

Aghora At The Left Hand Of God

Robert E Svoboda

Spiritual practice is never something mysterious or alien to ordinary existence. Neither is it defined by difficult exercises or maintained by perfect tranquility. *Waking To Ordinary Life* speaks directly to the false presumption that our relationship to the Divine, to Spirit, somehow precludes a simple life based in human maturity, dignity and kindness toward others. It casts unrelenting light on how clear-cut spiritual practice actually is, if only we have the courage to choose it. Lalitha is a spiritual teacher living in Washington state and Canada. *Waking to Ordinary Life* is derived from her recent talks and conversations with friends and students making its message fresh, accessible and real. Her many examples bypass heady concepts and pretty words, and bring the reader down to earth where messy relationships, greed and cancer must be handled. She speaks with compassion, yet is categorically unwilling to compromise the demands of committed, unsentimental work on self. Topics include: the necessity for articulating an aim, which may then be applied as a guiding principle in all one's endeavors; the power of genuine forgiveness; the urgency inspired in the face of death, and the experience of delight in ordinary life. *A Handbook for Sustainable Spiritual Practice*. Fresh, wise female voice on the spiritual scene. Grounded and practical help for any serious practitioner.

"Encyclopedia of World Religions" explores the major religions of the world, emphasizing the living faiths and their background. Each illustrated volume provides access to the theological concepts, personalities, historical events, institutions, and movements that helped shape the history of each religion and the way it is practiced.

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"Aghor Medicine moves seamlessly between an ethnography of religion and medical anthropology. The stories of suffering and renunciation, of collective experience that turn Indian hierarchy and discrimination upside down are quite marvelous. The writing is clear and direct and the interpretations balanced and scrupulously documented.

Barrett has written one of the best accounts on local traditions "modernizing" in ways that combine indigenous significance with globally crucial changes that react against health and social inequalities."—Arthur Kleinman, Harvard University

"Ronald Barrett's fine account of aghor medicine reveals essential characteristics of India's popular culture, and, since an ashram in California has an important role in the story, of American popular culture as well."—Charles Leslie, author of *Death Row Letters* (forthcoming)

Light on Life: An Introduction to the Astrology of India brings the insight and wisdom of Indian astrology to the Western reader. Jyotish, or Indian astrology, is an ancient and complex method of exploring the nature of time and space and its effect upon the individual. Formerly a closed book to the West, the subject has now been clarified and explained by Hart de Fouw and Dr. Robert Svoboda, two experts and long-term practitioners. In *Light on Life* they have created a complete and thorough handbook that can be appreciated and understood by those with very little knowledge of astrology.

This book introduces readers to Vodou's rich history, powerful ancestors, and vibrant spirits, known as Lwa. With more than one hundred breathtaking illustrations, *Vodou Visions* reveals how to honor and invoke the Lwa with specific ceremonial offerings and litanies. Using methods drawn from more than twenty years of practice, Vodou priestess Sallie Ann Glassman shares purification and empowerment rituals for individuals, communities, homes and spiritual spaces.

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Buddhist teachings inspired by the talks of Ajahn Brahm and the art of letting go. Lorenzo da Costa shares his personal journey and insights into Buddhism. Learning to 'let go' sits at the heart of day to day Buddhist practice. It is essential in dealing with the difficulties and troubles of everyday life using the principles of Buddhist psychology. In the format of vignettes and reflections the 'how to do it' is discussed. The material is inspired by Ajahn Brahm's internet talks. Ajahn Brahm is one of the world's best known Buddhist teachers. The second part of the book reflects on the essential unity of Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Gnostic Christianity. An excellent insight into Buddhist teachings and the art of letting go.

This volume explores aspects of yoga over a period of about 2500 years. In its first part, it investigates facets of the South Asian and Tibetan traditions of yoga, such as the evolution of posture practice, the relationship between yoga and sex, yoga in the theistic context, the influence of Buddhism on early yoga, and the encounter of Islam with classical yoga. The second part addresses aspects of modern globalised yoga and its historical formation, as for example the emergence of yoga in Viennese occultism, the integration of yoga and nature cure in modern India, the eventisation of yoga in a global setting, and the development of Patañjali's iconography. In keeping with the current trend in yoga studies, the emphasis of the volume is on the practice of yoga and its theoretical underpinnings.

A practical manual for the Western massage therapist. This book explores further border crossing among pragmatism, spirituality and society. It opens up American pragmatism to dialogues with pragmatism and spiritual quest from other traditions such as India and China thus making contemporary pragmatism a

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part of much needed planetary conversations. This book traces the shadowy tradition of “holy madness/crazy wisdom” from the Holy Fools of early Christianity, through the great adepts of India and Tibet, up to the controversial gurus of today. In our day, when even the Dalai Lama has warned Western seekers to choose their teachers carefully, Feuerstein provides an intelligent and cautionary guidebook to the guru-disciple relationship, plus a comprehensive analysis of the principles of authentic spirituality.

This book recounts the legendary love story of Chandidas and Rami, 14th-century Bengalis. He is a young Brahmin priest who renounces his caste status to become an heretical poet-musician wandering the byways of India with a small band of mystics and bards. Rami is a beautiful 20-year-old widow, of low caste, living with her two children. To survive, she washes the clothes of local villagers. An overwhelming magnetism of love and fate compels them to come together against prevailing religious and social customs. Rami leaves all of her familiar world behind to travel, sing and praise the Divine with her beloved Chandidas, along the dusty roads of Bengal. Krishna’s Heretic Lovers is an historical romance that blends fiction and fact, love and sex, action and spiritual teachings, politics, and true characters with the authentic poetry written by the revered poet Chandidas (later known as the “Father

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of Bengali poetry”). The synthesis of these elements, together with rare insight into the practices of a genuine tantric sect, creates an unforgettable alchemy for readers. Vivid descriptions of cultural and natural environments along with richly detailed characters capture the religion, politics, and lifestyle of the late 14th /early 15th century of remote Bengali villages. The reader is transported into an era when the basic human freedom to create, love, and worship based on one’s natural impulse had to be carved from the stone of rigid hierarchical, even feudal, societal and religious structures. Thanks to Mary Angelon Young, Chandidas and Rami live again to sing the glories of Krishna and Radha to a new audience. Victory to the Divine Couple! —Dr. Robert Svoboda, author of *Mysticism in the 21st Century* and *Aghora: At the Left Hand of God*. A BOOK FOR STUDENTS OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION, OR ANYONE FASCINATED WITH EASTERN TRADITIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE YEARNING FOR A LOVE STORY THAT INCLUDES SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS (DHARMA) AND SCHOLARSHIP.

The most comprehensive guide to the botany, history, distribution, and cultivation of all known psychoactive plants • Examines 414 psychoactive plants and related substances • Explores how using psychoactive plants in a culturally sanctioned context can produce important insights into the nature of

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reality • Contains 797 color photographs and 645 black-and-white illustrations In the traditions of every culture, plants have been highly valued for their nourishing, healing, and transformative properties. The most powerful plants--those known to transport the human mind into other dimensions of consciousness--have traditionally been regarded as sacred. In *The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants* Christian Rätsch details the botany, history, distribution, cultivation, and preparation and dosage of more than 400 psychoactive plants. He discusses their ritual and medicinal usage, cultural artifacts made from these plants, and works of art that either represent or have been inspired by them. The author begins with 168 of the most well-known psychoactives--such as cannabis, datura, and papaver--then presents 133 lesser known substances as well as additional plants known as "legal highs," plants known only from mythological contexts and literature, and plant products that include substances such as ayahuasca, incense, and soma. The text is lavishly illustrated with 797 color photographs--many of which are from the author's extensive fieldwork around the world--showing the people, ceremonies, and art related to the ritual use of the world's sacred psychoactives.

In *God of Justice*, anthropologist William S. Sax offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of cursing,

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black magic, and ritual healing in the Central Himalayas of North India. Based on ten years' ethnographic fieldwork, *God of Justice* shows how these practices are part of a moral system based on the principle of family unity.

"Beautifully written, erudite, a perfect balance between theory and ethnography. The narratives are wonderful."—E. Valentine Daniel, author of *Charred Lullabies* "No book in medical anthropology matches *No Aging in India* in its extraordinary richness of ethnographic detail. A feast of stories, lives, and theory--it contains such a thickness of social experience that the reader feels he or she has become a part of India's local worlds. Lawrence Cohen has written one of the finest ethnographic monographs I have read. A triumph of field research and writing, this book will, I feel sure, set the standard for the next wave of ethnographies in medical anthropology."—Arthur Kleinman, author of *Writing at the Margin*

Examines the left-hand path and reveals the masters of the tradition • Explores the practices and beliefs of many left-hand path groups, including the Cult of Set, the Hell-Fire Club, and heretical Sufi, Zoroastrian, Christian, and Muslim sects • Investigates many infamous occult personalities, including Helena Blavatsky, Aleister Crowley, the Marquis de Sade, and Anton LaVey • Explains the true difference between the right-hand path and the

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left-hand path--union with and dependence on God versus individual freedom and self-empowerment From black magic and Satanism to Gnostic sects and Gurdjieff's Fourth Way, the left-hand path has been linked to many practices, cults, and individuals across the ages. Stephen Flowers, Ph.D., examines the methods, teachings, and historical role of the left-hand path, from its origins in Indian tantric philosophy to its underlying influence in current world affairs, and reveals which philosophers, magicians, and occult figures throughout history can truly be called "Lords of the Left-Hand Path." Flowers explains that while the right-hand path seeks union with and thus dependence on God, the left-hand path seeks a "higher law" based on knowledge and power. It is the way of self-empowerment and true freedom. Beginning with ancient Hindu and Buddhist sects and moving Westward, he examines many alleged left-hand path groups, including the Cult of Set, the Yezidi Devil Worshipers, the Assassins, the Neoplatonists, the Hell-Fire Club, the Bolsheviks, the occult Nazis, and several heretical Sufi, Zoroastrian, Christian, and Muslim sects. Following a carefully crafted definition of a true adherent of the left-hand path based on two main principles--self-deification and challenge to the conventions of "good" and "evil"--the author analyzes many famous and infamous personalities, including H. P. Blavatsky, Faust, the Marquis de Sade, Austin

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Osman Spare, Aleister Crowley, Gerald Gardner, Anton LaVey, and Michael Aquino, and reveals which occult masters were Lords of the Left-Hand Path. Flowers shows that the left-hand path is not inherently evil but part of our heritage and our deep-seated desire to be free, independent, and in control of our destinies.

What is one to make of a group of goddesses that includes a goddess who cuts her own head off, a goddess who sits on a corpse while pulling the tongue of a demon, or a goddess who prefers sex with corpses? Tantra visions of the Divine Famine deals with

Yoga, tantra and other forms of Asian meditation are practised in modernized forms throughout the world today, but most introductions to Hinduism or Buddhism tell only part of the story of how they developed. This book is an interpretation of the history of Indic religions up to around 1200 CE, with particular focus on the development of yogic and tantric traditions. It assesses how much we really know about this period, and asks what sense we can make of the evolution of yogic and tantric practices, which were to become such central and important features of the Indic religious scene. Its originality lies in seeking to understand these traditions in terms of the total social and religious context of South Asian society during this period, including the religious practices of the general population with

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their close engagement with family, gender, economic life and other pragmatic concerns. Light on Life brings the insight and wisdom of Indian astrology to the Western reader. Jyotish, or Indian astrology, is an ancient and complex method of exploring the nature of time and space and its effect upon the individual. Formerly a closed book to the West, the subject has now been clarified and explained by Hart de Fouw and Dr. Robert Svoboda, two experts and long-term practitioners. In Light on Life they have created a complete and thorough handbook that can be appreciated and understood by those with very little knowledge of astrology. Presents the multi-faceted Hindu deity Dattatreya from his Puranic emergence to modern times. This book presents the multi-faceted Hindu deity Dattatreya from his Puranic emergence up to modern times. Dattatreya's Brahmanical portrayal, as well as his even more archaic characterization as a Tantric antinomian figure, combines both Vaisnava Saiva motifs. Over the course of time, Dattatreya has come to embody the roles of the immortal guru, yogin and avatara in a paradigmatic manner. From the sixteenth century Dattatreya's glorious characterization emerged as the incarnation of the trimurti of Brahma, Visnu, and Siva. Although Maharastra is the heartland of Dattatreya devotion, his presence is attested to throughout India and extends beyond the boundaries of Hinduism, being

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met with in Sufi circles and even in Buddhism and Jainism via Nathism. The scarce attention which most Western scholars of Indian religions have paid to this deity contrasts with its ubiquitousness and social permeability. Devotion to Dattatreya cuts through all social and religious strata of Indian society: among his adepts we find yogis, Brahmans, faqirs, Devi worshippers, untouchables, thieves, and prostitutes. This book explores all primary religious dimensions: myth, doctrine, ritual, philosophy, mysticism, and iconography. The comprehensive result offers a rich fresco of Hindu religion as well as an understanding of Marathi integrative spirituality: precisely this complexity of themes constitutes Dattatreya's uniqueness. "I learned a great deal from this book. Although I had known about Dattatreya as an important figure in Hinduism, I had never realized the richness and complexity of this truly Protean deity. As Rigopoulos notes, Dattatreya has been largely neglected by scholars, and this book makes you wonder why, since he is so intriguing. I suspect that this will become a classic in its area, since there really is no comparable work which does so much relating to Dattatreya. In a way, to read the history of Dattatreya as presented by Rigopoulos is to engage the history of Hinduism! Virtually all of the major historical phases and issues are there, from the Vedic period up to the last decade." -- Glen Hayes, Bloomfield College

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This volume explores current images of afterlife/afterdeath and the presence of the dead in the imaginations of the living in Indian and European traditions. Specifically, it focuses on the deepest and most fundamental uncertainty of human existence---the awareness of human mortality, on which depends any assignment of meaning to earthly existence as also to notions of worldly and otherworldly salvation. This central idea is addressed in the literature, arts, audiovisual media and other cultural artefacts of the two traditions. The chapters are based on two main assumptions: First, that one cannot report on the direct experience of death; so it is only possible to speak allegorically of it. Second, in contemporary Western societies, marked by structural atheism, people look at literature, the arts and mass media to study their depiction and reading of traditionally religious questions of disease, death and the Beyond. This is in contrast to Asian civilizations whose preoccupation with death and Beyond is persistent and perhaps central to the civilizations' highest thought. The chapters cover a wide spectrum of disciplinary approaches, from psychoanalysis to religious, anthropological, literary and film studies, from sociology and philosophy to art history, and address issues of unsettling power: comforting illusions of afterlife; the relations between afterlife and fertility; visions of technological immortalization of mankind; the problem of thinking

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about death after the “death of God”; socialist utopias of bodily immortality; fear of Hell and punishment; different concepts in relating the living and the dead; near-death experiences; and cultural practices of spiritualism, occultism and suicide. Clears up misconceptions about Tantra, and explains its pursuit of spiritual power in order to attain enlightenment

The spiritual journey is perhaps the most personal experience of our lives—but does that mean we have to go it alone? With *The Guru Question*, award-winning author Mariana Caplan brings you a unique and much-needed guide for deciding whether you need a dedicated mentor to help illuminate your path to awakening—and if so, how to navigate the deep complexities of the guru-disciple relationship. For those seeking a teacher worthy of their trust and devotion, or anyone who has been frustrated by their experiences with a spiritual teacher, Caplan offers a candid, practical, and daringly personal examination of the student-teacher dynamic, including: Are you ready to be a student? If and when you should consider making a commitment to a spiritual teacher The path of the conscious learner—how to retain your power and autonomy while accepting a mentor's authority Tips for the wounded seeker—the valuable lessons we learn from our encounters with false teachers Spiritual scandals and predatory gurus—guidance for avoiding the inherent pitfalls in

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the student-teacher relationship How to recognize the inner light of divinity as it manifests in the imperfect human guise of your teacher—and yourself In a time when a distrust of authority has been proven to be a healthy trait, we tend to be justifiably suspicious of those who present themselves as gurus and spiritual masters. Drawing upon her knowledge as both a scholar of mysticism and lifelong practitioner of spiritual traditions, Mariana Caplan helps readers develop the discernment that is crucial when seeking an authentic teacher—and reveals the immeasurable rewards that can come from having a trustworthy guide on the spiritual path. AghoraAt the Left Hand of GodRupa Publications India Pvt LimitedAghoraAt the Left Hand of GodBrotherhood of Life Books

Intimate portraits of the life of Hindu Sadhus.

The Aghora trilogy have been embraced world-wide for their frankness in broaching subjects generally avoided and their facility for making the 'unseen' real. We enter the world of Vimalananda who teaches by story and living example.

Human sexuality is a problematic thing. It gets us into trouble, breaks our hearts, involves us in painful compulsive relationships, even transmits deadly diseases. It would surely scare us off, if it were not for its siren call to higher forms of union and moments of bodily bliss. When examined more closely, however, and especially when we turn our gaze inward to see what sexual arousal is doing to our consciousness, we find we

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are in an altered state—a form of "erotic trance" that reveals dimensions of ourselves, our partner, and possibilities for human life that otherwise would not have been discovered. -- Procreative sex forms the foundation of the nuclear family and the glue that holds society together—what we might call the "horizontal" potential of sex. Tantra, however, is about its "vertical" dimension—about "tuning" our awareness to bring higher, spiritual realities into focus. It all begins by mastering our bodily reflexes. This first volume of Tantra and Erotic Trance deals with the preliminary stages of mastery and the transformations of consciousness that they make possible. The whole project is imagined as a ladder with its feet on the earth and its top leaning into Indra's heaven. Each rung represents a new level of awareness, a mastery of what just the rung below had appeared to us as a poorly understood gift.

A complete guide to creating planetary yantras to access their healing and centering benefits • Provides easy-to-follow instructions to create the yantras • Serves as an introduction to active meditation, which focuses the mind while the body is engaged in a meditative activity The tantric art of drawing or painting the nine designs known as yantras is an ancient practice of active meditation that releases positive healing and centering effects. Each of the nine designs corresponds to one of the nine qualities of body and mind essential to well-being: radiance, nourishment, passion, intellect, expansion, bliss, organization, uniqueness, and spirituality. From the basic elements of the square, the circle, and the triangle, dynamic visual meditations unfold as the practitioner

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works clockwise from the outer elements inward toward the central point of stillness, or bindu, the source of happiness within. An accompanying mantra is recited while preparing each yantra to fully engage the senses in the meditative process. Creating the design that “speaks” most to the practitioner enables its unique healing quality to be transmitted. For example, working on the yantra named “Radiance” cultivates optimism and the self-confidence to succeed in one’s endeavors, while “radiating,” or imparting, one’s inner light to others. This workbook provides an important resource for active meditation, a practice revered for its effectiveness in revealing the spiritual underpinnings of everyday life. The active participation of the body in meditation while creating the nine planetary yantras raises to the level of spiritual ritual the practitioner’s intention toward wakefulness and gives access to profound states of healing integration.

A guide for personal exploration of the path to the divine feminine and the spiritual power of women. • Reveals the essential role of women in creating and maintaining the psychic/energetic/emotional landscape of society. • Explores feminine roles and the archetypal model of the Great Goddess from both Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. • Includes exercises, meditations, and visualizations drawn from ancient techniques to assist women with their spiritual awakening and self-realization. The Path of the Priestess takes readers on a journey deep into the heart of the feminine experience. It describes the author's years of first-hand experience in the ancient arts of Tantra, Dzogchen, and Indian and

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Egyptian temple dance and healing, as well as her research into the feminine principle in the mystic teachings of the Alchemists, Hebrew Kabbalists, and Christian Gnostics. Beginning with an analysis of the basic issues and frustrations inherent in contemporary society's conditioning of and expectations for women, readers travel back in time to the age of the great temples, schools, and sacred societies in which women still held and transmitted the spiritual light that nourished all of civilization. Through its mythic and historic tales, descriptions of sacred ritual practices, and teachings on the Goddess traditions, *The Path of the Priestess* provides contemporary women with the means to enter this time-honored path. In keeping with the experientially based teaching methods of these traditions, it also offers exercises and visualizations designed to align women with the powerful, sensuous, and loving energies of the most profound feminine role model that shaped and preserved culture and society--the Great Goddess. The most complete visual record of cannabis culture ever published, this book explores the therapeutic, historical, and cultural uses of this plant in traditions around the world.

Death matters and the matters of death are initially, and to a large extent, the decaying flesh of the corpse. Cremation as a ritual practice is the fastest and most optimal way of dissolving the corpse's flesh, either by annihilation or purification, or a combination. Still, cremation was not the final rite, and the archaeological record testifies that the dead represented a means to other ends – the flesh, and not the least the bones –

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have been incorporated in a wide range of other ritual contexts. While human sacrifices and cannibalism as ritual phenomena are much discussed in anthropology, archaeology has an advantage, since the actual bone material leaves traces of ritual practices that are unseen and unheard of in the contemporary world. As such, this book fleshes out a broader and more coherent understanding of prehistoric religions and funeral practices in Scandinavia by focusing on cremation, corpses and cannibalism.

The aura has been given many names over the centuries-*chi'i*, *prana*, *karnaem*, and *Illiaster*. In fact, it has been documented for over 5,000 years. Astral lights alluded to by ancient Eastern Indians, Chinese and Jewish mystics are attributed to a universal energy permeating all matter. The aura was described in early esoteric writings and later in those of the Rosicrucians, Zen Buddhists, Christian mystics-even in the oral traditions of the American Indians. Now, *Capturing the Aura* brings the science, technology and metaphysics of auric investigation into a concise and readable book for the 21st century-a century that will see continuing integration of science and metaphysics into the MetaScience of the future.

Fifty-five documents in a western-Himalayan language dealing with land, pilgrimage, legality and temple-economy are presented. They explicate how 'lesser states' patronized numerous shrines and the role of Nath-Siddha-ascetics in creating consent-to-rule, and constructing hybridity between the Hindu and Tibetan-Buddhist traditions.

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Chants of a Lifetime offers an intimate collection of stories, teachings, and insights from Krishna Das, who has been called "the chant master of American yoga" by the New York Times. Since 1994, the sound of his voice singing traditional Indian chants with a Western flavor has brought the spiritual experience of chanting to audiences all over the world. He has previously shared some of his spiritual journey through talks and workshops, but now he offers a unique book-with-audio download combination that explores his fascinating path and creates an opportunity for just about anyone to experience chanting in a unique and special way. Chants of a Lifetime includes photos from Krishna Das's years in India and also from his life as a kirtan leader—and the audio that is offered exclusively in the book consists of a number of "private" chanting sessions with the author. Instead of just being performances of chants for listening, the recordings make it seem as if Krishna Das himself is present for a one-on-one chanting session. The idea is for the listener to explore his or her own practice of chanting and develop a deepening connection with the entire chanting experience.

A unique compendium of anthropomorphic personifications of death from historical to present day phenomenon including traditional and non-traditional death encounters told in the words of those who have experienced this growing phenomenon.

The mantra and kirtan (call-and-response devotional chants) of yoga practice sometimes get short shrift in the West because they aren't well understood. These chants are an integral part of most every Eastern

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spiritual practice because they are designed to provide access into the psyche while their underlying mythology helps us understand how our psychology affects daily life. Sacred Sound shares the myths behind the mantras, illuminating their meaning and putting their power and practicality within reach of every practitioner. Each mantra and kirtan includes the Sanskrit, the transliteration, and the translation. Clear retellings of the pertinent myths highlight modern-day applications so that readers discover their own personal connection to the practice. Alanna Kaivalya has refined her teaching over a decade with tens of thousands of diverse audience members. Her unique and popular approach to human connection and self-knowledge turns a time-tested tradition into a versatile and potent tool.

Through shrewd marketing and publicity, Hindu spiritual leaders can play powerful roles in contemporary India as businessmen and government officials. Focusing on the organizations and activities of Hindu ascetics and gurus, Lise McKean explores the complex interrelations among religion, the political economy of India, and global capitalism. In this close look at the business of religion, McKean traces the ideological and organizational antecedents to the Hindu nationalist movement. The Indian state's increasing patronage of Hindu institutions makes competition for its support greater than ever. Using materials from guru's publications, the press, and extensive field research, McKean examines how participation by upper-caste ruling class groups in the Divine Life Society and other Hindu organizations further legitimates their own authority. With a remarkable

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selection of photographs and advertisements showing icons of spirituality used to sell commodities from textiles to cement to comic books, McKean illustrates the pervasive presence of Hindu imagery in India's burgeoning market economy. She shows how gurus popularize Hindu nationalism through imagery such as the goddess, Mother India, and her martyred sons and daughters.

The Self Possessed is a multifaceted, diachronic study reconsidering the very nature of religion in South Asia, the culmination of years of intensive research. Frederick M. Smith proposes that positive oracular or ecstatic possession is the most common form of spiritual expression in India, and that it has been linguistically distinguished from negative, disease-producing possession for thousands of years. In South Asia possession has always been broader and more diverse than in the West, where it has been almost entirely characterized as "demonic." At best, spirit possession has been regarded as a medically treatable psychological ailment and at worst, as a condition that requires exorcism or punishment. In South (and East) Asia, ecstatic or oracular possession has been widely practiced throughout history, occupying a position of respect in early and recent Hinduism and in certain forms of Buddhism. Smith analyzes Indic literature from all ages—the earliest Vedic texts; the Mahabharata; Buddhist, Jain, Yogic, Ayurvedic, and Tantric texts; Hindu devotional literature; Sanskrit drama and narrative literature; and more than a hundred ethnographies. He identifies several forms of possession, including festival,

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initiatory, oracular, and devotional, and demonstrates their multivocality within a wide range of sects and religious identities. Possession is common among both men and women and is practiced by members of all social and caste strata. Smith theorizes on notions of embodiment, disembodiment, selfhood, personal identity, and other key issues through the prism of possession, redefining the relationship between Sanskrit and vernacular culture and between elite and popular religion. Smith's study is also comparative, introducing considerable material from Tibet, classical China, modern America, and elsewhere. Brilliant and persuasive, *The Self Possessed* provides careful new translations of rare material and is the most comprehensive study in any language on this subject. For more than 30 years, *Yoga Journal* has been helping readers achieve the balance and well-being they seek in their everyday lives. With every issue, *Yoga Journal* strives to inform and empower readers to make lifestyle choices that are healthy for their bodies and minds. We are dedicated to providing in-depth, thoughtful editorial on topics such as yoga, food, nutrition, fitness, wellness, travel, and fashion and beauty.

Describing one of the most important practices of hathayoga (khecarimudra), the Khecarividya of Adinatha is presented here to an English-speaking readership for the first time. The author, James Mallinson, draws on thirty Sanskrit works, as well as original fieldwork amongst yogins in India who use the practice, to demonstrate how earlier tantric yogic techniques developed and mutated into the practices of hathayoga.

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Accompanied by an introduction and an extensively annotated translation, the work sheds light on the development of hathayoga and its practices.

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