

Institute News



A Newsletter for the members and friends of Nityananda Institute / Volume 19 / Fall 2003



A Sense of Possibility

By Swami Chetanananda

When I read the paper lately about the situation with Iraq, I think back to a time in the early Sixties, when there was another war going on. I remember what a hopeful time it was, even in the face of a great deal of social conflict. We were struggling in those days to come up with better values. We believed that there was a possibility that we could make our world a better world, and people were constantly thinking about that and working at it. It filled the media. The discussion was everywhere in the whole country. The fact that people had hope was a wonderful thing.

People not only had hope, they were doing lots of things to express that hope and thinking about how that hope might appropriately be structured in our lives so that it could be self-sustaining. There were so many people who had come together out of the same concern. It seemed we were on the verge of making life so much better for a lot of people. I thought in those days that what quality of life is, what it should be and what it could be, was on the forefront of everybody's mind, and I thought there would be a huge transformation in our culture. I couldn't have been more wrong.

I look back on that moment and see that the so-called commitment to change that was being expressed in our culture across the whole country, in ways that I still look back on and think were wonderful, has completely gone. What are we

concerned about today? Our internet service? Our satellite TV provider?

The sense of possibility that existed for us at one point in time has evaporated as we have been satiated by the extraordinary material benefit of our life in America. That benefit should be an incredible blessing for us, but, like many things, it can also be a curse. In our quest for comfort, we, as a culture, have succumbed to greed and laziness.

But I believed then, and I believe now, ever so much more powerfully, in the truly mind-boggling possibility that lives in the core of every human being. The only thing I can see that is enduringly valuable is that we cultivate the finest part of ourselves. It is enduringly valuable that we have faith in the highest potential which lives within us and that we hold to that highest potential no matter what. When we do that, we get to some interesting places, because there is no way that we can continue in the same vein--there's no way that we can continue to be the same person that we were--and express a higher order of the possibility that exists for us, is there?

In 1970, after a number of years of being deeply involved in politics, I was exhausted from the endless campaigns that we had done, and I pulled back. Upon reflection, I decided that politics was not the answer. I decided that before I did anything about the quality of anybody else's life, I had to do something

about the quality of my own, and that I had to have some self-realization of the hope and the possibility that I believed existed for human beings. So I turned to spirituality.

For me, at that moment in 1970, there was a gigantic change from Indiana and my rural, white, Southern Catholic background. I landed in New York City, an intense urban setting, with a Jewish Swami. How incongruous! And of course at that time, I'd been led to believe that every Swami had a long beard and was skinny as a rail and only ate brown rice and carrots. So it was an additional shock to find out that Rudi ate hot dogs and sauerkraut right before meditation.

It was a wonderful, wonderful lesson for me. The lesson was that the fulfillment of our possibility is going to require us to change enormously, and that possibility cannot look anything like what we're accustomed to. This is a possibility which transcends anything that you can imagine. If you can imagine it, it has nothing to do with that possibility. The highest thing we can imagine only has to do with the furthest extension of our egos.

I could never imagine, for instance, finding in the middle of the East Village in Manhattan in 1970 a Jewish-American art-dealer Swami who was such an extraordinary, powerful, fine, compassionate, caring, difficult, demanding human being, who was so

focused on that profound possibility. How could I have imagined that?

I remember standing outside Rudi's house the second day I was there. I was sweeping the walk, and one of Rudi's students came up to me and said, "So, you're new here." And I said, "Oh, yeah, and I'm just overwhelmed by it all and so grateful to be there." He said to me, "You know, I just don't know how you can like Rudi. He's so fat." That's the way human beings are. People pray for something to come into their life, and when it comes into their life, it's so much better than they could ever imagine, that they turn their back on it and walk away. They can't see it for what it is, because they're looking at it with blinders on.

Don't bring your ordinary, lowest common denominator part of your brain to your endeavor to improve yourself as a person and to realize a very profound possibility that is present in your life. There is no way you can possibly wrap your mind around the vastness of the possibility that exists for you. That possibility, because it is so strong, so extraordinary, is not going to manifest in ways you're used to.

A spiritual life is about discovering. It is about opening to those places within ourselves that we're protecting, about being able to confront our ego and rise above our limitations and connect to the extraordinary flow within ourselves, which is a presence that vastly transcends our individual existence, and cultivate that flow to the degree that we realize a potential within ourselves which is unforeseeable by our brain, because our brain is trying to keep us from it. Every day our ego is trying to keep us from that potential, because if we come to know that potential, our ego will be finished.

Spiritual work is about taking down walls, consciously taking down walls. It is about consciously unwinding all of the boundaries and the barriers that you hold so tightly to, which you think give your life some sense of certainty. You allow new energy, new influences, new

insights, and love to nourish you and awaken you to the extraordinary and profoundly simple beauty of the life that is within and around you.

People allow their personal agendas to hijack their ideals for the sake of some low order of personal pleasure, and the profound possibility that exists for us becomes like a dream or a mirage or an illusion, when in fact that only means that the mirage, the illusion, the dream has consumed us. This is what happens to people when they experience some calling and feel within themselves some strong need for a change. In the process of experiencing that awakening, every other agenda asserts itself, taking a little of the energy here and a little of the energy there. Finally, all of this energy becomes structured within a form of life that denies us the possibility for any further change or the realization of any potential that is beyond the bounds of our social and cultural conditioning. We allow ourselves to be dominated by our ego and our personal history rather than by our sense of the possible.

There is the possibility of infinite renewal and the chance to transcend all of the negative consequences of our limitations as a person and our unfortunate choices. But it happens only if we have the capacity for perseverance. It takes a long time. Absorbing the lessons and absorbing the energy of our experience, and thoughtfully reflecting upon all the aspects of the work that we do, all the aspects of our life, takes time. To realize a possibility that is truly profound and of a higher order of magnitude than human beings are accustomed to requires that we have a deep personal commitment to changing and improving ourselves.

If you are trying to grow, then by definition you are going to be outside the box and, to some degree, outside the boundaries of what is considered socially acceptable. You have to have enough faith in yourself and enough depth of commitment to that possibility that you can travel through every scene change in your life with a great commitment to

growing, a great love of life, and a passion for learning. Then you have to come to a higher place. You have to.

Life is not just light. It is light and dark and every shade and texture in between, and to be a really big person is to encompass all of it in the flow of your love. Some of it will be painful and stressful, and I doubt you'll find out how warm and wonderful human beings are. I think mostly what you'll do is experience the weaknesses of other human beings, and the endless disappointment that is there for people who are strong in their love of life and their commitment to growing. But we have to carry on. So love your life. Love every place it takes you. Be grateful for all of it, and just be sure in every single moment of as many moments as you can remember every day that you are as conscious as you can be of the flow of energy within yourself and connecting that flow to the highest possibility that you can be aware of.

Just keep loving God. That's really all it takes. If you can just feel every part of yourself connected to every other part and rising up, then you will keep attracting new pieces of the puzzle of that possibility as it presents itself in your life. If you can avoid being confused by the pieces of the puzzle and keep looking for the big picture, then something unbelievably amazing can happen for you.

I encourage you not to engage your mind in issues very much. Rather, focus your attention on the potential, the creative power that exists within you and the potential inherent in that, and make it very strong. Make it bring out the light and the brightness in you, and the love. Let that be what you concern yourself about. Then, as the energy within you circulates and as the depth of understanding within you is released, very much like the fragrance in a flower or the sweetness in a fruit, the realization of your highest potentiality and the clarity to recognize the unlimited power of your own inner nature will be present and palpable.

Lama Wangdu Brings the Queen of Great Bliss to Portland

By Michelle Lawson

We were delighted to see Lama Wangdu again last winter. He spent three months in Portland, practicing Chöd and Phowa with us and doing many pujas for the benefit of the ashram community. His presence was as light and joyful as ever.

During his visit, Lama Wangdu introduced a new practice to our community called The Queen of Great Bliss. It is a beautiful puja devoted to the Queen of Great Bliss, a title bestowed on Yeshe Tsogyal, one of Padmasambhava's consorts and his principal disciple. On February 9, Lama Wangdu gave an introductory teaching and the formal initiation for the practice to the Institute community.

This puja, like our chöd practice, was discovered as a treasure text by Jigme Lingpa and is from the Longchen Nyingthig tradition of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. Lama Wangdu explained the importance of the Longchen Nyingthig in his introductory teaching on the puja: "In Tibet, there was a great lama named Longchen Rabjampa, and that's where the first part of the Longchen word comes from. In the actual etymology, 'long' means expanse and 'chen' means great. So it is a great, vast expanse. And then Nyingthig means 'heart-drop,' or 'heart blood', so there is a sense that this is the most essential practice, the heart essence of this vast expansive practice."

The Queen of Great Bliss practice is a tsok or feast offering. The word "tsok" means gathering, and tsok practices involve a gathering both externally and internally. Outwardly, we gather offerings, such as sweets, wine, fruit, yogurt, and meat, and gather together as practitioners. Internally, we gather our creative energy. We make offerings of the various material substances we have assembled, and we offer the entire range



of our inner and outer sensory experiences. In the Tibetan tradition, tsok practice is believed to be a very profound method of accumulating positive energy for ourselves and our environment.

Many Institute students are familiar with another tsok practice that Lama Wangdu has done for us during his visits here: the "Precious Garland of Chöd Feast Activities," by Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, which we usually refer to as the "all day Chöd." Like the Precious Garland, the Queen of Great Bliss puja is performed by the community as a whole once a month. The Queen of Great Bliss is done on the 25th day of the Tibetan month (the tenth day after the full moon), a day that is considered especially auspicious for practices associated with the feminine energy and dakinis. The Precious Garland practice is done on the 10th day of the month (the 10th day after the new moon), since that is the day dedicated to practices associated with male energies and Padmasambhava.

In addition to the tsok, the practice includes a sadhana to the Queen of Great Bliss. We visualize and meditate on Yeshe Tsogyal in the form of Vajra Varahi, of whom she is considered to be an emanation. Red in color, Vajra Varahi represents kundalini, our individual creative energy, and her form is similar to the form she takes in the Phowa practice. Through this sadhana, we begin to develop the understanding that we are not separate from the Queen of Great Bliss and to see everything in the world as her mandala.

We have been doing the Queen of Great Bliss puja monthly since Lama Wangdu left, and we're hoping to learn more about it when he comes back to Portland. We're very grateful to him for sharing yet another blessing with us.



Swamiji's Work with Hari Bahadur Khadka

("Guruji")

By Howard Boster

Swamiji met Hari Bahadur Khadka (also known as "Guruji") in the spring of 2000 at Guruji's home in Duwakot, near Bhaktapur, in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. At the time, Swamiji was searching for someone accomplished in a particular form of tantric practice that evolved in Nepal and is related to Kashmir Shaivism. Someone told him about Guruji, and Swamiji made an appointment to meet him.

Swamiji tells the story of his first visit to Guruji's house, where Guruji proceeded to sit him down on a stool and do a puja for him. In that puja, which lasted only a few minutes, Guruji broke an egg on Swamiji's head and an orange ribbon about 40 feet long came out of the egg. Guruji said that he could help to avert some trouble that someone might be causing Swamiji. Then Guruji put the ribbon on the floor on a piece of newspaper and threw some rice on it, and it burst into flame. Needless to say, Swamiji was intrigued.

Swamiji continued to visit Guruji regularly after that, and Guruji began to train Swamiji in the practice. That training has happened during Swamiji's trips to Kathmandu and during several visits Guruji has made to Portland. A number of people in



the Nityananda Institute community have experienced the egg puja during that time, often with profound results.

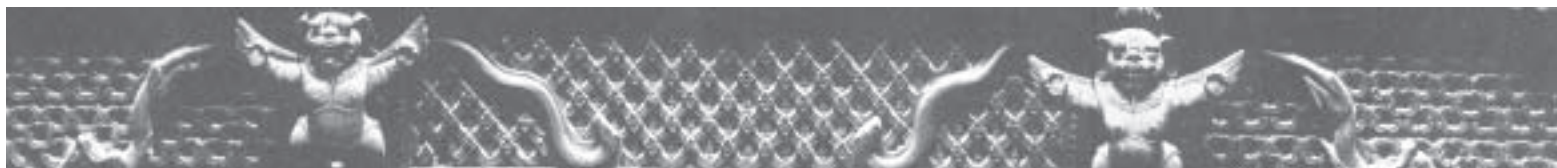
Guruji is known all over Nepal for his ability as a spiritual healer. His practice is a form of tantric healing that has been passed down by his family for several generations. The practice has proved to be effective for a variety of mental and physical diseases and conditions. The puja has helped people suffering from AIDS, cancer, paralysis, tuberculosis, infertility and ulcers. Guruji is skilled in divination as well, and high ranking members of the

Nepali government consult him regularly.

At his home in Duwakot, Guruji does his egg puja three days a week and sees over 200 people each day that he is practicing. They are usually indigent and receive treatment without charge. Guruji lives very simply and is devoted to helping people through his practice.

Guruji began his spiritual practice when he was only 11 years old. He learned the egg puja from his father, the late Sammar Bahadur Khadka, also a renowned tantric practitioner. He undertook an extended course of ascetic practice prior to beginning that training. During the period in which he was training with his father, he served in the Nepalese Army, the Nepalese Police, and as an administrator for the Ministry of Finance. Upon his father's death, he began practicing his healing work full-time.

While Guruji's egg puja is done in public, his practice also includes pujas practiced in private, the details of which are disclosed only to those empowered to practice. Swamiji has studied both the egg puja and the private pujas with Guruji. Their work together has greatly benefited the entire Institute community.



The Karmacharyas of Bhaktapur

By Leiko Coyle



For many years, Swamiji has searched to find a living remnant of the Shaiva tantric tradition in India. He concluded that none existed and turned his attention to Nepal. In the spring of 2001, during his retreat in Kathmandu, he finally encountered what he had been looking for. A friend introduced him to Surendravir Karmacharya, one of the last remaining members of a caste of royal tantric priests, the Karmacharyas of Bhaktapur.

Bhaktapur, which served as the Nepalese capital and seat of the royal palace from the 12th to 16th centuries, is one of the most important historic cities of the Kathmandu Valley. The Karmacharyas, a caste of Newaris indigenous to Bhaktapur, rose to prominence there as priests to the royal court under the rule of the Malla kings from the 14th to the 18th century. The Karmacharyas were employed by the kings to perform elaborate goddess-based tantric rituals to protect the kingdom and ensure its prosperity. With the fall of the Mallas in the late 18th century, a new kingdom ruled by the Shahs sought to create a Nepali national identity which rejected traditional Newari culture. As a result, the kings of Bhaktapur stopped using the Karmacharyas, a core tradition of Newari culture, as royal priests, and the Karmacharya tradition went into decline.

Swamiji recognized the significance of this ancient tradition and was eager to learn more from Surendravir. As Swamiji puts it, "Tantric culture was preeminent in all the royal courts of South Asia from Vietnam to Persia at

one point in time. The Karmacharyas are the last living link to that remarkable philosophical, spiritual and ritual culture." Surendravir is the younger brother of the head Karmacharya, and a direct descendant of the family that served the Malla kings. He spent many hours with Swamiji discussing rituals and looking over ancient texts passed down by his ancestors. He also performed two pujas at our retreat center in Kathmandu - the first time that those pujas have been seen by Westerners.

In the course of his work with Surendravir, Swamiji found that the ritual aspects and techniques of the practices of the Karmacharyas shared a common ancestry with Kashmir Shaivism, and that the goddesses they worshipped were related. The principal deity worshipped by the Karmacharyas is the goddess Nava Durga (who is related to Durga). "Nava" which means nine, implies the nine manifestations of



Durga, including eight mother goddesses and Tripurasundari. The goddess Taleju is one of the eight mothers and is the primary goddess of the royal courts and the kingdom. She has both a public form and a secret, or esoteric, form called Siddhi Lakshmi. This secret form was worshipped only by the kings and the Karmacharyas, who had the exclusive knowledge of her mantras and specific rituals.

An earlier form of Taleju/Siddhi Lakshmi is the goddess Kubjika, who was worshipped by the Licchavi kings (the predecessors to the Malla kings). Kubjika is the earliest form of Kalasamkarsani, an aspect of Kali who is the innermost goddess of the Trika. She is represented in the Trika mandala as the

lotus in the center. In essence, she is the same as Siddhi Lakshmi, representing the vitality of Shiva and the potential for manifestation. She gives rise to the other three goddesses of the Trika mandala: Para, Para Para, and Aparā. In form, Siddhi Lakshmi is less wrathful than Kalasamkarsani and is associated with prosperity. To remind us of our connection with the royal court tradition of tantric Shaivism, a thangka of Siddhi Lakshmi (painted in the Newari style) is now hanging in the Portland meditation hall.

Last year the Institute joined the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies of Tribhuvan University, the national university of Nepal, for a research project to study the Karmacharyas and their religious and secular role in Bhaktapur. The project was an effort to document and preserve the unique sacred practices of the Karmacharyas, whose tradition is now in danger of becoming extinct. There are only a small number of practicing Karmacharyas who still live in Bhaktapur. These priests occasionally perform rituals at public festivals, but their importance in the development of tantrism in Nepal is largely forgotten.

The study included a survey of extant source materials, including rare ritual texts, as well as field observation and interviews with practicing Karmacharyas. The steering committee for the project was led by Professor Tirtha Prasad Mishra of CNAS as Chairman and Swamiji as Co-Chairman. The chief researcher for the project was Dr. Purushottam Lochan Shrestha. We have invited Surendravir Karmacharya and Dr. Shrestha to visit Portland this winter, and we look forward to learning more about this fascinating tradition.



Hatha Yoga Teacher Training Begins at Nityananda Institute

By Ruth Knight

This March Nityananda Institute welcomed a new group of participants into its hatha yoga teacher training program, offered through The Movement Center yoga studio.

Over the last three decades we have trained many students to become instructors, and as instructors ourselves, have studied and practiced with accomplished teachers from the Viniyoga and other hatha yoga traditions. Several years ago, Swamiji met with Institute hatha yoga teachers to begin developing a collective understanding of the interface between Trika yoga and hatha yoga. Energized by those discussions, our individual practices and program overall have expanded in scale and depth. This current teacher training is part of the blossoming of that inspiration.

For the first time, we have opened our training to the public. This is significant and exciting because it demonstrates that our perspective of hatha yoga has coalesced to the point where we are ready to make it available outside the boundaries of the ashram and Movement Center studio. As we continue to explore and refine our expression of this interface, we expect the scope of our day-to-day instruction and trainings will be communicated to yet a wider audience.

So how have we expressed our unique understanding of hatha yoga? It starts with the recognition that the state of Total Well Being - that joyous actualization of each person's creative potential on every level: body, mind, and spirit - is accessible to everyone, no matter what. The goal of hatha yoga, simply, is to facilitate the unfoldment of Total Well Being. The method is to release tension from mind and body so that the flow of the creative energy, Vital Force, is optimized.

Recognizing that body, mind, and breath are totally linked, a core component of



hatha yoga is learning to link body and mind into the experience of breath so that all three parts are integrated. Over time, it's the integration of body, mind, and breath that releases the constrictions in a person's body and breath enough that they are able to experience the flow of Vital Force through their energetic mechanism. The ability of hatha yoga practice to effect this change of state is why it is such a useful adjunct to spiritual practice. It literally makes the experience of meditation more accessible.

Likewise, a person's experience of openness and flow in meditation feeds their hatha yoga practice. So, both continually reinforce each other. It's all about flow.

The hatha yoga teacher's role, then, is more subtle than knowing how to teach the physical form of the asanas and pranayama exercises. The practical information is certainly a necessary foundation that any qualified, careful instructor needs to teach safely. However, the most important part of teaching is that the instructor must first connect to the state of Total Well Being within themselves. From that state of openness, they connect with the students in the classroom, observing and feeling what is needed, and then teaching a class that serves that person's needs. In this way, an experience of flow is facilitated for everyone.

The current training began with a look at the energetic foundations of yoga, both as a way to set the tone for how we understand the goal of hatha yoga practice, and to set a context for the practical tools and methods that we use to achieve that goal.

The training curriculum includes lectures and workshops, practice sessions, a teaching practicum, study groups, and mentoring. This intensive training is organized so that each of the categories of asanas: forward bends, lateral bends, back bends, twists, extensions, balances, and inversions are being taught side-by-side with anatomy and observation and adaptation skills. Other course topics include pranayama, learning to sequence asanas and breathing, specific physiological effects of hatha yoga, and specialized topics such as the effect of sound and vibration on breath and asana.

The full schedule and program description for the training is available on request. If you are interested in attending parts of the training on a "drop-in" basis, please call The Movement Center for more information.

WE THINK WE KNOW

By Rachel Gaffney

Relating to the guru is one of the most challenging issues for students of Eastern traditions who live in the West. This, right off the bat, is a sort of conundrum. After all, the mentor/student relationship is at the heart of Christianity, a given in the world of music, and permeates our medical and educational systems. In my experience, if you want to learn how to code software, there is no faster way than working with those who write the best.

So why is it so hard for us as students of spirituality, and how is it that Westerners assume they don't need teachers? There are certainly pat answers to this question: our culture is one of independence, a person's spiritual growth is their own event, and some gurus have taken advantage of students are a few common ones. Each of these has elements of truth to it. But if we get down to what's at the heart of it, we can't help but find two loosely-tied allies-egotism and arrogance. And if we drill down one layer deeper, I'd suggest that behind both of those is an even more primitive emotion, fear.

Before I say anything more, I want to point out that I don't use the words egotism, arrogance or fear with any sense of judgment. We can't help it-it's our nature to have all three of those forces shape almost every action and choice in our lives. They're part of the package that comes with being in a human body. They're not inherently negative. It's the extent to which we believe in them that creates the problem.

Let me give you an example. As a hatha teacher, I have found that my students have the hardest time with the breath. They struggle with breathing techniques and neglect the breathing part of the practice. They resist because breath is so core to our state, so shaped by

patterns and trauma, that it's inherently challenging to work with. But another part of it is that we think, for God's sake, that we already know how to breathe. We do it all day long, every day. Maybe we could get better at it, but do we really need a teacher? Just how hard could breathing be? In fact, breathing, as any seasoned yoga

teacher would tell you, is the subtlest and most delicate of all the activities associated with asana. It takes years of practice, discriminating self-observation, and the guidance of a skilled practitioner to use it well in asana and, by extension, in meditation and daily life. The more we practice it, the subtler the tuning of it gets.

I think there is a parallel in how we think and feel about our lives. We think we already know how to live. We've been doing it, after all, for our whole lives. We've been successful, to a greater or lesser extent, by clinging to those patterns that we think get us what we want. We feel we know better than anyone else how to live our lives.

Sadly, it usually takes a crisis to break us out of this fundamental misconception. Sometimes it is a health crisis or the recognition of an addiction. Sometimes it is the loss of a loved one. And these crises are really the greatest blessing because all our assumptions are called into question, and suddenly, quite irreversibly, we see that we really don't understand anything at all.

These moments of recognition will occur more than once in our lives. Each realization is baptism of sorts, and it seems we need refresher doublings from time to time. Because, thanks to the resilience of egotism, arrogance and fear, after each one we start thinking that now we know how to live. Our minds close in a slightly different, if more elevated way. In the worst case, our spirituality becomes a different form of closed-mindedness, an arrogance of godliness. While I don't think this happens for most people-the sheer magnitude of the mystery of life prevents that-we tend to fall asleep again in smaller ways. We start to think again that we are our own best teacher.

While there is some truth to that-it is only us that can transform ourselves and only through the inner guru-there is a great distance between living from the direction of the Inner Self and living from the ignorance of thinking we know best. It's this distance that the external guru is the key to crossing. The former is the highest state available, the latter delusion. We don't cross the gap in a week, and we don't cross it alone. The ego is so crafty-you have to give it that-we simply cannot see clearly, for a long time, when we are fooling ourselves. We dive into decisions not ultimately in our best interest because we are afraid, or greedy, or worse. We get caught in the passion of the moment and make choices from which we must extract ourselves later at a painful price.

So this is really why you have a guru: to save you from yourself. And while a true guru will never force anything upon you, at the same time, if you have gone to him as an honest student, he will not let you fail. He is a vast storehouse of patience and love and generosity, and from that love he can guide and stabilize you until that time when you take guidance from your own highest source.



Perhaps it is here that we see both the chasm that Westerners feel towards gurus, and the bridge by which we can cross it. Because we think of teachers as purveyors of specific techniques, information or knowledge, we cannot reconcile ourselves to the idea of someone who would direct our life choices. But in fact a true spiritual teacher rarely plays that role, and the direction I receive is far more subtle and energetic. I almost never go to my teacher about choices of that nature, and yet his energy illuminates the process I use to make those choices. That energy extracts a standard from me I could not muster on my own. It factors in love and compassion when fear and greed would have their way.

For any of you for whom the chasm is still in need of crossing, I will say this: close your eyes and feel back into a time when you were unconditionally loved, just as you are. Feel a little further into the moments when you drew upon that love to bring out strengths to face things you didn't think you could face. Hold to that feeling-to that energy-just a little while and you will know the blessing it is to have a guru.

In what has become NI's most widely celebrated and community centered fundraising event, the Portland ashram held its fourth annual "HUGE Yard Sale" on June 14. Not only does the yard sale give us an opportunity to meet hundreds of our neighbors, it also gives us a chance to come together to socialize, show our support for the Institute, and raise much-needed funds for various projects. This year's event raised more than \$4,000--not bad for a single day.

While the yard sale remains a cornerstone of fundraising efforts by Friends of the Institute, other initiatives are also necessary to meet our ongoing financial needs. Primary among them:

Pledge program. Monthly and quarterly pledges are the core of our fundraising and allow us to anticipate the flow of resources for operating expenses. If you haven't already made a pledge, please consider helping out. Even a small monthly donation makes a big difference in our ability to provide programs in Portland and bring teachers to the Centers.

Targeted fundraising for special projects. NI Friends have been highly responsive to requests to support particular short-term projects. In the last year, such projects have included deep-cleaning the meditation hall carpet and purchasing ritual items for the Queen of Great Bliss puja. We typically communicate these requests by email to the NI-List; if

you're not on the list yet, please contact Sharon Ward (sharonwardor@earthlink.net).

Individual fundraisers.

Members of the community with special skills or projects they want to support often come up with fundraisers of their own. Meg Pennock's photo cards, the Lapchi meditation rug sale, and John Sulahian's stained glass holiday ornaments are recent examples. Last fall we were able to bring noted scholar Wendy Doniger to the Institute because Mary Pat Crum helped a number of people combine individual fundraisers to raise money for her honorarium. If you have an idea for an individual fundraiser, please contact Patty Slote: (paslote@earthlink.net).

There is always something on the NI wish list. Right now, we're looking for support for a few current and upcoming projects:

Shrine path. The new flagstone path to the shrine was made possible by an initial individual donation of \$3,000. We are looking for an additional \$7,000 in

donations to finish Phase 1 of the project, the area immediately around the shrine.

Visiting spiritual masters.

When special visitors such as Lama Wangdu, Guruji, and tantric priests come to Portland, we need additional funds to cover their travel and other expenses. Donations are needed to help with these expenses this fall.

Puja offerings. As part of his work with Guruji, Swamiji is doing many pujas each day. We have added the Queen of Great Bliss puja to our monthly schedule. Offerings for these pujas, especially flowers, are needed, and our expenses in this area have increased dramatically. We would like to find sponsors to assist with puja offerings on an ongoing basis.

Wish list. We usually have a variety of items on our "wish list." See the insert to this newsletter for the most current list, or contact Patty Slote for a copy (paslote@earthlink.net).

The mission of Friends of the Institute is to provide resources to Nityananda



Institute through donations, in-kind gifts, volunteer programs, and cost saving initiatives. The Institute depends on donations for a significant part of its annual operating expenses. Each year generous contributions by Friends have greatly enriched our spiritual community and environment.

Ayurvedic Expert Dr. K.P. Balagopalan Visits Portland

By Pamela Rico

We were most pleased to have Dr. K.P. Balagopalan (Vaithyar) and his son, Balraj Kunnath as our recent guests in Portland. Swamiji and Vaithyar met twelve years ago in Madras on the southeastern coast of India, where Vaithyar has lived for many years. Vaithyar is a master practitioner of ayurveda and has visited Swamiji in Nepal. This was his first trip to the United States.

Vaithyar is a highly accomplished practitioner who trained in one of the purest traditional training systems existing in India fifty years ago. Vaithyar began his training at the age of 14 and studied until the age of 22 when he began his practice as an ayurvedic physician. He has been practicing ever since, for well over forty years. Ten years ago, Vaithyar opened his own ayurvedic



clinic in Mandaveli, Madras (now known as Chennai), where he sees patients from 4:30 am until 8:00 pm, seven days a week.

Ayurveda is a holistic health care modality that originated in India and was first documented in the ancient Hindu texts, the Vedas. The practice of ayurveda utilizes the pulse and various observation techniques for determining proper treatments which focus on diet, herbs and lifestyle recommendations, as well as Pancha Karma (five action) treatments, which are designed to cleanse and restore balance to body, mind and spirit.

We have been talking with Vaithyar about establishing an ayurvedic teaching program at the Institute next year. It is one of the many exciting prospects on the horizon for the Institute community.

Visiting Scholar Wendy Doniger Speaks on the Mythology of Siva

By Mary Pat Crum

In January we had the pleasure of meeting Professor Wendy Doniger and hearing a lively and educational talk on the origins of yoga and the mythology of Siva. Professor Doniger is engaging, unassuming and articulate -- and a wonderful storyteller.

Professor Doniger is on the faculty of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, where she has been a full professor since 1978. She is recognized as an outstanding scholar and teacher as well as a prolific author and editor. Her research and teaching interests revolve around Hinduism and mythology. Her courses in mythology address themes from cross-cultural perspectives, and she has been called "the greatest living scholar of comparative mythology."

In her session here, she placed Shaivism in a cultural, philosophical and political context. She discussed the central paradox of the mythology of Siva that Siva is portrayed in some myths as

overtly erotic and in others as chastely ascetic. She explained that the contradictions in the mythology portray different aspects of human nature and spirituality.

Professor Doniger's work in comparative mythology is wide-ranging. Her books include *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic*, *Other People's Myths: The Cave of Echoes*, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*, and *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade*. She has also translated Sanskrit texts, such as the *Rig Veda*, *Laws of Manu*, and the *Kama Sutra*, and she has edited several works on mythology. I met Professor Doniger through my University of Chicago alumni group and was fortunate to be able to coordinate her visit to the ashram. Professor Doniger said that she really enjoyed speaking to people who were so interested in what she had to say.

Her lecture was made possible through the efforts of several Institute students who held individual fundraisers: Vivina

Boster, Wally Chapman, Meg Pennock, John Sulahian, and Lindsey Titus. We're hoping to invite Professor Doniger to come back in the coming year, and we're looking for sponsors for that visit. If you are interested in helping, please contact Patty Slote.

Institute News

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Nityananda Institute promotes the recognition of the creative resource within each of us by supporting individuals in their exploration of the human spirit and its expression in the world.

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PROGRAM NEWS:

The first of three five day intensives for 2003 was held from May 27th through the 31st. Swamiji's morning programs included lively question and answer sessions, and he taught class each evening. Other program highlights included a new course on Hatha Yoga for Meditators, Fundamentals of Chöd, and a tormā making demonstration by monks from Samtenling Monastery in Kathmandu. We celebrated Lydia Junewick and Steve Reznick's wedding (congratulations!) on Sunday morning, with Swamiji officiating. The Queen of Great Bliss puja on Sunday evening provided a wonderful finale.

The Queen of Great Bliss puja has been added to our schedule and is practiced monthly on the 25th day of the Tibetan calendar. Everyone is welcome to attend. Puja dates for the remainder of the year are: Sunday, September 21; Monday, October 20; Wednesday, November 19; and Thursday, December 18. There is an ongoing practice session for the melodies and mudras every Monday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

We are continuing to practice Chöd and Phowa on Friday evenings, and chum and Chöd on Saturdays before class. Chöd is also practiced on weekday evenings after dinner. We often receive requests for Phowa to be done for

friends and family members who have passed on to help uplift them in their transition. We welcome donations from anyone making such a request.

Students from a Comparative Religion class at the University of Portland visited in March for a tour and a presentation on meditation, and students from Capstone English Mastery Center made the Institute the destination for one of their field trips in April. Paul Rosenberg hosted a tea ceremony and tea tasting for 20 members of the Oriental Art Study Society in November.

COURSES AND STUDY GROUPS:

This spring Monica O'Neal held a weekly course on the ritual aspects (the instruments, mudras, offerings, etc.) as well as a study group to learn the text and the sadhana (the inner practice and visualizations) for the Queen of Great Bliss puja, both with very enthusiastic audiences. Andrew Bonner has transcribed and helped train us in the melodies for the chants. Thanks to George Cohn and Marilyn Ritter, we have DVDs of the puja and of Lama Wangdu performing the mudras to use as training tools. They're available for sale to initiates.

The Introduction to Trika Yoga course has been an ongoing part of the curriculum since it was

introduced last summer. Over 100 students have attended during the last year. This eight-week course includes comprehensive coverage of the principal tools of our practice in a multimedia format featuring PowerPoint slide presentations and guided practice sessions. New students and long-time students have found it informative, stimulating and practical. One student called it "valuable for anyone at any stage of practice." The fall 2003 session of the course began in early September.

Howard Boster gave a well-attended course on Kashmir Shaivism at the December retreat. The course covered the principal philosophical tenets, teachers and texts of the tradition in three afternoon sessions. Howard made it an informative and stimulating presentation, including in the last day a test for participants: "Name that Upaya."

Study groups meet on Tuesday and Thursday in Portland. This spring we read the *Gitartha-Samgraha*, Abhinavagupta's commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, in which Abhinavagupta explains the esoteric or inner meaning of the Gita. We were excited to have a fresh perspective on the Gita, which Swamiji has always considered to be a Shaiva text. The next text for study is *The Warrior Song of King Gesar*, an epic story of a Tibetan king who is believed to be an incarnation of Padmasambhava.



By Bob Shoemaker

In the next year we'll be seeing some new products from Rudra Press. The first is a prenatal yoga DVD featuring Movement Center instructors and students. It will be the pilot for a planned series of yoga video products. We hope to make it a high quality product that will compete with the best of what's on the market. Based on our market research, we believe that we have something truly unique to offer.

We're also preparing to release the CDs of Volumes 3 and 4 in the series of talks by Rudi. If you're interested you can place orders by calling the Institute office.

Another product under development is a DVD of Lama Wangdu's studio recording of the Chöd. The performance is the same as the one on the professionally filmed video we previously released, but the DVD offers better quality video and audio and the advantage of English and transliterated Tibetan subtitles. We're also working on a hatha yoga book describing the approach developed over years of practice by Movement Center instructors.

Finally, we're planning to publish a revised edition of *Entering Infinity* and a 30th anniversary edition of *Spiritual Cannibalism*.



Swamiji's birthday cake
July 2003



Monks from Samtenling
Monastery with Liam Naughton



Lydia Junewick and
Steve Resnick's wedding
May 2003



Swamiji performing Shri Chakra Puja on his birthday
July 25, 2003