

Twilight Yoga I
Ecstasy, Equipoise, and Eternity

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Ecstasy, Equipose, and Eternity

**The Vade Mecum and Guide to Shri Mahendranath's
Fantastic Kosmic Kingdom
of the
Alakshya Nathas of Shambhala International.
A Dreamtime Dossier
for those who want to do their own thing,
but do it themselves.
The Balance of both Liberation and Enjoyment.**

Sub-title Natha Mandala Sahaja Marga — which means the Path of Ecstasy of the Nath Circle — in Europe and the Americas called the International Nath Order.

Exordium

Between the years 1532 and 1534 AD, Francois Rabelais, the French novelist and humorist, produced the satirical masterpiece of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. The books themselves are fantastic, but the real miracle of the author's life was that he was never burnt at the stake.

In his very humorous way, and probably with a smile, he did more to rock the power of the Church than any other man of his period. He introduced to his public an imaginary Abbey of Thelema, a monastic institution which had inscribed over the entrance doorway the conclusive injunction "Do what thou wilt shall be the only Law". This rule, it appears, was piously obeyed by the resident monks and nuns.

Many years later, Sir Francis Dashwood revived the Abbey and its delightful law in the grounds of his country residence not far from London. John Wilkes, a fiery radical parliamentarian, was one of his chief and most active members. This Abbey is now a local tourist attraction.

In more recent history Saint Aleister Crowley, who did much to reform and revive the Western Occult Tradition, in reverence to the Rabelaisian masterpiece also revived the Thelemic Law; and even, for a short period, established an Abbey on an Italian island.

"Do what thou wilt shall be the only Law" has always been an injunction which strikes fear and terror in the hearts of the moralists, ministers, and mini-minds. Yet millions have practiced it and passed by unnoticed.

It may be new to those who read this manuscript, but the identical rule or law has been held in the highest respect in India and neighboring countries for thousands of years. It has been the amoral philosophy of the Nathas, Tantriks, and Siddha saints and sadhus. It made possible the *Parivrajaka* or homeless wanderer saints, and eventually led to the highest grade of Indian spiritual attainment known as *Avadhoota* or emancipated one. Thus Rabelais, Dashwood, and Crowley must share the honor of perpetuating what has been such a high ideal in most of Asia.

Now that the Natha tradition has been reborn in Europe and the Americas, we must know a little more about the amoral patterns of the Nathas.

The Nathas as a sect and organized body of people came into being as an answer to two separate events. One was the invasion of India by the Muslims, and the destruction of holy places; and the second, which actually occurred much earlier, was the spread of the Shankaracharya doctrine of Mayavada: that all and everything was an illusion, and only God was real.

About 1000 C.E., a great teacher came to the fore. He was the son of Minanath, a fisherman, and was known as Matsyendranath. This great saint of humble origin is considered to be the founder of the Natha Order of Sadhus. Actually, he gave it substance, for Nathas had been known much earlier. He combined the three viewpoints of Siddha, Tantrik, and Natha philosophy in a great sweeping revival of the ancient teaching that, although God was one, there were also many manifestations of God, and these included the world and human beings also.

Although God is One, we also live in the dual form of many. Though much of life can be an illusion, there are many occasions when pain, suffering, and hunger bring us down to reality because they real also.

But the greatest concept of the Nathas was to free the mind and body from Karmas, Kleshas, and Konditioning, and break forever the chain of rebirth into the world; thus ending Samsara, and freeing the Spirit of the real Self to its natural condition of peace, freedom, and happiness. Matsyendranath was followed by a brilliant disciple who developed the Natha Order and outshone his Guru. He was Gorakshanath, a weaver who came from a caste of cowboys.

We must be technical, but only for a moment, to examine the Sanskrit terms which are related to the Nathas so that we can translate them into creative thought. A knowledge of the Sanskrit language (now a dead language, anyway) is not necessary either for modern Nathas. These are given, not so that we can learn Sanskrit words, but so that we can understand the meaning and deeper concepts, to translate into our own mother tongue and into our own valid patterns of life.

First, let us see the Thelemic Law in terms of Hinduism and Sanskrit: *Sveccha* means one's own wish or free will. *Svecchachara* means a way of life where one acts as one wishes and does what is right in one's own eyes. Doing one's own Will. The concluding Sanskrit expression in the *Avadhoota Upanishad* is "*Svecchachara Paro*".

The term "*Paro*" means a mysterious or secret pattern to that action done by one's own Will. In other words, we do our Will but with discretion, not making it too obvious, nor to harm or hurt other people. Yet this is also a typical Nathism; a complete reversal of Vedic morals and philosophy.

This combined attitude toward people and one's own Will is clearly expressed by Shri Datta in the *Avadhoota Upanishad*, where he is made to say:

**What I actually wanted to do is exactly what I did.
 What I wished for, I received, and this always happens.
 No matter what I do, whether it is that which is
 Ordained by scripture or custom, or that which is natural
 And not restrained, are my own inhibitions and feelings.**

**Yet, although I do not wish for it, I may follow
 Spiritual patterns prescribed by scripture,
 But I do this for the benefit of humanity
 (Not wishing to confuse them)
 What can this possibly matter to me?**

Thus the concluding lines of the Upanishad end with the expression “*Svecchachara paro.*” Since the Avadhoot who has evolved to the highest level never forgets that all people are not the same as himself, he uses some discretion for their sake, and also because those acts fit for him may also involve him in worldly conflict.

There are still many Natha orders and numerous subsects in India today. Some of them are still numerically strong, but others, for a variety of reasons, have become tiny exclusive In-groups. Some have degenerated to the level of holy beggars, who know and understand nothing but collecting.

Most of the higher strata Nathas belonged to the North, but in the Southwest they have evolved into purely devotional cults, worshiping Shri Datta as a benevolent god, and not as a far-out exceptional teacher. The original revolt against Vedic Brahmanism with its bogus morality is forgotten. Also the basic battle for spiritual life as opposed to civilization, urbanization, and religious superstition, has also vanished.

SAMSARA: What are we getting away from? The ceaseless rounds of birth and death, transmigration, but also meaning “worldly life” and the mundane process from birth to death, household or secular life as opposed to spiritual renunciation of the world. Sometimes used to mean “The Ocean of Life” or the “Wheel of Rebirths.” Samsara is the bondage which bind us to worldly involvement, and worldly involvement perpetuates it. Spiritual life aims at breaking the chain and ending the rebirth process, but religions — such as Hindu sects — only promise an escape to heaven. But this is recognized as temporary, and when that span of existence has finished, Samsara starts again.

NATHA means Lord, Protector, a Refuge. It becomes Lady by giving the feminine ending, but female Natha Sadhvinis have always been rare in India. Usually they occur as Yogini or Devi. In India, Nathas do not marry, live a householder life, or breed children. They do not practice sex abnegation, and usually have a female partner. A western Nath would not find it practical to follow the same patterns, as the free wandering life of a saint is not possible; and so western Nathas can be householders, married, and even have regular employment for wages. This in no way affects the life of Nathas in India.

Environment, climate, and social patterns must be taken into consideration in any transfer of Eastern cults into the West. It is the free spiritual and amoral patterns which most matter, and not the external forms. Nor would it be possible for Western Nathas to wander about naked or wearing only a G-string or longoti.

The word Natha is very, very ancient, and was used in former times for any saint or sadhu, but after the amalgamation of Siddhas and the Tantriks into one order, the word came to be confined only to them. The Nathas, East or West, however, will do as they will to retain their order and unity. Natha is related to 'Nithan' (Gothic) and 'Ginatha' (Anglo Saxon).

Three words in Sanskrit express the essence of the Natha Way of Life:

Sama: The same, equal, corresponding, balance, equipoise.

Samarasa: Equipoise in feelings, non-discriminating, the mind at rest.

Sahaja: Natural joy, amoral, elevating all worldly things to a divine status, to dissolve natural senses into divine expression.

These three words express the attainment of the Avadhoota or Emancipated One. The full expression of "Do what thou wilt". Thus those who become Nathas do not remain content to wear it around their neck like a label, nor think of it as just something to which they belong. Instead they strive for the higher attainments (Siddhis), practice the rites, rituals, and yoga, and teach others the way out of Samsara.

We are creating something new for our people and building a new fantastic Kingdom of Shambhala. This will not be done without sincerity and right forms of activity. *Samsara* need not be all misery and suffering if we seek and understand the use of the natural joys which it offers us, and use them to purify the mind and awaken to immortality.

While it is true that the Indian Siddhas, Nathas, and Tantrik Yogis renounced the world for the higher attainments and immortality, whilst they remained in the world, they felt it a duty to try and help others onto the same path. Though this was not for everyone, and it was important that people obtained some *punya* (merit) in this life and in the future, so as to escape from *Samsara* in only one or two lives.

To do this, the Nathas encouraged better social organization based on good will and mutual aid. Thus they gave new life to the ancient cohesion of the Hindu people by encouraging the rituals, worship, Guru Grace, and also instruction. The Rituals must not be neglected, and if they have deep meaning to the individual, so much the better.

It is said that the Nath Order in its recent and present Indian form was founded by Shri Matsyendranath. He was the son of Minanath, a fisherman. Matsyendranath's disciple was Jalandharanath. The name means a water bearer or carrier, but he was employed as a sweeper. The very names of these spiritual leaders were a blow to the Vedic Brahmin caste system. The Nathas spread rapidly, and enjoyed vast public support.

The tradition of the Natha with magick powers still persists even in the chaos of today. They never at any time gave the impression of puritanical piety. They wore varied dress, carried trishules (tridents), fire tongs, and huge earrings. They wore the hair long, and marked the body, especially the forehead, with ashes. Some were naked; none cared if they were dressed or not. Some wore an orange cloth, some red, and some (in the case of the Adi-Nathas) black. I did not like black, and only wore it on odd occasions. Few Nathas and Yoginis followed fixed rules and customs.

There is every reason to believe that the early Nathas were associated with the worship of the Mother Goddess, but a bipolar worship in which Shiva played a large part. The physical appearance of most Nathas was similar to the accepted ideas of what Shiva looked like.

They all accepted the ideal of the Avadhoot, and regarded Shri Dattatreya as a cult Guru, and even as a guardian spirit. Only later, when the Nathas of Southwest India developed into bhakti-devotional cults was he elevated to the status of a god. Also, in many of these cases, although Datta was thought of as an avatar or manifestation of Shiva, he later became regarded as an avatar of Vishnu — probably due to some thoughtless acceptance of Vedic influence. The real Nathas of India today still belong to the North, even the Pagal (Mad) Nathas, so called because of their outrageous and erratic behavior.

History cannot obscure the fact that the rise of the Tantriks, Siddhas, and Nathas in India was not only a revolt against puritanical, straight-laced Vedic and Buddhist morals, but it placed an emphasis on the fact that spiritual attainments began with the awakening of the Insight Faculty — and had nothing to do with caste, education, or social status.

This came at a time when real Pagan values were being forgotten, and the anti-sex syndrome was creeping in from Europe and missionaries. Added to this was the Muslim aversion to naked images and sex symbols, such as the lingam and yoni.

Most of the great Nathas of the past and present came from the lower stratas of society, but they were all people who upheld the dignity of their own class, even if it was classified as lower. One great Nath came from a caste of snake charmers, a caste which considered it beneath their dignity to beg, in spite of their poverty. Fishermen, sweepers, and weavers were poor enough, but they worked and maintained themselves and their families. As in Europe, all too often, they were better and nobler people than you found in the upper crust.

Yet when they became Nathas, they became nobodies, but free and unconditioned. They belonged to nobody, and nobody belonged to them. Mostly they wandered. They did not work, marry, or breed children. They no longer worked for reward or served others as menials. If they served others, it was without obligation or reward.

Although a sadhu depends on the alms of the faithful, he never asks for anything. Of course, in the Indian sub-continent, these things are part of the way of life, and understood. In nearly thirty years in India and the adjoining parts of Asia, I have never lacked food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. These are needs and not wants. In Europe, it would not be possible to do this from scratch. But as life has adapted in India, so Europe and America must make their own patterns.

INTERNATIONAL NATH ORDER

This edition of Shri Gurudev Mahendranath's ECSTASY, EQUIPOISE, AND ETERNITY is one of many projects planned by the not-for-profit International Nath Order. The International Nath Order itself is based upon the fundamental principles and inspiration set forth in Shri Mahendranath's *Master Pattern of the Nath Order*, TWILIGHT YOGA trilogy, and other writings. The three manuscripts which comprise the TWILIGHT YOGA Trilogy offers the building blocks with which to construct a more fantastic way of life. The International Nath Order strives to realize these aims through practical action and was conceived and constructed to serve the needs of many. Our primary concerns are the dissemination of higher wisdom, the construction and maintenance of places of meeting and worship, plus the activities related to continuing a spiritual transmission or initiation lineage which has its roots in a distant past, but continues to burn brightly even today. The International Nath Order seeks to fan this spiritual flame and make available to many the ideas and basics on which to develop a more expansive spiritual experience and fantastic way of life.

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