



A Path to Hindu Heritage

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We also invite our readers to send their comments regarding the **Marg** articles, or about other issues falling within the scope of **Marg**. We reserve the right to select, abbreviate, and edit for clarity submitted materials to conform to the editorial policy of **Marg** and the available space.



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PARASHU-RAMA AND RAMA AVATAR

Swami Jyotirmayananda

Out of the twenty-four avatars of Lord Vishnu that are given importance in Bhagavat Purana, ten are considered most important. These are: Matsya (Fish), Kurma or Kachhapa (Tortoise), Varaha (Hog), Vamana (Dwarf), Narasinha (Man-Lion), Parashu-Rama (Rama with an Axe), Rama (the delighter of hearts), Bala-Rama (Rama endowed with Might), Krishna (the Source of attraction and charm), and Buddha (the Enlightened).

In this article we will describe Parashu-Rama and Rama, along with their mystic implications for the spiritual movement in the life of an aspirant.

PARASHU-RAM

Lord Vishnu incarnated as Parashu-Rama (Rama who held an axe as his weapon). Though born a brahmin, as the son of princess Renuka and brahmin Sage Jamadagni, Parashu-Rama was physically strong, mentally tough and very aggressive by nature, and was raring to fight injustice, wherever he found it.

Once, when Parashu-Rama was away from the hermitages, the mighty king, Sahasrabahu, (also known as Kartavirya Arjuna) happened to come there with his people. Sage Jamadagni received them all with great courtesy. He then served them delicious food with the help of the wish-fulfilling Divine cow Kamadhenu—a gift from Lord Indra that could feed any number of people with extraordinary food within seconds.

Sahasrabahu was amazed by the powers of this Divine creature and immediately wanted to possess her for himself. Therefore, as he was leaving the ashram of Sage Jamadagni, he dragged away the cow and her calf forcefully.

Sahasrabahu had received a boon from Lord Dattatreya to be empowered with the strength of a

thousand arms. Although initially working for positive developments in society, this mighty kshatriya warrior had become exceedingly arrogant and freely misused his power.

Coming to know of the injustice committed by Sahasrabahu, Parashu-Rama marched with his axe to the capital of the king, fought with his army, and finally killed the mighty Sahasrabahu himself. Then he returned the cow and calf to his father.

When the sons of the slain king saw that Parashu-Rama was away from home on a pilgrimage, they ravaged the hermitage of Sage Jamadagni and brutally slaughtered the Sage in revenge for the killing of Sahasrabahu.

Learning of what happened to his father, Parashu-Rama flew into a rage and killed all the perpetrators of the crime. He then continued to destroy twenty-one generations of sinful kshatriya kings who had been inflicting untold hardships on society. In order to restore peace and tranquility on the earth, Parashu-Rama kept roaming with his axe to crush the growing despotism, oppression and cruelty let loose by the ruling class against weak and ordinary people.

Parashu-Rama's repeated slaying of the kshatriyas mystically implies that an aspirant should tirelessly strive to overhaul the unconscious, repeatedly destroying and sublimating the impure impressions that are based on rajas—impressions of egoism, externalization and multiplicity. Each time your mind is agitated or overcome by selfishness, greed, hate, or jealousy, rajas is at work, try to allow the spiritual force of Parashu-Rama's axe within you to mow down those weeds of rajas. They will grow again and again, and you must mow them down again and again. If you keep them under control, you will have a beautiful lawn flourishing within your mind! Divine impressions (Shubha samskaras) will blossom and thrive.

Parashu-Rama's mission was to bring about harmony and order by forceful means. He was born during a time when rajasic kshatriya kings who had developed immense pride and conceit, were predominant on the earth. Sahasrabahu himself, with his power of thousand arms, represents vikshepa—rajasic distraction of mind. With his crude expression of Divine power, Parashu-Rama eliminated

VALUE YOUR OWN WISDOM

Your very own inner wisdom should be valued more than any other and will always guide you in the direction you need to travel.

Throughout our lives, we will encounter individuals who presume to know what is best for us. The insights they offer cannot compare, however, to the powers of awareness and discernment that already exist within us. From birth, we are blessed with wisdom that cannot be learned or unlearned. It exists whether or not we acknowledge it because it is a gift given to us by a loving universe before we chose to experience existence on the earthly plane. Yet for all its permanence, it is vital that we value and honor this incredible element of the self. It is when we do not use our inborn wisdom that we begin to doubt our personal truths and are driven to

outside sources of information because we are afraid. What we know to be true in our hearts is invariably true, and we discover how intensely beautiful and useful self-trust can be when we recognize the power of our wisdom.

Inner wisdom is not subject to the influences of the outside world, which means that it will never demand that we surrender our free will, nor will it counsel us to act in opposition to our values. We benefit from this inspiration when we open ourselves to it, letting go of the false notion that we are less qualified than others to determine our fate. The wisdom inside of us is the source of our discernment and our ability to identify blessings in disguise. When we are unsure of who to trust, how to respond, or what we require, the answers lie in our inner wisdom. It knows where we are going and

understands where we are coming from. Taking this into account though, it is not a product of experience but rather a piece of our connection to the universal mind.

In the whole of your existence, no force you will ever encounter will contribute as much to your ability to do what you need to do and be who you want to be as your natural wisdom. Through it, you reveal your growing consciousness to the greater source and discover the true extent of your strength. If you heed this wisdom with conviction and confidence, the patterns, people, and fears that held you back will be dismantled, paving the way for you to fulfill your truest potential



Courtesy: www.dailyOm.org

TAKING A PAUSE

Giving ourselves a respite from our daily concerns is like giving a gift to ourselves. By stepping away from the problems that seem to saturate our thoughts, we lessen the weight of our troubles, and instead, become more receptive to the wisdom and answers the universe has to offer us.

Courtesy: www.dailyOm.org

USE OF IMAGES IN HINDUS WORSHIPING

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VIEWS

Umesh Gulati, Durham, NC

Narendra, later known to the world as Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), was the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) who had initiated him and fifteen others into sannyasa or monkhood. After the passing away of their beloved Master (Guru), the brother disciples lived together for some time in a dilapidated house, which they had turned into a monastery. They also took their monastic names. Narendra got for himself the name Swami Vivekananda. Soon after that all except one left the sheltered life of a monastery and took to the road as wandering monks, either in a group of two or three, or taking a solo journey. Narendra, now Swami Vivekanand, preferred the latter course more often than any of his brother disciples.

All these journeys took him to every corner of India, from his original home in Kolkata (Calcutta) in the East to the North, to the West, and finally to the South. Many of these journeys were on foot; he took the train if and when some generous seeker offered him the fare. Like most monks in India, he ate whatever daily alms would bring him, and during the night he would sleep under a tree in the forest or in a cave or near the bank of a river. At times, he became the guest of rich people, and princes, too. But he never

stayed there very long, for that would be against the grain of a real monk.

It was early February 1891 when the Swami alighted from a train at the Alwar Railway Station, Rajasthan. There with the help of a Bengali doctor, he settled in a room above one of the shops, which was meant for the wandering monks like him. After a few days, the prime minister of the state of Alwar chanced to hear about Swami Vivekananda and invited him to his residence for a talk. The minister also invited the Maharaja Mangal Singh of the State, who had become very much anglicized in thought and manner. The minister's intention was that a contact with the Swami might soften the Maharaja's scorn for his own religion.

Maharaj started conversation by saying, "Well, Swami-ji, I hear that you are a great scholar. You can easily earn a handsome sum of money every month. Why then do you go about begging?"

Swami-ji replied with a home thrust: "Maharaja, tell me why you spend your time constantly in the company of Westerners, go on shooting excursions, and neglect your duties to the State?"

Those who were present were taken aback. "What a bold sadhu (wandering monk)! He will repent of this", they thought. But the

Maharaja took it calmly and, after a little thought, replied, "I cannot say why, but, I guess, I like to."

"Well, for the same reason I wander about as a beggar", rejoined Swami-ji.

The Maharaja's next question was, "Well, Swami-ji, I have no faith in idol-worship. What is going to be my fate?"

The Maharaja smiled as he spoke, apparently on his own sarcastic remark.

"Surely you are joking", said the Swami.

"No, Swami-ji, not at all. You see, I really cannot worship wood, earth, stone or metal, like other people. Does this mean that I shall fare worse in the life hereafter?"

"Well, I suppose every man should follow the religious ideal according to his own faith," the Swami responded. But Swami-ji had not yet finished; his eyes lit on a picture of the Maharaja, which was hanging on the wall. At his desire, the picture was passed to him. Holding it in his hand he asked, "Whose picture is this?" The maharaja's minister answered that the picture was of the Maharaja. The Swami commanded, "Spit on it." He repeated his command, "Any one of you may spit on it. What is it but a piece of paper? What



something, which is beyond thought or form? The image helps us focus on the invisible. Besides, in order to invoke the spirit in images, priests follow an elaborate procedure of preliminary rituals. They sing Vedic chants and say prayers to invoke and sanctify, and, thereby, enliven the presence of the Divine in the image (Pran pratishtha) for worship.

Once again, worship is offered to the consecrated Deity in the image and not to the image as such. Just as a picture of our father reminds us of our father and not of the paper on which the picture appears, in the same way the divine image brings into our minds our Deity. In ordinary life when we salute the national flag, we are not doing it for the piece of cloth with some markings, but for the honor of the country or nation that it represents. Similarly, images of the Deity, though humanly conceived, represent the invisible divinity that receives our worship.

The worship of God through an image, however, is neither compulsory nor obligatory for every Hindu, though it has certain advantages. In the first place, an image helps the worshiper concentrate on the Deity within oneself, which the image outside is just its representation. In the

second place, worship through images indirectly allows a devotee offer service, such as plucking flowers, making sandal paste, polishing the utensils of worship, arranging offering, etc., to the Deities incidental to their worship, thereby keeping the body, senses, and mind engaged in the thought of the Deity. Finally, and quite importantly, images of the Deities, artistically sculptured as they are, serve both theological and narrative functions. In a country like India, where a large percentage of population is still without formal education, images, according to Diana Eckvi are “visual theologies,” and they continue to be “read” that way by the Hindus.

Worshipping God through images, however, is only the kindergarten of devotional service to God. In fact, all rituals in all religions and in many sects of these religions are merely the preparatory form of bhakti, Gauni bhakti or devotion. Religious quarrels that we often encounter are over such rituals, dos and don'ts of religions. Only when through such preparatory form, worship ripens into what is called ‘para bhakti’ or supreme devotion that the objective of the worship, which is experiencing the direct vision of God within oneself, is achieved. That

becomes possible when our heart gets purified through preparatory worship and we develop intense yearning for the darshan (vision) of God as a child has a yearning for his or her mother. Keeping the company of holy people, attending spiritual retreats from time to time, cultivating dispassion and discrimination, and having constant awareness of what one thinks, speaks, and does, helps this kind of attitude.

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The foremost thing is to make individual human beings into living temples. If that happens, change will happen in the world.

Sudhguru

REVIEW THE PAST – RENEW YOUR EFFORTS

Swami Lalitananda

At some time during the year, everyone looks back over their recent past and takes account of their actions according to their own perceptions. They worry about their mistakes, their failures to gain more material possessions. Then they vow to make everything different in the future. They want wisdom without tears. They long for obstacles to be swept away like dust with an ordinary broom. They still wonder why they didn't succeed in all their endeavors when they made so many plans and promises. What they don't realize is that promises can be pompous and desires can be devastating, frothing with daydreams. Without real substance, without genuine effort, without sustained endeavor, nothing can be achieved.

Achievement of either material nature or spiritual nature must be backed by a sincere, sustained daily self-effort. "As you sow, so shall you reap." This is the universal law. Although many may disclaim karma and the fruit of actions, seeds planted, whether negative or positive, will give forth their blossoms and their fruit. As Swamiji has said again and again, "You are the Architect of your Destiny. "Therefore, there is no use in blaming the world, blaming society, blaming environment, blaming relatives, or blaming destiny. You alone are constructing the course of the future. You alone are stamping out the coin that you must carry. And you alone are drawing to yourself the conditions that you have vainly perpetuated.

If one is to change, it should be done by the strength of will. But how is one to develop willpower?

Already a weak will has brought about a treachery that is hard to undo, but with aspiration flaming anew in the heart, one can summon new hope and refrain from yielding to the temptation of procrastination.

Power of will can be developed by confronting problems with the light of reason and keeping in view the objective of Self-realization. It is possible to change, and much more so, to be spiritually transformed. Stop having pity for yourself. Bring a program with the schedule for betterment in every aspect of life. Adopt moderation in external activities, in food, in weaving dreams, in entertainment, and in every movement of life.



Courtesy: International Yoga Guide
www.yrf.org

THE VOICE OF SILENCE

Many people are afraid of silence. They must be doing something all the time.

Many people also are afraid of being alone. But actually no one ever is alone.

He's always with his great divine Self. Every person has a great, divine Self within him, a perfect, shining, sublime being of light.

The voice of this being is a loud silence. The voice of your soul is a loud silence.

Many people have said that the voice of God is a deep, profound silence.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001)
Founder of Hinduism Today

DINOSAURS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

Dr. Omesh Chopra

Fossils give a glimpse of the life that existed on Earth long before we began writing history. They provide evidence of Earth's billion-year history. Fortunately, fossil record of the Indian subcontinent is excellent. It is home to fossils found nowhere else, including the 80-ton Bruhathkayosaurus and the chicken-sized Alwalkeria. Deposits of fossil flora and fauna give us information about the life that thrived in the subcontinent from the Late Triassic period to the end of the Cretaceous period (≈ 252 –65 mya, million years ago). During that period the Indian plate was located in the southern hemisphere near Antarctica. Also, Major-general Sir William Henry Sleeman (KCB),[‡] a British soldier and later administrator in British India and best known for suppressing the organized criminal gangs known as Thuggee in 1830s, also happens to be the first to discover dinosaur fossils in 1828 CE on Bara Simla Hill near a British Army gun carriage workshop in India. Sleeman was also known as the Accidental Palaeontologist. This happened 13 years before the word “dinosaur” was coined. Since then, many more dinosaur bones, eggs and nests have been found across the subcontinent. He noted, “Reasoning from the analogy at Jabulpore where some of the basaltic cappings[§] of the hills had evidently been thrown out of the craters long after this surface had been raised above the waters and +became habitation (for) both vegetable and animal life.” The fossil was named Titanosaurus (1877 CE).

Let's first establish the distribution of landmass on planet Earth and location of the Indian subcontinent on Earth during the Triassic–Cretaceous periods. In 20th century, German geologist, meteorologist and polar researcher Alfred Wegener wrote a paper describing his theory that the continent landmasses were “drifting” across the earth, sometimes plowing

through the oceans and into each other. He called this continental drift. His theory is now known as the science of plate tectonics. According to this theory, Earth's outer shell is divided into large slabs of solid rock, called “plates,” that glide over



Fig.1. Presentation of the various continents in Pangaea Supercontinent 310 mya.

Earth's mantle, the rocky inner layer above Earth's core. It explains mountain-building processes, volcanoes, and earthquakes as well as the evolution of Earth's surface. Initially, billions of years ago, planet earth consisted of a single planetary ocean and a single supercontinent. The evolution of planet Earth went through a series of supercontinent.

Eventually, ≈ 310 mya, Earth's landmass was evenly distributed across the equator in a C-shape facing east (Fig. 1). Alfred Wegener named it Pangaea in Greek it means “all the Earth.”

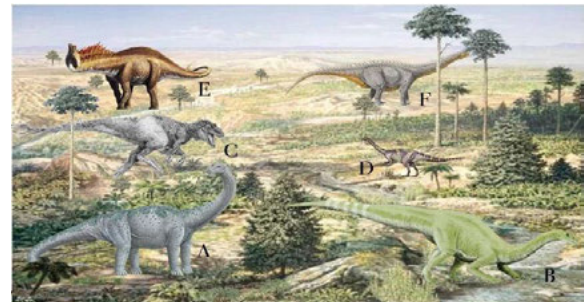
The top part of Pangaea was known as Laurasia and bottom half as Gondwana. India was located in Gondwana wedged between Africa and Australia with Antarctica to the south. Then ≈ 299 mya, a rift started opening from the east, which split a long, narrow strip off from the southern part of the C, which comprised parts of

[‡] Knight Commander is the second level of appointment attainable in the Most Honorable Order of the Bath. It is the second level of the Order of the Bath.

[§] The leached upper part of a rock that still contains disseminated sulphide mineral deposit.

Alwalkeria (235–228 mya) was a tiny dinosaur that lived during the late Triassic period. Its fossils were discovered in the Godāvārī River valley. Initially it was named *Walkeria maleriensis* by Sankar Chatterjee in 1987, in honor of British paleontologist Alick Walker. However, since the name was already taken, the name *Alwalkeria* was created in 1994. The specific name *maleriensis* refers to the Maleri Formation, in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana where its fossil was discovered. Due to its fragmentary remains, not much more is known about this small theropod. Its partial skull

Nambalia (208–203 mya) was a sauropod dinosaur that also lived during the Triassic period. It was found with the fossils of *Jaklapallisaurus* in the Pranhita–Godāvārī basin in Telangana. Its name “*Nambalia roychowdhuri*” is derived from the village of Nambalia located south of the excavation site and honors Dr. Roy Chowdhuri for his research on the Triassic vertebrate faunas of India. It is known from skeletal remains but no heads, though there is material from several individuals. It is believed to be 3.7 m (12.1 ft) long and weighed ≈ 125 kg (276 lb).



Kotasaurus (186–183 mya) was one of the most primitive sauropod dinosaurs that existed in the Early Jurassic period (Fig. 3b). It was discovered in the Kota Formation of Telangana, near the village of Yamanpalle. *Kotasaurus* shared its habitat with *Barapasaurus*. So far, the remains of at least 12 individuals are known. In late 1970s,

Pradhania (197–190 mya) has been named after Dhuiya Pradhan, a fossil collector at the Indian Statistical Institute. It was discovered Upper Dharmaram Formation of the Pranhita–Godāvari basin in Andhra Pradesh, India. So, most likely, it shared the same habitat as the genus *Lamplughsaura*. It was a modest-sized dinosaur ≈ 4 m (13.1 ft) long and 1.7 m (5.6 ft) tall. Since it is known from only fragmentary remains, it is difficult to know anything more.

Barapasaurus (189–177 mya) was discovered in the lower part of the Kota Formation, from an early Jurassic period. It is one of the largest dinosaurs in India. It was 12–14 m (39–46 ft) tall and weighed 7000 kg. However, just like most gigantic dinosaurs Barapasaurus was a harmless herbivore. Its name means “big-legged lizard,” where bara means big and pa means leg in various Indian languages. Barapasaurus is known from ≈300 bones from at least 6 individuals. Except for the anterior cervical vertebrae and the skull, its skeleton is almost completely known. Like all sauropods, Barapasaurus was an herbivore. However, since no cranium has yet been found, its exact diet is not known. Also note that although Barapasaurus was found in India, it is similar to dinosaurs found in Madagascar and East Africa. From this we can infer that during early Jurassic period, India and Madagascar were wedged between Africa and Australia, with Antarctica to the south and ocean to the north.

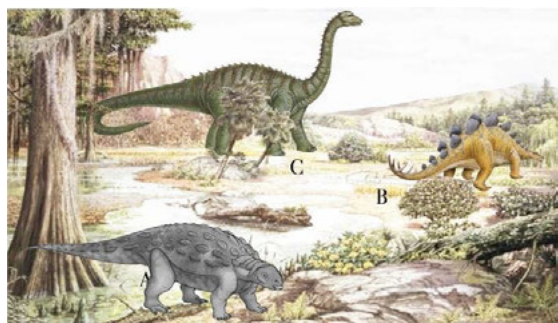


Fig. 3c: Cretaceous period dinosaurs of the Indian subcontinent. (A) *Brachypodosaurus* (70–65 mya, (B) *Dravidosaurus* (89–86 mya) and (C) *Bruhathkayosaurus* (71–69 mya).

Brachypodosaurus (70–65 mya) meaning “short-legged lizard” is a dubious genus of dinosaur from the Late Cretaceous Lameta Formation in India (Fig. 3c). The only remains discovered so far for this animal consist of a single fossil bone, excavated at the Chota Simla Hill near Jabalpur. Possibly it belongs to Ornithischia (bird-hipped), an extinct species of mainly herbivorous dinosaurs characterized by a pelvic structure superficially similar to that of birds. Not much is known about this dinosaur because very few remains have been found. The size of *Brachypodosaurus* also remains uncertain.

Dravidosaurus (89–86 mya) is believed to be an extinct genus of stegosaur, a four-legged, herbivorous, armored dinosaur characterized by the distinctive kite-shaped upright plates along its back and spikes on its tail. Its name means “Dravidanadu lizard,” Dravidanadu is a region in south India where its remains were discovered. It was estimated to be ≈ 3 m (10 ft) long and weighed ≈ 200 kg, (441 lb.). Yadagiri and Ayyasami named it *Dravidosaurus blanfordi*, honoring an English geologist and naturalist William Thomas Blandford. However, it is known from mostly poorly preserved and weathered fossils, consisting of a partial skull, a tooth, a sacrum, an ilium, an ischium, a dermal plate, and a spike, that were found in marine deposits near Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu. So, *Dravidosaurus* is interpreted as an ornithischian dinosaur distinguished by having a pelvic structure resembling that of a bird; a four-legged, armored

stegosaur dinosaur; or a plesiosaur, an extinct marine reptile. Thus, for now, pending further discoveries, *Dravidosaurus* remains a subject of debate.

Bruhathkayosaurus

(71–69 mya) might possibly be the largest dinosaur that ever lived on planet Earth. Estimates claim that the dinosaur could have been 28–47 m (92–154 ft) long, close to 33.5 m (110 ft) tall, which is as tall as an eleven-storied building, and weighed 175–220 tons. Its name literally means “huge-bodied lizard.” *Bruhathkayosaurus* is an extinct genus of sauropod dinosaur found near the southern tip of India in Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu, northeast of Kallamedu village. It was recovered from rocks of the Kallamedu Formation dated ≈ 70 mya. The shin bone (tibia) of *Bruhathkayosaurus* was 2 m (6.6 ft) long and fragmentary femur measured 0.5 m (2.5 ft). However, these estimates were based on fossil dimensions given by Yadagiri and Ayyasami in 1987. In 2017, it was reported that the holotype fossils had disintegrated, and no longer exist. It was also suggested that the alleged “bones” of *Bruhathkayosaurus* were actually pieces of petrified wood. Thus, for now, pending further fossil discoveries, *Bruhathkayosaurus* remains a subject of debate.

.....Continues in the next issue



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(Other References will be included in the next issue)

About the Author: Dr. Omesh Chopra, a Mechanical and Nuclear engineer, worked at Argonne National Lab, Chicago, IL. After his retirement, he authored two books entitled “History of Ancient India Revisited, A Vedic-Puranic View” Blue Rose Publishers, India. 2019 (ISBN: 978-93-5347-780.6), and *History of Ancient India, From the last Ice Age to the Mahabharata War (≈ 9000 –1400 BCE)*. Blue Rose Publishers, India. 2022 (ISBN: 978-93-5668-532-1). Email omeshk@comcast.net



IMPACT OF KATHAK ON ME

A TEENAGER'S KATHAK JOURNEY

Noori Choudhary

HISTORY OF KATHAK

Kathak, as one of the classical dance forms of India, surpasses being just a performance art. It merges Hindu cultural values with millennia of tradition and storytelling to create a vibrant expression of Hindu principles. Past its ancient origins, however, Kathak serves as a bridge into the present, allowing many young people, especially those born outside of India, a captivating way to explore and understand their own complex culture.

The term "Kathak" itself comes from the Sanskrit word "Katha, which directly translates to "story". True to its name, Kathak is a narrative dance form that evolved from the storytelling traditions of ancient India. Historically, Kathak was performed by wandering bards or storytellers known as "Kathakars," who used dance, music, and dramatic expression to recount tales from Hindu epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Initially, Kathak was performed in temples and royal courts, and it often depicted scenes from Hindu mythology. One of the earliest forms of Kathak involved dance performances by gopis (female devotees) to please Lord Krishna. This divine play, or "Leela," celebrated the life and miracles of Krishna, showcasing the devotional aspect of Kathak.

Stylistically, Kathak has deep connection with Hinduism as its themes are largely derived from narratives of the lives of Hindu deities such as Lord Krishna and Radha.

One of the earliest forms of Kathak involved dance performances by Gopis (female devotees of Lord Krishna). This divine play or "Leela," celebrated the life and miracles of Krishna, showcasing the devotional aspect of Kathak.

The main goal of any kathak dancer is to illustrate a story and make every detail as clear to the audience as possible. Therefore, it becomes extremely complex to depict every intricacy within the elaborate lives of our deities, and doing so accurately to portray stories, so significant to our culture, becomes of paramount importance for every Kathak dancer.

Aside from mythological tales, Kathak reflects many philosophical concepts monumental to Hinduism such as Dharma (duty/righteousness) and Bhakti (devotion). The dance form's emphasis on rhythm and expression mirrors the Hindu belief in the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms. The emphasis on the storytelling aspect underscores the importance of oral traditions in preserving cultural and religious heritage.

PERSEVERANCE

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Dev Rishi Narad was a great god-sage. Just as there are sages among mankind, great yogis, so there are great yogis among the gods. Narad was a good yogi and very great sage.

He traveled everywhere - particularly, to see how the people were doing. One day he was passing through a forest and saw a man who had been meditating until the white ants had built a huge mound round his body -- so long had he been sitting in that position. He said to Narad, "Where are you going?"

Narad replied, "I am going to heaven." As a god-sage, Narad had free and unlimited access to heaven.

"Then ask God when he will be merciful to me and when I shall attain freedom."

Farther on, Narad saw another man. He was jumping about, singing, and dancing. Seeing Narad, he said, "O, Narad, where are you going?" His voice and his gestures were wild.

Narad said, "I am going to heaven." Then ask God when I shall be free, said the person.

Narad went on his journey. In the course of time, he came again by the same road, and there was the man who had been meditating with the ant hill around him. He said, "O Narad, did you ask the Lord about me?"

"Oh, yes." Replied Narad.

"What did he say?"

"The Lord told me that you would attain freedom in four more births."

Then the man began to weep and wail, and said, "I have meditated until an ant hill has grown around me, and I have four more births yet to go!"

Narad went to the other man. "Did you ask my question?" Asked the other man.

"Oh, yes. Do you see this tamarind tree? I must tell you that as many leaves as there are on that tree, so many times you shall be born, and then you shall attain freedom."

The man began to dance with joy, and said, "I shall have my freedom after such a short time!"

Just then, a voice from the heaven came, "My child, **you will have freedom this minute.**"

Moral of the story

That was the reward for the second man's perseverance. He was ready to work through all those births; nothing discouraged him. But the first man felt that even four more births were too long. Only perseverance like that of the man who was willing to wait eons brings about the highest result.



PARABLE OF THE VEENA

Once a skilled musician demonstrated his musical skill on the strings of a Veena during a satsanga in his Ashram. His fingers floated upon the subtle strings. Music seemed to drizzle like a soft summer rain on the attentive ears of the audience. There was a sweet sentiment of divine devotion in the atmosphere.

When the satsanga was over, the Veena was left alone in the corner of the hall. I lingered awhile watching the strings and remembering the music that had expressed through them. And lo! the strings seemed to converse among themselves. First there were whispers, but gradually there were loud shouts and squeals.

One String said, "Look how wonderfully I conducted myself. That sweet melody that all the people were admiring could not have been possible without me."

The Second String said, "Yes, you did well. But all glories in me. I am greater than you. The musician gave more attention to me. Without me the music would have become discordant and abrupt."

The Third String spoke louder, "Look at the vanity of you two little strings. I am in the middle of the Veena. Indeed, I am the most favored one. You, strings, are like servants to assist upon me.

The fourth interrupted, "I am the best. Without me you all will become helpless and lifeless." And soon the whole

atmosphere rattled with confusion. All began to shout at their highest pitch.

I gently passed my fingers across the strings and said, "Silence! Please listen with attention. You are all equally great. No melody can be produced without coordination among all of you. Therefore, please live in harmony. Develop self-effacing love towards each other. And you will discover the Divine Melody flowing through you in an unceasing stream of sweetness."

There was silence in the atmosphere. The Strings came to their senses. Each one complained that life was running out.

My fingers gently passed upon the strings producing devotional music. And I said, "You do not have to wait for a future time. Harmonize yourselves. You will express the Divine Melody, HERE and NOW." And soon the serene atmosphere was flooded in sublime melody. The false sense of ego that asserted in each string now melted away in the ecstasy of Divine Music.

Similar is the Veena of human personality, in which the strings of reason, emotion, will and action must be properly harmonized by the practice of Yoga to produce the melody of Divine Realization. It is not time that is important. In harmonization lies the secret of Self-realization.





(A story from Mahabharat)

THE KING AND THE NAGAS RETRIBUTION AND REVENGE

Sri Sudhguru

Krishna and the Pandavas have passed on and the new generation of Kshatriyas inhabits Hastinapur with Arjuna's grandson as their king. But the shadow of the past still looms over the words and deeds of today as Arjuna's feud with the Nagas continues through his progeny. Will the violence go on forever? Who will break the vicious cycle of revenge? Will there ever be peace?

The Pandavas and their generation were gone. Parikshit was coronated as the king. Parikshit literally means, "a tested one," or someone who has faced the pariksha (test) before being born. He was a stillborn child. Krishna literally gave his own life to him, and he grew up to rule as the king.

One day, he was out hunting and became very thirsty. He came to a small clearing. There was a hut where a Yogi was sitting and meditating. Parikshit said to the Yogi, "I am thirsty - give me water." The Yogi did not respond. He was in another state. The king got irritated. When a royal request is made, you are supposed to respond. He looked around and saw a dead serpent. He picked it up with an arrowhead and put it around the Yogi's neck.

A disciple of the Yogi came by, and when he saw this sacrilege, he got so furious that he cursed the king, "For what you

have done to my Guru today, you will die of a snakebite within seven days." Parikshit was terrified. He ran back to Hastinapur and built a small place upon a column where he could live, so that the snakes could not climb up.

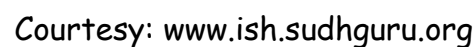
In the town of Hastinapur, people started gossiping, "What has happened to our king? His father was Abhimanyu, a great warrior. His grandfather was Arjuna, the greatest Kshatriya that ever lived. Why is our king sitting on a post in terror? What kind of a man is he?" But he was terrified of getting killed by a snake, so he sat on a post for seven days. On the seventh day, his trusted guards brought him fruit. He bit into the fruit, and out of it came a little snake that grew in size and bit him in the neck. Before the guards could come and save him, he died of the snakebite.

A VICIOUS CYCLE OF REVENGE

When Parikshit's son, Janamejaya, saw his father being killed by this Naga, he got so furious that he called all his priests and said, "Let us conduct a Sarpa Satra yagna. In this yagna, mantras are chanted, and all the snakes in the vicinity come and fall in the sacrificial fire and die. He wanted to conduct a snake sacrifice in revenge for his father's

Janamejaya asked, "What is this story that you were telling me about my great-grandfather? How do you know about

That is a final lesson for you: do not think too much of yourself. We have our bit to play, and it is just a bit. There are too many other aspects of life that are influencing who and what we are right now.



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