Book Reviews
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Gods and gurus figure prominently in this quarter's book selection. The ever-popular elephant-headed Ganesha stars in three, Lord Siva and Lord Krishna in two each. Informative and entertaining narratives too tell us about the lives of three revered spiritual masters--Neem Karoli Baba, Swami Vishnu-devananda and Dada J.P. Vaswani.

MIRACLE OF LOVE, stories about Neem Karoli Baba, compiled by Ram Dass, 1995. 424 pages, pb., us$17.95., Hanuman Foundation, P.O. Box 478, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87504, USA. Phone: 505-982-1176, fax: 982-1759.

Here's a thousand appealing and instructive short anecdotes gathered from the life of Neem Karoli Baba, a revered Hindu saint who attained Mahasamadhi in 1973. Sometimes touching, often humorous, always instructive, no area of life is left unexplored in these first-hand recollections. The book is easy reading; one need not start at the beginning but can simply open to any page and enjoy Baba's mystical intervention in his devotee's lives.

CANDRAJNANAGAMA, Kriyapada and Charyapada, translation by Dr. Rama Ghose, 1995. 235 pages, pb., us$40.00., Shaiva Bharati Shodha Pratishthanam, D. 35/77, Jangamawadimath, Varanasi, 221 001, India.

The Shaiva Bharati Shodha Pratishthanam has embarked upon the ambitious task of rendering the 28 Saiva Agamasinto English and Hindi, and eventually into other Indian languages. Candrajnanagamais the fifth in their series. These Agamasare a primary scripture for all Saivites, equal in authority to the Vedas, and therefore a useful resource.

BORN TO LOVE, Glimpses into the life and teachings of Dada J.P. Vaswani, compiled by Gulshan Gidwani and Krishna Kumari, 1995. 116 pages, hb., us$15.00.pb., us$10.00.,Gita Publishing House, 10 Sadhu Vaswani Path, Pune 411 001, India. In the USA from Sadhu Vaswani Center, 494 Durie Avenue, Closter, New Jersey, 07624, phone/fax: 201-768-7857.

This colorful and informative volume was prepared by the devotees of Dada Vaswani for his 77th birthday. Many excellent pictures compliment the overview of this modern-day saint's life, work and teachings. Included too are short versions of his speeches at major events, such as the 1993 Parliament of the World Religions and the 1984 World Hindu Conference, as well as many excerpts from his books and conversations. None will fail to benefit from his simple words of wisdom. A sample: "If, while praying, we can think of worldly matters, why can we not, while doing worldly work, think of God?"

THE HEART OF YOGA, Developing a Personal Practice,by T.K.V. Desikachar, 1995. 242 pages, pb., us$19.95., Inner Traditions, One Park Street, Rochester, Vermont, 05767, USA. Phone: 808-767-3174.

Here is a step-by-step sequence for developing a complete yoga practice responsive to the student's current state of health, age, occupation and lifestyle. The author is the son of Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya a revered yogi, teacher and

ayurvedic physician who passed away in 1989 at 102 years of age. The world-famous yogis B.K.S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois and Indra Devi all studied with Krishnamacharya in their early years.

Desikachar continues his father's tradition at his school in Madras and centers in Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. His fundamental principle is viniyoga: that yoga techniques must be continually adapted to the individual's changing needs in order to achieve the maximum therapeutic value, "a program for the spine at every level--physical, mental and spiritual." The text includes more than ninety photos of Krishnamacharya (supple at 80+!) and his family and students that provide an intimate glimpse into their yoga practice. Part three of the text is a complete translation and commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutra.

THE MOUNTAIN OF SHIVA,by Karan Singh, 1994. 94 pages, pb., Rs50., Sterling Paperbacks, L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi, 110016, India.

This short and entertaining fictional novel by the former Union Minister and ambassador to the United States is set in pre-insurgency Kashmir and deals essentially with the spiritual quest. The plot centers around the chance meeting of long-parted childhood friends on a flight to Srinigar for a vacation. There the hero becomes enthralled by the "Mountain of Shiva" and its grand temple overlooking the valley, sparking the spiritual desire within him. More worldly events conspire to pull him off this quest--but .... ah, we can't give away the plot, can we?

THE YOGI, Portraits of Swami Vishnu-devananda, by Gopala Krishna, 1995. 165 pages, pb., us$12.95., Yes International Publishers, 1317 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55105, USA. Phone: 612-645-6808.

A charming look at "The Flying Swami," who came to the West and championed a borderless world. The author paints an intriguing portrait of Swami Vishnu-devananda, the man and the saint, from his foibles and idiosyncrasies to his profound spiritual wisdom. We hear vivid tales of his early life in India, anecdotes about the founding of his many yoga centers, and fond remembrances by students who sat at his feet to learn the ancient mysteries of yoga.

LIFE SURRENDERED IN GOD,The Philosophy and Practices of Kriya Yogaby Roy Eugene Davis, 1995. 300 pages, hb., us$14.95., Center for Spiritual Awareness, Lake Rabun Road, P.O. Box 7, Lakemont, Georgia, 30552, USA. Phone: 706-782-4723, fax: 782-4560.

Author Davis is a direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda and has been teaching in the Kriya Yoga tradition since being ordained by his guru in 1951. Though at first glance his Center for Spiritual Awareness may seem to sport a Western facade, the orthodox Hindu will be quite comfortable with this comprehensive treatise on the essential teachings of Kriya Yoga, its lifestyle, routines and spiritual practices. Also included is Davis' lucid commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

THE PLAY OF GOD, Visions of the Life of Krishna,by Devi Vanamali, 1995. 416 pages, pb., us$19.95., Blue Dove Press, P.O. Box 261611, San Diego, California, 92196. Phone 619-271-0490, fax: 271-5695.

The full story of Lord Krishna's life is spread between the

Srimad Bhagavad Puranaand the equally voluminous Mahabharata. Vanamali has provided a useful service in compiling and condensing most of the stories into a single chronological narrative, complimented with interpretations and commentary upon key events.

GANESHA, beyond the formby Lakshmi Lal, 1991. 104 pages, hb., RS460.

SHIVA, eye of the stormby Lakshmi Lal, 1992. 120 pages, hb., RS650., IBH Publishers Pvt Ltd, Euchshaw Building, 3rd floor, 249 Dr. D.N. Road, Bombay, 400 001, India

These twin volumes with their rich graphic images and computer-generated layouts (the Ganesha book's images are more alluring) are notable as a creative attempt to present the traditional Puraniclegends of the Gods.

I DARE, Kiran Bedi, a Biographyby Parmesh Dangwal, 1995. 328 pages, hb., RS295., UBS Publisher's Distributors Ltd., 5 Ansari Road, New Delhi, 110 002, India.

Kiran Bedi, the first women ever to join the elite Indian Police Service, became internationally famous for her innovative reforms based on dharma and compassion at Delhi's overcrowded Tihar jail. This readable book relates the often stormy events of her life, leading to her present life on the lecture circuit where she is perhaps one of the few people in the world thought to have viable solutions for the worldwide problem of prison conditions and criminal rehabilitation.

LEADERSHIP, book for youth, parents and teachers,by Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Dr. M.L. Chibber, 1995. 195 pages, pb., us$12.00., Leela Press, Inc., Route 1, Box 339C, Faber, Virginia, 22938. Phone: 804-361-1130.

The author of this very well received book is the former Chief of Staff of the Indian Army. In his words, "the book attempts to synthesize Eastern and Western experiences in the fields of leadership. Much of it was articulated by Satya Sai Baba, from time to time, during his interaction with the students and the teachers involved in the Leadership course." This text forms part of Sai Baba's Education in Human Values series.

CHARMING KRISHNA Madhurastakam by Sri Vallabhacharya

Paintings by Rozalia Radhika Priya Czegledi, 1995. 152 pages, 48 color plates, hb., us$100.00, in India rs1250, D.K. Publishers Distributors (P) Ltd., 1, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi, India, Phone: 326-1465, fax: 326-4368.

Charming Krishnais a collection of 48 paintings inspired by the devotional hymn "Madhurastakam" of the Vaishnava saint, Sri Vallabhachara. The Hungarian-born and French-trained artist spent a decade in India mastering the Nathadvara school of painting in which Lord Krishna is depicted as the supreme embodiment of love, bliss and beauty. The beautifully articulated forms of Krishna and Radha are set within red arched windows and surrounded with blooming lotuses, silvery lakes, moons, grooves and dancing peacocks in the style of this school. According to the book's introduction, "These poetic representations break away from traditional Nathadvara painting in that they re-express the concept of the bhakti bhavaof Pusti Marga in a contemporary idiom. The works are an intimate form of citra-seva, personal offerings in the form of a painted icon, meant to be used as an device for contemplation."

TWO FOR GANESHA . . .

GANAPATI, Song of the Selfby John A. Grimes, 1995. 160 pages, pb., Us$12.95, hb., $39.50. , State University of New York Press, State university Plaza, Albany, New York, 12246-0001. Phone: 518-472-5000, fax: 472-5038.
"Ganapati," explains Grimes, "is the Hindu Lord of Beginnings, the Keeper of the Threshold, the Remover of Obstacles, Master of the Mind, Son of Siva, Elephant-headed, plump and loveable. He is found everywhere: in temples, in wayside shrines, in homes, in autorickshaws, in devotee's hearts. His enormous popularity transcends sectarian and territorial limits." This book, an attempt to explain the phenomenon of Ganesha, is an encyclopedic work. It presents a wide-range of technical and cultural information about Ganapati gathered from such diverse sources as hymns, poems, myths, shrines, practices and theologies. Besides being a handy reference work, the book is also an attempt to understand this information from withina tradition, and further, to follow how that understanding may have universal connotations. The book is liberally laced with traditional stories told in an engaging manner and the author's own insights and explanations. Grimes has taught at universities in India, Canada and the USA and credits the Siddha Yoga Dham Foundation of Swami Muktananda for inspiration. He has also published the very useful A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy, among other books.

LOVING GANESHA, Hinduism's Endearing Elephant-Faced Godby Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, 1996. 800 pages, pb., Us$19.95., Himalayan Academy Publications, Kauai's Hindu Monastery, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii,

96746-9304, USA. Phone: 808-822-7032, fax: 822-4351.

Hindus have often hidden their Deities so as not to offend people of other faiths or to appear modern. This has not only weakened them in their own faith, it has deprived the world, which is spiritually starved, of contact with these manifest powers of the Supreme Divinity, who offer a more intimate and personal connection with the Infinite. Loving Ganesha, perhaps more than any book, not only reverses but demolishes this trend. It confidently and brilliantly brings forth one of the greatest, and probably the dearest, of Hindu Divinities, Ganesha. Lord Ganesha comes to life within these pages at a time when His descent is very much needed. Ganesha, as the book clearly reveals, is the space-age God of Hinduism. His universal knowledge dwarfs any computer system. His universal power makes any technology seem petty. His universal play makes any great media entertainment appear dull and pointless. Yet, Loving Ganeshais more than a book about Ganesha, it is a book about Hinduism, the Sanatana Dharma, or Eternal Religion of humanity, which is now stirring from its millennial slumber and arising to shake the world back to the proper spiritual path. The book contains in many ways the best introduction to Hinduism, particularly the section "How to Become a Hindu." Like Hinduism, it covers all aspects of life, with particularly well-done chapters on vegetarianism and ayurveda that are important for everyone.

Reviewed by Vamadeva Shastri (Dr. David Frawley)