

Inclusivity

Most of my Hinduism research has been done independently though I've also studied it at three universities including a degree project on the notion of the self in Western and Hindu thought; other subjects formally studied are Western philosophy, art music, international affairs and education and I've taught Western cultures, music and English courses at several universities. Academia with its exclusively intellectual and paradigmatic rather than experience based terms of justification however is opposed to Hinduism's concern for intuition and direct insight from more holistic and interconnected understanding.

My interest in Hinduism and Indian philosophy dates from March 1989 when I was nineteen and looking to explain psychological states and behaviour, several years later doing a course on *advaita Vedanta* or the dominant Indian monistic philosophy and coming to see that my efforts were equivalent. People in an established tradition over thousands of years had the same perspectives on how the mind with its intellect to intuition relationship works but in much greater detail.

I entered India independently fifteen times between 1997 and 2019 usually for several weeks or months each and visited most of the states while also travelling in most other south and southeast Asian countries and a hundred in the major world regions. I've written widely on Hindu or *Vedic* philosophy and its application to areas in the humanities while the Hindu religion, mythology and wider culture are of secondary if vital interest; I've also done a twice daily Hindu meditation since 1994 and been a practicing Hindu and maintained personal shrines since 2008.

Hinduism's purpose is to support coordination of mind and hence personal development and understanding across life. It looks to subjective experience and independent thought where scripture is of value but only a guide and provides no belief system or reified behavioural prescriptions. It's not a religion in the *Abrahamic* sense but accepts the spiritual views and practices of all other religions in as far as they're relatable to Hindu insight; Hinduism is the creation of one's own vision or path to self-realization as the basis of reality or *Brahman* without adherence to given principles or intellectual theorizing abstracted from experience.

Truth has transcendental reference rather than only the relative relations of internally consistent but unsteady conceptual schemes as in Western thought and religion; Indian culture with its subjective but universalizable philosophical tradition is a totally secure bedrock with Hindus in possession of extraordinary assurance and certitude. It's an experience of unmatched richness and intoxication for the westerner with contrasting yet completely confident norms and values and many thought provoking if not life-changing observations. Human experience and truth is intellect, relativity and humanity united with intuition, absolute and God; philosophy becomes wisdom and fulfilment and indeed without direct personal insight there is no real understanding and only endlessly revised sky castle theorizing as in many areas of both Western social and natural sciences.

Hinduism is *sanatana dharma* or *eternal law* while both the words *Hindu* and *India* derive from *Sindhu*, the ancient *Sanskrit* word for the Indus River, now largely in Pakistan. Of the major religions with around a billion adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Taoism-Shenism or Chinese folk religion, Hinduism is the least understood in the West partly as it's focused in one country but largely as its thought is alien to Western paradigms of distinct principle, rationalizing and dogma.

Modern physics has failed to define the unified field or fundamental plane of existence in foregrounded intellectual terms while its overarching quantum theory shows that reality has fundamental relations with subjective consciousness and irrationality. Western philosophy's central epistemological attempt across four centuries to find propositional grounds to knowledge or a knowledge of knowledge has likewise failed.

Intellectual theories only approximate reality because truth is non-conceptual, hidden beneath outward rationality and propositions' infinite regressions of justifying presuppositions; mechanistic views indeed ended with the 18th century Enlightenment movement. The intuition is only paralleled by the intellect with reality having a core transcendent or spiritual dimension beyond the rationally perspicuous that grounds truth in the major branches of experience of reasoning, ethics and aesthetics, as many major Western philosophers have understood.

Hinduism is massively monistic in reality having the single substrate of consciousness or *Brahman* with all gods, with small *gs*, and all immateriality and materiality as expressions of it. *Brahman* is the unified field or theory of everything while Hinduism is actively compatible with science and there's much science in the *Veda*, the ancient body of Hindu thought looking at humanity's relation with the divine. Moreover with the final reality of *Brahman* lying beyond the gods Hinduism encompasses atheism while life as consciousness is then not only God but greater than God.

About 95% of Hindus are in India, comprising 80% of the population, while Nepal and Bali in Indonesia have similar majorities and with Mauritius at 50% and Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago and Fiji around 25%; other countries have small minorities with all Hindus outside India totalling 50 million while Hindus make up about 15% of world population. The other 20% in India comprise roughly 15% or 190 million Muslims, 2% or 28 million Christians, 2% or 28 million Sikhs, 1% or 8 million Buddhists, 0.5% or 4 million Jains, and about 3% or 30 million unspecified.

Hindu worship is based on ritual *puja* offerings to the gods mostly carried out personally at shrines in homes or businesses with visits to temples, for prayer or *pujas* there by *Brahmins* from the priest *caste*, or for festival days, being secondary and done at leisure; everything is optional without rules, with a minimum of intermediaries and only done as best one can. *Pujas* return the devotee's attention back to themselves for the reassessment and achievement of life goals; personal shrines and street shrines are also used in Buddhism, Shenism and sometimes *Abrahamic* religions as redeployed in Asian terms.

Hinduism looks to self-realization and life in fulfilment and without error through unity with one's divine *self* via enlivening the mind's transcendent or intuitive rather than intellectual basis. It has no central organization or hierarchy of control and instead is based on independent spiritual expression. There are many sects and guru master to student lineages but one's personal insight is superior to any authority above- textual comprehension must be student-led with no blind belief. Hinduism and its culture is self-sustaining with the average Hindu having a seemingly subtle understanding of God.

There are many gods with different characteristics serving different needs at different times and in reflection of there being many legitimate paths towards a deeper or spiritual understanding of life and truth- a mountain has one singular peak but many paths to it. *Dharma* or righteousness is the difference in path and right action or duty for different people in different circumstances as leading to the same understanding, wisdom or self-realization; the context and subject dependence of personal development is respected regardless of how different one's own path is.

The other Indian *dharmic* religions of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism all have small numbers in India today. The *dharmics* don't proselytize while Hinduism sees all other religions at least in terms of their core values as already aspects of itself; there is no conflict with other spiritual views unless they provide worldly conflict, which the *Abrahamic* religions with their fixed principles and dogmatic insistence do.

The blind or blindfolded men and the elephant is a metaphor for the unity underlying the major religions where despite contrasting beliefs and practices all look to one God and see personal development as alignment with

values transcending the material world. The men try to understand what the object is before them only by touching it, getting different ideas from different parts while missing the whole- one takes the leg to mean it's like a tree, another the hide like a sheet, the ear like a fan, the trunk like a snake, the tail like a rope.

Once the blindfolds are off however it's seen that there is just a unitary elephant with any number of aspects; it's also men here rather than women who get confused, feminine psychology being more divinely aligned. Moreover *Mount Kailash* as home of the major god *Shiva* and important pilgrimage site is in Tibet over the Himalayan border from Uttarakhand State and exemplifies the confounding of systematic containment and boundaries as in Apollonian Western culture; it also represents the head of *Shiva's* phallus with sexual unity as spiritual unity being central to Hinduism.

In the earliest text the *Rigveda* 1.164.46 famously says that the wise speak of what is one in many ways; polyvalence and interconnection pertain to an understanding beyond immediate experience. All paths and all gods lead to God, as *Krishna* also details in the central text of the *Bhagavad Gita*, in contrast to *Abrahamic* insistence on the single fixed paths of their principle based books of the *Bible* and *Koran* that must belligerently compete with all others; they also have single saviour figures, simplistic and crude commandments, and claims that modernity exposes as bizarre. When truth is couched in reified ideologies and perimeter practices the core message of how to live life is distorted and lost; truth may be approximated by the determinate propositions of *Abrahamic* Apollonia but doesn't consist in them.

In Hinduism the atheist path has the same legitimacy through questions asked that give the same understanding; *Brahman* as including all things includes all things that are not and hence the non-existence that atheism and Buddhism address. Indeed the whole idea of being a Hindu or not is somewhat alien to Hinduism while any formalized conversion to Hinduism would mean you're not Hindu as understanding and devotion can only come from the heart, there being no higher authority to sanction it. Otherwise people are encouraged to find fulfilment instead through their own spiritual traditions.

Nonetheless there can be an initiation *puja* called a *diksha* to mark the start of more spiritual attention in life or for receipt of spiritual practice or a mantra from a guru, and I had one when I began meditation followed by a couple more. There's also a traditional view however of Hinduism only being properly practiced in India and by indigenous Indians because it epitomizes the culture and indeed any visit to India is a spiritual event.

The fourteen *gopurams* or entrance towers of the great *Meenakshi Amman Temple* in Tamil Nadu are typical of *Dravidian* or South Indian style in being covered in gods, goddesses, demons and mortals. There are about 1500 on each tower providing a colossal statement of spiritual inclusivity, praising yet embedding all possible gods in *Brahman*; all gods are welcome as paths to the divine beyond.

There are an infinite number of possible aspects or manifestations of God or *Brahman*, and there is no impudently telling God how that manifestation should be constrained; God is abstract and not defined by concrete words and concepts in a particular holy book. *Brahman* is *nirguna* or without attributes while the deities and everything else are *saguna* or with attributes; *Brahman* nonetheless contains and underlies relativity and multiplicity.

Hindu gods also then have endless incarnations or *avatars*, forms of these, combinations with other gods, versions of their myths, and any number of names- the *Vishnu Sahasranama* scripture for example lists a thousand names of the major god *Vishnu*. The *Veda* speaks of 330 million gods and moreover the 700 000 Indian villages typically have their own deity while new ones can be created in response to evolving human needs and aspirations, all having transcendent reference in *Brahman*.

Hindu sects are actively diversified with rich philosophies and art developed over centuries and millennia along with a wide array of festivals yet everything is compatible. Truth is intellectually unforegroundable and only subject to lateral indication and hence Hinduism particularly is concerned with transcending outward spiritual differences and dualities; the *dharmic* religions represent a powerful force for world peace.

All personal gods are combined into God or the Godhead with a capital *G* or *Ishvara*, and beyond this is impersonal *Brahman* as combining all levels of relativity within the absolute; some sects however see *Ishvara* as consisting in an individual god. The one God or *Brahman* of the monotheistic religions must be the same God because only things that are more than one can have characteristics to distinguish them from each other; a singularity is necessarily the featureless absolute and the Gods of the *Bible*, *Koran* and *Vedas* are identical regardless of framing.

Christianity's one or three gods for instance are happily added to the temple tower ledges without a stir-infinity is embraced so that anyone's gods fit in the acknowledgement of a transcendent truth beyond them, unlike the reverse in churches or mosques and their blind hatred. Experientially also the sense of stillness within oneself in the presence of different idols is the same each time.

Often Hindus and Buddhists praying and prostrating at temples don't even know who the deities before them are as it hardly matters with there being only one God. Instead of *Abrahamic* lists of conceptual mandates with their confused exceptions to insist on and compete with other lists, Hinduism is concerned with that which is aware of any concepts and thinks about such issues.

Hindus choose the god or gods and perspectives and practices to focus on, and if necessary the sect to belong to, depending on their disposition and circumstances. The main three sects are *Vaishnavism* concerned with *Vishnu* gods, *Shaivism* with *Shiva* gods, and *Shaktism* with goddesses or *devis* as particularly associated with *Shiva's* wife *Parvati*; sects overlap without mutual exclusivity but most Hindus are independent and don't belong to one. Imagery in Hindu shops is likewise readily and commonsensically inclusive while a Christian shop by contrast would only condemn the thought of including elephant-headed multi-armed *Ganesh* statues next to its crucifixes, as also referencing the blind men and the elephant metaphor.

Hinduism situates all spiritual viewpoints without confrontation under a reference only to intuitive, non-propositional insights about the nature of the mind, reality and effectiveness in life. Hence it's *pantheistic* and *panentheistic* in *Brahman* being the hidden foundation of all physical as well as mental reality while also being transcendent to it. Then it's *polytheistic* in having many gods, *trinitarian* in having three principle ones, *monotheistic* in all being expressions of one God, and *atheistic* in not God being the highest reality.

It's also *henotheistic* and *monolatrous* in having devotion to one god while accepting the existence of others as either equals or not. It's *deistic* in God as not intervening in the world but also *theistic* in that the divine and spirit in us can be enlivened to intervene both directly and subtly, God and us being the same background consciousness; God or *Brahman* doesn't break the laws of physics and by contrast it is the laws of physics. Finally Hinduism is *theosophical* in the view that God and scripture must be verified from personal thought and experience; the *Veda* is the light of the world lit or discovered only by humanity.

All categories being included and dissolved in *Brahman* means antagonism, fundamentalism and heresy are almost impossible- the concern is for endless reinterpretation and endless gods that help to connect with truth beyond. Moreover Indian culture has a deeper peace than any other, dissolving stress and tension in thought rather than it being limited to finding reconciling reference only to other thought in the relative mind; the culture's assurance, smoothness and holistic reference provide for the attention's untroubled return to itself before getting lost.

Intellectual activity as relational thought is coordinated via the intuition with truth or the *self* beneath. Whereas *Veda* means knowledge of unity or self-realization *yoga* is its practice or path Hindus may then choose one of the three main *yogas* of action, devotion or knowledge, alongside their gods and sects. *Karma yoga* is active regular life always with concern for righteous rather than only ends-based action, *bhakti yoga* is practices of worship and devotion to a deity, and *jnana yoga* is intellectual understanding of the *Veda*; *raja yoga* is a *bhakti* path of greater reclusion, asceticism and meditation. Again the paths have no mutual exclusivity; an advanced male practitioner of *yoga* is a *yogi* while a female is a *yogini*. *Hatha yoga* popularized and developed in the West from the 19th century emphasizes physical posture and exercise.

Christianity as based on the teachings of *Jesus Christ* in Israel in the early 1st century has a following in India concentrated in the southwest and northeast; tradition holds that *Saint Thomas* one of *Christ's* apostles or original twelve followers travelled to Kerala in 52ce. When the Portuguese arrived in Goa two states north in the colonial period they disagreed with the Christian practices already there as inauthentic yet Christianity had reached India three centuries before the Roman Empire legalized it in 313 and made it the official religion in 380; *Se Cathedral* is a large 17th century Portuguese church in Goa.

The Portuguese also began the *San Tome Basilica* in Chennai on the opposite coast in Tamil Nadu in the 16th century and it was rebuilt in 1893 by the British as one of the largest Asian cathedrals; it's claimed to be built on *Thomas's* grave and is an important Christian pilgrimage site. Along with *Thomas* in India there are theories of *Jesus* being in India during his unaccounted for years between ages twelve to thirty to gain spiritual instruction, possibly also returning there after surviving a crucifixion and buried in Srinagar in Kashmir- there are numerous parallels between Christian and Hindu and Buddhist thought.

Christianity and Islam trace their origins to the *Old Testament* in the *Bible* and *Abraham* near its start and are in conflict with all other religions, as well as various forms of themselves, as truth is taken to be reducible to fixed and hence conflicting narratives, doctrines and prescriptions. Truth is intuitive for subjective insight not conceptual for proselytization and trouble.

Adherents are guided by suspicious third party authority saying that only they should be listened to while personal development and unity with God are found exclusively via *Christ* or *Mohammed*. Such specificity and articulation issues from and encapsulates the wider Apollonian West's prioritization of intellectual and rational or conceptual thought whereas *dharmic* religion reflects Indic intuitive and holistic culture.

The *dharmic* religions originating in India by contrast are pacifist due to truth and righteousness taken as abstract, formless and different for different people on different paths back to unity with *Brahman*. Union with the divine can't take place by proxy so those with the capacity for it become it themselves not defer to it in an organizational hierarchy; Hinduism isn't an organized religion and only assists personal enquiry. It has no founder, no prophets, no overall leaders, no regulating institutions, no historical events to accept, no single theological and no ethical system; it also has no identifying clothes while for much of its history it even had no name to demark and separate it off from other religions.

Whereas Hinduism is monotheistic Christianity struggles not to be polytheistic with its *god the Father*, *god the Son* and *god the Holy Spirit* and an empty argument that the human mind can't understand how one God can also be three. It has further spiritual entities including *arch angels*, *angels*, *apostles*, *Virgin Mary*, *saints*, *regular souls*, *cherubs* and *seraphs* plus *fallen angels* and *devil* yet all not regarded as versions of the same thing. Moreover at the *Catholic* confirmation ceremony a personal saint to pray to is chosen all as in Hindu henotheism.

Then Christianity and Islam along with Buddhism are also materially renunciant with *Jesus* even renouncing his life while Hinduism only renounces what you're not and embraces material life and the senses because the

absolute also inheres in the relative world and its experience. It's only that the mind or attention isn't to be lost to the senses and instead keeps a reference to its *self* and its stillness for an unaffected relation with life- all glories both divine and worldly are due to humanity while most great Hindu gurus have been householders rather than recluses, following *karma* rather than *bhakti yoga*.

Mohammed founded Islam in 7th century Saudi Arabia and as a result of Muslim raids, invasions and rulers from the eleventh to seventeenth centuries an eighth of India's population are Muslim, giving India one of the largest Muslim populations of any country even after the 1947 partition into Islamic Pakistan and Bangladesh. The *Jama Masjid* mosque in Delhi dates from 1650 and is India's largest while the 16th century tomb for the second Islamic Mogul emperor *Humayan* influenced the 17th century *Taj Mahal* tomb with its Persian architecture, for the fifth emperor's wife; the *Aasfi Masjid* in Lucknow is another impressive building from the 18th century.

The Mogul dynasty originated from the Mongol empire and its first six rulers in the north from 1526 to 1707 were the most important- *Babar*, *Humayan*, *Akbar*, *Jahangir*, *Shah Jahan* and *Aurangzeb*; power then fell to Hindu groups and the British but the line continued until 1857. *Babar* displaced the *Delhi Sultanate* who had displaced the *Ghaznavids* in 1206, who raided Gujarat in 1024.

Guru Nanak founded Sikhism in the 15th century, *Mahavira* Jainism in the 6th century bce although he may have been more a reformer of other traditions, and *Gautama Siddhartha* Buddhism around the 5th century bce. Sikhism's heartland is Punjab in the northwest while Jains are largely in west-central states and Buddhism in Maharashtra in the centre; Sikhism combines Hindu and Islamic elements and Jainism respects all life forms.

Buddhism became a state religion in the 3rd century bce under king *Ashoka* of the *Mauryan Empire* and was strong enough to spread beyond India in the first centuries ce but declined in India from the *Gupta Empire* of the 4th-6th centuries through the medieval. Indian Buddhism today is largely the *Navayana* sect while *Mahayana* north and east of India has a wider pantheon than *Theravada* to the east with its focus on original scriptures and personal reflection. Buddhism looks to an atheistic state of enlightenment and an underlying reality that somehow isn't beyond the ever-changing experience of life's surface- relativity is seen to have no absolute reference.

The Bahai faith is another minority religion and has similarities with Christianity and Islam but its temples are open to all faiths to pray *dharmically* to their understanding of god while the major temple in Delhi is based on the shape of the lotus flower bud, as with some North Indian Hindu temple *sikhara* or tower architecture. Most of the visitors here are Hindus while Christians and Muslims with their static principles by contrast can't pray at other houses of god and have little but aversion and malice towards alternative paths.

As a Hindu I've prayed in many places of worship in the world to different expressions of God- to *Jesus* in Britain under various denominations, *god the Father* in Eastern Orthodox churches in Russia, *Allah* in Iran, *Jehovah* in Russia, *Buddha* in Thailand, and *Confucius*, *Tao* and folk gods in China. I've further prayed to Shinto gods in Japan, animists god in South Korea, and Sikhs gods, Jain gods, and deified Hindu and Sikh gurus and other people, along with numerous *Vishnu* and *Shiva* gods in India. Hinduism isn't really an *ism* or set of ideas to separate off from all others and to choose to side with but the acknowledgement of life's infinite scope and possibility. *Brahman*, God, the absolute, or truth isn't relative yet Hindus can still pray to Buddhist deities in terms of the aspect of non-being they pertain to within all-embracing *Brahman*.

In prayer one's goals and hopes are clarified and augmented to realign the devotee's own spirit to secure them such that intuition finds aesthetic ways round intellectually defined barriers for achievement in life. The gods are beyond us as relative thought yet are also us with us being in the world but not of it; *namaskara* or prostration is a powerful aesthetic experience.

I've also done the initiation ceremonies or declarations to formally belong to the four main religions- the *diksha* for Hinduism, the *Threefold Refuge* for Buddhism, baptism for Christianity, and the *Shahada* for Islam, even though the *Abrahamics* try to say I can't have allegiance to more than one tradition despite there only being one god. Moreover there are dualistic splits throughout the world religions with each side often seeing the other as heretical or threatening, except in Hinduism where the concern is transcendence of dualities to unity.

Religious practice is split between *Abrahamic* and *dharmic* and within these in Christianity between *Catholic* and *Protestant*, Islam between *Sunni* and *Shiite*, Buddhism between *Theravada* and *Mahayana*, and Hinduism between *Shaivism* and *Vaishnavism*; Judaism is also split between *Sephardim* and *Ashkenazim*, and Taoism-Shenism contrasted with *Confucianism*.

The primary Hindu philosophy of *advaita Vedanta* or non-dualism understands reality under a monistic ontology comprised of undifferentiated *Brahman* as pure consciousness or *Being*. *Brahman* is the union of the absolute never-changing aspect of reality with the relative ever-changing aspect where neither of them exist per se. The relative is all materiality including the relations of intellectual and reasoned thought while between *Brahman* or the absolute and the relative is the field of *prakriti* or the intuition, Dionysiac or *gunas* as the flow of primary dynamics, potentials and tendencies in life situations and personalities. They emerge directly from *Brahman* and are equivalent to the gods, and with the whole field equivalent to the Godhead.

Although *Brahman* subsumes all attributes, distinctions and dualities, even of existence and non-existence, the subjective experience of it before complete unity with it as a *jivanmukta* person is *sat-chit-ananda* or *being*, *consciousness*, *bliss* while seven states of consciousness rising towards unity are recognized. The conscious essence of a person is *Brahman* or *self* distinct from the mind's experience, thoughts, personality, structure and memory; the *self* of the individual person is as a drop or wave of water separated momentarily from the ocean but retaining the same nature.

Spirituality is seeking the absolute within ourselves and uniting personal selves, characteristics and lives with the universal. Hinduism's purpose is aiding the realization of and access to this wider unity and gaining understanding of *atman* or the seemingly individual experience also to be universal *paramatman*, *purusha* or *Brahman*. Union with *Brahman* is also *moksha* or release from *samsara* or the cycle of rebirths as involving misperception and illusion; moreover the whole universe moves away from and in some cosmological theories back over billions of years to the singularity as the ongoing and timeless one-pointed essence of *Brahman*.

The two most important of scripture's great pronouncements or *mahavakyas* are *Aham Brahmasmi* or *I am Brahman*, and *Tat tvam asi* or *You are That*, or also *I am That, you are That, all this is That*. These are from the early *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chandogya Upanishads* within the *Yajur* and *Sama Vedas*, from around the 8th century bce; *That* is the absolute and *this* is the relative. To develop and know oneself is to know *Brahman* or God via *prana* or the life force or organizing intelligence, conceived as a breeze, implicit in the field of the *gunas* in nature and the mind; the mind aligns with fundamental pre-rational imperatives underlying relativity.

Consciousness as the unified field is featureless and the same for all life forms and all materiality though present or accessed in greater and lesser degrees by different species and individuals since it's created in greater and lesser degrees by brains of different quality. The unified field being subjectivity however is systematically hidden from empirical study as it's the studier not the studied and not subject to a regular scientific foregrounded or intellectual understanding; it's reality's vertical axis that horizontal relativity hinges on.

Likewise the existence of God or the sub-intellectual aesthetic Dionysian field, comprising as *gunas* or gods, can't be proved. Life's logic and meaning is subtly incalculable and instead intuitive, aesthetic and direct; the

intellect is secondary despite the presupposition of its priority in Caucasian Apollonian psychological disposition and Western culture. The intuition also equates to faith in the insight of thought and action issuing from the absolute beyond endless theory and cerebration; reasoning only processes concepts laterally or horizontally and can't access truth transcendently or vertically, making a focus on it delusionary and foolish.

Words, description and argument are concerned with relative relations and can't instead give consciousness with its silent awareness back to itself for the experiences of intuition and truth. Indeed none of the three major areas of human experience of intellectual knowledge, ethics or aesthetics can be grounded in their own intellectual sky castles and logical schemes- it can't be said how the world can be known to exist, what moral action is and why it is right, or why some things have beauty or other aesthetic character. The justification for these is not in Western philosophy's conceptual shuffling terms but in the mind referring via the field of the *gunas* to the absolute hidden beneath.

The *gunas* in the Dionysian field or Godhead or *Ishvara* interface between unmanifest absolute or *Brahman* and manifest relative thought and materiality; they are strands or threads of tendency or intention with the three main ones *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* or roughly serenity, work and rest, or also revealing, projecting and veiling. They issue out of *Brahman* as its first manifestation and are aesthetic, unstated, not subject to foregrounding or account, and proliferate endlessly in parallel to the gods within God. They give rise to both inward experience and outward concerns along with the three groups of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* gods.

Rising maturity of mind and wisdom plus worldly achievement, in terms of the mind as divine essence moving towards its realization as God or *Brahman*, is expressed in the *Nara-Narayana* pair of deities or the human experience plus *Vishnu* or the *self* or soul; they are twin brothers and eternal companions. The *Gita* further examples this relation with its characters *Arjuna* as a man but ultimately only another if less self-realized *Vishnu avatar* and *Krishna* an *avatar* or incarnation of *Vishnu* as teaching him; all people as conscious are incarnations of God while there is mutual support between their absolute and relative minds that drives personal development toward unity.

Right thought and action out of the infinite complexities of how to be and what to do emerge from a coordinated state of mind in tune with its own holistic nature; *vidya* or clarity of knowledge is achieved as paradoxically commonsensical grasp of life situations. The Hindu or *Vedic* literary tradition is then concerned with states of consciousness but where the end result is only to be oneself; higher conscious life forms are in essence already their colossal divine selves but *maya* or illusion as compromised intellect to intuition coordination may obscure their nature.

Moreover the supremely civilized Hindu greeting of *namaste* or *namaskar* for hello and goodbye means *The God in me acknowledges the God in you*, sometimes with hands pressed together as honouring a god; *vanakkam* in Tamil Nadu in the south has a similar meaning. Service to God is also then service to people but where action is guided by aesthetic insight rather than altruism as blind principle; the array of people in life compares with the array of gods while important and honourable people are also dressed in gods' decoration and iconography. Royalty and the singularity of monarchy also compare with the *self* along with sex in there being no further point of reference- there is only for-itself self-effulgence and glory, depending on nothing and beyond relative relations.

It's metaphysically absurd to speak of a path to oneself yet highly significant on the practical level. Particularly Apollonian westerners can get lost in conceptual working and lose sight of their mind's own basis; indeed an individual life passes in the blink of *Vishnu's* eternal eyes where for a moment he doesn't see clearly. Femininity with its evaluative and objective psychology however has fewer coordination issues than masculinity; chromosomes indeed are the uniform XX rather than XY with its emphasized relative mind in the psychology.

People showing developed states of consciousness or insight can be deified and shrines and whole temples erected to them alongside the gods; *Vedic* guru teachers and writers who established followings in India or abroad can be worshipped, as can be the spirit of any person either deceased or alive as part of *Brahman*. The *Swarminarayan* sect for instance has many temples with idols of its eponymous early 19th century seer, including as the presiding deity at the *Akshardham Temple* in Delhi, one of the world's largest Hindu temples. The sect is allied with *Smartism* emphasizing *advaita* philosophy and five deities, *Vishnu*, *Shiva*, *Durga*, *Ganesh* and the *Vedic* god *Surya*.

Another saint as a god who inspired a devotional movement with a large following is *Sai Baba of Shirdi* in Maharashtra, of the 19th and early 20th centuries. He was a *yogi* or ascetic who practiced Hinduism and Islam equally, combining *Vedanta* and its active engagement without attachment with Muslim philosophy in a rejection of fundamental differences; there are various paths to the same end with unimportant outward differences. He is revered by devotees of both religions and his temple complex has tens of thousands of mostly Hindu pilgrims daily, praising his intuition and insight over blinkered principle.

A further figure is *Jhulelal*, a 10th century *Sufi* or mystic Muslim saint from Sindh province in southeast Pakistan and a god of Sindh people- there are legends of him likewise arguing for Hindus already worshipping the same one God as Muslims, and thus preventing Turkic Muslim attacks on them. Another well-known and worshipped figure is *Prabhupada* who established the 20th century *Hare Krishna* movement.

Life as divine also brings a concern for *ahimsa* or non-violence and among animals this is particularly expressed by cows and their extraordinary imperturbable temperament. They also represent the weak and vulnerable anywhere and hence demand protection; they further embody maternal values particularly with their milk, which provides purification. They're symbols of unselfish giving and nurturing with their labour, transport, dairy products, dung for fuel and manure, medicines, and after death leather and other products from many parts of the body; traditionally they're symbols of wealth.

They have right of way and in most Indian states it's illegal to kill or injure them, or to sell or transport them to a location for legal slaughter, while ox and other bovine animal slaughter is also taboo; there is an illegal export beef industry however. They'll wonder into buildings including train or bus stations or shops if they can and no one minds; they reflect the peace of Indian culture and they're well-liked.

Cow are deified as *avatars* of *Kamadhenu*, an anthropomorphic mother of cows; she is venerated through worldly cows and rarely worshipped as an independent goddess. People may pray outside temples in the company of cows while temples may maintain a cowshed within the compound; people can bless themselves by touching one then touching their head and chest.

Cattle are revered in the *Vedic* texts and are on *Indus Valley Civilization* seals of the fourth to second millennium bce; they've had similar status in other civilizations including ancient Mesopotamians and Egyptians, who mummified bulls. Bulls however can show aggression if still in restrained style, along with supreme head in the air masculinity and focus on the *self* and divine power within; they example the unsuperfluous coordinated mind. *Shiva's* vehicle is *Nandi* the bull god while *Krishna* was a cowherd in his youth known as *Govinda* or *Protector of cows*, a name chanted in *Vaishnavite* temples.

In Tamil Nadu and across South India the January festival of *Mattu Pongal* or *Thai Pongal* after the month of *Thai* in the Tamil calendar celebrates cattle and their key part in farming that produces harvests; it also acknowledges the sun's northward movement after winter solstice. Some villages have *Jallikattu*, a bull taming sport where men hold onto or otherwise try to subdue a bull; this was banned in 2014 as unsafe for all parties.

Alternatively temples may keep an elephant who blesses devotees by a tap on the head with its trunk; they symbolize *Ganesh* the major elephant-headed god and as God inheres in all life it can be worshipped and provide blessings. Indeed many other animals are deified, often as gods' *vahanas* or vehicles or mounts- *Parvati's* is the lion, *Lakshmi's* the elephant or owl, *Murugan's* the peacock, *Ayyappan's* the tiger, and *Kalki's* the horse; they can have their own shrines for worship.

Ganesh's vehicle is *mooshak*, of a mythical rodent species similar to or identified with a rat or mouse, while *Saraswati's* is *hamsa* of a mythical bird species or a swan or goose; *Vishnu's* is *Garuda*, a humanoid bird or eagle or kite. Snake worship is part of *Shivling* worship, or *Shiva* and *Parvati* in sexualized form, dating to the *Vedas*. *Vishnu's* animal *avatars* also include *Matsya* the fish, *Kurma* the turtle and *Varaha* the boar while *Hanuman* the monkey god is a *Vanara* or mythical hominid species; goats occasionally provide spiritual blessings with a devotee holding the tail while *Vedic* hymns are recited.

Hindu ethics as not based on principles or commandments but *dharma* or context-specific right action looks to underlying dynamics and action in accord with *rta* or *prana* or order in the field of the *gunas* that gives rise to dharma or righteousness. Here empathy for misfortune is important but not for lack of personal responsibility or attention, which may be *dharmically* exploited by others; this is exemplified by monkey's natural and opportunistic behaviour, which Indians often live close to, where they'll exploit with intelligence and cunning someone's lack of awareness of their surroundings to steal from them. Monkeys in their natural state lack reference to any contrived moral norms as pushed by *Abrahamic* and *Apollonian* society; like cows they're respected and not harmed but don't have the same sacred status.

And among sacred plant life are the *lotus* with its growth in muddy water yet producing a perfect flower from within itself, the *tulasi* or *tulsi* as a *Lakshmi avatar*, and the mango tree under which *Shiva* and *Parvati* were married and symbolizing love. The *ashvattha* or Indian *banyan* fig is an important tree as *Krishna* and *Radha's* resting place and with its multiple trunks blending together as part of one life force reflecting the unity of gods and people within God and *Brahman*.

Shrines may be built around the base of *banyans* while the sticks are used in sacrificial fires; here there's an enclosure with *Shivlings* and other deities. This example of an adorned *banyan* is at Kurukshetra, the site of the *Mahabharata* war and the *Gita* dialogue with *Krishna*; trees here may be descended from the time of the war 5000 years ago. Banyans also were honoured by the *Indus Valley Civilization*, appearing on its vessels and seals. A different species called the *Bodhi* or *Peepal* tree is also important in Buddhism, the *Buddha* having gained enlightenment sitting under one.

About a third of Hindus are vegetarian, eating the lower life forms of plants to incur the least harm to life with its divine essence; the necessary violence involved in meat preparation also brings negative karma. If meat is consumed it should be *jhatka* where the animal is killed instantly to minimize pain. Ethical action and respect for life is justified through the understanding in the *Upanishad* understanding of *I am That, you are That, all this is That* and hence I act ethically towards you because I am you, or the same divine consciousness or *Brahman*; two and a half millennia of Western philosophy by contrast has failed to ground ethics.

Dharma is then based on this universality but inwardly grounded and different for different individuals in different circumstances, not prescribed from without. As with normal ethical consideration it involves not rules but personal standards and reflection, non-violence, learning from the wise, devotional practice, and *karma* as the nature of the action is returned to the doer in the wheel of life.

There is no damnation or hell, only personal development and reincarnation for further progress towards unity with, over inconsistency with, one's own divinity. Levels of ethical thought and behaviour however are determined not only by the mind's or attention's coordination with its own consciousness but the different

degrees of consciousness present in different people and life forms; as *Socrates* understood there can be no self-aware wrongdoing or evil per se.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) is India's most famous moral leader and emphasized nonviolence, respect for life and vegetarianism, along with *satyagraha* or the force of truth as speaking for itself; he worked to eliminate antagonism between groups in leading India to independence from Britain in 1947. His conciliatory policies however may have helped the Islamic movement to break off parts of the country into Pakistan and Bangladesh, costing hundreds of thousands of lives in fighting and ongoing geopolitical problems. Non-violence shouldn't mean appeasement that gives rise to more violence- he was assassinated the year after independence. *Gandhi Jayanti* on 2nd October is Gandhi's birthday and one of three national holidays, along with *Independence Day* and *Republic Day*.

Moreover *Hindutva* is Hindu political nationalism that looks to defend Hinduism and Indian culture against antagonistic foreign religions and influence that likewise look to take cynical advantage of Hindu inclusivity and tolerance. The *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* or *RSS* is a nationalist organization promoting Hindu culture founded in 1925; the right wing political party *Bharatiya Janata Party* or *BJP* developed from this in 1980. The *BJP* is one of the two main parties, alongside the centre-left *Indian National Congress* or *INC* founded in 1885; the *INC* provided the platform for Gandhi's independence movement.

Hopefully there will be a return to pre-partition undivided India or *Akhand Bharat* or *Akhand Hindustan* in the future; as well as pre-partition Pakistan and Bangladesh this is sometimes seen to include Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. Greater India is the wider region with historical influence from Indian culture, including Afghanistan and China's Tibet region and Yunnan province; Buddhism also spread across China and most other East Asian countries. The furthest major Hindu temple complex from India in the region is *Prambanan* in central Java in Indonesia, from the 9th century.

Most people have limited ability for critical distance and can only maintain identity with their culture and normative system to give shape to the world but Hindu culture has the achievement of normalizing openness and space so that those who think are simultaneously provided for. This parallels the West's individuality and liberalism in providing for the individual to take society forward rather than threaten it; Hinduism is a powerful combination of religious passion yet broadmindedness.

Literature

The primary Hindu scriptures are the four *Vedas*, called *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*, extensive compilations comprising sets of devotional hymns of metrical verse in *Sanskrit*. They encapsulate in symbolic terms all later Hindu philosophy on the relation between humanity and God, reflecting knowledge as already complete and structured in consciousness. They have four parts each, a core *Samhita* followed by a series of explications, the *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and the famous *Upanishads*.

The *Rigveda* has the original and longest *Samhita* at 1028 verses, largely praising gods but discussing a wide range of subjects; it encapsulates the other *Vedas* and all later Hindu texts. The *Vedas* are by far the world's oldest texts of their size, even conservative Western academia dating the *Rigveda* to 1500bce with the others appearing in the following few centuries of the second millennium bce; four of its ten books however are in a more archaic *Sanskrit* placing them around 4000bce.

The four *Samhitas* plus the much shorter summarizing *Bhagavad Gita* are *shruti* or heard texts, meaning they're cognized and revealed as pre-existing in minds of sufficient coordination with their own consciousness; they've been passed down from ancient *rishis* or knowers or seers, the highest being the *Brahmarshi*. The

shruti texts are authored neither by God nor any level of the human mind but exist eternally like scientific truths.

Secondary texts are *smriti* or remembered in reference to the mind's natural understanding and explication of the *Vedas*; they comprise literature written across many centuries interpreting and commentating on the *shruti*. They include the *itihasa* or two poetic epics about the gods, the *puranas* or elaborating myths, and the *vedangas* covering ritual, astrology and *Sanskrit* structure; there are numerous other texts including on government, economics and law.

The *puranas* of c250-1350 were written in part to connect new temples with the *Vedas* while promoting the *trimurti* of three principle gods and their families of modern Hinduism; there are 18 *mahapuranas* or great *puranas* ranging from 9000 to 81000 verses. The books in the slide are the *Rigveda Samhita* on the left and a *smriti* on the right on social philosophy by guru *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi*, plus two weak and misguided translations by Western academics of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *smriti* epic the *Mahabharata* in a one-tenth abridgement.

Two key groups of *smriti* texts summarizing and explaining the *Samhitas'* monistic philosophy, and which established *advaita Vedanta* or the non-duality of reality with all things consisting in *Brahman* as the classic Hindu position, are the first ten of the *Upanishads* and the *Brahma sutras* by *Badarayana* in the 5th century bce that in turn explain them. The *Upanishads* are prose works sometimes in narrative form with the ten seminal ones dating from 1200-600bce and distributed two, two, four and two in the four *Vedas*, although some recensions have other orderings; over a hundred subsequent *Upanishads* are then appended to the final *Atharveda* while the *Muktika* is a set of 108, a sacred number.

The *Yoga Sutras* of *Patanjali* are another important text from around 400ce that also draw on Buddhism; a *sutra* is a set of aphorisms or connecting line or thread. Neither *smriti* nor *shruti* texts however are infallible and on occasion where they clash with innate insight or morality or they aren't clear then scripture is set aside; personal conscious insight is primary and always the arbiter, scripture only serving understanding and with nothing required to be accepted on faith alone.

The array of elaborating texts and later gurus' writings are for the seeker to draw on, contrasting with the single Bible or Koran and to some extent the Buddhist *Pali canon* and their associated notions of spiritual authority somehow external to the individual and their normal wider research and reflection. They have controlling institutions run by others who claim to know better and disapprove of questioning even while personal development can only be based on personal understanding.

The *Gayatri mantra* is a famous verse in the *Rigveda* that invokes the solar deity *Savitr* and provides the *gayatri metre*; the metre is deified as *Gayatri*, one of *Brahma's* consorts. The verse encapsulates the *Rigveda's* understanding of the mutually supporting relation between humanity and God; Vedic mantras were revealed to or cognized by the sage or *rishi Brahmarshi Vishvamitra* who appears in the *Ramayana* epic. Hinduism is a sun god religion in terms of personal development as light or enlightenment being illumination only of what is already in us and not the reception of any new knowledge imposed on the mind from outside- the self-fulgent glory of the sun and our *self* or God unfolding in the relative mind is the same.

The *itihasa* are two vast poems, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* at around 24000 and 100 000 verses, comprising allegories of *Vedic* thought, particularly *dharma* as righteousness, ethics, justice, duty, and sacred law. The *Ramayana* dates from the 5th-4th centuries bce, is attributed to a single poet *Valmiki* and divided into seven books although with the last probably by a different author and added later.

It concerns the usurping of the *Vishnu* incarnation *Rama* from his kingdom, the failed seduction then abduction of his wife *Sita* by the demon king *Ravana* of Sri Lanka, and her rescue with the help of an army led by *Hanuman* the monkey god. The *Ramcharitmanas* of the late 16th century by *Goswami Tulsidas* is a poetic retelling of the *Ramayana* in the vernacular *Awadhi* language, a *Hindi* dialect of Uttar Pradesh, also incorporating related *Puranic* and other stories.

The *Mahabharata* epic dates from the 4th century bce to the 4th ce though with origins at least to the 8th century bce if not long before; it has many contributors and divided in 18 books. It's mythically attributed to *Veda Vyasa* who may have lived in the third millennium bce and is also a character in it; he's further seen as the author of the *puranas* and a scribe of the *Vedas* and is one of a set of seven main semi-immortal or very long living beings called *chiranjivis*.

The *Mahabharata* is centred on a war that took place in Kurukshetra north of Delhi traditionally dated to 3138bce between gods and demons incarnated as two sets of cousins, the righteous *Pandavas* and usurping *Kauravas*; today there's a museum there. The disputed kingdoms in both epics are metaphors for the *self's* sovereignty over the mind lost and eventually regained.

The sixth book of the *Mahabharata* contains the extraordinary Hindu text *The Bhagavad Gita* or *The Lord's Song*, summarizing *Vedic* philosophy. This comprises a dialogue between the god *Krishna* or the embodiment of *Brahman*, and *Arjuna* an archer and warrior in the righteous army- he's a mortal although also another divine incarnation, as with all life. The *Gita* or *song* as music also underlies both the aesthetic rather than intellectual content and hearing as the primary sense, being least mediated by the sense organs and providing more direct cognition.

The *Gita* is the masterpiece of *Sanskrit* poetry with 701 verses divided into 18 chapters and may have first been cognized a few centuries before the *Mahabharata* then added to it; it is uncreated *shruti* with an independent existence. *Arjuna* is disturbed on moral grounds about fighting in battle and particularly as the opposition includes relations close to him; *Krishna* however advises him not to worry, to act from his own insight and do his duty.

Morality is infinitely complex and Hinduism has no set of commandments on the conceptual level with their attendant exceptions and dilemmas; the *Gita* instead outlines developed states of consciousness in which to perceive truth and correct action to take. The diversity of life can't be funnelled through fixed doctrines and values and indeed in Hindu myth the gods typically carry out ethically uncertain action when considered in such terms.

In this iconic image *Krishna* the charioteer in front is a person's *self* or consciousness, *Arjuna* the driver behind is their intellect and its activity, the reins are the coordinating mind, the chariot is the body, the horses are the senses, and the roads the sense objects. It represents sex under God's direction with the two wheels the two partners locked by the axial, racing forwards with sparks and dust flying, turning and jarring, experiencing tremendous power and excitement, and driven by the senses.

This is a display on the entrance of the *Keshav Dev Temple*, next to the site of *Krishna's* birthplace in Mathura. The basic encouragement is just presence of mind over reasoning with presuppositions by themselves, and other distracted attention. The mind or self isn't to lose the *self* or consciousness to the senses in experience, or the horses carry the person away; there is unity only at orgasm. For most paths to personal development and unity the mind needs the fullest engagement with the world and relative experience but where the absolute point of attention and levelheadedness is held alongside. *Subhadra* is *Krishna's* sister and *Arjuna's* wife.

Poetry as aesthetic is superior to prose for conveying spirituality, art and the *Veda* being aligned with the flow of *gunas* or underlying potentials of mind in the sub-intellectual Dionysian field that issues from *Brahman* or truth. Aesthetics is subjectively experienced but objectively referenced and universalizable while artists typically feel they are transcribers rather than creators in only uncovering processes that already exist.

Whereas the poetic *Gita* already exists, isn't ascribed to *Krishna* and is aesthetically perceived by the individual, the prosaic *Abrahamic* texts are grounded in and believed on the basis of their historical record, bringing fearful concern over its veracity. The *Gita* has been published in hundreds of translations from its original *Sanskrit* in varying quality- it needs a scholar who is also a seer to provide literary skills in keeping with the poetic spirit.

Chapter 2 verse 45 is one of the key verses, speaking of the unaffected relation needed with the *gunas* so that the perfect action they dictate can be carried out. 4:20 says that acting under the *gunas* and hence *dharmic* context specificity means you don't act at all- the *self* that you are issues the *gunas* out of its inward dynamics in relation to the environment but stays separate from activity in the same way that God is uninvolved in the world in the direct sense.

Doing consists in not doing where the attention remains at one with the *self's* underlying stillness; *prana* is this process where the unmanifest absolute manifests itself in and organizes the relative. 2:2 gives *Krishna's* response to *Arjuna's* long elaboration on his predicament, completely dismissing his problems- inward organization and not confusion from outward details is required. There is no such thing as a problem in that problems aren't solved on their level but are transcended and negated by the global God's-eye perspective of consciousness; the human spirit overcomes all obstacles.

3:42 outlines the mind's increasing levels of understanding and access to holistic reality. 2:46 advises that to the developed and self-realized mind scripture is of no further use; the *Gita* and whole *Vedic* literature have nothing of substance or nothing external to teach and only help illuminate divinity already within us. The *Veda* is merely the structure of consciousness as constituting us.

5:2 notes that of the many paths back to *Brahman* those of action where the gains of material life follow are superior to the renunciation of action. Early Hindu scripture is composed in *Sanskrit*, India's ancient sacred language and early member of the Indo-European group but almost a dead language now. 40% of Indians mostly in the north speak *Hindi* as first language while other regions have their own language often with its own script; English provides a lingua franca.

Sanskrit is written in *Devanagari* script dating only from the 8th century, also used by *Hindi*, *Marathi*, *Nepali* and other languages; there's a far larger extant *Sanskrit* literature than ancient Greek and Roman combined. Important ancient *Sanskrit* grammarians are *Panini* and *Patanjali*, both around the 4th century bce. Its endless recombinations of words and inflections parallel the recombinations of Hindu gods, thought patterns and also sexual experience; its sounds move with great beauty and spontaneity.

It's seen as a natural language with correspondence between its sounds and what they signify. Relative intellect is unified under absolute intuition and hearing the sound of Hindu texts in it has priority over their translation or conceptual understanding; the sound communicates the essential aesthetic and spiritual character of its content. Texts chanted by *Brahmin* priests at temples, often with great virtuosity, are part of *pujas* and other ceremonies.

The longstanding academic view is that *Sanskrit* or an earlier *Proto-Indo-European* originated in the Caucasus in southwest Russia and was transmitted to India and Europe by a group called the *Aryans* in the mid-second

millennium bce, along with the *Vedas*. Hindus however tend to take a strong stance against the theory with *Out of India* theories arguing for *Sanskrit* and *PIE* being indigenous.

The question of the original language's homeland location in the ancient world and who is an offshoot of who is central to both civilizations' identities and has much political investment, particularly for India. The *Aryan invasion or migration theory* has increasingly weak evidence and comes from the Victorian colonial period of downplaying Indian civilization's achievements and trying to locate all things of value necessarily in Christendom.

The language of the *Indus Valley Civilization* prior to the Aryan period, centred on south-central Pakistan and northern India, is undeciphered, the *Aryans* are seen as nomadic without home cities to support such a rich literary culture, ancient river names are largely *Sanskritic* unlike in Europe, and *Sanskrit* is most established in India not elsewhere. Hinduism is not only the world's oldest extant religion but is claimed to have existence in more ancient periods than the *IVC*; Hinduism as *Sanatana dharma* or the eternal religion has philosophy to be perceived at any time by the developed mind.

The *IVC* lasted about 2000 years from 3300 to 1300bce, contemporary with the other initial civilizations in the historical record of Mesopotamia and Egypt; it declined from 1700bce perhaps for reasons of climate or changing paths of the Indus or Saraswati rivers. The *Mehrgarh* group precede the *IVC*, extending to 7000bce. I visited two of the foremost *IVC* sites in central Pakistan in May 2009; Harappa has only the foundations of walls outlining rather intricate layouts of rooms while Mohenjo-daro by contrast was a major *IVC* city, today comprising an extensive site of walled buildings and having a strong otherworldly atmosphere. It lies to the east of the Indus River, dates to the 26th century bce, was abandoned about seven centuries later, and rediscovered in 1922; many artefacts have been disinterred. Even larger *IVC* cities are currently being excavated in Haryana state in India. To the south in Gujarat in west India is Lothal, another evocative *IVC* site.

The *Vedas*' were passed on by a sophisticated and reliable oral tradition across at least three thousand years and hence could be older still, with various Indian and Western scholars making claims for earlier millennia. Indeed verses mentioning the position of the Saraswati River and astronomical configurations suggest greater antiquity, also comparing with theories of the Egyptian pyramids being part of a much older tradition than the third millennium. The *Vedas* weren't transcribed until around the 5th century while the earliest surviving written *Rigveda* copy is from 1464; some *Brahmins* still specialize in their memorization.

One scenario to explain the origins of *Sanskrit* and the *Vedic* tradition being in both India and the Caucasus is that before the end of the last ice-age around 10 000 bce there was a progenitor or Atlantean civilization with *Vedic* culture and influence extending across both India and Europe. It came to an end as a result of melt waters and sea levels rising over a hundred metres to leave India as the main retainer and guardian of prediluvial culture but with *Sanskrit* developing into the wider Indo-European language group.

Furthermore *Sanskrit* may not have been the *IVC* spoken language but just its passed down sacred language as in India today. Poorly explored submerged stone structures in coastal areas in several places in the world may comprise progenitor civilization cities including the Gulf of Cambay near Dwarka, *Krishna's* capital in Gujarat state, and off southern Tamil Nadu. The 12 000 year timescale also equates with the four *yuga* time periods taken as 3000 years and the oldest as the most spiritually developed.

Indian culture and religion demonstrates profound embedded knowledge about humanity and the divine; the Indians know something of great magnitude on a deep level that touches the soul and are custodians of ancient and ahistorical understanding. There's a long and complex history of human settlement in India before the *IVC* and *Mehrgarh*; the rock shelters at Bhimbetka have drawings from different periods, the oldest dated 30 000 years ago. Bhimbetka is named after *Bhima*, brother of *Arjuna* in the *Mahabharata*.

Hindu gods' involvement in the world is mythological rather than historical or literal, their significance centred on allegory and philosophy- in some cases the events they're associated with were historically true but details don't have to be and change and contradict from one account to the next. Myths are typically concerned with the correction or defeat of misunderstanding and the return of oneself to oneself after a period of delusion, as indeed in the character of artworks generally, and hence often feature the aesthetics and complexities of subject to subject romantic relations.

By contrast the insistence on definite histories and conceptually distinct rules of Christianity and Islam express cultures prioritizing rationality. These look for certainty in terms of foregrounded intellectual knowledge in subject to object relations, the project at the heart of Western philosophy and wider Western thought, yet truth resides beneath sense-making in terms of relatively referenced relations- it eludes logical analysis but is amenable to myth.

Moreover great literature discussing human concerns and enriching the mind often has a basis in history but the accuracy or otherwise of its treatment of events is irrelevant; truth isn't historically situated. These posters of Hindu mythology paintings were on a wall of one of my previous apartments; ideally nothing should be above the gods in a shrine, even other gods, but in worship you only do your best.

Sangam literature is an extensive Tamil Nadu collection from 300bce to 300ce by several hundred poets while *Kalidasa* is a 5th century *Sanskrit* poet and playwright from Madhya Pradesh whose thought is based on the *puranas* or myths being composed at that time and develops romantic relations as expressions of spirituality and personal development. His most famous play *Shakuntala Recognized by a Token* concerns a king's affected and short-term desire being transcended to an unaffected love relation. *Nammalvar* of the early 10th century is a Tamil *Vaishnavite* who wrote the vast poem *Tiruvaymoli*, outlining how god participates in the world as both with forms and qualities and without them.

The sacred poetry tradition includes the 12th century *Shaivite Lingayati* sect from Bijapur in Karnataka, using the *Kannanda* language, particularly work by the poet and saint *Allama Prabhu* and the woman poet *Akka Mahadevi*; the sect was founded by the philosopher *Basavara*. This style is *vachana* or short allusive philosophical verse ending with a line of *bhakti* or devotion to *Shiva* to jolt and awaken the mind from complacent states; more ritualistic *Vedic* and temple worship *Brahminical* styles are avoided.

An anthology of *Prabhu's* work is called *The Achievement of Nothingness* or *The Mystical Zero* in reflection of the *self* that is sought only being what the person already is and involving nothing of material substance beyond this; the *Veda* and *vachana* have zero value to add to oneself yet great value for self-unfoldment. Coming back only to one's natural insight while relinquishing attempted sense making of life in terms of groundless conceptual ideas is the experience of 'Oh...' or *O*.

Meanwhile *Tallapaka Annamacharya* is a 15th century poet and composer saint from Andhra Pradesh writing in the *Telugu* language and focusing on the *Vaishnavite* myths of *Ventakeswara* and *Alamelu* as incarnations of *Vishnu* and his consort *Lakshmi*. Then *Rabinadrath Tagore* from West Bengal is among great early 20th century writers with evocative discussions of spirituality and ethics; he gained an international audience and was a key figure in revealing Indian culture to the West.

Hindu philosophy looks at the grounds of both reasoned and empirical knowledge and is divided into six *astika* or orthodox schools of thought that accept the basics of the *Veda*, plus three *nastika* or heterodox non-*Vedic* schools. The *astika* systems are *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyaya*, *Vaisheskika*, *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta*, and which are subject to unification under monistic *advaita Vedanta*; the partially atheist *nastika* systems are *Carvaka*, *Jain* and *Buddhist*. The first two systems of *Samkhya* and *Yoga* are the two main paths to personal development and

union with divinity as discussed in the *Gita*; *Samkhya* relates to the path of *karma yoga* through activity while *Yoga* relates to the path of *jnana yoga* through reasoned understanding.

Western philosophy has failed to ground intellectually any of the three main areas of human experience of reasoned or empirical knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics, whereas the Indian traditions understand instead that truth is grounded within the subject themselves in their own consciousness. Among great philosophers *Adi Shankara* of the early 9th century from Kerala is the foremost *advaita* or non-dualism exponent, explicating the *Veda's* message of *Brahman* as both underlying the relative world of multiplicity and change, and identical with individual yet universal and featureless consciousness or *atman*. Two of his most important works are commentaries on the early *Upanishads* and the *Brahma sutras*.

Classic *Advaita* is the view that all relativity has the same basis in the absolute or *Brahman*, and only appears as separate because of *maya* or illusion. The idea that reality is understandable in terms of other things in reality, in a relativistic universe without final truth, is mistaken- instead relativity and multiplicity has to make final reference to something unchanging and beyond the intellect and its conceptual relations- rational or *ratio-nal* means *of ratios*. One cannot talk rationally about the foundation of the world as this objectifies it as separate to oneself when consciousness is part of the world- you can only be it aesthetically.

By contrast *Ramanuja* of the 11th or 12th century from Tamil Nadu argues for *Vishishtadvaita*, a modified monism where *Brahman* is one yet still has relative attributes and an identity; he worked with *Vaishnavite* or *Vishnu* sects and temples. Whereas *advaita Vedanta* unifies the six systems by seeing the absolute as ascendent over the relative yet united with it in *Brahman*, *Vishishtadvaita* looks to treat the two with greater equality also on the higher levels. *Paradvaita* is a Kashmiri philosophy similar to *Vishishtadvaita* but focused on *Shaivism* or *Shiva* worship; it was founded by *Vasugupta* in the late 9th and early 10th centuries.

And then *Madhvacharya* of the 12th century from Karnataka argues for *Tattvavada*, a *dvaita* or dualist philosophy where absolute and relative always remain separate and individual consciousness has no unity with *Brahman*. He's then a key figure in the medieval *bhakti* movement emphasizing spiritual and personal development for all through devotion and commitment independent of high *Brahminical* philosophy; *Madhvacharya* is sometimes also seen as an incarnation of *Vayu* the *Vedic* wind god while *bhakti* is also related to Islamic *sufi* mysticism.

These *Vedanta* thinkers although contrasting may be found deified together in temples where the validity of each along with the six philosophical systems presupposes the encompassing *advaita Vedanta* position. Other ontological traditions include the *mahabhuta* or set of five basic *tattva* or elements of the material world- *prithvi* or earth, *jala* or water, *tejas* or fire, *vayu* or air, and *akasha* or space, ether or sky.

The *mahabhuta* are also represented by forms of *Shiva* at five temples in southeast India- *earth* at Kanichpurnam, *water* at Tiruchirapalli, *fire* at Tiruvannamalai, *air* at Srikalahasti, and *space* at Chidambaram. The first five are in Tamil Nadu with Srikalahasti in Andhra Pradesh to the north. The *mahabhuta* is further associated with psychological qualities and correspond to the five lower *chakras* or energy centres down the centre of the body; they are first described in the *Upanishads*.

The *mahabhuta* is part of a group of seven sets of five or six qualities each called the *36 tattvas*. The other six sets are five *jnyanedriyas* or the sense organs, five *karmendriyas* or the body's organs of action, five *tanmatras* or the experiences of the senses, five *antahkarnyas* or aspects of mind, five or six *shat kanyucukas* or limitations of experience, and five or six *shuddas* or aspects of subjectivity.

Hindu culture values the *guru* or learned master to student relationship as exemplified by *Krishna* and *Arjuna* in the *Gita* and comparing with selecting a god to devote to; most Indian Hindus however have no *guru* and

belong to no sect. My *guru* is *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi* from Madhya Pradesh who died in 2008 and who travelled to the West from the 1950s onwards with the ancient *transcendental meditation* technique and many related initiatives including a political party.

He had a degree in physics while *Vedic* philosophy on the nature of reality has interested a number of famous Western physicists. Maharishi's master or *guru* was *Brahmananda Saraswati* or *Guru Dev* from Uttar Pradesh. He was *Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math*, a spiritual position at a Himalayan monastery and town in Uttarakhand state, one of four institutions at cardinal points in India established by *Shankara* in the 9th century. *Guru Dev's* master in turn was *Swami Krishnananda Saraswati*.

Among other successful Indian *gurus* to the West in the late 20th century is *Prabhupada* from West Bengal who established the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness* or *Hare Krishna* movement in 1966 in New York. This is based on the philosophy of *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* developed in the early 16th century by scholar and *Krishna* devotee *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu*; *Hare* is a name for *Vishnu* and *Krishna* is a *Vishnu avatar* or incarnation.

There are *ISKON Krishna* temples throughout the world and the movement has raised the profile of Hinduism in the West, although they see ultimate reality as a personal god while their path also includes austerity and repression of sexuality and the senses rather than embracing all dualities to find unity beyond. Both *Maharishi* and *Prabhupada* are noted *Sanskrit* translators and commentators. *Maharishi's* breadth of insight and quality of writing is impressive with his rendition of the first third of the *Gita* a major achievement; *Prabhupada's* first language wasn't English and his work is less polished.

The Theosophical Society is another significant movement disseminating Hindu thought in the West, along with other spiritualities concerned with personal intuition of the divine; it was founded in 1875 in New York before moving to Chennai and Varanasi in India with two early key members being *Helena Blavatsky* and *Annie Besant*. A range of later institutions are associated with the *Theosophical Society* including the *London School of Economic Science* and its affiliated *School of Practical Philosophy*- this organized courses that introduced me to and connected my own thought with Indian philosophy in the early 1990s.

Moreover in the West and particularly across Europe Christianity is in a process of displacement by new spiritual movements that parallel the *dharmic* religions in their central notions of divinity within the person and direct connection with the natural world in contrast to priestly intermediaries and hierarchies of authority. They promote spiritual practices carried out personally along with holistic focus on wider life experience over specific books and paths.

Another Hindu *guru* famous in the West is *Ramakrishna*, a mid-19th century *Brahmin* priest from Bengal who also practiced Christianity and Islam, arguing for the unity of religions; he never travelled beyond India however. His most notable disciple was *Swami Vivekananda*, a late 19th century Bengali monk who became a key figure in the introduction of *Yoga* and *Vedanta* philosophies to America and Europe, particularly from 1893 when he attended the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Ramana Maharishi from Tamil Nadu was an early 20th century figure who also remained in India but was published in the West. *Sri Aurobindo* or *Aurobindo Ghose* was another Bengali and a nationalist figure in the independence movement against British rule; he built wide-ranging theoretical structures and wrote poetry, and had lived in England earlier in life. He was assisted by a Frenchwoman *Mirra Alfassa* who became known as *the Mother* and who later founded the town of Auroville near Puducherry as a community under *Aurobindo's* values.

Paramahansa Yogananda introduced meditation and yoga to westerners through his book *Autobiography of a Yogi* and lived and taught in America in the second half of his life; some of his writing however is populist. *Jiddu Krishnamurti* was from Tamil Nadu and travelled to many countries, writing and speaking on spirituality, the nature of the mind and human relations; he had first studied with the *Theosophical Society* in India.

Chinmayananda Saraswati was from Kerala and travelled to America; the *Chinmaya Mission* was established in 1953 to disseminate *Vedanta* and has branches in many countries. *Sathya Sai Baba* from Tamil Nadu established Hindu interfaith ashrams in over a hundred countries along with many charitable organizations though he only travelled to Africa; he claimed to be a reincarnation of *Sai Baba of Shirdi* who died in 1918, the interfaith saint who looked to reconcile Hindus and Muslims.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh or *Osho* from Madhya Pradesh was a philosophy professor and writer who travelled to America, criticized institutional religion and promoted sexuality as a means to personal development. *Swami Maheshwarananda* is from Rajasthan and founder of the system *Yoga in daily life*; he advocates tolerance across religions and cultures and respect for all life forms, and again is part of a long lineage of gurus.

Sadhguru or *Jaggi Vasudev* from Karnataka founded the *Isha Foundation* for yoga and philosophy in many countries and travelled to America. *Deepak Chopra* from Delhi and now an American is a physician and practitioner of *Ayurveda* the holistic Hindu health system; he was in the *TM* movement and is another prolific writer. *Jesus of Nazareth* may also qualify as a guru to the West with some of his teachings suggesting he had studied spiritual philosophy in India.

Symbols

The Indian flag adopted at independence in 1947 examples Hindu inclusivity with its central *chakra* a Hindu symbol but here in the Buddhist style of the great 3rd century bce king *Ashoka*; it has 24 spokes and appears alongside several of his extant stone inscribed edicts. A *chakra* is a vortex of coordinated thought and energy, and peaceful processes of change, and hence *dharma* or righteousness; *chakras* are associated with *Vishnu* gods and the *chakra* system of energy points down the body.

The flag is a tricolour with the top saffron or orange-yellow band denoting the fiery renunciation of falsity, the central white denoting truth, and the bottom green denoting our relation with the soil and nature. *Indian Independence Day* is 15th August after transfer of power from the British, and *Republic Day* is 26th January after the Constitution's passing of it in 1950 as the highest governing document, replacing the Government of India Act of 1935. 26th of January was selected to commemorate the date that the *Indian National Congress* party made its *Purna Swaraj* or *Declaration of Independence* from Britain in 1930.

The national emblem is also *Ashoka's* lion capital design, specifically the example surviving on a pillar at Sarnath near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and which includes the *chakra*. The Indian national motto is then added to the emblem's base, a quote adopted at independence from the early *Mundaka Upanishad* scripture from the wider *Ashoka* period- *Satyameva jayate* or *Truth alone triumphs*. Truth is also *alone* in that it can't be spoken in terms of objective intellectual account; instead it hides behind all thought, having sequestered transcendent grounding to be subjectively in touch with. The emblem and motto appear on the banknotes and passports, and there are still lions in India.

The national anthem *Jana Gana Mana* or *You are the ruler of the minds of all people* also has an inclusive and non-specific spiritual character with both words originally in a *Sanskritic* Bengali and music by *Rabindranath Tagore* (1861-1941), a writer on Indian spirituality and culture as well as translator and composer. He describes the anthem as addressed to the lord of destiny and reader of India's collective mind; it dates from 1911 but is often heard in an orchestral arrangement by *Herbert Murrill* from England prepared for first president

Jawaharlal Nehru. Another of *Tagore's* poem songs was selected for the Bangladesh national anthem at its independence from Pakistan in 1971.

There's also a national song in the same language called *Vande Mataram* or *I Praise You Mother*; it's addressed to the motherland with words by the influential writer *Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay* (1838-94), and music by *Jadunath Bhattacharya* (1840-83). The words are the first two verses appearing in a poem within *Chattopadhyay's* novel *Anandamath* or *Abbey of Bliss* of 1882, set during the Bengal famine of 1771 under British rule; the British had banned the book.

The music was written immediately after the book but became associated with the independence movement from 1896 when sung by *Tagore* at an Indian National Congress party meeting; the English translation was made by spiritual philosopher and nationalist *Aurobindo Ghose*. *Bhattacharya* had also taught music to *Tagore*, and all four figures were from Bengal. However its depiction of India as the Hindu goddess *Durga* has caused some controversy with non-Hindu Indians.

The Indian national fruit is the *mango*, the bird is the *Indian peacock* or *peafowl*, the land animal is the *royal Bengal tiger*, and the aquatic animal the *river dolphin*. The *Asiatic elephant* is the national heritage animal while the *grey langur* or *hanuman langur monkey* is an unofficial national animal; the reptile is the *king cobra snake* and the tree the *banyan fig tree*.

The *lotus* plant *nelumbo nucifera* is India's national flower and a Hindu symbol, growing and opening into a perfect flower in muddy impure water just as well as clean water, reflecting the essential irrelevance of a person's circumstances to their personal unfoldment and understanding. The lotus and consciousness are dependent on nothing and instead self-effulgent with all their knowledge and growth already structured within; the flower's reproductive nature further reflects the personal development that sexuality provides.

It's in water yet its flowering is detached from it, all as we are in the world but not of it with activity separate to the *self* and its stillness. The ground that the roots are in also reflects the *self* with the water its Dionysiac interface with the world; if the lotus is pulled out and disconnected from its basis it also necessarily gets damaged and crooked. It's a long living perennial as reflecting the eternal *self*, and fragile and beautiful yet resolute and confident as reflecting both the human condition and India; as part of deities' iconography it's called *padma*, this also being a name of goddess *Lakshmi*.

Most lotus flowers are white or pink but this variety is blue; the root and other parts of the plant are edible, offering nutrition. The lotus flower bud also provides the form for the main temple towers at the Hindu medieval complex of Angkor in Cambodia dedicated to *Vishnu*, adapted from north Indian designs; Hinduism spread here around the 1st century. Angkor has 72 temples with extensive carvings and sculpture, providing the cultural heart of southeast Asia.

There is a Hindu flag, flown from temple towers and at festival times from a *dhwaja stamba* stylised flag pole near the front of the enclosure. As with most Hindu icons the flag has many versions, though with saffron colours and triangles predominating, expressive of knowledge and its fire, and one-pointedness of mind. Hinduism doesn't advertise or intrude on others, it's personal rather than an issue of social identity and has few outward signifiers.

Traditional Hindu and wider Indian clothes for men however include the *kurta* or loose shirt, usually long with long sleeves, and the *dhoti* legs cloth, the left side of which is passed between the legs and tucked in the waist at the back; deities are often depicted in these clothes. Here I'm wearing a *lungi* or pleated tube, a *mundi* being a white *lungi*, while the *gamucha* towel can be worn in many ways including as a headscarf or *pagri* or turban.

The range of saffron colours commonly used reflect universality of the divine in different people; this photo was taken with locals staying in tents at the 2013 *Kumbh mela* festival. These men are wearing a *sarong* or loose leg cloth which can be folded upwards in hot conditions; occasionally temples require men to enter bare-chested. More common than the *dhoti* in urban areas is the *shalwar kameez* or combination of *pajamas* or usually white trousers, again with a *kurta*; *churidar* are similar but close-fitting trousers.

These are hot weather cotton clothes and feel light, elegant and dignified, or *sattvic*, at one with the culture's stress relieving nature. Versions of the *lungi*, *pagri*, *sarong* and *shalwar kameez* are also found in other countries. Here's a few photos of me in various *shalwar kameez*; open sandals help with keeping cool but only when staying out of direct sunlight for Caucasians with light skin, and foot protection is limited. Here Indian Muslims with Islamic *kufi* skullcaps are wearing the *shalwar kameez*, and moreover *pajamas* is adapted from a Persian word.

Women also wear a version of the *shalwar kameez* and *churidar*, usually with a *dupatta* or *chunri* scarf or headscarf. Despite Hinduism both having worship of *Shakti* or the female principle as a major branch and it being sexualized in many ways, younger women before they're married keep a lower profile particularly in the north; the urban environment remains typically rough, unwelcoming and masculine. Excessive modesty and lack of independence for women issues from the Mughal and British periods and paradoxically result in poor family planning and too many children within marriage, and hence India's foremost problem of overpopulation.

The *sari* is five to eight metres long and a metre wide, wrapped around the waist and over the shoulders and head with complex folds, and worn with a blouse; it's associated with grace and dates from the ancient world. Woollen *shawls* are used during the short winter and are more versatile than a coat. *Gamucha* and *pagri* headdress for men are symbols of honour and looking to live life to high standards, similar to the Western necktie; they expand on the head, the seat of consciousness and divinity.

Pagris vary in size, shape and colour; saffron can stand for valour, pink for marriages or the spring season, and white for peace or senior ages as in three men here. *Pagris* are particularly important in Sikhism; hand holding between the same sex is only a sign of friendship. Hindu sects use a *tilak* or distinguishing forehead mark from coloured powders and pastes; it indicates being a spiritual seeker.

The dot between the eyebrows represents the third or spiritual eye beyond the intellect and its concern for dualities, as represented by the two eyes; it is the one-pointedness and zero-dimensional point of *Brahman*, the goal being to open this eye and gain unity with oneself and the world. *Vaishnavites* have various vertical lines, particularly U-shapes with a vertical line within, sometimes extending onto the nose; they reflect the mind's descent deeper into itself. *Shaivites* have white horizontal lines including from sacred ash from burnt offerings, *Shiva* being associated with fire and the burning up of the mind's confusion and impurity.

Shiva shrines may have a block of *sandalwood* to rub with water against a stone to provide a light *tilak* paste. *Kumkum* is from *turmeric* or saffron crocus plants and turned red or other colours with slaked lime while *chandan* is a thick yellow aromatic paste from sandalwood. *Tilaks* may be applied to the foreheads of deity statues or other idols, or even photos of them or of important people.

Tilaks are distinct from the *bindi* or marks for women indicating marital status, these being higher up on the forehead and sometimes as a manufactured sticker in place of powder; the *sindoor* also for marriage is a line of powder between a central hair parting. *Mehndi* or *henna* is an orange-brown paste applied in detailed decorative designs to women's and sometimes men's hands and feet; it can last a month before entirely wearing off. *Mehndi* expresses the illuminating *self* within and is particularly used for brides at weddings and other auspicious ceremonies and festivals; it has spread to other countries and traditions.

Akshamalās or sacred necklaces are made with beads from seeds of the *rudraksha* tree, or from the woods of the *tulsi* or *tulasi* plant or *sandalwood* trees. *Akshamalās* are both spiritual signifiers and prayer beads for counting repetitions of a deity's name or of *Vedic* chants; they're ideally held in the right hand with beads moved forward by the thumb against the forefinger while a head bead called a *sumeru* marks the beginning and end of a count.

Rudraksha akshamalās are particularly worn by *Shaivites*- *Shiva* developed from the *Vedic* god *Rudra* while *aksha* means *eyes* in reference to *Shiva's* third eye of the *self*. *Tulsi akshamalās* are particularly worn by *Vaishnavites* as an expression of *Vishnu's* consort *Lakshmi*, one of her avatars being a *tulsi* plant. *Sandalwood* is a yellow, heavy, fine-grained and slow-growing wood unusual in retaining its fragrance for decades and which is used for incense as well as *tilak*; smaller beads are more expensive.

Akshamalās may further be made from small *shilas* or rounded stones representing *Vishnu*. A *japa mala* is the set of *akshamala* beads and usually comprises the sacred number 108 excluding the *sumeru*; a 50 bead *japa mala* however may also reflect the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. *Mala* is jewellery made from organic materials. Necklaces with icons here are for the gods *Radha-Krishna*, *Kali*, *Krishna*, *Surya* and *Hanuman* as his mace, *Shiva* as his snakes, and the *aum* symbol for higher consciousness. *Rakhis* are sacred bracelet threads tied on, with the bottom one here a fixed band, signifying devotion and sometimes with different colours for different gods; the top one has *swastikas* for understanding beyond dualities of thought given by the two crossing arms.

The *Nataraja* is the greatest Hindu symbol, issuing from immense psychological insight with *Shiva* in his *tandava* Dionysian dance of the liberated mind standing on *Apasmara* the Apollonian demon of ignorance. He is circumscribed by a ring of fire, the basis of the mind as self-referral consciousness meaning the attention is to be kept away from the groundlessness of the intellect per se and secure within the intuition or its *self*, and within the gods or *gunas* or modes of mind comprising the Dionysiac interface with relative thought.

Brahman as all-embracing background dynamic silence is expressed by the dance being self-contained and self-effulgent- everything in the relative makes ultimate reference to the absolute but the absolute makes reference only to itself. The mind avoids castle in the sky theorizing and rigid principle and dances freely in life without limit. *Shiva* lifts his left leg symbolizing the intellect as the workings of the left half of the brain prevented from trying to find grounds in its own terms, as in other gods' iconography, and hence us being in the world but not of it; only the right leg is grounded while left is sinistral, related to sinister.

Shiva's oneness with the cobras and their phallic and intellectually treacherous connotations all around him expresses his unity yet unaffected relation with sexuality- he is both eroticism and asceticism, reconciling sexuality along with the thinking mind only from within them and not trying to move outside to any foolish subject to object position. The tiger's skin strips similarly reflect the mind locked-on to its *self*, the animal mind with its lower intellect doing this more easily; meanwhile *Shiva's* consort *Parvati* in her form as *Kali* also provides a dance of destruction and has a lion or tiger mount.

The sacred *aum* symbol refers to the first four of seven states of consciousness on paths to self-realization and unity with the divine, the three relative states and the transitional transcendental state. The top left curve is deep sleep, the right curve dreaming, and the bottom left curve regular waking state; the *chandra* or moon-like crescent separates the *bindu* or dot, the dimensionless point of the unchanging absolute. The *chandra* is *maya* or the illusion of the mind led by the intellect and senses instead of itself or its own consciousness while *cosmic*

consciousness or *turiya* is the experience of the absolute or pure consciousness, conscious only of itself usually in meditation and to be extended into the waking state to dispel *maya*.

The three constituent sounds of *aum* relate to many other spiritual sets of three including the structure of consciousness of *knower*, *knowing* and *known*, the *trimurti* gods, and the *gunas*; the silence after the word *aum* is the unity of all in *Brahman*. Moreover the left side of the symbol is in the shape of a 3 and the right the 0 of *Brahman* as beyond relational numbers; *aum* is also written as *Om*.

The *swastika* represents the stability of mind in all directions out of alignment with the higher *self*; it's also sacred in various ways to other *dharmic* religions. The opposing dualities characterizing the relative world of thought and experience are represented by the two lines, and the *self's* transcendence and unification of them by the central point. *Swastika* is Sanskrit for *good being* where righteous thought and action issue from the position beyond concepts of right and wrong or positive and negative.

The *swastika's* stability associates it with *Vishnu* the preserver while the lines as two stylized serpents associate it with *Shiva's* as well as *Vishnu's* snakes and illumination from sexuality; illumination as enlightenment further associates it with *Surya* the *Vedic* sun god. The *swastika* also has astrological reference to the shapes of the similar main asterisms of the Great Bear and Little Bear constellations and their revolving around the pole star at the centre of all the stars' apparent movement; the four arms moreover reflect the four *Vedas*. Here are metal *swastikas* for use in *pujas* lying on ones on a *gamucha* headscarf, plus an anticlockwise one on Buddhist temple doors.

In clockwise or right-handed forms it expresses the god *Brahma* and the creation, present outward expansion and evolution of the universe while in anticlockwise or left-handed forms it's the future inward moving contracting universe, as described in modern cosmology. Anticlockwise *swastikas* may be displayed at more negative ceremonies such as funerals, allied with anticlockwise circumambulation with the left hand rather than the auspicious right hand of the body closest to the corpse.

Here the *swastika* is on an old coin, a bus and a folk string instrument; the *Nataraja*, *aum* and *swastika* are sophisticated sets of philosophical ideas yet found throughout Indian culture and without parallels in the West. The *swastika* is among the world's oldest sacred symbols with examples from *Indus Valley Civilization* sites 5000 years ago; it's also a symbol in many European pre-Christian and early Christian cultures including Greece, Rome and Anglo Saxon, possibly having spread from India.

The German Nazi party looked to the *Aryans* or early European and central Asian speakers of Indo-European languages, who were thought to have invaded Europe and India, as a founding master race to identify with and took their *swastika* symbol; they may also have been trying to tap into ancient knowledge and strength. Hitler redesigned the regular clockwise *swastika* himself, tilting it on a corner with the three colours from the previous German flag- it was used from the mid-1920s to 1945, becoming the sole national flag for the last ten years.

Nazi naval flags were through and though however, displaying anticlockwise as well as clockwise *swastikas*, while straight clockwise *swastikas* were also used; the *swastika* has then become stigmatized in the West. The tilted *swastika* is a less common Hindu symbol but also references both the *Vishnu chakra* or energy and sharpness of mind, and *samsara* or the cycle or reincarnation as a wheel; here are examples on a *Vishnu* temple in Delhi and a building in Allahabad.

The syllable *Sri* again symbolizes the transcendent and is a character in *Sanskrit* and Hindi in the *Devanagiri* script. It's also an honourable form of address particularly for deities, comparing with the words *lord* or *lady* and *holy*, and related to *sir*; it also evokes prosperity and hence has association with the goddess *Lakshmi*.

Other honorifics for people and deities include *swami* or guru or holy man, *maha* or great, *baba* or wise for an older man, *bahadur* or brave or chivalrous, *sahib* or master or owner, ...*ji* or respect added to the end of a name, *jai* or victory, *adi* or first, and *bhagavan* or God is associated with *Krishna* along with abstract expressions of God. Formal titles are also created for *Vedic* learners of various kinds.

Mandalas are geometrical patterns expressive of the organizing intelligence of *Brahman* or consciousness both in life here and across the cosmos- viewing them helps focus the attention on the *self's* potential while they can also be the abode of a deity. A *mandala* compares with the mind established in the central *self* and having no outward limits to its reach or achievements; historically it was an administrative region where power was concentrated in the centre but without fixed territorial boundaries.

The *Sri Yantra* or *Sri Chakra mandala* is a standard composition of a circle within a square with four T-shaped gates and nine intersecting triangles within that create many more, representing increasing self-realization towards one's own centre. Four upright triangles represent masculinity or *Shiva* and five downward represent femininity or his wife *Parvati* or *Shakti*; the resulting six-pointed hexagrams express sexual and cosmic union along with creative processes and relate to *Shiva's* and *Parvati's* son *Shanmukha* or *Six-faced* or *Murugan*. *Shanmukha* hexagrams are also found carved on temples and provide pendants.

Sex dissolves duality into unity and *cosmic consciousness* or the fifth state of consciousness where a connection with the absolute and truth is maintained throughout relative experience; *Sri Yantra* red colours further reflect sexual energy. The *bindu* or central point is the orgasmic junction between body and *self* in parallel with the relative manifest universe and its absolute unmanifest source or one-pointed *Brahman*. *Sri Meru* is a name for the *Yantra* in relief form, *Mount Meru* being a mythical gigantic mountain as the centre of the universe.

Rangolis or *kolams* are decorative floor designs of various coloured powder, rice paste or grains used during festivals to provide sacred welcoming areas for deities. Being short lived they reflect life's impermanence and the necessary attention to and enthusiasm for the present, while the materials as edible by small creatures reflect respect for all life; they're traditionally made by women at sunrise. A *rangoli* type design appears on a girl's face here at a festival.

The conch shell used as a horn reflects the primary nature of sound and vibration and hearing the voice of the intuition and the *Veda*, and complements the illumination of light; the conch features in *Vishnu* iconography. Spirals including the shell's also reflect both the power of the mind that progressively embraces more understanding of the outer world, and the holistic rather than linear nature of understanding.

Flower water bowls and *flower water rangolis* are similarly auspicious and ephemeral; they particularly attract *Lakshmi's* blessings as a goddess of beauty. The sacred number 108 has a rich set of properties including being 1 to the power 1, times 2 to the power 2, times 3 to the power 3, or $1 \times 4 \times 27$, and being divisible by the number of its divisors, 12. The figures 1, 0 and 8 also represent one thing, nothing and everything or infinity, the infinity symbol turned upright, for the immanence, transcendence and boundlessness of *Brahman*, or the relative, absolute and their union.

In the *Samudra manthan* creation myth there are 54 *devas* or gods and 54 *asuras* or demons pulling the phallic snake repeatedly either way, while Krishna has 108 milkmaid friends or *gopis* with their sexual reference. 1 is also the phallus, relativity and linear masculine thought, 0 the vagina opening and the absolute and circuitous feminine thought, and 8 the woman's figure as access to infinity when on its side for sex; infinity's counterpart is 0 while 8 further has serpentine shape in reference to the Dionysiac's and truth's stealthy presence behind the intellect. Moreover 108 describes the size and distance relations between the earth, sun and moon, and is one and a half times 72, the number of years for the sky to revolve one degree of arc due to the earth's axial precession.

Other sacred numbers involving the same figures include *1008* which is divisible by the number of 168 prime numbers below it, and *81* with the square of the sum of its two digits equalling the number; *1080* is also used. *7* is important with seven sacred cities and rivers, seven *Vedic* sages, seven *heavenly planes*, seven promises in Hindu weddings, and in music seven notes within the octave or the doubling of a frequency, which predates their use in Western music.

0 was also discovered by Hindu mathematicians and is revered as lying beyond the ratio-nality of regular relative numbers, not subject to multiplication or division or expression in terms of other numbers; no matter how great the mind's constructions are, if they aren't grounded transcendentally they collapse to nothing, *zero* times any number still being *zero*. Moreover there is the notion of *one more* as denying false Apollonian closure and symmetry with numbers or sets commonly using round numbers plus one, for instance the *Gita's* 701 verses. An awareness of the interconnected nature of the world and the mind rather than discrete elements and ideas is also found in *Vedic* fire sacrifices where residue from a previous fire is carried over to the next.

My Hindu name is *Gouresh* which I occasionally need in Hindu temples or other settings; westerners in Hindu sects likewise use one. It's a *Shaivite* name whereas I have a *Brahma Ishtar devata* or personal god and a *Vaishnavite* meditation mantra, representing all three *trimurti* gods. During *archanas* or personal *pujas* the priest may also ask if the devotee has a *gotra* to be invoked, an affiliation with a social group claiming male line lineage back to an ancient sage; Indian states may have several thousand *gotras* each.

Affiliation is partially mythical so I chose *Agastya*, his name meaning *mountain thrower* after my *mantra* meaning *mountain peak* as well as being a name of *Lakshmi*; *Agastya* further became associated with a 7th century bce father figure of Tamil literature. *Gotras* are distinct from *jatis* or family groups or communities as subdivisions of *varna* or caste, and from *kulas* or groups following the same deity.

The *gotra* lineages are descendants of the *Saptarishi* or set of seven patriarchal sages in the *Vedas* with *Agastya* sometimes an eighth member; they are sons and representations of *Brahma* and also the ancestors of the *Brahmin* caste. Here *Matsya* the fish, as the first incarnation of *Vishnu* in his main *dashavatara* set of ten, participates in a great flood myth by rescuing the *Saptarishi* plus the current *Manu*, who is a progenitor figure for humanity in the present historical age and was the first king.

The current *Saptarishi* names are *Gautama*, *Bharadvaja*, *Vishvamitra*, *Jamadagni*, *Vashista*, *Kashyapa* and *Atri*; they feature in the *Puranic* myths while *Vashista* features in the *Vashista Yoga*, an early medieval 29000-verse text on self-realization in the form a discussion with *Rama*. The members change either with each *manvantara* or lifespan of a *Manu*, consisting of 71 four-*yuga* historical period cycles of indeterminate length, or alternatively with every new *yuga*; some current members however have different names in different scriptures. The *Saptarishi* embody the plough asterism in the *Great Bear* constellation, giving their names in *siddhanta* or Hindu astronomy to its seven main stars; *Agastya* by contrast is the name for Canopus, the second brightest star in the sky in Carina, a southern sky constellation but viewable from India.

Practice

Worship, meditation and other spiritual practices are for raising consciousness to more holistic and universal levels where thought and action gain absolute reference rather than only relative reference to other thought and action. Spirituality is an acknowledgement of the transcendent or a sphere of meaning beyond material life although an interest in it via Hinduism comes from oneself as the attention has to move inward and there is no obligation for any devotional practice.

The seven states of consciousness are *sleeping, dreaming, waking, transcendental, cosmic, god, and unity* becoming *Brahmin*; the first three are concerned with relative thought while the fourth is pure consciousness only conscious of itself. The others establish the *self's* aspects of the *knower, process of knowing* and the *known* on the level of attention or awareness, all things being increasingly seen as aspects of *Brahman* or the plane of existence; *cosmic* or the fifth state is the key first higher and enlightening state where intellect is united under intuition.

In the higher states the *self* is retained in the attention by the attention returning hermetically to itself rather than being lost in the objects of the senses. The person experiences the real subject-subject relation with *Brahman* underlying all things rather than the delusory subject-object relation with their own intellect and material world. Right action under an unaffected relation with the flow of the *gunas* then emerges and is good not only for oneself but for all others along with the environment, and furthers personal development while improving one's *karma* or balance of spiritual merit.

Action has universal interconnection and reach and returns to affect us both in this life and following lives in terms of the level of one's reincarnation across the array of human circumstances and other life forms in a cycle of birth and death. Right action to align with issues spontaneously from the foundations of nature in life situations and has separation from its instrumental reference; action is done for itself not for its results, even though the results are there.

A *dharmic* life achieving good *karma* has a balance suited to the individual of the two main paths of *Samkhya* or action and *Yoga* or knowledge while incorporating chosen devotional practices. More favourable reincarnations progressively lead the individuated *self* or soul in *samsara* or the *wheel of life* to *moksha* or release and union with *Brahman*. People are aspects of a single timeless consciousness and have no meaningful birth or death; life is an individual drop or wave of water seemingly separated for a few moments from the ocean.

Worship is centred on personally maintained home or business shrines and *pujas* or ritual offerings carried out by anyone for either silence, worship, thanks or supplication; I first kept one to *Vishnu* and his consort in 2008. The deities in my next shrine here are from all the *trimurti* families of *Brahma, Vishnu* and *Shiva*, from left to right *Saraswati, Parvati, Shiva, Ganesh* and *Radha-Krishna*.

Gods represent human qualities which here are roughly learning, love, renewal, wisdom, balance and knowledge; they relate to the *gunas* or underlying tendencies of life or nature with the *trimurti* families corresponding to the three groups of *gunas*. The presiding deity here is *Shiva* in the centre while the green background is *Brahman* or nature that the gods are manifestations of; *Brahman* isn't a god and isn't worshipped; my guru at the base is *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi*.

Murtis are statues, pictures, icons, and other idols and signifiers; shrines should be in dedicated and pleasant areas. In the next shrine I had the same gods. The statues are given a consecration ceremony called *prana pratishtha* meaning *life force positioning* for the particular aspects of *Brahman* that comprise the god to be associated with it; the object is submerged, for example in water, milk or rice. Next were *Ganesh, Lakshmi, Parvati* and *Radha-Krishna*.

Gods or values aren't subject to rational account or able to be seen or touched and are instead located in the Dionysiac field between the changing relative and unchanging absolute realms. The following shrine had about 17 deities- *Ganesh, Lakshmi, Durga, Nandi, Shivling* or *Shiva-Parvati, Shiva Nataraja, Saraswati, Alamelu, Venkateswara, Hanuman, Vishnu* as *shila* stone and *Radha-Krishna*.

Gods of other religions as expressions of *Brahman* are fine so I also had the Chinese folk deities *Shoushen*, *Lushen* and *Fushen* and the Buddhist *Avalokitesvara* although the Buddha was also *Vishnu's* ninth incarnation; a prayer mat is in front. The values or qualities represented here then include power, defence, coordination, aesthetics, grace, patience, courage, unity, and compassion; multiple pairs of arms hold artefacts embodying these in complex and overlapping ensembles. The Chinese folk gods from right to left were *Fu* for luck and success, *Lu* for money and prosperity, and *Shou* for health and long life; as with Hindu idols they have reassuring eyes. *Saraswati* became my *Ishtar devata* or the deity chosen above others to look to in 2010, and is the presiding deity here.

Life achievements issue from our higher qualities or spirit, changing the world beyond rational calculation and the *puja* enlivens these qualities through its central feature of the *darshan* or momentary personal sighting of the deity. This spirit is what people are already such that our relationship with the gods and Hinduism is only subject-subject and not a subject-object appeal for anything external to us- worship illuminates the god that is us, helping express our insight and power beyond rationality.

The idol looks back at the devotee, often with eyes painted with great realism and emotional awareness, such that the devotee's goals and how to achieve them are realigned, augmented and given back; the subtle dynamics underlying rightful processes considered are vitalized. The self-referential subject-subject loop of silent but dynamics or active attendance to the god returns the self to its *self* and its power.

Next were *Ganesh*, *Durga*, *Surya*, *Shivling*, *Nataraja*, *Saraswati*, *Nandi*, *Lakshmi*, *Vishnu* and *Hanuman*. *Murtis* are only material objects but *Brahman* is everywhere, which includes where the *murtis* are, so *Brahman* and the god and their values are also really in them. There are debates over how far or in what ways the gods can be understood to be real or independent of us, or previously incarnated on earth, in contrast to inflexible and intolerant *Abrahamic* doctrine.

Here were *Lakshmi*, *Saraswati* and *Shiva* with a fruit offering. To convey the deities' qualities shrine platform edges can be touched with the right hand fingers then these touching the forehead and chest or face. Here were the same on an ornamental cloth, plus a *Parvati* and *Shiva* icon. And here I had *Saraswati* and *Shiva* before adding *Surya*, *Hanuman*, *Kurma* and several others. Icons are often present at shrines and *pujas*; Hindu painting is typically luxuriously elaborate and detailed although there are simpler styles. This is an array of spiritual signifiers from different traditions where I previously lived including Hindu, Mahayana Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist and Shenist.

There are many versions of *pujas*, my full occasional one involving about 20 *upacharas* or attendances including offering food, drink, light, incense and flowers, *namaskara* or bowing, *abhishekam* or pouring liquid, *aarti* or moving a flame, scripture reading, and *prasad* or offering food and drink to a deity to be blessed before consuming. At the end of the *namaskara* hands may be pressed together pointed to the deity with upper thumbs touching forehead, chin and chest- signifying right thought, right speech and right heart or emotion.

Pujas transcend the duality of ends-based forms of giving and taking by combining them- the offerings to the gods reflect more developed states of mind where action is separated from the *self* or consciousness and given up to objective righteousness in an unaffected yet full relation with the world. The word *shanti* as the stability of the *self* across all circumstances may be recited three times after a *puja* for the overcoming of worldly and internal obstacles.

Pujas include circumambulation around the shrine three times or more clockwise; temple shrines are usually designed for this but where it's not possible devotees may revolve on the spot where they're standing. *Pujas* are powerful aesthetic and numinous experiences to enliven the gods' transcendent qualities within us; the array of gods and their abstract human values provide a government and its departments for life.

Simpler daily short *pujas* that only take a few minutes are made to each of the gods in turn. These include burning incense particularly *dhoop* or gum circulated around the idol and all *murtis* in the room to honour the gods; oil lamps are favoured over candles due to the historical use of animal products in solidifying them. Here are *diyas* or oil lamps in metal and clay, a bottle of oil, lamp wick, *tilak* powder holder and different coloured clothes and cloth for different deity statues; ringing a bell concentrates the mind and signals the god.

Clay *diyas* often contain *ghee* or clarified butter with a wick which may be lit and left at temple shrines; they can be positioned in a line referencing the lines of lights for action comprising the *gunas* in the intuition. The *aarti* flame reflects *Brahman* as illumination and provides a medium for conveying the god's qualities, first being imbued with them by its movement in clockwise circular motion in front of the idol, then transferred to the devotee by their hands motioning the flame to their head or heart as one's intellect or emotion.

The blessed water ladle serves to the right-hand palm for either drinking or applying onto the hair over the head, again to transfer the god's qualities and blessings, while *prasad* is similarly imbued and transferred on consumption. In order to give one's *self* to oneself there is along with transference the *shatari* or metal cup placed to the head by a priest to remove the devotee's impurities; it has images at the top of the god's feet symbolized as *paduka* or traditional simple sandals, the impure part of the body to neutralize impurity.

Prasad and *shatari* as give and take lead beyond duality to right action in terms of the *gunas* or natural dynamics of situations rather than the fruits of action; fruit is central to the food offering and its detachment in terms of its sexual and reproductive reference, and with sex and its union of having and being had as the fruit of the coordination of mind. Further items used in *pujas* here include incense sticks, cones, *dhoop* and incense holders, *chandan tilak* paste, *camphor* and its burner, metal jug for pouring water over the *Shivling Shiva* idol, and cup for sipping water for self-purification; metal as a durable material parallels the *self's* security. Incense smoke reflects God as all-pervasive as well as the dissolving of the ego and thoughts into the supreme while *camphor* burns without residue, reflecting the complete elimination of confused intellectual structures of mind lacking reference to the intuitive *self*; camphor pieces can be left to burn at shrines along with *diyas*.

Sometimes present at *pujas* is the *sarva ichha kachua* or *archer of personal will turtle*, often in a dish embossed with the *aum* symbol and in copper coloured metal. It's for wish making, looking to the turtle's characteristics of determination, stability and longevity to make positive approaches to life more consistent and focusing efforts like an arrow; the dish can be filled with water for the turtle.

On the turtle's underside is a *magic square* of nine numbers called the *Ganesh yantra* with all its eight columns, rows and diagonals adding up to fifteen, reflecting equal success in all pathways. The turtle may also be found sculpted on the floors of *Shiva* temples often with a stylized rounded and flattened carapace, as *archer* is an epithet of *Rudra* the *Vedic* god who became *Shiva*.

Moreover the turtle *Kurma* is *Vishnu's* second incarnation in the *Samudra manthan* ocean of milk creation myth who prays to *Shiva* to remove the poison called *halahala* created from the ocean's churning before the gods' nectar was created, and representing affected rather than unaffected sexuality and wider relations. Even *Vishnu* couldn't bear the poison's fumes so *Shiva* drinks it for them, turning his throat blue.

The turtle along with the tortoise on land further have the ability to withdraw their head and limbs completely, reflecting the attention's inward containment within the intuition and *self*, not left beyond and vulnerable in groundless workings of the intellect; this metaphor appears in the *Gita* while *Shiva's* rounded *Nataraja* has the same principle.

Hindus visit temples at leisure and without obligation where priests of the *Brahmin caste* or social group perform various *pujas* both as required and at set times in the day and in monthly and annual calendars; there are many festivals and other events. The *archana* is a short personal *puja* where the devotee's name, *gotra* or lineage back to a sage, and *nakshatra* or lunar birth star sign may be recited for a blessing, to invoke guidance or to look to meaning beyond the rational and material; a small donation can be made. Among more elaborate hour long *Brahmin pujas* is the *yagya* or *homa*, an ancient *Vedic* fire sacrifice using a consecrated but temporary square fire altar where only a small *murti* for the deity is present; food is typically burnt with wood fuel. Devotees may sit in a line extending away from the offering reflecting the *gunas* as lines of lights or points of intuitive insight.

Following an initiation ritual called *upanayana* *Brahmins* wear a thread on the skin, over the left shoulder and under the right arm, called a *yagnopaveetham*; two threads are worn if they are married and a third if they have children. Threads have three strands reflecting debts to scholarship, teachers and family, along with purity of thought, word and action, and the *tridevi* or highest female gods of *Saraswati*, *Lakshmi* and *Parvati*. *Brahmins* have forehead and sometimes body markings and are serious but businesslike without fuss.

Temples aren't designed for congregations with fixed seating even during events- there is personal volition and subjective spirituality for both attendance and movement around, not *Abrahamic* external organization without freedom or centred on priestly mediation of God. Shoes are removed before entering a temple or before stepping up to a shrine's platform, ideally using the left hand as for all unclean tasks, the right being reserved for eating and if possible giving and receiving. Socks are optional but will dirty when walking and are harder to clean than feet; bathing before attending the temple or shrine provides cleanliness of body alongside the mind.

To acknowledge moving in ascendance towards God devotees may touch the steps or threshold of a temple with the right hand and then touch themselves, also often repeating this when departing a temple while turning to face it, or after walking backwards out of a shrine room so not to turn their back to it. Temples or at least their central shrines typically close for a few hours after noon.

Temples and important houses are built to architectural systems called *Vastu Shastra* which along with idol and other *murti* construction methods are detailed in the *Agamas* scriptures. A tapering tower is positioned above the presiding deity inside to link earth to heaven, in north India this being the *sikhara* with curvilinear sides and *amalaka* or lid-like top. This is a large *Dravidian* or South Indian style temple which opened in 2006 near where I live in the West Midlands county, central England in Britain; the design is based on the major temple complex dedicated to the *Vishnu* incarnation *Venkateswara* in Andhra Pradesh.

The *Dravidian* temple tower is the *vimanam* with its straight edged pyramidal sides; the upper part may be called a *sikhara*. It has sculptures and decreasing tiers going up, and topped with either a *kalasam* or inverted pot dome or a sideways cylindrical feature; they also often have one or several gateway towers at the entrance to the temple grounds called *gopurams*. *Prakarams* meanwhile are encircling compounds around the central shrine at some *Dravidian* temples. Flat and often four sided small temples, often short but becoming tall obelisks, are also ubiquitous.

The *dhwaja stamba* flag pole indicates the temple is operational and without it the temple may only be a monument; the three bars at top point to the shrine's entrance. There's a square section near the base with four plaques displaying the temple's *Vaishnavite*, *Shaivite* or other sectarian iconography; smaller shrines of different affiliation in the grounds may have their own smaller *dhwaja stamba*.

A *balipeetam* is a platform before reaching the shrine for offering a flower head or burning camphor to symbolize leaving the ego behind; it's usually positioned next to the *dhwaja stamba* and a statue of the

presiding deity's *vahana* or vehicle or animal mount facing the shrine, in this case *Garuda* the bird-man for *Vishnu*. Alternatively it may be positioned at the base of a set of steps ascending to a hilltop temple.

Large temples may have a *tank* or rectilinear paved pool of water for ritual bathing and ceremonies, sometimes becoming very large and ornate. There may further be a *sthala vriksha* or temple tree, referring both to all life as divine and the folk Hinduism notion of trees, as towers uniting heaven and earth; temples as a whole along with mountains are seen in the same terms. The divinity of life is also expressed in the *yali*, a mythical animal combining about seven animals- a lion head, goat horns, pig ears, elephant trunk, cat body, cow hind, and snake tail. *Yalis* often feature in both external and internal temple architecture for protecting the temple and the routes to it.

The *mandapa* is the main shrine hall with numerous carved pillars featuring minor gods and goddesses including *yalis* and *yakshins* or voluptuous female nature spirits, and incidents from the two Hindu epics or the residing deities' *puranic* myths; the *ardhamandapa* is an antechamber. Here the central presiding deity is accompanied by two other main shrines in the hall but only he has his *vahana* present facing him.

The devotee has to stand aligned with the *garbhagriha* or *womb chamber* narrow enclosure for the sighting of the deity within all as the mind is to be narrowly aligned with truth; it further reflects sex and the vagina's stepped doorways, and coordination of mind in seduction needed for phallic alignment with these. The temple represents both the universe and the human body with the *garbhagriha* the location of the originating singularities of the big bang cosmic origin and orgasm; this unity as Brahman or consciousness then underlies all times and points in both relative reality and subjective experience.

In contrast to the *darshan's* meeting of eyes and exchange of influence with the deity, Christian statues often look downwards, cutting off personal relations and leaving one alone in connotation of *Abrahamic* intermediaries and wider controlling organizations with their corrupt power relations. This is at a temple in Vietnam to *Mariamman*, a southern Indian health and fertility goddess and manifestation of *Durga* or *Parvati* the female Godhead; a northern version of *Mariamman* is *Shitala*. Again the main shrine has two others set to the sides and rear.

Offerings for temple deities are typically given to the priest at the shrine before being partially returned as blessed *prasad*. They're typically available at stalls outside and include flowers and coconuts with their reference to sexuality as spiritual revelation- flowers are plants' sexual organs as well as beautiful, sex and beauty as aesthetic transcendently grounded logic, while coconuts have a white liquid developed inside a hairy exterior. Coconuts are also blessed and anointed by Brahmins as part of longer *puja* offerings.

Small sugar sweets, sometimes mixed with nuts, are among the most common *prasad*, being pleasant to eat in reference to the body's basic needs; sugar is energy with its nature as the absolute in distinction to the relative world energy acts on. Among other offerings is *abhishekam* or various libations poured over deity statues; here oil to pass to the priests is sold with clay *diya* oil lamps. Less frequent offerings include blood sacrifice, the *Kamakhya Temple* in Guwahati in Assam for instance killing male goats for *Durga*, partly in reference to menstruation and fertility; there's been a temple here at least since the 8th century.

The *aarti* flame to transfer the god's qualities near the end of the *puja* examples *dharma* and choice of life path and god in everyone having their own hand movements from the flame to themselves with no two people the same. These include variously moving hands to the head and chest once or twice and touching the forehead then upper and lower lips and both cheeks then chest.

Elaborate stylized wooden chariots or *rathas* may be used to move temple deity statues or copies of them in ceremonies called *rath yatras*. *Sadhanas* are further devotional practices and include *japa* or repetition of a

god's name in either *mantra* meditation or with *akshamala* necklace beads, plus yoga *asanas* or body postures, and chanting *Vedic* hymns. *Transcendental meditation* was introduced to the West by *Maharishi* from the 1950s and is a twice daily twenty minute practice in an ordinary sitting position; I've done it since April 1994.

It partly uses a gently repeating and hence vibrating *mantra* to still the mind, find its natural order and gain better alignment with pure consciousness as the source of thought. My private *mantra* is also a *Lakshmi* epithet related to her honorific *sri* and evokes her blessings; it's supplemented with other *Sanskrit* words meaning roughly *I acknowledge the highest*. Meditation provides the 4th state of consciousness where consciousness is conscious only of its unitary self distinct from the relative realm beyond, and which can then be infused in the mind in 3rd or regular waking state to produce 5th, the first higher state and cornerstone of personal development. *TM's* beneficial psychological and physiological effects have been the subject of many hundreds of peer reviewed scientific studies.

Yoga means union and the seeking of liberation from the misconceptions of duality or the intellect's workings per se, and refers both to one of the six traditional philosophical systems and the physical practices for yoking mind and body together. The Western *Hatha Yoga* system of *asanas* has three formative texts from the 15th-17th centuries and *Shiva* as its mythological founder.

It's also informed by the philosophical *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* as a collection of 196 aphorisms in *Sanskrit* summarizing *yoga* traditions; *Patanjali* was probably one of several contributing authors. The *Sutras* discuss *samadhi* as 4th state of consciousness where analytical and logical thought is silenced for clear-sightedness, and the path to this in terms of non-attachment to the end results of action.

Sadhanas further include the *chakra* system from the *tantra* group of early medieval traditions with concern for the love relation of *Shiva* and his consort *Parvati* or *Shakti* as the female principle. There are seven *chakras* down the centre of the body as points of energy or vortexes, comparing with the discus *chakra* that *Vishnu* holds- *sahasrara* for spirituality, *ajna* for intuition, *vishuddha* for communication, *anahata* for love, *manipura* for power, *swadhistana* for sexuality, and *muladhara* for survival. *Ajna* at the forehead is associated with *tilak* markings and the third eye of the *self*. *Kundalini* or self-awareness rises through the *chakras* from *muladhara* at the base of the spine to the foremost *sahasrara* at the crown of the head or above it; here masculine and feminine sexual energies unite in *Brahman* to dispel illusion.

Hindus try to complete a *yatra* or pilgrimage at least every year to one of numerous *tirthas* or *crossing places* as providing inspiration for divine qualities of mind; for foreign Hindus moreover a visit to India is the basic one. Sites include places in or representing aspects of the gods' myths including birthplaces and capital cities along with places associated with historical holy figures, all with limited regard for the degree of historical truth reference- sites as with idols just provide reified points of attention for higher values aspired to.

They include the *Sapta puri*, a set of seven sacred cities- Ayodhya as *Rama's* birthplace, Mathura as *Krishna's* birthplace, Varanasi as *Shiva's* favourite city, Ujjain as a *mela* venue, Haridwar where the Ganges enters the plains from the Himalayas, Dwarka as *Krishna's* capital, and Kanchipuram with its early medieval *Shiva* temples. The *Char Dham* or *Four abodes* is a group of pilgrimage destinations at cardinal points in India established by *Shankara* in the early 8th century- Badrinath in Uttarakhand, Puri in Odisha, Dwarka in Gujarat, and Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu.

Kshetras are sites associated with a sacred event or person and usually have temples; pilgrims may queue at major ones for several hours for a *darshan* with a presiding deity that takes only a few moments to acknowledge the transcendent. Some *kshetras* favour particular clothes and colours such as red and saffron for women and black for men. Sacred waters include a set of seven rivers- the Ganges, Yamuna, Indus, Narmada, Godavari, Cauvery and Saraswati which is important in the *Rigveda* but disappeared early in the second

millennium bce and now only exists mythically, including sometimes as underground; *ghats* are steps towards water.

Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on the Ganges is the most important holy city and has been a centre for philosophers and artists since antiquity; it dates from around the 12th century bce and is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities. People come here to die and gain *moksha* or release from *samsara* the birth and death cycle; there are ongoing cremations at one of the larger *ghats* day and night in a very intense and alien atmosphere. Varanasi is the *maha* or great *shmathana* or cremation ground.

Moreover ashes from cremations anywhere in the country are often transported to some point along the Ganges for scattering in, referencing myths describing the Ganges as descending from heaven and hence providing a route back to it. The Ganges symbolizes the sacred waters of Hindu mythology generally and is a symbol of Indian civilization; bathing anywhere in it washes away impurities of the mind and sin, restoring order from disorder.

It's deified as the goddess *Ganga*, here worshipped in a nightly ceremony in Varanasi; she's a consort of all the *trimurti* deities. The Ganges begins in the Himalayas in Uttarakhand west of Nepal, flowing south and east across northern India into Bangladesh and the Bay of Bengal; a final part of it becomes the Hooghly River, flowing through Kolkata. *Ganga* here in 5th and 10th century sculptures is holding a pitcher of primordial milk and standing on her mount, a *makara* comprising either a crocodile or a comparable mythical land animal front half and aquatic animal rear half.

The *makara* along with milk is associated with love and passion in the sexualized *Avatarana* myths in the *Vedas* describing the Ganges' descent from heaven. *Indra* the lord of the heavenly planes slays *Vritra* the phallic serpent god, releasing the intoxicating *soma* drink as the gods' celestial nectar and which falls to earth as sustaining rain. Heavenly sex concludes with the erection quelled by ejaculation which both coordinates the mind towards divinity and fertilizes new life; the sky above is male and earth below female.

Chitrakut in Madhya Pradesh is another pilgrim site where *Rama* in the *Ramayana* epic spent his early years. Later in forests nearby he and his wife *Sita* and brother *Lakshmana* spent eleven and a half of their fourteen years' exile caused by the exploitation of an agreement made by his father King *Dasharatha* with one of his three wives who wasn't mother to *Rama*. Kamadigiri is a small hill next to the town that embodies *Rama* and has a five-kilometre pathway to circumambulate. Shoes are removed for the walk while some devotees lie down all the way round, here using a coconut to mark the next point to get up to walk to.

The *Kumbh mela* is the largest pilgrimage gathering, held every twelve years at Allahabad in southern Uttar Pradesh where people bathe in the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers, also combining with the mythical Saraswati. The 2013 event lasted 55 days and was the largest gathering of people in history with over 30 million on the foremost day 10th February and 120 million overall. *Kumbh* is a *pitcher* or *jug* and *mela* is *fair*, after the sexualized *Samudra manthan* creation myth of the churning of a primordial milk ocean and the jug of nectar derived from it.

Vishnu spilt the milk at four cities now in four states on three sacred rivers and various six-yearly, three-yearly, and yearly sub-*melas* are also held at these. Along with Allahabad the cities are Haridwar in Uttarakhand both on the Ganges, Nasik in Maharashtra on the Godavari, and Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh on the Shipra; the Shipra is separate to the set of seven sacred rivers.

Festival dates are determined astrologically with *melas* coinciding with the planet Jupiter or *Brihaspati* entering the constellation of *Aquarius* the water bearer with its pitcher, or entering *Leo*. Stepping into the water on the main bathing day in glittering sunlight was a remarkable experience; water is cupped in homage to all the gods.

Living with Indians you begin to learn their practical ways to look after yourself, keep warm, wash, eat and dress without the anaesthetizing and disorienting amenities of modernity.

Devotees may also visit *ashrams* or spiritual retreats traditionally located in forests or mountains offering instruction from a *guru*, study of scripture and philosophy, meditation, yoga, music and exercise. Depending on the *ashram's* dharmic perspective sexual relations may be encouraged or not as paths to union with the divine; *ashrams* are popular with westerners on spiritual searches. Mahatma Gandhi's base from 1917-33 during the independence movement was the *Sabarmati Ashram* in Gujarat and was unusual for admitting *dalits* or the *casteless* underclass. After a period of imprisonment he established the *Sevagram Ashram* in Maharashtra, his base from 1936 to his death in 1948.

There are numerous festivals with their dates determined by the lunisolar calendar *Surya siddhanta*. *Navratri* in October or November is dedicated to the female Godhead *Parvati* as *Durga* and her slaying of the demon *Mahishasura* in her set of nine *Navadurga avatars*; *Navratri* means nine nights and the *avatars* along with *Lakshmi* and *Saraswati* are worshipped over ten days.

It's an important festival for women through worship of the *tridevi* members or consorts of the three principle gods; the final tenth day is *Dusserha* and is followed twenty days later by *Diwali*. *Diwali* or *Festival of Lights* again in October or November is among the most important, celebrating light over darkness and good over evil. *Diyas* or oil lamps here express the line of isolated non-rational points of understanding as guiding lights and that the intuitive mind finds in right action. *Diwali* also celebrates the returns from periods of exile of characters in both the Hindu epics- the *Pandava* brothers in the *Mahabharata* and *Rama* in the *Ramayana*.

Holi at full moon in February or March is a popular spring festival, also celebrating the love of *Krishna* and *Radha*; people throw coloured powder and water at each other as an aphrodisiac for fertility. The festival also celebrates the survival of *Prahlada* a mythical *Vishnu* devotee from the attacks of his demon father *Hiranyakashipu*, later killed by *Vishnu's* fourth incarnation *Narasimha* the *man-lion*. *Shivaratri* also in February or March celebrates the marriage day of *Shiva* and *Parvati* and the convergence of masculine and feminine energies. *Ganesh Chaturthi* in August or September celebrates *Ganesh's* birthday over eleven days where he is immersed in water to wash away his devotees' impurities and misfortunes; sweet foods are served as at other festivals.

The *ashramas* or four stages in life are *brahmacharya* or the student, *grihastha* or the householder, *vanaprastha* or the withdrawer for reflection, and for a limited number *sannyasi* for men or *sannyasini* for women, the worldly renouncer who may be mendicant and itinerant. These stages secure the four *purusarthas* or life goals of *dharma* or right action, *artha* or legitimate material success, *kama* or love and pleasure, and *moksha* or the release from *samsara* or reincarnation; the *trivaga* is the triple worldly path of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* and the *chaturvarga* as also including *moksha*.

Subsequent reincarnation in a higher or lower level of consciousness within humanity or other life forms depends on the level of personal development and righteousness towards unity with God or *Brahman* gained in the present life; there is no eternal life distinct from *Brahman* and no damnation or hell. The foremost texts for the *ashramas* and *purusarthas* are the social and dharmic texts of *The Laws of Manu* of the 2nd century bce to 3rd ce attributed to *Manu* the first human, along with the *Arthashastra* of c300bce-200ce originally by Kautilya of the Mauryan empire, and the *Kamasutra* of c300 by Vatsyayana.

The *sannyasi* lifestyle with its purely spiritual concerns may be taken towards the end of life by men retired from work and family duties but can be taken at any time. Here disinterest and detachment from material life form the basis of a peaceful and simple existence; saffron, ochre and earth coloured clothes are common. Sometimes they are organized into an order where vows are taken and historically they've occasionally formed

a military force. *Sadhus* are men and sometimes women of a wide age range who follow a more organized version of the *sannyasi* lifestyle.

They possess little, study *Vedic* texts and follow disciplined practices for self-realization; they can provide blessings similar to *Brahmins* and have high social status. However with action superior to knowledge for personal development most Hindu seers and thinkers have been householders not withdrawers or renouncers. Islam also has *fakirs* or similar ascetic mendicants, along with *sufis* or mystics.

Sadhus may wear no clothes and cover their skin in sacrificial ash in parallel with *Shiva's* asceticism; they don't cut hair or beards in the view that cutting releases a subtle energy that distracts the attention's unaffected relation with the senses. By contrast though there is tonsure including at some temples where barbers shave devotees, symbolizing purity, humility and shedding the ego and the past, and starting anew; sometimes a *sikha* or a length or tuft of hair is left at the rear, reflecting one-pointedness of mind.

Varna or *caste* is described in the *Vedas* as a hierarchical system for social organization based on merit; centralization of power in society though is limited and secondary to local autonomy, in parallel with *dharma* or context-specific righteousness. The needs of society's various levels however are provided for by power being with its most capable and developed members at the top, not with the widest democratic tier of masses with their moronic desires defining society's official culture and dragging the higher levels and the whole down.

There are four main *varnas* of increasing numbers towards the bottom- *Brahmins* or priests, scholars and teachers, *kshatriyas* or rulers, administrators and warriors, *vaishyas* or artisans, traders and farmers, and *shudras* or manual and unskilled workers. *Varna* affects most Hindus' status, vocation and marriage prospects and in recent centuries unfortunately has been based largely on birth; *varna* discrimination is prohibited by the constitution with much government sponsored activity against it although the system also helps defend against both foreign cultures and exclusion caused by capitalist competition.

Although not described in the *Vedas* there is a large disadvantaged *dalit* underclass while *adivasis* or recognised tribes and ethnic minorities including semi-nomad groups comprise about 8% of India's population. *Varnas* are divided into thousands of *jatis* or extended family groups or communities linked by place of origin, profession or religious sect; there may be a preference to marry within one's *jati* as well as one's *varna*.

Ayurveda is the health system concerned with preventative practices and balancing three *doshas* or qualities of the mind and body- *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* in accord with personal *dharmaic* emphases. The *doshas* issue from the three *gunas* or tendencies of mind of *sattva* or serenity, *rajas* or work and *tamas* or rest while also relating to the *Vedic* gods of *Indra*, *Agni* and *Soma*, and the *mahabhuta* or five elements, as well as to three food groups. Fasting may be done in honour of particular gods or during festivals to be reminded of the body's needs and the situation for those struggling to meet them; *vratas* are fasting vows or obligations.

Jyotish is the Hindu system of astrology and part of the *Vedanga* scriptures; *siddhanta* is astronomy. The ecliptic or earth's orbital plane and the sun's yearly path through the sky is divided into 12 *rasis* or zodiacal constellations or signs, which were adapted for the Western system. They are the *Mesa* or ram, *Vrishabha* or bull, *Mithuna* or couple, *Kark* or crab, *Simha* or lion, *Kanya* or girl, *Tula* or the balance, *Vrishchika* or scorpion, *Dhanus* or bow, *Makara* or sea monster, *Kumbha* or pitcher, and *Mina* or fish.

Jyotish however uses the moon's position in its monthly orbit which is only 6 degrees from the ecliptic, and 17 degrees back towards the ecliptic from the earth's equatorial plane, and not the sun's position, to assign people's *rasis* at time of birth; as the moon orbits the earth the 12 *rasis* change about every two and a half days in 30 degrees of arc each. Precession or the direction of the earth's axis revolving over 26 000 years changes

the sun's position in relation to the month and in Western solar astrology the sun is now no longer in the constellations it's ascribed to at their times of the year; the moon however is unaffected.

I was born under the 11th *rasi* of *Kumbha* the pitcher that became *Aquarius the water bearer* in the West, having characteristics of broad-mindedness and creativity but with fewer people relating to them closely. Each *rasi* is also associated with one of the five *mahabhuta tattva* or basic material elements, *Kumbha's* being *Vayu* or air; my Western sign meanwhile is *Taurus the bull*, relating to the sacred cow.

The lunar orbit zodiac is then given a second set of divisions overlapping the 12 *rasis*, the 27 *nakshatras* or lunar mansions of 13.3 degrees of arc each; the moon orbits in 27.3 days so that a *nakshatra* lasts just over a day. They are named after their prominent constellation asterisms or small star patterns as listed in the *Atharvaveda* and mythologized as wives of *Chandra* the moon god and daughters of *Daksha* son of *Brahma*.

Each *nakshatra* is then subdivided into four *padas* of 3.3 degrees, lasting about six hours and designated a syllable that can be used for selecting a person's first name as beginning with that syllable; 27x4 also totals the sacred number 108 with its references to the relative sizes of the earth, moon and sun, and to the earth's precession. I was born under the 24th *nakshatra* of *Shatabhisha* or *A Hundred healers* and my *pada* within it is the first, providing the syllable *go* and meaning *cow*; the *nakshatra's* brightest star also provides the *birth star*, *Shatabhisha's* being *Gamma Aquarii* of fourth magnitude brightness. *Shatabhisha* has symbols of a circle and a thousand flowers or stars and is associated with the *Vedic* ocean god *Mitra-Varuna*, referencing the water in *Kumbha's* pitcher; it has characteristics of independence, research, rationalizing, truthfulness, commitment and contentment, but also loneliness, anguish and sense of restraint.

The *Navagraha* or nine forces or influences is then a set of nine astrological deities after the seven regular naked eye celestial objects known by the ancients that move against the stars, plus two extra lunar ones. These are *Rahu* for the moon in its orbit moving northward to cross the celestial equator or earth's equatorial plane at 23.5 degrees from the ecliptic, and *Ketu* for it moving southward to cross it in the other half of the month.

The *Navagraha* lord over the 12 *rasis*, *Kumbha's* being *Shani* or Saturn which has adverse influence to be placated. They likewise lord in three cycles over the 27 *nakshatras*, *Shatabhisha's* being *Rahu*, depicted as the head of a serpent in a chariot with their sexual references and drawn by eight black horses as responsible for solar eclipses with the moon crossing the ecliptic at these times.

The deities for the seven objects are associated with the days of the week as in the West- *Chandra* or the moon is Monday, *Mangala* or *Bhauma* or Mars is Tuesday, *Budha* or Mercury is Wednesday, *Brihashpati* or Jupiter is Thursday, *Shukra* or Venus is Friday, *Shani* or Saturn is Saturday, and *Surya* or the sun is Sunday. Each of the *grahas* or forces comprise complex sets of qualities, associations and myths.

Navagraha shrines are arranged with *Surya* the *Vedic* sun god in the centre and devotees circumambulate nine times; temples may hold astrological ceremonies for the moon throughout the lunar month. There are occasional separate shrines to *Shani* the Saturn god for staying free of trouble by calming both his and his crow vehicle's harmful and inauspicious characteristics; he exemplifies a deity representing negativity and is the most intractable of the *Navagrahas*. In folk Hinduism *Shani* also dispels dangerous ghosts and other supernatural beings and on the right here is a stuffed *Shani* figurine idol in folk style for home shrine worship.

Hindu timescales run from microseconds to 300 trillion years and more and have correspondence with modern cosmology- a *kalpa* or day of *Brahma* the creator god as described in two of the *puranas* is 4.32 billion years, close to the earth's age and of the same order as the universe's 13.5 billion. Scripture describes a cycle of universal creation and destruction over astronomical time spans along with cycles within of four *yugas* or historical periods- *Satya* or *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dwapara* and *Kali*, charting a decrease in social and spiritual conditions.

The present degenerate *Kali yuga* is often seen as beginning in 3102bce, the date of *Krishna's* death on earth, 36 years after the *Mahabharata* battle given as 3138; *Kali* here refers to an apocalyptic demon unrelated to *Parvati's* avatar. Lengths of the *yuga* time periods are unclear with *Kali* traditionally seen as the shortest at 432 000 years but other theories are down to each *yuga* as only 2700 years with 300-year transitional periods; following *Kali* will either be *Satya* from the start or *Dwapara* again going backwards.

Saka is the Indian national calendar used alongside the Western Gregorian calendar and begins in 78ce and with a year zero, while *Vikrama* is another calendar used in the north dating to 56ce; there are twelve months in each of these, the first being *Chaitra* which begins in mid-March. Both calendars reference Indian victories over invading *Saka* peoples from Iran or Kazakhstan and are variants of the astronomical *Surya Siddhanta* calendar.

In the arts painting is typically lavish and free but graceful and with some miniature forms while sculpture compares with painting in its elaborate detail expressive of royalty, although also has more austere schools; it has a long history at least back to the *IVC*. The *IVC* examples are small however with the monumental stone tradition only beginning with king *Ashoka* of the 3rd century bce; towns across India retain sculpture and architecture of exceptional interest.

This is a store in Delhi with new metal statues including a large *Nataraja* and a four-armed *Lakshmi*. These are life-size and expensive statues of *Shiva's* wife *Parvati* in voluptuous form with her two sons as boys *Ganesh* and *Murugan*; to the left might be *Brahma* with his *hamsa* bird vehicle. These other examples from the mid to late medieval are *Murugan* in six-faced and twelve-armed form on his peacock mount, and *Vishnu* with his consort *Lakshmi* plus *Saraswati* with her veena musical instrument.

Here are two early medieval examples of *Ganesh* and *Krishna* with fine detail and drama. *Krishna* kills the horse demon *Keshi* in a myth variously described in three *puranas*- his maternal uncle *Kamsa* and evil king of Mathura in Uttar Pradesh where *Krishna* was born had sent it to kill him and his brother *Balarama*. As *Keshi* opened his mouth to attack, *Krishna* used his arm to break the teeth and choke him. These others date from the ancient world- Greek styles via Persia and Bactria in central Asia influenced Buddhist carvings in the first few centuries ce while *Ashoka's* pillars of inscribed edicts were topped with lions. The *IVC* Mohenjo-daro dancing girl foreshadows the assured facial expressions and tilted hips of medieval temple statues and figurines.

Indian classical music also has a continuous tradition from the ancient world, unique in music, and made discoveries in harmonic progression that spread to the West; it's a well-organized improvisatory folk music however rather than fully composed Western art music and has no absolute pitch, only relative tuning as convenient. Music is the highest of the arts in its medium of disappearing sound being entirely transcended by aesthetic or spiritual experience. The *Samaveda* is the second of the four *Vedas* and discusses music and chanting which became the *ragas*, or outline melodies based on scales or series of notes where the last is twice the pitch of the first, and the *talas* or rhythmic units; *ragas* are also personified in *ragamala paintings* of figures in scenes.

Music is typically performed by small ensembles of three to six musicians with a standard structure of the *alap* for the melodic instrument alone, then the *chor* and *jhala* as rhythmic explorations, then the *gat* that increases in speed and having subdivisions of *vilambit*, *madhya* and *drut*. The development in complexity until it can go no further parallels the *yuga* historical periods that begin in tune with nature then develop until collapse and renewal.

North Indian *Hindustani* music is more influenced by Persian traditions via Mogul rule and typically has a flute or violin melodic instrument over a drone and accompanied by a drummer. The austere traditional form is *dhrupad* which became the more flamboyant *khayal*; *thumri* are love songs where a soprano sings slowly in unison with a *sarangi*, *harmonium* or other, while *ghazal* is its Islamic Urdu counterpart. *Carnatic* or South Indian music is more vocal with pronounced rhythms and structure in richer and darker textures and harmonies; *kritis* are longer *Carnatic* songs, many by *Thyagaraja* of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Important melodic instruments include the *sitar* and *sarod* with more subdued tone, which improvise on the *ragas* and *talas*, these allowing *glissandi* or gliding between notes as expressive of Indian culture; the *surbahar* is a bass sitar. *Ravi Shankar* and his daughter *Anoushka* are two of the most famous *sitar* players, both also cultivating links with Western music. The *veena* is a lute family instrument appearing in the *Natya Shastra* treaty on the arts from 200bce-200ce, is played by music goddess *Saraswati* and gave rise to the sitar in the 18th century; the *venu* is a bamboo flute and among the oldest Indian instruments. The *Indian violin* often has its four strings tuned to two alternate notes five and four tones apart, rather than four different notes.

The South Indian *nadaswaram* is a rasping loud double reed instrument of the oboe family with a hardwood shaft and metal flare bell; it's particularly for temple use and often played two together. The North Indian *shehnai* is a shorter version of the *nadaswaram*; it's sharp and distinctive and associated with sanctity and may accompany wedding ceremonies and temple processions. The occasional practice of snake charming uses a *pungi*, a small double pipe wind instrument sounding similar to the *bagpipe*.

Drone or melodic-drone instruments provide hypnotic and fluctuating sounds often on two notes, the foremost being the *tanpura* with a long-neck and four plucked strings; drones have their own sinuous and evocative resonant cycles independent of the melody and percussion. Melodic and drone instruments together parallel the process of thoughts emerging, flourishing, reconciling and submerging; the greatest Hindu text the *Bhagavad Gita* or *The Lord's Song* also has a musical as well as aesthetic and intuitive nature. Meditation is also reflected by the *glissandi* instruments as the mind's emerging and wandering thoughts and the independent drone as the steady *mantra* and background consciousness.

Other melodic-drone string instruments include the short-necked *sarangi* played with a bow, its rich sound again symbolizing India while comparing somewhat with the voice and sharing some vocal repertory. The *santoor* is an ancient trapezoid instrument with 72 strings or more and resembling a lyre, native to Jammu and Kashmir and originating in Persia; glittering notes can be played at high speed.

The *gottuvadhyam* is related to the *veena* but with more wavering sounds and has 20 or 21 strings including six primary ones for melody and three for drone; the *rudra veena* is a larger version with lower notes. The *harmonium* or *pump organ* is a reed organ producing sound with bellows and has a limited volume and tonal range; the *melodeon* is an *accordion*. The *tabla* pair of hand drums are from ancient India and issue a wide range of sounds while *thavil* is a larger sideways double drum and the *pakhavaj* larger still; playing involves complex rhythmic patterns. The *mridangam* drum with deeper but crisp sounds features in mythology and is sometimes played by the elephant god *Ganesh* and bull god *Nandi*, and in the *Hare Krishna* sect.

Gandharva is devotional music generally, the *Gandharvas* being nature and warrior spirits who perform music for the gods and are husbands of the *asparas* or female angel dancers for the gods. Music is often performed at temples in their deities' honour, particularly in the south. Some temples provide continuous music played by revolving sets of performers, sometimes maintained for many decades; the ceaselessness reflects the infinity of the divine and reach of the mind, in contrast to the closure of Apollonian music and thought.

Moreover temples may use recordings of a hypnotically repeated, short but subtly complex motif that parallels *mantras* and their dissolving of articulated thought. *Suprabhatam* are Sanskrit sacred poems chanted as hymns

to the *vasantatilaka* metre as traced to a verse in the *Ramayana*; they are for waking deities at dawn. It's often sung by two women in unison and is highly virtuosic; it's mesmerizing and intoxicating, focusing the attention in the moment rather than intellectually contrived structures beyond. The foremost example is a text to the *Vishnu* avatar *Venkateswara* from around 1430, taking about 20 minutes to sing.

The related *sahasranama* chant is a 1000 or 1008 name recitation for a deity, shorter versions having 108; four *sahasranama* recordings here are to *Lakshmi*, *Vishnu* as *Varaha* the boar, *Parvati* as *Lalitha* from her *Mahavidya* deities, and *Ganesh*. *Stotras* are hymns addressed to divinities while *bhajans* are songs of worship; *kirtan* is a call and response devotional music across India, particularly associated with *Vaishnavism*. Traditional folk music is *lok sangreet* with major strands in Rajasthan, Bengal, and Punjab from which *bhangra* popular music and dance developed; dance in films tends to use a mix of styles. Classical dance often enacts mythological stories while the major form *bharatanatyam* from Tamil Nadu has developed nationwide.

Features of Indian popular music in parallel with classical include intricacy, convolution, inscrutability and open-endedness; melody on flutes and violins in high velocity and polyrhythmic dazzle provide searing, unrelenting intensity and a far more engaging experience than most Western pop. *Filmi* is pop music associated with the Bollywood film and dance industry of Mumbai.

Moreover the classical music has influenced strands of 20th century Western art music, most importantly the Frenchman Messiaen (1908-92) such as in his euphoric and *Sanskrit* titled *Turangalila symphony* of 1948, while American minimalism with its repetitious patterns developed from the 60s. Philip Glass's minimalist *Dance No.1* for instance also draws on virtuoso Indian popular music to create a Dionysian welter through both multifaceted sexualized sensation and spirituality from focus on aesthetic content beyond the intellect with its architectonic concerns; it's one of the most compulsive musical works of all time.

Its narrowly controlled idiom yet tremendous inner detail and demand for careful listener attention further reflects *suprabhatam* as well as the *self's* nature as dynamic silence in *Vedic* philosophy; it's scored for a Hindu classical and popular music sized ensemble. Minimalism looking to Indian popular music also provides the only significant influence on art music from popular forms, Western examples being too simplistic.

Deities

Although both God and *Brahman* beyond consist in us we can speak of these rather than just us because we often sense that we're less than fully realized, liable to mistakes and can be more than what we are now. The personal God as the field of the *gunas* and its constituent gods or *gunas* are our inner perfection and hence possible outward attainment; gods as persons with characteristics exist when we're at less than fully developed states of consciousness but they are relinquished in unity with impersonal *Brahman*.

Contemporary Hinduism focuses on gods developed in the first millennium *puranas* that expand on the four ancient *Vedas* and other writings while most *Vedic* gods are rarely worshipped beyond invocations in Brahmin chant for *pujas*; all are names for the nameless transcendent and many of both groups have rich literatures. *Vedic* gods are organized in two main groups of half-brothers personifying natural elemental forces and in eternal battle, the benevolent *devas* or *suras* and the more demonic *asuras*.

Leader of the gods is *Indra* with his elephant vehicle *Airavata* sometimes with five heads; he's also lord of *Svargaloka* or the seven heavenly planes for souls before union with *Brahman*, and god of rain and thunderstorms. *Aditi* is mother of the gods as well as of twelve zodiacal spirits and rides on a cock while her sons the seven or eight *Adityas* are also aspects of *Surya*; *Pushan* is another solar deity and a god of journeys and meetings.

The *Ashvins* are twin anthropomorphic horses and *ayurvedic* doctors to the gods while also known as *Nasatyas* for sunrise and sunset as they are sons of *Surya* the sun god; the *Ribhus* are three gods of artisan skill who began as mortals but became gods through austerities. *Mitra-Varuna* leads the *Adityas* as a god of friendship, law and the ocean, and shares the same crocodilian vehicle *Makara* as the *puranic* river goddess *Ganga*, and whose consort *Varuni* is an intoxication goddess; *Soma* is also a deified but today an unidentified narcotic drink.

Other important *Vedic* deities include *Agni* the fire god, *Vayu* the wind god, and *Kubera* a treasure god; *Indra*, *Agni* and *Vayu* comprise a trinity while *Agni* and *Kubera* often have three legs. Both *Vedic* and *puranic* gods usually have a *vahana* or vehicle as an animal or mythical animal mount. *Surya* is sometimes equivalent to another solar deity *Savitr* while the *Maruts* are a set of aggressive storm gods also identified with a set of eleven *avatars* or sons of *Rudra*, a fertility god who later develops into *Shiva*.

Surya is also still worshipped, the sun as the primary source of illumination with energy also informing descriptions of the *self*, God or the absolute. He has few active dedicated temples today but there are inactive monuments while small icons are common; the *Mattu pongal* cow and agricultural festival in January acknowledges him. *Ushas* is a dawn goddess and *Vritra* a serpent and drought god who *Indra* slays in releasing the seven ancient world rivers of the *Sapta sindhavah*; the set is deified but are unidentified today. *Saraswati* among these rivers however is an important goddess across ancient and contemporary Hinduism.

Another *Vedic* god worshipped today is *Vishvakaram* or *Tvastr*, a personification of *Brahman* as architect of the universe in the *Rigveda* and a god of architects and craftsmen; he also has *Brahma's* swan *vahana*. His daughter is *Saranyu* wife of *Surya* and their offspring alongside the *Ashvins* include *Yama* lord of death, represented by the Yamuna river, and *Manu* the first man.

The *Vedas* have the sophisticated perspective on gods continued in later Hinduism of their individualities blurred by the interconnections of both the human values and natural forces they stand for, along with confusions of names, descriptions, forms and avatars. The mesh of gods, iconography, myths and the wider culture it expresses isn't subject to transparent account and instead has holistic, transcendent and aesthetic reference.

The displacing *puranic* gods mostly of the first millennium are roughly organized under the *trimurti* or trinity gods of *Brahma* the creator, *Vishnu* the preserver and *Shiva* the destroyer as the foremost representations of *Brahman*; the *g o d* letters of God as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva combined can relate to generative, operative and destructive. These gods exist in early forms in the *Vedas* with *Prajapati* becoming *Brahma*, *Vishnu* a minor deity toppling *Indra*, and *Rudra* becoming *Shiva*.

Indra has a set of eight *Vasus* or attendant deities including *Agni* and *Vayu* who become *Vishnu* attendants and become sons of *Prajapati*; *Aditi* also becomes a feminized form of *Prajapati* while *Indra* fathers *Arjuna*, one of the key figures in the *Mahabharata* and *Gita*. Some contemporary *Vedic* gods have also gained affiliation with one of the *trimurti* families while a range of gods including deified people remain outside them.

An example of Hinduism confounding categories however is the *trimurti* god *Brahma* rarely being worshipped and his family being much smaller than *Vishnu's* and *Shiva's*. Instead *Shaktism* or attention to the female Godhead, particularly associated with *Shiva's* consort *Parvati*, is the third major branch while intersecting with the others. Gods have their own iconography but which varies; often extra pairs of arms hold objects as carrying forward the qualities of other deities that were merged with them in the early medieval following the Gupta empire standardizing worship and their popularity changing.

Some deities however always had extra arms while their array of objects reflects the interconnection of human values; the absorption of deities into others examples Hindu inclusivity and the awareness widening and rising to one God and *Brahman*. The *tridevi* is a further trinity comprising the consorts of the male *trimurti* as *Saraswati*, *Lakshmi* and *Parvati* and representing intellectual, material and emotional wealth; all gods are united in the Godhead or *Ishvara* as the highest reality before *Brahman*.

The unity of all goddesses as avatars of these three leading goddesses is given in personalized forms by *Durga* or *Parvati* or also *Gayatri* or various sects' goddesses, while in more impersonal forms by *Shakti* or *Adi Parashakti*. *Shaktism* may see *Ishvara* as feminine due to the feminine's higher characteristics of holistic understanding, intuition, equanimity and evaluation. Male and female deity titles include *deva* and *devi*, *Bhagavan* and *Bhagavati*, and *Ishvara* or *Ishvari*.

Brahma has four heads but originally had five, the other being cut off by *Shiva* for having an affected attachment to the goddess *Shatarupa* that *Brahma* created, a similar situation to *Shiva* replacing his son's head with an elephant's and its animal directness free of confusion. Losing and replacing heads is a metaphor for the mind's sudden illumination in exchanging relatively or relationally referenced for absolute or transcendently referenced thought- foolish shadow thinking only with concepts becomes real perception and simple truthful evaluation.

Brahma's four heads or faces reflect the four *Vedas* that he continually recites while the missing fifth is also the hidden *self* or *Brahman* that the *Vedas* dissolve superfluously into; the heads further represent the *yugas* or four epochs of time. While *Vishvakaram* is a *Vedic* godly expression of *Brahman*, being the basis of creation and not worshipped, *Brahma* is the *puranic* expression; *Brahman* or consciousness as the background substrate to all things is subject to no objectification and can only be lived.

After initiating the universe *Brahma's* only activity is meditation as expressing the mind in its self-referential state yet versions of him are widely worshipped in Thailand and other Buddhist countries; his *vahana* is the mythical *hamsa* bird similar to a goose, or it's the swan. *Saraswati* is *Brahma's* consort and a goddess of study and music, also symbolizing *jnana yoga* or the path of intellectual knowledge to self-realization and union with intuitive knowledge; her name means *essence of self* and she's my *Ishtar devata* or personal god.

The *veena* or lyre she plays expresses harmony of mind while she wears white, reflecting her purifying influence, and her vehicle is again the *hamsa* or swan or the peacock; her birthday has the festival *Vasant Panchami* or *Fifth day of spring* in *Magha*, the eleventh month of the *Saka* calendar, in January or February. Gods' iconography is related to their myths although their lower pairs of hands can be empty and instead have *mudra* or hand gestures indicating dispositions of either the protective with the palm outwards and upwards, or the charitable with the palm downward.

The goddess *Gayatri* personifies a verse in the *Rigveda* used as a *mantra* and is another *Brahma* consort; in parallel with *Saraswati* plus *Lakshmi* she stands for both education plus wealth. Her five-headed and ten-armed form holds all the objects or qualities of the three *trimurti* gods and she's one of the few goddesses frequently depicted multi-headed. She also compares with *Brahma* in her swan vehicle, lotus seat, and five heads as he originally had- being a woman she stays imperturbable however and keeps her fifth head in passion has he failed to.

Vishnu the preserver is a god of knowledge and energy; *Narayan* is among his names, meaning *One who rests on water*. His iconography includes his upper left hand holding a unique *shankha* or conch shell trumpet called *panchajanya*, representing his power to maintain the universe through vibration and the *aum* syllable. His lower left holds a *gada* or mace as mental and physical strength along with the power of the divine in us to rise above the ego.

His upper right hand holds a *chakra* or discus weapon called *sudharshana* with 108 serrated edges though sometimes depicted as a hexagram and representing the sharp and purified mind that protects; his lower right holds a *padma* or lotus flower as the unfolding of divine consciousness and liberation in the individual. Divine objects are partial incarnations of their owners and can be depicted anthropomorphically as *ayudhapurushas*.

Vishnu in his *Ananta Shesha* or *Endless snake* pose reclines on a bed of the coils of *Shesha* the king of *nagas* or serpents; his *yogic* resting or sleep reflects God's non-intervention in the world and the *self's* separation from action under the *gunas* or tendencies of relative nature. The snake is phallic while *Vishnu* with his head under the partial hood of the snake's heads references the genitals and their nerve endings as the physiological expression of the ends of the lines of relative intellectual reconciliation leading to the absolute- he relaxes at one with sexuality.

Water reflects both sexual fluid and flooding of the mind with awareness issuing from sexuality's subject to subject rather than regular worldly subject-object relations. His consort *Lakshmi* is seated near his feet, a goddess of beauty; the expression *lotus feet* refers to someone following in the footsteps of the feet of the gods or spiritually developed individuals and is unrelated to Chinese foot binding.

Lakshmi-Narayan is the union of *Vishnu* and *Lakshmi* while *Sheshanaga* has several divine and human incarnations including *Rama's* brother *Lakshmana*, *Krishna's* brother *Balarama*, and the medieval philosopher *Ramanuja*. *Brahma* the creator emerges from *Vishnu's* navel and umbilical cord, indicating the gods' interdependence while *Vishnu* is sometimes seen as brother of *Shiva's* wife *Parvati*; there's a small *lingam-yoni* nearby, representing the sexual union of *Shiva* and *Parvati*. Here the snake heads parallel sperm in their liquid environment.

Vishnu is depicted in blue, black or other dark colours reflecting depth of character and the ability to deal with difficulties, blue also being the colour of the limitless sky. Blue and black are further the colours of deep water, reflecting *atman* or the individual *self* as a drop of water rejoining the ocean as universal *Brahman*, and Dionysian drowning of the intellect into sexual and spiritual awareness.

The *naga* serpents as the phallus, sexuality, fertility and primal beings of creation can shape-shift into human form, reflecting the Dionysiac as the basis of the mind, centrally expressed in sexuality, that changes back to dealing rationally with the outward world. However relative relations should still be transcendently referenced via the Dionysiac field of the *gunas*, rather than remain Apollonian or with the thinking mind trying to operate per se; shapeshifting seems to be a discontinuity and contradiction only from such a superficial or culturally repressed perspective.

Naga myths have sometimes been misinterpreted elsewhere to indicate the presence of reptilian aliens in the world who interbreed with humans and corrupt what is only a false Apollonian basis to the mind; by contrast in the mind's normal developed state for-other relative relations are subsumed into for-themselves absolute or truth-based relations. Western and *Abrahamic* notions of righteousness and ethics as intellectual principle and empathy are confused and corrupted, spirituality instead being alignment with the *gunas* as they lie in different situations.

Snakes nonetheless also represent treachery and the need to be secure of mind beyond the possibility of being foolishly deceived; the mind must retain its self-referential or subject-subject direct perception of the world as epitomized by sexuality and not fall for relative or conceptual reconciliation. Deceit and the need to be above it is a feature of Indian culture with its lack of dreamy groundless Western intellectual and moral principles, regardless of their specific usefulness detached from the whole- as the national motto *Truth alone triumphs* reminds us the fool has only themselves to look to with no fake support from wider society. *Vishnu's* vehicle is

also the man-bird *Garuda*, an enemy of the *nagas* and preys on them in terms of being above and negating affected relations with sexuality; *Shiva's* son *Murugan* also has similar positive and negative snake iconography. *Lakshmi's* vehicle is an elephant or owl.

In the first millennium period of *puranic* texts the *Vishnu* cult developed a group of 24 *avatars* through absorbing deities from both the *Vedas* and folk Hinduism. These include the *dashavatara* or ten main ones with their associated myths where *Vishnu* descends to earth to rectify rising negative forces and renew human understanding; they express evolution from lower to higher life forms and are assigned positions in the *yuga* historical epochs. The set has variations and depictions may be anthropomorphic or not.

The first *avatar* is *Matsya* the fish who in a flood myth rescues *Manu* the first man and king, telling him to collect grains and animals to store in a boat which *Matsya* pulls to safety. Someone's ungrounded intellect may confuse and cause them to swim but their core *self* is always retained and they can be drawn back to safety. In another myth *Matsya* slays the demon *Hayagriva* who had hidden the four *Vedas*, on the right here deified as children; *Matsya* is first mentioned in the *Yajurveda* the second *Veda* and identified not with *Vishnu* but *Prajapati* who becomes *Brahma* and constantly recites the *Vedas*. *Matsya* incarnates in *Satya yuga* the earliest of the four cyclical epochs, as do the next three *avatars*.

The second is *Kurma* the turtle, an amphibian as developed from fish- he's in the *Samudra manthan* creation myth and supports *Mount Mandara* while it churns the sexualized milk ocean. The third is *Varaha* the boar, a mammal- he defeats the demon *Hiranyaksha* in a thousand-year battle after *Hiranyaksha* had stolen the earth personified as the goddess *Bhudevi* and hid her in primordial waters.

Varaha lifted her with his tusks back to her rightful celestial place, referencing the *self's* transcendent position; she becomes his consort, and is mother of *Sita*, wife of *Rama* in the *Ramayana itihasa* or epic poem. Again *Vahara* was originally a form of *Brahma* and his four feet parallel the four *Vedas*; this fine early 10th century sandstone colossus is at the Khajuraho *Shiva* temple complex.

The fourth *avatar* is *Narasimha* the half man half lion- he tears open *Hiranyakashipu*, brother of the slain *Hiranyaksha* who was looking for revenge. *Vishnu* was also protecting *Hiranyakashipu's* son *Prahlada* who he was trying to kill for being a *Vishnu* devotee despite his attempts to change *Prahlada's* allegiance. The festival of *Holi* in February-March in part commemorates this *Vaishnavite* victory. There's great understanding in the attendant men's faces here at the *yatra* or pilgrimage hill at Chitrakut.

The fifth *avatar* is *Vamana* the dwarf as reflecting pre-human hominids; he's *Indra's* younger brother and one of the *Aditya* sun gods in the *Vedas* but elaborated on in the *puranas*. *Vamana* comes to restore *Indra's* authority over the heavens after it had been displaced by *Mahabali*, a benevolent king and grandson of *Prahlada* but who had become egoistic and lost the detached and unaffected nature of righteousness.

Vamana carries an umbrella while in disguise as a *Brahmin* approaching *Mahabali* before revealing his identity by enlarging himself to gigantic proportions, this form being known as *Trivikrama*; the dwarf and giant reflect the unity of microcosmic personal consciousness and macrocosmic Brahman. He incarnated in the *Treta yuga* or second of the four epochs, as do the next two *avatars*.

The sixth is *Parashurama* or *Rama of the Axe*, an immortal man reflecting the start of humans' use of metal- he undertook penance for wrongdoing but *Shiva* then taught him martial arts and gave him an axe. King *Kartavirya* killed *Parashurama's* father after which *Parashurama* defeated the *Kshatriya* ruling caste on 21 occasions, and saved southwest India by pushing back advancing seas; he's expressive of independence of mind based on the *self*. *Parashurama* further appears in both the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; he's a

descendent of *Brahma* and in reference to the *Vedas* has four right arms for four axes but only one left arm; he also carries a bow and arrows.

Avatars seven to nine are by far the most important; the seventh is *Rama*, a man expressive of structured societies and *dharma* in terms of duty, and the main character in the *Ramayana*. His birthplace and capital city is Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh and he has a genealogy back to king *Manu*. *Rama's* consort and *Lakshmi avatar Sita* was abducted by the demon king *Ravana* but rescued by *Rama* with the help of his brother *Lakshmana* and devoted anthropomorphic monkey leader *Hanuman*, positioned on the left in their classic pose. *Rama* embodies fortitude and *Lakshmana* selflessness while also being a *Shesha* the snake god avatar; *Sita* embodies purity, having been a *Vedic* agriculture goddess, and *Hanuman* courage.

The eighth avatar is *Krishna*, a man whose divine nature is revealed particularly in the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad Gita* within it as the great summary of *Vedic* thought, and in the *Bhagavata Purana*. The boy *Krishna* here is a thief while later in the *Gita* he tells his warrior friend *Arjuna* to kill rather than appease or forgive his enemies in war, both reflecting God and morality as beyond simple principles.

He also has a few parallels with *Christ* though, partly explaining the success in the West of movements like *Hare Krishna*- he has a human incarnation, compassionate nature, venerated child forms, and was both a herdsman and conceived in his mother *Devaki* by *Vishnu* at a distance. However she had seven previous children by her husband *Vasudeva* while foster parents *Yashoda* and *Nanda* then raised *Krishna*.

His dates are 3228-3102bce, living to 126 years; his birthday is celebrated at the *Janmashtami* festival in August; the *Mahabharata* events took place at the end of the *Dwapara yuga* with the current fourth *Kali yuga* dated to *Krishna's* death. His eyes are typically depicted with infinite humanity and understanding; his consort and lover is *Radha*, another *Lakshmi avatar* with stories about them appearing in several *puranas*.

As cowherd he is known as *Govinda* and he has eight primary devoted *gopis* or cowgirl friends, the most prominent being the older *Lalitha*. They are *Lalitha*, *Vishakha*, *Campakalata*, *Citra*, *Tungavidya*, *Indulekha*, *Rangadevi*, and *Sudevi*; he has further maidservants and messengers. *Krishna* also married the *Ashtabharya* or group of eight wives as queens, the most important two being *Rukmini* then *Satyabhama*.

Another name for *Krishna* is *Vasudeva*, after his father as his mother's husband. *Krishna* and *Radha* embody the man-woman relationship and its reflection of humanity and God- men as the relative aspect of reality worship and seek unity with women as the perfect absolute aspect while women are also acknowledged and supported by men's presence. *Krishna* charms the world but *Radha* charms *Krishna*, complementing him and his knowledge; these are small paintings, the left one on cloth also depicting *Lalitha*.

She has the attractiveness to attract an all-attractive personality of Godhead and as in all god-goddess relations *Shakti* or the female nature is the essence of the god's power and potency, and hence sometimes seen as his superior. Although *Krishna* discusses the absolute and *Brahman* in detail it's still in linguistic intellectual terms distinct from the absolute itself, which is more directly expressed in the silent intuitive feminine mind and form; *Radha-Krishna* is the union through sexuality of the absolute and relative in *Brahman*.

The small copies of the gods to the left are used in ceremonies where they are moved around. *Krishna's* iconography includes him in relaxed poses with *Vishnu's* blue skin, yellow *dhoti*, holding a flute and sheltered by the banyan tree with its multiple trunks reflecting his multiple forms. He often plays the flute with *Radha* or the *gopis*, referencing the same intuitive movement or flow of *gunas* or underlying dynamics in music and sexuality- the flute is the phallus aesthetically charming the milkmaid *gopis* who milk him. He's often with a cow but his *vahana* remains *Garuda* the man-bird; *Radha* by contrast exchanges *Lakshmi's* elephant or owl for

a peacock. At bottom right their unity is reflected by the *aum* symbol behind them for *Brahman* or consciousness and sexuality beyond all conceptual thought and duality.

The ninth *avatar* is the *Buddha* or the 6th century bce man *Siddhartha Gautama* who founded Buddhism and is discussed in several *puranas*; he lived in the present *Kali yuga*. He was from Lumbini in south central Nepal, this being one of the four principle pilgrimage sites associated with his life, the others being in neighbouring Indian states- Sarnath where he first taught and Kushinagar where he died, both in Uttar Pradesh, and Bodh Gaya where he gained enlightenment in Bihar.

The *Buddha* may have been incorporated in the *dashavatara* by Hindu priests uneasy about his religion's development in its early centuries; Buddhism declined in India through the first millennium to very low numbers since the 12th century. Whereas for Hinduism nature's underlying reality is the absolute, for Buddhism it's relativity; Hinduism classically understands relativity only as an aspect of the absolute within *Brahman* or the *Great Union*, also making Buddhism and all other religions naturally part of itself.

However as with Islam departing from the convoluted Biblical tradition Buddhism departing from convoluted Hinduism brings an admirable sense of purity. The tenth avatar *Kalki* a white-horseman and destroyer of darkness is yet to be incarnated even mythically and will appear at the close of the present debased *Kali yuga* to begin a new *yuga* cycle; sometimes he's an anthropomorphic horse alone.

Among important *Vishnu* avatars beyond the *dashavatara* is *Ventakeswara* or *Balaji*, particularly in southeast India. In his foremost myth *Lakshmi* leaves *Vishnu* dispassionately when his attention is divided by other responsibilities so that he has then to pursue her in their *avatars* of *Venkateswara* and *Alamelu* or *Padmavati*; it's an exploration of the interacting aesthetic lines of masculine and feminine psychology. Another southern Indian *Vishnu* avatar is *Vithoba*, again associated with *Krishna*.

Then *Jagannath* is the lord of the universe with his main temple at Puri in Odisha. He is a form of or associated with *Krishna* and is on the right in the shrine with his elder brother *Balabhadra* on the left and younger sister *Subhadra* and *Arjuna's* wife at centre. *Jagannath* is further associated here with *Bhairava* either in his usual form of a fierce aspect of *Shiva* or as a form of *Vishnu*, while *Subhadra* is associated with *Shiva's* consort *Parvati* in the form of *Vimala*; the tangle leads only to one god.

The *Jagannath* literature includes the creation of idols to him being left unfinished because the artist was disturbed, reflecting humanity looking to the gods because of its own outward imperfection; statues today comprise only head and chest and are made of wood rather than the usual more durable stone or metal. The *rath yatra* celebration in June or July processes the triad of deities in large stylized chariots to another temple three kilometres away.

Most Hindu deities are humanoid, anthropomorphic, animal or occasionally plant but among more abstract representations are *shilas* or *shaligrams* or rounded stones or fossils in *Vishnu* worship; here a *shila* for a shrine rests on an *aum* symbol plate. Blue, black and yellow stones are the most auspicious as the common colours of *Vishnu's* skin and *dhoti*. Other *Vaishavite* iconography is from marine animals in reference to the *Ananta Shesha* pose and its ocean that drowns individual conceptions of the self.

Ammonites from the Mesozoic era or earlier are favoured *shila* fossils, the spiral as featured by nature across immense timescales reflecting in parallel with the *chakra* discus the coiled-up power of thought issuing from the *self* and amplified into the world; the unravelling is further the dissolution of stress. The *shankha* or spiral conch shell with its tip cut off compares with the trumpet and is used by heroes of the *itihisas* and myths, as well as in temple ceremonies; *shankhas* dispel negativity and embody grandeur and longevity.

Sound or vibration has a primordial nature and translates into thought, language and music; conch shells are the product of a large Indian Ocean sea snail called *turbinella pyrum* while this example also has *Sri Rama* written on it in *Devanagari* script. The *chakra* discus is given as a part of another spiral shell here; the *chakra* is aerodynamic and spinning with stable gyroscopic effects and hence undeflected by wind, symbolizing unwavering sharpness of the intellect coordinated with the *self* and the inward vortex of attention leading to *dharma* or powerful right action.

Lakshmi is a goddess of prosperity, beauty and luck. She is daughter of the *Vedic* god *Mitra-Varuna* and emerged from the *Samudra manthan* ocean carrying the *amrita* nectar of immortality; her beauty distracted the affected *asuras* or demons from it for it to be passed to the righteous *devas* to restore their power. Beyond *Sita*, *Radha* and *Alamelu*, consorts to *Rama*, *Krishna* and *Venkateswara*, the *Ashta Lakshmis* are her main set of eight secondary manifestations as presiding over eight sources of wealth. *Adi* is the primary *Ashta* then *Dhana* is for monetary wealth, *Dhanya* for granary, *Gaja* for elephants, *Santana* for progeny, *Veera* or *Dhairya* for courage, *Vijaya* for victory, and *Vidya* for knowledge.

The *kaudi* is a small seashell used as a *Lakshmi* emblem or embodiment, reflecting her origins in the ocean and her sexuality. The sacred *tulsi* or *tulasi* plant *ocimum tenuiflorum* with small light green leaves is worshipped as a further *Lakshmi avatar* while symbolizing *Vaishnavite* deities generally; a variety with dark green or purple leaves is associated particularly with *Krishna* and *Hanuman* worship.

Lakshmi as *tulsi* is detailed in the *puranas* as resulting from a disagreement with *Saraswati* where *Lakshmi* sided with the goddess *Ganga* after *Ganga* was chastised by *Saraswati* out of jealousy for flirting with *Vishnu*, despite *Lakshmi* being his consort; *Saraswati* cursed *Lakshmi* to be reborn as a plant. In other *puranic* elaborations on the *Samudra manthan* *Lakshmi* alternatively emerges bringing *Dhanvantari* with her, a *Vishnu* healer *avatar* whose tear falls into her cup of *amrita* to then form the *tulasi* plant. *Tulasi* wood is also used for *akshamala* or *mantra* necklaces, its oil in the *ayurveda* health system, and its scented leaves for herbal tea. Moreover the fourth day of *Diwali*, the *Festival of lights* celebrating good over evil, focuses on *Lakshmi* pujas.

Hanuman the *vanara* hominid and shape-shifting monkey is a key figure in the *Ramayana* and leads a *vanara* army; he's devoted to *Rama* and embodies *bhakti yoga* or the devotional path to union with *Brahman*. He's immersed in his tasks with locked-on animal determination free of confused deliberation, making him a god of strength, courage and loyalty; his prominent *gada* or mace represents power and righteousness.

Lakshmana is wounded by an arrow in Sri Lanka during the rescue of *Sita* so *Hanuman* goes to find a restoring herb called *sanjivani*; he has no vehicle but can fly. It's only found on *Mount Dronagiri* in the Himalayas in Uttarakhand but on arrival he's unable to identify it so brings the entire mountain back, never wavering from duty; he's also mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. He further represents the intelligence and swiftness of the monkeys of India as well as their lack of principled morality- under their *dharma* they'll rightfully steal anything, testing people's awareness and self-containment.

Shiva the destroyer of illusion, ignorance and impurity is alien to Western concepts of spirituality as kindness, despite him having some parallels with *Christ* who destroys the sins of the world and also himself in an event of the passions, and is likewise concerned with retreating to practise austerities. Both these gods have links with *Dionysus*, the Greek god of self-aware wholeness, ecstasy, intoxication and the emotions.

Shiva iconography includes a third eye of the *self* in the tilak position between the eyebrows, cobras about his neck standing for sexuality that he's at one with, and a tiger skin indicating both his stature and union with the animal mind and its directedness. His four hands variously display a *trishula* or trident spear, *damaru* or a drum to beat time during creation, and a flame of destruction.

The *trishula* reflects many sets of three that merge into *Brahman* as the single shaft including the *trimurti* gods, creation, preservation and destruction, the three gunas, the three states of consciousness of the *aum* symbol, the sounds of its syllable, past, present and future, and the interior mind, immediate world and wider world. The drum as rhythm also parallels the actions in sex that destroy the relative mind without due grounding; temple *pujas* may include a drummer providing a beat that increases in speed with sexual reference.

He further wears *rudraksha* bead necklaces, the god *Rudra* being his forerunner in the *Vedas*, while he's covered in *vibhuti* or white ash from burnt offerings in his *yogic* practices, symbolizing fire burning up the intellect's impurities when unaligned with the intuition; hence while ash also symbolizes the impermanence of life and materiality he's also a god of rejuvenation. Giant statues of him are common while the *Nataraja* is his greatest symbol where he dances within a circle of fire on a demon of ignorance, the intuition only contained within and dependent on itself.

He is both an ascetic and a householder, combining *raja* and *karma yogic* paths to union with *Brahman* and practicing both austerities and eroticism. *Shiva* sometimes is five faced representing the *mahabhuta* or five primary elements of earth, water, fire, air and space; *Rudra* shared *Shiva's Pashupati* or *Lord of Animals avatar* while the *Indus Valley Civilization Pashupati* seal with its *yogic* figure from the Mohenjo-daro ruins is among artefacts providing evidence for proto-*Shiva* from earliest times.

Like other seals it also features bulls associated with *Shiva* while further *IVC* artefacts include black stone pillars resembling *lingams* or *Shiva* in phallic form. Western scholars since the Victorian era and its insecurity and pomposity try to undermine Indian civilization and Hinduism, in claiming *Sanskrit* isn't indigenous to India and instead that everything is subsets of Western culture, and denying the links with the ancient indigenous *IVC*.

Bhairava is *Shiva* in terrible form, associated with annihilation, his iconography including a necklace of skulls in parallel with his wife *Parvati's* terrible form *Kali*. *Bhairava* shrines are associated with the twelve *Shiva Jyotirlinga* temples across India with naturally occurring *lingam* stones and with the 51 *Shakti peetha* sites for *Shakti* the female principle. *Shiva's vahana* is the bull *Nandi*, symbolizing the mind's focus on the *self*, as seen in bulls along with power and potency, and justice and moral order. He's depicted seated though some *puranas* describe him as anthropomorphic, and usually he's white; devotees whisper desires or thanks in his ear and he may be found in separate temple shrines. *Nandi* was previously born as a boy to the sage *Shilada* before *Shiva* changed him to a bull.

He is *Shiva's* principle *gana* or follower or attendant and in medieval temples he may feature as one of *Shiva's* two doorkeepers alongside *Mahakala* or one of his foremost attendants; *Mahakala* is also the name of a form of *Shiva* in consort to *Kali*. This is a bronze *Nandi* for home shrine worship; bull worship is found in other cultures including ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Shiva's home is Mount Kailash where he meditates with *Parvati*; it lies just outside India in Tibet in China, northeast of Uttarakhand state, and exemplifies the category transcendence of Hinduism with something always spilling beyond. It's a remote pilgrimage site with a long and poorly designed path for circumambulation and currently has political issues making it difficult to visit; it's also sacred to Buddhism, Jainism and Bon as the indigenous Tibetan religion. Although only 6638 metres Kailash has never been climbed in respect for its religious status. Lake Manasarova nearby is also sacred and the area is the source of major Indian rivers including the Indus, Brahmaputra, Sutlej, and Karnali a Ganges tributary.

Shiva's first wife is *Sati* or *Dakshayani*, an ascetic who was insulted by her disapproving father *King Daksha* when returning to him from her marriage such that she immolated herself to be reincarnated as *Parvati* by *Himavat*, king of the mountains. *Shakti peethas* are both in India and surrounding countries where pieces of

her body fell to earth; *Maha Shakti peethas* are 18 of the most well established. *Sati* as *Vishnu's* sister is a love and longevity goddess and destroys fear.

Shiva remarries her as his second wife *Parvati*; she is particularly associated with the female Godhead *Durga* and personification of *Shakti* or the absolute referenced feminine psychology that masculinity looks to. *Shiva* and *Parvati's* divine union and sexuality is a central aspect of Hinduism; they have two sons, *Ganesh* and *Murugan*. *Ardhanarishvara* is also a composite androgynous form of *Shiva* and *Parvati* split down the middle, usually with *Shiva* as the right side of the body.

It's the unity of masculine and feminine principles equating with that of the relative and absolute in *Brahman*. *Shiva* grants *Parvati* his body's left side as replacing groundless masculine left-brain rationality with more grounded femininity- man's divine alignment and completeness is brought about by union with woman while she gains acknowledgement and worship. The left image also has their *vahanas* of bull and lion or tiger; *Ardhanarishvara* sculptures date at least to the 1st century.

Shaktism is the major branch of *Shaivism* that forms the third Hindu division alongside *Vaishnavism*; the Godhead as femininity with its emphasis on subtle relations compares with *Vedic* philosophy. It's centred on *Parvati* as the *mahadevi* or great goddess particularly as *Durga* her warrior form; *Durga* being a secondary yet also the highest form reflects the confounding of hierarchies and categories. She symbolizes the victory of good over evil, her mount having slain the *Mahishasura* demon in its buffalo form that was invincible against all men; she holds a *Shiva trishula*.

There are three main sets of *Parvati* or *Durga* avatars- the ten *Mahavidyas*, nine *Navadurgas* and seven or eight *Matrikas*; on the right here she's surrounded by the *Mahavidyas*. The ten *Mahavidyas* or great revelations are wisdom goddesses ranging from gentle to horrific, reflecting feminine insight and masculine enlightenment from experience of women; they include some powerful aesthetic statements. Their names are *Kali*, *Tara*, *Shodashi*, *Bhuvaneshvari*, *Bhaivari*, *Chinnamasta*, *Dhumavati*, *Bagalamukhi*, *Matangi*, and *Kamala*; *Matangi* is also called *Lalitha*, unrelated to *Krishna's gopi*. They are further feminine forces associated with *Vishnu's dashavatara* or ten avatars.

The terrible form *Kali* is the first, a dancing goddess of annihilation, change and time. She holds and is necklaced by the severed heads of those whose minds aren't coordinated with or who oppose truth. Behind her is a partially vanquished army and she's biting her tongue as she realizes her destructiveness is excessive- *Shiva* is supine and passive beneath her, trying to absorb her power. *Chinnamasta* the sixth *Mahavidya* fantastically cuts her own head off above a lovemaking couple in further exploring mental coordination as decapitation.

The nine *Navadurgas* are then honoured at the *Navratri* or nine nights festival, along with *Saraswati* and *Lakshmi* from the *tridevi*; again they have complex sets of characteristics and iconography. Their names are *Shailaputri*, *Brahmacharini*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kushmanda*, *Skandamata*, *Kathyayini*, *Kaalratri*, *Mahagauri* and *Siddhidaartri*. The seven or eight mothers or *Saptamatrikas* or *Ashtamatrikas* appear in the *Mahabharata* and have motherly but also inauspicious aspects; they are always found together apart from *Chamunda*.

There are separate temples to *Chamunda* who has a fearsome nature and alarmingly depicted as a grotesque skeletal figure residing on a corpse alongside other symbols of death- as with a small number of gods she has negative influences to be placated and may have had folk origins. The *Matrikas* further part of 64 or 81 sorcerer attendant *yoginis* on *Durga* as goddesses issuing from either eight or nine *Matrikas* squared; *Chamunda* is a leading member of these.

Kritika or *Kartika* moreover is a group of six sisters and wives of the *Saptarishis* or seven original Vedic patriarchal seers; they became estranged for the women to become the brightest stars of the Pleiades star cluster in the Taurus constellation and the men the Plough stars in the Great Bear; the *Kritika* raised *Shiva's* son *Murugan* or *Kartikeya*. They are *Brahmani*, *Vaishnavi*, *Maheshvari*, *Indrani*, *Kaumari* and *Vahari*, variously with *Narasimhi* and *Chamunda*; at bottom left *Durga* in her demon-killing form *Ambika* leads them against *Raktabija*. *Parvati avatars* separate to the three main sets also include *Gauri*, a benevolent harvest goddess and protector of women.

Popular *Ganesh* also known as *Ganapati* and *Vinayaka* is a god of beginnings, wisdom, writing and good fortune, and a remover of obstacles. Coordination of mind is expressed both by his elephant head after his original was mistakenly cut off by *Shiva*, animals as free of excessive deliberation, while similar one-pointedness and non-dualism is reflected by his broken off tusk leaving one longer than the other; the head is sometimes *Airavata's*, *Indra's* elephant mount.

The broken tusk as the secondary intellect concerned with language and concepts was used by the sage *Vyasa* as a pen to transcribe the *Mahabharata*; it's from *Ganesh's* auspicious right side though, reflective of left brain linguistic activity being coordinated with right brain intuitive reference. As with many gods the right leg is vertical down to the floor and the left horizontal, expressive of us being in the world but not of it; the *self* provides the mind's direct reference down to truth in contrast to relationality on the surface, though the leg in the air also expresses liberation.

Throughout the iconography there are two forms in one while *Ganesh's* rough shape personifies the *aum* sacred syllable symbol. He may further hold a rope that pulls devotees closer to the divine and an axe that cuts off excessive attachment to the world. Multi-headed and multi-armed forms of gods reflect their omniscience, omnipresence across place and time, and ability to listen to and understand multiple devotees simultaneously; their multiple forms meanwhile defy them conceptual determination.

Ganesh's vahana is a *mooshak* or mythical kind of mouse or rat, reflective of even the mightiest, if indeed they are mighty and not just grandiose, having respect for the smallest and lowest. Attending to such creatures is further to be unselfish while rodents are good at finding unexpected routes around obstacles. *Ganesh's* consorts are *Buddhi*, *Riddhi* and *Siddhi*, goddesses of wisdom, attainment and prosperity, and his daughter is *Santoshi Mata* or mother of satisfaction, a new goddess developed in the 1960s.

Shiva and *Parvati's* other son *Murugan* or *Kartikeya*, *Skanda* or *Subrahmanya* is a god of war, victory and purification of human ills, particularly popular in Tamil Nadu. He has six heads or faces and twelve arms with implements, and hands in both charitable and protective modes; on the right is a 42-metre statue in simpler form. His vehicle is a peacock the same as for *Radha*, national bird of India, reflecting loss of the ego in it being a resplendent object of attention in comparison with oneself; the peacock then rides on a phallic snake while having killed another snake, expressing the fully engaged but unaffected relation with sexuality.

At this shrine *Murugan* is with his *vahara* facing and *dvarapalas* or guardian deities armed with *gadas* or maces adorning the sides of the *garbagriha* entrance; it's designed for easy circumambulation. His faces reflect the original six children that were combined in his formation, looked after by the *Kritika* goddesses who had become the Pleiades stars. *Murugan* slew the demon *Surapadman* while his consorts are *Valli* who began as a folk goddess along with *Indra's* daughter *Devasena*; he's also associated with *Agni* the fire god.

Harihara is a unification of *Vishnu* in black on his right side and *Shiva* in white on his left as aspects of the same Godhead and *Brahman*, and important for both *Vaishnavites* and *Shaivites*; he holds a *Vishnu chakra* and *Shiva trishula* while consorts *Lakshmi* and *Parvati* attend here. Another syncretic god of the two main families is *Ayyappan* as a son of *Shiva* and *Vishnu's* only female avatar *Mohini*, or son of *Shiva* as *Hara* and *Vishnu* as *Hari*

without a female. *Mohini* is an enchantress who perplexes her admirers while *Shiva* in several *puranas* is affectedly desirous of her despite his marriage to *Parvati*.

Ayyappan developed in the early first millennium in Tamil Nadu as *Shasta* and is associated both with *Murugan*, rather than being a third *Shiva* son, and with the folk guardian deity *Aiyandar*; he protects against trouble and evil and may be accompanied by tigers symbolizing victory over hidden forces. The deities on the left here are forms of *Aiyandar* whose worship in Tamil Nadu dates at least to the 3rd century; *adivasi* are Indian tribal groups.

Trees meanwhile feature in folk as well as *Brahminical* traditions in connecting the earthly and celestial; here a sacred fig tree has offerings of coloured bags of stones for wishes. Folk Hinduism in rural India may have village deities and practices partially distinct from the *Vedic* and *Puranic* pantheons and their *Brahminical* caste-based and Sanskritized ritual. Folk traditions featuring female priests are more developed in *Dravidian* or southern Indian culture. Moreover *Bharat Mata* is a mother goddess personification of all of India.

Dionysiac

The mind has a dual nature characterized by the more fundamental intuition and emotion, and the secondary explanatory intellect and rationality, these perhaps having correspondence with the activity of the right and left halves of the brain. Ancient Greece at the origins of Western civilization understood and deified these as the spontaneous *Dionysus* based on natural pre-rational dynamics of mind, and disciplined *Apollon* based on sets of concepts without grounds beyond themselves. The Dionysiac however only consists in an interface between relative thought and absolute truth as *Brahman*- the developed mind transcends attachment to both Dionysian and Apollonian, and dualities of every kind while also being at one with them.

Hinduism is concerned with coordinating functioning between the intellect and the *self* as consciousness or *Brahman* via the Dionysiac as comprising the field of the *gunas* or imperatives of circumstance on the intuitive level; the innumerable applications of the *gunas* translate to the array of gods. The mind needs to keep contact with the Dionysiac and intuition as access to its *self* and avoid processes and conceptualization operating on their own and becoming Apollonian.

The 19th century German composer *Richard Wagner* and philosopher *Friedrich Nietzsche* are key figures in the modern explication of Greek insights. Coordination of mind is expressed in *Wagner's* works through their formal design issuing from the characteristics of their musical material rather than from any external and abstracted Apollonian conceptions- passion remains ascendant over perspicuous pre-given structure.

This with their librettos' psychological insights puts them at the centre of the empire of Western art and makes them some of the civilization's greatest achievements. *Nietzsche* discusses the Dionysiac and Apollonian in his first and most important book *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* of 1872, influenced by *Wagner's* theorizing and interest in the Greeks. However he subsequently broke with *Wagner*, leaving the mind's duality unresolved with the rest of his writing inconsistent and controversial, and became insane in his last decade.

The world's cultures can be fitted under either more Dionysian or Apollonian normalization, Dionysian having its centres of India with its radiation into southeast Asia along with DR Congo into Africa. The West is overwhelmingly Apollonian along with to a less developed extent China and its east Asian satellite cultures. India and DRC are self-sufficient prime-movers, depending on no other country while others depend on them; Indian civilization has outlived all others while central Africa traces back to humanity's origins.

They reflect the necessarily existence of a locus of truth somewhere for all else to be relative to- if a ball is covered with fur it can't be smoothed down all over but instead must have at least two crowns where it stands

vertically or is absent, and likewise there have to be places in the world where the wind isn't blowing. Thoroughgoing relativism and Apollonian thought necessarily lack self-consistency because all their components only have for-other reference and real meaning at every point is deferred- instead there has to be a for-itself absolute reference as also consisting in consciousness.

When travelling in developing countries one first tends to think that chaos is a problem but on arriving in these two where Dionysian interaction is at its height there's a transformation of understanding- the logic within is perceived when freed from the last of confused and deceptive relative Apollonian frames that the mind was mistakenly holding onto. The Dionysiac field of the *gunas* is aesthetic in comprising sub-intellectual meaning not subject to reasoned account in terms of relations between concepts.

Aesthetic experience refers to truth directly such that sunsets are beautiful and rubbish isn't, even if this isn't subject to outward demonstration- aesthetics is the oldest branch of philosophy and the inquiry into why certain sounds and other forms have the effect on us they do is unanswerable in principle. The natural world with its characteristics and activity issues from fundamental dynamics as do the arts and with some of the most impressive aesthetic sights being of water and the sun's fire; water relates to *Brahman's* immanent aspect and fire to its transcendent while *Vishnu* embodies drowning of the intellect's confusion and *Shiva* burning it up.

The sun is the world's source of light and energy, these being the absolute in *Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity* that underlies modern physics; matter is frozen energy such that the material world consists ultimately in the absolute. Everything including the sun is seen only by the light of the sun and accordingly the *Gita* and several *Upanishads* relate the monistic *self* and *Brahman* along with *Krishna* to the sun.

Moreover sunsets change their appearance at exactly the rate they are processed by the attention, keeping it endlessly engaged- the outer natural world and inner mind have the same abstract substrate. The sun is further the solar system's gravitational centre with all else revolving around it. The sun illuminates and sustains itself self-effulgently all as truth, *self* and the Dionysiac particularly sexuality inhere in us by themselves across all situations; personal development is the emergence of what is already in us, rather than the addition of new learning or anything else. The sun also comprises a single luminous eye all as the I, the third eye of *Shiva* or the *self*, and the eye of the phallus also as the insight or sight of the self or I, and as the third eye; the circle further gives the circularity of organized holistic thought.

Sex can't be discussed in seduction because it's fundamental with no reference beyond and movement toward it must instead be under silent imperatives; seduction can't be foregrounded nor the sun looked at directly. The *self*, the sun and sex also compare with a monarch and their glory with no one above them. Similarly *Brahman* isn't worshipped directly, only the interface of the gods as aspects of *Brahman*. Sunday is both the weekday of the sun and the day of *Shakti* worship with femininity both closer to the absolute divine and the source of relative and worldly masculine energy; Sunday is also the main day of worship in Christianity as the son of god or sun god religion. *Surya* the ancient *Vedic* sun deity is still important today.

Aesthetic experience as transcendent meaning extends throughout the universe, Saturn having profound serenity and mystery, the most beautiful object known in the cosmos. Nebulae are interstellar areas of gas and dust, providing vistas with sunset-like combinations of the *self's* stillness yet dynamism. The Apollonian West creates elaborate traditions in the arts as a repository for the lost Dionysiac and intuition under the surface of thought. The nature of the aesthetic or Dionysiac as dynamic stillness is evident in *Mark Rothko's* painting with its edges between blocks, comparable with those in sunsets and nebulae.

Rothko, Monet, Cezanne, Van Gogh and *Whistler* are among those producing series of works of the same scheme or scene to explore its inner logic, keeping within the *Nataraja* and circumscribed inward relations. Artists often feel they create under autonomous guiding influences beyond themselves as individuals. These

however are at the heart of all thought and action, rationality at most only paralleling or giving later account of the initial intuition- consciousness's relation with the world is always aesthetic, hidden forever just beneath intellectual processes and not to be confused with them.

Van Gogh also frequently depicts the sun, along with sunflowers. All these painters are related to impressionism, the depiction of a fleeting moment in time where a scene's essential aesthetic or absolute reference emerges. *Whistler's* dark style moreover tries to organize paint tones in terms of musical tones and harmony. Related examples in art music of narrow focus on aesthetic content of material distinguished from intellectually conceived or architectonic framing include *Wagner* and minimalism, a movement begun in the 1960s in America and influenced by Indian music.

All these use repetitious techniques where before the mind can get lost in consideration of one iteration of material the following one is presented- the attention or the *self* can't get lost in the objects of the senses and is given back to itself for its nature as bliss to shine while Apollonian structures are negated. Important minimalist composers are *Philip Glass* and *Steve Reich* while *John Adams* and Englishman *Michael Nyman* explore related process. Repetitions and lack of foreground to background contrast compare with *mantra* meditation to bring loss of intellectual critical distance and individual subjectivity.

Attempts to ground truth intellectually create infinite regressions of justifying presuppositions and in this music these are transformed and replaced into static repetition of low formal information content and instead focus on its aesthetic or immanent truth beneath. Energy and ecstasy seethe from the paradoxically immobile and seemingly uninteresting background all as the *gunas* for worldly activity issue from the *self's* dynamic stillness. *Wagner* and minimalism also parallel sex's similar focused attention in the *self* given back to itself by direct contact with another *self*, and in its meaningfulness yet low information.

Philip Glass's opera *Satyagraha* from 1979 is loosely based on *Mahatma Gandhi's* life and his philosophy of *truth force* including a Sanskrit text from the *Bhagavad Gita*, the ancient summary of Hindu philosophy; it's a highly compelling listen with *Christopher Keene* conducting in the superb Sony recording. *Michael Riesman* is among other important *Glass* interpreters.

Other techniques of juxtaposed material and their subtly proliferating interrelations similarly displace linear form and isolate the attention in the moment. Examples are *Messiaen*, *Bax*, *Schumann* and *Scarlatti* as well as *Wagner*; *Scarlatti* further examples working within a repeating specific idiom to explore its aesthetic possibilities while *Messiaen* studied Hindu rhythms.

Bax was also influenced by the poet *William Butler Yeats*, an important literary example of juxtaposition and interconnection. Art is a response to alienation from rising rationality and loss of spirituality on the cultural level in the West particularly in the modern period from the Renaissance- people's nature as the intuition and Dionysiac gave way to reason and materialism per se.

Velazquez's masterpiece painting from the start of modernity is of Spanish royalty at the height of wealth and living standards yet the young princess at the centre is curiously distracted with a doll-like frozen posture and glazed-over demeanour; the maids look at her with concern but share the strangeness. Their chocolate box existence is unsatisfying and demands something more- truth is hidden immanently behind the surface of material life but the culture has instead taken it to be that surface.

The situation remains the same in the 20th century- *Edward Hopper's* paintings of Western civilization's leading country are drenched in disconnection and the loss of something important but inscrutable. He looks to the subconscious and introspection intimating the transcendent and undermining norms of confident material development referenced to nothing more.

The West's perspective of the mind as basically rational and conceptual is expressed in its modern period philosophy's mistaken central project of epistemology or the attempt to find truth or knowledge in intellectually transparent terms. *Descartes* in the early 17th century contemporary with *Velazquez* began the project in trying to establish an initial proposition about our experience of the world with certainty, but it can't be done as immediate experience is its own basis and not any intellectual discussion about it.

He said *I think, I am*, trying to locate certainty within conceptual thinking and arguing that sensory information about the world could be wrong- a demon god or mad scientist holding us as manipulated brains in vats could lead us to believe in a fictitious outside world. Truth however resides beneath thinking including abstract propositions- we have direct intuitive although aesthetic access to the world to provide certainty and don't have to theorize about our relation with it first.

Descartes' mistaken assumption is that there are gaps to bridge between subjective consciousness, the outside world, and our cognitive faculties. The I or *self* can't be separated from itself for an objective or foregrounded intellectual understanding and as the world has the same substrate in consciousness, neither can anything at all; thorough intellectual definition is impossible, our relationship with reality not being subject-object as in the diagram but subject-subject, direct and pre-rational.

All objects and the material universe are already within subjectivity or consciousness such that knowledge is simple unfoldment rather than a reception of something entirely from outside of us. Experience is defined aesthetically by the *gunas* not by anything more superficial or foregroundable in the intellect. The problems with epistemology and the search for intellectual certainty encapsulate Western thought and its culture of excessive rationality, loss of contact with the natural world, and sexual repression.

Indeed after 300 years in the early 20th century epistemology met serious objections even in its own terms, particularly with the phenomenology or attention to the nature of outward experience of *Edmund Husserl* and *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*. Contact with the world is real and not mediated by conceptual information because reality is contained purely within consciousness to begin with; experience is self-justifying.

The world is known to exist because it is aesthetically seen to be there and not because of a theoretical explanation about how the senses might reliably connect with it; the brain in a vat couldn't be supplied with enough information to close the gap between the *self* and experience detached from it. Moreover truth having no intellectual basis doesn't mean it's only grounded in arbitrary culture and norms as sets of intellectual presuppositions yet to be foregrounded- instead a trans-cultural God's eye view is possible for the reason that we are God and consciousness and what consciousness is conscious of are the same thing.

One famous argument to demonstrate that there is more to the mind than information processing or relatively interacting thought and perceptions is *The Chinese room* paper by the American cognitive scientist *John Searle*. A man inside a sealed room equivalent to a program in a computer takes a written question in Chinese passed from outside, not knowing that it's a question or even that it's Chinese but then applies information processing tasks to it to produce a response which is then passed back out.

This makes the computer look like it's conscious and self-aware but it's not, having no idea what it's doing- basic sentient experience can't be data streams or propositions as these alone provide a complete absence of underlying meaning. Even formal information can only be understood by humans with their consciousness, a computer not having the means to know that the symbol '4' means 4; any syntax needs transcendent reference in order to provide semantics.

Furnishing a computer with sensory equipment like video cameras for eyes and microphones for ears then doesn't make it any more aware, such sensory data still being converted into meaningless formal symbols- it has no thinker that does the thinking, never has our unmediated contact with the world, and remains dead. Rather than understanding or knowledge as relative relations that try to connect with the world these must already be structured in us on the level of God. This moreover is close to *Socrates'* position at the beginning of Western thought where if knowledge wasn't already in us we couldn't recognize it.

Also the Anthropic principle in cosmology notes that the universe's underlying physical nature is accurately defined to allow the existence of biochemistry and life, as though a necessary feature of the universe is the development of consciousness in it. This parallels quantum physics showing that photons and other particles behave in observer-dependent ways and thus that even the most distant objects in the universe only come into existence as billions of years old when they're observed and cognized by us. Consciousness is produced in the brain but extends over the universe, our subjectivity being the essence of the relative world.

Allama Prabhu the 12th century *Lingayati* poet in his poem *Looking for the Light* provides the analogy of finding the self-realizing transcendent within us, and the ascendance of intuitive direct insight with its common sense and power, as the sudden and orgasmic dawn of a million million suns. This is also literally true with some large galaxies having that many stars suddenly realized into existence by observation; both the devotee gaining self-realization and the universe abruptly stop dreaming.

As with humanity and God there is a mutually sustaining relationship, the physical constants allowing life to exist and evolve for humanity then to reify that reality by perceiving and understanding it. The unitary basis to reality also resolves the mind-body problem of how immaterial thought can interact with the material brain and body- everything is *Brahman*. Furthermore in relativity theory the range of phenomena with relative values is extended and the absolute redefined from a physical position in space as an ether to the more abstract laws of physics or speed of light.

Matter, energy, space and time change in order to keep the speed of light and thereby normal cause and effect unchanging in all situations. Light as the absolute is the light or illumination behind the ever-changing relative mind while also being light in terms of weightlessness, reflecting the coordinated mind not weighed down by endless intellectual deliberation. Light as energy further compares with the absolute and God or the Dionysiac field of the *gunas* in being given in the universe from the start and not created or destroyed. However no object can reach the speed of light or get to absolute zero temperature as the absolute is inaccessible by relativity per se- for union with God the absolute has only to be found already inhering within, through coordination of intellect or thought with intuition or consciousness.

The Dionysiac's primary expression or set of dynamics or *gunas* is sexuality, this being people's origins and central to Hinduism. Sex is concerned with another person as a subject within an object, subsuming the apparent self to world distinction of all other experience in the uncoordinated mind. It clarifies the absolute as inhering within the relative and the singular substrate of mental and physical, along with our relation with the world as subject to subject rather than subject to object, and of knowledge being already within us.

Both sexual psychology and intercourse further parallel the interconnections of Vedic thought while most of the gods have consorts and developed romantic relations. This is a medieval temple complex at Khajuarho in Madhya Pradesh dedicated to the lovemaking of *Shiva* and *Parvati*, so long and intense it shakes the world. It features erotic sculpture and *maithunas* or either divine or mortal couples or other groupings in spiritual sexual congress.

Many temples including to the highest gods have depictions of sexual activity and some are covered in them- art and sex have similar abstracted and purified aesthetics, or emerging structure from the Dionysiac.

Khajuarho is expressive of *Tantrism*, a set of first millennium Hindu spiritual practices and philosophy on the love relations of *Shiva* and *Parvati* or *Shakti* the female principle; when human couples have sex these great gods incarnate as them and provide transcendence of mind.

The man giving of himself to a woman both in sex and what he does for her reflects both the giving up of action to the *gunas* and divine nature out of the separation of action from the *self*, and the offerings first to god in the *puja*. Us being immanent and omniscient God is reflected in sex in the experience of blending and uniting with and being the other person, and transcending all dualities to the intuition as the impersonal source of knowledge and wisdom in life. Man and woman uphold each other as do humanity and God, and universal creation and consciousness.

Khajuarho has a diverse array of sensuous forms with the sculptures in good condition. It's a grand statement of the unity of sacred and profane, completely undermining Western notions of an antithesis; it's marvellously sultry in the heat, haze and quiet. Only a tenth of the Khajuarho sculptures are clearly sexual but all opulent with tilted head and swung hip styles, capturing sexuality's combination of detached beauty and teleological desire as the absolute and relative.

Depicted alongside the *maithunas* are *surasundari* or beautiful and graceful young female deities with round faces, full breasts and hips and slim waists, developed from the 9th century. They are related to *yakshis* or sensuous nature spirits dating to the 2nd century; alongside the male *yakshas* the *yakshis* have a capricious disposition and guard treasures within the earth and attend on *Kubera* the *Vedic* wealth god who rules in the mythical Himalayan kingdom of *Alaka*.

The figures smile across the centuries with serene coordination of sexuality with the outward mind, embracing fullness of life; they have the knowingness of unaffected relations with sex. Aesthetic courtship and seduction move forward under intellectually silent imperatives where the woman may accept what action the man takes but never agrees to anything. The process has to continue without subject-object foregrounding or rationalizing, ratios being things seen in terms of other things- the absolute that sex references is unique and only accessed immanently in the situation's dynamics.

Compare the ecstasy here with the gloom, sorrow and sick repression of much Christian art in the assumption of the Dionysiac's wrongfulness when it's simply a challenge to the mistaken prioritization of reasoning and principle in Apollonian culture. Sex is the intellect infused by and united under the intuition, in contrast to Western epistemology's search for the world understood as conceptual verification of sensory information.

The world consists within consciousness such that the senses directly access the world; sensation has truth content as expressive of an immanent aesthetic relation between the reasoning mind and consciousness or the *self* beneath, and not second-order justification. The for-itself sensation of direct and unforegrounded sex makes this clear but results in Western culture censoring sex and providing a religion of suffering, self-hatred and abstracted principles.

Sex seems illicit in Apollonian culture due to the visceral, non-ratio-nal immediacy of its subject-subject relation, displacing transparent and worldly for-other instrumental rationality. The unitary focus in sex epitomizes holistic reality as inseparable from the subject and to be lived rather than reduced to principles or accounted for. The requirement is not to suppress sex but only to keep the *self* on the level of the attention without being lost entirely in the senses; only at orgasm in *Brahman* does the *self* unite with all levels of the experience, as subject and object and absolute and relative.

Consciousness has a threefold structure of the knower, the knowing process, and that which is known, providing for inward critical distance in sex and all life confined to the intuitive level of mind, all as the

Nataraja's circumscription by a ring of fire. Good sex encapsulates this structure as giving the higher 5th, 6th and 7th states of consciousness and establishing a wider subject-subject unity of mind and life. Moreover the sexual subject-subject relation is unaffected because the other person's *self*, the senses, and the world are only oneself.

Khajuarho depicts gods and mortals including priests in a range of activity involving sixty-nine, chains of three, other groups, masturbation, oral sex, homosexuality and even bestiality. The *Vedas* understand that humanity has fullness of relative experience as well as absolute understanding, or the outer senses and materiality as well as inner development and the divine; these are united in sex.

Temple sex further reflects *Brahman* in terms of the *omega point* in modern physics, a final state of the universe where all knowledge is complete. Hindu scripture in parallel with modern cosmology describes cyclical periods of universal expansion and contraction between points of creation and destruction. Orgasm and death at the start and culmination of life are equivalent to the big bang and big crunch singularities at the start and end of the universe where the relative unites fully with the absolute in the dimensionless point of *Brahman*; life also reflects *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* as procreation, life and death.

However the *omega point* or *Brahman* is integral to and pervades reality and the mind as sex and one-pointed orgasm or pure consciousness at all times; this is also argued by philosopher *Arthur Schopenhauer*, influenced by *Immanuel Kant*. Sex encapsulates and gives us the union of knowledge and the divine at end of time- the *omega point* exists now as the foundation of reality with knowledge already complete within human consciousness in order for us to move forward to gain and realize it.

The *Surya* sun god temple from the 13th century at Konark in Odisha two states east has almost entirely erotic sculptures and thousands of *maithunas* in endless positions; the sculptures again are mostly figurines but with a range of larger scales. It expresses the connection between the illumination of the sun or light and sex and the burning up of confusion in the fire of both and it's in the form of a chariot as expressing sex with its royal triumph, rush and dust and sparks flying. The sun also compares with sexual returns in being self-effulgent, glorious and singular while it is the world's main source of energy as the mysterious ability to do work that exists independently of materiality and relative relations.

Again the love-making celebration is riotous and has unselfconscious continuity with regular life scenes nearby; there's no disjunction between the attention in sexuality returning self-referentially and its outward focus with things referring to each other. The sculpted figures show no loss of control, due not to Apollonian denial but to the coordinated mind in sex and its order arising from the Dionysiac and field of the *gunas* retained in regular life; deities at the centres of *maithuna* and *yakshi* assemblages are likewise sensual and at one with the ravishment.

The stone at Konark however isn't as durable and though two centuries younger than Khajuarho hasn't weathered so well- it would be fine to see it restored and repainted. Another *Surya* temple at Modhera, Gujarat in the west from 1026 has erotic carvings on the inside as well as outside, discounting an idea at Khajuarho that sex is left aside when attending to God and doesn't extend to the mind's foundations. Again divinity is sensuality; these are orgiastic scenes on the interior columns in the main hall; the temple was damaged by Muslim invaders in the 14th century and isn't active today. Moreover in *jyotish* or Hindu astrology the zodiac revolving around *Surya* has the constellation *Maithuna* the amorous *couple* in place of the Western Gemini the twins.

The Ellora caves in Maharashtra of the 5th-10th centuries have similar sculpture again in a range of scales; the *Kailasa Temple* here is also designed in shape to recall *Shiva's* phallic Mount Kailash in Tibet. This is a life-size frieze of *Shiva* and *Parvati's* wedding, their love relation as first detailed in the *puranas* of the period. Then the

12th century *Channakeshava Temple* dedicated to *Vishnu* in Belur in Karnataka examples erotic sculpture on its *gopuram* or entrance tower. All these sites reflect Hindu sexuality free of the influence of India's Islamic and Christian overlords' confusion and twisted morality, present for a millennium from the 11th to 20th centuries. *Abrahamic* rule in India has made it on the surface a sexually conservative country today, with associated population problems from poor birth control norms within marriage.

Sacred erotic sculpture in terms of humanity's union with ultimate reality depicts mortals in congress with mortals, mortals with gods, and gods with gods. Sexual positions include the intimate *yab-yum*; *Indra* at top centre is leader of the ancient *Vedic* gods. The divine romantic relations acknowledge the fundamental claim of femininity on the masculine gods, all as the absolute ineluctably inheres in and grounds the relative thinking mind.

Even *Ganesh* has someone, no one unhappy or unhealthy and in contrast with *Abrahamics* seeing sexuality as anathema and somehow in a fallen state. The *Kama Sutra* scripture details methods for *kama* or sensual pleasure as one of the *purusathas* or four life goals; it's associated with the 5th century philosopher *Vatsyayana* but is likely a composite from the 4th century bce to 2nd century ce; most of it discusses wider issues of love, courtship, relations and family.

It was first cognized by *Nandi*, *Shiva's* bull gatekeeper who overheard *Shiva* and *Parvati's* lovemaking as enlightening; in *Sanskrit* the sounds also have vibrational parallels with what they mean. *Bhairava* and *Kali* as principle destructive forms of *Shiva* and *Parvati* on the right here are in congress, destroying a demon as the unreferenced Apollonian mind beneath them in the fire of passion.

Similar transcendence is expressed in the fantastic aesthetic image of *Chinnamasta*, sixth of the ten *Mahavidya* avatars of *Parvati*, *Kali* being the first; she resides over *Kama* and his consort *Rati* making love on a lotus, god and goddess of sexual desire. She's cut off her own head and holds it in one hand, with blood spurting from her neck into the mouths of her attendant deities *Dakini* and *Varnini* and into her own head's mouth; the three figures have *Shaivite* phallic snakes around them.

She's drawing energy from *Kama* and *Rati's* passion and transferring it through her blood and its sustaining force into her devotees; passion and the emotions are expressions or implications of the Dionysiac's dynamics that equate with the gods. Blood circulation in the body further reflects the *self's* self-referential and self-justifying nature while fed to *Dakini* and *Varnini* reflects the *self's* simultaneous ability to connect with relative reality beyond itself, as the absolute inheres in the relative and with *Dakini* and *Varnini* indeed also being divine.

The energy from the couple is an awakening that blows *Chinnamasta's* head off, sexuality as on the level of *Brahman* isn't only intellectually irreconcilable but beyond even the gods' comprehension in the Dionysiac field; behind her is the sun or illuminated sky, symbol of enlightenment. All the *trimurti* are represented here, *Chinnamasta* and her attendants as *Shiva* goddesses, *Kama* often a *Vishnu* god, and *Rati* a *Brahma* goddess; the three standing goddesses also represent the three *gunas*, *Chinnamasta* as *sattva*, *Varnini* as *rajas* and *Dakini* as *tamas*.

On the left *Chinnamasta's* head is also directly in front of the sun to form a halo, and in this case she's having sex with *Shiva* herself and without the others; on the right is another *Chinnamasta* shrine. Her detached head further symbolizes the unaffected relation with life, the mind locked-on to the intuition and activity based on the *gunas* and its core sexual expression. Dogs eat the severed heads of men lying around while there are fires in the background, expressive of the comprehensive passing away of purely relational thought in personal development. *Chinnamasta* is a great goddess of the unity of sex, life, death and cyclical renewal; she further represents courage, discernment and loss of ego.

Lingams

The *Samudra manthan* or *Churning of the milk ocean* myth appears in the *Mahabharata* and elsewhere in the *puranas*; it's a creation myth in terms of procreation and the phallus as a snake. Following a typical *Vedic* misunderstanding or mistake of mind and ego involving the sage *Durvasa* in confrontation with *Indra* and his elephant *Airavata*, the gods lost their power and turned to *Vishnu* for help.

Vishnu advised them they needed *amrita* or the nectar of immortality, which required the serpent king *Sheshanaga* in the form *Vasuki* to be used as a rope coiled around *Mount Mandara* supported by *Kurma* the turtle, *Vishnu's* second incarnation. *Kurma* reflects sex providing support of mind from the emergent structure in the Dionysiac- emerging out of the ocean. *Vasuki* is pulled by the *devas* or gods at the tail end and *asuras* or demons at the head to churn the primeval ocean of milk and sustenance.

The phallic snake moves one way then the other for semen to move for ejaculation; gods and demons as right and wrong and love and lust are transcended at orgasm to *Brahman*, given by the mountain between them with its singular peak. Immortality in terms of both absolute-referencing intuitive awareness and offspring is gained for the gods and humanity. The gods and demons cooperate in the churning but the gods win despite the demons' equality with them as truth is beyond the duality of good and bad; sex is the dissolution of subject-object to subject-subject relations and orgasm the unity of possession and being possessed, having and being had, and taking and giving.

The churning further relates to the *self's* dynamic silence or inner movement referring back on itself to create hermetic reality in terms of the material world contained within the mental, or object within subject, or relative within absolute. *Vishnu* in purple here also stands on *Mount Mandara* while the myth is also important in Buddhism with him as the *Buddha*; his iconic reclining pose meanwhile is on *Ananta Shesha* or *Endless snake*.

Samudra as *ocean* or *confluence* has further sexual reference as the joining of two rivers while accompanied by the mythical or subtle and feminine *Saraswati River* as the absolute beyond the duality; this has foremost celebration in the *Kumbh mela* festival at Allahabad with the Ganges and Yamuna rivers. Sex is central to personal development and effectiveness in life in providing the unaffected relation with experience that bypasses rationality.

The *lingam-yoni* as symbol of the male and female sex organs expresses the divine union of *Shiva* and his consort *Parvati* leading to *Brahman* beyond; sculpted examples date to the IVC over 4000 years ago. It can however also have no sexual reference and only *Shiva* as divinity, corresponding with the gods and Brahman being with and without characteristics, or *saguna* and *nirguna*.

Moreover men's offerings to women in hope of their favourable appraisal parallel *puja* offerings made in hope of a deity's acknowledgement of the devotee, distinct from response to their wishes. The *lingam-yoni* at top right is used in *pujas* while flowers at bottom right as present in *pujas* reflect sexuality in being plants' reproductive parts and having self-effulgent but ephemeral radiance; men offer flowers to women in parallel to the gods.

Here they are marigolds whose yellow colour associates with the lion *vahana* or vehicle of *Parvati* and her avatar *Durga*, and which also have medicinal properties. *Shiva's* sensuality is unaffected to paradoxically provide the full relation with sexuality and with the senses and the world. *Shiva's* progenitor is the fertility god *Rudra* in the core *Rigveda* text while his phallus or *lingam* is discussed in the *Atharvaveda* and elaborated in myths of the *Lingam Purana* and elsewhere; the phallus is separated from the body as the *self* is from the intellect.

Here are two ithyphallic *Shiva* sculptures from previous centuries. Three more in relief from the early medieval including *Shiva* in his fiery form *Bhairava*. The *lingam* is *Shiva* as both destroyer and creator, sex destroying the Apollonian mind but creating insight from alignment instead with pre-rational and clear-sightedness Dionysian dynamics, while also being procreation for new life.

The *lingam-yoni* as *Shiva's* phallus in *Parvati's* vagina is the dominant focus of *Shiva* worship as the highest of the gods, found in thousands of temples, shrines and elsewhere across India. We come from and are defined by sexuality, the essence of the Dionysiac leading the mind to its *self* under the surface of conscious thought. This *Shiva lingam* or *Shivling* has the *aum* symbol with the dot of transcendent consciousness and truth reference that sexuality promotes beyond relative thought; above is a multi-headed cobra also symbolizing the phallus and a container dripping water onto the *lingam* in reference to semen.

The *lingam* further has the horizontal lines of *Shaivite* forehead markings in being a head while there are two virile *Nandi* bulls along with a *Shiva trishula* or trident spear. More elaborate temple *lingam-yoni* ceremonies may be accompanied by drum playing, the drum being a *Shiva* attribute and where its rhythm reflects that in sex. There's a wide and unselfconscious understanding of the *lingam-yoni* and Hinduism's sexualized nature, although norms from the Islamic and Christian periods also downplay it.

Here's a set of *lingam-yonis* on a platform with a *Brahmin* performing an *aarti* towards the end of a *puja* where a flame is moved in front, light reflecting illumination of mind from sex and other aesthetic experience. Here's a line of *lingam-yonis* where devotees walk past touching with their right hand both parts of each followed by their forehead and chest, conveying divinity to mind and heart.

This is one of many lines of large *lingam-yonis* in cloisters at a major Tamil Nadu temple. These temples have some of the largest *lingam-yonis* or unaccompanied *lingams*, including an 11th century temple in Madhya Pradesh. The abstract monolithic style at top right reflects clear sightedness while *Nandi* facing his master *Shiva* as the *lingam* is prowess and strength; sometimes they lie in water, liquid as the Dionysian form of matter. The Madhya Pradesh temple has a small proxy *lingam* outside for offerings, with a cobra and *Nandi*. Again there is water around this example.

There are also twelve *dyotirlingams* or *radiant lingams* at separated points across India where naturally occurring *lingam* shaped rocks have a temple built around them and which didn't require a consecration ceremony to infuse them with *Shiva's* presence. They are at Bhimashankar, Ellora, Aundha Nagnath and Trimbakeshwar in Maharashtra, at Ujjain and Omkareshwar in Madhya Pradesh, at Somnath in Gujarat, Kedarnath in Uttarakhand, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Deogarh in Jharkhand, Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh, and Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu.

Here's a *lingam* with water continuously running from the top reflecting semen, including before ejaculation. This one is at an eighth century temple to *Shiva* and *Parvati* in Odisha, still receiving pujas from Brahmins. Sex is at the centre of mental and spiritual development towards God, in total contrast to the repressed *Abrahamic* religions. On smaller scales are sets of the sacred number of 108 *lingams* with its sexual connotations of 1 as phallus, 0 the vagina and 8 or the infinity symbol as their union in *Brahman*. 1008 is a related number.

Moreover Saint Peter's Square in Rome as the headquarters of Catholicism, Christianity's original and largest sect, has a phallic obelisk from ancient Egypt within a *yoni* design- spirituality is also understood as sexuality but officially denied. Cobras are often incorporated in *lingam-yonis* with a raised body and flattened neck ready to inject or spit venom, symbolizing the erection and foreskin behind the head, opposite the base of the vagina; they may be multi-headed.

Snakes also reflect lovers intertwining, sperm with their tails and movement, and the DNA helix, along with the stealth and ever-presence of sexuality and truth. *Shesha* or other serpent gods or *nagas* can transmute or shapeshift into human form, expressive of people's real background state as the Dionysiac and hidden *self*, along with the phallus changing from the flaccid state. There is no substantive Dionysiac to thinking mind disjunction or duality, the primary intuition instead subsuming rational constructions above, but in confused Apollonian and *Abrahamic* culture where the intellect and outward life per se is normalized, people can seem retreat to and return from sex and the Dionysiac.

Lingams as *Shiva* can morph into *shilas* or *Vishnu* in the abstract form of elongated rounded stones. *Naga stones* by contrast are for serpent gods worship, particularly by women for fertility but along with prosperity and protection, including from snakes; they're also associated with folk Hinduism while the cobra is the Indian national reptile. *Abhishekam* is a libation or drink offering poured over a deity statue as part of a *puja* and includes milk, yogurt, honey and plant oil along with sandalwood, turmeric and rose waters.

Liquid running out the *yoni* reflects intercourse with every repeated *puja* an orgasm and the one-pointed timeless presence of the transcendent mind or *Brahman*; sex issues enlightenment and common sense beyond reasoning. Nurturing white milk from sacred cows in parallel with semen is favoured, particularly for *lingam pujas*; cows' imperturbable disposition further compares with that needed in courtship.

Devotees pour water over the *lingam* from metal jugs in brief *pujas*, or bring milk for them or priests to use; priests may also spurt water on it. The shape of Mount Kailash in Tibet as *Shiva's* abode is also a giant *lingam* head; the developed intuition brought by yogic mountainous retreat is also that for seduction and the circumspection required for dealing with wider life. These are *abhishekams* for *Parvati* and *Durga*, wife of *Shiva* and the female Godhead. When the god is female *abhishekam* reflects the sexual practice of bukkake or multiple men ejaculating over a beautiful girl- they have the same aesthetic, if without erotic content in *abhishekam*.

Women's holistic psychology has more direct reflection of humanity's divine status and thus men seek unity with them all as humanity seeks unity or self-realization with itself or God. In sex and life men give themselves profoundly to women all as they give their intellect and ego up to intuitive or aesthetic experience and God. A beautiful idol is covered with sacred Dionysian messiness and the logic within; the liquid surface as sublimated solid matter connects the subjective deity and their face with the objective world while undermining notions of purely structural or formal beauty.

The chaos and excess in *abhishekam* and bukkake are at one with the Dionysian cultures of Asia and Africa issuing from India and DR Congo, and opposed to the West's superficial order. The Indians understood the Dionysiac and visceral aesthetics long before the Greeks and their god *Dionysus*, and long before bukkake; it is fit only for a god or a girl goddess whereas the sick Apollonian West sees all sexuality as degraded.

When the god is male the whole idol embodies a dripping *lingam*, the man encapsulated as a phallus through both shape and genetics, while the base of the whole *garbhagriha* enclosure forms the *yoni* with the liquid draining to a *pranala* outlet. Here it's *Brahma* the four faced creator god as comparing with procreation; this 9th century Indonesian sculpture examples the holistic understanding in Hindu culture and profoundly conflates God and the *self* with humanity and sexuality.

The kernel of both Hinduism and Indian culture in parallel with sexuality and transcendence of mind is the *garbhagriha* or *womb chamber*, or the deity's narrow enclosure in the temple with its doorways within doorways reflecting the vaginal opening, and the idol inside as the phallus. The design of the wider temple then expresses the wider body; the whole also reflects the universe and its explosive big bang origin, the *garbhagriha* being the location of orgasm or the big bang, singularity, Omega point, consciousness or *Brahman*

from which the universe emerged and which underlies all points and times in subsequent relative reality. Any deity can be offered *abhishekam*, including *Nandi* at bottom right.

Mukhalingams are *lingams* featuring faces at their head in parallel with *Brahma*, giving the phallus as the man, the sensation's intimate connection with the mind, multiple faces as overwhelming sensation, the sense that sex is what we are, and the giving of oneself in sex. They further express the genetics of sexuality as expressed in the face, the aesthetic interest from the absolute infusing into the relative mind in the face of someone experiencing sexual sensation, and the unity of subjectivity and objectivity in sexual and all experience. The erection head and clitoris nerve endings are the physiological parallel of the ends of the lines of rational reconciliation or interrelation of the relative world, both relative life and sex as grounded in transcendental consciousness beyond.

The *Gudimallam lingam* similarly depicts *Shiva* contained within his phallus; it's among the oldest *lingam* sculptures, from around the 1st century bce and 1.5m tall. He presses down on a god below that may be one of his forerunners associated either with affected sexuality or misguided asceticism, *Shiva* finding that position beyond both. A myth of the intellectual irreconcilability of sex and the need to find structure or *dharma* instead within it is where *Brahma* and *Vishnu* are vying for superiority and *Shiva* intervenes as a *lingam* in the form of a column of fire as phallic desire, asking them to try to find its top or bottom and thus give closed account to sexuality. They fail because it can't be separated from us or objectified to be dealt with, sexuality and the Dionysiac being our interface with the world that require internal unity with ourselves and not external intellectual ideas about ourselves.

A structure for the intellectually unmediated senses is only found immanently and so instead *Shiva* reveals himself in the centre of the column, as with the *Gudimallam lingam* and *mukhalingams*, such that consciousness and senses, subject and object, absolute and relative are one in *Brahman*; *Brahma* and *Vishnu* then pray to him. *Arunachala* is *Shiva* in this fire *lingam* form with the foremost site for worship being the *Arunachaleshwar* or *Annamalaiyar Temple* at Tiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu; the temple is at the base of Mount Arunachala, an extinct volcano referencing ejaculation and sexual heat and fire, and also seen as a *lingam* head.

The annual ceremony here of *Karthigai maha deepam* or *Kartikeya's great fire* in November or December involves a *lingam* comprised of several tonnes of *ghee* or clarified butter with a wick, and lit on the mountain top. It celebrates the restoration of light to the world after *Parvati* playfully closed *Shiva's* eyes reflecting lack of alignment with oneself or sexuality always being a joke, while also celebrating the birthday of their son *Kartikeya* or *Murugan* as the results of the *lingam* and their sexuality.

The temple is one of five in the southeast dedicated to *Shiva* as the *mahabhuta* five elements of earth, water, fire, air and space, this one being for *tejas* or fire. The central *lingam* examples the three-part structure of square bottom as *Brahma*, octagonal middle as *Vishnu*, and round head as *Shiva*, also comparing with the three-part mind of absolute, Dionysiac and relative; the right-hand one is a variation while the left-hand one is faceless but on a *yonis*.

Brahma originally had a fifth head or face that *Shiva* cut off to correct his affected desire, replacing it with 5th state of consciousness or transcendental consciousness beyond individuality; sometimes *Brahma's mukhalingam* faces however are seen as *Shiva's* or *Vishnu's*. Hinduism arrived in Cambodia in the first centuries ce and Khmer kings saw themselves as equivalent to *Shiva*; the same four faced *Shiva lingam* design is used at the ecstatic *Bayon* building in the vast *Angkor* temple complex.

Buddhism also takes up the myths and in Thailand four faced *Brahma* is the popular protection and fortune deity *Phra Phrom*. Sexuality and Theravada Buddhism with its emphasis on examination of life over principle

and dogma share similar qualities of freedom and openness, Thailand then being one of the world's most sexually at ease cultures. Spiritual phallic imagery is present throughout Southeast Asia, this Buddhist temple in Vietnam exemplifying two large lingam candles for burning hot at the top.

Buddhism has an unaffected relation with the snake, the image of the Buddha with a cobra above being related to the *lingam-yoni* and *Vishnu's Ananta Shesha* pose. The snake here is erect and empowered, residing in a higher position than the *Buddha* or his intellectual mind yet at one with him. *Naga* staircases built up hillsides to Buddhist temples express sexuality being by the devotee's side at every step of personal development, the snake staying with them all the way to the singular orgasmic peak, or God or reality- the Dionysiac and the *self* beneath are immanent and at no point objectifiable.

Buddhism also understands coordination of mind and union with reality as sex with the *Buddha*, here again in the Hindu *yab yum* position. By contrast *Abrahamic* Christianity and Islam as embodying their Apollonian cultures and Caucasian peoples' psychology have deep problems with sexuality. Most people also have limited levels of consciousness and need to accept their culture with its presuppositions as a basis for their mind and identity before applying any critical thought above, so as Dionysian sex clashes with and threatens this it has to be repressed, condemned and denied.

Sex was the *Abrahamic* Biblical original sin where in the first book *Genesis* a serpent as the *Devil*, rather than *Shesha* as god, came between humanity and God, yet it's where the snake or erection comes between man and woman that they are united with themselves and become God and beyond. Sex is the forbidden fruit *Adam* and *Eve* took from the *Tree of Knowledge* or self-developing, self-referential carnal knowledge distinct from but encompassing other-referential worldly knowledge; Western culture fits people's mental characteristics and consciousness limits in a control system instead of a basis for freedom.

It's forbidden due to its undermining of Apollonian culture and the phoney assumption of the mind's basis in the intellect, and is misogynistically given by the women to the man as corrupting the more rational masculine psychology when in fact it greatly improves it; the mind gains a global understanding of its environment and a transcendent grounding in the intuition. Sexual union makes clear that conceptual thought and its dualities are secondary to or a subset of a wider state of knowledge established on the divine level; it's a cornerstone of developed and mature relations with oneself and the world.

Adam and *Eve's Fall* from the *Garden of Eden* is them being thrown out of grotesque Apollonian society as a duplicitous warning to others for having sex, being human and seeing clearly. The culture alienates people and particularly the more conscious from their natural intuitive state of mind as also depicted by the garden animals. It sees free will in terms of arbitrary intellectual deliberation rather than alignment with primary nature or truth; freedom is freedom from rationality's disassociation with empirical reality and a return to common sense and oneself.

The snake expresses wrongheaded *Abrahamic* thought in arguing that they could take the fruit for themselves despite guilt from sexual sensation's character as Dionysian for-itself and independent of further relative reference or reasoning- culture shouldn't conflict with sex in the first place and there shouldn't be any crazy guilt. The concern in life is for right action rather than the fruits of action, these only following from right action when the attention is instead coordinated with itself or its *self* and lost neither in the relative objects of the senses nor the intellect.

Only the unaffected relation with sex through to its unity of right action with fruit, or worldly and divine, in orgasm is necessary yet the *Garden of Eden* myth takes non-fruitive action to be no fruit at all- with dire consequences for social development and human happiness. Whereas *Shiva*, *Parvati*, the *Buddha* and other *dharmic* gods have sophisticated relations with the phallic snake, the offensive *Virgin Mary* of Catholicism just

treads on it with sex as wrong. She denies the foundations of her own existence with a mindless immaturity and cluelessness over the normal sophisticated feminine reserve; she's a goddess of virginity, abnegation, unawareness, underdevelopment, self-effacement, inhumanity, unpleasantness and foolishness.

Similarly the Protestant symbol of the pelican here crushes the snake, symbolizing self-denial along with twisted self-harm in the false idea of it piercing its own chest to feed its young with its blood, in a parallel with *Christ's* passion story. Among Christianity's most repellent doctrines is from *Saint Augustine* of the 4th century holding that through sex and procreation the original sin of sex is passed on to the next generation so that people can always be regarded as fallen and wrongful, condemning even the unborn child.

Art is a Dionysian counterbalance for alienated Apollonian culture and among its greatest works is necessarily *Michelangelo's Pieta*, depicting *Christ*, his mother and the West as two virgins in sorrow and death. The Dionysiac and the passions are expressed in two main directions, sex and orgasm in Hinduism, and their counterpart torture and death in Christianity. Torture and death have important components but approach the absolute from the wrong side of the aesthetic line leading to *Brahman*.

Instead of commonsensically looking to avoid suffering, psychotic and sick Christian rationalization sees it as good while sex accordingly is bad. The religion's central image is horror and murder of a masochist with devotees kneeling before, looking up to and praising it, while the sexual repression even has him with trunks on. The death cult's churches display their crucifix as representing the opposite of life and its normal values, surrounded by graves of the dead.

Islam as the opposing branch of Apollonian *Abrahamic* duality has even more crazed and lunatic contempt for the human condition, providing similar iniquity, neurosis and abomination. The veil is a misplaced reference to the sacred being intellectually hidden- putting a bag on someone's head to cut them off from the world facilitates the torturer regarding them as less than human in hiding their facial responses and reactions.

Whereas Hinduism praises the sight of the female body as revelatory in its sophistication yet simplicity, in parallel with the *self's* dynamic silence yet its pure consciousness, and indicating to the man the ease of being himself to deal with her, *Abrahamic* teaching is that the nude human body and particularly the female body is intrinsically sinful and shameful. The existence of women with their more intuitive and divine psychology critically undermines the prioritization of masculine intellectual psychology and its lack of coordination on the normative level across wider Western civilization with its two main patriarchal religions; in both and particularly Islam the twisted response is that women have to be crushed.

The extremes of insanity and evil of Islam's forbidding of men and women to look at or speak to or be near each other, burying given healthy sexuality to align it with a sick culture, contrast with Hinduism as based on unity with one's own nature. Instead of Abrahamic gods and goddesses of denial and self-hatred Hinduism has gods and goddesses of romantic love and specific gods of sexual desire in *Kama* and his consort *Rati*, associated with the *Kama Sutra* discussion of lovemaking and pleasing life.

There is an extensive literature on the major god *Shiva's* phallus yet *Christ* likewise depicted with one is as unthinkable as erotic sculpture in a church; in Christian art tree leaves cover offending body parts and figures don't touch. Moreover whereas alcoholic spirits consumed to evoke the Dionysiac and spirits are in Christianity taken in moderating pious ceremony, the *Rigveda* features the intoxicating *soma* juice along with intoxication goddess *Varuni* who sails on the endless primordial milk ocean.

Foolishness

Alignment of mind with life's inner imperatives, aesthetic lines and logic, or the *gunas* of nature beneath intellectual reasoning, is maintained through perceiving the *self's* separation from the midst of activity. The possibility of the mind losing its truth reference and engaging in affected relations with thought and the world and making mistakes however is given in the *Upanishadic* example of the rope that in half-light or from a distance looks like a snake.

It's not that you must have it explained that it's not dangerous and so that you don't have to worry, you just need to see that it's not a snake. Any intellectual process of trying to understand that it's not a snake is completely negated by the transcendent, epistemologically or theoretically unbridged experience of the fact- we awake from the delusion of being led by the thinking mind and revert to immediate intuition, direct connection with the world, and mysterious common sense. Moreover the rope as a coiled spiral references sprung and emerging understanding plus release of stress and the *Vishnu chakra*.

The riddle of the rope is the riddle of the universe because the transcendental perspective is needed to deal with it, and thence with all life- rationally it might be argued that if you don't know what the object is you should run off from it yet there's no need to run off from a piece of rope. The answer is to take a cautious aesthetic step forward, look again, and then another and another until it can be seen it's only a rope and one can relax.

In terms of sexuality the rope is a phallic snake and once courtship and sex is seen for what it is it's understood as nothing fearful nor immoral, with the mind neither confused by nor lost in it but finding structure emerging from it. When a young man wants to approach a girl he finds that though he may be unsure and not have all the skills or architecture of mind to deal with the situation, nothing problematic happens with the girl giving no indication of being anything other than an ordinary person, and he can step forward and unfold the knowledge he needs.

Moreover in the blindfolded men and the elephant analogy of the unity of religions and God behind appearances the men take the elephant's ends of tail and trunk as rope and snake. These are indeed diametrically different things but the men lack the holistic perspective and hence the place between dualities and the commonsensical elephant in the room. Once limited understanding is transcended by the full view it's seen as a joke since it was baseless deception and foolish to have fallen for it; tension disappears, the shoulders drop and the person says *oh* as relating to the letter O and zero with its transcendent position and unusual properties outside all other numerical ratio-nal relations. The gods of all three major branches of *Vaishnavism*, *Shaivism* and *Shaktism* have myths of and serpents about them expressing oneness with sexuality. There are further connotations of ropes as binding and snakes by contrast as unbounded, along with bondage in sex paradoxically providing freedom from Apollonian constraints.

Another analogy for taking aesthetically but not intellectually justified steps forward is walking up a staircase in the dark with a small torch, one step at a time and not worrying too much about steps that can't yet be seen. The stairs can be negotiated when the person literally comes to their senses, acts on what they're telling them, and finds the situation's emerging aesthetic line of action, rather than holding onto groundless ideas and extraneous sky-castle theorizing.

Art is the *self* coming back to itself and comparing with the deception involved in taking the rope to be a snake where a return to common sense and non-rationality is then evoked. The Dionysiac is displaced to the arts in alienated Apollonian society with the aesthetic nature of life abstracted away rather than normalized and lived. The Roman myth *Pyramus and Thisbe* from the basis of Western civilization then encapsulates art's project of finding oneself in confused cultural surroundings, its clearest rendition being the play within the play that ends *Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596).

In the play the wall between two young people trying to meet is non-existent and ridiculous and is only their baseless internal misperception, particularly the man's with his need to act. *Pyramus* however never sees what to do despite courting involving no information he doesn't have- ignorance has no material basis and instead knowledge is structured and self-generates in one's own consciousness. The *Queen* in the audience responds to their reticences and unwitting foolishness with 'This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard'. The partition is also duality of mind as issuing from ethnic Caucasian left-brain and masculine psychological disposition as normalized in the culture.

Pyramus compares with *Arjuna* in being on the level of calculating things out in a false and narrow subject-object relation with the world instead of finding immediate connection and global awareness; he fails to proceed intimately and intuitively with another subject *Thisbe*. The subject-object gap to his beloved is unbridgeable because the initial idea of an object beyond the subject is mistaken, even if the material world suggests this.

Pyramus is foolish in being afraid of the snake because it's not a snake and he has no substantive basis for thinking it is- his mind is on the wrong footing, failing to find unity with itself. In the play an attempt to have an epilogue to explain or reconcile the farce is dismissed by the king, the answer being common sense not more daft reasoning, and a dance is performed instead with its intuitive music and movements, all as *Shiva* in the *Nataraja*, keeping away from the edges. Sex is harmless while life needs the same unaffected approach where the attention returns to itself before getting lost and the concern is for right action rather than its fruits, which then follow. *Shakespeare* also makes use of the myth in *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) while its first recorded expression is in *Ovid's Metamorphosis* (8ce).

In the related Chinese myth *The Butterfly Lovers* (9th century) a girl can only hint at and not say directly to a boy about her attraction to him and the potential of a relationship, but he doesn't see the situation with the Dionysiac repressed in him. He waits in the same confused if intellectually acute and considered suspension as does *Arjuna* on the battlefield before *Lord Krishna* asks him from whence his blemish comes and shocks him out of it. Too late and still on the wrong footing he pursues her to find she's now taken for, understands her past words and behaviour and his stupidity, and dies of despair- neither women, the *self* or God intervene directly in the world and instead men with their more relative nature must rise to that level and act under the dynamics of situations or the *gunas* of nature.

In *Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) the Dionysiac likewise is uncoordinated in the mind of a respectable doctor in a skewed society taking it to be a set of secondary desires rather than primary. He makes a potion to rid himself of his unsociable Dionysian nature but instead it just separates out from his regular dual state of mind in mental swings as *Hyde*, and he gets to like it all the more.

Finally he spontaneously and increasingly metamorphoses into *Hyde* as his mind's basis asserts itself, returning to *Jekyll's* appeasing Apollonian state, uncoordinated with *Hyde*, only for shorter periods; the Dionysiac or absolute consciousness can be on its own but Apollonian constructs or relativity per se cannot, and are unstable. The person in touch with their core stillness is at one with the Dionysian imperatives issuing from it and hence neither gratuitously indulges nor eschews life but acts correctly.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice (1797) story is also traced to Greek myth and concerns organizing the Dionysiac only from within. Following an apprentice's dubious labour-saving experiment endless bucket-carrying brooms as male sex organs sweep back and forth before throwing water as semen from their phallic handles plus testicle and bush brushes; the deluge to drown in is only sorted out by the master sorcerer at one with sexuality. The sorcery, or seduction and the rest of effective life, is transcendent and mysterious and impossible to the apprentice in their reason and relative relations based 3rd state of consciousness.

The superb *The Wicker Man* (1973) film concerns a Christian policeman who foolishly fails to find common sense and is sacrificed by pagan islanders to a sun god- he refuses sex offered him in terms of the illuminating midday sun at midnight and thus is made into an offering himself. He parallels Christ in leading himself to a horrific sacrificial death as a pompous virgin outsider trying to impose moral high-mindedness and confused sexual mores on an already well-adjusted and happy society.

When someone hasn't found the absolute or their real *self* via the Dionysiac or level of the gods, and instead tries to operate in rational terms per se, they experience self-consciousness rather than *self* consciousness. There's also a decapitation ritual reflecting the replacement of mind of absolute over relative referenced thought that sex encapsulates; the *Wicker Man* sun god icon compares with *Surya's*, the *Vedic* sun god.

Shakespeare discusses fools many times and whether any external help should be offered them, there being no reasoned route to the *self* because a person is already themselves- the fool needs to see inwardly the riddle of the snake, the riddle of *Pyramus*, and the riddle of *Arjuna's* inaction and action in the *Gita*. Before he's killed he says 'Think, think what you're doing!' but of course the problem indeed is thinking when separated from intuition or that level of existence bringing us in touch with reality. He's sacrificed to the light of fire burning up his own useless thinking, on the wrong side of an aesthetic line leading to the absolute and enlightenment as suffering and death instead of sex and life; *The Wicker Man* moreover compares with *Shakespeare's Othello* (1603) in the lies of *Iago* gaining justification because someone is stupid enough to believe them.

There's the same understanding of deception and the truth beneath it in Hinduism and life in India with the idea that if someone deceives a fool out of something then it's theirs; action isn't subject to contrived moral or other overall principles and instead *dharma* or righteousness is differently expressed for different people on different life paths. The degree of consciousness present in an individual however as well as its coordination with their thinking mind complicates these issues.

In the even greater film *Forbidden Planet* (1956) the ancient alien civilization of the *Krell* based on the intellect reached extraordinary technological heights to finally build a Great Machine to create anything at will from the mind but when switched on it created monstrous entities that destroyed them. The machine projected direct from consciousness's immediate expression in the Dionysiac despite it having been repressed for aeons, the aliens having come to assume that their rational thought was what they were; they had failed to align outward Apollonian achievement with their own fundamentals, making it groundless and vulnerable.

Over time their cities then completely crumbled away while the Dionysiac-reading machine underground, in having grounds, remained in perfect condition- the issuing absolute *self* never changes. *Forbidden Planet* is based on *Shakespeare's The Tempest* (1611) and the confusion and struggles of mind of *Prospero*; it also references the Biblical *Garden of Eden* forbidden fruit or sex, forbidden in Apollonian and *Krellian* civilization.

The *Krell* took the for-itself Dionysiac to be subservient to the for-other surface intellect and material progress yet the Great Machine's projector console materializes nothing instrumentally useful but instead the present sexual interest, the girl *Altaira*. In the sexualized climax a monster from the subconscious id as the absolute mind is infinitely powerful and unstoppable, readily melting its way through pure *Krell* metal, an otherwise impenetrable Apollonian barrier; again it ends with the protagonist's enlightenment and death. The depiction of the sex organs further compares with the Hindu temple *garbhagriha* enclosure for a deity.

However the *Star Trek* series and films (from 1966) onwards although influenced by *Forbidden Planet* capitulate to its challenges, presenting American and Western intellectual development and the intuition as reassuringly in balance while it's only the alien Spock who is too rational or logical. Meanwhile in the *Star Wars* films (from 1977), also influenced by *Forbidden Planet* along with the *Mahabharata* epic, the protagonist *Darth Vader* progressively loses insight and common sense until he partially destroys himself.

He adopts darkness or evil whereas the *Krell* adopted light or perspicuity, both needing transcendence beyond attitudes and principles instead to *self*-based truthful action; again he finally returns to himself and dies. Hindu terms and gods' names are adapted- the *self* is the Force, the *Veda Darth Vader*, *Yoga Yoda*, and *Padmavarti* the estranged goddess *Padmi*; one of the film titles *The Phantom Menace* is the fooled state of mind, there never being a menace all as with the rope-snake.

Apocalypse Now Redux (1979 revised 2001) outlines insight in the context of a renegade officer in the American Vietnam War who sees corruption and understands that reasoning about his situation in terms of its presuppositions is defeating. He separates with an army faction away from the lunatic official involvement into the Hindu spiritual context of Angkor's architecture and sculpture in Cambodia, comparing with the Dionysiac separate from the Apollonian.

However he makes insufficient sense of the paradoxes of war and again is killed at the end of the film; the story is based on *Joseph Conrad's* novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899) with its fascination for the primeval, set in DR Congo, the heart of Dionysian Africa in parallel with India in Asia. Then in *The Devils* (1972) the Christian priest protagonist understands sexuality and has good values but similar to *The Wicker Man* policeman his thinking gets on the wrong side of a treacherous process that leads to his burning at the end. The interest in destruction of a rival as an aspect of the Dionysiac here is depicted in highly significant scenes, censored for many decades; challenges are raised which Apollonian society tries urgently to keep buried.

Sex aligns the mind with its *self* because the two selves embody the subject-subject or self-referral nature of consciousness; knowledge and reality are already contained within it while sex and consciousness are for-themselves, independent and self-effulgent in understanding and bliss, not for-anything else. Art is the Dionysiac, truth and spirituality captured in abstraction, reflecting life and knowledge in terms of what more they could be and hence art tending towards tragedy, while life in fullness would negate the need for art; music is its greatest form, and the greatest achievement of alienated Western civilization.

The central statement across the arts is then *Wagner's* set of mature operas and among those *Tristan und Isolde* (1859), based on Arthurian legend with ineluctable sexuality independent of the lovers' principle based Apollonian society standing against them; its position in music and art history also compares with the centrality of the Dionysiac in humanity. As with all *Wagner's* mature work the music has enormous conviction and inevitability while being unpredictable and inscrutable, issuing from ex nihilo non-architectonic impulses or the aesthetic *gunas* beneath intellectual sense-making. It's descends into the mind and again leads via deception to the absolute as death, although alongside sex and orgasm, rather than lived fulfilment in Dionysian culture.

Mozart's opera *Così fan tutte* (1790) is also concerned with the irrelevance of anything but the fundamental dynamics of love and seduction, and full of deceit to see through with women's testing ruses and men as imposters. Unqualified attention to the next romantic partner here is all as Hindu monolatry or attention to a god at a shrine being exclusive to them at that time but passing to the next at a later time- *Brahman* is omnipresent.

In *Shakespeare's Measure for measure* (1604) the ruler *Angelo* decrees a ban on love but when the beautiful *Isabella* approaches him to forgive her brother for breaking it he instantly wants to break it himself with her- again the Dionysiac is fundamental regardless of moral principles or rationalizations above. *Isabella* then explains the situation to her brother in prison, saying she can't help and he has to be executed, the Dionysiac being the core consideration such that it must be correct for her and she can't sell herself.

In the Greek myths of *Orpheus* (6th century bce) he travels to the underworld to recover his wife *Eurydice* but where he must walk in front and not look back at her until they both reach the surface- near the end however

he anxiously looks and loses her forever. This is an account of keeping the *self* in seduction and so not losing the girl before arriving out of seduction manoeuvrings to the light of sex- the man must act only on the situation, moving forward intuitively himself and never irrelevantly looking to her in terms of rational subject-object reconciliation.

Similarly the Greek Gorgons (8th century bce) were women with phallic snakes for hair who turned to stone those who tried to seduce them by looking at them directly instead of circumscribed by and in reference to only the mind's own level of silence. *Orpheus* is then killed for not honouring his patron god *Dionysus*, the end for him again being death instead of love with *Eurydice*; he loses his head even while it still sings music, the Dionysiac lost to him and only reflected in artistic abstraction.

Hindu figures expressing transcendence of subject-object mentality through losing their heads include *Brahma*, *Ganesh*, *Chinnamasta*, *Daksha* son of *Brahma*, *Mahisha* the demon, and the victims of *Kali*; the *chakra* of *sahasrara* or spirituality and life energy moreover is located above the head. In the West *The Wicker Man* and *Frog Prince* below provide further decapitation examples.

In these final examples characters manage to find ways out of their confused relationship with the Dionysiac and themselves. Fairy tales or myths of a frog becoming a prince (from the 13th century) outline a callow youth, not yet finding himself in courtship and seduction, in terms of a prince under an evil spell as a talking frog, but where he persuades a girl as a princess to kiss or let him rest on her pillow, as having sex.

Despite her distaste for his uncoordinated mind and small stature from inexperience she has judgement enough to proceed with him; he subsequently realizes his natural self into a capable and powerful king or autonomous man with no other power above to defer to, and is then everything she wants. In some versions of the story she throws the frog against a wall, rather than being stuck behind a wall as with *Pyramus and Thisbe*, in order to shake him into self-realization from *Arjunian* entrapment; in further versions she cuts his head off, sex replacing calculation with immediate intuition.

He compares with the lotus bud, having everything within him needed for full bloom, and nothing lacking from without, and simply needs the conditions to unfold. In the *Sleeping Beauty* myth (17th century) a girl and her kingdom are again under a spell and awakened by a kiss, her mind and life suddenly properly illuminated by the subject-subject *self*. *Arjuna's* problems and objections are dismissed and his suspension relieved in the sudden dawn of a million million suns as in *Allama Prabhu's* poetry; relationality gives way to direct contact with reality and the *gunas* and she sees the rope for what it is. Kissing stops talking and quells thought, and as two faces together it's the Dionysiac interface between relative masculinity and absolute femininity; direct mental and body contact parallels the mind locked-on to reality's same substrate and without rational or epistemological distance.

In the *Tchaikovsky* ballet of the story (1876) the dance with no one speaking or singing compares with the dance that succeeds *Pyramus and Thisbe* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where intuitive life is reasserted over ungrounded explanatory mediation. Once someone knows what one piece of sugar tastes like, its sweetness also comparing with love and sex and its energy transcendent yet fundamental to the world, they holistically know what all sugar tastes like, and likewise once they know what one circle looks like they know what all circles look like. And *Brahman* via its expression in the purified subject-subject relation of sex is then that knowing which all things are known.

Again with music in Mozart's *The Magic flute* (1791) the young prince *Tamino* is lost in a distant land or his mind lost in confused ideas about difficulties of courtship and relational thought or 3rd state of consciousness but pursued by a serpent or his sexuality forcing him out in the world to find a girl. He has a series of trials reflecting his efforts and the need for unaffected relations with desire in order to win his girl *Pamina* and

proceed to the *Temple of Ordeal* or gain sexual experience; the trials are organized by priests, reflecting the Dionysiac's spiritual order. Playing the flute references the phallus and compares with the flutes of *Krishna* and *Dionysus*; it further references music, including of the opera, as the core artistic expression of the aesthetics of life.

Similarly in *Beauty and the beast* (18th century) a girl is entertained by a beast who again as a prince under a spell and not seeing things clearly; meanwhile she dreams about a handsome prince who asks why she refuses him, young women often not seeing that youth may only be undeveloped and not unsuitable. When she gets deceived by other girls into abandoning the beast she finds him almost dead with regret and shows compassion, hence allowing him to turn into the prince- as in the *Frog prince* she finds a lateral way of doing something for him and is rewarded forever.

The two fools help each other and escape from their Apollonian dream states; an uncoordinated man and sexual beast is transformed into being at one with his real self and Dionysiac. Hindu thought influences key minimalist composer Philip Glass with motivic iterations comparing with the self-referentiality of consciousness and sex, and has set *Beauty and the beast* as an opera *Belle et la Bete* (1994), based on Jean Cocteau's film adaptation (1946); it's among his finest works.

Tchaikovsky's last opera *Iolanta* (1892) is a further transcendent perspective allegory about a princess who's blind, rather than asleep, but everyone declines to tell her and she gains her sight with her first lover; she speaks of a vague sense of missing something important before the magical new world becomes visible. She asks why she didn't see this before, all as with a first kiss, or the revelatory scenes for *Morbius* in *Forbidden Planet*- common sense is paradoxically compromised in the mind attending to reasoning with concepts foregrounded away from the whole.

Strauss's opera *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916) is another effective variation on *Pyramus and Thisbe* where *Ariadne* mistakenly thinks love is difficult while others make jokes on her. Her partner is *Bacchus* the Roman version of *Dionysus* who again is under a delusory spell; both achieve clarity of mind through good sex, particularly with *Bacchus* understanding his divinity or the relative masculine finding its absolute value, and as he says becoming quite other than he was. Similarly in *Strauss's* earlier *Feuersnot* (1901) the fires that warm and illuminate a city are extinguished by a spell but rekindled through the ruler's daughter's first sexual experience.

Wagner's Parsifal (1882) also leads up to and away from a kiss, after *Parsifal* rejects empty carnal relations, with his spiritual understanding from it as unifying relative with absolute and then revitalizing an ancient religious order and kingdom that has once again been affected by spells of affected attachment or detachment. The order and kingdom as Christianity and the West with their superficial principled structures are negated and transformed by *Parsifal's* unaffected relations with sex and life; sex unites intellectual Apollonian under spiritual Dionysiac to redeem his immaturity and the wider human condition. An earlier *Wagner* opera *Das Liebesverbot* (1834) meanwhile sets Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* with its Dionysian ascendancy, again arguing for social change.

Although art counterbalances the Dionysiac repressed in Apollonian culture art has unravelled throughout the 20th century due to exhaustion of technical resources, in parallel with exhaustion both in postmodern society and in part world natural resources. The most central work in this terminal process is *Stravinsky's* orchestral *The Rite of spring* (1913) with self-justifying violent destruction of unitary forms; its enormous visceral power issues from Wagnerian movement out of holistic stasis and belies the world as basically Apollonian rationale and explanatory architectonics.

It crushes an entire tradition and a civilization beneath primeval impulses of unrelenting rhythmic drive and dissonance- it's still widely analysed but is irreducible to systems of account and instead foreshadows the close

of Western sense-making abstracted from the real world. Its techniques were part of a long-term process of developing music's natural harmonic system of tonality, that had prevailed for three centuries, through to its furthest extent and subsequent destabilization; they were only properly usable once in this work however, all as the Dionysiac is singular.

The contemporaneous attempt of serialism by contrast to continue to take tonality forward by distortion into a rational system failed artistically; the underlying logic of its interrelations isn't subject to aesthetic inevitability. Truth doesn't consist in systems of conceptual account independent of experience, there was nothing more for music to do, and all meaningful composition finally came to an end by around 1990. The Ukrainian *Igor Markevitch* is an important *Rite* interpreter and his finest recording is with the Warsaw Philharmonic (1962)- traditional pre-compositional structures give way to incredible instinctual response and the Dionysiac incarnate; its outline ballet story also informed *The Wicker Man*.