

## IN A TRANCE

When someone is in an ecstatic trance, they are no longer in touch with the everyday world. Some believe that a person in such a state is experiencing a reality much different from the everyday world. People who experience these mystical states can be of any religion or ethnic group. Every religious group has mystics who achieve very high states of consciousness. Some people have made fun of mystics and thought them very odd because these trances can not be explained in a scientific manner. Scientists and religious people are working to provide new models of understanding that will explain this behavior. Even people who do not consider themselves religious have reported them.

early years of her career to performing as a jazz musician, as had her late husband, John Coltrane. When Alice turned 31, she left the music business and entered a period of spiritual isolation. When it was over she had revolutionized her life and become a swami. She soon organized the Vedantic Center in Los Angeles.

Coltrane wrote several books and her group bought land in rural southern California to establish Sai Anatman Ashram for its members. The Vedantic Center there is unique because it is one of the very few Hindu organizations drawing members predominantly from the African-American community. There are many ashrams and centers throughout the United States with black members, but Coltrane's center is unique in being led by a woman serving a largely black ashram.

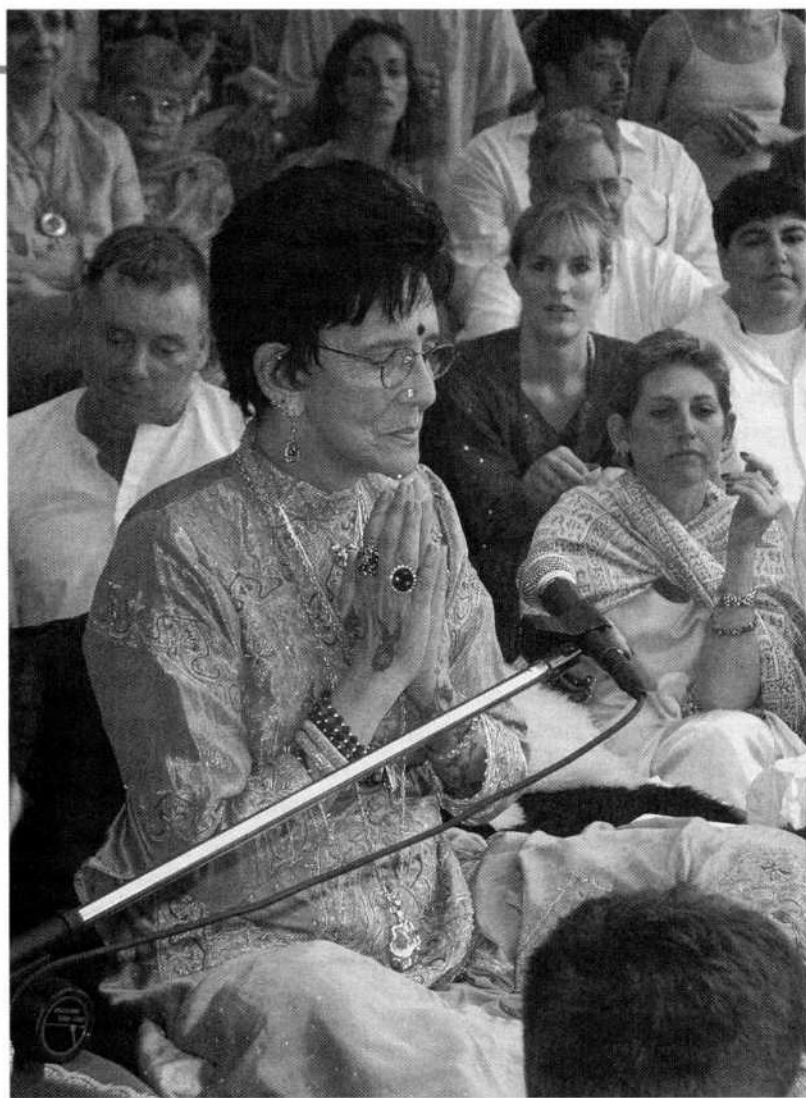
## Joyce Green (b. 1940)

Joyce Green was born into a working class family in Brooklyn, New York. She lost her mother when 13 years old. Her first human rights teachers were four homeless black people she met living under the boardwalk at Coney Island. It was from friendships formed with them that she learned, "There are no throwaway people."

A mother of three, married, and living in the suburbs, her life—once quite ordinary—unfolded in a spectacular way. In an attempt to lose weight, she went to the gym and enrolled in a yoga class. Learning new ways to breathe (*prana*) helped her to lose weight. Much to her surprise, more than her weight began to change. Through her new breathing patterns she experienced visions while in ecstatic trance. Over the following years, she spiritually evolved into Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati, known simply as Ma. She started The Kashi Foundation, an organization with medical, educational, and spiritual projects around the world.

In 1976, Ma and her students moved to Florida and established the Neem Karoli Baba Kashi Ashram, a multi-religious community committed to helping and teaching others. Ma helps the poor and the sick who cannot take care of themselves. She is united with other major spiritual leaders in gaining awareness of the plight of innocent children, women, and men who are victimized. One of Ma's religious principles is that all religious paths lead home to God. In Hinduism, this means devotional prayer (*bhakti*), yogas, karma, and meditation.

One of the most unique projects Ma and her group started was the Ma Jaya River School in Florida, for children of all faiths and ethnic



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***A different path***

*New York homemaker and mother Joyce Green became the important American Hindu teacher and community leader Ma Jaya. Her groups work in education and in taking care of people suffering from disease.*

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groups. It is a private school that emphasizes both academics and spirituality in an environment of love, caring, and non-judgment. The school combines service to others, such as helping at Mary's House, a home for babies with AIDS, and other facilities. Through their Service Learning Program, the River School serves 1,200 people in nursing homes, hospitals, and assisted living facilities. More than 10,000 people a year are touched by these students, who have learned that service to humanity is a celebration of human compassion. The programs at River House also include college prep classes, problem-solving, creative arts, and more.