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Tree shrine at Vijaynagar

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT SUTRA JOURNAL

“Sutra Journal is a beautiful new online magazine.” - Prof. Fritjof Capra, author of ‘The Tao of Physics’

“Gorgeous... excellent and much needed.” - Philip Goldberg, author of ‘American Veda’

“The long awaited response to light weight Yoga mags” - Anneke Lucas, Liberation Prison Yoga

“Congratulations. Looks Great!” - David Frawley

“Looks awesome! Well done and congratulations on the first issue.” - Eddie Stern, Ashtanga Yoga New York

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doctorseth.ca | deepiyoga.ca | somaheyogicquest.com



Vikram Zutshi is a writer-producer-director based in Los Angeles. After several years in indie film and network TV production, then a stint as Creative Executive at 20th Century Fox and later in International Sales/Acquisitions at Rogue Entertainment, he went solo and produced two feature films before transitioning into Directing. His debut feature was filmed at various points along the two thousand mile US-Mexico border and has since been globally broadcast. He is a passionate Yogi and writes frequently on Shamanism, Metaphysics, Buddhism, Shaivism, Culture, Art and Cinema. As a photojournalist, Vikram often travels on photo expeditions to SE Asia and Latin America and is involved with a number of charities that empower and educate street children in India, Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam and Cambodia. He is currently prepping his next two films, a 'mystical screwball comedy'-called The Byron Project and a feature documentary on the global yoga movement.



Virochana Khalsa has taught Kriya, Tantra, and ways of working consciously in the earth for 35 years in a dozen countries. He is the author of 4 books including Eternal Yoga: Awakening into Buddhist Consciousness and Tantra of the Beloved, is a co-creator of Sacred Mountain Retreat, and has a software company Silver Earth. From designing computer chips at Caltech, to working with street people; from years spent building a retreat in the mountains of Crestone, and a life of joyful Sadhana, Virochana immerses himself in everything he does. He lives primarily in Colorado and Maui, rides Arabian horses, and loves meditation.

ASSOCIATE EDITORS



With undergraduate degrees in English (with Honors) and Art, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Claremont Graduate University, Mary Hicks continues to work as an artist and as editor for scholars in religious studies. Her watercolor paintings draw on Chinese philosophy, art, and Song dynasty ceramics, and Japanese art. In addition to memorizing Sanskrit texts, she has recently studied Nāgārjuna at university. maryhicks.com



Lea Horvatic started her yoga journey at a very young age, over 35 years ago. In 2009 she qualified as a Homeopath (MLCHom), after which she completed her 350 hours YTT, and now teaches yoga and practices Ayurvedic Massage. Her teaching includes working in conjunction with Age UK holding classes for elderly with Alzheimer's and Dementia, as well as her ongoing work with Touchstone Charity Positive Care Programme providing treatment and yoga classes for people with long term conditions and mental health issues and their caregivers. Her published article 'On Regulating Yoga for Therapeutic Uses' is a critique which appears in the Namaskaram Magazine.



Sri Louise is a Contemporary Dancer and Yoga Teacher interested in the politics of whiteness as it pertains to both Art and Spirituality. She is a featured Yoga Teacher at Impulstanz International Dance Festival in Vienna and has also had the recent honor of Yoga Acharya at the International Yoga Festival in Rishikesh. She has been in an intimate process with Yoga since 1993 and met her Guru, Swami Dayananda Saraswati in 1999. Sri Louise regularly visits India to study at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam within her Advaita Vedanta Sampradaya. She is an outspoken critic of philosophical appropriation and has presented in the Yoga & Race Conference at UC Berkeley, most notably Lost In Translation or the Looting of Yoga. ([link](#)).

Sri Louise is the visionary behind the Underground Yoga Parlour for Self-Knowledge & Social Justice in Oakland, Ca. where she teaches Asana classes that fuse physical honesty and cognitive clarity, with social responsibility.



Meera Grace Hoon (aka Melissa) is a Kriyaban, sexual assault counselor, documentary filmmaker, and journalist who has reported for the Orange County Register and other prominent publications. Her work has taken her across the globe, where she has reported on human rights abuses including weak medical aid in Vietnam and poverty in South Africa. She specializes in counseling sex trafficking survivors, a population for which she developed a therapeutic journaling and meditation program. Also a yoga instructor (RYT 200), Meera now teaches this program nationwide at universities, high schools, counseling centers and spiritual retreats through her Inner Awakening Writing Center. She has a Master's degree in American studies, where she studied gender-based violence, and undergraduate degrees in journalism and American studies. Meera is currently in the documentary film graduate program at Chapman University, and is the associate producer on Vikram Zutshi's feature documentary on the global yoga movement.

CONSULTING EDITORS



Dr. Sthaneshwar Timalisina completed his Master's degree in 1991 from Sampurnananda University in Varanasi, India, and taught for several years in Nepal Sanskrit University, Kathmandu. He completed his PhD from Martin Luther University in Halle, Germany (2005) with a focus on the history of the philosophy of Advaita. His dissertation is published under the title, Seeing and Appearance (Shaker Verlag, 2006). Before joining San Diego State University in 2005, Timalisina has taught in a number of institutes including University of California, Santa Barbara, and Washington University in St. Louis.

His areas of research include classical Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain literature and philosophies with a specific focus on consciousness studies. His book, Consciousness in Indian Philosophy (Routledge, 2008) is a result of a comparative study between Advaita and Buddhist understandings of the self and consciousness.

Timalisina also works in the area of Tantric studies and his recent publications, Tantric Visual Culture: A Cognitive Approach (Routledge, 2015), and Language of Images: Visualization and Meaning in Tantras (Peter Lang, 2015), explore the cognitive and cultural domains of Tantric visualization.

Timalisina has published over forty articles, book chapters, and review essays on religion, culture, literature, aesthetics, and philosophy. Timalisina teaches courses on Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religious, philosophical, and literary traditions, and his teaching interests include 'Religion and Science' as well as 'Yoga Philosophy and Practice.' His current areas of research include theories of mind, with a particular focus on the cognitive aspects of recognition, memory, imagination, and emotion.



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Philip Goldberg has been studying India's spiritual traditions for more than 45 years, as a practitioner, teacher and writer. An Interfaith Minister, meditation teacher and spiritual counselor, he is a skilled speaker who has lectured and taught workshops throughout the country and in India. He is the author of numerous books, most recently *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation, How Indian Spirituality Changed the West*, which was named one of the top ten religion books of 2010 by Huffington Post and the American Library Association. He blogs regularly on the Huffington Post and Elephant Journal.

www.PhilipGoldberg.com | www.AmericanVeda.com.

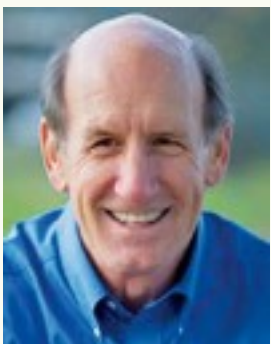
SEVA COUNCIL



Dr. Stuart Sovatsky (AB, Ethics/Psychology, Princeton University; PhD, CIIS) co-directed Ram Dass's "prison ashram", and in 1977 he was selected for Princeton University's Outstanding Alumni Careers Panel for his groundbreaking work of bringing meditation to the homeless in the US. Stuart is Co-president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology since 1999 - the premiere professional organization for spiritually-oriented psychologists in the US, is a board trustee for the California Institute of Integral Studies for 20 years and a recipient of its Most Outstanding Alumni Award 1978-2008. In 2006-08, he was initiating co-convenor of the forty country World Congress on Psychology and Spirituality in Delhi, India. Author of critically acclaimed books like *Eros Consciousness* and *Kundalini*, *Words From the Soul*, and numerous articles on love, ideal marriages and families, spirituality of infancy and Buddhist dissolution of suicidal thoughts. A serious scholar-practitioner of tantra yoga with numerous academic publications and university presentations throughout the US, India and Europe, he now leads couples retreats and trains therapists in the US and in Russia, is a faculty member at Moscow Psychoanalytic Institute and is the director of two psychotherapy clinics in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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Richard C. Miller, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, author, researcher, yogic scholar and spiritual teacher who, for the past 45 years, has devoted his life and work to integrating the ancient nondual wisdom teachings of Yoga, Tantra, Advaita, Taoism, and Buddhism with modern Western psychology. Richard is the founding president of the Integrative Restoration Institute, co-founder of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, founding editor of the peer-reviewed *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, and a founding member and past president of the Institute for Spirituality and Psychology.

Author of *The iRest Program for Healing PTSD* (New Harbinger), *Yoga Nidra: The Meditative Heart of Yoga* (Sounds True) and *iRest Meditation for Health, Healing and Well Being* (Sounds True), Richard serves as a research consultant for the iRest Meditation protocol that he developed (Integrative Restoration ~ iRest), a modern adaptation of the ancient nondual practice of Yoga Nidra, documenting its efficacy on health, healing, and well-being with diverse populations that include active-duty soldiers, veterans, children, youth, college students, seniors, the homeless, the incarcerated, and people experiencing issues such as sleep disorders, PTSD, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, chemical dependency, and anxiety. He additionally researches iRest's efficacy for enhancing resiliency, well-being, and compassion.

In 1983, after decades of searching, Richard met his spiritual mentor, Jean Klein, who introduced him to the non-path, non-method, and non-goal realization of nonduality. Richard now shares the paradox of nondual instruction through international training sessions, meditation retreats on awakening, and the integration of enlightened living into daily life. For information on Richard's teachings visit www.irest.us.



*We hope you enjoy Sutra Journal, and walk
through the door to the (inner) Sun... OM*



Cave Temples at Ellora

TANTRA AND THE WEST

by Dr. Sthaneshwar Timalsina

Tantra in the Western imagination stands for exotic and orgasmic rituals coming from India and Tibet that blend sex and meditation. Tantric practice is often compared with pagan animistic rituals that include blood and sex, and the supernatural powers described in Tantric texts are often compared with magic. This does not mean that Tantra has always been painted positively in its homeland. For most native Indians, Tantra stands for scary witchcraft and ghoulish Aghoris that capture the imagination when one thinks of a 'Tantrik'. With the 20th century guru movements and the vacuum resulting from a lack of traditional awareness, the 'exotic' side of Tantra appears to be in transit, doubling back to India in changed form.

Historically, Tantra has remained elastic in adopting practices that cannot be blended together to make one single practice or belief. The contemporary categorization of Tantra subsumes this intrinsic diversity, with its practices contradictory to each other, and philosophies supporting different goals.

As Tantra becomes grossly simplified, the market that consumes Tantra is little concerned with the problems inherent to blending Hindu and Buddhist Tantras, left-hand and right-hand Tantras, and various disciplines (Acharas). Once again, this homogenization is doubling back and attracting millions in its homeland, mostly mixed with astrology and new-age beliefs.

There are reasons why the Tantric practitioners remained hidden in the homeland of Tantra and also why it has developed such a distinctive identity in the West. In its history, Pashupatas, one distinctive school of Shiva worshippers, through their denial of social identity and their rejection of social labels, exemplify the earliest tendency of Tantrics. The peculiar character of the Pashupatas to reject social identity and norms tends towards deconstructing social identity and reflects the subject's quest for liberation from socially constructed subjectivity. By demeaning themselves, they believe, they can free themselves from their ego, desire, and attachment. This self-rejection, however, cannot be sold in the marketplace, if Tantra were to be capitalized.

Nowadays the Tantrics are less shy in proclaiming their identity, as this allows them to make a brand of themselves and be successful in selling spiritual orgasm. The marketplace demands that Tantra's unique 'fla-

vor' be immediately recognizable. Bringing Tantras to the West, in this light, is about selling spirituality in the marketplace.

The practices that would otherwise take tens of years of preparation are now to be purchased for a good sum of money. Relying upon post-modern ethics guided by capitalism and the missionary tendency of making beliefs appealing (thus uniting globalization with free-market competition), religious value is determined by the marketplace, with its validity confirmed on the basis of its marketability. Rewriting Tantras, in this light, demands response to these needs.

There is no marketing for self-negation, and thus Tantra becomes its opposite.

Nobody would purchase some secretive meditative practices to be carried out in the forest or the cave, and thus Tantra becomes hedonistic. The corporeal disciplines outlined in the Siddhanta texts become displaced, as Tantra has to discover itself in the post-1960s American imagination. All the discussions regarding Tantras being Hindu or Non-Hindu have nothing to do with the history or practice of Tantra, as it now stems from the desire to draw a bigger number of clients to the workshops. In other words,



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Tantra in the West is the encounter of ‘sacred sex’ as determined by ‘capitalistic ethics.’

Reflection upon Tantra in the West can be more meaningful, if read within these parameters. The challenge now is to unravel what the Western individual finds attractive in the ‘alien other’ of Tantra and what in this is repellent to the larger culture. Central to this is the *atimarga* or the transgressive nature of the path that simultaneously constitutes the core of Tantra and makes Tantra alien to the West, for both Tantra-philes and Tantra-phobes. With the many subgroups of Pasupatas, Kapalikas, Kalamukhas, Aghoris and so on, Tantra emerged as the path that contravenes regular codes determining what is ‘religious’ and ‘ethical’ and embraces marginal paths,

practices, rituals and philosophies, and worships violent and ecstatic forms. This disregard for norms shatters the hegemony of the elite by sidelining what is considered pure and benevolent, and brings into the stream that which is ‘outside’ of the norm: the outcaste, the horrific and fearsome, the hidden and neglected.

This reversal of the margin and center is not to reject the existence of what lies at the center but simply to reject its centrality, breaking the code that rises from bottom to top, and to create a circular social mandala, finding purity and divinity even in the entities that are otherwise considered impure. The simple pantheistic or monistic argument considers that divinity is manifest in all forms and norms, and there is nothing that is not divine.

THE SECULAR EXPERIENCE

The first problem of bringing Tantra into discourse with the West rests in the nature and effect of the secular experience. Although Tantra is very liberal in embracing all rituals, individuals, and divinities within its scope, it is not secular in terms of bringing experience from the realm of the sacred to the mundane. Quite the contrary, there is nothing that is not 'spiritually enlightening' and not divine within the Tantric worldview. Selling spirituality in the market is a midway through-point, as it on one hand demands the recognition of something that is spiritual, while on the other hand it assumes that the objects or practices that can transform our experiences and turn them spiritual also hold market value. The universalization of Tantra that happened in its homeland in classical times meant the deconstruction of social hierarchies and norms. The modern universalization of Tantra rests on the assumption that everybody has the right to a piece of the Tantric pot of gold. The New Age faces the dilemma of reconciling these two opposite social realities, and post-modern enlightenment is sanguine about its ability to commodify everything, including a commercialization of the divine.

To some extent, the secularization of Tantra can be compared to the process that secularized Yoga. The process of removing Yoga from its religious context started in the early 1930s in India and received prominence in the West with multiple Yoga brands. Just as secularized Yoga stands for physical fitness, secularized Tantra corresponds to hedonism, with orgies removed from social or mental boundaries.

Secrecy and marketing do not travel hand in hand. Tantric practices were mostly marginal, with secrecy remaining the norm.

The process of creating a marketplace, the appropriation of practices, the assimilation of archaic forms into the mainstream society and mixing with the social imagination, all tend to constitute a peculiar flavor of the divine that can be achieved through money. The single-most obstacle in this chain of transformation is the secretive character of Tantric practice. Secrecy and marketing do not travel hand in hand. Tantric practices were mostly marginal, with secrecy remaining the norm. What is peculiar today is that we can google any form of Tantric practice, text, or visualization.

It is not a select group of people that participates in these hidden practices, but rather every individual is the consumer of the Tantras today. Between marketability and the transformative power of esoteric practices, what survives today in the West is marketability. The challenge for a modern guru is not of finding a more qualified student, but to reach out to the higher bidder, be it a group or an individual. Reality regarding the transformative powers of such practices is determined by the expenses incurred for marketing and advertising them.

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MAKING TANTRA MORE 'TANTRIC'

The discussion upon 'Tantra in the West' is not possible without exploring the Western imagination of non-Western culture. What is essential in this analysis is to identify categories that have become prominent in recognizing the Western contribution to the popular imagination of Tantra. Among select constituents, the foremost is the dynamics of the mystical 'Orient,' which can be analyzed along the Saïdian lines. The concept of the bipolarity of 'rational' and 'mystical' rests upon the supposition that the 'Orient' is mystical and therefore lacking in scientific knowledge or rationality. Although various religious phenomena from the East - including Sufi mysticism, Vedanta, or Zen Buddhism - were introduced before Tantra emerged in the West, Tantra most closely fits the Western imagination of the East, because among all forms of mysticism, Tantra introduces the most archaic elements. Even within this paradigm, the Tantric practices of the Aghoris and Kapalikas match the Western imagination the most. An Aghori living in the cremation ground, consuming human flesh along with hard liquor and opium, eating excrement, walking nude, appearing insane with rolling red eyes and incoherent shouts: all portray a heathen savage unaware of the dawn of civilization. The early description of Tantra found in Western literature vividly portrays this imagination.

There is only a marginal difference between incorporating Tantra in the marketplace and teaching Tantra in the departments of South Asian Studies. The scholarly studies of Tantra demand that something

Oriental is discovered in every membrane of secrecy embedded within the manuscripts, images, and ritual practices. Tantra in the marketplace demands that something orgasmic is revealed in every layer peeled away from the secretive garb of Tantra. In these parallel projects, what is discovered is the orgasmic 'other'. Rather than reaching out to their colleagues in other departments, South Asianists tend to 'understand' India better by re-reading Max Muller and Sir William Jones, and in translating from some archaic texts. The scholarly fantasy of discovering the heart of India has set India aside, just as the spiritual marketing has saved everything of Tantra except for its power to transform human experience and grant liberation.

Talking about Tantra in the Western setting is also talking about orgasm. This is where the religious imagination of the West that stands in isolation of the body, gender, and sexuality parallels the West's imagination of Tantra, which thus becomes the religion that is completely the opposite of what is considered 'religious'.

There can be nothing more irrational or 'Otherly' than blending sexuality and religion, as 'sex' in the Western religious landscape

remains the consequence of forbidden fruit. The New Age has found Tantric practice liberating, within its own understanding or appropriation of sexuality.

A crucial element further embellished with the emergence of a 'new' Tantrism is its counter-cultural and anti-social aspect. Human beings share social constructs to the extent that this negotiation does not endanger the individual's autonomy to override the social and experience its individuality unbound by social constructs. This may include the end of rationality and embody transgression. As socio-ethical norms are human constructs, this again becomes a human possibility for the individual to liberate himself from the boundary that has been erected. The tension between the 'social' and 'subjective' aspects of a human reflects this construction. Tantra, following this argument, is a need where the social overrides the subjective, where an individual strives to find his liberation untrammelled by social conventions. Tantra of the Atimarga category possesses this disruptive character. What Tantra adds to this 'anti-social' aspect is the autonomous religious experience considered possible without relying upon any religious institutions or texts.

Abhinavagupta, the foremost Tantric theologian, claims that there are three sources of the gnosis that gives one self-realization: the mentor, the text, and one's self-experience. Interestingly, this classification of knowledge identifies self-



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experience as the highest. Now the scenario is, the vein in which intuitive personal encounter was placed highest provides the theological justification for adapting practices and incorporating the bizarre forms that support marketization. Giving self-experience centrality has its own counterculture role. All institutionalized religions face the dilemma of dealing with human subjective experience: if the individuals are correct in recognizing their self-nature, then the institutions, the texts, and the tradition as an integration of all these elements become irrelevant. The subjective quest for liberation stands in opposition to organized religion, as the individual's path allows the subject to seek his or her own salvation. In making Tantra a quest of self-discovery, there is also a thin line of balance. This process can also challenge the market, because if subjects are free to explore their own spirituality, there is nothing that makes the products sold through workshops inextricably essential.

The anti-social character found in Tantra that offers liberation for which one does not need to rest upon religious institution or scripture is preserved even in the wake of the Guru Movements, where the guru stands as the first and the last authority in granting liberation. The guiding principle is, the authority of the guru is determined by their ability to sell themselves in the market. Something that can be sold and purchased is true and those making the brands are the siddhas. In the process of accepting, changing, including, and renouncing gurus, individuals arouse the very primitive instinct when humans first imagined the 'divine.' In institutionalized religions, it is not possible for one to discover new gods or new scriptures, and the primitive instinct of projecting divinity is permanently subsumed. This is where Tantra finds itself countercultural in displacing the boundaries in which the 'spiri-

Tantra is occasionally invoked to irk the pious Christian brothers. What could be more unnerving than the imagination of a witches' circle with idolatry, magic potions, debauchery, and the talisman? It is in this context that the most esoteric practice from the contemplative traditions comes to the contemporary existential platform and discovers its social relevance.

Tantra in the West stands as an enigma. Bringing oriental practice into the society where institutionalized forms of religion do not allow for the possibility of worshipping icons or murtis, performing magic rituals, or including exotic sexual practice within the realm of enlightening practice; all of these function as revolutionary.

tual' is recognized. One fiction overrides the other. One collective fiction of religion becomes controlled by the other, the money.

In this new cultural experience of Tantra in the West, there are two crucial domains interacting each other: the psychological and the social. The psychological is the innate human condition that constitutes the sacred, that envisions the supernatural, and gives rise to animistic and pagan belief forms. Although this facet of human imagination has been suppressed by the institutionalized forms of religion, it nevertheless remains layered within the human psyche. Tantra, whether in the classical or modern times, provides a window for this need. In the societal level, Tantra has allowed an escape from the norms, both in previous and contemporary settings. Whether or not Tantra remains liberating in its true sense, Tantra still provides basic psychological needs of the individual and the collective.

Tantra is occasionally invoked to irk the pious Christian brothers. What could be more unnerving than the imagination of a witches' circle with idolatry, magic potions, debauchery, and the talisman? It is in this context that the most esoteric practice from the contemplative traditions comes to the contemporary existential platform and discovers its social relevance. Tantra in this light stands for everything that the mainstream Western imagination of religiosity stands against. Tantra in its homeland may not have evolved in reaction to orthodox Brahminism, as has been taught in the departments of South Asian Studies. Tantras could have evolved through sustained contemplative practices, introduced by the practitioners who have themselves shunned the social pressure and family ties. What makes Tantra interesting in modern times is the potential rediscovery – yet to be widely disseminated - that Tantra stands for social revolution, a revolution against one imaginary society of the orientalist. Whether in the marketplace or in the classrooms, Tantra in the West stands as an enigma. Bringing oriental practice into the society where institutionalized forms of religion do not allow for the possibility of worshipping icons or murtis, performing magic rituals, or including exotic sexual practice within the realm of enlightening practice; all of these function as revolutionary. In fact, any practice not grounded on monotheistic belief is transgressive to the common Western psyche.



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The unraveling of Tantra as revolutionary demands that we read Tantra as a socio-economic tool, inflating the sacred from within. Rather than reading Tantric transgressions as steps towards deconstructing self-identity, this new reading finds Tantric transgression relevant in challenging societal norms. Implanting the social norms from one culture to another has a wide range of consequences. Drinking liquor, for instance, may have been transgressive in classical Hindu-Buddhist society where purity is maintained by refraining from drinking liquor. There is nothing transgressive about drinking wine in the West. The sex-codes imposed in classical Indian society may not be applicable in the Western settings either. The reinvention of Tantra in the West therefore demands that something be invented from within Tantra that transgresses the social codes in the West. In this regard, everything coming from India is Tantric, as this carries a peculiar alien flavor.

The Tantric injunction to transcend its own rules also applies in the case of modernity. Modernity not only has the ability to deconstruct old values, it also has the self-reflexive ability to break itself down.

This fits with the argument that while Tantra may endorse liberal values, it does not establish secular values, but just the reverse, it spiritualizes all modes of experience. What remains non-negotiable between these two is the capitalistic value wherein a human possesses real independence through the accumulation of capital, making it possible for an individual to purchase commodities, whereas in Tantra, its fundamental value rests in its endorsement of divinity in all forms, eliminating the profane from the horizon of existence.

Further Readings:

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- Sthaneshwar Timalsina. 2011. "Encountering the Other: Tantra in the Cross-cultural Context", *Journal of Hindu Studies* 4:274-289.



Dr. Sthaneshwar Timalsina completed his Master's degree in 1991 from Sampurnananda University in Varanasi, India, and taught for several years in Nepal Sanskrit University, Kathmandu. He completed his PhD from Martin Luther University in Halle, Germany (2005) with a focus on the history of the philosophy of Advaita. His dissertation is published under the title, *Seeing and Appearance* (Shaker Verlag, 2006). Before joining San Diego State University in 2005, Timalsina has taught in a number of institutes including University of California, Santa Barbara, and Washington University in St. Louis.

His areas of research include classical Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain literature and philosophies with a specific focus on consciousness studies. His book, *Consciousness in Indian Philosophy* (Routledge, 2008) is a result of a comparative study between Advaita and Buddhist understandings of the self and consciousness. Timalsina also works in the area of Tantric studies and his recent publications, *Tantric Visual Culture: A Cognitive Approach* (Routledge, 2015), and *Language of Images: Visualization and Meaning in Tantras* (Peter Lang, 2015), explore the cognitive and cultural domains of Tantric visualization.

Timalsina has published over forty articles, book chapters, and review essays on religion, culture, literature, aesthetics, and philosophy. Timalsina teaches courses on Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religious, philosophical, and literary traditions, and his teaching interests include 'Religion and Science' as well as 'Yoga Philosophy and Practice.' His current areas of research include theories of mind, with a particular focus on the cognitive aspects of recognition, memory, imagination, and emotion.



AN INTERVIEW WITH GOPI KRISHNA ON CONSCIOUSNESS AND KUNDALINI

Editors' Introduction

A visionary thinker and writer whose life spanned most of the 20th Century, Gopi Krishna championed Consciousness Studies long before this field was validated in Neurology and Consciousness Studies. Widely published and a compelling speaker, he advocated an understanding of Kundalini, which he posited as “a biological force driving human evolution.

“The Kundalini hypothesis holds that there is a biological transformation effected through a rejuvenating activity of the reproductive system which then refines the nervous system and ultimately the brain. This differs from Darwinian theory that genes are transmuted through external environmental selection. Except for the organic changes occurring in the subtle levels of the neuron structures, science, as it exists today, can have no direct knowledge of the subjective nature of this experience. It is only individual experience which can lead to confirmation and validation of the awakened man and lay the foundation of a new and yet eternal science.” - Rakesh Kaul, Gopi Krishna's grandson

CONSCIOUSNESS RESEARCH

This interview was conducted in New Delhi in the mid-1970s by a reporter for a UNESCO publication in India. The reporter's name is unknown.

For more than a decade now, you have been writing books on consciousness and evolution and about mystical experience. Could you restate your position in clear-cut terms and point out some of the reasons that might have stood in the way of their acceptance by scientists so far?

The transcendental and trans human nature of mystical experience are a still uncharted province for scholars. There is a wide gulf between scholarship and mystical vision.

The main reason is that there is still a great deal of confusion about the phenomenon known as mystical ecstasy. The general impression is that it is just an altered state of awareness, comparable to the states brought about by intoxicants, mind-altering drugs, hypnosis, biofeedback, auto-suggestive conditions and the like. Even an authority like William James has been in error in the comparison he has made between mystical ecstasy and the states induced by wine and nitrous oxide.

What is the reason for this?

The reason is simple. The transcendental and trans human nature of mystical experience are a still uncharted province for scholars. There is a wide gulf between scholarship and mystical vision. The staggering nature of the vision and the revolution it brings about in the life and thinking of one who is blessed with it and the light it throws on the problems of existence are all beyond the power of the intellect to grasp.

Can you explain this further?

Intellectual study is like the data gathered by a dreamer of the dream world in which he dwells for a while. The mystical vision is like the awareness gained by one when awake. I must make this clear, with all the emphasis at my command and in full conformity to what has been as emphatically stated by mystics of the past that the objective world disappears, like a phantom, in the illuminating blaze of mystical consciousness. The Reality which is unveiled in the duration of the experience is beyond the grasp of the intellect and the power of language to describe.



Since it is impossible to describe, how can you hope to convince scientists that there is still something beyond their comprehension?

It is the same as though the intellectual prodigies of the past, such as Shakespeare and Bacon, were expected to know of the awful force of the atom. Most of the present day intellectuals believe that they are almost at the frontiers of knowledge, but they have no inkling that the quest of man has yet to begin. All the knowledge and experience they have gained, all the discoveries they have made and all the inventions wrought, so far, have been a preparation for the next step in his progress, which is the exploration of his own mind to answer the Riddle of his being.

It seems to me that what you are saying points to a new direction for human effort and thought.

Exactly. It is entirely beyond the imagination of our contemporaries. Hence, it is but natural that many of them should consider what I say as incredible and fantastic. We cannot expect a more favorable response from the learned, because they are no more informed about the phenomenon, on which I dwell, than the ordinary class of human beings. The intellect, proud of her knowledge, is seldom ready to believe that there are worlds and regions beyond her reach.

What about present-day research on consciousness? Isn't some progress being made in this area of science?

Research on consciousness, as it is being carried out today, can easily be compared to the investigation done by a dreamer of the mental condition of the personalities in his dream. For one who lacks the least awareness about himself, however erudite he might be, the issue will always arise—and on what? How can one who is ignorant of his own mind stalk forth to study the mind of another who is as ignorant of himself as he?

Is that why the Upanishads say that the effort of the unenlightened, however scholarly they might be, are like the blind leading the blind when it comes to guiding others in the knowledge of the Self?

Yes. According to the Indian Masters who have contributed most to the study of the mind, Turiya or the fourth state of consciousness, experienced in the mystical trance, is the real state of human awareness and the other three below it—namely deep sleep, dream and the normal wakeful state—are delusive. The normal state lends substance to a false appearance which hides the true Reality.

The research on consciousness should mean study of one's Self?

In truth, this is what the ancient sages and seers proceeded to do in their search for enlightenment. It is for this reason that during recent times there has been hardly any new addition to the brilliant galaxy of enlightened prophets and sages of the past. This is also the reason why there has been no fresh accumulation of knowledge on the mystical state of consciousness. When our study of the outer world, during the same period has yielded such a rich harvest in transforming the life of human be-

As one who has been granted a brief glimpse into this profound Mystery, I can say with confidence, that no amount of objective study of consciousness, undertaken over the next hundreds of years, with the methods employed at present, would lead the learned any nearer the solution of the enigma.



The stage is being set for this radical change in the direction of human effort from the outer to the inner world. The learned are not able to read the signs, as the future is entirely shut from their view, and they have no idea of the coming revolution in the life of humanity as a complement to the evolutionary change that has occurred within.

ings why do we find the doors tightly shut in our exploration of inner realm?

This is the crux of the problem, I'm sure. What is your explanation?

As one who has been granted a brief glimpse into this profound Mystery, I can say with confidence, that no amount of objective study of consciousness, undertaken over the next hundreds of years, with the methods employed at present, would lead the learned any nearer the solution of the enigma. On the contrary, except for the hundreds of volumes of confusing data that would result, the investigation would make it even more bewildering than before.

But what is the reason for this?

Research on consciousness demands a new approach because it marks a new phase in the career of humanity. Evolving man must now shift his attention from the outer to the inner world, make his own body the laboratory and reverently approach the Spirit within to instruct him in the rudiments of this science.

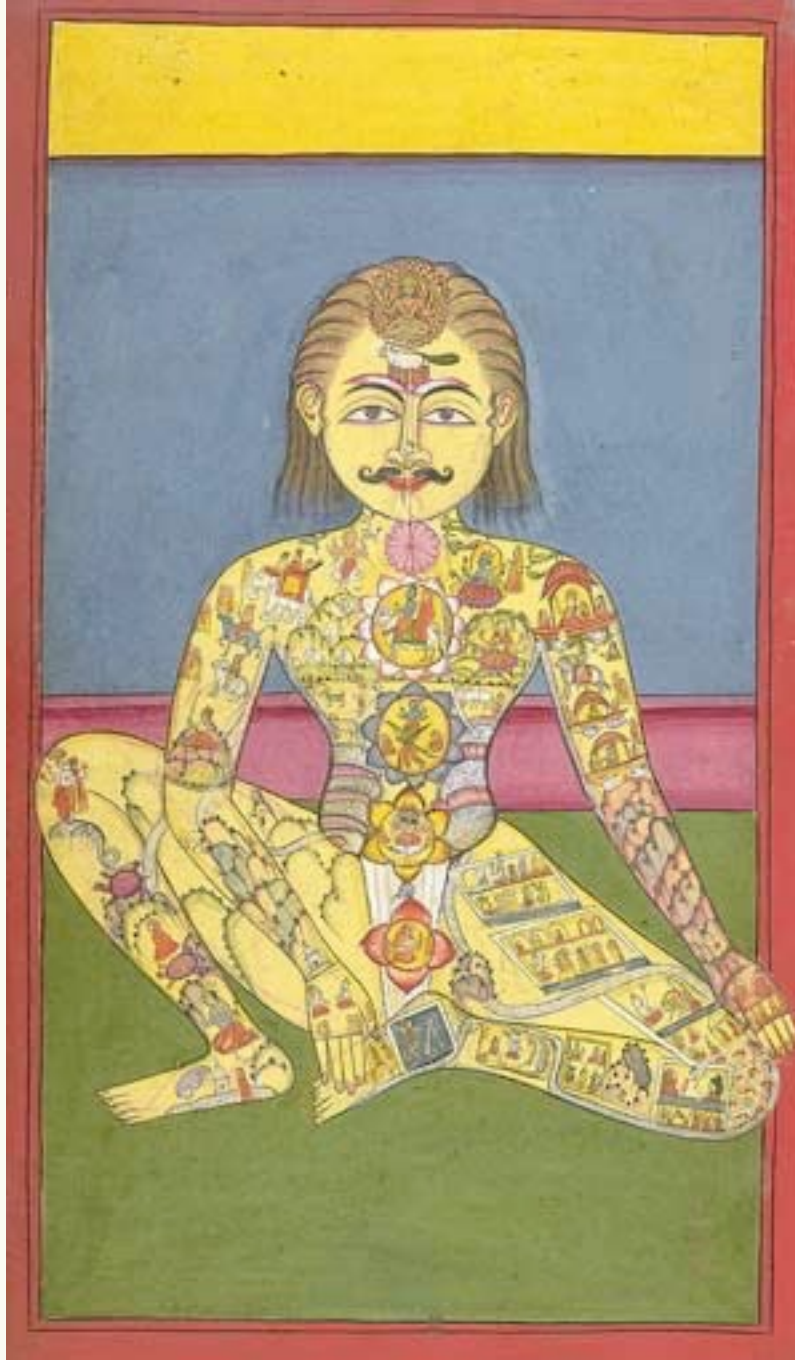
Many people are eagerly waiting for this. There seems to be an instinctive longing to return to nature, for instance, to break away from the highly complex, hectic life of today. Isn't all this an indication of a coming revolution in thinking?

The stage is being set for this radical change in the direction of human effort from the outer to the inner world. The learned are not able to read the signs, as the future is entirely shut from their view, and they have no idea of the coming revolution in the life of humanity as a complement to the evolutionary change that has occurred within.

Can you describe this evolutionary change that you believe has occurred within?

It will take some time, but it has to do with the existence of a potential in the brain that can transform human life and bestow undreamed of intellectual, supersensory and artistic gifts to individuals in a manner beyond imagination at present.

But as you have already said, most intellectuals have no grounding in mysticism, so they continue to apply the same methods of



analysis and criticism to which they are accustomed in other branches of knowledge.

It is a sad commentary on the academic life of our time that a subject treated with respectful attention and reverential regard by the greatest intellectuals of the past, including such giants as Plato and Newton, should appear so trivial and unimportant to them that they deem it beyond their dignity to study it with the care and attention which it needs.

You are considered to be a rebel to many of the popular ideologies of our time. Perhaps if you were to put your ideas in the language of the intellectuals, they would be more acceptable to the readers in the United States.

I have made no secret in my books of the fact that my education has been poor and that all I am writing is from inspiration, which needs a dive into the depths of my own being to receive it. I have never made any claims of infallibility and have repeatedly said that every word I am writing should be weighed and put to rigid test before it is accepted. It is for this reason that I am so keen to lay the foundation of an Experimental Center, to validate my views about the evolutionary mechanism in the human frame.

Your ideas need to be expressed by scholars who are trained in the language of academics. Without such credentials, it might be impossible to make any real headway in the West.



The universe is a vast amphitheater and the dramas enacted by consciousness, on this stage from one end to the other, infinitely varied in plot and action, are yet closely interwoven and interconnected in a manner far beyond the grasp of the puny human intellect.

Either that or else what we need are the resources to broadcast our views far and wide. I am putting my ideas in the language of the common man and woman rather than in that of the intellectuals for the simple reason that in the first place, I am not capable of writing in the discursive style peculiar to scholars. Secondly, I wish my sage to be easily intelligible to all those who read it. .

Do you believe it is possible to communicate your ideas the language of modern psychology?

Perhaps not. Modern psychology is bristling with internal conflicts and controversies, and also the pulls and pressures from individual authorities, each contradicting the other. How can a study based on a mistaken conception of mind, with excessive emphasis on the beast and chilling silence over the god in man, provide a suitable vehicle for explaining the profundities of consciousness or its triumphant march from the sub-human to the super-human plane?

Then what is the solution?

The moment it is demonstrated that the human brain is still in a state of organic evolution in a pre-planned direction, not only the current theory of evolution but also psychological systems, based primarily on the animal origin of mind and not on its infinitely intelligent cosmic character, will come toppling to the earth. How can we reconcile the divine nature of consciousness with some of the revolting explanations offered by psychologists?

The universe is a vast amphitheater and the dramas enacted by consciousness, on this stage from one end to the other, infinitely varied in plot and action, are yet closely interwoven and interconnected in a manner far beyond the grasp of the puny human intellect. Mankind will have to rise to dizzy heights of evolution before she can begin to comprehend the bewildering play of Life.

From Euclidean space we have come to the curved space of Relativity. But there are already indications to show that this is not the end. Who knows what new surprises are in store for astrophysicists in the years to come? It is a fallacy to suppose that we have come to the end of the knowledge of the mind.

I have emphatically tried my utmost to make it clear that mystical experience does not represent a vision of God but only a passage into a new dimension of consciousness in which it wears an aspect of glory and sovereignty which is not present on the human plane.



As far as I know, this is the first time that mystical consciousness, or the organic mechanism leading to it, have been defined in this way, in the language of reason, divested of the supernatural and mythical.

You claim to be in possession of extraordinary knowledge, is that not true?

I have never laid any claim to a higher position than the one I possess. In fact, I have emphatically tried my utmost to make it clear that mystical experience does not represent a vision of God but only a passage into a new dimension of consciousness in which it wears an aspect of glory and sovereignty which is not present on the human plane. I have also repeatedly asserted that in all other aspects I belong to the class of normal human beings with the frailties and vanities common to human nature. Nowhere in my writings have I made any claim to sainthood nearness to God or to a superhuman stature, as is often done by godmen to point out the gulf that exists between them and the normal run of human beings.

But you do claim to reside in the transcendental state of consciousness, do you not?

Yes, but it has always been my endeavor to make it clear that the transcendental state of consciousness, experienced in the form of ecstasy by prophets and mystics throughout the past, does not signify a special favor from the Deity. It is only a more extended dimension of the perceptual faculty towards which mankind is evolving irresistibly through the operation of an evolutionary mechanism in the body, designated as Kundalini by the Indian sages of the past.

As far as I know, this is the first time that mystical consciousness, or the organic mechanism leading to it, have been defined in this way, in the language of reason, divested of the supernatural and mythical.

That is my view, exactly. I have, at the same time made no secret of the fact that knowledge of Kundalini represents a monumental discovery of the illumine of India, and that I am only presenting this knowledge in the language of modern science. I have also said that the interpretations I am placing on it would be beyond my capacity but for a strange dispensation of fate, beyond comprehension, by which I became the participant in an experience that unfolded the secret to me.

Secret? Can you expand on this a bit?

What I am trying to emphasize in all my work is that we have our existence in two worlds, the world of matter and the world of mind. As the



This is the purpose of the mystical trance or the trans human states of consciousness exhibited by the prophets and mystics of the world. They sung praises to the glory of God because the plane of being where they arrived is a plane of splendor, beauty and transport, surpassing anything conceivable by a normal mind.

result of an inquiry that has persisted through a prodigious span of time—ever since the dawn of reason—we have come in possession of an amount of knowledge of the material world, which is able for study by anyone. But the study of the world of spirit needs entry into a new plane of consciousness and a super-sensory channel of cognition, which are slowly coming into the possession of man.

The secret, then, is that mankind is slowly coming into possession of a super-sensory channel of cognition, is that correct?

Yes, through evolution. This is the purpose of the mystical trance or the trans human states of consciousness exhibited by the prophets and mystics of the world. They sung praises to the glory of God because the plane of being where they arrived is a plane of splendor, beauty and transport, surpassing anything conceivable by a normal mind.

But even so, if I understand you correctly, it is a plane of being just a little higher than that of normal human beings.

You are perfectly correct. Those men and women who arrogate to themselves a trans human stature or position of authority—as incarnations of, or surrogates for the Divine—must have a poor opinion about the staggering dimensions of the universe or the inconceivable proportions of its Almighty Creator.

Because it is simply an evolutionary advance of the normal state of consciousness?

Yes. This attitude could be justified in the prophets, sages and seers of the past, when the earth alone bounded the vision of man and he had no idea of what gigantic worlds lie beyond, and what a countless host of colossal suns and planets dwells in space. But from a godman of today, the statements of the kind which are made in the Scriptures of the past should be an affront to the intelligence of anyone who has even a passing idea about the extent of the universe or possibility of other, far superior, forms of life residing in it. There are some, even among the learned, who believe in such self-concocted tales, but they scoff at the rational explanations which I offer.

What about the future of humankind?

From my point of view, the future luminaries of the race, adorned with trans human consciousness, would still be occupied with the exploration of the Mystery of Creation in the higher, to us, imperceptible planes of being, in the same way as we are now occupied with the exploration of the material universe. The present-day concepts about mind, its behavior, urges and appetites, are mere capricious intellectual excursions into a territory which needs another channel of cognition to explore.

I would like to know more about this other channel of cognition.

You said yourself that it was a plane of being that is a little higher than that of normal human beings, and that is perfectly correct. But it is nothing to merit comparison or equality with the infinite majesty and splendor of the Lord. It is a variation of almost the same kind as we observe when we rise in the scale of life from the lower species to the higher ones.

It amuses me to find that people in general, including scholars, sometimes, raise mystics and enlightened saints to the stature of gods who cease to be humans, belonging to a world of superhuman dimensions and possibilities, where they can defy the laws of nature, change the fate of common men and women or do whatever they please.

This is a serious error which stands as an impediment in the understanding of the mystical trance and in placing this extraordinary state of mind on a rational footing. It is simply the addition of another channel of perception, designed by Nature for every human being.

But you still insist that it is necessary for science to undertake research on consciousness?

There will soon be a time when the evolution of consciousness will be taken up by scholars in all its different aspects, spiritual, psychological, sociological and biological. When once the experiment I propose is confirmed, there will be no subject, I am sure, which will receive as much sustained attention from scholars of every shade and color, and the rank and file of science, as this. But the most colossal task in front of the erudite would be to explain the evolution of mind in terms of the organic evolution of the brain. As far as I can see, it shall take long spans of time to cover each single step in the territory of consciousness.

Then you do welcome the efforts of scholars and psychologists to write on consciousness, to the best of their knowledge and skill.

Of course, I welcome it most certainly. But in fairness to all, I must point out that except in the case of those who have experienced the transformation, no attempt made by a scholar, merely with the exercise of his intellect, however versatile and learned he might be, can fathom the mystery. How does Eternal Consciousness come to be embodied and then rise, step by step, through eonian spans of time, to the realization of its own sovereignty? This is a riddle so profound that it is hard even to gauge its proportions. I must also add that present-day ideas about psychology, which emanated from Freud and others, offer only short-range explanations. These explanations will be subject to radical change from time to time as more and more knowledge is gained by the illuminees of the future about the

nature and working of the mind and the organ of its expression, the brain.

Your opinion of modern psychology is rather unflattering.

I have written extensively on this subject, but we can compare the present views of psychologists to the ideas of alchemists before the modern science of chemistry came into existence. The human intellect, not unoften, takes delight in providing explanations even for those phenomena which are beyond its probe, as for example, the existence of God and the origin of the universe, the nature of the soul and life after death. These eternal riddles have strongly drawn the human mind from the dawn of reason to this day without ever finding the right answer that could solve them once and for all. This is also the case with the riddle of the mind.

You believe that the experiment you propose will furnish solution?

It is my endeavor to divest mystical ecstasy of ancient superstition and modern intellectual confusion both by drawing attention to the biological factors responsible for it. Because this objectification of the phenomenon has never been attempted before, the academic world is still unaware or incredulous of it. That shows the entirely unsuspected nature of the disclosures made.

From my point of view, mystical ecstasy is a human experience, the outcome of an organic process at work the brain—which signifies the first beginning of trans human capacities in man. Except for the organic changes occurring in the subtle levels of the neuronal structures, science, as it exists today, can have no direct knowledge of the subjective nature of this experience.

If that is the case, then no intellectual formulations about it are possible at this time.

That is correct.

Your writings are, to summarize briefly, primarily confined the evolution of the mind. Isn't this what others have said?

I do not say that the human mind is evolving towards an undefined summit as, for instance, Teilhard de Chardin and others have said. What I firmly assert is that human consciousness is evolving towards a predetermined target, which I have experienced, and that this target is the mystical or illuminated state attained by thousands of mystics and enlightened human beings in the past and that the religious scriptures of mankind are a harvest of the revelations received from a Higher Intelligence in this state of exalted being. What I further affirm is that the human brain is evolving towards this state of trans human perception, through the activity of an organic mechanism, named Kundalini by the ancients, whose existence can be demonstrated with the methods known to science

This is a monumental assertion. Science has been attempting to discover this organic mechanism for decades, without, insofar as I know, any success whatsoever.

From all this, it follows that I am trying to place the whole domain of religion and mystical ecstasy on the footing of a regular science, demonstrable with empirical methods of which the laboratory has to be the human body itself.

Has any thinker, scientist or religious teacher, present or past, thrown a challenge of this kind?

I frankly know of none. There is no need for me to use dubious intellectual methods to carry my point. One successful experiment is sufficient to clear the confusion and confirm what I say.

Your writings include a good deal about other mental phenomena in addition to mystical ecstasy, could you elaborate on this?

My whole philosophy can be summed up in a few words. Therefore, it is not necessary that my books should be read and reread to arrive at the conclusions I have drawn from my experience. I also aver that the commonly known abnormal and paranormal states of mind—such as retardation, neurosis or insanity, on the one hand, and exceptional talent or paranormal gifts on the other—all proceed from the working of the evolutionary mechanism; and that with advanced knowledge of this lever the aforesaid evils, resulting from its malfunctioning, can be cured or obviated and the latter highly precious attributes cultivated at will

This is a new and original contribution to the knowledge of man, I believe.

To the best of my belief no other philosopher or mystic in the past has given the same interpretation to mystical experience and put a cut-and-dried formula before human kind. I am not put-

ting forward an intellectual dissertation based on mere erudition and logic, I am submitting a concrete proposal based on personal study of the phenomenon for experiment, to validate the conclusions drawn by me, which are of colossal importance for the race.

If this is the case, and I have no reason to doubt what you say, why haven't these disclosures been greeted with acclaim?

The reason is because the ideas expressed by me are new and original, which therefore need time to take root in the common mind, and, secondly, because they strongly militate against some of the current conceptions or misconceptions of both orthodox science and religion. How can the erudite, on either side, readily swallow the utterances of one who proclaims loud that matter is a mirage, Darwin was wrong, Freud mistaken, consciousness is All; that humanity is on her way to this awareness in the beatific state, that the great illuminate were not and could not be the favorites of the Almighty and that mystical experience does not represent an encounter with God but only a vision of the divinity in man?

Then what is needed, urgently, as far as I can see, is something like a New Manhattan Project to try to scientifically validate your theory.

It is only by a deep study of my thesis that it can dawn on an unbiased intellect that there can be no other interpretation which can synthesize the diversity of religious experience and outlook, serve as a connecting link between religion and science and bring science back from a lopsided, entirely materialistic view of the universe, towards a more rational and more comprehensive philosophy of Creation. This philosophy is one in which matter and mind figure as the two

aspects of one incomprehensible Reality dimly perceptible in another dimension of consciousness of which religion is the still growing child.

It must be extremely frustrating to you to spend year after year, writing your views down in books, only to see decades pass without any signs of recognition on the part of the scientific community?

I have been watching the whole drama of my life without a tinge of regret for the coldness I have received for the knowledge given out by me while living virtually in the jaws of death. I am a frail human being myself, and I know the frailties of my other fellow human beings. Had the secrets disclosed by me come from the lips of a distinguished personality in science, the discovery would have resounded throughout the world. Or were a leading personality, like the President of the United States, to affirm publicly the importance of the disclosure, all the newspapers of the earth would open their columns to the message and the learned fall over each other in expressing their high appreciation of it. It was only through the conversion of Asoka the Great in India, and Emperor Constantine in Rome, that Buddhism and Christianity became dominant faiths in the East or West.

Apparently the support of temporal authority was always needed to push forward a spiritual creed.

That is entirely correct. Left at the mercy of the populace, including the learned, without the enthusiastic support of ardent protagonists, no new idea or line of thought, diametrically opposite to prevailing conceptions, can find wide acceptance. At best, it would only serve as a topic for perfunctory discussion here and there. Even the

media, which are supposed to keep track of all new developments, would give a wide berth to it for its uncommon nature and touch it only if it is mentioned by one in authority, not because they have become enamored of it but because it suits their purpose to give publicity to the utterances of a great personage.

Such is the opacity of the human intellect when face-to-face with a new revelation, showing the way out of a confusing labyrinth of thought. Ours is not a message that can be thoroughly grasped or made universal in the course of a few years, but it must roll across long spans of time to gather the momentum necessary for it to become a universally recognized philosophy and science.

What if you had your wish, what would it be?

With all my heart, I wish that in the exploration of consciousness mystical tradition—not the methods of traditional psychology—were to be followed to bring a correct awareness of its evolution to the world. Intellectual dissertations, beyond a certain limit, would only lead to confusion and chaos in a province where first-hand experience is necessary to know the truth. Like the exploration of the sky, intellectual exercise can carry us only a short distance. After that, the use of the telescope becomes absolutely necessary for correct knowledge of the position. In the same way, for the study of the inner firmament, a dive into the depths of one's being is essential to know the reality.

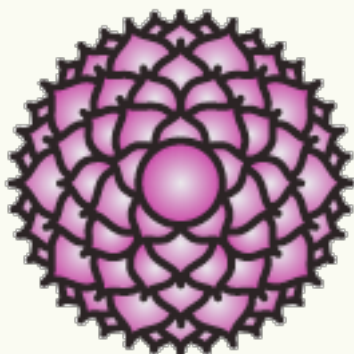
The inexpressible?

Music and poetry provide a better language for expressing the profundities of consciousness than logic. This is the reason why prayers are

Perhaps science will be forced to take up the research project just as it was forced to experiment on the atom bomb some 40 years ago, when the threat of its falling into the hands of an enemy was urgent.



Time will prove the correctness of our stand. I am not the last of the line that has already appeared to beseech their contemporaries to look within. Others will rise to repeat what has already been said and win confirmation for the disclosures made, if lacking still.



sung. The state of mind produced under the spell of a beautifully sung prayer is more expressive of the indefinable world of consciousness than volumes of reasoned prose. The problem is that it is hard to make an intellectual accept the position that his territory ends at the very beginning of the mystical trance.

It is characteristic of the intellect that she is seldom prepared to accept defeat and is often over-confident of her ability to know all that can be known. It is only when face-to-face with the unbelievable splendor of the Mystical Vision that, hushed into silence at the awesome majesty of the Reality unfolded, the tittle-tattle of this irrepressible gossip, that always talks of this sublime experience from a distance, comes to an end and her propensity, in the words of Pascal, of putting two and two together and make it five, is lost.

Perhaps science will be forced to take up the research project just as it was forced to experiment on the atom bomb some 40 years ago, when the threat of its falling into the hands of an enemy was urgent.

Time will prove the correctness of our stand. I am not the last of the line that has already appeared to beseech their contemporaries to look within. Others will rise to repeat what has already been said and win confirmation for the disclosures made, if lacking still. No power on earth can prevent truth from spreading when time for it has come, just as no power can stop the sun from bathing the earth in light when the night is over.

The verdict on what I have revealed does not rest in the hands of a few scholars in a particular country, living now or who may rise in the future. The secret we have disclosed, not by choice but at the decree of fate, is not limited by time and place but covers the whole earth and is of everlasting value for the race.

It doesn't disturb you, then, that still more time is needed for a better grasp of your message?

Not at all. I know what I am up against in the claim I make and the truth I reveal. The day will come when those whose intuition was right in accepting this disclosure are vindicated.

The End



HOW DEEPEST TANTRA SAVES THE WORLD: PT I

By Dr. Stuart Sovatsky

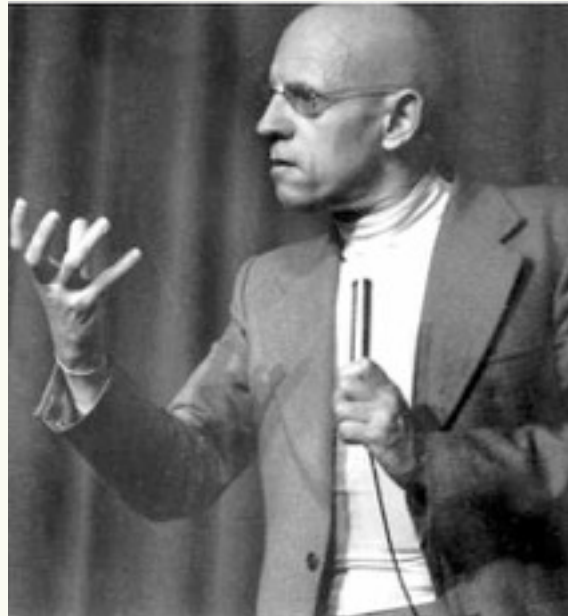
EDITOR'S NOTE:

In this and the next two issues of Sutra Journal, Dr. Stuart Sovatsky discusses the nature and the impact of the Scientia Sexualis, the sex-desire-centric 'liberated sexuality' based in Freudian theories and supported by modern birth control methods, which has also appropriated Indic Ars Eroticas of Kundalini-Tantra and Hatha Yoga in Scientia modes of 'neo-tantra' and 'neo-yoga'.

The nature and power of Ars Erotica itself is rooted in a lifelong 'perineum-to-pineal' spinal puberty of 'profound pleasures', tied to a sacred inner development, as seen in the 'liberations' noted in the Dharma traditions of Indian Kundalini-Tantra and in charismatic 'being moved' spiritual traditions.

These two terms were coined by Michel Foucault in his Vol.1, The History of Sexuality as will be further discussed on Dr Sovatsky's article.

PART 1: CREATING JOYFUL FAMILIES AND GRACE-BESTOWING SAINTS IN THE GRAND UNFOLDING YOGAVERSE



Dedicated to Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

REVERBERATIONS IN THE BODY AND THE SOUL...THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

“[There are]...the societies--and they are numerous: China, Japan, India, Rome, the Arabo-Moslem societies—which endowed themselves with an *ars erotica* [in contrast to *scientia sexualis*, as Foucault called both The Church’s moral-confessional approach to right and wrong ‘erotic truth’ and modern sexological research ‘truths’, sexual liberation encouragement-truths and practices, all based in psychoanalytic theory and its many offshoots]....

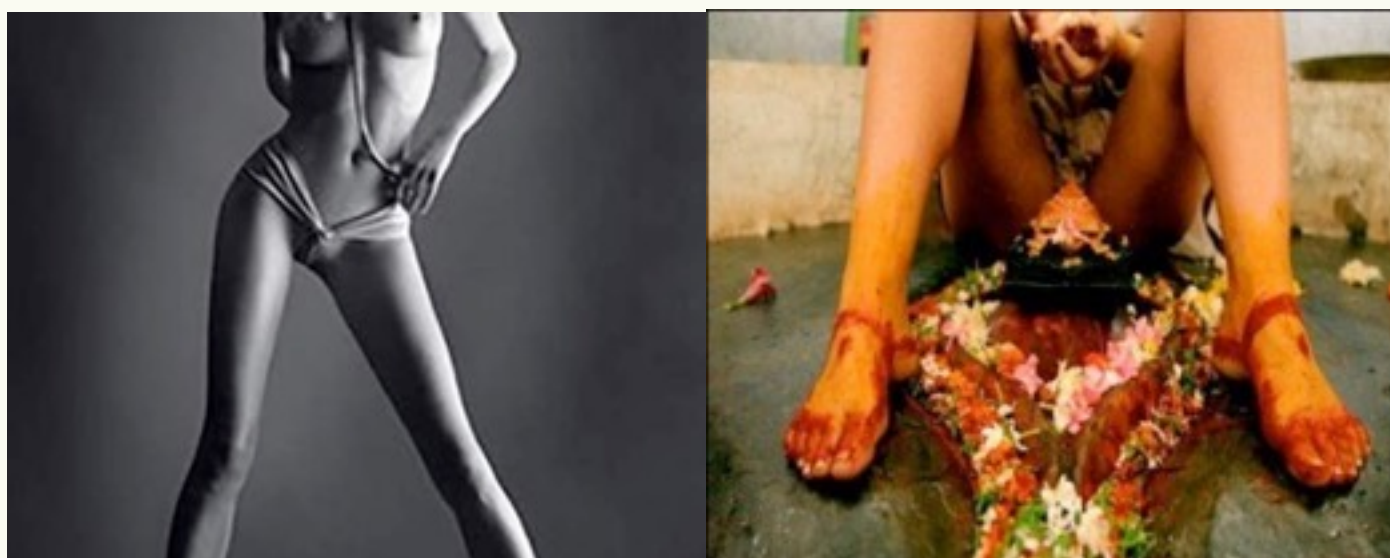
In the [secret] erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience; pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself, it is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul.

Moreover, this knowledge must be deflected back into the sexual practice itself, in order to shape it as though from within and amplify its effects. In this way, there is formed a knowledge that must remain secret, not because of an element of infamy that might attach to its object, but because of the need to hold it in the greatest reserve, since according to the tradition, it would lose its effectiveness and its virtue by being divulged. [Though unknown to Foucault, 'secret' or esoteric energetic 'initiation-knowledge', such as via shaktipat, Kundalini, Holy Ghost, baraka and other charismatic bodily awakenings, should be included here.]

.... The effects of this masterful art, which are considerably more generous than the spareness of its prescriptions would lead one to imagine, are said to transfigure the one fortunate enough to receive its privileges: an absolute mastery of the body, a singular bliss, obliviousness to time and limits, the elixir of life [my emphasis] the exile of death and its threats."

(Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, V. 1. pp. 57-58)

FROM SCIENTIA SEXUALIS TO THE ARS EROTICAS OF KUNDALINI AND PARIYANGA TANTRAS



Scientia sexualis

Ars erotica (Julianne Reynolds)

1. SCIENTIA SEXUALIS

On the left is a scientia sexualis image meant to activate what the sexually-adventurous and preeminent social historian, Michel Foucault called its "most imaginary element, the desire for sex." From this alluring and singularly-attuned center, a world of sexuality represents itself to us in hundreds of

millions of images, numerous psychosexual theories and myriad consequent personal interactions and hopes, as if sex-desire is anything but an imaginary construct, as if this desire, shaped by Freud, Reich and all who followed, is, in all actuality, the final and unquestionable truth and 'liberation' of Eros. Indeed, the expansion of Eros into 'spiritual realms' by Carl Jung resulted in his expulsion from the Freudian circle while Freud, in his understandably naïve times, mischaracterized yoga as a suppression of 'the instincts' that only sex can satisfy.

Even including Liberal critiques from Feminism (objectification), Marcuse (commodification) and Lasch (narcissism), the pull of desire draws nearly everyone back into its scientia sexualis precincts. Such images and their arousing desires still capture the one and only ideal aesthetic of erotic life, desired pleasures and erotic exchange or self-stimulations. And, in looking at the exquisite, air-brushed image, even for just a few moments, is there any doubt why it is so powerful?

Thus, gay, straight, teenager, elder, weighty-bodied—all are drawn to their own iconic images within this now-ubiquitous theory of gender, pleasures and bodies that presents itself as a timeless, universal fact of human nature, rather than as a provisional theory devised within the conditions of a specific 'modern' cultural-historical context.

While psychoanalysis made sex-desire into a first-ever 'scientific discovery' of the fundamental

meaning of human existence hidden everywhere, effective and easily available contraceptives and safe, legal abortion technologies (and widespread, "Use protection!" Teen Sex Education) fostered its practical expansion far beyond the intrusive power of fertility and unintended conceptions, to the greatest degree in all human history. Indeed, the far-seeing anthropologist, Ashley Montagu ranked the evolutionary impact of legalization of The Pill in 1960 with the primeval discovery of fire.

This sequestering of the Foucauldian 'elixirs of life seed-creativities' in order to free sex-desire from unwanted fertility also thoroughly screened out the fundamental consciousness-seed connection ubiquitously present for seven millennia in Indic ars erotica (yoga, Buddhism, advaita and tantra) as they began, unavoidably piecemeal, to enter the West since The Sixties' peak era of the scientia sexualis's 'Final Truth Sexual Liberation' influences. Indeed, many mature, ars erotica visiting gurus were swept into the currents of scientia sexualis culture or their ars erotica teachings were misconstrued within the scientia spell.



Further, powerful, synthetic entheogens of the times (lsd, mescaline, psilocybin) could bypass in a 'mad', Kerouac-flash any yogic-scriptural claims for the long-developing role of yogic or Buddhist seed forces in spiritual development, or so it seemed to scientia spell-bound spiritual seekers, whether regarding 'tantric sex', yoga or in meditative enlightenment.

Sounding like an lsd cosmic orgasm of consciousness, Gopi Krishna's 1971 description of the surges of Kundalini awakening captured the attention of clinically-minded Transpersonalists, such as my predecessor at the Kundalini Spiritual Emergence Center, Lee Sannella, M.D. (author of the meme-setting book, Kundalini: Transcendence or Psychosis?)

"Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord. . . . The illumination grew brighter and brighter, the roaring louder, I experienced a rocking sensation and then felt myself slipping out of my body, entirely enveloped in a halo of light. . . . It grew wider and wider, spreading outward while the body, normally the immediate object of its perception, appeared to have receded into the distance until I became entirely unconscious of it. I was now all consciousness without any outline, without any idea of corporeal appendage, without any feeling or sensation coming from the senses, immersed in a sea of light simultaneously conscious and aware at every point, spread out, as it were, in all directions without any barrier or material obstruc-



tion. I was no longer myself, or to be more accurate, no longer as I knew myself to be... but instead was a vast circle of consciousness in which the body was but a point, bathed in light and in a state of exultation and happiness impossible to describe.”

Krishna, Kundalini: Path to Higher Consciousness (New Delhi: Orient Paperback, 1992, pp. 6-7)

In complete congruence with those frothy scientia sexualis times, Krishna’s emphatic inclusion of the role of the seed-forces in Kundalini processes would be ignored. Instead of being understood as a spiritual blessing in the flesh, similar to the birth of a baby, Kundalini, the Mother of Creation for thousands of years, was now a kind of light-show of odd-sensation distractions in the awakening process, as troubled persons and under-informed clinicians made use of the term to try to make sense of a wide range of unrelated ‘symptoms’.

Yet, we shouldn’t be surprised. The East-West exchange is just beginning. Indeed, little more than five percent of the Indo-Tibetan archive is translated, and almost entirely from the perspective of the scientia sexualis.

Yet, as early as 1932 and without much of an alternative in mind, Huxley wondered if the scientia sexualis liberation might be a darkly fraught, “brave new world” of pleasure that masked a quiet narrowing of human possibilities for life and intimacy. Likewise, Marcuse saw the scientia sexualis as a “repressive de-sublimation” of eros embedded in an unsustainably rapacious capitalism. His 1955 proffered but vague response in *Eros and Civilization*, too, was a “spiritualization of the [elixir] instincts.”

Echoing both writers in 1976 (French original date) and armed with only rudimentary knowledge of the ars erotica, Foucault closed his critique of the scientia sexualis with this prediction:

"...in a different economy of bodies and pleasures, people will no longer quite understand how the ruses of [scientia] sexuality, and the power that sustains its organization, were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex, so that we became dedicated to the endless task of forcing its secret, of exacting the truest confessions from its shadow...having us believe that our 'liberation' is in the balance."

(The History of Sexuality, v. 1, p. 159)

In his reversed characterization of our modern era of "sexual liberation" as the "austere monarchy of sex," Foucault (who later contracted and died of HIV) goads us toward somewhere else, outside this ironic, compelled "austerity." And, if modern sexuality is an "austerity," a "brave new world" of sexually free, but deeply limited human bonding, compared to the ars erotica, what must the latter be like?

What must the ars erotica include that it renders 'sexuality' an overworked, nearly barren sector of some greater realm of Eros? Succinctly, it includes a profound link of the activated Mother Kundalini

Seed force (but not the de-seeded, medico-scientia sexualis bowdlerized version of 'Kundalini' of the transpersonal spiritual emergence discourse, au courant) with the deepest creativities of the Body and Consciousness.

As a first step toward the ars erotica, hipper sectors of the scientia sexualis now speak of "the spirituality of sacred sex" and even the prolonged, nonejaculatory and passionate "...fucking one's partner to God" of David Deida that borrows from Osho, Margot Anand and the men's movement, who, along with Adi Da, countered Reich's centralized "function of the orgasm" with an endless karezza eroticism.

Thus, too, Pulitzer-winner, William Broad chose "thinking-off" (touchless fantasy masturbation) as his (half-a-step backwards) hint-of-a-step toward the 'deeper' aspects of yoga and tantra in his New York Times front-page featured scientia yoga book, *The Science of Yoga* (2012).

For, in the shift from monarchical scientia sexualis ubiquity to ars erotica transpersonal (consciousness-enhancing) ubiquity, all that goes on in this 'thinking' and its radically different 'off' must be re-considered:

- the re-centering with ‘the pleasures of profundity’ where ‘sex-desire pleasures’ once reigned
- where, and in what moods, might partners focus their attentions upon genitals, mouths, anuses, feet, tongues, breasts, heart
- ‘happy-ending’, simply disposable ‘cum’ and vaginal ‘lubrication’ become the hermetically-prized alchemical male and female elixirs of life itself: entheogenic retas, ojas, auras, madhu, amrita, soma-rasa; the hormonal basis of unbreakable love and matured enlightenment
- the new (perhaps only in Sanskrit) vocabulary used to re-name the then-occurring sensations (e.g., Shakti chalani, brahmacharya urdhvaretas, khecari mudra pariyanga, ‘moving the divine feminine’, ‘uplifted inner marriage seed-juices’, and ‘lingual-pineal delight gesture love-making’, respectively)
- indeed, the spine, forehead, throat and pineal will also become primary realms of erotic rapport and arousal, not as scientia arousals of desire, but within the ars erotica’s ‘new economy of bodies and pleasures’.

Likewise, past-president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex and a chief architect of the scientia sexualis for forty years, Marty Klein also writes in *Sexual Intelligence* (HarperOne, 2012) that the narratives, theories and stories we create about ‘sex’ are more powerful than ‘sex’ itself in determining how ‘sexuality’ unfolds in people’s lives—not the mere freeing-up of an obvious desire.

From loftier heights, Wittgenstein noted how theories create self-enclosed “forms of life, language-behavior games”, Heidegger lyricized how language “conceals, as it reveals” and Kuhn’s paradigm analysis showed how dominant theories, such as the mega-dominant, scientia sexualis ignore and even squelch any contradictory information.

For, should modern yoga and tantra of the current eighteen million enthusiasts be re-understood as seed-elixir infused ars erotica, a massive truing and disorienting paradigm shift in all East-West spirituality will be triggered.

Further, the tantric ars erotica embodies gender in the universal, hermaphroditic mystery of the perineum trikona (hermaphroditic “triangle”) where the catalytic powers that contain every sort of male or female heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, devotee/demigod/demi-goddess, femme, dyke, she-male, et al possibility, as ars erotica entheogenic power spots. The ground under scientia sexualis theories of gender will also shake.

Below are two images of the perineal trikona, in utero and in the matured, inner-marriage yogi and a third image of the yogi in his/her full body ardha-nari (all-gendered, cosmic union) matured state:



Left: The vagina-penis androgynous perineum of all humans in utero during early gestation that forms the basis of the heel to androgynous perineum

Right: Siddha Asana (Cosmic Power Asana) that awakens Kundalini at the base of the spine, as seen in ancient Pashupati Seal.



Shiva icon as commingled male/female union or yoga, from head to toe



Dr. Stuart Sovatsky (AB, Ethics/Psychology, Princeton University; PhD, CIIS) co-directed Ram Dass's "prison ashram", and in 1977 he was selected for Princeton University's Outstanding Alumni Careers Panel for his groundbreaking work of bringing meditation to the homeless in the US. Stuart is Co-president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology since 1999 - the premiere professional organization for spiritually-oriented psychologists in the US, is a board trustee for the California Institute of Integral Studies for 20 years and a recipient of its Most Outstanding Alumni Award 1978-2008. In 2006-08, he was initiating

co-convenor of the forty country World Congress on Psychology and Spirituality in Delhi, India. Author of critically acclaimed books like *Eros Consciousness and Kundalini*, *Words From the Soul*, and numerous articles on love, ideal marriages and families, spirituality of infancy and Buddhist dissolution of suicidal thoughts. A serious scholar-practitioner of tantra yoga with numerous academic publications and university presentations throughout the US, India and Europe, he now leads couples retreats and trains therapists in the US and in Russia, is a faculty member at Moscow Psychoanalytic Institute and is the director of two psychotherapy clinics in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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Khajuraho

SACRED ROOTS: INDIA'S DIVINE MUSIC

By Naren K. Schreiner

Thousands of years ago, beyond the scope of scholarly research, the rishis (seers) of ancient India created a society and culture wherein religion, art and science thrived in harmony, without any competition or need of comparison. Music was known to be a divine art interwoven with the sciences of sound, psychology and mathematics. It was partially intended for pleasure and entertainment, but primarily intended to assist in man's quest for Self-realization.

Music was known to be an expression of the original sound, Naad Brahma, scripturally referred to as the Word, Cosmic Vibration, or Aum. The rishis discovered the effect of physical sound on the body, emotions and consciousness. They deciphered various melodies and rhythms that could re-create the effects of the seasons and times of day on man. Ragas were created to paint a sonic picture or rouse a certain emotion (rasa) or state of being (bhava) such as tranquility, love, happiness, courage.

The human voice was recognized to be the original and perfect instrument of sound. When the need for verbal communication arrived and language was created, words merged with vocal sound; lyrical song was born and became a powerful form of expression. The word for musician became bhagava-

tar, one who sings the praises of the Supreme. In time, instruments were developed in order to accompany or mimic the myriad expressions of vocal music.



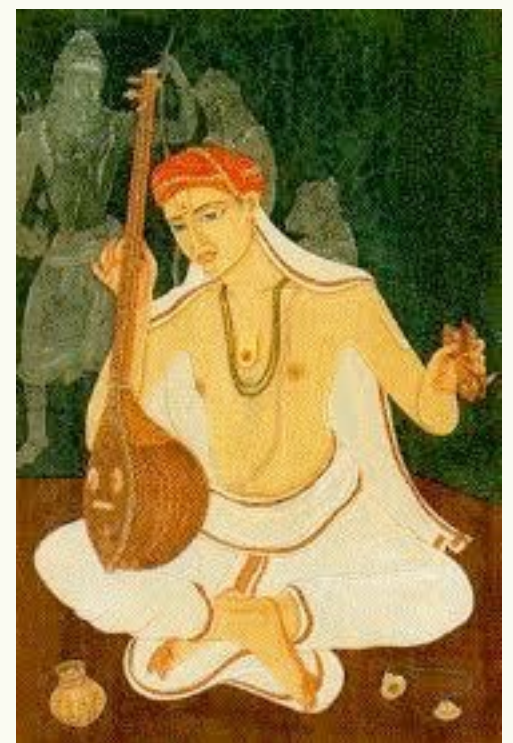
These distant and lofty origins need not intimidate the modern listener. As the late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote, “Indian music is essentially impersonal, reflecting an emotion and an experience which are deeper and wider and older than the emotion or wisdom of any single individual. Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exultation and it is passionate without any loss of serenity.”

Over the millennia, various mystics, seers, musicians and scientists have developed and expanded India’s music. Foreign rulers and the changes of civilization have made a tremendous impact. But India’s music has remained, in essence, unchanged. It is still unwritten, spontaneous and individualistic, concentrating on the variations of a raga melody rather than symphonic harmony. Its subtle hues are still made possible by an octave of twenty-two notes (shruti) rather than twelve notes of the Western scale, and by dozens of com-

plex rhythmic cycles (tala). It still balances improvisation with structure—the musicians must invent new expressions within a rigid framework.

As you listen to Indian music, realize that you are linked to an ancient coalition of science, art and spirituality. Seek to perceive the essence of the raga as it awakens within you some profound response. Feel the underlying rhythm that unites the pulse and breath of your body with the sway of Nature. Realize that a harmonizing flood of sound is pouring over your being—the calming tanpura drone, the raga of voice and instrument, the energizing tala of drums.

Listen not only with your ear but also with your heart, mind and soul. This music is a bridge from modern life to ancient India, connecting the present time with the timeless. Allow your soul to reach for the yogic state wherein the listener, the music and the musician become one. Experience music as you never have before.



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ṢAḌ DARŚANAS - SIX VIEWS ON REALITY

By Dr. Jeffery D. Long

For many centuries, Indian thinkers have spoken of the ṣaḍ darśana, or “six views” on reality. This article will explore the concept of darśana, the question of precisely which views are intended when the term ṣaḍ darśana is used, and the six views that have come to be accepted as belonging to this group of perspectives.

WHAT IS DARŚANA?

Many have spoken in recent years of the untranslatability of certain Sanskrit terms in any simple, one-to-one fashion. The rendering of particular Sanskrit words into English, such as dharma into religion, or śāstra into scripture, inevitably involves a major distortion of what these words mean in their origi-

nal contexts: a loss of much of the original meaning, as well as an addition of connotations never intended. The word darśana is no exception.

Darśana (or darśan in modern Indian languages such as Hindi) is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root *drś*, or “see.” Darśanam literally means seeing. Building on this foundation, darśana has come to hold two very specific meanings in Hindu traditions. A very well known meaning of darśana is the act of seeing and being seen by a deity in the context of worship, usually in a temple. The deity is present in a *mūrti*, or image, which a devotee beholds. A spiritual communion thus occurs between the devotee and the deity, through the medium of sight. And such darśana is not limited to the use of *mūrtis*. It is also possible to have darśana of a living human teacher, such as one’s guru.

The other meaning of darśana, more relevant to our discussion here, is a specific system of ideas used to perceive reality: that is, a perspective or world-view.

It has become a common practice to translate darśana, in reference to this second concept, as philosophy. Here, though, is a case where we see the problem of distortion if we fail to attend to unwanted nuances that this translation brings into the conversation. To the degree that philoso-

phy has come to refer, in most modern universities, to a purely academic activity of a highly technical nature, with little or no reference to lived human experience, this term is an inadequate translation of darśana, which is always understood to occur within the context of a way of life, usually (though not always) one aimed at the goal of *mokṣa*, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth, the highest of the *puruṣārthas*, the aims of human existence.

It might therefore be tempting to translate darśana as theology; for theology has come to refer increasingly to any reflection on the basic questions of life that occurs self-consciously from within the context of a lived tradition of practice, which is a pretty good account of darśana. However, due to its long association with the Christian tradition, as well as to its original Greek meaning, which refers to reflection specifically on the nature of divinity, many hold a deep aversion to applying this term to any activity in the Hindu tradition.

In this article, therefore, I shall utilize the common practice of translating darśana as philosophy, with the proviso that the reference here is not to the denaturalized activity of many contemporary philosophers—particularly Anglophone philosophers, Continental philosophy being far more self-conscious about its location within a reflective tradition—but to *philosophia* as this was conceived by the ancient Greeks: as not only an abstract set of cogitations, but as reflection occurring within the context of a way of life aimed at the realization of the ultimate good. This is a



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very appropriate translation, which really does capture the sensibility surrounding the traditional activity of darśana.

WHAT ARE THE ṢAḌ DARŚANAS?

For many centuries, Indian thinkers who have written about the practice of darśana have referred to ṣaḍ darśana, or six systems of philosophy. However, many more systems of philosophy have developed in India than this. To speak, therefore, of the six systems of Indian philosophy does a major disservice to the Indian philosophical tradition. There are dozens of systems of Indian philosophy.

Many scholars who have written of six darśanas have used this number, it seems, as a convenient way to limit the purview of discussion to what they regarded, in their particular times and places, as the major systems of thought then seen as making serious claims about the nature of reality: claims which any thinker worthy of the name needed to consider and reflect upon (even if ultimately rejecting one or more of them).

Probably the earliest Indian thinker to write about six darśanas was the Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher, Bhāvaviveka, who lived in the 5th century CE. In addition to his own Madhyamaka system (established by Nāgārjuna), Bhāvaviveka engages with earlier Buddhist thought (which he labels as Śrāvakayāna or Hīnayāna), Yogācāra (a Mahāyāna Buddhist school that developed after Madhyamaka), Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, and Mīmāṃsā. An early 6th century Tamil Buddhist text lists the six darśanas as Lokāyata, Bauddha (Buddhist), Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā. The 8th century Jaina (Jain) thinker Haribhadra lists them as Bauddha, Nyāya, Sāṃkhya, Jaina, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā (Pahlajrai, 3).

Again, the basis for classifying a darśana as one of the six systems in these works seems simply to be the fact that it is well known to the author. But at least as early as the 10th century Advaita Vedānta thinker Vācaspatimiśra, another way of conceiving of the six darśanas had emerged. This system of organization had become commonplace by the nineteenth century, and is presupposed, for example, by Swami Vivekananda (Complete Works, Volume 3, 397-398).

According to this system, although there are certainly many more than six schools of Indian philosophy, six of these schools are regarded as āstika, a word often translated as orthodox. The precise meaning of the word āstika, too, has shifted over time. Today, it most often refers to belief in Īśvara, the Supreme Being, with a nāstika—the opposite of āstika—being an atheist. For the Jain thinker Haribhadra, though, āstika referred to belief in the principle of karma, the cycle of rebirth, and the possibility of liberation. In regard to the categorization of the ṣaḍ darśanas that has become standard today, however, āstika means affirming the authority of the Vedas. And because affirmation of Vedic authority is seen as definitive of Hindu identity, the six āstika systems of philosophy refer to what are now seen as the Hindu systems of philosophy.

The ṣaḍ darśanas, according to this categorization, are Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā (Pūrva Mīmāṃsā), and Vedānta (Uttara Mīmāṃsā).

Left out of this categorization are the systems of philosophy that do not affirm the authority of the Vedas, such as the various Buddhist systems, Jainism, and Lokāyata. Although Buddhism and Jainism affirm the principle of karma, the cycle of rebirth, and the pursuit of mokṣa (and are therefore, from Haribhadra's perspective, āstika), they reject Vedic authority, while the Lokāyata system, a form of an-



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cient Indian materialism, rejects both Vedic authority and the cosmology of karma, rebirth, and liberation, as well as the existence of Īśvara.

EXPLORING THE ṢAḌ DARŚANAS: MANY VIEWS, ONE VISION

The six systems of Hindu philosophy can be further categorized into a set of three pairs, based on shared assumptions and affinities. These pairings are: Sāṃkhya with Yoga, Nyāya with Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā with Vedānta. Sāṃkhya and Yoga share a common worldview (with one exception, which we shall discuss below) and terminology. Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika share so much in common that they eventually fused into a single system, known as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta share the fact that both are focused on the interpretation of the Vedas. Mīmāṃsā, however, focuses upon the

earlier karma kanda, the action portion of the Vedas that is concerned primarily with ritual. Vedānta is focused on the later jñāna kanda, or knowledge portion of the Vedas: the Upaniṣads. In the cases of Sāṃkhya and Yoga and of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, the first member of each pair can also be seen as having a relationship with the second of theory to practice. That is, there is a sense in which Yoga is applied Sāṃkhya, and Vaiśeṣika applied Nyāya.

These systems of philosophy seem originally to have been independent schools of thought, even at times engaging one another polemically, their adherents disagreeing with and critiquing one another's ideas and approaches. Again, though, beginning at least as early as Vācaspati miśra, thinkers over the course of the last millennium have come to see these systems as complemen-

tary, and as reflecting different, but not wholly incompatible, approaches to different dimensions of a shared reality. This is in keeping with Hinduism as an internally pluralistic system that allows for diverse approaches and interpretations of reality for persons with different bents of mind, akin to the four Yogas as presented by Swami Vivekananda.

Sāṃkhya is a very ancient system of thought, traced to the sage Kāpila (for whom the city of the Buddha's upbringing, Kāpilavastu, was named). Sāṃkhya is dualistic. It affirms, in other words, that there are two fundamental types of thing making up reality. These are puruṣa, or spirit, and prakṛti, meaning nature or materiality. There are as many puruṣas as there are living beings. They are numerically many. Their nature, however, is one; and this nature is pure consciousness. The puruṣas passively observe the operations of active prakṛti, or material nature. Prakṛti is in constant motion, and oscillates through three modes of being, or guṇas. These guṇas, or qualities, are known as sattva, rajas, and tamas. Rajas is the active quality. It could be translated as dynamism. Tamas is inertia. Sattva is a peaceful state of equilibrium between these two. From a spiritual perspective, to be tamasic is the worst state to cultivate, in which one makes no progress, nor has any interest in doing so. A tamasic person—one in whom this quality is predominant—could be called a spiritual “couch potato.” The predominance of rajas causes one to be very active in the world: a better state than tamas, but nonetheless one in need of transcendence. The best of the guṇas is sattva, a calm but alert state in which one can view reality with

more objectivity than the desire-driven states of rajas and tamas. Even sattva, though, is to be transcended; for the ultimate goal of Sāṃkhya philosophy is the liberation of the puruṣa, which has become so transfixed with the activities of prakṛti that it has falsely identified itself with them. The most obvious example of this identification is our identification with the physical body, which is itself a bundle of prakṛti.

The reader may note that no reference has been made in this account of Sāṃkhya to Īśvara, the Supreme Being. This is because this system, at least in the preponderance of its texts, is non-theistic. In this respect, Sāṃkhya is quite similar to Jainism, which is also a form of dualism that sees the universe as consisting of countless centers of life and consciousness (called, in Jainism, jīvas rather than puruṣas) that are striving for freedom from bondage to materiality (known as ajīva, the Jain equivalent of prakṛti). As Andrew Nicholson has noted, not all Sāṃkhya authors deny the existence of Īśvara (Nicholson 2010). But an understanding of Sāṃkhya as non-theistic has been the predominant view of most scholarly commentators on this tradition.

SĀṢKHYA AND YOGA

Affirmation (or not) of the existence of Īśvara is the primary difference between Sāṃkhya and the Yoga darśana with which it is traditionally paired. Yoga does affirm the existence of Īśvara, which it defines as a puruṣa that has never been bound to prakṛti. Īśvara is an ever free being; and contemplation of Īśvara (Īśvarapraṇidhāna) is one of



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the practices that the Yoga system commends for the attainment of liberation.

Yoga, as mentioned earlier, could be seen as a practice built upon the Sāṃkhya theory of the nature of reality. The Yoga darśana accepts the Sāṃkhya worldview, but adds to this worldview an eight-step or eight-limbed (aṣṭāṅga) system of practice for the purpose of liberating puruṣa from prakṛti.

These eight steps, as enumerated by the sage Patañjali in his Yoga Sūtra, the root text of this system, are yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇayama, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi. Yama and Niyama are ethical restraints which one must master before one even begins the process of meditation. The yamas are nonviolence (ahiṃsā), telling the truth (satya), not stealing (asteya), self-control in all areas of life, especially in the area of sexuality (brahmacarya), and detachment (aparigraha). The niyamas are purity (śauca), contentment (santoṣa), asceticism

(tapas), study, including self-study (svādhyāya), and the aforementioned contemplation of Īśvara (īśvarapraṇidhāna). Āsana is the posture in which one practices meditation. Interestingly, given the complex system of āsanās that are developed in the related system of Haṭha Yoga (and expanded upon in modern yoga practice), Patañjali tells us that the only absolute requirements for posture are that one be in a clean and comfortable place and that one keep one's back straight (to aid breathing). Prāṇayama is control of the breath. Pratyāhāra is control of one's response to external stimuli. One is gradually withdrawing one's attention and identification from prakṛti and directing it inwardly, toward the puruṣa, which is one's real identity. Dhāraṇā consists of concentration on a single object, which is a preparation for Dhyāna, or meditation. The culmination of Dhyāna, is Samādhi, or complete absorption in the object of meditation: the puruṣa. Samādhi itself has two modes: savikalpa samādhi, where there is a residual awareness of the distinction between subject and object, and

nirvikalpa samādhi, where this distinction has gone completely. The practitioner is now fully one with the puruṣa.

NYĀYA AND VAIŚEṢIKA

Turning now to the next pair of darśanas, Nyāya is a system of logic and a theory of knowledge (what philosophers call epistemology), and Vaiśeṣika is a realist account of the nature of the universe revealed to our common experience. Developed by the sage Gautama (not to be confused with the sage Siddhārtha Gautama, the Buddha), Nyāya is focused primarily upon establishing a firm foundation for knowledge. How do we know what we know? How do we support the truth claims that we make? In Indian philosophy a basis for making a knowledge claim is called a pramāṇa. The various darśanas accept different sets of pramāṇas, and the pramāṇas that a system of philosophy accepts is one basis for distinguishing one system from one another. One principle of Indian philosophy accepted by all schools is that, when one is debating with an adherent of another darśana, one should only use pramāṇas that the other accepts. If, for example, one is an adherent of a Vedic system debating with a Buddhist or a Jain, citing the authority of the Vedas as the basis for one's claims will carry no weight with one's interlocutors. In order to be persuasive, one would need to cite sensory experience or inferential logic—both of which Buddhists and Jains accept—in one's argument. Nyāya accepts four pramāṇas: sensory perception (pratyakṣa), inferential logic (anumāna), comparison (upamāna), and “word” (śabda), which is the speech of an authoritative person or text (such as the Vedas).

Vaiśeṣika is a system of cosmology. It describes the types of entity that make up the world revealed in common experience. The types or category (padārtha) of entity are six in number: substance (dravya), quality (guṇa—bearing a somewhat different meaning than this term carries in Sāṃkhya and Yoga), activity (karma), universality or generality (sāmānya), particularity (viśeṣa), and inherence, or the relation between a quality and a substance (samavāya). Some Vaiśeṣikas add to these six a seventh category of absence, or non-being (abhāva).

One can already begin to perceive how these various systems, each with its own emphasis and terminology, could be seen either as distinct systems, with potential areas of contradiction and conflict, or as different approaches to a common reality. Again, it is the latter view which eventually held sway among a wide array of Indian philosophers, mostly adherents of the Vedānta tradition, which gradually “absorbed” these systems into itself.



MĪMĀṂSĀ AND VEDĀNTA

The final two views, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, are sometimes referred to as Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Uttara Mīmāṃsā—or as “earlier interpretation” and “later interpretation,” respectively. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, as mentioned above, is focused on the interpretation of the earlier portion of the Vedas, which is concerned with ritual action. Uttara Mīmāṃsā, or Vedānta, is focused on the interpretation of the later portion of the Vedas, also known as the Upaniṣads, which is concerned with knowing Brahman, or the Supreme Reality. The name Vedānta itself refers both to the fact that the Upaniṣads are literally the “end of the Veda” and that the knowledge of Brahman is the ultimate goal or “end” of Vaidika or Vedic thought and practice.

Although they do not deny the possibility of mokṣa, the adherents of Mīmāṃsā were not traditionally concerned with this puruṣārtha so much as with the attainment of more worldly (laukika) ends through the correct performance of Vedic ritual, or yajña. Some of the greatest philosophical achievements of these Mīmāṃsikas were in the area of linguistics, given the importance of the correct usage of Sanskrit in Vedic practice. In addition to language, with regard to ritual itself, the entire structure—what one might call the “grammar”—of Hindu ritual is based upon Mīmāṃsā principles.

Vedānta, probably the best known of the darśanas, itself consists of many diverse schools of thought, each with its own conception of the relationship of Brahman both to the self and to the world. There is Advaita Vedānta, whose best-known exponent is the teacher Śaṅkara, which affirms the non-duality of Brahman and the world. Sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ Brahman: all this, indeed, is Brahman, in the words of the Upaniṣads. There is Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, developed by Rāmāṇuja, which affirms the identity of



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Brahman with all of existence, but does not see the distinctions between self, world, and Īśvara as a mere appearance, or *māyā*, but as reflecting real difference within Brahman. Then there is Dvaita Vedānta, established by Madhva, which affirms a distinction among Īśvara, the living beings (or *jīvas*—the same term we saw previously in Jainism), and the world. And then there are a variety of systems, such as Bhedābheda, each of which seeks to affirm, in some fashion, both the unity of existence as Brahman, and the reality of the diversity of the world.

CONCLUSION

Each of these darśanas has added to the richness, and the sum total of the insight, that is available from within the vast field of Indian philosophy. The conclusions reached by each system are the result of the presuppositions and categories with which it begins its inquiry into reality. One may analyze one's experience in terms of the categories of Sāṃkhya. One may add to that analysis a practice of Yoga, to make the fruits of this analysis concrete in one's experience. One may apply the logic of Nyāya to the claims that one wishes to make, and that are made by others, in order to sort out real possibilities from things which do not hold together coherently. One may apply the categories of Vaiśeṣika to the analysis of the external world, just as one applies those of Sāṃkhya to one's inner life. One may perform karma and embody bhakti utilizing the ritual science of Mīmāṃsā. And one may synthesize all of this into a Vedāntic vision of totality. Each system contributes its share of insight to form a more complete and ever-unfolding view of existence.



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Auroville

INDIA: WALKING THE RAZOR'S EDGE

By Philip Goldberg

I first became intoxicated by India as a college student in the 1960s, through the movies of Satyajit Ray, the music of Ravi Shankar, the fiction of Herman Hesse, Somerset Maugham and J.D. Salinger and, most of all, the revelations of the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads.

The Beatles put me over the top when they took up Transcendental Meditation and made their landmark pilgrimage to Rishikesh. The total effect of those cross-cultural hinges was to turn this existentialist/atheist/social activist into a dedicated spiritual seeker. I've been immersed in yogic practices and Hindu texts ever since.

Over the years, I saw the teachings of India's sages transform the lives of millions of people who took up meditation, stretched and bent in yoga studios, visited ashrams and sat with gurus. I saw Hindu-based ideas and practices filter into mainstream culture through health practitioners, psychotherapists, research scientists, scholars and artists. Eventually, I wrote a book, *American Veda*, chronicling the East-West transmission from the days of Emerson and Thoreau to the present. The book was well-received, and I vowed that when it was published in India I would go there to tell the Indian people

how much their spiritual heritage has influenced me and millions of my fellow Americans.

That dream came true in the fall of 2013, when the India Foundation, a cultural non-profit in Delhi, organized a speaking tour to launch the Indian publication.

In 30 days, I visited 18 cities in 12 states and gave 28 presentations: public lectures, private discussions with select audiences and talks at high schools, universities, and yoga academies.

I was on 11 domestic flights, a few trains and countless automobiles. I visited teeming metropolises, medium-sized (by Indian standards) cities and ancient towns like Rishikesh, Haridwar and Varanasi that Hindus hold sacred.

When I describe my schedule, people say, "It must have been exhausting." I tell them, yes, it was physically demanding, but it was always exhilarating, mentally and emotionally, and on the whole extremely gratifying. I would do it again tomorrow, happily and enthusiastically, only with perhaps a bit more downtime.

It was exciting to see India in the midst of its explosive modernization. Since my previous visit, six years earlier, changes were glaringly evident: infrastructure upgrades like highways, Delhi's new Metro system and sparkling airports (all my flights were on time and the terminals were comfortable); gleaming office buildings that have taken root like banyan trees; energetic young people carving out a new future for their country. The makeover is not complete, of course. Poverty and hunger persist; income inequality is off the charts; modern amenities (toilets, paved roads, clean water, etc.) are absent in too many places.

It will take decades to overcome the socio-economic impact of hundreds of years of colonial rule and mistakes made after independence. At the same time, one hopes that certain aspects of India's unique and timeless character will be preserved forever, and thankfully they remain: the vivid colors, the captivating scents, the welcoming faces, and of course, the palpable sense of holiness, in temples both enormous and tiny, in wayside shrines, in chants both whispered and blared through tinny speakers, in the eyes of gurus, monks and ordinary people fingering japa beads and doing pujas in their shops.

Because I was hosted by gracious, generous and impeccably courteous people, I got to see places that most tourists do not even know exist. I also visited homes and ate what Indian families eat. Most precious of all, I had meaningful conversations with people from all walks of life: politicians, professors, entrepreneurs, corporate executives, retired generals, students, engineers,



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swamis, gurus, yoga masters, taxi drivers, hotel clerks, mothers and fathers. As a result, I learned more about contemporary India than I could possibly discern as an ordinary traveler.

To sum up a multiplicity of impressions, India as a whole seems to be walking on a razor's edge — a metaphor first employed in the Upanishads — with modernity and material progress beckoning on one side and its precious spiritual heritage open-armed on the other. The country's welfare might well hinge on its collective sense of balance.

This spiritual/material, ancient/modern tension was explicit in my conversations and in the responses to my lectures. My talks summarized the message of American Veda: Over the course of 200 years, Americans have been imbibing the essence of Hinduism—primarily the philosophical revelations of Vedanta and the methods and principles of Yoga—through a variety of streams and tributaries. Evidence suggests that this East-to-West transmission is responsible in large part for a huge shift in the way Americans understand religion and engage their spirituality. I believe it could be one of the most important developments of the modern era.

Most of the people in attendance were proud to hear that their heritage has influenced Americans for the better. Some, especially the young, were surprised by my message, because they

themselves considered the spiritual and philosophical aspects of the Vedic tradition irrelevant to modern life. Some even see it as an impediment to the material progress of their families and their nation. That America, the most prosperous and innovative nation on the planet, had found value in what they rejected — “Grandma’s superstitions” as one student disdainfully put it—was more than intriguing to them.

It was precisely because Indian youth look to America as a model of progress worthy of emulating that my hosts had me speak at so many schools and colleges. They urged me to emphasize that the Vedic heritage can complement modernization rather than impede it. At first, I was not sure how to address the issue. I did not want to sound like I was preaching to them. Nor did I want to come across as an arrogant American telling them how to think. India has had quite enough of that from foreigners over the centuries, and even today. As an outsider, I felt I ought to be humble and deferential to India’s own spiritual and educational leaders. Then again, as the author of a well-researched book I had information to impart.

Ultimately, I settled on a strategy. Think of America as the laboratory of the world, I suggested. Americans are good at inventing new things and experimenting with imported ideas and products. When something proves to be useful, we adapt it to our specific needs and integrate it into our way of life. Sometimes, I added, we modify or redesign useful things and sell them to the rest of the world—for better and for worse. America experimented with Vedanta, Yoga and other

components of the Hindu dharma and found them to be compatible with modern life—and helpful antidotes to the excesses of modernity

In short, large numbers of Americans see the ageless teachings of India’s rishis not as antiques to be stored in museums and libraries, but as practical wisdom to applied here and now.

And that, I said, is a message from America worth paying attention to, as opposed to the marketing blitz that promotes harmful junk food, diabetes-inducing soft drinks, dispensable gadgets and trendy fashions.

In the Q&A sessions, I was asked about everything from American foreign policy to “Slumdog Millionaire.” The most pertinent queries from Sutra Journal’s perspective were, “Do Americans care about the spiritual components of yoga, or only the physical benefits?” and “Has there been a backlash from fundamentalist Christians?” Those questions are more complex than they would appear to be. The short answers are: “Some do and some don’t” and “Yes, but less than you think.”

I was also asked about the campaign for India’s highest political office, which was heating up at the time. Because of my deep affection for India, people expected I might have my own perspective. In fact, I’m asked about Indian current events all the time, and I always say, as I did then, that I do not know enough to venture an



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opinion. Based on what I heard at the time, however, and decades of concerned observation of politics in my own country, I did risk one prediction: Narendra Modi would not be the national savior that his ardent supporters expected him to be; nor would he be the demonic force of communal intolerance that his opponents feared he would be. That's as far as I would go, and so far I seem to have been right. India's future will not turn on one individual, but on the actions of a billion.

To my surprise, the most frequent line of inquiry—often more of a discourse than a question—had to do with the aggressive missionary campaigns funded by American Evangelicals.

The anger, frustration and resentment was palpable, and the descriptions of devious, coercive

and unscrupulous tactics that missionaries sometimes use to “harvest souls” were painful to hear. (I described some of those stories in this article.) I could not adequately respond to their concerns, but I did inform them that most American Christians would be appalled by such tales. I said that with confidence, knowing that most Christians in America are far more accepting of other religions than the loud, toxic, intolerant minority.

It is in that context that recent news items from India, about Hindus reconverting Christians, should be understood. It is in large part a backlash against centuries of aggressive conversion, which is viewed by Hindus as religious imperialism. They can't imagine why anyone would want to coerce another person into abandoning their own traditions and pledging allegiance to a new



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one. Historically and culturally, India has always been innately pluralistic.

The entire notion of conversion as we know it is alien to the Dharmic traditions, which understand that there are multiple pathways to the Divine and that individuals must determine their own ways according to their personalities, preferences and personal tendencies.

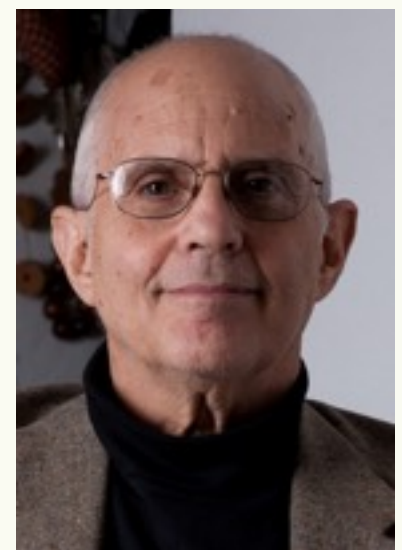
In his appearance at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions, Swami Vivekananda deplored the missionaries who help the hungry "only on condition that the Hindus become Christians, abandoning the faith of their fathers and forefathers." He added, "Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid." For the sake of India's future as a harmoniously diverse nation, one hopes that all its inhabitants, and all of its visitors, will honor the words of the venerated swami.

And, for all our sakes, one hopes that as India modernizes, it continues to preserve, adapt and implement its greatest gift to the world: the de-

tailed articulation of our supreme spiritual potential and the universal methods of attaining them.

...

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Ajanta

BUDDHA IN VEDIC INDIA

By Dr. Koenraad Elst

Orientalists have started treating Buddhism as a separate religion because they discovered it outside India, without any conspicuous link with India, where Buddhism was not in evidence. At first, they didn't even know that the Buddha had been an Indian. It had at any rate gone through centuries of development unrelated to anything happening in India at the same time. Therefore, it is understandable that Buddhism was already the object of a separate discipline even before any connection with Hinduism could be made.

BUDDHISM IN MODERN INDIA

In India, all kinds of invention, somewhat logically connected to this status of separate religion, were then added. Especially the Ambedkarite movement, springing from the conversion of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar in 1956, was very driven in retro-actively producing an anti-Hindu programme for the Buddha. Conversion itself, not just the embracing of a new tradition (which any Hindu is free to do, all while staying a Hindu) but the renouncing of one's previous religion, as the Hindu-born politician Ambedkar did, is a typically Christian concept. The model event was the conversion of the Frankish king Clovis, possibly in 496, who "burned what he had worshipped and worshipped what he had burnt". (Let it pass for now that the Christian chroniclers slandered their victims by positing a false symmetry: the Heathens hadn't been in the business of destroying Christian symbols.) So, in his understanding of the history of Bauddha Dharma (Buddhism), Ambedkar was less than reliable, in spite of his sterling

contributions regarding the history of Islam and some parts of the history of caste. But where he was a bit right and a bit mistaken, his later followers have gone all the way and made nothing but a gross caricature of history, and especially about the place of Buddhism in Hindu history.

The Ambedkarite worldview has ultimately only radicalized the moderately anti-Hindu version of the reigning Nehruvians. Under Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, Buddhism was turned into the unofficial state religion of India, adopting the "lion pillar" of the Buddhist Emperor Ashoka as state symbol and putting the 24-spoked Cakravarti wheel in the national flag. Essentially, Nehru's knowledge of Indian history was limited to two spiritual figures, viz. the Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi, and three political leaders: Ashoka, Akbar and himself. The concept of Cakravarti ("wheel-turner", universal ruler) was in fact much older than Ashoka, and the 24-spoked wheel can also be read in other senses, e.g. the Sankhya philosophy's worldview, with the central Purusha/Subject and the 24 elements of Prakrti/Nature.

The anglicized Nehru, "India's last Viceroy", prided himself on his illiteracy in Hindu culture, so he didn't know any of this, but was satisfied that these symbols could glorify Ashoka and belittle Hinduism, deemed a separate religion from which Ashoka had broken away by accepting Buddhism. More broadly, he thought that everything of value in India was a gift of Buddhism (and Islam) to the undeserving Hindus. Thus, the fabled Hindu tolerance was according to him a value borrowed from Buddhism. In reality, the

Buddha had been a beneficiary of an already established Hindu tradition of pluralism. In a Muslim country, he would never have preached his doctrine in peace and comfort for 45 years, but in Hindu society, this was a matter of course. There were some attempts on his life, but they emanated not from "Hindus" but from jealous disciples within his own monastic order.

So, both Nehru and Ambedkar, as well as their followers, believed by implication that at some point in his life, the Hindu-born renunciate Buddha had broken away from Hinduism and adopted a new religion, Buddhism. This notion is now omnipresent, and through school textbooks, most Indians have lapped this up and don't know any better.

However, numerous though they are, none of the believers in this story have ever told us at what moment in his life the Buddha broke away from Hinduism. When did he revolt against it? Very many Indians repeat the Nehruvian account, but so far, never has any of them been able to pinpoint an event in the Buddha's life which constituted a break with Hinduism.



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THE TERM “HINDUISM”

Their first line of defence, when put on the spot, is sure to be:

“Actually, Hinduism did not yet exist at the time.”

So, their position really is:

Hinduism did not exist yet, but somehow the Buddha broke away from it.

Yeah, the secular position is that he was a miracle-worker.

Let us correct that: the word “Hinduism” did not exist yet.

When Darius of the Achaemenid Persians, a near-contemporary of the Buddha, used the word “Hindu”, it was purely in a geographical sense: anyone from inside or beyond the Indus region.

When the medieval Muslim invaders brought the term into India, they used it to mean: any Indian except for the Indian Muslims, Christians or Jews. It did not have a specific doctrinal content except “non-Abrahamic”, a negative definition. It meant every Indian Pagan, including the Brahmins, Buddhists (“clean-shaven Brahmins”), Jains, other ascetics, low-castes, intermediate castes, tribals, and by implication also the as yet unborn Lingayats, Sikhs, Hare Krishnas, Arya Samajis, Ramakrishnaites, secularists and others who nowadays reject the label “Hindu”.

This definition was essentially also adopted by VD Savarkar in his book *Hindutva* (1923) and by the Hindu Marriage Act (1955). By this historical definition, which also has the advantages of primacy and of not being thought up by the wily Brahmins, the Buddha and all his Indian followers are unquestionably Hindus. In that sense, Savarkar was right when he called Ambedkar’s taking refuge in Buddhism “a sure jump into the Hindu fold”.



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But the word “Hindu” is a favourite object of manipulation. Thus, secularists say that all kinds of groups (Dravidians, low-castes, Sikhs etc.) are “not Hindu”, yet when Hindus complain of the self-righteousness and aggression of the minorities, secularists laugh at this concern: “How can the Hindus feel threatened? They are more than 80%!” The missionaries call the tribals “not Hindus”, but when the tribals riot against the Christians who have murdered their Swami, we read about “Hindu rioters”. In the Buddha’s case, “Hindu” is often narrowed down to “Vedic” when convenient, then restored to its wider meaning when expedient.

One meaning which the word “Hindu” definitely does not have, and did not have when it was introduced, is “Vedic”. Shankara holds it against Patanjali and the Sankhya school (just like the Buddha) that they don’t bother to cite the Vedas, yet they have a place in every history of Hindu thought. Hinduism includes a lot of elements which have only a thin Vedic veneer, and numerous ones which are not Vedic at all. Scholars say that it consists of a “Great Tradition” and many “Little Traditions”, local cults allowed to subsist under the aegis of the prestigious Vedic line. However, if we want to classify the Buddha in these terms, he should rather be included in the Great Tradition.

Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha was a Kshatriya, a scion of the Solar or Aikshvaku dynasty, a descendant of Manu, a self-described reincarnation of Rama, the son of the Raja (president-for-life) of the Shakya tribe, a member of its Senate, and belonging to the Gautama gotra (roughly “clan”). Though monks are often known by their monastic name, Buddhists prefer to name the Buddha after

his descent group, viz. the Shakyamuni, “renunciate of the Shakya tribe”. This tribe was as Hindu as could be, consisting according to its own belief of the progeny of the eldest children of patriarch Manu, who were repudiated at the insistence of his later, younger wife. The Buddha is not known to have rejected this name, not even at the end of his life when the Shakyas had earned the wrath of king Vidudabha of Kosala and were massacred. The doctrine that he was one in a line of incarnations which also included Rama is not a deceitful Brahmin Puranic invention but was launched by the Buddha himself, who claimed Rama as an earlier incarnation of his. The numerous scholars who like to explain every Hindu idea or custom as “borrowed from Buddhism” could well counter Ambedkar’s rejection of this “Hindu” doctrine by pointing out very aptly that it was “borrowed from Buddhism”.

CAREER

At 29, he renounced society, but not Hinduism. Indeed, it is a typical thing among Hindus to exit from society, laying off your caste marks including your civil name. The Rg-Veda already describes the Muni-s as having matted hair and going about sky-clad: such are what we now know as Naga Sadhus. Asceticism was a recognized practice in Vedic society long before the Buddha. Yajnavalkya, the Upanishadic originator of the notion of Self, renounced life in society after a successful career as court priest and an equally happy family life with two wives.

RENUNCIATION

By leaving his family and renouncing his future in politics, the Buddha followed an existing tradition within Hindu society. He didn’t practice Vedic rituals anymore, which is normal for a Vedic renunciate (though Zen Buddhists still recite the Heart Sutra in the Vedic fashion, ending with “sowaka”, i.e. svaha). He was a late follower of a movement very much in evidence in the Upanishads, viz. of spurning rituals (Karmakanda) in favour of knowledge (Jnanakanda). After he had done the Hindu thing by going to the forest, he tried several methods, including the techniques he learned from two masters and which did not fully satisfy him, -- but nonetheless enough to include them in his own and the Buddhist curriculum. Among other techniques, he practised Anapanasati, “attention to the breathing process”, the archetypal yoga practice popular in practically all yoga schools till today. For a while he also practised an extreme form of asceticism, still existing in the Hindu sect of Jainism. He exercised his Hindu freedom to join a sect devoted to certain techniques, and later the freedom to leave it, remaining a Hindu at every stage.

He then added a technique of his own, or at least that is what the Buddhist sources tell us, for in the paucity of reliable information, we don’t know for sure that he hadn’t learned the Vipassana (“mindful-



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ness”) technique elsewhere. Unless evidence of the contrary comes to the surface, we assume that he invented this technique all by himself, as a Hindu is free to do. He then achieved Bodhi, the “Awakening”. By his own admission, he was by no means the first to do so. Instead, he had only walked the same path of other Awakened beings before him.

At the bidding of the Vedic gods Brahma and Indra, he left his self-contained state of Awakening and started teaching his way to others. When he “set in motion the wheel of the Law” (Dharma-cakra-pravartana, Chinese Falungong), he gave no indication whatsoever of breaking with an existing system. On the contrary, by his use of existing Vedic and Upanishadic terminology (Arya, “Vedically civilized”; Dharma), he confirmed his Vedic roots and implied that his system was a restoration of the Vedic ideal which had become degenerate. He taught his techniques and his analysis of the human condition to his disciples,

promising them to achieve the same Awakening if they practiced these diligently.

CASTE

On caste, we find him is full cooperation with existing caste society. Being an elitist, he mainly recruited among the upper castes, with over 40% Brahmins. These would later furnish all the great philosophers who made Buddhism synonymous with conceptual sophistication. Conversely, the Buddhist universities trained well-known non-Buddhist scientists such as the astronomer Aryabhata. Lest the impression be created that universities are a gift of Buddhism to India, it may be pointed out that the Buddha’s friends Bandhula and Prasenadi (and, according to a speculation, maybe the young Siddhartha himself) had studied at the university of Takshashila, clearly established before there were any Buddhists around to do so. Instead, the Buddhists greatly developed an institution which they had inherited from Hindu society.

The kings and magnates of the eastern Ganga plain treated the Buddha as one of their own (because that is what he was) and gladly patronized his fast-growing monastic order, commanding their servants and subjects to build a network of monasteries for it. He predicted the coming of a future Awakened leader like himself, the Maitreya ("the one practising friendship/charity"), and specified that he would be born in a Brahmin family.

When king Prasenadi discovered that his wife was not a Shakya princess but the daughter of the Shakya ruler by a maid-servant, he repudiated her and their son; but his friend the Buddha made him take them back.

Did he achieve this by saying that birth is unimportant, that "caste is bad" or that "caste doesn't matter", as the Ambedkarites claim? No, he reminded the king of the old view (then apparently in the process of being replaced with a stricter view) that caste was passed on exclusively in the paternal line. Among hybrids of horses and donkeys, the progeny of a horse stallion and a donkey mare whinnies, like its father, while the progeny of a donkey stallion and a horse mare brays, also like its father. So, in the oldest Upanishad, Satyakama Jabala is accepted by his Brahmins-only teacher because his father is deduced to be a Brahmin, regardless of his mother being a maid-servant. And similarly, king Prasenadi should accept his son as a Kshatriya, even though his mother was not a full-blooded Shakya Kshatriya.

When he died, the elites of eight cities made a successful bid for his ashes on the plea: "We are Kshatriyas, he was a Kshatriya, therefore we have a right to his ashes". After almost half a century, his disciples didn't mind being seen in public as still observing caste in a context which was par excellence Buddhist. The reason is that the Buddha in his many teachings never had told them to give up caste, e.g. to give their daughters in marriage to men of other castes. This was perfectly logical: as a man with a spiritual message, the Buddha wanted to lose as little time as possible on social matters. If satisfying your own miserable desires is difficult enough, satisfying the desire for an egalitarian society provides an endless distraction from your spiritual practice.

THE SEVEN RULES

There never was a separate non-Hindu Buddhist society. Most Hindus worship various gods and teachers, adding and sometimes removing one or more pictures or statues to their house altar. This way, there were some lay worshippers of the Buddha, but they were not a society separate from the worshippers of other gods or Awakened masters. This box-type division of society in different sects is another Christian prejudice infused into modern Hindu society by Nehruvian secularism. There were only Hindus, members of Hindu castes, some of whom had a veneration for the Buddha among others. Buddhist buildings in India often follow the designs of Vedic habitat ecology or Vastu Shastra. Buddhist temple conventions follow an established Hindu pattern. Buddhist mantras, also outside In-



Ajanta

dia, follow the pattern of Vedic mantras. When Buddhism spread to China and Japan, Buddhist monks took the Vedic gods (e.g. the twelve Aditya's) with them and built temples for them. In Japan, every town has a temple for the river-goddess Benzaiten, i.e. "Saraswati Devi", the goddess Saraswati. She was not introduced there by wily Brahmins, but by Buddhists.

At the fag end of his long life, the Buddha described the seven principles by which a society does not perish (which Sita Ram Goel has given more body in his historical novel *Sapta Shila*, in Hindi), and among them are included: respecting and maintaining the existing festivals, pilgrimages and rituals; and revering the holy men. These festivals etc. were mainly "Vedic", of course, like the pilgrimage to the Saraswati which Balaram made in the *Mahabharata*, or the pilgrimage to the Ganga which the elderly Pandava brothers made. Far from being a revolutionary, the Buddha emphatically outed himself as a conservative, both in social and in religious matters. He was not a rebel or a revolutionary, but wanted the existing customs to continue. The Buddha was every inch a Hindu.

Koenraad Elst (°Leuven 1959) distinguished himself early on as eager to learn and to dissent. After a few hippie years he studied at the KU Leuven, obtaining MA degrees in Sinology, Indology and Philosophy. After a research stay at Benares Hindu University he did original fieldwork for a doctorate on Hindu nationalism, which he obtained magna cum laude in 1998. As an independent researcher he earned laurels and ostracism with his findings on hot items like Islam, multiculturalism and the secular state, the roots of Indo-European, the Ayodhya temple/mosque dispute and Mahatma Gandhi's legacy. He also published on the interface of religion and politics, correlative cosmologies, the dark side of Buddhism, the reinvention of Hinduism, technical points of Indian and Chinese philosophies, various language policy issues, Maoism, the renewed relevance of Confucius in conservatism, the increasing Asian stamp on integrating world civilization, direct democracy, the defence of threatened freedoms, and the Belgian question. Regarding religion, he combines human sympathy with substantive skepticism.



THE FIVE ACTIONS OF AYURVEDA

By Vikram Zutshi

It was a balmy weekend in August.

I was home at my apartment in Los Angeles, reading in bed, when my inbox pinged to inform me that the medical lab reports I had been anticipating had arrived. The report showed a cholesterol count that was off the charts, high blood pressure, inordinately high uric acid levels and indications of borderline diabetes.

I was sliding down a slippery slope and would have to take things into account or face the consequences. I realized I would have to get far away from my embedded routine and go somewhere with no moorings to my familiar habitat.

Having read up on numerous class action lawsuits initiated against major pharmaceutical companies for egregious violations of public safety and consumer trust, I had developed an aversion to Big Pharma, and wary of the side effects of hard prescription drugs - particularly liver damaging anti-

inflammatory medication and cholesterol lowering Statins. They are invasive short-term remedies that extract a heavy price for the benefits they offer.

I had long been fascinated by indigenous and traditional systems of medicine, and after considerable research took what seemed like a leap of faith at the time and had myself admitted into an intense Ayurvedic regimen in the south Indian coastal state of Kerala.

Ayurveda means 'Science of Life' in Sanskrit. It was the holistic healing science of ancient India that had been practiced for at least five thousand years and down the ages had spread to the Far East, Arabia and Europe.

In late October of that year, after a long flight from Los Angeles and a two hour drive from Cochin airport, I arrived at Athreya Ayurvedic center, on the outskirts of Kottayam town at approximately 4 pm.

As I was driven into the grounds, the first thing to hit my eyes was an imposing statue of the Hindu deity Hanuman facing the entrance. Upon arriving, I was greeted by a smiling attendant and shown to a cottage facing a vast expanse of paddy fields that was to be my home for the next three weeks.

Soon after unpacking I was taken to meet Dr. Srijit, the head physician, for initial consultation. Without much ado he began to ask various probing questions while taking my pulse and peering into my mouth. This is the traditional method of Ayurvedic diagnosis that enables Vaidyas or Ayurvedic physicians to identify the patient's core issues and design a tailored program for their specific needs based on Tridosha readings.

TRIDOSHAS

According to Ayurveda, every living organism is controlled and governed by three major life forces known as the Tridoshas. The Tridoshas are Vata, Pitta and Kapha - all physical and mental disorders occur when these three doshas lose their innate balance in the body.

Vata is attributed with qualities reflecting the elements of Space and Air. It governs movement in the body, activities of the nervous system and the process of elimination. Vata influences the other doshas.

Pitta contains the qualities of Fire and Water. It governs the body's internal functions -digestion, metabolism and energy production. The primary function of Pitta is transformation.

Kapha connotes the Water and Earth elements. It governs structure and is the principle that holds cells together and forms the muscle, fat, bone and sinew as well as influencing the secretion and formation of body fluids.

When the levels of these doshas become either excessive or deficient, disorders begin to occur.

Broadly similar to other holistic systems of classical antiquity, Ayurveda classifies bodily substances in the context of the five classical elements (Sanskrit 'Panchamahabhuta'):

- Earth (Prithvi)
- Water (Jala)
- Divine Fire (Tej)
- Air (Vayu)
- Ether (Akasha)

Divine Fire (Tej) is the primordial essence from which Pitta emerges and Pitta in turn manifests as Agni in the human body.

Agni plays a vital role in the creation and maintenance of the seven basic tissues or vital substances that constitute the human body called Dhatus, which in Sanskrit means 'that which binds together'.

Ayurveda postulates that there are seven Dhatus in all. They are:

- life sap or Plasma (Rasa dhatu)
- blood (Rakta dhatu)
- muscles (Mamsa dhatu)
- fatty tissue (Meda dhatu)
- bones (Asthi dhatu)
- bone marrow and nervous tissue (Majja dhatu)
- semen (Shukra dhatu)

Daily food intake is converted into life sap or Rasa, which in turn transforms into blood or Rakta; Rakta transmutes into muscle or Mamsa; Mamsa is further transformed into fat or Meda; Meda is the precursor to bones or Asthi; Asthi forms bone marrow or Majja and Majja produces the ultimate dhatu i.e. semen or Shukra.

According to Ayurveda, it takes one hundred drops of Rakta (blood) to produce a single drop of Shukra (semen), thus making it the most vital and refined substance created by the body, indeed the 'essence' of life.

Ayurvedic treatments are designed to penetrate all seven dhatus for the deepest possible healing to take place.



The doctor described a fairly demanding and rigorous daily schedule which included the five integral Ayurvedic cleansing and detoxing modalities - known as Pancha Karma - combined with medication, a simple but nourishing vegan diet and a regular morning yoga regimen.

Tea, coffee, dairy products, meats, sweets, fried foods, tobacco, alcohol and refined carbohydrates were strictly off limits. He also advised me to be psychologically prepared for mental and physical changes and fluctuations that may occur due to the intensive therapy.

The Athreya Center had been tastefully designed in the traditional Kerala style, utilizing mainly wood and laterite, by Dr. Srijit's father-in-law, Dr. Girish. The ancient healing science had been practiced and taught by his ancestors for 600 years, a tradition that continues to this day in a seamless progression. Handsome portraits of the family patriarchs going back five generations adorn the walls of the well-appointed reception area.

The retreat is nestled in a bucolic hamlet and surrounded by a network of canals flowing into the gorgeous Kerala Backwaters. Floating water hyacinths, vivid green paddy fields and gently swaying coconut palms, Ficus, Pipal, Banana, Papaya, Ashoka and Eleocarpus trees punctuate the Vedic symmetry of the resort. It includes a yoga room, a treatment center, ten residential cottages and a separate chamber for training in Kalaripayattu, the ancient martial art of Kerala, widely believed to be the source of later disciplines like Kung Fu and Karate.

Treatment started on the first day itself. Pancha Karma (the five actions) is a comprehensive system that facilitates the flushing of toxins from every cell, using the same organs of elimination that the body naturally employs such as sweat glands, blood vessels, the urinary tract and the intestines. It specifically addresses a toxin called Ama, one of the most damaging forces in our bodies.

Poor digestive fire, or weak digestive strength, leads to improper digestion of food. This results in gas, bloating, burning indigestion or constipation. In addition, a residue of this poorly digested food called Ama, accumulates in the digestive tract, overflowing into all bodily systems, clogging them and damaging tissues.

I was led into a building at the edge of the property and after stripping off all my clothes, made to lay supine on a raised wooden platform. Two male attendants wrapped my groin area with a langot which is a local variant of the jockstrap. They then began pouring a warm medicated solution over my body from head to foot. This process, known as Dhanya Amla Dhara, continued for over an hour.

The liquid is a blend of fermented puffed rice, lemon, tamarind, Amlaki and a few other herbs. Amlaki, commonly known as 'Amla' or Indian Gooseberry is one of the ingredients in the ubiquitous Triphala. The continuous and prolonged flow of the astringent solution penetrates to the deepest levels of body tissue, muscle and bone, facilitating the removal of lymphatic blockages and enhancing lymphatic circulation.

No exposition on Ayurveda is complete without talking about Triphala, which was given to me at the retreat three times a day. Tri-phala (Sanskrit 'three fruits') is made from the dried and ground fruits of three trees that grow in India:

1) Amalaki or *Emblica officinalis*, is one of the most commonly used herbs in Ayurveda. It is a powerful antioxidant that contains 20 times more vitamin C than orange juice. It strengthens the immune system and cools the body, balancing the Pitta dosha.

2) Haritaki or *Terminalia chebula* is the strongest laxative of the three. The herb also has astringent and antispasmodic properties, balancing the Vata dosha.

3) Bibhitaki or *Terminalia belerica* helps remove excess mucous in the body, thus balancing the Kapha dosha. In addition, to being an excellent rejuvenative, astringent and laxative, Bibhitaki is very effective in curing lung conditions like bronchitis and asthma.

Dr. Sujit Basu of Ohio State University and his team of researchers recently found that administering chebulinic acid (the active molecule in Triphala) to cancer-afflicted mice showed significantly reduced growth in cancerous cells. The Ayurvedic medicine, as well as its main active constituent, the chebulinic acid, have been shown to block the action of a body chemical called vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) that plays a critical role in the formation of malignant tumors.

Evidently, Ayurvedic physicians and indigenous healers were aware of these properties thousands of years before the information became available to the West.

The medicated body wash was followed by a vigorous abdominal massage to loosen up stomach toxins. Recent medical findings have shown that the abdominal tract, especially the large intestine, contains as many neurons as the brain itself and therefore plays a vital role in one's overall mental and physical wellbeing. Abdominal mas-

sage also helped to flush out the accumulation of Ama in the viscera and various organs.

DETOX

However, I went to bed that night feeling disoriented and slightly sick. I was not able to sleep very well and stayed up for most of the night tossing and turning in bed, coughing my lungs out. My neck, arms and belly were covered with a red-dish rash.

The next day, in a panic, I called Dr. Srijit who allayed my fears by saying it was a natural reaction to the intense detoxification and internal cleansing that had been set in motion by the treatments.

Clearly my smoking habit for the past several years was now paying dividends!

Ayurvedic therapy did not suppress health symptoms but rather brought them out so they could be tackled more effectively. Understandably this was seldom an agreeable process from the perspective of the average city dweller, accustomed to allopathic quick-fix remedies.

The doctor had attendants bring me a glass of bitter green liquid extracted from the medicinal leaves of a bush growing right outside my cottage called Vasaka or Adulsa. I was instructed to take two teaspoonfuls every half hour combined with a heated herbal poultice or kizhi applied on my neck and chest region thrice a day. The coughing was rendered bearable by the treatment and eventually subsided after a few days.

The next day I was shown a rather disturbing instructional video of Dr. Srijit undergoing the proc-

ess of Vamanan or the stomach wash; the first stage of Pancha Karma. Following a vigorous abdominal massage, I had to swallow several tumblers full of a muddy, slightly sweet liquid - Yeshtimadhu or Liquorice - that caused deep heaving, retching and vomiting - expelling all the muck that had attached itself to the stomach walls over time.

It was not a pleasant experience and at one point it literally felt like I was puking my guts out. Post Vamana, I felt strangely euphoric and was rewarded by a Shiatsu massage to the head by Gopu, my experienced therapist.

David Winston and Steven Malmes, in their comprehensive study of the subject titled, 'Adaptogens: Herbs for Strength, Stamina and Stress Relief', have expounded the virtues of Liquorice as an adaptogen which helps regulate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis.

The active compound glycyrrhizic acid found in liquorice, is in common usage across Japan for the treatment and control of chronic viral hepatitis as well as regenerating damaged cells caused by liver injuries. Recent studies have also shown glycyrrhizic acid exhibiting a strong anti-viral effect.



KERALA

Natasha from Moscow and Luis, a retired film producer from San Sebastian, Spain were my only companions at the resort, it being the low season. On a day off, the three of us decided to explore the Kerala backwaters, the access to which was only twenty minutes away from the center.

Upon arriving at the jetty we were led to a traditional Kerala riverboat and soon began our cruise down one of the most beautiful and pristine bodies of water I had ever seen.

The Backwaters are a chain of brackish lagoons and lakes, created by the commingling of sea and freshwater, lying parallel to the Arabian Sea coast. The network includes five large lakes linked by a labyrinthine network of canals, almost 900 kilometers long, fed by 38 rivers criss-crossing half the length of Kerala state.

Crabs, frogs, mudskippers, terns, kingfishers, cormorants, otters and turtles are some of the creatures that thrive in the lush habitat generated by the unique eco-system, often compared to the Bayou of the Gulf Coast region in Louisiana.

On Day Four I was initiated into Virechana ie Ayurvedic purgation, wherein after the customary herbal bath, I was made to gulp down a cup of a thick muddy compound.

The compound was an intestinal purgative, made up of Castor oil and Trpihala, that made me pass stools about six times over the course of the day to empty out all the contents of my bowels and clean out the small intestines.

For the past couple of days I had been subsisting on a diet of rice gruel, boiled vegetables and bananas. During Vamana and Virechana, even

After Abhyanga, I sat in a wooden chamber large enough to accommodate one person, pumped full of herb infused steam. The process is called Swedana, the Indian version of the sauna.

In Ayurvedic medicine, a Basti is a therapeutic treatment in which medicated, herbal decoctions are introduced into the rectum for the purpose of flushing toxins from the intestinal tract.

the fruits and vegetables were dispensed with and I was given only steaming bowls of gruel accompanied by freshly squeezed juices of gooseberry, beetroot, watermelon, tomato, cucumber and carrot in various combinations by Amma, the amiable chef.

Surprisingly I did not crave more solid food and I grew to appreciate the minimal diet.

The next day my entire body was massaged vigorously with heated and medicated herbal oils by two attendants, while I lay on a raised wooden platform, a process known as Abhyanga. The massage oil is made up of Sesame oil, Camphor, Country Mallow and a compound named Dasha Moola or Ten Roots, extracted, as the name suggests from ten medicinal roots that are blended together in precise amounts.

Like all herbs used in Ayurveda, the Dasha Moolas are endowed with significant healing, regenerative and rejuvenating properties.

After Abhyanga, I sat in a wooden chamber large enough to accommodate one person, pumped full of herb infused steam. The process is called Swedana, the Indian version of the sauna.

After sweating out subcutaneous toxins for twenty minutes, I was let out of the box and once again made to lie down, this time on my side for Basti - the ancient precursor to what is commonly known as a 'colonic irrigation' in the American wellness community.

A long thin tube was inserted up my anus which acted as a conduit for a viscous solution released into my large intestine. Ten minutes later I got up and visited the restroom to empty out my bowels and left the place feeling lighter than I had in ages.

In Ayurvedic medicine, a Basti is a therapeutic treatment in which medicated, herbal decoctions are introduced into the rectum for the purpose of flushing toxins from the intestinal tract. The name has its source in antiquity, when healers used the 'bastis' (sterilized bladders) of animals to hold the medicated solutions.

Bastis are often referred to as enemas but go much further than merely emptying the large intestine. In Ayurveda, the colon is the principle site of Vata, the Dosha that governs movement and circulation. An excess of Vata manifests as many symptoms and diseases, including most di-



gestive disorders, back aches, arthritis, gout, migraines, nervous disorders and Alzheimer's among others. Basti therapy penetrates all the seven Dhatus and facilitates the elimination of excess Vata, helping restore total health.

However, the day wasn't quite over yet.

My right big toe became swollen, inflamed and unbearably painful as is the case with chronic gout. I reported this to the doctor following which he recommended 'leech therapy'. The leech, or Jalauki as it was called in Sanskrit, had been used since antiquity to remove toxic blood from affected areas in the body.

In this procedure a few selected leeches are placed on the affected area to suck out the contaminated blood. They grow fat and engorged

from ingesting the thick red liquid and eventually fall off when they've had their fill.

The process was certainly efficacious as I can testify from personal experience. My toe regained its natural mobility in a few days, and after a few more sessions returned to normal once again. The leech's saliva contains enzymes and compounds that act as an anti-coagulation agent. The most prominent of these anti-coagulation agents is hirudin.

Several other compounds have been identified in leech saliva with clot dissolving, anti-inflammatory, vasodilating, bacteriostatic and anaesthetic properties. Interestingly, the chief deity of Ayurveda, Dhanvantari, is depicted with four arms, one of which holds the Jalauki, alongside the Chakra (wheel), Shankha (conch shell), and Amrita or nectar of Life.

A paper published by Dr. Robert Mory and others ‘The Leech and the Physician: Biology, Etymology, and Medical Practice with *Hirudinea medicinalis*’ looks at how leeches are used to treat arthritis and other inflammatory processes, vascular (arterial and venous diseases), as well as heart and lung problems. It posits that diseases like hepatitis, stomach ulcers, and pancreatitis, and skin conditions like psoriasis, herpes, and eczema can be treated with leech therapy.

The daily abdominal massage, Abhyanga, Swedana and Basti sessions continued for the whole week. The colon was the most important organ of elimination and its treatment was therefore given the highest priority.

The days progressed slowly but steadily, punctuated by short sporadic showers rendering the vegetation a vivid green hue shot through with little explosions of red, yellow, white and purple flowers. Occasional thunder and lightning gave the experience an epic, almost mythical quality, like being healed by the Maharishis in some antediluvian Golden Age of the Vedas.

Later that evening as we sat down for dinner, the doctor and I spoke at length about the traditions and history of Kerala. The Maharajas of Travancore had made conscious efforts to preserve the ancient sciences thus ensuring that the traditional systems of learning would not wither away.

The Sushruta Samhita and Charaka Samhita, along with Vagbhatta’s Ashtanga Hridaya, were the three primary texts of Ayurveda, comprising an exhaustive practicum that dated back at least 3,000. They were named after Sushruta, Charaka and Vagbhatta, venerable physicians who had documented their work for the benefit of posterity.

I was amazed at the intricate details described in the one text I had access to the Sushruta Samhita, which contained complex procedures like cataract surgery, rhinoplasty, hernia surgery, haemorrhoids treatment, laparotomy, cauterization, amputation, fractures, dislocations and C-sections among others. It had exhaustive data pertaining to obstetrics, pediatrics, gynaecology, ophthalmology and the treatment of mental and nervous disorders, thyroid imbalance, dysentery, diabetes, angina, seizures, hypertension, kidney stones, to name just a few—essentially the entire gamut of contemporary medical prognosis and treatment.

The Sushruta Samhita is divided into 184 chapters—containing the descriptions of 1120 illnesses, 700 medicinal plants, 64 preparations from mineral sources and 57 preparations from animal sources.

The works of both Sushruta and Charaka were translated into Arabic during the 8th century into a tome called the Kitab-I-Susrud. The Arabic translation was received and further propagated in Renaissance Italy at the end of the medieval period by the Brancas of Sicily and Tagliacozzi of Bologna.

The works of both Sushruta and Charaka were translated into Arabic during the 8th century into a tome called the Kitab-I-Susrud. The Arabic translation was received and further propagated in Renaissance Italy at the end of the medieval period by the Brancas of Sicily and Tagliacozzi of Bologna.

The practices ultimately reached Britain inspiring physician Joseph Constantine Carpue's voyage and twenty year sabbatical in India to study plastic surgery techniques. Carpue performed the first major surgery in the western world in 1815, dubbing it the 'Indian method.'

RETURNING TO HEALTH

After my chest cold and cough had completely subsided, we commenced with Shirodhara.

It was a steady flow (Dhara) of cooling liquid streaming down on my forehead through a hole in an earthen pot, placed directly over the head. The liquid is a decoction of buttermilk processed with Amlaki and Cyperus rotundus. The leaves and root of the Cyperus plant have been recommended in Indian Ayurvedic texts for reducing fever and inflammation, digestive disorders, menstrual cramps and other maladies. In traditional Chinese medicine Cyperus was considered the primary Qi regulating herb.

Shirodhara has the effect of calming the mind and generating a feeling of peace and contentment. Indeed the warm, centered, glow stayed with me for a good few hours after the treatment.

I had also got into the habit of circumambulating the premises five to six times daily. One round of the periphery was a distance of approximately half a kilometer. It was a delight to walk amidst the lush vegetation, smell the flowers and listen to butterflies, squirrels and avian warblers rejoice at the first rays of the morning sun. Luis and Natasha had left the center and other guests had arrived; three couples from Germany, Switzerland and Mauritius.

At the end of two weeks a new round of treatments began called Nasyam or Nasya Karma (through the nose). Laying prostrate on the massage table, my neck, face and head were gently massaged, opening the channels, dislodging congestion and loosening up the tissues.

Next, I was made to inhale herbalized steam through a pipe to open the internal channels and liquefy the congestion of the nasal tissues. Lastly, two milliliters of Nasya oil was administered gently into my nose. The Nasya oil is pressed from *Sida cordifolia*, also known as Country Mallow, Fennel weed or 'Bala' in Sanskrit.

Country Mallow is used in the indigenous healing systems of Brazil and Africa for the treatment of asthmatic bronchitis, nasal congestion, stomatitis, asthma and nasal congestion. It also has psycho-stimulant properties due to the substantial ephedrine content, and affects the central nervous system as well as the heart.



Recent studies have shown that an aqueous extract of *Sida cordifolia* tested on rats had potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties as well as the ability to stimulate liver regeneration.

According to the Sanskrit texts, Nasya therapy activates the Sringataka Marma which is a vital point situated on the surface of the brain where nerve cells and fibres (siras) converge that control the function of the sense organs - speech, vision, hearing, taste, and smell - the seat of cognition. From here it spreads into various Strotasas (vessels and nerves) and brings out vitiated Doshas from the brain. The absorption of Nasya medication takes place through the mucous membrane, the ophthalmic veins and directly into the cerebro-spinal fluid.

Nasya was also administered in the form of smoke - a burning stick of cotton cloth was tightly rolled up with camphor wood and tur-

meric, lit up at the tip, and its smoke funnelled through a cone shaped leaf directly into my nostrils.

I felt a tingling sensation running down the back of my head, all the way from my nostrils to the base of my neck. Almost immediately after, I felt a sense of clarity and sharpness, like all my senses were heightened and amplified. The state of heightened awareness stayed with me through the day.

In esoteric terms Prana or life energy enters the body through the intake of breath through the nose. Nasal administration of medication helps to correct the disorders of Prana affecting the higher cerebral, sensory and motor functions. The mechanism of Nasya can be summed up in a single statement made in the Ayurvedic texts - Nasahi Shirasodwaram which means the 'nose is a pharmacological passage into the head'.

Apart from the evening Nasyam sessions, I was undergoing Njawara Kizhi therapy every morning. The treatment is named after Njawara, a unique strain of medicinal rice that grows only in Kerala and has been cultivated specifically for Ayurvedic therapy for eons. Its healing properties and various applications are well documented in the Charaka Samhita.

After boiling the rice in a decoction of Sida root and milk, it is bound in small cloth bags or boluses (Kizhis) and pressed all over the body, causing perspiration, opening the pores and absorbing the compound deep into the tissues.

The paste can also be massaged directly on the body. It has remarkable rejuvenating properties and is an effective cure for rheumatoid arthritis, neurological complaints, muscular degeneration, tuberculosis, anaemia, ulcerative disorders and skin diseases. The oil extracted from the bran of the rice has been used for neural diseases and eye disorders.

CONCLUSION

My three weeks were almost at an end and I was eager to verify the clinical effects of Pancha Karma for myself. The doctor referred me to a diagnostic lab in Kottayam town for the test. The report was emailed to me three hours after the blood sample was drawn from my vein.

At first glance I could not believe the numbers. My total cholesterol count had come down by a massive 80 points in just 20 days and was now safely in the normal zone. My triglyceride count was down from a staggering 800 to just 180.

Lastly, the abnormally high uric acid levels, the main cause of gout, were also in the safe zone. I let out a loud whoop and did an impromptu war dance around my room and patio, much to the amusement of the attendants passing by.

The long-term effects of the treatment became more apparent in the weeks and months that followed. I did not crave cigarettes, alcohol, meat or junk food anymore and the quality of my sleep was much better. I wasn't nearly as prone to anger and irritability, and could focus on the many tasks at hand

with gusto. My relationships with various family members and co-workers also improved significantly and I started what felt like a brand new chapter of my life.

To me there is no place on earth capable of inducing a major perceptual shift like India can. On the flipside, not everyone is equipped for dramatic changes in consciousness. Many come away from the experience feeling disassembled; like all the parts that make up the 'Self' have to be picked up and pieced back together into a new whole.

For me it was a journey worth embarking on and one that is never really over. I hope this personal account will prove to be helpful for others who wish to overhaul their lives and pull themselves out of embedded patterns but don't know where to begin.



Vikram Zutshi is a writer-producer-director based in Los Angeles. After several years in indie film and network TV production, then a stint as Creative Executive at 20th Century Fox and later in International Sales/Acquisitions at Rogue Entertainment, he went solo and produced two feature films before transitioning into Directing. His debut feature was filmed at various points along the two thousand mile US-Mexico border and has since been globally broadcast. He is a passionate Yogi and writes frequently on Shamanism, Metaphysics, Buddhism, Shaivism, Culture, Art and Cinema. Vikram often travels on photo expeditions to SE Asia and Latin America, and is currently prepping his next two films, a 'mystical screwball comedy'-called The Byron Project and a feature documentary on the global yoga movement.



A CONVERSATION WITH DR. RICHARD MILLER

By Vikram Zutshi

Vikram Zutshi is making a feature documentary on the transformative effects of Yoga and Meditation. Every issue of Sutra Journal will profile one of the film's characters. For our second issue he chose Dr. Richard Miller, renowned Yogic scholar, accomplished clinical psychologist, and an esteemed teacher of Yoga Nidra and non-dual Tantra. Richard's answers are straight from the heart and based on direct experience. Without further ado, here is the conversation.

Sutra Journal: What is Yoga Nidra and how did you discover it? How did it become an integral part of your life?

Richard C. Miller, PhD: Yoga Nidra is an ancient and comprehensive approach to meditative self-inquiry, awakening, and enlightenment that leads to the fundamental realization of our essential non-dual nature that we share in common with all of life. The aim of this practice is to enable us to realize,

or awaken to the Mystery that all life - sentient and insentient - arises from and into which it dissolves and remains not-separate.

Traditionally, Yoga Nidra is based on the sheath (kosha or maya) model, where each sheath represents a realm - a changing state of consciousness - with which we've come to identify ourselves, i.e., body, senses, thoughts, well-being, and ego-I, whereby during the process of Yoga Nidra meditation we inquire into each sheath so that we may realize our essential non-changing nature, or Mystery, in which these changing states arise and dissolve.

I first discovered Yoga Nidra in 1970 during my first-ever Hatha Yoga class, when the instructor taught a rudimentary Yoga Nidra practice at the end of class. I walked home that evening, feeling myself in harmony with and not-separate from the entire universe, feeling that I'd just come home to my true self.

A spontaneous vow arose in me, to understand what had just transpired within myself, and what this practice I'd just engaged in was, and how to invite this realization into every waking moment of my daily life.

Over the next decades, I deeply explored the teachings of various spiritual approaches including Yoga (here the practice of Yoga Nidra), Advaita, Kashmir Shaivism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Sufism, and other approaches to meditative self-understanding. Over the years I kept returning to the



practices inherent in Yoga Nidra, which encompasses the teachings of Samkhya-Patañjali, Advaita, and Kashmir Nondualism, as they represented, to me, the underlying principles that all spiritual practices share in common.

In 2004, I was invited to engage a research project at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) to study the effectiveness of the Yoga Nidra protocol I'd developed to help wounded warriors heal from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms they were experiencing from their wartime exposure. During this first study, the military asked me to rename the Yoga Nidra protocol I'd developed, saying, "We're military. We don't do yoga!". So I renamed Yoga Nidra 'Integrative Restoration', or 'iRest' for short. The military replied, "Hey, that's great! We can do Integrative Restoration - iRest!"

This study was so successful that WRAMC immediately implemented my iRest protocol at their Health Deployment Clinical Center so that all wounded warriors could engage iRest Yoga Nidra as part of their healing regimen. More than 22 research studies followed, examining the efficacy of iRest Meditation with such issues as PTSD, chronic pain, TBI, depression, anxiety, sleep, and well-being.

As a result, iRest is now being taught at over 12 Military bases, 41 Veterans Administration facilities and 36 organizations working with active duty service members, veterans and their families, as well as at hospitals, clinics, yoga and meditation centers and other facilities in the US, and in facilities in Europe, Australia and other countries around the world. In addition, in 2010, both the US Army Surgeon-General and Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) confirmed iRest Yoga Nidra as a complementary practice (CAM) for the treatment of PTSD, and recommend iRest as a CAM for the management of chronic pain in Military and Veteran settings.

Currently, my non-profit, The Integrative Restoration Institute (IRI), runs trainings, workshops and retreats on iRest Meditation, as well as a three-level certification program for those wishing to become certified as an iRest meditation teacher. To date we've trained over 2,000 Level I teachers-in-training, with 150 certified teachers, 178 in certification, 15 trainers and 12 supervisors, all of whom deliver the iRest Program in locations throughout the world.

Sutra Journal: You are a scholar of Yoga, Tantra, Taoism and Buddhism. What led you to the academic study of these disciplines? Can you describe your areas of specialty?

Richard C. Miller: I first became involved in these teachings in 1970 as a way of both understanding myself, as well as furthering my grasp of how we each function as a psychological-physiological-sociological-spiritual human being. Along the way of my own psycho-physical-social-spiritual healing, I discovered what all these traditions ultimately aim to impart - our essential nondual nature - the Mystery and the very essence that has given birth to each of us, and to this entire universe.



While I have explored and experienced multiple spiritual and religious paths, I realized many decades ago that, for me, it would be best to dig one well deeply, rather than dig many shallow wells. The path of Yoga, I would say, chose me as that well to dig all the way to water, and this is what I have done. While digging this well, I've had the privilege to study with extraordinary teachers, both in the US and India, as well as discover the common thread, that I believe all spiritual paths share.

Along the way I contemplated how I could bring this understanding that I'd discovered, not only to the folks who would naturally attend my regular offerings, but also to those who might otherwise not have access to these precious teachings. I've been fortunate to share this dream by bringing iRest Meditation into homeless shelters, VA and military settings, into prisons, and to pre-school through college youth, as well as to women who have been rescued from human trafficking in the US, India and Nepal. So one specialty that I engage is helping people heal through their pain and suffering and reclaim their human dignity and well-being.

My primary interest and therefore specialty remains the same - to bring an end to human suffering and help people awaken to their essential nondual nature.

My desire is that everyone with whom I work brings an end to their perception of separation and suffering, and realizes that fundamentally, every sentient and insentient being and object, including themselves, is an expression of the Mystery - the essential nature that underlies all of life.

Sutra Journal: You are a clinical psychologist as well as a religious studies scholar. Was it a spontaneous decision on your part to take a multidisciplinary approach to healing? Did you have to reconcile widely divergent worldviews in order to do so?

Richard C. Miller: Early on in my training as a psychologist, I was fortunate to meet a mentor who had recently arrived in the US from the Far East who helped me understand and integrate the essential teachings of Western psychology and Eastern spiritual teachings. Thus, from the beginning of my training, I knew no separation between these seemingly different fields of understanding. This mentor came into my life in an unexpected way where, through her guidance, I felt that life was choosing me for this work. I've come to recognize that my life and work are mission-driven.

I've come to realize that I'm not living life; life is living me!

When I adopted this understanding and came into harmony with what life wanted of me, deep peace spilled over into my daily life and my work in the world.

With regard to reconciling divergent views, I've realized that at their root, seemingly divergent positions convey the same message. Western and Eastern perspectives are both concerned with deep healing, peace, freedom, and awakening to our fullest human potential.

Sutra Journal: Have you had powerful experiences at an early age that pointed the way to your future direction? Could you attempt to describe them?

Richard C. Miller: Several experiences come to mind. The first occurred when I was around 2 years of age. Suddenly, my sister appeared in front of me, as well as the walls and interior contents of the room in which I stood. Years later, I came to realize that in that moment, my sense of being a separate self came on line. Before that moment I knew no separation.

A second event occurred when I was thirteen, while visiting my grandmother during spring vacation. Lying down one evening, pondering the night-time sky, I began to wonder where the end of the universe was. Suddenly all sense of separation dissolved and I found myself being the entire universe - not separate - experiencing a felt-sense of the underlying Mystery that underlies everything. While this experience slowly faded into the background, it left an indelible impression that followed me into my adult years.

These two experiences presaged the awakening I was to have in my adult years, first during the Yoga class I took in 1970 where all sense of separation fell away and the spontaneous vow arose within me to spend my life inquiring into this sense of no-separation; and second when all sense of separation



fell away some years ago. Since then, to this day, while my senses and mind perceive borders, boundaries, and separate objects, something within has been restored that knows no sense of separation. I've come to realize the self as simply a function, one among many, that arises within, and is not-separate from the Mystery that is truly who I am, and everything is!

Sutra Journal: Who do you consider your main teachers and what are the biggest lessons they have for us? Can you tell us a bit about your experiences with them?

Richard C. Miller: I've been fortunate to have many exquisite teachers in my life. In the order that they came into my life, they are: Laura Cummings, J. Krishnamurti, Joel Kramer, Da Free John, Stephen Chang, Swami Bua, Nisargadatta, Dada Gavand, TKV Desikachar, Jean Klein, Ramesh Balsekar, and Suzanne Segal. I have also been greatly influenced by the teachings of so many sages who had long passed on before I came to know their teachings, including Ramana Maharsi, Shankaracarya, Abhinavagupta and Lakshmanjoo. Of all these teachers, Jean Klein was my sat-guru, the one who helped me realize the truth of our essential nature and the Mystery of non-separation.

While Jean helped me realize the ultimate understanding, all of these teachers, in their own way, conveyed to me the same message: know thyself! They all gave me the incredible gift of being exquisite vessels for the truth of non-separation and the Mystery from which we all emerge. I also respect that none of these teachers tried to hold me captive. They were only interested in helping me realize true freedom: from myself, from them as a teacher, from the teachings, and from searching. They were all interested in finding truth!

Sutra Journal: What are the results of the medical and scientific research you have conducted on the effects of Yoga Nidra on traumatic disorders, brain injury, chemical dependency and others? Can you give us a couple of examples that stand out?

Richard C. Miller: There are so many results that I've seen from the research with iRest that it would take pages to describe all that's been discovered. I point readers who are interested to my website where I list the results of research studies that have been done with iRest (www.irest.us/research). That said, several important themes stand out. To date, all the populations and issues we've studied have been helped through the iRest Meditation program. All the trend lines we look for have been in the right direction, i.e., decreases in PTSD, depression and anxiety symptoms, increases in restful sleep, increases in well-being, and so on.

Among all of these, one significant result stands out prominently in my mind. Countless times I've been with attendees at homeless shelters, VA settings and other sites where, after receiving iRest for the first time, people say to me when I ask for their reflections, "I feel like I just came home!" When I hear this, the hair on the back of my neck stands up, as I feel the impact that the practice has brought to their lives.

Sutra Journal: As a Yogic scholar familiar with Hindu and Buddhist terminology of skandhas, samskaras, chitta, manas, buddhi and ahamkara, as well as a clinical psychologist trained in western psychoanalytic theory, have you drawn parallels between the results of your treatment on patients and what the ancient texts describe? In other words, what is happening to these people from a Vedic/Tantric perspective and how does this tally with your training as a psychologist?

Richard C. Miller: Vedic/Tantric and psychological traditions are interested in freedom, but from different perspectives. Western psychology emphasizes individuation and self-actualization as a separate self.

The Yogic traditions recognize the self as a function; one among many that is genetically engineered into the body (which modern day neuroscience validates). The Yogic traditions realize that while the five senses and mind work together to provide a sense of separation, we have within us, innately, another function, that for most people remains asleep, as a vestigial organ. Eastern teachings emphasize that this function can awaken so that we are restored to the tacit and intuitive realization of our non-separation; that each of us is a unique but not-separate expression of the underlying Mystery within which all of life arises.

I have witnessed a slow shift in psychological theory since I first began in 1970, whereby the field now recognizes what ancient Yogic practitioners have known all along: that spiritual experience is a

part of the continuum of human experience. May I dare here to venture my opinion that in the years to come, mainstream psychological theory will embrace and incorporate the understanding of non-separation and not-self as an aspect of our human potential!

Sutra Journal: Is there a fundamental divide in how western science views the 'Self' and how it is viewed in the Dharmic worldview?

Richard C. Miller: Absolutely. Within both Western science and Eastern perspectives we see this divide. On the one hand we have the Western materialists whose view is that consciousness is derived from matter. On the other hand we have Westerners whose view is that matter is derived and not-separate from consciousness. We see these same two views in traditional Eastern perspectives, as well.

Interestingly, the Western materialistic view is being thoroughly challenged by neuroscience and quantum research, which are revealing two distinct ways the brain perceives reality: 1) from a dualistic time-space, separate self-material perspective, and 2) from a non-local, no time-space, no-self, no-separation perspective.

We could say then, that both perspectives are real. That said, while the non-dual perspective does not negate duality, the dualistic view does negate non-duality. From my perspective and experience, both views are! The Mystery that gives rise to both views, welcomes both views, and knows that both are expressions of this underlying Mystery that lies beyond all objective and subjective, and dualistic and nondual views.

Sutra Journal: What is meant by somatic healing and transpersonal psychology, and how do they differ from the more conventional modalities?

Richard C. Miller: The mind and body are one, not two. True healing occurs at three levels: the physical - somatic - as well as at the psychological and spiritual level. The mind is part of the somatic, so true healing is always experienced at a somatic, felt-sensed level.

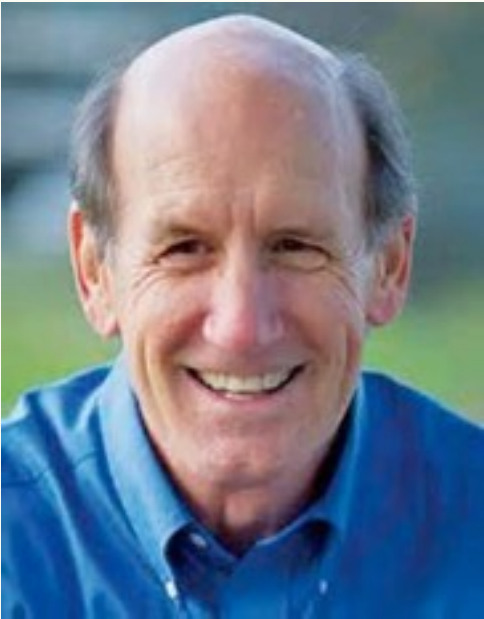
When psychological and/or spiritual healing takes place, we register it at a somatic level where something now 'feels right', where before something felt 'off'. Until the somatic - body - is included, true healing hasn't truly taken place.

Transpersonal psychology, by definition, goes beyond traditional, conventional, personal and individual levels of understanding. It recognizes experiences in which the felt-sense of separate self-identity extends beyond (trans) individual or personal identity, and encompasses wider aspects of human potential. Transpersonal psychology often falls within a dualistic framework, as it posits a reality that's 'beyond' (trans) and different from ordinary reality. The perspective I have experienced and teach is one where the Mystery is not something 'other' or 'trans', but is here, now, in this and every moment, and is not apart or special from everyday life. We can experience both the personal and the non-personal (or trans) in this moment. Life will always be experienced as a paradox!

Sutra Journal: Can you name a few books and authors who have made a big impact on you and perhaps changed the way you see yourself and the world around you?

Richard C. Miller: Wow! What a request! My mind swims with the books that have impacted my life and perspective. Of course, I'd have to first mention the books by my teacher, Jean Klein, especially *The Ease of Being* and *The Flame of Transmission*. Beyond these, I think of *The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, and *I Am That* (Sri Nisargadatta). I love Linda Graham's new book, *Bouncing Back*, that integrates insights from the perspectives of psychology, spirituality and neuroscience; Hood's book, *The Self Illusion*, which examines how our social brain creates a sense of identity as a separate individual where, in fact, no separate self exists. I also love Almaas' latest writings, *Runaway Realization*, where he posits enlightenment as a drive, much like our drive for safety, sex, and food. I've received great joy in reading Brazier's book, *The Feeling Buddha*, which shows the human side of Buddha, as well as Rahula's book, *What the Buddha Taught*, which I've read cover to cover countless times over the years. I'm constantly recommending Jaidev Singh's books on Kashmir nondualism, especially *The Vijñānabhairava* and *The Siva Sutras*, which also makes me think of *The Radiance Sutras* by Lorin Roche. I could go on and on, as I'm a constant reader of old and new books, with three or four by my side that I'm reading.

There's no end to learning. What I love about the Mystery... it's always new, always fresh, forever changing and deepening, yet always recognizably the same. Life is a paradox! Thanks for asking!



Richard C. Miller, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, author, researcher, yogic scholar and spiritual teacher who, for the past 45 years, has devoted his life and work to integrating the ancient nondual wisdom teachings of Yoga, Tantra, Advaita, Taoism, and Buddhism with modern Western psychology. Richard is the founding president of the Integrative Restoration Institute, co-founder of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, founding editor of the peer-reviewed International Journal of Yoga Therapy, and a founding member and past president of the Institute for Spirituality and Psychology.

Author of *The iRest Program for Healing PTSD* (New Harbinger), *Yoga Nidra: The Meditative Heart of Yoga* (Sounds True) and *iRest Meditation for Health, Healing and Well Being* (Sounds True), Richard serves as a research consultant for the iRest Meditation protocol that he developed (Integrative Restoration ~ iRest), a modern adaptation of the ancient nondual practice of Yoga Nidra, documenting its efficacy on health, healing, and well-being with diverse populations that include active-duty soldiers, veterans, children, youth, college students, seniors, the homeless, the incarcerated, and people experiencing issues such as sleep disorders, PTSD, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, chemical dependency, and anxiety. He additionally researches iRest's efficacy for enhancing resiliency, well-being, and compassion.

In 1983, after decades of searching, Richard met his spiritual mentor, Jean Klein, who introduced him to the non-path, non-method, and non-goal realization of nonduality. Richard now shares the paradox of nondual instruction through international training sessions, meditation retreats on awakening, and the integration of enlightened living into daily life. For information on Richard's teachings visit www.irest.us.



Vikram Zutshi is a writer-producer-director based in Los Angeles. After several years in indie film and network TV production, then a stint as Creative Executive at 20th Century Fox and later in International Sales/Acquisitions at Rogue Entertainment, he went solo and produced two feature films before transitioning into Directing. His debut feature was filmed at various points along the two thousand mile US-Mexico border and has since been globally broadcast.

He is a passionate Yogi and writes frequently on Shamanism, Metaphysics, Buddhism, Shaivism, Culture, Art and Cinema.

As a photojournalist, Vikram often travels on photo expeditions to SE Asia and Latin America and is involved with a number of charities that empower and educate street children in India, Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam and Cambodia.

He is currently prepping his next two films, a 'mystical screwball comedy'-called *The Byron Project* and a feature documentary on the global yoga movement.



Ajanta

WHO ARE THE NAGAS?

A JOURNEY INTO EMBODIED AWARENESS

By Virochana Khalsa

A Naga is a subtle elemental entity with a predominance of watery, somewhat spacious essence who resides primarily within the subtle dimensions of our earth. In such kingdoms reside individuals ranging from relative beginners to masters of almost incomprehensible development expressing through all levels of creation in an enlightened continuum.

There is a somewhat common, but mistaken view of Nagas as snake beings, although there is a connection, just as the kundalini is often associated with the movement of a snake. In this article I will share a few of my experiences with these beings and in the process touch upon a few insights into how we embody within our mother earth.

While the shape of a human is unmistakable, composed of 2 arms, 2 legs, a head, and so on; there is no single image one can give for how a Naga looks, because there is an adaptability of form. In-

deed, there are Nagas who can become a physically present human, a whale, a sensual current, a great cloud of presence, a sacred movement, or an underlying essence of light to touch upon the possibilities. The concept of individuality is different than the stark separations and clear boundaries which our human society dwells in. What is it then that defines a Naga and differentiates such a being from the human realm? To answer that we will need to dive within.

NECTAR AS IDENTITY

Nectars are at the root of embodied life, both physical and non-physical. From our sexual nature, to the aliveness in our heart or pleasure in the center of your head, a nectar is an alive substance that is tangibly felt. They are concentrated essence bridging between the realms and composed of elemental or essential qualities, and here we come back to my earlier statement of Nagas having a predominance towards the water element.

Nectars ground our identity and give presence. They can elicit subtle emotion along with expanding our connectivity through feeling, thus making the spiritual path enjoyable, even blissful. You can regenerate your body through their cultivation, or form the support for a deeper dissolving and wakeful definition in the unlimited expanse of our oneness. Touching into them is a simple and basic awareness we all have, and yet the ability to remain in their essence as bindu is an advanced and often unspoken quality developed through meditative practice and purifying into our enlightened nature.

Just as we humans relate to terra firma - walking, talking, and interacting within our constructs of reality, a Naga is at home within a more subtle fluid-like transparent quality, yet still connected to our earth.

Within the intertwining of our physicality and subtleness, between the various aspects of our earth, on the boundaries of our mental structures, and in the many holographic re-creations of our universe - are membranes between the so-called realms. It is on these membranes that our nectar-shakti is cultivated, contained, and flows to hold and support the personified images within a particular realm. A practical awareness of this is a specialty of Naga wisdom, and gives a degree of siddha, or abilities inherent through this multidimensional connection.

OUR SOUL EMBODIED IN MOTHER EARTH

As we develop and gain definition in our meditative subtlety, the subtle make-up of creation, such as our earth or another being, likewise unveils itself in whatever direction our glance moves to, in essence mirroring our own inner development.



Sanchi

Resting above the crown of my head and reflecting into the earth, I have differentiated five realms of subtle existence. Our surface reality needs no introduction. In the next 30 miles or so is supported a physical-like strata many go through in their dreams and which receives numerous impressions of our daily life. Of course there is rock in our earth all the way to the center; but that is not what we are talking about here, just as there are physical tissues in our body as we center within its spaciousness.

The third layer under this is much more subtle, primarily supporting a causal awareness, and few consciously touch upon it. The fourth and fifth realms are extremely subtle and require a development beyond the scope of this article to explore, other than to say that one can travel anywhere in the universe from deep within the earth.

Deep in this case is the depth of inner awakening.

Just because you may visualize going into the center of the earth, it does not indicate you have awakened to this depth, as it requires the subjective maturity, and in fact a yogi does not project anywhere as it is all within. These models are simply a helpful modality which gives a psychological support.

A soul wanting to evolve through the long term support of mother earth, will anchor their seed in its core.

Remember the earlier emphasis on the boundaries or membranes between the realms? Well as we have experiences on this earth, they make impressions both within us and also in the subtle tissues of our earth.

There is this illusion that a person gradually and consistently evolves between lifetimes of their own accord. Until there is enough ability to remain awake in the continuum through a higher development, it is more like the bobbing up and down of a cork in the ocean, stimulated here, and forgetting there, while tossed by the interdependent play of desire and the senses, a fragment of our potential.

And yet, there is a potential for a continuum of development, a relative connectivity through lifetimes, so how does it occur?

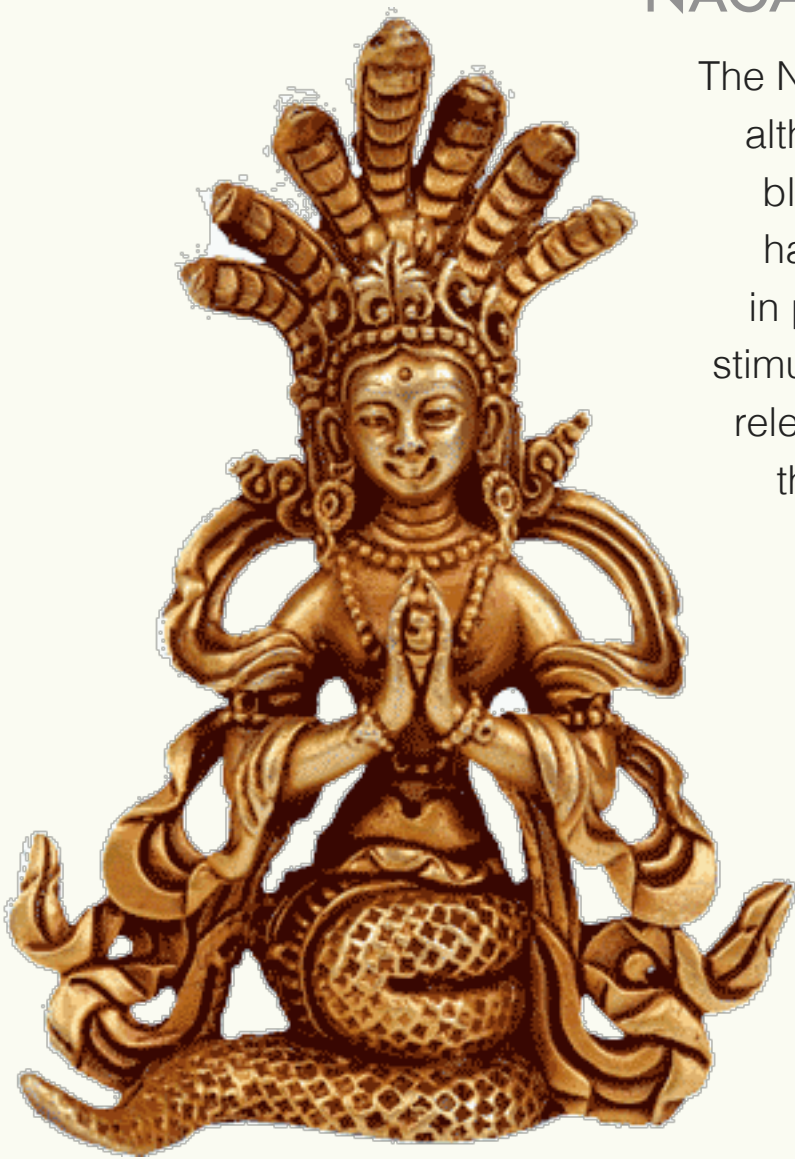
An analogy will help. Think of our collective spirit in the core of the earth like a bright projector lamp, and the images on these boundaries like a piece of film. As the light shines through the film, it re-creates the subtle images upon our surface calling us forth into their evolvments and continuum.

NAGA KINGDOMS

The Naga kingdoms primarily reside in the 2nd and 3rd realms, although they touch upon our surface as well but remain invisible to most people. That does not however mean that they have no effect in our world, or ours in their world. The Nagas in particular know the nature of these boundaries and how to stimulate the impressions living on them, and to even wash and release them upon the timing of the great mother, who is all those who are awake within that moment.

An intuitive estimate is that about 20% of us have deeply anchored into the core of our planet, either initially or through evolvment. It may not be something we are aware of explicitly, but there is a deep down feeling about it.

The remaining individuals have entered her through the surface layers of their psyche, and from this perspective are not fully here, simultaneously reflecting a kind of fragmentation within themselves. It is another way of looking at the disconnection between our souls and embodied lives. This is not judgmental, as our universe is a big place and we travel within it over the eons of our journey into embodied enlightenment.





Hampi

As the more difficult emotional and mental impressions are stimulated and released from the subtle layers of our earth over the coming decades, the essence of the incompletions themselves still remain in each person's subtle makeup and tissues of their body. When that person dies, and those images are no longer simultaneously present in our earth, there is no magnetic attraction pulling one back to them, and the samsaras will look for another place to ground in our universe.

This is a turning of the wheel, one that is always, albeit slowly turning. As the wheel turns to support a more unified expression, a kind of permission comes into the innate awareness of adepts who know how to facilitate this clearing to bring forth a greater transparency of the oneness of life. The analogies given here are simplistic in what is in reality an almost incomprehensible, interwoven matrix, but the essence of this remains true. This is not just individual clarification, as many will understand to a greater degree what collective karma means and make choices where they stand within the social structures shaping their life source. If amidst these stimulations, one internalizes self-responsibility, there is greater opportunity of knowing oneself and growth; indeed a blessed time.

But to think that the human psyche is in control of that timing is arrogance, and so to think we are the pinnacle of life, while in fact there is a great interplay of many forms of consciousness, is an arrogance that might be our downfall.

Life on our planet is not just respecting our physical resources, but also honoring the type of thoughts and emotions we have, and recognizing that this can also be either a blessing or pollution we are placing within this, our larger body.

A PRACTICE

Many sacred practices, primarily of a tantric holistic nature, are held and treasured in the Naga realms, of which I have received a number through transmission and dreams. Some are personal, and some involving a larger service in the collective. While most of these are beyond the scope of this article, here is a simple one.

In a dream, a Naga friend came to meet me while I was sitting in my meditation spot in our dome. He took a knife and very quickly cut through the surface layers of a woman's body, like flaying a fish, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch deep, and as doing so brought forth an ecstatic release of energy exposed from the within it.

As a meditation, sit still sensing the wholeness of your body and its interior space. Within that interior transparency, imagine a skin like membrane about a half inch to an inch or so underneath your skin. Make it paper thin, electric, and shimmering with a bright fluid sensual energy with a positive life-force. Let it heal you, making you strong and vital, while keeping the primary weight of your effortless focus in the heart or above.

DRAGONS

As we awaken our kundalini in a stabilized sensitivity of our larger environment, a type of subtle elemental (essence) body is developed which becomes a vehicle of expression. Moving through our earth, this is like the kundalini currents within it. Such a presence can sometimes be large covering hundreds of miles and influencing the feeling and nature of a country.

The maturing of this can be called a dragon, inferring a quality of elemental potency and expanse, but they are not like picture book dragons, although your mind can use that representation if it needs to.



Hampi

The evolutionary evolution of a Naga is to become a dragon of enlightened expression. Likewise human practitioners also frequently develop this ability, and many if not most of the great yogis and yoginis have done so. An example being Ramana of Arunachala who often visits me in that form.

LIMITATIONS

There is a vast range of realization within the Naga realms. Some get caught up on the sensual currents and forget themselves, becoming trapped in the sexual and drug energy of humans for example.

Once I was asked to teach a 3-day retreat within the middle of an alternative tantra scene. I would not have normally done so, but there was a reason. The night before I flew on the plane, a dragon came in my dreams and started vibrating the layers of the earth underneath the place I would be teaching with this beautiful orange light. This was stimulating the release of many images from the earth, having outwardly positive or negative affect on each individual depending on how they internalized it or not.

As this continued the head of a dragon would materialize out of the light for a moment, and the background voices were saying, is it a god or a demon, and the dragon was telepathically broadcasting to me, "Where do you put the power?", meaning if centered beyond the individual or not.

Then he would dissolve and continue to increase the vibratory mainly orange light within the earth, and again people would say is it a demon or a god, and again he would silently transmit in a booming voice to me, "Where do you put the power?". This happened a number of times.

On arriving, I became aware that there was a young Naga spirit entrapped within the sensual energy that the group had created, and my body went into a fever transmuting it, sleeping a few hours per night during the retreat. While teaching for the 8 hours a day or so, the fever would go, but would return the moment I finished a session. This was a secret work, for which no one knew the real reason I was there. In the years following, it ended up shifting the energy of the whole area which is sacred, and is now one of the areas I live in.

Many in the Naga realms do not relate to the human way of things and often make fun of it, laughing amongst each other. For example, the seriousness at which humans look upon death. A number of times they have come in my dreams, digging bodies out of grave yards, mocking funerals, and just making fun of the social fabric which humans bind themselves in.



TRANSMUTATION

To transmute something, one has to become it. Thoughts and dramas impress themselves in our cells and upon the earth. After a while this creates an opaqueness to our light, further compounding ignorance and fear. Such is the environment we all live in today, and there is a lot to lighten up.

Nagas, because of their connection to the water element are associated with disease, and some people give them the power to curse us with it – but in reality it comes about from the accumulation of our own collective thoughts.

Every action has a reaction, every thought through all time must either be dissolved or evolved, as all is consciousness.

The dishonoring of our earth and the grossness of our perceptions will eventually create dis-ease. As our fabric is stimulated for the removal of toxic thoughts, hopefully we can work with it intelligently instead of as an outer force thrown upon us.

A great trust is slowly developed between those who know each other as pure in heart, who are willing to help in this transmutation, typically with skillful means and a transcendent anchor. Of all the powers, abilities, skills – Love is the one that can most open and bring forth new opportunity into a hopeless situation. May the sharp eye of our discernment rest upon a heart-filled love.

ENLIGHTENED COMMUNITY

There exists a lot of Love and a number of great masters in the Naga community. As I hope you have caught glimpse of, for an enlightened being the limitations of a human, Naga, or other form as the sole expression, has dropped away. So many, but not all, of the great masters, known and unknown to the greater populace, are also in these realms. The Nagas are one expression, and there are others.

They are very involved with the welfare of our earth, and it would help if people can understand that this earth is the mother for a number of beings, visible and invisible, of which there are many forms. Some of those forms are more corporeal than others, and when we understand our own nature as consciousness-first, then there is a greater opportunity to awaken into this awareness.

They are very involved with the welfare of our earth, and it would help if people can understand that this earth is the mother for a number of beings, visible and invisible, of which there are many forms.

Recently I had a couple of bad horse accidents, worse than most people realized, and a number of times I was breaths away from leaving this body. These things are always opportunities. Sometimes it was all I could do to get my body to the dome, and then meditate for 3 or 4 hours in an inner flame. One of these times, a great female Naga adept from South India, whom I knew well, visited me in her subtle body along with a Naga King typically residing in the Himalayas. Clinging to the human body for my dharma, they presented me the choice to come back into their realm fully: a place of honoring, a transparency, where the blending of individual and the greater oneness is naturally understood. I was given the opportunity to embrace particular practices that I love within the reflections of a more enlightened community, although there are still challenges in these realms as well.

I have had this choice a few times, in different ways, and this was something I had to seriously consider. Walking back from the dome, the one I call my Sat Guru, placed his arm on my shoulder and assured me that I would live, and he has continued to back up this assurance with his help. It is the choice-less choice, to know one's dharma created in freedom and the innate wisdom of love.

Find the images you have created within yourself, within the earth, and evolve them. Discover who you are, and take courage in your decisions in that pure elevated place.

CONCLUSION

I hope to have transmitted at least a glimmer of the great life we live within, and whatever each of our journeys are within that, I hope that we can bring enough wisdom and love to it and each other.

These journeys within the earth and stars, within our own precious human body, are but a reflection within a non-dual awareness. When you sit and meditate, know that you have the potential within you to experience it all, and honor that pure, simple space within your body through which your spirit flows. There is no need to search for experience outside of yourself, rather through the natural uprising of purity and potency of practice, these things present themselves. Keep it internalized as it matures, and may all beings be blessed by and in your light.



Virochana Khalsa has taught Kriya, Tantra, and ways of working consciously in the earth for 35 years in a dozen countries. He is the author of 4 books including *Eternal Yoga: Awakening into Buddhist Consciousness and Tantra of the Beloved*, is a co-creator of Sacred Mountain Retreat, and has a software company Silver Earth. From designing computer chips at Caltech, to working with street people; from years spent building a retreat in the mountains of Crestone, and a life of joyful Sadhana, Virochana immerses himself in everything he does. He lives primarily in Colorado and Maui, rides Arabian horses, and loves meditation.



Himalaya

YOGAVASISTHA II: REFLECTIONS ON ACTION AND DISPASSION

By Mary Hicks

This is part two of a twelve part series.

The YV expands its scope beyond the political history, but many of the puzzles that Mahabharata (MB) raised provide the foundation for the philosophical reflection in the YV.

Near the end of the Mahabharata (MB), the author Vyasa says, “Whatever is found elsewhere in other texts is also found in this book. Whatever is not found in this book is nowhere else to be found.” The Yogavasistha (YV) falls in the genre of MB in terms of the wisdom contained therein. Instead of the historical narratives and genealogies in which these nuggets of wisdom are embedded in the Mahabharata, the YV chooses parables and fanciful stories to describe the same reality. Just like the epitome that holds the deep wisdom in the MB is the Bhagavadgita, YV contains the Siddhagita, the Song of the Siddhas. Although only one third in size of the MB,

the YV expands its scope beyond the political history, but many of the puzzles that MB raised provide the foundation for the philosophical reflection in the YV.



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Among the many that have been raised in the Bhagavadgita, (BG) the most essential issues are those that address the human destiny and the human struggle to find its relevance in time and its quest for the transcendence over temporality. In my reading, the most essential question that surrounds the BG is the issue of action and wisdom. The intricate balance between these is at times perplexing, and one can read the BG as either instructing the primacy of action or of wisdom. The exegetical traditions have exploited this ambivalence and have buttressed their own theological positions. At times, the text appears to accommodate a God-centric worldview, unsettling other philosophers who read the text as simply stressing one's own duties and rightful actions.

YV is a response to questions such as, if everything is predestined and all that happens is because the God wants it so, why should an individual bother with any action? And the response found in the text has given rise to philosophical perspectives that have evolved over a millennium.

ARJUNA AND RAMA

This is just one side of the narrative. The frustration Arjuna feels in the beginning of the BG is the same that Rama expresses in the initial sections of the YV. By evoking the memory of Ramayana and

introducing the protagonists such as Rama, Janaka, Vasistha, and Visvamitra, the YV is also setting the stage in the cultural paradigm woven in the fabric of the Ramayana. The first two sections of the YV, on Dispassion and on the Behavior of a Seeker, are the subtexts for the narratives on which the protagonist Rama finds himself engaged with the enlightened masters such as Vasistha.

The text is entirely grounded on the premise of Advaita philosophy, and the very first question of the first section is an effort to respond to a consequently emerging question: if the self is eternally free and subjects are not really bound, what is the requirement for the guru or the scriptures?

YV responds to this self-imposed question with the narrative of Suka, a major character in the Bhagavata Purana and the son of Vyasa, the author of MB. All the conversations regarding Suka depict him as an enlightened being. In this narrative found in the YV, Suka appears at the gate of King Janaka, and while waiting, enters the highest meditative state of absorption. Janaka comes and affirms that what Suka has realized is in fact the highest state of the self. The text is suggesting is that although the self is eter-

nally free and in reality we all are enlightened at the core, we need a master to confirm our experience. Without guidance, our experience takes us in different directions, and we are confused as to which one is to be seen as the absolute.

Running parallel to the stage of the MB, the YV begins with the disillusionment of Rama, the noble hero and the incarnation of Visnu. Rama summarizes life as a sequence of frustrations: the child desires and is constantly thwarted, the adolescent desires and his heart is broken, the adult desires and regrets at the same time, and in old age regret for lost desire and unfulfilled desire dominate. Although staged differently, the central driving thrust is the same – a recognition of the meaninglessness of the human condition and an ardent desire to transcend the laws of nature that keep us bound, finite, and ignorant.

ROLE OF TIME

In the BG, Krishna explicitly identifies himself with time. In the YV, the author categorizes temporality in three different ways by which the seekers can find their temporal relevance. The first is metaphysical time, the time that is experienced in the form of days and nights or the seasons. The other time is that which makes us finite, the embodied time that results in the form of our death, and the time that is deified as Yama, as Kala, the god of death. The third is the time for the fruition of actions, the time that reveals the consequences of what we do, and this time has to come for everybody. The questions, whether our actions are required, or are things predestined, are linked with our temporality.



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Countering the fatalistic consequences that had swept the survivors of the battle of the MB, Vasishta critiques fatalism and repeatedly urges Rama to stay focused on action.

Although it may seem that things are there just the way they are supposed to be, and things will happen in the way they are destined to happen, the overarching position of the YV does not share this metaphysical worldview. The protagonist Rama is an action-hero, bound within the world, embodied here to seek for self-realization and not a fatalistic individual who has succumbed to depression with his philosophy of subjective illusionism.

In other words, things are in dynamism and while things change, it is incumbent on the individual to make change a reality.

The issue of action and wisdom that repeatedly appears in the BG is also the issue that is at the backdrop of the narratives that permeate the YV. If the narratives here are closely read, and if the philosophical stanzas are analyzed properly, the underlying philosophy that comes to prominence balances between action and wisdom. An integration of action and wisdom (jnana-karma-samuccaya) is not just possible but mandatory.

The text unfolds metaphorically, describing the paths to self-realization as the gateways to self-knowledge. The four fundamental qualities that are to be cultivated are self-control, inquiry, con-

tentment, and the company of the wise people. In this section the text is more concerned about practical philosophy rather than describing the nature of reality. What we understand from this is that the texts such as YV are not composed merely to describe what the truth is, but also to prescribe what the path is to recognize this reality.

METAPHOR

The YV repeatedly uses the terminology of maya, or avidya, and confirms that our recognition of the external world is grounded on one or another form of illusion. Although the first two sections are not as focused on this central metaphysics of subjective illusionism, the concepts are there to be found in the seminal form. In the first section, a single metaphor used, that of birds caught in a net, is sufficient to illustrate human conditioning: the more we try to free ourselves, the further we tie ourselves into the net. The fetters in this metaphor are our desires.

With strong attachments, subjects transform their self-identity into the objects of their desire. Whatever one desires, one becomes that.

The objective of instructing illusionism is not even to teach inaction (dispassion), but rather to disentangle the subjects from their long association with desires.

With strong attachments, subjects transform their self-identity into the objects of their desire. Whatever one desires, one becomes that. In order to defend this position, the author follows an underlying philosophy of the creativity of consciousness. The most baffling position for the readers of YV to reconcile is its metaphysical stance that all that manifests is the self alone in its true form of bliss and awareness, with the examples that the text repeatedly uses stressing subjective illusionism.

To read the YV is to engage philosophical logic metaphorically. The YV depicts normal human conditioning in terms of the actions of a mad horse. Every day the individual wakes up in the morning and runs in every direction to find something that even he himself does not know what it is. Our relations, our emotional entanglements with our families

and friends, they all give us this drunken madness and craving that becomes our defining force.

THE TREE

In describing his disillusionment, Rama also uses another metaphor, that of a tree, comparing the world with a forest. The individual's body is compared to a tree wherein a restless monkey lies, and which hosts worries in the form of crickets, and which is constantly eaten and being turned hollow from within by the insects. It is the very image of suffering without limits. The body in the form of the tree also hosts the thirst that acts like a venomous serpent, and is the abode of a crow, the metaphoric anger. We do have the flowers of laughter and the fruits that sustain us, and good and evil, and the tree sways to and fro, moved by the wind of the life force. This tree sustains both the birds of the senses and shelters the traveller, the subject with desire who takes refuge beneath it. The wide canopy of the tree offers shade in the form of pleasure and is also a seat for the vulture of egotism. The hollowness of the tree depicts the vanity of life in all regards. The body, composed of flesh and blood, cannot support what the dweller seeks to extract from it. While one seeks eternal happiness by being in the body, the only thing one gets as a consequence is old age and death.

The fundamental human problem that the text reiterates is our fixation on permanence. We take things for granted; we assume that things continue as they are without any change.

The fundamental human problem that the text reiterates is our fixation on permanence. We take things for granted; we assume that things continue as they are without any change. The two words the YV uses in these sections, jagat and samsara, are both meant to depict the transitoriness of the things with which we identify ourselves. These terms suggest the metaphysical dynamism that describes both the external cosmic reality and the mental reality embodied in the forms of imagination and memory. Reading the YV is to recognize that the self is the foundation for all that is in dynamism. Everything in the world is in flux. Actually, the world is flux itself and we stubbornly resist acceptance of this awareness. In order to describe this flow, the text uses the metaphor of a spinning wheel: just like the little insects caught in the wheel, we fail to recognize that it is spinning. We who are already inside the system that is solely defined by its dynamism fail to recognize this flux. The



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only reality in this depiction is the reality of momentariness. YV, however, seeks to ground this samsara, this dynamism, this jagat, on the foundation of the self, the pure awareness that is required for even the recognition of the dynamism.

Among all the characters, the author of YV shows Rama to be the person being tormented by the treacheries of life. Not only that Rama is the god, an incarnation of Visnu, the very name Rama derives from the verbal root $\sqrt{\text{ram}}$ which means to enjoy: Rama is the subject who enjoys. The allegory is noteworthy, as in the Advaita paradigm, the self is the very supreme Brahman and the essential nature of the individual self is pure bliss and pure awareness.

How can the self suffer although its essential nature is quite the opposite? How can the self fall for illusion although it is comprised of pure consciousness?

These are the two central puzzles that the text strives to solve in more than thirty thousand verses. The heroism of Rama in the narratives of the YV does not depend on him killing some naughty demons but on his ability to reflect upon himself, and his ability to face the demons within that perturb his blissful nature. Rama's narrative gives us hope that we all are capable of achieving liberation and that suffering is not unique to us.



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Suggested Readings:

- 1 Vasistha's Yoga. by Swami Venkatesananda, SUNY Press, 1993.
- 2 The Concise Yoga Vasistha, by Swami Venkatesananda, SUNY Press, 1995.

Reference Works:

- 1 Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha of Vālmīki (4 volumes) edited by Ravi Prakash Arya. Parimal Publications, 2005.
- 2 Seeing and Appearance, by Sthaneshwar Timalsina. Aachen: Shaker Verlag. 2006.



With undergraduate degrees in English (with Honors) and Art, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Claremont Graduate University, Mary Hicks continues to work as an artist and as editor for scholars in religious studies. Her watercolor paintings draw on Chinese philosophy, art, and Song dynasty ceramics, and Japanese art. In addition to memorizing Saṃskṛit texts, she has recently studied Nāgārjuna at university.
www.maryhicks.com



MY JOURNEY MAKING 'SOLD' IN SERVICE OF A BIGGER PLAN...

By Jane Charles

When I received a call from my friend, Director Jeffrey Brown, in early 2007, telling me that he had just read a book that he thought I should read, I had no idea that we would embark on an 8 year + journey together. That book was SOLD, the award-winning novel by Patricia McCormick and we're about to release the feature film based on the novel in March of 2016.

Films each have their own journey and SOLD's has not been an easy one. The subject is child trafficking, something I knew very little about before reading the novel. I had seen the film Born Into Brothels, as had Jeffrey, and had a vision of what brothel areas in India looked like but I had no idea that this is a global issue, a 150 billion dollar business, the 2nd highest grossing illegal crime in the world.

We optioned the book and a week later it was nominated for a National Book Award, then won a Quill Award. We knew that we had something that could introduce the world to human trafficking in a very personal way, through the eyes of one young girl named Lakshmi.

It was important to us that the film be as authentic as possible so we interviewed author Patricia McCormick about her research in writing the book and we followed her footsteps on our first few trips to India and Nepal, visiting NGO's (non-governmental agencies) that she had visited and speaking with survivors of trafficking aged 14 to 60. So many of their stories were similar.

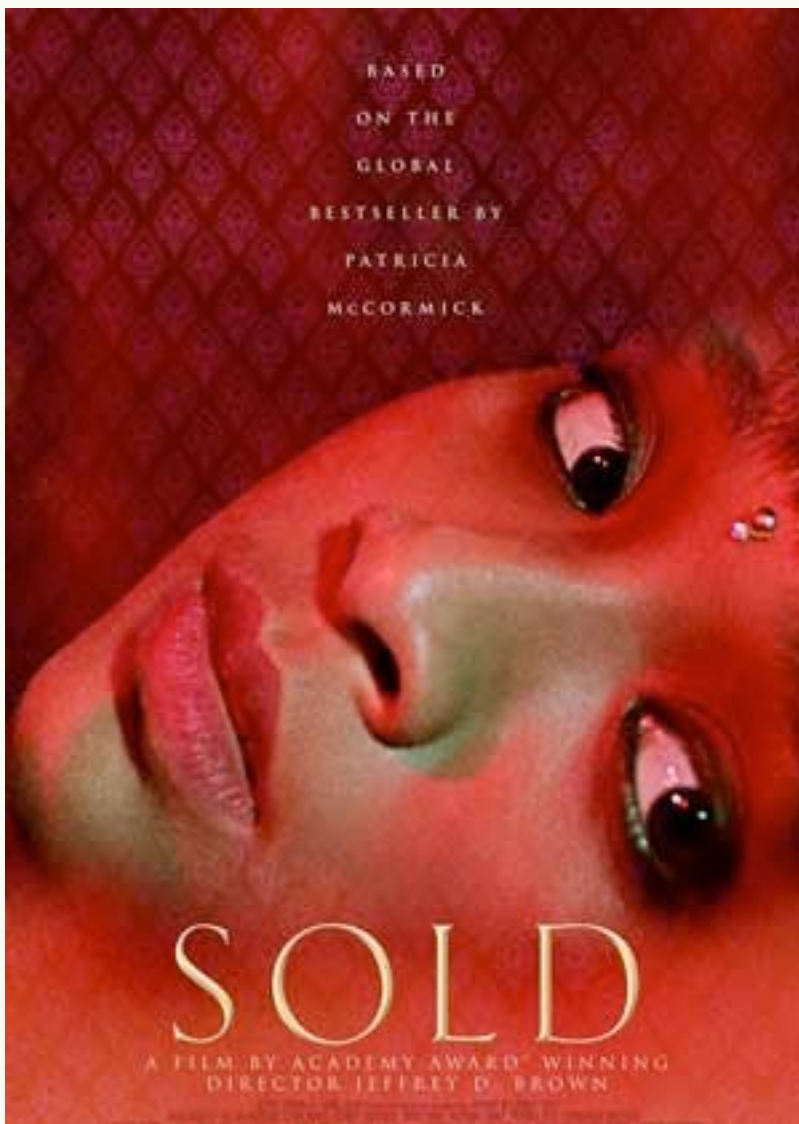
We learned about the day to day life in the brothel areas of India and visited a rescue facility, housing 150 girls when their capacity was 100 maximum. There were floors of girls from Nepal, Northern India and Bangladesh. We found out that many of them have to stay there for a year or even 2 until their traffickers are brought to trial before they can go home or be repatriated to their own country.

Seeing thousands of survivors and meeting hundreds of them, we carried their stories with us wherever we went and still do. The enormity of the issue was overwhelming at times and we were urgent to get our film made so that we could educate the world about what was happening.

Jeffrey and I traveled often, going to conferences about human trafficking, connecting with anti-trafficking organizations and raising funds to both make the film and for the grass roots organizations on the ground doing good work. We realized early on that, even before we had the film to show, we could talk about trafficking and garner support for projects and programs. We became activist and abolitionist filmmakers.

When people hear about this issue they either turn away because they don't want to hear about it or they want to do something to help right away. A group of women in Seattle, where I live, who were supporters of the film decided to go to India to see the issue first hand. Moved, devastated and motivated to do something they came back to Seattle and, together, we set out to find out what was happening in our own backyard. The 12 of us formed Stolen Youth (www.stolenyouth.org) and have now raised over 2.5 million to help support a coalition of anti-trafficking organizations locally in Seattle.

While funding and packaging the film, we were asked to help organize panels for the 2012 National Association of Attorneys General about how media can create change in issues like human trafficking. The panels were successful and we still hear from people as we're traveling that their AG returned from that NAAG summit and started creating programs to address human trafficking in their state.



A good friend from Canada, Martin Prihoda, had done some heart warming photographs of children in Nepal with Childreach International. He introduced us to Angie Windell and then Tshering Lama of Childreach and we started a relationship to protect the children of Nepal. We weren't sure what we would do together but we started talking about the root issues of trafficking and how we could help address them in Nepal. Tshering and Childreach created the TaughtNotTrafficked campaign to keep children in school in remote villages as a way to prevent trafficking. If you keep a child in school until the age of 16, they are 80% less likely to be trafficked. This is a campaign that can work for many countries and we're excited to be working with Childreach to make this happen.

Another gift came last year when Jeffrey met Richard Miller of iRest therapy and took the level 1 training. iRest is based on yoga nidra and has been used effectively to help veterans heal from PTSD. Jeffrey's vision was that iRest could be used to help heal the trauma of trafficking survivors so that they could go on to vocational training and better lives. Molly Birkholm, an iRest teacher became involved and the iRest Human Trafficking Relief team was born. We'll be raising funds for this program for Nepal and India as we release the film.

Making this film has changed my life. I thought the journey would be about how difficult this film was to make as an independent feature, to fund it, produce it and then distribute it and make sure that it has impact on the issue of human trafficking. That has been difficult, but the real challenge has been more personal. It's been about how to go on with life, how to maintain relationships, friendships, be a good parent, have a home, do good work, all while knowing that these atrocities are happening in the world. Knowing that there are very young children being held against their will, tortured and raped every day with no one to love and protect them... it's almost too much to bear. These children are all of ours, worldwide, and we need to protect them.

Now that the film is coming out and now that more of the world knows about these children and what's happening to them, I feel like I can share this burden and not feel so heavy carrying these stories around on my own. I still feel sad



much of the time but I'm getting better at being present to my family, friends and others knowing that we are making a difference. I'm feeling lighter when I meditate and I'm getting back to taking care of myself, exercising, doing my daily practice, finding my inner peace, staying in service to whatever this journey has in store.

Knowing about this issue has changed me forever and it has cracked me open to the immense suffering in the world, not just for these children but recognizing that there are people that need our help, our prayers, our service, everywhere and we can all do something every day to lessen someone's suffering. Even a smile, being present when someone needs an ear, comforting those in need, saying a few kind words and telling your friends and family that you love them. I am more vulnerable, more patient, more compassionate and closer to tears & laughter at the same time than ever before.

I can only hope that people who see SOLD, a film that so many people have worked so hard to create and bring to the world, will act and not walk away. We can change the world one small act at a time.

www.soldthemovie.com

www.stolenyouth.org

<https://www.facebook.com/SOLDmovie>

#TaughtNotTrafficked

@soldmovie on Twitter





Khajuraho

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY ON “TRUE ART”

INTRODUCTION

Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) was a Ceylonese Tamil philosopher and metaphysician, as well as a pioneering historian and philosopher of Indian art, particularly art history and symbolism, and an early interpreter of Indian culture to the West. He was born in Colombo, Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, to the Ceylonese Tamil legislator and philosopher Sir Muthu Coomaraswamy and his English wife Elizabeth Beeby. His father – a Sri Lankan Tamil Brahmin – died when Ananda was two years old, and Ananda spent much of his childhood and education abroad. Through 1932, from his base in Boston, he produced two kinds of publications: brilliant scholarship in his curatorial field but also graceful introductions to Indian and Asian art and culture, typified by *The Dance of Shiva*, a collection of essays that

remain in print to this day. Deeply influenced by René Guénon, he became one of the founders of the Traditionalist School.

Along with René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon, Coomaraswamy is regarded as one of the three founders of Perennialism, also called the Traditionalist School.

His books and essays on art and culture, symbolism and metaphysics, scripture, folklore and myth, and still other topics, offer a remarkable education to readers who accept the challenges of his resolutely cross-cultural perspective and his insistence on tying every point he makes back to sources in multiple traditions. He once remarked, "I actually think in both Eastern and Christian terms—Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Pali, and to some extent Persian and Chinese. While serving as a curator to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in the latter part of his life, he devoted his work to the explication of traditional metaphysics and symbolism. His writings of this period are filled with references to Plato, Plotinus, Clement, Philo, Augustine, Aquinas, Shankara, Eckhart and other mystics. When asked what he was foremostly, he said that he was a "metaphysician", referring to the concept of perennial philosophy, or *sophia perennis*.

He built a bridge between East and West that was designed to be two-way: among other things, his metaphysical writings aimed at demonstrating the unity of the Vedanta and Platonism.

Along with René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon, Coomaraswamy is regarded as one of the three founders of Perennialism, also called the Traditionalist School. Several articles by Coomaraswamy on the subject of Hinduism and the perennial philosophy were published posthumously in the quarterly journal *Studies in Comparative Religion* alongside articles by Schuon and Guénon among others. Although born in the Hindu tradition, he had a deep knowledge of the Western tradition as well as a great expertise in, and love for, Greek metaphysics, especially that of Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism.

He built a bridge between East and West that was designed to be two-way: among other things, his metaphysical writings aimed at demonstrating the unity of the Vedanta and Platonism. His works also sought to rehabilitate original Buddhism, a tradition that Guénon had for a long time limited to a rebellion of the Kshatriyas against Brahmin authority.

"Alan Antliff documents (...in *I Am Not A Man, I Am Dynamite*) how the Indian art critic and anti-imperialist Ananda Coomaraswamy combined Nietzsche's individualism and sense of spiritual renewal with both Kropotkin's economics and with Asian idealist religious thought. This combination was offered as a basis for the opposition to British colonization as well as to industrialization.

Excerpt from "The Essential Ananda K. Coomaraswamy," pp. 129-130

"Primitive man, despite the pressure of his struggle for existence, knew nothing of such merely functional arts. The whole man is naturally a metaphysician, and only later on a philosopher and psychologist, a systematist. His reasoning is by analogy, or in other words by means of an 'adequate symbolism'. As a person rather than an animal he knows immortal though mortal things."

"...Primitive man made no real distinction of the sacred from the secular: his weapons, clothing, vehicles and house were all of them imitations of divine prototypes, and were to him even more what they mean than what they were in themselves; he made them this 'more' by incantation and by rites. Thus he fought with thunderbolts, put on celestial garments, rode in a chariot of fire, saw in his roof the starry sky, and in himself more than 'this man' So-and-so. All these things belonged to the 'Lesser Mysteries' of the crafts and to the knowledge of the 'Companions'. Nothing of it remains to us but the transformation of the bread in sacrificial rites, and in the reference to its prototype of the honor paid to an icon."

"The Indian actor prepares for his performance by prayer. The Indian architect is often spoken of as visiting heaven and there making notes of the prevailing forms of architecture, which he imitates here below. All traditional architecture, in fact, follows a cosmic pattern. Those who think of their house as only a 'machine to live in' should judge their point of view by that of Neolithic man, who also lived in a house, but a house that embodied a cosmology. We are more than sufficiently provided with overheating systems: we should have found his house uncomfortable; but let us not forget that he identified the column of smoke that rose from his hearth to disappear from view through a hole in the roof with the Axis of the Universe, [that he] saw in this luffer [louvre – opening] an image of the Heavenly Door, and in [the] hearth the Navel of the Earth, formulae that we at the present day are hardly capable of understanding; we, for whom 'such knowledge as is not empirical is meaningless'. Most [of] the things that Plato called 'ideas' are only 'superstitions' to us."

“To have seen in his artifacts nothing but the things themselves, and in the myth a mere anecdote would have been a mortal sin, for this would have been the same as to see in oneself nothing but the ‘reasoning and mortal animal’, to recognize only ‘this man’, and never the ‘form of humanity’. It is just insofar as we do now see only the things as they are in themselves, and only ourselves as we are in ourselves, that we have killed the metaphysical man and shut ourselves up in the dismal cave of functional and economic determinism. Do you begin to see now what I meant by saying that works of art consistent with the *Philosophia Perennis* cannot be divided into the categories of the utilitarian and the spiritual, but pertain to both worlds, functional and significant, physical and metaphysical.”



KRISHNA

*I am both the light of knowledge, and the goal of knowledge.
In me, knower and known are one.*

Bhagavad Gita



KESHAV



*Behold now the entire universe,
With everything moving and not moving,
Standing here in my Body, Arjuna,
And whatever else you desire to see.*

*If a thousand suns should rise all at once
In the sky,
Such splendor would resemble
The splendor of that Great Being.*

*I see You everywhere, infinite in form,
With many arms, bellies, faces, and eyes,
Not the end, nor the middle, nor yet the beginning of You do
I see, O Lord of all, whose form is the Universe.*

*You are the unchanging, the supreme object of knowledge;
You are the ultimate resting place of all;
You are the imperishable defender of the eternal law;
You are the primeval Spirit.*

*With infinite power, without beginning, middle, or end,
With innumerable arms, the moon and sun being Your eyes,
I see you, the blazing fire Your mouth,
Burning all this universe with Your radiance.*

*You are the primal God, the ancient Spirit,
You are the supreme resting place of all the universe,
You are the knower, the object of knowledge, and the supreme state.
All the universe is pervaded by you,
O One of infinite forms.*

Bhagavad Gita





KESHAV VENKATARAJAN

*O Krishna My Beloved! Even If you break the our relationship of love, I will not do the same.
For, who else will I form a relationship with, if I break off from You?*

*If You are a Grand Tree, then I am a bird sitting and taking shelter on that tree.
If You are a lake I am a fish within the waters of the lake.*

*If You are a mountain, I am a stream flowing through and in it.
If You are the moon, then I am the Chakora bird, forgetting everything and staring at the full moon.*

Mirabai

INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST KESHAV VENKATA RAGHAVAN

Q. Traditional Indian art (in the sense that Coomaraswamy uses this term) focuses on capturing the essence rather than physical realities. For example, in Bhasa's Pratima-natakam, Bharata does not recognize the statues of his forefathers-- because Indian art does not do portraiture. In Coomaraswamy's words, "the aim of the highest art must always be the intimation of the divinity behind all forms than the form itself." Is this also your understanding of art?

KV - Our understanding of art is to view it as a whole, not just painting, but the entire gamut of the fine arts – like sculpture, dance, music, architecture, etc. It is to make the artist complete in every sense of the term.



Coomaraswamy and Stella Kramrisch and later C. Sivaramamamorthy have done an excellent service by writing extensively on Indian art, and the extent of Eastern art is vast, sites in Angkor Wat and Cambodia. It looks at the idealism, or divinity of the subject -- rather than what is. In fact, the Chinese are famous for doing landscape paintings of animals and birds, after observing the subject for hours or days altogether, and then painting what they have seen.

The idea of such art is to raise the viewer to a completely different, spiritual level. There is no mention of modelling for the artist. He observes and paints what he perceives, and then composes his idea. That gives them the ideal measurements. Faces are idealised rather than presenting an actual resemblance. So the various sculptures of saints and sages and ap-saras, the kings and the warriors, all have an ideal measurement and are seen in relation to each other, comparative in size, according to their status in soci-

ety. But we have moved away from such ideal art. Now only the application of colour and lines and shading are given importance and the subjects have been given the go by.

The text and the formulae for Indian art have been codified in the ancient Purana text, Vishnudharmot-tara. Of this Chitra Sutra is the treatise on painting. It is detailed in 16 chapters as a dialogue between a king and the sage Maitreya. Here the author mentions the interconnection of the arts. The art-

ist is expected to be disciplined and expected to know something about the allied arts. The painter should know about music, dance, sculpture, architecture etc., and the musician likewise should know about painting and so on.

Q. When I look at your Krishna, I see a depiction of the ananda-tatva, of his leela. Is this true? Is this what you try to depict? In other words, am I understanding it correctly?



KV - After my decade-long reading of Srimad Bhagavatha and other writings, it is my understanding that Krishna is Ananda personified. As the Vedas proclaim : Ananda ithi brahmam. Ananda IS the ultimate truth, and this concept has been personified as Krishna. When I began reading the epics, little did I realise that I would be entering the area of symbols. The epics have conceptualized abstract human thoughts, personified them, and created such magnificent stories. Once the story is understood in its true sense, the story vanishes and you understand that it is so universal – because it deals with human frailties. It tells us how one can, with effort overcome and tackle such predicaments with ease.

To give an example, Arjuna is the mind. In the kurukshetra, the war is within oneself. The two armies are within us, and there is Krishna, the Supreme Force, within each one of us. Now when we put things in this perspective, it begins to make sense.

What I have tried with Krishna is his different leelas or episodes, which tell us how to react to different situations. He kills so many asuras, the monsters which

are the various manifestation of our various gunas -- but each time, he kills them differently. Each problem has a different solution. And always with equanimity. With a smile. Completely in control.

The leelas are many. Each time you read, you have a different interpretation and depending on the context. The more you read, the more layers of thoughts you uncover. It has been a journey or an exploration within.

Q. Krishna is, of course, a multi-faceted personality. What other facets have you attempted to bring out?

KV - It has just begun. I have many series of Krishna drawn over a period of a decade.

- a Experiments with Krishna series.
- b New Forever series.
- c Single line series. (the eka – rekha series)
- d Dialogues with Arjuna series (deals with the Bhagavad Gita)
- e Kaliyamardhana series
- f Goverdhana series.
- g Krishnapremi series (where I use the orangutan, the monkey as a muse, which is an old metaphor for the mind)
- h Vaatsalyam series – which deals with the grace and kindness shown to the cow, which is a representation for the soul, the jeevatma or the earth in a personified form.

In the course of painting Krishna, I try to vary the style so that it doesn't become stale and remains fresh. The subject has been drawn and sculpted and discussed in epics for thousands of years. If one has to retain freshness, one has to be original.

I try to use different techniques, use various designs, costumes and nationalities (I have an egyptian Krishna, a Chinese Krishna, and various other forms) so that one doesn't repeat oneself – although the subject and the stories are the same. In the process, one also tries to decipher what has been hidden in such stories, which makes it a treasure-hunt of sorts.

Keshav Venkata Raghavan





संस्कृतम् • SANSKRIT CORNER

By Yogi Baba Prem, Yogacharya, Veda Visharada

This is the first of a series of articles by Yogi Baba Prem in which he will introduce a few sanskrit words at a time along with audio clips of their pronunciation.

LIGHT ON THE LANGUAGE OF YOGA : Variances in Sanskrit Pronunciation

Sanskrit, the language of Yoga, is often a mystery to many students of Yoga. Yet, it would be correct to say that most students of Yoga commonly use Sanskrit terms and the language has permeated the nomenclature of everyday English; as many people are familiar with terms such as OM or Namaste, Guru, Karma or a host of other terms which are from the Sanskrit language. With the growing popularity of kirtan, many more Yoga students are being introduced to Sanskrit without even knowing it at

times. One of the common issues that have plagued students of the language of Yoga is what appears as contradictory pronunciation and spelling of various terms, and at times it is difficult to find a clear explanation as to the reason for these variances. To examine this, let's explore one word--yajñya.

Yajñya is a reference to the Vedic fire ceremony. From a Vedic and even Yogic perspective, yajñya is rather important. But the word yajñya has several varied and well known forms of pronunciation. With the first being as it is currently written-yajñya, it would be pronounced as yaj-ny-ya. This pronunciation is favored in parts of India, though in other areas of India a different pronunciation is favored-- yagya (ya-g-ya). Therefore, initially, we must recognize there are numerous regional pronunciations found within Sanskrit.

As a general rule pronunciation/spelling is divided into Northern India and Southern India, but this can be misleading, as there are certainly numerous regional dialects, and pronunciation that has been slightly modified throughout the history within India. An example of this can be found in Bengali, as it favors various pronunciations that are somewhat unique to that region. These variations of pronunciation are a great source of pride in this geographic region. Another common pronunciation of Yajñya is yajana (ya-ja-na). Yajana is probably the most common pronunciation in the West, but is more likely due to a mispronunciation of yajñya rather than a conscious favoring of the pronunciation yajana, and here is the reason why. This pronunciation is formed due to a grammatical rule called Svarabhakti which is not

commonly known to the West. I would translate this as meaning devoted vowel, it is also commonly translated as loyal vowel; still others translate it as vowel separation. In reality, all three definitions are appropriate as it merely depends upon how one looks at the word, and in essence, they are saying the same thing. Regardless of the favored translation of the rule svarabhakti, it requires, in this case, that the 'j' sound have its vowel added back, as it is in a conjunction or compounded with a nasal letter, then it requires that the letter that is the compound is dropped.

There is more complexity to this rule, but this information meets the need for the example just given. So in this case 'j' becomes 'ja' and the 'ñ' is dropped (ya-ja-na). This teaching comes from the Prātiśākhya. Another series of teachings commonly known as prosody favors an elongation of vowels. Of course there are various rules in chanting that require some letters are dropped or elongated in the Vedas. Creating a different sound from what is literally written and there are variations in chanting that will change the structure and flow of words as well.





So we have three very different pronunciations and sometimes spelling for the same word in our example:

- 1 yajñya
- 2 yagya
- 3 yajana

There are several key points to remember:

- 1 That pronunciation/spelling is due to regional variations with another example being Purusha which is also pronounced as Purukha in some parts of India.
- 2 There may be specific grammar rules that change the pronunciation of a word such as the example of svarabhakti that was given (note there are additional rules that can affect a word as well).
- 3 And finally, we should note there are specific rules in chanting in Sanskrit where letters are changed or changed back to their original form. This is somewhat complex for most students and requires a developed and strong skill-set in Sanskrit.

We have not explored all possibilities but this should answer some fundamental questions regarding Sanskrit regarding variances in words. It is important to remember there can be numerous pronunciations/spelling to a Sanskrit word, and we must not jump to a conclusion that a pronunciation is incorrect just because it is unfamiliar with a specific pronunciation. The pronunciation may be quite valid relative to the system it is coming from.

Yogi Baba Prem

