

# Path to Siva

## A Catechism for Youth

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami



A richly illustrated catechism of Saiva Siddhanta for youth, drawn from the Master Course Trilogy, exploring how to live life, know the Divine, honor all creation and see God everywhere, in everyone.

In sixty-eight illustrated lessons, this book conveys the basics of a 3,000-page Master Course Trilogy created by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (Gurudeva, 1927-2001), a legacy of profound, approachable teachings in three realms: philosophical, cultural and mystical. *Path to Siva* is a Mini-Master Course created by Gurudeva's successor to inspire youth to know and follow that venerable way of wisdom embodied in the Saiva Siddhanta traditions of South India and Sri Lanka. It covers the following and more:

- **Self-Identity:** Who am I? How can we see God? What are the three worlds? Being a strong Saivite
- **Philosophy:** God Siva; Saiva Siddhanta; Our immortal soul; Death & reincarnation; Dharma & karma
- **Personal Life:** A happy home; Virtue; Sin & evil; Religious tolerance; Hospitality; Harmony with others
- **Practice:** Yoga, meditation; Appreciating the temple; Home puja; Pilgrimage; Caring for the environment



(left) Four children, eager students of Saiva Siddhanta pose with a bronze murti of God in the form of Nataraja, whose divine dance depicts Siva's five activities—creation, preservation, dissolution, veiling and revealing—a dynamic rhythm that takes place within every atom of the universe. (front cover) In his later years, Satguru Yogaswami walks the path in his sacred land of Sri Lanka on the way to Nallur Temple, a favorite place of pilgrimage for him throughout life. Lord Siva, looking on from the inner worlds, blesses this great knower of truth. Nallur was the home of Swami's guru, the place of his first spiritual realization, the ground of his early tapas and the spiritual theater where he met with disciples.

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Yoga/Metaphysics/Religion/Youth



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*In Gurudeva's 1975 vision, Lord Siva was seen walking in white robes in the meadow near the Wailua River on the island of Kauai, blessing devotees.*



Pilgrims walk through the magnificent corridors of the ancient Ramanathaswamy Siva Temple in Rameswaram, India

# Path to Siva

## A Catechism for Youth

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami  
Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii



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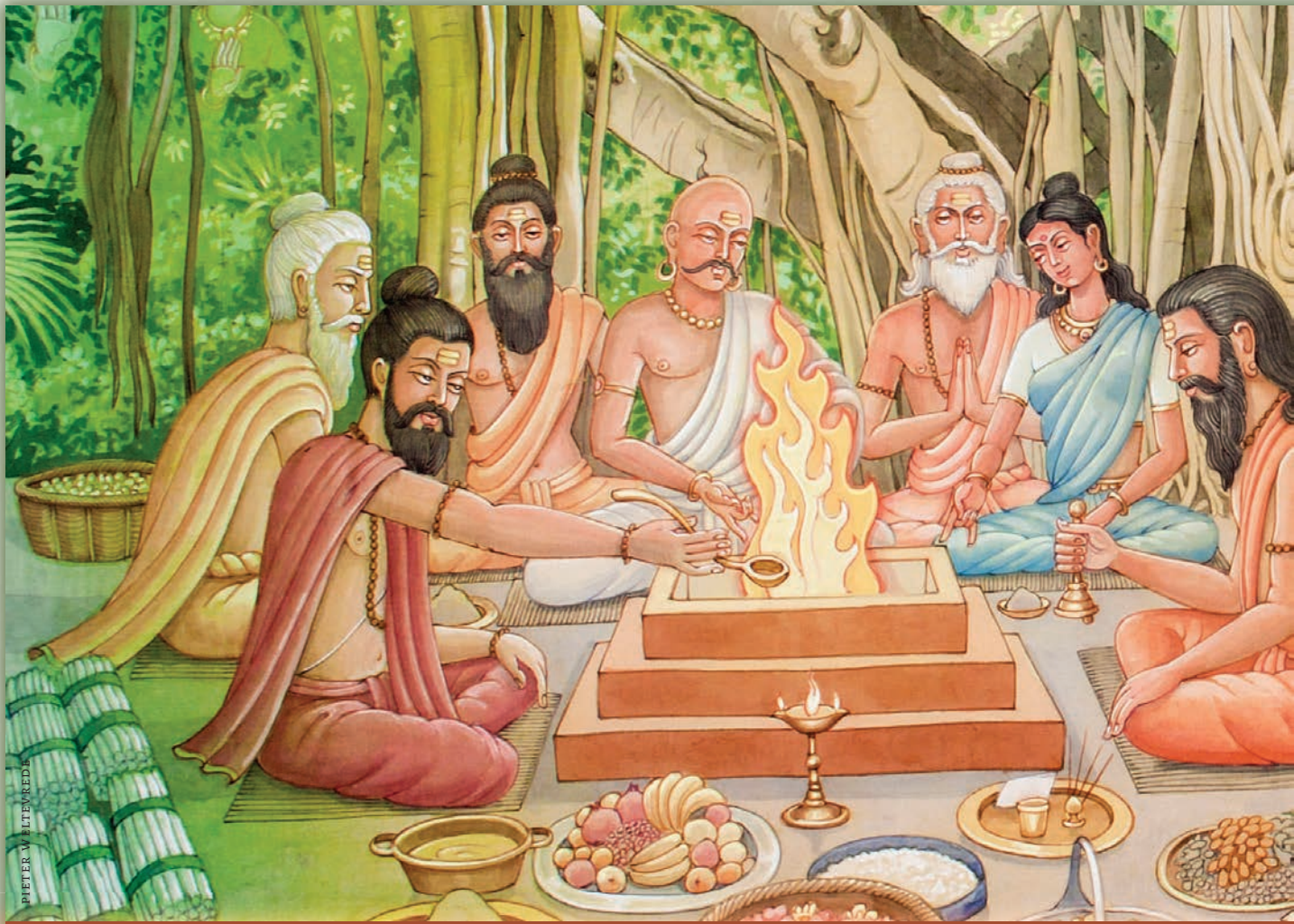
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# **Path to Siva**

## **A Catechism for Youth**

By Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami  
Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii



## Introduction

**W**elcome to *Path to Siva, a Catechism for Youth*. We hope you enjoy this colorful book. It is based on *Dancing, Living and Merging with Siva*, the Master Course Trilogy created by my Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniaswami. *Path to Siva* presents all of the important teachings of our Saiva religion, Shuddha Saiva Siddhanta. It is written with youth in mind, but is also ideal for anyone who wants a condensed version of the Master Course. Note that we have reluctantly adopted the English-language style of using masculine pronouns, such as He and His, when referring to God and the Gods, even though they are beyond gender. Other options, for now, are awkward.

**For Youth:** The sixty-eight lessons in this book cover the most important things a Saivite Hindu needs to know. Each lesson is short—just one or two pages—but packed with information. Here you can find answers to questions about God Siva, Lord Ganesha, Lord Murugan and the devas—how they can help us in our lives, and how to contact them through temple worship and home puja. You will find clear explanations of karma, dharma and reincarnation, and how to use japa, meditation and affirmations to make your life better. You will learn the best ways to live in order to achieve your most important goals. The lessons include insights on home life, getting along with others, religious tolerance, vegetarianism and caring for the environment. They cover difficult philosophical areas, like death and dying, reincarnation, sin and evil. Absorbing these short essays will provide a clear understanding of our practices, beliefs and philosophy and give you a deep comprehension of life that few people have.

**For Teachers:** This book is intended for youth age 10 and older. As the teacher, you should be sure your students understand all the words of the lesson text. This will make the meaning much clearer in their minds. Encourage them to ask questions.



“The Natha Sampradaya has revealed the search for the innermost divine Self, balanced by temple worship, fueled by kundalini yoga, charted by monistic theism, illumined by a potent guru-shishya system, guided by soul-stirring scriptures and awakened by sadhana and tapas.” **Gurudeva**

**For Parents:** This may be the most important study your child undertakes. It is the study of Saivism, the oldest form of Hinduism, and more specifically of Saiva Siddhanta. Some parents feel that the study of religion is not important, that their children should focus solely on academic studies. A wiser approach is to include both. The study of Saivite Hinduism as presented here explains many practices that will help your child excel in his or her academic studies. It also creates a more balanced life for children, a happier and less stressful childhood and more mature relationships. Take an interest in your child’s study of *Path to Siva* by reading all the lessons. Consider this catechism the education of your child’s soul and conscience, a spiritual training that will prepare him or her to understand our religion, practice it with knowledge and be able to use its wisdom and insights in facing the challenges of life. Encourage your child; help your child with the lessons and you may find answers to questions of your own in the process.

*Bodhinathaneylanswami*

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami  
163rd Jagadacharya of the Nandinatha Sampradaya’s Kailasa Parampara  
Guru Mahasannidhanam  
Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii, USA





SHUTTERSTOCK

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## T Who Am I and Where Did I Come From?

Seekers ask: "Who am I and where did I come from?" They inwardly know they are more than just another person with a particular name who was born in a certain place. They sense that they are more than their body, mind and emotions. They want to understand, "Did I exist before I was born? Will I exist after death?" The answer given in Saivite Hinduism is that we are each a divine soul on a wondrous journey. We are an immortal body of light that has lived many lives, had many bodies and personalities. Gurudeva explained, "When the soul has had enough experience, it naturally seeks to be liberated, to unravel the bonds. That begins the most wonderful process in the world as the seeker steps for the first time onto the spiritual path. Of course, the whole time, through all those births and lives and deaths, the soul was undergoing a spiritual evolution, but unconsciously. Now it seeks to know God consciously." Our soul was created by God Siva out of Himself, like sparks flying forth from a fire. Like the sparks and the fire, we are both the same and different from Siva, our source. We live within His

boundless creation, this unthinkably vast cosmos which is filled with His divine presence. Siva is the life energy in the birds, in the fish and in the animals. His being flows through all we see and experience. Our Vedic rishis have assured us that "God is the Life of our life." We are all beautiful children of God Siva. Deep within, we are one with Him this very moment. We came from God, live in God and are evolving into complete unity with God. Siva created each of us in a perfect state, but we have to discover that perfection within us to be whole. By seeing the life energy in all creatures and in all people, we are seeing God Siva in action. By drawing close to God, we draw nearer to our immortal soul. Siva is all and within all.

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



A YOUNG WOMAN REFLECTS ON ONE OF LIFE'S MOST PROFOUND

QUESTIONS. THE ANSWER MAY TAKE HER AN ENTIRE LIFETIME TO FIND, BUT THAT ANSWER IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DISCOVERY SHE OR ANY OF US WILL EVER MAKE.

ERRITORY AND STOPS TO REST AND GET HIS BEARINGS, TO DECIDE WHICH FORK TO TAKE. TH

A CYCLIST HAS PEDDLED INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE BEYOND HIS KNOWN T

E AUM ON HIS COMPASS INDICATES THAT DHARMA IS THE WAY FORWARD.



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## 2 Where Am I Going? What Is My Path?

Life has a purpose. We have taken this birth in a physical body to mature into our divine potential. This life is one more chapter in a maturing process that has been occurring over many past lives. All souls are on this same journey. The deepest part of our soul, our essence, is and has always been one with Siva, but our soul body is still maturing. We are like a tiny acorn growing into a mighty oak tree. We grow by learning to control our mind, body and emotions. The stronger we get, the more we sense our Sivaness. At first we learn from our suffering to avoid more suffering. We turn fear into fearlessness, anger into love and conflict into peace. We then learn to serve. Selfless service is the beginning of spiritual striving. Through our selfless service, we come into deep understanding and love of God. We can then see that the world we live in, the people we relate to and we ourselves are none other than

Siva. Finally, we learn to meditate deeply, to quiet the mind, find peace and silence within ourselves, and watch ourselves going through all our experiences like watching an actor in a movie—knowing that our true identity is the soul, the watcher. That practice brings us to the realization of God within us. At the end of this evolutionary journey, we are fully one with God—no difference remains. We call this ancient path of spiritual striving San Marga, the “True Path.” It is a path of service, worship, yoga and wisdom. Just as a train reaches its destination by following the tracks, we reach our innate perfection and freedom from rebirth by following the San Marga.

---

**GURUDEVA:** We are the undying consciousness and energy flowing through all things. Deep inside we are perfect this very moment, and we have only to discover and live up to this perfection to be whole.



### 3

## What Is the Ultimate Goal of Life?

**K**nowing God is life's highest goal, reached by mature souls following a spiritual path. Just as only the most highly disciplined climbers reach the summit of Mount Everest each year, only a few mature souls reach life's highest peak in this life. That is because souls were not created all at once. There are old souls and young souls. Older souls have matured over many lifetimes. They have enjoyed life's pleasures, suffered all the many sorrows and faced countless challenges. This process has made them strong, like the mountaineers, and ready for the final ascent, ready to become one with God Siva. As we mature, we become kind, generous, understanding and truthful. Anger, fear and jealousy no longer control us as they once did. We become wise and loving. Reaching this maturity moves us toward life's true purpose. Eventually we no longer need the experiences of Earth, so we do not need to be reborn. Instead, we continue to evolve and serve humanity in the heavenly worlds in our subtle body. This graduation from the cycle of reincarnation is called moksha, which means freedom, release or liberation. But before we attain moksha, we must

experience the highest goal of raja yoga—the realization of the Self, God. After Self Realization, you no longer see yourself as just someone from some place. Instead, when you look inward, you see Siva. When you look at other people, you see Siva. All souls will achieve moksha, but only a few will do so in this lifetime. Hindus know this and do not think that this life is the last. While seeking to perfect themselves through service, worship and yoga, they know there is also much progress to be made in fulfilling life's other three goals: righteousness, wealth and enjoyment. Even moksha is not the end of our path. After liberation from rebirth, the soul body continues to evolve in the inner worlds until it fully merges with God. Jiva (the soul) becomes Siva, a union called *vishvagrasi*. Being on an ancient path followed by countless souls gives the serene feeling that everything is all right as it is, that everything is perfect.

~~~~~  
**GURUDEVA:** Each soul discovers its Sivaness, Absolute Reality, Parasiva—the timeless, formless, spaceless Self God.

# 4

## What Is a Religion?

A religion is a system of belief about God, soul and world. Throughout history, seekers around the world have tried to understand the nature of things. They struggled to unravel the mysteries of the mind, of ultimate reality and the purpose of life. They puzzled about the cause of suffering and the way to relieve it. They analyzed good and evil, virtue and vice. These quests for truth have produced various systems of thought. Those based on a belief in God or a holy presence are called religions or faiths. Today there are about a dozen major religions in the world and hundreds of smaller ones. Of Earth's 7.4 billion people, six billion are followers of a religion. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Chinese folk religion and Buddhism are the five largest. Many traditional cultures have ancient faiths. Most religions have sacred texts, called scriptures. Hinduism's primary scriptures are the *Vedas*. Buddhists have the *Dhammapada*, Christians look to the *Bible* and Muslims have the *Koran*. Scriptures, and the teachings of saints through history, define how life should be lived and what happens when we die. Each faith

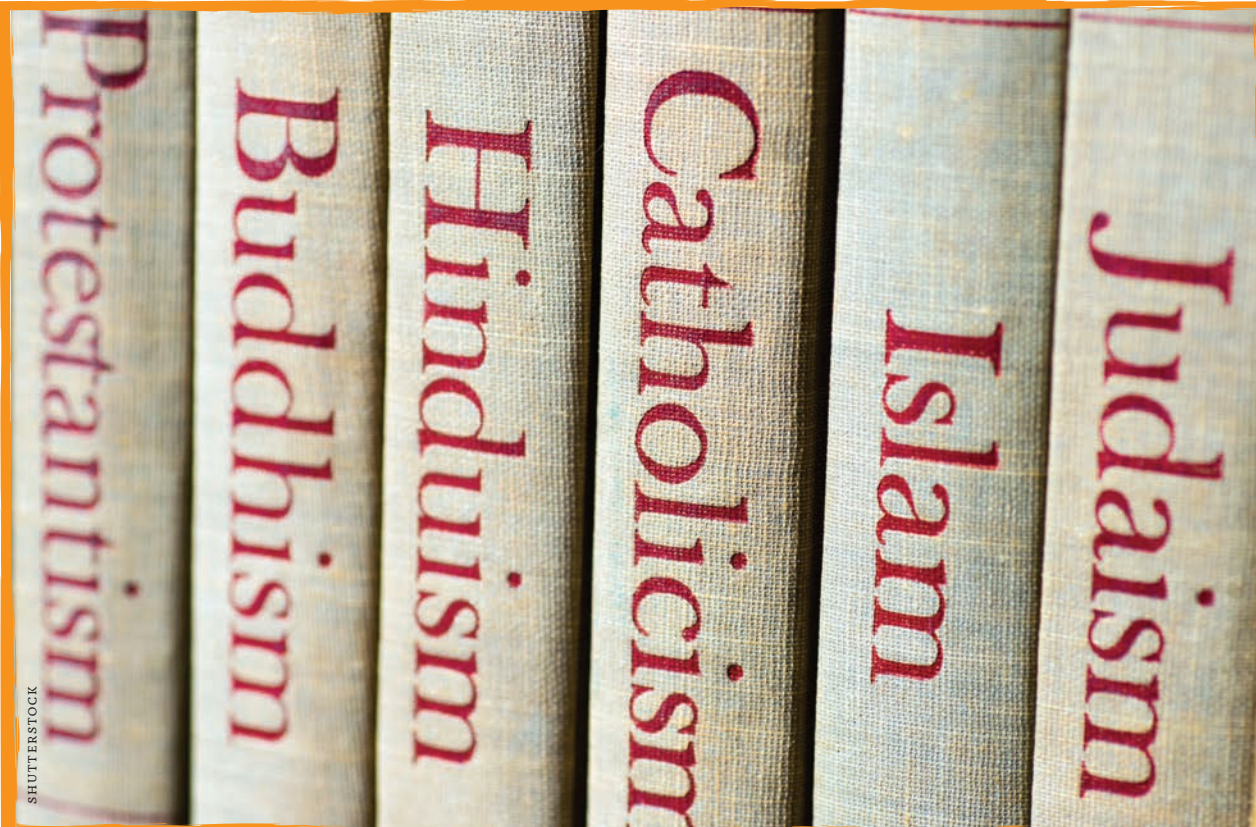
has its places of worship, priesthood and holy rites. Religions are not all the same. Their beliefs and practices differ, often greatly. Of Earth's major religions, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism are Eastern. Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam are Western. There is a vast difference between Eastern and Western religions, with Eastern goals being unitive and introspective and Western goals being dualistic, extroverted. Eastern faiths tend to see God in all things, and everything as sacred. Western faiths tend not to believe that God pervades everything, and make a strong distinction between what is sacred and what is profane. While Eastern faiths hold to karma, reincarnation and liberation, the Western postulate a single life for the soul, followed by reward or punishment.

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**GURUDEVA:** Religion is the connection between the three worlds, and temple worship is how you can get your personal connection with the inner worlds.

WITH A VOLUME DEDICATED TO EACH MAJOR RELIGION, EXPLORING ANY OF THEM WILL REVEAL

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION SITS ON THE BOOKSHELF, WITH



GREAT COMPLEXITY CONCEALED BENEATH THE SIMPLE TITLE.

# 5

## What Is Hinduism?

**H**induism is the ancient religion of India, practiced today by one billion people all over the world. With no founder and stretching back unknown thousands of years in India's earliest known civilizations, Hinduism is called Sanatana Dharma, the "eternal faith." It is based on the *Vedas* and other scriptures. Four beliefs are most central. First is belief in one Supreme God who created the universe, and who abides everywhere within it. He/She is all and in all. Second is belief in the law of karma, the principle of cause and effect, action and reaction. Third is belief that the cosmos is governed by the principle of dharma, which is divine order, righteousness and duty. Fourth, Hindus believe in reincarnation, the natural process of birth, death and rebirth. While these four convictions are essential, in Hinduism belief alone is not enough to propel us forward on the path. Our actions and behavior are the keys to spiritual progress. Hindus seek to experience God and their inner self through temple worship, meditation, yoga, pilgrimage and devotional singing. They enjoy a rich family life and ageless

traditions of culture. They honor gurus, saints and sages. They worship many Gods, who are grand helpers to the Supreme Being. The three pillars of Sanatana Dharma are its scriptures, temples and gurus. Today Hinduism is like a great banyan tree, whose limbs represent the many variations of this ancient faith. The four main branches, or denominations, are Saivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Smartism. Each has a multitude of guru lineages, religious leaders, priesthoods, sacred literature, monastic communities, schools, pilgrimage centers and tens of thousands of temples. Since Hinduism has no one central authority, these are like four independent religions sharing a vast common heritage of history, culture and belief.

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**GURUDEVA:** Hinduism is a mystical religion, leading devotees to personally experience its eternal truths within themselves, finally reaching the pinnacle of consciousness where man and God are forever one.

THE GIANT GOLD-PLATED CHARIOT AS IT CIRCLES THE FAMED NALLUR TEMPLE IN JAFFNA, SRI

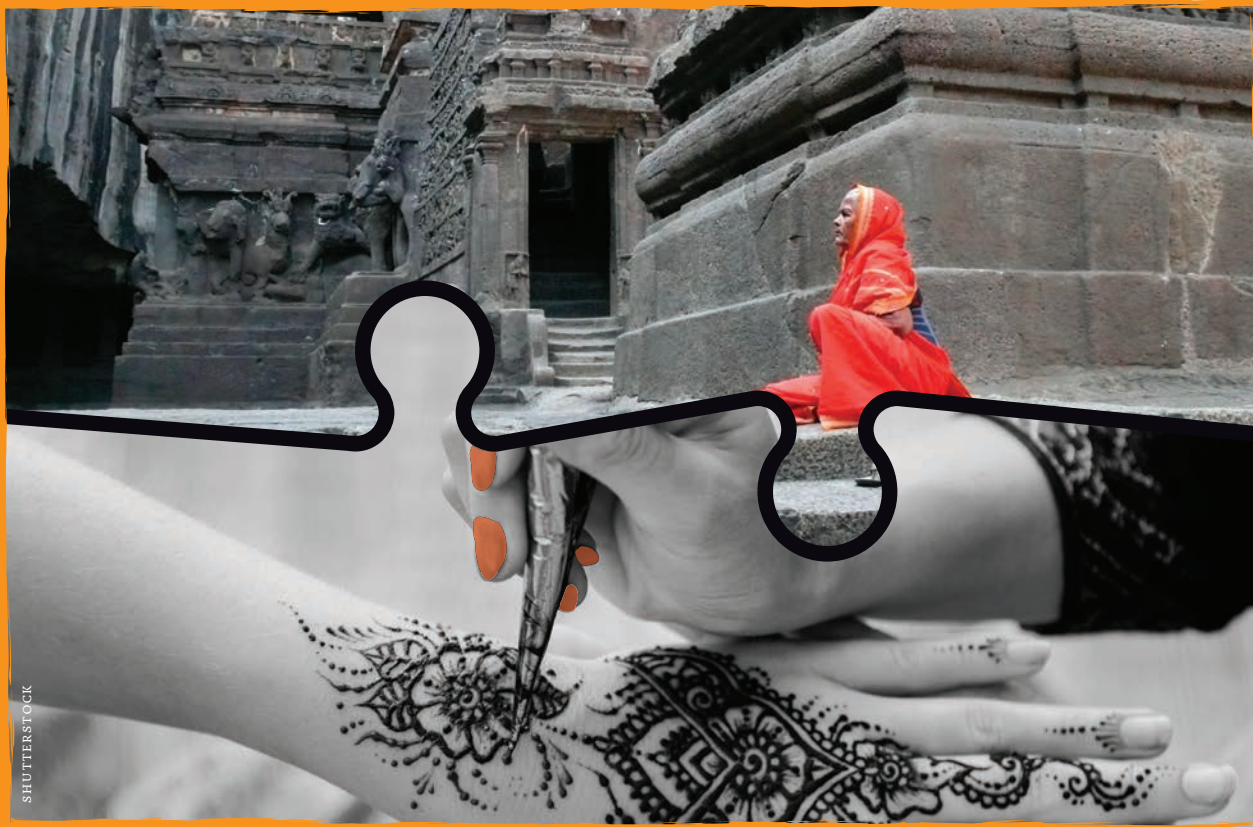
HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF MURUGA BHAKTARS CROWD AROUND



LANKA. SUCH FESTIVALS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF HINDUISM.

D NAILS PAINTS A FRIEND'S HAND. AS ANY PUZZLE'S SOLUTION REQUIRES ALL ITS PIECES, SO

A WOMAN IN RED WORSHIPS ALONE, WHILE ANOTHER WITH RE



THE FULLNESS OF HINDUISM INCLUDES RELIGION & CULTURE.

## 6 Is Hinduism a Religion or a Way of Life?

**H**induism is a religion, and it is a way of life. Both ideas are true. It is a highly spiritual way of life, which is the perfect definition of religion! The word *religion* means a particular system of faith and worship. It comes from *religionem*, a Latin word meaning "respect for what is sacred, reverence for the Gods." In that sense, Hinduism is overqualified for the term. Unlike most religions, it does not divide life into secular and spiritual opposites. To devout Hindus, all of life is spiritual; all of our daily activities are part of our religious practice. *Religion* is a powerful word in today's world, one that we should freely use in describing India's ancient faith. A related issue is the use of the term *Hinduism*. This is the broad name by which Sanatana Dharma is known and honored in the world. For centuries Hinduism was misunderstood by the West and wrongly disparaged. But that has changed. Entering the 21st century, Hinduism is recognized as the most compassionate, mystical and enlightened faith on the planet. Its messages of peace, non-injury and openmindedness are urgently needed

in this time of strife and bigotry. These values are being appreciated, as are Hinduism's sciences of yoga, vastu, jyotisha and ayurveda. If we discard the name *Hinduism* or call it "just a way of life," we remove it from the grand, esteemed position that it holds and deserves as a major world religion. We should not do that. United together under the Hindu banner, our family of faiths enjoys the many protections given to all religions, and we have a respected, unified voice to the media, government, boards of education and planning departments. Hindus themselves are becoming more confident about their faith, proud to declare, "I am a Hindu." In universities the world over, Hindu youth stand proudly side by side with students of other religions. That can't happen if we avoid the name *Hinduism*. And it can't happen if we give up the word *religion*.

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**GURUDEVA:** Dharma means merit, morality, good conduct, religious duty and the way of life of the wise person.



HINDUISM'S FOUR MAIN DENOMINATIONS. DIFFERENT, BUT ALIKE IN MANY WAYS, THEY WORK TOGETHER FOR DHARMA: SAIVISM, VAISHNAVISM, SHAKTISM AND SMARTISM.

FOUR HANDS ARE LOCKED IN MUTUAL SUPPORT. THEY REPRESENT HINDUISM'S FOUR MAIN DENOMINATIONS. DIFFERENT, BUT ALIKE IN MANY WAYS, THEY WORK TOGETHER FOR DHARMA: SAIVISM, VAISHNAVISM, SHAKTISM AND SMARTISM.



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## 7 What Are the Main Hindu Denominations?

**H**induism's primary denominations are Saivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Smartism. For two centuries Western scholars have struggled to understand India's faith. They found it so vast and varied in its beliefs, practices and ways of worship that they could not comprehend or describe it. What they didn't realize is that India's Sanatana Dharma, or eternal faith, is a family of religions with four principal denominations. For example, seeing so many Deities, scholars wrote incorrectly that Hindus have no Supreme God. In fact, Hindus all worship a one Supreme Being, though by different names. For Vaishnavites, Lord Vishnu is God. For Saivites, God is Siva. For Shaktas, Goddess Shakti is supreme. For Smartas, who are the most liberal Hindus, the choice of Deity is left to the devotee. These strains arose in different geographical and linguistic regions. Each has its own beliefs, scriptures, religious leaders and

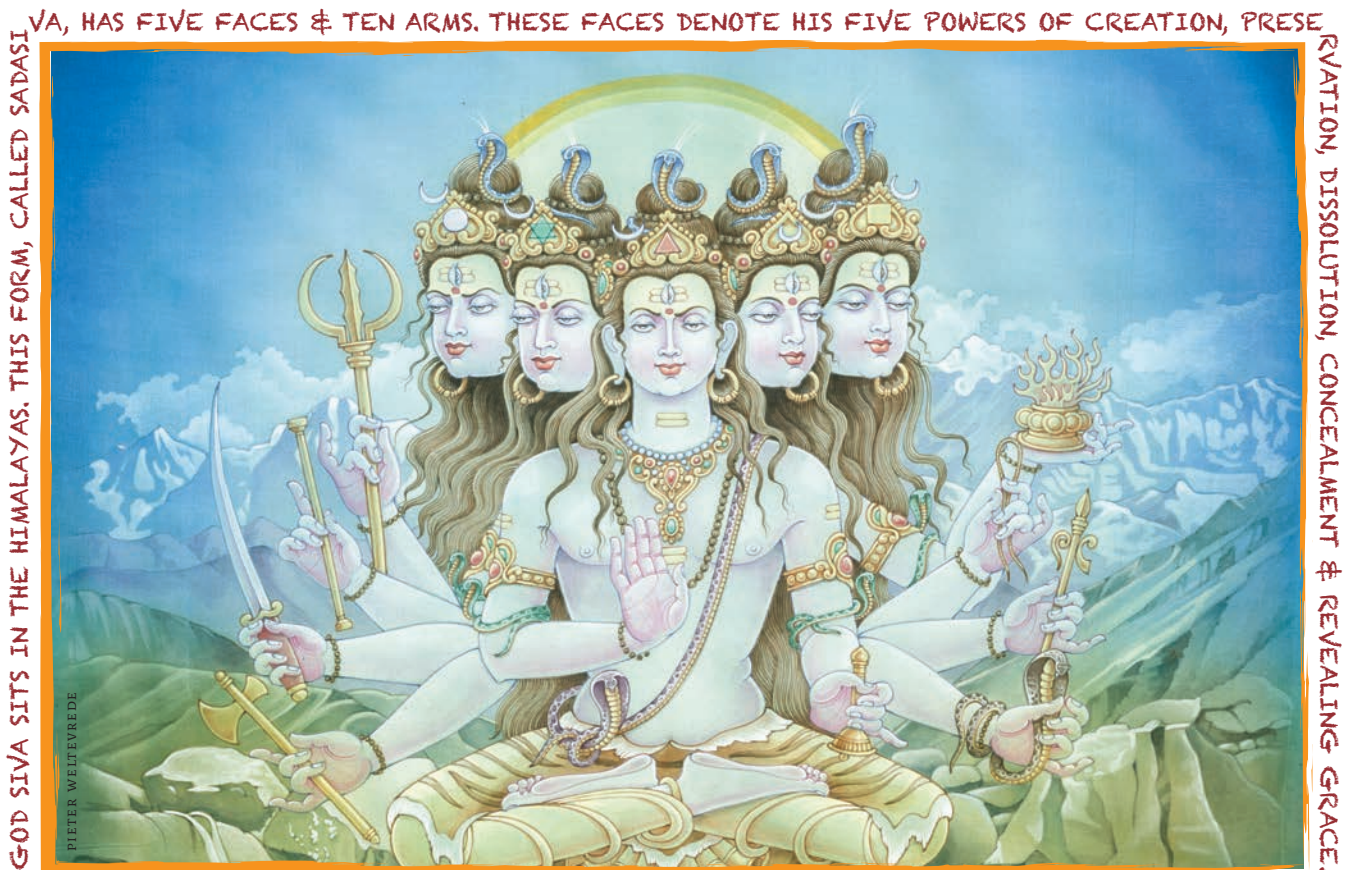
monastic traditions. Each has its own temples, festivals and ways of worship. Some are more focused on devotion and temple worship. Others stress yoga, mantra and scriptural study. Each has hundreds of millions of followers. All four accept the authority of the *Vedas* and the basic beliefs of karma, dharma and reincarnation. Much of their culture and tradition is the same. Most Hindus follow the same lineage as their parents and grandparents. As Saivites, we respect all Hindu paths and we may occasionally visit the temples of other Hindu groups. We join in their festivals and honor their religious leaders, but we hold firmly to our Saiva path.

**GURUDEVA:** Whatever our background, we can and we must maintain our sectarian roots and heritage, cultivate our differences and become strong within them.

**S**aivism is the world's oldest religion. Worshipping God Siva, the compassionate One, it stresses potent disciplines, high philosophy, the guru's centrality and the path of bhakti and raja yoga, leading to oneness with Siva within. Saivism is ancient, truly ageless, for it has no beginning. It is the precursor of the many-faceted religion now termed Hinduism. Scholars trace the roots of Siva worship back more than 8,000 years to the advanced Indus Valley civilization. But sacred writings tell us there never was a time when Saivism did not exist. There are six schools of philosophy and tradition within Saivism: Saiva Siddhanta, Kashmir Saivism, Pashupata Saivism, Vira Saivism, Siva Advaita and Siddha Siddhanta. They differ in many ways, philosophically, historically, linguistically and geographically. Still, they share an overwhelming similarity of belief and practice. In addition to the *Vedas*, the *Saiva Agamas* are the shared scriptures of all six schools. All six identify Siva as the Supreme Lord, both immanent and transcendent, worshiped as the personal Lord and realized through meditation as the Absolute,

Parasiva, beyond all form. All hold these principal Agamic doctrines: 1) the five powers of Siva (creation, preservation, destruction, concealing and revealing grace); 2) the three primary elements of existence, *Pati*, *pashu* and *pasha* (God, souls and bonds); 3) the three bonds, or *malas* (*anava*, *karma* and *maya*); 4) the threefold energy of Siva—*iccha*, *kriya* and *jnana shakti* (desire, action and wisdom); 5) the thirty-six *tattvas*, or categories of existence; 6) the need for a satguru and initiation; 7) the power of mantra; and 8) the four *padas* or stages of spirituality, *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana* (service, devotion, union and wisdom).

**GURUDEVA:** Saivism is the greatest religion in the world, and we are all very fortunate and proud to be Saivites. It has the most ancient culture on the planet. It has scriptures that are utterly profound. It has sacred hymns that stir the soul. It has unparalleled disciplines of yoga and meditation. It has magnificent temples that are truly holy. It has devoted sages and holy men and women.



## 9

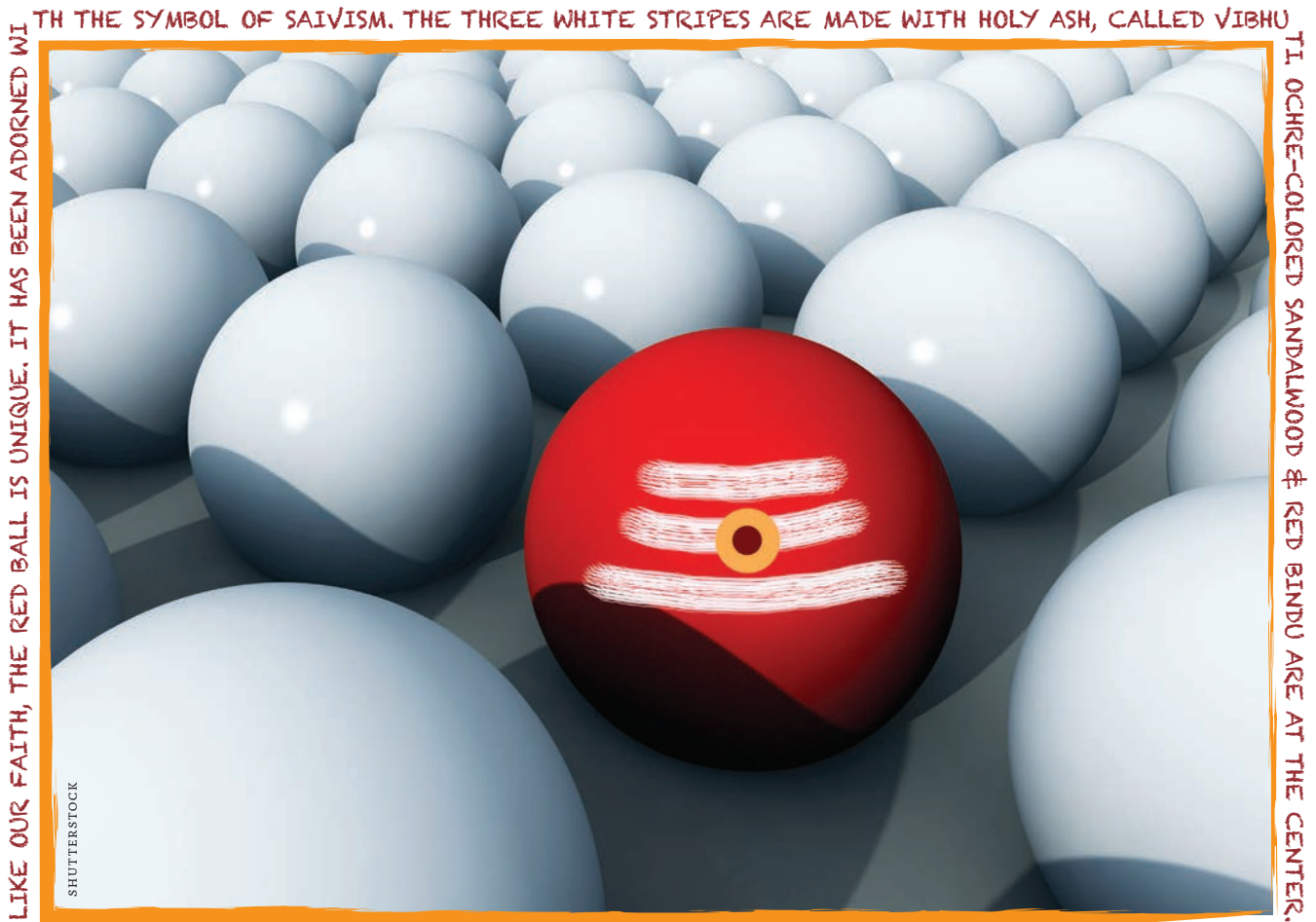
## What Is Saiva Siddhanta?

**S**aiva Siddhanta is the name of our school of Hinduism. It is today the oldest, most vigorous and widely practiced of the six forms of Saivism. It has many millions of devotees, tens of thousands of active temples and dozens of living monastic and ascetic traditions. Saiva Siddhanta once enjoyed a glorious presence throughout India. Today it is strongest within the Tamil traditions of South India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and elsewhere. In fact, it is sometimes referred to simply as Tamil Saivism. The term *Saiva Siddhanta* means “the final, or established, conclusions of Saivism.” Today there are two primary schools of Saiva Siddhanta. One is the pluralistic school of Meykandar, which holds that God, soul and world are eternally separate. The other is the monistic school of Tirumular, which stresses the ultimate oneness of man and God. We follow Tirumular’s lineage, which is specifically called Shuddha Saiva Siddhanta. For both schools, Siva is All, and His divine, manifest energy, Shakti, is inseparable from Him. In temples we often see Siva and Shakti

enshrined as two separate beings, a divine couple, but in truth they are one. We worship Ganesha and Murugan as great Lords who serve their creator, God Siva. We chant the holy mantra *Namaḥ Śivāya*. We wear rudraksha beads and holy ash. We revere the many Saivite saints. We believe it is necessary to have a living guru. We cherish the holy Sivalinga, keep company (*sangam*) with other devout seekers, and revere the great many Siva temples. These four—*guru*, *Lingam*, *sangam* (fellowship) and *vali-padu* (worship)—are the essence of Saiva Siddhanta as found in ancient Sanskrit and Tamil literature.

**GURUDEVA:** Saivism—and most especially the traditions and philosophy expressed in Saiva Siddhanta—is more able to provide for mankind’s resurgent demands for direct spiritual awakening and enlightened living than any other religion on the planet.





## 10

## What Is Monistic Theism?

**M**onistic theism is the combination of two concepts: monism and theism. Monism is the doctrine that reality is a one whole. It holds that everything is God. Theism is the belief that God exists as a loving, personal Lord and creator. These are like two sides of a coin, present in most Hindu systems. Our Saiva Siddhanta philosophy is a form of monistic theism. We see God as our personal Lord; as the essence of all that exists; and also as Absolute Being, Parasiva, beyond all form. In our theistic practices, we worship God and the Gods in the spirit of devotion and humble submission. In our monistic practices, we meditate deeply to experience the essence of our soul, which is identical with God Siva's essence, which is present throughout the universe. Siva has both a monistic aspect and a theistic aspect. Through our two-sided practice we honor and draw close to both. The most complete and perfect path requires both monism and theism. The opposite of monism is dualism, which teaches

that God and creation are separate realities. Dualists believe that God, like a potter, creates the universe (a pot) from "clay," cosmic matter which has always existed and is not part of Him. In Saiva monism, Siva is all and in all: the potter, the clay and the resulting pot. Some forms of Hindu monism do not include much theism. Ours does. We worship Siva as the God of love, Parameshvara, Siva as creator, preserver and dissolver, Siva as separate from us, who loves us as His creation. That is the theism part. Yet we know that, on another level, He is not separate from us. He is within us as Parashakti, pure consciousness flowing through all form, and as Absolute Reality, Parasiva. That is the monism part.

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**GURUDEVA:** Monists, from their mountaintop perspective, perceive a one reality in all things. Dualists, from the foothills, see God, souls and world as eternally separate. Monistic theism is the perfect reconciliation of these two views.

ARDHANARISHVARA, GOD WHO IS HALF MALE AND HALF FEMALE. SIVA WORSHIPERS BELIEVE THAT SIVA AND SHAKTI ARE A ONE DIVINITY THAT CANNOT BE SEPARATED.

THIS KERALA MURAL BEAUTIFULLY DEPICTS SIVA IN THE FORM OF



VA AND SHAKTI ARE A ONE DIVINITY THAT CANNOT BE SEPARATED.



## Who Is Siva?

Lord Siva is the Supreme Being of the universe. He/She is All and in all, both the Creator and the creation, within everything and beyond everything at the same time. Siva has a threefold nature. His highest reality is beyond time and form. His second aspect is the Divine Mind, existing here, there and everywhere. His third aspect is the Personal Lord, the Creator and source of all time and all form. Only in the deepest meditation can the nature of such a vast and mysterious God be fully known. The name *Siva* means “the auspicious,” “gracious” or “kindly one.” Siva is the One Supreme Being that all faiths have worshiped, by many names, and sought to understand for thousands of years. Siva has five powers: creation, preservation, destruction, and the twin graces of concealment and revelation. He creates the three worlds from His own being, and He also preserves the three worlds, dancing in each tiny atom at every point in time. Ultimately, He absorbs creation back into Himself. He does this in great cycles of time spanning billions of years. Then, in

the next grand cycle of time, He creates again. Siva is also the creator of individual souls, like us. With His fourth and fifth powers, concealing and revealing, Siva governs and guides our evolution, as a parent guides a child. We should always worship this great God of love and never fear Him. He is the Self of ourself, closer than our breath. Gurudeva taught, “His nature is love, and if you worship Him with devotion you will know love and be loving toward others.” Siva is the sun above us, the wind that cools the land, the five elements, the thought within our mind, the spark of light within our body, that which lives and that which is inert. Beyond knowing, beyond gender, He/She is the deathless Being who resides beyond the three worlds, yet stands in souls united.

**GURUDEVA:** To love God is to know God. To know God is to feel His love for you. Such a compassionate God—a being whose resplendent body may be seen in mystic vision—cares for the minutiae such as we and a universe such as ours.

# 12

## What Are Siva's Three Perfections?

**P**erfection is the word Gurudeva used to describe God Siva's three flawless aspects: Absolute Reality, the Divine Mind and the Primal Soul. Gurudeva described the One Being of Siva in this way to help devotees better understand the totality of His being and to tune into each perfection in worship and meditation. The three perfections also apply to each of us, as God Siva naturally creates souls in His image and likeness. The first perfection, Absolute Reality, Parasiva, is our inmost essence, the Self God. What is the Self God? Gurudeva explained, "It is That which is beyond the mind, beyond thought, feeling and emotion, beyond time, form and space." The second perfection, Siva's vast, Divine Mind, known as Satchidananda or Parashakti, is our own superconscious mind. It radiates as divine light, love, energy and knowing. When we touch into that level of our being, we become aware of the pure consciousness flowing through all things. Our sense of I-ness dissolves and we experience unlimited love and bliss. Siva's third perfection, the uncreated Primal Soul, Parameshvara, is the fullness

of God, ruler of the universe, creator of our soul and all that exists. To love God is to know God. To know God is to feel His love for you. Parameshvara's resplendent body may be seen in mystic vision. It is the ultimate prototype of our own soul body, which is like the Primal Soul, but less brilliant, because it is not yet mature. The Primal Soul, God's personal aspect as Lord and Creator, is depicted in many forms: Nataraja by Saivites, Vishnu by Vaishnavites, Devi by Shaktas. To understand Siva's three perfections, think of a perfect mango. It has a skin, sweet fruit and a seed. Yet it is a one fruit. The skin is Siva's body, the fruit is His Divine Mind and the seed is His inmost essence and being.

**GURUDEVA:** The great God Siva has form and is formless. He is the immanent Pure Consciousness or pure form; He is the Personal Lord manifesting Himself as innumerable forms; and He is the impersonal, transcendent Absolute beyond all form. We know Siva in His three perfections, two of form and one formless.

THE CIRCLE. THE SIVALINGAM IS HIS TRANSCENDENCE. NATARAJA IS HIS DANCE OF CREATION & PARASHAKTI IS HIS AWARENESS/ENERGY FLOWING THROUGH ALL.



Saivism teaches us that God Siva is knowable and we can experience Him right here and now. It is not just a matter of faith. Satguru Yogaswami declared, "See God in everything. You are in God. God is within you. God is in everyone. See Him there." It takes much meditation to find God Siva in all things, through all things. Gurudeva taught, "He is there as the Soul of each soul. You can open your inner eye and see Him in others, see Him in the world as the world." Perhaps the easiest place to start seeing God is in great religious teachers. We feel a spiritual aura about them that is uplifting. We see a light in their eyes that we do not see in others. The mere sound of their words encourages us to live a more spiritual life. Another way to see God is to look deeply into the eyes of another person. Look beyond the personality, go deeper than his or her intellect and see the pure life energy, which is God. This practice does not stop with people but can also include seeing the life energy in trees, birds and animals. Doing this, you discover that God is our life. God is the life

in all beings. Becoming aware of this life energy in all that lives is becoming aware of God's presence. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* explains: "He who knows God as the Life of life, the Eye of the eye, the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, he indeed comprehends fully the Cause of all causes." A third place to look for God is in the Hindu temple. In powerful temples you can sense the Deity's presence in the enshrined murti, and even catch a glimpse of His divine form during the puja. This is done with your third eye, your inner eye of divine sight. Many people, not just saints and sages, have seen God in such mystical visions.

**GURUDEVA:** Smile when you feel unhappy with someone and say to yourself, "How nice to see you, Siva, in this form." Animals, beggars, princes, politicians, friends and enemies, holy men, saints and sages are all Siva to the soul that loves God. He smiles and thinks to himself, "How nice to see you, Siva, in this, another of your many forms."

SIVA IN THEIR MEDITATIONS, IN THEIR DREAMS, WITHIN THE SANCTUM OF A TEMPLE. IT IS THE TH



MYSTICS AND ORDINARY PEOPLE HAVE HAD VISIONS OF GOD, SEEING

IRD EYE, OUR MIND'S EYE, THAT SEES THE NON-PHYSICAL REALITY.

SADYOJATA FORM, WHICH MEANS "QUICK BIRTHING" AND REPRESENTS THE POWER OF CREATION.

SIVA SITS IN A REMOTE FOREST UNDER A BANYAN TREE. THIS IS HIS



TWO HANDS BLESS; THE OTHERS HOLD A JAPA MALA & SACRED SCROLL.

## 14

### What Are Siva's Traditional Forms?

Every form is a form of Siva. Tradition has given us several of special sacredness. Nearly every Siva temple in the world has a Sivalinga, symbolizing His formless state. It is usually a simple oval stone set in a round base. Lingams can also be made of metal or quartz crystal. We revere God as Parasiva when we worship the Sivalinga. Its simple shape speaks of God's Absolute Being, which cannot be described. We revere Siva as the love that flows through everything when we worship any form of His Shakti, or feminine energy. Ardhanarishvara, Siva as half man and half woman, is the perfect image for this, reminding us that Siva and Shakti are a one being and can never be separated. We adore God as the Primal Soul, creator of all souls and worlds, when we worship Nataraja, the Divine Dancer who animates the universe. This image of Siva dancing in a ring of fire is popular throughout the world. Thus we worship Siva's three perfections in three forms. Yet His forms are infinite. He is also

Dakshinamurti, the silent guru spoken of in the *Upanishads*. Other scriptures speak of Hari-Hara, half Siva and half Vishnu. This icon symbolizes the union and nondifference of the two major Gods of Hinduism. The *Saiva Agamas* give us Panchabrahma, Siva with five faces, representing His five powers. The three-pointed Trishula, or trident, is also worshiped as Siva. Its points represent love, wisdom and action. The *Tirumantiram* reminds us, "Everywhere is the Holy Form. Everywhere is Siva-Shakti.... Everywhere is the Divine Dance."

**GURUDEVA:** God Siva is so close to us. Where does He live? In the Third World [causal plane]. And in this form He can talk and think and love and receive our prayers and guide our karma. He commands vast numbers of devas who go forth to do His will all over the world, all over the galaxy, throughout the universe.



NATARAJA, THE COSMIC DANCER. THIS FORM IS WORSHIPED AT THE FAMOUS CHIDAMBARAM TEMPLE, THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE WITHIN THE HEART OF ALL.

THIS EXQUISITE BRONZE IS A BEAUTIFUL SCULPTURE OF SIVA



LE, THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE WITHIN THE HEART OF ALL.

## 15 What Is the Meaning of Siva's Dance?

Lord Nataraja is an inspired portrayal of Siva in action as the Divine Dancer in His Ananda Tandava dance. This is His dance of creation, preservation and dissolution, a performance constantly taking place within each of us and within every atom of the universe at every moment in time. The Nataraja form has dozens of meaningful symbols. The most important represent His five powers. Creation (*shrishti*) is symbolized by His back right hand. It holds the small rattle drum, *damaru*, whose sound signals the start of creation. Preservation (*sthiti*) is symbolized by His front right hand, held in the gesture *abhaya*, "fear not." His back left hand holds a blazing flame. This is the Fire God, Agni, symbol of dissolution (*samhara*). His right foot rests on a small person representing the ego and known as Apasmara, "forgetful" or "heedless." This represents concealing grace (*tirodhana*), the power by which the soul sees itself separate from God. Siva's front left hand is held in "elephant trunk pose," pointing toward His raised left foot, symbol of revealing grace (*anugraha*), the power by which the soul comes to know

its oneness with God. On His forehead is the third eye, which sees everything, past, present and future. While the dance is incredibly powerful, indicated by the strands of hair flailing out in all directions, Siva remains poised and peaceful. The ring of flames, *tiruvasi*, symbolizes universal consciousness, the "hall" in which Siva dances. Siva's left earring is feminine; the right earring is masculine. These remind us that God embraces both male and female. At the top of the *tiruvasi* is Mahakala, "Great Time," another form of God Siva, who creates, transcends and devours time. The snake adorning Siva's body symbolizes kundalini, the spiritual force within the spine.

**GURUDEVA:** The Cosmic Dance describes the Hindu view of existence, from the first thunder of the drum in His right hand announcing the Beginning, to the final all-consuming flames in His left hand pronouncing the End, which but heralds a new Beginning.

## 16 What Is the Namaḥ Śivāya Mantra?

**N**amaḥ Śivāya is the most famous and holy of Saivite mantras, chanted daily by millions of devotees. *Namaḥ Śivāya* means “adoration to Siva” and appears in the *Yajur Veda* in the famous Shri Rudram hymn to Siva. It is known as the Pan-chakshara, or “five letters.” Each syllable has a meaning. *Na* is the Lord’s concealing grace and *Ma* is the world. *Śi* stands for Siva, *Vā* is His revealing grace, and *Ya* is the soul. The five letters also represent the five elements. *Na* is earth, *Ma* is water, *Śi* is fire, *Vā* is air, and *Ya* is ether, or akasa. This mantra is repeated verbally or mentally, drawing the mind in upon itself to cognize Lord Siva’s infinite, all-pervasive presence. It is freely sung and chanted by everyone, but it is most powerful when given by one’s guru. Before this initiation, called mantra diksha, the guru will usually require a period of study. This initiation is often part of a temple ritual, such as a *homa* (fire ceremony).

The guru whispers the mantra into the disciple’s right ear, along with instructions on how and when to chant it. Traditionally it is repeated 108 times a day while keeping count on a strand of rudraksha beads. This practice is called japa yoga. When done correctly, it calms the mind and brings spiritual insight and knowledge. It also keeps the devotee close to Siva and within His protective global fellowship. Gurudeva advised, “When life becomes difficult or strained, say to yourself ‘Śiva Śiva’ or ‘Aum Śivāya’ or ‘Namaḥ Śivāya.’ Mentally put it all at His feet.”

**GURUDEVA:** From the lips of my Satgurunatha, I learned Namaḥ Śivāya, and it has been the central core of my life, strength and fulfillment of destiny. The secret of Namaḥ Śivāya is to hear it from the right lips at the right time. Then, and only then, is it the most powerful mantra for you.

MANTRAS, SUNG PRAYERFULLY BY DEVOTEES AND RECITED BY YOGIS IN REMOTE CAVES. IT

NAMAḤ ŚIVĀYA IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR AND HOLY OF ALL HINDU

HIMALAYAN ACADEMY

நமசிவாய  
Namaḥ Śivāya  
नमः शिवाय

IS SHOWN HERE IN THREE SCRIPTS: TAMIL, ENGLISH AND DEVANAGARI.



DEVOTEES APPROACH GOD SIVA WITH OFFERINGS OF FLOWERS, FRUITS AND LOVE. OTHERS BR

EVE THAT A HEARTFELT APPROACH TO GOD WILL BRING CONTENTMENT, JOY AND ABUNDANCE.

## 17 What Are the Beliefs of Saivism?

Every religion has a set of core beliefs, called a creed, that summarizes its theology. Children learn the creed of their faith at a young age. By knowing and understanding our creed, we can express our tradition, in basic and consistent terms, to followers of other faiths. The twelve beliefs on the next page capture the main ideas of Saiva Siddhanta, which is one of the six schools of Saivism. They contain our view of God, soul and world, evil, love

and more. Beliefs vary greatly among the religions of the world. Our beliefs create our attitudes, and our attitudes influence our actions. Therefore, what we believe shapes our lives, defines our culture and molds our future. Each person's actions can be traced back to what he believes about himself, other people and the world around him. If those beliefs are correct, his actions will be helpful to others. Consider the belief in God as a loving power flowing through

everything. This creates an attitude of respect, kindness and compassion. In contrast, the belief in an evil power, in light forces and dark forces, creates the attitude that it is acceptable to cause pain and injury to those we judge to be evil. Gurudeva explained the power of belief: "The human mind is exactly like a computer. Programs that go in are the beliefs. Their performance is the attitude, and the knowledge or the impetus that passes through both determines the output or the action. Children will learn the basic attitudes from their mothers and fathers by absorbing the beliefs that their mothers and fathers have placed into their subconscious mind, even prenatally.

This is the first stage of writing the code, as a programmer would do in creating a new application."

Memorize these twelve beliefs. In so doing, you will help to perpetuate Saivism's culture of devotion, humility, nonviolence, compassion and service.

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**GURUDEVA:** Historically, creeds have developed whenever religions migrate from their homelands. Until then, the beliefs are fully contained in the culture and taught to children as a natural part of growing up. ... A creed is the distillation of volumes of knowledge into a series of easy-to-remember beliefs, or shraddha.

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## A Creed for Saivite Hinduism

**1** REGARDING GOD'S UNMANIFEST REALITY: Siva's followers all believe that Lord Siva is God, whose Absolute Being, Parasiva, transcends time, form and space. The yogi silently exclaims, "It is not this. It is not that." Yea, such an inscrutable God is God Siva. Aum.

**2** REGARDING GOD'S MANIFEST NATURE OF ALL-PERVADING LOVE: Siva's followers all believe that Lord Siva is God, whose immanent nature of love, Parashakti, is the substratum, primal substance or pure consciousness flowing through all form as energy, existence, knowledge and bliss. Aum.

**3** REGARDING GOD AS PERSONAL LORD AND CREATOR OF ALL: Siva's followers all believe that Lord Siva is God, whose immanent nature is the Primal Soul, Supreme Mahadeva, Parameshvara, author of *Vedas* and *Agamas*, the creator, preserver and destroyer of all that exists. Aum.

**4** REGARDING THE ELEPHANT-FACED DEITY: Siva's followers all believe in the Mahadeva Lord Ganesha, son of Siva-Shakti, to whom they must first supplicate before beginning any worship or task. His rule is compassionate. His law is just. Justice is His mind. Aum.

**5** REGARDING THE DEITY KARTTIKEYA: Siva's followers all believe in the Mahadeva Karttikeya, son of Siva-Shakti, whose vel of grace dissolves the bondages of ignorance. The yogi, locked in lotus, venerates Murugan. Thus restrained, his mind becomes calm. Aum.

**6** REGARDING THE SOUL'S CREATION AND IDENTITY WITH GOD: Siva's followers all believe that each soul is created by Lord Siva and is identical to Him, and that this identity will be fully realized by all souls when the bondage of anava, karma and maya is removed by His grace. Aum.

**7** REGARDING THE GROSS, SUBTLE AND CAUSAL PLANES OF EXISTENCE: Siva's followers all believe in three worlds: the gross plane, where souls take on physical bodies; the subtle plane, where souls take on astral bodies; and the causal plane, where souls exist in their self-effulgent form. Aum.

**8** REGARDING KARMA, SAMSARA AND LIBERATION FROM REBIRTH: Siva's followers all believe in the law of karma—that one must reap the effects of all actions he has caused—and that each soul continues to reincarnate until all karmas are resolved and moksha, liberation, is attained. Aum.

**9** REGARDING THE FOUR MARGAS, STAGES OF INNER PROGRESS: Siva's followers all believe that the performance of *charya*, virtuous living, *kriya*, temple worship, and *yoga*, leading to Parasiva through the grace of the living satguru, is absolutely necessary to bring forth *jnana*, wisdom. Aum.

**10** REGARDING THE GOODNESS OF ALL: Siva's followers all believe there is no intrinsic evil. Evil has no source, unless the source of evil's seeming be ignorance itself. They are truly compassionate, knowing that ultimately there is no good or bad. All is Siva's will. Aum.

**11** REGARDING THE ESOTERIC PURPOSE OF TEMPLE WORSHIP: Siva's followers all believe that religion is the harmonious working together of the three worlds and that this harmony can be created through temple worship, wherein the beings of all three worlds can communicate. Aum.

**12** REGARDING THE FIVE LETTERS: Siva's followers all believe in the Panchakshara Mantra, the five sacred syllables "Namaḥ Śivāya," as Saivism's foremost and essential mantra. The secret of Namaḥ Śivāya is to hear it from the right lips at the right time. Aum.

# 18

## What Is Our Affirmation of Faith?

**G**od Siva is Immanent Love and Transcendent Reality.” That is our affirmation in English. It summarizes the beliefs and doctrines of the Saivite Hindu religion. *Immanent* means “present throughout.” *Transcendent* means “beyond.” By repeating this affirmation, we assert that God is both manifest and unmanifest. He is present throughout the world and He also transcends it. He is personal Divine Love and impersonal Reality. We repeat “God Siva is Immanent Love and Transcendent Reality” when going to sleep and again while awakening. This statement brings us close to Siva and prepares us for the day. In Tamil it is Anbe Sivamayam, Satyame Parasivam. In the Sanskrit language it is Premaiva Sivamaya, Satyam eva Parashivah. In French it is Dieu Siva est Amour Omniprésent et Réalité Transcendante. We can use it like a mantra and recite it 108 times. We can write it down 108 or 1,008 times as

a sadhana. Repeating this affirmation, we impress our mind with the ultimate truths of our religion so that these memories give us strength in times of distress, worldliness or anxiety. It reminds us that God’s immanent love protects and guides us. Through the day, it lifts our mind into useful thoughts and keeps us from harm’s way. Reciting this affirmation draws us into Siva consciousness. Other religions also have affirmations of faith. For example, Christians have the Apostle’s Creed and Muslims have the Shahada. Followers treasure their affirmations, repeating them often individually or as a group.

**GURUDEVA:** God Siva is Immanent Love and Transcendent Reality” is what we have when we take the milk from the sacred cow of Saivism, separate out the cream, churn that cream to rich butter and boil that butter into a precious few drops of ghee.

HERE OUR AFFIRMATION OF FAITH IS WRITTEN IN ENGLISH, TAMIL AND SANSKRIT. THIS SIMPLE STATEMENT CONTAINS MANY LAYERS OF TRUTH. IT IS THE GHEE CONDENSED FROM THE CURD, MADE FROM THE MILK OF UNDERSTANDING.

English	God Siva is Immanent Love and Transcendent Reality
Tamil	Anbe Sivamayam, Satyame Parasivam
Tamil Script	அன்பே சிவமயம் சத்தியமே பரசிவம்
Sanskrit	Premaiva Sivamaya, Satyam eva Parashivah
Sanskrit Script	प्रेमैव शिवमय सत्यम् एव परशिवः

HIMALAYAN ACADEMY



## 19 What Is the Nature of Life for Saivites?

All people seek the same things in life. They want to be happy and secure, loved and appreciated, creative and useful. Saivism has a rich and gentle culture that fulfills these human wants. It has profound teachings that help us understand the world and our place in it. It gives guidance in the refined qualities of character so necessary in spiritual life: how to be patient, kind, tolerant, humble, hard-working and devoted. Saivism centers around the home and the temple. Monastic life is its core and power. Family life is strong and precious. Mother and father are a child's first gurus. Saivism possesses a wealth of art and architecture. It has beautiful traditions of music, art, drama and dance. It has a treasury of philosophy and scholarship. Saivite temples provide worship services daily. They are sacred places where devotees find peace and closeness with God. Festivals are fun for the whole family.

Scriptures help us to know ourself, live a good life and love God. Our holy men and women teach us yoga and ways of worship. They inspire us in everything we do and give us daily sadhana, which are our spiritual studies and disciplines. Performing sadhana helps us control our instinctive impulses and live a pure and happy life. To the Saivite Hindu, all of life is sacred. All of life is religion. Thus, Saivite art is sacred art, Saivite music is devotional music, and the Saivite's business is not only his livelihood, it is his service to man and God. You are so fortunate to be a Saivite Hindu. Stand strong for Saivism.

**GURUDEVA:** Saivism's grandeur and beauty are found in a practical culture, an enlightened view of man's place in the universe and a profound system of temple mysticism and siddha yoga.

Our holiest texts are the *Vedas* and the many *Agamas*. These large collections of religious books are called *shruti*, "that which is heard." This means they were revealed by God to Indian rishis long, long ago. For the *Vedas* this possibly occurred more than 6,000 years ago. For many centuries they were chanted from memory, then finally written down in the Sanskrit language. The *Rig*, *Sama*, *Yajur* and *Atharva* are the four *Vedas*. Each has a section on hymns, rites, interpretation and philosophy. Many of the mantras chanted during temple worship are from the *Vedas*. The *Upanishads* are the most popular and mystical part of the *Vedas*. The *Agamas* date back about 2,000 years and are also in Sanskrit. Each major Hindu lineage has its own *Agamas*. There are 28 main *Saiva Siddhanta Agamas*, each with four sections. The *Agamas* provide knowledge in temple design and construction, daily worship and festivals. They also provide teaching on meditation and Saiva philosophy. The *Vedas* have been published in many languages, but the *Agamas* are not yet widely known. In addition to the

*Vedas* and *Agamas*, Saiva Siddhanta has thousands of sacred books and songs. These comprise a vast body of secondary scriptures called *smriti*, many of which are written in the Tamil language. A popular *smriti* text is the *Tirumurai*, a twelve-book collection of hymns composed by numerous Saivite saints. Most important among these is the *Tirumantiram*, a yogic treatise by Rishi Tirumular, recording the Saiva tenets in 3,047 verses. *Tirumantiram* is prized for expressing a unified understanding of Siddhanta and Vedanta. Another important *smriti* text is the *Tirukural*, containing 1,330 couplets by the weaver saint Tiruvalluvar. *Tirukural*, one of the world's greatest ethical scriptures, is sworn on in South Indian courts of law. We also regard the writings of our satgurus as scripture.

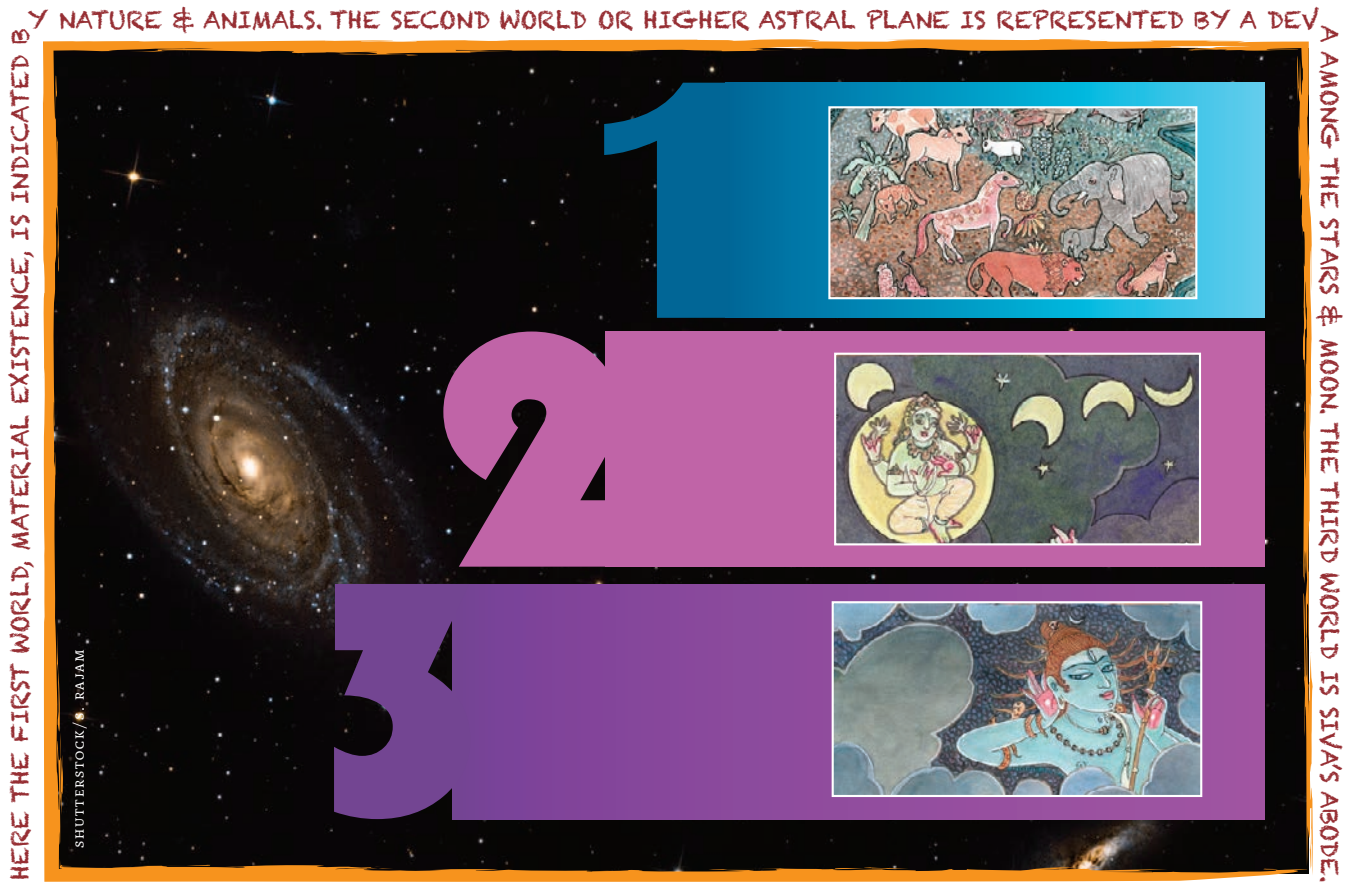
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**GURUDEVA:** If you desire to find the answer to any question intently enough, you can find the answer within yourself, or you can find it in our holy scriptures or books of wisdom.

CHANTED THESE VERSES THOUSANDS OF TIMES. IN FRONT IS A COPPER POT FILLED WITH WATER BLESSED & ADORNED WITH FLOWERS AND MANGO LEAVES.



A DEVOUT HINDU HOLDS A WELL-WORN TEXT, SHOWING HE HAS

TER BLESSED & ADORNED WITH FLOWERS AND MANGO LEAVES.



## 21 What Are the Three Worlds?

There are three worlds of existence. The First World is the physical universe, the gross plane, called Bhuloka. This is the world we see with our eyes and touch with our hands. It is the material world, where we have our experiences, create karma and fulfill the desires and duties of life in a physical body. The Second World is the subtle or astral plane, the in-between realm called Antarloka. This world exists within the physical plane. As our thoughts and feelings are part of that inner world, we are functioning in the astral world even while we are awake. During sleep, we leave our physical body and are aware in that inner world fully. Besides dreaming, we may also attend inner-plane classes held by our satguru. The Antarloka has many levels, spanning the spectrum of consciousness from the hellish Naraka regions, where the asuras, demonic beings, dwell, to the highest region of the Devaloka where the devas, or angels, live. When our physical body dies, we live fully in the Antarloka in our subtle body. The Third World is the causal plane, the world of light and blessedness, called Sivaloka. This highest

plane is the home of God Siva and of the Gods who assist Him, such as Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan. It is also the home of highly advanced souls who exist in their brilliant soul form. We experience the Sivaloka when we see the inner light or have a flash of intuition. We can worship God and the Gods anywhere. But the temple is the best place, because it is built as a special, sacred space where the three worlds meet as one. When we are awake, we normally don't see or sense the inner worlds. The temple enables us to feel the presence of God, Gods and devas, just as night-vision goggles allow us to see in the dark. In our form of worship, called *puja*, we chant, burn incense, ring bells and offer lights and flowers. This ritual brings us close to God and the great beings of our faith.

**GURUDEVA:** Siva's followers all believe that religion is the harmonious working together of the three worlds and that this harmony can be created through temple worship, wherein the beings of all three worlds can communicate.



**O**ur soul is an immortal, spiritual being. The essence of the soul is Pure Consciousness and Absolute Reality. This essence is perfect, eternal and was never created. Visualize it as a light bulb covered by five layers of colored fabrics. These are our five bodies or sheaths. The physical body is our outer body of flesh and bones, which we need to function in this earthly world. Inside it is the pranic body, the sheath of energy, or prana, that flows through the physical body. Then we have the subtle or astral body. It is the sheath of ordinary thoughts, desires and emotions. Next is the mental or intellectual layer. It functions on the higher mental plane. Finally, we have the body of the soul. This is the body that evolves from birth to birth, that reincarnates into new outer sheaths and does not die when the physical body perishes. Gurudeva described it like this: "The body of the soul actually looks like a plastic body filled with light. You have seen mannequins with arms, legs, torso and head made completely out of transparent, neon-like plastic. If you were to put a light in such a mannequin, it would

glow. This is what your soul body, your psyche, looks like." Our soul body is neither male nor female and never dies. Within our subtle bodies we have chakras, twenty-one in all—colorful, spinning force centers. The seven lower chakras, those of fear, anger and the other lower, instinctive impulses, are located in the legs. The seven middle chakras are along the spine, and the highest seven, accessible only after Self Realization, are above the head. We also have an aura, radiating within and around us, whose colors change according to our thoughts and emotions. Once physical births have ceased, this soul body still continues to evolve in the heavenly worlds. We are not the physical body, mind or emotions. We are the eternal soul, atman—consisting of the radiant soul body and its essence, Pure Consciousness and Absolute Reality.

**GURUDEVA:** Reverse your thinking about yourself. Feel that you come out of timelessness, causelessness, spacelessness. Visualize the pure radiant body of light, the being of the soul, the "I Am," the "Watcher."

IS A BODY OF LIGHT. THE CHAKRAS ARE WINDOWS OF CONSCIOUSNESS. THE MIDDLE ONES ARE A

WE INHABIT A BODY THAT WAS ONCE STAR DUST, BUT OUR SOUL



LONG THE SPINE. THE LOWEST SEVEN ARE IN THE LEGS & FEET.

AND MIND ARE SHOWN AS LINKS OF A MIGHTY CHAIN. THESE KEEP US FASCINATED WITH THE EVER-

THE THREE BONDS THAT HOLD US IN THE SWIRL OF EGO, KARMA



RE-CHANGING WORLD AND IGNORANT OF OUR DIVINE IDENTITY.

## 23 Why Are We Not All-Knowing Like Siva?

**S**iva is perfection itself. Each soul shares His perfection inwardly, but outwardly is immature. Think of Siva as a mighty oak tree and the soul as an acorn that will one day be a mighty tree itself. Lord Siva's veiling grace, *tirodhana shakti*, veils the soul's all-knowingness. This is a loving power that limits and protects us so that we may learn and mature. This grace is in three parts. First, *anava* makes us forget that we are unlimited. Anava is that which makes the soul finite and separate from God Siva. Under its power, we are completely involved in the joys and sorrows of our particular life, not aware that we are a divine soul, one with God. Second, *maya*, the world, offers us vast opportunities for experience. This gift from Siva is our playground of experience. Third, *karma*, the law of cause and effect, is our instructor in the play of life. Together, anava, karma and maya are known as *pasha*, meaning "tether." An ancient analogy of a cowherd tending his cows illumines this idea. The cowherd is God Siva, called Pati. The cows represent souls, *pashu*. And the tether, or rope, with which Pati leads the

cows is *pasha*. The cowherd restrains and protects the cows with the rope, just as Siva guides and protects souls with anava, karma and maya. Through many lifetimes, under the harnessing power of these three, our soul grows to maturity and the three malas begin to loosen their grip. When the time is ripe, Siva grants His revealing grace, *anugraha shakti*. When finally we yearn to know Siva, the satguru appears in our life and gives us disciplines to help us evolve further. Finally, through his grace, the soul realizes its true identity with Siva. The *Tirumantiram* explains, "When the soul attains Self-knowledge, then it becomes one with Siva. The *malas* perish, birth's cycle ends and the lustrous light of wisdom dawns."

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**GURUDEVA:** Maya is the classroom, karma the teacher, and anava the student's ignorance. The three bonds, or malas, are given by Lord Siva to help and protect us as we unfold. Yet, God Siva's all-knowingness may be experienced for brief periods by the meditator who turns within to his own essence.



## 24 Are Souls & World Essentially Good?

All souls are essentially good, for their inner nature is divine. Each soul is created by God Siva from Himself. Siva's nature is pure love. So, goodness, compassion, understanding and joy are natural qualities of the soul. Wisdom and pure knowledge are the intrinsic nature of the soul. The world, too, is God's flawless creation. All is in perfect order and balance. Since God is everywhere and in all things, there can be no place for evil. Evil is often looked upon as a force against God. But we know that all forces are God's forces, even mean, hurtful actions. This is sometimes difficult to understand when we see the pains and problems caused by people against each other. Looking deeper, we see that what is called evil has its own purpose in life. Yes, bad things do happen. Still, the wise never blame God, for they know such things are the return of our self-created karmas, tough lessons that help us learn and mature. The nature of the world is duality. It contains each thing and its opposite: joy and sorrow, goodness and evil, love and hate. Suffering cannot be totally

avoided. It is a natural part of human life that causes much spiritual growth for the soul. Knowing this, the wise accept suffering from any source, be it hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, famine, wars, disease or personal tragedies. Suffering offers us the important realization that true happiness and freedom cannot be found in the world, for earthly joy is bound to sorrow. Having learned this, devotees seek a satguru who teaches them to overcome suffering through understanding and acceptance. The world is the bountiful creation of a benevolent God, who means for us to live positively in it, facing karma and fulfilling dharma. We must not despise or fear the world. Life is meant to be lived joyously.

**GURUDEVA:** This is my advice: gain the perspective first that it is a wonderful world, that there is nothing wrong in the world at all. ... All men and women on the Earth are doing exactly as they should and must do.

In the highest sense, there is no good or bad. God did not create evil as a force distinct from good. He granted to souls the divine laws of dharma and karma along with the freedom to act as they wish in the great ocean of experience. This is God's grace allowing us to learn and evolve. There is no eternal hell, nor is there a Satan. However, there are hellish states of mind and painful births for those who think and act wrongfully. Sin is related only to the lower, instinctive-intellectual nature as a transgression of dharma. Man's true nature is not sullied by sin, and no bad deed can cause the soul to be forever lost or damned. Still, wrongful actions are real and to be avoided, for they return to us as sorrow through the law of karma. Bad deeds can be atoned for with sadhana, worship and penance. As Saivites, we do not see a sharp contrast of good and evil in the world. Instead we understand that all people have a threefold nature: instinctive, intellectual and spiritual. The instinctive nature is the outer, lower or animal nature of I, me and mine. When it dominates,

people become angry, fearful, greedy, jealous and hurtful. The intellectual nature is the soul's mental aspect. When it rules, people can become arrogant and prone to argument and conflict. The spiritual, or superconscious, nature of the soul is the source of compassion, insight, modesty, peace and understanding. The animal instincts of young souls are strong. Their intellect, which is needed to control the instincts, is yet to be developed. When we encounter meanness and wickedness in others, we recall this threefold nature and have compassion for those in the lower, instinctive states. We know they will continue to evolve, as they learn from their self-created karma. We also know there is no intrinsic evil.

**GURUDEVA:** Hinduism is such a joyous religion, freed of all the mental encumbrances that are prevalent in the various Western faiths. It is freed of the notion of a vengeful God. It is freed of the notion of eternal suffering. It is freed from the notion of original sin.

BALI, FRIGHTENING AWAY THOSE WHO SHOULD NOT ENTER. HE IS FEARSOME, BUT LIKE SIN AND

THIS FIERCE MONKEY GUARDS THE ENTRANCE TO A TEMPLE IN



AND EVIL, HE IS NOT FEARED BY THOSE WHO ARE PURE IN HEART.

**L**ord Ganesha is the elephant-faced Patron of Art and Science, the Lord of Obstacles and Guardian of Dharma. First son of Siva, He is worshiped before any of the other Gods, including Siva Himself. His *vahana*, or mount, is Mushika, the mouse, symbol of this God's ability to access all places in the mind. Gurudeva taught, "Wherever His devotees are—in the home, the factories, the offices, the hospitals, the marketplace, orbiting in space or tilling the soil on the farm—Lord Ganesha is ever there." We worship Him before beginning a new project, taking an exam, or making a major decision, such as where to go to college. When we feel the need for Ganesha's blessings, we attend puja to Him in the temple or pray to Him at our home shrine. You can get to know Him as a good friend. To contact Him, hold His elephant image in your mind. Look into His eyes. Speak your questions and problems into His right ear. When you are finished, open your eyes. Ganesha's guidance will come in a subtle, indirect manner. Over the next several days, watch for signs, perhaps a suggestion or even a casual comment from a teacher, parent or

friend that suddenly makes it clear what you should do. The shakti of Lord Ganesha is a gentle, soothing force. Even a subtle encounter has the power to bring us into the secure consciousness of the muladhara chakra, the force center of memory where Ganesha resides. This blessing keeps us above the seven lower chakras, home of the base emotions such as jealousy, fear and anger. Lord Siva, the Supreme God, created Lord Ganesha, Murugan and all the other Hindu Gods. They are souls like us, but of a higher evolution, destined to enjoy union with Him. They are very old and mature souls, mighty beings who live in the Sivaloka. Though commonly depicted as male or female, they are actually beyond gender.

**GURUDEVA:** Lord Ganesha was created as a governor and interplanetary, intergalactic Lord. His knowledge is infinite, His judgment is just.... This Lord of Obstacles prevents us from hurting ourselves through living under an incomplete concept or making a request unneeded or beginning an endeavor not well thought out.





## 27

## Who Is Lord Murugan?

**M**urugan is the God of religion and yoga. He is the second son of Siva, born of His divine mind. His electric power awakens spiritual wisdom to propel souls onward in their evolution to Siva's feet. Also known as Karttikeya, Kumara, Skanda, Shanmukhanatha and Subrahmanya, He is worshiped not only by Hindus but by Buddhists as well, in China, Japan and other countries. Majestically seated on the manipura chakra, this red-hued God blesses mankind and strengthens our will when we rise to higher consciousness through sadhana and yoga. He brings detachment, willpower and contentment, and His blessings strengthen our meditations. Lord Murugan carries a *vel*, or spear, representing the power to overcome darkness and ignorance. He is the authority behind the king (nowadays, any government which rules the people), there to see that justice is done and peace prevails. Murugan is especially loved by Tamil Saivites, who believe He guides their culture and history. Devotees look to Him for healing of the

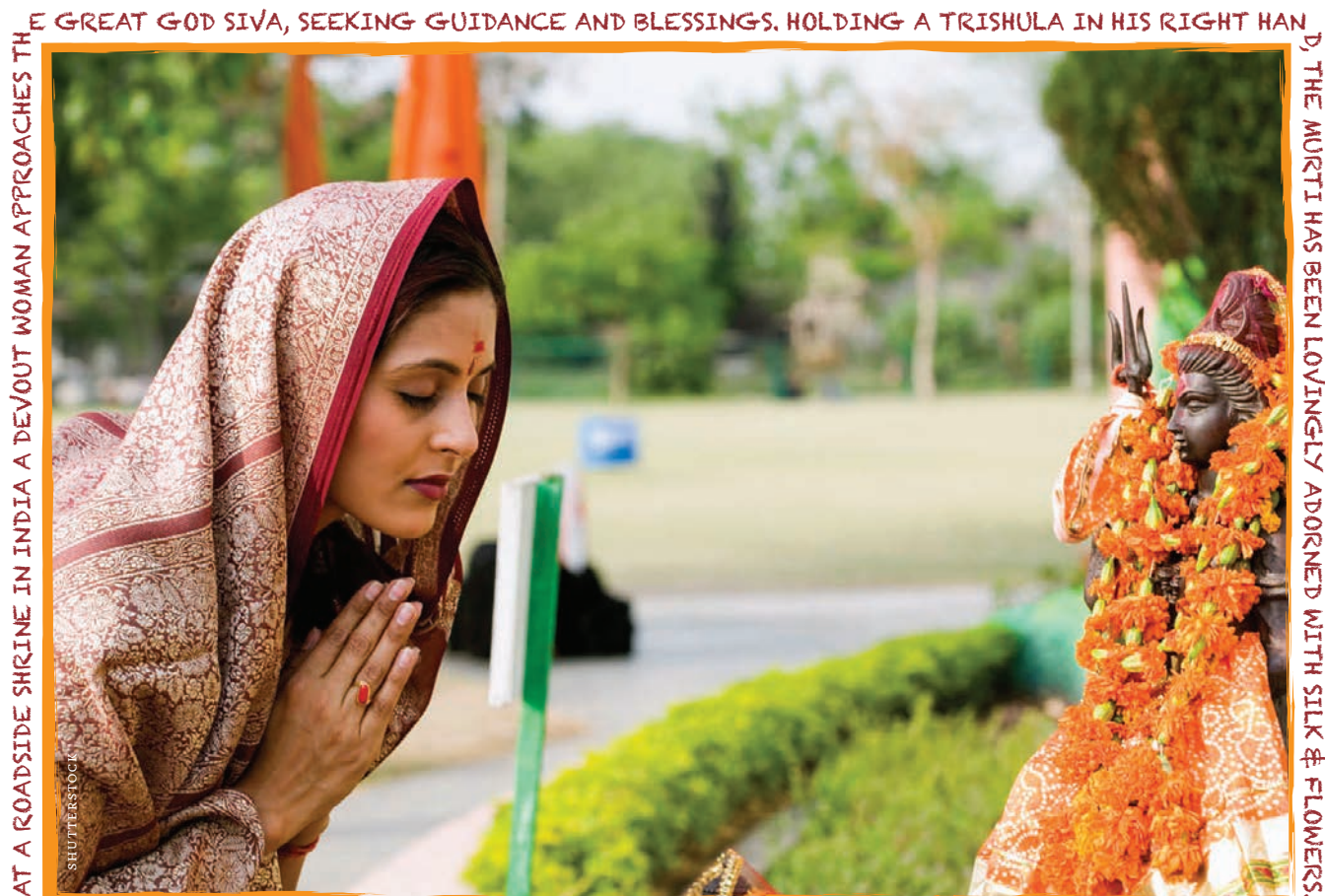
body and mind, and for strength to face life's challenges. He is said to love bamboo groves and hilltops, and His vahana is the proud and beautiful peacock. When we connect with Murugan, we have to be ready to change, for He brings a dynamic energy. He inspires penance, such as carrying kavadi during Tai Pusam, which softens karmas and purifies the mind. When Murugan's blessings come into our life, we become a better person, more kind, disciplined and spiritual. Many saints and devotees have had visions of Murugan and other Gods. But more often we just sense their presence, as we feel the warm rays of the sun when our eyes are closed.

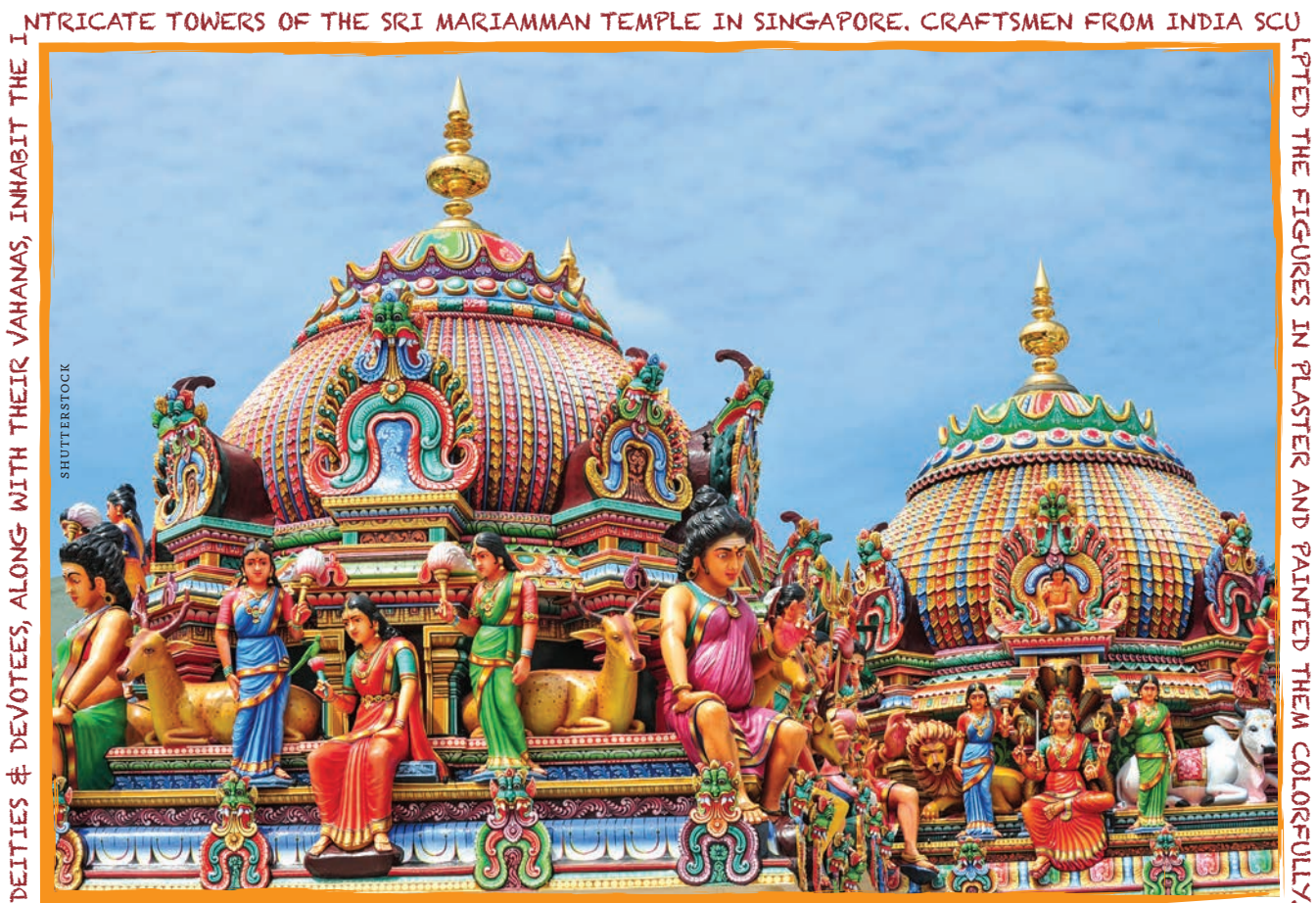
**GURUDEVA:** Pray to Lord Murugan to unravel the great mysteries of the universe. Pray to Lord Murugan to make you a spiritual person. Pray to Lord Murugan to release you into the arms of Lord Siva by teaching you more about your Saivite religion.

**B**hakti is devotion or love felt toward God, Gods and guru. Bhakti yoga, the practice of expressing this love, is strong in most Hindu traditions. We express bhakti when we worship in our home shrine, attend the temple or travel on pilgrimage. The more we experience devotion, the more it grows within us. This occurs when we sing sacred songs and chant bhajans. Listening to stories of our great saints and satgurus inspires bhakti. In Saiva Siddhanta, bhakti yoga is never outgrown. It is not just for beginners. As Gurudeva said, "The yoga of pure devotion is found at the beginning, the middle and the end of the path." By awakening this love and appreciation, we open ourselves to God's grace. We also express bhakti toward our guru as a way to experience his or her blessings and grace. Devotion is a calm, intelligent expression of love for the Deity. It is not unlike the closeness felt between good friends. In Saiva Siddhanta, the path begins at the charya stage, with getting to know the Gods and developing a relationship with them through service, or karma

yoga. Then bhakti is naturally experienced. This is the kriya stage. Our nature becomes soft, flexible and content. Gurudeva explained, "The inner knowing that 'All is Siva's will' is one of the first benefits of bhakti yoga." A close, loving relationship with God and the Gods gives us a great stability in life and allows for success in meditation. If problems, or negative karmas, arise, the devotee can place them at the feet of the Deity to be dissolved. When karmas are clear, the devotee is able to internalize his devotion into deeper meditations in the yoga stage.

**GURUDEVA:** The greatest inhibiting factor in practicing bhakti yoga is the doubting, cynical, intellectual mind. Doubt and skepticism harden the heart and narrow the mind. When you have the energy of bhakti, of love, flowing through your body, meditation is easy. You don't have to go through the preliminaries. You are already functioning in the higher chakras.





## 29

## Who Are the Devas?

**G**urudeva wrote: “Religion is the bringing together of the three worlds. This means that the ascended masters, angels, devas, Deities, saints, sages of each of the world’s religions, living without physical bodies in the inner worlds, guide and govern, help and protect, shower forth blessings and inspiration to the members of their religious family.” As a Saivite, you are part of a large and wonderful global family with members in all three worlds. The devas are beings of light, souls living in the higher level of the Second World, Antarloka, who assist God and the Gods. One of their duties is to help answer the prayers of devotees. Another is to receive newcomers to the inner world—those who have died—helping them adjust to their new life without a physical body. Each Hindu has special guardian devas. They are assigned shortly after birth at the name-giving ceremony, or later in life when one enters the great tribe known as the Hindu religion. Some devas are attached to individuals and families for many generations. Each family has numerous

guardian devas who bless the home and keep the spiritual vibration strong. Some are drawn from nearby temples, attracted by the pujas performed in the home shrine. Still others are from far-off temples who return with the family after the yearly pilgrimage, to help in many ways. If the family neglect their sadhana and pujas, however, the home loses its spiritual power and the devas begin to slowly drift away. The devas guard us and the home silently and are seldom seen, though their presence in our lives is quite obvious in the form of good happenings and harmony.

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**GURUDEVA:** These guardian devas in the heaven world cannot be seen by you with your physical eyes, but they can be seen and are seen by those who know how to use the psychic vision of their third eye. Nevertheless, you can feel their presence in your home. They surround you, they help you and they communicate with the great Gods of our religion to guide you through life.

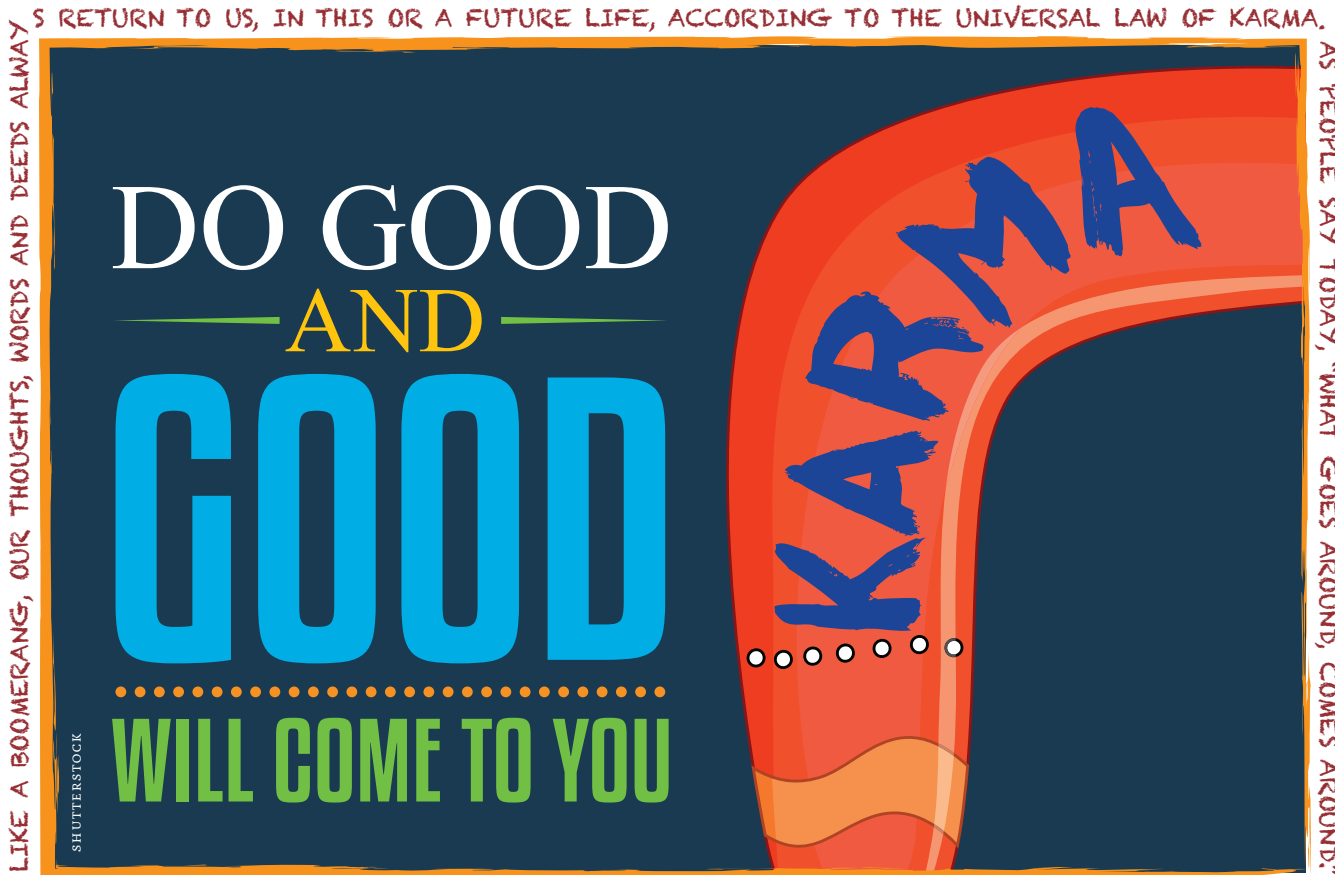


**W**hen created by Lord Siva, the soul is young and immature. Its process of "growing up" over many lifetimes happens in four stages. This is much like the development of a lotus flower. First it sends its roots into the pond's mud, then it grows a stem and leaves that reach the water's surface. Finally it blossoms in the full sun. Yet each previous stage of growth is still there supporting the flower. Siva's grace guides this process so that we learn and grow toward the light through experience, under the divine law of karma. As the soul progresses through each stage, it becomes less instinctive and more spiritual. Siva is continually creating souls, so at any point in time, there are on the Earth young souls, adolescent souls, middle-aged souls and old souls. The four *padas*, stages of maturation, are *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. *Charya* is good conduct and humble service, attending the temple and helping with temple chores. Here, the main work is harnessing the instincts and developing virtuous qualities. *Kriya* is the stage of devotion, or love of God, expressed through home puja and temple worship. *Yoga* is the period of meditation and inner striving under a guru's guidance. At this stage, the temple

is a sacred space for contemplation as Siva's veiling power gives way to His revealing grace. *Jnana* is the wisdom state, where the realized soul sees himself as one with the temple Deity. These stages are also experienced in each lifetime. As children, we learn good conduct, as summarized in the yamas and niyamas. Then we are taught worship, expressing heart-melting devotion for God, Gods and guru. Next, we may learn to meditate, with the goal of gaining true wisdom. The four *padas* are not alternate ways, but progressive steps on a one path called San Marga. Nor does the soul give up the practices of one *pada* when it enters the next. Thus the mature soul in *jnana* is a paragon of wisdom, yoga, devotion and virtue. The greatest yogis still love and worship Siva.

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**GURUDEVA:** Some people think, "When you get to the yoga stage, you don't have to do the worship, you don't have to do the service. You just do the yoga." In our Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, when you get to the yoga stage and the *jnana* stage, you still enjoy the worship, you still enjoy the service. These are dear and intricate parts of your life.





LIKE A BOOMERANG, OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS AND DEEDS ALWAYS

RETURN TO US, IN THIS OR A FUTURE LIFE, ACCORDING TO THE UNIVERSAL LAW OF KARMA. AS PEOPLE SAY TODAY, "WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND!"

## 31 What Is Karma?

**G**od Siva creates the cosmos and He resides within it. His many special laws or systems are at work within our complex universe. The law that causes an object to fall to the Earth we call gravity. The law that governs the reaction of thoughts, words and deeds we call karma. It is an automatic system of divine justice. By this law, what we sow, we will reap. Actions and the fruit of action are both called karma. There are three kinds of karma: the karma of all deeds done in our past lives; the karmas we bring into this birth to experience; and the karmas we are making by our actions now. Good, helpful thoughts, words and deeds bring good karma to us in the future. Hurtful actions bring back to us painful karma. Doing bad is like planting poison ivy. Doing good is like planting delicious mangos. Understanding the law of karma gives us the power to act wisely and create a positive future. Gurudeva said, "You are the writer of your own destiny, the master of your ship through life." He meant that karma is not fate. It can be overcome. Through understanding the effect of their actions, individuals sooner or later learn to

refrain from committing misdeeds. This is what we mean by saying, "Karma is our teacher." It teaches us to refine our behavior. Even difficult karma helps us grow, by teaching us the painful results of unwise actions. No matter how well we understand karma, facing it bravely is still a challenge. Our ego gets in the way. Our emotions are stirred and we react without thinking. Such weakness can be overcome by perfecting our character according to the yamas and niyamas. The effects of karma can be softened in several ways: by accepting and not reacting, by doing penance, by performing good deeds that balance the not-so-good we have done and by seeking the grace of God and guru. Karma applies not only to individuals but to groups, communities and nations.

**GURUDEVA:** Siva's devotees accept all experiences, however difficult, as their self-created karma, without cringing or complaining. There is the power of surrender, accepting what is as it is and dealing with it courageously.



## 32

## What Is Dharma?

**W**hen God creates the universe, He/She endows it with order, with the laws to govern creation. Dharma is that divine law prevailing on every level of existence, from the sustaining cosmic order to religious and moral laws that bind us in harmony with that order. It is goodness, ethical practice and duty. It is the path which leads us to liberation. Dharma is at work on four levels of our existence: universal, human, social and personal. Universal dharma rules the natural world, from subatomic quantum to galactic clusters. Social dharma governs society. Human dharma guides life's four stages. Personal dharma is your own perfect pattern in life. It is determined by your past karmas and how the other three dharmas impact you. The key to discovering and understanding your personal dharma is to worship Lord Ganesha. He knows our past lives and can clarify our right path in life. Gurudeva wrote: "When we follow this unique pattern—guided by guru, wise elders and the knowing voice of our soul—we are content and at peace with ourselves and the world." At every step in life, your

main dharma is to follow the path of good conduct. As a youth, a big part of your dharma is to be a good student and a good daughter or son. It is your parents' dharma to care for you. It is your teacher's dharma to teach you. It is the dharma of the police to protect you. As an adult, you may become a parent, and it will then be your dharma to raise and support your family. Later, as an elder, your dharma will be to guide the younger generations. Yogaswami said that dharma is like the tracks of a train, and like the train we must stay on the tracks to reach our destination. Dharma is so important that the Sanskrit name of Hinduism is Sanatana Dharma, the eternal path.

**GURUDEVA:** Dharma is a rich word which encompasses many meanings: the path to God Siva, piety, goodness, duty, obligation and more. ...By following the ancient path of dharma, we avoid all this suffering and mental pain and bring ourselves into positive, creative and productive states of consciousness, bringing us ever closer and closer to the holy feet of God Siva.

**R**eincarnation is the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Each soul has many lifetimes on Earth. In each life, we drop off our physical body at death, but our inner self, or soul, never dies. We just leave our physical body and go on thinking, feeling and acting in our astral body. We also do this when we sleep, but we return to our body each time we wake up. At death we don't come back into our physical body. We leave the physical plane and remain conscious in the inner worlds. After some time, we are born again as a baby in a new physical body, with a new mother and father, a new name and a new future. This return to the physical plane in a new body is called reincarnation. Memories of our previous lifetimes fade away during childhood, though some adults can remember them. We eventually die again, because of illness, old age or an accident. Again we step out of the physical body and go on living in our astral body. This happens repeatedly. Sometimes we are born as a boy, sometimes as a girl. The way we live in this life determines what

our next life will be like. Reincarnation is like a great school, and each life is a classroom. Who is learning and growing in the school of life? You, your immortal soul. You have lived many lives. Each lifetime is but one stride on the great journey of your soul. When all the needed lessons have been learned, your soul has matured, all karmas have been resolved and you have realized God, you will not need to be born again. That is called liberation or moksha, the destiny of all souls, without exception.

**GURUDEVA:** Through the ages, reincarnation has been the great consoling element within Hinduism, eliminating the fear of death. We are not the body in which we live but the immortal soul which inhabits many bodies in its evolutionary journey through samsara. After death, we continue to exist in unseen worlds, enjoying or suffering the harvest of earthly deeds until it comes time for yet another physical birth.

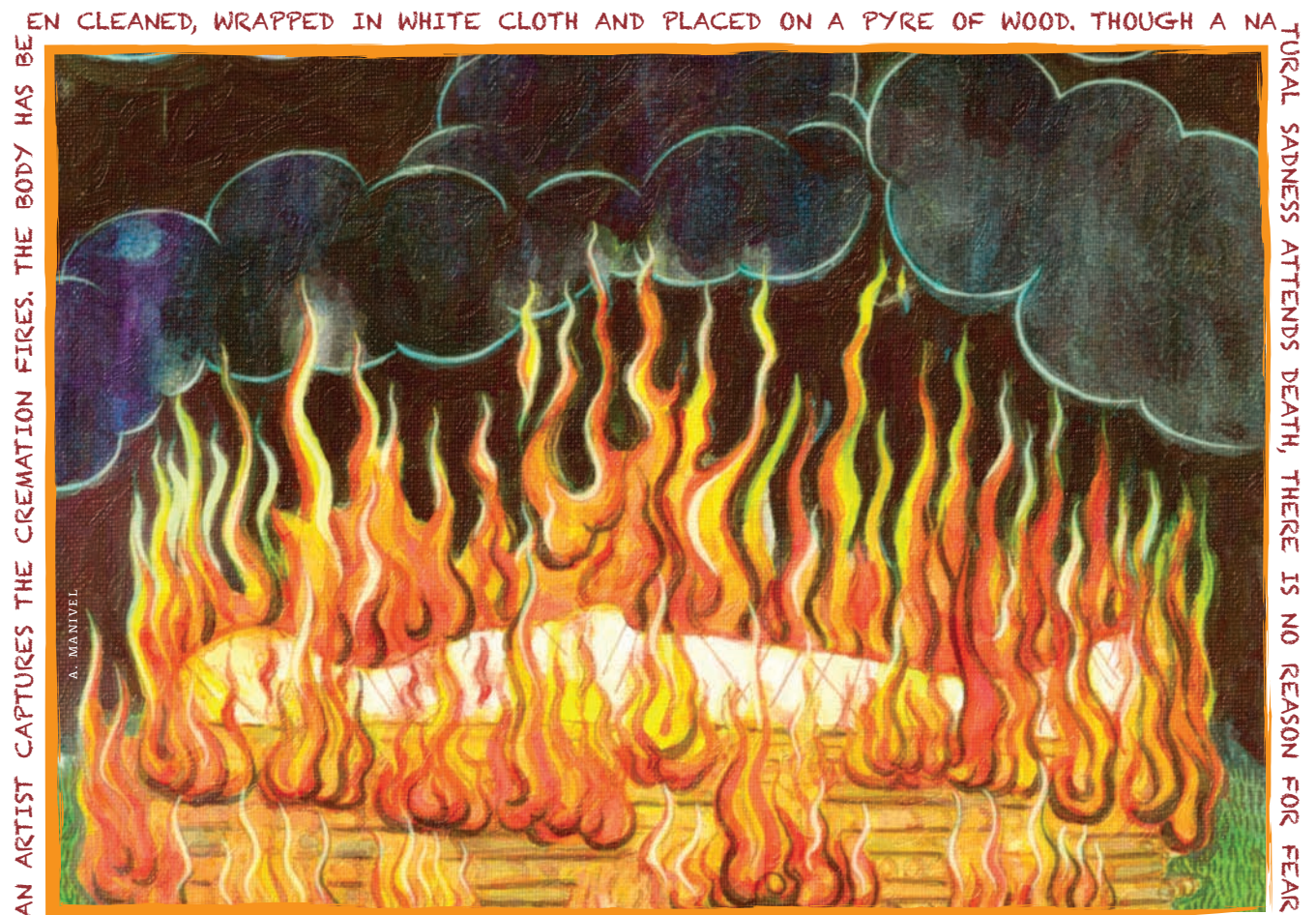
LITTLE LIKE THIS BUTTERFLY, WHOSE OUTER FORM CHANGES FROM EGG TO CATERPILLAR TO CHRYSAALIS TO ADULT. THE SAME CREATURE LIVES IN EACH NEW FORM.



**O**ur rishis and holy scriptures assure us that death is a blissful, light-filled transition from one state to another, as simple and natural as changing clothes. It is not a horrid experience to be feared. In fact, ancient sages called death man's most exalted experience. Our soul never dies; only the physical body dies. We neither dread death nor look forward to it, for we know that life, death and the afterlife are all part of our path to perfect oneness with God. Death is a quick transition from the physical world to the astral plane, like walking through a door, leaving one room and entering another. If we are blessed with the knowledge that our transition may be soon, we fulfill obligations so that we have nothing on our mind except our sadhanas. We make amends and resolve differences with others, forgiving and letting go of conflicts of the past so that we are free of guilt and worry and don't carry these karmas into future births. We also execute our will, distributing our possessions and duties, not leaving

these tasks to others. Then we turn to God through meditation, japa and study of our holy teachings. Many Hindus go to sacred places to make their Great Departure, as it is called. Varanasi is the most famous for this. It is ideal to be conscious and clear of mind at the time of death. Therefore, we minimize the use of drugs and heroic efforts to keep the body alive. When nearing transition, if hospitalized, we return home to be among loved ones. In the final hours of life, we seek the Self God within and focus on our mantra while family keep prayerful vigil. At death, we seek the grace of God Siva as we strive to leave the body through the crown chakra at the top of the head, entering the clear white light and beyond in quest of liberation.

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**GURUDEVA:** Death itself is not painful. Death itself is blissful. You don't need any counseling. You intuitively know what's going to happen. Death is like a meditation, a samadhi.





## 35 Why Is the Satguru So Important?

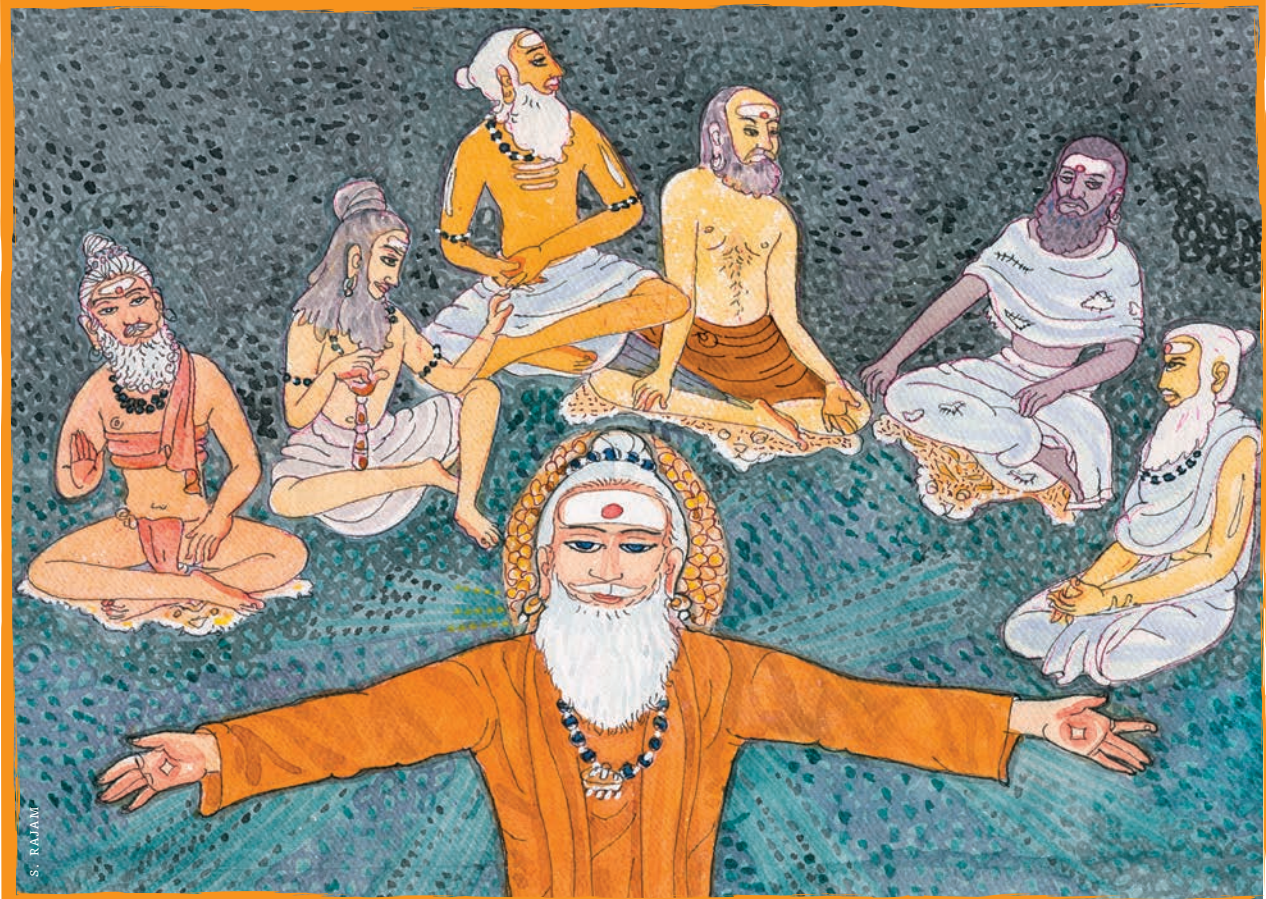
Anyone hoping to climb Mount Everest would be wise to have a Sherpa by his side, a guide who has been where you want to go. Similarly, as we walk the spiritual path, we should not be without a satguru, an enlightened master who knows Truth and can take us there. The word *guru* means “teacher.” Anyone you are studying with may be called a guru, such as a dance guru, music guru or a classroom teacher. A teacher is important in any area of study, because it is difficult for us to see our own weaknesses, but easy for a trained expert. Your mother and father are your first gurus. Many Hindus have a satguru, a teacher of *sat*, or truth. A satguru is a mature soul who has realized God and is able to lead others along the path. Siva is within each of us, shining out through our eyes. But Siva shines out from the satguru more brightly, because he or she is pure and enlightened. Thus, we worship the satguru as Siva Himself. The satguru is devoted full time to religious life, to upholding Saivism and helping his devotees. Just by living and being, he or she brings peace and blessings to the world. A satguru

is always a sannyasin, one who is unmarried and has renounced all possessions, personal life, family and friends. A rare initiation from his guru empowered him with the highest spiritual knowledge and authority. This is Siva’s revealing grace, *anugraha shakti*, in action. If your family has a satguru to guide it, you are indeed fortunate. He can wisely advise your parents and keep the family strong, harmonious and spiritually alive. Get to know him. Talk to him and ask questions. He will share his wisdom and help you draw close to God.

**GURUDEVA:** The satguru is the devotee’s spiritual guide and preceptor, friend and companion on the path. Having become religion’s consummation, the satguru can see where others are and know what their next step should be. A satguru is needed because the mind is so cunning and the ego is a self-perpetuating mechanism. It is he who inspires, assists, guides and impels the shishya toward the Self of himself.

PAST SATGURUS: (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) MAHARISHI NANDINATHA, TIRUMULAR, RISHI FROM T

GURUDEVA HOLDS HIS ARMS WIDE TO EMBRACE THE LINEAGE OF



HE HIMALAYAS, KADAITSWAMI, CHELLAPPASWAMI AND YOGASWAMI.

## 36

## What Is Our Heritage of Gurus?

Since the beginning of time, the power, or shakti, of God Siva has been carried forth by enlightened beings, satgurus. That power is like a brilliant ray of spiritual energy. Many of these masters trained other great souls and passed on their power to them. As this happened again and again for thousands of years, many chains of gurus, called *parampara*, were formed. Our lineage is called the Kailasa Parampara. It means the lineage from Siva's Himalayan mountain, Kailas. It began thousands of years ago. The first master that history records is Maharishi Nandinatha (ca 250 bce). He passed his power to Rishi Tirumular, a sage who wrote a yoga text called *Tirumantiram*. After him, over 150 rishis carried the shakti of Siva forward, their names lost to history. In the 19th century, a nameless Himalayan rishi of this lineage traveled to Bengaluru in South India. There he passed the thread of power to Kadaitswami (1804–1891) and sent him to Sri Lanka to strengthen Saivism there. Kadaitswami passed his power to Sage

Chellappaswami (1840–1915). He, in turn, initiated Satguru Yogaswami (1872–1964). In 1949, Yogaswami ordained our Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). Gurudeva brought Saivism to the West and established Kauai Aadheenam, his monastery, on the Hawaiian island of Kauai in 1970. In 2001 he initiated Bodhinatha Veylanswami as his successor. The power from all previous gurus and the blessings of the devas that assist them abide in the current preceptor.

**GURUDEVA:** Hindu temples sustain Hinduism around the world. Scriptures keep us always reminded of the path we are on and the path we are supposed to be on, but only from the satguru can you get the spirit, the shakti, the sustaining spirit, to make it all come to life in you, to make the temple meaningful and to complement the scriptures with your own sight, your own third-eye sight.

In Hindu society there are two ways to live our adult life. We call them the two paths. Most people follow the family path. A rare few follow the monastic path. A married couple has great responsibilities. They create and run a home together. They raise their children as spiritual, well-educated citizens of their nation. They provide support to the young, the aged and the monastic community. The *Tirukural* summarizes: "The foremost duty of family life is to serve duly these five: God, guests, kindred, ancestors and oneself." Married life begins with the wedding ceremony, where vows are taken to be faithful and follow dharma for life. Monastics follow a different path. Instead of having a spouse and children, they embrace the whole world as their family. They have two goals: to serve humanity and realize God. They renounce name and fame. Their focus is worship, meditation and yoga, which makes them pure and wise. They inspire and uplift those on the householder path. Some wander or live alone, and others join monasteries. Some are dynamic teachers, some are swamis with many followers and others

are unheralded hermits. In Saivism, most monastics are men, but there are also orders for women. Monastic life begins with vows to stay unmarried and celibate, devoted to God, Gods and guru. Most Hindu monks wear orange robes. Others wear white or yellow robes. Some shave their heads, while others have long hair and beards. The *Tirukural* praises both paths: "Behold those who have weighed the dual nature of things and followed the renunciate's way. Their greatness illumines the world." "Domestic life is rightly called virtue. The monastic path, rightly lived beyond blame, is likewise good." The key is to choose your path carefully and follow it faithfully.

**GURUDEVA:** The two paths—householder and renunciate—every young man has to choose between them. ... The choice is his and his alone as to how his soul is to live through the birth karmas of this incarnation. Both paths take courage, great courage, to step forward and embrace the responsibilities of adult life.

AT THE ASHRAM IN MUMBAI FOUNDED BY SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA, SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA, SEATED, IS SURROUNDED BY HIS SWAMIS AND FAMILY DEVOTEES. FAMILIES & MONKS WORK TOGETHER TO FULFILL THE GURU'S MISSION.



AT THE ASHRAM IN MUMBAI FOUNDED BY SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

COURTESY CHINMAYA MISSION

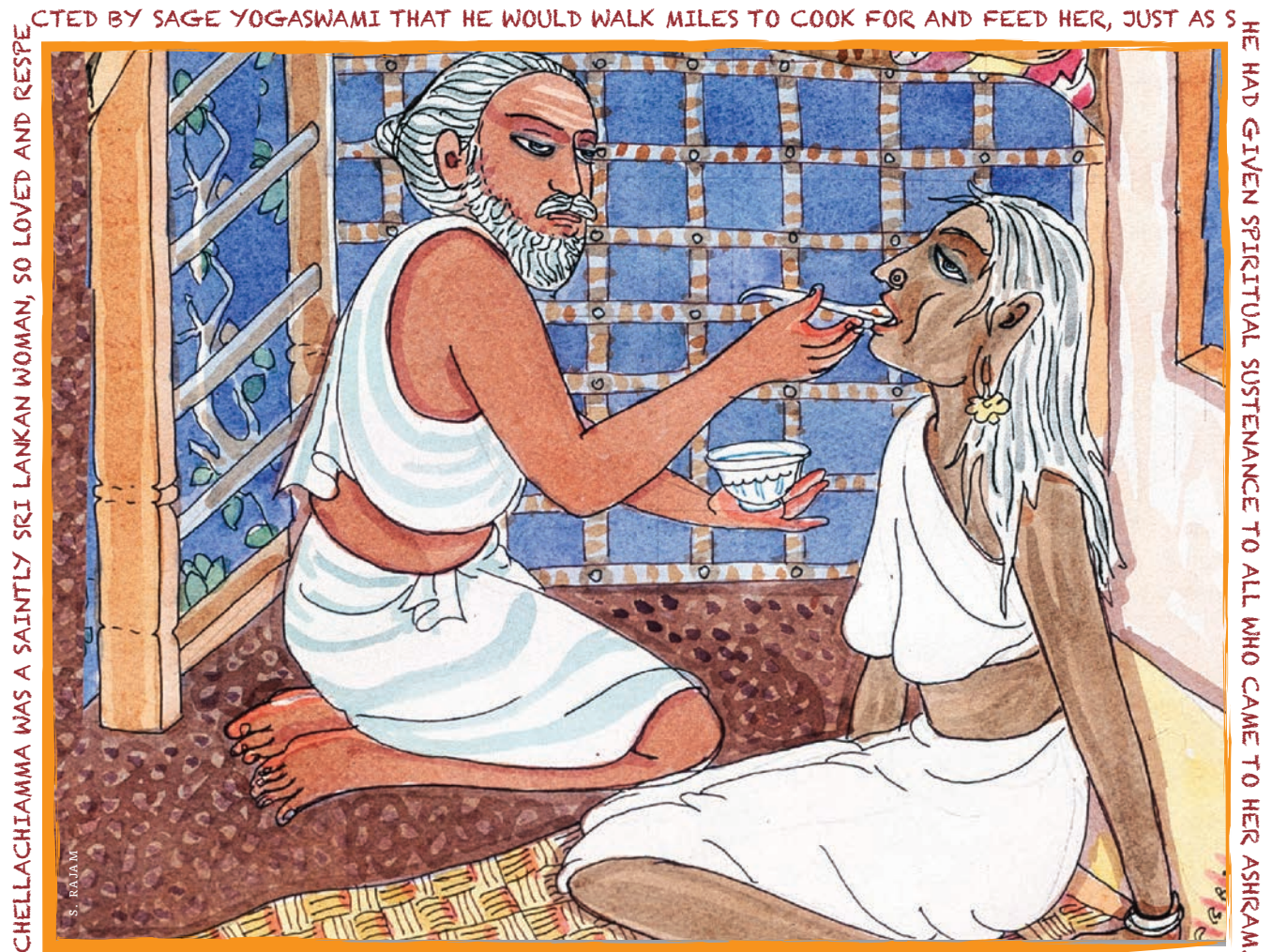
FAMILIES & MONKS WORK TOGETHER TO FULFILL THE GURU'S MISSION.



Saivism has many holy men and women. All are great devotees of Siva, Murugan and Ganesha. We honor living holy ones on their birthday, or *jayanti*. Those who have left this Earth we revere on the day of their passing, or *mahasamadhi*—their new birthday. Saints reflect the peace, humility and purity of a devout life. Sages are great souls who may outwardly appear ordinary. Satgurus are enlightened beings who guide others on the path. Holy men and women—married people as well as gurus, sadhus and swamis—have stood strong for Saivism at critical times throughout history. Many traveled widely and spread Saivite culture and knowledge to new areas. Some were solitary mystics, meditating and performing yoga. Some wrote scriptures or composed beautiful songs to God that we sing today. Our lineage began over 2,000 years ago with Maharishi Nandinatha, a yoga master from Kashmir. His

disciple Sundaranatha, later known as Rishi Tirumular, traveled by foot to South India to teach Saivism. Our many gurus followed from him. Other Saivite traditions include that of Matsyendranatha and his disciple Gorakshanatha, who expounded hatha yoga and spread Natha Saivism through central India and Nepal. The many women saints include the austere yogini Karaikkal Ammaiyar and the beloved Saint Auvaiyar, whose poems children study to learn religion and good conduct. Among the most famous Tamil Saiva saints are the Nalvars, who kept Saivism strong in Tamil Nadu twelve centuries ago.

**GURUDEVA:** Though it may not be your dharma to formally renounce the world, you can benefit your search immensely by knowing how the great ones seek to live and respond to life. You can find ways in the midst of your life to follow their example.



A TEMPLE BEHIND. THEIR SONGS, WRITINGS AND LIVES INSPIRED SAIVITES THROUGH HARD TIME



## 39 Who Are the Four Great Tamil Saints?

The Nalvars are four Saiva saints who lived in Tamil Nadu around 1,200 years ago. Each composed devotional songs that are sung today in satsangs and temples. Their names are Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar and Manikkavasagar. All are deeply revered by Tamil Saivites. Saint Tirunavukkarasar, known as Appar (“father”), traveled from temple to temple worshiping Siva. He chose the humblest of work, sweeping the temple walks and weeding the stone courtyards. Saint Sundarar is known for his deep visions of Lord Siva and for several miraculous events that occurred in his life. A poor man, he often prayed for money or food for his family. His prayers were always answered. The third saint, Sambandar, was just three years old when he was blessed with a vision of Lord Siva, after which he spontaneously sang his first song. He traveled throughout South India, sometimes with Appar, his elder, singing the praises of Siva. At age 16, his family arranged for

him to be married. But this was not to be. He was so devoted to Siva that just before the wedding, he disappeared into the sanctum of Tirunallurperuman Siva Temple near Chidambaram and was never seen again. The songs of the first three saints are called *Devarams*. Manikkavasagar, the fourth Nalvar, was prime minister to the Pandyan king of Madurai. One day he was blessed with enlightenment in a vision of Lord Siva sitting under a banyan tree. After this he left the royal court and traveled about, composing songs and building a temple for Siva at Tiruperunthurai. His poems stress the importance of the Namaḥ Śivāya mantra, developing dispassion and cultivating love of Lord Siva. His highly poetic hymns are found in two collections, *Tiruvagasam* and *Tirukovaiyar*.

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**GURUDEVA:** Our saints have sung that Siva is within us, and we are within Siva. Knowing that, fear and worry and doubt are forever gone from our mind.

OF THE TEN CLASSICAL RESTRAINTS, CALLED YAMAS, AND THE TEN OBSERVANCES, CALLED NIYAMAS.

ON A CLASSROOM BLACKBOARD THE TEACHER HAS WRITTEN A LIST



TOGETHER THEY FORM AN IMPORTANT HINDU CODE OF CONDUCT.

## 40

## What Is Our Code of Conduct?

**T**he yamas and niyamas are the Hindu code of conduct. Heeding the ten yamas or “restraints” keeps our instinctive nature in check. Abiding by the ten niyamas, “observances,” makes us more

religious and cultured, revealing our refined soul nature. The yamas and niyamas provide the foundation to support our yoga practice and sustain us from day to day and year to year on the path to Siva.

### The Ten Restraints (Yamas)

- 1. AHIMSA:** “Noninjury.” Do not harm others by what you do, say or think, even in your dreams. Live a kindly life, never causing fear, pain or injury. See God in everyone. Follow a vegetarian diet.
- 2. SATYA:** “Truthfulness.” Speak only what is true, kind, helpful and necessary. Be true to your promises. Don’t keep secrets from family or friends. Be accurate and frank in discussions. Don’t deceive others. Admit your failings. Do not gossip, backbite or tell lies.
- 3. ASTEYA:** “Nonstealing.” Do not steal. Control your desires, and live within your family’s means. Do not desire what others possess. Do not misuse things you borrow. Do not gamble or fail to repay debts. Do not

- use others’ names, words, resources or rights without permission and acknowledgement.
- 4. BRAHMACHARYA:** “Divine conduct.” Control your desires when single, reserving sexual relations for marriage. Before marriage, use vital energies in study, and after marriage in creating family success. Dress and speak modestly. Seek holy company. Avoid pornography and violence on TV, in movies, magazines and online.
- 5. KSHAMA:** “Patience.” Restrain intolerance with people and impatience with circumstances. Be agreeable and unhurried. Let others behave according to their nature, without adjusting to

you. Do not argue, interrupt or dominate conversations. Be especially patient with children and the elderly. Remain poised even in difficult times.

**6. DHRITI:** "Steadfastness." Overcome fear, indecision and changeableness. Stick to what you are supposed to do without getting sidetracked. Be firm in your decisions. Achieve your goals with a prayer, purpose, plan, persistence and push. Do not complain or make excuses. Develop willpower, courage and industriousness. Conquer obstacles.

**7. DAYA:** "Compassion." Conquer cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings. See God everywhere. Be kind to people, animals, plants and the Earth itself. Forgive those who apologize and express their true remorse. Foster sympathy for others' needs and suffering. Help those who are weak, poor, aged or in pain. Oppose family abuse and other cruelties.

**8. ARJAVA:** "Honesty, straightforwardness." Give up

deception and wrongdoing. Obey the laws of your nation and community. Do not bribe or accept bribes. Do not cheat or deceive others. Be honest with yourself. Face and accept your faults without blaming them on others. Always be honest.

**9. MITAHARA:** "Moderate appetite." Do not eat too much. Do not eat meat, fish, shellfish, fowl or eggs. Enjoy fresh, wholesome vegetarian foods that vitalize the body. Avoid junk and processed foods, such as white sugar, white rice and white flour. Eat at regular times and only when hungry. Do not eat in a disturbed atmosphere or when upset.

**10. SAUCHA:** "Purity." Avoid impurity in mind, body and speech. Maintain a clean, healthy body. Keep a pure, uncluttered home and workplace. Act virtuously. Keep good company. Never use harsh or indecent language.

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## The Ten Observances (Niyamas)

**1. HRI:** "Remorse." Be modest and show shame for misdeeds. Recognize your errors, confess, apologize and make amends. Welcome constructive criticism. Resolve all contention before sleep. Seek out and overcome your own faults. Do not boast. Shun pride and pretension.

**2. SANTOSHA:** "Contentment." Seek joy and serenity in life. Be happy, smile and uplift others. Live in gratitude for your health, friends and belongings. Don't complain about what you don't have. Identify with the eternal You. Live in the eternal now and work for spiritual progress.

**3. DANA:** "Giving." Tithe and donate to temples, ashrams and spiritual organizations. Feed and give to those in need. Freely share your time and talents. Treat guests as God.

**4. ASTIKYA:** "Faith." Believe firmly in God, Gods, guru and your path to enlightenment. Trust in the scriptures and traditions. Be loyal to your lineage, one with your satguru. Don't make friends with those who try to break your faith. Practice devotion and sadhana to build faith. Avoid doubt and despair.

**5. ISHVARAPUJANA:** "Worship of the Lord." Worship and meditate daily. Offer fruit, flowers or food daily at the home shrine. Learn a simple puja. Visit the shrine when leaving home and returning.

**6. SIDDHANTA SHRAVANA:** "Scriptural listening." Study the teachings and listen to the wise of your lineage. Carefully choose a guru, then follow his path and don't waste time exploring other ways. Listen to

readings and inspired talks by which wisdom flows from knower to seeker.

**7. MATI:** "Cognition." Develop a spiritual will and intellect with your satguru's guidance. Strive for knowledge of God, to awaken the light within. Seek the lesson in each experience to understand life and yourself. Cultivate intuition through meditation.

**8. VRATA:** "Sacred vows." Take and fulfill religious vows, rules and observances. These are spiritual contracts with your soul, your community and God, Gods and guru. Fast periodically. Pilgrimage yearly. Uphold your vows strictly, be they chastity, marriage, monasticism, nonaddiction, tithing, loyalty to a lineage, vegetarianism or nonsmoking.

**9. JAPA:** "Recitation." Recite your holy mantra daily as instructed by your guru. Bathe first, quiet the mind and concentrate fully to let japa harmonize, purify and uplift you. Let japa quell the emotions and rivers of thought.

**10. TAPAS:** "Austerity." Practice from time to time austerity, serious disciplines, penance and sacrifice. Atone for misdeeds through penance, such as 108 prostrations or fasting. Perform self-denial, giving up cherished possessions, money or time.

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**GURUDEVA:** Through following the yamas and niyamas, we ... lift ourself into the consciousness of the higher chakras—of love, compassion, intelligence and bliss—and naturally invoke the blessings of the divine devas and Mahadevas.

**W**orship, holy days, pilgrimage, dharma and rites of passage are the five areas of practice that Gurudeva recommended for all Hindus. In Sanskrit they are called the *pancha nitya karmas*. First and foremost is daily worship, *upasana*. This is the core of religious life, the soul's natural outpouring of love for God and the Gods. Next is *utsava*, honoring holy days, when the blessings of the Deities are strongest. We join with family and community in ceremony and feasting during the major Siva, Ganesha and Murugan festivals each year. Monday is the Hindu holy day in the North of India, and Friday in the South. On this day we attend the temple, clean and decorate the home shrine and spend extra time in prayer, japa and scriptural study. These are not days of rest; we carry on our usual work. Pilgrimage, *tirthayatra*, is our third area of practice. At least once a year, we make a special journey to a holy place. It is a complete break from our usual concerns, during which God, Gods and gurus become the singular focus. These three forms of worship—daily puja, holy days and pilgrimage—help us manifest

our inner perfection in our outer nature. Our fourth area is dharma, living an unselfish life of duty and good conduct. Here, the yamas and niyamas are our guide. Dharma includes being respectful of parents, elders, teachers and swamis. Our fifth area of practice is rites of passage, called *samskaras*. These are personal ceremonies that sanctify and celebrate crucial junctures in life, from birth to death. The first major samskara is the name-giving rite. Others follow, including first feeding, ear piercing and beginning of formal study. As an adult, the most important ceremony is marriage. At death, the soul is released from the body during sacred funeral rites. Rites of passage draw to us special blessings from the devas and Deities, society and village, family and friends.

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**GURUDEVA:** Performing daily sadhana, keeping good company, pilgrimaging to holy places, seeing to others' needs—these evoke the higher energies, direct the mind to useful thoughts and avoid the creation of troublesome new karmas.



WE ALL HAVE. ON THE LEFT, A YOUTH IS DEPRESSED, SILENTLY REPEATING NEGATIVE STATEMENT



TWO POSTURES SPEAK OF THE NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE POTENTIAL

S. ON THE RIGHT HE DISCOVERS THE POWER OF POSITIVE THOUGHTS.

## 42

## How Do We Use Affirmations?

**A**n affirmation is a positive declaration or assertion that we repeat regularly to bring about useful changes in our life. While repeating the words, we concentrate on the meaning and visualize and feel the desired result. Your words, visualizations and feelings have power. They impress your subconscious mind. When they are positive, useful and creative, they make you more secure and successful in everything you do. Affirmations must be carefully worded to gain the desired effect. The sadhana is to repeat it to yourself for a minute or two, ideally at the same time each day. Silently is good, but aloud is even better. For example, "I can. I will. I am able to accomplish what I plan." Repeating this each day programs your mind with confidence and increases your willpower. But just saying the words is not enough. You must really feel "I can! I will! I am able!" Imagine what it will feel like when you accomplish your goal. It is helpful to remember the feeling of success you experienced when you achieved something in the past. Positive affirmations

help you face life with optimism. Negative thinking does the opposite. Many people think, "I can't. I won't. I'm not able." And, sure enough, they fail. Why? Because they have programmed their mind to fail. An affirmation creates the opposite effect. You see the goal clearly and feel yourself attaining it. Success follows naturally. Gurudeva's other affirmations include "I'm all right, right now," "All my needs will always be met," and "I am equal to any challenge I meet." Affirmation builds a positive self-concept. This means knowing that you are a worthy person deserving a wonderful life and fully capable of achieving it. Having such a positive concept allows us to identify with our inner, spiritual nature so that we truly feel we are a divine being on a perfect path.

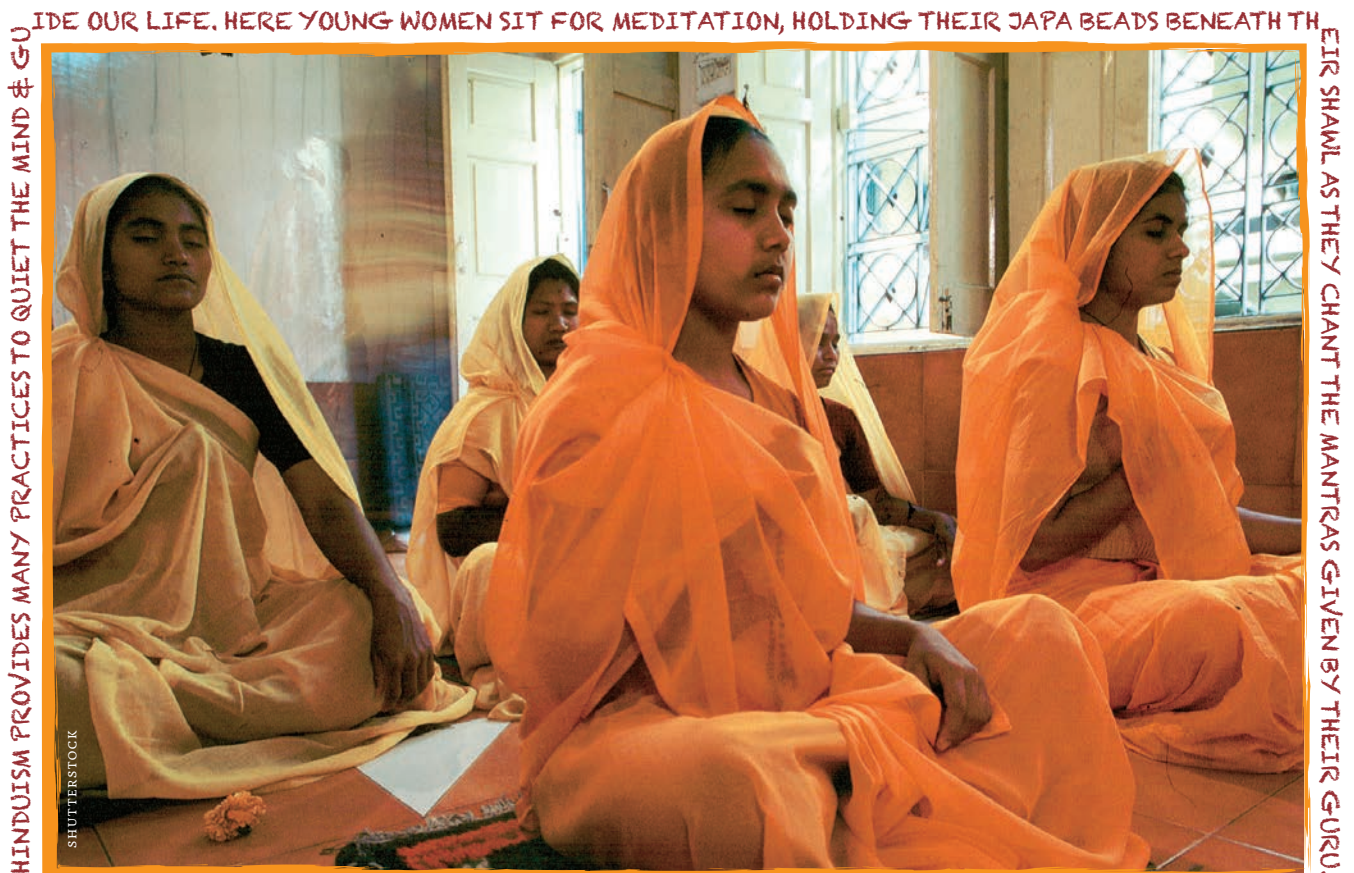
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**GURUDEVA:** Get into the rhythm of the affirmation. This causes strong feelings and impressions deep in the inner mind. Each word has a certain rate of vibration. Feeling is greater than visualization.

There are three dimensions to our being: physical, emotional/intellectual and spiritual. All three need attention for optimum health. Exercise strengthens our physical body. Learning and practicing self control expands and enhances our emotional/mental capacity. Through *sadhana*, spiritual practice, we exercise our spiritual nature by taking time to experience it. Most of the time we are so wrapped up in our outer nature that we are hardly aware of our deep, glorious inner reality. This can go on life after life, as many people only begin to think of greater realities when nearing the point of death. We give time to our spiritual nature by performing religious activities, ideally as a daily vigil or spiritual exercise. During this quiet time alone we focus on life's inner purpose, which is to make spiritual progress. Puja, japa, scriptural study, hatha yoga and meditation are all forms of *sadhana*. Some *sadhanas* are yearly, such as going on pilgrimage. Some may be assigned by the guru as a one-time practice. A popular *sadhana* is chanting "AUM" 108 times each day. The ten-minute spiritual workout is becoming

popular in today's busy world. These times of quiet retreat from life's hustle and bustle are underrated, their benefits overlooked. *Sadhana* builds willpower, faith and confidence in oneself and in God, Gods and guru. It harnesses our instinctive-intellectual nature, allowing unfoldment into the superconscious realizations and innate abilities of the soul. Gurudeva noted: "Through *sadhana* we learn to control the energies of the body and nerve system, and we experience that through the control of the breath the mind becomes peaceful. *Sadhana* is practiced in the home, in the forest, by a flowing river, under a favorite tree, in the temple, in gurukulas or wherever a pure, serene atmosphere can be found." Yogaswami directed his devotees to follow the *sadhana margā*, the path of religious effort, all through life.

**GURUDEVA:** For consistent progress, *sadhana* should be performed regularly, without fail, at the same time each day, preferably in the early hours before dawn.



BENEATH A BANYAN TREE SAGE PATANJALI IS SEATED ON A FIVE-HEADED NAGA, THE SERPENT THAT REPRESENTS KUNDALINI, THE POWER IN THE SPINE. HE TAUGHT

BENEATH A BANYAN TREE SAGE PATANJALI IS SEATED ON A FIVE



THE WAY OF YOGA, A PATH LEADING THE SEEKER DEEP WITHIN.

## 44

## What Is Yoga?

**Y**oga, meaning “union,” is Hinduism’s system of yoking our individual consciousness with transcendent or divine consciousness. Yoga was described by Sage Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras* over 2,000 years ago as a system of meditation with eight limbs or stages. Hence it is known as ashtanga (eightfold) yoga. It is also known as raja yoga. Patanjali defined it as “the restraint of mental activities.” Stages one and two are *yama* and *niyama*. These define the spiritual lifestyle we need for success in meditation. The third limb is *asana*, meaning “seat” or “posture,” learning to sit comfortably for long periods without moving. This is achieved through hatha yoga, the postures of which balance the energies of mind and body, promoting health and serenity. The fourth stage is *pranayama*, regulated breathing. This is the science of controlling prana (subtle energy) through breathing techniques. Stage five is *pratyahara*, withdrawing awareness from the senses, emotions and thought. Like a tortoise who withdraws its head and legs into its shell for protection, the yogi withdraws his awareness from the outside world and discovers the infinite world within.

The sixth stage is *dharana*, concentration, focusing the mind on a single object or line of thought, not allowing it to wander. Stage seven is *dhyana*, true meditation. Gurudeva described it as “a quiet, alert, powerfully concentrated state wherein new knowledge and insight pour into the field of consciousness.” A good meditation teaches us something new about ourselves or the world. The eighth and final stage is *samadhi*. This is the goal of yoga, a state in which the meditator and the object of meditation are one. Over time, specialized forms of yoga have been developed. For example, kriya yoga focuses on breath control, mantra and mudra; karma yoga transforms work into worship; bhakti yoga is union through devotion; and in some forms of hatha yoga, bodily perfection is the goal.

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**GURUDEVA:** If you just sit without moving, and breathe,...awareness is loosened from limited concepts and made free to move vibrantly and buoyantly into the inner depths where peace and bliss remain undisturbed for centuries.





A DEVOTEE SITS QUIETLY IN A FOREST AND HOLDS A MALA OF RUDRA

SHUTTERSTOCK/HIMALAYAN ACADEMY

TRA 108 TIMES, KEEPING TRACK OF HIS PROGRESS ON THE BEADS.

## 45 What Is Japa?

A mantra is a sacred Sanskrit word or phrase, and repeating one's mantra while counting on beads is called japa, or mantra yoga. Such a magic chant forms a kind of spiritual affirmation that we repeat mentally or aloud to draw close to God. It helps us feel in perfect harmony with everything. There are many mantras. Each one honors God or one of the Gods. One of Ganesha's mantras is "Aum Gaṃ Gaṇapataye Namaḥ." It means "Praise to the Lord of devas." Murugan's special mantra is "Aum Śaravaṇabhāva." It describes the mind as a peaceful, undisturbed lake. The supreme Saiva mantra, found at the center of the *Yajur Veda*, is "Namaḥ Śivāya," which means "adoration to Siva." Because it has five syllables (Na-Ma-Śi-Vā-Ya), it is called the Panchakshara Mantra, or "five-lettered chant." One of your goals as a youth should be to qualify yourself for Namaḥ Śivāya initiation from your guru. This will give the mantra special power for you. After that ceremony, you will repeat it every day 108 times. Chanting Aum Namaḥ Śivāya

connects you with millions of Siva's devotees. Aum Namaḥ Śivāya feeds your soul, brightens your intellect and quells the instinctive mind. Until you are initiated in Namaḥ Śivāya, you can chant "Aum Śaravaṇabhāva." Here is how to perform japa. Sit quietly holding a strand of 108 prayer beads in your right hand. Repeat the mantra, verbally or mentally. Each time you repeat it, push a bead over the middle finger with your thumb. Concentrate on the sound and its meaning as you have been taught. Keep your mind from wandering. As you chant, the devas send divine rays of blessing. Perform japa anywhere: in the temple, in your home shrine room, under a favorite tree, on the banks of a river, or in a remote cave.

**GURUDEVA:** One who performs japa properly will realize what he knows. You see, japa opens up the inner mind and focuses the energies of certain chakras, which are consciousness encased within the psychic nerve ganglia of the nadi network.

**M**editation is the yoga practice we use to quiet the mind, the body and the emotions and go deep within ourself. It is more than sitting down and thinking about things in an ordinary way. And it is not just closing the eyes and doing nothing. Meditation occurs when concentration is sustained. It is a quiet, alert, powerful state wherein new knowledge is awakened from within as you focus fully on an external object or an internal line of thought. The first goal is to sit still for a few minutes. Then sit longer, until you can remain perfectly still for ten or fifteen minutes. When you are able to sit for twenty minutes without moving even one finger, your divine mind can begin to express itself. It can even reprogram your subconscious and change bad habits. The second method is to breathe regularly, nine counts in and nine counts out, slowly. Our emotions and thinking are tied to our breathing. If we control breathing, we automatically quiet our emotions and thoughts. When our body is still and our

mind and emotions are quiet, we can find peace and discover new knowledge inside ourself. We become aware of the spiritual power within us. We can use that power to understand our religion, to solve problems in our life and to be a better person. Meditation is the study of awareness, which is therefore a study of yourself and the universe. With practice, meditation becomes a door to contemplation, where you experience the highest states of consciousness and see the clear white light of your soul. If you learn to meditate, your life will be more interesting and less stressful. You will be more alive and alert, more present and able to live in the eternal now. Your thinking will be clearer and your emotions more joyful.

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**GURUDEVA:** Seeing the mind in its totality convinces the seeker that he is something else, he is the witness who observes the mind and cannot, therefore, be the mind itself. Then we realize that the mind in its superconsciousness is pure.

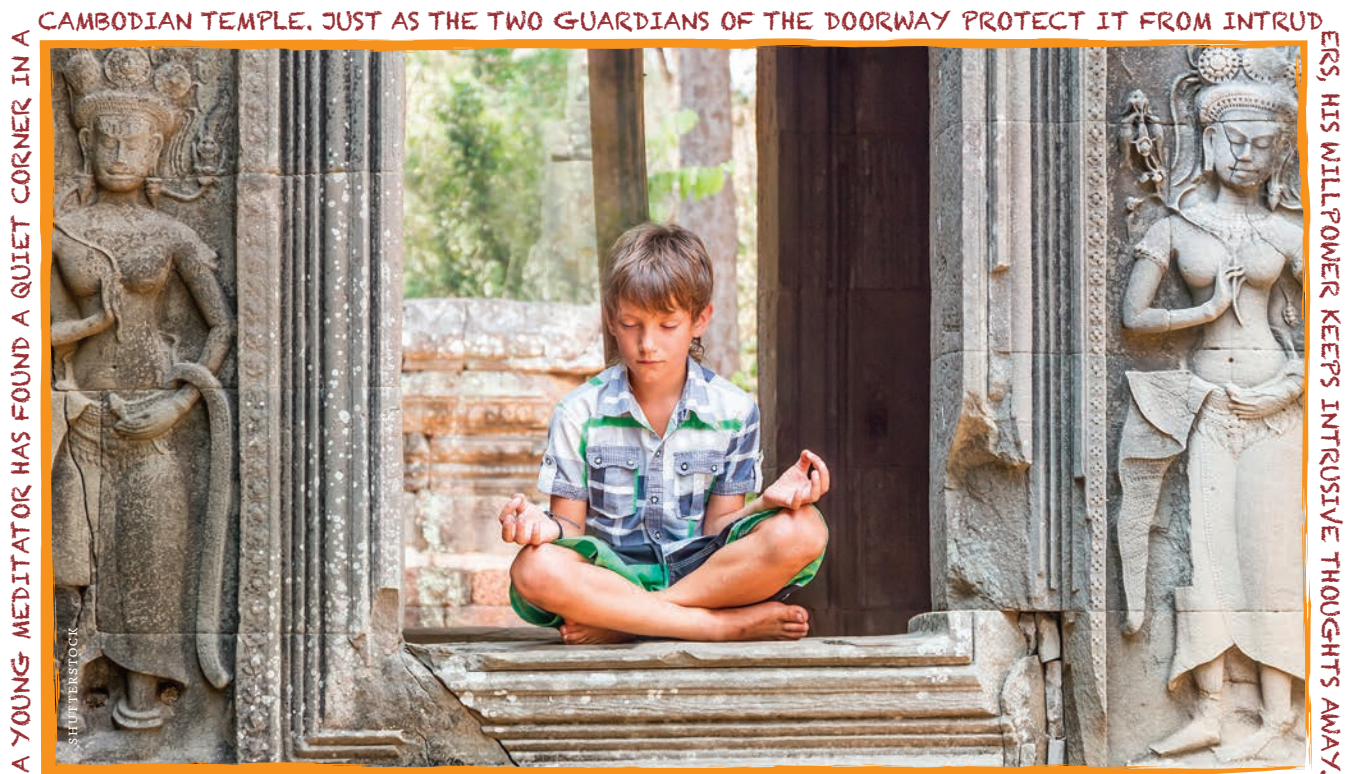
TO QUIET THE MIND THROUGH THE AGE-OLD ART OF MEDITATION. IF SUCCESSFUL, SHE WILL

EYES CLOSED AND SEATED ON A YOGA MAT, THIS TEENAGER SEEKS



SHUTTERSTOCK

MOVE BEYOND THOUGHT TO DISCOVER A LASTING PEACE OF MIND.



## 47

## How Do We Meditate?

**G**urudeva said, "Meditation is a long journey, a pilgrimage into the mind itself." He knew that meditation can make life joyous, creative, calm and profound. He gave us clear instructions about this ancient practice. First, he said, we should meditate regularly each day. The best time is in the early morning, and the best place is a clean, undisturbed space. Making meditation a part of each day stabilizes karmas, brings peace of mind and keeps the external world in perspective. He taught, "The finest times to meditate are just before sunrise and sunset. The period of meditation should be from ten minutes to one-half hour to begin with." Breathing is most important. At first you may find that thoughts are racing through your mind. By regulating the breath, thoughts are stilled and awareness moves into an area of the mind that does not

think but knows. Gurudeva gave us a system called "preparation for meditation." It is a series of breathing and mental exercises that quiets our mind and directs our awareness inward. Using the same series in reverse returns you to normal consciousness. Going in should take about one-third of your allotted time. The actual meditation should take about half of the time, and coming out should take one-sixth.

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**GURUDEVA:** Throughout your inner investigations in meditation, cling to the philosophical principle that the mind doesn't move. Thoughts are stationary within the mind, and only awareness moves. It flows from one thought to another, as the free citizen of the world travels through each country, each city, not attaching himself anywhere.

### Going Into Meditation

**1. POSTURE:** If you are able, sit on the floor with your legs crossed, either in full or half lotus. Place your hands in your lap with the right hand resting on the left and the tips of your thumbs touching softly. You

may also sit on a cushion, on your knees, or in a chair. Sit upright with your shoulders back, spine straight and the head balanced on top of the spine. You should feel poised and comfortable.

**2. BODY HEAT:** Feel the warmth of your body, your head, your chest, your feet. Become conscious of heat radiating out from your skin.

**3. BREATH:** Breathe through your nose, not through your mouth. You should breathe from the diaphragm, the muscle at the bottom of your rib cage just above your abdomen. Your stomach should move in and out as you breathe. Don't breathe by expanding and contracting your chest. That kind of breathing makes it difficult to be calm. As you inhale, slowly count to nine and hold one count. Then count to nine again as you exhale, softly contracting the abdomen as you expel air. Then hold one count. At first, you may be more comfortable counting only to five or six.

**4. LIFE FORCE:** Next feel the nerves within your body. Feel the nerves in your face, in your hands, in your feet. Feel the energy, the life force flowing

through those nerves.

**5. POWER OF THE SPINE:** Now move your spine slightly—this is the only time in the meditation you should move at all. This will help you focus on your spine and the energy that flows within it. Try not to be aware of anything else, just the spine.

**6. WITHDRAWAL:** Draw the energy from the body inward. On the first in-breath, become aware of your left leg, all the way to your toes. On the out-breath, slowly pull the energy of the left leg into your spine. Do the same with the other leg, each arm and finally the torso.

**7. PURE AWARENESS:** At this stage, you should have little awareness of your body. Now become aware that you are aware. Then be aware of awareness and nothing else. Hold this state as long as you can.

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## Meditate on a Subject of Your Choice

**YOUR MEDITATION:** With the body relaxed and the mind quieted, you are ready to focus on the day's meditation. It could be a problem you are working on, a decision you want to ponder or something that interests you. But this isn't a time to think, that is, to logically move from one thought to another. Instead,

you want to concentrate in a general way on the issue, and wait for some new understanding to occur. So instead of thinking, keep the mind quiet and wait for the next insight, which will come when your mind is open. In this way, you can tap into your superconscious mind.

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## Or Meditate on Five Forms of Siva Consciousness

**SIVACHAITANYA PANCHATANTRA:** When you are really good at meditating, you can try this advanced one. The discipline is to concentrate on five forms of Siva consciousness, one after the other:

- **Vital Breath:** *prana*. Concentrate only on your in-breath and out-breath. Try to experience them as Siva's will within your body, then as the pulse of the universe, divine will in action.
- **All-Pervasive Energy:** *shakti*. Become conscious of the flow of life within your body. Try to see this same universal energy within every living thing.
- **Manifest Sacred Form:** *darshana*. Hold in your

mind a sacred form, such as Nataraja, Sivalinga or your satguru, and try to experience that form as Siva Himself.

- **Inner Light:**  *jyoti*. Look within your mind as if you were looking at an inner TV screen. Remove the images and thoughts and you are left only with light. Concentrate on that light.
- **Sacred Sound:** *nada*. Listen to the constant high-pitched ee sounding in your head, like a humming swarm of bees. Usually this can be heard first in one ear, then the other. Try to balance the sounds until the ee sound is centered in the head.

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## Coming Out of Meditation

**REVERSE THE SEVEN STEPS:** When you are finished meditating, reverse the steps you took to go within. Feel the spine, then the energy of the spine returning out to the parts of the body. Feel the nerves of the body, then your breath. Finally, become aware

of the body's warmth, then your posture. Open your eyes, chant "AUM" three times and your meditation is complete. Every time we go within, our life is enriched. Gurudeva said the only bad meditation is the one you did not do.



## 48

## Why Do We Practice Ahimsa?

**O**ur basic beliefs as Saivite Hindus naturally inspire us to practice ahimsa, or noninjury. Because we see God everywhere, we feel a deep closeness and affection for all beings. We would never want to hurt that which we love and revere. Knowing that God is in every person, every creature, every thing bestows an attitude of sublime tolerance and acceptance. We reject the idea that some people are evil and deserve to be treated badly. People do act in evil ways, but deep inside they are all divine beings; they are experiencing a difficult part of their evolutionary path. The second belief behind ahimsa is the law of karma. We know that any hurt we cause others will one day return to us. Being aware of this basic principle, we wholeheartedly practice ahimsa—refraining not only from causing physical harm or violence, but also from hurting others with our words and our thoughts. Such gentleness gives rise to respect, courtesy and appreciation for others. Noninjury is the product of spiritual consciousness. Hurtfulness arises from lower, instinctive consciousness—fear, anger, greed, jealousy and

hate. It is based in the mentality of separateness—of good and bad, mine and yours. We never retaliate. It is wiser to accept the hurt as self-created karma and respond with understanding and forgiveness; to retaliate would only perpetuate that karma. However, ahimsa does not mean pacifism. We may defend ourselves to protect our life or the life of another or turn to the police, who are authorized to use force. And we support our country's use of military force to safeguard its citizens. Ahimsa is also a powerful tool for changing and improving society and government. Gandhi proved this with his civil disobedience movement, which freed India without resorting to fights or force. Ahimsa is called the mahavrata, the great vow. Among all the yamas and niyamas, it is the most important virtue.

**GURUDEVA:** It is good to know that nonviolence speaks only to the most extreme forms of forceful wrongdoing, while ahimsa goes much deeper to prohibit even the subtle abuse and the simple hurt.

**P**eople adopt vegetarianism for five main reasons: dharma, karma, consciousness, health and environment. First, dharma declares that we should not kill other creatures to feed ourselves. Second, those who eat meat are participating indirectly in violent acts against the animal kingdom. This creates negative karma, bringing to us suffering in the future. A third reason is the impact of eating meat on our consciousness. At the moment of death, the terror and torture of the animal is biochemically locked into the flesh. When we consume the meat, we take that animal's fear into our own body and it negatively affects our consciousness. The fourth reason is health. Eating meat has been linked to a variety of illnesses, including cancer. There is no nutritional reason humans have to eat meat. Modern research confirms that a vegetarian diet is a fundamentally healthy diet. Reason five, the huge industry that raises meat for human consumption is bad for the environment. It contributes to climate change, destruction of rain forests, loss of topsoil

and the extinction of species. If the resources currently spent on raising beef, pigs and chickens were instead used to produce vegetarian food, hunger could be reduced worldwide and global warming largely allayed. Today vegetarianism is a global movement. There are vegetarians among all the religions as well as those who have no religion. Three percent of Americans are vegetarians, with eight percent among teens. In the UK, 15 percent of teens declare themselves vegetarians. India has the largest number of vegetarians in the world, more than 500 million, 30 percent of the population. Our saints proclaimed vegetarianism to be man's natural and noble diet. The very name of our religion in Tamil, *Saivam*, also means vegetarianism!

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**GURUDEVA:** Vegetarianism is a natural and obvious way to live with a minimum of hurt to other beings. ...In my fifty years of ministry, it has become quite evident that vegetarian families have far fewer problems than those who are not vegetarian.

SOUP, CHICKPEA CURRY, TOFU AND NOODLES AND RAW VEGETABLES. SUCH A VEGETARIAN MEAL IS



WARM BUTTER MELTS ON A FRESH ROTI, SURROUNDED BY SPICY

IS HEALTHY NOT ONLY FOR OUR BODY, BUT FOR OUR PLANET, TOO.



## 50 How Do We Treat the Environment?

**T**he Hindu tradition understands that man is not separate from nature, that we are linked by spiritual, psychological and physical bonds with the elements around us. Knowing that the Divine is present everywhere and in all things, Hindus hold a deep reverence for life. We hold an awareness that the great forces of nature—the earth, the water, the fire, the air and space—as well as all the various orders of life, including plants and trees, forests and animals, are bound to each other within life’s cosmic web. Our beloved Earth, so touchingly looked upon in our scriptures as Bhumi Devi, the Earth Goddess, has nurtured mankind through millions of years of growth and evolution. However, the Earth’s large population, its industries, automobiles and lifestyle are causing significant damage to the environment. As one sixth of the human family, Hindus can have a tremendous impact. We should take the lead in Earth-friendly living, personal frugality, lower power consumption, alternative energy, sustainable food production and vegetarianism. All of Earth’s diversity is to be cared for, from the soil, water and

air to the plants and animals of every shape and kind. To achieve this, we practice restraint in the use of Earth’s resources. We do not exploit its minerals, water, fuels or soil. We avoid polluting our blue planet. We work to protect the many endangered plants and animals. We do not buy or use products from exploited species, such as furs, ivory or reptile skin. We recycle paper, glass, metal and plastic and use efficient means of transportation that save on energy. We plant trees and do not waste food. In these ways we express the fundamental Hindu reverence for the Earth and all life upon it.

**GURUDEVA:** Hinduism offers a unified vision of man and nature in which there is reverence, not dominion or carelessness. Mother Earth, sustainer of life, is a key Vedic idea. ... All Hindus feel they are guests on the planet with responsibilities to nature, which when fulfilled balance its responsibilities to them. The physical body was gathered from nature and returns to it.

**T**he ideal home is a place so magnetic and harmonious that it's difficult to leave. In a true home, family members enjoy love, kindness, sharing and appreciation. They help and support one another. It's a place of selflessness and togetherness, where each person has time for everyone else. It is the duty of the parents to turn a house into a home. They do this through their loving care of each other and the children, and their worship in the shrine room. This builds a spiritual vibration, giving the home a temple-like atmosphere. The Gods are worshiped in the home. Devas, guardian devas and ancestors are honored and invited into the home. All the rooms are kept sparkling clean. Puja is done every day in the home shrine. Whenever possible, meals are taken together, preceded by the food-blessing chant. The family observes the Hindu festivals together in the home. Devotional songs are sung and traditional music played. Saivite art and artifacts adorn the rooms. All this creates a secure, wholesome living space, a refuge from the harshness of the world. Harmony is a fragile vibration which the family protects

by seeking to see one another's point of view, finding points of agreement and avoiding argument and harsh words. All disagreements are settled before sleep. Guests are treated as God, and hospitality is given generously. Children can help their parents keep the home strong. They assist during the morning puja and annual festivals. Gurudeva recommends a weekly "family home evening," during which all members sit together for dinner, make plans, play games, share interests, express appreciation for one another and enjoy family togetherness without TV, digital entertainment or other distractions.

**GURUDEVA:** The devas can live within a home that is clean and well regulated, where the routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner is upheld, where early morning devotionals are performed and respected, a home which the family lives together within, eats together within, talks together within, worships together within.





**H**indus and their homes are known throughout the world for big-hearted hospitality. Treating the guest as God is the Hindu way. Even in the rush of modern life, we should never feel guests are keeping us from what we should be doing. We drop everything, no matter how important, to care for company. We know how it feels to be unwelcome, and would never want to send that message to visitors. When guests arrive, even without notice, they are greeted eagerly at the door by the entire family. We are generous with our time and kindly with our words. Our loving care makes each one feel special. This is our ancient and sacred duty. The *Tirukural* tells us, "The whole purpose of earning wealth and maintaining a home is to provide hospitality to guests. ...The host should care for the guests he has. He should watch hopefully for more. He will then himself be a welcome guest in heaven." Hindu shastras describe the ideal, saying the guest is to be honored by going out to meet him or her, offering

water and a seat, lighting a lamp before them and providing food and lodging. There follows friendly conversation on subjects that interest them. Even the humblest home will never fail to honor a guest with food and beverage. The absolute minimum is a chair or mat to sit on and a glass of water to drink. The visit of a holy person to the home is given extra special attention and may involve days of preparation, garland and gift making, cleaning and decorating. As the guest departs, we offer good wishes and gifts, even if only a simple sweet. Then we walk with them to their transportation, palms together, watching until they are out of sight.

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**GURUDEVA:** Hospitality flows from Siva's followers like sweet music from a vina.

Guests are treated as Gods. Friends, relatives, acquaintances, even strangers, are humbled by the overwhelming, ever-willing attention received.

ICE, HOME-MADE TREATS AND WELCOMING SMILES. HOSPITALITY IS THE GIFT GIVEN TO EVERY GUEST WHO COMES TO OUR DOOR. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT DUTY.



A FAMILY GREETS GUESTS TO THEIR HOME WITH FRESH MANGO JU

RY GUEST WHO COMES TO OUR DOOR. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT DUTY.



## 53

### How Do We Use Our Home Shrine?

**T**he home shrine is the family's personal temple. It is the heart of the home, a sacred place we go into to be close to God, Gods and the devas. Hindus who are wise and serious about practicing their religion have an entire room for the home shrine. They keep it just for this purpose and maintain it with a temple-like atmosphere. They know that a closet or a shelf is not enough to create a sacred space. In this special room, the family gathers to conduct puja, read scripture, meditate, sing bhajana, do japa and other sadhanas every morning. On holy days they devote extra time to these practices. As a youth, you can help with the shrine room and make it your special place. You can collect flowers from the garden, help prepare prasadam and help organize the puja items before the daily worship. Learn the Sanskrit mantras and chant along with your parents. The home shrine should be the most beautiful room in the house. It is adorned with pictures of your guru lineage. The altar has images of God Siva, Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan. There are oil lamps, incense,

bells, offering trays and flower baskets. Each time we return from the community temple, we visit the shrine and light a lamp. This connects it to the temple. If the shrine is kept pure, many devas come and live there, including your own guardian devas. Gurudeva said, "A room is set aside for these permanent unseen guests. It is a room that the whole family can enter and sit in. They can commune inwardly with these refined beings. These devas are dedicated to protecting the family generation after generation." These beings of light bless and protect you, keeping the home secure and peaceful. When we provide a home for God inside our own home, it is easy for the family to be happy. It is easy to get along and love one another. It is easy to feel Siva's protective presence.

**GURUDEVA:** Every Saivite home centers around the home shrine, a special room set aside and maintained to create a temple-like atmosphere in which we conduct puja, read scripture, perform sadhana, meditate, sing bhajana and do japa.



## 54 What Are Our Saiva Forehead Marks?

Our forehead marks are a distinctive Hindu cultural and spiritual practice. We wear red or black dots, white stripes and designs in sandalwood paste. Most marks are sectarian. They tell the world which Hindu tradition we follow. Worshipers of Lord Vishnu often wear a U-shaped tilaka made of clay. Saivites wear three stripes of white sacred ash, called *vibhuti* or *tiruniru*, across their forehead. This mark is called a *tripundra*. These practices have mystical explanations. Holy ash can be seen by the devas in the inner worlds, especially during puja. This allows them to better help us. The holy ash signifies purity and the burning away of the soul's three bonds: anava, karma and maya. Wearing it brings the blessings and protection of God Siva. It also reminds us of the temporary nature of the physical body and inspires us to strive without delay for God Siva's grace. A dot is often worn just below the middle of the forehead. It is called *bindi* in Hindi and *pottu* in Tamil and is used by Hindus of all sects. Said to represent the "third eye" of spiritual sight, it is a reminder to use our mind's eye or inner

vision and not just see life with our physical eyes. A red bindi can indicate a woman is married. A black one, especially on a child, is intended for protection. The sacraments passed out after a puja in a Saivite temple include vibhuti, kumkum and sandalwood. Both men and women apply all three. Women usually use a smaller amount of ash on the forehead than men. Visitors to a Hindu home are often blessed first at the doorway with a pottu. We proudly wear our forehead marks, knowing they distinguish us as devout Hindus.

**GURUDEVA:** We wear the pure white ash to alert the devas that we are members of this religion. This vibhuti is a sign, a way of saying, "We seek your help, and we seek your blessings." And by seeing the ash, they can distinguish your face. ... The dot worn on the forehead is a sign that one is a Hindu. The dot has a mystical meaning. It represents the third eye of spiritual sight, which sees things the physical eyes cannot see.

**G**ood conduct is right thought, right speech and right action. Being right means it agrees with dharma and our refined soul nature. Our religion gives us the great knowledge that all people are divine souls on a wonderful journey, learning many lessons along the way. While they may not be outwardly perfect, we learn to see the beautiful, radiant soul in everyone we meet. We look for the best in others and overlook their faults. We try to help others in any way we can, to always be uplifting and not critical or hurtful. We work with ourself to be a good example and a joy to be around, not a person to be avoided. It is our sadhana to express the beautiful qualities of love, patience and kindness. We protect, guide and encourage those who are younger. We look up to those who are older and eagerly seek to learn from them. We use terms of respect for those close to us, such as "auntie," "uncle" or "elder brother." We greet others with "Namaste," "Vanakkam" or "Aum Sivaya." Two important customs we follow are to never argue and never interrupt others, especially our elders. The four keys to good conduct are purity,

devotion, humility and charity. We cultivate purity by thinking, speaking and doing only that which is conceived in compassion for all. We cultivate devotion through worship and selfless service, and by being loyal and trustworthy. We cultivate humility through showing patience with circumstances and forbearance with people. We cultivate charity through giving to the hungry, the sick, the homeless, the elderly and the unfortunate. The first teacher in matters of good conduct is our conscience. It is the voice of our soul. To know what is right and what is wrong we can also turn to God, to our satguru and swamis, to scripture and to our elders, family and trusted friends.

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**GURUDEVA:** The Hindu fosters humility and shuns arrogance, seeks to assist, never to hinder, finds good in others and forgets their faults. There is no other way to be called a true devotee, but to conduct ourself properly within ourself and among our fellow men.

COMMUNITY. SHE AND HER FRIENDS TALK ABOUT WAYS THEY CAN HELP OTHERS, SHARING IDEAS

A YOUNG VOLUNTEER SERVES MEALS TO NEEDY PEOPLE IN HER



B.A.P. SWAMINARAYAN SANSTHA

ABOUT ALL THE FORMS OF SERVICE THAT WOULD BE UPLIFTING.



## 56 What Is the Hindu Way of Greeting?

**F**or Hindus, the greeting of choice is *namaste* (or *namaskar*). The two hands are pressed together and held near the heart with the head gently bowed as one says, “Namaste.” It is both a spoken greeting and a gesture—a mantra and a mudra. The prayerful hand position is called *anjali*, from the root *anj*, “to adorn, honor or celebrate.” In our Saiva community, we also say, with folded hands, “Vanakkam,” “Namah Sivaya” or “Aum Sivaya.” The meaning is similar. The hands held in union signify the oneness of an apparently dual cosmos, the bringing together of spirit and matter, or the self meeting the Self. It is said that the right hand represents the higher nature or that which is divine in us, while the left hand represents the lower, worldly nature. In Sanskrit *namas* means “bow, obeisance, reverential salutation.” It comes from the root *nam*, which carries meanings of bending, bowing, humbly submitting and becoming silent. *Te* means “to you.” Thus *namaste* means “I bow to you.” The *namaste* gesture gently reminds us that we can see God everywhere and in every human being we meet. It is saying, silently, “I see the Deity in us both, and bow before

It. I acknowledge the holiness of even this simple meeting. I cannot separate that which is spiritual in us from that which is human and ordinary.” This beautiful custom opens our heart to see that person’s good qualities. We remember to treat him or her with respect and love. It would be difficult to offend or feel animosity toward anyone that you greet as God. *Namaste* can also be used to say farewell. An even deeper veneration is expressed by bringing the fingers of the joined palms to the brow, the site of the mystic third eye. A third form of *namaste* brings the palms above the head. This salutation is reserved for God and the holiest of *satgurus*.

**GURUDEVA:** The mudra is called *anjali*. It is a devotional gesture made equally before a Deity, holy person, friend or momentary acquaintance. Holding the hands together connects the right side of the body with the left, and brings the nerve and nadi currents into poised balance, into a consciousness of the *sushumna*, awakening the third eye within the greeter to worship God in the greeted.

**F**amily and community are extremely important in Hindu culture, and relationships are valued above all else. Every day we have many opportunities to do good, learn, help and uplift others. Many people find it hard to get along with others. They are always arguing and holding on to hard feelings. In order to maintain harmonious relationships, we must be peaceful on the inside. Then we can make the most of the opportunities life gives us. We cannot do our best if we are worried or upset. Peace of mind, called *shanti* in Sanskrit, is more precious than gold, and our Hindu culture gives us many tools for protecting it. Worship, service and yoga are three main tools. Gurudeva also valued another tool, called consideration, the art of not hurting the feelings of others. We are kindly and sensitive in thought, word and deed. We treat others as we would like them to treat us. We praise their good qualities and good deeds. We never argue or use harsh or angry words. That destroys the *shanti* for everyone present and causes hurt feelings. The *Tirukural* warns, “The

wound caused by fire heals in its time. But the burn inflicted by an inflamed tongue never heals.” If we do have a disagreement, we make sure to talk with the person, apologize and forgive, and settle the matter before sleep. By living in harmony with everyone, we have more joy in our life and we are more effective human beings. It is most important to get along with our close family. Harmony begins in the home and radiates out into all parts of life, bringing light, love and good will to every relationship.

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**GURUDEVA:** Diplomacy, a kind of love—one not wanting to hurt one’s fellow man, suppression of the emotions of hate and anger—brings about a kind of harmony. These are products of the intellect which when developed into a strong intellectual sheath is able to control the baser emotions through controlled memory, controlled reason and controlled willpower, the three faculties of our ability to govern forces of nature.

OTHER SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS IN LIFE, TEAM MEMBERS TRAIN HARD TO BE INDIVIDUALLY FIT, BUT ALSO WORK TOGETHER AS ONE TOWARD THEIR SHARED OBJECTIVES.

THIS CANOE RACE IS HELD EACH YEAR IN KERALA, INDIA. AS IN O



SO WORK TOGETHER AS ONE TOWARD THEIR SHARED OBJECTIVES.

## 58 What Is the Value of Spiritual Friends?

**A**s Saivite Hindus, we know this life is precious and are thankful for it every moment of every day. Appreciating the gift of life makes us want to do the best we can, improve our character, serve others and live a spiritual life. Knowing life's purpose, we hold firmly to dharma. Like a marathon runner, we must stay on the course to finish the race. Having good, religious friends helps us stay on the path. If we mix with a worldly crowd, we may lose our way. The *Tirukural* tells us, "As water changes according to the soil through which it flows, so a man assimilates the character of his associates." Friends who are good Hindus will help you most of all. If you befriend a person who is dishonest or mean, his example will lead you into trouble. If you befriend someone who studies hard and is kind and helpful, their example will inspire and uplift you. Some people poke fun at religion or make mischief and resist authority. They do not know the real purpose of

life. They waste their time and cause pain to others. Wise teachers advise us to be nice to everyone, but make close friends only with those who will help build good character and set positive patterns for the future. The *Tirukural* tells us, "Purity of mind and purity of conduct, these two depend on the purity of a man's companions." Following our religious path is made easier when we are part of a satsang group with shared values and goals. Such companionship helps keep our sadhana strong, especially during difficult times in life. As Gurudeva often said, "The group helps the individual and the individual helps the group."

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

IMPORTANT & WORTH CULTIVATING. THEY ENCOURAGE OUR IDEALS & GOALS IN LIFE. THEY ?

FIVE FRIENDS TAKE A SELFIE TO SHARE ONLINE. FRIENDS ARE IMP



SHUTTERSTOCK

ROVIDE FUN & KEEP US SAFE FROM THE WORLD'S NEGATIVE FORCES.



TWO VOLUNTEERS SERVE LUNCH TO A GROUP OF SADHUS AND PILGRIMS IN INDIA. BACK IN THE KITCHEN, OTHERS HAVE SPENT THE MORNING COOKING. THIS IS ONE

FORM OF KARMA YOGA, SELFLESS ACTIONS DONE TO HELP OTHERS.

## 59 How Do We Practice Karma Yoga?

**K**arma yoga is selfless service, or *seva*. It often takes the form of volunteer work at a temple—helping with the basic needs and events, like polishing the brass lamps, answering the phone, making garlands and preparing for pujas. This humble service helps establish good character. The effort to do good deeds can be extended into other areas as well, such as the workplace and the home, quietly and willingly helping others, without complaint and without expecting thanks. Such service reaps hidden blessings. In its broadest sense, karma yoga is spiritualized action. It is doing each and every task consciously, selflessly, excellently, as an offering to the Divine. Satguru Yogaswami advised devotees, “Whatever work you have to do, do it well. That in itself is yoga.” Work done in this spirit is a form of worship. Doing our ordinary daily duties becomes a powerful *sadhana* that contributes to our spiritual progress. This yoga makes us more focused, effective and fulfilled. It eliminates the false separation of secular work from religious practice. Swami Vivekananda counseled, “When you are doing any work,

do not think of anything beyond. Do it as worship, as the highest worship, and devote your whole life to it for the time being.” Here are some keys to successfully turning work into worship: 1) Pray to Lord Ganesha before beginning your work. 2) Act selflessly, detached from the results. Focus on serving, helping, giving. 3) Work hard; overcome lethargy, fatigue, confusion and doubt. 4) Maintain harmony with others. 5) Enjoy the effort; don’t feel rushed. 6) Make the work a worthy offering, completing it as perfectly as you can. Then stop, review what you have done and make it even better.

**GURUDEVA:** Go out into the world this week and let your light shine through your kind thoughts, but let each thought manifest itself in a physical deed, of doing something for someone else. Lift their burdens just a little bit and, unknowingly perhaps, you may lift something that is burdening your mind. You erase and wipe clean the mirror of your own mind through helping another. We call this karma yoga.



## 60 What Is the Purpose of the Temple?

**T**he temple is where we worship and commune with God and the Gods. Here, devotees are uplifted and receive the inner help they need to live a positive, fulfilling life. Temples are sacred for three reasons: they are constructed in a mystical manner, they are consecrated with special, complex rites, and thereafter continuous daily worship builds a holy force field. Our grand Saiva temples are like no other place on Earth. Some are more than 1,000 years old. Strict rules from the *Agamas* are followed to create such holy spaces where holiness, God, can reside. Devas, Gods and people work together to establish the temple and assure it will be used only for worship. Over the years, the power becomes strong, forming an invisible, glass-like bubble or shield around the temple. This keeps out gross vibrations and allows the heaven worlds to be strongly present. As you approach God's home, you can feel the spiritual energy, and as you go inside you are engulfed in peace. Here the devas and Gods can easily hear your prayers. Here the ancient scriptures are chanted, the traditional rites knowingly

performed. Here joyous festivals are celebrated and arduous pilgrimages concluded. At the high point of puja, as bells ring loudly and conches blow, the Deity sends rays of blessings through the enshrined image, or murti. Flooding your aura, this energy can erase worries, clear confusion and relieve sadness. Devotees leaving the temple feel inspired and lightened of burdens. Gurudeva explained that the stone or metal images are not mere symbols of the Gods. The image is the physical-plane form through which the God's love, power and blessings flood forth into this world. The image is like a temporary physical body the God uses during temple ceremonies. The temple, God's home, becomes a truly sacred place for us when we know that the Gods are real beings and the purpose of going to the temple is to experience their blessings.

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**GURUDEVA:** A Siva temple marks an agreement between God Siva and the people on the Earth as a meeting place where the three worlds can consciously commune.

LE IN INDIA. THEY LOOK UPON THIS AS THE HOME OF GOD SIVA, AND THEY ARE ABLE TO DRAW



PILGRIMS HAVE REACHED A REMOTE ALL-GRANITE SIVA TEMP

SHUTTERSTOCK

NEARER TO HIS DIVINE LOVE & LIGHT IN SUCH A HOLY PLACE.



## 61

## How Do We Visit the Temple?

**W**e go to the temple to be close to God. Though Siva is everywhere, it is in the holy temple that we can most easily feel His presence. Knowing that Siva and the devas can see us, we want to look our best. Before our visit, we bathe and put on clean, traditional clothing. We bring an offering, such as fruits, milk and incense or a lovely garland of flowers. The act of giving makes us receptive to blessings. Outside, we remove our shoes and wash our hands, feet and mouth and seek blessings at Lord Ganesha's shrine. Next we walk clockwise around the temple or the central chamber, then pay respects to each Deity. If it is puja time, we sit quietly and enjoy the ceremony being performed by the priest. Through his chants, gestures, visualizations and offerings, he purifies himself and honors the Deity with choice offerings, as one would receive a king. He calls upon God to come and shower blessings on all. During the puja we focus on the acts of worship, not allowing our mind to wander. Over time, we learn the meaning of the priest's chants and rituals and mentally follow along. After the arati we prostrate and rise to receive the

flame, blessed water, holy ash and other sacraments, receiving each item with the right hand. Then we sit quietly and meditate, or just feel the blessings wash over us. This is also a good time for japa. Worship takes many forms in a temple. Devotees can be immersed in the joys of devotion, lost in prayerful communion, seeking consolation for a loss, singing devotional songs, chanting mantras or celebrating a rite of passage. Arriving home, we light a lamp in our shrine room to bring the devas from the temple into that sacred space. Pujas and rituals give us a chance to pause, look inward and concentrate on something more meaningful and profound than the mundane matters of life. Puja is holy communion, full of wonder and tender affections. The indispensable part of any puja is devotion. Without love in the heart, outer performance is of limited value. But with true devotion, even simple gestures are sacred ritual.

**GURUDEVA:** In our religion there are altars in temples all over the world inhabited by the devas and the great Gods. When you enter these holy places, you can sense their sanctity.

HYDERABAD, TWO WOMEN LOVINGLY APPLY KUMKUM TO ALL OF THE STEPS LEADING TO THE TEM

DURING THE ANNUAL BONALU FESTIVAL AT GOLCONDA FORT IN



PLE AT THE TOP. HINDU TEMPLES INSPIRE AMAZING DEVOTION.

## 62 How Can We Strengthen Our Temple?

**B**lessed with the knowledge that the temple is the home of God and the Gods, we visit often, for they are our dear friends. This is the first way to strengthen and become a valued part of our temple and its community, by keeping your spiritual life strong. The more we visit, the more sensitive we become to the spiritual energies. As our love, or bhakti, grows, the grace of the Gods makes us kinder, more cooperative and more generous with our time. The second way to strengthen and serve the temple is by participating in activities and helping with duties to make it beautiful and inviting. This uplifts our energies and keeps us close to other devotees. Service takes many forms. We can prepare decorations and assist the priest with puja items. We may like to help cook and serve prasadam to devotees. We can welcome temple visitors, organize activities, make garlands, clean lamps or direct parking. We can sing or dance during satsanga and festivals. We can help with mailings or contribute to the temple website. Festival times each year offer even more ways to help. By attending the temple on

such auspicious days, when the shakti is strongest, we become attuned to the Deity's blessings. The temple is the center of Hindu spiritual life. Saivites consider it most important to live no farther than a day's journey from a holy temple, and we build one wherever we find ourselves in the world. Helping to build a temple earns blessings in this life and the next; plus it is a gift to future generations. Temple worship is for all men and women at every level of spiritual development. Its meaning and experience deepen as we unfold spiritually through the stages of service, devotion, yoga and enlightened wisdom. We never outgrow the practice of temple worship.

**GURUDEVA:** In Hinduism it is believed that the Gods are living, thinking, dynamic beings who live in a different world, in an inner world in the microcosm within this world in which there exists a greater macrocosm than this visible macrocosm. ... Through temple worship, the three worlds become open to one another, and the beings within them are able to communicate.

**G**od Siva and the Gods are always with us, closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet. Praying is our way of communicating with them. To offer a prayer, visualize the face of God Siva or a God, concentrate and say your prayer mentally, sending it up through the top of your head. You can pray anywhere, but the inner-world beings can best hear you in a sacred temple or your home shrine. One of the greatest prayers of all is giving thanks for all the gifts Siva has provided in our life. Most often, though, devotees pray for help. The Gods will respond. Most simply, they send a blessing to quiet your mind and clear your aura. Sometimes this is all that's needed. Suppose you pray to Lord Ganesha for help with your studies. After the blessing from the Mahadeva, the subject matter seems clear and interesting. You absorb it easily and do better on your tests. Answering some prayers may require assigning a deva to determine the best way to assist you. It is comforting to know that the Gods, their devas and your own guardian devas are ever ready to respond to your requests for help and guidance. You gain this boon

by living a religious life and being consistent in your sadhana. Some temples, such as Kadavul Temple in Hawaii, accept written prayers from devotees. When burned, these are released to their astral form in the Devaloka for the devas to read and act upon. Before asking for help, we make every effort to use our own intelligence and strength. In our prayers we always remember that God and the Gods know the highest course for our life. They know better than we do the lessons and experiences we need to improve. Our prayers will be answered, and in wisdom we accept the answer—even if it is not what we had hoped for.

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**GURUDEVA:** Those who worship in Siva temples slowly gain acceptance into the devonic realms of the Gods, and one or two of the uncountable numbers of devonic intelligences often return with the devotee to his home. . . . It is these guardian devas who are the first to receive the devotee's written prayers when they are transferred to the Devaloka through the sacred fire.

THROUGH THE CROWD OF DEVOTEES HOLDING THE LAMP, AS HE APPROACHES, THEY EAGERLY REACH OUT



FOLLOWING THE FINAL ARATI OF A PUJA, THE PRIEST MOVES THROU

TO "TOUCH" THE FLAMES WHICH CARRY THE DEITY'S BLESSINGS.



## 64 How Do We Celebrate Festivals?

**H**induism is celebratory by nature. Hindus miss no opportunity to set mundane matters aside and join with family, friends, neighbors and strangers alike to feast and have fun, to renew the home and the heart and, most importantly, draw nearer to God. Festivals are perhaps more impressive and varied in Hinduism than in any other religion. The devout Hindu knows these are times of profound mysticism, when God and the Gods touch our world, revitalize our souls, lighten karmas and bless our families. Yet, festivals do even more than this. They are essential to the perpetuation of religion, periodically reigniting the spark of zeal and devotion in the community. They provide the spiritual public square where Hindus engage with one another to affirm shared values and enjoy life's intersections. Before each celebration, vows are taken, scriptures are studied, pilgrimages are made and fasts observed in preparation. Such acts of intimate devotion bring the devotee closer to the Gods and keep him on the path to his inmost Self. As each festival begins, solitary worship becomes a collective ritual, with millions of people taking their places

in a creative choreography. Every festival is special and unforgettable in its own way. Thus Hindus are reminded of their faith by the sounds, scents, colorful decorations and the wild medley of tastes laid out for the feast. Mind and emotions are saturated with Hinduism as sacred mantra prayers are intoned, the spiritual teachings are recounted by saints, and the Gods are praised in melodious bhajans. Each Indian village and each global community lends a little of its unique culture to how a festival is celebrated, creating almost endless variations. Recently, with the growing Hindu population outside of India, festivals have acquired an international dimension. What could be more entertaining, alive, vibrant and yet pious and rich in symbolism than a Hindu festival?

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**GURUDEVA:** Festivals are special times of communion with God and Gods, of family and community sharing and sadhana.... We strive to attend each major festival, when the shakti of the Deity is most powerful, and pilgrimage to a far-off temple annually.

**W**e prepare ourselves for our yearly pilgrimage inwardly and outwardly. First we have to decide where to go, how to get there and how long to be away from home. We want to choose a temple that inspires us. It could be the famed Mahakaleshwar Siva temple of Ujjain, or the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi, both in the middle of large cities. Or it could be a remote place, such as Rameshwaram, near the tip of South India, with its purifying wells. Or it could be a holy site that is even harder to reach, such as Mount Kailas in Nepal or the Amarnath Cave in Kashmir. We may also choose a holy place in Europe, the Americas, Malaysia or Australia. Then we make sure that our affairs will be taken care of in our absence, allowing us to concentrate on the pilgrimage. We prepare inwardly as well. Before a pilgrimage, some devotees will fast, eating just one meal a day for a week or as long as a month. Others do extra sadhanas and attend their local temple daily. All get the satguru's blessings for the journey. Once we reach the destination, we throw ourselves into the worship and attend every possible puja. We

meditate deeply afterwards. We put all our concerns, worries, hopes and dreams at the feet of the Deity. We go home inspired and fulfilled. This is true pilgrimage. As Hindus, we don't necessarily feel the need to take a vacation to get away from it all. We live a moderate, unhurried life and look at our pilgrimage as a special, cherished time to take problems and prayers to God. We know that the blessings received will recharge our batteries and inspire us to do even better in our daily life. On pilgrimage we hope for special moments with the Deity, even an encounter with God at the holy destination. These spiritual moments will grow within us for years to come.

**GURUDEVA:** Different temples become famous for answering certain types of prayers, such as requests for financial help, or prayers for the right mate in marriage, prayers for healing, prayers to be entrusted with the raising of high-souled children, or help in matters of yoga, or help in inspiring bhakti and love.





## 66 Why Should We Learn a Cultural Art?

It is a great joy to listen to a fine singer or musician, or watch a gifted dancer perform. It is uplifting to see beautiful paintings by a devoted Saiva artist. It is enchanting to hear someone tell a story well. Each song, each art piece or performance is a gift to every devotee who experiences it. Gurudeva encouraged devotees to perfect a form of Saiva art, singing, drama, dance or a musical instrument. The ideal time to start is in childhood. He also praised the merits of learning a creative skill requiring the use of one's hands, such as pottery, sewing, weaving, painting, gardening, baking and the building arts. All these talents manifest creative benefits for family and community. There are so many options for each of us. You could learn a form of classical Indian dance. You could learn music, such as voice, vina, flute or drum. You may learn Sanskrit chanting or dramatic storytelling. You could become an expert at weaving flower garlands, writing poems, sculpting or carpentry. You can create kolam floor designs and other handmade decorations. You can perfect the art

of cooking and prepare delicious prasadam dishes for festivals. Learning an art or skill takes hard work, willpower and dedication. These are strengths you can apply to everything you do. Each skill or art gives you new ways of uplifting your friends, family and community. These cultural and creative expressions are fulfilling to you as well. You become an accomplished human being. And if you learn something well, you can teach that skill to others. There are 64 cultural arts, or kalas, in Hindu tradition. In *Saiva Dharma Shastras* Gurudeva offered two contemporary lists, one for girls and one for boys.

**GURUDEVA:** The Hindu enjoys all the facets of life as transmuted into a religious expression in art. The Hindu's art is a religious art—drawing, painting and sculpture of the Gods, the devas, and the saints of our religion. The music is devotional and depicts the tones of the higher chakras, echoes the voices of the Gods; and the dance emulates the movements of the Gods.

## 67 How Can We Be Strong Saivite Hindus?

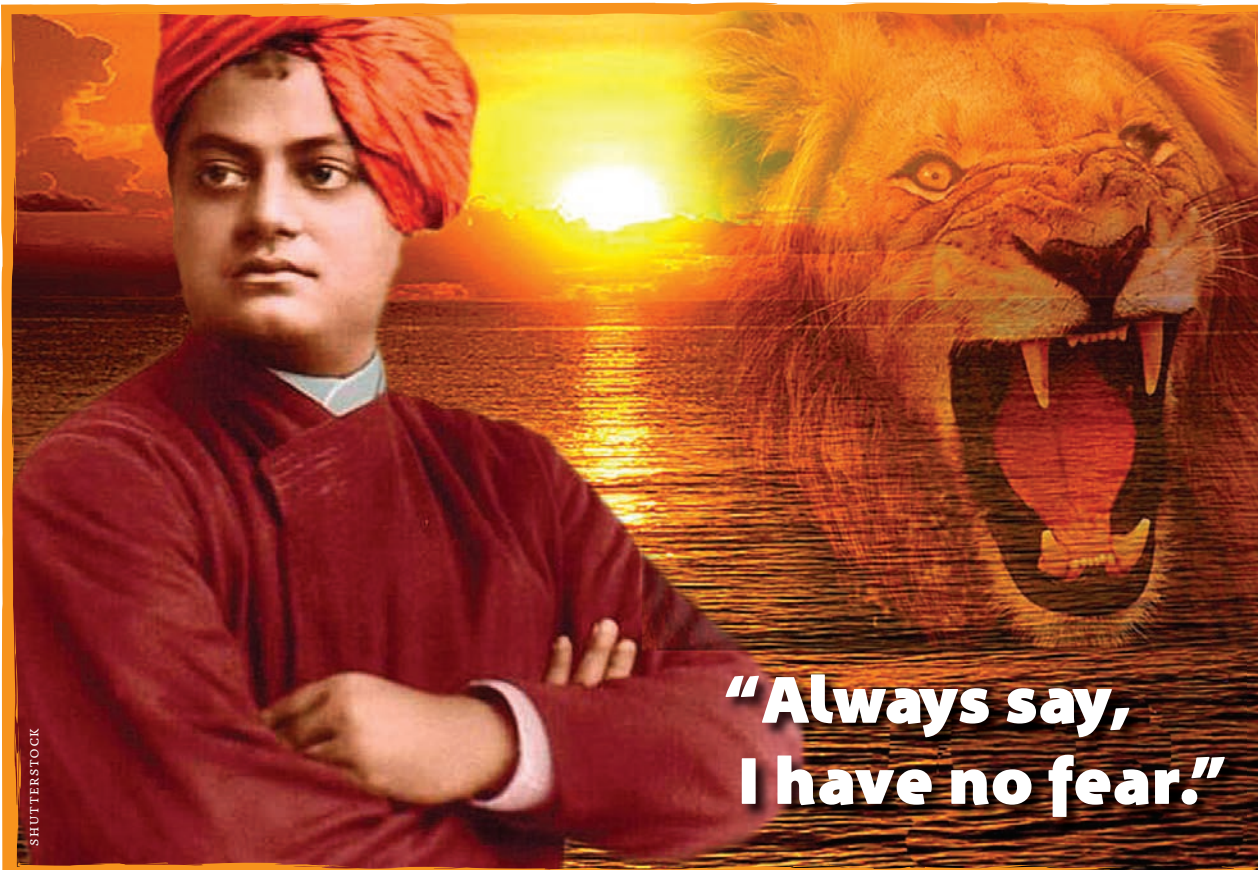
**G**urudeva taught, "Once we have chosen and accepted our faith, it is then our spiritual duty to learn it well and live by it as a wholehearted, contributing member of a faith community so that we pass it on in a vibrant way to those who come after us, the next generation." To be strong Hindus, first we must learn our religion well. This means gaining a good understanding of the philosophy, the culture and the subtle mysticism. Second, we must live by it fully. This means having a solid commitment, a good character, and putting its principles into practice. For us, this includes adopting the gestures, attitudes, customs, ways of worship, dress and refinements of Tamil Saiva culture. The third step is passing our faith along to others. We all live in mixed societies, interrelating with people of varied backgrounds. You may find yourself being asked about your Hindu faith. Some questioners may have no religion. Others may reject religion and believe science has all the answers. You may be confronted by their questions: "Do you worship cows?" "Why are there so many

Hindu Gods?" "Why do you wear the dot on your forehead?" Prepare yourself by studying the answers to such questions. Respond with confidence and kindness. Assume that the person really wants to learn. Yes, some may want to harass you, or turn you to their view. If you sense this is the case, smile and dismiss yourself without engaging further. You can also share your faith by conducting classes or sharing at public gatherings. In sum, we each stand strong for Hinduism by being good Hindus. Gurudeva has given us the tools in his Master Course Trilogy, *Dancing, Living and Merging with Siva*. Using these tools of philosophy, culture and yoga, we can defend, explain, protect, preserve and promote our Saiva faith.

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**GURUDEVA:** The time has come for Hindus of all races, all nations, of all cultures, of all sects to stand up and let the peoples of the world know of the great religion of which they are one of the staunch adherents.

NTLE YET STALWART LOOK ON HIS FACE. HE WAS A LION AMONG MEN, A REFORMER AND BOLD DEFEN

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (1863-1902) STANDS WITH ARMS FOLDED, A GE

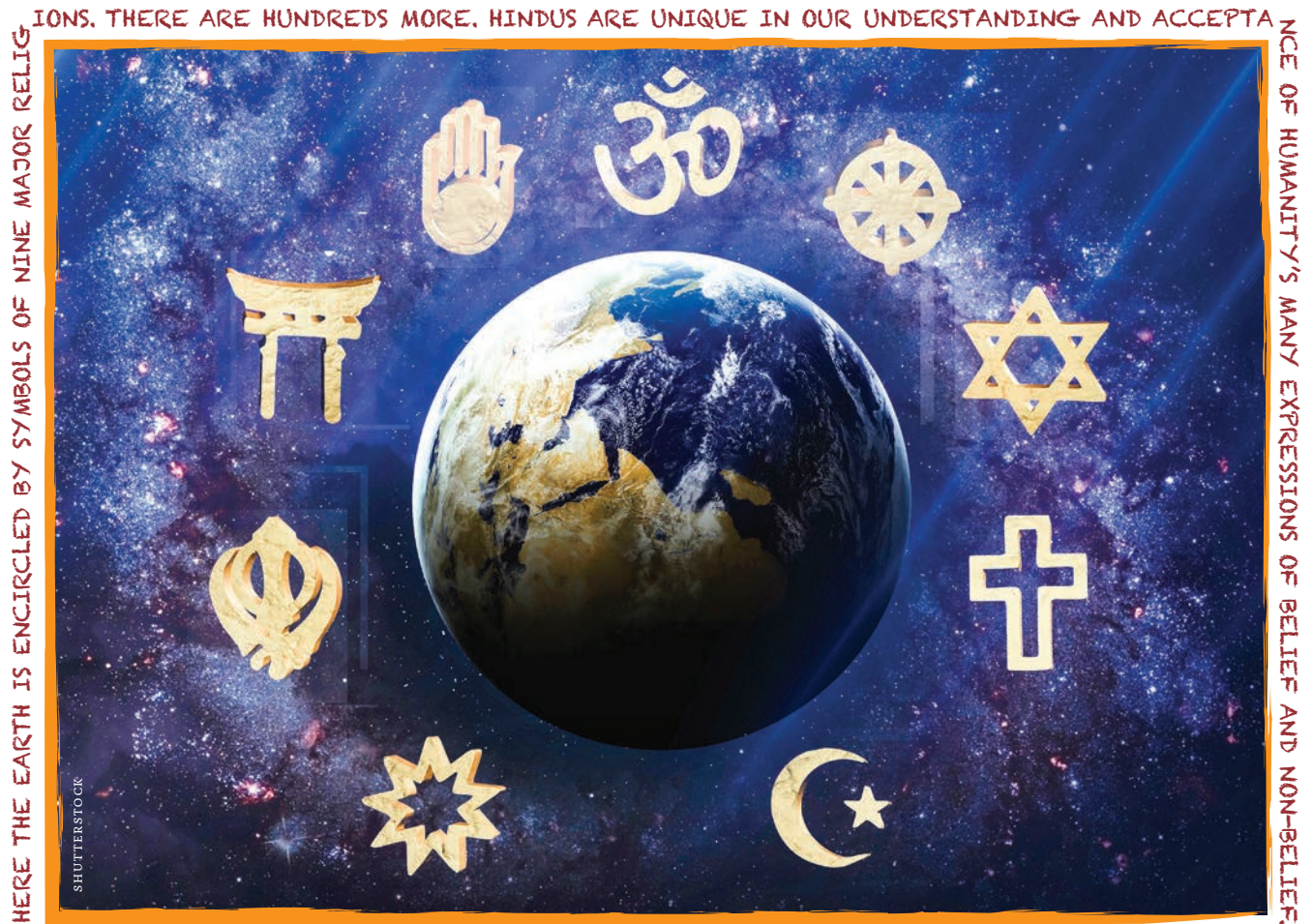


SHUTTERSTOCK

**"Always say,  
I have no fear."**

DER OF HINDUISM. HIS QUOTE INSPIRES US TO HAVE SUCH COURAGE.





## 68 How Do We View Other Faiths?

**D**evout Hindus, secure in their sadhana, hold their faith in highest esteem. Gurudeva boldly called it the greatest religion in the world. Its refined culture, deep philosophy, grand temples and yoga practices offer more than we could explore and enjoy in a hundred lifetimes. Yet, there is no sense whatsoever in Hinduism of an “only path.” Rather, the Eternal Path is seen reflected in all religions. We hold a profound tolerance and affection for those of all other religions. At the same time, we know that all religions are not the same. Each has its unique beliefs, practices and scriptures, and the doctrines of one often conflict with others. Even such difference should never be cause for religious tension or intolerance. Saivites seek to be faithful to their own path, following it without getting sidetracked into practices of other faiths or movements. We defend our faith and avoid the enchantment of other ways. Being content in our path, we encourage others to follow and defend their religion. There is a great

strength in loyalty to a religion and undistracted focus on its beliefs, teachings and cultural gifts. Hindus never seek to convert others to our faith, though we do accept sincere seekers into the fold. We stand strong against unethical efforts by those of any faith who try to draw Hindus away from their religion in times of distress or weakness. Gurudeva summarized, “We respect all religious traditions and the people within them. Good citizens and stable societies are created from groups of religious people. Still, Saivites defend their faith, proceed contentedly with their practices and avoid the enchantment of other ways, be they ancient or modern.”

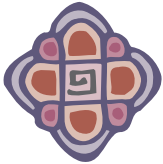
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**GURUDEVA:** The people who are Hinduism share a mind structure. They can understand, acknowledge, accept and love the peoples of all religions, encompass them within their mind as being fine religious people.



## Free Resource Materials



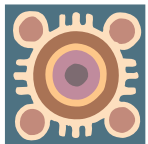
**Today at Kauai Aadheenam**, TAKA, is our monastery's daily chronicle of activities in words, pictures, sounds and videos. If you want to follow our temple progress, see who's visiting or just check in on what's happening, go to: [www.gurudeva.org/taka/](http://www.gurudeva.org/taka/).



Browse through our **audio library** of over 800 talks given by Gurudeva and Bodhinatha. Listen to talks on family, personal transformation, yoga, spiritual practices, relationships and more. Go to: [www.himalayanacademy.com/audio/talks](http://www.himalayanacademy.com/audio/talks). For our small video library, go to: [www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/video/](http://www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/video/). For our Podcasts, go to: [www.himalayanacademy.com/audio/podcasts/](http://www.himalayanacademy.com/audio/podcasts/).



On our **publication resource page**, you will find Gurudeva's legacy of spiritual teachings, 3,000 pages of the Master Course trilogy, three decades of our international magazine, children's courses, the *Vedas* and more. Go to: [www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/](http://www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/). All of our publications are available there, to read or download for free. The following might be of particular interest: 14 Questions, My Friend Lord Ganesha, Home Puja, Hatha Yoga, Four Facts, Nine Beliefs, Four Denominations, What Is Hinduism?, History of Hindu India, Ten Tales (I & II), Growing Up Hindu, Life Skills for Hindu Teens, Character Building Workbook.



The following free **e-mail resources** are available at: [www.himalayanacademy.com/email-news/](http://www.himalayanacademy.com/email-news/).



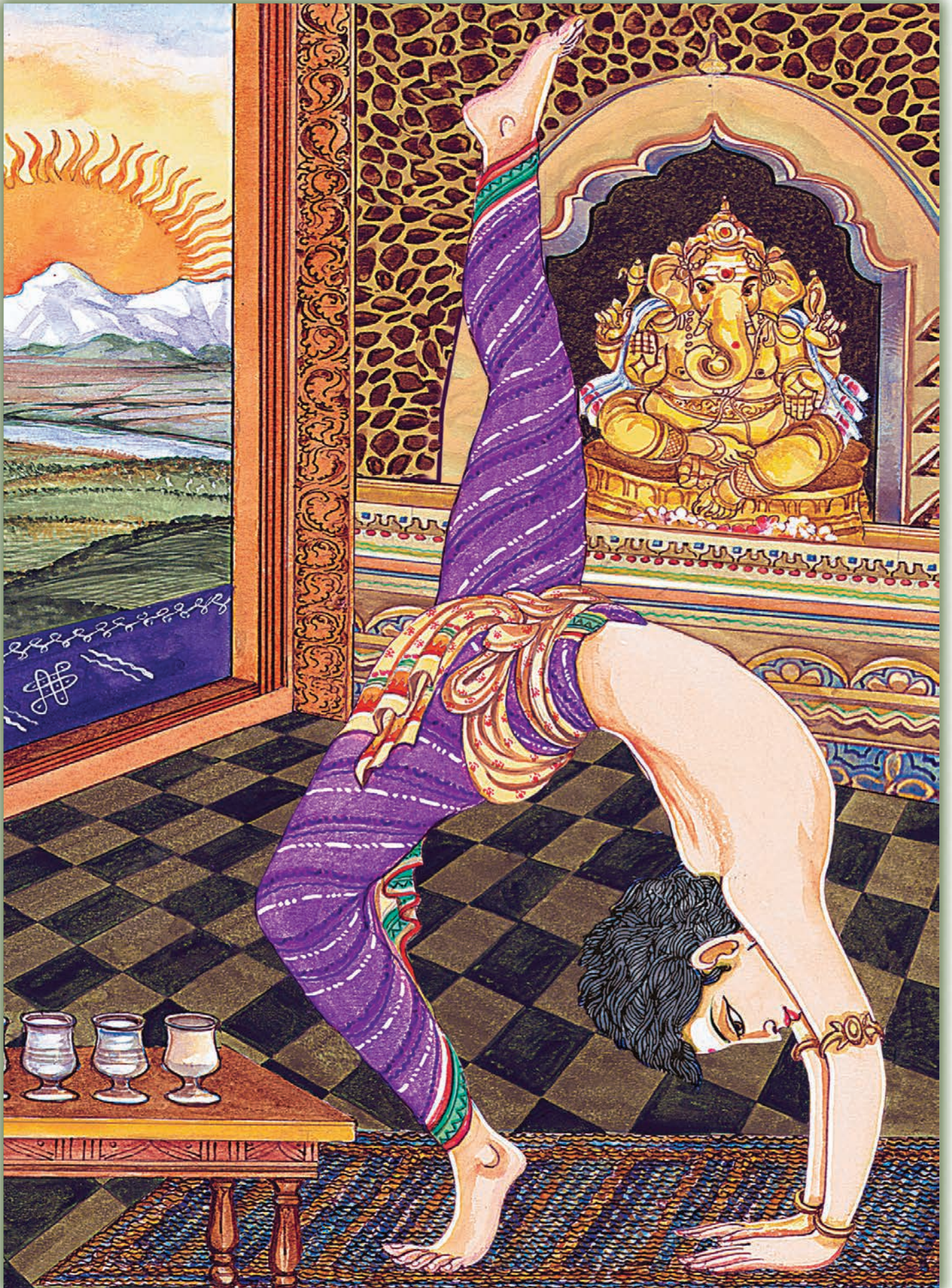
- ❖ The Master Course Daily Lesson
- ❖ Inspiring Daily Verses from the *Vedas*, mankind's most ancient scripture
- ❖ Verses from the *Tirukural*, one of Hinduism's greatest ethical scriptures



- ❖ Hindu Press International, a daily news summary for journalists, educators, researchers, writers, religious leaders and interested Hindus worldwide



- ❖ Kauai's Hindu Monastery Monthly Newsletter
- ❖ Hindu Heritage Endowment News



# Hatha Yoga

**H**atha yoga is a system of handling the physical body so that the mind and the nerve system are calmed and quieted. It is primarily a means to prepare oneself for meditation. Hatha yoga is founded on a principle of putting the physical body into a position so that the nerve currents in the physical body get tuned up to a perfect pitch. It is like tuning the strings on a violin; if you tune the violin just right, then each string will be in harmony with the other strings.

This chapter consists of original illustrations and instructions for 24 asanas organized in eight sets of three to be performed in series. While there are many more complex hatha yoga routines, these 24 relatively easy poses provide a good, balanced system for daily use. To prepare yourself for an effective meditation, this routine is all you will ever need. For the very best results, hatha yoga should be taught personally by a qualified teacher. The instructions and illustrations given here are a rudimentary aid. For more elaborate regimens, inquire at a recognized school specializing in hatha yoga.

Asanas elongate, tone and strengthen muscle tissue, massage the organs, stimulate the nerves and balance the *pingala* and *ida nadis*. From the hundreds of known asanas, these 24 affect all the major parts of the body. Each pose is to be held in relaxed stillness for 30 to 120 seconds, without straining. As maximum stretch and flexibility are approached, a subtle stimulation of the physical and psychic nerve system begins to occur.

Perform the postures daily in the privacy of your own room, without drawing attention to yourself. Naturally, they should not be performed after meals. Don't worry if you can't perform them perfectly, or if some are difficult for you. Do the best you can. Progress at your own pace, rather than in a competitive manner. With practice, you will find the body becoming more supple, reflecting the mind's flexibility, alertness and freedom from subconscious repressions.

By controlling breath we control thought and life energy, or prana. Yogis call this pranayama.

The pranayama for these asanas is simple: breathe in for nine equal counts (ideally counting with *mathura*, the heartbeat), then hold one count, breathe out nine counts, hold one, and so on. Breathe deeply, fully and diaphragmatically, rather than shallowly expanding the upper chest. Harnessing the breath's three phases (inhalation, retention and exhalation) directs the flow of prana, calming and relaxing body and mind.

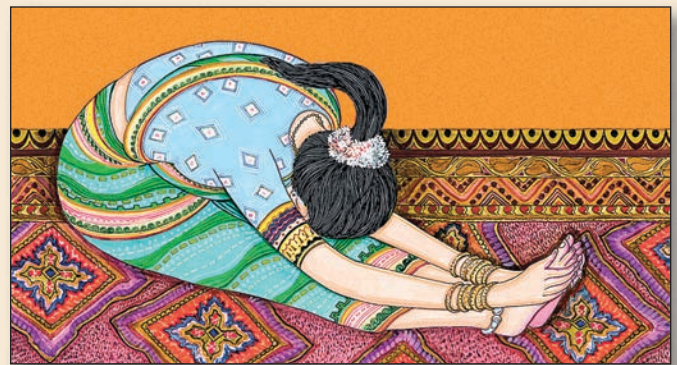
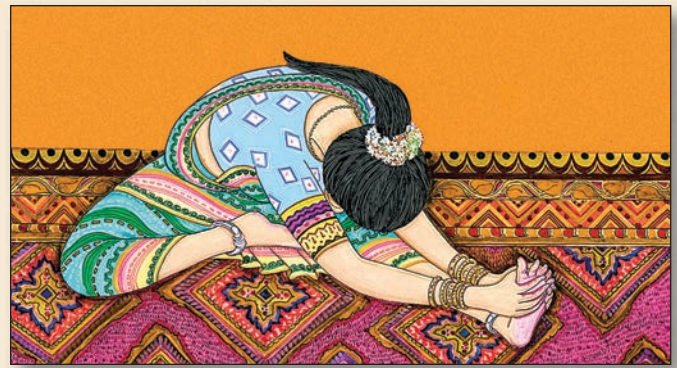
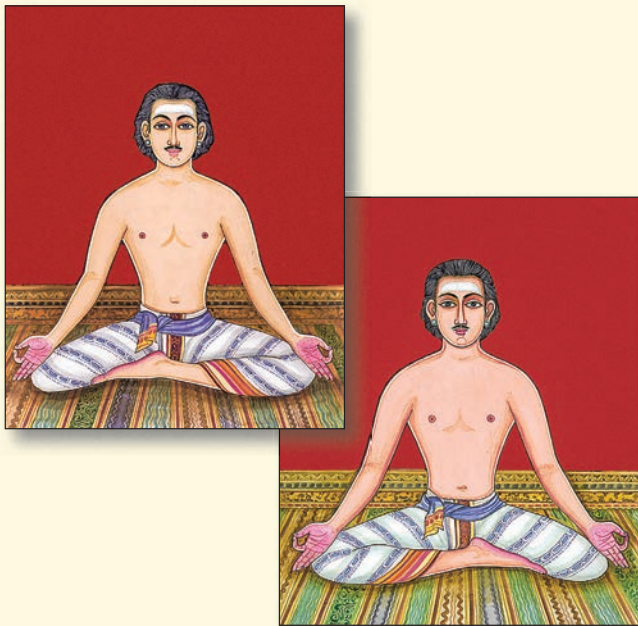
When physical tensions are released through hatha yoga, mental-emotional tensions are automatically dissolved. This is a great secret and a wonderful tool that you can use every day of your life. Free the mind of thoughts and tensions and you will be more aware, more alive, more serene. As you perform the hatha yoga asanas, put out of your mind all thoughts relating to your work, family, friends, associates, problems and challenges that normally concern you. Relax. Relax. Relax. Be completely at peace with yourself and fully enjoy this contemplative art.

Try to sense the inner and outer nerve system reaching a crescendo of energy as you sustain each pose. When this peak is felt, gracefully shift during the outbreath to the next asana. The whole series of 24 poses is like a dance; and a deliberate flow from one to the next is a key to perfect serenity. Each set includes a color visualization to quiet the mind and intensify healing. The color of the background wall in each illustration is the color to visualize while in that pose. Mentally fill your body with that color, from your head to your toes; or imagine yourself suspended in space, surrounded on all sides by the color shown with the pose. If tensions in the body or mind are discovered, visualize them flowing away with the outbreath. At the end, plunge into meditation. Tradition sets the best times for hatha yoga at dawn, noon and twilight. Minimally, only 12 minutes of time is needed.

**An Important Caution:** Individuals with neck or back problems should abstain from poses that place strain on the spine, such as the headstand, *shirshasana*, and the shoulder stand, *sarvangasana*.

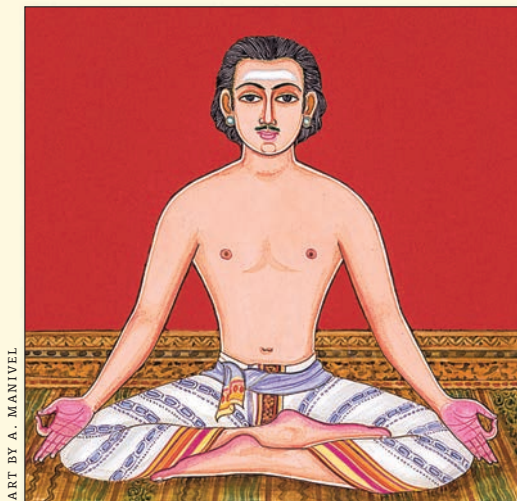
## Set 1

**1.** Bend the right leg back around the thigh and tuck the right foot along the contour of the buttocks. Bring the left leg in front of the torso, tucking it close to the groin. Hands are on the knees, palms up, thumb and index fingers touching, in the akasha mudra. Keep the spine (the powerhouse of the body) straight, the head erect and balanced at the top of the spine. **2.** Next reverse leg positions. **3.** In the third pose tuck the right leg into the groin area, then place the left leg in front of it, with the left heel in front of the right heel. This is a variation of the accomplished pose, *siddhasana*, सिद्धासन. Keep both legs resting fully on the floor. Visualize deep, ruby red for physical vitality during this first set.



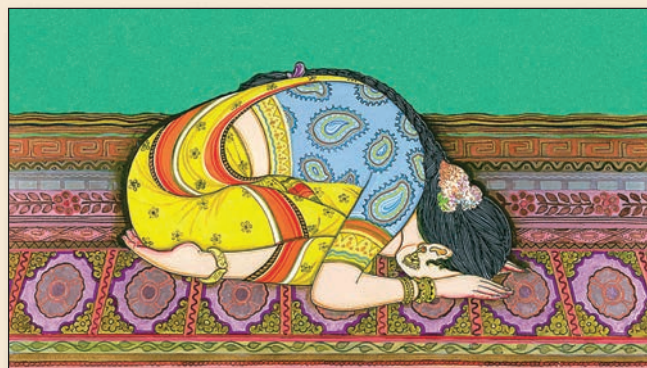
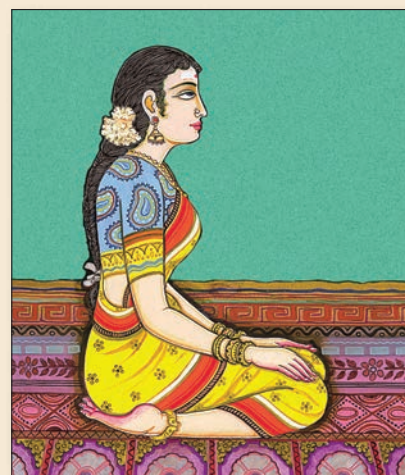
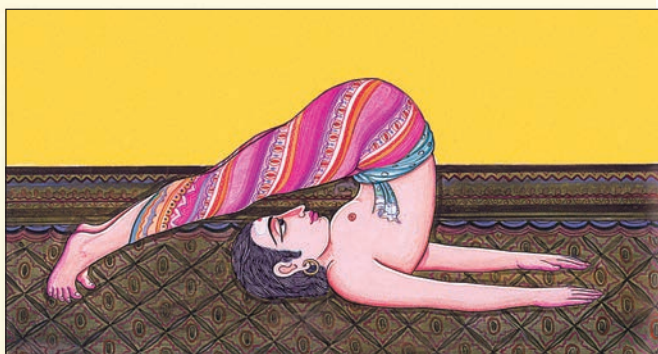
## Set 2

**4.** From the last pose of set one straighten the left leg, lean forward and grasp the left foot with the thumb and index fingers of both hands. This is the *janu shirshasana*, जानुशीर्षासन, head-to-knee pose. Relax into the position, letting the head drop lower and lower until it rests on the knee. In full flexibility the elbows lower to the floor, and the torso rests on the leg. **5.** Repeat these steps on the right side. **6.** Then extend both legs (a little bend is OK at first) into the forward bend, *pashchimottasana*, पश्चिमोत्तानासन. Grasp the toes with the thumb and index fingers and let the head gently fall to the knees. With practice, the elbows will lower to the floor. In this set, visualize marigold orange for pure, selfless service.



### Set 3

**7.** Lying face-up on the floor, raise the legs and—with the hands in the mid-back region to support the body—raise the torso until the entire body is vertical over the shoulders. This is the shoulder stand, *sarvangasana*, सर्व आङ्गसन. Keep the spine straight, feet together, torso perpendicular to the floor. **8.** Lower the legs slowly over the head until the toes touch the floor. Then lower the arms, palms down. This is the plough pose, *halasana*, हलासन. **9.** End the set with the corpse pose, *shavasana*, शवासन, by lowering the legs to the floor in front of you. Let the hands rest loosely by the sides, palms down. Every muscle is relaxed. Visualize sun-glow yellow for purified intellect during this third set.

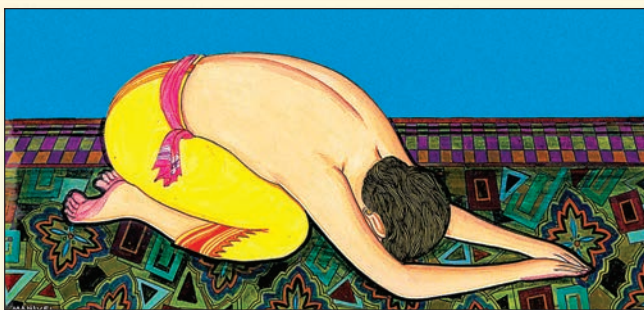
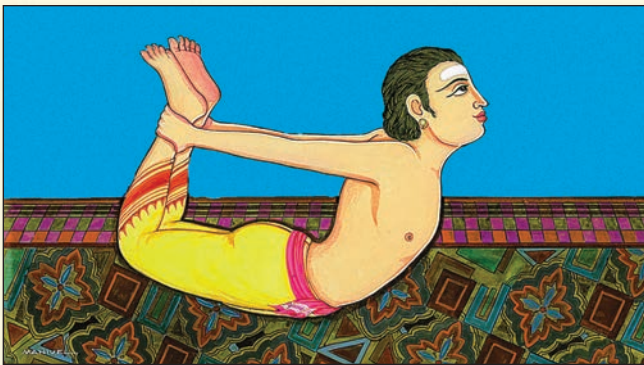


### Set 4

**10.** Kneel and spread the feet apart, sitting between the ankles, hands on the knees, palms down. This is the heroic pose, *virasana*, वीरासन. **11.** Still kneeling, arch back as far as possible until the head touches the floor behind you in the couch pose, *paryankasana*, पर्यङ्कसन. Hold the palms together over the chest in a. **12.** When you reach the right pitch of energy, bring the torso up (ideally without aid from the arms) and bend forward until the forehead touches the floor, palms down near the head, buttocks on the floor between the ankles. In this set, visualize emerald green for physical and emotional health.

## Set 5

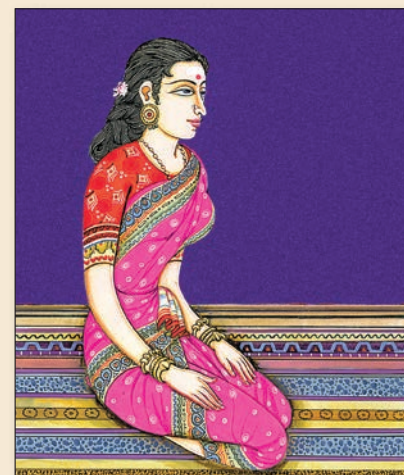
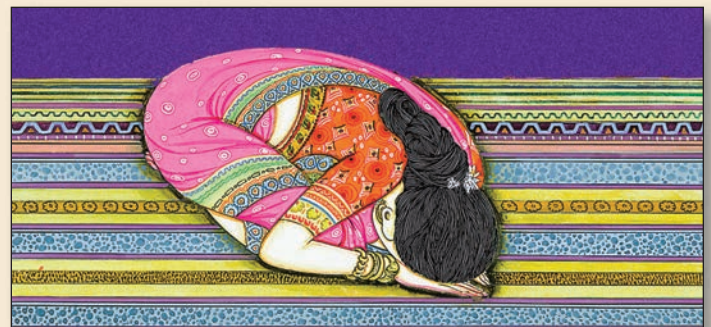
**13.** Move the upper body forward, inhale, arch the back slowly and extend the arms until straight, in the cobra pose, *bhujangasana*, भुजङ्गासन. Hold for two or three breaths, then lower the torso gracefully. **14.** Bring the legs up, reach back and clasp the ankles. Inhale as you pull the legs up and raise the head and upper body into the bow pose, *dhanurasana*, धनुःरासन. Look up and back. Hold for two or three rounds of breathing. Exhale as you release the legs and lower to the prone position. **15.** Rise into a kneeling position, buttocks on the ankles, in the *panchanga pranamasana*, पंचाङ्गप्रणामासन, forehead on the floor, arms forward, palms down. In this set, visualize bright royal blue for peace of mind.



ART BY A. MANIVEL

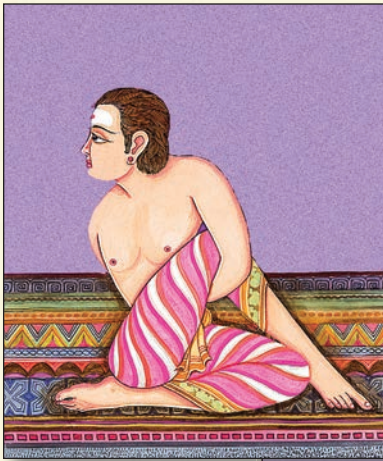
## Set 6

**16.** From the last asana, move the body forward and form a triangle of forearms and head, hands clasped behind the head, fingers interwoven. The hairline touches the floor. Raise the body slowly, keeping the knees bent. Pause, then extend the legs vertically into the headstand, *salamba shirshasana*, सालम्ब शीर्षासन. Keep most of the body weight on the arms, not the head. **17.** When ready, bend and tuck in the knees and carefully lower into the curled pelvic pose for at least 8 cycles of breath to allow the blood to equalize. **18.** Slowly rise into the upright pelvic pose, hands on knees, palms down. Keep the head down momentarily against the chest in a *bandha*, or lock, and then straighten the neck. Visualize purple for the flooding forth of spiritual knowledge.

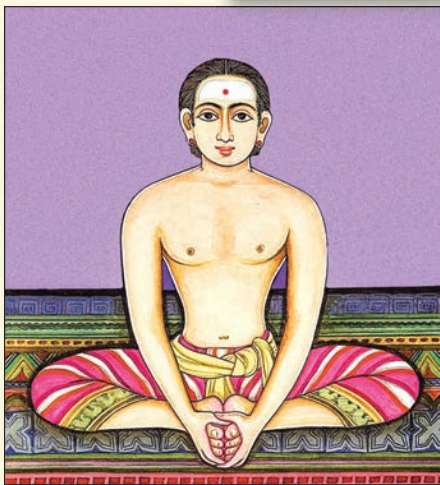
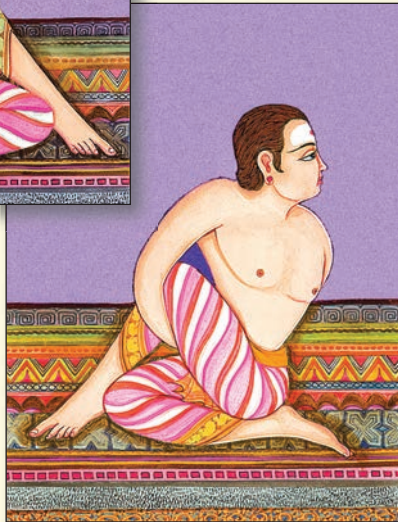


## Set 7

**19.** Sit on the left hip and place the right foot over the left knee. Insert the left arm under the bent right knee. Extend the right arm behind the back and clasp the left hand with the right (as an easier alternative, grasp the right knee with the left arm). Keep the spine as straight as possible. This is the spinal twist, *matsyendrasana*, मत्स्येन्द्रासन. Turn the head slowly to the left and twist the torso each time you inhale, and back to the right as you exhale. **20.** Repeat the posture on the opposite side. **21.** Finally, bring the soles together and hold the feet with both hands in the bound-eagle pose, *baddha konasana*,



बद्धकोणासन. Let the knees lower to the floor. Throughout this set visualize lavender to purify karma through divine sight.

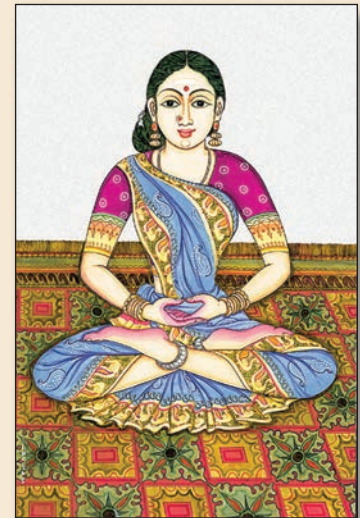


## Set 8

**22.** Extend the right leg and place the left ankle high on the right thigh. Stretch forward and clasp the right foot with the thumb and index finger. This is a variation of the head-to-knee pose, *janu shirshasana*, जानुशीर्षासन.

**23.** Repeat this same procedure on the left side, with the right foot on the left thigh.

**24.** Finally, assume the lotus posture, *padmasana*, पद्मासन. The right foot is already on the left thigh. To complete the lotus, carefully place the left foot on the right thigh. Spine straight with the hands resting in the lap, palms open, right hand on top, with the thumbs gently touching in *dhyana* mudra. Visualize white during this set to attain moksha, freedom from rebirth.





# Glossary

**affirmation:** A positive declaration or assertion that we repeat regularly to impress our mind and thus improve our life in specific ways.

**Agama:** A large collection of revealed scriptures written in Sanskrit, describing temple ritual and construction, philosophy and yoga. Saivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism each have their own *Agamas*.

**Agamic:** Of or pertaining to the *Agamas*.

**ahimsa:** “Noninjury.” Not causing hurt or damage to any living being, or to the environment, by thought, word or deed—even in your dreams.

**Alaveddy:** A village in northern Sri Lanka where Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami performed sadhana and established an ashram in the late 1940s.

**anava:** Sense of being an individual, separate from God and the world. Anava is part of Lord Siva’s veiling grace.

**anjali mudra:** A gesture of respect and greeting in which the two palms are held gently together, slightly cupped, usually in front of the heart.

**Antarloka:** “Inner or in-between world,” known in English as the subtle or astral plane. It is the intermediate dimension between the physical and causal worlds, where souls function in their astral bodies between incarnations—being helped to readjust to not having a physical body, and eventually prepared for yet another birth—and during sleep. See *subtle plane*.

**anugraha:** Siva’s revealing grace, which frees the mature soul from anava, karma and maya.

**Appar:** “Father.” Tirunavukkarasar, one of the four great Tamil Nalvar saints.

**arati:** The waving of a lighted lamp, as done before the Deity at the high point of puja.

**artifact:** A special man-made object, such as a statue of a Deity.

**asana:** Any of numerous hatha yoga positions, each with specific benefits. These postures balance the energies of mind and body, promoting health and serenity. Asana is the third limb of ashtanga yoga. Gurudeva’s system of twenty-four sequential asanas relieves stress and prepares mind and body for meditation.

**ascetic:** One who leads an austere and highly disciplined life, shunning comforts and pleasures, for religious goals.

**ashram:** The home of a guru or Hindu monk.

**ashtanga yoga:** The eightfold system of yoga described in Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*, comprising yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara,

dharana, dhyana and samadhi—each stage building on those before.

**astral plane:** Second World. See *Antarloka*.



**Aum:** A sacred mantra, or sound, that is present at the beginning of many scriptures and chants. The primal vibration from which all manifestation issues forth.

**Aum Gam Ganapataye**

**Namah:** “Praise be to Ganapati,” a sacred mantra for Lord Ganesha.

**aura:** The luminous, colorful field of subtle energy radiating within and around the human body, extending out from three to seven feet. The colors of the aura change constantly according to the ebb and flow of one’s state of consciousness, thoughts, moods and emotions. Higher, benevolent feelings create bright pastels; base, negative feelings are darker in color. Auras can be seen and “read” by clairvoyants.

**austere:** Without comfort or luxuries.

**Auvaiyar:** A saint of Tamil Nadu (ca 200 bce), devotee of Lord Ganesha and Karttikeya. She wrote exquisite ethical works, some in aphoristic style and some in four-line verse. Her Tamil primer is studied by schoolchildren to this day.

**Batu Caves:** Famous caves on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A Murugan temple is inside the largest cave. Alongside the 272 steps leading up to the cave stands a beautiful 140-foot-tall statue of Lord Murugan.

**Bengaluru:** A city formerly known as Bangalore, in the South Indian state of Karnataka.

**bhajana (bhajan):** Spiritual song. Individual or group singing of devotional songs, hymns and chants.

**bhakti:** Religious devotion.

**bhakti yoga:** The practice of devotional disciplines, worship, prayer, chanting and singing with the aim of awakening love in the heart and opening oneself to God’s grace. Bhakti may be directed toward God, Gods or one’s spiritual preceptor.

**Bhogar Rishi:** A great Saivite siddha who did intense yoga in a cave at the site of Palani Hills temple in Tamil Nadu, India. He is known for creating the enshrined murti that is worshiped to this day, using nine medicinal substances.

**Bhuloka:** The physical world we perceive with our five senses, and in which we function in our physical body. The First World.

**Bhumi Devi:** “Earth Goddess.” The name of Earth given in Hindu scripture, so beloved as to be revered as the Divine Mother.

**bindi:** (Hindi) A dot worn on the forehead between the eyebrows. It is a sign that one is a Hindu. In Sanskrit it is called *bindu*, and in Tamil, *pottu*.



**Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Satguru:** The current guru of the Kailasa Parampara, the successor of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami.

**bond:** Restraint, fetter.

**Buddhism:** A religion that arose out of Hinduism based

on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (624–544 bce). Followers seek to overcome greed, hatred and delusion and to attain enlightenment by following the Eightfold Path and realizing the Four Noble Truths. Its primary scripture is the *Dhammapada*.

**chakras:** Great force centers, areas of consciousness, in our inner bodies. The seven principal chakras can be seen psychically as colorful, multi-petaled wheels or lotuses. They are situated along the spinal cord from the base to the cranial chamber. Seven lower chakras, barely visible, exist in the legs and feet. These are seats of instinctive consciousness, the origin of jealousy, hatred, envy, guilt, sorrow, etc. They constitute the lower or hellish world, called Naraka or patala. The highest seven chakras, accessible after Self Realization, exist above the head.

**charya pada:** “Stage of [good] conduct.” The first stage of human unfoldment, where one learns to live righteously and serve selflessly, performing karma yoga. Traditional acts of charya include cleaning the temple, lighting lamps and collecting flowers for worship. Worship at this stage is mostly external.

**Chellappaswami:** A satguru who lived in Jaffna, Sri Lanka (1840–1915). He was the guru of Satguru Yogaswami, who in turn was guru to Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami.

**Chidambaram:** A South Indian city, site of the famous Thillai Nataraja Siva temple (often simply called Chidambaram Temple).

**Christianity:** The faith based upon the teachings of Jesus Christ. Its main scripture is the *Bible*.

**Confucianism:** A system of philosophy and ethics founded by Confucius in China around 500 bce.

**consideration:** Being thoughtful and sensitive to the feelings and needs of others.

**cosmos:** The whole of creation—all three worlds—seen as harmonious and complete.

**creed:** An authoritative, clearly expressed declaration of the core beliefs of a religion.

**Dakshinamurti:** Siva as the guru seated under a banyan tree, silently teaching four rishis seated before him.

**darshan:** Seeing the Divine. Beholding with our inner or outer vision, a temple image, Deity, holy person or place, with the desire to inwardly contact and receive blessings, and to be seen by that Divinity.

**death:** Termination of the physical body due to accident, disease or old age. The soul’s detaching itself from that form and continuing on in the subtle body with the same desires, aspirations and activities as when it lived in a physical body.

**Deity:** God or a God. *Deity* also names the murti, or image, through which a Divinity can send blessings, especially during puja.

**denominations:** The various groups within a religion which hold varying beliefs.

**deva:** “Shining one.” A soul inhabiting the higher astral plane in a subtle, nonphysical body. *Deva* is also used in scripture to mean “God or Deity.”

**Devaram:** The collection of religious songs of Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar, three of the Tamil Nalvar saints.

**Devi:** An alternate name for Shakti, the Goddess, used especially in Shaktism.

**Dhammapada:** The most important scripture of Buddhism. It is a collection of sayings of the Buddha in verse form.

**dharana:** Concentration. Focusing awareness on a single object or area and not letting it wander. The sixth stage of ashtanga yoga.

**dharma:** “Righteousness.” From *dhri*, “to sustain; carry, hold.” The inherent order of the universe. Divine law as it applies to all things and all beings. The term has many meanings, including: law of being, religion, duty, virtue and truth.

**dhyana:** True meditation, a quiet, alert, powerful state in which knowledge comes from within; the seventh limb of ashtanga yoga. It is the result of prolonged concentration.

**dualism:** The philosophical concept that there are two eternally separate principles, entities or truths. It is often contrasted to monism.

**essence of the soul:** The two aspects of the soul that are identical with Siva: pure consciousness and absolute reality. They are eternal and perfect; whereas our soul’s third aspect, the soul body, is immature and not yet identical with the Primal Soul.

**evolution:** Gradual development, usually over long periods of time.

**fast:** Not taking any or some kinds of food or drink for a certain period of time.

**festival:** Special day (or days) of religious celebration and worship, usually annual.

**Ganapati:** "Leader of the ganas." One of Lord Ganesha's many names; synonymous with *Ganesha*.

**Ganas:** a kind of deva who help God Siva.



**Ganesha:** a Mahadeva, the beloved elephant-faced Deity honored by Hindus of every sect. He is the Lord of Obstacles (Vighneshvara), revered for His great wisdom and invoked first before any undertaking, for He knows all intricacies of each soul's karma and the perfect path of dharma that makes action successful. He sits on the

muladhara chakra and is easy of access.

**Ganesha Chaturthi:** The birthday celebration of Lord Ganesha, a ten-day festival in August-September. On the last day, Ganesha Visarjana, we release Ganesha to His Third-World home by immersing His murti in water to dissolve.

**God:** Lord Siva, the Supreme Being, creator of the universe and everyone and everything in it. The word *God* can also refer to great beings like Lord Ganesha or Lord Murugan who serve Lord Siva and were created by Him. See *Gods*.

**Goddess:** Female representation or manifestation of Divinity; Shakti or Devi. God as female. In truth, God is neither male nor female.

**Gods:** Extremely advanced beings, such as Lord Ganesha or Lord Murugan, created by Lord Siva to perform grand cosmic functions, such as aiding souls in our evolution.

**Gorakshanatha:** A great Saivite guru who lived in North India and Nepal around 950 ce. He was a sidha yoga master of the Adinatha lineage and the foremost guru of Siddha Siddhanta.

**grace:** A gift from God given out of His love. More broadly, Siva's grace is twofold. Concealing grace, *tirodhana shakti*, binds the soul with the three bonds of anava, karma and maya. This purposeful limiting of consciousness enables the soul to grow and mature through experience of the world. Revealing grace, *anugraha shakti*, is God Siva's power of illumination, through which the matured soul is freed from those bonds and ultimately attains liberation, moksha.

**guardian devas:** Inner-world helpers assigned to an individual at birth, or at their formal entrance into Hinduism. Each family has numerous guardian devas who assist the family, bless the home and keep the spiritual vibration strong. Every religion has its own guardian devas.

**guru:** A title for a teacher or guide in any subject, such as music, dance or sculpture, but especially religion. For clarity, the term is often preceded by a qualifying

prefix: a *kulaguru* is a family teacher, a *vinaguru* is a vina teacher and a *satguru* is a spiritual preceptor.

**guru lineage:** A line of gurus. Each passes the spiritual power to the next through initiation.

**guru puja:** Worship of the guru by bathing his feet and presenting offerings.

**Guru Purnima:** A festival day to honor one's guru. It takes place every year during the full moon in July.

**Gurudeva:** An affectionate, respectful term used by devotees for their guru. Used in this book, it refers to Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami.

**Hari-Hara:** A Deity image (murti) whose right half is Siva and left half is Vishnu, showing that these two most popular traditional forms of the Divine are actually one being, not two. *Hari* is a name for Vishnu, and *Hara* is a name for Siva.

**hatha yoga:** A system of physical positions (asanas) and associated mental exercises. The third limb of ashtanga yoga, it quiets the mind and body in preparation for meditation. Hatha yoga is sometimes presented from a solely physical and health standpoint. See *asana*.

**Himalayas:** "Abode of snow." The highest mountain ranges in the world. They run 2,400 km between India and China from Kashmir to Assam.

**Hindu:** A follower of the Hindu religion, distinguished by a Hindu name. As an adjective: pertaining to the Hindu faith.

**Hinduism:** India's indigenous religious and cultural system, followed today by nearly one billion adherents, mostly in India, but with large populations in many other countries. Also called Sanatana Dharma, "eternal religion," and Vaidika Dharma, "religion of the Vedas." Hinduism is the world's most ancient religion and encompasses a broad spectrum of philosophies ranging from pluralistic theism to absolute monism. It is a family of myriad faiths with four primary denominations: Saivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Smartism.

**holy ash:** see *vibhuti*.

**homa:** A sacred Vedic fire ceremony, an ancient way of worshiping God and Gods.

**instinctive nature:** The urges that come from the physical body and the lower mind, such as self-preservation, procreation, hunger, thirst, greed, hatred, anger, fear, lust and jealousy.

**intellectual nature:** The mental aspect of humans: the power to think, discriminate, analyze, reason and make plans.



**Iraivan Temple:** A Chola-style Siva temple on Kauai island in the state of Hawaii, USA. It is the only temple in the West built entirely of hand-carved granite stone. Located in the heart of a traditional Hindu monastery complex

reminiscent of ancient mathas and aadheenams of India, Iraivan is a pilgrimage destination, a place of sadhana and spiritual rejuvenation.

**Islam:** The religion founded by Prophet Mohammed in Arabia about 625 ce. Its principal scripture is the *Koran*.

**Jaffna:** The main city of northern Sri Lanka and the name of the peninsula where it is located.

**Jainism:** An ancient non-Vedic religion of India that emphasizes ahimsa. Mahavira was a great Jain teacher who lived around 500 bce.

**japa:** Repetition of a mantra, or sacred sound, with concentration. Japa is done silently or aloud, often keeping count on a strand of beads. This practice is called japa yoga or mantra yoga.

**jayanti:** "Birthday," such as guru jayanti, the birthday of one's guru.

**jnana pada:** "Stage of wisdom." The fourth stage of human evolution, the outcome of perfecting the stages of charya, kriya and yoga.

**Judaism:** The religion of the Jewish people. The *Torah* is their principal scripture. Judaism began about 3,700 years ago in the Near East, chiefly Canaan (now Israel) and Egypt.

**jyoti:** Light, radiance, brightness. The inner light seen within the mind in meditation is a form of Siva consciousness.

**jyotisha:** Hindu astrology. The knowledge and practice of analyzing events and circumstances, delineating character and determining auspicious moments, according to the positions and movements of heavenly bodies.

**Kadaitswami:** The guru of Chellappaswami, 1820–1875. He came from Bengaluru, India, to Jaffna, Sri Lanka, to teach Saivism.

**Kailasa Parampara:** The spiritual lineage of Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, his Gurudeva and all the preceptors that preceded them. Part of the Nandinatha Sampradaya.

**kalas:** Arts and skills of cultured living, such as singing, dancing and garland making. There are 64 cultural arts, or kalas, in Hindu tradition

**Karaikkal Ammai:** A Saivite saint who lived in the 5th century ce. She was a great mystic poet and yogini who composed important hymns, which are part of *Tirumurai*.

**karma:** 1) Any act or deed; 2) the principle of cause and effect; 3) a consequence or fruit of action, which sooner or later returns upon the doer. Selfish, hateful acts will bring suffering. Benevolent actions will bring loving reactions. Karma is a neutral law of the inner cosmos, much as gravity is an impersonal law of the outer cosmos.

**karma yoga:** Selfless service as a means of spiritual unfoldment. Karma yoga, seva, is an important part of the charya pada.

**Karttikeya:** One of Lord Murugan's many names, meaning "child of the Pleiades" constellation.

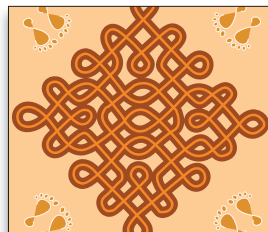
**Kashi:** Alternate name for Varanasi. See *Varanasi*.

**Kashi Vishwanath:** A famous Siva temple in Varanasi, India.

**Kauai's Hindu Monastery:** Kauai Aadheenam, the monastery/temple complex established in Hawaii, USA, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami.

**kavadi:** A decorated yoke/arch placed across one's shoulders and used to carry two milk pots to the temple during Muruga festivals.

**Kerala:** A state on India's southwestern coast.



**kolam:** A traditional Hindu decoration drawn on the ground or floor during festivals or weddings, and daily at one's doorway. Kolams are made using plain or colored rice powder, pulse grains or flower petals. They are only intended to last a few days.

Designs may be simple or elaborate.

**kriya pada:** "Religious action or worship stage." The second stage of human unfoldment, of bhakti yoga, cultivating devotion through performing puja and regular daily sadhana. A central practice of the kriya pada is performing daily puja.

**Kumbha Mela:** A Hindu gathering held periodically at four sacred cities in rotation over a 12-year period: Prayag (Allahabad), Nasik, Haridwar and Ujjain. The exact dates are set by astrological calculations and are not evenly spaced over the 12 years. Attendance at Prayag numbers up to 120 million people over the course of the festival and 30 million on a single day, making it the largest assembly of humans on Earth for any one event.

**Kumbhalavalai Temple:** A powerful Ganesha temple in Alaveddy, Sri Lanka.

**kumkum:** A red powder applied to the forehead. (*Kumkum* is the Hindi form; *kunkumam* is Tamil, and *kunkuma* is Sanskrit.)

**kundalini:** "She who is coiled; serpent power." The cosmic energy in every individual which, at first, lies coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine and eventually, through the practice of yoga, rises and stimulates each successive chakra.

**kundalini yoga:** "Uniting the serpent power." Advanced meditative practices and sadhana techniques, a part of raja yoga, performed to arouse the kundalini power and guide it up the spine into the crown chakra, sahasrara. In its highest form, this yoga is the natural result of sadhanas and tapas well performed, rather than a distinct system of striving and teaching.

**liberation:** Release from the round of births and deaths. See *moksha*.

**Lingam:** Same as Sivalinga. See *Sivalinga*.

**macrocosm:** The manifest physical universe. See also *microcosm*.

**Madurai:** A city in Tamil Nadu, South India. The great Meenakshi-Sundareshvara Temple is there.

**Mahadeva:** "Great shining one; God." A worshipful term used to refer to God Siva, and to highly evolved beings, such as Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan, created by Lord Siva to perform grand cosmic functions, such as aiding souls in our evolution.

**Mahakaleshwar:** A ancient and famous Siva temple in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, India.

**maharishi:** "Great seer." Title for a great saint.

**Mahasivaratri:** The biggest Siva festival of the year. It is celebrated on the night before the new moon in February-March. Fasting and an all-night vigil are observed as well as other disciplines: chanting, praying, meditating and worshipping Siva as the Source and Self of all that exists.

**malas:** "Impurities." An important term in Saivism referring to the three bonds (*pasha*), anava, karma, and maya, which limit the soul, preventing it from knowing its true, divine nature. **Mālā** (long a's) names a looped strand of beads for holy recitation, japa, usually made of rudraksha, tulasi, sandalwood or crystal. Also, a flower garland.

**manifest energy:** God's energy, Shakti, which you can see and feel.

**Manikkavasagar:** A Tamil saint who contributed to the medieval Saivite renaissance (ca 850). He gave up his position as prime minister to follow a renunciate life. His poetic *Tiruvagam*, "Holy Utterances," a major Saiva Siddhanta scripture, is a jewel of Tamil literature. There he expresses his aspirations, trials and yogic realizations. His *Tiruvagam* and *Tirukovaiyar* are part of the eighth *Tirumurai*.

**mantra:** A sacred Sanskrit word, phrase or sentence from scripture, chanted during puja, as japa, or as a blessing before meals, at gatherings, etc.

**mantra yoga:** The practice of japa, chanting mantras to aid in spiritual unfoldment. See *japa*.

**Matsyendranatha:** A great Natha guru who lived in the 9th century ce. A patron saint of Nepal.

**maya:** The substance emanated from Siva through which the world of form is manifested. Hence all creation is also termed maya. It is the cosmic creative force, the principle of manifestation, ever in the process of creation, preservation and dissolution. Maya is a key concept in Hinduism, often differently translated as "illusion."



**meditation:** Sitting quietly, controlling the breath, stilling the thought waves and going within oneself. Through meditation we can unfold new knowledge and study awareness.

**Meykandar:** A 13th-century Tamil pluralistic

Saiva Siddhanta theologian, founder of the Meykandar Sampradaya.

**microcosm:** "Little world" or "miniature universe."

The inner world, from which the macrocosm issues forth. See also *macrocosm*.

**moksha:** "Liberation." The soul's release from the cycle of births and deaths. This occurs after all dharma has been fulfilled, all karma resolved and God Realization attained. The soul then continues to evolve in the inner worlds.

**monastery:** A home or ashram for monks, usually under the guidance of a satguru.

**monastic:** A monk or nun. An unmarried man or woman who lives an austere religious life.

**monism:** The doctrine that there is only one ultimate substance or principle; the perspective that reality is a unified whole.

**monistic theism:** Monism is the doctrine that reality is a one whole or existence without independent parts. Theism is the belief that God exists as a real, conscious, personal Supreme Being. Monistic theism (also called panentheism) embraces both monism and theism. The Sanskrit equivalent of monistic theism is Advaita Ishvaravada.

**Mount Kailas:** A Himalayan mountain sacred to Lord Siva.

**mudras:** Esoteric gestures used in puja, dance and yoga to express specific energies or powers or to communicate meaning.

**muladhara chakra:** The chakra of memory, at the base of the spine. Seat of Lord Ganesha and beginning of the spiritual path.

**Mumbai:** A major city in India's Maharashtra state, formerly known as Bombay.

**murti:** An image or icon of God or a God that is the focus of worship rites, called puja. Murtis are made of stone or metal and sometimes wood.



**Murugan:** The second son of Lord Siva, brother of Lord Ganesha. A Mahadeva worshiped in all parts of India and throughout the world. This God of yoga and spiritual striving holds

the holy vel of jnana shakti, which is His power to vanquish darkness or ignorance.

**Mushika:** Ganesha's mount, the mouse, symbolizing abundance, carrying Ganesha's grace everywhere.

**mystic:** One who pursues spiritual disciplines aimed at union or communion with Ultimate Reality, God, through deep meditation or trance-like contemplation.

**mysticism:** Spirituality. The pursuit of personal spiritual or religious experience.

**nada:** Sound. Metaphysically, the subtle, mystic sounds of the Eternal. One form of nada is the high "eee" sound inwardly heard by meditators.

**Nalvar:** "The four." The four most highly revered Tamil Saiva saints: Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar and Manikkavasagar.

**Namaḥ Śivāya:** "Praise to Siva." The foremost mantra for Saivites, known as the Panchakshara or "five syllables." *Na* is the Lord's veiling grace; *Ma* is the world; *Śi* is Siva; *Vā* is His revealing grace; *Ya* is the soul.

**namaskar (or namaskaram):** "Reverent salutations." Virtually equivalent to *namaste*. The most common verbal greeting used among Hindus. As the word is pronounced, the palms are often held together in anjali mudra before the heart or raised to the level of the forehead with the head slightly bowed. It is a devotional gesture made equally before a temple Deity, holy person, friend or momentary acquaintance.

**namaste:** "Respectful greetings to you." A traditional verbal greeting. Hands are in anjali mudra.

**Nandinatha:** The first known guru of the Nandinatha Sampradaya, and of the Kailasa Parampara. He lived around 250 bce.

**nonviolence:** *Ahimsa* in Sanskrit. To avoid causing harm or pain to others, physically, mentally or emotionally.

**Nataraja:** God Siva as Cosmic Dancer. This is Siva's intricate state of Being in Manifestation. The dance of Siva is the dance of the entire cosmos, the rhythmic movements in all. All that is, whether sentient or insentient, pulsates in His body. Dance and Dancer are one; not an atom moves on any plane of existence but by His Will. Thus, this elegant symbol embodies the underlying unity of all.

**Natha Sampradaya:** The oldest Saivite stream of teaching. The Nandinatha Sampradaya is one of its branches.

**niyama:** The observances by which we cultivate our spiritual nature. Niyama is the second limb of ashtanga yoga.

**Odissi:** A form of Indian dance from Orissa state, India.

**padas:** The four progressive, cumulative stages of each soul's maturation: charya, kriya, yoga and jnana.

**Palani Hills:** The site of a large and famous Murugan temple in Tamil Nadu, South India.

**Panchabrahma:** The form of Siva with five faces, representing His five powers.

**Panchakshara:** "Five-lettered chant." Namaḥ Śivāya, Saivism's foremost sacred mantra.

**pancha nitya karmas:** Five essential Hindu practices: 1) worship (upasana); 2) holy days (utsava); 3) pilgrimage (tirthayatra); 4) virtuous living (dharma); and 5) rites of passage (samskaras).

**Parameshvara:** The Primal Soul, Supreme Mahadeva, Siva-Shakti. God's personal perfection, who acts, wills, blesses, gives darshan, guides, creates, preserves, reabsorbs, obscures and enlightens.

**parampara:** A lineage (of gurus). The spiritual power is passed from one to the next by initiation.

**Parashakti:** "Supreme power; primal energy." God Siva's impersonal, all-pervasive Pure Consciousness, the Primal Substance of all that exists. It is also called Satchidananda.

**Parasiva:** The Self God. Siva's first perfection, Absolute Reality, transcending time, form and space.

**pasha:** All of existence, manifest and unmanifest. The soul's threefold bondage of anava, karma and maya. That which binds or limits the soul.



**pashu:** In Hindu philosophy, pashu refers to the soul. It can also refer to all creatures including man. The literal meaning is "cattle."

**Pashupatinath:** The foremost temple of Nepal, dedicated to Lord Siva, "Lord of souls."

**Pati, pashu,**

**pasha:** God, soul, world—the three primary elements of philosophy. Literally: "master, cow and tether."

**penance:** Actions done to atone for misdeeds.

**perfections (three):** Qualities, dimensions or aspects that are perfect. A term used to describe God Siva's three flawless aspects. Perfection one: Siva is the Absolute Reality (Parasiva) that transcends all but is the foundation of everything. Perfection two: Siva is immanent, pervading all existence as the Pure Consciousness (Parashakti) within all. Perfection three: Siva exists in personal form as Primal Soul (Parameshvara), Creator of all.

**pottu:** In Tamil, the small dot (also called bindi or bindu) worn on the forehead, which identifies one as a Hindu. It is usually made of kumkum (red powder) or sandalwood paste. Widows and unmarried girls traditionally wear a black pottu.

**prana:** Vital energy. Usually prana refers to the life principle, such as in the human body, but sometimes denotes energy, power or the animating force of the cosmos.

**pranayama:** The practice of controlling prana (subtle energy) through breathing techniques. Pranayama quiets the mind and balances the masculine and feminine (pingala and ida) energies. This is the fourth limb of ashtanga yoga.

**prasadam (or prasada):** A gift of food offered to God, Gods or guru, or a portion of offerings that is shared with devotees.

**pratyahara:** Withdrawal of awareness from externalities—first from the physical senses, then from emotion and intellect. The fifth limb of ashtanga yoga.

**Primal Soul:** The uncreated, original, perfect soul, Parameshvara. God in His personal aspect as Lord and Creator, who emanates from Himself all of

creation—the inner and outer universes and all individual souls. The essence of each soul is the same as His: Satchidananda and Parasiva.

**puja:** A Hindu form of worship, a ritual ceremony that includes offerings of incense, water, food and flowers, presentation of lighted lamps, chanting of Sanskrit verses and, usually, the ringing of bells—all of which help to establish communion with the God being worshiped.

**raja yoga:** The classical yoga system of eight progressive stages to Illumination as described in various yoga *Upanishads*, the *Tirumantiram* and, most notably, the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, who called it *ashtanga* (eightfold) yoga.

**Rameshwaram:** A town at the southern tip of India, site of the large, ancient Ramanathaswamy Siva Temple founded by Lord Rama.

**reincarnation:** “Reentering the flesh.” The process in which a soul is reborn on Earth to continue its evolution. It is a repetitive cycle, known as *punarjanma* in Sanskrit, which originates in the subtle plane. See *Antarloka*.

**rishi:** “Seer.” A term for an enlightened being, emphasizing psychic perception and visionary wisdom.



**Rishi from the Himalayas:**

The first recently known siddha of the Kailasa Parampara; guru of Kadaitswami.

**rudraksha:** A reddish seed sacred to Lord Siva, worn by devotees and strung on malas for japa.

**sadhana:** Religious and spiritual disciplines, such as

puja, yoga, meditation, japa, fasting and austerity.

**sadhana marga:** The path of intense effort, spiritual discipline and consistent inner transformation, as opposed to theoretical and intellectual learning.

**sadhu:** A holy man dedicated to the search for God. Feminine: *sadhvi*.

**Saiva:** Same as *Saivite*. See *Saivite*.

**Saiva Agamas:** Revealed scriptures specific to Saivism, supplementing the *Vedas*. Strongly theistic, they identify Siva as the Supreme Lord, immanent and transcendent. There are 28 *Saiva Siddhanta Agamas* and 64 *Kashmir Saiva Agamas*.

**Saiva Siddhanta:** “Final conclusions of Saivism.” Theology based on the 28 *Saiva Siddhanta Agamas*. For Saiva Siddhantins, Siva is the totality of all, understood in three perfections: Parameshvara (the Personal Creator Lord), Parashakti (the substratum of all form) and Parasiva (Absolute Reality, which transcends all). Souls and world are identical in essence with Siva, yet also differ in that they are evolving. The first known guru of the Shuddha (“pure”) Saiva Siddhanta tradition was Maharishi

Nandinatha of Kashmir (ca bce 250). A pluralistic stream of Saiva Siddhanta arose in the middle ages from the teachings of Aghorasiva and Meykandar.

**Saivam:** The Tamil word for Saivism. It also means vegetarian.

**Saivism:** The religion of those who worship Lord Siva as the Supreme God. The oldest of Hinduism’s four major denominations.

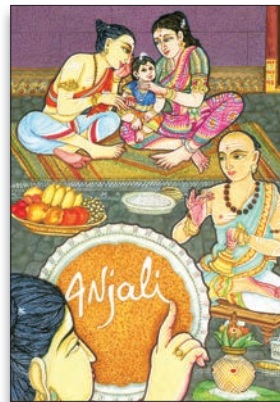
**Saivite:** Of or relating to Saivism or its adherents, who number about 400 million in the world today. Same as *Saiva*.

**samadhi:** The goal of yoga, a state in which the meditator and the object of meditation are one. *Savikalpa samadhi* is oneness with the essence of an object, or with Pure Consciousness. *Nirvikalpa samadhi*, Self Realization, transcends all consciousness.

**Sambandar:** A child saint who lived in the 7th century and composed many devotional songs, *Devaram*, in praise of Siva. He is honored as one of the four Tamil Nalvar saints.

**samhara:** God Siva’s cosmic power of destruction or dissolution.

**samsara:** The repetitive cycle of birth, death and rebirth. More broadly, *samsara* refers to the phenomenal world, transmigratory existence, the realm of impermanence and change.



**samskara:** Rites of passage marking a significant transition in life, such as name-giving, first feeding, ear-piercing, beginning of study, coming of age, marriage and funeral rites. Also refers to any deep impression made on the subconscious mind.

**sangam:** Coming together in a group, especially for religious purposes. Fellowship; religious gathering.

**San Marga:** “True path.” The straight, spiritual path leading to the ultimate goal, Self Realization, not detouring into psychic exploration or the development of siddhis.

**Sanatana Dharma:** “Eternal religion” or “everlasting path.” A traditional designation for the Hindu religion.

**sannyasin:** A Hindu monk, unmarried and celibate; a swami. One who has renounced family, possessions and career to follow a religious life, fully devoted to God, without any distractions. One becomes a sannyasin by being initiated (given *sannyas diksha*) by another sannyasin, ideally a satguru. Feminine: *sannyasini*.

**Sanskrit:** The ancient language of India in which thousands of texts are written, including the *shruti*, revealed Hindu scriptures (*Vedas* and *Agamas*).

**santoshā:** Contentment. Being happy and satisfied with what one has.

**Saravanabhava:** A mantra invoking Lord Karttikeya (Murugan), the great guardian of the spiritual quest. It describes the mind as a peaceful, undisturbed lake.

**Satan:** The devil; evil personified—a being propounded by Christianity and other Semitic faiths, believed to oppose God’s will and tempt souls into wickedness. In Hinduism, all is seen as the manifestation of God. Our ignorance, fears and desires can lead to wicked actions, but there is no Satan.

**satguru:** A great religious teacher who is close to God and guides others on the right path.

**satsanga:** A holy gathering. Association of a group of devotees for non-temple worship and religious study.

**sect:** A denomination or other group within a religion. This term is often used in a derogatory sense.

**sectarian:** Having to do with a religious sect or denomination.

**Self Realization:** Direct knowing of the Self God, Parasiva, by transcending consciousness itself. It is the culmination of yoga—attained only by a rare few in any lifetime, but eventually by all souls.

**seva:** Service, karma yoga, doing useful work for others without thought of reward.

**Shaktas:** Those who follow Shaktism, one of the four major denominations of Hinduism.

**Shakti:** “Power, energy.” The active power or energy of Siva, worshiped as the Supreme Being, the Goddess, by followers of Shaktism. In Saivism, this power is regarded as an aspect of Siva, who encompasses all, including male and female.

**Shaktism:** The religion of those who worship the Supreme as the Divine Mother. One of the four major Hindu denominations.

**Shanmukhanatha:** “Lord with six faces.” One of Lord Murugan’s many names.

**shanti:** Inner peace, tranquility, bliss.

**shastras:** Authoritative religious or philosophical writings. The term means “text” or “teaching.”

**Shri Rudram:** “(Hymn) to the wielder of awesome powers.” Preeminent Vedic hymn to Lord Siva as the God of dissolution, located in the middle of the first three *Vedas*. It is chanted often in Siva temples throughout the world. It is within this long prayer that the mantra *Namaḥ Śivāya* first appears.

**shrishti:** One of God Siva’s five powers, that of creation or emanation.

**shruti:** That which is “heard” (by great sages). *Shruti* refers to Hinduism’s revealed scriptures, the *Vedas* and *Agamas*.

**Shuddha (pure) Saiva Siddhanta:** The oldest school of Saiva Siddhanta, the monistic theism of Maharishi Nandinatha. Besides the *Vedas* and *Saiva Siddhanta Agamas*, its scriptures include the *Tirumantiram*, *Tirumurai* and *Tirukural*.

**siddha:** an accomplished yogi; one who has attained great spiritual attainment or powers.

**Sikhism:** The religion founded by Guru Nanak about 500 years ago. A reformist faith, Sikhism rejects murti worship and the caste system. Its holy book is the *Adi Granth*, and its main center is the Golden Temple of Amritsar. The word for a follower of this faith is *Sikh*, which means “disciple” in Punjabi.

**sin:** Intentional transgression of dharma, divine law. Sin reaps painful karma, causing the soul to learn and evolve. We eventually rise above all misbehavior as we unfold our innate Godliness.

**Siva:** The “auspicious,” “gracious,” or “kindly one.” The Supreme Being as worshiped in the Saivite religion. God Siva is All and in all, simultaneously the Creator and the creation, both immanent and transcendent. He is a one Being, perhaps best understood in three perfections: Parameshvara (Primal Soul), Parashakti (Pure Consciousness) and Parasiva (Absolute Reality). See *perfections*.

**Sivachaitanya Panchatantra:** Concentrating on five successive forms of Siva consciousness, one after the other: vital breath, all-pervasive energy, sacred form, inner light and sacred sound.

**Sivalinga:** “Mark, or sign, of Siva.” Found in nearly all Siva temples, this icon, usually an oval-shaped stone set in a circular base, is the most ancient symbol of Siva, especially of Parasiva, the Ultimate Reality beyond all forms and qualities. Synonymous with *Lingam*.

**Sivaloka:** The third world, realm of Siva, the Gods and highly evolved souls. The Sivaloka is the highest, or most refined, part of the heavenly worlds.

**Smarta:** A follower of Smartism, one of the four major Hindu denominations.

**Smartism:** One of the four major denominations of Hinduism. Its name derives from its basis on the secondary scriptures (*smṛiti*), especially the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* (which includes the *Bhagavad Gita*), *Puranas* and *Dharma Shastras*. Smartism is an ancient Vedic brahminical tradition (ca 700 bce). From the 9th century onward it was guided and deeply influenced by the Advaita Vedanta teachings of the famous Adi Shankara. Smartas worship all the Gods as representations of the Supreme Being and discourage sectarianism. For spiritual authority, Smartas look to the regional monasteries established across India by Shankara. These are the headquarters of ten orders of renunciate monks.

**smṛiti:** That which is “remembered;” the tradition. Hinduism’s nonrevealed, secondary but deeply revered scriptures, derived from human insight and experience. Smṛiti texts speak of secular matters as well as spiritual lore. 1) The term refers to certain collections of ancient Sanskrit texts, such as the *Vedāngas*, *Upavedas*, *Itihasas* and *Puranas*, etc. 2) In a general sense, *smṛiti* may refer to any text other than shruti (revealed scripture) that is revered as scripture within a particular sect or lineage. The



selection of smṛiti varies widely from one sect and lineage to another.

**soul:** The real being of humans, as distinguished from body, mind and emotions. The soul—known as *atman* or *puruṣa* in Sanskrit—has two aspects: the form or body of the soul, which matures over many lifetimes into perfect identity with *Parameshvara*, and the essence of the soul, which is already perfect as *Parashakti* and *Parasiva*.

**Sri Lanka:** Island nation off the southern tip of India. It was formerly called Ceylon. Several million Tamil Saivites live here, mostly in the east and north.

**sthiti:** “Preservation.” One of the five powers of God Siva.

**sublime:** Excellent, grand. Inspiring awe or reverence.

**Subrahmanya:** One of Lord Murugaṅ’s many names. It means “very pious; dear to holy men.”



**Subramuniyaswami, Satguru Sivaya:**

Satguru (1927–2001) of the Kailasa lineage within the Nandinatha Sampradaya. He was initiated by Yogaswami in 1949 with a powerful slap on the back. His successor is Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami. This book embodies his teachings, as drawn from his Master Course Trilogy.

**subtle body:** The astral body. The nonphysical, astral body or vehicle in which the soul encases

itself to function in the *Antarloka*, or subtle world.

**subtle plane:** The *Antarloka* or Second World, also called the astral plane. The intermediate dimension between the physical and causal worlds, where souls in their astral bodies sojourn between incarnations and when they sleep. It comprises several levels, from the *Devaloka* (realm of the *devas*) to the *Narakaloka* (realm of *asuras*, demonic beings). Between incarnations we live fully in the realm of the subtle world that corresponds to our consciousness. See *Antarloka*.

**Sundaranatha:** The original name of Rishi Tirumular, author of *Tirumantiram*.

**Sundarar:** One of the four great Tamil Nalvar saints. He lived around 800 ce.

**superconscious mind:** The mind of light, the all-knowing intelligence of the soul. The highest or most refined form of consciousness.

**swami:** A renunciate Hindu monk. See *sannyasin*.

**Tamil:** The ancient Dravidian language of the Tamils, spoken by an ethnic group of 60 million people.

**Tamil Nadu:** A state in South India.

**tandava:** “Exuberant dance.” Any vigorous dance sequence performed by male dancers. The prototype is God Siva’s dance of bliss, *ananda tandava*.

**tapas:** Severe austerity, penance, sacrifice performed for purification. The word *tapas* means “warmth, heat.”

**temple:** The English term most commonly used for a building devoted to Hindu worship. The physical-plane home of God. It may be referred to by the Sanskrit terms *mandira* (Hindi: *mandir*), *devalaya*, *Sivalaya* (a Siva temple), as well as by vernacular terms such as *koyil* (Tamil).

**ten-minute spiritual workout:** A quick daily regimen designed by Satguru Bodhinatha to maintain key spiritual disciplines at extremely busy times in life, such as the student years. The spiritual workout has four parts: worship, introspection, affirmation and study.

**theism:** The doctrine that God exists as a real, conscious, personal Supreme Being, Creator and Ruler of the universe. Theism, in its various expressions, may include belief in the Gods.

**three worlds:** The three dimensions of existence: 1) *Bhuloka*: “Earth world,” the physical plane. 2) *Antarloka*: “Inner or in-between world,” the subtle or astral plane. 3) *Sivaloka*: “World of Siva” and of the Gods and other highly evolved souls, the causal plane.

**tilaka:** Distinctive marks worn by Hindus on the forehead, made with clay, ashes or sandalwood paste as an indication of specific religious affiliation. The Saivite *tilaka*, called *tripundra*, is three horizontal strips of holy ash with a dot at the third eye, below the middle of the forehead.

**tirodhana:** “Concealment.” *Tirodhana shakti* is the particular energy of Siva that binds the three bonds of *anava*, *karma*, *maya* to the soul. This purposeful limiting of consciousness enables the soul to grow and mature through experience of the world.

**tirthayatra:** Pilgrimage—one of Hinduism’s five sacred duties (*pancha nitya karmas*). Preceded by fasting and celibacy, this is a time of austerity, purification and focus on spiritual matters.

**Tirukovaiyar:** A collection of 400 devotional songs by Saint Manikkavasagar. This work and the *Tiruvagam* by the same author make up the eighth *Tirumurai*. These profound hymns embody the author’s boundless love for Siva, his visionary experiences and urgent quest for truth.

**Tirukural:** A masterpiece on ethics written in Tamil by Saint Tiruvalluvar around 200 bce. Using a supercompact verse form of 14 syllables, the poet presents 133 subjects of ten verses each on God, conduct, relationships, human strengths and foibles, statecraft and more. One of the world’s earliest ethical texts, the *Tirukural* could well be considered a bible on virtue for the human race. In fact, it is sworn on in South Indian courts of law.

**Tirumantiram:** "Holy incantation." The Nandinatha Sampradaya's oldest Tamil scripture, written around 200 bce by Rishi Tirumular. One of the *Tirumurai* texts, it is a vast storehouse of esoteric knowledge, including the fundamental doctrines of the 28 *Saiva Siddhanta Agamas*. *Tirumantiram* is prized for expressing a unified understanding of Siddhanta and Vedanta.

**Tirumular:** One of the first gurus of the Nandinatha Sampradaya; a disciple of Nandinatha. He lived around 200 bce and wrote the *Tirumantiram*.

**Tirumurai:** A 12-book collection of thousands of hymns and writings in praise of Siva, written from the 6th to 11th centuries by numerous South Indian Tamil Saivite saints. It is the most important body of Saiva Siddhanta scripture in Tamil. Books 1-3 are the hymns of Sambandar (ca 600). Books 4-6 are the hymns of Appar, a contemporary of Sambandar. Book 7 contains the hymns of Sundaramurti (ca 800). These first seven books are known as *Devarams*. Book 8 consists of Saint Manikkavasagar's (9th century) *Tiruvagasam* and *Tirukovaiyar*. Book 9 is the *Tiruvisaippa* and *Tiruppallandu*, the works of nine saints. Book 10 is the *Tirumantiram* of Saint Tirumular (ca 200 bce). Book 11 contains the hymns of ten saints, including Nakkirar and Nambiyandar Nambi, the compiler. Book 12 is the *Periyapuranam* by Saint Sekkilar (11th century), narrating the life of the 63 Saiva Nayanars.

**Tirunavukkarasar:** One of the four great Tamil Nalvar saints, often known as Appar, meaning "father."

**Tiruvalluvar:** The South Indian weaver saint (ca 200 bce) who wrote the *Tirukural*.

**Tiruvagasam:** The lyrical Tamil scripture by Saint Manikkavasagar (ca 850). Considered one of the most profound and beautiful devotional works in the Tamil language, consisting of 658 hymns, it discusses every phase of the spiritual path, from doubt and anguish to perfect faith in God Siva, from earthly experience to the guru-disciple relationship and freedom from rebirth. The work is partly autobiographical, describing how Manikkavasagar, the prime minister to the Pandyan king, renounced the world after experiencing a vision of Siva seated beneath a tree.

**tiruvasi:** The ring of flames around the Siva Nataraja murti, symbolizing universal consciousness.

**tolerance:** A willingness to accept that others' beliefs and practices differ from one's own.

**tripundra:** The forehead mark of a Saivite: three horizontal lines of vibhuti (holy ash), representing the burning away of the three bonds (anava, karma and maya). Often with a dot (bindi or pottu) at the third eye. Women usually use less vibhuti. Holy ash is a reminder of the temporary nature of the physical body and the urgency to strive for spiritual attainment and closeness to God.



**Trishula:** "Trident." The three-pronged spear held by Lord Siva, depicting God's three fundamental powers: ichcha (desire, will, love), kriya (action) and jnana (wisdom).

**Ujjain:** A large city in Madhya Pradesh, India. Site of the ancient

Mahakaleshwar Siva temple. A traditional holy place of Saivism.

**unremitting:** Continuous, never letting up.

**Upanishads:** The fourth and final portion of the *Vedas*, expounding the philosophical meaning of the Vedic hymns, the nature of God, soul and world and the doctrines of reincarnation, karma and liberation. The *Upanishads* are a collection of profound texts which are the source of Vedanta and have dominated Indian thought for thousands of years. Ten to 16 Upanishads are classified as major or principal.

**upasana:** "Sitting near." Worship or contemplation of God, to be performed daily without fail. This is the core of religious life, the soul's natural outpouring of love for God and the Gods. One of Hinduism's five sacred duties (pancha nitya karmas).

**utsava:** "Festival." Religious festival or holy day. Also, the discipline of observing holy days, including home and temple festivals, each year. Utsava is one of Hinduism's five sacred duties (pancha nitya karmas).

**vahana:** "Vehicle." Each Hindu Deity is associated with a particular animal which He/She uses as a vehicle, symbolizing the Deity's nature or function. Siva's bull, Nandi, symbolizes strength and potency; Karttikeya's peacock, Mayil, beauty and regality, Ganesha's mouse, Mushika, prosperity and the ability to go anywhere.

**Vaishnavism:** The religion of those who hold Lord Vishnu as the Supreme God. One of the four major denominations of Hinduism.

**Vaishnavites:** Followers of Vaishnavism.

**valipadu:** "Ritual worship; revering, following." The acts of adoration of the Divine, expressed in many practices and ways.

**vanakkam:** The Tamil word of greeting that is similar in meaning to *namaste*: "reverence," "respect," "bowing in worship."

**Varanasi:** City in North India, One of the most holy of Saivite cities, and among the oldest cities in the world. Also known as Banaras or Kashi, it is located in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh on the Ganges River. Hindus consider it highly sanctifying to die in Kashi, revering it as a gateway to moksha. Varanasi is the site of the famed Kashi Vishwanath Siva Temple.

**vastu:** "Dwelling." Vastu vidya is the knowledge of dwelling, or architecture, as defined in ancient Sanskrit texts called *Vastu Shastras*. The principles of vastu are employed to create harmonious spaces by

integrating architecture with nature. These shastras are considered part of the body of text called the *Sthapatyaveda*.

**Vedas:** Sagely revelations which comprise Hinduism's most authoritative scripture. They, along with the *Agamas*, are *shruti*, that which is "heard." The *Vedas* are a body of dozens of holy texts known collectively as the *Veda*, or as the four *Vedas*: *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*. In all they include over 100,000 verses, as well as additional prose. The knowledge imparted by the *Vedas* ranges from earthy devotion to high philosophy. Each *Veda* has four sections: *Samhitas* (hymn collections), *Brahmanas* (priestly manuals), *Aranyakas* (forest treatises) and *Upanishads* (enlightened discourses). The oldest portions of the *Vedas* are thought by some to date back as far as 4,000 bce—transmitted orally for thousands of years, and written down in Sanskrit in the last few millennia—making them the world's most ancient scriptures.

**Vedic:** Of or pertaining to the *Vedas*.

**vibhuti:** Holy ash, especially sacred for Saivites. It is made by burning cow dung with other precious substances, such as milk, ghee, honey, etc. Applied on the forehead, it symbolizes purity. See *tripundra*.

**vina:** Large, popular South Indian musical instrument usually having seven strings and two calabash gourd resonance boxes.

**Vishnu:** "All-pervasive." The Supreme Deity of the Vaishnavite denomination of Hinduism.

**vishvagrasa:** "Total absorption." The final merger, or absorption, of the soul in Siva, by His grace, at the fulfillment of its evolution. With the soul fully matured and all externalities discarded, nothing differentiates the soul from Siva.

**Western:** Refers to an idea, custom or practice originating from Europe or North America.

**Yajur Veda:** Third of the four *Vedas*. The *Samhita* portion of this *Veda* is a special collection of hymns to be chanted during fire ritual, called *yajna* or *homa*.

**yama:** The restraints by which we control our lower nature. The first limb of *ashtanga yoga*.

**yoga:** The many practices, such as meditation, breathing, *japa*, postures of the body and hands, that are used by yogis to reach divine consciousness. Some people use the term simply for *hatha yoga*. See *ashtanga yoga*.

**yoga pada:** "Stage of uniting." The third stage of human unfoldment. Having matured in the *charya* and *kriya padas*, the soul now turns to internalized worship and *raja yoga* under the guidance of a *satguru*. It is a time of *sadhana* and serious striving when realization of the Self is the goal.

**yogi:** A man who is accomplished in *yoga* practices. Feminine: *yogini*.

**Yoga Sutras:** The foremost text on *ashtanga* (eight-limbed) *yoga*, written by the Saivite Natha siddha Patanjali (ca 200 bce).



**Yogaswami,**

**Satguru:** A highly revered guru of Sri Lanka (1872–1964), the predecessor of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami.

**yogini:** The feminine form of *yogi*.

**yoke:** To join, couple, link, or unite.



*Machete in hand, Gurudeva clears a path through the jungle thicket and over natural waterways, guided by unseen devas as he seeks to find the holy svayambhu Sivalingam seen in his early morning vision.*