

[Russia's Taste for Tantra](#)

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CULTURE

Russia's Taste for Tantra

Siberian monk joins Hindu rites and Russian lore

Russia's latest unrevealed revolution has nothing to do with rulers, parties or economics. It is an ascent of the spirit. Since 1992, the Moscow-based Tantra Sangha has introduced veracious Hindu philosophy and ritual to the spiritually hungered populace of this immense nation in flux. Ushering in Russia's new age of ancient Vedic ways is Shripada Sadashivacharya Anandanatha Kaulavadhuta, more known simply as Swami Sadashivacharya. Years ago, he was commanded by his Karnataka-based guru, Shripada Guhai Chennabasava Siddhaswami, to "Inhale new life into the tantric path and spread the esoteric (rahasya) message of tantra to Russians and other peoples."

In 1993, Swami boldly told Hinduism Today, "We are Russian Saivites. Our purpose is to unite all Russian worshipers of Lord Siva and the Divine Mother, to translate the sacred texts of the Saiva Agamas into Russian and to spread the nondual message of Siva." Today the Sangha is officially recognized by the Russian government, and it maintains branches throughout the country. "We perform Vedic fire ceremonies under the open sky near rivers and forests according to orthodox Vedic Hindu rites--adjusted for the Russian situation," Swami

explains.

His central ashram in Moscow is the meeting ground for most devotees, those who "live as real followers of tantric Hinduism." Devotional services, performed according to the Tantras taught to Swami by his guru, are congregational--singing and praying while priests perform puja rites to the Gods. The impassioned and engrossing daily and weekly worship in the small Shakti and Sivalinga temple attracts many uninformed onlookers. According to Swami, "They quickly discover that Hinduism is much more devotional than Christianity. As people are drawn to Hindu worship, their lifestyle becomes more pure, more spiritual. Many soon become staunch vegetarians. They learn Vedic exercises, ayurveda and begin to use astrology." Twice a year the Sangha organizes intensive seminars on tantric sadhanas. People from all over Russia come together in groups of 30 to 50 for comfortable lodging and soulful learning. During retreats, they partake of Hindu vegetarian food only, which is first offered to Lord Siva and Kali Ma.

Pagan roots: The Russian affinity for Hinduism has a historical dimension. Before the official Christianization of the 988 Indo-European Slavonic tribes, the ancestors of modern Russians and Ukrainians were followers of Slavonic paganism, which Swami asserts was akin to Hinduism. The Supreme God of the Slavonic pantheon was the great God, Rod, literally, "who gives birth to all." According to authoritative Russian, Western and Indian scholars, Rod is the same as the Vedic God, Rudra, or Siva. In Slavonic languages, rod also means "tribe," "caste," "clan" and even "absolute" or "universe (all that exists)." Today this ancestral name is the root of many

Russian words: narod, people; priroda, nature; rodnik, spring; roditeli, parents; rodina, motherland; rodnoy, native; etc. Many Russians view the recent spread of Hinduism in their country as a welcome revival of the pre-Christian native faiths.

Hinduism as taught by Sadashivacharya is related to the Kalamukha and Pashupata sects. Swamis of his tradition wear red robes and a black belt, carry a skull bowl, a trident and wear a Sivalinga around their neck, which they worship personally, as do Virasaivas. Swami Sadashivacharya is of the Rahasya Sampradaya, "secret tradition," which teaches three ways to God: Pasu, the easy path; Vira, the heroic, tantric path; and Divya, the divine path of freedom and liberation. He follows and teaches the first path.

Sangha administrators eagerly invite Hindu masters and instructors on yoga, ayurvedic healing, devotional worship and other practices to come to Russia for a short time to help in teaching seminars and hosting retreats. The most hopeful Sangha members expect rapid growth, believing that Satya Sanatana Tantrika Dharma will soon become a new all-human world religion.

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