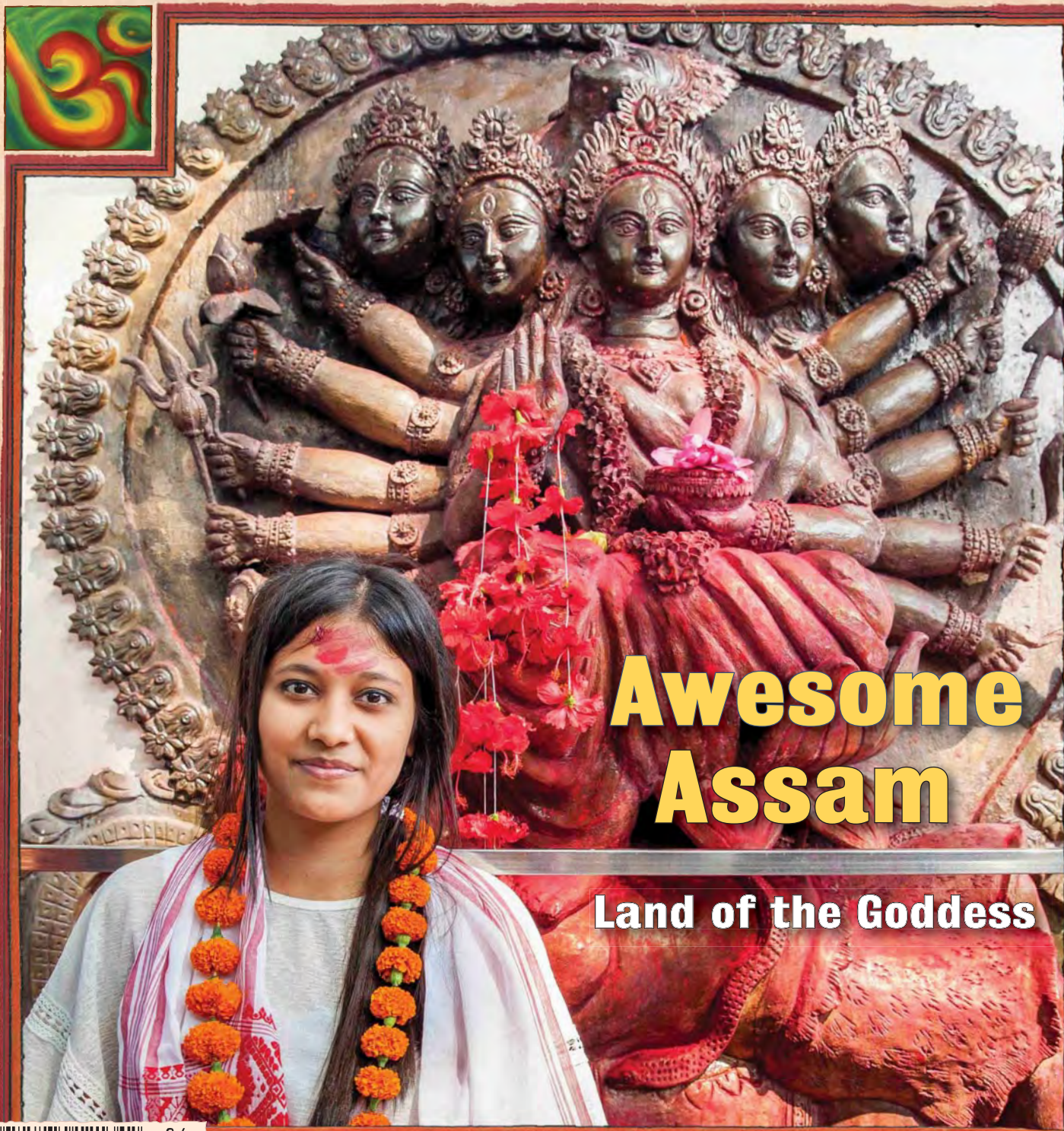


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(Cover) Twelfth grader Ashi worships at the famed Ma Kamakhya temple to the Goddess in Guwahati, in India's northeast Assam State; (above) the science of consciousness explores a new understanding of the mind's relationship to the cosmos and to reality

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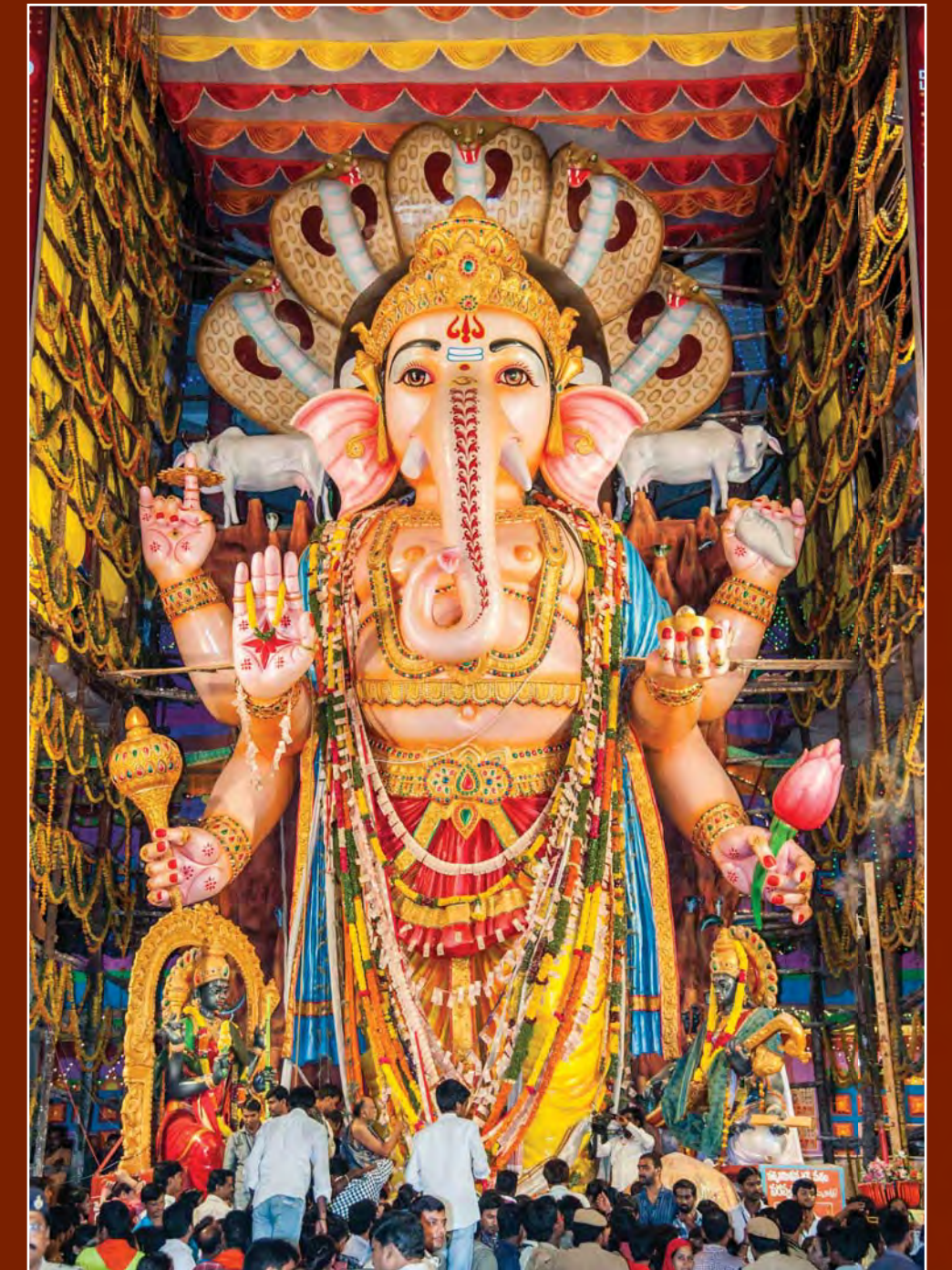
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2016 Ganesha Chaturthi

Photographer Arun Mishra takes us to Mumbai for India's glorious Ganesha festival ...Page 64



(Left) Giant Ganesha images—crafted by individual districts, neighborhoods or streets—are referred to as their area's "king." Here Tejukacha Raja or "King of Teju" is paraded through Mumbai on His way to the ocean for immersion; (above) one of the world's tallest Ganeshas in Khairtabad, Hyderabad, before immersion in Lake Hussain Sagar



GLOBAL DHARMA

USA

More Hindus Enter Congress

THE 115TH UNITED STATES CONGRESS opened in Washington DC January 3, 2017 and with it an all-time record number of Hindus and Indian-Americans holding office. Tulsi Gabbard—who was first sworn in to the House of Representatives in 2013, representing Hawaii—was the first Hindu member in Congress. Now we have our first Indian-Americans, Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Kamala Harris (D-CA). Senator Harris, of Indian-Jamaican ancestry, is the first Indian-American elected to the Senate. She hasn't publicly

offered a religious identification. Raja Krishnamoorthi, Pramila Jayapal and Ro Khanna identify publicly as Hindus. Krishnamoorthi, Jayapal and Gabbard all took their oath of office on the *Bhagavad Gita*. Gabbard said at the time, "I'm grateful to the people of Hawai'i for the opportunity to continue serving them in Washington, and was humbled to take the oath of office on the *Bhagavad Gita*, as I was sworn into the 115th Congress. The *Gita* has been a tremendous source of inner peace and strength throughout my life. I'm proud to welcome



New to Congress: Freshman House members on the Capitol steps

my new colleagues to the 115th Congress that has become even more diverse and representative of the makeup of our country." Representative Ro Khanna chose to take his oath of office on the US Constitution, explaining, "I have always believed that Hinduism is a philosophy of life that respects religious pluralism, a separation of church and state and civil liberties. So I

also believe swearing in on the Constitution is deeply consistent with my faith, particularly as Mahatma Gandhi and my grandfather practiced it." Of the total of 535 representatives and senators, there are 485 Christians, 30 Jews, three Buddhists, two Muslims, four Hindus, and several who do not publicly identify with a religion.



UNITED KINGDOM

Do Britain's Yoga Teachers Really Need Regulating?

UK YOGIS ARE BEING PUT TO the test while the country awaits possible regulations on their beloved yoga. In October, 2016, the British Wheel of Yoga, the largest yoga membership organization in the UK, teamed up with Skills Active, an organization licensed by the government to deal with training in the active leisure and learning sector, in order to create a national occupation standard or NOS.

The question of regulation has been looming for several years as yoga becomes a major part of the country's culture. Repetitive strain injuries, torn ligaments and damaged wrists have resulted from yoga practice, but

the question of blame depends on which side you are on. For those supporting the NOS, the responsibility falls on unqualified teachers. The yogis against the BWY's proposal to set standards say you cannot regulate the philosophy or culture that is yoga. They argue that the possibility of injury is always present in the practitioner, and yoga only makes it known.

"The other school of thought," says Sarah Shone, a chartered physiotherapist and yoga teacher, "There is a risk of injury with any physical activity that any of us undertake."

Paul Fox, Chairman of BWY, says he hopes regulation will



"help to protect the public from injury in yoga classes." Fox explains, "If you're going to take members of the public through a set of yoga poses, you have a duty of care towards them. You have to do a risk assessment, and know how to modify postures and how to deal with people who have any number of common ailments. Many good yoga teacher training courses will cover that."

Skills Active and BWY say their research for the project will take one year as they go around "holding a UK-wide consultation with specific

Stretching the truth?: While the BWY claims the proposal is not about money, they will have a monopoly in yoga training and certifications if the regulations are passed

sessions." In the meantime yogis are protesting with a web-based petition, hoping to receive 5,000 signatures. The petition states, "Please refrain from infringing on the human rights of yoga practitioners to share their practice by instituting the entirely inappropriate 'National Occupational Standard for Yoga Teachers.' Yoga is not in your brief."



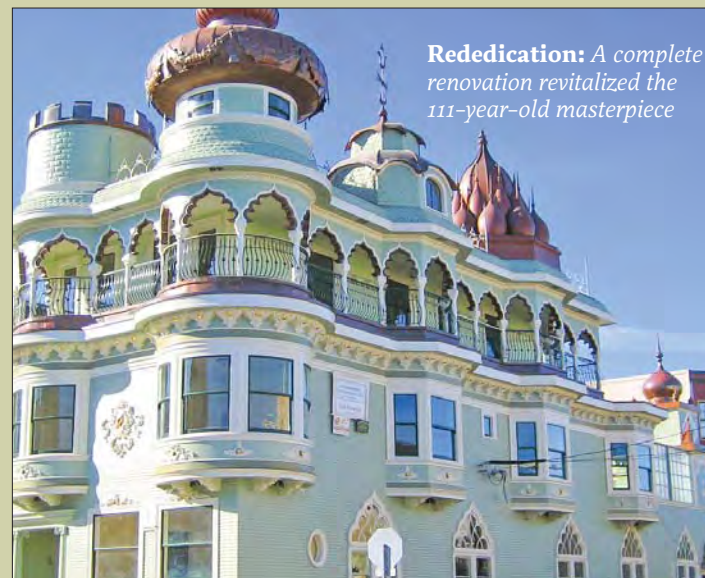
All systems go: This Tamil Nadu system is 20% more powerful than the world's second largest solar plant in California

INDIA

Mega Solar Park Powers Up

WITH NEW DELHI'S POLLUTION reaching the highest level in 17 years, Adani Green Energy Group completed the world's largest solar farm on September, 2016, in Kamuthi, Tamil Nadu. The 648-megawatt project using 25 million panels can power 150,000 homes, with some sources projecting double that figure. The solar park was built in eight months by a crew of some 8,500 people working around the clock to make the

deadline, despite severe floods and other obstacles. This is just the beginning of Prime Minister Modi's goal of producing 175 gigawatts by 2022 and reducing emissions by 33-35 percent by 2030. Further, Modi hopes that India will produce 40 percent of its power from non-fossil fuels. *National Geographic's* 40-minute documentary about the project is on YouTube at bit.ly/TamilNadusSolarPlant.



Rededication: A complete renovation revitalized the 111-year-old masterpiece

SAN FRANCISCO

America's First Hindu Temple Renovated

THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF Northern California, founded by Swami Vivekananda, was opened in January, 1906. With Swami Trigunatita in charge of construction, it was the first Hindu temple in America. The structure was rededicated on October 29, 2016, the

holy Kali Puja day, after two year's of restoration, repair and repainting. During the ceremonies, formal worship was offered to Sri Ramakrishna, holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Mother Kali and Swami Vivekananda in the center's main hall and sanctum.

INDIA

Guru as Parent—Legally

IN A REMARKABLY INCLUSIVE gesture in December, 2016, the Ministry of External Affairs announced a decision allowing sadhus and sannyasins to apply for travel documents using their spiritual guru's name instead of that of their biological parents.

A statement released from the ministry stated, "Sadhus/Sannyasis can apply for a passport with the name of their

spiritual guru mentioned in the passport application in lieu of their biological parent(s) name(s) subject to their providing of at least one public document such as Election Photo Identity Card (EPIC) issued by the Election Commission of India, PAN card, Adhar Card, etc wherein the name of the guru has been recorded against the column(s) for parent(s) name(s)."



Respect for spiritual renunciation: India is home to at least three million sannyasins and holds them in high regard. This new regulation shows a deeper appreciation for the ascetic tradition.

TOP TO BOTTOM: WIKIMEDIA; NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC; SHUTTERSTOCK

CANADA

Rescue Remembered

ON AUGUST, 11, 1986, 155 starved and dehydrated Sri Lankan Tamil refugees were rescued off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada, by a man named Gus Dalton. Thirty years later, on August 11, 2016, four of those Sri Lankans returned to the same docks to visit with Dalton and the other the people who brought them to safety.

"It touched all of us; most of us came as refugees," said Kanapathipillai, 29, who wasn't even born when this group of refugees arrived and has no familial connection to the event.

He was simply moved by the story.

The Tamils sought refugee status because of persecution in Sri Lanka, and upon being found they told the Royal Canadian Mountain Police they paid US\$3,000 to \$5,000 to be taken to Canada or the United States.

Kanapathipillai said Tamils deeply honor the generosity of Newfoundlanders—and the federal government's willingness to take in the refugees despite opposition among some Canadians. This is all part of "what we identify as Canadian values."

Legacy of life: Sarujan Kanapathipillai speaks on behalf of the Canadian Tamil Congress in St. John's, Newfoundland on Aug. 11, 2016



TOP TO BOTTOM: SHUTTERSTOCK; VEDANTA SOCIETY; PAUL DALY/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Teaching about Gandhi

A NEW 134-PAGE CHILDRENS' book, *Ghandi for Kids: His Life and Ideas with 21 Activities*, brings to life the challenges and philosophy of India's foremost freedom fighter. Author Ellen Mahoney takes a biographical approach to recount the Mahatma's life but with added interactive lessons, arts and crafts projects and Indian culture descriptions.

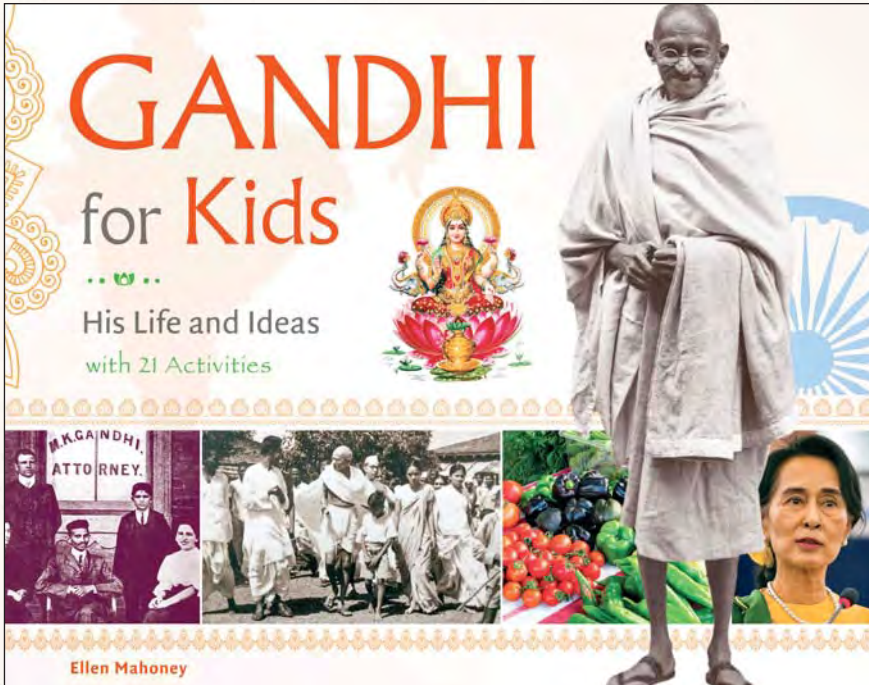
Ghandi for Kids is filled with information and definitions for the Hindu tradition at the end of each chapter, including one

entire section on yoga. Detailing Gandhi's childhood and work for equality and Indian independence in India, England and South Africa, Mahoney makes clear connections between Gandhi's philosophies and contemporary issues that kids deal with on a daily basis, such as bullying and conflict resolution, healthful eating from local sources, civil rights and diversity and the "reduce, reuse, recycle" movement.

The book shares Gandhi's impact on the lives and work of activists kids may be familiar with—Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, and others. *Gandhi for Kids* also offers 21 activities to illuminate his life, environment and ways of thinking.

Packed with historic photos, informative sidebars about historical figures and events, a timeline and a glossary, the book is an informative and illuminating read for young activists.

Children can dive into the Indian/Hindu paradigm,



Beautifully conceived, written and illustrated: (above) Cover of the digital and paperback book which is available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for just under \$20; (left) after learning about ahimsa, the readers are asked to write a poem about what nonviolence means to them. This is one of many interactive sidebar assignments.

including vegetarian meal planning, without getting bogged down with complex religious themes and concepts.

Ellen Mahoney is the author of *Nellie Bly* and *Investigative Journalism for Kids* and coauthor

with Edgar Mitchell of *Earthrise: My Life as an Apollo 14 Astronaut*. She lives in Boulder, Colorado, and is currently an instructor of journalism and technical communication at Metro State University of Denver.

BRIEFLY...

PAKISTAN'S PRIME MINISTER Nawaz Sharif inaugurated the restoration of an ancient Hindu temple complex in Punjab in January, 2017. This is seen as a symbolic gesture that may appeal to the Muslim nation's minority communities and soften the country's image abroad.

HINDU PRIEST NARAYANACHAR L. Dialakote from the Sri Siva Vishnu Temple in Lanham, Maryland, was invited to the Washington National Cathedral January 21, 2017, where

he gave a prayer in Sanskrit to bless the country. The National Prayer Service, which was attended by President Trump, is an inauguration tradition that includes clergy from several religions, including Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Baha'i, Mormon, Native American, Greek Orthodox and others.

A RUSSIAN YOGA TEACHER HAS been forced into defending himself in the face of a controversial new law against "missionizing." Computer programmer Dmitry Ugay

was detained by police in St. Petersburg, Russia, on October 22, 2016, while giving a talk at a festival about the philosophies behind yoga, a discipline for achieving physical and spiritual well-being.

CHHOM KUNTHEA BECAME Cambodia's first Sanskritist in December, 2016, after receiving a doctorate for her research on the impact the ancient Indian language had on the Khmer language. It is widely accepted that the country's primary language could not have developed effectively without interaction with Sanskrit, which is believed to have arrived on Cambodia's shores with Indian merchants sometime around

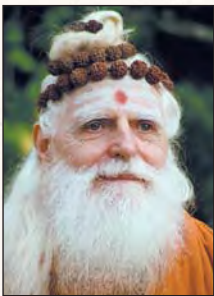
year one on the Gregorian calendar. Sanskrit was used for written records during the Khmer Empire for more than 1,000 years, researchers believe. When Kunthea began her studies, Sanskrit was not taught at any Cambodian universities.

Global Dharma news provided by

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PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CHICAGO REVIEW PRESS



HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



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Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami

Publisher's Aide: Paramacharya Sivanatha Ceyonswami

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Production Manager: Sannyasin Brahmanathaswami

Subscription and Distribution Manager: Sannyasin Shanmuganathaswami

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India Editor: Sadhaka Jayanatha

Assistant Editor: Sadhaka Rajanatha

Correspondents: Rajiv Malik, Delhi; Choodamani Shivaram, Bengaluru; Lavina Melwani, New York; Sally Acharya, Nepal; Paras Ramoutar, Trinidad. **Copy Editor:** Chamundi Sabanathan. **HPI Staff:** Chandra Sankara. **Consultants:** Dr. S. P. Sabharatham Sivachariyar, Sheela Venkatakrishnan. **Photo Contributors:** Thomas L. Kelly, Dinodia Picture Agency, Dev Raj Agarwal. **Digital Team:** Andre Garzia, Dharmalingam Siddhan. **Distribution:** USA: Ingram Periodicals, New Leaf, EBSCO Subscription Services, Ubiquity. Europe: SWETS Subscription Service. Malaysia: Kovind Enterprises. Singapore: Sanathana Dharma Publications India: Central News Agency Limited, Delhi. Mauritius: CODIP. Trinidad: Pandit Narendra & Ashwinee Ragoonanan. **Printer:** Quad/Graphics, Waseca, Minnesota.

IN MY OPINION

My Discoveries in Distant India

A land of hospitality, community and true devotion

BY AARTI VISSWANATHAN

RECENTLY, MY FAMILY AND I REVISITED India after six years. Based on our previous journey to the land of my ancestral origin—when I was eleven—my brother Mayuresh and I were disenchanted at spending our cherished three-week vacation in a place where pollution and poverty were hard to miss. Anticipating a repeat of prior experiences, we embarked on this journey rather disinterested. Little did I realize that the enigmatic charm of India—often described by visitors to this holy land—was something I was about to experience. A strong sense of community, genuine hospitality and the loving expressions of devotion among local residents are what stood out to me most during this memorable visit.

In Mumbai and Chennai, I was amazed and amused at how lively these cities are, even late into the night. They rightly befit their "hustle and bustle" description, especially when the unmarked vehicle-lanes on the road are often left to each driver's wild imagination and the seemingly reckless driving starts to feel like a spontaneous dance, set to the tune of the constant honking of cars and ringing of bicycle bells with an occasional accompaniment of a "moo" from the honorable *gomata* (cow). Within minutes of stepping onto these streets, there is a lot to take in: from the colorful produce and aromatic grab-n-go foods sold by street vendors, to the multitude of little shops, buzzing with customers trying to get a good bargain; from people trying to cross the busy street whilst cars, buses, bicycles and auto rickshaws zoom by, to the cows and stray dogs relaxing on the pavement. Amidst the locals so actively engrossed in their work was an empowering sense of community spirit. One evening during peak traffic hours, we came to a lengthy, full halt at an intersection. When the traffic finally began to clear up, we saw that it was thanks to the efforts of three professionally dressed onlookers who had voluntarily stepped in to help direct traffic. It was remarkable how these men, who were clearly not part of the police force, joined to help their community.

Another enthralling sight to behold in India is its Hindu temples, showcasing



exquisite architecture, eye-capturing sculptures and grand ceremonies to honor their Deities. I was deeply touched by the pious expression of love I witnessed when attending arati to Lord Ganesha at the famous Siddhivinayak Temple in Mumbai. This was the first arati of the day, before sunrise. I had thought few would wake up to attend. We were proven wrong when countless devotees of all ages eagerly stood in line to enter before the doors closed for the duration of the arati. Despite being conducted daily, the arati was a grand event; the beat of the drums vibrated throughout the sanctum, while the rhythmic clapping of devotees accompanied the priest's chanting, all enhancing the beauty of the Deity dressed in the most glittering jewels and ornate robes.

While in South India I was overwhelmed by the heart-warming hospitality, so generously dispensed. On one occasion a priest invited us to his home for a freshly prepared meal after having just met us. Another instance was our encounter with a street-side coconut stand run by an elderly couple. Despite their humble circumstances, they had warm and loving personalities and took it upon themselves to ensure that we truly enjoyed the tender coconuts and palm fruits. Such boundless hospitality was refreshing and instantly created a family bond. A strong community spirit combined with devotion to God brings about a genuine sense of hospitality that's rooted in our Hindu belief that the guest is God. Although I am happy to be back home in America, I readily await to be welcomed into India's open arms again.

AARTI VISSWANATHAN, 17, is an 11th grader at San Marcos High School, California, US

The Power of Kindly Speech

Words can hurt others, so it's always good to avoid harsh language, backbiting and even friendly teasing

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

ONE OF THE KEY TEACHINGS OF my guru, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, is that we are a soul, a divine being. However, we live in a physical body—as embodied souls—with strong thoughts and emotions. Thus, we have a soul nature, an intellectual nature and an instinctive nature. He describes this plurality as three phases of the mind: superconscious or spiritual (which is the soul); intellectual or mental; and instinctive or physical-emotional.

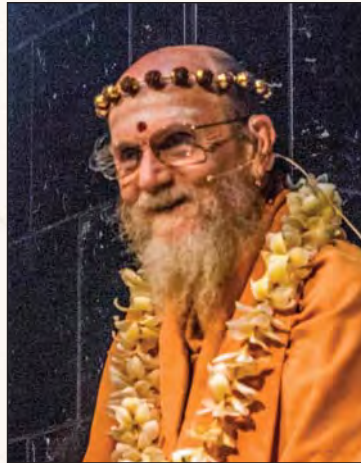
It is the instinctive, animal-like nature which contains the tendencies to become angry, jealous, fearful or hurtful to others. Part of making progress on the spiritual path is learning to control the instinctive mind. This is where the yamas, the ten ethical restraints, come into play. They provide a list of tendencies we need to subdue. The classical Hindu depiction of restraining the mind is the charioteer pulling back on the reins of a team of three, four or five horses to keep them under control. The yamas are the reins which help us control our instinctive and intellectual natures, which are like strong steeds that can work for us or run wild if not kept in check.

The first yama is noninjury, ahimsa: not harming others by thought, word or deed. Noninjury, as we all know, is a central Hindu principle. Of course, most of us do not indulge in physical violence. We may conclude from this that ahimsa presents no challenge to us. However, looking more closely at the definition of ahimsa, we see that it includes not harming others by our thoughts or words. Hence those following a spiritual life need to practice noninjury in our speech and even our thoughts.

To make progress on the spiritual path we need to focus on our weak points and strive to improve them. Furthermore, we need to hold the attitude that no matter how well we are doing in a particular practice, we can always do better, find ways to further refine our behavior. Speech is perhaps our most powerful tool for communication and a worthy focus for our attention.

Gurudeva provides a fourfold guideline to judge if our speech is appropriate: "Speak only that which is true, kind, helpful and necessary." Let's take the example of a friend who is overweight. We are genuinely worried that it is vital for his health to lose some weight. We voice our concern by saying, "Ravi, you are way too heavy." Our message passes the test of helpfulness but fails the test of kindness.

We need to express our concern more diplomatically. Perhaps, "I hope you won't mind my saying this, Ravi, but it would be good for your health to get serious about diet and exercise." Even helpful



words need to be expressed in a kindly way if they are to have the intended effect. There are four common forms of hurting others with our speech: joking, teasing, gossiping and backbiting.

Joking & Teasing

Let's look at some examples that illustrate joking and teasing. First example: a peer has a special privilege or position. We grumble, "Look at Mr. I'm-better-than-you! Why was he exempted from the work we had to do today?" Second example: someone speaks with a foreign accent. You mimic his faulty pronunciation and laugh. Third example: a coworker has difficulty multiplying numbers. When she struggles with a calculation, you make fun of her. The rationale

is "I'm joking," "Just being humorous," "Entertaining my friends." In truth, your words are *himsa*; you are harming others through your speech and justifying it by saying you are just joking, as if humor removes or exempts the hurt. Words can cause real pain, even if they are said in jest. Many don't realize this. Critical humor comes at the expense of the person you are joking about. In evaluating these examples with our fourfold test, we can see that they are neither true, kind, helpful nor necessary.

Gossip

Gossip is talking about the details of others' personal lives for the delight of it when they are not present. It's like creating and watching our own soap opera. Such talk entertains those present at the expense of the person being gossiped about. Some wives regularly gossip about their husbands, on the phone or on the Internet, with other wives. Some husbands complain about their wives among coworkers. Such idle talk may perhaps pass the test of being true, but it fails the other three tests: kindness, helpfulness and necessity. Husbands need the support of their wives to be successful. Wives need the support of their husbands to be secure. Telling tales and teasing disastrously undermine support in any relationship.

Backbiting

Last but not least is backbiting. Finding faults in another and sharing such shortcomings with others is a hobby many enjoy. It is so much easier to look for faults in others and complain about them than to

see the same faults in ourselves and correct them. The *Tirukural* challenges in verse 190, "If men perceived their own faults as they do the faults of others, could misfortune ever come to them?" And in verse 188: "If men are disposed to spread the faults of friends, what deadly harm might they do to strangers?" Backbiting clearly fails our speech test.

The fact is that unless we are responsible for someone's upbringing

they meet." verse 94

"If a man seeks to do good while speaking sweet words, his virtues will wax and his vices will wane." verse 96

"Words yield spiritual rewards and moral excellence, when they do not wander far from usefulness and agreeableness." verse 97

"To utter harsh words when sweet ones would serve is like eating unripe fruits when ripe ones are at hand." verse 100

Control of speech: Here a man reflects on the effects of his words, resolving, by his gesture, to speak only that which is true, kind, helpful and necessary

or training, such as parents to their children or supervisors to their staff, it is best to ignore the faults of others and focus instead on finding and improving our own shortcomings. Improving ourselves produces positive spiritual advancement; criticizing others does not. The next time you find yourself dwelling on the faults in others, ask if you might have that same fault, for what disturbs you in others often indicates what you need to improve in yourself.

Focusing on Three Virtues

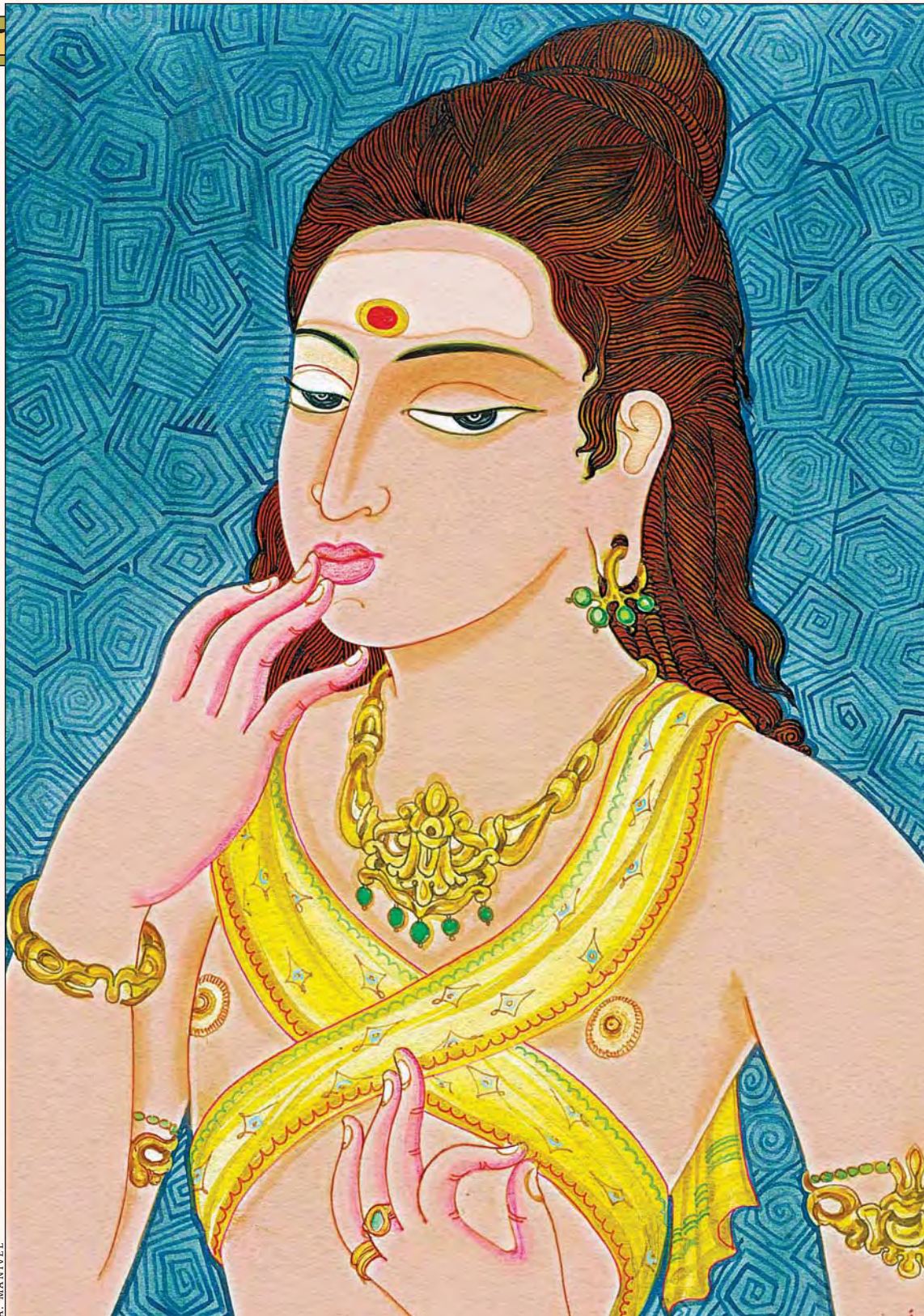
For those on the spiritual path, it is not terribly difficult to avoid backbiting, gossip and hurtful humor. But controlling and refining our speech on more subtle levels is a lifetime sadhana.

Three virtues we can focus on are courtesy, tact and sensitivity. Courtesy is being polite, respectful and considerate of the needs and feelings of others. Tactfulness is being diplomatic and skillful in dealing with people and situations, responding to disagreements judiciously, and maintaining harmony by seeking solutions that offend no one. Sensitivity is holding a delicate appreciation of others' ideas, attitudes and natures, listening carefully in conversations and not interrupting, striving to uplift rather than dominate. The *Tirukural* warns, "Not knowing the companionable art of cheerful conversation, men estrange even friends by divisive discourse" (verse 187).

As a general strategy, Gurudeva directed us to "Think before you speak." Reflecting on what we are going to say is necessary, as it protects us from speaking inappropriately. Thus, control of speech has two parts. First, before you speak, stop and consider what you will say. Second, determine if your words meet the test of being true, kind, helpful and necessary. This simple practice can avert many difficulties. It can also be applied after a comment has slipped out, providing important lessons to guide future conversations.

Tirukural Verses

We can learn much about speaking pleasant words from the ancient weaver, Tiruvalluvar, who devoted chapter ten of his *Tirukural* to the subject. Here are four verses to live by. "Poverty-producing sorrow will not pursue those who speak joy-producing words to all



LETTERS

Results of Kavadi

I am enclosing a quote which appeared in an article on the financial page of the prestigious magazine *The New Yorker*, on July 25, 2016 (page 19):

"Dimitris Xygalatas, an anthropologist at the University of Connecticut, who studied the effects of [extreme] rituals, ran a fascinating experiment with people who were undergoing kavadi—a Hindu ritual that commonly involves piercing the skin with sharp objects and then making a long procession while carrying heavy objects. Xygalatas found that people who did kavadi, and even people who just joined in the procession, donated more to charity than people in a control group. And those who gave the most painful descriptions of the experience donated the most."

What I think Dr Xygalatas is attempting to show is that those who enter what he regards as "extreme" spiritual practices also develop a deeper sense of compassion and an ethic of responding to the needs of others.

CARL VADIVELLA BELLE
ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA
VADIVA@INTERNODE.ON.NET

Latest Issue

The article "Six Streams of Hindu Philosophy," Jan/Feb/Mar, 2017, explains the six systems beautifully. It would help the readers if the Sanskrit words are printed in Sanskrit also. Those words written in English are difficult to read.

PRABHAKAR JOSHI
LIBERTYVILLE, ILLINOIS, US
JOSHIPPS@HOTMAIL.COM

Himalayanacademy.com

I find your website to be the ultimate unbiased true source of answers for all questions any one could have about Hinduism. The very nature of explanation and choice of words is simply outstanding. There were a lot of questions in my mind about life, karma, God, idol worship, Gods being married, etc, almost all of them have been answered. I thank you from the deepest corner of my heart for your effort in enlightening people like me.

Can you please add more content on places like Kashi, Rameshwaram, Tiruchendur and explain what they are special for. Why some temples are powerful and some not. If God is everywhere, why do we pilgrimage?

ANAND NATARAJAN
BANGALORE, KARNATAKA, INDIA
BIKERANAND@GMAIL.COM

Missing Schools

I was most disappointed by the fact that you left out four of the most ancient schools of

philosophy from the Indian subcontinent: Charvaka, Ajivika, Jain and Buddhist. Please consider presenting them in your next issue so that we do not get a one-sided view and neglect the vast richness of our heritage.

SALIL C. TIWARI
JACKSON, MISSOURI, US
N258ST@YAHOO.COM

Thank you for your note. As you may know, the Shad Darshanas all accept the Vedas as authoritative and are thus called Astika traditions. In conceiving the Insight, we did consider adding one spread to introduce the Nastika traditions, those you have mentioned, which do not accept the Vedas. The author felt that devoting just two pages to these important Indian philosophical traditions would not do them justice. Thus, we decided to focus only on the six classical Hindu streams and not delve into Buddhism, Jainism and the Charvaka and Ajivika schools. Perhaps we will present them in a future issue.

Hindu of the Year

I read with interest your article on Sri Morari Bapu as Hindu of the Year, Jan/Feb/Mar, 2017. There is no doubt about his immense contribution to propagate the teachings through the *Ramayana*. I do believe though that in the 21st century we also need a teacher who connects with the Hindu youth via logical and practical debates, which the youth may better relate to than the recitation and teaching through a drama like the *Ramayana*. Therefore my own nominee for the next Hindu of the Year would be Sri Jay Lakhani, of the Hinduacademy (hinduacademy.org) in London, UK. He is a teacher who promotes the teachings of Hinduism through schools, colleges and universities.

J. DAVE
SAN RAMON, CA, US
PHARMACISTRPH@GMAIL.COM

Numbering the Tattvas

I read with interest your article, "Understanding the Layers of Existence" (HINDUISM TODAY; Jan/Feb/Mar, 2017). However, the 36 tattvas of the soul that the author mentions have not been enumerated.

PRADEEP SRIVASTAVA
ALBANY, CALIFORNIA, US
PRADEEPSCOOL@HOTMAIL.COM

Articulating our Religion

I recently moderated a roundtable where members of the Muslim faith explained their

religion to members of a mix of other faiths. There were twelve tables with a dinner dialog format with two Muslims explaining their religion to the others at the table. The take-home from this experience was how consistent and simple the Muslim narrative was from the different tables.

I have been convinced for some time, and further reinforced by this experience, that we would be hard pressed to find two Hindus who can articulate their religious core beliefs in a manner that is cohesive, concise, consistent and simple to understand. It is so essential that we have a narrative that the non-Hindu community can relate to and not conveniently paint Hindu religion as paganistic.

Padma Kuppa's article seems to share my view and I am sure others do. It seems the time has come for us to develop a simple, consistent, universal narrative of the big ideas of Hinduism that we can all use as the basis to explain our religion to others.

VASU RAYACHOTI
WOODLANDS, TX, US
VRAYACHOTI@HOTMAIL.COM

Sharing your Work

The London's Hindu Temple article in the Oct/Nov/Dec, 2015, issue is a very interesting read with beautiful photography. I like the tube map very much and have shared it with colleagues in the Tamils in Europe Research Network at bit.ly/TamilNetwork.

DEMELZA JONES
BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND
D.JONES4@ASTON.AC.UK

Biased Information

While researching astrology on Wikipedia, I stumbled across Hindu astrology. The writing is very biased and gives me a feeling that most Wikipedia authors are Indologists or Abrahamic subject matter experts who have a negative view of *Vedas* and ancient Bharath scriptures and traditions. This site lacks verification from a *Veda* expert who was born and brought up in Bharathiya traditions.

Is there an alternative site which is authored by Vedanta scholars and Sanskrit experts that can counter such sites to which people can go to for all matters Sanatana Dharma and can gradually become bigger and well known than Wikipedia and can challenge its biased views with real extracts from *Vedas*?

RAJESH KUMAR
RAJESHKUMARS@YAHOO.COM

We recommend you take a look at hindupedia.com/en/Jyotish

Left or Right Hand?

I am a left-handed Hindu. I was brought up in loving family and since they are observant Hindus, they tried to get me to learn to be right-handed; other than for religious rites when I use my right hand (if I remember to, otherwise the pandya/pujari corrects me), I use my left hand for most activities.

I was ridiculed by a fellow Hindu—a brahmin (by name, if not karmas), no less—for standing up to his mockery of left-handed people. His reference was to purity and to strict rules of leading a dharmic life. While I accept that as partly valid, my reference is to teachings of bhakti yoga sages and seers over the recent centuries, who reference passages in the *Bhagavad Gita* and elsewhere, and who have claimed that any prayer, any offering, made to God in true love and humility, is fully accepted by the Lord. To me, that makes innate sense, for unlike the Abrahamic nature of God, Hinduism as I practice it does not teach about a vengeful God, or a petty God.

How do modern Hindus learn to accept

each other, left-handed or right-handed, of various varna/jati (caste)? How would the learned acharyas, monks of HINDUISM TODAY/Himalayan Academy address this issue?

HIMANSHU VYAS
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, US
HIMANV@YAHOO.COM

The origin of this preference comes from using the left hand for personal hygiene. We are not aware, and our readers might be able to help, of any discussion of the issue in Hindu writings. Such cultural habits resist change. We know many left-handers who have learned to eat and pass things with the right hand.

Several Questions

I read your publications *What Is Hinduism?*, *Loving Ganesha* and *Dancing with Siva* and I liked all of these books so far.

I have some confusion regarding Hindu culture and tradition and whether they are superstitions or not. Could you please answer

them? 1) In my hometown in India, it is considered that we should not cut our hair/nails on Tuesday or Friday, or at night. Do you know the reason behind it? 2) Some of my elders say that women should braid their hair. What is the reason behind this? What will happen if their hair is unbraided? 3) Elders also say that women should not cut their hair. Is this true? Or is this a superstitious belief as well? 4) I usually worship God in a dhoti without a shirt, but since I am not very comfortable wearing this attire, I feel distracted at times. Can you please suggest any other attire I can wear while worshipping?

SAI RAVI KIRAN
MALLAMPATI, INDIA
SAIRAVIKIRAN.MALLAMPATI@GMAIL.COM

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

Letters, Hinduism Today
107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA
or faxed to: (808) 822-4351
or visit: www.hinduismtoday.com/letters

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

Our Publisher's Vision for HINDUISM TODAY Magazine

As interest in Hinduism grows, so does the need for a clear, objective and authoritative voice

WE THANK OUR GENEROUS READERS for having helped the HINDUISM TODAY Production Fund increase its principal by \$100,000 over the past few years. "This has been a great step forward," shared publisher Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami. "The increase in grants is making it possible for the editors to produce fine articles more regularly, such as the ones on Assam and Varanasi in this and previous issues."

As a next increment in developing the fund, he and the staff have now set a hefty new goal—to build up the principal so that grants can one day cover all of the magazine's production costs.

"We are currently a long way from that and we need to work toward it," explains Satguru. "Right now we are dependent on revenues from advertising, copy sales and subscriptions. But these sources have a habit of drying up when there is a drought. We don't want that for HINDUISM TODAY. We want it to be secure, as only the Production Fund can make it, ultimately independent of societal fluctuations and freed of the eternal search for funds.

"To sustain this level of performance, the fund's principal needs to grow to five million dollars, and the plan is to raise that amount



Publisher Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami at Hinduism Today headquarters in Hawaii: "The growing interest in Hinduism started among the youth and now permeates all age groups; it is also spreading to many countries"

through estate gifts. As these are future gifts, it will be a long time, of course, before they all actually come into the fund. That is OK. Our goal is simply to establish that, according to our donors' pledges, the day is definitely coming when HINDUISM TODAY is finally financially secure.

"This is an important project, a serious project," Satguru stresses. "Today, we see more and more Hindus searching for clear, unambiguous knowledge about their faith and looking to HINDUISM TODAY for answers. This is natural, for the magazine is unique, as far as we know, in that it gives friendly coverage to the immense variety of Hindu ways and traditions with objectivity and clarity, distinguishing each one from the others, so that there is no confusion. This makes a vast Hinduism approachable, understandable and, especially, usable to great advantage. It is vital to keep this information flowing. Over the next 50 years, I see that trend toward more interest in Hinduism continuing to grow, among Hindus everywhere and non-Hindus as well. I see a groundswell of enthusiasm that will parallel the growth of yoga over the past 50 years. HINDUISM TODAY needs to be there, fully endowed, fully functional and able to continue its important work."

Find out more about the Production Fund and the many opportunities available to support it significantly via your estate plan at www.hheonline.org Contact us at hhe@hindu.org or call 1-888-464-1008.

QUOTES & QUIPS

Never ever compare anyone with anybody. One who is not satisfied with his own self cannot find satisfaction anywhere in the world.

Morari Bapu, Gujarati kathakaar, HINDUISM TODAY's Hindu of the Year

Sri Ramakrishna once went to see a religious drama produced by his disciple. The curtain went up and a character started singing the praises of the Lord. Sri Ramakrishna immediately began to enter the supreme state of consciousness. The stage faded; the actors and actresses faded. As only a great mystic can, he uttered a protest: "I come here, Lord, to see a play staged by my disciple, and you send me into ecstasy. I won't let it happen!" And he started saying over and over, "Money... money... money," so as to keep some awareness of the temporal world. **Eknath Easwaran** (1910–1999), spiritual teacher, author

If I cannot be the maker of my own fortune, then I am not free. But if this is not my

first birth, I can take upon myself the blame for the misery of this life, which is the result of the evil I have committed in another, and say I will unmake it. This, then, is our philosophy of the migration of the soul: We come into this life with the experience of another, and the fortune or misfortune of this existence is the result of our acts in a former existence, and thus we are always becoming better, till at last perfection is reached. **Swami Vivekananda**, (1863–1902)

When he sat me down beside him, in Jaffna, he just started right in on me, saying, "What do you think you're doing jumping around the world like that, wasting your energy? What a waste! Why don't you sit,

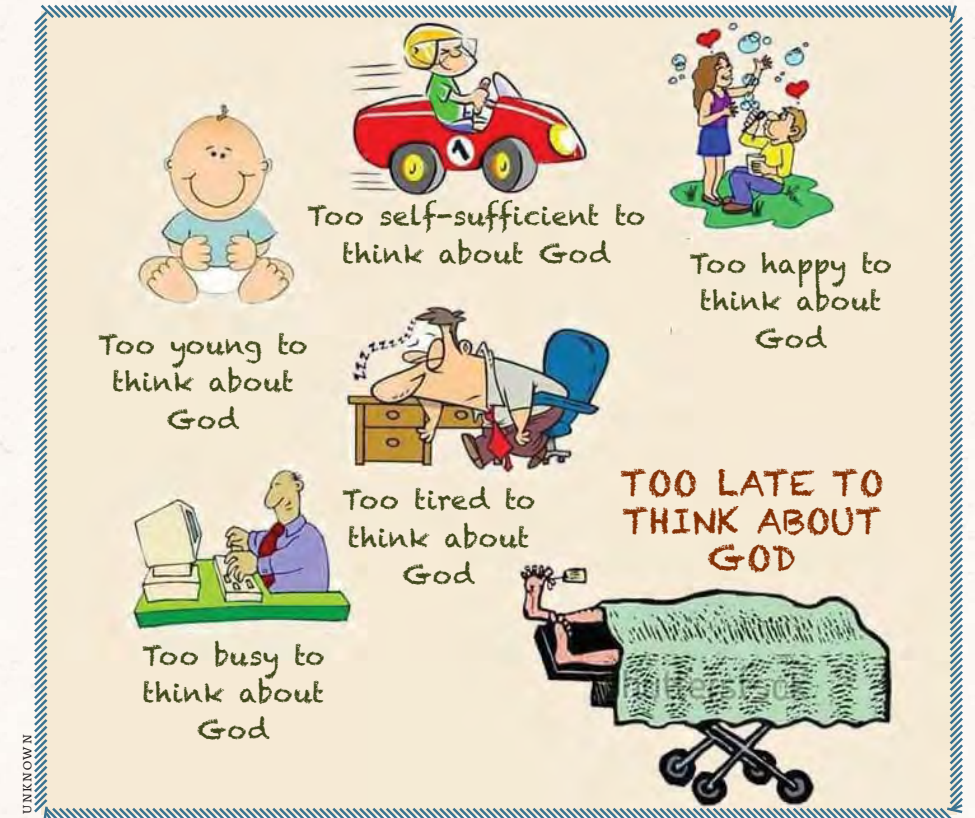
quietly, and say, "Who Am I? Who Am I? WHO AM I?" **Dr. James George**, a Canadian disciple of Siva Yogaswami of Jaffna and international diplomat having just returned from a world tour, recounting one of his visits with the Lion of Jaffna.

Any religion can be compared to the attic of an old home. Unless the attic is regularly cleaned, it gathers dust and cobwebs and eventually becomes unusable. Similarly, if a religion cannot be updated or cleaned from time to time, it loses its usefulness and cannot relate anymore to changed times and people. **Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati** (1833–1899), 19th-century sannyasin

Why the pains of long pilgrimages? Why observances that emaciate the body? All the fruits anticipated from such austerities can be easily obtained by motiveless service to the guru. *Kularnava Tantra*, 2.1

Achieving great powers brings with it two possible obstacles to achieving moksha—the thought of utilizing them and pride in having them. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, publisher of HINDUISM TODAY

If Hindus really understood how deep into their soul their religion penetrates, if they knew how superior it is to any other spiritual path on the Earth today, they would not abandon it so easily but cherish and foster it into its great potential. They would not remain silent when asked about their religion, but speak out boldly its great truths. They would not hesitate to stand strong for Hinduism. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001), founder of HINDUISM TODAY



DID YOU KNOW?

Three Types of Karma

Contributions from Swami Sivananda's essay on karma

PRARABDHA, KRIYAMANA AND sanchita are the three foundational karmas that guide a soul's cycle of life, death and rebirth. *Prarabdha* means "actions begun" or "set in motion." These are the karmas we are living through right now because they were set in motion in the past. *Kriyamana* karma means "being made" and is all of the actions going on in our life right now only to return in the future. *Sanchita* means "accumulated actions" and is translated as the sum of all our karmas from this and past lives. Karma's complex three-fold definition makes this Hindu law one of the cornerstones of our religion and

can help clarify our current situation. In Vedantic literature, there is a beautiful analogy. The Bowman has already sent an arrow; it has left his hands and he cannot recall it. He is about to shoot another arrow. The bundle

of arrows in the quiver on his back is the Sanchita. The arrow he has shot is prarabdha. And the arrow which he is about to shoot from his bow is kriyamana. Of these, he has perfect control over the sanchita and the kriyamana, but he must surely work out his prarabdha. For that is the past and has begun to take effect which he must experience."

BASICS

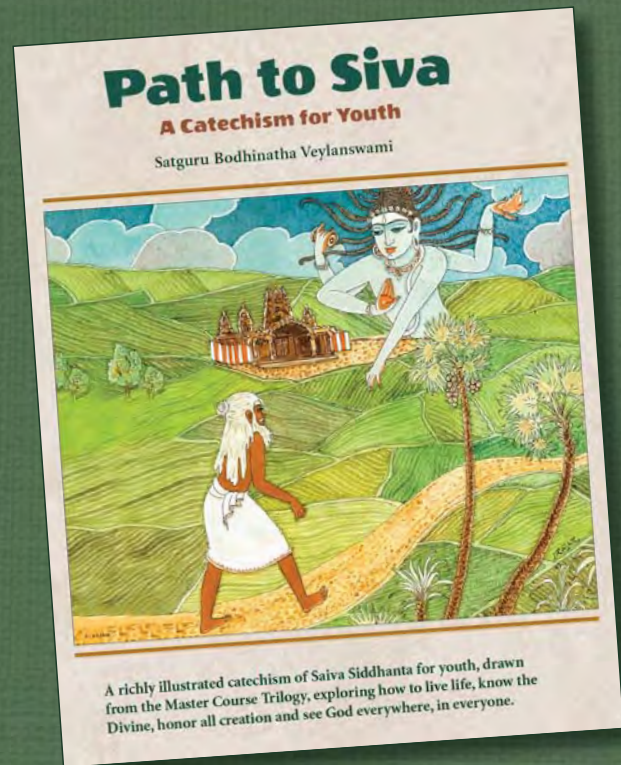
What Are Hinduism's Revealed Scriptures?

From Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's *Merging with Siva*

THE VEDAS AND AGAMAS, REVEALED BY God, are Hinduism's sovereign scriptures, called *shruti*, "that which is heard." Their timeless truths are expressed in the most extraordinarily profound mystical poetry known to man. *Veda*, from *vid*, "to know," means "supreme wisdom or science." Similarly, *Agama*, which names the sacred sectarian

revelations, means "descent of knowledge." The *Vedas* and *Agamas* are eternal truths transmitted by God through great clairaudient and clairvoyant rishis. They are Hinduism's primary and most authoritative scriptures, expounding life's sacredness and man's purpose on the planet. These psalms of wisdom were disclosed over many

centuries, memorized and orally conveyed from generation to generation within priestly families, then finally written down in Sanskrit in the last few millennia. The subtly symbolic language of *shruti*, the cherished word of God, is lyrical and lofty. In imparting religious practice, rules and doctrine, the *Vedas* are general and the *Agamas* specific. The *Vedas* extol and invoke a multiplicity of Gods through elaborate fire rituals called *yajna*. The *Agamas* center around a single Deity and His worship with water, flowers and lights in sanctified temples and shrines. The *Tirumantiram* lauds, "Two are the scriptures that Lord Siva revealed—the primal *Vedas* and the perfect *Agamas*."



1 Who Am I and Where Did I Come from?



A YOUNG woman reflects on one of life's most profound questions. The answer may take her an entire lifetime to find, but that answer is the most important discovery she or any of us will ever make.

to unravel the bonds. That begins the most wonderful process in the world as the seeker steps for the first time onto the spiritual path. Of course, the whole time, through all those births and lives and deaths, the soul was undergoing a spiritual evolution, but unconsciously. Now it seeks to know God consciously. "Our soul was created by God Siva out of Himself, like sparks flying forth from a fire. Like the sparks and the fire, we are both the same and different from Siva, our source. We live within His boundless creation, this unthinkable vast cosmos which is filled with His divine presence. Siva is the life energy in the birds, in the fish and in the animals. His being flows through all we see and experience. Our Vedic rishis have assured us that "God is the Life of our life." We are all beautiful children of God Siva. Deep within, we are one with Him this very moment. We came from God, live in God and are evolving into complete unity with God. Siva created each of us in a perfect state, but we have to discover that perfection within us to be whole. By seeing the life energy in all creatures and in all people, we are seeing God Siva in action. By drawing close to God, we draw nearer to our immortal soul. Siva is all and within all.

GURUDEVA: When we realize that we have come from Siva, the way back to Siva is clearly defined. That is half the battle, to realize we came from Siva, live in Siva and are returning to Siva. Knowing only this much makes the path clear and impels us to return to Him, to our Source, to our Self.

24 What's the Value of Spiritual Friends?



AS SAIVITE HINDUIS, WE KNOW this life is precious and are thankful for it every moment of every day. Appreciating the gift of life makes us want to do the best we can, improve our character, serve others and live a spiritual life. Knowing life's purpose, we hold firmly to dharma. Like a marathon runner, we must stay on the course to finish the race. Having good, religious friends helps us stay on the path. If we mix with a worldly crowd, we may lose our way. The *Tirukural* tells us, "As water changes according to the soil through which it flows, so a man assimilates the character of his associates." Friends who are good Hindus will help you most of all. If you befriend a person who is dishonest or mean, his example will lead you into trouble. If you befriend someone who studies hard and is kind and helpful, their example will inspire and uplift you. Some people poke fun at religion or make mischief and resist authority. They do not know the real purpose of life. They waste their time and cause pain to others. Wise teachers advise us to be nice to everyone, but make close friends only with those who will help build good character and set positive patterns for the future. The *Tirukural* tells us, "Purity of mind and purity of conduct, these

two depend on the purity of a man's companions." Following our religious path is made easier when we are part of a satsang group with shared values and goals. Such companionship helps keep our sadhana strong, especially during difficult times in life. As Gurudeva often said, "The group helps the individual and the individual helps the group."

GURUDEVA: Make friends with those who are on the path. Be with fine, positive people. Don't be with negative, complaining people who have no relationship to what you are doing on the inside, or who are criticizing you for what you are doing.

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Path to Siva

A CATECHISM FOR YOUTH

Sixty-eight lessons based on Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswam's Master Course Trilogy for passing our tradition on to the next generation, and the next...

PATH TO SIVA PRESENTS ALL OF THE important teachings of the Saivite religion. It is written with youth in mind, but is also ideal for anyone wanting a condensed version of Gurudeva's 3,000-page Master Course. Each illustrated lesson is short—just one or two pages—but packed with information. Here our youth can find answers to questions about God, Lord Ganesha, Lord Murugan and the devas—how they can help us in our lives and how to contact them through temple worship and home puja. You will find clear explanations of karma, dharma and reincarnation, and how to use japa, meditation and affirmations to make your life better. You will learn the best ways to live in order to achieve your most important goals. The lessons include insights on home life, getting along with others, religious tolerance, vegetarianism and caring for the environment. They cover challenging philosophical areas, like death and dying, sin and evil. These short essays will provide a clear understanding of Hindu practices, beliefs and philosophy and give you a deep comprehension of life that few people have. The book was designed as a tool for teachers and for parents with youth, a focus text for exploring Hinduism together. Discussing one lesson a week can keep the family conversation going for more than a year.



FROM THE UPANISHADS

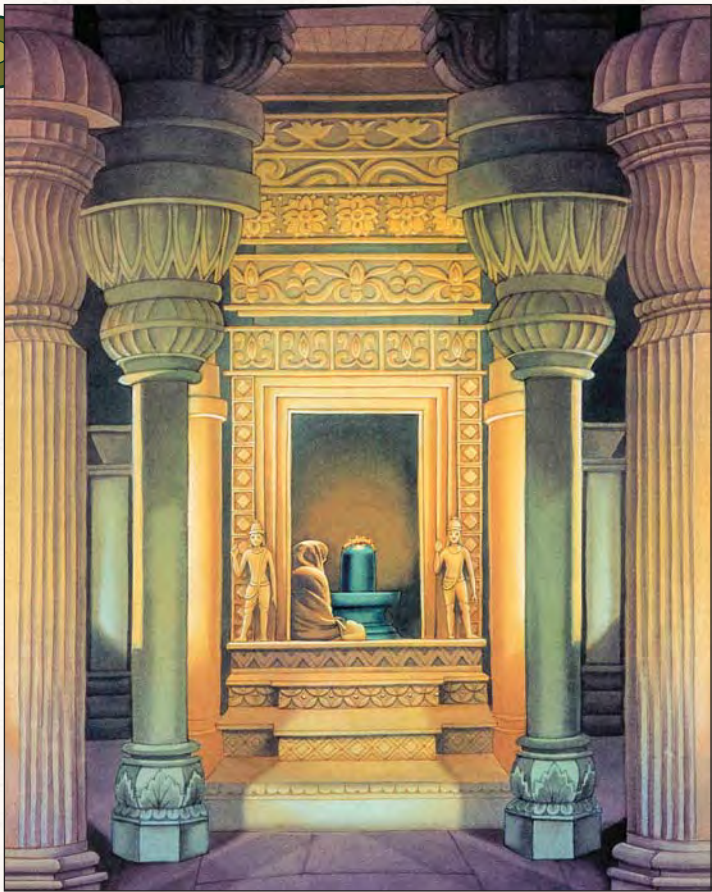
It Is Both Manifest & Unmanifest

On the unity of God, soul & world

The following is a translation of the Isha Upanishad from The Principle Upanishads by S. Radhakrishnan. This Upanishad, also known as the Ishavasya, belongs to the Vajasaneyi school of the Yajur Veda and consists of forty chapters, of which the Isha is the last. The Isha is not concerned with the Absolute, Parabrahman, but with Parameshvara, the Supreme Soul. It teaches that life in the world and life in the divine spirit are not incompatible.

- 1 Know that all this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God. Therefore find your enjoyment in renunciation; do not covet what belongs to others.
- 2 Always performing works here, one should wish to live a hundred years. If you live thus as a man, there is no way other than this by which karma does not adhere to you.
- 3 Demonic, verily, are those worlds, enveloped in blinding darkness, and to them go after death, those people who are slayers of the self.
- 4 The spirit is unmoving, one, swifter than the mind. The senses do not reach It, as It is ever ahead of them. Though Itself standing still, it outstrips those who run. In It the all-pervading air supports the activities of beings.
- 5 It moves and It moves not; It is far and It is near; It is within all this and It is also outside all this.
- 6 And he who sees all beings in his own self and his own self in all beings, he does not feel any revulsion by reason of such a view.
- 7 When, to one who knows, all beings have verily become one with his own self, then what delusion and what sorrow can be to him who has seen the oneness?
- 8 He has filled all; He is radiant, bodiless, invulnerable, devoid of sinews, pure, untouched by evil. He—the seer, thinker, all-pervading, self-existent—has duly distributed through endless years the objects according to their natures.
- 9 Into blinding darkness enter those who worship ignorance; and those who delight in knowledge enter into still greater darkness, as it were.
- 10 Distinct, indeed, they say, is the result of knowledge, and distinct, they say, is the result of ignorance. Thus have we heard from those wise who have explained to us these.
- 11 Knowledge and ignorance, he who knows the two together crosses death through ignorance and attains life eternal through knowledge.

PIETER WELTEVREDE



Worshipping within and without: *The devotee ardently seeks to know his true self by worshipping the Sivalingam*

- 12 Into blinding darkness enter those who worship the unmanifest and into still greater darkness, as it were, those who delight in the manifest.
- 13 Distinct, indeed, they say, is what results from the manifest, and distinct, they say, is what results from the unmanifest. Thus have we heard from those wise who have explained to us these.
- 14 He who understands the manifest and the unmanifest, both together, crosses death through the unmanifest and attains life eternal through the manifest.
- 15 The face of truth is covered with a golden disc. Unveil it, O Pusan, so that I who love the truth may see it.
- 16 O Pusan, the Sole Seer, O controller, O Sun, offspring of Prajapati, spread forth your rays and gather up your radiant light that I may behold you of loveliest form. Whosoever is that person, that also am I.
- 17 May this life enter into the immortal breath; then may this body end in ashes. O Intelligence, remember, remember what has been done. Remember, O Intelligence, what has been done, remember.
- 18 O Agni, lead us along the auspicious path to prosperity, O God who knowest all our deeds. Take away from us deceitful sins. We shall offer many prayers unto thee.

SARVAPELLI RADAKRISHNAN was an Indian philosopher and statesman, India's first Vice President (1952–1962) and second President (1962–1967).



THOMAS J. KELLY

Karbi women in locally woven cotton outfits, including the dokhona dress and jwmgra scarf, dance at the Brahma Dharma Jyoti Mondir in Langhin Manikpur, central Assam

Meeting the Many Peoples of Assam

Assam, India's Northeast state embracing the immense Brahmaputra River valley, is a land of remarkable variety—of people, traditions, religious practice, flora, fauna and natural resources. Join us as we visit the major temples and religious institutions of this place of ancient and modern migrants from both inside and outside modern India.

BY RAJIV MALIK, NEW DELHI

ASSAM, ONE OF THE "SEVEN SISTERS" states of northeastern India, is famous for its Vaishnava *satras* (religious centers) and majestic ancient temples, including Kamakhya for the Goddess Shakti and Sivasagar, built by the Ahom dynasty in the 18th century. The name *Assam* is possibly based on *Ahom*, though others ascribe it to *a-cham* ("undefeated") from the Tai language, *ha-sam* ("land of the Bodo people") or *asama* ("peerless") from Sanskrit. In ancient times the area was known as Kamarupa. The Pandava brothers of the *Mahabharata* lived and married here while in exile.

Assam is 61% Hindu, 34% Muslim, 3.7% Christian plus a small number of Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs. It is home to all the three main streams of Hinduism: Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Saivism—this among a population of 31 million people comprising hundreds of tribal, ethnic, linguistic and religious communities speaking 45 languages. Of the 20 largest tribes, the most prominent are the Bodos and Misings of Tibeto-Burmese origin.

.....
Home of the Goddess: (clockwise from right) Ma Kamakhya Dham, one of the most revered Shakti temples in all of India; a goat donated to the temple but not offered for ritual slaughter—his ultimate fate, however, was likely unchanged; devotees approaching for worship; Viraj Sharma, temple priest; women devotees; map of Assam, central state of India's "Seven Sisters" of the Northeast which are connected to the rest of India by the 27-km wide Siliguru Corridor



There are also millions of Bangladeshi illegal migrants, both Hindu and Muslim. Assam is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, including tea, silk, oil and the mighty Brahmaputra River.

HINDUISM TODAY assigned me and photographer Thomas Kelly the challenging job of profiling Hinduism in Assam in just nine days. Assam is a complex topic to report on, so we have divided our report into two parts. The first, in this issue, covers the capital, Guwahati, and the regions around it; the second, in the July/August/September 2017 issue, will cover Dibrugarh, the tea country and Majuli island.

Kamakhya Temple

The most famous temple of Assam is that of Ma Kamakhya, situated on the Nilachal Hill in a western part of

Guwahati. It is an age-old seat of tantric culture and one of the oldest of the 51 Shakti Peeths, centers for the Goddess. There are many legends associated with the origin and building of the temple. It attracts two million devotees and a large number of tantrics during an annual festival celebrated here known as Ambubachi Mela.

Though there were no special activities the day we visited with our guide, Nitai Das of Ekal Vidyalaya schools, the place was overflowing with pilgrims. Security was tight, and at first we were unable to get any special consideration as journalists. Fortunately, the



Ma Kamakhya Dham: Famed Home of the Goddess





temple administrator appeared unexpectedly—or by divine intervention, listened to our plea and requested a priest, Viraj Sharma, to show us around. Viraj's grandfather was a popular priest, but Viraj has an outside job and serves at the temple part time out of devotion to the Goddess. The temple's 300 priestly families have various hereditary duties, as assigned by the kings many generations back, according to Bhupati Kant Sharma Badpujari, one of the priests who conducts puja.

We started at the Ganesha temple, which was unexpectedly powerful, then moved on to the queue for the main sanctum. The inner sanctum is situated below ground level in a small, dark cave reached by a narrow, steep flight of stone steps. The sanctum contains a rock fissure naturally fed by an underground spring. It is this natural depression in the rock that is worshiped as Ma Kamakhya. The priest there invited me to touch the water of this spring and then sprinkle it on myself as the blessing from the Mother Goddess.

The whole experience of walking towards the sanctum to sprinkle the water took perhaps twenty minutes, but seemed much longer as the mysticism in the air here put me in a meditative state. Similarly, other devotees were in a mood of stunned amazement. Back outside, we slowly adjusted to the hectic activity. Many of the priests and devotees were dressed in red cloth, a symbol of Ma Kamakhya's blessings. The color red is linked to the

menses of the Mother Goddess, said to take place here once a year during the Ambubachi Mela in June during the monsoon season. That festival attracts hundreds of thousands, including many sadhus, tantrics and West Bengali Baul singers. The inner parts of the temple are closed to devotees for the first three days, with all devotees worshipping outside. On the fourth day the temple is opened again.

There are exquisite ancient statues on the outer walls of the sanctum where devotees reverentially pray by lighting incense. Another priest, Hemadri Sharma, 33, explained that while the time for darshan is short, the area around the temple is ideal for extended sadhana and meditation.

Two types of pujas are performed here, Vedic puja from morning to evening, and tantric puja, which is done at night in secret anywhere on the temple grounds. Allaying a common concern, Hemadri said that tantra is "just a system of worship, not a form of black magic and is not dangerous in any way."

We encountered the area of the temple where animal sacrifice is done, though none was in progress at the time in the blood-stained shed. Viraj explained that one goat is sacrificed daily for the morning puja by a designated group of priests. More are sometimes offered during the day. With animal sacrifice falling out of favor—Shankardeva preached against it four centuries ago—a number of animals are simply donated to the

temple by devotees and not killed.

Viraj himself finds the opposition to animal sacrifice rather hypocritical: "It is difficult to understand why, when so many animals are eaten each day by people all over the world, so much noise is raised when just a few animals are sacrificed and then consumed." Hemadri defended the animal sacrifice, stating, "The whole idea is to have the animal attain moksha and be liberated. The ultimate aim is to grant salvation to the animal from the bondage of animal life."

Shankardev's Birthplace

The most prominent Hindu saint of Assam is Srimant Shankardeva (1449–1568), a multifaceted individual who made Majuli, the world's biggest river island, a seat of Neo-Vaishnavism and cultural capital of Assamese civilization. His birthplace, Barduwa Than, Nagaon, is 123 km east of Guwahati. Shankardeva remains unquestionably the most widely influential religious figure, especially due to the thousands of Naam Ghar temples set up by his disciples under the system of *satras*, or religious centers, found across Assam. They preach Ekasarna

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A varied religious landscape: (below, left to right) a woman prays at an outer wall of Kamakhya Temple; a devotee with coconut offering; a pilgrimaging Kolkata family pose for a portrait after worshipping the Goddess



Insights on Assam

Dr. Biren Gogain, of the Ahom tribe, is an anthropologist, former bureaucrat and ardent devotee of Lord Siva whom we interviewed in Guwahati. Some excerpts from that free-wheeling discussion:

BEFORE THE ADVENT OF VAISHNAVISM IN ASSAM, LORD SIVA AND Mother Goddess Parvati were the presiding Deities of all groups in what was then called Kamarupa. The earliest forest people were the Khasia and Jayantia. Then came the Indo Mongoloid groups in large numbers through Tibet and Bhutan. They pushed the Khasi and Jayantia to the hills. Later people came from China, Myanmar and elsewhere. Why it is that they all adopted Saivism I am not able to answer. My research shows the tribals worshiped Siva in many different ways and forms, such as the Bathow God.

Vaishnavism came to this region in the 15th century during its heyday. It was at that point in time the *kathas* of Lord Krishna were injected into the psyche of the people of this region. Shankardeva was influenced by a disciple of Adi Shankaracharya who propagated Vishishtadvaita philosophy in which no duality of God is accepted and no female principle required. To Shankardeva, Radha was just a disciple of Krishna. He also did not believe in ritualism but taught that one could approach God directly through the recitation of His name and avoid all the middlemen.

Assam is a hotbed of casteism and tribalism, because most of the people here are tribals. Some are included in the Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes list in India's constitution, others are not. Those listed get reservations in education and jobs; those who are not are agitating to be listed. I always say that Ambedkar did a disservice to the nation by putting these schedules in the constitution and not as an administrative order with a set time limit. Homogenization is not possible, as the tribals would like to remain tribals and

not become a part of the mainstream.

The Nagas have lost their tradition to Christianity. They now go and listen to Christmas carols and no longer worship their own Gods and Goddesses. This is how Christianity has played havoc with the culture of our tribal regions. In Mizoram, there is even one small group, the Bnei Menashe, who believe they are a lost tribe of Israel. Since 1970 several hundred have emigrated to Israel. The people of Arunachal, on the other hand, have retained their own culture and not converted. Here in Assam, this kind of situation was prevented because the Ahoms are very strong and Shankaradev preached unity in diversity.

When tea was discovered in upper Assam, it was found to be even better than what was grown in China. The local population did not want to work the plantations, so the British brought workers from Bihar, Telangana and Mysore. Many died during the journey to Assam or were treated badly upon arrival. The tea garden workers you see today are descendants of those people.

Delhi needs to understand Assam in a better manner. The "Look East" policy is good, but the biggest obstacle to development is the "chicken neck" corridor with India (see map, page 20). There is a railroad, but not enough trains. Transport by road is very expensive. If the route were severed by militants, the Northeast would be completely isolated. Assam only produces rice, even most fish comes from the outside. Industrial development has not taken place here because transport is so costly. We need a route through Bangladesh.

Five million Bangladeshis entered Assam in 1971. These immigrants are a big problem; they are eating into the vitals of the Assamese race. They put the identity of the state in danger. There is talk of giving citizenship rights to the Hindu Bangladeshis. But if that is done, then eventually the Muslim ones will also be given an order in their favor by the Supreme Court. These migrant Bangladeshis should be distributed all over India. This is a very sensitive issue and if not handled properly the present BJP ruling party will be beaten down. Just shouting "Hindu, Hindu" will not win them elections in Assam.

Worshippers at Kamkhya Temple



Dharma, literally, “shelter-in-one religion.” Shankardeva was amazingly multi-talented: author, composer and Sanskrit scholar, painter, sculptor, dancer, musician and even weaver. Barduwa Satra was where he lived, wrote his books and taught. Preserved here and worshiped by devotees is a stone said to bear his footprints.

Inside Burduwa Satra’s huge temple, a large group of priests were chanting the names of Krishna accompanied by musical instruments and devotees all dressed in white clapping their hands. At the entrance we encountered the seven-tiered throne with the *Bhagavat Purana* placed on top as the object of worship. In Ekasarna Dharma, Krishna alone is worshiped, without a consort, a priest explained. His picture is displayed, but there are no Krishna statues, or murtis, for worship. The prayer hall has an ancient look, with its nine majestic doors, ornate statues of Garuda, tall multi-stemmed brass lamps and huge antique drums. Adjacent to the prayer hall is the Manikut, a sanctum where the temple’s valuables are kept, including Shankardeva’s personal copy of the *Srimad Bhagavat Purana* and other scriptures. A small temple outside holds a murti of Krishna, the only one in the entire compound, for devotees who wish to worship Him as having form.

We met Jugesh Atoi, who became chief priest here in 1965 at the age of 25. He said priest candidates come from all jatis, but to be a priest one must receive initiation. The Ekasarna Dharma is an egalitarian tradition,

with all jatis regarded equally. In Assam, there are 800 satras in this tradition, some led by householders, others by brahmacharis.

Inder Mohan Saikia, a temple devotee and ex-army man, said they have four levels of initiation. According to one’s level, certain duties and responsibilities are taken on in the temple. With the second level, one must follow a vegetarian diet. Saikia told us of the eventful life of Shankardeva, who lived to 120. His main message was: “God is one; people worship different manifestations of the same one God.” Saikia concluded with this observation on Assam, “If you go 20 km from here, you will find the language has changed, and if you go another 20, the dress has also. This is how Assam is.”

Tirupati Temple

One major religious site in Assam’s capital isn’t Assamese at all, but a transplant from South India: the Purva Tirupati Sri Bala Ji Temple. A small clone of the famed temple of Andhra Pradesh, it was inspired by the Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham and opened in 1998. The temple is on 20 acres of land, with the area immediately around the temple artistically landscaped and well maintained.

The Kanchi Shankaracharya directed the founders to include a temple to Goddess Durga, in respect to Ma Kamakhya. The temple and its many shrines were designed by Sri Ganapati Sthapati in typical South Indian style and painted a brilliant white. The facilities include a large yagashala and a fully

equipped auditorium.

After passing through the 70-foot-tall rajagopuram entrance tower, we entered the main sanctum with its imposing 8-1/2-foot-tall statue of Lord Vishnu as Balaji, along with His consort, Mahalakshmi, and other Deities. The original Tirupati temple is famous for its laddu prasadam—a sweet made of flour, milk and sugar given to devotees after being offered to the Lord. Tirupati cooks were sent here to train the staff to prepare laddus to the same standard.

Pujas are performed in South Indian style, though here they follow the *Pancharatra Agama*, while Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh follows the *Vaikhanasa Agama*, according to Amodan Sharma, 47, one of the two chief priests. He said that most of the temple’s ten priests were trained at Kanchi Peetham. He notes that many Balaji devotees from Kolkata come here, to avoid the massive crowds at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. He explains that, under the influence of Shankardeva, “most Assamese worshiped God as formless, but still they like to have darshan of Balaji.”

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Assam’s great saint: (clockwise from above right) the main hall of the temple at Sri Sri Batadrava Than, birthplace of Shankardeva, about 150 km from Guwahati; Purva Tirupati Sri Balaji temple; a 19th-century wooden carving of Lord Vishnu at Bardowa Satra; these initiated devotees in the front of the main hall lead bhajan from 4:00 am to 8:00 pm in shifts every single day



Shankardeva’s Birthplace. . .

and a South Indian Temple Transplant



Naraya Sharma, the temple administrator, shared that the main person behind the temple's construction was B. M. Khetan, a leading tea businessman. According to Naraya, 2,000 people a day visit the temple, with 6,000 on weekends—a tenth of what Tirupati in Andhra sees on a daily basis.

The Bodo Traditions

We drove 230 km from Guwahati to the Phulani area in Karbi Anglong district, a tribal area that is home to Karbis, Bodos, Kuis and many non-tribal people. Along the way we passed vast rice fields on both sides of the highway. We first visited a VHP project, the residential school, Reng Bong Hom Shishu Niketan. It was set up in 1979 and so named after a local tribal king and his wife. They have 244 students and 19 teachers who follow the government curriculum with added programs to teach religion and morals. The medium is Assamese. The school faces competition from better-funded Christian schools that also teach in English.

Sarsing Phangcho, a RSS volunteer, explained that people of his tribe, the Karbi, after which the district is named, prefer to have their children educated in English-medium schools. The Bodos in this area came from lower Assam after riots there between Hindus and Muslims. He said that among both the Karbis and the Bodos there are some who say they are Hindus and others who identify as just "tribals." Both groups are largely non-vegetarian. Twenty-five percent of Karbis are said to have converted to Christianity, mostly as a result of studying in the Christian schools.

From Phulani we drove through interior villages to Langhin Manikpur. By chance we

encountered a group of Bodo women walking on the road, nets in hand and carrying baskets of fish they caught that morning. In retrospect, this was one of the most touching and poignant moments of our visit. We spoke with one of them, Champa Basumatari. I was amazed at the divinity shining on the face of this tribal lady. Her poise and confidence while communicating with me in Hindi would match well with any lady in India's metropolitan cities. She looked blissful and contented. I was deeply touched when she said she gives preference to her religious life over material progress and intends to pass those values on to her children.

She kindly invited us to a nearby relative's home, our first visit to a tribal house. Here we witnessed the Bodo worship of the sijou plant (the medicinal cactus *euphorbia splendens*) growing in front of the home and protected by a woven bamboo fence. The Bodo religion is called Bathou, meaning five principles—air, sun, earth, water and sky—parallel to the familiar five elements air, earth, fire, water and ether. The Supreme God, whom they worship through the sijou plant, is called Bathoubwrai, the "Elder" who created the five principles and is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Champa said they treat Bathoubwrai as Siva. His consort, Mainao, is revered as protector of rice fields. Some regard Her as a form of Parvati; one Bodo elder identified Her with Lakshmi. There are minor Gods as well. Worship in the Bodo faith is done at home, at Bathow temples and during several large community festivals each year, notably Bwisagu, the Bodo New Year Day, in April.

We were visiting two temples here, one along the lines of the worship of Bathou we just saw, and the other a more recent innovation: the Karbi Anglong Brahma Dharma Jyoti Mondir in Langhin Manikpur. This is a temple of the Brahma Dharma movement introduced to the Bodo people in 1906 by Sri Sri Kalicharan Mech, a Bodo. Brahma (or Brahmo) Dharma is an offshoot of the Brahmo Samaj, a Hindu reform movement founded in the late 19th century in Kolkata, Bengal, by Ram Mohan Roy.

A large group in elegant dress greeted and paraded us to the open-air temple, where we joined an elaborate yagna, with over a dozen priests chanting Vedic hymns and mantras in worship of Agni, the Fire God. At the end of the rites all the devotees prayed before the fire, kneeling down and placing their foreheads on the floor, chanting, "*om purnaparam brahma jyoti swarupaye namo namah*," which means, "We salute the highest Brahma, Who is in the form of light."

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Home of the Goddess: (clockwise from right) Bodo worship of the sijou plant, a form of the Supreme God Bathou, often equated with Siva; an expanse of rice fields outside of Guwahati; Champa Basumatari, 25, explaining Bodo beliefs to our reporter; Bodo tribal women returning home from their morning fishing



Worship Among the Bodos



The Brahma Samaj believes in six commandments of Paramatma, God: 1) keep the universe always clean; 2) treat all creatures equally and try to solve their problems; 3) offer sweets and scented articles to the fire and let others also offer; 4) chant *om purna-param brahma jyoti swarupaye namo namah*; 5) bear the light, *jyoti*, in the eye or on the forehead faithfully; 6) be attached to He Who is omniscient.

While rooted in tradition, the young tribal women of Brahma Samaj seemed educated and modern in their outlook. Many were using mobile phones to take videos and click pictures of our visit.

Our final destination for the day was the Bathou Temple. As happened at the Brahma Samaj temple, we were greeted not as a reporter and photographer, but as honored guests. Over a hundred temple members and the officials of the All Bathou Maha Sabha were there to welcome us, beginning with the traditional Bodo dance, Baguramba (see photo on page 18).

The temple was simple, an open hall with the sijou plant representing the Bathou God in its bamboo enclosure at one end. The worship, on the other hand, was quite elaborate, in part because, in addition to Bathou, many

other tribal Gods and Goddesses were there to be honored. All the eighteen sacred items in the open around Bathou God were symbolically connected to specific native Gods. The rites were accompanied by constant bhajan and kirtan.

It is difficult to express how moved I was



Weavers' art: the skill of Assam's woman weavers was evident everywhere

as I worshiped Bathou God. This was the first time I connected to God in the interiors of the tribal lands and experienced the power and faith of tribal people. Many regard Bathou God as Lord Siva, others do not. But as a Saivite, I found this worship profound and more than uplifting enough to make me forget the grueling day we were completing with seven hours on the road. I had been allowed a glimpse into the mystic life, tradition and culture of this colorful community of Assam who live so close to the divine.

Education Projects

Education with a Hindu slant was one topic we were tasked with documenting in Assam. We got quite a sampling, ranging from a driving academy and sewing training center to the one-room schools of Ekal Vidyalaya in remote villages and the Shankardeva Vidya Niketan, a premier Guwahati school popular with parents for its high standards and Assamese ethos. These schools are privately funded and do not take government money. All try to instill in students love of country and devotion to the Hindu traditions.

Jan Kalyan Trust, associated with the RSS, operates vocational schools across India, one of which was the driving school in South Guwahati. Bharat Kumar, an RSS lifetime worker, founded it in response to a lack of Hindu drivers in a profession dominated by Muslims. He told us of multiple problems from harassment of Hindu passengers to difficulties with full-time drivers working for Hindu families resulting in cases of "love jihad," where a daughter drawn into marriage is forced to convert to Islam.

At Jan Kalyan's small sewing school in Shankardeva Nagar, the students welcomed us with Vedic chanting and bhajans they are taught as part of the curriculum, along with basics of Hinduism through a book in Assamese, *Ideal Hindu Home*. Ladies enthusiastically showed us the various Assamese ethnic motifs the use in their embroidery work. Many ladies were wearing Assamese outfits they had designed and sewn themselves—using skills they are finding quite marketable.



The Brahma Dharma Jyoti Mondir



Incidentally, the people here, as a whole, are impeccably dressed in traditional garb.

The **Shankardeva Vidya Niketan School** is one of sixteen run in Guwahati by Vidya Bharati, part of the educational wing of the RSS. This school is 36 years old and has 700 students. It maintains a standard as good or better than local Christian missionary schools. Four languages are taught: Assamese, Hindi, English and Sanskrit. Students regularly score well on tests and have a reputation for good conduct and refined manners, according to Pranjeet Pujari.

Every class begins with a few minutes of meditation, and the day ends with the entire school singing in unison Vande Mantaram, the national song in praise of Mother India. As the children departed, hundreds touched the feet of the principal, Chitra Medhi Das, seeking her blessings as they left for home.

Pranjeet told us their city schools are well funded, but those in tribal areas face financial difficulty. Christian schools in those areas are free. "We call their strategy of influencing the impressionable minds of our kids 'silent killing.'" The missionary schools were here long before Vidya Bharati was established.

In the evening we visited the headquarters of **Sewa Bharati**—which included a small youth hostel for tribal boys—in the Adingiri area. It was during this visit we first became acquainted with Assam's early sunset at this time of year (October). It became pitch black shortly after 5pm! India does not observe daylight saving time, and Assam is on the eastern end of the country's compromise of three time zones made into one. The practical consequence of this was traversing several kilometers of poor road in the dark.

During our visit, a conference of RSS volunteers was taking place. The center frequently hosts such functions. Sewa Bharati manages various education, health, relief and rehabilitation projects. It was currently exam time, so the boys were deeply immersed in their studies, but they took a moment to greet us with a Vedic chant. They all study at a nearby Vidya Bharati school.

The 35 boys belong to 17 out of Assam's 34 districts, as well as some neighboring states. They encompass a wide range of religious practice and belief, according to Vikal, but each is encouraged to follow his own tradition. Some, he explained, follow the Bathow God. There are children from Mizoram who practice Buddhism, others from Assam who follow Shankardeva and the *Bhagavat Purana*, while still others, from Meghalaya, who follow their tribal form of worship.

Vikal explained Sewa Bharati's approach: "We do not ask the students to worship any Hindu Gods or Goddesses, but instead ask them to worship Mother India, the heroes of Assam and even the rivers of the Northeast. The basic idea is to inculcate honor and love in them for their native roots and their country. We do not interfere with their individual way of worship. It is the policy of all Sangh Pariwar organizations to help people maintain their individual identities. This contrasts with the Christian missionaries who are engaged in changing their identity by conversion. There are such missionaries active in this district right now."

The **Ekal Vidyalaya project** at Kathiatoli, Kandoli Tea Estate, is about 200 km east of Guwahati. We arrived as the tea workers—mostly women—were winding up their day,

having their harvest weighed and heading home. They were tired, and not in the mood to talk, but were willing to be photographed, giving Thomas a marvelous opportunity. I had seen women carrying heavy packages of picked tea in movies and TV serials, but in person it was a moving experience.

When we reached the school, the young girls were ready to welcome us by washing our feet while chanting Vedic hymns and singing bhajan. In North India men do not normally accept women doing this for them. With folded hands, I requested them to greet us by putting a tilak on our forehead.

The children gave a short presentation by chanting Vedic mantras and some prayers, but given the lack of light, were then sent home. The electrical supply to the school was unreliable, and a clear hindrance to its functioning. We were able to talk with the school's teacher, Pushpanjali Munda, who said that 40 to 50 come daily. Most attend government school in the morning; but for some the Vidyalaya is the only schooling they receive. Assam has some 2,200 Ekal schools, each with a single teacher.

During our stay in Guwahati, we visited **Vivekananda Kendra** at Paan Bazar and later the Vivekananda Institute of Culture

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People and places: (clockwise from right) Bodo women pray during the worship of the Bathou God, a form of Siva; each aspect of the bamboo enclosure has a philosophic significance; bhajan is a major part of the worship; devotees, dancers and musicians pose for a photo after the ceremonies were over



Bathou Temple Worship in the Bodo Tradition



ALL PHOTOS: THOMAS L. KELLY

and Celebrating Shankardeva's Birthday



DEV. RATI AGARWAL

situated on the banks of Brahmaputra River in Uzan Bazar. The Kendra is a spiritually oriented service organization working throughout the country since 1972. According to Meera Kulkarni, a senior organizer, they run a chain of 22 Vivekananda Kendra schools in Assam and 139 branches of a project called Anandalaya, which provides non-formal education and hostel facilities to children of tea garden workers. They also operate extensive medical and rural development projects. These efforts are managed by 32 full-time workers in Assam with the help of hundreds of volunteers in 39 centers. Religious education and yoga are a part of many of the programs.

The m was set up in 1993 to nurture the Northeast's indigenous cultures through scholarly seminars, research, documentation and publications. According to Pranav Jyoti Brahmachari, they host frequent intellectual and cultural programs, as well as maintain a library and research center. They sponsor researchers to live among the various tribal communities to record their life and culture, with a focus on understanding the aspects of belief and culture the tribes share with each other and the rest of India.

Conclusion for Part One

At the first sight, Guwahati appears to be like any other Indian cosmopolitan city, with large and glamorous showrooms, malls and luxury hotels lining highly commercialized roads in the posh areas around the city's center. However, within a few days of our moving in and around this ancient city we experienced its many unique treasures. The first and oldest is the mighty Brahmaputra River,



Hindu schooling: children of the Shankardeva Vidya Niketan in Guwahati, one of 470 Hindu-oriented schools established by the Shishu Shiksha Samaiti in Assam

"Son of Brahma," a rare male name for an Indian river. Then there is the world-famous Ma Kamakhya Temple, which we felt truly blessed to visit. We traveled hundreds of kilometers to Barduwa to visit the birthplace of Srimanta Shankardeva. Our guide took us to interior tribal areas where we encountered the traditions of the Bodo, Ahom, Karbi and other tribes, and observed the manifold activities of Ekal Vidyalaya, RSS, VHP and other Hindu organizations.

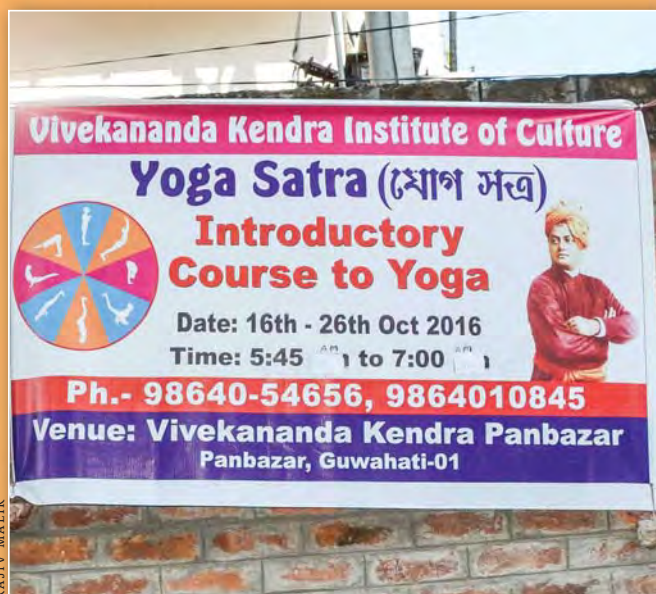
Our fascinating spiritual exploration of the lives and traditions of Assamese Hindus will continue next issue as we shift to Dibrugarh, center of the tea country. We visit with the tea workers, whose forefathers were brought here by the British in the 19th century. We take a ferry boat across the Brahmaputra to the world's largest river island, Majuli, seat of Neo-Vaishnavism and the religion known as Ekasarna Dharma propagated by Srimant Shankardeva through his Vaishnava satras.

In Majuli we met the world-famous mask-makers and the Mising tribals. After traveling to the ancient Siva temple at Sivasagar and the famous Tilinga Mandir, or Bell Temple, in Tinsukia, we spend our last day among the large Nepalese Gorkha community here. Stay tuned, as they say, for our final coverage on the amazingly diverse land of Assam.

Faces of learning: (clockwise from right) teacher, students, volunteers and friends pose outside the one-room Ekal Vidyalaya school on Kandoli tea estate; students at the Jan Kalyan sewing school show off their embroidery work; a traditional welcome to journalist Rajiv Malik at the Ekal school; workers wait in a long line for their individual harvests to be weighed and recorded at day's end, Kandoli tea estate; a poster advertising Vivekananda Kendra's yoga classes



Education Across Assam





ALL PHOTOS: PUTU EKA PRAYASTITI KEFANI

CULTURE

Usaba Dangsil: Bali's Festival of Gratitude

Thousands flock to Bali's ancient village of Bungaya to participate in one of the island's oldest celebrations, one which gives thanks and honors the youth

BY PUTU EKA PRAYASTITI KEFANI, BALI
IN BUNGAYA VILLAGE IN KARANGASEM, ON the western side of Bali, a unique and sacred ceremony takes place once in a decade or two. Usaba Dangsil, the festival of gratitude, was last observed 14 years ago. The multi-day ritual, the area's largest, was joined by more than 20,000 people from Bungaya and surrounding villages including Jungsri, Asak and Timbrah.

For most, the festival is a chance to honor and give thanks to the Gods, particularly Surya—Lord of the Sun—who is given offerings in appreciation for life's abundance. For the area's youth, Usaba Dangsil is a chance to perform austerities and gain community recognition as the upcoming generation. The festival also marks the start of a structural renovation period for the upkeep of this ancient Balinese village.

The latest Usaba Dangsil began with the *melasti* ceremony on August 17, 2016.

Devotees paraded nine miles to and from the seashore to bless and purify the *pratima*—the sacred articles and equipment used by local temples. This same ceremony begins many of Bali's traditional festivals. For the youth who are fasting for the day, this walk is the beginning of several days of austerity. Nineteen palanquins carrying temple equipment were paraded to the beach by the local youth, followed by a baleganjur gong orchestra to enliven the celebratory march.

One of the Usaba Dangsil's distinctive qualities is the creation of wooden structures known as *dangsil*. Dangsil are used to house devotees' offerings dedicated to Lord Surya. The artful structures vary in size and form, from small ones ornately carved, to the seven giant dangsil that tower 60 feet into the air and weigh as much as six tons. They symbolize welfare and protection. Each is sponsored by a particular village. The mobile monuments are carried in procession by

thousands of enthusiastic devotees, and are usually made from durian trees, the straightest and tallest that can be found. Two *dangsil pemaksan* 20 feet tall and 40 *dangsil taksu* three feet tall follow the seven giant ones. The materials to build and decorate each are ceremoniously obtained by the head of Bungaya Village from the crops and materials offered by surrounding farms. The village architect, *undagi*, designs each dangsil. After the main structure of each is built, it is festooned with garlands and decorated by the thousands of people from various village organizations.

On August 26, three days before the main ceremony, the *pemahbah* ceremony was held in which the Bagus Selonding Deity was paraded out from His shrine in Puseh Temple. With a musical ensemble in tow, He is placed on the shoulders of the head priest and carried a short distance along a white carpet to nearby Bale Agung Temple.



Shortly thereafter, the area's youth are ceremoniously recognized for their dedicated religious services to local temples and officially honored as the succeeding generation. This year's 565 young men and women were charged with many tasks and participated in important ceremonies throughout the festival. The first was an initiation ceremony, *mesesedep*, invoking the blessings of Lord Vishnu upon the youth. It was led by three women priests from three of the area's important temples and held at the Puseh Temple.

Such events are all-day affairs for the youth and require great dedication. Participants must stay actively awake all night and on into the next day, many while fasting. On the 27th, the youth performed the sacred *manda* dance for a full twelve hours through the night, ending at 6:00 the next morning. Then, in the *peileh* ceremony, they circumambulated the Bale Agung temple nine times. Offerings of rice, bananas and traditional cakes were then carried to the temple on their head or shoulders, not by hand.

On the final day, the 29th, all the dangsils were paraded 300 meters to Penataran Temple by the massive crowd of thousands. The youth are expected to observe *mesaya-sayaan*, which includes strict rules on how to

A flamboyant tradition: (far left) Two giant dangsil are made ready for the festival's final day; (counter-clockwise from below right) two of the many *dehas*—young women to be recognized for their volunteer work at the village temples; hundreds pull one of the largest dangsil structures upright during the main event on the final day; the *Manda* dance at Bale Agung Temple goes on for 12 hours; young men carry one of many smaller *pratima* palanquins in a procession for the *Melasti* ceremony

dress and behave. The young men are to wear only a sarong; the women sarong and shawl. No one is permitted to wear sandals or a head covering, nor watches or any jewelry.

In procession, the seven giant structures arrived at Penataran, carried by devotees from their particular village sponsors, then the medium ones and finally the smallest. The festival was then concluded with a grand celebration. This year's event was attended by the governor of Bali and the ranking local official. It is our hope that the ancient and culturally significant Usaba Dangsil is carried on into the future, as the people of Bungaya continue to give thanks for the welfare and prosperity of all our villages.

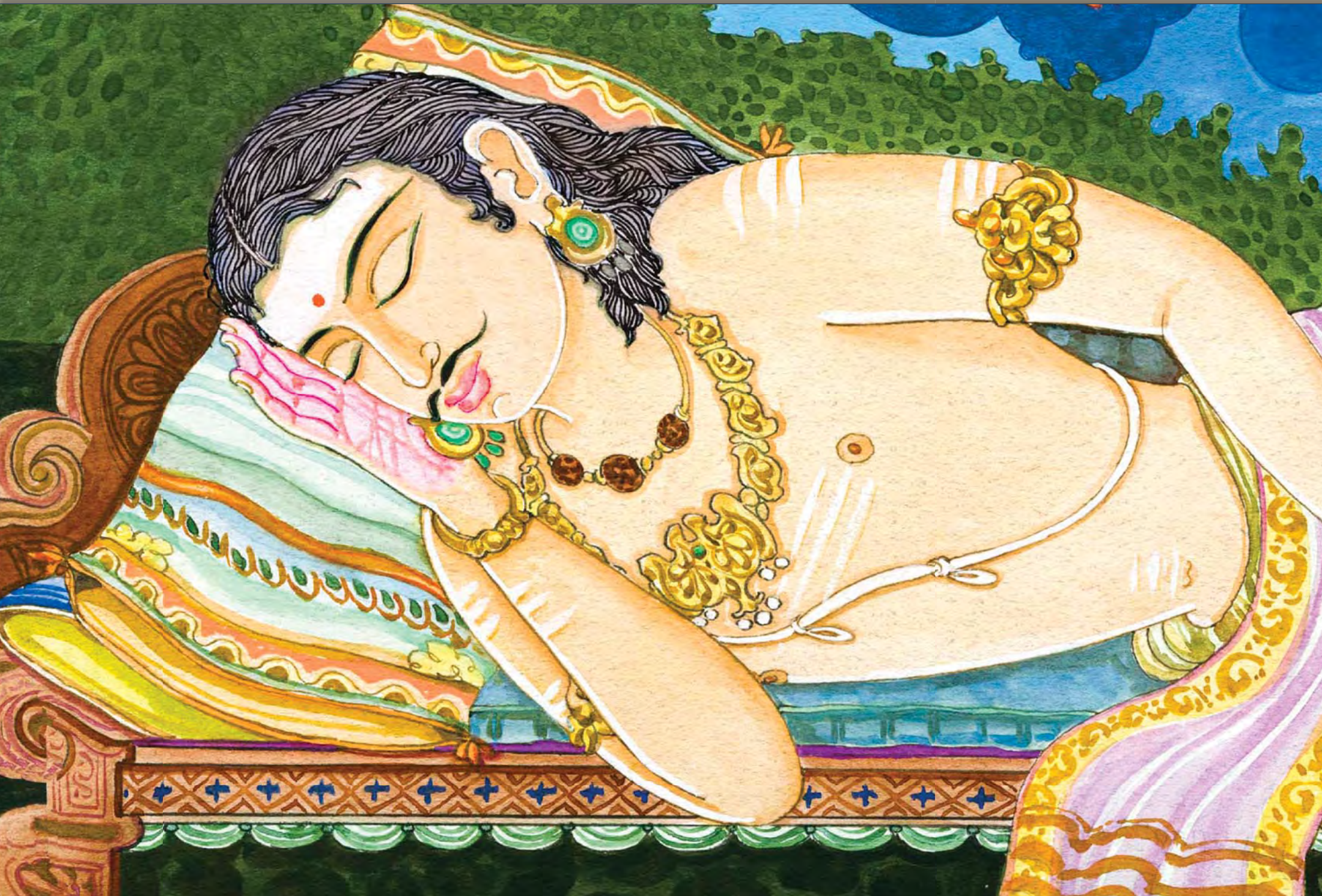


Our Daily Journey In Consciousness

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Understanding four states of mind: waking, dreaming, deep sleep and samadhi

By Acharya Vamadeva Shastri



MANY OF THE GREATEST YOGA SECRETS ARE PART OF our daily lives, hidden in our natural rhythms and actions—in how we see, think, speak and breathe, through the days, months, seasons and years. Our ongoing state of awareness and its various levels hold perhaps the greatest of these secrets.

Consciousness is the very basis of our existence, abiding as the steady inner light behind the changes of outer life. We are by nature conscious beings working through the instrumentalities of body and mind. Our current incarnation is but one of many lives in our gathering of experience through the worlds of time and space. Consciousness endows us with our sense of self, feeling and knowing, the inner reality out of which body and mind function. It is the very core of our being.

Yet, the essence of our consciousness is largely unknown to us. We are so busy projecting our awareness upon the external world that we have forgotten its origins deep within us. Our demanding lives keep us from knowing who we really are, what (if anything) survives death, and what our ultimate purpose is. We are trapped in a bodily image of ourselves that forgets our inner essence of light. Our transient lives veil our inner connection with the Eternal.

The result of this distractedness is that we fall into ignorance, desire and sorrow, driven by external forces rather than internal knowing. We remain at the turbulent surface of our being and rarely visit the calm depths within. We pursue outer fulfillment in the dense, material world and neglect the subtle bliss that dwells inside us.

Our lives are a great mystery of consciousness and its unfoldment. Exploring that should be our most important activity. We should be impelled to carefully examine our own minds, not just the external world. In pursuit of self knowledge, we should study the profound implications of the daily movements of our consciousness through waking and sleep. Such self examination has long existed in the Indian spiritual tradition, as the pages before us will reveal.

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Dreams are often considered imaginary, unreal and irrelevant to daily life. In fact, there is far more to dreams, and to sleeping, than we are taught in the West. Indian spiritual knowledge brings an understanding of dreams that can help us live a richer, more aware life.

What Are the Four States of Consciousness?

CONSCIOUSNESS IS NOT A MERE METAPHYSICAL CONCERN OF little practical relevance to us. It is the source and ground of our every experience in life. India's sages knew that each day for us is a journey through consciousness, and they spoke of four states (*avastha chatushtaya*): waking, dreaming, deep sleep (technically called Non-REM sleep), and a fourth state beyond. We are ordinarily concerned only with the waking state and its demands, but dream and deep sleep also have their value, identity and experiences. These two subtle states have a profound impact on us, from health to spirituality, and should not be ignored.

1. The Waking State, Jagrat Avastha

We do not dwell in a uniform state of consciousness throughout the day. The nature of our consciousness changes radically through the states of waking, dream and deep sleep. The waking state shows us a vivid outer world through the five senses. It appears steady and solid and can be experienced objectively by each of us. Yet, our waking experience has many variations relative to our thoughts, emotions and attention span, from moments of clarity to periods of distraction and dullness. Additionally, physical reality, by nature, has many fluctuations, uncertainties and is ultimately transient.

2. Dreaming, Svapna Avastha

The dream state provides an inner, imaginative consciousness that is dramatic and colorful, changes rapidly and is subjective in nature. In dreams we create our own personal reality, with its own sense of time and space, but with seemingly little lasting effect on our outer lives. Ordinarily we take the dream world to be unreal, as compared to the reality we give to the waking world. Yet, dreams and astral experiences have their own beauty and fascination.

Most of us look upon the dream state as simply a condition in which our memories and subconscious patterns reverberate and express themselves. Often these patterns are meaningless, but we do at times have meaningful dreams. Sometimes we have inspiring dreams that enrich our waking life. Or we may have disturbed dreams that make us fear the dream state. Examining the dream state, psychoanalysis finds only reflections of the urges and traumas of the waking state. Its explorations are limited to the subconscious and unconscious states of awareness, with little understanding of the deeper layers of consciousness that lie beyond.

Overall, we often live in fantasy, which means dreaming even in the waking state. We find our waking state proceeds too slowly and does not give us the type of wish fulfillment that we seek. This makes exploring the realms of imagination and dream a fascinating pastime. Today technology is providing us with "virtual reality" and "augmented reality," which are much like dream projections in the waking state. Soon people may prefer this virtual reality, which is somewhere between waking and sleep, as it can better fulfill our dreams and wishes but with a stronger connection to physical reality than the dream state. Such miracles of technology are now bordering on the occult.

Yoga teaches that there is an entire dream world and we have a dream self with its own existence and identity. This is our astral body, in which our soul resides after our death experience. While we also abide in the astral body all the time, most people are aware in it only superficially, though some souls enjoy a strong astral experience throughout life. Many such inwardly aware beings become artists, mystics, occultists and psychics.

While in the waking state, we work with an objective world born of collective karma. In the dream state, we work with a subjective world born of our own thoughts and imaginations. This poses a dilemma

for us. If we are not in control of our mind, the dream state can easily degenerate into bad dreams, nightmares or connections with lower astral worlds of turbulence, violence, desire, anger and hatred. Without control of our emotions, our dream reality will remain agitated.

3. Deep Sleep, Sushupti Avastha

Deep sleep draws us into a realm of unmanifest consciousness in which everything is obscured and brought back to its seed form. Deep sleep is easy to overlook but functions as the source and support of the states of waking and dreaming, without which they could not function. It is the ultimate state of rest and renewal that we look forward to when we go to sleep.

In deep sleep there is a mergence into the heart in which we all feel peace, rest and gain renewal. We are not aware of ourselves in this state, but only hold its essence, or *rasa*. We awaken feeling we have slept well. Deep sleep is the blissful sleep in which we naturally experience happiness in our inmost sheath, *anandamaya kosha*, which also gives us access to the thought-based, or *savikalpa*, samadhis.

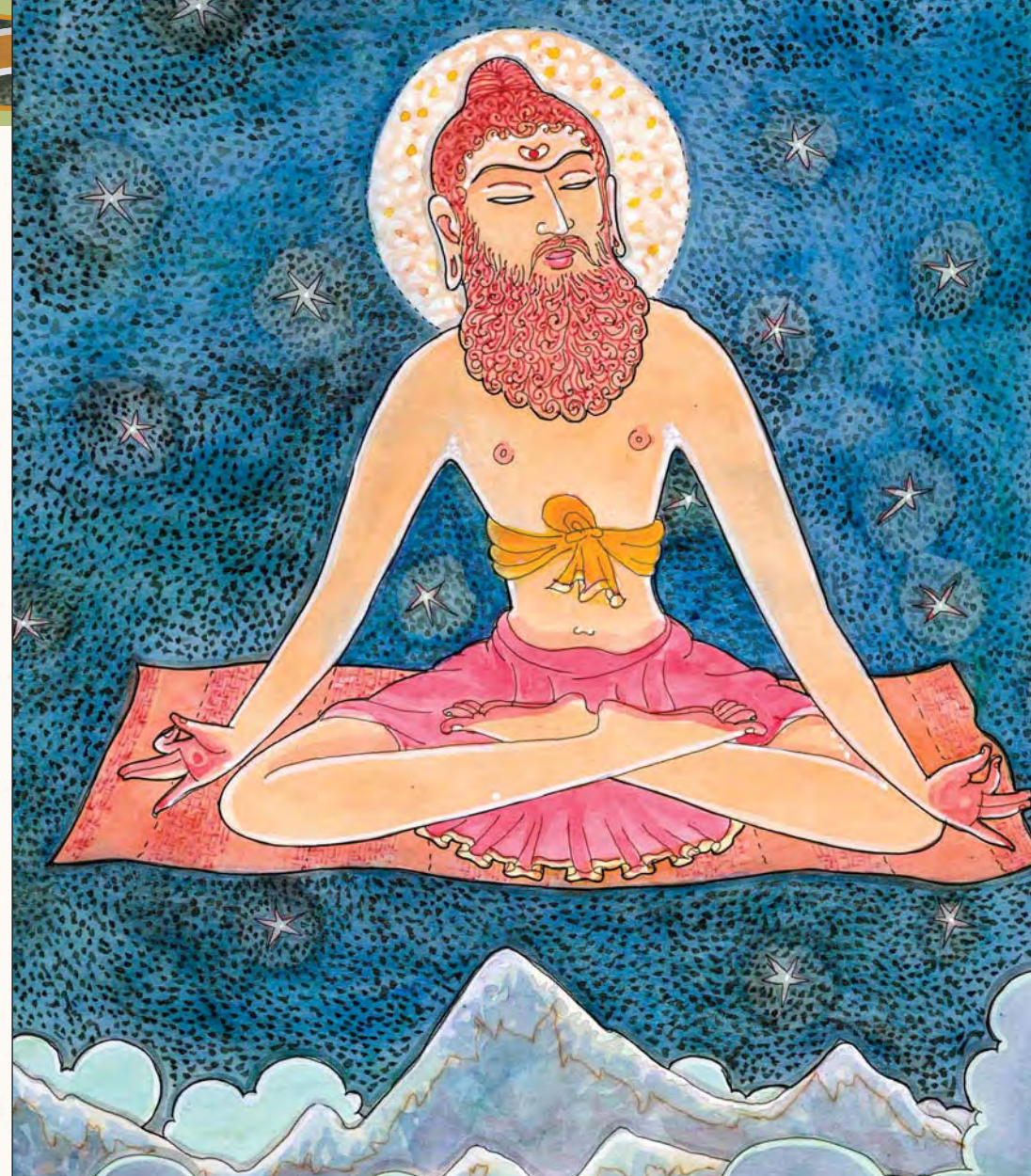
The root of our human incarnation dwells in the state of deep sleep, in which we return to the divine source of our being, though unknowingly. In deep sleep we go back to our inner flame of awareness, in which our energy and awareness get cleansed and vitalized for another day. But our experience in deep sleep is covered over by the deep ignorance and forgetfulness of maya, the illusion of the world.

We hardly notice our sojourn in deep sleep unless we fail to sleep properly, in which case tiredness and fatigue can dominate all else that we do. In the absence of proper deep sleep, the mind and prana, along with the doshas, or biological humors—starting with vata dosha, the core physiological motivating force—become imbalanced, causing a progressive breakdown in our organic functioning. Deep sleep balances our pranas and grounds us in our deeper vitality (what is called *ojas* in ayurvedic thought), without which our energy remains erratic and depleted. Without deep sleep, our immunity, endurance and patience collapse, leading ultimately to collapse of body and mind.

In Vedantic thought, deep sleep is understood as the *mula-avidya*, or "root ignorance," behind our lives. It presents the primary barrier to any higher consciousness. It is a kind of darkness or unknowing that conceals the greater reality of universal consciousness within us. Yet, it is also the main potential doorway to the liberation of consciousness, if we learn to examine it, understand and move beyond it.

Deep sleep is our natural samadhi or unity state, but it is born of ignorance. It has a tamasic quality. Yet, it does reflect the samadhi-like qualities of peace and happiness, in which the mind can become renewed. Cultivating samadhi in meditation is a means of moving behind and beyond deep sleep.

Until we learn to move beyond deep sleep through a deeper awareness, we will remain bound by karma, desire, birth and death. We will live in the shadow of darkness and unreality, which is our inability to see beyond the darkness of deep sleep into the inner light of truth. Deep sleep is not just a biological phenomenon; it is a spiritual limitation. It is the core mystery of our lives. Unless we learn to awaken from this primordial darkness, we will not know our true, cosmic reality.



A yogi is seated on a magic carpet floating in space, which represents cosmic consciousness. The mountainous terrain below symbolizes the mind's kinetic activity in the states of waking and dreaming. Deep in meditation, he abides in the unitive consciousness that is experienced in turiya, the fourth state.

yogic state of samadhi or unity consciousness.

Sri Swami Chidananda (1916–2008) explained it thusly: "Because the pure consciousness or awareness is there, these three ever-changing states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep find it possible to manifest. So, the support and substratum of the ever-recurring and ever-changeable threefold state, or *avastha-traya* (three states of consciousness: waking, dreaming and deep sleep) is the *turiya avastha* (the fourth state), the permanent, existence-consciousness principle which is the Purusha (The Supreme Being). Existence-consciousness or Sat-Chit, which is unchanging, which is permanent, supports all the three states. Existence-consciousness is super-consciousness" (from Swami's book: *The Philosophy, Psychology and Practice of Yoga*, 1984, The Divine Life Trust Society). Thus, we can see that from the perspective of Advaita Vedanta, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (Satchidananda) is the supreme reality and ultimate state of consciousness.

This is reaffirmed in the entry on this subject in *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (India Heritage Research Foundation, 2010), based on Adi Shankara's commentaries on the *Mandukya Upanishad*. "Turiya is the same as the highest self, or Brahman. It is the transcendent, non-dual, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, immutable, self-effulgent, quiescent and inexpressible, absolute and ontological reality....Turiya has been described as lying beyond the three bodies and the five sheaths.... It is free from subject-object duality. Thus, it is the non-dual state of consciousness, free from all phenomenal projections."

Non-being, darkness and death are the nature of our consciousness on this side of deep sleep. Being, light and immortality arise once we cross over deep sleep into ever-wakeful awareness, the inner light. Crossing over death is not possible without crossing over deep sleep. That is the alchemical journey of the soul, which involves a transformation within our own core awareness and self-identity.

4. Superconsciousness, Turiya Avastha

Beyond these three ordinary states, more hidden and mysterious, endures the potential for an ever-wakeful awareness not subject to daily fluctuations—the transcendent "fourth," or *turiya* in yogic thought. Discovering this is the goal of higher yoga practices, taking us beyond time and death. Turiya holds the real secret of our existence, but to unravel it we must search it out with full determination. It is the state of unitive consciousness that underlies and transcends the other three states.

The *Mandukya Upanishad*, verse 7, offers this description: "That which is neither conscious nor unconscious, which is invisible, impalpable, indefinable, unthinkable, unnameable, whose very essence consists of the experience of its own self, which absorbs all diversity, is tranquil and benign, without a second, which is what they call the fourth state—that is the atman. This it is which should be known." (*Vedic Experience*, p. 723). The fourth or ever-wakeful state is the

Turiyatita, the State Beyond the Fourth

Scriptures also speak of a fifth state, called *turiyatita* ("beyond the fourth"). For some this is the most profound superconscious state attainable; for others it is beyond all forms of consciousness. The former describe it as abidance in a state of the witness, or pure consciousness. For the latter, when we become fully established in turiya, no longer identified with the mind, we enter into the state of *turiyatita* and ultimately have the great non-experience of nirvikalpa samadhi, samadhi without fluctuations, the highest form of Self Realization. The *Mandala Brahmana Upanishad* (2, 4–5) says, "There are five states (*avastha*): *jagrat* (waking), *svapna* (dreaming), *sushupti* (dreamless sleeping), *turiya* (the fourth) and *turiyatita* (that beyond the fourth). The yogin is one who has realized Brahman, which is [*turiyatita*] all-full beyond turiya." Sri Ramana Maharshi explained, "The experiencers of the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, known as *vishva*, *taijasa* and *prajna*, who wander successively in these three states, are not the Self. It is with the object of making this clear—namely that the Self is that which is different from them and which is the witness of these states—that it is called the fourth (*turiya*). When this is known, the three experiencers disappear and the idea that the Self is a witness—that it is the fourth—also disappears. That is why the Self is described as beyond the fourth (*turiyatita*)" *Spiritual Instruction*, no. 8.



Sleep & Well-Being

OUR BIOLOGICAL TIME CYCLE THROUGH THE DAY IS NOT SIMPLY a physical movement but reflects an inner movement in consciousness. It is not defined by mere physiological energies but is ultimately connected to inner powers of eternity, from which we gain our capacity to renew body and mind.

Our biological clock reflects the movement of the Sun outwardly, as we wake in the sunlight in the morning and go to sleep at night after the Sun has set. On an inner level, our biological clock is defined by prana and measured by the breath. Each day, according to yogic texts, we have around 21,600 breaths, or one every four seconds, with 360 breaths every 24 minutes or 1/60th of a day.

The mind moves along with the breath and shares its rhythms and fluctuations. During sleep, the prana returns within, along with the mind, to a withdrawn state. Our biological clock is reset in deep sleep for another day.

Of course, there is much in our modern behavior that has removed

us from the organic time of nature, with our events in social time measured by mechanical clocks. Beginning with the appearance of electricity, we have inhabited the night and habitually stay up past sunset, countermanding our biological rhythms. Until we accept our biological rhythms, proper sleep will be denied to us, and with that denial our physiological and psychological functions will be disturbed.

Our biological clock decrees that we live one day at a time, with each day providing a new potential for experience. Our body, mind and ego continue from day to day but undergo subtle changes. Our life is not a continual movement in time but is modulated or interrupted by the fluctuations of day and night.

Our consciousness returns to an unmanifest state every night during deep sleep and then reemerges in the morning for another day, almost like a daily death and rebirth. We underestimate the importance of our daily withdrawal into subtle realms, overwhelmed by

A devotee kneels in a state of blessedness, eyes lifted toward her Lord Śiva, who cradles her in the sheltering palm of His hand. In her state of centered and serene awareness she inwardly discerns His perfect universe and knows that nothing is wrong in this world. Her serenity has blossomed as she perfected yoga in all the four states.

our obsession with physical existence. This causes us to presume there is a continuous existence of our physical personality, which is not the case. Deeper forces of consciousness and eternity impact us during our daily life cycles.

So, too, our spiritual practice proceeds one day at a time, with each day offering new opportunities for growth, transformation and realization of the greater consciousness within and around us. Our spiritual life benefits as we learn to embrace the uniqueness and transforming power of each day.

Mind & Prana

Our mind and prana change radically in the four states. In the waking state, both mind and prana are active outwardly. The mind is caught up in dualistic currents of attraction and repulsion, like and dislike, pleasure and pain, love and hate. The prana is caught up in dualistic currents of inhalation and exhalation, sensation and action, and the movement of energy on the right and left sides of the body.

In the dream state, the mind is withdrawn inwardly and our prana also turns within. Our inner mind comes forth with its luminous dreams and powers to radically alter our time-space experiences. We also experience a subtler non-physical prana that projects a changeable dream body according to the thoughts of the mind. While dreaming, we function in the astral body—consisting of the pranamaya, manomaya and vijñanamaya koshas. Pranamaya dreams are largely energetic and instinctual in nature. Manomaya dreams are sensory and emotional. Vijñanamaya dreams connect to deeper insight and cross over into deep-sleep type meditations.

In deep sleep the mind merges into a state of latency. The body is upheld by prana, which sustains it from its seed state. (This is discussed in detail in the *Prashna Upanishad*.) We experience a natural deep pratyahara, sensory withdrawal, in which all our faculties return to their core energy.

In the fourth state, turiya—for those who are able to experience it through meditation—prana and mind are merged within a deeper consciousness. The mind ceases to make any movements of its own, functioning only as an instrument of unitary consciousness, no

longer able to generate false ego activity. To reach that fourth state, we must give up our identification with the body, and remove the knot of prana that connects us to it.

It is said that in the waking state our consciousness dwells in the eyes, specifically the right eye. In the dream state it dwells in the throat. In deep sleep it dwells in the heart—meaning the deeper spiritual heart, not the physical or emotional heart. In the fourth state it is also centered in the heart but consciously, not unconsciously as it is in deep sleep.

Healing

Drawing our prana, or vital energy, within us is the essence of all deeper healing. In this regard, the prana of deep sleep has the special power to heal all the other pranas, as well as the mind. In deep sleep, the brain is able to remove negative patterns and energies and reset its equilibrium. This is vitally important in all psychological healing.

Yet, the deepest healing of the body also comes from the awareness and prana behind deep sleep. A yogi can access this inner power of prana and direct it through his hands or through his eyes, using it to both guide and heal his disciples.

Sleep and the Home

Most of us define our homes as where we sleep, reflecting sleep's importance. Our bedroom is the most intimate room in the house. We all look forward to going home and having a good night's rest, particularly after a hectic day or after having traveled away for some time. Having no home or place to sleep of our own is a great trauma. Establishing our home or place of rest is the foundation of our sense of well-being. Sleeping in the same place affords us a certain inner contentment.

Yet, it is not just a question of a house, room or physical home. Sleep takes us back to our spiritual home, the divine energy and consciousness through which deep sleep renews us. We all sense that benefic power. When we have difficulties in life, we all wish to return to the quiet and rest of our homes, in which we can shut the outer world off, be ourselves, relax and let go—and have a good sleep.

We are all happy to go to sleep because we recognize that sleep brings us to a natural state of peace and well-being in which we can release the cares of the world. Beggar or king—sleep is the same for both. This peace of deep sleep can help us understand the peace inherent in our deeper consciousness. Yet, it is not enough to rest in our outer home, we must learn to rest in our inner home, which is the core awareness within our own hearts.

Qualities of the States of Consciousness (Avastha)

English	Sanskrit	Lord	Kosha/Sheath	Realm/State of Mind	Mind & Prana	Location	Planet
WAKING	Jagrata	Brahma	annamaya	physical; conscious	outwardly directed	right eye	Earth
DREAMING	Svapna	Vishnu	pranamaya, manomaya & vijñanamaya	astral; subconscious	inwardly directed	throat	Moon
DEEP SLEEP	Sushupti	Rudra	anandamaya	higher astral; subsuperconscious	withdrawn	spiritual heart, unconsciously	Sun
THE FOURTH	Turiya	Ishvara	anandamaya	Brahmaloka; superconscious	merged within; samadhi	spiritual heart, consciously	
BEYOND THE FOURTH	Turiyatita		beyond the five koshas	Parasiva/Parabrahman; beyond the mind	transcendent	timeless, spaceless, formless	

The Great Cosmic Dream

OUR LIVES ARE BUT A LONG SLEEP AND DREAM, NOT OF A mere personal nature but of our soul, which has had many lives in many different bodies and worlds of experience. Our physical lives are based upon forgetting our eternal origin and falling into the allure of a transient external reality, in which we lose our true spiritual identity and come to think of ourselves as only the physical body.

How long does our physical life continue unbroken? Most of us will reply as long as a lifetime. The fact is that our physical awareness is broken every day by the state of sleep. We spend around eight hours a day, or a third of our lives, in the sleep state. We know much less about the sleep state than we do about the waking state. We do not take sleep seriously or regard it as having any validity of its own except as an epiphenomenon of the waking state. Yet, there is much hidden within it, including the secret of what the waking state is based upon.

The Fact of Impermanence

What most characterizes a dream is that what happens in it is but a momentary affair, with no lasting result or continuity in the outer world. You cannot visit your dream locations in the waking state. Once a dream is over, it is quickly forgotten. We can experience great success or great difficulties in the dream state, but normally do not take them seriously once we awaken.

Though the waking state is more enduring than dreaming, it has similar limitations in time. It also eventually comes to an end and must be forgotten. The waking state is a kind of prolonged collective shared dream. We experience a common waking world that appears fixed in nature, what we call the material world. But if we look deeply we see that physical reality is changing every second. Modern physics has deconstructed physical reality and shown it to be an illusion of subtle particles and energy fields in a vast interconnected universe of space and light. Behind the apparent stability of the material world are ongoing changes that reveal its illusory nature.

The movement of the day shows its transient nature, with morning quickly turning into afternoon and evening. An hour can pass by so quickly that we fail to notice. The shift of the seasons through the year is the prime factor of change and transformation in the world of nature. The outer rush of prana in the springtime is followed by its inward withdrawal in the autumn. Most important is our own aging process through our biological clock, showing that our physical body is not a fixed reality but a limited movement in time. And our mind changes more quickly than the body, having ups and downs, even in the period of a few minutes or hours.

The transience of our lives indicates their dream-like nature. In the end—however things may appear to last, however much we gain or lose—they come to an end, which is to end up as nothing, whether it is yesterday's food, our own childhood experiences, or the achievements of our adult life. The tragedy of those individuals who die young is a reflection of life's unpredictable transience. In fact, none of us can be guaranteed that this current day is not our last!

Most of us have experienced this truth of impermanence in dramatic ways, going back to older family homes, for example, and finding that they have radically changed or that they are no more. We all lose our friends and family members in the course of time. Sometimes the world loses interest in us, particularly as we become older. Even if great world leaders pass away, in a few weeks they, too, are forgotten. The movement of time is relentless and leaves nothing standing in the end.

The experience of impermanence is the basis of much great art and

literature, particularly tragedies. We all are unhappy facing the fact that we ourselves will eventually die. But we fail to see that our longing for eternal existence reflects the deeper reality of our soul, which is not bound by time. To discover that immortal soul, we must move beyond the illusion of time that is created by our daily cycles of waking, dream and deep sleep.

In the ignorance of deep sleep, we forget our cosmic reality and fall into a limited, outward-looking self-awareness. This is the stupor of the ego that causes us to take our physical body as our true nature and forget the wellsprings of consciousness within us. The obscuring power of deep sleep remains with us in the background through waking and dream.

The Illusion of the Senses

Our physical world is a reality or phantasmagoria put together by our physical senses. Our sense of sight provides us with our main image or idea of the world. Sound provides us with communication. Touch, taste and smell provide more physical sensations.

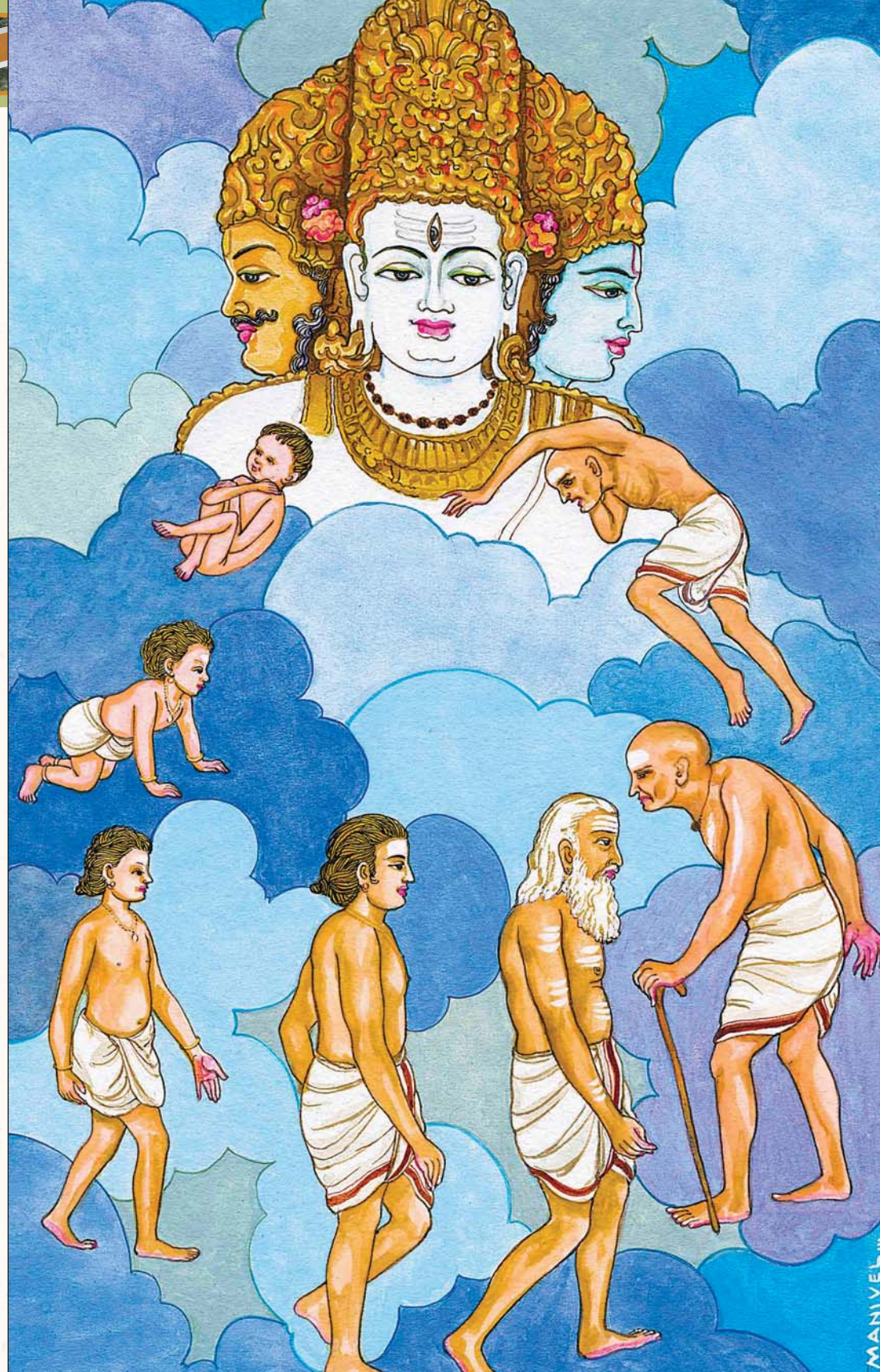
Yet, the senses do not provide a perception of the true nature of things. Sensory images are suggestive and easily stimulate our imagination, which is a dream-like function, projecting fantasies of what we would like to happen or to achieve upon what our senses present to us. For example, the sight of a beautiful woman affects the male senses differently than the female. The smell of food to a hungry man is more powerful than to one who has just eaten. Provoked by our senses, biological imperatives compel us to act.

We spend much of our time evaluating our chosen reality, whether it is what to buy, our relationships or who we are really. The development of intelligence requires learning to discriminate between how things appear and what they may actually be. Vedic thought tells us that the entire universe is but a reflection, like images in a mirror seen from a deeper consciousness.

Indeed, our sensory perception is as much a type of dreaming as it is a seeing or cognition. Our senses are as much faculties of dream and desire as they are a means to objectively determine the nature of any enduring reality.

We are all familiar with the famous story of five blind men, each coming to a different conclusion about the nature of an elephant, owing to their limited contact with it. Our five senses provide us information about the world that can obscure or confuse us as much as bring clarity. We must strive to understand who we truly are as conscious perceivers behind the five senses and the ephemeral physical body.

In today's information technology era, many people are living more in fantasy reality than in clear waking consciousness. We have invested our lives with virtual reality, social media images and digital bios that attempt to represent us to other people. Indeed the desire and fantasy nature of our physical reality is easy to see if we but examine our mental activity throughout the day.



As Brahma, Ishvara creates. As Vishnu, He sustains. As Rudra, He draws all back to Himself. Here Ishvara, as Trimurti, guides the reincarnation process as a soul is embodied, grows to manhood, then declines into old age and death, to be reborn again to experience the world and evolve. The author submits that on another scale each day is a birth, an evolving and a death, and each morning we awaken in a fresh and different form.

form, thought and energy. This is sometimes called the atmospheric realm or realm of the Moon in yogic thought. Deep sleep relates to our sojourn in formless, causal realms of seed energy and light. This relates to Heaven, the realm of space or the Sun in yogic teachings (*Prashna Upanishad*).

The experience of death and rebirth is much like sleep, dream and reawakening on a daily level. Death is but a sleep in which we have unembodied dreams and eventually awaken in a new physical incarnation. Each day we undergo a birth and death, as it were. The self that wakes up in the morning is slightly different than the self that went to sleep the night before. We leave something behind every night and take up something new every morning. Most forget this daily change of nature, but for those who are aware it is easy to see. Try to hold a certain thought right before you go to sleep at night and then remember it at the moment you wake up in the morning. It is not uncommon to forget what it was.

Mastering the daily movement from waking to deep sleep helps us master our soul's greater journey through the physical, astral and causal worlds. If we can live one day fully in consciousness, we can conquer death and transcend all time and space. The mysteries of day and night are profound.

Every Day as the Creation of the Entire Universe

Deep sleep state can be identified with Mula Prakriti, the root substance of the universe. If we can remain conscious and observe it, we can penetrate to the origin of creation. We can experience the creation of the universe every day, its unfoldment from pure consciousness to gross materiality, through the cosmic Aum vibration.

Behind deep sleep is the consciousness of Ishvara, the Creator, Preserver and Transformer of all, with which our soul is one. We can experience every day how Ishvara creates and absorbs all. This Ishvara is the Adi Guru or original teacher of yoga through the cosmic vibration Aum, as is taught in the *Yoga Sutras*. Our individual soul mirrors this cosmic creative process within our mind.

Actually, all of eternity is present at every moment in time. Each day and night reflects the movement of time overall as the day and night of Brahma, day being the cosmic creation and night its withdrawal, or pralaya.

Eternity is the unending day of pure consciousness, whose dualistic shadows of day and night form our outer world of experience. Once we remove the ignorance from our minds, that will be our constant experience. Similarly, every point in space is the Infinite, overflowing with numerous Brahmandas, or cosmic eggs, unfolding various world systems.

Each Life Is a Day in the Lifetime of Our Soul

The daily movement from waking to dream and deep sleep reflects the longer movement of our souls from one life, or incarnation, to another. Waking relates to our sojourn in physical reality, the realm of dense matter and form. This relates to the Earth in yogic thought. Dream relates to our sojourn in astral reality, the realm of subtle

Yoga in Each of the Four States

OUR TRUE SELF IS NOT MERELY THE SELF OF THE WAKING state identified with the physical body. Our true Self is behind and beyond all the four states. Having deeply explored this mystery, Hinduism presents us a clear system for understanding and transcending the three limited levels of awareness and a practical means for attaining the fourth state, which brings a direct perception of eternal reality. It is important to be aware of all aspects of our self and consciousness in the states of waking, dream, deep sleep and beyond. For this purpose, we have outlined the yogas of the four states below; but these overlap to a great extent.

The Power of Consciousness

Behind the daily movement of consciousness is a great power, the shakti of consciousness, which sets this process in motion. No one can stop the daily process of waking, dream and deep sleep. We can stay up later but must eventually succumb to this inner force.

This shakti has secret powers of transformation that we can cultivate. It develops into the kundalini shakti, the inner power of consciousness that draws us to the highest awareness. The movement beyond deep sleep to pure consciousness rests upon the kundalini shakti and is part of its awakening, though this may not be specifically said in all the teachings about the four states. Kundalini shakti is the power of cosmic sound and is made up of the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. It is the power that arises from the primal sound, Aum, which sustains all the vibratory forces of the universe.

Yoga in the Waking State

The yoga of wakefulness is striving to be conscious and attentive in all that we do. It is a cultivation of direct perception in which we distinguish our eternal essence of awareness from the outer forms limited in time and space. Most of us are half asleep during much of the day, falling into speculation, imagination, daydream, habit, enjoyment and loss of self-awareness, rarely connected and sustained by our inner consciousness. True wakefulness is being mindfully aware at every moment, observing the world with detachment, rather than running after it with desire. There is nothing the world can offer that can compare to the depth of awareness, perception and insight within us.

We all have our moments of clarity and wakefulness in the waking state, lucid moments that allow us to make wise decisions. But few people consciously cultivate this state.

It may sound odd, but we need to cultivate staying awake while awake, rather than drifting off into mechanical action or compulsive reaction, and getting lost in the dream of the material world. Our base emotions are largely subconscious reactions, rather than conscious responses. Fear, anger or desire are little better than dreams, unintelligent ways to interact with the world. If we examine our so-called waking state, we will find that there is little true wakefulness within it, but predominantly distracted or dull states of mind.

The yoga of the waking state is one of moment-by-moment wakefulness. All its practices are merely supports for this. There are many ways to become more aware while awake. A yogic goal is to perfect these sadhanas and carry them on to the other states of consciousness.

Chanting and meditating upon Aum is a helpful support practice to all the yogas of the four states. Chant Aum as you fall into sleep; chant Aum as you awaken in the morning. This helps us hold wakeful awareness throughout the day and carry it into dream and sleep as well.

Remembering ourselves as the witness of the waking state—with dream, deep sleep and cosmic consciousness as the deeper aspect of our nature—is a key practice, not losing ourselves to the external world, but remaining composed within. Cultivating memory overall is a strengthening aid.

Holding to a mantra throughout the day, such as Aum Namah Shivaya, helps remind us of our deeper awareness. Yet, we must energize the mantra with attention. Mere mechanical repetition can result in a loss of wakeful awareness. Most important is to remember the Deity through mantra the first thing each morning, such as with Hinduism's many morning remembrance chants, *pratar smarami*.

Brahma Muhurta, the period of one to two hours before sunrise, is the ideal time for meditation. It is the time of day when we can most easily connect with the forces of cosmic consciousness, drawing the awareness behind the deep sleep state into the waking state and experiencing how the entire universe arises from Brahman as Aum.

Pranayama brings us back when our mind drifts into a lack of awareness, breathing in the deeper energy of consciousness that persists in deep sleep. The more we have such a unified and spiritualized prana, the more we can hold our awareness centered within throughout the day.

By using the senses for contemplative awareness, rather than entertainment or enjoyment, we learn to be aware of the presence of Being and the light of consciousness behind the forms of nature. This sadhana can be developed further into pratyahara, or sense withdrawal.

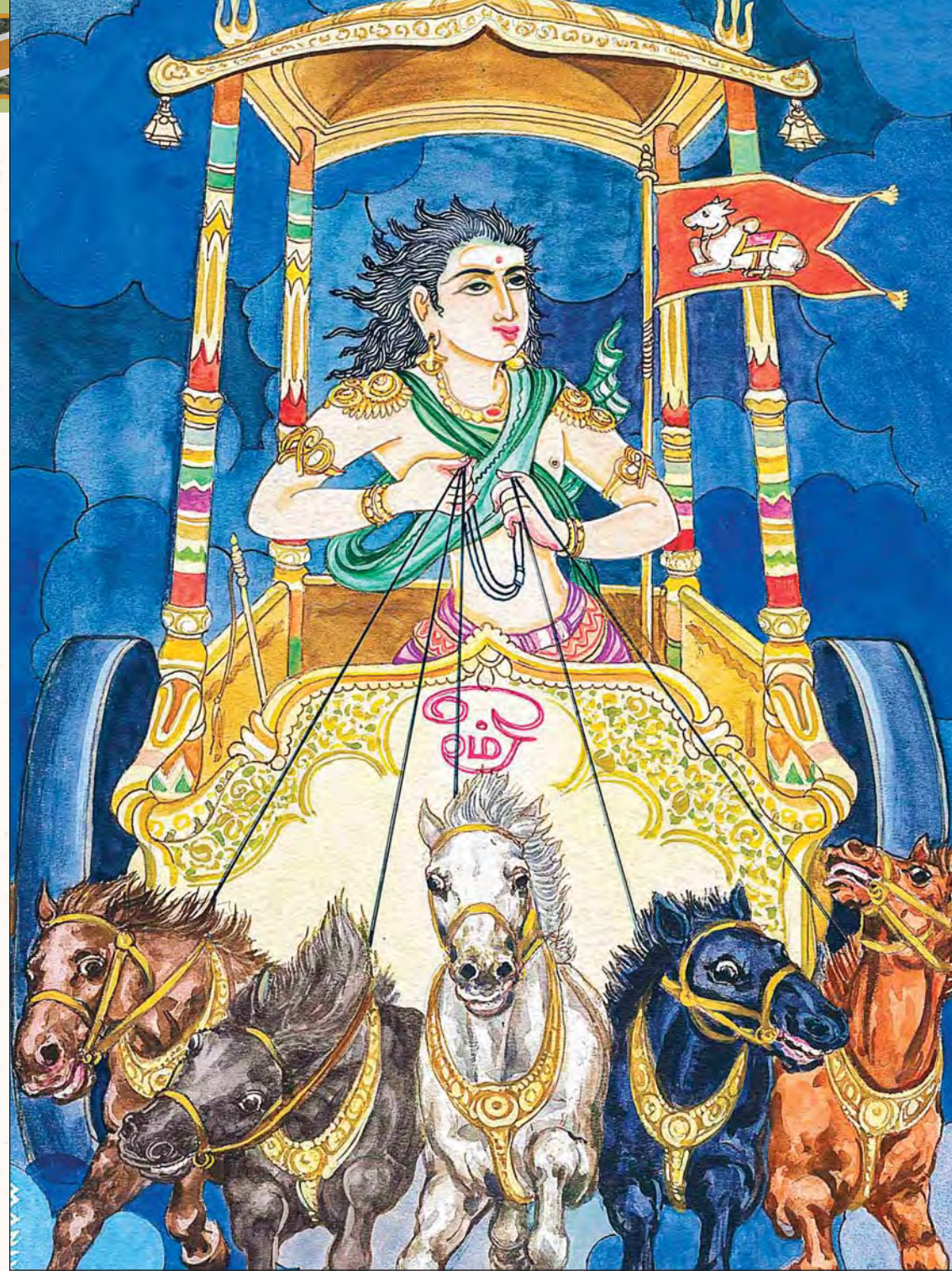
Cultivating a sense of the impermanence of all waking experiences, including dramatic events in our own life, helps us identify with our true Self.

Karma yoga, selfless service, allows us to imbue our actions with awareness and let go of mechanical reactions. This is particularly important if we find meditation practices difficult. Those who remain perpetually awake never die, for their wakefulness is not rooted in the physical body but in recognition of the divine presence. To achieve this requires being undistracted and concentrated in all that we do. This cannot be achieved immediately, but we can make progress every day.

Yoga in the Dream State

At the moment we fall asleep we encounter a doorway in consciousness through which we can enter into the ever-wakeful state. This we should learn to recognize. We should prepare for the moment of sleep as an opportunity to transcend our waking self and its outer reality. Then, instead of simply falling asleep, we can move into a meditative state.

To be able to move into this state of conscious sleep, it is helpful to shut down all media and electronic influences at least two hours before sleep. Go out into nature for a few minutes, chant or silently meditate, perform some rituals using ghee lamps or incense. Such practices will clear your mental field from the agitated patterns of the day. When you lie down to sleep, first voluntarily let go of the



To control the mind in all states of consciousness, one must harness and discipline the senses and bring awareness into a state of uninterrupted concentration. Here a charioteer holds the reins of five horses which represent his five senses, firmly and positively guiding them toward his spiritual destination.

In the dream state we have access to the subtle elements, or tanmatras, the creative essences behind the sensory potentials of sound, touch, sight, taste and smell. The sensory potentials of the dream state are actually much greater and more refined than those of the waking state, but require some cultivation of the mind and perception to access. The dream state provides access to worlds of subtle perception, imagination and creativity. These are great realms of art, vision, inspiration and joy. Cultivating higher sensibilities and artistic expressions can help us reach the higher levels of the dream state.

Certain occultists pursue astral travel—waking and moving in the dream state and the astral world. They realize the reality of the dream state. While they may have various psychic abilities, they can still be caught in subtle ego, illusion and desire, which are considerable in the dream realm.

There are various meditative approaches that teach us to manipulate our dreams in order to transcend the outer idea of who we are. Some yogis learn to awaken in the subtle or dream body and visit the subtle worlds for higher knowledge and experience, without being trapped in its illusions. Others seek to circumvent the dream state and go directly into formless levels of awareness beyond any imagination. Note that imagination, called *vikalpa* in Sanskrit, is the main mental fluctuation that yoga implores us to master.

There are two aspects of the yoga of dreaming. The first is to try to become conscious in the dream state (which usually puts our dreams to an end). This does not mean being aware in our waking ego in the dream state, but holding to the witnessing consciousness, detached from body and mind, being aware that we are dreaming. This allows us to transform our dreams into tools of deeper insight, recognizing that dreaming is but a creation of our own mind.

The second aspect of this yoga is to dream our highest spiritual dreams and aspirations, which is closely connected to bhakti yoga. It is to cultivate the higher powers of imagination, the visionary powers of the mind, to reflect a higher spiritual reality.

Dream is the best state in which to dream our highest dream, which, if we go to the core of our hearts and the eternal wishes of our souls, is that of communion with the Deity in divine realms of pure energy, light and happiness. Bhakti yoga has a special resonance with the higher aspects of the dream state. Enjoying devotional music, mantra and chanting before sleep can transform the dream into a natural state of worship. Creative visualization is very helpful, particularly visualizing the Divine with our inner eye. Performing manasa puja, or mental puja, is excellent for spiritualizing the dream state. As you fall asleep, call to mind the image of the Deity and commune with it. You should pursue your highest dreams in life, which are to commune with the greater universe within our own hearts, worshipping the Divine in the form that your heart most aspires to.

Yoga in Deep Sleep

The yoga of deep sleep is primarily abiding in formless awareness, returning to the original void or state of emptiness in which everything is hidden in seed form. In deep sleep there is no objective world to be perceived, nor a separate self with which to perceive. World and self-consciousness are merged in a state of pure potential, with currents of possibilities and structures of underlying cosmic principles or dharmas. There is a mass of light, energy and vibration with only incipient movement. There is no outer or form-based bodily self. Being conscious of this root vibration is the yoga of deep sleep.

The higher, formless worlds of the causal plane can be reached through developing awareness in deep sleep. These are realms of meditation, voidness and light. We can earn access to them by cultivating a deeper peace and contentment and by learning to be a formless being, a pure mind, without the need for an external world or body. We can do so by cultivating higher principles of unity and harmony, the rule of cosmic law. One way to facilitate this is to meditate on the yantras, or geometrical forms, of the Deities, like the famous Shri Yantra.

The yoga of deep sleep happens on two levels. It begins in the waking state with the practice of deep *pratyahara*, or sensory concentration and withdrawal. In this way it is possible to draw the mind, prana and senses into a condition of wakeful deep sleep. One holds the awareness deep within the heart, and the outer mind and senses are shut off.

Then, during deep sleep, one strives to maintain continual awareness throughout, not as the waking personality, but as the deeper awareness behind the mind. This is the true *yoga nidra*, or yogic sleep.

Another important part of the yoga of deep sleep is cultivating peace and contentment in daily life, particularly the ability to surrender, relax and accept. Practicing *pratyahara* in the waking state aids in this. We must learn to let go of name and form, body and mind and rest in the undifferentiated state of awareness. We must accept the great mystery that true knowledge transcends the mind and that what the mind knows is just a form of darkness or ignorance that can at best merely reflect some aspect of the light. Then deep sleep can lead us into the turiya state.

Yoga Nidra

Yoga nidra is one of the most important aspects of traditional yoga practice. Its popularity today shows a new interest in the more esoteric yogic practices. Many forms of relaxation and *pratyahara* are now being taught as yoga nidra, but these are preliminary practices only. True yoga nidra is an integral part of the yoga of the four states, cultivating wakefulness during waking, dream and deep sleep. It involves moving into the inner peace of the witness Self at the time of sleep or rest. It allows us to consciously enter into deep sleep like a deep *pratyahara*, and gives us the ability to shut off the sense and motor organs during the waking state as needed. In this condition, we withdraw our consciousness into the heart—not the physical heart but the deeper spiritual heart. In the state of yoga nidra, in which the mind is suspended, one can contact the free flow of knowledge from the higher consciousness. This is described as *dharma megha samadhi* in the *Yoga Sutras*. Through true yoga nidra, we contact the consciousness of Ishvara, the inner teacher of yoga.

Yoga in the Fourth State

The underlying practice behind the yogas of waking, dream and deep sleep is cultivating the witness consciousness, or *sakshi bhava*. To remain firmly in the witness state is to immediately cross over waking and sleep, time and space, birth and death. This begins with cultivating wakeful awareness, conscious dreaming and remaining aware in deep sleep.

Cultivating the witness state is also the core practice for the fourth state, but requires support practices. First, we should maintain a dharmic and conscious lifestyle, such as outlined in the yamas and niyamas of yoga practice. This includes a vegetarian diet, control of our sense and motor organs, and control of our mind and emotions.

.....
A seasoned meditator is immersed in his deepest Self, while outer *pranas* and thoughts flow around him. He has controlled *karman*s sufficiently to master the art of nonreaction and withdraw into *samadhi*. With such adeptness, he can readily reach the subtle worlds of the causal plane in deep sleep.

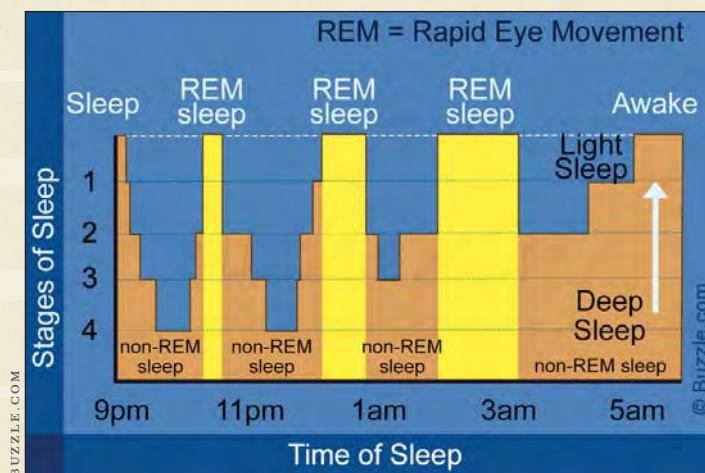


Natural Patterns of Sleep

From: healthysleep.med.harvard.edu

OUR BODIES REQUIRE SLEEP IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN PROPER function and health. In fact, we are programmed to sleep each night as a means of restoring our bodies and minds. Two interacting systems—the internal biological clock and the sleep-wake homeostat—largely determine the timing of our transitions from wakefulness to sleep and vice versa. These two factors also explain why, under normal conditions, we typically stay awake during the day and sleep at night. But what exactly happens when we drift off to sleep? Prior to the era of modern sleep research in the early 1920s, scientists regarded sleep as an inactive brain state. It was generally accepted that as night fell and sensory inputs from the environment diminished, so too did brain function. In essence, scientists thought that the brain simply shut down during sleep, only to restart again when morning came.

In 1929, an invention that enabled scientists to record brain activity challenged this way of thinking. From recordings known as electroencephalograms (EEGs), researchers found that sleep was a dynamic behavior, one in which the brain was highly active at times, and not turned off at all. Over time, sleep studies using EEGs and other instruments that measured eye movements and muscle activity would reveal two main types of sleep. These were defined by characteristic



electrical patterns in a sleeping person's brain, as well as the presence or absence of eye movements.

The two main types of sleep are rapid-eye-movement (REM) sleep and non-rapid-eye-movement (NREM) sleep. On an EEG, REM sleep, often called "active sleep," is identifiable by its characteristic low-amplitude (small), high-frequency (fast) waves and alpha rhythm, as well as the eye movements for which it is named. Many sleep experts

think that these eye movements are in some way related to dreams. Typically, when people are awakened from REM sleep, they report that they had been dreaming, often extremely vivid and sometimes bizarre dreams. In contrast, people report dreaming far less frequently when awakened from NREM sleep. Interestingly, during REM sleep muscles in the arms and legs are temporarily paralyzed. This is thought to be a neurological barrier that prevents us from "acting out" our dreams.

NREM sleep can be broken down into three distinct stages: N1, N2, and N3. In the progression from stage N1 to N3, brain waves become slower and more synchronized, and the eyes remain still. In stage N3, the deepest stage of NREM, EEGs reveal high-amplitude (large), low-frequency (slow) waves and spindles. This stage is referred to as "deep" or "slow-wave" sleep.

Cycling at Night

In healthy adults, sleep typically begins with NREM sleep. The pattern of clear rhythmic alpha activity associated with wakefulness gives way to N1, the first stage of sleep, which is defined by a low-voltage, mixed-frequency pattern. The transition from wakefulness to N1 occurs seconds to minutes after the start of the slow eye movements seen when a person first begins to nod off. This first period of N1 typically lasts just one to seven minutes. The second stage, or N2, which is signaled by sleep spindles and/or K complexes in the EEG recording, comes next and generally lasts 10 to 25 minutes. As

N2 sleep progresses, there is a gradual appearance of the high-voltage, slow-wave activity characteristic of N3, the third stage of NREM sleep. This stage, which generally lasts 20 to 40 minutes, is referred to as "slow-wave," "delta," or "deep" sleep. As NREM sleep progresses, the brain becomes less responsive to external stimuli, and it becomes increasingly difficult to awaken an individual from sleep.

Following the N3 stage of sleep, a series of body movements usually signals an "ascent" to lighter NREM sleep stages. Typically, a 5- to 10-minute period of N2 precedes the initial REM sleep episode. REM sleep comprises about 20 to 25 percent of total sleep in typical healthy adults.

NREM sleep and REM sleep continue to alternate through the night in a cyclical fashion. Most slow-wave NREM sleep occurs in the first part of the night; REM sleep episodes, the first of which may last only one to five minutes, generally become longer through the night. During a typical night, N3 sleep occupies less time in the second cycle than the first and may disappear altogether from later cycles. The average length of the first NREM-REM sleep cycle is between 70 and 100 minutes; the average length of the second and later cycles is about 90 to 120 minutes. The reason for such a specific cycling pattern of NREM and REM sleep across the night is unknown. Some scientists speculate that specific sequences of NREM and REM sleep optimize both physical and mental recuperation as well as some aspects of memory consolidation that occur during sleep, but this has not been confirmed.

All of this is required for any serious meditation practice. Second, we must learn to sustain a moment-by-moment awareness. This begins by regular meditation practices morning and evening, mantra and certain spiritual qualities, particularly astute powers of attention, concentration and detached observation.

This leads us to the practice of Self-inquiry, tracing the I-thought to its origins in the heart. One asks the question “Who am I?” and follows its examination deep within the heart and inner consciousness. One inquires into the nature of the pure “I am” beyond the identified or objectified self of the waking state or bodily self. One then looks into the nature of the pure “I am,” beyond the self of the dream state, which holds our desires and wishes. Finally, one looks into the pure “I am” beyond the self of deep sleep, confronting the ignorance behind our lives and recognizing our true identity as pure consciousness.

The true Self we are seeking is not the self of the waking state, but the Self behind waking, dream and deep sleep. Normally we seek realization for our physical, wakeful self, which is but a dream and an illusion. True spiritual practice begins when we set the waking self and outer waking world aside as unreal and learn to look within, removing the deeper veils of consciousness.

Energizing the entire Aum vibration is a great aid in this process. Aum is the bow, our Self-awareness is the arrow, and Brahman or the transcendent state, is the target or goal, as the *Mundaka Upanishad* says.

Another method is total surrender to the Deity, known as Ishvara

pranidhana in the *Yoga Sutras*, and as *prapatti* in later devotional thought. This can be aided by mantra or practiced purely as the highest attitude of devotion.

Other People

Just as we ordinarily look at ourselves according to the waking reality only, we do the same with others, regarding them mainly in terms of their waking reality, which is when we actively are engaged with them. We should remember that each person and each creature undergoes these four states each day, just as we do. When you look at others, try to remember that they are also more than their waking selves. They also merge back into deep sleep and the primordial reality every day. While we are physically separate, we are all one in the state of deep sleep. When we reach the fourth state, turiya, we become one with all, and go beyond all bodily limitation and separations in consciousness.

Dreams & the Astral World

From the teachings of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

IN THE INNER WORLDS, INNER UNIVERSE, THERE IS A LIFE NOT unlike this one that we experience as a jiva, but far more complete, intricate, logical and much more advanced. Within this world, the Antarloka, there are great schools where students gather to learn of a more productive future that they can participate in creating when they incarnate. Here they mix and mingle with other souls whose physical bodies are sleeping and whom they will work and cooperate with during their next cycle of birth. It is a well-planned-out universe, both the outer universe and the inner universe.

The value of sleep for the person on the path is to gain the ability to bypass the lower dream state and soar deeper within to these inner-plane schools. This is done by the repetition of mantras, japa yoga, just before sleep, after relaxing the body through hatha yoga and diaphragmatic breathing.

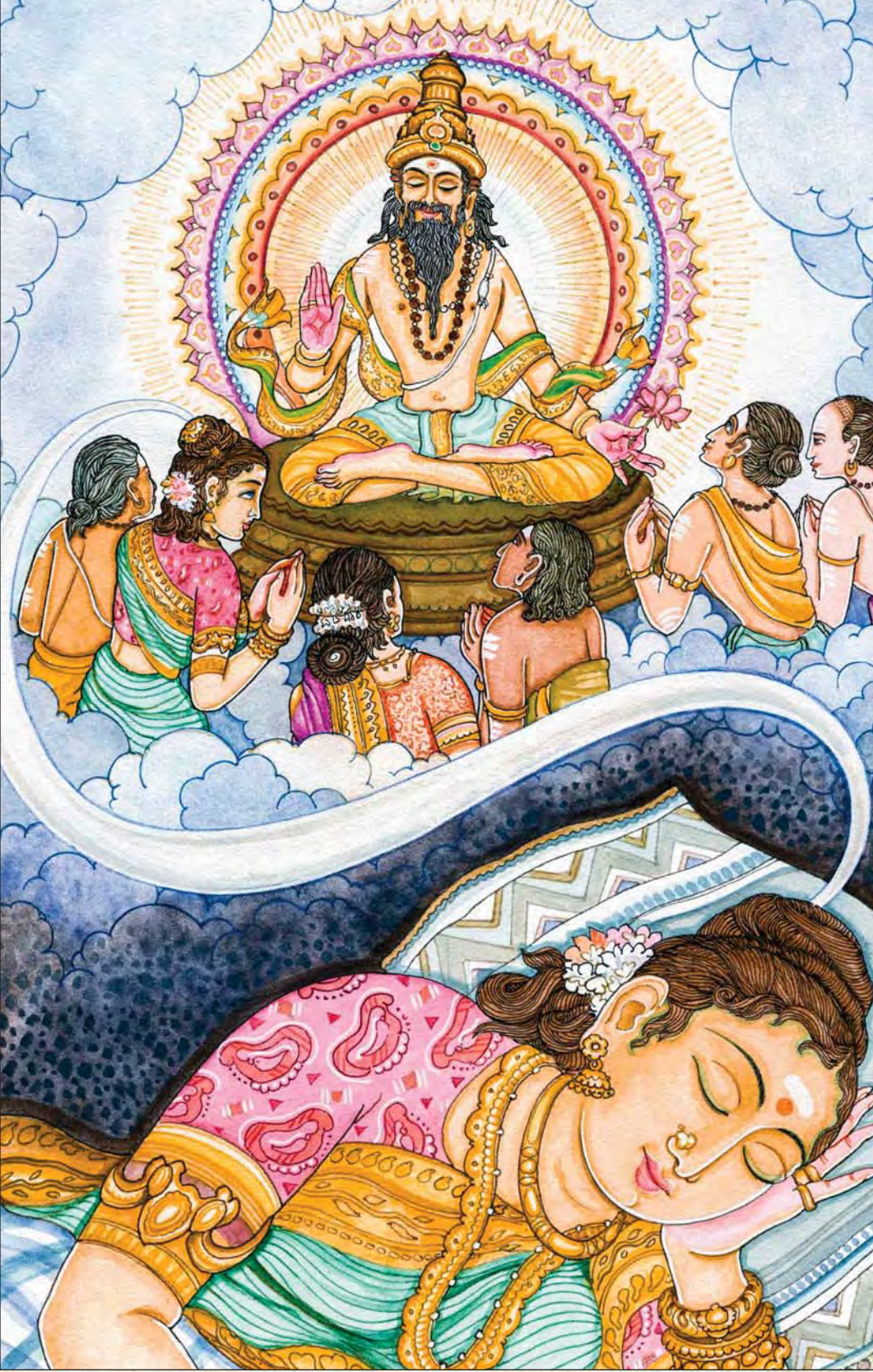
When japa is well performed and the sincere desire is maintained to transcend the forces of the physical body and enter into the astral schools of learning, the aspirant would have dreamless nights. A deep sleep would prevail. There may be a few seconds of dreaming just before awakening, to which one should not pay any attention, as the astral body quickly reenters the physical. But a deep, dreamless sleep is in itself an indicator that the purusha is totally detached from the physical forces and totally intact and functioning in the Devaloka.

SHOULD DREAMS BE REMEMBERED? It is almost traditional in many cultures to try to remember one’s dreams, and dreamologists will even interpret them for you. This all borders close to the realm of superstition and is far less desirable for spiritual growth than other more pragmatic types of practices. A beginner on the path, or even one in the intermediate phase, should endeavor to forget dreams and strengthen the fibers of the mind and psyche through daily sadhana. There is actually a time, on the yoga marga, after the charya and kriya

margas have been well mastered and passed through, that the remembrance of one’s dreams is beneficial and fruitful, but this would only be between the guru and the shishya.

It may be beneficial for those under the guidance of a satguru to write them down each morning upon arising and put them at his holy feet at the end of each month. This would be strictly a guru-shishya training relationship and for a specified period of time, not more than four months. It might be scary, even disheartening, for you to do this for yourself. And satgurus would recommend that you forget your dreams upon awakening, for if remembered they may bring that reality into the awakened reality and produce experiences you would not want to experience.

We want to forget bad dreams as quickly as possible, lest by remembering them through the conscious mind we impress them in the immediate subconscious and make them manifest in daily life. To think about a bad dream is to create. To forget it is to avoid creating. Therefore, if you have the slightest worry about dreams and are not directly under a guru’s guidance on a daily basis, it is best to let them slide by and consider them unimportant and not a part of you, as you would consider a television program to be.



A seeker has consciously put herself to sleep after performing japa and meditating. This preparation has given her access to an inner-plane school where she meets with others in her astral body. Having learned how to join her satguru in these second-world classes, she avoids lower, energy-depleting dream states.

Science & the Mind

By Vamadeva Shastri

OVER THOUSANDS OF YEARS, INDIA’S CIVILIZATION HAS MADE the inner science of consciousness its main concern. Dharmic civilization recognizes that inquiry into the nature of consciousness is the most important way of knowledge and the most fundamental pursuit in life. This inner science is the supreme science, because through it alone can we truly understand the nature of the universe, its origin and goal, and also the nature of our own inner being, which is one with all.

Modern science, with its many new research projects, is slowly developing a new view of consciousness that is better aligned with Dharmic traditions than the old, fixed, material view of the world. It is approaching consciousness in two ways.

First, quantum physics is proposing a unitary field of consciousness behind the universe in order to explain the coherence of the laws of nature. So far, this universal field of consciousness is but a theory. Yet, it is well known in Vedic thought as Brahman, the pure consciousness behind the universe, the Vedic idea of God, the Divine, or the Supreme Reality, the origin and end of all.

The second scientific approach to consciousness is through modern neuroscience, which includes the mapping of the brain, its functions and energies, and exploring how these affect our minds and our cognition, including sleep and dream. This new form of brain study is discovering the healing powers of yoga and meditation for mental health and neurological functioning.

Still, modern science remains far from embracing consciousness as the Supreme Reality. The problem is that neuroscience identifies brain as the origin of mind and consciousness, which limits consciousness to the body, to physical reality. From this perspective, chemical medicine remains the main method for treating mental dysfunctions.

Hindu thought teaches us that brain, mind and consciousness are related but different in nature. The physical brain is an instrument for the mind, but the mind has a level of existence extending beyond physical reality. The core mind, our karmic patterns, will leave the body at death and go on to another body and another life—as many yogis, mystics and occultists are well aware.

Yet the mind, which has its own structure and functions and is part of nature, is not supreme either. It is an instrument for a deeper consciousness, our true Self beyond body and mind, which is the real source of awareness and is beyond all change and action, time and space. The atman is one with Brahman as the universal consciousness. The universal consciousness and embodied consciousness or mind are inseparably linked.

Behind the physical brain and its chemistry is what could be metaphorically called a subtle brain of energy and awareness, the thousand-petal lotus, the highest of the seven chakras of yogic thought. It holds the secrets of higher consciousness, but must be activated by yogic practices. It is largely dormant or unevolved in the ordinary person.

When modern science explores the brain for understanding consciousness, it is like measuring a man by examining the movements of his shadow. Hindu thought teaches us first how to transcend the brain along with its biological limitations and compulsions, then how to transcend the mind, which is individualized consciousness, to move beyond our karmic limitations. This leads us to eventually understand pure consciousness, which is an all-pervasive universal principle. This requires going to the core of our awareness that persists behind waking, dream and deep sleep.



Scriptural Basis, the Mandukya Upanishad

THE MANDUKYA UPANISHAD PROVIDES THE CLEAREST SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT for the yoga of the four states, though we find it commonly taught in many places in Vedic and yogic texts. The *Mandukya Karika* of Shankaracharya explains the four states in great detail. In it Shankara comments both on the *Mandukya Upanishad* and on the commentary of his paramaguru, Gaudapada. It is one of the greatest works of Advaita Vedanta.

Section I

1. Aum. The imperishable syllable Aum is everything. Now follows its explanation. What has been, what is and what will be, everything, is only Aum. And what is beyond these three periods of time, that is also only Aum. Everything is Brahman. The Self (atman) is Brahman. This Self has four quarters.

Section II

1. Dwelling in the waking state, with external knowledge, with seven limbs and nineteen mouths, the enjoyer of what is gross, that is Vaishvanara, the universal person, the first quarter of Aum.
2. Dwelling in the dream state, with inner knowledge, with seven limbs and nineteen mouths, the enjoyer of what is subtle, that is Taijasa, the luminous, the second quarter of Aum.
3. When sleeping, one has no desires and sees no dream, that is deep sleep, sushupti. In the state of deep sleep, one's awareness becomes unified, a mass of knowledge. This is the state of happiness, with the enjoyer of happiness through the single mouth of consciousness. This is Prajna, the power of wisdom, the third quarter of Aum.
4. This deep sleep state is the lord of all, the knower of all, the inner controller, the basis of all, the origin and end of all beings.
5. Where there is no inner knowledge, no outer knowledge, no inner and outer knowledge combined, no mass of knowledge, no presence of knowledge and no absence of knowledge; what is unseen, beyond all appearances, without mark, unthinkable, what cannot be taught, which is the essence of the perception of the unitary Self, beyond the manifest world, auspicious and non-dual, that, the sages say, is the fourth quarter of Aum. That is the Self. That is to be known.

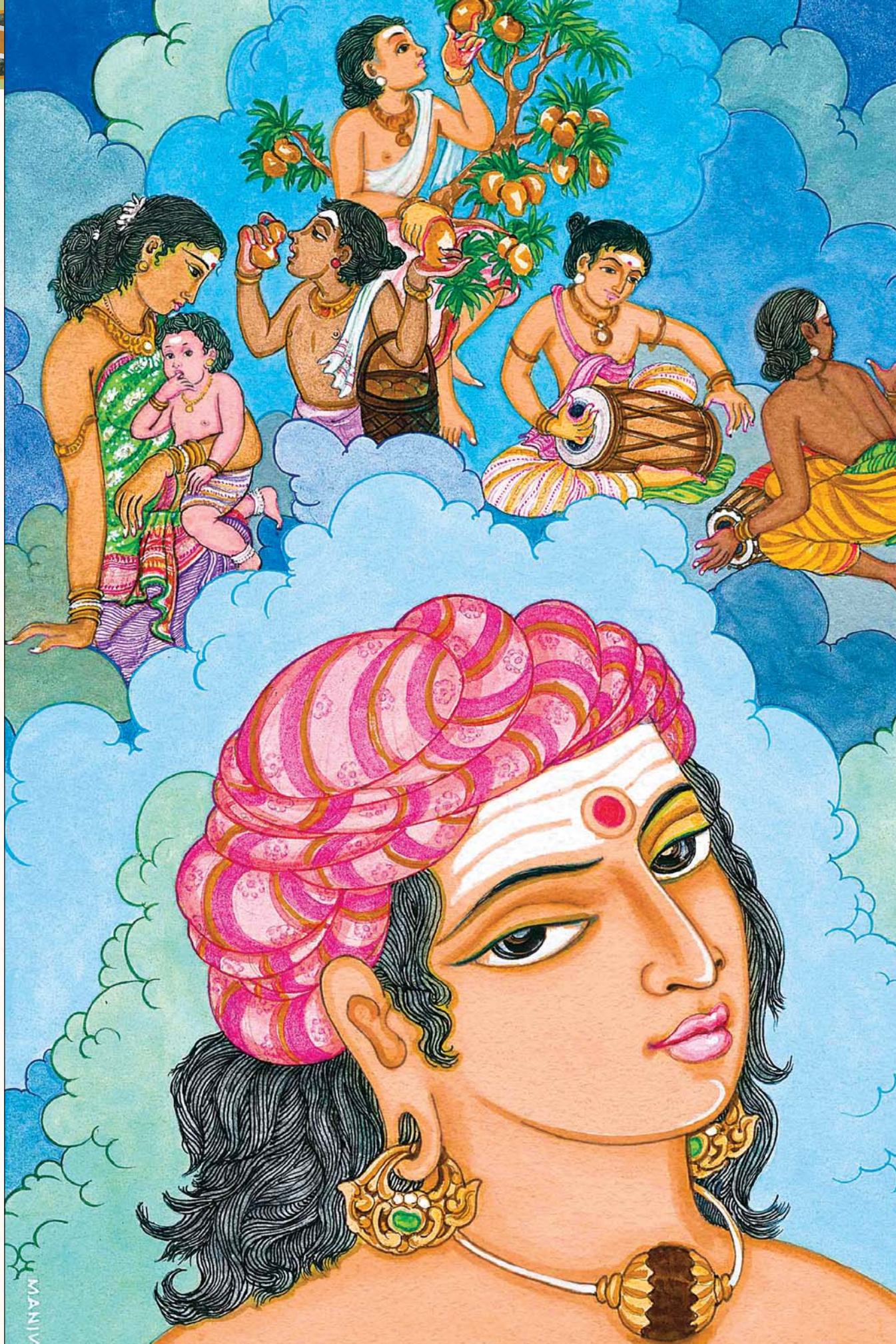
Section III

1. One should know this Self as the imperishable syllable Aum, by syllable, quarter and measure—A-kara, U-kara, M-kara—the letters A, U and M.
2. The waking state and Vaishvanara is the letter A, the first quarter, the first measure. As the origin, it pervades all. One gains all desires and becomes foremost who knows this.
3. The state of dream and Taijasa is the letter U, the second measure. Being elevated and holding both the other states, dream and deep sleep, one gains the continuity of knowledge and equanimity. No non-knower of Brahman is born in his family who knows this.
4. The state of deep sleep and Prajna, the letter M, the third measure, is the measure in which all things dissolve. One measures and dissolves the entire universe who knows this.
5. The measureless fourth state, turiya, beyond experience, the cessation of the phenomenal world, auspicious and non-dual, that is Aum; that is the Self. He enters by the Self into the Self who knows this!

Commentary

Aum is the entire universe, all time and what is beyond time. That Aum is our essential nature through the four states of waking, dream, deep sleep and turiya, which are its four quarters. From it all time arises, starting with the movement of our lives. These are the four aspects of our nature, symbolized by Agni as the flame of life and awareness.

Vaishvanara stands for the digestive fire as the root energy of the waking state,



The dream state often involves ruminations in the subconscious mind, reliving events of the past, reveling in good times and anguishing over events that trouble the mind. Here a man dreams of happy moments with his mother, a summer day when he and a friend found a mango tree full of ripe fruits and his years of work learning the drum

the individual soul in the waking state. His seven limbs are the seven subtle energies of prana. The nineteen mouths are the five sense organs, the five motor organs, the five *tanmantras* (sound, sight, touch, taste and smell), and the four aspects of the mind (*ahamkara*, ego; *manas*, mind; *buddhi*, intelligence; and *chitta*, subconscious mind and memory).

Taijasa stands for the fire of the mind. It reflects memory and the subtle essence of our waking experience that also connects us to the subtle worlds. This subtle body has the same form and faculties as the physical body but is composed of energy rather than matter.

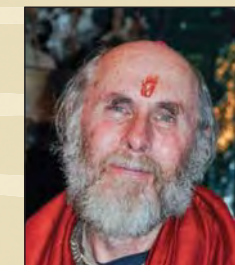
Prajna is the inner flame of wisdom at the core of our being behind deep sleep. All happiness in life derives from our ability to access the bliss or ananda that is filtered to us through the restfulness of deep sleep.

The true Self is not an outer object that can be known through the mind. It is the unmanifest witness of all appearances. It is beyond the three states, waking, dream and deep sleep, and can only be known through moving beyond these three states and their faculties.

The four states are the four aspects of Aum as A, U, M, and the silence beyond. Aum is the vibration of cosmic consciousness, the very sound of the Self. Wakefulness is the first state and holds the main experience of our consciousness. The dream state partakes of both waking and deep sleep, which are all part of a greater dream. The deep sleep state absorbs all. Behind these fluctuating conditions is the transcendent fourth, the state of pure unity. One should know that the same Self and flame of awareness is within and behind them all.

Conclusion

Learn to transform your daily activity into a daily adventure in consciousness. Observe the changes of waking, dream and deep sleep with profound attention, as containing many secret doors to higher awareness. Cultivate a moment-by-moment awareness, so that you are always alert. Remember your eternal pilgrimage in consciousness, with each day as a stage in its cosmic unfoldment. Be aware of your daily movements from waking to dream and deep sleep and study how they affect body, prana and mind. Be awake within your eternally wakeful Self. Remember that to fall asleep in consciousness or to lose our awareness is a great calamity. Value every day as the ultimate day, the eternal day of the Divine Life. Try to bring out your eternal potential every day in a new way. Attune yourself to the power of consciousness that moves you through the three states. Let it take you beyond them as well. Your consciousness is the inner guide of the drama and destiny of your life.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pandit Vamadeva Shastri (Dr. David Frawley) is the author of over thirty books on Vedic subjects. He has a Jyotish Medha Prabha from the Indian Council of Vedic Astrology, a D. Litt. from SVYASA, and a prestigious 2015 Padma Bhushan award from the Government of India. Vamadeva is an advisor for the Council of Vedic Astrology (CVA) and director of the American Institute of Vedic Studies. He is a disciple

of Sri Sadguru Sivananda Murty, was closely connected with Dr. B.V. Raman and is an associate of Chakrapani D. Ullal.

A New Science of Consciousness?

Mankind is gaining a wholly new understanding of the mind and of reality itself. Intriguingly, these discoveries were intimated in the ancient *Upanishads*.

By VARUN KHANNA, INDIA

THE STUDY OF CONSCIOUSNESS HAS BEEN of interest to scientists, philosophers and laypeople alike for millennia. But the struggle to define consciousness has been more perplexing than productive, due to its intangible nature.

How can we describe something that we cannot perceive with our senses? We can know what it is like to perceive, and what it is like to have consciousness, but for thousands of years scientists have failed to pinpoint with any measure of certainty what consciousness actually is. Furthermore, when attempting to study consciousness, the method by which we can study it is elusive. Is it necessarily limited to the philosophical realm? Can there be a hard science of consciousness?

By current empirical scientific standards, it is difficult to study consciousness objectively and holistically because either we do not know enough about the brain or there are seemingly nonphysical components to consciousness that are rendered totally subjective by the scientific method. We can ask: Must the methods employed to study consciousness be borrowed from the natural scientific disciplines, like biology, chemistry or physics, or can it be studied by the psychological or philosophical disciplines, with an independent epistemology and methodology? And do we know that the questions we are asking are valid, or are we missing something altogether?

The very definition of consciousness is a challenge, because different worldviews use similar terms to mean disparate things. Humans may have some common experience of being conscious, but the definition of consciousness and its origin differ, based as they are on divergent philosophies. In the West alone, varying theories regarding consciousness have been proposed by philosophers in the last several centuries—from Descartes (1596–1650) and Spinoza (1632–1677) to Nagel (b. 1937) and Chalmers (b. 1966). Today we have multiple distinct and arguable philoso-

phies of consciousness.

It may be argued that a sufficiently similar definition has allowed us to begin performing meaningful research on consciousness. Yet, the field of consciousness studies clearly enjoys no true consensus. On that ambiguous note, we begin a review of the various contemporary theories, theories which will lead us compellingly into the main subject of our investigation—the Upanishadic approach to consciousness.

When studying consciousness from a Western scientific perspective, there appear to be two general approaches. One is an em-

pirical method, which asks questions of an evidence-based kind, seeking to locate consciousness in a specific region of the brain, or to identify consciousness as a product of brain activity. This approach asks questions like “What parts of the brain are associated with conscious experience?” or “What does brain activity look like in different states of consciousness, like dream sleep and dreamless sleep?” or “When does a conscious experience arise, in relation to the associated neurological change?” Such a third-person objective method of study can reveal physical changes and characteristics in exqui-

site detail; it is useful in understanding the brain and its relationship to our conscious experiences, but it cannot examine causality between consciousness and changes in the brain, for example, or tell us anything about the fundamental nature of consciousness. Similarly, identifying the seat of “fear” in the brain can tell us nothing about the nature of fear itself.

The other general approach to the study of consciousness in the Western scientific model is a first-person method. This involves self-observation and is psychological in nature. Questions like “How does it feel to see the color blue?” or “What is it like to have a nose?” may be asked through this approach. This method reaches more into the subjective experience of being conscious, but it can at best only reveal qualities of being conscious, such as being happy, sad or curious. It is silent about the nature of consciousness itself. This method is useful in understanding the relationship between various stimuli and their associated feelings, or even the feeling of having various qualities, like joyfulness or

tallness, but reaches its limit when we ask, “What is the nature of that which is experiencing these feelings?”

In the Western philosophical world, several theories about the nature and properties of consciousness have arisen over the centuries. For example, the theory called “substance dualism” holds that there are two distinct substances that cannot be reduced to any common existential ground: matter and consciousness. This theory, then, considers consciousness a nonphysical substance. Another theory, “property dualism,” proposes that consciousness evolves as a property of complex physical systems, yet (as in substance dualism) is itself nonphysical. A third methodology, “functionalism,” states that consciousness is just a function of the brain, and is not a separate substance.

The current popular paradigm within the Western scientific world is that of physicalism, which assumes that only the physical world exists, and that consciousness is a product of brain activity, inseparable from the brain. When the brain dies, conscious-

ness ceases. Though this theory is currently in fashion, it is but one of many theories of consciousness that have come in and out of fashion. As Max Velmans observes, “Being out of current fashion does not mean they are entirely wrong.”

India's Contribution

Within the world of Indian philosophies, there are even more ways to look at consciousness. According to Advaita Vedanta, a system of non-dualism, the entire perceived world is an “illusion” (maya) and, in fact, only consciousness (*chit*, *chaitanya*, *jnana*) exists; instead of being bodies with a consciousness, we are consciousness itself, inhabiting an illusory body, due to false identification (*adhyasa*) with the illusory world (*samsara*).

The experience common to all worldviews is that of being conscious. As Descartes pointed out, one finds it difficult to deny one's own conscious existence. It follows that the study of consciousness is one of humankind's most fundamental investigations, a quest confounded by the highly elusive na-



It's not all in your head: Science is finding the mind is more than the brain's neurons and biochemistry; (inset) artist Alex Grey depicts all-seeing consciousness as a golden Goddess kissing the third eye of a seeker to initiate an inner awakening

SHUTTERSTOCK

ture of its subject.

Even though consciousness has finally moved to the forefront of 21st-century scientific inquiry, from a philosophical perspective the current methods of inquiry seem incapable of fully encapsulating the object of their study: we are using physical methods to pursue consciousness, and these methods can only reveal physical properties. If, as many believe, there is more to consciousness than electrical impulses and chemical interactions within the brain, then current scientific methods will prove insufficient in revealing the nature of consciousness."

In the Upanishads

The *Upanishads*, written thousands of years ago in the Sanskrit language, can serve as new reference texts for this exploration, because the nature of reality, which includes the study of consciousness, is of vital interest to the ancient Indian philosophical texts. The *Upanishads* assert that consciousness is not limited to the physical realm, but rather pervades the physical realm, just as space pervades any object with a form. If this is the case, then a research method that reveals only physical properties will necessarily fail in this quest.

The *Upanishads* are the philosophical capstones of the *Vedas*. Since *Veda* means "knowledge," the *Upanishads* are also traditionally referred to as Vedanta, or the "culmination (*anta*) of knowledge (*veda*). These texts inquire into the nature of truth, consciousness and happiness, boldly questioning the commonly held notion of happiness residing in finite, worldly pleasures.

It is useful to examine a few instances where the *Upanishads* grapple with consciousness, both implicitly and explicitly. Through these examples we will attempt to show how the *Upanishads* address consciousness in a broader context, citing its definitions and the means and purposes of knowing it. Before highlighting these teachings, we must understand that the *Upanishads*, like many ancient texts, are cryptic. Quoting and translating them directly is not always enough to understand the full meaning; we must apply careful reasoning to extract meaning from them.

For that reason, numerous scholars have commented on them over the millennia. We turn for insight to Shankara, one of the most celebrated commentators on the core Vedan-

tic texts. With his help, we explore what the *Upanishads* teach about consciousness. The interested reader will want to explore beyond this handful of examples.

The *Chandogya Upanishad* is among the more ancient. Its sixth chapter contains a story about the student Svetaketu and his teacher and father, Uddalaka. Svetaketu returns home from his studies at the gurukula, arrogantly convinced that he knows everything worth knowing. Uddalaka challenges him, "Did you ask about that teaching through which the unheard becomes heard, the unfathomed becomes fathomed, and the unknown becomes known?" Svetaketu,



takes place. The very fact of Existence's envisioning, according to Shankara, is justification enough to declare that Existence is also Consciousness (in other *Upanishads* called *chit*, or *jnana*). How can this be so? The *Upanishads* already established that Existence is singular, without a second, and beyond qualification in the beginning. Then how could it perform the action of envisioning? To do so it must be conscious. But being conscious implies a quality of Existence, and Existence has already been stated not to have qualities.

From this it follows, he concludes, that Existence does not *have* consciousness—it simply *is* Consciousness. How can it be said that these aspects are one and the same entity? If Existence were separate from Consciousness, then Consciousness, or the ability to envision, would not exist. And if Consciousness were separate from Existence, then Existence would not have the ability to envision. Thus, according to Shankara, Consciousness and Existence must be synonyms for each other.

Another text drives home the identity, the oneness, of Existence, Consciousness and Brahman: the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, which states, "Brahman is truth, knowledge and infinite." Shankara sheds some light on this terse statement. He writes:

As for *satya*, a thing is said to be *satya*, true, when it does not change the nature that is ascertained to be its own; and a thing is said to be unreal when it changes the nature that is ascertained to be its own. Hence, a mutable thing is unreal... So the phrase *satyam Brahma* (Brahman is truth) distinguishes Brahman from unreal things.

From this it may follow that (the unchanging) Brahman is the (material) cause (of all subsequent changes); and since a material cause is a substance, it can be an accessory as well, thereby becoming insentient, like earth. Hence it is said that Brahman is *jnanam*. *Jnana* means knowledge, consciousness. The word *jnana* conveys the abstract notion of the verb (*jna*, to know); and being an attribute of Brahman along with truth and infinitude, it does not indicate the agent of knowing.

To the rishis, the authors of the *Upanishads*, an "end" or a "theory" was meaningless without a method of attaining it. So how can Consciousness be known? In answer to this question, the *Aitareya Upanishad* lists the ways in which Consciousness (*prajana*), the all-perceiver, can be perceived; that is, the

forms in which the effect of Consciousness can be witnessed. Here, the names and attributes of Consciousness are mentioned:

It is this heart (intellect) and this mind... It is sentience, rulership, secular knowledge, presence of mind, retentiveness, sense-perception, fortitude, thinking, genius, mental suffering, memory, ascertainment, resolution, life-activities, hankering, passion and such others. All these, verily, are the names of Consciousness. ...The universe has Consciousness as its eye, and Consciousness is its end. Consciousness is Brahman.

A logical question was first asked: We often mention Consciousness, Existence or Brahman as a final Truth, but how can we actually know it? Any activity related to living, knowledge and emotion is referred to here. Where there is life, there can be seen the effects of Consciousness. Through these effects, Consciousness can be known, for it is the principle that underlies them all. But does this just mean life as we know it? The *Upanishad* does not stop there. Those creatures that "do not move" are also included

under the purview of Consciousness, which indicates that even inert objects are included as effects of Consciousness. The *Upanishad* goes on to state that the entire universe has Consciousness as its substratum and as its goal. Meditation on these effects of Consciousness brings one to the knowledge of Consciousness itself.

How to Realize Immortality

How else can one achieve the realization of Consciousness? In the *Katha Upanishad* it is said, "The unintelligent people follow the external desires. They get entangled in the snares of the widespread death. Therefore, the discriminating people, having known what true immortality is in the midst of impermanent things, do not pray for anything here." Reducing one's desires for objects of the external world is also a means to this realization.

Finally, King Yama, or Lord Death, tells Naciketas in the *Katha Upanishad*, "Arise, awake, and learn by approaching the excellent ones." In the *Mundaka Upanishad* it is said, "For knowing that Reality, he should go, with sacrificial [twigs] in hand, to a teacher versed in the *Vedas* and absorbed in Brah-

man." Value is placed upon learning directly from a teacher who is already a knower of Brahman, because according to Shankara, no means of knowledge pertaining to worldly things can be a valid means of knowing Brahman, for its scope must necessarily be limited to what can be perceived.

But then, why should one strive to achieve this realization? In Indian philosophical literature, no inquiry takes place without a clear purpose in mind. So what is the purpose of knowing Brahman? The purpose of this inquiry becomes clear at the end of the *Aitareya Upanishad*, when the text declares, "Consciousness is Brahman." In fact, nothing other than Consciousness truly exists. What is the practical application of this knowledge for a person? The final section makes it clear:

Through this Self that is Consciousness, he ascended higher up from this world; and, getting all desires fulfilled in that heavenly world, he became immortal. He became immortal.

Immortality is the goal. Immortality is the end. Identification with Consciousness means that one is finally identified with

The Evolution of Science 101

REMEMBER WHEN EUROPEAN SCIENCE WAS ADAMANT THAT the earth is flat? That notion, so aligned with human observational skills of the day, was disproved some 2,400 years ago. It took another 1,800 years before Copernicus convinced most that the Sun, not the Earth, was at the center of the universe. And here we are, 500 years after that disorienting revelation, about to be shocked again by science—this time, the science of the mind.

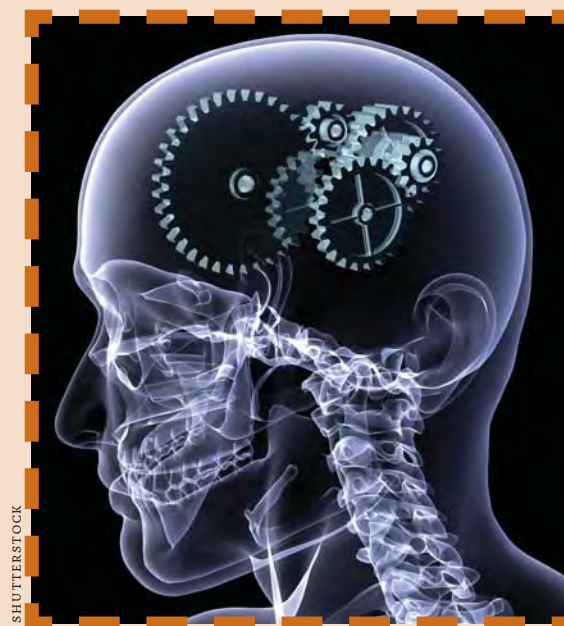
The old science (still alive and well and in the majority) tells us life begins with protobacteria, evolves to single-celled then multicellular organisms, into (OK, this is Simple Science) fungi, plants, protozoa, insects, worms, reptiles, and mammals such as *Homo sapiens* in all his cerebral glory. With man came the cerebral cortex, that complex mechanism inside of our skull which, they say, creates consciousness. Old-school scientists don't quite know what consciousness is, but they are certain that it is an epiphenomenon of matter and when the brain dies, consciousness ceases to exist.

The new science of conscious-

ness retorts, "No, no. The brain does not create consciousness. Consciousness creates the brain, and continues after brain death." Evidence of the nonmaterial existence of consciousness is drawn from near-death experiences, out-of-the-body experiences, non-local awareness, reincarnational experiences and the wild

world of quantum physics, where even particles separated by great distances seem to be aware of each other in some mysterious way.

The new science is in its infancy. Like Copernicus and Galileo, its acolytes are pioneers who suffer the derisive slings and arrows of the die-hard physicalists—those who hold to a material source for consciousness. But there are many who are convinced that, like the Pope who threw Galileo into a cell for his heliocentric heresies, the nay-sayers will ultimately be proven wrong and a new science of the mind will emerge, setting the stage for the greatest of all discoveries. Spoiler alert: some have already made those discoveries. Check out the conferences held every two years in Tucson, Arizona: www.consciousness.arizona.edu/archived.htm





Brahman, with Truth Itself, the unchanging, eternal Reality, and is freed from the suffering of limitation. This immortality, or identification with Brahman, gives rise to fearlessness and bliss. The *Kena Upanishad* corroborates this attainment:

It (Brahman) is really known when it is known with (i.e. as the Self of) each state of consciousness, because thereby one gets immortality. (Since) through one's own Self is acquired strength, (therefore) through knowledge is attained immortality.

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* also verifies this ideal: "This (Self-knowledge) is (the means of) immortality,"

and also, "I believe that Self alone to be the immortal Brahman... Knowing (It), I am immortal."

What is that person like who sees this Consciousness in all? How does he behave? The *Katha Upanishad* offers a simple description: "He is *akratu*, without desires." Desirelessness is the quality of the man who can see the infinitude of the Self. If he knows himself to be infinite, then nothing can possibly be desired, for he already has and indeed is everything. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* describes him as fearless: "The enlightened man is not afraid of anything after realizing that Bliss of Brahman, failing to reach which, words turn back along with the mind. Him, indeed, this remorse does not afflict: 'Why did I not



perform good deeds, and why did I perform bad deeds?"

With all this in mind, the Upanishadic understanding of Consciousness may be summarized as follows: Consciousness is the underlying principle of awareness, the ultimate witness, of all of creation and beyond. It is one with the fundamental Existence of all things, and is one with Brahman, the most subtle substratum of all. It is the Self. The *Upanishads* do not philosophize about some "other," but rather expound the Self that is within all of us, available for realization here and now. It is the "I" within all.

How can Consciousness be realized? By meditating upon its effects in the world and knowing them to be nothing but the effects of a higher Consciousness. It is realized through the cessation of desire for finite objects, but also the inculcation of desire for knowledge

of that through which everything becomes known. It is realized by finding a teacher of this knowledge who is well versed in the *Vedas* and established in knowledge of Brahman.

Why should one strive to realize Consciousness? To gain immortality. To befriend infinite bliss. To perceive the ultimate knowledge. To transcend duality. Consciousness, one with Existence, one with Brahman, is the cause of the universe, and to know it implies, according to the *Chandogya Upanishad*, knowledge of the nature of everything. To know Consciousness is to be free from the sorrow of suffering and to be free from the cycle of birth and rebirth. It is liberation. To know Consciousness, according to the *Upanishads*, is to be free of the suffering associated with finitude forever by identifying oneself with the infinite, immutable, immortal glory of Brahman.



Varun Khanna grew up in Chicago and studied Neuroscience and Mathematics at Saint Louis University. He studied Sanskrit in depth from many gurus in India, and with their blessings he obtained his MPhil in Sanskrit from Cambridge University, UK, and then completed his PhD in Hinduism (Vedanta) from Cambridge University. He is professor of Sanskrit, Vedanta and Social Justice at the new Chinmaya University in Kochi, India. Email: varun.khanna@chinmayauniversity.ac.in

What is consciousness?: The human eye is but one of the pathways of perception being explored by scientists.

Brain & Mind

Glimpsing the New Science of Consciousness

The old science declares that perceptions, feelings, instincts, reasoning and memory all derive from neurological activity in the cranium. The conclusion, quite naturally, is that when you die, or when the brain dies, consciousness ceases. But a new field of inquiry, drawing from quantum physics, concludes that reality is less material than once thought. This view gives credence to the survival of the soul after death, and has deep roots in Hindu metaphysics. We share here reflections from the field's trailblazers.

For at least two thousand years thinkers have tried to explain the human mind and disagreed heatedly, but a consensus has formed around one thing. When you try to figure out where the mind comes from, you find yourself in a strange domain filled with mirrors, illusions and a shaky grasp on reality. The mind is harder to hunt down than the mythical unicorn, because the hunter and the hunted are the same. This frustrating obstacle has led to speculation that swings between two extremes—at one extreme, consciousness is pure illusion created by brain chemistry. At the other extreme, consciousness is a given that defies exploration, much as water is a given to a fish. We can't jump out of our minds to land on a place where objective observations could be made, just as a fish cannot land on dry land as a way to peer under the sea. Both are categorically impossible.

Must the riddle of the mind remain a riddle? Our position is radically different from the vast majority of brain researchers, who attempt to unravel the intricacies of the mind by dissecting the intricacies of the human nervous system. We hold that mind doesn't need the brain in order to exist. It precedes all living things by being fundamental to the universe. In other words, human beings are part of a conscious universe.

Over the past decade or so, this notion has gained in stature, even though it began as a ridiculed fantasy. Some leading cosmologists are circling back to the insights of quantum pioneers like Max Planck and Erwin Schrödinger. Planck declared that it was impossible to "get

behind" consciousness, meaning that it can't be explained by referring to anything more primal. Schrödinger held that consciousness cannot be subdivided; there is only one consciousness, even though it appears to be subdivided into billions of individual minds. To use an honored analogy from India's Vedanta tradition, pure gold can be made into countless objects, but in essence they are the same gold.

Planck, Schrödinger and their like-minded colleagues never pursued this line of investigation very far, being consumed with the new frontiers of quantum mechanics and the challenge to create a complete account of microscopic phenomena. Today, the physicists who are circling back can take advantage of brain science, which gives them a continuous view of mind, from the biggest to the smallest, from the entire cosmos to the subatomic particles that constitute all objects, including the human brain.

One of the most open-minded cosmologists, Max Tegmark of MIT, is a gifted explainer of difficult mind-brain-cosmos issues. Tegmark goes further than traditional physicalists. He has become identified with a tag line: Consciousness is a state of matter. However, this view still remains materialistic, in that subatomic particles come first and foremost, arriving from the quantum vacuum carrying information, which then becomes one of the primary trademarks of consciousness. By transferring and building up more complex information structures, one arrives at the human brain and its potential for creating artificial intelligence in computers of the future—everything depends on how powerful their information processing becomes.

Quantum physics is a two-edged sword when it comes to explaining the mind. Its predictions and theoretical approach have been used to justify a conscious universe or not, depending on the perspective of the thinker who is wielding the theory. But there is a consensus on the necessity of mathematical models. This is where Tegmark has fascinated his peers, because—totally believing in mathematics as the ultimate model of reality—he wants to rescue the materialist view by positing that matter can have the property of consciousness. His ambitions are, quite literally, cosmic. He wants to

deliver a universe where math is compatible with mind.

The higher you climb, the farther you may fall. In Tegmark's case, critiques have emerged in equal measure with praise. He himself poses the most troubling problems that must be confronted:

1. Since it is agreed among quantum theorists that subatomic particles are essentially mathematical constructs, with no fixed properties that resemble tangible objects, how did rocks, clouds, mountains and trees get their physical properties? It looks like creation out of nothing. How do we get from numbers to the hardness of granite and the sweetness of strawberries?
2. To date, there has been a chain of discoveries of ever more potent mathematics to explain the structure of the cosmos. But what if the chain isn't endless? We may be at the point where Nature's patterns, and the math that describes them, run out. If that's true, then the mathematical models will no longer work, just as every previous model going back to the Greeks has succumbed. The big difference is that no one trained to view math as the ultimate tool of science can conceive of what would replace it.
3. What gives some kinds of matter the property of consciousness and not others? Oxygen has the property of being gaseous, while iron is metallic. The difference can be explained using the periodic chart of the elements. No such chart exists for why the sugar in your brain participates in thinking, while the sugar in a sugar cube does not, until you consume it. No explanation exists for why the electrons that are being sent around the brain are somehow associated with thought, while the same types of electrons are found in the cores of nuclear reactors. If the electrons and elementary particles are common to both, would we conclude that brains and reactors are the same? Of course not.
4. "Information" is a dubious foundation for consciousness. You can make heavier elements by adding more protons to an atom and more atoms to a molecule, but is it true that the great achievements of the mind (represented, for example, by Mozart, Shakespeare and Einstein) were gained simply by adding more information? A Mozart symphony contains no more and no less information than a symphony by one of his hack contemporaries. Besides, doesn't information

require someone to make sense of it? Random computer streams of 0's and 1's have no meaning independent of the algorithms that someone has devised in advance, using a mind. So tracing mind back to 0's and 1's seems like circular reasoning.

5. There is a limit to all models, because reality is too complex to be whittled down. The great mathematician John von Neumann supposedly said that the only adequate model of a neuron would be a neuron. In other words, you can't explain the mind by reducing it to anything else.

Tegmark offers an eloquent exposition of his claim that matter may have consciousness as one of its basic properties. He and others in the same wave of cosmologists are nibbling around the fringes of a universe that may be entirely mindful. One camp is willing to call itself "panpsychist," meaning that in some way everything is conscious. This would be the same as accepting Schrödinger's original notion that consciousness is holistic and cannot be subdivided. A radically new view of reality emerges if you accept this one idea, sending shock waves through brain science, quantum physics and cosmology.

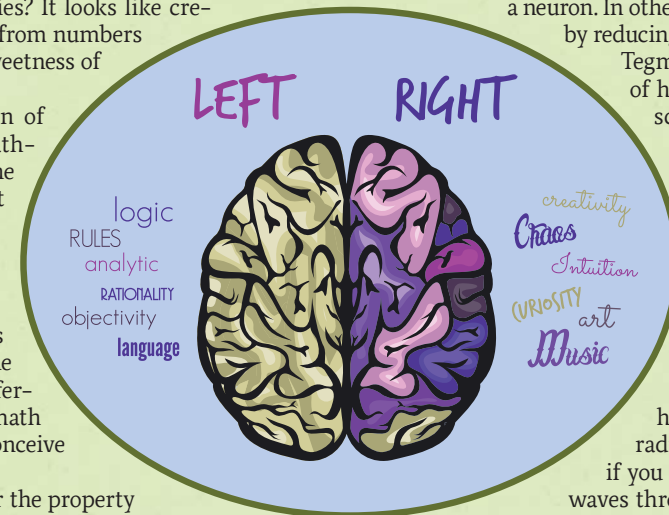
Here are three quotations from Vashishtha, a Vedic sage writing many centuries ago, almost eerily anticipating the most far-seeing speculations in current cosmology.

The entire universe is forever the same as the consciousness that dwells in every atom, even as jewelry is non-different from gold.

Cosmic consciousness alone exists now and ever; in it are no worlds, no created beings. That consciousness reflected in itself appears to be creation.

The world exists because consciousness is, and the world is the body of consciousness.

By Deepak Chopra, MD; Rudolph E. Tanzi, PhD; Menas Kafatos, PhD; Subhash Kak, PhD; and Neil Theise, MD



MANIFESTO

For a Consciousness-Based Science

By Deepak Chopra, Menas Kafatos and Rudolph E. Tanzi

The greatest mystery of existence is existence itself. There is the existence of the universe and there is the existence of awareness. Were it not for awareness, even if the universe existed as an external reality, we would not be aware of its existence, so for all practical purposes it would not exist.

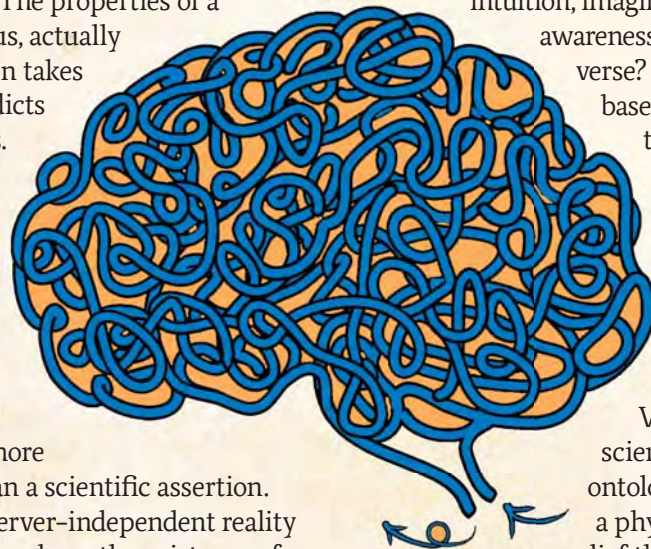
Traditional science assumes, for the most part, that an objective, observer-independent reality exists—that the universe, stars, galaxies, sun, moon and earth would still be there if no one was looking. However, modern quantum theory, the most successful of all scientific creations of the human mind, disagrees. The properties of a particle, quantum theory tells us, actually do not exist until an observation takes place. Quantum theory contradicts traditional, Newtonian physics.

Most scientists, although respecting quantum theory, do not follow its implications. The result is a kind of schizophrenia between what scientists believe and what they practice. When we examine the materialistic hypothesis of traditional science, we find it more a metaphysical assumption than a scientific assertion. How can we assert that an observer-independent reality exists if the assertion itself depends on the existence of a conscious observer? This raises an additional dilemma: Who or what is the observer, and where is this observer located?

When scientists in general describe empirical facts and formulate scientific theories, they forget that neither facts nor theories are an insight into the true nature of fundamental reality apart from any observer. According to quantum theory, what we consider to be empirical facts are entirely dependent on observation. The scientific observer in this case is an activity of the universe called Homo sapiens, usually with a Ph.D. in physics, biology, neuroscience or other branches of science. However, many scientists

have never really asked the question, “Who am I?”

Many neuroscientists still don’t believe that quantum theory has anything to do with the brain. They would assert that “I,” the conscious observer, is solely an epiphenomenon of the brain—that consciousness is produced by the brain, just as gastric juices are produced by the stomach and bile is produced by the gall bladder. But any neuroscientist worth his or her tenure will admit that there is no satisfactory theory in neuroscience to explain how neurochemistry translates into conscious experience. How do electrochemical phenomena in the brain create the appreciation of the beauty of a red rose, the taste of garlic, the smell of onions, the feeling of love, compassion, joy, insight, intuition, imagination, creativity, free will, or



awareness of existence of self and the universe? There is no physicalist theory based on classical physics to explain these subjective experiences. Nor is there any obvious means for coming up with such a theory. With traditional science in this impasse, it might be time to question some of the basic assumptions about so-called independently existing reality. We must remind ourselves that science is a methodology and not an ontology. Current science is based on a physicalist ontology—the basic belief that reality is physical and mind is an epiphenomenon of matter (the nervous system). Nonetheless we are baffled when asked to explain how matter becomes mind.

We suggest here a fundamental revision in our most cherished scientific assumptions. We boldly suggest that matter, force fields, particles, waves, even the fabric of space and time are not denizens of fundamental reality but that they are perceptual and cognitive experiences in consciousness. This proposal concurs with the theories of most of the great physicists who founded quantum theory almost a hundred years ago.

But we are also going beyond, taking the statements of quantum theory to the next level: All of physical reality

is a perceptual experience in consciousness alone. The experience may turn out to be different for different species. What is physical reality to a bat, a honey bee, a nematode, a whale, a dolphin, an eagle, an insect with numerous eyes? There is no fixed physical reality, no single perception of the world, just numerous ways of interpreting worldviews as dictated by one’s nervous system and the specific environment of our planetary existence.

We propose that there is a basic flaw in the current scientific worldview, which assumes that facts emanating from human perception and particularly from observations made with human scientific methods are the only fundamental truth. Furthermore, the subject/object split that is the basic premise of current scientific methods has led to the creation of

arguably detrimental technologies including mechanized death, petroleum products in our food, genetically modified foods, global warming, extinction of species, and even the possible extinction of the human species.

Building on the quantum view of the cosmos, which accepts a non-local, entangled reality in which observers

are fundamental, we suggest the next natural step—a new science rooted in consciousness. This new science will strive to interpret the entire universe, with all its observers, all modes of observation and all objects observed, as nothing other than consciousness and its manifestations. We believe this is the most reasonable and rational approach; that rejecting it will lead nowhere and force us to accept randomness and lack of purpose as the hallmarks of the universe. Ultimately, such a rejection leads to the conclusion that our own very existence has no meaning.

We suggest that perceptual objects experienced in consciousness, including our very brains, are not the source of consciousness. We suggest rigorous testing of this radically different ontology. We feel a holistic science that does not separate

observer from that which is observed would lead to the unraveling of the mysteries of the universe which presently seem beyond reach, leading to an understanding of a conscious universe in which all are differentiated activities of a single field that is an undivided wholeness and in some sense bridges external reality with inner being.

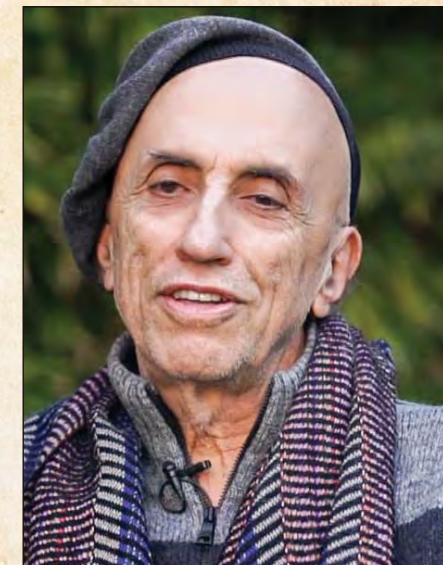
“The mind is harder to hunt down than the mythical unicorn, because the hunter and the hunted are the same.”

Chopra & Tanzi



Deepak Chopra MD, FACP, (left) is founder of The Chopra Foundation and co-founder of The Chopra Center for Wellbeing. He is the author of more than 85 books translated into over 43 languages, including numerous New York Times bestsellers, and he is co-author with Rudolph Tanzi of the international bestsellers, *Super Brain* and *Super Genes*.

Menas C. Kafatos, Ph.D., (center) an internationally acclaimed quantum physicist and cosmologist, is a Professor of Computational Physics at Chapman University. He has authored over 315 articles



and is author or editor of 15 books, including *The Conscious Universe* (Springer) and *Looking In, Seeing Out* (Theosophical Publishing House).

Rudolph E. Tanzi, Ph.D. (right) is a Professor of Neurology at Harvard University and Massachusetts General Hospital and an internationally acclaimed expert on Alzheimer’s disease and neurogenetics. He is the author of over 500 articles and the co-author with Deepak Chopra of *Super Brain* and *Super Genes*.

THINK TANK

Sages & Scientists 2016:

Boldly addressing the big question: Who, or What, Am I?

IN SEPTEMBER OF 2016, HINDUISM TODAY attended the Chopra Foundation's three-day Science and Sages Symposium in Los Angeles, California, held at the prestigious Beverly Wilshire Four Seasons hotel. Even at a cost of \$1600 per person, the room was filled with some 500 knowledge-hungry teachers of yoga, wellness and art. The conference's livestream peak had 250,000 people watching, with an average of about 100,000 over the course of the three days.

Each day had a different theme and featured philosophers, doctors, scientists, musicians, artists, physicists, neurologists and astronomers. Each presenter had the stage for about 20 minutes, and at the end of the set all gathered for a panel discussion moderated by Deepak Chopra.

Day one's theme was "Cosmos, Physics and Consciousness: The Deep Mystery of Existence." Our morning began with a one-hour holographic HumaGram [sidebar left] presentation of Dr. Chopra explaining a 5,000-year history of our understanding of consciousness and where we stand today with the hard problem—what is consciousness and how does it relate to our perceived reality? Chopra and his presenters are work-

ing to tie the two together with a monistic answer: The universe and consciousness are the same.

Two presenters on dark matter, an incredibly dense topic filled with unknowns, opened up the landscape for out-of-box thought. Dark matter, along with dark energy, is hypothesized to comprise around 95 to 98 percent of the universe.

Topics for the afternoon included philosophy, awareness, the akashic field and quantum physics. Along with Chopra, Subhash Kak and Menas Kafatos related all of the conference's teachings thus far to Hinduism, specifically to Vedanta and Saivism.

On day two, Chopra and the other presenters took us through wellness and understanding of both the Earth and ourselves, themed "Nature, Well-being, Love and Spirit." Topics included meditation, mental health, climate change, neuroscience, microbiome health, genetics, epigenetics and philosophy.

Cutting-edge information was presented by Rob Knight, a professor working on microbiome discoveries—aka, "gut health." The Center for Microbiome Innovation is discovering the critical importance of the human gut and how essential its balance of bacteria

is for optimal health. He shared some amazing therapies that use the bodies' bacteria as alternatives to medicine.

Rudolph Tanzi of Harvard Medical School, co-author (with Chopra) of *Super Brain* and *Super Genes*, presented his work on brain health and his lab's new findings on Alzheimer's disease.

Day three, "Technology and Creativity," was devoted to showing how new technology can improve the quality of life. The over-arching message was that soon much of society will be using smart devices to enhance its day-to-day activities. The presenters introduced meditation devices, sleep aids, brainwave tuners and ideas for future tech gizmos that we could wear as clothing. One panelist was wearing about six devices across his body to show how small and inconspicuous mobile devices are getting.

At the end we sat down with Chopra and asked, "What are you and the whole movement bringing to humanity that's new, that didn't exist in the Indian paradigm?"

"In the Indian paradigm the ultimate goal," he responded, "of life is *moksha*, or finding your true Self. As fundamental reality, *atman* is *Brahman*; and until you do that, you

Profound presenters: For these days experts and seekers turned the Four Seasons' ballroom into a chamber for the sacred and philosophical



Human holograms: The use of a new technology called HumaGram awed the *Hinduism Today* staff, as it was one of the few things we had not seen or heard of before. HumaGram, produced by ARHT Media, is a type of holographic projection of 2D and 3D (available with headset only) objects or people. Essentially our symposium hostess and Dr. Chopra were introducing and presenting from the second floor of the hotel, while everyone on the main floor watched

them on a giant screen. HumaGram uses this technology to project speakers all around the world without their having to leave the studio. The company's name stands for the system itself: Augmented Reality Holographic Technology. Above is Chopra with Rob Knight, microbiome specialist. The below photo is the end result of a HumaGram projection onto a giant screen in front of an audience. HumaGram was used for both the conference and Facebook live updates.





LAVINA MELWANI

VEGETARIANISM

Delhi's Vegetarian Delights

With its history of culinary arts and broad range of regional styles, India offers a dazzling cornucopia of choices for vegetarian foodies

BY LAVINA MELWANI, DELHI

IN INDIA, IT'S ALL ABOUT FOOD—AND IF YOU are vegetarian, India simply has no comparison. As a traveler from the prosaic West and eater of quick sandwich meals, I was delighted that my return journey to Delhi, the capital of India, brought me to the fabled magic table of remembered childhood where you have to merely clap your hands to get undreamed of delicacies. Even before taking flight, you can order a vegetarian or vegan meal. And once you land, no mere salad, pizza or boiled veggies here—the complex dishes that appear on the dining table are deliciously intricate, from Rajasthan's *Ghatte Ke Curry* (chickpea flour dumplings) to the Punjab's *Besan Koftas* (dal flour balls in yogurt gravy).

As a toddler, I remember our family cook Shankar, who used to work on a coal oven in the open courtyard and hand-feed us hot, simple *sabzis* (veggies) with fresh rotis while telling stories from the *Ramayana*. Those tastes linger after decades, as does the taste of Sindhi *channa dabalroti*—chickpeas simmered in a golden gravy made from chick pea flour and served over slices of bread, with a topping of sliced onions and crispy flakes, or *murmula*. This was served to friends who came to our home to view the grand Republic Day Parade which passed below

VISHAL GROVER



the balcony of our apartment in Connaught Place every year.

Yes, food was always an intrinsic part of our outings—be it plates of *alu tikkis* (potato turnovers) or aromatic *chole bhature* (chick peas and flatbread) and plump, syrupy *gulab jamuns* at roadside stalls. Delhi is famous for its chaat shops, fiery ammunition centers that scorch your tongue and make you weep with *pani puri*, *bhelpuri*, *gol gappas*, and *samosa chaat* (fried flatbread and veggie ball snacks with sauce.)

Then there were the visits to Old Delhi, my father's go-to destination for a special hundred percent pure *pista mithai*. Seems at the

age of four, I would eat only this rich, dark green pistachio sweet and my dad which Dad would sometimes make special trips to get for me.

If happy occasions involved food so did sad ones. There was the season of shraddas—meals commemorating the departed—when carloads of uncles, aunts and cousins would descend on the home for prayers and feeding the pujari the delicious treats the ancestors had loved. Then we, too, would feast on the wonderful food. There was Sindhi curry and rice, *saibhaji*—spinach cooked with seven vegetables, *pakor*as and *samosas*, *daibhallas* and, of course, all followed by *gulab jamun* and *jalebis* (fried orange pinwheels). Each part of the extended family would bring their own special dishes, and it would be an endless talkathon and eatathon. With so many uncles and aunts around, life meant a lot of feasting after the holy days' fasting.

So I returned this year to an India exploding with food memories. The

Turn off your calorie counter:

(above) Masala House in Sundar Nagar takes snacks to a new level; (left) Indian food giant Haldirams' modern vegetarian self-serve restaurant on Jaipur-Gurgaon Road in Delhi's IT corridor



LAVINA MELWANI

first morning in Delhi at my sister's home, it was as if nothing had changed. We had Sindhi *kokies* for breakfast, flatbreads embedded with chopped onions and green chilies, and served with yogurt. It was hard to stop at one, and brought back memories of mothers, grandmothers, loved aunts—all who had served this must-have breakfast.

As the families have grown and children married into different households in different regions of India, new recipes have entered the repertoire, as well as Western dishes that have become popular in affluent India. On the menu might be a noodle dish one night and a Thai soup the next, while pizza and pastas are not unusual foods at home. A Sindhi sister-in-law, who is Sindhi but grew up in Indonesia, served us a dinner of *gado-gado* (salad of blanched vegetables, tofu or tempeh), noodles, nasi goreng (fried rice) and other treats—all vegetarian, since she is a Sai follower.

Perhaps the greatest treats on my visit were those served at home by the family cook. Chillas delicious crepes made of mung daal, served with *guar* and *achari aloos* and chutney. My sister had different food for me on the table every day, including that made by a Brahmin cook who makes vegetarian food only and uses no garlic or ginger.

Since everyone in my family circle has access to great cooks, there was a lot of animated food exchange going on. *Dahi ki sabzi* is a delicious treat I had never experienced, a dish made with thick, Greek-style yogurt, vegetables and condiments. Another unusual dish was *tawe wale chawal* (a type of vegetarian fried rice).

Super strict vegetarians can find hundreds of *shudh* restaurants all over Delhi, places

that do not prepare meat of any kind on their premises. Many other fine restaurants are "vegetarian friendly," offering marvelous fare for those less concerned about what else goes on in the kitchen. Either way, vegetarians in India have an unimaginable array of choices.

If money is no concern, just about anything is possible, with a buzzing world of five-star hotel restaurants. I visited a fancy new place called Delhi Club House—a take on famous old clubs like Calcutta's Tollygunge Club and the Royal Bombay Yacht Club and their signature dishes. The menu includes famous delicacies like cheese Bombay toastie (at the Presidency Club), vegetable momos (Gorkha Rifles Mess) and Saffron Onion Rice (Railway Club).

Delhi's mall culture has posh restaurants as well as fast food places. Brand names from America are all here, from Subway and Dominos to TGIF. McDonalds, for instance, offers varied vegetarian alternatives that you don't find in the US, including Mexican and Lebanese McAloo Tikki, Crispy veggie pops and Paneer Salsa Wrap.

While America has brought Burger King to India, an enterprising desi trio have come up with Burger Singh, serving craft burgers with a sense of humor and a distinctly Indian touch. Vegetarian burger lovers also have many options, starting with Nani's Rama Burger (Grandma's bean burger), United States of Punjab Veg Burger, Chana Burger and Shorshe Paneer Burger.

Even middle class India is on a big "eating out" journey. Global Indian food giant Haldirams, established in 1937, with revenues higher than McDonalds and Dominos combined, has outlets throughout Delhi and all over India. Many offer a modern, food-court,



LAVINA MELWANI

All classes: (left) A giant pot of chole (chickpea curry) is a tempting offering from this street vendor; (below) Burger Singh outclasses McDonalds with desi diversity for the middle-class

self-serve interior and provide savory, hygienic food at good prices. These and other small restaurants are everywhere, serving tasty, robust street food in a sanitized atmosphere, handled with gloves—and with chutneys made with bottled water—no risk of "Delhi belly" here!

Regional cuisine is offered in scores of restaurants, from Gujarati to South Indian. Swagath, in the Defence Colony Market, has the most marvelous dosas and a big screen TV where fans enjoy the games when cricket fever hits. This seven-chain restaurant serves Mangalorean, Malvani, Goan, Chettinad, Gomatank and Andhra cuisine. Elsewhere, you can get everything from Bengali to Tibetan food, and with many vegetarian variations.

Vegetarians comprise 30 to 40 percent of Indians, a large market that gets special attention. Even Chinese and Thai restaurants have strong vegetarian components. The menu for Berco's, a Chinese and Thai eatery in Delhi, even states, "All dishes can be made without onions and garlic—just let us know!"

During my 45-day stay in India, I enjoyed virtually every possible kind of meal, from gourmet to street-fare to home-cooked comfort food. What stays most in my memory is a grand Holi celebration at a friend's house where all the food was created by traditional chefs from Mathura, home of Lord Krishna. Guests played with colors and danced to the music to celebrate the festival of colors. The hosts had created a colorful marketplace with a vegetarian feast of specialties from this pilgrimage spot, all served on metal plates and in clay pots. The menu included everything from *malpuras* (sweet bread) to *pakor*as (batter-fried vegetables), *vada pav* (lentil paddy) and *ragda pattis* (potato turnovers) to main courses, including *paneer ki khurchan* (spiced soft cheese) and *kulfis*, ice cream, of many flavors served in little clay pots. There were mounds of *jalebis* and *multicolored mithai*. Fresh *puris* made of green peas were fried on the spot. The *bhel puri* was served in playful multicolored buckets, in keeping with the Holi spirit. It was a vegetarian paradise with unimaginable treats—and all cooked with pure ghee.

Yes, in India, if you can dream it, there are skilled hands that can make it happen!

Lavina Melwani is a journalist who writes for several international publications. She blogs at [Lassi with Lavina](http://LassiwithLavina.com).

[Lassiwithlavina.com](http://LassiwithLavina.com) Follow @lavinamelwani

Lord Ganesha's 2016 Birthday Party

Millions the world over joyously invoke the enduring grace of the Lord of Obstacles

THE ELEPHANT-FACED LORD HAS BEEN WORSHIPED FROM antiquity. He is invoked by every Hindu at the beginning of every ceremony in every corner of India and the world over. Ganesha Chaturthi, His birthday party, is one of the grand festivals of Hinduism, celebrated on the 4th day of the waxing moon. Nowhere is it more widely and elaborately celebrated than in India's state of Maharashtra. No one knows for sure how long ago Ganesha has been worshiped on this day. According to one story (see Wikipedia), the famed Maratha King Shivaji instituted public celebration of Ganesha in Pune around 1650. Maratha Peshwars (state administrators) continued the practice. The first *sarvajanik pandals* (public shrines) for worship were started in 1892 and made popular by freedom fighter Lokmaya Tilak. "In 1893, Tilak praised the celebration of Sarvajanik Ganesha Utsav (festival) in his newspaper, *Kesari*, and the following year he installed a Ganesha idol in the *Kesari* office; his efforts transformed the annual domestic festival into a large, well-organised public event.... generating nationalistic fervor in the Maharashtrian people to oppose British colonial rule." Months of preparation precede Ganesha's annual birthday on the 4th tithi in the month of Bhadrapada. Rites are continued for one to ten days with immersion of murtis in water on the last day. The 2016 festival was as big as ever. According to the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, 50,250 murtis were immersed at the designated natural ocean fronts, rivers, lakes and artificially constructed pools. That included 9,714 Ganeshas from public shrines, 40,302 from home shrines and 234 Gauri idols (Parvati holding baby Ganesha) that were immersed at 71 natural sites and 27 *krutrim talavs* (artificial pools) across the city and in the suburbs. Small artificial pools, made with plastic tarpaulins or brick and mortar, received 22,000 immersions, thereby allaying the burden on natural waterways. The clay from dissolved Ganeshas is often spread on gardens.

After ten days of worship Ganesha returns home:

(Clockwise) Sutar Lane Ganesha is taken into the ocean at Girgaum Chowpatty beach; a group of boys, faces smeared with sindur, take their Ganesha to the ocean; a young sister and brother lovingly immerse their Ganesha along with 40,000 other family home Ganeshas; small Ganesha being immersed in a small krutrim talav (artificial pond)



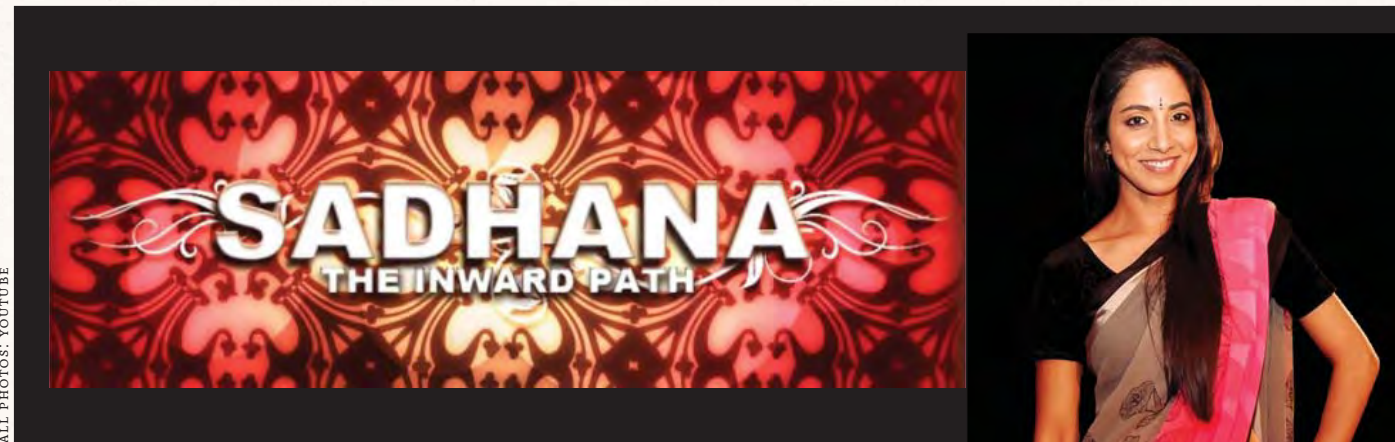
ALL PHOTOS: ARUN K. MISHRA





“Growing Good Through Media”

For six years now, African Lotus Productions has been presenting the many facets of Hinduism to South Africans through a quality TV program



RAMALINGAM MOODLEY, S. AFRICA
SADHANA—THE INWARD PATH IS A 24-minute Hindu magazine program broadcast on SABC 3 (South African Broadcasting Corporation), the premier TV channel in South Africa. The only Hindu series broadcast in the country, *Sadhana* is now in its sixth year.

The series started as a 12-minute program called *Sunday Sadhana* on SABC 2. After two-and-a-half seasons, the show grew in popularity and the SABC commissioned a longer 24-minute program on Saturdays. With the move to SABC 3 and the change in broadcast day, the show was renamed *Sadhana—The Inward Path*.

As the name suggests, the aim and purpose of *Sadhana* is to take the viewer on an inward journey through the enlightenment

of ancient Hindu philosophy, traditions and practices. Hosted each week by the ever-graceful Shirdika Pillai, *Sadhana* showcases the vibrancy of Hinduism in South Africa and abroad through art and architecture, culture and tradition, music and dance, seva and satsang, food and lifestyle, ranging in emphasis from the ritual to the spiritual.

The staff packs a lot of well-researched information into its short time slot. *Sadhana* has high production values and quality editing. The spiritual or mythological background of each ritual is concisely explained. This is important, especially for the younger generation busy with material pursuits, who dutifully perform the rituals they learned from their parents and grandparents but do not have a clear understanding of their significance. Nor do they have time to investi-

gate such matters for themselves.

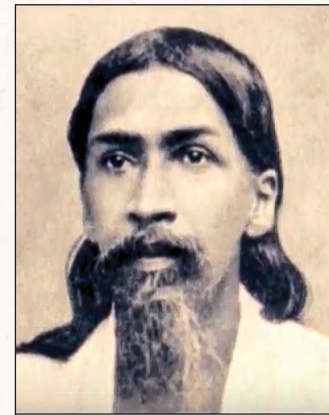
Unfortunately, one viewer remarked, the program is aired around midday on Saturdays, when most of the working class are out shopping or doing their weekend chores. A Sunday time slot might be more successful in reaching a larger audience, they thought.

Also, another pointed out, the program's advertising should also target a larger audience. YouTube is a good start, but other social media could attract many more viewers. The show could also be advertised more intensely on the broadcaster's other TV channels.

Sadhana is produced for the SABC by African Lotus Productions, a Durban-based company whose vision is to “grow good through media.” *Sadhana—The Inward Path* can be followed online on their YouTube channel or at africanlotusproductions.co.za



Covering the Hindu gamut: (left page, counterclockwise) *Sadhana*'s host Shirdika Pillai; a local Hindu singer showcased; a scene from an episode featuring Ganesha festivals; (this page, clockwise) a youthful portrait of the great philosopher Sri Aurobindo, who was the subject of an entire show; a scene from a segment on Shirdi Sai Baba schools; a traditional Hindu wedding is celebrated on the show and the tradition is explained in detail; a KwaZulu Natal family worshipping at their home shrine during Diwali, the festival of lights



Spotlight on Commissioning Editor Marc Friedman

RAMALINGUM MOODLEY, REPRESENTING HINDUISM TODAY, interviewed Marc Friedman, the Commissioning Editor of *Sadhana*, on behalf of SABC 3 (South African Broadcasting Corporation)

When did *Sadhana* go on air for the first time, and what was it that catalyzed the program? We aired first in 2011. The producer replied to a brief that the SABC put out looking for a new Hindu religion and spirituality program and was selected as the leading bidder. There had previously been another Hindu program on air called Dharma Moments.

What is the viewership of the program, both local and international? The figure per episode within South Africa is approximately 150,000. We load the program to YouTube, and the statistics show that a few thousand people around the world watch it.

Do you target any specific age group? The program is accessible to any person who

follows Hinduism, but it is also produced in a manner that it will be of interest to others who would like to find out more about Hinduism and its unique practices, philosophy and rituals. The core audience appears to be between 35 and 49 years old.

Given that much of the younger generation seems caught up in material pursuits, with religious and spiritual matters taking a back seat, do you have any plans to reach more of the younger generation? We try to have segments that are of interest to youth, such as yoga, the arts and travel. The program is packaged in a way that it sells spirituality as aspirational, which is in keeping with SABC 3's approach. This should make it of interest to the youthful spiritual seeker and spark interest in those who aren't necessarily inclined that way.

How is content decided? Do you consult with interest groups such as the South African Hindu Maha Sabha, the S. A. Tamil Federation, etc., to gauge what would be suitable? This is discussed

between African Lotus Productions (the producer) and the religion department at the SABC. We try to follow the Hindu calendar by having programs that reflect all the festivals. We also give a platform to events in the Hindu community. African Lotus Productions has a large network of connections in the Hindu community, and we endeavor to offer equitable coverage to all the organizations.

What are your future plans? We would like to grow the audience and continue to diversify it by offering content that is attractive to people outside the Hindu community, while still doing justice to our primary mandate, which is offering a platform to the Hindu community.

.....
Ramalingam Moodley, 59, lives in Randburg, South Africa, with his wife and three daughters. He is a business consultant, specializing in project finance for lower-income housing developments. Contact Ramalingam at chris57.moodley@gmail.com



OPINION

The Choice: Hindu or Non-Religious?

The Future of Hinduism in America's Evolving Religious Landscape

BY ANANT RAMBACHAN

THE RECENT PEW RESEARCH CENTER FINDINGS on America's religious landscape revealed that approximately 56 million Americans are religiously unaffiliated and belong to the category of religious "nones." There are more "nones" than Catholics or mainline Protestants, and "nones" are second only to evangelical Protestants. "Nones" are also comparatively younger and more educated. In addition, the survey estimated that the number of Hindus in the US rose from 0.3% of the population in 2007 to 0.7% in 2014. Of Hindus in the US, 77% are college graduates. Good questions have been raised by Murali Balaji about the challenges of gathering accurate numerical data for American Hindus. He suggests that the actual numbers may be higher (bit.ly/undercounted).



Although we might rejoice at our growing Hindu percentage of the adult population, the rise of "nones" is of particular interest to Hindus, who are not immune to larger US trends. When I was a child attending a Hindu elementary school in Trinidad, we recited a series of questions and answers about Hinduism from a small religious booklet. One of the questions was, "Why are you a Hindu?" The answer followed: "Because I was born a Hindu." That may have been a good answer in its time, but it will not work for a new generation of Hindu Americans. Today, one's affiliation with the Hindu tradition is not guaranteed by birth, nor is it limited by it.

The religious commitments of a new generation of Hindu Americans are challenged by a more common rejection of a religious worldview, or indifference to religion altogether. Many young Hindus will pursue the finest education, achieve great success in their careers, live productive and, for the most part, ethical lives, and do all of this without any significant commitment to Hinduism. The Hindu tradition will not necessarily inform their choice of profession, their spouse, leisure activities or political values. They may not see what religion might contribute to the pursuit of their primary life goals or even understand themselves as having religious needs.

As I see it, the choice placed before the new generation of Hindus in the US is not between the Hindu tradition or another religion; it is between being Hindu or being non-religious.

When the challenge is the attraction of another religion, one may respond by demonstrating and commending the virtues of the Hindu tradition, but when the challenge is indifference or the rejection of religion altogether, the response must be different. In the first case, a religious need is assumed and one tries to demonstrate the best way of fulfilling this need. In the second case, there is no religious need to begin with. One has to spark their religious life by establishing why such a life is actually important or useful.

We must be clear about the ways in which a Hindu worldview enriches human life at both an individual and community level. In order to impart our tradition to the next generation, we must first answer the question, "Why am I Hindu?" Answering this question is a matter of embodying what the tradition means for us in the way

we live all dimensions of our lives in the world. This is not an easy question to answer, since most first generation Hindu Americans are Hindus by birth and have not wrestled in significant ways with alternative choices—religious or non-religious. They are Hindu without feeling the need to know why. The new generation wants to know why.

This next generation of American Hindus will answer this question in ways different from earlier generations. A significant number of first-generation Hindus in the US are immigrants from India. They have a deep connection with India and with the nation's languages and cultural traditions. There is a close bond between Hindu identity and Indian

identity; and I hope that the richness of Indian cultural traditions will continue to flourish in the United States. In contrast, the next generation of Hindus identify strongly as Americans and will engage the world on the basis of that identity. The Hindu tradition—if it finds expression in their lives—will be less connected with India, nationally, linguistically and culturally, than it was for their parents. Religion will be for them a profound understanding of the meaning of life and a source of values to define their actions in the world.

In the transmission of Hinduism to a new generation, our emphasis has to be on its deep and eternal wisdom, which is accessible and meaningful to all human beings. These teachings are not only relevant to those with ancestral and cultural roots in the Indian subcontinent. If, in the transmission of the Hindu tradition to a new generation, we are not attentive to this fact, we risk losing its most important and universal dimension. If universal wisdom about human life and existence is what speaks to the next generation, then Hinduism is in a strong position to be something that will prove useful to them.

Hinduism is a knowledge-based tradition. Its preeminent sacred texts are the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* describe the fundamental human problem as ignorance (*avidya*), and value in a special way the remover of ignorance—the teacher (*guru*). Hinduism values knowledge that aims at the overcoming of self-created suffering and at the blossoming of human fulfillment. We need to focus on how our teachings not only promote a balanced material life, but at the same time on how those teachings lead one into a joyous inner life. We must show also how these teachings promote the common good and contribute to the flourishing of communities. Religious teachings cannot be good for us if they inflict and legitimize suffering on others. We must return to Hinduism's emphasis on religious teaching and practice that are always concerned with the public good and the acceptance of those who are different.

Although the Pew findings suggest a future of change and uncertainty as people move towards nonaffiliation, a Hindu tradition that commits itself to truth (*satyam*), goodness (*shivam*) and beauty (*sundaram*) is more than likely to gain the allegiance and hearts of a new generation in the United States.

Email: rambacha@stolaf.edu

Hindu Heritage Endowment

See Your Generosity in Action through an IRA Charitable Rollover Gift

If you are 70½ years old or older and live in the USA, you can take advantage of a simple way to benefit Hindu Heritage Endowment and receive tax benefits in return. You can give up to \$100,000 from your individual retirement account (IRA) directly to a qualified charity such as HHE without having to pay income taxes on the money.

This law no longer has an expiration date, so you are free to make annual gifts to HHE this year and well into the future.

WHY CONSIDER THIS FORM OF GIVING?

- Your gift will be put to use today, allowing you to see the difference your donation is making.
- You pay no income taxes on the gift. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions.
- If you have not yet taken your required minimum distribution for the year, your IRA charitable rollover gift can satisfy all or part of that requirement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. I have already named Hindu Heritage Endowment as the beneficiary of my IRA. What are the benefits if I make a gift now instead of after my lifetime?

A. By making a gift this year of up to \$100,000 from your IRA, you can see your philanthropic dollars at work. You are jump-starting the legacy you would like to leave and giving yourself the joy of watching your philanthropy take shape. Moreover, you can fulfill any outstanding pledge you may have made by transferring that amount from your IRA as long as it is \$100,000 or less for the year.

Q. I'm turning age 70½ in a few months. Can I make this gift now?

A. No, you cannot. The legislation requires you to reach age 70½ by the date you make the gift.

Q. I have several retirement accounts—some are pensions and some are IRAs. Does it matter which retirement account I use?

A. Yes. Direct rollovers to a qualified charity can be made only from an IRA. Under certain circumstances, however, you may be able to roll assets from a pension, profit sharing, a 401(k) or a 403(b) plan into an IRA and then make the transfer from the IRA directly to Hindu Heritage Endowment. To determine if a rollover to an IRA is available for your plan, speak with your plan administrator.

Q. Can my gift be used as my required minimum distribution under the law?

A. Yes, absolutely. If you have not yet taken your required minimum distribution, the IRA charitable rollover gift can satisfy all or part of that requirement. Contact your IRA custodian to complete the gift.

Q. Do I need to give my entire IRA to be eligible for the tax benefits?

A. No. You can give any amount under this provision, as long as it is \$100,000 or less per year. If your IRA is valued at more than \$100,000, you can transfer a portion of it to fund a charitable gift.

Q. I have two charities I want to support. Can I give \$100,000 from my IRA to each?

A. No. Under the law, you can give a maximum of \$100,000. For example, you can give each organization \$50,000 this year or any other combination that totals \$100,000 or less. Any amount above \$100,000 in one year must be reported as taxable income.

Q. My spouse and I would like to give more than \$100,000. How can we do that?

A. If you have a spouse (as defined by the IRS) who is 70½ or older and has an IRA, he or she can also give up to \$100,000 from his or her IRA.

It is wise to consult with your tax professionals if you are contemplating a charitable gift under the extended law. Start your estate plan by downloading the pdf file at www.hheonline.org/tool-kit.shtml.

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment	
Ashwin & Vena Cattamanchi	US\$1,000.00
Anonymous	411.68
Janava Dharmadeva	1,248.00
Roshan Harilela	375.00
Murali Krishnaswamy	500.00
Gayatri Rajan	75.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	75.00
Aran Sambandar	72.00
Other Donations	30,000.00
Total	33,756.68

Iraivan Temple Endowment	
Frank Burkhardt	30.00
Gunasegaran Chitravelloo	54.42
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	200.00
Anonymous	83.00
Dinesh Kumar Jayaram	6.52
A. Paranthaman	4.34
Jayaram Rajaletchumi	10.86
Indrani Shanmugasundram	10.86
Other Donations	30,000.00
Total	30,400.00

Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund	
Thirujnanam Arnassalon	11.12
Gunavadee Caremben	24.42
Somasundaram Caremben	24.42
Sukanta Caremben	24.42
Rajendra Giri	36.00
Kamila Jagambrum	169.75
Juhivaasana Koothan	8.19
Anil Kumar	27.00
Rohan & Girija Malkhare	251.00
Ashwini Maureemootoo	22.30
Saroja Maureemootoo	21.94
Anonymous	315.30
Jogendra Moorooogen	2.78
Vidyadevi Moorooogen	2.78
Toshadevi Nataraj	20.00
Chandran Param	20.00
Padmini Pareatumbree	20.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98
Hemavalli Sivalingam	46.73
Total	1,098.13

Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund	
Sushri Ananda	299.00
Federico Nicolas Blanco	299.00
Ram Chandra	299.00
Tapash Dey	299.00
Simren Preeti Gupta	299.00
Kamila Jagambrum	69.72
Karthik Mahadevan	299.00
Rohan & Girija Malkhare	499.00
Jay Mazo	299.00
Poongodi Mogan	342.48
Bhaveshan Moorghen	8.19
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen	8.19
Udeyadeva Moorghen	8.19
Anonymous	483.00
Bijamati Pareatumbree	60.00
Akshay Prabhakar	299.00
Ashokkumar Ranchhod	299.00
Muthukumar Shanmugam	81.06
Sai Singh	120.00
Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	299.00
Bijender Tanwar	299.00
Sudha Vinadharan	66.41
Sahunthala Vinothachandran	299.00
Total	5,334.24

Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund	
Anonymous	108.00
Vel Mahalingum	21.94
Manogaran Mardemootoo	66.52
Total	196.46

Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment	
Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	9.00
Umasankaran Mohambourame	74.21

Gowri Nadason	124.71
Leela MPK Nair	3,276.00
Parimala Selvaraj	93.00
Total	3,576.92

Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund	
Vel Alahan	500.00
Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00
Patricia Johnson	25.00
Anonymous	72.00
Kulagan Moonesawmy	17.76
Gowri Nadason	124.71
Toshadevi Nataraj	20.00
Rajeswary Ramamoorthy	225.00
Aran Sambandar	35.00
Muthu & Nandini Senthilkumar	51.00
Vayudeva Varadan	36.00
Other Donations	4,800.00
Total	5,939.47

Nadesan Family Lord Muruga Shum Fund	
Sadhunathan Nadesan	501.00

Iyarappan Temple Trust	
Krishanth Rajasooriyar	45.00

Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam	
Anonymous	424.00
Aran Sendan	108.00
Muthu & Nandini Senthilkumar	101.00
Total	633.00

Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Anonymous	334.00
Total	384.00

Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund	
Aran Sendan	108.00

Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment	
Ravi Madapati	100.00
Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00
Aran Sendan	108.00
Total	283.00

Hinduism Today Production Fund	
Bhagawandas & Rajani Lathi Charitable Fund	15,000.00
Ron & Jennifer Burke	100.00
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	200.00
Satish Gandhi	1,001.00
Prabhakar C Ghosh	90.00
Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	2.71
Rajendra Giri	110.00
Rajiv Kaushal	72.00
Anonymous	5,063.00
Alok R. Lathi	7,000.00
Raj & Deepa Maturi	1,000.00
Pramod J. Mehta	100.00
Muster	500.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Gayatri Rajan	75.00
Aran Sambandar	107.00
Tilak R. Sharma	47.85
Krishan Chawla	3,007.75
Total	33,526.32

Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund	
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	200.00
Benevity	280.00
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.10
Roshan Harilela	375.00
Anonymous	108.00
Sandi OShaughnessy	72.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	75.00
Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00
Himanshu Vyas	121.00
Matthew Wiecezork	5.00
Total	1,320.10

Hindu Education Endowment	
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	100.00

Hindu Press International Endowment Fund	
Rajendra Giri	110.00
Surendra & Patsy Rajpal	250.00
Total	360.00

Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund	
Mano Navaratnarajah	225.00
Gassa Patten	1,350.00
Total	1,575.00

Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment	
Anil Kumar	18.00

Positive Discipline Endowment	
Vinaya Alahan	33.00

Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund	
Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00
Srinivas R. Madaboosi	300.00
Total	333.00

Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund	
Rajadeva Alahan	102.00
S.K. Rangole	100.00
Total	202.00

Murugan Temple of North America Pillaiyar Shrine Fund	
Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	15.00
Total	165.00

Thank You Bodhinatha Fund	
Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
Anonymous	5,741.55
Debashis Ghosh	100.00
Lorraine Jackson	10.00
Ashwini Maureemootoo	2.78
Olha Nahnybida	1,001.00
Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00
Sandi OShaughnessy	108.00
Janaka Param	108.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	1,008.00
Aran Sambandar	163.00
Som Sharma	250.00
Ramesh Sivanathan	15.77
Anba Dayananden Valayten	10.64
Vayudeva Varadan	42.00
Michael Wasylkiw	648.00
Total	9,682.74

Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Shyamal Chandra Debnath	150.00
Total	200.00

Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund	
Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00

Manitha Neyam Trust Fund	
Bala Sivaceyon	10.00
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	30.00
Total	40.00

Tiptur Shiva Temple & Youth Hostel Fund	
Kunjai Thaker	20.00

Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00

Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00

Karnataka Temple Development Fund	
Kumari Santosh	30.00

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment	
Canaganayagam Kugendra	60.00

Hindu Literature Fund	
John & Abha Wiersba	153.00

Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund	
Rajagopal Krishnan	60.00

Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund	
Shyamadeva Dandapani	33.00

Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund	
Sivakumar Saravan	1,500.00

Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment	
N. Balasubramanian	5,000.00
Marlene Carter	162.00
Anonymous	1,583.71
Sasikumar Darmalingam	10.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Dharmalingam Siddhan	25.00
Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00
Soma Sundaram	10.00
Total	7,290.72

India Hindu Tribals Endowment	
Rajendra Giri	110.00

Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund	
Vayudeva Varadan	36.00

India Hindu Temple Cleaning Fund	
Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.10
Ravi Madapati	100.00
Manogaran Mardemootoo	13.89
Kulagan Moonesawmy	16.38
Toshadevi Nataraj	20.00
Total	154.37

Anantha Ladies Home Endowment	
Sayanthan & Anupama Sivanathan	30.00

Hindu American Foundation Endowment	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00

Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment	
Partha Ayalasomayajula	350.00
Anonymous	24.12
Kunal & Sanyogeeta Ghurbhurn	4.10
Jegathesan Murugaya	50.00
Natraj Narayanswami	22.00
Toshadevi Nataraj	10.00
Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00
Arunasalam Vathavooran	75.00
Total	685.22

Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund	
Anil Kumar	27.00

Murugamoorthi Thirukkovil Endowment	
N. Balasubramanian	10,000.00

Digital Dharma Endowment	
Anonymous	178.43
Chellappa Deva	25.00
Shama Vinayaga	360.34
Total	563.77

Insurance Premiums	
Mrunal Patel	3,003.00

Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment	
Other Donations	600.00

Total Contributions	US\$154,467.14
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Funds at Market Value, Dec 31, 2016	
Total Endowment Funds	US\$14,196,922.38
Total Pooled Income Funds	\$0.00

Grand Total	US\$ 14,196,922.38
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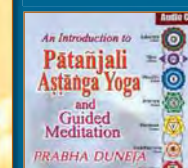
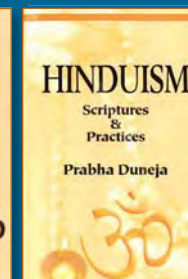
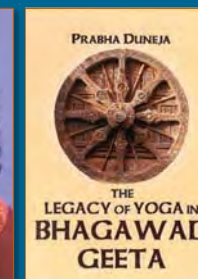
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Marriage is challenging at best. And when the spouses are of different religions, the challenges can multiply. One can suddenly grow bewildered, discovering that what is unfolding today is not what was assumed or understood when vows were taken. For example, a spouse can be shocked to discover that his or her idea of equality in marriage is not shared. Or the question can suddenly arise: in which of the two religions are the children going to be raised? If these questions were not foreseen and no clear agreement had been reached beforehand, distress can ensue.

Whether you are the parent in a contemplated interfaith union or the prospective bride or groom, it

www.InterfaithShaadi.org

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- ◆ Marriage laws from many countries, traditions and expectations in various religions including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and more
- ◆ Quotes from scriptures, historic perspectives, practical issues, video messages
- ◆ 900+ real-life experiences from people who have dated, married or divorced interfaith
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- ◆ Innumerable articles and views covering all aspects of interfaith family life
- ◆ Free web-based consultation
- ◆ A non-profit, non-religious, independent service organization

is wise to learn relevant key elements of the faith being married into before the knot is tied. Best course is to give all parties concerned the opportunity to learn about the issues before a final commitment is made and, if necessary, to discuss them and arrive together at a reasonable conclusion—to go through with the wedding or not.

The couple has the final say as it is their life. Either way, they will have understood what is at stake and made an informed and wise decision for their life. To help in this delicate process, a non profit online forum has been set up since 2009, dedicated to the happiness of couples contemplating marrying someone of another faith: www.InterfaithShaadi.org

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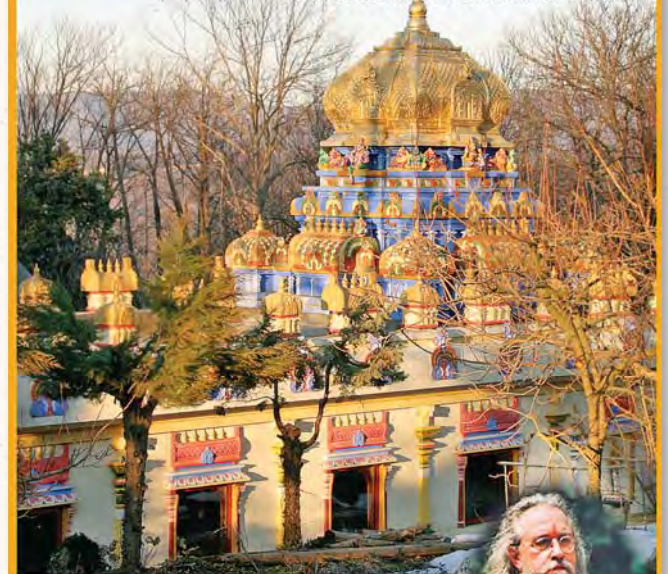
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13–16, Austin, TX
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29–30, Atlanta, GA

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23–24, Warrington, PA
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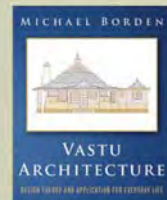


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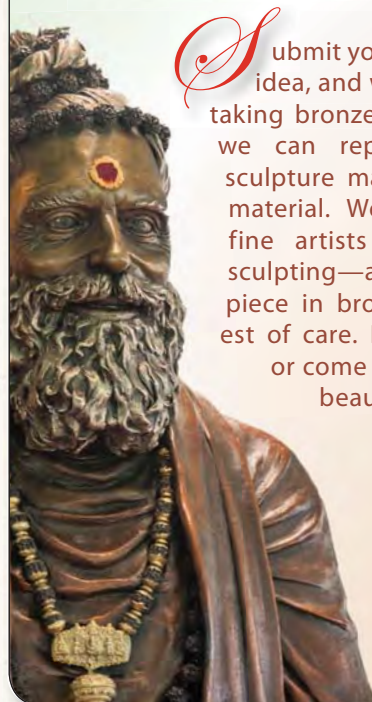
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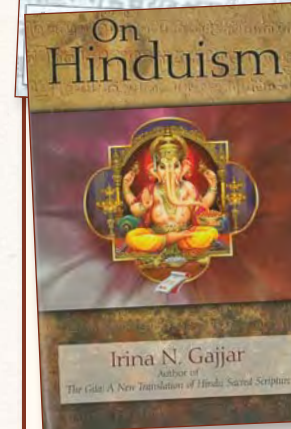
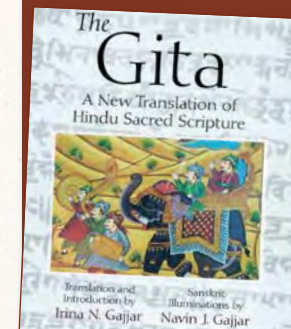
Roy Eugene Davis has been teaching in North and South America, Europe, and India* for almost 60 years. He was ordained by Paramahansa Yogananda in 1951.

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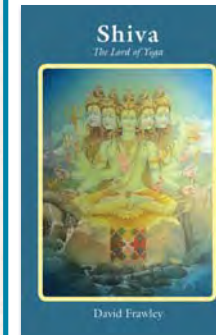
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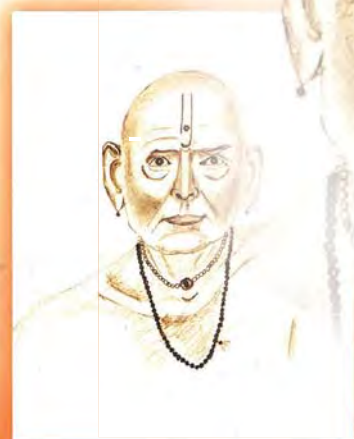
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Jul 16-22 (Sun-Sat) Family Vedanta Course I , Swami Vidadatmananda, Vivekacūḍāmaṇi	Oct 3-Nov 21 (Tue-Tue) Fall 7-Week Vedanta Course for Adults , Swami Tattvavidananda
Jul 23-29 (Sun-Sat) Family Vedanta Course II , Swami Vidadatmananda, Swami Pratyagbodhananda	Nov 23-26 (Thu-Sun) Thanksgiving Family Vedanta Course , Swami Tattvavidananda
Jul 30-Aug 5 (Sun-Sat) Family Vedanta Course III , Swami Vidadatmananda, Swami Pratyagbodhananda	Dec 24-31 (Sun-Sun) Year-End Vedanta Course (Christmas) , Swami Tattvavidananda, Swami Pratyagbodhananda
Aug 6-11 (Sun-Fri) One-Week Vedanta Course , Swami Tadatmananda, Drk-drśya-viveka	Dec 31 (Sun) Mula-mantra Japa , 9:00 am -1:00 pm
Aug 13 (Sun) Gurukulam's 31st Anniversary , Saranagati	Jan 1, 2018 (Mon) New Year's Day Celebration , 9:30 am -12:30 pm
Aug 17-20 (Thu-Sun) Patrons' Complimentary Course I , Swami Vidadatmananda, Swami Pratyagbodhananda	

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hat

bonds are these

That set my mind on fire?

What forces are they that unleash
My relentless heart to seek
Thy Holy Ground?

And suddenly Thou comest into view,
Unfolding before me like the mighty Himalaya.

On Thy Holy Ground,
My eyes lock onto Thy Edifice,
I hear Thy mighty bow twang OM
Reverberating throughout the world.

"Chant Aum and feel My Strength
Coursing through your blood."
I see Thy spinning Trishul
Dash vortices of energy
Round and 'round the earth.
"Stand here and know
You are not the body."

From Thy Peak, Ganga flows
Into the Ocean of Love.
"Drink from that Fountain
And dissolve your bonds."

Thou art the Arthee
In the setting sun.
"Burn your dross
In the flames of
My Purity."

"In the land of Jogjakarta,
I stand:
My Light of cosmic energy
Radiating through all of existence.
I am the Lord of the Solar Lords,
The Central Solar Logos.
I am Siva,
The Infinite Spirit.
I Am the One."

The Central Logos, Para Brahman, by Dr Arjunan Subramaniam.
Desa Parkcity, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 23 September to 3 November, 2014

DIGITAL DHARMA

FILM MAKING

The Remarkable & Vast Repository of Benoy K. Behl

BENOY K. BEHL IS ARGUABLY A PERSON who has done more than anyone else to document the Hindu and Buddhist art and temple architecture of India and Asia. A filmmaker, art historian and photographer working primarily for Doordarshan, India's largest broadcasting company, Behl has taken more than 40,000 photographs and made more than 100 documentaries, all without becoming well known on YouTube. Amazingly, his channel, which contains a rich reposi-

tory of documentaries filmed around the globe, has just under 1,000 subscribers.

While mostly making religious and cultural films, Behl is also mentioned by *Limca Book of Records* as the most traveled photographer to document Indian art influences across the world, estimating that he logged over 400,000 miles between 2001 and 2015 while

documenting the art and sculpture of India and Asia.

You can find trailers and excerpts of Behl's work at his YouTube channel, bit.ly/2BenoyBehl. His *Spectacular India* documentary comprises about twenty

www.hinduismtoday.com



8-minute clips. It was this production that caught the attention of HINDUISM TODAY. Notable clips from the *Spectacular India* series are shown in the film-strip above, left to right. Episode 23 is titled *The Glorious Temples of Karnataka*. Benoy showcases a selection of Karnataka's ancient temples, from the 6th century Badami shrines and onward. This video covers the sites of Pattadakal, Belur, Halebid and others.

Episode 14 features Durga, the most popular God in Kolkata, and Her festival. Episode 11, far right, shows Behl with the Baul singers of Bengal. They are God-intoxicated singers performing in forests and traveling in a caravanserai, singing the names of God spontaneously with supreme devotion. Behl's *Yoga: An Ancient Vision of Life* contains interviews with B.K.S. Iyengar and others who explain yoga's spiritual and philosophical nature. Behl also authored *The Ajanta Caves: Ancient Paintings of Buddhist India*, and has lectured extensively on the history of Indian art.

This extraordinary man makes his home in New Delhi, the city of his birth.

ALL PHOTOS: BENOY BEHL

