

Issue 7

*Categories of Indian Thought*

# NĀMARŪPA

## THE BEATLES IN INDIA

Paul Saltzman

**BHAGAVAD GITA** Richard Freeman • Paul Hackett • Graham Schweig • Paul Sherbow  
**JYOTISHA** Dr. Robert Svoboda **NAVAGRAHA PAINTINGS** Nara Allsop  
**RASAKHAN** Shyamdas **SARASWATHI RANGASWAMY** Interview by Nick Evans

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# NĀMĀRŪPA

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fer shade, shelter and sustenance to  
its readers and contributors alike, it is  
hoped. Now, though, it needs nurtur-  
ing with articles, images, ideas and con-  
tributions. We invite you to support us  
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NĀMARŪPA uses diacritical marks,  
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words. While many of the articles do  
contain these marks, it is not a univer-  
sal occurrence in the magazine. In those  
cases where authors have elected not to  
use diacritics, Saṁskṛta words remain  
in their simple, romanized form.

अ • a  
आ • ā  
इ • i  
ई • ī  
उ • u  
ऊ • ū  
ऋ • ṛ  
ॠ • ṝ  
ऌ • ḷ  
ॡ • ḹ  
ए • e  
ऐ • ai  
ओ • o  
औ • au  
अं • am  
अः • aḥ  
क • ka  
ख • kha  
ग • ga  
घ • gha  
ङ • ṅa  
च • ca  
छ • cha  
ज • ja  
झ • jha  
ञ • ña  
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ढ • ḍha  
ण • ṇa  
त • ta  
थ • tha  
द • da  
ध • dha  
न • na  
प • pa  
फ • pha  
ब • ba  
भ • bha  
म • ma  
य • ya  
र • ra  
ल • la  
व • va  
श • śa  
ष • ṣa  
स • sa  
ह • ha  
क्ष • kṣa  
त्र • tra  
ज्ञ • jña

NĀMARŪPA, *Categories of Indian Thought* is  
a journal that seeks to record, illustrate, and  
honor, as well as comment on, the many sys-  
tems of knowledge, practical and theoreti-  
cal, that have originated in India. Passed  
down through the ages, these systems  
have left tracks, paths already traveled  
that can guide us back to the Self—the  
source of all names NĀMA and forms  
RŪPA. NĀMARŪPA seeks to present  
articles that shed light on the incred-  
ible array of DARŚAṆAS, YOGAS,  
and VIDYĀS that have evolved over  
thousands of years in India's creatively  
spiritual minds and hearts. The publish-  
ers have created this journal out of a love  
for the knowledge that it reflects, and desire  
that its content be presented clearly and inspi-  
rationally, but without any particular agenda or  
sectarian bias. The aim is to permit contribu-  
tors to present offerings that accurately represent  
their own traditions, without endorsement or  
condemnation. Each traditional perspective on  
reality is like a different branch on a vast  
tree of knowledge, offering diverse  
fruits to the discern-  
ing reader.

# NĀMĀRŪPA

## SEVENTH ISSUE

FALL 2007

Cover photos by Paul Saltzman

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Robert E. Svoboda

Edwin Bryant

Shyamdas

Richard Freeman

Paul G. Hackett

Graham Bond

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Madurai, Tamil Nadu, South India. January 2007.*

*Preparing dosai at Hotel Aryaas on the  
road between Thanjavur and Tiruchirapali,  
Tamil Nadu, South India. January 2007.*



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**NĀMARŪPA**, *Categories of Indian Thought* (ISSN# 1559-9817) is published by NĀMARŪPA, Inc. Editorial: 430 Broome Street, #2, New York City, NY 10013; Design & production: P.O. Box 271, Dublin NH 03444. Subscription Rates: Single current issue: US\$10 + US\$4 s&h. (+US\$4 Canada +US\$10 all other countries). 1 Year (2 issues): US\$22 includes s&h (US\$29 Canada, US\$42 all other countries). 2 Years (4 issues): US\$39 includes s&h (US\$48 Canada, US\$66 all other countries). 3 Years (6 issues): US\$55 includes s&h (US\$66 Canada, US\$93 all other countries). All payments in U.S. \$ drawn on a U.S. bank. For bulk orders, distributors, subscriptions and other information, please e-mail: [subscriptions@namarupa.org](mailto:subscriptions@namarupa.org). Send editorial mail, manuscripts, letters to the editor, etc., to: NĀMARŪPA, 430 Broome Street, #2, New York City, NY 10013. Send all production mail and address changes to NĀMARŪPA, P.O. Box 271, Dublin NH 03444. Manuscripts, photography, and all artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. ©2007 NĀMARŪPA, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of editorial or pictorial content in any manner without permission is prohibited. Printed in the USA.

Mothers feeding children lunch at school.  
Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, South India. January 2007.







## THE NAVAGRAHA

NINE SEIZERS OF HUMAN DESTINY

Artwork and Text by NARA ALLSOP

Hymns of praise from Navagraha-Kirtana by Śrī Muthuswami Dikshitar AD 1775-1835



## SŪRYA ☼ SUN

SALUTATIONS O LORD IN THE FORM OF SŪRYA, THE LORD OF BEAUTIFUL CHĀYĀ  
O ILLUMINATOR OF ALL INFINITE CAUSES AND EFFECTS IN THE WORLD,  
THE LORD OF SĪMHA RĀŚI,  
ONE WHOSE EFFULGENT LUSTER HAS BEEN PRAISED BY THOSE OF THE HIGHEST ESTEEM,  
THE BESTOWER OF BENEFITS SUCH AS GOOD HEALTH,  
FRIEND TO THE DAY LOTUS, A FRIEND TO ALL,  
THE MOST RESPLENDENT ONE, THE THOUSAND RAYED, THE FATHER OF KARṆA,  
THE FIRE SWALLOWING DREADFUL SINS,  
WHOSE BRILLIANCE HAS DELIGHTED GURUGUHA,  
ONE WHO IS PRAISED BY THE LEARNED,  
THE AUSPICIOUS DAY JEWEL, CREST-JEWEL TO CANDRA AND OTHER PLANETS,  
WORSHIPPED BY THE ENERGETIC, THE WITNESS TO ALL ACTIONS,  
ONE WHO HAS HIS CHARIOT DRIVEN BY SEVEN DIVINE HORSES,  
ONE WHOSE PRINCIPAL NATURE IS EMBEDDED IN THE EIGHT-SYLLABLED HYMN OF PRAISE,  
WHO IS OF GOLDEN HUE, OF THE NATURE OF BRAHMĀ, VIṢṆU AND ŚIVA,  
AND WHO CONFERS MATERIAL BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL EMANCIPATION.

*Chāyā = Shadow*

*Simha Rāśi =  
Constellation Leo*

*Karṇa = tragic hero of the  
Mahabharata*

*Guruguha = a name of  
Kārtikeya, son of Śiva;  
also a name the author  
uses for himself*

*The eight-syllabled hymn  
of praise refers to a portion  
the Gayatri mantra.*

*On rising, Sūrya appears  
in the form of Brahmā  
— creator, at mid-day as  
Viṣṇu — preserver, and on  
setting as Rudra (Śiva)  
— dissolution.*





## CANDRA 🌙 MOON

*Indra is the Vedic god of thunderbolt and battle, Lord of Heaven.*

*The sixteen digits are the sixteen lunar phases.*

*Madana = god of love*

*Virāt = primeval man; "the Moon was engendered from his mind."*

*Candra is associated with the suffering of separated lovers.*

MIND, WORSHIP CANDRA, PURE AND PLEASING,  
WHO IS LIKE THE HEARTS OF ALL GOOD MEN.  
WORSHIP HIM ALWAYS, THE LORD OF THE STARS,  
PRAISED BY THE GUARDIAN DEITIES OF INDRA AND OTHERS,  
WHO MOISTENS THE EARTH, THE ONE WITH SIXTEEN DIGITS, AND RICH IN NECTAR.  
WORSHIP HIM, THE ORNAMENT ON LORD ŚIVA'S CREST,  
THE COOL-RAYED, THE FOUR-ARMED, THE PARASOL OF MADANA,  
THE NIGHT MAKER, THE EYE OF LORD VENKATEŚA, MENTALLY CREATED BY VIRĀT,  
THE INFLECTOR OF SUFFERING, THE FRIEND OF THE NIGHT LOTUS,  
AND THE FACE OF LORD SUBRAHMANYA WHO BECAME THE TEACHER OF THE CREATOR.  
WORSHIP HIM WHO BEARS THE MARK OF THE HARE, WHO WAS FIRST CURSED  
AND LATER FAVORED BY BṚHASPATI, WITH HIS WHITE BODY SHINING BRIGHT IN AUTUMN,  
THE WEARER OF ARMLETS, BRACELETS, NECKLACE AND CROWN,  
ENEMY OF THE DAY LOTUS AND COURTEOUS LOVER OF ROHINI.



## MAṆGALA OR CHEVVAI 🌙 MARS

I TAKE REFUGE AGAIN IN AṆGĀRAKA,  
THE DIVINE MANDARA TREE TO THE HUMBLE DEPENDENT DEVOTEES,  
THE PRESIDING DEITY OF TUESDAY, AND THE SON OF EARTH  
WHO IS THE LORD OF THE CHERISHED HOUSES OF MEṢA AND VṚŚCIKA  
WITH RED LIMBS, WHO WEARS RED AND IS THE BEARER OF THE SWORD AND TRIDENT,  
THE AUSPICIOUS ONE, WITH BEAUTIFUL NECK, WITH LOVELY FEET,  
BESTOWER OF AUSPICIOUSNESS, RIDING ON THE GOAT,  
WHOSE HIGHER ASPIS IS IN MAKARA RĀŚI,  
WHO IS WORSHIPPED BY GODS AND DEMONS,  
WHOSE FACE IS BEAMING AND SMILING, BESTOWER OF LANDED WEALTH AND  
BROTHERHOOD, WITH RED EYES, PROTECTOR OF THE AFFLICTED,  
WORSHIPPED IN THE HOLY VAIDHEESWARAN TEMPLE, AND FAVORED BY THE HOSTS OF THE  
GODS AND GURUGUHA, WHO IS THE FRIEND OF SŪRYA, CANDRA,  
AND BṚHASPATI, SHINING WITH HIS GOOD WIFE, AND HIS HANDS ON HIS KNEES,  
HAVING FOUR ARMS, AND WHO IS QUITE EXTRAORDINARY.

*Aṅgāraka = "glowing charcoal"*

*Mandara tree is a form of Coral tree, one of five divine trees of heaven.*

*Meṣa and Vṛścika = Constellations Aries and Scorpio*

*Makara Rāśi = Constellation Capricorn*



बुध



**BUDHA ✨ MERCURY**

*Kuja = Aṅgāraka, son of Śiva and Earth  
Mithuna and Kanyā =  
Constellations Gemini  
and Virgo*

I ALWAYS SEEK SHELTER IN BUDHA WHO IS WORSHIPPED BY THE GODS,  
WHO IS THE SON OF CANDRA AND TĀRĀ,  
WHO IS REVERED BY THE LEARNED, AND WHO BRINGS JOY TO BRAHMINS,  
WHO IS THE BESTOWER OF THE SWEET ART OF POETRY,  
THE ONE OF SPLENDOROUS WEALTH, WHOSE FORM GIVES DELIGHT TO GURUGUHA,  
WHO IS THE ENEMY OF KUJA,  
WHO IS THE WEARER OF A GEM-STUDDED CROWN, NECKLACE, ARMLETS AND BRACELETS,  
LORD OF THE HOUSES OF MITHUNA AND KANYĀ,  
WITH BOOK IN HAND AND WHO IS ASEXUAL,  
WHO IS HONORED BY HIS ATTENDANTS, IS DEVOID OF ALL EVIL,  
BENEFITS THE DEVOTEES OF ŚIVA AND IS ALWAYS JOYOUS.

गुरु



**BRĤASPATI OR GURU ✨ JUPITER**

*Dhanus and Mina =  
Constellations Sagittarius  
and Pisces*

O OMNIPRESENT ONE, O LORD OF GREAT STRENGTH, LORD OF SPEECH,  
LORD OF LOVELY DHANUS AND MINA,  
WHOSE FORM IS ADORED BY INDRA AND THE OTHER GODS,  
WHO IS THE GREAT INTELLECTUAL HONORED BY DIVINITIES LIKE MĀDHAVA.  
O MOST ESTEEMED TEACHER OF THE GODS, WIELDER OF THE THUNDERBOLT,  
OF AUSPICIOUS MARKINGS, TEACHER OF THE THREE WORLDS,  
WHO IS NOT AFFECTED BY OLD AGE AND THE LIKE, UNEXCITABLE, ...  
THE DIVINE WISH-FULFILLING TREE FOR THOSE WHO TAKE REFUGE IN HIM,  
WHO IS A DELIGHT TO ŚIVA AND GURUGUHA, AND THE BESTOWER OF OFFSPRING,  
KIN TO THE DISTRESSED, THE MANIFESTER OF THE FOUR PHASES OF SPEECH,  
AN OCEAN OF COMPASSION, WHO IS DEVOID OF ALL ILLNESS, ...  
UNCONTROLLED, THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE, THE UNTARNISHED ONE,  
WHO DELIGHTS IN THE WORLDS AND IS THE BESTOWER OF VIGOR.



शुक्र



### ŚUKRA ✨ VENUS

*Tula and Vṛṣa =  
Constellations Libra and  
Taurus  
Kesava = a name of Viṣṇu*

I ALWAYS MEDITATE UPON THE GOD ŚUKRA, THE KNOWER OF ALL TRUTHS.  
RESCUE ME QUICKLY, O ŚUKRA, LORD OF THE HOUSES OF TULA AND VṚṢA,  
AND SOUND COUNSELOR TO ALL DEMONS,  
WHOSE ONE EYE WAS SAFEGUARDED BY THE GRACE OF KESAVA,  
WHO IS THE WEARER OF THE CROWN AND OF WHITE,  
WHOSE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ON THE VARIOUS CONSTELLATIONS LASTS TWENTY YEARS, ...  
THE POET, THE BENEFICENT PLANET FOR MARITAL BLISS,  
INIMICAL TO SŪRYA AND BRĤASPATI, ...  
WHO BESTOWS ROYALTY AND KINGDOMS AND DELIGHTS GURUGUHA.

शनि



### ŚANIŚVARA ✨ SATURN

I ALWAYS MEDITATE UPON THE SLOW MOVING ŚANI,  
THE SON OF SŪRYA AND THE COURAGEOUS ONE, WHO CAUSES FEAR IN PEOPLE PLUNGED IN  
THE OCEAN OF WORLDLY EXISTENCE, AND IS THE HARBINGER OF CALAMITOUS EVENTS,  
WHO GRANTS UNIQUELY AUSPICIOUS REWARDS FOR DEVOTEES  
FAVORED BY ŚIVA'S BENIGN GLANCES,  
WHO HAS A BODY OF DARK LUSTER LIKE COLLYRIUM, BROTHER OF YAMA,  
RIDING ON HIS VEHICLE THE CROW,  
DECORATED WITH BLUE DRESS AND A BLUE FLOWER GARLAND,  
WITH ORNAMENTS EMBEDDED WITH BLUE STONES,  
WHO IS WORSHIPPED BY MALINI AND DELIGHTS GURUGUHA.  
LORD OF THE TWO HOUSES OF MAKARA AND KUMBHA,  
WITH A SPECIAL LIKING FOR THE LAMP LIT WITH SESAME OIL  
AND FOR RICE WITH SESAME SEEDS,  
AN OCEAN OF NECTAR OF COMPASSION, AND FEARLESS,  
WHOSE KNEE WAS DISFIGURED BY THE STAFF OF THE LORD OF DEATH,  
WHO IS LIKE KAMADHENU YIELDING ALL DESIRES,  
THE FIRE CAPABLE OF SPLITTING THE TIME WHEEL,  
AND ONE CONCEIVED OF AS THE SON OF THE GODDESS CHĀYĀ.

*Collyrium = a black  
sandalpaste mixture*

*Malini = a name assumed  
by Draupadi, heroine of  
the Mahabharata. While  
in exile, she worshipped  
Lord Śani.*

*Makara and Kumbha =  
Constellations Capricorn  
and Aquarius*

*Kamadhenu = wish-  
fulfilling cow*



राहु



**RĀHU ✨ ASCENDING NODE - LUNAR ECLIPSE**

*Gomedaka gems = one of the varieties of garnet, with colors like honey or cinnamon*

I AM CONSTANTLY REMINDED OF RĀHU WHO SEIZES SŪRYA AND CANDRA,  
AND IS DEFORMED, WHO IS BOTH GOD AND DEMON, WHO REMOVES ALL ILLS,  
AND DISPELS DANGER FROM POISONOUS CREATURES LIKE SERPENTS,  
WHO DOES GOOD TO THOSE WHO WORSHIP HIM,  
WHO IS SEATED IN HIS GRAIN-SIEVE AND BEARS THE SPEAR,  
WITH A DREADFUL FACE, HARSH, DIRECTING HIS COMPASSIONATE SIDE-GLANCE  
WHEN WORSHIPPED WITH THE KAYANA MANTRA,  
WITH FOUR HANDS AND CARRYING THE SWORD AND SHIELD,  
WHO IS ATTIRED IN BLUE CLOTH AND GARMENTS MADE OF LEATHER,  
WHO WEARS ORNAMENTS MADE OF GOMEDAKA GEMS,  
THE FRIEND OF ŚANI AND ŚUKRA, AND WHO DELIGHTS GURUGUHA.

केतु



**KETU ✨ DESCENDING NODE - SOLAR ECLIPSE**

I WORSHIP KETU, THE GREAT DEMON WHO IS FOREMOST OF THE SHADOW PLANETS,  
WHO WEARS A PECULIAR CROWN AND AUSPICIOUS DRESS,  
WHO IS HAPPY IN HIS PART HUMAN-LIKE BODY  
AND IS FRIENDLY IN THE GROUP OF NINE PLANETS ...WHO IS EXCEEDINGLY WRATHFUL ...  
WHO SAVORS HIS GRAIN, AND HAS HIS FLAG WITH THE CUT OUT TRIANGLE,  
WHOSE DISTINCTION LIES IN HIS DISCERNMENT OF GOOD AND BAD,  
WHO CAUSES ECLIPSES AND MOVES IN A COUNTERCLOCKWISE DIRECTION.



PROPITIATION OF THE NINE MAJOR influences on human fate is considered to have a modifying effect on one's destined karmas. For example, a pleased Śaniśvara could result in a broken leg as opposed to an amputation. Of these nine influences, two are luminaries (Sūrya, Candra), two are eclipses (Rāhu, Ketu), and five are planets (Śukra, Maṅgala, Bṛhaspati, Budha, Śaniśvara). Their arrangement, following one Tamil tradition, is as follows:

<b>BUDHA</b> Mercury	<b>ŚUKRA</b> Venus	<b>CANDRA</b> Moon
<b>BR̥HASPATI</b> Jupiter	<b>SŪRYA</b> Sun	<b>MAṆGALA</b> Mars
<b>KETU</b> Solar Eclipse	<b>ŚANĪŚVARA</b> Saturn	<b>RĀHU</b> Lunar Eclipse



NAVAGRAHA Nineteenth-century book



DEEP SPACE 9 Collage by Barry Silver

### सूर्य SURYA ~ SUN

THE SOLAR ORB HAS BEEN A PRIMARY object of reverence for as long as mankind has revered anything. In this brief discussion we are confining ourselves to the anthropomorphic form of the sun worshipped in India as Sūrya. The various characteristics of the sun have given rise to a myriad of names. One hundred and eight names are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* including: Ādideva, Aja, Bhāskara, Grahapati, Heli, Kāla, Sanātana, Tejas and Yogin. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* states that Sūrya manifests from the causal sound vibration *Om*. Due to his differing natures corresponding to the times of the year, Sūrya becomes twelve different forms known as the Ādityas. Their names are Bhānu (March–April), Tapana (April–May), Indra (May–June), Ravi (June–July), Gabhasti (July–August), Yama (August–September), Hiranyaretas (September–October), Divārka (October–November), Mitra (November–December), Vineu (January–February), Varuṇa (January–February), and Sūrya (February–March).

In some lines of tantric practice, Sūrya is regarded as the visible manifestation of the Ātman. According to the *Sūrya Tattva Vistāra*:

*The All pervader, seated on a luminous throne, travels across the whole world constituted of the three gunas. The karmans, composed of sattva, rajas and tamas, he holds tight with his reins. The reins are the mind (manas), the driver of the chariot is illumination/ discrimination (prajñā) Aruṇa, who has a head, an upper part, but is bereft of feet. The adept Yogin worships Sūrya as the Celestial Void (Nabhaśūnya), the Great Void (Mahāśūnya), the Self-Luminous Void (Taijasa Śūnya).*

THE RISING SUN IS EQUATED WITH Brahmā, the midday sun with Śiva and the setting sun with Viṣṇu. Sūrya has many composite forms: Hara-Sūrya stresses His identification with Śiva, Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa with Viṣṇu, and the rare form Hara Hari Hiranyagarbha encompasses both Śiva and Viṣṇu and Brahmā as well. This extraordinary combination of the principal trinity

with Sūrya can be seen at Khajarahō's Vishvanatha and Duladeva temples, on the western façade. Too bad academics and art historians have lavished so much more attention on the orgies going on around Hara Hari Hiranyagarbha!

Today, in popular poster prints, the sectarian mark of Viṣṇu, the *Śrī Vasta*, is usually placed on Sūrya's brow. Sūrya is given as one of the thousand names of Viṣṇu in the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*. In order to temper his brilliant burning luster, Sūrya requested Brahmā to cut off some of his powerful rays. Brahmā called on Viśvakarmam, the celestial architect, who cut off a portion. From these he manufactured Viṣṇu's *Sudarśana Cakra*, the great staff of Yama, and the trident of Śiva. Other weapons used by the Divinities were also formed.

The progeny of Sūrya is fascinating. When seen as a horizontal grouping, the nine planets are often preceded by Gaṇeśa, which places him adjacent to the sun. In Nepal, Gaṇeśa is considered to be a child of Sūrya – born of His brilliant rays. Perhaps this parentage is the source of Gaṇeśa's flaming vermillion color. Another of Sūrya's sons, who is also one of the Navagraha, is Śaniśvara, who in some tales is responsible for the beheading of Gaṇeśa.

Other offspring include the River Goddess Tapati and the once much revered Revanta. In modern times, Revanta has slipped into deep obscurity as a member of the Hindu pantheon. Since he is the divine monarch of horses and ruler of the forest spirits, modernity has eclipsed his role. Revanta's iconography is similar to that of Viṣṇu's Kalki avatāra, with the exception that Revanta is surrounded by a hunting party. He is depicted as a warrior with raised sword on a white steed.

THERE IS ALSO A SOLAR LINEAGE OF men, the *Sūrya varṇśa*. The most well-known member of that family is the avatāra Rāma. This lineage is traced back to Ikṣvāku, the founder of the dynasty, himself the son of Sūrya and Śraddhā. In recent times the greatly revered Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram Kamakoti Peeth, Sri Candrasekharendra Saraswati (d. 1989), stated that Yogi Ramsuratkumar (1918-2001) of

Tiruvanamallai, who is reported to have spent many hours daily contemplating the solar orb, belonged to the illustrious Sūrya varṇśa.

The sun is known as the eye of the world. In keeping with this image, Sūrya's chariot has one wheel. A single revolution of this wheel is counted as the passing of one year. Esoterically, the sun's yearly journey is equated to the rising of the *kuṇḍalinī* through the various cakras. The chariot is pulled by seven green or multi-colored horses representing the seven Vedic metres – *Gāyatrī*, *Bṛhatī*, *Uṣṇik*, *Jagatī*, *Triṣṭubh*, *Anuṣṭubh* and *Parikṭi*. The horses are sometimes referred to as yoked to Sūrya's chariot by *Nāgas* (snake divinities). A seven-headed horse pulling the solar vehicle is also referred to as Uccaiḥśravā. Driving the chariot in many icons is Aruṇa, the brother of Garuḍa. He has no legs, the writer does not know why. Other riders include Daṇḍi and Piṅgalā. Daṇḍi is a portly figure holding a pen and ink pot, engaged in the recording of time. Piṅgalā is shown with a rod, for the measurement of time was fathomed in earlier technologies by the length of shadow cast. Goddesses of dawn, Uṣā, and twilight, Pratyuṣā, are depicted shooting arrows of light from their drawn bows.

There are several important Sūrya temples in India. When sages enquire of Brahmā in the *Brahmā Purāṇa* where the best places on earth are for the attainment of *dharma* (right action), *kāma* (sensual fulfilment), *artha* (prosperity), and *mokṣa* (liberation), His response includes Konadity (Konark) in Orissa. The Konark Sūrya temple's architectural splendor is well known; it is one enormous stone chariot (*ratha*). It has twenty-four ten-foot high wheels, illustrating the twelve months of the year divided by day and night or the twenty-four hours of day. The wheels also act as giant sundials with eight major spokes and eight minor ones. The wheels have carvings on the major spokes depicting activities, ritualistic and ordinary, appropriate to the time of day recorded. Although the central shrine is no longer accessible, the Konark temple is still an active site of Navagraha worship.

Other historical sites of Sūrya worship with extraordinary solar temples are



Gujarat’s Modhera and Rajasthan’s Osian. In Bangalore, the Gavi Gangadhareswara temple has several tall pillars surmounted by huge stone solar discs. Here sage Gautama is said to have worshipped Śiva. Andhra Pradesh has the active Arasvalli temple, the deity here, Sūryanārāyaṇasvāmi, is thought by devotees to have been installed by Indra. In Tamil Nadu, the main center of worship is Sūryanayinar Koil, one kilometer from Aduthurai. The temple legend states that the sage Kalava Munivar knew he was karmically due to suffer leprosy and so worshipped the Navagraha. Unused to the attention, they happily absolved him of the leprosy karma. This infuriated Brahmā as it was the Grahas’ duty to aspect people only on the basis of their negative and positive acts and not to grant boons. He banished the Grahas to earth and decreed that they should take on the karmic fruit of leprosy. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the Grahas begged Brahmā for leniency. He told them to worship Śiva and Umā through *tapas*. Thus pleased, Śiva absolved the Navagraha and since that time, the place of their tapas has been a focal point of planetary worship. All the nine Grahas are enshrined in this temple, with Sūrya as the central icon. A unique feature of the shrine is that Bṛhaspati (Jupiter) is placed in front of Sūrya and, according to local tradition, is said to be helpfully controlling the sun’s burning rays.

The special day for propitiating Sūrya is Sunday. His gemstone is ruby, his symbol, a red or gold circle, and his metal, copper. Flower offerings should be red flowers or sunflowers; food offerings are red saffron, plantains and their leaves, and wheat (wheat pongal is recommended). Any South Indian cookbook will have a recipe for pongal which you could adapt.

In the painting (p. 7) Sūrya holds aloft in His upper hands two large *sentamarai* (red lotus blooms). His lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* – the gesture of protection and reassurance. He wears saffron-colored cloth. In North Indian tradition Sūrya is shown dressed in a vest of chain link armor with knee-high boots, sometimes He is gloved.

A pleased Sūrya improves one’s relationship with male authority figures,

especially one’s father, and grants positive personal authority. In some systems He is considered malevolent, in others, benefic.

## चन्द्र Candra ~ Moon

THE MOON, CANDRA, IS PROPITIATED on Mondays. His gemstone is pearl, his symbol a white square, and his metal silver or bronze. Flower offerings should be white and food offerings include curds and white rice with ghee and sugar. His *vāhana* (vehicle) is the deer or alternatively a chariot of ten white horses pulling him across the night sky. In his upper hands he holds aloft two *alli* (white water lilies); his remaining hands are in *abhaya* (upward pointing) and *varada* (downward pointing) *hasta* (*mudra* or hand posture).

Candra is intimately connected with *soma*, the ambrosial nectar of immortality. Candra is the storer and the spreader of ambrosia. The gods quaff soma from the vessel of the moon, regularly draining its reserves, hence the waxing and waning cycles.

Candra is the attendant of Manmatha (the god of love) who churns the mind and fills it with desire. Manmatha in turn is absorbed into the tantric form of Kṛṣṇa (Madana Gopāla). Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā share their most intimate dalliance intoxicated under the cool lunar rays.

Rāma also has lunar features, including his cooling influence and beautiful face, testified to by his name Rāmacandra – *Rāma the Moon*.

Lord Śiva wears the moon in his matted dreadlocks and has a peaceful form known as Candraśekharamūrti (*Weaver of the Moon*). In the painting (p.8) Candra appears wearing pearl-white cloth, before an ocean of soma.

Candra has twenty-seven wives, corresponding to the twenty-seven *nakṣatra* – the stars which govern the lunar mansions of the zodiac. These are the daughters of the great sage Dakṣa who cursed Candra for favoring Rohiṇi over his other daughters.

Candra is feminine and benefic. Saivites consider him a partial incarnation of Lord Śiva. In Tamil Nadu, his main center of worship is at

Kayilayanathur Thirukoil in Thingalur near Kumbakonam. Here, the saint Thirunavukkarasar resurrected a child killed by snakebite by singing a hymn to Śiva. A pleased Candra improves one’s relationships with women, particularly one’s mother, and grants healthy emotional sensitivity.

## मंगल Maṅgala or Chevvai ~ Mars

IN MUTTUSWAMI DIKSHITAR’S SONG, Maṅgala is referred to as *Āṅṅāraka* – *glowing like hot coal*. He is youthful, robust and strikingly handsome. *Padma Purāṇa* states that his is the nature of a strike of lightning. ‘He has tormented the demons, the devourers of corpses, and the enemies of gods and men, plants, beasts and birds, according to his position at their birth.’ Maṅgala is born from a drop of sweat from the forehead of Śiva. Initially the drop became the exceedingly ferocious Virabhadra who was given the task of destroying sage Dakṣa’s sacrificial ritual. Dakṣa had enraged Śiva when Satī, Śiva’s wife and Dakṣa’s daughter, immolated herself in shame at Śiva’s being excluded from the sacrifice. After destroying Dakṣa’s sacrifice, Virabhadra was transformed by Śiva into the mighty planet Mars.

In South India, Maṅgala is seen as being either identical to or a portion of Murugan (Kārtikeya), the second son of Śiva.

Maṅgala is propitiated on Tuesdays. His gemstone is coral, and he is compared to the celestial coral tree, Mandara. His symbol is a red downward-pointing triangle, and his metal, copper or brass. Flower offerings should be red and food offerings are cooked red lentils or rice mixed with toor dhal powder. His *vāhana* is the goat, ram or Annam bird.

In the painting (p.9) he appears by his temple, dressed in red cloth, with hills and mountains (sacred to Murugan and site of his army camps) in the background. In his upper right hand Maṅgala holds the Shaktivel, a weapon consisting of three connected squares signifying the three guṇas, three inner fires and three Vedas. The Shaktivel is the principal weapon of Murugan and is often worshipped independently by his devotees. Saint Aruṇagirinātha has composed *Vel Vaguppu*, a splendid

composition expounding the glories of Shaktivel.

In Maṅgala’s upper left hand he holds the *śūla* or trident with triadic meanings similar to those of the Vel. The lower left hand holds the *gadaī* (mace). Though he is the lord of beauty with his muscular body described as a flame of yoga, Maṅgala is also the god of war and therefore malefic. Indeed, Mars was the god of the Roman armies.

In Tamil Nadu, Maṅgala’s main center of worship is Vaidheeswaran Koil near Sirkazhi. It is a beautiful temple where Murugan is worshipped as Maṅgala. When pleased, Maṅgala grants sibling harmony, courage, valor, purpose, and protects one from violence.

## बुध Budha ~ Mercury

BUDHA IS PROPITIATED ON WEDNESdays. His gemstone is emerald, his symbol an arrow, and his metal brass or gold. Flower offerings should be white, lush green leaves or Bermuda grass are also pleasing; food offerings are green gram (mung beans) and green pumpkin. Budha’s *vāhana* is the lion or horse. He wears green cloth and holds *khaḍgam* (sword), *kedaya* (shield) and *gadaī* (mace). Parrots shown in the green canopy above him (p.10) associate Budha with quick-wittedness, learning and wisdom. Budha is the illegitimate son of Candra and Tārā, the wife of Bṛhaspati. He is considered benefic or malefic depending on which planets he is in conjunction with. In Tamil Nadu, Budha’s main shrine is located under a banyan tree in Thiruvankadu. Brahmā is said to have received knowledge of all the arts at this shrine. Of this temple, Saint Sambandar sang, “He who has been washed by the waters of my Lord of Thiruvankadu, whose inseparable half is mother Umā, is saved from all harmful sins.”

A pleased Budha grants sharp intelligence and an ability to skillfully assimilate knowledge.

## गुरु Brhaspati or Guru ~ Jupiter

GURU IS PROPITIATED ON THURSDays. His gemstone is topaz or yellow sapphire, his symbol a golden rectangle, and his metal gold. Flower offerings should be white jasmine or any yellow flower, and food offerings are yellow rice with curds or chickpeas with

yellow raisins. Guru has an elephant for his *vāhana*. In the painting (p.11) he is shown wearing a yellow cloth standing in front of a shining golden city of which he is the ruler. Guru is the teacher of the Devas and an expert on the *Vedas*.

His upper right hand holds a *mālā*, his upper left, the *kamaṇḍalu* (water pot) and the lower right, a stick. The lower left hand is in varada hasta. In Tamil Nadu Guru is seen as identical to Lord Śiva in Dakṣiṇāmūrti form (seated silently teaching *ṛsis*) and there are several important shrines to him. A famed temple where Guru is worshipped as Dakṣiṇāmūrti is at Thiruvallangadu (popularly known as Alangudi) near Tanjore. The street to the temple is lined with stalls selling yellow flower garlands and yellow cloths. A beautiful, very busy, small shrine to Dakṣiṇāmūrti can be seen next to the Rāmana Maharshi ashram in Tiruvanamallai. A pleased Guru grants optimism, wealth, honor and a vast spiritual perspective. He is considered the greatest of the benefics.

## शुक्र Śukra ~ Venus

ŚUKRA IS PROPITIATED ON FRIDAYS. His gemstone is diamond, his symbol a six-pointed star, and his metal silver. Flower offerings should be white and fragrant and food offerings, beans or white rice with coarse sugar crystals. White sandalwood and camphor can be burned. In the painting (p.12) he wears a brilliant white cloth and sits on his hawk *vāhana* inside his temple compound. He can also be depicted in a chariot driven by eight white horses or, according to one North Indian tradition, riding a mole! The sacred and highly fragrant *nāg champa* tree (*mesua ferrea*) with its unusual “fried egg” blooms, flowers above Śukra, with highly scented gardenias and lilies beneath. In his upper right hand he holds a diamond mala; in his upper left, a kamandalu. The lower right hand is in *vyākhyāna hasta* (or *chin mudra*) expressing insight, and the lower left holds a *yoga daṇḍa* (meditation staff).

Śukra is often described as being one-eyed, the result of Lord Viṣṇu, in the form of the dwarf Vāmana, poking him in the eye with a straw.

Śukra was attempting to obstruct the flow of water from the water pot of the *asura* (demon) king Bali, which would have sealed the promise of Bali to offer Vāmana as much land as he could cover in three steps. Śukra turned himself into a bee and blocked the spout. After having remedied that situation, Vāmana revealed himself to be none other than Lord Viṣṇu and in three steps traversed all the known worlds. Iconographically, however, Śukra is shown as two-eyed.

He is considered benefic despite being the Guru of the asuras whom he constantly brings back to life after their various battles with the devas using the *Saṅjivani* mantra. In Tamil Nadu, Śukra’s main center of worship is in Kanjanur, near Thiru-kadikaval. The deity is, in fact, Agniswarar worshipped as Śukra, an occasional practice in India. A pleased Śukra helps temper an overly lustful nature and grants marital harmony and an affectionate and pleasing disposition.

## शनि Śaniśvara or Śani ~ Saturn

SUCH IS ŚANIŚVARA’S POWER, THAT when he first opened his eyes at birth, Sūrya (his father) went into eclipse. Śaniśvara is propitiated on Saturdays, his gemstone is blue sapphire, his symbol a drawn bow, and his metal iron. Flower offerings should be violets, pansies, or other dark blue or purple flowers. Food offerings include black sesame seeds, urad dhal and wheat chappatis or tortillas with mustard oil and salt. It is also recommended that one burn sesame oil lamps. His *vāhana* is the crow, raven or vulture. Also, any wholly black animal is sacred to Śaniśvara. He wears a black cloth and holds in his upper right hand an *ambu* (arrow), in his upper left, a *vil* (bow), in his lower right, a *kathi* (dagger) and his lower left hand is in varada hasta. His black body is emaciated; he is narrow-chested. His right leg is lame; his brother Yama, the Lord of death, injured it in a fight. Hence, Saturn’s slow, limping gait.

In the painting (p.13), Śaniśvara is depicted in a rocky, barren landscape scattered with dead trees, sacred to Saturn; ominous storm clouds rush in



overhead. His gaze is downward and his bulging, furious eyes inspire terror, awe and dread. One should contemplate the feet of Śaṇiśvara rather than focusing on his eyes, as is the usual practice in *darśana*. (This practice is useful for all the malefics.) In Tamil Nadu, Śaṇiśvara's main shrine is located in Thirunallaru, near Karaikkal. The deity of Śaṇiśvara worshipped here is two-armed, with the right arm in *vyākhyāna hasta* and the left in *kati hasta* (hand placed on hip). He is standing with a golden crow behind him. The entrance to the temple has plenty of beggars of severe appearance with all kinds of leg ailments, who are dressed in black, physically invoking the image of Lord Śaṇiśvara.

It was at this temple that King Nala was relieved of Śaṇi's oppressive grip after having experienced prolonged torture in the form of losing his kingdom, Nidatha Nadu, being exiled to a forest, losing his wife and children, being bitten by a snake whose poison deformed Nala's enchanting looks, etc. Nala persevered through all these difficulties, pleasing Śaṇi who restored everything to him in time. King Vikramāditya went through a similar ordeal at Śaṇi's decree with the additional detail of having his hands and legs severed. No one is spared Śaṇiśvarar's baleful glance. Kings Nala and Vikramāditya, by their accepting response in the midst of these bleak, karmic storms, are examples of the attitude that will be helpful to us when we are in Śaṇi's grip.

Recently, in the south of Delhi, sixteen kilometers from the Qutub Minar, an impressive twenty-one-foot-high black stone statue of Śaṇiśvara was installed. The village of Shingnapur in Maharashtra worships a large black stone block as Saturn; the village is noted for the absence of doors, apparently at the request of the deity himself.

The *Martandabhairava tantra* equates Lord Śiva, in the form of Mahākāla (Great Time), with Śaṇi as the dissolver of the universe and time itself.

At the birth of Kṛṣṇa, Yaśodā forbade Śaṇiśvara from having the Lord's darśana, as she feared his dread-inspiring presence would frighten the baby. All the other gods and devas were present. Thus rejected,

Śaṇi became depressed and upset. He went to the forest and tearfully prayed to Kṛṣṇa over his despised condition, for he was only doing his work, dispensing the karmas that each of us earn. Kṛṣṇa heard. Praising Śaṇi's just nature, Kṛṣṇa gave him the darśana he desired. The site of this darśana is known as Kokilavan, six kilometers from Kosi, in the Mathura region of Uttar Pradesh. Kṛṣṇa granted the boon that anyone who prays to Saturn at the temple there will be freed from their troubles. Worship of Hanumān on Saturdays is also a traditional modifier of Saturnian ills.

The great oppressor, when pleased, grants longevity and protection from the extreme effects of our karmas: poverty, disease, starvation, and physical and psychological torture.

#### राहु RĀHU ~ ASCENDING NODE – LUNAR ECLIPSE

RĀHU IS ALSO PROPITIATED ON Saturdays. His gemstone is agate, his symbol the winnowing basket (in common with Dhūmavati, the goddess of misery, senility and misfortune), and his metal is lead. Food offerings are milk, mustard, black beans, and in North Indian tradition, mutton. Food and flower offerings can be the same as those for Śaṇiśvara; however, the wheat chappatis should be made with sugar and fried in ghee. Also, lamps made of half limes filled with ghee can be lit. No one but the worshipper should touch any item offered to Rāhu, nor should he solicit help in any way (i.e., sending a partner to shop for the fruits), or Rāhu will retaliate. This is highly undesirable.

In the painting (p.14) he is shown seated upon a blue lion. A goat, or a chariot pulled by eight black horses are also traditional. Rāhu has the lower body of a snake and an ugly lion-like face. Sometimes he is depicted as a snake with a human head or as a giant head with gaping mouth devouring the sun and moon. His upper right hand holds kadgam (sword), upper left kedayā (shield), and lower right the sula (trident). His lower left hand is in varada hasta. He is depicted within a forest; dark overgrown places and caves are sacred to Rāhu.

In Tamil Nadu, his main shrine is in the Naganathaswamy temple at Thirunageswaram, close to Kumbakonam. Here silver snakes are offered to Rāhu. The skins snakes shed on the statue of Rāhu are preserved and serpents are depicted in relief work across the deity's platform. Rāhu is clearly malefic, but when pleased, grants wisdom and freedom from, or modification of, mental instability.


#### केतु KETU ~ DESCENDING NODE – SOLAR ECLIPSE

KETU IS PROPITIATED ON TUESDAYS and/or Saturdays. His gemstone is turquoise, his symbol the flag, and his metal lead. Food offerings are multi-colored rice, flower offerings red alli (red lily). His vāhana is the vulture or a red chariot with eight green horses. His head is that of either one or five snakes and his body that of an asura.

In South India, Ketu's skin is described as grey or variegated in color. He can also be depicted as a red snake. His cloth is orange or variegated. Ketu is two-armed, the right arm in abhaya hasta, the left holding a gadai. Rāhu, Ketu and Śaṇiśvara are described as Śūdras and so can be depicted without the Brahmanical cord.

Ketu governs whether or not a person will attain spiritual liberation in any given lifetime.

In Tamil Nadu, Ketu's main shrine is in Keezhaperumpallam, near Tanjore. The temple's association with snakes is two-fold; as well as being sacred to Ketu, it is said that after the asuras failed to obtain the nectar of immortality, using the serpent Vāsuki as the churning rope of the milk ocean, they became furious. They ripped poor Vāsuki into pieces and cast her remains hither and thither over a bamboo forest. Slowly, Vāsuki regrew and learned that during the churning of the ocean, Lord Śiva had absorbed her poison. Contrite at having troubled Śiva, Vāsuki engaged in tapas and prayed to Śiva for forgiveness. Śiva was pleased and offered Vāsuki a boon. The serpent requested that Śiva remain in the bamboo forest to be worshipped by the grief-stricken. This form of Śiva is known as Nāganāthasvami.

A pleased Ketu grants spiritual development and tempers violent natures. 

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Dr. Robert E. Svoboda. Agastya Siddha Ashram, Vaypeen Island, Kerala, South India. January 28, 2007.

## JYOTIṢA

*A talk in May 2007, New Hampshire.*

BY DR. ROBERT SVOBODA®

LET US CONSIDER WHY HUMAN BEINGS might be so bold as to imagine that they could successfully divine the secrets of time. It is difficult enough to know what is going on in the present without also undertaking to decipher the future or to understand why something happened in the past.

First and foremost, we concern ourselves with past and future because we can. Humans alone among embodied terrestrial beings enjoy that persistence of memory that permits us to conceptualize past, present and future. Though only the present is available for

our direct perception, that perception is almost always skewed by our memories of the past and spiced by our projections into the future.

Our conception of time exists chiefly for the purpose of ordering the sequence of our experienced events, for all occurrences do not take place simultaneously. Realizing this, our species saw how valuable it would be to dissect the past and predict the future. While we moderns use the laws of physics to evaluate priority and posteriority in phenomena, India's ancients used the *Karma Nyāya*, the Law of Karma. The



Law of Karma happens to be identical with one of the immutable laws of modern physics, Newton’s Third Law of Motion, which states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Jesus put it this way: “As you sow, so shall you reap.”

JYOTIṢA IS A SYSTEMATIZED ATTEMPT to “read” the karmas of individuals, families, institutions, and nations. The word *Jyotiṣa* comes from *jyoti*, a Sanskrit word for light. Jyotiṣa “reads” karmas less by the physical luminosity of the planets and stars and more by the astral light that shines from the astral forms of these celestial bodies. The most important influences upon us come from the Nine *Grahas* (Seizers): the two luminaries (sun and moon), the five visible planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn), and the two nodes, Rāhu and Ketu. The nodes are points in the sky where the orbits of the moon around the earth and the earth around the sun intersect; these are points where eclipses take place. Rāhu and Ketu are sometimes called “shadow planets” because, though their physical existence is limited to shadow, they act upon us as if they were corporeal. Shadows can be extremely influential: movies, TV, the Internet, all are moving shadows that exert extreme influence over enormous numbers of humans.

Rāhu and Ketu are excellent examples of why we call the nine chief influences upon us grahas instead of planets. The Sanskrit word *graha* comes from a root that also gives us the English words *grab*, *grasp*, *grip* and *grope*. A graha is something that seizes hold of you and acts through you. Almost never is the effect of a graha accomplished via some process envisioned by classical physics, for the physical influence of planets upon us is relatively trivial (aside from a few anomalies, like the streams of electrons that gust from Jupiter to Earth). Given that the gravitational effect of the midwife or obstetrician who delivers a child is greater than the gravitational effect upon that child of any extraterrestrial object, the grahas clearly do not significantly influence us by physical gravity.

Their most important influence upon us comes in fact from their astral gravity, a force that, though material, is made from a form of matter that is far less dense than that which makes up physical bodies. Grahas control us by grasping our awareness and altering it to fit the version of reality that they wish us to perceive, which will usually encourage us to behave in the way that they want us to behave. What we humans experience of our external environments is only a representation of what is actually going on outside, a simulacrum concocted by our brains and minds after they winnow out whatever they believe to be significant from our sensory input. Only about two percent of what the eyes take in is actually converted by the brain into “sight”; such drastic editing ensures that even slight alterations in preference for what is “important” can lead to vast differences in how each of us very fallible and temporary beings “sees” the world.

When a graha seizes you, it enters your organism and takes control of your being, so that it actually sees with your eyes, speaks with your tongue, and acts with your body. The grahas are agents of the Law of Karma; they drive you to be present in particular places at those precise moments when you will experience the reactions to your previously performed actions. Your karmas determine which graha influences you at any one moment; your horoscope is a map of your karmas, drawn to the specifications of the Nine Seizers. Jyotiṣa proposes that it is often possible to figure out something about how a person’s life is going to go by examining the graha patterns that appeared in the sky at the time of birth.

JYOTIṢIS (PRACTITIONERS OF JYOTIṢA) are readers of birth maps, which they decipher by means of the *Jyotir Vidyā*, the Lore of Light. *Vidyās* are bodies of living knowledge, goddesses who, when properly worshipped, develop personal relationships with their worshippers which then permit the Jyotir Vidyā to possess *jyotiṣis*. Both Vidyās and grahas grasp and possess, but while grahas drive their hosts to experience karmic

reactions, Vidyās work through their hosts to illumine behavior patterns that the grahas generate. The shape, color and luminosity of heavenly bodies can have a substantial influence on interpretation, but Jyotiṣa focuses chiefly on the influence of those heavenly bodies on the light of consciousness that shines within us.

Jyotiṣa arose in the Vedic era as a *vedāṅga* (limb of the Veda). When the Veda is personified as a living being, Jyotiṣa represents the eyes. We can’t call Jyotiṣa “Vedic astrology,” which differed substantially from the Jyotiṣa that exists today; and I don’t like to call Jyotiṣa “Indian astrology,” because in addition to horoscopic calculations Jyotiṣa also includes palmistry, omenology, and similar techniques. I prefer to term Jyotiṣa “Indian divination,” a phrase that more accurately reflects its reliance on the divine Jyotir Vidyā.

Many of you will have heard the Sanskrit word *rāga*, probably in the context of Indian music. Indian musicians use that word to indicate a mode, a certain fixed arrangement of notes, often differing in the ascent from the descent. The word *rāga* emerges from a root that means *to color*. Tone poems, like Holst’s suite, “The Planets,” use musical notes to generate likenesses of their subjects within listeners, images limned with an aural palette. Music or art seeks to activate all five senses in a sort of a synesthesia that in Indian aesthetics is summed up as that artistic construction’s flavor. In Sanskrit we call this *rasa*. Astrology is all about rasa and *bhāva*.

In the Jyotishical environment bhāva means both a state of being and what Western astrology calls a house of the horoscope. Taken together the twelve bhāvas represent the totality of all the realities of all the various aspects of your life. Horoscope analysis can become exceptionally useful when it helps you to determine which areas of your life are generally going to be trouble-free, and which more problematic.

For example, the fifth bhāva of a horoscope indicates, among other things, children and students; the ability to form governments; financial speculations; and the power of discernment. The condition of the fifth

bhāva of your horoscope will determine your life circumstances in these regards; a strong fifth bhāva (all other factors being held equal) will promote positive experiences regarding these matters (attractive, discerning, cooperative children; successful investments; and the like), while a weak fifth bhāva might deny you children, or encourage you to become involved in unprofitable ventures. The juice, the flavor that you extract from a bhāva, is your rasa, the savor you enjoy in that sphere of life. The bhāva provides the tint; the rasa is your enjoyment (or not) of it.

Jyotiṣa appraises life’s hues. Some lives are painted in vibrant, eye-catching colors, like the covers of *Nāmarūpa*; others appear in somber charcoal gray tones alternating with black (particularly when the extremely powerful and influential planet Saturn is involved). What result you will get from your life will depend on how well you are able to digest these states of your being, these conditions in which you find yourself. The relation between bhāva and rasa can be compared to the relationship between tree and fruit. Difficult bhāvas often produce unpleasant rasas, just as ugly trees often yield bitter or sour fruit. And yet sometimes you can have an ugly tree that produces good fruit. A person who has suffered great adversity in his or her life – Nelson Mandela is a good example – can still somehow extract compassion from their misery and find satisfaction.

Some beautiful trees produce excellent fruit; these are the people that we salute, though astrologers hardly meet them because they are so busy enjoying life, drinking in the succulent juice produced by their excellent karmas. Yet other handsome trees bear inedible fruit; think of some trust-fund children, “poor little rich” girls and boys who make a complete hash of their existence despite every advantage, or that substantial number of lottery winners who commit suicide when they find themselves unable to digest their sudden wealth.

Clearly, it can be extremely useful to discover what a person’s chief life challenges may be, and when those challenges, positive or negative, may

occur. Fortunately for us, the Jyotir Vidyā dedicates herself to assisting us with this task. God – the Supreme Reality, the Big Boss – does not, however, want people to know everything that is going to happen; God makes it very difficult for the future to be known.

Uncertainty begins at the moment of birth. Unless you were there yourself, how can you know if the birth time entered on the birth certificate is correct? The clock might have been wrong, the midwife or obstetrician might have been too busy to note the precise moment and decided to estimate, anything could have happened. And even when the father is standing in the birth chamber with an accurate timepiece in hand, we still have the question of when the baby is actually born. Is it when the head crowns? When the baby emerges? When the umbilical cord is cut? My personal opinion is that the birth time should be fixed at the moment when the child takes its first unassisted breath – but who can say for sure?

It is for this reason that in the previous age, in *Dvāpara Yuga*, people would calculate a baby’s horoscope from the time of its conception, and why in *Tretā Yuga* they used the time when the desire to have a child arose, and why way back in *Satya Yuga* they would take the horoscope from the moment when the idea to produce progeny first arose. Today, in *Kali Yuga*, we pay attention to the birth time because we humans of today are so dramatically focused on the material world. But since we cannot be sure of the birth time, we must make it a point to rectify any birth chart that comes our way, by attempting to match significant life events against potential horoscopes.

Of course, even a rectified birth map represents only those karmas that an individual brings into this life. What about the karmas that he or she has performed in the interim between birth and the consultation? To address this situation a jyotiṣi uses a horary chart (in Sanskrit, *prāśna*), to find out what is going on at the moment of the reading. The jyotiṣi casts a horoscope based on the time that the question is asked and interprets this chart in association with the questioner’s birth

chart. Birth charts can also be cast for organizations, corporations, ground-breakings, for anything that is being established on Earth. It is indeed wise to examine potential birth times in advance, to encourage events to unfold in a way productive for whatever is being established. The branch of Jyotiṣa that deals with such pre-planning is known as *muhūrta* (electional astrology).

HERE IS A VERY SIMPLE EXAMPLE OF muhūrta: the seven visible grahas each rule one day of the week. The day of the week on which you schedule an event will influence to some degree how well or poorly the event unfolds. Suppose you wish to schedule a business meeting and you want that meeting to descend into violent chaos; all other factors being held equal, you’d do well to schedule your meeting on a Tuesday, because Tuesday is the day of Mars, the warlord. To reinforce Mars’ indications on that day, hold the meeting in a red room, being sure to wear bright red (the color of Mars), and serve your refreshments (which should contain plenty of tomatoes and tomato sauce) on copper plates (copper being Mars’ metal) that are triangular (Mars’ shape). Face south (Mars’ direction), and you will preside over an assembly of cutthroats who will spend all their time seeking to destroy one another.

Better days for meetings are Thursday (the day of Jupiter) and Friday (the day of Venus), because Jupiter and Venus both encourage reason, reasonableness, honesty, politeness, and the giving and accepting of good advice. Wednesday (Mercury’s day) is also good, as Mercury is the graha of communication. On Sundays everyone will try to shine, because like a lion (Sun rules Leo) Sun always shows off. On Monday, the day of Moon, graha of emotion, expect people to become sensitive when their opinions are challenged; there may be weeping, and hard feelings. As for Saturday, Saturday is good for dissatisfaction in all directions, back-office machinations, and even blackmail.

Selecting a day for matrimony is far more important than scheduling a meeting, for your choice will help set



the flavor for the entire marriage. As my Jyotiṣa mentor has pointedly observed on more than one occasion, “No wonder everyone in North America gets divorced – they all get married on Saturday!” Saturn represents everything that most people do not desire (at least overtly) in a marriage: dissatisfaction, sickness, fear, emotional coldness, reluctance to cooperate, acerbity, and the like. Getting hitched on Saturday encourages a Saturnine tang to spread throughout the marriage, particularly when the groom wears black (Saturn).

Natal, horary and electional horoscopy all require calculations – but Jyotiṣa does not limit itself to calculations. Other methods for getting ideas of which graha is a person’s chief influence require us to read and interpret what is written in the Book of Existence. Sometimes just watching a person stare is sufficient: Sun, Mars and Ketu, for instance, stare upwards, for they are bold, active grahas. Moon and Jupiter stare straight ahead, Mercury and Venus glance coyly sideways, and Saturn and Rāhu glance downward. A person who is strongly influenced by Saturn will look downward almost all the time, because Saturn is melancholic. So much can be learned from people simply by watching how they hold themselves, seeing the quality of luster on their skin, assessing the kind of attitude they display, how they present themselves, the language that they use, their Ayurvedic constitutions, and so on.

**E**VEN MORE CAN BE LEARNED BY THE astute interpretation of omens. Here’s an example: crows and vultures are birds that represent Saturn. Whenever you happen to be thinking something, or asking yourself something, and you see a vulture or a crow, you can be sure that Saturn is somehow involved with the subject of your musing. When a few weeks back I was driving down a Texas highway toward Austin talking with someone on the phone and a question was asked precisely at the moment that I drove by ten buzzards sitting brooding in a line on a single fence, the indication was clear.

Even more dramatic was the scene I saw some years back in Benaras, before

all of India’s vultures died. Benaras is the city of Śiva, the city where people come to die, where corpses are carried daily through the streets as their carriers chant, “*Rām nām satya he!*” (“The name of God is truth!”). Saturn represents death, which means that getting married in Benaras even on a good day is fraught with potential peril. Marriages in India go on for several days, on one of which there is usually a *bārāt*, a procession of the bridegroom and his relatives and friends to the bride’s home to take her back to the marriage pavilion.

On this day (which could have been a Saturday, though I doubt it, as few Indians dare to marry on a Saturday), a procession began to cross the street in front of me just as my rickshaw approached. Leading that procession was a vulture, walking along the ground. No clearer indication could be imagined. I was sorely tempted to buttonhole the bridegroom and tell him, “Look in front of you! Mr. Death is leading your bārāt! How do you think this bodes for your nuptial happiness? Run away now, while you still have a chance!” But then Will Rogers’ excellent advice came to mind: “Never miss a good chance to shut up.” So I left the couple to their shared destiny.

As you come into alignment with the world, the world will gladly give you direct indications of what you need to know. The important issue in omenology is to remember only to interpret as omens those events which are either self-evident, like the walking vulture in Benaras, or that occur at the precise moment that you have a significant question in mind, as with the ten Texan buzzards. Everything that happens to you is not an omen; over-interpretation is the bane of the budding augur.

**A**LIGNMENT IS CRUCIAL. CONSTRUCTIVE relationships with the grahas are basic prerequisites for the successful practice of Jyotiṣa. A good way to begin to get a feel for the grahas, and the *rāśis* (constellations) and bhāvas, is to expose yourself to stories about them. The best way to learn any Indian vidyā is via stories, because until very recently all Indian Vidyās were communicated orally. Most

books are filled with dead facts; living wisdom is best related in an organic way.

**H**ERE IS A TEACHING TALE THAT explains why the individual constellations are owned by specific grahas: Long, long ago existed the zodiac, owned by the solar system’s king and queen: Sun and Moon. The two luminaries greatly enjoyed their promenades through their territory, and graciously permitted the five visible planets to wander freely therein as well.

As time wore on each of the planets began to long for a home base, a portion of zodiacal territory that they could call their own. Mercury, the quick, rational planet who always plans ahead, was the first to act. Mercury, who rules communication, cleverness and diplomacy, went to Sun and said, “Oh great orb! How mighty you are, proprietor as you are of this beautiful universe! You, being the very embodiment of generosity, I am sure that out of the goodness of your heart you will see fit to gift me some of this valuable real estate, that I might enjoy it for myself.”

Like a lion, Sun loves to have his glory recounted. He swelled with appreciation at Mercury’s insight to his greatness, and replied, “Why yes, oh Mercury, you may have the plot of property that sits right next to my personal palace.” Sun rules the zodiacal constellation Leo, which is flanked by Cancer and Virgo. Cancer being already occupied by Moon, Mercury took possession of Virgo.

Mercury has long been known as a two-faced planet; we now know this is literally true, astronomically. One face of Mercury eternally faces the sun (and so is almost molten); the other face is always pointed away from the sun (and so is exceedingly frigid). Astrologically Mercury is known to be duplicitous, speaking out of both sides of his mouth; he is also diplomatic and, well, mercurial. Mercury thought to himself, “Gosh, that was easy! Why not make a move on the queen as well?” So Mercury, waiting until Queen Moon was on her own, strolled over to her and said, “Your majesty, your handsome, considerate, powerful husband was kind enough to gift me with a portion of the

zodiac that is right next to his own. You are known for your munificence; can you assist me too?”

Moon, thus approached, acceded quickly to Mercury’s request. The sun symbolizes the *ātman*, or *puruṣa* – the Supreme Soul, Limitless Consciousness. That awareness is represented as a lion because it is fearless; it is confidence personified. The moon represents the mind, which always aims to be like the soul. But neither moon nor mind is self-luminous; both shine by reflection. The mind dreams of being as intelligent, as permanent, as glorious as the soul, and though this can never be, the mind never stops trying. Moon is much showier than Sun because Moon has to show off in order to attract attention; it does so by continually changing its size and shape, striking poses to invite your notice. Moon is very susceptible to emotive appeals; in this instance Mercury was employing emotional blackmail to get his way.

Moon accordingly awarded Mercury Gemini, the constellation right next to her palace in Cancer. Now satisfied, Mercury retired from the scene to inspect his two parcels. Desire for zodiacal terrain next appeared in the heart of the clever, poetical Venus, who represents the desire-mind. Venus went swiftly to Sun and Moon, and swiftly obtained Libra, the plot next to Virgo, and Taurus, the plot next to Gemini. By this time the impetuous, sword-wielding, blood-red, ever-irate Mars had got the news. He showed up at the palace demanding to know why he had been left out, and was promptly awarded Scorpio (next to Libra) on the one side and Aries (adjacent to Taurus) on the other. At this point Jupiter, guru of the gods, his name a byword for forbearance, relinquished his restraint. Jupiter proceeded to the palace, where Sun and Moon granted him Sagittarius (next to Scorpio) and Pisces (adjacent to Aries).

Now only two constellations remained for allocation, and one planet remained without zodiacal representation: Saturn, slowest moving of the planets visible to the naked eye. Saturn, always the last to know, to catch on. When Saturn finally

began to hobble toward the palace, Sun and Moon, who knew well that there is nothing worse than having Saturn stare you in the face, sent out a messenger, who prostrated before the dreadful presence and stammered, “Oh mighty Saturn! Thank you for coming! The deeds to Capricorn, which adjoins Sagittarius, and Aquarius, which adjoins Pisces, have already been registered in your name! Now you can depart!” What Sun and Moon didn’t add to the message was this: “These are the constellations that are furthest from our own Cancer and Leo; please enjoy yourself, far from us!”

When you hear a story like this, you will remember it far more easily than you would remember a list of details. This story also helps you remember the order of the planets in distance from the sun: first Mercury, then Venus, then Earth (from whose perspective the zodiac is seen), and then Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The moon may be right next to the earth, but by virtue of the fact that it is 400 times closer to Earth than the Sun, whose diameter is 400 times greater than that of the moon, the two luminaries appear to our eyes to be identical in size, and therefore significance – and it is our perceptions of the celestial that we are considering here.

This one little story, when heard and understood properly, provides a number of useful facts as it simultaneously offers some of the flavor of the grahas. Jyotiṣa cannot be known without knowing the savor, the aroma of the grahas; the only way to truly comprehend what grahas are really doing is with such non-verbal knowledge. How will the world be able to speak with you if you do not speak its language?

Once you begin to pick up that lingo, you will start to realize how continually and consistently the grahas encourage us to behave in certain ways. The Sun will always encourage us to shine out in life. Should you have a strong Sun in your horoscope, you will shine out without much effort; if your Sun is weak, you may have to struggle to shine, or may have trouble figuring out how to shine. Mars acts boldly and with enthusiasm on every issue, whether or not bold action is wise in every case. Saturn never acts boldly or with enthusiasm, even when it would be

wise to do so. Mercury communicates, and rules commerce; Mercury also rules green leaves, children, and learning. In Sanskrit Mercury is Budha, which suggests correctly that Lord Buddha and his philosophy are strongly informed by Mercury.

Mercury represents the rational mind, and Moon represents the thinking and emotional mind. In Jyotiṣa Moon is much more important than Sun, particularly for women, as Moon is archetypally female. We respect the (archetypally male) Sun, but when he scorches, Sun can dry up life’s juices. Moon is the graha of rasa, the lord of juice. Moon indicates where and what sort of flavors you will be able to find in life, and what you have a flavor for.

**O**NE GOOD WAY TO GET TO KNOW the grahas is to pay attention to details. With regard to color, Mercury is green, Sun golden, Moon ivory-white. Venus is also white, but represents variegated colors, rainbow hues, as well, for Venus is very artistic. Mars is blood red, Jupiter a sort of saffron gold, and Saturn a dark, dull gray, blue, violet or black. Each day as you exit your home you should consider paying attention to the color that attracts your mind first, for it could well indicate which graha’s influence will dominate that day. Were you to walk out of your front door one morning and notice a black (Saturn) cow limping slowly by (Saturn), you would be right to identify this lame bovine as a Saturnian cow, even though cows per se are not ruled by Saturn. If this happened on a Saturday, you might even want to contemplate going back into the house and remaining in seclusion (which Saturn governs) for the remainder of the day.

But if instead on a Monday you happen to see a beautiful white egret with an oyster in its mouth, an oyster which suddenly pops open to reveal a shining pearl, you can be certain beyond remotest doubt that Moon will on that day influence you impressively, for Moon rules white aquatic birds and aquatic animals, and pearl is Moon’s gemstone. It is at this point that you will want to try to identify what Moon means to you, personally; whether Moon



is good or bad for you, more likely to act to your benefit or your detriment. Even on days when nothing dramatic catches your eye, try paying attention to how things go for you on particular days of the week. Do your Tuesdays go well for you, or not? Do you enjoy Mondays, and new moon and full moon days, or not? Always pay attention first to what is going on in your environment and how it affects you before you try to start applying abstracted principles.

Make it a point to spend some time outside staring at the sky whenever possible. You may not be able to from your home, if you live in an urban area; artificial light has become so pervasive that light pollution prevents two thirds of the world's population from being able to see the Milky Way. Find a dark location, and let the luminescence of the stars and planets speak to you non-verbally. When sky watching is impractical, study an ephemeris, a tabulated schedule of the movements of heavenly bodies. Around here begin with *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, which is published right next door, in Dublin, NH. Even though it is not a *pañcāṅga*, a Jyotishical ephemeris, it does offer noteworthy perspectives on how celestial events relate to terrestrial effects.

Remember: Take plenty in before you put any out. As students progress in their study of Jyotiṣa and Jyotishical facts accumulate within them, as they begin to scent the grahas' rasas, they become sorely tempted to rush to interpretation. "Yield not to temptation!" is our advice to them, advice that is often difficult to take. Even if they determine to resist, they will be surrounded by friends and family members who all want advice. But when one sets off too early on the interpretive path, one may miss learning the most important lesson in all of Jyotiṣa, which is: Remain calm. This is one reason why Gaṇeśa is always worshiped at the start of all auspicious endeavors, because Gaṇeśa specializes in bringing about calm. Lose your calm, when using Jyotiṣa, or Āyurveda, or some similar vidyā, and you will soon lose your mind. You will think, "Oh my God! Jupiter is in the eighth! My life is finished!" and you will tear out your hair

in frustration, which will be good only for your wig maker. Jyotiṣa takes upon itself the extraordinarily difficult task of understanding another being's personal reality. Divination succeeds only when the mind is sufficiently clear and calm to mirror the client's astral light; only then does it become obvious where to begin.

IF ANY OF YOU EVER BECOME SERIOUS students of Jyotiṣa, you will quickly become impressed with the sheer number of the classical literature's interpretive principles. India's system of divination offers so many data points that you can quickly become utterly confused if you attempt to apply them all. Some years back an American mathematician named David Pingree even proved this mathematically. We avoid this situation by refraining from using all of the principles all of the time. In any event, some of them work some of the time, and many of them work much of the time; but no principle works all the time.

What we do instead is to become so aligned with the principles, so sensitive to them, that when we sit down with the client it will very often happen – not always, but most of the time, if you are calm and sensitive – that the best approach to the consultation will be illumined by something that will open a window to the crux of the matter: the first principle that comes to mind, or the first interesting combination that you note in the horoscope, or the omen that appears when the first question is asked. Begin from the right point, move in the right direction, and soon you are negotiating the maze. This can happen only when we remain relaxed and calm; Gaṇeśa will help us when the need arises, if we are on good terms with him.

When examining a karmic map, remember that only in extreme cases is fate utterly fated. Indians like to believe that Jyotiṣa permits you to know exactly what will happen in all situations, but this you cannot do. You can often, however, read what is very likely to happen, and sometimes you can determine what is likely to be unavoidable, thanks to *dṛḍha* karma, which indicates severe karmic extremity

– for good or ill. I like the word, *dṛḍha*; it is difficult to pronounce, and when pronounced properly it sounds much like its meaning: "fixed, unmoving, unswayable." Dṛḍha karma is karma that is fixed, so fixed that it seems fated, meaning that it is highly unlikely to change even should a person try earnestly to change it.

Imagine for a moment that you have fallen into a swiftly flowing river. If you have fallen into the river near its verge, you will probably be able to easily emerge from it, because the current is usually weak near the riverbank. If you find yourself a little farther in, the current will be stronger, and you may have to swim hard, or grab hold of a rock or branch (if one is handy) in order to extricate yourself; but this you should still be able to do. Get too far into the river, though, and you may not be able to swim your way out of it. Dṛḍha karma represents the main current of a violent, turbulent karmic river, created of course by your previous actions.

Human beings are, by and large, creatures of routine; as soon as we do something once, we become tempted to do it again. Having done it twice, the temptation for a third time becomes even stronger, and pretty soon it becomes a habit. Good habits are those routine activities that pay dividends, in health, wealth, or some other manner of well-being; bad habits are those that ram you in the rump, sooner or later. If you have had a bad habit long enough (how long is "long enough" depends on the activity), its evil effects will continue even after you have seen the error of your ways and realized the need to end it. It's all a matter of momentum.

SOME SO-CALLED "NEW AGE" PEOPLE will say to ailing individuals who have improved their diets and changed their habits but are not yet well, "Oh, you are still sick because you *want* to be sick." Bollocks, say I. Have they forgotten that the body works much more slowly than the mind? Just because the mind repents does not mean that it can force the body to alter itself forthwith. Even dramatic changes may take time to produce results, and even

when improvements occur their extent may be limited by the degree to which the tissues and organs have deteriorated, by how far their vitality has been compromised. Just because your body fails to return to normal after starting to live healthily does not mean that you want to be sick; and just because your life fails to improve after you change your ways does not mean that you are doomed to be forever miserable. What it does suggest is that your progress is being obstructed by dṛḍha karma.

You may decide firmly, today, to take concrete steps to improve your life, and you may dedicate sustained effort toward that end for weeks, or months, or years, but your decision will provide you no guarantee of success should substantial momentum from previous actions continue to drag you down. Dṛḍha karma might cause you to be struck by lightning on two separate occasions, as happened to a friend of a friend of mine. Being struck once is unusual enough – but twice? Dṛḍha karma for sure. The first man to survive going over Niagara Falls in a barrel died some time later in New York City after a fall caused by slipping on a banana peel in the street. Curious karma, to have survived such danger only to perish by a simple twist of fruit.

Conversely, dṛḍha karma for good results in life may cause success to pursue you. Maybe you will win the lottery twice. Or maybe, if you are a professional athlete, you will find yourself on winning teams. I spend a lot of time nowadays with my mother, who is in her nineties, and since she lives near San Antonio she is of course very fond of the San Antonio NBA team, the Spurs. The Spurs have won the NBA title four times in nine seasons, most recently in 2007. When they won it in 2005, it was a particularly happy moment for Manu Ginobili, who is one of their star players. Manu is from Argentina and won that championship just nine months or so after leading the Argentine national team to the 2004 Olympic gold medal. Here is a case of dṛḍha good karma – winning even one title would have thrilled him, but he ended up winning both – and then won again this year.

Rule No. 1 of interpretation: Always look for dṛḍha karma. You can't rely on every indication you see in an astrological chart, because there are many more potential interpretations than there are events to interpret. The interpretations you can rely upon are those that are confluent, and dṛḍha karma is the source of confluence.

Confluence occurs when several different astrological principles offer similar indications. The greater the number of astrological combinations present in a chart that point in the same direction, and the greater the strength of those combinations, the greater the likelihood that that will be the direction taken. Fixed good karma in the realm of finance suggests, as my mentor's guru's guru used to say, that God will "break open the ceiling and pour money down on top of you" when it is time for you to become rich. And when a confluence of poverty karmas occurs and it becomes time for you to become poor, money will flow out of your accounts like air from balloons that have been skewered with scimitars.

It is very difficult – or impossible – to foretell what will transpire in those domains of life in which the karma is *adṛḍha*. Adṛḍha karma lacks confluence; it is "unfixed," which indicates increased free will available to you in this regard. Unfixed karma in the realm of marriage offers you the free will to get married or not, as you choose. Fixed karma in the realm of marriage means you will, for better or worse, either end up being married or not being married, even if you try to do otherwise. Maybe your father will show up with a shotgun, or your fiancées will mysteriously disappear before reaching the altar; or maybe you'll be born into a culture where child marriage is the norm. Or maybe you keep marrying and keep divorcing, maybe you go through five or six or seven different spouses, or maybe, like one of my friends, you end up getting wed to and divorced from the same guy on three different occasions. Whatever the details, such behavior all boils down to dṛḍha karma.

Adṛḍha karma is "New Age" karma: you make a decision to change, act

upon it, and change occurs. A new karmic pattern develops because the old pattern was so weak that it could not resist your determination to modify it. Of course, even in such a situation you still bear the responsibility for your decision, good or bad. And even if it is a good decision, you will still have to work to make it work. Divining the prospects for marital, business, or other types of partnerships can be tricky, because all such collaborations involve a joining together of karmas. We should always enjoy attending weddings between two people with dṛḍha good karma for marriage, for those unions are highly likely both to last and to be rewarding. Two people with true dṛḍha bad karma for marriage may find themselves either splitting after only a few hours of matrimony, or (if conditions prevent the end of the marriage) praying for the end of time so they can end their time with each other. The branch of astrology that specializes in assessing the relationship dynamic between two or more people by comparing their horoscopes is known as synastry. Gauging the interaction among participants in a potential relationship, in order to encourage a smooth, durable fit between them, is regarded as so important in India that almost all families there seek out the assistance of astrologers for horoscope matching when the time comes to marry off their young.

ANOTHER USE FOR SYNASTRY IS TO see how two unrelated people will interact, to see how the auras of these two people will work together, according to how well or poorly their grahas are aligned. Often you will find two perfectly fine individuals who will simply not be able to get along with one another. They can get along with everyone else, just not with one another. Why? Because the otherwise fine combinations in their individual horoscopes do not align.

Family dynamics become ever more complex as new members are added, since each child adds its own karmas into the mix. Each organization's destiny is driven by the destinies of its members; where



confluence is present, prediction becomes easier. Let's return for a moment to the San Antonio Spurs, to Robert Horry, another key player. Robert Horry has thus far won seven NBA championships, with three different teams. Any sensible coach would welcome Robert onto his team as it appears to be Robert's fate to win with whatever team he ends up on.

Ḍṛḍha karma and adṛḍha karma; fate and free will. In between these poles lurks a further karmic measure: *ḍṛḍhāḍṛḍha* karma, which is "fixed, but not fixed." The bricks have been laid but the mortar has not yet dried, so with the help of a good crowbar and some elbow grease the wall can be remade, or can come down. Karma that is set but not yet set in stone invites the use of *upāya*, or astrological remedies. Now interpretation becomes even more complex, for not every individual who could be benefited by an *upāya* will have the gumption and the determination to both begin and complete that *upāya*. It is often very difficult to discern how likely it is that the client will be able to make a change. There is no use in suggesting *upāyas* to clients who are not likely to perform them, or not likely to succeed at them. It is particularly unhelpful in such situations to say something like, "Oh, you may be having a hard time in your life right now, but if you will only employ your power of positive thinking to visualize what you would like to achieve in your life, what you visualize will rapidly take shape." In fact, you will have to explain that, although what the client visualizes will take shape, it will do so only after some hard work, for which patience will be necessary. Suggest *upāyas* to people who cannot be patient and they may end up tearing out their hair, or possibly tearing out the hair of whoever suggested the *upāyas*.

*Upāyas* that do work do so because they disconnect us from the graha whose archetypal pattern we have taken on. When karmas are fixed, grahas possess us most efficiently and are most difficult to disconnect from. In such cases they act through us most comprehensively, we thinking that we are the doers when it is they who are actually doing. Even in those dark hours when your karmas

are most ḍṛḍha, your best course of action is to stay calm and keep moving forward, for you never know when some opportunity to wriggle out of the grahas' grasp might present itself.

OUR TALK HERE THIS EVENING was scheduled to begin at 6:00, but I was careful to wait until 6:11. "Why 6:11?" The answer: "To begin after Libra had begun to rise." Libra is ruled by benefic Venus, who also rules poetry, arcane knowledge, and *tantra*. Moon, lord (for a Libra-rising chart) of the tenth house of action in the world, currently occupies Libra. Venus, Libra's lord, had just a few minutes earlier entered Gemini, which is a Libra ascendant's ninth bhāva of good fortune, devotion to divine beings, pursuit of transcendental wisdom, mentors and mentoring, higher studies, *dharma* and, most pertinent to this evening, *satsaṅga*. Being in the very first or very last degree of a constellation, as Venus was then, make Venus's spiritual, "other-worldly" qualities to come to the fore.

Just before seven this morning the moon became exactly full. This particular full moon was Lord Buddha's birthday. Buddha means awake, conscious; Budha means Mercury. How excellent to have the still practically full Moon of Mindfulness occupying the rising sign, ready to rise, when we began our talk! Particularly since, at that moment, in the seventh bhāva sat Sun and Mercury, creating a *Budhāditya Yoga*, a combination for sharp discernment that was particularly powerful because Sun is currently exalted and because, for a Libra-rising chart, Sun rules the eleventh bhāva, which relates to discernment, and Mercury is lord of the auspicious ninth bhāva in which sat ascendant lord Venus. And at that moment Jupiter, who rules oratory, occupied with retrograde strength the second bhāva of speech, repetition of mantras, and all forms of traditional knowledge; and Mars, who rules penetrating insight, occupied the fifth bhāva of discernment. All told this was an unusually potent moment to commence such a lecture, a moment when the grahas were particularly well aligned for our purposes. What luck!

TIME NOW TO END THIS LUDICROUSLY incomplete introduction to a vast subject. So much to learn, and only one brain to learn it with; get the Nine Grahas to assist you, and they will tell you everything you need to know. Why, we have not even mentioned the vital question of timing. Timing is everything! How foolish it is to look at a horoscope and say, "Oh my goodness, this lord is over here and that lord over there; they are having a fight, your life must be in complete ruin." Let them fight – why should you care? You should only care at those moments when that fight is actually triggered for you; problems only occur when problematic combinations get activated.

Our difficulty now is to do something practical before we must depart. "Practical" means something that will encourage the grahas to cooperate with us. As my Jyotiṣa mentor likes to say, there is fundamentally only one graha to consider: Saturn. Let us therefore do something to encourage Saturn to show grace to us, to cut us some slack. Saturn's job, which he does very well, is to cause people to experience everything that they worked very hard to avoid experiencing. To placate Saturn is to reduce the degree of his inexorability. Worshiping Lord Śiva, particularly in the form of the mighty Hanumān, is a fine way to help placate Saturn. Internally, Hanumān represents the *prāṇa* in your body; when you align yourself with Hanumān, you calm and focus your *prāṇa*, and as long as your *prāṇa* remains calm and focused inside you, you need not fret about whatever is happening outside you.

One good way to worship Hanumān is with the *Hanumān Chalisa*; another is via the popular mantra *Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma*, which is the mantra we shall now repeat for a few minutes, so that everyone may leave here with a beneficial vibration. *Om Namaḥ Śivāya!* ❧

Chanting *Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma* ...



# YOGA SŪTRA OF PATAÑJALI & ITS COMMENTARIES

Edwin Bryant's translation of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras with commentaries (to be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux) contributes to the growing body of literature on classical yoga by providing insights from traditional Sanskrit commentators on the text.

BY EDWIN BRYANT

विपर्ययो मिथ्याज्ञानमतद्रूपप्रतिष्ठम् ।

1.8 Viparyayo mithyājñānam  
atadrūpapraṭiṣṭham.

*Viparyayah*, error; *mithyā*, false; *jñānam*, knowledge; *atad*, not that, incorrect; *rūpa*, form; *pratiṣṭham*, established in.

Error is false knowledge stemming from the incorrect apprehension [of something].

PATAÑJALI NOW PROCEEDS ONTO THE second of the five different types of *vṛttis*, error. Vyāsa defines error as considering something to be what it is not, a state that can be subsequently removed by true knowledge of the actual nature of the thing in question. As an example he gives the perception of two moons. After consuming alcohol, a person may see double. This error of perception nonetheless produces a *vṛtti* in the mind of this person, but this *vṛtti* differs from *vṛttis* produced by the valid sources of knowledge discussed in the pervious verse in so far as the seeing of two moons is an apparent perception that can be contradicted and dismissed by a later accurate perception that there is only one moon in reality, whereas valid knowledge cannot be contradicted. Vijñānabhikṣu notes that error is the result of the superimposition of wrong knowledge into an object (in the above example, an extra moon is superimposed onto the actual solitary one).

The classical example, especially

amongst the followers of Vedānta, is mistaking a rope to be a snake: if one happens upon a rope on the path as one is walking home at dusk, and imagines it to be a snake, one is superimposing the form of a snake upon something that is not a snake. This is error according to the Yoga School (different schools of philosophy hold differing views on this point).<sup>1</sup> The Nyāya School, which especially concerns itself with accurate knowledge, has a similar definition and gives as an example of error, considering mother-of-pearl to contain silver. (Specifically, Nyāya defines knowledge, *pramā*, as apprehending an object as it is, that is to say, correctly identifying the attribute of that object, and error as the opposite, that is, considering an object to have an attribute that it does not, in fact, have – the mother-of-pearl does not contain silver<sup>2</sup>). Vyāsa considers error to be produced by the five *kleśas*, the impediments to the practice of yoga that will be discussed in II.3 – ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion and clinging-to-life.

शब्दज्ञानानुपाती वस्तुशून्यो

विकल्पः ।

1.9 Śabdajñānānupātī vastuśūnyo  
vikalpah.

*Śabda*, words; *jñāna*, knowledge; *anupātī*, resulting from, followed in sequence; *vastu*, actual object; *śūnyah*, devoid of; *vikalpah*, fancy, imagination.

Fancy results from verbal usage devoid of an actual object.

ALL THE COMMENTATORS TAKE THE third type of *vṛtti*, imagination, to be metaphor, the usage of words or expressions, that do not correspond to any actual physical reality, but that are understood in common parlance. Vyāsa gives some slightly complicated examples including the statement that “the arrow remains still.” What this actually means in the mind of the listener is that the arrow has ceased to move. Vācaspatimiśra elaborates that in order to understand the meaning of the root ‘to stand still,’ the listener has to imagine a state of not moving. In actual fact, ‘standing still,’ that is, absence of motion, is really an imagined state of affairs dependent on the idea of motion, but it is then projected as an actual characteristic of the arrow. A more straightforward example from English usage might be: the ‘sun rises and sets’ or ‘time flies.’ The sun doesn’t actually either rise or set, nor is there a tangible entity called ‘Time’ flapping about with wings, but common usage has assigned meaning to these imaginary states of affairs, and no one bats an eyelid when such expressions are uttered. In other words, metaphors and similes are *vikalpas*. Indeed, Vācaspatimiśra notes that such expressions which, if dissected to their literal meanings, do not correspond to reality, are normal everyday expressions and ubiquitous in human language, since language is largely figurative.

†Edwin Bryant's treatment of Sūtras 1-7 can be found in Issue Nos. 1, 2 and 6 of *Nāmārūpa* magazine.

<sup>1</sup>Vijñānabhikṣu, for example, points out that error is considered an action that entails a positive act of misidentification in the Yoga School, rather than a negative lack of discrimination as certain other thinkers (such as those subscribing to the Sāṃkhya School) hold.

<sup>2</sup>Tarkasaṅgraha, 35.



In this way, although other schools, such as Nyāya, consider vikalpa to be a category of error, the previous vṛtti, rather than a vṛtti in its own right, the Yoga school considers the vṛtti of vikalpa, imagination, to differ essentially from the previous two vṛttis. From this perspective, ‘right knowledge’ corresponds to accurate knowledge of an actual objective reality, recognized as such by others, and error corresponds to something that is a misperception or misunderstanding of something, but of something that does actually have objective reality, and therefore it is perceived as an error by other people who can see the actual nature of the misunderstood object. Vikalpa, on the other hand, while, like error, referring to an object which lacks actual physical reality, yet, unlike error, is not based on an error of judgment and is intelligible to other people in practice, producing a vṛtti impression in the mind of the listener without being perceived as an error or attracting any attention.<sup>3</sup> It thus paradoxically represents a meaningful expression which yet has no actual physical reality in the real world. It is therefore held to be a different category of vṛtti.

Vijñānabhikṣu accepts the more common understanding of this vṛtti of vikalpa—the usage of nonsensical expressions such as ‘sky-flower,’ ‘hare’s horn’ or ‘son of a barren woman,’ which are the typical motifs in philosophical discourse that correspond to expressions in English such as ‘pie-in-the-sky.’ These are all non-existent objects, but nonetheless produce some sort of a vṛtti in the mind of the listener. It is curious that the commentators do not discuss more common aspects of imaginative thought, such as day-dreaming, fantasy, make-believe, wishful thinking, etc, which actually occupy major portions of most people’s waking attention, but such things depend on the activation of *saṁskāras*, and are thus perhaps more accurately relegated to the function of memory, the fifth type of vṛtti discussed below.

## अभावप्रत्ययालम्बनावृत्तिर्निद्रा।

### 1.10. Abhāvapratyayālambanā vṛttir nidrā.

*Abhāva*, absence; *pratyaya*, idea, conception, cognition; *ālambanā*, support, basis; *vṛttiḥ*, state of mind; *nidrā*, sleep.

**Sleep is that state of mind which is based on the cognition of an absence [of any knowledge].**

THE COMMENTATORS ACKNOWLEDGE here that there is some difference of opinion regarding whether or not sleep is an actual vṛtti or not. Based on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI.8.1) the Vedāntins, for example, do not consider any vṛtti to be present in the *citta* during deep sleep, but that the *ātman*, or *puruṣa*, undisturbed by any citta vṛtti in the state of deep sleep, enters into Brahman (*Vedānta Sūtra* I.4.18; 2.3.31). Vyāsa and the Yoga commentators, in contrast, view deep sleep as a type of vṛtti on the grounds that when one awakes, one remembers that one has either slept well, or slept restlessly, or slept in a stupor. One would not be able to do so, in their view, if these impressions did not relate back to a state of mind that existed during deep sleep. This is because, in yoga psychology, memory is the product of saṁskāra, and saṁskāra is caused by experience. Therefore, the memory of having slept well must relate to a state of mind experienced during deep sleep, which is recorded in the citta as memory (the topic of the next verse) and remembered upon awakening. This state of mind according to this line of reasoning, must therefore pertain to a category of vṛtti distinct from others.

It might be useful to note that, according to Vācaspatimiśra, the fourth vṛtti being discussed by Patañjali in this verse is not referring to the state of mind represented in the dream state – dream sleep corresponds to the vṛttis of memory (since it involves the activation of saṁskāras). Sleep, then, *nidrā*, refers to deep dreamless sleep. It takes place when the *tāmasic* element of the mind densely covers the *sāttvic* nature of *buddhi*, the intellect. As a result of this, the mind does not assume the form of the objects of knowledge, as it does during the waking and dream states and

thus *puruṣa* is conscious of darkness alone. If the tāmasic element that covers the intellect during deep sleep is accompanied by a measure of sattva, a person feels refreshed and lucid upon awakening; if accompanied by rajas, one feels that one has slept restlessly and one is confused and distracted; if tamas has almost completely dominated sattva and rajas during sleep, one feels sluggish and tired upon awakening. Vācaspatimiśra adds that sleep, too, can be controlled in *samādhi*, trance, pointing back to I.3 where Patañjali states that yoga is the cessation of all vṛttis, which therefore includes deep sleep as well. The hagiographies of saints the world over are replete with claims that many indulged in a very minimal amount of sleep.

## अनुभूतविषयासंप्रमोषः स्मृतिः।

### 1.11

*Anubhūtaviṣayāsampramoṣaḥsmṛtiḥ.*

*Anubhūta*, experienced; *viṣaya*, sense objects; *asampramoṣaḥ*, not slipping away, retention; *smṛtiḥ*, memory.

**Memory is the retention of sense objects that have been experienced.**

VYĀSA NOTES THAT MEMORIES ARE generated from and thus dependent on the other types of vṛttis described in the preceding verses: right knowledge, error, imagination, and sleep (one has memories of right knowledge, error, etc.); hence, says Vācaspatimiśra, memory is mentioned last on the list of vṛttis. Nonetheless, the Yoga School considers memory a vṛtti in its own right. Patañjali describes memory as the retention, or more literally, the ‘not-slipping away,’ *asampramoṣaḥ*, of an object of experience. As noted earlier, every object that has ever been experienced forms a saṁskāra, an imprint, in the citta mind. The mind forms an impression of an object through the sense organs, and this impression produces a *pratyaya*, a conception or recognition by the intelligence of what the object is and where it fits into the general scheme of things.

A person approaching a red rose, for example, receives an impression through the senses of sight and smell of a red object of a particular shape with a certain odor. This input is then recognized by the intelligence as a rose, a fragrant member of the flower family. This identified impression remains embedded in the citta mind in the form of a *saṁskāra*, imprint. Since the mind is exposed to numerous sense objects all the time, and has been for numerous lifetimes, there are unlimited saṁskāras embedded in the citta, which are all potentially retrievable. Memory, then, the fifth and final type of vṛtti listed by Patañjali, consists of the retrieval of these saṁskāras; memories are the reactivation of the imprints of sense objects that one has experienced and recognized in the past.<sup>4</sup> (Vijñānabhikṣu makes a distinction between memory and recognition, here<sup>5</sup>). When these saṁskāras do not ‘slip away’ (i.e., fall into the unconscious) they are memory.

Vyāsa states that dreams are the spontaneous activation of saṁskāras, and therefore are memories. Bhoja Rājā says that the saṁskāras that activate during dreams do so because of the force of the impression that created them. In other words, they were vivid events. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī raises the question that if all memory consists of, and only of, events or objects that have been actually experienced, then what about the saṁskāras that activate during a dream, when one might imagine oneself as having the body of an elephant? Surely one has not had such an experience in real life. Such memories, answers Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, are the result of error, which affects the dream state just as it does the waking state.

One might add at this point, that one cannot dream of, or for that matter even imagine, something that does not exist as a saṁskāra or set of

saṁskāras in one’s citta, and saṁskāras, in turn, correspond to something one has actually experienced. However, saṁskāras can be merged together in a way that corresponds to something that has never been experienced in reality, such as a flying elephant, or the horns of a hare. What is taking place in such imaginative instances is the merging together of two sets of actual saṁskāras; in other words, one set of memory experiences, recollections of the act of flying, or of a hare, are, in these examples, superimposed on and blended with other memory imprints, those of an elephant or a hare. (As an aside, in addition to the fantasy nature of most dreams, *Vedānta Sūtra* III.2.4 allows that some dreams can also serve as omens).

This concludes the discussion on what constitutes a vṛtti. According to Vyāsa, the five types of vṛttis identified by Patañjali are either experienced as pleasurable in nature resulting in attachment (sattva); unpleasurable, resulting in aversion (rajas), or deluded, resulting in ignorance (tamas). Of course, as Vijñānabhikṣu notes, from the absolute perspective, pleasure also results in pain, because pleasure generates attachment to the object of pleasure, and this attachment ultimately results in pain upon the loss of this object. Whatever their nature, says Vyāsa, vṛttis must be restrained for any type of trance – either *samprajñāta* or *asamprajñāta* – to take place, as Patañjali announced at the beginning of his *Sūtras*.

One might add here that Patañjali has indicated that these all these five vṛttis are *kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ*, detrimental to the goal of yoga, or non-detrimental, that is, conducive to the goal of yoga. Thus, for example, the vṛtti of sleep might be considered non-detrimental when, say, it is not excessive but simply adequate for the well-being of the body,

but detrimental when in excess of this; that of memory, non-detrimental when one keeps the goals of yoga in mind, but detrimental when one harps back on past sensual indulgences, and so forth. Perhaps the hardest vṛtti to envision in this regard might be how ‘error’ could be conducive to the goal of yoga, but one can play around creatively with possible scenarios: one might take up yoga in a studio taught by dedicated teachers grounded in Patañjali’s teachings, for example, thinking it to be purely a physical bodily practice, but, once there, become inspired to adopt the lifestyle and spiritual philosophy of the system, and thus one’s initial ‘error’ becomes conducive to the goals of the yoga. There are certainly plenty of examples in the *Purāṇas* that might illustrate error from a *bhakti*, devotional, perspective. The residents of Vraj, for example, where Kṛṣṇa spent his childhood, unaware of Kṛṣṇa’s divinity, mistook him to be their son, or friend, or lover, etc., but such ‘error’ is not just highly desirable in this yoga tradition, but fundamental to the notion of *līlā*, the ‘pastimes’ of the incarnation of God in the world, and indicative of the extraordinary past life yogic attainments of those residents, who were all undertaking their last birth in saṁsāra.<sup>6</sup> ❖



Tanka Vel, a Saivite sadhu, meditating. His name refers to the spear, the ‘power of wisdom,’ carried by Murugan. Tamil Nadu, South India. January 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Other schools, such as the Vaiśeṣikas, consider *vikalpa* to be a category of error rather than a separate vṛtti in its own right.





# RASAKHAN

BY SHYAMDAS

## INTRODUCTION

IT IS SAID THAT IN THE STATE OF SPIRITUAL love, one can remain without the Beloved for up to one day, but when that love rises to the level of attachment, the lover can remain apart from the Beloved for only a few hours. When attachment matures into divine addiction, that blessed lover cannot be separated from the Beloved for even a moment.

These sublime states of being define the course of blessed devotion and the poet-saint Rasakhan's personal path. Devotion, or more specifically, *bhakti*, is nourished by renunciation of what is unrelated, by listening to devotional subjects, and by singing your heart out to God with unconditional devotion. These are the foundational principles of Śrīmad

Vallabhacharya's (AD 1479-1531) Path of Grace, the *Puṣṭi Mārga*.

Śrī Gusainji (Śrī Vitthalnathji), the son of Śrī Vallabhacharya and guru of Rasakhan, continued his father's teachings and also brought forth new elements in the elaborate mode of divine service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, called *sevā*. This form of *sevā* is dedicated solely to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. It was being practiced in Śrī Nathji's temple on the Govardhan Hill when Rasakhan arrived there around AD 1561. Rasakhan (c. 1534-1619) was among the exalted group of Śrī Gusainji's 252 main disciples, the grace-filled souls who were the principle recipients of the Bhakti master's devotional vision.

According to the Path of Grace, Śrī Kṛṣṇa adapts to the nature of His devotees, for it is too difficult to achieve perfection through one's own narrow means. This truth comes as a relief for the spiritual practitioner, or *bhakta*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa plays with His own souls in a personal way, so that each is able to clearly recognize Divinity.

The life story of Rasakhan provides a convincing example of that profound process. The divine exchange also allows the practitioner to truly take refuge, and then an array of religious experiences arises. It is not a question of skillful means, but rather intense yearning, which brings the Supreme into the practitioner's world. This formula allows true character to develop, often in unusual ways, as witnessed in the life of Rasakhan.

The foundations of both lawful and grace-filled devotion (*Maryādā* and *Puṣṭi Bhakti*) are found within the Sanskrit teachings of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. These teachings were then more fully revealed in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Rasakhan, a Muslim-born, ecstatic Kṛṣṇa follower, was able to uniquely express through his poetry the sublime devotional views found in those texts. Rasakhan's lyrical expressions grant us access to his ecstatic realm: Śrī Kṛṣṇa's playground – the sacred lands of Vraja. His instructional poems teach us to prioritize our values, making them devotional and focused on divinity. Then, there can be transformation and vision.

IN RASAKHAN'S WORLD, THE GOPIS ARE the gurus. They have demonstrated how to leave everything unnecessary and move directly toward the Beloved. The Gopis provide the best examples of devotion, because above all else, they desired the Lord of Sweetness. They simply forgot all other illusions and became solely attached to God. They became recipients of *nīrodha*, the blessed state of continual God-awareness. Their every motion and emotion was perfectly fixated on Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Rasakhan entered deeply into the Gopis' realizations and sometimes even described his experiences from their vantage point. His poems are filled with astounding sounds, meanings, and unexpected conclusions, all of which propel the reader into a "Kṛṣṇa awakening."

Throughout Rasakhan's work, the diversity of his beloved Kṛṣṇa's loving plays and sublime character unfold. He leads us from Child Kṛṣṇa's adorable antics to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's ultimate union with the beautiful Rādhā. He

employs emotions that are common in the world, but finds in them their eternal, divine counterparts.

Rasakhan is not interested in enlightenment, a path which he considers selfish. Instead, he urges us to find our true essence as eternal parts of the Infinite and to become followers of the Lord, lovers of the Beloved. In his inimitable style, Rasakhan uses Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own tongue of Vraja Bhāṣā to express the Blessed Path as well as its divine goal. He shows us that whenever there is pure love, the means becomes the reward. As Rasakhan explains, once you are in God's orbit, you cannot forget Him, even if you try.

Rasakhan's rhyme and alliteration make his poems delightful just to hear. His language, although set in a village vernacular, is elegant and witty. He is famous for concluding his poems with an unexpected revelation. His writings are precious, as they are infused with insights that inspire us to join him on a love pilgrimage to a domain beyond even liberation. The astonishing is found in the ordinary as Rasakhan celebrates the joys of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's loving worship.

RASAKHAN'S REMARKABLE POEMS HAVE always been an inspiration to me. I live for some months every year in the town of Gokul, where Rasakhan lived, as well as in Jatipura, where Śrī Nathji's temple stands on top of the sacred Govardhan Hill. It was here in Jatipura that Rasakhan first beheld his beloved Kṛṣṇa and his guru, Śrī Gusainji.

This text was completed with the help of Dr. David Haberman and Kṛṣṇa Kinkari, both lovers of Rasakhan's revelations and the sacred lands of Vraja. I have had the pleasure of wandering Vraja with both of them; our respect and love for Rasakhan's poetry brought us together.

What incredible truths Rasakhan discovered! He was truly independent, and his words inspire us to find our own unique relationship with the Supreme. He gives us the confidence that it could happen for us as well. Personally, I feel aligned with Rasakhan. Like me, he was born outside of Hindu society, yet he penetrated its core. He consciously

rejected anything from Hindu and Islamic tradition that was not true to the *dharma* of his own soul.

In devotion, the fastest way to understand something is through emulating the ways of someone who has already attained the exalted state. I have chosen Rasakhan as my guide and inspiration. These translations of his poems are my personal salute to his rarified attainments.

## THE LIFE OF RASAKHAN

*Taken from 252 Vaishnavas, Part 3*

RASAKHAN IS A RAJAS BHAKTA, AND IN the *Līlā* he is Rasasiddha. He was born in this world as a Muslim in Delhi.

Rasakhan was very attracted to the son of a wealthy Hindu merchant and could not remain without him. He would eat the remains of whatever that boy ate or drank. He was totally infatuated with him. The other members of Rasakhan's clan were disturbed by this and questioned, "Why do you eat the leftovers of that Hindu boy? You are an outcast."

Rasakhan replied, "What can I do? But if you say another word to me on the subject, I will kill you." People feared Rasakhan, and he continued his relationship with the Hindu boy for many years.

Once, two bhaktas visited Delhi, and after observing Rasakhan they mentioned to each other, "Rasakhan's attachment to that Hindu boy truly demonstrates the meaning of attachment. He cannot live without that boy and always chases after him. Rasakhan is not only shameless but also unconcerned about what others think about him. Anyone who can develop that level of attachment to God would attain spiritual perfection in a moment."

Meanwhile, the love-intoxicated Rasakhan was standing nearby and suspected that the two men were speaking about him. He approached them and asked, "Were you just talking about me?"

The two bhaktas became concerned and replied, "We were just talking to each other."

Rasakhan threatened, "Tell me the truth and I will let you live, otherwise I will kill you both. Now tell me what

you were saying!"

Rasakhan then pulled out a knife, and the two terrified men began to explain, "We were just saying that if you could be as attached to Śrī Nathji as you are to that Hindu boy, you would become devotionally enlightened."

"Who is this Śrī Nathji you speak of?" Rasakhan asked. "I know nothing about Him."

"This entire world is just a part of His manifestation," one of the bhaktas said.

When Rasakhan questioned, "How can I know Him?" one of the men pulled a small painting of Śrī Nathji from his turban. In this painting, the Blessed Lord was adorned with a peacock-feather crown and the garb of a dancer. As soon as Rasakhan saw the painting, his heart became wed to Śrī Nathji, and tears poured from his eyes. At that moment, all of his infatuation with the Hindu boy vanished.

*The great teacher, Śrī Harirayaji later commented: In this account it is shown that attachment is a very important part of the devotional dharma. Pure attachment, even to something worldly, can transform itself and lead the soul to God. Rasakhan's attachment to that Hindu boy was pure, and therefore he was able to transfer it to Śrī Nathji.*

Rasakhan immediately questioned, "Where does this Lord live?"

The bhaktas replied, "He lives in Braja."

Rasakhan then demanded, "Give me that painting so that I will never forget Him."

The bhakta reflected, "This Rasakhan appears to be a divine soul, otherwise how could his mind and heart become transformed and so attracted to Śrī Nathji?" He gave the painting of Śrī Nathji to Rasakhan, who immediately headed out toward Braja.

WHEREVER HE CAME ACROSS A temple, Rasakhan would go inside to see if the Lord depicted in the painting was there, but he could not find Śrī Nathji anywhere. When Rasakhan eventually arrived in Braja, he first went to Vrindavan and then Mathura. He



looked everywhere for Śrī Nathji, but he could not find Him in any temple. Finally, he went to the Govardhan Hill. As he climbed up toward Śrī Nathji’s temple, a call sounded from the temple for Śrī Nathji’s flower garland to be brought to the temple. Many other bhaktas also made their way up the hill to see Śrī Nathji. Rasakhan was so excited that he started to run up the Govardhan Hill, but when he reached the temple gates, the door guard, a local Braja man, pushed him aside and did not allow him entrance.

Rasakhan then sadly climbed down the hill and went to the Govinda Lake, where he pondered, “I was allowed into every other Hindu temple, but not this one. I am sure that Śrī Nathji lives here, but He is well protected.”

Rasakhan just sat by the Govinda Lake and gazed toward Śrī Nathji’s temple. He vowed to himself, “I will not go anywhere until I see Him.” Rasakhan was unaware of hunger or thirst. He just sat there for two days.

On the third day, after Śrī Nathji’s midday Rājā Bhoga *darshan*, when the temple was closed for the afternoon, Śrī Nathji reflected, “This Rasakhan is not even aware of his body. He has not eaten anything for three days and will leave his body if I do not do something.”

Śrī Nathji became filled with compassion. He took off all of His ornamentation and adorned Himself exactly as He appeared in Rasakhan’s painting. Then, accompanied by His band of cow

lads, Śrī Nathji climbed to the top of the Govardhan Hill and began to play His flute. As soon as Rasakhan heard the call, He recognized that it was his Lord. When he looked up and saw Śrī Nathji, he knew, “That is Him!”

He then ran up the hill, chasing after Śrī Nathji. When Rasakhan tried to grab Him, the Blessed Lord disappeared from his sight and went to Gokul to discuss the matter with Śrī Gusainji.

At that time, Śrī Gusainji had just taken his meals and was napping. Śrī Nathji appeared in Śrī Gusainji’s room and awoke the bhakti master by stroking his hair. When Śrī Gusainji got up and saw Śrī Nathji beside him, he placed his hand on Śrī Nathji’s face and said to him in Sanskrit, “You are the Remover of Your followers’ afflictions.”

ŚRĪ NATHJI THEN TOLD ŚRĪ GUSAINJI, “There is one divine soul whose name is Rasakhan. Although he was born as a Muslim, he desires to know Me and has been fasting by the Govinda Lake for three days. He has not eaten or even taken any water. Today, when I gave him My darśan, He tried to grab Me. I ran away and came to discuss this matter with you. Now you should come up to My temple on the Govardhan Hill and initiate Rasakhan. Accept him.”

Śrī Gusainji then asked, “Why did You run away from him?”

Śrī Nathji explained, “I have promised to only touch, speak to, and accept the food offered by those souls whom

you have initiated with the *Brahmā Sambandha* mantra. I will not give those blessings without your intervention.”

Śrī Gusainji was pleased to hear the Blessed Lord’s words. He quickly got up, went to the banks of the Yamuna River, and took a boat across. On the other side of the river, he mounted his horse, rode toward the Govardhan Hill, and proceeded directly to the Govinda Lake, where Rasakhan was sitting.

As soon as Rasakhan saw Śrī Gusainji, he thought, “This man who just got down from his horse seems to be a close friend of my Lord Who lives on top of the Govardhan Hill.” He approached Śrī Gusainji and said, “My Lord lives in that house on the Hill. I am very attached to Him. I also know that you are his close associate. If you would let me meet Him, that would be truly grand.”

Śrī Gusainji was delighted with Rasakhan’s words and asked him, “How do you know that He is my friend?”

Rasakhan replied, “When you came here, I saw that your eyes were fixated on His temple.”

Śrī Gusainji then told him, “Now bathe in the Govinda Lake.”

After Rasakhan returned from his bath, the bhakti master gave him initiation into the Path of Grace. Śrī Gusainji told his assistant to take Rasakhan up to the temple, and he himself climbed up to Śrī Nathji’s temple and sounded the awakening conch. After the temple opened, Śrī Gusainji prepared some fruits for Śrī Nathji’s early afternoon

offering. A short while later, Rasakhan entered Śrī Nathji’s temple and was delighted to once again behold his Beloved Śrī Nathji.

As Rasakhan was leaving the temple, Śrī Nathji came out of His shrine room, grabbed hold of Rasakhan’s arm and said, “Hey you! Where are you going?”

From that day on, whenever Śrī Nathji went out to herd His cows, He always took Rasakhan with Him. Rasakhan composed hundreds of poems about the divine experiences Śrī Nathji blessed him with. Rasakhan went on to attain the perfect devotion exemplified by the Gopīs of Vrindavan. He was Śrī Gusainji’s blessed follower. To what extent can this account be praised? ❀❀

### Selections from THE POEMS OF RASAKHAN TREASURE HOUSE OF LOVE

Translated by Shyamdas,  
Krishna Kinkari & David Haberman,  
Edited by Vallabhadas,  
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*Shiva chants Krishna’s names and  
the Creator meditates on Him  
to increase his own dharma.  
If the unconscious fool  
contemplates Him for a moment  
in his heart, he becomes  
a repository of wisdom.  
The gods, demons, and  
women of this world  
offer Him their lives and  
discover the vitality of life.*

*But the dairymaids of  
Vrindavan can make Him  
dance for a sip of buttermilk  
from the palm of their hands!*

*The gods Shesh, Ganesh, Mahesh,  
Suresh and Dinesh  
constantly sing of Him  
Who is beginningless,  
endless, unlimited,  
indestructible, void of difference,  
and revealed in the Vedas.  
Narada, Sukha and Vyasa  
are exhausted*

*from searching for Him.  
They can never fathom  
His limits.  
But the dairymaids of  
Vrindavan can make Him  
dance for a sip of buttermilk  
from the palm of their hands!*



*Celestial nymphs and  
heavenly bards  
hear and then sing  
His praises.  
Sharada and the  
serpant god Shesh  
all sing His glories.  
Ganesh recites His  
innumerable names  
while Brahma and Shiva  
cannot fathom His limits.  
Yogis, renunciates,  
ascetics and the pure saints  
meditate on Him  
in endless trance.*

*But the dairymaids of  
Vrindavan can make Him  
dance for a sip of buttermilk  
from the palm of their hands!*



*Brahma and the other gods  
always meditate on Him.  
The yogis cannot find His end.*

*The thousand-headed serpent Shesha  
chants His Names from  
morning to night, and then  
from night to morning.*

*The great sage Narada  
searches for Him  
Traversing the world  
playing his vina.*

*But the dairymaids of  
Vrindavan can make Him  
dance for a sip of buttermilk  
from the palm of their hands!*



*Krishna’s elephant gait,  
gunja bead necklace,  
and peacock crown  
totally delights my mind.*

*He is the swarthy son of Nanda  
and everyone calls him  
the “Champion of Vraja.”  
He is simply the best,  
the adornment of His clan  
and I cannot adequately  
describe His splendor.*

*But the dairymaids of  
Vrindavan can make Him  
dance for a sip of buttermilk  
from the palm of their hands!*



### Searching for Brahman

*I have searched for  
the Supreme Brahman  
in the Puranic songs.  
From listening to Vedic verse  
my desire for Him  
has increased fourfold.  
But nowhere have I  
ever seen or even heard  
of His real form or nature.*

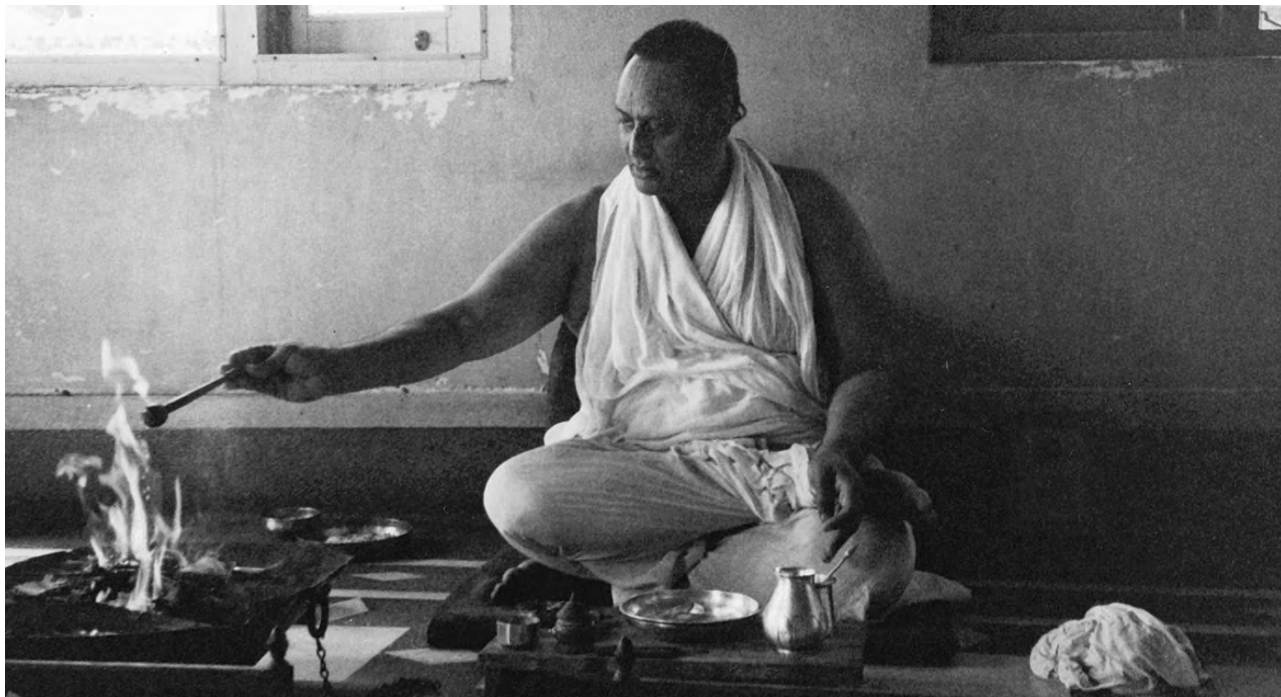
*Cries Rasakhan,  
“I am exhausted from my  
calls and search.  
No man or woman  
can even describe Him!*

*Then I beheld Him, Krishna  
sitting in a secret love-bower,  
massaging Radha’s feet.”*



### True use of the Body

*The true voice  
sings His praises.  
The true ear is filled  
with His words.  
The true hand  
adorns His body.  
The true feet follow Him.  
The true life accompanies Him.  
The true honor is  
comforting Him.  
Who is Rasakhan,  
the Fountain of Joy,  
the storehouse of love,  
the blissful Krishna.*







## OCEAN OF GRACE

From the Introduction to the book  
Ocean of Grace: The Teachings of  
H.H. Shri Prathameshji

### BY SHYAMDAS

I HAD THE EXTREME PLEASURE OF living with His Holiness Goswami Prathameshji, a direct descendant of Śrī Vallabhacharya and the head of the first seat of the Vallabh Sampradaya, for eighteen years. Although his physical form disappeared from this world in 1990, Prathameshji’s devotional teachings remain with us. His knowledge was vast. He was a pundit of Āyurveda, Vedānta, as well as the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He was a master of Sanskrit, Urdu, Gujarati, and Brajabhasha languages and an accomplished classical musician.

Prathameshji masterfully played the *tabla* and *pakhavaja* drums, harmonium, sitar, flute, and even *sarangi*, but most of all, it is the way he sang *Dhrupada-Dhamar* devotional *kirtan* songs that still resonates throughout my being. He was a master of “Lila kirtan.” His life and songs emerged from the eternal realm and somehow manifested here in this

world. His being was full of Lila-mood. As he once told me, “To sing of the Lilas of Hari is the fastest flight to God.”

On the evening of His Holiness’ birth in 1930, the outline of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus footprints appeared, in red powder, on the floor of his father’s temple courtyard in Jatipura. His father, Goswami Dwarkeshji Maharaja, commented at that time, “He will certainly be a very powerful lineage holder.” By the time His Holiness was fifteen, he was already an accomplished pundit, speaker, and musician. I had the fortune of meeting him in his home in Jatipura, near Vrindavan, when he was forty-three years old. I was nineteen.

His Holiness gave me many teachings and amazing explanations of his lineage, the blessed Path of Grace. Whenever he spoke, the meaning of the words filled my heart. My greatest pleasure was to be around him. Some years later, having noticed that His Holiness kept many accomplished scholars, musicians, Ayurvedic doctors, and artists around him, I asked him, “Why do you keep me around?”

He answered, “Your position here is to simply hang out and shoot the breeze with me!” I felt very blessed to be given that appointment. After living with Goswami Prathameshji for several years and reflecting upon his empowerments, I came to understand that the most

important thing is not how much you know, but how to apply your wisdom to devotion.

### A CONVERSATION BETWEEN HIS HOLINESS AND SHYAMDAS

**Shyamdas** When does *mānasī sevā* (constant, natural mental absorption into the Lord) occur: in the state of love, attachment, or addiction to the Lord?

**HH** It can appear anywhere. It is free of all restrictions.

**SD** What is the difference between the yogi’s *samādhi*, the perfect meditative absorption, and the *bhakta’s mānasī sevā*?

**HH** There is a difference. The yogi takes *samādhi* for his own benefit, while the bhakta enters the state of *mānasī sevā* for the Lord’s pleasure. The yogi forgets himself, while the bhakta remembers himself.

Since the Primal Being has created everything, why waste time making distinctions? He is all three forms: *ādhideva* (Divine Person), *ādhyātmika* (formless spiritual force), and *ādhibhūta* (the manifested world).

One who has not seen the Divine Person will deny that He exists, while those who have seen Him will confirm His reality. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is both the first person’s concept of non-existence as well as the other person’s devotional realization, but the former, the pure formless Brahman, is not the goal of devotional practice.

**SD** When Sanatan Goswami insulted the formless abode, the goal of the impersonalist, by saying that it was not worthy of attainment, Śrī Vallabhacharya corrected him. He told Sanatan Goswami that he should not insult the formless, because it is one of the forms of the Lord. Sanatan Goswami’s guru, Śrī Chaitanya, agreed with Śrī Vallabhacharya and reprimanded his disciple.

**HH** But we are able to give loving insults to Sākāra, the Supreme with form during the festival of Holi, so what is wrong with insulting the formless? [Laughter]

**SD** That is all on a divinely inspired level, but what about on the philosophical level?

**HH** On the level of non-dual,

*Brahmavāda* philosophy, in which everything is God and nothing but God, what can be wrong with the formless? Why should there be a distinction of higher and lower? That cannot exist in the state of love.

Those who believe only in the formless sometimes insult people who worship the divine form, and vice versa. It’s that type of relationship. They fight and then love each other, something like how a husband and wife or brothers quarrel. What can you do? Even after a disagreement, they still live together! The same is true here. In this respect, Śrī Vallabhacharya is extremely broadminded and difficult to fully comprehend. Know that true dharma exists within the devotional heart, not in the brain. Śrī Vallabhacharya was able to accept every situation that occurred within the world as God’s sport, something many others had difficulty doing.

**SD** Why wasn’t there a teacher like him before?

**HH** Why should we worry about that? When Bhagavan wishes, it all occurs. That is the only answer. Some years back there were no potatoes in India, and now, they have come. If you get too caught up in how they came, then you will not be able to even enjoy the ones that are here. Besides, what explanation can you really give? It will just end up spinning you all around. What is the use?

**SD** In order to reach Lord Kṛṣṇa, isn’t it necessary to first go through the formless spiritual realm?

**HH** The only order is the Lord’s call. If a worldly person in a position of power is able to grant things, then imagine what the Lord can do! He is the power of all powers, the regulator and the regulations, the practitioner and the practice. He is all forms, above and below. He can make us sit anywhere. If He wants to give a promotion, He simply does. For this reason, one should never be jealous. The Lord can say, “Even though you are a perfected yogi, when you come to Me, you will have to bow.”

You have to follow His rules, just like you have to follow the rules of the world.

Imagine that you are a big pundit, much more knowledgeable than even your father. Still, when you come to your father, you must give him respect, because that is the code. There is no other way, unless you want to change the entire arrangement, and then the whole structure could fall down. Why make it fall?

**SD** You would have to accept that the outer form of the Path of Grace changes with time. In the future it will change some more. For instance, today there is electricity in the temples. Before, the only light was from ghee lamps.

**HH** Yes, there is a difference between moonlight and a bulb. That will remain. If you want to see the forest in the moonlight, would you place a lot of lamps there? Of course not! It would ruin everything. We are now able to create such disturbances, but light’s soft sweetness is found more in a candle or ghee lamp than in a glaring bulb. People leave their homes to visit the jungle; their nature compels them to.

Movie producers may spend millions in order to create the proper mood, so that, for example, we will believe that the actress in the movie is really Cleopatra. Within the world, there are atoms, and from them we have been able to produce atomic power. The bhakta creates things from common reality that will enable him or her to grasp the divine reality.

**SD** In *sevā*, what is the difference between the means and the fruit in terms of our devotional sentiments?

**HH** If you are going to Bombay from Calcutta, on the way you will pass the Nagpur station. There you might stop and drink some coconut milk, but you will not forget that your actual goal is to reach Bombay.

**SD** If you see someone else drinking coconut milk in the Nagpur station, should you remind him to continue on to Bombay instead of drinking coconut milk?

**HH** Well, if he drinks too much coconut milk for too long, he may forget whether he is there to drink coconut milk or just stopping there on the way to Bombay.

**SD** And if the train leaves?

**HH** He stays in Nagpur.

**SD** And if another train comes?

**HH** If his goal is forgotten, then he remains in Nagpur.

**SD** If you see such a stray person in Nagpur station without a ticket, should you provide him with one?

**HH** If he wants to go, then give him a ticket.

**SD** But is the soul able to give the ticket, or only God?

**HH** Only when the Lord inspires both the giver and the receiver can it occur. In the same way, people are inspired to manifest dharma.

**SD** So there should be no anxious feelings to reach Bombay. Can’t one enjoy the journey?

**HH** Yes. Those who are in a hurry will not enjoy the journey. If I am flying in a plane, my goal is to reach the destination. The plane’s goal is to fly in the air. Whatever one’s goal is, so they achieve. What do you want to do, to drink coconut milk or reach Bombay?

**SD** Both.

**HH** You must make up your mind, which one do you really want?

**SD** In the Path of Grace, can’t you have both? If you have no nourishment, then how can there be grace?

**HH** The goal is grace. If eating prevents you from reaching your goal, then don’t eat. If eating takes you there, then eat.

**SD** So people may spend lifetimes at many stations before reaching.

**HH** Yes. After one destination is reached, then another is seen. But with proper faith and conviction, the proper destination can be known.

**SD** According to *Brahmavāda*, which teaches that all is God and nothing but God, all the stations – Calcutta, Nagpura and Bombay – are Brahman. And so, are there no real distinctions between the fruit and the means?

**HH** A fruitful outlook, directed toward the true destination, overcomes all false distinctions. ▲



Śrī Kṛṣṇa reveals his cosmic form to Arjuna. Bas-relief on the wall of the newly constructed Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govinda Temple in Tirupati, Andra Pradesh, South India. January 2007.

# A TALK ON THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

given at The Yoga Workshop, Boulder, CO, November 2006.

BY RICHARD FREEMAN

IN THE BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTEENTH chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa an interesting question, which is in effect a reframing of the *Gītā*:

*Ye śāstravidhim utsṛjya  
yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ  
teṣāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā Kṛṣṇa  
sattvam āho rajas tamah*

*Those who cast aside the injunctions of the scriptures and still offer sacrifice filled with faith, what is their condition, Kṛṣṇa? Is it sattva [harmonious and pure in motive]? Is it rajas [driven by desire for personal gain]? Is it tamas [full of ignorance and delusion]?*

Arjuna is beginning to think that he himself may be about to blow off the *śāstras*, big time. In his confusion, he can't figure out what the often contradictory *śāstras* want him to do.

A *śāstra* is a living system of knowledge and action that is passed on to us culturally as scripture. Because there are blind spots in any broad system, scriptures must be constantly refined and reinterpreted by us in our unique situations and circumstances. Our personal refinements and adaptations are also structured and have blind spots. This is true right on down to the smallest event. Understood in this way, *śāstra* is the equivalent of *dharma*, both in the broad public sense of duty and in the individual, intimate, personal sense of our responses to the moment-by-moment arising of events.

Eventually Arjuna's doubts and questions lead to Kṛṣṇa's final teaching: *sarvadharmān parityajya, mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja* – “Give up all dharma, all duties, and just come to Me alone.” But Arjuna is saying, “What if I just ignored the scriptures and didn't come to You?” describing what I think is our tendency. In the Hindu tradition, this would be huge, because life is very much organized by the *śāstras*. To disregard the *śāstras* would mean destruction of Hindu culture, destruction of the caste system and ruination of the family. This is of some concern to Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa gives him a very roundabout answer. He goes on and on, page after page, in essence reviewing the whole teaching of the *Gītā*.

Kṛṣṇa talks about giving up the rewards of work, which is one aspect of ignoring the *śāstras* because, on some more superficial levels, the *śāstras* are oriented toward material acquisition. This is what most people are interested in, so He speaks about giving up the approach to Vedic sacrifice and to any practice, which has an eye to the fruits of the sacrifice.

Kṛṣṇa shows that the ultimate purpose of faith, sacrifice, practice, diet, and the giving of gifts or offerings is defeated when rajas and tamas dominate them. Likewise, the ultimate purpose of a system gauged toward realization of reality is beyond that system's structure and can occasionally be defeated by its own rules and practices. This is why Kṛṣṇa ends the seventeenth chapter with the instruction to do all work with the chant *Om Tat Sat*.

OM IS THE WHOLE, THE ENTIRE point of the sacrifice. Om is reality; truth, including both manifestation and what is beyond manifestation; Om is everything. *Tat* means “just that” or “that's it.” We are doing this practice, this action, this sacrifice just for Om, implying that we are not doing it for any other thing. This is how Kṛṣṇa wants Arjuna to do his practice, just “om tat sat,” with nothing extra; not to get anything else; just purely the action itself without any sense of *ahaṁkāra* or ego, without “mine-ness,” greed, hope, or anything. *Sat* means truth or reality. So, “Okay, I'll practice that way for real, in truth, willing to work with anything and any consequences.”

Of course, this defines *śuddha bhakti* – pure devotion, selfless love, outside of the three qualities of nature. Whatever you do, even if pure, is still composed of the three *guṇas* or qualities. There is nothing that manifests that is not a braiding of the three *guṇas*; sattva, rajas and tamas. In yoga the realization is such, the intelligence is such, that the activity, the movement of the *guṇas*, reveals what is beyond the *guṇas*. Work done with this awareness leaves no residue because there is no selfish motivation; the action is always revealing the final goal, which is the bhakti, the love itself. The bhakti is done only for the sake of the bhakti.

When the bhakti is done only for the bhakti, no one is being used as a stepping stone. Sometimes we use other people as stepping-stones to our own happiness. This happens when we say, “You could make me happy. You could make me very happy! Want to go out?” No thanks! This sense of a separate self becomes a huge problem – our happiness now has to come from the outside. We even want our bodies to make us happy, doing yoga.

“My *āsana* practice today just wasn't as good as yesterday's. I'm really bummed out! My body just isn't making me happy.” If you think about it, if you look at the body, what is its destiny? The body is going to have a lot of trouble trying to make you happy. It has enough troubles anyway. Someone then comes along and says, “Make me happy.” Forget it! I can't even make myself happy. I don't even have a self to make happy! So this is why Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Gītā*. There was a huge misunderstanding about the nature of the body, the world and the mind.

IN RELATIONSHIP, THERE IS A NATURAL love. There is also a natural attachment and ignorance that arise with the love like a conceptual crust. You have to keep giving up that crust. Give it up and it will re-form to be given up again. Imagine giving someone a gift. If it weren't something really nice, it wouldn't be a good gift. Misunderstanding the *Gītā* on nonattachment and impermanence, you might say, “I have no attachment to anything so here, have this old plastic cup. I love you.” But when you give away a fine rose, the fact that the gift is worthy reveals the intimate connection between us. The impermanence and beauty of a form like a rose produce a natural clinging and then an opening, a blooming petal by petal, when the rose is given or received consciously.

Bhakti is not the rejection of *prakṛti*. Rather, it draws it into the most profound forms to be given, received and released. Just consider the body, living and then at the time of death. It's easy for the mind to think, “All of this prakṛti, all of this manifestation and form, being impermanent, is useless stuff. Who needs it?” But that is not what's being

taught at all. No, that's another pitfall, another mistake. The finest things are impermanent. For instance, a nice thing about chant is its impermanence. Sing “*Jaya Jaya Deva Hare*” and it's gone. You try to hold onto it with a recorder. Still, every time you play it, it's gone again, just like that. That's why this is such a delightful method of practice. *Śabda*, sacred sound, is just like that. It's out of here, gone, even as you say it. It's going even as it's appearing. That makes it hard to get attached to it, but still there's something very nice about sweet words. Most of the *Gītā*, particularly if it's sung, is sweet words. Kṛṣṇa is offering sweet words. And then, there's silence. So the offering itself is as nice as you can make it. However, it can never be a perfect offering in and of itself.

In the eighteenth chapter of the *Gītā*, verse forty, Kṛṣṇa says, “*There's no creature on earth or among the gods in heaven who is free from the three modes born of nature,*” so that would include us too. In fact, everything about us is a weaving of the *guṇas*; our bodies, our subtle bodies, our minds, are all *guṇa*-woven. Then, all of the things we do are *guṇa*-woven. That would include even the more together ones, the yogins.

He describes the four castes – these four types of persons. Beginning in verse forty-five, He says: “*Devoted each to his own duty, man attains perfection. How man attains perfection, hear that. Better is one's own law, one's svadharma, imperfectly carried out, than the svadharma of another, carried out perfectly. One should not give up the work suited to one's nature though it may be defective, for all enterprises are clouded by defects as fire by smoke.*”

THIS LECTURE HAS DEFECTS BUT YOU can understand what I am saying, if you are merciful, and not a nit-picking literalist, like some politicians. In politics, one side says something and the other side, even if it knows what was meant, wants to pick it apart and completely misunderstand it, to make the opposite side appear foolish. There is no way scholars, politicians or religious people can understand each other or agree if they are comparing and relating in a rajasic



way. They've got a goal in mind, and part of the means to their ends is to destroy their opponent, even if their opponent is saying great and good things. They have to get rid of the opposition because he or she is in their way, going for their prize. Likewise, if you weren't filled with mercy, you wouldn't put up with me for long.

Often times, I'm tempted to think, "Man, if I had a different job, my life would be easy. I could really be good at anything but this!" But if I were to get a real job, what would I do? Actually, there are some things I could probably do well. I could be a lawn caretaker, rake up all the leaves, and that would be fine. How satisfying that would be! But even if I did that perfectly, something would eat away at me. What about all those yoga people out there that I should be serving, unqualified as I am? So currently it's better for me to at least finish this lecture, imperfect as it is, than to say, "I'm out of here."

Even if the *Gītā* is presented really well, you still can't say everything about it because the *Gītā* contains so much. We pick out a few threads in the hope that, if we appreciate even a thread, it will pull us back into the tapestry and the flow of the book. Then one day, another thread will pop up and we'll go back again. We say, "Oh, my study of the *Gītā* is imperfect," because the mind wants to comprehend the whole thing, but it can't.

All work has some imperfection. Part of the offering is the imperfection of the offering. Part of the bhakti is the fact that there is imperfection. The imperfection allows for the "spark gap" or the bridging of the gap, because without the bhakti, no one jumps the gap to actual understanding. Returning to the rose, roses have thorns. If you cut the thorns off the stem, it's not even a rose anymore. "Oh, here's a safe rose for you. No thorns." That's like, "Here's some love and there's no danger of a broken heart." It wouldn't be very interesting love. So the imperfection is part of the offering. It's the same thing with the imperfection of philosophical systems, the imperfection of any of the śāstras. A good śāstra is one that knows its own limitations. Really, it's the love that's spilling out through the śāstra that is instructive.

PEOPLE LOVE THE DALAI LAMA AND for good reason. When the Dalai Lama speaks, he always comes out and starts his lectures with some form of "I hope you aren't disappointed." This is because his body is woven out of the guṇas. It's an offering. The three guṇas are being offered, just prakṛti. That's the vehicle of the offering. The bhakti, the *prema* or the love, is the cream filling within the prakṛti, but it has to be offered in a vehicle. If I offered you tea, I'd have to put it in a cup. If I offered you tea without a cup, it just wouldn't work. It would make a mess. So I really can't offer the bhakti without containers woven of the guṇas.

This is why Kṛṣṇa returns to the doctrine of bhakti, because this is the nature of things. This is why He wants Arjuna to let go of sarvadharmān, all dharmas, all duties, but keep the essence of them. If the intention is there as bhakti, letting go of the vehicle doesn't mean there's no vehicle; it means it's the best way to operate the vehicle. When you drive a car, if you know where you're going, it really helps. It's much safer for other vehicles too. If you're just out there in the middle of the road, infatuated with the car itself – "Look at my new thing!" – you could drive right into a tree or another car. Arjuna still has a duty to do, but he has to give up the duty at the same time as he is doing it, like a continuous sacrifice.

Kṛṣṇa says, in verse sixty-one,

*Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ  
hṛddeśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati  
bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni  
yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*

*Īśvara* is in the heart of all living beings. If you had the vision, you could look into the heart of any sentient being, not just people, but animals – bugs, whales, birds – and you'd see divinity there. By the magical power of *māyā*, which is the power of the guṇas, they are all made to move about, as if mounted on a machine.

Kṛṣṇa says that because they are turned by *māyā*, they are essentially helpless; *māyā* being so subtle and so smart. Therefore, "*tam eva śaraṇaṃ gaccha*,

*sarvabhāvena bhārata.*" "Take refuge! With all of your being, with all of your feelings, take refuge." Then, "*tatprasādāt*," out of mercy, out of kindness, out of compassion, you'll have supreme peace and eternal refuge.

IN VERSE SIXTY-THREE – ESSENTIALLY the end of the *Gītā* – we find: "This is the secret of all secrets. And it's been declared to you by Me. Think about it, then do what you want. Hey, do whatever you want." Ultimately, that's what you have to say to anybody. You're free. I told you what I think. Now, do what you want. But after this, I'm sure there was a pause. Kṛṣṇa just couldn't stand it!

He turned back around and said, "*Sarvaguhyatamaṃ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṃ vacaḥ iṣṭo'si me dṛdham iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam*" – "Listen again. I'm going to tell you again Arjuna, because you are My dearly beloved! Fix your mind on Me. Be devoted to Me. Sacrifice yourself to Me. You shall come to Me. I promise you, for you are dear to Me."

Kṛṣṇa continues, "*sarvadharmān parityajya*." Dharma means duty, but dharma also means experiences, all of the moment-by-moment experiences. Give them up. Come to Me. Giving up means letting go. When you let something go, it doesn't mean you're rejecting it. It doesn't mean you're accepting it either. It means that it isn't really what counts. So, if I give you some tea in a cup, it's not the cup that counts, it's the tea that counts. "Give up all cups and drink the tea" doesn't mean drop the cup and make a mess. It means the cup isn't what counts. You ought to taste the tea! This is really fine tea!

But if you break the cup, you lose the tea. And this is the question throughout the entire *Gītā*. Arjuna says, "Do You want me to drop the cup or do You want me to drink the tea? Throw away the cup? Then how can I drink the tea?" Arjuna is hopelessly entrapped. So finally Kṛṣṇa says, "I will set you free. I'll protect you from all these problems." "*Mā śucaḥ*," meaning "Don't worry about it! Just do it." And that's the end of the book. Om Tat Sat. ❧

ॐ तत सत



# LOOKING FOR A LOST GĪTĀ

*Gedun Chöpel's Tibetan Translation of the Bhakti Chapter*

BY PAUL G. HACKETT

THE ILLUSORY NATURE OF TIME AND place, though intellectually inescapable, all too often remains practically elusive. It was a truism that I felt quite viscerally while seated in the back of a taxi careening through the foothills of North India. With the Teesta River below me and intimations of Himalayan peaks above, I devoutly wished I had spent more of my life cultivating such a timeless state of mind as each switchback in the road sent me sliding from side to side on the seatbelt-less backseat of a Maruti minivan. After little more than a week in India, I was bound for my fourth city. The gentle serenity of Kalimpong that I had left behind only hours earlier was still fresh in my mind, but fading rapidly.

Darjeeling, or Dor-je-ling as the Tibetan populace still call it, lay ahead of me as I contemplated strategies for the ensuing days. Although my eventual destination was Tibet, the bulk of my research, I knew, remained in India, for as pointless as it seemed at times, I remained hopeful that traces of the trail I was following might still be found. Seventy years earlier Theos Bernard, an American graduate student not so different from myself and likewise bound for Tibet, had plied these same hill roads between Kalimpong and Darjeeling on his own quest. While he had sought information about tantric yoga, I was seeking information about him.

THEOS BERNARD, WHOSE NAME IS NOT unknown in certain yoga circles, was an early pioneer in Tibetan studies whose efforts in that field had been all but forgotten when I chanced upon one of his travelogues in a used bookstore years close to ten years earlier. Now I found myself in India retracing his footsteps with only passing comments from letters and diaries as my guide.

On this occasion, however, since the bulk of Bernard's activities in Darjeeling were confined to tourism, shopping and schmoozing local authorities, the objective of my search here was not so much Bernard as the men he had met and interacted with. At the top of my list was a monk from the Amdo region of northeastern Tibet named Gedun Chöpel whom Bernard met when both men were in their early thirties.

In recent years the name of Gedun Chöpel has become somewhat synonymous with so-called "Tibetan modernity." In his day however, he was only one of a number of Tibetan expatriots who had made their home in the hills of Sikkim and West Bengal during the first half of the twentieth century. While many of his fellow countrymen in the area were Lhasan aristocrats with winter homes or merchants seeking their fortunes in the fluctuating market of the Tibetan wool trade, Gedun Chöpel's situation in Darjeeling was unique.

As a brilliant young student at Drepung Monastic University outside Lhasa, Gedun Chöpel was both promising and troublesome to his teachers, with a penchant for unorthodox thinking and behavior that, at times, struck the faculty as disrespectful. His main teacher at Drepung, Geshe Sherap Gyatso, saw the perfect opportunity both to benefit his charge and to relieve himself of a disruptive student when, in the early 1930s, the Indian scholar Rāhula Śaṅkṛtyāyana arrived in Tibet seeking assistance with his research. At the recommendation of Sherap Gyatso, Śaṅkṛtyāyana took Gedun Chöpel as his assistant and together they traveled across southern Tibet, Nepal, and India before Śaṅkṛtyāyana abandoned the hapless monk in Darjeeling, where Gedun

Chöpel and Bernard were first to meet.

By 1940, Gedun Chöpel had established a life of sorts for himself in India. Having learned the local languages, he managed to eke out a modest living as a contributor to journals and newspapers in Hindi, English, and Tibetan, and as a translator for hire. Unlike his fellow monks in Tibet, Gedun Chöpel had no fondness for the age-old pedagogy of structured learning and instruction, and consequently had no qualms about speaking freely and candidly about history, philosophy, and, more significantly, tantra. His openness in this regard made him a perfect collaborator for Theos Bernard.

While Bernard's lawyer was negotiating the arcane waters of U.S. State Department visa regulations in order to bring him to America, Gedun Chöpel bided his time in Darjeeling, supplementing Bernard's support funds with spare work wherever he could find it. One such project was a Tibetan translation of portions of the *Gītā* for the Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashram in Darjeeling. Although he later sent a copy of his translation to Theos Bernard in America, by the time Bernard's papers reached a suitable archive, the copy of the publication was gone. The existence of an original copy of Gedun Chöpel's work remained unrecorded in any library. Having added the discovery of such a copy to my list of objectives in Darjeeling, the text's obscurity and therefore the near hopelessness for success in finding it was just the sort of challenge I was looking for on this trip.

SETTLING INTO MY HOTEL AND DOING my best to recover from the journey, I began prioritizing my research list. Day after day, with camera, maps, palm pilot, and notebook (and often, umbrella) in



Darjeeling train station.  
Photograph by Paul G. Hackett.





hand, I walked up and down the streets of Darjeeling trying to pick out landmarks from seventy years past. Some days I found only a whitewashed and barely recognizable building, while other days I lucked into meetings with the descendants of Bernard’s acquaintances. Finally, one day, I decided to seek out the Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashram, which I was informed still existed and now functioned as an orphanage. As I walked farther and farther down the hill of the city, I was assured by each person whom I asked that my destination lay still below me. At last, passing down a narrow street-side staircase that opened up into an alley, I stumbled across a slightly rusted gate bordered by a moss-encrusted stone arch with the barely visible engraved seal of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashram. “Here goes nothing,” I thought, as I walked through the gate and down the narrow and slick, wet stone path in search of a resident.

In no time at all, I found a young boy, one of the dozen or so orphans being educated at the ashram, walking up the path towards me. Returning his friendly smile, I asked him, “Do you have a library or a bookstore here?” “Yes, we

have a library,” he said, and immediately turned and led me farther down the path to one of the buildings. Finding one of the swamis who ran the ashram, we explained what I was doing here. “We have a library,” the elder replied, “but it is not open to the public.” Still hopeful that I might be given access, I tried to elaborate further. “I’m a student from America,” I explained, “and I’m trying to find some books your ashram published many years ago.” He paused for a second and then said, “Follow me.”

Turning a corner, he led me to what appeared to be an assembly hall; taking off my shoes, I followed him inside. I sat down on the floor while the swami disappeared behind some curtains and began what I realized was a short *pūjā*. After some time, we were joined by another swami, who sat down near me. Opening a small cupboard along one side of the hall, he drew out a silver platter covered with pieces of fresh fruit and a pitcher of saffron water. “Blessing and *prasād*,” I immediately realized. After the swami drank a palm-full of water and ate a couple of pieces of fruit, I extended my hand to do likewise. After I drank my sip of saffron water,

the swami proceeded to place seven or eight pieces of raw fruit in my hand, and a sinking feeling came over me. Being cautious about food and water with so many months of travel to go, the prospect of eating so much raw fruit gave me a moment’s pause. However, having come this far in my search, I was not about to back down. Taking a deep breath, I quickly ate all the fruit, following my guide’s lead even to the point of tossing the lychee pit out the door. With what I hoped was a suppressed sigh, it occurred to me that taking that *prasād* was probably the greatest act of faith I’d ever engaged in.

WITH THE RITUAL PRELIMINARIES out of the way, the Swamiji led me out of the hall and farther down the hill through the maze of walkways that made up the ashram complex. We came to a set of old and faded padlocked doors with the barely discernible word “Library” written above them. As the Swamiji unlocked the doors and opened them wide, I was immediately met by the familiar old-book smell of mildew and the sight of small eddies of dust on the floor as we entered a room that was obviously seldom used.

Fairly uncluttered, the room was lined with an impressive row of barristers’ bookshelves whose glass-paneled doors were coated with a thin yellowing veneer and accumulations of dust at the edges. Pausing to set down my backpack, I began systematically opening the doors of shelf after shelf to read the spines of the books. After a few minutes the Swamiji left me alone and I slowly began working my way around the room. Containing a mixture of Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, and English books, the room appeared to be exactly what I should have expected: a library filled with a variety of reference books, but no publications of the ashram’s own.

After some time, I came across a shelf of language reference works and began to find a few books on the Tibetan language, just as one of the older students entered the room and asked me if I needed any help. “I’m looking for some Tibetan language books,” I explained, “They were published by the ashram about sixty years ago.” “Oh,” he replied, “there’s a whole bunch of those in the back room; I found them one day when we were moving things into storage.” My heart skipped a beat. “Really?” I said. “Yes, I’ll go get the keys,” he said as he turned and headed out the door. This could be it, I thought, and grabbed my backpack to retrieve my camera in anticipation of documenting the find.

A few minutes later, in the company of the key-bearing Swamiji, my young friend returned. Almost paralyzed with apprehension, I stood by as they unlocked a door at the back of the room that I had barely noticed for the cobwebs that clung to its surface. Following the young man into what was hardly more than an inner wall passageway, we approached yet another door with yet another padlock. Pushing that door open – and disturbing whatever clutter had fallen behind it – we entered a dimly lit storage room, strewn with broken chairs, boxes, and tables stacked with a wide assortment of indistinct ephemera. In the corner I could see two old wooden cabinets; one, with its door slightly ajar, displayed piles of pamphlets, some

neatly stacked and others jumbled and falling against each other.

Opening the doors to the cabinets, I could see that they were filled with hundreds, if not thousands, of small paperbound books. Clearing a space on a nearby table, I began to slowly pull stacks of pamphlets out of the cabinets and, after pausing to read the titles, handed them to my impromptu assistant. This was what I was looking for: the overstock of ashram publications. The vast majority of books were Tibetan primers, the fruit of the efforts of Karma Sumdhon Paul to propagate interest in Tibet and Buddhism in the 1950s as an apparent act of atonement for his days spent as a missionary prior to his repudiation of Christianity. Putting aside a few select samples of each new book as I came across it, I soon realized that it would be impossible, or at least impractical, to empty the cabinets of their contents. Instead, I found myself reaching through the vertical stacks on each shelf, groping for discernible differences in size, bindings, and paper texture at the back of each pile. As I moved from shelf to shelf, I kept hoping for success, though my optimism was fading as I extracted stack after stack of publications: a short Tibetan Grammar, a Tibetan translation of Nehru’s “*Letters to My Daughter*,” and more volumes of the Tibetan primer.

Finally, with a small flashlight stuck between my teeth, reaching far into the back of the bottom shelf of the last cabinet, I felt a stack of thin, oversized pamphlets. Slowly pulling them out, I stared in disbelief at the words “The Gita” and “Lama Gedun Chhophel La.” “This is it. This is exactly what I was looking for,” I said over and over again to my new friend, trying to contain my excitement. Reaching back into the cabinet, I retrieved the remaining copies, about fifty or sixty in all, and stacked them neatly on one corner of the table. Regaining my composure after a few seconds, I turned and looked at my companion in literary archeology and said, “These books would be immensely helpful to me in my research. Do you think it would be possible to speak with the Swamiji about having some of them?

I would be very honored to make an offering to the ashram.” My mind was still reeling from such an unexpected last-minute success, and moments later I couldn’t even remember what he said in response, though his friendly smile seemed encouraging. Together we gathered up the piles of books. I quickly snapped a few documentary photos as we walked back out of the dusty rooms into the light of day.

MOMENTS LATER I WAS SEATED before the venerable Swamiji, drinking tea and listening to my young friend recount in Hindi the events which, although they seemed to last an eternity at the time, could not have taken more than twenty minutes. Already discerning his kind assent to my request before his response was translated, I slowly drank some more tea and ate a cracker as he produced a small receipt book and asked me to write out the receipt for my donation myself. Taking the pen in my hand, I thought to myself, “I could be a complete jerk here, make a token offering of little consequence to myself and moderate benefit to the ashram, and walk out with documents that could never have been found anywhere else in the world.” Resolving not to do that, I began writing out the receipt, printing my name as my young friend repeated each word I wrote to the Swamiji, letting out a short gasp when I spelled out the actual donation amount. “Good,” I thought, “I think I’ve done right by them.” With nothing more discernible than a simple, humble nod of appreciation from the Swamiji, I removed a stack of rupees from my money-belt, placed them in a small envelope and offered them to him along with the receipt book. We then enjoyed more tea as he told me about the efforts of the ashram to care for and educate the young orphans that they took in from the streets. Before long, my small gift of books from the Swamiji was bundled in paper and tied with string. Paying my respects one last time, I was led back up the hill along the still glistening stone path, out through the rusty gate, and once again onto the streets of Darjeeling.





## GEDUN CHÖPEL’S GĪTĀ

GEDUN CHÖPEL’S COLLABORATION with Swami Prabuddhananda at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashram in Darjeeling led to the publication in the fall of 1941 of a small ten-page pamphlet entitled *The Gītā: Bhakti-yoga Chap. XII*. Although the text of Gedun Chöpel’s translation has been published in collections, like so many of his other works, it has been edited. While his other works have been edited for content, the subsequent publication of his translation of the *Gītā* appears to have undergone only minor typographical editing.

The translation of portions of the *Gītā* into Tibetan is unique for several reasons. Although many non-Buddhist works were translated into Tibetan during the heyday of translation activities in the tenth to fourteenth centuries, explicitly Hindu-Vedic religious works were not included. What motivations Gedun Chöpel had in accepting the job might have been purely financial or, in his characteristically provocative manner, an attempt to spur genuine dialog with a living Vedic tradition. In either event, there is evidence that Gedun Chöpel maintained his Buddhist sensibilities. In translating the short selection of stanzas, Gedun Chöpel made a number of word choices that reflected his own beliefs, not the least of which being his decision not to use an epithet of the Buddha – Bhagavan – for a Hindu deity. In other instances however, Gedun Chöpel appears to have relied on Swami Prabuddhānanda’s interpretation of certain verses. ❖

## THE TIBETAN TRANSLATION:

THE SONG OF THE GLORIOUS KṚṢṆA  
The Twelfth Chapter, called  
THE YOGA OF FAITH

Translated into the Tibetan language by the mendicant Chöpel with the assistance of Swami Prabuddhānanda. The fourth day of the fourth month of the Iron Snake year of the sixteenth cycle.

THE SONG OF THE GLORIOUS KṚṢṆA  
CHAPTER TWELVE

*Arjuna asked:  
Thus, whosoever with constant faith  
Gives worship to you, and  
Whosoever [gives worship] to the Unmanifest, the Hidden,  
Of these, who is the supreme yogi? 1*

*The Glorious Kṛṣṇa replied,  
Whosoever, having fixed [his] mind on me, and  
Constantly paying respect to me,  
Approaches me with supreme faith,  
I think [of him as] bound most closely [to me]. 2*

*Indeed, whosoever [is fixed upon] the Unchanging, the Unseen,  
The Unmanifest, the All-pervading,  
The Inconceivable, the Unmoving,  
The Constant and the Eternally Stable, 3*

*The collection of sense-faculties having been gathered and,  
Through rejoicing in the benefit for all beings,  
Being respectful with mental equanimity,  
Those find only me. 4*

*For those whose minds are fixed on the Unmanifest  
[Their] affliction is greater;  
The goal of the Unmanifest  
Is difficult to obtain by the embodied. 5*

*Whosoever takes the supreme to be me,  
Having abandoned all actions,  
Through only [this] one-pointed yoga  
Worships and meditates upon me, 6*

*Those who have fixed [their] minds on me,  
Without being long obstructed,  
Will be perfectly led by me over  
The ocean of death and cyclic existence, O Son of Prthā! 7*

*Place [your] mind on me;  
Let [your] intellect come to rest in me.  
From this dwelling in only me,  
Henceforth, there is no doubt. 8*

*If [you] cannot stabilize the mind  
By placing [it] on me,  
Then through yoga endowed with effort,  
O Conqueror of Wealth, seek to attain me! 9*

*If [you] cannot accomplish [this] even with effort,  
Engage in actions for my own purpose!  
Even performing actions for my own sake,  
[You] will completely attain success. 10*

*But if [you] are unable [to do] even this,  
Rely on refuge in me!  
Having abandoned all the fruits of [your] actions,  
Make effort with self-restraint. 11*

*[Greater] than [action] conjoined with effort [is] wisdom;  
However, greater [even] than wisdom is meditation.  
Greater than that is the abandonment of the fruits of actions,  
[For] from [that] abandonment, [one] immediately obtains  
peace. 12*

*Without hatred for all beings, and  
With only love and mercy,  
Without engaging in “I” and “mine,”  
Have forbearance [holding] pleasure and pain as the same. 13*



*The yogi who is always content,  
Has attained self-control, and [whose] resolve is firm,  
He, who is possessed of faith that is fixed  
In mind and intellect on me, I hold dear. 14*

*From whom the world does not shrink, and  
Who does not shrink from the world,  
Is liberated from delight, anger, distress and fear;  
That one, moreover, I hold dear. 15*

*Whosoever [is] impartial, skilled, and pure,  
Without prejudice and free from causing harm,  
Thoroughly abandoning all endeavors,  
That one who has faith in me, I hold dear. 16*

*Whosoever does not rejoice and does not hate,  
Does not feel sorrow and does not desire,  
Has thoroughly abandoned virtue and non-virtue,  
That one who is possessed of faith, I hold dear. 17*

*[Holding] enemy and friend as the same, and  
Similarly honor and disgrace, as well as  
Heat and cold and pleasure and pain as the same,  
Thoroughly abandoning distractions, 18*

*[Holding] praise and blame as the same, and cutting off speech,  
And anything whatsoever, being content,  
Of stable intelligence, homeless,  
With faith, that man I hold dear. 19*

*Who even gives praise to this immortal  
Dharma just as it was taught,  
Him, endowed with faith, belief, and  
Holding me as supreme, I hold exceptionally dear. 20*

*From the Song of the Glorious Kṛṣṇa,  
the twelfth chapter, called “The Yoga of Faith.”*

Paul G. Hackett is currently depositing copies of the 1941 publication with research libraries in America and Europe.



# AN AUSPICIOUS ASSOCIATION: PILGRIMS IN THE SANT TRADITION

BY GRAHAM BOND®

SOME HOURS HAVE PASSED SINCE I FIRST inhaled Mumbai airport’s moist night air, in which the fragrance of incense and mogra flowers combine with the smell of sweat and open drains. After laboring up the steep scarp separating Maharashtra’s steamy coastal plain from the drier air of the Deccan plateau, my taxi is coasting with relief into the sleeping city of Pune. There’s a hazy morning glow on the horizon. We stop for *chai* at a roadside tea stand.

Nearby a blind man is following the Indian tradition of reciting sacred texts invoking *Shri* – auspicious, benevolent power. He’s singing the immortal words of the Supreme Being from *Shri Bhagavad-gita*:

*Take refuge in Me. Do not grieve.  
Fix your mind on me and I shall  
liberate you from all evils.  
I promise this, for you are dear to Me.<sup>1</sup>*

The little copper bowl in front of him holds a few coins thrown by the passers-by who appreciate his efforts to be useful. Though Indian cities are booming with cyber-café’s and affluent malls, here is an arresting example of survival, and the irrepressible faith in a benevolence that mystics of all traditions say is the divine ground of life itself.

Over my years of yoga study and practice, I’ve experienced this benevolence and inspiration through the heartfelt words of Muslim poet-saints like Rumi and Hafiz, and Indian poet-saints like Kabir, Namdev, Mirabai, Tukaram, and Akka Mahadevi. Their songs have inspired and supported the Indian people through drought, famine, the Moghul invasion, and now through the challenges of modernity. I came

to this bustling city to see for myself how these saints – or *sants* in the local Maharashtrian language of Marathi – continue to shed their auspiciousness into the hearts of the people.

IN PARTICULAR, I AM DRAWN TO SANT Jnaneshwar Maharaj or Jnanadev, who is considered one of the cornerstones of a reform movement called the *bhaktimarga* or the “path of divine love,” that emerged in Maharashtra in the thirteenth century. Like many of the mystic sants in the bhaktimarga, he broke many boundaries. Though male, he is known locally as *Mauli* or “mother”; though only a teenager, he became Maharashtra’s greatest poet and spiritual genius; though born into a Brahmin family, he was an outcast; though learned, he willingly taught the illiterate; though forbidden, he allowed Sanskrit scripture to be made available in the common language of Marathi; though initiated into the most esoteric path of devotion to Shiva/Shakti<sup>2</sup>, he is honored as a devotee of Vishnu/Krishna; and though dead for 700 years, he is still considered alive.

Legend has it that while followers chanted, Jnanadev walked into his tomb to permanently enter the yogic state of *samadhi*. Thus, his heart continues to beat in the local imagination and within his tomb (samadhi shrine), which I have come to visit in the little town of Alandi, north of Pune. I will also join the renowned fifteen-day July pilgrimage, in which bhaktimarga followers chant and walk the 140 miles from Alandi to the holy town of Pandharpur.



THE WORD *HINDUISM* CAUSES OUR colonial imagination to run riot through images of naked sadhus smoking chillums, haggard ascetics lying on beds of nails, snake charmers, animal sacrifices, erotic Tantric statues, bejeweled temple dancers and burning widows. However, India is in continuous spiritual reform, though these ancient practices still exist. After all, which Indian party or government ever had the power to create a reformation, or to homogenize the bewildering diversity of India’s teeming billions?

The bhaktimarga reform movement began during the thirteenth century in Maharashtra, lead by mystic sants like Namdev and the village grocer Tukaram. They were ordinary working-class people, not the high-caste Brahmins designated to specialize in spiritual teaching, and were often chastised for being unauthorized spiritual teachers outside the caste system in place at that time.<sup>3</sup> These mystic poet-saints protested the aberrance of asceticism, the superstition of village magic, the egotism of punditry and learning, the hierarchical dominance of the caste system, and the elaborate, costly Sanskrit rituals of Brahmanism. Scholars refer to this movement as the pan-Indian bhaktimarga or the “path of divine love” that had its roots in Tamil Nadu<sup>4</sup> and spread throughout India during its medieval era.

The bhaktimarga’s vision of unity and simplicity resound in the words of Sant Tukaram, one of Maharashtra’s seventeenth-century poet-saints. In the song below, he expresses an Indian national’s frustration with the bewildering variety of arcane phenomena associated with the word *Hinduism*.

*I know no trick  
To lure the public.  
I can only sing of You  
And praise Your goodness.  
I work no miracles,  
I wake no dead.  
I have no hordes of disciples  
To advertise my selflessness.  
I am not the lord of a monastery  
Thriving on grants of land.  
I run no God-shop  
To worship personal profit.  
I command no spirits,  
Nor hold any seances.  
I am no teller of tales from the Puranas  
Split between profession and practice.  
I am no wretched pundit  
Splitting Vedantic hairs.  
I burn no lamps to raise  
The Mother Goddess with shrill praise.  
I swing no rosary  
To gather fools around me.  
I am no warlock  
To bewitch, to magnetize, to fix, to kill.  
Tuka is not like any of these  
Crazed citizens of hell.<sup>5</sup>*

Yogis use austere discipline, creating miraculous transformations of mind and body to gain union with this benevolent life force; scholars use profound intellect to plumb the mysteries of its formless nature, but for the common man, the Indian scriptures recommend devotion to a form of the Supreme (*bhakti*) as being the simplest and easiest path to an illumined life. Even today, this devotion to different representations of the formless divine has become a hallmark of life in India – easily practiced by ordinary, working-class people with children, and not requiring strenuous renunciation or a lifetime of Sanskrit study. Narada’s *Bhakti Sutras*, the *Bhagavad-gita* and the sage Kapila in the *Bhagavata Purana* have outlined the path of liberation through devotion.

COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF RURAL villagers in the state of Maharashtra follow nature’s seasonal cycles of tilling, planting and harvesting as they have done for centuries. Their hardy, earthy and often challenging existence is

softened by their fervent devotion to the tradition of poet-saints that flourished in the medieval era of Maharashtra, following the thirteenth-century saints, Jnanadev and Namdev. Most of rural Maharashtra lives sheltered under this lineage of bhaktimarga sants and the village people are nourished by the ecstasy of chanting and *kirtan* – gatherings in homes or temples where the song-poems of the sants are mixed with exposition by *kirtankars*, lay preachers who lead kirtan in the evenings, after practicing their village trade of farmer, weaver, tailor, metalsmith.

One evening kirtan at Jnanadev’s Samadhi Shrine felt like the Indian counterpart of gospel music. The leader roused the audience with fiery rhetoric, vigorous drumming, soaring vocal improvisations and a chorus playing cymbals with deafening fervor. However, kirtankars can have a refined style, as well. Many maintain the gentle daily rhythm associated with a life of teaching young students: rising early, doing *puja*, studying the scriptures, meeting visitors, and in the evening, teaching the songs, scriptures and stories associated with the sants. Inwardly content with their daily *sadhana*, or spiritual practice, they often prefer to avoid the hectic crowds and hardships associated with the practice of pilgrimage.

Even so, for most followers of the bhaktimarga, an annual fifteen-day pilgrimage on foot to the holy town of Pandharpur is the foundation of their spiritual practice. Because of this, they are known as *Warkaris* – someone who does (*kari*) the regular pilgrimage (*wari*). This tradition of pilgrimage to Pandharpur started in the early twelfth century<sup>6</sup> and has gained huge proportions in which the number of participants commonly quoted today is seven lakhs (700,000). They go whenever the spirit leads them, but around the sacred time of *Ekadashi* there are two large organized pilgrimages in the lunar months of Ashada and Kartika, which generally fall in July and November.

On these occasions hundreds of thousands of devotees from Maharashtra and beyond carry the sacred silver

sandals (*padukas*) representing the great poet-saints from Alandi to the holy town of Pandharpur and its temple of Lord Vitthal. Prominently represented in the procession are palequins (*palkhis*) carrying the padukas of Jnaneshwar and Tukaram, along with the palkhis of other historic sants like Eknath, Namdev, Bahinabai, Janabai, and contemporary kirtankars and gurus. In this way the sants continue to give pilgrims their auspicious presence (*darshan*) and enjoy the company of their devotees.

Because of my familiarity with the practice of “enjoying what is,” I felt ready to embrace the challenges of the pilgrimage, whose austerities are considered a spiritual practice by the faithful Maharashtrian farming community. Their devotion to Sri Vitthal – a form of Sri Krishna – created an atmosphere of solidarity and support for contentment. Everywhere I saw smiling faces floating in a light-hearted holiday atmosphere – undaunted by mud, rains, and lack of toilets – and I marveled at the organized disorganization which supported the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims with only minimal hardship to both the participants and the towns we passed through.

Our huge procession of pilgrims was made up of *dindis* or chanting groups associated with a guru or village. These dindis were self-sufficient in providing their members with food and tents, but local municipalities provided tankers of water for drinking and bathing. Our massive procession was welcomed in the rural villages with gaily decorated archways and patterns in colored sand on the road (*rangolis*) and blessed food (*prasad*) in the form of bananas and snacks.

THE GENEROUS OUTLOOK OF THE bhaktimarga reaches out across caste and sectarian barriers. Kabir, a sant of North India, was honored equally by Muslims and Hindus, and the annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur has a dindi lead by a female Muslim. It isn’t incongruous that Jnanadev is considered both a Shaivite and Vaishnavite, because in the bhaktimarga, all forms of God

<sup>1</sup>Author’s rendering from the *Bhagavad-gita*, 18:65-6.

<sup>2</sup>Shaivite Tantra practiced by the wandering Nath Yogis who first codified yoga postures into the system we now know as Hatha Yoga.

<sup>3</sup>The Indian government made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of caste.

<sup>4</sup>See Schomer.

<sup>5</sup>Dilip Chitre, *Tukaram: Says Tuka*, p. 120, ©Dilip Chitre 1991, Penguin Books.

<sup>6</sup>G. A. Delelury, *The Cult of Vithoba*, p. 7.



are honored as doorways to the formless Absolute.

Mystics aligned with the unity behind diversity are rarely agitators. However, in the struggle for India's independence, many kirtankars, like Vasudeo Kolhatkar of Pune, became politically active and some were jailed by the British. But for the most part, the bhaktimarga approach has been to avoid extremes. Sayings attributed to Tukaram such as, "One should be happy in whatever state God has put us," have been criticized by renowned Indian reformers such as Lokmanya Tilak<sup>7</sup> for discouraging necessary revolution and encouraging passivity.

Still, the poet-saints hastened the caste system's eventual illegality, with much thanks to the thirteenth-century Sant Chokamela, an untouchable from the lowest caste. His humiliating exclusion from temples and final triumph over the temple authorities (supported by divine intervention) is now enshrined in folklore. Like Mahatma Gandhi centuries later, Chokamela's accomplishment was through non-violent means – a classically Indian attitude also maintained by Jnanadev and Tukaram during their own struggles with Brahmanical authority.

Though Jnanadev's parents were originally Brahmins, he and his family were outcast because of a mistake his father made. Without complaint, Jnanadev respectfully argued his family's case before the council of Brahmins in Paithan, which was eventually convinced (legend says by a miracle) to reinstate the family into the Brahmin community.

Another great mystic, the grocer Tukaram, was seen as a threat by the Brahmin authorities of the town of Dehu. In an attempt to unseat him, they decreed that Tukaram destroy all the devotional songs he had ever written. The sant, though conflicted, obeyed them and cast his life's work into the river. But legend has it that the

manuscripts were miraculously saved. Tukaram advises:

*If one stands up  
To argue or fight  
One gets into a mess*

*Reeds don't need to exert  
any force of their own  
They accept the force of water*

*If one tries to be tough  
One meets one's match  
The humble stay out of trouble*

*Says Tuka  
Blend with all  
You'll join  
A global family<sup>8</sup>*

EXPERIENCED THE JOYFUL GLOBAL FAMILY as we sang our way into Pandharpur. A pilgrim, filled with the spirit of celebration briefly carried me on his shoulders, and the youngsters romped in the mud. But after all the jumping and clashing of bells had died down, we didn't run to the Vitthal temple as I had anticipated. After all, devoted pilgrims can wait in line for over twenty-four hours to have darshan of Lord Vitthal's statue. Instead, we held evening kirtan and headed to our tents to rise early the next morning and join the crowds in procession (*pradakshina*) around the Vitthal Temple, which is humble by Indian temple standards. Nonetheless, it has been honored over the centuries by Maharashtrian villagers, and its old wood pillars and heavily worn steps bear the mark of millions of hands and feet.

The saints are beloved by all, from the poorest villagers to the rich and famous. In Alandi, I was fortunate to see Lata Mangeshkar, the legendary Bollywood singer, adorning Jnanadev's Samadhi with mountains of fragrant flowers. And via a large video screen on the outside of the Vitthal Temple, I watched a famous politician's darshan of the black statue clothed in gleaming yellow silk. Manohar

Joshi honored "the auspicious dark one" with enormous flower garlands before flying out via helicopter.

FROM START TO FINISH, THE PILGRIMAGE was an immersion in the sanctifying sweetness of "association with the saints" (*santasajjanaanci maandi*), and not simply a journey to reach Pandharpur. The saintly teachers of the present enjoyed their association with the saints of the past, like two facing mirrors enjoy and reflect each other's light – a classic analogy used in Jnanadev's poetry. In this association, the sant's holy relics gave blessings to the "saints-in-process" who were guided and uplifted by their sacred songs.

*Jai Jai Vitthala Vitthala gajaree*, a well-known song by Chokamela, who lived at a time when there was an unprecedented number of bhakti saints, glorifies the sant association ...

*This holy town is resounding with  
people calling out 'Jai Jai Vitthala!'*

*Everywhere in Pandharpur there  
are colorful flags, decorations,  
and processions of devotees chanting  
God's name in ecstasy.*

*Nivritti, Jnaneshwar, Sopan and  
other gathered here, and one can  
experience their spiritual radiance.*

*Everywhere crowds of people  
are singing the glories of God.  
It's here that Chokhamela  
embraced the Lord!<sup>9</sup>*

As night fell on the sacred day of *Ashada Ekadashi* – the culminating day of the pilgrimage to Pandharpur – our vast encampment of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims pulsed with the sound of bells and kirtan. The auspicious darshan of benevolence was happening within the temple of Sri Vitthal and within each pilgrim's heart.

INDIA TODAY MAY BE STRIVING TO change its public image from poor mystic to global leader. Even so, while religious fanatics and commercial interests inflict tragic agonies within the global community, the auspicious association with these moderate, mystic reformers of India upholds humanity's highest aspirations and bestows a healing boon of unity, tolerance and peace. Says Tuka, "You'll join a global family ..."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Lokmanya Tilak (1856–1920) was a scholar and politician honored as a determined and pivotal figure in the movement to secure India's independence of British rule, prior to the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi.  
<sup>8</sup>Dilip Chitre, *Tukaram: Says Tuka*, p. 142. ©Dilip Chitre 1991, Penguin Books.  
<sup>9</sup>Author's rendering from various available English translations.







# THE DĪṬCITARS of CITAMPARAM

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT MOSES

Text from *The Home of Dancing Śivaṅ*  
*The Traditions of the Hindu Temple in Citamparam*  
by PAUL YOUNGER ©Oxford University Press, 1995.



Paul Younger’s book uses diacritics according to the Tamil Lexicon. That convention has been adhered to in this article.

THE DĪṬCITARS OF CITAMPARAM are an unusual religious community. They are an endogamous community of about a thousand members. The two hundred married males among them have undergone a five-stage initiation so that they can serve as priests of Śivaṅ Naṭarājan. The two hundred priests meet as a democratic body that owns and manages the temple, and they carry out the elaborate ritual traditions connected with the worship of Śivaṅ Naṭarājan. The traditions they carry on reach back to at least the middle of the first millennium, when hymn writers began to sing about the special priesthood and the special worship traditions of the place.

*Worship always the  
Dancing Lord  
presiding in the  
Little Hall of Tillai  
where dwell the Cittar (Yogis)*  
Campantar



K. Vivekananda Deekshitar

I first came to Citamparam in 1985 while on a South Indian pilgrimage with my gurubhai, Swami Janardanananda. Through Swamiji’s good graces we found ourselves guests in the ancestral home of a Dīṭcitar family. We awoke early in the morning to witness the eldest son sitting before a small cow dung fire burning in a copper havan kundh. He was reciting his morning sandhyavanda as the smoke from the fire was curling its way through the open roof above the courtyard in the center of the home. Light was beginning to stream into the house. That scene is still very fresh in my mind, an ancient and endless moment. He was our host as his father was away in Haridwar where he had

gone to take a bronze image of Dancing Śivaṅ. Nothing was asked of us and the hospitality was warm, genuine, and polite, although I could hardly understand a word that was said. Later in the day, after we had visited the temple, we were ready to say our farewell. Standing on the street at the threshold of the entryway to the home we offered thanks. The young, though very mature-seeming, Dīṭcitar looked past us and knowingly said in clear English, “We will meet again!” Over the years since then, being drawn again and again to this sacred space, I have noticed him in the temple. Although we have not spoken there is a way in which his words rang true.

Robert Moses



THE INCOME OF THE PRIESTS IS ALL through a system of *kaṭṭalais*, or endowments, that are carefully regulated. Some very large *kaṭṭalais* have been in place for centuries and involve substantial provisions of the large quantities of ghee and rice used in the worship. ... Individual Dīṭcitar also have clients in *kaṭṭalai* relationships. In these situations the priest says a prayer for the person on their birthday or other

important day, and sends the holy ash used in that worship to the client. The client in turn makes a regular payment or *kaṭṭalai* to the priest. When these clients are able to come and worship, they are met by their “*kaṭṭalai dīṭṣitar*” and, in a leisurely visit to the different shrines, are carefully led through the worship routines. ... Clients make payment by mail or when saying good-bye to their Dīṭcitar host as they leave the temple.



THIS SACRED SPOT ON THE SOUTH-east coast of India has been a place of worship now for almost two millennia. Tradition says that the first worshipper was a wandering ascetic from North India who was looking for the most difficult place on earth where he might worship. He was told that the milky sap from broken branches of the *tillai* shrub was poisonous, and so he courageously entered what was then a thick forest of *tillai* shrubs and found a pond beside which to worship. Among those who eventually joined him was an exiled prince from Bengal, and the prince was so delighted with the place that he lured a whole company of three thousand religious specialists to the spot and built them a temple where they could carry on their special forms of worship. According to tradition, that worship tradition is still being carried on in Citamparam.

East Kōpuram



The Golden Roof over the Cit Sabhā or Hall of Consciousness wherein Śiva Naṭarāja dwells at the heart of Citamparam, January 2007.

*In this much-adored Tillai live the Anantār whose greatness is to be covered with ash because of their service to the one who has taken the form of a dancer. Their worth is without limit because they live only to perform service to the holy feet and their value is only in that love.*

*They serve with joy in that beautiful temple, concentrating on the duties assigned to each. In accord with the Vedic scriptures they do all forms of auspicious service and undertake the rituals with a beauty that increases holiness.*

Cekkilar, twelfth-century Cola court poet

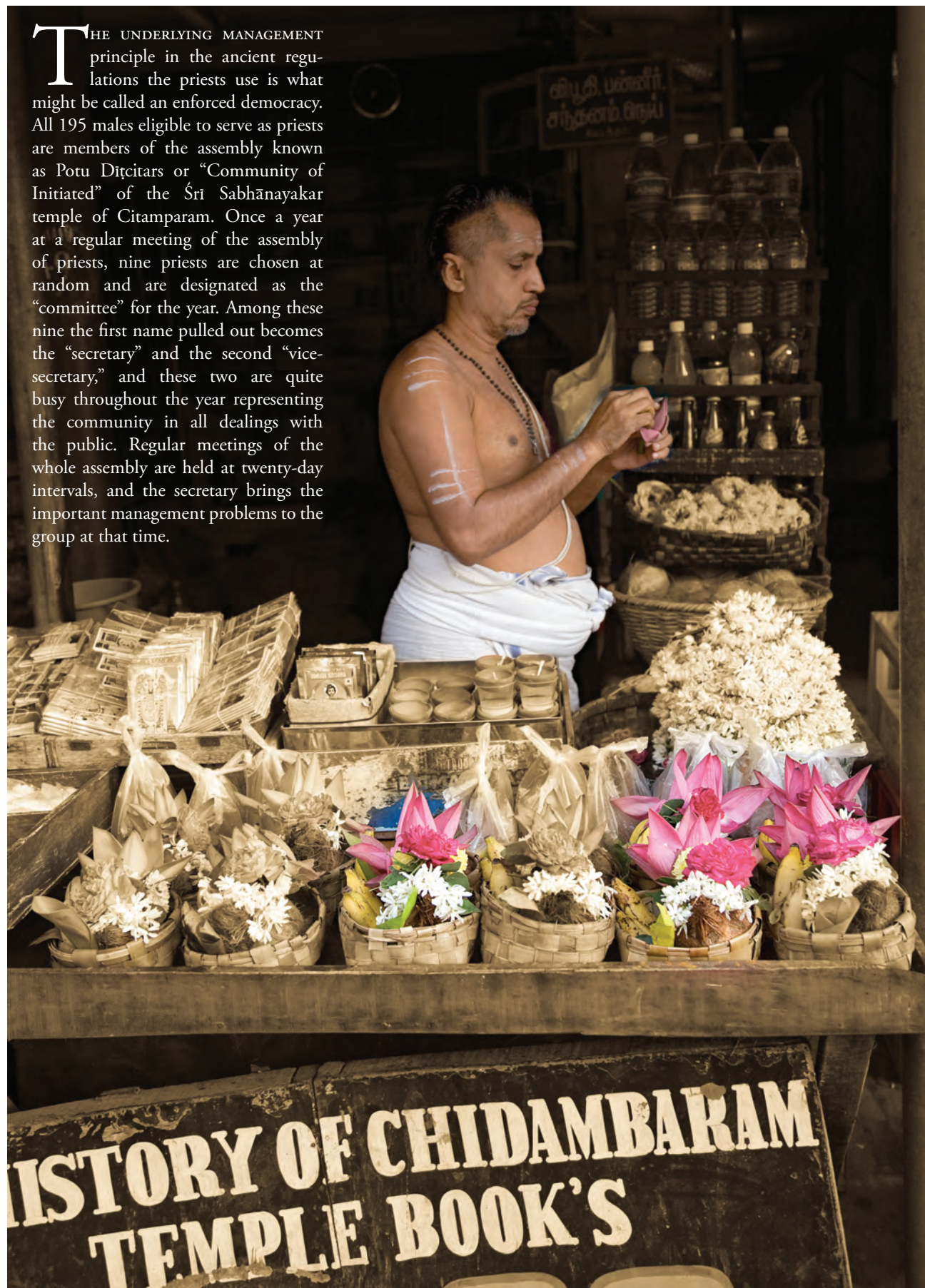
*The roof over the Cit Sabhā is constructed of 21,600 gold plates, representing the number of breaths a person takes in a day, held in place by 72,000 gold nails, representing the nadis through which the prāṇa circulates.*



Young Dīṭṭar boys at play, pulling a small chariot with an image of Dancing Śiva in the street outside the eastern entrance to the temple. Their hair, tied in a knot on the left side of their heads, is in the unique and distinctive Dīṭṭar style. January 2007.



THE UNDERLYING MANAGEMENT principle in the ancient regulations the priests use is what might be called an enforced democracy. All 195 males eligible to serve as priests are members of the assembly known as Potu Diṭcitar or “Community of Initiated” of the Śrī Sabhānayakar temple of Citamparam. Once a year at a regular meeting of the assembly of priests, nine priests are chosen at random and are designated as the “committee” for the year. Among these nine the first name pulled out becomes the “secretary” and the second “vice-secretary,” and these two are quite busy throughout the year representing the community in all dealings with the public. Regular meetings of the whole assembly are held at twenty-day intervals, and the secretary brings the important management problems to the group at that time.



AT EACH OF THE TWENTIETH DAY meetings, twenty names are first chosen to provide the officiating priests for the five major shrines of the temple complex, twenty more names are chosen for the ten minor shrines, and twenty more to be on hand to make offerings for worshippers who arrive and are not already clients of one of the Diṭcitar, with various others to serve guard duty and other tasks. Even within this scheme the group of twenty appointed for the worship on the five major shrines is broken up into five groups of four, which rotate from shrine to shrine at four-day intervals, and the twenty assigned to the ten minor shrines are in

groups of two, which rotate at two-day intervals. All this rotation of duties is to ensure that no one gains the prestige of remaining for a long time at the main shrine (each Diṭcitar ends up serving the main image about three times a year), or of being in charge for more than a few days of the vast collections of jewels associated with particular images. The most important of all the random selections comes up just twice a year when, on the first day of each of the two major festivals, a name is drawn to determine the person who will serve as head priest of the festival. This selection is from a pool of those who have never served before, and is therefore a once-in-a-lifetime honor that comes to the priest just hours before his duties begin.





THE TEMPLE COMPLEX OF ŚIVAN NĀTARĀJAN in Citamparam, South India, is one of the truly great Hindu temples. Its history and legend are somewhat richer than most, but what makes it unique is that it is the only temple where the presiding deity is in his Śivan dancing form. The *ananda tāṇḍava* dance that Śivan performs in Citamparam is a dance of joy, and the presence that the deity brings to the life of the Citamparam temple complex is pervaded with that joy.

Vimāna of Gōvintrarājan on the left and the West Kōpuram in the background. January 2007.



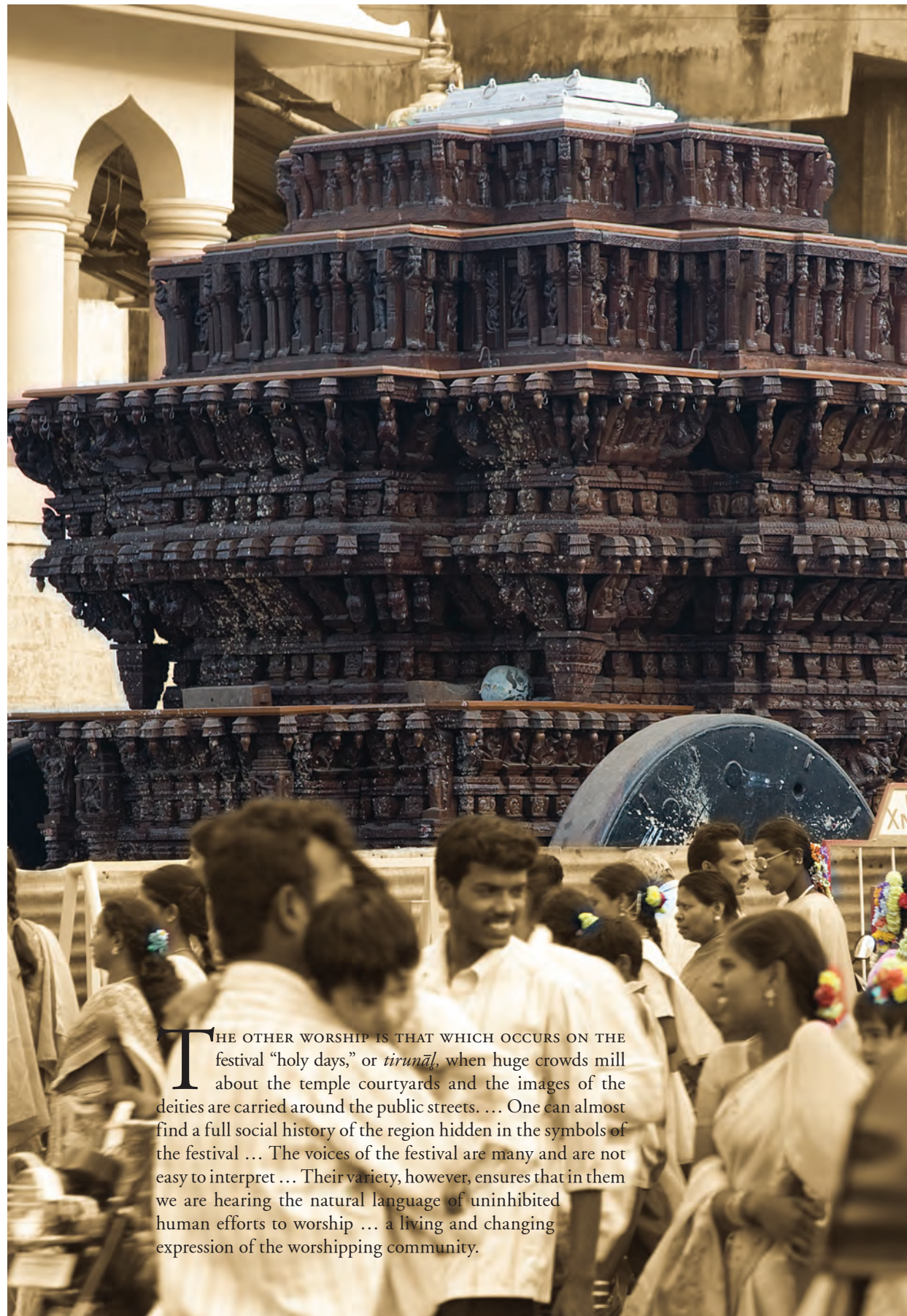


*This holy city of Citamparam is renowned.  
Its residents have both humility and devotion. I have  
composed a few works. I am more than seventy years  
of age, a ripe age at which to pass away. I have no  
desires other than to see the holy feet of Naṭarājan.*

Final words of Appayya Dīṭṭar (1552-1624),  
spoken as he entered the inner sanctum  
of Śivaṇ Naṭarājan, never to be seen again.

Worshippers entering the temple complex through the East Kopuram in time for the final kalam in the late evening. January 2007.





THE OTHER WORSHIP IS THAT WHICH OCCURS ON THE festival “holy days,” or *tirunāl*, when huge crowds mill about the temple courtyards and the images of the deities are carried around the public streets. ... One can almost find a full social history of the region hidden in the symbols of the festival ... The voices of the festival are many and are not easy to interpret ... Their variety, however, ensures that in them we are hearing the natural language of uninhibited human efforts to worship ... a living and changing expression of the worshipping community.



EVEN THOUGH THE WORSHIP traditions of Citamparam are challenged by the modern preference for a more individualistic and petitionary form of worship ... there are reasons to believe that the ornate ritualism of the worship in Citamparam may not have lost all its appeal in present day Tamil society ...

In some ways it is the 200,000 rural folk who jam the corridors of Citamparam for a festival every six months who are the best evidence that the worship tradition the Dīṭcitar priests are fighting to preserve is one Tamil society still finds meaning in ...

The priests also recognize that they cannot forever just cling to a past tradition and that as the pressures for change mount they will have to find ways to try to recover the meaning of the forms they have so lovingly preserved over the centuries. ▀





*Śivaṇ Naṭārājan & Śivakāmacuntarī*  
Collage by Barry Silver.





*Yoga asana demonstration at Neyveli Lignite Corporation  
Yoga School. Neyveli, Tamil Nadu, South India. January 2007.*





*Jambukeśvarar Temple  
at Tiruvanaikka near  
Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu,  
South India. January 2007.*



# TRANSLATING THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

*Dimensions of Yoga Unveiled*

BY GRAHAM M. SCHWEIG, Ph.D.

Graham Schweig's translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* has just been published by HarperCollins as *Bhagavad Gītā: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song*. We asked Graham to write about his translation and to reflect on the *Gītā*'s teachings on yoga and their relationship to the Ashtāṅga Yoga of Patañjali.

AFTER READING AND TEACHING THE *Gītā* countless times, contemplating its verses for over thirty-eight years both in translations and in the original Sanskrit, I have been struck by the need, despite the dozens of available translations, for a precise and beautiful translation of this sacred masterpiece. I began this daunting task with the assumption that the Sanskrit author was not impoverished; thus my translation must be literal. It became my ardent desire to bring the verses to life, to see how each verse could resonate, or sing. I looked at each verse as a special jewel that, if ardently polished, would begin to glow. Thus I wound up spending day and night on the verses – my quest became an obsession.

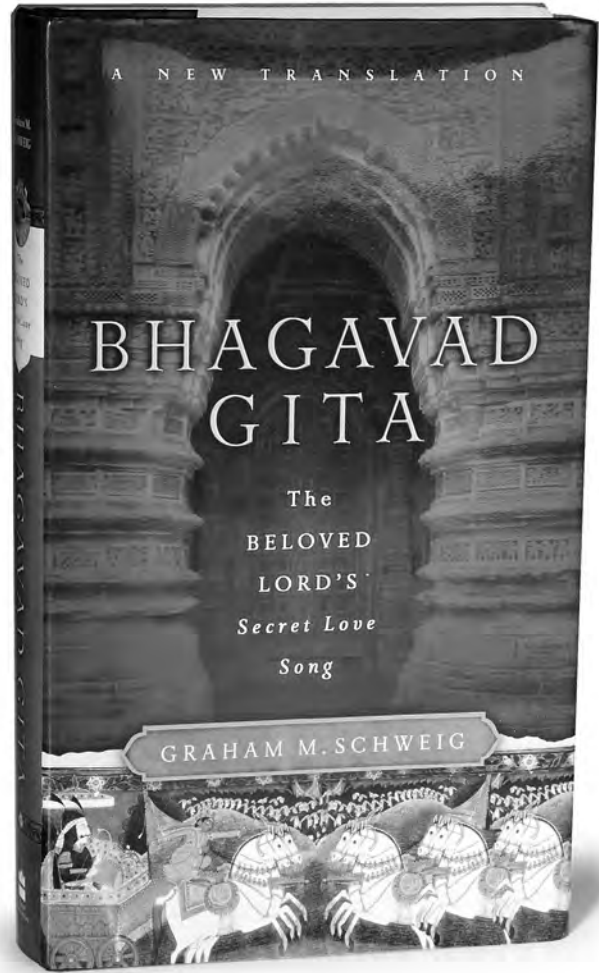
My hope is that the reader can now experience the text as if reading it in the original language to get some sense of its aesthetic quality and the philosophical power of its phrases. Each verse projects its own special drama with its unique play of words, which I have attempted to preserve. Most translators do not bother to preserve this, being more concerned with transmitting the meaning. But I have found, as with all poetry, that one cannot divorce the particulars and nuances of the language from its meaning. Very few translators have incorporated the poetic sense and beauty of the text, with its literary motifs, structures, and repetitions. And very few have conveyed the sense of the text's philosophical power through the literary quality of the translation. My desire has been to bring out what

is embedded in the original, but is not necessarily available to the ordinary eye, allowing the soul of these verses to come through and speak to us in powerful and compelling ways.

Each verse is a veritable meditation, worthy of endless contemplation. The translated verses are meant to stand on their own. Therefore, I present them so that if one reads nothing but the verses, one can read the text with a reasonable comprehension. Footnotes allow the reader to appreciate the verses without having to leave the page for further consultation. As with anything exquisite, however, the text deserves a frame. I provide a frame in the form of introductory words that give the unseasoned reader just enough to dive into the depth of the *Gītā*'s message. I continue to frame the verses with a section that follows the translation, called Textual Illuminations, in which I offer a deeper discussion of the es-

sential messages of the text. The English transliteration of every verse follows, including instructions on how to recite the verses accurately. I conclude with a twenty-four-page nuanced and detailed index to the verses.

WE LEARN IN THE *BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ* that the heart of divinity, who is Lord Kṛṣṇa, passionately desires to connect with the hearts of humans. Kṛṣṇa expresses this yearning through a *gītā*, a *song* of love. Though not a song in the lyrical sense, this song streams from the divine heart to the human heart. In my introduction to the book, I describe it as “a song issuing forth from the heart of God. It is the secret call of the divinity for all souls to love him, to take the journey to him, to be blissfully united with him.” The divinity in the *Bhagavad Gītā* inspires us to hear this secret song and to live in this world according to its message.





THE *BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ* IS THE BOOK ON yoga *par excellence*. The narrator himself calls Kṛṣṇa’s teachings, found within the whole dialogue between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, “the supreme secret of yoga” (BG 18.75). The secret yoga reveals three layers described in the eighteenth chapter as the secret, the greater secret, and the greatest secret of all, corresponding to how we should act in the outer world of conflict, what we will experience in the inner world of transcendence, and finally, what we will find in the innermost heart. The great secret, described in verses 1-49, has to do with acting out of love in this world in the way that best expresses the heart. In the greater secret, revealed in verses 50-63, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to know him as *brahman* (the supreme spirit) and as the *puruṣa*, embracing Arjuna from within his own heart.

This instruction to experience one’s self in relation to brahman and puruṣa is a running theme throughout the *Gītā*. The greatest secret of all appears in verses 64-66 in which Kṛṣṇa emphatically expresses his own heart’s divine passion, his pronouncement of love for humans.

The greatest secret is dramatically announced in verse 64 of chapter 18:

*sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūya  
śṅṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ* |  
*iṣṭo ’si me dṛḍham iti  
tato vakṣyāmi te hitam* ||

Hear still further  
the greatest secret of all,  
my supreme message:  
“You are so much loved by me!”  
Therefore I shall speak  
for your well-being.

*Bhagavad Gītā* 18.64

*Sarva-guhyatamaṁ* translates as “the greatest secret of all.” This secret is unquestionably a superlative, the utmost secret. Further emphasizing the secret is the imperative, *śṅṇu me*, “listen to me,” then *paramaṁ vacaḥ*: “my supreme message.” Nowhere else in the *Gītā* do we find such emphatic language and expression. Kṛṣṇa even further highlights his secret by placing

it in quotation marks, *iṣṭo ’si me dṛḍham iti*: “You are so much loved by me!” The word *iṣṭaḥ* indicates a passionate love, a longing: “I need you!” These are verses worth having on one’s dying breath. Once discovered, this secret, this direct message from Kṛṣṇa, is meant to be received by and embraced within the heart of the devotee.

Yoga, then, in its ultimate form, is the natural outpouring of love between the human heart and the divine heart. This mutual loving embrace between humanity and divinity is the secret supreme yoga. The *Gītā* tells us, and even demonstrates, that divinity practices yoga through various divine manifestations, one of which is a full presence within the inner region of the heart. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa is known as Yogeśvara, “the Supreme Lord of Yoga.” Humans, on the other hand, are meant to practice a yoga that allows them to enter fully into the heart of divinity. Upon reaching this elevated state, one is not cognizant of one’s individuality, though one remains an individual. Indeed, at this stage, one has already gained oneself fully in self-realization in order to lose oneself completely in divine love.

THE GREATEST IMPOVERISHMENT IN the world is the impoverishment of the human heart. If the heart were nurtured, it would take care of all other impoverishments. One may ask, then, why would Kṛṣṇa keep his supreme love a secret? The simple answer is that we are not yet ready to receive it. If we could hear his message, we would be filled with his love. Although he is embracing us through his numerous manifestations, we may not be able to recognize him and reciprocate with him. He is therefore a passive lover, an eternally patient lover who waits forever for us until we are ready to offer our love, or *bhakti*, to him. Kṛṣṇa does not create an atmosphere of obligatory love with humans: I love you and if you don’t love me, you must go to hell for eternity. He is not a judgmental deity or a god of punishment, condemnation, or guilt; rather, his love is unconditional, just as he desires our unconditional love.

TRANSLATE BHAKTI AS “THE OFFERING of love,” the offering of the heart. Such love is active and dynamic, and not passive. Kṛṣṇa actively offers us his embrace as the *Antaryāmin* (The Indweller) within our hearts, and makes himself available to us at every moment. Kṛṣṇa urges us to love the divine in this way:

*tam eva śaraṇaṁ gaccha  
sarva-bhāvena bhārata* |  
*tat-prasādāt parāṁ śāntiṁ  
sthānaṁ prāpsyasi śāśvatam* ||

In him alone take shelter  
with your whole being,  
O Bhārata.

Through his grace  
you shall attain  
supreme peace,  
the eternal dwelling.

*Bhagavad Gītā* 18.62

Thus the *Gītā* could be considered a scriptural love letter. Balance is essential to any relationship; without balance, a relationship simply cannot grow. If I love you and claim that you are my best friend, but you have not decided that you want to be my best friend, such a relationship is obviously imbalanced. When balance is achieved, however, in any relationship, the relationship becomes nourished and the love within grows. When we rise to the level of unconditional loving in relation to the divine, a yoga exists, and along with that, the eternal fullness of the heart.



KṚṢṆA’S LOVE, KINDNESS, AND PATIENCE shine forth throughout his teachings. His open and generous nature is poignantly expressed in his cooperation with, even fulfillment of, our desire to worship divinities other than himself:

*yo yo yāṁ yāṁ tanuṁ bhaktaḥ  
śraddhayārcitum icchati* |  
*tasya yasyācalāṁ śraddhāṁ  
tām eva vidadhāmy aham* ||

Whoever, with faith,  
has offered love  
to whatever form that  
person desires to worship –  
Upon every such person,  
I bestow this  
immovable faith.

*Bhagavad Gītā* 7.21

Kṛṣṇa’s inclusiveness also pervades his philosophy of yoga. Many philosophical arguments have arisen about whether the *Gītā* promotes *karma* (action), *jñāna* (knowledge), or *bhakti* (devotion). The issue is not which one of these is correct or which one is higher. Kṛṣṇa states that we attain a “yoga” with the divine by “acting” out of love for the divine, by “knowing” the divine, and by “offering our hearts” to the divine. Each of these three primary approaches constitutes a valid and worthy process of yoga.

THE PRIMARY MESSAGE OF THE *GĪTĀ* is embedded in the question: How should we act in this world of conflict? I translate the word *karma*, which comes from the Sanskrit root meaning *to act* or *to perform*, as *action*. In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa acts out of love for us; thus it is only natural that we act out of love for him. The very first verse of the *Gītā* poses the question: “How did they act?” Here, the word *act* is a seed, a *bīja*, a key to the whole text. The issue is not so much what we do on our own battlefields of life; rather, *how* we *act*, which has ethical, moral, emotional and spiritual implications. The *Gītā* addresses the question of right action, of proper action – *how* should we act? Since the achievement of the heart is all we can take with us at the time of death, the *Gītā* informs us that we can transcend death by living within and acting from the depths of our hearts.

BOTH THE *BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ* AND THE *Yoga Sūtra* teach us that the sense of *ahamkāra*, or the notion of “I am

acting alone,” and *mamatva*, the feeling of possessiveness or “mine,” are to be transcended. Our *sādhana* (spiritual practice) enables us to prepare the way of the heart. Ultimately, the perfection of our spiritual path is to act out of love. As we become instruments of love, detached from our actions and the result or fruits of those actions, our hearts become fixed more and more on the divine. When we understand that we are dependent upon the divine for everything, then we begin to know, connect to, and embrace the divine. The eight limbs of *Rāja Yoga* prepare the practitioner for this relationship of love, and indeed, are expressive of the eight constituent and simultaneous processes of the heart in love – the heart that has given itself fully to the divine.

The eight limbs of Patañjali’s yoga system are considered hierarchical; yet, they are equally important constituents to yoga and function simultaneously. A distinction is to be made between the practice (*sādhana*) and the accomplishment (*siddhi*) of each limb. Patañjali couches the processes of yoga in a way that allows practitioners to apply each of these limbs at whatever level or stage they find themselves. Beyond the practice of each limb is its perfection, revealed only to the hearts of practitioners who are ready to receive such perfection. The *Gītā* develops this *siddhi* level within the eight limbs, which in effect, become limbs of the heart for achieving *īśvara pranidhāna* (worship of one’s beloved divinity).

THROUGHOUT ITS TEACHINGS, THE *Gītā* exemplifies and speaks about all eight limbs, *yama* being the first. Numerous verses describing persons who possess the highest ethical values, such as nonviolence, truthfulness and so on, address the five ethical principles of *yama*. Whereas *niyama*, the second limb, involves the things we should practice or observe, including *īśvara pranidhāna*, so central to the text. The *Gītā* abounds with verses in which Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna (who represents the Ātman or the true self) to dedicate himself to the divine, indicating that this scripture is truly a song of divine love and worship, a *gītā*.

The *Gītā* presents meditative discipline of the body, when describing how to place the body in an *āsana* position with spine erect, gaze fixed between the eyes, and so on. Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to tell him how to recognize a realized soul, then inquires about how a realized soul stands or sits, and how a person of steady wisdom walks or situates the body in any activity, so that all human actions are incorporated within meditation. Thus even Arjuna is interested in the way the body is positioned – not only in the formal *hatha* sense, as in āsanās, but in how one controls the movements of the bodily limbs.

*Prāṇayāma*, the fourth limb, appears in verses in which Kṛṣṇa speaks not only about offering the incoming and outgoing breaths to each other, but also about dedicating one’s own life breath to the divine. Kṛṣṇa says, “Have your *prāṇa* come to Me” (BG 10.9). When one offers every breath with love, what need is there for manipulating the life breath? One breathes in the love that one receives from the divine, and breathes out as an offering to the divine, thus pointing to the mystical underpinnings of *prāṇayāma* practice.

In the second chapter, Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna to be like the tortoise who withdraws its limbs within its shell, which refers to *pratyāhāra*:

*yadā samharate cāyaṁ  
kṣrmo ’ngānīva sarvaśaḥ* |  
*indriyāṇindriyārthebhyas  
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā* ||

And when one withdraws  
completely,  
as a tortoise  
all of its limbs,  
The senses from  
their sense objects –  
the profound knowledge  
of such a person  
is firmly established.

*Bhagavad Gītā* 2.58

However, the teaching in both the *Sūtras* and the *Gītā* goes deeper than the idea of the yogi withdrawing from the senses or the world entirely; instead,



one must learn to withdraw one's attachment to and preoccupation with sense objects. One of the easiest ways to cultivate such detachment is through the practice of Bhakti Yoga.

The presentation of Bhakti Yoga found both in the *Sūtras* and the *Gītā* informs us that if one knows the form of the divine Beloved, everything else pales by comparison. In other words, along with the complete attraction to the Beloved, intrinsic to divine love, comes automatic renunciation of all else. The siddhi or īśvara praṇidhāna of pratyāhāra involves focusing all the senses on the beautiful, intimate form of the Lord. Rather than struggling to withdraw the senses from a delicious pastry calling from the window of a bakery, we offer the senses in service to the divine Lord and master of the senses. *Pratyāhāra siddhi*, the perfection of this practice, occurs when we melt at the vision of the divine, no longer tempted by the sweet pastry. Withdrawing the senses no longer challenges the yogi who understands to whom the sense objects and everything else belong.

THE LAST LIMBS OF RĀJA YOGA, *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*, comprise *saṁnyama*, "perfect discipline" or perfect practice. One first encounters the beloved object when focusing on these three upper limbs. As *dhāraṇa* develops, one finds that not merely by one's own efforts can one concentrate, but by the very power of the object drawing one to itself. As the beautiful, beloved object commands the heart, one turns one's complete attention to it, encountering the beloved anew. In such first encounters, until the heart becomes wholly absorbed in the Beloved, there may be interruptions. The goal then is to continually return to the object, bringing the mind back to this focal point.

In cultivating the flow of thought to a single object, one may consider, "What one point, what singular object could possibly command my attention constantly, at every moment?" What if the one point on which I focus, with thought constantly flowing toward it, contained everything in the universe? This would mean that anything upon which I focus

– even eating breakfast, tying my shoe laces, driving to work – would be fixed in meditation on that point. What could such a point be that could command the loyal dedication of one's heart and mind, while sleeping or waking, continually, without interruption? Such an object must have captivating powers. This ultimate object of meditation is īśvara, that supreme point within which everything is contained:

*yo mām paśyati sarvatra  
sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati |  
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi  
sa ca me na praṇaśyati ||*

One who sees me everywhere  
and sees all things in me,  
To such a person I am never lost  
nor is such a person ever lost to me.

*Bhagavad Gītā* 6.30

IN THE *GITĀ*, THE ĪŚVARA IS LORD Kṛṣṇa, and it is he who declares that the greatest absorption in yoga is found when yoga is focused upon him:

*yoginām api sarveṣāṁ  
mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā |  
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām  
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ ||*

Even among all yogis,  
one whose inner self  
has come to me,  
Who is full of faith,  
who offers love to me –  
that one is considered by me  
to be the most deeply  
absorbed in yoga.

*Bhagavad Gītā* 6.47

Patañjali instructs us to choose our *iṣṭa devatā* – the one who is held as our most desired Beloved, for no better way exists for focusing the mind than to concentrate on what one loves most.

ONCE ONE DISCOVERS ĪŚVARA praṇidhāna, one does not concentrate simply by one's own effort. Although personal effort must be exerted, one is not alone in this

endeavor, for the power of the divine object attracts one's heart to itself. At this point *dhāraṇa sādhana* commands one's attention. Once that attention is undistracted and uninterrupted, one comes to know and love the Beloved more and more. This uninterrupted flow of love, in which one cannot take one's mind and heart off the object, is called *dhyāna* (meditation). In *dhyāna siddhi*, the mind and heart are endlessly and constantly sustained by and absorbed in the beloved object.

SAMĀDHI, THE STATE OF PERFECT AND total absorption, is the ultimate perfection. As we progress from one limb to another, each of the previous limbs becomes more perfected. One never abandons any of the steps; rather, one delves more deeply into each. *Samādhi* means to place over completely and represents a complete spilling over of the self into the object of meditation. As Patañjali states in *Sūtra* 3.3, *samādhi* is the awareness of nothing but the particular object of meditation, as if one's own intrinsic nature has become empty (*śūnya*). In this state of *śūnya*, the existence of the meditator appears voided out because the meditator is utterly and totally absorbed in the chosen object.

In *Sūtra* 2.45 of the *Yoga Sūtra*, Patañjali claims that the perfection of meditation is dedication to the Supreme Lord (*samādhi siddhir īśvara-praṇidhānāt*). As early as the second limb, Patañjali gives us the perfection of the perfection – that of the eighth and final limb. Thus we can see how deliberately the limbs are integrated and that they are not simply hierarchical. Ultimately, yoga is the mutual embrace of the human soul (ātman) with the Supreme Soul (puruṣa). In the perfection of the yoga process, there are no longer any coverings – *kleśas* – or obstructions. The mind is so clear and purified that it can afford to forget itself. One no longer needs to be self-centered or self-concerned. One no longer needs a self! Metaphysically the self always exists, but the self offers itself utterly to the Beloved. This is the self-surrender of love. ❖





## NOTES ON THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

BY PAUL H. SHERBOW

*Mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ  
Āgamāpāyino ’nityās tāṁs titikṣasva bhārata*

Bhagavad-gītā 2.14

THIS IS THE FOURTH VERSE IN KṚṢṆA’S initial instruction to Arjuna in the second chapter (*adhyāya*) of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It follows directly after Kṛṣṇa’s description of the transmigration of the *ātmā* from one body to another just as an individual body (*deha*) develops through the stages of childhood (*kaumāram*), youth

(*yauvanam*) and old age (*jarā*) within a single lifetime,<sup>1</sup> which, in turn, was part of Kṛṣṇa’s argument for the eternality of the *ātmā* in spite of the changing bodies by which it is encased. Although Kṛṣṇa has made a good case in verses 2.11-13 for the eternality of the *ātmā* and thus for neither it nor the body being a cause for grief, Arjuna still has a

problem in terms of his own emotional separation from his beloved friends and relatives. Here in verse 2.14, Kṛṣṇa reduces Arjuna’s (and everyone else’s) emotional attachments to their origins in the perceptions by the senses of their respective sense objects.

IN HIS COMMENTARY ON THE *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śaṅkara<sup>2</sup> introduces this verse by anticipating Arjuna’s doubt that even if the delusion (*moha*) that the self (*ātmā*) is able to be destroyed is not possible for one who understands that the self is eternal (*nitya ātmeti vijānataḥ*), yet delusion relating to the impressions of heat and cold and happiness and distress in this mundane world still occurs, as well as delusion caused by the separation from happiness (*sukha-viyoga*) and the grief (*śoka*) resulting from contact with misery (*duḥkha-saṁyoga*).<sup>3</sup>

Commenting on the first word of this verse – *mātrā-sparśāḥ* – Śaṅkara says that the word *mātrā*, derived from the verbal root *mā* – ‘to measure’, means ‘those by which (*ābhiḥ*) the five sense objects – sound (*śabda*), texture (*sparsā*), form (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*) and smell (*gandha*) – are measured (*mīyate*),’ that is, the five sense-organs or *indriyas* (*śrotrādīnām indriyāṇi*),<sup>4</sup> respectively, the ear (*śrotra*), skin (*tvak*), eyes (*cakṣus*), tongue (*rasanā*) and nose (*ghrāṇa*). According to Śaṅkara, *sparsā*, the second word in this compound, is derived from the verbal root *spṛś* – to touch, thus meaning ‘contact’ or ‘connection’ (*saṁyoga*). The entire *śaṣṭhī-tatpuruṣa* compound – two words related in a sixth-case (*śaṣṭhī*) or possessive sense – thus means: ‘contacts of the sense-organs (with the sense-objects).’<sup>5</sup> Śaṅkara also offers a second interpretation: the word *sparsā* may be understood as referring to ‘those that are touched (*spṛśyante*), thus meaning the sense-objects (*viśayāḥ*) themselves.’<sup>6</sup> Read thus as a *dvandva-samāsa*, or copulative compound, *mātrā-sparśa* means ‘the *mātrā* (= sense organs) and the *sparsā* (= sense objects), rather than ‘*sparsā* (= contacts) of the *mātrā* (= sense organs)’ as in the former interpretation.

The Vaiṣṇava commentators Rāmānuja (1017-1137) and Madhva (1238-1317),

however, disagree with Śaṅkara on the meaning of *mātrā*. Both also derive the word from the root *mā* (to measure), but Rāmānuja understands *mātrā* to mean sense-objects due to their development from the subtle material elements or *tan-mātrās*<sup>7</sup> and Madhva understands *mātrā* to mean ‘that which is measured’ – the sense objects (*viśayāḥ*)<sup>8</sup> – rather than that which does the measuring – the senses (*indriyāṇi*) – as Śaṅkara would have it. The commentator Jayatīrtha (1335-1385), following Madhva, flatly declares that the explanation of *mātrā* as the *indriyas* is untrue (*asat*), because in the *Purāṇas* and elsewhere the term *mātrā* has been used repeatedly in the sense of *viśaya* rather than in the sense of *indriya*.<sup>9</sup> Aside from these two differing readings of *mātrā*, the ultimate meaning of the compound as a whole is basically the same.

The contacts of the sense-objects with the senses (*mātrā-sparśāḥ*) have in this verse been qualified by three adjectives: (1) *śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ*, (2) *āgamāpāyinaḥ*, and (3) *anityāḥ*. The *mātrā-sparśāḥ* are *śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ* – producing (the experiences) of cold (*śīta*), hot (*uṣṇa*), happiness (*sukha*), and misery (*duḥkha*). Secondly, the *mātrā-sparśāḥ* are *āgamāpāyinaḥ*, a compound formed of the two words *āgama* (‘coming’) and *apāyi* (‘going’). Thirdly, they are for this reason *anitya* – non-eternal or temporary – from *a* (non-) and *nitya* (eternal). Kṛṣṇa ends the verse with the instruction to tolerate the perceptions of the sense objects (*tāṁs titikṣasva bhārata*).

The experiences (*anubhavāḥ*) of cold and heat, happiness and distress produced by contacts with the sense objects fall into two groups: *śītoṣṇa* and *sukha-duḥkha*. Śaṅkara comments that the experiences of the first two – cold (*śīta*) and heat (*uṣṇa*) – are not regular, but vary according to time and condition; he points out that cold (*śīta*), for instance, is sometimes (*kadācit*) experienced as happiness (*sukha*) and sometimes as distress (*duḥkha*).<sup>10</sup> The Gaudiya commentator Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa illustrates this point by offering an example: the very same cold water (*śītaḥ udakam*) that gives happiness (*sukha-dam*) in the heat of

summer (*grīṣme*), gives misery (*duḥkha-dam*) in the wintertime (*hemānte*).<sup>11</sup>

Here Jayatīrtha asks: Are the contacts of the senses with their objects alone capable of producing the experiences of heat and cold, happiness and distress? He answers that such results are possible only through the added factor of *abhimāna*, or deep personal attachment, of which he gives three examples: (1) affection (*snehaḥ*) caused by a superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of beauty (*śobhana*) on the sense objects (*viśayeṣu*); (2) enmity (*dveṣaḥ*) caused by the delusion (*bhrama*) that someone is one’s enemy, etc.; and (3) the absence of discrimination (*avivekaḥ*) caused by excessive (*atiśaya*) possessiveness (*mamata*).<sup>12</sup> In the absence of such personal attachment (*abhimāna*), even though the ingredients (*sāmagrī*) mentioned in this verse (*mātrā-sparśāḥ*) are present together in one location (*eka-deśaḥ*), they are incapable of producing the sensations on the other side of the equation – heat and cold, happiness and distress. *Abhimāna* is thus, in fact, an intrinsic element of all that humans normally claim as perception of the visible world. Hence, Madhva concludes that experiences of happiness and distress (*sukha-duḥkha*) have their cause (*kāraṇa*) in the error (*bhrama*) or mistake of identifying the *ātmā* with the body, etc. (*dehādī*).<sup>13</sup>

It is because these sensations are ‘coming and going’ (*āgamāpāyī*) and therefore are temporary (*anitya*) that, according to Śaṅkara, they are able to be tolerated.<sup>14</sup> Rāmānuja also notes the quality of ‘coming and going’ as the reason for the sensations being tolerable (*kṣantum योग्याḥ*) by those who possess patience (*dhairyaavatām*).<sup>15</sup> The adjective *anitya* (‘temporary’) means, according to Madhva as elaborated by Jayatīrtha, that even the ‘coming and going’ of sense perceptions is not a continuous series of states, such as the continuous flow of a river like the Ganges, but rather a flux occasionally interrupted like the blooming of flowers in season. Such interruptions in sense impression occur during the states of deep sleep (*suṣupti*) and *asamprajñāta-samādhi*, in which all sense perception is absent.

The verb form *titikṣasva*, from the root *tij* meaning ‘tolerance’ (*sahana*), is in the imperative desiderative form, reinforcing the strength of Kṛṣṇa’s prescription to tolerantly endure the varied perceptions of the senses. Nevertheless, the objection is often voiced that the notion of mere tolerance of others and one’s environment is insufficiently positive. Here, however, Kṛṣṇa definitely uses a verb prescribing a form of neutrality, rather than a more positive expression, supported, for instance, in Śaṅkara’s explanation of *titikṣasva* as ‘to take neither joy (*harṣam*) nor sorrow (*viṣādam*) in the sensations of heat and cold, etc.’<sup>16</sup> As noted by Śrīdhara Svāmī in his comment on 2.15 in which the fruit of the practice of toleration is stated, this neutral notion of *titikṣā* or toleration excludes efforts for retaliation (*pratikarā-prayatna*) as well.

In his comment on the verb *titikṣasva*, Jayatīrtha explains that toleration of the sensations of heat and cold means to make them fruitless or resultless (*viphalī-kuru*).<sup>17</sup> Sumatindra Tīrtha, a later scholar of the same school, explains in turn that ‘to make fruitless’ means to render them non-causes (*ahetūn*) of alterations (*vikāra*) characterized by heat and cold, happiness and distress.<sup>18</sup> It is not the case that all sensations will disappear, but that the reactive impressions (*vikāra*) in the mind will not occur, and that is not possible while attachment (*abhimāna*) due to a faulty identification with the body remains. Hence Madhva and other commentators in his lineage emphasize the prior abandonment of one’s attachment as a necessary factor in the successful practice of tolerance.<sup>19</sup>

In regard to the actual practice of tolerating the dualities of sense-perception, the present verse does not provide elaboration. Contributing two highly relevant elements on this point, Rāmānuja qualifies Kṛṣṇa’s simple instruction to tolerate with the words *dhairyaṇa*, meaning ‘with patience’ or ‘patiently,’ which tells *how* toleration should be practiced, and *yāvat-yuddhādi-śāstrīya-karma-samāpti*, meaning ‘until the completion of one’s scripturally ordained duty,’ which tells *how long*.<sup>20</sup> These two added qualifiers impose



boundaries on what would otherwise constitute too open and unrestricted an instruction. Arjuna is being asked to tolerate whatever is encountered in performing his scripturally ordained duties as a *kṣatriya*, in which his professional and personal obligations and prohibitions are clearly spelled out. Without such clear bounds to action, on the positive as well as the negative side, an unregulated application of tolerance can readily lead to its use as an escape from responsibility and thus off the upward path. Thus, in this view, toleration does not exist in isolation from one's function in society and the world as a servant of the Supreme Lord. It is to be practiced as one meets the difficulties encountered in one's service, in Arjuna's case as a *kṣatriya*, battling his foes for the protection of society. Vedānta-deśika (1268-1369) comments that Rāmānuja, in augmenting the meaning of *titikṣasva* by the word *dhairyēṇa* is alluding to Kṛṣṇa's use of the word *dhīra* (an adjective meaning 'steady,' 'sober,' 'patient,' etc., from which the abstract noun *dhairya* has been derived) in both the preceding and following verses (Bg. 2.13 and 2.15). Alternatively, Rāmānuja is referring to the implication of the two names – Kaunteya and Bharata – by which Kṛṣṇa addresses Arjuna in the present verse, both appellations referring to his illustrious *kṣatriya* ancestry – to his birth as the son of Kuntī (Kaunteya) on his mother's side, and to his descent from Bharata Mahārāja (Bhārata) on his father's side. The implication is that anything other than *dhairyā* or patient tolerance would be unbefitting Arjuna's distinguished ancestral lineage.<sup>21</sup>

Verse 2.14 must also be taken in context as part of Kṛṣṇa's reasoning to convince Arjuna that he should perform his duty as a *kṣatriya* and confront his opponents, even though they include his friends and relatives. Arjuna's grief at the thought of killing or harming these close relations, caused by his attachment, which in turn has its root in his faulty identification – caused by ignorance – with the body, is the main element to be eliminated. ▲



<sup>1</sup> *Dehino'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanam jarā*

*Tathā dehāntara-prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati* (Bg. 2.13)

<sup>2</sup> Śaṅkara (788-820) is the most prominent commentator of the Advaita (pure non-dualism) School, author of commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras* and the classical *Upaniṣats* as well as the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

<sup>3</sup> *Yady apy ātma-vināśa-nimitto moho na sambhavati nitya ātmeti vijānatas, tathāpi śitoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-prāpti-nimitto moho laukiko dṛśyate, sukha-viyoga-nimitto mohaḥ, duḥkha-samyoga-nimittaś ca śokaḥ. Ity etad arjunasya vacanam āsaṅkya bhagavān uvāca – mātṛā-sparśa iti* (Śaṅkara-bhāṣya on Bg. 2.14)

<sup>4</sup> *Mātṛā ābhir mīyante śabdādaya iti śrotrādīnām indriyāṇi* (Śaṅkara-bhāṣya on Bg. 2.14). The meaning of *mātṛā* is similarly derived by many commentators subsequent to Śaṅkara, such as Śrīdhara Svāmī, Nilakaṇṭha, Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī, and including the eighteenth-century Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholar Baladeva, who comments as follows: the *mātṛās* are the functions of the sense-organs (*indriya-vṛttayaḥ*) such as the skin and others (*tvag-ādi*), from the derivation (*vyutpatteḥ*) 'by which (*ābhiḥ*) the sense objects (*viśayāḥ*) are measured (*mīyante*)' – *mātṛās tvag-ādīndriya-vṛttayaḥ mīyante paricchidyante viśayā ābhir iti vyutpatteḥ* (*Vidyābhūṣaṇa-bhāṣya*).

<sup>5</sup> *Mātṛāṇām sparśāḥ śabdādibhiḥ samyogāḥ* (Śaṅkara-bhāṣya on Bg. 2.14)

<sup>6</sup> *Athavā sprśyanta iti sparśa viśayāḥ śabdādayaḥ* (Śaṅkara-bhāṣya on Bg. 2.14)

<sup>7</sup> *Śabda-sparśa-rūpa-rasa-gandhāḥ sāsrayāḥ tanmātṛā-kāryatvāt mātṛā iti ucyante* (Rāmānuja-bhāṣya)

<sup>8</sup> *Mīyanta iti mātṛā viśayāḥ* (Gītā-bhāṣya 2.14)

<sup>9</sup> *Mīyante viśayā ebhir iti mātṛā indriyāṇi iti vyākhyānam asat, purāṇātau mātṛā-śabdasya viśaye rūḍhatvād iti* (Prameya-dīpikā on Bg. 2.14)

<sup>10</sup> *Śītaṁ kadācit sukhaṁ, kadācit duḥkham* (Śaṅkara-bhāṣya 2.14)

<sup>11</sup> *Yad eva śītaṁ udakaṁ grīṣme sukha-dam, tad eva hemānte duḥkha-dam* (*Vidyābhūṣaṇa-bhāṣya* on 2.14)

<sup>12</sup> *Abhimāno nāmātra viśayesu śobhanādhyāsa-nimittāḥ snehaḥ, aritvādi-bhramanimitto dveṣaś ca, śarirendriyāntaḥkaraṇeṣu māmātītiśaya-betuko viveka ity-ādih* (Prameya-dīpikā on Bg. 2.14)

<sup>13</sup> *Ata ātmano dehādy-ātma-bhrama eva sukha-duḥkha-kāraṇam* (Gītā-bhāṣya 2.14)

<sup>14</sup> *Atas tān śitoṣṇādīn titikṣasva* (Śaṅkara-bhāṣya on 2.14)

<sup>15</sup> *Te ca āgamāpāyitvād dhairyavatām kṣantum योगyāḥ* (Rāmānuja-bhāṣya on 2.14)

<sup>16</sup> *Atas tān śitoṣṇādīn titikṣasva prasahasva teṣu harṣaṁ viśādaṁ vā mā karṣir ity arthaḥ* (Śaṅkara-bhāṣya)

<sup>17</sup> *Titikṣasva viphalī-kurv iti bhāvaḥ* (Prameya-dīpikā on Bg. 2.14)

<sup>18</sup> *Viphalān śitoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-lakṣaṇa-vikārāhetūn* (Bhāva-ratna-kośa on Bg. 2.14)

<sup>19</sup> *Ato bhīmānaṁ parityajya tān śitoṣṇādīn titikṣasva* (Gītā-bhāṣya 2.14)

<sup>20</sup> *Tān dhairyēṇa yāvad-yuddhādi-śāstrīya-karma-samāpti titikṣasva* (Rāmānuja-bhāṣya)

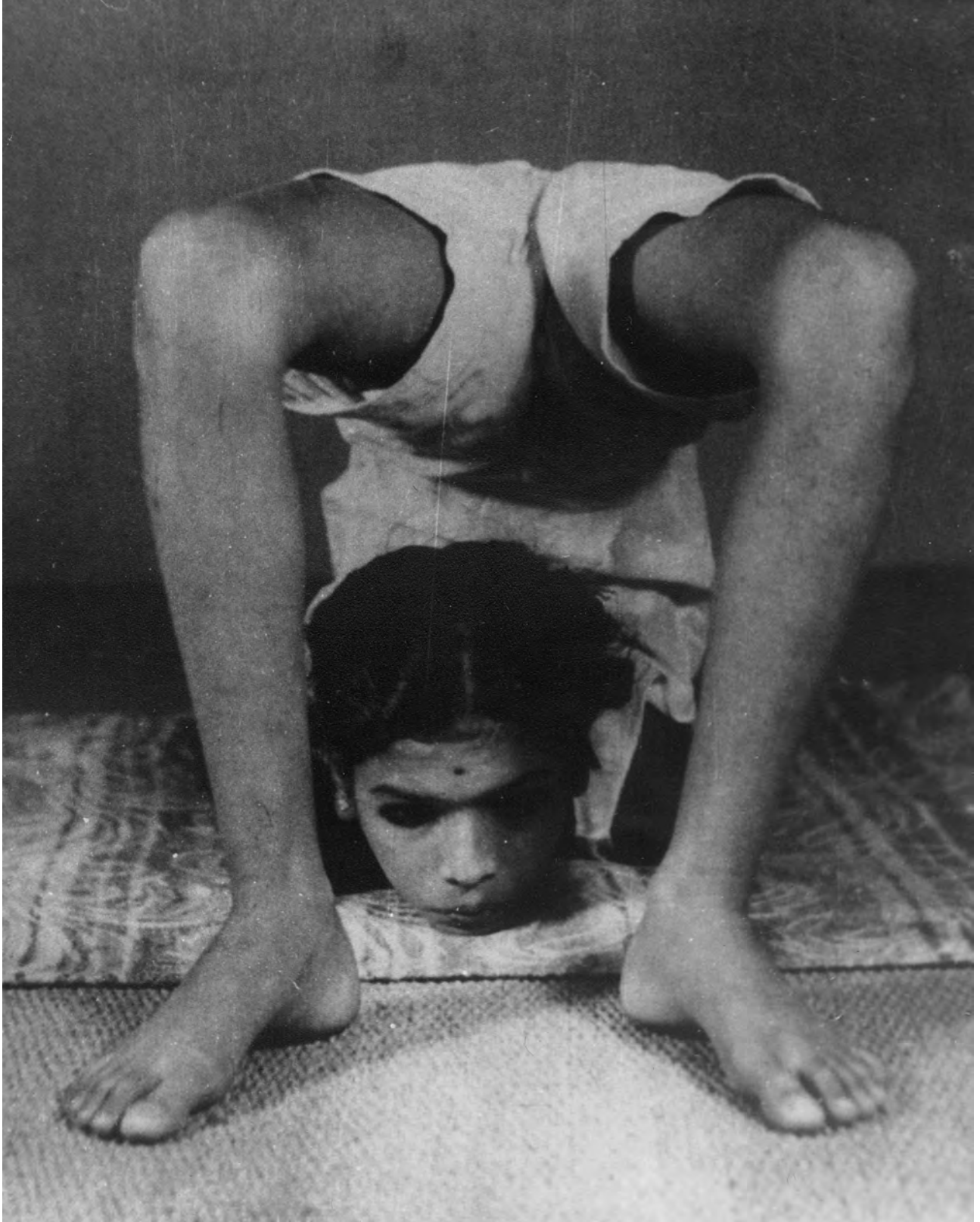
<sup>21</sup> *Dhīram iti vakṣyamānaṁ, dhīras tatreti purvoktaṁ cākṣyāha – tān dhairyēṇeti. Yadvātraiva kaunteya-bhārata-śabdābhyām kṣatriyāyām utpannasya viśiṣṭa-kṣatriya-santānikasya te dhairyam evocitam iti sūcitam.* (Tātparya-candrikā on Bg. 2.14)



# SARASWATHI RANGASWAMY

AN INTERVIEW BY NICK EVANS

*Conducted on September 2 & 3, 2007 in Mysore, Karnataka, South India*



*Saraswathi Rangaswamy in Gandhaberuṇḍāsana. Photographer unknown.*





SARASWATHI RANGASWAMY WAS BORN in 1941 in Mysore, Karnataka, South India. She is the sole daughter of Ashtanga Yoga master Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, known to his students as Guruji, and his wife, Savitamma Jois, who passed away in 1997. At twenty-six, she married M.S. Rangaswamy and had two children, Sharmila and Sharath, who is now the Assistant Director of the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (AYRI) in Mysore.

Saraswathi began her own yoga classes in 1975, after many years of practicing and assisting her father, and now, along with her son, she teaches early-morning and afternoon sessions with Guruji, followed by a class of her own at AYRI in Gokulam, Mysore. Her firm and loving approach to teaching the traditional Ashtanga Yoga method is born of a deep personal experience with the practice and a teacher-student relationship with her father that has lasted over fifty years.

NE You were born and raised in Mysore. Can you share any particular memories or moments that stayed in your mind?

SR I love Mysore. I was born here, I grew up here. After I was married, I spent a few years living with my husband, Rangaswamy, who was working near Calcutta. But when I was

pregnant with Sharath, I came back to Mysore and didn't go anywhere else afterwards.

At school, I would practice yoga every day. Once, at a school function when I was fourteen, I did *Ganda-bheruṇḍāsana* [a posture from the third series of Ashtanga] and the president of the school said, "Stop or something bad may happen." But I didn't care – I was very happy, very flexible. I loved sports in high school. I won so many prizes. I was chosen to go to the Maharaja of Mysore's parade for *Navarātri* [the nine-night festival of the goddess]. I remember the Maharaja sitting on a gold chair on the elephant ... such a special memory.

My father took me to so many places when he was lecturing on yoga. I would do the demonstration of the *āsana* as he spoke of the particular benefits. He would call the *vinnyāsa* and I would demonstrate, say, *Kūrmāsana* [tortoise posture]. My father was a big man, maybe eighty kilos. He stood on my back and then started to lecture, explaining the benefits of the *āsana*. Maybe he was talking for one hour while standing on my back. My mother would tell my father, "Don't talk too long." My father would say, "Only five minutes, that's all." But then when we got there, he would do the same – one hour! It didn't hurt; I was very small, very happy, so many people were seeing me.

NE How has Mysore changed since you were a young girl? Particularly since the western influence is now so strong?

SR Before, it wasn't crowded. Mysore was a very beautiful place with nice people. You only went to the city at feast times [Hindu festivals], where there would be many people buying flowers and fruits. Then, it would be crowded. But nowadays, everyday is a feast and it is crowded all the time. So many factories, so many visitors.

The old traditions were very nice; people had so much energy at those times. At feast time, you would cook a dish at your house for the particular celebration. For *Gaṇeśa Chaturthī*, you would cook *laddoos*, *payasam* and *idlis*, especially for Gaṇeśa. For Gaurī [the divine mother], you would cook sweet *chapattis*. People were interested in the *pūjās* [ritual worship] and the families would celebrate together at home, eating beautiful food and being very happy. Before, particular days were for particular things. Now, everybody has everything, every day. They prepare whatever they want; it's not special anymore. If you want sweet chapatti, they are already there.

In those days, the man of the house was responsible for everybody in the family, and they respected him. Now, after marriage, people want to live separately. It wasn't like that before. All the family lived together, all the generations in the same house. If one person has a problem, they can be looked after by the others. Not so many headaches for the family. Now everybody is the boss in the house. Before, in the olden days, people liked children, not property. Everybody was very poor, but very happy. It's rare now to want to keep the family together. The traditional way is slowly going, although we have four generations in this house. Now the western way is coming to India. Before, every house had only one bicycle, but now one house has two scooters and three cars.

NE Your family is *Smārta Brahmin* [worshippers of Śiva]. Can you talk a little about the character and beliefs of this particular Hindu community, and how it affected your life?

SR My grandfather and great-grandfather on my father's and mother's sides were all Brahmin people. I like these methods – the prayers, the *pūjā* – not just *Smārta*, but all Brahmin traditions. *Smārta* Brahmins follow the teachings of Śaṅkarācārya. We don't only worship Śiva; Gaṇeśa and Devī also, but really God is only one. My father's side worships Īśvara [Śiva]. When I was married and went to my husband's place, the God I worshipped changed to Venkataramana [Viṣṇu]. After marriage, you don't follow the father's side; everything follows the husband's side.

*Pūjā* brings a love of God into your heart. I love Gaṇeśa. Every morning I wake up with Gaṇeśa in my bedroom, I chant some *ślokas* [Sanskrit prayers] to him, and then I go to the *shālā* to teach. Brahmins have many generations of experience in chanting the *ślokas* correctly, doing the *pūjās* correctly. In the past, Brahmin people were very poor people. They couldn't become engineers or doctors, so they became lawyers or professors, the whole education field. The Brahmin people are very intelligent; it was their work to preserve the traditional wisdom of India. They master Sanskrit, and then all other languages come easily. They would memorize the *Rg Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sāma Veda*, and the *Atharva Veda*.

NE What are some of the important pilgrimage places in Karnataka and what role do they play in Hindu life here?

SR If you go to South Karnataka, so many Hindu temples are there: Dharmasthala, Shringeri, Subrahmanya, Kateel, Mookambika, Udupi. Near Mysore itself is Nanjangud – the oldest temple, a powerful Śiva Temple. Tipu Sultan [the ruler of Mysore in the late eighteenth century] had a blind elephant; people told him that the Śiva Liṅga at Nanjangud could cure the elephant's blindness. Tipu didn't believe it, being a Muslim himself. For forty-one days he took the elephant to the temple and applied *myrtika* (temple mud) to the elephant, and on the forty-second day the elephant could see. So Tipu Sultan made a *pachchā liṅga* [a jade liṅgam],

very rare and costly, and installed it in the temple. It is still there.

Dharmasthala is home to the Manjunatheshwara Temple. It is also very powerful. So many people go there to pray when they are sick. Kṛṣṇa devotees in the area go to Udupi. Subrahmanya [another name for Śiva's son Skanda, the God of war] is a snake temple. You have to be so careful when you go there. You take a bath. If you have no children, you go there and do *Nāga Pratiṣṭhā* [a snake worship ceremony]. You stay there ten days and on the eleventh day you do *pūjā* and maybe you will have a baby. There are three places for Subrahmanya: Kukke Subrahmanya; then, near Bangalore, Gatte Subrahmanya; and in Kudupu, the Sri Ananthapadmanabha Subrahmanya temple. One is the snake's head, one its stomach and one its tail. In the Kudupu temple, there is a mirror and in it you can see Narasiṃha [the lion avatar of Viṣṇu] reflected. In Horanadu, there is Annapurṇeśvarī temple, where the Goddess gives food. Also a very beautiful place, it is near Shringeri. Gokarna is one of the main places for the Brahmin death ceremony. In Tamil Nadu, you can go to Chidambareswara and see Naṭarāja. In Murdeshwara [North Karnataka], there is a huge statue of Śiva.

NE: Do ladies have the same religious duties as the men?

SR: The really important person in the family is the mother. If there are ten children in the home, she is controlling them, not father. Father is working for money, but the mother takes care of the morality, food and education. When she is giving birth, she suffers a lot, but when the baby comes, she is very happy, ready for the next one, so strong. When the mother is managing the house, the whole family is very happy. Ladies also have different texts to learn – *Gaurī Pūjā*, *Durgā Aṣṭaka*, *Lalitā Sahasranāma*. And now, many girls are learning Sanskrit; they are the ones sharing this knowledge.

NE What relationship did you have with your father's guru, Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, and his family?

SR Not so much, but I took yoga examinations with Krishnamacharya. I have First Class and Intermediate, and a certificate from him. A long time back, maybe 1985, I wanted to go to America with my parents, but I didn't get the visa. Sharath and Shammi were so small, and my husband was working in Saudi Arabia. They said, "If you leave your children in India, you can have a visa." But I couldn't leave them; going to America wasn't important, my children were.

At that time, I went to meet Krishnamacharya in Chennai, because Guruji's western students wanted to meet Guruji's guru. So, I took them. Desikachar and his family have also visited my house, so there is a little relationship coming now.

NE What is your personal experience with the Ashtanga Yoga practice, and what have been its benefits in your life?

SR That is why I am so strong, so many benefits are there. I was a small child when I started the practice; my father started teaching me when I was five. I was bending nicely, and my grandmother was shouting at me, "Your father is killing you!" But I was happy. From ten years until twenty-two years, I had a daily practice. Sometimes, if my mom wasn't feeling well, I would skip. I wanted to take care of my family while my father was working in the *shālā* in the Sanskrit College, and also because Manju [her younger brother] was very small.

I was the first lady to do *Gandha-bheruṇḍāsana* alone with no help. I would go to a demonstration with my father; he was so strict. He would tell me to do a certain *āsana*, and I would say, "Tomorrow." He would say, "No, you do," and I would do. At that time he was not helping so much, he would just shout, "You do!" My standing *āsanas* are very fine, but *Baddhakonāsana* is very difficult for me – too stiff now. So many days I am crying because of that posture.

NE How did motherhood and marriage affect your relationship to the yoga practice?

SR I got married in 1967, when I was twenty-six. After marriage I had to



move away to be with my husband; that is the rule in India. He was working in Jamshedpur, near Calcutta, for Tata Motors. I didn't know my husband when we got married – in India, arranged marriages are like that. Not much practicing yoga, because my husband didn't like it so much then. But still, I was teaching small children. I won't stop my work. Then in 1975, I left college. I didn't want to go, I wanted

to teach yoga. So I stayed at home and my father taught me to teach. Many ladies would come to my father's yoga shālā and I would teach them. When I was pregnant, I came back to my father's house, where Sharath was delivered.

It was difficult with my husband's family and, since he was always changing jobs, changing places, my mother and father asked, "You have two children, where will you go?" I was thinking

about their education – one place talks English, one place Hindi. It is very difficult for children to learn anything if you are moving every six months. My parents said, "If you stay in one place you can go, but otherwise you stay here." That seemed like a good idea, so I stayed at my father's house for fourteen years. My husband was coming and going – when he had holidays he would come. Finally, he went to work in Saudi Arabia

for six years. I asked him so many times if I could go, but he didn't want me to go there; that country is very different from India. So I stayed in Mysore. This made my family very strong.

**NE** What were your early experiences teaching your own yoga classes?

**SR** Because I came back to my mother's house, everybody began teasing me for being back. Everyday I was crying.

When Sharath was four years old, I went to Santpur at the top of Karnataka where my husband was working. But there was no good water, no good milk, and Sharath got an infection. I stayed a month there, but he was so sick – fever, headaches – and my husband was so busy working. I was worried, so I came back to Mysore. I took him to the doctor, who said Sharath had glandular fever – very serious, one year of treatment. When the treatment was finished, Guruji started building the yoga shālā in Lakshmipuram. There were bricks everywhere, and Sharath was jumping over them and fell down and broke his leg. He had to sit down for three weeks; he was only seven. Then his hemoglobin became low, and he developed rheumatic fever. For four months he was in bed, he couldn't move. From ages four through fourteen, one thing after another. At that time I had so many financial problems, so I was thinking, how can I pay for all this treatment? I decided to start teaching my own yoga classes.

My father said, no advertising, it is not correct. But he had a student, an American lady, Sally Walker, who had stayed in our house. She put an advertisement in the Hindu newspaper for my class [which was held at a temple], as a presentation, and that day, four students came. I was charging fifty rupees admission and twenty-five rupees monthly fees. That day I will never forget – I had two hundred rupees in my hand, a very good feeling. Then our doctor, J. V. Narayan, took out an advertisement in the *Star of Mysore* for four Sundays as a gift to me, and many people started coming. When more people came, jealousy came also. People complaining about money: "When Guruji started teaching, he charged three rupees, now you charge twenty-five – why?" I said, "In Guruji's time, one kg of rice was one rupee, now it is ten rupees."

Every few days they would use the room for shaving people's heads like in Tirupati [a Viṣṇu temple near Chennai], or for making laddoos. I said, "Are you going to let me use the room or not?" They had another room at the back of the temple, which was not

used in the afternoons. The students liked it very much, and I taught in that room for eleven years. At that time, Guruji and Amma [Saraswathi's mother] were always going abroad. I wanted to stay at home and take care of the house, and I also took care of Guruji's students. After eleven years, jealousy started again. Someone wrote on the wall "Don't teach here." My mom had come with me that day and said, "Don't teach here any more." When things go well, people start to discourage you, when they should be encouraging.

I built a house in Gokulam. My husband was back from Saudi Arabia, but then he moved for five years to Bangalore. I took my children and moved into the new house in Gokulam. Many of the students followed, some who had been practicing with my family for thirty years.

**NE** You were the first woman to be educated in the Sanskrit College in Mysore. Then you were the first woman to teach yoga to men and women together. What were your experiences?

**SR** The Sanskrit College had no ladies – it was very conservative at that time. People didn't like men and women being educated together. I was the first lady to be admitted, and for three years I studied Kāvya, primary Sanskrit. I would practice my yoga at the Sanskrit College – me and all these boys. When I left college to take care of my family, many ladies started coming.

In the temple, I only taught ladies. This was what my family wanted, the traditional way. But after I went to America, where boys and girls learn together, I thought, "Why don't I teach them together? What is the difference? All are the same, I don't care." So I started. I wanted to see what would happen, for if my mind and heart were strong, where is the problem? I had many boys in my class then. In India, if they see you talking to boys, they automatically think of you badly. But I didn't care what people thought.

**NE** How did your mother influence your life? I hear she was a very special, loving lady.



Saraswathi Rangaswamy teaching at Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute, Mysore, South India. September 2007. Photograph by Govinda Kai.



**SR** She was a very funny lady, jokes and everything. She loved all the students. She would feed the western students food, coffee. My mum liked to look after people. She took care of my father, who was very poor. He left all his things in Kaushika [his hometown] and went to Mysore with only two rupees. After marriage, my father's salary was only fourteen rupees, but my mom was very happy to stay with him. Out of the fourteen rupees, four rupees was for rent, one rupee for electricity, and nine rupees left for everything else for the whole month. But it was fine for her. Sometimes for a few days we wouldn't eat ... only one or two papayas from the tree at the back of the house. When my brother and I were very small, my father would bring rice sometimes when he had some money. There was nothing, just small things for *uta* [lunch]. Later my father started making some money, but my mother always remembered how it was before. Money didn't change her. Even though their horoscopes didn't match, she loved my father, and he also [loved her]. For sixty-three years they were very happy together.

She was always teasing my father. One day he bought a scooter. After seventy years old, Guruji started riding a scooter and every day he would fall off it. He could have broken something, and my mom was always scolding him, "Send back this scooter." My father said, "No, you sit on the back." She said, "I will never sit on that thing! You will have to find other ladies for that! If I fall off, who will take care of me? If you fall down, I take care of you. I will never sit on that thing." My father was always falling off. She was a clever lady.

**NE** Sharath is now a father and a yoga teacher himself. How has it been watching his development, and what advice have you given him?

**SR** When Sharath was a little boy, he played at yoga a little bit, but he didn't like it. He preferred cricket. But the first time I went to America in 1989 – just Guruji, me and Amma – at the Seattle Airport, Guruji got food poisoning from a fruit juice and was very sick. When we got home, the doctor said, "Guruji

needs rest, he is working too hard." At that time, he didn't have an assistant; he taught in the morning and evening alone. I said to Sharath, "Guruji took care of my family, but no one is helping him teach Ashtanga." When Guruji would go abroad, one of his students would teach the class. I scolded Sharath, "What will happen to Ashtanga if no one is helping Guruji?" The next day Sharath said he wanted to go to the class. After that he would never miss a class. His interest started growing and the number of western students coming was growing also. My children want to spread the Ashtanga method like my father did. It is the family project. In my last moment, I want to teach yoga. Nowadays, I want to teach and look after my family and me ... that's all.

**NE** Your daughter Shammi is teaching Ashtanga Yoga in Bangalore, which is a busy westernized industrial city. How are the Bangaloreans taking to the Ashtanga Yoga practice?

**SR** Guruji told her to start teaching in her house. Many people are teaching yoga in Bangalore, but not the correct method like her grandfather. So she thought, 'Why don't I teach people the correct way?' And Guruji gave his blessings. Now some students are coming, western students also. People who have come from abroad to work there are coming now too. People are beginning to hear that Pattabhi Jois's granddaughter is teaching there, and they are excited, because she is his granddaughter, and that is important.

**NE** As a woman and teacher, what advice can you give to pregnant women who want to practice Ashtanga Yoga?

**SR** It is good for pregnant women to take practice – the breathing brings oxygen to the blood and to the baby. The baby gets exercise too and the mothers are very flexible at this time. Women should take three days rest during their periods, but many western ladies keep practicing. That is very bad. The ladies' holiday is a time for rest. In the old days, Brahmin ladies would work all the time, but during their ladies' holidays, they rest and the rest of the family cooks

and cares for them. After the delivery of a baby, the mother should take three months rest from the practice and the first three months of the pregnancy also; you can do a little bit, but no jumping. Sitting and breathing is best. I have one girl who comes to my class who is four-and-a-half months pregnant and she practices Intermediate and Advanced, no problem. It depends on the person. Sometimes it is good to check with a doctor too.

**NE** What advice can you give to Ashtanga Yoga teachers who want to teach this method over a long period of time, as you have done?

**SR** You don't want to change the method. What you learn in Mysore with us is what you should teach in your place. Guruji has told us so many things; you can't go changing it. If you follow Guruji's method, definitely everything is coming spiritual. It will change minds; everything will change. People like it the way it is – that's why it is spreading everywhere. For forty years nobody has taught like him. But in old age – seventy years, eighty years – you keep a few āsanās and make them your regular practice. Just do primary, that's enough, but don't stop. You look at the people and see what is suitable for them. You can choose what their practice should be. Even a very big man can do *Sūrya Namaskāra* with correct breathing – you can make him try. Soon it will be much easier for him. If you can't do *Sūrya Namaskāra*, you can do simple āsanās, with breathing and *mūla bandha* and *dṛṣṭhi*. Even sick people can do the breathing. Eventually they will feel happy and their bodies will become light. So many people tell us Guruji has changed their lives with Ashtanga Yoga.

Westerners are very strong people – when they start, they keep going. Indian people are not doing yoga. They are scared. They go to the hospital and they are told not to work, just rest and eat.

**NE** How do you see Ashtanga growing in the future? How can the traditional aspect of the practice best be preserved?

**SR** The teachers should preserve the traditional method ... it is so precious.

I like this yoga, not the others, only this one. The breathing, the bandha and the dṛṣṭi is a very special thing. Now people are changing the yoga, mixing it up, but that is not Ashtanga. You want to practice with our old students, not the others who don't know the correct method. The teachers who practice with us in Mysore are very honest, we know them; they have asked for permission to teach. But there are so many people teaching Ashtanga

who have not come to see us – this is not honest. They are not recognized by us. It is not our property, but it is important to go the correct way, then it will spread everywhere very happily.

First you want to respect the teachers who brought this yoga to you. Guru – that is mūla [root, base]. If you don't give that respect there is not coming God. That is very important. Some people change it, but it is just their ego. Think

who is the best teacher, and go there. If you keep changing teachers, it is not correct. You will get confused. When your mind is strong, you stay with one teacher. You go everywhere and try, then when you find one, you follow that one person. When you meet the right one, you will know in your heart. ❖



Saraswathi Rangaswamy and her father Sri K. Pattabhi Jois. Mysore, South India. September 2007. Photograph by Govinda Kai.



# THE BEATLES IN INDIA

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WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?” It was August 8, 1966, and I was twenty-two years old. It was the first time I can recall being conscious of the possible existence of an inner path, an inner journey to knowing, to a connection with Divine Nature.

Who were “they”? My parents? No. My schoolteachers? No. My Judeo-Christian ancestors? No. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi? No.

“They” were the Beatles: John, Paul, George and Ringo.

The moment remains crystal clear. It was the day the Beatles album *Revolver* was released in Canada. I drove down to Sam the Record Man’s store on Yonge Street, in Toronto, to buy a copy before they sold out, which usually happened on the first day.

Back home, my girlfriend Trisha and I took a small stereo out on the front lawn, hooked up a yellow extension cord, lay down on a tree-of-life patterned Indian bedspread, closed our eyes in the sunshine, and cuddled.

The final song, *Tomorrow Never Knows*, had an unusual effect on me. I remember these words like it was yesterday:

*Turn off your mind, relax  
and float down stream,  
It is not dying, it is not dying.*

*Lay down all thoughts,  
surrender to the void,  
It is shining, it is shining.*

*Yet you may see the meaning of within.  
It is being, it is being.*

*Love is all and love is everyone.  
It is knowing, it is knowing.*

I felt suspended in time. As the silence seemed to hang in the air, thought flooded back in and, to my surprise, I realized that for some reason I trusted the Beatles. I can’t say that in any way, more clearly. Something in the joy of their music, in the meaning of their words as they described their journeys,

*In 1968 Paul Saltzman spent time with the Beatles in India. His photos of that time have been released in a fine art limited edition photography book, The Beatles in India, which includes an original DVD and music CD. You can find them at [www.TheBeatlesInIndia.com](http://www.TheBeatlesInIndia.com)*

rang true. I remember thinking that if they were talking about something real, within me, it was nothing my teachers or my parents had ever talked to me about, and I wanted to know what it was.

My mother and father were both atheists. So, I was taught that there is no God, or Goddess, no Spirit, no Soul; we live, we die and that’s it. Finito. I was, however, taught to live by the Golden Rule. They instructed my older brother and me, “Do unto others as you’d have them do unto you.”

THE SECOND STEP ON MY INNER journey, though I didn’t know it at the time, happened just over a year later, in Montreal. Working for the National Film Board of Canada, I woke up alone one morning in my tacky, wrong-side-of-the-tracks rooming house and had the shocking thought that there were parts of myself I didn’t like. Being a “successful” but relatively unconscious guy, I felt lost. In the silence that followed, a magic moment unfolded.

Without thought, I spoke out loud:

“So, what do I do about that?”

For the first time in my life, I heard a deep, resonant, calming, inner voice speak:

“Well, if you really want to look at yourself more clearly, Paul,” it said, “you might want to get away from the environment you grew up in.”

Again, without thought, I spoke out loud:

“Where do I go?”

The inner voice—I now know it, intimately, as the voice of my Soul – said:

“India.”

I knew nothing about India, had no interest in meditation or mysticism, no desire to explore the subcontinent. I was broke. I knew one of our film directors was leaving soon to shoot a documentary in India, and I asked him if I could work on his crew. He said he was only hiring a cinematographer out of London and a local soundman in Bombay. There was a pause, “Have you ever done sound?” he asked. “Absolutely,” I responded without hesitation, lying through my teeth. “Okay, you get yourself to Bombay and I’ll pay you what I’ve budgeted for the local soundman.” That was exactly \$500, and the return ninety day excursion ticket was \$550. I called a leading film sound recordist I knew and said, “Please, teach me.”

Trisha began to sob when I told her I was going. I began to sob. “If you go, I’ll make myself stop loving you,” she said. “I have to,” I said, not knowing how to explain my inner guidance. We were both miserable.

LANDING IN THE EARLY DAWN’S DUST and heat of Bombay on December 6, 1967, I was four days shy of my twenty-fourth birthday and I’d never been out of North America. On my own, far away from home, I found myself loving my girlfriend more than ever. Culture shock hit hard. I spent the first three nights in a Salvation Army hostel for a dollar-fifty a night, including three meals and tea. The first night, my two hundred dollars in U.S. traveler’s checks were stolen and I was awakened at 5:30 the next morning by an earthquake. Nonetheless, I was amazed by India – by its richness and its poverty. The streets around the hostel stank of sewage and yet the colorful

clothes, the music, the art, the smell of incense were exquisite, and the local people were remarkably hospitable.

As the first days passed, I felt the wonderful winter heat of Bombay bathe my body. My neck and back stretched out and stood tall, and my shoulders came upright from their long, defensive hunch. My chest opened up, feeling unrestricted, and my breathing became deep and relaxed, like I couldn’t remember. I loved India, that first week, just for that.

It would be only a few weeks later, and a few city blocks from where I was staying in Bombay, that George would first record *The Inner Light* – on January 12, 1968, at EMI’s Bombay studios – and I couldn’t have imagined that by mid-February my path would unexpectedly cross his, and that of the other Beatles, in Rishikesh.

We finished our filming and, at the end of January 1968, we drove into New Delhi. I was excited. A letter from Trisha was waiting for me. All I can remember is her first line: “Dear Paul, I’ve moved in with Henry.” As I read her “Dear Paul” letter that first night in Delhi, my heart felt crushed. I could hear a screaming inside me and I feared that if I let it out I would drown in it. I could barely breathe through the tears. I felt totally alone, abandoned.

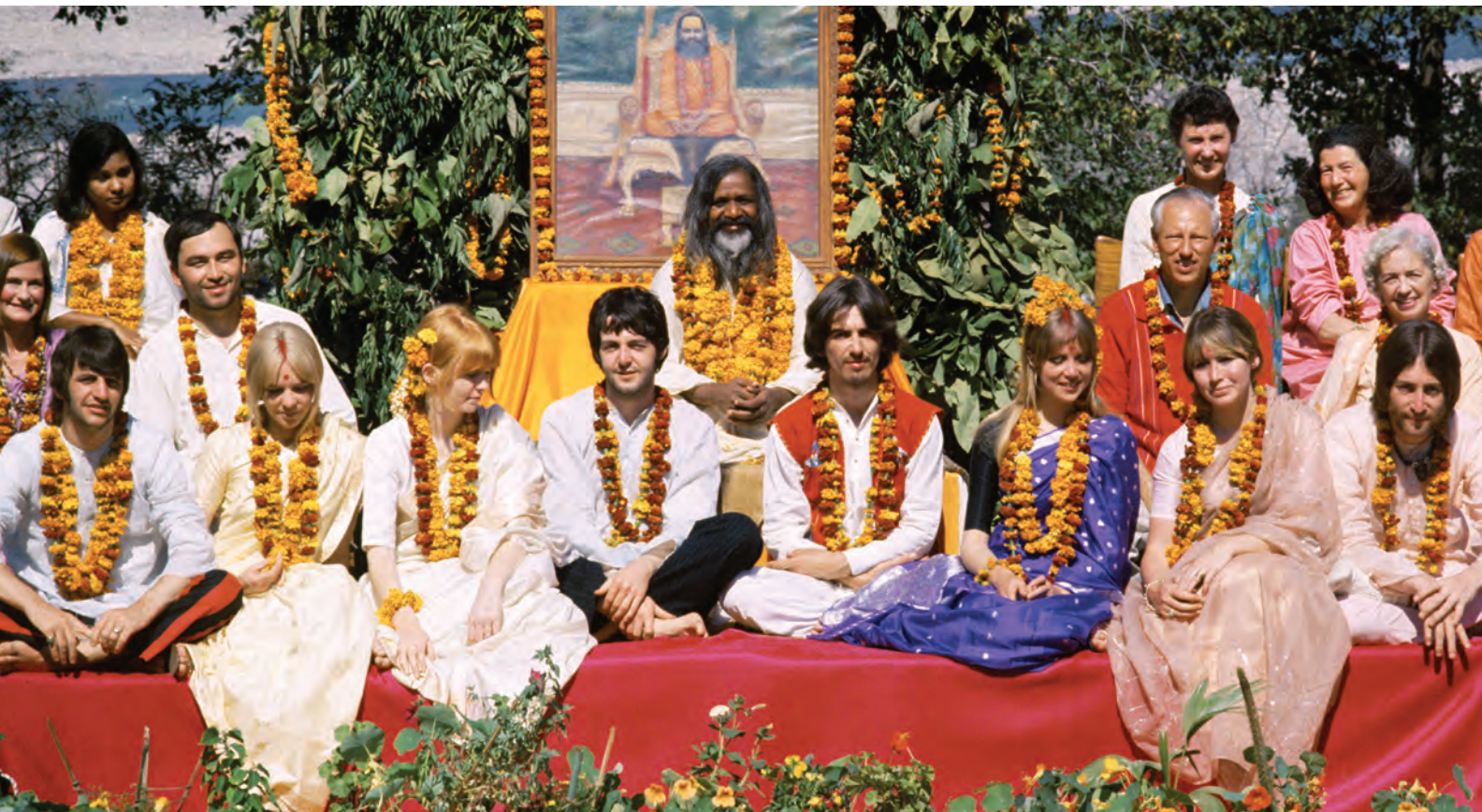
ANew AMERICAN ACQUAINTANCE, AL Bragg, suggested meditation and asked if I wanted to come along to hear the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi give a talk on transcendental meditation. “I’ll try anything,” I said, jumping at the chance. That night, the large auditorium at New Delhi University was jam-packed, overflowing with foreigners and Indians as Al and I squeezed in against the back wall. On stage, a low dais was festooned with flowers. After ten or fifteen minutes, a short, curious little man draped in white cotton, with long scraggly graying hair and beard, entered at the rear of the hall and walked down the center aisle. Close behind, twenty Westerners followed, each of them wearing colorful Indian clothes and garlands of red, white, and orange flowers around their necks. They

were part of a group of meditators on their way to the Maharishi’s ashram in Rishikesh. As the Maharishi sat cross-legged on the dais, his followers seated themselves in a semicircle behind him.

The Maharishi talked in a high musical voice about meditation as a direct path to inner peace and harmony: “Transcendental meditation naturally takes the mind beyond the present level of experience to the finer stages of experience, and eventually takes it beyond the finest state of experience and leaves it in a state of pure awareness. It takes the mind behind and beyond the fears and anxieties that trouble us. Reaching those fields of pure consciousness, of pure being, we tap the very source of bliss and energy.”

All this, he said, could begin quickly and easily without conflict in the mind and without giving up any of life’s pleasures. I couldn’t quite buy this. I guess I believed the road to inner peace and happiness was one of struggle. And yet, he was light and joyful and his laughter seemed to embody what he promised was available to all of us through meditation. Standing there at the back of the auditorium, I prayed he was right.

That night, I decided to go to his ashram to learn meditation. Distracted by the pain I was feeling, I didn’t think to make arrangements. Several days later I rode through the night by third-class train, northeast into the foothills of the Himalayas. As morning came, a dawning lavender-pink sky illuminating the forested green slopes that rose on either side of the tracks, we entered Dehra Dun, a town known for its two elite British-run private schools, its temples, and as one of two rail stops close to Rishikesh. An hour-and-a-half ride by scooter-rickshaw, forty-three kilometers up the road and 1,175 feet above sea level, we arrived in Rishikesh. Here, the majesty of the Himalayas begins as the Shivalik range towers 5,500 feet above the town that straddles the banks of the Ganges. To India’s 800 million Hindus, the Ganges is Ganga Ma – or Mother Ganges – the holiest of rivers, making Rishikesh a pilgrimage center filled with temples and hostels.





AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE MAHARISHI'S ashram stood a faded yellow wood picket-fence gate. It was locked and a man in a slightly tattered, dark blue Nehru jacket stood guard. He spoke no English but motioned to someone inside and a short young man in his early thirties, with a lovely, light brown complexion and a short, dark, trim beard, came to talk to me. He introduced himself as Raghvendra, a disciple of the Maharishi, and asked if he could help me. I told him that I'd come to learn meditation. Raghvendra was kind, but firm, "I'm very sorry but the ashram is closed because the Beatles and their wives are here, and we're doing a meditation teacher's course." I had nothing to lose: "You have to teach me," I said, "I'm in a lot of emotional pain." He considered this for a moment, then said, "I will ask the Maharishi. I will send you a cup of chai, but I may not be back for two or three hours."

I thanked him, dropped my backpack to the ground, and plunked myself down. I had no idea the Beatles would be there and, at that moment, it was not good news. I spent the afternoon resting there by the gate and wrote a letter to my parents and one to my girlfriend, hoping she would reconsider. A few hours later, Raghvendra returned. He was soft-spoken and kind.

"I'm sorry," he said, "the Maharishi says, 'Not at the present time.'"

He explained that there were sixty meditators in the ashram from all over the world to take their advanced teacher's course, and with the Beatles and their wives there the ashram was closed to all visitors and the press. Without thinking, I said, "Can I wait?" Raghvendra was a little taken aback. He paused, seeming to check my sincerity, then said, "Yes."

THE 1960S WERE ARCHETYPICAL. Following the enormous destruction and inhumanity of two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century, and the reactive focus on creating personal wealth for safety in the 1950s, the '60s quickly became a time of tremendous change in society, marked by a world-wide upheaval between the

generations and growing skirmishes between governments and their own young people.

By 1968, the struggle for outer justice and equality was being mirrored by a growing thirst for inner transformation, and our generation dived into the universal quest for personal fulfillment. We were looking for a redefinition of relationships that was more loving than our parents' generation seemed to believe in. It wasn't just about getting a job and making a living anymore. It was also about living your feelings, about honesty, joy and playfulness. It was about peace, both inside and out. The Beatles, Dylan, and Donovan were our heralds, our troubadours calling out to us, leading the way, in the ideal, to an end of the patriarchal, both within and without. It was the beginning of a movement from a struggle-based paradigm to a joy-based paradigm. In their music, they never felt or appeared or sounded as if they were out to please, or manipulate, or make money.

For the Beatles, they were mostly having authentic fun, itself a great lesson.

But something was missing. Early in 1968, at the height of their popularity – arguably the most famous people on the planet – the Beatles traveled to India, to the foothills of the Himalayas, to find something that all their fame and fortune could not give them. They went to find inner peace.

Seekers in their music, they were now seekers in their spiritual lives. For many of us, the Beatles were the avatars – the embodiment, the archetype – for western culture and society, and when they turned to the East, millions of young people turned to see what they were looking at, where they were going, what they were doing. To the West, then, ashrams were a little-known phenomenon. They were centers of spiritual learning, of yoga, of vegetarian eating, and to the generation of the '60s, word that the Beatles were at an ashram in India aroused a curiosity in a great many people searching in their own lives for a deeper fulfillment than materialism could deliver. The Beatles were forging ahead, again.

Why did all four Beatles go to India? George was the most interested. He was "the quiet one," perhaps most in touch with himself. He was a devoted seeker, devoted to finding the inner connection with his own Divine Nature. This connection is soul food; it requires quiet to do this. That they all went was significant. Each, in his own way, more or less, was looking to get away from their fame, from the cacophony of their busy lives. Looking for the quiet. Looking for the soul food.

The turbulence of world events in 1968 didn't echo in Rishikesh. At the same time, the world's press arrived to find out what the Beatles were doing there. Every day twenty to thirty would arrive: camera crews, radio and press reporters: *BBC*, the American networks, *Time* magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Paris Match*, *Vogue*, *Der Stern*, Italian and Japanese television, and more. Each afternoon I'd watch as the Maharishi came out of the gate to give a press conference and answer questions. Referring to the Beatles, one British reporter asked me if I thought they'd "gone bonkers."

I WAITED FOR EIGHT DAYS. THEN ONE day, in the early morning mist, Raghvendra came through the gate. He said I could come in now and learn to meditate, that I could spend my days in the ashram, take my meals with them and continue to sleep in my tent at night. My initiation into transcendental meditation took place in Raghvendra's quarters, with only the two of us there. We sat cross-legged on white futons on the floor and began with a short *pūja*, a traditional Hindu offering of fruit, flowers, cloth and prayers. After Raghvendra sang ancient Sanskrit prayers, he told me the mantra that I would use in meditating. Mantras can be words, but mine was simply a one-syllable configuration of letters that gave a soft sound when pronounced. He instructed me in how to say the sound silently, within, just easily following it, listening to it until it faded to silence, and how to repeat this until I experienced a transcending of normal waking consciousness. I closed

my eyes and tried it for a few minutes. Raghvendra asked me to describe what I was experiencing, to make sure I was using the technique properly. Then after reminding me that the mantra was mine, and secret, he left me alone to meditate for the first time.

I relaxed, shut my eyes, and let thoughts come and go. As I became engrossed in thought, the outside world seemed to recede. I no longer noticed the wind in the trees or the sound of faraway talking. Then, as Raghvendra had instructed, I gently replaced my thoughts with my mantra. I silently said my sound and listened to it, following it. Thoughts flooded back in, and again I replaced them with my mantra. I lost sense of time and, for a moment, only the sound of my mantra was in my conscious mind. As the sound faded, no verbalized thoughts replaced it and I was left in a place without sound and without thought. I wasn't actually

conscious of this until a second later, when that faithful little observation voice in my head said, "Hey! That's it!" which right away pulled me back into conscious, verbal thought.

I hadn't fallen asleep, yet I had been in a very restful place of silence and darkness. I didn't know quite where I had gone, but I knew I had been somewhere deeply peaceful. I felt reenergized and I realized that I must have transcended. I wanted to experience it again and so continued meditating for about half an hour and transcended once more. It could have been for a second or two, or several minutes – I couldn't tell. Most of the time, though, I just thought about things, and my thinking seemed clearer, less cluttered than usual.

When I stopped, I waited for about a minute, slowly opened my eyes, and walked into the bright afternoon sun. It took my eyes a moment or two to adjust. The scream that had been filling

my consciousness was gone. The agony was gone. I felt like a newborn chick, having just come out of its shell into a whole new reality. I walked toward my tent feeling rested, calm, mildly euphoric, turned on at being alive.

As I sat, I couldn't help smiling at the friendly hills. I felt a soft physical vibration in my body and a warmth in my heart. I felt a new sense of oneness with the world. I realized, sitting there, that truly loving another person is not possessive or controlling, but expansive and supportive. Surprisingly, I felt happiness for Trisha. And I realized I had abandoned her before she left me. I felt different, like something profound had shifted within me. Was this part of "finding myself"? Was this what I had been looking for? And was it to be found inside me? It felt like it, like I was on the beginning of a new path – and I felt very grateful.





That night I sat alone looking up at the mountain stars for hours. The trees rustled faintly in the distance, the sweet fragrance of evening jasmine filling the air. Monkeys chattered, and somewhere in the valley below a lone peacock called out. From the far side of the ashram another answered. Allowing the soft, velvet touch of night to envelop me, I felt at peace.

THE ASHRAM SAT ON A SMALL PLATEAU among wooded hills. A narrow dirt road ran from the front gate to the back of the property, and a barbed-wire fence surrounded the property, ensuring the ashram's privacy. Along the road, away from the cliff, behind a low chain link fence were six long, whitewashed bungalows, each with five or six double rooms. Flowerbeds filled with large red hibiscus blossoms garlanded the ashram and several vegetable gardens, tended by a turbaned old gardener, supplied some of the fresh vegetables we ate. Peacocks inhabited the surrounding woods and occasionally one would wander onto the ashram grounds.

I was walking through the ashram the next morning when I saw John, Paul, George, and Ringo sitting with their partners – Cynthia Lennon, actress Jane Asher, Pattie Boyd Harrison and Maureen Starkey – as well as Donovan and Mal Evans at a long table by the edge of the cliff that overlooked the Ganges and Rishikesh. Somewhat nervously, I walked over.

“May I join you?” I asked. “Sure, mate,” said John, “Pull up a chair.” Then Paul said, “Come and sit here,” and pulled a chair over next to him. As soon as I sat down, to my surprise, I heard this voice in my head scream, “Eek! It’s the Beatles!” Before I even had time to think, I was surprised by a second voice within me. This one was calm and deep – the voice I’d heard in my room in Montreal. “Hey, Paul,” it said, “They’re just ordinary people like you. Everyone farts and is afraid in the night.” And from that moment on, I never thought of them as the Beatles again, but rather, as four individual human beings.

At a pause in their conversation, John turned to me and said, “So you’re

from the States, then?” “No, Canada,” I answered. He playfully turned to the others, “Ah! He’s from one of the Colonies, then.” I said, “Yes,” as we all laughed. He turned back to me, “You’re still worshipping Her Highness, then?” “Not personally,” I quipped, as we all laughed again, “but we still have her on our money.” “Lucky you,” joked Ringo, and Paul joined in with another tease. I came back with, “Well, we may have her on our money but, hey, she lives with you guys.” As we continued to roll with the laughter, Cynthia good-humoredly interceded, “Leave the poor chap alone. After all, he’s just arrived.” “No problem,” I responded, and John turned to the others with a final, “Ah! You see, mates, they still have a sense of humor in the Colonies!” and we all laughed again. With that, they just took me into their small family. Later, someone got up and said they were going to meditate. Within moments all were gone except Mal and me. I asked him if they were really as cool as they seemed. “Not always,” he answered, “but pretty much.”

THE BEATLES AND THEIR GROUP ATE at the table by the cliff, shaded by a flat thatched roof covered with vines and held up by white wooden poles. Breakfasts were cereal, toast, juice, tea and coffee. Lunch and dinners were soup, plain basmati rice and bland but nutritious vegetarian dishes with almost no spices. Occasionally I ate with them. Crows settled in the trees nearby and silver-gray, long-tailed langur monkeys gathered on the flat roof of the nearby kitchen, all waiting for an opportunity to grab a scrap of food someone might leave behind. Perhaps this is where John wrote *Everybody’s Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey*. Occasionally, a vulture circled lazily overhead, hanging in the updraft, pausing on its way back across the river to the non-vegetarian side of the Ganges, beyond Rishikesh, which was an officially designated vegetarian area. George and Pattie, Ringo and Mal all had cameras with them and, as we sat around the table by the cliff, they took snapshots of the group. It felt like we were all on a family picnic. The day after I met them, I asked John, Paul, George

and Ringo, individually, if they minded my taking the odd snapshot. Nobody minded at all. I had my inexpensive Pentax camera with 50mm and 135mm lenses and, although I had never been a photographer, I liked taking pictures.

People on the meditation course were off on their own, meditating ten to twelve hours a day, including Prudence Farrow. The Beatles spent their time meditating, resting, writing songs and attending the Maharishi’s lectures, but mostly having private group sessions with him on the roof of his bungalow. My days were free to meditate, relax and hang out with the Beatles, their partners, Mal, Mia Farrow, Donovan and Mike Love, usually in small groups at the table by the cliff.

One afternoon, Donovan, Mal, John, Paul, George, Cynthia, Jane, Pattie and her sister Jennie and I were sitting around chatting about meditation, agreeing that more than one voice would play in one’s thoughts and the key was to simply go back to one’s mantra. John said, “Not so easy, really. I often have music playing in me head.” George seemed the most serious about meditation, followed by John. Paul seemed slightly less serious, but he’d had several profound experiences, he said, enjoying the time he dropped away from busy, worldly thoughts. Ringo was the least interested. John did say, though, that there was a friendly competition amongst the four of them to see who was really getting the best results.

AS WE SAT TOGETHER, JOHN, PAUL, Ringo and George exuded a truly down-to-earth decency and warm-heartedness, without any airs. As a couple, George and Pattie were self-contained and quiet. They seemed very much in love. Ringo and Maureen had just had their second child together and seemed so comfortable, like an old married couple.

Paul was the most overtly warm and friendly. Jane Asher was a lovely-hearted woman whose striking red hair framed a freckle-filled face of beauty and intelligence. Unlike the other Beatles and their partners, Jane and Paul were openly tactile and

affectionate. John and Cynthia were different. They were both bright and friendly with me but distinctly distant and cool with each other.

ONE AFTERNOON, TOWARDS EVENING, the sky was turning a lovely pale pink, and across the Ganges the sounds of Rishikesh were fading into dusk. A flight of forty or fifty beautiful emerald-green parrots landed dramatically in a nearby tree and glimmered like jewels in the evening light. Gradually, people got up to leave our gathering spot near the cliff’s edge until everyone had left except John and me. He was quiet, even a bit sullen, and I got the sense he wasn’t happy. I asked him how long he was staying.

“We’re all taking the Maharishi’s course for three months, including Mal, and who knows after that.” He looked at me very warmly and smiled, “What about you?” I told him about my trip, the heartbreak and how I felt about the miracle of meditation. I said that I’d probably hang around for just a few more days. He picked up a glass of water and, after almost finishing it, said that meditation had certainly been good for him, so far. After a moment he looked at me and gently added, “Yeah, love can be pretty tough on us sometimes, can’t it?” We both sat quietly. A lone hawk circled in the sky just above us and out over the river, so close we could see its talons. I looked at John and our eyes met. He smiled and said, almost mischievously, “But then, the good thing is, eventually, you always get another chance, don’t you?” “For sure,” I said. We were silent again, and after a while John said, “Off to write me music, then.”

It was an important moment for me. John was reminding me to maintain perspective; in the words of Aldous Huxley: “maintaining fair witness.” We got up and walked together to the bungalow where he was staying. I continued on to my tent. It wasn’t until some months later that I read all about John and Yoko and realized that, that night, he had been talking not only about me, but also about himself.

IN THE MORNING, AS I FINISHED meditating, Raghvendra came and said it was time for me to meet the Maharishi. I followed him out into the intense Indian sun and walked to the Maharishi’s white-washed bungalow. His house sat in a grove of trees at the edge of the cliff. We walked up the stone path, crossing the well-kept lawn between two small fountains, past flowerbeds filled with yellow and orange marigolds. Several steps led up to a wide porch where we left our sandals. We entered a small, bright meditation room, separate from his private quarters in back. There was a low dais for the Maharishi and the floor was covered with white futons.

We sat cross-legged on the floor in front of the dais and waited. A few minutes later, voices approached from outside. The door swung open and, after removing their shoes and sandals, John, Paul, Ringo, George, Cynthia, Pattie, Maureen, and Jane all came in.

“Hi, Paul, how are you?” asked Ringo.

“Excellent,” I said.

“That’s what happens here,” said George, smiling, as everyone sat cross-legged around us.

After a moment the Maharishi came in from his room and sat on the dais. He put his palms together and said, “Namaste” with a giggle of joy.

We returned the greeting. After some general words of welcome, hoping we were all getting along well, he asked George about the small black tape recorder he’d brought with him. “Is it a new song, George, or shall I recite the *Vedas*?” the Maharishi giggled again. “A new song,” George answered, “I just recorded it in Bombay last month.” George pressed the play button and began to sing along with his recorded voice and music, smiling shyly like a new father as his song, *The Inner Light*, filled the room. The Maharishi, rolling his prayer beads between his fingers, laughed approvingly. The Maharishi never did notice me, but I didn’t mind at all. Sitting beside George, listening to him sing, I felt blessed.

THE NEXT DAY, I SAT WITH THE Beatles overlooking the Ganges. After chai, everyone left except George and me. Sitting alone with him, I felt shy, awkward. George was quiet and intense, but friendly. He was then just a few days away from his twenty-fifth birthday. I told him I loved their song, *Norwegian Wood*, and asked him how long he had played the sitar.

“A little over two years,” he answered. “It was when we made *Help*. We were filming and there was a sitar around. I was curious and fooled around with it on the set. But the first time I really listened





to sitar music was off a Ravi Shankar album. Later, I met him in London and asked him to teach me. He agreed, but it wasn't until I came here with Pattie, to Bombay where Ravi lives, and studied with him, that I really got deeply into it. And into India and all it has to offer, spiritually and otherwise."

A baby monkey dropped down onto the far end of our table from the thatched roof above, scampered four or five feet towards us, grabbed a crust of bread lying there and chattered off, noisily. We both laughed at its apparent pleasure. "I'm going to practice for a while. Would you like to come and have a listen?" George asked.

We walked over to his bungalow and into a small meditation room, about eight feet by ten feet, with only a white futon on the floor and his sitar. George sat cross-legged near the center of the room and I sat facing him a few feet away, my back resting against the wall. He gently nestled the sitar's large gourd base against the sole of his left foot. Soft sunlight filtered through the slightly dusty windowpanes. Everything was glowing. I could smell the faint aroma of sandalwood incense from somewhere outside as George closed his eyes and began to play.

As the multilayered music, like a kaleidoscope of exquisite colors, filled the small room, my eyes closed and I drifted dreamily on the waves of sound. Time shifted. It seemed to slow down. He played an Indian raga for fifteen minutes, or maybe it was forty. As he finished, the musical reverberations slowly fading into silence, I felt a soft, delicious feeling of peace. When I opened my eyes, he was gently laying his sitar back down. The sunlight had shifted across the futons and there was a vibrant, soothing aura in the room.

In the relaxed conversation that followed, he told me that his wife Pattie had learned transcendental meditation first and then he got interested. The Beatles' interest in meditation and spirituality had begun several years before Rishikesh. George was influenced by the writings of the Indian scholar and sage Vivekananda and had been exploring the spiritual aspects of life for

some time. As he found exciting books or passages, he would share them with John, Ringo, and Paul. As they delved into deeper spiritual questions they found drugs less capable of helping them find the inner answers they were looking for. Earlier, smoking marijuana and hashish, and taking LSD for fun and for exploring consciousness, had brought some positive results manifested in their songs. In time, though, drugs became somewhat of a dead end. I had experienced this as well.

I asked him what meditation was like for him. He was quiet for a while, and thoughtful: "Meditation and Maharishi have helped make the inner life rich for me. The meditation buzz is incredible. I get higher than I ever did with drugs. It's simple, the vibration is on the astral plane, and it's my way of connecting with God." He was silent for a moment, then with a profound modesty he added, "Like, we're the Beatles after all, aren't we? We have all the money you could ever dream of. We have all the fame you could ever wish for. But it isn't love. It isn't health. It isn't peace inside. Is it?" He gave me a dear, even loving, smile. Neither of us spoke for several minutes.

Sometimes, it's only much later that we realize the impact another person has had on us. I've never forgotten his words. Only years later would I realize that, in that moment, George changed my life. He was one of my heroes and he was pointing the way, telling me where to "find myself." Not outside myself, in money or fame or anything else external, but within myself. He was also telling me that that's also why he and the other Beatles were there – to find something deeper within themselves. In time, I would come to understand that it's a universal journey. To know ourselves, to like ourselves, profoundly, to be self-realized, we must journey within. George and I sat quietly a while longer, and then we went out into the warm winter sun.

THE WEEKS THE BEATLES SPENT AT the ashram were a uniquely calm and creative oasis for them, filled with the peace of meditation, vegetarian food, and the gentle beauty of the foothills

of the Himalayas. There were no fans, no press, no rushing around with busy schedules. In this freedom, in this single capsule of time, they created more great music than in any similar period in their illustrious careers. In less than eight weeks they wrote forty-eight songs.

IN 2000, I REVISITED RISHIKESH FOR the first time since 1968. In 1996, the Maharishi's lease of the ashram had expired and the Rajaji National Parks Authority now administers it. The original buildings are gone and the path I once climbed to find the ashram has been washed away in a flood.

As I walked through the ashram, I felt a deep sense of pleasure, not only returning to this place of past personal transformation, but also for the ripple effect it has had throughout my life since then. At the edge of the cliff, I recognized the area where I had first met John, George, Paul, and Ringo. Now only rough, wild grass, it had been the location of the shaded, long table where they and the other famous folks hung out and where I often joined them. I sat down cross-legged a foot from the cliff's edge, with my back against a small tree.

*Looking down, the steep, brown earth falling away to the blue-gray boulders along the banks of the Ganges far below, I watch the lazy river burble and dance through two slow bends as it traces the edge of Rishikesh. Taking a deep, slow breath, again I feel joy surfacing from within, like iridescent silver bubbles rising through a calm Algonquin lake at sunset. It was so right to return here. I close my eyes and listen to the sounds of the river and the soft wind purring in the trees. Dropping inside, meditating, I feel a profound calm and internal harmony.*

*After five minutes, slowly coming out of the meditation, I hear a rustling and open my eyes to see a baby monkey climbing in the bushes a few feet in front of me, looking for food. As I get up to leave, I notice a single, old rubber sandal in the underbrush, like a footprint left in the sand, and I'm reminded of the path that's been washed away and the Greek proverb, "You can never enter the same river twice." As the ashram I knew is gone, so too are the Beatles. And yet, we can evoke their*





*magic through their music, their words, and their photographs, making that time in Rishikesh in 1968 tangible again – if but for a moment.*

AND SINCE THEN? In the past ten years I've been blessed to find two exquisitely adept, loving and magical guides. Magical, in the very grounded and masterful ability both to create reality, in concert with Divine Nature, and to teach an elegant and graceful technology of reality creation. One of the definitions of magic I find most powerful is: "That which is real but we, as yet, do not understand."

The one I work with, mostly, is a quiet and modest man. He has no interest in being a guru, or a new-age star. He has no organization, no website, no

books, no magazine articles. He gives no interviews. Yet his devotion is to pass on the most elegant, graceful and remarkable technology of enlightened living. This is my style, I must say. The growing and evolving is as equals, one more advanced than the other. This is very different from those gurus I've met who set themselves up to be adored, to be followed.

Experientially, I've learned that we do, each, create our own reality on a profound, material and real level, whether we like to take responsibility for our creation or not. As we are all unique Souls, each of our paths is unique. In the beginning stages of our emotional and spiritual development we learn from others: we "exploit" their knowledge through imitation and

adaptation. In the middle stages we can choose to move into our own light, our own authorship, our own authority. Finally, as each of our paths is unique, it behooves us to leave our earthly gurus, teachers, psychics, and guides, and move into "exploration": continuing to evolve in concert and with the love of the all-knowing, all-loving energy of both God and Goddess.

IN THE TURBULENT 1960s, AS A twenty-three-year-old, I went to India to "find myself" only to discover that the inner journey is available to all of us, anywhere and at any time. My personal story is just one tiny part of the 60s movement toward peace and self-realization undertaken by millions of people worldwide, a great

many of us influenced by the Beatles' own journeys of self-discovery. Today, I continue to meditate, using a method I find much more effective. I return deeply refreshed, connected with my Soul. And in this conscious place, all my worldly problems have a different feel and look. I approach my life from a place of love, rather than a place of fear – from a joy-based paradigm rather than a struggle-based paradigm.

I recently heard a lovely parable of this elegant technology:

An interviewer goes to a master painter and asks, "How do you paint your great masterpieces?" The master painter says, "Well, when I want to paint one of my masterpieces, I go into my studio and I lock the door. I don't eat or sleep for

days, and when I'm beside myself, the muse comes, and I paint."

The interviewer goes to another master painter and asks,

"How do you paint your great masterpieces?"

The master painter says,

"Well, when I want to paint one of my masterpieces, I go into my studio and I lock the door. Then I sit in meditation for five minutes and the muse comes, and I paint." ❧

*To purchase The Beatles in India photographs or limited edition books please see: [www.TheBeatlesInIndia.com](http://www.TheBeatlesInIndia.com)*







**Lady at the Tryst (Garhwal)**  
The beautiful Uthantika Nayika waits for her lover at the bank of a river, unaware of the fearful darkening jungle in the background. The Nayika has a most aristocratic appearance with slender figure, delicate wrists and long tapering fingers.



**Prince with a Parrot (Persian)**  
The Prince is holding a parrot on his right hand and appears to be receiving important information from him. The Persian school of painting gave a vast stimulus to the birth of the Mughal, though its influence did not last. Indians, however, borrowed their use of brilliant colors and refinement of lines.

# MINIATURE PAINTING

Exploring the age-old art of North India

BY REKHA BHARWANI

MURALS AND MINIATURES BROADLY classify the art form of Indian painting. Massive works executed on the walls of solid structures, such as the great Buddhist murals dated 200 BC - AD 500, discovered in the Ajanta caves in Central West India, make up the mural category, while miniatures refer to more precious paintings – small in size, meticulous in detailing, delicate in brushwork and portable, as opposed to fixed.

The story of North Indian miniatures began in the Pala era (eighth-twelfth centuries) with small-scale Buddhist paintings on palm leaves. Manuscript illustration and hand-written documents followed – folios decorated with initials, borders and miniature pictures, a tradition fashioned in Gujarat and Rajasthan. These miniatures contributed to the development of the Rajasthani school of painting (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries), an important style that shaped the vocabulary of the visual expression of Indian miniatures. The Mughals arrived during roughly the same era, along with fresh ideas and new inspiration for the Rajasthani School, which furthered the progress of miniatures and marked a colorful phase in Indian cultural history.

The essence of the Indian miniaturists' expression lay in the idea of symbolism, through which artists revealed their deep-rooted genius. In the language of symbols, they recorded their communion with nature; rich in wonder, awe and delight. Their minds excelled in expressing what lay beyond the primary function of lines and pigments. The paintings from the courts of Rajasthan from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, for example, evoke a way of life. We see the Maharajas as they themselves liked to be portrayed – individually, in fiercely impressive profile, solemn *darbar* (court) groups, giving impetuous chase on the hunting field, participating in riotous festivals, or, more privately, at their devotions

or dallying in the *zenana* (women's quarters). The ruler is normally the central figure, to which all the others defer in hierarchical order. Bright daylight colors, enclosed by rhythmically adumbrated and boldly accentuated outlines pervade the paintings, even in night scenes, which are indicated by the muted presence of moon and stars and a lamp held by servants.

Both in mood and style, these miniatures embody the cultural values of their Rajput patrons, interpreted by the artisans of low caste. Besides preserving earlier scholarly and artistic traditions, the Rajput rulers also initiated new work. At their courts, the illustrations of poetical and rhetorical themes such as *Ragamala*, the depiction of visualized musical modes; *Baramasa*, the paintings of the seasons' changes and how they affected lovers' attitudes; or *Nayaka-Nayikabheda*, the classification of ideal types of loves, were first developed. Of the religious themes, the most important and profusely illustrated were from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, works belonging to the Krishna cult, such as the *Gita Govinda*, *Bhagavata Purana*, and the theme of Radha and Krishna. Folklore and ballads, as well as Sanskrit classics were also depicted. Court scenes and royal portraits were added to these scenes, a style later set by Mughals in the sixteenth century.

THE RAJPUT STATES WERE ENGULFED one by one within the Mughal Empire and Indian art was transformed. The native (Rajput) artist took basic technical elements of composition and fluid outlines from Mughal painting style and used them to revitalize his bold and independent artistic attempts. His pictures reflected the zest for life, delight in nature and love for romance and fantasy in vibrant, glowing colors and decorative designs.

The Mughal Empire was founded

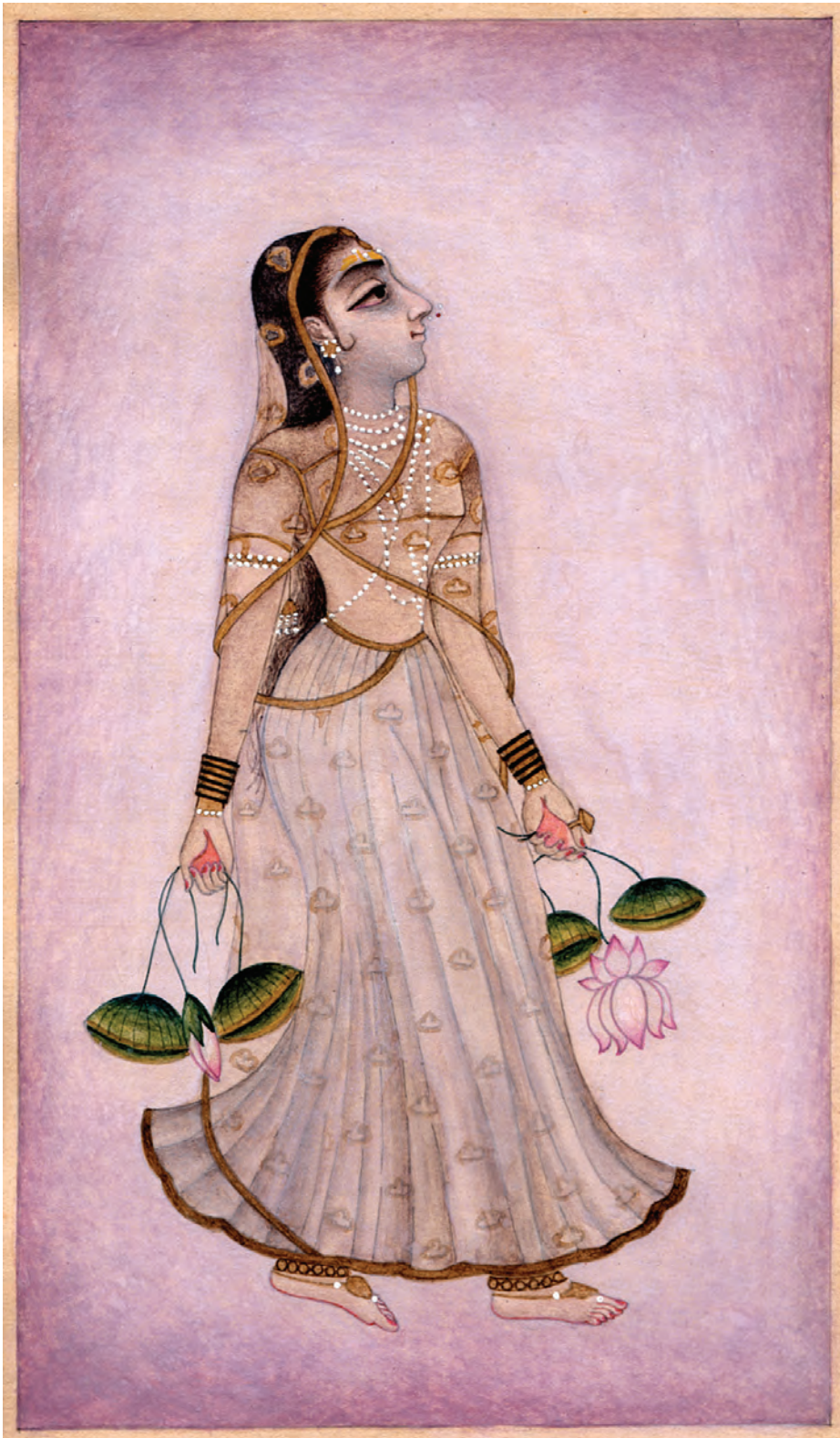


**Old Man Leaning on a Stick (Mughal)**  
The brilliant use of the transparent washes and fine lines convey the character of an old man in the simplest form. Here, the presentation of a stylized stick in red captures the eye.



### Lotus Flowers (Pahari)

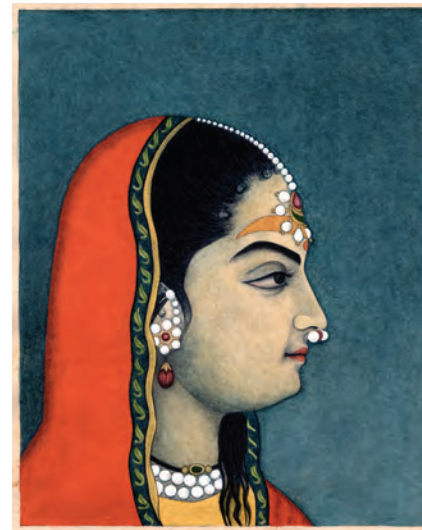
The Nayika brings fresh lotuses from the waterbed. The unusual color treatment of the background helps to highlight her.



by Babur in AD 1525, the descendent of Tamerlane and Genghis Khan from Central Asia in the northeast of India. At that time, the idea of portraiture was foreign to the Indian classical tradition, with its predilection for idealized forms based in religious iconography or in the stock conceits of poetic imagery. It was also unknown in the Persian court culture in which the Mughals were grounded. The individual emperors, however, evolved their own, more modern standards.

Closely related to their personalities, portraiture received their patronage. The painter was a visual historian, producing painted sets of records of events and individual portraits with recognizable features. An impressive range of paintings supplements the wealth of details found in memoirs, chronicles and travelers' accounts, making for a richer historical picture of the glories of the Mughal court. In his memoirs, Babur showed a candid and observant eye for the peculiarities of man and nature, an interest shared by his grandson Akbar (AD 1556-1605), who brought together a large atelier of Indian artists under the guidance of two Persian masters. Under Akbar's supervision, a brilliant, eclectic style of poetical and historical manuscript illustration was quickly developed, combining Persian technical refinement and Indian vigor, along with a feeling for nature and a gradually increasing influence from European art, which began to reach the Mughal court through Jesuit missionaries.

Akbar's initiative was further developed by his son Jehangir (AD 1605-1627), who, like Babur, revealed an unusually observant and inquiring mind in his memoirs. As a patron, Jehangir's preference was less for illustrated manuscripts than for individual paintings, often portraits or animal and flower studies, which were mounted in splendidly decorated borders and bound in albums. The art of the portrait was brought to perfection in the reign of Jehangir. In fact, the Mughal School had gathered such momentum during this period that it was able to continue with high technical standards. It experienced



### Profiles (Mughal)

Akbar stimulated the painting of realistic portraits, a notable contribution to Indian art. Persian influence set the art of portraiture on a course of perfection rivaling that of Persia itself. Under Akbar's order, artists painted the likeness of all the important personages in his court with exquisite skill and delicate, but sure lines. This exerted a great influence on later Rajput paintings. Actual portraits of women are rare in Indian art on account of the social taboos that kept the sexes on opposite sides of a purdah (curtain). The portrait of a woman is therefore an idealization, an image of taste and fashion, rather than an actual likeness.



some loss of inspiration, however, during the reigns of Shan Jahan (AD 1627-1658), whose primary concern was for his grandiose architectural projects, and the puritanical Aurangzeb (AD 1658-1707), who eventually banished the arts from his court.

THE RAJPUT AND MUGHAL MINIATURISTS used the traditional, simple technique of opaque watercolors on handmade papers: Two or three sheets of paper were fused together with book-binder's paste to form a paste-board (*vasli*) strong enough to be painted. Sitting on the ground, the artist would rest the *vasli* on his raised knee and sketch out the initial structure of the composition or the basic outlines of the portrait. Once the rough contours of a drawing were established, a thin coat (*astar*) of white lead was applied. With the help of rough outlines visible through the white scumbling (the process of dragging opaque color over colors already painted in such a way that the under painting is not entirely obliterated), the painters succeeded in recovering the entire drawing with almost all its details. In between the careful application of successive color coats, the *vasli* was repeatedly burnished to ensure that the pigment particles settled compactly and enmeshed with the paper. It imparted to every color an enamel-like brilliance and created an even surface, ideal for the next stage of minute stippling (a process of elaborate building-up of a watercolor by means of minute spots or strokes of color).

Charred tamarind twigs were used for drawing the sketches, and brushes were made by fitting squirrel hair into feather quills. The traditional binding media with which the pigments were tempered was gum arabic and the method of using beaten gold foils (*sona tabak*) and powdered gold (*sona hallkari*) as paint was known to the illuminators of the pre-Mughal era. For finer ornamentation, the areas in gold were tooled with a needle point, a process called *suikari* (needlework). Most of the time, two or more artists worked together, but not more than four or five. Each painting took days, months or years to complete, depending on the details of the composition.

The Rajput rulers who spent long periods in residence at the Mughal court inevitably came to adopt many of its customs and fashions – among them a taste for the naturalism and high finish of Mughal painting – by introducing Mughal-trained artists to their own Rajput courts. The decline of Mughal power in the eighteenth century led to the dispersal of the court artists and a final flowering of miniature painting in the western and northwestern (Punjab) states which resulted in distinct schools, such as Rajasthani, Pahari (mountain) and Desert kingdoms. Each had unique style and characters, and portrayed images of hills, valleys, deserts, palaces, gardens, court scenes and religious processions. Some of these schools still exist today, and produce “loose” miniature paintings (one-sided, as opposed to the double-sided traditional manuscript illuminations), but they lack

the detail, technique, quality and beauty of the court paintings. In the nineteenth century, the illustrated manuscripts and albums of painting stored in the Mughal imperial library (Shahi Kitabkhana) were dispersed to private and public collections all over the world.

THE GRADUAL BREAKUP OF MUGHAL suzerainty led in part to the British East India Company's greater political and administrative role in India. “Company painting” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was established first in the south, then in the east under British rule. This vast and disparate collection of miniature drawings done on mill-made paper from England had thin washes of watercolors with areas finished in gouache (painting with watercolors made opaque by the addition of white), which yielded an altogether different effect. Newer media such as glass, mica, ivory and shell also became popular in miniatures. Company painting ended in the second half of the nineteenth century, primarily due to the emergence of photography, as well as industrialization, which ultimately undermined the role of the traditional artisan. ▲

*Rekha Bharwani studied the traditional art of miniature painting after experimenting on her own (see “Lady at the Tryst”). The paintings on the preceding pages are done in the traditional miniature style and themes of the Mughal and Rajasthani schools. All are painted with watercolor on *vasli* except “Lady at the Tryst,” which is done on mill-made drawing paper and the “Old Man Leaning on a Stick,” which is painted on craft paper.*





#### Sunday, April 27: New Delhi

Arrive in New Delhi ~ Hanuman Mandir ~ Sightseeing in Delhi

#### Monday, April 28: Haridwar

Train to Haridwar ~ Ganga arati

#### Tuesday, April 29: Haridwar

Mansa Devi & Chandi Devi Temples ~ Ananda Mayi Ma Samadhi

#### Wednesday, April 30: Haridwar to Rishikesh to Uttarkashi

Sivananda Ashram ~ To Uttarkashi

#### Thursday, May 1 to Tuesday, May 6: Uttarkashi

Daily program: Early-morning optional Ashtanga Yoga, Ganga bath, meditation, talks and discussions with local swamis, visits to temples and shrines, hikes in the mountains, visits to small ashrams, evening Garwali cultural programs, chanting and arati.

#### Wednesday, May 7: Road to Gangotri

Via Gangnani Hot Springs ~ Gangotri

#### Thursday, May 8: Gangotri Ganga Mata Darshan

Opening day of Ganga Mata temple. On this day Ganga Mata is brought up from her winter residence to be installed for the pilgrimage season.

#### Friday, May 9: Gomukh

Hike to Gomukh (18 kms), camp en route at Bhojbasa. The entire walk is along the roaring Bhagirathi (Ganga) high in the Himalayas ~ Gomukh to take a holy dip in the freezing waters of Ganga where She emerges from the 'Cow's Mouth' glacier ~ Porters & ponies available.

#### Saturday, May 10: Return to Gangotri

Hike back to Gangotri ~ Relax.

#### Sunday, May 11: Uttarkashi

Back to Uttarkashi ~ Farewell and bandhara (feeding sadhus) in Uttarkashi.

#### Monday, May 12: Return to New Delhi

Bus to Haridwar and evening train to New Delhi. \* Reach by 11 PM. 🚶

The cost covers all accommodations, yoga classes, vegetarian meals and land transport. Modest clothing should be worn throughout the yatra and for yoga classes. Evenings can be cool especially in the Gangotri region. Sleeping bags are required for camping. \*Participants must make their own arrangements for reservations in New Delhi on May 12 night. These will not be arranged and are not included in the cost of the yatra.

#### YATRA, TIRTHA & DARSHAN

Countless places mentioned in the ancient Puranas are fully alive today and are important places of yatra (pilgrimage). Worship is performed daily to the resident devatas in a tradition that reaches back many hundreds of years. These places where the sacred stories happened are sometimes called tirthas. A tirtha is a place of crossing over and most literally refers to fords of rivers. It also refers to a spiritual crossing place, where the divine is more easily intuited, recognized or experienced.

#### NAMARUPA GANGA YATRA

The intention of the NAMARUPA GANGA YATRA is to go, as much as possible, as pilgrims to the sacred temples and to have darshan of the devatas. We will travel simply, lodge in comfortable Indian-style accommodations, eat vegetarian meals and dress and behave appropriately according to local custom. We will have time for practices such as yoga asanas and meditation, as well as discussions and explanations regarding our experiences. Local swamis will give discourses and chanting, and arrangements will also be made with priests for the performance of any rituals that we may wish to request. At some places we will have ample time for the usual sightseeing, shopping and exploring that travelers enjoy. The pace will be relaxed, but this being India, one can expect the unexpected.

#### Included in the Land Cost of \$1,900

The complete yatra will last 16 days with the first and last day being for arrival and departure. Lodging will be Indian-style. Meals will be North Indian vegetarian, nutritious but hot and spicy. Travel will be in AC train and comfortable vehicles. We will be limiting the group to 15 yatis (not including guides).

**Note:** Airfare is not included in the cost.

**Indian culture** honors traditional and conservative values and we will be part of this tradition. At the outset yatis can purchase inexpensive and comfortable Indian-style clothing especially for temple visits. We also request that very modest clothing is worn during yoga practice.

#### Reservations

To secure a place on **Ganga Yatra**, please e-mail us as soon as possible at:

robert@namarupa.org

For more details please see:

www.namarupa.org/yatra/yatra08.php

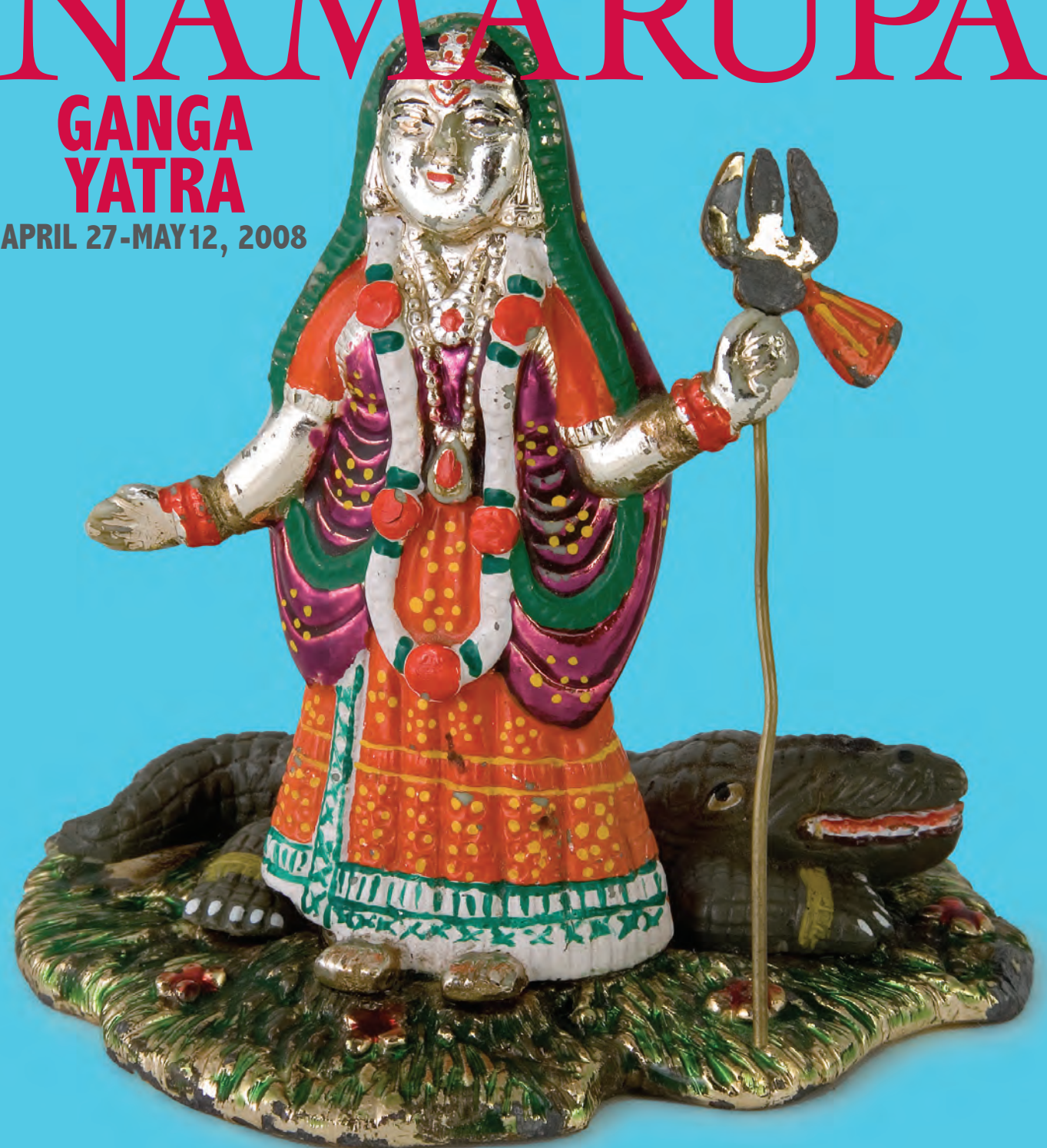
UTTARKASHI GANGOTRI GOMUKH GANGA MATA DARSHAN

NORTH INDIA YATRA APRIL 27 - MAY 12, 2008

# NAMARUPA

## GANGA YATRA

APRIL 27-MAY 12, 2008



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**ROBERT MOSES YATRA GUIDE**  
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*Horse that draws the festival chariot of Minākṣī & Sundarīśvarar at the Minākṣī Sundarīśvarar Temple, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, South India. January 2007.*