

Love from India

by

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For Tristan, Jamie, Emil and Cordelia

Even as a great fish swims along the two banks
of a river, first along the Eastern bank and then
the Western bank, in the same way our Spirit
moves along beside our two dwellings; this
waking world and the land of sleep and dreams.

Upanishads

The photographs of modern India were taken by Niamh Ferguson.

The reproductions of the religious paintings were taken from the internet – Google images for Upanishads.

The text used for the Upanishads was also taken from the internet. This version was translated by Max Müller in 1879.

The selections from the Upanishads were made on a random basis and minor modifications were made to help place it comfortably in this context. Every effort was made to keep the beauty and spirit of the original work.



Foreword

During her six month visit to India, Niamh sent emails - like verbal snapshots - to her friends. Imagining them in a book where others might enjoy them is how 'Love from India' was born. Not thinking it prudent to make a portrait of India from a single viewpoint, I decided to celebrate its complexity by placing Niamh's texts and photographs alongside references and sketches from other sources. This book is a collage of many different perspectives from the real and imaginary world of India.

Each of the six chapters has similar content and an identical structure. They start with two images; the first is an ancient Temple sculpture and the second, a photograph of an Indian child.

These are followed by a pair of texts, four verses long; the first is a tribute to hungry children who work from dawn to dusk and the second is a eulogy on love's magical resonance.

Edited versions of the same verse texts open each of the subsequent chapters.

This introductory section is followed by one of Niamh's email texts, with a selection of her photographs interspersed through its pages.

The final section starts with the beats sung by tabla players when teaching their rhythms. After this comes a duet of fragments from two very different sources. Presented alternately, the first is an invented narrative about distance in love and the second is a series of quotes from the Upanishads - the holy texts of ancient India.

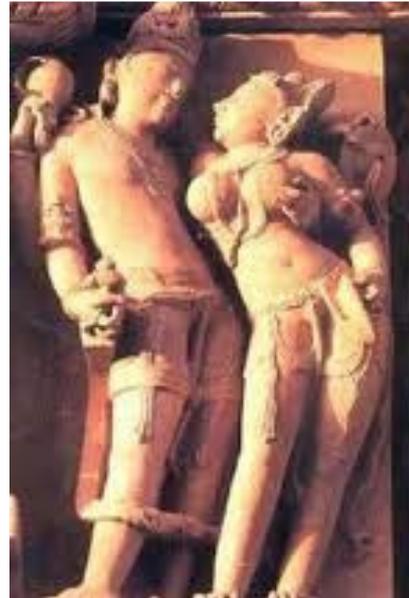
The photographic reproductions in this section are copies of religious paintings made in the same period as the Upanishads.

Peter Stickland

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CHAPTER ONE



DIFFERENT WORLDS



VICIOUS TRICKS

A hungry stare looks about, conscious of being observed. Swelling with inexorable surplus, the market, with tempting cruelty, invites skeletal children to take what they can. It's time to eat.

These youths emanate luminosity, but working from dawn to dusk requires tons of food energy. Dexterously manoeuvring through crowds, they succeed against the odds or go home starving.

Craving is theatrical. Relentless poverty calls for quick decisions as punishment is swift. No magical activity or droll play for these workers. Fear spirals decline, but it also spurs them on.

Blistering heat bloats undernourished bellies. Politicians converse idly about their sustenance. These elegies, relentlessly jumping from open mouths in cheerful promise, are vicious tricks.

THIS LOVE

This Love fills the air along the eastern coast. The resultant seismic vibrations multiply with endless variations, resonating outwards over the oceans, satiating hopes, daydreams and fancies.

This Love springs up into the air, its magically tuned power intensifying over many centuries, reverberating with the hearts of millions who imagine this caress is the start of a new dawn.

This Love energizes the belief in starting anew. Sweet affection blooms like blessings, pledging vibrant pleasure to enthusiasts. Each new lover displays a smile that's both valiant and cheeky.

A blazing sunset flames on the western horizon. The world's adventurers return to their ancient homelands. Poetry, like a kiss, is on every lip and the joy of whimsy informs every exploit.

BORN TO SCOOT



Hi Jen,

Thanks so much for organizing the send off. Didn't really need to arrive with a hang-over. Not great for the very bumpy, truly scary bus ride and beyond crowded train trip. And the heat! Hotter than their curries darling. Finally arrive in Pondicherry, on the East coast. Ici la, c'est tres chic and quite a bit French, doncha know.

All wide, tree-lined boulevards and buildings painted in forty shades of grey.

Decide to rent a bicycle to get around, as... c'est un tres grand citee – Blimey... at this rate I'll be using up all my French vocab.

Soon get used to cycling round, dodging whole families on the one scooter, or ancient men on bicycles holding umbrellas up, carts pulled by buffaloes and rickshaws.

You wouldn't believe what they carry on bicycles and scooters Jen...my jaw was on the floor seeing a skinny little chap tie a two-seater sofa on the back of his bicycle and wander out into the heavy traffic!

Soon get bored with bicycle, so steel my nerve and hire a scooter. Never had one before and can't believe I'm doing it.

Pick up lovely orange Vespa thing, called 'Pleasure' from Babul on the Mahatma Gandhi Road, which makes Hyde Park corner look like a quiet country lane.

My style of driving a scooter I've discovered is quite unique.

Thing is, tend to keep the brake on all the time, (just in case) as well as the accelerator.

So, it's a 'stops and starts' method which comes naturally to me, but am embellishing and perfecting it daily.

I whizz up and down on the promenade past the Bay of Bengal.

Lordy, been dying to say that...The Bay of Bloomin' Bengal... still get a kick out of saying it.

When I say whizz... it's a bumpy style of whizz.

The locals give me a wide berth – think word is out I'm driving around town.

A bit like Moses and the Red Sea, I find the roads clear miraculously around me.

Day two of driving, I discover what the little knob on the left is for...its indicators.

However, the locals get up a petition and one and all agree its best I DON'T use them.

The thing is... I get so elated at having found the blessed things, I'm inclined to leave them on and forget 'em.

Neither the speedometer nor petrol gauge work and mirrors hang at an unnatural angle - but are handy for a lippy check.

Day three on the scootering front, figure out my system of continuously honking the horn not totally necessary

Only need do it when **I'm** over-taking.

And, only do it persistently when I'm trying to overtake a large, tank-like bus.

However, lesson learnt.

Won't be doing that again in a hurry.

All I can say is, thank God they don't have bendy buses in India.

It's bad enough when one of those big babies cuts you up, but at least they're kind of short here.

Still not sure what rules apply at junctions about who goes first.

It's kind of like scissors, paper, stone.
You have as much chance of getting either right.

I tend to plough straight ahead mouthing, 'I'm a foreigner, I'm a foreigner,' in between the 'Oh my gods.'

I'm convinced that one of their 1,329 deities is dedicated to women of a certain age who take to scootering in public, 'cos weirdly enough, I feel quite safe on the roads.

Tristan says it's the other poor sods that have to worry. Sons can be so v rude and heartless.

The police I find are very co-operative.

They wave at me frequently - very friendly.

What I enjoy most though, is the sheer lawlessness of it all.

There's no such thing as a 'right side of the road' - its go where you bloomin well want matey.

And I do.

I find it such a thrill - immature I know - to turn into a main road and stay on the wrong side till feel capable of joining in with everyone else.

Would like to say I've learnt the meaning of life since coming here but, more importantly, have learnt the meaning of - the BEEP.



Single beep - Just to say - 'Hello, I'm here' - quite friendly, no problems.

Double blast - hey, I really think it's my turn to get across the road now.

Single, double, single beep - Ah no lads, it's definitely my turn. I was here first and a load of you just waded in and took my slot, so watch out, I'm going anyway.

Small, barely audible beep - Oh thank God, we all survived that little scrape.

Mirror is at a funny angle, but I never use it anyway.

Bee, bah, bip - in rapid succession. That's just showing off.

Long continuous beep - Oh for mercy's sake, my Lawrence of Arabia headscarf arrangement is collapsing over my eyes, I'm pressing the accelerator instead of the brakes, so if you value your life, get out of my way NOW.

So, am doing that teenage thing of just riding round all day long.

Up and down, up and down.

Even find myself thinking, 'must take the scooter out for a bit of a spin', as though the

silly thing needs an airing.

It's what our dad used to say when we got our first car in the '50's.

Not that the blessed thing is dominating my life here or anything, but, well... I haven't walked since I got it.

Despite that, my bones are loosening up enough so I can ALMOST do a full lotus position, which I do whilst having breakfast.

It's just... well, getting up out of nearly-achieved lotus after an hour is agony.

The ole knees take at least ten minutes to unbend, but have a few more months here to perfect that.

Am now staying at an Ashram guesthouse at two quid a night.

Am meant to be a follower of Sri Auro somebody but no one checks my credentials so I slip in and have fab room, even if it is on ground floor with no balcony.

It's all a bit like sixth form at Mallory Towers here, complete with ten O' clock curfew.

And no alcohol, smoking or anything else that one might find amusing or fun.



Largest daily expense is baksheesh to night-watchman when I arrive back late; which is often.

Tried standing on scooter to climb over gates when I get locked out. Another thing I won't be doing again.

Grazed hands play havoc with one's beeping and braking abilities.

Now know why gloves are a must when scootering as have developed fat finger syndrome.

Probably means my knitting days are over.

But...knitting, scootering, knitting, scootering - Hmm - no contest.

I was born to scoot darling.

With each day am settling into the rhythms, sounds and total foreignness of the place more, but it's hardly what you'd call an 'adventure'. But I don't care...absolutely **adore** being here.

Pondicherry is half French and half Indian. Indian side, which also has a Muslim and Christian quarter, is a huddle of mad vibrant colour, cheap signage on every available space and horn blasting to split your eardrums. I love both and flit from one side to the other over the public sewer, I mean canal.

Jen, need a big favour.
Haven't brought the right clothes at all.
Everything I have is beach stuff – not a good look in a city, or on a scooter!
Any chance you could send over my sun hat plus jeans and a few long-sleeved shirts? They're in my trunk.
Clothes here are a nightmare – all mirrored, embroidered and thirty years out of date.
Hope your heating is back on darling.
Big love, n.x.





BRÂHMÎ

Thom

Ta Ka

Ta Ki Ta

Ta Ka Di Mi

Ta Di Gi Na Thom

THIS LOVE IS LIKE WATER

Anupama laments. If I accept your love my life will never again know peace; you will dominate my actions and I will struggle for breath; you will be jealous and I'll feel bound to hide away.

Peetambar, shocked, says love will not change her life. Know only that you are loved and love in return. We can be independent, remote even; we do not have to create chaos because we love.

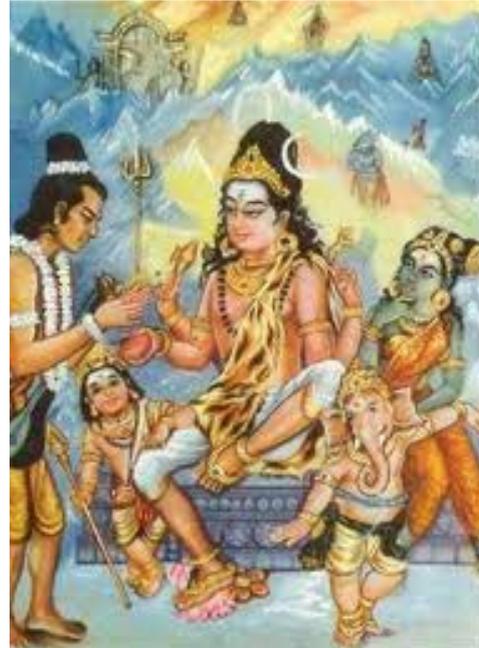
But what is this love? Is it only an agreement, a bond that might endure even without contact?

Yes, this love is like water, not tricky like eating trifle with the fingers. Know it as the Brahman.

Please teach me what you know of Brahman?

I know only what I can read in the Upanishads.

Oh read to me, Peetambar, I'll hear of this love.



TALAVAKÂRA
KENA-UPANISHAD
FIRST KHANDA

At whose wish does the mind sent forth proceed on its errand? At whose command does the first breath go forth? At whose wish do we utter this speech? What god directs the eye or the ear?

It is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of speech, the breath of breath and the eye of the eye. The wise, freed from the senses, depart from this world and become immortal.

The eye doesn't go there, nor speech, nor mind. We neither know nor understand how anyone can teach it. It is different from the known and above the unknown. The elders taught us this.

That which is not expressed by speech, but by which speech is expressed; that which does not think by mind, but by which it is said that mind is thought, these you might know as Brahman

And that which does not see by the eye, but by which one sees the work of the eyes; that which does not hear by the ear, but by which the ear is heard, these you might recognise as Brahman.

That which does not breathe by breath, but by which breath is drawn; this act you might also know as Brahman and realize that it is far from the things that people generally adore.

SONG OF A SERENE RIVER

*The sound of these words washes over me like
the song of a serene river that pulls me along.*

*This river bursts from the mountain, Anupama,
dive into the spring water; melt in it like snow.*

*Peetambar, allow me to enjoy the river as I find
it. Will you always read to me when I visit you?*

*Yes, even if we meet each day at dawn and stay
together until sunset, I will read to you always.*

*And by reading, is this how you will love me; is
this your pledge, your vow, 'to love like water?'*

*With the sun I will rise up at dawn and confirm
it. With the night I will sing its song to the stars.*



SECOND KHANDA

If you think you know Brahman well then it is beyond doubt that you have no knowledge of it.

Can we learn this? I do not think I know it well, nor do I know that I do not know it. He among us who knows this, he knows it, but what he doesn't know is that he does not know it. True?

Yes. It is not thought by those who think it; it is thought by those who do not think it. It is not understood by those who understand it; it is understood by those who do not understand it.

This thing we'll know at our awakening, when we obtain immortality, when we know the Self, obtain great strength and gain true knowledge.

The book says if you know this now, this is true ambition; if you do not know this now, then it will be some time before you know it. We must try to know it before departing from this world.

THIRD KHANDA

Brahman obtained the victory for the Devas. The Devas became elated by the victory of Brahman and they thought - this victory is ours only, this greatness is ours only.

Brahman perceived this and appeared to them, but they did not know it and said:

'What sprite (yaksha or yakshya) is this?'

They called out to Agni (fire):

'O Gâtavedas, find out what sprite this is.'

'Yes,' he said. He ran toward it, and Brahman said to him: 'Who are you?' He replied:

'I am Agni, I am Gâtavedas.'

Brahman said: 'What power is in you?'

Agni replied:

'I can burn all, whatever there is on earth.'

Brahman put a straw before him, saying:

'Burn this.' Agni went towards it with all his might, but he could not burn it. Then he returned to the Devas and said:

'I could not find out what sprite it was.'



Then they said to Vâyu (air):
'O Vâyu, find out what sprite this is.'
Vâyu ran toward it. Brahman said to him:
'Who are you?' He replied:
'I am Vâyu, I am Mâtârisvan.' Brahman said:
'What power is in you?' Vâyu replied:
'I could take up all, whatever there is on earth.'
Brahman put a straw before him, saying:
'Take it up.' He went towards it with all his
might, but he could not take it up. Then he
returned thence and said:
'I could not find out what sprite this is.'
The Devas said to Indra:
'O Maghavan, find out what sprite this is.'
He went towards it, but it disappeared from
before him.
Then in the same space (ether) he came towards
a woman, highly adorned: it was Umâ, the
daughter of Himavat. He said to her:
'Who is that sprite?'

FOURTH KHANDA

Umâ replied with these words:

‘It is Brahman. It is through the victory of Brahman that you have thus become great.’

After that he knew that it was Brahman.

Therefore these Devas, Agni, Vâyû, and Indra, are above the other gods, for they touched it (the Brahman) nearest.

And therefore Indra is, above the other gods for, he touched it nearest, he first knew it.

This is the teaching of Brahman, with regard to the gods (mythological): It is that which flashes forth in the lightning and vanishes again.

This is the teaching of Brahman, with regard to the body (psychological): It is that which seems to move as mind and by it the way imagination remembers again and again.

That Brahman is called Tadvana and the name of Tadvana is to be meditated on. All beings have a desire for him who knows this.

Most kind and loving heart, you asked me to tell you about Brahman and I promised to quote you from the Upanishad. The Upanishad has now been read to you. I have given you the teachings of the Brâhmî Upanishad.

The feet on which that Upanishad stands are penance, restraint, sacrifice; the Vedas are all its limbs, the True is its abode.

He who knows this Upanishad, and has shaken off all evil, stands in the endless, unconquerable world of heaven, truly in the world of heaven.



CHAPTER TWO



POLES APART



BRUTAL FRAUD

A famished gaze stares out, mindful of getting caught. Bulging with relentless excess, the old souk, with alluring callousness, incites skinny teenagers to steal anything that is nourishing.

Minors radiate brilliance, but persistent labour from sunrise to sundown needs sustenance. Deft choreographies around hordes of shoppers will win the day or infants spend the night in hunger.

Appetite is dramatic. Inexorable hardship calls for fast choices as the penalties are instant. No special hobbies or witty fun for this workforce. Terror causes debility but it urges them forward.

Searing temperatures swell famished stomachs. Urbane appraisers talk lazily about better food. These speeches, inexorably leaping from gaping jaws with positive guarantees, are brutal fraud.

A TENDER SMILE

A tender smile embraces the sky over the coast. Sweet sensations multiply, the endless variants expanding as they float across the deep seas to saturate whimsy and flights of the imagination.

A tender smile launches a mysterious beat that can deepen the heart's sonorous thudding. The rhythm of its echo connects with musical spirits and drives impulses that envision a fresh start.

A tender smile stirs many into growing wiser. Affection flowers like miracles to guarantee an aura of animated affability. Each of the lovers beams a grin that's intrepid and mischievous.

A shining twilight blazes in the distance. The planet's pioneers re-establish links with their native soil. Melodies, like kisses off the hand, make blissful concord and sensuous skirmishes.

DANCING TO CYCLONES



Hi Frances,

Well, Christmas Day wasn't that strange after all, lying by the pool. Was sooo lovely to speak to you. And my boys called too.

Tristan had to DJ but managed to squeeze in partying too. Jamie went...surfing. What else? Felt a bit teary afterwards thinking of family and friends so far away.

Was under a bit of pressure before I left with you all saying what an 'exciting adventure' it'd be.

I only wanted a place to quietly spend winter. But, life is v funny sometimes...

Go for supper to my usual haunt L'Space and am introduced to Fred Lassarre, a choreographer from Paris with partner Cathy. Join his dance class next day - Wednesday before New Years.

Think it'll be way over my head but manage to keep up apart from the floor work.

Thursday Fred, whom I totally adore by now, announces casually that he expects me to take part in the public performance on New Year's Day.

'Donn worree, I make him esspessyal danze for
uz tree...very gentle, slow wiz lovely muzeek,'
he reassures me and Yasmina, another game old
bird.

I look into his deep brown eyes.

Quite frankly would dance a jig, Highland fling
and tango all at once, if he asked.

He makes you feel graceful and that you really
are a dancer.

Love the way he says 'HUP', with a resigned
look of knowing that 'HUP' is the last place
we're capable of going.

But his slight smile and twinkle in his eyes,
which shines brighter than any blood diamond,
suggests he still hopes you might be able to do
it...one day.

I think they're called 'jettays', the 'HUP' step
he was after.

I'm more of a 'pleeay' woman myself, in my
own inimitable style.

There's a place for personal interpretation in
these steps and one doesn't have to be too rigid
in contemporary dance.

After class on Thursday, sky turns dark and
grey.

By evening rain gushes down.

By midnight, wind is at screeching point.

It whistles. It howls. It bangs and batters like a
dozen bulldozers are on the roof.

This is the massive cyclone, Thane.

We don't have cyclones in Ireland, so am quite
excited.

Soon get over that.

It takes six strong men to hold our front door
closed.

Top terrace windows all crash into the stairwell.

Water floods rooms and corridors.

Huge concrete wall blocking my view of the
sea, crumples like a tissue.

Now have great sea view AND into the
neighbour's front-room too.

Mighty roars screech, as Coconut and Neem
trees crash to the ground.

Total chaos and mayhem.

Early morning, the storm lets up.

Worry how I'll get to dance class.

Have only two more days to learn new routine.

Wade through water-logged hallways strewn
with broken glass and ashen-faced, subdued
guests wondering aimlessly about.

A few of us British find broom cupboard and start a mop-up and glass clearing session. No electricity or water so by mid afternoon, cabin fever sets in. Set off for town in warm torrential rain.



Tramping through back alleyways, the utter devastation of cyclone is staggering. Whole streets blocked off by fallen trees. Spent weeks orienteering myself around the boulevards and streets. But now, few are recognisable. Few are open. My usual haunts, cafes and restaurants, unfamiliar, as most signage lies in torn heaps around the street. Can't get through to rehearsal room. Only one shop open, taking orders from the porch and lugging out baskets of essentials; selling them off auction-style. New Year's Eve, thankfully bright and sunny, so things can dry out. In my village, the rattan roofed houses lie smashed all over the roads. But - kids still play about; women sit on door steps, men huddle and a lot of sweeping goes on. They sweep endlessly anyway, but now with renewed vigour.

Road by the promenade looks like a beach with so much sand, bits of boat and debris blown up onto it.

On my favourite street, Rue Dumas, it's like driving in the Brazilian jungle.

Intrepid neighbours cut a pathway through the fallen trees, just wide enough for a scooter or rickshaw.

At one point, have to dodge washing hanging from branches.

Finally, after many detours, reach rehearsal hall. Fred and Yasmina already in full flow.

Learn the routine eventually after a lot of une, deux, trois, quatre....no, no,no, avec les mains comme ca!

Never realised how much counting goes on in dancing.

New Year's day, whole show is cancelled.

The young Gotipua dancers from Orissa pulled out.

Am kind of relieved, as v nervous and have no dress to wear.

At four thirty emergency meeting called.

Organiser Pichaya puts it to the vote.

We all want it to happen, SOMEHOW.

Can blame cyclone for any lack of finesse.

Pichaya goes into overdrive organising lighting, sound system, generator, clearing stage area of fallen trees, fliers & posters.

In renewed panic, Yasmina and I go over and over our bit.

Still haven't got a cozzie.

Six O'clock and we're due to start at seven.

Last minute dash to shops and find an OK dress.

Would prefer if it didn't have target-type logo on the front.

Line me up in an Archery contest and arrows would know exactly where to aim.

At Ghandi Square, stage area is marked out with branches from fallen trees.

Fierce lighting and ear-splitting music create a frenzy of expectation, for the hundreds of milling Indians, all clutching fliers.

In three hours, so much has been achieved.

Now we really have to give them something to remember New Year's Day by.

The children dance first, creating the 'Ahhh' factor.

Good tactic.

The audience realize they're in safe hands with Cathy's stunning solo and respond as though they'd never seen the like.
And probably haven't.
Our only Indian from Orissa goes down a storm with his Gotipua dance.
Next Fred, a triumph of flashing muscle and sinew, with outrageous kicks and flicks, dances like a demon.
Cathy and Fred's duo has the audience practically hysterical.
Then it's us.
Would like to say we waft about on stage as planned, but what with the totally blinding lights, and distorted music, trundling and lolloping is closer to the mark.
Never knew if we were ever doing the same thing at the same time.
Me and Yasmina grin like idiots, hoping to distract from our fumbly footwork, thankful our routine involves a fair amount of running about.
All eyes are on Fred anyway.
He's dynamite to watch.
We almost finish our routine within thirty seconds of each other - not bad really and

anyway, it's contemporary dance, so it's meant to be a bit of a free-for-all.
As we come to the end, my one over-riding thought, looking out at the throng of eager faces, is that at least no one from Frome is here.



At the finale, the crowd roars and cheers.
Audience and dancers, all have a sense of
having achieved something very special.
We've come through the eye of the storm, alive,
and dancing to boot.
Fred and Cathy return to Paris that night.
My heart officially broken.
Next day woken at 5am by neighbour yelling,
'building falling down, building falling down' -
there was an earthquake on the way!
Pull on a kind of kaftan thingy, fill a bag with
passport, camera, phone etc. and jump on bike.
Head off down to Ghandi Square where there
are no tall buildings.
No credit on phone, so can't call Tristan or
Jamie to say I love them and where my Will is.
Find tourist police who say it's a rumour.
Don't believe them – they'll tell you anything.
Can hear them snickering as I leave.
Dew from bike soaked through my see-through
kaftan and so wished I'd put on some
underpants.

After an hour of hanging around, feel foolish
and chilled, so head back to ashram.
False alarm - it was an earthquake in Japan.
Today most streets unblocked, light and water
back on, dozens of women on promenade all
day sweeping sand.
But poor old Pondy - it's been ravaged.
Can't desert it now, so staying for another few
weeks.
Darling, hope you think I've fulfilled the
'exciting adventure' quota you all so hoped for
me.
V excited you might be coming...send me date
soonest so I can make travel plan.
big love,
n.x.

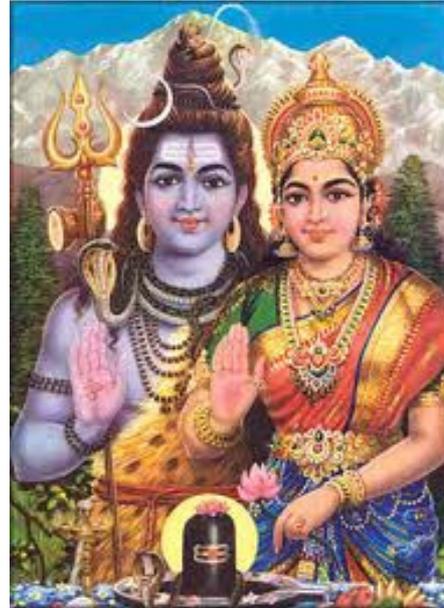
BRÂHMANA

Ta Ki Ta

Ta Ki Ta Ta Ka

Ta Ka Ta Ka

Ta Ka Di Mi



FREED OF THE SENSES

Peetambar, we talk again of my life and love. It is enough that I enjoy living; by my enjoyment I give praise to whoever granted this life. I thank you for the Upanishads, must I also please you?

No Anupama, but I offer my praises to you, for reading to you grants me life; having you near me is love. Say that you will return tomorrow, say we'll talk of love then and read holy books.

I will try Peetambar, but know that my freedom is not easily attained; try to resist turning your invitations into despondent pleas and calls for attention; be content with a little; become wise.

The feet on which I stand are indeed the feet of penance, restraint and sacrifice. Do you want me to become wise, to free myself of my senses, to depart from this world to become immortal?

FIRST PRAPÂTHAKA

If you would make the sacrifice to Brahman, lay the fires and meditate on the Self. In this way you will become complete and faultless. He who is to be meditated on is called Prâna (breath). Of him there is this story:

A King, named Brihadratha, having established his son in his sovereignty, went into the forest, because he considered his body to be transient and had obtained freedom from all desires. Having performed the highest penance, he stood with uplifted arms, looking up to the sun. At the end of a thousand days the Saint Sâkâyanya, emerged in splendour, like a fire without smoke. He said to the King: 'Rise, rise! Choose a boon!' The King, bowing before him, said: 'O Saint, I know not the Self, but you know the essence of the Self, we have heard tell of this. Please teach it to us.'

Sākāyanya replied: ‘This was achieved in ancient times, but what you now ask is difficult to obtain. O Aikshvāka, choose other pleasures.’

The King, touching the Saint’s feet with his head, recited this Gāthā:

‘O Saint, What is the use of the enjoyment of pleasures in this body which is a mere mass of bones, skin, sinews, marrow, flesh, seed, blood, mucus, tears, phlegm, ordure, water, bile and slime! What is the use of the enjoyment of pleasures in this body which is assailed by lust, hatred, greed, delusion, fear, anguish, jealousy, separation from what is loved, union with what is not loved, hunger, thirst, old age, death, illness, grief and other evils!

All this is perishable, as are flies, gnats and other insects, as are herbs and the trees that grow and decay. And what of the great ones like

the mighty wielders of bows and the rulers of empires? What of those kings who before the eyes of their family surrendered the greatest happiness and passed on from this world to that. What of snakes and vampires? There is the drying up of great oceans, the falling of mountains and the moving of the pole-star, the cutting of the wind-ropes that hold the stars, the submergence of the earth and the departure of the gods from their place. In such a world as this what is the use of the enjoyment of pleasures, if those who have fed on them are seen to return to this world again and again! Deign therefore, O Saint, to take me out! In this world I am like a frog in a dry well. O Saint, you are my way, you are indeed my only way.’

IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS

You are more beautiful than memory allows. I vowed to ignore you if you ever came back; it's been seven weeks. You didn't send a word or a token of friendship in this time. My sullen mood has been murderous. Why have you come now?

I wanted to hear you read the beautiful books and receive a little of their knowledge. Why do you expect so much? Being with you is fretful. You wait for me each day, but my presence here is only the beginning of your ambition. I travel far to hear you read; it's the reason I am here.

We are in the same place, you looking one way, I another, our thoughts in opposite directions?

Oh dear, Peetambar, yield to me, read passages from the book so I'll know what it can teach us.



SECOND PRAPĀTHAKA

The Saint Sākāyanya, pleased with the answer, said to the King:

‘Great King *Bṛihadhratha*, you are the banner of the *Ikshvāku* race. You have quickly obtained knowledge of the Self, you are happy and you are renowned by the name of *Marut*, the wind. This indeed is thy Self.’

‘Who is this Self, O Saint,’ said the King.

‘He who, without stopping the out-breathing, proceeds upwards from the *sthūla* to the *sūkshma sarīra* and who, modified by impressions, and yet not modified, drives away the darkness of error, he is the Self. He who in perfect rest, rising from this body - both from the *sthūla* and *sūkshma* and reaching the highest light - comes forth in his own form, he is the self. This is the immortal, the fearless, this is



Brahman. This is the science of Brahman and the science of all Upanishads, O King. This was told to us by the Saint Maitri and now I shall tell you what he said: 'The sacred records speak of the Vâlakhilyas; they had renounced evil and they were both vigorous and passionless. It is said that they spoke to the Pragâpati Kratu like this: "O Saint, this body is without intelligence, like a cart. To what supernatural being belongs this great power by which such a body has been made intelligent? Who is the driver? Whatever you know, O Saint, please tell us." 'Pragâpati answered them thus: "He who in the Sruti is called "Standing above," is like a passionless ascetic amidst the objects of the world. He is pure, clean, undeveloped, tranquil, breathless, bodiless, endless, imperishable, firm,

everlasting and unborn. He is the independent one, the one who stands in his own greatness, and it is by him that this body has been made intelligent. He is also its driver." The Vâlakhilyas said: 'O Saint, how has this been made intelligent by such a being as this, one who has no desires? How is he its driver?' He answered them like this: 'That Self which is very small, invisible and incomprehensible, is called Purusha, and it dwells here of his own will only in part; just as a man who is fast asleep awakes of his own will. This part of the Self, which is entirely intelligent, is reflected in man as the sun in different vessels of water. It knows the body (kshetragñā), attests to his conceiving, willing and believing and is Pragâpati, lord of creatures. He is called Visva. It is by him, the intelligent

one, which this body is made intelligent. He is the driver.’

The Vâlakhilyas said: ‘O Saint, if this has been made intelligent by such a being as this, which has no desires and, if he is its driver, how can this be so?’

He answered them like this:

‘In the beginning Pragâpati, the lord of creatures, stood alone, but he had no happiness when he was alone. Meditating on his true self, he decided to create many creatures, but he looked at them and saw they were like a stone, which is without understanding, standing like a lifeless post. He thought to himself, I shall enter within them so that they might awaken. Making himself like air (vâyû) he entered within them. Being one, he could not have succeeded in this had he not divided himself into five.

He is called Prâna, Apâna, Samâna, Udâna and Vyâna. The air which rises upwards is Prâna; that which moves downwards is Apâna, that by which these two are supposed to be held is Vyâna and that which carries the grosser material of food to the Apâna and brings subtle material to each limb, has the name Samâna.

After the work carried out by the Prâna, the Apâna and the Samâna, comes the work of the Vyâna. Between them, with the Prâna, Apâna, and Samâna on one side and the Vyâna on the other, comes the rising of the Udâna, which is that which brings up or carries down what has been drunk and eaten.

Now the Upâmsu-vessel, or prâna, depends on the Antaryâma-vessel, apâna. The Antaryâma-vessel depends on the Upâmsu-vessel and between these two resplendent Selves heat is produced.



This heat is the purusha, or person, and this purusha is Agni Vaisvânara. This is why it is said that Agni Vaisvânara is the fire within us by which the food that is eaten is digested. Its noise is the one we hear if we cover our ears. When we are on the point of departing this life we do not hear this noise.

Having divided himself into five, Pragâpati is hidden in a secret place (buddhi) and assumes the nature of mind. He possesses the prânas as his glorious body. He has true concepts and he is free like ether. However, even now he feels he has not attained his purpose and he thinks from within the interior of his heart, "Let me enjoy objects." Therefore, having first broken open these five apertures of the senses, he enjoys the objects by means of the five reins.

This means that these perceptive organs - ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose - are his reins; the active organs – tongue, hands, feet, anus and generative organ are his horses; the body is his chariot, the mind its charioteer and the whip is his nature. Driven by that whip, his body goes round like the wheel driven by the potter. This body is made intelligent and he is its driver.

This is indeed the Self, who, seemingly filled with desires and seemingly overcome by bright or dark fruits of action, wanders about in every living body while he himself remains free. Because he is not manifest, because he is infinitely small, because he is invisible, because he cannot be grasped, because he is attached to nothing, he seems to be changing and seems to be an agent without *prakṛiti* - nature, the basic

intelligence by which the Universe exists and functions - but he is in reality not without *prakṛiti* and he is unchanging. He is pure, firm, stable, undefiled, unmoved, free from desire, remaining a spectator and resting in himself. Having concealed himself in the cloak of the three qualities he appears as the one that enjoys *rita*, that is, as the one who takes enjoyment from his good works.’

CHAPTER THREE



OPPOSING PLANETS



CRUEL DECEIT

A ravenous glance scans the scene, alert to the chance of arrest. Bloated with persistent surfeit, the bazaar, with tempting brutality, provokes scraggy youths into nicking anything nutritious.

Adolescents are radiant, but those who toil from sun-up to sunset should receive their fuel. Nifty strategies to divert shopkeepers must turn out well or hunger will haunt the hours of darkness.

Hunger is demoralizing. Inescapable destitution necessitates speedy reactions; justice is instant. No comic daydreams for these tiny labourers. Panic magnifies failure, but it keeps 'em going.

Blazing fevers distend ravenous bellies. Suave critics chat languidly about a healthier cuisine. Such orations, relentlessly soaring past crooked tongues with fixed assurance, are cruel deceit.

WARM AFFECTION

Warm affection pervades the heavenly seashore. Delicious vibrations thrive on endless options to enliven outlying notions and connect love with secluded urges that exist like castles in the air.

Warm affection expands the generous melody and sounds out a dream's sensations. The beat of this atmosphere ricochets off courageous acts and steers inclinations towards fresh innovation.

Warm affection stirs us to intensify the wisdom. Fondness thrives like a spectacle to assure all that charisma is vigorous and jovial. It radiates joy and speaks of pure, roguish rebelliousness.

An intense dusk permeates the heavens. The worldly buccaneers re-inhabit their primordial territories. Whispers like tiny squeaks fly out in ecstatic unity; it's the sound behind every song.

TANGO AND THE MONK



Hi Jen,

Guess what?

Am finally in room on the top floor.

Penthouse suite I call it.

You should see it Jen...balcony looks down over the slum so I can see what all the neighbours are up to.

And I can see the sea... have to lean out a bit but it's definitely what any estate agent would call a 'sea view'.

Am on a health kick these days and scoot to Goubert Market for pomegranates and papaya, then to my banana man in the lanes.

He's so sweet and spends ages choosing 'today eating' then 'tomorrow eating' bananas, but he wraps the whole lot up together so I never remember which is which.

He showed me how to tell if one is ripe. You have to pinch it at the bottom to see if it's squashy.

If it's not, then you've opened a banana that's not fit for eating and have to ditch it.

After market, I scoot up to the dairy for a pot of fresh curd.

I sit up on the roof terrace, looking out to sea,
eating a mountain of bird food.
And have never been happier.
Have kinda weird neighbour across the hall.
He's Eastern - Japanese or Chinese. I can never
tell the difference.
According to the lovely Sebastian on the second
floor, he's Korean and was a monk for 17 years.
Hardly ever see him, which suits me as you
know how much of a hermit I can be.
But he comes over with half a payaya and sort
of bows as he offers it to me in outstretched
hands.
Am almost tempted to curtsy, he's that formal.
In return, leave him a bag of bananas on the
handle of his door.
Only two of them had been tested for ripeness
and found wanting.
Think of sellotaping them up but then he'd
think I was the weird one.
That starts a steady stream of to-ing and fro-ing
of fruit gifts.
I up the anti when I leave him a handful of
cashew toffees I pinched from the reception of
Le Promenade, a swanky hotel in town.

He then presents me with a flower.
Think it's pinched from the garden.
It's all v. cool an all but we never say more than
'pleeeeze' and 'hank you' and the bobbing
thing he does and lots of the sort of smiling that
threatens to break your face in half with the
effort of being nice.

Then one night I hear Tango music coming
from his room.
You know how addicted I was to Tango years
ago, so had to knock and find out what gives.
He's watching a tango film on his computer,
sitting among a pile of other electronic gizmos.
You've never seen such a collection of stuff -
and him a monk!
If he'd more than 10 words of English I'd have
wormed it out of him. I was dying to ask - what
do you do all day long as a monk, why'd ya
leave and do you get paid or where'd ya get the
money for all this gear?
He gestures for me to sit beside him on the bed.
That's really not ashram guesthouse etiquette,
but the effort of miming all that is beyond me,
so do as I'm told and sit.

It's past ten and past my bedtime, so am not really in the mood, but he's pretty insistent. Monk or no monk, he's not a pushover. Anyway, it's only a short clip, mercifully, but then he shows me another and I think, oh, we could be at this lark all night and I'm a middle aged woman and I need my sleep so, I escape. Turns out there's a tango group in nearby Auroville who meet up for classes three times a week.

So, yes you've guessed it, we arrange to go to a salon together.

On the back of his shiny, vintage Royal Enfield. He insists I cling onto him, rather than the bar at the back.

He sure does know how to get what he wants, Mr. Monk.

I thought he'd be all meek 'n mild an' all but not a bit of it.

Driving out to Auroville, he does this sort of wild yelp thing as we're going along - gets me all excited about dancing with him.

You know...me-Tarzan-you-Jane type of thing. Sadly he's a complete beginner, so it's a gruelling schlep round the dance floor.



And...his grip is like he's afraid I'll break if he holds too firmly.

Try telling him to hold on stronger but he's not a great one for taking instruction.

God knows how he ever did the obedience thing in the monastery.

Over the next few days, he invites me into his room for 'runch' or afternoon tea.

The tea is 25 years old and the whole ceremony takes nearly as long.

Everything done in slo mo and with such reverence I feel like screaming, 'pour the bloody tea for God's sake.'

We sit on the floor, me pretending I can do the lotus thingy.

But my knees are killing me and I keep fidgeting.

The most he moves is an eyebrow and that makes me fidget more.

Anyway, 25 year old tea tastes just like old Tetley's if you ask me.

A few days later he asks if I'm 'flee to see the heef effans of his rife'.

Think it's a new bit of kit and am v curious. Have to sit beside him on the bed - again - but at least we don't have to do the yoga-on-the-floor thing.

He produces a notebook.

Turns out he's written something called: The Chief Events of My Life - a sort of essay.

He's deadly serious and wants my feedback.

Good job you weren't there or we'd have creased.

I point out that his brother of twenty can't be his younger brother, if he's seven at the point of the story. He's not having it.

He even shuts the book, looks at me in the eyes, asking: 'Do you want to lead the heef effans' etc.

Don't know much about monkhood, but I'd never have guessed assertiveness is a course they'd be teaching in a monastery, would you?

His 'younger' brother apparently slapped him when he was seven and he's never forgotten it.

When I ask if he's forgiven him, I get a big fat 'NO'.

Hmmm...so forgiveness not high on the agenda for monkdom then.

What's the use of all that meditating, Jen, if you can't get to grips with the basics like forgiveness?

Anyway, get a bit fed up with all the smiling and gifting and being told to sit by him on the bed lark.

Any brief fantasy I had of romance is scuppered by the 'heef effans' thing.

I make an excuse so I don't have to go to Tango with him anymore.



But the cheeky sod gets himself another partner.
A young Korean chick who spends all day in
his room.
I hear him talking non-stop. Seventeen years of
'sirence' has to come out sometime I suppose.
Sebastian reckons he's teaching her meditation.
The sort where you groan in the night?
Not likely.

Soon everyone on our floor knows he's
teaching her a lot more besides.
And all this going on in an ashram! I ask you.
Bully for him though.
Am only slightly miffed not to be getting the
attention any more.
Such a relief not to have to do the smiley thing
or sit in 'sirence' as he slowly 'peers a glape'.
Knock to say goodbye, before leaving for Goa.
'So, you not going to be a monk anymore then?'
'Today I onry know...tomollow who can tell. I
onry know about today,' he says.
Think it's the good ole art of burrshit they're
teaching in Korean monasteries these days.
He sure is bullshitting himself if he thinks he'll
be getting rid of any of his toys, bike or Miss
Korea tomollow or any time in the near future.

Anyway Jen... Goa beaches here I come.
Why don't you come out for a while?
Be a real gas - Frances is coming mid Feb.
Think about it and let me know.
Big love,
N.x.



BHÛTÂTMÂ

Ta Ki Ta

Ta Ka Di Mi

Ta Ka Ta Ki Ta

Ta KaTa Ki Ta

Ta Ka Di Mi

WORDS LIKE BREATH

Anupama, why must our most precious time be taken up with snakes and vampires when we can share the amorous feelings that lie between us?

The words in these books are like breath to me, they balance my world. I cannot offer you those things which you so ardently desire, yet you can give me relief; be generous, I crave this luxury.

No, Anupama, I wish with all my soul my reply was different, but it cannot be. My feelings will not diminish. I want you to go now and take all these sacred books with you. Fill your carriage; read to your heart's content, but do it far away.

Anupama, ten books at her feet, returns home, bewildered. Tears fill her eyes and the precious erudition of the books fills her desolate heart.

THIRD PRAPÂTHAKA

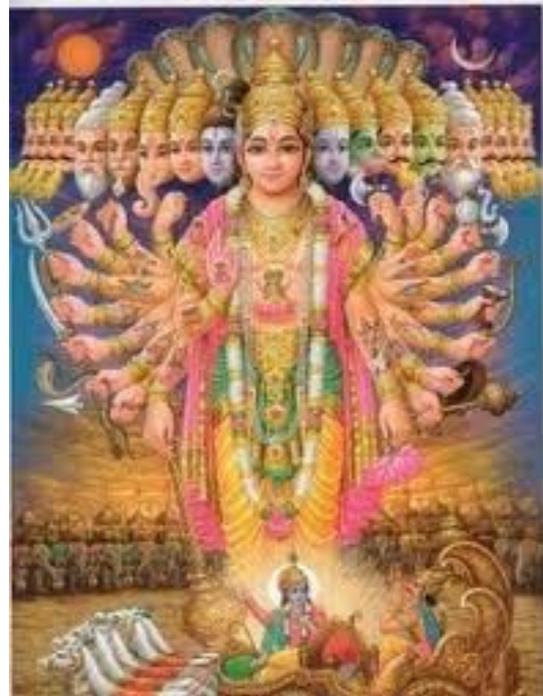
The Vâlakhilyas said to Pragâpati Kratu:
‘O Saint, if you show the greatness of that Self then who is that other different one, also called Self, who is overcome by bright and dark fruits of action and enters on a good or bad birth? Downward or upward is his course and overcome by the distinction between pleasure and pain, hot and cold, he roams about.’

Pragâpati Kratu replied:

‘There is indeed that other different one, called the elemental Self, Bhûtâtâmâ, who, overcome by bright and dark fruits of action, enters on a good or bad birth: downward or upward is his course, and overcome by the pairs he roams about.’ This is his explanation:

‘The five Tanmâtrâs, sound, touch, form, taste and smell are called Bhûta and the five Mahâbhûtas, gross elements, are also called

Bhûta. The aggregate of all these is called sarîra, or body. The person, of whom it is said, 'they dwell in the body,' these people are called Bhûtâtmâ, the elemental Self. Their immortal Self is like a drop of water on a lotus leaf and they are overcome by the qualities of nature. Then, because they are overcome, they become bewildered and because they are bewildered, they cannot see the creator, the holy Lord, who abides within us. Carried along by the waves of the qualities, darkened by their imagination, unstable, fickle, crippled, full of desires, vacillating, they start to believe they are the creator and that this world belongs to them. They bind one Self by the other Self, as a bird with a net, and later, when they are overcome by the fruits of what they have done, they enter on a good and bad birth; downward or upward



is their course and, overcome by the pairs, they roam about.'

The Vâlakhilyas ask Pragâpati Kratu:

'How can we tell them apart?' He answers them:

'He who acts, is the elemental Self; he who causes to act by means of the organs, is the inner man (*anta/purusha*). Now as even a ball of iron, overcome by fire and hammered by smiths, becomes manifold and assumes different forms, such as crooked, round, large and small, so the elemental Self, overcome by the inner man and hammered by the qualities, becomes manifold. And the four tribes, mammals and birds etc, and the fourteen worlds, such as Bhûr etc, with all the number of beings multiplied eighty-four times, all this appears as manifoldness. The multiplied things are impelled by man (*purusha*) as the wheel is

driven by the potter.

When the ball of iron is hammered the fire is not overcome and similarly, the inner man is not overcome, but the elemental Self is overcome, because it has united itself with the elements.

This body, produced by marriage, endowed with growth in darkness, originating from the urinary passage, is built up with bones, covered with flesh, thatched with skin, filled with ordure, urine, bile, slime, marrow, fat, oil and many impurities besides is like a treasury full of treasures.

Bewilderment, fear, grief, sleep, sloth, carelessness, decay, sorrow, hunger, thirst, niggardliness, wrath, infidelity, ignorance, envy, cruelty, folly, shamelessness, meanness, pride and changeability, these are the results of the quality of darkness (*tamah*).

Inward thirst, fondness, passion, covetousness, unkindness, love, hatred, deceit, jealousy, vain restlessness, fickleness, instability, emulation, greed, the patronising of friends, family pride, aversion to disagreeable objects, devotion to agreeable objects, whispering and prodigality, these are the results of the quality of passion (ragas).

By these we are filled and overcome. Therefore this elemental Self assumes manifold forms.'



INSIGHTS AND WONDERS COME

When Anupama's husband asks where she has purchased the precious books, 'at the market,' is her curt reply. When her children ask of the tears in her eyes, 'they're for my friend,' she says. She passes her days reading the books.

She ignores her customary social commitments, withdrawing completely. Others talk about her. For years she's been the subject of idle gossip. No-one ever offered proof, only the suspicion that men were unaccountably driven to woo her.

Only Anupama knows why the sweet words of the Upanishads bring such a beneficent balance to her life. She knows the folly of hiding from the world, but tomorrow is always to be the last of it. Each day new insights and wonders come.



FOURTH PRAPÂTHAKA

The Vâlakhilyas, whose passions were subdued, approached Pragâpati Kratu full of amazement: ‘O Saint, we bow before you; explain to us how the elemental Self, after parting from its identity with the elemental body can obtain union with the true Self?’

Pragâpati Kratu said to them:

‘Like the waves in large rivers, we cannot turn back from that which has already been done. Like the tide of the sea, the approach of death is hard to stem. If the elemental body is bound by the fetters of the fruits of good and evil, like a cripple; without freedom, like a man in prison; beset by many fears, like one standing before Yama, the judge of the dead; intoxicated by the wine of illusion, like one intoxicated by wine; rushing about, like one possessed by an evil spirit; bitten by the world, like one bitten by a great serpent; darkened by passion, like the

night; illusory, like magic; false, like a dream; pithless, like the inside of the Kadalî (banana tree); changing its dress in a moment, like an actor; fair in appearance, like a painted wall, what is to be done? Sound, touch and other things are like nothing; if the elemental Self is attached to them it will not remember the Highest Place.

This is the remedy for the elemental Self: You must acquire knowledge of the Veda, perform your duty and conform to the order you belong to. This is the duty of each individual, for all other performances are like the mere branches of a stem. By this practice you will obtain the Highest above, otherwise you will fall downward. This is how one’s own duty is declared and it is to be found in the Vedas. No one belongs truly to an order (âsrama) who transgresses his own law.



If any say that they do not belong to any of the orders, that he is an ascetic, this is wrong, though, on the other hand, no one who is not an ascetic brings his sacrificial works to perfection or obtains knowledge of the Highest Self.

This is what is said on the matter:

By ascetic penance, goodness is obtained; from goodness, understanding is reached; from understanding, the Self is obtained. If you have obtained that you will not return.

"Brahman is," said one who knew the science of Brahman and this penance is the door to Brahman. "Brahman is," said one who by penance had cast off all sin. "The syllable Aum is the manifest greatness of Brahman," said one who is well grounded in Brahman and always meditates on it. Therefore by knowledge, by penance, and by meditation is Brahman gained.

This is exactly how one goes beyond Brahman (Hiranyagarbha) and to a divinity higher than the gods. He who knows this and worships Brahman by these three - by knowledge, penance, and meditation - obtains imperishable, bliss, infinite and unchangeable.

If you are freed from the senses of the body, or that by which you are filled and overcome, even though you are a mere charioteer, you will obtain union with the Self.'

The Vâlakhilyas said:

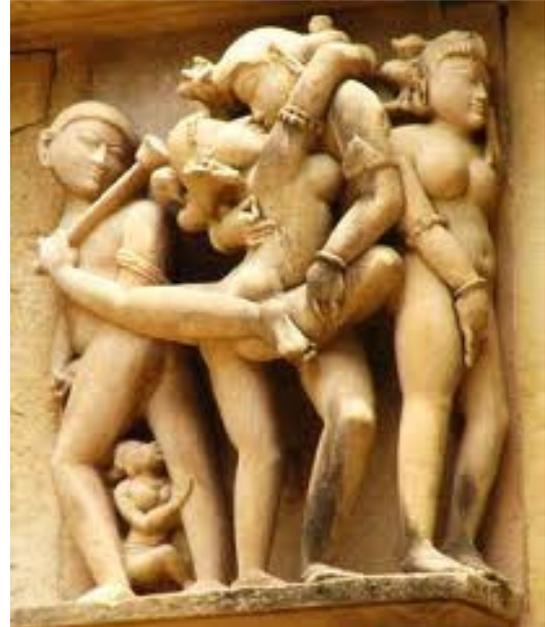
'O Saint, you are the teacher. What you have said has been properly laid up in our mind. Now answer us a further question: There are many who we might meditate upon. Agni, Vâyu, Âditya, Time (kâla) which is Breath (prâna), Food (anna), Brahmâ, Rudra and Vishnu. Some meditate on one and some on another. Say which of these is best for us.'

Pragâpati Kratu said to them:

'These are but the chief manifestations of the highest, the immortal, the incorporeal Brahman. Those who are devoted to one, rejoices here in this world, in the present. Brahman indeed is all this and anyone may meditate on, worship, or discard any of those who are its chief manifestations. With these deities he proceeds to higher and higher worlds and, when all things perish, he becomes one with the Purusha. He truly becomes one with the Purusha.'



CHAPTER FOUR



DIVERGENT PROSPECTS



CALLOUS LIES

Starving glimpses search about, vigilant to avoid capture. Stuffed with a constant glut, the street market, with enticing harshness, arouses scrawny teens to pinch something wholesome.

The youngsters are aglow, but they drudge from daylight to dusk and must have nutrients. Neat tactics to distract merchants must be lucrative or starvation will gnaw at their dreams all night.

Famine is heartbreaking. Unavoidable penury tempts a rapid response for beatings are nearby. No pleasant reveries for these little busy bodies. Dread triggers collapse, but it can induce action.

The scorching sun expands starving abdomens. Debonair arbiters natter sleepily about superior catering. These lectures, routinely flowing from big mouths with set promises, are callous lies.

LOVING FRIENDLINESS

Loving friendliness dominates life by the coast. The connections thrive on incessant abundance, lighting the dismal hollowness of remote whims and bringing gentle warmth to jagged ugliness.

Loving friendliness inflates the abundant music and surveys reverie's ambience. The rhythms of these feelings reflect spirited routines and direct a penchant for a renaissance in cunning ardour.

Loving friendliness motivates ecstatic freedom. Affections prosper like spring flowers, inspiring magnetically charged hilarity and exuding new atmospheres of blissfully naughty insurgence.

A forceful dawn spreads out over the universe. The urbane voyagers return to their customary occupation. Free verse, making words flee lips in jubilant fancy, start endless euphoric lyrics.

CURTAINS IN GOA



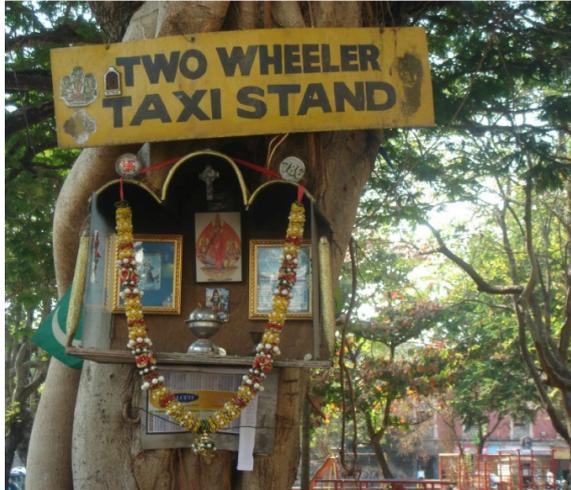
Hi Jen,

Shame you couldn't make it darling.
Thanks for sending clothes with Frances.
Feel more like myself now I've got my own kit.
Suggested Goa 'cos thought she'd prefer lolling
on a beach rather than a bustly city like Pondy.
Hah... little did I know.
She was like a whirling Dervish.
In the two weeks she was here, we moved to
eight different places, in five different locations.
First Benaulim where I find a room straight off.
Wasn't a palace, even I'll admit that.
Curtains that terrible brown, twirly stuff our
mums had in the '70's.
After three months in Ponducherry, have
different standards to her, just off the plane.
She hates room so next day, find better one.
Was so pleased with better class of curtains,
didn't notice Frances wasn't exactly smitten.
Over beer, she said she'd throw any amount of
money at it, to have nicer places to stay.
Move north to the quiet and more up-market
Ashwen.

Book into darling little beach-hut on stilts,
complete with verandah.
That night, hear all restaurant staff perform their
ablutions as though they're - oh, I don't know,
right by our headboard.
Endure same rigmarole next morning.
No discussion necessary, so after breakfast,
pack our bags again.
Cab driver shafts us right royally for short trip
into Arambol, nearest town, which we hear is
cool 'n groovy.
Not our kind of cool and groovy so we head to
beach further south.
Settle for nearest, halfway decent place.
Not much better, but its noon and sun is like a
thousand pins piercing your skin at that time of
day.
Outside, this little delight was painted violent
blue - no other way to describe it.
They were obviously so thrilled with choice of
colour they continued theme inside too.
You would have died Jen. Navy flooring,
Cobalt walls, Gentian ceiling, Indigo curtains,
Pastel bathroom with all fittings in - yes, BLUE.



Spend three days there, but only 'cos of totally
fabulous restaurant, La Plage, nearby.
Food is French and beyond scrummy.
We check out town nearby, Vagator.
Cab it there, returning on a scooter.
I'm back where I belong, driving scooter and
Frances was beyond thrilled – then we find
HER place.
Boutique hotel called Casa. It's heaven.
Expensive heaven but just the ticket.



Bed is big, soft, wide.
Bathroom, grey, chrome.
Mountains of soaps and cosmetics worth pinching.
White fluffy towels in abundance.
Bedside lighting with lamp-shades - we've forgotten what lighting can do to a room, we're that used to fluorescent strips.
Outside, raised garden looks down over beach.

Feel like I'm in expensive brochure.
Day three of our new-found luxury, we've eaten most of menu at the only decent restaurant, so scooter into nearby city Panjim.
Get stopped by cops before bridge into city for no helmets.
No one told me about helmets.
It's India and NO ONE wears them.
Only get small fine.
Panjim is THE place for us - old Portuguese city with lots of ancient buildings.
Big, big river and frock shop that has us diving for credit cards.
Move into darling guest-house, straight out of a Graham Green novel.
Remember that awful shawl you bought in Corfu, the one the woman MADE you buy?
Well, have similar experience in Panjim.
Usually on the ball about not getting suckered into shops.
Insistent exhorts of 'looking is free madam' don't even register now.
'I can give you real ting, not fake fake'
When she mentioned 'nice memory card', wonder what a nasty fake memory card is?

Anyway, spot dress hanging up outside shop but
close up, its obviously polywhatsit
Certainly not 'reel sillek madam'.

In moment of weakness, allow ourselves to be
drawn in.

Weak moments are any time within an hour of
needing food or a nap, which in temperatures of
40 degrees, is most of the day.

Luckily, find pair of halfway decent trousers.
They mostly sell Ali Baba trousers - cool if you
work in a circus.

But these are by Ghost - either a copy or
knocked off gear.

Not content with me buying trousers, assistant
steers us to Mama.

She's the heavy guns at back of shop, used to
increase our spending.

Fortunately Mama is taciturn and not in the
slightest bit interested in our 'good names' or
what 'lovely country' we come from.

We sit in a corner with Mama and extra fan is
brought out for added comfort.

Means we HAVE to buy something more.

Down come the tops.

Oceans of tops.

Something to go with the trousers, I say.

Trousers are blue.

Mama ransacks the shelves.

Shows us orange swirly patterned rayon with
frills all down the front.

Great in the '70's.

And stuff that any good housewife in Golders
Green could do the hoovering in.

End up sitting waist-high in mountain of spotty
tops, stripy tops, long, short, bright, sombre,
plain and patterned tops.

Mama pulls armfuls off shelves despite us
saying 'no, no, we can tell from here'.

Think her mind isn't quite on the job.

Certainly isn't listening to our descriptions of
what we like, judging by what she offers.

Suddenly, I spot a colour and feel of fabric I
like.

Oh thank God!

Maybe now we can have lunch.

Tug it out from under the mountain of crinkly
plastic wrappings and discarded tops,
wondering how this one escaped us.

I tug and I tug.

Mama laughs.

First sign of life from her in over an hour.
'No, no, he no good. Not top. Not good top'.
'It is - it's exactly the kind of fabric I like,' I
reassure her.
She brushes aside the whole bang lot of tops
with one sweep of her ample arms to reveal the
end of her Sari.
The only top I like is the edging on her Sari,
which I'm trying to pull off her.
She graciously allows us to leave without
buying anything, without making us feel bad.
A first.
They usually sulk like teenage girls and ignore
you if you don't buy something.
Mama isn't sitting outside her shop when we
pass by next day.
Probably still busy tidying up the 400 tops we
rejected.
We last four days then Frances has the urge to
'explore' again!
Set off south to Agonda.
Find v sweet hut that looks for all the world like
a brown version of the Dulux dog.
A bit like a woolly igloo.
With a verandah.

Verandah is a must-have accessory to any
accommodation here.
It's where one person goes when the other is
wondering why they had Vindaloo the night
before; where you hang washing; leave sandy
shoes; clip toe nails; sit and get bitten alive by
Mozzies, watch the sun set; check out the
neighbours or moan about the midday sun being
a bit too hot.
That night, we have the option of listening to
the cranky baby on one side, who sounds like
it's under our bed, or the bickering German
couple on the other side.





Then later, in the middle of the night, we hear the couple across the way who are obviously NOT bickering.

Next morning, it's telling that neither of us has unpacked.

I traipse up the beach one way and Frances the other, to check out the scene.

That's when I see it - the hut called Venus.

It's the bubble gum pink curtains that sway it for me.

The front is painted a gorgeous turquoise.

It's instant love.

The sides are plaited palm leaves with strips of thin white gauze hanging down in front, so light shines through inside, in a diamond pattern.

A large window looks out to sea.

Electrics held in place by bits of twine, right next to where shower head dribbles water out.

Love that they're not obsessed by health 'n blooming safety here but a wee bit of common sense is not a bad thing either.

Honestly, a Wendy house would be more substantial.

Move in and I think, phew, we can laze about now.

Not a bit of it.

Frances is off down the beach for hefty early morning walks.

All restaurants have to be sampled.

When she finally leaves, I collapse and decide to cancel my flight to Rajasthan.

Need a rest so am staying put another few weeks.

Can't face packing again.

Am v content sitting here, watching the diamond lights move in the breeze, going no further than the restaurant next door, walking only as far as the water's edge.

Besides, I just adore the pink curtains.

Soo glad I ain't superficial or anything.

Darling, if Jake is thinking of coming over, can meet him in Jaipur but tell him - no moving around.

Have had it with you city types needing a 'quiet holiday'.

Not sure I'm cut out for this travelling about lark.

Big love, n.x.



PRAGÂPATI

XDha - Dhin

2Dha Dha Tin

0Ta - Tin

3Dha Dha Dhin

ISOLATION NOT UNITY

Anupama writes to Peetambar, begging him to reconsider, but she gets no reply. Months later, being in his vicinity, she overhears scandalised folk talk of his excessive drinking, gambling and womanising. His property in ruins, his wealth squandered, he is now living with the bandits.

Utterly dismayed that a precious life should be so miserably corrupted, Anupama returns. She lives inside her books, ignores society and takes her meals in private. The tender words cocoon her in love, but without Peetambar beside her the insulating wrap brings isolation not unity.

FIFTH PRAPÂTHAKA

Kutsâyana's hymn of praise:

You are Brahmâ, Vishnu, Rudra and Pragâpati.
You are Agni, Varuna, Vâyû, and Indra.
You are the Moon, Anna, the food or the eater.
You are Yama and the Earth.
You are All and you are the Imperishable.
In you all things exist in many forms, whether
for their natural or for their own higher ends.
Lord of the Universe, glory to you!
You are the Self of All and the maker of All.
You are the enjoyer of All.
You are all life, the lord of all pleasure and joy.
Glory to you. You are the tranquil, the deeply
hidden, the incomprehensible and the
immeasurable. Glory to you without beginning
and without end.'

‘In the beginning only darkness (tamas) was this. It was in the Highest, but, moved by the Highest, it becomes uneven and becomes obscurity (ragas). Then this obscurity, being moved, becomes uneven and becomes goodness (sattva). When this goodness is moved the essence flows forth.

This is the state of the Self that is entirely intelligent. It is reflected in us, just as the sun is in different vessels of water. Knowing the body (kshetragñā) and confirmed by his conceiving, by his willingness and his believing, this is indeed Pragâpati, called Visva.



The part of him which belongs to darkness -
that is the one who is called Rudra.

The part of him which belongs to obscurity -
that is the one who is called Brahmâ.

The part of him which belongs to goodness -
that is the one who is called Vishnu.

He being one, becomes three, becomes eight,
becomes eleven, becomes twelve and becomes
infinite. Because he came to be, he is the Being
that moves about, having entered all beings.

He has become the Lord of all beings.

He is the Self within and without.'

A BEGGAR AT THE GATES

*Doctors, wise men and an herbalist are called
to cure Anupama's malady, but none succeed.
After two years her condition reverses abruptly.*

*Her secretary wakes Anupama with news that a
gateman has found a beggar at the gates. The
man is in a state of collapse, his body broken.*

*After being washed and given a bed, Hema, the
secretary visits him. Anupama cries out; she has
guessed it; this decrepit beggar is Peetambar.*

*Anupama dresses quickly to see him. Peetambar
is fast asleep and greatly aged. She orders his
removal to the room housing the sacred books.*

*She directs Hema to care for him. 'Allow no one
to enter, read aloud to him and inform me when
life is again flowing through his precious veins.'*

SIXTH PRAPÂTHAKA



1. The Self bears the Self in two ways; those who're Prâna (breath) and those who're Âditya (the sun). There are two paths, one within and one without, and they both turn back in a day and night. The Sun is the outer Self, the inner Self is Breath. The motion of the inner Self is inferred from the motion of the outer Self. The person who knows and has thrown off all evil, the overseer of the senses, the pure-minded, firmly grounded in the Self and looking away from all earthly objects, that one is the same. Likewise the motion of the outer Self is inferred from the motion of the inner Self.

For thus it is said:

‘Those who are within the sun are the golden ones, who look upon this earth from their golden place; they are the same who, after entering the inner lotus of the heart, devours food and perceives sensuous objects.’

2. The one who enters the inner lotus of the heart, who devour food and reach up to the sky as the fire of the sun, they are called Time and, being invisible, they devour all beings as their food.

‘What is that lotus and of what is it made of?
Ask the Vâlakhilyas.

That lotus is the same as the ether; the four quarters and the four intermediate points are its leaves.

These two, Breath and the Sun, move near to each other; in the heart and in the ether. We should connect with these two, with the syllable Aum, with the Vyâhriti words (*bhûh*, *bhuvah*, *svah*), and with the Sâvitri hymn.

3. There are two forms of Brahman, the material, causing the effect, and the immaterial, affecting the cause. The material is false and the immaterial is true. That which is true is Brahman and that which is Brahman is light.

That which is light is the Sun and this Sun became the Self of that Aum.

He divided himself threefold, for Aum consists of three letters, a + u + m. Through them all this is contained in him as warp and woof.

‘Meditate on that Sun as Aum, join your Self, your breath with the Self of the Sun.’



4. The Sun is Udgîtha and he is Pranava or Aum. 'Pranava, the leader in the performance of sacrifices, the bright, the sleepless, free from old age and death, three-footed, consisting of three letters (a + u + m), and likewise to be known as fivefold (five prânas) placed in the cave. The three-footed Brahman has its root upward; the branches are ether, wind, fire, water and earth. Asvattha, the world, is Brahman, it is the light which is called the Sun and it is also the light of that syllable Aum. With the syllable Aum, we should connect with the breath and the sun as manifestations of Brahman. He alone enlightens us.

'This alone is the pure syllable, this alone is the highest syllable; he who knows that syllable only, whatever he desires, is his.

5. This Aum is the sound-endowed body of Prânâdityâtman. His gender-endowed body is feminine, masculine and neuter. His light-endowed body is Agni, Vâyû and Âditya. His lord-endowed body is Brahmâ, Rudra and Vishnu. His mouth-endowed body is Gârhapatya, Dakshinâgni and Âhavanîya. His knowledge-endowed body is *Rik*, *Yagus* and *Sâman*. His world-endowed body is *Bhûh*, *Bhuvah and Svar*. His time-endowed body is Past, Present and Future. His heat-endowed body is Breath, Fire and Sun. His growth-endowed body is Food, Water and Moon. His thought-endowed body is intellect, mind and personality. His breath-endowed body is *Prâna*, *Apâna* and *Vyâna*. Therefore, by the aforesaid syllable Aum, all these bodies are praised and identified with Prânâdityâtman. The syllable Aum is the high and the low Brahman.



CHAPTER FIVE



CONTRARY EXPECTATIONS



PITILESS LIBEL

A predatory eye hunts about, heedful to evade arrest. Crammed with overabundance, stalls, with beguiling ruthlessness, inflame the skinny youngsters to thieve any kind of hearty snack.

Children exude beauty, but if chores last from morning to nightfall an intake of food is critical. Neat tactics to distract merchants must come off or starvation will plague them until morning.

Deprivation shatters nerves. Persistent poverty spawns instant selections for there's a whipping nearby. No lively fancies for these pert navvies. Alarm aides defeat, but it can provoke response.

The sizzling heat aggravates hungry tummies. Refined mediators gossip drowsily about better produce. Such homilies, habitually uttered from fat jaws with added pledges, are pitiless libel.

AMOROUS JOVIALITY

Amorous joviality reigns all along the seashore. The frisson, blooming in growing profusion, creates a shimmer on inaccessible impulses and brings a soothing heat to life's sharp cruelties.

Amorous joviality motivates the copious pulses and measure vision's mood. The tempo of her silver trinkets makes an animated performance, resonating with dreams of magical resurgence.

Amorous joviality finds new breathing spaces. Love, burgeoning with fantasies, verifies the allure of charisma, resulting in a hearty comedy that conveys wonderment with impish mutiny.

A passionate sunrise mushrooms through space. The debonair explorers go back to their routine vocations. Rhymes, like quivering lips relishing euphoric unity, create countless proud librettos.

FELT UP IN HINDI



Hi Frances,

Well... our lovely beach in Goa seems a zillion miles away.

On the last stretch of my travels now, in the filth and smog of Jodhpur.

Arrived here on local bus from Jaisalmer; a dazzler of a place.

Stayed in room within the Fort walls surrounded by twisty narrow alleyways and buildings of yellow stone.

Outside my room, women sit on a stone platform all day, doing embroidery or preparing herbs for selling.

Everywhere, surfaces are worn, shiny and glossy from over hundreds of years use. All facades are carved or intricately decorated. Unbelievably beautiful.

Avoided the camel into the desert ride gig, which every tourist thinks is a 'must do'.

Reluctantly leave Jaisalmer.

Could only get local bus.

Takes five hours but not too uncomfortable.

Discover seat number one is the must-have seat.
Nobody in front of you, clear view of road
ahead and extra leg room. Bliss.
Old boy in his 70's, sits next to me for about an
hour.
Long white nightie thing with fab saffron turban
and big white whiskers, which the Rajasthan
men wear with such panache.
Such a cool look, complete with large wooden
shepherd's stick - quite dashing.



We chat away - he in Hindi I presume - neither
of us caring a jot we hadn't a clue what the
other is saying.
Quite relaxing, not worrying if you're
understood or not.
Hand him several segments of carefully peeled
orange.
He offers a squidgy, mustard-coloured glob of
something, which he breaks with his filthy
fingers.
Know its petty noticing filthy fingers but am
still v picky about stuff like that.
Five months of being here still hasn't knocked it
out of me.
He pops his bit into yellow-toothed whiskery
mouth.
I neatly slip mine into tissue.
Faking eating is easy.
Faking drinking chai takes real skill.
Have developed knack for tipping chai into any
available container, whilst offering pathetic
excuses to deflect attention.
Even that childish thing of pointing to the sky
and asking, 'what's that?'

Yes, I know... it IS pathetic.
But HATE chai.
Weak, overly sweet, boiled, milky tea...how can ANYONE like that?
Mr. Turban then offers what look like pieces of white marbly stone.
Sharp stones like in the bottom of a fish tank.
We look at each other, sucking on our stones.
Big smiley, fake sucky looks, with my stone joining the mustard blob in the tissue.
All lovely and friendly.
Gradually feel his leg wander over in my direction.
Then creep over so far his knee jams my shins up against rucksack.
Oh, well, if the old boy gets a kick out of feeling my shin, it's not hurting me and am not especially picky about stuff like that.
Then the cheeky sod drops his hand in my lap and tries to bury it down between my legs.
Ah no, no, no.
We won't be having any of that, I think, lifting his hand out and replacing it in **his** lap.
Gradually his knees close back together again.
Our mutual nonsense conversation fades.

The gifts of goodies ceases.
He gets off at Pokram with hardly a backward glance.
Funny, some things are the same in any language.
When an old boy is trying to feel you up, whether it's in Hindi or English, it still feels the same.



Now staying in eccentric, madhouse hotel in Jodphur, called Yogi's.
Every surface decorated with old hangings, carvings, paintings - some proper antique-shop

stuff but with a touch of art-school students let loose.

Central well goes all the way up to rooftop restaurant.

They have a pulley system with bag on string for doing the bills and giving change.

Quaint but takes an age.

It's bedlam here.

First night, owner watches cricket on TV loudly, till 2 am.

Ask him to turn it down.

He's dead drunk but eventually he kills the sound.

An hour later, group of tourists arrive and make such a racket, am woken again.

Then night-watchman starts ranting at about 6am.

Last night, the same shenanigans with late arrivals followed by drummers drumming in streets, call to prayer from different mosques, men in houses nearby hawking, women banging pots and pans...!

Was v grumpy this morning.

But landlord, who is real charmer, moves me to fab room with balcony out to courtyard, away

from the noise - fingers crossed for sleep tonight.

Not sure I can hack the pollution though...you could write messages in the air, the smog is so thick.

But Jodhpur is so, so very mad and exotic and vibrant.

Looks like what I expect Morocco to be.

Blue painted houses and hovels built into the side of the fort walls which rear up hundreds of feet above the city.

All floodlit by night - quite magical.



Expect I'll get used to noise and the unbelievable FILTH.
Whose idea was it to let cows loose on the streets anyway?
They need FIELDS.
Can someone please tell the Indians that? Rajasthan is so very different to down south.
Walking down the bazaar the vendors are v hassley.
'What's your good name...which country you come from?
Holland? Oh, that's a lovely country.
No not Holland...IRELAND.
Oh...Ireland, UK...yes, velly good.
NO, not UK - oh never mind.
You want spices? Silleks? We have all genuine hundred per cent tings Madam.
Let me show you madam...looking is free'.
On and on it goes.
In Jaipur they spread out their arms and block your way as you try strolling down the bazaar.
Actually, forget strolling.
It's more like a rugby scrum.
Or they come up from behind and stand so close to your ear, telling you of all the lovely stuff

they can sell you.
Or young bratty boys say, 'Hello madam,' to your chest and run off giggling with their mates.
But you learn to ignore it.
Or not let it annoy you.
Not sure where next but maybe Pushkar, which has recently come onto my radar.
So Darling, that's the latest.
Am so missing our genteel time in Goa.
It's eating time now so off for vegetable Jalfreizi - trying to wean myself off Paneer Butter Masala.
big love, n.x.





VYÂHRITIS

XDha Dhin Dhin Dha

2Dha Dhin Dhin Dha

0Dha Tin Tin Na

3Na Dhin Dhin Dha

A WORLD OF PLEASURE

Hema, Anupama's secretary, comes to her with news that Peetambar is well. Anupama hasn't visited her reading room for the past six weeks.

She has returned to the pleasures of family and social life again. As before, her reputation for attracting eligible men is being widely debated.

Once Anupama and Peetambar have made their greetings, she asks if Hema's readings of the Upanishads have helped facilitate his recovery.

Peetambar speaks thus. I am an opportunistic seducer and lover. I care not for the battlefield or the library; I like the pleasures of the flesh.

The ancients didn't declare the body a temple to be preserved. For them flesh is a fund of riotous but innocent misrule, a joyful world of pleasure.



SIXTH PRAPÂTHAKA

6. This world was unknown until Pragâpati, having brooded, gave it these words; Bhûh, Bhuvah, Svar. These are the mighty body of Pragâpati, they are his three worlds. Of that body, Svar is the head, Bhuvah the navel and Bhûh the feet. The sun is his eye and the eye is our greatest asset. With the eye we make all measurements. The eye is truth, satyam, for the person, purusha, dwelling in the eye knows all objects with certainty.

We should be closely connected with the Vyâhritis, with Bhûh, Bhuvah and Svar, for this is how great respect is given to Pragâpati, the Self of All, how he is connected with the sun, the Eye of All. The sun is Pragâpati's all-supporting body, for in it this All is hidden by the light of the sun. Know also that in this All the light is hidden. Therefore this must enjoy our great connection.

7. The Sâvitri begins; *Tat Savitur varenyam*. When the Savitri is chosen, the Âditya, or sun is Savitri. This must also be chosen by the lover of Self.

The Savitri continues; *Bhargo devasya dhîmahî*. This is the splendour of the god we meditate upon. Here the god is Savitri and whoever is known as splendour, this one we should meditate on. The Savitri ends with *Dhiyo yo nah prakodayât*. Go with the one who stirs up our thoughts. The dhiyah are thoughts, and he stirs these up for us.

Now the word bhargas is to be explained. The one who is called bhargas is the one who lives in Âditya, the sun. This one is the pupil in the eye and he is called by this name because he proceeds by gati, by rays (bhâbhih). He also parches (bhargayati) and causes the world to shrivel up.

8. The Self is also called Isâna, lord, Sambhu, Bhava and Rudra; it is also Pragâpati, lord of creatures, *Visvasrig*, the creator of all and *Hiranyagarbha*. It is Satyam, truth, *Prâna*, breath and *Hamsa*. It is *Sâstri*, ruler, *Vishnu* and *Nârâyana*. It is *Arka*, *Savitri* and *Dhâtri*, supporter. It is *Vidhâtri*, creator, *Samrâg*, king, *Indra* and *Indu*, the moon. It is also the one who warms, the Sun, hidden by the thousand-eyed golden egg, as one fire by another. This one is to be thought after and sought after. Having said farewell to all living beings, having gone to the forest and renounced all sensuous objects, you should perceive the Self from your own body. See the golden one who assumes all forms, who knows all things, who ascends the highest, who, alone in his splendour, warms us; the thousand-rayed one who abides in a hundred places, the spirit of all creatures, the Sun, who rises.

9. The one who by knowing this has become the Self of both Breath and Sun, meditates on his Self while meditating on them; surrenders to his Self while surrendering to them. The mind absorbed in these acts is praised by the wise. Before eating you must rinse the mouth and offer the food with five invocations in the fire of the mouth. You should eat in silence and rinse the mouth after the meal. Then you must meditate on the Self with these two verses. *Prâno* 'gni*h* - May the Highest Self as breath, as fire, as digestive heat consisting of the five vital airs, having entered the body, yourself satisfied, satisfy all, the one who protects all. *Visvo* - You are *Visva*, all, you are *Vaisvânara*, fire, all that is born is upheld by you; may all offerings enter into you; creatures live where you grant immortality to all. If you eat with this rule, you will not become the food for others.

BOTH CULTIVATE INTENSITY



On hearing the torrid dispute, Hema imagines Anupama is keeping sensuality a secret, even from herself, but she is wrong, she preserves her unspoken virtue with unswerving tenacity.

She knows that Peetambar finds her deliciously alluring, that he'll continue to court Anupama with sweet promises despite his outburst. Her mistress will forgive his rash outspokenness.

Hema concludes that Peetambar can't keep his feelings to himself, so discord is inevitable. The present is torturous, so they are never together for long. Their bond survives only in memory.

As they have no future they must try to invent a blissfully happy past. A refined idealised love is Anupama's dream. A provocatively carnal love is Peetambar's dream; both cultivate intensity.

SIXTH PRAPÂTHAKA

10. There is a further modification of this Self-sacrifice that concerns the food, eating and the eater. The thinking Purusha (person), abiding within the Pradhâna (nature), is the feeder who feeds on food supplied by Prakriti (nature). The elemental Self is truly his food, his maker being Pradhâna (nature). Therefore what is composed of the three qualities (*gunas*) is the food, but the person within is the feeder; evidence of this is supplied by the senses. Animals spring from seed and as the seed is the food, therefore it is clear that what is food is Pradhâna (the seed or cause of everything). Therefore, the Purusha (person) is the eater, Prakriti is the food and abiding within it he feeds. All that begins with the Mahat, the power of intellect, and ends with the Viseshas, the elements, is the sign that there must be a Purusha, an intelligent subject. In this way the fourteen steps have been explained.

The world is food, three elements, pleasure, pain, and error. There is no laying hold of the taste of the seed (cause), so long as there is no development in the shape of effect. The three stages, childhood, youth and old age also have the character of food.

The perception of Pradhâna (nature) takes place after it has become manifest. Intellect and the rest, determination, conception, consciousness, are for tasting the effects of Pradhâna. The five perceptive organs are intended for tasting the five objects of senses. The acts of the five active organs and the acts of the five Prânas or vital airs are there for tasting their corresponding objects. What is manifest of nature is food and what is not manifest is food. The enjoyer of it is without qualities, but because he has the quality of being an enjoyer it follows that he possesses intelligence.



11. Food is the highest form of Self, for this Prâna, body, subsists on food. If it doesn't eat it cannot perceive, hear, touch, see, smell or taste and it loses the vital airs.

12. The sun takes food with his rays, by it he shines. These vital airs digest, when sprinkled with food. Fire flares up by food and by Brahmâ (Pragâpati), desirous of food, all this has been made. Therefore let a man worship food as his Self. From food creatures are born, by food they grow when born. Because it is eaten and because it begets creatures, it is called food.

13. Food is the body of the blessed Vishnu, called Visvabhrit (all-sustaining). Breath is the essence of food, mind of breath, knowledge of mind, joy of knowledge. If you know this you are possessed of food, breath, mind, knowledge and joy. Food has been called the physician.

14. Food is the cause of the time of food and the sun is the cause of time. The visible form of time is the twelve months of the year, made up of twinklings. Half of the year, when the sun moves northward, belongs to Agni, the other half, when the sun moves south, to Varuna. The months of the year consist of nine-fourths of asterisms; two asterisms and a quarter being the twelfth part of the passage of the sun through the twenty-seven twinklings. Because time is imperceptible by sense, the progress of the sun is its evidence and by it time is proved to exist. Without proof there is no apprehension of what is to be proved; but even what is to be proved can become proof, for the sake of making itself known, if the twinklings can be distinguished from the whole time. From time all beings flow, from time they grow; in time they obtain rest; time is visible (sun) and invisible (moments).



CHAPTER SIX



CONTRASTING REVERIES



RUTHLESS SLANDER

A voracious look pursues chance, mindful of possible jail. Jammed with a plethora of food, the streets, with mesmerizing cruelty, ensnare thin adolescents to pilfer any possible nibble.

The kids have lustrous skin, but if errands last from cock-crow to night-time eating is crucial. Smart plans to sidetrack vendors must work or malnourishment will eat away at them all night.

Scarcity triggers anxiety. Unrelenting paucity seeds hasty options if a thrashing is in store. No droll retreats for these sassy hands. Distress will cause illness, but it can inflame their comeback.

The baking weather irritates ravenous stomachs. Superior arbiters bletcher hazily about improved nourishment. Oaths or vows like this, regularly voiced from stout chops, are ruthless slander.

PASSIONATE CHEERINESS

Passionate cheeriness laps at the water's edge. The connection, promising relentless excess, spawns a twinkle on secluded beliefs and offers a calming supplement to life's spiky harshness.

Passionate cheeriness invigorates the heart by engaging visible humour. The cadence of its charms rebounds off vivacious acts and echoes its brilliant ideas with enchanting resurgence.

Passionate cheeriness thrills the astute intervals. Care escalates the desire, making charm and genial wit commonplace. All now talk freely of amazement and openly discuss playful sedition.

A fiery daylight swells through the cosmos. The courteous travellers re-engage everyday crafts. Sonnets, like trembling mouths that love joyful pacts, launch vivid cycles of uplifting stanzas.

RAJ TO TAJ



Hi Frances,

Well, last days here, scrabbling to send postcards and buy gifts.

Finally learnt some Hindi just as I'm leaving! Typical.

Thought travelling with you in Goa was hectic , but nothing on the Rajasthan jaunt.

Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Pushkar, Agra, Varanasi, Rishikesh – all since you left!

In Delhi now, which is a delight.

Grand tree-lined avenues and wide open parks.

The magnificent Lutchens Connaught Circle reminiscent of Regents Park.

Shopping around Janpath has me in heaven.

Spent last week in Rishikesh, surprisingly great place to end trip.

Rishikesh, home of spiritual boffs, hawkers and vendors.

Where-ever there's a temple, there's a hoard of sellers who line the alleyways selling the cheapest googaws.

Every so-called spiritual event is a selling opportunity and possibility to rip you off.

But why not?

'Twas ever thus.

It's not just there...

In Pushkar, meet Brahman monk who nabs me at the temple gates, proclaiming, 'I'm Holly Man, no money, no money.'

Fair enough I think, let's see what you're about then.

He lisps and spits his way through unintelligible nonsense.

I dodge the spit but not the gobbledegook, v irritating.

'I'm spiritual monk man, no money, no money,' he repeats regularly.

Was v keen to cram in his limited knowledge in the three minutes it takes to traipse round the temple.

The gates are large and impressive, suggesting a grander interior.

Like many things, it's all packaging.

Can't lose the sod and get suckered into a guided tour to the Ghat by the 'Holly Wawther'.



He introduces me to a higher-up 'Holly man'. He's the real deal, allegedly.

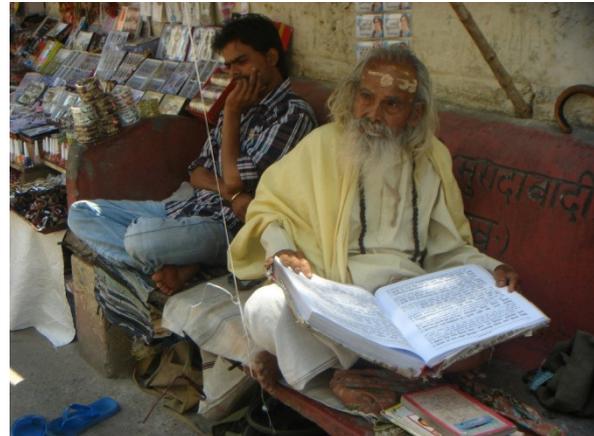
His mantra is a list of every imaginable Indian God.

I listen, whilst holding a marigold, coconut and bit of string.

Have to sit on dusty steps in fresh white trousers.

Not best pleased.
Feel v foolish and wish I'd worn darker
trousers.
Or had cushion at least.
He insists I repeat each thing after him.
Feel v v stupid but go along with it to see where
it'll lead.
Get a little pep talk about donations.
Aha...now we get to the nub of it.
He asks how much I'm going to donate.
Tell him it's a secret between me and my God.
He drones on with the list, inserting the word
'donation' in between Ganesh and Shiva.
Does he think I'm stupid, I wonder?
He winds bit of twine stuff round my wrist.
Don't duck in time to stop him putting red gunk
on my forehead.
Big chief Brahmin ushers me to 'donations'
window.
Tell man in donations booth I need to think
about it, handing back coconut and oil.
Big chief Brahman not impressed and starts on
the litany of Gods again.
Stop him before he can get properly started.

Tell him I don't do donations on demand and
head off.
Am sure I hear them cussin' me as I meet my
holly monk man at the exit.
'What about something for me...500 rupees?'
'You're a fake, a cheat and a liar and have very
bad karma', I say.
Repeat it loudly as my farewell mantra to them,
so every tourist can hear.
Pushkar not my favourite place.



You'd have hated the room I stayed in!
Bed all wonky, so move it to get it on the level.
Find hole in floorboards - think, 'Aha - good
hiding place for passport and cash.'
Spot old cloth down there.
Pull it out but its heavy so have to lever up
floorboard.
Inside cloth are two ancient, large books.
Lovely thick paper with strange drawings and
Hindi writing in it.
Emailed Gwendy about it – she says it could be
Sanskrit.
Do you think they could be worth something?
Tempted to send them to you, but maybe should
hand them in to museum here.
Don't want to 'pinch' them and have bad
karma, man!

Leave Pushkar on eight hour train trip to Agra.
Train journey just bearable in 3AC but strange,
waking up with an unfamiliar family of Indians.
'Morning, morning' as SOON as you wake up,
is just not me.
You know what I'm like in the mornings before
first cup of tea!



Anyway, survive that and hit Agra before noon.
Not a time to arrive ANYWHERE in India.
Planning not my strong suit on this trip.
Hop on over-priced rickshaw to Taj area,
looking for cafe.
Lonely Planet recommends rooftop of the Taj
restaurant.
Have NO idea why.
Obviously haven't been anywhere near the
joint.
Toast so thin it could slip through the
floorboards.

Honey like watery sugar.
Butter you wouldn't even rub on your old walking boots.
Tea made from some sort of twigs.
Where, oh where is Tetley's when you need it?
Eventually head off for the Taj through 'orrible filthy streets and ramshackle rubble.
Get there to HOARDS of people.
Think Oxford Circus, think Christmas Eve.
In forty degree plus heat.



When finally get a glimpse of the Taj through the crowds, it's...
Well, for starters, it's not as white as the pictures or TV make out.
To get closer have to negotiate the 'Indian's Only' or 'Foreigners' pathways which has a bizarre logic, as we all traipse obediently along in parallel lines.
Tourists can be so v irritating trying to do the 'Diana' seat thing or take cutesy pics holding their hands up, as though cradling a rooftop crenulation.

It's hard to describe the Taj.
First thing, when you have an inch of space to notice anything, is the uniformed men with the very loud whistles.
They **love** blowing their whistles.
Not just loudly but constantly.
It's to move us on so we don't get too fond of the place and set up residence.
Actually, when you see how at home Indians make themselves at railway stations, they have a point.
Not only do they sleep, eat, perform their entire toilette there, but also hang out their washing.

Makes you wonder how much forward planning goes into journeys.

'We'll get there nice and early - don't want to miss it so let's say we go Monday for the 10.30 on Wednesday,' kind of thing?

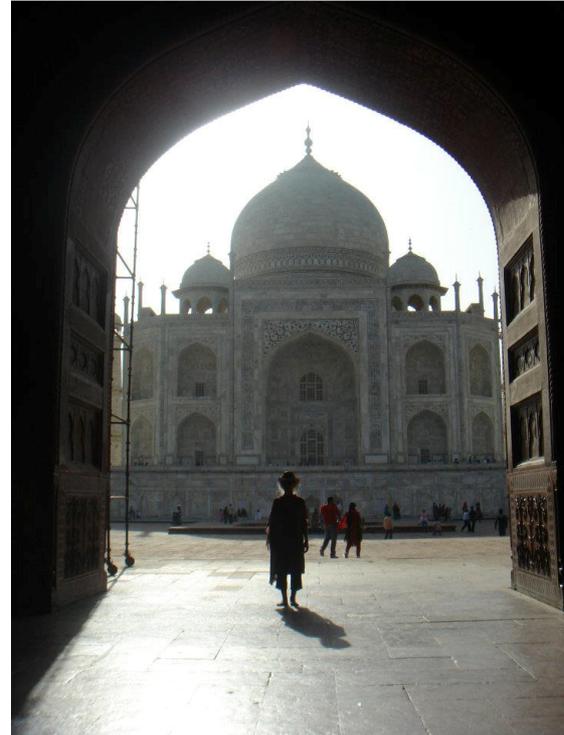
Anyway, as you can imagine, 'lingering' at the Taj is a totally no-no concept.

Inside, not as impressive as the outside from what I can see through the assortment of sun hats, visors, clicking, clacking cameras and faces of a hundred different races.

Worst are the Indian guides who SHOUT their history lesson in adolescent, girlie, LOUD voices all doing different chambers at the same time.

I escape to the yard and sit in the shade of high corner tower, looking over a puddle of what presumably in monsoon time is a torrent of river.

I look at the Taj, hoping to be charmed, over-awed or have some sort of emotional response. All I feel is wilted.



Guard whistles at me to move on but tell him
I've come a v, v long way and am not going
anywhere in a hurry.
Funny enough, he lets me be.
Gradually, once the Indians stop asking me to
be in photos with groups of them, which I
always say, 'NO' to, feel an enormous sense of
peace.
Am totally happy to just sit and watch this
spectacularly famous building from a little
distance and admire both its simplicity and
grandeur.
Overall shape basically a square with the four
corners cut off.
Tad more complex than that, obviously!
No surface over-complicated or too decorated.
Black, grey and white zigzagging pattern -
sometimes vertical, then horizontal.
Classic barley twists, vast arched opening.
Each aspect a mirror image of its neighbour.
Marble in hundreds of different colours,
creating different shapes.

I'm smiling just thinking of it.
Need to go see it again.
At dawn.
After I've had a decent cup of tea.
It really should be moved to a better
neighbourhood though - Agra is scuzzy beyond
words.
Thank God didn't have to spend a night there
and escaped on the midnight train to Varanasi.
Varanasi, home of the spiritual, Ganges,
burning bodies etc., etc.
...don't get me started on that little lot!

I'll be back next week - can't believe the six
months have gone.
You still OK to collect me from Heathrow?
Dying to see you.
big, big, love,
n.x.



SAVITRI

XDha TiRaKiTa Dhin Dhin

2Dha Dha Tin Tin

0Ta TiRaKiTa Dhin Dhin

3Dha Dha Dhin Dhin

JEALOUS WOMEN

Anupama does not visit the reading room for six days and on the seventh day Hema comes to her with the news that Peetambar has disappeared.

The gossip that Anupama is a tease is untrue. It is instigated by jealous women who hate their men displaying stormy aspirations towards her.

The gossip about Peetambar is likewise untrue. It is instigated by women angry that he pays no attention to them when they show him willing.

He never lived with bandits, lost his fortune or left his estate in ruin. He sold his inheritance and has purchased a house beside Anupama.

When Anupama learns that Peetambar is living nearby, she writes, asking if they might resume their relationship by an exchange of letters.



SIXTH PRAPÂTHAKA

15. There are two forms of Brahman, time and non-time. That which was before the existence of the sun is non-time and has no parts. That which had its beginning from the sun is time and has parts. Of that which has parts, the year is the form and from the year all creatures are born; when produced by the year they grow, and go again to rest in the year. Therefore the year is Pragâpati, is time, is food, is the nest of Brahman, is Self. Thus it is said: 'Time ripens and dissolves all beings in the great Self, but the one who knows into what time itself is dissolved, this one knows the Veda.'

16. This manifest time is the great ocean of creatures. He who is called *Savitri* (the sun, as begetter) dwells in it, from whence the moon, stars, planets, the year, and the rest are begotten. From them again comes all this, and thus,

whatever of good or evil is seen in this world, comes from them. Therefore Brahman is the Self of the sun, and we should worship the sun under the name of time. Some say the sun is Brahman, and thus it is said:

'The sacrificer, the deity that enjoys the sacrifice, the oblation, the hymn, the sacrifice, *Vishnu*, Pragâpati, all this is the Lord, the witness, that shines in yonder orb.'

17. In the beginning Brahman was all this. He was one and infinite; infinite in the East, infinite in the South, infinite in the West, infinite in the North, above and below and everywhere infinite. East and the other regions do not exist for him, or across, or below, or above. The Highest Self is not to be fixed, he is unlimited, unborn, not to be reasoned about, not to be conceived. He is like the ether (everywhere),



and at the destruction of the universe, he alone is awake. Thus from that ether he wakes all this world, which consists of thought only, and by him alone is all this meditated on, and in him it is dissolved. His is that luminous form which shines in the sun and the manifold light in the smokeless fire and the heat which in the stomach digests the food. Thus it is said: 'The one who is in the fire, in the heart and in the sun, they are one and the same.' The one who knows this becomes one with the one.

18. This is the rule for achieving concentration of the mind on the object of meditation: restraint of the breath, restraint of the senses, meditation, fixed attention, investigation and absorption, these are called the six fold Yoga. When beholding this Yoga, you behold the gold-coloured maker, the lord, the person,

Brahman, the cause, then the sage, leaving behind good and evil, makes everything, breath, organs of sense, body etc, to be one in the Highest Indestructible, in the pratyagâtman or Brahman. And thus it is said:

‘As birds and deer do not approach a burning mountain, so sins never approach those who know Brahman.’

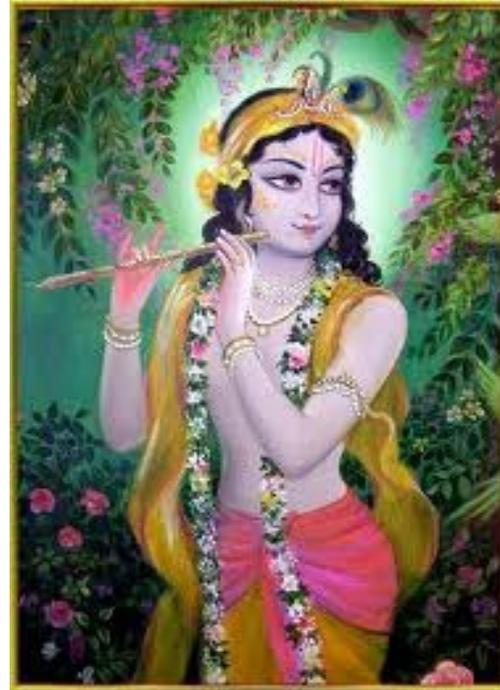
19. And thus it is said elsewhere: When you know this, while still Prâna (breath), when you have restrained your mind and placed all objects of the senses far away from yourself, then you will be without any conceptions. And because the living person, called Prâna (breath), has been produced here on earth from that which is not Prâna (the thinking Self), therefore let this Prâna merge the Prâna (actual self) in what is called the fourth. And thus it is said:

‘What is without thought, though placed in the centre of thought, what cannot be thought, the hidden, the highest, let us merge our thoughts there: then will this living being (lînga) be without attachment.’

20. The superior fixed attention (dhâranâ) is achieved when you press the tip of the tongue down the palate and restrain your voice, mind, and breath, seeing Brahman by discrimination (tarka). And when, after the cessation of mind, you see your own Self, smaller than small and shining, as the Highest Self, then having seen your Self as the Self, you become Self-less, and because you are Self-less you are without limit, without cause, absorbed in thought. This is the highest mystery and the final liberation. And thus it is said:

‘Through the serenity of the thought you kill all actions, good or bad; your Self serene, abiding in the Self, obtains imperishable bliss.’

21. The artery, called Sushumnâ, going upwards from the heart to the Brahmrandhra, serving as the passage of the Prâna, is divided within the palate. Through that artery, when it has been joined by the breath, held in subjection by the sacred syllable Aum and by the mind absorbed in the contemplation of Brahman, proceed upward and, after turning the tip of the tongue to the palate without using any of the organs of sense, let greatness perceive greatness. From there you’ll go to selflessness, and through selflessness you’ll cease to be an enjoyer of pleasure and pain, you’ll obtain aloneness, kevalatva, final deliverance.



EVENING TWILIGHT

Peetambar's days are divided. He works and he waits for Anupama to visit. Unremittingly, he imagines his servant entering to announce her.

Peetambar waits and paints; he has built a fine studio. His renowned artworks are passionate and vivacious; the best he sends to Anupama.

Anupama writes, but Peetambar never replies. She never visits because his desire for her and the inevitable conflict fill her with trepidation.

Anupama is no longer inclined to read the holy books. She tells Hema to sell them at the market and invites her to keep the profit for her family.

Hema takes the beautiful books home, finding a hiding place for them under the floor. She reads them to her happy lover in the evening twilight.

SIXTH PRAPĀTHAKA

22. Two Brahmans have to be meditated on, the word and the non-word. By the word alone is the non-word revealed. Now there is the word Aum. Moving upward by it where all words and all what is meant by them ceases, you'll arrive at absorption in the non-word (Brahman). This is the way, this is the immortal, this is union, and this is bliss. And as the spider, moving upward by the thread, gains free space, thus also so you, if you meditate moving upward by the syllable Aum, will gain independence.

Other teachers of the word, such as Brahman, think otherwise. They listen to the sound of the ether within the heart while they stop the ears with the thumbs. They compare it to seven noises, like rivers, like a bell, like a brazen vessel, like the wheels of a carriage, like the croaking of frogs, like rain and as if a person speaks in a cavern. Having passed beyond this



variously apprehended sound and having settled in the supreme, soundless non-word, the unmanifested Brahman, they become undistinguished and undistinguishable, as various flavours of the flowers are lost in the taste of honey. And thus it is said: 'Two Brahman are to be known, the word-Brahman and the highest Brahman; he who is perfect in the word-Brahman attains the highest Brahman.'

23. The syllable Aum is what is called the word. And its end is the silent, the soundless, fearless, sorrowless, joyful, satisfied, firm, unwavering, immortal, immovable, certain (Brahman), called Vishnu. Worship these two, that you might obtain what is higher than everything, your final deliverance. For thus it is said:

‘He who is the high and the highest god, by name Om-kâra, he is soundless and free from all distinctions: therefore dwell on him in the crown of his head.’

24. The body is the bow, the syllable Aum is the arrow and its point is the mind. Having cut through the darkness, which consists of ignorance, it approaches that which is not covered by darkness. Then having cut through that which covered the personal soul, you’ll see Brahman, flashing like a wheel on fire, bright like the sun, vigorous, beyond all darkness, that which shines forth in yonder sun, in the moon, in the fire, in the lightning. And having seen him, you’ll obtain immortality. It has been said: ‘Meditation is directed to the highest Being (Brahman) within and before to the objects of body, Aum and mind; in this manner the

indistinct understanding becomes distinct. And when the works of the mind are dissolved then that bliss which requires no other witness, that is Brahman (Âtman), the immortal, the brilliant, that is the way, that is the true world.’

25. The one who has his senses hidden as in sleep, and who, while in the cavern of his senses, his body, but no longer ruled by them, sees, as in a dream, with the purest intellect, Him who is called Pranava (Aum), the leader, the bright, the sleepless, free from old age, from death, and sorrow, this one will also be called Pranava and become a leader, bright, sleepless, free from old age, from death and sorrow. ‘Because in this manner you join the Prâna (breath), the Aum and this Universe in its manifold forms, or because you join yourself to him, this process of meditation is called Yoga. ‘

26. As an athlete, after drawing out the denizens of the waters with a net, offer them as a sacrifice in the fire of his stomach, thus are these Prânas, vital airs, after they have been drawn out with the syllable Aum, offered in the faultless fire (Brahman).
You will be like a heated vessel, full of clarified butter; for as the clarified butter in the heated vessel lights up when touched with grass and sticks, thus does this being which is called Not-breath (Âtman) light up, when touched by the Prânas, the vital airs. And that which flares up, that is the manifest form of Brahman that is the highest place of Vishnu that is the essence of Rudra.

27. This is the heat of the highest, the immortal, the incorporeal Brahman, the warmth of the body. And this body is the clarified butter poured on it, by which the heat of Brahman, otherwise invisible, is lighted up. Then, being manifest, it is placed in the ether of the heart. Then by concentration they remove that ether which is within the heart, so that its light appears.
Therefore the worshipper becomes identified with that light almost instantly. Just as when a ball of iron, placed in the earth, becomes earth. It happens without much delay and once it has become a clod of earth, the fire and the smiths have nothing more to do with that ball of iron.

In the same manner thought, without delay,
disappears together with its support.

And thus it is said:

‘The shrine which consists of the ether in the
heart, the blissful, the highest retreat, that is our
own, that is our goal and that is the heat and
brightness of the fire and the sun.’



Thanks from Niamh

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