



Bhagirathi



Newsletter of The Center for Indic Studies at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Spring 2009



Odissi dance recital

The Center for Indic Studies, along with the Meru Education Foundation, presented an Odissi dance recital by Madhavi and her student and niece Arushi Mudgal at the UMass Dartmouth Auditorium, in which the pair gave innovative and dynamic compositions of this classical Indian dance. Odissi is one of the eight Indian classical dance forms. Originating in the eastern Indian state of Orissa, it is distinguished from other classical Indian dance forms by the importance it places upon the tribhangi (literally: three parts break), the independent movement of head, chest and pelvis, and upon the basic square stance known as chauka.

The Odissi tradition existed in three schools; Mahari, Nartaki, and Gotipua. Maharis were Orissan devadasis or temple girls, their name deriving from Maha (great) and 'Nari' or 'Mahri'

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Upcoming Events 2009

Eighteenth International Congress of Vedanta

July 16-19

Main

Auditorium,

UMass

Dartmouth

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Stephen Brown (center) along with Bal Ram Singh (left) and Jerry Solfvín of Indic Studies.

Student of Tantric Buddhism talks of his enlightenment

In 1995, Stephen Brown left Boston to travel to Nepal and India to study Tantric Buddhism. He lived for seven years in the entourage of the luminary Tibetan Lama, H.H. Chatral Rinpoche, one of the refugees who fled Tibet during the Chinese invasion of 1959, and who is now considered a living saint in Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Northern India.

In a seminar, Brown shared discoveries he made practicing Tantric Buddhism while living and traveling with Tibetan exiles in India and Nepal. He provided an historic and philosophical explanation of Tibetan Buddhism in general and the high secret teachings of Dzogchen in particular. He displayed several sacred texts and artifacts he brought back, and read from his recently published memoir, *So Close to Enlightenment*, written under the pen name Seivis Kerfinsky.

Odissi dance recital (continued from pg 1)

(chosen), particularly those at the temple of Jagannath at Puri. While early Maharis performed mainly nritya (pure dance) and abhinaya (interpretation of poetry), based on mantras and slokas, later Maharis performed dance sequences based on the lyrics of Jayadev's Gita Govinda.

A firm believer in tradition as a flowing stream that continually renews itself, Madhavi has received critical acclaim across the world for her choreographic works, and made a mark in international dance as a soloist and master choreographer. Her Abhinaya or expressive dance is par excellence. Trained under the legendary Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, she herself has created a generation of outstanding dancers.

A leading classical dancer from India, Madhavi has also received numerous honors, including the Padma Shri, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, and the Chevalier des l'ordre des arts et des lettres from the government of France.

Arushi Mudgal, known for her riveting performances, youthful ebullience, and tasteful delicacy, demonstrated the same care for rhythmic and narrative detail as her guru and aunt. These two dancers from two generations were joined by live musicians from India.

Mahatma Gandhi and non-violence through the eyes of yoga

When we talk about the eternal truth of oneness, it remains an impotent concept unless we incorporate into our lives practical methods to attain it. The teachings of yoga and the discipline of selfless service offer various methods that have universal appeal. Yoga is a spiritual science that goes to the core of the common need of humanity, providing a holistic discipline of body, mind, and spirit. Selfless service is a practice that demonstrates how to work in the world and experience love in all action.

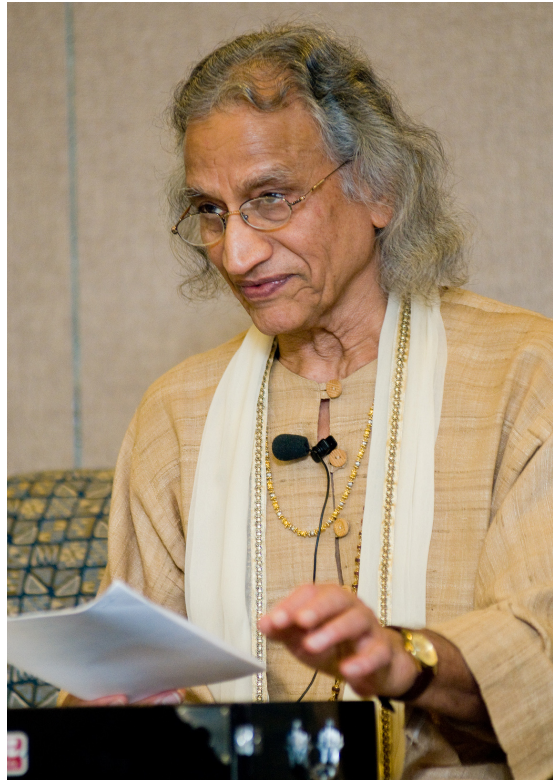
As yoga has become popular, it has suffered some deterioration of its original purpose and spirit. Practitioners find the physical postures so beneficial that they assume the external form of Hatha Yoga is the total experience of yoga. But yoga is much more than just a physical discipline.

Love is discovered through yoga and it is given through selfless service. However, love also has many meanings, and all too often is confused with attachment. The key that truly unlocks our heart is hidden in the heart of

another. To retrieve the key that opens our own heart we need to love others so that they can open theirs. It is in the giving of love that we receive it.

The meaning of the word yoga is “union.” The real purpose of the practice of yogic disciplines is the awakening of the internal integration of the individual soul (Atman) with the cosmic soul (God—Paramatman). Since his arrival in 1960, Gurudev has pioneered an innovative approach to the spiritual dimension of Hatha Yoga. The Shaktipat initiation he received from his guru, Swami Kripalu, led to a profound awakening in 1971. This event transformed his life and infused his teachings with the rare ability to transmit the energetic energy of shakti to those who are open and receptive. The methodology he developed has become so widely adopted that today it is taught by more than 5,000 certified yoga teachers in 40 countries. He is the creator of Kripalu Yoga and the founder of the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health. Challenges he encountered over a decade ago have led to a greater level of self-discovery, which is reflected in his presence and the quality of his teachings. The depth of his inner work has evolved into the Amrit Method® of Yoga and Yoga Nidra. Widely acknowledged for carrying the authentic voice of yoga to the world, he has been honored in the U.S. and abroad. His distinguished titles include Doctor of Yoga, Jagadacharya (Universal Teacher), and the rare Vishwa Yoga Ratna, awarded by the President of India.

“Mahatma Gandhi and Non-violence Through the Eyes of Yoga,” a continuation of the Gandhi Lecture Series, centers on Gandhi’s search for truth, and non-violence through experiment and application. This subject reflected such a deep personal commitment that none of the odds he encountered would ever discourage him. His commitment was so deeply connected to the source of his heart and soul, and went so far beyond the ego and mind, that even the face of death was not a challenge for him. This rare



Yogi Amrit Desai (Gurudev)

shining being can be used as a guiding star to find the way when a spiritual seeker is lost, as the sailors of old used the North Star to guide them in the right direction.

Mahatma Gandhi is perhaps the first crusader in world history in which a nation’s freedom fight was completely founded on principles of spirituality in politics. Such a combination of extremes was a forceful and effective motivator, the effects of which we still witness today. Its direct power was not based on a majority party’s mutual agreement, but on a single individual’s commitment. Few in history have demonstrated the courage, strength, and endurance in the face of such challenge.

Karma yoga is fundamentally founded on renouncing the results of all actions of karma performed toward an end result. Even though a karma yogi is continually working toward an end result, he is more committed to the principles by which he is living, acting, and expressing that ideal. He “is” in the beginning that which he seeks at the end, abandoning consequences that are beyond his control. As a result, external affairs are managed by internal integration: If you are seeking to bring peace, be peaceful. That is the only way to be a messenger of peace.

What is required of a karma yogi is the ability to turn every challenge, every reaction in life into an opportunity for self-study, observation, and transformation, rather than a challenge to be dealt with exclusively by modifying or changing the external conditions.

All situations we deal with stem from fear, manifesting as anger, resentment, hatred, or jealousy. For a karma yogi, the challenges are not obstacles, but vehicles to change oneself. Thus, changes that occur externally are a reflection of this internal peace. To be at peace, you must first maintain peace from within. As Christ said, “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” To be loving, you must first heal all the past wounds of your heart .

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Garba nite

Garba night represents a tradition that UMass Dartmouth Indian Student Association enthusiastically celebrates. This year, the entire Indian student community gathered at the Tripp Athletic Center in a festive mood. The evening began with an invocation to the goddess Amba, and then students in colorful and traditional attire took center stage. Their rhythmic circle dance filled the space with joy and liveliness, while the accompanying music vibrated throughout the gym for the entire evening.



(Mahatma Gandhi continued from pg 3)

The source of peace and love flows from within. Unless you are actively connected to this primary source of love, all other seeking of love outside becomes a façade. Love that comes from within contains purity of heart. Only such love can be uncontaminated by love that must prove anything outside of itself. This is the core concept of all that Gandhi presented to the world.

Today, we stand at the dawn of a new age. Political, religious, social, and racial conflicts have become a catalyst for a new awakening of planetary aware-ness. An increasing



number of people are becoming conscious of the crucial need for a change of values. Paradigm shifts are occurring in most areas of society, within religious groups, business, sports, education, health, medicine, and family. These shifts in consciousness may appear as ripples, and too many are indistinguishable from the ailments of society. However, collectively they are bound to gain momentum, creating a tidal wave of active awareness that will affect the world culture for future generations.

“The neurophysiology of spiritual experience”



Dr. Jay Glaser shares his insights on spirituality, meditation, and brain physiology for a receptive audience at UMass Dartmouth.

Since the first reproducible physiological research on meditation was published in the 1960s, much has been learned about the physiology of spiritual experiences such as the yogic experience of samadhi and the Buddhist experience of nirvana. Computerized electro-encephalography, functional MRI, neurotransmitter analyses and single photon emission CT scanning of meditating brains have identified the brain areas involved during moments of higher states of consciousness. Dr. Jay Glaser, M.D., a board-certified internist and a hospitalist at UMass Health Alliance Hospital, correlated these discoveries with modern neurophysiology, giving insight into the nature of spiritual experience as well as the long-term benefits of regular practice.

Dr. Glaser has been involved in the revival of Vedic medicine since 1972, and has published numerous research papers investigating Ayurvedic techniques and Transcendental Meditation. He has been clinical director of the Lancaster Ayurveda Medical Center, one of the first Ayurvedic medical facilities outside India.

Making cognitive affective learning visible: The scholarship of teaching and learning via contemplative practice

Maureen Hall, assistant professor in the Teaching and Learning Department at UMass Dartmouth, presented a talk focused on defining the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and Contemplative Practice, and described two of her SoTL projects: “Investigating Contemplative Practice in Creative Writing and Education Classes: A Play (of Practice and Theory) in Three Acts,” that has become a book; and “SoTL Investigation into a Science of Kriyayoga Course: Using a Formative Evaluation for Course Improvement.” The latter, a collaborative effort with Prof. Bal Ram Singh, focused on a course in the Indic Studies minor.

Creation comes from an impulse and an urge. Contemplative practice in education refers to a range of activities which emphasizes a grounding and habitation in the present moment. Any kind of contemplative practice attempts to integrate all aspects of cognitive and affective learning because that is the way that learners respond and come to understand concepts, ideas, and experiences. Contemplative practice regards the learning process holistically. Naturally, the learning process encompasses both thoughts and feelings. A contemplative pedagogy attempts to quiet the chaos and distractions inherent in modern life in the name of the best teaching and learning.

Contemplation is not a method, but rather a practice—an everyday practice that can transform the world. It is difficult work. It calls for being prepared to meet life moment by moment, as it arrives. This discipline



Dr. Maureen Hall in collaboration with Professor Bal Ram Singh is investigating ways to improve learning through contemplation.

of greeting each moment as it arrives seems contrary to the ways we are often expected to be in schools. It places us in a larger vision, in a more expansive and generous locale and time. It is making space to remember that we are in the always midst of all these many relations. It attempts to write a different story about what it means to be in schools in the context of what is happening globally, ecologically, politically and economically.

Affective learning is demonstrated by behaviors indicating attitudes of awareness, interest, attention, concern, and responsibility; the ability to listen and respond in interactions with others; and the ability to demonstrate those attitudinal characteristics or values which are

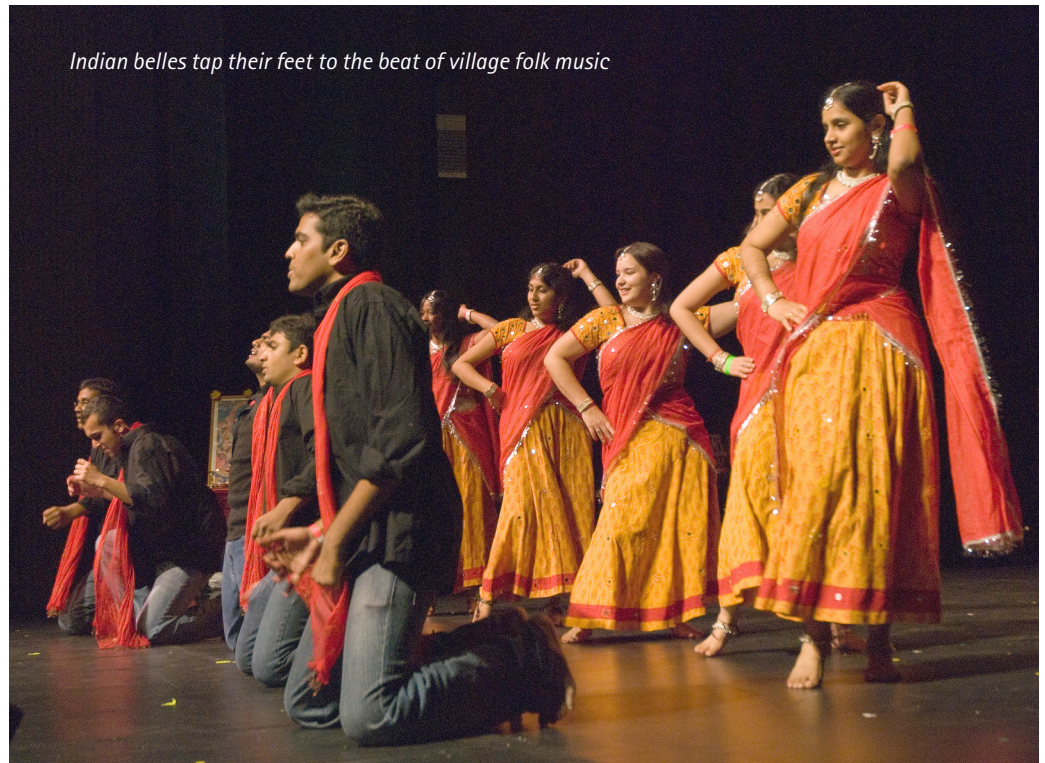
appropriate. Dr. Hall, an initiator and a member of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, focuses on Cognitive Affective Learning. Dr. Hall is able to bring teaching, research, and service into an integrated whole that links theory to practice and focuses on teaching to the whole person.

The linchpin is a focus on Cognitive Affective Learning, and enacting this kind of learning through contemplative practice. Contemplative practice through reflective writing has received much recent attention from educators because of its potential for introspection, deep learning, and even psychological health.

Dr. Hall has a forthcoming book from Equinox Publishers, London, entitled *Writing from the Inside*.

Diwali Festival

Diwali Night 2008, an event organized by the Indian Student Association of UMass Dartmouth, was an evening filled with song and dance. As Indian students displayed their enthusiasm and love for their culture, the audience was entertained by a full evening of Indian dance and music performances. The show-stealer was a fusion of the various traditions from all corners of the Indian sub-continent presented with pomp and splendor. The audience also experienced the classical flavor of Indian music and Indian rock, and the evening ended with authentic Indian cuisine for all.



Indian belles tap their feet to the beat of village folk music



Garba, the folk dance of Gujarat, performed in traditional attire



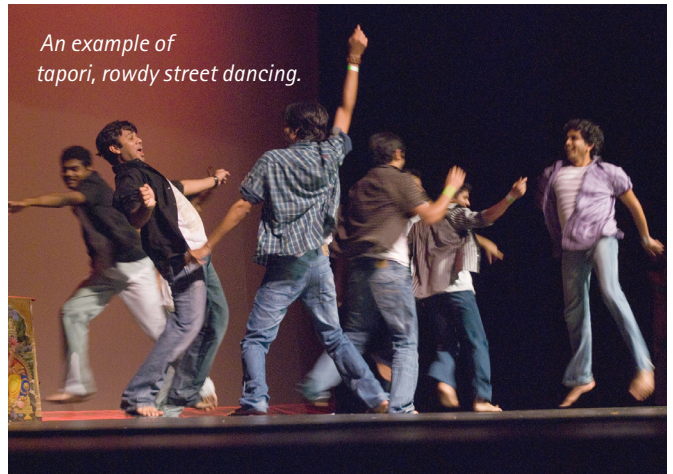
A classical musical performance (above). At right young women display traditional costumes of India.,



A site of worship of Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, prosperity, and generosity.



An example of tapori, rowdy street dancing.



An Indian rock music performance.

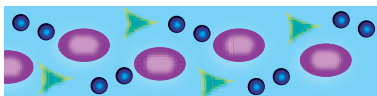


The jingle of the lehjim, a folk dance of Maharashtra, India.



Rangoli, colorful floor art done with sand, enhances the beauty of the surroundings and signifies a spreading of joy. (left)





Post-retirement musings

“There’s enough in this world to fulfill every person’s need but not enough to fulfill one person’s greed.” The current financial meltdown of the global economy is primarily the direct result of obscene greed of some individuals. Some of the best and brightest of those educated in the best educational institutions of our society were at work, which caused this unfortunate debacle. Can amassing unlimited wealth solely for one’s personal gratification, without the slightest consideration of others in the society, be the goal of life? Could it be that our educational curriculum is deficient in some way, which does not deter its educated minds from such actions? These questions definitely force us to introspect and to reflect on the educational system.

Probably something is missing in the our educational system; there is a void.

The Center for Indic Studies at UMass Dartmouth came into existence in 2001. During this span of almost a decade, it has been very actively involved in fulfilling its mission and meeting multifaceted goals and objectives with utmost sincerity and enthusiasm. Those who have followed its activities would appreciate why those questions have been raised at the outset.

The center has organized many scholarly seminars on a regular basis on various topics connected with Indic contributions in a wide spectrum of areas related to arts and science, philosophy, religion, spirituality, health, and medicine, to name a few. The center has meticulously arranged and organized with an enviable regularity at least eight seminars each academic year. These scholarly



seminars and lectures are presented by experts from reputed universities and other well-recognized institutions. The seminars are of general interest and introduce to a broader audience various theories, ideologies, and concepts, and are researched and supported by well-documented work. These seminars and discussions help to generate interest and provide guidance in the topics to both academic and non-academic communities with diverse background. To bring such audiences to a common platform and engage in an academic and intellectual discourse is itself an accomplishment. Besides these seminars, the center has been offering annual special Patanjali Lectures, conferences on Ayurvedic Medicine, and a World Vedic Conference, attracting renowned international speakers and scholars from far and wide.

Over the years, I have seen a steady growth in the size and diversity of the audience. It is a heartening development definitely. It still lacks a more robust supporting patronage, considering the amount of hard work, effort and time devoted in organizing

these well planned seminars. It is understandable the faculty and students are very busy and finding time outside their main departmental obligations becomes difficult. Yet, an hour or so to attend a seminar in a month during the semester can be squeezed in. Probably by setting that hour in the calendar is the easiest way to make it happen. Moreover, these seminars are a break from our day-to-day routine, sometimes monotonous academic activities. These provide a much-needed diversion to infuse energy and insight into our lives; they always enrich our academic experiences in one way or the other. They also provide a venue to interact with the invited scholar guest speakers, faculty and students, and thereby open new avenues with exchange of ideas and opinions on diverse matters.

The center has developed and offered many courses in the areas of Indic languages, civilization, history, philosophy, yoga, and its science, to mention a few topics benefitting the students both at undergraduate and graduate level.

The center also sponsors and co-sponsors many activities on campus related to cultural, social, and inter departmental programs, in collaboration with other academic centers and professional societies. Such programs help to disseminate understanding of issues related to the culture, customs, and social values of India. All these activities provide exposure, generate awareness among Americans of contemporary India, and help develop mutual trust and respect, paving the path for international peace and harmony.

The center is unique in its mission and objectives. It differs from the

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common South Asian centers and organizations of various universities. The center's objectives are much more focused, and it strives to delve deeper into scholarly work that remains buried in the vast Vedic and Upanishadic literature of ancient India. It is a gold mine of knowledge where finer thoughts have reached their highest peaks of human mind. The center wants to bring these noble and lofty creations into the light with its scholarly pursuits, and disseminate them for the benefit of all humanity. Availability of some research grants in this direction is showing some promise.

The center is thankful to its patrons for their support over the years. However, much more needs to be done. These can be achieved not only through financial help but also through constructive suggestions to improve its programs and activities in the days ahead.

—T. K. Roy

Editor's Note:

Dr. Tridib K. Roy retired in June 2008 from the Mechanical Engineering Department at UMass Dartmouth after 30 years of service. He is a founding member of the Center for Indic Studies and a key supporter of it since its inception in 2001. Dr. Roy is currently involved with local sustainability programs. He is also volunteering for the South Coast Railroad Project and would like the local community to be more actively involved to make it a success. The views expressed in this article are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of the Center for Indic Studies.