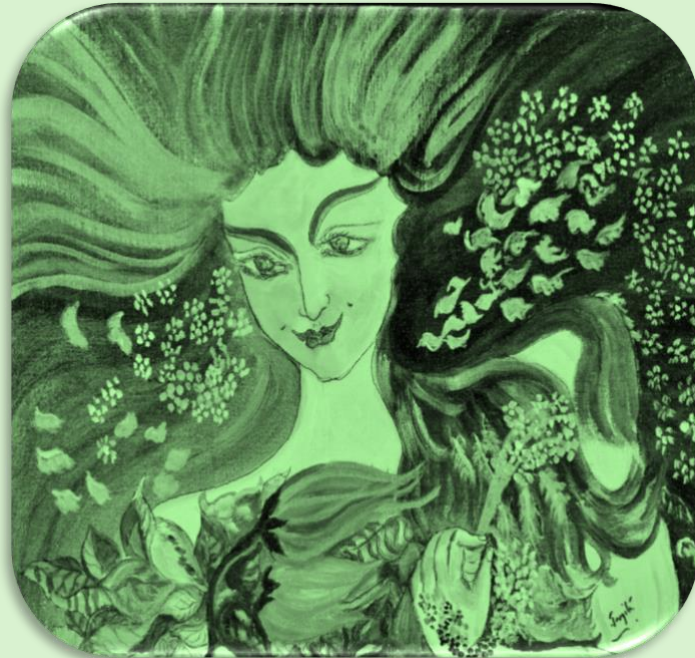




# Caesurae Newsletter -6 2024-2025



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*“Spring”, Acrylic by Jayita*

## **Contents**

1. Editorial by Prakash Joshi (3-4)
2. The Forthcoming VI International Conference of Caesurae (5-10)
3. AGM NOTICE & Caesurae Activity 2024-25 (11)
4. Reflections (12-17)
  - The Philosophy & History of Mahadeva by Kabir Deb
  - Folklore of the Sundarbans by Syamantak Datta
5. Artscapes (18-23)
  - Murali Sivaramakrishnan
  - Jayita Sengupta
  - Arunendu Banerjee
6. Translations (24-26)
  - Two Poems by Dr. Surjit Patar, from Punjabi to English by Kiran Deep
7. In Memoriam (27-32)
  - Mark Dyczkowski: One who lived for Trika by Swastik Banerjee
  - Elegy on the Demise of a Maestro: Zakir Hussain & the Band Shakti by Soutik Chakraborty

## Editorial



Creatures other than humans have their cultures, too. We must grant that, at least, in what has come to be designated our *post-anthropocentric* era. But, deprived of the proper methods and wherewithal to do so, we humans can only make some broad assumptions and only draw some raw conclusions about the cultures of non-humans. Moreover, inspired or infected by the hot trend of ‘political correctness’ in the human world, non-humans, in all likelihood, may tell us humans to mind our own businesses and not interfere in the matters of their cultures.

So, minding our own business — the business of the human world that is, we put a pertinent question as a sort of prompt. Here is the question: ‘How long and big is the history of human cultures?’ In spite of the research spread over at least a couple centuries, there isn’t yet available a definitively specific answer to the question. Anthropologists and their multidisciplinary methods incorporating the streams of geological and geographical sciences mention some tentative dates as the dates of the origin(s) and beginning(s) of human culture(s) at different sites on planet earth. However, reason and logic and also some social scientists tell us that some form of cultures must have come into being, quite fortuitously, even while humans were still moving nomadically in bands and larger groups, with no permanent place to live. There is little for us to do except making some conjectures about those cultures because, being the cultures of those migratory bands of our ancestors, there are no records of them for us to study. Of course, humans couldn’t have developed their cultures until their nomadic and migratory groups found sites to settle. But, quite logically, they must have discovered something of a predecessor to culture even during their long migratory period. Going by the broad calculations of anthropologists, the beginning of human cultures should be and could be placed in the range of 25,000 to 12,000 years BCE with a few thousand years on either side taken as the zones of approximation. Onward from what are generally known as ‘classical times’ in different parts of the world, usually dated — approximately and roughly — in the range of 6000 to 4000 years ago, we can see clear lines of the development of human culture(s).

Before doubts about the significance and relevance of these sketchy thoughts and cogitations on culture start creeping in, let's quickly point out that *Caesurae* — the forum and its activities — are all about 'human culture' and its various forms. In its lifespan of around eight years, which include the horrific and deadly 'Covid-19' years, *Caesurae* has held annual conferences at different locations pan-India and has organised other activities and events, each of which has had everything to do with human culture. The journal that *Caesurae* brings out is unambiguously subtitled 'the poetics of cultural translations'. The 'translations' the journal aims to cover include not only the 'linguistic translations' - the translations from one language to another - but also the transcreations, the transmutations, the transcriptions of things cultural from one form to another. The journal aims to encapsulate and cover much of that in its different sections.

Themed 'Paradigms of Consciousness and its Cultural and Aesthetic Expressions', the upcoming international conference of *Caesurae* opens up a vast and unlimited universe of the possibilities of the translations, transcreations, manifestations, and realisations of culture in its several forms right from the moment of its conception and inception to the moment of its expression. In this world of ours that is characterized by too much of flux, both in actual and in theoretical-ideological domains, such edifying cogitations on culture and its several manifestations offer an anchor, simultaneously, to the psyche and the soul. Of late, the format of *Caesurae* conferences has undergone an evolution in the sense that poetry and art and music workshops have become integrated with them. Functioning either as core sessions or parallel, these workshops broaden the reach and the scope of *Caesurae* conferences. As always, the workshops planned as parts of the upcoming conference integrate with the broad theme of the conference that seeks to create, investigate and study the multifarious cultural manifestations of consciousness. The conference, thus, is to be an event in full consonance with the guiding motto of *Caesurae*, which is to draft and delineate the 'Poetics of Cultural Translations.'

----- Prakash Joshi,  
Professor of English, Allahabad University

Vice President,  
Caesurae Collective Society

09.03.2025

VI International Conference of the Caesurae Collective Society

**Paradigms of Consciousness and its Cultural and Aesthetic Expressions**  
**Online Sessions – 29 -30 March 2025**  
**Offline Sessions in Cooch Behar- 9 -11 April 2025**

Jointly organized by the Centre for Indian Arts and Cultural Studies (CIACS), Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University, Department of English, Cooch Behar College (affiliated to the university) and Caesurae Collective Society in collaboration with Sri Vishnu Mohan Foundation, Chennai.

Concept Note

The conference '*Paradigms of Consciousness and Its Cultural and Aesthetic Expressions*' seeks to investigate the diverse ways in which consciousness and spirituality are understood, experienced, and articulated across disciplines and cultures. Consciousness, as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, transcends disciplinary boundaries, integrating philosophical, artistic, scientific, cultural and psychological perspectives. This conference offers a platform to explore these intersections, delving into the deep connections between the mind, self, and the world, as expressed through various cultural and aesthetic forms.

Consciousness finds vibrant expression in interdisciplinary research and creative activities. Literature, visual art, music, film, and performance become mirrors of human experience and pathways to transcendence. Presentations are invited on artistic practices and their role in embodying the nuances of consciousness. Traditional art forms rooted in spiritual traditions along with contemporary explorations that challenge normative aesthetics serve as both a reflection and a means of transformation of consciousness. How do cultural paradigms influence artistic expressions of inner experience, and how do these expressions, in turn, shape collective understanding?

The dialogue between cognitive science and spirituality opens avenues to understand consciousness through the lens of empirical and theoretical inquiry. The conference encourages exploration of topics such as the neural correlates of consciousness, the role of the brain in spiritual practices, and how advancements in artificial intelligence reshape our understanding of human awareness. It also seeks to bridge the empirical rigour of science with the experiential richness of spiritual practices, interrogating the role of technology for disseminating ancient spiritual wisdom, and improving the common masses' understanding of consciousness in the modern age.

Consciousness is also deeply embedded in cultural practices, rituals, and narratives, where it takes form as both personal and collective experiences. How do the traditions of self-discovery (whether through meditation, yoga, storytelling, or communal rituals) serve as frameworks for understanding the self and its relation to the cosmos? How do myths, symbols, and rituals function as tools for awakening and transformation, and how do these practices evolve across cultures?

Finally, philosophy provides the foundation for exploring the nature and scope of consciousness, raising questions about the self, mind, and universe. Discussions on the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical dimensions of consciousness are welcome. Comparative explorations of Eastern and Western philosophical traditions (e.g.: Advaita Vedanta, Tantra Traditions, Kriya/ Kundalini Yoga, Phenomenology, and Existentialism) promise to reveal new insights into the non-dualistic, relational, dualistic and transcendental

aspects of consciousness. What does it mean to 'know the self,' and how do diverse philosophies and psychology as a discipline reflected in art, architecture and iconography address the tensions between unity and multiplicity, immanence and transcendence?

This conference will embrace the radical pauses and intersections where theoretical and artistic trajectories converge. The gaps and ruptures that creative and intellectual pursuits uncover become spaces for new dialogues and possibilities, allowing the diverse expressions of consciousness to blend and clash in dynamic interplay. By examining these paradigms in depth, the conference aspires to foster a rich understanding of how consciousness shapes and is shaped by our cultural and aesthetic worlds. Invited and selected presentations will be coupled with Art Exhibition on the theme of the conference, Rhythm and Indian Classical Music Workshops so that the theoretical understanding of Consciousness Studies is matched with praxis or cultural and aesthetic expressions.

***Sub Themes:***

- Self-realization, Practice and Cultural Expressions
- Śāstra and Prayoga
- Diverse World Cultures and Rituals of Divine Sacrifice
- Spirituality and Aesthetics
- Exploring Consciousness beyond the materialistic Brain and its aesthetic renditions
- Comparative models of Consciousness Studies in the Eastern and Western Cultures and their artistic expressions
- Visualizations, atavistic memory, Cultural Aesthetics
- Supramental Consciousness and Aesthetics
- The role of Physics, AI and Neuroscience in Consciousness Studies and Aesthetic Expressions
- Cognitive Science, Psychology, Consciousness and Cultural Expressions
- Semiotic Expressions, Culture and Consciousness Studies
- Environment, Ethics, Culture and Consciousness Studies
- States of Consciousness, Spiritual dilemmas and their renditions in music, art and architecture

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS CONFERENCE**

- ✓ **Academic Sessions**
- ✓ **Music and Rhythm Workshop**
- ✓ **Cultural Events in the Evenings**
- ✓ **Poetry Readings & Book Launches**
- ✓ **Lecture Demonstrations**

## INVITED SPEAKERS

### Academic Sessions

1. Professor Sarit Chaudhuri  
Vice Chancellor, Alipurduar University,  
West Bengal, India.
2. Dr. Pushpa Misra  
Former Principal, Bethune College,  
Former President,  
Indian Psychoanalytical Society.
3. Dr. Godabarisha Mishra  
Professor and Dean, School of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and  
Comparative Religion, Nalanda University.
4. Dr. Shashank Shekhar Sinha  
Historian, Publishing Director (South Asia), Routledge,  
Taylor and Francis Group.
5. Mahesh Venkataraman,  
Managing Director, Accenture.
6. Professor Himadri Lahiri  
Department of English  
Netaji Subhas Open University.
7. Professor Goutam Ghosal  
Former Professor in the Department of English  
Visva Bharati University.
8. Professor Banibrata Mahanta  
Professor of English,  
Banaras Hindu University
9. Professor Sthaneswar Timalina  
Nirmal K. and Augustina Mattoo Endowed Chair in Classical Indic Humanities, Stony  
Brook University, New York.
10. Ishwor Chandra Shreshtha  
A Harvard University Graduate,  
Translator, Spiritual Counsellor and Instructor  
Former Lecturer, Lumbini University  
Kathmandu Nepal.

11. Sonam Phuntsho Khenpola  
Bhutan.
12. Professor Daniel Raveh,  
Professor of Indian & Comparative Philosophy,  
Tel Aviv University
13. Professor Ramakant Angiras,  
Ex-Professor of Kalidas Chair,  
Department of Sanskrit,  
Panjab University, Chandigarh.
14. Dr. Georgi Mishev,  
Bulgarian Author & Researcher.
15. Adriana Di Cillo  
Dancer, Actor, Writer, Choreographer,  
Spain.
16. Dr. Danilo Costa Lima  
Sao Paolo University.

**There will be Special Panels (offline) for Caesurae Academics, and those collaborating with Caesurae.**

**Music Workshops/ Lecture Demonstrations (Offline)**



**Shri Nishaant Singh** – the youngest and first Fulbright Associate in Pakhawaj  
for ***Rhythm Workshop and a performance***





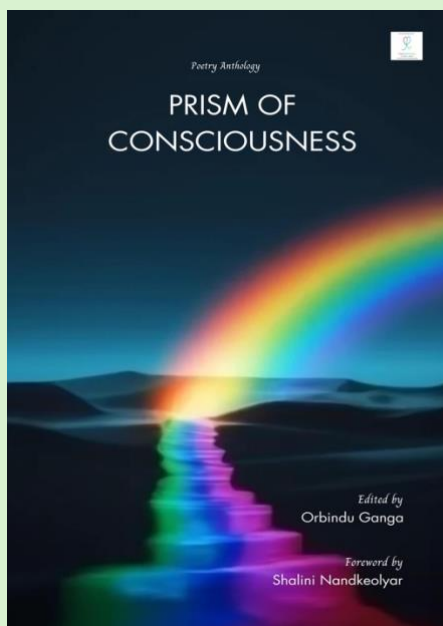
*Sound, Music and Wellness* – A lecture demonstration by **Dr. Sanchita Choudhury**, an Indian Classical Vocalist and Ethnomusicologist.



*“Nriyato Bhairavakrite”*: *Self-Recognition through Dance*  
A lecture-demonstration by **Smt. Nandita Banerjee**, a senior Bharatnatyam dancer and choreographer, hailing from the lineage of Dr. Padma Subramanyam



Poster credits: Shri Prajnajyoti Dutta & Shri Susanta Das



To be released on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at the Poetry Reading Session of the Conference (Virtual Session). Poems have been selected, compiled and published by Shri Orbindu Ganga especially for this Caesurae Conference on Consciousness Studies. Copies of the Anthology will be available on Amazon, and one could directly contact the publisher for procuring a copy.

## AGM NOTICE

Annual General Meeting of the Caesurae Collective Society will be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2025 afternoon, post lunch during the conference. All Life & Annual Members are requested to be present.

### Agenda:

1. Filling up of vacant posts of the Governing Body and reconstituting the Governing Body for the next three years.
2. Policy making decisions.

Sd/-  
Jayita Sengupta  
President

Prakash Joshi,  
Vice President

Date: 09.03.2025

### Caesurae Activity 2023-2024

2024

COOCH BEHAR COLLEGE

CAESURAE

Translating the Glorious Tradition of Indian Culture

Special Lecture Series  
Jointly organized by  
CAESURAE COLLECTIVE SOCIETY & COOCH BEHAR COLLEGE

**SPEAKERS :**

1. DR. MRINAL KANTI GANGOPADHYAYA,  
ASUTOSH PROFESSOR, DEPT. OF SANSKRIT, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY  
TOPIC: INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS

2. DR. SARBANI GANGULI, PROFESSOR, DEPT. OF SANSKRIT, JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY  
TOPIC: THE ROOTS OF INDIAN MUSICAL TRADITIONS

3. DR. JAYITA SENGUPTA  
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH,  
COOCH BEHAR PANCHANAN BARMA UNIVERSITY  
TOPIC: KRIYA YOGA AS THE PATH TO SELF- REALISATION

**DR. MRINAL KANTI GANGOPADHYAYA**  
Asutosh Professor, Dept. Of Sanskrit, Calcutta University  
Topic: Indian Philosophy and Cultural Traditions

**DR. SARBANI GANGULI**  
Professor, Dept. Of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University  
Topic: The Roots of Indian Musical Traditions

**DR. JAYITA SENGUPTA**  
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH,  
COOCH BEHAR PANCHANAN BARMA UNIVERSITY  
TOPIC: KRIYA YOGA AS THE PATH TO SELF- REALISATION

WELCOME ADDRESS BY DR. PANKAJ KUMAR DEBNATH,  
PATRON & PRINCIPAL, COOCH BEHAR COLLEGE

CLOSING REMARKS BY MR. PALLAB KUMAR SARKER

**VENUE: SEMINAR HALL  
COOCH BEHAR COLLEGE**

**MARCH | 11 | 2024**

**TIME: 2:30 P.M.**

1. Publication of the Caesurae Journal issues Vol 5: 2 & Vol 6:1.
2. Processing of selected papers at the Caesurae Conference 2023 for a publication with Routledge.
3. A Special Lecture Event at Cooch Behar College on “Translating the Golden Tradition of Indian Culture”, held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

## Reflections

### THE PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF MAHADEVA

- \*Kabir Deb

"ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम्।  
उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात्॥"

It has become way too much easier for any individual to speak about the Sanatana Dharma by fabricating it, because one offers little effort. Since the whole essence of Sanatana lies in understanding what's inside the individual, not outside, Sanatana works both for the soul (through meditation and Tantra) and body (through Yoga). The Sanatana Dharma never keeps anything in binary and therefore, if we go through Mahabharata, Ramayana, Linga Purana, Devi Purana, etc., we would see that there is a mixture of the cosmos inside every character. But at the same time, it is tough for that individual to work on Sanatana Dharma, since he/she has to invest his/her entirety in understanding the world of Sanatana, and therefore, people like Leena Manimekalai and others easily fabricate the Dharma just because it is easy to get anything that is prestigious (award to be precise) in the West by dismantling what forms the basis of the Sanatana Dharma from which Taoism, Buddhism, Jainism took birth.

If someone has not gone through the Shiva Sutra or the Devi Purana, he/she should never ever start a debate or put something out there that is on Maheshwara, because if someone is calling Maheshwara as Shiva, then he/she is wrong as Shiva cannot be called as Shiva if we are not mentioning the name of Shakti. That's why Shiva Sutra always focuses on Shiva-Shakti, and so does the Tantra school of Sanatana Dharma. It is one of the most beautiful thoughts that is beyond feminism or any kind of 'ism' that has been gifted to us by some of the most progressive Hrishis who came to know the truth by developing the senses. Therefore, in Kaivalya Upanishad, the sage is praying that God should help him to work on his senses. For as human beings if we are able to strengthen our senses, then only we would be able to understand the existence around us.

The world living in pop-culture with some of the most horrible "self-proclaimed liberals" actually started the notion that Shiva smokes weed, and his posters are out there on different social media platforms without getting any outrage. When Leena Manimekalai released a poster with Kali smoking a new-aged cigarette, an outrage started which easily tells us that almost all the Hindus perceive Kali from the lens of a patriarchy where Maheshwara has the power holding position. I can only pity them because their idea of Sanatana is so limited that they cannot even launch a healthy debate on the same. But at the same time, they will stick to their Hindu name, celebrate a Hindu festival and, live like a "liberal", etc.

## 1. Lingeshwara



Shiva, for the very first time, was understood by human beings through our senses without any particular form and so he was called Lingeshwara. The ishta-linga is formless and divine with different philosophical stories associated with it. Basava, a man from Karnataka, for the first time understood ishta-linga as a version of Maheshwara which can easily break every possible division created by society. He was just using the idea of infinite to understand the finite. The school of Tantra says that since Shiva and Shakti are so much in love with each other, Shiva became one with Shakti, and because of which, Shiva also became invisible to Shakti.

Therefore, no one can actually see Shiva, because of which he has no form, and the Shiva Linga is just a manifestation of the invisibility and love of Shiva towards Shakti. But at the same time, he appears as a phallus, as Shakti is the reason for which Shiva stays (as a linga) with the world full of flora and fauna with all his compassion raining on us.

Many people, from the twelfth century, tried to give different types of form to Lingeshwara but none of them were similar to each other. We try to understand everything through our five senses, and if something/someone is beyond our five senses, we do not try to develop the other senses to understand what is out there, and that is okay. If the linga becomes more accessible to the devotee/sadhaka, then there is no harm in implementing the idea. There are twelve major jyotirlingas in various parts of Bharata. Some of them are Somnath, Vishweshwara, Kedarnath, Vaidyanath, Mallikarjuna etc. It does not matter what we believe in, but the philosophy behind the emergence of Lingeshwara is very important, since it speaks of the infinite and finite; form and formless; union and separation; faith and rationality at the same time.

## 2. Lakulisha/Lakulesh

Many "so-called liberals" who still believe that the wild form of Maheshwara is a weed-smoking God, I think they have absolutely no idea of the manifestation of Maheshwara named Lakulesh who used to live away from the Samsakara (Samskar = household/family/society; akara = form). He mostly lives in the jungle and is in a deep meditative state with a staff in his hand and an erect manhood. We have been told by Western psychologists and sexologists that whenever we're under any kind of stimulus of sexual kind, then every single time we will feel like masturbating because of an erect penis. The Sanatana Dharma and especially, Shiva Purana denies this theory (which we consider as pragmatic and rational). Lakulesh has an erect penis because his mind is fully awake and not in a state of rest.



You do not have to believe me, and so I would just recommend that you start meditating and think about many things at the same time. Maybe about your career, love life, family life, conspiracy theories against you, childhood bullying, an accident etc., (this etcetera could have many things), and then you would really feel that you just had an erection, because the mind releases the same hormones that are not identical to our sex hormones, but are responsible to excite us when we're about to make love: dopamine and adrenaline being two of the most important hormones over here. Lakulesh lives outside the human settlement and is completely independent to do whatever he likes to do, but never

in the scriptures or cave paintings would we find that he is taking 'ganja' because he is always meditating, even after being the primary manifested form of Maheshwara.

### 3. Bhairava



One of the most interesting, loved, feared and personally, my favorite form of Maheshwara is Bhairava. 'Bhairava' is a specific term, a tantra term for one who has gone beyond. That is why Shiva is known as Bhairava and Devi is known as 'Bhairavi' — those who have gone beyond the dualities. Kaal Bhairava is someone who has conquered the fear of time (bhaya of kaala). The fear of death is the primary condition for which everything is in order and chaos simultaneously. The Sanatana Dharma always says that life is not linear - rather circular. If any sadhaka/bhakta/devotee perceives and worships God based on fear, then he/she won't be able to reach the eternal truth, and here Bhairava becomes so important. He just eats the primal fear of our life and thus makes us fall in love with him. He is, in fact, the one who really wants everyone to live with love. Since we are human

beings (unaware of nature), when we reach the state of Bhairava by knowing that life is a cycle, we can actually become one with love rather than a lovely or loving individual. If we become one with love, then we won't change, but if someone is a lovely individual, then the external factors will make him/her miserable because he/she still doesn't have the strength to really know love. Bhairava also is a non-smoker (according to the Tantra).

Although you would see that Bhairava is a consumer of Bhaang because of his Raudra-Roop (anger or when he howls) there is a philosophy behind it. Someone who is responsible for the elimination of fear from the hearts of every living being, that particular manifestation of God, must have to fight with different kinds of fear that the human mind constructs. The wild form of Bhairava consumes the purest form of Bhaang to make him realise that he is the one who is also a father, husband and a God who is most content compared to the other gods and demigods. To remember the other side of his nature, Bhairava has to consume a narcotic herb, which takes him back towards understanding that his change in behaviour should be for some time only.

Everyone is going to concentrate on the fact that 'Bhairava consumes Bhaang', but if you really have the patience and guts to understand the philosophy behind it, then you would know that under extreme conditions, nature takes drastic steps just to stay in order. Bhairava is love and nature at the same time. He is the giver and taker. So, he cannot stay in this state for too long or else he will forget the other parts of his manifestation, for which it becomes very important that one should understand why the philosophy of Bhaang is associated only with those manifestations of Maheshwara, which are wild and full of temptation.

#### 4. Yamantaka

One of the brilliant things about the Markandeya Purana is that it is told from the perspective of Hrishikesh Markandeya and while narrating the Purana to Pandavas, he says, "I leave my story to you. You can deduce it in your own way". This is the sign of a person who is rational and really knows how to 'be'. Hrishikesh Markandeya's parents had to choose between his brother and him because it was said that he would be a stupid individual while the other one would have wisdom and knowledge. Naturally, like every other human being, Markandeya's parents chose his brother. When Yama came after sixteen years (since sixteen years was the given period), Markandeya was fully a Bhakta of Maheshwara and was worshipping a Shiva Linga. He requested Yama to wait for his prayers to end, but Yama didn't listen and started dragging him away from the Shiva Linga. Maheshwara became furious and he came out of the Linga and destroyed Yama, and for which Maheshwara is also known as Yamantaka. Yamantaka. He too, doesn't smoke any kind of weed or has nothing to do with ganja.



Now, the whole story is centred around faith and many people believe that faith does not go by rationality. It is just like saying that an absolute illiterate man/woman does not chew a Tulsi leaf using his/her teeth because his/her faith lies with the story that Tulsi being the lover of Vasudeva should be treated softly, and so he/she should directly gulp it with a glass of water. It is something that came to him/her out of faith, but after so many years of scientific development, scientists are saying that a Tulsi leaf contains mercury which can destroy the calcium of our teeth. Similarly, the actual faith associated with the Sanatana Dharma has something to do with the development of the existence of every species living on this planet. The other types of faith which are being questioned came after the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas.

#### 5. Karpura Gauranga

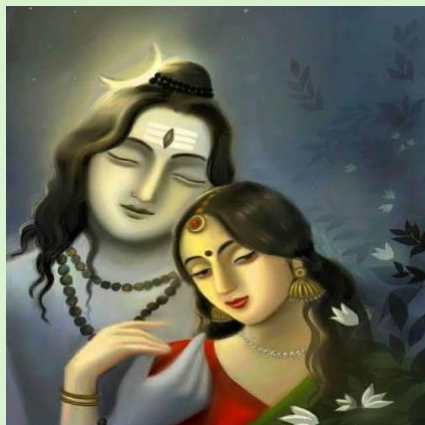


Maheshwara's Raudra-Roop (angry form), once slaughtered the head of Brahma because he wanted to conquer nature as, even after being the Prajapati (seed bearer), he was afraid and so he tried to take charge of Prakriti. Shiva does not care who Brahma is, and what his position is in this existence. He just cares about existence; he has to protect existence from himself too, and so when Sat-Chit-Ananda was coined in the Upanishads and also by Adi Shankaracharya, it was for anyone who is in a meditative state and desires nothing. Maheshwara is the only God who is in meditation even in the most tempestuous times, and so he is looking for nothing. Therefore, he is also referred to as Karpura Gauranga, because

when we use camphor (karpura), during worshipping it generally takes nothing, rather gives itself like an offering, and so even Agni (fire) is in love with Karpura (camphor). Maheshwara is often portrayed as white in color and so he is Gauranga (Gaur = white; anga = body). This manifested form of

Maheshwara is someone who is angry at Brahma but gets back to meditation without using any kind of smoke/ganja/bhaang.

## 6. Shankara



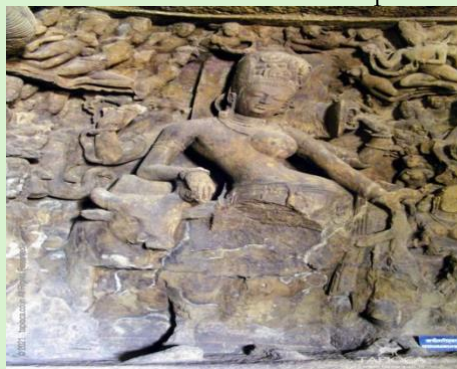
Shiva can only be called Shankara or vice-versa, when he is with Shakti. Shakti is the one who makes him compassionate. Shakti, being the Bhairavi, is someone who desires Shiva or Shankara. She did not seduce Shiva, but made Shiva fall in love with her, and so when Sati (Daksha's daughter) sacrificed herself since Shiva was insulted by Daksha, Shiva, like a true lover, became furious and started the Tandava Nritya, which was then stopped by Vishnu by chopping Sati into 108 pieces.

Sati is reborn as Parvati, the daughter of Himavan. Parvati arouses Deva through Devotion. Though Parvati did not seek the help of Kama, he forcefully shoots arrows at Mahadeva, and as a response, Mahadeva opens his third eye (which doesn't discriminate between man and woman; devas and asuras; flora and fauna etc.), and kills Kama because of which he is also called Kamantaka. Now the Tapasya performed by Parvati is also called Vrata.

When Shiva becomes a householder, he is then called Shankara. Parvati is hence referred to as Kamakhya because she used Kama but kept devotion before lust. Parvati is dominating. She does not stop Shiva from doing what he should do, but she also wants to stay with him to know everything about this existence and so Tantra was born out of the samvaad between Shakti/Parvati and Shiva/Shankara. The vagabond Shiva is someone who used to hardly smoke and the domesticated Shankara does not at all. So, when he is with Parvati, he is always the person who is deeply immersed in Parvati, making love to her, and giving answers to the questions Parvati has about Nature.

## 7. Ardhanarishwara

Leena Manimekalai used the poster of Kali and placed a pride flag just to showcase that Shakti or



Kali is the goddess of the LGBTQ community, and the irony is that every "so-called intellectual" actually believed in what she portrayed. Ardhanarishwara is the manifested form of Shiva, and so I have many transgender friends who are Shiva or Tantra Sadhaka. Shakti never transformed into Kali to be a part of Shiva because it is completely impossible. Even Shakti was not in the state of Bhairavi because an unstirred or angry or uncontrollable mind cannot join with Shiva. Also, if Bhairava or Rudra were in the same place, it would have been impossible for him to combine with Shakti. So, to place a flag of the LGBTQ community in the hands of Kali is so very inaccurate and actually a joke! Ardhanarishwara was born because Bhringi, being a follower of Mahadeva, wanted to walk around Mahadeva, but Mahadeva said that he is incomplete without Parvati, so he must go around both of them, which Bhringi refused to do. He tried to push Parvati away, and as a response, Parvati sat on Shiva's thighs and then Bhringi took the form of a bee just to fly through the gap, because of which Shiva just blended with Parvati and thus becoming a half man and half woman manifestation of Mahadeva. Therefore, nowhere in this entire world, Shiva can be worshipped without Shakti. Ardhanarishwara too has a trident in his lower right hand, a lotus in his



lower left hand, a conch in his upper left hand and a damaru in his upper right hand. He doesn't consume Ganja/alcohol/or any kind of narcotic product.

I have included some of the oldest and most widely worshipped forms of Mahadeva and out of all these, only the form which exhibits anger (rudra) consumes bhaang to lighten the senses, and all the other forms do not consume any kind of narcotic product. So, when someone is creating a painting or a poem or a story keeping Mahadeva in mind, it becomes very important for the artist to actually know about the manifestation of Mahadeva he/she is working on. One cannot do anything on a general basis. Also, if the history of Mahadeva or Sanatana Dharma was patriarchal, then Parvati would not have been the one to control Mahadeva, and to make him more compassionate. The vagabond god who has nothing to offer and starts worrying about his sadhakas, is because of Shakti, in all her manifestations.

It is easy for any individual (especially those who are not aware of the philosophy of Bharata) to comment anything on the Sanatana Dharma, but it is actually pretty tough to know the root and various schools of philosophy and the thoughts associated with them. The "so-called liberals" can do whatever they want, but the eternal truth of Mahadeva and Shakti being the ones who are beyond the thinking pattern of a corrupted mind remains unaltered. I am not against the liberals. He/She has to go through the scriptures thoroughly and if he/she does not, then he/she is doing injustice to the history of the five-thousand-year-old civilization which actually reveals his/her lack of commitment and understanding of anything related to art because Sanatana is art. Period.

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**\*Kabir Deb is an author, poet, thinker.**

## FOLK LORE OF THE SUNDARBANS

– \* Syamantak Datta



Sundarbans or the southern estuarine jungle on the Bay of Bengal, has been a place where spiritual India melted into animalistic rituals of honey collectors, fishermen, pirates and wood cutters. During middle ages this took the form of Tiger God, Baba Dakshin Roy, the most spectacular of the animal deities of southern Jungle. A fanciful moustachioed character, no boatmen or wood cutter could ever enter the dangerous river banks of Sundarbans without first worshipping Baba Dakshin Roy, offering country liquor and potent herbal drugs. Baba guards their fortunes and saves them from tigers, pirates, high tides, wild bees, crocodiles and strong winds. Even today he is worshipped at mid night under a Neem or pipul tree on the Equinox or Makar Shankranti.

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**\*Shri Syamantak Datta is a retired Army Officer. He loves travelling, reading, photography and has a wonderful sense of humour.**

## ARTSCAPES

MURALI SIVARAMAKRISHNAN



### THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO KILL A POET

There are many ways to kill a poet.  
The best one --is to neglect him.

From the wet treetops on monsoon dawns  
The *brainfever* screams in all delirium  
The sky glows red and green all night,  
He walks the streets, stands bewitched by the sea,  
Rolls on the lush grass, and lies open eyed  
Under the rolling skies.

You walk beside him

In silence.

*There are many ways to kill a poet, remember.*

He is naïve and like the parrot writing across open skies.  
That is his green and red mistake.

*It is easy enough to kill a poet, remember.*

He hopes in the dark  
Screams in the night  
And keeps wide awake till all the stars go white  
In a pale blue sky

He breathes in air  
Walks on water  
Caresses all tamarind trees  
And climbs the gooseberry by the wall  
He is brown  
He is black  
He is tall  
And is everywhere  
Sees beyond all walls.  
He is fool, he is prophet, he is the king of Iran.  
In Istanbul, Jerusalem, Papanasam, Belur, Budapest, Pakshipatalam.

You fear him, remember  
Remember, *there are many ways to kill a poet.*

You blast him sky high  
Tied to a rock. You kill him many times over.

He mocks you in your slumber.  
He rocks, he sings, he dances the *ramba ramba*  
He keeps you all wide awake while he sleeps.  
*There are many ways to kill a poet, remember.*

*Fear not fear not wedding guest*

Drink more water and spit on him full blast.  
Tell him to leap sky high  
And rock the sun like a big red fruit.

You feign sleep when he weeps beside you  
You shout and laugh  
When he weeps beside you  
You celebrate everyday  
While he weeps beside you.

He walks on water  
Sleeps on a giant snake  
Plays with saints and scholars  
On Mount Olympus, Parnassus, Tiruvannamalai, Kodajadri, Annapurna.

In Weimar, in Pondicherry  
By the sea, over all hills and peaks  
You fly by and shop while he weeps beside you.

*There are many ways to kill a poet, remember.*  
Perhaps, the best is not to listen to him.

You throw him deep down into the gorge  
He bounces back like a rubber ball and stands tall.  
You harness the elephants and stampede him chained  
He smiles his innocent smile and bows to the beasts.  
He is farmer he is scholar he sees far more  
Than you or I. There are indeed many ways.  
Perhaps, still, the best is not to listen to him.

That's easy enough by our standards.

You search all stacks and rows of books  
Run around with Google and Yahoo  
Pick up handfuls of periodicals and papers  
Probing and prying, trying to dislodge meaning from his word  
You tear him to shreds in your goddamn dissertations  
And debate across podiums in classrooms round the world  
Of Jack and Jill and Race and Class and Gender,  
Of why he writes of butterflies and balloons  
Of clowns and cacophonies  
Of himself and no other.  
All the while, remember, remember  
There are indeed many ways. One could, of course,  
Invent more fear. Silence is another.  
Still, the easiest, is to stop by and ask him for a catalogue.

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This poem was read at the inauguration of the *International Conference on Poetic Ecologies*, held in the Universite Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, in May 2008. Later it featured in *The East Facing Shop and Other Poems*. Kolkata : Monfakira, 2010.

**MURALI SIVARAMAKRISHNAN** (India) is artist, author and poet, —a specialist in Indian aesthetics and theory. His involvement in art for over three decades has produced several works of quality and acclaim. S Murali's paintings have gone on display at many group exhibitions in India and abroad. He has held seventeen solo exhibitions. His works have been singled out for their originality of craft and execution. He is passionate about nature and still draws inspiration from natural forms—

his work over the years has progressed from water colour sketches through nonfigurative art to abstractions where his thick brush strokes have come to create a special textural and structural effect. He has evolved his own personal style of abstraction, featuring evocative natural images and visual imagery which reach out to the spectator spontaneously. As he states, “painting is a complete art and can evoke all the senses at once and variously.” Murali has had a very successful career as an academic and scholar of distinction— he taught literature in many colleges in Kerala State and was Professor and former Chair of the Department of English, Pondicherry University prior to availing early retirement voluntarily from his academic position to devote his time entirely to art and literature. An avid birdwatcher and an ardent nature photographer, deeply concerned with indigenous values and environmental issues, he is the founder-President of ASLE-India (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) and has also authored several articles and books on aesthetics and the environment and six volumes of his poems and sketches. His paintings are also housed in the Sri Chitra Art Gallery in Trivandrum and in private collections in India and abroad. Currently Murali lives with his wife Dr Usha in “Arathi” L-8, Jawahar Nagar, Trivandrum, Kerala. Phone: +91 9443493472 Email: [smurals@gmail.com](mailto:smurals@gmail.com); [smurali1234@yahoo.com](mailto:smurali1234@yahoo.com)

### **A STATEMENT**

I grew up in Kerala, and from my school days in the early seventies I was taken in by the explorative and explosive power of modernist art. I could not differentiate between the art of the west and east—not even when the power of the traditionalists turned the wave inward toward our own cultural mores and life. The language of art I found was something that would awaken from somewhere deep within and would surge forth with its own language and metaphors irrespective of where you were. Since I grew up in a conservative family profoundly religious and at the same time quite forthwith and modern in outlook, open to all modes of experience, I had the good fortune to be exposed to a huge variety of art forms—both spiritual and secular. Raja Ravi Varma’s evocative images of devi-devatas framed my first forms of aesthetic delight and imagination. I was moved by the lines and spatial expressions of KCS Paniker the doyen of the Madras School and his works provided the basic alphabets for my own inner search. The great wave of Indian modern art pioneered by the Bombay and Baroda schools as well as the vibrant and energetic school of Calcutta artists gave us dwellers in the deep south of India new and newer ways for seeking expression. I too painted landscapes and did figurative drawings. I was equally spellbound by the brush strokes of MF Hussain as well as Adimoolam. The idea of an Indian aesthetic as formulated by scholars like Ananda Coomaraswamy and others and the theoretical issues on tradition and modernity in the Indian context raised by KG Subramanyan of the Baroda school took me deeper into myself. My imagination was aflame with questions of history and labour and capital. All the while, the market was closing in on our generation. Artists rose to fame as they sold. Print and later the ubiquitous technological media created images of success and fame. As my society evolved I became more and more sophisticated in my language. The power of the framed art moved me and I set up my first solo show in 1987. After that I have expanded my boundaries of seeing and sketching. Wherever I travelled I made it a point to feel the vibes and throbs of that place and people. I always carried my sketch book along. I like making pen and ink drawings of people and trees. My bird books are filled with sketches of birds I have seen and of pictures I came across. My solo shows hitherto have been milestones in my aesthetic awakening.

**\*JAYITA SENGUPTA**



**TARA**

Mind has its own magic with colours, forms, archetypal memory, influences ...  
She haunts my imagination in various shapes, forms, colours, styles ... patterns of light  
She ... in a bluish haze, the protector of my thought waves and visions, guarding against external  
invasions of a world beyond the one we see through the senses.  
Those who have spent years in absolute solitude know what I mean ...  
The fierce and the sublime entwine in that ecstatic chiaroscuro of light and shade ...  
She is bountiful yet she is fearful too ...

**MALHAR MOODS**

This painting has been for my music Guru Shri Anjan Chattopadhyay, who has requested me to paint a few frames for various shades of Malhar on his sitar. The work is in progress. This frame is a village scene, and the woman towards the dusk has come to fill her pitcher. As the monsoon clouds coil and uncoil, in the horizon, the swan beckons her to hurry up, for the rains are coming.



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**\*Jayita Sengupta is an academic and painter**

**ABSTRACTIONS BY \*ARUNENDU BANERJEE**



**\*Shri Arunendu Banerjee is an Engineer,  
Heritage Architect, Tagore Researcher and  
Painter**



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*Note: Copyright for all the paintings rest with the artists.*

## Translations

### Two Translated Poems

Originally written in Punjabi by Dr. Surjit Patar

TRANSLATED BY DR. KIRAN DEEP

#### Smoldering Woods...

How can I calm down the wailing woods?  
How can I console each tree in the woods?

Woods who used to battle against the climatic mayhem;  
Woods who used to stand in the way of each foe of mirth;  
Woods who served everyone in sculpting ladders for them;  
Woods who burnt as fuel in every hearth;

Whom can I blame for putting such woods to fire?

Woods who ever offered fragrances;  
Woods who coloured every season with flowers;  
Woods crowned with the crest of green leaves;  
Who asked for nothing in return, but streaming waters.

How can I turn the showers of flames into showers of waters?

When these woods filled the prisons of your towns  
These woods terrified the walls of your palaces  
With these woods, you all shared your words  
Was there anyone whose words were afraid trials ?

How can I trust the words which are afraid of trials?

“Confessed, I am a heath lying in ignorance  
You feel pride in your logic and intelligence



Give me the humiliation as my comeuppance”  
This is how the woods call to a court for filing case.

Where can I appeal , If this case meets a dismissal at the court ?

Your silence covered the woods with tense environs  
Look, there grew a bed of thorns.  
Thorns! Thorns! You denounced  
In a few thorns, you entangled the whole woods

How can I unravel the knots if you wish to create confusions?

In creating confusions, you made your gains  
In growing more thorns, you made your gains  
In making the woods run wild, you made your gains  
And then in making a fuss, you made your gains

“Look! I’ll show you wild woods”.

When there was no path for the woods to follow  
What if few trees followed the path to violence  
And all the woods were blamed again and again  
Thus, you accepted such vicious rule as your prophet.

Why did you get angry when I pray the same prophet?

Those so- called guards, perhaps they wanted to change this path;  
Poor, terror-stricken souls could not dare .  
Ironically enough, they tried to teach the lesson of fearlessness.  
For them, I am reiterating same lessons .

When you have brought the game to this end  
You blamed the woods for riots  
Half of the woods quarreled with the other half  
Then you turned your cannons to the woods

How can I sing of peace before the cannons?

The greater woods come to see the smaller ones  
Come to warm up, at the smouldering woods  
Or come to call it, “Horrible” or  
Come to bow before your greatness

How can I make the woods to declare a war?

Each tiny plant can join the woods  
These smouldering woods can burn  
Burning flames can march towards the palace too

Yes, perhaps we can avoid all this....

Alas! Where can I find the torrents of rain?

[Originally published as “Dhukhda Jungle” in *Birch Arz Karay* (1996)]

### **O Earth! Thine Trees....**

O Earth! Thine trees long for being violins  
Thine metals wish to be the strings of the violins  
May the iron not be the arms, but be the tools for construction  
May the human beings be the workers, lovers and cause all creation  
The cotton plants too, bud and blossom with the prayers,  
‘Save us from being the attire of the assassins.’

[Originally published as “Dhartiye ! Eh birch Tere” in *Lafzan Di Dargah*(2003)]

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### **About the Poet**

#### **Dr. Surjit Patar**

Padam Shri Dr. Surjit Patar is a widely acclaimed Punjabi poet. His lyrical pen crowned with honours like Sahitya Akademi Award and Sarsvati Sanman sings of the scintillating hopes as well as strangling struggles of human heart. The tormenting anguish and the smiling joys, the struggling aspirations and the singing dreams resonate alike in the lyrical world of Dr. Patar. Among his works of poetry are : *Hawa Vich Likhe Harf* (Words written in the Air), *Birch Arz Karay* (Entreats the Tree), *Hanere Vich Sulagdi Varnmala* (Words Smouldering in the Dark), *Lafzaan Di Dargah* (Shrine of Words), *Patjhar Di Pazeh*, (Anklet of Autumn) and *Surzameen* (Land of Music).

### **About the Translator**

#### **Dr. Kiran Deep**

Dr. Kiran Deep, a researcher and translator is Professor of English at Ch. Balluram Godara Govt. Girls College, Sriganaganagar (Rajasthan). Indian Literatures, Folklore, Cultural and Translation Studies form her current areas of interest. Working on translation as a bridge connecting language communities for cultural exchange, as a translator Dr. Deep began with English translation of verses of eminent Punjabi Poet Padma Sri Surjit Patar. Her first English translation of Punjabi poems was published in Indian Literature, Journal of Sahitya Akademi in 2014. Recently she has got published English translation of celebrated Rajasthani poet and cultural historian Dr. Aidan Singh Bhati’s award winning anthology “*Ankh Hiye Ra Hariyal Sapna*” (Green Dreams in Heart’s Eyes).

## In Memoriam

### ONE WHO LIVED FOR TRIKA - \*SWASTIK BANERJEE

*Rājānaka Dr. Mark Dyczkowski* (August 29, 1951 – February 2, 2025):



Dr. Mark Dyczkowski, a Rājānaka and an eminent scholar of Trika (Kashmiri Śaivism) and exponent of esoteric Tantric traditions, transitioned from this world on *vasant pañcami*, February 2, 2025, a day consecrated to Saraswati, the Vāc Devi. His departure, occurring during the *pūrṇa mahākumbha* and the auspicious *gūpta navratrī* in Benares, a place he held sacred, signifies not an end, but a profound immersion into the *parā vāc*, the transcendental source of all speech and knowledge, uniting with the divine consciousness that permeated his life's work. Dyczkowski's journey, commencing in the crucible of 1960s London and culminating on the sacred banks of the *Ganges* in *Kāśī*, epitomizes a life dedicated to unveiling the hidden dimensions of Indic spiritual traditions.

#### **From Countercultural Roots to a Quest for the Guru:**

Born in London to an Italian mother and Polish father, Dyczkowski's formative years were influenced by the intellectual and spiritual ferment of the 1960s. Inspired by the works of Swami Vivekananda, Paramahansa Yogananda, and seminal texts like the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Lañkāvatāra-sūtra*, he embarked on a transformative pilgrimage to India in 1969 at the age of seventeen. This initial sojourn was marked by an early lesson in detachment when he lost his possessions, an event he later interpreted as a symbolic purification. Encounters with fellow spiritual aspirants led him to Swami Lakshman Joo Guru Mahārāj-ji, where he experienced a profound deepening of Śīva consciousness through meditation and *satsang*, solidifying his commitment to exploring Indic philosophy.

### Scholarly Pursuits and the Illumination of Kashmir Shaivism:

Upon returning to India, Dyczkowski enrolled at Banaras Hindu University in 1970, undertaking the study of Sanskrit, philosophy, and Tantra under the tutelage of Pandit Hemant Chakravarti, a senior disciple of Gopināth Kavirāj. A pivotal meeting with Kavirāj, where he received the benediction “*Mahāprakāśh?*”, served as a guiding impetus throughout his scholarly career. Later, he pursued doctoral research at Oxford University, studying with Alexis Sanderson and engaging with other scholars of Indic traditions. His dissertation, revised and published as *The Doctrine of Vibration* (1987), offered a comprehensive exposition of *Spanda* philosophy, establishing him as a leading voice in the field. Further, he enriched the scholarly landscape through meticulous translations of the *Spandakārikā*, *Śivasūtra*, *Tantrālokā*, and several other works, accompanied by insightful commentaries. In recognition of his distinguished contributions, Dyczkowski was honored with the title of *Rājānaka*.

### Unveiling the Esoteric: The Kubjikā Tradition:

Dyczkowski's scholarly interests extended to the esoteric *Kubjikā* tradition, a relatively unexplored area within Tantric studies. Beginning in 1986, he embarked on extensive fieldwork in Nepal, leading to the monumental publication of the fourteen volumes of the *Manthanabhairava Tantram: Kumarikbandam*, a testament to his meticulous research and dedication. These works unveiled a previously obscure Tantric society and its intricate rituals, illuminating the connections between *Kubjikā*, *Trika*, *Kālī*, and *Śrīvidyā* traditions. His research brought to light the unique role of Newar kings as initiates and the influence of *Kaula* practices in shaping Nepalese society.

### Kāśī: A Confluence of Sacred Geography and Spiritual Practice:

Dyczkowski's decision to reside in *Kāśī*, overlooking *Nārada Ghāt*, reflects his deep reverence for the sacred landscape and its spiritual resonance. Here, his study room, with its panoramic view of the Ganges, became a hermitage for contemplation and scholarship. His choice to have his mortal remains cremated at Harischandra Ghat further underscores his intimate connection with *Kāśī* as a *tīrtha*, a liminal space facilitating the soul's liberation. Dyczkowski's life in Kashi was a testament to his devotion to Śiva, the presiding deity of the city.

### Dissolution into the Divine Light:

Mark Dyczkowski's life exemplifies the harmonious integration of rigorous scholarship and profound spiritual practice. His transition on *Vasant Panchami* symbolizes a merging with the *parā vāc*, joining the lineage of esteemed *ācāryas* who dedicated their lives to the *bhārāṭīyā jñāna parampara*, particularly the *Anuttara Trika* tradition. As Swarajya noted, his passing marks the end of an era for scholars and practitioners of Kashmir Shaivism. His legacy endures through his extensive publications, his dedicated students, and the *Anuttaratrikakula* website, ensuring that his radiant wisdom continues to illuminate the path for future generations]. Dyczkowski's life, characterized by unwavering commitment and penetrating insight, serves as an enduring inspiration for those seeking to understand the depths of Indic mystical traditions. He wanted his life to be an offering, and as he himself said "May our minds blaze with insight. May we be one with all that exists. May we work for the benefit of all sentient beings, steeped in the insight that each one of us is Lord Śiva."

This 'I,' whom we knew as Mark Ji, was but a wave rising in the vast ocean of consciousness—an expression of divine will, dense with bliss, surging forth as the luminous unfolding of Śiva's play. Now, as that wave dissolves back into the infinite expanse, no longer distinct, we bow to that boundless ocean itself—the nectarous tide of awareness, ever vibrant, ever full. In his journey, he merged into the essence he so deeply cherished, where sovereignty and surrender are one, where the currents of wisdom and devotion flow as a single stream. To that supreme reality—unfathomable yet intimately known—we offer our reverence, for he was never apart from it, nor are we.

*Abamānandaghanecchāghaṭiteśvaratonmiṣatsamastormih/  
Ityullāsataranṅitamamṛtormimahaṁ cidamṇavam vande//*



**Me (Swastik) with Mark Dyczkowski.**

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**\*Swastik Banerjee is a senior research scholar in the Philosophy Department of Calcutta University**

## ELEGY ON THE DEMISE OF A MAESTRO: ZAKIR HUSSAIN AND THE BAND SHAKTI - \*SOUTIK CHAKRABORTY



**Shakti** brought together Eastern and Western musicians, creating a blueprint for what we now know as World Music. Their vibrant fusion of styles captivated audiences worldwide and inspired countless musicians, artistes, and thinkers from diverse backgrounds to pursue their own cross-

cultural journeys. Shakti is a trailblazing Indo-jazz fusion band, known for blending jazz with elements of Hindustani and Carnatic classical music.

A Greenwich Village music shop owner introduced British jazz guitarist John McLaughlin to Indian tabla player Zakir Hussain and the two found inspiration to create something new in music. The two musicians first performed together in 1972 at the California home of sarod maestro Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. Zakir Hussain, then 21, had been touring with his father, while the 30-year-old McLaughlin was already regarded as one of the era's leading electric guitarists. Though they felt an immediate connection, neither could have anticipated a musical partnership that would span five decades.

In 1973, McLaughlin left his previous band and with Hussain, violinist Shankar, and ghatam player T.H. "Vikku" Vinayakram created the fusion band, Shakti. The members of Shakti collaboratively crafted an exhilarating new musical fusion, pioneering unexplored territories and showcasing the possibilities of global blends to inspire generations of musicians worldwide. The first album *SHAKTI with JOHN McLAUGHLIN* came in 1975 with three tracks. The initial success is followed by a second album *A Handful of Beauty* in 1976 and a third, *Natural Elements* in 1977.

While Shakti's music clearly carried strong influences of Indian music, it maintained a unique acoustic sound. A standout 18-minute track, "Joy," from the first album, became immensely popular. Songs like "La Danse du Bonheur," "India," "Isis," "Two Sisters," "Mind Ecology," "Face to Face," and "Bridge of Sighs" quickly became fan favorites, while "Lotus Feet" offered an improvisational take on a tune by the Mahavishnu Orchestra. Carlos Santana even described Shakti's music as the most intense he had ever heard.

In the late 1960s, as rock music gained popularity in Europe, jazz musicians began blending jazz with rock, led by figures like Miles Davis, Coryell, McLaughlin's previous band Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Weather Report. This trend soon expanded to fusing jazz with global styles, inspired by the success of Brazilian bossa nova. Meanwhile, Indian music gained Western attention through maestros like Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan, and Alla Rakha. Albums like *West Meets East* by Ravi Shankar and Yehudi Menuhin, along with works by artists such as Ananda Shankar and John Mayer, further explored Indian-Western fusion. Indian spirituality and yoga also influenced Western musicians during this period. This had made the word stage ready for Shakti to perform and the legendary artists seized the opportunity.

Shakti's original lineup parted ways in 1978, with each member embarking on their own highly successful careers over the next two decades. In the late 1990s, the band reunited and reformed again with Shankar Mahadevan on vocals, U. Srinivas on mandolin, and Selvaganesh Vinayakram stepping in to replace his father, Vikku. For a brief phase in 1997, flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia was a part of the group.

Following the heartbreaking loss of mandolin player U. Shrinivas in 2014, Shakti temporarily ceased performing. However, in early 2020, the group reunited once more, this time with violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan joining the lineup. In 2001, the band's last album *Saturday Night in Bombay: Remember Shakti* was released.

Original band members McLaughlin and Hussain, supported by Mahadevan, Selvaganesh, and Rajagopalan, planned to reunite for a studio album of fresh compositions and a world tour celebrating Shakti's 50th anniversary. In 2023, the band had played in Texas, Michigan, California and other places. On 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2023 the album *This Moment* was released. In 2024, Shakti received the Grammy Award for Best Global Music Album at the 66th Grammys in LA for their record *This Moment*. Today's Shakti pays tribute to the original band's legacy by embracing their tradition while boldly venturing into new musical horizons.

Zakir Hussain was a major winner at the 2024 Grammys, taking home three awards. The composer and tabla player won Best Contemporary Instrumental Album for *As We Speak*, a collaboration with Bela Fleck, Edgar Meyer, and Rakesh Chaurasia. Their song "Pashto" also earned the Grammy for Best Global Music Performance. On 15<sup>th</sup> September 2024, Hussain's death left the music world disheartened. His absence is yet to be filled and the coming years are hoped to produce a table player of such calibre.

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