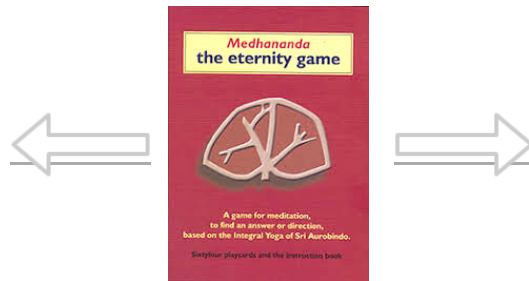


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Shiva's Play with the Shadow

Or how the Eternity Game came about

The god Shiva was sitting on the highest summit of the world mountain, meditating. It became day, it became night, and again day and again night. Then early one morning when the sun had risen above the horizon he looked up and saw his shadow on the ground to his left.

The shadow spoke to him. "Shiva, I pray, give me true being." Shiva smiled, took a golden leaf from the ashwattha, the holy tree of being, and gave it to the shadow.

"Seven times nine," he said to the shadow, "you may toss the leaf into the air between us. If it alights only once with its point towards you, you will have true being."

Seven times nine the shadow tossed up the golden leaf, and seven times nine times the leaf fell with its point towards Shiva, but not once towards the shadow, because only Shiva is true being.

When evening came the disappointed shadow took the golden leaf with him into the underworld, the world of shadows. Here he showed it to the demon kings who dwelt there and told him of his game with Shiva. The demon kings made fun of him. They considered nobody and nothing as more real than themselves, and they were so sure of themselves that they were ready to wager their most precious treasures that they would win the game if the shadow would only play it with them. He agreed to do so. Now in the underworld the leaf had become black, and so when they played, it always pointed towards the blackest, towards the shadow, who even as the mere shadow of Shiva had more being than the demon kings. So the shadow won all the games and all the bountiful treasures which the kings had wagered.

The next morning, loaded with the riches he had won, the shadow returned to Shiva. "I will give you all I have," he said, "only give me true being." From the tree of love Shiva broke a coral-coloured leaf which had the shape of a heart.

"Let us play," he said to the shadow. "If you lose, you will give me the riches of the demon kings, and if you win, you shall have true being."

“All right,” the shadow answered cunningly, “if the tip of the leaf points to you, you will lose.” The shadow did not know that the leaf of love always shows its opening to Shiva, because Shiva is god also in the kingdom of love. So thus it happened that the shadow lost again.

In the evening he slunk away with the coral-coloured leaf into the underworld. Here this leaf also became black and again the shadow won all the games. In the morning he came back to Shiva, put all his treasures at his feet and begged him to play once again. From the tree of life Shiva plucked a green leaf which had the shape of a four-leafed clover. The shadow plucked out one of the four leaves, the leaf of consciousness, so that only three remained.

With confidence he announced, “If one of the three leaves points to you, I have won”. Because the shadow thought he had three chances to one, and since he believed in chance, he thought he was bound to win. But the green leaf always turned to Shiva its empty place, so that he might refill it, because Shiva is also pure consciousness.

Again the shadow lost, and in the evening disappeared into the underworld where he told everything to the demon kings, played his game with them, and won as before.

The next morning he again offered Shiva the treasures of the demon kings and asked for another play. This time Shiva plucked a leaf from the tree of wisdom, a blue diamond-shaped leaf. Still believing in chance the shadow asked, “If one of these points turns only once to me, will I then have true being?” Shiva smiled, and agreed.

Seven times nine the leaf fell in such a way that not once did it point to the shadow. Yet each time it pointed to Shiva, because Shiva is also the fountain of wisdom. In the evening the shadow took the blue leaf and retreated into the shadow world. Here he played again with the demons and the next morning put all his treasure at the feet of Shiva, asking him for a last game. Shiva plucked a leaf from the fifth tree of paradise, the tree of bliss. This leaf was of pure light, and round like a little sun.

To be quite sure now that he would win, the shadow said, “Only when the little stem of this leaf points directly to you, have you won. If it does not point to you, I have won.” Shiva smiled. Seven times nine times the leaf fell between them and seven times nine times its stem indicated Shiva, because Shiva is the origin of all bliss.

Then the shadow understood that there is no such thing as chance, and that only as Shiva's shadow could he participate in Shiva's being – the sole being. Only through Shiva, only as an obedient shadow, could he participate in the love, the consciousness, the wisdom and the bliss of true being. So he begged for permission to remain during the night also at Shiva's feet, and the god granted his prayer. Sixty-four mega-years the shadow sat immobile at the feet of the blissful consciousness and each mega-year he imprinted a leaf with the truth and the power which came to him from Shiva, and sixty-four times Shiva gave his blessing, touching each leaf.

The demon kings continued to play with the four shadow leaves, which in their ignorance of paradise, they called spade, heart, diamond and club. They played with these leaves for the shadowy treasures of the shadow countries.

But the sun, who had seen the true game, taught his son Ikshwaku, the first king of earth's solar dynasty, the secrets of all the symbols of truth and power, and also how to play with them. Ikshwaku passed the game on to his son, who did likewise, so it went from generation to generation. It always belonged to the treasures of the solar dynasty, and thus it came about that

the rishis and the seers, the gods and the yogis, were able to play with the true leaves, the symbols of transformation, which show the way to the eternal seat of being and consciousness and bliss.

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