

ASHÉ!



JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

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DEDICATION

Baba Raul Canizares

9/24/55 – 12/28/02



On 28 December 2003, Baba Raul Canizares passed from this plain. A celebration of his life was held on January 18th at Clayton's Gallery in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Friends and colleagues gathered to share their memories of Baba and artwork inspired by his influence. A traditional Misa Espiritual (Kardecian séance) led by Baba's successor Narayan Ramos followed the celebration. Described as Santeria's "renaissance man," Baba was an artist, writer, scholar and spiritual Godfather.

Baba was born in Cuba where he was initiated into the mysteries of Obatala Oba Moro at age seven in the lineage of the legendary, visionary priestess Yamaya Ferminita Gomez Oshabi. Baba was a blood descendant of Oyo royalty on his mother's

side and European nobility on his father's. While still a small child in Cuba, Baba was also initiated into the tradition of Palo Monte by Demetrio Gomez Camposanto Medianoche.

He earned an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts from Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida; a bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religious Studies, and a Masters in Religion, all from the University of South Florida, where he served as adjunct professor until 1994. While at USF, he designed the first full-credit course on Santeria ever offered at American university.

His scholarly work has appeared in numerous journals such as *A Journal of Alternative Religions*, *Journal of Dharma* (India), *Caribbean Quarterly* (Jamaica) and



Ethnic Studies Reports (Sri Lanka). Baba has lectured at academic institutions throughout the country including The American Academy of Religion, UCLA and Colby College, as well as, the Open Center, the Afro-Caribbean Cultural Center and the Learning Annex in New York City.

Baba authored over a dozen books, including *Cuban Santeria: Walking With the Night*, *The Life and Works of Marie LaVeau* and *The Book on Palo*. He published several more practical volumes under the name Robert Laremy including *The Psalm Workbook* and *Spiritual Cleansing*. He produced three collections of spiritual music *Sacred Sounds of Santeria*, *Rhythms of the Goddess* and *Cuban Trance*. Baba won the prestigious Enrique Jose Varona literary prize in multiple categories: poetry, essay and short fiction.

Also an accomplished artist, Baba's work has been exhibited in the Cavin-Morris Gallery, the leading venue for Afro-Caribbean folk art in New York City, the Folk Art Museum in Baltimore and three different one-man shows at Clayton's Gallery. In *El Espectador* (Puerto Rico), art critic Luis Perez described Baba's works as "some of the most important sculptures of the latter part of the twentieth century."

Under the guidance of his head orisha Obatala Oba Moro and the spirit guide known as Lord Jagga, Baba established the Orisha Consciousness Movement (originally called the Ashram-Ilé Oba Moro) in New York City on 24 March 1995. The Movement received official recognition as a religious corporation on 14 August 1998. Since 1995, OCM has grown into an international body with members from all parts of the world. The organization continues under the direction of Baba's spiritual successor, Narayan Ramos and continues to be based in New York City.

"Baba is not gone just separated from us by a thin veil," read the official announcement of his passing.

Baba Raul was a friend and supporter of Ashé, since the very beginning of the project. He was in fact the first person who agreed to join our council of advisors. Despite his extremely busy life, he graciously shared his blessed wisdom and keen insights with our editors. It was his beautiful portrait of the Santeria Orisha (goddess) Oshun that graced our first cover.

The belief that the ancestors (*eggún*) continue as a presence within the world is an integral component of Santeria. They are available to advise the living with their wisdom and the living, in turn, honor the ancestors' blood that flows within their own veins by their honorable actions. In this spirit, Baba Raul will continue to be listed as a member of Ashé's advisors.



Contributors

Anasya Atkins is a journalist, photographer and hypnotherapist. She has also raised champion collies and horses. She currently lives Seattle, Washington where she is a freelance writer.

Baba Raul Canizares was an author, artist, scholar and respected religious leader. He is founding Oba of the Orisha Consciousness Movement based in New York City. His books include *Cuban Santeria: Walking With The Night, The Life & Works of Marie LaVeau, Spiritual Cleansings & Psychic Defense* (under the name Robert Laremy), *Eshu-Eleggua Elegbara: Santeria & the Orisha of the Crossroads, The Book on Palo* (reviewed in this issue) among others. For more information see dedication to this issue.

Sven Davisson received a degree in Critical Theory & Cultural Studies from Hampshire College, Amherst, MA. In addition to being *Ashé* editor, his work has appeared in *The New Aeon, Abrasax: Journal of Magick & Decadence, sneerzine* and *mektoub*. He is a member of the American Academy of Religion. He lives on an island off the Maine coast with four dogs, a parrot and lover of 11 years. His personal homepage is: www.geocities.com/svendavisson

Jan Fries is the author of *Helrunar: A Manual of Rune Magick* which is available in a new revised and improved edition from Mandrake of Oxford (450pp, at £15 postfree). Jan's homepage is www.noctilucae.com/janfries/janfries.htm and includes an essay on places of power, extracts, etc.

Gail Gutradt is massage therapist, business woman sage, world traveler and spiritual explorer.

Trebor Healey has published poetry in *The James White Review, Long Shot* and *Chiron Review*. He served as co-editor for the award-winning *Beyond Definition: New Writing from Gay and Lesbian San Francisco*. His novel, *Through It Came Bright Colors*, will be in bookstores Fall, 2003, and his fiction has appeared in *Best Gay Erotica 2003, Harrington Gay Men's Fiction Quarterly, Blithe House Quarterly, Lodestar Quarterly, Velvet Mafia.com* and *Ashé!* <http://www.treborhealey.com>



Mary Hedger is the author of *History of Fun* a sex magick novel published by Mandrake of Oxford. Her website Mauvezone is <http://www.mauvezone.screaming.net>

Chaitanya Keerti is a long-time disciple of Osho. He is a former editor of the Hindi edition of *The Rajneesh Foundation Newsletter* and worked in the Osho Ashram press office for over a decade. He currently runs the Osho World Foundation and Osho World Galleria in Delhi. keerti@oshoworld.com

Yoga Laxmi was the first disciple initiated by Osho (then Acharya Rajneesh). She served as his personal secretary from the early seventies through to 1981. Her autobiography *Journey of the Heart* is available online at oshoworld.com.

Eric K. Lerner combines outstanding credentials in the areas of writing, spiritual ministry, divination, and art. He has served for the past five years as a priest of the Yoruba arch-divinity Obatala. As such, he has conducted weddings, initiations, spiritual counseling and divination for a multi-cultural group of people, including African-Americans, white, Jewish, Christian, Wiccan and Yoruba religious practitioners. As a diviner, he was named “Best Psychic for 2001” by the *City Paper*. He has taught workshops on Santeria essentials and Tarot divination. He teaches tarot divination, Yoruba religion, and other spiritual topics. As an author, he has written two books *AIDS Crisis in America* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clío) 1998 and with Baba Raul Canizares, *Babalu Aye Santeria and the Lord of Pestilence* (Plainview, NY: Original Publications,) 2000. His article “Santeria’s Healing Path” appeared to wide acclaim in the Winter 1998 Issue of *Shaman’s Drum* magazine. Currently, he is illustrating a book by Nigerian writer Ibukun Olatunji and writing a book on combining the Thoth Tarot with Astrology and Kaballah with co-author Bozana Antic. Mr. Lerner’s website is <http://www.voiceofthoth.com>.

Mogg Morgan is a respected occult publisher and owns Mandrake of Oxford. He is an author whose work includes: *The English Mahatma*, *Sexual Magick* (under the name Katon Shual) and *Tankhem* (reviewed in this issue).

Autumn Pardee is a renaissance man. At 29 he aspires to be: Photographer, Actor, Film Maker, Writer, Philosopher, Activist, Friend to the environment, citizen of the world. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Community Development, writing, and making documentaries in the Pacific Northwest. Contact info: autumn@infoasis.com.



Pranavananda Brahmendra Avadutta Swamigal has spent over 30 years in India. He currently runs an ashram in the Kuoli hills.

Prem Arun has been a sannyasin for 16 years.

Rupda is the organizer of Kids In Divine Spirit (K.I.D.S) a alumnus group of children who grew up within the Osho/Rajneesh movement. <http://www.rupda.com>.

Shri Sahajananda was one of the founders of The Servants of the Star and the Snake. For many years he edited the ground-breaking American magickal journal *Abrasax* and, later, the trantrik journal *The Trident*.

Lawrence Schimel (b. 1971, New York) is a full-time author and anthologist, who's published over 50 books, including *Found Tribe: Jewish Coming Out Stories* (Sherman Asher), *Kosher Meat* (Sherman Asher), *His Tongue* (North Atlantic), *Switch Hitters: Lesbians Write Gay Male Erotica and Gay Men Write Lesbian Erotica* (with Carol Queen; Cleis Press), *The Drag Queen of Elfland* (Cirplet), and *Things Invisible to See: Lesbian and Gay Tales of Magic Realism* (Cirplet) among others. His *PoMosexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality* (with Carol Queen) won a Lambda Literary Award in 1998 and other of his titles have been finalists for the Firecracker Alternative Book Award, Small Press Book Award, and Spectrum Award. His work has been widely anthologized in *The Random House Book of Science Fiction Stories*, *The Best of the Best Gay Erotica*, *The Mammoth Book of Gay Short Stories*, *Gay Love Poetry* and *The Random House Treasury of Light Verse*, among many others. His writings have been published abroad in Basque, Catalan, Czech, Dutch, Esperanto, Finnish, French, Galician, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, and Swedish translations. His website is <http://www.cirplet.com/schimel.html>. He currently lives in Madrid, Spain and New York City.



From the Editor

Namasté,

In 1630 early Puritan and Massachusetts Bay Colony governor John Winthrop gave a sermon in which he described the founding of the American colonies as building a City upon a Hill: “ee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us.” While the United States has largely taken this image as an ideal, building a shining example of freedom and perfection for the world to see, the reality has often been different. Even the archetypal New England city of Winthrop’s vision, was one based largely on rigidity and religious intolerance. Like most colonizing peoples, assimilated American immigrants, from the Puritans forward, have become increasingly protective of “their land” especially as attitudes move across the generations. It is perhaps the more tenuous and hard fought the claim, the more obsessive the need to protect it is. The reaction to the attempt by a band of mostly Western followers (sannyasins) of the Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh to establish a permanent city-commune in the Oregonian desert is a marked example of this xenophobia and defensive myopia.

The U.S. stands as a superb experiment of modern democratic ideals. In practice, however, the depth of religious tolerance often has managed to extend only to small innocuous (unthreatening) religious groups. The larger the group, the less difference from the founding Puritan notions is tolerated. Even major faiths, such as Catholicism and Buddhism, had to acclimate the existing populations over generations. When the sannyasins came to Oregon they came up against this distrust—a misgiving that had recently been sharpened by the events at Jonestown just a few years earlier. Through a course of successive small events, the increasingly gruff and later corrupt management of the commune went head to head with the 40-or-so local residents and, later, world public opinion. The United States government at the highest levels took a disturbingly active role in the eventual collusion against the sannyasins’ City upon a Hill, Rajneeshpuram. Since the dissolution of the Oregon commune, Rajneesh and his merry band have been all but forgotten by those outside of Oregon. It is now merely an element in the colorful local history of the place.

Now that his 15 minutes are long over and almost twenty years have passed since the dénouement of the commune, perhaps Osho the philosopher will re-emerge as the revolutionary thinker that he was. It is with this in mind, and with the hope that from this



distance we may begin the process of objectively evaluating the experiment of Rajneeshpuram, that I have collected the material that makes up a large portion of this issue. It is my hope that I have included enough information in my article about the commune, to provide background and display the negative, and illegal (on all parties), aspects of the story. The rest of the material that we selected provides insight, mini-windows, past-present-future, onto the people rather than the process. Some look back, some look in and some look forward. I have chosen to begin the section with two articles by individuals who grew up within the neo-sannyas movement. The “kids” more than anything else are the true achievement, and litmus test, of the movement.

In a similar vein are the two pieces by Trebor Healey and Lawrence Schimel. Both speak of the visitor in a foreign land and the mistrust/misconceptions that this generates.

This original theme for this issue was to have been a look at various attempts to build intentional communities, diverse “Cities upon a Hill.” As it progressed the theme naturally developed into a more focused look at modern permutations of the ancient Indian renunciate tradition of *sannyas*. The first section looks at permutations on traditional Hindu sannyas: a Westerner goes to the great Hindu pilgrimage of the Maha Khumba Mela and a Frenchman becomes a Shiva lover in India and founds his own ashram. The second section focuses on “neo-sannyas” the initiatory movement founded by the guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (later known as Osho). The third section offers material on Orisha Consciousness, a modern movement of the Americas that blends the traditional Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria with devotional Hinduism to develop a next-phase postmodern faith that is both progressive and traditional. The fifth section examines the Indian tantrik sect of the Adi-Natha, a practice at a crossroads between ancient practice and the new realities of spiritual practice in a modern world.

I hope that you enjoy this issue and that it brings Ashé (divine energy) into your life and onto your Path.

Love light laughter,
Sven





“Ashé” for Baba Raul Canizares Memorial Celebration 12 January 2003
Sven Davisson, digital media, 8-1/2” x 11”



In the Basilica de la Soledad in Oaxaca

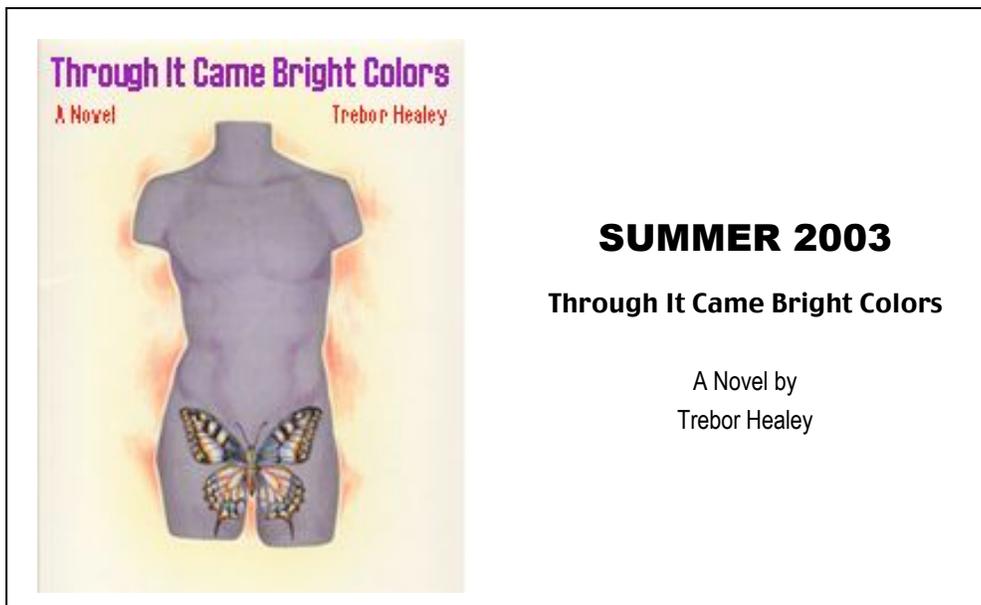
Trebor Healey

I think her look was one of disdain
I'll never be sure
She was walking on her knees
and I was sitting in a pew
fingering my 3-peso Virgin de la Soledad medal
hoping for miracles
as I looked about me at the bloodied saints and
gold-leafed Spanish baroque columns.
I'd always idealized Indians before I saw her
I almost concluded:
"Old catholic ladies of that sort are the same everywhere; they just don't approve."
But what's the use of that judgment?
What do I learn making it?
I've only confirmed something, not learned anything new
That didn't work when I was 14 holding the white candle of Confirmation
Why should it work for my trip to Oaxaca a whole lifetime later?

She was beautiful and simple
and I don't know her mind
I only remember
the dignity of her long, gray hair
the frayed, green and white checkered housedress
barefoot, but feet as good and tough as any shoe
She'd have a million reasons to despise me
A white man with enough money to travel
expecting to be welcomed everywhere
I thought then of going back in to join her on my knees
but feared that might offend her more
-as if to presume
Besides, I was too proud and self-conscious to crawl on my knees after her



So I went out and looked for boys in the parks
who would be willing to accept me,
to make me feel welcome in the world
in Oaxaca
in their world
They could make me feel Mexican for a brief spell
Then maybe I could go back and find the old woman
and in my best Spanish
tell her:
"I just made love with a young Mexican boy and he was beautiful."
In my madness
believing somehow she might understand
my odd way
of imploring: "I love you. Will you love me?"





“Maine Spring, 2002”
Sven Davisson, digital media.



Religion and Experience:**The Social Identities of a Gay New York Jew on the Iberian Peninsula***Lawrence Schimel*

While sex has often been compared to “a religious experience,” I almost never ask a “trick” his religious background. So how do I know that we’re referring to the same numinous moment? If we can believe in different notions of divinity, can one just assume that our conceptions of orgasm converge? (It’s difficult enough, in the act of sex itself, to manage the physical trick of concurrent orgasms, let alone worrying about a simultaneous spiritual convergence!)

For the past three years, I’ve been living in Madrid, Spain, and I still don’t ask the men I meet for sex about their religious background. But I don’t really need to; there is such a pervasive normative Catholicism here that to do so would belie the obvious.

My being Jewish is also patently obvious—at least the moment we get undressed and it’s observed that I’m circumcised. Unlike in the United States, where circumcision is a matter of course for reasons of hygiene regardless of religion, in Spain it’s a practice that only occurs in extreme medical cases—if the foreskin is so long, for instance, that it doesn’t fully pull off the glans when the penis is erect. Most Spaniards, therefore, assume a religious importance to circumcision, perhaps unable to imagine such a painful procedure being self-imposed by a people without the ineluctable justification of a divine mandate. (Thus far, no one has ever asked simply if I’m American.)

More often than not, we don’t interrupt the foreplay for theological discussion, but sometimes after sex we’ll start chatting before heading for a shower and the question will arise. And I will try to explain my history as a Diaspora Jew to men who grew up in



a country where being Jewish was only officially pardoned by the King less than a decade ago, half a millennium after the Inquisition and the Expulsion.

The question I am most frequently asked is if I am an observant Jew. This question makes me defensive every time, for various reasons. First of all is the implied taint of belief, which in the scientifically-ruled world of Western culture is seriously looked down upon.

For my generation of twenty somethings, religion is for the most part looked on for its secular implications of family gatherings and an excuse for time-off from studies or work. We're by and large skeptical when it comes to the idea of miracles or anything which violate the laws of physics as we currently understand them; Science Fiction and the paranormal may be popular on television or in the movies, but in real life we take little on faith and instead demand measurable proof before being convinced of something being more than just fancy special effects. And if science should manage to recreate what we had been told were acts of god, well, that just goes to prove that there is a perfectly rational and plausible explanation for these miracles that has nothing to do with faith or belief. Like we had known all along.

While I am considered a homosexual based on the acts that I perform with other men, and if I were to change my sexual behavior to perform such acts with women instead my identity as perceived by others would also change, no distinction is made between my inescapable cultural identity as a Jew, in that I was born to Jewish parents, and a performative identity as a Jew, which is to say, the acts of prayer and ritual that correspond with Jewish belief. To be Jewish in Spain is automatically equated with being Orthodox and frum, and it is a long convoluted discussion to begin splitting hairs about everything possibly Jewish from Abraham to (post-)Zionism. Additionally, the question of whether I am an observant Jew unnerves me each time because I am not. Ironically, my own non-belief makes me feel inadequate, as if I am, in a way, failing my religion. I am serving as a representative example of Judaism, like an emissary sent into hostile territory—not to proselytize, necessarily, but with a social obligation, perhaps, to be on my best behavior.

It is similar to how I often feel as a gay man when faced with heterosexual ignorance and prejudices. Can I summon the patience to explain why their preconceived notions about me are wrong? In these situations I feel a sort of guilt on behalf of all of homosexuality in its many diverse and deviant behaviors—whether or not I practice them myself—and feel responsible to portray us all in a good light.

Which is, of course, ridiculous, but that's the gut feeling I have. I may joke that this guilt is a preconditioned response from being Jewish as well as gay, but the truth is



that it stems from a sense of blameless innocence in the face of the double whammy of cultural anti-semitism and homophobia. I have this naive belief that simply by my existence as a gay Jew I cannot provoke such hatred, even when I'm faced with it. I also have the hopefully less-naive belief that by my good example I can change people's minds and misconceptions about my people(s). Ironically, as a gay man I don't think of myself as either assimilationist or apologist. I actively try to promote an acceptance of the myriad differences, whatever they may be, both within homosocial circles and to the pervasively heterosexual culture at large. I often try to include cultural space in my queer anthologies and books for radical acts and thinking.

But I have realized, living in Spain, that as a Jew I am more of a coward, and don't like to find myself alone and out on a limb. And not

simply because unrest in the middle east has heightened awareness in general of aggression and violence toward Jews. I think my unease stems mostly from not having a Jewish community here. With regards to homosexual concerns, I know there are many other men and women fighting for the same things I am, all over the world and in all languages, even when I seem to be a lone voice shouting out into the darkness. I am one voice shouting into a darkness that many other voices are shouting into. There are certainly lots of homosexuals here in Spain, to that I can attest. Whereas, in all my travels across this country during the past two years, I'd be hard pressed to come up with a minyan of Spanish Jews, irrespective of their gender. Which makes me very aware of being alone, of being without the safety blanket of having a community at one's back—even if I never participated very actively in its rituals and beliefs. Only once it was gone did I realize what a comfort its subliminal presence was.

Feeling nervously alone, therefore, every time a Spaniard asks me whether or not I am an observant Jew, I find myself telling a small white lie to claim a community and bridge the not-consciously-belligerent gap that this question engenders between my perceived being and his Catholic upbringing. I say that we have a Sephardic branch in the family, and suddenly he feels he understands what a moment ago seemed so alien to him. His history now overlaps with mine. In fact, more often than not, he will say he has some converso blood as well and point out one of his gazillion surnames, and we will feel almost familiar in that Spanish way of embracing one wholeheartedly on recent acquaintance.

It is quite likely that I do have some Sephardic blood somewhere in my veins, for all the predominantly Ashkenazi surnames in the family. It would explain my generically Mediterranean look—physically I blend in perfectly in Madrid, My Spanish fluency is sufficient that, for bar-room and preliminary chat, many men don't even realize



I'm not a native speaker (if not exactly from Madrid). Which is why my being circumcised so often comes as a surprise.

We do have some Sephardic relatives, the Rose family, whose name was Rosales before emigrating to the States. The only problem is: no one is certain how we're related. We see each other at weddings, brises, bar mitzvahs, and occasional high holiday gatherings, and since we get along with them grandly no one bothers with the details of how we're kin. We think we're related by marriage, although since it was likely a Schimel woman who married a Rosales there wouldn't be any Sephardic blood passing through my heart—at least not from that source. But then again, we might simply have been from the same town and claimed kinship for the purpose of coming to the States. It's never really mattered much to us, and we're happy to call them part of our family.

And there's also some Bartels floating somewhere in the family tree, a Jewish Catalan surname. And probably some others, over the centuries, that we simply don't have records of any longer, or never did because they'd changed their names for safety's sake when they fled Spain or some other country.

So I don't feel all that guilty claiming some Sephardic blood, when it might very well be true, and especially when it goes so far to create a bond between us. (As it should here; after all, “Sephardic” in Hebrew simply means “Spanish.”) The idea of having a Sephardic heritage makes me feel less like a stranger in a strange land, and more like my having moved here is a sort of homecoming. Perhaps that is what aliyah feels like for Jews who choose that option.

And while being Jewish is an unknown concept here, equated with religious practice, being Sephardic is quite understood and accepted and even to be praised, because the intervening years (not to mention the Expulsion) have separated the secular achievements of these Jews from the taint of their belief. Jewish cities and centers were often important places of learning and craftsmanship, at the forefront of Medieval Spanish culture.

For all my unease about being a religious stranger here, the ease with which we set aside our accidental natal religious identities in favor of other identities we share has made me reflect on how we define ourselves, both personally and to others. I guess in a heterosexual encounter, interfaith issues have more import because of the risk of children and how to raise them. But as gay adults we can agree to disagree about the nature (or even existence) of God and still get along—even when “tricks” become relationships. Now that gays are more frequently having children, this may become a thornier issue for some homosexual couples than previously. So much of our religious background is unconscious and accepted without being analyzed. I can and often do point out to these



men who ask if I am an observant Jew that they are Catholic. And they demur, saying they were born Catholic but that doesn't really mean anything. What they don't recognize is the pervasive Catholicism of Spanish culture, from things like saying "Jesus" after someone sneezes to celebrating the Saint Day's of one's own name.

For many of us living in the secular world, when it comes time to present ourselves to someone we've just met, our religious identities don't usually leap to mind because they are so subliminal. It's not that these identities aren't important to us, but that we don't perhaps consider or assume that someone we meet is different from us in this regards until proven otherwise.

By contrast, I actively choose to live my life as a gay-identified man, independent of the sexual acts I am (or am not) at the moment performing. As a result, I am very much aware of my "different" sexual identity as I move through the largely-heterosexual world and react to situations accordingly. My sexual identity is constantly under attack by the barrage of heterosexist media and messages in advertising, cinema, television, music, etc. and one of the ways I react is to more strongly affirm my minority identity.

In an ideal world without homophobia or anti-semitism, I like to think our urgent need for identities such as being gay or secularly Jewish would disappear as irrelevant. Whether we can ever arrive at that prejudice-free world, I am not sure, but it is certain that we who claim either of those identities could not do so without changing ourselves as well. Both as Jews and as homosexuals, we define ourselves in relation to others—Jews as the *hosen* People, queers as "not straight." In both cases, we exist, as we know ourselves now, only in the context of a subculture, and a dynamic of opposition to those who are not us. And those constant confrontations, be they overt or subtle, reinforce our identities.

And yet the primal physicality of sex can drive away social conventions and constrictions. Sex has the power to cut across all of our social identities and divisions; it can transcend language barriers, religious and cultural differences, class distinctions, etc. It reduces us to a state of universal sameness, of being human and desiring. However we might differently describe "a religious experience," sex—at its best—instills in us a belief in numinous moments.





Sannyas

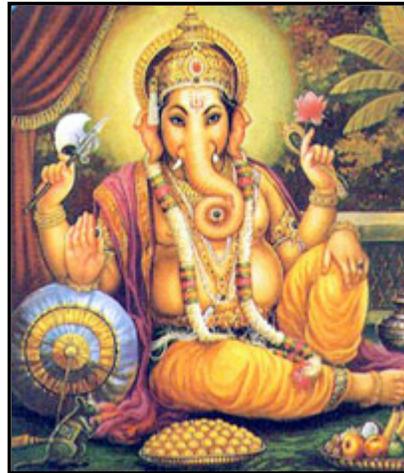


Maha Kumbha Mela

Gail Gutradt

24 January, 2001, Allahabad, India

After a week of wandering through dusty Mela grounds, sitting with gnarly, ganja-smoking Naga Babas practicing various degrees of intense tapasya, sleeping on stone floors, eating endless ghee-glistening chapatis with dal and subjie, sneezing and gritty coughing from storms of dust and dirt. 'til our abdomens should be washboard-tight, stealthy forays from the ashram after chow mein and chocolate chip cookies, momentary visions of God in the glances of children or passing saints in the market place; after all the obscene blasting from the giant TV screen promoting Colgate toothpaste and other corporate sponsors, the relentless loudspeakers repeating the million names of God and lost children, it is here, it has finally come, the day of the great bathing in the Sangam, the holy confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mystic Saraswati Rivers, the moment the waters will flow with Amrit, the nectar of Immortality, Forgiveness and Enlightenment.



All day before we question saints, saddhus, soldiers and sweepers, trying to ascertain the exact astrologically auspicious moment for bathing. “One a.m.”, “three a.m.”, “six a.m.”, they tell us. “When the sun first dances on the waters of the Ganga.” No one seems to know for sure, but each one is sure. Thirty million people gathered for a vast drama with no script, save to go to the River and bathe and be purified.

Laurence wakes me at three a.m. It is time. Already the crowds are moving toward the Sangam, millions of pilgrims wrapped tightly in shawls the color of earth, or of saddhu saffron orange, chanting Hare Ram, Hare Ram. They come carrying brass pots and plastic jugs to gather the precious water, fingering malas, with bundles on their heads and babies in their arms. The old, it is their chance after a lifetime of suffering and prayer, one moment to set it right for eternity. You can see the determination in their



eyes. Streaming millions of people converging, walking barefoot halfway across India to be here this morning. Fifteen thousand people a minute, it is said, arriving in Allahabad.

We are leaves in a stream, twigs in a flood. We are the water itself seeking its own level in Mother Ganga, the merging of spirit with spirit, our sweetness with her sweetness; ahead somewhere in the mist and darkness she lies waiting to hold us in her arms. For a moment the Shakti is too strong, I stand unable to walk, overwhelmed, weeping and breathless.

And then we are there. The crowd suddenly congeals into a struggling mass moving at odds with itself. Sand turns to tangles of seaweed under our feet; uncertain footing, slippery, lifted and moved by the crowd streaming to and from the river. The crowd, close to panic, yet still trusting. A momentary eye contact held to say, "it's ok, you are safe with me. We are here together to seek Mother's blessing."

Somehow our little group circles, sorts roles- who will bathe first and who will keep the clothes and hold the beacon flashlight high. We strip down to sarongs and trunks, barely keeping our balance in the crowds as we remove pants and shoes.

And then we are there. Earth changes to water. It is the only clue that we have arrived, for the crowds are still too thick to see the river. Up ahead it becomes thinner and suddenly there is openness and a silent privacy, as we stand waist deep in stillness and gratitude and prayer.

I want to stay here in the warmth of the water and gentle wind and garlands of marigolds floating by and holding the precious photos of my friends and family. To stand there for a long time, to remember all the nuances of prayer and blessing and aspiration that I have been holding back, but suddenly there is only love and that is all that is needed, and the warm wind is breathing all around us, is breathing us, and we return to the shore, re-entering the pushing crowd to find our friends, these people we may never see again but with whom we share this one astounding Karmic moment, this walk to bathe in the Sangam at the Maha Kumbha Mela.

We struggle into our damp clothes and climb the hill against the crowds advancing, pushing to replace us at the River. We are moving against the crowd now, and only Mantra and eye contact keep us going. Clear spaces appear, interrupted by chains of people desperately holding the ends of each other's saris, forming chains of family and friends, clots of villagers mad not to lose contact with each other.

I have come so far in surrender I would never have thought possible; and this is my true pilgrimage, to trust my journey and to know quietly, deeply, that I will be, that I am, alright and safe and whole, and even in this seeming chaos that I am part of and one with it, this great assembled vibration of humanity in love with God.



My hands in Namaste, the crowds open in front of me. There is eye contact to encourage those newly arriving, and smiled shared blessing. We have reached the top of the hill now and it is easier to walk. We finish dressing and head home, a little cold now as the winds pick up. Here and there in the night, groups of people crouch around tiny fires, huddled tight as lotus buds. They wave us over to share the warmth, all smiles of welcome, eyes full of love.

Walking home, we follow a father and small son, chanting Hare Ram, Hare Ram, walking hand in hand, and I think that one day, when he is an old man, the boy will tell his grandchildren of this day, the day of the Maha Kumbha Mela, when he walked through the crowds, a small boy safe in the protection of his father and the Mantra, when they came to the holy Mother Ganga to pray for the world.

That day, 30 million people bathed in the Holy Ganga.

II SHANTJI

For days Shantji has been asking me questions I cannot answer. Sitting by the morning fire, or in satsang, he invites me to speak or to question him. My answers, when they come, are terse, clipped and unrevealing. I, who have so many opinions, am silent, intimidated before him.

And he loves to provoke drama, does Shantji, to stir it from the bottom of the pot with his stick, like a chef adding spice to balance a flavor, or salt to make an ingredient taste more like itself.

I wonder if he thinks I am stupid or careless. And my ego wants to show him I'm not, and come up with the perfect comment, diagnosing totally the nuances of the situation, with some added element that will surprise and delight. Because, yes, I want him to love me as I love him, as I fell in love with him as I massaged his feet with salve after the fire

walk. He told me I was a healer, that he could feel the energy from my hands, and my ego loved that. But it was only love, and the flow of love through my hands, and wonder of wonders, to hold and soothe the feet of the Guru. If he were my own Guru, and I were given to do that, could I keep from vaporizing on the spot, burning in the heat of my own bliss? How are they different?



Shantji is a complex man, given to confronting saints about their own spiritual attainment, and whether that makes them better than the God in the rest of us. And what I watch for is whether his dramas are those of a man or a Guru.

Tonight, one of his closest devotees here has been spending time with a western woman at the ashram. She is beautiful, energetic, insatiable. She dances with abandon, enchanting the whole room full of celibate devotees, whom she further astounds with long discourses on sexuality. My male roommates have dubbed her “She Devil” and “Cock Tease”, offended by her licentiousness at this modest gathering.

Shantji's devotee is smitten. Instead of accompanying his Guru, he has begged off to help the woman go shopping and do her errands in the marketplace.

Coming in late to the Kirtan tonight, Shantji is quiet. Cryptically he announces, “I have been shaken to the core of my being!” He asks us, why do we think he feels on a different energetic wave length when he enters the room?

Gradually it comes out that the issue is around Raju, his devotee. But on what level is this? Is it the petty jealousy of a man spoiled by the attention of his followers? I watch for clues, still unsure of him. He tells Raju, “If you cannot please me, you will have to leave!” The American woman is stricken and rises to leave herself. He calls her back, questions her. She says she will go instead, that he is acting like a punishing parent, threatening with his stick. Why can't he let Raju be with her, she asks? She will only be here for a few days more. Then Shantji can have him back. Shantji objects. Then he will have him in defeat. He wants his devotee in victory!

Like Moses down from the mountain, Shantji has returned from the Holy Place to find his children worshipping false Gods, and it sickens him and breaks his heart. No matter if the errand was a generous one, it turned Raju's attention from Sadhana, Guru and God. It is a cosmic drama. The Guru against the Maya, the illusion, of the world, played out on a tiny stage here in Allahabad.

Furthermore, and here Shantji softens and smiles kindly, this woman has cracked open the man's heart, and he is happy for that. And that this opening, however worldly its cause, is truly an opening for love, an energy that can be redirected, in time, to love of God, and so Shantji is pleased. And besides, she need not leave. How can he make her stay more comfortable, he asks, now the perfect Indian host? This is Shantji's drama, his play, his stirring the pot with his stick and adding salt to make each ingredient taste more truly like itself.

So which is it, the too-human man jealous for attention, or the Guru, whose every action is designed to purify and pulverize his disciple's ego? Can it be both at once, or something else? Later, as I go to bed, I pass Raju sitting alone, staring soberly



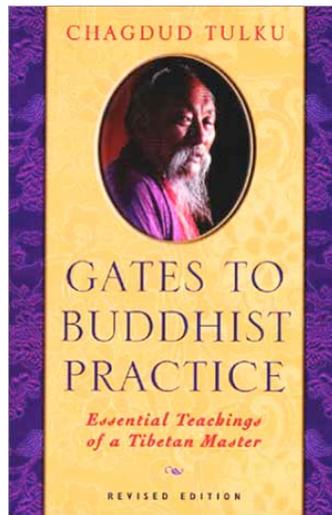
into the lights of the Mela below. The woman, has she understood her role? Have I gotten the lesson for my own Sadhana, the stupid wasted time spent away from my own Guru, neglecting my own practices? The others here, what are their lessons? And who am I to judge another's enlightenment? I pray only to be open to receive and understand what lessons I am given to learn in this lifetime.

God stages His grand play for us all to know Him. It is He who casts both the Guru in his chair and the sweeper stooped over his short broom.

Laurence, reading this asks, "what is Shantji's drama here? Why have we all come here to play our bit parts for him? Shantji the instigator, the rebel saddhu. What does Shantji see reflected here of his own drama?"

And what of Laurence himself? He has come to India to commit his daughter's ashes to Mother Ganga, and knows so well the excruciating pain of the parent who loses a child. He also questions the quality of his discipleship to his own Guru, Yogananda, and weeps to find affirmation that, however imperfect his practice, he has not been forgotten.

This morning I take my own Guru's photo from the waterproof bag I carried when I bathed in the Ganga at the Kumbha Mela, and carefully replace it in the little frame by my bed.



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Pranavananda Brahmendra Avadutta Swamigal Ashram

Sw. Prem Arun

Located in the beautiful, serene and peaceful Kolli Hills, in South India, is the ashram of Pranavananda Brahmendra Avadutta Swamigal (Swamiji). The ashram is 1160m above sea level and is isolated from human civilization—surrounded instead by the wondrous beauty of the unspoiled Indian landscape. The closest village is 3km away, hidden behind a nearby hill. Residents and visitors to the ashram are very careful to protect their natural surroundings. No littering, picking flowers, breaking branches, spitting, shouting or smoking are permitted.

The ashram was founded by Swamiji and it is surrounded by places that hold deep significance for him. The samadhi (resting place) of Swayamprakash Brahmendra Avaduth Swamigal is located nearby. Fifteen kilometers away in the village of Nerur is the samadhi of Sadashiva Brahmendra Avaduth Swamigal. Both men were practitioners of Avadutha Digambara (sacred nudity).

Born in France, Swamiji has spent the past 30 years in India. In 1988 received sannyas dhiksha (initiation) from Vedananda Swamigal at the instructions of his Guru



Sarveswara Swamigal. After receiving a vision of Lord Shiva during meditation, Swamiji set out in search of a location to build an ashram. Once he found the beautiful location in Southern India, he built his hermitage and temple to Lord Shiva.

Swamiji lives at the ashram where he offers service to the local communities and practices various tapas, including the Avadutha Digambara. Though the ashram has no phone, it does have a satellite internet connection. Swamiji maintains several very well designed websites to assist in the outreach of his work. He also uses the internet to keep in touch with his sannyasins around the world as well as being available as a spiritual advisor to anyone through live internet chat.

The Ashram site is: <http://www.aumnamahshivaya.org>
Swamiji's Shiva Lovers' portal is: <http://www.shivaquest.org>



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Orisha Consciousness...

The Orisha Consciousness Movement (OCM) was founded by Baba Raul Canizares (see dedication page) in New York City March of 1995. OCM is a spiritual community founded along traditional Yoruban lines—a hierarchical structure headed by divinely inspired leader called an “Oba.” OCM blends traditional Cuban Santeria with Hindu devotionalism. Their basic crede is represented in “The Eight Points of Faith” reprinted later in this issue.

Canizares was deeply committed to building a spiritual community based on ethics and integrity. His vision was to create a professional organization that would allow Santeria to take its place among the world’s bona fide religions. In the Americas there are millions of followers of Santeria and the other New World descendents of African religions, Brazilian Candomblé, Haitian Vodoun, etc.

With, I suspect, no small connection to Western xenophobia and subtle racism, academics and religious scholars have spent little time studying and writing of Santeria. Canizares’ own book *Cuban Santeria: Walking With the Night* is one of the few full-length academic studies and is used in several religious studies courses, including UCLA. The bulk of the religious corpus (in English at least) of Santeria consists primarily of the small “recipe” books that are ubiquitous to Americanized Voodoo.

In Baba’s own words: “OCM is committed to address the social and religious needs of its adherents as well as to contribute, where appropriate, to the easing of pain and giving of solace to any among the larger community (humankind) who come seeking our comfort.”

OCM’s website: orishareligion.com



“Oggun” Baba Raul Canizares
mixed media 18” x 24”



The Eight Points of Faith

Baba Raul Canizares

Like any other spirituality, the Orisha Consciousness Movement has its creed, eight minimum requirements for membership formulated by the founding Oba (leader) Baba Raul Canizares. The number “eight” has mystical significance for the movement since eight is the number most closely associated with orisha Obatala.

- PREM (Divine Love, realization) is the ultimate reality. PREM is beyond the impersonal deity, beyond undifferentiated potential. PREM is ALL. PREM may be experienced as a warm beam of LOVE from within, the LOVE that has no selfish motive, the LOVE that is a spontaneous expression of the DIVINITY of humankind.
- No one religion, philosophy or creed should claim to possess the sole keys to salvation, liberation, or enlightenment, for the paths to THE TRUTH (PREM) are as varied as human temperaments. Each individual has a right to search for THE TRUTH by following the path(s) that feels most natural to him or her.
- Realization (PREM) is felt differently by different individuals according to their temperaments. Some may experience PREM as a total void, whole for others PREM represents total fulfillment. Still others will describe PREM as merging with DEITY while for some PREM is total surrender to a just cause. There are many varied expressions of the one reality which is PREM.
- Recognizing that discipline and focus are essential to the development and continuation of a unified system, the Orisha Consciousness Movement holds the teaching of Baba Raul Canizares and his successors to the position of Oba to be authoritative in matters of faith.
- There is Divine Wisdom in the world's sacred texts such as the Bible, the Vedas, and the Tao Ching. Devotees of the Movement are encouraged to reverently study these texts, particularly under the guidance of the Oba and his designated teachers.
- DEITY (GOD, GODDESS) is to be understood as the Supreme Personification of PREM. Deity is the being perfect in power, wisdom and goodness. Offering selfless service and devotion to the Deity is a necessary step towards realization, the ultimate goal of existence. This selfless service and devotion is best achieved through identification with those aspects of Deity which resonate with one's



particular temperament.

- Yoruba deities are the most honored aspects of GOD in the Orisha Consciousness Movement, along with Indian devas. This reflects the founding Oba's life experience as a Yoruba priest and his karmic links to Indian Yoga. The Movement, however, asserts that the faces of DEITY are countless. Individual members, then, are encouraged to bring to the Movement's attention their own interpretations of Deity.
- Besides divine beings such as orisha, deva, and angels, the Movement holds that disincarnate human intelligences can also provide guidance and counsel to those in the material plane, while other spirits may benefit from prayers and rituals performed on their behalf by members of the Movement. The method of communication between the "living" and the "dead" will be that developed by Allan Kardec as interpreted by Baba Raul. The movement must hold a minimum of two Kardecian "seances" (misas) per month in order to receive direct guidance from the spirit guides of the Movement. Members who have latent mediumistic abilities should be encouraged to develop such gifts, while all the members should attend these misa as part of the mandatory practice of honoring one's ancestors.

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	<p>The Orisha Consciousness Movement</p> <p>www.orishareligion.org</p> <p>Mail Address: 151 1st Ave. Ste. 157 New York, NY 10003</p> <p>voice mail: 212-591-1809 email: contact@babaraul.com</p>
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Babalu

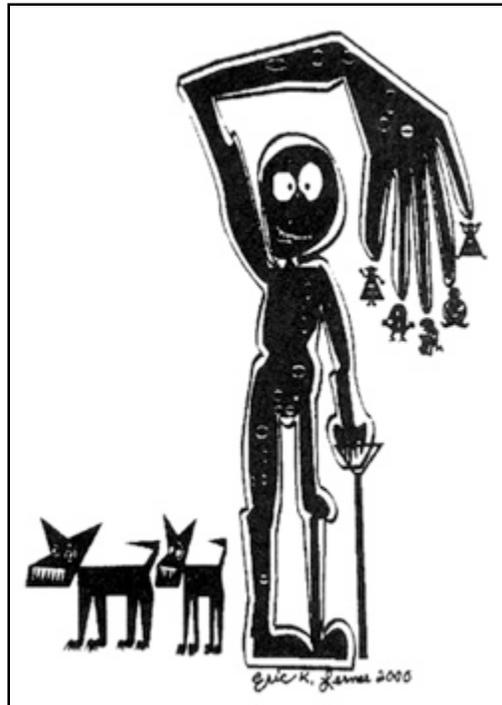
Eric K. Lerner

The young warrior reflected on his face in the still black pool. This was to be his day—when his cheeks would bare the stripes of manhood. The prospect of the pain tightened his stomach and quickened his heart. At the same time, he had a hardon his loin cloth failed to conceal. He gulped. He wanted to envision the ancestors - the distant spark of his existence communicated to him through song and prayer. He smiled wanly and startled at the touch of a leathery hand on his shoulder. This was to be his hour.

The elders were tired. This was the fourth such initiation in the past few days. They had grown weary of ritual. It had become to them like pulling tubers from earth when their stomachs were full and stash backed up to the heavens. This initiation itself might just as well be left to women. It was mundane, it had lost its grace. Power they felt in their hands no longer tingled. Knives had worn dull and become filthy with caked blood, soil and skin tatters.

His cheek failed to yield to the blunt instrument, but the elders continued in spite of his cries. To rid themselves of the act, their sacred charge, the boy's momentary presence in their control was quickly gone. His face hideously furrowed and gushing, the young warrior curled like an aborted fetus on dead earth and punctuated silence with sobs....When he looked upon himself once more in the still black pool, the water itself seemed to whirl...so crazy, convoluted and hackneyed was his scarred face.

His scream funneled out of his lungs, sweeping droplets of his mucus, his humidity, his essence up into a vortex which shot up through the sky and fused with clouds. So immense and righteous was his anger at the elders, the clouds blackened and



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rumbled. His indignation fermented in one defining moment into the birth of plague. And a scourge of pox rained down upon earth. The elders themselves felt their skins electrify as they bubbled up in web of blue-black pustules.

Long after wind whistled through the blanched bones of the corrupt elders, the warrior still walks free. Free to rain pestilence at his whim. At his side, loyal terriers—their noses sniffing out the subtleties of dirt—and his mighty hardon rubbing raw against sackcloth. All welcome his charity. That is his good will to leave them alone. So his meals are left well beyond the outskirts of villages. Nuts and grains, perhaps some hard liquor, to carry with him on his endless journey... He is never welcome, yet always to be welcomed. After all, he is Father of the Earth. The black black wind that toils and turns and walks upright as a man.

Today, I imagine Babalu still wandering, a gathering army in his wake. The lame, the sick, the queer, the addicted, those marginalized through their actions, reactions to their beings by society. I've always felt he was my friend, well before I began to fathom complexities of his character....

The first time I visited a botanica, I purchased a small statue of San Lazaro without quite examining it. Later on, I showed it to a girlfriend. At that moment, I noticed the dogs at his feet and was startled by their resemblance to my own terrier puppies. I took that to be a favorable sign.

The next sign came shortly thereafter when I was departing New York for home. I was waiting in line for the Peter Pan bus at the Port Authority. I noticed a beggar with a cane and piece of burlap wrapped about his shoulders soliciting from those on line ahead of me. At first, I averted my eyes. But then a sense of obligation grabbed me as my fellow passengers rejected the beggar. I grabbed the contents of my pocket - some change and three subway tokens. I handed my offering to him and beheld his face. His yellowy eyes burned with awesome intelligence. His was a noble bearded face - not one covered or deranged by wretched circumstance. He nodded approvingly, and I was moved by a genuine sense of well being I hadn't felt in a long time. I realized divinity in that man. Right away I looked around for him again. Maybe, I had a dollar or two in my wallet I could give him or something....But he was nowhere to be seen.

Yesterday, a Jewess told me her people believe God is speaking through signs to man all the time. It is our spiritual ignorance that prevents us from interpreting them. Likewise, the Yoruba believe in constant dynamic divinity manifest throughout all. I myself feel orisha abound, and am increasingly privileged to recognize them in elements of my world. Occasionally, they grace me with a personal aside. Maybe I find a lit cigar in a train station well past midnight amidst a blizzard and know in that instant Eleggua



walks with me. Or a huge white stork alights beside me in an urban park, and I recognize Obatala favoring me with a visit....But it is Babalu on whom I continue to reflect.

The tale I used to begin is taken from Awo Fa'lókun Fátunmbi's interpretation of Odu Ika in his book *Ìba Se Òrisà*. Pataki explaining how Babalu became the orisha of plague vary somewhat. Often the story is told that he became angry at other orishas making fun of his lameness when he tried to dance at a bembé. Babalu responded by bringing plague or smallpox into the world. Hence, he was exiled from Ilé-Ife for his cruelty, and began an arduous lonely journey accompanied by dogs. In his isolation he developed compassion for the afflicted, and that quality lead to his redemption as a king in Dahomey.

I chose to begin with the odu because of its cautionary quality and application to the current AIDS epidemic. There's a cogent analogy to be drawn between the elders' negligence with the sacred knives (and their obligations) and the role "dirty" needles play in the spread of AIDS. Furthermore, the resemblance between Babalu and one living with AIDS is clear. I quote Baba Raul Canizares: "[Babalu is] depicted as a man full of leprosy. The AIDS patient is not only a biologically stricken person, he is also sociologically stricken. This is the equivalent of what the leper used to encounter in old societies. The leper was not only medically ostracized, he was also socially ostracized."

A leper, a pariah... As a person living with AIDS, I know what being thus labeled feels like. (Even though at this point in time, my condition does not fit a medical definition of AIDS, I prefer to think of every one living with the virus as having AIDS, because society looks at us the same way however sick or well we may be. I don't foresee a dinner invitation from any of the Jesse Helms or Bob Doles of this world - remember the corrupt elders - anytime soon.)

But now I wish to reflect on some of the complexities of my relationship as a person living with AIDS to Babalu. I have read that those afflicted by infectious disease in Yorubaland say thank you to Soponna (one of the names by which Babalu is known) for striking them. At first, this seems masochistic. How can someone welcome the contempt of his peers and a death sentence? But progressing spiritually is not an easy task. And we must learn to carefully examine the works of the orishas if we hope to develop good character. Being afflicted by this modern plague illustrates our own implicit divinity.

Babalu may be feared, even despised, because of how he can strike. Yet it is partly because he has the power to do so that he is worshiped. Having AIDS gives us similar power. Unlike Babalu, we are not necessarily disfigured by our ailment. Therefore, when someone sees us, they probably don't recognize the risk they face



through intimacy or sharing a set of works with us. It is our prerogative to protect or afflict them. Thus, we are god-like in wielding power.

Our responsibility is obvious. After all, we are all children of orishas, and if we honor orishas, we don't go around haphazardly poisoning their kids. Having AIDS can and should elevate us. We are given a sacred charge through which we can protect or attack our community. This requires we develop responsibility. Having AIDS empowers us. It causes us to see in ourselves a face of God that scares away most people.

There is historical precedent for Babalu's worship to involve the control of contagion. E. Bolaji Idowu in his seminal work *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* portrayed the role priests of Soponna played. It was customary for them to take charge of the bodies of those who died from infectious disease. As payment, they would frequently demand all of the deceased's personal effects which were burned as an offering. This curbed the spread of disease. However, some priests would also retain some of the dead's belongings and even their blood and body parts to use them to afflict illness and death when necessary.

Appreciating the rationale behind this is not a simple task. But coming to terms with Babalu is not easy. On one hand, he is described as prowling about at the peak of noon under a pitiless sun. On another, he is the lord of the swamp. He embodies many contradictions. I became ill through Babalu. Yet my ability to thrive in spite of this illness also issues from him. I do not think of him as malevolent. He is a kind mentor. Baba Raul Canizares also says: "When a person comes to Babalu, Babalu gives that person the strength to face whatever there is to face....Many people are turning to Babalu because of his compassion."

At times, I perceive Babalu's kindness in the warm light of a yellow candle, in a cool morning breath after a wicked humid and congested night, in the suppleness of my once cramped knees. The realization of an orisha is not necessarily an intellectually explicable act. I sometimes think my faith begins at the point where rational explanation no longer suffices. Ours' is indeed a spiritual path in which miracles occur. But I do not ask Babalu for miracle for myself. I ask him to give the tools I need to endure.

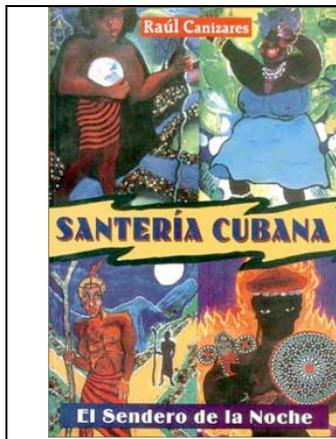
Afterall, Babalu always limps. He does not move instantly like Shango or Ochossi. He must take his time, moving on with an arduous gait. And he continues in spite of adversity. That is such an important quality to learn from him when one is facing a great illness. You're not going to go to bed lame one night and wake up the next day able to jump fences. But you can still get out of bed, take one step at a time. And perhaps with each step, you grow in strength. Today, I am a stronger person spiritually and physically then when I was uninfected years ago.



Babalu and the other orishas have taught, nurtured and empowered me. My spiritual development and my plague have progressed together. I became injured through my blood. My recovery begins in blood. I share with you a bit of wisdom from Narayan Ramos: “The path of blood heals you. The path of blood sacrifice heals you.” Making sacrifice aligns your spirit and body to overcome the obstacles to achieve the task at hand. In the case of one such as Babalu, just the act of walking can be a sacrifice. You have no right to expect something unless you are willing to give something.

Dealing with having AIDS must begin with an acknowledgment that you put yourself in this situation. This can be painful. I, myself, did not exercise good judgment. I did not consult Elegua about the steps I should take to keep my path open. I did not keep a cool head while acting as a child of Obatala should. In short, I screwed up. And I have to accept that and learn from it in order to move on just as Babalu will forever have a lame leg and walk a certain way in order to be able to keep moving.

Therefore, I give testament to the strength and dignity of Babalu. I worship an entity scaled with sores, with cowries twisted in his matted hair. I honor the virility of one who must walk with dogs, whose penis can ejaculate death. I praise him who others will not look at, nor his name speak. I respect that he must sometimes walk ahead and pave the way for Oya-Yansan in her most fearful task. To him, I make offerings of dry white wine, grains and cigars. And I acknowledge that a terrible part of him exists in me. And I beseech his kindness to show me how to endure. And I give him praise. Babalu, Ashé!



SANTERIA CUBANA

El Sendero de la Noche

Raul Canizares

El cubano Canizares describe los metodos y rituales de los seguidores de la santeria, que van desde la prescripcion de hierbas magicas, hasta la curacion mediante el espiritismo y el sacrificio de animales; y explica como se ha mantenido durante muchos anos disimulada bajo el catolicismo, para evitar la persecucion religiosa.



The Meaning of Prem

Baba Raul Canizares

One of my university teachers noted Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner, told me that in many cases Orthodox Jews feel the fulfillment of their duties is more important than such esoteric concerns as whether God exists or if there is an afterlife. In other words, they claim that by fulfilling their *mitzvoh* (duties), they are doing the right thing. In Santeria today, there is also a trend towards “practice” rather than “religion.” In other words, the legitimate, money-making “professional” aspects are exulted over the contemplative, esoteric aspects. Part of the beauty of Santeria is in the gorgeous, gaudy exuberance of its colorful paraphernalia, but to concentrate solely on these material aspects and not in its deeper face is wrong.

In the Orisha Consciousness Movement we counter Santeria materialism with Indian spirituality—I am not suggesting that African religion in general and Santeria in particular do not have enough spirituality. I am merely stating that for our utilitarian use, Hindu concepts, which originally came from where all life began anyway, serve a beautiful function as the spirit of our faith. One particular Hindu concept the Movement has adopted as its paramount virtue is *Prem*, a Sanskrit word that has no direct English equivalent in its highest meaning. The closest is what I have defined as “the ultimate reality, beyond the impersonal Deity, beyond undifferentiated potential... a warm beam of LOVE from within, the LOVE that has no selfish motive, the LOVE that is a spontaneous expression of the Divinity of Humankind.” It is my teaching, then, that PREM is above the orishas, above ALL. We must strive to develop this quality—Even the Christian scriptures, in an inspired moment, said “GOD IS LOVE.” Notice it doesn’t say God FEELS love or God EXPRESSES love. It says LOVE is GOD, so let us seek PREM and PREM will permeate our beings filling our souls with DIVINE LOVE.

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“Stonehead Skinhead,” Sven Davisson,
Oil on canvas, 16” x 20”
(Estate of Raul Canizares)



Nath-Tantra

The Nath (Adi-Nath) are an Indian sect of tantrik sadhus (renunciate holy men). Like most sects they claim a divine lineage, holding Lord Shiva to have been the first Natha. Historically, the lineage stems from an accomplished yogi Matsyendra Nath who most scholars believe lived around the 11th century C.E.

Hindu scholar, Gopinath Kaviraj provides the following description of the Natha cosmology:

“This shows that the metaphysical position of the Nathas was not monistic, nor was it dualistic either. It was transcendental in the truest sense of the term. They speak of the Natha, the Absolute, as beyond the opposition involved in the concepts of Saguna and Nirguna or of Sakara and Nirakara. And so to them the Supreme End of Life is to realize oneself as Natha and to remain eternally fixed above the world of relations. The way to this realization is stated to be Yoga, on which they lay great emphasis. It is held that Perfection can not be attained by any means unless it is supplemented by the disciplinary practices of Yoga.”

Various traditions trace the origins of Hatha yoga to the Natha—either as inventors or resuscitators of an ancient system in decline. The Natha taught a yoga combining Pranyama (breath control), Asana (body control), Mudra (posture) and Nadanusandhana. The practice results in a state of intense Joy, known as Sahajavastha.

Kaviraj elaborates on the Natha strain of yoga:

“The general principle on which they proceeded appears to be the recognition of the graded character of Matter, ranging from the densest form revealed in our waking sense-experience up to the most rarefied and tenuous form to which the end of Samprajnata Samadhi - the so-called Sasmitha Samadhi - eventually leads. I am speaking here in terms of Sankhya nomenclature. The consciousness of the individual self as enmeshed in grosser matter is really identical with the Universal Consciousness of the World-soul, nay, with Absolute Consciousness itself. Only that limitations have to be carefully removed.”

And in summary:



“The Nathas insist that if the Absolute is to be reached, the central Track, which leads directly into it as a river loses itself in the ocean, must be found out and resorted to.”

H.H. Shri Paramahamsha Mahendranath, known as Dadaji, was the 23rd lineage guru of the Adi-Nathas. He was born in London, England in 1911. He met infamous British magician Aleister Crowley who advised the young seeker to go to India. He was not able to act on the instruction until 1949, but after arriving in India he remained there until his death in 1991. He was initiated into the Natha tradition on Gurupurnima (Guru Day, first full moon in June) 1953 from Shri Lokanatha the Digambar-Avadhoot of Uttarkashi (U.P.). From then on he lived as a wondering saddhu. He also received Kaula tantrik initiation Uttarakaula Order from Shri Pagala Baba. Additionally Dadaji received initiations in the Karguyt Pas sect, soto Zen, Taoism, Ch’an, Ramanaya Nikaya (Theravadan Buddhism).

Dadaji’s extant writings represent a fascinating and innovative combination of traditional Natha tantrik teachings and New Aeonian hermeticism. Two modern organizations claim direct descent from Dadaji, AMOOKOS (the Arcane and Magical Order of the Knights of Shamballa) and the International Nath Order (and MAGIKOS).

His writings are available online at The Scrolls of Mahendranath (also the home page for the International Nath Order): <http://www.mahendranath.org>

AMOOKOS’s homepage is: <http://www.cix.co.uk/~mandrake/naths.htm>

Another great site with a wealth of Hindu and Tantrik translations is maintained by translator Michael Magee: <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/tantra/>

Kaviraj, Gopinath. Published in the Princess of Wales *Sarasvati Bhavan Series*, Vol VI, (1927).

H.H. Shri Paramahamsha Mahendranath, manuscript sent to Michael Magee, <http://www.shivashakti.com/dadaji.htm>.



Interview with Mogg Morgan

Mogg Morgan is a highly respected occult publisher (Mandrake Press, Oxford) and author of *The English Mahatma*, *Sexual Magick* and the recently released *Tankhem* (see review in this issue).

ASHÉ: What are the roots of your interest in tantra/Hinduism?

MOGG MORGAN: Roots? I'm ethnic Welsh but have always been drawn to the subcontinent—perhaps because of my father's war photos from his service there during partition—he was in the Kyber Pass for a while – see his web site [include link]. Otherwise I came across Hinduism from works of Blavatsky and a brief membership of the TS [Theosophical Society]—they have excellent libraries full of fascinating Hindu classics.

A: In some respects, I have always thought of Theosophical Society as an interesting artifact, an antiquity of the late 19th century. Do you think that they still have some relevance or resonance in our modern, or post-modern era?

MM: For a good laugh ring the TS in London when you know the answerphone is on. You'll hear a very quivery voice – he – l o oooooo – this is the t – he o – sop – ica – l s – oci ety – ‘ says it all really. The TS does still, have some nice people in it but it is a bit of a relic. It suffers from the fate of many earlier societies and orders—as they become established they find it impossible to change and let new blood flow. In my opinion the TS could do with a proper shrine or temple at their very well appointed buildings. It lacks cult.

A: When were you first exposed to tantra?

MM: umm - stumbled into it maybe - probably from reading Crowley and then the articles Dadaji sent to Sothis in the mid seventies when he was first making contact with western occultists

A: Sothis the ground-breaking British occult journal?



MM: That's right—edited by a gang of four Typhonians in the 1970s.

A: Are there natural affinities between tantra and western magick?

MM: I've said that already—tantrism has many points of contact with Egyptian magick and many similarities—its fairly certain now that many hermetic/Egyptian ideas were moved to India—especially after the closure of all pagan temples under the Christian emperors—this story is told in various sources—see Zvelebil's novel *Hipalos*—my pamphlet "Isis in India." I've just finished a book called *Tankhem* which also explores these themes—I'm distributing it as a beta version in pdf format for a few months to get some feedback before going to paper—so if someone wants one let me know—should be about \$8 - 200pp. [See review later in this issue]

A: What was Dadaji's connection to Crowley/thelema?

MM: Said some of this above. Also in the 1970s Dadaji entered into an extended contact with western occultists around the typhonian mag Sothis and submitted several crucial articles for publication - principally *Londinium Temple Strain* whicj includes the dragon seat meditation.

A: In the west, tantra has become synonymous with "sex"... how does the actual teachings/practice of tantra differ from this common mis-preception?

MM: I guess that whole sex therapy stuff is a valid modern application of things tantrik—but the tradition itself is probably broader and includes more stuff we would call ritual magick and hermeticism. It would be like saying Egyptian magick/religion was only about sex.

A: One meaning of the word Tantra is a secret book or teaching, is it not? Does the west have a tradition of secret writings? Would the medieval grimoire fall into this category? I have colleagues who view *The Book of the Law* in very much this way, calling it the Tantra of the New Aeon.

MM: Most of the sensible magi have given up on the idea of secrets – just some knowledge will do – the difficulty of the quest is more than enough to put off the



unworthy. Besides it seems a bit pretentious to talk of secrets when some of the best are to be found buried in academic books.

Maybe we could renovate the idea of prophesy instead – as in the magical tradition, the tradition of channeled teaching such as Liber AL is very much alive. Tantra are often books, perhaps inappropriately heard – as in the fisherman or fisher Matsyendranath who overhears a ‘secret’ pillow talk of Shiva and Shakti. This motif is very like the myth of the oxyrinchus fish consuming the phallus of Osiris.

A: What is the goal of tantrik practice? And is there a western analogy? For example, some have drawn parallels between Eastern practical/applied spiritual practice and the alchemists’ quest for the allusive Philosopher’s Stone.

MM: The goal is same as in western magick—immortality and liberation. Alchemy is very strong in India—some alchemists I know say it’s a very pure tradition because it is still based largely on plant alchemy rather than heavy metal. Some groups such as the Tamil Siddhas discovered many interesting drugs as a byproduct of their spiritual experiments and this has help generate an interest alternative medical system. The way of the drug or herb is listed as one of the valid means of knowledge as far back as the Yoga Sutras.

A: What is the Nath tradition of tantra? And how does it fit in with other eastern tantrik traditions?

MM: The Nath trad is a very old one founded about 1500 years ago in india by Matsyendranath the fisherman—like all cults it has divided into a number of sects over that time—sometimes said to be 12 major ones—of which the Dadaji lineage is one sub-sect.

A: Is there a particular name for Dadaji’s sub-sect?

MM: Not sure – perhaps the Adinaths but I’m not sure if that is unique to Dadaji. There are various mystery schools or subsects such as AMOOKOS, INA etc.

A: What has become of this particular lineage since Dadaji’s passing?



MM: It's become an undercurrent within the western occult fraternity. Small but sufficiently interesting to attract those types who want to incorporate it and enforce brand loyalty. When I joined I'd hoped it would be a more Rosicrucian order and it would be a sanctuary from the ego tripping that goes on in other magical orders and that has been the death of real magick—in my opinion. But unfortunately AMOOKOS has not been immune from that kind of tendency and I guess its only a matter of time before I get kicked out—again :)

A: Who was Dadaji?

MM: An Englishman who was advised by Aleister Crowley (The English Mahatma, See Review in Ashé #1) to get out of UK and seek enlightenment in the east. He met Crowley in the 1930s during one of the court battles when Crowley was feeling very cynical. After the WW2 he got there and stayed as a wandering sadhu/holy man—eventually receiving his initiation etc.

A: And he remained in India for the rest of his life?

MM: Yes—he did make one attempt to return to die but he was refused an exit visa and after a lone journey home that almost killed him he never made another attempt to leave.

A: How did you first make contact with his teaching?

MM: via sothis magazine in mid 70s

A: What is AMOOKOS?

MM: Arcane and Magical Order of the Knights of Shamballa—a east/west mystery school chartered by Dadaji.

A: Is this now a house-holder sect?

MM: Yes in the main although there are some who are authorized to lead a sadhu's life – but haven't met any myself.

A: Is there a place or possibility for a true sadhu renunciate tradition in the West?



MM: In my opinion not at the moment—and in India the institution has been in deep crisis for years—it’s the effects of development and materialism—too corrupting. Maybe Osho got close—although he made the fatal mistake of leaving India and buying a piece of land that had little or no water.



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On the Kriya-Shakti, or “Nine Powers of Action”

Shri Sahajananda

The *Kriya-Shakti*, or Nine Powers of Action, are the most potent magical powers, or siddhis, at the command of the tantric adept, and, as such, elude the best of Orientalists in detail sufficient for explication, as befitting occult lore of this extraordinary level of attainment. Although most authors list only eight of the *mahasiddhis* or great powers, Danielou believed that any list of the 'miraculous' powers would have to include that most godlike of talents, omniscience. The Nine Powers are believed dormant in us all. By re-remembering them, we too, might be as gods, *aishvarya*. Hence, it is to be presumed that only the highest adepts—yogins—can master them.



This, in turn, in keeping with the tripartite Shaivite tantric conception of evolution, from the *pashu* (or animal type), to the *vira* (or heroic type), to the *divya* (or deified being). Legend has it that precisely 84 Nath Siddhas have attained to immortality. Their praises were sung by the medieval Sahajiyan poets, in their tantric works, such as the *Caryas* and the *Doha-Kosas*, 84, of course, being a magic or mystical number in Hinduism (“...chiefly important in Buddhism”, says Crowley in “An Essay on Number,” in the Weiser edition of *Liber 777 and Other Qabalistic Writings*).

We find fascinating parallels between the 84 Siddhas and legends of such immortals as the Comte de Saint-Germaine and the “Ascended Masters” of theosophical fame. That a College of Adepts exists in Shambhala or some other hermitage in the Himalayas, occluded by clouds, is even a part of the popular culture. (It is time Hollywood remade James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon* and did it “right” this time. i.e. with all of the Shambhala symbolism intact.)

Lama Govinda has shown us that once we have done the meditation and other work to achieve the status of an adept, we no longer see much use for magical powers, since we begin to associate them with our ego and what it takes to “feed” it. We have also



learned to reintegrate those shadow parts of ourselves, unwanted elements we tend to project onto others, so that we may approach that evolutionary state of the *jivanmukti* or the *avadhut*.

Those who have undergone diksha, initiation, into a *Kula*, or clan of tantric adepts, probably know that the Nine Powers of Action are techniques of high magic(k) that can be employed to one effect or another in their own Work. The following discussion of the Nine Powers will delve less into the praxis and more into the theoretical basis and, by definition, the ontological implications of Nath-Siddha magic(k) itself. Where appropriate the author will offer insight into how the theory is brought to fruition, though he would be hard put to claim success with most of the siddhis except on a limited, mostly metaphorical, basis.

Emphasis also will be placed on illustrating, whenever possible how each of the Kriya-Shaktis found its way into western ceremonial magic(k), which has adapted the Nine Powers of Action to its own uses. (Including witchcraft, it might be observed, and especially the authentic witches among gypsy and (Italian) *strega*, (for that matter, there was more good craft being practiced in the Balkans in times of old than in any other part of the world, and almost all of it deriving from Oriental sources.) We have assumed that an ontological basis underlies the operational energies of each *siddhi*. Studies with the I-Ching have convinced us beyond peradventure that works of magic(k) are “willed synchronicities” and that it is imagination, not will, that is the most powerful weapon in the sorcerer’s arsenal. We are well aware of the principles of Chaos Magic(k), which has become all the rage, but “coincident” by definition is chaotic.

We hope to show that the Nath-Siddhas, by their intuitive grasp of such New Physical paradigms as the mutual interpenetration of matter, found the means to manipulate the “information picture” inside the reality hologram and practical applications of the ancient Hindu (and especially tantric) notion that, to paraphrase Gopi Krishna, it is consciousness, not matter, that is the ultimate reality in the universe.

We know that the Kriya-Shaktis are by nature *rajasic*, which is to say, they partake of the organizational power of the Divine which includes gravitation, activity, and motion; as such they are related to Brahma more than Shiva or Vishnu. However, the *sattvic* nature of Nath-Siddha Magick is such that the forces of concentration are brought to bear on the wielded powers, the magician presumably having the wisdom to employ the siddhis only for the sake of love. It has been argued that the term, “willed synchronicity” is oxymoronic, will being the application of *intentionality* to “acausally-connected” events. But the adept slips in and out of the holes in Indra's Net; she or he is empowered with a Tricksterish, 'phantom-ability of space-time manipulation. The Nath



Siddha also hurls his or her thunderbolts from a dispassionate stance, having no lust of result, as both Crowley and Gopi Krishna taught.

Julius Evola (*The Yoga of Power*) reminds us that 'siddhis' also mean "perfections'. The most potent Magic(k) —the kind most likely to succeed — is that done in the name of love:

Shyam Sundar Goswami, in *Layayoga: An Advanced Method of Concentration* refers to the siddhis as "super powers" and, indeed, with an arsenal such as the nine Kriya-Shaktis at one's disposal, it is hard to imagine a wonder one could not perform. Briefly, the Nine Powers are: *Anima* (atomization); *Mahima* (immensity); *Garima* (gravity); *Laghima* (lightness); *Prapti* (attainment); *Prakamya* (at will-ness); *Ishitva* (domination); *Vashitva* (holding in one's power); *Yatramavasayitva* (transformation at will). One finds manifestations of these powers in the shamanic, sorcery, or magical traditions of all peoples. For example, what is *Yatramavasayitva* if not 'shape-shifting' commonly claimed as an ability of certain Native American shamans? But each of the Nine Powers has application in the magic(k) of the west, as I shall demonstrate.

Anima:

The ability to perceive the infinitely small, including subatomic particles was claimed by the Nath Siddhas who had progressed to such a stage in their meditation that they realized, as Gopi Krishna has put it, that "it is not matter but consciousness that is the ultimate reality of the universe." (*Hidden Secrets of Kundalini* (in Panchastavi).) When the tantric adept has progressed to a certain stage, he can see the adult in a child and vice-versa, which is to say, he can watch another being born, living, and dying, with one and the same glance at the same moment in eternity.

Those who have studied themselves in a mirror while under the influence of LSD and certain other psychotropic substances may have experienced a similar phenomenon, which is to say the death of the physical body.

It is precisely as the opium-smoking Jean Cocteau expressed it: "Mirrors are the doors through which Death comes and goes." (This thought is personified in his film of Orpheus, which is recommended to you, and of which Steven H. Scheuer has remarked, in his *Movies on TV*, "Defies anything else in cinema." — A magical work.")

The Nath Siddha can "see microscopically" because he has advanced to the state where he can reduce all of Nature to its starting point: nothing, zilch, zero, *nada*. Only self-organizing principles and a holographic universe could bring such order into being.

An understanding of the tantric-alchemical-hermetic formulae of "As above, so below", will help. It is only necessary to take to its logical conclusions the concept of the



linga-sharira to make sense of such numinosities. The *Linga-Sharira* is the equivalent of DNA. How can something like left-handedness, to use a rather obvious example, be passed on from parents to children? But this is only a physical characteristic! It is *a fortiori*, all the more marvelous that certain ethical precepts and tendencies of mind can be passed genetically as well. As Danielou points out (While the Gods play. Shaiva Oracles and Predictions on the Cycles of History and the Destiny of Mankind), the *Linga-Sbarira* helps produce an individual who:

“...carries out the role that nature has given him [and who] degrades himself if he abandons that role. The perfect man, the harmonious man, the useful man, is the man who, like an actor, plays to perfection the role assigned to him.”

It seems to me I have heard this elsewhere — perhaps *Liber AL vel Legis* (or The Book of the Law). In the comment to Chapter One of that work, Crowley states that once the individual becomes conscious “of his true, inmost will, of his essential nature,” any act, which expresses the soul, that act and no other is right.”

Both this siddhi and, to some extent, the next, are governed by the *Ajna-chakra*

Here is a true story from an initiated Nath, whom we shall call Vimalanatha, a criminal defense lawyer by profession, who applied this and other siddhis in an eclectic working recently and sent us a letter describing the results:

“I recently handled a criminal defense in which the charge was aggravated sexual assault, which is the legal ‘umbrella’ term for several varieties of rape. I did not think the State could prove its case, as the complainant lied repeatedly in her statement to police, and if she changed any part of her story on the stand. I would have the earlier statement to impeach her. I knew some things that the prosecutor probably did not, for example, that the complainant now worked as a waitress in a beer bar where a lot of drugs were being sold.

“I had had excellent results in prior workings using the voodoo rituals formulated by the Semi-legendary Anna Riva and other New Orleans practitioners, and I knew that, where legal matters are concerned, one only has to call upon one of the loas, Agwé, to work one’s will. I drew the loa’s veve on a piece of parchment and meditated—or, rather, concentrated—on it, using that state of meditation known as dharana, or single-pointed fixation of mind, during which time I visualized the complainant’s purse. I found that I was able to make myself extremely small. I was thus able to climb down into the purse, where I found a packet of cocaine.”

Obviously, the Sorcerer was putting both *anima* and, as we shall see, *prapti*, to good advantage. Voodoo makes use of many of the siddhis, and so it is not unusual to find modern Shaivite *sadhakas* becoming interested in such an Afro-American religion.



We can add only that it is characteristic of dharana that its masters are said to be in control of what Goswami calls —”Superconsciousness”:

“Superknowledge arises from concentration—not from perception and intellection. Superknowledge has two levels—inward and outward. At the outward level, Superknowledge reveals the supermatter field, and thus the range of knowledge is increased to a very high degree...

(Goswami. 1980.) This 'supermatter field' is the Net as well as the many-realities world on both sides of the “holes” in the fabric.

Mahima

Translated as “expanding” or as -immensity, this is the ability to assimilate the Macrocosm in the Microcosm, which is what occurs sometimes in *dhyana*, and which explains the famous “Star-Sponge Vision” of Crowley during his New Hampshire Working. This occurred during one of Old Crow's magickal retirements, to-wit, his trip to Lake Pasquaney (not even shown on new maps, we're told). The Master Therion experienced a form of samadhi in which his *Linga-Sharira* left the physical body and became 'pure information'. The adept in control of this siddhi can cross galaxies and shake up the information picture of anything anywhere anytime. To put it country simple, Crowley had a Bohm-blast; he became enlightened to the nature of the implicate order in all of its manifestations and with all of its ramifications.

Like Anima, this siddhi depends upon complete mastery of the equilibrating forces between the Microcosm and Macrocosm, a balance that is only possible by activation of the *Shushumna*. The language Crowley found to explain his Vision is strikingly similar to the description of this siddhi by Walker (1968): “...the power of becoming as vast as the cosmos and being able [*quoting from a hatha-yoga text*] ‘to watch the functioning of the galaxies as though an the worlds were laid out before one.’” This siddhi is associated with the seed mantra. “Lam” and with *Prithivi*. Evola (1992) says that this chakra associated with this siddhi, the *muladhara*, is associated with “the cohesiveness of physical matter.”

Garima

It is a common practice taught to students of occultism that one way to master “astral travel” is to project any large animal through the ajna chakra onto the astral plane, whence consciousness can be made to travel almost anywhere, the bigger the animal the better. In fact, I have seen such manuals suggest that one not only select giraffes, elephants, and such, but also to paint them, with polka-dots in loud colors, the better to



make them visually stimulating to discrete altered states. It is foolish to believe that the siddhis are meant to be taken literally, however exciting reports of Laghima, say, in the accounts of Alexandra David-Neel may seem.

Walker says that this *siddhi* is more related to the necessity of becoming immovable, “even as heavy as a mountain,” the texts put it.

Laghima

Actually, Mme. David-Neel did not just witness a “levitation,” as this siddhi implies, she saw adepts dart along a chosen path 'several feet off the ground', in the manner of one of those anti-gravitational vehicles in a sci-fi story. No problem. The adept merely disorganizes the information picture, reassembling it incrementally, rather like the figure in Duchamp's “Nude ascending a Staircase.” (And if you don't think the surrealists used art for magical purposes. I recommend to you the works of not only, Duchamp, but Carrington, Fini, Colquhoun, and Varo, an female adept of extraordinary abilities.)

In Tibet, this siddhi is known as lung-gom. Lamas are said to be able to “move along the ground with extraordinary speed in a series of long bounding steps.” (Walker, 1982.)

Prapti

Strictly speaking, this is a psychic ability. The Dutch psychic, Peter Hurkos, was adept at it. He simply intuited *situs* from the vibrations of physical matter closely associated with the missing person. Like most psychic skills, *Prapti* depends upon the altering of the brainwave pattern. As has been shown, the quantum theoretical concept of “action at a distance- could very well explain this ability to “obtain an object wherever it might be. “ to quote Danielou.

This is one of the more common siddhis, apparently. This “power of being transported anywhere” (Walker) is said to be a talent of the Nepalese shamans, or *bombos*, who maintain that they magically fly, ascending to heavens and underworlds where they encounter gods 'face to face' (Peters, 1987.) These Tamang shamans, who made their home in the mountains of the Kathmandu Valley, believe in a tripartite soul, and they initiate new recruits with techniques quite obviously equating to Kundalini arousal, beginning with a ritual of spirit-possession in which the neophyte becomes seized of a possessing spirit or tutelary guru. The four-stage process of initiation has as its ultimate goal activation and mastery of the 'third soul' or *che wa*, which —incredibly —Peters tell us is they describe as “a light located between the eyes”!



Prakamya

Walker refers to this as “the power of an irresistible will [or] to obtain anything merely by desiring it.” An intimate relationship with the Shakti principle is implied by the very name, *prakamya* and *prakriti* having the same Sanskrit root. This is the most abused siddhi by those who would view the powers only as means to various ends, and Walker says that both Patanjali and other great thinkers of India discourage its development by those who are motivated only by desire. This siddhi would appear to be related to another *manojavitva*, the power to act with the speed of thought. Technically, *prakamya* may be the most potent of the powers, some Nath-Siddhas even managing, by its abilities, to reduce to ashes those who oppose them.

Ishitva

Or “overlordship” (Walker, though Danielou translates it as 'dominion'). This is the power to control the forces of Nature, the *siddhi* most commonly found in the western magical tradition (e.g. legends of Merlin, Shakespeare’s, Prospero, et al.). The adept is said to be able to arrest the wind, provoke storms, and summon rain. The root, “ish,” implies God-like abilities and the word, 'Lord,' in a theological sense. Works of the nature of the homunculus also belong to this *siddhi*.

Vashitva

Or “holding in one’s power” —the ability to obtain power over any being. In the western tradition, this siddhi can be equated to 'bindings.' In *The Tempest*, Prospero is depicted as quite adept at it, Shakespeare showing him in an act of freezing, or making immobile, his treacherous brother and company. Voodoo and Wicca make extensive use of the power, the latter mainly because it has fewer karmic consequences than, say, a rite designed to physically harm the subject. The deity associated with this siddhi is Rama (Kakar, 1982), and, Thus, the *anahata chakra*.

To return again to the letter we received:

“ I began on a Friday preceding the Monday in court. I decided that the best way to rid ourselves of lying witnesses was to bind them in some fashion, which would indicate to me an earth working, in which case I would have done some Wicca, sort of ritual, or an air working for which Voodoo is best. I chose the latter, not only out of convenience, but because I had used such rites before to good effect.

Now it so happens that the Loa governing court cases and anything of a legal nature is Agwé, who is propitiated with seashells and such. I devised my ritual after one



given in the book by Pelton; that is, the one for Winning in court, employing a mantra read nine times over a poppet representing either the prosecutrix or her witness, as well as recitation nine times of Psalms 7, which happens to be beautifully tailored to the binding of enemies who bear false witness. "I also burned myrrh and frankincense, as they were called for, and lit a special sky-blue candle sold in all of the local curandero shops, called, simply, 'Court Case,' I lit this candle, bound the poppet with a clean white cotton cloth over which I had written the names of both the state's attorney and the witness. I fed incense to the charcoal 'punk' while reciting the mantra and the psalms, then wrapped the poppet in the clean white altar cloth. I hid it away in a secluded part of my house and went to bed.

"The following morning the prosecutrix informed the court she wanted to dismiss the indictment, as she was having witness trouble."

This is the power to transforming oneself at will into any form, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral. Almost every shamanic tradition known to man includes this power, usually known by the name, "shape-shifting," (The widespread prevalence of the phenomenon best explains the tales of werewolves from story-tellers the world over.) The 1981 film, *Wolfen*, was an admirable attempt to portray the siddhi as wielded by a mad Native American bent on reclaiming the slums of New York for his tribe. Shamans are famous for having their "power animals," usually wolves, eagles, bears, and others generally thought endowed with special abilities, usually of a hunting or tracking nature — animal allies or guides, who accompany the shaman on his vision quests.

It is interesting in this regard that although animals are associated with each of the chakras, e.g. elephant (Ganesh) for the *muladhara*, most authorities believe that they 'function primarily as symbolic meditation images.' (Metzner, 1987.) Even so, the practitioner can gain distinct advantages by incorporating the animals' strengths and qualities into consciousness. Johari (86) provides the mantram correspondences, and other information necessary for workings involving these powers. Good luck!



**On The *Aparasahaja*,
Or “Inferior Simultaneously-Arisen Joy”**

Shri Sahajananda

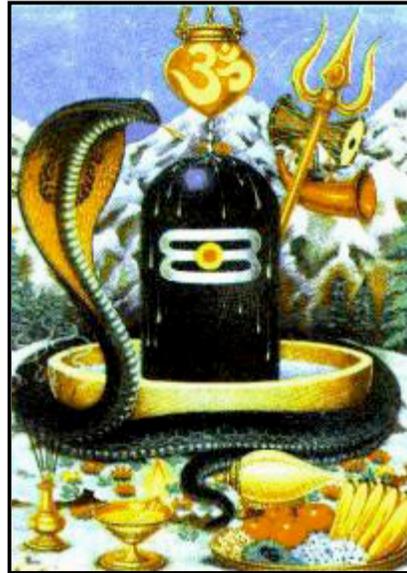
*The mystery of the universe can never be understood unless it is revealed in love.
Baul saying in the Vividha-dharma-sangita*

Part One

A story is told of the late Fritz Perls that when he attended a lecture by Abraham Maslow, he created some sort of commotion to draw attention to his conviction that Maslow was full of baloney. I would like to suggest that Perls, the great clown of gestalt therapy, was merely green with envy, since he hadn't been the first to think of the sublimely simple theory behind Maslow's “actualizations”: that the Eastern concept of *samadhi* could be employed in Western psychology to like effect. (Perhaps I should have written “deceptively simple”, as Maslow's “peak experience” does not equate with *samadhi* in anything but a qualitative way.)

I am troubled by the distinct possibility, however, that we will forget Maslow, just as we have forgotten another great American thinker, Charles Sanders Peirce, the logician. There! You didn't know who Peirce was, did you? Neither does 99.99% of the population, I suspect. Clue: a collection of his essays was published posthumously under the title, *Chance, Love, and Logic*.

But now, back to Maslow. In his 1976 book, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, Maslow, drawing the usual distinction between spirituality and religion, suggests that we refer to the former as religion (with a small “r”) and to the latter as Religion (with a capital “R”) so that we can readily “differentiate the subjective and



naturalistic religious experience and attitude from the institutionalized, conventional, organized Religions...” (p.viii.) Maslow intellectualized certain philosophical tenets that were expressed in the vernacular of their time by the Sahajiyān philosopher-poets (including Saraha, Kabir, and the authors of the *Kanhas*, *Caryas*, and *Dohas* - anticlerical, ecstatico-mystical poems), whose era encompasses the 9th through 17th centuries. (It is my contention that these essentially Gnostic sentiments were part of a worldwide awakening, and it might be said that the medieval Sahajiyāns of India represented the survival of antinomian Gnosticism at a time when the movement was undergoing a crisis in the West, culminating with the Albigensian Crusade early in the 13th century. It should be added that Sahajiyānism was an amalgamation of Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufic philosophy, which indicates, among other things, that it “showed up” the inadequacies of three of the four major world Religions. Its closest approximation in the West, the Troubadours, were guilty only of a minor heresy: romantic love.) There is another connection between the Eastern Sahajiyāns and Western Gnostics — Aurobindo hinted at it — and we shall examine it briefly in a moment.

Maslow decried the tendency of Religions to allow dogma and formalities to replace if not pervert the founder's mystic experience, illumination, or “great awakening, “ and to eventually forget or distort the image of the “charismatic seer” who began the faith. “Organized Religion,” he concluded, “the churches, finally may become the major enemies of the religious experience and the religious experiencer.” Maslow, a self-described practitioner of what he called an “uncovering (Taoistic, noninterfering) psychotherapy,” wound up wondering whether we might not rear our male offspring in the belief that “all his mysteries were...true mysteries.” For example, we could teach our young men to think of their penises... as phallic worshippers do, as beautiful or holy objects, as inspiring as mysterious, as big and strong, possibly dangerous and fear inspiring, as miracles which are not understood.

Thus we might empower the young man with a “B-attitude” (Maslow's delightful pun, combining his B — for Being — Values (“Wholeness,” “Dichotomy-transcendence,” “Aliveness,” &c.) with the Western religious notion of “perfect blessedness or happiness”). This assists the youth in thinking of his orgasm “in the same way that the Tantrists” do: i.e., as a unifying experience, a holy experience, a symbol, as a miracle, and as a religious ceremony.

How very different a view than the one espoused by most Western religions — that sex is shameful and dirty and should be used only for procreativity.

But, of course, tantra is not exclusively sexual either in theory or praxis. Whatever yogic or magical means they take, all true tantrists view their goal as



attainment of that state known as *Sahaja-samadhi*. It may be that such a state may only be known by the yogin-ascetic, but the Fire Serpent, Kundalini, may be sufficiently aroused in anyone, theoretically, even the most *artha*-bound individual. Quite often, Kundalini is only partially aroused in such persons, and if they are sufficiently evolved, the Snake may hover in and about the *Anahata*, or “Heart Chakra,” where resides *aparasahaja* in all its manifestations.

Of course, it would be impossible to explain the Inferior Simultaneously-Arisen Joy without first explaining *sahaja* itself, and here we wander into a huge field of prickly cactus, a realm where academics find the stuff of doctoral theses and cavil mongering among themselves.

Maslow himself admits that the “peak experience” (which I believe is a Western synonym for *aparasahaja* at the very least) is “essentially ineffable (in the sense that the best verbal phrasings are not quite good enough),” which perhaps explains why those who *try* often get themselves in a lot of hot water, as witness that great Sufi martyr, Mansur al-Hallaj, or, for that matter, Teilhard de Chardin, Roger Bacon, or Raymond Lull, all Sahaja Saints in my book.

That said, we could agree with Maslow that some value lies in simply adumbrating the *qualities* of the “peak-experience.” That is, the “described attributes of reality” when the latter is “perceived in peak-experiences, *or* as a list of irreducible, intrinsic values of this reality”. He goes on to list some 14 categories of attributes, and then suggests that they are to be distinguished from such “attitudes or emotions of the B-cognizer *toward* [such attributes]”: awe, love, wonder, sense of mystery, fusion with, joy, rapture, bliss, ecstasy, and so forth. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to examine *sahaja* and *aparasahaja* according to the attributes /values of “Wholeness” and “Dichotomy-transcendence,” which are linked together in Maslow's list as #'s 4 and 4a.

Sarahapada, one of the great Sahajiyan philosopher-poets, spoke of *sahaja* as a sublime form of *ananda*, or bliss, which is “free from all mental constructions.” (Das Gupta, 1969, p.81.) Cryptically, he insists that the state cannot be attained — the bliss of one's *sahaja*-nature cannot be experienced — unless the body, speech, and mind “are destroyed.” Of course, he means this metaphorically, in the way, say, that alchemists had to “destroy” the *prima materia*, or chaotic prime substance, in the process of transmutation, which yields alchemical “gold.”

Similarly, Tilopa (or Tilopada), says in a *dohd* (short poem or song), that *sahaja* is a state where all the thought-constructions are dead and *prana* (the “vital wind”) is also destroyed. He adds that as “the secret of this truth is to be intuited by the self,” it cannot



be explained, and it is “inaccessible to ordinary foolish people,” just as it is “unknown and unknowable to scholars.” (Das Gupta, p.80.)

Sex, as I have stated, is only one of many ways to attain to *sahaja-samadhi*. In *Liber AL vel Legis*, II:21, it is stated, “Think not, o king, upon that lie: That Thou Must Die: verily thou shalt not die, but live. Now let it be understood: if the body of the King dissolve [a rather obviously alchemical formula], he shall remain in pure ecstasy forever...” In “Comment by OTz PTN 690 Upon the Second Chapter of *Liber AL vel Legis*,” (Archive of Black Moon, reference P.V.N.) We’re told that this tantric arcanum directs the adept to expend all his or her energies on raising their own kundalini force, and that:

“Thou shalt not die” refers to the supreme moment when orgasmic death is circumvented by the awakening of that which the false ego has kept forcibly asleep, so that ego-death seems not to have happened, for when the false ego dies, the Observer awakes...”

All of this depends upon pranic energy being brought up through the *nadis*, or “veins” (I actually prefer the word “channels”), drawing left-brain logical thought down to Malkuth/Muladhara and right-brain intuition up into Kether/Sahasrara via the equilibrating capabilities of the Shushumna. (Archetypically, this has corresponded to the figure eight Mobius strip that is traditionally painted onto the Magician *atou* in Tarot. Only a magician would be capable of balancing these energies. But he is an advanced adept, not a “show” magician.) The trip from the Garden to Paradise is that from Earth to the Pleroma, the Ascent of Gnosis bearing a direct equivalency to the raising of Kundalini.

For the Sahasrara-chakra is the Pleroma in an ontological sense. (See writings of Aurobindo.) The Fall of Sophia in Judeo-Christian Gnosis equates to the Descent of the Shakti to the Muladhara, the Serpent of the Garden initiating this Other Eve into the Mysteries of the Tree of Knowledge of Good (*yang*) and Evil (*yin*). The Judeo-Christian Gnostic's soteriological ascent “through the Aeons,” or planetary spheres, is merely a metaphor for the *nadi-chakra* system. The “mental constructions” addressed by Saraha and Tilopa — yes, it's the same Tilopa who initiated Naropa, both Tibetan and commonly referred to as “Buddhists”! - are roughly equivalent to the *kleshas* as discussed in the writings of Shri Gurudev Mahendranath (Dadaji), and of course by Patanjali before him. Which is to say, *avidya*, or spiritual ignorance,&c. There is also a connotation of the spirit of the “Verses on Faith-Mind,” attributed to the Third Zen Patriarch:

The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences. When love and hate are both absent everything becomes clear and undisguised. Make the smallest



distinction, however, and Heaven and Earth are set infinitely apart. If you wish to see the truth then hold no opinion for or against anything. To set up what you like against what you dislike is the disease of the mind. When the deep meaning of things is not understood the mind's essential peace is disturbed to no avail.

The way is perfect like vast space where nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess. Indeed, it is due to our choosing to accept or to reject that we do not see the true nature of things. Live neither in the entanglements of outer things, not in inner feelings of emptiness. Be serene in the oneness of things and such erroneous views will disappear by themselves.

When you try to stop activity to achieve passivity your very effort fills you with activity. As long as you remain in one extreme or the other you will never know Oneness.

*Which is to say, you will never know *sahaja-samadhi*.*

Part Two

In the first installment, I quoted Tilopa, one of the 84 Nath-Siddhas and, for all practical purposes, the founder of Buddhist Sahajayana (he was the teacher of Naropa, who taught, in turn, a great line of succession in Vajrayana/Yogachara Buddhism) for the proposition that the “secret” of the *sahaja* state is only “to be intuited by the self.” While the academics dicker as to what the very word, *sahaja*, means, the *sadhaka* who actually experiences it knows that it evades definition, categorization, characterization, and objectification. It simply *is*.

Sahaja-samadhi is the experience of “pure consciousness,” which is to say, the union of subject and object and total participation in the meaning universe. It is a state of existence devoid of conditions, qualities, and conceptions, and is therefore almost synonymous with the esoteric meaning of Buddhist “mindfulness.” Or, as Henepola Gunaratna has put it (*Mindfulness in Plain English*, 1994), it is “non-conceptual awareness,” a disturbing experience for Westerners, who traditionally have viewed mind and body as separate, and who rely upon projections of self to bolster their egos. If anyone has come close to describing the experience (which is, of course, essentially ineffable), it was the late Gopi Krishna, who might have been paraphrasing Abraham Maslow when he wrote:

What matters is that the basic characteristics of the mystical trance or samadhi are present in varying forms in the experience: an overmastering sense of wonder at the extraordinary occurrence, the unutterably glorious nature of the vision, a powerful



feeling of awe combined with inexpressible happiness, overflow of love, and entrancement or a state of complete or partial oblivion to the world.

Last, but not least, there is the vivid consciousness of a higher existence or of submersion into an ocean of knowledge in which all that was obscured is now explained. (Kundalini: The Secret of Yoga, 1972.)

Sahaja-bliss is realized upon transcendence of all dualities. The concepts of *advana* (nonduality) and *yuganaddha* (the principal of union) play important roles in the metaphysics of this *sadhana*.

But it is a mistake to take the idea of union in an always literal sense, else why would some celibate *sadhakas* experience *sahaja-samadhi* by meditative, yogic, or other austere practices? We're told that the first step toward transcendence is taken when the *sadhaka* recognizes the part played by *aropa*, or the attribution of qualities to an object. Eliade says that we come to see ourselves not in a physical, biological, or psychological way, but from the perspective of ontology. Nevertheless, the *sahaja* state is indefinable; it cannot be known dialectically, but "can only be apprehended through actual experience." (Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 1958).

Lama Govinda describes the state as a natural extension of the *sadhaka's* "spontaneity of intuition" (*Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, 1960.) Throughout the writings on *sahaja*, one encounters references to its intended meaning as "natural" or "spontaneous," terms which find much disfavor in academic circles, as witness the continuing debate on whether the word means "non-conditioned," "co-emergent," or "together-born." (See, e.g., Kvaerne, 1975.) But I think that the term can and does embrace what in popular parlance we call a "lifestyle," and in that, at least, the words "natural" and "spontaneous" readily apply. Luis O. Gomez has shown how most Sahajiyans dedicated themselves so totally to the concept of *sahaja* that they became "long-haired, wandering *siddhas*," typically the "homeless madman wandering about with his female consort, or a householder-sorcerer" who "sought spontaneity, and saw monastic life as an obstacle to true realization. ("Buddhism in India," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987.

Benjamin Walker might have been describing Shri Gurudev Mahendranath Paramahansa ("Dadaji") when he wrote of the Sahajiyans "living a spontaneous and uninhibited life, free from the bondage of artificial conventions and social restraints":

The followers [of sahajiya] believe that truth is not to be attained through reading, philosophy, fasting, ablutions, and the construction of images, penance, mantras, or sacrifice. They prefer natural occupations like farming, fishing, and weaving



to artificial modes of livelihood, and rustic life is their especial delight. They hold that the most natural acts are the most meritorious....

(Walker, *The Hindu World*, 1968.)

This has nothing soever to do with Sahajiyans being of the pashu, or animal, nature, but rather involves their commitment to the antinomian ideals of being or becoming beyond "good" and "evil," which, of course, are the hallmarks of dualism. To me, the expression "artificial conventions" is the most important, for, in our Way, we seek enlightenment not through fixed teachings, but by what the Prajnaparamita-sutra characterizes as "an intuitive process that is spontaneous and natural"

(Bhikshu Wai-tao and Dwight Goddard, *A Buddhist Bible*, 1957).

Das Gupta identifies sahaja with the Brahman of the *Upanishads* and Advaita Vedanta, but it is also the *Nirvana-dhatu* of canonical Buddhism, as it is the *tathata* ("thatness") of Ashvaghosa, and the negatively described "absolute reality" of Nagarjuna. It is the *abhuta-parikalpa* or the innate absolute with the potency of all objectivity and subjectivity but in itself bereft of all dualism, or the *pure consciousness (vijñapti-matrata)* of the Vijnana-yogins. It is again the Vajra-dhatu or the Vajra-sattva of the Vajra-yanists.

It is the Bodhicitta in the form of the unity of Shunyata and Karuna, it is the Maha-sukha or the Supreme Bliss. All these ideas have merged in the idea of Sahaja of the Sahajiyas. (Das Gupta, 1969, emphasis added.)

We shall shortly deal with the concepts of the *Nirvana-dhatu*, *tathata*, *abhuta-parikalpa*, *vijnana*, &c. For the time being it is important to note that, once again, we encounter the notion of such a thing as a "pure consciousness" or state of being totally free from cognition of duality. In this state, the entire universe is viewed not as an ego-construct, but as partaking of the nature of the self. In the tantras, we find the idea of the world having proceeded from the bliss (*ananda*), the cessation of all duality. Saraha-pada and the other Sahajiyans poets define sahaja simply as "that stage of bliss which is absolutely free from all mental constructions." (Das Gupta, 1969.)

In his *Atma-Darshan*, Atmananda (a.k.a. Krishna Menon) observes that we are prisoners of the "attribution of reality to things which rise in thoughts." Form, he suggests, exists "only as the object of seeing and never independently of it," nor can an object exist "for a moment unless cognized by thought. When thought changes, the object changes also." (Cf. *The Dhammapada*, sayings attributed to Gautama the Buddha.) These philosophical principles are born out by the New Physics, especially the apparent subject-object dichotomy. Compare Atmananda's statement on the matter, from the Vedantic point of view, with that of a prominent quantum physicist, John Wheeler.



It is the experience of all that, when viewed carefully, everything that is not oneself can exist only as the object of oneself, who is the subject. The object is also seen to have an inseparable connection with oneself. There is no form without seeing; there is no sound without hearing. One views oneself as seeing and hearing, and thus takes the stand of the perceiver of these objects. In truth, seeing, hearing, etc., are themselves objects. When they are viewed as such, one's stand is in pure consciousness, which is the perceiver. The idea of perceiver will also disappear there. Whenever the stand taken by the perceiver changes, the perceived also changes accordingly.

(Atma-Darshan: At the Ultimate, 1946, quoted in Arthur Koestler, The Lotus and the Robot, 1969.)

We had this old idea, that there was a universe out there, and here is man, the observer, safely protected from the universe by a six-inch slab of plate glass. Now we learn from the quantum world that even to observe so miniscule an object as an electron, we have to reach in there...So the old word observer simply has to be crossed off the books, and we have to put in the new word participator. In this way we've come to realize that the universe is a participatory universe. (Quoted in A Question of Physics, 1979.)

The average person simply believes that his sense impressions of "objective reality" are somehow "true," while the Sahajiyan is a participator. Or, really, to be fair, it could be said that the average person participates, but he is unaware.

Part Three

I cannot recall when I first experienced the *aparasahaja*, though I clearly recall two of the early instances as if they were yesterday. One was the birth of my first son, Alexander, born April 6, 1978. The second was a magickal working in the VIII [degree] in a forest not far from Mt. Mansfield in Vermont. The woods of New England are a magical place. Perhaps all forests are. It is easy to understand the popularity of the "earth religions" after removing oneself from the city and spending any significant amount of time in the rural mountains of America.

I had come to Vermont to write, thinking it an easy commute to New York, the publishing capital of America, where I might sell my wares. Although the deadening New England winters would eventually take their toll (in 1977-78, there was a stretch of ten straight days with no temperature higher than 30 *below!*) the summers were enchanting in the best sense of the word.



We lived in an old barn at the base of a 3,700-ft. mountain blanketed by birches, maples, and pines. The barn had been converted into over-and-under duplex apartments within easy bicycling distance of a place I called “the grotto,” although there were no caves to my knowledge. I simply felt that the appellation “fit” for some reason. There, a mountain stream had etched a course through the rocks, forming a series of pools where one might bathe and become totally immersed in the glamour of the ghyll, its very spirit - the spirit of the place. Sun rays streamed down through the lime-green leaves, creating mottled patterns of light and shade on the path from the gravel road to the grotto itself. Many times, I would lie naked in the pools, staring up at the treetops and sky beyond.

On more than one occasion, I felt the presence of the forest gods including, yes, old Pan Himself. It was a perfect place for VIII [degree] offerings of the flesh of the celebrant to the Oneness of All Creation. One such occasion, at the moment of orgasm, I experienced an epiphany: the realization that Creation is One and that, with It, we are all, all of us, One; that Life is One - there are no boundaries between our world and that of the vegetable and animal worlds. And, finally, we are One with the Gods, the subtle spirits, and all living things, indissolubly bound together as One. This banishing of all dualities is the essence of the *aparasahaja*. Muktananda said: “Meditate on your Self. Honor and worship your own being. God dwells within you as you.” This is an expression of the *deha-tattva*: In the sexo-magical praxis of tantra, masturbatory rituals can be transformed into a form of meditation. Dadaji included a masturbatory rite in his writings on Nath-Siddha *sadhana*. Engaging in such a working on a mountainside would seem all the more efficacious; after all, many Shaivite regard Mt. Kailas as the lingam of Shiva. The Holy Phallus as Summit.

In the second part of this essay, I introduced the concepts of the *nirvana-dhatu*, *tathata*, *abhuta-parikalpa*, and *vijnapti-matrata* and promised to explore their relationship to the experience of *aparasahaja* in a later installment. This is a “tall order” if only because, to a certain extent, we are mixing philosophical apples and oranges. But it is the way of the Sahajiyans to do just that - to borrow from all the flowerings of spiritual *gnosis* as a hummingbird drinks from the blossoms of a goodly variety of plants. Let me first emphasize one fact: *aparasahaja* is but the first *glimmering* of the *enstasis* that, theoretically, characterizes *sahaja*. It is the untying of knots only up to the Heart Chakra. As the song goes, “the best is yet to come.”

The *sadhaka*, to judge from the writings of the Sahajiyans, at the moment of his or her experience of *aparasahaja*, *intuits* the “ultimate principle” of the Yogacharins, Vijnanavadins, and Tantric Buddhists, variously described as the *abhuti-parikalpa*, the *vijnapti-matrata*, the *nirvana-dhatu*, &c. S.B. Dasgupta, in both *Obscure Religious Cults*,



and the later *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, argued that Mahayana Buddhism, in its later manifestations, gravitated toward (or came full circle to) the Vedantic view of the Absolute and even, in some cases, posited “a Being - sometimes as the personal God, the Lord Supreme...the Vajra-sattva,” or unity of emptiness (*shunyata*) and manifestation. He even went so far as to say that there was no essential difference between the Yogachara conception of “God” and that of Vedanta.

We have seen how union of all dualities is the ultimate goal of the yogin. When both the transcendent and the phenomenal are united, the Vijnanavadins say that their totality is the *dharmadhatu*, the commingling of the absolute and the relative.

This is the *tathata*, or “suchness” of the *Lankavatara* and other *sutras*. Tadeusz Skorupski, in his essay on *tathata* in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, says that it “is held to exist in all beings and thus to undergo no changes either in its perfect or defiled state: its nature remains uncreated and eternal.” He might as well have been describing the Vedantic atman. To get “in touch” with our own *tathata* is to realize the Buddha in ourselves. It comes to the fore with what Skorupski calls the “inner realization that the true nature of existence does not manifest itself through dichotomous appearances: knower-known, subject-object,” &c. This, too, is the only legitimate goal of our Nath-Siddha *sadhana*. Dualities arise in the main because of the *abhuta-parikalpa* (false, or unreal imagination) which, according to the *Lankavatara-sutra*, causes us to:

Grasp things as twofold, like a reflection of oneself in a mirror or in water, or one's shadow by the light of the moon or in a house, or like hearing an echo. Thus, by grasping at their own false imagination they imagine things and non-things...and never attain tranquility.

(Quoted in Edward J. Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought*.) Thomas characterizes *tathata* as “absolute reality.”

The *yogacharins* and *vijnanavadins* who provided tantric Buddhism with its ontology broke with their *madhyamika* predecessors over this very issue: whether that consciousness by which phenomenal existence is fabricated may be said to be “real.” They anticipated a central theme in quantum theoretical speculation, that “the image of an object is produced by the consciousness itself, there is no external object independent of the consciousness.” (Hattori Masaaki, “Yogachara”, *Encyclopedia of Religion*.)

This is consensus reality, a false construct composed of the ego projections of all sentient beings at any given moment in space-time. But consensus reality is notoriously faulty; borrowing from the *Mahayanasamgraha*, Masaaki gives some marvelous examples of how tricky such perceptions can be.



Thus, he explains, one and the same thing often is “represented differently by beings in different states of existence; for instance, that which is perceived by a man as a stream of clean water is represented as a foaming river by an inhabitant of hell and as a stream of pus and filth by a *preta* [so-called “hungry ghost”]. This shows that an object represented in the consciousness is a product of mental construction.

Another cause of frustration and suffering is that level of subconscious mind called “storehouse” (or “receptacle”) consciousness - the *alaya-vijnana*. Think of a big, invisible bowl where the effects of both our good and evil acts are stored. The yogacharins spoke of these effects as a form of *energy*, which they characterized as *bijas*, or seeds, from which grow, as the term implies, future phenomenal existences. These may be prevented from origination by certain forms of meditation; in particular *shamatha-vipashana*. Lamarckian ontology, Jungian psychology, and quantum theory would all seem to support the Yogacharin doctrine of the *alaya-vijnana*, where the objective world manifests, based upon “projected” characteristics, racial memory, and some kind of self-organizing principle akin to the morphogenetics of Rupert Sheldrake.

Finally, in the concept of the *vijnapti-matrata*, we come full circle to the notion of a realm of “pure consciousness,” which the vajrayanists identify with the supreme deity, or Vajra-sattva. Dasgupta says that the Buddhist tantras conceived it “exactly in the manner of the Upanishadic Brahman...the Self in man...the ultimate substance behind the world of phenomena.” It is also Sahaja, the greatest *siddhi*.

Enough of this academic speculation, you, the reader, may be silently screaming to these pages. What about praxis? What about *sadhana*? Alas, I must lease such considerations to a later essay, recommending, for now, that you read the appropriate chapter in Agehananda Bharati's *The Tantric Tradition*.

I will adumbrate only the characteristics of the *experience* of the *aparasahaja*, which includes a sense of elation, tingling sensations on the surface of the skin, “shivers” running up and down the spine (like sneezing without the snot), and most important, I think, crying out loud for sheer joy, for is it not written:

My ecstasy is in yours. My joy is to see your joy. — AL, I:13.

Let me also provide at least one practical note, which deserves more detailed analysis by, say, the Cultus Cucurbitus. The combination of *cannabis* or one of its cognate forms, such as *ganja*, taken together with the African tree bark, *yohimbe*, in amounts of at least 1,000 mg., is a sure aid to realization of *aparasahaja*, assuming one has been properly prepared through the discipline and insight of *laya-yoga*.



Baboons*Mogg Morgan*

Sidling backwards
on hand and knee
sex a flag
enough to make
Arjuna
change his gender
like baboons we tumble
biting nape's of neck
cock swollen like fire
your sex red
beautiful pale buttocks
nestle seductively
in groin's crook
smooth skin strokes
fine hair where leg
and abdomen meet
wriggling,
my tip-tup finds a glide
wet with moisture
wet too with wanting
teats that hand like dumplings
lifted back
nipple nestling gently
tickling the palms of hands
my hand stroking you
stoking you with my sex
moving
through the groove
tickled
by mounds of hair



I am drawn inside
twist and rich saliva flows
from mouth to mouth
deeper we go
reaching for the secret key
fondling it lovingly
you grasp me within
my centre is in you
bodies floating everywhere
desire mounting
upwards from within
something bursting forth
pulsations coming
flesh with flesh
fluids merging
flesh without flesh
fluids merging
moments of pleasure
and we are again Baboons

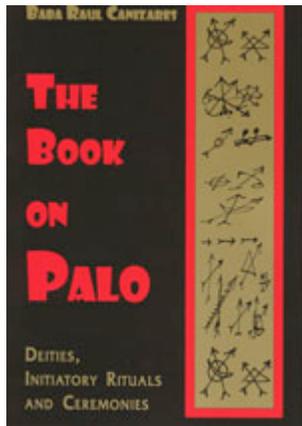


Reviews

The Book on Palo: The Wisdom of Don Demetrio, Baba Raul Canizares

(Original Publications, 2002, \$21.95)

Reviewed by Sven Davisson



Baba Raul Canizares received initiation into the mysteries of the Afro-Cuban spiritual practice known as Palo Monte while still a young boy living in Cuba. Canizares, whose palo name is Tata Camposanto Medianoche, received this empowerment from Demetrio Gomez (1874-1968) who lived in the city of Guanabacoa where for almost fifty years he led one of the most potent and influential Palo houses in Cuba.

Demetrio's student Paco kept his mentor's notebooks and Canizares was able to access these in preparing this work. He also had access to unpublished material by Andres Petit, founder of the Kimbisa faction of

Palo. Canizares has chosen an interesting and powerful method of writing creating this work. Half the book is written in the first-person and that personally referential I is the voice of Don Demetrio himself. Canizares states in his introduction, "it will be Demetrio's voice you will hear, channeled through mine."

This is one of the few books on the Palo tradition in English. I know from personal communications with the author, that this book was truly a labor of love—a project that he put a tremendous amount of energy into over the last few years of his life. The final product of his hard work is nothing less than *the* definitive book on Palo. He goes much farther than one would expect in a volume such as this detailing practices, providing complete mambos (chants), various plants & their uses, and sigils for the deities. He gives the reader a fascinating description of the making of a *nganga*—the ceremonial cauldron at the heart of the Palero's practice.

In addition to being a Palero and Santero, Canizares was a scholar. His earlier *Cuban Santeria* is already a classic in the field of Afro-Caribbean religious studies. Echoing a similar rationale as that given by the Dalai Lama when asked about revealing previous secret tantras to the general public, Canizares states that his reason for



publishing such a detailed book on a secret tradition is both to preserve it from being lost and to protect it from being corrupted by greed and sensationalism.

Canizares does not shy away from discussing openly aspects of the religion which will most likely be troubling to some readers. Most markedly among them is the topic of animal sacrifice—an important aspect of many of the African descended new world faiths. It should be noted that the ritual taking of animal life has a long and ancient connection with the practice of religion and is still an important part of several of the world's "big five" religions. The U.S. Supreme Court has even ruled on the constitutionality of animal sacrifice and religious practice in a landmark case involving a Santerian church in Florida. This said, Canizares approaches the use of animals in a manner that is both unapologetic and non-sensational.

There are many photographs included with the book, including images of Canizares involved in actual initiation ceremonies—"scratching." Many of the images stand alone as works of art-photography that are as evocative as they are explanatory. The images of the various *nganga* are really extraordinarily powerful.

Baba passed way in December of 2002 and this is his last book, published just months before his death. It stands alongside *Cuban Santeria: Walking with the Night* as one of his best works. *The Book on Palo* is an invaluable contribution to the study of American religion. It should be a part of the library of anyone interested in comparative religion—regardless of their own faith.

The Ninth Arch, Kenneth Grant

(Starfire Publishing, 2002. Available from Mandrake of Oxford)

Reviewed by Mary Hedger (*Mandrake Speaks*)

'Can you in good conscience recommend *The Ninth Arch* to someone who is only familiar with some of the early work of Grant? That is, is the new book comprehensible to a neophyte of Grant's work or should I resume investigation elsewhere in his canon, in the improbable event that copies can be found? I've read *AC and the Hidden God* and part of *The Magical Revival*.

Umm good question. I regard myself as a child of the first trilogy, Cults of the Shadow, Magical Revival and Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God. I never really expected the second trilogy to even appear - Nightside of Eden, Outside the Circles of Time and Hecate's Fountain; and I never even looked at the third trilogy, Outer Gateways, The Mauve Zone and now The Ninth Arch. So perhaps I am a bit of a guinea pig and give it a go. I was surprised how intriguing the Ninth Arch can be. I found it, to



use KG's own words 'a rush of mephitic air from the unsealed depths', a 'Kamsin blast.' truly something different in a word of publishing mediocrity.

'The Ninth Arch is an ancient Masonic concept relating to the legend of the three Grand Masters engaged upon the erection of King Solomon's Temples. After it was completed, the three deposited therein those things which were important to the craft, such as the arc of the covenant, a pot of manna, the rod of Aaron, the book of the law etc.' Inscribed about it was the lost or unutterable Word.' The purpose of Grant's book is to explain this mystery and reveal the word.

The heart of Grant's book is a 924 verse Book of the Spider, a mystical text channeled to Grants New-Isis Lodge in the 1950s. Around this sutra, Grant weaves almost six hundred pages of comment, mainly in the form of mini essays. It sounds an unpromising structure but it really works and is well suited to the lucid dreamers or to use Grant's parlance, the inhabitants of the mauve zone to whom this books is addressed. Having no acquaintance with Grant's earlier work might actually make this book even more evocative. There were some very obscure sections that would only really make sense if I totally entered into Grant's system, but there were many comments that seemed to throw light on almost any style of magick.

After all it is the books central thesis that something out there is trying to tell us something using a whole variety of mediums and modes of communication. Crowley, he tells us, 'with prophetic acumen [] presaged the massive interest in alien phenomena which erupted soon after his death and which was caused by Kenneth Arnold's 'flying saucer' sighting [in 1947]. Whatever one's attitude to such phenomena - positive, negative or indifferent - there is no just denial of the fact that the wave initiated an era of psychomythology unparalleled since man conceived the idea of the 'gods'. unless, therefore, we are to write off the entire 'myth' as an unprecedented mass delusion, we have to accept the fact that something approaching a seemingly new and inexplicable nature began slowly and insidiously to disturb the world in the year 1947.' (p xix)

Acting on the assumptions that 'Many a true word spoken in jest'; 'the 'ritualists of the New Isis Lodge utilized certain novels and stories as other magicians might use paintings or musical compositions to effect perichoresis and astral encounters' xxxvi. Apart from the usually occult litany, H P Lovecraft, Algernon Blackwood et al Grant primary source is Richard Marsh's novel The Beetle which contains the only published account known [to Grant] of the Children of Isis who emerge in the channelled text in rather startling form.

I haven't read Marsh's novel but guess that Grant's reworking of it is likely to be far more evocative. Really Grant's books are a new artform what I have in the past



called 'auto-romance'. I picked it up near the end of the day, not expecting a factual hit, although there are some fascinating facts here somewhere - but more as a collective grimoire. I take a little snort and am then primed to enter the mauve zone. Here's a little taster.

The oracle

31-2 below the tunnels of the spider hanging athwart the network of alleys choked in the mud, the sand of the Mokkatam hills.

The comment

The spider is here symbolic of the web of alleys that existed at the time Crowley received from Aiwass "The threefold book of the Law", not far distant from the Mokkatam hills. This verse sets the scene for a series of events concerning the Children of Isis, of whose activities a fragmentary account was given in fictional form by Richard March writing in the 1890s. It is assumed that he was oblivious of the actuality of the events he described. It may not be so easy to assume that he was not an indirect descendant of that Obed Marsh of who Lovecraft writes in *The Shadow over Innsmouth*. It is also not impossible that he was related to Dr. Phineas March Black, a great uncle of the present commentator. Details of Dr. Black's mysterious life are given in *Against the Light*, which contains much information relevant to this Book OKBISH. Note that the present verse constitutes verse Thirty-One of the Books as a whole.'

Kenneth Grant's numerology may be suspect, his historical sources unreliable, but his poetical intuition is strangely prescient. I may not want to be part of the only true order but I can't help admiring his eclecticism, his culture, his generosity towards other artists and writers. So this book is really a triumphal arch - the final act from a highly creative magician and writer who has done more than any other living adept to explicate Crowley's magical universe and to initiate us all into some very sinister mysteries.





The Cosmic Tribe Tarot, Steve Postman
(Destiny, 1998, \$32)

It is impossible to describe in words how wonderful and enchanting and innovative Steve Postman's tarot is, so I will begin straight off by giving the URL for Mr.

Postman's website. www.stevee.com Get yourself there and check the cards out for yourself! *The Cosmic Tribe Tarot* stands apart from the handful of other "postmodern" tarot decks that have come out in the past several years.

Each card shows an attention to artistic detail that is more often than not lacking in other thematic decks. Each card is a singular work of art, infused with beauty, light, fun and a spiritually charged eroticism. The ethereal beauty of the naked form dances through the various cards. This is not the body neutered by an "Golden Age" earthy naturalness; this is, instead, the postmodern body, equally sensual and sexual, sometimes comfortable, sometimes comforting, and sometimes aggressively threatening. This is the body of the magician who has recreated him or herself and reclaimed the Godhead. This is the technoshaman body: tattooed, pierced and in your face.

A quality of energy runs through the cards like lightning or electricity. Postman has developed his own meta-symbolism that plays throughout: eyes, lotuses, butterflies, fairies, serpents and stars. The Devil is an image of Pan dancing through the greenery, Death is Kali-ma dancing through flame a gigantic mouth gaping across the stomach, the Tower is a flaming tower of televisions. It is truly a testament to Mr. Postman's abilities that the digital manipulations that underlie all the cards never obscure the images. Each card possesses a unity and none look as if they were a mere collage. Also of note: the deck includes three different versions of the Lovers card: male+male, female+female and female+male.

The text of the accompanying book by Eric Ganther works very well with the deck. The writing style is playful and draws one into each card with a clear descriptive analysis and helpful divinatory meaning. Ganther manages to do this without becoming didactic or taking away from the imagery by heavy-handed over interpretation.



The Way of Mystery. Magick, Mysticism & Self-Transcendence, Nema
(Llewellyn Publications, 2003, \$15.95) Reviewed by Jan Fries (*Mandrake Speaks*)

In the early eighties, Kenneth Grant amazed the occult establishment by publishing a book (*Outside the Circles of Time*) that was based to a major extent on the visions and experiences of a hitherto unknown initiate called Sorror Andahadna, or more briefly, Nema. Nema's experiences provided a silver key and much needed counterweight to the better known current of Horus, her work being the pre-shadowing, but also the manifestation of the elusive and all-inclusive current of Maat. Nema was channeling Maat, the ancient Egyptian goddess of truth, balance and justice. All of these are subtle and sometimes elusive concepts that seemed a lot more difficult to understand than the more simple seeming formula of Horus, the falcon-headed god of will, force and focused activity. Many Thelemites who felt comfortable with the Horus current found it hard to comprehend Maat, who was always dancing around the focus of their awareness, visible and invisible at once, comprehensible by paradox and enigmatic to the point where reason gives way to laughter. Where the prophet of Horus, Aleister Crowley, offered a number of almost straightforward stratagems of yoga and ritual magick, Nema's manifestation of Maat seemed cryptic as it was so simple, refined and essentially self-focused. The two approaches to the magick of the Nu Aeon balanced, but only for a handful of dedicated researchers who developed their own methods of blending and manifesting the twinned approach in courageous subjectivity.

It was not until 1995 that a full book called *Maat Magick* appeared, a much needed work that offered a full program of experiences leading to self-initiation in a system that was guaranteed to destroy itself upon fulfillment. Nema's first book seemed a simple system of things that can be done, it's deep and artistic subtlety remained hidden to the more casual readers, and indeed to all who did not bother to do the exercises and find their own approach to Maat, Truth, in and through their own true will. Maat, however, was not to be confined to a single approach. Eight years later I am delighted to see that another manifestation of the current has appeared which balances the dynamic doing of the first volume with a more subtle approach.

The Way of Mystery, originally entitled *Wings of Rapture*, provides a counterweight to the first volume by offering initiation into the way of mystery, or mysticism, as you might call it.

What is mysticism? The concept may or may not appeal to you, depending on what you have learned to associate with this subject. Most people in modern magick seem to believe that mysticism means "doing without." The publisher, Llewellyn,



obviously subscribed to the popular and totally misleading idea that mysticism is something practiced by doddering elders who have given up on life and decided to transcend the world, the flesh and the devil, as they are not up to them any more. If you see the cover of the book, you will understand what I mean. Instead of making use of the brilliant and illuminating paintings of the author, the publisher decided to cater to the public opinion, and printed a picture of a monk who might have come from a cheese advertisement.

This is exactly the sort of mysticism which you will not find in Nema's brilliant book. Mysticism is not for senile recluses; *The Way of Mystery* is for people who are very much alive and enjoy it. This is a book of magick, discovery and self-exploration. It focuses on aspects of magick which are conveniently forgotten by the result-hungry and shows that mystery is the counterweight to magick. Where magick is the weaving of illusions (maya), mystery is the freedom to transcend them. To use a simple metaphor, we could propose that mystery means going up the Tree (or the spine, if you prefer Kundalini yoga), a process that means leaving the limitations and confines of everyday life, everyday consciousness and everyday belief in reality, in a process of continuous refinement and simplification. Mystery is very much being yourself, once you have come to understand how all-inclusive Self has ever been. Magick is coming down the Tree again, bringing change and transformed awareness into the world of phenomena. More simply, you have to get out before you can come back again. Most modern magickians desire to work change in this world, but unless they embrace mystery, there is little chance that they will get out far enough to come back again with a laugh, a word, and a fire in their eyes that will set the world aflame. Where medieval mystics practiced abasement and denial to the point of stupidity, Nema's *Way of Mystery* means adventure, rapture and the wild joy that comes from meeting the Forgotten Ones, unfolding Self in its totality and doing will in ways that are far beyond Crowley's modest achievements. This is a very practical book. Its center is You, and as you read, do and discover, you will find that there can be no magick without mystery, and no mystery without magick, as the twinned forces shape the flow of evolution. For the beginner, *The Way of Mystery* offers a system of excellent and useful practices that work in shaping awareness and identity to transform the personality into a stream-lined vehicle of True Will. The experienced mage will find some of the practices familiar, and be delighted to discover the depth and subtlety that is woven into the seeming simplicity. Nema is a very methodical and well-organized philosopher, behind each of her lines you can discern a lifetime of courageous self-exploration that is well worth contemplating in depth. For the advanced adept, *The Way of Mystery* is one of those rare and priceless works that can be read again and again



without coming to an end of its many levels of meaning. This is a book to explore, embrace and enjoy through a lifetime of self-evolution.

The Edge of Certainty: Dilemmas on the Buddhist Path, Peter Fanner.
(Red Wheel/Weiser, 2002. \$16.95) reviewed by Prem Arun

I was very unsuspecting when I picked up this deceptively slim volume (a scant 111 pages not include notes and index). Peter Fenner has written a very thought provoking book. As one progresses through the book, one finds oneself in a puzzle-box. The dilemma that Fenner is primarily concerned with is the dichotomy between orthodox and non-orthodox Buddhist cosmology—the question rather practice produces enlightenment or if enlightenment is already present and therefore not producible. The author provides a good introduction to the major Buddhist traditions—enough of an intro to set up his juxtaposition of their diverse positions on the question of attainment and practice. He begins the work with a straight-forward introduction to the Four Noble Truths. After laying this groundwork, he moves through the various Buddhist traditions: Theravada, Mahayana, Tantra, Zen, Dzogchen and Mahamudra.

One does feel two-thirds of the way through the book that you're reading a long introduction that, given the slender book, won't give you much once you arrive. Then all of a sudden, Fenner begins breaking down the various positions, throwing one against another. With each page he successfully pulls the ground he just so nicely filled in on the previous page out from under you. As one nears the conclusion (if you can call it that), you realize that the author is playing a very deliberate mind-game with his readers. At this point you either smile and continue where he might lead, or put the book down with annoyance or boredom and return to the mat.

Looking back, the book itself is constructed as a practice. If one makes it to the end, the reader should come away with a shift in their thinking—even if it is simply disrupted enough to not be capable of “thinking” through the dilemmas at all. The book is described as being about dilemmas of the Buddhist Path and the entire context of its philosophical discussion is firmly rooted in the breadth of the Buddhist schools. Of particular note, is his nutshell sketch of Nagarjuna's masterwork the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*.

The Edge of Certainty is, however, a work that would prove fascinating to a much larger set of spiritual seekers. He provides enough of the foundation to set up his



discussions, without the necessity, on the part of the reader, to bring a large amount of pre-knowledge to the table.

Tankhem: meditations on tantrik and Egyptian magick and the mysteries of Seth, the great dragon, Mogg Morgan

(Mandrake of Oxford, 2003, e-book, or £5 or \$8.00)

Reviewed by Z. A. Sibsi al Vauteth

I purchased a copy of the first edition of Mogg Morgan's *Sexual Magick* over a decade ago in a small bookshop in Oxford. To this day, I vividly remember the shop and the little bridge over which I had to walk to reach that particular street. Without exaggeration, Morgan's earlier book *Sexual Magick* defined a significant portion of my earlier spiritual life. His innovative and, dare I say, groundbreaking theories set me on a course which I still walk today. This current book *Tankhem* is a superb practical follow-up to *Sexual Magick* building on the theories and hypotheses which he began in the previous work. He draws a tremendous amount of varied, but surprising cohesive, material into this book. It is above all else a explication of a particularly interesting subset of ancient Egyptian mythology set in the midst of a very practical, modern construst. He calls this magickal cosmology "Setanism" as it focuses on the Egyptian god Set (or Seth), a member of one of the earliest divine families (Abydos) of the Egyptian pantheon.

Morgan addresses some touchy areas including a pointed analysis of both LaVey's Church of Satan and it's more esoteric offshoot the Temple of Set. He asks pointed questions about the mythic basis of thelema (the religion founded by Aleister Crowley soon after the turn of the last century). Morgan ties in long explications of tantra vis a vis Egyptian magick, modern sexual magick, the Erotic Landscape, the visionary experiments of W.B. Yeats and more.

The heart of the work is a detailed and systematic meditative exploration of the temple built by Seti I at Abydos. His walk-through description is as much a guided magickal exercise as it is a descriptive analysis of the temple and its metaphysical significance. The most controversial aspect of the work is his discussions of thelema and its relation to Setian metaphysics. He proposes that Awaiss is equitable to Set (a notion supported by Crowley's own writings) and that Liber Samech is in fact an invocation of Set. For Morgan, an aeon presided over by Horus alone with be untenable. He instead proposes a thelemic cosmology with a joint rule of Horus and Set—something that is



very much supported in the early Egyptian myths, where the pharaoh ruled by “the Horus and the Set.”

Even as a self-described “amateur Egyptologist” Morgan does a superb job with this both difficult and arcane material. I highly recommend this work and hope that it gets a wider distribution within (and without) the greater magickal community. This edition is described as a beta version, but I would not wait for a final edition before purchasing it. The book is available as a PDF from Mandrake of Oxford.

Ayurveda: The Mantra of Niramaya

Interactive CD-Rom on the ancient system of Indian Medicine.

(Recommended price 20 Euros. Available from Mandrake of Oxford.)

This is quite a useful introduction to the Ayurvedic medical system covering all possible aspects of interest - history, personalities, pharmacology, philosophy, basic principles and therapies. I found it a relatively trustworthy and informative guide to material that can so often be the field of 'nationalistic' history and mythmaking. Illustrated with beautiful modern renditions of traditional images. But it is just that - introductory - the section on pharmacology, for example listed and illustrated a great many interesting medicaments but I would have liked a little more detail. I really appreciated the biographies of several seminal medics. On the whole, if you like the medium of CD ROM, which apparently many students at Gujerat's Ayurvedic University do, then this product is pretty good. It could perhaps do with a better index and perhaps the interactive aspect could allow some kind of self analysis of body types etc. But otherwise recommended. *-mm*



new & notable**America IV: The Man Comes Around**, Johnny Cash

(America, 2002)

Thankfully, as the old saying goes, reports of his death were greatly exaggerated. But who would have thought that two years into the next century one would have a new Cash album. His voice is not that of “Ring of Fire” or even “Fulson Prison Blues,” but this is still the Man In Black—if anything more dark and brooding than ever. This is Cash the story-teller, now a voice scratched and broken with life, age and illness. It is precisely this wizened, flawed sound that lends dramatic poignancy to the songs on this album. Cash continues his innovative and unexpected choice of songs and collaborators, begun with volume one of this series *American Recordings* (1994). In addition to his own songs which include the title track and an updated “Give My Love to Rose,” he’s recorded a very surprising selection of material: Trent Reznor’s “Hurt,” Paul Simon’s “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” Sting’s “I Hung My Head,” Depeche Mode’s “Personal Jesus,” Lennon and McCartney’s “In My Life” as well as classics like “First Time Ever I Saw Your Face,” “Danny Boy” and Hank Williams “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry.” Don Henley joins Cash to sing on Henley’s “Deperado.” Nick Cave duets on “I’m So Lonesome” and June and Rose sing along on “We’ll Meet Again.” Despite the eclectic selection of music and collaborators, this album comes together as a whole each song deftly blending to the next. Cash takes each of the diverse pieces and makes them uniquely his own, so that one can easily forget that they are the same number performed by the Beatles, Simon and Gardunkel or Sting. We can be thankful that the world never righted itself enough to allow Cash to put on that suit of white.

Cruelty Without Beauty, Soft Cell

(Cooking Vinyl, 2002)

2002 also saw a new album from Soft Cell—the first original studio release in 18 years. The synth-pop duo remembered best for their cover of the northern soul ballad “Tainted Love” and “Memorabilia” (widely considered to be the prototypic techno album) has returned with a fresh and innovative album. This is not surprising, since in the almost two decade hiatus singer Marc Almond and partner Dave Ball have been busy. Almond has had a varied career spanning more than 20 albums, four record companies and a repertoire including songs about masturbation, Judy Garland and English translations of



Jacques Brel and Charles Aznavour. Ball's collaboration *The Grid* is still a powerful, behind-the-scenes influence on modern dance and techno. Unlike many of their compatriots riding the eighties "vintage" revival, Ball and Almond have produced a new album of fresh material, rather than simply attempting to replicate a sound that may have made the famous but is now dated and derivative. Ball's production and arrangement stands out from the current crop of formulaic pop, slower and without the requisite, repetitive, canned backbeat. Almond allows his wit and a dash of camp to come through in his lyrics which he accomplishes their delivery with the agility of comfortable music veteran. Almond sings in "Last Chance" *In a city lost in time/Somewhere sordid and sublime/We met over a gin and lime/One rainy evening/Survivors clinging to the mast*. The familiar characters of vintage Soft Cell are all present, the prostitute, the fallen star, the sex-addict, the down-and-out and morally bankrupt, just now they have reached middle age. "In Whatever It Takes" Almond croons, *I tried meditation/Crystal therapy/Colonic irrigation/Didn't agree with me/Road rage and new age/Just tricks of the mind/The onset of middle age/Is all that I find*.

Yoga: Science of the Soul, Osho.

(St. Martin's, 2002. \$11.95)

This work is actually a selection from Osho's multi-volume discourse series on the yoga sutras of Patanjali *Yoga: The Alpha and Omega*. The series has been out of print for some time and the republication of Osho's insights on yoga, even in selected form, is a welcome return.

The Big Bang, the Buddha, and the Baby Boom: The Spiritual Experiments of My Generation, Wes "Scoop" Nisker

(HaperSanFrancisco, April 2003, Cloth, \$24.95)

The author of *Crazy Wisdom* chronicles his wide-ranging search for spiritual bliss—a long, strange trip that takes him from Bob Dylan to Ram Dass and all the points in between.

Doomed Megalopolis DVD

(ADV Films, \$29.95)

Finally Hiroshi Aramata's classic supernatural anime is available on DVD. This two DVD set includes all four episodes of this epic: *The Haunting of Tokyo*, *The Fall of Tokyo*, *The Gods of Tokyo* and *The Battle for Tokyo*. In his drive to conquer Tokyo, the powerful sorcerer Kato awakens Masakato, the city's guardian. Kato's diabolical plan



which involves the corruption of an unsuspecting, innocent woman, results in the near destruction of the entire city. A small band of unlikely heroes are, of course, the only thing that stand between Kato and the realization of his plans. Doomed Megalopolis is a dark and complex saga of good versus evil, depravity and redemption. Chilling, mysterious and miraculous.

Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession, I.M. Lewis
(Routledge, March 2003, \$22.95)

States of spirit possession, in which believers feel themselves to be “possessed” by the deity and raised to a new plane of existence, are found in almost all known religions. From Dionysiac cults to Haitian voodoo, Christian and Sufi mysticism to shamanic ritual, the rapture and frenzy of ecstatic experience forms an iconic expression of faith in all its devastating power and unpredictability. Third edition, originally printed 1971.

Samurai Zen: The Warrior Koans, Trevor Leggett
(Routledge, 2003, \$14.95)

For centuries, the Zen Buddhist masters used koans—riddles that test the inadequacy of logic—to train samurai in the art of patience, precision, and practicality, hallmarks of Asia’s supreme warriors. Zen expert Trevor Leggett gathers 100 of these medieval Japanese interviews rescued from secret temples of the 13th century. These early koans are unusually pure and vivid. For unscholarly warriors, the masters created instant koans from incidents of everyday life—a broken teacup, a water jar, a cloth. The pupils could reply with a poem, brush strokes, a song or a line from the No drama. The resulting koans are rich in simple, powerful images that meld the serenity of Zen with the mental steel of the samurai warrior.

Philosophy and Religion: From Plato to Postmodernism, Max Charlesworth
(OneWorld, Oct. 2002, \$19.95)

From the Greek philosophers to the postmodern theories of Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty, this authoritative survey encompasses over two thousand years of interaction between philosophical and religious thought. Exploring the various ways in which philosophy can relate to the monotheistic religions, Charlesworth follows a chronological pattern, considering both major and lesser known philosophers.

Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, J.D. Turner
(Peeters, Belgium, 2002, 80 Euros)



No less than eleven of the fifty-three treatises of the Nag Hammadi Library fit the designation ‘Sethian Gnostic.’ They reveal the existence of a hitherto unrecognized religious competitor of early Christianity. With its own roots in second temple Judaism and in various first and second century sectarian baptismal movements, Sethian Gnosticism is now the earliest form of Gnosticism for which we possess a great deal of textual evidence. Like the Christian school of Valentinus (120-160 CE) and his followers—which it seems to antedate—Sethianism not only allied itself with the early Christian movement, but was also vitally indebted to the (Middle) Platonism of the first three centuries, even to the point that several of its heological treatises became the subject of scrutiny in Plotinus’ third century Roman seminars.

Accordingly, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition is divided into five sections: an introductory discussion of the scholarly attempts to characterize the relation of Gnosticism and Platonism, followed by three main sections: Part One, an analysis and history of Sethian literature, mythology, and ritual practice in its pre-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian phases; Part Two, a survey of the development of Platonic metaphysics from Plato to Theodore of Asine; and Part Three, an extensive analysis of the four Platonizing Sethian treatises and their implication for the history and development of Middle and Neoplatonic metaphysics. The final section offers a concluding overview of the Sethian religion.

The Ethiopian Jewish Exodus: Narratives of the Migrational Journey to Isreal, 1977-1985, Gadi BenEzer

(Routledge, 2002, Cloth, \$95.00)

Between 1977 and 1985, some 20,000 Ethiopian Jews left their homes in Ethiopia and embarked on a secret and highly traumatic exodus to Israel. Due to various political circumstances they had to leave their homes in haste, go a long way on foot through unknown country, and stay for a period of one or two years in refugee camps, until they were brought to Israel. The difficult condition of the journey included racial tensions, attacks of bandits, night travel over mountains, incarceration, illness and death. A fifth group did not survive the journey.

Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination, Conrad Ostwalt

(Trinity Press, 2003, \$27.00)

In this provocative volume, Conrad Ostwalt challenges assumptions and presents fresh ideas about the relationship between religion and secular culture. Organized religion may no longer dominate culture, but predictions of its demise in a secularized society—from



the Enlightenment to the “secular city” of the 1960’s—have not been borne out, he says. However, religious institutions face significant new challenges because of the transitions they have made in a world where they do not set the agenda.

Poems of Hanshan, Translated by Peter Hobson

(Altamira Press, 2003, \$19.95)

Hanshan, which means Cold Mountain, was the pseudonym adopted by an unknown poet who lived in China as a hermit twelve hundred years ago. The poems collected under his name have had an immense impact worldwide, especially among Zen Buddhists, and have been translated into many languages. Peter Hobson’s translation of more than a hundred of the poems, almost all of which are published for the first time in this volume, brings those qualities of timelessness, poetic diction and engaging rhythm that do justice to the concepts and language of the original.

Religion & Postmodernism 4: Transcendence and Beyond

(Conference, Villanova University, PA, 18-20 Sept. 2003, \$95, Students \$50)

The fourth international colloquium of philosophers will address the relevance of the concept of transcendence today. Is the post-modern age also an age of post-transcendence? Speakers include: Jean-Luc Marion (Sorbonne), Gianni Vattimo (University of Turin), Richard Kearney (Boston College), Catherine Keller (Drew), Fergus Kerr, O.P. (Edinburgh University and Blackfriars, Oxford), Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza (Harvard Divinity School). For more information and on-line registration: www.villanova.edu/ReligionAndPostmodernism





Spirit Guide

Sven Davisson

My spirit guide came to me in a dream.
Not as before, in the acid dripping night
Meditating at water's edge beneath stone bridge.
Not in the form of the cross-legged old monk,
Black silhouetted in the candle light.
No, this time he came as a beautiful young man
Nervous college age queer
23, just a year out of school, he later said
pale slight dark brown hair sideburns
plaid cotton shirt t-shirt jeans
thick-soled black shoes.
he appeared in a bar



eyes meeting accidentally
breath catching in recognition
After several attempts,
I said hello—as he knew I would.
We went to a table
introduced ourselves
I finished my beer
He bought a second round
Because he was nervous.
Another beer for me
A double vodka neat for himself.
We continued on
Through the awkward obligatory
praising of first meetings.
Strange light talk
Introducing the necessities
Like people who meet in a bar.
What is your will, when all you want
is to fuck your Guardian Angel?



Photographs by DJ Jefferson Hobbes



Notes

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“The World Is Imperfect, And So Are We” appeared in *Viha Connection* XV(2).
[oshoviha.org]

“Part of this Infinite Love” appeared in *Viha Connection* XV(1). [oshoviha.org]

“The Master’s Call” is excerpted from Laxmi’s autobiography *Journey of the Heart*.
[oshoworld.com]

“Why I Loved the Ranch” appeared in *Osho Pulse* #1.
[http://www.globalserve.net/~sarlo/]

“More German than the Germans” appeared in *Viha Connection* XV(5). [oshoviha.org]

“Not A Cloud But the Sky” appeared in *Osho Pulse* #2.
[http://www.globalserve.net/~sarlo/]

“Close Encounter” appeared in *Osho Pulse* #4. [http://www.globalserve.net/~sarlo/]

“Interview with the 16th Karmapa” is from the book *Allah to Zen*.
[meditate-celebrate.com]

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“Babalu” appeared in a slightly different form in *The New Aeon* 2(1).

“The Meaning of Prem” appeared in a slightly different form in *The New Aeon* 2(1),
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