

# India Again...

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I am in India again. My favorite thing about this is the “again.” The young man who picked me up at the airport to drive me to the village Ashram asked me how many times I’ve come to India. I asked him, “What year were you born?” He said, “1994.” I said, “I’ve been coming to India since before you were born.” A big sign in the airport proclaimed, “Indian at Heart, Global in Spirit.” In addition to describing me, I think it describes a lot of Americans, certainly many yogis.

You don’t have to come to India to dive deep into yoga. You don’t have to come to India to see beauty or to see poverty. India exports its amazing handicrafts to America and around the world, some of the most beautiful clothing and household items you can find anywhere. Every mail order catalog I receive has one or many things from India. Why? Because they sell well.

But it is not the incredible wealth of India’s architecture, art, jewelry and silks that I have come to enjoy. It is not the towering mountains or sacred rivers that draw me here, as much as I love them. It is not the astounding temples that call to me, though they shelter me as they sheltered the sages we treasure. It is the sages themselves that draw me here, both ancient and modern sages. The sages and the teachings that nurtured Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau. They who laid down out the science that makes our practices work.

So I climb into the taxi for a two-hour car ride after I get off the 14-hour plane trip. I confess that I like the direct flight. I arrive at midnight and get up at 4 am to go to the shrine of such a sage, Bhagavan Nityananda, located in the small village of Ganeshpuri. At 4:20 am, they blow the conch, ring the bells and pound on the kettledrum, while waving candle flames in front of his golden statue, which sits on top of the marble slab covering his tomb.

Is this yoga or is it religion? I don’t care. I come from a society that has religious pluralism in its constitution. I take it seriously. But yoga helped me get real about that, along with lots of other things. What I know is that, when they pour water on His head, it feels like it is washing mine. Better than any other intoxicant, this leaves an indelible imprint of consciousness on my mind, and it has only gotten better over time. I am home — again.