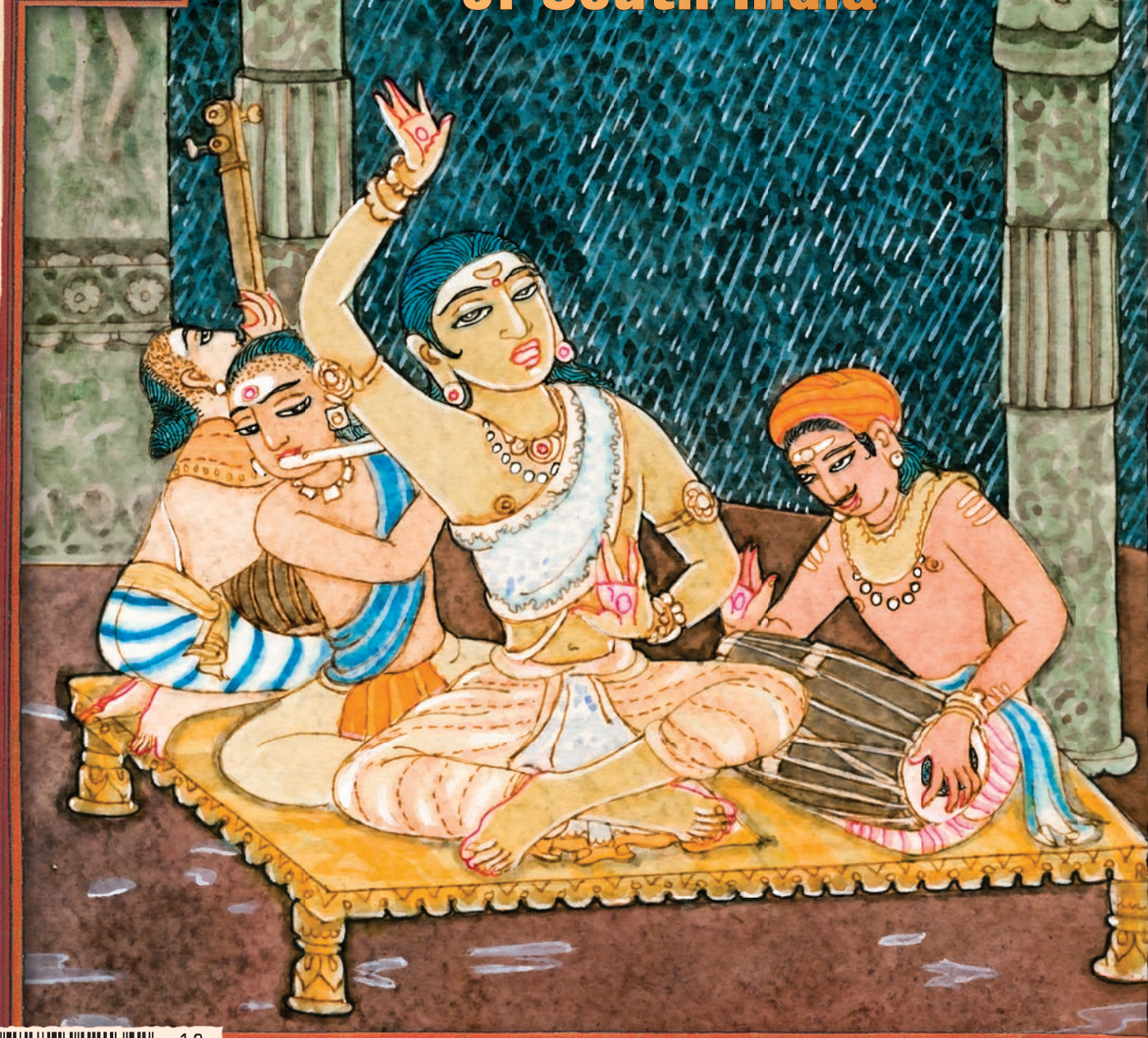


HINDUISM TODAY

Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



The Singing Saints of South India



S. RAJAM



CanadaCAD 10
India.INR 225

Malaysia.....MYR 14
Mauritius . . MRU 115

Singapore.....SGD 10
UK.GBP 5



COURTESY HOPPERS

(Cover) Muthuswami Dikshitar (1776–1835), a famed exponent of the South Indian Carnatic music tradition, successfully pleading for rain to relieve drought in Sattur village; Hopper's restaurant in London features spectacular vegetarian dishes in Sri Lanka style

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2022 • The Hindu Year Śubhakṛta, 5124 • शुभकृत

Bodhinatha Veylanswami

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The High Art of Restoring Kathmandu's Earthquake-Destroyed Temples

During the massive tremor in 2015 that killed thousands, many of Nepal's beloved temples suffered damage. Since then, local artisans have undertaken the titanic task of restoring each structure to its former glory ...Page 18

Master craftsmen Indra Kaji Shilpakar works on a temple column at his workshop. He has been helping with many of the temple restoration projects in Kathmandu.



Bright Pink: Seated Ganesha at Wat Phrong Akat temple

THAILAND

Ganesha Is Huge Here

THE WORLD'S LARGEST GANESHA STATUES ARE NOT IN INDIA, BUT in Thailand! Here, the elephant-headed God is called Phra Phikanet, worshiped as the Deity of fortune and success, and the remover of obstacles. While Ganesha is found all over the country, three extra-large statues are picturesquely situated in Chachoengsao province. You can visit all three in a day trip from Bangkok. A pink Ganesha at Wat Phrong Akat, 160 feet high by 62 feet wide, sits next to green fields and a beautiful golden Buddhist temple. A standing bronze statue at Khlong Khuean Ganesh International Park is 98 feet tall, and a reclining Ganesha at Wat Saman Rattanaram is 52 feet tall and 72 feet long.



MALAYSIA

The Tale of Kellie's Castle and Mariamman Temple

WHEN WILLIAM KELLIE-Smith traveled to Malaysia from Scotland in 1890 at age 20 to work as an engineer, he didn't imagine expanding a Hindu temple someday. With substantial profits from a business venture clearing 9,000 hectares of forests in Batu Gajah, Perak, he bought 1,000 acres of jungle land in Kinta district, where he planted rubber trees and mined tin. With fortune made, he married his Scottish sweetheart, Agnes, bringing her to Malaysia in 1903.

He made plans to build a huge castle on his estate with Scottish, Moorish and Tamil Indian architecture, and brought 70

craftsmen from Chennai, India. In an April 2022 interview with *The Star*, Sri Maha Mariamman Devotees Association president P. Velmurugan said Kellie-Smith had noticed people praying at a small shrine at his Kellas Estate when he passed by daily. When asked what they were doing, they said they were praying to Goddess Mariamman (Amma), as She was known to grant wishes. He then prayed for a child and his prayers were answered.

"Overjoyed, and as a show of gratitude to the Goddess, in 1907 Kellie-Smith instructed the craftsmen to stop work at the castle. He ordered them to

GLOBAL DHARMA

INDIA

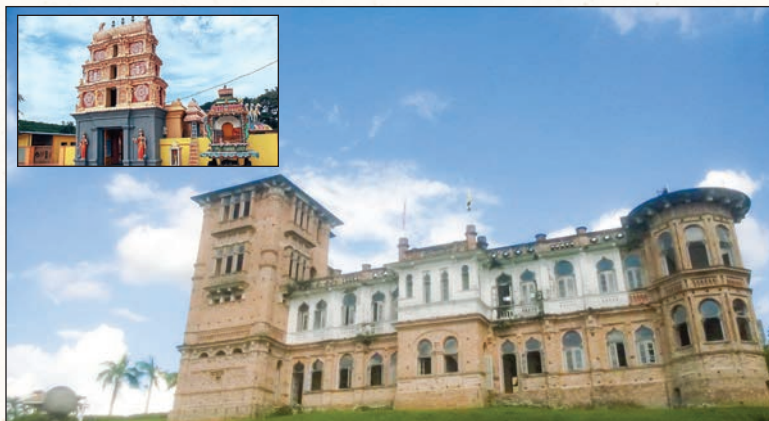
Temple Live Darshans Online



Live Feed: Decoration of Sivalinga at Somnath Temple in Gujarat

IN APRIL 2022 THE TEMPLE360 website was inaugurated by Union Culture Minister, Meenakshi Lekhi. The goal is to direct visitors to live video feeds in temples all around India, primarily the 12 Jyotirlingas and Char Dham. Ms. Lekhi explained that the recent global lockdowns precipitated this need. So far, 29 temples are included, nearly all of them in North India. Each page

has a short description of the temple and links to its livestream and donation pages. Most links go to the websites of the temples themselves, while some streams are hosted by the temple360 site itself. Some of the feeds only show the temple facade, such as at Kedarnath in the Himalayas, where you see devotees milling outside. See: temple360.in



Castle and Goddess: The Sri Maha Mariamman Temple (inset) is situated 1,600 feet from Kellie's Castle, which now lies mostly in ruins

start building a temple instead, a promise he had made to Amma," said Velmurugan. Kellie-Smith died unexpectedly of pneumonia, and the castle was never finished; it is now a tourist attraction. A new book in four

languages called *Forgotten Tales and Existing Facts* pays tribute to Kellie-Smith's contribution. "We want everyone to read the actual history of this tourist landmark (castle) and temple," said Velmurugan.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TWITTER/@VERTIGOWARRIOR; PRIYANK JAISWAL; RONNIE CHIN/THE STAR; WIKIPEDIA



CONVERSION

Tamil Nadu School Students Targeted

THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD RAJAN (name changed), a student of Class 8 in a school in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli city, recalls how he was told during an extra class that if he needs good marks and wishes to perform academically better than his peers, he must pray to no other God but Jesus. Not doing so will bring "failure in life and deformities to his body," Rajan told *CNN-News18* in early 2022. In April, a video of a Class 6 student from a school in Kanyakumari city was widely shared on social media. She was seen complaining to the

administration of her government school about how one of her teachers was telling her and other classmates to read a *Bible*, and that all other Deities are Satans. In January, 17-year-old Lavanya, a Class 12 student in Thanjavur city, ended her life due to alleged torture by two nuns of her school. The girl reportedly said in her dying declaration that they were forcing her to turn to Christianity.

In the wake of these and other recent headline-grabbing incidents of unethical religious conversions reported in schools,

the special investigations team of *News18* traveled extensively across south Tamil Nadu, visiting various government and private-run schools. Recorded testimonies of students, parents, activists and educationists claimed that conversion in this part of the state is rampant. They also raise questions on how the lack of action on the state administration's part has been fueling such practices. *News18* found that similar conversion activity is also present in tuition centers. See their full report:

bit.ly/school-conversions

ACTIVISM

One Swami's Mission to Improve Education During British Times

PRIOR TO BRITISH OCCUPATION, education in India was decentralized, localized and, through the network of rural communities, democratic. It was also cost-effective. The British government, instead of upgrading this system, introduced a more centrally controlled, capital-intensive education. This created disparities in the literacy of communities, which was blamed on Hindu society. Yet, the Hindus pursued

democratized education and upgrading of their traditional institutions, even in the colonial settings.

An article at [swarajyamag.com](https://www.swarajyamag.com) tells how Siva Shanmuga Meijnana Sivacharya Swamigal (1873-1942) countered missionary propaganda and bureaucratic harassment by providing holistic, dharmic education to children in Tamil Nadu. Affectionately known as Jnaniyar Swamigal, he was concerned about the spread

of cultural and spiritual illiteracy that came with the British mode of education. He also painfully saw how social stagnation was creating its own malaise in society. In order to change that, he went on extensive tours giving wonderful discourses, showing the richness of Tamil language and Saiva spirituality. At the same time, he took special care to create Saiva-Vaishnava harmony. For the full tale visit:

bit.ly/jnaniyar-swamigal



CAMBODIA

Preah Vihear Temple Assisted by China

PREAH VIHEAR IS A HINDU temple situated atop a 1,720-foot cliff in the Dangrek Mountains of Cambodia, about 248 miles north of capital Phnom Penh and 124 miles northwest of the famed Angkor Wat complex. The 11th-century temple (photo left) was included in UNESCO's World Heritage List in July 2008.

The *Khmer Times* reported in April 2022 that Kong Puthikar, director-general of the National Authority for Preah Vihear, said

China is the co-chair (with India) of the International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and the Development of Preah Vihear. "In the role as the co-chair, China pledged to conserve and restore Gopura I, Gopura II and Gopura III [three of five]," he said. A gopura is a temple entrance gateway. China has already sent its technical team to study and assess the risks and structure of the three gopuras. However, the actual work is not yet started, due to the

impact of global lockdowns.

Preah Vihear is one of Cambodia's three sites registered in the World Heritage List. The other two are the Angkor Archaeological Park in northwestern Siem Reap Province and the Sambor Prei Kuk Archaeological Site in central Kampong Thom Province. Kong Vibol, director of the Preah Vihear Provincial Tourism Department, is confident that Preah Vihear, once complete, will be a popular destination for Chinese tourists along with Angkor Wat.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK; SWARAJYAMAG.COM; WIKIPEDIA



GODS

Deity Made of 16,008 Fossils

THE ADIKESHAVA PERUMAL Temple in Thiruvattar, Tamil Nadu, India, is being readied for kumbhabhishekam (consecration) after 400 years. A May 2022 report in *The Hindu* shares how the statue of Adikeshava is unique not just because it is the longest—22 feet—among the Deities of the 108 Divya Desams (Vaishnava holy sites), but it is also the longest Kadusarkarai yogam Deity in India. It was created by covering 16,008 salagramas (a fossil ammonite that is representative of Vishnu) with *kadusarkarai*, a paste made of over 60 medicinal and mineral

ingredients, including jackfruit gum, sandalwood, triphala fruits and bilva fruit. Lauded in song by Vaishnavite minstrel Nammalwar, Adikeshava was the principal Deity of the Travancore Royal Family before they relocated from Padmanabhapuram in Tamil Nadu to Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala. Damaged at many places, the Deity required refurbishing. Restoring this type of Deity in a traditional manner is a lengthy, complex and time-consuming process. There are not many experts who know the method of doing *lebanam* (the process of applying the paste) and the



Adikeshava: A painting of the Deity which is being refurbished

ingredients that go into making it. S. Subramaniarar is the priest of the Kalpakamangalam Madam, which is vested with the right of conducting and overseeing rituals at many temples. He says, "We have decided to work

from the Mathur Madam, because we found an old wooden box there containing the ingredients needed for making the paste. It is evident it has been done in the past." Read more details at bit.ly/adikeshava.



FESTIVALS

65 Saivite Saints Paraded During Annual Celebration

ARUBATHU MOOVAR IS AN annual procession of the 63 Nayanmars plus Tiruvalluvar and Manikkavasagar, as part of

the Panguni Uthiram chariot festival in Kapaleeshwarar Siva Temple, Chennai, India. The saints are the leading figures

and poets of the South Indian Saiva Siddhanta sect. [Casualwalker.com](https://casualwalker.com) documented the parade in April, 2022, noting that all the streets around the temple were filled with cheerful and energetic devotees. The procession is headed by Goddess Kolavizhi Amman, followed by Sri Vinayaka and the

Saints blessing crowds:

(left) the four most celebrated saints, Samayacharyas, are adorned with tuberoses; (right) clouds of incense waft through the procession

four Samayacharyas—Appar, Sundarar, Thirugnana Sambandar and Manikkavasagar. The bronze statues of the saints are paraded in a palanquin lavishly decorated with ornaments and flowers. The Samayacharyas are carried in a separate palanquin. Statues of Kapaleeshwarar, Karpagambal and other Deities are also decorated with colorful and fragrant flowers and taken in procession around four Mada Veedhis (streets) in and around the Kapaleeshwarar Temple. See vivid photos at bit.ly/arubathu.

BRIEFLY...

SOUTH AFRICAN FLOODS HEAVILY damaged a Hindu temple in Chatsworth in April 2022 after the Umhlathuzana River burst its banks. The Vishnu temple had stood by the river for 70 years. It also suffered major damage in the 2017 floods.

AT LEAST 16 PEOPLE DIED IN Kashmir in July 2022, with

rescuers searching for dozens more missing, after flash floods swept away hundreds of tents near a popular Hindu pilgrimage site. Around 10,000 people were camped near the remote Amarnath temple, nestled in a Himalayan mountain cave, when a sudden cloudburst triggered a deluge. The Indian army deployed two infantry

battalions and special forces units to help with the search.

AUSTRALIA'S VICTORIA STATE WILL soon become the first to ban public display of the Hakenkreuz (Nazi swastika). The Nazi Symbol Prohibition Bill also recognizes the significance of the swastika for Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and other faith communities as an ancient and sacred symbol of peace and good fortune. The bill does not prohibit the display of the swastika in such

religious and cultural contexts.

Global Dharma news provided by

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PHOTOS FROM TOP: THE HINDU; CASUALWALKER.COM



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IN MY OPINION

My Path to Hinduism

I didn't wake up one morning and decide; it was a conscious, but time-consuming process

BY SEAN BRADRICK

MY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES began early in life. At age four, I saw and communicated with otherworldly beings, events I now see as mystical. Looking back at these contacts later in life, I comprehended their lesson—that I am not the body. Reality is more than the mental and physical, or the psychological and biological. A spiritual world exists beyond life's normalities.

A bit later I was indoctrinated into Catholicism. I went through sacraments, studied the Bible, prayed and became a devotee of Christ. That's when I developed devotion that I would later put towards a Hindu sadhana. My time as a Christian was not negative. I was never the type who preached to or wanted to convert others. I never had the thought that Christianity was the only true path to God. Around age 12, I had brief interest in the occult and European Paganism. I also began yogic and other esoteric studies and practices.

My father was a psychology professor who also taught meditation. He read the *Vedas* and was a student of Baba Ram Dass. By age 16 I had read the *Rig Veda*, *Tao Te Ching*, *Bhagavad Gita* and Buddha's teachings. I also had a full yoga practice. Long before I realized I was Hindu, I was practicing its disciplines.

In my early twenties, I was introduced to Haidakhan Babaji. I found an ashram of his devotees just 35 minutes from my home. There, I could practice karma and bhakti yoga while learning more about Hindu dharma and how to practice puja, *homa*, *japa* and *arati*. Soon I was studying Ayurveda and took courses from the American Institute of Vedic Studies founded by Acharya Vamadeva Shastriji (Dr. David Frawley), whom I regard as a modern-day rishi. Two decades later I got to study and practice with Dharma Pravartaka Acharya (Frank Morales), the founder of International Sanatana Dharma Society. Acharyaji is a brilliant man with an immense amount of knowledge.



I initially felt drawn to the Sanatana Dharma by its depth of psychological understanding, along with its various philosophies, its all-inclusive pluralism and multiplicity. I had found none of these things in the monocultural Christian dogma. I became enamored with Vedanta and the idea that there exists a phenomenal uni-

verse outside the self, as well as a perceptible universe that could be found within the Self. I loved the idea that God could be found in the here and now through esoteric practices, introspection and austerities.

I became enamored with the idea that you are just a version of who I am, and that what I do to others, I actually do to myself. I admired the concepts of atman (the divine Self), Paramatman (the universal, eternal soul) and Brahman (the spiritual core of the Universe). I liked the idea that these three were considered to be in perpetual union, and I liked how Hinduism focuses on inner knowledge over outer belief.

I prefer to say that I've adopted Hinduism rather than converted. I eventually came to realize that Hindu ideology, philosophy and theology was what I had always known to be true. I like to say that I was born Hindu, was raised Christian and remembered later in life that I was actually Hindu. I did not wake up one morning and decide to be Hindu. It was a conscious, but a time-consuming process. I tend to introduce myself as an American Hindu because I do think there is a distinction between Hindus from India and Hindus from America, though we are all united under the greatness of Sanatana Dharma. In a world formed by colonialism, war, religious intolerance, imperialism and materialism, we Hindus should be proud to be simple yet astute, and peaceful yet potent practitioners of the dharma.

SEAN BRADRICK, author of *A Hindu's Guide to Advocacy and Activism*, is an Ayurvedic counselor and writer living in Nebraska, USA.

Hindu Responses to Tragic Times

Practical and Spiritual Responses to Hardships and Loss—from the Heart, the Hand, the Head and the Soul

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

THE ENTIRE WORLD ENTERED A CHALLENGING new era in December, 2019, when the first human cases of Covid-19 were identified in Wuhan, China. In the two and a half years since then, the lives of virtually every human being were touched by lockdowns, economic hardships, health issues and loss of loved ones. With the pandemic still with us, global citizens now face another avalanche of difficulties provoked by Russia's war on Ukraine. The greatest military conflict in Europe since WWII, it has further disrupted the world's supply chains and contributed to soaring prices, as well as severe shortages of food and fuel in many countries. These hardships have become so dire that people in poor nations are demonstrating in the streets, hoping a new government will be voted in and improve conditions for the populace. Financial markets are in turmoil, recovery of the global economy is in doubt and Europe is experiencing the most severe humanitarian crisis it has seen in decades.

From the Heart

The first and foremost response to major challenges such as the pandemic or the war in Ukraine is to arouse our compassion and offer supportive thoughts to those who are experiencing hardship and loss of loved ones. This first response is one of compassion and is from the heart.

From the Hands

Next is to provide practical help. In an early response to the pandemic, Hindu groups around the world stepped forward to do just that. For example, as reported in our April 2021 issue, Sewa International first focused on helping the most vulnerable, such as by providing N-95 masks to caregivers and frontline workers. Next came the Sewa Sankalp initiative which combined dharmic resources to ward off the Covid-19 threat and build cooperation and collaboration. It was an ambitious effort to bring spiritual groups together in service to the community. Volunteers sent the Sankalp Patra (letter of intent) to 1,000 organizations, and 500 of them signed the pledge. Several institutions gave money, material and volunteers to the Sewa relief work in key cities. By joining hands with Sewa or working on their own, dharmic institutions helped soften the blow of the pandemic, providing meals, food packets, milk and other essentials to the needy. Thus, our second response is of a practical, helpful nature and is with our hands.

From the Head

Our first and second responses are directed toward the emotional and physical needs of the



immediate situation. Once those have been addressed, we can step back and take more of an overview, seeking ways we can learn from a tragedy to face future calamities with better preparation. Should more resources be stored for emergencies, such as food and fuel? Are better plans needed to help individuals resume supporting themselves? This and more requires good thought. The wisdom of this suggestion is more apparent at this time in history than it was before Covid-19, its lockdowns and now Russia's brutal attack of Ukraine and the global chaos that conflict is causing.

This third response focuses on planning and is from the head. At the national and international level, countries and medical agencies instituted safeguards to prevent the spread of the virus, and bolstered systems for facing pandemics of the future. In response to the war in Ukraine that threatens the entire continent, leaders of nations are joining together to stop the aggression and guard against future incursions. As Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, wrote: "It is when the Devaloka [higher minded] people are in charge that peace will truly come; it can come in no other way. So, if the Devaloka people really desire to have peace on Earth, they should not be shy but take charge. ...They have to all get to know each other and then join hands in love and trust and work together."

From the Soul

Stepping back even further, we come to the philosophical level of why such devastating events happen. Some people's faith in God is shaken, as they are not able to comprehend how a benevolent God could let such catastrophes happen. Others are overwhelmed and turn negative toward life. From the Hindu viewpoint, a pandemic is part of nature and is not an act of God. Earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, disease, fires, droughts and floods are all normal expressions of nature. Man, too, is part of nature, with ever-increasing power to create disasters rivaling nature's greatest fury. Such philosophical reflection—our fourth level of response—comes from our soul. The Hindu beliefs in the Divinity of all things, the soul being eternal, inner planes and reincarnation are a great source of solace during times of suffering, tragedy and loss.

Gurudeva wrote in *Dancing with Siva*: "The nature of the world is duality. It contains each thing and its opposite: joy and sorrow, goodness and evil, love and hate. Through experience of these, we learn



A Lesson from Hanuman: This massive bronze murti in Hawaii grew out of the ashes of an unexpected mishap

the world, for earthly joy is inextricably bound to sorrow, and worldly freedom to bondage. Having learned this, devotees seek a satguru who teaches them to understand suffering, and brings them into the intentional hardships of sādhanā and tapas leading to liberation from the cycles of experience in the realm of duality."

On the personal level, living through a catastrophe can be a catalyst to reflect profoundly on one's life and look for ways to add deeper meaning to it. Life-changing moments are rare and are often provoked by something that drastically upsets our day-to-day existence.

Many individuals will have been considering making changes in their life but have never gotten around to doing so. Now is an excellent time to revisit such plans and set them into motion. Plans could relate to the family's spending more quality time together, with more frequent verbalizing of love for others. For those who are focused on community, now is a good time to share and implement those plans for new activities that would uplift and advance those in nearby neighborhoods. For those with strong spiritual interests, now may be the time to learn that new meditation practice, improve one's Sanskrit and puja performance or go on that long-desired pilgrimage to ancient tirthas in India. These are just some of the many ways we can take the energy generated by global challenges and use it to improve our life, our families lives and the lives of the surrounding community.

Most disasters are not so global, but still require the right response. Here at our Hawaii monastery we experienced an unfortunate event a few years back. A 135-foot tall black granite Hanuman that had taken four Indian artisans seven years to create was lying down awaiting installation when, one morning, a monk discovered that both His legs had broken at the calf, making the murti unusable. All those years of artistic sculpting lost. All that considerable expense gone.

Clearly, it was a disaster. But the monks could never forget Gurudeva's teaching that even a disaster faced with high consciousness can be turned into a blessing and a boon. The monks meditated on what Gurudeva would do, and arranged for the broken murti to be molded and then cast in bronze by a team in Colorado. The

result was even better than the original stone, since the sculptor could add refinements in wax not possible in stone. After another team of more than twenty bronze masters worked for over a year, a masterpiece emerged and was shipped to Hawaii to be installed near our sacred Rudraksha Forest. Amazingly, today the monks are actually happy that the original stone murti broke, for without that event the far more amazing bronze would not exist. It's a perfect example of Gurudeva's teaching that it is not what happens to us in life that matters. It is how we respond.





LETTERS

Not Avoiding Life's Challenges

What an awesome graphic (above) depicting modern experience and the ultimate goal. It fits perfectly with Satguru's Publisher's Desk editorial (Jul/Aug/Sep 2022).

EASAN KATIR, WWW.EASANKATIR.COM
EASAN.KATIR@GMAIL.COM

Your Spiritual Nature

I love the article "How to Experience Your Innate Divinity" (Jan/Feb/Mar 2022), filled with inspiring, practical wisdom. It's such an important life skill to be able to recognize our innate Divinity, and this article clearly outlines how to live this lofty goal. Thanks a ton and sincere pranams for publishing this beautiful piece!

LAKSHMI CHANDRASHEKAR SUBRAMANIAN
LAKSHMI@ECLIPSE-NIRVANA.COM

Thank You!

The educational insight "Raising Children as Good Hindus" (Apr/May/June 2021) is fantastic! Please create many more such presentations. Help spread these articles and share them in school/college classrooms if possible. The world should know about the beauty and benefits of being a Hindu.

PALASHAND
PALASHCHAKQA@GMAIL.COM

Making the best of ordeals: A man surveys the path ahead, seeing all of the difficulties, but knowing that his goal of moksha awaits at the end of his soul's journey

Conversion to Christianity

To the author of the guest editorial "My Unfortunate Conversion" (July/Aug/Sep 2022). Please forgive yourself for questioning, seeking, even for allowing yourself to be lured down a hateful path. Forgive yourself for your youthful rebellion, and also for your bad treatment towards your family, as those arguments have played an important role in your self realization. It is all part of your atma's journey. You could have followed the dharma blindly, but instead you now know it deeply and with clarity and joy. You have answered so many questions including the great "Why?" You have forged your own path home and that IS your dharma. Hold no regrets. You are home.

MONIKA
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Under Nehruvian secularism impulses, I similarly started hating Hinduism. It was the works of Shri Ram Swarup-ji that brought me back to Hinduism. They made me see the beauty of Sanatana Dharma.

VISHAL
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Medical Astrology

"Ayurvedic Astrology" by Vamadeva Shastri

(Jan/Feb/Mar 2021) is a real eye-opener for people who are new to astrology. Thanks a lot for this high-quality article. I won't think twice to endorse it to anybody who wants and needs to know more about astrology and the relationship between planets and us.

DANIEL BAUER
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Take Pride in Your Heritage

I've been reading this magazine for years now, and it makes me sad to read how some Hindus have been humiliated in America. I can feel your pain. I consider myself a serious follower of the Vichara Marga taught in the Ramana Maharshi Sampradaya, but I was born in Puerto Rico in a Jewish family. I researched religions all over the planet, and I have to tell you that Hinduism is the most beautiful system of religion. You Hindus have everything of real value: the best ethics, the best reasoning, the best music ever! The best dances, the best family values, the best poetry, the best everything. If some Westerners do not like you, please do not give up your culture. I welcome all Hindus to my country (America), to my home, and to my heart. I love you all for what you are—Brahman!

NELSON G. DIAZ
 KENEDY, TEXAS, USA

Transformative Prayers

The article "Performing Sandhya Vandanam" (Jan/Feb/Mar 2021) was so inspiring! I love the way the author shared and explained the power of praying three times a day. I am from Spain, coming from a Christian background, so in my family we didn't have this tradition, but I was lucky to meet Shantala Sriramaiah, Eddie Stern and other teachers who have introduced Gayatri Upasana. It is a wonderful practice that leads one to the path of clarity.

ROBERTO GARCIA
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To the author of "Performing Sandhya Vandanam"—I am proud and so happy to know that this tradition is still being kept alive and the values are being instilled in young minds like you who will further pass these on to future generations. As a grown-up, I feel so good to learn and take motivation from youths like you. Stay focused and have a blessed life. Koti Koti pranamam to you and your parents.

SUNIL MENON
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✓ *Editor's Note: As readers have pointed out, in the March 2021 edition, the boy's sacred thread in the above photo was incorrectly over his right shoulder because the digital Shutterstock photo had been unwittingly flipped horizontally, a fact that we failed to notice. Above, and in the online version of the magazine, the problem has been fixed.*

Letters with writer's name, address and daytime phone number should be sent to:

Letters, Hinduism Today
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 Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
 or visit: www.hinduismtoday.com/letters

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.

Hinduism Teaches the World Tolerance/Acceptance/Love

How you can help HINDUISM TODAY continue to deliver this vital message

“ONE OF TODAY'S GREAT, ONGOING SOCIAL events is the dramatic rise of diversity, in some places especially,” explains publisher and satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami. “Some individuals, families and groups are experiencing this phenomenon directly in their interpersonal interactions, others less directly. Either way, it can have a tremendous impact. One knows that, for the sake of a newcomer, he, she or they may be called upon to change their ways, to move over to make room, or share bounty. Sometimes that impact is merely anticipated, feared or worried about. And unless wisdom is liberally applied, friction results.”

“The response of some individuals toward those who are different is to like and trust, befriend and help. Others are uncomfortable, and their response is to dislike and distrust the stranger, hate and even inflict injury.”

“The basis for Hindu tolerance is the belief that we are all divine beings. We highlight this blessed truth in our magazine at every opportunity to remind our readers as they navigate their busy day. This powerful understanding has given to the Hindu people



their amazing, unshakable spirit of tolerance.

“In Chicago in 1893, the great Swami Vivekananda introduced himself with these words: ‘I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.’ The concept was evidently important enough to him to be mentioned before anything else. Plus, in his message, he enhances the term to become *acceptance*. Today, 130 years later, that mes-

sage is more pertinent than ever.

“This adage from the *Maha Upanishad* takes it one step further: ‘*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, the whole world is a family.’ We need not only tolerate and accept the stranger, but welcome him warmly as a cherished relative. The full verse is even more powerful: ‘This one is a relative, the other is a stranger,’ utter the petty-minded; ‘the entire world is a family,’ hold the magnanimous. Thus, the ultimate expression of tolerance or acceptance is to love and bless everyone in the world: ‘*Sarve janah sukhino bhavantu*, May all people be happy.’”

There are many ways to support this grand concept: disseminating the idea, good works, giving to the right kind of charities, being the smiling ambassador yourself. Or you can do all these at once by supporting HINDUISM TODAY. You can donate through your estate plan for long-term strength and stability. Or, especially at this time of soaring expenses, you can donate now, at the end of the year, or occasionally to help meet ongoing expenses.

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QUOTES & QUIPS

Has a dog Buddha-nature?
This is the most serious question of all. If you say yes
or no, you lose your own Buddha-nature. **Zen Koan**

Compassion is the root of religion. Compassion brings with it kindness, love, fellowship and service. **Dada J. P. Vaswani** (1918-2018), *Indian spiritual leader*

A person can achieve everything by being simple and humble. **Rig Veda**

True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us. **Socrates** (469-388 bce), *Greek philosopher*

Q: "Why has God created wicked people?"
Ramakrishna: "That is His will, His play. In His maya there exists avidya as well as vidya.

Darkness is needed too. It reveals all the more the glory of light. **Ramakrishna** (1836-1886), *Hindu Mystic*

The one eternal amid the transient, the conscious amid the unconscious, the one amid many, who grants their desires, to the wise who perceive Him as abiding in the soul, to them is eternal peace and to no others. *Katha Upanishad 2.2.13*

A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for. **J. A. Shedd** (1859-1928), *American author and professor*

There is force in the universe, which, if we permit it, will flow through us and produce

miraculous results. **Mahatma Gandhi** (1869-1948), *Indian political ethicist*

The brain and muscles must develop simultaneously. Iron nerves with an intelligent brain — and the whole world is at your feet. **Swami Vivekananda** (1863-1902), *influential Hindu monk*

Everything in some way connects to everything else. **Leonardo Da Vinci** (1452-1519), *Italian polymath*

We know not. **Chellappaswami** (1840-1915), *reclusive Sri Lankan Sage*

Your ideas about yourself change from day to day and from moment to moment. Your self image is the most changeable thing you have. It is utterly vulnerable, at the mercy of a passerby. A bereavement, the loss of a job, an insult, and your image of yourself, which you call your person, changes deeply. To know what you are, you must first investigate and know what you are not. And to know what you are not, you must watch yourself carefully, rejecting all that does not necessarily go with the basic fact: "I am." **Nisargadatta Maharaj** (1897-1981), *Hindu sage*

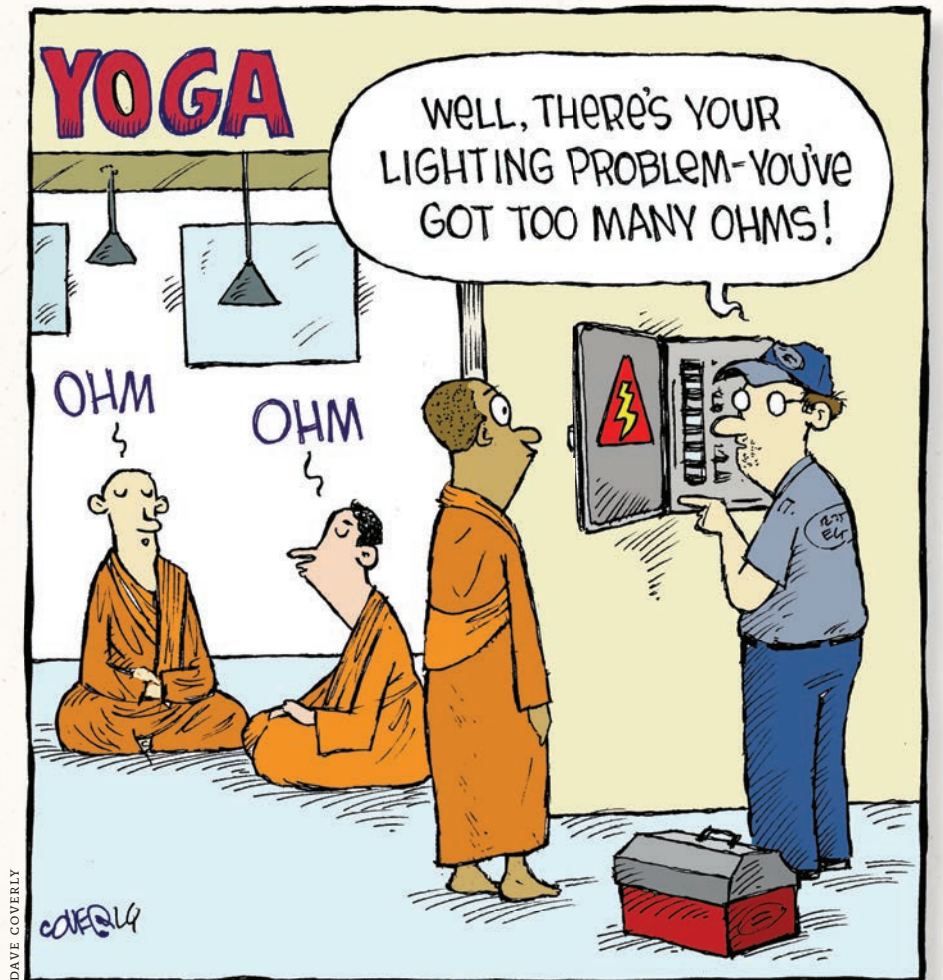
When you can do the common things of life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world. **George Washington Carver** (early 1860s-1943), *African-American agricultural chemist and advocate for equality*

Never worry about things that you are unable to change. Change your own way of looking at truth. **Sri Chinmoy** (1931-2007), *renowned spiritual leader*

Raise your words, not your voice, it is rain that grows flowers, not thunder. **Rumi** (1207-1273), *Sufi mystic*

Let your life lightly dance on the edges of time like dew on the tip of a leaf **Rabindranath Tagore** (1861-1941), *Bengali poet and philosopher*

Mindfulness is attention in the here and now. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, *publisher of HINDUISM TODAY*



The purified, integrated mind, so perfected in its own understanding, lives in close communion with the soul radiance so that light becomes the constant

companion of the mind. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927-2001), *founder of HINDUISM TODAY*



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY OPERATIONAL GROUP
US ARMY INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMAND
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755

9 June 1983

SUBJECT: Analysis and Assessment of Gateway Process

Did you know?

Wouldn't espionage be a breeze if you could just listen to some special audio tapes to walk away in your astral body? You could then look around top-secret facilities, all while being completely unnoticed. A 28-page report commissioned by the CIA, written in 1983 by Lt. Col. Wayne McDonnell in partnership with Israeli-American biomedical engineer Itzhak Bentov and others, investigated the practicality of using the "Gateway Experience" to enhance US military and

intelligence operations.

The Gateway Experience is a technique developed by the Monroe Institute for reaching altered states of consciousness. The technique attempts to invoke what they call brain hemisphere synchronization, shortened to "Hemi-Sync", by playing sounds corresponding to different frequencies of the brain. Theoretically, subjects could then engage in "out-of-body movement," probably with the express purpose of gathering intelligence from a foreign country.

An excerpt from the document reads, "In states of

expanded consciousness, the right hemisphere of the human brain in its holistic, non-linear and nonverbal mode of functioning, acts as the primary matrix or receptor for this holographic input..."

This siddhi of separating the subtle body from the physical body is documented in many Hindu texts. However, the texts note it is achieved only after many years of self-discipline, contradicting the idea that anyone could accomplish such feats by means of the methods outlined in the report.

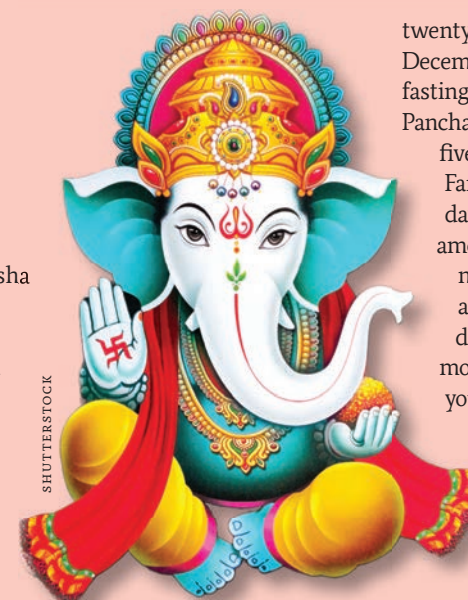


Read the full document here

BASICS

Ganesa Festivals

Ganesha Chaturthi is a joyous celebration of Ganesha's birthday. Vinayaka Vratam is twenty-one days of fasting and daily temple worship. Pancha Ganapati is a five-day family festival of harmony and gift-giving. On Ganesha Chaturthi, in August-September, elaborate temple pujas are held. Worship is also given in the home shrine to a clay image of Ganesha that we make or obtain. At the end of the day, or after ten days, we join others in a grand parade, called visarjana, to a river, temple tank, lake or seashore, where we immerse the image, symbolizing Ganesha's release into universal consciousness. During the



twenty-one days of Vinayaka Vratam, in November-December, devotees vow to attend daily Ganesha puja, fasting on water and taking a full meal after sunset. Pancha Ganapati, December 21 to 25, is a modern five-day festival of gift-giving, dear to children. Families invoke His five shaktis, one on each day—creating harmony in the home, concord among relatives, neighbors and friends, good business and public relations, cultural upliftment and heartfelt charity. Ganesha's monthly holy day is Chaturthi, the fourth tithi after the new moon. The Vedas implore, "O Lord of Categories, you are the Lord, the seer of seers, unrivaled in wealth, king of elders, lord of the principle of principles. Hear us and take your place, bringing with you all enjoyments."

From the teachings of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

SACRAMENTS

Initiation Along the Ganga

The sacred thread ceremony was a natural next step after my name-giving

BY KESHAV FULBROOK

AS I STEPPED ONTO THE FLIGHT TO INDIA from my home in Montana, I was elated. I had dreamt of this since age 19, and finally at 26 I had the opportunity to visit India for a full academic year. My university had offered Hindi courses since 2015, and I started college at age 24 largely in order to pursue my linguistic passions. After studying Hindi while pursuing my degree in political science for three years, I was accepted into an immersive Hindi language program taking place in Jaipur during the 2018-2019 academic year. Also accepted was my friend in the language program and next-door neighbor Krish.

During that year, I was able to go on many yatras, including Kashi Vishwanath and Mahakaleshwar in the north and Sri Padmanabhaswamy, Meenakshi Amman and Thiruvannamalai in the south. All were personally significant and incredibly memorable, but one of the biggest milestones was my *upanayanam* in Rishikesh.

The *upanayanam* is one of 16 *samskaras*, traditional Hindu rites of passage. While not everyone does them all, some of the primary *samskaras* Hindus will undergo include the *namakarana* or name giving ceremony, the *upanayanam* or the conferral of a sacred thread and initiation into Vedic study, *vivaha* or marriage and *antyeshti* or one's funerary rites. Generally, the *namakarana* and *upanayanam* are performed during childhood.

By age 13 I had decided to leave Christianity and was looking into subjects like Vedanta. At 19 I formally decided to enter Hinduism. At 22 I had my *namakarana* at the Hindu temple in my hometown of Las Vegas. I was given the name Keshav by the pandita. Most consider the *namakarana* an official "ritual of conversion" into Hindu dharma for those who are not hereditary Hindus, and at the very least it is a powerful affirmation to oneself and to the world at large of one's commitment. The *upanayanam* is a furthering and deepening of this commitment.

Krish came along for the ceremony. We took off from the Jaipur bus station. It was November—not as cold as at home, but cold enough. I drank one last chai before boarding the sleeper to Rishikesh. This was my first trip outside of Jaipur since arriving. Not being a seasoned traveler in India, I did not get much sleep. My friend Sankar traveled by train all the way from Kerala to join me, having booked us both at the Swami Sivananda Ashram. My friend Krish, slightly less an ascetic, opted for a nearby hotel.

During the *upanayanam*, one is initiated into following one of four *Vedas*. Sankar brought his Malayalam-language copy of the *sandhyavandanam* procedure for the *Yajurveda*, and went through each step and the mantras in detail to prepare me for post-*upanayanam* responsibilities. After initiation, one is to perform the *sandhyavandanam*, a set of mantras and procedures including Gayatri, for the rest of one's life three times daily.



While not in the ashram, I spent time on the Ganga river ghats, wandering to and fro over Ram Jhula and Lakshman Jhula, bridges connecting both sides of Rishikesh. The landscape reminded me of Missoula with its mountains, frosty air, and the river running directly through town. In a strange way, I was in both places at once. There were many cafes, shops selling dharmic goods, and restaurants around Rishikesh which I could have explored for days. The impact of international yoga tourism was ubiquitous. Advertisements for yoga teacher training were seen near coffee shops with menus that would seem at home in any California bistro, and Western kirtan artists' bhajans blared over loudspeakers.

I preferred Madras Café, drawn by my love for South Indian cuisine and Tamil filter coffee. While sitting, I was surprised to hear someone ask "Keshav?" from across the room. Swami Bodhichitananda Saraswati and Swami Yatidharmananda Saraswati, long-time Facebook friends whom I had not yet met in person, were seated across from me. They introduced me to people who were visiting them, and we remarked at how it's a small world after all.

We held the ceremony on the full moon day, Kritika Purnima. We gathered with the panditas of the Swami Dayananda Ashram on the banks of the Ganga. The atmosphere was surreal. The years of commitment leading up to this moment played through my mind. Not all hereditary Hindus themselves undergo the *upanayanam*, which today is mostly

pursued by people born into families of hereditary priests. The concept of hereditary practices and who is eligible to pursue them is contentious, but I and my teachers hold that one's commitment and inner disposition outweigh factors of birth when it comes to Vedic study, performance of pujas and yajnas and so forth, and that this view is scripturally supported as well. I had begun studying Vedanta with teachers associated with Arsha Vidya Gurukulam around 2014, but never imagined then that I would be at one of the main centers established by Swami Dayananda of Arsha Vidya now.

I joined in chanting Ganapati Atharvasheersham and many of the other mantras and suktams I had learned over the years as they were recited over the fire. During one part of the ceremony, I was to bathe in the Ganga. I immersed myself into the frigid water and dunked three times reciting mantras. As the water passed over me, the cold drowned out any thoughts, and everything I was mentally reciting receded to silence.

I dried off, wore a new dhoti, and returned to conclude the ritual. My left hand placed on the *pancapatram*, cup filled with Ganga water, and the right hand upraised with the sacred thread between them, I placed the thread over my chest. At the end, ashram residents who were observing congratulated me. We took our midday meal in silence as is customary in the ashram. I was overwhelmed with gratitude over having the opportunity I had striven years for. I packed my bags the next day with a new silver *pancapatram*, a ritual cup used during *sandhyavandanam* gifted to me by Sankar, and returned to Jaipur from one of many yatras I would take that year.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keshav Fulbrook, 28, is a soon-to-be political science graduate and has pursued Sanatana Dharma from the age of 19. He is currently affiliated with Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. Contact: fulbrookb22@gmail.com

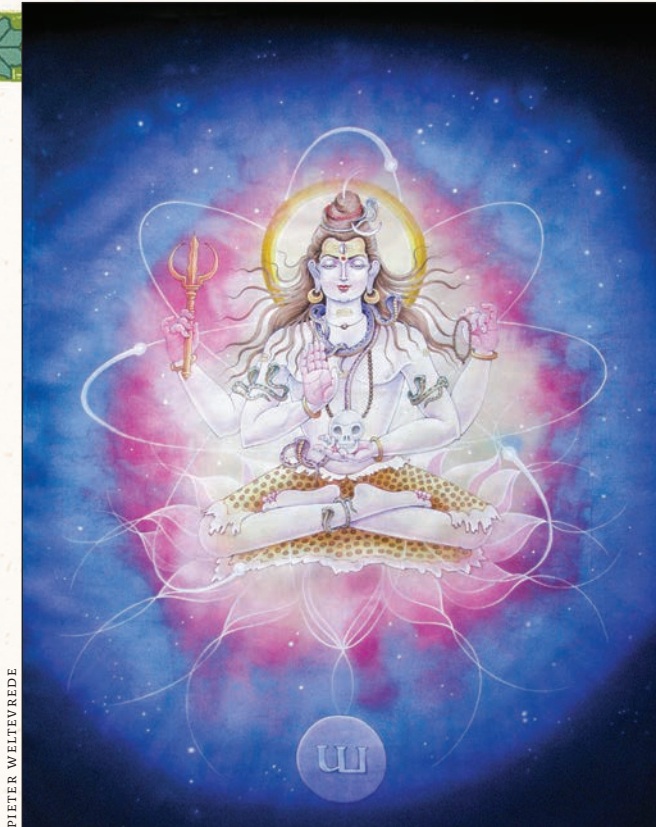
FROM THE UPANISHADS

As Brahman in The Beginning

The metaphysics of creation and endorsement of non-dual meditation

The following is from the translation of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad by S. Radhakrishnan. This Upanishad belongs to the Shukla Yajurveda. The following verses are drawn from chapter 1, section 4, and have been lightly edited for clarity. Verse 7 was removed for brevity.

1. In the beginning this world was only the Self, in the form of the universal soul. Looking around He saw nothing else than the Self. He first said, "I am." Therefore arose the name "I." Therefore, even to this day when one is addressed he says first "This is I" and then speaks whatever other name he may have. Because before all this He burnt all evils, therefore He is the universal soul. He who knows this, verily, burns up all who wish to be before Him.
2. He was afraid. Therefore one who is alone is afraid. This One then thought to Himself, "since there is nothing else than myself, of what am I afraid?" Thereupon His fear passed away, for, of what should He have been afraid? Assuredly, it is from a second that fear arises.
3. He, verily, had no delight. Therefore he who is alone has no delight. He desired a second. He became as large as a woman and a man in close embrace. He caused that Self to fall into two parts. From that arose husband and wife. Therefore, as Yajnavalkya used to say, this body is one half of oneself, like one of the two halves of a split pea. Therefore this space is filled by a wife. He became united with her. From that, human beings were produced.
4. She thought, "How can He unite with me after having produced me from himself?" Well, let me hide myself. She became a cow, the other became a bull and was united with her and from that cows were born. The one became a mare, the other a stallion. The one became a she ass, the other a he ass and was united with her; and from that one-hoofed animals were born. The one became a she goat, the other a he goat, the one became a ewe, the other became a ram and was united with her and from that goats and sheep were born. Thus, indeed, He produced everything, whatever exists in pairs, down to the ants.
5. He knew, I indeed am this creation, for I produced all this. Therefore He became the creation. He who knows this as such comes to be in that creation of His.
6. Then He rubbed back and forth and produced fire from its source, the mouth and the hands. Both these mouth and the hands are hairless on the inside, for the source is hairless on the inside. When the people say "sacrifice to him," "sacrifice to the other one," all this is His creation indeed and He Himself is all the Gods. And now whatever is moist, that He produced from



semen, and that is Soma. This whole world is just food and the eater of food. Soma is food, and fire is the eater of food. This is the highest creation of Brahma, namely, that He created the Gods who are superior to him. He, although mortal himself, created the immortals. Therefore it is the highest creation. Verily, he who knows this becomes a creator in this highest creation.

8. That Self is dearer than a son, is dearer than wealth, is dearer than everything else and is innermost. If one were to say to a person who speaks of anything else than the Self as dear, he will lose what he holds dear, he would very likely do so. One should meditate on the Self alone as dear. He who meditates on the Self alone as dear, what he holds dear, verily, will not perish.
9. They say, since men think that by the knowledge of Brahman they become all, what was it that Brahman knew by which He became all?
10. Brahman, indeed, was this in the beginning. It knew itself only as "I am Brahman." Therefore It became all. Whoever among the Gods became awakened to this, He, indeed, became that. It is the same in the case of seers, same in the case of men. Seeing this, indeed, the seer Vamadeva knew, "I was Manu and the Sun, too." This is so even now. Whoever knows thus, "I am Brahman," becomes this all. Even the Gods cannot prevent His becoming thus, for He becomes their Self. So, whoever worships another Divinity than his Self, thinking that he is one and Brahman another, he knows not. He is like an animal to the Gods. As many animals serve a man, so does each man serve the Gods. Even if one animal is taken away, it causes displeasure, what should one say of many animals? Therefore it is not pleasing to the Gods that men should know this.

SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN (1888-1975) was an Indian philosopher and statesman, India's first vice president (1952-1962) and second president (1962-1967).

Following the powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015, the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust has brought together countless artisans who have since been restoring the square's damaged temples and monuments. Stone carvers, woodworkers, brick layers, metalworkers and an array of helpers of all skill levels have been dutifully giving their time to rebuild this place of inestimable religious, cultural and historical importance.

Photo: The partially restored Patan Durbar Square, April 20, 2019

THE RESTORATION OF Patan Durbar Square



BY CLAIRE BURKERT, NEPAL

“DON’T VIEW THE AFTERMATH OF THE earthquake as purely negative; there have also been positive outcomes,” reflects Rohit Ranjitkar. Rohit is the director of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), a not-for-profit organization that has worked on the Patan Durbar Square in Kathmandu, Nepal, for three decades. Following the powerful 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015, KVPT has been busy restoring most of the square’s valuable historic monuments.

We meet in a workshop where woodworkers are repairing old carved temple columns and windows. “What could be positive about the effects of an earthquake?” I exclaim.

He responded: “Before the first earthquake, on April 25, a lot of people took their heritage for granted. When the temples collapsed, they suddenly had no place to worship. Hundreds of people came out to collect and protect the remnants of temples. They recognized their value. In this way the earthquake brought intangible and tangible heritage together.”

Rohit introduces me to Ravi Darshan-dhari, previously a tourist guide, who is now secretary of the square’s local improvement association (Mangal Tole Sudhar Sangh). Immediately after the earthquake, Ravi ran to the square to bring the toppled Yoganarendra statue, dating from 1693, into the Keshav Narayan Chowk palace for safety. Local people guarded the area for two nights and two days to keep wood and stone temple carvings safe from theft until the army and police arrived. “The earthquake brought people together,” Rohit tells me, “and their awak-

ened understanding about the value of these monuments left an enduring message for the general public.”

How well I remember the valley’s second major earthquake on May 12, when my husband Thomas Schrom and I huddled with other staff members of the KVPT in the café of the Patan Museum. In the early 1990s, Thomas had been a member of the professional Austrian team who had transformed the Keshav Narayan Chowk into the world-renowned Patan Museum, which exhibits Buddhist and Hindu antiquities. The Museum was like a home to us and the people who had worked on it, who were like an extended family. We looked up to the tilting pinnacle of the northern Degutale temple, wondering what further damage the Patan Durbar had suffered. The earthquakes’ toll on people, animals and architecture left us in despair.

Now, seven years later, I can understand Rohit’s perspective. “After the earthquakes, we needed more craftsmen to restore the square,” he recounts. “Within a month, we engaged two hundred people and created our ‘royal workshop’ behind the Museum, where many craftsmen learned new skills. So what I really want to remember from this experience is what we were able to teach and learn.”

I will never forget seeing the Patan Museum courtyard packed with struts, columns and other precious carvings rescued from the Durbar square’s major temples. Putting them together again seemed like an impossible puzzle. Rohit began the daunting task with a group of youth from around the square who helped to carry and store artifacts. They sorted elements by size and type—for instance, all the carved wooden lion heads were

grouped together. Rohit admits that not all of the lions were replaced on temples exactly where they’d previously been, adding wryly, “Maybe they are not happy, thinking ‘I used to be facing the east rather than the west’—but at least they are all on their original level in the correct building.”

The Monuments and Craftspeople of the Patan Durbar Square

In the 16th and 17th centuries, until the conquest by Gorkha rulers in 1767, Kathmandu valley’s three major cities, Patan, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, were each under the rule of Malla kings. The *durbar* (palace compound) of each kingdom faced an open quadrangle on which a succession of religious kings erected a panoply of temples. Their temples and palaces mark a pinnacle in the artistic achievement of the valley’s Newar craftsmen. The Newars, the original settlers of Kathmandu Valley, are today still renowned for their crafts skills, and because of these living artisans it has been possible to rebuild in Nepal.

Whenever I visit the Patan Durbar Square, just a five-minute walk from my house, I am struck by the harmony of more than 30 different-style monuments in a bricked space that measures only 525 feet by 230 feet. In 1652ce the poet Kunu Sharma wrote, “Isn’t it like a piece of heaven?” The widely traveled early-20th-century writer Perceval Landon observed: “As an ensemble, the Durbar Square in Patan probably remains the most picturesque collection of buildings that has ever been set up in so small a space.”

It is only since the earthquake, observing the great monuments of the square reassem-



CLAIRE BURKERT

bled to their original splendor, that I have learned the names and individual identities of each temple. My curiosity about them grows as I watch the pagodas under repair by local builders and craftspeople of rare skill. “You know, there is money for conservation, but if we don’t have artisans, what can we

do?” says Ravi. “They are the backbone of conservation. And it is not just the work of individuals, but the work of the team.”

Even now, not all of the temples have been fully restored. With the pandemic, national priorities shifted and building costs rose. Here we describe several completed monuments and their histories, shaped by the gifted artisans who recently restored them.

Char Narayana Mandir

Char Narayana Mandir is the square’s oldest major temple; construction was begun in 1563 to honor Narayan (Lord Vishnu). Built primarily of brick in the pagoda style, it has two tiered roofs supported by carved struts.

In Newar woodcarving, the struts are not merely functional; they are also artistic, protective and divine. Wooden struts of valley temples of this era had up to sixteen carved arms in various positions, their hands often

A local trust helps to rebuild and renew Kathmandu’s sacred monuments



PHOTOS: THOMAS KELLY



(Clockwise from above) Tirtha Maya Tamang cleans the doorway of Bhimsen Mandir before it is officially reopened; KVPT Head Director Rohit Ranjitkar at Vishveshwara temple; Conservator Ravi Darshandari at the entrance of Bhimsen temple; a view of Char Narayan Mandir, Krishna Mandir, Vishveshwara Mandir and Bhimsen Mandir from above



holding objects that made clear the identity of the temple Deity. Twenty struts support Char Narayana's lower roof; twelve of these depict Vishnu as the cowherding Krishna. Nepal's kings were believed to be incarnations of Vishnu, so temples were often dedicated to His various forms.

Char Narayana collapsed down to its plinth in the 2015 earthquake. Within a week, its original veneer bricks and carved elements were rescued and stacked neatly around the square. Photo documentation helped in the reuse or repair of five broken struts and other broken parts, so that the temple could be rebuilt almost as it was.

Workers salvaged 162 of these carved wooden arms from the rubble of the Char Narayana and nearby Harishankara temples, but most were too badly damaged. The struts (with identifiable arms reattached) were reinstalled on the temples, and 102 of the unidentifiable arms were displayed in a Patan Museum exhibition showcasing post-earthquake rescue and conservation efforts.

Shiva Chauguthi, Head Carpenter

Shiva Chauguthi learned to make furniture as a boy in Bhaktapur, a city famous for its woodworkers and carvers. Jointing timber correctly, he tells me, is the hardest thing for a carpenter to learn. He describes the challenges of working on the scaffolding erected on temple roofs, overseeing the laborers who had to join huge pieces of timber according to precise measurements. It took months to find proper sizes of timber, with some 11" x 14" pieces a full twelve feet long. "At first I wondered, how can I do this? But now I can show what I've accomplished.

Two years ago, KVPT appointed me head carpenter!"

Until recent years, wood was abundant in Nepal. It is in this medium that Newar craftsmen have most excelled. The carvings on door and window panels, arched toranas, end beams, columns and capitals all are significant in their iconography and demonstrate the artistic invention of the carver. Wooden temple struts of the Gods not only offer divine protection, but also provide instruction. For instance, below the depictions of Siva or Vishnu on the Harishankara Temple are small scenes showing results of evil deeds, with inscriptions such as, "Who abandons his dharma is stung by hornets."

Indra Kaji & Indra Prasad Shilpakar, Woodcarvers

Following the tradition of generations of Shilpakars (the Newar caste of woodcarvers), Indra Kaji Shilpakar started sanding wood when he was ten. Guided by his father and uncle, he began carving at age 12, using the tools made traditionally by the Khami (blacksmith caste). "When I saw the damage of the Patan Durbar, I wondered how it would ever be rebuilt," remembers this renowned master carver. "But I was called immediately to begin work on several temples."

To begin the reproduction or repair of a strut or door panel, Indra Kaji draws the imagery for his relatives to roughly carve. He is familiar with traditional iconography and often refers to images of Deities drawn by his grandfather. When he has no model to work from, he must reimagine a carving of a God by studying carvings of other Gods: "there are so many questions to solve—how

many arms, what the Deity holds," he explains. Then he or his son Indra Prasad complete the final intricate carving. When it is time to install the finished piece, they know in which direction to install it: for instance, in the local Siva temples Ganesha will always face south.

Indra Prasad has a masters degree in fine arts, specializing in sculpture. He admits, "When we make carvings for private orders, we can earn more income. But the public doesn't see those pieces. We like restoration work, because it stands out. When people can see our work on the square, we feel pride."

Yet public work comes with a peril. A strut his father had painstakingly carved for Patan's Sulima Temple was stolen and never found. "Once the carved work is public, there are so many risks—for instance, kids put their bubble gum in the crevices," Indra Kaji says woefully.

Their struts, columns and most recently, carved window panels for the square's Bhai Degah Temple are carefully documented on Indra Prasad's mobile phone: A torana (an ornamental arched piece above a portal) may take five months to carve, and a single panel flanking a door or window 5 to 6 weeks. "One thing we had not known before the earthquake is how our ancestor carvers saved time, putting the most intricate carving closer to the ground where we can best see it. So, a first-floor temple window may have the carving of a God. The floor above may have a lion, and then above that a bird, and then perhaps only a small motif on the top level."

Despite their success, they worry their profession may not survive into the next generation. Large pieces of wood are hard



THOMAS KELLY

In the wake of destruction, new life is breathed into ancient temples



(Clockwise from left) Ruins of the Char Narayan temple after the massive earthquake of 2015; Char Narayan Temple after restoration; scaffolding covers a temple during its reconstruction; head carpenter Shiva Ram Chauguthi supervises craftsmen carving pieces for one of the restoration projects



THOMAS KELLY



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to obtain. The even bigger issue is passing on the skills: “We need the government or some organization to create a university to teach our carving arts and give certification,” explains Indra Kaji. Like other Nepalese craftsmen, he wishes the government would provide more support and appreciation for craftspeople and quality restoration. KVPT has tried to fill this gap.

Harishankara Mandir

Though it had survived the earthquakes of 1809, 1833 and 1934, this three-tiered temple built in 1706 collapsed almost completely in 2015. Soon after the earthquake, 2,000 parts were sorted, documented and repaired. By 2017, the entire first level of the temple—including columns, capitals and beams—had been “test-assembled” in KVPT’s workshop. It was then disassembled and reassembled on the empty plinth. By 2018 the second-level timber elements were installed, and by 2019 the third level was completed. Roofs were covered utilizing 16 truckloads of yellow mud topped by *jhingati* (overlapping clay tiles). Finally, metalsmiths Babu Ratna and Binod repaired and re-gilded the roof pinnacle.

The reconstruction, spanning four years and requiring several thousand man-days, succeeded in reusing 90% of recovered historical materials while improving seismic strength at the same time. Only when restoration was completed could the Deity, Harishankara, inhabit the temple again. Hari-shankara is the eight-armed manifestation of Vishnu (Hari) and Siva (Shankara).

During the earthquake, the Harishankara murti had broken diagonally at the waist. A unique collaboration between local engineers and craftsmen with students and professors from the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, helped to repair the almost five-foot-tall sculpture so that Harishankara could be returned to the temple sanctum.

Rohit recalls working out the challenge of its repair: “You cannot plan the reassembly on paper—you have to hold the sculpture and find the thickest parts where it would be safe to insert steel dowels.” But even after reassembly, the statue could not be worshiped; tradition does not allow the worshipping of a broken statue. So master stone carver Amar Shakyia put a photo of the original on a smaller stone and made a smaller replica, less than one foot tall. The temple priest gave the new statue life during a fire puja (homa), a ritual of regeneration. Now, both the original and the new God reside together to receive worshippers in the temple’s sanctum.

Amar Shakyia, Stone Sculptor

Amar says it has become harder and harder to find good stone, and he often needs to move his workshop when neighbors complain about the noise of chiseling and hammering. His children work on computers and not with the hammer and chisels of many types that he learned to use from his father. Yet he has found satisfaction working in this project: “Before I was hired to work on the square, I did not take so much notice of it. But now I’ve looked hard at everything and it has inspired me in my profession.”

Amar shows us places in the square where KVPT has not just

restored or replaced earthquake-damaged pieces, but also added stone images that had been stolen or had never existed. He is particularly proud of an image of Mahalakshmi, eternal companion of Lord Vishnu, representing prosperity and abundance, which he carved to replace a stolen image in the Vishveshwara Temple.

Krishna Mandir

Krishna Mandir, a three-story square stone *shikara*-style temple, is the most important temple for Vaishnavite Hindu pilgrims from all over Nepal and India, who visit especially for the celebration of Krishna’s birth (Krishna Janmashtami). The term *shikara* refers to mountain peaks, which are suggested by the temple’s 16 open-air pavilions peaked with 21 gilded pinnacles. Its style, unique to Nepal, was compared to Mount Meru. Surrounding the ground floor are narrative friezes carved with 55 scenes from the *Ramayana*; on the floor above are 36 scenes from the *Mahabharata*. Legend has it King Siddhinarasimha Malla in a dream saw Radha and Krishna in front of the palace, and so

.....
Restoring the Divine: (upper-right, clockwise) Indra Kaji Shilpakar working on Hari Shankara Temple’s torana (entry arch) and designs; Indra Prasad Shilpakar and Indra Kaji Shilpakar standing alongside the Vishnu carving they restored at Hari Shankara Temple; they and their team lift a beam into place; (lower-left) Priestess Bandana Jha and her mother-in-law, Manimaiya Jha; (lower-right) the restored replica, but smaller, of Hari Shankara



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Re-creating what once was has its challenges

Bandana Jha, priestess

For hundreds of years, the relatives of Bandana Jha, 35, have performed rituals and daily puja for the square’s temples. When a priest who had performed puja for the Harishankara Temple for nearly half a century could not carry on, she and her mother-in-law, Manimaiya Jha, took over. “Men will continue to carry out rituals such as homa, the fire ritual bringing renewal,” she says, “but in the future maybe only women will perform daily puja. The younger generation of gents are too busy.”

Bandana rises at 4:00am to bathe, then performs her house puja. Next she goes to various

temples in her neighborhood, worshipping Ganesh, Uma Maheshwar and Harishankar. Arriving at the southern end of the Patan Square, she performs puja in a Krishna temple before arriving at the Harishankara Mandir at 8:30am. “I don’t feel hungry,” she says. “God gives me energy.” Widowed in her teens, she lives with her mother-in-law and son. “God is my family.”

The doorways to the temple’s inner sanctum are flanked by carvings of the Eight Mother Goddesses, powerful protectors of the city and of individuals. Four, lost in the 1970s, were replicated during the temple’s reconstruction by Indra Kaji Shilpakar. Taking off her sandals, Bandana unlocks the door to the sanctum, enters and sweeps the floor of dust and debris. In the center of the sanctum stands the impressive statue of Harishankara.

Missing sculptures must be remade by the most skilled of artisans

The right half of the image, Siva, is flanked by a smaller Uma Parvati, while the left half, Vishnu, is accompanied by Laxmi. The murti has been so well repaired one can scarcely see the damage, but a replica image carved by Amar Shakyia rests on a stone block below it. “God is in both,” she tells us, “But the old one is imperfect for worship. With only the old one, our puja is not valid—it is incomplete.”

She washes the great old statue and then the small one with water and lights an oil lamp. On a copper plate she has assembled rice, black sesame, unhusked grains of barley, red and yellow powder, and orange and red petals. She scatters petals and grains on the feet and then the heads of each murti, and then marks with red powder the feet, navel, arms and head. More flowers and grains are

given to the Deities, with grains offered to their mouths to feed them. She rings the bell, calling the Gods and chanting, “Harishankar Narayan, Om Namo Bhagwati Basu Devaya Harishankar Mahadev, Om Namo Shivai.”

Bandana offers bananas and sweets to the Gods, then lights and offers incense. She ritually washes her face with the smoke, a blessing from the Gods, then touches her head to the feet of each.

The Gods have accepted her prayers. She returns home to make tea and have a meal with her mother-in-law, satisfied that the Gods are fed and cared for till the next day.





Continuing the Lineage

Surya Bahadur Ranjitkar is descended from a line of stone carvers. After 13 years working with KVPT, his expertise is vast. Few buildings in Nepal are made of stone, so knowledge of their repair is limited. Surya Bahadur took part in a training program provided by Professor Ramesh Bhole and Dr. Neeta Das from India, where he learned a system of numbering stones so they could be reused or repaired. Then he set about repairing or carving new stones, and reinserting them using lime *sirkhi* (brick dust) mortar.

On the second story of the Krishna Mandir, he shows me the heavy 14" x 14" base stones he had carved and then replaced, climbing up and down a heavy scaffold for days. "I was scared because the stones were so large and heavy, but I wore a helmet and used a chain pulley. I can do it myself, and it won't be hard, I kept affirming. 'Just work slowly.'"

A KVPT publication documented the precarious work with photos and captions: Surya Bahadur checking straps as the corner stone is removed; with the temporary steel post; preparing to fill joints with mortar after installing the new corner stone....

Slight and nimble, he leads us through the square to see all the carved stone gateways, stone lions, base stones and temple pillars he has worked on over the years. "In the history of the Patan Square, I know my name is here."

Tirtha Maya Tamang, Cleaner and Laborer

On restoration sites, women are cleaners and carriers of bricks and debris. Before the grand opening of the Bhimsen Mandir, I meet Tirtha Maya Tamang, 35, cleaning the

gilded doorway with its new repoussage (hammered metal relief) Deities placed in the torana above and along the sides. Tirtha Maya used to sell jewelry on the square to tourists. She points to her husband, Rakesh Shrestha, who is operating a pulley to raise bricks to a scaffold nearby. "He used to drive a taxi, but since the pandemic we work here together, and we like it," she says.

Vishveshwara Mandir

Both roofs of Vishveshwara (Lord Siva, Lord of the Universe) Temple, consecrated in 1627, collapsed in the rains of 1989. The damaged stone elephants were at the time poorly patched with cement and stand at the front of the temple, serving as a reminder of this event. As Rohit reminds me, repair and restoration are ongoing processes.

The carved wood columns on the temple's first level form what scholar Niels Gutschow calls a "virtual forest of sturdy pillars." In 2015, this timber structure saved the temple when its brick walls collapsed. Now the brick masonry has been rebuilt, and the precious columns have a steel skeleton to take the load.

"Conserving doesn't mean you have to build from scratch," says Rohit, who is critical of quick rebuilding efforts that take place without research and investigation. Though some of the temple's stone bases were broken, "We salvaged the stone pieces and rejoined them. Most people don't think about the importance of saving materials, the importance of things that are old."

Bishwo Ram Suwal, Brick and Stone

Buildings of the Newar towns and cities were traditionally constructed of timber and

brick, and narrow alleys and squares were predominantly paved with brick. Unique to Newar brick construction is the use of *daci apa* brick, a type of exterior veneer brick that tapers towards the back, with the front face showing almost no mortar. This high-fired deep red brick makes a beautiful smooth wall surface. Behind it is an interior layer of low-fired brick called *ma apa*. A core of rubble brick fills the space between these outer and inner layers.

Few people today retain the ancient skill of bricklaying. Bishwo Ram Suwal, 53, is a master mason who has worked for fourteen years with KVPT, laying brick and paving stones and installing the heavy base stones of the Durbar's temples. After the earthquake, seeing the salvaged bricks carefully stacked in piles around the collapsed temples, he knew that the rebuilding could be done. Where temples had collapsed completely, the task was relatively straightforward: he simply started with the foundation and built upwards. Much harder, he says, was repairing walls that still stood but were fragile—since the whole temple might suddenly collapse. While repairing walls, he came up with new ideas, such as a system of interlocking outer and inner bricks to make the walls more resilient long term.

Bishwo Ram says humbly, "We are lucky to have the chance to work on these monuments, as they are the gift from our ancestors. In working on them we see their skill."

The Pillar of Yoganarendra Malla

King Yoganarendra Malla erected a 26-foot stone pillar in 1693. A metal sculpture on top depicts an elegant king sitting in a large



lotus with his hands in Anjali mudra (prayer position). The king is flanked by two diminutive wives, who also hold their palms together. He is symbolically protected by a large naga (serpent Deity) and is armed with two swords and a shield. Yet the king's statue was not protected from the earthquake. Rohit explains, "The statue was smashed beneath the fallen pedestal, bending the king at the neck and waist but fortunately not damaging his head. Everyone wanted to make a new one, but the old is valuable—it has history. We are not here to create Disneyland. We put a steel skeleton inside the statue to strengthen it, and we put steel in the pedestal to bear the weight of the statue. With help from the Viennese conservators, we gilded the areas that had been damaged by hammering the king's body back into shape." The reinforced pillar was erected in 2016, using a crane. In 2017 the king and his wives once again perched high above the square.

Babu Ratna Maharjan and Binod Maharjan, Metal Craftsmen

"I grew up playing amidst the temples on the Patan Square and had a creative mind," relates Babu Ratna. Rather than follow his caste's farming tradition, he began to draw and make his own tools and teach himself the skills held by the tamrakar (metalworker) craftsmen in his neighborhood. For 20 years he has worked for KVPT, making repoussage and developing new technology for installing stone pillars and blocks. He often works with his friend Binod.

When the Yoganarendra statue fell, the stone pillar did not break, but the gilded copper lotus holding the king's statue was detached. "When I work on something old, I learn how it was assembled and find a way to improve it," he says. He modified the iron structure within the metal lotus so it would hold more securely to the pillar.

He hammered out each part of the lotus,

Divine details grace each temple pillar and archway throughout the Patan Durbar Square



(clockwise from top-left) Close-up of a carving by Amar Shakyas; Surya Bahadur Ranjitkar examining the statues in the worship bath of Tusha Hiti; Amar Shakyas working on a statue alongside his other creations at his home studio; an overview of the Tusha Hiti bath; youth and students under the torana of Vishveshwara Temple





and used a jack to straighten the iron rod within the snake. He disassembled and repaired each part of the king and his queens. "Making something new is easier than repairing the old. From KVPT I learned how to conserve with quality, take time, and not to compromise." I ask about the most challenging aspect of his work after the earthquake. "It is not difficult, but it takes time. If you apply too much heat while welding one place, it can crack someplace else." Repairing the king's lips and the folds of his clothing required the most careful touch, he explains.

After Babu Ratna had reassembled the Yoganarendra statue, the Viennese conservation experts introduced a new way to gild using glue and gold leaf. The traditional way used by most artisans is to mix gold with mercury, which is extremely poisonous. The gilder puts a piece of raw meat in his mouth and then rinses with alcohol, believing this will prevent toxicity. Artisans prefer this method, Binod explains, because even though it is dangerous, it lasts longer, whereas new



methods require replacement in fifty years.

Babu Ratna and Binod lead us around the square to show us their repairs. They point to the gilded copper pinnacles on the Krishna mandir that they reattached with methods to block water damage, and new metal supports they created for many of the mandirs' wooden pillars. They used their skills and ingenuity to invent practical conservation solutions. Babu Ratna emphasizes again and again how conservation needs creative minds. Binod adds, "I never thought the square would be rebuilt in my lifetime. Now I come here with my child and am so proud—rebuilding is part of our story."

Bhimsen Mandir

One of the five Pandava heroes from the *Mahabharata*, Bhimsen is worshiped by Newars as the protector of trade and

commerce. Bhimsen Mandir, a favorite of local people, is duly resplendent with a top roof clad in gilded copper, gilded copper roof finials on each of the three roofs, a projecting bay window clad in gilded copper, bronze bells along the roof eaves, elaborate struts depicting Bhairav, Ganesh and Siva, and a long metal banner that hangs from a middle finial on the third roof. After the earthquake, the temple required bracing on all four sides. KVPT's artisans not only strengthened the building, but replaced stolen images around the gilded copper repoussage door frame. With the temple's splendid metal decorations gleaming, the Prime Minister of Nepal recently consecrated its reopening.

Rajindra and Rabindra Shakya, Metal Carving and Repoussage

Brothers Rajindra and Rabindra Shakya were contacted by KVPT to make the new repoussage images of Gods that had been stolen from the Bhimsen Mandir. They had learned their skills as children from a family member, and Rabindra continued his training in an arts university. Their workshop maintains the high level of quality that Newars have attained in metal working. Here giant Gods and Buddhas are created for monasteries all around the world. The work involves drawing a design to a sheet of metal, setting it in pitch and hammering from the backside and then setting it in pitch again and carving details with hundreds of chisels.

They do not know whether the next generation of their family will continue their metalwork tradition, but for four years the brothers have provided training to three boys of the Tamang ethnicity, all in their



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early twenties. I ask Sushan Tamang what has been the hardest thing to learn, and he explains how difficult it is to hold the chisel steady due to the vibration from the hammer. "That these boys are interested to learn is so important for the future," comments Rajindra, "or else our profession will not continue."

The Future of Patan Durbar Square

Patan Durbar Square is a model conservation effort, led by the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust in cooperation with the Department of Archeology, Government of Nepal. The square is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. But everything depends on the living masters of the necessary crafts.

Rohit points out that preserving the square

is not only about conserving buildings, but preserving the ongoing specific worship, rituals and festivals associated with each edifice. The temples are where Gods and people meet.

Daily, in the bays between carved columns, young couples watch TikTok on their mobile phones, old men shoot the breeze and school-girls sip cups of bubble tea. Young children play on stone lions, and students in school uniforms pose on temple steps for class photos. The square is alive and has never been more visited and appreciated.

Before their morning class, three IT students, Prashant, Shishir and Benuka gather on the plinth of the Harishankara Mandir. "We do our puja at Krishna Mandir," Prashant says, "and we like to be near our old culture."

After their classes in business administration, Puja and her friend Aakriti sit in front of the Patan Museum enjoying ice cream and watching the activity. A bride and groom in elaborate wedding clothes pose for photos with temple backgrounds. There are children with balloons, the ever-present dogs, more students with ice cream. Puja reflects that youth have a responsibility for the cleanliness of the square: "It's youth who understand most about pollution and the environment, but we are also more into ice cream. We cannot carelessly discard our ice cream wrappers and other trash or spit gum without thinking."

In a secluded bay of the Vishveshwara Temple, 16-year-old Prasant is drawing the face of his friend Rijisha. "I used to play here as a child," he says. After the earthquake, when he was but nine, he asked his parents to donate money for rebuilding the square.

From his sketchpad he shows me a detailed pencil drawing of the temple. "Slowly, I will draw them all."

"I'm just chilling," says Sanjog Rai, a business student. "With all the temples, it's a nice place to hang out with my friends. People feel happy here—it has a good vibe. I'm glad the square is well taken care of."

With the care of KVPT, the artisans and the local people, the square is in good hands. But as Rohit reminds me, "Conservation is an ongoing effort. There is much more to be done if we want to keep these buildings for the future." For more information on KVPT, and if you wish to donate, please visit:

kvptnepal.org

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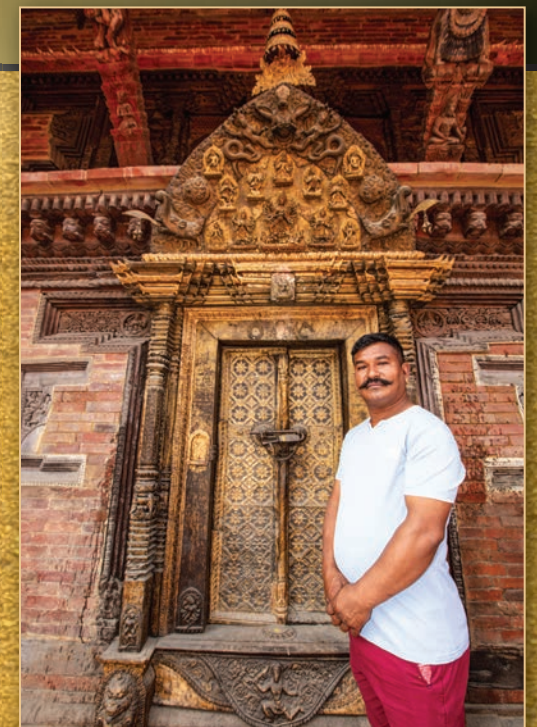
Under the blessings of the Gods. . .

(Clockwise from top-left) The fallen bust of King Yogendra Malla after the 2015 earthquake; restored statue of King Yogendra Malla alongside his wives; Rupindra Shakya, Mangal Maharjan, Rajesh Shakya engaged in metalwork at their shop; A statue of Maitreya with metal frames from other works in the background



. . . art and selfless service blossom side by side

(Clockwise from above) Young Puja Poudel, 20, and Aakriti Devkota, 19, are both students who frequent Patan Durbar Square, the Yoganarendra Malla pillar is seen here in the background; Santa Man Maharjan standing in front of the torana repoussage he restored; craftsman Sushan Lama hammers repoussage designs at his workshop





N E P A L

Beloved Mystic Mountains

Nepal's chief surveyor recounts the Himalayas' spiritual importance, the modern and ancient history and his own 2019 work on Everest's summit

BY KHIM LAL GAUTAM WITH
MADHU SUDAN ADHIKARI, NEPAL

THE HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS FORM A 1,500-mile arc from Naga Parbat in Pakistan to Namchabarwa in Tibet, crossing India, Nepal and Bhutan. Three of the world's greatest rivers, the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra, originate in the Himalayas—literally “the abode of snow”—providing fresh water to more than 700 million people. The range has numerous high peaks, including the world's highest, Everest, or in Hindu lore, Naubandhana, which when covered with shining snow looks like the crown of the Earth.

Here modern researchers of various disciplines find much to study: geography, geology, hydrology, meteorology, biodiversity, ecology, environment, sociology, ethnicity, art, culture and more. It is the most appropriate place for adventurous tourists to hike, explore deep canyons or climb mountains. It is a huge store of natural resources. Small wonder that people since time immemorial have been so keen to know about this versatile and precious natural gift—seeking to understand how the mountains were formed, how high the peaks are and how they might be climbed.

The Himalayas in Scripture

We can find several modern and ancient literatures that exalt and explain the glory of the Himalayas. Ancient literature mentioning them include three great Sanskrit poems:

Kumarasambhava of Kalidasa, *Kiratarjuniya* of Bharabi and *Naisadacharita* of Sriharsha. In the very first sloka of *Kumarasambhava*, Kalidasa describes the Himalayas: “There is to the north a mountain named Himalaya, whose soul is Deity, with his spurs diving into the Eastern and Western ocean; he stands as the measuring rod of the earth.” In sloka 1.17, he wrote, “And marking him as the source of the materials of sacrifice, and marking him strength, as well able to support the earth, the Creator bade him share in the sacrifice, and Himself attended his installation as king of the mountains.”

In 5.10 of the *Kiratarjuniya*, Bharabi explains the range's richness: “The Himalaya bears no mountain peaks without heaps of gems, no caves without creepers; the Himalayan rivers that look like the newly married bride are full of the lotus, and there is no tree in the region without flowers.”

In *Naisadacharita*, sloka 19.32, the beauty of the Himalayan rocks is described: “Should not the beds of the day lotus laugh, the sun, their ally, being up? Should not the night lotus slumber, the moon, its friend, having lost its radiance? Perhaps the day lotus blossoms have exchanged their sleep for yonder smile of the night lotus bed; the smile that resembles the Himalayan rocks in beauty.”

One can find several analogical expressions regarding Himalaya in other Sanskrit texts, such as 10.25 of the *Bhagavad Gita* where Krishna says, “I am Bhṛigu amongst the great

seers and the transcendental Om amongst sounds. Amongst chants know Me to be the repetition of the Holy Name; amongst immovable things, I am the Himalayas.”

The *Rigveda*, oldest of the Vedic texts, in sloka 10.121.4 says that the Himalayas, the oceans, and the universe all are created by the Almighty. “Through His might, are these snow-covered mountains, and what men call the sea and Earth His possession: His arms are these, His are these heavenly regions.”

The History of Everest Research

Mount Everest was a lesser-known mountain until the British embarked on their long-term mission to colonize South Asian countries. The East India Company undertook The Great Trigonometric Survey of India in 1802 under the direction of William Lambton, to precisely survey the entire Indian subcontinent. Beginning in the South and working at times with 700 people and huge instruments, they established with great accuracy the latitude and longitude of survey towers and stone markers at points across India.

In 1823 George Everest (he pronounced his name “eave-rest,” incidentally) took over the survey and reached North India. At the time, Dhaulagiri (214 miles to the west) was thought to be the highest peak in the world. As the survey team established control points to measure the Himalayas, they eventually identified one mountain, “Peak XV,” as the highest, at 29,000 feet. Concerned that all the

zeroes might give the impression that the elevation was rounded off, the lead surveyor added two feet to make it sound more exact: 29,002. According to a long-standing joke, he thus became the first person to put “two feet” on the mountain. In 1865, the Royal Geographical Society named it after Everest (over his objections). Thereafter, Sagarmatha (its Nepali name) earned global fame as Mount Everest.

Geologists say the Himalayan range began to form 40 to 50 million years ago, when two large landmasses, India and Eurasia, driven by plate movement, collided. Because both landmasses have about the same rock density, one plate could not be subducted under the other; the pressure of the impinging plates could only be relieved by thrusting skyward, which contorted the collision zone and formed the jagged Himalayan peaks. What had been the bottom of the Tethys Sea became the world's tallest realm.

In the Great Flood

Many peaks are sacred in both Hinduism and Buddhism, but Mt. Everest has a special place in Hindu scripture. According to a story in the *Matsya Purana*, by the end of the Chakshusha Manu era, when the king was offering water to the Sun in the Kritmala river, a small fish came in his hands. When Satyavrat tried to put the fish back in the river, the fish asked not to put there but to be saved. The king brought him to the ashram in his water pot. The fish grew larger overnight, and the king put him in a bigger pot. The fish again grew in the pot, and the king put him in a pond. The fish quickly grew even there. Realizing this was no ordinary fish, Satyavrat set out to throw it into the sea. But again the fish asked not to be released, but to be saved. With folded hands, the king spoke to the fish, saying he seemed to be no ordinary fish and asked of its real nature.

World's highest point: (top) Panoramic view of Everest, just left of center; (below) *Manu and the Seven Rishis pulled to safety by Vishnu's Matsya avatar, a golden horned fish, on Naubandhana Mountain, later named Everest*



Then Lord Vishnu appeared in the form of His fish avatar and explained soon the earth would be submerged in the sea due to a catastrophe of excessive rain. “In advance, with my inspiration, you will make a huge boat. When the catastrophe starts, you will take all living beings into the boat, including the seven sages, and seeds from all the Earth's plants. I will come to you in this horned fish form. Tie your boat to my horn with the serpent Vasuki and I will pull you safely through the sea.” Saying this, Vishnu disappeared.

The king started doing penance, the catastrophic rains arrived. The monarch sat in the great boat with the sages, food, animals and seeds, and the sea began to rise. Vishnu's fish avatar, Matsya, appeared and the king tied the boat to His horn. While navigating the

waters, Matsya taught the king the principle of Self, then secured their safety by tying the boat to a lofty Himalayan peak. Thus ended the sixth Manu era, Chakahusha, and began the seventh, Vaivasvata.

The tip of the Himalaya that remained above water while the remainder earth was submerged was obviously the tallest peak of the world, Everest. The line where the boat was tied is still there on the mountain as a yellow band below the summit at 29,032 feet—well above the second highest mountain, K2 at 28,251 feet. Thus without measuring its height, the highest peak of the world was identified at the beginning of Earth's present era, Vaivasvata Manu. The peak was named at that time as Naubandhana (*nau* = boat; *bandha* = tie).

We can find these slokas in *Mahabharata*: “O best of the Bharatas! She was immediately bound there by the sages. Hearing the words of the fish, the boat reached the peak of the Himalayas. That is the peak called Naubandhana, beyond the Himalayas. It is still well known. O, Arjuna! O, best of the Bharatas! know this fact.”

From the above, we can say that Mt. Everest was in existence at least at the end of the sixth era of Manu. To determine that date, we can then calculate backwards from chants at the commencement of Hindu rituals, which state we are “in the second half of Brahma's life, in His very first day, Svetabarhkalpa, in the Vaivasvata Manvantara, in the 28th yuga, in the 5,123rd year [in 2022 CE] of the Kali Yuga.” From this, I have determined that the tying of the boat to Everest took place 122,261,123 years ago. This is earlier than the geologists' 40 to 50 million years for the origin of the mountains, but not totally out of line, especially when compared to the Biblical date for the similar story of a great flood and Noah's ark being set in time at just 4,372 years ago!

One can't determine from our scriptures,



ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY KHIM LAL GAUTAM

however, when the Himalayas were created. The first mention is *Rigveda* 10.121.4 which says they were created by God. There was no issue of climbing the Himalayas, because the Deities used to go there for penance and meditation.

No measurement was made to find the highest peak, because the only peak that was not submerged during the catastrophic flood was the highest one, Naukabandhan.

It is, of course, difficult to verify the above dating calculations, but as a surveyor, I found it a most interesting exercise in exploring our geographical history as portrayed in our scriptures. But a catastrophic earthquake in Nepal brought Everest into my life and work in a very real manner.

When the Earthquake Struck

It was Saturday noon, 25 April, 2015. I was fitting a solar panel at our newly rented office building in Sirdibas village of Gorkha, a district in the foothills of Himalayas around 56 miles northwest of Kathmandu. Flocks of birds fluttered over me, and dogs started barking loudly. All of a sudden, I felt a tremor underfoot. The intensity of the jolt continued worsening for a couple of minutes. A building 165 feet away was destroyed right before my eyes. People were crying in panic as they ran out of their houses to open spaces.

My building was trembling so badly that I was really scared, my mind almost frozen in fear. I had absolutely no idea what was going on. I don't know exactly what I was thinking, but I jumped off the 25-foot-tall building—somehow without hurting myself—and ran towards an open space where people were shouting, "Earthquake, earthquake!" Only

Aiming high: (above) the summit team not far from base camp; (inset) Khim Lal Gautam leaps a crevasse; (opposite) Khim Lal (left), Rabin Karki (middle) and Tshiring Jangbu Sherpa with the Global Navigation Satellite System equipment behind them, on top of Mount Everest from 3:00 to 5:00 am on May 22, 2019

then did I realize what was happening.

We later heard on the radio that the epicenter of the 7.8 Richter scale earthquake was Barpak, a village just 12 miles away from us. Thousands of houses as well as cultural monuments in our area were reduced to rubble.

Did Everest Gain Elevation?

Scientists and researchers from around the world talked about a possible change in the height of Nepal's mountains due to the earthquake. It was determined that Kathmandu Valley itself had moved 4.7 feet to the southwest and was uplifted three feet. Responding to widespread questions over the height of Mount Everest, the survey department announced that a new measurement would be made with its own resources and manpower. A team of 80 surveyors led by Deputy Director General Susheel Dangol was assigned to accomplish the overall campaign. Different groups were formed for different tasks. It was my great good fortune to be assigned with the most important and challenging task, the leader of Summit Observation. Perhaps, I got that opportunity because I had previously summited Everest in 2011.

Our team arrived at Everest base camp in April, 2019, for 26 days of acclimatization. On May 18th, surveyor Rabin Karki and I headed up the Kumbhu Icefall with three sherpas, while two of our surveyors, Yubaraj Dhital and Suraj Singh Bhandari, stayed at base

camp. Our team carried survey instruments to conduct observations using the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS). In conjunction with observations by several other teams, these would pinpoint accurately the elevation of the highest point on Earth.

We reached Camp II the same day, Camp III at the base of Lhotse Face the next day, and Camp IV at the South Col the next. That is easy to say, but this was technical climbing at high altitude, with hurricane force winds at the South Col. But that was the least of our worries. When we got to Camp IV, we learned that the stockpile of oxygen that was supposed to be there had not yet arrived. The situation was critical: without oxygen, it is nearly impossible to summit, and a return to base camp basically means going home. Fortunately, we successfully borrowed enough for our purposes.

We headed for the summit at 2 pm, putting us there around midnight. This was unusual, as most climbers start from the saddle at about midnight and take 10–15 hours to reach the top. Our guides were concerned: "If it is too cold, we cannot even take off our mittens to work with the equipment."

But the nighttime arrival also meant our work would not be disturbed by a rush of climbers on the summit. Additionally, satellite positioning data is much more accurate if it is made at night instead of at sunrise. This expedition was all about accuracy, and we



had to do everything in our power to ensure that there would be no margin for error in our measurements.

We reached the summit at 3 am on May 22. Unlike my first climb, it was pitch dark, very windy, and I was utterly exhausted after 13 straight hours of trudging up the mountain. I had nothing left in me physically, and just thinking about the descent made me nervous. But there was no time to think about anything. There was work to be done. Despite the extreme tiredness, howling wind and numbing cold, we had to complete our GNSS survey and the Ground Penetrating Radar observation (to measure the depth of snow under us)—all in the limited time window at our disposal. We were completely focused on our work, which we had rehearsed many times at base camp.

We stayed on the summit for almost two hours, installing the GNSS equipment on a small, sturdy tripod designed especially to work on the summit. By 4 am, as the eastern sky started lighting up, other climbers began to arrive at the summit. I was now worried that the climbers would affect the sensitive data we were collecting. However, members of our team kept the climbers from going near the GNSS antenna at the top. Finished with our data collection, we headed back down, contending with a throng of climbers ascending—a record 223 in a single day. At the Hillary Step, we had to wait two hours for our turn on the one-way route.

While we were descending from the South Summit at about 28,000 feet, Rabin Karki's oxygen system started giving him trouble. His life was at risk. Our guide Tshiring Jangbu Sherpa borrowed an extra oxygen cylinder from another Sherpa colleague, and Rabin managed to continue his descent.

I was drained, and did not have much energy left by the

time we got back down to the Balcony. My condition got worse, and on the slope down to the South Col at one point I actually lost consciousness at 26,903—700 feet above the start of the "death zone." The rest of my team were ahead of me and did not realize I had fallen. I must have lain there for two hours in the blue ice, until another climber kicked me to see if I was alive. Normally, if climbers fall unconscious at that altitude, it is unlikely that they will wake up again. It was that kick, and a miracle, that woke me up so that I could stumble down the mountain that day, with the precious cargo of data in my backpack.

Conclusion

Though as per the Hindu mythology it was known 120 million years ago as the highest peak of the world with a different name, Naubandhan, our mission on measuring Sagarmatha (as we Nepalese call Mt. Everest) was successful in gathering all data required for the measurement. In 2020, Nepal and China—based on the findings of their independent survey announced 29,031.69 feet (8,848.86 meters) as the new official height of Mount Everest. That is three feet higher than any previous measurement, a difference largely attributed to the earthquake. It was the most accurate measurement ever made of Sagarmatha and a historic event, not just for Nepal but also for the rest of the world. Our detailed report is here: bit.ly/KhimlalEverest.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Trigonometry's True Origins

BY KHIM LAL GAUTAM

EVEN TODAY, SURVEYING IS LARGELY BASED on trigonometry, the branch of mathematics dealing with triangles. In Hindu tradition, this comes under one of the six *vedangas* or subject sections of the *Vedas*, specifically astrology, which includes both observation of the stars and of terrestrial geography.

In the West, it is taught that Pythagoras, born in 570 bce, is the founder of trigonometry and the discoverer of the theorem named after him. But research has found that the Pythagorean theorem was already described in the *Sulbasutra*, one of six important books written by Baudhayana around 800 bce. Baudhayana did not just explain the relation of sides and hypotenuse of isosceles triangles (the famed $a^2+b^2=c^2$); he explained various relationships between the area and the diagonal and the remaining sides of rectangles.

For example, sutra 48: "If a rope is stretched along the diagonal length [of a rectangle], the resulting area [of a square with sides of that length] will be equal to the sum total of the area [meaning squares] of horizontal and vertical sides taken together." Put in simpler language, if one takes the diagonal of a rectangle and creates a square of that height and width, its area will be equal to squares created by the length of the horizontal and vertical sides. In other words, the square of the diagonal is equal to the sum of the squares of the two sides. This is exactly Pythagoras' theorem, which came two centuries later.

Much later in history, the mathematician Bhaskaracharya, born in 1114 ce, developed methods to measure the height of an object from a distance. He was first famous for the *Siddhanta Shiromani*, which he wrote at the age of 36. This text elaborated the construction of nine ingenious instruments which help observe the stars and calculate the time. One, the Yasti Yantra or stick machine, could measure the height of objects without knowing their distance, (but there seems to have been no systematic effort to measure the heights of mountains).

Though it is still commonly believed that the basis of the mathematics of modern survey science is the theorem ascribed to Pythagoras, all its elements were already articulated in Hindu literature at least 250 years before him. Our scriptures were rich not only in their spiritual teachings and history, but also in science and technology.

The Meat Paradox

How can a person who feels compassion for animals still eat them?

TWO GOOD FRIENDS TAKE A WEEKEND outing through idyllic countryside, driving slowly by green pastures with cows quietly grazing, they gaze endearingly as one coos with a jealous tinge, "I love how those cows are sooo peaceful and content." Returning to town around midday, they nonchalantly waltz into a family restaurant and enjoy big, juicy hamburgers.

The above phenomenon has been dubbed the Meat Paradox—being fond of animals while regularly consuming their flesh. Elisa Aaltolao, tells us, "Research on it posits that it is caused and maintained particularly by six factors: Cognitive dissonance, dissociation, strategic ignorance, hedonism, custom and marginalization of empathy." ("The Meat Paradox, Omnivore's Akrasia, and Animal Ethics")

In a first, a group of researchers in the UK reviewed all known surveys and literature up to May 2020. Their findings were summarized in 2021 in the *Social Psychological Bulletin* as "A Structured Literature Review of the Meat Paradox." Here we share some of the basics. The full paper is available at bit.ly/meat-paradox.

Dissonance and Consonance

The meat paradox represents a form of *cognitive dissonance*, a term describing discomfort arising from a contradiction between one's beliefs and behavior. For instance, in most US surveys meat-eaters expressed concern about animal welfare. The extent of discomfort varied according to the context. Sixty-seven percent were concerned about animals in research, 57% in zoos, and 54% in food production.

The study concluded that concern for animals is shared by most people. In fact, we empathize more with dogs than with adult humans. Nevertheless, 90 to 97% of people consume meat.

According to cognitive dissonance theory, the innate goal of humans is to achieve *consonance*, or compatibility between behavior and values. The strategies toward this end



are of three types: 1) To adjust one's values; 2) To change one's behavior (also known as moral engagement); 3) To obscure the contradiction between one's values and behavior (moral disengagement), such as not thinking about the animals one is consuming.

Since most meat consumers say they care about animals yet continue to eat meat, they are clearly not following strategy one: they do not change their values. And it is clear via statistics that the paradox does not lead them to completely change their behavior, though it does cause some to reduce meat consumption.

This leads to the conclusion that meat-eaters must be employing some form of moral disengagement (strategy three) to obscure the contradiction between meat-eating and their compassion toward animals. It is this pattern that perpetuates meat consumption.

Triggers

A trigger is a stimulus that arouses a sense of dissonance and may set in motion dissonance-reducing strategies. The UK review revealed two primary triggers: reminders of meat's animal origins, and increased awareness of animal suffering. It also found limited support for three other triggers: 1) reminders of one's own meat consumption; 2)

reminders of the harm one's meat consumption inflicts on animals; 3) exposure to vegetarians. The trigger most frequently mentioned in surveys was "reminders of meat's animal origins," such as seeing a photo of a animal one has consumed; or references to meat by its animal name, such as *pig*, *cow* or *deer* (rather than *pork*, *beef* or *venison*).

Additionally, people experience greater dissonance and disengage more when animals are described as "edible" versus "non-edible." Meat-eaters also shared that they experience increased dissonance when exposed to socially threatening stimuli, such as being rejected or criticized for consuming flesh. Common ways that people reduce *dissonance* is to avoid triggers and to trivialize the harmful consequences of their behavior.

Breaking Out of the Paradox?

Engagement (the second strategy for consonance) describes encounters that increase one's empathy with animals. Think of a child connecting with an adorable lamb at a petting zoo, as in "The Simpsons" cartoon (above right), and then being served lamb chops at dinner. Such engagement is a common cause of behavioral change, such as reducing meat, or becoming a vegetarian or vegan. However, surveys revealed that discomfort and willingness to reduce meat consumption waned



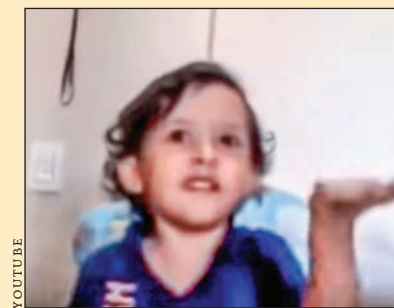
"Enough!"

In 2013, Brazilian toddler Luiz Antonio went viral after his mother recorded him explaining (bit.ly/LuisVeg) why he didn't want to eat octopus gnocchi for lunch. The three-year-old started by trying to grasp how the "legs" ended up on his plate next to rice and potatoes, and what happened to the rest of it.

"Is his head still in the sea?" Luiz asks his mom, who responds, "It's at the fish market." "The man chopped it?" Luiz asks. His mom then informs him that all animals we eat, even chickens, are chopped up, prompting the bold realization, "No! Those are animals!" "So... when we eat animals they die!" a wide-eyed Luiz acknowledges. "Why do they die? I don't like that they die. I like that they stay standing up... These animals—you gotta take care of them... and not eat them!"

After that epiphany, Luiz realizes his mom has been touched by his compassion. "Why are you crying?" he asks. "I'm not crying," his mother responds. "I'm just touched by you." "I'm doing something beautiful?" Luiz wonders aloud, prompting his mom to direct him back to the plate, "Eat! No need to eat the octopus, all right?"

According to a 2013 post at globalvoices.org, some people were inspired by the pure simplicity of the child's argument and decided to adopt a meat-free lifestyle, such the friends with whom



Reckoning: (left page) Seeing the living animal which is a source of meat increases the sense of dissonance; (left) young Luiz Antonio, who faced his paradox when being served calimari, made from octopus; (above) in *The Simpsons* TV sitcom, Lisa meets a sheep during a family visit to the zoo. Later at dinner she is served lamb chops, remembers her encounter and decides to become a vegetarian.

blogger Viviane Zandonadi shared the video. A food writer, she wondered about what she is going to do when her daughter starts to ask the same kind of questions: "I'm apprehensive. When my turn comes, if Cata questions the logic of the food chain, I have no idea what I will say. Luiz Antonio has overthrown my arguments."

Writing for Acerto de Contas blog, Guilherme Carvalho hoped that other parents start to respect the sensitivity of their children, and stop resorting to lies or simplistic arguments to force kids to change their minds: "It is time we stopped deceiving our children and suppressing their feelings of compassion when they show no inclination to eat animals. Let's respect and value this altruistic and compassionate stance. Having a vegetarian child is not a problem, and today there is extensive literature showing the potential health benefits of this option. Luiz Antonio's video has left many people moved—and hopeful."

after two weeks of engagement. This was due to two direct disengagement strategies: 1) *decredibilization*—denying the credibility of information; 2) *trivialization*—downplaying the behavior by comparing it to worse practices.

Disengagement is the predominant response to dissonance. The three most commonly observed disengagement strategies in

relation to the meat paradox are as follows: 1) To deny that animals have positive qualities; 2) To reinforce the paradigm of the four "Ns"—meat is *natural*, *necessary*, *nice* and *normal*; 3) To deny or obscure the obvious harm meat-eating causes to animals.

The reviewed literature did not explore in depth how religious beliefs relate to the paradox, though some survey participants

linked meat consumption to God's abundant provision of food. Others emphasized ethical animal slaughter within Islam.

The authors of the UK review expressed hope that their efforts will inspire researchers to perform more rigorous studies to develop the meat paradox theory and facilitate necessary and positive social changes regarding meat consumption.



The Trinity: (left to right) Muthuswami Dikshitar, Tyagaraja and Shyama Shastri hold a special place of honor in the Carnatic world. They were born in the same village only a few years apart.

.....

raga, swara (musical notes), *sahitya* (lyrics) and Vedanta. Music was their way of life, a vehicle to the Divine—not only to the Divine almighty, but to their inner divinity. They reached tremendous spiritual heights through their outpourings of love, loyalty, seeking and surrender.

Carnatic music connects all the states of South India. These composers brought out the beautiful nuances of Indian languages in their compositions, whether in Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam or Tamil. Deep philosophical truths from the *Itihasas*, *Puranas*, *Vedas*, Vedanta and *Brahmasutras* permeate each song, and the

composers sing about topics that have practical relevance in our lives today. When we listen to the devoted offerings of Shyama Shastri, we wonder how we can develop surrender to Goddess Bangaru Kamakshi; when we hear the *kritis* of Sadasiva Brahmendra we, too, ponder the true purpose of our lives.

The 15th through 19th century was a golden period of 500 years for Carnatic music, immeasurably contributing to the bhakti movements of India. Numerous composers were prolific, producing a staggering volume and variety of work. Sri Tallapakka Annamacharya worshiped the God of Tirumala, Lord Venkateshwara, with his *sankirtanas* in early 15th century Andhra Pradesh. In the same century, Sangita Pitamaha Saint Purandaradasa sang soulful *Devaranamas*. Sadasiva Brahmendra and Oothukkadu Venkata Kavi created Sanskrit masterpieces in the 18th century. The Carnatic music trinity (Sangita Trimurti) Sri Shyama Shastri, Sri Tyagaraja and Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar were all born in the temple town of Thiruvavur, a religious and cultural haven in Tamil Nadu, within a short period of fourteen years. Kerala's shining star, Maharaja Swati Tirunal, composed songs for Lord Padmanabhaswami in the 19th century.

These saints were Vaggeyakaras, composing lyrics (*sahitya*) as well as music for their visionary compositions. They developed compositional styles that brought out the depth and beauty of every raga, and adopted the *kriti* as their primary mode of expression. They are not only renowned within

the field of Carnatic music, but stand among the greatest musical giants to have ever lived.

During a time when Carnatic music flourished in temples and royal courts, these principled composers never engaged in *narastuti*, praising mortals, in exchange for patronage. Their sole, and soul's, inspiration for composing was the Divine alone. While the Carnatic trinity taught music to students in their homes, they also composed songs spontaneously when glorifying Deities at holy shrines they visited. Having engaged in music as a path to liberation their entire lives, these saints could foresee their death and gracefully accept it, thereafter blissfully merging with the divine feet of their *ishta devata*.

Annual Aradhanas are celebrated in honor of Carnatic composers. For students of music, this is a time of remembering, learning and performing, as they learn new kirtanas. These compositions are not simply for entertainment or musical accomplishment, but tools for spiritual upliftment. We offer this Insight as an Aradhana reflecting on the stories of eight saints who revolutionized Indian classical music through their profound linguistic, musical and devotional creations.

GLOSSARY OF CARNATIC TERMS

- ◇ **kirtana/kriti:** Carnatic song
- ◇ **sankirtana:** specialized Carnatic songs in Telugu
- ◇ **devaranama:** specialized Carnatic songs in Kannada
- ◇ **raga:** melodic mode
- ◇ **tala:** rhythmic cycle
- ◇ **swara:** musical notes
- ◇ **sahitya:** lyric in a Carnatic song
- ◇ **gamaka:** melodic oscillation

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

India's Remarkable Carnatic Musician Saints

For these eight composers, music was a spiritual path, an ascent to higher consciousness and moksha

BY LAKSHMI CHANDRASHEKAR SUBRAMANIAN; ART BY BAANI SEKHON

Aradhana refers to glorifying and paying homage, and this Educational Insight is just that. It is a homage to the immortal musical and spiritual giants of the Carnatic music tradition. "Endaro Mahanubhavulu," sings Tyagaraja, as he offers salutations to the many saints who have lived through the ages. With a similar sentiment of awe and admiration, we explore the lives and songs of eight Carnatic composer-saints. A classical South Indian art form dating back to ancient times, Carnatic music originated as a devotional

language. Each of these composers was devoted to Deities who abundantly inspired their spiritual and creative minds. They were vessels of overflowing bhakti, musical creativity and scholarship, easily communicating the inherent relationship between Advaita philosophy and theistic worship.

Carnatic music weds the melodic (*raga*) with the rhythmic (*tala*), binding devotional expression with technical improvisations. These virtuosic composer-saints were powerhouses of musical and scriptural knowledge—voices of



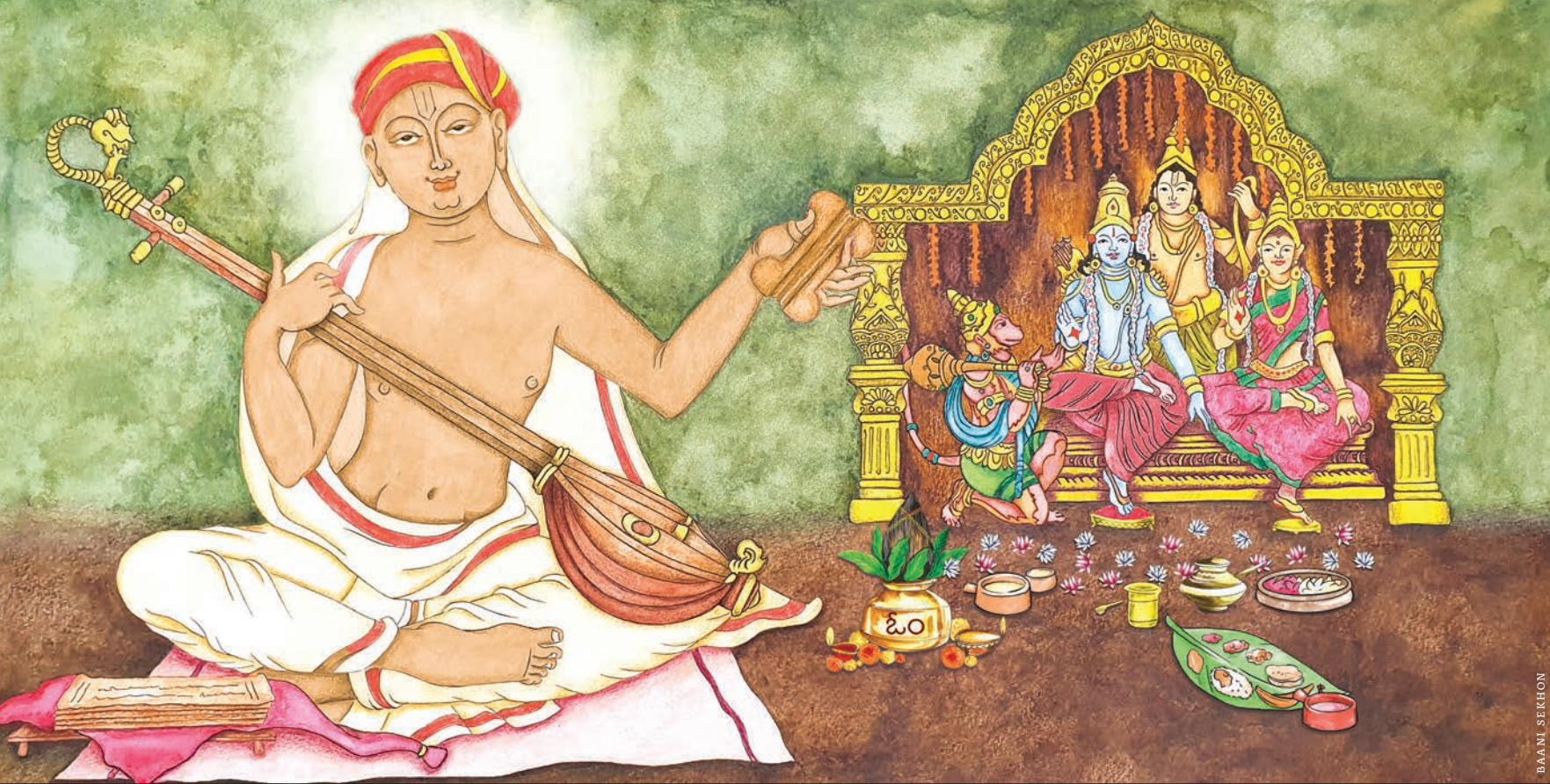
ABOUT THE AUTHOR & THE ARTIST



Lakshmi Chandrashekar Subramanian is an LA-based vocalist who brings devotional singing, scholarship and storytelling onto one platform. With an M.A. in religion from Stanford, she writes on India's poet-saints and has recorded several albums with her mother and guru, Padmini Chandrashekar, in her hometown of Singapore. Lakshmi performs concerts of Electronic Bhakti Music with her husband Aks. www.eclipse-nirvana.com

Baani Sekhon earned her masters in fine arts from College of Arts, Chandigarh, India. After substantial experience in the creative industry, Baani opted to work as a freelancer and art consultant from home. Commissioned illustrations keep her amply engaged. She writes about art, enjoys research projects and maintains a blog. myartpoint.com





Tyagaraja, Lord Rama's Songster

"O Raghava, why this curtain between you and me? You are omnipresent; then how can you hide from me!" So sings Saint Tyagaraja in the composition named "Marugelara," as he awaits the darshan of Lord Rama. His compositions reflect the non-dualistic philosophy of the Advaita sampradaya. This preeminent 19th-century composer-saint, one of the famed Carnatic music trinity, was a genius of swara (notes), laya (rhythm), and sahitya (lyrics). Also known as Tyaga Brahman or Tyagayya, he is believed to have composed 24,000 kritis, out of which we have access to 800 today. These compositions, mostly in Telugu, cover more than 250 ragas!

His Blessed Childhood

Born in Thiruvavur, near Thanjavur, in Tamil Nadu on May 4, 1767, Tyagaraja was the third son of Ramabrahman and Sitamma. His ancestors were from Andhra Pradesh (Kakarla village), and hence he composed his songs in Telugu. After his upanayanam, he commenced learning the *Vedas*, *Shastras* and *Upanishads*. He venerated his father and became his ardent student in Telugu and Sanskrit. From his mother he learned the devotional compositions of Purandaradasa and Sri Vijayagopala Yathi Swamikal. One year, on the night before Sri Rama Navami, thirteen-year-old Tyagaraja spontaneously composed his first kriti, the soul-stirring "Namo Namo Raghavaya." Seeing his son's great promise, the father sent him to Guru Sonti Venkataramanayya for training in classical music.

Divine Vision of Lord Rama

One day when Tyagaraja was around twenty, his father said he would soon depart this world to attain the feet of Lord Rama. The young man could not bear to hear these words and started to cry; to him,

his father was Lord Rama himself. He shared that his one and only goal was for Lord Rama to appear before him in all his beauty and glory. Ramabrahman, eyes welling up with pride, told his dear son, "You can definitely see Lord Rama if you just chant Rama Nama (the name of Rama) one hundred crore (one billion) times." Tyagaraja began chanting, "Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama..." and his father merged with the feet of Lord Rama.

From this point on, Rama Nama was Saint Tyagaraja's everything—parent, brother, friend, confidant, God and more. Twenty years went by, and he was still immersed in singing the Lord's name in every waking moment. He married, had a daughter and eventually completed 96 crores of Rama Nama. One day he heard a knock on the door. Opening it, he was overwhelmed by an effulgent blue light in which Lord Rama appeared in front of him! His dream had come true, the mantra had indeed manifested the form of the Lord!

Saint Tyagaraja dedicated his life to singing only for the Lord. Even though four kings from the Maratha dynasty were in rule during Tyagaraja's time (Tulaji to Raja Shivaji), he never served any of them. These kings were great connoisseurs of art, language and music. When the composer received a prestigious invitation with many gifts to sing alone in the royal court, he declined with the composition, "Nidhi Chala Sukhama." "O my mind! Tell me truly, which conduces greatly to happiness—wealth or the sight of the Lord?"

Innovator of Ragas

Saint Tyagaraja created 60 to 70 ragas (in addition to the lyrics and songs in those ragas), usually by making just one change in the swara pattern of an existing raga. Many a time, he wrote only one kirtana in a specific raga. These are known as "ekakriti ragam," (one-song ragas).

Song as worship: Holding a tambura and the traditional percussion instrument khartal, Tyagaraja sings to Lord Rama, the subject of his thousands of Carnatic songs. Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman listen with rapt attention.

His mudra (signature) is his own name and can be found in all his songs. He often presented a statement in the introductory stanza, and then elaborated on the what and why of it in the following verses. The starting phrase of the song also usually defines the raga's form. Also characteristic are occasional "jumps" in the note structure in many of his compositions. The particular notes (swaras) work closely with the lyrics, and these jumps are often introduced to showcase a certain rasa, or mood.

Tyagaraja's Bhakti

The divine Sage Narada is said to have given Saint Tyagaraja the musical treatise *Swararnava*, using which he created many unique ragas. Tyagaraja mentions the text in the song "Swara Raga Sudha," noting that it had been narrated to Goddess Parvati by Lord Siva. His remarkable compositions were also influenced by the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Srimad Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad Gita*. The saint pilgrimaged to many sacred sites such as Tirupati, Kanchipuram, Srirangam and Sholingur, composing songs at the temples.

His Legacy Lives On

Saint Tyagaraja had numerous disciples who spread his musical legacy throughout South India. He became so popular in his own time, devotees came to his house daily to listen to him or his students sing. Tyagaraja attained samadhi on January 6, 1847, in Thiruvaiyaru, on the banks of the holy river Kaveri. His message to humankind was simple: to get over the shackles of maya, we need to have total surrender and hold on tightly to the divine feet of Lord Rama. Through his life and immortal songs, the devoted composer demonstrated how music is a means to mukti (liberation).

LEARN MORE

- * **Experience** Saint Tyagaraja's life in the biopic *Endaro Mahanubhavulu* (2021), a 100-minute film written and directed by Bombay Gnanam. Available with subtitles at: youtu.be/47cDkpuNWG4
- * **Listen** to Saint Tyagaraja's "Bantureethi Koluva" on Youtube by Uthara Unnikrishnan, complete with lyrics and translation in English: youtu.be/smf7rx-jPMw
- * **Visit** the Prasanna Venkatesa Perumal Temple in Madurai, to see the tambura that Saint Tyagaraja used, alongside that of Venkataramana Bhagavathar, the saint's foremost disciple.
- * **Read** *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja* (1957) for an in-depth exploration of the saint's songs and biography
- * **Watch** Smt. Vishakha Hari's Thyagaraja Hrudayam series on YouTube, in Tamil with English subtitles. Our sincere gratitude to her for enlightening us on this genius composer



Musicians Celebrate

In 2022, the 175th Aradhana of Saint Tyagaraja was celebrated with added fervor globally. At the heart of these Tyagaraja Aradhana festivals is the musical tribute, during which the composer's Pancharatna Kritis are sung and played in chorus. These songs, set to Adi talam, are known as the five gems of Carnatic music. His Utsava Sampradaya Kritis accompany temple rituals such as Radha Kalyanam and Sita Kalyanam. Other categories of compositions include Divyanama kirtanas for bhajana settings, as well as two musical dramas, "Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam" and "Nauka Charitram" for Bhagavatas to enact with dance and music, as was commonly the tradition in olden times.

"All his compositions are conversations with Lord Rama, or conversations with his own mind. Both are the same since his mind is completely filled with Lord Rama alone!" —Carnatic vocalist and Harikatha exponent Smt. Vishakha Hari

"Melody is the soul of music and Tyagaraja is the soul of melody." —Dr. A. Prasanna Kumar, former President of Visakha Music Academy and retired Professor of Politics, Andhra University

A Song by Tyagaraja

Rama Nee Samanamevaru

Ragam: Kharaharapriya; Talam: Roopakam; Language: Telugu

O Lord Rama, who elevated the Raghu dynasty, who can equal you?

Your beloved Sita is tender like the shoot of sweet marjoram.

She is the parrot singing to you in the cage of devotion!

You have brothers who speak such that honey drips from each word.

Hari, Tyagaraja family's greatest ornament, gentle and soft-spoken Lord!

Shyama Shastri Singing to the Goddess

In the spiritual mind of Shyama Shastri (1763–1827), he was Goddess Kamakshi's child, constantly yearning for the Divine Mother's affection, compassion and protection. This is the tone of his gitams, varnams, swarajatis and kritis. He was a Sri Vidya upasaka, born to Vishwanatha Shastri and Vengalakshmi in Thiruvavur. His compositions were primarily in Telugu, his mother tongue, though he also composed in Sanskrit and Tamil. Shyama Shastri's father, like his ancestors, was a priest at the Sri Bangaru Kamakshi Amman Temple in Thanjavur. They lived in a house right behind the temple.

In his youth, he spent a lot of time at the temple, where his devotion towards the Goddess grew. In time, he inherited the right to be temple priest. After performing the pujas each day, while still in the shrine, ecstatic compositions would flow from his mind like a gushing river.

Mastery of Music

Young Shyama Shastri was introduced to classical music by his uncle, and later received four months of training from Sangita Swami of Kashi. With the grace of the Goddess, that period of tutelage helped to make him a grandmaster of the art form. He then studied with Pacchimiriya Adiyappaya, a vina master in the Tanjore royal court.

Shyama Shastri dedicated most of his compositions to Goddess Kamakshi, including three hallmark swarajatis referred to as Ratnatrayam, or Three Jewels. As the architect of the swarajati form, which was originally a dance genre, but now could be sung in concerts, he was an expert in *swaraksharas*, fusing the swaras (notes) with the sahitya (lyrics). For example, the note "Ga" corresponds with a "Ga" in the lyrics. All his compositions carry the mudra (signature) *Shyamakrishna*.

The saint composed roughly 300 songs, of which around 75 are available today. He created the Navaratnamalika—nine exquisite songs on Goddess Meenakshi of Madurai—and glorified many other South Indian temple Deities. Shyama Shastri composed several magnificent kritis in ragas like Anandabhairavi and Saveri, and often adopted Mishra Chapu talam for his compositions.

Shyama Shastri was known for his intricate talams, resounding voice, and majestic countenance. When the famed musician Bobbili Kesavayya from Andhra Pradesh challenged the artistry of the Tanjore musicians, Shyama Shastri was sought to represent Tanjore. The composer-saint immediately approached the Divine Mother, singing

LEARN MORE

- * **Enjoy** anecdotes from Shyama Shastri's life and listen to his compositions on the veena with Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh: youtu.be/JQtffDJGfNo
- * **Listen** to Shyama Shastri's Brovavamma sung in a concert by Carnatic vocal duo Ranjani–Gayatri: youtu.be/jfHhigCtZ2M



the kriti "Devi Brova Samayamide" ("Devi! This is the moment to protect me!"). By the grace of Goddess Kamakshi, the saint won with his skilled singing of raga, tanam, pallavi, mastery of Simhanandana talam and astounding creation of Sharabhanananda rhythm cycle. In a similar musical duel, he defeated Appukutti Nattuvanar, who became an admirer and popularized Shastri's compositions in Mysore.

He and his wife Lalitha had two sons, Panju Shastri and Subbaraya Shastri. In 1827, he attained the lotus feet of Goddess Kamakshi. Panju Shastri then became the priest of Bangaru Kamakshi. Subbaraya Shastri, a gifted Carnatic composer, had the unique blessing to learn music from each of the Carnatic trinity, starting with his father and later from Tyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshitar.

Kamakshi's child: *Shyama Shastri, having completed his daily puja to the Goddess, regales three musical aficionados who have come to his home for a private concert. In front of him is a betel nut knife, which, it is said, was always nearby.*

A Song by Shyama Shastri

Himadri Sute Pahi Mam

Ragam: Kalyani; Talam: Rupakam; Language: Sanskrit

O Daughter of Snow Mountain! Please protect me.
O Bestower of boons! O Supreme Goddess!
O Sri Kamakshi—abiding in the centre of sacred Meru Mountain!
O Golden Bodied! O Lotus Eyed! O Mind-Born of Sage Matanga!
O Mother extolled by Brahma—abiding in lotus, Vishnu, Siva, celestials and great ascetics!
O Mother whose face resembles moon—enemy of lotus!
O Mother whose neck is resplendent with pearl and diamond necklaces! O Creeper of Wish Tree for devotees!
O Gauri—Sister of Vishnu—Shyama Krishna! O Parameshvari!
O Daughter of Mountain! O Mother with dark tresses! O Sri Lalita—Sweet-voiced like a parrot!

Translation by V. Govindan (Shyama Krishna Vaibhavam)

Muthuswami Dikshitar, Blessed by Lord Muruga

"I worship Lord Ganapati of Vatapi, who has the face of an elephant and confers boons on His devotees." Thus sang Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar in a heartfelt offering to Ganesha. This legendary composer, scholar, vocalist, vina exponent and Sri Vidya Upasaka was the eldest son of Subbammal and Ramaswami Dikshitar, a composer known for his magnum opus *Ragatalamalika*, featuring 108 ragas set in 108 talas. Muthuswami Dikshitar's brothers, Chinnaaswami and Baluswami Dikshitar, also renowned musicians, performed Muthuswami's compositions as a vocal duo. Baluswami pioneered the use of the violin in Carnatic music. Muthuswami Dikshitar lived from 1776 to 1835.

Musicians have identified around 500 compositions by Dikshitar spread over nearly 200 ragas. These include several sets of *vibhakti kritis*, four *ragamalikas*, and around forty *nottuswarams* based on Western melodies loosely resembling raga Shankarabharanam. *Vibhakti* refers to case-endings in Sanskrit. Dikshitar was known for his brilliant creations in all the different cases. His exposure to British bands playing Irish music at Fort St George in Madras inspired him to fuse that genre with Sanskrit lyrics. He sang with authority about Advaita Vedanta, mantra, tantra and Sri Vidya, often with rhyming lyrics. Like the Nayanmars and Alvars, Dikshitar pilgrimaged to Saivite and Vaishnavite temples—Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai, Chidambaram, Tirupati, Srirangam, etc.—glorifying the lands, Deities, festivals, architecture and rituals in majestic compositions.

Chidambaranatha Yogi's Guidance

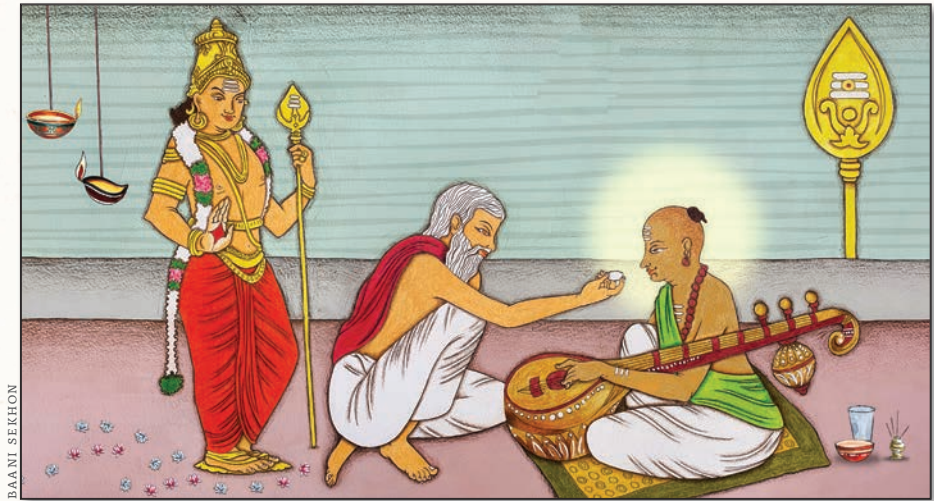
Around 1790, Chidambaranatha Yogi—a sannyasin who gave Sri Vidya diksha to his father—took Dikshitar to Varanasi, where he trained him in Sri Vidya upasana, music, Vedanta and yoga. Here the composer encountered the Dhruvad style of Hindustani music. Influences of Dhruvad are evident in the way he handled certain ragas, with characteristic lilts and tilts. Dikshitar also skillfully created Carnatic counterparts to many Hindustani ragas. Upon the passing of Chidambaranatha Yogi, Dikshitar traveled to the temple town of Tiruttani, remembering his guru's songs in praise of Lord Muruga.

Tiruttani Muruga's Blessing

When he was chanting the Shadakshari mantra at Tiruttani, an elderly man placed sugar candy in his mouth and asked him to sing. Suddenly the man disappeared and Dikshitar had a vision of Lord Subramanya seated on a peacock, with his consorts, Valli and Devasena, on either side! He realized that the man was none other than the Deity, Lord Subramanya of Tiruttani, and the candy was jnana (knowledge). This explains why the composer adopted the signature *Guruguha*, a name of Subramanya. After this incident, Dikshitar composed his first

LEARN MORE

- * **Listen** to the blending of Western melodies with Sanskrit lyrics in Muthuswami Dikshitar's *nottuswara* composition "Shyamale Meenakshi," sung by young Sooryanarayanan: youtu.be/5CUword1TPk
- * **Read** T.L. Venkatarama Aiyar's biography of Muthuswami Dikshitar as part of the National Biography Series (1968)



Divine blessings: *At age 25, Dikshitar reached the famed Tiruttani temple where an old man approached and fed him a sugary sweet. When it was revealed that Lord Muruga was behind the gesture, the youth was so inspired he immediately composed his first song.*

song, "Srinathadi Guruguho." Seven more followed, glorifying Lord Subrahmanya as guru. These make up the Guruguha Vibhakti Kritis.

Dikshitar's Brilliant Creations

Dikshitar composed mostly in Sanskrit, except for a few songs in Telugu and Manipravalam (a literary language). With his mastery of the vina, using the distinct *vainika* style, he would explore a raga through expressive gamakas (melodic oscillations), composing meditative creations, usually slow in tempo, on Lord Siva in the form of Tyagaraja, His consort Sri Nilotpalambal and Goddess Kamalambal. His Kamalamba Navavarna Kritis are filled with mystical and musical intricacies, detailing the tantric mode of Devi worship, sacred geometry and the Sri Chakra. He also composed the seven Vara Kritis, one for each day of the week, in seven ragas set to the seven Sooladi talas. His knowledge of Vedic astrology is seen in his Navagraha Kritis. Dikshitar's disciples include the famed Thanjavur Quartet (Chinniah, Ponniah, Vadivelu and Sivanandam), who formalized the performance repertoire of Bharatanatyam as we know it today.

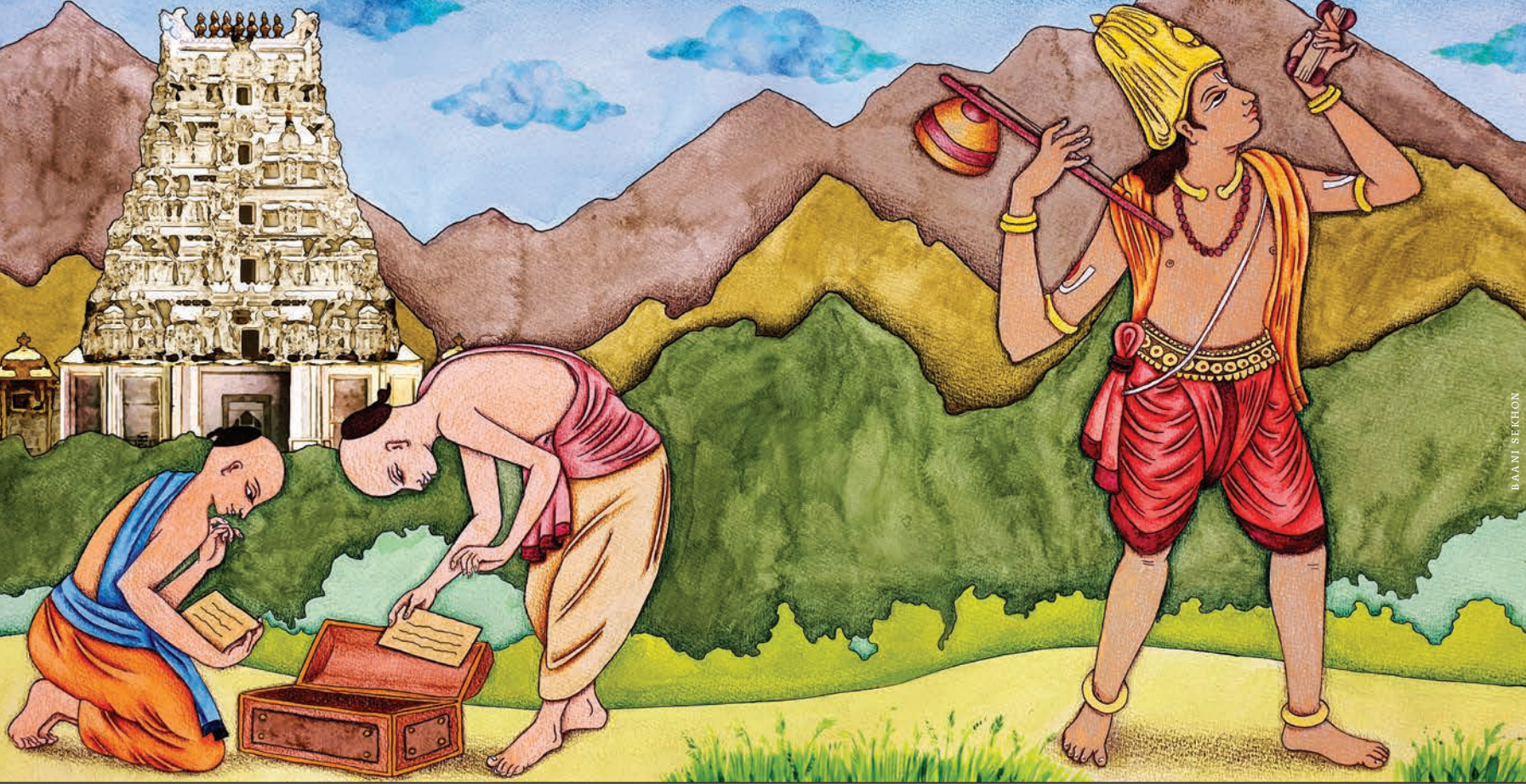
A Song by Muthuswami Dikshitar

Mahaganapatim Manasa Smarami

Ragam: Nattai; Talam: Adi; Language: Sanskrit

I meditate on the Supreme Lord Ganapati, who is worshiped by great sages like Vasishtha, Vamadeva and others.

He is the son of Lord Siva and is praised by Guruguha. He shines bright like crores of cupids, and is peaceful. He loves great poetry, drama and other arts. He has a mouse as a mount, and is fond of sweet modakas.



Annamacharya, Master of Nuance

The year 1922 was momentous for the Carnatic music community. A priceless collection of 2,500 copper plates inscribed with 13,000 *padams* (musical compositions), along with corresponding ragas, were found in a special vault (later named Sankirtana Bhandara) inside a small chamber opposite the *hundi* (donation box) in the Sri Venkateshwara Temple at Tirupati. These devotional offerings were composed by the illustrious 15th-century composer-saint Annamacharya.

Annamacharya Charitramu, a poetic biography composed in *dvipada* (rhyming couplets) by Tallapaka Chinnanna, grandson of Annamacharya, describes the life and contributions of the saint. A Nandavarika Brahmin couple, Narayana Suri and Lakkamba, were struck by a dazzling light from the sword of Lord Venkateshwara while they were prostrating in front of the flagpole, *dhvajastambha*, on a visit to the Tirumala Temple. Soon thereafter, on Vaishakha Purnima in the year 1408, in Tallapaka village in Andhra Pradesh, the family welcomed a baby boy, Annamayya. The baby was devoted to the Lord from birth; he cried incessantly, stopping to no lullaby unless it was the sweet sound of Vishnu's name.

Annamayya started composing poetry at the age of sixteen, inspired by a vision of Goddess Alamelumanga and Lord Venkateshwara while on pilgrimage to Tirupati. A sage in the Tirumala temple initiated the boy into the Srivaishnava tradition, then sent him home, where he married Timmakka and Akkalamma. He then became a disciple of Shathakopamuni, from whom he learned Vedanta.

Rejecting Narastuti

Saluva Narasimha Raya, ruler of Tanguturu, invited the composer to

his court. Impressed by the saint's remarkable songs, the king asked for a song in praise of himself. Annamayya was shocked at his request and refused to engage in "narastuti" (praise of human being). He told the king he would compose songs only for the Lord. His ego hurt, the king threw the saint in prison. Legend says that when Annamacharya sang to the Lord with utmost devotion, his shackles miraculously broke free. The king realized his folly and released the saint. Annamacharya returned to his spiritual home, Tirumala, the court of the Lord. In the words of scholars Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, "Annamayya was Venkateshwara's court poet, and the God rewarded him and his family lavishly in the royal manner."

Traditional accounts say Annamacharya considered Purandara-dasa, a younger Kannada saint-composer, to be an incarnation of Vitthala. Purandaradasa paid his respects to Annamacharya by singing about him as the incarnation of Lord Venkateshwara.

Sankirtanas for Every Occasion

Composing a song each day as a form of worship, Annamacharya sang an astounding 32,000 songs, celebrating the Lord's daily rituals and temple festivities, from morning prayer to nighttime lullaby. Annamayya's songs are very popular in the Carnatic community. The lullaby "Jo Achyutananda" musically depicts Sri Krishna Leela; "Sri-man Narayana" and "Adivo Alladivo" glorify the God of Tirumala. Annamacharya's songs express nuanced messages of bhakti and philosophy from Hindu scriptures such as the *Puranas* and *Vedas* in beautiful Telugu poetry. Full of vivid imagery and subtle emotions, his work is a treasure trove to classical dancers who creatively enact stories of divine love and oneness in their choreography.

Rediscovered: Annamacharya is shown traveling on foot near the Tirumala Hills, singing God's praises to all who would listen. His masterful works, dedicated to Venkateshwara, were lost for three centuries, then rediscovered in a chest hidden near the hundi of the Tirupati temple. Inside were his devotional songs, scribed on copper plates.

In addition to 32,000 sankirtanas in accessible Telugu, Annamacharya composed several shatakas (sets of a hundred verses), including the "Venkateshwara Shataka," the "Ramayana" in dvipada meter in Telugu, "Sringara Manjari" in Telugu, "Venkatadri Mahatmya" in Sanskrit, and prabandhas in various languages. His heart and mind became so pure that his words carried immense power.

Sringara and Adhyatma Songs

Annamacharya's devotional songs are in two complementary genres, as indicated on the ancient copper plates. The majority of the songs we have today are sringara sankirtanas, which poetically depict the affection between Lord Venkateshwara and his beloved wife Alamelumanga. Usually in the female voice, these songs brim with Madhura Bhakti, in which the devotee becomes the heroine (nayika)

and God is the hero in a divine play of love and longing between the individual self and the cosmic self. The adhyatma sankirtanas, usually sung in the poet's own voice, are more introspective and metaphysical, addressing moral and spiritual values such as detachment. While the saint glorifies and expresses affection and surrender to the Lord in some songs, in others he argues and taunts the Lord, or confesses fears and self-doubt.

Annamacharya wrote his sankirtanas on palm leaves. Late in his life or soon after his samadhi, given his popularity in his own times, his son Peda Tirumalacharya converted them to copper inscriptions, a costly endeavor that preserved the songs for generations to come. These copper plates have been found not only in Tirupati but also in several other South Indian temples, including Srirangam, Ahobilam and Chidambaram. Vocalist Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna, an expert on Annamacharya sankirtanas, set music to over 800 of these compositions, as the original tunes are unknown. In 1979, Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi's soulful renditions of Annamacharya's songs further spread them nationally and globally. The prolific composer's saintly life ended in 1503. His songs live on in temples and concert halls, enrapturing listeners in the Lord's presence.

LEARN MORE

- ✧ **Read** *God on the Hill: Temple Poems from Tirupati* by Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman, an incredible resource on Annamacharya with English translations of 150 poems from copper plates
- ✧ **Listen** to "Jo Achyuthananda," a soothing lullaby by Annamacharya, sung melodiously by Sooryagayathri (with lyrics and translation in English): youtu.be/xCSBpkUxOJE
- ✧ **Visit** the 108-foot-tall sculpture of Annamacharya at Tallapaka, birthplace of the saint



A giant statue of Annamacharya at Dwaraka, Tirumala

A Song by Annamacharya

Muddugare Yashoda

Ragam: Kuriñji, Talam: Adi, Language: Telugu

He is the lovely pearl of Yasoda, playing in her front yard.
He is the all-powerful and perfect son of Devaki.

He is the ruby of all gopikas. He is a diamond-like weapon for the adamant Kamsa. He is the emerald of the three lokas, radiating light.
He is little Krishna staying with us.

He is the coral of beautiful Rukmini. He is the agate that lifted Govardhana mountain. He is the cat's eye in conch and discus.
He is the lotus-eyed. He is our savior.

He is the topaz on the heads of Kaliya (serpent). He is sapphire. He is the divine gem in the ocean of milk. He is Padmanabha moving like a boy amongst us.

Translation: Damodara Rao Dasu

"I am constantly amazed by the wealth of life truths and wisdom in his compositions and the profound philosophy therein. I also like his sweet language and dialect while describing God." —Venkat Garikapati, author, speaker, Annamayya scholar & banker

"Annamayya was such a genius that his writing encapsulated complex ideas in descriptive phrases, often employing the vernacular to connect with the common man. This adroit use of language and ideas offers immense choreographic possibilities to the dancer." —Dr. Anupama Kylash, Annamacharya scholar and senior practitioner of Kuchipudi and Vilasini Natyam



BAANI SECTION

Purandaradasa, Father of Carnatic Music

"I have offered 479,000 kritis to you, O Vasudeva, all because of your grace." Thus sang Purandaradasa in "Vasudevana Namavaliya." This genius composer was born in Karnataka in 1484, three centuries before Saints Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri. In fact, the first compositions Saint Tyagaraja learned were the Devaranamas of Purandaradasa, whose greatness he sings about in "Prahalaad Bhakti Vijayam." Purandaradasa is revered as Sangita Pitamaha, grandfather and founder of Carnatic music pedagogy. He systematized the early lessons in Carnatic music that students learn even today. He wove the essence of the Vedas into accessible songs in Kannada and musical Sanskrit. His creations were popularized by modern-day Carnatic legends Madras Lalithangi, her daughter M.L. Vasantakumari, and T.K. Govinda Rao.

The Haridasas of Karnataka

Purandaradasa sang his heart out to the Lord mainly in the form of Vishnu and Krishna. He composed one of the earliest Carnatic lullabies, "Thoogire Rangana," from which composers drew inspiration in later centuries. He dedicated kritis to Lord Ganesha, Lord Siva, Narasimha, Goddess Mahalakshmi, Tulasi, Lord Rama and Lord Hanuman.

The Haridasas, "servants of Sri Hari," shaped Kannada Vaishnava devotional literature through their Dasa Sahitya, singing the dvaita philosophy of Madhvacharya. As with their spiritual cousins—the Kannada Virashaiva saints and Tamil Alvars—the Haridasas' relationship with God is intuitive and experiential. They sang about God's availability to one and all. Other famed Haridasa composers include Kanakadasa, a follower of dvaita philosopher Vyasa-tirtha from the Madhva order of Udipi, who initiated Purandaradasa (ca. 1525). The pen-name *Purandara Vittala* features in all his compositions.

Affluent Childhood

Varadappa Nayaka and his wife Kamalabai were affluent diamond merchants. Childless for many years, they prayed to Lord Srinivasa, promising to name the child after him if they were blessed with progeny. In 1484, a beautiful baby boy was born. They named him Srinivasa and fondly called him Chinnappa Nayaka (the future Purandaradasa). Chinnappa was married early to Lakshmibai, and they had several children together. His parents passed away soon after that, leaving the diamond business for Chinnappa to look after. He was very proficient in moneymaking, and also miserly; he spent all his time and energy increasing the business. Eventually he made nine crore (nava koti) rupees and was thenceforth referred to as Nava-koti Narayana. Lakshmibai, on the other hand, was a generous woman who only wanted to do danam, give to the needy.

Spiritual Transformation

One Friday morning, an elderly bhagavata singing the name of the Lord approached Chinnappa's shop. Eagerly waiting for the man to produce an expensive gem that he wanted to pledge in exchange for money, Chinnappa Nayaka was disappointed to see only turmeric-smeared yellow rice, an indication that the man was seeking charity. The elder explained that his daughter was getting married, and their family needed financial assistance. Chinnappa rudely declined and had his bodyguard escort the beggar out.

Meanwhile, Lakshmibai was engaged in Lakshmi Puja at home, praying to the Goddess to bless her with the opportunity to do danam. That very moment she heard a knock on the door and someone calling out to her, "Ammal!" The elderly gentleman had arrived at her house. He blessed her with all auspiciousness and prosperity, as was

Riches to rags: Purandaradasa regales a small gathering somewhere in Hampi, singing of the philosophy of Madhvacharya. Here listeners are enraptured by his bhakti, as two keep time with his raga, one clapping, the other marking the meter with an open hand on the knee.

customary, and then asked for her kind help.

She immediately removed her diamond nose stud and gave it to him. The bhagavata went back to Chinnappa Nayaka's shop and presented the nose stud for trade. Chinnappa was shocked to see his wife's jewelry! The bhagavata joyfully shared that he came across a huge mansion nearby, where the lady of the house was extremely generous. Chinnappa rushed back to his house and asked Lakshmibai to show him her nose stud. Lakshmibai knew her husband would be angry and immediately worshiped the Tulasi, which represents the Divine Goddess in the Madhva sampradaya. She was in distress as she did not want to lie to her husband. Suddenly she felt something in her hand—lo and behold, it was her diamond stud, the very same one she had given away! She rushed to give it to Chinnappa Nayaka, who was equally as-

tounded. As he scrutinized the nose stud, it radiated a divine effulgence in which he had a vision of Lord Ranganatha reclining on Adi Shesha.

Purandaradasa gave away all his wealth and began his spiritual journey. He composed innumerable songs on Sri Krishna as Vittala, of which musicians have access to around 1,000 today. His famous compositions include "Bhagyada Lakshmi Baramma," where the saint welcomes Lakshmi, the Goddess of abundance, and the soulful "Venkatachala Nilayam" for the Lord of Tirumala Hills, Tirupati Venkateshwara. Themes in his songs include social reform and bhakti-filled poetry about the adventures of Lord Krishna. Hindustani classical musicians such as Bhimsen Joshi have adopted Purandaradasa kritis into their repertoire.

During Purandaradasa's time, the center of devotional activity was Hampi, the magnificent capital of the Vijayanagara empire. Legends say Purandaradasa settled there with his wife and children. With bells on his ankles, tulasi mala on his neck, tambura in hand and the Lord's names on his lips, he sang his kirtanas through the streets of Hampi. Saint Purandaradasa lived for about 80 years, until 1564, taking sannyasa towards the end of his life.

LEARN MORE

- ✱ **Watch & listen** as legendary vocalist M.S. Subbulakshmi performs the song "Jagadoddharana" at the UN Concert in 1966: youtu.be/ArOsyp6dSLE
- ✱ **Listen** to Tamburi Meetidava, a soul-stirring composition by Saint Purandaradasa, rendered by Raghuram Manikandan: youtu.be/uCCaFqRoIHQ (with lyrics and translation in English)
- ✱ **Watch** the documentary film Kanaka-Purandara (English, 1988) by director and playwright Girish Karnad, available in full here: youtu.be/aGdb19OECiY
- ✱ **Visit** the Purandaradasa Mantapa in Hampi, Karnataka, India



DINODIA.COM

A Song by Purandaradasa

Jagadoddharana Adisidaleshoda

Ragam: Kapi, Talam: Adi, Language: Kannada

Thinking that the Savior of the world was her son, Yashoda played with embodiment of all great qualities.

The one whose greatness is infinite and beyond measure, and the gem amongst children, Yashoda played with Him.

The one who is smaller than the atom and bigger than infinity, and who is enigmatic, Yashoda played with Him.

The one who is Supreme among men, God of all worlds, whom Purandara adores, Yashoda played with Him.

"If we analyze Purandaradasa's songs, we will find so many different subject matters. Bhakti, yoga (meditation), srngara (love), jnanamargam (attaining spirituality), philosophies pertaining to leading a good life, Vedanta, as well as aspects of music and music grammar." —Dr. M L Vasanthakumari, Padma Bhushan awardee and Sangita Kalanidhi

"Purandaradasa has been justly termed the father of Karnataka music. He was not merely a composer but a lakshanakara of the highest calibre. The system of South Indian music, as we now know it, is entirely his gift." —T.V. Subha Rao, lawyer turned musicologist, founding member of The Music Academy, Madras



Sadasiva Braharendra, Ascetic Lyricist

“Everything is pervaded by Brahman, O dear!” Thus sang Carnatic composer Sadasiva Braharendra, an extraordinary philosopher, recluse and enlightened being. He was born to Meenakshi Sundareswarar and Parvati Ammal near Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu. As he was conceived after a pilgrimage to Rameshwaram, he was named Sivaramakrishnan. A brilliant child, he studied the *Vedas*, music, Sanskrit and more in Tiruvissainallur, a prominent center of education and Hindu culture. In time, as an established Advaita scholar, he was so immersed within that he would spontaneously compose songs. Around eighteen, his parents asked him to return to Madurai for marriage. As the engagement ceremony neared, he realized that his purpose in life was to realize God, which he could not focus on with a family to care for. He left home in search of the ultimate Truth.

Meeting His Guru

Arriving in Kanchipuram, the youth met Sri Paramasivendra Saraswati Swami, the 57th pontiff of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. At that moment, seeing the radiance of knowledge in Sivaramakrishnan's face, Swamiji took him as a disciple and gave him sannyasa diksha, naming him Sadasiva Braharendra Saraswati. One of the true mystics of Bharat, Sadasiva Braharendra belongs to the same Advaita lineage as Adi Shankaracharya. He is often referred to as a jivanmukta (liberated soul), Brahmajnani (knower of Brahman) and avadhuta (a mystic or sage who has utterly shaken off worldly attachments).

Musical Contributions

Sadasiva Braharendra (ca. 1700–1756) wrote many Carnatic compositions in Sanskrit, masterfully blending bhakti with Advaita philosophy. His ecstatic songs, underscoring the importance of nama

smarana (remembering God's name), carry a simple elegance with layers of philosophical truth showcasing his mystical experiences. Only around 25 of his songs are in circulation today, but these highly regarded pieces are frequently heard in concerts. Popular compositions include “Manasa Sancharare,” “Bhajare Gopalam,” “Jaya Tunga Tarange Gange” and “Bruhi Mukundeti.” He used the word Paramahansa or simply Hamsa as signature. He authored several treatises, including *Brahmasutra Vrtti* (commentary on the Brahma Sutras), *Yoga Sudhakara* (commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras) and *Siddhanta-kalpa-valli*.

Lifelong Vow of Silence

Sadasiva Braharendra loved to debate. One day while his guru was immersed in Siva puja, there was incessant chatter outside, fueled by Sadasiva Braharendra and other students who were debating some topic. Paramasivendra Saraswati grew annoyed. Coming outside, he asked, “Sadasiva, won't you ever stop speaking?”—and that was the last time that Sadasiva Braharendra spoke. Taking his guru's words as an ultimatum, he plunged into silence (mouna) and remained in that intense state of spiritual penance and solitude. When he met other saints, such as Sridhara Ayyavaal and Sri Bodendra Saraswati, they would sit under a mango tree to discuss philosophy. Sadasiva Braharendra would write his thoughts on the ground, while the other two saints would speak to share their views.

Over time, external silence and persistent meditation led to deep inner bliss. Eventually, the stillness of samadhi took over so much so that certain societal norms no longer seemed important. The ascetic wandered in the forests or near the Kaveri River in a trance-like state of divine contemplation, wearing only a loin cloth, sometimes less.

Silent sadhu: Sadasiva Braharendra journeyed through forests and wilderness, composing profoundly non-dualistic songs that others, not he, would sing. Wearing only a loin cloth, his life of radical renunciation was an inspiration to some of the greatest monks of his time.

He shed everything of the materialistic world, speech, propriety, bodily comforts, even clothes. Onlookers labeled him a madman. When Paramasivendra Saraswati heard of his student's state, he exclaimed with tears of joy, “Will I ever be so fortunate!” He realized that his disciple had become a true avadhuta, unbound even by sannyasi dharma.

Despite his aloofness from the world, he installed shrines at various temples, including the Ganapati shrine at the Tirunageswaram Naganathar Temple, and a Hanuman murti in the Prasanna Venkateshwara Temple in Thanjavur.

Sringeri Jagadgurus

The Jagadgurus of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham had deep reverence for Sadasiva Braharendra and his *Atma Vidya Vilasam*, even incorporating it into their practice. This text on renunciation, considered the author's spiritual autobiography, describes the characteristics of a knower of Brahman, his state of mind and behavior. Sri Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Nrisimha Bharati was an ardent devotee of Sadasiva Braharendra. He visited his samadhi at Nerur, where he famously meditated and fasted for three days and had a divine vision of the saint. He then composed two Sanskrit works glorifying the saint's life and philosophical contributions: *Sadasivendra Sthavam* and *Sadasivendra Pancharatna Stotram*. Much of what we know about this composer-saint today comes from the former text.

Divine Miracles

In his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Swami Yogananda writes, “Immersed one day in samadhi on the bank of the Kaveri River, Sadasiva was seen to be carried away by a sudden flood. Weeks later he was found buried deep beneath a mound of earth. As the villagers' shovels struck his body, the saint rose and walked briskly away.” In another story Sadasiva Braharendra's arm was cut off by an angry attacker, but he simply reattached it and continued with his day. There are also stories of his compassion for humanity expressed through miraculous deeds. These incidents were testaments to Sadasiva Braharendra's state of samadhi, during which his mind was so completely absorbed in supreme consciousness that his body followed suit and transcended itself. The silent sage Sri Sadasiva Braharendra attained Mahasamadhi in 1756.

LEARN MORE

- ✱ **Listen** to Sadasiva Braharendra's soul-stirring Pibare Rama Rasam by Rahul Vellal, with lyrics and translation: youtu.be/vJxVWF8KjFI
- ✱ **Pilgrimage** to Sadasiva Braharendra's shrine in Nerur, installed by the Raja of Pudukkottai



The Sadasiva Braharendra Samadhi temple in Nerur, Tamil Nadu.

A Song by Sri Sadasiva Braharendra

Sarvam Brahmamayam

Ragam: Madhuvanti, Talam: Adi, Language: Sanskrit

Everything is pervaded by Brahman!
Everything is pervaded by Brahman, O dear!

What ought to be spoken; What ought not to be spoken,
What ought to be created; What ought not to be created!

What ought to be learnt; What ought not to be learnt,
What ought to be revered; What ought not to be revered!

What ought to be understood; What ought not to be understood!
What ought to be enjoyed; What ought not to be enjoyed!

At all places, at all times, 'Hamsa' meditation—
The cause for liberation, ought to be practised, O dear!

Translation: Sharanya Bharathwaj

“Brahmendra's kirtanas shine like a crest jewel in a Carnatic concert, without which the concert would be bare.”
—Sri Sri Krishna Premi Swamigal

“It is the life of this sage that made a very deep impression in my mind. I came to a very definite conclusion that there is a sublime divine life independent of objects and the play of the mind and the sense. The sage was quite unconscious of the world. He did not feel a bit when his arm was cut off. He ought to have been absorbed in the Divine Consciousness, he ought to have been one with the Divine.” —Sri Swami Sivananda, Divine Life Society



Musical mastery: With traditional Carnatic musical notation in the background, Venkata Kavi sings as Krishna dances on the head of the venomous serpent Kaliya.

Master of Language, Rhythm & Melody

When conversing with the Lord, he sang in Sanskrit. When he sang about (and as) the folk of Vrindavan, he used colloquial Tamil. To communicate deep philosophical truths, he wrote in scholarly Tamil. Venkata Kavi's creations are incredibly rhythmic and so full of rhyme that if one were to simply read the lyrics, the appropriate tala would fall into place!

His songs melt our hearts with devotion for the mischievous young Lord Krishna. These compositions were not popular in his own time, largely due to the fact that he did not take on disciples who would propagate them. His works were brought to the mainstream in the 1940s by legendary Harikatha exponent Needamangalam Krishnamurthy Bhagavata, one of Venkata Kavi's brother's descendants.



A Song by Venkata Kavi

Parvai Ondre Podume

Ragam: Surutti, Talam: Adi, Language: Tamil

Just one mischievous glance from Krishna's eyes is more than enough for me.

So what if these two celestial treasures of the conch and the lotus were forcefully given to me; I would still treasure a single glance from Krishna's eyes more.

With a face (and dark curls) like a dense black cloud and eyes so luminous that they make one wonder if they are the sun and moon,

Will you not open those oceans that are your dark eyes just a bit and shower a deluge of your compassion so that it warms the depths of my soul?

Should I describe the time when little Krishna went beside his mother Yashoda and stole butter from right under her nose?

Or should I describe when Krishna, having stolen the butter, embraced his mother from behind, and pleaded with his eyes with me to not tell her about it?

"Ootthukkadu Venkata Kavi is in the same stature as the famed Trinity of Carnatic Music" —Carnatic vocalist Padma Vibhushan Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer

"The evidence available proves that he was one of the most prolific, imaginative, original and versatile composers in Indian culture. His style—with dazzling contrasting passages, complex talas, scholarly lyrics but evocative melody—definitely forms one of five distinct composing styles in Carnatic. —Chitravina N Ravikiran, Chitravina exponent, vocalist, music educator and scholar

Oothukkadu Venkata Kavi, Rhythmic Virtuoso

"Taamita Tajjam Taka Tajjam Takadika Tajjam Taam," sings Ootthukkadu Venkata Kavi rhythmically in his *Kalinga Narthana Thillana*, as he sees young Krishna dancing in his mind's eye on the swaying serpent Kalinga. The composer's genius can be seen in the way a particular word in the song resembles the hissing of the serpent. Replete with the dancing of intricate *jatis* (rhythmic syllables) and flowing lyrics, this song is a dramatic introduction to this great Carnatic composer.

Oothukkadu: Where Krishna Danced on a Serpent

More formally known as Ootthukkadu Venkata Subbaiyer, this composer dedicated his life (ca. 1700–1765) to "Kaliya Narthana Krishna"—the name of the presiding Deity in Ootthukkadu town, which is featured like a secondary signature in his many compositions. He was born Venkata Subramaniam, the eldest of five children, to Tamil Smarta parents Subbu Kutti Iyer and Venkamma in Mannargudi near Thanjavur. Later they moved to the village of Ootthukkadu.

Venkata Kavi's family Deity was Goddess Kamakshi, but his mind and heart were enraptured by Kalinga Narthana Krishna. The great poet composed on a staggering range of topics. He composed operas on the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Around 200 of his songs in his Bhagavatam opera musically bring to life scenes from the tenth canto of the Purana, colorfully depicting Sri Krishna Leelas. He also composed songs on Vinayaka, Saraswati, Siva, Karttikeya, Devi (including the famous Kamakshi Navavarana kritis), Rama and Anjaneya. In addition, he composed songs on great saints such as Shuka Brahmarshi, Valmiki, Vyasa, Kannappa Nayanar, Jayadeva, Andal and Bhadrachala Ramadasu. His compositions show that he was inspired by the devotion of the 12 Alvars, 63 Nayanmars

and composer-saints such as Purandaradasa and Tulsidas.

During the Maratha rule in the Tanjore region between the 17th and 19th centuries, the Bhagavata mela tradition flourished in South India, especially in villages like Ootthukkadu. Our virtuosic composer Venkata Kavi was influenced by this tradition, which might explain his many operas and works that were suited for music, dance and theater, as well as the handful of songs in Marathi. Venkata Kavi was never keen on publicizing his music, and would sing his songs in isolation, mostly at night, once refusing to sing at the king's court upon invitation. Venkata Kavi was married to his devotional music, and remained a celibate for life.

Lord Krishna as Guru

As a youth, he wanted to learn formally from a great musician called Shri Krishna Yogi. However, Krishna Yogi did not accept him as a disciple, for reasons unknown. The disappointed Venkata Kavi went to his mother, who advised him to surrender to Lord Krishna in the Kalinga Narthana temple. It is believed that the Lord appeared before Venkata Kavi and blessed him with musical knowledge. Thereafter, Venkata Kavi started composing and referred to Lord Krishna as his guru in many songs.

We have around 600 of his compositions today, which were originally scribed in palm leaf manuscripts by his family. His dazzling creations are known for their unpretentious devotion, humility and state of blissful exuberance. Like other saintly composers in his time, Venkata Kavi traveled to temple towns such as Srirangam, Kanchipuram, Madurai, Udipi, Pandharpur, Chennai, Sikkil, Palani and Tiruvarur. We know this through the songs he dedicated to the presiding Deities of these holy lands.

Tamil Treasures on Lord Krishna

Venkata Kavi composed several musical operas as well as ragamalikas in Tamil. His hugely popular Tamil songs include the mellifluous "Alai Payude" and "Pal Vadiyum Mugam." His song "Maadu Meikum Kanne" is an enchanting dialogue between little Krishna and his mother Yashoda, in which she tells him not to go outside, and he gives her a long list of reasons as to why he should do just that!

"Thaye Yashoda," another masterpiece, was secretly noted down and learned by Rudra Pashupati, a nadaswaram player of Tanjore court who admired Venkata Kavi's soul-stirring renderings. In this song, the Gopis of Vrindavan complain to Yashoda about the incessant pranks of her mischievous son Gopalakrishnan. One of the verses of the song presents the complaint of an exasperated Gopi thus: The other day, we welcomed two guests to our home. After eating, they fell soundly asleep on the verandah. Kannan saw them sleeping. He had just finished eating butter and had some on his hands. He smeared the butter on their mouths and disappeared. When we discovered the butter was missing, we went in search of the thief. The guests were caught! Kannan had eaten the butter, but our guests, with butter on their mouths, were blamed. What mischief! What songwriting!

LEARN MORE

- ✳ **Download** "Ootthukkadu Venkata Kavi" app on Google Play or the App Store to immerse yourself in the composer's songs and enjoy the excellent website: venkatakavi.org
- ✳ **Listen** to the hugely popular Maadu Meikum Kanne by vocalist Smt. Aruna Sairam: youtu.be/iDKEbj-PDYk
- ✳ **Watch** rhythmic and energetic music/dance performances of Kalinga Narthana Thillana on YouTube, such as: youtube.com/watch?v=sU1SNjnGcPo



Maharaja Swati Tirunal, King and Composer

The maharajas of India were highly cultured and deeply religious, considering themselves as *dasas*, or servants, of the Lord. The royal family of Travancore governed their kingdom as representatives of Lord Padmanabha (Vishnu).

Swati Tirunal was born in the sovereign state of Travancore, now a part of Kerala, in 1813 to Raja Raja Varma Koyi Tampuran and Maharani Lakshmi Bai. The well-known Malayalam lullaby, “Omana Thingal Kidavo,” was composed by the eminent court poet Irayimman Thampi on the birth of this royal baby. Swati Tirunal’s mother passed away when he was merely two, and he was brought up by his father and his maternal aunt, Sri Parvati Bai.

The Erudite Prince

Groomed to be a king, Swati Tirunal excelled in mathematics, music and literature. By age seven, he had mastered Malayalam (his mother tongue) and Sanskrit, and was being tutored in English, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi and Urdu. The brilliant child was constantly in the company of court musicians, poets and scholars. He quickly learned the fundamentals of Carnatic music and deepened his insights with celebrated musicians who performed in the Travancore court. Soon Swati Tirunal was ready to express his devotion to Lord Padmanabha through music, and thus began his journey in composing.

At age sixteen, Swati Tirunal was crowned king and ruled for eighteen years. He was a progressive leader, admired by his people and open to new initiatives that modernized Travancore into a model state. During his visionary governance, he brought about many social and legal reforms. He also initiated the Trivandrum Public Library (now called State Central Library), a government printing press,

English-medium schools offering free education to boys and girls, ayurvedic and allopathic hospitals, an astronomical observatory, a meteorological observatory, a museum and even a zoo.

King, Devotee & Composer

Maharaja Swati Tirunal used over 100 ragas in around 500 compositions available to us. His deeply devotional compositions were mostly about Lord Padmanabha and Maha Vishnu. In addition, a good number were dedicated to Krishna and Rama. He also glorified Ganapati, Siva, Devi, Karttikeya and Hanuman, as well as composed on Advaita philosophy. He authored several literary works, including *Bhakti Manjari* (a philosophical poem of over 1,000 shlokas), *Padmanabha Shatakam* and two musical plays, *Ajamila* and *Kuchela Upakhyanas*.

Swati Tirunal composed effortlessly in Sanskrit; sometimes making it easily accessible and at other times adorning the song with complex linguistic patterns. While the majority of his compositions are in Sanskrit, several are in Malayalam and Manipravalam (an amalgam of Sanskrit and Malayalam), Telugu, Kannada and Hindi. Swati Tirunal was unique for having composed in so many genres and in so many languages. He employed several forms in his compositions: varnam, swarajathi, kirtanam (most of his songs are in this style), padam, thillana, javali, ragamalika, ragamalika shloka and compositions suitable for Harikatha (musical discourses).

Dance and Hindustani Music

Swati Tirunal was brilliant at composing for classical dance, and his padams are used extensively in Mohiniyattam and Bharatanatyam. Exploring the Vaishnava motif of the devotee seeking the compassion

Royal composer: Swati Tirunal, seated here on a Kerala style throne, was a king and prolific composer who ruled in the court of Travancore. He is shown playing his favored instrument, a sarod, serenading Vishnu who reclines on the serpent Ananta Shesha just outside the Padmanabhaswamy Temple.

of the Lord, these esoteric songs are full of colorful and vivid imagery describing the intimate relationship between God and human. He composed nine songs in nine ragas in praise of the Goddess to be sung on each of the nine nights of the Navaratri festival. Swati Tirunal’s Navaratna Malika, another unique set of songs, explores nine forms of bhakti.

While other famed composers like Muthuswami Dikshitar adapted Hindustani ragas to suit the Carnatic framework, Swati Tirunal used them in their original form without modifications. He composed in several Hindustani forms with ease, including khayal and dhrupad, as well as in the Marathi abhang style. His devotion to Lord Padmanabha was so all-encompassing that

instead of his own name, the monarch always signed his songs with the divine name *Padmanabha* or its variations, such as *Jalajanabha*, *Pankajanabha* and *Sarasijanabha*.

Patron of the Arts

As a connoisseur and promotor of the arts, Tirunal provided patronage to many leading classical dancers, musicians and visual artists. Vadivelu, one of the members of the famed Tanjore Quartet and a disciple of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar, was one of Swati Tirunal’s favorites. Vadivelu was an acclaimed violinist, vocalist, composer and dance exponent.

In the last years of his life, Maharaja Swati Tirunal witnessed the death of several of his family members and spent most of his time in solitude, engaging in the worship of Lord Padmanabha. He let go of his mortal form in 1846 at the young age of 33. In the words of Dr. Achuth Sankar S. Nair, “the Swati star appeared, shining brightly but briefly.”

LEARN MORE

- ✧ **Listen** to Swati Tirunal’s Bhogindra Shayinam, beautifully rendered by Raghuram Manikandan & Sooryagayathri: youtu.be/QeAYXZMxYbU
- ✧ **Enjoy** Swathi Tirunal’s Hindustani khayal-style Aaye Giridhar Dware by Kruthi Bhat: youtu.be/leA1ULUDPEw
- ✧ **Read** more than 70 articles on the life, times and music of Swathi Tirunal: www.swathithirunal.in/articles.htm
- ✧ **Browse** the lyrics and translations of Swati Tirunal’s multilingual compositions at: swathithirunalfestival.org/swathi-thirunal/compositions



Music Festivals

Swathi Sangeetha Utsavam, or Kuthiramalika Festival, is a ten-day music festival commemorating the legacy and mammoth contributions of Maharaja Swathi Tirunal. It takes place every January in the courtyard of the Kuthiramalika palace built by Swathi Tirunal on the southeastern side of Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The festival brings together top performing artists from the Carnatic and Hindustani traditions who sing the Maharaja’s compositions.

“Aliveni,” a Song by Swati Tirunal

Ragam: Kuringi; Talam: Chaapu; Language: Malayalam

O Aliveni-tresses having the hue of a black bee! Alas! What shall I do now? O Manini, the respectable lady!

Lotus-eyed Sri Padmanabha has not come yet! What shall I do?

O Komalangi, having a charming form! Tell me, what is the use of all these: the humming of the bees, the gentle breeze, sandal paste and fragrant flowers, like jasmine, etc., if my beloved does not turn up?

I do not know who is the blessed damsel on this earth, enjoying the company of Sarasaksha, the one who resembles Cupid! I keep looking out for Him to come by the usual path. I cannot see, as my eyes are brimming with tears.

Has my darling forgotten all the sweet words He uttered when we were together? O Kambukanthi, one with a neck like a conch, don’t delay anymore. Please tell Him my miserable state and bring Him at once to me.

Translation: Sangita Kalanidhi T.K. Govinda Rao

“Maharaja Swati Tirunal of Travancore was a multi-faceted personality, who pursued South Indian classical music, North Indian classical music, dance, poetry, science, astronomy and languages with equal ease.” — *Vidwan Prince Rama Varma, Carnatic vocalist and vina exponent*

“Swati Tirunal Maharaja’s compositions are immortal because we see Padmanabha in them, we hear and feel Padmanabha in them.” — *Mysore Vasudevacharyar, Carnatic musician and composer*

The Museums of India

In a world of digital enticements, India's museums showcase enduring material creativity. They may inspire renewed artistry in modern generations.

BY ANURADHA GOYAL

A MUSEUM IS A GLIMPSE INTO A TIME and space that we are not a part of, an opportunity to interact with the past through what has been left behind for us. It is a time travel of its kind. *Museum* comes from the root word *muse* and traces its roots to 16th century Florence, where it referred to collections of curious objects. Museums as we know them now were first established in Oxford in the late 1700s. In India, the first one came up in 1814 at Calcutta, and it was simply called the Indian Museum. This continues to be one of the best-loved museums in the country, holding some of the finest collections, including Buddhist stupas and railings from Bharhut.

Today museums are popping up everywhere, showcasing the grandeur of the past, history of technological evolution, human stories and micro-histories of all possible subjects. Sometimes they go all-out and create dioramas and virtual cities to showcase the living traditions. Allow me to take you on a tour to some of the museums that showcase the nation as it was, as it evolved and as it stands today.

National Museum, New Delhi

The National Museum, located close to metro stations in the heart of Lutyens, Delhi, is one of my favorites. It is home to the National Museum Institute, which offers courses in art appreciation and museology. It has some of the finest galleries and exquisite artifacts. For example, the Harappa gallery has the famous dancing girl from Harappa, the Buddhist gallery holds relics of Buddha, making it a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists, and the Chola gallery has some of India's best bronzes. The only museum that can match this Chola collection is the Government Museum at Egmore, Chennai, where you can see a documentary on the making of such bronzes using the ancient lost wax method.

My top recommendation here is the gallery of miniature paintings from across the country—from Pahadi in the hills to Deccan in the South, and all possible schools of Rajputana in between. These paintings illustrate epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, seasons, musical ragas, sports and festivals, all celebrating life and spirituality. Old maps of sacred cities, such as Kashi, list all the temples

one can visit and depict the pilgrimage paths to them.

Ancient jewelry collections in pure gold and precious stones can enchant anyone. I remember seeing a necklace with miniature paintings embedded in it. You admire the continuity of design and also how our current styles have evolved from ancient traditions. Thankfully, you can see some of the Museum's vast array of artifacts online—nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/en/photo-gallery/category/21. The decorative art gallery has exquisite pieces in wood, ivory and metal. Another display depicts the evolution of Indian scripts, tracing their journey through history and identifying the one origin of the various streams.

This museum offers guided tours as well as audio guides, canteen facilities and a couple of curio shops where you can purchase replicas of miniature paintings or Harappan seals. You will need a couple of hours at each gallery of your interest, and there are many galleries to explore. It is like a visual walk through Indian history. Website—nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/

Mythology Museum, Telangana

This unique museum, dedicated to the Itihasa-Purana stories of India, is located at the foothills of Yadagirigutta, about 37 miles northeast of Hyderabad, capital of Telangana. India is a sacred land dotted with pilgrimage places, including *tirthas* that have been inhabited by avatars or where saints and sages have performed *tapasya*. It is nearly impossible to visit all of them in a single lifetime. Kunda Satyanarayana wanted to bring all these places, plus stories from the epics and *Puranas*, together with a goal to create awareness of them. On this 17-acre site he created replicas of many important temples. He named the place Surendrapuri in memory of his son Surendra, but it is popularly known as the Mythology Museum.

This museum has larger-than-life *murtis* (statues) of Deities, immediately impressing you with their size with respect to your own. You walk through an arched pathway formed by the replicas of elephant tusks and then through a gate shaped like a lion's mouth. Once inside, you are in the cosmos that is so beautifully described in our scriptures. There is a recreation of different planes of existence: Vishnuloka, Brahmaloaka, Shivaloka, Nagaloka, Indraloka, Yamaloka, Naraka, Patala. In Indraloka you meet the dancing apsaras, in Vishnuloka you see the Lord sleeping on the bed of Shesha Naga in Kshirsagar. Nagaloka takes you underground where you are surrounded by serpents of all kinds. My favorite re-creation is Ganga at Haridwar, where the river is believed to enter the realm of humans from the realm of Devatas. You have to actually walk through the flowing water, as if you are crossing the river. Scenes from *Ramayana*



Strings and mythology: (Clockwise from opposite page left) traditional instruments at the National Museum, New Delhi; pottery from the Indus Valley civilization; aerial view showing the many recreated pilgrimage sites at the Mythology Museum; clay characters from a Puranic story

National Museum, New Delhi | Mythology Museum, Telangana





and *Mahabharata* are elaborate. Some, like Chakravyuha during the Mahabharata war, let you appreciate the formation used to surround enemies, resembling a labyrinth of multiple defensive walls.

The replicas of India's major temples, juxtaposed in close proximity, make this a great place to appreciate the diversity of temple architecture. Imagine the Jagannath Puri temple next to the Brihadeeshwara temple of Thanjavur, allowing you to admire the similarities in design but variations in expression. There are even some functioning temples—shrines for each of the nine planets where people like to perform homas as per their planetary charts. To the best of my knowledge, this place is one of a kind, rivaled only by Char Dham at Solophok hills in Namchi, Sikkim, where the four *char dham* temples in cardinal directions are recreated—Badrinath, Jagannath, Rameshwar and Somnath.

A whole day can be spent exploring the museum walkways, which are nearly two miles long. You can combine a trip to Surendrapuri with the nearby Sri Lakshminarasimha Swamy Temple at Yadagirigutta. Yadagiri has the closest hotels and food. The best way to reach the museum is via road from Hyderabad. Website—surendrapuri.com/

Kala Bhoomi Crafts Museum, Odisha

Kala Bhoomi, in the temple city of Bhubaneswar, is young, opening just in 2018. It was created as a lively space where visitors can interact with the arts and artists. The pleasantly designed 13-acre site oozes the essence of Odisha culture. The gardens are well

maintained, the walls are covered with tribal art and the courtyards have an open-air display of tribal life and temple architecture.

Kala Bhoomi's eight galleries showcase terracotta, paintings, stone carving, wood carving, metal crafts, tribal crafts and hand looms. The art of stone carving is still practiced in Odisha, and the state has many workshops. Most hotels and public spaces have stone sculptures in their decor. For the finest examples, you must see the stone gallery where the master craftsmen have chiseled the classic emotions. Wood carving, too, is still practiced, and is exemplified in the wooden murtis of Jagannath, Subhadra and Balbhadra at Puri.

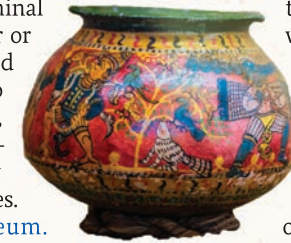
A big attraction of this museum is its delicate silver filigree. Cuttack, near Bhubaneswar and the erstwhile capital, is well known for this magical work. The museum also contains larger artifacts, such as sailboats that remind us of the maritime history on India's east coast. There are, of course, Deities and many decorative items.

The art of this state is not to be missed. Another standout gallery is Farm Craft, where the products are made from bamboo, grass, palm leaves and more. Odisha's famous palm-leaf paintings, made by piercing the surface of a leaf and filling it with black color, tell stories from Indian history in a nutshell. Also on display are fine paintings on terra-cotta pots, coconut shells or areca nuts, available for purchase as souvenirs. When I visited, artisans were making beautiful artifacts and jewelry using rice grains and cotton thread. It is one thing to see a finished piece. Watching it being made helps you appreciate

the skill and effort involved.

Odisha's rich handloom heritage is proudly displayed with Sambalpuri Ikkat, Ganjams Bomkai and tribal Kotpad saris. There is a silk trail showcasing the indigenous varieties like Tussar and Eri. You can buy much of what you see at the museum's well-curated shop.

The museum is easily accessible from Bhubaneswar. For a nominal fee you can take a guided tour or a museum walk on specialized trails, available from time to time. Photography is allowed, but no tripods. You can combine this with a visit to nearby Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves. Website—odishacraftsmuseum.com/



Calico Textiles Museum, Ahmedabad

India is known globally for its exquisite textiles, especially cotton, along with dyeing techniques that introduce vibrancy and variety. Gujarat is one of several textile clusters. At the time of Indian Independence, it was home to many textile mills, one of which was Calico Mills, owned by the Sarabhai family. In 1949 (just after independence), at the urging of art historian and philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy, this family established the Calico Museum to showcase ancient garments that featured India's distinct weaves and patterns. The museum was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India.

Now the museum is housed in a heritage haveli of the family, adding an aura of the past. The haveli is divided into two zones. One houses textiles used for religious purposes, as well as a collection of Chola bronzes and Jain art, including manuscripts and miniature paintings. The second zone, called Chauk, displays collections from royal art, including tents, carpets, costumes and furnishings.

Gujarat remains a business bastion of India, and the Calico Museum captures the history of textile trade in the nation through

Kala Bhoomi Crafts Museum, Bhubaneshwar, Odisha

Crafts at Kala Bhoomi Museum: (clockwise from top left) clay horses; a painted pot; Odisha fashions on display, with live models; a stately wooden chest with metal hardware; visitors in a crafting class learn pottery and paint coasters



the displays of traded items. A wide range of embroidery embellishing these textiles is also on display. Unlike a typical museum, you interact directly with the displays, though you cannot touch them, as that would damage the fragile cloths. The publications division contains books on textiles and reproductions of masterpieces depicting yantras or religious art used for worship, available as posters as well as on fabric. These are hard to find elsewhere.

This is not an easy place to visit. You need to pre-book the guided tour, arrive within the specified 15-minute window and then follow the guide, who is not obliged to be friendly. There is no climate control, so it can get stuffy. Only about 20 people are allowed daily, so plan ahead. No bags, phones or photography is permitted. Website—calicomuseum.org/

India's textiles are also on view at the well-curated Sanskriti Anandgram Museum in New Delhi—and at a crafts museum in Varanasi that displays the famous Varanasi silks which have been traded from the city since time immemorial.

Uruswati Folklore Museum, Haryana

This museum spotlights people's everyday lives, reflected in the spaces we live in, stories we pass through generations, the patterns we weave on our textiles, our items of everyday use, as well as our music and our folk dances that are not performances but a collective expression of shared emotions.



COURTESY BHAU DAJI LAD MUSEUM



COURTESY CALICO MUSEUM OF TEXTILES

Located just off the highway connecting Delhi and Jaipur, this is technically in Sector 78 of Gurugram in the national capital region. Immediately noticeable here are the large terracotta tablets telling folk tales of the region, including stories of Krishna, kings and love stories. Two tree-lined walkways named Thandi Sadak, "cool road," and Gul Gulfam resemble distant Kashmir, where similar silver oak trees line the roads.

The museum's two floors showcase paintings, embroidery, jewelry and household items seldom used now, like perfume boxes or churning pots. All these items evoke the culture which produced them. I especially recommend the museum's murtis and temples of local Deities, usually made in wood, each with a story to tell. Sanjhi is a form of Devi worshiped in parts of North India during Navaratri that is hardly known outside the families who practice it. When I saw a Sanjhi image made traditionally, using cow dung and clay on the walls of this museum, it was sheer nostalgia. The seed to write about it was born inside me, finally taking shape in the form of a book called *Navaratri—When Devi Comes Home*.

Fairs are an integral part of folk life, bringing people together for festivities and trade. The museum presents a unique documentation of these socio-cultural events that followed their own calendar. It also organizes cultural events with folk performances from around the region.

The souvenir shop is not to be missed. I picked up a copy of *Love Legends of Haryana*, an illustrated book published by the museum. There are oral stories of the saints and sages who wandered through these lands. Most remarkable is Uruswati's handwritten documentation in calligraphy. It adds a personal touch and also keeps alive the art of calligraphy in a useful way. Website—urusvatiart.com/folk-lore-museum

Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

Varanasi city is an educational hub and India's spiritual nerve center. So, no wonder that one of the country's earliest museums was conceived here in 1920, as part of Bharat Kala Parishad. After moving to various locations, it finally settled in a lovely building on the campus of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Its Mahamana Gallery is dedicated to Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, the university founder, highlighting his life and times—an introduction to this great personality who designed the campus using the principles of Vastu.

You will see many letters and notes handwritten by various Indian leaders during the independence struggle. Newspapers and periodicals from the early 1900s here are a delight to read, as is local literature by the likes of Munshi Prem Chand and Jayasi.

Varanasi is celebrated through a display of masks used in the famous month-long Ram Leela of Ramnagar. Maps, artifacts and

archival material take you through the city's historical dating back to the Satyuga, when Raja Harishchandra visited from Ayodhya. Here Buddha gave his first sermon and Jain Tirthankars were born. Poet saints like weaver Kabir lived here. All these wonders are honored in the gallery.

With Varanasi being one of India's biggest weaving hubs in India, a textile room here introduces cotton, silk, wool and blends of these, with myriad expressions using different weaves and patterns. A decorative art room is full of medieval collections. A sculpture gallery brings you some of the finest from the Ganga-Yamuna plains. Most of these are carved using Chunar stone found near Varanasi. This stone was used by the Sarnath School of Sculpture, and the famous Ashoka pillars were carved from it.

Most memorable to me is a precious collection in a vault which opens only for a short period. It has vintage jewelry with miniature paintings, jade bowls, studded gold jewelry, coins and musical instruments in silver. The museum also has great books on art.

You can easily spend half a day here. Nearby you can visit the New Kashi Vishwanath temple in the BHU campus that has the tallest shikhara, tower, of all the temples in India. Take a walk around the campus in the evening to admire the architecture, which combines many styles in quintessential red and yellow color. Website—bhu.ac.in/kala/

Mumbai | Gujarat | Haryana

Communities and textiles: (Clockwise from top left) at the Bhaui Daji Lad Museum, dolls (two photos), show the many communities and professions in teeming Mumbai; local birds. Quaint small buildings house the Calico Museum of Textiles in Gujarat. A diorama at the Uruswati Folklore Museum, Haryana



COURTESY BHAU DAJI LAD MUSEUM



COURTESY BHAU DAJI LAD MUSEUM



ANURADHA GOEL

Napier Museum, Kerala

Napier Museum, in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram city, stands out in my mind for its absolutely unique architecture. Named after the then governor general of Madras, as the region was called, this masterpiece was designed for Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja by Robert Chisholm as a museum. The ornate outer walls display a mosaic of red, pink and blue tiles, punctuated with the typical dark wooden windows and doors of this region. The steep conical roofs on top never let you forget you are in Kerala, even though the architecture has influences from Europe, China and North India, making it a one of its kind Indo-Saracenic architecture in the region with Gothic roofs and minarets. A remarkable thing about this museum is its natural air-conditioning system.

Inside it is a typical museum, with sculptures in bronze and stone, paintings, wood and ivory carvings, lamps, textiles, traditional musical instruments, and numismatic collections. Notable here is a temple chariot. The museum has a bandstand with concealed speakers where the Travancore army band used to play. No photography is allowed inside.

Napier Museum is a part of a complex that also houses one of the oldest zoos in Asia, a natural history museum and the Sri Chitra Art Gallery. Napier Museum and this art gallery (along with Lakshmi Vilas Palace, up north in Vadodara) are the best places to see

the original work of Raja Ravi Varma, one of the most celebrated painters of modern India.

Varma revolutionized the art by bringing in lithography, which made the prints of his paintings present in every Indian household and a part of calendar art. He came from the royal family of Travancore, but his art flourished under the patronage of Gaikwads, the royal family of Baroda, while he was based in Mumbai. His famous paintings of Shakuntala and Damayanti can be seen here.

Works of other celebrated painters like Tagore, Jamini Roy and Nicholas Roerich are also displayed, along with traditional miniature paintings from across the country. There are reproductions of the murals of Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra and Sigiriya in Sri Lanka. An Oriental collection showcases paintings from China, Japan, Tibet and Bali, creating a melange of Eastern cultures. Website—napiermuseum.org/

Thanjavur Palace, Tamil Nadu

This beautiful Maratha palace in Thanjavur, called Aranmanai by the locals, was originally named Shivgangai Fort by its builders, the Thanjavur Nayakas, who ruled from here after the fall of Cholas and Pandyas. The area was later ruled by Marathas till the British took over, but the palace itself always stayed with the royal family. Today it is a museum, visited by tourists

and history enthusiasts. Attractions include the colorful Durbar Hall, Saraswati Mahal Library, the bell tower and the Raja Chola Art Gallery. The complex is a mish-mash of buildings in different styles, with pathways connecting them.

The bell tower, seven stories tall, served as a watchtower and also for darshan of Brihadeeshwara temple and the Ranganatha temple in Srirangam. It was probably much taller than what we see today. It reminded me of the beautiful *deepstambhas* that we see in temples of Maharashtra. Locally it's called Maadamaaligai, referring to its square structure. At one time, it had a bell that was rung at regular intervals to announce the time.

This palace museum has royal artifacts like headgear, weapons and sculptures. Serfoji Memorial Hall, originally the living quarters of the royal family, now commemorates their life through displays and photographs.

The museum's highlight is the colorful,



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opulent and ornate Durbar Hall, which makes your eyes struggle to choose a focus. There are scenes from epics, portraits of rulers and various Deities painted in bright colors. A life-size statue of Maharaja Serfoji stands in the middle.

Raja Chola Art gallery has some beautiful Chola bronzes, special in that you see them in situ, in the Chola heartland where they belong. On the upper floor is a 90+ foot skeleton of a whale that was found on a beach in 1955, and an inverted lotus-shaped ceiling.

Saraswati Mahal Library has an amazing collection of palm-leaf manuscripts in Sanskrit, Tamil and other languages. I was fascinated by the detailed manuals describing species of elephants and horses, generously illustrated with drawings and sketches. Many of these books were published by the Serfoji press, telling us about the recent publishing history of the city.

Once you are in Thanjavur, the museum is not difficult to locate. When visiting, you have to buy a separate ticket to visit each area.

Conclusion

Here I have offered a glimpse of what you will find in some of the museums in India. Each is a window that lets you peek into the past to explore the culture, diversity, traditions and peoples of ancient and modern Bharat.

Varanasi | Kerala | Thanjavur



DEPOSIT PHOTOS

Varanasi to Thanjavur: (Clockwise from top right) Bharat Kala Bhavan Museum in Varanasi: independence struggle painting; museum exterior. Napier Museum in Kerala: tiled outer walls and blended architectural styles; gilded Garuda; wooden temple chariot. Thanjavur Palace in Tamil Nadu: Durbar Hall ornate ceiling.



COURTESY NAPIER MUSEUM



COURTESY NAPIER MUSEUM



ANURADHA GOEL



SHUTTERSTOCK



SHUTTERSTOCK



VEERASWAMY



VEERASWAMY

FOOD

Come Feast At London's Finest Vegetarian-Friendly Places

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK CITY
IMAGINE LIVING IN A CARNIVOROUS—AND coronavirus—world in the heart of London—and yet exploring soul-satisfying vegetarian food for 20 days! Vegetarian and vegan food are a growing trend in London. Representing a combination of philosophical, moral and health aspects in thinking, vegetarian food is now available in almost all cuisines.

Visiting from New York, I was staying with relatives who all eat meat. Since I would rather starve than eat anything that moves, the challenge was to find the British essence of what vegetarian food can be. During those three weeks, I discovered some great resources for vegetarians—and realized that London's Indian food ranks among the best in the world.

The travel site Wanderlust recently did a

listing of the top vegetarian-friendly countries to visit. While India was first and Sri Lanka second, Italy (surprisingly) ranked third and the UK seventh (after Lebanon, Indonesia and Taiwan). Another travel site, Travel Off Path, listed Israel as the best country for vegetarian and vegan-friendly food, with India ranking second. It seems Tel Aviv calls itself the Vegan Capital of the World: at least five percent of the population classify themselves as vegan and 13 percent as vegetarian. The UK ranks sixth on this list: in 2018 the UK launched more vegan products than any other country.

The UK capital came on top for a second year in the rankings put together by HappyCow, which claims to be the largest vegan and vegetarian restaurant and store guide in the world, looking at options in more than 180 countries. The number of vegans in

the UK has quadrupled between 2014 and 2019, with around 600,000 Britons now on a plant-based diet, equivalent to more than one percent of the population, according to The Vegan Society.

Gone are the days when a vegetarian had to survive on bland meatless soups or salads, or a slice of pizza—restaurants across London offer an abundance of vegetarian riches. Whether a restaurant is Italian, Taiwanese or Middle Eastern, you are bound to find at least a few plant-based dishes on the menu that celebrate healthy eating. Some of these dishes are so appealing that you have non-vegetarians clamoring to have a taste from your plate!

Some of the international restaurants I tried were casual, trendy places in the heart of London. These included Middle Eastern, Korean and Malaysian neighborhood res-

Best of the best: (left to right) Veeraswamy's stately banquet room; one of their many vegetarian specialties: bel puri with paneer and condiments

taurants. The latter, with an extensive vegetarian, pan-Asian menu, had a lot of Indian clients who are often vegetarian on different Hindu holy days (Mondays for Shivji, Tuesdays for Hanuman, Thursdays for Satya Sai and Saturdays for Shani), and so on. I felt part of a group rather than an outsider!

Some relatives in nearby Ealing invited me to join them for a meal. Since they are believers in Radhaswami, I knew I would be in solid vegetarian hands. To my surprise, what they served me was not a home-cooked Indian meal but a vegan meal in a pub, as they wanted me to get the full English experience! We ate "burgers," "buffalo wings," "chicken nuggets" and fries—all plant-based, but looking unnervingly like the real thing. At home they cook perfect Indian vegetarian food, and even their cakes are made without eggs. Also, they don't use garlic or onion in their food, so this was their idea of a fun, chilled out evening for me to experience.

My niece lives in Dubai most of the time, but was spending a month in London. She explained to me she was so busy with work that she hardly did any Indian cooking, but

left that task to magic helpers increasingly being used by well-to-do South Asians in Britain. These immigrant workers, adept at Indian cooking, ensure that busy families are kept stocked in homemade rotis, Indian snacks and a variety of curries and kormas. By cooking at several homes, these part-time workers provide a livelihood for themselves and a comfortable lifestyle for their employers. I was delighted to get home-made, soul-satisfying spinach, cauliflower, daal and rotis, with the menu changing each day. These talented women can also make vegetarian biryani, dhokla and Sindhi koki (a flatbread), having picked up the tastes and recipes of different families.

While Britain has a massive South Asian population and scores of Indian-Pak grocery stores, especially in areas like Southall and Wembley, which have immigrant demographics, the surprise was to see how Indian grocery items had infiltrated the aisles of the mainstream supermarkets. As a vegetarian, I felt like a kid in a candy store—there were just so many frozen, ready-to-eat Indian delicacies, from samosas and fritters to South

Indian treats like idli and dosas. The **Waitrose**, one of the largest and most upscale stores, gives out recipe cards to its customers. I was tickled to pick up one for cauliflower and chickpea tikka masala, a recipe I had not seen even in New York.

The MW Eats Restaurant Empire

My trip took place in November 2021, when the pandemic was at its height. Going out to eat was a real challenge, since so many restaurants had shut. I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of Camellia Panjabi, the author of the award-winning book *Fifty Curries of India*. She, her sister Namita Panjabi and brother-in-law Ranjit Mathrani are the brains behind **MW Eats**, a mini Indian restaurant empire in London with eight **Masala Zone** restaurants, the elite **Chutney Mary**, the very sophisticated **Amaya** and also the oldest Indian restaurant in London—**Veeraswamy**, which is as old as Queen Elizabeth II.

Veeraswamy was opened in 1926 by Edward Palmer, a British Indian army officer who was the grandson of an English general and an Indian princess. It is said famous guests had included Winston Churchill, King Gustav VI of Sweden, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Charlie Chaplin. This



Among London's Select: (left) Gymkhana elegant dining rooms include a lower level; (above) their vegetarian achari paneer tikka with corn chaat; (below) MW Eats founders Camellia Panjabi (center), sister Namita and brother-in-law Ranjit Mathrani

glamorous restaurant, with its ornate, palatial interiors, was named by *National Geographic* as among the ten best Destination and Special Restaurants in the world. MW Eats acquired Veeraswamy in 1997 and restored it to its former glory.

It won its first Michelin star in 2016. The Michelin Guide inspectors said that "It may have opened in 1926, but this celebrated Indian restaurant just keeps getting better and better! The classic dishes from across the country are prepared with considerable care by a very professional kitchen. The room is awash with color and it's run with great charm and enormous pride." The restaurant has consistently won the star every year and remains among London's great Indian restaurants, with its classic dishes and efficient kitchen.

The Queen has a soft spot for Veeraswamy. She chose it to work with royal chefs for a reception she hosted at Buckingham Palace in 2009 for the State visit of the President of India, and then to launch 2017 as the UK-India Year of Culture and India's 70th year of Independence. The delicacies at this event included many sophisticated vegetarian canapes such as raj puri, paneer squares with herb crust, soya gujjias, pineapple almond halwa tart, and boondi and chocolate rock.

Camellia Panjabi came from Bombay in the 1980s, when there were hardly any Indian restaurants in London. With a stellar career as marketing director at the Taj Hotels, where she had helped open 40 restaurants, she introduced modern Indian cuisine to London—classic cooking served in contemporary fashion, with small grazing

plates showcasing the best of India's streets and markets. She joined her brother-in-law and sister (who had both been bankers) in starting MW Eats. The emphasis was on freshness and innovation: India's famously popular street snack Pao Bhaji was served with home-baked caramelized onion pao



bread. Even many in India would not be familiar with Jalebi Chaat, savory crisp jalebis combined with yogurt, tamarind, spices and fresh herbs. According to *The Caterer* magazine, "Namita and Camellia are regarded as leading authorities on authentic Indian cuisine, which they have researched extensively in people's homes, Maharajas' palaces and wayside stalls rather than conventional restaurants."

Camellia Panjabi has seen the worldwide push toward vegetarian choices: "I have noticed that even Middle Eastern clients who would normally go for a full meat-based menu have started incorporating a vegetarian biryani or other meatless sides. They too

are reading the same media as everyone else and realize the importance of adding some vegetables to the meal," she says. "The proportion has gone up, but is still far from a majority. But it is rising and even though it seems strange to put so many vegetarian dishes on the menu with less sales, we still make sure that it's there."

While most restaurants accommodate vegetarians by substituting tofu for meat in various dishes, the MW Eats restaurants already offer scores of vegetarian dishes in the printed menus. "There is a full vegetarian section with main courses fully prepared, not put together at the last minute. There is a big proportion of vegetarian starters—four or five as compared to six non-vegetarian. We do tandoori artichoke, chili paneer with date and sesame as well as char-grilled aubergine—and all kinds of things you will not find anywhere in the world."

In fact, Amaya, near Hyde Park, is noted for its menus of grilled offerings. Its huge silver tandoors are almost a part of the decor. Meat-eaters have always enjoyed a huge array of kebabs; Amaya also offers vegetarians their own menu of grilled vegetables and plant-based delicacies such as vegetarian spinach kebabs and tikkis, all barbecued to get that special aroma, including char-grilled aubergine, spinach tikki with spiced fig and watercress and green peas seekh kebabs. There are also world-class flatbreads of varied textures and ingredients to enrich the tandoori eating experience.

Each of the MW Eats Indian restaurants has its own personality. **Chutney Mary** is at a power location close to St. James Palace, home of Prince Charles, and the Carlton Club, which is headquarters of the Conser-



vative Party politics. Panjabi tells me this is the prime financial district of Mayfair, surrounded by 500 hedge funds.

The eight **Masala Zone** restaurants are popular with Indians and non-Indians alike, especially the young. The atmosphere is fun and light, with happening decor, design and art, and the price point is affordable. A tight budget shouldn't force you to economize on joy, and that is the atmosphere of these fun restaurants where you could probably taste something new every day, something from the streets and small towns of India. Both veg and non-veg dishes are offered, as one family can have its share of vegetarians, vegans, non-vegetarians and ovo-vegetarians.

The Sri Lanka Entree

One can hardly talk about vegetarian food in London without touching upon the delights of Sri Lankan food. I had eaten a flavorful vegetarian Sri Lankan curry in Canada many years ago, and the tangy taste has always stayed with me. Just as I was departing London, I was intrigued to hear about a whole array of London restaurants called **Hoppers** that showcase Sri Lankan food. Social media has made this a small world, and I connected on Whatsapp with Karan Gokani, the young owner, who happens to be from my Sindhi community. I saw a lot of nonvegetarian food on the menu, but asked him about the vegetarian signature dishes and how popular plant-based dishes were.

Karan, who is Indian but from Sri Lanka, told me he was fascinated by how different Sri Lankan food is—but also how similar it is, in some respects, to the cuisine of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. A lawyer by trade, he had always wanted to open a restaurant. His wife's family already owned several Indian restaurants in London, and he founded Hoppers with them. The success led to the open-

Fresh from Sri Lanka: (left) Hoppers restaurant at King's Cross; (inset) their logo; appam, a typical Lankan dish; (right) vegetarian meal with white "stringhopper" rice noodles

ing of three Hoppers, and he just did a popup in Saudi Arabia too. Soon to be launched is a cookbook inspired by the cuisine of Hoppers. "We've been flying the flag for Sri Lanka for a while, but it's very much Indian as well. Obviously, both regions have a lot of great vegetarian food, but it's an equal match," he says. "Meat is definitely some of the highlights, but we do an amazing aubergine curry and local vegetables like squash and kale. I wish I could get more Sri Lankan and Indian vegetables here but it's difficult."

At Hoppers he says he doesn't need to tweak the food much because it's naturally vegan, and they don't use meat substitutes or soy—just showcase the vegetables. While there is a growing trend for people to eat more ethically, Hoppers doesn't try to target any one market; there's something for everyone. He says, "Our menu is just naturally balanced. That's our unique selling point and we just follow traditional stuff—we follow a set of recipes that are time-tested and obviously great without tweaks to it, without making it fusion."

What is a popular signature vegetarian dish at Hoppers? Karan suggests a barbecued cabbage which is grilled and charred and immersed in a mild coconut curry with crispy mushrooms and chili oil. He says it can be eaten with rice but is fantastic enough to eat by itself with a fork and knife.

Quilon: Top of its Class

While in London, I visited the remarkable **Quilon Restaurant** in the Taj Hotel, a virtual vegetarian feast with a special tasting menu—dish after dish evoking the flavors of the South. Chef Sriram, who was originally

headed for law studies, graduated instead from the Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition in India. While still in college, he joined his father in the restaurant business before joining the luxury Taj Hotels in 1989.

"It was here that I strengthened my thoughts and shaped my desire to uncover the potential of South Indian cuisine," he says. He opened the Karavali, which was ranked among the top five restaurants in India in 1995, and he was judged as one of the top five chefs in India. He believes the lightness and multidimensional flavors of Southwest Indian cuisine can appeal to Western audiences, but "to use the right technique and authentic ingredients from the recipe, without compromising the foundation of the cuisine, was challenging."

Sriram opened Quilon in the Taj Hotel in London in 1999 and made it his mantra to interpret his southwest roots for a new audience, using only the freshest ingredients. He is the largest importer of South Indian spices. His food has won many awards, including the Michelin Star in 2008 and every year since then.

Quilon's vegetarian tasting menu can make a vegetarian or vegan feel like a pampered prince. Its offerings include drumstick soup, stuffed courgette (zucchini) with courgette flowers and paw paw chutney, pulled jackfruit roast with steamed pathiri (rice pancakes), scallions, baby cucumber, cherry mustard, mint chutney, vegetable kola chop, jerusalem artichoke roast, thalassery vegetable biryani, coin paratha, yellow dal clove smoked, followed by boondi guava cheese-cake with guava kulfis.



Best out or in: (left to right) Quilon's papad appetizer with condiments; the kitchen staff; Jikoni's home kit takes a short time to prepare

I was able to have a brief conversation on vegetarianism with Sriram in his office, after enjoying the delicious brunch he had prepared for me—and after his busy morning preparing tailor-made meals for his many other guests, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian.

Sriram pointed out that in India 39 percent of the population is vegetarian anyway, and even non-vegetarians consume largely vegetarian food which has long been part of Indian culture as a whole, be it due to religion or moral philosophy. He says that in Hinduism all animals are connected to some God and worshiped in different parts of India in different ways and there's a great respect for their sanctity.

"I think people look up to India because it's the only country in the world which has followed a cuisine in terms of vegetarianism so intensively and because of which there is so much variety," he says. "The idea that a vegetarian diet has no variety has been proven completely wrong in India, inspiring a lot of Western chefs and the Western world. I think that is of great value and brings people to become aware of what they are eating and what it does to their body."

Now is definitely a good time to be a vegetarian in London—you will not only get your vegetarian food but you will be well fed. Even mainstream Britishers are totally familiar with samosas and other delicacies. They are increasingly cooking vegetarian at home and also buying ready-made Indian vegetarian meals.

There's Even Home Delivery

Indeed, you get the flavors and influences of all the meals cooked by immigrants to the British Raj from different parts of the globe.

Chef Ravinder Bhogal, for instance, was born in Kenya to Indian parents. She brings to her food and restaurant the many influences of growing up in diverse cultures. Her debut restaurant **Jikoni**, launched in 2020, introduced the vegan and vegetarian home delivery brand Comfort and Joy to London.



Michelin's star: Chef Sriram Aylur of Quilon, one of London's best restaurants

She is also the author of *Proudly Inauthentic Recipes from an Immigrant Kitchen*. Jikoni, meaning "kitchen" in Swahili, is a London restaurant that draws on a mixed heritage, flavors and culinary traditions.

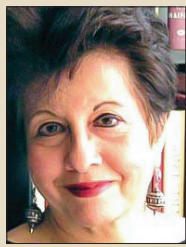
And that, perhaps, is the charm of the London food scene. Reading up on the creation of Jikoni, you read the designer notes: "We created a relaxed, disarming and homely space with hand-finished details, ingredient illustrations and carefully sourced textiles, supporting craft and coopera-

tives in India, East Africa and the Middle East. The open kitchen and bar were designed in a domestic style at a human scale. We created a spice pantry and sky-lit stairwell, with details inspired by 1950's homes in Nairobi."

Jikoni's takeout is a changing selection of vegan and vegetarian meal boxes, inspired by different cultures from around the world. Every meal is cooked using green energy and the packaging is 100% home compostable. With every order, a meal is prepared for London's homeless by the charitable organization Nishkam SWAT.

Indian Food Colonized the British Raj

Just imagine: the ancient food culture of India has traveled over hundreds of years to the small island nation of the United Kingdom, once known as the mighty British Raj, and has conquered the country, one British palate at a time, with its noble food philosophy and healthful ideas, its myriad flavors and its jeweled spices. It has been brought by South Asian immigrants arriving by boat and by air, on slave ships and chartered flights, as refugees, travelers and dreamers. Each newcomer has brought their own family heritage and food secrets and now shares them with the entire world.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lavina Melwani is a New York-based journalist who has written on the arts, spirituality and life for several international publications. She is a columnist for CNBCTV18.com and is a co-founder of Children's Hope India. She blogs at www.laviniawithlavina.com. You can follow her @lavinamelwani

More of London's Best

The media always includes several Indian restaurants on the "best of London lists." While none of these are even close to being exclusively vegetarian, one can see the mighty V is present in all menus of these restaurants as the vegan and vegetarian customer becomes ever more important. I wasn't able to visit these, but assembled some information from their websites:

The **Gymkhana**, with one Michelin star, has the amazing Vault Vegetarian Tasting Menu (right) with dozens of choices. It's definitely not a budget choice, at us\$131, but quite the treat if you can afford it. The menu includes tandoori broccoli, chilli and green mango raita, beetroot chops pao, peanut ghati masala, methi malai mutter paneer and khatta meetha baigan, along with dal maharani, rajasthani bhindi, saag makai, bread basket or basmati rice, and rich desserts.

Flora Indica has several vegetarian offerings and an entire vegan/vegetarian take-away menu on its website including such delicacies as kurmure okra fries, chaat, achari tender broccoli, cherry tomato and sour cream, jerusalem artichoke papdi chaat, sauteed curly kale with shredded hispi cabbage, turmeric and ginger, and spiced almond cream spinach cooked with dill and cherry tomato.

Jamavar also has a Michelin star and features a luscious vegan/vegetarian menu with offerings such as chandni chowk ki aloo tikki (potato tikki, spiced white peas, yogurt, tamarind and mint chutney) katal bhel (jackfruit cutlet, puffed rice and date-tamarind chutney) and makai palak ke goolar (spinach and rice dumplings, mustard yogurt, pine nuts, raisins and feta).

Along with these high-end restaurants, there are also some fun takeaway places like **Motu Indian Kitchen's** eight locations. These are owned by JKS Restaurants, which also owns Gymkhana, Trishna, Brigadiers and Hoppers. The site describes it thus: "Motu, a name derived from the affectionate Hindi term for "Fat Man," serves indulgent home-style Indian food, paying homage to the British love of a classic Indian takeaway. With a nod to the *dabbawalas* of India, who would traditionally deliver a packed meal for workers across Indian cities in what became known as a tiffin." Bowing to the all important 'V,' they offer a vegan Motu Box.

Formal or casual, still top-tier:

(top) Gymkhana's amazing vegetarian tasting menu; (right) advertising art for Motu (literally, "fat man"); elegant interior of Jamavar



VAULT VEGETARIAN TASTING MENU

£110.00
Wine Pairing £95.00

Pappadam Selection, Mango Chutney & Nimbu Achari Raita
Gol Guppa, Jaljeera, Potato, Sprouting Moong
2020 Sainte Victoire, Rosalie, Donnaire Terre de Mistral, Provence, France

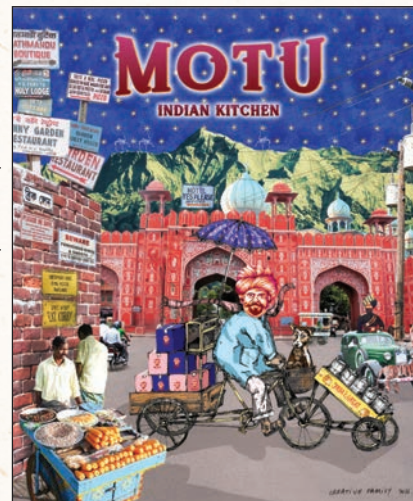
Aloo Chat, Tamarind, Sev
2017 Verdejo, Majuelo del Chivitero, Isaac Cantalapiedra, Castilla y Leon, Spain
or
Punjabi Samosa Chaat, Saunth Chutney
2020 Semillon, Epileptic Inspiration, BlankBottle, Elgin, South Africa

Tandoori Broccoli, Chilli & Green Mango Raita
2016, Fruilano, Galea, I Clivi, Friuli, Italy
or
Achari Paneer Tikka, Fig & Cashew Nut, Corn Chat
2020 Plexus, John Duval, Barossa Valley, Australia
or
Beetroot Chops Pao, Peanut Ghati Masala
2020 Brully, Vieilles Vignes, Jean-Claude Lapalu, Beaujolais, France

Gucchi, Khumb & Truffle Pilau
2020 Collioure, Les Canadells, Domaine La Tour Vieille, Roussillon, France
or
Methi Malai Mutter Paneer
2020 Semillon, Epileptic Inspiration, BlankBottle, Elgin, South Africa
or
Khatta Meetha Baingan
2020 Chinon, Vieilles Vignes, Domaine Fabrice Gasnier, France

Served With: Dal Maharani, Rajasthani Bhindi, Saag Makai - Bread Basket or Basmati Rice

Saffron Pistachio Kulfi Falooda
2020 Moscato d'Asti Frizzante, Nivole, Michele Chiarlo, Piedmont, Italy
or
Cardamom & Basmati Rice Kheer, Fresh Mango, Sorbet
2010 Château Filhot, Sauternes, France



Taoism's Hindu Parallels

My brief encounter with Taoist Deities in China left me amazed at the similarities with key Hindu concepts



BY RUTVIJ HOLAY, 17

FROM IT BECAME ONE, FROM ONE BECAME TWO, from Two became Three, from Three became all things in the Universe. Replace *It* with Brahman, Siva, Vishnu, or whichever God you believe to be the representation of the Supreme depending on your *sampradaya*, and you find yourself telling one of the Hindu stories of creation. Replace *It* with *Tao*, however, and you find yourself reciting the 42nd verse of the *Tao Te Ching*, one of the foundational books of the Taoist faith of China.

The similarities do not stop with this one verse. From philosophy to methods of worship to ethics and everything else, there are profound similarities between Hinduism and Taoism, many of which I was blessed to see during a one-day layover in Hong Kong, and in my studies of Chinese culture afterwards. I have found that these similarities are so prevalent that one could claim that Taoism and Hinduism are, in many ways, Indian and Chinese variations of the same faith.

My Revealing Visit to China

The first time I noticed these similarities was in 2019 when I entered a small village in Hong Kong. It was the quaint fishing town of Tai O, from which most of the younger generation had moved out. China is often painted as a second West, incredibly modernized and focused on industrial development; yet, even before we stepped into the village, there was a small red stone murti in a modest shrine just outside.

There isn't much I can say about it—it



was nameless, handleless, legless, and merely had a face, with a red hat put on it alongside two stones. What did stand out, however, were the oranges placed alongside it and the red glasses of liquid placed in front of it.

Out of respect for the Deity and not knowing the customs, I did not go closer to it; yet it was clear that He was some sort of Gramadevata for the villagers, given offerings and called upon to protect the village. My curiosity piqued, I took His blessings, so that I could understand the culture of the people in the village better, and how exactly it related to Hindu dharma, if at all. With us were a Hindu couple from Vishakhapatnam whom we had met on the flight going back to their home after visiting their son in California. The resemblance was also clear to them, and they joined me in taking the blessings of the Devata.

Heading into the heart of the village, we came across the 500-year-old Kwan Tai Old Temple. The temple honored Kwan Tai, a general during the Han Dynasty known for his loyalty and righteousness. Much like Hindu mandirs, however, it also contained murtis of other Devatas, such as Tudigong, the God of the Ground and the Soil.

The temple featured a method of divination, something also found in some Hindu temples, though not in this form. Devotees could ask a question, usually regarding marriages and business, and rub two tiles together, throwing them into the air. If both land on the "yes" side, then the answer to the question is yes. While I can't speak to the accuracy of the method, I did ask the Devatas whether the Chinese Tao and Vedic Brahman are the same. The answer from the tiles was "Yes."

Similarities in the Two Faiths

After a delicious meal at a local Buddhist monastery, we were on a flight heading home to Los Angeles, where I used the last few days of summer to begin getting an overview of the Taoist beliefs and texts, which until then had been reduced to the



China's traditional temples: (clockwise from left) The Kwan Tai Old Temple in Tai O; enshrined statue of Kwan Tai, a general, and his wife; the temple's entranceway; the street-side shrine in Tai O

popular yin and yang symbol in my mind. I also worked on my Chinese for the next three years, to allow me to better understand the Chinese scriptures and texts. Given the similarities I found between the traditions, it was well worth the effort.

To start with, both religions are inherently pantheistic. Just as Hindus believe that everything in the world is the manifestation of a nameless, formless concept known as Brahman, Taoists hold that everything in the world is the manifestation of a nameless, formless concept known as Tao.

In fact, the *Tao Te Ching* even goes into philosophy regarding the Atma when it mentions how "the Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao," which is similar to the *Bhagavad Gita's* "The Atma is eternal and constant, and does not die when the body dies." In this way, it seems that Tao is a far broader term than Brahman, in that it encompasses more concepts.

One common Hindu concept is the idea of *Rita*, the natural order that governs the universe. Known in Taoism as Tian Tao, "Way of Heaven," it works "so that all things are brought to perfection by it." When discussing how men ought to interact with the Way, Taoist texts give the examples of the legendary emperors that all kings aspire to be like—Huangsi, Yao and Shun—who "did nothing, but tried to imitate that Way of Heaven," much like our *Puranas* and *Itihasas* give examples of people like Rama and Harishchandra who always stuck to the dharmic path, and whom many Indian leaders aspire

to be like.

The *Zhuangzi*, a foundational text of Taoism, describes the man who is able to understand the Tao and live in accordance with it: "His whole mind is fixed, and he rules over the world. The spirits of his dead do not come to scare him; he is not worn out by their souls. His words proceeding from his vacancy and stillness, yet reach to heaven and Earth, and show a communication with all things: this is what is called the Joy of Heaven."

In Hinduism, when one experiences the Divine and aims to merge with that state completely in some way, depending on the sampradaya, they are aiming to not merely understand and live in accordance with dharma, karma and rita, but to transcend these three completely by merging themselves with a higher power, rather than being trapped in the cycle of life and death that is governed by these three concepts.

There are such clear similarities between Taoist and Hindu methods of thought that, language aside, the difference between a Vaishnav and Quanzhen (a sect of Taoism) is no more than the difference between a Vaishnav and a Shaivite.

Conclusion

Given that the two nations have always had contact over their 5,000 year history, it is possible that Taoism is a school from India that made its way to China, but more likely it formed independently.

A few years back, I was discussing with a Native American the similarities between their faiths and Hinduism. When I argued a common origin, he gave me the example of a pond: an Indian

may have seen it, and a Native American may have seen it awhile later. Both use the pond for bathing, drinking water, and the like, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the Indian led the Native American to it or vice-versa.

It may be the same with Taoism and Hinduism. The Chinese sages and Indian rishis both, through their own contemplation, were revealed the secrets of a divine power, termed by the Chinese as the Tao and the Indians as Brahman, Siva, Vishnu or another name. Both, however, understood that the entity was truly without name, form, or identity, and sought to teach the knowledge they had gained through their meditation to their disciples, both completely unaware that, based on the same divine power, their neighbors were also developing their own system of faith.

Thus it is clear that the realization our rishis came to was not a realization that can only be found under the Hindu banner. Others, whether independently or under Indian influence, came to the same conclusions, and both our traditions, the Chinese Taoist sects and the Indian Hindu sects, are part of the wider Dharmic tapestry that recognizes that all living beings, from the tiniest ant to the human, are manifestations of the Divine itself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rutvij Holay, 17, of Irvine, California, is an executive committee member of Americans for Equality PAC and a Hindu political activist. He is presently working with his school district and a textbook maker to change how Hinduism is depicted in education. He can be reached at rutvij.holay@gmail.com.



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Hindu Heritage Endowment

The Importance of Wills for Young People

By AKHILA SATISH



The COVID-19 pandemic has caused us to be more mindful about wills

There is a certain natural reluctance among us to discuss our own death. It can feel morbid and unsettling. However, there is one immense emotional and practical reason to have at least one conversation about our own death: once we are gone, we can no longer advise our loved ones on what we wish to happen. The responsibility of choosing what happens next will rest solely on the shoulders of our grieving loved ones. At that moment, we will no longer be there to help ease their pain. However, clear, thoughtful instructions and directives can mollify the stress, guilt and uncertainty that may arise when trying to navigate a loved one's last wishes without guidance. No matter how old you are or how much you own, having your affairs in order is a way to responsibly take care of the people you love.

You can begin the process by creating a will that defines how you want your assets to be distributed. This is an opportunity to consider what matters most to you and how you want to be remembered. Perhaps there is a charity you would like to support, or a cause you would like to donate to. You may also wish to designate a process for curating your digital assets.

There are numerous online services to help you create a will at little or no cost. Alternatively, you could consider seeking legal counsel to help you with the draft. Failing to allocate your assets clearly can put your loved ones at risk for a lengthy and complicated settlement process through the court system. Regardless of the size of the assets, this process can create confusion, roadblocks and unpredictable outcomes. If you have children or pets, this is where you should designate guardianship. You may also want to consider a trust if you have young children, as it will allow for money to be allocated over a period of time, rather than a lump sum. Certain trusts may also help minimize estate taxes, reduce probate court time and protect assets from creditors.

Next, you may want to consider a power of attorney in the event that you are unable to make decisions for yourself at the end of your life. A power of attorney can be financial or medical, or both. It is vitally important to discuss your preferences with this individual, as well as potentially prepare a way to let others know whom you have chosen and why. You can further stipulate your wishes with an advanced medical directive and include specific desires in your will for funeral arrangements.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused us to be more mindful about wills and why. You can further stipulate your wishes with an advanced medical directive and include specific desires in your will for funeral arrangements. Be responsible and thoughtful; show your loved ones you care about these issues. We may not want to dwell on it, but we have little control over the externalities of our life. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused us to realize this. In growing numbers, more and more young people are stepping up to create solid estate planning. In 2021, Caring.com's Wills and Estate Planning Study shared that younger adults are 63% more likely to have a will this year than before the pandemic. Surprisingly, 18-34 year olds are now more likely to have a will than 35-54 year olds. If you fall in those two age groups, or if you happen to be as mortal as everyone else, join the trend to take part in a planning process that can protect and care for those you love.

For more information about planned gifts, visit <https://plannedgiving.hheonline.org/>

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Madan Ganesh Velayudham	499.00		Cassan Pancham	1,500.00		Sivaruban & Carolyn Sivanesan	200.00	
Total	4,995.06		Janaka Param	101.00		Anonymous	1,388.41	
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Arunasalam Vathavooran	75.00		Ravi Vinayak Family	100.00			
Anonymous	64.97		Anonymous	2,022.00			
Total	2,030.28		Total	6,356.21			
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Anonymous	108.36		Anonymous	10.00			
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Swarnalatha Mani	101.00		Grand Total			\$19,440,747.59	
Total	201.00						
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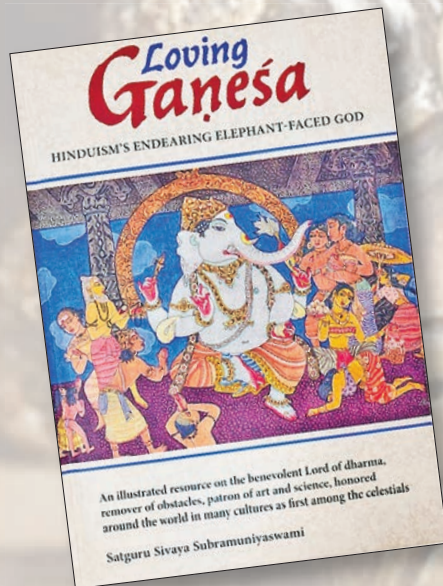


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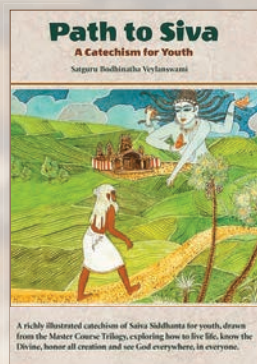
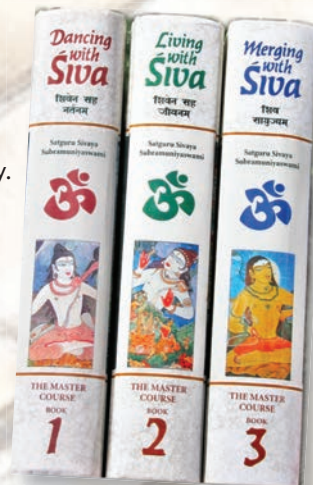
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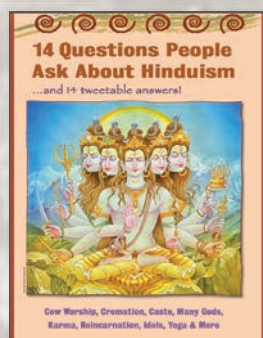


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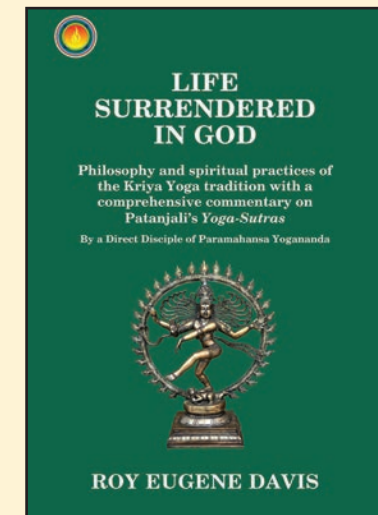


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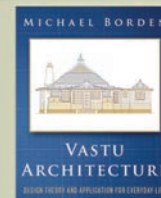
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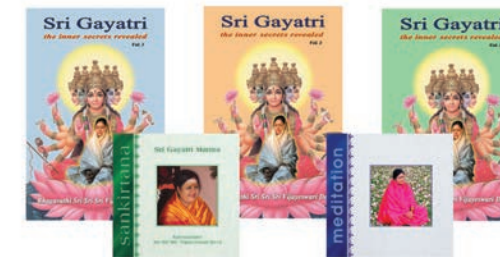
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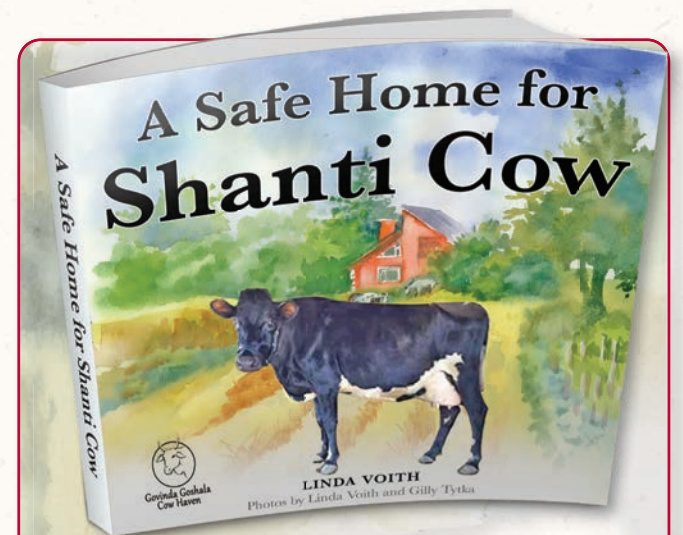
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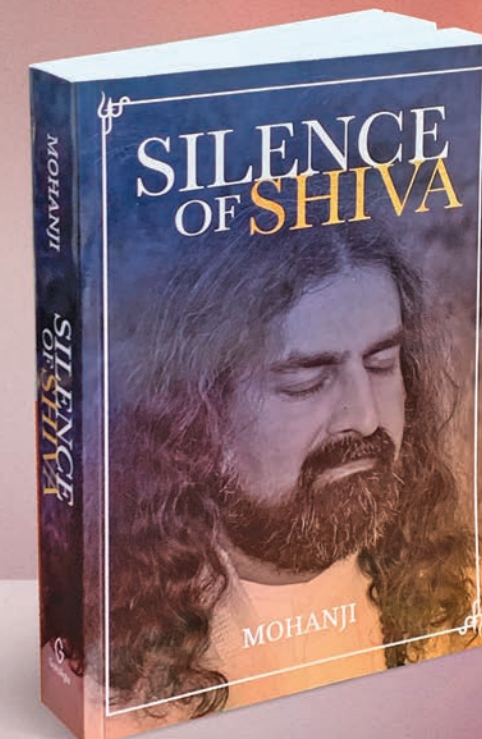
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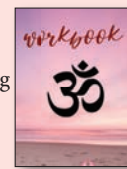
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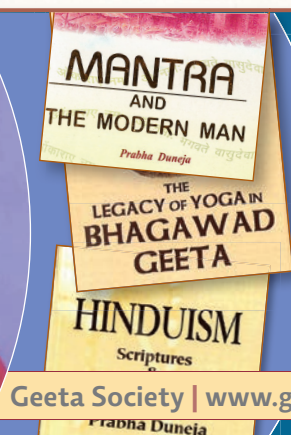
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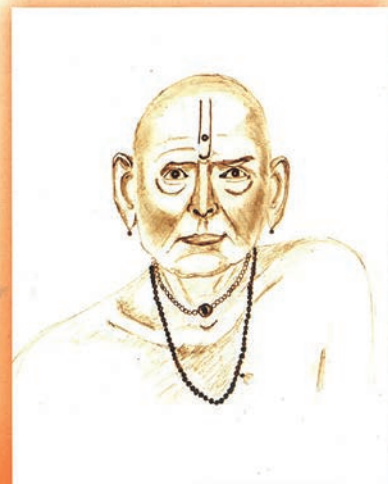


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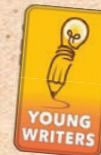


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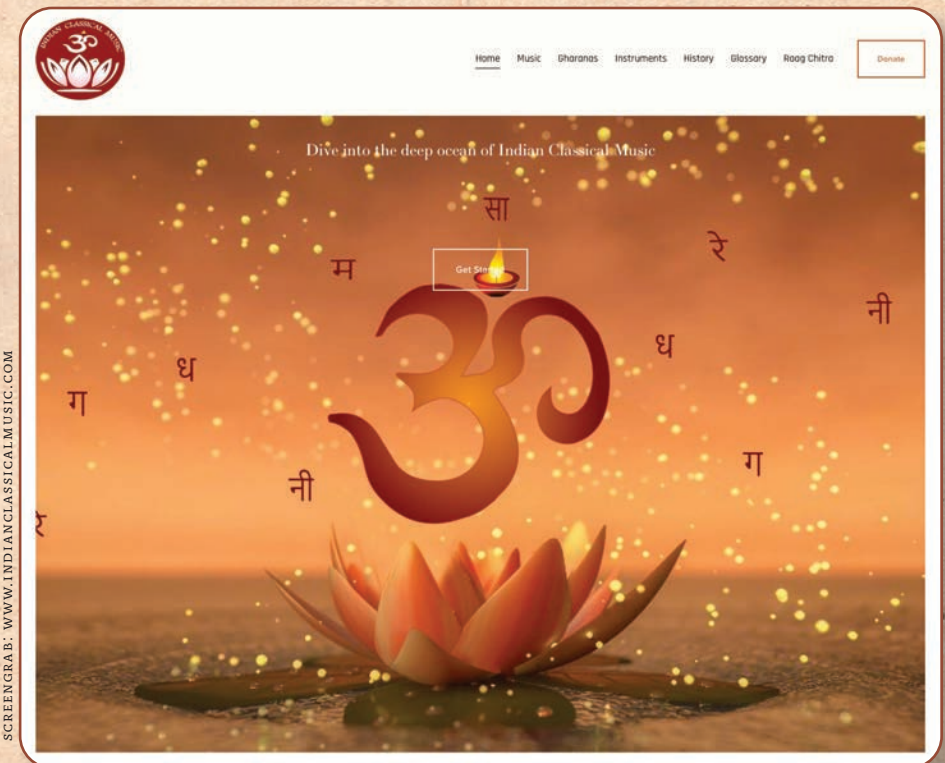
THE MISSION OF THE BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED site indianclassicalmusic.com is to document the Hindustani musical tradition. It offers vast resources for beginners and professionals alike. In its library of ragas, each is accompanied by an informational video discussing its history, with a short melodious improvisation.

Still a work in progress, the site also offers lessons on Hindustani music theory; a gallery of Indian classical instruments organized by instrument group, with a description of each; and a history of Indian classical music dating back to around 2500 BCE. This site covers the general history, philosophy, and theory behind Hindustani music. Unfortunately, it does not offer information about India's other great musical tradition, Carnatic music.

One of the main differences between Hindustani and Carnatic classical music are *gamakas*, graceful ornamentations of musical notes. In Hindustani music, most gamakas are *meend*, a glide between notes. But in Carnatic music, singers usually use a technique called *kampitam*, or oscillation between notes. Carnatic music recognizes more than ten different techniques, but *kampitam* is the most characteristic type used to identify which style of music is being played or sung.

The second major difference between Hindustani and Carnatic classical music is language. Because Carnatic music originated in South India, most songs are in Tamil, Telugu, Malayam, Kannada and, of course, Sanskrit, while Hindustani music uses Punjabi, Rajasthani, Urdu and Brajhasha.

In addition, Hindustani music gives far more importance to *raga* (melody) than to lyrics, and to human emotions, while Carnatic music places great importance on its Hindu devotional lyrics. At an advanced level of training, improvisation is taught within the rigorous structure of its compositions. Many of these differences are the result of the Muslim influence on Indian classical music since the time of the Mughal invasion into North India in the 1600s. The kings and emperors were the main patrons of the arts, supporting most of the musicians and other



artists.

An excellent website for South Indian classical music is karnatik.com. Lakshman Ragde has made it his life's mission to research and compile lyrics of Carnatic music compositions and share them with music lovers. Though the website design is a bit dated, it contains a wealth of information. There is a library of 20,000 lyrics arranged alphabetically, as well as by raga, composer, singer, or type of composition. There is a large repository of reference material for students of Carnatic music, from biographies of famous composers, to a list of ragas with notations, to tables of the 72 Melakartha ragas and 35 talas. There is also a section with basic lessons in Carnatic music, which was written by Saint Purandaradasa about 500 years ago and is still used today as the system of teaching and learning.

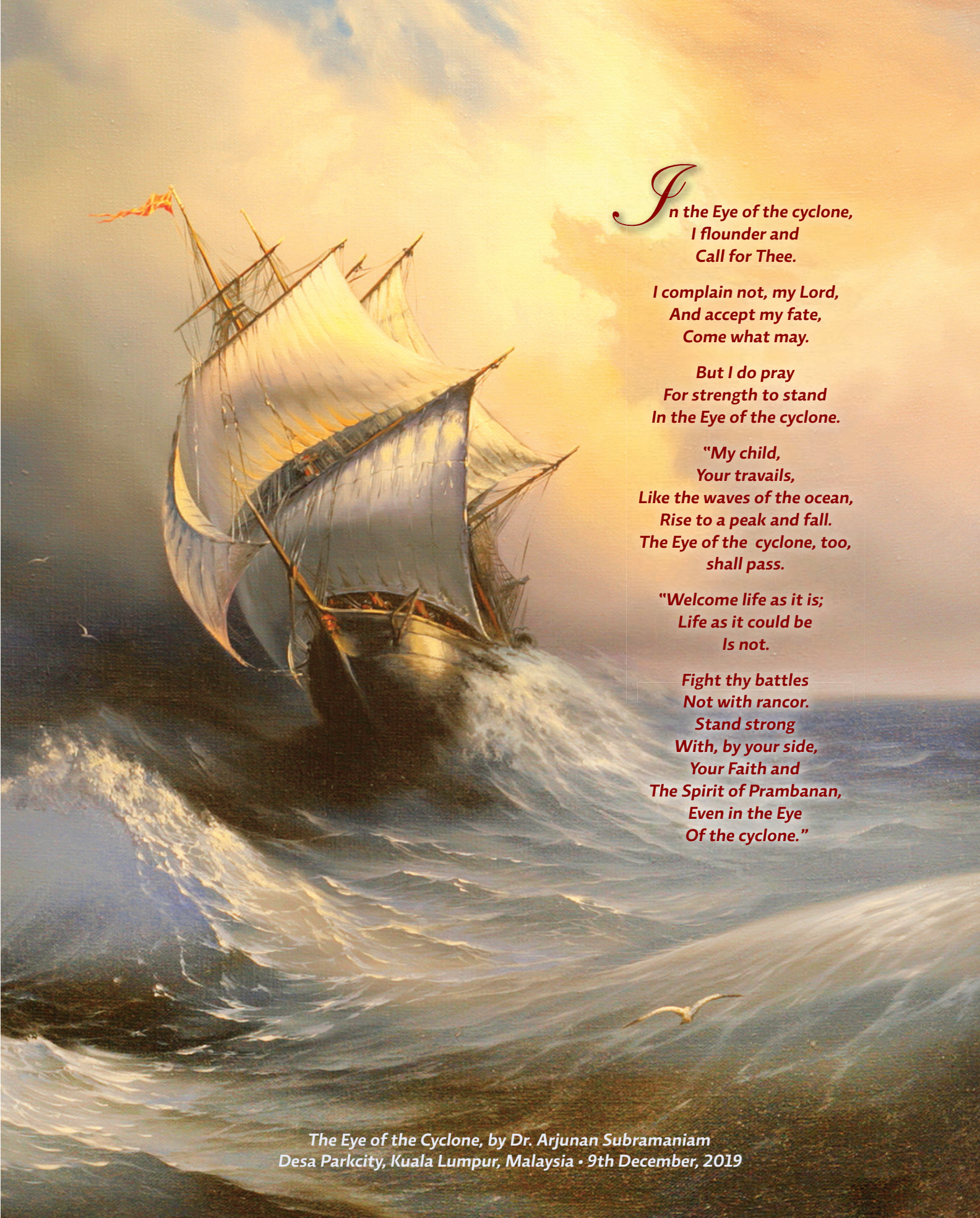
If you are a student of Hindustani or Carnatic music, you will find these websites to be great resources to enhance your learning and reveal similarities and differences between the two genres.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Arunesh Eswaran, 14, of Plano, Texas, has been learning Carnatic vocal music for the past nine years. When he's not playing music, he enjoys photography, tech, swimming and volunteering.
arunesh2026@gmail.com



*I*n the Eye of the cyclone,
I flounder and
Call for Thee.

I complain not, my Lord,
And accept my fate,
Come what may.

But I do pray
For strength to stand
In the Eye of the cyclone.

"My child,
Your travails,
Like the waves of the ocean,
Rise to a peak and fall.
The Eye of the cyclone, too,
shall pass.

"Welcome life as it is;
Life as it could be
Is not.

Fight thy battles
Not with rancor.
Stand strong
With, by your side,
Your Faith and
The Spirit of Prambanan,
Even in the Eye
Of the cyclone."

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