



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF **Hinduism**



CONSTANCE A. JONES AND JAMES D. RYAN

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Hinduism



Encyclopedia of Buddhism
Encyclopedia of Catholicism
Encyclopedia of Hinduism
Encyclopedia of Islam
Encyclopedia of Judaism
Encyclopedia of Protestantism

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WORLD RELIGIONS

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Hinduism



Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan

J. Gordon Melton, Series Editor

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Encyclopedia of Hinduism

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PREFACE



The Encyclopedia of World Religions series has been designed to provide comprehensive coverage of six major global religious traditions—Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity. The volumes have been constructed in an A-to-Z format to provide a handy guide to the major terms, concepts, people, events, and organizations that have, in each case, transformed the religion from its usually modest beginnings to the global force that it has become.

Each of these religions began as the faith of a relatively small group of closely related ethnic peoples. Each has, in the modern world, become a global community, and, with one notable exception, each has transcended its beginning to become an international multiethnic community. Judaism, of course, largely defines itself by its common heritage and ancestry and has an alternative but equally fascinating story. Surviving long after most similar cultures from the ancient past have turned to dust, Judaism has, within the last century, regathered its scattered people into a homeland while simultaneously watching a new diaspora carry Jews into most of the contemporary world's countries.

Each of the major traditions has also, in the modern world, become amazingly diverse. Buddhism, for example, spread from its original home

in India across southern Asia and then through Tibet and China to Korea and Japan. Each time it crossed a language barrier, something was lost, but something seemed equally to be gained, and an array of forms of Buddhism emerged. In Japan alone, Buddhism exists in hundreds of different sect groupings. Protestantism, the newest of the six traditions, began with at least four different and competing forms of the religious life and has since splintered into thousands of denominations.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the six religious traditions selected for coverage in this series were largely confined to a relatively small part of the world. Since that time, the world has changed dramatically, with each of the traditions moving from its geographical center to become a global tradition. While the traditional religions of many countries retain the allegiance of a majority of the population, they do so in the presence of the other traditions as growing minorities. Other countries—China being a prominent example—have no religious majority, only a number of minorities that must periodically interface with one another.

The religiously pluralistic world created by the global diffusion of the world's religions has made knowledge of religions, especially religions

practiced by one's neighbors, a vital resource in the continuing task of building a good society, a world in which all may live freely and pursue visions of the highest values the cosmos provides.

In creating these encyclopedias, the attempt has been made to be comprehensive if not exhaustive. As space allows, in approximately 800 entries, each author has attempted to define and explain the basic terms used in talking about the religion, make note of definitive events, introduce the most prominent figures, and highlight the major organizations. The coverage is designed to result in both a handy reference tool for the religious scholar/specialist and an understandable work that can be used fruitfully by anyone—a student, an informed lay person, or a reader simply wanting to look up a particular person or idea.

Each volume includes several features. They begin with an essay that introduces the particular tradition and provides a quick overview of its historical development, the major events and trends that have pushed it toward its present state, and the mega-problems that have shaped it in the contemporary world.

A chronology lists the major events that have punctuated the religion's history from its origin to the present. The chronologies differ somewhat in emphasis, given that they treat two very ancient faiths that both originated in prehistoric time, several more recent faiths that emerged during the last few millennia, and the most recent, Protestantism, that has yet to celebrate its 500-year anniversary.

The main body of each encyclopedia is constituted of the approximately 800 entries, arranged alphabetically. These entries include some 200 biographical entries covering religious figures of note in the tradition, with a distinct bias to the 19th and 20th centuries and some emphasis on leaders from different parts of the world. Special attention has been given to highlighting female contributions to the tradition, a factor often overlooked, as religion in all traditions has until recently been largely a male-dominated affair.

Geographical entries cover the development of the movement in those countries and parts

of the world where the tradition has come to dominate or form an important minority voice, where it has developed a particularly distinct style (often signaled by doctrinal differences), or where it has a unique cultural or social presence. While religious statistics are amazingly difficult to assemble and evaluate, some attempt has been made to estimate the effect of the tradition on the selected countries.

In some cases, particular events have had a determining effect on the development of the different religious traditions. Entries on events such as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (for Protestantism) or the conversion of King Asoka (for Buddhism) place the spotlight on the factors precipitating the event and the consequences flowing from it.

The various traditions have taken form as communities of believers have organized structures to promote their particular way of belief and practice within the tradition. Each tradition has a different way of organizing and recognizing the distinct groups within it. Buddhism, for example, has organized around national subtraditions. The encyclopedias give coverage to the major groupings within each tradition.

Each tradition has developed a way of encountering and introducing individuals to spiritual reality as well as a vocabulary for it. It has also developed a set of concepts and a language to discuss the spiritual world and humanity's place within it. In each volume, the largest number of entries explore the concepts, the beliefs that flow from them, and the practices that they have engendered. The authors have attempted to explain these key religious concepts in a nontechnical language and to communicate their meaning and logic to a person otherwise unfamiliar with the religion as a whole.

Finally, each volume is thoroughly cross-indexed using small caps to guide the reader to related entries. A bibliography and comprehensive index round out each volume.

—J. Gordon Melton

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—Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan

NOTE ON TERMS AND SPELLING



Because the spelling of Hindu terms today relies upon transliteration from several different languages from different language groups, perfect consistency in English spellings is not possible. Moreover, alternate spellings of Hindu terms and names are in common use throughout the English-speaking world.

We have chosen in most cases to cite the academically accepted and/or current spellings, even though these spellings may not be the same as common usage and/or historical usage. For example, the name of one wife of Shiva, the goddess Minakshi, is popularly rendered Meenakshi, while scholars predominantly favor the former spelling. Also, a number of variations appear over time in the names of cities, so that Banaras is now commonly spelled Benares. Similarly, the honorific Sri is also spelled Shri, Shrii, and Shree. When proper names such as these appear in published volumes in bibliographical citations in this volume, the spelling follows the Library of Congress listing exclusively. Consequently, there often appear differences between spellings of names in text entries and spellings in the further reading associated with those entries.

Another point of possible confusion is current alternate spellings of Hindu terms such as *sannyasi* and *sannyasin* (meaning renunciant), which are synonymous. A closely related term, *sannyas*, is the vow that *sannyasis* or *sannyasins* take to enter into their lives of austerity.

In the last 20 years, the names of several important cities in India have been changed to their historical pre-British names. In this work, names of cities are generally left in the form found in the scholarly literature of the period. In most instances present-day changes are indicated in the text, such as Madras (Chennai), Bombay (Mumbai), Benares (Varanasi), and Calcutta (Kolkata).

Due to the dissemination of Hindu ideas in the West, many terms have become part of the English language and are not italicized to indicate that they are foreign words. For example, *atman*, *bhakti*, *karma*, *maya*, *mudra*, *nirvana*, and various types of *yoga* (such as *hatha*, *jnana*, *ashtanga*, and *siddha yoga*) are treated as English words.

INTRODUCTION

HINDUISM



The Origins of Hinduism

Until the 19th century, Hinduism was considered the indigenous religion of the subcontinent of India and was practiced largely in India itself and in the places where Indians migrated in large numbers. In the 21st century, while still centered in India, Hinduism is practiced in most of the world's countries and can thus rightly be considered a world religion. Its creation, unlike that of some world religions founded by known historical leaders, reaches into prehistory; we do not know the individuals who first practiced the religion (or set of religions that have merged to constitute present-day Hinduism) nor know exactly when its earliest forms emerged.

Hindu is a term from the ancient Persians. The Sindhu River in what is now Pakistan was called the “Hindu” by the Persians (the first textual mention occurred perhaps in the last centuries before the Common Era [C.E.]). The people who lived in proximity to the Sindhu therefore came to be called Hindus.

In academic terms the Hindu tradition, or Hinduism, is usually referred to as Brahmanism in its earlier phase, before circa 300 B.C.E., and referred to as Hinduism after that. In common

usage, the term *Hinduism* is used for the entire span of the tradition.

For at least two reasons the Hindu tradition contains the greatest diversity of any world tradition. First, Hinduism spans the longest stretch of time of the major world religions, with even the more conservative views setting it as well over 3,000 years old. Throughout this expanse of time, the Hindu tradition has been extremely conservative about abandoning elements that have been historically superseded. Instead, these elements have often been preserved and given new importance, resulting in historical layers of considerable diversity within the tradition. Second, Hinduism has organically absorbed hundreds of separate cultural traditions, expressed in as many as 300 languages. As a result, Hindu tradition is metaphorically like the Grand Canyon gorge, where the great river of time has sliced through the landscape, leaving visible successive historical layers.

Some practices of Hinduism must have originated in Neolithic times (c. 4000 B.C.E.). The worship of certain plants and animals as sacred, for instance, could very likely have very great antiquity. The worship of goddesses, too, a part of Hinduism today, may be a feature that originated in the Neolithic.

The first attested elements that can be argued to be “Hindu” are found in the Indus Valley civilization complex, which lay geographically in present-day Pakistan. This civilization complex, which is contemporaneous with Sumeria and matches it in complexity and sophistication, is dated 3600–1900 B.C.E. Many seals found at Indus Valley sites were apparently used to mark commercial goods and had engraved upon them pictures that some have related to later Hinduism. One is the “proto-Shiva” seal, which shows a person, seated in a cross-legged position, with a headdress with horns on it and what appears to be an erect phallus. The headdress is said to relate to the later god Shiva’s title of “Lord of the Animals,” and the erect phallus is said to be related to the common icon of Shiva, the lingam, which is phallic in shape. Some see his seated posture as being the yogic lotus position. Shiva is known for his yogic practices.

Other Indus Valley seals seem to depict what came to be known as the “Seven Mothers,” still worshipped in contemporary Hinduism. Additionally, B. B. Lal, the most prominent Indian archaeologist of the Indus Valley culture, argues that other artifacts and fire sites of the Indus Valley complex appear to be designed for rituals associated with the Vedic ritual tradition, which is usually dated many centuries later.

The Sacred Texts of Hinduism: The Vedas

Considerable debate exists with regard to the relationship of the Indus Valley civilization and the later Vedic tradition that focused on fire worship. The scholarly consensus for many years held that the Aryans, people who migrated from the west through Iran, arrived in India no earlier than 1200 B.C.E., much too recently to have participated in the Indus Valley world. These people were, the view holds, associated with the transmission of the Vedas, India’s most sacred and revered texts. This consensus has been challenged, primarily

from the Indian side, and continues to undergo scrutiny. The alternative view rejects the notion that the people who gave India the Vedas were originally foreign to India and sees a continuity between India’s earliest civilization and the people of the Vedas.

The Rig Veda (c. 1500 B.C.E.), which everyone agrees is the most ancient extant Indian text, is the foundational text of Hinduism. It consists of about a thousand hymns. The great majority of the hymns are from five to 20 verses in length. The Rig Veda contains hymns of praise to a pantheon of divinities as well as a few cosmogonic hymns that tell of the creation of the universe. These stories are extremely important for the development of later Hinduism.

By far the greatest number of the thousand plus hymns of the Rig Veda are devoted to Indra, king of the gods, a deity connected with rain and storms who holds a thunderbolt, and Agni, the god of fire. The rest of the hymns are devoted to an array of gods, most prominently Mitra, Varuna, Savitri, Soma, and the Ashvins. Less frequently mentioned are the gods who became most important in the later Hindu pantheon, Vishnu and Rudra (one of whose epithets was *shiva*, the benign). A number of goddesses are mentioned, most frequently Ushas, goddess of the dawn, and Aditi, said to be the mother of the gods. The goddess of speech, Vach (Vak), however, may be most important, since speech is one of the most powerful sacred realities in Hindu tradition, although there are not many references to her.

The religion of the Rig Veda has for a long time been referred to as henotheistic, meaning that the religion was polytheistic, but it recognized each divinity in turn as, in certain ways, supreme. Certainly, later Hinduism continued and enriched this henotheistic concept, and, through time, Hinduism has been able to accept even Christ and Allah as being supreme “in turn.” The Rig Veda, though, was the central text in a very powerful ritual tradition. Rituals public and private, with sacred fire always a central feature, were performed to speak to and beseech the divinities. Sacrifices of animals

were a regular feature of the larger public rites of the Vedic tradition.

Two other Vedas, the Yajur and Sama Vedas, were based on the Rig Veda. That is, most of their text is from the Rig Veda, but the words of the prior text are reorganized for the purposes of the rituals. Yajur Veda, the Veda of sacrificial formulas, which has two branches called the Black and the White Yajur Vedas, contains the chants that accompany most of the important ancient rites. The Sama Veda, the Veda of sung chants, is very much focused on the praise of the god Soma, the personification of a drink taken at most rituals that probably had psychedelic properties. Priests of the three Vedas needed to be present for any larger, public ritual. Later a fourth Veda, the Atharva Veda, became part of the tradition. This text consists primarily of spells and charms used to ward off diseases or to influence events. This text is considered the origin of Indian medicine, the system of Ayurveda. There are also a number of cosmogonic hymns in the Atharva Veda, which show the development of the notion of divine unity in the tradition. A priest of the Atharva Veda was later included in all public rituals and the tradition evolved to include four Vedas rather than three.

Two important points must be understood about the Vedic tradition. First, none of the Vedas is considered composed by humans. All are considered to be “received” or “heard” by the *rishis*, divinely inspired sages, whose names are noted at the end of each hymn. Second, none of the text of the Vedas was written down until the 15th century C.E. The Vedic tradition was passed down from mouth to ear for millennia and is, thus, the oral tradition par excellence. The power of the word in the Vedic tradition is considered an oral and aural power, not a written one. The chant is seen as a power to provide material benefit and spiritual apotheosis. The great emphasis, therefore, was on correct pronunciation and on memorization. Any priest of the tradition was expected to have an entire Veda memorized, including its nonmantric portions (explained later).

Any of the four Vedas is properly divided into two parts, the mantra, or verse portion, and the Brahmana, or explicatory portion. Both of these parts of the text are considered revelation, or *shruti*. The Brahmanas reflect on both the mantra text and the ritual associated with it, giving very detailed, varied, and arcane explication of them. The Brahmanas abound in equations between ritual aspects, the ritual performers, and cosmic, terrestrial, and divine realities. Early Western scholars tended to discount these texts, as being nothing but priestly mumbo-jumbo. But most recent work recognizes the central importance of the Brahmanas to the development of Indian thought and philosophy.

The name *Brahmana* derives from a central word in the tradition, *brahman*. *Brahman* is generically the term for “prayer” but technically refers to the power or magic of the Vedic mantras. (It also was used to designate the one who prays, hence the term *Brahmin*.) *Brahman* is from the root *brih*, “to expand or grow,” and refers to the expansion of the power of the prayer itself as the ritual proceeds; this power is understood as something to be “stirred up” by the prayer. In later philosophy, the term *brahman* refers to the transcendent, all-encompassing reality.

The culmination of Brahmana thought is often considered to be the Shatapatha Brahmana of the White Yajur Veda. It makes explicit the religious nature of the *agnichayana* fire ceremony, the largest public ritual of the tradition. Shatapatha Brahmana makes clear that this public ritual is, in fact, a reenactment of the primordial ritual described in Rig Veda X. 90, the most important cosmogonic hymn of the Vedas. This myth describes the ritual immolation of a cosmic “Man,” whose parts are apportioned to encompass all of the visible universe and everything beyond it that is not visible. That is, the cosmic “Man” is ritually sacrificed to create the universe. Shatapatha Brahmana delineates how, at the largest public ritual in the tradition, the universe is essentially re-created yearly. The Brahmana understands that, at its most perfect, the Vedic ritual ground is identical to all of the universe, visible and invisible.

Within the Brahmanas two subdivisions are important in the development of later tradition. One of the subdivisions is called the Aranyaka. From its name one can understand that this portion of the text pertained to activity in the forest (*aranya*). These specially designated portions of the Brahmanas contain evidence that some Vedic *yajna*, or ritual, was now performed internally, as an esoteric practice. This appears to be a special practice done by adepts, who would essentially perform the ritual mentally, as though it were being done in their own body and being. This practice was not unprecedented, since the priests of the Atharva Veda did not chant as other priests, but rather were required at public rituals to perform mentally the rituals that other priests performed externally. But the Aranyaka notion was distinctive in that the ritual was performed *only* internally. From this interpretation originated the notion that the ritualist himself was the *yajna*, or ritual.

Last, the Brahmanas included (commonly within the Aranyaka portion) the Upanishads, the last of the Vedic subdivisions or literary modes (no one really knows when these subdivisions were designated). As do the Brahmanas, many of these texts contained significant material that reflected on the nature of the Vedic sacrifice. Thus the division between Brahmana proper, Aranyaka, and Upanishad is not always clear. The most important feature of the Upanishad was the emergence of a clear understanding of the unity of the individual self or *atman* and the all-encompassing *brahman*, understood as the totality of universal reality, both manifest and unmanifest.

The genesis of the Upanishadic understanding, that the self and cosmic reality were one, is clear. First, the Shatapatha Brahmana stated that the most perfect ritual was, in fact, to be equated to the universe itself, visible and invisible. Second, the Aranyakas made clear that the individual initiated practitioner was the ritual itself. So, if the ritual equals all reality and the individual adept equals the ritual, then the notion that the individual equals all reality is easily arrived at. The

Upanishads were arrived at, then, not by philosophical speculation, but by ritual practice. Later Upanishads of the orthodox variety (that is, early texts associated with a Vedic collection) omitted most reference to the ritual aspect and merely stated the concepts as they had been derived. Most importantly, the concepts of rebirth (reincarnation) and the notion that actions in this life would have consequence in a new birth (*karma*) were first elaborated in the Upanishads.

This evidence shows that the concept of *karma*, or ethically conditioned rebirth, had its roots in earlier Vedic thought. But the full expression of the concept was not found until the later texts, the Upanishads, which are called the Vedanta, or the end or culmination of the Vedas. Therefore, the notion of reaching unity with the ultimate reality was seen as not merely a spiritual apotheosis, but also a way out of the trap of rebirth (or redeath).

Epic Hinduism and Classical Hinduism

In the sixth century B.C.E., a large-scale revolt against Vedic practice occurred in India. The Buddha, a great reformer, decried the supremacy of Brahmins in Vedic practice and in Indian society and called for a path that was open to all without discrimination. He criticized the animal sacrifices made by the Brahmins and their corruption in monetary pursuits. He was joined in this era by the Jain leader Mahavira. Both of these leaders began movements on the eastern plain of the Ganges valley, near the area of Benares (Varanasi), which represented a shift in the center of the culture from the area of the Punjab, in what is now present-day Pakistan, to eastern India.

Buddhism achieved supremacy in early India through the influence of the empire of the great king Ashoka in the third century B.C.E., but, although it enjoyed periods of state glory over the centuries, it never succeeded in supplanting traditions that looked to the Vedas. Thus, the culture and tradition represented by the great

epics Ramayana and Mahabharata showed the emergence of the forms of religion called, in current academic terms, *Hinduism*. These specifically show a contrast to the forms found in earlier Vedic “Brahminism.”

In the Sanskrit epics, still widely known in myriad versions in India today, the gods Shiva and Vishnu begin to emerge as the focal points for cultic worship. Shiva appears to be a god of the Himalayas who was identified by the Brahmins with the god Rudra of the Vedas. In all likelihood the cultic Shiva was fashioned from an amalgam of traditional sources over many centuries. This pattern of taking local traditions and creating direct connection of them with the Vedas was an ongoing feature in the evolution of the Brahminical tradition.

Similarly, Vishnu and his numerous avatars emerged from a *mélange* of cultural sources. Vishnu in the Vedas was not at all a significant divinity. But the cult of Vishnu was organized around a sense of continuity with this Vedic divinity and the larger monistic philosophy that developed in the Vedic tradition. The epic Ramayana is understood to be a story of the descent of Vishnu to Earth in order to defeat the demons. Likewise, Krishna, as warrior, another important avatar of Vishnu, was central to the Mahabharata epic. In both epics, stories of Shiva are also found scattered throughout.

A similar phenomenon occurs in the career of the great Goddess, Shakti, in Hindu tradition. *Shakti* forms the third large cultic center in Hinduism, whose worshippers, called *shaktas*, believe in the supremacy of the goddess. The development of *shakti* worship began to take shape at the beginning of the Common Era, some centuries later than the developments in the other cultic contexts.

The Bhagavad Gita (c. 100 B.C.E.), which is found in the Mahabharata (MBh), identifies the god Krishna with the *brahman* of the Upanishads. The likelihood is that Krishna was a divinity of certain western Indian groups, who had reached such popularity that he could not be ignored. It

may have been that Krishna was originally a tribal chieftain. In the Mahabharata itself he is spoken of consistently as God only in the Bhagavad Gita, which is clearly a later addition to the MBh. This identification of a local god with the highest divinity (and further with Vishnu) shows a pattern that leads to the incredible diversity of Hinduism. All across India in the next thousand years numerous local gods and goddesses are taken up into the larger Hindu tradition.

Examples from as far away as South India, the last area of India to accept the Aryan ethos, demonstrate the process of absorption of local divinities into the larger Hindu pantheon. Lord Venkateshvara of Tirupati, in Andhra Pradesh, a hill divinity who may have been worshipped in the same spot for several thousand years, was first identified with Shiva and then later identified as the god Vishnu himself. Tirupati thereupon became part of the Vaishnavite tradition and a pilgrimage site of great importance. Similarly, the goddess Minakshi in the temple city of Madurai, most probably a goddess of her home region in Tamil Nadu for many, many centuries, was associated with Shiva by being identified as his wife. In fact, she appears late enough not to be identified with Parvati, his usual spouse, but as a separate wife. Likewise, the Tamil god Murugan became identified as the youngest son of Shiva and Parvati.

Over the era from perhaps 600 B.C.E. until as late as the 14th century various local divinities were slowly but systematically absorbed into the Vedic or Brahmanical tradition. The Sanskrit texts, the *puranas*, composed from the fourth to the 12th centuries C.E., tell tales of the complicated and varied lives of Vishnu, Shiva, and the Goddess, but many local tales in local languages and Sanskrit tell the more hidden tales of how these local godly kings and queens became part of the larger tradition. The earliest additions to the pantheon of Hinduism were clearly those gods and goddesses who formed the basis of the Vishnu and Shiva cults. Parvati was likely a mountain goddess who may have ruled the mountains on her own

at one time but became absorbed in the Shaivite tradition. Likewise, Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu, has characteristics of a local nature divinity who became identified with Sri of the Vedas.

Vedic ritual tradition saw a revival in the kingdoms of the Guptas during the fourth through sixth centuries C.E. This period is often described as a golden age of Indian tradition, when Sanskrit literature flourished with such poets as Kalidasa, and the kings patronized Brahmins and reestablished Vedic rites that had long languished. Except for this passing phase, however, Vedic ritual tradition lost its supremacy very early. By the turn of the Common Era worship of the major cults had expanded greatly and by the sixth century C.E. temples to these divinities began to be created in stone.

Temple Hinduism represented a real shift in worship from that of the Vedas. Vedic worship had no permanent cultic sites, and no icons or images, nor was it locally bound. Following the traditions of the non-Aryan substratum in India, temple Hinduism focused its worship around icons placed in permanent temples. Most of these temples were built at places that had been sites of worship for hundreds of years. Part of the shift, however, very much connected the new temple sites with the Aryan tradition: the priests in the major temples now were all Brahmins and they all used Sanskrit in the rituals to the gods, where other languages had been used exclusively.

Caste

In the transition from Vedic religion to Hinduism proper, one important feature is the development of the stratified social system that in India became known as the caste system. Texts dating from the late centuries before the Common Era, such as the *Laws of Manu*, began to make clear that the four classes found in the Vedas were now seen as stratified social entities. Rules and social laws began to be passed down, not universally, but in terms of each class or “birth” (*jati*) division. Brahmins, here, were placed at the apex of the pyramid,

because of their priestly positions. (However, they were also not allowed to accumulate large amounts of wealth and could not hold positions of direct political power.) Next were the warriors, or Kshatriyas, who held kingly and administrative power. The large body of the people, the Vish, or Vaishya, were farmers or merchants. The lowest class were the Shudras, born, it was thought, to be servants.

As time went on and the tradition expanded its reach into all parts of India, indigenous tribes and other groups entering the society of Aryans were absorbed at an even lower rung of the social ladder. Eventually the concept of the untouchable (contemporary Dalit) was created to refer to people whom the upper castes would not even allow to be near or to touch them. Hinduism developed into a society where people became ranked rigidly by occupation. The sacerdotal position, or priestly work, was considered purest. Work that involved dealing with the dead, carrion, cleaning of sewers, sweeping, and other such tasks, was considered “unclean” and was performed only by hereditary untouchables.

Islam

In the 11th and 12th centuries, Islam entered an India that was flourishing. As the devotional movements that embodied the new tendency of the culture to worship the iconic divinity developed, saints emerged to sing poetry at the many shrines. Cultic Hinduism displayed a vast array of poet singers and wanderers who embodied the devotion for which ordinary Hindus strove. The ascetic wanderer had emerged even before Buddha, who was one of them. And through time the developing tradition looked to the wandering sadhu, or saint, to exemplify the purest devotion to the divine. The often eccentric holy man remains a distinctive feature of Hinduism today.

Islam entered India with a vengeance and stayed to rule. As Islamic presence expanded over North India, the Mughal empire was established in the 15th century C.E. For several centuries

Islam presided over India. Its reach encompassed nearly the entire country, although the far reaches of the south were spared its iconoclasm and its heaviest hand.

The Islamic era (c. 1100 to 1750 C.E.) produced religious interaction that may be unique in the world. Many of the Muslims who entered India were Turks, who often had an appreciation for the Sufi traditions. Sufis were often patronized by the Islamic courts. As the Sufi wandering holymen, many of whom were as otherworldly and eccentric as their Indian counterparts, began to meet with the local wanderers and saints, new religious ideas began to develop. The long tradition of Hindu saints who were lower caste, anticaste, or anti-Brahminical were supplemented by Sufi wanderers who held similar views. What emerged were powerful spiritual traditions that condemned *all* orthodoxy and were socially revolutionary in that they decried caste as spiritually bankrupt and laughed at the Brahmins as scoundrels and worse. The Sant tradition of North India that emerged in this era was well represented by such people as Kabir, who spoke most radically about the stupidity of untouchability and the foolishness of the orthodox.

The Sant and Sufi sentiments that developed in this era merged in the tradition of Guru Nanak (15th century) and the Sikhs, who eschew all ritual, icons, and ritual leaders. For the Sikhs there is no guru except the Granth Sahib, their holy book, which has many verses from the poet-saints of this era.

Other movements, such as the Bauls, remained less institutionalized than the Sikh tradition. They too combined elements from devotional Hinduism, Sufi love poetry and music, and anti-Brahminical sentiments into cultic groups that exist today outside the orthodox umbrella of Hinduism.

British Era

By the beginning of the 18th century, the British had arrived in India and had become powerful in Bengal. They succeeded in developing political power

through the use of intermediaries carefully chosen from corrupt Muslim potentates and Hindu kings in the chaotic aftermath of Mughal rule.

It is no accident that Hindu modernism begins in Bengal, as it represented the longest contact point between the Western ruler, Britain, and its new subjects. English education became the norm for well-educated Bengalis by the early 18th century. When other parts of the country were just becoming accustomed to the heavy hand of the British, the Bengalis had already become more than familiar with their views and ways. What emerged were both a reform movement in Hinduism and the roots of the Indian nationalist movement.

Groups emerged in the late 18th century who, influenced in part by Christian ideas, sought to reform Hinduism. Groups such as the Brahmo Samaj of Ram Mohan Roy sought to end child marriage, to allow widows to remarry, to eliminate the custom of widows' burning themselves on the funeral pyres of their husband, to eliminate caste, and to end worship of icons. Many of these people worked from a notion that India had been dominated by the British because the Indian culture had become spiritually corrupt. They felt that if they had had a stronger social sense and greater solidarity, the British could not have so easily gained preeminence. This view was held by nearly every major fighter for Indian independence, including Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo.

The caste system received significant criticism for more than two millennia by various groups who argued from the point of view of a different spiritual vision. The Buddha and Mahavira are the first we know of, starting in 600 B.C.E., but the Virashaivas of Karnataka, a South Indian state, eliminated caste from their reform tradition in the 11th century C.E., and many groups of mendicant wanderers such as the Siddhas routinely criticized caste and Brahminical cultural dominance, from the Buddha's time forward. The medieval poet-saints of North India who followed the views of Kabir were only maintaining a long countertradition. So when the "reformists" of Bengal began to

attack the social evils of Hinduism their actions must not be seen as merely a mimicking of Christians and the British. It should be noted, as well, that the antiiconic view of the Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta (Kolkata) were also not new. The Virasahaivas were essentially antiiconic (except for the Shiva lingam, which they kept in their personal homes), and the traditional Vedanta of the Upanishads looked to *brahman* alone without characteristics (or icons) as the ultimate divinity. The Brahmo Samaj takes its name, in fact, from this *brahman*, spelled as *Brahmo* in Bengali.

In the rich matrix of Hindu reform in Bengal in the 19th century emerged the great saint Ramakrishna and his student Swami Vivekananda. They maintained the reformist notions that caste must be uprooted, but Ramakrishna himself was not opposed to worship of icons. What Ramakrishna does, though, is round out the syncretic movements of the Sants, who melded Islamic and Hindu notions while decrying orthodoxy. Ramakrishna directly experienced Islam and Christianity and saw them as alternate paths to the one goal of the Divine. Ramakrishna then takes Hinduism full circle from its Vedic roots, where God could be seen as having any face and still be God. But now the social evils that had accrued in Hinduism over the centuries were seen by many to be superfluous to any religious need.

Post-Independence India (after 1947)

The Indian Constitution was written by an untouchable (now referred to as a Dalit), B. R. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar's selection as the person to head the Constitutional Commission was a sign that the reform values that the Indian independence fighters held were going to be instituted in law in independent India. In the Indian Constitution, "scheduled castes and tribes," those "out-casted" by traditional Hindu society, were given a specified percentage of guaranteed seats in the Indian Parliament

until such time as the Constitution could be amended. (This guarantee was also instituted in nearly every state of the new Indian Union.) Additionally, separate electorates were established for Muslims to ensure that they would have adequate representation in the new Indian state. Along with these reforms, inheritance and marriage laws established legal practices to aid women and to counter long-held traditions detrimental to women. Dowry, for instance, a burden for every woman's family, was outlawed. (This law, regrettably, has never been rigorously enforced.) Most importantly, the new state of India was declared a secular state with its own unique definition: it was a state that respected all religions and made accommodations for them, but a state that privileged no single religion. This respect for religion went to the extent of institution, by request of Muslim leaders, of certain laws regarding marriage and property that only applied in the Muslim community. (Muslims, for instance, were allowed to maintain the practice of polygamy, in which men may have as many as four wives.)

Independent India began in the chaos of partition. Many Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs were killed in the days after independence, when the state of Pakistan was created. Millions crossed the borders on India's east and west to enter the state that they felt would most protect their interests. Blame has been assigned in many places for the tragic fact of partition. Muslim leaders, Hindu leaders, and the British certainly all bore some share of the blame. Conflict ensued over the state of Kashmir, where a Hindu king ceded his majority Muslim state to India at the last minute. This began a long history of wars and disagreement between Pakistan and India that continues in the present day. (Pakistan itself was split in two in 1972, when the state of Bangladesh was created from East Pakistan.)

For a long time these disagreements did not greatly affect the relationship between Indian Muslims and the Hindu majority. In the 1980s a new political movement emerged in India, based on the

assertion of Hindu majority privilege. It is often referred to as Hindu fundamentalism, but this phraseology glosses over the complexities and competing values it represents. Nation-states need to justify their existence ideologically. Pakistan shaped its identity from the beginning around Islam, and Hindus and other religions found themselves marginalized there from the beginning. India, however, had preserved the values of a secular state. Muslims regularly held the office of president of India and cabinet posts and were kept visibly in government offices and in positions in the army.

It can be argued that the movement for privileging Hinduism in India and for a call to “Hinduize” India was directly related to the need for a national ideology. Formation of national identity for new nations is extremely complex, and flows of power are difficult to track, but the emergence of Hindu fundamentalism seems clearly related to this need for the creation of national identity. Hindu assertion was not new in India. Certain groups, such as the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (The National Self-Help Organization), who admired the fascists in Italy and Germany and taught regimented military tactics for their followers (along with hatred of Muslims), had their roots in Hindu nationalist groups of the 19th century. Suffice it to say that hatred of Muslims, conversion of non-Hindu minorities (including Christians), and reassertion of caste privilege were all part of this larger movement. In the 1990s the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gained power with this platform, and some of its officials presided over a bloody anti-Muslim massacre in the Indian state of Gujarat. In 2004 they were ousted from power in favor of the Congress Party, the same party that had led India to independence and created the secular state of India. In the interim, great damage was done to relationships between Hindus and Muslims in India. Many Muslims began to retreat into their own fundamentalisms, now global in scope. Others simply left India, if they could. This relationship is in deep crisis at this time and will need skillful diplomacy and cultivation to be repaired, if it ever is.

Dissemination

Through European scholarship and interest, Hindu texts and practices became known in Western Europe and North America as early as the 18th century. In the 19th century, German philosophy, French scholarship, and the American transcendentalist movement served to disseminate Hindu ideas among Western readers, without contributions from Indian emigrants. A diaspora, which involved the resettlement of significant numbers of emigrants from India, began as early as the 17th century and reached significant size in the 18th through 20th centuries. The pattern of the diaspora was first characterized by the arrival of indentured laborers in Indonesia, Africa, and the Caribbean region to work the fields of large landowners. From the 20th century, Hindus from India migrated to the West for education. From the first days of the diaspora, groups of Hindus have cohered to transfer their faith and practices from native India to their new homes, temples, and communities. Thus, the dissemination of Hinduism around the world has followed two main routes: the route of scholarship and study, as the religion has been studied by non-Indians and introduced to non-Indian populations, and the route of immigration, as devoted Hindus have created Hindu homes and institutions in their places of resettlement.

The acceptance of Hindu ideals and practices in the West has depended upon a succession of Hindu practitioners who visited the West. Beginning with P. C. Moozumdar and Swami Vivekananda at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and continuing through the residence of Paramahansa Yogananda in the United States from the 1920s, the West has received ever-larger numbers of Hindu teachers, especially since new immigration laws that allowed South Asian migration to the West.

Philosophical and theological ideas from Hinduism have been incorporated into Western thought on a large scale, primarily through the publications and activities of the Theosophical

Society and the teachings of many Hindu adepts in the West. Today, every major form of Hindu practice and belief has its Western form, which, although modified from traditional Hinduism, nevertheless contains the character of Hinduism.

An Encyclopedic Approach

In some 800 entries, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* explores the vast world of Hinduism that emerges from prehistory and lives today in astonishing variety. This volume focuses on the most significant groups within Hinduism, the religious and cultural movements that enriched its history, significant teachers and their contributions, and the diaspora of Hindu thought and practice around the world. Two major religious traditions that sprang from a Hindu milieu, Jainism and Sikhism, have many entries; Buddhism, also a tradition that

evolved from within Hinduism, is the subject of another encyclopedia in this series.

Inevitably, one volume cannot fully describe a history of at least 3,000 years and a staggering diversity in the present. The authors had to choose one topic over another and one person over another. Yet, the *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* represents major events, specific groups, central concepts, and major teachers who have given Hinduism its unique place as a world religion. Importantly, the many women leaders and teachers who have been valued in the evolution of Hinduism retain a focus in these entries. This volume, though selective, gives the interested reader a reliable window into the vast and enduring tradition of Hinduism, and some of its sister traditions in the land of India.

—Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan

CHRONOLOGY



3600 B.C.E. to 1700 B.C.E.

- ◆ Indus Valley civilization, including sites at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, prospers. Archaeological finds include a seal that some scholars identify as a proto-Shiva.

2050

- ◆ Indo-Iranian people settle in Iran (Persia) and Afghanistan.

1900

- ◆ Drying up of Sarasvati River due to climate changes. End of Indus-Sarasvati culture; center of civilization in ancient India relocates from the Sarasvati River to the Ganges River.

1500

- ◆ Compilation of Rig Veda Samhita (the earliest extant text in Hinduism).

1350

- ◆ At Boghaz Koy, Turkey, stone inscription of the treaty with Mitanni lists as divine witnesses the Vedic deities Mitra, Varuna, Indra, and the Nasatyas (Ashvins).

1000

- ◆ End of compilation of the three original Vedas: Rig, Yajur, and Sama.

950

- ◆ Decline of Sanskrit as a spoken language occurs over the next 300 years.

800 to 400

- ◆ Orthodox Upanishads are compiled.

750

- ◆ Prakrits (vernacular or “natural” languages) develop among India’s various cultures, as evidenced from later Buddhist and Jain works.

c. 600

- ◆ Death of Zoroaster, founder of Zoroastrianism, original religion of the Persians. His Zend Avesta, holy book of that faith, has much in common with the Rig Veda, sharing many verses.

599

- ◆ Birth of Mahavira Vardhamana (c. 599–527), 24th Tirthankara, Jain master who stresses vegetarianism, asceticism, and nonviolence.

563

- ◆ Birth of Siddhartha Gautama (563–483), the Buddha.

c. 500 to 200

- ◆ Over these 300 years numerous secondary Hindu scriptures (*smṛiti*) are composed: Shrauta Sutras, Grihya Sutras, Dharma Sutras, Mahabharata, Ramayana, *puranas*, and others.

c. 450

- ◆ Panini composes his Sanskrit grammar, the *Ashtadhyayi*.

c. 400

- ◆ *Dharmashastra* of Manu develops. Its verses codify cosmogony, four *ashramas*, government, domestic affairs, caste, and morality.
- ◆ The Ajivikas, an ascetic, atheistic sect of naked sadhus reaches the height of its popularity. Adversaries of the Buddha and the Jain Mahavira, they have a philosophy that is deterministic, holding that everything is inevitable.

305

- ◆ Chandragupta Maurya, founder of first pan-Indian empire. At its height under the Buddhist emperor Ashoka (r. 273 b.c.e.–232 b.c.e.), the Mauryan Empire includes all India except the far south.

c. 302

- ◆ Kautilya (Chanakya), minister to Chandragupta Maurya, writes *Arthashastra*, a compendium of laws, procedures, and advice for ruling a kingdom.

300 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.

- ◆ Tamil Sangam age begins. Sage Agastya writes *Agattiyam*, first known Tamil grammar. Tolkappiyar writes *Tolkappiyam*, a summary of earlier works on grammar, poetics, and rhetoric, indi-

cating prior high development of Tamil. Gives rules for absorbing Sanskrit words. At this time Tamil literature refers to worship of Vishnu, Indra, Murugan, and Supreme Shiva.

- ◆ Pancharatra Vaishnavite sect is prominent. All later Vaishnavite sects are based on the Pancharatra beliefs (formalized by Sandilya about 100 c.e.).

297 B.C.E.

- ◆ According to Jain history, Emperor Chandragupta Maurya abdicates; becomes Jain monk.

273

- ◆ Ashoka, the greatest Mauryan emperor, grandson of Chandragupta, seizes power and rules until 232. He converts to Buddhism. India's national emblem features the lion capital from his pillar.

c. 200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.

- ◆ Patanjali writes the Yoga Sutra.

c. 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.

- ◆ Jaimini writes the Mimamsa Sutra.

c. 75 C.E.

- ◆ A Hindu prince from Gujarat invades Java.

c. 80

- ◆ Jains divide, on points of rules for monks, into the Shvetambara, "White-Clad," and the Digambara, "Sky-Clad."

c. 100

- ◆ Birth of Kapila, founder of the Samkhya philosophy, one of six classical systems of Hindu philosophy.
- ◆ Birth of Sandilya, first systematic promulgator of the ancient Pancharatra doctrines. His Bhakti Sutras, devotional aphorisms on Vishnu, inspire a Vaishnavite renaissance. By 900 c.e.

the sect has left a permanent mark on many Hindu schools. The Samhita of Sandilya and his followers embody the chief doctrines of present-day Vaishnavites.

c. 200

- ◆ Hindu kingdoms are established in Cambodia and Malaysia.

c. 250

- ◆ Pallava dynasty (c. 250–885) is established in Tamil Nadu. They erect the Kamakshi temple complex at the capital of Kanchipuram and the great seventh-century stone monuments at Mahabalipuram.

320

- ◆ Imperial Gupta dynasty (320–540) emerges. During this “Classical Age” norms of literature, art, architecture, and philosophy are established. This North Indian empire promotes both Vaishnavism and Saivism and, at its height, rules or receives tribute from nearly all India. Buddhism also thrives under tolerant Gupta rule.

c. 380

- ◆ Birth of Kalidasa (380–460), the great Sanskrit poet and dramatist, author of *Shakuntala* and *Meghaduta*

c. 400

- ◆ Vatsyayana writes *Kama Sutra*, the famous text on erotics.
- ◆ Death of Karaikkalammaiyar, a woman, first of the 63 Shaivite saints of Tamil Nadu.

c. 500

- ◆ Sectarian folk traditions are revised, elaborated, and recorded in the *puranas*, Hinduism’s encyclopedic compendium of culture and mythology.

c. 570

- ◆ Birth of Shaivite saint Appar (c. 570–670).
- ◆ Birth of Shaivite saint Sambanthar (c. 570–670).

c. 600–900

- ◆ Twelve Vaishnava Alvar saints of Tamil Nadu flourish, writing 4,000 songs and poems praising Vishnu and narrating the stories of his avatars.

c. 700

- ◆ Over the next hundred years the small Indonesian island of Bali receives Hinduism from neighboring Java.
- ◆ Stone-carving and sculptural works completed at Mahabalipuram.

c. 710

- ◆ Death of Bhavabhuti, Sanskrit dramatist, second only to Kalidasa.

712

- ◆ Muslims conquer Sind region (Pakistan).

c. 750

- ◆ Rashtrakuta dynasty carves Kailasanatha Temple out of a rock hill at Ellora.

788

- ◆ Shankara (788–820) is born in Malabar. The famous monk-philosopher establishes 10 traditional monastic orders.

c. 800

- ◆ Birth of Vasugupta, modern founder of Kashmiri Shaivism, a monistic, meditative school.
- ◆ Birth of Andal, girl saint of Tamil Nadu. Writes devotional poetry to Lord Krishna, disappears at age 16.

c. 825

- ◆ Birth of Tamil Shaivite saint Sundarar.

c. 850

- ◆ Birth of Manikkavacakar, Tamil Shaivite saint.

c. 880

- ◆ Birth of Nammalvar (c. 880–930), greatest of Alvar saints. His poems shape beliefs of southern Vaishnavites to the present day.

c. 900

- ◆ Birth of Matsyendranatha, exponent of the Nath sect emphasizing kundalini yoga practices.

950

- ◆ Birth of Kashmiri Shaivite guru Abhinavagupta (950–1015).

960

- ◆ Chola king Vira, after having a vision of Shiva Nataraja, commences enlargement of the Shiva temple at Chidambaram, completed in 1250 c.e.

1001

- ◆ Turkish Muslims invade Afghanistan and the Punjab, the first major Muslim conquest in India.

c. 1010

- ◆ Tirumurai, Tamil devotional hymns of Shaivite saints, is collected as an anthology by Nambian-dar Nambi.

1025

- ◆ Chola ruler Rajendra I sends victorious naval expeditions to Burma, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

1077

- ◆ Birth of Ramanuja (1077–1157) of Kanchipuram, Tamil philosopher-saint of Sri Vaishnavite sect.

1106

- ◆ Birth of Basavanna (1106–1167), founder and guru of the Virashaiva sect.

c. 1130

- ◆ Birth of Nimbarka (c.1130–1200), Vaishnavite teacher of Vedanta. Birth of Sekkilar, author of Periya Puranam, epic hagiography of the 63 Tamil Shaivite saints.

c. 1150

- ◆ Khmer ruler completes Angkor Wat temple (in present-day Cambodia), the largest Hindu temple in Asia.

1197

- ◆ Birth of Ananda Tirtha Madhva (1197–1276), venerable Vaishnavite dualist philosopher.

c.1200

- ◆ Birth of Gorakhnath, famous Nath yogi.
- ◆ All of North India is now under Muslim domination.

1230 to 1260

- ◆ Temple to the Sun (Surya) is constructed at Konarak, Orissa.

c. 1300

- ◆ Birth of Lalleshvari (c. 1300–1372) of Kashmir, Shaivite renunciant and mystic poet. She contributes significantly to the Kashmiri language.

1336

- ◆ Vijayanagara empire (1336–1646) of South India is founded.

1398/9

- ◆ Tamerlane (Timur) invades India with 90,000 cavalry and sacks Delhi (1398) and Haridvar, a Ganges pilgrimage town (1399).

c. 1400

- ◆ Birth of Kabir, Vaishnavite reformer who has both Muslim and Hindu followers. His Hindi songs remain immensely popular to the present day.

1450

- ◆ Birth of Mirabai (1450–1547), Vaishnavite Rajput princess-saint devoted to Lord Krishna.

1469

- ◆ Birth of Guru Nanak (1469–1539), founder of Sikhism, a faith that rejects caste and renunciation.

1473

- ◆ Birth of Vallabhacharya (1473–1531), a saint who teaches *pushtimarga*, “path of grace.”

1486

- ◆ Birth of Chaitanya (1486–1533), Bengali founder of popular Vaishnavite sect that proclaims Krishna as Supreme God and emphasizes group chanting and dancing.

c. 1500

- ◆ Shaivite Hindu princes resettle on Bali and construct a separate kingdom.

1526

- ◆ Muslim conqueror Babur (1483–1530) occupies Delhi and founds the Indian Mughal Empire (1526–1761).

1532

- ◆ Birth of monk-poet Tulsidas (1532–1623), author of *Ramcharitmanasa* (1574–77) (based on *Ramayana*), which advances worship of Rama.

1556

- ◆ Akbar (1542–1605), grandson of Babur, becomes third Mughal emperor, promoting religious tolerance.

1595

- ◆ Construction begins on Hall of a Thousand Pillars at famous Shaivite temple in Chidambaram and is completed in 1685.

1600

- ◆ Royal charter forms the East India Company, setting in motion a process that ultimately results in the subjugation of India under British rule.
- ◆ Birth of Surdas (c. 1600), sightless Hindi bard of Agra, whose hymns to Krishna are collected in the *Sursagar*.

1603

- ◆ Guru Arjun compiles *Adi Granth*, Sikh scripture.

1605

- ◆ Akbar's son Jehangir succeeds his father as fourth Mughal emperor.
- ◆ Sikh Golden Temple at Amritsar, Punjab, is finished; later covered with gold leaf.

1608

- ◆ Birth of Tukaram (1608–1649), saint famed for his poems to Krishna. Considered greatest Marathi spiritual composer.

1647

- ◆ Shah Jehan completes *Taj Mahal* in Agra on the Yamuna River.

1658

- ◆ Zealous Muslim Aurangzeb (1618–1707) becomes Mughal emperor.

1675

- ◆ Aurangzeb executes Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur, beginning the Sikh-Muslim tensions that continue to this day.

1708

- ◆ Gobind Singh, 10th and last Sikh guru, is assassinated.

1718

- ◆ Birth of Ramprasad Sen (1718–1780), Bengali poet-saint and worshipper of goddess Kali.

1751

- ◆ Robert Clive is victorious in the British fight for control of South India.

1764

- ◆ British defeat the weak Mughal emperor and gain full control of Bengal, richest province of India.

1781

- ◆ Birth of Sahajanand Swami (1781–1830), Gujarati founder of the Swaminarayan sect (with 1.5 million followers today).

1784

- ◆ Judge and linguist Sir William Jones founds Calcutta's (Kolkata's) Royal Asiatic Society, first such scholastic institution.

1786

- ◆ Sir William Jones uses the Rig Veda term *Aryan* (noble) to name the parent language of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and Germanic tongues.

1792

- ◆ Britain's Lord Cornwallis, governor-general of India, defeats Tipu Sultan of Mysore, the most powerful ruler in South India, which consti-

tuted the main bulwark of resistance to British expansion in India.

1803

- ◆ Second Anglo-Maratha war results in British capture of Delhi and control of large parts of India.
- ◆ Birth of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), American poet who helps popularize Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads in the United States.

1818

- ◆ Birth of Swami Shiv Dayal Singh (1818–1878), founder of the esoteric reformist Radhasoami Vaishnavite sect in Agra.

1820

- ◆ First Indian immigrants arrive in the United States.

1824

- ◆ Birth of Swami Dayananda Sarasvati (1824–1883), founder of Arya Samaj (1875), Hindu reformist movement stressing a return to the values and practices of the Vedas.

1828

- ◆ Rammohan Roy (1772–1833) founds Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta (Kolkata). Influenced by Islam and Christianity, he denounces polytheism and idol worship.

1831

- ◆ Birth of Russian mystic Madame Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), cofounder of Theosophical Society in 1875. Introduces amalgam of psychism, Buddhism, and Hinduism to the West.

1835

- ◆ Mauritius receives 19,000 indentured laborers from India. Last ship carrying workers arrives in 1922.

1836

- ◆ Birth of Sri Paramahansa Ramakrishna (1836–1886), God-intoxicated Bengali saint, devotee of goddess Kali, and guru of Swami Vivekananda.

1837

- ◆ Britain formalizes importation of Indian indentured laborers throughout the Commonwealth.

1838

- ◆ Birth of Keshab Chunder Sen (1838–1884), Hindu reformer.

1840s

- ◆ Hindus from India enter the Caribbean region as indentured laborers.

1841

- ◆ First U.S. chair of Sanskrit and Indology established at Yale University.

1850

- ◆ First English translation of the Rig Veda, by H. H. Wilson.

1851

- ◆ Sir M. Monier-Williams (1819–1899) publishes *English-Sanskrit Dictionary*.

1853

- ◆ Birth of Sri Sarada Devi (1853–1920), wife of Sri Ramakrishna, lineage holder in the Ramakrishna tradition and inspiration for the Sarada Math convent for women.
- ◆ Max Müller (1823–1900), German Sanskrit scholar in England, advocates the term *Aryan* to describe speakers of Indo-European languages.

1857

- ◆ First major Indian revolt against British rule, the “Sepoy Mutiny.”

1860

- ◆ First indentured servants from Madras (Chennai) and Calcutta (Kolkata) arrive in Durban, South Africa to work on sugar plantations.

1861

- ◆ Birth of Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913.

1863

- ◆ Birth of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), dynamic missionary to West and catalyst of Hindu revival in India.

1869

- ◆ Birth of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), Indian nationalist and Hindu political activist, who develops the strategy of nonviolent disobedience that leads to the independence of India (1947) from Great Britain.

1872

- ◆ Birth of Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950), Bengali Indian nationalist and yoga philosopher.

1873

- ◆ Birth of Swami Rama Tirtha (1873–1906), who lectures throughout Japan and America spreading “practical Vedanta.”

1875

- ◆ Madame Blavatsky, with others, founds Theosophical Society in New York, later headquartered at Adyar, Madras (Chennai).

1876

- ◆ British queen Victoria (1819–1901) is proclaimed empress of India (r. 1876–1901).
- ◆ Birth of Dada Lekhraj (1876–1969), Hindu founder of Brahma Kumaris, an international

social reform movement led by women that stresses meditation and world peace.

1876 to 1890

- ◆ Max Müller (1823–1900), pioneer of comparative religion as a scholarly discipline, publishes 50-volume *Sacred Books of the East*, English translations of Indian and other Asian scriptures.

1879

- ◆ First emigrant ship to Fiji adds 498 Indian indentured laborers to the nearly 340,000 already working in other colonies of the British Empire.
- ◆ Birth of Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950), Hindu *advaita* renunciant saint of Tiruvannamalai, South India.

1884

- ◆ Birth of Swami Ramdas (1884–1963), known as Papa, Indian saint and devotee of Lord Rama.

1885

- ◆ Indian National Congress founded.

1886

- ◆ René Guénon (1886–1951), first European philosopher of note to become a Vedantin, is born.

1887

- ◆ Birth of Swami Shivananda (1887–1963), renowned universalist teacher, author of 200 books, founder of Divine Life Society in Rishikesh, and guru to many teachers who brought Hinduism to the West.

1888

- ◆ Birth of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), philosopher, eminent writer, and free India's first vice president and second president.

1893

- ◆ World Parliament of Religions in Chicago recognizes Eastern religious traditions through presentations by representatives of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Swami Vivekananda receives acclaim as spokesperson for Hinduism.

1894

- ◆ Birth of Meher Baba (1894–1969) of Poona, silent sage whose mystical teachings stress love, self-inquiry, and God consciousness.

1896

- ◆ Birth of Anandamayi Ma (1896–1982), God-intoxicated yogini and mystic saint of Bengal.
- ◆ Birth of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977). In 1966 he founds International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in the United States.

1897

- ◆ Swami Vivekananda founds Ramakrishna Math and Mission near Calcutta (Kolkata).

1908

- ◆ Birth of Swami Muktananda (1908–1982), a guru of the Kashmiri Shaivite school who founds Siddha Yoga Dham to promulgate Indian mysticism, kundalini yoga, and philosophy throughout the world.

1912

- ◆ Anti-Indian racial riots on the U.S. West Coast expel large Hindu immigrant population.

1916

- ◆ Birth of Swami Chinmayananda (1916–1993), Vedantist scholar, lecturer, teacher, and founder of Chinmaya Mission.

1917

- ◆ Last Hindu Indian indentured laborers are taken to British colonies of Fiji and Trinidad.
- ◆ U.S. government severely restricts Indian citizens from immigration. Restriction stands until 1965.

1918

- ◆ Sai Baba of Shirdi (1856–1918), saint to Hindus and Muslims, dies at approximately age 62.

1920

- ◆ Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948) uses *satyagraha*, “truth power,” first articulated in South Africa, as a strategy of noncooperation and non-violence against India’s British rulers.
- ◆ Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), famous author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, teacher of *kriya yoga* and Hindu guru with many Western disciples, enters the United States, where he founds the Self-Realization Fellowship (1935).

1922

- ◆ Tagore’s school at Shantiniketan (founded 1901) is made into Visva Bharati University and becomes a national university in 1951.

1923

- ◆ U.S. law excludes Indian nationals from naturalization.

1924

- ◆ Sir John Marshall (1876–1958) discovers relics of Indus Valley pre-Hindu civilization. Begins systematic large-scale excavations.

1925

- ◆ K. V. Hedgewar (1890–1949) founds Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), a militant Hindu nationalist movement.

1926

- ◆ Birth of Satya Sai Baba, charismatic Hindu guru, educationalist, and worker of miracles.

1927

- ◆ Shivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001), founder of Saiva Siddhanta Church and *Hinduism Today* magazine, is born in Oakland, California.
- ◆ Maharashtra bars tradition of dedicating girls to temples as Devadasis, ritual dancers. Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Orissa soon follow suit. Twenty years later, Tamil Nadu bans devotional dancing and singing by women in its temples and in all Hindu ceremonies.

1928

- ◆ Hindu leader and future prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) drafts plan for a free India; becomes president of Congress Party in 1929.

1931

- ◆ Birth of Sri Chinmoy, yogi, artist, master of self-transcendence, and United Nations peace ambassador, in Bengal.
- ◆ Some 2.5 million Indian Hindus reside overseas; largest communities are in Sri Lanka, Malaya, Mauritius, and South Africa.

1934

- ◆ Paul Brunton’s popular *A Search in Secret India* introduces Hindu teachers such as Ramana Maharshi to the West.

1938

- ◆ Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is founded in Bombay (Mumbai) by K. M. Munshi to conserve, develop, and honor Indian culture.

1947

- ◆ India gains independence from Britain on August 15.

1948

- ◆ Establishment of Sarva Seva Sangh, Gandhian movement for new social order (*sarvodaya*).
- ◆ Mohandas Gandhi is assassinated on January 30 in retaliation for his embracing of Muslim demands in India.
- ◆ The last British troops leave India on February 28.

1949

- ◆ India's new constitution, authored chiefly by B. R. Ambedkar, declares there shall be no "discrimination" against any citizen on the grounds of caste, *jati*, and abolishes the practice of "untouchability."

1950

- ◆ India is declared a secular republic. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (r. 1947–64) is determined to abolish caste and industrialize the nation.

1964

- ◆ India's Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu religious nationalist movement, is founded to counter secularism.
- ◆ Rock group the Beatles practice Transcendental Meditation (T.M.), making Maharshi Mahesh Yogi famous.

1965

- ◆ U.S. immigration law is rewritten to cancel racial qualifications and restore rights of naturalization to Asians. The first Hindu teacher to benefit from the lifting of immigration quotas is Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, famous Vaishnavite guru and founder of International Society of Krishna Consciousness. Annual immigration from India shifts from 100 (1925) to 170,000 (1985) per year.

1966

- ◆ Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, becomes prime minister of India, world's largest democracy.

1973

- ◆ Neem Karoli Baba (1900–1973), Hindu mystic and *siddha*, dies.

1975

- ◆ Netherlands gives independence to Dutch Guyana, which becomes Suriname; one-third of Hindus (descendants of Indian plantation workers) immigrate to Netherlands for better social and economic conditions.

1979

- ◆ Shivaya Subramuniaswami founds *Hinduism Today*, international journal to promote Hindu solidarity.

1980

- ◆ Hindu nationalist party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is founded.

1984

- ◆ Indian soldiers under orders from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi storm Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar and crush rebellion. Gandhi is assassinated later in the year by her Sikh bodyguards. Her son Rajiv takes office.

1986

- ◆ Swami Satchidananda (1914–2002) dedicates Light of Truth Universal Shrine (LOTUS) at Yogaville, Virginia, in the United States.
- ◆ Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), Indian philosopher, lecturer, and author, known for his teaching of radical self-awareness, dies.

1992

- ◆ Hindu radicals demolish Babri Masjid, built in 1548 on Rama's birthplace in Ayodhya by Muslim conqueror Babur after he destroyed a Hindu temple marking the site.

1993

- ◆ Chicago hosts centenary Parliament of World Religions, in September.

1994

- ◆ Harvard University study identifies more than 800 Hindu temples open for worship in the United States.

1998 to 2004

- ◆ Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) serves as India's ruling party.

2001

- ◆ History's largest human gathering, 70 million people, worship at Kumbha Mela 2001, Alla-

habad, at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers.

- ◆ Swami Amar Jyoti, 73, founder of four Jyoti ashrams in the United States and India, dies.

2006

- ◆ Hinduism continues to grow in most countries of the old diaspora: Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad, Mauritius, Malaysia, and Suriname. Europe and the United States continue to be destinations for the current participants in the diaspora. Descendants maintain their faith and identity.

ENTRIES A TO Z



A



abhaya mudra

The *abhaya mudra* (see [MUDRAS](#)) is an important gesture in Indian iconography. In it, the right hand is raised and opened, straight up and facing forward (divinities with more than two hands raise one of their right hands). *Abhaya* literally means “no fear,” and the gesture indicates blessing, protection, and reassurance. The gesture is ancient and widespread and is found in the iconography of Buddhists, Jains, and Hindus.

The Buddha(s) and the TIRTHANKARAS are frequently seen using this hand gesture. The Lord SHIVA in his NATARAJA, or divine dancer, pose has his upper right hand in the *abhaya mudra*. In fact, this *mudra* may be used when any divinity is represented in Indian dance/dramas.

Further reading: Fredrick W. Bunce, *A Dictionary of Buddhist and Hindu Iconography, Illustrated: Objects, Devices, Concepts, Rites, and Related Terms* (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1997); Eva Rudy Jansen, *The Hindu Book of Imagery: The Gods and Their Symbols* (Havelte, Holland: Binkey Kok, 1995); Margaret Stutley, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

Abhedananda, Swami (1866–1939) pioneer Hindu leader in the United States

The Indian monk Swami Abhedananda founded the New York City Vedanta Society at the end of the 19th century, pioneering the spread of Hindu thought in America.

Abhedananda was born Kaliprasad Chandra in Calcutta (Kolkata). As a teenager, he was interested in yoga, philosophy, and the religious life and, though quite intelligent, did not attend college. Rather, at the age of 18 he had his first meeting with Sri RAMAKRISHNA, who immediately recruited the youthful Kaliprasad to his inner circle. Kaliprasad moved into the Ramakrishna residence at Dakshineswar, where he lived until Ramakrishna died two years later.

Shortly after Ramakrishna’s passing, Kaliprasad joined the other men who had gathered around the master in taking the vows of the renounced life (see [SANNYASI](#)), at which time he took the name Abhedananda. He spent the next several years in concentrated study of the Hindu holy books and in meditation. For a brief period he left his brother monks to wander around India.

In 1893, one of his fellow monks, Swami VIVEKANANDA, traveled to America to address the WORLD

PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS. Abhedananda organized the celebration in Calcutta of the swami's American success, and three years later Vivekananda called him to assist his work in the West. Abhedananda remained in London for a year speaking and building a following for the Vedanta Society.

In 1897, Abhedananda began a 25-year stay in New York City. He succeeded in organizing a Vedanta Society (Vivekananda had failed to do so), and built it into a relatively strong organization. He moved in the intellectual circles of his day and was invited to speak at a number of colleges and universities. He also made some 17 lecture tours in Europe. All his teachings and lecturing consistently reflected the *ADVAITA VEDANTA* perspective of Ramakrishna; together with his learned colleagues he argued for the unity of Truth and the confluence of science and religion.

In 1921, Abhedananda returned to India, where he was received as a celebrity. He went on to establish two Ramakrishna centers, in Darjeeling (1923) and Calcutta (1929). Among his last duties was presiding at the 1937 Parliament of Religions in Calcutta, organized to celebrate the Ramakrishna Centennial. Abhedananda died two years later in 1939.

See also [VEDANTA SOCIETIES/RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION; UNITED STATES](#).

Further reading: Swami Abhedananda, *Doctrine of Karma: A Study in the Philosophy and Practice of Work* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1965); ———, *The Religion of the Twentieth Century* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1984); ———, *Spiritual Teachings of Swami Abhedananda*. Translated by P. Sheshadri Aiyer (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math 1962); ———, *Swami Vivekananda and His Work* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1968); Ashutosh Ghosh, *Swami Abhedananda, the Patriot Saint* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1967).

Abhidhyan Yoga Institute (est. 1991)

The Abhidhyan Yoga Institute, also called Modern Seers, headquartered at Swarthmore, Penn-

sylvania, is a training center for All Embracing (*Abhidhyan*) Yoga, a somewhat rare form of TANTRA that has survived within several lesser-known Hindu and Buddhist sects. All Embracing Yoga incorporates the four major yoga paths: *JNANA YOGA*, the path of study; *BHAKTI YOGA*, the path of devotion to the Divine; *KARMA YOGA*, the path of action; and *RAJA YOGA*, the path that unites mind, heart, and body in pursuit of the Divine.

The revival of All Embracing Yoga, and its spread from India to the United States and several other countries is attributed to Sri Acharya Abhidhyanananda Avadhuta (Anatole Ruslanov) (b. May 5, 1965), a Russian computer scientist who apprenticed in BENARES (Varanasi) India, with Sri ANANDAMURTI (1921–90), founder of the ANANDA MARGA YOGA SOCIETY. As a monastic student of the guru, Anatole became a vital transmitter and spiritual master of this largely overlooked form of tantric practice.

A year after the death of Sri Anandamurti (1990), Anatole established the Abhidhyanananda Yoga Institute with its headquarters in the United States. He added his own teaching methods to those of his teacher, synthesized what he had learned during his monastic life in India, and refined his tantric abilities. In 1998, Anatole revealed to his students that he had had a transformational experience that had lifted his religious and practical focus to a higher level, thus requiring a revision of the discipline required of practitioners.

Students of All Embracing Yoga engage in regular meditation, follow strict moral codes, and practice postures (*ASANAS*) and breathing techniques (*PRANAYAMA*). Abhidhyanananda recommends solitary spiritual work for a year prior to entering this specific yoga path.

The institute publishes a periodical, *The Tantrik Path*, at its headquarters in Nevada City, California. No publications in book form are used at the institute. Rather, all teachings are found online on the Internet.

Abhinavagupta (c. middle of 10th century to middle of 11th century) *Kashmiri Shaivite philosopher*

Abhinavagupta, who lived his entire life in the northern Indian region of Kashmir, is one of the giants of Indian philosophical and intellectual history. His work represents the pinnacle of the tantric (see [TANTRISM](#)) school of KASHMIRI SHAIIVISM, which sees the world as both real and divine. He is also recognized as one of India's foremost theorists in the field of aesthetics, or the appreciation of art.

Abhinavagupta interwove the diverse threads of the earlier schools of Kashmiri Shaivism into a coherent and cogent philosophy and practice. He wrote numerous books and commentaries, all in Sanskrit. Most well known is the magnum opus, the massive *Tantraloka*; it deals with the philosophy, religion, and yogic practice of the Kashmir Shaiva tradition.

Abhinavagupta's exceptional work on the theory of art derives its interest from his belief in the divinity of the senses and sense experience. His most well known book in this area is his commentary on the *Dhvanyaloka*, an important text on aesthetics, which has become a source book for much of later Indian aesthetic theory. Abhinavagupta's influence is most evident in the traditions of Swami MUKTANANDA and his disciple Swami CHIDVILASANANDA, two of the most prominent modern teachers in the Kashmiri Shaivite tradition.

See also [SHAIIVISM](#).

Further reading: Raniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968); Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Siva: Kaula Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Shaivism of Kashmir* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); K. C. Pandey, *Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1963); R. Raghavan, *Abhinavagupta and His Works* (Varanasi: Chokambha Orientalia, 1981); Y. S. Walimbe, *Abhinavagupta and Indian Aesthetics* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1980).

Abhishiktananda, Swami (1910–1973) *pioneer in Hindu-Christian monasticism*

Born Henri Le Saux, Abhishiktananda was a pioneer in the field of spiritual and theological dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism.

He was born on August 30, 1910, at Saint Briac in Brittany, France. At an early age he felt a call to the vocation of a Roman Catholic priest, and in 1929 he entered the Benedictine Monastery of Saint Anne de Kergonan in Plouharnel. During his 19 years there he worked as librarian and master of ceremonies. He served in the French army during World War II and experienced a miraculous escape after being captured by German troops in 1940.

Seeking a more radical path for living a spiritual life, Le Saux was attracted to India as early as 1934. In Tamil Nadu state he met Father Jules Monchanin, a Roman Catholic priest serving in a Tamil village in southern India, who was formulating a path for living a contemplative life that combined Indian asceticism (see [SANNYASI](#)) and Christian practice. Le Saux joined Fr. Monchanin in 1948 at Kulitalai; the two began a small ashram near the CAUVERY RIVER at the village of Tanirpalli in Tiruchirappalli District, South India. In 1950, they settled in Shantivanam (Forest of Peace) and named their new foundation Saccidananda Ashram after the Hindu trinity.

In 1950 Le Saux adopted the dress of a Hindu ascetic and changed his name to Swami Abhishiktananda (the Bliss of the Anointed One). He began studying Tamil and Sanskrit and immersed himself in Indian traditions and practices. A meeting in 1949 with RAMANA MAHARSHI (1879–1950) at Ramana's ashram in Tiruvannamalai had a strong influence on his developing spirituality, and between 1950 and 1955 he spent many months in deep meditation in the caves near Ramana's ashram at the holy mountain Arunachala. After Ramana's death in 1950, he became a disciple of Gnanananda Giri of Tirukoylur.

When the ailing Fr. Monchanin returned to France and died in 1957, Abhishiktananda felt a growing attraction to the north of India and

the Himalayas. He undertook several pilgrimages and often visited the holy city of BENARES, (Varanasi), where he found others, such as Dr. Raimon Panikkar, engaged in Hindu-Christian dialogue. In 1968, he left Shantivanam under the leadership of Father Bede Griffiths (1968–93) and went to live in a hermitage in Uttarkashi in the Himalayas. In 1980, Shantivanam, under the leadership of Father Bede, was received in the Camaldolese Congregation of the Benedictine Confederation.

In 1969 Abhishiktananda participated in the All-India Seminar on the Church in India Today in Bangalore, the aim of which was to adapt the principles of Vatican II to the Indian context. There he was recognized as a pioneer in the field of Hindu-Christian dialogue, whose life and work inspired several religious communities, such as Jyotiniketan Ashram formed in 1969 at Bareilly.

Abhishiktananda's books and teaching are largely addressed to Christians, with the aim of helping them discover the spirit and principles of ADVAITA (non-dual) Hinduism. While always remaining a Christian, he discerned elements of Christianity in the spiritual wisdom of India that helped him toward resolving for himself the tensions between the two religions and finding an inner integration. His goal was to move beyond the limits of institutional religions and churches to encourage spiritual renewal, which he considered essential for human survival in the modern world.

On July 14, 1973, Abhishiktananda suffered a heart attack on the road in Rishikesh, where he was on retreat with another French religious. He died December 7, 1973, at Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

See also [CHRISTIAN-HINDU RELATIONS](#).

Further reading: Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience* (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1974); ———, *The Further Shore* (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1975); ———, *The Secret of Arunchala*

(Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1979); ———, *Guru and Disciple: An Encounter with Sri Gnanananda* (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1990); ———, *Swami Abhishiktananda: Ascent to the Depth of the Heart: The Spiritual Diary (1948–1973)*. Edited and selected by Raimon Panikkar, translated by David Fleming and James Stuart (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1998); H. Ralston, *Christian Ashrams: A New Religious Movement in Contemporary India* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987); James Stuart, *Swami Abhishiktananda: His Life Told through His Letters*, rev. ed. (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1995).

Abu, Mount

Mount Abu is a small peak (some 4,000 feet high) in the southwest of the Indian state of Rajasthan that figures in Hindu legend. It is especially holy to Jains (see [JAINISM](#)), who built beautifully adorned temples there. It was once a British hill station for retreat from the summer heat.

According to one legend, the sage Vasishtha's cow Nandini was once trapped in a deep gorge and could not free herself. The sage appealed to Lord SHIVA for assistance. The Lord sent SARASVATI, the divine stream, to help flood the gorge so that the cow could float up. Vasishtha then decided to ensure that such mishaps would not occur in future. He asked the youngest son of HIMALAYA, the king of mountains, to fill the chasm permanently. This he did with the assistance of Arbud, the mighty snake. This spot came to be known as Mount Arbud, and the name was later changed to its present form—Mount Abu.

It is said that this mountain was visited and blessed in the sixth century B.C.E. by MAHAVIRA, the 24th and last Jain TIRTHANKARA of this half of the cosmic era. It is known for its marble Jain temples, two of which are famous. The first, built in the 11th century, is devoted to RISHABHA, the first Tirthankara of the line leading to Mahavira. The other, from the 13th century, is dedicated to Neminatha, the 22nd Tirthankara in the line. The temples are not large but are known for their

stunning and intricately carved statuary and ornamentation.

Further reading: Lothar Clermont, *Jainism and the Temples of Mount Abu* (New Delhi: Prakash Books, 1998); Sehdev Kumar, *A Thousand Petalled Lotus: Jain Temples of Rajasthan: Architecture and Iconography* (New Delhi: Abhinav, 2001); Jodh Singh Mehta, *Abu to Udaipur (Celestial Simla to City of Sunrise)* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970); Muniraj Jayanta Vijayi, *Holy Abu: A Tourist's Guide to Mount Abu and Its Jaina Shrines* (Bhavnagar: Shri Yashovijaya Jaina Granth-mala, 1954).

Acharanga Sutra (c. 300 B.C.E.–400 C.E.)

The Acharanga Sutra is the first of the 12 texts accepted as canonical by SHVETAMBARA Jains. The DIGAMBARA Jains believe that the original version of this sutra was lost and reject the text held sacred by the Shvetambaras. The sutra outlines, with some details, the rigorous limitations that Jain monks must observe and answers difficulties that might occur in their struggle to prevent injury to any creatures, including microscopic ones.

To cite some examples, the Acharanga Sutra prohibits monks from digging in the earth (to prevent injury to any earth being); bathing, swimming, wading, or walking in the rain (to prevent injury to any water being); kindling or extinguishing any flame (to prevent injury to beings that live in fire); waving the arms or making any other sudden movement (to prevent injury to air beings); and walking in any greenery or stepping on any plant (to prevent injury to beings living in plants). The sutra also demands the strictest vegetarianism.

Further reading: Hermann Jacobi, trans., *Jain Sutras*, Part 1, Sacred Books of the East, XVI (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964); P. S. Jaini, *The Jain Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Bimala Churn Law, *Some Jain Canonical Sutras* (Bombay: Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society, 1949).

acharya

An *acharya* is any spiritual guide or teacher. In ancient times the term referred specifically to the one who initiated a student and taught him the complete VEDA or sacred literature. In later times it became a general honorific indicating great learning and/or spiritual accomplishment. The term was, for example, appended to the names of all the great VEDANTA teachers: SHANKARA, RAMANUJA, MADHVA, and NIMBARKA, become Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, and Nimbarkacharya.

This practice is followed in the JAIN tradition as well; for example, GUNABHADRA will be called Gunabhadracharya. Furthermore, Jains honor *acharyas* in the *panchanamaskara* MANTRA, the central mantra of the Jain faith, immediately after the ARHATS and SIDDHAS; this indicates their exalted status.

Further reading: Brian K. Smith, "Ritual, Knowledge and Being: Initiation and Veda Study in Ancient India," *Numen* 33, no. 1 (1986): 65–89.

achintya bhedabhedā See CHAITANYA, SRI KRISHNA.

adhvaryu

The *adhvaryu* is the priest of the YAJUR VEDA at the traditional Vedic public ritual. He oversees all the ritual activity, carrying out most of the actions himself. He prepares and uses the implements, pours clarified butter, kills the ritual animal, and recites the appropriate verses (of either the Black or the White Yajur Veda) as the ritual actions are performed. The priests of the RIG, SAMA, and ATHARVA VEDAS are usually much less active on the ritual ground.

Further reading: Julius Eggeling, trans., *The Satapatha-Brahmana*, Part I, *According to the Text of the Madhyandina School* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982); Jan Gonda, *The Ritual Sutras* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassow-

itz, 1977); Arthur B. Keith, trans., *The Veda of the Black Yajus School* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967); J. Frits Staal, *The Science of Ritual* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1982).

adhyasa

Adhyasa, or “superimposition” of an unreal thing upon a real one, is an important concept in the *ADVAITA* (non-dual) philosophy of SHANKARA, the renowned teacher of *VEDANTA*.

A pedestrian example would be a person looking at a rope in a dark place and briefly seeing a snake. This sort of superimposition involves two physical objects, but the central superimposition or *adhyasa* in Shankara’s system is the ignorant superimposition of the empirical world upon the attribute-free *BRAHMAN* or ultimate reality. Humans imagine that the empirical world is real, but, just as the rope is not the snake, so is the empirical world not the *brahman*. Shankara holds that the phenomenal world is false (*mithya*) and illusory (*MAYA*). Ignorance (*AVIDYA*), leads us to see the world as real, but when knowledge (*VIDYA* or *JNANA*) dawns, we see the truth: that the only existence is *brahman*, the actionless, attribute-free ground of being that can be described as *SAT-CHIT-ANANDA*, being-consciousness-bliss.

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adhyaatma See *VEDANTA*.

Adi Da Samraj (1939–) *teacher of “Crazy Wisdom”*

Adi Da Samraj, a U.S.-born guru, teaches his idiosyncratic philosophy and discipline to a small

but devoted international following, mostly in English-speaking countries.

According to Adi Da Samraj’s autobiography, he experienced a state of perfect awareness of ultimate reality from the day of his birth as Franklin Jones on November 3, 1939, on Long Island, New York. At age two he relinquished that state in order to experience human limitations completely. From 1957 he studied philosophy at Columbia University in New York. Beginning in his college years Jones engaged in a spiritual quest that led him to Swami *RUDRANANDA* in New York City and eventually to Swami *MUKTANANDA*, the famous practitioner of Shaivism and *siddha* yoga. From childhood, Jones reported many experiences of *KUNDALINI* (awakening divine energy), mystical revelation, astral travel, and superconscious identification with higher beings, but he found that these powers were not valuable because they were not expressions of his real nature. In 1970 at the Vedanta temple in Hollywood, he experienced a reawakening and realization of his ultimate nature; he knew his oneness with *SHAKTI*, divine energy. He left *Muktananda* and became a devotee of *Shakti*.

In 1972, Jones began to teach his “radical” understanding of a spiritual path that includes devotion to a guru and self-observation. He opened a small ashram in Los Angeles and began to attract devotees. During a trip to India he adopted the first of what would become many new names for himself, *Bubba Free John*. At first he worked with students in a traditional way, but in the late 1970s he adopted the “Crazy Wisdom” approach to spirituality. In 1979, he changed his name to *Da Free John*. In 1986, his name became *Da Love-Ananda*. In the late 1980s he became *Da Avabhasa* (the Bright), in 1990 *Da Kalki*, and finally, in 1995, *Adi Da Samraj*. The completion of his work of revelation, he says, is signified in this last change of name and his title of *AVATAR*.

In 1983, he acquired an island in Fiji for his community, then called the *Johannine Daist Communion*. Today *Adi Da’s* spiritual movement is named *Adidam*, or the *Way of the Heart*. A

central teaching of this path is that all seeking requires constant activity, a factor that, in itself, prevents conscious realization and perfect happiness. Because the means used on any path are always changing, no method of seeking is ever permanently successful. Adi Da asserts that he has attained the Most Perfect Happiness and can transmit this divine Self-realization to others. Thus, a devotional relationship with Adi Da is the source of divine Self-realization. The Way of the Heart employs meditation, study, worship, communal living, and dietary and sexual disciplines as means for “radical” understanding and communion with Adi Da.

The educational organization of Adidam is the Laughing Man Institute, which propagates the teaching of Adi Da around the world. Adidam also has a publishing vehicle, the Dawn Horse Press, which publishes *The Adidam Revelation Magazine* and books about and by Adi Da.

At the turn of the 21st century Adidam reported over 1,000 members worldwide, the majority of whom live in the United States. Centers have been opened in New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, and Fiji. Ashrams currently are located in Fiji, Hawaii, and northern California.

See also [BONDER](#), [SANIEL](#).

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Adidam See [ADI DA SAMRAJ](#).

Adi Granth See [SIKHISM](#).

Adinatha See [RISHABHA](#).

Adipurana

The Adipurana is an important SANSKRIT text of the DIGAMBARA Jains (see [JAINISM](#)). It records the lives of the 63 great men of Jain history and myth (which are also recorded later in the larger compendium of HEMACHANDRA, *The History of the 63 Famous Men*). It was begun in Karnataka state by JINASENA around the ninth century C.E. and completed by one of his students, GUNABHADRA, whose addition bears the separate name of Uttarapuram.

The Adipurana was the first major Jain text that openly integrated elements of Hinduism into the Jain philosophical framework. Jinasena provides for Jain BRAHMINS (who are not, however, allowed the haughtiness and privilege of Hindu Brahmins), the caste system (which in the Jain view is a political institution, not a birthright), various Hindu life transition rituals, and elements of Hindu temple ritual, which are given different philosophical interpretations. For example, Jinasena provided the first Jain fire rituals, which are clearly Vedic, Brahmanical rituals revalorized for the Jain context. Jinasena also establishes a set of “traditional” Jain MANTRAS to mirror the Hindu tradition.

See also [JAINISM](#).

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Adishesha (also Shesha or Ananta)

Adishesha, the divine thousand-headed serpent, is the couch for Lord VISHNU as he sleeps between eras on the vast ocean of milk. When the MILK OCEAN was churned by the demons and gods to produce the nectar of immortality,

Adishesha was the churning rope, according to some versions of the story. It is also said that, when time begins again in a new era, the world sits on the head of Adishesha; whenever he stirs, earthquakes result. At the end of each cosmic era he vomits out the fire of destruction, which incinerates the universe.

In the story of PRAHLADA and HIRANYAKASHIPU, Prahlada prays to Adishesha when forced by his father to eat poison and is saved. Other stories associate Adishesha with cosmic poison in different ways.

Many different personages in Indian tradition have been said to be incarnations of Adishesha, most notably BALARAMA, the brother of Lord KRISHNA. Adishesha is usually described as the son of a *rishi*, a seer. However, as is common in Indian mythology many contradictory stories exist, and some say that he was born of SHIVA. He has even been identified with the eternal, all-encompassing BRAHMAN itself.

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Aditi

Aditi (she who has no limit) is one of the few goddesses mentioned by name in the RIG VEDA, the earliest extant Indian text. There she is said to be the mother of the ADITYAS, a group of seven (sometimes eight or 12) important divinities, including VARUNA and MITRA. However, the list of her children varies in other texts; SURYA, the Sun God; AGNI, the god of fire; or even INDRA, the king of the gods, is referred to as *aditya*, that is, “having Aditi as mother.” Aditi is said to have sprung from the RISHI DAKSHA (although in Rig Veda, Daksha is also simultaneously her son). There is no iconography of Aditi (see [ICONS](#)).

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Adityas

Aditya means “whose mother is ADITI,” the Vedic goddess. The father of the Adityas is usually said to be the RISHI Kashyapa, a famous Vedic *rishi*. The Adityas are sometimes referred to as seven, sometimes eight, and sometimes 12 in number. The Vedic list is seven or eight. The list of seven includes VARUNA, MITRA, ARYAMAN, BHAGA, DAKSHA, ANSHA, and SURYA or SAVITRI. The list of eight sometimes includes Martanda, who is said to have been excluded by his mother.

When 12 Adityas are listed, in later times, they represent the 12 months of the year; they are Dhatri, MITRA, ARYAMAN, RUDRA, SURYA, Bhaga, VIVASVAT, PUSHAN, SAVITRI, TVASHTRI, and VISHNU. In some lists AGNI, the god of fire, or even INDRA, the king of the gods, is referred to as an “Aditya.”

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adrishṭa

Adrishṭa literally means the “unseen,” a category in MIMAMSA and VAISHESHKA traditions.

In Mimamsa the term refers to any invisible result of a ritual act that accrues to a person; it

bears fruit upon that person's death. *Adrishta* has lent itself to extensive commentary in the Mimamsa literature. It is intangible and ineffable, but also the instrument through which Vedic rites come to fruition.

In Vaisheshika, the term is sometimes synonymous with *adharmā*, the equally invisible negative karmic accrual. In a larger sense in Vaisheshika, *adrishṭa* is the unknown quality of things and of the soul; it brings about the cosmic order and arranges for souls according to their merits and demerits.

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advaita

Advaita (non-dual, from the root *dvi*, or two) is a term used to describe the unitary philosophies and religious movements in India. Rather than a definition of these schools of thought as unitary or monist, the negative description is generally used. *Advaita* is usually translated as “non-dual.” Duality would imply that there is more than one reality; non-duality implies that there is nowhere a second to the one reality.

A number of philosophies in Indian tradition are conventionally called *advaita*. Their characteristics vary considerably. Best known is “absolute *advaita*,” formulated by the Vedānta founder SHANKARA, in which the individual self, and all apparently separate selves, are understood to be nothing but the ultimate Self, that is, non-dual with it; there are no distinctions between selves. A further aspect of Shankara's *advaita* system is that the world is false or *MAYA*, illusion. Only the one *BRAHMAN* is true.

The views of RAMANUJA and VALLABHA are also technically referred to as *advaita* or non-dualistic,

as both their systems maintain that individual selves are nothing but the ultimate Self. However, they both also include qualifying language to show that they do not hold Shankara's absolute view. In their understanding, the highest Self or *brahman* is God and therefore has certain inherent characteristics that distinguish it from any other self. No individual self can possess the power and supremacy of the divinity; in fact, both Ramanuja and Vallabha see the individual selves as being distinct from each other. Similarly, Ramanuja and Vallabha qualify their *advaita* belief that the world or universe is in fact nothing but the divinity: from another perspective the world is different from the divinity.

Many other Vedāntins similarly could be called *advaita* with these sorts of reservations. They sometimes use terms like Dvaitadvaita (non-dualist and dualist) or BHEDABHEDA (both different and non-different). Philosophically they are quite similar to Ramanuja and Vallabha.

Finally, most TANTRIC philosophical systems are also termed *advaita* or non-dual. In these cases, the individual self is understood as being precisely *brahman*, God or Goddess, with no reservations. The power inherent in the divinity is understood to belong to any individual, at the highest level of realization. The world too is understood to be non-dual with the divinity.

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***advaita* Fellowship** See [NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ](#).

Africa, Hinduism in

Hinduism is practiced throughout the African continent but is primarily focused in South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, and Ghana. According to 2000 census data, nearly 1 million Hindus live in South Africa, the largest concentration of followers on the continent.

India has had a long history of interaction with East Africa, first recorded as trade during the time of the Roman Empire, which exported products and slaves from East Africa and imported Indian cloth and spices. An Indian presence in Africa has been discovered at archaeological sites in Zimbabwe and the Swahili coast. Remains of small Indo-African colonies have also been identified on Madagascar and Zanzibar. Zanzibar appears to have been the center of South Asian mercantilism, which predated the entry of the Europeans. Even today words from Indian languages can be found in the Swahili language.

The trade initiated by the Roman Empire ebbed for centuries, but the onset of European colonization of Africa and India, and particularly the British Empire, renewed communication between East Africa and India, as Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa became part of the British Empire and began to be settled by South Asian colonists. Europeans presided over a flourishing of trade across the Indian Ocean that included the German colony of Tanzania (German East Africa), although they also suppressed the slave trade. The Indian community in Zanzibar grew to include Hindus, Muslims, Roman Catholics from Goa, Buddhists from Sri Lanka, Sikhs, and Parsees (Zoroastrians from India).

Construction by the British of the Kenya-Uganda railway generated another emigration of South Asian workers to East Africa. First Muslims, and later Hindus, arrived as construction laborers. After completion of the railway, many remained to create Indian bazaars and shops along the new line. The British practice of separating different ethnic groups into homogeneous colonies kept Indian immigrants in segregated communities. Racist attitudes and policies among the European colonists prompted various South Asian groups to organize politically. Schools were founded in order to educate South Asians. After World War II, nationalist movements among the indigenous African population channeled resentment of the financial success of the Asians and threatened the South Asian communities. Even under duress, South Asians continued to immigrate to East Africa and to assist in the development of Hindu communities there.

The majority of the Hindu population in East Africa is from the Gujarat (70 percent) and Punjab regions; all but the lowest castes are represented. As a result of constant communication with India, Hindus in East Africa practice the religion of the subcontinent, although members of the different castes interact more freely in East Africa than in India. Various temples allow the Hindu population to worship their respective deities.

In 1972 Idi Amin expelled all Hindus from Uganda. Twenty years later Uganda allowed the Hindu population to return. Today there are two Hindu temples in Uganda, and 65 percent of the South Asian population in Uganda is Hindu.

The Hindu population continues to be separate from other ethnic and religious groups in Africa, as the indigenous and European populations of Africa tend to be primarily Christian or Muslim. Modern movements, such as the VEDANTA SOCIETIES and RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION and the SATYA SAI BABA movement can be found, although traditional Hinduism and Hindu movements remain of interest to the immigrants and their descendants.

In contrast to free Hindu immigration in Uganda, Hindus first appeared in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and MAURITIUS as indentured servants for the British Empire. It was the same indentured servant scheme that took other Indian populations to Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. Hindus arrived at the South African port of Natal in 1860 to work on plantations. The laborer population increased over the following decades with the construction of continental railroads. Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu are among the Indian states from which the first Hindus emigrated. During the early decades, Hindus preserved a broad array of rituals and customs even through they shared temple space across various sects. The temples became eclectic places of worship and helped to solidify a cultural identity for Hindus living far away from their Indian homes.

Most laborers remained in Africa after their contracts of servitude ended and established permanent settlements. An Indian merchant class soon formed around the developing communities. Revenues accumulated for the construction and maintenance of the first temples, built on plantations or at the outskirts of towns. Large temples built as early as the 1880s still stand in Durban at the Umgeni Road Temple Complex. The Umbilo Shree Ambalavanaar Alayam Temple of Durban, built in 1875, is recorded as the first proper Hindu temple built on the continent. After it was destroyed in 1905 by the flooding of the Umbilo River, the temple was revitalized in 1946 and was dedicated as a national monument in 1980. The Umbilo Temple continues to operate as a favored place of Hindu worship, celebrating the annual fire walking ceremony each spring.

In 1913 laws were passed in South Africa to curb immigration. Nevertheless, before strict apartheid appeared, South Asians were relatively free to travel and to own land. In response to the policies of apartheid, MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI, during his 21-year residency in South

Africa, first developed his method of social action and nonviolent protest. In 1947 the South African government passed the Group Areas Act, which enforced strict segregation of all people of color. Previously, South Asians and indigenous Africans had worked together and shared traditions through free intercommunication. The Group Areas Act precluded the possibilities of free communication and forced South Asians and Africans to leave desirable locations and settle in segregated townships in more undesirable areas. Hindu congregations were scattered across the country, isolated from each other and cut off from India. Temples and community centers were created in these highly segregated communities. Between 1968 and 1973 the government of South Africa established a policy of conversion to Christianity for the Hindu population, which left Hindu communities cut off from their traditions and unable to socialize youth into the Hindu heritage.

The ARYA SAMAJ movement fought the South African policies of apartheid. The movement, begun in India in 1875, entered South Africa in 1906 and Kenya and Tanzania later on. As a social service and educational organization, the Arya Samaj served poor Hindus, but it also affirmed the Vedic tradition and established schools. The movement effectively dissuaded Hindus from converting to Christianity, despite the presence of influential Christian missions. In Tanzania the Hindu Mandal, established in 1910, offered welfare programs, youth activities, and medical services.

Other Hindus from diverse backgrounds joined to retain their tradition in the face of significant challenges to its existence. With the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, Hindus were again able to travel and have contact with India.

A number of active Hindu missions countered the growing influence of Christian missionaries. One exemplary mission was begun by Swami Shankarananda. The swami arrived in South Africa in 1907 and helped organize

Hindu practice, spread Hindu teaching, and revive festivals. Schools were established under his direction, focused on the study of traditional Hindu scripture. In 1912 Shankarananda organized the first South African Hindu Conference, which established the South African Maha Sabha, which maintained ties among 44 institutes. Shankarananda's work opened the way for other missionaries, including Swami Adhyananda and Pandit Rishi Ram, to establish their own work in the country. The work of these early missionaries inspired movements in the later decades of the 20th century.

Hindus entered Mauritius in the early 19th century as indentured workers for French sugar plantations. After Great Britain suppressed the slave trade, the colonial French farmers needed a new source of cheap labor. In time the population of Indians in Mauritius grew considerably. Today Hindus make up 68 percent of the total population. Most Hindus live in the rural areas and still work on plantations. Arya Samaj is also active in Mauritius.

Recently neo-Hindu movements have grown in popularity on the continent. In both Kenya and South Africa the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS became influential in the latter part of the 20th century. The RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION, and the Divine Life Society of Swami SHIVANANDA Saraswai have also become popular. In Ghana, where Indian merchants arrived during the 20th century, a missionary known as the Black Monk of Africa founded a monastery in Accra in 1977. With a small but devoted following, the monastery provides services to Hindu communities. The ANANDA MARGA YOGA SOCIETY has also established a popular following in Ghana. Only five Hindu families live in Senegal at present.

The observance of Hindu festivals continues in Africa largely unchanged from Indian sources. Each year in October DIVALI, or the festival of lights, is celebrated across Africa. In South Africa, the popular festival lasts into Novem-

ber and includes both Hindu and non-Hindu participants. In Kenya, Divali is recognized as a national holiday. Communities in Tanzania and Ghana also celebrate Divali. Other festivals observed across Africa include the popular summer celebration HOLI, the festival of colors. Several local festivals are also observed according to regional customs.

Although Hindus have maintained a cultural identity and are generally respected throughout Africa, some Hindus have become increasingly alarmed over the tactics of Christian missionaries. Some of the growing numbers of American and European Christian missionaries have instigated divisions among African communities. For example, some Christian evangelicals have disseminated portrayals of Hindus as followers of demonic gods and goddesses, fueling religious tensions. In South Africa in recent years, several Hindu organizations have petitioned Christian evangelicals to condemn attempts to convert Hindus and have protested against the use of propaganda that depicts Hindus as devil worshippers. The tactics have ignited a new call for Hindu unity and for peaceful efforts to counter Christian evangelicalism.

See also [CARIBBEAN REGION](#); [DIASPORA](#).

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agama

In the tantric tradition (see **TANTRISM**) *agama* most commonly means “authoritative scripture.” Different systems of tantric tradition may designate different texts as *agamas*. In South India, for instance, there is a tradition called Agamanta SHAIVISM that relies upon 28 *agamas*. In this tradition, the **VEDAS** are referred to as **NIGAMA**.

Agamas tend to be fairly late texts (compared to the **Vedas**); the earliest *agama* could hardly have been written before the sixth century C.E. Though many of the *agamas* of the diverse tantric traditions are philosophical, others focus on Shaivite temple ritual, including the layout of temples, the installation of icons, and the ritual forms to be used. In this sense, they are foundational texts for temple Hinduism.

In a more limited sense, an *agama* is a tantric text that takes the form of a teaching by SHIVA to PARVATI or another goddess. (In this context, a *Nigama* is a text taught by the goddess to Shiva.) Finally, *agama* is a linguistic term used in PANINI. The great Sanskrit grammarian, for an augment added to a base to form a complete word.

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Agastya (also Agasti)

Agastya was one of the Vedic **RISHIS** (inspired poets); his name is given as the author of several hymns in the first of the 10 chapters of the **RIG**

VEDA. He is said to be the son of both **MITRA** and **VARUNA**, both of whose seed was emitted upon sight of the celestial **APSARAS** **URVASHI**. Agastya then was born in a water jar. (A similar story exists about the conception of **DRONA** in a bucket.)

In the **MAHABHARATA** and later literature Agastya became an important *rishi*. In the Mahabharata itself there are a number of stories about him. One tale frequently mentioned in Indian literature relates how Agastya helped the gods destroy demons who had hidden in the ocean by drinking up the entire ocean. In another tale Agastya restores the world to order: the **VINDHYA** mountain grew jealous of mount **MERU**, the central mountain of our universe around which the Sun and Moon always go, so he began to raise his head in order to block the path of the celestial orbs. Agastya, **GURU** of the Vindhya mountain, went to Vindhya and forced him to lower his head in obeisance, and to keep his head lowered while Agastya headed in the southern direction. Agastya, however, never returned.

This notion of the Vindhya's bowing to Agastya is associated with the migration of the **ARYANS** and particularly the **BRAHMINS** to South India. Agastya is venerated in the south of India, where he is said to have been the first to organize the Tamil grammar. Tolkappiyar, the author of the oldest known Tamil grammar, is considered one of Agastya's 12 students. Agastya was also said to have been a member of the first two Tamil Sangams or literary academies, which were inundated by the sea. (The literature of the third and last Sangam is understood to be still extant, but, of course, the Sangams are not historically verifiable.)

In Tamil Nadu Agastya is mythologically associated with **SHIVA**, who it is said to have sent Agastya to the south. In the tantric tradition of the **SRI VIDYA**, Agastya is said to be the husband of **LOPAMUDRA**, the female founder of one of the *sri vidya* lineages.

In the Ramayana Agastya was visited at his **ASHRAM** by **RAMA** and became an adviser to him. In

the end Agastya became a star—Canopus, which shines in the southern sky in India.

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Agehananda Bharati, Swami (1923–1991) *Western Hindu monastic*

Swami Agehananda Bharati was an Austrian-born Hindu monk and an important scholar of Indian culture and languages.

Leopold Fischer was born in Vienna, Austria, on April 20, 1923, to a retired cavalry captain, Hans Fischer, and his wife, Margarete. In a youth of considerable privilege, Leopold and his brother Hans were closer emotionally to their governess, Frau Blumel, than to their parents, who, according to Leopold, were not interested in understanding and communicating with their sons. At age 13 Leopold joined the Indian Club, as he was already keen on India and all things Indian, and began to study HINDI and classical SANSKRIT; the next year he decided to become a professional Indologist. On his 16th birthday, after Hitler took over Austria, Fischer took an oath to fight for India's freedom and became a member of Hitler's "Free India" Legion, an organization based on anti-British politics and Aryan racist thought. Also on his birthday, he took vows to become a Hindu by honoring the five things of the cow (milk, buttermilk, butter, urine, and dung) while renouncing the sixth thing of the cow, namely, its flesh. He was given the Hindu name Ramachandra by a traveling Hindu preacher, Bhai Sachidanand. During the war, he served with the Indian Legion of the German army in the European theater, expanding his language skills to include several contemporary Indian languages.

In January 1949, Fischer landed in Bombay (Mumbai), having written to many Indian contacts he had made in Europe. He lived in RAMAKRISHNA ashrams, first in Calcutta (Kolkata), then in Almora. After two years, he decided that the Ramakrishna Math was not his ordained path; nor was its founder, Swami VIVEKANANDA (1863–1902), his ordained teacher, and he became a novice in a Hindu monastery. He was initiated into the Dasanami SANNYASI order of Hinduism by Swami Vishvananda Bharati on the banks of the Ganges at BENARES (Varanasi), where he became Agehananda Bharati (bliss through homelessness). In this initiation into monasticism (*DIKSHA*), he became the first Westerner to embrace monastic Hinduism fully. He then began a 1,500-mile trek of India on foot as a mendicant monk with a begging bowl.

Agehananda Bharati continued his scholarly activities in such diverse subjects as cultural anthropology, South Asian studies, linguistics, and comparative philosophy. He taught at Delhi University, Banaras Hindu University, and Nalanda Institute in India; at a Buddhist academy in Bangkok, Thailand; and at the University of Tokyo.

In 1956, Bharati immigrated to the United States as a research associate for Washington University. In 1957 he joined the anthropology faculty at Syracuse University and became the Ford-Maxwell Professor of South Asian studies. He became a U.S. citizen in 1968. His publications include 500 articles, essays, and books that report on Hindu monasticism and worldview and have been widely read by scholars and general readers alike.

His interpretation of Hinduism through anthropological and personal lenses have been influential among Western Hindus as well as scholars.

Agehananda Bharati died of cancer at a friend's house in Pittsford, New York, on May 14, 1991, at the age of 68.

Further reading: Swami Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (London: Rider, 1965); ———, *The Light*

at the Center: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Ross-Erikson, 1976); ———, *The Ochre Robe: An Autobiography*, 2d ed. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Ross-Erikson, 1980).

Aghora See AGHORI SADHUS.

Aghori sadhus

Paradoxically named, the Aghori (“non-terrible”) SADHUS are among the most strange and frightening of all the mendicants of India. Their practice is similarly called *aghora*—“non-terrible.” They inhabit cremation grounds, where they perform their esoteric rituals. They eat the flesh of human corpses and smear their bodies with ashes from human cremations. They carry begging bowls made from human skulls (they do not beg but will not refuse anything) and eat their food from them. They are popularly known as evil sorcerers who command fearsome magic powers.

The practices of the Aghoris are calculated to outrage; they are known coprophages (eaters of human excrement), and folklore reports their kidnapping and sacrificing children for their outrageously transgressive rites. They trace their sect to the great guru of the NATHS, GORAKHNATH; they embody the extreme left-handed tantra (see [TANTRISM](#)), which finds the divinity everywhere, and they believe that complete release is to be found in discovering the essence of the divinity in that which is most horrific. They are often devotees of the fierce aspect of the GODDESS, but also, of SHIVA. Their origins are probably to be found in the ancient SHAIVA cult of the Kapalikas. These sadhus are given a wide berth by most contemporary Indians and are looked down upon as evil.

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KLM, 1995); *Sadhus: India's Holy Men*, 3, Aghori, *Living with the Dead* (videorecording)/a Bedi Films/Denis Whyte Films Production for BBC TV, Canal Plus, Premiere (Princeton, N.J.: Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1995); Robert Svoboda, *Aghora: At the Left Hand of God* (Albuquerque: Brotherhood of Life, 1986).

Agni

Agni, the god of fire, is one of the most central divinities in the early Vedic tradition. There are more hymns to Agni in the RIG VEDA, the earliest SANSKRIT text, than to any other divinity. Agni is sometimes said to be the son of earth and sky. He is also sometimes said to be the offspring of BRAHMA. He is sometimes called the son of ADITI and the RISHI Kashyapa. Finally, he is also sometimes called the son of the *rishi* Angiras.

Agni's most important role is in the Vedic ritual, where he is the messenger between humanity and the gods. He is called upon always to take the gods to the ritual place so that they can hear the pleas and praises of the chanters. In Vedic poetry he is called a domestic priest, a poet, and a sage, as though to identify him directly with the RISHIS. There is a sense of his presence in every home as the hearth fire, and there are a closeness and intimacy expressed in the Vedic poetry with him that are lacking with many of the other Vedic divinities. He is seen to extend protection to humans in many ways and to grant wealth and length of life.

Iconographically, in later times Agni is seen as red or black in color, riding a ram. He is guardian of the southeastern direction among the eight guardians of the directions. Fire is considered one of the five elements (*PANCHA BHUTAS*).

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agnichayana

The *agnichayana*, or “ritual of building the fire altar,” was one of the grandest rituals in the Vedic sacrificial tradition; it played an extremely important role in the development of Hinduism. It is most completely described in the sixth book of the SHATAPATHA BRAHMANA, which is attached to the YAJUR VEDA. The ritual involves building a temporary shelter of posts and roof thatching to serve as the site for the ritual and all of its adjuncts, which last for more than two weeks. Once the shelter has been created, a huge falcon is built from consecrated bricks. This bird is homologized or understood to be PRAJAPATI or the PURUSHA, the Universal Being. Seventeen specialized priests are required for this most elaborate of Vedic rituals. A sacrifice of 14 goats formed a central part of the early ritual.

The *agnichayana* is understood as a renewal or re-creation of the universe through ritual. A late verse in the RIG VEDA recounts how the Primordial Man offered himself in sacrifice to create all of the universe; the *agnichayana* reenacts this process. SOMA, the special drug taken by the Vedic BRAHMINS, was used during this ritual.

The *agnichayana* ritual, and the theory that developed around it, helped define Indian notions of ADVAITA or non-duality—the equation of the individual self with the Universal Self or Reality. The Shatapatha Brahmana, where this ritual is described, says that it must be understood as the universe itself. As the later Vedic texts, the Aranyakas, show, this Vedic ritual can be done esoterically within the body and being of one person. If the *agnichayana* is the Universal Reality and a person’s being is the ritual, then one can conclude that a person’s being is the Universal

Reality, or all that is. This insight leads to the philosophical identification of the individual self and the Ultimate Reality, later found explicitly in the Upanishads.

Further reading: Julius Eggeling, trans., *The Satapatha-Brahmana*, Part 1, *According to the Text of the Madhyandina School* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982); J. Frits Staal, *AGNI: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Robert Gardner and Frits Staal, *Altar of Fire* (videorecording) (Cambridge, Mass.: Film Study Center at Harvard University, 1983).

Agni Yoga Society (est. 1920)

The Agni Yoga Society was founded in New York in 1920 by the Russian artist Nicholas Roerich (October 9, 1874–December 13, 1947) and his wife, Helena (February 12, 1879–October 5, 1955), and was incorporated in New York City as a nonprofit educational organization. The society’s philosophy emphasizes the evolution of planetary consciousness as a necessary and attainable goal for humankind.

Agni Yoga, sometimes referred to as the teaching of “Living Ethics,” does not rely on a physical or meditative discipline. It is rather a way of life offering a practice and commitment to directing thought and prioritizing actions for the common good. It is reportedly practiced by thousands in Russia and by several thousand others around the world. Although the teaching reveres Hinduism, Agni Yoga is not considered exclusively Hindu in nature; rather, it involves a synthesis of religious teachings of all ages from around the world.

Agni Yoga evolved from Nicholas Roerich’s encounters in London with Mahatma Morya and Mahatma Koot Hoomi (ascended masters in the tradition of THEOSOPHY). In March 1920, Nicholas produced the first of the group’s writings; they were followed by several books by Helena. At the request of the Mahatmas the Roerichs moved to New York to share the teachings and to open

cultural centers in America. Several institutes and museums were established, including the Agni Yoga Society.

The society has published a set of books called the Agni Yoga Series, which encapsulates their philosophy, a teaching that integrates Eastern beliefs with Western spiritual and scientific thought. Although the society does not offer courses, it provides information on Agni Yoga and welcomes correspondence.

Further reading: Agni Yoga Series (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1977); Ruth Drayer, *Nicholas and Helena Roerich: The Spiritual Journeys of Two Great Artists and Peacemakers* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Pub. House, 2005); *Helena Roerich, Letters of Helena Roerich* (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1954–67); Nicholas Roerich, *Altai-Himalaya: A Travel Diary* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1929).

Ahalya

The wife of the *RISHI* Gautama, Ahalya was seduced by *INDRA* while her husband was taking his morning bath. Indra took the form of her husband, and though Ahalya knew that Indra was not her husband, she consented to his advances. When the *rishi* was returning to the hut Indra took the form of a cat and escaped. The *rishi*, however, knew through his supranormal powers what had occurred. He cursed his wife, turning her to stone, and put a curse on Indra as well.

In some versions of the Ahalya story Indra is cursed with the testicles of a ram; in other versions he is cursed with 1,000 vaginas. In the later tale, Indra beseeched the gods to relieve the curse and the vaginas were transformed into 1,000 eyes. This colorful story explains how Indra acquired the epithet “thousand-eyed one.”

In the *RAMAYANA*, *RAMA* comes upon the stone form of a woman, who, with the touch of his foot, becomes alive again. She is Ahalya. This well-known myth has generated many books and novels in contemporary Indian languages.

Further reading: Wendy Doniger, *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Stephanie W. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer’s Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); C. Rajagopalachari, *Ramayana* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962).

aham brahmasmi See [MAHAVAKYAS](#).

ahamkara

Ahamkara means “ego” (literally, I-doing, or conceiving of everything in terms of I.) In nearly every tradition of Hinduism *ahamkara* is considered the great spiritual enemy. In *YOGA* one transcends the ego through the calming of the mind and eventually learns to ignore the pernicious pull of *ahamkara*. In non-dual Vedantic practice, ego is seen as false self, which must be rejected in favor of the transcendent Self that is Ultimate Reality.

In the practice of *BHAKTI*, or devotional *YOGA*, through chants and *MANTRAS* one connects to the inner godhead and uproots the ego with service to the Divine. Only in the tantric (see [TANTRISM](#)) traditions is Ahamkara seen as a positive word, but there, also, it is understood that one’s ego must be transformed into divine “I-ness,” where the mundane ego is totally supplanted in identification with God. In Jain and *SIKH* traditions *ahamkara* is seen also as a supreme negative; ego must be controlled and finally eliminated.

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ahimsa

Ahimsa means “non-killing.” This is a concept that seems to emerge in late Vedic times (c. 800 B.C.E.) and is primarily associated with the Jain (see **JAINISM**) and Buddhist traditions at that time. It gradually is taken into the Brahminical tradition and becomes central to it up to the present day. The notion of *ahimsa* is applied toward animal life primarily but in Jain tradition is recognized in the case of plants also.

Ahimsa understands that all animals (and for the Jains certain plants) have souls and that the killing of any animal (or certain plants) whether for eating or not accumulates karmic (see **KARMA**) demerit to the one who does it. The Jains were the most radical in this regard, and their monks were enjoined to sweep their path clear with whisks to prevent stepping on insects and sometimes wore (and wear) masks over their mouths to prevent the breathing in and killing of small invisible beings and insects. Jains would never eat meat and would not countenance the eating of meat or the killing of any animal for any reason in their tradition.

Because Jains believe that there were small invisible beings everywhere, monks were required to walk and move extremely circumspectly and slowly. Agriculture was traditionally forbidden to all Jains because it involved violence to beings, invisible and visible, who live in the ground. Buddhists in India adhered to a strict notion of *ahimsa*, but Buddhist monks would accept meat if given it, while Jain monks would never do so. The notion of *ahimsa* is the primary motive for Indian vegetarianism and orthodox BRAHMINS too avoid all meat, animal products, and eggs (which are seen to be living embryos).

Because of *ahimsa* there are certain orthodox Hindu ascetics who will not wear leather shoes or sandals, but will wear only wooden shoes. Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI expanded the notion of *ahimsa* to the interpersonal realm and developed it into a philosophy of personal action. Gandhi took the word to mean “nonviolence” in

all its aspects, and, while he was very strictly vegetarian as part of his vow of *ahimsa*, he believed that it should become a general principle of human conduct, in all relations between people. Particularly he trained people in the notion of “nonviolent” response to all violence and provocation as a moral as well as a political matter. His political use of *ahimsa* was adopted by many great political leaders of the 20th century, including Martin Luther King Jr.

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Airavata (Airavana)

Airavata is the huge, four-tusked white elephant who is the vehicle of the king of the gods, INDRA. When the elephants of the eight directions are listed, Airavata is the elephant of the western direction. Airavata appears in the MAHABHARATA as the mount of Indra, but is particularly referenced in the RAMAYANA in the battle with the *raksasas*. In this battle, he is attacked by the *raksasas* and loses his tusks, whereupon he turns and gouges RAVANA, the demon king. In the myth of the churning of the MILK OCEAN, Airavata emerges along with many other auspicious beings and things. For this reason, it is understood, he is named “the one from the waters.”

Further reading: Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia: Temple University

Press, 1978); E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986); T. G. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, 4 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997); Margaret Stutley, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

Aishtanemi See [NEMINATHA](#).

Aitareya Upanishad

Aitareya is a matronymic or patronymic deriving from the SANSKRIT root *itara*. It means “son of *itara*” (either masculine or feminine), who would be his mother or father. This is an ancient RIG VEDIC sage who also goes by the name of Mahidasa. Credited to him are the Aitareya Brahmana, the Aitareya Aranyaka, and the Aitareya Upanishad, all texts attached to the RIG VEDA. The Aitareya Upanishad is found in the Aitareya Aranyaka, constituting chapters 4 to 6 of that work.

The Aitareya Upanishad begins with cosmological verses showing how the ultimate being, the ATMAN or Self, created the worlds, the elements, and human beings. Important here is the connection between each of the elements of the divine *PURUSHA*, which is the template Person, and the elements of nature aspects of the cosmos and the human being. From the original Person fire, air, Sun, the quarters of space, the Moon, death, and water emerge. All of these elements again go into making up the human being. Once this takes place the Self enters into the human being that has emerged as the result of his creation. This then makes clear that the self of a human being is the Ultimate Self, which is the source of everything.

Further reading: S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975); Arthur B. Keith, *The Aitareya Aranyaka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909); Swami Nikhilananda, trans., *The Upanishads*, Vol. 3 (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1975); S. Radhakrishnan, *The Princi-*

pal Upanishads (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1994).

Aiyandar

Aiyandar is a demigod represented as a warrior mounted on a horse who is the night guardian in Tamil Nadu. He is sometimes accompanied in iconography or painted representation by other martial figures and dogs. He patrols the boundaries of fields, chasing away evil forces. Figurines of horses and elephants are found in his shrines. Horses in Tamil Nadu will be devoted to Aiyandar. He is regarded as a local son of SHIVA.

Further reading: R. Srinivasan, *Aiyandar's Domain: Political and Social Conditions and Attitudes in Tamil Folk Literature* (Bombay: Research Book Centre, 1993); Henry Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India* (Delhi: SumitPublications, 1976).

Ajanta

At Ajanta in the Aurangabad District of Maharashtra are some of the most famous ancient caves of India. Here are preserved some of India's most beautiful ancient painting and sculpturing. The caves date from the second century B.C.E. to seventh century C.E. There are 29 caves at Ajanta, which are carved into solid stone halfway up a large hill that curves gently away, to the left of the visitor. In the middle of the steep incline is a walkway, which appears made on a natural cliff.

All of the caves at Ajanta were done by the Buddhists. Some were clearly used as monastic dwellings, and others were *chaityas* or shrine rooms. Some of the caves have beautiful frescoes depicting scenes from the Buddhist Jatakas (tales of the life of the BUDDHA). The frescoes of Ajanta show a development of nearly 1,000 years of fresco art. Other caves have impressive figures of the Buddha in high relief.

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Ajapa Yoga Foundation (est. 1974)

The Ajapa Yoga Foundation was established in 1974 by followers of Guru Janardan Paramahansa (1888–1980). It promotes *ajapa*, a breathing and meditation technique not widely known but practiced for centuries by *RISHIS* (spiritual adepts) in India. Practitioners believe that it is the pure and original YOGA and not a derivative of any prior teaching.

The primary teaching of the foundation is that humans see themselves as living in a world of suffering and desire because they have lost their true sense of self. Through the practice of *ajapa* yoga, they can realize their true identity. Today, five ashrams are maintained in India, Bangladesh, and California.

The modern teaching traces back to the 1860s, when Swami Purnananda Paramahansa (1834–1928) learned the ancient technique from Matang Rishi at Siddhashrama, a remote Tibetan monastery. After five years of training, Purnananda returned to Bengal and established ashrams with the purpose of reintroducing *ajapa*.

Upon Purnananda's death, leadership passed to Swami Bhumananda Paramahansa (1873–1958), who was in turn succeeded by his disciple, Guru Janardan. In the 1960s Janardan organized the World Conference on Scientific Yoga in New Delhi, where he made the acquaintance of many Westerners. He then toured Europe and North America and established ashrams and centers in Hamburg, Montreal, New York, and California. In 1966, Janardan found a baby on the bank of the Ganges River in India, named him Guru Prasad (b. 1966), and raised him to be his successor as a living master of *ajapa* yoga. Guru Prasad assumed

leadership of the ashrams and foundation at age 14 and continues to teach practitioners and to maintain the ashrams and centers.

Further reading: Mitchell Radow, *Search for Peace* (New York: Ajapa Yoga Foundation, 1983); Swami Shradhdhanand, trans., *Tattwa Katha: A Tale of Truth, Parts I and II* (New York: Ajapa Yoga Foundation, 1976–79).

Ajivikas

The Ajivikas were an ancient cult known mostly through references in contemporaneous Buddhist and Jain literature. The founder of the cult was Maskariputra (d. 484 B.C.E.), who had learned from earlier teachers in the tradition. The last element of Ajivika tradition died in India around the 15th century.

As did the followers of SAMKHYA, the Ajivikas did not believe in a god or gods. They believed only in KARMA and the round of births and rebirth, and were strictly deterministic. Each of us, they thought, must live through these cycles for a fabulously long period of time—8,400,000 great eons; no amount of good or bad deeds would make any difference. The Ajivikas were criticized in some texts for licentiousness, but the evidence indicates that, compelled as they believed by fate, they were devoted ascetics.

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ajna chakra

The *ajna* (command) chakra is the sixth chakra (energy center) from the base of the spine in the

KUNDALINI YOGA systems. It is located between the eyebrows. The realization of *ajna* chakra yields undifferentiated cosmic awareness transcending all emotion. Some take the “element” associated with this chakra to be Prakriti, the source of the natural world, and her three GUNAS, or strands. Others associate this chakra with the elements of consciousness—BUDDHI (higher mind), AHAMKARA (ego), and MANAS (mind). In either case, the *ajna* chakra’s presiding deity is ARDHANARISHVARA, the form of SHIVA when he is half-goddess and half-god. This form symbolizes the end of differentiation and the integration of the transcendent and the worldly. The SHAKTI, or energy, of the chakra is *hakini*. This chakra has two petals of luminescent, translucent whiteness.

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Akal Takht

“The Seat of the Eternal,” Akal Takht is the center of SIKH religious authority. It is located in the Golden Temple compound in the Punjabi city of AMRITSAR.

The Sikh community meets twice a year in front of the Akal Takht. Decisions must be unanimous; once made they are then considered “decisions of the Guru” and must be observed by all members of the Sikh community.

This tradition goes back to the 10th SIKH GURU GOBIND SINGH, who decreed before his death in 1708 that there would be no more personal, human gurus and that the Sikhs should consider their sacred book—the Granth Sahib (Adi-granth)—as their guru. Any disputes concerning

interpretations of tradition must be decided by the entire community gathered together.

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akasha See ELEMENTS, FIVE.

Akka Mahadevi *Virashaiva saint*

Akka Mahadevi, a talented mystical poet who died while still a young woman, is regarded as one of the early saints of the VIRASHAIVA sect founded by BASAVANNA.

Akka Mahadevi was born in the 12th century in Karnataka. As a young and beautiful maiden, she was seen by the then king Kaushika, who fell hopelessly in love with her. Despite the attempts of his ministers to distract him from marrying a commoner, he persisted in asking them to arrange for her to be his wife. Because the king was not a SHAVITE and she was a devotee of SHIVA Akka Mahadevi persisted in refusing to marry the king. Finally the king threatened her parents with death if she did not marry him. Mahadevi could no longer refuse, but she exacted a high price: she was to be allowed to worship Shiva as she liked, spend time with Shiva devotees as she liked, and be with the king only as she liked. These conditions would be permanent; the king would have the right to overrule them only three times.

Mahadevi sadly proceeded through the marriage rites. Once married, by day she would focus on the Shiva LINGAM in prayer and spend time with Shaivite teachers and devotees; at night she would suffer the attentions of the king. Before she would go to meet him she would remove all her jewelry and makeup in order to appear bedraggled and disheveled.

Time passed; eventually the king in his impatience to be with his beautiful wife used up his three exceptions by interfering with her devotions. Mahadevi then abandoned the king and set out to be near the form of Shiva on a mountain outpost some distance away. There she worshipped continuously, abandoning all care for her body or for the world. She had already begun to go naked in the palace, uninterested in worldly things; her trip to the mountain was also without clothes. Mahadevi is depicted in all iconography as naked, her privacy protected by her long full hair. Her parents begged her to return to the king, but she refused. The king tried to lure her back by converting to Shaivism, but this too failed.

Though the stories vary, it seems certain that Mahadevi met Allamaprabhu of the Virashaivas and joined the sect. She is said to have died after her visit to the mountain, but there must have been a long enough interlude for her to produce her beautiful mystical poetry, in which she finally found Shiva in a formless reality beyond even the notion of God.

Further reading: Swami Ghanananda and Sir John Stewart Wallace, eds., *Women Saints East and West* (Hollywood, Calif.: Vedanta Press, 1979); K. Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava: Lingayat Religion and Culture in South Asia* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992); A. K. Ramanujan, trans. and introduction, *Speaking of Siva* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973).

akshamala

An *akshamala* is a necklace of seeds or beads used for keeping track of a prayer litany, in other words, an Indian rosary. SHAIVITE *akshamalās* are typically made of the *rudraksha* (*Eleocarpus ganitrus*) seed—spherical, brownish red, with a texture similar to that of a peach pit. VAISHNAVA *akshamalās* are typically made of seeds of tulasi, the Indian basil plant, sacred to Vaishnavites. *Akshamalās* can also be made of coral, crystal, or other gems; some TANTRICS use small skulls carved

of ivory. Many *akshamalās* have 50 beads to correspond with the number of letters of the alphabet. Others have 108 or other numbers of beads.

Further reading: Kim Kaur Khalsa, *Mala Meditation for Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Prosperity: Yogic Use of Malas (Prayer Beads) to Maintain a State of Union with the Infinite Based on the Teachings of Yogi Bhajan* (Los Angeles: Sacred Gems, 1994).

Akshapada (Gautama) See [NYAYA](#).

Allahabad (Prayag)

Prayag is the traditional name for the city of Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. *Prayaga* in SANSKRIT means “confluence,” and it is the place where the holy YAMUNA and the most sacred GANGES meet. It is also understood that an ancient sacred river mentioned in the VEDAS, the Sarasvati, invisibly joins these two. Thus, this city is considered most holy because these three rivers join there.

Prayag is one of the seven holy pilgrimage cities of India. It is said that BRAHMA did the first *ashva medha* or HORSE SACRIFICE there. Every 12 years during the month of Magha (January–February), the great KUMBHA MELA festival is held in Prayag, attracting millions of pilgrims and devotees.

Further reading: S. K. Dubey, *Kumbh City Prayag* (New Delhi: Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, 2001); Anne Feldhaus, *Connected Places: Region, Pilgrimage and Geographical Imagination in India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Baidyanath Saraswati, *Traditions of Tirthas in India: the Anthropology of Hindu Pilgrimage* (Varanasi: N. K. Bose Memorial Foundation, 1983).

Alvars

The Alvars, “those who are immersed in God,” are the 12 poet-saints of South Indian VAISHNAVISM.

They lived between the seventh and 10th centuries. Their devotional songs, written in the Tamil language, were collected in the Nalayira Divya Prabandham (The sacred collection of the four thousand songs) by Nathamuni, the first of the great Vaishnavite teachers of Tamil Nadu.

The songs of the Alvars are used today in Tamil Vaishnava temples and in ritual contexts alongside the sacred SANSKRIT recitations. They praise Lord VISHNU in an intimate, highly passionate style, frequently referring to his incarnations as RAMA, KRISHNA, and other deities. The acts and adventures of all these incarnations are lovingly recalled and praised. The poems frequently refer to the well-known shrines of the Tamil country, which were visited by the Alvars in their pilgrimages and travels.

The Tamil Alvars are Periyalvar, ANDAL, Kulasekhar, Tirumalisai, Tondaradipodi Alvar, Tirupanalvar, Maturakavi, Tirumankai, NAMMALVAR, Poykai, Putam, and Pey. The latter three are the earliest, dating from 650 to 700 C.E. Two Alvars stand out for their brilliance: Periyalvar (c. ninth century), who composed beautiful verses in praise of Lord Krishna as a child, and Nammalvar (c. 880–930 C.E.), who is the most prolific poet in the Nalayira Divya Prabandham. Nammalvar's main work, the 1,102-stanza Tiruvaymoli (The divine words from the mouth) was intended to encapsulate the Vedas. The only female Alvar was Andal; her poems expressing her love for Ranganatha, the form of Vishnu found at the most sacred Tamil Vaishnavite shrine at Srirangam, are used in Vaishnava wedding ceremonies in Tamil Nadu.

Further reading: S.M.S. Chari, *Philosophy and Theistic Mysticism of the Alvars* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997); Vidya Dehejia, *Antal and Her Path of Love: Poems of a Woman Saint from South India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Alkondavilli Govindacharya, *The Holy Lives of the Azhvars or the Dravida Saints* (Bombay: Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, 1982); David N. Lorenzen, ed., *Religious*

Movements in South Asia, 600–1800 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); V. K. S. N. Raghavan, *A Brief Study of the Tirpallandu of Sri Periyalvar, the Tirupalliyeluchi of Sri Sondaaradippodiyarlvar, and the Kanninunsirutambu of Sri Madhurakaviyalvar* (Madras: Sri Visishtadvaita Pracharini Sabha, 1983); A. K. Ramanujan, trans., *Hymns for the Drowning: Poems for Visnu by Nammalvar* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981); Kamil Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*. Vol. 10, fascicle 1, *A History of Indian Literature*. Edited by Jan Gonda (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974).

amangala

Amangala means “inauspicious” (See *MANGALA*). It is one of four crucial terms in Indian culture; the others are *mangala* (auspicious), *SHUBHA* (purity), and *ashubha* (impurity).

Further reading: John B. Carman and A. Marglin, eds., *Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985); B. Holland, compiler, *Popular Hinduism and Hindu Mythology: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1963).

Amarnath

Amarnath is a famous shrine to SHIVA in Kashmir, located some 80 miles from Shrinagar, in a mountain cave roughly 7,500 feet high. A Shiva LINGAM shape of ice covered with snow is visible at the far end of the cave. This is considered a “natural” or “self-generated” Shiva lingam, created by nature.

It is said that Shiva revealed the secret of immortality to PARVATI at this cave. Beneath the tiger skin on which Shiva sat, pigeon eggs later hatched. Those who do pilgrimage to this place often see the immortal pigeons incubated by the Lord Shiva himself. Some say that the first to make the pilgrimage to this shrine was Bhṛigu Rishi.

In modern times it is said that a Muslim shepherd, Buta Malik, was given a sack of coal by a holy man at this site. When the shepherd returned home, he discovered that the coal had turned to

gold; at the same time a Shiva lingam made of ice had appeared in the famous cave. The principal pilgrimage to this shrine is during the full moon of Shravana (July–August). The full pilgrimage, a widely observed custom since 1850, takes a total of 40 days from the lowlands upward and back.

Further reading: F. M. Hassnain, Yoshiaki Miura, and Vijay Pandita, *Sri Amarnatha Cave, the Abode of Shiva* (New Delhi: Nirmal, 1987); Karan Singh, *The Glory of Amarnath* (Bombay: Shanti Svarup Nishat, 1954).

Ambuvachi

Ambuvachi is a rite observed in most of North and central India, but most elaborately in Bengal. During four days in the Hindu month of Ashadha (June–July), just before the rainy season is to begin, the earth goddess is said to menstruate in order to prepare herself for fertility. During this period all plowing, sowing, and other farmwork are suspended. Widows may be required to observe special taboos during Ambuvachi, as they are not involved in procreation.

Further reading: Abbe J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. Translated from the French by Henry K. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959); Swami Harshananda, *Hindu Festivals and Sacred Days* (Bangalore: Ramakrishna Math, 1994).

American Meditation Society

The American Meditation Society was founded in 1976 by Purushottam Narshinhran Valodia (March 3, 1932–May 17, 1988), also known as Gururaj Ananda Yogi. Its teaching is focused on MEDITATION.

Drawn as a child to spiritual concerns, the guru ran away from his home in Gujarat at age five to visit temples. He wandered from village to village for six months, until found by his parents. As he wandered, he discovered that the temple gods were lifeless and did not speak to him. Con-

tinuing his search into adulthood, he eventually discovered that what he sought lay within himself. After SELF-REALIZATION, he set about to become a spiritual teacher in the West.

He moved from his native Gujarat to South Africa and became a successful businessman. In 1975, he retired from business to become a full-time spiritual teacher, founding the International Foundation for Spiritual Unfoldment in 1975. By 1976, the organization had spread to nine countries in the British Commonwealth, Europe, and America, where the American Meditation Society was founded that year in California.

Gururaj Ananda Yogi taught that his path is not a religion, but the basis that underlies all religions. His teaching is to awaken each individual to the same reality that he discovered, primarily through the practice of meditation. The society offers courses in meditation and the intonation of sound during meditation. During his lifetime, students would send pictures of themselves to Gururaj, who would meditate upon the pictures and hear each person's unique sound in the universe, which became the student's personal mantra for meditation.

Further reading: Ted Partridge, *Jewels of Silence* (Farmborough, England: St. Michael's Abbey Press, 1981); Savita Taylor, *The Path to Unfoldment* (London: VSM, 1979).

American Yoga Association (est. 1968)

The American Yoga Association, the first nonprofit organization in the United States dedicated to yoga education, was founded by Alice Christensen (no date of birth) in 1968. Located in Sarasota, Florida, it serves as a resource center for both students and teachers, focusing on VEDANTA philosophy, HATHA YOGA, and MEDITATION techniques.

In 1953 Christensen began to have visionary experiences of a white light followed by transcendental communications from Swami SHIVANANDA SARASWATI (1887–1963) of Rishikesh. Subsequent dreams encouraged her to pursue the path of yoga. Sivananda became Christensen's guru and they

maintained their correspondence by mail until his death. She then began to study with SWAMI RAMA (1900–72) and to travel in India.

Christensen began to teach yoga in 1965. As a student of Swami Rama she represented his teachings in the West. In 1968 she founded the Light Society (known later as the American Yoga Association) in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. By 1972 11 yoga centers were established in India, Australia, and the United States. During this time the first book published by the association was released, *The American Yoga Association Beginner's Manual*. After Swami Rama's death in 1972, Christensen continued to study yoga as a student of Sri LAKSHMANJOO (1907–92), a teacher of KASHMIRI SHAIIVISM. Christensen would remain his student, frequently traveling to Kashmir, until his death in 1992.

The American Yoga Association provides educational services to program developers in health-related fields as well as writers seeking information on yoga. During the late 1960s Christensen inaugurated a program called Easy Does It Yoga, which the association continues to offer to seniors and those with physical limitations. The program has gained wide respect for its effectiveness in helping older adults regain independence. Following the Kashmiri Shaivism system, the association emphasizes a self-directed approach to yoga that encourages its participants to engage in inner awareness for the purpose of releasing potential for self-knowledge. The association offers books and videotapes by Christensen.

Further reading: Alice Christensen, *The American Yoga Association Beginner's Manual* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002); ———, *The American Yoga Association's Easy Does It Yoga* (New York: Fireside Books, 1999).

amrita

Amrita is the term used in the VEDAS for SOMA, comparable to the ambrosia of the Greeks. It is considered a nectar of immortality of sorts and is

taken during certain rites to achieve transcendent insight. Perhaps because the Moon is sometimes called Soma, *amrita* in the Vedic context is said to be found on the Moon; it feeds the Fathers in the dark half of the Moon's phases and the gods in the bright half.

The story goes that the gods and antigods (*asuras*) once joined together to churn the MILK OCEAN to make *amrita*. A huge mountain was used as a churning stick and the divine snake ADISHESHA (or Vasuki) was used as the rope around the stick. Many things emerged from the Milk Ocean at that time including the special divine wish-giving cow who appears in later mythology. Finally, the *amrita* emerged held in a cup by the divine physician Dhanvantari. The gods then plotted with VISHNU so that the antigods (*asuras*) would not be able to drink the nectar. Vishnu took on his form of the dazzling maiden, MOHINI, and as he distracted the *asuras*, the gods drank all the *amrita* themselves.

One story says that when the gods drank the *amrita* it spilled at four sites: HARDVAR, Nasik, Ujjain, and ALLAHABAD (Prayag). In esoteric HATHA YOGA it is thought that *amrita* can be accumulated in the skull above the posterior of the nasal passage. This *amrita* is understood to be transformed semen that can create bodily immortality. By severing the frenulum, or skin attachment under the bottom of the tongue, a yogi can force his tongue backward into what is called the Khechara MUDRA, in order to drink the *amrita*.

Further reading: Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); Alfred Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990); E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986); W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic* (Calcutta: Rupa, 1973).

Amrita Foundation (est. 1970s)

The Amrita Foundation was founded in Dallas, Texas, during the 1970s by former associates of the

SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP (SRF), who felt the need for independent development and wanted to publish their own version of the teachings of Paramahansa YOGANANDA (1893–1952). Since the 1920s, SRF had taken prime responsibility for publishing and circulating Yogananda’s writings, but after his death some followers thought that the SRF’s editing distorted the texts.

As SRF owned the copyrights to most of Yogananda’s writings, the Amrita Foundation set about reprinting materials that had passed into the public domain, including the original editions of Yogananda’s writings. Among the reprints were the initial writings and essential teachings of the infrastructure of Yogananda’s work—the lessons on *KRIYA YOGA* distributed to students.

The home study course is a hallmark feature of the foundation’s services, making the *kriya* lessons available to everyone. Issues are sent out each month to subscribers. The focal points of these lessons include the principles of MEDITATION and concentration, as well as physical practices designed to facilitate the spiritual development that *kriya yoga* can help achieve. Advice on diet and nutrition is also promoted; an important aspect of *kriya yoga* is promotion of a healthy body in order to awaken KUNDALINI energy as the vehicle to spiritual bliss (ANANDA).

The foundation has reprinted a substantial number of the first editions of Yogananda’s early writings, including *The Second Coming of Christ*, *Songs of the Soul*, and *Whispers from Eternity*. The foundation remains based in Dallas, Texas.

Further reading: Paramahansa Yogananda, *Second Coming of Christ* (Dallas: Amrita Foundation, 1984); ———, *Songs of the Soul* (Dallas: Amrita Foundation, 1980).

Amritanandamayi Ma (1953–) *teacher who embodies the Divine Mother*

Ammachi (beloved Mother), as Amritanandamayi Ma is affectionately known, is a world-renowned

Hindu guru recognized as an incarnation of the Holy Mother of Hinduism.

Sudhamani (her birth name) was born on September 27, 1953, to a poor fisherman in the small village of Parayakadavu in the state of Kerala, showing signs of divinity from the start. The birth itself, which was foreseen by a wandering religious mendicant, was said to be painless for her mother, and the infant did not cry, beaming a happy smile instead. At six months she began speaking prayers and singing songs in praise of Krishna. Her fervor increased, and by age six she was found daily immersed in JAPA (MANTRA recitation), devotional singing, and quiet MEDITATION. This practice estranged her from family and friends who did not understand. She took refuge in a deep spirituality.

In the mid-1970s she had a series of profound visions and meditative experiences, which firmly established her intimate relationship with the Divine Mother and set her on her present mission to



Amritanandamayi Ma (b. 1953), a famous devotional teacher from South India known for physically embracing all who go to her (*Ma Amritananda Center, San Ramon, California*)

“Give solace to suffering humanity.” Her mission has matured into a dynamic global congregation. She runs an orphanage near her ASHRAM, housing about 400 poor villagers. She has built hospitals in Bombay and Ernakulam and industrial and computer training centers to help poor students learn vocational skills. She advocates the establishment of schools at every ashram to impart religious education.

The house where Ammachi was born has become an ashram and the headquarters of Mata Amritananda Mayi Trust. The ashram, Amritapuri, offers food and accommodations for travelers, funds social services for indigents, and sponsors humanitarian activities around the world. Hundreds of devotees work there on social service projects all day and attend daily sessions with Ammachi. At each of her daily appearances, Ammachi sits on a simple chair on stage with 30 male students, *brahmacharis*, seated on mats on her right and 30 female students, *brahmacharinis*, seated on her left, all dressed in white. Each DARSHAN, which can last for six to eight hours, includes the singing of BHAJANS while each of the attendees walks forward for a blessing and an embrace from Ammachi, who remains on stage until all have experienced her embrace.

Ammachi tours the globe with a constant schedule of appearances held at major cities in many countries. She does not deliver teachings or speeches. Instead, she blesses all those who go forward. Often thousands of admirers stand in line for hours to be hugged by Ammachi. She says that her life itself is her message and teaching. “An unbroken stream of love flows from me towards all beings in the universe,” she has said. “That is my inborn nature.”

At gatherings she disappears behind a screen, where she puts on the clothes of KRISHNA or DEVI, the goddess. She returns to serve as a channel for God, blessing the audience. She says, “The ATMAN, or Self, that is in me is also within you. If you can realize that Indivisible Principle ever shining in you, you will become That.”

Ammachi has initiated 11 senior disciples into the order of *sannyas* (renunciants), two of whom are women. She has followed Hindu tradition by having Swami Dhruvananda of the RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION give the rites of *sannyas* to Swami Amritaswarupananda, her first disciple to renounce worldly life. Since then, Amritaswarupananda has performed the rites with Ammachi in attendance.

In 1993 Ammachi was named one of three presidents of Hinduism by the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. That same year *Hinduism Today* bestowed a “Hindu of the Year” award upon her. In 1995 she spoke at the interreligion meeting of the United Nations. A movie, *Darshan*, released in 2006, portrays her life and the services organized by the headquarters of her trust.

Further reading: Amritanandamayi, *Awaken Children: Dialogues with Sri Sri Mata Amritanandamayi*. Adaptation and translation by Swami Amritaswarupananda 3d ed. (Kerala: Mata Amritanandamayi Mission Trust, 1992); ———, *Eternal Wisdom*. Compiled by Swami Jnanamritananda Puri. English translation from the original Malayalam by M. N. Namboodiri (San Ramon, Calif.: Mata Amritanandamayi Center, 1999); Swami Amritaswarupananda, *Ammachi: A Biography of Mata Amritanandamayi* (San Ramon, Calif.: Mata Amritanandamayi Center, 1991).

Amritsar

Amritsar is the sacred city of the SIKHS, located in Punjab state. The land was given to the fourth Sikh guru Ramdas by the Muslim Mughal emperor Akbar, and Ramdas shortly thereafter, in 1577, founded a city there. The city was built around a sacred spring, called Amrita Saras, “the flow [*saras*] of the nectar of immortality [*AMRITA*].”

The famous AKAL TAKHT or “eternal seat,” of central importance in Sikhism, is located in Amritsar within the GOLDEN TEMPLE. The Adigranth, or Granth Sahib, the sacred book of the Sikhs, is enshrined in the temple; it is the sole true



Sikh devotees outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the international center for Sikh spirituality. ([www.shutterstock.com/Paul Prescott](http://www.shutterstock.com/Paul_Prescott))

guide for the Sikh faith, which no longer recognizes any human gurus.

Further reading: J. S. Grewal, *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak University, 1982); W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community: Five Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975).

anahata chakra

The *anahata* CHAKRA, or the “chakra of the unsounded sound,” is the fourth chakra (energy center) from the base of the spine in KUNDALINI YOGA systems. It is located on the spine at the heart. The *anahata* chakra is associated with

righteousness, sanctity, and an emerging clarity of consciousness. Dedication, devotion, and calmness are also linked to the *anahata* chakra. Its deity is a form of SHIVA, Isana Shiva. Its SHAKTI is Kakini. It has 12 deep red petals.

Further reading: Harish Johari, *Chakras: Energy Centers of Transformation* (Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Books, 2000); Lilian Silburn, *Kundalini: The Energy of the Depths: A Comprehensive Study Based on the Scriptures of Nondualistic Kashmir Saivism*. Translated from the French by Jacques Gontier (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); Sir John Woodroffe, trans., *The Serpent Power* (Madras: Ganesh, 1978).

ananda

Ananda literally means “bliss.” In Hinduism, *ananda* is the bliss beyond comprehension that is experienced when one is in communion with or has realized in totality the Godhead.

Ananda is seen as an aspect of the Divine and is often mentioned together with *sat* (divine being) and *cit* (divine consciousness). The term SAT-CHIT-ANANDA (divine being, consciousness, bliss) often appears in Vedantic contexts (see VEDANTA) and has become a proper name for SWAMIS or holy men.

Many teachers also have “*ananda*” appended to their names, such as Nikhilananda, “He who has realized total divine bliss,” or Satyananda, “He who has realized the divine bliss of the One Truth,” or Muktananda, “He who has realized the divine bliss in liberation from birth and rebirth.”

Further reading: John Dudley Ball, *Ananda—Where Yoga Lives* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1982); J. A. B. van Buitenen, “Ananda, or All Desires Fulfilled,” in *Studies in Indian Literature and Philosophy: Collected Articles of J. A. B. van Buitenen*. Edited by L. Rocher (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988); Nalini Devdas, *Ananda: The Concept*

of Bliss in the Upanisads (Madras: Christian Literature Society for the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1974).

Ananda Ashram, Monroe, New York (est. 1964)

Ananda Ashram was founded in 1964 in Monroe, New York, as the headquarters of the Yoga Society of New York, Inc., which was founded by Ramamurti S. Mishra, M.D. (1923–93), also known as Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, a teacher of Raja YOGA. The ashram serves as a spiritual retreat and educational center that integrates principles of yoga and VEDANTA with a commitment to an East-West “cultural exchange.” The center offers instruction in MEDITATION, Vedanta philosophy, HATHA YOGA, SANSKRIT, dance, and music, as well as regular workshops and retreats. Guest teachers and artists from diverse traditions offer courses.

By the 1950s Mishra had gained renown in the East and West for his expertise in Eastern and Western medicine, including the system of AYURVEDA. In 1966 he quit the practice of Western medicine and left the United States. He later returned as a doctor of acupuncture and led a number of his ashrams into holistic health, including Ayurveda. In 1984 he took the vow of *sannyas* (renunciation) from Swami Gangeshvarananda and was given the name Brahmananda Saraswati.

Sri Brahmananda Saraswati also established the Brahmananda Ashram (the Yoga Society of San Francisco, Inc.), in 1972, as well as several meditation centers in the United States and around the world. He was a prolific writer who published texts on yoga, a commentary on the writing of the great ADVAITA philosopher Shankaracharya, and translations of Sanskrit texts, in addition to many essays and stories. Much of his teaching is recorded in audio and video formats. Brahmananda died in 1993.

Ananda Ashram is open year round and offers teachings to people of all faiths. Programs offered

are nonsectarian and place an emphasis on self-awareness and meditation. The Baba Bhagavandas Publication Trust was established by Brahmananda in 1993 to publish important works in philosophy, medicine, and yoga.

Further reading: Ramamurti S. Mishra, *Fundamentals of Yoga* (Monroe, N.Y.: Baba Bhagavandas Publication Trust, 1996); ———, *Self Analysis and Self Knowledge* (Monroe, N.Y.: Baba Bhagavandas Publication Trust, 1997); ———, *The Textbook of Yoga Psychology* (Monroe, N.Y.: Baba Bhagavandas Publication Trust, 1997).

Ananda Ashrama and Vedanta Centre (est. 1923)

Ananda Ashrama of La Crescenta, California, was founded in 1923 by Swami PARAMANANDA (1884–1940) to facilitate a better understanding between Eastern and Western spiritualities and to disseminate VEDANTA philosophy. The 120-acre retreat features Viswamandir, a temple established in 1928 and dedicated to the world’s great religions. The ashram upholds a model of tolerance and nonsectarianism. By upholding the teachings of Sri RAMAKRISHNA and Swami Paramananda, the ashram assists individuals in discovering principles for spiritual practice. It teaches the basic tenets of the Vedanta tradition: God is one, human nature is divine, all paths lead to the same goal, and the purpose of life is the realization of God in one’s soul.

In line with Paramananda’s belief in equality of the sexes, he ordained women to teach Vedanta, entrusting them to undertake major responsibilities in his work in India and the United States. In both countries, he founded schools and orphanages to assist women and children in need. In fact, he designated a woman, Sri Mata Gayatri Devi (1906–95), to succeed him as director of the ashram. As a result, the parent order in India, the RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION, excommunicated his centers. Nevertheless, for 55 years Gayatri Devi continued teaching Vedanta in the tradition

of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Paramananda. At her death in 1995, Dr. Susan Schrager (1942–), known as the Reverend Mother Sudha Puri, accepted the spiritual leadership of the ashram.

Residents of Ananda Ashrama are primarily women monastics. MEDITATION classes, weekly worship services, a lending library, and retreats are offered to the public. Membership is offered to anyone who attends regular services. Through its company, Vedanta Centre Publishers, the ashram publishes and sells books, compact disks, and cassette tapes by and about Swami Paramananda.

In addition to two ashrams in Calcutta, India, and Ananda Ashrama, Swami Paramananda founded the Vedanta Centre in Cohasset, Massachusetts, in 1929.

Further reading: Sister Devamata, *Swami Paramananda and His Work*, 2 vols. (Crescenta, Calif.: Ananda Ashrama, 1926 and 1941); Sara Ann Levinsky, *A Bridge of Dreams: The Story of Paramananda, a Modern Mystic, and His Ideal of All-Conquering Love* (West Stockbridge, Mass.: Lindisfarne Press, 1984); ———, *Christ and Oriental Ideals* (Cohasset, Mass.: Vedanta Centre, 1912); ———, *Creative Power of Silence* (La Crescenta, Calif.: Vedanta Centre; 1923); ———, *Emerson and Vedanta* (Boston: Vedanta Centre, 1918); Swami Paramananda, *The Path of Devotion* (New York: Vedanta Society, 1907).

Ananda Marga Yoga Society (est. 1955)

The Ananda Marga Yoga Society describes itself as “an international socio-spiritual movement involved in the twin pursuit of SELF-REALIZATION and service to all of creation.” Ananda Marga, through its educational and charitable affiliates in over 160 countries, claims more than a million followers worldwide.

The movement was founded in 1955 in the state of Bihar, India, by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921–90), better known as Marga Guru Sri SRI ANANDAMURTI, which means “He who attracts others as the embodiment of bliss.” He received enlightenment quite early in his life—he is reported to have been an accomplished yogi by

the age of four—and he attracted his first devotees when he was only six. After marrying and getting a job with the railway system, he founded Ananda Marga. From then until his death he authored more than 250 books as Sri Sri Anandamurti.

After founding Ananda Marga, Sarkar began to train missionaries to carry his teachings beyond India; today the society has a complex international organization. Three levels of membership are offered: (1) *acharyas*—teachers and devotees who devote their lives to the movement and may be employed in many locales around the world; (2) local full-time workers; and (3) *marginis*—members who are initiated but hold jobs outside the movement. The number of active members is not known, but estimates run as high as several hundred thousand.

The teaching of the movement involves three dimensions: the practice of tantra yoga, MEDITATION, and engagement in social service with the goal of bringing about a more just and humane world. Part of the movement’s discipline is Sarkar’s Sixteen Points, a system of spiritual practices that helps initiates balance the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of life. Rituals include KIRTAN (singing) and recitation of the mantra *Baba Nam Kevalam* (the universal Father is everywhere).

Ananda Marga stresses public service, including care of the sick and elderly. Service to others is a means of transformation from the needs of oneself to the needs of others, which is also the path to enlightenment. Because of the movement’s dedication to human service, many organizations have been formed within its ambit. The Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT), founded in 1965, and the Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team Ladies (AMURTEL), founded in 1977, address disaster relief around the world. Renaissance Universal, founded in 1958, encourages intellectuals to design and create programs for improving the human condition. The Education, Relief, and Welfare Section (ERWS) is another organization created to propagate Ananda Marga’s agenda of social service.

Sarkar tried to conceptualize and mobilize new ways of education. He advocated a form of education that encourages simultaneous development of the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of humanity. His philosophy extends his emphasis on human development to include animals and plants. He established a global plant exchange program and animal sanctuaries around the world.

Sarkar proposed a political program in 1959, called Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT), which calls for economic democracy and human rights. He also advocated a global bill of rights, constitution, and system of justice.

In India, Sarkar's political activism generated much controversy regarding the movement during the 1960s and 1970s. He ran unsuccessfully for political office in 1967 and 1968, representing the Proutist Bloc. Many in India saw the Proutists as a terrorist organization, and both PROUT and Ananda Marga were banned in India during the period of national emergency declared by Indira Gandhi. Sarkar was accused, convicted, and sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiring to murder former members. In 1978 he won a new trial and was acquitted of the charges.

Since the acquittal of its leader, Ananda Marga has recovered slowly in India but has spread widely outside India, including Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. Led by Acharya Vimala-ananda, the movement entered the United States in 1969 and gained many followers.

Ananda Marga has adherents and social betterment activities in more than 160 countries and claims more than a million followers worldwide. It supports a variety of schools, clinics, and children's homes. It is attempting to put its larger economic program into effect through the formation of cooperative communities, the largest of them Ananda Nagar (the City of Bliss) in West Bengal, and promoting rural development. International headquarters of the movement is in West Bengal.

The society produces several periodicals, including a monthly newsletter and a magazine.

Sadvipra, begun in 1973. A branch of Ananda Marga, Renaissance Universal, is dedicated to working toward a renaissance of social institutions based on neohumanistic values. This renaissance will involve a redesign of the major institutions of society and will foster individual growth and self-realization. Twice a year Renaissance Universal organizes a worldwide forum on contemporary issues. Its quarterly journal, *New Renaissance*, features articles on neohumanism, art, and science in service of self-realization, and social justice.

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Anandamayi Ma (1896–1982) *mystic and avatar of Shakti*

Born Nirmala Sundari Bhattacharya in Vadyakuta, East Bengal (now Bangladesh), on April 30, 1896, Anandamayi Ma was a mystic considered by her disciples as an AVATAR of SHAKTI, the manifest energy of the divine, and as God in the form of the goddess KALI.

Her father, Bipin Behari Bhattacharya, was head of a poor Brahmin family and was often in religious ecstasy as he sang songs from the Vaishnavite tradition. Her mother, Moksada Sundari Devi, also experienced states of religious emotion and reported visits by avatars and deities who appeared surrounded by light. Moksada eventually took vows of renunciation.

As a child, Nirmala also behaved as an ecstatic. She fell into trances, saw visions of religious figures, and gazed into space with eyes not focused on physical objects. Her education was limited and her writing skills minimal.

Married at age 13 to Ramani Mohan Chakravarti, she spent a few years living in her brother-in-law's house, often in a trance. At age 18, when

her brother-in-law died, she went to live with her husband; there she met a young man who was impressed by her quiet way of being. He called her Ma (*mother* in Bengali) and said that one day the entire world would address her with that name.

Her marriage remained celibate because Nirmala's body would grow stiff and faint when her husband approached the topic of sexuality. She would regain normal consciousness only after he repeated MANTRAS. He eventually accepted her as his GURU and took initiation from her.

Throughout her life, Nirmala exhibited bodily states of trance, physical stiffness, and fainting. She could hold difficult yogic positions (ASANAS)

for long periods and form complex hand positions (MUDRAS) and gestures. After examination by exorcists and physicians, she was diagnosed as having a kind of god intoxication, a divine madness. Her status as a holy woman was based entirely on her spontaneous ecstatic states, as she did not receive formal religious training or initiation from a guru. Instead, she heard voices that told her which spiritual practices to perform and which images to visualize. She would variously shed profuse tears, laugh for hours, talk at great speed, roll in the dust, dance for long periods, and fast for days.

At age 26 Nirmala began a stage of spiritual discipline (SADHANA) without a guru. She performed her own initiation (DIKSHA), spontaneously visualizing the ritual and initiatory sacred words, after which she entered three years of complete silence. In 1925, Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy named her Anandamayi Ma.

Although her parents worshipped KRISHNA, Anandamayi is not properly placed in a specific Hindu sect; rather, her influence was felt in many religious traditions of India. She traveled widely, staying at abandoned temples and other inhospitable sites, with little care for her physical body. She taught detachment from the world, religious devotion, and service to others. She was known for her SIDDHIS, or yogic powers, particularly telepathy, healing, and a variety of psychic states. Her chaotic states of consciousness, she believed, derived from spontaneous eruptions of the divine will that arise out of the state of nothingness or the void (*mahasunya*). She explained that her emotional states were the play of the Lord acting through her body, and that she as an individual person did not exist. She died on August 27, 1982. The Sri Sri Anandamayi Sangha of Varanasi coordinates many ASHRAMS built for her by her disciples throughout India.

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Anandamayi Ma (1896–1982), a renowned 20th-century mystic of Bengal and North India (Courtesy Anandamayi Ma Ashram, Haridwar)

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Ananda movement (est. 1968)

Ananda is a worldwide movement based on the teachings of Paramahansa YOGANANDA (1893–1952) and founded by Swami Kriyananda (b. 1926). The Ananda World Brotherhood includes the Ananda Church of Self-Realization, several Ananda communities around the world, educational institutions, and several publishing ventures.

When he was 22 years of age, Kriyananda became a disciple of Yogananda, and he lived with him until his death, receiving the vow of *SANNYAS* (renunciation) from him in 1948. Until 1961 Kriyananda served in a variety of capacities—as minister, director, lecturer, and vice president—at the SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP (SRF) at Mount Washington, California, the primary organization founded by Yogananda. As a monk in Yogananda's order, he initiated students into *KRIYA YOGA*, traveled, and taught.

Along the way, Kriyananda received what he perceived as a summons from God, calling him to serve in another way. His intentions were perceived as divisive by officials of SRF and he was asked to resign from the organization in 1962. He left SRF to expand upon the meaning of Yogananda's teachings of *kriya yoga*. He initially offered himself as teacher and leader to lay people and students who wished to know his viewpoints. In 1968, observing Yogananda's vision of a world brotherhood community, he constructed a retreat center and house in Nevada City, California, on 750 acres of woodland and natural forest in the Sierra foothills. At present Ananda Village has almost 300 members, making it one of the largest religious communities in the United States. The village and adjoining areas support about 600 people drawn from some 25 nationalities. All

residents of the village are also members of the local congregation of the Ananda Church of Self-Realization.

Kriyananda saw himself as responding to Yogananda's plea to “cover the Earth with world-brotherhood colonies, demonstrating that simplicity of living plus high thinking lead to the greatest happiness.” Kriyananda took this mission seriously and laid out the rationale for Ananda in his booklet *Cooperative Communities: How to Start Them and Why* (1968).

Members of Ananda Village work in a number of capacities. Some own their own businesses; others work for Ananda. Residents operate the Ananda Education-For-Life, a school for children through the junior high school level. Youth then attend Nevada City High School to complete their education. A governing village council is elected every year. The Expanding Light, a guest facility, offers retreats, a variety of special events, workshops, and seminars. Residents engage in *kriya yoga* as taught by Yogananda. They also sponsor a worldwide outreach program for those interested in becoming practitioners. The village includes a farm, a natural food store, and a vegetarian restaurant.

Founded in 1990, Ananda Church of Self-Realization, similar in many ways to SRF, has 2,000 members who worship in the congregational way, quite different from temple worship, where individuals go alone to commune with God. The goal of the Ananda Church is to provide fellowship and teaching to inspire others to find spiritual nourishment in serving humanity. The purpose is to engage in the practice introduced to the West by Yogananda. The church has over 150 trained and ordained ministers who serve at home or in missions abroad. There are five branches: in Sacramento and Palo Alto, California; Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; and Assisi, Italy. Ananda's Crystal Clarity Publishers issues books on yoga, including Kriyananda's own writings, and the periodical *Clarity Newsletter*. East-West Bookstore in Palo Alto is a thriving business begun by members of the Ananda Community.

In the 1990s, Ananda went through a significant court struggle with SRF concerning copyrights and trademarks related to Yogananda's writings and images and the name of the Ananda Church of Self-Realization. The church prevailed in most of the issues and is now free to use pictures of Yogananda and reproduce his early writings. On the other hand, the movement suffered from a lawsuit brought by a former member claiming sexual abuse at the hands of an Ananda minister. A court judgment in 2001 against the minister and the church sent the Nevada City community into bankruptcy, from which it is only slowly recovering.

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Anandamurti, Sri (1921–1990) founder *Ananda Marga Yoga Society*

Sri Sri Anandamurti, the founder of the ANANDA MARGA YOGA SOCIETY, was born Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. His father died while Prabhat was still a youth, putting an end to his formal education. As his father had, he took a job with the railroad. However, he gradually developed a discipline of YOGA and MEDITATION, and in 1955 he announced to his acquaintances that he had achieved enlightenment. He resigned from his job and founded the ANANDA MARGA (Path of Bliss) YOGA SOCIETY. It was at this time that he assumed his religious name, Anandamurti. In

1962, he initiated the first monks and four years later the first nuns.

The new organization taught a form of tan- tric yoga but also became socially active. As it expanded, it founded and supported several hun- dred elementary schools and homes for children. The social activism was underlain by Anandamur- ti's developing theories about the reorganization of society. He had begun to feel that both capital- ism and communism, the two main economic and political options being debated in India, were lacking the elements necessary to build the good society. In 1958 he formally introduced his new plan, which he termed Progressive Universal The- ory (PROUT), and founded Renaissance Universal as an organization to propagate his perspective.

PROUT was introduced in the context of wide- spread criticism of government corruption. As Ananda Marga grew, it became involved in a num- ber of violent clashes and was charged with illegal political activities and terrorism. In 1967, five members of the group were murdered. The new government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (r. 1966–77) restricted the organization by issuing a ban on government employees joining it. In 1971, Anandamurti was arrested on what some say were fabricated charges that he had ordered the murder of some former adherents. In 1975, under severe political pressure Gandhi declared emergency rule. Ananda Marga was one of a number of orga- nizations that were banned. The organization was suppressed, its assets seized, and a number of its leaders arrested. Gandhi was voted out of office in 1977 and Anandamurti and his followers were released when emergency rule ended.

After the drama of the Gandhi era, Ananda Marga was reorganized in India and resumed its program of propagating the spiritual and social teachings of its founder. Controversy has sur- rounded Anandamurti and his movement since its inception. In this period Anandamurti developed his concept of Neo-Humanism, in reaction to the neglect of the spiritual dimension of human life that he saw in communism and capitalism. He

suggested that human beings were an expression of the Supreme Consciousness. If this concept were accepted, he believed, humanity would enter a state of love toward all sentient beings. He died in 1990.

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Ananda Yogi, Gururaj See [AMERICAN MEDITATION SOCIETY](#).

Ananta See [ADISHESHA](#).

Anasuya Foundation (est. 1975)

The Anasuya Foundation (also known as the Tripura Yoga Foundation) was created in 1975. It was a response to a revelation of Lord Dattatreya that Swami Punitachariji received while meditating on Mount Girnar in Gujarat state. Lord Dattatreya appeared as the Vedic trinity—the union of BRAHMA, VISHNU, and SHIVA. His classic form of three heads and six arms appeared as the supreme being who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient.

Lord Dattatreya represents the divine spark contained in true wisdom. He is a transmitter of the secrets that when known empower others to understand the universal energies and know the meaning of life. In the vision, Swami Punitachariji (also known as *Bapu*, a fond name for a grandfather figure) saw Lord Dattatreya seated on a large

rock. Legendary saints and holy people were worshipping him with flowers. Bapu recognized Lord Dattatreya from traditional statuary and paintings and knew that the Lord's all-knowingness and spiritual prowess could transform ordinary existence into divine life.

Lord Dattatreya gave Bapu a mantric chant: “*Hari Om Tatsat Jai Guru Datta*, a mantra recited for the effects of its sound, rather than its meaning.” From his own training in the Hindu tradition, Bapu believed that the world and everything in it were created through sound. He believed that repeated mantras of power make the invisible creative planes of existence reverberate to enrich and enhance the physical plane of the Earth. Bapu believed that repetition of the mantra of Lord Dattatreya sends forth the Lord's spiritual essence to those who seek his divine wisdom. Through the union of sound, between the visible and invisible worlds, one's spiritual teacher need not be on the physical plane sharing an earthly life. Chanting in this way allows spiritual interaction between GURU and *chela* (student) without time constraints. Bapu believed that Lord Dattatreya had specifically given him this insight to promote the elevated consciousness of humankind and to enhance the spirituality of the people on the planet.

The religious beliefs of Bapu were exported to North America in the late 1970s, when Shantibaba, an early devotee of Bapu, who wished to share with students in other countries the mystical teachings about sacred sound, immigrated to the United States. Not long afterward, teaching centers were also founded in the United Kingdom and Germany. Today there are centers located in California, New York, Colorado, and New Jersey. International headquarters are at Girnar Sadhana Ashram in Gujarat state, India. The American headquarters is the Tripura Yoga Foundation in Snowmass, Colorado.

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ancestor worship

Worship of the ancestors (*pitrīs*) is a tradition in India dating to Vedic times (c. 1500 B.C.E.) Traditionally, a man is expected to offer libations of oil and water to his deceased father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. The anniversary of the deaths of one's mother and father must also be celebrated with formalities, including the offering of balls of rice to the ancestors. (Ancestors are presumed to be in heaven but must be fed by their progeny.) Funeral rituals always include a worship of ancestors with offerings of rice balls. Among five sacrificial rites that are enjoined daily for BRAHMINs, worshippers must "sacrifice to the ancestors" by ritually pouring out a glass of water to them.

There is an inherent paradox in this practice. The very ancient Vedic rites assume that the departed have gone to a heavenly realm. However, such notions have long been superseded by the orthodox Hindu understanding that most departed souls will be reincarnated in a new form in this realm.

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Andal (c. ninth century C.E.)

Andal was the only woman among the ALVARS, the 12 Tamil Vaishnavite saints.

There are no reliable historical data on Andal, only two hagiographies. Tradition says she was born in Srivilliputtur in the southern state of

Tamil Nadu. Her father, Vishnucitta, who was also a saint under the name Periyalvar, is said to have found her as an infant girl while he was hoeing his sacred basil (basil or TULSI is sacred to VISHNU). The infant was recognized as an incarnation of Bhudevi, the goddess of the Earth, who is consort and wife of VISHNU and a form of sri.

Andal's father raised her as though she were Sri herself. As a young girl, when her father was absent, she would dress up as a bride and put on the garland her father had set aside to be offered to the Lord Vishnu. Any handling of PUJA flowers ordinarily makes them unfit for offering, and when her father discovered her doing this, he was very upset. He put the flowers aside and did his puja without the garland. That night Vishnu appeared to Periyalvar in a dream, saying that Andal's wearing of the garland had increased its desirability to him.

After this time Andal became even more focused on worship of Vishnu. She refused ordinary marriage, wishing only to be a bride of Vishnu. She composed Tiruppavai and Nacciya Tirmoli, two poetic works in devotion to Vishnu. Not knowing which form of Vishnu his daughter was obsessed with, Periyalvar sang songs to each of the 108 manifestations of the Lord in various places. Andal responded to the song to the Lord of SRIRANGAM, the most prominent South Indian Vaishnavite (see VAISHNAVISM) shrine. Once again, in a dream, Vishnu appeared to Periyalvar and said that he would accept Andal as his bride. It is said that Vishnu himself arranged for Andal to be taken from Srivilliputtur to Srirangam with a fabulous marriage party. When she arrived at the shrine she approached the reclining image of Vishnu there and disappeared into his image, never to be seen again.

Both of Andal's short poems, which are included in the Tamil Vaishnavite sacred text Nalayira Divya Prabandhan, use Tamil motifs to praise Vishnu. Her Nacciya Tirumoli focuses particularly on Vishnu's forms as Krishna and Venkatanatha (see TURUPATI). The sixth hymn of *Nacciya Tirumoli*, which reenacts all the mar-

riage rites, is recited at all Vaishnavite weddings in South India.

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Andhaka

Andhaka (Blind One) is the blind demon born to SHIVA and PARVATI in the following way: Parvati was joking with Shiva and covered up his three eyes with her hands. As she did this, the entire cosmos fell into darkness. Parvati's hands began to sweat as they covered Shiva's potent third eye. From the sweat of her hands, heated up by the third eye of Shiva, arose Andhaka, an angry black blind demon.

Andhaka is thus considered the son of Parvati, but when the childless demon king HIRANYAKSHA, after performing strict austerities, requested a son as a boon from Shiva, he gave him Andhaka. After a short time, Hiranyaksha died and Andhaka became the king of the demons. After horrific austerities, in which he offered every ounce of his own flesh to a sacrificial fire, Andhaka was given a boon. His request was very strange: If he were ever to desire the most desirable woman of all, he asked to be destroyed. The "most desirable woman of all," however, could only have been his own mother, Parvati. Eventually, he did in fact manifest this desire, and he was impaled by Shiva on his trident. Existing half-dead there, Andhaka became purified and a complete devotee of Shiva and Parvati and ceased being a demon.

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Anekantavada

One of the underlying philosophical ideas in JAINISM is Anekantavada, "the assertion that everything is many-sided." This historical Jain concept, which for centuries remained largely at the level of theory rather than practice, has received more focused attention from many modern Jains, especially those in the diaspora. One must take a position of Anekantavada when one realizes that no ordinary human can have a full view of anything—as only the Omniscient SIDDHA or TIRTHANKARA can. It logically follows that all views are partial and subject to many-sided analysis.

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Anga (c. 400 B.C.E. to 500 C.E.)

The Angas are the 12 main texts that are seen as fundamental by all Jains (see JAINISM). SHVET-AMBARA Jains believe that 11 of these are still extant; DIGAMBARAS believe that none of the original texts any longer exist and that the existing versions are not authoritative. The Angas cover ecclesiastical law, doctrine, determination of false views, and narratives for the laity. The texts were all originally written in Jain Prakrit; however, Jains most commonly refer to them by their SANSKRIT names.

See also [ACHARANGA SUTRA](#).

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Anirvan, Sri (1896–1978) *Baul and Samkhya author and guru*

Sri Anirvan was an important scholar and writer of commentaries on traditional Hindu sacred texts, a practicing BAUL, and a spiritual seeker who espoused the SAMKHYA philosophy of Hinduism.

The future guru was born Narendra Chandra Dhar on July 8, 1896, in Mymensingh, East Bengal (now Bangladesh). His parents, Raj Chandra Dhar and Sushila Devi, were cultured, pious middle-class Hindus of the Kayastha caste. Poor but deeply committed to spiritual values, they provided Narendra with an environment of love and harmony. He learned PANINI'S SANSKRIT grammar at an early age and daily recited chapters from the BHAGAVAD GITA. At the age of seven, he had a vision of an exquisitely beautiful young girl, whose image became for him a symbol of a mystery to be addressed. This image was a benign influence that deeply influenced his SADHANA (spiritual path) and became a presiding deity of his life. Later he recognized in this vision the Divine Mother, born of perfect wisdom, the Uma Haimavati of the *Kenopanishad*.

At age nine, in a state of SAMADHI (blissful consciousness), he experienced the boundless Void and saw the sky (AKASHA) with its myriad stars enter into him. The *akasha* became his symbol of freedom and detachment; his meditation on it became part of his teaching. At age 16, upon completion of his secondary education, he left Mymensingh to live in Assam with his family's guru, Swami

Nigamananda, who was building a new ashram near Jorhat. Narendra worked on the building site until he was awarded a state scholarship to study Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. He specialized in study of the VEDAS and stood first in the University of Calcutta (Kolkata) Sanskrit examinations at both the bachelor's and the master's levels.

At age 22, having completed his studies, Narendra returned to the ashram, where his guru initiated him into *sannyas* (renunciation) and gave him the name Nirvanananda. In 1920, at age 34, he left the ashram after serving as teacher and administrator. He changed his name to Anirvan to signify that he was no longer bound by the vows of *sannyas*. He spent the next 12 years traveling widely in the Himalayas in quiet retreat and MEDITATION.

In 1944 he began living in a house near Almora, Uttar Pradesh, where he began to translate Sri AUROBINDO'S *The Life Divine* from English to Bengali and began to write his own commentaries on the Vedas. Here he met a Swiss woman, Lizelle Reymond, who became his pupil and biographer. Her work became his line of transmission to the West, and they remained in intimate contact for the rest of his life.

Living in Almora, Shillong, and finally Calcutta, Anirvan continued to write and to give lectures on the UPANISHADS to small groups of disciples. Bedridden after a fall in 1971, he remained in the care of two disciples in Calcutta. He continued to be a quiet seeker with a spiritual journey based on the teachings of PATANJALI and the SAMKHYA philosophy of Hinduism. He identified himself as a BAUL, although he did not belong to a formal organization of Bauls. He especially liked the freedom of spiritual expression taught by the Bauls and some of his writing is collected as "Letters from a Baul."

His statement of his mission was clear: "My ambition is not very great. It is to live a life rich in impressions, luminous to the end; to leave behind a few books embodying my life-long search for Truth, and a few souls who have caught fire. My

aim? Simply to inspire people and give them the most complete freedom to live their own life. No glamour, no fame, no institution—nothing. To live simply and die luminously.” Anirvan wrote some 20 books, most of them commentaries on the scriptures and philosophical systems of India. All but two English volumes were published in Bengali. Anirvan died on Fern Road in Calcutta on May 31, 1978.

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Annapurna

Literally “She who is abundant [*purna*] with food [*anna*],” the goddess Annapurna is considered a form of DURGA or sometimes of PARVATI, both being wives of SHIVA. In her iconography she is light colored and stands on a lotus or sits on a throne. She has only two hands; in one she holds a bowl of rice and in the other a spoon that is used to stir rice while cooking it. Sometimes Shiva, as a mendicant, is receiving alms from her. For many Hindus she is a protecting deity; those who worship her are said never to want for food.

The most elaborate festival to Annapurna takes place in BENARES (Varanasi) in the fall, when she is celebrated as the sustainer of life. She is also celebrated there in the springtime during the *annakuta* or “food-pile” festival, in which a pile of food fills her temple in worship to her. In the spring, she is worshipped in association with the new sprouts of rice in the fields; at that time her temple is decorated with rice sprouts.

In the Linga Purana there is a story about Annapurna that purports to tell how Shiva took the form of ARDHANARISHVARA, or “half-man, half-woman.” Once when Shiva was unable to do his

usual begging to support his family as a result of marijuana intoxication, there was nothing in the house to eat. Shiva thereupon went out to beg, while Durga, his wife, in anger, started out for her father’s house. On the way she and her children ran into the famous sage NARADA. Narada told her that in her aspect as Annapurna she should make it impossible for Shiva to get food by begging. She did this and went home, still in her aspect as Annapurna. When Shiva returned home she offered him food. He was so pleased that he merged his being with her, creating Ardhanarishvara.

The name of this goddess is given to one of the highest peaks in the HIMALAYAS.

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Anoopam Mission (est. 1965)

The Anoopam Mission was founded in 1965 as an independent branch of the SWAMINARAYAN MOVEMENT. It is dedicated to the worldwide spread of the theistic devotional Hinduism (BHAKTI YOGA) and strict moral code of Sri Sahajanand Swami, better known to his followers as Swaminarayan (1781–1830).

Swaminarayan believed that God was not the impersonal deity portrayed in the writings and oral tradition of VEDANTA. Saints and RISHIS (wise souls) were teachers who had traveled to Earth to help a suffering humanity find the way to God; the swami considered himself to be an incarnation of an earlier guru, Lord Swami Narayan, who was believed by his followers to be God.

In the mid-20th century, His Supreme Holiness Brahmaswarup Param Pujya Yogiji Maharaj (d.

1971) sent what he called the Anoopam Mission to the United States. Its success was due to the dedication of a young man named Jashbhai, born on March 23, 1940 in Sokhada, Gujarat, who had as a young college student crossed paths with Yogiji Maharaj. Yogiji was so impressed with the young man that he called him *Saheb*, a term of great respect. Saheb organized meetings and recruited his peers onto the path of bhakti, especially as expressed through the lineage of Yogiji Maharaj. He encouraged the young men to live a life based on spirituality, service to others, and positive assistance in their community.

Those attracted to his teachings developed a new way to live as SADHUS. They did not renounce the world but accepted it. They did not take vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty; instead they had families and participated in life on an everyday level but focused on a mission of service to others. Their aim was to integrate the life of holy people with that of lay people.

Saheb was expelled from the larger movement in 1965, after a dispute with conservatives who did not want women to become sadhus. He and his followers established the Brahmajyoti (light of God), in Mogri, Gujarat, which became the new movement's international headquarters. Groups developed in the surrounding countryside and areas adjacent to the mother organization, with similar institutions set up for community service. Followers began to migrate to the United States in the 1960s, and Saheb traveled to visit them in 1973.

The Anoopam Mission in the United States encourages members to live frugally in a community atmosphere. The excess income they make in their careers is saved to enhance and carry forth the obligations of the mission. Over 100 American members (called *sadhaks*) engage as a group to work with devotees toward spiritual goals.

Sadhaks are distinguished by attire that reveals their commitment. Blue shirts and cream colored slacks are worn by the men. Cream is the symbol of the Earth; blue is symbolic of the sky and the greatest of spiritual attainments, which is to unite

with God into the bliss of Oneness. These colors reflect the transformation of each person's mission from Earth-bound to spiritual-bound.

Members also wear a saffron and white badge showing an eight-spoked wheel. The hub of the wheel represents Saheb, while the spokes are the internal purification rituals required in the movement. The spokes also represent eight brothers who were blessed by Yogiji Maharaj as the leaders of the mission.

Saheb has continued to extend the mission to 25 countries throughout the world. After beginning in India, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, the mission now has centers in several countries in Europe, Africa, and the Far East. The mission now sponsors educational institutions, health-care organizations, social welfare programs, and relief programs for assistance in floods, earthquakes, and water conservation. The international headquarters remains in Mogri, Gujarat, India.

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anumana

In Indian philosophies *anumana* or inference is almost universally recognized as one of the valid means for gaining knowledge. Buddhism and VAISHESHKA accepted only two valid means—*anumana* and direct perception (*PRATYAKSHA*). The SAMKHYA school recognized direct perception, inference, and verbal testimony (*shabda*). NYAYA added a fourth: analogy (*upamana*). In JAINISM, *anumana* is admitted as valid under the wider category of “non perceptual” knowledge, which includes other elements such as memory. Only the CHARVAKAS or materialist philosophers denied the validity of *anumana*, thinking truth could be gained only by direct perception.

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Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963).

ap (also *jala*) See [ELEMENTS](#), [FIVE](#).

Apabhramsha

Sanskrit linguists use the term Apabramsha, “that which is badly fallen,” to refer to the languages spoken in North India between approximately 600 and 1200 C.E. These languages developed from certain of the earlier Prakrits (themselves evolutes of SANSKRIT), and evolved to become the various modern languages of North India. There are important extant Apabramsha texts, particularly among the Jains. Examples of Jain text are the Paumacariu of Svayambhu and the Mahapurana of Pushpadanta. Some later Buddhist sages also composed in this language; some of their texts are still extant.

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apana See [PRANA](#).

Appar (Tirunavakkarasu) (c. 570–670 C.E.) Tamil Shaivite poet and saint

APPAR was one of the three most prominent Tamil Shaivite saints (see [SHAIVISM](#), [NAYANARS](#)), whose hymns appear in the central liturgical and literary text of the the Tamil Shaivites, the *TEVARAM*.

Appar was born under the name Marunaikkiyar to a Vellala (agricultural class) family in Tiruvamur. His family were Shaivite but he converted to JAINISM as a youth, taking on the name Dharmasena. Afflicted by a painful abdominal disease, the young

Jain monk turned to his sister, a Shaivite, for help. At her request he put his faith in Shiva, and was miraculously cured. He immediately converted back to the faith of his birth. He began to sing passionate hymns to Lord Shiva, which angered his former Jain associates. It was said that he was persecuted and even tortured by the angry Jains but by the grace of Shiva was unharmed.

Appar is said to have led the Pallava king, who had also converted to Jainism, back to Shiva. He was recognized as a saint and spent his time traveling from one shrine to the next singing hymns at each sacred location. Iconographically, Appar is often showing holding a hoe, for he was known for clearing the temple grounds of weeds and grass in service to Lord Shiva. His beautiful lyrics and speech earned him the name Tirunavakkarasu, “He who is the king of eloquence.” It is said that he was first called Appar (my father) by his younger contemporary SAMBANTHAR, who addressed him thus.

Further reading: *Appar: A Sketch of His Life and Teachings* (Madras: G. A. Natesa, n.d.); Ratna Ma Navaratnam, *The Vision of Periyapuram* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1987); Indira Viswanathan Peterson, *Poems to Siva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, trans., *Periyapuram (the Lives of the Saiva Saints)* (Madras: Rajan, 1955); T. N. Ramachandran, trans., *St. Sekkizhar's Periya Puranam* (Thanjavur: Tamil University, 1990); Dorai Rangaswamy, *The Religion and Philosophy of Tevaram* (Madras: University of Madras, 1958–59); G. G. Vanmikanathan, *Appar* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1983); ———, *Periyapuram, a Tamil Classic on the Great Saiva Saints of South India by Sekkizhar* (Madras: Shri Ramakrishna Math, 1985); R. Vijayalakshmy, *An Introduction to Religion and Philosophy—Tevaram and Tivviyappirapantam* (Chennai: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 2001).

apsaras

The *apsaras* are celestial nymphs. These beautiful young women appear first in the Vedic literature

and play a role in the *puranas*. Late tradition says that *apsaras* either were born from BRAHMA'S fancy or are the daughters of the RISHI DAKSHA or of Kashyapa. The Vedic *apsaras* born from the daughters of Daksha are Menaka, Sahajanya, Parnini, Punjakasthala, Gritasthala, Ghritachi, Vishvachi, Urvashi, Anulocha, Pramlocha, and Manovati. Other well known *apsaras* of later times are Tilottama, Rambha, and Mishrakeshi.

The most famous *apsaras* is perhaps Urvashi, whom King Pururavas fell in love with and begged to stay with him. She agreed upon several conditions, one of which was that she never see him undressed. As fate would have it, one night she saw him without his clothes and was forced to return to her celestial home. Pururavas was heartbroken and searched everywhere for her. One day he was able to reach her abode and persuaded her to promise that she would meet him yearly and have his son. After he had gone to see her several times she told him how he might obtain her as his bride permanently. Through a ritual sacrifice he was able to become a celestial (GANDHARVA singer) and gain her as his bride forever.

Tilottama is also well known, as the *apsaras* who tempted Lord BRAHMA when he was doing austerities. She appeared before him in turn on all sides and caused him to form heads in all directions. Eventually he was humiliated, because he had been doing austerities to gain the throne of INDRA. *Apsarases* are often depicted in temple architecture.

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Aranyaka

The Aranyakas or "forest books," originally part of the BRAHMANA sections within the VEDAS, contain

esoteric interpretations of the Vedic rituals. They show the ritual actors performing aspects of the ritual internally and esoterically while meditating in the forest. In the development of Indian tradition, the Aranyakas are in one sense transitional between the typical Brahmana philosophy, which explains the Vedic acts in practical terms, and the UPANISHADS, which delve into the higher philosophical vision of the Vedas.

Only four Aranyakas have been preserved: the *Brhad Aranyaka* in the SHATAPATHA BRAHMANA of the White YAJUR VEDA, the Taittiriya Aranyaka of the Taittiriya Brahmana of the Black Yajur Veda, the Aitareya Aranyaka in the Aitareya Brahmana of the RIG VEDA, and the Kaushitiki Aranyaka in the Kaushitiki Brahmana, also in the Rig Veda.

Further reading: Julius Eggeling, trans., *The Satapatha Brahmana, According to the Text of the Madhyamdina School* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972); Jan Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, Jan Gonda, ed., in *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. 1, fascicle 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975); Arthur B. Keith, *Aitareya Aranyaka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

arati See PUJA.

Ardhamagadhi

Ardhamagadhi is one of the Prakrit languages that immediately descended from ancient SANSKRIT. The canonical works of the Jains (see JAINISM) were written in this language; the Jains only later began to write in Sanskrit. Stray records of Ardhamagadhi survive in the dialogue sections of Sanskrit high literature, and some Ardhamagadhi poetry is still extant.

Further reading: Siegfried Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit*. Vol. 3, Fascicle 1, *History of Indian Literature*, edited by Jan Gonda (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984); Moriz Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967).

Ardhanarishvara

Ardhanarishvara, “The Lord Who is Half Woman,” is a form of SHIVA whose left half is the GODDESS PARVATI or SHAKTI, with breast and sari drape. The iconic image is a popular one at temples and shrines to Shiva everywhere in India. Images were present very early in the development of stone architecture and are found at various rock cut temples such as at MAHABALIPURAM.

It is said that BRAHMA, the creator god, tried many times to create beings who would procreate properly. Usually the beings he created, god or human, would take up asceticism and not reproduce. Finally, he asked Lord Shiva to separate out his female goddess aspect, so that procreation could take place. Shiva did so; this feminine aspect stood before Brahma and at his request gave him the feminine energy that allowed him to become the creator of the human line.

Through this story all human beings are seen to be descended from Brahma via his feminine, procreative energy. The Ardhanarishvara depiction of Shiva as half goddess is a reminder of this story.

A different explanation for the Ardhanarishvara is found in another story, in which the sage Bhringi respectfully circumambulated Shiva every day but ignored Parvati, unlike all the other *rishis*, who customarily circumambulated them both. To induce him to honor Parvati, Shiva and Parvati joined together as one, but the stubborn sage became a bee and bored between them so as only to go around Shiva (explaining the name *bhringa*, which means bee). Still other explanations exist (see ANNAPURNA).

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arhat

In the Jain tradition (see JAINISM), an *arhat* (one worthy of worship) is an omniscient being who teaches in the world. As Jains do not believe in living liberated beings (*jivanmukta*), the *arhat* while living is not released from the cycle of birth and rebirth, but will be upon his/her death. A person becomes an *arhat* when he or she has destroyed nearly all KARMAS except those that hold him or her in bodily existence. Technically, one becomes an *arhat* at the 12th *gunasthana* (progression level) out of the 14 that take one to posthumous NIRVANA. All the TIRTHANKARAS in the Jain pantheon are referred to in their texts as *arhats*.

The term *arhat* is also used in the Buddhist context, where it refers to someone who has attained nirvana—who has attained enlightenment and will be released from the cycle of birth and rebirth upon death. In the Buddhist tradition also one can be referred to as an *arhat* before one is dead.

Further reading: M. A. Dhaky, ed., *Arhat Parsva and Dharanendra Nexus* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997); P. S. Jaini, *Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); K. C. Lalwani, *Kalpa Sutra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979); Kristi Wiley, *Historical Dictionary of Jainism* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

Arjuna

Arjuna was one of the five PANDAVAS in the MAHABHARATA epic, all of them sons of Kunti by different gods. Arjuna’s father was the king of the gods, Indra, hence his prominent role in the epic.

It is Arjuna who won the Pandavas’ wife Draupadi at her “self-choice” ceremony, where the contestants competed in various challenges of strength and skill. The rule was that each of the five brothers would stay at night with Draupadi alone. No other brother was to enter their chamber

on penalty of exile. Arjuna broke this agreement and was sent away from the other brothers for 12 years.

During his exile Arjuna had relationships with many women. He married Krishna's sister Subhadra, to whom was born their son Abhimanyu, who played an important role in the Mahabharata war. Arjuna at this time also met up with Parashurama, the BRAHMIN warrior and incarnation of VISHNU; he taught Arjuna the use of magical weapons. For helping the god AGNI and KRISHNA burn down the Khandava forest, Arjuna received his bow Gandiva, his most cherished weapon.

Returning home Arjuna was forced into solitary exile again for 13 years when his brother Yudhishthira lost everything to the Kauravas in a dice game. In his wanderings he met a hunter—Shiva in disguise—from whom he received the devastating Pashupata weapon. In the last year of his exile he served Virata, king of the Matsya people, disguised as a eunuch. There he taught music and dance to the women. He also helped Virata fight his enemies.

In the final battle of Kurukshetra, the conclusive battle of the Mahabharata, Krishna served as Arjuna's charioteer. The BHAGAVAD GITA details Arjuna's momentary failure of will as the battle is about to begin and Krishna's teachings to him. After the victory, when the customary *ashva medha* (HORSE SACRIFICE) was done, Arjuna followed the sacrificial horse on its wide wanderings, fighting many kings and claiming many countries for the Pandavas. During these wanderings he encountered his own son Babhruvahana, whom he fought and killed. The son was revived, however, by a Naga princess (see NAGAS) who had once been his lover.

After the war, in which most of Krishna's Yadava tribe were killed, Arjuna himself performed the funeral rites for Krishna, who had accidentally been killed by a hunter, and for Krishna's father, Vasudeva. Arjuna took the remnants of the Yadava tribe and their women back to Hastinapura, the Pandava capital.

In his old age Arjuna went to live in the Himalayas with his brothers and Draupadi, leaving the kingdom to his grandson, Parikshit (Abhimanyu's son).

Further reading: J. A. B. van Buitenen, trans., *The Mahabharata*. Vol. 1, *The Book of the Beginnings*, Vol. 2., *The Book of the Assembly Hall*, vol. 3., *The Book of Virata and the Book of Effort* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973–78); Ruth C. Katz, *Arjuna in the Mahabharata: Where Krishna Is, There Is Victory* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); P. C. Roy, trans., *The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa*, 12 vols. (Calcutta: Oriental, 1952–62).

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (est. 1986)

The Arsha (from the *RISHIS*) Vidya (knowledge) Gurukulam (spiritual learning center and residence) at Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, was founded in 1986 by SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI (1930–) in the tradition of the ancient gurukulams of India. The institute is dedicated to the traditional study of *advaita* VEDANTA, SANSKRIT, HATHA YOGA, AYURVEDA, Vedic chanting, MEDITATION, astrology, and other classical Indian disciplines. It offers courses in the UPANISHADS, BHAGAVAD GITA, VEDANTA SUTRA, and other classical Vedic texts in English. The more than 15 teachers have all studied with Dayananda Saraswati. The center offers short- and long-term study programs and on-site accommodations. The 54-acre campus includes a temple dedicated to Lord Dakshinamurti, considered the first teacher of Vedic knowledge.

The Gurukulam also sponsors the All India Movement (AIM) for Seva, established in New Delhi in 2000, as its service outreach. It hopes to unite Indian society through service and caring, in a way that promotes self-sufficiency and dignity among those served. It seeks to transform Indian society by bridging the gap between privileged and less-privileged people through a policy of Indians' caring for fellow Indians. AIM has 22

branches in different states of India and publishes many books on various topics in Vedanta, including a Bhagavad Gita Home Study course and a Vedic Heritage Teaching Program for children. The Arsha Vidya bookstore in Pennsylvania has over 3,000 publications on Vedanta, Hinduism, Sanskrit, yoga, astrology, Ayurveda, philosophy, and Indian history.

Further reading: Swami Dayananda Saraswati, *Arsha Vidya: The Vision of the Rishis* (Rishikesh: Sri Gangadhareeswar Trust, Swami Dayananda Ashram, 1999); ———, *Collection, Talks and Essays of Swami Dayananda Saraswati* (Rishikesh: Sri Gangadhareeswar Trust, Swami Dayananda Ashram, 2000).

artha See ENDS OF LIFE, FOUR.

Arthashastra (c. 300 C.E.)

The *Arthashastra*, the “*Authoritative Treatise on Worldly Affairs*,” is generally attributed to Kautilya (Chanakya) (c. 300 B.C.E.), the minister of the famous Chandragupta Maurya kingdom, although it was apparently expanded at a later time, as the received text includes references to later phenomena.

The *Arthashastra* resembles in many ways *The Prince*, written in the 16th century by the Italian Nicolò Machiavelli. It is a complete and elaborate treatise on statecraft and law, clearly designed for use by a king. It includes sections dealing with clans and tribes who do not belong to the state proper, the conduct of ministers, government officials, city government, taxation, law, punishments, spies, types of conquest, the army, slavery, divorce, women’s property, indigent women, prostitutes, gambling, alcoholic drinks, and interest rates, among other topics.

The book is part of the tradition of authoritative treatises (*shastras*; *artha* means “worldly affairs”) that relate to the four ENDS OF LIFE. It parallels the *DHARMASHASTRA* and the *Kamashastra*

(among which is the *KAMA SUTRA*). The fourth end of life—*MOKSHA*—is not generally associated with *shastras*; its subject, liberation from birth and rebirth, relies on gurus instead.

Further reading: Roger Boesche, *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2002); Subhash C. Kashyap, *Concept of Good Governance and Kautilya’s Arthashastra* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Social Science Research, 2003); L. N. Rangarajan, trans., *The Arthashastra by Kautilya* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1992); Sujata Reddy, *Laws of Kautilya Arthashastra* (New Delhi: Kanishka, 2004); Manabendu Banerjee Sastri, ed., *Occasional Essays on Arthashastra* (Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2000); Bijay Dhari Singh, *Bibliography of Kautilya Arthashastra* (Varanasi: Kishor Vidya Niketan, 2004).

Art of Living Foundation (est. 1982)

The Art of Living Foundation promotes the spiritual endeavors of Sri Sri Ravi SHANKAR (b. 1956) (not to be confused with the prominent musician of the same name). It focuses on the use of ancient Hindu methods for reaching serenity.

Shankar is a native of Bangalore, India. As a child he demonstrated great intellectual skills. He could read and discuss BHAGAVAD GITA by the age of four. In childhood he read Indian literature and was able to grasp complex text material and philosophy.

As an adult, Shankar traveled the world from his home in India, teaching the methods revealed in classical texts for developing a serene life, which he called the Art of Living. Shankar’s teachings emphasize ancient science, especially Sudharsha Kriya, a meditative breathing technique that balances natural rhythms in mental, emotional, and physical life. Sudharsha Kriya gained celebrity in 1998 and 1999 when scientific studies confirmed its benefits. The meditative practice is used for stress reduction, conflict resolution, and personal development.

The Art of Living Foundation was officially established in Bangalore, India, in 1982 as a non-profit educational and humanitarian organization. It now has more than 4,000 chapters around the world. Although the foundation claims no religious affiliation, it upholds basic spiritual tenets through its offering of compassionate service around the world, including charitable and educational programs in 142 countries. It is a consulting nongovernmental organization (NGO) registered with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Services include the 5-H program, a holistic endeavor that focuses on homes, health, hygiene, harmony in diversity, and human values. All programs follow the general philosophy of the foundation, emphasizing the practical and intellectual development of human values and the potential of individuals to strengthen society. The Art of Living Foundation has provided many workshops over the years at United Nations summits and conferences.

According to the foundation an estimated 2 million people around the world have benefited from Sudharsha Kriya through Art of Living courses. The foundation has also established the Research and Health Promotion Center, which provides scholarships for research into the health benefits of Sudharsha Kriya. The foundation publishes an online journal, *Prana*. A sister organization, the International Association for Human Values, coordinates volunteer efforts for aid and relief.

In 1995, the president of India recognized Shankar's spiritual accomplishments by giving him the title of Yogi Shiromani (Supreme Flowering of Enlightenment) during a major World Conference of Yoga.

The center in Bangalore, India, administers the various programs to spread the spiritual precepts of the movement, heighten knowledge of Vedic texts, and engage in community service. In England, the United States, and Canada, the work is pursued under the name *Art of Living*; in Europe

it is called the *Association for Inner Growth*. In January 2005 the Art of Living Foundation donated over \$34 million for tsunami relief. The foundation has also established orphanages for children and homes for women in the affected areas of India and Sri Lanka. Many of the services offered by the foundation are provided almost entirely by volunteers.

Further reading: François Gautier, *The Guru of Joy: Shri Shri Ravi Shankar and the Art of Living* (New Delhi: Books Today/The India Today Group, 2002); Ravi Shankar, *Bang on the Door: A Collection of Talks* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Art of Living Foundation, 1990); ———, *Celebrating Silence* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Art of Living Foundation, 2001); Ravi Shankar and Judith S. Clark, *Waves of Beauty* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Art of Living Foundation, 1998).

Arunachala See [RAMANA MAHARSHI](#).

Arundhati

Arundhati was the wife of the Rishi Vasishtha and one of the nine daughters of Prajapati by his wife Devahuti. Along with her husband, she is one of the mythical seven *rishis*, for whom the seven stars of the Great Bear or Pleiades are named. Vasishtha is the middle of the three stars that form the tail. Arundhati is the small faint star (Alcor) beside it. Arundhati is considered the paragon of wifely faithfulness. In the Hindu marriage rites, after the main ceremony and after the marriage meal, the priest takes the couple outside and points out the star Arundhati to the bride.

Further reading: Abbé J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. Translated from the French by Henry K. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959); Alfred Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, 2 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990); E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

Arya See ARYAN.

Aryaman

Aryaman (friend or companion) is a Vedic divinity listed among the ADITYAS. When invoked he is usually paired with some other divinity. He is chief of the “Fathers” or Manes, those who have passed from this world and exist in heaven. There are no MANTRAS in the Rig Veda that focus solely on Aryaman.

Further reading: Paul Thieme, *Mitra and Aryaman* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1957).

Aryan (Arya)

In the VEDAS, the earliest Indian texts, the SANSKRIT word *Arya* had the sense of noble or worthy person. It was used by the tribes or peoples who recited the Vedas to distinguish themselves from other peoples. Sometimes, in early Sanskrit the term was used to refer to the “respectable” upper three classes of the Indian tradition, to distinguish them from the disreputable classes such as the SHUDRAS and those below them, the untouchables. Most Brahmins still refer to themselves as Aryas, as do all Buddhists and Jains (see JAINISM).

The earliest text of the Vedic tradition, the RIG VEDA, which is set in ancient India, has been dated to around 1500 B.C.E. This rough estimate refers to the time the text was compiled as an anthology. Parts of the text may thus date back some centuries earlier, an indication that the Aryas were in India as early as c. 2000 B.C.E.

Vedic references to the Aryas are thus synchronous with the theoretical migration of Indo-European-speaking peoples into India from the northwest. Much scholarship and speculation have been focused on this issue since at least the 18th century, when it was discovered that Sanskrit was an Indo-European language related to Latin and Greek, while the languages of southern India seemed unrelated. The term *Arya* also appears in

ancient Persian texts (it is reflected in the name of the country Iran), and in Hittite inscriptions from the Middle East around 1500 B.C.E. The name *Ireland* may also reflect the word, which would be evidence for a simultaneous Aryan migration to Europe. Recent attempts have been made in India to refute the notion that the Aryans arrived from outside the country. It is prudent to say that the issue is not yet settled.

Within India itself there are various different understandings of the nature of the Aryans. The linguistic term *Dravidian*, referring to the tongues spoken in South India, was sometimes used in the 20th century to designate a people or race different and distinct from the Aryans of the north. The term *Aryan* was taken up in Europe in the 20th century by the Nazis to designate a person of a “superrace.”

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Arya Samaj (est. 1875)

The Arya Samaj, formerly known as Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, is a reformist Hindu sect founded in 1875 in Mumbai by Mul Shankara (1824–83). It aims to synthesize ancient orthodox ritual practice with modern anticaste and universalistic principles.

Shankara was born a Brahmin and was educated into orthodox Brahminism in Gujarat state. In 1948 he renounced ordinary life and took

vows of a *SANNYASI* in the Saraswati Dandi Order of Yogis. As Dayananda Saraswati, his name given at initiation, he wandered all of India for 12 years, finally taking residence in Mathura to study the *VEDAS* under the scholar Varajananda. Dayananda understood the Vedas to teach gender equality and rejection of caste, a message that clearly opposed the orthodoxy of the day. The movement grew among liberal, educated Indians and became strong in the state of Punjab, where it remains important.

The Arya Samaj seeks to restore the centrality of the Vedas to Hinduism and to reject much of Hinduism's *SANATANA DHARMA* (eternal way), including worship of images and *PUJA* (traditional rituals). The society teaches 10 basic principles: (1) The source of all that is true is God. (2) God is a single, eternal, fully conscious being. (3) All true knowledge is contained in the Vedas. (4) All people should be prepared to accept truth. (5) All acts should be performed with righteousness and duty. (6) The movement should promote physical, spiritual, and social progress for all humans. (7) All relations among humans should be guided by love and justice. (8) Knowledge and realization should be provided for all people. (9) The movement should work for the uplift of all, not only personal development. (10) All members should be devoted to the social good.

The Arya Samaj sponsors the Purohit Academy to train students in philosophy and in the repetition of Sanskrit *MANTRAS*. After training, practitioners are certified by the academy to perform traditional rituals and marriages.

With its message of social reform and the universalization of spiritual truth, the Arya Samaj has proselytized since its inception and has become an important element of the Indian *DIASPORA* around the world, including North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Oceania. Prominent countries in the Indian diaspora all have multiple worship centers, although membership numbers are difficult to estimate.

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asana

Asana is the term for a stance or posture in *HATHA YOGA*. It is from the root *as* (to sit). Some say that there were originally 8,400,000 asanas to represent the 8,400,000 births that each individual must pass through before he or she becomes liberated. There are said to be only a few hundred in practice today; 84 is the number most often presented to students.

An asana is a means to focus the mind so that it becomes steady, calm, and quiet. It is not intended as any sort of physical exercise per se, despite being commonly understood that way in the West. The various asanas are intended to open up different subtle energy channels in the body and the psychic centers (*CHAKRAS*) that run along the spine. It is understood that the total command of the body at both gross and subtle levels is a path to the total command of the mind. Total command of the mind can lead to the steady, calm, and quiet poise of being, where the highest reality of self and universe can be directly perceived. Breath control, or *pranayama*, is always a part of asana practice.

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Ashish, Sri Madhava (1920–1997) *Vaishnavite guru*

Sri Madhava Ashish was the successor to Sri Krishna PREM as head of the Uttar Brindavan Ashram at Mirtola village, near Almora in the foothills of the Himalayas in Uttaranchal state.

Alexander Phipps was born on February 23, 1920, to Protestant parents, Lt. Col. Henry Ramsey Phipps and Lorna Campbell Phipps. His father was an artillery officer and his great-grandfather, a Scottish laird. Alexander attended Sherborne Public School and the College of Aeronautical Engineering at Chelsea, London. He was described as an avid reader but “not successful at school.” In general, he was shy and reserved. Before completing a degree, he went to India to help in the World War II war effort as an aircraft engineer by repairing crashed planes at Dum Dum Airport, Kolkata.

While in India he met Sri Ramana MAHARSHI in Tiruvannamalai. Fired by his meeting with the South Indian saint, he decided not to return to England after the war ended. He joined the Uttar Brindavan Ashram (founded in 1929) at Mirtola village in the Kumaon region of the Himalayas as a BRAHMACHARYA under his guru, Sri Krishna Prem. In 1947, Krishna Prem gave him the vows of *sannyas* (renunciation) under the Gaudiya Sampradaya (see GAUDIYA MATH) and named him Madhava Ashish. The Gaudiya Sampradaya of VAISHNAVISM is associated with Sri Radha Raman Temple at BRINDABAN, the birthplace of Lord KRISHNA; it follows strict vegetarianism and devotion to the deity Krishna.

After taking up discipleship, Ashish followed a strict Vaishnavite regimen in food, dress, conduct, and sacramental worship. However, in 1957 he and his guru, Sri Krishna Prem, decided to simplify the rigid framework of full Vaishnavite orthodox discipline, so that it would speak directly to the seekers who increasingly visited Mirtola for spiritual guidance. They advocated a system of self-inquiry, which encouraged disciples to search for the mystery at the root of their own being and to find their essential nature apart from

the psychophysical ego personality. The attempt was to merge individual consciousness with the uniting source of all life, a higher center of awareness accessible to all.

Madhava Ashish oversaw a discipline that included MEDITATION; service in the temple; assiduous self-inquiry through introspection, dream analysis, self-remembering, and development of a witnessing awareness in all activities in order to harmonize the inner and outer life. In addition to practices of the Vaishnavite tradition, his teaching drew on the wisdom of others, including NISARGADATTA Maharaj and the Greek-Armenian teacher G. I. Gurdjieff.

In addition to guiding disciples at Uttar Brindavan Ashram, Madhava Ashish served as a member of the Committee for Hill Development (of the Himalaya region) for India’s premier planning body. He was awarded the Padma Shree by the government of India in 1993 for his contribution to scientific farming. He was also actively involved with environmental work, including sustainable farming, water harvesting, animal husbandry, environmental education, and efforts against deforestation.

After his death on April 13, 1997, leadership of Uttar Brindavan Ashram was taken up by his disciple Dev Ashish. The ashram does not have a Web site; its address is P.O. Mirtola, Via Panwaula, District Almora, Uttaranchal-263 623.

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ashram

The Sanskrit *ashrama* was a place for ascetics to perform austerities (practices of renouncing bodily and psychological comfort), usually at a distance from and in isolation from the larger world (*shram*, means to exert oneself strongly). In later times the word came to designate a place organized for spiritual practice, a refuge where devotees could pursue their paths. Most often the ashram would be under the tutelage and guidance of a particular guru or lineage of teachers. Isolation is no longer the determining factor of an ashram, though many are still deliberately sited away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

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ashramas

The *ashramas* were the four traditional stages of life that BRAHMIN males were expected to follow, according to the authoritative Hindu texts. People of other twice-born castes, such as Brahmins, warriors, or merchants, could optionally take on the *ashramas*. SHUDRAS and Dalits (Untouchables) were not included in this system.

The four traditional *ashramas* are BRAHMACHARIYA (studentship), grihastha (householder stage), VANAPRASTHA (entering the forest), and SANNYASI (mendicancy). Usually, one was permitted to leave household life after one had seen one’s grandchildren. During the *vanaprastha* stage of life, which ordained austerities in the forest or wildlands, one could optionally be accompanied by one’s wife, as long as chastity was maintained.

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Ashtanga Yoga

Ashtanga (eight-limbed) Yoga is the system devised by PATANJALI, author of the YOGA SUTRA. As the name implies, eight practices are involved, divided into two groups. The five outer practices are YAMA, niyama, ASANA, PRANAYAMA, and *pratyahara*; the three inward-oriented practices are *dharana*, *dhyana*, and SAMADHI.

Ashtanga Yoga involved a sitting yoga, sometimes called *raja yoga*, focused on the breath. As one watched the breath, one developed ways of concentrating and eventually controlling the mind. The ultimate goal, as in all yogas, was liberation from birth and rebirth, but in the practice of Patanjali, the specific effort was to free the self (PURUSHA) from its false attachment to the phenomenal world, or PRAKRITI.

ASANAS, or postures, play a central role in the systems of Ashtanga Yoga that are disseminated today, but in the Yoga Sutras themselves, “sitting,” or “asana” is simply one of the eight “limbs.” Many of the postures known today may have been later additions to the practice or may have developed through separate practices that later merged with the Patanjali school. There are strong resemblances between the practices found in Patanjali and those of the Buddhist Pali canon, although the practice postures were never an important component in Buddhism.

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ashva medha See [HORSE SACRIFICE](#).

Ashvins

The Ashvins (horsemen) are twin gods of the sky in the VEDAS, depicted as young and beautiful males. They seem to have been associated with the predawn light. The Ashvins do not play a great role in later epic and Puranic mythology (see [PURANAS](#)), though they are ubiquitous as minor characters. In the Vedas they are called the children of the Sun (SURYA) or of the sky. But they also are said to emerge from the tears of AGNI or from VISHNU. They are said to have a wife in common, the daughter of another Sun divinity (SAVITRI); they won her in a race contest.

Most commonly the Ashvins are known as the physicians of the gods; they are everywhere connected with healing. In the Vedas they make an iron leg for Vishpala, restore Kanva's eyesight, and restore the youth of Cyavana (after trying to seduce his wife). Through the latter feat they are said to have earned the Vedic SOMA libation, which is offered to them.

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asura See [DEMONIC BEINGS](#).

Atharva See [VEDAS](#).

atman

The atman is the self or soul. The word is derived either from the root *at* (to move) or the root *an* (to breathe). It is used both for the individual self or soul and for the transcendent "Self" or "All-soul," which is all reality. Often the individual self is referred to as the *jivatman*, "the life self," and the transcendent Self is referred to as the *paramatman*, or "Ultimate Self."

The Upanishads and Vedanta philosophy focus on realizing the unity between the individual self and the ultimate Self, by means of various practices. When one realizes (not just intellectually knows) the unity of individual self and Ultimate Self, one breaks the bonds of KARMA and escapes from further rebirth.

Some sort of meditation or contemplation is always necessary to realize the unity of Ultimate Self and individual self. Some Indian paths emphasize "knowledge," or transcendental realization; some paths emphasize devotion; some look to combine devotion and action, or knowledge, action, and devotion, to reach this final goal. Though *ADVAITA* (non-dual) Vedanta emphasizes a total identity between the individual atman and the large atman, other Indian traditions understand that there are an infinite number of totally distinct individual selves or atmans that never merge into each other at the highest level. VAISHNAVISM generally holds this view, as does SHAIVA SIDDHANTA.

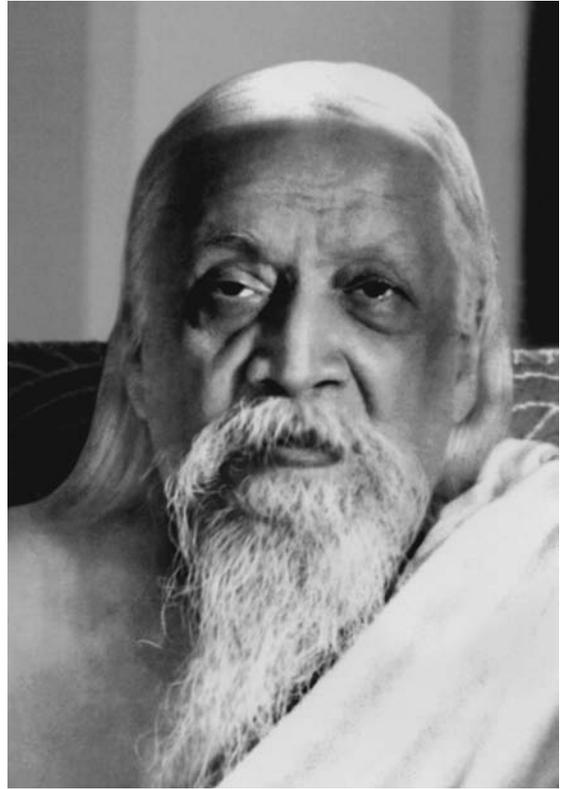
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aum See [OM](#).

Aurobindo, Sri (Aurobindo Ghose) (1872–1950) *philosopher sage of modern India and creator of Integral Yoga*

Aurobindo Ghose, later named Sri Aurobindo, was one of the great sages of modern India. After an influential political career in the cause of Indian independence, he turned to the spiritual and developed the very influential Integral Yoga path, which combined practices from many different historic Indian yogas.

Ghose was born on August 15, 1872, in the Indian state of Bengal to a surgeon, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, and his wife, Swarnalata Devi. His father aimed to turn his fourth child into an Anglicized gentleman, giving him the name Aurobindo Ackroyd (he later dropped his middle name) and sending him at the age of seven to a convent school in Darjeeling. Shortly thereafter he was packed off to Manchester, England, where he was educated at home for five years and isolated from “Indian” influences. In 1889 he entered Cambridge, where he distinguished himself in Latin, Greek, and French. In 1893 he returned to India and joined Baroda Col-



Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), founder of Integral Yoga
(Courtesy Aurobindo Archives, Pondicherry)

lege, where he taught English and French and eventually became vice principal. In 1901 he married 14-year-old Mrinalini Bose, not long after beginning his political activity in support of Indian independence. Because of his absences from home and spiritual pursuits, this marriage, though affectionate, produced no children. Mrinalini died at the age of 32, just before her planned move to the Pondicherry ASHRAM Aurobindo had established.

In 1903 in Kashmir an important spiritual event took place in Aurobindo’s life. Through the aid of a teacher, Bhaskar Lele, he realized the non-dual nature of the “characterless” divine

(*Nirguna Brahman*). Moving to Bengal in 1906 he plunged into revolutionary political activity, helping to found the journal *Bande Mataram* (Hail to the Mother India!) and writing many articles for it. As a result of these articles he was arrested on August 16, 1907, on a charge of sedition; he was arrested again in 1908 and spent a year in Alipore jail awaiting trial.

Aurobindo Ghose is known in India more for this political activity on behalf of India's independence (years before Gandhi returned from South Africa) than for his great spiritual work. It is only among Bengalis that is he well known and honored as a sage. The year in Alipore Jail was a turning point for Aurobindo Ghose. There he read the BHAGAVAD GITA, practiced yoga, and experienced a vision of Krishna that was powerful and transformative. Not long after he was released from jail he headed south to the French protectorate of Pondicherry, in part to avoid rearrest by the Indian police. In 1914 a Frenchman by the name of Paul Richard persuaded Aurobindo to write philosophy for a monthly journal called *Arya*. Aurobindo had begun to develop a reputation as a yogi and Richard was interested in his philosophy. All of Sri Aurobindo's major works except the epic poem *Savitri* were first published serially in this magazine. As fate would have it, Richard's wife, Mirra Alfassa, was to find in Aurobindo the fulfillment of her spiritual calling. In 1920 she left her husband and joined Sri Aurobindo in his spiritual quest; she would soon be dubbed the Mother.

In 1920 Ghose began to accept the name Sri Aurobindo, and he began delving more deeply into the unique yoga that he had initiated. His new ashram flourished after the arrival of Mirra Richard. On November 24, 1926, Sri Aurobindo announced that he had reached the "Overmind" in his meditations and retired from active ashram life. He left the external activities of the ashram to the care of Mother, who attended to all its affairs and developments until her death in 1973. In 1928 Sri Aurobindo released his book, *The*

Mother, which declared to the doubters that the consciousness of the Mother and his consciousness were one and the same. In 1939–40 the ashram released the book *Life Divine*, one of Sri Aurobindo's masterpieces. On December 5, 1950, Sri Aurobindo left his body.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's yoga had unique characteristics. Sri Aurobindo argued that each of the yogas that had been developed in India had its own important and positive elements, but that practicing any one of them solely would lead to unbalanced spiritual development. In his book *Synthesis of Yoga* he outlined how the yogas of the Bhagavad Gita particularly could be harmonized into a synthesis that would serve the whole human being: the physical, emotional, mental, psychic (soul), and spiritual levels, he argued, all needed tending. The term for the yoga that would involve all these levels of the human being was in Sanskrit *Purna Yoga*, or "Complete Yoga." This term was translated by Sri Aurobindo as *Integral Yoga*, which he adopted as the name of his path.

Sri Aurobindo argued vehemently that the world was real, rejecting the Indian philosophical view that it was illusory. Equally importantly, he believed the world was evolving toward a state of perfection. He drew from science his belief that life emerged from matter and consciousness from life. He argued therefore that superconsciousness or the "Supramental" stage must develop from ordinary consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo's yoga aimed at accelerating the advance of this evolution toward "Supermanhood." His and the Mother's efforts were entirely focused on engendering what they called the "Supramental" manifestation, which would transform not only all human beings, but all life and even all matter. Their effort was effectively to unlock the divine within matter itself; thus, they referred to their philosophy as Divine Materialism. This was the vision that was developed in Sri Aurobindo's massive book *The Life Divine*.

Sri Aurobindo acknowledged at his death in 1950 that he had not yet achieved the “descent of the Supramental” and indicated that this would occur through the efforts of the Mother. In 1956 Mother indeed announced that the descent had occurred. In 1968 she inaugurated AUROVILLE, a new utopian city in southern India dedicated to the realization of her goals. It was intended as an international city, belonging to “nobody in particular.” Along with the ashram in Pondicherry, this city flourishes to this day and is still developing according to the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s principles and philosophy.

Significantly, Sri Aurobindo and Mother never desired to create a new cult or religion. Their goal was nothing less than the transformation of the conditions of existence for all of humanity. As a result, no successor was appointed to follow Mother. A loose-knit but devoted group of admirers have continued to practice the yoga in creative and ever changing ways. Perhaps the best known admirer of Sri Aurobindo in America was Dr. Haridas CHAUDHURI, who in 1968 founded the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, a graduate school dedicated to the development of “mind, body and spirit.”

Ashrams devoted to Sri Aurobindo have been established at several sites in the United States. The first such ashram was the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco, founded by Chaudhuri in 1951. Another important ashram is Matagiri, founded by Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes in 1968 in the Catskill mountains of New York State. The name *Matagiri* means “Mother’s mountain” in Sanskrit. A third developing ashram in America dedicated to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is the Lodi, California, ashram founded in the 1990s, with its well-known Auromere book outlet (books@auromere.com), the main American source for books written by and about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

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Auroville

Planned as an international experimental township, Auroville was inspired by the evolutionary vision of SRI AUROBINDO and founded by Mirra Alfassa, known as the MOTHER. The name *Auroville* has the two meanings: “city of dawn,” from the French *aurora* (dawn), and “city of Aurobindo,” for the theorist who inspired its foundation.

Auroville was inaugurated on February 28, 1968, in a ceremony attended by representatives from 124 nations and all the states of India. In a gesture symbolic of human unity, a boy and a girl from each nation and state poured a handful of soil from their homeland into a lotus-shaped marble urn near the center of the city-to-be. Auroville has been endorsed by three resolutions of the UNESCO general assembly and recognized as an international trust by a unique parliamentary act of the Indian government. Auroville welcomes people from all parts of the world to live together and explore cultural, educational, scientific, spiritual, and other pursuits in accordance with the Auroville Charter.

The idea for Auroville began in the Mother’s thinking as early as 1952, when she called for an international center of education. She wrote: “A synthetic organization of all nations, each one occupying its own place in accordance with its own genius and the role it has to play in the whole, can alone effect a comprehensive and progressive unification which may have some chance of enduring.” She continued, “The first aim then will be to help individuals to become conscious of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to put them in contact with the modes of

living of other nations so that they may know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries on the earth.”

Naturally, the Mother’s internationalist ideal, embedded in the statement, was firmly joined with her understanding that communal and individual progress must proceed simultaneously. She imagined in this international center that the individuals would all be in search of their highest spiritual development, while they worked toward collective “unification.” When in 1956 the Mother finally experienced the “Supramental manifestation on earth,” which Sri Aurobindo and she had anticipated, she understood that this was the beginning of a new order on Earth. Her notion of Auroville then was of a place where this new order could take concrete form in an international community with a charter and vision like none before.

In 1972 the Mother wrote in regard to her “dream” of Auroville:

There should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme Truth, a place of peace, concord, harmony, where all fighting instincts of man could be used exclusively to conquer the sources of sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weakness and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the seeking for material pleasures and enjoyment.

There are four principles in the Auroville Charter. In summary, they ask that each resident see himself or herself as a servant of the “Divine Consciousness,” that Auroville will be a place of unending education, that Auroville will be a

place where the past and the future meet, and that Auroville will be a site to realize “Human Unity.”

The ideals for an Aurovillian emphasize the INTEGRAL YOGA, the creative development of each person as a unique point of the Divine, and the synthesis of the yogas of knowledge, love, and work. Auroville’s organization and administration are perhaps the most free and unbounded of any similar township on Earth (it is a flourishing community of about 3,000). It is a measure of the success of this experiment in self-governance (fully supported by the Indian government) that Auroville has several citations from the United Nations for its land use and ecological work. The world’s largest solar kitchen provides meals. In support of the Mother’s belief that the age of religions is past and is to be supplanted by a spiritual age beyond religion, the Auroville Charter states pointedly, “No religions.” Except for the stunning hemispheric Matri Mandir (Mother’s temple), no sign of any religious symbol or building can be seen in Auroville.

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Australia

Mass immigration of Hindus from India to Australia occurred later than in most other regions of the British Commonwealth, largely because of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, a policy enacted by white Australians to limit the numbers of nonwhite citizens.

Prior to the enforcement of immigration policies, small numbers of Indians had entered Australia as merchants, indentured laborers, and

domestic servants. The first immigrants from India arrived in New South Wales in 1830 on a trade ship from the Bay of Bengal to work as laborers on cotton and sugar plantations. Others followed sporadically until 1857, when a gold rush on the continent attracted a steady flow of Asian workers. Most Indian laborers were males, who arrived without their families and returned to India once their labor contracts were fulfilled. Some, however, remained in Australia and made a place for themselves and their families. Some became prosperous, such as Sri Pammull, an Indian merchant, who in the 1850s entered the opal trade in Melbourne and established a successful family business that has continued for four generations.

Approximately 1,000 Hindus resided in Australia at the time immigration restrictions were enacted. Most observed their religion privately at shrines within their homes, as formal places of worship had not yet been established. Although immigration restrictions limited the number of immigrants from India, the laws did not prevent adoption of Hinduism by white settlers. Between 1890 and 1920 an enthusiasm for Eastern mysticism spread in Australia. Spiritual dissenters, intellectuals, and artists from the middle class promoted the establishment of centers of THEOSOPHY. In the 1890s Charles Leadbeater founded the Theosophical Lodge in Sydney, which eventually became one of the largest Theosophical centers in the world. Theosophical lodges served as resource centers for YOGA, sites for lectures on Eastern wisdom, and sponsors of bookstores that disseminated works on Buddhist and Hindu thought. Theosophical lodges served as cultural centers for white Australians who sought introduction to and assimilation of Eastern spirituality.

After the immigration restrictions were lifted in the 1960s and 1970s, the population of Hindus, primarily from India, Sri Lanka, and Fiji, grew dramatically. The new arrivals established strong communities and maintained tra-

ditional Hinduism. In 1977, Australia's first Hindu temple, Sri Mandir, was established by Dr. Padmanabhan Shridhar Prabhu, Dr. Anand, and Prem Shankar. Sri Mandir has served as a center for Hindu festivals and has propagated Hindu culture and philosophy among Indians and non-Indians.

Today, many Hindu organizations and yoga schools are part of the culture of Australia, including the VEDANTA SOCIETY, SIDDHA YOGA FOUNDATION, DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY, and the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS. Australian-born adherents have also participated in the propagation of Hindu teachings. John Mumford, known as Swami Anandakapila, has become instrumental in popularizing TANTRIC YOGA through the INTERNATIONAL YOGA FELLOWSHIP.

The current growth in Australia's Hindu population and the continuing interest in Hinduism among those of European origin have created a sort of renaissance of Hindu thought and practice. In the 1990s Hinduism became one of the country's fastest growing religions. According to current census reports approximately 95,000 people in Australia identify themselves as Hindu.

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avadhuta

An *avadhuta* is a type of SADHU or wandering mendicant. The term refers to different populations in different parts of India. In Bengal the BAULS are referred to as *avadhutas*. In the NATH sect founded by GORAKHNATH, the *avadhuta* is someone who has reached the highest state of spiritual development. In Maharashtra and in Gujarat the *Avadhuta* is the single Guru-God DATTATREYA.

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Avalon, Arthur See [WOODROFFE, SIR JOHN](#).

avatar

Avatar is a modern Hindi word from the SAN-SKRIT word *avatara*, which means “one who has descended to the earthly realm.” The word in both its Sanskrit and its Hindi forms is used in VAISHNAVISM to refer to the incarnations of Vishnu, which usually number 10. Technically, Shiva never becomes an avatar. In recent times, the word avatar has come to be used for any enlightened teacher. It is, in effect, an honorific bestowed upon the teacher by his or her disciples or the larger community. One such example is Avatar ADI DA SAMRAJ.

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avidya

Avidya, or “ignorance,” is a centrally important term in Hinduism. The term also has an important place in Buddhism. *Avidya* is the fundamental ignorance that causes us to misperceive the phenomenal world. Ignorance causes us to imagine that what we see is the only reality, when this is not the case. There is an underlying reality that transcends the mundane sphere and also underlies it, but which cannot be seen by ordinary vision.

In the VEDANTA of SHANKARA this misunderstanding or *avidya* is often equated with *MAYA*, or illusion. According to Shankara *avidya* is the perception of an actual reality when there is none

there, only a false or illusory reality. The only thing real is the *BRAHMAN*, which underlies all names and forms.

In Hindu tantrism the understanding of *avidya* is different. In that tradition, *avidya* is what makes us see the world as other than the divinity. The word is used in theistic, nontantric contexts in the sense of misperception of the nature of things.

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Ayodhya

Ayodhya is located in North India on the Gogra River (formerly the Sharayu), just east of Faizabad in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. It is the city where Lord RAMA, the AVATAR of VISHNU, was born and where he ruled. Rama's story is told in the ancient Indian epic the RAMAYANA.

Since the time of the Ramayana story, Ayodhya has been recognized as an important urban center and both Hindu and Jain (see [JAINISM](#)) mythological literature mentions this city and its king often. In modern times, Ayodhya has become a place of controversy because of a medieval mosque that is said to have been built upon the birth place of Lord Rama. (Because of controversy over the site the mosque had been decommissioned for many years.) Encouraged by politics, this mosque was destroyed in 1993 by fervent Hindus, commencing a time of sharpened conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India.

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Ayurveda

Ayurveda (from *ayus*, "life," and *veda*, "knowledge") is the ancient tradition of medicine in India. It is said to originate in the ATHARVA VEDA. The text *Ayurveda*, which is no longer extant, was said to have been written by Dhanvantari, the physician of the gods.

Ayurveda stresses the close observation and diagnosis of the patient by the doctor. Medicines are not prescribed so universally as in Western allopathic medicine; when they are prescribed they are tailored to the bodily tendencies of the patient.

Much of Ayurvedic medicine is based on the understanding of three humorlike systems in the body called wind, bile, and phlegm. Imbalances in these humors are seen to be the cause of various ailments of body and mind. Diet, herbs, water, minerals, and other treatments are used for cures. Some, but not all, of Ayurvedic treatment is homeopathic. The ancient tradition of Ayurveda was first put into textual form (the *Charaka Samhita*) by Charaka or Agnivesha, who claimed that he drew on the Ayurveda of Dhanvantari.

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Ayyappan

Lord Ayyappan of Sabrimali in Kerala is a divinity with a synthetic character. He is said on the one hand to be the son of SHIVA and MOHINI, VISHNU's female form. He is also said to be an incarnation of the Buddha. Furthermore he is honored in Kerala by Muslims. According to the myth, the god transformed himself into a baby who was found by the king Pandalam, who was childless. Ayyappan was then adopted as his heir. After a short time, Pandalam's queen produced her own son, and she tried afterward to get rid of Ayyappan. She pretended she was ill and said only tiger's milk could cure her.

Ayyappan went off to the forest and returned riding a tigress. In his search for tiger's milk, Ayyappan had been sent to heaven by Lord Shiva to kill a demoness, Mahishi. Ayyappan had succeeded in ejecting her from heaven and making her fall to Earth. The demoness asked him to take her as his wife, but, he, being celibate, decided not to accept her. However, Mahishi is given a prominent place at the Ayyappan shrine.

In recent years a winter pilgrimage has been instituted to the Ayyappan shrine; it takes place between December 15 and January 15, depending on the lunar calendar. This men-only event involves an arduous climb up the hills of the Western Ghats and has become popular throughout India. Participants dress in black, take a vow of celibacy for the duration of the celebration, prepare for the pilgrimage by singing praises to Ayyappan, and then head off on the long trek. All castes and creeds are allowed to enter the Ayyappan shrine, but women in their fertile years are not permitted as Ayyappan is said to be "lord of celibacy." Ayyappan is sometimes also referred to as Shasta, or "ruler of the realm."

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B



Baba

Baba is a word from the Hindi language that means “father” and is used commonly as an honorific for sages, gurus, and saints. A person called Baba may or may not have taken the vows of renunciation that are signified by the title SWAMI.

Babaji (birth possibly 203 C.E.) *the eternal yogi*

Babaji (Revered Father) is a legendary immortal YOGI who is said to have instructed many of the great historic yogis, in the service of his goal of human spiritual evolution. He is particularly associated with the modern yoga movement of the SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP.

Historical information regarding Babaji is difficult to obtain. Paramahansa YOGANANDA, founder of the fellowship and the first author to create wide recognition of Babaji, dedicates one chapter of his book *Autobiography of a Yogi* to Babaji, whose other names are Mahamuni Babaji Maharaj (Supreme Ecstatic Master), Maha Yogi (Great Yogi), and Trambak Baba or Shiva Baba (both incarnations of SHIVA). According to Yogananda, Babaji chooses to live in obscurity in the Himalayas, beyond a holy place called BADRINATH, and has intentionally kept secret any information about

his birthplace and date of birth, which is believed to have occurred so long ago as to be beyond consideration.

Babaji is said to work in the background to guide the evolution of human consciousness; at certain times he appears and initiates certain people to advance their spiritual evolution and to promote new paths for humanity. He is not normally accessible, appearing only when he desires, often at *melas* (festivals). Babaji is not “religious”; rather, his goal is to help everyone achieve SELF-REALIZATION by means of several forms of the science of YOGA.

Babaji is said to have given yoga initiation to the historical teachers SHANKARA (seventh century C.E.) of the Swami Order and KABIR, (15th century C.E.), the famous medieval Hindi saint-poet. Around 800–900 C.E., he appeared as GORAKHNATH and initiated disciples into HATHA and KUNDALINI yoga disciplines. According to Yogananda, around 1860 Babaji taught KRIYA YOGA (the main teaching of the Self-Realization Fellowship), to LAHIRI MAHASAYA (1828–95), the GURU responsible for reviving the discipline. Yogananda claimed that Babaji also appeared to him early in the 20th century and gave him his mission to teach in the West.

Stories attest to Babaji's ability to become invisible at will. Because of this and his implicit instruction to his disciples to keep silent about him, little is known about his life. He can speak in any language but generally uses Hindi. His body is forever young, immortal, and not in need of food. Yogananda is said to have demonstrated this ability by the incorruptibility of his own body after his death in 1952, perhaps a capacity that develops after intense practice of *kriya yoga*.

Since Yogananda's death, many more stories relating to Babaji have emerged. He has been identified with an unnamed person who lived in the foothills of the Himalayas in the Kumaon region from around 1890 to 1922. His followers, acting on his statements, expected him to return after his departure in 1922 and established a number of ASHRAMS for him throughout India. Another teacher, Mahendra Baba (d. 1969), throughout the 1950s and 1960s predicted Babaji's return. Blessed from childhood with appearances from Babaji, Mahendra Baba (d. 1969), a sainted figure himself, devoted his life to facilitating the reappearance of Babaji. Mahendra restored the old ASHRAMS, wrote books about Babaji, and asked everyone to receive Babaji. However, Mahendra died before Babaji returned.

In June 1970, a young man identified as Haidakhan (also spelled Hariakhan) Baba appeared and moved among the Babaji ashrams for 14 years. From 1970 until his death on February 14, 1984, he traveled around India teaching and healing as more ashrams were opened for him. Tens of thousands of Hindus traveled to see him. Haidakhan Baba/Babaji stayed in the countryside, where he could teach the traditional sacred principles. He taught by example how to attain spiritual awakening silently. Babaji told his devotees that he appeared in many incarnations to restore the *SANATANA DHARMA*, the eternal truth of creation that has manifested and operates in harmony with Divine Will. He urged his students to live in truth and simplicity, regardless of religious affiliation.

According to Babaji, true devotion will replace material obsessions and will cultivate the presence of divine wisdom. He urged people at all times to chant the name of God, using the mantra *Om Namah Shiva*, literally "I take refuge in God." Babaji's followers sing a song to him each morning and evening in a service called an *arati*. They practice a fire ceremony called the *yagya* or *hawan*. Babaji advocated above all things a dedication to serve humanity through karma yoga, selfless action.

Leonard Orr and Sondra Ray, founders of the "rebirthing" movement, were among his American disciples, and BABA HARI DASS of Santa Cruz, California, published a book about stories collected about Haidakhan Baba, *Hariakhan Baba Known, Unknown*.

The Haidakhan Samaj was established in 1980 near Nainital, Uttar Pradesh state, India, as a central headquarters for the teachings of Haidakhan Baba/Babaji. The American headquarters of the Haidakhan Samaj is located in Crestone, Colorado. American devotees publish *American Haidakhan Samaj Newsletter*. The movement counts more than 8,000 members worldwide.

Another Indian teacher, S. A. A. Ramaiah, independently of the Haidakhan Baba movement and Self-Realization Fellowship, claimed that in 1942 he and a journalist, V. T. Neelakantan, became students of Babaji in spirit and received directly from him the texts of three books, *The Voice of Babaji and Mysticism Unlocked*, *Babaji's Masterkey to All Ills*, and *Babaji's Death of Death*. Ramaiah reports that Babaji revealed his actual beginning in human form in 203 C.E. in Tamil Nadu, India, as the son of a priest of Shiva.

Ramaiah reports that Babaji traveled during the third century to the southern tip of Sri Lanka, where he studied with a guru and had a vision of Lord Muruga, son of Shiva. After studies in Tamil Nadu, he eventually went to the Himalayas to practice *kriya yoga*. Through his practice he was transformed into a *SIDDHA* (a perfected person with supernatural abilities) and his body became

free of the effects of aging, disease, and death. Since that time, he has continued to exist, maintain a youthful appearance, and become the guide and inspiration of many of India's great spiritual teachers.

In 1951 Ramaiah founded the INTERNATIONAL BABAJI KRIYA YOGA SANGAM, which now has locations in 50 countries and teaches all of the *kriya yoga* material that Yogananda deemed inappropriate for introduction to the West in the early 20th century. Since Ramaiah's death, the Babaji Kriya Yoga Sangam has been led by Marshall Govindan, who was initiated by Ramaiah in 1971.

Another guru, Swami Satyaswarananda of San Diego, California, claims to have had contact with Babaji. At Babaji's instruction, he has republished the writings of Lahiri Mahasaya in a series called Sanskrit Classics.

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Badami

Badami is an archaeological site in the Bijapur District of the Indian state of Karnataka, capital of the famed Chalukya empire from around the sixth to the 11th century. Four sixth-century temples carved into solid rock there show a combination of northern and southern architectural styles. Generally they resemble the temples at ELLORA.

To the left of the visitor climbing to the top of the rocks is cave one, dedicated to SHIVA. It shows

a 14-armed Shiva on one side of the entrance and a protection deity on the other side. Cave two is dedicated to VISHNU. Its stone carvings tell the full story of Vishnu's incarnation as VAMANA, the divine dwarf, to save the world from the ravages of the demon king BALI. Vishnu's boar incarnation (VARAHA) is also depicted in the cave.

Cave three is the largest and most elaborate. It contains large carved pillars and an extensive interior. It too has several images of Vishnu—standing, lying on the divine serpent ADISHESHA, as the boar incarnation Varaha, as the man-lion NARASIMHA, and as the divine dwarf Vamana. Each depiction is approximately 10 feet high and elaborately carved.

The fourth cave temple is smaller and is Jain (see [JAINISM](#)) in orientation. It depicts the 24 Jain TIRTHANKARAS, or divine teachers, on a wall and on pillars in relief. The central image is of PARSHVANATH. Gommateshvara, the son of the first Tirthankara, RISHABHA; he is depicted in his standing, yogic pose, overgrown by carved stone vines.

Some distance below the caves near the tank are two smaller shrines to Shiva and a small temple to the South Indian goddess Yellamma. These later shrines are from the 11th century. There are small caves scattered at the site down below, some of which were used or dug by Buddhists between the sixth and eighth centuries.

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Badarayana (Vyasa) *Vedantic Philosopher*
See [VEDANTA SUTRA](#).

Badrinath

Badrinath is an important Hindu pilgrimage site located in a glacial area some 10,000 feet high in the central Himalayas, in the Chamoli District of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. It is sometimes said to be one of the four shrines that a Hindu must visit in his or her lifetime to reach salvation. It is also known as Badarikashrama and has been an important pilgrimage site from ancient times, mentioned in the MAHABHARATA epic. Badrinath lies on the Alaknanda River, understood to be one of the channels that the GANGA or Ganges took when descending from heaven.

The town has a comparatively modern temple built on a peak, dedicated to a form of VISHNU called Badarinatha. The name—of the site and of the god—is taken from the berry patch, *badari vana*, that once existed there. The great ninth-century sage SHANKARA established one of his four famous centers at Badrinath.

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Bahubali

In Jain mythology Bahubali was the younger son of RISHABHA, the first TIRTHANKARA (holy teacher) in this half of the cosmic cycle, renowned for his remarkable asceticism. In a contest for control of their kingdom Bahubali defeated his older brother, BHARATA, who then became a monk. Not long afterward, Bahubali himself decided to take vows of renunciation. His initial motive was just to compete with his brother, whose asceticism he envied. When his own austerities yielded no fruit, he eventually concentrated on fierce renunciation. On one occasion he was said to have stood on one leg so long that vines and other plants grew up

around him and he became covered with ants. He reached his goal of *kevalajnana*, highest knowledge, and has since been famed for it.

Bahubali is one of the 63 great beings in the DIGAMBARA Jain pantheon. He is enshrined in colossal statues, particularly in the state of Karnataka. One huge statue, the 10th-century Shravana Belagola statue in Karnataka, rises nearly 60 feet from its base atop a small mountain peak. On special occasions this statue is given a huge ritual bathing in milk along with massive offerings. Another Bahubali, built in the 15th century in Udipi District, Karnataka, is 40 feet high.

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Bailey, Alice Ann (1880–1949) Theosophical teacher

Alice Ann Bailey was a prominent teacher and leader in the Western Theosophical movement. She founded Lucis Trust, the Arcane School, and World Goodwill.

Bailey was born on June 16, 1880, in Manchester, England. She had a rather confined childhood. A devout member of the Church of England, as a young adult she went to India on its behalf to work with the British army. There she met her first husband, John Evans. The couple moved to the United States, where he served as an Episcopal minister, and had three children. The marriage eventually ended in divorce.

About the time of her divorce during World War I, she was introduced to the THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY. At the society headquarters in Los Angeles she saw a picture of a man in a turban, whom she recognized as the same person who

had appeared to her in England when she was only 15 years old. She later learned that the figure was Koot Houti, one of the ascended masters who had communicated with the society founder Helena P. BLAVATSKY. Bailey went on to become an active member of the society, where she met her future husband, Foster Bailey.

While working with the society she was contacted by another of the masters, Djwhal Khul, usually referred to as D.K., or simply the Tibetan. Bailey began to channel writings from the Tibetan, later compiled into 19 books. In an appendix to her unfinished autobiography she explained her method of receiving teachings and writing texts in cooperation with the Tibetan. In the same book she stated the founding principles of the school she would later establish.

Bailey's first book, *Initiation: Human and Solar*, was initially well received. However, Annie Besant, the international president of the society, frowned upon writings independently received from the masters, and both Alice and Foster were soon relieved of their positions in the society.

The Baileys were married in 1921. Soon afterward they founded Lucis Trust and the Arcane School, to publish and disseminate the writings and teachings of the Tibetan and to facilitate the work of interested students. These teachings continued the synthesis of Western and Hindu thought first articulated by Blavatsky that had become the hallmark of Theosophy. The teachings emphasized the divine plan for humankind, the role of karma and reincarnation, and the existence of a spiritual brotherhood or hierarchy, overseeing the evolution and welfare of humanity. Of note is Bailey's prolific writing on the science of the Seven Rays, first introduced by Blavatsky.

Bailey's work also emphasized the practical aspects of spiritual discipleship, applied on a human level, in particular the importance of group consciousness and world service. To this end, she also founded World Goodwill, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to the promotion of good human relations on a global scale. The Lucis Trust

has consultative status at the United Nations, and World Goodwill is affiliated with the United Nations Department of Public Information. Bailey also introduced a world prayer for peace, enlightenment, and spiritual assistance called the Great Invocation, as well as a set of creative meditations designed to be observed cyclically, primarily at the time of each full Moon, in order to create human alignment with the divine Plan.

In addition to the 19 titles written in cooperation with D. K., Bailey authored five books by herself. All 24 books carry Bailey's name. Bailey continued to head the Arcane School until her death on December 15, 1949, when Foster took over to lead the organization for several additional years. The Arcane School and the Lucis Trust, together with the service activities World Goodwill and Triangles, continue to function today. In addition, a number of other groups attempt to perpetuate the Bailey teachings.

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Balarama

Balarama is the elder brother of KRISHNA. He is depicted as having a light color in contrast to Krishna's dark skin; one legend says that Balarama was created from a light hair of VISHNU, and Krishna from a black hair. Sometimes Balarama is seen as an AVATAR of Vishnu alongside his brother Krishna; sometimes the two are considered to share an avatar as two "parts" of the whole. He is also sometimes seen as an incarnation of ADISHESHA, the divine serpent on whom Vishnu rested.

Balarama's mother, DEVAKI, was the wife of VASUDEVA, minister to the evil king Kamsa. When Kamsa learned that a son of Devaki's would eventually kill him, he had the couple guarded and had six of Devaki's children killed in succession. Miraculously, however, the seventh child, Balarama, was transferred as an embryo into the womb of Rohini, a second wife of Vasudeva. When Krishna, the eighth child, was born, the guards miraculously fell asleep, and Vasudeva was able to deliver his new child to a woman from a cowherd family, YASHODA.

There are few stories about Balarama independent of those that associate him with Krishna. He is said to have gone to the ocean to meditate when he was very old, when Adishesha emerged from his mouth and returned to the ocean whence he had emerged.

Iconographically, BALARAMA is known as "Rama with the Plow" and carries a plow and axe in either hand.

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Bali, Hinduism in

Bali, an island in the Indian Ocean immediately east of Java, is today a part of the country of INDONESIA. Unlike the rest of predominantly Muslim Indonesia, however, Bali is overwhelming Hindu. Its unique history reaches back to the spread of Hinduism to Java in the fourth century C.E., the rise of Hindu rulers on Java by the seventh century, and the spread of Hinduism to Bali in the 11th century. The Hindu Majapahit kingdom, which emerged in eastern Java in the 13th century, at its peak ruled all of Java, Bali, and Madura. However, its upward trajectory was stymied by the arrival and spread of Islam into the Indone-

sian islands. In the 15th century, Islam pushed the Majapahits out of Java and the once-powerful kingdom retreated to Bali, where it survived while Java was divided among rival Muslim sultans.

Hindu rule of Bali lasted until the mid-19th century, when the Dutch conquered the island. They held it only until the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia after World War II. Much of the Hindu leadership remained in place under Dutch rule. After the Dutch relinquished administration of the island the Hindu culture remained protected by the Indonesian government. A government-sponsored organization, the Parishad Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), or Hindu Council of Religious Affairs, is the highest religious body on Bali and has been given the power to make decisions on all spiritual matters.

Since the 16th century, Hinduism in Bali has developed somewhat in isolation from its roots in India, at the same time absorbing a variety of elements from the pre-Hindu indigenous religion of the island. These two factors shaped a distinctive form of Hindu life and practice in the islands, whose Hinduism is a blend of SHIVISM, Buddhism, and ancient ancestor worship. The deity SHIVA is primarily associated with the ancestors of kings; consistently with the indigenous religion of Bali, Hindus there do not distinguish between the ancestors of rulers and the gods. The Balinese do not hold to the vegetarian dietary practices of India; instead, they eat such foods as beef, pork, and dog.

Balinese Hindus believe in Sanghyang Widhi, the omnipotent Supreme Being, who manifests in three main forms as BRAHMA the Creator, VISHNU the Preserver, and SHIVA the Destroyer. However, this deity is not directly worshipped through cult or prayer, and none of the Balinese temples is dedicated to him. Among the deities to whom worship is directed, Shiva is the most prominent. He is usually worshipped in association with one or more local deities whose gender is indicated by their name—*Dewa* (male) or *Dewi* (female). The deities are acknowledged through

daily offerings and participation in village and temple events. Bali has become known in the wider Hindu world for its frequent and dramatic ceremonies, rather than for any intellectual or spiritual leadership.

Unlike in India, the gods of Balinese Hinduism are not seen as dwelling in their images; they live atop the great volcano Gunung Agung, which is identified with Mt. Meru, considered the axis of the world in many stories of traditional Hinduism. During worship and festivals the gods are called down from the mountain to enter their statues and the masks worn by celebrants. When the worship or festival ends, the gods return to their abode.

The Balinese generally bury their dead; cremation is performed only for the more significant members of society. When a cremation is performed, corpses of commoners who have died since the last cremation are dug up and burned along with the newly deceased. These cremations are elaborate events; a grandly built tower is burned as part of the rite. The cremation is considered to purify the souls of the deceased.

Although the images of the gods are not considered sacred, the temple sites are. Bali has more than 20,000 temples. Each village usually has three main temples: the Village Temple, the Temple of Death (in memory of dead royalty), and the Shrine of the Beginning.

At the Village Temple villagers congregate for worship and meetings, which center on shared sacred communal meals. The Temple of Death is associated with the nether world and is dedicated to the ancestors of rulers. In Bali, the dead are perceived as dangerous until they are purified by cremation; the temple keeps these negative forces in check.

The most important temple is the Shrine of the Beginning, dedicated to the Original Ancestor (the equivalent of Shiva) and His Consort. Other temples are dedicated to specific functions: water temples are responsible for irrigation and adequate water supply, sea temples hold back the

forces of the underworld, and harvest temples secure abundance of food. Temples are built with inner courts containing shrines to the deities and platforms for offerings, and outer courtyards for more mundane purposes, such as the preparation of food. The inner courts also contain one or more towers that represent Mt. MERU. Outside most temples are sacred groves, usually banyan trees, where demonic forces are propitiated. Each household also contains a shrine known as the "shrine of origin," dedicated to ancestors and to the Sun god SURYA. Shiva, in the form of Bhattara Guru, the Divine Teacher, is included.

According to the Balinese, the Hindu gods migrated to Bali. Indigenous deities such as Ranga and Barong also have an extensive mythology, which has been grafted onto the tales of the imported gods. Many Balinese live in a lively world inhabited by spirits of all varieties and ghostly entities, many of whom inhabit various animals, all existing alongside the deities of the Hindu pantheon. They also fear witches (malevolent sorcerers) who live among them more or less openly. Evil spirits are still looked upon as causes of illness and misfortune. Daily offerings are designed, in part, to appease angry spirit entities.

Balinese Hinduism distinguishes between two types of priests: the *pedandas* and local *pemangkus*, or temple priests. The *pedandas* are always male BRAHMINS; they perform duties and rituals primarily for the higher castes. The *pemangkus* are in charge of specific temples and daily rituals and serve as priests for commoners. *Pemangkus* are primarily men but can be women and can be either of caste or without caste. Unlike *pedandas*, *pemangku* priests are allowed to be possessed by the gods.

Uma, sometimes called PARVATI, is the principal goddess of Bali; she is the Goddess of the Mountain Gunung Agung, where she dwells as the consort of Shiva, the Great Ancestor. She has many manifestations. As Uma, she nourishes and causes seeds to germinate. As DURGA, she is the

Goddess of Death and the Mistress of Demons. As Devi Ganga and Devi Danu, she is the goddess of both the lake Bator (the site of her chief temple) and the second largest volcano, Gunung Bator. As Sri, she is worshipped at the temples in the rice paddies. As Ibu Petri, she is the Goddess of the Earth. Her most wrathful form is that of Ranga, goddess of the cemeteries.

Among the important temples on Bali is Gunug Kawi, one of the island's oldest, dating to the 11th century. Carved out of local rock, it is located in the Gianyar Regency. The most sacred site on the island is the shrine Pura Besakih, located on the slope of Mt. Agung.

Today, over 90 percent of Bali's three million inhabitants are Hindu, making the island the largest community of Hindus outside India.

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Bali, the *asura*

Bali is the *asura* (antigod) who plays the role of villain in the story of VAMANA, the dwarf AVATAR (incarnation) of Vishnu.

The story takes many different forms. In the most common version the demon Bali succeeds, through religious austerities, in gaining supreme power over the Three Worlds, Earth, heaven, and the underworld. When he begins to monopolize the offerings that previously went to the gods, they go to Vishnu to ask for assistance. He takes on the form of VAMANA and approaches the arrogant demon with a plan to trick him. The foolish demon king offers the dwarf a boon of territory—as much as he can cover in three paces. Thereupon the dwarf takes one step to possess the Earth, another to possess the sky, and another to possess heaven itself. In some versions Vamana takes two paces to step over the whole universe and a third step that ends up on Bali's head. Thus did Vamana return the worlds to the gods.

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Barry Long Foundation See LONG, BARRY.

Basavanna (1106–1167 C.E.) *saint who helped found Virashaivism*

Basavanna was a saint devoted to SHIVA and was the chief founder of the reformist VIRASHAIVA or lingayat community. He was a social reformer who opposed temple ritual and the caste system in favor of an internal religious orientation.

Born in the village of Mangavalli in the state of Karnataka to parents who apparently died when he was young, he was raised by his grandparents, and later by foster parents. He became learned in

Sanskrit and appears to have had a Brahmanical initiation. Basavanna studied the VEDAS and was a devotee of Shiva from an early age, but he was also a political activist and social reformer. He believed that the caste divisions and ritualism of traditional Indian society should be abolished.

Basavanna became a powerful minister to a king, while establishing a new religious movement in which caste, class, and sex were disregarded and only devotion to the Lord was important. He rejected traditional ritualism; in place of temples and icons to Lord Shiva, every Virashaiva was required to wear the LINGAM, or sign of Shiva, around the neck. Basavanna's *vacanas* or poems were pure expressions of BHAKTI, or devotion, declaring that one's own body was the true temple of Shiva, not some stone shrine. Virashaivas decry all external religion in favor of the religion of the heart.

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Baul sect

A loosely organized sect originating in Bengal around the seventh century C.E., the Bauls sought escape from orthodox Hindu thought and ritual practice, which they deemed lifeless, seeking ecstasy through music and dancing. They are known for their unconventional manner, as indicated by their name: the Bengali word *baul* (Hindi: *baur*) is derived from the SANSKRIT *vat-ula*, meaning "mad," or *vyakula*, meaning "perplexed." Bauls are referred to as "madmen drunk with God." Songs are their unwritten scriptures, yet they do not record either the words or the music.

The original Baul devotees drew inspiration from several religions that flourished at the time

in Bengal. They adopted practices from TANTRISM, the non-dual or *ADVAITA* conception of the Absolute from VEDANTA, YOGA disciplines, elements of Sufi dance and music, and the emphasis on the love in the human heart found in VAISHNAVISM. To these, the Bauls added a tenet that each individual must remain free and individual, and each must become a divinized subtle being.

Central to the spiritual path of Bauls is their reverence for gurus. Each guru writes his own songs from his personal experience, so that most songs remain original and individual. Some songs have become common to the community and are repeated at yearly festivals, or *melas*, which are held in Bengal, near Shanti Niketan, the university founded by Rabindranath TAGORE (1861–1941). It was Tagore who took the Baul sect out of obscurity by collecting the words of many of their songs and many of their simple melodies. He felt that these creations by the Bauls expressed the highest truth in simple language.

Most Bauls are illiterate members of the poorer classes. Others are learned Brahmins who have been rejected by their caste, Muslims disaffected with orthodoxy, and Sufis who fear persecution from Islamic law. Baul groups are scattered throughout India but remain centered in Bengal.

Recently Baul musicians and dancers have begun to tour Europe and the United States to perform their songs.

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Benares (Varanasi, Kashi)

Benares on the GANGES is the most visited pilgrimage destination in all of India. It is one of the seven primary pilgrimage cities in India, one of the 12 *vyotir* LINGAM (lingam of light) sites, and

a *SHAKTI PITHA* site sacred to the Divine Mother. It is considered the most desirable place where a Hindu can die and be cremated, as it is understood that liberation from birth and rebirth is conferred upon a person by the holiness of the city. Myth says that the Ganges flows through the topknot of Shiva down to Earth; for many it is understood that those who bathe in it derive special blessings from Shiva.

At Benares any act of devotion whatsoever, be it the smallest offering, act of penance or charity, or chant, yields unlimited results. Benares has been known at different times as Varanasi or Kashi (the place of the supreme light). It has been a great center of Shiva worship in particular and has known more than 3,000 years of continuous habitation. Only a few buildings are left from before the 16th century, as Muslim armies from the 12th century destroyed nearly every temple there.

The city's primary Shiva shrine, the Vishwanath Temple, dates only from 1776, when it was rebuilt across the road from its original ancient location. The *jnana vapi*, or Well of Wisdom, is adjacent to the site of the original temple and is the ritual center of Benares. The well is said to have been dug by Shiva himself, and its waters carry the liquid form of *JNANA*, the light of insight.

Benares contains so many hundreds of shrines and temples that it is said a pilgrim would need all the years of his or her life to visit them all. Some of these temples are named after the great pilgrimage centers, in other parts of India: RAMESHVARAM, DVARAKA, Puri, and KANCHIPURAM. In this way, visiting Benares is tantamount to visiting all the major shrines and temples of India. Most pilgrims make only short visits of days or weeks to Benares, but there are also many thousands who see it as the last port of call of their earthly existence. There are nearly 100 cremation spots in the six-mile expanse of the Ganges at Benares.

A well-worn 50-mile pilgrimage path encircles the holy city; pilgrims generally take five days to

complete the walk, visiting 108 shrines along the way. A second important Benares pilgrimage route takes two days to complete and has 72 shrines.

Bustling, dusty Benares was once an area of sylvan wilderness. Sages and saints such as BUDHA, MAHAVIRA, and TULSIDAS all at one time or another prayed and meditated here. For centuries Benares may have been the most often-visited sacred place on the planet. In any case, for Hindus there is no holier city on Earth.

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Bernard, Pierre Arnold (1875–1955) *Western tantric teacher*

Born Peter Coons in Leon, Iowa, Pierre Bernard created the Tantrik Order in America, in New York City, in 1909, perhaps the first Hindu group in the United States founded by a Westerner.

As a young man, Bernard moved from Iowa to California, where he held odd jobs. At age 30 he met Mortimer Hargis, with whom he formed the Bacchante Academy in San Francisco to teach hypnotism and “soul charming,” a term that referred to sexual practices. The earthquake of 1906 leveled the academy and Bernard moved east.

In 1909 Bernard founded the Tantrik Order in America and gave himself the name Oom the Omnipotent. He taught *YOGA* and tantric Hinduism, a branch of the religion that focuses on sexual energies and consciousness. In 1910 he was arrested on charges filed by two women in his group that he was conducting sexual orgies and was keeping women against their will. He was allowed to continue operating his institute but was kept under the eye of the local police. He became legal guardian of his half sister, Ora Ray Baker, later to become the wife of Hazrat Inayat Khan, founder of the Sufi Order.

Using the name Dr. Pierre Arnold Bernard, he created the New York Sanskrit College and opened a physiological institute. Around 1918, he married Blanche DeVries, a woman of some means in New York society and a cousin of Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ, Scientist. His wife provided an entrée for him into society circles, and some wealthy socialites, Ann Vanderbilt among them, became disciples.

In 1924, Bernard founded a center and an Oriental-Occult Library on his estate in Nyack, New York. His 70-acre property included a mansion that served as his headquarters and an adjacent Inner Circle Theatre, which contained a library of thousands of books on Eastern religion and the occult. Here he hosted gurus and other visiting teachers of religious and occult subjects. He became a prominent citizen, offering his estate to refugees from Nazi Germany. His nephew, Theos Bernard, lived at the Nyack estate and later attended Columbia University, where in 1944 he wrote a thesis on HATHA YOGA that has become a classic text.

A colorful and intriguing character, Bernard interpreted tantric practices in a manner uniquely his own. His claims of having attained a teaching degree in Hinduism in India are unsubstantiated. His frequent name changes and questionable credentials made him the object of ridicule in journalistic reports of the day, but he did gain an expertise in Hindu thought and practice that made him an important figure in the growth of interest in Hinduism in the United States, in part through his connections with spiritual leaders and occultists of his day.

Bernard died quietly after a brief illness on September 27, 1955, in Nyack, New York.

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Besant, Annie Wood (1847–1933) *English socialist and president of the Theosophical Society*

Annie Besant was an English socialist reformer who converted to THEOSOPHY after reading the works of H. P. BLAVATSKY. She became an influential figure in the growth of Theosophy as a worldwide movement and helped spread appreciation of Hinduism in the West.

Annie Wood was born in London to a middle-class Irish couple on October 1, 1847. She was raised after her father's death by her mother in a very religious environment. She followed convention by marrying a minister and schoolmaster, Frank Besant, in 1867. They had two children, but she left the marriage in 1893 and took the children with her in order to realize the ideals of her emerging progressivism. The couple was legally separated five years later.

Besant had begun to write while still with her husband; once separated she started to air her skeptical views in essays. She joined the National Secular Society and lectured on feminist issues. She joined forces with Charles Bradlaugh, the atheist freethinker, to found the Free-thought Publishing Company. In 1877, with Bradlaugh, she was arrested for selling birth control pamphlets in London's slums. They were convicted, but the verdict was overturned and the trial helped to liberalize public attitudes. In 1888 she coordinated a strike of unskilled young women laborers at a match factory, which shed light on cruel and unsafe labor practices. She soon established a reputation as an orator, skeptic, and advocate for women's rights.

During the 1880s, Besant became a friend of George Bernard Shaw, who considered her Britain's and perhaps Europe's greatest orator; developing an interest in socialism she joined the Fabian Society.

In 1888, she read Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, an event that changed her life. She later said that she found in the revelations of Theosophy answers to questions that she had not found in socialism, free thought, or Christianity. She resigned from the National Secular Society, renounced socialism, and became an ardent spokesperson for Theosophy.

After Blavatsky's death in 1891, Besant became the powerful head of the Esoteric section of the Theosophical Society. After a tour of the United States, where she addressed the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, she moved to India, which became her home and headquarters until her death. She succeeded H. S. Olcott as president of the Theosophical Society in 1907 and retained the office until her death in 1933; she presided over a time of rapid expansion of the society, after a period of stagnation.

In 1909 Besant organized the Order of the Star in the East, in order to prepare for Theosophy's predicted appearance of a world teacher, who would help all of humanity evolve to higher consciousness. When a young South Indian BRAHMIN boy was found near the Theosophy compound at Adyar, outside Madras (Chennai), she became convinced that he, J. KRISHNAMURTI, would be the instrument for the coming world teacher. After receiving considerable grooming for the role of Lord Maitreya, Krishnamurti abdicated the title and suspended the Order of the Star in the East. He continued to call Besant "mother," but he refused to accept the role of "world teacher" that she felt he embodied.

Although she had abandoned her socialist affiliations, Besant carried her social reform values wherever she went. In India, the Theosophical Society founded many schools in India, including some of the first in the country for women. Politically, she fought for Indian independence from British rule, and she was elected president of the Indian National Congress in 1917.

To Blavatsky's emphasis on Buddhism, Besant added an emphasis on Hinduism to the Theosophical corpus. She wrote with C. W. Leadbeater,

a Theosophist who was also an Anglican priest and later bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church, about the gifts of Hinduism and the East to esoteric wisdom in the West. Besant died on September 21, 1933, at the Theosophy compound.

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Bhadrabahu (c. 300 B.C.E.) *early Jain leader*

Bhadrabahu is revered by both DIGAMBARA and SHVETAMBARA Jains (see JAINISM). Both sects regard him as the last of the persons who knew all the early sacred texts of the Jain tradition.

Bhadrabahu was born in Pundravardhan in what is now Bangladesh, during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, the great Indian king. According to the Digambara tradition he led a large group of his adherents from North India to Karnataka and thus introduced Jain tradition to South India. That tradition further recounts that on his return to Pataliputra (Patna) in the north, he found that there had been an official recension of the Jain scriptures; he and his monk followers refused to accept this "new" Jain canon. He also found that the northern monks had taken up unacceptable practices, especially the wearing of clothing, which is forbidden to Digambara (sky-clad) monks. Bhadrabahu and his adherents declared themselves to be the only true Jains.

Another Bhadrabahu (c. sixth century) was the author of the Shvetambara work *KALPA SUTRA*.

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Bhagavad Gita

Bhagavad Gita means “Song about God.” It is a segment, dating from around 200 B.C.E., of the MAHABHARATA, the classic Sanskrit epic traditionally ascribed to VYASA. It has 18 chapters totaling approximately 700 verses. In the framework of a legendary battle, the poem presents a philosophy of life and states principles guiding the practices of YOGA.

The framework story begins when the hero, ARJUNA, asks his charioteer, KRISHNA, to pull the chariot up between the two battling armies. On one side are his own PANDAVAS who have the rightful claim to the kingship. On the other side are their cousins, the KAURAVAS, who now are usurpers. Seeing that he is about to go into battle with his own guru DRONA; his grandfather, BHISHMA; and many of his cousins, Arjuna’s will fails and he sits down, not wanting to fight.

Krishna scolds Arjuna and insists that he go to battle; he then begins a lecture on the nature of reality. Krishna, it eventually becomes clear, is God himself, though he has taken a role here as charioteer. He outlines several yogas that will help Arjuna fight the battle of existence.

The first of the yogas is that of knowledge (JNANA), which involves insight into the Truth of Ultimate Reality, BRAHMAN. This practice involves meditative focus on the Ultimate as beyond all forms and categories. Next is the yoga of devotion (BHAKTI), which involves focus on God—Krishna himself, in this case—in a steady, yogic poise of consciousness involving surrender to the Divinity, the being that oversees the universe. The third yoga is that of action (KARMA). Krishna explains how one can act in the world yogically without

regard to the fruits of one’s actions. Underlying all the three yogas is the fourth yoga, rajayoga, or the yoga of MEDITATION (*dhyana*), which must be practiced in order to do any of the others.

The Gita generally favors action in the world and opposes leaving the world to become a renunciant. In the Gita, renunciation is redefined as giving up the fruits of actions, not leaving the world to try to be actionless. The Gita also emphasizes devotion to the iconic divinity with form and characteristics, although it does not deny that some might pursue the path of realizing the transcendent *brahman* that is beyond characteristics and action.

The Gita often cites the importance of developing what is called “steady mind,” which will prevent perturbation of mind and wrong conduct whatever course we choose to take. It must be emphasized that though the Gita unfolds against a backdrop of war, it is not to be considered a prowar tract. All its commentators from earliest times interpret the text metaphorically; it refers to anyone’s battle against karma and for liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

The Bhagavad Gita was the favorite text of Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI, the foremost proponent of nonviolence. Today the Gita is memorized and chanted as an aid to the realization of the essence of the yogas detailed therein. Ideally, the entire text is committed to memory and chanted daily.

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ers of the *Bhagavadgita* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986).

Bhagavan

Bhagavan in Sanskrit means “one who is glorious, illustrious, revered, divine, or holy.” It is the most common word for “God” in Hinduism. In its sense of “holy” or “divine” it is also used as an honorific for gurus and divine personages, for example, Bhagavan Sri RAJNEESH.

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Bhagavata Purana

The Bhagavata Purana is one of the 18 principal PURANAS of Indian tradition; it may well be the most popular of them all. *Bhagavata* means “that which pertains to god” (in this case, VISHNU, and more particularly his incarnation as KRISHNA); a purana is a work describing the actions and history of a divinity. The Bhagavata Purana then is the story about those who are devoted to God. The work is sometimes attributed to VYASA, author of the Mahabharata.

The Bhagavata Purana was probably composed in South India, as it makes reference to the devotional ALVARAS Vaishnavite saints of the Tamil country. There are 18,000 verses in this work, 332 chapters and 12 sections or books. The 10th section, the most popular, recounts the tales of Krishna’s life in BRINDAVAN—his killing of demons, his childhood escapades, and his dalliances with the GOPIS or cowherd girls.

The work exalts BHAKTI or devotion to God as the highest of paths. Neither by knowledge alone (JNANA) nor by action can one reach the supreme, which requires only steadfast devotion. The poem agrees with those VEDANTA philosophers who see the supreme divinity as the embodiment of innu-

merable auspicious characteristics and see the world as real and a manifestation of the godhead. As do these philosophers, it equates the BRAHMAN (Ultimate Reality) and the ATMAN (Ultimate Self) of the UPANISHADS with Vishnu or Krishna.

According to the Bhagavata Purana, each individual soul is eternally distinct and real, even when basking in the full effulgence of God after liberation from birth and rebirth. Liberation gives the soul its place in heaven, Goloka, where Lord Krishna resides. Commentaries on the Bhagavata Purana are numerous; the Vedanta (teachers) MADHVA and VALLABHA both wrote full commentaries.

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Bhairava

Bhairava (frightful or terrible) is a fearsome manifestation of SHIVA, whose icon has long fangs. He is sometimes also called Kalabhairava or Kalaraja, Lord of Time (as KALI is seen to be the Mistress of Time), and is seen to control time and the world.

Bhairava’s frightful nature emerged when Lord BRAHMA spoke to him arrogantly, and he severed Brahma’s fifth upward-looking head with his fingernail. Because he had thus killed a BRAHMIN, the skull could not be removed from his hand, where it remained, until he was released from the curse that befalls one who kills a Brahmin.

Bhairava of the very dark complexion was forced to travel the Earth begging alms with the skull as begging bowl. It was he who wandered through the three worlds to arrive at the Deodar Forest where sages (*RISHIS*) dwelt with their wives. The sages did not recognize Shiva in this naked, fierce beggar, but he was irresistibly attractive to their wives. In a final act of defiance against the confounded *rishis*, Bhairava brandished his erect penis before the wives to their delight and passion (as he was the ruler of the universe). The *rishis* put a curse on him to lose his penis, which flew around the worlds like a missile, destroying everything in its path. Finally, they had to call upon the Great Goddess to offer her *YONI* or vagina to hold it in place and pacify it. This is the origin of the Shiva *LINGAM*, which is always depicted as a phallus held in an encircling *yoni*.

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Bhajan, Yogi (1929–2004) Sikh guru

Harbhajan Singh Puri was instrumental in establishing the Sikh religion in North America. The future guru was born on August 26, 1929, in what is now Pakistan to a family headed by a medical doctor. He spent a privileged youth in private schools (he attended a Catholic convent school) and summer retreats. At the age of eight he began training in yoga with an enlightened teacher, Sant Hazara Singh, who proclaimed Harbhajan a master of *KUNDALINI* yoga at the age of 16.

During the unrest of partition in 1947, the young Harbhajan led thousands of villagers from their residence near Lahore, Pakistan, to resettle in New Delhi. He went on to study comparative religion and Vedic philosophy and received a master's degree with honors in economics from

Punjab University and a Ph.D. in communications psychology. He married Inderjit Kaur in 1952 and they had two sons. He entered Indian government service, employed in the internal revenue supervision and customs service.

In 1968 Harbhajan immigrated to the United States, via Canada, with a vision of introducing *YOGA* to the West. He announced that he had traveled to the West "to create teachers, not to gain students." A devoted *SIKH*, he helped legally incorporate the Sikh Dharma (order) in the United States in 1971. That year Sant Charan Singh, president of the governing body of Sikh Temples in India, named Harbhajan Siri Singh Sahib, Chief Religious and Administrative Authority for the Western Hemisphere. The Akal Takhat, the Sikh seat of religious authority in Amritsar, assigned him responsibility to create a Sikh ministry in the West. He redirected young people who were experimenting with drugs and altered states of consciousness to seek higher consciousness, pointing to their deep desire to realize holistic and liberating states of mind.

In 1969, Yogi Bhajan created the *HEALTHY, HAPPY, HOLY ORGANIZATION (3HO)* to integrate kundalini yoga, *MEDITATION*, compassionate philosophy, and healthy living. It was one of the most popular of the new religions in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. He died on October 6, 2004.

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bhajans

Bhajans are Hindu devotional songs, sung to a chosen deity. They are often sung in gatherings, sometimes led by a teacher or guru. The songs praise the divinity, listing his or her aspects and virtues and

recounting favored elements of his or her mythology. The songs are used to establish a closeness or communion between the singers and the god.

Bhajan and *KIRTAN* singing are forms of BHAkti (devotion). They are aimed at focusing the consciousness on higher reality, in order to develop the steadiness of mind that is needed to deal with the troubles and difficulties of this life. They also are seen to purify the consciousness so that one can take a step toward ending one's cycle of birth and rebirth. Thus their purest goal is MOKSHA, liberation or release from that cycle.

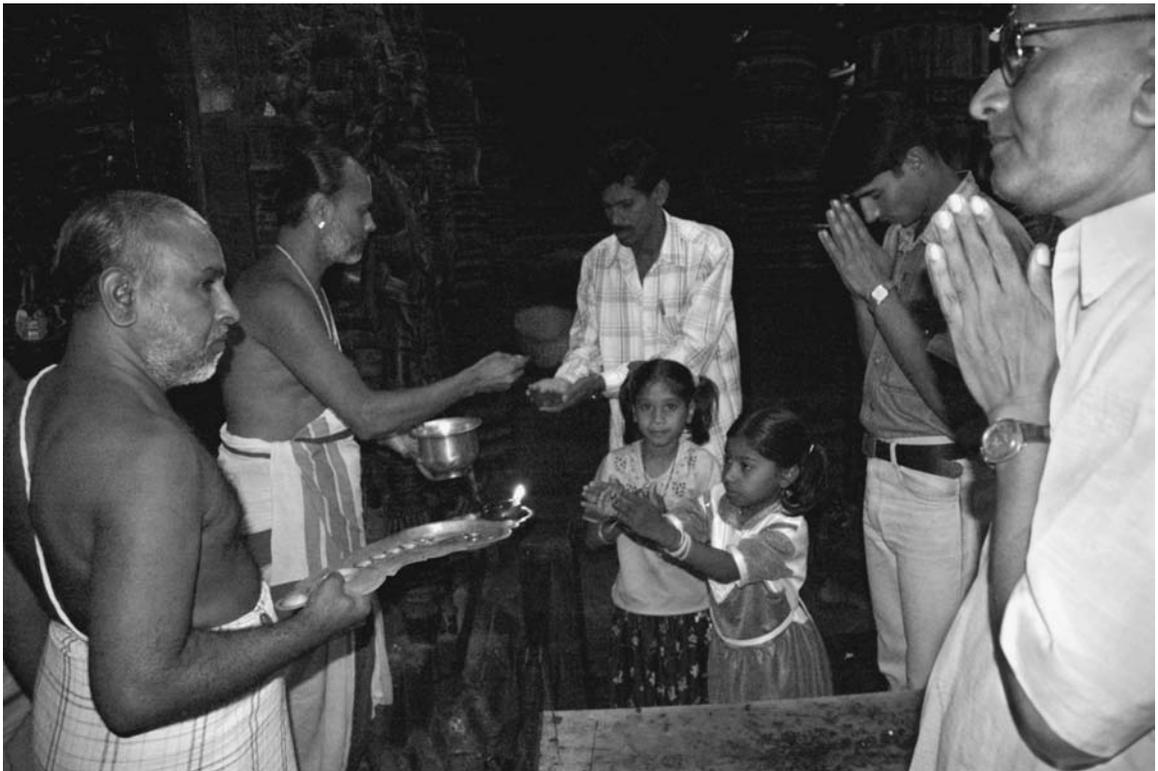
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bhakti

Bhakti (SANSKRIT *bhaj*, to adore, honor, worship) is a central spiritual path in Hinduism, involving devotion to and service of the chosen deity.

Vedic tradition, the chief religious practice of Hinduism from around 1500 B.C.E. to roughly



Devotional practice bhakti is a central feature of Hinduism. Here a Brahmin priest and devotees are at worship in Belur, Bengal. (*Gustap Irani*)

the start of the Common Era, relied on a ritual process of chanting and making offerings to various divinities. Compared with the later practice of bhakti, these divinities were not addressed with intimacy and a sense of connection; furthermore, they were never iconographically represented and were not generally visualized in human form; the humanity of the divinity became a very important element in later bhakti.

The devotional practices of bhakti are very old, probably originating with the non-ARYAN (thus non-Vedic) population. As the Aryans gradually spread beyond their original settlement in Northwest India and established cultural dominance over the indigenous peoples of India, they rather freely incorporated values and traditions from the local substratum. This influence began to show an obvious impact in the development of the bhakti path within Hinduism.

The Sanskrit text the BHAGAVAD GITA, written around 200 B.C.E., was the first true bhakti text in the Indian tradition, in that case focusing on the worship of KRISHNA. It depicts a very close, personal relationship with God, one with a human form and personality. However, bhakti is still seen as a restrained, austere practice that takes the form of a YOGA.

As bhakti began to emerge with full force in the extreme south of India beginning in the third century, the devotion to the gods VISHNU and SHIVA and to the Goddess became a passionate, emotional experience. Devotees such as the poet-saints who periodically emerged until the 17th or 18th century threw themselves into bhakti with complete abandon. The quintessential devotee took pride in being considered a mad person and would be often completely lost in ecstatic song and trance. One important reason why the bhakti movement eventually swept all India and transformed the face of Hinduism was that the songs of the saints were all in the local dialects and languages, not in the Sanskrit language of the priestly elite. These works were lovingly remembered and compiled by their followers.

Bhakti often involved PILGRIMAGE to and worship at sacred places where ICONS of the chosen deity could be found. The temple tradition of India developed on the basis of devotion to deities who took iconic shape in stone in temples the length and breadth of the country. Devotees yearned to see the deity and to have audience with him or her. This audience is referred to as DARSHAN, or “viewing,” and is the most special and intimate aspect of the temple visit.

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Bhaktivedanta, Swami A. C. Prabhupada (1896–1977) *Vaishnavite guru and founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness*

Bhaktivedanta Swami played a major role in interpreting Vedanta for modern Western readers and in spreading the worship of Krishna outside India. For several decades his followers’ chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra and their public distribution of literature became the face of Hinduism in the West.

Abhay Charan De was born in Calcutta on September 1, 1896, the son of a pious cloth merchant who would visit the Radha-Govinda Temple every day. When Abhay was four, his father gave him a small image of KRISHNA and taught him to worship

the deity. Abjay entered Scottish Churches College in 1916. While still a student he entered into an arranged marriage with Padharani Satta in 1919; his wife never shared his devotional aspirations. He completed his college work but refused his degree, in response to Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI'S call to boycott British goods.

While working as manager of a pharmaceutical company. De met Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami, head of the GAUDIYA MATH, an India-wide CHAITANYA-VAISHNAVITE religious movement, who became his spiritual master. In 1932 Sri Saraswati initiated De into the Gaudiya Math and gave him the name Abhay Charanaravinda, meaning "one who fearlessly takes shelter at the feet of the Lord." The GURU told him to prepare to spread the teachings of Krishna worship in the West, but De put aside the suggestion. After his guru's death two decades later, he wrote his first books: an *Introduction to the Geetopanishad* and the *Bhagavad Gita As It Is*. For these publications, a society called the Vaishnavites honored him with the title *Bhaktivedanta*, meaning "devotion to the knowledge of God." He left his wife and family in 1959 to study under another teacher, Acharya Goswami, at the Radha Damodara temple in BRINDAVAN (Krishna's birthplace), where he lived austerely in a small room.

In 1965 Bhaktivedanta visited the United States to proclaim the message of Krishna. In 1966 he founded the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS (known as ISKCON), to propound the ancient tradition of Vaishnavism, as taught in the first half of the 16th century by the ecstatic Chaitanya, among modern seekers. The followers of ISKCON have made BHAKTI YOGA famous in the West through their ubiquitous chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra. The organization has published new translations of many ancient Vaishnavite scriptures, particularly the BHAGAVAD GITA and the BHAGAVATA PURANA.

The movement became one of the most prominent of the alternative religions to emerge during the 1970s in America, from which it has spread

to every continent. Before his death, Srila Prabhupada (an honorific) saw the building of many temples, children's schools, rural communities, and major cultural centers around the world. Since his death, the movement has diminished in size and has fragmented.

On July 9, 1977, Bhaktivedanta Swami appointed 11 of his senior assistants to act as officiating priests (*ritviks*) to initiate all future ISKCON members on his behalf. After his death at Brindavan on November 14 that year, the appointees claimed they were in fact chosen as successor gurus, causing confusion and controversy within the movement. ISKCON members believe that Bhaktivedanta Swami still exerts his spiritual influence on anyone who follows his teachings, and that he remains a highly empowered devotee of their God, Krishna. Effigies of Bhaktivedanta Swami are installed in all ISKCON temples.

Today, in addition to ISKCON, a reform movement, the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS REVIVAL MOVEMENT (IRM), carries on the teaching of Bhaktivedanta Swami.

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Bharat (Bharata)

Bharat (*Bharata* or *Bhaarata* in Sanskrit) is the Hindi name for India and the official name that the country adopted at independence. Legend traces the name to Bharata, the eponymous chief

who headed the tribe from which all the people of India are said to descend and who gave his name to the MAHABHARATA. *Bharata* thus means “the homeland of those descended from Bharata.”

See also [RAMAYANA](#).

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Bharata See [RAMAYANA](#).

Bharata Natyam

Bharata Natyam is one of the oldest dance forms of India. It has been sustained in the temples and courts of southern India since ancient times. Its 108 poses are found carved on the walls of the huge gateway of the CHIDAMBARAM temple in Tamil Nadu. In the 19th century Bharata Natyam was codified and documented as a performing art by four brothers known as the Tanjore Quartet, whose musical compositions form most of the Bharata Natyam repertoire even today.

The dance was handed down from generation to generation under the DEVADASI system, in which women were dedicated to temples to serve the deity as dancers and musicians. These highly talented artists and their male gurus kept the art alive until the early 20th century, although the *devadasis* were by now no longer considered respectable. At that time, a renewal of interest in India's cultural heritage prompted the educated elite to rediscover it. The revival of Bharata Natyam by pioneers such as E. Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi Arundale drew the dance out of the temples and onto the stage. It did not cease, however, to be a dance devoted to the divinities.

Contemporary Bharata Natyam is based on solo dances with musical accompaniment, includ-

ing singers and percussion. The dance unfolds from a base stance with the body in a lowered position with knees akimbo. From this stance the legs are moved outward rhythmically, beating tempo in play with the percussion. Most performances include a “pure dance” aspect, but hand and facial gestures (MUDRAS) are also important; they communicate, in a coded pantomime, the story being told. The stories are almost always about the gods SHIVA and VISHNU (in his various incarnations) and their wives and families. The narrative plays on familiar stories that almost always express a devotional sentiment; it is a form of choreographed worship.

Today Bharata Natyam is one of the most popular and widely performed Indian dance styles; it is practiced by male and female dancers all over India. Degree courses covering the practice and theory of Bharata Natyam are at last available at major universities of India. Important Bharata Natyam dancers of the 20th century revival include Balasaraswati, sometimes thought of as the last *devadasi*; Rukmini Devi Arundale, and Yamini Krishnamurti.

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Bharati, Baba Premanand (d. 1914)

pioneer Hindu leader in the United States

Baba Premanand Bharati was among the small group of Hindu leaders who entered the United States in the decades after the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893. He founded the Krishna Samaj in New York City soon after the start of the new century.

Born Surendranath Mukerji in India, Bharati led a life prior to his arrival in the United States in 1902 that is little known. He was a devotee of Krishna and followed a form of Vaishnavite BHAKTI YOGA similar to that popularized in the 1970s by the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS. He advocated the repetition of the Hare Krishna mantra as a means of gaining release from the wheel of reincarnation and gaining enlightenment.

Bharati first worked in New York City, where he organized the Krishna Samaj. He lectured along the East Coast for several years and then moved to Los Angeles, where he built a temple and developed a youthful and loyal following. After only a few years, in 1909, he returned to India, where he died in 1914, still a relatively young man.

In the years after his death, Bharati was condemned by American nativists such as Elizabeth Reed, who were mobilizing public support for the Asian Exclusion Act, which passed in 1917. At about that time the Krishna Samaj was shut down. However, Bharati's followers later formed several other organizations with similar missions, including the Order of Loving Service, active only in the 1930s, and the AUM Temple of Universal Truth, which continued to operate into the 1980s, reprinting Bharati's writings in their periodicals and circulating his picture a half-century after his death.

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Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Peoples Party of India, is one of the largest political parties in India, serving as the governing party on the state and federal levels at various times in recent years.

The BJP is the political wing of the old RASHTRIYA SVAYAM SEVAK SANGH (RSS), the National

Organization for Self-help. It was formed as a separate party in 1980 after internal differences within the Janata Party resulted in the collapse of its government in 1979. BJP held the prime ministership of India from 1998 to 2004 under the leadership of Atal Bihari Bajpayee. In 2004 it was defeated in parliamentary elections by a coalition led by the Congress Party.

The Bharata Janata Party considers itself to be a party of HINDU NATIONALISM; its ideology is called Hindutva, defined not in terms of the Hindu religion but as Indianness. The party points to the original meaning of the word Hindu, coined by Arab conquerors to refer to all the people living in India. However, critics have labeled the BJP a Hindu fundamentalist or even a Hindu fascist party.

The BJP rose to prominence during the turmoil surrounding the Babri Masjid Mosque in the Uttar Pradesh city of AYODHYA. This mosque was built in 1528 C.E. on a site claimed to be the birthplace of RAMA, an AVATAR of Visnu. During the 1940s RSS members erected an image of Rama in the mosque, and the government later sealed off the mosque. During the 1980s the RSS began staging violent protests against its very existence. Lal Krishnan Advani, the leader of the BJP and a leader in the VISHVA HINDU PARISHAD (World Hindu Council), was indicted on several occasions for leading the protests. This mosque was destroyed in 1992 by RSS activists, prompting nationwide riots that killed 3,000 people.

In 2006 BJP was voted out of office to a great extent because of the Gujarat violence of 2003, when 3,000 Muslims were killed, for which the BJP chief minister, Narendra Modi, was held responsible.

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Bhartrihari (c. fourth or fifth century)
grammarian and philosopher

Bhartrihari was a philosopher of language whose work was seminal in the development of the Indian theories of language and of MANTRA. There are several extant accounts of his life, but none seem to have a historical basis. He was primarily known as a grammarian, but his works had great philosophical impact as well.

Bhartrihari developed a philosophy that came to be known as “word *ADVAITA*,” or non-dualism, based on the notion that the word (*shabda*) is the transcendent reality. His idea of “Shabda *BRAHMAN*,” or Ultimate Reality, as the basis of all language, broke the barrier between grammar and philosophy. He is best known for his work *Vakyapadiya* (Treatise on words and sentences), which formulates the *sphota* theory of linguistic utterance, much debated in successive times. Bhartrihari maintained that the study of Sanskrit grammar alone could cause one to attain liberation from birth and rebirth.

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Bhaskara (c. ninth century C.E.) *Vedantic philosopher*

Bhaskara was one of the most important philosophers of VEDANTA. He accepts the notions of non-duality—the unity of reality—as argued by

the earlier SHANKARA, but does not accept their notion that the phenomenal universe, the everyday world, is illusory. He instead argues that the universe is a real evolute of the Supreme Reality *BRAHMAN*, regarded not as a person but as an entity. Only one of his books is extant, a commentary on the Vedantic text the VEDANTA SUTRA.

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Bhavabhuti (early eighth century C.E.) *Sanskrit playwright*

One of the greatest authors in Indian literature, Bhavabhuti is most famous for his three surviving Sanskrit dramas: *Mahaviracharita* (Adventures of that great hero Rama), *Uttaramacharita* (The later adventures of Rama), and *Malatimadhava* (The story of Malati and Madhava). *Mahaviracharita* tells with considerable originality the full story of RAMA from his birth to the defeat of his enemy RAVANA. The *Uttaramacharita* is a story of the children of Lord Rama as they grew up in the forest, a story not told in the original RAMAYANAS. *Malatimadhava* is basically a romance.

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Bhave, Vinoba (1885–1982) *leader in the Indian independence movement*

Vinoba Bhave, a prominent nonviolent leader of the Indian independence movement, was a prolific popular writer and a tireless organizer for land redistribution and social reform. He continued to agitate on behalf of Gandhian social values in the decades after independence.

Vinayak Narahari Bhave was born on September 11, 1885, to a Brahmin family in the village of Gagode in Maharashtra. Vinoba (an affectionate nickname) studied the works of Maharashtra's saints and philosophers as a boy. He had a passion for mathematics, but as had Sri RAMAKRISHNA before him, he seemed uninterested in the ordinary course of education. He spent two years in college dissatisfied and adrift. Early in 1916, on his way to Bombay (Mumbai) to appear for the intermediate examination, he threw his school and college certificate into a fire and decided to change course for BENARES (Varanasi), the Hindu holy city, to study Sanskrit.

At Benares, Vinoba encountered the views of Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI. Enthusiastic about Gandhi's ideas of uplifting the poor and purity of purpose he joined Gandhi's ASHRAM at Sabarmati near Ahmedabad in Gujarat state. At Gandhi's request he took charge of the ashram at Wardha in Maharashtra in 1921. In 1923 he began to publish the monthly *Maharashtra Dharma* in the regional Marathi language, to which he contributed articles on Indian philosophy, including popular studies on the *Abhangas* of the poet-saint TUKARAM. Later on, the monthly became a weekly and continued to be published for three years.

On December 23, 1932, Vinoba moved to Nalwadi (a village about two miles from Wardha), where he tried to implement his idea of supporting himself by spinning. When he grew ill in 1938, he moved to what he called Paramdham Ashram in Paunar, which remained his headquarters. Vinoba was heavily involved in the freedom movement throughout this period. In 1923, he was jailed for several months at Nagda and Akola for taking a prominent part in agitation at Nagpur. In 1925, he was sent by Gandhi to Vyon in Kerala to supervise the entry of the Harijans (Dalits, or untouchables) to the temple. In 1932, he was jailed for six months for raising his voice against British rule. In 1940, he was selected by Gandhi as the first person to do "Truth Force"

(*satyagraha*), Gandhi's nonviolent method of social action, on his own.

Vinoba was jailed three times during 1940–41 for successively longer terms. He became known nationally when Gandhi selected him for individual action, introducing him in a statement on October 5, 1940. Vinoba took part in the Quit India movement of 1942, for which he was jailed for three years at Vellore and Seoni.

Jail for Vinoba had become a place for reading and writing. He saw the proofs of his book *Gitai* (a Marathi translation of the BHAGAVAD GITA) in the Dhulia jail, where he lectured on the Gita to his jailed colleagues; the talks were collected by Sane Guruji and later published as a book. In Nagpur jail he wrote *Swarajya Shastra* (the treatise of self rule) and completed a collection of the *bhajans* (religious songs) of the saints Gyaneshwar (see JNANESHVARA), Eknath and Namdev. His popular books eventually treated many diverse topics in religion, philosophy, education, and the common good.

In March 1948, Gandhi's followers and workers met at Sevagram, to discuss the idea of Sarvodaya Samaj (Society for the uplift of all). Vinoba got busy with activities to soothe the wounds of partition of the nation. In the beginning of 1950, Vinoba started several idealistic reform movements.

In 1951 Vinoba launched the activity for which he became most famous, the Bhudan (Gift of the Land) movement. For the next 13 years he walked from place to place around the country asking large landowners and villages to offer land to the poor, to help bridge the great divide between the landed and landless. His efforts yielded surprising success by the time he returned to Paunar on April 10, 1964.

Over the following several years he continued in his travels, now campaigning against the various divisions within Indian society: caste, language, and class. In 1970, he announced his decision to stay in one place. He observed a year of silence from December 25, 1974, to December 25, 1975.

In 1976, he undertook a fast to stop the slaughter of cows. His spiritual pursuits intensified as he withdrew from his practical work. He passed away on November 15, 1982, at his ashram.

Vinoba's contribution to the history of the nonviolent movement remains significant. All his life he campaigned for "people's government," according to the Gandhian principle of extreme decentralization. He believed, as Gandhi did, that government and the economy should be built from the village up, not from the capital city down. Though his idealistic campaigns may have fallen short of their goals, all who encountered Vinoba saw a generous, committed, spiritually directed person. He inspired a whole generation. As a sign of respect for him and his spiritual accomplishment, Vinoba Bhave was referred to most commonly as *ACHARYA*, "the learned one."

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bhavyatva See [JAINISM](#).

bhedabheda

Bhedabheda is a term used in some Vedantic philosophies to describe the relation between the individual self and the divinity. *Bheda* means "difference," *abheda* means "nondifference"; together the term refers to things that are different and not different at the same time. This school views the individual self as nondifferent (*abheda*) from the divinity, while recognizing that in certain respects the divinity is different from the individual self (for example, regarding its supremacy over the universe).

This point of view was expounded by *BHASKARA* and by the *CHAITANYA* school, whose approach is referred to as *achintya bhedabheda*. *NIMBARKA*'s school refers to itself formally as *Dvaitadvaita*, "duality and non-duality," a different expression of the same concept, although it too is sometimes called *bhedabheda*.

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Bhima

Bhima (literally fearsome or terrible) is the second of the five *PANDAVA* brothers, whose story is told in the great epic *MAHABHARATA*.

The five Pandavas were all born of the same mother, *KUNTI*, with different gods as their fathers. That Bhima's father was the wind god *VAYU* explains his violence, temerity, and quickness to anger. He is also known for overweening pride and gluttony. Bhima was prodigiously strong and a formidable, undefeatable wrestler.

From childhood, Bhima faced an angry rival in his cousin *DURYODHANA*, who persistently plotted to usurp the kingdom that rightfully belonged to the sons of *PANDU*. One time Duryodhana poisoned Bhima and threw him into the *GANGES*. This action backfired: the poison was neutralized by the snake-people or *NAGAS* who lived in the river, who also gave Bhima a magic potion to make him superstrong. When Duhshana, one of the Kaurava sons, tried to disrobe *DRAUPADI*, the wife of the Pandavas, Bhima angrily vowed that he would one day kill Duryodhana and drink the blood of Duhshasana, a vow he eventually fulfilled. Bhima married the demoness *Hidimba* and fathered a son with her named *Ghatokacha*, who became a

fierce fighter in the war with the KAURAVAS. In the final battle Bhima struck Duryodhana below the waist; he was forever labeled an unfair fighter on this account.

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Bhishma

Bhishma, “the terrible,” is one of the most important characters in the great epic MAHABHARATA. He was the son of the river goddess Ganga (see GANGES) and the first son of the king Shantanu. In his old age, Shantanu wished to take another wife, Satyawati, but the woman insisted that any son of hers become king. As a devoted son Bhishma thereupon took a vow that he would never take the throne; as a wise man, he also vowed never to take a wife or father children.

Bhishma’s efforts to obtain wives for Satyawati’s son Vichitravirya proved his undoing. When he seized a woman named Amba as a potential bride, she begged to be returned to her country to marry another man, and Bhishma released her. However, her chosen love rejected her, and she returned to Bhishma. This time he refused to marry her to Vichitravirya. Enraged, Amba vowed to kill Bhishma one day, although he had earned the boon that he could not be killed without his consent. Amba angrily haunted the Earth, returning in male form as Shikhandi to fight Bhishma in the great war. Because of her presence Bhishma was killed in that battle, as he resigned himself to death.

Bhishma’s half brother Vichitravirya failed to produce an heir; after his death his widows Ambika and Ambalika needed someone to father their children. Bhishma learned of another half brother, VYASA, the “author” (or compiler) of the

Mahabharata. Vyasa was a renunciant, but he consented to couple with the two women. They bore PANDU and DHRITARASHTRA, the progenitors of the two sets of cousins whose war over the land of the Kurus is the subject of the great epic. Thus, Bhishma is related through his father to both sides in the conflict. He is called, therefore, great-uncle to them, though he is not their direct progenitor.

Since Dhritarashtra was blind and Pandu died when his children were very young, Bhishma became a father figure to both the PANDAVAS and the KAURAVAS. In the great battle Bhishma became the general for the Kaurava side, the side of the usurpers. He was mortally wounded when ARJUNA stepped out from behind Shikandhi (Amba reincarnated) to shoot him. He lingered for 58 days before dying, giving discourses to YUDHISHTHIRA that make up the majority of the Shantiparvan section of the Mahabharata. A chapter of the Mahabharata called Bhishmaparvan recounts his role in the story.

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Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar (Lord of the Worlds) is an ancient city named for SHIVA that now serves as the capital of the southern Indian state of Orissa. It is famous for its many temples, mostly dedicated to the god Shiva, all built in the Kalinga style of the region. Most characteristic of this type of architecture are the soaring, tapering towers that are decorated so as not to interrupt their straight lines. Most temples in Bhubaneswar were built between

750 and 1250 C.E.; the most famous is Lingaraja, a temple to Shiva, or Tribhuvaneshvara (Ruler of the Three Worlds), built around 1100. Its tower is over 100 feet high.

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bija mantra

The concept of a *bija* (seed) *MANTRA*, originally derived from *TANTRA*, is widely employed in every sect of Hinduism. A *bija* is a short mantra, usually of one syllable, which is understood to be the visible or audible form of a deity. A *bija mantra* ends with the letter *m*. Examples are *Aim* for SARASVATI, *Shrim* for LAKSHMI, *Krim* for KALI, and *Gam* for GANESHA. In the tantric tradition such mantras are given to initiates only. In KUNDALINI YOGA there are *bija mantras* for each of the CHAKRAS; they are recited in order to raise the *kundalini*, the divine serpent energy coiled at the base of the spine.

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bindu

The *bindu* (drop or dot) is an esoteric concept denoting the spaceless, timeless point that is the source of all manifestation. It also can denote the silent point that is the source of all sacred sound. Most *YANTRAS*, or ritual designs that denote particular divinities, have a dot or *bindu* at their center. Sometimes the ritual or devotional dot on the forehead (see [FACIAL MARKINGS](#)) is considered to represent the *bindu*. In that form the *bindu* may be seen as the infinitely dense point of consciousness

out of which the universe developed. The Sanskrit writing system uses a dot where the *bindu* can be taken to represent the individual soul.

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Birla Mandir

One of the first temples built in modern India by industrialists to celebrate their faith is the Birla Mandir, built in 1938 by G. D. Birla. Appropriate to the status of his family as one of the most wealthy in India the temple is dedicated to LAKSHMI, goddess of prosperity, and Lord VISHNU, her husband. It is called the Lakshmi Narayan Temple. The temple was opened by Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI with the specific proviso that there would be no caste restriction in regard to entry. At that time (and even to some extent today) Dalit (untouchables) were barred from entering temples.

A special characteristic of the temple is that it is explicitly (in a plaque at the front of the temple) open to people of any faith or social class; the inner carvings and statuary also pay tribute to the Buddhists, Jains (see [JAINISM](#)), and Sikhs (see [SIKHISM](#)), as well as to the many Hindu gods.

The external surface of the temple is made to resemble Delhi's prolific Mughal architecture (c. 1500–1800 C.E.); it is made of red sandstone decorated with marble. As is any temple it is decorated with many carvings showing scenes from Indian myths. The *ICONS* of the temple were made by specialists from BENARES (Varanasi). There were 101 experts employed in its construction, led by a learned specialist, Vishvanath Shasti. The temple was built in Orissan style, which features high, curved turrets that show a ribbed motif at the top of the temple tower.



Birla Mandir, a temple devoted to Vishnu, is an example of a modern Hindu temple in Delhi, India. (Constance A. Jones)

The highest tower of the temple is 160 feet. It is eastward facing with a long stairway upward that leads to the platform in which the inner sanctum is situated. The inner sanctum contains Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Narayana. Other shrines display Lord SHIVA, GANESHA, and HANUMAN. In a northern section is a shrine to KRISHNA.

Behind the temple there is a spacious area that children love containing a stone version of the chariot that Krishna and Arjuna rode in the MAHABHARATA. Several small rock temples are also found there. Included is a statue of G. D. Birla himself, facing the back of his great temple. The temple is visited by thousands of people every day.

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Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna Hahn (1831–1891) *cofounder of the Theosophical Society*
Better known by her initials, H.P.B., Helena Blavatsky was one of the most influential 19th-century writers in the fields of Theosophy and the occult. As cofounder of the Theosophical Society and frequent visitor to India, she also provoked wide popular interest in the religious traditions of India.

Born in Ekaterinoslav, Russia (now Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine), on July 30, 1831, Blavatsky grew up in an affluent Russian family in which the occult and supernatural were not unknown.

As a teenager, she did automatic writing. Her mother died when Blavatsky was 12 years old and she went to live with her grandfather. At 16 she married General N. V. Blavatsky; however, claiming that marriage did not accommodate her “free spirit,” she left her husband and took residence in Constantinople.

The trip to Turkey was the start of almost two decades of extensive travel, taking her to Egypt, England, India, and (it was claimed) Tibet. She traveled around the world twice in the decade 1851–61, continuing her investigations in the occult, mediumship, and spiritualism. She founded a spiritualist society in 1871 in Cairo, but the organization failed almost immediately as a result of some members’ assumptions that H.P.B. had produced occult phenomena fraudulently.

H.P.B. arrived in New York in 1873 and quickly became familiar with American spiritualism. She met the Eddy brothers, mediums who conducted materialization seances. While visiting Vermont to demonstrate her own abilities at materialization along with the Eddy brothers, she met Henry Steel Olcott. In 1875, she and Olcott were joined by the lawyer William Q. Judge to found the Theosophical Society in New York City. She began to research and write her first book, *Isis Unveiled*, published in 1877.

To H.P.B., Theosophy superseded spiritualism. Whereas spiritualism claimed contact with spirits of the ordinary dead, she contacted the masters or *mahatmas*, teachers of occult wisdom who resided in elevated planes. She appeared to receive messages on paper from the *mahatmas*, which arrived, as if from the sky or from within a specially constructed cabinet, at the Theosophical headquarters. The source of the “letters from the *mahatmas*” continues to be debated—were they created by H.P.B. or delivered from the psychic realm?

H.P.B. and Olcott moved to India in 1878. The following year they began publishing *The Theosophist* magazine. A donation of land at Adyar near Madras (Chennai) in 1882 allowed them to

establish a center, which still conducts education programs and retreats for members of the Theosophical Society.

After securing the land for the Theosophical Society, H.P.B. returned to London, where in 1884 she demonstrated her powers before the Society for Psychical Research. The viewers were impressed. However, her assistant in India, Emma Cutting Coulomb, destroyed this favorable impression by charging that H.P.B.’s abilities were fraudulent. In 1885, the society commissioned Richard Hodgson to investigate the charges. His report concluded that she was indeed an accomplished fraud.

While attempting to live down the scandal, H.P.B. took up residence in Germany after 1885 and returned to London in 1887. Her major work, *The Secret Doctrine*, was written there and published in 1889. It remains one of the most influential occult works to appear in the West. Blavatsky died in England on May 8, 1891. Her most famous disciple, Annie BESANT, who became a convert to THEOSOPHY after reading H.P.B.’s work, succeeded her as head of the Theosophical Society.

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Blue Mountain Center for Meditation

See EASWARAN, EKNATH.

Bonder, Saniel (1950–) *contemporary American teacher*

Saniel Bonder, formerly a leader with ADI DA SAMRAJ, left that community in 1992 and has since emerged as an independent spiritual teacher.

Bonder was born in 1950 in New York to a Jewish family who moved to North Carolina in 1957. He was awakened to spiritual matters in the later 1960s while a student at Harvard University. His turn toward Hinduism was influenced by YOGANANDA'S *Autobiography of a Yogi* and by an encounter in India with Ramana MAHARSHI. In 1973 he learned of Da Free John (who is now known as Adi Da Samraj), and he joined the small community around him. He became a student of the ADVAITA VEDANTA philosophy that underlies that community.

By the beginning of the 1990s, Bonder decided that the experiment in spirituality led by Adi Da had failed, and in 1992 he withdrew from the community. He began an intense period of self-exploration with the assistance of a psychological therapist and a shaman. His experiences, including an encounter with the Goddess, led him to experience what he termed "Onlyness of Being," what traditional Hindu teachers term SELF-REALIZATION. From that point he began to conduct workshops and to lead daily MEDITATION sessions. A small initial following has grown into a new community organized around his teaching. He discovered that the new relationships were becoming what he called alchemical catalysts for transformation.

Bonder has characterized his approach to spirituality as "waking down." He contrasts his approach to the common idea that escape from mundane existence is necessary in order to become spiritual. He suggests that the ideal is to "fall" into both one's pure conscious nature and one's embodied personhood at the same

time. With this "fall" we realize that we already are infinite transcendental Being incarnating as human being. Bonder has described his approach as "aspirant centered." He tries to assist seekers in realizing their divinity as a beginning point for a life of transformation. He defines *self-realization* as awareness and confidence in one's basic integration of both infinite and finite natures.

Among those who found their way to Bonder, a number of students, including his wife, have emerged as teachers and adepts. They now assist in leading the community that operates under the name Waking Down in Mutuality. Activities are carried out across the United States. Headquarters are at the Ma-Tam Temple of Being in Portland, Oregon. Bonder has written several books and regularly teaches at Ken Wilber's Integral Spiritual Center.

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Brahma

Brahma is a divinity who makes his appearance in the post-Vedic Indian epics (c. 700 B.C.E.–100 C.E.). He has an important role in the stories of the great gods in the epics and PURANAS. He is often listed in a trinity alongside Vishnu and Shiva, where Brahma is the creator god, Vishnu is the sustainer of the world, and Shiva is the destroyer of the world. Brahma is generally considered the creator of the universe, but there are many different accounts of this act within Indian mythology; in fact, some stories credit other divinities or entities with the creation.

Unlike the other two members of the trinity (and to a lesser extent the Great Goddess),

Brahma has never had a wide following of exclusive devotees. There are only two temples in all of India devoted solely to Brahma; one is at PUSHKARA Lake near Ajmer in Rajasthan and the other is near Idar, on the border between Rajasthan and Gujarat. Brahma is born in the lotus that emerges from Vishnu's navel as he lies on the primordial MILK OCEAN. In this image he is the creator god, but still quite subsidiary to VISHNU. Iconographically Brahma's vehicle is the swan (Indian goose). Brahma's wife is SARASVATI, the goddess of the arts and learning. He is depicted carrying a vessel that pours water, prayer beads, and sometimes the VEDAS.

Brahma is always depicted as having four heads. The story is told that he was once in the midst of extended austerities in order to gain the throne of Indra, king of the gods, when the latter sent a celestial dancing girl, Tilottama, to disturb him. Not wanting to move from his meditative position, when Tilottama appeared to his right, he produced a face on his right; when she appeared behind him, he produced a face behind his head; when she appeared at his left, he produced a face on the left, and when she appeared above him he produced a face above. When SHIVA saw this five-headed Brahma he scolded him for his lust and pinched off his head looking upward, leaving Brahma humiliated and with only four heads. He did not attain the role of king of the gods.

There are a great many stories about Brahma in Indian mythology. Most commonly he is known as a boon giver who was required to grant magical powers as a reward for ascetics, whether animal, human, god, or demon. Often these beings, ascetics, gods, and the like would become problems for the gods when they became too powerful.

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Rajani Mishra, *Brahma-Worship: Tradition and Iconography* (Delhi: Kanishka, 1989).

brahmacharya

Brahmacharya literally means “conducting oneself in accord with BRAHMAN.” *Brahmacharya* itself has two important meanings. It refers to the ancient practice of celibacy for men, considered an indispensable aid for the most avid yogis and seekers who wish to break the bonds of SAMBARA, or worldly existence. Restraint of the senses has always been an important aspect of Indian YOGAS; complete restraint on sexuality is one of the most difficult and spiritually powerful restraints.

Brahmacharya was also used to refer to the student stage of a man's life, in the Brahmanical tradition of life stages or ASHRAMAS. One was expected to remain celibate during the 12 years of Vedic learning with one's guru, from the age of 12 to the age of 24, when one was to take up the household life. These stages of life may never have been precisely practiced by most BRAHMINS, but the ideal was widely known and respected.

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Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organizations (BKWSO) (est. 1937)

A worldwide family of individuals from all walks of life, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organizations offer education in human, moral, and spiritual values.

The founder, Prajapita Brahma, or Dada Lekhraj (1876–1969), was born into a humble home, the son of a village schoolmaster. He was brought up within the disciplines of the Hindu

tradition but was not particularly devout at an early age. He entered the jewelry business and earned a considerable fortune as a diamond trader. At age 60, he decided to invest more time in quiet reflection and solitude. In 1936, while in a meditative state, he felt a warm flow of energy surround him and experienced a series of profound visions that revealed truths about the nature of the soul and God, the Supreme Soul. He decided to dedicate his life to understanding the significance and application of the knowledge he received and to convey this understanding to others in service of world transformation. In October 1937 he formed a managing commit-

tee of eight young women, and in February 1938 he gave all of his property and assets to a trust administered by them.

Although the BKWSO is not a women's organization per se, it has been largely administered by women from its inception. The organization states that it is the need for the traditionally more feminine qualities of patience, tolerance, sacrifice, and love that keeps women in leadership positions.

The organization came into being under the name Om Mandali. At first it consisted of a handful of men, women, and children living in Hyderabad. After one year the organization moved to Karachi, Pakistan, where for 14 years, until after the partition of India and Pakistan, a group of 300 individuals lived as a self-sufficient community, spending their time in intense spiritual study and meditation.

In 1950, the community moved to Mount Abu in the state of Rajasthan, India. In 1952, Brahma Baba, as Dada Lekhraj had become known, felt that outreach was necessary to share the knowledge and experiences of the community. A few sisters left Mount ABU and moved to Bombay (Mumbai) and Delhi to serve by establishing study centers where the knowledge of Raja Yoga would be taught. The Madhuban community at Mount Abu remains the nucleus of the Brahma Kumaris centers worldwide and is a pilgrimage place for study and retreat.

In 1969, Dadi Prakashmani, one of the original eight trustees, was appointed chief administrative head of the Brahma Kumaris. Under her leadership the organization has experienced tremendous growth, expanding beyond India for the first time. It now includes 3,200 centers with over 450,000 students in 70 countries. Since 1974, Dadi Janaki has served as coordinator for all Brahma Kumaris activities outside India.

Today the BKWSO offers a varied curriculum with classes and workshops on Raja Yoga, stress-free living, MEDITATION training, community organization, and development of communication



The Universal Peace Hall, the main building of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization on Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India (Constance A. Jones)

skills. As part of its 60th anniversary, the Brahma Kumaris inaugurated the Academy for a Better World as a place where men, women, and children can reach their unique human potential and cultivate common human values. The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University is a nongovernmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

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brahman (brahma)

Brahman is one of the most important terms in the Vedic tradition, with a rich variety of meanings. It derives from the root *br̥ih*, which means to "swell" or "grow," and evidently first referred to the swelling or growing power of the sacrifice and its *MANTRAS* that expand out and create efficacy.

The most common early meaning of *brahman* was simply "prayer." It is from this term that the word *BRAHMIN*, "one who prays," or "priest," is derived. Certain Vedic text collections are called *BRAHMANAS*; they are said to contain the secret of prayer.

Eventually, the term *brahman* was developed in the Upanishads to mean "the All" or "Ultimate Reality." An understanding developed that the individual self, or *ATMAN*, was identical to the *brahman*. These understandings developed in later *VEDANTA* into both theistic views, in which the *brahman* was tantamount to a god or goddess, and nontheistic views, in which the *brahman* was seen as an uncharacterized reality that constituted or underlay everything.

Often *brahman* is spelled as *brahma*, in part depending on grammatical context. Both forms

are commonly used in transliterating Sanskrit. In the latter spelling the word must be carefully distinguished from *BRAHMA*, the creator god, whose name is pronounced with a long final *a*.

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Brahmana

Brahmanas are texts that delineate the workings of the *BRAHMAN* in its oldest sense of the power, efficacy, or energy of Vedic ritual. They are considered *SHRUTI* or revelation and are part of the *VEDAS*. They accompany the *MANTRA* text of the four Vedas and are memorized along with them; the Brahmans of the Black *YAJUR VEDA* is interspersed with the mantras; the other three are stand alone texts. All the Brahmans are written in prose.

The Brahmans are designed to guide and explain the ritual sacrifice (*YAJNA*). Much Vedic mythology is found in the Brahmans, explaining how particular rituals relate to the actions of particular divinities. For example, the *SHATAPATHA BRAHMANA* explains that goat hair is to be mixed with other ingredients for a ritual fire (*AGNI*), because the gods once collected *Agni* from among cattle. Brahmans abound in much obscure, esoteric material that is not easy for the outsider to grasp, but that assure the efficacy and intelligibility of the Vedic ritual for practitioners.

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Brahmananda Saraswati, Swami See ANANDA ASHRAM, MONROE, NEW YORK; MISHRA, RAMAMURTI.

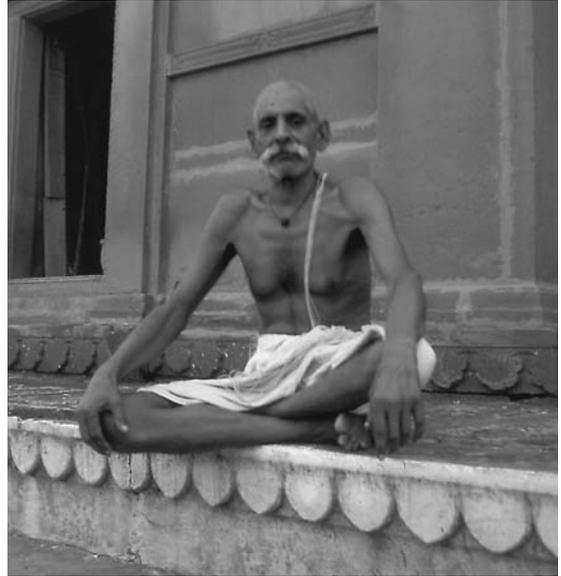
Brahma Sutra See VEDANTA SUTRA.

Brahmin (Brahman)

A Brahmin is a member of the hereditary priestly class of India. The term is derived from the Vedic word *BRAHMAN*, which means (among other things) “prayer.” In Sanskrit the same Vedic word designates prayer and the one who prays, the overseer of the Vedic ritual and its *MANTRAS*. In the ancient *VARNA* or class system the Brahmin was said to emerge from the mouth of the divine being, the warrior from his arms, the ordinary people from his thighs, and the servants from his feet.

Originally, Brahminical status was ensured by Vedic authority. Brahmins were responsible for the transmission of the *VEDAS* over the centuries via oral tradition within Brahminical families. This assured Brahminical authority over all ritual, since it was only through knowledge of the Vedas that the rituals could be performed. All public rituals had to be supervised by Brahmins and all private rituals could be learned only from Brahmins.

As the Brahminical tradition was challenged over the centuries to include more and more indigenous forms of religion, and the culture began to move away from exclusive reliance on Vedic ritual, Brahmins began to emphasize “purity” as a new justification for their superior status. This entailed special norms of conduct including very strict vegetarianism. However, they always maintained their dominant role in the transmission of knowledge and, thereby, in realms of social authority. Such knowledge extended far beyond the Vedas themselves. If there is a stereotypical or ideal role for a Brahmin in the modern world it is teaching. Transmission of knowledge is the traditional role of the Brahmin and remains so



A Brahmin priest wearing sacred thread at a village temple near Benares (Varanasi), India (*Constance A. Jones*)

today. Brahmins continue to perform the rituals at all the great temples in India, but the role of ritualist is now viewed as less important for Brahmins than the role of teacher or preceptor.

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Brahmo Samaj (est. 1828)

The Brahmo Samaj (The Society of Worshippers of One God) was founded in Calcutta (Kolkata)

India, in 1828 by Raja Rammohun ROY (1772–1833), a Bengali Brahmin. Roy was a central figure in the “Indian Renaissance” and the “Bengali Renaissance,” which introduced an emphasis on rationality, women’s rights, and the uplift of lower castes.

The society aimed to reform Hinduism by banishing caste, idolatry, and other features it considered debased in favor of reinstating what it considered were the traditional elements of truth, spirituality, and the unity of religion. Influenced by Christian missionaries and Western ideas that entered India during British colonialism, the society was firmly theistic, appealing to the worship of one God, omniscient and omnipotent. Distinctly Hindu, the society believes that all truth is from God and that the prophets of all religions are to be respected. Raja Rammohun Roy, Devendranath Tagore (1817–1905), and Keshub Chunder Sen (1838–84) were influential in creating the creed and practice of the society.

After Roy’s death the society declined, but it was revived by Devendranath Tagore, father of the famous Indian poet Rabindranath TAGORE. Tagore was opposed to Christian missions, but he did not accept the infallibility of the Hindu scriptures. Under Tagore, the society became an active Hindu missionary organization, attracting educated Hindus in a number of cosmopolitan centers in Bengal and other states. Under Sen, the society became more universal in outlook by drawing on world scriptures. While Sen was leader a number of schisms emerged; as a result, the Brahmo Samaj movement began to include several different organizations.

Today the movement continues to uphold the Brahmo teachings of faith in a personal God, congregational worship, and condemnation of idol worship and widow burning. The society operates the Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya, a school for girls in Calcutta (Kolkata), which has stressed the emancipation of women since its founding in 1890. The school began a Montessori Section in 1930, the first Montessori school in India. The society sponsors the Raja Rammohun Roy Memo-

rial Museum in Calcutta. Although very small today, the society provided a rational critique of traditional ritualistic observances that became part of the secularized democratic culture in Indian society. The society retains its affiliation with Unitarianism in Western countries.

See also UNITED KINGDOM; UNITED STATES.

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Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (c. 700 B.C.E.)

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is a classical UPANISHAD connected to the White YAJUR VEDA. It is probably the oldest of the classical Upanishads and retains much material on ancient Vedic ritual, which the later classical Upanishads ignore.

The work opens with a meditation on the *ashva medha*, or HORSE SACRIFICE, seeing the horse itself as universal reality in all its particulars. This is a feature that is well established in the earlier BRAHMANA literature, which focused on the deeper meaning of ritual.

The Upanishad contains a cosmogony of the Ultimate Self or ATMAN as it differentiates into worldly reality. It also preserves several ancient dialogues about the nature of the universe, the atman, and the BRAHMAN. Particularly, it contains the disquisitions or answers of the famous sage YAJNAVALKYA to these questions.

In the course of this Upanishad, the doctrine of the two forms of *brahman*, the formed and the formless, is outlined (Bri. 2.3. 1–6). This doctrine is repeated in later Upanishads and is a central issue in the thought of later VEDANTA. Brihadaranyaka

also presents for the first time the image of the divine reality as a spider and the worldly reality its spun web or threads (Bri. 2.1.20).

In the course of one of Yajnavalka's dialogues, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad also outlines, perhaps for the first time, the three levels of consciousness: waking (*jagarita*), dreaming sleep (*svapna*), and deep sleep (*sushupti*). (The fourth level appears to be a later development: *turiya*, the transcendent state of consciousness.) The work also outlines (Bri. 4.4. 3–6) the first extended discourse on REINCARNATION and KARMA, as well as the karmic paths of the Sun and Moon: liberation is the path via the Sun and reincarnation is the path via the Moon (Bri. 6.2. 16). Finally, it introduces the negative description of the *brahman* as being “Not thus, not thus” (*NETI NETI*) (Bri. 4.5.15.).

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Brihadishvara Temple

The Brihadishvara (Great Lord) Temple was built around 1009 C.E. by the emperor Rajaraja Chola in the Chola capital of Tanjore (Tanjavur) and is dedicated to Lord SHIVA. It is the tallest of all extant premodern Indian temples and covers the largest area. The round stone crown on top of its soaring tower is estimated to weigh 20 tons; it could have been moved to its current position, 120 feet in the air, only by a construction ramp approaching from a distance. The temple is also known for its 250 carved LINGAMS. The luxuriant and elegant artistry of this temple has been praised over the centuries. It is considered among the finest pieces of premodern Indian architecture still standing.

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Brihaspati (Brahmanaspati)

Brihaspati (Lord of Prayer) is the divine priest in the VEDAS who sanctifies human rites. Later he became priest of the gods, while Shukracharya became priest for the ASURAS. He is also known as Brahmanaspati, to whom several individual hymns are addressed in the RIG VEDA.

In some myths Brihaspati is a *RISHI*, the son of the Rishi ANGIRAS. His wife is carried off by the Moon (SOMA), but is restored to him after a war. She later bore a son, Budha (Mercury), who was claimed by both her husband and the Moon. Still later Brihaspati became identified with the planet Jupiter, which is considered to be auspicious. Iconographically, Brihaspati holds a sacrificial pitcher and a rosary whose beads are from the *rudraksha* plant.

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Brihatkatha (c. 200 C.E.)

The *Brihatkatha* (Great Story) is a collection of adventure tales ascribed to GUNADHYA and written around 200 C.E. It is said to have been originally composed in a dialect of the forest people, but if so, the original was not preserved. Several Sanskrit versions exist, the most famous the 11th-century *KATHASARITSAGARA* (The ocean of the streams of story) by Somadeva. Many of the stories of the *Brihatkatha* complex have found their way into the Jain tradition and reappear in such languages as Kannada and Tamil.

The stories tell of merchants and kings, romance and adventure, quite unlike the traditional Sanskrit PURANAS. The central hero is Naravahanadatta, the son of Udayana. Common in these stories is the appearance of semidevine wizardlike beings called Vidyadharas, who perform magic.

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Brindavan

For KRISHNA worshippers, the Brindavan region in Uttar Pradesh has for centuries been one of the main pilgrimage sites, a center for various cultic developments, and the focus of much Vaishnavite devotion. No prayer or song to Krishna will fail to mention it.

Although born in Mathura, Krishna spent his childhood and young life in the beautiful environs of Brindavan. There he encountered demons of various sorts and defeated them while just a child. There he became the butter thief who stole from all the families in his neighborhood. And it was there that he dallied with the cowherd maidens, the GOPIS, choosing for his favorite RADHA. In Brindavan a pilgrim can visit, walking barefoot, all the places of Krishna's young life, and sense firsthand his divine presence.

CHAITANYA's followers moved from Bengal to Brindavan to develop their philosophy and path. The region also hosts a center for followers of VALLABHA.

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Brunton, Paul (1898–1981) *British philosopher and spiritual teacher*

Paul Brunton was a spiritual writer and philosopher. His self-appointed task was to interpret what he learned in the East to Western audiences. He became a major figure in the spread of Eastern teachings in the West.

Brunton was born Raphael Hurst on November 27, 1898, in London. (When he first became prominent as Brunton, he never explained why or when he had changed his name.) His mother died when he was young; his father remarried, and when he too died Brunton took care of his widow. At age 16 he had a mystical experience, and by 1923 he was a member of a small bohemian group who were interested in spiritual matters. Recognizing that he had occult and clairvoyant powers, he joined the Spiritualist Society of Great Britain. He married Karen Augusta Tottrup and a son was born in 1923. Barely three years later, Brunton and his wife divorced and she married another member of their circle who became a leader in the Anthroposophical Society, another esoteric organization with roots in THEOSOPHY.

In 1930, Brunton traveled to India, where he met yogis and sages. His popular account, *A Search in Secret India*, introduced significant Indian teachers of the time, particularly MEHER BABA and RAMANA MAHARSHI, to a Western audience. His writings indicate that he practiced Ramana's technique of meditating on the question "Who am I?" and gained some degree of peace of mind and inner illumination from this discipline.

From 1934 to 1945, Brunton traveled even more extensively throughout the East and wrote six books about his experiences and his growing commitment to create a complete spiritual teaching for the modern world. Most of his writings

were in the form of organized notes and aphorisms on a host of subjects, comprising more than 7,000 pages withheld for posthumous publication. In his own words, these notes constituted an evolving new East-West philosophy that emerged to meet modern conditions. Brunton became a spiritual teacher and had followers who studied his ideas as well as his prophecies about world affairs.

During the last 20 years of his life, Brunton lived in Vevey, Switzerland, where he received students and inquirers. He died there of a massive cerebral hemorrhage on July 28, 1981.

In 1986, the Paul Brunton Philosophic Foundation (PBPF) was founded in Hector, New York, as a resource for those seeking spiritual understanding. The foundation, under the leadership of Brunton's son, Kenneth Thurston Hurst, completed publication of the 16-volume compendium of his notebooks; instituted a program for donating books to libraries, prisons, and world leaders; and initiated a circulating library of published and unpublished writings by Brunton.

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Buddha (c. 600 B.C.E.) *founder of Buddhism*

The Buddha (the Awakened One) is revered among contemporary Hindus, who usually consider Buddhism to be another form of Hinduism. The flag of India even shows the Dharma Chakra

or “wheel of the law,” which is a Buddhist symbol. The places where the Buddha was born (Lumbini in NEPAL), preached his first sermon (Sarnath near BENARES [Varanasi]), where he died (Vaishali), and where he reached enlightenment (Bodhgaya) are still visited as holy places by Hindus. Additionally, many old sites in India that preserve Buddhist sculpture and painting, such as Barhut, AJANTA, and ELLORA, are preserved by India and are very popular tourist places.

The story of the Buddha's life is well known to Hindus. The prince Gautama was shielded as a child and young man from witnessing any sorrow: disease, old age, and death. The one time he managed to elude the protection of his family and went out to see the world, he was shocked by what he saw. With the permission of his wife, he left her and their son and ventured off as a renunciant. He tried many different paths including severe asceticism, which withered his body and nearly killed him. Eventually, he decided that neither severe asceticism nor a worldly life of indulgence was the true path, and he formulated his famous “Middle-Way.”

Finally, under the sacred Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, Gautama reached his enlightenment; he spent the rest of his life as an awakened teacher wishing to lead the ignorant out of the bonds of karma into a release from birth and rebirth. Though recent and contemporary India looks upon the Buddha as an AVATAR and a holy being, in past eras Indian tradition witnessed great conflict between Buddhism and the Brahminical tradition. Hindu saints of South India, both Shaivite and Vaishnavite, reviled the Buddhist monks and accused them of following a false path. The great BHAGAVATA PURANA, which depicts the 10 incarnations of VISHNU, shows Buddha as the ninth, but in this account he has gone to Earth to preach a creed designed to mislead the ASURAS, or antigods, and not to save humanity.

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buddhi

Buddhi is a technical term in the SAMKHYA YOGA system that refers to discriminative intellect. Ultimately, one seeks to calm the mind so that the discriminative intellect or *buddhi* will be able to discern the clear division between the self or soul and the whirling world of phenomena. This discernment is a crucial step in the liberation of the self from the cycle of birth and rebirth. The *buddhi* is considered to have the greatest predominance of *sattva* (purity) of anything in existence. Ulti-

mately, however, liberation can occur only when *buddhi*, too, is transcended (in consciousness), as it too is part of the world of phenomena and, in its own way, a hindrance to the highest spiritual realization.

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C



Caribbean region

Hindus first entered the Americas from India as settlers in the Caribbean region in the 1840s, in what are now known as Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad/Tobago. Most were poor lower-caste workers from the states of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Western Bihar who were hired as indentured laborers to work on the British and Dutch sugar plantations. After their contracts of indenture ended, most of these workers remained. The British and the Dutch treated their workers differently. The Dutch tended to keep a hands-off policy toward their Hindu workers, with the result that Hindus in Suriname tended to maintain Hindi as their primary language. The British attempted to convert Hindus to Christianity and to change their culture. The result is that Hindus in Trinidad, Tobago, and Guyana speak primarily English rather than Hindi. In Trinidad a form of language known as Plantation Hindi developed, as expressed in oral histories. Missionaries from the ARYA SAMAJ countered the Christian missionaries in the 1940s. In Suriname a small number of immigrants from Java in INDONESIA, also introduced as indentured servants, converted to Hinduism. Today, approximately 27 percent of the

population of Suriname, 34 percent of Guyana, and 24 percent of Trinidad and Tobago are Hindus. Smaller populations of Hindus live on the islands of Jamaica, Grenada, St. Lucia, Martinique, and Guadalupe. All are descendants of indentured servants and have faced evangelization by Christian missionaries.

Hinduism in the Caribbean is primarily Vaishnavite and centers around devotion to the monkey warrior HANUMAN. Other deities such as SHIVA, DURGA, KALI, and GANESHA are also recognized. The primary sacred texts recognized by the laity are not the VEDAS or the UPANISHADS, but the RAMAYANA and the BHAGAVAD GITA. Most homes have a small shrine or prayer house that serves as a site for offerings, devotion, chanting of BHAJANS, and meditation. Because of the schedule of plantation work, the Hindu communities have adopted Sundays as the weekly time for PUJA. Once a year the communities gather for the Ramayana Yajna and DIVALI. Arranged marriages have become the norm among some communities and serve to join Hindus around traditional culture. Apart from recognition of BRAHMIN families and endogamy norms, caste observance has largely disappeared from the region.

See also AFRICA; DIASPORA.

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caste

The Indian term *jati* (birth) is usually translated as "caste," which is a Portuguese word. It refers to the community into which one is born. In VEDIC tradition the concept of VARNA stratified society into four groups: BRAHMIN (priests), KSHATRIYA (warriors), VAISHYA (common people, including merchants), and SHUDRA (servant classes). The simple stratification of the Vedic tradition became the template for a much wider formal social stratification within Indian society.

In addition to the four classes of the earlier scheme, a fifth class of people known as untouchables (now referred to as Dalits) emerged, possibly when certain non-Aryan tribes began to be integrated into the larger ARYAN cultural framework. "UNTOUCHABILITY" involved cultural concepts of POLLUTION; "purer" classes and castes avoided eating food with certain other classes or taking food that had been touched by certain other classes. At its most extreme, this required that the lowest castes not touch or have physical contact with upper castes at all. The lowest strata often performed work that put them in contact with dead animals, leather, and excrement, all of which were considered polluting.

The loose array of four classes (somewhat confused in the south of India, where the British incorrectly classified many agriculturists as Shudras) sprouted additional castes that amounted to guilds that protected certain occupations from encroachment by other groups. An intricate array of occupationally defined castes and sub-castes emerged. Marriage between castes is very restricted; even low-status castes jealously guard against intermarriage with groups that are lower in the hierarchy.

Brahmins are considered the purest in the hierarchy, by virtue of their cultivation of the ancient tradition of the Vedas and their strict vegetarianism. They may give food to any group, but they will only accept food from or eat food with other Brahmins. Certain Brahmins who are considered purer than others will not associate with or marry those other Brahmins.

Caste ranking has never been and is not now eternally fixed; however, it usually takes more than a generation for a given caste to move up or down the hierarchy. The primary means of advancement is to restrict meat-eating. Vegetarianism is a highly valued sign of purity, and avoiding all meat has aided more than one caste in gaining higher status, if the practice is sustained and universal. Second in importance is avoidance of marriage and association with groups that are low on the caste scale. Third, members must find different forms of employment that do not involve polluting substances. Slipping in any of these areas might cause a caste to lose status.

The Indian Constitution, which was written by the untouchable B. R. Ambedkar, outlaws caste. The national and state governments have instituted strict affirmative action in the makeup of parliaments (untouchables and disadvantaged tribals are assured a percentage of seats) and in government hiring. Many great strides have been made in modern India to abolish the evil of caste, but it is an ancient and deeply rooted system that may take generations to abolish, just as it took two centuries to dismantle discriminatory racial laws in the United States.

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Cauvery River

The Cauvery or Kaveri River begins at Talakaveri in Kodagu in the Indian state of Karnataka and flows about 600 miles, mostly through Tamil Nadu to the Bay of Bengal. It is known as the GANGES of South India. Along its course are numerous holy sites, the most important of which is SRI-RANGAM, an island famous in VAISHNAVA tradition where there is a shrine to Vishnu under the name Ranganatha. The river is used as a symbol of Tamil literature and culture (see VAISHNAVISM).

There are various legends about the river's origin. One story says that there was once a sage Kavera who performed austerities in the mountains near the source of the current river to propitiate BRAHMA. Brahma gave him the daughter Lopamudra, who manifested herself as the river Cauvery. Later, the sage AGASTYA married Lopamudra and placed the great river in a water pot. As chance would have it, one day a crow tipped over the pot and the Cauvery flowed out.

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Chaitanya, Sri Krishna (1486–1533)

Vaishnavite saint

Sri Chaitanya was born in Mayapur in what is now West Bengal to a learned teacher of the tradition. The written accounts of this great saint portray him as a miraculous child who had adventures and misadventures while still an infant that resemble those found in the stories of KRISHNA, of whom Sri Chaitanya was considered an incarnation.

As were many of the other great teachers of Indian tradition, Sri Chaitanya was a master of SANSKRIT. When he was only 16 he already knew as much as professors at Sanskrit schools. That same year his wife died of snake bite; he was then married to a daughter of a wealthy and respected teacher, a sign that his social standing was already on the rise. On a trip to Gaya to perform rituals

for his ancestors he visited a Vishnu shrine and there fell into a trance. He was caught before he fell by a noted ascetic, Ishvara Puri, a practitioner of devotional VAISHNAVISM. When Chaitanya came to his senses he asked Puri to help him understand RADHA's love for Krishna.

The stories of Radha's love affair with Lord Krishna were the backdrop for the intense Vaishnavite devotion that Chaitanya was to experience. Radha's passionate, uncontrollable love for her lover Lord Krishna was the model for this devotional path. Receiving the Krishna MANTRA from Puri, Chaitanya went into a prolonged and agonizing state of mystical longing; at times he was ecstatic at realizing the presence of Lord Krishna everywhere; at times he felt deep sorrow from losing this sense of passionate contact.

At this point Sri Chaitanya ceased being a pandit or teacher, overwhelmed as he was with intense moods of frenzy and mystic passion—the passion of God-love. It was not long before he was recognized as an incarnation of Krishna. He began to attract followers with whom he would spend his days singing praises of the Lord, dancing and falling into trances. It is said that his passionate religiosity was so strong that he converted a Muslim ruler of Bengal who had previously been known to persecute Hindus as infidels.

At times Sri Chaitanya felt himself to be the embodiment of Krishna; at other times he embodied the essence of Radha. He was an exemplar of the most emotional type of devotion, wherein the devotee loses sense of himself or herself in the thrall of the mystic vision. This devotional attitude is precisely the one that SRI BHAKTIVEDANTA PRABHUPADA, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement in America, took to the shores of the West to develop and spread. Sri Prabhupada is in the direct lineage of Sri Chaitanya.

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chakra

Chakra, literally, “wheel” or “discus,” is a term used in KUNDALINI yoga to designate energy centers along the spine. These centers do not reside in the gross body, at the physical level, but in what is termed the “subtle body.” Though they have a physical position, they have no definite physical adjuncts or precise nervous system connections as in the case of the Chinese system of meridians in acupuncture. They are instead believed to be connected to a network of channels in the subtle body called *NADIS*.

The chakras are usually visualized as being lotus flowers with differing numbers of petals. Each of the chakras is a center of consciousness of sorts, playing a role in the makeup of the full human being (including his or her transcendent aspect).

There are six basic chakras found in almost every kundalini system with a seventh “highest chakra” that technically is beyond the chakras, but is often called “chakras” nonetheless. The names of these chakras vary in different systems. The most common system lists the following chakras, moving from the base of the spine to a place above the head: *MULADHARA*, *SVADHISHTHANA*, *MANIPURA*, *ANAHATA*, *VISHUDDHA*, *AJNA*. In this system the seventh level is usually called *SAHASRARA*, the transcendent level, which is not in most systems actually a chakra, but for convenience is sometimes designated as such.

Some accounts include an additional chakra, the *LALATA* or *soma* chakra, between *ajna* and *sahasrara*. In kundalini yoga one raises the kundalini, which is seen to be a coiled serpent, through breath control and/or MEDITATIONS so that it pierces in succession each of the chakras, giving the adapt

control or mastery over them. This movement results in complete personal transformation and, ultimately, access to the transcendent state.

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Chamunda

Chamunda is a fearsome goddess who accepts human sacrifices and blood offerings. She is now usually assimilated to *KALI*, and *Chamunda* is an epithet for *Kali*. The first known historical mention of *Chamunda* is in the Sanskrit poet BHAVABHUTI's drama *Malatimadhava* (eighth century C.E.), in which the heroine *Malati* is captured by a female devotee of *Chamunda* to be sacrificed to that goddess. *Chamunda's* temple is depicted as near a cremation ground. That story has the goddess dancing so wildly that the world shakes; she has a gaping mouth and a garland of skulls and is covered with snakes; flames shoot from her eyes that could destroy the world, and she is encircled by goblins.

Another, South Indian description of *Chamunda* has her holding a skull-head mace, a snake, and a wine cup. She has a third eye, a jackal chews on a corpse below her, and her eyes show she has been drinking liquor. Another image of *Chamunda*, at Jaipur in Orissa, depicts her as emaciated; she holds a chopper and a pronged weapon, a skull begging bowl, and a severed head in her hands.

Chamunda is sometimes listed among the *matrikas* or “Mother Goddesses.” The *Markandeya PURANA* has *Chamunda* emerge from the forehead of *Amba* or *DURGA* to kill two fierce demons, *Chanda* and *Munda*, and her name is explained by combining the names of these two demons.

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The Sword and the Flute: Kali and Krsna, Dark Visions of the Terrible and Sublime in Hindu Mythology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); June McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Chanakya See [ARTHASHASTRA](#).

Chandi

Chandi (the fierce) is a name for the goddess DURGA, when she is killing the demon MAHISHASURA. This name is used primarily in the 700-verse poem chanted in her honor. This poem, called either *Chandi Stotra* (Praise of Chandi) or *Durga Saptashati* (Seven hundred verses to Durga), forms an episode of 13 chapters in the Markandeya Purana, also known as the Devi Mahatmya (Glory of the Goddess). It describes Durga's victory over Mahishasura, a demon with the head of a water buffalo, and his demon hordes. It is read daily at Durga temples and is always recited at the annual celebration of Durga PUJA in the fall of each year.

Further reading: Thomas B. Coburn, *Devi-Mahatmya: The Crystalization of the Goddess Tradition* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984); Swami Jagadisvarananda, *The Devi Mahatmyam, or, Sri Durga-Saptashati: 700 Mantras on Shri Durga* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969); Satya Nand Sarawati, trans., *Candi* (Martinez, Calif.: Devi Mandir, 1989).

Chandogya Upanishad

The classical Chandogya Upanishad is part of the Chandogya Brahmana, which is attached to the SAMA VEDA. It is one of the oldest UPANISHADS. It retains much of the character of the BRAHMANA from which it comes, in that it is largely devoted to delineating the deeper meaning and significance of the elements of the Vedic sacrifice or YAJNA (see [VEDAS](#)).

Much of the Chandogya Upanishad is devoted to the true meaning of the *Udgitha*, the loud chant of the Sama Vedic priest at the sacrificial ritual. The *Udgitha* is said to be tantamount to OM (Ch. 1.1.1–10) and is identified with the breath (Ch. 1.2.1–14). The esoteric meaning of each of the syllables in the word *Udgitha* is explicated (Ch. 1.3.1–12). The *Udgitha* is also identified with the Sun, with space as the ultimate, and with divinities.

The Chandogya Upanishad goes on to coordinate the sounds of the fuller Sama Vedic chant with cosmic and human entities. Through this process, the elements of the Sama Vedic chant are shown to encompass a wide range of human, worldly, and cosmic entities; it is much more important than a simple musical recitation.

Chapter three raises the familiar Upanishadic theme of the identity of ATMAN (the individual self) and the BRAHMAN (the Ultimate Reality). The fifth chapter gives the famous teaching of Uddalaka Aruni to his son, Shvetaketu; in defining the Ultimate Reality of the *brahman* he tells his son, “You are THAT” (TAT TVAM ASI). This is one of the most well known MAHAVAKYAS or “Great Sayings” quoted in the VEDANTA.

Chapters seven and eight relate the nature of the atman or individual self and show that it resides within the human heart. They tell the famous tale in which INDRA, king of the gods, at last learns the nature of the *brahman*/atman identity.

Further reading: S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975); Swami Nikhilandanda, trans., *The Upanishads*. Vol. 1 (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1975); S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1974).

Chandra

A rich Indian mythology addresses the Earth's Moon. In the VEDAS it was called Chandra (or *candramas*). The name SOMA, who in the Vedas was a

god with special characteristics, later was used for the Moon as well.

Chandra, too, is a god, one of the nine planets, and the leader of the stars. Whereas in the West the Moon's appearance is likened to the face of a man, in Indian mythology, the Moon has the form of a rabbit. The Moon is understood to be swallowed by a headless snake at the time of eclipses and regurgitated again later. The nectar of immortality (*AMRITA*) is found on the Moon in plenty. The crescent Moon is found in the topknot of SHIVA.

Further reading: John Dowson, *Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology, Religion, Geography, History, and Literature* (Portland, Oreg.: Trubner, 2003); E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

Charaka See [AYURVEDA](#).

Charles, Master (1945–) *founder of Synchronicity Foundation*

Master Charles is a popular American meditation teacher, who combines the teachings of Swami MUKTANANDA (1908–82) with the insights provided by contemporary psychology and parapsychology.

Master Charles Cannon was born on March 14, 1945, in Syracuse, New York, to Italian American parents and raised as a Roman Catholic. At one point he seriously considered joining a Catholic religious order, but in his later teen years he backed away from the church. He practiced Zen Buddhism for a period and explored parapsychology. Then in 1970, some friends who had recently returned from India showed him a photograph of Swami Muktananda. Seeing the picture had an immediate and intense effect upon him. In the midst of the altered consciousness into which he had moved, he had a vision of God as Mother (a relic of his earlier devotion to the Virgin Mary), and she instructed him to go to Muktananda.

He obtained a copy of the first of Muktananda's books, *Guru*, which had just been published in the West, and soon afterward left for India.

Cannon settled in at Muktananda's ashram in Maharashtra (about 75 miles from Mumbai). He remained in India with his guru for 12 years and for a period he served as Muktananda's private secretary. Halfway through his stay, he took vows of renunciation (*SANNYAS*). Shortly before his death, Muktananda instructed him to return to the United States. His experience with Muktananda culminated in his reaching a state of pure consciousness, which Master Charles described in mystical language.

Back in America, he withdrew from the Siddha Yoga Dham, the organization that perpetuated Muktananda's work, and settled in rural Virginia. He also dropped the garb of an Indian monk, began wearing Western clothing, and began to call himself Brother Charles. A small community gradually gathered around him. In 1983, he founded Synchronicity Foundation to facilitate his work and built a sanctuary to hold various meetings and classes. As his leadership manifested he assumed the name Master Charles.

Unique to Master Charles's teaching activity has been his mastery of contemporary data, generated by transpersonal psychology and parapsychology, concerning MEDITATION and altered states of consciousness. He integrated this information into the meditation he learned from Muktananda to create what he termed the Synchronicity High-Tech Meditation Experience.

Master Charles continues to teach and develop his scientific form of meditation from the headquarters of the Synchronicity Foundation in Nellyford, Virginia. He publishes compact discs of meditative music that use binaural-beat technology to induce meditative states.

Further reading: Master Charles, *The Bliss of Freedom: A Contemporary Mystic's Enlightening Journey* (Malibu Calif.: Acacia, 1997); ———, *Synchronicity Experience* (Nellyford, Va.: Synchronicity Foundation, 2002).

Charvaka

Charvaka or Lokayata philosophy is an ancient materialist tradition that is known to us only through the texts of its myriad opponents. It dates from approximately 400 B.C.E. The Charvaka motto can be approximately translated as “Eat, drink, and be merry.” In addition to being pure materialists, the Charvakas were strict empiricists who believed that the only valid source of knowledge is direct perception; they believed only what could be seen by the eyes directly. They rejected even inference as a method of investigation.

Though none of their texts were preserved, the Charvaka viewpoint was condemned in many philosophical contexts over two millennia. The RAMAYANA and MAHABHARATA both contained arguments against it. Nearly every subsequent Indian philosophical system, including that of the Buddhists and Jains, formulated arguments to answer them. Modern Marxists in India have sought to make this ancient system better known.

Further reading: Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and Mrinal K. Gangopadhyaya, eds., *Charvaka/Lokayata: An Anthology of Source Materials and Some Recent Studies* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1990); S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 5 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975); Anil Kumar Sarkar, *Dynamic Facets of Indian Thought* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1988).

Chaudhuri, Haridas (1913–1975) *follower of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in the United States*

A professor of philosophy in India and later in California, Haridas Chaudhuri helped spark the growing American interest in Asian religion, philosophy, and culture by founding the influential Cultural Integration Fellowship and the California Institute of Asian Studies, both of which have survived to the present day.

Chaudhuri was born in May 1913 in Shyamagram in eastern Bengal (now Bangladesh). He

was orphaned at an early age. In 1929, he won the Ramtanu Gold Medal in Bengali literature upon graduating from high school. He received his M.A. and B.A. with honors in philosophy and religion from Vidyasagar College in Calcutta (Kolkata). Dr. Chaudhuri married his wife, Bina, in 1946. In 1949 he received his Ph.D. from the University of Calcutta for a dissertation on Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy, “Integral Idealism.” Dr. Chaudhuri then became a professor and chair of the department of philosophy at Krishnagar College in Krishnagar.

In March 1951, Dr. Chaudhuri immigrated to the United States upon the direct recommendation of Sri AUROBINDO, who had received a request from Dr. Frederick Spiegelberg of Stanford University to nominate someone for a position in the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco, which was just opening. He was followed in the same year by his wife, Bina, and their two young children. Dr. Chaudhuri taught at this college for about 15 years along with several prominent scholars, including Alan Watts, who was later to become quite well known.



Haridas Chaudhuri (1913–1975), scholar and founder of the Cultural Integration Fellowship and California Institute of Integral Studies (*Cultural Integration Fellowship*)

Three months after he arrived in the United States Dr. Chaudhuri founded the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco, with the aim of furthering universal religion, cultural harmony, and creative self-development. This was the first major ASHRAM in the country dedicated to the values of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Cultural Integration Fellowship in 2001 celebrated its 50th birthday and still flourishes under the guidance of Bina Chaudhuri.

In 1968 Dr. Chaudhuri founded the California Institute of Asian Studies in San Francisco (which in 1981 became the California Institute of Integral Studies). This graduate school is devoted to the promotion of cultural understanding between East and West, offering masters' and doctoral degrees in philosophy, psychology, Asian studies, and interdisciplinary studies. Dr. Chaudhuri started an accreditation process for the school that reached its fruition in 1981, six years after his untimely death of a heart attack there in June 1975.

Dr. Chaudhuri wrote numerous books in English. Among them are *Modern Man's Religion* (1966), *Philosophy of Integralism* (1954), *The Rhythm of the Truth* (1958), *Shri Aurobindo: Prophet of the Life Divine* (1959), and *Integral Yoga: The Concept of Harmonious and Creative Living* (1965). He wrote two lesser known books in Bengali: *Ma* (1944) and *Sri Aurobindo Sadhana* (1949).

Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri had a strong impact on philosophical and religious studies and affairs in the San Francisco Bay area and beyond. He was host to Swami MUKTANANDA at the Cultural Integration Fellowship on one of the Swami's first trips to the United States. He also played host there to the American spiritual figures Alan Watts, Ram Dass, and Sant Keshavadas. He hosted and provided venues for such famous musicians as Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan in their early years of touring of the United States.

Among his students and those he strongly influenced can be counted Michael Murphy, cofounder of Esalen Institute, and Michael Toms, founder

of New Dimensions radio, both in California. Dr. Chaudhuri also kept up an active correspondence with his Asian friend U Thant, secretary-general of the United Nations in the 1960s.

Further reading: Haridas Chaudhuri, *Integral Yoga: The Concept of Harmonious and Creative Living* (Wheaton, Ill. The Theosophical Publishing House, 1965); ———, *Modern Man's Religion* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: J. F. Rowny Press, 1966).

Chetanananda, Swami (1949–) *teacher of Kashmir Shaivism and Trika Yoga*

Swami Chetanananda is an American teacher in the tradition of Swami RUDRANANDA. At his two institutes, he propounds a SHAIVISM that generally downplays asceticism and withdrawal from life and draws on Tibetan and Kashmiri practice.

J. Michael Shoemaker was born in Kentucky the son of a pharmacist and a nurse, both devout Catholics, and he was raised in the Catholic faith. He attended school in Connersville, Indiana, where he was a football player and swimmer. He attended but dropped out of Indiana University.

Shoemaker studied with Swami Rudrananda and lived in his ashram in Big Indian, New York, until 1973, the year of Rudrananda's death. In 1971 he founded the Nityananda Institute upon instructions from Rudrananda in Bloomington, Indiana, to foster Shaivite teachings. After Rudrananda's death, he traveled to India and was initiated into SANNYAS (renunciation) by Swami MUKTANANDA in Ganeshpuri, India, in 1978 and given the name Chetanananda (the bliss of pure awareness). He was also initiated into the ancient Tibetan Buddhist ritual practices of Phowa and Chod, and others from the Longchen Nyingthing and Padampa Sangye Shi-je tradition.

After Rudrananda's sudden death, Chetanananda read the *Shiva Sutras*, a text in the Trika school of Kashmir Shaivism; he discerned a close connection with the teachings of Rudrananda.

From 1980 to 1986, he studied Kashmiri Shaivism with Swami Lakshmanjoo in Srinagar. In 1983, he embraced the ancient KASHMIRI SHAIVITE practice of Trika Yoga, the philosophical framework for the practice of Kundalini YOGA. According to Rudrananda, Trika Yoga denies that renunciation is the superior path to spiritual development, but instead embraces all ethnic lifestyles as avenues to realization. Trika Yoga emphasizes a commitment to positive participation in life as a means for developing spiritual discernment.

Swami Chetanananda, as an advocate of Trika Yoga, teaches MEDITATION and the philosophy and tantric practices of Kashmiri Shaivism. He oversees a translation program for both SANSKRIT and Tibetan spiritual texts and has expertise in Indian, Tibetan, and Indonesian art, history, and archaeology. He has studied ASANA (postures in HATHA YOGA) practice, cranial osteopathy, homeopathy, and acupuncture. He is the author of several books on spiritual practice, published by Rudra Press. Although he received initiation into SANNYAS (renunciation), he does not give *sannyas* initiation to others.

Chetanananda serves as abbot of Nityananda Institute and Rudrananda Ashram, both of which are now located in Portland, Oregon. He is spiritual teacher, mentor, and guide to students. The institute emphasizes the role of the teacher in promoting spiritual growth and the importance of being engaged with a specified lineage within which the teacher was trained. The Nityananda Institute, under the imprint of Rudra Press, publishes books on Kashmir Shaivism, Trika Yoga, and hatha yoga. The institute also includes the Abhinavagupta Institute, which offers scholarly translations of Kashmiri Shaivite texts.

Further reading: Swami Chetanananda, *The Breath of God* (Portland, Ore.: Rudra Press, 1988); ———, *Dynamic Stillness*. Part 1, *The Practice of Trika Yoga* (Portland, Ore.: Rudra Press, 1990); ———, *Songs from the Center of the Well* (Portland, Ore.: Rudra Press, 1983).

Chidambaram

Chidambaram in the South Arcot District of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu has been an important pilgrimage center for those devoted to SHIVA since about the ninth century, when the site was known as Tillai. Tradition says that a Kashmiri king who was afflicted with an incurable disease bathed in the temple tank 1,500 years ago and was cured. He is said to have enlarged the temple in appreciation. Chidambaram is known for its phallic-shaped LINGAMS of light (*jyotirlingas*), which are set in bases of the vulvic goddess; they are a primary iconic symbol of Shiva.

Chidambaram is best known as the center of the cult of Shiva as the divine dancer or NATARAJA. It is said that one of the Chola kings (ninth to 13th centuries), Vira Chola, saw a vision of Shiva performing his cosmic dance near the shrine. He then built the Golden Shrine with Shiva Nataraja in it. In another section of the temple are the 108 dance postures found in Bharata's *NATYA SHASTRA*, sculpted in high relief in honor of Shiva the cosmic dancer. Shiva himself is said to have once danced in the hall there.

The Goddess KALI was the first inhabitant of Chidambaram, but Kali and Shiva entered into a dance contest, whose loser was to leave town. Shiva then defeated the Goddess by doing a dance pose with his leg straight up in the air. Kali, out of modesty, it is said, could not duplicate the feat and left. Her shrine is found in a temple on the borders of the town. Later South Indian kings expanded the Chidambaram temple, which now is a sprawling complex with shrines to many other deities besides Shiva. The great Tamil Shaivite saints APPAR and SUNDARAR sang of the shrine, and SEKKILAR, the great compiler of the compendium of the works of the Tamil Shaivite saints, the PERIYA PURANAM, used to recite there; notables and even kings traveled to hear him.

Further reading: B. Natarajan, *The City of Cosmic Dance: Cidambaram* (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1974); Paul Younger, *The Home of the Dancing Sivan:*

The Traditions of the Hindu Temple in Citamparam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

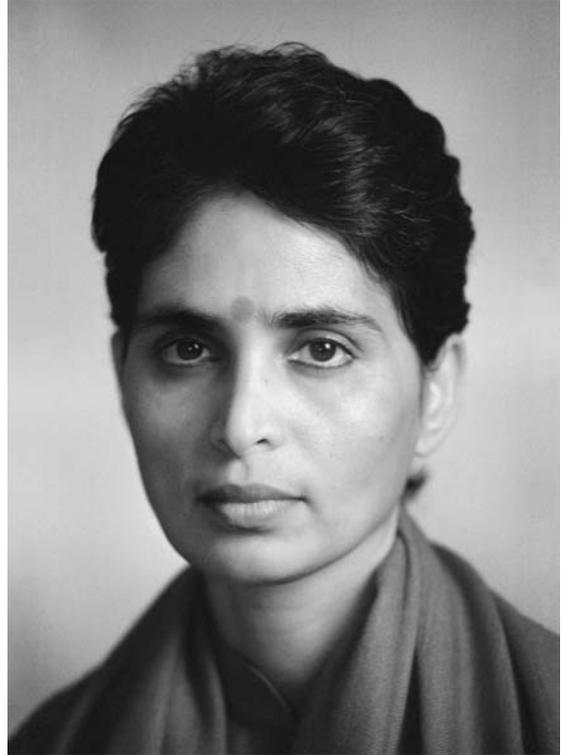
Chidvilasananda, Swami (Gurumayi)
(1955–) *Shaivite teacher and head of Siddha Yoga Dham*

Swami Chidvilasananda is a prominent international teacher, writer, and *SIDDHA YOGA* master. She was chosen by Swami MUKTANANDA to be successor to his lineage.

Chidvilasananda was born on June 24, 1955, in a village in Karnataka state, India. Following the Indian custom, the family GURU, Swami Muktananda, gave her her name—Malti. She met the swami for the first time at age five when she visited his ASHRAM with her parents. That same year Muktananda had a senior disciple take the young child several times to the nearby village of Ganeshpuri for the blessing of his own guru, Bhagawan NITYANANDA, who at that point had only a few months left to live.

From then on Malti was educated under the guidance of her guru. She lived with her family in Bombay (Mumbai) and spent weekends and school holidays in Muktananda’s ashram, chanting scriptural texts, following the disciplines of yoga, and attending to her guru. Even at a young age, Malti possessed a longing to know God, which fueled an intense focus on spiritual practice. When she was 13, Swami Muktananda gave Malti *SHAKTIPAT DIKSHA*, the spiritual initiation that awakens KUNDALINI energy.

Beginning in 1969, Malti traveled extensively with Swami Muktananda in India and the West. In 1975, in Oakland, California, Muktananda asked her to become his translator. She was 19 at the time. Her role was to provide English translation during Muktananda’s public lectures, which were sometimes delivered to audiences that numbered in the thousands, and at his private meetings with students, dignitaries, and public officials from East and West. Through her translation, Malti learned to communicate the essence of Swami



Gurumayi Chidvilasananda (b. 1955), a Shaivite teacher and the head of Siddha Yoga Dham (*SYDA Foundation*)

Muktananda’s teachings. She was also called on by her guru to perform a variety of other duties, including performing administrative duties with the newly formed Siddha Yoga Dham Association (*SYDA*) Foundation, a global nonprofit organization; teaching courses; giving her own lectures on KASHMIRI SHAIVISM, VEDANTA, and other philosophies fundamental to Siddha Yoga practice; assisting with the translation of his books; and handling his correspondence with devotees around the globe.

In April 1982, when Malti took vows of *sannyas*, Muktananda gave her the name Swami Chidvilasananda, “the bliss of the play of consciousness.” Then he initiated and installed her

as a Siddha Yoga guru, the direct descendant in his lineage. In the months that followed, in a final act of tutelage, he sent Swami Chidvilasananda to teach, on her own, in India and America. Her personal skill as a teacher and her capacity to fulfill the spiritual demands of the guru's lineage were thus consolidated and guaranteed. In October 1982, Swami Muktananda died (in traditional Hindu terms, the guru "took mahasamadhi").

Since then, as head of this lineage of meditation masters, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda has taught Siddha Yoga meditation to students on six continents. Gurumayi's books, filled with her teachings and poetry, have been translated into 12 languages. She has taken a special interest in making the Siddha Yoga path available to children and young people. Gurumayi's teachings are disseminated by the SYDA Foundation.

The philanthropic aspect of Gurumayi's work is expressed through the PRASAD Project. Established by Gurumayi in 1992, this charitable organization offers aid in seven countries, administering medical, dental, and nutrition assistance as well as community development projects. In 1997, Gurumayi founded the Muktabodha Indological Institute, an educational foundation that preserves endangered elements of India's scriptural heritage and the oral tradition of the VEDAS.

As a teacher, Gurumayi directs her students to assume responsibility for making the effort needed to succeed in their spiritual path. She emphasizes the importance of spiritual practice and the necessity of integrating the fruits of practice into the fabric of one's worldly life. She imparts the Siddha Yoga teachings in a way that makes them accessible and directly applicable to the challenges and opportunities of modern life. Gurumayi teaches Siddha Yoga students to live in the awareness of the Self so that they can transform their world as well as themselves. And she continues to awaken spiritual energy in her students, through the vehicle of the Siddha Yoga Shaktipat Intensive, a course of study that teaches students a practice and discipline and that introduces them to the

transmission of energy from Gurumayi to each of them, the profound spiritual awakening of kundalini SHAKTI (spiritual energy).

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Ching Hai Wu Shang See [SANT MAT](#).

Chinmaya Mission See CHINMAYANANDA, SWAMI.

Chinmayananda, Swami (1916–1993)
founder of Chinmaya Mission

Swami Chinmayananda was an influential teacher of Hindu scriptures. He gave public lectures, set up ashrams, and preached to adults and children around the world. His Chinmaya Mission has worked to further Vedic education among adults and children and runs a large network of charitable institutions.

Balakrishna Menon was born on May 8, 1916, the son of Parakutti and Kuttan Menon in Ernakulam, Kerala, in South India. His aristocratic family followed strict Kerala Hindu traditions. Saints and sages often visited the family home and paid attention to the young boy. A bright student, he read widely and was good at sports. An extrovert, he got along well with others and exhibited a charming personality. He studied science in Cochin and later graduated in science at

Madras University; he received a master's degree in literature from Lucknow University.

At Lucknow University he became active in campus life. In 1942 he joined the Indian independence movement, writing and distributing leaflets, organizing strikes, and giving speeches. He became quite visible in the movement and the British issued a warrant for his arrest. He went into hiding but soon after returning was caught and put in prison, where he spent several months under difficult conditions. While in prison he studied the works of major writers of contemporary Hindu thought and practice and was inspired to follow a path of inquiry.

After working as a freelance journalist, he decided to devote himself to the quest for SELF-REALIZATION. He studied VEDANTA with Swami SIVANANDA at the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh for a number of years and in 1949 was initiated into SANNYAS (renunciation) by Swami Sivananda. His name, Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati, means the "one who revels in the bliss of pure consciousness." At Sivananda's suggestion, he studied with Swami Tapovan Maharaj high in the Himalayas at Uttarkashi. He accepted Swami Tapovan as his guru and studied with him for seven years. In 1948 he made a trek to several traditional Hindu pilgrimage centers in the Himalayas, recording his account in *My Trek through Uttarkhand*.

In 1951, Chinmayananda started his mission of teaching and preaching to public audiences, a pattern that he followed until his death. He gave discourses and held meditation camps in India and abroad. In 1963 he set up his headquarters, Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, in Bombay (Mumbai). From there he established centers, ashrams, and schools in many parts of India. He organized children's clubs to teach the principles of Hindu religion and culture. The Chinmaya Mission, which has grown considerably over the years, sponsors 62 schools for elementary education, nursing, and management in India that teach normal school curriculum as well as the Vedic heritage. The mission also sponsors free clinics,

hospitals, vocational schools, orphanages, and retirement homes.

Chinmayananda was foremost a SANSKRIT pundit (scholar and teacher) and commentator on Hindu scriptures. He expounded each scripture verse by verse and then interpreted deeper levels of meaning against a backdrop of both Hindu and Western philosophy. He insisted that serious seekers find GURUS, teaching that a guru's guidance is necessary. He also taught that over time work with an external guru changes into guidance by a more pure and enlightened intellect within the student himself.

An erudite and acclaimed teacher of ADVAITA VEDANTA, Chinmayananda always stressed the importance of BHAKTI or devotion, which he defined as a consistent effort to raise the ego from its entrenchment in false values to an appreciation of selfhood. His centers contain temples and altars to several Hindu deities.

Chinmayananda was elected president of the Hindu Religion Section of the Centennial Conference of the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1993, where he was to receive recognition as a world-renowned teacher of Vedanta and selfless servant of humanity. Unfortunately, he died on August 3, 1993, before the conference took place.

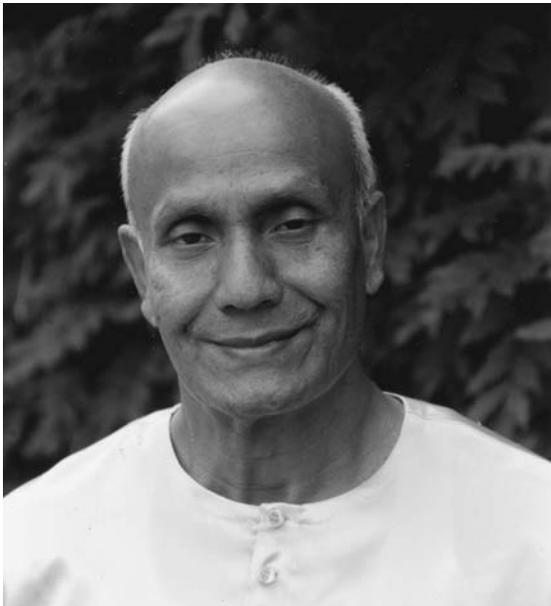
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Chinmoy, Sri (1931–) *teacher of integral yoga and peace activist*

Sri Chinmoy has established centers and a following for his spiritual teachings, in the tradition

of Sri AUROBINDO, in many countries around the world. His teaching makes use of his own music and art, and of sports, as well as MEDITATION.

Chinmoy Kumar Ghose was born, the youngest of seven siblings, on August 27, 1931, to a Kshatriya family in Shakpura, a small village in the Chittagong District of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). His father, Shashi Kumar, was a supervisor for the railroad and later a banker. Both his father and his mother, Yogamaya Vishwas, died before Chinmoy was 12 years old. In 1944, the 12-year old child took residence at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, South India, where his eldest brother, a *sannyasi* (renunciant), and some elder members of the family were already living. Here he practiced meditation, wrote poetry and essays, and created songs as part of his spiritual practice. He also excelled in sports.



Sri Chinmoy (b. 1931), a popular yogi and peace activist, who has a worldwide following (Courtesy Sri Chinmoy Centre)

The young Chinmoy studied in Pondicherry for 20 years and often took the blessing of both Sri Aurobindo and the MOTHER. After achieving accomplishment in advanced states of meditation, he moved to New York City in 1964 at the age of 32 to share the spirituality of India with seekers in the West. He continues to travel widely, offering concerts, lectures, and public meditations. He does not charge a fee for his spiritual guidance or performances.

His teaching focuses on the heart's aspiration as the creative spiritual force that lies behind all great advances in religion, culture, and science. Self-transcendence and living in the heart advance fulfillment and attunement to the highest reality. His message is consistent with the basic themes of Hinduism: that God is inside each person and that God at every moment is transcending his own reality.

Sri Chinmoy has centers in various parts of the world where his students practice spiritual disciplines according to his inspiration and guidance. Each Sri Chinmoy Centre is dedicated to harmonizing the inner life of aspiration and the outer life of dedication.

Chinmoy has been creative in several fields—writing and performing songs and music, creating visual art, and engaging in sports. He sponsors many events in support of peace and international cooperation, including the Sri Chinmoy Oneness-Home Peace Run, a relay that covers more than 77 countries. His extensive Web site offers information about all of these activities.

Further reading: Sri Chinmoy, *The Garland of Nation-Souls: Complete Talks at the United Nations* (Deerfield, Fla.: Health Communications, 1995); ———, *Mother India's Lighthouse: India's Spiritual Leaders* (Blauvelt, N.Y.: R. Steiner, 1973); ———, *The Oneness of the Eastern Heart and the Western Mind*, Parts 1–3 (Jamaica, N.Y.: Agni Press, 2003–4).

chit See [SAT-CHIT-ANANDA](#).

Chitrabhanu, Gurudev Sri (1922–) *Jain monk and teacher of ahimsa*

Gurudev Sri Chitrabhanu is a very popular Jain preacher and advocate of nonviolence as a way of life. He was the first Jain master to leave India to preach and lecture in the West. Gurudev Sri Chitrabhanu was born on July 26, 1922, in Rajasthan, India. After an experience of spiritual awakening at the age of 20, he became sensitive to questions of the purpose and meaning of life. His search for answers led him to the JAIN religion. For 28 years he lived the life of a monk, the first five years in silence. Through his practice, Chitrabhanu came to the realization that the purpose of life is to be liberated from attachment and desire. Leaving the monastery with this wisdom, he promoted a message of enlightenment and became known to millions across India.

Chitrabhanu became an advocate of AHIMSA (nonviolence) during the same period that Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI pursued his nonviolent struggle for Indian independence. After the upsurge of violence afflicting the Western world during the 1960s, Chitrabhanu made a conscious decision to spread *ahimsa* around the world. In 1970, he was invited to the Second Spiritual Summit Conference in Geneva. He became the first Jain master ever to travel to the West, excusing himself from the doctrine that Jains should travel only by foot. The following year he attended the Third Spiritual Summit Conference at Harvard Divinity School and lectured at a number of universities in the eastern United States. In 1974, he founded the Jain Meditation International Center in the Ansonia section of New York City.

The center follows the fundamental principles of *ahimsa*, promoting the mission to create unity within the diversity of humankind. Chitrabhanu teaches that everyone must become his or her own master, believing that the approach to peace begins with oneself in everyday living. The mission of one's life is to realize this inner mastery and peace. The JAIN MEDITATION INTERNATIONAL

CENTER includes 67 centers across North America as well as in England, Africa, Japan, and India.

Chitrabhanu has written over 25 books on self-realization, liberation, and peace. He continues to give talks at various centers around the world. Chitrabhanu and his wife, Pramoda, are the main advisers for the Jain Meditation International Center.

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chitta See [YOGA SUTRA](#).

Chittirai festival

The Chittirai festival that takes place in Tamil Nadu state, in MADURAI and Alakar Kovil Temple and points in between, is one of the largest South Indian festivals. It takes place in the Sanskrit lunar month of Chaitra (Tamil, Chittirai), corresponding to April or May. It brings together the Shaivite and the Vaishnavite (see [SHAIVISM](#); [VAISHNAVISM](#)) communities of the region in a single, two-part celebration. Apparently, this larger festival is in fact a combination of two festivals that once took place a few weeks apart. The joining of the two into one festival was the work of the Telegu king of Madurai Tirumala Nayaka (1623–59).

The Madurai part of the celebration tells the tale of MINAKSHI, the goddess of Madurai, and her marriage to Sundreshvara (Shiva). It is focused on

the monumental MEENAKSHI temple, with its four 100-foot towers, at the center of the city. Here, the festival lasts 12 full days, but it is the 10th day, when the huge temple car carrying Minakshi and her husband, Shiva, is pulled by devotees on the streets that encircle the temple, that is most dramatic. This temple car is elaborate and grand with wheels about 10 feet high and a canopy over the divinities that reaches to 40 feet. Devotees vie to pull on the heavy one-foot-thick ropes to convey the cart on a circumambulation of the temple. This temple parade is carried out each year after Minakshi and Sundereshvara (Shiva) are married.

The kings of Madurai were traditionally associated with the god Shiva. The festival's marriage of the god Shiva to Minakshi not only joins an indigenous, non-Aryan goddess to an ARYAN and Brahmanical divinity, but symbolizes a link in sovereignty between Shiva/king and the local population.

The second part of the festival starts in the mountains 70 miles west of Madurai. There the god Alakar, a form of Vishnu, proceeds toward Madurai and the Vaikai River as part of his annual outing. As it happens, VISHNU is the brother of Minakshi and is going to give the bride away to Shiva. Unfortunately, when he reaches the Vaikai River, in sight of the great temple of his sister, he discovers that he has arrived late at the wedding and must return. The Kallar community, relatively low-caste devotees of Vishnu, play a prominent role in this part of the festival, which lasts nine days.

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Christian-Hindu relations

Christianity has existed in India for almost two millennia. The Malakara Orthodox Church, head-



Shantivanam, a Christian ashram, in Tiruchchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, India (Constance A. Jones)

quartered in Kerala, has provided a Christian presence within the larger world of Hindu life. This Orthodox community has generally lived a peaceful existence over the centuries, but one largely cut off from the mainstream of the Christian world. The Roman Catholic nation of Portugal claimed portions of India in 1498, and, once a Catholic bishop was placed at the Portuguese colony of Goa, an aggressive mission program was initiated by the Jesuits. For a short time, the Orthodox realigned with the Catholics but soon saw their interests diverge and returned to an independent status.

A new era began in 1706 with the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries, Lutherans who began their missionary efforts from a base in Tranquebar. They were joined by a few other efforts to evangelize the country, but mission work did not begin in earnest until the early 19th century, when it won the backing of British colonial authorities. The number of conversions was modest, with occasional episodes of what were termed mass movements, when an entire community or caste would suddenly convert to Christianity. Often, these mass movements would originate among people at the lowest levels of the caste system, especially untouchables (Dalits), who had little to lose by abandoning Hinduism. (See [UNTOUCHABILITY](#).)

During the missionary era from the 18th century onward, Protestants adopted various plans for developing a successful thrust into Indian society, including the building of modern colleges and hospitals, intellectual appeals to elites, and enticing of Dalits and various fringe groups away from lives devoid of privilege. The end result was the development of the third largest religious community in India (after Hindus and Muslims), although today the 60 million Christians represent barely 6 percent of the population.

Throughout the 20th century before Indian independence, Christianity enjoyed a favored relationship with the colonial government and often used that special status to engage in aggressive campaigns of proselytizing. Such aggressive actions created a level of hostility among Indian Hindu leaders, who developed an extended list of grievances against the church, not the least the missionaries' use of their favorable status and relative wealth to woo converts to their religion instead of teaching the merits of their faith. Moreover, Hinduism was not a missionary faith, and it saw itself at a disadvantage in the face of aggressive proselytizing. Finally, Hindu leaders complained of the ways that the Christian churches, often in league with colonial authorities, were disrupting a traditional and sacred social order.

As native Indians, such as Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah (1874–1945), the first native Anglican bishop, gained positions of authority in Indian Christianity, they began to address some of these issues. In particular, these native Indians criticized Western missionaries for failing to distinguish between the faith they expounded and the Western culture from which they emerged. Because of ignorance or thoughtlessness, they complained, missionaries frequently tried to impose Western culture, provoking more opposition than they would have if they had focused exclusively on the religious message of Christianity, which was not necessarily offensive to Indians. At the same time, a new generation of more thoughtful Western Christian missionaries, who were also students of comparative religion, arrived in India; they were willing to appropriate features of Hindu piety and spirituality, and to shape a Christianity that incorporated as many elements of Indian thought and practice as possible.

By the middle of the 19th century, Christians attempted to initiate dialogue with Hindu believers, especially groups of liberal believers that evolved from the Hindu Renaissance. Among the first results of these early conversations was a decision by the Unitarian Church that the BRAHMO SAMAJ, founded in 1823 by Raja Rammohun ROY (1772–1833), was actually preaching the same basic doctrines as traditional Hinduism, uncorrupted (by *sati* [suttee], polygamy, and the worship of idols). The Unitarians, then, withdrew from the field of proselytization and used their missionary allocations to support the Brahma Samaj in various ways that continue to the present, including the opening of American Unitarian seminaries to train leaders of the Brahma Samaj.

Meanwhile, various Hindu leaders began to develop a range of views on the nature of Jesus Christ. Roy saw him as a moral and religious reformer, Sri RAMAKRISHNA (1836–86) saw him as an enlightened soul leading others to enlightenment. Swami VIVEKANANDA (1863–1902) developed Ramakrishna's advaitic (non-dualist) perspective

by including the life of Christ in his teaching. Roman Catholic thinkers such as Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861–1907) and currently Raimundo Panikkar (b. 1918) attempted to integrate Hindu concepts into an Indian Christian theology. In 1899, in spite of British attempts to suppress his efforts, Upadhyaya established a Catholic ashram, called Kasthalic Matha. These efforts at syncretism have contributed to the development of a Christian theology that includes Hindu religious categories. Such attempts have always had to answer charges from both Western Christians and Hindus that the process of articulating an Indian Christianity distorts both faiths.

On a more practical level, two Frenchmen, Jules Monchanin (1895–1957) and Henri Le Saux (1910–73), the latter better known as ABHISHIKTANANDA, tried to combine elements of Western and Eastern monastic practice. In 1950 they founded Saccidananda Ashram in Tamil Nadu, South India. The pair adapted Benedictine monasticism to the Indian ascetic tradition, which resulted in what has been termed Christian SANNYAS (renunciation). Both Protestants and Catholics have found points of connection with Hindu and Christian practice and spirituality, ranging from the monastic experiments of Dom Bede Griffiths (1906–93) to the philosophical and scientific contributions of Ravi Ravindra to the ashram movement founded by the Methodist E. Stanley Jones (1884–1973).

In the post-World War II environment, the value of world faith communities to one another has been an increasing theme in religious writings. The World Council of Churches has emphasized interreligious dialogue, although it has taken second place to building intra-Christian relations. In like measure, in 1964, in the midst of Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church established the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue. One of its major departments is designed to build new levels of understanding and respect of Hinduism. The council supported Pope John Paul II's (1920–2005) periodical meetings with Hindu and other religious leaders voicing his concern for

interreligious dialogue in which the followers of the various religions can discover shared elements of spirituality, while acknowledging their differences. As the 20th century came to a close, Pope John Paul II offered an apology for the attitudes of mistrust and hostility assumed by Catholics toward followers of other religions, as part of a broad papal acknowledgment of the failings of Christians in pursuit of their missions.

Most recently, religious leaders in India have led in initiating interreligious dialogue with the founding of such organizations as the World Fellowship of Religions (1973) and the World Union (1958). In the DIASPORA, Hindus have been very active in many national interreligious councils and have been especially prominent in the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions based in Chicago, Illinois, which holds international conferences in different parts of the world every five years. Among North American organizations that attempt to encourage and focus on dialogue between Hindus and Christians is the Society for Hindu-Christian Studies, which is currently administered by scholars at Notre Dame, Indiana, and Thiruvanniyur, Madras (Chennai), India. They also publish the *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*.

As the new century begins, India has been hit with a wave of anti-Christian activity fueled by anger over the proselytizing activity of the increasing number of missionaries. Occasionally, this has erupted in violence. These violent incidents have only increased attempts by Hindu and Christian leaders to pursue understanding through dialogue.

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Half of My Soul: Bede Griffiths and the Hindu-Christian Dialogue. Compiled by Beatrice Bruteau (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1996); ———, *Vedanta and Christian Faith* (Los Angeles: Dawn Horse Press, 1973); Raimundo Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Ravi Ravindra, *Whispers from the Other Shore: A Spiritual Search—East and West* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1884); ———, *The Yoga of the Christ* (Longmead, England: Element, 1990); Philip St. Romain, *Kundalini Energy and Christian Spirituality* (New York: Crossroads, 1991); James Stuart, *Swami Abhishiktananda: His Life Told through His Letters* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1989).

Cohen, Andrew (1955–) *teacher of spirituality and evolutionary enlightenment*

Cohen is an American spiritual teacher in the tradition of H. W. L. POONJA. His influential publications and lectures focus on the evolution of consciousness.

Born in New York City on October 23, 1955, Cohen experienced a deep spiritual awakening at age 16, without the help of any spiritual path. Beginning in his early 20s, he studied and practiced martial arts, KRIYA YOGA, and Buddhism. He met his guru, H. W. L. Poonja, in Lucknow, India, in 1986 and experienced a life-changing awakening in his presence.

Cohen's teaching centers around trying to guide aspirants to a place in which the ego is tamed, and each individual is more passionate about the evolution of world consciousness than about his or her individual liberation. According to Cohen, the energy of enlightenment wants to express itself as a force of evolution. Each individual can and should serve as a portal for that energy to express itself.

In 1986 Cohen began giving teachings in London. He then moved his headquarters to Marin County, California, and now resides in Lenox, Massachusetts. He travels the world giving public talks and holding retreats. His students have formed the International Fellowship for the Realization of Impersonal Enlightenment; it has centers in Europe, Asia, and the United States and runs a retreat center in the Berkshire mountains in western Massachusetts where Cohen lives.

Cohen's magazine *What Is Enlightenment?*, founded in 1992, features interviews with spiritual and cultural leaders of the age and addresses questions of ecology, spirituality, and psychology. Since 2000, the magazine has sponsored a speaker series with presentations by evolutionary thinkers from around the world. Known as *EnlightenNEXT* since September 2005, it has become a major publication in the spiritual community in the United States.

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creation myths See MYTHS OF CREATION.

cremation See FUNERAL RITES.

D



Da Avabhasa See [ADI DA SAMRAJ](#).

Daksha

Daksha is a *RISHI*, best known as the father-in-law of SHIVA. He is the son of the god BRAHMA and father of Shiva's first wife, SATI.

Daksha is best known for the events surrounding a Vedic sacrifice that he sponsored without inviting Shiva. When Sati found out that this special sacrifice was going to take place, she confronted her father. He replied with verbal abuse, which resulted in her death, because of a curse that had been placed on him. When Shiva heard, he (or his creation Virabhadra) cut off Daksha's head and destroyed the sacrificial grounds. Daksha was later restored to life, with the head of a ram.

In the epic and PURANIC literature, Daksha the *rishi* frequently appears in different cycles of creation. He is said to have had 50 daughters, 13 of whom were married to the *rishi* Kashyapa. His daughter Svaha was married to AGNI, god of fire; Sati was married to Shiva; and the 27 remaining daughters were married to the god of the Moon, CHANDRA, and are identified with the lunar asterisms, stars that are seen to be astrologically related to the Moon.

As a Vedic divinity Daksha is listed as one of the ADITYAS—SONS OF ADITI—although he is sometimes said to be Aditi's father. Thus, in some Vedic literature he is considered to be the grandfather of the gods and the *asuras* (antigods or demons), who are all brothers in Vedic literature. (See [DEMONIC BEINGS](#); [VEDAS](#).)

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Dakshineshwar See [RAMAKRISHNA, SRI](#).

dana

Since ancient times *dana* (giving, charity, or liberality) has been an important aspect of good conduct (DHARMA). The DHARMASHASTRA of MANU states that in this era of decline (KALI YUGA), *dana* is the most important virtue, compared to past ages, when TAPAS (spiritual power, knowledge, or the Vedic sacrifice) was paramount. The text prescribes *dana* as an important duty for all the three upper (twice-

born) classes. In Vedic times a *dana* or gift was given to BRAHMINS for remission of sins.

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Danielou, Alain (1907–1994) scholar of Hindu music and literature

Alain Danielou was an accomplished musician and artist who developed an intense interest in Hindu music and literature. He won a respected status in the West for classical Indian music; he also wrote many popular books that expound Hinduism and Indian culture.

Danielou was born on October 4, 1907, at Neuilly-sur-Seine near Paris, France. As the son of an aristocratic family, he spent much of his time in the country being educated by tutors. He occupied his time in the library, learning piano and painting. Danielou’s mother was a devoted Catholic, who founded a religious order; his father was an anticlerical politician. Danielou’s artistic abilities took him to the United States, where he attended school in Annapolis, sold paintings at exhibits, and played piano at movie theaters. When he returned to France he continued to study music under Charles Panzera and Max d’Olonne.

In 1932 Danielou began to travel extensively throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia with the Swiss photographer Raymond Burnier. While in India he became fascinated with its traditional culture. He became acquainted with the poet Rabindranath TAGORE, who employed him as director of the school of music in Shantiniketan, Tagore’s university. Danielou later moved to BENARES (Varanasi) and met the Indian music master Shiven-dranath Basu. He remained in India for the next 30 years. During that time he learned both Hindi and

SANSKRIT. He was introduced to Swami Karpatri and translated some of his works. Swami Karpatri later initiated Danielou into Shaivite Hinduism (see SHAIIVISM) and gave him the name Shiva Sharan. He continued a dialogue over the years with René Guénon, scholar of Sufism and ADVAITA VEDANTA, on the philosophy of Hinduism. In 1954, he left Benares to become director of the Adyar Library of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Madras (Chennai).

Danielou became sympathetic to the Indian independence movement. After India won its independence from Britain, he returned to Europe in 1963 and devoted himself to the mission of presenting a true understanding of Hinduism to the West. He founded the Intercultural Institute of Comparative Music Studies in Berlin and Venice, which he led for decades. Through this institute he organized concerts featuring Asian musicians and began recording traditional Indian music through an arrangement with UNESCO. Danielou is credited with raising the status of Indian classical music in the West to that of a recognized art form.

Danielou is best known for his scholarship on Hindu culture. He authored over 30 books on topics ranging from music to religion. In 1971, he published a *Brief History of India*, which has since been translated and republished in 12 different countries. His works on religion have significantly shaped the conversation on the relationship between ancient Western culture and Hinduism. In *Gods of Love and Ecstasy: The Traditions of Shiva and Dionysus*, Danielou illustrates the similarities in rites and beliefs between ancient Greek religion and Shaivism. He claims further that the loss of such rites has left humanity in the West alienated from nature and the divine.

Danielou’s books continue to be a source of great influence to those exploring Hindu culture. His works, written in French, have been translated into eight different languages, including English, Italian, and Spanish. He has also written piano arrangements to songs by Rabindranath Tagore.

In his later years, Danielou continued interpreting the music and philosophy of India to the

West. In 1981 he received the UNESCO/CIM prize for music and in 1987 the Kathmandu medal. In 1992 he was appointed member of the Indian National Academy of Music, Dance and Theater. He died on January 27, 1994.

Further reading: Alain Danielou, *A Brief History of India* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2003); ———, *A Catalogue of Recorded Classical and Traditional Indian Music* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952); ———, *Gods of Love and Ecstasy: The Traditions of Shiva and Dionysus* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1992); ———, *The Myths and Gods of India* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1985); ———, *The way to the Labyrinth: Memories of East and West* (New York: New Directions, 1987); ———, *While the Gods Play: Shaiva Oracles and Predictions on the Cycles of History and the Destiny of Mankind* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1987).

darshan

Darshan is from the Sanskrit root *drish*, “to see.” It refers to a most important element of Hinduism—the eye-to-eye contact between an iconic divinity (see **ICONS**) or a divine personage (e.g., AMRITANANDAMAYI MA, SATYA SAI BABA) and the devotee or worshipper. *Darshan* can by itself confer grace upon a seeker and result in spiritual benefit. So, Hindus eagerly visit temples as well as divine persons for *darshan*. If during a festival an icon is paraded through the streets, everyone vies to catch sight of it, to receive its glance and grace. No icon in the form of a person is considered an active divinity until the ritual opening of its eyes.

Further reading: Diana Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, 3d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Dasha Mahavidya

The Mahavidyas (*maha* great, *vidya* knowledge) are 10 (*dasha*) goddesses who are grouped together in various literary, iconographic, and mythical

contexts in India. It is a tantric grouping, though some of the goddesses are from a nontantric, normative context.

In TANTRISM, a *VIDYA* is equivalent to a *MANTRA*, but used for goddesses (the term *mantra* is restricted to devotion to male divinities). It is understood in the tantric context that the mantra or *vidya* and the divinity are identical. Therefore this group of 10 goddesses can be logically referred to as the 10 *vidyas*. Each of these goddesses can in fact grant the ultimate “knowledge” or *vidya* that can lead to liberation from birth and rebirth.

The 10 goddesses constituting the Mahavidyas are KALI, Tara, Tripura-sundari (Sri Lalita), Bhuvaneshvari, Chinnamasta, Bhairavi, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi, and Kamala (LAKSHMI). Kali is the fierce black goddess, the ruler over time (*kala*), who helped DURGA defeat the demons in order to restore order to the world.

Tara, known as “She who takes one across the ocean of birth and rebirth,” is more prominent in Buddhism. Iconographically, she very much resembles Kali, as she is depicted seated or standing upon the supine SHIVA. She is associated with the cremation ground and images of skulls. Tara reveals, however, a nurturing aspect that is usually not found with Kali. At Tarapith in Birbhum, Bengal, she is depicted nursing Shiva from her breast.

Tripurasundari is none other than Sri Lalita, the 16-year-old goddess who is the transcendent One. She is usually shown with a benign aspect, although she is in fact the incarnation of all goddesses, whether benign or fierce.

Bhuvaneshvari, who is often seen as the embodiment of the physical world, is vermilion in color, has three eyes, and wears a jeweled crown. She has a smiling face and a crescent Moon on her brow. She can be depicted with two, six, or 20 hands holding various objects including the lotus and a bow. She is usually depicted sitting in the cross-legged, “lotus position” yogic posture and is generally shown without clothing. A goddess described in the text Prapançasara called

Prapanceshvari appears to be identical to Bhuvaneshvari; this text is the fullest source for details on Bhuvaneshvari. In most aspects she resembles SARASVATI. In tantrism, her worship resembles in many details the worship of Sri Lalita.

Chinnamasta has the most startling representation of all these goddesses. She stands, self-decapitated, with her head in one hand and the large cutting instrument in the other. On two sides attendants drink her blood. She stands on the recumbent, copulating couple of Kama, god of love, and RATI, his mate. As does Kali she wears a necklace of human skulls, and, as does SHIVA she has a cobra encircling her upper body. Her body is naked, except for ornaments. One myth has Chinnamasta as a form of PARVATI, the consort of Shiva. Another sees her as Parvati in the form of CHANDI. In both myths the goddess is begged for food by her attendants and cuts off her head to offer them her blood. There are specific texts that outline the worship of this goddess with mantras and YANTRAS.

Bhairavi (the fierce goddess) is described as wearing red silk and a garland of severed heads (again as does Kali). Her breasts are said to be smeared with blood. She has three eyes with a crescent Moon on her forehead. She smiles, wearing a jeweled crown. She is shown with four or 10 hands. She holds a sword and a begging bowl in two of them. She is sometimes shown in sexual intercourse sitting astride Shiva. The literature often regards Bhairavi as Mahadevi, or Supreme Divinity. She is seen as supreme above even the male divinities BRAHMA, Shiva, and VISHNU. Unusual epithets call her “Fond of semen and menstrual blood” and “She who dwells in the YONI [the vagina].” Such epithets show her transgressive, tantric character.

Dhumavati, the widow goddess, is a rare and unusual personage. She is seen as black in color, ugly, old, and angry. She has hanging breasts, a long nose, and dirty clothes. She rides a conveyance that has a banner with a crow on it. She has only two arms. In one hand is a winnowing basket

and the other shows the “boon-granting” (VARADA MUDRA) gesture. (But sometimes she will hold a begging bowl made of a human skull and a spear.) Dhumavati is only rarely found independently of the Mahavidyas.

Dhumavati's origin myths show her being born from the smoke of the funeral pyre of the prototypical self-immolated goddess, SATI. Another myth shows her as a form of Sati, forced to become a widow through a curse of Shiva. Her separate temples are few. At her temples liquor, meat, and a marijuana drink are offered in addition to the usual offerings. Though her mythological history seems to depict this goddess as dangerous, she is approachable in temples and offers boons and protections, as any other local goddess.

Bagalamukhi is depicted on a lion throne. She has a yellow complexion and wears a yellow dress and yellow ornaments. She is surrounded and covered with things of yellow. One myth shows this goddess as a form of Sri Lalita. In a more popular myth she stops a demon named Madan who is killing people merely by speaking. She grasps his tongue and he becomes her devotee and therefore is not killed; there are iconographic and pictorial depictions of this event. In another myth Bagalamukhi is created by a curse of Shiva upon Parvati.

Bagalamukhi is associated with magic and occult power. She is often approached for magical powers such as the ability to immobilize or attract people. Sometimes, as with all of these tantric deities, she is associated with sexuality and sexual intercourse. As have several of the Mahavidyas, she has aspects that belong to Kali and she is sometimes said to sit upon a corpse, often while holding on to the tongue of the demon described in her myth.

Matangi is an unusual goddess who prefers offerings that are “polluted” in the Hindu sense, food that has been partially eaten or left over, things that have menstrual blood on them or have touched the dead. She is depicted as a 16-year-old

girl, with blue or greenish skin and three eyes, wearing red clothing and accoutrements, seated on a corpse. She has two or four hands. In one tale she emerges from leftover food that Shiva, Parvati, Vishnu, and Lakshmi have just eaten.

Another myth calls Matangi a sister of Shiva, cursed by Parvati to be reborn in an untouchable (Dalit) family, forced to survive on leftovers and other polluted things. Matangi is also sometimes associated with the giving of magical powers.

The final of the 10 Mahavidyas is Kamala. She is identified with Lakshmi and carries Lakshmi's typical characteristics and iconography, except that she is never shown in conjunction with her husband, Vishnu.

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Datta Yoga Center (est. 1986)

The Datta Yoga Center in West Sunbury, Pennsylvania, is a center of *KRIYA YOGA* practice and teaching. It was founded in 1986 by Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda Swami (b. May 26, 1942) as the American branch of Avadhoota Datta Peetham in Mysore, India (see *AVADHUTA*). The swami also founded the Datta Temple and Hall of Trinity in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1997.

As a child, Sachchidananda was fond of the religious life and became a devoted yoga practitioner. As a young adult he became known as a healer in his home village of Mokedati, Karnataka, in southern India.

To his devotees, Sachchidananda is considered an *avadhuta*, or liberated one, following in the tradition of Lord DATTATREYA. His teachings emphasize *kriya yoga*, which focuses on breath as a means of turning attention toward one's inner self and the realization of God. The Datta Yoga Center is a nonmembership organization. Centers serve

as temples for worship services and dissemination of the *avadhuta's* message of love, peace, freedom, and service and provide a place where devotees can develop spiritual values.

Music, in the form of *bhajans* (songs) and instrumentals, many of which have been composed by Sachchidananda, are a significant part of worship services. He says, "Music is my religion, music is my language, music is my soul and music is my expression." Sachchidananda has organized Music for Healing and Meditation concerts throughout the United States and Europe. He is also an advocate of ayurvedic medicine (see *AYURVEDA*) and the sponsor of a hospital for the underprivileged in India.

The Datta Yoga Center publishes books by Sachchidananda, a monthly newsletter called *Bhakti Mala*, and CDs of Sachchidananda's performances of his musical compositions.

Further reading: Swami Ganapati Sachchidananda, *Dattatreya the Absolute* (Mysore: Sri Ganapathi Sachchidananda Ashram, 1984); ———, *Sri Guru Gita* (Machilipatnam: Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda Publications Trust, 1988).

Davis, Roy Eugene (1931–) founder of Christian Spiritual Alliance

Roy Eugene Davis is an American teacher of *KRIYA YOGA*. He is associated with the Christian New Thought movement and teaches metaphysical Christianity along with Indian thought and practice through lectures and a large publishing program.

Born on March 9, 1931, in Leavittsburg, Ohio, Roy Eugene Davis was raised on a farm. He attended the Church of the United Brethren as a child and early on became interested in yoga through reading. In 1948, at age 18, while still in school, he read the influential book *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa YOGANANDA and inwardly accepted Yogananda as his GURU. He began to take the mail-order yoga lessons offered

by Yogananda's SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP (SRF). After graduation from high school in 1949, Davis went to the fellowship's headquarters in Los Angeles and became a student of Yogananda. He relates that KUNDALINI was gradually awakened in him after meeting Yogananda. He was ordained by his guru in 1951 and appointed leader of the SRF center in Phoenix, Arizona. He initiated students into Yogananda's practice of *kriya yoga*.

In 1953, after a stint in the U.S. Army Medical Corps at Fort Riley, Kansas, Davis became an independent spiritual teacher and withdrew from SRF. He founded New Life Worldwide in St. Petersburg, Florida. In the early 1960s Davis worked with Edwin O'Neal and the Christian Spiritual Alliance (CSA) in Lakemont, Georgia. He was associated with several New Thought churches, including Unity School of Christianity and Divine Science; joined the New Thought Alliance (INTA); and developed relationships with other teachers in the Hindu tradition, including SWAMI RAMA, SWAMI MUKTANANDA, and SATYA SAI BABA. When O'Neal left CSA, Davis became both chairman of the board and head of the publishing house, which was renamed the Center for Spiritual Awareness.

Davis's teaching combines metaphysical Christianity and *kriya yoga*, and he continues to give *kriya yoga* initiation. He has published over a dozen books, primarily with CSA publishers, on spiritual development, MEDITATION, *kriya yoga*, and AYURVEDA. He is the publisher of *Truth Journal* and writes monthly lessons for CSA members. He maintains a heavy schedule of lecturing to New Thought churches around the world.

Further reading: Roy Eugene Davis, *The Book of Life* (Lakemont, Ga.: CSA Press, 2000); ———, *An Easy Guide to Ayurveda: The Natural Way to Wholeness* (Lakemont, Ga.: CSA Press, 1999); ———, *God Has Given Us Every Good Thing* (Lakemont, Ga.: CSA Press, 1986); ———, *Miracle Man of Japan* (Lakemont, Ga.: CSA Press, 1970); ———, *This Is Reality* (Lakemont, Ga.: CSA Press, 1962).

Daya Mata, Sri See SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP.

Dayananda Saraswati, Swami (1930–)
teacher and scholar of advaita Vedanta

Swami Dayananda Saraswati has contributed greatly to the spread of knowledge of VEDANTA, by training hundreds of teachers and through his own study and teaching.

Natarajan Iyer was born on August 15, 1930, the second son of Valambal and Gopala Iyer in the small village of Manjakkudi in Thanjavur District in Tamil Nadu, India. He was raised in a traditional Brahmin family who primarily made their living selling coconuts. Described by family members as quiet, reflective, dispassionate, yet daring, Natarajan helped to manage his family's small plot of land after his father died when the boy was only eight. An excellent student, Natarajan excelled in all subjects related to logic, including physics and mathematics. He was known to be a voracious reader, harboring a large collection of books in his small home, where he regularly read until early morning.

Forced to grow up rapidly, and unable to afford college, Natarajan moved to Madras (now Chennai) to find a job that would allow him to continue his studies. He learned stenography and typewriting and began a career as a journalist with a job at a weekly, *Dharmika Hind*. When the paper seemed to be failing, he joined the air force as a combatant and was posted to the Ground Training Station in Bangalore; after military service, he returned to journalism, with an interim period as campaign manager for an independent candidate for state assembly, when he fine-tuned his public speaking skills.

In 1952 he was still waiting for his promised position with the prestigious newspaper *Indian Express*, when he accidentally met Swami CHINMAYANANDA during a 41-day public teaching. At the end of the teachings Natarajan volunteered to organize the feeding of the poor, which traditionally

followed a period of study and sacrifice. Swami Chinmayananda, attracted to Natrajan's earnestness and organization skills, informed him that he would return the following year for further teachings. The 22-year-old Natrajan was certain that he was meant to pursue these teachings and thus became an active member of the newly formed Chinmaya Mission, an organization inspired by the vision of Swami Chinmayananda. His previous experience in journalism and editing put him very close to Swami Chinmayananda.

In 1957 Natarajan gave up his work to follow Swami Chinmayananda. In 1962 he was the second student to be initiated into *SANNYAS* (renunciation) by Swami Chinmayananda and was given the name Swami Dayananda Saraswati. He would later continue his development as a teacher under the tutelage of several teachers, including Swami Pranavananda of Guduwada.

Known today as an authoritative teacher of traditional *ADVAITA VEDANTA* and an accomplished scholar of Hinduism, Swami Dayananda has conducted six three-year residential courses in both India and the United States, producing well over 300 Vedanta teachers around the world.

He has established three institutions: two in India, the *ARSHA VIDYA GURUKULUM* in Coimbatore, which offers three-year residential courses, and the Swami Dayananda Ashram in Rishikesh, a retreat center and place for continued studies, and the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, which serves as a retreat center and venue for residential courses.

Swami Dayananda is known for his scholarship, his depth of understanding, and his appreciation for Western culture, attributes that give him a wide appeal. He travels the world teaching in a variety of venues, including American universities and international conventions. He has presented papers at UNESCO and the United Nations, where he participated in the Millennium Peace Summit. In November 2001, in Delhi, he convened the First World Congress for the Preservation of Religious Diversity, inaugurated by

the Dalai Lama and former Indian prime minister Vajpayee. Swami Dayananda also actively participated in forming the Women's Global Peace Initiative, which convened at the United Nations in Geneva in October 2002.

In addition to teaching, Swami Dayananda emphasizes a commitment to peace and social justice. He instituted the All India Movement (AIM) for Seva, a public service organization that provides medical, educational, nutritional, and social support to villagers in remote rural Indian communities.

Further reading: Padma Narasimhan, *Swami Dayananda Saraswati* (Madras: TT. Maps & Publications, 1990).

death ceremony See [FUNERAL RITES](#).

demonic beings

Much of Vedic mythology, epic mythology, and early Puranic mythology (see [PURANAS](#)) depicts an ongoing war between the gods (*devas*) and demonic beings, called usually *asuras*, but sometimes *rakshasas* (both terms now simply mean a "demonic being"). Indian tradition, it must be noted, does not see the demons in completely polarized terms, as, for instance, in Christianity, in which Satan is an absolutely evil counterpart to God. The *asuras* are known to be the sons of the same father as the gods, and both *asuras* and *rakshasas* finally go to heaven after their battle with the different gods, its being understood that they have played a role in the glorification of God by being his (or sometimes her) opponents.

In the *VEDAS* a special role is played by the demon (*asura*) Vritra, a serpent being who is the enemy of god *INDRA*, king of the gods. Indra strikes Vritra with a thunderbolt to force him to release the terrestrial waters. Sometimes Vritra in his mountain lair holds back the summer waters of the "seven streams" of the *INDUS* River, so

important to the ARYANS; Indra must force him to release them.

A later example of a demon or *asura*, found in the epics and *puranas*, is BALI, who through severe austerities usurped the throne of Indra himself to perpetrate evil in all the worlds. VISHNU finally must take incarnation as the VAMANA AVATAR, the divine dwarf, to depose him.

Beginning with the epics, the demonic group is enhanced by the addition of the *rakshasas*, demons who are cannibalistic and blood-thirsty. In the MAHABHARATA the PANDAVA brothers encounter various such demons in their travels. BHIMA in fact had a son named Hidimba by a female demon. The most famous *rakshasa* must certainly be Ravana, ruler of Lanka. He was depicted as having 10 heads and 20 arms. It was he who abducted RAMA's wife, SITA, in the RAMAYANA; Rama destroyed him in the end, as was the divine plan. *Rashasas* are seen in later *puranas* (c. sixth through 16th centuries), as they are in the epics, often attacking sages in the wilderness and disrupting Vedic rites.

Further reading: William Buck, *Ramayana* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Robert Goldman, trans., *Ramayana of Valmiki: An Epic of Ancient India*, Vol. 1 *Balakanda* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Wash Edward Hale, *Asura in Early Vedic Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990); Alfred Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, 2 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990); M. V. Kibe, *Cultural Descendants of Ravana*. Poona Oriental Series No. 5 (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1941); Ajoy Kumar Lahiri, *Vedic Vrtra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984); Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Rupa, 1973).

Desai, Guru Amrit (1932–) *yogi and founder of Kripalu Yoga Fellowship*

Amrit Desai has been a prominent teacher of yoga in the United States for several decades. His career

has survived expulsion from his own ashram on charges of sexual misconduct.

Amrit Desai was born on October 16, 1932, in Halol, Gujarat state, India. Little is reported about his family or childhood. In 1948 at age 16, he met Swami KRIPALVANANDA, student of Swami Kaivarohan, reputed to be the 28th incarnation of SHIVA. Desai studied with Kripalvananda and taught Sahaj Yoga with the SWAMI. In 1960, he traveled to the United States to study art and design at the Philadelphia College of Art, as he worked in factories to support himself. He created a successful career in the arts and his wife and son joined him in America.

In 1966 Desai founded the Yoga Society of Pennsylvania, which drew a large following. In 1970, Kripalvananda called Desai back to India to initiate him into SHAKTIPAT DIKSHA (energetic transference from master to student to awaken spiritual energy). After his initiation, Desai experienced what he called a spiritual implosion, in which he instantaneously flowed from one ASANA (yogic posture) to the next and felt powerful KUNDALINI energy.

In 1972 Desai moved his fellowship to the suburbs of Philadelphia and changed its name to the Kripalu Yoga Fellowship. In addition to teaching KRIPALU YOGA, Desai and his fellowship became pioneers of holistic health. In 1983, the ashram and fellowship moved to a 350-acre former Jesuit retreat in Lenox, Massachusetts. The practice of yoga and the ASHRAM lifestyle were strictly observed, including separation of genders, silent meals, required SADHANA (practice) and *satsang* (attendance at teaching sessions), and BHAJANS (singing of devotional songs). In 1988, Kripalu gained the legal status as a spiritual/volunteer organization and became a leading spiritual retreat center in the United States.

Throughout his teaching in the United States, Desai was a charismatic and impressive GURU. Yet, in 1994, his integrity was compromised by sexual misconduct with members of the ashram and ashram guests and he was forced to leave the spiritual

center he founded. Many members of the community were saddened by the disclosure of Desai's behavior, but the Kripalu Yoga and Health Center has remained a prominent, respected spiritual and health center, reoriented around Desai's teacher, Swami Kripalananda.

Desai has returned to teaching and travels throughout the United States, offering workshops and teacher training. His new organization, Amrit Yoga Institute, teaches the Amrit Method of Yoga Nidra to provide tools for banishing unconscious fears and habits. The institute also publishes *Sacred Pathways Magazine*, a bimonthly journal of yoga and higher consciousness. The Amrit Yoga Institute is headquartered in Salt Springs, Florida.

Further reading: Richard Faulds, *Kripalu Yoga: A Guide to Practice on and off the Mat* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006); Richard Faulds, *Gurudev: The Life of Yogi Amrit Desai* (Lenox, Mass.: Kripalu Yoga Fellowship, 1982); Kaviraj (Stephen Cope), *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self* (Lenox, Mass.: Kripalu Yoga Fellowship, 2004).

Desai, Yogi Shanti (mid-20th century) *teacher of yoga and founder of Shanti Yoga Institute*

Born in Gujarat state, India, Yogi Shanti Desai studied yoga and Hindu scriptures from an early age. As a youth he met and was initiated by Swami Kripalu, the inspiration of the Kripalu Yoga Institute. After receiving a B.S. in India, Desai immigrated in 1961 to the United States, where he received an M.S. in chemistry from Drexel University. He worked as a research chemist while teaching yoga until 1972, when he turned to teaching yoga full-time.

He opened the SHANTI YOGA INSTITUTE AND YOGA RETREAT in Ocean City, New Jersey, in 1974 to provide instruction in yoga as a way of life. From 1977 to 1985 he directed the Glassboro (New Jersey) Ashram for spiritual communal living, and after 1981 he directed Prasad, a yogic health food store and restaurant. He personally

directs the Ocean City facility with his wife, Nayana. The institute offers yoga classes, seminars, and workshops.

Further reading: Yogi Shanti Desai, *Dynamic Balanced Living* (Ocean City, N.J.: Shanti Yoga Institute, 1985); ———, *Meditation Practice Manual* (Ocean City, N.J.: Shanti Yoga Institute, 1981).

Desjardins, Arnaud (1925–) *founder of Hauteville Ashram*

Arnaud Desjardins is a French teacher of ADVAITA VEDANTA. After a successful career making documentaries about Indian and other Eastern religious leaders and traditions, Desjardins eventually founded the first ASHRAM in France. He is the most popular and influential spiritual teacher in the francophone world.

Arnaud Guerin-Desjardins (he later dropped Guerin) was born on June 18, 1925, into a devout French Protestant family. His father, Jacques Guerin-Desjardins, was a hero in both world wars, and a prominent figure in Protestant circles. Close to Baden-Powell, the founder of the scouting movement, to whom Arnaud was introduced as a young boy, Guerin-Desjardins wrote books, gave lectures, and gave his two sons and one daughter a strict religious education. He earned a middle-class living as an executive for Peugeot, while his wife, Antoinette, also a devout Protestant, cared for the children at home.

As a young boy, Arnaud, although afraid of his father, was very interested in religious subjects, but was also tormented by questions rather uncommon for most children of his age, such as What about Catholics? Could they really be so wrong? If he had been born a Catholic, would not he be convinced that the truth lay in the Catholic Church? At the end of his teens, having seen plays given at the Comédie Française in Paris as part of his cultural education, Arnaud developed a passion for theater and acting, learning whole plays by heart. His parents very reluctantly consented

for him to attend the Cours Simon, at the time the most reputed drama school in France. He eventually studied law and political science, but his heart was with the Cours Simon, which opened a whole new world for him. There, he met young men and women, many of whom were to become famous actors, who lived in a different, more relaxed and open world than the one in which he had grown up. His ambition was to join the Comédie Française as an actor, yet, when he passed the first part of the exams at the national drama school, the Conservatoire, his parents put tremendous emotional pressure on him to renounce the theater. The young man finally gave in but became depressed.

The future seemed grim when he joined a bank but became bright when he fell in love with a young Protestant woman, to whom he was soon engaged. That beautiful dream came to an abrupt end when Arnaud, age 24, was struck with tuberculosis. His prospective father-in-law broke the engagement and Arnaud was sent to a sanatorium, never to see his fiancée again. Feeling abandoned and betrayed, he read voraciously and discovered the teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff and P. D. Ouspensky and learned about Hindu gurus through Jean Herbert's *Spiritualité Hindoue*, in which the author recounted his meetings with ANANDAMAYI MA, Sri AUROBINDO, RAMANA MAHARSHI, and Swami RAMDAS.

After his recovery from tuberculosis, Desjardins returned to Paris, where he joined a Gurdjieff group in the early 1950s and started working as an assistant for the embryonic French television system. In the Gurdjieff group, he met Denise, an impressive young woman a few years his senior who was an artist of growing reputation. They were married in 1957.

In 1959, having become a television director and filmmaker, Arnaud went through a difficult time in his professional life. His projects were refused one after the other, and he then decided to travel to India by car, to see for himself whether those masters he had read about lived up to Jean

Herbert's description; he planned to film them with a 16-millimeter camera.

In 1959 he traveled to India, where he met and filmed Swami SHIVANANDA SARASWATI of Rishikesh, Swami Ramdas, and Anandamayi Ma. Back in France, his finished documentary was shown on national television and very well received by the public as well as critics. He then specialized in documentaries on living spiritual traditions, filming with his 16-millimeter camera, assisted only by his wife. They traveled for extensive periods, taking their two children with them. In 1965, Desjardins produced several documentaries on the Tibetans, became close to the Dalai Lama, and went on to produce films on Zen Buddhism in Japan and Sufi brotherhoods in Afghanistan. Those films, available today on DVD and videotapes, are considered unique documents. The expeditions enabled Desjardins to spend a lot of time in close contact with some of the greatest teachers of the East and to pursue his spiritual quest while developing a growing reputation in France as a filmmaker and lecturer.

In 1965, feeling that despite his devotion to Anandamayi Ma, he could not really consider himself as her student, he went, with her blessing, to meet a swami he had only heard about, who lived a reclusive life, away from spiritual curiosity seekers, in the heart of Bengal. Sri Swami Prajnapad, while immersed in Hindu tradition, was a very unorthodox teacher. He advocated a path rooted in non-duality (*advaita*) that takes modern psychology into account. Swami Prajnapad was an ardent admirer of Freud, whose works he had studied as early as the 1920s, and had developed an approach through which students could open to their unconscious through private interviews, which he offered every day to one or two students. In that remote ashram, where the teacher was very accessible, spoke fluent English, and had an understanding of Western culture, Desjardins felt he had found his spiritual path. He then embarked on a very intense process with Swami Prajnapad,

visiting him every year for one to three months and applying his teaching in daily life.

In 1971, after going through a crisis in his personal life, Desjardins went to Swami Prajnapad and experienced a deep shift of inner perspective. Now aspiring to a quieter life, he planned to end his professional career as an administrator in French Television, but Swami Prajnapad saw a different future for his student. The guru plainly told him that his true calling lay in passing on the teaching, even if only to a few people. Since a group of people who had seen his films and read his books wanted to embark on the path with him as their guide, Desjardins started planning the opening of what was to be the first French ashram, examining it in detail with Swami Prajnapad. Having bought Le Bost, a large but modest house hidden in the heart of Auvergne, Arnaud retired from television and, in 1974, started welcoming a few students, whom he trained in the spirit of what he himself had experienced with Swami Prajnapad. A few weeks after Le Bost opened, Swami Prajnapad passed away in India.

The ashram was not open to visitors or advertised. Nevertheless, word of mouth spread and Desjardins was soon faced with an ever more demanding schedule. Nine years after he had opened Le Bost, after having experienced serious signs of utter exhaustion, he decided to rest for a few months and then open a new, more open ashram in the south of France. That was Font d'Isière, which also lasted nine years. Despite the lack of publicity, Arnaud's reputation as teacher kept growing. In 1987, he and Denise parted ways as husband and wife, although their friendship and collaboration in the work continue to this day. In 1995, at the age of 70, Desjardins embarked on a daring adventure—the foundation of a large ashram under his leadership where others could teach as well, and where many people could study and practice at different levels.

Surrounding himself with a few senior students and staff, Desjardins founded Hauteville, in the Ardèche, a place dedicated to traditional

SADHANA (spiritual discipline), interreligious dialogue, and sanctuary for spiritual aspirants. Desjardins has become the best-known and most respected Hindu teacher in the French-speaking world. Seekers from all over the world travel to Hauteville for retreats where they meet not only Desjardins himself, who still is available, but also his senior students. In 1996, Desjardins married Veronique Loiseleur, one of his long-term collaborators.

Today the words of Desjardins are published by Hauteville's publishing house, La Table Ronde, in Paris. Desjardins travels widely, especially to Quebec, where he has a thriving ashram. Only two of his numerous books have been published in English. He regularly participates in interreligious dialogue at Karma Ling in the Savoie region of France with Lama Denis Teundroup, a Frenchman given the title of lama in the Tibetan tradition.

Further reading: Arnaud Desjardins, *The Message of the Tibetans*. Translated from the French by R. H. Ward and Vega Stewart (London: Stuart and Watkins, 1969); ———, *Toward the Fullness of Life: The Fullness of Love* (Putney, Vt.: Threshold Books, 1990); ———, *Yoga et Spiritualité, l'hindouisme et nous* (Paris: La Palatine, 1969); Gilles Farcet, *Arnaud Desjardins, ou, L'aventure de la Sagesse* (Paris: Table Ronde, 1987); ———, *The Anti-Wisdom Manual: A Practical Guide to Spiritual Bankruptcy* (Prescott, Ariz.: Hohm Press, 2005).

deva

Deva, from the Sanskrit root meaning “to shine,” is the word for *god* in Indian mythology. There are numerous gods in the VEDAS and PURANAS, so the word has a polytheistic connotation. When one calls out to a singular God one uses the term BHAGAVAN. The gods of the Vedas are numerous; the most important are INDRA, god of storms, and AGNI, god of fire. Later VISHNU, SHIVA, and the GODDESS or DEVI (feminine form of *deva*) became the preeminent divinities.

devadasi

Devadasi literally means, “a servant of god.” This term was applied to women who lived in temples as the wives of the male divinity there. Traditionally the women were married in a solemn ceremony to the divinity. The women were seen to be the essential power and energy (SHAKTI) of the divinity incarnate; men would offer great gifts to the temple in order to have relationships and even sexual intercourse with the *devadasis*. The *devadasis* were rigorously trained in the arts and were very well educated. Several of the Indian dances that are well known today were preserved and developed by *devadasis* in the temples of India. Most notable are BHARATA NATYAM and *Odissi*.

When the British arrived they regarded these sacred women as nothing but prostitutes and banned the institution of the *devadasi* in the late 19th century. The practice continued secretly, however, for some time afterward.

Further reading: Saskia C. Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987); Frederique Marglin, *Wives of the God-King* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Deva Foundation (est. 1980s)

Dr. Deva Maharaj (b. 1948) established the Deva Foundation in Sweden and Beverly Hills, California, during the 1980s. Its mission is to provide a space where Asian and Western ideas and philosophy about holiness can meet. The foundation serves to educate individuals and groups in the areas of transformation, enlightenment, and individual growth. It offers a variety of services and treatments designed to facilitate personal growth and healing. These methods include acupuncture, massage, nutrition, self-hypnosis, and SHAKTIPAT, a technique that serves as the catalyst to awaken the KUNDALINI energy believed to rest in a latent state at the base of the spine. Often pictured as a coiled serpent, this vibrant energy is believed to stimulate the opening of the CHAKRAS (energy cen-

ters) located along the spine, serving to promote spiritual enlightenment.

Dr. Deva established the foundation to serve others, using the credentials he had earned in India as a homeopathic and ayurvedic medical practitioner (see AYURVEDA). Members of the foundation may also take classes at the Tantra House, an auxiliary facility that functions as an esoteric school. Students at Tantra House are taught that the wedding of spirituality with sexuality hastens enlightenment and that mastery of the mysterious should be accompanied by holistic health practices. Through the years Dr. Deva has become a frequent guest on radio and television, where he demonstrates telepathy and clairvoyance. He travels often to teach and heal. In India, he frequents the Yoga Center in New Delhi, an educational center promoting his mission abroad.

The membership of the Deva Foundation includes two groups in the United States and a sole mission in Canada. The organization reports some 1,000 members through North America and at the several international centers.

Further reading: J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religion* (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001).

Devaki

Devaki is the mother of KRISHNA, whose birth was assured by a miracle. Devaki's husband, VASUDEVA, was minister to the evil king Kamsa of Mathura. The king was determined to kill Devaki's children to forestall a prediction that one of her sons would assassinate him. He had the couple put under guard and had the couple's first six children killed. The seventh child, BALARAMA, was miraculously transferred while an embryo into the womb of Vasudeva's second wife, Rohini. By divine intervention, when the eighth child, Krishna, was born, all of the king's guards who kept watch over the couple fell asleep, and Vasudeva was able to deliver Krishna to his foster mother, YASHODA, with whom he was raised.

Further reading: Kenneth E. Bryant, *Poems to the Child-God: Structures and Strategies in the Poetry of Surdas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

Devanagari

Devanagari (“of the city of the gods”) is the script that is used for Hindi, Sanskrit, and Marathi. It developed out of the earlier Brahmi script toward the end of the last millennium B.C.E. It has been used regularly for Sanskrit ever since. When Hindi was recognized and developed as a separate written language in the 19th century, Devanagari was the script chosen for it.

As with most other scripts that derive from Brahmi, Devanagari uses a system of abbreviated vowel markings to show vowels after consonants, when the vowels are not the first letter of the word. Full vowel forms are made beginning a word. There are 48 to 51 letters in the Devanagari alphabet depending on whether certain unusual vowels are included and whether one includes conjunct consonants at the end. Typically the Devanagari alphabet begins with *a* and ends with *h*.

Further reading: K. C. Aryan, *Rekha, a Book on Art and Anatomy of Indian Languages and Symbols* (Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1952); India, Central Hindi Directorate, *Devanagari through the Ages* (New Delhi: Central Hindi Directorate, 1967); P. Visalakshy, *Nandinagari Script* (Thiruvananthapuram: Dravidian Linguistics Association, 2003).

Devayani and Yayati

Devayani and Yayati are the romantic protagonists in an old and popular myth, which also considers them to be ancestors of KRISHNA. Devayani,

daughter of the famous *rishi* Ushanas Kavya, was swimming in a pond with Sharmishtha, the daughter of the king of the *asuras* (antigods or demons) and a student of Ushanas Kavya. In those days such interchange took place between gods and *asuras*. When Lord Shiva happened by they rushed to get their clothes. Sharmishtha took Devayani’s clothes by mistake. Devayani upbraided Sharmishtha severely, and the latter in anger threw her friend into a well and took her clothes.

King Yayati, who was hunting, happened by and rescued Devayani. When he touched her hand, she announced that she would never touch another man’s hand. Kavya gave his daughter to the king; following Devayani’s wish he also handed over Sharmishtha as her slave, admonishing the king never to have carnal relations with the daughter of the *asuras*.

Devayani soon bore the king glorious sons, one of them Yadu, an ancestor of Krishna himself. Sharmishtha became jealous and managed to seduce the king to break his promise to Kavya.

When Devayani heard this she went home to her father. The king followed, chastised, and sought her return. When he reached her home, her father, Kavya, cursed the king with immediate old age as an antidote to his uncontrolled lust. The king begged a way out of the curse and was allowed to transfer the curse to someone else. He convinced his youngest son to take the curse of old age, and the son became a ruler while for a thousand years Yayati enjoyed the pleasures of love with Devayani. Finally, tiring of the life of the senses, the king took back his old age from the son and renounced the world.

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devi See [GODDESS](#).

Devi, Indra (1899–2002) *Western hatha yoga teacher*

Indra Devi was a highly popular Russian-born yoga teacher. In her long, active life she established a series of learning centers in several countries on three continents, popularizing yoga among celebrities and ordinary people around the world.

Eugenie Peterson was born on May 12, 1899, in Riga, Russia, the daughter of a Russian noblewoman and a Swedish bank director. In 1920 Eugenie and her mother escaped the turmoil of the Russian Revolution and settled in Berlin, Germany. She joined a theatrical company as an actor and dancer and toured throughout Europe.

In 1927, she toured India as a member of the performing troupe and remained there for 12 years. She married Jan Trakaty, a Czechoslovakian diplomat in Bombay (Mumbai), and became a movie star in Indian films, taking the stage name Indra Devi. She met many leaders and teachers in India, including Jiddu KRISHNAMURTI, RABINDRANATH TAGORE, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the maharaja and maharani of Mysore. The maharaja requested that she be allowed to study with him. He accepted his first non-Indian female student. At the palace at Mysore, Eugenie met Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, a yoga master, whose students included B. K. S. IYENGAR.

Devi, also known as Mataji (revered mother), discovered her passion in life. She stayed in India, studying and practicing yoga until 1939. Healed of a serious heart condition through her practice, she became an avid student. She followed her teacher's methods of HATHA YOGA, which advocated a unique practice for each individual body. She studied PRANAYAMA (breath work) and *dhyana* (MEDITATION). She continued her studies in the Himalayas after the death of her first husband. She adopted the name Indra Devi for her persona as yoga teacher.

In the late 1940s, Devi traveled to Southern California. She founded a yoga studio in Holly-

wood and taught many people, including celebrities. In 1953, she married Dr. Sigrid Knauer, a physician and humanitarian. They bought a ranch in Tecate, Baja Mexico, which served as a home, school, and retreat center for 24 years. She traveled throughout the world teaching yoga and lecturing.

In 1966, Devi met SATYA SAI BABA, who profoundly affected her subsequent practice and instruction. She developed Sai Yoga, a system of moving through ASANAS (yogic postures) with spiritual consciousness.

In 1985, she moved to Argentina and established the Indra Devi Foundation. She traveled all around the world and included many famous people as her students, including Gloria Swanson, Greta Garbo, Jennifer Jones, Olivia de Havilland, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek. She popularized yoga and meditation in Hollywood in the 1940s and 1950s and, through a series of books and innovative classes, helped to promote yoga in China, the Soviet Union, and Latin America. She remained active well into her 90s, teaching two classes daily. She died on April 25, 2002, at the age of 102.

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Devi Mandir See [MAA](#), [SHREE](#).

dharana See [YOGA SUTRA](#).

dharma

Dharma is a complex and multifaceted term in Hindu tradition. It can be translated as “religious

law,” “right conduct,” “duty,” and “social order.” Its root, *dhri*, means “to hold up.”

The social concept of dharma emerges from the VEDIC notion of *RITA* or “cosmic order.” In this worldview, dharma (the social order) is maintained by dharma (right conduct and the fulfillment of duty and religious law). Social activity was traditionally very much circumscribed by tradition; following dharma meant doing what was required.

Starting as early as the fourth century B.C.E., a voluminous literature in Sanskrit was created called *DHARMASHASTRA* (authoritative texts on dharma). These included the *Dharmasutras* (aphoristic texts). Dharma later became personified as a god in mythology and literature. His son was YUDHISHTHIRA, one of the five PANDAVAS in the MAHABHARATA story.

In the Jain tradition, dharma refers to the complex of duties required of a Jain. Jains recognize 10 forms of dharma that monks are to follow (see *JAINISM*). The word dharma can be used in association with any religion or faith, such as the Zoroastrian dharma.

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Dharmashastra

The Indian literary genre of Dharmashastra (authoritative scripture prescribing the rules of right conduct) began around the fourth century B.C.E. It included the subgenre of *Dharmasutras*, or aphoristic works about DHARMA. Traditionally, the *LAW OF MANU* (*Manusmriti* or *Manavadharma-shastra*) is considered the first and most authoritative text, written by the legendary MANU.

Dharmashastra literature prescribes the laws, norms, rules, and regulations of life for both the

individual and the community. It covers social norms, ethics, and moral tenets but also includes direction on the proper performance of rituals and ceremonies. It is usually quite specific concerning diet, domestic law, the proper conduct of kings, and, most important, the proper conduct of each caste. Major Dharmashastras were written by Apastamba, Gautama, Baudhayana, and Vasishtha, among others.

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Dhumavati See *DASHA MAHAVIDYA*.

dhyna See *MEDITATION*.

Diaspora

Although there is some disagreement about the term *Hindu Diaspora*, most members of the worldwide Hindu community use it to describe the millions of Hindus of South Asian origin who live outside India. While the majority of the world’s Hindus reside in India, those living abroad have established Hindu practices and communities in places such as AUSTRALIA, Canada, the CARIBBEAN REGION, the UNITED KINGDOM, Fiji, MAURITIUS, and the UNITED STATES of America. The practices of overseas Hinduism have had a significant influence within India, because of frequent travel and contact between family members and institutions located in India and abroad.

While exact numbers of overseas Hindus are difficult to determine, partly because of census restrictions (for example, the United States census does not record religious affiliation), scholars

have estimated the number of Hindus living in particular countries. For example, the sociologist Prema Kurien suggests that Hindus accounted for approximately 65 percent of more than 800,000 people of Indian origin reported in the 1990 United States census. Using the same calculation on the 2000 U.S. census figure of almost 1.7 million people of Indian origin, one arrives at a figure of approximately 1.1 million Hindus in the United States. Mauritius, a small country with a long history of Indian migration, is home to more than half a million Hindus, 48 percent of its total population.

Indians have been migrating since premodern times, both inside and outside India. The large-scale migration of the modern period, according to the historian Roger Daniels, may be the result of the British abolition of the slave trade and then of slavery itself during the first half of the 19th century. Without slaves, the British began to rely on indentured servants and contract laborers to work their plantations from Fiji to the Caribbean. The Indian subcontinent provided much of this cheap labor, and the British transported these workers throughout their empire. Some of these laborers eventually returned to India, but most of them remained in these distant colonies. Bhikhu Parekh, a political theorist, estimates that approximately three-quarters of the indentured laborers during the period from 1834 to 1924 were Hindu. Many Hindus were among the farmers and skilled laborers from Punjab and merchants from Gujarat who migrated as individuals to destinations such as East Africa and Canada.

Because purity and pollution are significant concerns for many classes of Hindus, orthodox Hindus, especially in the early period, were skeptical of travel abroad. At the least, international travel meant living among people who would be considered polluting. Further, many felt it would be difficult for Hindu sojourners to resist engaging in polluting activities such as MEAT-EATING or drinking alcohol. Members of the upper castes did begin to travel abroad, often for higher education,

but significant numbers did not settle abroad until the last half of the 20th century.

The patterns of global dispersal among Hindus have shifted since World War II as members of the middle and upper rungs of Hindu society began settling abroad in increasing numbers. Great Britain faced a labor shortage after the war and immigrants from India filled labor needs in the 1950s and 1960s. At first, these migrants were mostly single men, but women joined them and helped establish families there in the 1970s and 1980s. Although migration directly from South Asia slowed in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s, many East Africans of South Asian origin decided to migrate to Britain when political pressures forced them to leave Africa. Having lived abroad for multiple generations, those Hindus among them had already established Hinduism in the Diaspora and took strong orthodox traditions to Britain.

This newer wave of South Asian migrants began to arrive in the United States in the late 1960s. After decades of racist immigration laws that discriminated against Asians, among others, Lyndon Johnson signed the Immigration Act of 1965, drastically altering U.S. immigration policy. This act replaced an immigration quota based on national origins with preferences for relatives of residents of the United States and members of certain professions. The new law also increased the limits on immigrants from countries outside the Western Hemisphere. Many of the earliest post-1965 Indian immigrants were well-educated, English-speaking professionals, who tended to be from upper castes. On the basis of the family preferences in the new law, many of their relatives began to join them in the 1980s and 1990s.

These different historic immigration patterns affected religious communities in different ways. Parekh notes, for example, that the Hindus in French colonies such as Mauritius faced assimilation policies and many adopted Christianity, albeit in a hybridized form. Hindus in East Africa, by contrast, often remained connected to India and lived in more independent, homogeneous settle-

ments, retaining strong Hindu traditions. There are, however, some common patterns of Hinduism in the sites where Hindu immigrants more recently settled, such as the United Kingdom and the United States.

In these countries the home often remains a central site of Hindu practice. Families frequently set aside space in the home for a *PUJA* (worship) room, in which they install images of the deities. Worship there may range from daily practice to rituals associated with important Hindu festivals and life events. Because religious specialists are harder to find outside India, many Hindus living abroad learn how to perform practices for which they would have hired a priest if they had been living in India.

Members of the community often believe that their children need to see people outside the family engaged in Hindu practice. This is one of several reasons why many overseas Hindus regularly participate in one or more religious activities outside the home. Some participate in informal groups of families from similar backgrounds who meet to perform the same ritual on a regular basis. Many overseas Hindus also participate in temple activities, which may encompass the traditions of a wider variety of Hindu practices. Transnational religious movements such as the SWAMINARAYAN group have highly developed organizations that tend to the needs of members living both in India and abroad. Other, smaller organizations send gurus abroad to tend to the needs of Hindu householders and their communities. Hindus living abroad often return to India for short periods, most often for visits to family members, but sometimes for religious pilgrimages.

It is important to note that the Hindu Diaspora properly speaking includes people who are not of South Asian descent but who have accepted Hindu practices as integral to their lives. This includes, for example, the many members of the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, popularly known as the Hare Krishnas, who are not of South Asian descent.

See also [AFRICA](#); [BALI](#); [EUROPE](#); [INDONESIA](#); [MALAYSIA](#); [SCANDINAVIA](#); [SOUTH EAST ASIA](#).

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Digambara

Digambara is one of the two main divisions of the Jain tradition (see [JAINISM](#)). It literally means "those wearing the sky as a garment," a reference to the complete nudity of the monks of this

branch. The Digambara Jains, who are relatively few in number, are concentrated in the south of India, while the SHVETAMBARAS (those wearing white garments) are concentrated in the west and north.

The Digambaras hold that during a famine in the north around 300 B.C.E., the teacher BHADRABAHU led a group of Jain monks southward to Karnataka. Years later, when he and his community returned north, they were shocked to find that the community of monks had deviated from the true tradition and had begun to wear white garments. The Digambara Jains believe that all of the original texts of the Jains, the PURVAS and the ANGAS, were completely lost; any text claimed by the Shvetambaras is at best a corruption of the original knowledge. (The Shvetambaras also accept that the Purvas have been lost.) Both groups agree that Bhadrabahu was the last to know all the original texts.

The oldest Digambara sacred text is Shatkhandagama, "Scripture of six parts," written in Prakrit. It is said to have been composed by the monk Dharasena (c. second century C.E., who summoned two monks, Pushpadanta and Bhutabali, to a cave to record scriptural knowledge that he feared was dwindling away; the pair later put together the Kasayapahuda, "Treatise on passion." These two texts constitute the earliest and most sacred Digambara scripture. Another very important text for Digambaras is the Tattvarthasutra, "Aphorisms on the meaning of the constituent aspects of the universe" by the monk Umasvati. This text, coincidentally, is the only Digambara text that is also accepted by the Shvetambaras.

It appears that the differences between the two branches of Jain tradition are due to their separate development, rather than to any direct disputation. The most important difference concerns the nudity of Digambara monks. Digambaras understand that if a monk is to be truly possessionless and therefore truly detached, he (there are no female monks) must not possess even a garment. Following this rigorous logic Digambara monks

were never allowed to carry even begging bowls and were forced to beg only with their hands. Doctrinally, this concept has consequences for the potential of women to become liberated from the cycle of rebirth. Since women cannot take the final step into nudity, Digambaras judge that females cannot reach liberation until born in a male body.

Shvetambaras think that women can reach liberation in the female body. In fact Mallinatha, one of the TIRTHANKARAS, enlightened teachers, is understood by the Shvetambaras to be female, and by the Digambaras to be male. This is the only disagreement in the lists of Tirthankaras maintained by the two sects.

Until this day, there is little interchange between these two divisions of Jains, even though they share most of their doctrines. They have actively contended against each other for control of several important shrines in India, and in certain localities they are not on good terms. Generally, however, where both are present they tolerate each other, although they do not mix in festivals or in other spiritual contexts.

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diksha

A *diksha* is an initiation, of which there are many sorts in the Hindu context. For instance, many sects and traditions require the transmission of a MANTRA to members, in some cases by one's father, in other cases by the GURU. Most mendicant orders require a formal ordination that involves a ritual that is also called a *diksha*. A SANNYASI, one who renounces the world, is required to undergo a *diksha* that includes rituals usually done at a person's cremation after death. The Hindu ceremony at which the SACRED THREAD is invested on young boys is also formally called a *diksha*.

A person may quite easily undergo several *dikshas* during his or her lifetime. TANTRIC practitioners, for instance, will almost always have an initiation after leaving their original traditions and a second one when entering a tantric circle.

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Dinshah, H. Jay (1933–2000) *leader in vegetarian movement in United States*

H. Jay Dinshah was an American proponent of the vegan diet. He buttressed his arguments with Hindu concepts of nonviolence and respect for animals.

H. Jay Dinshah was born in Malaga, New Jersey, on November 2, 1933, and raised as a lactovegetarian by his parents, Irene Grace Hoger Dinshah and Dinshah P. Ghadiali, an Indian who immigrated from Bombay (Mumbai) to the United States in 1911. Ghadiali was a scientist and health educator and an early advocate of the vegetarian lifestyle. He educated his son on the value of a vegetarian diet from the time he was a small child. The boy was home-schooled by both parents.

When Dinshah was 23, out of curiosity, he visited a slaughterhouse on Front Street in Philadelphia. His wife, Freya Smith Dinshah, later recalled that the experience changed his life forever. In 1956 Dinshah read the influential book *Why Kill for Food?* by Geoffrey L. Rudd, published by the Vegetarian Society in England. Dinshah became an advocate of vegetarianism and sold copies of the book via classified ads. After reading literature from the Vegan Society in England, Dinshah stopped consuming dairy products and refused to wear leather. In 1957, he became a vegan, restricting himself to fruits, vegetables, salads, legumes, and nuts.

Dinshah founded the American Vegan Society in 1960 and served as its president for 40 years.

His efforts contributed to the steady growth of veganism throughout North America. Individuals seeking knowledge on veganism were welcome to stay at his home as long as a month to learn the ethics of veganism and ways to maintain a healthy diet. In the mid-1970s, the society purchased an office building in Malaga, New Jersey, and expanded its services.

Dinshah rooted the American Vegan Society in the doctrine of *AHIMSA*, a Sanskrit concept meaning no killing, no injury, and no harm, which was central to the work of both Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI and JAINISM. Dinshah did not view veganism as a mere dietary choice, but rather as an ethical responsibility to all living creatures. He taught the principles of *ahimsa* through an anagram: (1) abstinence from animal products; (2) harmlessness with reverence for life; (3) integrity of thought and deed; (4) mastery over oneself; (5) service to humanity, nature, and creation; (6) advancement of understanding and truth.

Dinshah was an accomplished orator and writer. He gave lectures and talks around the world on veganism and the mistreatment of animals. In 1975 he helped organize the World Vegetarian Congress at the University of Maine. He authored and self-published several books and was also chief editor of the American Vegan Society’s periodical *Ahimsa*, which is now called *American Vegan*. He died on June 8, 2000.

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Divali (Dipavali)

Divali may be the most popular Indian festival. Unlike some other festivals, such as RAM LILA, it

is celebrated in all parts of India. It starts on the 14th day of the lunar month of Ashvayuja and extends to the second day of the lunar month of Kartikka. It usually falls around the end of October and the beginning of November.

The origin of the festival of Divali cannot be traced, but it is known to be at least 1,000 years old. As a “festival of lights” it resembles many other festivals in the world with quite ancient roots. On the first day of the festival one makes an offering to the god of death, YAMA, after praying for expiation of sins. One lights a lamp to “the underworld” where Yama lives. After feasting, rows of lamps are lighted in the evening on ledges and external places of houses. Temples and public places are also illuminated the same way. On the second day LAKSHMI, the goddess of wealth, is worshipped; in Bengal KALI is worshipped instead. Lights are also lit on this day, when late at night a huge racket is created with drums and such to drive away Alakshmi, Lakshmi’s (or Kali’s) inauspicious counterpart. In fact, by tradition every day of Divali is filled with the sounds of firecrackers.

The third day is devoted to the unusual worship of a demon, BALI, the demon king who was vanquished by VISHNU. One is to stay awake the whole night. On the day of Bali it is common for people to gamble, since many believe that this was the day that PARVATI defeated her husband, SHIVA, in a game of dice. On this third day cows and bulls are also worshipped, as is a pile of food that represents the hill Govardhana, which KRISHNA lifted to protect his people from storm. People also pass under a rope of grass tied to a pole and tree in order to assure safe journeys. The final day is a brother and sister day, when brothers are invited to the homes of their sisters for feasting.

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Draupadi

Draupadi is the joint wife of the five PANDAVA brothers in the Indian epic MAHABHARATA. Her name derives from her father, King Drupada, of the Panchalas.

Draupadi and her brother, Dhristhadymna, were born from the sacrificial fire in the altar of the house of Drupada. She was a partial incarnation of the goddess SRI, who is associated with kingship and kingly success. As she was supremely attractive and desirable her father decided to hold a “self-choice” festival, where, after a competition of her kingly, princely, and other suitors, she would be able to choose her husband. In the competition, whoever among the suitors could hit a revolving, fish-shaped object suspended from a tall pole would receive Draupadi in marriage.

KRISHNA and BALARAMA, the two AVATARS of VISHNU, participated in the contest, but it was the Pandava ARJUNA who successfully hit the target and was garlanded by Draupadi. The five Pandavas, accustomed to sharing travails and rewards, argued on the way home as to who should receive this lovely woman as his wife. When they arrived at home and announced that they had obtained a prize, their mother, distracted with another task, absentmindedly told them that they should share it as brothers. Because holding to one’s word was more important than anything in those times, the mother, KUNTI, could not release them from her command; nor could they refuse a mother’s direct requirement. Therefore, Draupadi became the wife for all five. Henceforth, she stayed two days with each husband in turn.

Draupadi figures prominently in the famous “dice scene” in the MAHABHARATA. YUDHISHTHIRA, trying to win his kingdom back from his evil cousins the KAURAVAS, wagers everything he owns—and loses. Finally he offers his wife, Draupadi, as a wager. He loses her as well. Draupadi, in menstruation, was rudely taken from her quarters into public view by the Kauravas. Draupadi argues that since Yudhishtira has already lost himself in the dice game and has become a

slave, he can no longer be considered in possession of her and his wager was invalid. Angered at this “arrogance,” DURYODHANA, eldest of Kauravas, commands Duhshana, one of the Kauravas, to disrobe Draupadi in order to humiliate her. As Duhshana grasps her sari, Draupadi prays to Krishna for protection. Krishna answers her prayers and her sari becomes an endless garment that cannot be removed.

The disrobing of Draupadi is one of the most popular and reenacted parts of the Mahabharata. For this act Draupadi swears that she will not adorn her hair again until the blood of Duryodhana and Duhshana flows in defeat on the battlefield. Draupadi accompanies her husbands through their exiles and experiences everything along with them. In the great war all five of her sons die, but she does eventually see the day when she can adorn her hair once again.

In regional mythology Draupadi is often considered the Great Goddess. This tradition is particularly well developed in the Tamil country, where she takes on not only the role of the goddess Sri, but also exhibits the characteristics of KALI and is celebrated in many shrines, rituals, and dramas. The dramas are often accompanied by possession rituals and walking on burning coals.

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Dravidian

The adjective *Dravidian* defines a family of Indian languages that differs from the other families, mainly the Indo-Aryan, Munda, and Tibeto-Bur-

man. In the 19th and 20th centuries people speaking these languages in South India began to see themselves as possessing a separate culture, and a movement to create a separate Dravidian state, which was particularly strong between the 1930s and the 1970s, emerged.

The term itself is from the Sanskrit terms *dramila*, *dramida*, and *dravida*, referring in different contexts to peoples of the south of India, the South Indian region, and Tamil, one of the major Dravidian languages. The term is also sometimes used to refer to the people who speak the Dravidian languages; this usage is somewhat misleading in that it implies a racial designation such as ARYAN, while in fact there are many ethnicities represented by speakers of Dravidian languages. In the ongoing debate regarding the cultural nature of the ancient Indus Valley civilization, some believe its script reflects a Dravidian language and connect the Indus Valley peoples to contemporary Dravidian speakers. Others believe the language of the script is Indo-Aryan.

There are 26 Dravidian languages, spoken by some 250 million people. All but two of them are spoken in India; Brahui is spoken on the Afghan-Pakistani border in Baluchistan, and Kurux is spoken in Nepal. They are also spoken by old diasporic communities in Sri Lanka and Malaysia, and in newer DIASPORA countries around the world.

The largest Dravidian languages are Tamil and Telegu, each with about 70 million speakers, and Kannada and Malayalam, each spoken by about 40 million people. Other far South Indian dialects include Tulu and Toda, a tribal language. Other tribal Dravidian languages of southern and central India include Gondi, Kulumi, and Kurukh.

Great literatures have developed in all of the four major Dravidian languages. Tamil literature, however, has the most impressive corpus of extant ancient literature, dating from the second century B.C.E., as well as a large corpus of literature dating from the sixth century to the 12th century, when

Telegu and Kannada begin their literary records. Malayalam literature developed later. Scholars of Dravidian linguistics important for reference include M. B. Emeneau and T. Burrow. There are many scholars of Dravidian literatures; George Hart (Tamil), Velcheru Narayana Rao (Telegu), and A. K. Ramanujan (Tamil and Kannada) are important translators and scholars in this area.

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Drona

Drona (Bucket) is a Brahmin who played an important role in the Mahabharata epic. His unusual name derives from the fact that he was conceived in a bucket from the semen of his father, the *RISHI* Bharadvaja, who had been excited when the nymph Ghrītaci accidentally showed herself to him naked. Drona was a descendant of Angiras, an ancient *rishi*, and the grandson of BRĪHASPATI, a god. Drona's GURU was Agnivesha, son of the famous *rishi* AGASTYA.

Drona taught martial techniques and military science to both the PANDAVAS and the KAURAVAS, but he joined the latter in the great war between the two groups. After their great uncle, BHISHMA's, death, he became their commander. This was considered unusual, as he was a Brahmin and not a warrior by birth. In the battle Drona killed Drupada, the father of the Pandavas' wife, DRAUPADI. In turn he was killed by Drishtadyumna, Drupada's son and brother to Draupadi.

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Duce, Ivy O. (1895–1981) *founder of Sufism Reoriented*

Ivy O. Duce was an American proponent and leader of Sufism. She spread the universalist teachings of MEHER BABA.

Ivy Duce was born Ivy Judd and raised in the Episcopal Church. She served in the American Red Cross during World War I and after the war married and became a mother. During the 1930s she became interested in astrology. Around 1940, she became fascinated with the chart of Rabia Martin (aka Ada Ginsberg, 1871–1947) and decided to meet her. It turned out that Martin was the successor in America of the Indian Sufi teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927), who had offered an Islamic mysticism largely devoid of the peculiarities of Islamic thought. Duce became a follower of Martin's Sufi movement and eventually succeeded her as the leader in 1947.

In 1948, Duce met the Indian teacher MEHER BABA, of whom she had already developed a positive opinion from conversations with Martin. Over the next several years she adopted his perspectives, and he worked out a plan to redirect the Sufi movement she headed. Thus in 1952, Duce founded Sufism Reoriented, which was seen as the creation of Meher Baba. From this point on Duce viewed Sufism not as a form of Islam but as what she termed Universal Truth. She considered anyone who had reached God realization a Sufi. Meher Baba named her spiritual director or *murshida* of the organization, identified her as a seventh-plane master, and promised that her successors would be of an equally high status. He also promised that Sufism Reoriented would be a pure channel for God for the next 700 years (until his next incarnation as an AVATAR).

Duce was the only person in the West whom Meher Baba ever appointed as a spiritual teacher. Though head of a relatively small organization, she was widely recognized by the loosely organized movement that grew up around Meher Baba. Duce served for almost three decades.

Shortly before her death in 1981, she appointed James Mackie (b. 1932) as her successor.

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Durga

Durga (One who is hard to approach) is one of the major Indian goddesses, named perhaps for her ferocious nature. Her role is to intervene on behalf of the gods to defeat demons who threaten the cosmos.

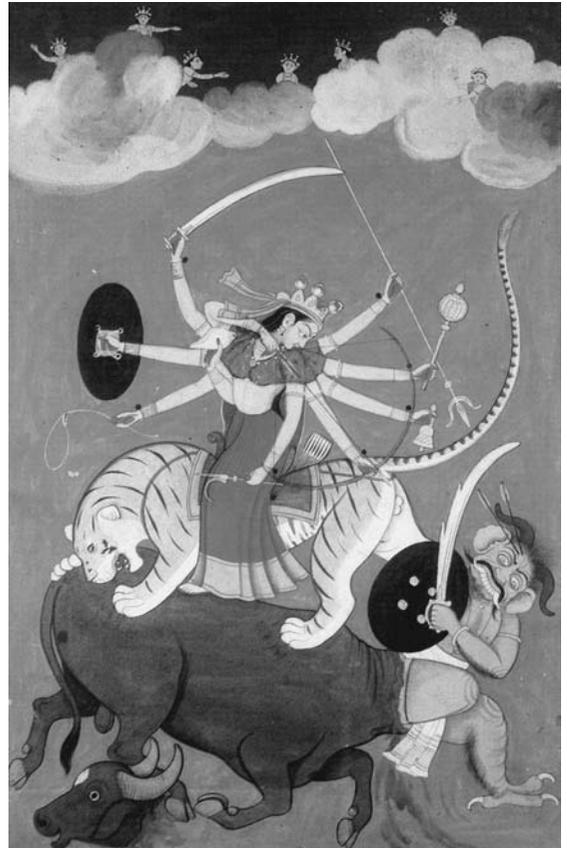
The *Devimahatmya*, the most famous text to extol Durga's deeds, shows her intervening on three major occasions on behalf of the gods: against the demons Madhu and Kaitabha, against the demons Shumbha and Nishumbha, and, most famously, against Mahishasura, the buffalo demon.

In the first case, Durga fought on behalf of Lord BRAHMA and VISHNU. The story goes that Madhu and Kaitabha were born from Vishnu's ear wax. They threatened to kill Lord Brahma. As Vishnu was sleeping at the time, Brahma calls on Durga to come forth out of Vishnu as the goddess of sleep, so that Vishnu can awaken and kill the demons. She does so and Vishnu kills them.

In the case of Shumbha and Nishumbha, the two demons performed austerities that compelled SHIVA to give them riches and strength that would surpass that of the gods. Thereupon, they began a war against the divinities. Finally, the gods had to perform religious austerities to Durga to obtain her blessing. Hearing of Durga's charms (though usually ferocious in aspect, she could change her form at will), Shumbha sent his deputies one after another to win her favor. After she easily destroyed the deputies Chanda and Munda she was forced to confront their com-

mander, Raktabija, who had the power sprout up from his own blood whenever wounded. The angry Durga then sprouted KALI from her forehead; Kali went forward and systematically drank up the blood from Raktabija's wounds until he was defeated. Finally Shumbha himself, along with Nishumbha, stepped forward, and they too were defeated.

The DURGA PUJA fall festival celebrates particularly Durga's defeat of the buffalo-headed demon Mahishasura. The story of this ASURA (antigod) begins when he becomes lord of heaven after defeating all the other gods—he had won



The goddess Durga slaying Mahesha, the buffalo demon (*calendar print*)

the boon that he could not be defeated by any male god or demon. When the defeated gods approached Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma for help, the three divinities became so angry that the light of their anger combined, taking the powers of all the gods with it to create the most formidable power (*Mahashakti*)—the goddess Durga.

Durga will be able to defeat the demon because she is female. Armed by the gods she begins a horrific battle with the buffalo-headed demon and eventually defeats him by driving her spear through him—a scene often depicted in her iconography. She is always represented in superior position over the demon, sometimes putting her foot on his neck.

Durga is the goddess of the universe, overseeing every realm. Durga's primary characteristics are that she dwells in inaccessible places and relishes meat, blood, and intoxicating drink. Durga is probably a form of the goddess from the tribal, non-Aryan realm of India, who came to be respected and adopted as the great goddess in the Brahminical tradition. Perhaps her early character is revealed in her association with the growth of plants and fertility.

The Durga Puja is held from the first through the ninth days of the first half of the month of Ashvin (September and October), as part of the NAVARATRI ceremonies in most parts of India. A bundle of nine plants is worshipped as representative of the goddess. The festival celebrates her battle against Mahishasura and her role as killer of that buffalo-headed demon. She is also cast as a married daughter, returning during the festival time from her home far away. She is particularly feted as the wife of Shiva and may be seen by some as an aspect of PARVATI. In the texts, as opposed to popular and local mythologies, her role as wife is not important.

Durga is said to have been asleep for several months when she is awakened to be worshipped at Durga Puja. The ritual of the festival includes recitation of parts of the *Devimahatmya*, an important goddess text.

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Durga Puja See [NAVARATRI](#).

Durvasas

Durvasas is a sage in Indian mythology known for his irascibility and for his curses. In the story of the churning of the MILK OCEAN, told in the *PURANAS*, Durvasas offers a beautiful garland to AIRAVATA, INDRA's white elephant. The elephant picks up the garland with its trunk and throws it on the ground. Indra tries to placate the furious sage but he will not relent, saying that he is known for his implacability and lack of forgiveness. He curses the gods to have ill fortune. It is a result of this ill fortune that they must eventually stir the Milk Ocean to obtain good results.

Another story, from the last chapter of the *RAMAYANA*, pits Durvasas against Lakshmana. The latter is guarding the entranceway to his palace while his brother, RAMA, talks with the god of death, YAMA. Yama has demanded that the meeting remain uninterrupted and has made Rama swear that he would kill anyone who interrupts them. Unfortunately, the perpetually angry Durvasas arrives at the entranceway and insists that he receive hospitality. Lakshmana asks for his patience but he has none. Durvasa threatens to curse all the kingdom, including Rama and Bharata, if he is not received. Lakshmana therefore tells Rama of Durvasa's arrival, knowing that Rama will be obliged to kill him. In the end Rama merely exiles Lakshmana, claiming that banishment and death are the same to noble men.

Numerous tales are told in the mythology about the angry Durvasas, but one story in the

Mahabharata credits him with giving Kunti a boon for treating him as a proper guest—she will have children by five gods. These five gods are the true fathers of the five PANDAVAS.

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Duryodhana

Duryodhana was the eldest of the 100 KAURAVAS, the evil sons of Dhritarashtra in the MAHABHARATA story. He was the chief conspirator among the Kauravas against their cousins the PANDAVAS, whose kingdom they tried to seize. He was a fierce fighter, as his Sanskrit name implies: *duryodhana* means “tough in battle.” He had a particular rivalry with BHIMA, physically the strongest of the Pandavas.

When Duryodhana’s cousin YUDHISHTHIRA was designated as heir to the throne, he persuaded his father to banish the Pandavas to a city where he had them placed in a house made of wax, where he planned to burn them to death. They escaped and went into hiding for some time. Later he challenged the Pandavas to a dice game in which he had the game fixed. After Yudhishtira lost everything in this game the Pandavas’ wife, DRAUPADI, was publicly humiliated. The dice game was replayed and the Pandavas lost again and went into exile for 13 years.

After they returned from exile, Duryodhana refused to split the kingdom with them and the great Mahabharata war began. Duryodhana was slain by his lifetime rival Bhima, and the Kauravas were defeated.

Further reading: Manorama Bhavanagara, *Duryodhana* (Delhi: Anila Prakashan, 2000); J. A. B. van Buitenen, trans., *The Mahabharata*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973–78); William Buck,

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dvaita

Dvaita (from *dvi*, two) is usually translated as “dualist.” In theological terms it refers to the notion that God is completely separate and different from the human soul.

Abrahamic traditions in their normative form—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—would be seen as *dvaita* or dualistic because they believe that the human soul is a separate entity and reality from God. Normative Hinduism tends toward forms of *ADVAITA*, non-dualism, the opposite of *dvaita*. But there are some Indian systems that are truly *dvaita* in nature. One form of *VEDANTA*, championed by *MADHVA*, a 12th-century sage, is authentically *dvaita*. Also, the South Indian tradition of Shaiva Siddhanta can be classified as *dvaita*.

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Dvapara Yuga

In the Indian tradition the YUGAS, or ages, refer to throws in an ancient dice game. Dvapara is named after the throw “two” (*dvi*), which is the third best throw or the second worst throw. Dvapara Yuga is 864,000 years in duration. In Dvapara the deterioration in human and worldly life continues. Passion, strife, greed, and war develop, and truth is no longer adhered to in the same way. In Dvapara Yuga, the once-unified VEDA was divided into four parts by VYASA. Because differences of opinion had arisen, the different Vedas (RIG, SAMA, YAJUR, ATHARVA) developed distinctions. Death arose among humankind, as well as disgust with existence, calamity, suffering, and disease. In *dvapara* a notion of “wisdom” became necessary as a result of the perception of the faults that now existed.

Whereas in the Treta Yuga *SATTVA*, the pure aspect of nature (*PRAKRITI*) tended to prevail, in Dvapara Yuga, *rajas* (impure) and *tamas* (contaminated) aspects of nature emerged. Ritual sacrifice became a predominant feature of Dvapara; it had not been important before. *VISHNU* is said to preside over Dvapara, because of the need for order.

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Dvaraka

Dvaraka is one of the seven sacred cities of India; for Vaishnavites (see [VAISHNAVISM](#)) it is also one of

the four places renowned for the special presence of god (the other three are *BADRINATH*, *RAMESHVARAM*, and *Puri*). *KRISHNA* is said to have fled here to escape from the evil Mathura king *Kamsa*, who had tried so often to kill him, and the city is considered the capital of Krishna's kingdom.

Dvaraka is on the sea in Saurashtra, a region of Gujarat. Krishna's birthday, the *HOLI* festival, and *DIVALI* are three special festival days at Dvaraka. There is a huge temple complex devoted to Krishna. The city is also the site of one of the four monastic centers established by the great sage *SHANKARA* in the eighth century.

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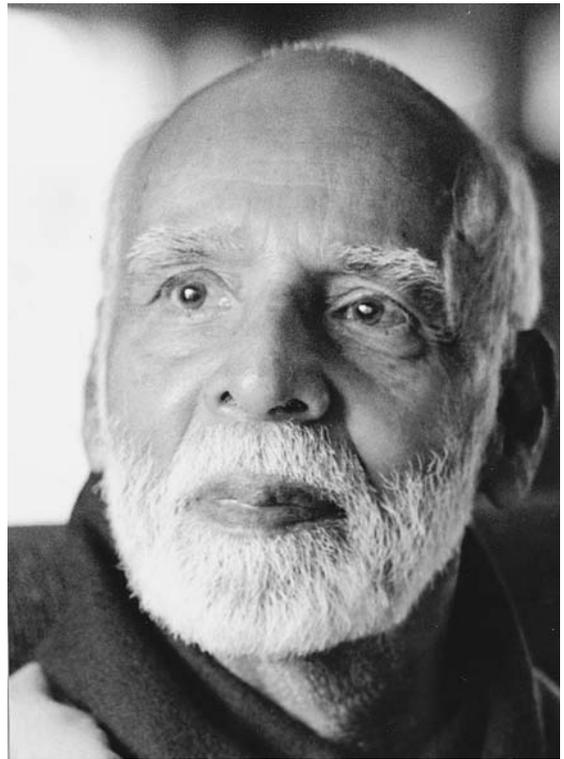


Easwaran, Eknath (1910–1999) *founder of Blue Mountain Center of Meditation*

An Indian-born proponent of MEDITATION, Eknath Easwaran was the first to teach the practice in an American academic setting. For four decades he taught nonsectarian techniques of meditation through courses, lectures, and more than two dozen books.

Eknath Easwaran was born on December 17, 1910, into an ancient matrilineal family in Kerala, India. He grew up under the guidance of his grandmother, whom he was later to honor as his spiritual teacher. From her he learned the traditional wisdom of India's ancient scriptures. When he was a boy, she sent him to the temple priest to learn SANSKRIT from one of the purest traditions in India.

Easwaran fell in love with English literature in high school. At 16 he left home to attend a Catholic college. Here he excelled in debate and read columns by Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI (1869–1948) in *Young India*. Easwaran spent his 20s as a journalist in Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh, where he soon became recognized as a public speaker. During this time he visited the ASHRAM of Mahatma Gandhi, where Gandhi's teaching impressed him greatly, particularly Gan-



Eknath Easwaran (1910–1999), scholar and founder of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, Petaluma, California (*Blue Mountain Center of Meditation*)

dhi's insistence on transforming oneself before trying to transform others.

Easwaran earned graduate degrees in law and English from Nagpur University. In 1946 he began teaching at Amravati in Maharashtra. With articles appearing in the *Times of India* and the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, his reputation spread. He was soon promoted to full professor at Nagpur University and won acclaim as a writer and lecturer.

In February 1948, when his grandmother died, Easwaran recalled, "All my success had turned to ashes." Meditating on passages from Bhagavad Gita gave him peace. He developed a regular meditation practice and created a method to share his experience. He developed an Eight Point Program of meditation for solving physical and emotional problems, releasing deeper resources, and pursuing life's highest goal, SELF-REALIZATION.

Easwaran immigrated to America in 1959 through the Fulbright exchange program. Attending the University of California at Berkeley, he lectured on India's spiritual heritage and soon attracted a dedicated group of people who studied his teachings. Among them was his future wife, Christine, who helped him establish the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, now in Petaluma, California.

In January 1968, at Berkeley, he inaugurated a course on meditation, believed to be the first of its kind offered at any major university in the United States. In 1970 the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation moved to Marin County and Easwaran transferred his teachings there. Nilgiri Press, a small publisher operating out of Oakland, began printing many publications including the *Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living* (1975), *Laurel's Kitchen* (1976), and his best-selling *Meditation* (1978), which sold over 200,000 copies. Easwaran's writings include 26 books about meditation and the classics of world mysticism, which have been translated into 26 languages, with over 1 million copies in print.

Until the end of his life, despite chronic ailments, Easwaran continued to hold regular retreats and deliver talks, drawing students from around the world. He taught nonviolence, concern for

endangered species, and meditation. He died on October 26, 1999.

The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation preserves Easwaran's teachings through the leadership of Christine Easwaran. A nonprofit and nonsectarian organization, the center has a mission to share Easwaran's teachings through a quarterly journal, *The Blue Mountain*, Nigiri Press books, and video and audio products.

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Eckankar (est. 1965)

Eckankar or ECK, the "Religion of the Light and Sound of God," was founded in 1965 by former journalist Paul Twitchell (c. 1909–70). During the 1950s Twitchell became a student of numerous esoteric and spiritual movements. He studied L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology for a time before finding a place in Swami Premananda's Self Realization Church of Absolute Monism. Later, Twitchell was initiated into Ruhani Satsang (fellowship of true seekers) in the RADHASOAMI movement, and received formal training from its founder, Sant Mat Master Kirpal Singh. Eventually he departed from Radhasoami after a disagreement and established his own teaching. He moved to San Francisco and began lecturing, writing, and practicing a form of *surat shabda* yoga, which involves contact with inner light and sound.

In 1956 Twitchell revealed that he had experienced "God-realization" after being trained by the Order of the Vairagi Masters, spiritual teachers. According to Twitchell, these beings have secretly

imparted the teachings of ECK to individuals throughout history. Twitchell believed that he was entrusted by these masters to disseminate ECK teachings to the modern world. In 1965 he proclaimed himself as the Living ECK Master and the 971st Mahanta. He founded Eckankar later that year and established its headquarters in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Twitchell spent the next few years working with his wife, Gail, to build a following for the movement. He also wrote several books on the teachings of Eckankar. In 1969 Twitchell published *Eckankar: The Key to Secret Worlds*. During the same period Brad Steiger wrote a biography on Twitchell entitled *In My Soul I Am Free*. Both books increased the popularity and notoriety of the movement.

Eckankar is an eclectic religious movement. The Light and Sound of God has been described as the science of soul travel, in which the soul departs from the body in an ascent to invisible worlds. ECK beliefs and practices resemble the teachings of Radhasoami as well as the Western occult teachings of Rosicrucians. The other fundamental teachings of ECK appear to be similar to the teachings of KIRPAL SINGH (1894–1974), teacher in the SANT MAT tradition.

It was revealed after his death that Twitchell may have plagiarized teachings from Julian P. Johnson, a disciple of the Radhasomai Satsang. Eckankar maintains in response that ECK teachings have permeated various teachings throughout history, and that Twitchell has made them more accessible for the modern world. Twitchell also used different terminology than Sant Mat. Eckankar teaches that God is the source of all being flowing, from the transcendent downward to the material world. The Light and Sound of God (ECK) is the energy current from which life flows and can be understood as the Holy Spirit in Christian terms. The numerous practices offered by ECK masters aim to guide individuals to the realization of God and their place as coworkers with God. A primary means of attaining realization is through the chanting of *HU*, an ECK name for God.

After Twitchell's death in 1971, Gail Twitchell announced Darwin Gross as successor and the 972nd Living ECK Master. The choice of Gross was controversial. He was a recent inductee of the movement and his eventual marriage to Gail Twitchell fueled suspicion. Despite the loss of several devotees (known as *chelas*), ECK continued to grow. Headquarters were moved to Menlo Park, California.

Gross relinquished his position as the Living ECK Master in 1981 and named Harold Klemp as the 973rd Mahanta. Gross's status of ECK master was revoked in 1984, and he is no longer affiliated with Eckankar. Lengthy litigation over the use of the name *Eckankar* ensued between Gross and the organization, and Eckankar eventually prevailed.

Harold Klemp was born in 1942 in Wisconsin and raised on a small family farm. He had a religious upbringing at a Milwaukee boarding school and later attended college, where he studied religion. After enlisting in the U.S. Air Force he was assigned to a military installation in Japan. It was here that he first encountered Eckankar. Under Klemp's direction, Eckankar headquarters were moved to its present location in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 1990, he established the Temple of ECK, the spiritual center of the movement. Klemp has authored over 40 books and routinely attends Eckankar conferences and seminars. Since his induction as Living ECK Master, Klemp has redirected the emphasis of ECK teachings toward divine love and service to others in daily life.

Eckankar maintains 164 centers in the United States and over 360 worldwide. The organization includes a publishing company called Illuminated Way Press, located in Crystal, Minnesota. Publications include books by Twitchell, Klemp, and other ECKists. An annual *ECKANKAR Journal* is also published. Eckankar has the status of a nonprofit religious organization and church with members in 130 countries. Its mission as an educational organization is to promote the knowledge of soul and God realization. The organization offers courses in dream interpretation, soul travel, and life service.

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ecology and Hinduism

The beliefs and practices of Hinduism have been a resource in ecological and environmental movements both within and outside India. Hindu religious stories, imagery, and symbolism are used to support the view that the universe is divine in all of its aspects and nature is sacred in its essence. Aspects of nature including mountains, seas, rivers, trees, flowers, animals, and even the elements of soil, water, and air have often been personified in Hindu myth as divine beings to be worshipped and cared for. Various forms of vegetarianism have been practiced widely among different Hindu groups for centuries. The deep respect for all forms of life in the beliefs and practices of Hinduism provides a natural alignment of Hindus with any concerted effort against environmental degradation.

In India, the traditional home of Hinduism, over 950 nongovernmental organizations work for environmental causes that address ecological problems from rural deforestation to urban pollution. As record rates of industrialization and urbanization press upon the limited resources of India, groups have mobilized to find ecologically sound practices in residential settlements, farming, mining, fishing, and water management. Threats to India's land, rivers, and seas, and air and the displacement of millions of people through construction of dams and mines are heightened by population expansion and the consumerism of a burgeoning middle class.

Traditionally India relied upon ecologically sound management practices in its rural areas

and included a religiously based cultural order that respected the sacredness of all life. Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI's activities in the movement for Indian independence gave political legitimacy to the religious and ecological sensibilities of India, particularly Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. His dedication to the values of nonviolence (*AHIMSA*), holding to truth (*SATYAGRAHA*), personal asceticism, minimal consumption, self-reliance, simplicity, sustainability, and community-based economics was based on his interpretation of Hindu values. However, since the days of Gandhi, the political leadership of the country has stressed secularization and growth so that India has continued to industrialize, urbanize, and modernize at a rapid rate. Loss of arable land, deforestation, water pollution, unplanned urbanization, dam construction, and pesticide pollution are critical problems being addressed by various ecological movements that draw on the Hindu devotion to life and the sacred.

Two locally based movements in India demonstrate the application of Hindu precepts to economic and environmental challenges: the Bishnois and the Chipko movement. The Bishnois are a small Rajasthani community who view environmental conservation as a religious duty. Their leader, Guru Maharaj Jambaji (b. 1451 C.E.), witnessed a severe drought and the cutting of trees as food for animals, which resulted in the desolation of both animals and plants. He constructed a program that prohibited the cutting of any tree and the killing of any animal. The ethic of the guru endured over centuries and the area became lush with vegetation. In the 18th century, the king of Jodhpur sent loggers to cut down the Bishnois' trees for construction of a new palace. The villagers protested, and, when their protests were not heeded, they protected the trees by surrounding the trees with their bodies. Upon hearing of the villagers' dedication, the king granted them state protection and their protection of trees and animals persists today. The Bishnois' tactic of encircling trees to protect them inspired the Chipko movement of the 20th century.

In March 1973 in Gopeshwar, Uttar Pradesh, a sports equipment factory marked trees near the village for harvesting. The villagers encircled the trees, as had the Bishnois before them, and provided a human shield against deforestation. The strategy was repeated in several villages in the Himalayas, creating the Chipko movement, which exists today as a grassroots ecodevelopment movement.

Both the Bishnoi and the Chipko movements demonstrate how environmental conservation is aligned with Hindu religion and culture. Hindu scriptures contain implicit environmental ethics that encourage respect for and stewardship of a sacred universe. The central concepts of DHARMA (right conduct) and KARMA (action in the world) have been used to support initiatives for environmental protection. Ecological writers call for a partnership between Hindu religious leaders and ecological activists to join the insight and devotion of traditional Hindu thought in collaboration with scientific strategies of sustainable development.

A series of 10 conferences on the world's religions and ecology was held at the Harvard Divinity School Center for the Study of World Religions from 1996 to 1998. Subsequently, the Forum on Religion and Ecology and its Web site were announced by the founders, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, during a report to the United Nations and subsequent press conference in 1998. In both the initial conferences and the continuing activities of the forum, scholars and practitioners promote a dialogue on the global environmental crisis and efforts to create public policy in alignment with the teachings of the world's religions. The relationship of Hinduism and ecology has become one focus of the Forum on Religion and Ecology.

Scholars and religious leaders have made presentations about Asian religious traditions and ecology at the Parliament of World Religions. The Green Yoga Association, founded by Laura Cornell in Oakland, California, in 2004, seeks to promote an ecological ethic in its practice of traditional yogic techniques and to interpret yogic texts, such as PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRAS, in terms of environmental ethics.

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ekadashi

Ekadashi (11th) denotes the 11th day of both the waxing and the waning lunar cycles. It is observed as a fast day by many Hindus and is an obligatory day of fasting for Vaishnavites, worshippers of VISHNU, as it is associated with his worship. When one observes *ekadashi* as a result of a vow, one must stay awake that night and worship Vishnu (as is done with SHIVA during MAHASHIVARATRI), as well as fast. The *ekadashi* in the bright half of the month of Margashirsha (November–December) is known as “heaven *ekadashi*,” in reference to the heavenly abode of Vishnu. It is a very important temple day, as those who go through the temple doors on this day are believed to go to heaven.

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Elan Vital See RAWAT, PREM.

elements, five

In Hindu science, the five gross elements that make up the universe are ether/space (*akasha*), wind/air (*vayu*), fire (*tejas* or *agni*), water (*ap* or *jala*), and earth (*PRITHIVI*). They are enumerated among the 24 categories of all reality of SAMKHYA, a philosophical system originating in c. 500 B.C.E., and YOGA. These elements are in fact accepted as the basic elements of all material reality by the Hindu tradition in general. Though they seem simple elemental categories, one must see them as abstractions that contain in elemental terms much more than they signify as individual words. Via

the *TANMATRAS*, or subtle elements, the five basic elements relate directly to the five senses in order: hearing (ether), touch (wind), sight (fire), taste (water), smell (earth).

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Elephanta

The famous SHIVA cave temple at Elephanta, a small island in the harbor of Bombay (Mumbai), is hollowed out from solid rock. It was created



A Brahmin householder performing water ablutions at dawn on the banks of the Ganges River in Benares (Varanasi) (Constance A. Jones)



A Hindu sculpture at Ellora Caves, c. 900, C.E., in Aurangabad, Maharashtra (Constance A. Jones)

around the sixth century C.E. It is not known which dynasty built the temple.

The temple is famous for a colossal sculpture of Shiva with three heads, one each of Shiva, VISHNU, and BRAHMA. This sculpture thus presents Shiva as supreme among divinities and embodies the Hindu Trimurti, or trinity. It has been said that this sculpture with its serene aspect is the most beautiful piece of religious architecture in all of India. The statue is flanked by two other figures of Shiva as ARDHANARISHVARA and Shiva as the “bearer of the GANGES.”

The inner sanctum of the temple holds a typical LINGAM. Also depicted are Shiva as cosmic dancer and a depiction of the killing of the demon ANDHAKA.

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Their Form,” in *Discourses on Siva: Proceedings of a Symposium on the Nature of Religious Imagery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1984), pp. 156–169. Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, George Berkson, and Carmel Berkson, *Elephanta, the Cave Temple of Shiva* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

Ellora

Ellora in the state of Maharashtra is a rich archaeological site containing caves, cave art, and monolithic rock architecture dating from the fifth to the eighth century C.E. Most of the work is Hindu, but some is associated with Jains (see [JAINISM](#)) and Buddhists. There are a total of 34 caves at Ellora. Some, cut out of solid rock, were used as dwelling places for Buddhist or Jain monks.

The most elaborate monument at Ellora is the Kailasanatha Temple (to Shiva who resides on Mount KAILASH), built by the Rastrakuta emperor Krishna I (c. 756–773 C.E.). This entire temple, cut from solid rock, includes a shrine room, hall, gateway, votive pillars, lesser shrines and cloisters. There are many carved divine figures and narratives on the walls. The ground plan is said to be about the same size as the Parthenon in Athens, Greece.

The facades for the caves inhabited by the Jain monks, as well as the Jain temples cut into the rock, exhibit sculptures featuring the full panoply of Jain religious imagery. There are images of the TIRTHANKARAS (great personages), gods and goddesses (subordinate to the Tirthankaras in importance in the Jain context), and scenes from traditional Jain stories.

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ends of life, four

The four ends of life or *purusharthas* (goals of man) represent a traditional scheme that has been maintained in its current form for over 2,000 years. The four are *artha* (prosperity, worldly well-being), *kama* (pleasure, erotic satisfaction), DHARMA (right conduct, adherence to social law), and *moksha* (liberation from the rounds of birth and rebirth). They offer a balanced approach to the world. Though Indian tradition is known to focus upon transcendence and the search beyond the world, VEDIC tradition always emphasized family, prosperity, pleasure, and well-being as worthy goals, as long as they are not pursued or cultivated in the extreme.

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Europe

Excluding Great Britain and the Netherlands, Europe has had little immigration from India and today has a small Hindu population. Great Britain and the Netherlands had colonies into which South Asian laborers migrated. Many Hindus from Guyana (see [CARIBBEAN REGION](#)) and Kenya (see [AFRICA](#)) left the struggling economies and racial persecution of those countries to enter Great Britain. Over 65,000 South Asians were exiled from Uganda under the directive of Idi Amin in the 1970s and nearly all fled to Britain.

In Britain today, Hinduism flourishes in a variety of practices, and many temples exist (see [UNITED KINGDOM](#)). Because these Hindus remain close to their native land through Commonwealth ties, they have imported influential political and religious movements from India. Most neo-Hindu movements as well as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad are active in Great Britain.

The Netherlands also has a sizable South Asian community, populated largely by Hindus who fled economic and political hardship in Suriname. As in Great Britain, they remain in contact with Hindu movements in India and reflect the traditional practices as well as the conflicts represented in contemporary Indian Hinduism.

Eastern Europe remains the main residence for the Gypsies or Romany, who were originally Hindus from the Punjab and Afghanistan. The language and customs of the Gypsy ethnicity retain vestiges of a Hindu past, even though the Gypsy population is not considered a Hindu movement.

In the last century, native Europeans have supported an entire array of contemporary Hindu movements, particularly the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, the SATYA SAI BABA movement, various forms of hatha yoga, and individual teachers of Hindu practices.

See also [DIASPORA](#); [SCANDINAVIA](#).

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F



facial markings

Various facial markings are used in India to denote sectarian affiliations or to serve other ceremonial purposes.

The most common Vaishnavite (see [VAISHNAVISM](#)) forehead marking is a large U-shaped mark with a vertical dot or line placed precisely in its center, not touching the bottom of the U. Variations include a more square U, and different placement of the center vertical line (which is sometimes made of a series of dots). Some Vaishnavite markings show only two parallel, vertical lines with or without a center dot, or three parallel vertical lines, sometimes with a dot placed on the middle line, or just above or below it.

Shaivite (see [SHAIVISM](#)) facial markings are most commonly three, equidistant, parallel lines on the forehead in varying patterns.

A dot or line of red saffron or ash might be placed on the forehead by anyone after a *PUJA* to mark an enhanced devotional state, or by a *GURU* or teacher at all times as a sign of devotion. In either case, the dot represents the opening of the third eye, which indicates heightened consciousness.

Women in India often wear a dot on the forehead, sometimes as a conventional decoration,

but sometimes as protection from the evil eye. It might also be interpreted as a recognition of the existence of the third eye of consciousness.

Some women in North India put a mark of red saffron on the part of the hair to signify that they are married.

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fasting See [VOWS](#).

Foundation of Revelation (est. 1970)

In 1968, a young American woman, Charlotte Wallace (no b. date), attended the Spiritual Summit Conference in Calcutta (Kolkata), India, and there met an unnamed Indian beggar. Enamored by his knowledge of life, Wallace and some of her friends followed the holy man home to his native village of Gorkhara to stay with his family and learn his teachings. The holy man was born in 1913 into a Brahmin family. As a youth he spent many years studying modern knowledge but deemed this study limited and illusory. On January 14, 1966,

the fire of knowledge (AGNI) vanquished all of his previous learning, and in September 1966 cosmos and consciousness became concentrated in him as the destroyer, SHIVA. Foundation devotees believe that the holy man's experience ushered in the era of Shiva Kalpa, the period of Lord Shiva's omnipotent imagination.

In 1969, the holy man took up residence in San Francisco. One year later, the foundation was established there and centers began to be created around the world. The purpose of the foundation is to break through religious, national, and racial boundaries to create a harmonious relationship of nations. The foundation reveres Shiva as the creator of all things, the destroyer of ignorance, and the force that moves each person to strive for perfection.

The foundation, still headquartered in San Francisco, has over 5,000 members in the United States. In 1997 it claimed 25,000 members worldwide. It has 21 centers in 10 countries, including India, England, France, the Netherlands, and Australia. Audio CDs of Sunday meetings and other events are sold through the foundation archives.

funeral rites

Indian *anyeshiti* (funeral rites or final sacraments) are formally outlined in the *Dharmashastra* law books and other texts, including a special section of *Garuda Purana*. Actual practice, however, frequently diverges from the textual tradition.

There are rituals to be performed before death, those that relate to the disposition of the body, those that take place after death to prevent the soul from taking on the form of a ghost, and those done later when the person is honored as an ancestor. A person will almost always be cremated at death, unless he or she is an infant or a mendicant, in which case the body is most often buried. Part of the postdeath ritual involves

placing the body on a bier, in either a sitting or a lying position, to be carried to the cremation ground by relatives or taken in a bullock cart or other conveyance.

At least part of this trip will be accompanied by ritual singing. The body is then lain on the funeral wood, always facing southward, as the south is the direction of death. The eldest son is the lay officiant at the cremation. After circumambulating the body, he pours oblations of water on it, cracks the skull to release the soul, and lights the funeral pyre. The funeral party will most often wait until the body is almost completely consumed.

Once the cremation is complete the funeral party returns home to do expiations, using mantras and other rituals, in order to ward off "death pollution" or the effects of being in proximity to a corpse. BRAHMINS in particular observe a period of 10 days when no one in the family is allowed to leave the house after a death. After a day or two the eldest son will return to the burning grounds to retrieve the ashes and bones. The ashes are usually put into an urn and either buried or poured into a sacred river such as the Ganges or Cauvery, thus guaranteeing liberation or heaven for the deceased. Often an 11-day ritual is performed to provide a spiritual body for the deceased, in order to prevent the deceased from becoming a ghost and wandering homeless for eternity. Later, the *shraddha* or ancestor rites are performed yearly to sustain the person in the other world.

Brahminical mendicants or SADHUS are buried in a special rite. The body is placed in a deep hole in yogic, sitting position. It is then covered in salt from bottom to chin, and the whole is covered with earth. Saints in India are usually buried in tombs. Often the tomb's covering protrudes above ground so that the constituted SAMADHI or grave site becomes a place of holy pilgrimage.

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Ghimire Poudyal and Binod Ghimire, *Hindu Death Rites: Antyeshti Samskar* (Kathmandu: Barsha Ghimire, 1998; New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1996); Ramashray Roy, *Samaskaras in Indian Tradition and Culture* (Delhi: Shipra, 2003).

G



ganadhara See [JAINISM](#).

gandharvas

The *gandharvas* are celestial singers and musicians. They are mentioned in the *VEDAS* and also play a minor role in the epics (*RAMAYANA*; *MAHABHARATA*) and *PURANAS*. They are minor but ubiquitous characters in Indian mythology.

KUBERA, the god of wealth, is considered the lord of the *gandharvas*. Etymologists have traced the word *gandharva* to *gandha*, or “scent.” Perhaps this is why the *gandharvas* are sometimes said to have emerged from the creator god’s nose. Other sources say their father is the *rishi* *Kashyapa* and their mothers are the daughters of another *rishi*, *DAKSHA*. *Gandharvas* are all said to have sweet voices, and they are seen as radiant, graceful, and beautiful. They are known to sing on various mountains including *MERU*, the central mountain of the earthly portion of the cosmos, but they are also heard in the sky and woods. They usually live in a sky world. The *kinnaras*, another class of beings who are sometimes considered the best of musicians, are also classified as *gandharvas*. The *gandharvas* are known to Buddhist and Jain traditions (see [JAINISM](#)) as well as to Hinduism.

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Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) (1869–1948) leader of the Indian independence struggle

Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest political leader in 20th-century India. He led the Indian independence movement to success and fought for religious and social reforms as well as restoration of preindustrial cultural traditions. His philosophy of nonviolent political action has been considered an inspiration for various opposition movements around the world.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, in the village of Porbandar in Gujarat, into a Hindu merchant family. As a young man of 13, he was married, as was the custom, to Kasturba Makharji, who was then 12 years of age. Their first son, however, was not born until 1888. He and Kasturba had three more sons.

Gandhi was considered a somewhat mediocre student; he barely won admission into the

University of Bombay in 1887. Since his father had a high position in government, and wanted the same for his son, Mohandas was persuaded to study law in England.

In 1889 at the age of 19 Mohandas entered University College at the University of London. Before he left he promised his mother to observe the strict precepts of his family's VAISHNAVISM, which forbade consumption of meat and alcohol. Once in England he made a study of vegetarianism to justify his vow intellectually and joined the Vegetarian Society, where he met various Theosophists interested in Buddhist and Hindu

scriptures. It was through them that he first read the BHAGAVAD GITA, which later became his moral guidebook. Ironically, his first study of it was in English translation. He also became interested in other religions at this time, particularly Christianity.

After admission to the British bar, Mohandas returned to India to set up a law practice in Bombay (Mumbai). He was not able to establish a practice, and after brief stints in various jobs, he took a one-year contract to work for an Indian firm in South Africa. Until this point he was not apparently interested in politics, but the treatment



Mohandas Karamchand “Mahatma” Gandhi (1869–1948), leader in the Indian independence movement, is known for his nonviolent tactics and dedication to truth. (*Shark/Art Resource, NY*)

he received from whites in South Africa, including several famous incidents, began to change his thinking.

Gandhi was forced off a train to Pretoria after he refused to leave a first-class berth to accommodate a white passenger. Another time he was forced to travel on the footboard of a stagecoach to accommodate a white passenger. He decided to remain in South Africa, just at this time the Natal legislature was taking up a bill to deny the vote to Indians.

Gandhi was asked by the Indian community to lead the opposition to this bill. He failed to stop the measure, but he did draw attention to the grievances of Indians in South Africa. In 1894 he formed the Natal Indian Congress to fight for the rights of Indians. This organization became a great force in South African politics. In 1896 Gandhi went back to India to take his wife and children to Africa with him. In 1897 in South Africa he was attacked and nearly lynched by a white mob, but by then he had abandoned his legalistic views in favor of a stricter ethical approach, and he refused to press charges against the men who attacked him.

At the beginning of the South African War (the Boer War), Gandhi thought that Indians must support the war effort in order to legitimize their claims to full citizenship. He helped organize a volunteer ambulance corps of 300 free Indians and 800 indentured laborers. At the end of the war, however, conditions for Indians did not improve. In 1906 the Transvaal government passed a new act compelling the colony's Indian population to register. In Johannesburg that year Gandhi held a mass protest. For the first time he articulated his philosophy of *satyagraha* or "Truth Force," asking his fellow Indians to defy the new law nonviolently. In seven years of difficult struggle, Gandhi was imprisoned several times, and many other Indians were jailed, shot, or beaten for refusing to register. Finally, however, the government was forced to negotiate a compromise with Gandhi because of the negative publicity the campaign had generated.

During his years in South Africa, from 1893 until 1914, Gandhi continued to study the Bhagavad Gita. He was also influenced by Leo Tolstoy, who himself pursued an interest in Indian philosophy. Gandhi corresponded with Tolstoy for two years. Gandhi was also influenced greatly by Henry David Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. In 1914, at the outbreak of World War I, Gandhi returned to India to begin a new phase in his life and imbue new vigor in the Indian independence struggle.

Gandhi initially supported the British war effort in World War I and the recruitment of Indians into the British army. However, when the Rowlatt Act of 1919, which allowed the government to imprison Indians without trial was passed, Gandhi launched a new call for *satyagraha*, nonviolent disobedience, his first such effort on Indian soil. The government response to this disobedience was violent, resulting in the Amritsar Massacre of Indians by the British army. The deaths shocked Gandhi and forced him to halt the agitation, but he had succeeded in organizing Indians to stand up against the British rulers.

In 1920, Gandhi was elected president of the All-India Home Rule League; the following year he became head of the Indian National Congress. Under his leadership congress became more militant, adopting the goal of self-rule in its new constitution. Gandhi helped transform congress from an elite organization to one with mass membership and mass appeal. He began to develop a policy of boycotting all foreign-made goods, especially British goods, as a way both to pressure the government and to build Indian economic self-reliance.

An enduring symbol of this policy was Gandhi's promotion of home-spun cloth in place of foreign-made fabric. The spinning wheel, which Gandhi began to use to spin thread for cloth for all his own clothing, became the symbol of the Indian independence movement. The boycott that Gandhi had begun was expanded to British educational facilities, and even to a refusal to pay

taxes. Once again the agitations in 1918 ended with violent reprisals by the British, and Gandhi called off the agitation before he was jailed by the British for six years for sedition. He served two years of this sentence and was released for health reasons in 1924.

Gandhi did not play a central role in the independence movement in the early 1920s. However, he stepped forward again in 1928. The British government had appointed a constitutional reform commission with not a single Indian on it. Gandhi presented a resolution at the Calcutta Congress in 1928 asking the British government for dominion status in one year. With no response by the British in the year 1929, Gandhi launched a new nonviolent resistance campaign, this time against the tax on salt.

Gandhi's famous campaign against the salt tax included his 250-mile Dandi March from Ahmedabad to the seaside village of Dandi, where he symbolically made his own salt. This campaign gained huge attention and participation from the Indian populace; 60,000 people were imprisoned during the salt tax protest. The government in response signed the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931, agreeing to free all political prisoners in return for suspension of the agitation. Additionally, Gandhi was invited to the Round Table Conference in London, as the only representative of the Indian National Congress. The conference failed to yield gains for the movement; it was followed by further repression by the new head of government in India.

In 1932 Gandhi began a campaign to improve the lot of India's untouchables (now called Dalits; see [UNTOUCHABILITY](#)), whom he renamed *harijans*, "children of God." In 1933 he fasted for 21 days to protest the Indian government's treatment of Indians, the first in a series of important political fasts. In 1934 three attempts were made by the British on Gandhi's life.

In 1934 Gandhi, discouraged at the lack of commitment of those in the Indian National Congress to his program of nonviolence as a way of life for the new India, resigned as party leader

and left the congress. Jawaharlal Nehru became the new leader. Gandhi disagreed with Nehru but at the same time saw him as preferable to other potential leaders of the movement. At this point Gandhi threw himself totally into efforts to educate rural India, fight against untouchability, and promote the manufacture of homespun clothing and other village-level cottage industries. For five years he lived very humbly in Sevagram, a village in central India. Gandhi was jailed by the British from 1942 to 1944 for this agitation.

Gandhi believed in cooperation between the Hindu and Muslim communities in India and maintained many friendships across religious lines. He was adamantly opposed to any partition. Eventually, however, the Indian National Congress acceded to a partition agreement that in 1947 created two states out of British India: India and Pakistan.

Gandhi personally was able to quell terrible riots between Muslims and Hindus on the eastern border between India and the new Pakistan, but when he returned to New Delhi to try to calm the communities there on January 30, 1948, he was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu radical who opposed Gandhi's embrace of Muslims. The long journey of the champion of nonviolence was ended with a gunshot. Gandhi's last words were said to be a call to his chosen deity, "Ram." In the process of partition, millions had to flee their homes, and perhaps a million or more people were slaughtered in communal riots.

Gandhi, critical of all organized religion, also saw the value in every tradition. He once said that he was a Hindu, a Christian, a Muslim, and a Jew. More than religious, though, Gandhi was deeply spiritual and saw the search for truth and nonviolence in every aspect of life as the secrets to God. Gandhi was given the name *Mahatma*, or, "great soul," by India. He is considered the father of the modern Indian nation. More than that he was a giant on the world stage.

India was one of the few countries freed from colonial domination that relied primarily on the

path of nonviolence; this was due to the enormous power and prestige of the humble, homespun cloth-clad Mahatma Gandhi. He inspired a generation of people to pursue political ends through nonviolence alone and had a tremendous impact on other great political leaders of the post-war world, notable among them Martin Luther King Jr. of the American civil rights movement.

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Ganesha

Ganesha, lord of beginnings and remover of obstacles, is probably the most worshipped divinity of the Hindu pantheon. With the head of an elephant and a human body that shows a protruding belly—the sign of Ganesha’s fondness for sweets—the god is a central figure in the cult of SHIVA, as the elder son of Shiva and PARVATI. He is also worshipped as a deity on his own, as is shown in Ganesha PURANA. Nearly every Indian PUJA or worship service commences with verses to and adoration of Ganesha. The figure of the sitting Ganesha and his incongruous vehicle, the rat, is found near the entranceway or one of the entranceways of many, many Hindu temples.

As is usual in Hindu mythology and lore, there are many and various stories about the events of Ganesha’s life. The most common story of his origin is that he was made by Parvati, who rubbed off material from her skin and formed it into a shape of a person. She set this “child” Ganesha to guard her shower or inner chamber. Shiva, unaware of



Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, is the son of Lord Shiva and known as remover of obstacles. (*Saiva Siddhanta Church, Kapaa, Kauai, Hawaii*)

this, found Ganesha at his post and thinking that he was a lover or intruder he cut off the child’s head. Scolded by an angry Parvati, Shiva hastily rushed off to find a new head for the child and returned with the head of an elephant.

In one popular story Parvati declares a race around the universe between the ponderous Ganesha and his younger brother, Skanda or KARTTIKEYA. The younger boy takes off on his swift peacock vehicle swift as lightning, leaving the slow Ganesha with his pitiful rat vehicle far behind. Thinking a moment, Ganesha realizes that his mother and father themselves constitute the entire universe. He simply walks around his mother and father

and wins the race. Ganesha is also said to have written down the MAHABHARATA epic as quickly as its reciter VYASA was able to tell it. For this Ganesha broke off one of his tusks to use as a stylus. In South India Ganesha is known as a bachelor, but in other parts of India he is seen as married.

Iconographically Ganesha appears in many poses and forms, but he is most often sitting, accompanied by the rat, with one tusk broken. Most often he is shown with two arms, but he is also depicted with several pairs. In his hands are sweets, his tusk, an axe, a noose, or an elephant goad.

After his popularity had been well established in the Brahminical tradition, Ganesha appeared in Jain tradition as well (see JAINISM), in which he was seen as a remover of obstacles. Outside India Ganesha is found in Buddhist contexts as a TANTRIC deity, with sometimes unbenign characteristics. He is found in Southeast Asian art, in Tibet, in China, and even in Japan.

The cult of Ganesha is probably quite old, originating in the worship of the elephant, but its actual origin is difficult to determine. The cult is visible in extant sources dating from the fourth century C.E. He is not mentioned at all in earlier texts such as the Mahabharata or the RAMAYANA, in which Shiva and VISHNU and their emerging cults are developing.

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Gangaji (1942–) *teacher of advaita Vedanta*

The American-born Gangaji is a popular international teacher of VEDANTA in the tradition of Sri Harilal POONJA.

Antoinette Robertson Palmer was born on June 11, 1942, in Mississippi and graduated the

University of Mississippi. She married Eli Jackson Bear, himself a spiritual teacher, and began a quest for spiritual fulfillment. She moved in 1972 to San Francisco, where she participated in several forms of Buddhist practice. She practiced Japanese Zen Buddhism and South Asian *vipassana* (insight) MEDITATION and helped manage a Tibetan Buddhist meditation center. She also took the *bodhisattva* pledge, in which a person vows to help humanity until all people reach enlightenment. Later she studied acupuncture and became a licensed acupuncturist.

Still on a quest to find a deeper level of being, Palmer went with her husband to meet the teacher of enlightenment POONJAJI in Haridwar on the GANGES River in northern India. There she found realization of the Self in the presence of her teacher, a fulfillment that he confirmed. He gave her the spiritual name *Ganga*, for the Hindu goddess of the Ganges River. Poonjaji asked her to introduce his teachings to the West.

As a popular teacher of ADVAITA (non-dualist) Vedanta, Gangaji does not base her teachings on any specific scriptures, but on her own experience of the Self. She holds regular *satsangs* (teachings) at her center in northern California and appears weekly on public access television. She travels widely and gives retreats in many places around the world. Her foundation's Prison Program provides books, audiotapes, and videotapes and organizes visits to prisons by volunteers.

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Ganges (Ganga)

The Ganges or Ganga is India's most sacred river. It is 1,557 miles long and sweeps a valley or basin 200 to 400 miles wide. Its scientific source is in



Morning bathing on the steps to the Ganges River in Benares (Varanasi) (*Constance A. Jones*)

glaciers on the southern slopes of the HIMALAYAS, some 10,300 feet above sea level, but its traditional source is the glacial site Gangotri. Its major flow begins where the Alaknand and Bhagirathi rivers meet at a site called Devprayag. It is joined by the YAMUNA River at ALLAHABAD (known traditionally as Prayag) in Uttar Pradesh and then

flows eastward through Bihar, traversing the holy city of BENARES (Varanasi), the city of Patna, and Calcutta (Kolkata) before entering the Bay of Bengal.

Although the Ganges has long been the most sacred of Indian rivers, it is mentioned unambiguously only twice in the RIG VEDA, the oldest extant

Indian text. Its prominent mention and sacred status are fully established only in the *PURANAS*, Indian texts of mythology. There the river is said to have descended from heaven, taken down to Earth by the prayers of the sage Bhagiratha to sanctify the ashes of the sons of his progenitor Sagara. The latter had dug out a huge hole looking for a lost horse, but the Ganges filled this vast expanse to form the ocean. Descending from Lord VISHNU's toe, the river might have inundated all the Earth, had not SHIVA agreed to let it first flow through his topknot. Shiva has since that time been depicted with the Ganges flowing through his hair.

Ganga is considered a goddess, the eldest daughter of HIMAVAT (the Himalayas). Ganga's husband is Shantanu; their son BHISHMA plays an important role in the MAHABHARATA epic, as great uncle of both the warring factions. Ganga's water is always pure and purifying, and pilgrims take flasks and casks home for rituals and blessings. It is every Hindu's wish to have his or her ashes thrown into the Ganges after cremation. It is widely believed that such an act confers heaven or liberation on the dead person. Because of the sacredness of the Ganges and its importance to Hinduism India has made great efforts to try to clean up this very heavily polluted waterway. Activist movements have for decades agitated for cleaning up this valuable resource.

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Garuda

Garuda is both the mount of VISHNU and the king of birds. He is depicted with the body of a man and the face of an eagle. He is considered the son of the *RISHI* Kashyapa and his wife, Vinata.

Garuda is known to be an enemy of snakes, a natural characteristic of a bird of prey such as the eagle. In his case the enmity is attributed to a rivalry between his mother and her sister Kadru, mother of the serpents. Kadru had taken Vinata captive but agreed to set her free if she would give her the nectar of immortality (*AMRITA*). Garuda was successful in going to heaven and defeating the two snakes who guarded it there. It was this deed that gained him the reward of being Vishnu's mount.

The story did not end at this, however. INDRA, ruler of heaven, wanted his nectar returned. Finally, he allowed Garuda to feed on snakes, the traditional food of eagles, in exchange for returning the nectar of immortality. Sometimes Garuda is iconographically represented holding a pot of ambrosia (*amrita*).

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Gaudapada (c. 750–800 C.E.) Vedantic philosopher

Gaudapada is best known as the guru of Govinda, guru of the famous philosopher SHANKARA. He is the earliest writer in the movement to revive the UPANISHADIC tradition of non-dual (*ADVAITA*) philosophy. He is author of a commentary on the MANDUKYA Upanishad, called the Mandukya-karika, which consists of four segments or books. This work was commented on in turn by Shankara. Notable in the text of Mandukyakarika is the use of Buddhist terminology. This has been shown to reflect not Buddhist influence on the VEDANTIC tradition, but rather an attempt to proselytize the Buddhists.

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Gaudiya Math (est. 1930s)

The Gaudiya Math (monastery) is an organization founded in the 1930s to promote Chaitanya VAISHNAVISM in India, and later around the world.

The modern revival of the BHAKTI (devotional) yoga tradition of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1534) is generally attributed to the efforts of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur (born Kedarnath Dutta, 1838–1914). A lifelong follower of the devotion to Lord KRISHNA, he concentrated his last decades on creating various programs to spread the devotion, especially the Nama Hatta program designed to promote the chanting of the holy name. Among his accomplishments, along with his colleague Srila Jagannath das Babaji, was the rediscovery of the birthplace of Sri Chaitanya.

Bhaktivinode Thakur's work was carried forward by his son, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur (1874–1937). Bhaktisiddhanta, together with Kuñja Babu and other devotees, founded the Gaudiya Math in the 1930s. He emphasized the personal nature of the godhead, in distinction to the view that had become dominant in eastern India, that the divine was basically impersonal. He also worked to build the preaching centers established by his father into full ashrams. Most importantly, he tried to put into effect the desire of his father to send Vaishnavite disciples to the West.

The first center of bhakti yoga in England opened in 1933 as the Gaudiya Mission Society of London; on July 20, representatives of the Gaudiya Math had an official meeting with the king. A second European preaching center was opened in Berlin. Meanwhile, additional centers were being established across India, with a concentration in Bengal and along the route of the GANGES River to BRINDAVAN. A conscious effort was made to establish centers in the places known to have been visited by Chaitanya. An active publishing program was developed. Besides its own accomplishments, the rise of the Gaudiya Math was seen as a stimulus to other organizations that continued Chaitanya's teachings.

The math has become best known through the Western Mission started by one of his former members, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977), a disciple of Bhaktisiddhanta. The later told Prabhupada in 1936 to prepare himself for a mission in the West. In 1965, already of advanced years, he moved to the United States and began the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS (ISKCON). Though independent of the math, ISKCON would become the most effective instrument in carrying out the goals of the math's founder. In the last decades of the 20th century, in spite of numerous ups and downs, it was still teaching devotion to Krishna in many countries of the world.

ISKCON's success spawned more than 20 new organizations that follow Krishna devotion. In the 1990s, most of these organizations joined with the surviving Gaudiya Math in India to create the World Vaisnava Association, as part of an attempt to coordinate and unify the global mission.

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Gaudiya Vaishnavite Society

The Gaudiya Vaishnavite Society developed in the 1980s. It arose in part as a result of differences among followers of the late Swami A.C.

Prabhupada BHAKTIVEDANTA, the founder of the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS (ISKCON). Within ISKCON, one group of conservative thinkers wanted to venerate all teachers in the organization as GURUS. A reform faction led by B. V. Tripurari opposed other ISKCON gurus' accepting veneration in the same manner as had been shown Prabhupada. Eventually Tripurari led many of the reform group away from the original organization and this group formed the Gaudiya Vaishnavite Society.

Tripurari Swami first met Prabhupada, a saintly holy man, when he visited the United States in September 1965. He became a student of the master and after a short time became a *sannyasi*, one who renounces the world to live a holy life. Amid the turmoil that follow Prabhupada's death in 1977, Tripurari remained loyal to his lineage, pointing reformists to honor Bhakti Rakshak Sridhara Maharaj (1895–1988), Prabhupada's god-brother (meaning that they had received their initiations from the same guru).

While Prabhupada had concentrated on the development of a mission in the United States. Sridhara Maharaj had developed an international following related to the work he had started through the Sri Chaitanya Saraswati Math in West Bengal, India. As knowledge of his work spread, he had built up communities abroad that supported his mission.

Several challenges emerged when the Gaudiya Vaishnavite Society became active in missionary efforts. In 1986, the city of San Francisco forbade society members to pass out their literature on the streets. The Gaudiya Society took the case to court and won. In 1988, the organization began to print its periodical *The Clarion Call*, similar in design and perspective to ISKCON's main magazine, *Back to Godhead*. This periodical was able to cross religious boundaries and reach far beyond the followers of the society. It especially addressed a variety of issues important to the New Age community, such as human and animal rights, reincarnation, holistic health ideas, vegetarianism, and spirituality.

The Gaudiya Vaishnavite Society remains in harmony with the religious beliefs and principles initially articulated by ISKCON. The major issue originally confronting ISKCON was resolved as its members spiritually realigned to Sridhara Maharaj as their leader. There was never any problem with remaining loyal to the spiritual ideal promoted by ISKCON. Society members, however, now trace their lineage from Sridhara Maharaj and not Prabhupada.

The Gaudiya Vaishnavite Society teaches a form of BHAKTI (devotional) *yoga* that encourages members to engage in temple worship, in contrast with other forms of Hinduism that focus on worshipping at a home altar. Precepts include belief in a theistic (personal) deity. The society's views thus differ from the traditional perspective of ADVAITA (non-dualist) VEDANTA, which supports a monist perspective in which the ultimate divine is conceived in impersonal terms. The Gaudiya Vaishnavite Society (and related groups such as ISKCON) build their relationship with God through personal devotion. A major element in that devotional activity concerns the frequent repetition of the following MANTRA that calls upon the name of God: Hare Krishna, *Hare Krishna, / Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, / Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare.*

The mantra is chanted several hours daily by devotees as a means of elevating their consciousness, quickening enlightenment, and hastening progress to SAMADHI, an elevated state of consciousness.

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Gautama See [NYAYA-VAISHESHKA](#).

Gayatri Mantra

Gayatri is a VEDIC MANTRA to the Sun; it is chanted each morning by twice-born Indian men—those who have been invested with the sacred thread, whether BRAHMINS, KSHATRIYAS, or VAISHYAS. In later times Gayatri was sometimes considered the wife of BRAHMA.

The mantra is from RIG VEDA (3.62.10) to the god of the Sun SAVITRI. Some think it the most important Vedic mantra. It translates: “OM, Earth, Sky, Heavens! May the most excellent effulgence of the Sun-god (Savitri) inspire higher consciousness.” Orthodox Indians chant the mantra three times during the day, in the morning, at noon, and at night. Gayatri is technically a Vedic meter with 24 syllables—considered the most elegant of meters.

Currently, a movement and ASHRAM are organized around the healing benefit of repeating the mantra. It operates as Gayatri Pariwar in HARIDVAR, India.

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Gayatri Pariwar, Haridwar See [GAYATRI MANTRA](#).

Ghose, Aurobindo See [AUROBINDO, SRI](#).

Gitagovinda

Gitagovinda (KRISHNA in songs) is a SANSKRIT poem written by the 12th-century poet JAYADEVA. Made

up of 12 chapters containing 24 songs, the Gitagovinda traces the passionate love affair of the young, handsome cowherd Krishna and his married lover RADHA, a young woman who also herds cows (GOPI). Both sacred and profane, the work details the love play of the fickle god with Radha, Radha's pain in separation from him, his eventual pain in separation from her, and their passionate reunion.

In theological terms, Radha is the devotee who seeks God, tastes the sweet pleasure of mystic union, and then is abandoned only to have the love renewed in further mystical experience. In later Vaishnavite theology Radha was seen as an extension of the fullness of the divine, who was (mysteriously) both identical and separate from him. Radha, then, becomes the energy of Krishna that allows him to experience and impart joy. This explains why in Gitagovinda god himself is seen to yearn for the devotee (Radha) in parting. Krishna needs the devotee nearly as much as the devotee needs Krishna.

Gitagovinda is a masterpiece of Sanskrit literature that was very influential among the Vaishnavites of Bengal. It was considered to be CHAITANYA's favorite work, and stories tell of his relish for the songs of this book. It also influenced the Vaishnavite Sahajiyas, a tantra-influenced sect that saw sexuality as an expression of Krishna's liaisons with Radha. The Sahajiyas esoteric practice joined a man with a woman not his wife as part of the realization of the mysterious union of Radha and Krishna.

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goddess

The worship of the goddess in India probably began in Neolithic times. There are several figurines from

the INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION (c. 3600–1900 B.C.E.) that appear to be goddess figurines and indicate a focus on the divine feminine.

In the RIG VEDA (c. 1500 B.C.E.), the oldest of India's extant texts, the primary divinities AGNI and INDRA are male, as are the great majority of divinities mentioned. Some important goddesses, however, are also cited. Perhaps most important is VACH, goddess of speech. Since speech in its form as MANTRA is the locus or primary source of ritual power in the VEDIC context, the goddess of speech is all-encompassing. In fact, in Rig Veda (X.125) a verse to this goddess of speech shows her to be an all-encompassing reality, surpassing all the male gods. Other important goddesses in the VEDAS are USHAS, RATRI, and ADITI. Ushas is the goddess of the early dawn light, possibly before sunrise. Ratri is her sister, who is the goddess of the night. Aditi is understood to be the mother of the male gods. Another goddess, SARASVATI, is hailed in the Rig Veda as an important river. She gains later fame, beginning with late Vedas when the same name is used for the goddess of learning. Finally, Shaci, the wife of Indra, is frequently mentioned and sometimes taken to be all-powerful.

Hinduism developed by mythically interlinking the male gods VISHNU and SHIVA, among others, to various local divinities throughout India. Vishnu is found in the Vedas, where *shiva* (the auspicious) was an epithet of the god RUDRA. As theistic Hinduism developed, these gods emerged as a sort of cultural meeting place for various local mythic traditions. They are, in essence, amalgams of characteristics derived from different, and perhaps sundry, cultural sources. As the ARYANS moved east and south, many local divinities were identified with these greater divinities. Some of them, such as GANESHA, the elephant-headed god, for instance, became members of a larger family; Ganesha became the son of Shiva.

In this context, local goddesses were understood to be wives of Shiva and Vishnu. It is possible that SATI, Shiva's first wife, derived from just such a local non-Aryan cultural complex. PARVATI,

his second wife and the daughter of the Himalaya mountain, may well have been a distinct divinity in ancient times. Later, as DURGA and KALI became recognized as wives of Shiva, many of the local goddesses lost some or all of their original character and began to be understood as Durga or Kali under other names. Parvati was probably the model, here, as many local goddesses under other names are identified with her, too—for example MINAKSHI of Madurai.

As was the case with Shiva, certain goddesses became identified with Vishnu's wife, Lakshmi; they may be seen as Rukmini or Radha the wife and lover, respectively, of Vishnu in his form as KRISHNA. Some are identified with SITA, the wife of RAMA, another AVATAR of Vishnu.

Vishnu and Shiva are the main divinities for VAISHNAVISM and SHAIIVISM, respectively (the goddess-oriented sect of SHAKTAS is discussed later). They are both loosely related to the divinity BRAHMA, who has a clear post-Vedic development. Very few male divinities around India become associated with him, but there are many goddesses who are identified with his wife SARASVATI, goddess of wisdom and learning.

The development of the two main Hindu cults to Vishnu and Shiva began with the great India epics (c. 700 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.). In the early centuries of the Common Era, additional texts recounting their deeds, incarnations, and adventures began to emerge, called PURANAS. At about this time the cult of Mahadevi, or the Great Goddess, began to develop as well; texts such as the Markandeya Purana (c. 300–600 C.E.) actually praised the goddess as the supreme being above Shiva and Vishnu. This represented the beginning of the cult of the Shaktas, who focus their worship on the goddess as SHAKTI (supreme divine energy). Undoubtedly, Vedic divinities such as Vac helped form the model for this development, but the cultural roots of the Great Goddess must be seen to be in the pre-Aryan substratum of Indian culture, in which goddesses were probably worshipped from Neolithic times.

Kali or Durga became the main object of worship for goddess-oriented Hindus, but it must be understood that there are many, many goddesses throughout India of independent origin who are identified with these “greater” divinities. In the Shakta context TANTRIC forms of worship are more likely to be found, though the Shaivites have also always had a well-developed set of tantric cults drawing on the same prehistorical sources in Indian culture. There are also rare cults of Vaishnavite tantra. Sometimes these tantric cults took up the worship of the DASHA MAHAVIDYA, a pantheon of goddesses joined for specialized worship. These included well-known goddesses such as Kali and Lakshmi, who are worshipped alongside specialized cult goddesses such as SRI LALITA or other more unusual divinities such as Dasha Mahavidya, who is worshipped with polluted things such as cloth that has been stained by menstruation (see PURITY/POLLUTION).

In Shaktism ferocious, frightening forms of the divine feminine are common; they often are worshipped with the understanding that since the goddess is all of reality, we must learn to love her in the most frightening, dark forms to understand her totality. In tantrism this realization about the divinity takes the form of engaging in activities in a ritual context that are usually forbidden, such as eating beef or having sex with someone to whom one is not married. This is done in order to comprehend the divinity beyond all social or mental conception. This sort of tantric practice involves only a very small minority of goddess worshippers.

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Golden Temple See [AMRITSAR](#).

gopi

A female cowherd. The *gopi* figure in the story of Lord KRISHNA as divine lover. When Krishna went to the woods alone at night to play on his seductive flute, the cowherds, all married women, secretly left their houses to rendezvous with him. They would dance the Rasa Lila (loosely, the divine play of the essence of divinity); with Krishna standing in the middle, each *gopi* thought he was dancing with her alone. Some versions of the story say that Krishna multiplied himself so that he could dance intimately with each of the cowgirls simultaneously.

The *gopi* becomes the symbol, in the theology of Krishna worship, of the devotee who is willing even to flout convention to go to her or his passionate “assignation” with the divine. In later versions, Radha appears as the favored *gopi* of Krishna. She, then, becomes the symbol of the passionate devotee. The love of Krishna and Radha is frequently depicted in literature, painting, and dance and is a central theme in Hindu devotion.

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Gorakhnath (c. 12th century) *Nath yogi and philosopher*

Gorakhnath (Sanskrit, *gorakshanatha*) (c. 12th century) is the most important figure in the NATH YOGI sect. In the North Indian Nath tradition,

Gorakhnath is variously considered the third to fifth in a series of 12 authoritative gurus.

Originally centered in western India, the practice spread throughout northern India, with both Buddhist and Hindu offshoots. Several early teachers in the lineage, including Gorakhanath, are included in Tibetan Buddhist TANTRIC lineages. Known to both is Mastyendranath, who is seen in North Indian Nath Yoga to be the guru of Gorakhnath.

There is a vast literature attributed to Gorakhanath, including several important SANSKRIT texts and numerous poems in Hindi, Bengali, and Rajasthani. A rich mythology emphasizes his magical, divine powers: he was known for being able to raise the dead at will.

The Nath Yoga practices in the tradition of Gorakhnath are tantric in orientation, but they did not involve any of the sexual practices of tantrism, as the Naths generally took a misogynistic view of women. They adopted antisocial behavior as a norm; as in earlier Shaivite sects, it was part of their esoteric practice to smear themselves with ashes from the cremation ground and even human feces, to eat disgusting things, and to act in outrageous, antisocial ways (see [SHAIVISM](#)).

Gorakhnath and his followers to this day are known for their propensities toward magic and their use of oxides of mercury and other secret substances and potions meant to create bodily immortality. Their practice generally conforms to that of the *SIDDHAS*, tantric yoga specialists, of India over many centuries.

In terms of yoga practice, those in the Gorakhnath tradition perfect forms of HATHA YOGA; they concentrate on an invisible web of bodily channels called *NADIS*, through which one can channel breaths to gain both occult powers and liberation from birth and rebirth. Philosophically the views of the followers of Gorakhnath varied from region to region, but generally they had a non-dual (*ADVAITA*) tantric character, which saw the divine as not merely a transcendent reality, but an immanent, worldly reality as well.

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gotra

A *gotra* is an exogamous kinship division within a *jati*, or subcaste. Members of the same *gotra* within a subcaste are not allowed to marry among themselves; of course, they must marry within their *jati*. *Gotra* literally means “the place of the cows”; the concept may thus date back to very ancient times, when kin shared the same cow herds. BRAHMINs particularly will often trace their particular *gotra* back to one of the seven *RISHIS* of Vedic times.

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Govardhana See [KRISHNA](#).

Grace Essence Fellowship (est. 1970s)

Grace Essence Fellowship of Taos, New Mexico, owes its development to Larry C. Short, an American with training in psychological counseling, bodywork, martial arts, MEDITATION, and YOGA. He has synthesized a path between yoga and Tibetan ideas, which he calls the Way of Radiance, a modern esoteric work school.

The fellowship was established in the late 1970s after Short discovered Swami RUDRANANDA (1928–73), the founder of the Nityananda Institute. Rudrananda was one of the first Hindu teachers to introduce KUNDALINI training to the United States. Short studied kundalini yoga with him until his death in 1973, then decided to

study with his Holiness Dilgo Khyentse, a Tibetan master. He also synthesized aspects of Zen and Taoism. Rudrananda had predicted that an integration of these paths would be a universal system of spiritual work.

The synthesis, called the Way of Radiance, teaches that life is a gift and that struggling is not necessary to achieve a full and harmonious life. The goals of these teachings are to live in each moment, to dedicate one's self to growth and freedom beyond rules and regulations that squelch growth, and to transcend the struggles with ourselves, the culture, and the environment. Short has woven together strands of mindfulness practice with TANTRA to produce a novel path.

Students of the Way of Radiance have the opportunity to grow and choose their way of relating. Some become teachers, seminarians, or practitioners. Study groups for the Way are found in the United States, Venezuela, and Canada. Their headquarters are in Newton, Massachusetts.

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Granth Sahib See [SIKHISM](#).

grihastha See [ASHRAMAS](#).

Grihya Sutra See [VEDAS](#).

Gross, Darwin See [ECKANKAR](#).

guna

In the SAMKHYA YOGA tradition, which originated around the fifth century B.C.E., the *gunas* were the

strands or fabric of nature or *PRAKRITI*; they eternally evolved into new universes, which would be destroyed only to reemerge. *Prakriti* itself was seen to be eternal.

There are three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Sattva* is that aspect of nature that is lucid, white, and placid. *Rajas* is that part of nature that is muddied, reddish, and agitated. *Tamas* is that part of nature that is impure, dark, and inert. Everything in worldly reality is made of the three *gunas* in lesser or greater proportions. *Sattva* predominates in discriminative intellect (*BUDDHI*), while *tamas* predominates in earth.

Samkhya yogic practice seeks to realize the self that is beyond and untouched by the three *gunas* of worldly existence. Samkhya became the philosophical basis for later yoga practice that focused on breath control and postures.

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Gunadhya

Gunadhya is the author of a lost work, the *BRIHATKATHA*, a vast collection of tales dating from the early centuries of the Common Era. The stories generally had a secular character and imparted nuggets of wisdom.

Nothing is definitively known about Gunadhya's life, but legends do exist. One well-known legend tells the fabulous story of how the book came to be written. Gunadhya was made a minister of the great king Satavahana. One warm day, the king and his wives began to bathe in the lake. When the king splashed water on his wives, one of them asked him to stop in the *SANSKRIT* language. In response to her request, the

king ordered sweets. His wife laughed, saying, "I never knew I had such an ignorant husband! How can we eat sweets when we are so wet? You don't understand Sanskrit well enough to know that I said, 'Stop splashing me!' 'Stop splashing' in Sanskrit sounds like 'bring sweets' if you don't understand the simple grammatical rule that two words often run together!"

The king thereupon returned to his palace and shut himself in his rooms. For the rest of the day he sat silently staring into space, refusing all food. When his two wisest ministers, Sarvavarma and Gunadhya, arrived to help, the king broke his silence, asking, "How long, my ministers, will it take me to learn Sanskrit if I work hard? What good is it to be a king, to have all this wealth, all these wives, these lands, if I am ignorant?" First Sage Gunadhya answered: "Most people need 12 years to learn Sanskrit grammar, but I will teach you in six years!" Sarvavarma jealously retorted, "The king does not have time to spend six years in such hardship. I will teach you in six months!" Gunadhya made this vow: "Sarvavarma, if you accomplish such an impossible feat, I shall renounce Sanskrit, Prakrit, and all the vernacular languages." Sarvavarma replied angrily, "And if I don't accomplish this, I shall carry your shoes on my head for 12 years!"

The king was happy, feeling he would soon be rid of his ignorance. Sarvavarma knew that what he had promised was impossible. He prayed to SARASVATI, goddess of learning. As a result of her intervention Sarvavarma was able to teach the king Sanskrit very quickly. The king bowed down to Sarvavarma, calling him "great teacher." Gunadhya, having lost the bet, left the kingdom with two of his disciples.

Gunadhya traveled in silence since he had vowed to give up all known languages. During his wanderings, he entered a wild forest, where he met a group of Paishachas, demons who spoke their seemingly incomprehensible demon language, used only in remote parts of India. The sage was able to learn this unusual language and

begin speaking again, since the language was not one of the three types he had sworn to give up.

Gunadhya was now able to understand the words of a wild-looking old forest dweller. This man greeted Gunadhya joyfully as if he had been awaiting this moment for many years, and in fact he had. He was a celestial who had been cursed to become a man, but he knew the curse would be lifted if he told a certain story to Gunadhya, who had been the cursed man's companion in a previous life. The curse would end if Gunadhya could make the story famous.

When Gunadhya realized the man's true identity, he appealed to him: "Tell the story told by SHIVA so that our curses will all end!" As the man recounted the divine tale, which comprised seven stories in the Paishachi language, the area where he sat seemed covered with a canopy of celestial beings hovering as they listened in the air above his head. Finishing his story the forest man returned to the celestial realm.

For the next seven years, Gunadhya recorded the story he had heard in 700,000 couplets, using the demon language. Since he had no ink and no paper, the great poet wrote the story's verses on tree bark in his own blood. When he finished he sent it to the king Satavahana, so that it would spread through the world. But when the king, who now knew Sanskrit, saw this disgusting book written in blood in a low language, he ordered it thrown away.

Gunadhya grew sad and depressed. He went with his students to the top of a hill and made a sacred fire. He had saved the last seventh of the tale, consisting of 100,000 verses, because his students loved it. As he was reading this tale aloud and beginning to burn its pages, every animal in the surrounding area listened and wept.

In the meantime, the king had fallen ill and needed meat, but because all the animals were listening to Gunadhya and not eating, they were too lean to kill. When the king heard this, he asked the hunters to lead him to the man telling the tale. He recognized Gunadhya, who appeared to be a forest

dweller with long matted hair, sitting in the midst of the circle of weeping animals. Gunadhya then told the king the curse and the circumstances that caused the great story to descend to Earth. The king then knew that Gunadhya was a celestial. He begged him for the full story, but, unfortunately, only one-seventh remained. The king took the great story, called the *Brihatkatha*, and went to his palace. He had the work translated into Sanskrit, and that is how the story indeed became famous throughout the world.

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Guptas (320–550 C.E.)

The Guptas were a powerful dynasty who ruled most of North India early in the Common Era. They patronized Jains (see [JAINISM](#)) and Buddhists (see [BUDDHA](#)) as well as Hindus. The famous Buddhist monastic university of Nalanda (a site now in western Pakistan) was founded by the Gupta kings and associates. Other Buddhist sites such as Bodh Gaya and Sanchi also benefited from Gupta attention and largesse.

The Gupta rulers were known for their adherence to traditional VEDIC norms in ritual and conduct. While patrons of the heterodox Buddhists and Jains, they were devotionally attached to VISHNU and remained Hindus by faith. Chandra Gupta I (320–34 C.E.) began the dynasty by consolidating power in the eastern Gangetic heartland. His successor, Sumudra Gupta (355–76 C.E.), made Pataliputra (now Patna) the center of a great empire reaching from Assam in the east to the Punjab in the west. He took tribute from other kings in the west, notably those of Rajasthan, and conquered much of the eastern Indian coastline down to KANCHIPURAM. Though he withdrew his armies, he remained overlord of southeastern India.

Chandra Gupta II (c. 376–415 C.E.) defeated the western Shaka armies and extended the rule of the empire up to the Indus River, controlling everything to the east. Chandra Gupta II ushered in a new era of cultural magnificence, becoming patron to the great poet KALIDASA and other poets and scholars. He may have had the title *Vikramaditya* cited by Kalidasa. During his reign the Chinese traveler Fa-shien, a Buddhist, traveled to India to record the wonders of the land. Chandra Gupta's son, Kumara Gupta I (c. 415–54), was killed in battles defending western India as fierce invaders, the Central Asians known as Hunas, challenged Gupta rule there. Kumara Gupta was known for his worship of SHIVA. Skanda Gupta (c. 455–67) took power upon Kumara's death. He fended off the invaders, but Gupta power had begun to weaken. The rest of Gupta rule was spent in fending off attacks from the west. The empire succumbed completely when it lost control of Bengal in 550 C.E.

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guru

The SANSKRIT word *guru* (“weighty” or “heavy” or “father”) is said to derive from *gu* (the darkness of ignorance) and *ru* (driving away)—thus, “the one who drives away the darkness of ignorance.” The notion of the *guru* began in VEDIC times; a student would live with a master for 12 years to acquire the Vedic learning. He treated the *guru* as his father and served his household as well. Today, a *guru* is a person's spiritual father, who is entitled to special deference, as are his wife and daughter.

The *guru* is a spiritual guide. Almost all traditions understand that spiritual progress and liberation from birth and rebirth cannot occur without the aid of a *guru*. In many contemporary

Indian traditions he is seen to be God himself and is treated as such; thus, his disciples may often refer to their devotion to the “feet of the guru” or their fealty to the “sandals [*paduka*]” of the guru. (Touching of the feet in India is a sign of deep respect.) So important is the guru that every year a holiday, Gurupurnima, is celebrated. It takes place on the full Moon in the lunar month of Ashadha (June–July). It was dedicated originally to the sage VYASA, who compiled the VEDAS and the MAHABHARATA, but it is observed by worship or honoring of one’s teachers and *gurus*.

The SIKH tradition, which was founded by Guru Nanak in the 16th century, honors a line of 10 gurus whose teachings form the core of the tradition. The teachings were eventually gathered together along with the teachings of certain Indian saints into the Sikh sacred scripture, the Granth Sahib or Guru Granth. Since then the book has become the true “guru” for the Sikhs, and none other has been recognized.

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Gurupurnima See [GURU](#).

Guyana

Guyana was the first country in the Western Hemisphere to receive Hindu immigrants from India. On May 5, 1838, the British ship *Whitby* docked at Guyana’s Berbice Colony with 249 immigrants on board, 164 of whom were East Indians bound for the sugar plantations of Davidson, Barclay and Company in Highbury and Waterloo. As many immigrants to the Caribbean were, these East Indians were contracted as indentured laborers to fill the labor shortage that resulted from Britain’s abolition of slavery in 1833. As newly freed Africans demanded higher wages and entered dif-

ferent labor markets, colonial officials turned to India as a source of cheap labor.

Guyana attracted many from western Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and other regions in northern India that had been affected by famine and poverty. Between 1838 and 1917, 238,960 Indian men, women, and children immigrated to Guyana. Most were farmers, but a small number of educated Brahmins also arrived, despite British policies aimed at preventing their passage. British officials believed that Brahmins would incite dissent among workers. As many as 75,000 indentured servants returned to India at the completion of their contracts. The rest remained and settled in permanent colonies.

Hindus endured unfair treatment on the plantations and were pressured to convert to Christianity. Work in the fields had no regard for the needs of Hindu prayer, ritual, or religious ceremonies. Hindus were sequestered, placed on separate plantations, and allowed to leave designated areas only with a validated pass. Long days in the field left little time for other activities; workers quickly adapted to certain patterns of Christian worship and adopted Sunday as a day for Hindu prayer and ritual.

During the 1850s Christian missionaries frequently visited the settlements of Indians in attempts to convert Hindus to Christianity. In order to counter conversions Brahmin priests began providing spiritual rites to all Hindus regardless of caste. The rate of conversion to Christianity slowed, but a breakdown of the traditional Indian caste system followed.

Official policy of the British colony barred Hindus from employment in the civil service unless they first became Christian; many Hindus converted for this reason but privately continued to practice Hinduism. Discrimination against Hindus gradually subsided in the 1930s as the social status of Indian immigrants improved.

Hindus who immigrated to Guyana took many of the traditional forms of their religion. Although these traditions were altered to suit the conditions

and circumstances of living in a multicultural society, the fundamental differences among sects found in India were reestablished in Guyana. The most popular traditions in Guyana remain VAISHNAVISM and SHAIIVISM. The largest Hindu organization in the country, Guyana Sanathan Dharma Maha Sabha, sustains most of the temples. Other organizations such as the Guyana Pandits Society maintain the tradition of Hindu orthodoxy in Guyana. In the Vaishnaivite tradition, the Ramayana is the main text of Hindus in Guyana; it supports devotion to the deity HANUMAN and an annual observance of Ramayan YAJNA. Among Shaivite practitioners, daily observances include bathing a SHIVA LINGAM. Small shrines and prayer houses appear in front of homes throughout the country. Temples are the sites of chanting, MEDITATION, ritual, and worship.

As in Trinidad, DIVALI, the festival of lights, is a national holiday in Guyana. Families and communities prepare special foods and decorate their homes and neighborhoods. Another Hindu celebration, HOLI, is also a national holiday. The holiday commemorates the lore about a traditional king who was killed by his son. It represents the triumph of good over evil and features the throwing of red dye on family and friends, representing the blood of the king.

Smaller groups following the Hindu faith have emerged over recent decades, including the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, the SATYA SAI BABA movement, and the ARYA SAMAJ. Most notable is the Guyana Sevashram Sangha, which was established in the mid-20th century by Swami Purnananda (no dates). Purnananda went to Guyana to foster Hinduism by teaching the Hare Krishna mantra and publishing *Aum Hindutvam*, a book to help guide Hindus in Guyana. The Guyana Sevashram Sangha serves as the only institution in the Caribbean that trains young *brahmacharis* (spiritual students; see BRAHMACHARYA) and is the first to produce its own swami, Swami Vidyarand.

Approximately 280,000 Hindus make Guyana their home. It is the second largest religion in the country, after Christianity.

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H



Haidakhan Samaj (est. 1980) See [BABAJI](#).

Hanuman

The monkey god Hanuman is one of the most universally worshipped divinities of the Hindu pantheon. He is the son of Anjana, an *APSARAS* (nymph) who was herself born as a monkey, and *VAYU*, the god of the wind. In the *RAMAYANA* story, Hanuman is a friend to Lord *RAMA*, the incarnation of *VISHNU*. He is equally worshipped by Vaishnavites (worshippers of *VISHNU*) and Shaivites (worshippers of *SHIVA*).

It is said that Hanuman as a child saw the Sun, thought it was a fruit, and leaped up 300 leagues to catch it. *BRAHMA* once gave him the boon that he would not be slain in battle.

In the *Ramayana*, Hanuman flies over to the island of *LANKA* to see whether Rama's wife, *SITA*, is there. He finds her, but she dissuades him from taking her back lest he besmirch Rama's reputation. In a scene famous in Indian mythology, he is captured on Lanka by the demons (*rakshasas*). They march him through the streets to his execution, humiliating him by tying an oil-soaked cloth to his tail and lighting it. Furious, he jumps from building to building and sets the capital city on fire.

Hanuman fought bravely in the battle against the demons; he is remembered for going off to find herbs to revive *LAKSHMANA*, Rama's slain brother. Not knowing which herbs to collect he took a whole mountain of them; from them medicine was found that restored Lakshmana to life. Hanuman follows Rama back to *AYODHYA* to serve him; the god gives him the boon of everlasting youth and longevity. Hanuman is seen as the foremost of the devotees of Rama.

Hanuman is also found in one passage of the *MAHABHARATA*, where he meets *BHIMA*, another son of his father, *Vayu*. Bhima, known for his power, fights with Hanuman and is defeated. Only afterward do they realize they are half brothers.

Hanuman is known for his superhuman powers, his celibacy (though in some parts of India he is seen as married), his ability to expand and contract himself, and his learning, including grammar and the Vedic sciences. He is often regarded as a village protector and is the special divinity of wrestlers and acrobats.

Iconographically Hanuman is usually depicted with only two hands, carrying a club, but other images give him eight hands that hold several weapons and a shield, for fighting in the war against the demons. In one hand he holds the



Hanuman, monkey god, servant of Lord Rama
(Courtesy Vedanta Society, San Francisco)

Sanjivini mountain, the mountain of herbs that saved Laksmana's life.

Further reading: K. C. Aryan and Subhashini Aryan, *Hanuman in Art and Mythology* (Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1975); Devdutt Pattanaik, *Hanuman: An Introduction* (Mumbai: Vakils, Feffer & Simons, 2001).

Hanuman Foundation (est. 1974)

The Hanuman Foundation is one of the creations of the American spiritual teacher Baba RAM DASS, born Richard Alpert, April 6, 1931, in Boston, Massachusetts.

After working with psychedelics with Timothy Leary at Harvard University and being dismissed with Leary, from their teaching positions there, Alpert went to India in 1967 and met his GURU, NEEM KAROLI BABA. Neem Karoli gave him the spiritual name Ram Dass (servant of God) and introduced him to Hindu spirituality. In his time with Neem Karoli, he learned about HANUMAN, the deity depicted as a monkey who is a symbol of selfless service in the Hindu tradition. Ram Dass became an affectionate devotee of Hanuman.

The Hanuman Foundation was incorporated in 1974, after Ram Dass's pilgrimage to India in order to supply information from the teachings of Neem Karoli Baba, who, although deceased, still teaches. Ram Dass founded the Neem Karoli Baba Hanuman Temple, located in Taos, New Mexico, in a remodeled adobe building. The central focus of the temple is a 1,500-pound marble carving of Hanuman imported from India. This temple primarily serves some 300 Indian families spread between Albuquerque and Denver. Major services featuring chanting and singing are held every Tuesday (as that is considered Hanuman's day). Neem Karoli Baba's *mahasamadhi* (death/liberation day) is celebrated in September.

The foundation has become over time a central archive and headquarters of a number of projects. The Orphalese Foundation controls a tape library and the ZBS Foundation (also known as Amazing Grace) has released several recordings on spiritual topics with the assistance of Steven Levine. The foundation also works closely with the Seva Foundation, founded by Larry Brilliant (b. 1946), a devotee of Baba, on social service projects, especially the eradication of blindness.

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Harappa See [INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION](#).

Hargobind See [SIKHISM](#).

Hari Dass, Baba (1923–) *teacher of Ashtanga Yoga*

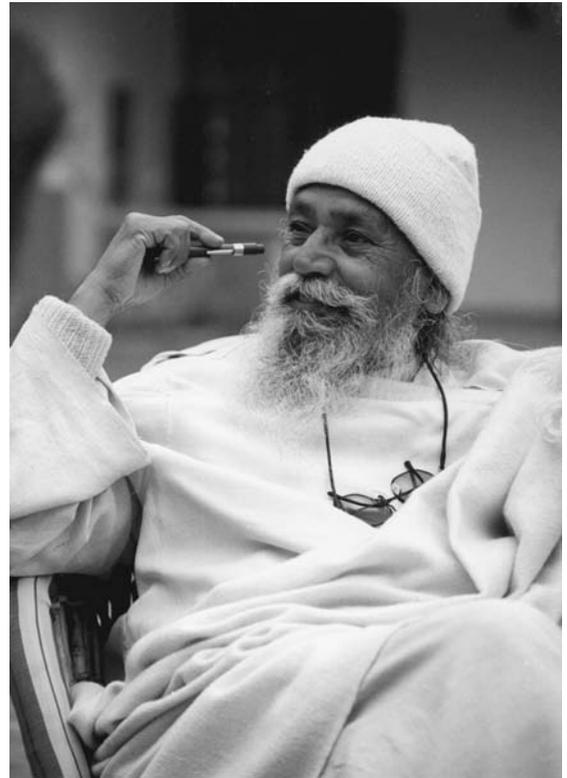
For over 50 years, Baba Hari Dass has been teaching ASHTANGA YOGA and instituting organizations for social service in the United States, Canada, and India, while maintaining vows of monastic silence.

Born in 1923 near Almora, India, in the foothills of the Himalayas, Baba Hari Dass left home at age eight to join a sect of renunciants in the jungles of the lower Himalayas. In 1942, he took initiation as a monk in the VAIRAGI Vaishnavite order. After years of MEDITATION, he decided in 1952 to become a MUNI SADHU, a monk who practices continual silence. The observance of silence is aimed at gradually quieting the mind and eliminating unwanted thoughts. He writes on a small chalkboard to communicate his teachings. Despite this vow, he has been able to implement his plans for the extension of his version of religion and spirituality, while developing ASHRAMS and teaching YOGA.

In addition to teaching classical Ashtanga Yoga (the Yoga of the Eight Limbs, originally codified by PATANJALI), Baba Hari Dass is an author, builder, philosopher, sculptor, and proponent of AYURVEDA (the ancient Indian system of health and healing.) In 1971, he traveled to

North America, and he has continued to work in India, Canada, and the United States. He and his teachings have inspired the Mount Madonna Center near Santa Cruz, California; the DharmaSara Satsang Society/Salt Spring Center near Vancouver; the Ashtanga Yoga Fellowship in Toronto; and the Sri Ram Ashram in Haridwar, India, all organizations dedicated to yoga education, retreats, service projects, and publishing. The California-based Hanuman Fellowship was formed in 1974.

In 1987, he founded (and continues to fund) a unique orphanage near HARIDVAR, Uttar Pradesh, that provides a family life for its residents,



Baba Hari Dass, silent monk, teacher of Ashtanga Yoga, author, and founder of several retreat centers and social-service organizations (© *Hanuman Fellowship*)

emulating the life of a home with parents and siblings. The orphanage now houses more than 35 children. His Hanuman Fellowship sponsors weekly gatherings, or *satsangs*, and periodic retreats at their centers. Sri Rama Foundation/Publishing, established in 1971, publishes the writings of Hari Dass.

Hari Dass presides at weekly sessions on the YOGA SUTRA, the BHAGAVAD GITA, Ashtanga Yoga, and related subjects. He also writes commentaries on the principal yoga scriptures and teaches classes on yoga. Each Sunday he leads community gatherings that include singing, meditation, and yoga.

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Haridvar (Haridwar; Hardvar; Hardwar)

Haridvar (*dvar*, doorway, to Hari, a name for VISHNU) is one of the seven sacred cities of Hindu India. SHIVA followers call the city Hardvar (Har, a name for Shiva).

Haridvar is located in the northern state of Uttaranchal, in the Himalayan foothills. The city has been called Mayapur, Gangadwar, and Kapila at different times in its history. It has been mentioned in scripture and other writings from the time of the BUDDHA (600 B.C.E.).

The city is considered the starting point for a PILGRIMAGE path that includes BADRINATH, KEDARNATH, Gangotri, and Yamanotri. It is the place

where Bhagiratha is said to have taken the GANGES down to Earth in order to bless the ashes of his ancestors; pilgrims annually honor the descent of the Ganges. They also perform the special *shrad-dha* FUNERAL RITES for deceased loved ones. Pilgrims visit a stone footprint of Vishnu and bathe nearby. The three major gods, BRAHMA, Shiva; and Vishnu, have been said to visit the city.

Numerous temples to both Shiva and Vishnu grace the city. There are also temples to the goddess, including the Mayadevi temple, considered one of the *SHAKTI PITHAS* where the heart (or navel) of the goddess is said to have fallen. Notable also is the temple to DAKSHA, father-in-law of Shiva; Daksha performed his famous sacrifice here without inviting Shiva, thus provoking a quarrel and eventually the death of his daughter SATI. Haridvar/Hardvar is one of the sites for the KUMBHA MELA and the larger Maha Kumbhamela festivals.

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Harihara

Harihara is an iconic deity who combines the forms of VISHNU (Hari) and SHIVA (Hara). He is revered by a syncretic cult based mostly in South India. There is a Harihara image in BADAMI in Karnataka that is dated to the sixth century.

The South Indian kings of the VIJAYANAGARA (1336–1565) patronized Harihara's temples. Some of their kings even took his name. A number of Harihara temples still exist in the Indian state of Karnataka today.

Harihara also appears in the iconography of Nepal. Though a minority cult, the Harihara phenomenon demonstrates the elasticity and syncretic character of Hinduism.



Harihara, iconic deity that unites Vishnu and Shiva
(calendar print)

Further reading: Michael W. Meister with M. A. Dhaky, eds., *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

Hariharananda Giri, Swami See [KRIYA YOGA CENTERS](#).

Har Rai See [SIKHISM](#).

hatha yoga

Hatha yoga is an amalgam of yogic practices that may have emerged separately and were later com-

bined. Its origins are obscure, but it is likely that the system began to develop in the early centuries of the Common Era.

Hatha yoga includes basic practices that can be found in ASHTANGA YOGA, which relies on the YOGA SUTRA of PATANJALI. It includes different arrays of postures (ASANAS), joined to various TANTRA practices. The term *hatha* originally meant “violent,” and it is possible that this style of YOGA originated in certain types of severe yoga that were later softened for protection of the body.

Some types of hatha yoga include or even focus on KUNDALINI practice. Here the focus of breath control is on the “serpent” or “Goddess Energy” at the base of the spine, which must be awakened and forced upward to pierce the psychic centers or chakras that run parallel to the spine. The NADIS, or subtle bodily channels, are used to guide breath into the central spinal channel to help the raising of the kundalini through the centers. Finally, the kundalini meets SHIVA at a point above the head called SAHASRARA CHAKRA. This meeting provokes absolute enlightenment.

Traditionally, hatha yoga has encompassed a wide range of practices including those of such sects as the NATH YOGIS, who sought bodily immortality through the ingestion (and transformation) of poisons such as oxides of mercury and practiced a physical alchemy. Today, in the West, hatha yoga is typically confined to postures and a simple focus on the breath; more advanced practitioners may begin to focus on the kundalini and the channeling of the breath in the *nadis*.

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Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization

(est. 1969)

Yogi BHAJAN (1929–2004) inaugurated the Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization (3HO) in the United

States and India in 1969, with the declaration “Happiness is your birthright.” The mission of 3HO is to assist the interested public in developing a happy, healthy, and holy lifestyle to meet the challenges of the modern world. Based on ancient yogic techniques taught by Yogi Bhajan, 3HO offers KUNDALINI YOGA, MEDITATION, information on a healthy diet, tantric practices, and a compassionate philosophy.

3HO is an affiliate of the larger religion of the Sikh Dharma. There are over 300 3HO centers in 39 countries including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Russia, Australia, South Africa, and countries in Europe. 3HO centers offer holistic health treatments including books, tapes, videos, and health supplements. 3HO publishes a quarterly journal called the *Aquarian Times*, featuring tips and tools for health and happiness. The organization’s headquarters are located in Espanola, New Mexico.

Yogi Bhajan established the 3HO after traveling to the United States and seeing a need for yoga in the West. He reached out to the youth of the 1960s, recognizing that their experimentation with drugs expressed a need for liberation and wholeness. Yogi Bhajan introduced many young people to kundalini yoga as a natural and healthy alternative. As word of his teachings spread, the organization grew and centers were established throughout the United States. Since then the 3HO has become a popular and dynamic community dedicated to personal growth and sharing of the ancient techniques upon which the organization is founded. The organization has fulfilled one of Yogi Bhajan’s stated intentions, “I did not come to collect students, but to train teachers.”

The practice of kundalini as taught by Yogi Bhajan is based on *kriyas* (ritual action). It is an integrative and authentic system that combines physical exercise, breath control, and meditation. These yoga techniques constitute a spiritual technology that expands awareness, opens the potential of mind, and draws forth one’s inner being. The benefits of kundalini, as cited by 3HO, include the strengthening of the nervous system,

the reduction of stress, self-awareness, concentration, and peace of mind.

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heaven

Heaven and hell (*NARAKA*) have been known to Hinduism since ancient times. VEDIC Hinduism conceived of a realm beyond the sky called *svar* or *svarga*, a realm of immortality and happiness beyond this world. One reached it through proper performance of the Vedic duties, especially the rituals (*YAJNA*).

In later mythology, beginning in the epics RAMAYANA and MAHABHARATA, *svarga* began to be understood as the realm of INDRA, king of the gods. His paradise contained the sacred wish-giving tree and the cow who grants all wishes. The beautiful courtesans of the gods (*APSARASES*) reside there, along with the divine musicians (*GANDHARVAS*). There all desires for pleasure are instantly satisfied.

Later Hindu traditions, starting around 400 B.C.E., considered *svarga* or heaven to be only a waystation in the transmigrating life. One could enjoy one’s accumulated KARMIC merit there but would still be reborn into the physical world. In Shaivite tradition, SHIVA resides in Kailash, a paradise of sorts located at an actual mountain in the HIMALAYAS, but one was only meant to visit this site once in a lifetime. It generally was not seen as a place for souls to go after death.

Among Vaishnavites (*VISHNU* devotees), the ancient realm that once belonged to INDRA remains as a goal, to be reached after liberation from birth

and rebirth. Vishnu and his wife, Lakshmi, preside over this paradise, where souls may live in effulgent bliss eternally, in proximity to the divinity himself.

Further readings: J. A. Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology* (Portland, Oreg.: Trubner, 2003).

Hemachandra (c. 1200 C.E.) *Jain yogi and philosopher*

Hemachandra was one of the foremost Jain SHVET-AMBARA sages and teachers. He is known for his many writings, including the vast Jain PURANA in Sanskrit, which catalogued the lives and adventures of the 63 venerated personages in the tradition of JAINISM. Included among the 63 are all the TIRTHANKARAS, enlightened teachers, of the current half-era, plus the story of BAHUBALI, one of the sons of the first Tirthankara, and even a Jain version of the story of KRISHNA. This work was highly influential in popularizing and spreading the Jain faith.

Hemachandra's Yogashastra is one of the best sources for some of the lost practices of Jain YOGA. In the area of philosophy Hemachandra wrote Pramanamimamsa and Anyayogavyavachhedika, which are widely studied as Jain contributions to the Indian logical school of the NYAYA. The second of the two is famous for its commentary by Mallishena, entitled Syadvadamanjari, which laid out a sophisticated Jain relativistic philosophy.

Further reading: Helen M. Johnson, trans., *The Lives of the Sixty-Three Illustrious Persons*, 6 vols. (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1962); E. Windsch, trans., "Hemachandra's Yogashastra," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* no. 28 (Leipzig, 1874).

Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy (est. 1971)

The Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy was founded in 1971 by

Swami Rama (1925–96); first based in Illinois, headquarters were moved to Honesdale, Pennsylvania, in 1977. The institute promotes its founder's teachings on mind-body consciousness. Courses in holistic health, HATHA YOGA, RAJA YOGA, MEDITATION, and psychology are offered there. Raja yoga, considered the royal road of yoga, is promoted as a prime way to balance mind, body, and spirit. Swami Rama always aimed to awaken the nascent consciousness, bolster its energy, and raise spiritual intensity so that the individual blends with the Universal Self. He advocated what he termed super conscious MEDITATION, a system that included relaxation, *prana* (breathing), ASANAS (postures), and chants, or MANTRAS.

After being orphaned at an early age, Swami Rama was raised by an accomplished yogi from Bengal. He spent time as a child and young man in the cave monasteries of the HIMALAYAS. He was an adept pupil eager to learn, and in 1949 he attained the level of Shankaracharya, a title that was considered a great honor. He gave up his title in 1952 and committed himself to an arduous discipline in order to prepare himself for attaining and teaching the highest spirituality.

In 1969 Swami Rama ventured to the United States; he became a research consultant for the Menninger Foundation Research Project, which viewed his project on voluntary control of external states as worthy of research. Little was known about how to induce the body to override the involuntary, autonomous nervous system. Swami Rama began to work with the husband-and-wife team of Elmer and Alyce Green, the on-site psychologists. He demonstrated an uncanny ability to control physical feats and body functions. His extraordinary skills offered significant material for laboratory analysis of mind-body connections.

The Himalayan Institute has published over 80 books on meditation and philosophy. It also publishes the bimonthly *Yoga International*. There are 37 branches, serving an international market, with affiliated centers in the United States, Canada, India, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Trinidad,

Curaçao, and Malaysia. In 2002, there were 1,500 members in the United States alone. Swami Rama died on November 13, 1996, without naming a successor. The institute carries on his work.

Further reading: Swami Rama, *Freedom from the Bondage of Karma*, 2d ed. (New York: Himalayan Institute Press; n.d.); ———, *Living with the Himalayan Masters* (New York: Himalayan Institute Press, 1978); ———, *Path of Fire and Light*, Vol. 1, *Advanced Practices of Yoga* (New York: Himalayan Institute Press, 1986); ———, *Sacred Journey: Living Purposefully and Dying Gracefully* (Detroit: Lotus Press, n.d.); ———, *Samadhi: The Highest State of Wisdom*, Vol. 1, *Yoga the Sacred Science* (Detroit: Lotus Press., n.d.).

Himalayan Mountains

Himalaya (the abode of the snows) is a vast mountain range spreading across six countries: India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, China, and Tibet (ruled by China). Geographically it separates the Indian subcontinent from the Tibetan plateau. Fourteen of the highest peaks in the world are found in the Himalayas. The sources of several of the rivers of India are found here. Both the Indus River of Pakistan and the GANGES of India begin in these snow-covered mountains.

The Himalaya is an important mythological site for Indian tradition. Lord SHIVA and his wife, PARVATI, are said to live on the peak KAILASA, an important pilgrimage site in Tibet just across the border from Nepal. The Himalayas are personified as HIMAVAT, the father of SATI, Shiva's first wife. The Himalayan lake Mansarovar is said to be the source of the Ganges. HANUMAN the monkey god was said to have gone to the Himalaya to get the mountain of herbs that saved LAKSHMANA's life in the RAMAYANA story.

Further reading: Cornelia Dimmit and J.A. B. van Buitenen, eds. and trans., *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); J. A. Dowson, *A Classical Dic-*

tionary of Hindu Mythology (Portland, Ore.: Trubner, 2003); Swami Sundaranand, *Himalaya through the Lens of a Sadhu* (Gangotri: Tapovan Kuti Prakashan, 2001).

Himavat

Literally “possessed of snow,” Himavat is the personification of the Himalayas found in Indian literature and mythology. His wife is Mena.

Many stories are told of Himavat, his wife, and their family. One story holds that the couple had three daughters, Ragini, Kutila, and KALI, and one son, Sunabha. The first daughter, Ragini, was reddish colored and dressed in red. The second daughter, Kutila, was fair and wore garlands and clothes of white. The last daughter was the dark Kali.

Six years after each girl's birth they all began to practice austerities. Successful in her austerities, Kutila was taken to heaven by certain divinities to meet BRAHMA, as there was a need for someone to bear a son to SHIVA to save the universe from torment by the demons. Brahma told the divinities that this fair girl could not bear such a son, but in her temerity she insisted to Brahma that she could. This incurred his anger and he cursed her to become the river in his land (later to be taken to earth in the form of Ganga or the GANGES).

The second, ruddy, daughter, Ragini, did austerities and was also cursed by Brahma when she too became angry at him. Because of her ruddy complexion, she was turned into the twilight.

Finally, it was time for the dark one, Kali, to go to heaven because of her austerity. At this point Mena, in anguish at the prospect of losing yet another daughter, shouted out, “u! ma!” (Sanskrit for Oh, no!). UMA is another name for PARVATI, and at this point her name was officially changed. She, of course, was successful in becoming Shiva's wife.

There are many stories of Himavat's encounters with his divine son-in-law, Shiva. Usually, they show him and his wife to be uncomfortable with the antisocial ascetic with whom their daughter

had fallen in love. In one example, Himavat has a ragged beggar thrown from his house only to learn later that this was Parvati's beau Shiva, with whom she had become enthralled.

Further reading: Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

***Hinduism Today* (est. 1979)**

The quarterly magazine *Hinduism Today* was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya SUBRAMUNIYASWAMI (1927–2001) as part of the nonprofit educational activity of the Himalayan Academy, the publishing and research organization of the SAIVA SIDDHANTA CHURCH. The publication is produced by a small monastic community on Kauai Island in Hawaii to “inform and inspire interest in Hinduism, dispel popular myths surrounding the religion, foster solidarity among sects and lineages, maintain respect for the Vedas, promote the continuing renaissance of Hinduism and serve as an educational resource for the promotion of Sanatana Dharma.” It employs over 100 reporters and dozens of photographers. It is distributed across 39 countries, reaching millions of readers.

In 1951 the Himalayan Academy began publishing a series of books on Hinduism and metaphysics. The quarterly emerged in response to a growing need in the late 1970s for a nontechnical publication accessible to a wide audience that could serve as a central resource for those maintaining the faith outside India. In addition to articles directly relating to Hindu philosophy, the Hindu DIASPORA, and international news of Hindu communities and temples, the publication includes topics ranging from AYURVEDA medicine to VEGETARIANISM and YOGA. Interviews with popular Hindu teachers, reformers, and activists appear regularly.

The publication has become a reputable source on the Hindu way of life for many outside the religious community. Governments, libraries, theologians, and scholars use it to research the beliefs, practices, and contexts of Hindu groups around the world.

Hinduism Today has changed from its first distribution in 1979 as a black and white newsletter to the current full-colored magazine and Internet journal. In 1996, the publication expanded to include a CD-ROM called *Dharma Graphics*, containing 1,500 illustrations of village arts and crafts selected from 20 years of images.

Further reading: Himalayan Academy, *Himalayan Academy, 1957–1968* (Virginia City, Nev.: Himalayan Academy, 1967).

Hindu nationalism

Hindu nationalism is a contemporary movement with religious, cultural, and political aspects, oriented toward creation of a Hindu state in India and a monolithic Hindu identity, based on Hindutva (Hinduness).

Critics charge that these nationalists define *Hindu* to emphasize Brahminical and upper-caste values, ethics, and practices. The movement also includes extremists and Hindu supremacists who have targeted the economic and political rights of cultural and religious minorities. Supporters point out crimes Muslims have committed against India and the depredations of the Christians in the form of the British and call for an uprooting of “non-Hindu” elements in India as much as possible.

Hindutva declares Christians and Muslims to be “foreign” to India because their faiths have holy lands outside the boundary of the modern Indian nation-state. Critics point out that the ideology of Hindutva supports violence against religious and cultural minorities, including sexual violence against women of minority groups and Hindu women who defy Hindutva's mandates. Further, the Hindutva agenda for nation building

subordinates the lives and livelihoods of *adivasis* (indigenous tribal peoples), Dalits (economically disadvantaged, former “untouchable” castes), and the poor to higher-caste Hindus. In general, Hindutva is not sympathetic to the historical and present struggles for the human rights of spiritually and politically distinct groups, such as tribal groups, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs, as these groups are understood to be antinational and anti-Hindu.

Hindutva’s tenets were first described by V. D. Savarkar in his text *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?*, published in 1922. Hindutva’s agenda is carried out by various groups, including the SHIV SENA and the Sangh Parivar, a network of organizations. The Sangh’s major parties are Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS); National Volunteer Corps, formed in 1925, which provides social service and militant training; Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP); World Hindu Council, formed in 1964, which frames the Sangh’s cultural and religious agenda and works to spread the Hindu nationalist agenda on an international level; and the Bajrang Dal, the militant youth group. Hindu nationalist political parties took various forms through the 20th century, and the BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP), “Indian People’s Party,” created in 1980, is the most recent incarnation of the Sangh’s political wing. While the BJP advocates a clear Hindu supremacist agenda, other political parties also empathize with and support “soft” Hindutva, which contains certain aspects of Hindutva that shun violence. The Sangh also operates through a vast network of development groups and service and education organizations, such as Ekal Vidyalayas, Sewa Bharti, Utkal Bipanna Sahayata Samiti, and Vanvasi Kalyan Ashrams.

The rise of Hindu nationalism can be traced to anticolonial movements during the late 19th century, when Hindus mobilized to fight British rule. Some of these movements protected the privileges and rights of the Hindu middle and upper classes against the struggles for equal rights of other minorities and lower-class and tribal

peoples. Scholarly analysis shows that Hindutva drew upon the ethnic and cultural nationalisms of Germany and Italy in the early 20th century, to promote physical training conducted in cells called *shakhas* and ideological training that linked “Hindu pride” to the subjugation of perceived enemies, such as the Christians and Muslims. The rise of Hindu nationalism is thus framed by the inequalities and struggles in India’s history.

When India and Pakistan became independent nations in August 1947, divided along religious differences, widespread violence between and within religious communities accompanied the massive displacement of people across newly drawn national borders. Large groups of Muslims moved into Pakistan (a self-proclaimed Islamic state), and non-Muslims moved into India (a self-proclaimed secular state). Official estimates put the displacement at about 12 million and deaths at several million. More than 75,000 women were abducted and raped by members of their own or other communities. The forms of violence that struck within and across religious lines during the Partition still fill the social memory of India and provide rationale for mutual resentment and anger between Hindus and Muslims.

On January 30, 1948, Nathuram Godse, a former member of the RSS, shot and killed M. K. GANDHI. At the time, Hindu nationalists expressed intense dissatisfaction with what they termed Gandhi’s “appeasement” of minorities, especially Muslims. Though Godse was not an official member of the RSS at the time, the RSS was banned for approximately a year. The language of “minority appeasement” continues to be a mobilizing rhetoric for Hindu nationalism.

In 1984, with Indira Gandhi’s assassination as a trigger, Sikh communities were targeted by large-scale violence, concentrated in Delhi. It is widely accepted that the violence was largely the responsibility of Hindutva, abetted by the Congress government’s complicity in not prosecuting instigators. In 1992, leaders of the BJP, VHP, and RSS incited Hindu nationalist crowds to destroy

the 400+-year-old Babri Mosque at AYODHYA in Uttar Pradesh. According to the Sangh's mythology and grievance, the mosque stands upon the ruins of a Hindu temple, rumored to be the birthplace of RAMA, a Hindu god. The destruction of the mosque was accompanied by systematic anti-Muslim violence throughout India, concentrated in Mumbai, for which the Srikrishna Commission has held Hindu nationalists responsible.

The BJP gained power in India at the national level at the head of a coalition of political parties called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The NDA controlled the national government until 2004, when the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance won elections at the national level, though the BJP continued to rule in various states, alone or within political coalitions.

In the spring of 2002, the torching of 58 Hindutva activists on a train near the town of Godhra, Gujarat, set off a systematic and government-backed massacre of Muslims throughout the state. Immediately after the train fire, some of the local-language press and state-level BJP leaders insisted that local Muslims had conspired to burn the train, though the Banerjee Commission later declared this allegation to be unfounded. Starting on February 28, violence broke out in 16 of Gujarat's 24 districts, attributed by most to Hindu nationalist groups. Muslim homes, businesses, and places of worship were destroyed by large mobs armed with swords, tridents, kerosene, and liquid gas canisters. Both girls and women were subjected to sexual atrocities: gang rape and collective rape, as well as sexual mutilation with swords and sticks, before being burned to death.

Independent fact-finding groups have placed the number of dead at no fewer than 2,000, and the number of displaced at 200,000, most of whom were Muslims. Human rights observers classified the events in Gujarat as "genocide" by the standards of the United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948. India's National Human Rights Commission charged the state government

with complicity at the "highest levels." Police and high-level BJP officials, according to fact-finding reports, supported the violence through inaction or active participation, including leaking electoral rolls indicating the locations of Muslim residences and businesses. Since the violence in Gujarat, impunity has reigned, as reported by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Several high-profile cases were moved out of the state by the Indian Supreme Court, because of the court's lack of confidence in the ability of Gujarat's judicial system to deliver justice for the survivors.

Since these incidents in Gujarat, groups in India and the DIASPORA have begun to trace international political and financial support for Hindu nationalist organizations. Two reports tracked the funding of Hindu nationalist activities: the Campaign to Stop Funding Hate released one report on the activities of the India Development and Relief Fund, a United States-based charity, and Awaaz South Asia Watch released another report on the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, a United Kingdom-based charity.

Sangh leaders have been quoted as promising to strengthen the Hindutva movement in Orissa, a state in eastern India, and in other parts of the country. In Orissa, as of 2005, Hindutva already has a strong network of Sangh organizations and activists, who are reportedly carrying out forced conversions of Christians and tribals to Hinduism, destroying churches, committing selective murders, imposing social and economic boycotts of minorities, and imposing a ban on cow slaughter, which threatens the livelihoods of poor Muslims and Dalits.

Further reading: Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Angana P. Chatterji, "Memory—Mourning: The Biopolitics of Hindu Nationalism," in Angana P. Chatterji and Lubna Nazir Chaudhry, eds. *Contesting Nation: Gendered Violence in South Asia: Notes on the Postcolonial Present* (New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2006); Thomas Blom

Hansen, *The Saffron Wave* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Zoya Hasan, ed., *Forging Identities—Gender, Communities and the State* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994); Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

hiranyagarbha

Hiranyagarbha (*hiranya*, gold; *garbha*, seed, egg, womb, embryo) is the Golden Embryo, Golden Egg, or Golden Womb identified in the Rig Veda (X.121) as the cause of the universe. Paradoxically, it has both a masculine and a feminine aspect. It is referred to as “he,” but it is also the “womb” of manifest reality.

From the beginning the term *hiranyagarbha* has had multivalent and sometimes contradictory meanings. In Rig Veda X.82 it is the cosmic egg that separates into two hemispheres, in the beginning of the world, its upper portion forming the sky and its yolk becoming the Sun. This vision is elaborated in the *PURANAS*, where other elements of the egg make up elements of the manifest universe: the water in the cosmic egg, for instance, becomes the ocean.

Various Hindu traditions have offered various and quite different understandings of this ancient image, even within the same tradition. Influenced by *SAMKHYA* concepts, some say that the *PURUSHA* (the transcendent divine) with the cooperation of *PRAKRITI* (nature) made the cosmic egg from which the world emerges. In one context *BRAHMA*, the creator, emerged from the egg to create the universe. In other contexts, however, Brahma is himself the *hiranyagarbha*; the word can be used as an epithet or alternate name of Brahma.

In Shaivite (see *SHAIIVISM*) contexts *hiranyagarbha* is seen as a creation of *SHIVA* that embodies aspects of him. From *hiranyagarbha*, in turn, Brahma or the universe can emerge. In Vaishnavite (see *VAISHNAVISM*) mythology, *VISHNU* inspires or creates the *hiranyagarbha*, from which the universe derives. In the *VEDANTA* of *SHANKARA*

the term takes on various meanings depending on the lineage and tradition expounding upon it. In this tradition it is often associated with a state of consciousness rather than an entity per se. For example, in Shankara’s own commentaries *hiranyagarbha* is considered synonymous with the manifest universe, which is the product of *MAYA*.

Further reading: Cornelia Dimitt and J. A. van Buitenen, eds., and trans., *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); O’Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, *Rig Veda* (London: Penguin Books, 1981).

Hiranyakashipu

Hiranyakashipu means “he who wears a golden robe” and is the name of an arrogant *asura*, or demon king, who ruled over and tormented all the worlds. Unfortunately, he had earned boons from the gods so that he could not be killed by man or beast, by day or night, indoors or outdoors. He had become so powerful through boons that he had usurped the sovereignty of Indra, the king of the gods. *VISHNU* was called to take on an incarnation to deal with this cruel, ignorant tyrant.

According to the myth *Hiranyakashipu* felt disgraced that his son, *PRAHLADA*, loved and worshipped Vishnu. He tried to force his son to reveal Vishnu’s whereabouts. Knowing that *VISHNU* was everywhere, Prahlada pointed to a pillar. The demon king brashly kicked the pillar and out sprang the man-lion or (*Narasimha*) incarnation of Vishnu (see *NARASIMHA AVATAR*), who ripped him apart. He was able to be killed here because the pillar was in the doorway (neither indoors nor outdoors), it was twilight (neither day nor night), and in the *Narasimha* form, Vishnu was neither man nor beast.

Further reading: Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, eds. and trans., *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia: Temple

University Press, 1978); W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic* (Calcutta: Rupa, 1973).

Hiranyaksha

Hiranyaksha (lit. he with golden eyes) was a demon in the story of VISHNU'S VARAHA AVATAR (incarnation in the form of a boar). Hiranyaksha had in a previous life been doorkeeper at Vishnu's palace in heaven. Because he had refused admission to many sages, they cursed him, and he was reborn as the son of Diti, the mother of the ASURAS or antigods. His father was the RISHI Kashyapa and his brother was the demon HIRANYAKASHIPU, who was killed by Vishnu in the incarnation as man-lion or NARASIMHA AVATAR.

When the Earth was at the bottom of the sea in ancient times, Vishnu took the form of an enormous boar to lift it up to the surface of the waters with his tusk. As Vishnu rose to the surface Hiranyaksha tried to take the Earth away from him so he could rule over it; as was his brother, he was killed by Vishnu.

Further reading: J. A. Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, 7th ed. (London: Trubner, 2003); W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology: Vedic and Puranic*, 2d ed. (Calcutta: Rupa, 1973).

Hittleman, Richard (d. 1991) *pioneer hatha yoga instructor*

Richard Hittleman was an American writer and teacher who popularized YOGA to a mass audience starting in the late 1950s.

Hittleman was born in New York City and raised in the city's Jewish community. He initially encountered yoga through a Hindu maintenance man who worked for his parents. He sought out additional teachers and during the 1940s developed his own system of HATHA YOGA, which he began to market as "Yoga for Health." In 1957 he opened the American Academy of Yoga in Coral Gables, Florida, but within a few years he relo-

cated to California. In 1961 he initiated the first yoga television show. Through the show and more than a dozen books, he introduced the practice of yoga ASANAS (postures) to a huge audience. Over the next decades he would sell more than 8 million books.

In 1964, in his small volume *Yoga Philosophy and Meditation*, he noted that many who had been attracted to yoga as exercise had also requested to know more about the teachings from which the practice arose. The request led to his writing several additional books on yoga philosophy and meditation, including *Guide to Yoga Meditation* (1969) and *Yoga: The 8 Steps to Health and Peace* (1976). These volumes, never as successful as his hatha yoga texts, exemplified ways hatha yoga could be used as an introductory tool to Hindu life and thought.

In 1977, Hittleman established the Yoga Universal Church, based in Rapid City, South Dakota. He had accepted ordination and chartered his church through the Universal Life Church in Modesto, California, the famous mail-order denomination set up by Kirby Hensley. Hittleman closed the Yoga Universal in the early 1980s. He subsequently formed a new organization, Yoga Universal, in 1982, not connected with the Universal Life Church. Yoga Universal continues to offer yoga-based events through Hittleman's associates John Roddy and Mary Conley.

Hittleman remained active into the 1980s. He died in 1991. His last years were spent fighting the Internal Revenue Service about back taxes. He died before the matter was settled, and the tax bill remains in litigation with his estate.

Further reading: Richard Hittleman, *Guide to Yoga Meditation* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969); ———, *Yoga: the 8 steps to Health and Peace* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976); *Richard Hittleman's Guide for the Seeker* (New York: Bantam Books, 1978); ———, *Richard Hittleman's 30 Day Yoga Meditation Plan* (New York: Bantam Books, 1978); ———, *Yoga for Total Fitness* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982); Ami Chen Mills, "Death

and Taxes,” Available online. <http://www.metroactive.com/papers/metro/11.22.95/yogi-9547.html>. Accessed August 16, 2005.

Holi

The Holi festival takes place on full Moon day in the Indian month of Phalguna (February–March) in most North Indian areas. It is very ancient, probably celebrated (with the name *Holika*) before the Common Era began.

One early form of the celebration was a rite for married women to celebrate the happiness and well-being of their families. In some areas today, the rite acquires sexual and erotic elements that may point to an origin in spring fertility rites. Sexually explicit songs may be sung and men may brandish penis-shaped objects. One of the names for the Holi festival is *Kamamahotsava* or the celebration for the God of Love.

The most popular feature of the Holi festival is the throwing or shooting of colored water on everyone. Celebrants wear white garb so that all the varied colors are visible. In villages it was not uncommon in years past for men to imbibe large quantities of *bhang*, a potent marijuana drink.

Three stories are told to explain the festival. In the first it is said that Holi is the day that SHIVA opened his third eye and turned the god of love into ashes. In another story Holika, the sister of the demon HIRANYAKASIPU, took PRAHLADA on her lap to kill him that day, but the devotee of VISHNU survived unharmed. Finally it is said that there was an ogress Dhundhi who troubled children in an ancient kingdom, until the shouts of the mischievous boys of the town (something heard often on the festival of Holi) made her run away, since she was, through a curse, made vulnerable to the taunts of children.

Further reading: Meenal Pandya, *Here Comes Holi: The Festival of Colors* (Wellesley, Mass.: MeeRa, 2003); H. V. Shekar, *Festivals of India: Significance of the Celebrations* (Louisville, Ky.: Insight Books, 2000).

Holm Community See LOZOWICK, LEE.

Holy Shankaracharya Order (est. 1974)

The Holy Shankaracharya Order was founded in 1974 by Swami Lakshmy Devyashram (d. 1981), a disciple of Swami SHIVANANDA SARASWATI (1887–1963). Swami Lakshmy had started on a spiritual path alone when she met the late Shivananda, who taught her the techniques to enter *samadhi* (the highest state of mystical consciousness). The meeting occurred in a vision, which convinced her that she should travel to the Poconos and continue under his tutelage there. In 1969, she took the vows of the renounced life and was ordained by Swami Swanandashram into the Holy Order of Sannyasa, the same spiritual order in which Shivananda had been ordained.

In the early 1970s, Swami Lakshmy established contact with the ancient SHANKARACHARYA ORDER headquarters at its monastic complex in Sringeri, India. In 1974 she was selected Mahamandaleshwari or great overlord of the Holy Shankaracharya Order in the United States. By this time a small group of Indian Americans had begun to attend services at the temple's property in rural Pennsylvania. Having purchased property in Virginia, she began building a second ashram-temple there, completed in 1977. In 1978, Jagadguru Shankacharya Abhinava Vidyateertha Maharaj traveled from his seat at the Shankaracharya Order at Sringeri to visit and satisfy himself of the accomplishments of the American Shankacharya Order. Subsequently, additional Indian families began to accept the leadership provided by Swami Lakshmy.

Responding to a request by the order in Sringeri, Swami Lakshmy established a *shakti peetam* (monastery), called Sri Rajarajeshwari Peetam. As Swami Lakshmy attracted students to her teachings the ashram grew, and new instructors and teachers were ordained. They serve the order as guides for the different activities and programs developed to serve others. In 1978 a Hindu Heri-

tage Summer Camp program was initiated. The success of this undertaking further convinced Indian Hindus that although an American, Swami Lakshmy could lead. Her leadership has also paved the way for more women to become accepted as leaders in other spiritual camps.

In 1981, Swami Saraswati Devyashram, a disciple of Lakshmy, was ordained as her successor. She assumed authority shortly before Swami Lakshmy died. A trailblazer herself, she, much as Swami Lakshmy had, maintained and enriched the outreach program. Swami Saraswati is responsible for a new center in Tucson, Arizona. During 1982, a winter heritage camp was established there.

In 1988, Saraswati Devyashram retired and passed her lineage to Swami Parvati Devyashram. In early 1991, she moved the Holy Order from Pennsylvania to Rush, New York (near Rochester). It continues as a small organization of primarily Indian American Hindus.

Further reading: Andrew Rawlinson, *The Book of Enlightened Masters: Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Press, 1997).

horse sacrifice

The (horse sacrifice) *ashva medha* was one of the most important and elaborate royal rituals

in ancient India. The exact requirements for its performance are detailed in the 13th chapter of the SHATAPATHA BRAHMANA. The sacrifice could be performed for various purposes, but it was usually a means to demonstrate the king's power.

The chosen horse would be left to run loose for one year. The horse would be followed by a large contingent of the king's army, which would be charged to subdue whatever land the horse entered. At the end of the year, the horse would be sacrificed at a large festival.

The BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD within the Shatapatha Brahmana begins with a meditation upon the sacrificed horse as the universal reality and dwells upon the esoteric interpretation of this sacrifice. This sacrifice was performed by many kings throughout Indian history, probably for the last time in the 18th century.

Further reading: Julius Eggeling, trans. *The Satapatha Brahmana, According to the Text of the Madhyamdina School* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972); Steven Fuchs, *The Vedic Horse Sacrifice in Its Cultural-Historical Relations* (New Delhi: Inter-India, 1996); J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual Kingship and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.); Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Sexual Metaphors and Animal Symbols in Indian Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981).

I



icons

The worship of images of divinities is probably very ancient among the original inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. In the VEDAS of the ARYANS there is no mention of image worship, and it seems unquestionable that the image worship of later Hinduism is a Brahminization or Vedicization of a common indigenous practice.

In India, icons are made from special materials—specially selected and shaped stone, metal, or wood. Icons are installed in temples or other locations with special rituals. First, the icon is consecrated and brought to life. Usually, this involves the transfer of the power of the divinity from a container, a clay pot with water and a palm frond in it, through a string that is tied to the icon. MANTRAS are used to empower the icon or bring the divinity to life within it.

Bare stone is not by itself an icon; only when the deity has been implanted within it does the image gain potency. Once the life breath (PRANA) has been established in the iconic deity, its eyes are painted in or finally formed; this prepares the icon for DARSHAN, the meeting of its eyes with those of its worshippers. An anthropomorphic icon is treated in its context as a royal human being—awakened early in the morning, sung to,

bathed, clothed, fed, fanned, and entertained. Such activity is carried out throughout the day until the deity is put to bed. Icons that do not have a basically human form, such as the SHIVA LINGAM, are usually treated the same way, as though the god were present in them.

When a temple or icon is decommissioned, another careful ritual must be performed to remove the life from the image, lest it become angry at not being treated properly.

Further reading: Jitendra Nath Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1985); T. G. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, 4 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997); Eva Rudy Jansen, *The Hindu Book of Imagery: The Gods and Their Symbols*. (Holland: Binkey Kok, 1995); Margaret Stutley, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

ida See **NADI**.

Ilankovatikal (c. second century C.E.)

Ilankovatikal (Venerable ascetic prince) was the author of the Tamil Jain classic *Silappatikaram*

(see **JAINISM**), written around the second century C.E. and considered one of the five great ancient Tamil epics.

Tamil tradition says that the author was the younger brother of the well-known Cheral (Kerala) king Senguttavan. By his name he would seem to have been a Jain monk. There is no reliable historical account of the author's life.

In the poem, he indicates that he had renounced the world upon hearing that he and not his elder brother would succeed the great king Imayavarampan Netuncharalathan (169–78 C.E.) He left the palace and joined a Jain monastery on the outskirts of Vanci.

Further reading: Parthasarathy, trans., *The Cilappatikaram of Ilanko Atikal: An Epic of South India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

Indian calendar See **TIME IN HINDU TRADITION**.

Indo-American Yoga-Vedanta Society (est. 1971)

The Indo-American Yoga-Vedanta Society was founded in 1971 when His Holiness Sri Swami Satchidananda Buaji (b. 1890) settled in the United States. The swami had been visiting and teaching in North America and Europe since 1948.

Satchidananda was born with a crippling birth defect, for which there was no medical treatment at the time. His parents were told he would not survive to adulthood. However, they allowed their son to be raised by a teacher and yogi, Swami Maharaj. Maharaj treated him with herbal remedies while teaching him HATHA YOGA in incremental stages to straighten out his disfigurement. Buaji began to heal. By the time he was a young man he had been successfully cured of his disability and was also a master of YOGA. He dedicated his life for a number of years to the Divine Life Society founded by Swami SHIVANANDA SARASWATI.

When he began to travel he allowed himself to be the subject of scientific studies researching how the body functions. He revealed considerable prowess in masterful demonstrations of yoga for the public. As an elderly man he settled in the United States and founded the Indo-American Yoga-Vedanta Society, headquartered in New York. Well over 100 years old, Swami Bua continued actively teaching as of 2005.

Further reading: Bhakta Wallace, "The Mysterious Story of Swami Bua (Buaji)," *VNN Vaishnava News*, January 25, 2002. Available online. URL: <http://www.vnn.org/editorials/ET0201/ET25-7120.html>. Accessed August 30, 2005.

Indonesia

For approximately 1,500 years the chain of islands today known as Indonesia were a part of what was known in the subcontinent as Farther India. Indian merchants began trading Indonesian spices with the West during the days of the Roman Empire. Indian-style royal courts were established on several of the Indonesian islands, with major courts in Java and Sumatra. Hinduism developed (and declined) differently on the islands of Borneo, BALI, Java, and Sumatra.

As early as the fourth century C.E., both Borneo and Sarawak were centers of both Buddhist and Hindu worship, as evidenced by statues from this period created in the Tamil style. Unlike Java and Sumatra, Borneo never developed a significant dynasty, and most of the surviving cultures there have until recently retained their indigenous forms. Hinduism can be found only among the few Indians who live there.

During the 14th century the Majapahit dynasty of Java occupied land outside its borders and extended the scope of Hindu influence to a southern portion of Borneo. On other islands, indigenous populations remained virtually untouched. Papua-New Guinea/Irianjaya and the Philippines were untouched by the Indianization of Indone-

sia. True Brahminic Hinduism was to be found only among the aristocracy of Java, Sumatra, and Borneo. The common people either retained their indigenous folk religions or blended them with Hindu features. The result was a form of Hinduism quite different from that in India.

The arrival of Islam caused the Hindu states to collapse. The royal courts of Java fled to Bali, leaving Bali as the only remaining Hindu state, even though pockets of Hindu belief and practice can still be found on Java and Sumatra.

After the collapse of Hindu states, Javanese Hinduism survived without a Brahminic tradition and became an amalgam of older indigenous religions, Shaivite Hinduism (see [SHAIVISM](#)), and Mahayana Buddhism. The result is a type of Hinduism that is similar in some ways to the folk religion found in Bali. However, Hinduism in Java has lacked a royal court and a Brahmin caste for centuries and has become primarily a folk religion in Hindu guise. All priests are laymen and not Brahmin.

Javanese Hinduism includes ancestor worship and belief in nature spirits, both malevolent and benevolent. The latter are often associated with ancestors and tend to be the ancestor spirits of each immediate family. Shiva is associated with the god of the Bromo volcano. The various gods are not seen to dwell in the temples, but rather on the mountains; the gods are ritually called out of the mountains into the temples.

Popular culture in Indonesia often includes puppet plays enacting scenes from the *RAMAYANA* and the *MAHABHARATA*. Recently a resurgence of Hinduism has appeared throughout Indonesia, resulting in the PASEK movement, the *SATYA SAI BABA* movement, and the Forum Hindu Dharma Indonesia. These new movements are more consistent with forms of Hinduism found in India, including several types of yoga; the older traditions with their emphasis on ancestor worship are considered backward by many.

Further reading: George Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*. Edited by Walter F. Vella, (Honolulu:

East-West Center Press, 1968); Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: Free Press, 1960); Robert W. Hefner, *Hindu Javanese* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

Indra

Indra is the king of the gods in the VEDIC pantheon. He is a symbol of strength and has the character of a warrior. He is associated with the thunderstorm and is said to hold a lightning bolt in his hand. Many early Vedic hymns tell of his battle with the snake demon, Vritra, in the course of which Indra splits a mountain to release the terrestrial waters that Vritra has held back. Indra also fights a demon named Vala in order to release the “cows of the dawn,” perhaps indicating that he was the creator of daylight.

Indra’s enemies are the Dasas and Dasyus; these have often been taken to refer to the indigenous tribes of India, but the context is not at all clear. At times the terms can best be translated as “enemy,” and at times they are seen to be mythological beings. In the Vedas Indra is also known as a great drinker of Soma, an intoxicant used in the Vedic ritual. SOMA itself is seen as a god.

Indra is frequently invoked ritually in Vedic ritual. There are more hymns to him in RIG VEDA than to any other god. Sometimes he is invoked along with AGNI (the god of fire), probably linking the main divinity of the heavens, Indra, with a primary terrestrial deity, Agni, who is also the messenger of the gods.

The Vedic tradition often mentions Indra’s wife, Indrani. Post-Vedic mythology gives Indra the white elephant AIRAVATA as a mount to ride. Eventually Indra loses his supremacy and begins to be challenged and even ridiculed. KRISHNA protects his village from Indra by holding a mountain up as an umbrella to keep away his rains. Indra is cursed for consorting with a sage’s wife (AHALYA) and is afflicted, in one version of the story, with 1,000 vaginas, which are then changed into 1,000

eyes to justify his common Vedic epithet “thousand-eyed one.”

Further reading: Jan Gonda, trans., *The Indra Hymns of the Rig Veda* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990); Alfred Hilbrandt, *Vedic Mythology*. Translated from the German by Sreeramula Rajeswara Sarma, Vol. I (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990); W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*. 2d ed. (Bombay: Rupa, 1973).

Indus

The Indus River is the longest river in Pakistan. It flows south from its sources in the HIMALAYAS. Its original Sanskrit name was *Sindhu*. This river became *Indos* in Greek and eventually gave its name to the country of India. The ancient Persians pronounced the name as *Hindu*, so that the people living there came to be called Hindus. The Indus was one of the two largest rivers mentioned in the VEDAS; it was included in the ancient list of the “seven rivers” praised by the Vedic sages.

It was along the Indus River in 1924 that Sir John Marshall, director general of the British Archaeological Survey, unearthed a previously unknown culture, which was dubbed the INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION. Later work by Sir R. E. Mortimer Wheeler at Harappa and others at Mohenjo-Daro showed it to be an extensive and elaborate city-centered culture dating from as far back as 3600 B.C.E.

Further reading: Shane Mountjoy, *The Indus River* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2005).

Indus Valley civilization

The Indus Valley civilization (c. 3600 B.C.E. to 1900 B.C.E.) was one of the largest civilization complexes in the ancient world. Excavations at the primary sites of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa show that the civilization stretched at least from the lower to the middle reaches of the Indus River, now almost entirely in Pakistan. First excavated

by Sir Mortimer Wheeler in 1921, the remains show a highly developed city culture with granaries, bath houses, city planning, sculpture, and a form of writing.

Most important for the history of Hinduism, there are elements that foreshadow later developments in the religion. Several artifacts seem to indicate goddess-oriented worship. These godlike forms, interestingly, closely resemble those excavated in Neolithic Europe.

Among the Indus Valley artifacts are numerous seals, possibly used for commercial purposes, which depict animals, humans, and possibly gods and goddesses. One of these seals seems to show a female divinity being worshipped in a tree, resembling very much the later worship of YAKSHAS, or tree beings.

One artifact that has garnered a lot of attention is a depiction of a seated figure with an erect penis and a buffalo style headdress. This figure has been called Proto-SHIVA and linked to the later concept of Shiva as Pashupati or lord of the animals.

The relationship between the Indus Valley remains, later VEDIC culture, and the ARYANS has been the subject of much controversy. Most modern Western scholarship dates the Rig Veda, India’s oldest extant text, to around 1500 B.C.E., comfortably after the fall of the Indus Valley civilization. Some, particularly in India, however, seek to find in the Indus Valley the earliest Aryan and Vedic culture.

Two facts complicate this claim of a Vedic Indus Valley civilization. First, the Rig Veda barely mentions city life. Most Vedic hymns dwell on horses and herds of cows; none of them even mentions a large building, let alone any feature that might be associated with advanced city life. More importantly, the Vedas frequently mention large horses pulling men in chariots. Archaeological research indicates that large horses are not indigenous to India, but are of Middle Eastern genetic stock. Large horse remains have been found in the northern Punjab, where the Vedic people are believed to have lived, but not a single verifiable

find has been made at any Indus Valley site—only remains of the smaller native Indian horse.

Undoubtedly, certain Hindu traditions may trace back to the Indus Valley civilization. Recent research has shown that elements of Indus Valley culture survived and spread in western and central India several centuries after 1900 B.C.E., previously believed to be the end date for the civilization. Additional research will probably find more examples of continuities in Indian traditions, particularly ceramic and pottery traditions. Cities did not emerge again in India until 800 B.C.E., so there is no reason to believe that the historical cities owed their existence to this early civilization.

Further reading: Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); B. B. Lal, *The Earliest Civilization of South Asia: Rise, Maturity, and Decline* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 1997); Gregory L. Possehl, *The Indus Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2002).

Integral Yoga See [AUROBINDO](#), [SRI](#).

Integral Yoga Institutes See [SATCHIDANANDA](#), [SWAMI](#).

Intercosmic Center of Spiritual Awareness See [MISHRA](#), [RAMAMURTI](#).

Intergalactic Culture Foundation
(est. 1981)

The Intergalactic Cultural Foundation was founded in Los Angeles in 1981 by Sri Swami Shyam Paramahansa Mahaprabho, an Indian guru with a mission to the United States. The foundation was initially known as the Lovetrance Civiliza-

tion Center, but the name was changed in 1986 to reflect the institute's new focus. Four sections were created to advise students along specific paths of spiritual aspiration, defined by personal proclivities and strengths: the path of the heart, the path of intellect, the path of action, and the path of reflection.

The foundation has published prolifically. Its periodicals include *Hindu Digest*, *Golden India*, and *Enlightenment Connoisseurs Newsletter*. Their publications catalog includes over 100 books, as well as correspondence courses, videos, and audio cassettes. Sri Swami Shyam has made speaking and teaching tours across the United States and has created the International Galactic Chronicles lecture series. By 2002, Swami Shyam had produced 2,000 pages of his own commentary on the Srimad Bhagavatam and 1,500 pages of his viewpoints on Yoga Vasistha, Viveka Chudamani, and the UPANISHADS, and 70 audio discourses on the *Bhagavat Katha*.

The headquarters of the foundation in the United States is in San Pedro, California. International headquarters is in Rishikesh, India. A number of electronic books are free.

Further reading: Swami Prem, *Galactic Chronicles Lecture Program* (Harbor City, Calif.: Aum Namō Bhagavate Vasudevay, 1995); ———, *What Is ILCC?* (Hawthorne, Calif.: Intergalactic Lovetrance Civilization Center, 1983); *Swami Prem Paramahansa and His Message* (Hawthorne, Calif.: Intergalactic Lovetrance Civilization Center, 1983); *Who Is Swami Prem Paramahansa Mahaprobho?* (Hawthorne, Calif.: Intergalactic Lovetrance Civilization, n.d.).

International Babaji Kriya Yoga Sangam (est. 1951)

The International Babaji Kriya Yoga Sangam was founded in Imperial City, California, in 1951 by Yogi S. A. A. Ramaiah, who had inherited a South Indian KRIYA YOGA lineage directly from Kriya Babaji Nagaraj, the group's official GURU. BABAJI is

a semimythical figure reputedly born in 203 C.E. in the seaport town of Porto Novo, Tamil Nadu, India. After a life of adventure and spiritual accomplishment, he emerged as a master of YOGA and KUNDALINI. He then spent years in retreat in the HIMALAYAS and emerged, having overcome the limitations of death. He would become known over the centuries as the immortal Babaji (the same personage introduced to the West by Paramahansa YOGANANDA in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*).

According to S. A. A. Ramaiah, in 1944 Babaji saw the need for an organization through which he could contact his devotees throughout the world. Thus, in 1951 the International Babaji Krija Yoga Sangam was established with Ramaiah as chief administrator.

Ramaiah became a model in the 1960s for those interested in yogic methods; he traveled to the United States and demonstrated in scientific tests that he had control of a variety of bodily functions. For example, he could vary his body temperature by 15 degrees in either direction from the norm of 98.6 degrees. Ramaiah founded a mission in America with monks and disciples from India. They opened their headquarters in Norwalk, California. Kriya centers, sometimes called *sadhana* centers, were established for the more highly developed forms of yoga that had a rigorous method. These were generally set up in rural locations so as to enhance the experience of contemplation and MEDITATION for attendees.

In Imperial City, California, Ramaiah founded a shrine to Ayyappa Swami, a holy figure from the PURANAS, ancient sacred Hindu stories. Since 1970, each December the disciples conduct an annual pilgrimage from the shrine to Mount Shasta in Northern California, a distance of some 500 miles.

In India the Sangam operates the KBYS Holistic Hospital and Colleges of Yoga Therapy and Physiotherapy, located in Athanor, Tamil Nadu. There are over 50 centers for the Sangam throughout the world.

Further reading: Yogi S. A. A. Ramaiah, *Shasta Ayyappa Swami Yoga Pilgrimage* (Imperial City, Calif.: Pan American Babaji Yoga sangam, n.d.)

International Foundation for Spiritual Unfoldment See [AMERICAN MEDITATION SOCIETY](#).

International Mahavir Jain Mission See [JAINISM](#).

International Meditation Institute (est. 1970s)

The International Meditation Institute in Kulu, Himachal Pradesh, India, was founded by Swami Shyam (b. 1924), an Indian teacher who taught meditation in Canada in the early 1970s. There he developed a following of enthusiastic devotees who returned with him to India. They bestowed upon him the unofficial title of SWAMI, although he is a householder, with a wife and five children.

When Shyam was a young man, he experienced an altered spiritual state that left him forever a changed person. That space of pure consciousness, which he named *Shyam Space*, was described as pure existence and pristine consciousness where one drops the mortal self, becomes detached from the mundane world, and identifies with the pure Self. This perspective is usually expressed in terms of *ADVAITA* (non-dual) Vedanta, a form of Hindu thought that forms the infrastructure of various yoga techniques for enlightenment.

Today, disciples of the institute live in independent group houses near the MEDITATION center, which they visit for meditation and teaching. Swami Shyam's teachings have been taken to other areas of the world. Centers now exist in Taiwan, the United States, Europe, New Zealand, Israel, and Japan. The North American headquarters is in Montreal.

Further reading: Anne Cushman and Jerry Jones, *From Here to Nirvana: The Yoga Journal Guide to Spiritual India* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998).

International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) (est. 1966)

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was founded in 1966 by the Krishna devotee and Vedic scholar Swami Prabhupada BHAKTIVEDANTA (1896–1977). He entered New York City at age 69 in 1965, when the U.S. quotas on immigration from Asia were abolished, and quickly attracted a following of young men and women by chanting the Hare Krishna mantra (*Hare Krishna / Hare Krishna / Krishna Krishna / Hare Hare, / Hare Rama / Hare Rama / Rama Rama / Hare Hare*).

The first ISKCON temple was established in a tiny New York storefront at 26 Second Avenue, and from here the movement spread quickly, first throughout North America, London, and Hamburg, and then all over the world. In just over a decade Bhaktivedanta Swami had established 108 Krishna temples and published 70 volumes of books, more than 100 million copies of which were distributed by his disciples, who in the late 1970s numbered in the thousands.

ISKCON's teachings are based exclusively on Bhaktivedanta Swami's translations and explanations of classical Hindu scripture, particularly the BHAGAVAD GITA and the BHAGAVATA PURANA. ISKCON sees itself theologically as representing the monotheistic central core of Hinduism. According to this position the absolute truth is a supremely powerful being, KRISHNA, and all individual souls are of the same spiritual nature as Krishna, but never equal to him. By chanting the Hare Krishna mantra, which was introduced 500 years ago by Sri Krishna CHAITANYA (1486–1533), believed to be an incarnation of Krishna, the individual soul can reawaken its dormant love for God and at the time of death return to the spiritual realm to serve Krishna eternally in full bliss and knowledge. All other Hindu deities are seen as either subservient

demigods, such as DURGA, SHIVA, and BRAHMA, or direct expansions of Krishna, such as VISHNU and Narayana.

Members of ISKCON are strict lactovegetarians and offer their food to Krishna before eating. Such offered food is called *prasadam* or the Lord's mercy. Practitioners living in temple ashrams are expected to rise early for religious observances (known as *aratis*) in the temple, the first starting at 4:30 A.M. During these ceremonies devotees sing Sanskrit songs while dancing before elaborately decorated forms of Krishna and his consort, Radha. After chanting the Hare Krishna mantra on beads and worshipping a form (or *murti*) of Bhaktivedanta Swami, the morning program ends with a class based on a verse from the Bhagavat Purana. Ceremonies and observances are standardized in all temples throughout the world.

ISKCON grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s but has seen a recent decline in membership, attributed by some observers to the controversies surrounding the leadership succession after Bhaktivedanta's death and the creation of subsequent reform movements.

See International Society for Krishna Consciousness Revival Movement (IRM).

Further reading: Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* (New York: Bhaktivedanta Trust, 1972); ———, *KRSNA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, 3 vols. (New York: Bhaktivedanta Trust, 1970); ———, *The Science of Self-Realization* (New York: Bhaktivedanta Trust, 1977); Steven J. Gelberg, ed., *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna* (New York: Grove Press, 1983); J. Stillson Judah, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture* (New York: Wiley, 1974).

International Society for Krishna Consciousness Revival Movement (IRM) (est. 2000)

The ISKCON Revival Movement (IRM) was formed in 2000 as a pressure group to revive and

reform ISKCON on the basis of an interpretation of the directives for succession given by Swami Prabhupada BHAKTIVEDANTA (1896–1977), the founder of ISKCON.

According to IRM, the founder revealed, in a philosophical treatise called “The Final Order” issued on July 9, 1977, a signed directive appointing 11 of his senior managers to act as *ritviks* (officiating priests) to initiate new recruits into the ISKCON movement on his behalf. According to IRM, all future disciples within ISKCON were supposed to revere Bhaktivedanta Swami as their GURU, not any successor. However, shortly after Bhaktivedanta Swami’s demise on November 14, 1977, these *ritviks* ignored the directive; instead, they divided the world into 11 zones, each claiming to be the guru or spiritual successor in a different area. By early 1978 the 11 *ritviks* had begun to initiate disciples on their own behalf, acting as gurus for the movement.

Over time, a number of the gurus suffered lawsuits, suicide, and other problems. The movement was plunged into confusion and acrimony. By the mid-1980s the Governing Body Commission (GBC), which managed ISKCON, issued a new interpretation of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s directive. What he had really wanted, it said, was for all disciples to become initiating gurus, not just the 11 *ritviks*. Today new gurus are added to the roster via a majority vote by the GBC at its annual meetings in Mayapur. Currently ISKCON gurus number around 80.

IRM contends that both the zonal guru system and its replacement multiple-guru system are unauthorized innovations. Citing GBC resolutions and management directives approved by Bhaktivedanta Swami, the IRM insists that ISKCON will continue to flounder as long as it fails to comply with the orders of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

The IRM has grown quickly in the few years of its existence, claiming members and temples on every continent, including the ISKCON temple in Bangalore, the largest ISKCON temple in the

world. It publishes an international magazine, *Back to Prabhupada*, and an electronic newsletter. They have also met with considerable opposition from those supporting the current multiple-guru system in ISKCON.

The IRM’s followers consist of both current and former ISKCON members, ISKCON Life Members, and members of the Hindu community at large. The IRM’s ultimate goal is to rebuild an ISKCON movement operating just as Bhaktivedanta Swami intended, with him as the sole guru and authority.

Further reading: Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* (New York: Bhaktivedanta Trust, 1972); Krishnakant Desai, *The Final Order* (London: Printed privately, 1996; Bangalore: International Society for Krishna Consciousness, 2001).

International Society of Divine Love (est. 1975)

Swami H. D. Prakashanand Saraswati (b. 1929) was born into a BRAHMIN family in AYODHYA, India. His early life was fraught with intense religious feelings, and as a youth he became a reclusive mystic so that he might find God in the silence. He took the vows of SANNYAS (renunciation) at age 20 from his guru, Jagadguru Krupalu Swami of Pratapgarh. He spent the next 20 years as a wandering mendicant in the Himalayas and in the forests of central India, ending in Braj, the reputed earthly home of Lord KRISHNA. In 1975, emerging from his solitary life, he established the International Society of Divine Love. Later on he traveled to America and founded a home for devotees and disciples. By 1981 Swami Prakashanand, who had begun to be thought of as a distinguished sage and a saint, conceived of creating a global mission movement.

Swami Prakashanand is of the lineage of the great Vaishnavite sage of West Bengal Sri Krishna CHAITANYA (1485–1553). Followers of VAISHNAVISM, as well as other schools of Hinduism,

understand that a great GURU can teach disciples even after the guru is no longer in a physical body. Communication between the visible and invisible is taken for granted and is an essential factor in many types of Hindu devotion. Chaitanya is assumed to be in charge of his lineage even today.

Devotees of the society believe Krishna to be the ultimate and highest God. Krishna is written about in the Mahabharata and, especially, in the BHAGAVAD GITA. According to the Gita, Krishna has the divine ability to disguise himself and give teaching and counsel while appearing to be someone else. His teaching to ARJUNA in the Gita has become one of the sacred texts of the path of BHAKTI YOGA, which emphasizes his loving activity; dedication to Krishna is considered a devotional pathway to enlightenment. This devotional approach is expressed in Prakashanand's writings based on the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavata Purana. Among the significant practices of this approach is chanting the name of God while offering oneself to Krishna as a devotee.

The society has members in India, England, Ireland, Singapore, New Zealand, and Australia. During the 1990s the Society of Divine Love constructed its main Western temple and ashram complex in Austin, Texas, which was dedicated on October 8, 1995.

Further reading: *The Deity Establishment of Shree Rasehwari Radha Rani of Barsana Dham*, October 7–8 (Austin Tex.: International Society of Divine Love, 1995); H. D. Prakashanand Saraswati, *The Path to God* (Austin Tex.: International Society of Divine Love, 1995); ———, *The Philosophy of Divine Love* (Auckland, New Zealand: International Society of Divine Love, 1982); ———, *The Shikchashtek* (Philadelphia: International Society of Divine Love, 1986).

International Yoga Federation (est. 1965)

The International Yoga Federation is a loose confederation of YOGIS and YOGA associations; it is

administered by the World Yoga Council, founded in 1965 by Mahavatar Kirsha Kisore Das at Bengal, India. The council is composed of grand yoga masters for each continent: Asia, America, Africa, Europe, and Oceania. The presidency rotates across continental representatives. In 2005, the executive office was located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. After 2006, the executive work rotates to Europe.

International Yoga Fellowship (est. 1980s)

The International Yoga Fellowship has grown out of the work of Swami Satyananda Saraswati (b. 1923), a former disciple of Swami Shivananda Saraswati (1887–1963).

Satyananda took the vows of the renounced life (*sannyas*) in 1943 and subsequently spent 12 years at Shivananda's Divine Life Society based in Rishikish, India. He then spent nine years wandering India in pursuit of divinity. In 1964, the year after Shivananda's death, Satyananda founded the Bihar School of Yoga, and to honor his guru and his teachings, established the Shivananda Ashram on the shores of the GANGES. Here, Satyananda continued to pursue his guru's ideas that everyone should have access to YOGA and spirituality, despite caste, marital status, or other challenges. He also explored the possibilities of a tantric path to God (see [TANTRISM](#)).

As did his guru, Satyananda believed in outreach programs to share their teachings. His missionary focus took him far and wide, first throughout India, then to other destinations. During the 1970s, he founded 10 ashrams in India. However, his more significant missionary activity occurred outside India. The development of the ashrams abroad had begun after his 1968 world tour to disseminate his teachings. Leaving India he encouraged missionary activity in Ireland, England, Greece, France, Sweden, Colombia, Australia, and Indonesia. Encouraged by the response, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship.

Satyananda's work entered the United States prior to his world tour. First, Llewellyn Publications in St. Paul, Minnesota, published a major work by Swami Anandakapila (aka John Mumford), who had been a major supporter and student of Satyananda in Australia. The publication of *Sexual Occultism* became the springboard of Mumford's 1976 tour to teach tantra and promote its study. Not long afterward, a New York publisher released *Yoga, Tantra and Meditation* by Janakananda Saraswati, a teacher of Satyananda's work in Scandinavia.

Meanwhile, in 1965, students and disciples of Satyananda began to migrate to the United States, taking their teachings with them from India. The new immigrants formed small gatherings. In the 1980s, Swami Niranjannan Saraswati (b. 1960) began to organize ASHRAMS for the International Yoga Fellowship in the United States. On October 28, 1980, he formed Satyanandan Ashrams USA as an affiliate of the mother organization in India. Niranjananda stayed in America to help build the work. In the summer of 1982, the American group was visited by Swami Amritananda, a major female leader in the fellowship. Her trip was followed not long afterward by Satyananda's first tour of North America.

By the time of Satyananda's American tour, he had long since developed his idea to include a complete system of tantric yoga, which begins with awakening of the KUNDALINI energy and includes sexual intercourse as a means of blending the male and female energies. Bliss is the ultimate reward for successful disciples of the so-called left-hand path.

The International Yoga Fellowship is reported to be one of the largest organizations teaching yoga. It is not always easy to find practitioners in the West, as most members live quietly in ethnic communities, but there may be tens of thousands of people affiliated in North America. International headquarters remain at the Bihar School of Yoga in Bihar, India, where the fellowship's journal, *Yoga*, is published.

Further reading: John Mumford, (Swami Anandakapila), *Sexual Occultism* (St. Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn, 1975); Swami Janakananda Saraswati, *Yoga, Tantra and Meditation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975); Swami Satyananda Saraswati, *Sure Ways to Self-Realization* (Mungyar: Bihar School of Yoga, 1982); ———, *Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati* (Mungyar, Bihar: Bihar School of Yoga, 1981).

Isha Upanishad

The Isha Upanishad appears in the White Yajur VEDA; it constitutes the Veda's last chapter (unlike most Upanishads, which are found within the BRAHMANAS of the Veda). *Isha* literally means "lord" or "ruler," and the Upanishad clearly has theistic overtones. It is a short Upanishad of only 18 stanzas.

The Isha opens with a stanza describing the world as "indwelt by the Lord" (*ishavasya*). Stanza 5, frequently quoted, describes the BRAHMAN or ultimate reality: "It moves. It moves not. It is far and it is near. It is within all this; it is outside all this." This attempts to show the incomprehensible infinitude of the ultimate. Also quoted often is verse 11, which states that the path of ritual and the path of knowledge of *brahman* are complementary. The cryptic verses 9, 12, 13, and 14, which speak of the relationship between higher knowledge and ignorance, have been frequently explicated by the classical commentators.

Further reading: Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1965); S. Radhakrishnan, ed. and trans., *The Principal Upanishads* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1992).

Isherwood, Christopher (1904–1986)

British novelist and Western Hindu pioneer

Christopher William Bradshaw-Isherwood, a prominent Anglo-American novelist and early gay activist, was also an outspoken apologist for

the VEDANTA SOCIETY and its *ADVAITA* (non-dualist) VEDANTA perspective.

Isherwood was born into a well-to-do family in Cheshire, England. He was educated at Repton School and Corpus Christi College at Cambridge, though he did not finish his degree program. In 1925 he reestablished a friendship with his fellow writer W. H. Auden, whom he had met in prep school, and, along with Stephen Spender, would constitute the so-called Auden Gang of angry young writers who made their mark on the English literary scene in the 1930s. Isherwood's initial contributions were his novels, *All the Conspirators* (1928) and *The Memorial* (1932).

In 1939 Isherwood moved to the United States and began to write for Hollywood films. At this time he became associated with the VEDANTA SOCIETY and became a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, who headed the Los Angeles center. An emergent pacifism, fed by his experience in Germany during the 1930s, was integral to his adopting *advaita* VEDANTA as a philosophical-religious perspective. Over the next several decades, he assisted Prabhavananda in preparing translations of Hindu texts and wrote several books on Vedanta himself. His edited volume, *Vedanta for the Western World* (1945), later issued as *Vedanta for Modern Man*, was arguably his most lasting contribution. Among his later works was an autobiographical volume describing his relationship with his teacher, Prabhavananda, *My Guru and His Disciple* (1980).

Beginning in 1953, Isherwood lived with his significant other, Don Bachardy. His 1964 autobiographical novel *A Single Man* represented his public acknowledgment of his gay life. He later became involved in various gay-rights efforts. His last novel mixed his Hindu and gay experience. *A Meeting by the River* (1967) tells the story of a bisexual movie producer who tries to stop his younger brother from taking vows as a Hindu monk.

Further reading: Christopher Isherwood, *An Approach to Vedanta* (Hollywood, Calif.: Vedanta Press, 1963); —

—, *Essentials of Vedanta* (Hollywood, Calif.: Vedanta Press 1969); —, *My Guru and His Disciple* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980); Christopher Isherwood, ed., *Vedanta for the Western World* (Hollywood, Calif.: Marcel Rodd, 1945).

ishta devata

Ishta devata (desired divinity) is an important concept in theistic Hinduism. It is understood that each person has a divinity that best fits his or her personal inclinations and way of life. Usually, the *ishta devata* will be chosen within the sectarian context—a person who has grown



A woman worships her personal divinity (*ishta devata*) at the Ganesh shrine in Belur, Bengal. (*Gustaf Irani*)

up in a Shaivite family, for example, is likely to chose a Shaivite divinity, for example Subramuniya, youngest son of SHIVA, as one's personal favorite.

It is not infrequent, however, for people to choose divinities outside their sectarian context. A Bengali Vaishnavite (devotee of VISHNU) might chose KALI, the fierce goddess, as *ishta devata*. This was precisely what Sri RAMAKRISHNA did.

Further reading: Klaus Klostermeier, *Survey of Hinduism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Thomas Hopkins, *Hindu Religious Tradition* (Encino, Calif., Dickenson, 1971).

Ishvarakrishna See SAMKHYA.

Iyengar, B. K. S. (1918–) *yoga teacher*

Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar was born on December 14, 1918, in the small village of Bellur in the Kolar District of Karnataka state in India, during the worldwide influenza pandemic. His mother had an attack of influenza while carrying and birthing Bellur. Both of them miraculously survived, but the child was left with a weak constitution, and he often suffered from malaria, typhoid, and tuberculosis.

Bellur was the 11th of 13th children, 10 of whom survived. His schoolteacher father, Sri Krishnamachar, died of untreated appendicitis when Bellur was nine years old, leaving his family in a state of poverty. His mother, Sheshamma, was known to be simple, kind-hearted, and religious in a highly orthodox way. Bellur's poor health and lack of financial resources affected his education. He struggled to stay well enough to pass exams and to collect funds to pay for his high school education.

In 1934, at age 15, he went to live with his sister in Mysore. His brother-in-law, the famous YOGI Sri T. Krishnamachar, was in need of someone to perform yoga ASANAS (postures) at the Yogashala,

the school of yoga. Bellur was initiated into the GAYATRI MANTRA and began to learn yoga practice from his brother-in-law, which slowly helped him to overcome his maladies. He began to train students at the school and soon ended his formal education in order to devote his energy to yoga instruction. He won certificates in the elementary, intermediate, and advanced diploma courses in yoga.

In 1937, Krishnamachar sent the young Bellur to Pune, India, to teach yoga. His commitment to a disciplined practice grew, as did his conviction not to publicize or beg for work or recommendations. He was devoted to living a yogic life as long as God willed.

In 1943, Iyengar married Ramamani; they had five daughters and one son. Although the 1950s continued to be financially challenging, Iyengar began to have contact with eminent personalities, such as the spiritual leader J. KRISHNAMURTI, the freedom fighter Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan (commandant of the National Defense Academy), Prime Minister Nehru, and the violinist Yehudi Menuhin. Iyengar trained Menuhin in yoga, which helped him to have better control over his violin. This special friendship, begun in 1952, continued over time and gained Iyengar great respect in the West. From the 1960s onward, Iyengar traveled abroad regularly to train students and perform demonstrations.

In 1975, Iyengar opened the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI) in Pune, named after his wife. His eldest daughter, Geeta, and son, Prashant, are actively involved in teaching yoga there.

Iyengar has based his teachings on the traditional eight limbs of yoga as presented in the YOGA SUTRAS by PATANJALI, written over 2,500 years ago. His first book, *Light on Yoga*, explains Patanjali's philosophy while introducing Iyengar's emphasis on body, mind, and spirit integration. This work, first published in 1966, has been translated into 18 languages.

Today, Iyengar is known to be one of the most influential yoga practitioners in the world.

Further reading: B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on Life: The Yoga Journey to Wholeness, Inner Peace, and Ultimate Freedom* (Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale, 2005); ———, *Light on Yoga*

(New York: Schocken Books, 1979); ———, *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2001); B. K. S. Iyengar and 60th Birthday Celebration Committee, *Iyengar: His Life and Work* (Porthill, Idaho: Timeless Books, 1987).

J



Jagannath Temple, Puri

The Jagannath temple at Puri, in Orissa on the Bay of Bengal, is one of the most famous in India. Lord Jaggannath (Lord of the Universe) is a form of KRISHNA. Each year in the bright half of the lunar month of Ashadha (June–July) he is honored in a huge festival. The image of Jagannath is placed in a massive temple cart, 45 feet in height with 16 wheels, each seven feet high. Behind him in conveyances nearly as high are his brother, BALARAMA, and his sister, Subhadra, images constructed by youth of the area. (The English word *juggernaut* derives from the name Jagannath, as associated with these massive conveyances.)

Further reading: Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tirupathi, *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978); Chris Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

jagrat (jagarita) See STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

Jaimini (c. 200 B.C.E.) *Indian philosopher*

Jaimini is one of the great philosophers of the MIMAMSA tradition. His Mimamsa Sutras was a

complete exposition of the views of one school of Mimamsa; he argued against other schools, which are no longer extant. Mimamsa is a basis for the Vedic ritualistic worldview (see VEDA), and the formation of the Hindu tradition in general. No biographical information about Jaimini has survived.

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Jain festivals

True to their more austere nature and image, the festivals of the Jains (see JAINISM) are much less exuberant celebrations than those of the Hindus. Jains in fact distance themselves from the more raucous festivals of Hinduism such as HOLI. One of their religious days is devoted entirely to silence—*Maun* Ekadashi, or the eleventh of the month. This observance is celebrated in the bright part of the lunar month Margashirsha (November–December). It should be noted that there are also Hindu festivals, such as the Magha Mela at Prayag (ALLAHABAD), which are observed with vows of silence.

Both the DIGAMBARA and the SHVETAMBARA Jain communities observe the birthday of MAHAVIRA (Mahavira Jayanti), which takes place in the

bright half of the month of Chaitra (March–April). Shvetambaras celebrate “Knowledge Fifth” (Jnana Panchami) on the fifth day of the bright half of Karttika (October–November), while Digambaras celebrate “Scripture Fifth” (Shrutapanchami) on the fifth day of the bright half of the month of Jyeshtha (May–June). In both these festivals books are cleaned and repaired and manuscripts are recopied.

Most important for the Jain festival cycle is the time called Chaturmas, the four months of the rainy season, when Jain monks traditionally do not travel, so as to prevent injury to water beings and other small creatures that emerge only in the monsoon. Paryushan is an eight-day observance for Shvetambaras during these four months. It is a time of fasting and concentration on purification for the lay person. One of the central events of Paryushan is the recitation of the Kalpa Sutra by monks. The final day of the festival includes a ceremony of communal confession and asking of forgiveness of creatures for the harm that may have been inflicted over the year.

The Digambara equivalent to Paryushan is called Dshalaksanaparvan, the Festival of the 10 Religious Virtues. It is conducted in the temples. The TATTVARTHA SUTRA is recited and homilies are delivered relating to the 10 virtues outlined in that text.

Divali (Dipavali) is celebrated by Jains, but the lights of the festival are intended to commemorate the final liberation of Mahavira. As among the Hindus, however, worship of LAKSHMI is performed (by laypeople only) in order to promote prosperity.

Another festival celebrated by both major sects of Jains is Akshayatriya (Undying Third), celebrated in the bright half of Vaishakha (April–May). It is a commemoration of a gift of “undying merit” to RISHABHA, the first TIRTHANKARA in our half-era.

Further reading: John E. Cort, *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 2001); Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (London: Routledge, 1992).

Jainism

The name *Jain* derives from *jina* (victory); Jainism is thus the religion of the “victorious one”—any human being who by his or her own effort has conquered the lower passions and thus become free of attachments to things. Most Jains believe that their faith was founded by a lineage of 24 teacher/saints, the TIRTHANKARAS. The Tirthankaras have provided human beings with a means to cross the ocean of SAMSARA (the cycle of existence) by providing a vessel, namely, the DHARMA, or teachings.

Most scholars consider the 24 Tirthankaras to be mythical or at best semimythical beings. For example, one of the 24, Nemi, is said to have lived for 1,000 years. They believe that Jain history really begins with PARSHVANATHA (c. 900 B.C.E.), the son of the ruler of BENARES (Varanasi). A successful soldier and husband, at the age of 30 Parshvanatha withdrew from his elite existence to become an ascetic. As he wandered India, he gathered followers to whom he advocated four laws of life—do not take life, do not lie, do not steal, and do not own property. He built the first Jain monastery on Mount Sammeda, where he died; it is a prominent pilgrimage site for Jains.

More important for the development of Jainism was Vardhamana (c. 599–c. 527 B.C.E.), later known as MAHAVIRA, the last of the 24 Tirthankaras. Mahavira lived most of his life without clothes, the most visible symbol of the renounced life. After some 12 years as an ascetic, he managed to overcome worldly passions and become the Victor. Jains describe his state of mind as *kevalajnana*, or perfect perception, knowledge, power, and bliss. He lived another 30 years traveling around India and attracting people to his life. A large lay community emerged to supplement the small monastic community created three centuries before by Parshvanatha. Mahavira reorganized



Jain temple in Palitana, Gujarat, a complex of white marble (Gustap Irani)

the Jain movement with followers assuming one of four roles: monks (*sadhu*), nuns (*sadhvi*), laymen (*shravak*), and laywomen (*shravika*).

Mahavira articulated the primary principles by which Jains live: nonviolence (*AHIMSA*), or the refusal to cause harm to any living things; truthfulness (*satya*), or the speaking only of harmless truth; nonstealing (*asteya*), not to take anything not properly given; chastity (*brahmacharya*), or refusal to indulge in sensual pleasures; nonpossession (*aparigraha*), or detachment from people, places, and material things. Monks took these as their law of life, while laypeople simply adopted a less austere existence. Several hundred years after Mahavira, the oral tradition that had until then guided the Jain community began to be written.

According to Jain tradition, Mahavira had 11 chief followers, or *ganadharas*. All these disciples are said to have achieved omniscience after 12 years of mendicancy. The last of the 11 to reach omniscience were Indrabhuti Gautama and Sudharman, who were left to lead the fledgling Jain community. It is they who probably created the various rescensions of the extant Jain canon; they also figure prominently as the chief questioners of Mahavira in the canonical dialogues.

Around 300 B.C.E, Jainism split into two basic communities, the SHVETAMBARAS (clothed) and the DIGAMBARAS (unclothed). Each subsequently divided into a number of sectarian bodies. The movement took a great leap forward in the 12th century C.E. when the ruler of Gujarat was converted and

turned his realm into a Jain state. In the next century, Muslim expansion in India stopped further Jain growth, but Gujarat remains the home to the largest Jain community worldwide.

JAIN BELIEFS

Jains picture a three-story universe with humans residing in the middle level. The earthly realm is the realm of human action. Humans should be seeking the state of MOKSHA (liberation), pictured spatially as the top of the universe; there they can remain in a state of eternal bliss and peace. However, the average person goes to the lower realm at the end of earthly existence, to be punished for his or her misdeeds.

Each being has a *jiva*, or soul: humans, animals, and even some plants. This soul accumulates KARMA as dust clings to an object. Karma is considered a physical reality and can be removed only by the most concerted right conduct, which must eventually include strict asceticism. Only then can the karmic matter be scraped off the soul so that the soul may go to the top of the universe and exist in eternal effulgence forever. The three “jewels,” main tenets of Jainism, are right knowledge (*samyagjnana*), right action (*samyakcaritra*), and right view (*samyagdarshana*).

One important concept for Jains is *bhavyatva*—a special quality that most souls possess that makes it possible to reach salvation through a permanent escape from the bonds of KARMA and rebirth. *Bhavyatva* is viewed as something of an inert possibility, which may or may not be triggered by the karma of the person who possesses it. The Jains, unlike most Hindus, accept the idea that some souls will never escape the round of birth and rebirth; they may lack *bhavyatva*, or they may lack the ability to activate it.

Today, a person wishing to adhere to the Jain community must profess belief in the teachings of the *jinās* and simultaneously renounce his or her attachment to any other religion. The convert then vows (1) not intentionally to take life (*ahimsa*); (2) not to lie or exaggerate (*satya*);

(3) not to steal (*achaurya*); (4) to refrain from marital unfaithfulness and unchaste thoughts (*brahmacharya*); (5) to limit accumulation of possessions and give away extras (*aparigraha*); (6) to put bounds on oneself so as to decrease the possibility of committing transgressions (*dik*); (7) to limit the number of both consumable and nonconsumable items in one’s possession (*bhoga-upbhoga*); (8) to avoid unnecessary evil (*anartha-danda*); (9) to observe periods of MEDITATION (*samayik*); (10) to observe periods of self-imposed limitations (*desavakasika*); (11) to live periodically as an ascetic/monk (*pausadha*); and (12) to support the monastic community (*atithi samvibhaga*).

The vows imply that Jains will be vegetarians (most do not even consume eggs) and will refrain from vocations that include the taking of life. The more strictly observant would not, for example, take up farming, which might lead to killing of living creatures (worms, insects, etc). Jains prefer business and various intellectual activities. The monastic life is most preferred.

Jains see themselves as following a path to SELF-REALIZATION. Steps along the path include the gaining of right perceptions (*mati*), clear scriptural knowledge (*sruta*), supernatural knowledge (*avadhi*), clear knowledge of the thought of others (*manahpariyaya*), and omniscience (*kevala*). Those few who attain *kevala* are considered to be perfected ones (*siddhas*). The path generally takes many lifetimes. Ultimately, the fully realized soul moves to the top of the universe to reside forever in a karma-free condition.

The many Jain temples are sites of worship and veneration of the *jinās*, which assist on the road of SELF-REALIZATION. These may be identified with the Jain symbol, a swastika above which are three dots and a half Moon. The symbol predates the German Nazi swastika by many centuries and bears no relation to it. Inside the temples one generally finds statues of one or more of the Jain saints, who in Digambara temples are usually pictured in the nude.

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE JAIN COMMUNITY

The major division in the Jain community arose in the fifth century B.C.E. and became formalized around 300 B.C.E., when the Jain scripture was written. The division between monks who wore clothes and those who did not eventually resulted in the separation of the Digambaras from the Svetambaras.

The Digambaras teach that nudity is integral to the teachings of Mahavira; they believe that monks should be devoid of any possessions, including clothes, and should not want to protect their bodies from the elements. They depict Mahavira in complete nudity, without any ornamentation, with downcast eyes. They also teach that Mahavira never married and was celibate throughout his earthly existence.

Digambaras also teach that the words of Mahavira, reputedly contained in the 11 ANGAS of the Jain canon, were lost forever at the end of the fourth century B.C.E. That loss, they believe, caused the Jains to write the rest of their scriptures. They refuse to accept the 11 *angas* that are considered canonical by the Svetambaras, which now form part of the 41 *sutras*. Finally, the Digambaras do not allow women to join the order of the renounced life, as women are not believed to be qualified for the austerity demanded of renouncers.

In contrast, the Svetambaras teach that some of the original Tirthankaras lived as clothed persons. They emphasize that Parshvanath, the saint immediately prior to Mahavira, wore white robes. Mahavira, they note, did not become an ascetic until his parents died and he fulfilled his necessary family duties. The Svetambara believe that the words of Mahavira were not lost and may be found in the 11 surviving Angas of the Jain canon. They also believe that women can attain sainthood, noting that at least one of the Tirthankaras, Malli, was a female.

Today the Digambaras are found mostly in the southern part of India, especially in Mysore state,

while the Svetambaras are primarily to be found in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Meanwhile, the modern Indian government has made various attempts to limit public nudity by the Digambara monks.

CONTEMPORARY JAIN COMMUNITIES

Today, in India, most Jains are found in business and trade. Unlike SIKHS and BUDDHISTS, they have not attempted to distinguish themselves from Hindus, and the two communities have a working relationship.

The austere Jain lifestyle tended to slow the spread of the community beyond India. Besides, many taught that travel by monks by any means other than foot was immoral. One of the earliest appearances of a Jain outside India occurred in 1893, when Virchand Gandhi made a presentation at the WORLD PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS in Chicago. A few other individuals, such as Champat Rai Jain, who traveled to England in the 1930s, appeared in the West through the early 20th century, but real communities did not emerge until the 1950s, when migration to England began. By the end of the century there were some 30,000 Jains in the United Kingdom, most from Gujarat, who organized the Federation of Jain Organizations in the United Kingdom.

Migration to North America followed in the 1970s, and now centers can be found throughout the eastern half of the United States plus Texas and California. These joined with Canadian centers in the Federation of Jain Associations in North America. Several Jain teachers in the United States founded organizations that attempt to spread Jain teaching among non-Indians: the International Mahavir Jain Mission is centered in New Jersey and the JAIN MEDITATION INTERNATIONAL CENTER with several branches in the United States and Canada. Jains may also be found in Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan.

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Jain Meditation International Center

See [JAINISM](#)

Janakananda, Swami Rajasi

See [SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP](#).

japa See [MANTRA](#).

Jayadeva (late 12th–early 13th centuries)

Sanskrit poet

As with most poets, scholars, and saints in the Indian tradition, very little is verifiably known about the life of Jayadeva, the prolific Sanskrit writer best known for the devotional work *GITAGOVINDA*. All that we know is gleaned from hints in the author's poetry, hints that often are subject to several interpretations. Some say that he was born in Kenduli village on the Ajaya River in the Birbhum District of West Bengal. Others say his birthplace was Kenduli village on the Praci River in the Puri District of Orissa. Other claims are made for the same village in Bihar and Maharashtra. It is evident that the poet was a Vaishnavite. Jayadeva's patron while he composed the *Gitagovinda* was King Lakshmanasena of Bengal (1179–1209 C.E.).

Jayadeva, as did many poets before him, became a saint for Vaishnavites. In the 17th century Nabhadhas wrote a Hindi text called *Bhaktamala*, which retold the lives and miracles of many poet-saints, including Jayadeva. The stories are meant to inspire worship of VISHNU, while showing that the poet-saints, as ideal devotees, were

themselves worthy of worship. In fact, they refer to the poet-saints as AVATARS of Vishnu, in the looser sense of the term—they are incarnations of the god for the purpose of showing all people the way to devotion.

The following is a selection from the hagiography:

1. When Jayadeva was still a child, his parents had to surrender their house to a neighbor. One day it caught fire; as soon as the boy ran inside, the fire extinguished itself.
2. It is said that Jayadeva was left as an orphan as a child. He lived in rags and survived on water alone, but he sang the praises of God wherever he went. He was said to be so ascetic that he preferred not to write poetry, but instead to perfect his soul. It is said that he did not even carry writing implements, which he felt were luxuries. He would not even sleep under the same tree two nights in a row, lest he become too attached to earthly delights and fail to think of God.
3. In order to lure him away from asceticism and to get him to write the *Gitagovinda*, God arranged for Jayadeva to marry a wife, Padmavati. She taught him human love, so that he could write about the divine love of Radha and KRISHNA.
4. Once in devotion to Krishna Jayadeva made a pilgrimage to Puri. On the way he fell down, fainting from thirst. It is said that Krishna in the form of a cowherd rescued him, gave him water and milk, and fanned him. It is said that Jayadeva composed his poem, the *Gitagovinda*, after having a direct vision of Krishna playing his flute.
5. Once Jayadeva went to the home of a merchant to be his GURU or teacher. On the way home he was accosted by two

thieves. Jayadeva told them to take what they wanted. They did so and then cut off his hands and feet and threw him into a pit. Jayadeva went into a trance, worshipping God and thinking of the irrelevance of the body. The king happened to pass by as the mutilated Jayadeva was singing the songs of the *Gita Govinda* from the pit. When the king got him out of the pit and asked how he had come to have his hands and feet amputated, Jayadeva said that he had been born that way. The king asked to become Jayadeva's disciple then began making obeisance to every devotee, giving service and alms to every SADHU or holy man. The thieves who had robbed Jayadeva heard of the king's generosity and went to him. Jayadeva asked the king to take special care of them. The thieves, fearing a stratagem, told the king that Jayadeva had lost his hands and feet in another court because of the evils he had committed there. Krishna could not bear hearing this calumny against Jayadeva and the earth opened up and swallowed the thieves before everyone's eyes.

Further reading: Lee Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in the Indian Traditions as Exemplified in the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978).

Jaya Sati Bhagavati, Ma (1940–)

American guru

Joyce Green was born on May 26, 1940, the youngest of four children in a working-class Jewish family in Coney Island, Brooklyn, New York. Her father, Harry Green, ran a stand selling hot corn, and her mother was a legal secretary. The family was often impoverished and the mother died when Joyce was 13 years old. Joyce attended Lincoln High School

but did not graduate. At age 15, she married Salvatore DeFiore, an Italian Catholic businessman. She became a housewife and mother of three children.

In 1972, Joyce learned a yogic breath discipline in a YOGA class and practiced the breath for seven days consistently. As a result, she was awakened to spirituality by a vision of Jesus Christ, who told her, "Teach all ways, for all ways are mine." She was visited by Swami NITYANANDA of Ganeshpuri, not in physical form, who became a teacher to her. In 1973 her guru NEEM KAROLI BABA appeared to her, also not in physical form, and gave her teachings. As she deepened her appreciation of the teachings of these two Hindu masters, a group of students began to grow around her and she became known as Ma, or mother.

In 1976 she founded Kashi Ashram in Sebastian, Florida, where she continues to teach in the Shaivite (see [SHAIVISM](#)) lineage of Swami Nityananda. The ashram is a residential community with members living on the campus and nearby. In addition to interfaith services, the ashram



Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati (b. 1940), American guru and founder of Kashi Ashram in Sebastian, Florida (*Kashi Church, Sebastian, Florida*)

provides a school for its own children as well as children from the larger community. First drawn to Hinduism by the inclusiveness of its tenets, Ma has incorporated many Hindu practices in an interfaith setting at Kashi Ashram. Temples devoted to GANESHA, HANUMAN, SHIVA, DURGA, KALI, LAKSHMI, SARASWATI, KRISHNA, the DASHA MAHAVIDYAS, and Ma's teachers are on the grounds of Kashi. Spiritual practices include MEDITATION, KALI YUGA, KIRTAN, and DARSHAN from Ma, and celebration of Hindu holy days. Kashi community also includes temples and shrines devoted to Judaism, SIKHISM, Christianity, and Buddhism.

In 1990, Ma founded the River Fund, Kashi's service organization, and inspired the founding of Mary's House, a home for children who have acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In 1994, she founded the River House, a respite for those with AIDS and other life-challenging illnesses. She and her students work with individuals who suffer from AIDS, homelessness, and abuse and those near death. She has become an advocate for those who have human immunodeficiency virus/AIDS (HIV/AIDS), for gay rights, and for the rights of women and minorities. Through the River Fund, which she founded in 1990, she and her students engage in service to communities around the world.

In 1996, Ma founded the Dattatreya Kali Saraswati Order of monks and SANNYASIS (renunciants). She has developed the teaching of Kali Yoga, a system of ASANAS (postures) drawn from ancient roots and adapted for modern times, as well as spiritual teachings in the traditions of KUNDALINI and tantric yoga (see TANTRISM). Kali Yoga emphasizes the divine feminine and selfless service to humanity.

Ma teaches internationally and regularly gives *satsang* group teaching in Florida, California, and New York. Her interest in joining people of diverse faiths led to her nomination as a trustee in the Governing Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions. She has worked with Tenzin Chogyal, brother of the Dalai Lama, to establish World Tibet

Day to honor the culture of Tibet and to raise awareness of the plight of the Tibetan people.

Ma has taken an active role in the interfaith movement and is a delegate to the United Religions Initiative. She serves on the advisory boards of the Institute of Religion and Public Policy and Equal Partners in Faith.

Also an artist, Ma Jaya has created works illuminating Hindu themes that have been shown in numerous galleries and museums. In 2004 Ma Jaya was honored by inclusion in the International Hall of Honor at Morehouse College, and she received the Inter-Parliamentary Paradigm of Peace Award, ratified by 26 governments around the world.

Further reading: Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati, "Kali Who Swallows the Universe," *Parabola*, Summer 1998, pp. 18–21; ———, "There Are No Throwaway People: The Journey from Brooklyn to God." *One Heart Magazine*, November 2000, pp. 32–35; ———, "Teach All Ways for All Ways Are Mine," *Journal of the Communal Studies Association* (2002); ———, "How the AIDS Pandemic Changed My Life" in *Awakening the Spirit, Inspiring the Soul* (Sebastian, Fla.: Skylight Paths, 2004); Andrew Cohen, "Compassion in Action." *What Is Enlightenment?* Spring/Summer 2001, pp. 66–67; Lavina Melwani, "The Selfless Life of Serving Siva in All: Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati, AIDS Angel of Kashi." *Hinduism Today*, February 1999, pp. 37–38; Regina Sara Ryan, *The Woman Awake: Feminine Wisdom for Spiritual Life* (Prescott, Ariz.: Hohm Press, 1998), 192–202; Wayne Teasdale, *The Mystic Heart* (Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 2001).

jewels of Jainism, three See JAINISM.

jiva See JAINISM; VEDANTA.

jivanmukta

A *jivanmukta* (living liberated one) is a person who has succeeded in escaping from the cycle of