

ISSN 1558-4690

# AŠHÉ!

JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

Fall 2006



## Table of Contents

True Spirituality	259
Earth and Sky Gods of India and Greece, <i>Dirk Dunbar, Ph.D.</i>	261
All Things Are Like This, <i>Master Dogen Zenji</i>	293
Commentary on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, <i>Brendan Connell</i>	295
A World Divided, <i>Zen Master Gudo W. Nishijima</i>	301
The Savage Buddha, <i>Sritantra</i>	304
Freedom from Karma, <i>Nissim Amon</i>	316
Radios and Mantras, <i>Nissim Amon</i>	319
Nissim Amon	324
Portfolio: Ernest Williamson III	325
Astroplankton Break Dance, <i>Sarah Knorr</i>	331
The Acoustic Hajj, <i>David Keali'i</i>	336
Camelopardalis, <i>David Keali'i</i>	339
Invocation, <i>David Keali'i</i>	341
Cultural Engineering With Eyes Wide Shut? Playback/Feedback	
Magicks And The Archaeology Of The Now, <i>Tristram Burden</i>	343
Reviews	349

Cover Photograph: Vladimir Pomortsev, Bohdi tree at Wat Prha Mahathat Temple in Ayutthaya, Thailand.

# ASHÉ

JOURNAL OF  
EXPERIMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

Fall 2006, Volume V, Number 3

ISSN 1558-4690 (print)

ISSN 1558-4704 (electronic)

**EDITOR:**

Sven Davisson

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS:**

Diane Chase

Eric K. Lerner

Bobby Shiflett

**FRIENDS & ADVISORS**

Nathaniel Bamford

Baba Raul Canizares

Christopher DeVere

Peter Fuerst

Trebor Healey

William J. Malay

Mogg Morgan

*Ashé Journal* was founded in 2002 by independent religious scholars, spiritual experimenters and investigators of new religious movements. The Journal is published quarterly—issues distributed online in HTML, downloadable PDF and print formats.

**PRINT COPIES** Current and back issues are available from Lulu Press  
<http://www.lulu.com./ashe-prem/>

**SUBMISSIONS** We encourage unsolicited submissions of original articles, fiction, poetry, photography and artwork. Electronic versions of submissions may be sent to [submit@ashejournal.com](mailto:submit@ashejournal.com). Please send material as an attached file not in the body of the email. For text documents MSWord is preferred.

**ADVERTISING** For information and rates contact the editor.

**BOOK REVIEWS** Publishers and authors may send review copies for consideration to the Journal's editorial offices, attn: Book Review Editor.

**COPYRIGHT 2006**, All rights reserved. Reproduction, storage or transmission of this work in any form or by any means beyond that permitted by Section 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law is unlawful without prior permission of the Publisher or the author.

**DISCLAIMER** The Publisher and Editors cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequence arising from the use of information contained in the Journal; the views and opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Publisher or Editors.

**EDITORIAL OFFICES**

P.O. Box 363, Hulls Cove, ME 04609

**WEBSITE**

[www.ashejournal.com](http://www.ashejournal.com)

## True Spirituality

The Buddha, India, 6th century BC

---

One day, a monk approached The Buddha and said:

Sir,

It just occurred to me as I was in meditation

That You have set aside

And left some important things unexplained:

Is the world eternal, or is the world temporary?

Are the soul and the body identical,

Or is the soul one thing and the body another?

Do the enlightened exist after death,

Or do they exist no more?

If you know the answers to these questions,

Then please tell me;

If not,

Then admit that you do not know.

If you do not give me an answer

Then I will cease to be a Buddhist.

The Buddha replied:

O monk,  
Did I ever say to you,  
'Come lead the spiritual life under me,  
And I will answer all your questions?'

O monk,  
The person who refuses to live the spiritual life  
Until I have answered all their questions,  
This person will have to wait until they die.

The spiritual life is not about  
Whether the world is eternal or not,  
Nor about opinions on body and soul,  
Nor about beliefs concerning the afterlife.

Always bear in mind  
What it is that I explain,  
And what it is that I do not talk about.

I have only taught those things  
Which have to do with true spirituality:

Teachings that facilitate serenity;  
Teachings that terminate suffering;  
And teachings that lead the way to freedom.

Taken from *The Book of Dharma*, translated and edited by Nissim Amon

---

## Earth and Sky Gods of India and Greece: Finding the Feminine in Masculine Myths

Dirk Dunbar, Ph.D.

---

I affirm that the presence of God is manifest, in the profound experience of the psyche, as a coincidentia oppositorum [a coincidence of opposites], and the whole history of religion, all the theologies bear witness to the fact that the coincidentia oppositorum is one of the most common and archaic formulas for expressing the reality of God. (1977, 229-30) –Carl Jung



Debasis Das

We are all born with a “call of the wild.” Myths and symbols of every culture express the need to identify with the force that mothered us into being. Many of the related archetypes, such as the Great Goddess and her fertility consorts, signal that we belong to the cosmos, that our flesh and bones are part of the earth’s body, that mind is a property of nature shared by all being—inanimate as well as animate. The instinctual or so-called feminine impulse binds us to nature and reveals the planet as home, the source from which we spring and return. Many of us

living in urban industrial complexes have alienated that impulse by habituating the innate call to sense the world as alive and sacred. While our obsession with technological progress has enhanced that loss, the roots of our alienation reach back to the ancient elevation of sky gods and vilification of earth deities concomitant with the integration—forced or otherwise—of Indo-European and indigenous cultures. India's gods, Vishnu and Shiva, and the Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysus, provide clear and profound examples not only of the distinct cultures, but also of the sense of balance that has been lost by the desecration of earth god and goddess archetypes.

The gods' relationships are long and complex, but can be summarized in terms of the Hindu and ancient Greek propensity to revere balance. The bipolarity of Apollo and Dionysus and Vishnu and Shiva began with the marriages of apparently distinct cultures, but, more importantly, evolved hand in hand with the long and complex blending of the unique worldviews. Apollo and Vishnu serve as solar-sky gods who, by promoting human welfare, being patrons of the aristocracy, and establishing laws regarding human behavior and propitiation, evolved into protectors of culture. Shiva and Dionysus, the sky-god counterparts, are lords of mountains and forests and represent the life force of animals and vegetation. Their domains include eroticism and ecstasy, androgyny, possession, dance and theater, as well as creation and destruction. While the ordered rites and worship of Apollo and Vishnu contribute to social structure and hierarchy by stressing humanistic self-knowledge and social responsibility, Shiva and Dionysus serve as archetypal expressions of primal peoples' communal relationship with nature, and their worship marks the awareness of the unity between the self and the cosmos.

I believe that the balance implicit in the relationships of Shiva and Vishnu and Dionysus and Apollo symbolizes the fullness of human worth. While attempting to avoid eulogizing pre-Indo-European peoples of Aegean and Indus Valley regions and unfairly denigrating Indo-Europeans,

my goal is to show how the union of the distinct cultures is expressed through the blending of the sky gods with the earth gods, respectively. I will suggest how that blending, if appropriated a clear feminine impulse, could provide insights into causes of and potential remedies for Western culture's alienation from nature, the feminine impulse, and the call of the wild.

### THE CULTURAL OVERLAY OF MYTHS, RITES, AND SYMBOLS

Much has been made of the so-called Indo-European conquests of native, Mother Goddess worshipping cultures. Evidence, or lack thereof, from archaeology, linguistics, and mythology has been used to support or refute theories related to the conflict, absorption, and assimilation of cultures that are distinguished by virtue of their unique artifacts, languages, race, myths, and symbols. Much of the archaeological and linguistic evidence for a recent version of the incursion theory stems from the work and impetus of Marija Gimbutas (1982), who concluded that the overlay of Indo-European and Old European cultures resulted from several waves of invasions that occurred somewhere between fifth and second millennia BCE. A patriarchal people with a male sky-god pantheon, the Indo-Europeans—whom Gimbutas called “Kurgans”—supposedly used their abundant weaponry, horse-drawn chariots, and combative energies to conquer and subdue Old Europe's Goddess-worshipping matrilineal societies that were purportedly peaceful agriculturalists. Reportedly stemming from the steppes of Russia through northwest Asia, the Indo-Europeans allegedly invaded peaceful societies from Crete to India. Riane Eisler (1988), a disciple of Gimbutas, offers a catalog of examples: Aryans assailed India; Kurgans, Eastern Europe; Hittites, the Fertile Crescent; Luwians, Anatolia; and Achaeans and Dorians, Greece.

Joseph Campbell (1976) helped popularize the purported clash and subsequent merger as an overlay of hunting and planting cultures. While



hunting societies of the cold and barren north depended mostly on killing animals for food, planting cultures of southern climates grew food for a living. That explains, if Campbell is right, why the Northern nomadic hunters—such as the Kurgans/Aryans—created dominantly masculine cultures and worshipped virulent sky-gods, while planters such as the Minoans of Crete and the so-called Dravidians of the Indus Valley Civilization created more matrilineal, matrifocal societies and worshipped earth gods and goddesses. The pinnacle in the popularization of the invasion theory may be Eisler’s proposal that the distinctions between the androcentric dominator model of the Indo-Europeans and the egalitarian partnership model of the Mother Goddess worshipping cultures could provide a paradigm of change for us today.

Clearly, much of the “history” of the cultural interplay is agenda driven (Gimbutas and Eisler are avid ecofeminists). That fact, along with the lack of data, has led many contemporary critics to not only reject the invasion theory, but to also question the very existence of, for instance, the Aryans and Dravidians.<sup>1</sup> It is beyond my scope here to affirm or refute the invasion theory and much that goes along with it.<sup>2</sup> I will say that the fall of

---

<sup>1</sup> One such critic, Padma Manian (1998), argues that the typical Eurocentric projection of the clash between the Harappan and invading Indo-European cultures can be explained in terms of three related versions of the invasion theory. The first is “the racial theory” introduced by the nineteenth century Sanskrit scholar Max Mueller, who regarded the *Rig Veda* as linguistic and literary evidence for the light-skinned Aryan conquerors and their god Indra’s destruction of the dark-skinned Dasyus, who were Dravidians. A Biblical literalist, Mueller considered the advent of imposed Aryan culture as a boon to the inferior Dravidians. The second version, introduced by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, accepted the racial aspects but professed that the Aryans were the barbarians and the Dravidians victimized, peaceful natives (Gimbutas, Eisler, and other ecofeminists support this version). The third version, which many scholars maintain today, is that the Harappan civilization fell to natural catastrophe and the Aryans might have simply migrated into the area following the collapse. After disputing the viability of all three versions, Manian adds another possibility: the Aryans entered long before heretofore considered.

<sup>2</sup> Similar kinds of debates exist regarding the so-called Kurgan invasions of Old Europe. Perhaps the strongest indication of an Indo-European invasion is that of the Mycenaean, who in the middle of the second millennium BCE conquered and subdued—with apparently minimal violence—the Goddess worshipping culture of the Minoans in Crete. It

the Indus Valley Civilization (which centered more along the Saraswati than the Indus River) probably owes to natural catastrophe—such as drought and/or the shifting or damming of rivers—and not Aryan incursions. Nevertheless, the Aryans did migrate to India. As Mathew Fitzsimons (1970), who rejects the invasion theory, assesses:

The advent of Aryans (circa 1500 B.C.) to India cannot be questioned but one may wonder when they came and how they came, all at once or in installments, and what they did upon their arrival. To note the lack of evidence for invasions is not to rule out later Aryan dominance in India. (16)

While there is too little evidence to affirm that the pre-Aryan people of Indus Valley Civilization were Dravidians (I will follow the tendency of contemporary scholars to call them “Harappans”), the Indo-Europeans who entered India were referred to—and even called themselves—Aryans (meaning “noble ones”). Setting aside the stereotypes owing to the terms’ association with early British scholarship as well as Hitler’s so-called favorite race, I believe reports that Aryan passions probably did include hunting, drinking, gambling, brothels, and animal sacrifices. It also seems likely that they are largely responsible for the indoctrination of India’s caste system, and for the oral transmission of the *Rig Veda*, the first of four Vedas for which the Vedic Age is named. However, the subtle yet thorough integration of the pre-Aryan and Aryan cultures makes it difficult to affirm distinct characterizations.

It is important to add that the notion of the Aryans being a white race and the Dravidians being a black one is highly debatable, if not indefensible (for certain, the Dravidians are not a genetically distinct “race” as

---

appears that the overthrow occurred following an earthquake and tidal wave that had destabilized Minoan culture.

nineteenth century scholars posited). On the other hand, the Rig Veda does support warfare between two distinct peoples. It may be, as David Frawley (1995) suggests, that the Vedic Age warfare refers to forces of light and darkness, not to light or dark-skinned peoples. In either case, the notion of conflict between two discrete cultures, whether they are engaged in localized battles or are part of a good-versus-evil cosmic war, belongs to the formation of the Vedic Age.

While the archaeological, linguistic, and literary notions of conquest remain problematic, the proliferation of Indo-European cultures can be traced, according to scholars such as Robert Graves (2000), Charlene Spretnak (1984), and Ralph Metzner (1999) through the mythological desecration of the Mother Goddess archetype.<sup>3</sup> Typical myths of this sort include a sky god—such as the Nordic Thor, Vedic Indra (the fierce warrior god of the Aryans), Babylonian Marduk, and Greek Apollo—who kills the serpent or dragon figure closely allied with the Great Goddess; or the rape of a goddess figure such as Persephone by Hades and Europa by Zeus (who had transformed himself into a bull, symbolizing the Minoan fertility god, to seduce her). Goddess figures such as the Canaanite Astarte, the Sumerian Lilith, and the Babylonian Ishtar are stripped of their power, demonized, and/or deposed. Havah, which means “Mother of All Living,” becomes Eve in the Torah/Bible, a mortal who, created from Adam’s rib, is responsible for succumbing to the serpent and damning humans from the sacred garden. While Mother Goddess consorts such as Pan, Shiva, and Dionysus became prototypes of the horned Devil, the fact that there is no Mother Goddess co-partner in Abrahamic traditions, wherein the Father in

---

<sup>3</sup> The Mother Goddess tradition may not be as monolithic as a number of archeomythologists such as Marija Gimbutas suggest; however, the expanse and diversity of that tradition is indisputable. Gimbutas’ work (1982, 1994) describes in superlative detail Mother Goddess rites, myths, and symbols. A. L. Basham (1959), Merlin Stone (1976), and Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor (1987) also provide abundant examples of Mother Goddess worship. Erich Neumann’s *The Great Mother* (1991) not only offers psychological interpretations of the archetype, but also contains an appendix of the remarkable collection of Mother Goddess artifacts that were photographed at an Eranos conference.

heaven creates ex nihilo and sustains a patriarchal hierarchy, also testifies to the rise of sky gods and subsequent disappearance of Goddess archetypes.

My point is: regardless of whether Northern, patriarchal, war-faring cultures victimized matrilineal planting societies there exist inescapable indications of a cultural overlay of rites, symbols, and myths that correspond to distinct, culturally unique worships of sky gods and earth gods and goddesses. More importantly, the marriage of those unique myths, rites, and symbols provide meaningful insights into the past, present, and potential relationship between humans, nature, and the divine.

### THE VEDIC MEETING OF VISHNU AND RUDRA-SHIVA

While the Aryans may have brought the *Rig Veda*, which is 1028 hymns that honor their gods, into the Indus Valley, the *Sama Veda* (a guide to rituals that correspond to the *Rig Veda*), the *Yajur Veda* (a compilation of prose that pertain mostly to sacrifice), and the *Atharva Veda* (a sort of manual for spells and incantations) were composed in India. The Aryan pantheon included gods such as the dragon-slaying Indra, who galloped across the heavens in his horse-drawn chariot; Varuna, the universal preserver of divine order; Agni, the god of fire; Soma the divine hallucinogenic plant; Mithra, the god of storms; the god of sun and stars, Mazda, who embodied truth and justice; and, of course, Vishnu. Vishnu is mentioned 93 times in the *Rig Veda*, and often with reference to his infamous three strides, which reflect his association with the sun's trek across the daily sky. Described in the *Brahmanas* (appendices to the Vedas), Vishnu, incarnate as Vamana, challenges a demon king who holds the world hostage. Disguised as a dwarf, Vishnu convinces the king to give him as much territory as he can cover in three paces. After reclaiming his true form, Vishnu takes the infamous "three strides" that cover the earth, sky, and beyond, thereby reclaiming the planet for humans and echoing his wholly beneficial role as a sustainer of human culture. Considered by many

scholars as a solar deity early in his evolution, Vishnu personified order, control, moderation, and benevolence—particularly to those who propitiated him.

Aryans were the most apt to receive the blessings of Vishnu and the other sky gods of the Vedas. Part of the reason may involve the caste system apparently established by the Aryans. The caste system is based on varna, or “color.” Though there is still debate, it seems plausible that varna referred to colors associated solely with the characteristics of the various castes and not skin color.<sup>4</sup> Whether or not Dasyus meant “darkskins,” they were apparently despised by the Aryans and were often classified as Sudras, the serfs or commoners whose purpose was to serve the upper castes. They had few rights or opportunity for financial or spiritual mobility. Dasyus often became “untouchables” (chandalas) who—still part of Indian culture—lived outside the communities they served and had to bear distinguishing marks and clap wood to signal their approach, which was allowed only to perform duties such as scavenging, sanitation, executions, and cremating dead bodies.

The highest varnas—the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), and Vaisya (merchants)—were, at the outset of the bi-cultural integration, composed mostly of Aryans. Those castes, because of their initiation into the Vedic “sacred thread,” were often consecrated as dvijas or “twice born.” The Brahmins, who were always “twice born,” maintained their authority via the sky gods for whom they spoke, interpreted hymns and incantations, and offered rites of propitiation. Vishnu was clearly such a Brahmin god, from his ability to destroy evil and save humans to his avatar Krishna, who, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, offers freedom from rebirth to all who are righteous, but, as author of the caste system, correlates “caste-mixture” with “universal destruction” (1972, 47-51).

---

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of the various colors as they relate to specific castes, see Manian (1998, 26-27).

In the localities that the Aryans did not inhabit, tribal chiefs and village shamans were often initiated as Kshatriyas and Brahmins to accommodate the surge of Aryan culture. Vedic Sanskrit—a cognate language of the Aryans—became the major language in Northwest India or Aryavarta (“the land of the Aryans”), which remains culturally and politically different from the Tamil peninsula, or the Southeastern plain. Still called Dravidian India, much of the peninsula, while embracing its Vedic cultural legacy, has retained its native tongues—such as Tamil, Telegu, and Kannada. Separated by the dry and hilly Deccan plateau, the Aryan and the pre-Aryan cultures have provoked and expanded each other and helped create the tolerance and flexibility to accept and assimilate diversity, whether social, religious, or linguistic (there are over 7,000 dialects in India). That flexibility has helped Hindu thought endure the spread of Buddhism, Muslim rule, and English colonization.

Much of the established Vedic law and social stratification carries patriarchal inferences (an injunction of the *Brahmanas* states that the populace should treat men well, while *Code of Manu*—though written much later—is clearly man-centered). Even Hinduism’s most profound spiritual treatise, the *Bhagavad Gita* (which is part of the world’s longest poem, the *Mahabharata*), is based on Arjuna’s dharma as a Kshatriya to fight against friends and relatives in a battle that stems from a lost gambling bet. Although it became a philosophical doctrine of right action based on ego-transcendent behavior, dharma in practice still has caste-related overtones. Karma—the law that one reaps what one sows and thereby dictates one’s station in the next life—does not apply to Sudras, let alone untouchables.

Whether or not the Aryans subjugated the pre-Aryan Mother Goddess and her vestiges, well before the *Gita*, the Trimurti or holy Trinity—Brahma (the masculine manifestation of the gender-neutral Brahman), Vishnu, and Shiva—was portrayed as male; though Shiva is often depicted with feminine traits. Moreover, samsara (the cycle of rebirth), Lila (Brahman’s divine play), and Maya (the force of worldly

illusion) not only serve as obstacles to samadhi (enlightened consciousness) and moksha (union with Brahman), they are often regarded as feminine. Similarly, the powers of Prakriti (the primeval feminine matter governed by Maya), the Apsarases (the mystical female seductresses), and the Terrible Goddess Kali are to be avoided or supplicated.

Despite the apparent patriarchal nature of the Aryan gods, much of the Vedic religion appears to have been largely absorbed in the pre-Aryan worldview. The pantheistic, feminine impulse was and still is glorified, due in part to the prominence accorded Shiva and his female counterparts. The earliest form of Shiva, the horned deity, belonged to the Harappans, who apparently worshipped him as a Mother Goddess' fertility consort. Shiva's evolution is reflected in his early epithet, Pasupati, the Lord of the animals, and his later one, Nagaraja, the eternal dancer on whom creation, destruction, and transformation depend. Besides worshipping a Mother Goddess, it appears that the original inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization had no fortifications, that their stone and metals were used mostly for agriculture and ornamentation, that they had domesticated plants and animals, and that they had developed systems of irrigation, city planning, and granaries for food distribution. Their script remains a mystery, but their fecundity remains indisputable: the Indus Valley Civilization comprised over 70 cities, some of which apparently had 30,000 to 40,000 inhabitants.

The primal Shivan impulse was reflected in shishna (phallus) worship and erotic dancing, two clear signs of his connection to Harappan culture. The pre-Aryan Shiva appears on seals and as small sculptures in the form of a horned, ithyphallic god sitting in a yoga position and surrounded by animals. Though the Brahmin philosophy emphasized Shiva's ascetic side and the Tantric cult on his sexual side, the god appears—as Wendy O'Flaherty notes—"far more often in his dual aspect than in either one or the other" (1973, 6). Linga or shishna and yoni (vagina) worship have been traced to Neolithic times by virtue of archaeological finds of phallic stones

and ring stones in Madras and Gujarat. The worship of the linga and yoni links Shiva to the goddess Shakti, one of the heirs of the Mother Goddess cult. Shakti's fusion with Shiva ignites the tantric force that allows followers to unite with Shiva through dance, meditation, and other forms of ecstasy. Shaktism—which is associated with a number of cults such as that of Amma, the pre-Aryan name for the Great Mother—permeates Shiva's mythology, as attested by the creation stories in which Shiva gives Brahma creative female power. Shakti's incarnations, Sati and Parvati, are wives and conjugal partners of Shiva and, as subjects of yoni worship, emphasize the joy and ecstatic experience of sexual oneness. The recurring depiction of Shakti's and Shiva's passionate embrace in temple statues reveals the Hindu recognition of the sacred dimensions of the sensual, an appreciation supported by works such as the Kama Sutra.

Shiva was bound to the Terrible Goddess as well. The lord of dance was known also as the “flesh eater” and recipient of blood sacrifices in honor of both Durga and Kali, the goddesses of night for whom he carries the often depicted severed head. One with Kali and Durga, Shiva represents nature's brutal force of death, destruction, and terror—as reflected in the gruesome rites and practices of groups such as the Thugs. Much of the goddesses' brutality may be part of her assimilation into Vedic mythology, yet, as Hindu scriptures and philosophers (such as the Shaivite Shankara) have emphasized, it is the deadly, destructive potential that makes rebirth or transformation possible (and why sex and death are so important to Shivan mythology). Hence, Shiva's relationship with Kali and Durga is as necessary as his relationship with Shakti. The source of creative and destructive forces as well as the source of inner energy which adept Kundalini practitioners channel through the sacred chakras, the feminine-Shivan relationship shares the cosmic dance that destroys the old to create anew. Symbolized in the animal skin he wears, his horns, his matted locks, the drum he carries, and his androgynous nature, Shiva's ties to the Mother



Goddess distinguish him as a god of fertility, dance, darkness, brutality, birth and death, and, in general, the earth.

Shiva was assimilated—in a series of modifications—with the Aryan prototype, the Vedic god Rudra (rud means “cry” and Rudra means “howler,” and Shiva was known as “The Howler”). In the *Rig Veda*, Rudra and Vishnu were connected to Agni, connections that typify both the opposition and tension between Rudra and Vishnu. Rudra represents the anger and brutality of Agni when the two are brought together, whereas the powers of Vishnu and Agni are beneficial when invoked conjointly, usually as a combined effort to conquer evil. In the later Vedas, Shiva begins to usurp Rudra, first as an adjective to describe Rudra’s “terrible” nature and, finally, as a replacement for the god altogether. Vishnu means “pervader,” a term that appropriates his unreserved acceptance in the Hindu pantheon, and much of his symbolism—such as his throne, the lotus, conch shell, discus, and golden mace—were well established in the Vedic period and represent the powers of salvation that he offers man throughout his and his avatars’ reign. Although little was made of the bipolarity of Vishnu and Shiva in the Vedic Age, the tension as well as the potential harmony between the two was clearly established.

### THE OLYMPIAN CONCESSION: APOLLO GREETSS DIONYSUS

A preeminent god, Apollo either accompanied the Indo-Europeans into the Aegean region in the second millennium BCE or was assimilated rapidly by them after their arrival. The absorption theory warrants that Apollo’s nature was not determined solely by one culture, but by a series of fusion of the myths, rites, and practices of Indo-Europeans and native Aegean cultures. How, when, or where Apollo usurped other gods remains unclear, but the consequences of that fusion are apparent in the pervading goal of the Olympian system: to assert control over animistic, earthly powers. Apollo’s success was due to three major sources—namely, the Indo-

European conquest of indigenous cultures, the Homeric worldview, and his absorption of other major savior gods.

If Homer recognized the tension between Dionysus and Apollo, he stressed the triumph of only one side, the Olympian. Apollo's role in *The Odyssey* is minimal, but his arrows are recognized as bringing sudden and painless death, and the day Odysseus kills the suitors falls on an Apollonian festival. *The Iliad* assured Apollo's prominence in early Greek culture. Dionysus does not play a role in either epic; however, he is regarded implicitly as the god of wine and explicitly as the accuser of Ariadne in *The Odyssey*, and, in *The Iliad*, he is reported to have been chased into the sea by Lycurgus. Which is to say, the epics of Homer helped subdue the final vestige of the Mother goddess, Dionysus, who was omitted from the Olympic pantheon for a century or more after Homer refused to place him there.

Apollo's brutal relationship to earth gods and goddesses is nowhere more apparent than in his forced usurpation of the Mother Goddess figure, Gaia (or Ge), at Delphi. Described first in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and later in Pausanias, Plutarch, and Pindar, Apollo's slaying of Tityos (the giant who attacked Leto on her way to Delphi), the female dragon Delphyne (the root word meaning "womb"), and Delphi's guardian dragon Python (the son of Gaia) are common themes. While some stories claim that it was his twin sister Artemis who slew Tityos and other versions that the Python was subdued and not killed, the conquest proved complete. Not only was her surviving vestige, Dionysus, a male, following Apollo's usurpation, the "white feet of women" were not allowed on the Delphic altar. More importantly, the priestess Pythia had to undergo purification before she fell into her ecstatic convulsions. Possessed by Apollo but deprived the right of direct speech, the priestess sounded incoherent and had to be interpreted by a male priest or priests who remained rationally detached from the spirit world. In some myths, she was chained to a rock and tortured. In this manner, Apollo imposed control on the divine

mysteries, eradicated direct experience of ecstatic wisdom, and dispossessed the powers of the Mother Goddess.

Apollo's role as a polis god is also marked at Delphi, where he was named "god of colonization," given epithets such as "founder," "ancestor," "father god," and "guardian of boundaries," and served as a physical "healer" and spiritual "guide" and "savior" (see Lindsay, 1965, 44). From the eighth to the fifth centuries BCE, his oracle established the Apollonian impulse as masculine, rational, all knowing, and virtuous, helping him become the ultimate single force that sustained the Olympian system. By expanding his cult image, Delphi generated Apollo's individual character and universal appeal and inspired his classical image as god of music, poetry, medicine, science, mathematics, and "moderation in all things." Apollo was called the patron god of Socrates (who the Delphic oracle recognized along with Euripides as the wisest men in Greece) and the Father of Plato (who claimed that all rites of purification should be done in accordance with Apollo's as practiced at Delphi).

Delphi introduced urban Apollonian values while maintaining, in a secularized form, tribal connections to the spirit world—a process that allowed the Olympian system to perpetuate itself as the State religion. Its flexibility to assimilate and canalize the Mother Goddess and other chthonic powers proved to be its source of vitality, and the prime example of the harmony in discord relationship between Olympian and non-Olympian powers was Apollo and Dionysus. The balance of the gods is attested at Delphi by their sharing of the temple and its activities: Dionysus presided over it bi-annually for three winter months and Apollo resumed control the following spring (when Dionysus was ritually buried between Apollo's holy tripod and the Omphalos or sacred stone which was guarded by the python); Apollonian paeans were addressed to Dionysus; and the Apollonian oracle started with the Dionysian rite of sacrificing a goat. As indicated by a fourth century BCE vase painting, which shows Apollo and

Dionysus shaking hands at the Delphic temple, Dionysus' tie with Apollo at Delphi assured him entrance into the Olympic pantheon.

An Aegaen earth god, Dionysus emerged as a bull, a goat, a snake, and a satyr—all part of his role as the dark, ecstatic, and unpredictable force of nature. His thyrsus (a scepter/magic wand), like the Phallophoria (festive processions filled with phallic symbols), represented Dionysus' fertility powers. Vase paintings render both Dionysus and Semele as "earth born" (Semele means "earth" in Phrygian), while his epithets "the frenzied" and "the raving one" refer to the madness with which he possessed his followers. As "the sufferer" and "the rich in joy" he spoke to society's repressed and offered them ecstasis—the ability "to stand outside" oneself. His feminine qualities are marked by the epithets "the womanly" and "the hybrid," and as "the initiated" he vitalized the spread of the mysteries across Greece. His role as "liberator" is reflected in his festivals from the Anthesteria (the opening of wine casks in the spring to commemorate and participate with ancestor spirits) to City Dionysia—when, purportedly, business stopped and jails were opened for the celebrations that even slaves and women were allowed to attend.

As a god of women and, in turn, the lower classes, Dionysus served the spiritual needs of those repressed by the newly formed state. That Dionysus' original worshippers were women is indisputable. The earliest known cult in Greece was practiced by the infamous wild women, the Thyiades of Thrace and Phrygia, who performed the maenadic dance revel, the oreibasia, which served as a communal means of fusing with Dionysus. Every two years during the winter period attributed to the awakening and reign of their god, the female devotees dressed in fawn skins, roamed mountainsides, played ecstatic music, and danced themselves into altered states of consciousness (wine, hallucinogenic ivy, and/or lack of sleep may have aided the process). In their frenzy, they may have engaged in orgies, sparagmos (the tearing apart of young, wild animal) and/or omophagia (eating the animal raw)—rites in which Dionysus played the paradoxical

role of leading the hunt and being the sacrifice. After bringing the women to a state of delirium, he offered his incarnate flesh and blood in the sacrificial animal, thereby entering the body, mind, and spirit of the ritual participants. The wild women may have practiced human sacrifice, but such sacrifices were more likely part of the myth and not of the cult. The significance of the rites is obvious: by fusing with Dionysus, women were empowered in a religiously meaningful sense. Free from the auspices of patriarchal control, the rites offered a legitimate means for women to vent their oppression in a way that conflicted with and transcended the Olympian system. Dionysian worship is reflected in the god's relationship to wine, which, along with the group possessing song and dance, initiated the hysteric spread of his cult through Greece. His presence in the wine made the act of intoxicating oneself with it a means of summoning and fusing with the god.

Although too little is known of Vishnu's and Apollo's prototypes to discern a direct historical connection, Dionysus is clearly a descendent of Shiva. The diffusion of the symbols associated with his cult (the bull and snake, the horns and erect phallus, his yoga position) could be, as Alain Danielou insists (1984), the result of cross-cultural contact. Their devotees, the Indian bhaktas and the Greek bacchantes, share the same rites, iconography, and epithets regarding their respective gods—such as “The Raving One” and “The Terrible One.”

Orphism—the most equivocal phenomenon in Greek religious history—also presents a unique connection between Shiva and Dionysus. A derivative of the Neolithic Mother Goddess tradition, Orphism draws from ancient mythological beings such Gaia, Chaos, Eros, and the cosmic egg to describe the pantheistic nature of ultimate reality. Orphism (as does Pythagoreanism) also shares many of the millennia-old Hindu tenets and practices such as tantrism, karma, reincarnation, vegetarianism, and compassion for all things. While the link between Orpheus and Shiva is more philosophical than historical, Orpheus and Dionysus are drawn into

association by numerous ancient sources, such as Aeschylus, Plato, Pausanias, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the Orphic Hymns. The so-called founder of many Dionysian initiatory rites and sects, Orpheus also shares much with Apollo—such as his musicianship, piety, and respect for order, control, and reason. As an Apollonian hero, Orpheus calls for personal redemption and decrees an afterlife based on reward and punishment; but, at the same time, he serves as a secret daimon of the divine mysteries. As such, Orphism expresses the Greek attempt to marry the distinct myths, rites, and values that characterize the Dionysian and Apollonian union in early classical culture. Karl Kerényi calls that union “the greatest miracle in culture history” (1976, 331).

### **THE *UPANISHADS*, HINDUISM, AND BRAHMAN’S RIGHT AND LEFT HANDS**

While the Vedic and Olympic Ages introduced Shiva and Vishnu and Dionysus and Apollo as all-powerful gods, the *Upanishads* and the birth of Greek drama helped the gods eclipse their progenitors, Brahman and Zeus, respectively. The *Brahmanas*, commentaries on the Vedas, are regarded as the last texts of the Vedic Age, while Hindu philosophical thought began with the writing of the *Upanishads* and coincided with Shiva’s and Vishnu’s rise in popularity in North India, approximately 800 to 600 BCE. The *Brahmanas* were aimed at educating priests in Vedic sacrificial rituals and, like the Vedas, were supposedly written by the rishis, or the Aryans’ legendary “seers.” Appendices to the *Brahmanas*, the *Upanishads* (“sitting near a teacher”) and the *Aranyakas* (“the forest books”) were compilations of the teachings of mystics and monks of various sects, or India’s first gurus. The *Upanishads* (of which 108 survive) revealed Brahman, Vishnu, and Shiva in ways that transcended Brahmin dogma, which is one reason that the *Upanishads* mark the emergence of Hinduism.

The Upanishadic Brahman firmly established the Hindu pantheistic worldview. The *Mundaka Upanishad* states that, “Heaven is his head, the sun and moon his eyes, the four quarters his ears, the revealed scripture his voice, the air his breath, the universe his heart. From his feet came the earth. He is the innermost Self of all” (1957, 45). By calling that innermost Self “Atman,” the *Upanishads* still laid claim to Vedic truths that regard Brahman as the universal macrocosm, but added Atman as the microcosm or inner Self that can be realized through various processes of enlightenment—such as yoga, chanting the sacred syllable OM, and meditation (the *Taittiriya Upanishad* claims that “Meditation is Brahman”) (1957, 59). The duality of Brahman and Atman becomes a unity upon enlightenment, as the *Vagnavalkya Upanishad* avers, “so man in union with the Self, knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within . . .” (1957, 107). Or, as the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* testifies:

Of all religions thou art the source.  
The light of thy knowledge shining,  
There is nor day nor night,  
Nor being nor non-being . . .  
Neither male nor female art thou,  
Nor neuter;  
Whatsoever form thou assumest,  
That thou art. (1957, 126)

That unity-in-duality was attributed also to Shiva and Vishnu. The *Kaivalya Upanishad* asserts that one can see Shiva and Vishnu in Brahman by meditating, through devotion, and by consulting a guru. Called the food that sustains the universe, the goal of the soul’s journey, and the light at the highest point of the universe, Vishnu “dwells in the hearts of all creatures” as “the ruler” and as “the great Light, shining forever.” His counterpart, Shiva, is infrequently regarded as Rudra in the *Upanishads*, then only to

proclaim Shiva's assimilation of the Aryan god. The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* describes "the all-pervading, all-present Shiva" interchangeably with Rudra as the maker and destroyer of "all the worlds" (cited in Basham, 1959, 253).

By creating a cohesive, philosophical understanding of the Brahman-Atman union and the Shiva-Vishnu bipolarity, the *Upanishads* transmuted Brahmanism's focus on rites, magic, and propitiatory paths to salvation into paths toward self-actualization through various practices, including right action—the precursor to the dharma of the *Bhagavad Gita*. By seeing "beyond all dualities," the "knower of Brahman"—as the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* contends—is free of the ego's cravings and enjoys harmony with the universal Self. When that Self permeates all action, all desire and distinctions recede, and nothing is as it once appeared—as the *Vagnavalkya Upanishad* acclaims:

The father is no father, mother is no mother; worlds disappear, gods disappear, scriptures disappear; the thief is no more, the murderer is no more, castes are no more; no more is there monk or hermit. The Self is then untouched either by good or by evil, and the sorrows of the heart are turned into joy. (1957, 107)

The *Upanishads* not only initiated Hindu thought, but they also opened doors to religious reforms, to new religions (particularly Buddhism), and to the so-called six schools of Hindu philosophy. Part of the shift from mechanical, propitiatory paths of salvation toward self-realization included cultivating the vital force (*prana*) that connects the body and mind with nature and the universe. Proper breathing (*pranayama*), for instance, is regarded as an art form that mirrors cosmic principles: exhaling represents the force that pushes life into existence, and inhaling destroys the past and secures the transformational power of the



present. A significant means in all yogas, from kundalini to tantric dance, proper breathing balances the body and mind with cosmic being and consciousness.

Inspired by the *Upanishads*, by the emerging guru tradition, and by the rise of Jainism, Buddha rejected Brahmin liturgy. Considered Vishnu's ninth and latest incarnation (who was, among other Hindu assertions, sent to stop animal sacrifice), Buddha and his teachings profoundly impacted Hinduism. The Upanishadic focus on Brahman-Atman, yoga, OM, and the Shiva-Vishnu bipolarity along with Buddha's emphasis on self realization and dharma (a caste-free version of dharma) helped stimulate the rational framework for the development of Hinduism's six orthodox systems of philosophy—or "the six systems of salvation."<sup>5</sup> It is during that period when the irrational nature of Shiva was modified to the point of appropriating him as the all-god worshipped in Hinduism, which helps explain why aspects of Shaivism that developed centuries later have such a scientific and philosophical emphasis as opposed to the ecstatic nature of his cult.

While the *Upanishads* initiated Hindu philosophy, the *Bhagavad Gita* inaugurated the cults of Vishnu and Shiva and the Age of Devotionalism. Not only does Krishna—Vishnu's eighth avatar—pronounce in the *Gita* that "I am Vishnu" and "I am Shiva" (1972, 89), the *Gita* also decrees the ultimate Hindu vision of Brahman: "If man sees Brahman in every action, He will find Brahman" (1972, 53). The cult of Vasudeva, which was inspired by the *Upanishads* as a devotional path to salvation, became associated with Krishna in the *Gita*. Vasudeva's cult appears to have existed

---

<sup>5</sup> The six systems of the so-called intellectualizing period are grouped in pairs. The Vedanta or "the end of the Vedas," called "intellectual Hinduism," is paired with Mimamsa, perhaps the last school to adhere to the sacred and authoritative nature of the Vedas. Nyaya ("analysis"), the school of logic and epistemology, complemented Vaisesika, or the study of physics that promoted a sort of spiritual atomism. Sankhya (the oldest school) taught a bipolarity of feminine matter (Prakriti) and masculine soul (Purusha) and was aligned with Yoga, which taught various forms of psychic training based foremost on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.

by the fifth century BCE and may have merged with Krishna's cult by 200 BCE, when the name Vasudeva-Krishna was simplified to Krishna. Vishnu's most popular incarnation, Krishna appeared in the third age of human history to bring divine love and free people from sin and suffering. Though the devotional yoga, bhakti, is related to any number of gods, in practice it blossomed with Krishna.

True to the spirit of Vishnu, all of his avatars issue in a "golden age"—as is typified in Rama's just conquest, one in which the priestly caste overcame the warrior caste in a brutal and bloody battle. Kalki, the tenth avatar who is yet to appear, prophetically represents Vishnu's mission to violently sweep away evil and place the holy and virtuous in control of worldly affairs. Each incarnation helped Vishnu become a household god capable of providing physical and spiritual sanctuary for his followers. The worship of Shiva also proliferated in the early part of the devotional period. Tree and snake worship are ancient Shivan traditions that helped cultivate the bhakti dimensions of his legacy. His union with Shakti, the focal point of the Tantras, also encouraged the popular devotion of Shiva and became a focus of transcendental meditation. Proper worship of Shiva, the god of healing herbs, ensured a long life of health and well-being, a conviction that dominates contemporary Shaivism.

Vaishnavism and Shaivism grew out of the gods' cults over a period of six or seven centuries, becoming full-ended religions by the fifth century CE. Since then, the two religions have vied for supremacy in an ebb-and-tide manner. Although the gods have retained their essential characteristics, their differences have been gradually declining and the similarities rising, partly because of the Hindu propensity for assimilating gods into gods. For instance, Shiva has become less threatening and more benevolent. Some Shivan sects insist that devotees make vows of nonviolence, chastity, poverty, and vegetarianism (a long-standing Hindu practice). Later Shivan sects ascribe Vishnu-like avatars to Shiva. Also, Vishnu's relationship with Radha suggests aspects of Shiva's and Shakti's

union, particularly in terms of tantric eroticism and as an allegory of the union of a Father God with Mother Nature.

Inevitably, the conjoined forces of Shiva and Vishnu led to their pre-eminence and Brahman's waning significance. That prominence was foreshadowed in the Puranic presentation of a unity of Vishnu and Shiva in the god Hari hara, who, half Shiva and half Vishnu, represents the coincidence of opposites characteristic of Indian thought. The ancient Indian creation gods, Yami and Yama, also reveal the Hindu awareness of nature's opposing, yet harmonious impulses—an awareness that made Vishnu and Shiva the right and left hands of Brahman. Much like China's first depictions of the Dao, Brahman was originally a cosmic egg that represents the living universe and the unity of all being. After an immensely long incubation, the egg split into heaven and earth, creating a polarity that is distinguished eventually as the respective realms of Vishnu and Shiva. In most Indian creation stories the primal entity—whether a giant, lotus, or egg—becomes the universe. Perennial philosophy's "That Art Thou," Brahman permeates the *Vedas*, *Brahmanas*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Shiva and Vishnu, however, assured the evolution of Brahmanism into Hinduism and remain the primary gods of Indian worship.

### GREEK DRAMA AND "MORE POWERFUL BIRTHS"

What the philosophy of the *Upanishads* and the sense of devotion captured in the *Gita* meant for Hindu culture, the rise of Delphi and the birth of drama meant to Greek culture. While Delphi introduced and helped institute Apollonian values while canalizing the Dionysian impulse, the evolution of dramatic performances provided a release of the Dionysian tendencies in ways that could be assimilated into the goals of the polis. The roots of Greek drama began with the dance rites of the original "wild women" of Dionysus, who found release from patriarchal control. Women

did not remain the sole worshippers. A lower-classes' adaptation of the oreibesia, the dithyramb—also a song and dance that honored Dionysus—was performed by a chorus of men who, dressed in animal skins and masks, represented the mythological goat men or satyrs who attended Dionysus. The first dithyrambs were song and dance improvisations performed in celebration of the god's gifts of wine and fertility. The earliest reference to the dithyramb comes from the seventh century BCE Ionian poet, Archilochus, a missionary of the Dionysian cult and a Delphic "servant of the Muses" who claimed that he could lead the dithyramb when he was "thunderstruck with wine." Also, the saying, "when you drink water, it isn't a dithyramb," was apparently shared among seventh century practitioners and/or spectators. By all accounts, the dithyramb originated as a peasant festival that invoked laughter, lamentation, and rapture through drinking, dancing, singing, and shouting.

Like the oreibasias, the original dithyramb involved vigorous dancing, utilized instruments such as the aulos, hand drums, and rattles, and centered on group fusion with the god. As women used the oreibasias as a religious outlet, the lower classes used the dithyramb to criticize the social injustices created by the rise of the polis. As in the divine mystery initiation rites, the dithyramb consisted of things done, the dromena, and things said, the legomena. The legomena served as a means of interpreting the meaning or power of the dromena's magical ritual acts. The hypokrites, or in Ionic, the exarchon, was the actor or dithyrambic leader whom the chorus danced around and with whom they verbally interacted. While the early performances were vulgar, the interaction between the exarchon and chorus became more sophisticated in theme and scope until the dithyramb became, eventually, a full-ended drama. The distinguishing element of that development involved a shift from the unconscious to the conscious use of words. The screams and word chants of the bacchantes that were part of the subconscious invocation made during the trance inducing ritual became messages of conscious intent with the dithyramb.

Between changes that Arion introduced in the seventh century BCE and the 534 BCE performance of Thespis' goat song (tragoedia), the conscious use of words became an essential part of the drama. Arion poeticized the dithyramb by presenting satyrs speaking in meter, which fostered anti aristocratic purposes by turning the spontaneous, unregimented dithyramb into a planned and practiced performance. That development converted the ritual forms of the female revolt into a medium of protest, which, in turn, led to the change over in the function of the dithyramb from a religious to a secular one, from a female-oriented ritual to a glorified drinking bout to an organized public dramatic festival.

Long before 534 BCE, when the state sanctioned the folk festival, City Dionysia, the devotees convinced authorities that their allegiance to the uncivilized god was not something to be taken lightly. By accepting and honoring Dionysian ritual, the state tamed and re channeled the Dionysian impulse and secularized the dithyramb. The culmination and the synthesis of the political aims of the state with the religious and social aims of the consolidated lower classes produced a powerful aesthetic expression of society's needs, spiritual as well as economic. As significant as the development of drama was, it was only part of the manifestation of the *Zeitgeist* that transformed Attic culture. In other words, while sixth century BCE Greece gave birth to the democratic city state, it also created an aesthetic means to express the newly formed, but deeply rooted spiritual and political hopes and needs of the populace.

From the Homeric worldview to the secularization of the dithyramb, the Greeks gradually recognized the Olympian chthonic tension would—through conflict—necessitate the union of Dionysus and Apollo. The rise of the Apollonian impulse as contemplative, rational, law and-order oriented is attested to by almost all post Homeric depictions of Apollo. The bow not only signified his function as the “hunter god,” “protector,” and “avertter of evil,” but also became a symbol of justice used to fight barbarism. His lyre served as a constant reminder that the muses were his:

poets praised his intellect, sculptors made him an ideal of physical beauty, and musicians shared his ordered, therapeutic power. By the middle of the sixth century BCE, the highly popular Pythian games (held in honor of Apollo at Delphi) epitomized his prominence in Greek athletics and the arts. Known very early as the “speaker of truth,” Apollo taught moderation—as is indicated by his decrees “know thyself” and “nothing in excess”(maxims inscribe at his sanctuary in Delphi). Once a pastoral deity, he evolved into a purifier, patron of male rites of passage, and, ultimately, the god who replaced Zeus. Fittingly, Aeschylus and Pindar gave him the epithets, “holy” and “pure” (see Otto, 1954, 63). In short, Dionysus and Apollo reflect the tension between tribe and polis, nature and culture, and instinct and reason.

That tension is marked in their respective forms of music. The dithyramb and the aulos, both renowned in Greek history for their loud and intoxicating effects, juxtapose the calming and healing effects associated with Apollo’s more formal paeon and soothing lyre. According to Plutarch, Aeschylus called it “fitting” that the loud and euphoric dithyramb should accompany Dionysus and that the structured paeon and the gentle muses should be used to worship Apollo (see Harrison, 1922, 440). Pindar exclaimed that the differences of the gods’ cultic hymns were not only marked in rhythm and harmony, but “ethos” as well. Signifying Dionysus’ assimilation into the Olympic pantheon, dithyrambs were eventually addressed to Apollo and paeans to Dionysus; however, the notion of conquest persists here too, as is evidenced by the myths in which Apollo kills the flute playing Pan (from whom he forced the secret of prophecy). Apollo also brings the Thyiades down from Mount Helicon to Delphi, where he tames and leads them in ordered and decorous dances; he beats the flute playing Marsyas in a musical contest and, hence, in the position of determining punishment, has him flayed. Those victories consecrate the Greek conquest of the region’s native music, as is suggested by the resulting predominance of stringed instruments over wind

instruments. Yet, even here, the notion of balance exists—for instance, Apollo at Delphi encouraged the use of the aulos: Sakadas of Argos won first prize at the first Pythian games for his flute solo honoring Apollo’s victory over the Delphic dragon.

The Apollonian-Dionysian tension is relayed also by authors of dithyrambs and tragedies. Pindar, a disciple of Apollo, emphasized formal Olympian structure over ecstatic chthonic tendencies in developing and ordering the dithyramb’s tragic elements. Pausanias tells of “the Chair of Pindar” at Delphi where Pindar used to sit and sing his songs to Apollo (see Lindsay, 1965, 323). However, Pindar also wrote dithyrambs to Dionysus. Aeschylus—who transformed tragedy by adding a second actor, increasing dialogue, and reducing the role of the chorus—promoted a more sophisticated Zeus, Apollo, and Athena in an attempt to purify tribal religion and customs and to elevate law to a rational, civilized form of justice. His tragedies tended to support Olympian order and the rules of the polis. The patriarchal nature of that law is exhibited in the play *Orestes*, wherein Aeschylus has Apollo cast the deciding vote that exonerated Orestes, who killed his mother. Yet, Aeschylus recognized the necessity of the Dionysian spirit, as evidenced by the chthonic elements in all of his plays. Aristophanes called Aeschylus “our Bacchic King” and Pausanias reports that Dionysus came to Aeschylus in a dream and told him to write tragedies (see Lindsay, 1965, 344). In a well-known fragment attributed to Aeschylus, he claims that he dared (in an unknown drama) to depict Apollo and Dionysus as equal, balanced gods.

The Delphic priest Plutarch may have been the first to explicate the harmony in discord relationship between Apollo and Dionysus in terms of principles.<sup>6</sup> He described the sharing of the temple as a “matter of due

---

<sup>6</sup> The tragedian Euripides may have been the first to demonize Dionysus. His play, *The Bacchae*, described the terror associated with the Dionysian impulse, as Agave’s beheading and parading of her son’s head illustrate. By being completely out of touch with their Dionysian side, Pentheus and his Mother became the god’s unwitting victims. As such, we are all victims of what Euripides would consider the unfortunate

proportion” of Apollonian “moderation” and Dionysian “craving” and maintained that their balance is exhibited in Delphic worship, in their respective celebrations, in the dithyramb and paean, and in sculpture—where Apollo is “ever young and ageless” and Dionysus has “many forms and shapes.” Plutarch concludes that all expressions of the two gods convey polar principles: “In a word, they attribute to the one [Apollo] uniformity and order and an earnest simplicity, but to the other [Dionysus] a certain incongruousness owing to a blend made up of sportiveness and excess and earnestness and madness” (cited in Harrison, 1922, 440).

The actualization of Dionysian and Apollonian impulses within the ancient Greek mind allowed the two gods to not only outlive their Olympian counterparts, but to display the genius of early Greek culture in terms of a balanced expression of human worth. In the words of Friedrich Nietzsche:

Through Apollo and Dionysus, the two art deities of the Greeks, we come to recognize that in the Greek world there existed a tremendous opposition, in origin and aims, between . . . two different tendencies [that] run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births. (1967, 33)

The balance not only marks the merger of two cultural forms of art, religion, and values, it inspired and inspires still the unfolding of the West’s worldview.

---

beast within. It is that vision of Dionysus that Plato and other Greek philosophers shared and attempted to expose and conquer (but that is another story).



### THE RELEVANCE OF THE GOD'S ALLIANCE

Shiva and Vishnu and Dionysus and Apollo share distinctive differences. It is *because* of those differences that the earth and sky gods emulate the balance necessary for healthy social and environmental relations. The earth gods reflect the powers of darkness, instinct, emotion, creation and destruction, mystery, the feminine, synthesis, intuition, and the unconscious while the sky gods represent principles of light, civility, intellect, order, constructiveness, sensibility, the masculine, discrimination, reason, and the super-ego. Friedrich Nietzsche may have been the first to recognize the overlay of the unique propensities of the Aegean earth wisdom captured in Dionysus and the Greek humanism that accompanied the rise of Apollo and the polis. When viewed as principles, Nietzsche insisted, the gods delineate opposing wills and attitudes which define two unique ways of looking at the world which “belong together.” Or, as the rational principle of individuation and the emotional urge for fusion or immersion of self in nature, Apollo and Dionysus “need each other.” The same is true for Shiva and Vishnu, as Louis Renou observes: “Vishnu and Shiva have developed by successive modification until they have been sufficiently deprived of their personalized aspects so that, not without reason, they have at times been called ‘social principles’” (1963, 20-21).

Nietzsche may have also been the first to distinguish an imbalance in the West’s logos-dominated worldview based on the “demonization” of the Dionysian impulse by Greek philosophy and Christian theology and its categorical dismissal by science. As I have shown elsewhere (1994), beginning with the Olympian myths and ending with the “value-free” myth of science, Nietzsche describes and vociferously attacks ways in which Western morality has eulogized reason, order, and control while banishing the ecstatic Dionysian drive from acceptable human behavior. Although his work is filled with pro-patriarchal, anti-Semitic, and anti-feminist elements, his insistence that Western culture desperately needs to incorporate Dionysian proclivities related to instinct, ecstasy, and nature

helps account for the contemporary revival and relevance of his work. Dionysian-Shivan spirituality remains a link to ancient Earth wisdom traditions that are, though forgotten, still part of the Western ethos. As Alain Danielou submits, “A rediscovery of Shivaism-Dionysism would allow an effective return to the source and the re-establishment of that almost-broken link with a multi-millennarian knowledge of which we are the unwitting and ungrateful heirs” (1984, 7-8).

Although part of Goddess worshipping cultures, Shiva and Dionysus are male gods and lack a purely feminine impulse, a fact that must be taken into account when assessing the nature of balance in each tradition.<sup>7</sup> The lack of a feminine impulse in Hindu culture is not meant to incriminate the Aryans, but India’s Earth wisdom tradition is heavily pre-Aryan. Often depicted as half male and half female, Shiva remains one of the strongholds of the Mother Goddess impulse in Indian civilization. The Vedic alliance of Shiva and Vishnu, though tenuous, helped ameliorate and unify the worldviews of the distinct cultures, and led to a unity-in-diversity that is uniquely Indian. The overlay of Aryan and Harappan cultures, on the other hand, may have something to do—at least in part—with reasons that practices such as sati, female genital mutilation, and female infanticide can exist in land known as Mother India (Bharat-ma), where rivers, such as Mother Ganges, are worshipped for their feminine, nurturing powers.

Western civilization’s lack of a divine feminine principle is exacerbated by its eulogy of sky gods and vilification of earth gods. Not

---

<sup>7</sup> Despite a certain lack of feminine archetypes, Hindu gods tend to be more polymorphous and their myths, rites, and symbols are richer and more open to balanced archetypes than the Greek. For instance, there are vastly more expressions of feminine qualities in Hinduism, as is indicated by the unions of Shakti and Shiva and Shiva and Kali, and the existence of pantheistic Mother Goddesses such as Prithvi. Moreover, Shiva and Vishnu are fully united in Brahman, while the oft-antagonistic Dionysus and Apollo are sons of Zeus, a penultimate patriarchal sky god. Furthermore, Zeus fathered Apollo with the Olympian Leto and Dionysus with Semele, a mere mortal whom Dionysus resurrects from the underworld after she is turned to ashes by seeing Zeus in his “full glory.” Although the Mother Earth Goddess, Gaia, is highly regarded in pre-Homeric Greece, she is usurped by the Olympians.

only is the relationship between Dionysus and Apollo more tenuous than their Hindu counterparts, but the West has also glorified the Apollonian and demonized the Dionysian. As forces such as logos, Apollo, and the divinely ordained human spirit evoked the light as right and separate from the “dark side,” it followed that the Mother Goddess, Eros, Dionysus, and all other “primitive,” animistic notions necessarily embody evil and attempt to defile the souls of humans. The moral distinctions between spirit and matter, God and the Devil, and control and ecstasy are part of the West’s heritage, which is why the affirmation of and reverence for Shivan-Dionysian powers has been traditionally lacking, and why there exists such a need for an integration of the spiritual dimensions of the body, the earth, and the feminine.

To find the feminine in the earth gods Shiva and Dionysus and to reconstitute their true value, one must not only look to the original traditions in which the gods served as consorts of a Mother Goddess figure, but also refine the principles in accordance with contemporary culture. That, I believe, is precisely what is happening today. The renewed interest in Asian religions, Native American Earth wisdom, Wicca and other Goddess traditions, like the mainstreaming of yoga, feminism and environmentalism and the advent of holistic health and green politics, all bespeak an attempt to integrate a distinctly sacred feminine impulse into a dominantly masculine tradition. That integration could help procure a place for Earth wisdom in a contemporary worldview.

Works Cited

- Basham, A. L. 1959. *The Wonder that Was India*. New York: Grove Press.
- Bhagavad Gita*. 1972. Trs. S. Prabhavananda and C. Isherwood. New York: Mentor.
- Campbell, Joseph. 1976. *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. New York: Penguin.
- Danielou, Alain. 1984. *Shiva and Dionysus*. Tr. K.F. Hurry. New York: Inner Traditions International.
- Dunbar, Dirk. 1994. *The Balance of Nature's Polarities in New-Paradigm Theory*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Fitzsimons, Matthew. 1970. "The Indus Valley Civilization." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 4. No. 1 (Nov.), 9-22.
- Eisler, Riane. 1988. *The Chalice and the Blade*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Frawley, David. 1995. *The Myth of the Aryan Invasion of India*. New Delhi: Voice of India.
- Gimbutas, Marija. 1982. *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*. Los Angeles: University of California.
- . 1994. *The Civilization of the Goddess*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Graves, Robert. 2000. *The White Goddess*. New York: Farrer, Straus, and Giroux.
- Harrison, J. E. 1922. *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: The University Press.
- Jung, C. G. *Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*. 1977. Eds. W. Mcguire and R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University.
- Kerenyi, C. 1976. *Dionysos*. Princeton: Princeton University.
- Lindsay, Jack. 1965. *The Clashing Rocks: A Study of Early Greek Religion and Culture and the Origins of Drama*. London: Chapman and Hall.

- Manian, Padma. 1998. "Harappans and Aryans: Old and New Perspectives of Ancient Indian History." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 32, No. 1. (Nov.), 17-32.
- Metzner, Ralph. 1999. "Sky Gods and Earth Deities." In *Green Psychology*. Rochester, Vermont: Park Street, 114-131.
- Neumann, Erich. 1991. *The Great Mother*. Princeton: Bollingen.
- Nietzsche, F. 1967. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Tr. W. Kaufmann. New York: Vintage.
- O'Flaherty, Wendy. 1973. *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Shiva*. London: Oxford University.
- Otto, Walter. 1954. *The Homeric Gods*. Tr. Moses Hadas. New York: Pantheon.
- Renou, L. 1971. *Hinduism*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Sjo, Monica and Barbar Mor. 1987. *The Great Cosmic Mother*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Spretnak, Charlene. 1984. *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece*. Boston: Beacon.
- Stone, Merlin. 1976. *When God Was a Woman*. New York: Barnes and Noble.
- Upanishads*. 1957. Tr. S. Prabhavananda and F. Manchester. New York: Mentor.

---

**Dirk Dunbar** is the director of the AA to BA Interdisciplinary Humanities program at Okaloosa-Walton College and the University of West Florida, where he teaches courses in Philosophy, Religion, and Environmental Humanities. His book, *The Balance of Nature's Polarities in New-Paradigm Theory*, and recent essays survey the tradition of modern and contemporary ecocentric thought in terms of art, religion, philosophy, and psychology.

---

# All Things Are Like This

Master Dogen Zenji, 1200-1253

---

When you sail on a ship  
Deep into the middle of the ocean,  
Looking around, all the water that you see  
Appears to be circular.

But the ocean is neither round nor square;  
Its real form is infinite in variety.  
It only appears circular  
As far as you can see.

All things are like this:  
Though there are many features  
In our great world,  
You see and understand only as far  
As your eyes or your practice can take you.

In order to learn the true nature of things,  
Remember that they may only appear  
To be round or square,  
But their true features  
Are infinite in variety.

Whole worlds are there.  
It is so all around you,  
Directly beneath your feet,  
Above you,  
And even in a single droop of water.

Taken from *The Book of Dharma*, translated and edited by Nissim Amon

---

## Commentary on the Tibetan Book of the Dead

Brendan Connell

---

The third century Indian philosopher Nagarjuna said that if a person were to heap together the bones from the bodies of all their previous rebirths, the pile would be higher than Mt. Everest—and that, in the future, if one does not exert oneself on the path, they will have to discard even more skeletons than that!

This fixation on death is not something unique to Buddhism. Indeed, all cultures probe the subject, whether it be through folklore or literature. Plato has his *Phaedo*, Dante his *Inferno*. Homer and Virgil both describe trips to the



Mass grave of Khmer Rouge victims in Choeng Ek, the Killing Fields, near Phnom Penh, Cambodia. (Photo: Vladimir Pomortsev)



netherworld. The Hindu *Katha Upanishad* describes a boy's encounter with Yama, the god of death, and what he learned from him.

In Buddhism, the most famous piece of death literature is certainly *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* or *Bardo Thödrol*. Most people with any interest in Eastern mysticism have heard of it, but not all have read it. Few of us, involved as we are in the rush of life, care to look to such a morbid source for reading material. Generally it is a book that one reads upon experiencing the loss of a loved one, or during a period of fear about one's own mortality. At that time we pick the book up with grave curiosity. We want to know what exactly *does* happen when we die.

It would be difficult to read the book and not be in some measure effected. Essentially, it is a road map or guide for our inevitable voyage through the *Bardos*, or intermediate stages between death and rebirth, meant to be read to the dying person by his or her guru, who begins the ceremony by saying, "The factors which made up the person *so and so* are about to disperse!"

The first part of the death experience, when the respiration and the pulse stop, is described as one of great clarity, and agrees very well with present day accounts of "near death" experience. It is said to be blissful and like an empty, cloudless sky.

The text states that this state soon degenerates, and spirals into a series of increasingly ghastly situations. The descriptions we read of these conditions are often times chilling. They remind us of nightmares. The images are vivid, and described with an almost scientific precision.

"Whenever you try to rest, monstrous forms rise up before you. Some have animal heads on human bodies, others are gigantic birds with huge wings and claws. Their howlings and their whips drive you on, and then a hurricane carries you along with those demonic beings in hot pursuit."

There is talk of smoke, lights of various shades, winds, channels and multitudes of both peaceful and wrathful deities, Dharma protectors and warrior deities, the latter decked in ornaments made from human bones,

beating skull drums, waving flags of human skins and burning seared flesh incense. One deity is described as having three faces, six arms, and four legs, with 'fangs that gleam like new copper.' His body is adorned with black snakes and a freshly severed head garland. His consort offers him sips of blood from her skull bowl. The text goes on to describe ghouls of ever increasing morbid ferocity, and all the while admonishes us not to panic or be afraid of these visions as they are self created and do not actually objectively exist.

"Your form is voidness itself," the text says, "so you have nothing to fear. The death deities are your own hallucinations and themselves are forms of the void . . . Voidness cannot harm voidness."

Yet the whole thing is alarming. It can also all be rather confusing, especially when we consider how it pertains to our own selves. It reminds us, through every phrase we read, that we ourselves are going to die. It makes us think about this undeniable fact, a fact that is extremely hard to face, yet certainly beneficial. Sogyal Rinpoche says that by reflecting on death, realising you could die at any moment, life becomes very precious.

One important aspect of the text is the movement from death to rebirth. To be able to make a conscious choice in your rebirth is in fact a goal for much of tantric Buddhism. A person's fate depends on their karma, and if one is not in control of the situation, it is said that one could be reborn in any state, even in that of a hungry ghost or an animal, a dog, pig or even a worm! *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* describes how Yama, the god of death, holds up before his victim the shining mirror of karma, in which all the person's deeds are reflected. It then goes on to say that it is you yourself who pronounce your own judgement, which in turn determines your own rebirth. So really, the book is as much about birth, or rebirth, as it is about death.

Its message is both frightening and uplifting. It essentially says that we reap what we sow. The problem is of course, that very few of us are totally confident that we have planted nothing but virtuous seeds, and no one

wants the result to be rebirth as a hungry ghost! However, according to Buddhism, through certain practices, one can be assured of a good rebirth. These practices revolve around the replication of the death process in the body. If you are familiar with the process, if you are used to it, then when the time comes for actual death you will have no problem in doing it well.

According to Sogyal Rinpoche, death is not something to be feared as a tragedy, but instead is an opportunity for transformation.

In Buddhism, there are many meditations surrounding death – from tantric practices of incredible complexity, to relatively simple meditations, such as visiting a cemetery or burial ground and contemplating on the certainty of death and that, due to the instability of life, it might strike at any time. The yogis of old India carried trumpets made of human thigh bones and cups made of human skulls for this very purpose – to always keep the thought of death before them. Gampopa, the disciple of the great yogi Milarepa, said that by reflecting on death and the impermanence of life, we are incited to live spiritually. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso says that by contemplating our own death we will be inspired to use our life wisely by developing an inner refuge of spiritual realisations.

One of the most interesting death yoga practices is the yoga of transference of consciousness, or *pho wa*, of which a mention is made at the beginning of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

*Pho wa* is one of the six yogas of Naropa, an Indian master of the tenth century. It is a method for circumventing the bardos and entails shooting the consciousness through the top of the head, and forwarding it to a Pure Land, or higher rebirth. There are two types of the yoga: one in which the practitioner, upon seeing the signs of approaching death, transfers his or her own consciousness to a Pure Land or higher rebirth and another wherein a lama performs *pho wa* on a dying person and transfers that person's consciousness to a Pure Land or higher rebirth.

Most tantric practices are quite complicated and require initiations, intense discipline and training, and are therefore out of the immediate

reach of most of us. Even so, we can all practice the relatively simple yoga of meditating on the impermanence of life.

In the Lam Rim tradition of Tsong Khapa, there is a yoga called The Nine Point Meditation on Death, which is relatively simple and excellent for anyone to practice. The points to meditate on are A) Death is definite: 1) everyone must die, 2) the span of our lives is constantly diminishing, 3) the amount of time we can devote to spiritual practice is very small. B) The time of death is uncertain: 4) the life-expectancy of a human being is uncertain, 5) there are numerous causes of death, 6) the human body is extremely fragile. C) Only spiritual insight can help us at the time of death: 7) our possessions and wealth cannot help us, 8) our family and friends cannot help us, 9) our bodies cannot help us.

Pabongka Rinpoche said that we should conduct ourselves like visitors who are about to return to their homeland. Such individuals avoid any of the activities that persons who are planning an extended stay might undertake.

The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is attributed to the great eighth century yogi Padmasambhava, who is said to have been miraculously born from a lotus that sprung up from Lake Danakosha, in Afghanistan. According to tradition, he hid the book on a mountain in Tibet where it was discovered some five hundred years later by the famous mystic Karma Lingpa. It is a book written specifically for practitioners of the Nyingma branch of Buddhism. It was not meant for casual reading, but to serve the specific purpose of providing death instructions for followers of their sect.

Though the book was not written for the uninitiated, it doesn't mean that we cannot all gain something by reading it. True, it's hard to make sense of much of it; but it does give us insight into the dying process. It shows us what we might expect when we die, and in that sense, the book is invaluable. It does, after all, shed light on one of the truly great mysteries.

---

**Brendan Connell** was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1970 and currently lives in Ticino, Switzerland, where he teaches English and writes. He has had fiction published in numerous magazines, literary journals and anthologies, including *The Journal of Experimental Fiction*, *McSweeney's*, *Adbusters*, *Leviathan 3* (The Ministry of Whimsy 2002), *Album Zutique* (The Ministry of Whimsy 2003) and *Strange Tales* (Tartarus Press 2003). His first novel, *The Translation of Father Torturo*, was published by Prime Books in 2005; his novella *Dr. Black and the Guerrillia* was published by Grafitisk Press the same year. He also translates.

---

## A World Divided

Zen Master Gudo W. Nishijima, Japan, b. 1919

---

The inherent harmony and beauty of the natural world  
Has been noted in the work of countless poets.  
There must be few indeed who have not sensed that harmony  
At some point of their lives.

When we take a walk in the forest,  
The peace and quiet of Nature  
Seem to communicate something to us.

Isn't it interesting that nature,  
That accumulation of meaningless matter and energy,  
Should have such an effect on us?

Could it be that the division between  
Man and Nature is an artificial one?

A convenient intellectual model  
That somehow became accepted as fact?

Could it be that our common-sense view

Is again only an interpretation?

In fact,  
Our usual understanding of the world  
Is rooted in duality.

There is the mind and body,  
Thinking and feeling,  
Spirit and matter,  
Heaven and earth,  
But why do we see the world in this way?

The answer is quite simple.  
We see things the way we do  
Because of the nature of seeing itself.

We cannot think about one thing,  
Nor can the mind perceive one thing in isolation.  
There must always be two.  
“This” must always be seen or considered  
In relation to “That.”  
So the activity of the intellect  
At its most basic level,  
Is to find differences.

The mind divides, cuts, breaks down and rearranges.  
We seek to understand things  
By seeing them in contrast to other things.  
We separate the world into parts  
And oppose one part to another in our minds.

Buddhism challenges our belief in the common-sense view.  
Buddhism claims that the common-sense view is just that:  
A view point.

It may be useful and efficient,  
But it is not always reliable,  
And,  
It is not reality itself.

People and Nature are different faces  
Of the same One,  
That One Thing is Reality,  
It is the real situation of our lives,  
We are the great universe itself.

Taken from *The Book of Dharma*, translated and edited by Nissim Amon



---

# The Savage Buddha: Notes on Gautama & the Kāpālīka-vrata

Sritantra

---

## GAUTAMA'S EARLY PROTÉGÉS

From viewing a number of my online articles, certain readers have formed the impression that I strongly identify with a remote class of Asiatic asceticism. They furthermore presume my “tradition” (yes, hard to get beyond this decadent term) to be essentially shamanic, but with a particular penchant for seeking out secreted oases. Finding this not too far off the mark, I should like to suffix some orienting surfaces.

First let me make something absolutely clear: I am not a shaman. Second, since we have become so gripped by the “Buddha” thing, let us be a little scientific for once. Anthropologically we are speaking here of the *bhikkhu sangha*, or community of Bauddha ascetics, as a “living fossil.” But a primitive stratum of yogic savagery was already current with the *parivrājaka* and *anāgārika* trends of “abodeless ascetics,” and with the *śrāmana* movement in particular. The *bhikkhu* or almsman is of a later appearance. So we have to understand the *bhikkhu* or “beggar” in the light of the *śrāmana* (ascetic wander). We must also keep in mind the historical fact that in the earliest times Gautama ‘himself’ was not called the Buddha, but the “shamana.” This confirms that Gautama was something like a shaman.

**Question: But how can anyone be so sure what was going on more than two thousand years ago?**

First of all, one needs to discern between history and legend. One then needs to make some private, in-depth, ethnographic studies. However, in the end it is up to everybody's own interpretive and/or re-creative imagination.

**Q: How might one see it then?**

In the first twenty years of Gautama's mission he sent forth untold numbers of disciples that had undergone training at his bleak encampment. We visualize a broad assortment of outcast mendicant bowl beggars and wearers of robes sewn together from the rags they had scavenged from fetid cadavers<sup>1</sup> left to be gobbled by carrion, rat and worm. This is even more impressive in knowing that the carcasses were flung from society's nethermost rung. These were no mere untouchables, but unseeables! — Indeed, those whom 'proper' caste-society deemed inherently abominable and whose chief social function was the disposal of the most abhorrent pollutant conceivable—namely, woman's menstrual discharge. Not only the touch, but the mere sight alone of these intrinsically despicable sub-human pariahs was enough to defile a proper caste-Hindu. Hence were these virtual miscreants-by-birth compelled to lead nocturnal existences, and upon their demise they were literally "flung to the jackals" at designated sites. These gruesome haunts proved veritable conservatoires for ascetic endeavors currently in vogue.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is worth here noting the archeological evidence contained in a commentary to the *Samyutta-nikāya*, the *Sāvatthappakāsinī* (Pali Text Society, 1932, trans. Woodward: 199.27-200.9 [XVI.11]) where Sakyamuni is depicted in a charnel ground picking up a vile rag 'teeming with growth' (Pali, *tumbamatta*). Did Gautama have in mind a robe? See Jonathan Silk, "A difficult Pali word," Archives of Indology, 14 Feb 2001, online post.

These were the places where Gautama's earliest protégés flocked and established their provisional yogic encampments. They begged through the silent streets of dawn with bowls likely fashioned from human skulls. Some wore matted hair Rastaman-style while others pulled their hair out strand by strand. Some engaged in arcane rituals that involved the eating of human flesh... They kept to the woods and undisturbed places conducive to ecstatic technology. When rarely emerging from their no-man's lands, these wayward characters were sure to inspire revulsion and awe in the delicate hearts of the civil population. For it was tacitly inferred that such a class of men who dared to transgress all social restraints became privy to the magical force of chaos.

### THE ORIGINS OF THE KĀPĀLIKA RELIGION

We have talked about the "savage" nature of early Bauddha asceticism. The picture becomes increasingly clear as we gather more data on the distinctive mold of early generic Indian asceticism,<sup>2</sup> which stems from the little known Kāpālīka religion.

#### **Q: What exactly is the meaning of *kāpālīka*?**

Literally "skull-ist," ("wearer of skulls"), *kāpālīka* denotes an early and primarily southern Indian medieval tantric cult regarded as an offshoot of *Śaiva Pāshupata*. Their permissive attitude toward caste distinction and the general iconoclastic and anti-social nature of their practices was an overall attack on the divinely ordained Indian social order based on *Varnāshramadharma*. They are pictured as sitting in a cemetery ground (*śmaśāna*) wearing garlands made of human bones, their bodies smeared with human corpse-ash. They eat their food from human skulls. No texts survive. As for the Sanskrit root *kapāla*, again, it simply means "skull." But the origin of

---

<sup>2</sup> Especially as seen in its *vrata* or "ordered observance."

the term is not entirely clear. According to Manfred Mayrhofer, opinions differ between its derivation from Indo-European \**kap-* ‘take, grab, seize’ (vis-à-vis Latin *capere*, *capula*, etc.), its association with the Latin cognate *caput* as well as Old English *hafola* ‘head.’ Otherwise it may be entirely of non-Indo-European origin, perhaps more marked by Austro-Asian influence.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless it is worth pointing out that in the modern North India Bhojpuri language, *kapāt* denotes “head.” We may also consider the feminine form “*kapālikā*,” which is a name for Kālī, “the skull wearing one,” and the masculine “*kapāli*,” a name for Śiva. Interestingly, *kapāla* likely shares the same root with German *kaputt*.

### BRĀHMACIDE – THE KĀPĀLIKA OBSERVANCE

The Kāpālika religion is itself believed to have originated from a very strange brāhmacidal penance prescribed in the ancient *Dharmasūtras*.<sup>4</sup> According to the English scholar Robert Mayer (1990), the Kāpālika observance came to be adopted as the principal ascetic practice of the earliest Tantric sect, the Lākulas. It subsequently came to pervade all tantric Śaiva and Bauddha sects, and to varying degrees, nearly all forms of Asiatic asceticism. It stems from the Ancient Indian Legal Code or *Dharmasūtras* and the punishment it prescribes for a *brāhman* who commits “brāhmacide,” that is, killing a fellow high-caste member. The specific penance is called *Kāpālika-vrata*. It has remained a constant and unchanging feature of Indian legal literature from around 600-400 BCE to

---

<sup>3</sup> Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindiarischen*, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> See Alexis Sanderson (i) “Purity and Power Among the Brāhmins of Kashmir,” 1990 in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed., M. Carrithers, S. Collins and S. Lukes (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press) 1986; and (ii) “Saivism and the Tantric Traditions,” 1988 in *The World’s Religions*, ed., Steward Sutherland, Leslie Houlden, Peter Clarke, Friedhelm Hardy (Routledge, Kegan, Paul) 1988.

the present day.<sup>5</sup> This outrageous penitential observance has always comprised the following:

- (i) Banishment to a cemetery.
- (ii) Living only by alms, to be accepted from all castes.
- (iii) Wearing only rudimentary clothing, often only a lower garment made of animal skin.
- (iv) The constant carrying of the skull of the *brāhmin* one has killed.
- (v) The use of this skull (*kapāla*) as one's begging bowl.
- (vi) The constant carrying with one of a *khatvanga*, literally "the leg of a bed," i.e., a staff or trident with a skull attached at its top. (This implement has no other recorded usage; it is a unique emblem of a convicted *brāhman* brāhmacide).
- (vii) The sustaining of this entire regime for twelve years.
- (viii) The acceptance that one is highly ritually impure for the duration of the observance, and therefore one remains socially isolated and observes avoidance behavior in the presence of *brāhmans*.
- (ix) The dedication of oneself to intense moral reflection and spiritual purification for the duration of the observance (all quoted from Mayer).

### MODERN REMNANTS

**Q: How does this relate to contemporary monasticism, particularly Buddha monasticism? Does the Kāpālīka religion or something like it still exist today?**

---

<sup>5</sup> Robert Mayer 1990. "The Origins of the Esoteric Vajrayāna," a seminar paper for The Buddhist Forum, London School of Oriental and African Studies, Centre of Religion and Philosophy, October 17, 1990.

These questions are key. For the all-important fact that nearly everyone ignores is that many of those early, far-wandered disciples of the Buddha never returned to the Teacher at all.

**Q: So where did they go, and with whom did they eventually mix?**

It was during my search for answers to such questions that I came to regard my own yogic quest as analogous to a sentiment stemming from strata that predate the advent of the codified *bhikkhu*. We are talking about a savage expression of asceticism that is essentially shamanic in structure.

Now as time went on the Kāpālīka penance was adopted by both the Śaiva and Bauddha orders as their central religious observance. But why this happened I barely have a clue. For it is actually quite hard for me to fathom the extreme morbidity of the early Indian ascetic customs. However, Mayer has a very clear idea. For Mayer the strange Kāpālīka observance expresses a kind of ‘intensification of the Indian ascetic’s predilection to perform his own funerary rites at the time of his initiation (*dīkshā*).’ In other words, according to Mayer, it is the intention of the Indian tantric ascetic to ritually perform his own murder. Allow me to quote the distinguished author:

Living in that most polluting of all conceivable places, the cemetery, constantly smearing his face and body with those most polluting of all conceivable substances, menstrual blood, semen, grease from a human cadaver and the ashes of a burned corpse, he drank wine and ate meats out of a bowl fashioned from a human skull, while enjoying frequent rituals of social, commensal, religious and above all sexual intercourse with untouchable women. Far from attempting to purify himself of this inconceivably vast weight of impurity by the three-fold daily bath, instead he enjoyed a grisly parody of such

purification by “bathing” himself in human corpse ash, thus merely compounding the intensity of his pollution to the best of his ability and in accordance with the precept of his sect.

Now most would consider this pretty weird stuff. Indeed, this is freak asceticism at its most extreme. We are fathoming the life of a serial Brāhmicide, these very annotations inscribed on human parchment, corpse-ash ground with blood for pigment, a sharpened bone for cryptic stylus. It’s the charnel ground method, what do you expect.

**Q: But what exactly is the writer’s point then? Does this have any relevance in the Twenty-first century?**

Well, perhaps it takes strange historical tid bits such as these to wake up all you Bauddha-monk worshippers to a sensible perspective on the objects of your worship. Or maybe the writer simply has an axe to grind. I’m in no position to say. But to me such facts lend a priceless glimpse into the character and life of the quasi-historical Buddha who, once again, during his lengthy monk’s career was apparently not known as “The Buddha” at all, but rather, the *śrāmana*, that is, something on the order of a “shaman.”

## THE SAVAGE BUDDHA

**Q: Are we making the Buddha out to be some sort of witch doctor?**

We have to be prepared to recognize “Buddha” primarily as a literary device; as either a shorthand allusion to the dressed up protagonist of the Pali texts on the one hand, or a code-word for the “authors” of the scriptures themselves on the other. Obliquely conceding this tacit qualification, along with the urge to suspended disbelief, one then becomes privy to a quasi-historical data-source that avers to the ‘fact’ that the ‘mythical’ Buddha took part in the ritual disciplines known widely in India



as *śavavāda*. *Śavavāda* literally means “corpse-way.” The practice involved certain extreme necrophilic beliefs that were common to ‘Hindu’ and ‘Bauddha’ Tantric cults. Its practitioners were notorious for their deep involvement with scatological matters, death and the dead. It entailed erotic attraction to corpses and eating the putrefied flesh of semi-cremated and exhumed cadavers. The *śavavāda* discipline was also distinguished by yogins’ repeated performance of their own symbolic funeral rites. The cemetery thus became a fundamental iconographic motif that underpinned the role of “initiatory fear.” This was typically symbolized by the terrible appearance of Goddess Kālī.



As “the black one,” Kālī, represents not only fear of death, but more importantly the death of fear. For fear is that over which the yogin must triumph in order to cut through the fraudulent mass of ego-consciousness. Such death is followed by the birth of liberation. This is why Kālī is black and naked. Iconographically her face is terrifying. She wears several wreaths of skulls around her neck. Every detail is significant—the snake or *nāga* that serves as her sacred thread, the thousands of amputated hands about her hips, her bloodstained body, the two infant corpses in place of earrings. The Goddess also treads upon a naked Śaivite ascetic. He seems to be a Nātha or a Kānphatā yogin, as the huge wooden earrings inserted through the split cartilage of his ears would indicate. He wears nothing but two *nāgas*, one around his neck the other around his waist. His facial expression is that of spiritual illumination. His third-eye is opened. In his right hand he holds a small damaru or ritual hourglass-shaped Indian drum.<sup>6</sup> The setting of these rituals is a smoldering *śmāna* or “charnel ground” It is littered with a child’s severed head and other body parts upon which birds and jackals feed.<sup>7</sup> The scene thus illustrates the fundamental aspects of the *śavavāda* or “corpse-way” sacrament, distinguished by extreme necrophillic beliefs and by the repeated performance of the ascetic’s own symbolic funeral rites.

---

<sup>6</sup> F.B.J. Kuiper treats *domba* [retroflex d] together with other words for drum in his Proto-Munda Words in Sanskrit (1948: 84-87). See *Domba*, 87, under the heading (Rigvedic), and *dundubhi*, ‘drum,’ 43. In regard to these listings, Witzel mentions “a comparison to many other words for drum with similar shape: Skt. *dunduma*, *DiNDima*, *tumbukin*, *ADambara* (Vedic), *lambara*, *Dimbima*, Pkt. *heramba*, Pali *dudrabhi*.... Finally,” writes Witzel, “Kuiper connects [Munda] Santali DoDom DoDom ‘sound of drumming,’ and with a slightly different -o-, DoDom DoDom ‘sound of Doms drumming when arriving in a village,’ with the word *Dom* designating a ‘certain low Hindu caste...small agriculturists and...drummers’ = Hindi *Dom(b)*, Skt. *Domba*, [and] Pkt. *Dumba* (who cook dogs!).” See Michael Witzel, Re: .dombii as scavenger woman, Archives of Indology, 23 Apr 2000, online post. Bracketed words mine. For more on the Doms see my “Digression-Loop: The Sacred Dombi” in my *Mystical Eroticism* (revised 2002).

<sup>7</sup> It may also be the case that “jackal” is the right or wrong translation for Hindi *gīdar*, “wild dog.” The Latin name for *gīdar* is likely *Canis aureus*. There is great similarity between the wild *gīdar* and certain domesticated dogs, but the *gīdar* does not look at all like what one thinks of as a jackal. See Jaap Pranger, cooking dogs [was: .dombii as scavenger woman], Archives of Indology, 26 Apr 2000, online post.

**Q: But why have ascetics so long carried out these bizarre procedures while living in the fiery environs of cremation grounds?**

Performing yogic practices amidst the evanescent ambiance of death and in constant contact with decomposing corpses was believed to instill a heightened awareness of the utter meretriciousness of “ego” experience. The symbolism of the cemetery (*śmśāna*) and the meditations performed while sitting on corpses plays an important role in a number of Indian ascetic schools. Writes Eliade (1954),

The cemetery represents the totality of psychomental life, fed by consciousness of the ‘I’; the corpses symbolize the various sensory and mental activities. Seated at the center of his profane experience, the yogin ‘burns’ the activities that feed them, just as corpses are burned in the cemetery. By meditating in a *śmśāna* he more directly achieves the combustion of egotistic experiences; at the same time, he frees himself from fear, he evokes the terrible demons and obtains mastery over them.<sup>8</sup>

This arcane symbolism played an important role in a number of other Indian ascetic schools as well, and which gained popularity especially from the 12th century. But exactly how, when and where these early morbid practices began is not plainly known; most likely they emerge from a remote pre-historic past. But this we know for sure: the Kāpālīka Religion acted as the model for many such later ascetic orders that emphasized the teachings of yoga-tantra. These show close affinity with the Bauddha

---

<sup>8</sup> Mircea Eliade 1958. *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. W. Trask (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul) 1958: 296. First published in French as *Yoga: Essai sur l'origine de la mystique Indienne* in 1933.

Vajrayāna, the tradition of the Eighty-Four Siddhas and the Indian alchemists, too.

For many it is strange and understandably difficult to imagine that the Buddha ever involved itself with such eerie and anti-social goings on. To waylay doubt, I would direct the patient reader's attention to the *Mahā-Sihanāda Sutta*,<sup>9</sup> a Pāli discourse that the Buddha seems absolutely horrified to quote. In this extraordinary document the Buddha is heard to be almost boasting over having undergone more extreme austerities than any of his yogin contemporaries. He then recites his comprehensive catalog that includes, for one thing, sleeping on human bones in cremation grounds. Here we find the fundamental *śavavāda* sacrament where the Buddha symbolically performed his own funeral rites while living in a cremation-ground. Also included in the Buddha's list of extreme austerities is crawling into cow pens to eat fresh cow dung, a typical custom of the *gōvrata*, or "cow-vow" practice. Based on this scripture, then, we know that the Buddha spent a certain amount of time living and eating like a cow. We furthermore hear the Buddha making claims of having consumed his own urine and fecal matter. In the words of Oxford Professor Richard F. Gombrich, "the author of the text" appears to be saying, "Anything your guru has done, ours has done better."<sup>10</sup> At any rate, this data needs some time to sink in.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 12. It has been brought to my attention that the title of the discourse is actually associated with the culture of Śiva, Mahā-Sī = Mahā-Shiva. See *Maha-sihanada Sutta* ("The Great Discourse on the Lion's Roar"), trans. from the Pāli by Ñānamoli Thera 1993, ed. and revised by Bhikkhu Bodhi.

<sup>10</sup> Richard F. Gombrich 1996. *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings* (London and Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Athlone) 1996: 78-9. See also Axel Michael's review in *Numen*, vol. 45 (1997): 222-23.

---

**Sritantra** is described in studied succinctness as an ascetic researcher, writer and artist who left his native Los Angeles at the age of 22 and who has lived nearly all of his adult life abroad in Asian and European countries. He is furthermore depicted as having been inducted into the Bhikshu Sampradāya in 1978 at the Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhgaya, India. It is additionally declared that his spiritual father is nobody less than His Holiness Śrī Satyānanta Sarasvatī Svāmin more commonly known as Saint Guru Chod (1900-1988). Venerable Sritantra currently resides in Singapore at his private Jasmine Hermitage & Centre for Research. Portions of his writing are accessible at <http://sritantra.co.uk/> and <http://www.blogger.com/profile/>.

---

# Freedom from Karma

Nissim Amon

---

Fate, according to eastern philosophy, is not that which is inevitable or must eventually happen. Fate is the accumulation of many sub-conscious imprints on our minds, the outcome of our general tribal heritage, and of the significant incidents in our personal pasts. Fate is everything that we are, as manifested at this present time. It is our burden, our “karma,” our binding iron chain. Only if we drop it, can we truly set ourselves free.

The Buddhist doctrine of karma says that we are like puppets, being constantly pulled by many strings. However, unlike a real puppet, we think that we are responsible for the movements, and we assume that it is our dance that we dance. Some of us choose to rebel against one of the strings, like a puppet that has decided



Vladimir Pomortsev

there is a certain string it will not put up with anymore. Such “wars” are usually waged against religion, education, work, marriage, or anything else that we are bound to. In most cases, we tie ourselves to other strings that pull us toward the opposite extreme.

Whether we accept our strings or resist them with other strings—either way we are still bound. The Buddha did not speak about accepting our karma or about fighting it. The Buddha spoke about freedom from karma.

But this freedom is not so easily attained. You can renounce everything and travel to the farthest corners of the globe, yet still carry within you the bondage of your strings. To be free from your karma, first you must be aware of it. Luckily, karma is not a theoretical thing at all, we can actually see it with our own eyes. Take a close look at your parents and the family you came from—they are your karma.

Being aware of this karma will help us start distinguishing some of the strings that bind us. However, there are so many of them that it would be a never ending task trying to untie them one by one. Some of them are so delicate and hidden, that it is impossible to know if we are aware of them or not. If we wish to remove them one by one, it would be extremely difficult to know where to begin. The Zen approach to this tangle of strings is a wholesale one, not retail. A Zen teacher will help you go deeper, to the very root of this multitude of strings.

A man once asked the monk Seng-Chan:

“Please show me the way to inner freedom.”

The master replied:

“Who is tying you up?”

That which binds us to our karma is not its grip on us, but our grip on it. It is our unconscious insistence on holding on to the strings that bind us. The way to freedom is simply to release this grip, and thus let them all go at

once. To be more precise, we are not holding all our karmic strings. We are in fact holding only one—we follow our Minds. We believe them, obey them, and moreover, identify ourselves with them.

To let go of this grip, we need to accumulate moments in which we are free from thinking about ourselves, free from our memories, free from our personalities. Moments in which past and future are at total rest, and only pure presence remains. This is where meditation aims. When a critical amount of such moments is accumulated, we can suddenly realize that we are much more than our minds, and will eventually be able to master them.

If only we could release the grip on our Crow  
And encourage it to fly away,  
Not only would we have peace of mind,  
But all the karma of our Crow  
Would fly away with it.

---

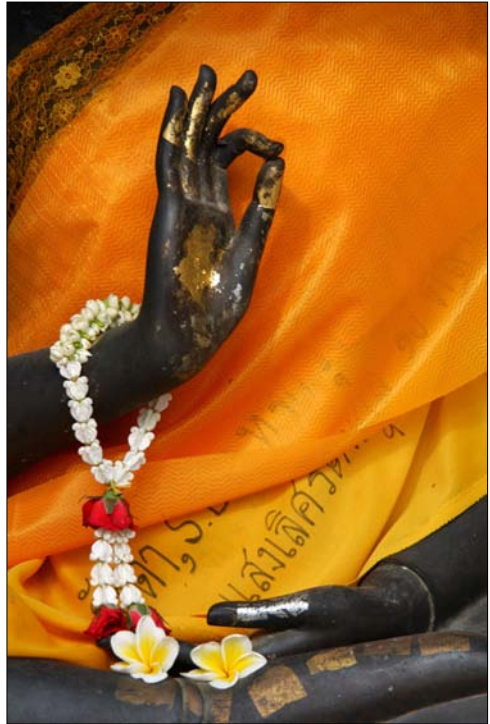
## Radios and Mantras

Nissim Amon

---

There are certain things that are a waste of time to try to understand—a vanilla-cream cake, hugging a baby, the blossoming of the cherry tree in your backyard, and also meditation. Sometimes experience is everything, and understanding is not even necessary. For this reason, in Japanese monasteries, they will make you sit for two weeks facing the wall, and only then the teacher will have a word with you.

After the first two weeks, most newcomers still



Vladimir Pomortsev

do not exactly understand what meditation is all about, but one thing they do understand—it is not an easy thing to sit quietly. The only instructions you receive are to rest in the gap between the thoughts, but there seems to



be an Inner Radio inside your head which continuously broadcasts, and the space between the thoughts is very difficult to enter, much less rest in.

You sit motionless, but your mind cannot stop working: What is the purpose of doing nothing? How can you get wiser by sitting in front of the wall in a quiet room? Isn't doing nothing a complete waste of time? What can be gained by such an autistic pastime?

From its own standpoint, Reason is right. You could have used this time more effectively—to water the plants, do the laundry, or read the weekend magazine. If it was up to your Reason, the rich cream cake, dancing madly at a party, or peacefully sitting by yourself—are all unreasonable.

When you put aside both desire and thinking, some of the benefits of “just sitting,” doing nothing, start to be revealed; and a gateway is opened, leading to a pleasant feeling of happiness.

The Taoist symbol of Yin and Yang describes two complementary opposites that balance each other into one circle. According to this teaching, the two contrasts we need to balance are “Outside” and “Inside.”

“Outside” includes our home, work, family, friends, arrangements, problems, pleasures, and everything that occupies us during the week. “Outside” is the role that we have in the theater of life, the role which repeats itself daily and thus gives us a feeling of stability. And yet, this is just one role out of an infinite of others that we could also have taken on.

Meditation will take you “inside,” to the actor itself, regardless of the role he or she is playing on the stage. It is a journey to strengthen your inner core, a journey to touch something which is neither your head nor your body. These two are only temporary costumes that you wear, and they are part of the general setup of your environment. They are not who you really are.

So you buy yourself a plane ticket, say goodbye to everyone, arrive in Japan, and get accepted in a Zen monastery. For the first two weeks, you sit in the meditation posture on a black cushion, and your head keeps showing

you scenes from the play you wish to leave behind. Meditation is an inner exploration, but before you can have a pleasant time on the black cushion, surfing freely above time and space, there is one great difficulty to face and one great fear to overcome.

People fear that by going in, they might uncover memories that they normally attempt to forget, dreams that they have given up on, and anxieties they might usually prefer to overlook. It might be like opening Pandora's Box. This is a fear one should overcome.

The big difficulty is in trying to mute your Inner Radio's voice. Every one has his own Inner Radio, and usually it is fixed on a station which does not broadcast many optimistic programs, and it is almost impossible to switch the radio off. The Indian yogis have investigated this issue deeply, and the conclusion they reached was that if you cannot switch the radio off, you can at least change the station. According to the Yogi method, all you need to do is to play a mantra disk on the inner recorder. The meaning of the mantra is irrelevant; but by doing it repeatedly, eventually you will achieve a more relaxed station.

The mantra technique is widely in use, both in Hinduism and in Buddhism. Usually, it has a very open meaning and a very abstract message. This way, it offers a gateway to places which are beyond words, sentences, or daily thoughts. The modern "positive thinking" methods (autosuggestion) are a development of the old Indian trick. The modern idea is that the content of the disk you are playing in your mind can make a difference. You can include clear messages that will support your self-confidence and remind you of your recent important spiritual decisions.

After realizing that the solitary listener of your radio station  
Can actually change the station if he is fed up with the old one,  
New possibilities open up with new channels—happier ones.  
The next stage on your journey will be to “zoom out”,  
Calmly looking from the outside at the whole play of your mind.  
When this happens, you can choose to hear yourself think,  
Or you can choose to hear reality itself,  
Without the background sounds of thinking.  
The greatest discovery is that the best mantra is “No Mantra”:  
Just keep your mind quiet  
And allow the two contrasts of “Inside” and “Out” to become one,  
The same one who is reading and breathing right now.



Taos-Greece

Nissim Amon

---

## Nissim Amon

---

Nissim Amon was born in 1963 in Jerusalem.

He was ordained in Korea by Zen-Master Soeng-Sahn at the Hwa-Gey-Sa Monastery, with the designation of monk and Meditation Teacher. Later he traveled to Japan, and studied extensively with G.W. Nishijima, a Soto Zen-Master, who taught him how to catch the Dragon. After ten years under the teaching of Nishijima Roshi, he received a Dharma Transmission and got his Zen-Master title.

As a wandering monk, he was also trained in the Forest Monasteries of Thailand and in Tibetan Monasteries in India and Nepal. In Puna, India, he taught Zen Practices at the famous Osho Center, where he was exposed to a revolutionary approach to heal emotional wounds, a tool that is used to achieve inner balance. In Tel-Aviv he established "The Faculty for High Consciousness" at the "Medi-Cin" College, and taught there for six years.

Nissim Amon has since published three books and released a CD of world meditation music.

He currently resides with his family on the island of Paros, Greece.

It is here in this peaceful place that Nissim, along with partners and friends, have created Tao's—a center for the study and practice of the Art of Happiness.

For more information see: <http://www.taos-greece.com>

---

## **Portfolio**

Ernest Williamson III

Ernest Williamson III is a self-taught painter and pianist, who has published poetry and visual art in over fifty online and print journals. He holds the B.A. and the M.A. in English/Creative Writing from the University of Memphis. Currently, Ernest is a doctoral student at Seton Hall University in the field of Higher Education and he a member of The International High IQ Society based in New York City. Ernest is 29 years old and he appreciates your criticisms of his work.

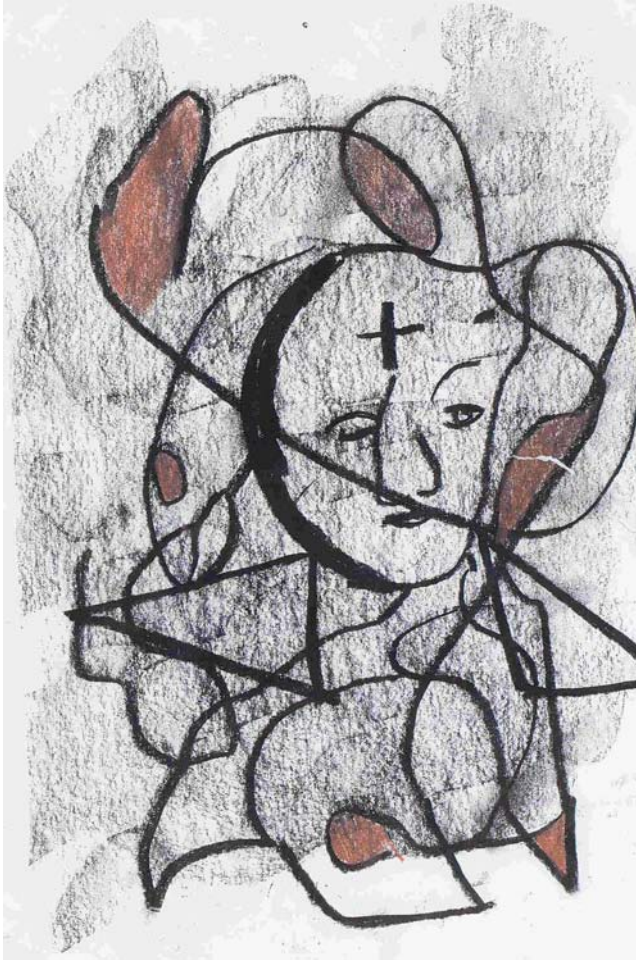


Talented Man Overwhelmed



Dedicated Shepherd





Priest In Abstract



The Giving of Genius



World Peace Held

---

## Astroplankton Break Dance

Sarah Knorr

---

Just because this never happened does not mean it is not true. I have lived it thousands of times in my mind, force blooming it to reality. This iron lung keeps me breathing but the journey keeps me alive. It is the truest thing I know: truer than polio, truer than loneliness, truer than love. It is a teeming drop of life plopped into a well slide, properly lighted and longingly catalogued. It is a personal mythology of root, stem, bloom and seed; a morphology of becoming. It is truth in full blossom.

I spent my youth preparing for it, rambling the back woods until I got down, then reading and rereading the odd selection of books relegated to the county's lending library. Many of these were the gift of a retired biologist, old college texts with micrographs of dinoflagellates, photos of Africans with elephantiasis, and a favorite about Gregor Mendel's plant research.

You may think genetics would be of little use to a man encased in a breathing machine, but you would be wrong indeed. I self-selected out of the gene pool—yes I say “self-selected” because I went swimming despite Mother's grave warning. But I was nine then, what did I know of pheromones, pair bonding, the unrelenting hunger for intimacy? What did I know of biology's imperative: procreate, procreate, procreate?

And now that I know these things, I'm in rather a narrow niche of the singles market, more hardware than most women crave. A talking head, all

my generative paraphernalia enrobed in this damned suit of armor. But inside this head, with its flirty eyes, lies a knack for synthesis so intense!

When I see clouds 'round the moon I read them like an old time pigeon racer reads the rings in the eyes of his birds, mining portent where others see halo and speck.

I cannot make the earth move, myself, but as though to make it up to me, she whispers her secrets at night. This, then, is the distillation of the earth's very breath, told on the wing to her sessile, adoring scribe:

“Have you heard a radish singing after warm spring rain? Did you know that moss dreams in color? That rocks are light at heart? The blinders your kind wears – so literal, so linear! The mosquito's hum is sweeter to a rock than to an itching warm-blood!

“Seen through the eyes of a leaf, what color is the sky?

“Humans are so fond of classifying and categorizing, so proud of believing you invented writing and history. But history is written every day in dirt, in air and in eggshells thinned by DDT. Insect intaglio script under log tells no less than your dusty tomes. Scout bees dance, ‘Lots of food forty meters northwest of the hive.’ A dingo sprays his updates on the landscape for his brethren to read.

“You are tiny expressions of a vast completeness, bit players in a cast of billions, and the only one of them all so presumptuous of your own superiority. Robbing yourselves of your place in the wild continuum, you've traded your birthright away. Only a few still dance with creation; you are the still-fertile seed.

“What you know in your bones began lifetimes ago, before bones, before brains, before lungs. It has been accreting through the eons. Unless you reclaim your vision, your access to the timeless will expire.

“Bipeds are a sprout at one tip of an unimaginably grand family tree, a sprig of consciousness that could be snapped by a freeze or a bomb or a

virus, by war or pollution or greed. But the tree goes on; its roots are deep. As long as a drawerful of roaches survives, nature has a fighting chance.

“Humans gasp at geysers and bioluminescent tides, but equivalent amazements occur every second. The gentle vibration of earthworms rocks you to sleep every night. You miss so much, but you do have wonder, and therein lies your hope.

“And you, child, are one of my live wires. So choose: tell me what you miss the most and it will be yours for the night.”

“Playing otter. Spinning myself dizzy. Laughing ’til I cannot breathe.”

“You shall have them all. Close your eyes and hit that mud slide flying.”

And so I was granted release. Stillness is a blessing, but so is extravagant physical freedom. I’m one of the few who has been given both.

After I wore out my childhood favorites, the surprises began. Awakening inside an endless black opal, the sky flashing curtains of color; the journeys of fire and of dust; a season as a gecko; a river soak with the hippos.

When I tried to thank her, the earth said simply, “I want to keep feeding your roots.”

I had forgotten the sacred smell of dirt from decades of living three feet off the ground, and that ground almost always disinfected. It revived me to awaken on the forest floor. The aromas of life and rot and regeneration reminded me that I am a slowly unfurling seed. I gained faith in the dirt I belonged to, which I had never left, just hovered above in suspended animation. My fledgling roots burrowed in and anchored me to my source.

“What do you think embers are for? And deep sea vents and lightning? They are the ways I call out your dreams.”

She gave me a turn as the cambium in an ancestral chestnut tree, to record its history ring by ring. Tree time is unhurried. It is an incremental

respiration through drought, flood, heat and cold, faithful to one green task.

“Stillness is the precursor to flight. Glory rests in the commonest things. Every strand is integral to the whole. Sometimes the threads shine through, as when a manta ray enfolds you in its pulsing wings. Listen! The enchantment is worth the terror.” Now that my wings are clipped, I surge with an oyster’s dream of flight. When I was a dust spore surfing the updrafts, I clung to the goal of post-touchdown peace. In my orbit ’round the sun I have changed from wriggling larva to sessile polyp, than bloomed into pulsing argonaut. Freedom and stillness, bimorphic amazement: two lives for the price of one ride!

“For all your foibles, there is something about you as hopeful and brave as frog eggs. So vulnerable! So improbable to believe you will grow into tadpoles and later sprout hopping legs. You are forever just beginning.

“Ancient seeds germinate after centuries in storage. DNA is a magical beanstalk. You humans may yet reclaim your wildness and exult, like kelp strands stretched by the current, like maple wings spinning through air.”

I next awake as a basil flower, tickled by the attentions of a foraging bee. I give up my nectar and swoon in the breeze, adrift in the honeybee’s song. Months from now, crunching his toast and honeycomb, my neighbor will start at the wildness infusing his bones, transmuting his ballast to wings.

In the way that wind carves stone and water carves stone and roots carve stone I sculpt the course of time by simply outdancing the obdurate. Stranded like a fossil cast in rock, I am a breathing geode, all my treasure hidden inside. Here in my stainless cocoon, I sing like a flute in prevailing winds. Within my alien pod, this glistening carapace my receiver-transmitter, I listen to the music of the spheres.

What better protective coloration in a high-tech world than a gleaming iron lung? In my dreams I am a feathery tubeworm waving my

fronds in the warm salt sea, fomenting beauty and rebellion from my burrow. Waking, just another hermit crab, straining to drag my shell with me everywhere I hope to go.

Even rooted in my tin can, there are wildernesses to explore. Most plants never move far, but watch the world through wild, wide eyes. But for one component or two, chlorophyll and hemoglobin are the same. Seen through the eyes of a leaf, what color is the sky?

A childhood friend once did an electronics project that seemed to transform music into a flashlight beam. When the light came on, the music played across the room.

Without lifting a finger, we twirl about at a thousand miles each hour. Not bad for a planet still becoming, and for all of us star struck motes of being, turning in the light. Motes? Notes? We are musical dust: simultaneously humble and celestial. And every day the sun comes up, the music starts again. We are astrophankton, looking for a place to bloom.

If ever I have a child I shall name her “Cnidaria” for that phylum’s primordial splendor. Unconstrained by bones, they invented multicellular motion, Terpsichore’s art, and gave it to us all. They sting, but the pain’s a small price for the joy of the dance.

---

**Sarah Knorr** works, dreams and votes for a place at the table for all. Her stories and poems have appeared in *Tough Times Companion*, *Streetlight*, *Moondance* and the [forthcoming] anthology *Sisters Singing: Incantations, Blessings, Chants, Prayers, Art and Sacred Stories by Women*.



---

# The Acoustic Hajj

David Keali'i

---

I tore down the walls of God  
That surrounded me so that I could  
Further seek the beloved...  
This put me on a journey that  
would bring me all over the world.

First, I came across a stone Buddha sitting amidst  
A grove of cedars  
And I thought that he might be the eternal Tao within.  
Then, I remembered that, "The Tao that can be named  
Is not the eternal Tao."

So onward I went  
The 8 Immortals my companions  
Each one shimmering with razor sharp light.  
At the mouth of the Ganges River we stopped  
All 8 motioning for me to step into the  
Running waters

In the waist deep currents I felt  
The path to better births ahead of me

So it seemed that there was a way to realize  
My ultimate self.

But, as I stepped away I realized  
That this road only leads to more of samsara  
I did not want that  
So I left the 8 Immortals with Ganga Ma  
And the offerings of marigolds that  
Line the holy river.

I continued on my way criss-crossing oceans and islands  
Until the journey ended.  
In Istanbul, at a café in the shadow of what was once Hoga Sophia,  
The great Byzantine Cathedral,

I sat with Jel-al-uddin Rumi and Kahlil Gibran  
Sipping mint tea sweetened by amber colored honey.  
They spoke to me about love and the self  
Which when entwined  
Is as beautiful as Japanese calligraphy.

They whispered into my ear that Narcissus  
Was not wrong know your self  
by looking into yourself.  
Use water, ink, or tea...

The window to the soul IS your eyes.  
My only response was to grin and nod  
As I looked deep into my cup of tea  
My eyes  
Pools of twilight.

And I knew that the beloved  
Had never been far off.

## Camelopardalis

David Keali'i

---

*For Rane*

Wake me when we crackle the  
indigo cathedral of midnight.  
Remind me that there is more to  
life than striding second by second  
through existential hell.  
Especially when I was spoken too via  
luminescent guitar chords that broke  
quantum physics into a melodic intrusion.

Is life only a song that defined high school?  
Not when I grasped the elusive embrace,  
not when the Sufi's whirl cut  
the layers of five senses to reveal:  
creation.

Jean-Paul Sartre was not one-hundred percent correct.  
No, life must be more than angst dipping into  
roller coasters of whipped insanity.

Tell me, how often will we fall into  
one another till we finally see how

valuable we are?

Do you believe that all of this is enough?

I hope that question is not too

Platonic.

Take your time answering,

and

wake me

when we crackle the indigo cathedral of midnight.

## Invocation

David Keali'i

---

Night calls across the waters  
gently breaking upon the shores.  
Do you hear the pulsing  
of the depths?  
It is the marker for the dance  
the beat by which we shall chant.

For now is when we make that  
evening journey, the time of  
the rising sun maybe far off, but  
we are together  
the movements of our hands tell the story.

The time of the gods whisper  
in the breeze.  
Our worlds draw closer as  
the sand nearly sings from  
the light of the moon.

Did we ever leave the waters?  
When did our feet land on the ground?  
The night still calls.

Its voice is pleasant, not harsh,  
calming like the stories told to children.

This is our time to again slip  
into indigo seas.

We have made our hearts ready  
open to one another, to the world,  
to what lies beyond.

---

**David Keali'i** has been the host of a weekly poetry open-mic for about 4 years. He has been published in the November 3rd Club. He lives in Springfield, Massachusetts. His book, *Komohanaokala: Entering In of The Sun*, was published in June 2006.

---

# Cultural Engineering With Eyes Wide Shut? Playback/Feedback Magicks And The Archaeology Of The Now

Tristram Burden

---

Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* is a film about relationships and sex: particularly the dogmas towards them specific to gender and native culture. But what Kubrick seems to weave, from a magickal perspective, is a vast healing spell, designed to untie the cultural knots that bind culture and society within recurring behaviour patterns. What Wilhelm Reich termed the emotional plague is still rife within us, and the reflection and representation of ourselves through



Darko Novakovic

the media, though it can serve to fractionalise and de-specify meaning, perpetuates the very behaviour patterns we'd be wise to change. Cinema can serve both purposes: as a perpetrator of outmoded and destructive cultural paradigms, as for example the transmitter of racial-sexual and narrative stereotypes that betray a limited view of the potentials of our species. Or as a perpetrator of positive shifts within cultural narratives,



either by design, folly, or the manifestation at strategic points of a gestalt human will.

There is the argument that the representation of old subcultural themes reabsorbed and re-represented as a mainstream cultural artifact serve to make bland what was once fresh and inviting; but the increase in the production and dissemination of information, an accelerating new orgy of producing, consuming, reproducing and consuming, heralds the death of the banal. Everything is always new and perpetually recreated and reflected through the lenses of mind and culture, the giant, all seeing, mirror of the mind. The dependence upon television perhaps emblematic of contemporary western culture was forewarned by Harlan Ellison and his 1960's column, entitled "The Glass Teat." While everything within the refracted and reflected lens often looks new, its banality is seemingly obvious to those not caught in a loop of false consciousness. Progressive cultural paradigms can be implemented with stealth through the teat, secreted as an antidote to the psychic toxins which likewise seep through. *Eyes Wide Shut* is perhaps emblematic of cinema that is designed to change something about the way we behave, or show us a way out.

The film's narrative seems constructed around the central scene. Included in the centre is a powerful piece of music formed around a backwards Romanian prayer. The piece was constructed by Jocelyn Pook, not specifically for the film, but Kubrick wanted it, perhaps aware of what the original prayer was: a section from John 13:34,<sup>1</sup> "God said unto his disciples: 'A New commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another'." Another line in the prayer, sung by the tenor priest, translates: "We still pray for the mercy, the life, the peace, the health, the salvation, the scrutiny, neglection(sic) and forgiveness of the sins of God's servants, worshippers, almsgivers, benefactors of this holy site."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Four numbers which add up to eleven, the number of the Great Work.

<sup>2</sup> Info garnered from <http://www.eeggs.com/items/29092.html>

Reversal is a classic magickal technique, utilised in the search for an authentic Satanism, that can symbolise the undoing of influence, in this case perhaps to unwind portions of the Judeo-Christian paradigm and its still-strong grip upon our sexual behaviours. At the beginning of the pseudo-masonic masked ball, when the music is played, it is a patriarch that commands, with the ritual stamp of a staff, a circle of eleven woman to go out from the circle and fuck whom they please. The individual female will under the severe direction of masculine authority.

During the ensuing orgy, just before the central character is unmasked as an imposter, men and men and woman and woman are seen in congress in the only place in the film. Only when the masks are on, the eyes wide open, do we behave sexually as we want to, masked so as to conceal our identity, refusing to associate ourselves with these deep animal drives, but allowing it just for this pocket of time under the explicit instruction of a masculine power. Perhaps it is Kubrick's intent to unwind these behaviours, determined by socio-religious norms and values and reflected and refracted through the media and culture. Because when the masks are off, we shut our eyes from ourselves and our deepest animal nature and from each other, in fear of what may emerge as our deepest will, to allow the play acting of civilised society. This is the emotional plague that Wilhelm Reich perceived; the pushing down and suppressing of our natures, intrinsically linked to sexuality, preventing impulses from finding safe and natural outlets.

Many of Kubrick's films deal with the animal within us and it's manifestation in our past and future: In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the narrative was a cosmic/mystical journey into the heart of human creation, direction and evolution; *A Clockwork Orange* was a representation of our drives towards violence and causing great pain, and a critique on the cultural shift towards the acceptance of such behaviour as something banal and integral to our cultural narratives. There's no certainty that Human nature is disposed towards violence and causing pain, except in the name of

some 'greater' good, whether it be the individual ego's survival, or the cultural ego's survival—a drive thinly veiled under the panic-button ideologies of Patriotism and Nationalism. Another film of Kubrick's, directly related to the human disposition to keep out of harms way and not cause pain onto others, is *Full Metal Jacket*. This film destroyed army stereotypes, and presented a bunch of fearful, fucked-up males going through an ordeal of primal terror triggered by an ultimately futile war, a consequence itself of human fear and terror.

*Eyes Wide Shut* tackles the same subjects from a different view, the consequence of fear and terror on our sexual and more general human relationships. The film's message is contained within a labyrinthine narrative that leads into the centre, presents a ritual that the audience participates in through the subliminal imbibation of backwards prayer, and then leads out of the centre again back into mundane time and space. The main character himself is taken down the rabbit-hole by smoking weed with his wife. During the smoke, she presents him with a view on gender contrary to his own assumptions through the confession of a surprise sexual fantasy she once had, just when he thought their relationship was perfect. This leads him on a quest to forge jealousy within her, as she has forged it within him. After encountering a prostitute and sex-play between an adolescent and two Japanese business men, he is taken to the masked ball, after which he discovers that the adolescent's father has come to an arrangement with the business men, and that the prostitute he nearly fucked is HIV positive. The narrative, mirrored in this fashion either sides of the central masked orgy, is possibly a play on the mirror of culture, reflecting and refracting different effects from different cultural paradigms, ricochets from the wheel of karma<sup>3</sup> and suffering. Though prostitution is often hailed as the oldest profession in the world, therefore attempting to give it some legitimacy and its rightful place in culture, perhaps it only exists

---

<sup>3</sup> In the actual true sense of the word: cause, effect and the interdependence of phenomena. Not the popular simplification of reward and punishment.

because sexual expression is so inhibited, preventing the sex we want but can't get without the right currency. Indeed the first words of the film are from Bill, the main character, to Alice his wife: "Honey, have you seen my wallet?" - a possible critique of the Western male's obsession with power and profit over awareness, compounded by his remark later in the scene: "How do I look?" Asks Alice.

"Perfect."

"Is my hair OK?"

"It's great."

"But you're not even looking at it."

Eyes wide shut in our relationships, sleepwalking through the most primal congress, the meeting of polarities and its successful maintenance. When we open our eyes, and fall down the rabbit-hole, we get a glimpse of the mechanics behind our relationship's, which Bill witnessed compressed into symbolic ritual form at the masked ball.

The only way out is to break free of the loop, and one possible solution to the problem is presented as the final word of the film, spoken by Alice to Bill: Fuck. Sex unbound by ritual and words, sex beyond the clouds of meaning and structure we inhibit it with, experienced as it really is – genital to genital, arse to cock, cunt to mouth and heart to heart. Once we worry less about what goes where, who does who and who's on-top, the unwinding of the ties that bind us will perhaps begin, enabling a more precise expression of ourselves as we are.

Movies as a magickal platform seems under-discussed, if not ignored altogether. Though directors like Kenneth Anger make a conscious decision to take the audience through an actual magickal transformation through his films, and magickal artists and practitioners are exploring the transposition of ritual into film,<sup>4</sup> cinema like *Eyes Wide Shut* is emblematic

---

<sup>4</sup> See the Fotemicus project, well documented in *Now That's What I Call Chaos Magick* by Gregg Humphries and Julian Vaine from Mandrake of Oxford Press. And Orryelle

of a magickal process occurring through and into a mass-audience, using tried and tested psychological techniques and perhaps engineering culture towards a fruitful given end. The same could be said of *The Matrix*, and perhaps even the two *Star Wars* trilogies. Whether Kubrick had intent behind his magick we may never know, but with the emerging interface of media and sorcery, with artists like Jodorowsky creating purposely magickal films and the increasing experimentation with playback and feedback magick,<sup>5</sup> it hopefully won't be long before the tools implicit in the 'black magic' of advertising and mass-media are consciously utilised in the more multi-colourful and powerful magick of the modern magus.

---

With Grandparents who were practicing Christian Scientists, a grandfather who was a yoga enthusiast and who studied eastern mysticism, an uncle who studied Theosophy, a father who was a Freemason and aspiring Rosicrucian, a mother who was a member of esoteric Christian sect the White Eagle Lodge and an Anthroposophist, from an early age **Tristram Burden** was surrounded by Esotericism. A technical hitch during an Astral Traveling experiment when he was sixteen introduced him to Kundalini, and on his journey towards understanding the phenomenon he has had close encounters with a wide range of beliefs and practices. He is an empowered Sekhem practitioner, an Adi-Nath and a member of the Horus-Maat Lodge and the Order of Chaos, and studied contemporary and alternative religions at degree level. He has contributed material to a variety of publications, amongst them *Prediction Magazine*, *Silverstar*, and *Silk Milk Magi-zain*. He is also resident New Age correspondent at the on-line nexus of culture and society, Suite101.

---

Defenestrated's film work at [www.crossroads.wild.net.au](http://www.crossroads.wild.net.au) is another powerful platform of experimentation in this area.

<sup>5</sup> See "Playback" by Cabell McLean in Ashe 3.1.

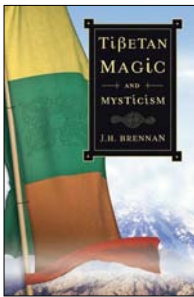
---

## Reviews

---

### **Tibetan Magic and Mysticism, J.H Brennan**

(Llewellyn, 2006, 218pp, \$12.95)

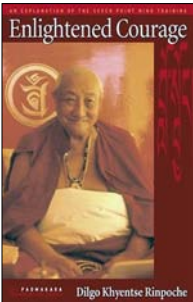


I often find I have misgivings about authors who seem to write on a never-ending succession of topics. J. H. Brennan's credits include forays into spying, Martians, Atlantis, the I Ching, time travel, fantasy gaming and other topics de rigueur for the paranormal eclectic. *Tibetan Magic and Mysticism* expands on Brennan's earlier book *Occult Tibet*. Within a few pages, one realizes that Brennan has more than a cursery knowledge of his subject. Brennan provides an overview of Tibetan Buddhist mysticism and magical techniques, delving deeper into the body's energy systems, gurus, spirit guides, prayer forms and dream yoga. The book also includes a glossary to assist the reader with some the specialized Tibetan terms used. Diving into the immense ocean of knowledge that has flowed forth from once-secluded Tibet, Brennan produces a highly valuable book for anyone seeking to begin their exploration of Tibetan magic. Of particular note is the section on death, examining when the point of death occurs, contrasting Western scientific observations with Tibetan. Brennan then proceeds from the state immediately post-death, through the *bardos*—the stages that the soul passes

through after death detailed in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*—to rebirth. Brennan brings his other knowledge and interest to his approach to his Tibetan subjects. He draws comparisons to the work and theories of such Western mystics as Aldous Huxley and Aleister Crowley. *Tibetan Magics and Mysticism* stands a solid introduction to an extremely complex science of complimentary techniques—one enmeshed in Tibetan Buddhist legend. Brennan's book provides an overview from whence the inquisitive reader can jump and explore Tibetan commentaries and source texts, such as the Tibetan Book of the Dead or Tenzin Wangyal's *Yogas of Dream and Sleep*.

**Enlightened Courage: A Commentary on the Seven Point Mind Training**, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

(Snow Lion, 2006, 120pp, \$15.95)

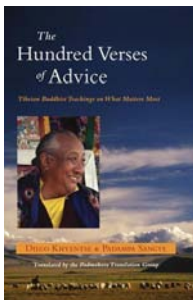


Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991) was a highly respected teacher within the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. He was widely recognized as one of the greatest Vajrayana meditation masters within the traditions of Mahamudra, Mahayana and Great Perfection. Rinpoche was born in the Denhok Valley of eastern Tibet. After the Lhasa uprising of 1959, he escaped to Bhutan. Over the following years, he traveled throughout Asia and the West giving teachings on diverse topics. The talks that comprise in *Enlightened Courage* were given during a month long seminar at Shechen Tennyi Dargyeling, at La Sonnerie in the Dordogne département, France. In these talks Rinpoche gave a detailed explanation of the Seven Point Mind Training first brought to Tibet by the Indian Buddhist master Atisha and further expounded by the Tibetan teacher Thogmé Zangpo in the fourteenth century. The Seven Point Mind Training is the practice at the very heart of Tibetan Buddhism. It explains Bodhisattva practice in a concise way. The training covers topics ranging from *tonglen* (the practice

of taking on the suffering of others, giving happiness in return) to transforming obstacles into aids along the path. This volume produces the entire root text by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje and also repeats the text line-by-line throughout as Rinpoche comments upon it. In the preface, the editors acknowledge that the talks were originally given to an audience comprised mainly of practitioners well versed in Buddhist teachings. This is evident throughout the book. The editors have addressed this, however, by providing footnotes and a glossary to assist with unfamiliar terms and philosophical concepts. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was truly an exceptional teacher and this shows through in these talks. *Enlightened Courage* is an indispensable work for any practitioner's library.

**The Hundred Verses of Advice: Tibetan Buddhist Teachings on What Matters Most, Dilgo Khyentse and Padampa Sangye**

(Shambhala, 2005, 192pp, hardcover, \$19.95)

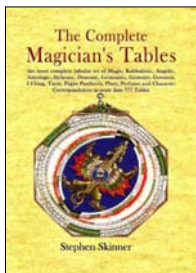


*The Hundred Verses of Advice* were composed by the twelfth century Buddhist teacher Padampa Sangye, known in India as Paramabuddha. He traveled several times between India, Tibet and China. He spent much time teaching in the Tingri valley, located between Tibet and Nepal. Fearing the time of his passing, his followers asked Padampa what they would do once he was no longer with them. He composed the *Hundred Verses* as a gift to the people of Tingri, so that they might continue to live by the sacred teachings and learn how to further apply them throughout their daily lives. These simple verses have been studied by countless Tibetans over the centuries since Padampa's departure. This book comprises the complete translation of Padampa's verses and a commentary on each by Dilgo Khyentse given in talks during 1987. Padampa, and Khyentse in his commentaries, eloquently and beautifully illustrate how to turn the challenges of daily life



into aids along the meditator's path. Each verse consists of two couplets imparting a simple practitioner's truth. Dilgo Khyentse then extends this verse through a lively discussion of a delicate page or two. "If you wander in distraction, you'll waste the freedoms and advantages of human life; People of Tingri, make a resolute decision now," advises Padampa in verse twenty-eight. "If there is one constant tendency of our fickle and ever-changing minds, it is our strong predilection for ordinary distractions," begins Khyentse's explication. "Until we learn to master our thoughts and attain true stability of mind," he continues, "our commitment is bound to be hesitant and we run the risk of being distracted by activities with little true meaning, wasting our life and the precious opportunities for the Dharma is has brought us. To postpone the practice of Dharma until tomorrow is tantamount to postponing it till we die." With such clarity, these two great teachers provide a timeless wisdom that is universally valuable to all spiritual seekers.

### **The Complete Magician's Tables, Stephen Skinner** (Golden Hoard, 2006, 432pp, hardback £30)



"Tarot without number" which is one possible title for this review. Now a revision of 'Crowley's' 777 or as its known in the trade, *The Qabalah of Aleister Crowley*, might seem a bit nerdy. We've probably all been tempted at some time or another to prepare our own revision of what's seen as the essential text—well actually not me but I know a few who have been so tempted. By the way—the apostrophes around Crowley are meant to indicate that the old bull's authorship of said text is not without its doubters, as Stephen Skinner points out in his introduction.

What's it for—I hear you say? Indeed, it's a while since I looked at my battered old copy but there is a school of magic (I'm not saying how old)

that recommends that all magical operations should be beefed up with information from such a book of tables. It all goes back to the old doctrine of signatures and correspondences. The power of magick seems to reside in the ability to assign the many things in our imaginal world to various classifications. The ancient pagan world was full of classificatory systems—perhaps that was then the nature of knowledge—the obsessive making of lists?

As very many of these lists have come down to us from posterity principally via the grimoires and kabbalistic texts such as the *Sepher Yetzirah* (Book of Formation), *The Bahir* (Book of Light), *The Zohar* (Book of Splendour) etc, etc. Rescued from obscurity by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, these books and their lists were given a new lease of life and form the basis of much modern magick including the schema underlying the Tarot, perhaps the ultimate ‘list.’

If you’re not a list maker yourself how might you use them? Well received wisdom says that if for example you want to construct a ritual to Seth, the Egyptian god of Chaos, you might use the traditional ‘correspondences’ of that god—color red, constellation Ursa major, planet Mercury or Mars, depending whether you follow the views of the ancient Egyptians or the later traditions. They can also be used to check on details of a vision—this usually done during a practice called Path working. This entails an imaginal journey over the various ascending paths of the Tree of Life. I should point out in one of his many revisions, Skinner recommends a return to the Lurianic Tree i.e. that of Isaac Luria (1533-1572) as opposed to the Golden Dawn version, constructed by Macgregor Mathers, but considered by most experts to be inferior. Even so, Skinner acknowledges these Golden Dawn attributions have become a discreet if problematic tradition in their own right. So for completeness and easy comparison both sets are listed often side by side for easy comparison, as on page 133 of the Tables. So if our astral traveler received a toothy vision he or she might later conclude that they were either on course on the path between sphere 10 to

9 at the bottom of the tree or had strayed into the ‘path direct’ and was actually on 3 to 2.

In a sense all classificatory system have an arbitrary quality. It’s like astrology, many swear by the use of the tropical Zodiac—despite the fact that it hasn’t quite be in synch with the actual constellations for a while now. It’s a conventional system, where the relationships between the parts is maybe more important than the underlying reality.

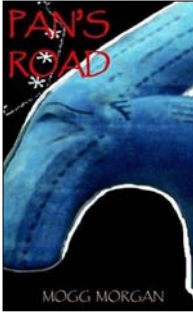
Well that’s just to discuss the issues raised in one of the many hundred of seminal tables presented in this crucial book. Although at its strongest when dealing with the material related to High Magick, the Grimoires, Alchemy and the Kabbalah, I was glad the author had ditched that piece of cultural imperialism, that reduced Kabbalah to a mere filing system then ‘used’ to bury every other system under a semblance of false knowledge. Kabbalah is far from the last refuge of the lazy thinker. I’m glad to see the message is getting through at last—that all belief systems need to be embraced in their own context.

Skinner’s revisionism is extended to the Tables, which ditch the clunky and confusing system adopted by Crowley, whereby everything was mapped onto a 33 row table (10 spheres, 22 paths and a couple extra for the awkward ones that don’t fit.) Skinner instead returns to the older more user friendly ZEP system whereby everything is classified according to either the Zodiacal, the Elemental or the Planetary attribution.

—Mogg Morgan, *Mandrake Speaks*  
(*mandrake-subscribe@yahoogroups.com*)

**Pan's Road**, Mogg Morgan

(Mandrake of Oxford, 2006, 232pp, £7.99/\$14.99)



Mogg Morgan's new novel *Pan's Road* opens with a contemporary archaeological dig that unearths a magician's box from the rubble of an Egyptian tomb in Coptos, Upper Egypt. The opening of this box "propels us on a supernatural journey across space and time" to an ancient and very threatened Coptos where we join a small group fleeing the Roman army by taking the route along Pan's Road and eventually into the City of Ombos—Citadel of Seth, the Egyptian God of Chaos.

Well written, beautifully crafted and interspersed with exquisite pieces of verse from ancient Egyptian tomes *Pan's Road*, is quite simply a wonderful book that fulfils in style, polish and content many of the promises and potentialities laid before us by its predecessor *The English Mahatma* (Mandrake of Oxford, 2001).

*Pan's Road* successfully animates and peoples a time in the long distant past and for those like myself with a patchy, at best, knowledge of Egyptian culture and history there is a small but a much appreciated glossary of terms.

However this novel will be appreciated all the more if it is read in the context of Mogg Morgan's other writing. Mogg Morgan's body of work, which is primarily focused on Egyptian and specifically Sethian magic, needs to, like a hall of mirrors, be explored in totality to fully appreciate it. *Pan's Road* should be read alongside its non fiction counterpart, *The Bull of Ombos* (Mandrake of Oxford, 2005) and just as a gazer into a mirror can lose the sense of which is the true reality so can the reader of these two works wander the dreamscape of what was/what could be and what is perhaps, just imagined.

One of the incidents that most aptly demonstrates such parallels is when *The Bull of Ombos* describes a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum to view the Was Sceptre found in the Ombite temple of Seth whilst a scene from *Pan's Road* describes a similar pilgrimage.

These are haunting, memorable and different perspectives which prove to be pivotal points of the two books.

Then there are the *Pan's Road* connections with *Tankhem; Seth and Egyptian Magick* and the aforementioned *The English Mahatma* which precipitates further wandering on the readers part through halls of mirrors and alternative and literal realities; interconnected paths with different routes and endings which seem to shift as much as the sands of time on which these roads travel.

Perhaps I seem wax a little too lyrical; I don't think so though. To read a book that takes one on a journey that absorbs, entertains, educates AND inspires dreams deserves more than just a little lyrical praise, in my opinion.

—Charlotte, *Mandrake Speaks*

(mandrake-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

悟

り

REBEL SATORI PRESS

[www.rebelsatori.com](http://www.rebelsatori.com)