

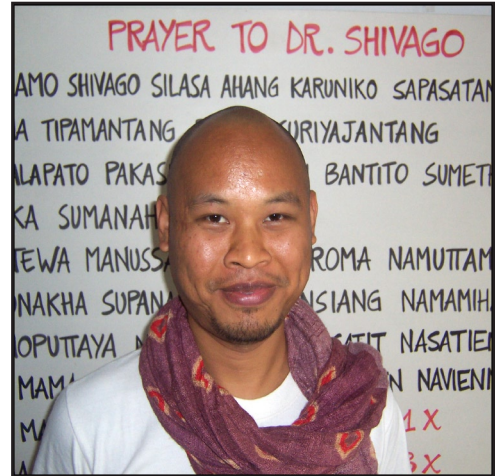
# Om Namo...what ?

## By Bob Haddad

Every serious practitioner of traditional Thai massage is familiar with the famous prayer to the founding Father of Thai massage. We may recite it silently before practicing, or aloud in a group before beginning our lessons. But what is that ancient Pali chant really saying?

Don't ask the average Thai person! Pali is an ancient language from India, and although some Thai people still chant in Pali, it's much like when Christians would recite prayers in Latin, without really knowing what they were saying.

In addition, many hundreds of years of transliteration have made it difficult to understand the meaning of the original Pali text. Compare these two translations which are quite different from one another. Which one do you like best?

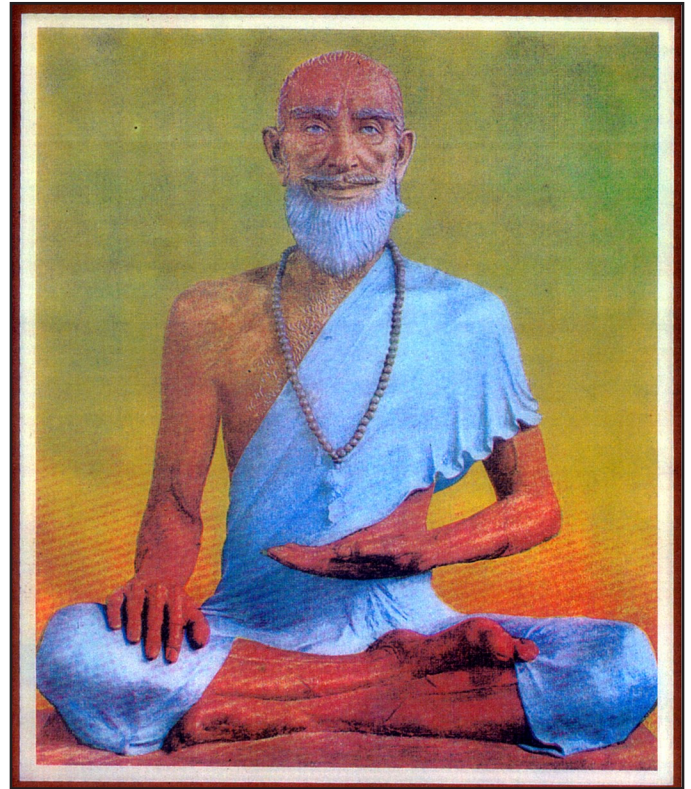


Thai massage teacher Therdchai Chumphoo-pong (Mac) in front of the Om Namo written on a markerboard in his classroom in downtown Chiang Mai. Photo by Bob Haddad

**We pray to you Shivago,  
you who led a saintly life  
We pray that you bring us knowledge  
and that you allow our prayers  
to bring us the true medicine of the Universe  
We pray that you will bring us health  
and all good things  
The God of healing lives in the heavens,  
and we live in the world below  
We pray to you  
so that heaven may be reflected  
in the world below,  
and that healing medicine  
may encircle the world  
We pray for the one we touch,  
that he will be happy,  
and that all illness will be released from him.**

**All homage to you Shivago,  
you who established  
the basic rules and precepts  
I pray that everything may come through you;  
kindness, wealth, and medicine  
I pray to you.  
You bring light to me,  
just like the sun and the moon  
You have perfect wisdom  
and you know many things.  
We respect you.  
You are without defilement,  
and you are near to enlightenment  
We all come to pray to you.  
I pray to you. I pray to the Buddha.  
I pray that with your help,  
all sickness and disease may be released  
from the ones whom I touch.**

**Om Namō Shivago  
Silasa Ahang  
Karuniko Sapasatanang  
Osata Tipa Mantang  
Gomalapato Paka Sesi  
Wantami Bantito  
Sumetaso Aroha  
Sumana Homi  
Piyo Tewa Manussanang  
Piyo Proma Namutamō  
Piyo Nakha Supananang  
Pininsiang Namō Mihang  
Namō Puttaya  
Navien Navien  
Nasatit Nasatien  
Ehi Mama  
Navien Nawe  
Napai Tanvien  
Navien Mahaku  
Ehi Mama  
Piyong Mama  
Namō Puttaya  
Na-a Na-wa Roh-ha Payati Vinasanti**



An artist's rendering of an Indian-influenced Jivaka.



The altar to Jivaka Kumarbhacca (Shevaga Komarapaj) at the Old Medicine Hospital in Chiang Ma, where public prayers to the deity are held twice daily. *Photo by Bob Haddad*