Afterword

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I have the honor of saying the last word about David Shulman here; the ending, because I was there at the beginning of his mature academic career and so have known David longer than any of the other contributors to this volume. I met him in London in 1972 when he was newly married to Eileen, before his first son Eviatar (Tari) was born in 1973. David was twenty-four, and I was thirty-two. (My own son, Mike, born in late 1971, always delighted in calling Tari, barely two years his junior, "Baby Tari"). I met David just four years after I had received my Harvard PhD in 1968; he received his PhD from SOAS in 1976. He had come to London from Israel and didn't like cold, wet, dark, aloof England at all for some reason; he was impatient to get back to the land "wo die Citronen blühn." Iowa, Israel, India, the places he loves all have to begin with an "I" and tend to be warm or at least sunny.

So he became my first PhD student. Of course, I was not his first teacher. He had already studied in Jerusalem with scholars who remained important to him all his life. And in London, I shared him with John Ralston Marr, his official dissertation advisor, who taught him Tamil and Carnatic music and much else. His other great teacher was Velcheru Narayana Rao, who invited David, in 1982, to study Telugu with him in Madison. That partnership has yielded some of David's and Narayana Rao's greatest books.

And David had other teachers too. When we were together on Gorée Island, Senegal, in 2004, while I was desultorily brushing up my high school French, David set out to learn Wolof, the native language of Senegal. He found a little book, and then he found a woman who made jewelry and who taught him to speak quite well. When he introduced me to her and said I was his teacher, she brightly replied, "I am his teacher too," and indeed she was.

I once asked him why he referred to me as his teacher, and he said, "because you taught me to love the myths." He certainly does love them, and that is his primary way of reading, to see the beauty in them, and the wisdom, and the humor. But

he didn't stop there. He went on to learn and to teach that myths are historically embedded, philosophically tangled, that they have political meanings as well as religious, and that some of those meanings are cruel and bigoted. And yet, the main reason to read them is because they are beautiful, and to render that beauty in any translations that you try to make. This is all the more true of his reading of poetry, where his passion for Carnatic music guides him to hear the singing voices inside the poetry and brings that music into the English approximation of the meaning. His very personal method of reading other literary texts differs from text to text, as he bonds with individual authors and seems to be able to imagine himself coming up, all by himself, with the ideas in the texts he is reading. And so he waxes philosophical, or psychoanalytic, or romantic, or tragical-comical-historical, or even pious, as he weaves through so many texts, in so many languages and genres.

When I first met David, I didn't realize how extraordinary he was. True, he already knew Arabic and Persian and Sanskrit, and Greek and Latin, and French and German, and Russian. (And Hebrew: though it is often an invisible thread, a great influence on his unique way of thinking is the fact that Hebrew is his second first language; his poetry in Hebrew has won several awards.) True, he soon began to present me with chapter after chapter of his dissertation, abounding in original ideas, each documented by numerous perfectly translated Sanskrit and Tamil texts, in flawlessly expressed and punctuated English. But I just thought, "Oh, teaching graduate students is going to be so easy!"

So that was how it began. After he left London, David went places I could never follow, to learn things that I myself not only had never taught him but could never learn as he knew them. He became my teacher. From *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition* (1980, his revised dissertation) and *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (1985), I learned how fascinating the link between Sanskrit and Tamil mythologies was. From *When God is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Kṣetrayya and Others* (1993, with Narayana Rao and A.K. Ramanujan), I learned how much more subtle the sexual mythology of Shiva was than I had realized from my work on the Puranas. The subjectivity of *Spring, Heat, Rains: A South Indian Diary* (2008) inspired me to find a more personal voice in my own writing. *More than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India* (2012) made me see a text I thought I knew well, the *Yogavasiṣṭha*, as part of a far more complex mythology of the real and unreal than I had understood. And on and on.

Nor was I alone in this trajectory of constant intellectual revolution that David inspired. *Tamil Temple Myths* and *The King and the Clown* established a new field within the study of Indian religions, the study of local temple myths, particularly local Tamil myths, where previously the field had been dominated by the study of pan-Indian stories and Sanskrit texts. With *When God is a Customer*, he and his coauthors seeded another entirely new field in another linguistic area, Telugu, establishing what was in effect a new body of literature and history in English

translation. Narayana Rao and David (for Ramanujan died tragically that same year, 1993) went on to produce many studies of Telugu literature and history and superb translations, such as Peddana's *The Story of Manu* for the Murty Classical Library of India (2015), and there is more in the pipeline. More recently he has immersed himself in Malayalam. There is no end to it.

And so David has encouraged a whole generation of scholars to find new meanings in the poetry and folk traditions of south India, blasting open the Orientalist bubble. It was as if scholars of European literature had studied only the French—Flaubert and the Chanson de Roland—and suddenly someone said, "Look, here's Dante and Boccaccio!" ("And Rilke!" "And Lermontov!"). His books have changed the way Indologists go about their own work and educate their students. Scholars throughout the world greet him with reverence, gratitude, and affection.

His work with Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Narayana Rao (in *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka-Period Tamil Nadu* [1992] and *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India* [2002]) has had resonances far beyond the bounds of Indian studies, for they have invented a new model of interdisciplinary scholarship, combining history, literary studies, religious studies, and anthropology in a seamless integration. Often they wrote each sentence together, rather than resorting to the patched-together piecemeal collaborations, with one chapter by one person and another by another, that are usually produced by such enterprises. David also published books of this genre in collaboration with Don Handelman and Yigal Bronner, and edited books with S.N. Eisenstadt and Reuven Kahane; with Shaul Shaked and Guy Stroumsa; and with Galit Hasan-Rokem, Debbie Thiagarajan, Shalva Weil, Yigal Bronner, and Gary Tubb. As director of the Institute for Advanced Studies, in Jerusalem, from 1992 to 1998, he inspired many scholars to join him in a series of wide-ranging international seminars (which he continued to run even after stepping down from his position). Those who have been fortunate enough to work within his great circle have dared to reach out into areas that they had not ventured to before, producing new, original work.

David's list of publications is not only unusually long but amazingly varied in genres and disciplines, including literature, religion, history, politics, folklore, ritual, myth, translation, exegesis, art history, comparative studies, anthropology, performance studies, poetry, and music. *The Hungry God* (1993), for instance, is a model for the right way to do comparative religion, a stunning comparison of the story of Abraham and Isaac and the story of the Hindu god who demands that a couple kill and cook their son for him. At the time I am writing now, David is going around the world introducing unsuspecting audiences to troops of dancers/actors trained in Kudiyattam, Kerala's living tradition of performance of Sanskrit dramas.

How does he do it all? People joke about the MacArthur awards being genius awards, but I do truly think that David Shulman, who won one of those, is a

genius, and not merely because of his uncanny knack for learning languages and memorizing whole bodies of literature, which is just the obvious part of his brilliance. He has the sweetness and generosity of a true genius, a love of life that inspires all who come in contact with him, and a confident modesty about his own achievements that immediately relaxes the awe with which most people generally first approach him. This spirit pervades his academic work; it is the quality of a man who is more mensch than saint, though a good bit of both. His *Menschlichkeit* as well as his saintliness are tempered by his scholarly rigor and his poetic gifts, and both are grounded, like everything he does, in his passionate love of human beings, a love whose center is his family, Eileen and their three boys and the ever-expanding roster of allegedly uniquely talented grandchildren.

His scholarship and his activism combined in an extraordinary book that he published in 2007: *Dark Hope: Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine*, a chronicle of his work as a peace activist, a founding member of the joint Israeli-Palestinian movement Ta'ayush. Ta'ayush, which takes its name from the Arabic for "living together," works actively to try to prevent Israeli "settlers" from taking away the land that belongs to Palestinian farmers and shepherds; its members deliver food and medical supplies to Palestinian villages and accompany the farmers to their lands, often clashing with police and armed settlers. When David won the Israel Prize in 2016, he donated his NIS 75,000 prize money to Ta'ayush, a fact that was known to Netanyahu as he obligatorily shook David's hand. The great success of *Dark Hope*, and that of the series of articles on the same subject that he has published in the *New York Review of Books*, has inspired a second volume, *Freedom and Despair: Notes from South Hebron Hills* (2018). This work ranks high in the list of the myriad things that David has done in his life that will surely grant him instant access to heaven.

Like everything else that he has written, *Dark Hope* and *Freedom and Despair* were driven by a deep compassion for another culture and a brilliant gift for making his readers share that compassion. David has always managed somehow, in both his person and his work, to erase the imaginary line between work and person, more precisely between the solitary, solipsistic academic life in which we scholars spend so much time alone with our texts, and the world in which we interact with human beings—our students, our colleagues, and, if we're David Shulman, the Palestinian farmers and the forces threatening them.

He pours his understanding as a student and lover of Indian literature into every report he writes on the terrible events transpiring in the West Bank. And he brings his experience of the world and that conflict into everything he writes about Indian texts and history. Where we mortals experience a boundary, however permeable, between the silent, peaceful communion of the archive and the difficult, often tragic world of interactions with other human beings—for him there is no divide. This is his greatness.