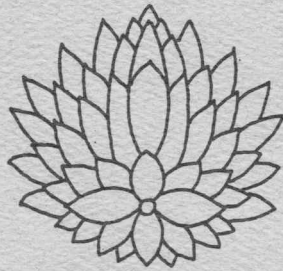


# GURUKULAM

VOLUME X • 1994

FIRST QUARTER





# GURUKULAM

VOLUME X • 1994

FIRST QUARTER

- 3 PRACTICE WHAT, PRACTICE WHY? by Nancy Yeilding
- 5 EXPERIENTIAL AESTHETICS AND IMPERIENTIAL  
TRANSCENDENCE: Commentary on Narayana Guru's  
*Svānubhavaḡīti Śatakam* by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 12 THE KATĦA UPANIṢAD  
Translation and Commentary by Muni Narayana Prasad
- 15 THE PAST ALONGSIDE by Woodrow de Castro
- 16 THE SCIENCE OF HARMONIOUS UNION  
Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Śastra*  
by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 22 NEW STRUCTURES: TRADITIONAL TEXTURES
- 24 BIOGRAPHY OF NARAYANA GURU by Nancy Yeilding
- 30 THE GURU by Peter Oppenheimer
- 32 THE ALLEGORIES AND SYMBOLISM IN  
VĀLMĪKI'S RĀMĀYAṂA by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 40 MY CANDLE by Rohit Remesh
- 41 YOUR CHOICE by Peggy Grace Luke
- 42 ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN  
Tori Luke
- 43 EAST-WEST UNIVERSITY REPORT AND  
NARAYANA GURUKULA NEWS
- 44 PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

# GURUKULAM

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITION

GURUKULAM is published by Narayana Gurukula and the East-West University of Unitive Sciences. Its policy is that enunciated by Narayana Guru when he convened the Conference of World Religions at Alwaye, South India, in 1924: "Our purpose is not to argue and win, but to know and let know."

NARAYANA GURUKULA is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax-deductible.

FOUNDER: Nataraja Guru  
GURU and HEAD: Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati  
REGULATING SECRETARY: Muni Narayana Prasad

PUBLICATIONS BOARD: Deborah Buchanan, Sraddha Durand, Scott Teitsworth, Robert Tyson, Nancy Yeilding.

EDITOR: Nancy Yeilding  
PRODUCTION STAFF: Deborah Buchanan, Sraddha Durand, Desiree Hunter, Bill Hughes, Calder Hughes, Patrick Hughes, Andy Larkin, Suellen Larkin, Susan Plum, Nancy Richmond, Fred Simpson, Emily Teitsworth, Scott Teitsworth, Robert Tyson, Indra Vas, Nancy Yeilding.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: Yearly: \$16.00 for four issues. For outside USA add \$4.00 for surface mail, \$12.00 for air mail. Write to: GURUKULAM, 8311 Quail Hill Road, Bainbridge Island, WA, 98110, USA. In India write to: Narayana Gurukula, Srinivasapuram P.O., Varkala, Kerala, 695145, India.

PRINTED at Island Gurukula Aranya, Bainbridge Island, Washington, USA.

COVER: *Compassion* by Peggy Grace Luke

Printed on Recycled Paper  
With Soy Based Ink

# Practice What, Practice Why?

Recently a friend asked me: "A lot of people I know are talking about their meditation practice. What do they mean? Am I missing something important?" Another friend, saying he hadn't been doing his morning practice regularly, mused, "Is it really something being done or not being done?" Still another friend said, "I need to do something more consistently to help me keep from being swallowed by my concerns about work and money."

I was pondering their questions early one morning when there was a knock at my door. A man in loose robes stood there peacefully, not speaking, but bowing politely, even reverently, to greet me. When I opened the door to receive him, he slipped off his shoes and came in. Moving with a fluid grace, he walked across the room and sat cross-legged on a pillow on the floor with his back very straight. Still without speaking, he closed his eyes, took a few slow, deep breaths and then simply sat quietly, breathing peacefully.

I was also drawn to be quiet, to sit with my legs crossed and eyes closed. I remembered standing on the edge of a hill in India with Guru, looking across a valley to distant hills and clouds as he softly intoned: "The grass is as if in meditation; the trees are as if in meditation; the hills are as if in meditation; the clouds are as if in meditation; let us also be in meditation and be filled with their peace. *AUM, śantiḥ, śantiḥ, śantiḥ.*"

As I sat, I was aware of my breath slowly moving through my nostrils, in and out of my lungs, rhythmically, gently, effortlessly. Occasionally I wondered who my visitor was and why he had come, but soon my questions would subside into the peace that surrounded us. Again and again I was aware of the simple in and out movement of my breath.

When I opened my eyes after some time, my visitor was gone, having left even more quietly than he had come. Early the next morning, when I heard a sound at the

door, I knew it must be him. I welcomed him in and searched his face for a sign that he might speak and answer my questions about who he was, from where and why he had come. But he just smiled gently as he sat down and closed his eyes. Once again, I also sat, enfolded by the serene silence. And once again, he had slipped away before I re-opened my eyes. He came the next morning at the same time, and then the next, until I came to expect him each day. I looked forward to sitting quietly together, without any expectations, without any program except to sit peacefully in silence.

But some mornings, though I sat still, I found that my thoughts were racing, going from one thing to another. At other times, they seemed like a whirlpool, going around and around a spot of anger, frustration or pain. Then I heard a voice so soft that I wasn't sure if someone was really speaking:

*Many thoughts will crowd into your mind. Don't dwell on thoughts of good or bad. Let your thoughts come and go, without getting involved in them or trying to suppress them. Think the unthinkable. In other words, think no-thinking. Meditation is not a way to enlightenment, nor is it a method of achieving anything at all. It is peace and blessedness itself. It is the actualization of wisdom, the ultimate truth of the oneness of all things.*

Though I puzzled about the meaning of thinking no-thinking, the voice felt like a trustworthy friend leading me by the hand back into serenity. As usual, when I opened my eyes, my visitor was gone, and I was left wondering whether I had indeed heard him speak. Who he was continued to be a mystery, but one that receded in importance compared to the simple reality of beginning each day sitting together.

Then one day I was in great distress. When the knock came at the door, I didn't want to answer, and turned my head aside, hoping to conceal the tears in my eyes. When he sat down, I started to walk

away, feeling too miserable to sit quietly. Then he smiled and pulled a book off my shelf, pointing to a section which read:

*When you feel disagreeable it is better for you to sit. When you are sitting in the middle of your own problem, which is more real to you: your problem or you yourself? The awareness that you are here, right now, is the ultimate act.*

So I sat as usual, but I doubted that it was possible to have the same experience of peace. Then I found that the pattern of sitting quiet day after day had built up an inner habit. Despite my distress, I found that my attention was naturally drawn to my breath, which slowly became calmer as I watched it. Although I was jolted now and again by bad feelings, I kept finding it possible to go back to the simple in and out of my breath.

As days passed, the answer to the question "Which is more real to you, your problem or you yourself?" became clearer. In the quiet moments of sitting, I was more real than any problem I had, but that 'I' was not exactly the 'I' with which I was usually identified. That social identity didn't cease, but it became absorbed into a spread-out sense of being which at the same time had the quality of an immediate presence. Its limitlessness meant that the moments of absorption gave a great sense of freedom; its immediacy gave them a vibrant allure. One morning, I thought I heard the soft voice again:

*In your meditation, you yourself are the mirror reflecting the solution of your problems. The human mind has absolute freedom within its true nature. You can attain this freedom intuitively. Don't work towards freedom; but allow the work itself to be freedom.*

But then came days when it was a real effort to sit and it did not feel at all like freedom. Sometimes it was physically painful. At others, it felt like an annoying waste of time when I thought of all the things that needed to be done, friends and family who were depending on me. Thinking no-thinking sometimes seemed silly and sometimes loomed as an impossible goal. But the serene presence of my daily visitor in itself encouraged me to

continue sitting calmly morning after morning. And now and again as I sat, it seemed to me that I heard soft words of encouragement:

*When you want to rest, move your body slowly, and quietly stand up. Practice this meditation in the morning or in the evening or at any leisure time during the day. You will soon realize that your mental burdens are dropping away one by one, and that you are gaining an intuitive power previously undreamed of.*

*There have been thousands upon thousands of people who have practiced meditation and obtained its fruits. Don't doubt its possibilities because of the simplicity of its method. If you can't find the truth right where you are, where else do you think you will find it?*

*Life is short, and no one knows what the next moment will bring. Cultivate your mind while you still have the opportunity. You will soon discover the treasure of wisdom, which in turn you can share abundantly with others, bringing them happiness and peace.*

As time passed, I became less and less sure that I really was receiving a visitor early each morning. It still seemed as though he came in and sat silently, but my sense of the presence of another person grew fainter and fainter. But whenever I sat down with my eyes closed, I felt far from alone. It was as though I was enveloped not only by the serenity of my visitor, but that of the great seers of all ages. The peace I was finding "within" paradoxically was like a vast ocean in which I floated along with all other beings, all other things, no longer separate or unknown. I thought I heard the soft voice one last time:

*Truth is perfect and complete in itself. It is not something newly discovered; it has always existed. Truth is not far away. It is nearer than near. There is no need to attain it, since not one of your steps leads away from it.*

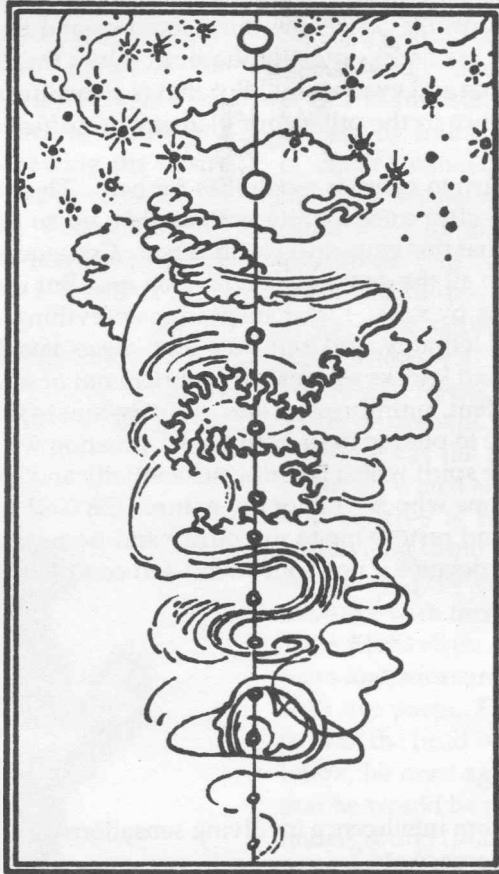
*Nancy Yeilding*

The spoken words are those of Zen master Dogen from Stephen Mitchell's *The Enlightened Mind*, and the written words are from Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*.

*Svānubhāvagīti Śatakam:*  
Experiential Aesthetics and  
Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by  
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



*Verse 73*

Along with the earth and fire and the water that flows  
and the winds filling the sky,  
without meandering in confusion,  
please constantly come and give me  
Your endearing companionship; that is enough for me.

The five elements and the triple modalities have become my strange bedfellows. No two of them are alike. Nor is there anyone among them which I can look upon as a kindred spirit. The earth in me is earth-earthy. It came from the dust. It is always wondering when it can again crumble and return to dust. It is so gross that it sometimes brings the same heaviness into me. For example, when I am tired it is as if my limbs and body and even head have become like heavy granite. If by chance I have gone into deep-sleep, the earth in me takes malicious pleasure in squeezing out of me even the pleasure of a dream.

The water in me knows only how to go down and down and down. It can make an ascending step only when it is over-heated. Its molecules are not cohesive. It is always disturbed on its surface. The only surface I know is my conscious mind. The slightest change in my environment destabilizes the serenity of my mind. It is hard to keep water safe and pure. Muddy and impure water can easily flow into me and make me murky, too.

The fire in me has almost succeeded in making my spirit mimic its passions. If the fire has caught hold of my feelings, the wind is playing with my thoughts. It carries my mind into bits and fragments in all directions making me listless most of the time. Only the *ākāśa* (ether) in me aspires to be free and evanescent. But that is also quite temperamental. Any disturbance in the other four elements is sufficient to make it echo in resentment.

I cannot turn to nature's modalities for help. The *sattva* of nature brings to me such clear and definite notions that are so good that they make me believe that this empirical world is real. Consequently I become very responsible to all the demands made upon me. But in the very next moment I am stung by *rajas*. I start suspecting everything, including my own sanity. The lethargy and self-pity that *tamas* lavishes upon me makes me stupid and knocks all sense of propriety out of me.

O omniscient, omnipresent and compassionate God, how and why did You agree to put me in such an unjust situation when I have also a spark of the same spirit which belongs substantially and wholly to You? You are the only one who is truly of my nature. Oh God, lay Your healing hand on me, and restore me to my purity and perfection. Allow me to be Your faithful devotee if not Your friend and comrade.

#### Verse 74

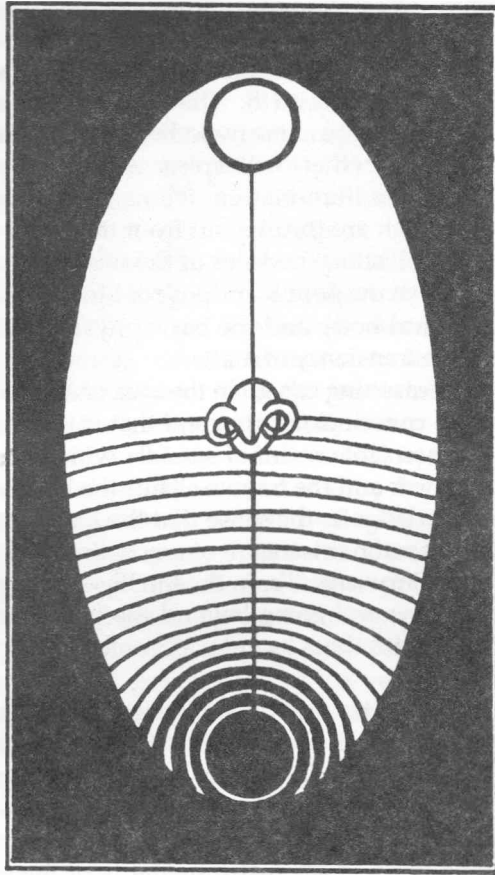
Ranging from intelligence involving sensations  
such as fragrance etc.

and culminating in non-awareness,  
is the self-shining principle, *cit*.

From the perishing earth to the cosmic obscuration of darkness,  
everything is inertial matter, *jada*.

Everything is included in these two categories.





This verse is very central to Vedanta. It is one of the main contributions of Narayana Guru to the philosophy of Vedanta. Vedanta philosophy is attributed to Bādarāyana who is also called Vyāsa in mythical legends. In Vyāsa's *Bhagavad Gīta*, he devotes at least two chapters to explain the distinction between inertial matter (*jada*) and spirit (*cit*). One chapter is "The Unitive Vision of the Knower and the Known" (13), and the other is "The Unitive Vision of the Divine and the Demonic" (16).

Śankara and Rāmānuja tried their best to hold to a monistic philosophy of the non-dual. In spite of their valiant attempts, the initial premises always remained divided between spirit and matter. Nobody made any definite categorization of the two until Narayana Guru. He began with the most familiar experience of reasoning. Knowledge is analogically compared to light, and consequently ignorance is equated with darkness.

This analogy has one short-coming. As the Self is self-luminous, most people think of it as similar to a burning light or a luminous object like the sun. Even though sunlight enables the eyes to discern objects, the sun has no knowledge of itself nor that it is illuminating anything. Factually speaking, bright objects like the sun and the phenomena of light are

also to be considered as part of the material world. The light of reasoning is light-like only in the sense that it enables the reasoning faculty to focus its attention in a delimited field.

Spiritual illumination is to be discerned in terms of the power of reasoning. Partial manifestation of it comes in sensory experiences. An extreme point in the hierarchy of the manifestation of the spirit commences from the olfactory principle of sensing odor. Odor is said to be the quality of the physical element earth. The five elements as conceived by Kapila constitute the most ingenious hypothesis put forward to link earth with matter and *ākāśa* (the ether) with spirit. Although odor comes within the purview of spirit's illumination, its main dynamic comes from physical molecules which are thrown out from the disintegrating clod of earth to bombard the olfactory nodules of the nose. Thus the references to earth and *vasana* serve the double purpose of hinting at both the impermanence of the physical body and the basic physiological conditioning which comes from the transiency of matter.

The farthest reasoning can go in the area of awareness is intuitive flashes. The flight of consciousness beyond that is transcendence, and it takes one to the indiscernible realm of *samādhi* which allows no distinction between the knower and the known. Thus the highest knowledge is on par with non-knowledge in the sense that the knower neither has any egoistic recognition of self nor is aware of any delimited embodied entity to be known. Hence Guru says "From the intelligence implied in reasoning involving sensations and going beyond the pale of intuition, to the transcendent identity with the Absolute, all comes under the category of the spirit (*cit*)."

On the side of matter (*jada*), the physical element earth is the first to be enumerated. It is introduced first as *kṣiti*, "that which is intrinsically deteriorating or is unstable in its integrity." Transformation of matter is a principle which is known to modern science. In terms of consciousness, other aspects of matter are even less known or more veiling of the spirit which is articulating through the instrumentality of the elements. How exactly the element water carries with it the several shades of the palate to evoke the sensation of taste and how that manifests as the very foundation of the culture of humanity is a mysterious realm.

The greatest riddle in descriptive psychology is the form which can transcend the limitations of dimension and color and is basic to gestaltation. We are held captive by discernment. Our social life is established on the pleasures and pains of contact experienced at the skin level. Although the cutative power is only skin deep, the entire edifice of human social structure stems from that flimsy sensation. The *ākāśa*, which is neither matter-like nor spirit-like, is the mystery of all mysteries. That is the cosmic womb to which all phenomena belong. The characteristic of darkness in matter is not to be taken as physical darkness but the obscuration by which causes are guarded as indiscernible secrets.

Thus, in either case, from a non-entity we move to an extreme degree of hierarchical ascent or descent. In the case of spirit we ascend. In the case of matter we descend. The power of discrimination that can be exercised in discerning between matter and spirit is most central in the study of Vedanta and is cryptically stated in this verse.

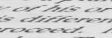


*Verse 75*

To the whole world this classification is very satisfactory.  
Even ancient seers like Suka agree that such  
understanding simplifies comprehension.  
Many truths are handed over hierarchically.  
The magic of the Lord's creation is great.

Philosophers are drawn to many conclusions about the totality of being to which they belong. In science it is customary to reduce truth to a single principle. Physicists want to think of one energy. Chemists think of one unitary scheme which can proliferate with quantitative and qualitative changes. Biologists think of one life that evolves, grows and multiplies into many faceted forms. Among philosophers there are monists, qualified monists, dualists, and pluralists. Mystics also speak in terms of one or two or many.

The idea of one or two or many shouldn't be disturbing to anyone, but human nature is such that until a problem is resolved and definite conclusions are drawn, we are not satisfied. In the previous verse



and the present one, Narayana Guru takes up this problem and gives his conclusive decision about it. Philosophers before him such as Śankara and Rāmānuja, in their zeal to uphold a certain Upaniṣadic conclusion that the Absolute is non-dual and One alone is, fashioned their philosophical systems to suit this teaching. In Sanskrit the teaching is "*ekam eva advaitam brahma* - One alone, non-dual Absolute."

It is not difficult to argue in any direction and intellectually arrive at metaphysical conclusions. But an individual person has certain special features which cannot be explained away. One has a body which is substantially unitive and yet physically undergoes changes throughout one's life. The body is equipped with organs of perception and organs of action. The sense organs bring various kinds of stimuli from outside, and the organism as a whole and in part responds to such stimuli in terms of pain, pleasure or indifference.

A person is drawn to what brings happiness and turns away from what threatens to bring unhappiness. He or she has a subjective consciousness with a biophysical and biochemical ground. From that source, provocations and affinities come which prompt a person to act, i.e., to walk toward an object which attracts, flee from an object of threat, or stand firm where the environment is suitable. One stretches one's hands in love, fondles, embraces, and uses many talents to help those whom one loves. One uses the same hands to push away, to fight or even to kill if one is pushed to that contingency. One is often tempted to express oneself by talking. If one is in a cheerful mood, one wants to sing. When provoked, one goes into silence or shouts angry words. One can praise or abuse with one's tongue. Of all the organs of action the one which is sparingly used but most purposeful in preserving the species is the regenerative organ. The pleasure that one derives directly and indirectly from the genitals is more than all the other pleasures combined. Virtues and vices both stem from the desires related to the pleasures of the genitals. The excretory organ needs to function regularly every day to keep the body free of dirt.

When one is habitually bound by all these requirements which cannot be assigned to a proxy, one has to make a clear distinction between oneself and the rest. What is most central to a person's self is the ego or I-consciousness. Whatever does not belong to it is 'the other'. Thus it is most natural for a person to think of the self and 'the other'.

The self is the cognizing consciousness which has its own light to be aware of itself and 'the other'. This is what Guru calls *cit*. It is the knower. The known can be other persons with their own consciousness, but from the point of view of one's own self, 'the other' is the known and is relegated to the non-self of objects. In the previous verse Narayana Guru treated it as *jada* and has given the characteristic difference between *cit* and *jada*.

Life is simplified a great deal if one takes a positive stand with regard to one's relationship with the cognizing self within and what is cognized as the objective world. A person may be a philosopher or one who has not cared to evolve a metaphysical theory of his or her own. In any case, even a child has no doubt that he or she is different from the 'other'. Thus duality is a good basis from which to proceed. It is one's diving board to jump into the deep waters of philosophy. That is the simple beginning.

The problems of life do not terminate there. Between the subjective identity and objective factors that come and go, leaving the traces of their ideas, complications can arise. Therefore the philosopher or the common man on the street may sometimes have to make concessions and be obliged to emphasize the one recurring or constant factor, voting for monistic vision.

Even when one makes such a shift from the dual to the single, one should be cautious to say 'non-dual' instead of saying 'single'. Śankara and Rāmānuja both called their systems 'non-dual'. Narayana Guru agrees with Śankara's system of the non-dual while remaining clear in his mind that the dual factors of spirit and matter, *cit* and *jada*, are to be maintained.

Ultimately, is the Absolute one, two, or many? One should say that the creation of the Lord is such a wonder that it can be one or two or many and all at once.

*(Continued in next issue.)*



# Kaṭha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

V:5

*Not by prāṇa alone and not by apāṇa does any mortal whatsoever live. But by the other do they live - that whereon both these depend.*

We say one is dead when the vital energy leaves the body. The upward movement of this vital energy was called *prāṇa* and the downward one *apāṇa* in the third mantra. Both the *prāṇa* and the *apāṇa* have their existence and function in the body. The common notion is that the vital energy and its abode, the body, constitute the substance of life. This way of understanding is a relative. There is another understanding which is free of, and frees one from, the identity of the "I" with the body and the vital breaths. As this understanding does away with all that the "I"-consciousness depends on, it is called Absolute Knowledge or Self-knowledge. It is this immortal Self that gives *prāṇa*-hood to *prāṇa* and *apāṇa*-hood to *apāṇa*. When we become fully aware of the truth that we exist and live only in the Self, through the Self, and as the Self, our identity with the Self becomes realized. Thus we realize our own immortality. Then there is no question of the hereafter. The state after death becomes a problem only in our relative understanding.

V:6

*Come! I will declare to you the truth of the eternal and secretive Absolute (brahman). And also how the enjoying self fares after the reaching of death, in the relative sense.*

In the light of the discussion made so far, the problem of the hereafter can be approached from two different standpoints, one absolutist and the other relative. Yama says that he is going to declare the secret and eternal truth side by side with the state of the soul after death for the one who thinks that death is the end of life. This will enable Nachiketas and us to evaluate the results of the absolutist and relative approaches and to choose the most beneficial one. The Absolute is never born and it never dies. If we are well founded in the understanding that the Absolute or the Self is the only truth, that very understanding liberates us from the grip of death and we attain immortality. It is the possessor of the body that has an end in death. If my understanding of myself is that I am the possessor of the body, the existence of "I" without a body becomes meaningless. Then the destruction of one body necessitates being embodied in another body. This results in the concept of rebirth. Both are only in understanding. Thus, the answer to the question depends

upon the understanding of the questioner about himself.

V:7

*Some souls enter the womb to become embodied, others go to the plants - according to their work and according to their knowledge.*

In the last mantra Yama said that he was going to declare the secret of the Absolute as well as the state of the soul after death. The latter is stated first so that the plight of the ignorant one can be compared with the immortality gained by true understanding. The embodied one or the possessor of the body is the one who has death. If there is no body, there is no embodied self. So the *dehin* or possessor of a body has to attain a new body in order that it can continue to be a *dehin*. For that it has to find a new womb to born in again. Which womb one enters depends, as stated here, on the actions of the embodied one and also the knowledge it has gained, in the present life.

Every action that we perform is with an end result in view. The nature of the goal intended and the nature of the performance of actions depends on one's understanding. Thus, we see that knowledge decides the actions and actions decide the fruits. This is the nature of actions from the standpoint of an individual as the doer. This is also true from the standpoint of the universe as a whole. The universe is always in a state of change. In that sense it is called *jagat* (the changing one) in Sanskrit. The state of the universe at a particular moment is decided by what happened just before that. It is the activity of the cosmic system that is in every event that occurs in the universe. When thus viewed, we can say that each successive state of the universe is the result of the action of the system in the previous state. The same is also true of the changefulness of the embodied one. In this sense, what will be the state of the embodied one in the next moment is

decided by what is done at the present moment. What differentiates the action of the individual man and that of the cosmic system is the volition behind the former. No volition with a particular end in view is seen in the actions of the universe. Man thinks that he is free to alter the nature and the fruits of actions at will. So, one who thinks that one exists as the possessor of a body naturally gives importance to one's actions in deciding which womb one will reach after death.

Here it might seem that the Upaniṣad approves of the popular belief in the transmigration of the soul. What is stated here is that the ignorant one who is well-rooted in the belief that he is an embodied being and who is not aware of the ignorance which he is caught in and that it can have an end, in his struggle for existence as an embodied one he clings to a new body after leaving one. The vision of Truth by a wise one who has come out of this illusion is declared in the next mantra.

V:8

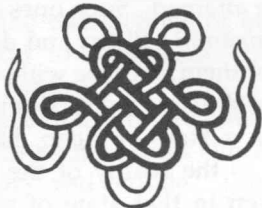
*That Person who is awake even in those who sleep, fashioning desire after desire, That verily is the Pure. That is the Absolute. That indeed is called the Immortal. To It cling all the worlds. No one transgresses It. This verily is That.*

In the last mantra it was said that those who are unaware of the Absolute Truth, considering themselves as embodied beings, go to new wombs to gain new bodies depending on the deeds done and knowledge attained. Such ones are called ignorant (*ajñānin*). Births and deaths will continue for them, because without a body they cannot think of their existence. They are as if in a state of sleep, having not awakened to the reality of the Absolute Truth. Even in that state of sleep they have their own likes and dislikes and there is a value notion which decides what is



desirable and what is not. Such a one is not aware of the truth that this value notion is nothing but a sparkling of the Absolute Truth which is also the Absolute Value. He thinks, "I am the enjoyer, and I have my own interests." He takes upon himself the actor-hood and the enjoyer-hood. He is completely ignorant of the cosmic vital principle which makes him the performer, and ignorant as well of the Absolute Value notion which always is in search of newer and newer fields for the actualization of self-value in terms of enjoyments. He is in a state of sleep. Though sleeping, the all-inclusive vital principle of the Self which also is the Absolute Value, is operative in him as it is everywhere. That directs him to newer and newer desires. This is true both with the ignorant and the wise and all living beings. But only the wise one knows that. Thus the Self, or knowledge pure and simple, has no attributes and is absolute. It cannot be designated as someone's knowledge. This is the Absolute (*brahman*) understood by the Vedantins. It has no birth or death. Every worldly phenomenon which has birth and death has existence only depending on It, only in It, only as It. Nothing transgresses It because It is not a thing, but that which causes and gives room for all things. That is the immortal Truth sought by all, even by the ignorant, though they are not aware of it.

The conclusive answer to the question raised in this Upaniṣad is given in this and the previous mantras inclusively. You are already immortal if you have imbibed the wisdom that the most secret and eternal Absolute Truth is what exists. If you are ignorant of it you will attain death, and the never-ceasing cycle of birth and death will continue.



१:१

*Just as the one fire entered the world and became corresponding in form to every form, so the one inherent Self becomes corresponding in form and yet is external.*

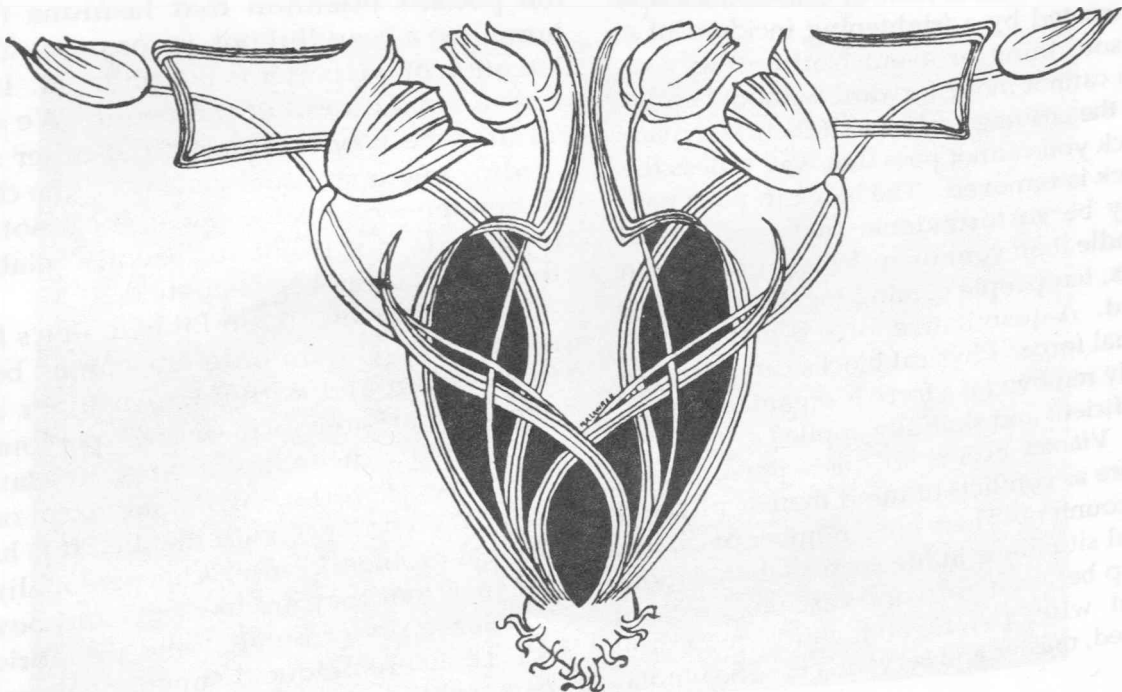
The last mantra describes how the immortal Self remains awake even in those who sleep, creating newer and newer desires. This mantra and the next two show how the same Truth attains the form of each and every element of becoming. The fire hidden in a match stick can be brought out by rubbing it against a match box and made use of to light a lamp to study by. Fire can also consume a vast forest. When two objects are rubbed together very hard, fire sparks out. Though not visible, fire is hidden in every object. It is supposed that there is fire even in the ocean. Because of this fire, which is called *baḍavāgni* in Sanskrit, the ocean remains constant without any overflow in spite of all the rivers flowing into it. Though there is fire in all objects, it flames in different forms. The color and form of the flame vary depending on the nature of the fuel. The forms of the flaming fire are enumerated as seven in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.4.). They are the Black (*kāli*), the Terrible (*karāli*), Swift-as-mind (*manojave*), Very-red (*sulohita*), Very Smoky-colored (*sudhumra varṇa*). Fire is hidden in all objects and flames externally with different forms. Thus fire is neither internal nor external. In the same way the one and only Truth is inherent in every form of becoming and externally appears to be as the form of becoming. As the inherent truth the Self is called *sarvāntaryāmin* in Sanskrit. When we say that it is the inherent truth that manifests as the external forms also, the Truth is to be understood as beyond the duality of internal and external and at the same time appearing as internal and external. Usually it is taken for granted that the Self is internal. But here it is stressed that it has no differentiation of internal and external.

(Continued in next issue.)

# The Past Alongside

No longer harnessed to the future  
I tend more often to live,  
    not in, but with, the past.  
Interspersed with tendrils that touch my progeny  
I savor the eternal imprint of other encounters,  
Wrapped in gift tissue  
    and placed in my cupped hands  
By the love that was never obliterated,  
But only outrun and left behind,  
So that I need no longer view it at a distance.  
Suffice to pause for it to approach,  
    and to walk alongside.

Woodrow de Castro



# The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patāñjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sūtra II:33

*vitarka bādhanē pratipakṣa bhāvanam*

*vitarka*: conflicting state of mind

*bādhanē*: when disturbed by

*pratipakṣa*: the opposites

*bhāvanam*: constant pondering over

When the mind is disturbed by conflicting thoughts, constant pondering over the opposites (is the remedy).

*Vitarka* (confrontation) is a constant occurrence in the world of transaction. When the normal flow of consciousness is obstructed by a frightening incident of a person, thing or event confronting you, you cannot move forward without resolving the ensuing problem. If there is a roadblock you cannot pass that way unless the block is removed. The block in your path may be so formidable that you cannot handle it on your own. Where one person fails, ten people coming together can succeed. A quantitative force is met with an equal force. Physical blocks can be physically removed if a force is organized that is sufficient and skillfully applied.

*Vitarka* occurs in one's personal life more as conflicts of mind than as physical encounters. There are a number of dialectical situations in life such as the relationship between guru and disciple, husband and wife, parent and child, ruler and ruled, master and servant, etc. The bipola-

arity between them is to be established on positive love and mutual understanding. If disadoption comes in the mind of the guru or disciple, there cannot be any wisdom transaction occurring between them. If husband and wife lose their mutual respect and think of each other as a burden, a nuisance and a drag, their life together becomes miserable. These are causes of greater conflicts than physical confrontations. To resolve such riddles, a psychological device is given here which is basically spiritual.

The clay that is put on the potter's wheel does not become a pot by itself. It is the potter's intention that fashions the lump into a beautiful pot, jar or mug. The intention of the potter is not physical. It is a vision in the spirit of the potter. We are all in some way fashioning the other according to our spiritual visions. If the clay put on the wheel is too moist, it cannot be fashioned. If it is not sufficiently pliable, then also it cannot be fashioned.

One's personality unfolds in one's life situations. The unfoldment comes both from within and without. An inner dynamic decides the form of one's personality. It is like a die that is fastened to a lathe. Whatever is worked by the lathe can only come in accordance with the die. It is here the real problem comes. Our personalities are such that they are like pots and bowls which are preformulated and prefabricated. There are unique distinctions between personalities. Often, however much is the

need for two people to live together, they cannot get away from their egoistic stances to make a common cause.

If a pot and a bowl are to be blended into a new form, the prefabricated vessels first have to be reduced to the state of clay.

Then the clay is to be poured in the desired mold. Like the basic clay which can be fashioned in many forms, our personalities have sprung from the common spirit in which there is no difference. A yogi who is very conscious of the empirical and transactional peculiarities of the world of things and persons decides to leave aside his or her ego and approach the problem from the starting point of manifestation. At that level there is only *īśvara*. One puts oneself in the position of *īśvara* and, with a neutral mind and no vested interest, sees things from a catholic, altruistic and compassionate ground. As one then has no ego, one's counterpart also loosens his or her grip on the ego. This is just like disarming a rival. The Zen Buddhists call this listening to the clap of one hand.

Suppose an evil-minded person is always being an aggressive nuisance to you and you cannot but hate him. Look at that person from another angle. When he sleeps he is like a helpless child lying in the cradle. However bad he is to you, the most compassionate God is supervising his circulation of blood, his respiration, his metabolic balance and a million other things that make his existence possible. If God cares for him so much and you share the mind of God, you can also care for him. Even though in the given empirical situation and social structure, you may not be able to literally hug and kiss him, all the personal bickering disappears from your mind.

Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna to be of his mind, not the social mind of an individual in confrontation, but the mind of all. In that, friends and foes are all merged into the one fantasy of a universal dream. There is no anger or attachment there. When we are identified with this universal mind, God's mind, the person who is spitting venom or kicking at one is seen only as a patient with a malady. Suppose a mother

is watching over her child who has a high fever. If, in his delirium, he speaks evil words and curses his mother, she doesn't react. Her compassion only increases and she gives even greater care to her child to bring him to normalcy. This is how we can change the world by changing ourselves. One changes oneself by establishing oneself in a spiritual position and becoming equipped with God's vision. The yogi who is ever engaged in *īśvara prāṇidhāna* has no other identity and thus transforms himself or herself to transform the world.

### Sūtra II:34

*vitarka himsādayaḥ kṛta kārītanumoditā lobha krodha moha pūrvakā mṛdu madhyādhimātrā duḥkhājñānānanta phalā iti pratipakṣa bhāvanam*

*vitarka*: conflict, confrontation

*himsādayaḥ*: causing violence

*kṛta*: done by oneself

*kārīta*: done by others

*anumoditāḥ*: abetted, approved

*lobha*: greed

*krodha*: anger

*moha*: delusion, confusion

*pūrvakāḥ*: preceded by, caused by

*mṛdu*: mild

*madhya*: medium

*adhimātrāḥ*: intense

*duḥkha*: misery, pain

*ajñāna*: ignorance

*ananta*: endless

*phalāḥ*: result

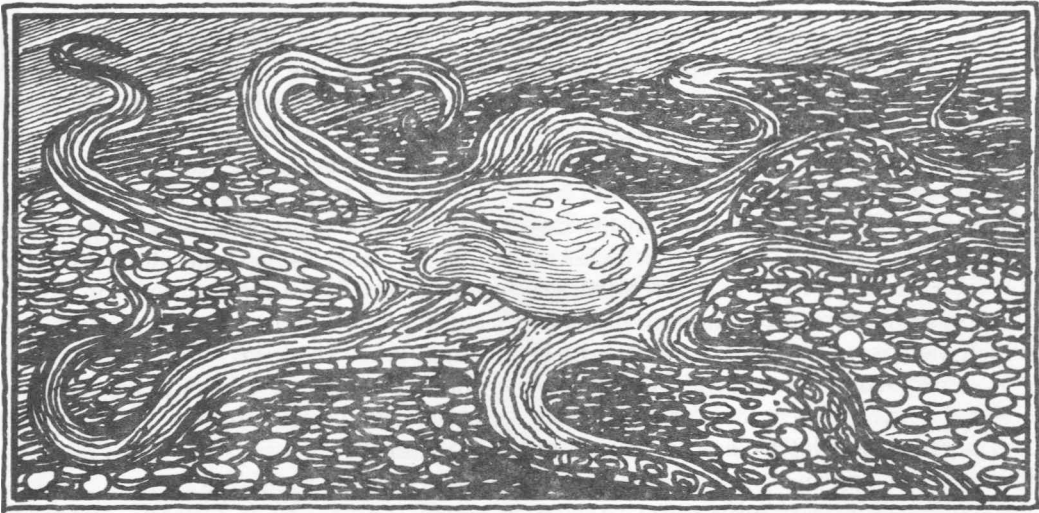
*iti*: thus

*pratipakṣa*: what is opposed to *kaivalya*

*bhāvanam*: dwelling in mind

By engaging in violence, causing violence to be done by others, or abetting violence, if one precipitates conflict with greed, anger and delusion, one will be endlessly subjected to mild, medium and intense misery and ignorance and will generate an attitude of mind opposed to *kaivalya*.

(The attitude suggested in the previ-



ous *sūtra* is the annulling of such negativity that afflicts the mind of the ill-fated.)

Even when a person wants to live a very righteous and peaceful life, many obstructions come in one's way to make life a chain of conflicts. No one is blessed with a path which is straight and wide where they can walk fearlessly. From childhood we have seen people exterminating anything believed to be harmful. As man has an intense fear of snakes, even the most innocent of that species is ruthlessly killed wherever it is seen. One of the most profitable multinational industries of our own age is the manufacture of insecticides and pesticides. The psychological extrapolation of this is to terminate anyone who opposes you. This can even be extended to your own brother. According to the Bible, the history of this approach began with the first human family when Cain eliminated his brother Abel out of sheer jealousy and even refused to be the keeper of his brother.

Those who have hardened their minds can cause violence to others and be worse than brutes. There are others who have the prick of conscience, so they induce others to do violence to those with whom they are displeased. Then there are those who neither inflict violence nor induce others to commit it but they rejoice when their adversaries are exterminated in a fateful manner. We have legislated laws

against violent crimes and even the crime of aiding and abetting violence. But those who secretly appreciate or rejoice in the ill-fate of those they do not like escape the attention of others.

Three things are indicated here as instrumental in causing violence. The first is greed. A baby in the arms of its mother is scared whenever there is a quick movement; then it clings to the body of its mother. When the nipple of the mother's breast is pulled out of the child's lips it screams as if it is going to lose its sustenance forever. The concern for security is instituted in us from early childhood. Afterwards we identify our security with the valuable things of life. When we grow in sophistication and understand that exchange value has an advantage over use value, we learn to hoard money or gold with which security can be bought.

This fear as well as conviction is looked upon as a commercial proposition by the greedy vultures of society who have instituted devices like banks, insurance companies, agencies for surveillance, and concealed accounting systems like those for which the Swiss banks are notorious. Greed has become an octopus which induces us to rate everything in terms of money. Even sacred institutions like marriage are wrecked by the greed of the participants.

In India every year several hundreds of innocent young women are burned alive

for having failed to give the dowry which their parents had offered to get their daughters married away. Sometimes even those who have fully paid are burned because the husband sees another prospective bride who is willing to give a more lucrative dowry. In the committing of this kind of crime there are all three kinds of agents - those who directly kill, those who induce to kill and those who rejoice that death has come. Yoga is not a passive way of closing ones eyes to an injustice performed before ones eyes. If the yogi has a moral conscience, he or she has to challenge all three kinds of involvement in violence.

The second cause of violence is emotional disturbance which eclipses ones' rational power. Even small children throw tantrums at a very early age and behave like monstrous dictators. Later that becomes a personality factor in some people. The slightest provocation can cause an avalanche of glandular secretions which make them forget all sense of proportion and propriety. They forget the exact nature of the relationships that exist between them and others when they are stung with pride and prejudice, anger and animosity. It begins as a defense mechanism and becomes a habit. It is animal behavior to bare one's teeth, to maul, to bite, to shout, to shriek. It not only disturbs oneself but also fills the whole atmosphere with feelings that are so scary and evil that they can cause the death of a family. In the politics of crime precipitated in a family, some are directly involved, some are agents and some secretly rejoice in the crumbling of the family.

Some people never grow up. They always remain as deviant or perverted children, full of fear and suspicion. They live in perpetual paranoia. There are number of people who, even when saturated with their illusion and fantasies, intensify their delusion by becoming alcoholic or heavily drugged. They give themselves into the hands of mischief makers.

Greed, anger and delusion all cause people to behave like slaves of passion. Even the little spark of intelligence in them

is forged into a weapon of the devil. The conscious self, which should always be raising one to one's higher Self goes in the opposite direction and pulls one into darkness. That is why the previous *sūtra* recommended that we establish ourselves in god-hood which is one hundred percent opposed to these three kinds of darkness. The true nature of the self and the reality of *īśvara* are not different, so by establishing oneself in pure existence, subsistence and value, *īśvara* becomes sufficient to counter the darkness of ignorance. If we do not reform ourselves, ignorance will precipitate more and more darkness which will bring misery of varying degrees from mild to intense.

#### Sūtra II:35

*ahimsā pratiṣṭhāyām tat saṁnidhau  
vairatyāgaḥ*

*ahimsā*: non-violence  
*pratiṣṭhāyām*: on being firmly  
established  
*tat saṁnidhau*: in that vicinity  
(of the yogi)  
*vaira*: hostility  
*tyāgaḥ*: not manifest

On being firmly established in non-violence, hostility does not manifest in the vicinity (of the yogi).

In this *sūtra* we are led to the very source of our actions and thoughts. As one goes closer and closer to one's Self, the homogeneity of selves becomes clearer and more evident. The ego of a person is one of the four inner organs. It can have two identifications, one with the individuated social member of a community and the other with the inner organ (intellect) that is receiving the light of the Self. The social factor manifests when the individual takes upon oneself the agency of action or of a person who intends to prevail upon others with one's words. If the person withdraws from the sense of agency, both of action and speech, then the I-consciousness re-

mains only as a recipient of the light of the Self. If that state of consciousness is maintained for a long time, the yogi will come to stay more in unity with the Self which by nature is pure existence, subsistence and bliss.

The peaceful silence of a yogi will affect the entire atmosphere around him or her with a unifying and pacifying magnetism. If you walk into a room and find a person sitting there in a state of meditation, you will immediately experience an aura of serenity. It can have such a telling effect on you that you feel spell-bound and wouldn't dare to cause that person any disturbance. Just as anger and madness are contagious, peace and silence are also.

The yogi can go to a still deeper anchoring of contemplative at-onement when he or she recognizes one's absolute union with the life of all, especially through *īśvara praṇidhāna*. There is no question of wanting to show any violence to anyone because there is no one apart from oneself. A person who has cultivated a positive attitude of union with others, not only humans but all sentient beings, affects others just like a magnet affects a piece of iron by magnetizing it. In the yogi's silence everyone is disarmed. There are many true stories which illustrate how, in the presence of a deeply loving person, even wild animals become affected by their love. Paul Brunton recounts such an incident which he witnessed at the *aśram* of Ramana Maharshi. One day he saw a cobra raising its hood and hissing at him. He ran out to get a gun. A silent mendicant of the *aśram* came in. On seeing the snake, he lovingly went near it and, like a guide, showed it how to retrace its path to the jungle. Brunton thought that the mendicant had cast a magic spell on the snake. But the mendicant, who did not speak, wrote in the sand with his walking stick that when a person casts fear away from his mind completely, all those who come into contact with him also become fearless.

It is a common experience of many yogis that they become a center of attraction for others. People are drawn to them with great love and affection. This is especially

so when they are wandering in lands where they have not gone before and where people are total strangers to them.

Sūtra II:36

*satya pratiṣṭhāyām kriyā phalāśrayatvaṃ*

*satya*: truthfulness

*pratiṣṭhāyām*: on being firmly established

*kriyā*:: action

*phala*: fruit, result

*āśrayatvaṃ*: state of being a substratum

On being firmly established in truthfulness, the fruits (of action) rest on the action (of the yogi).

Truth is to be understood from the relativistic position of the empirical world where it has transactional validity and also from the absolutist point of view in which truth remains the same for all people all over the world irrespective of the time factor or space factor. At the beginning, persons who enter into the path of truth will only become conversant with the relativistic aspects of truth. Soon they will find out that there is a degree of untruth which enters into both the perceptual and conceptual comprehension of truth. Then they do not fight in the name of relativistic truth. If they are bent on knowing what truth is, they will find out that in all things held as valid for transactional purposes, there is a common factor of homogeneity by which empirical truth can be discerned from illusions. They will also recognize that there is a non-physical reality which provides for the truthful existence of things.

For example, if ten or a hundred people are present in a place where all of them see several objects such as a tree as a tree, a stone as a stone, the sky as the sky, a cloud as a cloud, etc., the specific differences between the things does not matter in the recognition of each element as truthful. This is what is called the existentiality of

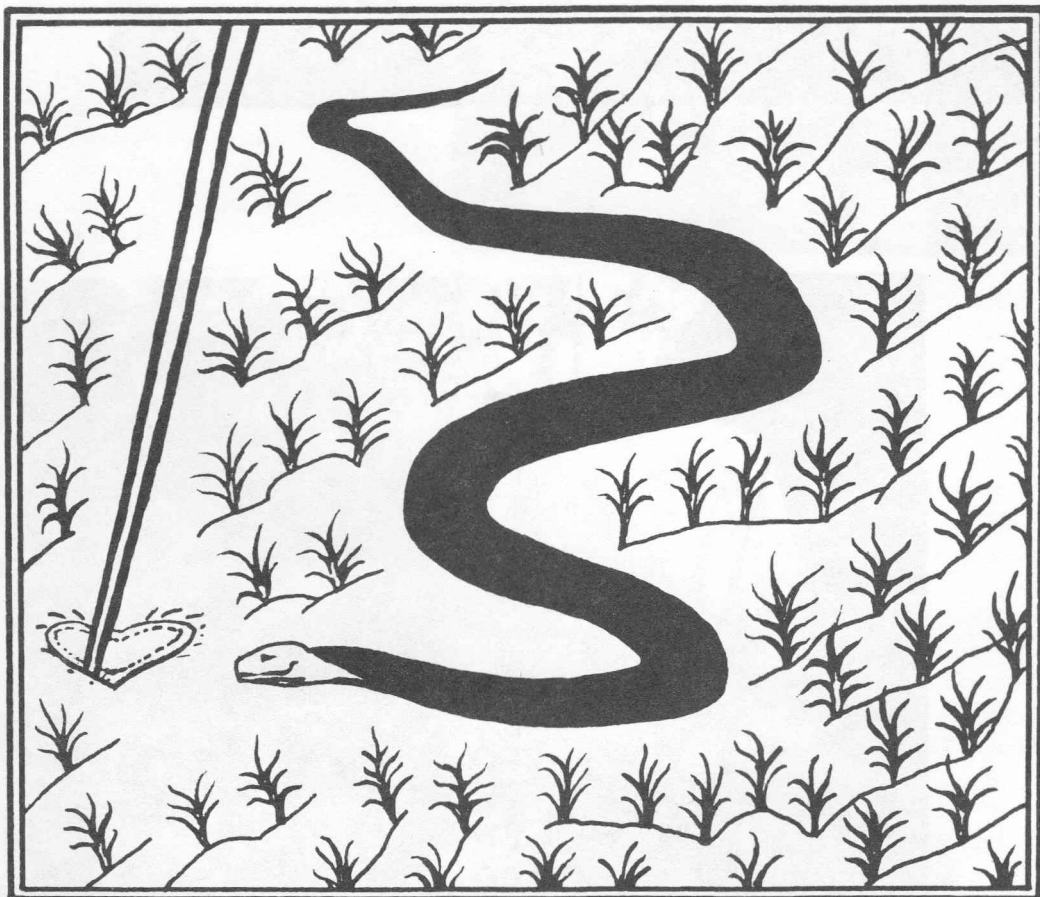
things which is irrefutable. In Sanskrit this is called the *satya* which makes truth valid. When the yogi becomes conversant with the unmanifested substratum of truth and the manifested modification of truth, his or her mind can easily go between the ground and the figure.

Truth has a value dimension as well as an existential dimension. However true a thing is, if an exposition of it is detrimental to the common good, then priority is given to the collective value rather than to the existential factor. One is not deemed a liar for not revealing to the world a socially detrimental truth. It is very difficult to draw a line between absolute truth and the relativistic evaluation of truth. But it is taken for granted that truth need not necessarily be harshly presented. Hence the old adage, "Speak truth, speak it sweetly."

To a person with farsight and insight, in whose consciousness existence and val-

ue blend as a holistic apprehension, both truth and goodness manifest in knowledge as the adorable or the beautiful. Consequently we can say that person is not confined to the limited field of the body/mind complex. Such a person is called a *mahātma*, one whose Self (*ātma*) has reached the highest magnitude possible, which implies the good of all. When a person matures into that state, one gains a prophetic vision of foreseeing things, the capability of forewarning and of predicting future good. All great reformers and all who are the saviors and prophets of the world first speak the truth. In the course of time, what they have said comes to be true. This is the mark of a person being established on truth.

(Continued in next issue.)



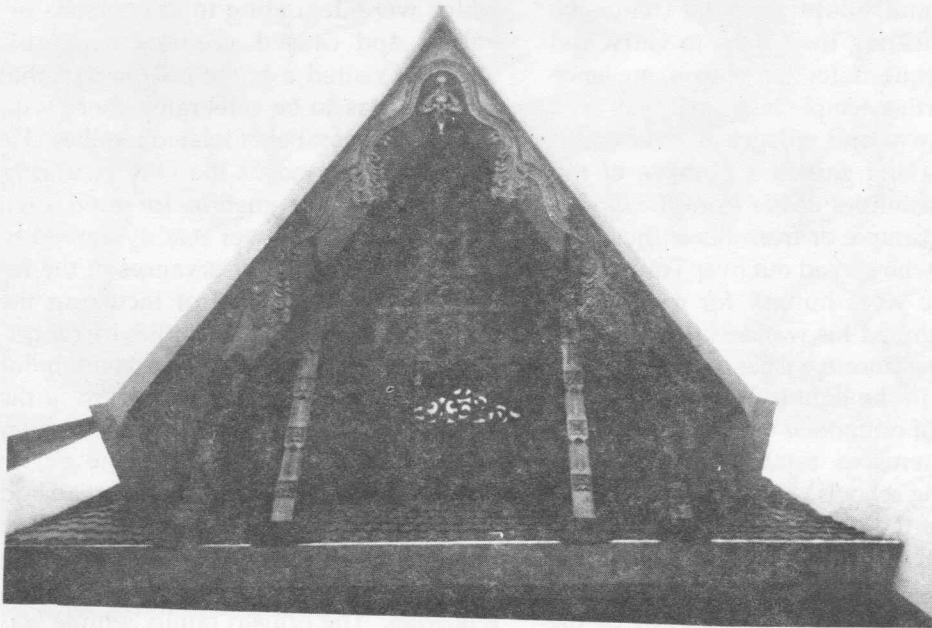
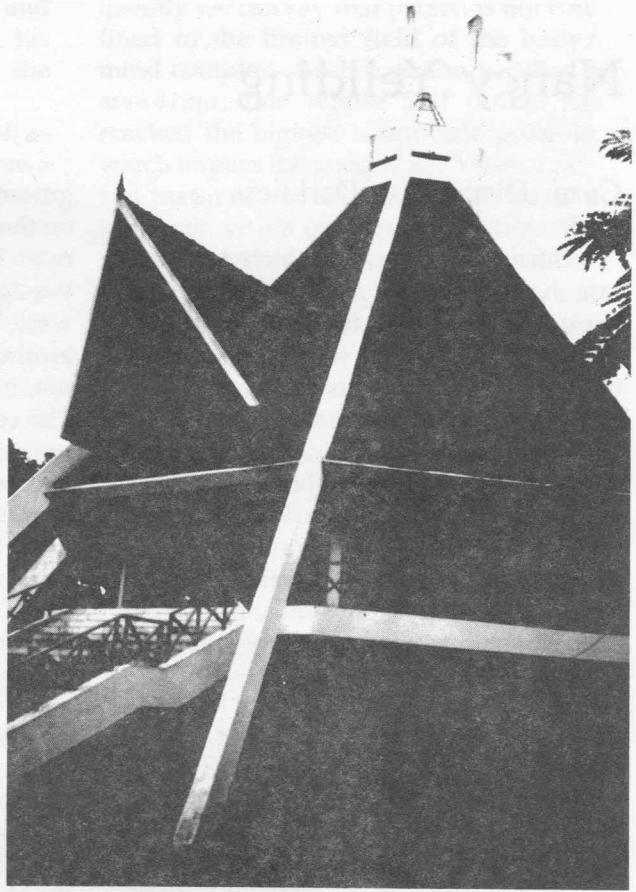


## *New Structures:*



*Narayana Gurukula, Fernhill, Nilgiris, Tamilnadu*

## *Traditional Textures*



*East-West University Brahmavidya Mandiram, Varkala, Kerala*

# Biography of Narayana Guru

Nancy Yeilding

## Guru: Dispeller of Darkness

During the years in which Aruvipuram had grown as a center, Narayana Guru had returned to his earlier pattern of wandering throughout the countryside, returning periodically to the hermitage. With the growth of the S.N.D.P. Yogam and its increasing identification with a single group in society, he shifted his home base in 1904 to a hill in Varkala which he named Śivagiri. After traveling many miles on foot, staying in many homes, tending the psychic, physical and spiritual ills of his fellow human beings, he would return to the hill overlooking a sea of coconut palms and the shining ocean beyond. There his disciples and followers would come to seek his advice and bathe themselves in the serenity of the Guru's presence. The solitary hill soon transformed into a hermitage where members of every group of society came to shed all such distinctions and adopt *sannyasa* (renunciation), dedicating their lives to Guru and Truth. Requests for the Guru's presence and for further temple installations poured in from towns and villages all over South India. Having gained a glimpse of the wider possibilities of life from the Guru's word or example or from his enthusiastic followers who spread out over Travancore, the people were hungry for more. The Guru continued his wandering ways. He honored the sincere wishes of the people to live more in the light by urging the abandonment of outmoded rituals, cleaning up decaying temples, establishing new ones and starting schools.

One of the rituals popular at the time was that of *tālikeṭṭu*. In a Hindu wedding a *tāli* (necklace or cord with a gold charm) is tied around the neck of the bride by the

groom, analogous to the placing of a ring on the bride's finger in a Christian ceremony. *Tālikeṭṭu* was a ceremony involving young girls in which a number of them were brought together to have *tālis* tied around their necks by men who would not, in fact, later become their husbands. The ceremony reflected the uncertain nature of marital status for women who were often expected to receive a number of men without any commitment from them. They, and any children which resulted from such unions, remained in the family home. For the girls involved, the ceremony was humiliating, and for their families it was terribly expensive. Another expensive ceremony was *theranda kalyāṇam* which was a public bathing and procession of a young woman when her first menses arrived, a kind of advertisement of her eligibility for marriage.

Narayana Guru often spoke against the observance of such outmoded customs which were degrading to the persons involved and caused needless expense. Once he visited a home on the day that *tālikeṭṭu* was to be celebrated there with girls from a number of related families. He spoke to the head of the family, urging him to drop the custom for their own good. Guru's follower readily agreed to have no more such observances in the future but he was afraid of incurring the wrath of the other girls' families by canceling at the last minute. Guru asked him for his agreement only and then went to the others and obtained theirs. The women were relieved and grateful. The guru's quiet and sensible words soon spread and such practices faded away.

Another time, the Guru visited the ancestral family home (*taravadu*) of one of his followers. The Erinjeri family temple was

full of images of different deities and ancestors encrusted with the dirt and superstition of ages. Even though the family elders were very orthodox, they raised no objection when Guru came and cleaned it all out, removing all the images except one of Bhagavati, leaving behind a setting that inspired openness, purity and peacefulness.

In *The Word of the Guru*, Nataraja Guru describes another such incident:

*Let the reader imagine a village in Travancore. . . . The sandy village-lane is untreadable in the midday heat. It is more than a hundred yards long and leads to the village temple and the pond. A poor villager, a hard-working agriculturist, and his tired newly-wedded wife have traversed the hot sand on their way from afar. They meet the priest of the temple who enters the lane from the opposite direction. A new-comer to the village would have heard an angry shout raised by the priest, which was meant for the approaching couple to make way*

*for him. He was the representative of God and had to be given the wall. The harsh traditional shout was effective in making the tired couple retrace their steps all the way backwards till the priest could pass without distance-pollution from the poor workmen. Let the visitor pass on to the temple-yard, which is the centre of the village life. The whitewalls of the temple which once formed the canvas on which inspired artists tried to express the richness of their inner life, was now a place which the idle village-urchins scratched and defiled with ghastly figures in charcoal. The temple festival had degenerated into a drunken merry-making. Instead of the spirit of heroic sacrifice, society connived at the cowardice of ritual sacrifice of animals...The spirit had fled from the temples, leaving the shell of tradition behind. The unholy wand of degeneration had touched with its deadening touch the once luminous spirit that radiated from the village temple. Such and a hundred other such so-called places of worship were the canker at the core of a fallen society.*



Not far from the temple stands the house of a trustee of the temple. The mistress of the house has finished the duties of the day. The children have retired to rest after their evening meal. The last visitor has arrived in the village, and this happens to be none other than the Yogi of the riverside hermitage. A youthful follower is with him and conducts him through the slaty darkness beneath the palm trees, with the light of a torch. They partake of the last remnants of the meal and prefer to sleep in the open, under the starlight. At day-break the anxious housewife discovers that the bed, on which the Guru slept, is made, and the Guru departed. He is already on the scene of action. He has called the leaders together, and talks to them. Animal sacrifices must be stopped. The temple must be demolished. It is too dirty for a place of worship. Drinking must be discouraged. All are equal in the sight of God, so long as they are clean and moral. There is no harm in modern innovations in shaving or dressing. Such was his outlook and programme. Soon the task appeared to take on serious aspects. Hydra-headed tradition raised difficulties. Age-long precedents were quoted. Bloodshed was threatened. The wrath of the gods would descend on the race. The voice of a thousand years of convictions questioned the authority of anyone on the face of the earth to touch a hair in the accepted tradition of their forefathers. Some even trembled and gave vent to hysterical outburst, while the Guru sat on another side talking in his usual gentle way to the leaders. After hours of pitched battle, one by one the leaders yielded to reason. Demonic feelings of ancient origin danced their last dance, exhausting themselves, and fell back before the gentle tear-filled features of the Guru. His voice sounded stronger than the shouts of vested interest. One by one the diverse elements melted into harmony.

Next morning the Guru began the demolition of the old temple. The stones were to be used for a new temple. An overgrown grove, untouched for generations out of superstition, was to be cut down by the Guru's mandate. The timber available there from was to be used for the school building that the Guru proposed for the education of the idle village-urchins. <sup>63</sup>

From village to village the Guru

walked and such scenes were often repeated as he shared the life of the common people and allowed his light to dispel the shadows of ignorance. Although he often asked that meaningless and harmful customs be discontinued, Narayana Guru revalued rather than discarded or truncated the ancient religio-spiritual traditions of the people. Recognizing the power of a symbol to raise consciousness to the numinous and raise values to the most pure and wholesome, the guru often would install traditional images of deities such as Śiva or Devi in the temples which were newly established. At the same time he emphasized that the "worship of God ought to reach every heart and home and not be confined to the temples. For this purpose the essential principles of religion should be made known to all."<sup>64</sup>

To aid in this process, the Guru also composed many devotional hymns of such poetic charm that they became popular songs (e.g. *Vināyakāṣṭakam.*, *Guhāṣṭakam*, *Śri Vāsudevāṣṭakam*, *Bhadrakālī-aṣṭakam*, *Śiva Śatakam*, *Subrahmanyāṣṭakam*, *Śaravaṇa Bhava Stōtram*). They infused the traditional symbols of the deities with universal references, transforming them into windows opening on the vast, unbounded nature of reality.

Always ensuring that they be located in beautiful places with clean water and fresh air, the Guru founded temples at Karunagapally (1898), Kunnumpara (1898), Anjengo (1904), Perungottukara (1904), Trissur (1906), Kannur (1907), Thalassery (1908), and Kozhikode (1910). In Mangalore, which is near the birthplace of Madhva, an ancient teacher of Vedanta, Narayana Guru established a temple called Gokarna-nath, in the Madhva tradition (1910). The Guru wished each temple to include a library where books and scriptures of all philosophies and religions would be available. He also wanted each temple to be a work of art so its capacity to uplift the human soul would transcend ritualism and religiousness.

The Śarada temple founded at Śivagiri in 1912 especially exemplifies these values. The Guru asked many archi-



itects and artists to submit their ideas for the temple and image to be constructed. The result was a revolutionary design in temple architecture. For the first time, a temple was made with windows that bathed the temple in light and provided fresh air. As the architecture did not follow the usual elaborate patterns, it was not inordinately expensive to construct. The image of Śarada, the Goddess of Learning, was beautifully constructed of *pañca loha*, a mixture of five shining metals. Guru asked that expensive and elaborate rituals of worship be given up in favor of the simple offering of flowers.

Many poets contributed inspirational poems in praise of Śarada which were sung at the dedication. Narayana Guru also wrote the hymn, *Nine Gems in Praise of the Mother: Jananī Nava Ratna Mañjari* from which we quote two verses:

#### Verse 1

*From that unitive mind-stuff,  
all encompassing,  
A thousand tri-basic rays*

*(of knowledge-knower-known)  
come and; lo and anon,  
Self-consciousness gone,  
There awakened love  
of food and such;  
Fallen thus into the ocean of need  
and lost altogether,  
Say when, O Mother, shall my inner being  
regain that path of hope  
To be merged within the domain  
of pure word import,  
bereft of all tri-basic prejudice  
And, within the core  
of the radiance outspread  
of reason pure,  
Reabsorbed in communion cool,  
ever remain.*

#### Verse 7

*That Wisdom's arrow  
that can smite my sin  
In your flowery feet resides  
My love, it is the bowstring,  
and an iron will the bow;  
The ego-sense is the victorious one,  
While you the Mother it is*

*who victory gives,  
 My sin-stained self,  
 thereupon, is transformed  
 In terms of awareness,  
 with the mightily heavy body too,  
 The world and all else  
 into awareness leaps!*

Translation by Nataraja Guru

In addition to this kind of revaluation of traditional deities, the Guru also introduced other possibilities. At the Karamukku temple in Trissur (1920), the temple officers wanted an idol of Lord Cidambaranatha. Instead, Guru said, "Bring a lamp." He installed it, pronouncing the benediction, "Let there be light." At the Śrī Kalakanteśvara temple in Murukkumpuzha (1922), he installed the words "Satyam, Dharmam, Daya" (Truth, Righteous Law, Compassion). In 1926 there was a dispute in connection with an old Devi temple (Kalavamkotam) which had come under the administration of the S.N.D.P. Yogam.

They had proposed to remove the Devi and install an Ardhanārīśvara (androgynous Śiva), with Subrahmanya and Ganapati (sons of Śiva and Parvati) as sub-deities. Narayana Guru was invited to do the installation. Before it was to take place he was visited by a group who objected to the installation of the idols. There was a serious argument between the two sides. Guru listened quietly, then asked for a mirror to be brought. He had the *mahāvākya* (great dictum) of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, That Thou Art (*tat tvam asi*) inscribed upon it and installed it as a purer representation of that which is beyond all envisioning.

That one of Guru's *sannyasi* disciples who had accompanied him then proceeded to install the deities as well is an indication of the frequent misunderstanding of the full import of Narayana Guru's gestures on the part of his disciples and followers. That same short-sightedness eventually necessitated firm correction from the Guru.

In a social framework in which one's ritual status in temple life determined one's privileges, position and possibilities

in every aspect of life, the act of establishing temples which accorded equal status and access to all had a profound impact. With it came new possibilities of freedom from the chains of social oppression and from the enslavement of caste traditions. But even in the temples established by the Guru the insidious practice of caste discrimination once again crept in. The actors were different, with those once excluded now turning on their brothers and sisters whom they considered lesser, but the tragedy of exclusion and preference was all too familiar. Narayana Guru found it necessary to correct this with firm words: "I have not given you the God of a caste but the God of all who seek. Open the doors of the temples to all who knock."<sup>65</sup> And finally he discouraged further temple installations as unnecessary and misleading:

*You have had enough of these temples.  
 God may be worshipped anywhere. Just a  
 small prayer hall is quite sufficient. It can be  
 easily constructed and easily maintained. The  
 idols are not essential. It is the ideals which  
 matter. Worship the ideals. Put up the mottoes  
 of Truth, Love and Duty in your temples  
 and practice these virtues in your lives. That  
 would be better than all the idols in the world.  
 . . . God is in us. We must put up temples in  
 our hearts and worship God within us. That is  
 the real worship; all others are substitutes.*<sup>66</sup>

Narayana Guru was very aware of the power of education to free a person from the encroaching forces of caste oppression. He was so well educated in Sanskrit scholarship and philosophy that he could defeat the pro-caste arguments which scholars (including Śankara) had culled from ancient texts using counter quotes from the same texts, imbued with the quality of truth unsullied by vested interest. As Sanskrit was the language of temple ritual, the traditional mark of a learned person, and the great treasure chest of Indian philosophy and literature dating from the most ancient *Vedas*, Narayana Guru encouraged its study. He established a number of Sanskrit schools along with his in-

stallation of temples. At the Advaita Aśrama which grew in Alwaye after he shifted his headquarters there in 1912, he established a Sanskrit *Pataśala* (boarding school). Situated near the birthplace of Śankara, the great eighth century Guru of non-dual (*advaita*) Vedantic philosophy, the school welcomed dedicated brahmacāris (students who walk the path of the Absolute) to study Vedantic thought and its application to life.

In addition to the importance of education in one's own grass roots, the Guru stressed the value of education which would prepare one to participate in and contribute to the modern world. In Varkala he established the first of many Model English schools, and started night schools for fishermen and field workers in a number of villages. He also encouraged pride and excellence in local industries such as weaving and other crafts as away to foster self-sufficiency and self-determination. The graduates of these schools soon undermined the traditional argument in favor of preserving hereditary professions in the cause of excellence. In an atmosphere of encouragement and freedom, self-confidence and intelligence bloomed and came to fruition in a whole generation of newly awakened minds which flooded

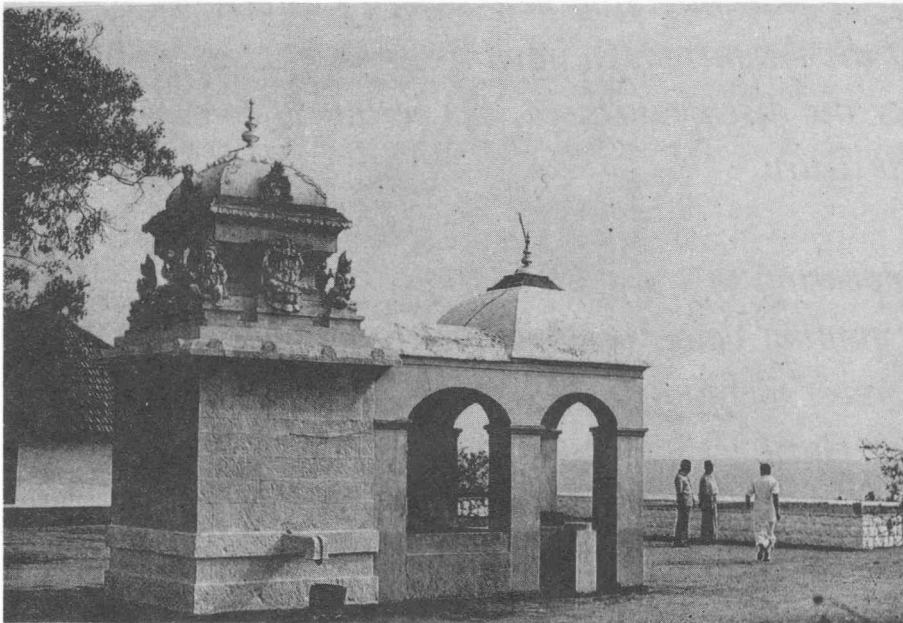
and transformed the fields of education, literature, business and government.

An early indication of the transformation which was underway was experienced by a Dewan (government minister) who visited Narayana Guru. He arrogantly claimed to be able to tell the caste of any person as proof of caste's inherent truth. Narayana Guru asked that a number of the young boys who were *aśrama* inmates be called. They all chanted Sanskrit *slokas* (verses) for the Dewan. He made a number of declarations regarding the supposed hereditary background of the boys but was so abysmally wrong that he soon had to rescind his argument. Again and again the Guru's message came home in ways just as simple, gentle and irrevocable.

(Continued in next issue.)

#### NOTES

63. Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*, East-West University, Fernhill, 1990, p. 25-26.
64. Dharmatirthan, *Prophet of Peace*, Sree Narayana Publishing House, India, 1931, p. 43.
65. *Ibid*, p. 70.
66. *Ibid*, p. 70-71.





# The Guru

*Sowing seeds of love and cheer  
Shining bright like a cosmic mirror  
Seeming far yet ever near,  
The Guru.*

*A soothing breeze, refreshing rain  
The only comfort amidst great pain  
The prize beyond which no greater gain,  
The Guru.*

*With grace suggesting a heavenly dance,  
A gambler risking all in a game of chance,  
Dispelling darkness with just a glance,  
The Guru.*

*To the lost providing new sense of direction  
To the downtrodden administering kind affection.  
For the disenfranchised, the certainty of connection,  
The Guru.*

*Appearing in the soul's darkest night,  
A guiding voice, an inner light,  
Forever merging Seer, Seen and Sight,  
The Guru.*

*Even in the guise of beggar or fool  
Resting content to be a divine tool*

*Valuing wisdom as the most precious jewel,  
The Guru.*

*With equal care for one's mugger or mother  
Treating even an ant as a sister or brother  
Seeing all as one's self and one's self in each other,  
The Guru.*

*Keeping still while busy and active while at rest,  
Savoring the bland and spicy with equalized zest,  
With Truth, Goodness and Beauty  
as sole worthy quest,  
The Guru.*

*Prizing Being over having and Doing over trying  
Neither for goods nor status with others vying  
Knowing one's self as a lamp unlit and a life undying,  
The Guru.*

*Where is this one to whom all praise is due  
Who can sift the eternal from the fleeting  
and the false from the true?  
We needn't look far; it's in her, him, me, you -  
The Guru.*

*On the Occasion of  
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati's 70th Birthday  
With Love and Gratitude  
Peter Oppenheimer*

# The Allegories and Symbolism in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

## Viṣṇu and His Symbols

Viṣṇu is depicted with four hands, one head and two legs. He is also called the paramount person (*puruṣottama*). He is described as the cosmic person (*virāt puruṣa*). In the Samkhyan philosophy, *puruṣa* stands for the principle of the spirit or consciousness in all its aspects including the infinite and fathomless stretch of the inconceivable consciousness which is usually referred to as the fourth (*turīya*). As the word is spoken from the mouth of a person, wise people who engage in the pursuit of word-wisdom are said to have come from the face of the *virāt puruṣa*.

The two main features which characterize intelligent beings are their knowledge and their indomitable spirit to act. Knowledge in Sanskrit is *jñāna* and action is *karma*. All needs for the simple retention of life in the body, from the act of breathing to the various programs such as the creation and production with which human beings nourish and protect themselves, are attributed to their organs of action, especially the dexterity of the hands. Hence, people who are engaged in the pursuit of action are said to have come from the *virāt puruṣa's* hands. The thighs which support a person when he sits symbolize establishment. Therefore, those who are engaged in the transactions of establishment are said to have come from the thighs of the *puruṣa*.

These triple functions are possible only if a person has a foundation which can be both stationary and mobile. The society entirely depends on its power to move and support the entire body. Therefore both

the movement and labor on which humanity depends are said to have come from the *virāt puruṣa's* feet. Thus the cosmic person represents the four-fold function of the society.

These four aspects of Viṣṇu also have reference to the four elements, earth, water, fire and air. *Ākāśa*, the time-space continuum in which everything happens, is essentially immaterial and boundless like the Absolute. Viṣṇu is self-contained like concreteness, fluidity, the formal powers, and the vibratory function are all held in earth, water, fire and air. These four aspects are also symbolized by his four weapons: the gross and massive mace (*gada*) is counter-balanced by the delicate and beautiful lotus flower which represents water; the discus (*cakra*) which represents both the brilliance and heat of fire is complemented with the conch shell (*śankh*) which stands for both the clarion call and the vibratory function in all elements, most purely expressed by the sound wave (*nāda*). Thus in Viṣṇu all existential aspects are harmonized.

In the epics you will find four principles occurring again and again. One is contradiction that creates wars and tragic situations of conflict. As if by magic, contradictions get arranged in such a way that complementarities arise. Where complementarities are properly aligned, there is wholesomeness, perfect union and mutual fulfillment. Again and again we come across mutual disadoptions leading to loss or mutual adoptions leading to double gain. Another principle which gives immense relief to the world comes from the canceling out of opposites which again

and again leave an open field of neutral zero from which innumerable cycles of action arise.

The fourth principle is a spiraling of eternal motion which goes through contraries where nothing is totally similar or totally dissimilar. In it there can be an ascending dialectics or a descending dialectics which touch the two urges of romance and tragedy, creation and destruction. Thus we find the best of beings are motivated by urges which are base as well as by ideals which are profound. The paradox of the one and the many is never resolved in human life.

### Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra

The story of Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra narrated in the *Rāmāyana* throws light on the most crucial point in the conflict between *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*. The *brāhmaṇas* follow the three *Vedas*, *Rg*, *Sāma* and *Yajus*, and the *Atharva Veda* is considered to be of non-Aryan origin. The precepts of the *Atharva Veda* were held as a special heritage of the pre-Aryan people who later became identified as *kṣatriyas*. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* we come across references to the contemplative wisdom of the *kṣatriyas* which was later developed in the *darsana* of *Vedānta*. However, the *brāhmaṇas* prided themselves on their psychic attainments.

Three kinds of rishis were recognized in India: *brahmaṛṣis*, *mahāṛṣis* and *rajāṛṣis*. People like Vālmiki and Vyāsa of indigenous spiritual wisdom were called *mahāṛṣis*. Seers who came from the Vedic heritage such as Nārada, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya and Vasiṣṭha were called *brahmaṛṣis* and people of *kṣatriya* royal clans who became rishis, like Janaka, were called *rajāṛṣis*. Orthodoxy recognized only *brahmaṛṣis*. Although *kṣatriyas* ruled the country as kings, their political superiority dimmed before the social status of *brahmaṛṣis*. From among *kṣatriyas* King Kauṣika rose to challenge the monopoly of brahmins. Through the excellence of his self-discipline, he finally made his chief rival, Vasiṣṭha, recognize him as a *brahmaṛṣi*

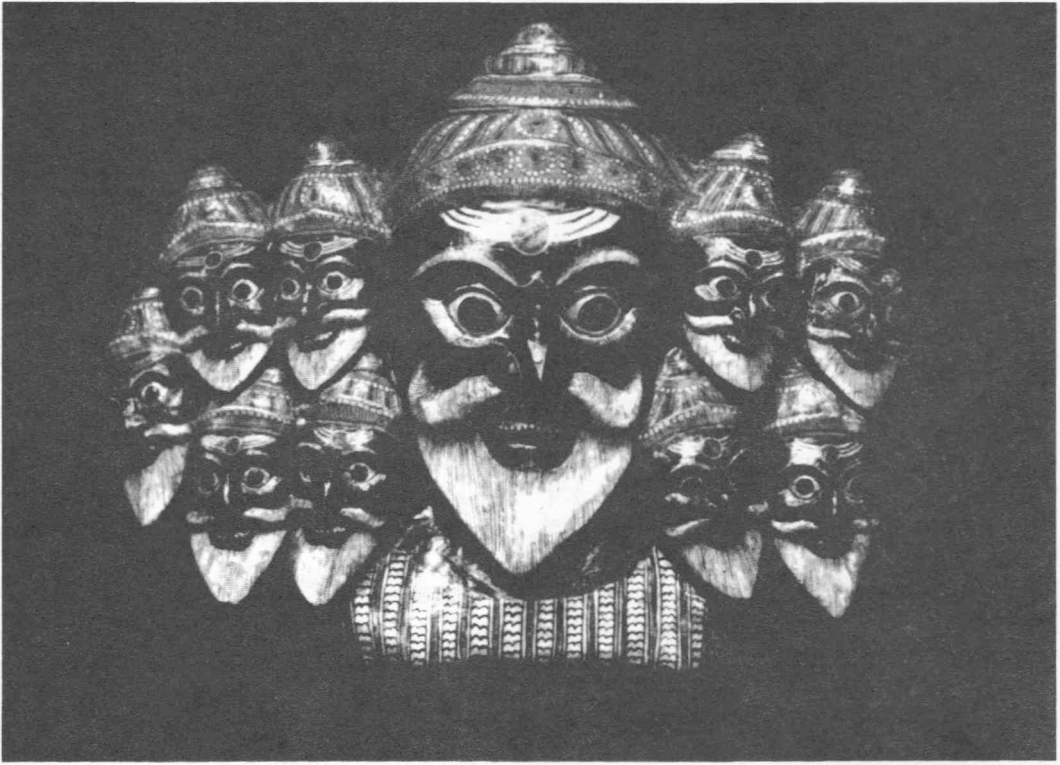
which was considered to be an impossible feat. He became known as Viśvāmitra.

Vasiṣṭha is so-called because he is the *iṣṭha* (friend) of the *vasus* (elements). Viśvāmitra, on the other hand, means the friend of the entire universe. The trials and tribulations he had to endure to reach such a position should be scrutinized, with special attention given to every anecdote of his life. That study will be a difficult one but it is well worth undertaking because it will reveal to us all the secrets implied in the spirit articulating through matter and matter becoming properly fashioned to be a worthy repository to convey the excellence of the spirit. So far this study has never been undertaken in India.

### Viśvāmitra and Daśaratha

As we have seen, Viśvāmitra was a person of action who became convinced of the superiority of *mauna*. He was a king who, with immense self-discipline, achieved the status of a great seer. He proposed to carry out a sacrifice for the well-being of the entire world but the contradictory forces of good and evil beset his path.





So he went to Daśaratha to ask for the help of Rāma, the son of Puruṣottama, to remove the evil forces which he was foreseeing as intervening demons (*asuras*). The purpose of bringing Rāma to the scene has a symbolic meaning. Rāma means rejoicing. Where there is boundless joy there is also boundless knowledge. Pain and misery are only where ignorance reigns. The *asuras* stand for knowledge or consciousness darkened by the absence of *sūrya* or the self-luminous principle of the light of the Self (*ātman*). Mythically, the opposite of Rāma is Rāvaṇa. Viśvāmitra was seeing in Rāvaṇa the source of all evil. Rāvaṇa also belonged to an illustrious clan but was somewhat like Lucifer, an angel turned into a lord of darkness.

All phenomenal manifestations are like magical formulas which are used as ploys for the purifying function of transforming non-existence into existence, darkness into light and the revelation of wisdom, and the vast fear of death leading to the promise of the imperishable. When such a scheme is presented to the world, the world's immediate reaction is usually

to misunderstand the entire scheme and to become deluded by conditioned memories. Thus, when Viśvāmitra went to Daśaratha with the best of intentions to uphold the spiritual personality of Rāma and to transform many demonic forces into divine luminosity, Daśaratha's reaction was one of grief because of his physical and emotional attachment to his son Rāma.

The sophisticated social life of India was one of diplomacy and Sanskritized culture based on traditions and customs. Daśaratha, in accordance with his upbringing, made many spontaneous promises to Viśvāmitra before he knew why he had come. When the latter told the king that he had come to obtain Rāma from him, a situation of contradiction suddenly came to the fore. He found he could not carry out his promises. The Indian concept of *dharma* can appear to be very strange. Once something has been declared openly in so many words, it has to be held on to with absolute integrity by the pronouncer of it, even when he becomes convinced that he has made the most fool-

ish utterance of his life. This compulsion comes from *dharma*, but it is justified by the understanding that the basis of truth is conforming to it in practice. Hence the *Upaniṣad* says, *satyam vadiśyāmi, ṛtam vadiśyāmi*: *satyam* is the proclamation of a principle and *ṛtam* is carrying it out in totality. You cannot have half and half. So whatever Daśaratha told Viśvāmitra, he had to support it with *ṛtam*.

At the point of contradiction, when the king was about to fail in accomplishing the *ṛtam* of his statement, Vasiṣṭha, his own teacher, advised him to stand by *dharma*. Throughout the texts of both *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*, we again and again find some statement inadvertently made by a person who is unaware of its consequences being held against them in the name of *dharma*. When we have a partial view, these situations can look ridiculous, but Indian scriptures and mythologies require a holistic approach and not partial treatment. In the course of events we see that what outwardly looked like horrendous killing and large scale massacres, when put into their rightful place in the enigmatic set-up of the world order, turn out to reveal secret meanings which justify both the deluded one and the participants who acted as victors or victims in each particular case.

When Viśvāmitra leaves the court of Daśaratha with the two charming princes, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, Vālmiki presents a series of challenges, each one capable of opening to us an understanding which will stand good throughout our lives as one of the finest examples of spiritual revelation. The first one to be presented is the psychological import of Tātakā, and Rāma's conversion of the leering demoness of hunger into a wholesome beauty of supreme spiritual excellence.

### ***Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa***

The basic tenets of *sanātana dharma* are *dharma, artha, kāma* and *mokṣa*. We human beings belong to the collective reality of the universe. When we look at the world we are impressed by the innumerable gross

bodies, subtle principles and known and unknown causal factors which come to our notice. Looking at this plurality of things we can say this world is a multiverse. But each individual tries to understand this world from his or her own point of view. The most central nucleus of one's awareness is where one experiences the reverberation of one's own I-consciousness which is called *aham*. The first vowel of the language of Sanskrit is *a* and the last consonant is *ha*. When *a* and *ha* are put together and the articulation is terminated with the sound *m*, it becomes *aham*. That means *aham* stands for the agency of consciousness which covers the entire sphere of knowledge. Each person reduces the multiverse into a universe by relating everything known and knowable to the central focus of one's consciousness of biological and psychological experience. So it is necessary for each person to understand oneself and relate with the world which he or she psychologically comprehends. As the totality thus known, postulated, understood and held before one's mind for continuous inquiry is unlimited, it is called *brahman*. Thus the human range of interest lies between *aham* and *brahman*.

Before we come to understand that we and the absolute reality to which we belong are the same, we are assailed by many doubts (*samśaya*) and many forms of bondage (*bandha*). Where there is ignorance of a structure, there is also ignorance of its function. If we have a thorough knowledge of how a thing is structured, we will also know how to operate it. Partial knowledge either of the structure or function of a thing can lead us to simple errors as well as terrible catastrophes. To avoid such negative consequences, our great seers advise us to know the internal reality of everything from an atom (*anu*) to what constitutes the domain in which a living entity conducts itself. They advocate knowing the *dharma* in every aspect of reality.

*Dhar* means to sustain or uphold. *Dharma* is that which makes a thing what it is. A hydrogen atom is constituted of one electron and one proton. When the

balance is kept between the positively charged proton and negatively charged electron it remains a hydrogen atom. If its structure is tampered with, it leads to catastrophe. The same is true of everything in this world. So the first teaching given by the seers of India is familiarization with the *dharma* which has constituted each element. By knowing the action-reaction properties implied in *dharma*, many things can be created and many things can be destroyed also. *Dharma* being a value in itself which can be related with another value, the whole study of *dharma* belongs to the relativistic plane to which transactions belong. To understand *dharma* one has to delimit the field of one's search and study. In modern phenomenology this delimitation or placing the subject of inquiry and its corresponding objective phenomena within a bracket is considered very important. It is called *epoche*.

*Dharma* being relative, it can also tend to become its opposite. Thus all instances of *dharma* also have their negative shadows. By knowing truth one can distort it into untruth. The place of Self can be taken by the non-Self. Instead of love, hatred can dominate. Thus *dharma* becomes polarized with *adhharma*. The weeds that grow as parasites among plants can easily be mistaken for real plants. Similarly, *adhharma* can be mistaken for *dharma*. Hence great teachers ask us to be conscious of the possible error and we are advised to exercise great discrimination between *dharma* and *adhharma*, *satya* and *asatya*, *nitya* and *anitya*.

To discriminate the right nature of *dharma* we should place it in a context where its meaning (*artha*) can be discerned.

*Dharma* can never be understood except in terms of its *artha*. In the course of time, *artha* became wrongly understood as wealth.

The instrumentality of meaning came to be mistaken for meaning itself just as in the modern world the exchange value of things has been superimposed on the use value and people think of value as money. That simple error has caused grievous damage to the judging faculty of human beings. If exchange value is taken as val-

ue, one will make serious mistakes. One cannot find a substitute for one's father or mother, wife or child. Values of intrinsic worth cannot be placed within an exchange system.

A person is a *guru* or a teacher only when he adheres to his *dharma* of teaching in full. A judge can function as a judge only if he can administer justice without partiality. Thus, in whichever capacity a person functions, we can discern their *dharma* by placing them in a meaningful context. The clay with which bricks are made has the *dharma* that it can be strong and solid to support another brick and thus make a foundation or superstructure of a building. That is the intrinsic nature of clay. It cannot be substituted by gold. Where clay is valued, its value is unique. When an ornament is to be made, clay is of no use and gold is needed. When the *Gīta* speaks of clay and gold representing ultimate values, that makes sense only when clay and gold are each placed in their own transactional realm of value.

These secrets are now unknown because both *dharma* and *artha* can be concealed if a person has a hang-up of desire (*kāma*). There is a difference between what a person desires and what is desirable. Only when the *dharma* and meaning are properly conceived does one opt for the desirable. If one's inner vision becomes confounded with hedonistic desires, wrong meaning is read into the unknown aspects of *dharma*. But in the *Gīta*, the Lord also says, where the desire is not opposed to *dharma* and its meaning then the Absolute itself is the desire (*kāma*). When *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* bring a fulfillment to the *jīva* by which the light of the Self is actualized from moment to moment, that person is living in unbounded liberty (*mokṣa*).

To bring this point to us, a highly symbolic context is presented in the *Rāmāyana* just after Viśvāmitra leaves the court of Daśaratha with Daśaratha's two sons, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. They enter a forest where the remnants of an ashram are seen. Śrī Rāma becomes curious to know whose ashram it was. Viśvāmitra narrates to

Rāma the circumstances that led to Śiva marrying Parvati after his state of dejection following Dakṣayani's committing herself to the flames and becoming Sati. Śiva is beyond all desires but the *devas* who were desirous of enjoyment and who opted for *svarga* (heaven of pleasures) read into Śiva a *dharma* and an *artha* which did not really belong to him. When they tried to induce *kāma* in him, he burned Kāmadeva (Eros) to ashes. The story told by Viśvāmitra, in which Śiva destroyed the lord of erotics, serves as a prelude to the presentation of *kāma* in its most vulgar form, Tātakā.

There are discernible desires (*an-garāgas*) and indiscernible desires (*anan-garāgas*). The manifestation of *anangarāga* in *angarāga* is given in the episode of Tātakā who at first was not an ugly *rākṣasa* but a beautiful female born of a *yakṣa*. In all our scriptures there are two styles of presentation, one leading us from the subtle to the gross and the other from the gross to the subtle. In this case, the story is presented in the literary form of going from the most subtle suggestions to gross actualities. Before we come across Tātakā, we hear of the beautiful *yakṣa* female approaching a rishi of great excellence, Agastya, who wanted to save the world from her many magical performances. He cursed her to be monstrous looking and repulsive so no one would fall in her traps. If we could see the many magical desires that come to our minds as demonic and ugly, we would not run after desires.

The most compelling desire is to eat. Thus Tātakā is depicted as a big mouth of want or necessity which makes her forget all other finer values. If we look at the world, especially the realm which the media of advertisement creates in us the zest for consumer goods, we can see that the whole world has become a Tātakā. We are now made to swallow with our eyes, through addiction to the vulgarity of colors and forms, countless millions of desired forms which will never bring any good to us. From the most malicious whisper in our ear of the merchant's consumer tricks to the deafening blast of re-

peated lies, we can see how Tātakā is still around us. *Tātanām* in Sanskrit means beating up. We are beaten up in a million ways with our exposure to these practices. A number of items are such that we take them because of our thirst or hunger. Then we become addicted and the compulsion finally kills us. Jean Paul Sartre describes man and woman who have lost their inner values and who look upon each other as pleasure objects as sucking each other like octopuses. Such is the deadly clutch of want or desire here depicted as Tātakā.

Only with *brahmasparśa* (vision of the Absolute) which effects a wholesale transformation to *ātmarāma*, knowing oneself to be the fountainhead of the supreme joy of the Self, can one get rid of the monstrous desires which disfigure one's life. Rāma never kills; he transforms. When Tātakā fell dead with his arrow, the beautiful *yakṣi* came back into her own and recognized her savior. We also need to undergo that purificatory grace of the divine. It is unfortunate that this great secret conveyed to us at the very beginning of the *Rāmāyana* still remains in the form of a fairy tale.

### The Trinity (*Trayi*) and the Quaternion (*Catuṣpāda*)

Most mantras and hymns in Sanskrit begin with the *praṇava*, *AUM*. *Praṇava* has in it three measurable sounds (*mātras*). They are *A*, *U* and *M*, of which *M* is partly expressive and partly merging in silence. The invocation: *AUM guru brahmā, gurur viśṇur, guru devo maheśvaraḥ, guru sāksāt param brahma, tasmai śri gurave namaḥ*, is also an explanation of the secret of the *praṇava*. First of all, the mantra to be elucidated is given as *AUM*. It is then equated with the sound *guru*. In Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, *īśvara* is described as the *paramaguru* which is then equated to the *praṇava*. In the *praṇava* there is a secret formula of the triad and the quaternion. In Sanskrit the quaternion is *catuṣpāda*, that which has four limbs.

The first three limbs are suggestive of the phenomenal world of the wakeful, the dream and the deep sleep. In nature, they



are respectively the gross (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*) and causal (*kāraṇa*). Most of us move within these three realms of consciousness. That gives us three states of mind. A state of mind is a *bhāva* and therefore the three states of mind are called *bhāvatraya*. The audible aspect of the *praṇava* summarizes *jāgrat* (wakeful), *svapna* (dream) and *suṣupti* (deep sleep). There is also an inaudible aspect of *praṇava*, a silence that exists before its articulation and a silence that follows. That silence is infinite in its range, both spatially and temporally. Therefore, it is considered as the beyond (*param*). God is also considered to have the phenomenal aspect as manifestation and the transcendental aspect as *param*. Hence the Absolute (*brahman*), is referred to in the invocation as *param*.

A *guru* also has these four aspects. He teaches with his verbalized, articulated and demonstrated lessons in the wakeful. He also teaches by creating subtle transformations in the *taijasa* consciousness of his disciples with the esoterics of the teaching he imparts in silence. Actually, a disciple is more influenced and transformed on the psychic plane than on the transactional plane of the wakeful. There is a story that one day in the *vihāra* of the Lord Buddha, where five thousand disciples were seated, after a period of contemplative silence, the Lord picked up a lotus flower and smiled at it. On seeing this, Upali, a humble disciple who was by profession a barber, became enlightened with Buddha consciousness. His face beamed with an indescribable resplendence. Thus it is a very mysterious experience to which a *guru* subjects his disciples. Sometimes it comes in the form of a vision or a dream.

The third is a more drastic change which a *guru* brings out in a disciple by changing the very incipient memory (*vāsanā*) with which a person has come into this life. That changes the *gunas* of his *kāraṇa* or *linga śarīra*. When these three are happening in a disciple, both *guru* and disciple are in their *bhāvatraya*. A *guru* can also give a transcendental merger of the disciple through an *āveśa* or merging into the disciple which can give a spell of

*turīya*. That is why in the invocation given, *AUM* is first equated with *guru* and the *param* aspect of the *guru* is glorified as the one to whom one makes supplication. Śankaracārya makes a special reference to this by saying that his *guru* is none other than the supreme bliss *paramānanda*, conventionally called Govinda, a *guru* which cannot be seen with physical eyes but can be comprehended with the exclusive teaching of Vedānta.

To understand the secret of the *praṇava* we have to make a distinction between the triad and the transcendental (*turīya*). The triad comes in a number of human endeavors. When a person perceives an object he or she is the perceiver in the act of perception of the object of perception. These are called the three petals of an experience (*triputi*). We miss the unity of our identification because of *triputi*. Hence the Vedāntins think of such an experience as inferior and phenomenal. We have the world above, the world which is intermediate and the world which is under our feet; outer space, the atmosphere and terra firma. Theologically we speak of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva - the creator, the preserver and the dissolver. In space we speak of the location, proximity and the far, stretching into infinity. Temporally there is the present, the past and the future. All these triads are of the phenomenal. Every aspect of the triad is illuminated by nature in a distinctly beautiful manner. Hence Mother Nature is called *tripura sundarī*, the beautifier of the three cities. As the phenomenal is to be burned up to arrive at the noumenal or the unitary principle of the Absolute, Śiva is called *tripurāntaka*, the burner of the three cities.

Another triple aspect with which all living beings are concerned stems out of desire. Desire is to get what one is not in possession of. What is desired to be achieved is called *siddhi* (attainment). A thirsty person wants to appease his thirst. To be thirstless again is an attainment. Innumerable are the *siddhis* to which people can aspire. When one gets the *siddhi* one aspires for, one is called a *siddha*. The possibility of attainment (*sādhyā*) is inherent in

a thing, operation, place or process which provides us with a certain experience (*sādhanam*). Therefore the possibility of an attainment is residing in a ground of possibilities. *Sādhyā*, *siddhi* and *sādhanam* make a triad. An aspirant (*sādhaka*) undergoing a discipline (*sādhana*) and arriving at an attainment (*siddhi*) make another triad.

In the *Rāmāyana*, after showing the vulnerability of a mind infested with desire (*kāma*) with the example of Tātakā, Viśvāmitra introduces Rāma to Siddhāśrama where many *sādhakas* live, doing various kinds of penance for the attainment of several levels of *siddhi*. Viśvāmitra himself had undergone many years of penance to gain certain attainments. The third chapter of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* is the chapter on attaining psychic powers (*Vibhūti Pāda*). However, the fourth and final chapter is *Kaivalya Pāda*, which shows that the ultimate release of a yogi comes only by eschewing the desire for *siddhis* because psychic powers are the last temptation for a yogi. This is illustrated by Viśvāmitra with the story of the most benevolent of the forest-dwellers (*dānavas*), Bali.

The images that are evoked in us when we hear the words *rākṣasa*, *asura* or *dānava* are not relevant to Bali. He had all the di-



vine virtues, including continuous and total love for God, Narayana. He prided only in one thing - his unbeaten love for renouncing anything that he possessed. All people live between the realm of the transactional and the transcendental. Without retaining the ego of the knower, the doer and the enjoyer, one cannot function in the field of transaction. Bali was willing to give up his claim on all these three hallmarks of personal identification. It is very difficult for any spiritual person of absolute excellence to relate himself with the transactional. This is so beautifully put in the *Tao Te Ching* of Lao Tsu. He says that saintly life brings jealousy and that corrupts the minds of people in a society.

The mind is full of greed (*lobha*), lust (*kāma*), rivalry and anger (*krodha*). The supreme manifestation of the mind is symbolized by Indra. Indra and all the items of consciousness in the triple states of mind are shown as failing in this story because they are inferior to the renouncing power of Bali. Hence they supplicate Viṣṇu, Narayana, to take his supremacy away. His supremacy was in chanting *AUM* effectively. *AUM* is described in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* as *anujñāvākya*, the word of consent. A person is truly rich when he has the preparedness to give up anything which another asks for. The consent to give is by saying *AUM*. When Mahāviṣṇu came as Vāmana and requested Bali to give enough space for him to measure with three paces, Bali said *AUM*. Then Mahāviṣṇu changed into his cosmic form and measured the earth and heaven with two paces. For the third, nothing was left but the head of Bali. Without any hesitation, he once again said *AUM*, knowing that he would be pushed all the way to the underground (*ṣūktāla*). Here Bali is the donor of the three worlds and Mahāviṣṇu, like Tripurāntaka, rids Bali of all *upādhis* (conditions). The unconditioned state is called *nirvikalpa* which transcends all *siddhis*. This was the secret lesson of Siddhāśrama which Viśvāmitra covertly revealed to Rāma - that the ultimate attainment is to give up all claims. ♦

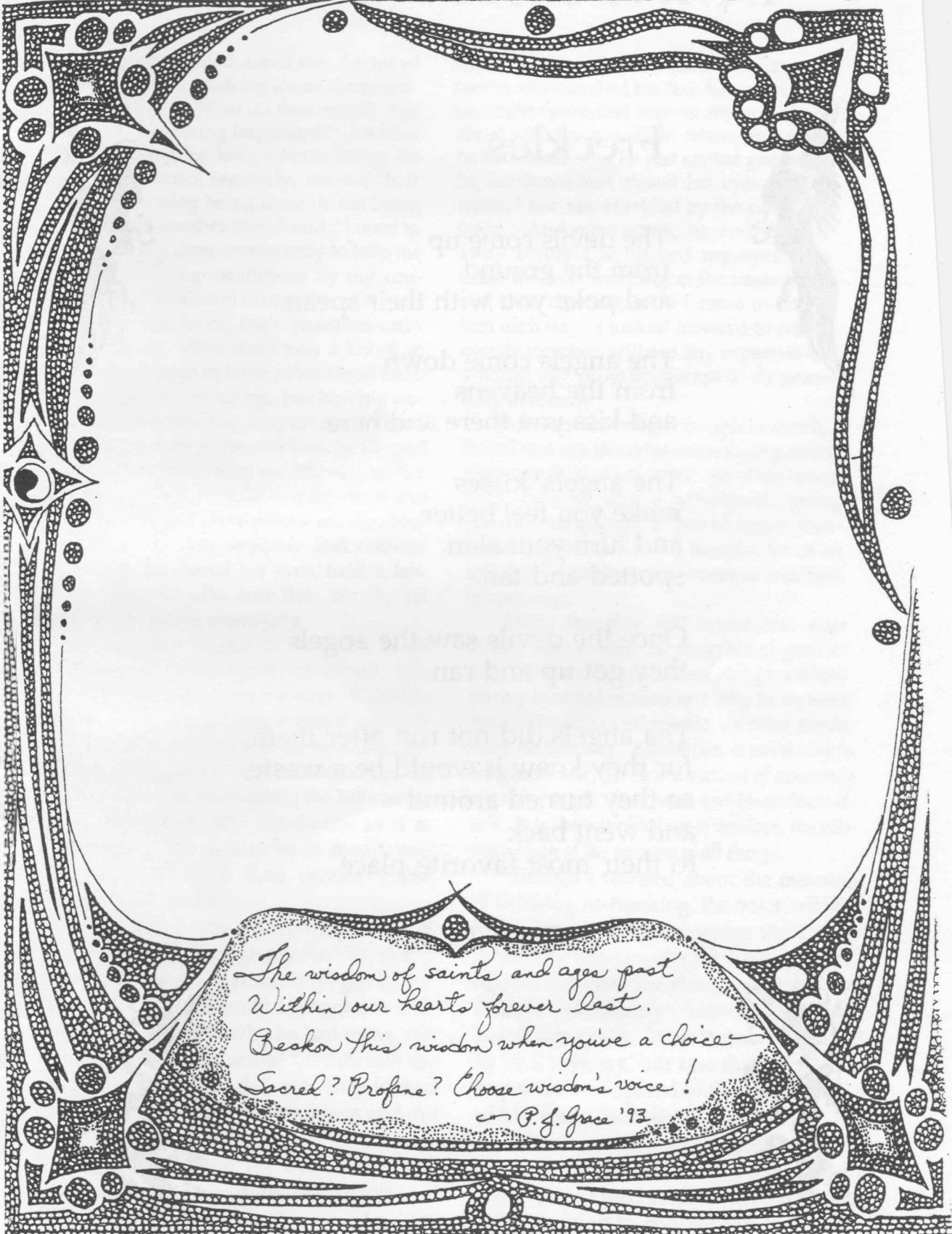
# My Candle

There was darkness everywhere,  
not a soul in sight.  
All were sleeping soundly  
In the cool, dark night.  
I could hear only the sound of the wind,  
the cold wind blowing again and again.  
As I looked outside my window,  
a fear gripped me and I kept on saying,  
"Oh Lord! Take this dark night away from me.  
I can get no sleep with this frightful sound  
of the wind blowing through and through.  
If only there was light all around."

When I said the word, 'light',  
a thought of someone gripped me,  
someone who would be burning bright  
and give my room real delight.  
I took my loving candle out  
and when I lit its wick, it was shining bright.  
I felt as if it was a gift of God  
as it had given me and my room a light so bright  
as seen on a full-moon night.

I closed my windows to avoid the cold wind.  
I was filled with delight, delight, delight  
when I suddenly saw  
my candle's reflections on the window panes.  
It was really a beautiful sight.  
This was a night which I can never forget.  
Just a candle had taken away my fright  
and given me company throughout the night.

Rohit



The wisdom of saints and ages past  
Within our hearts forever last.  
Beskon this wisdom when you've a choice  
Sacred? Profane? Choose wisdom's voice!  
— P. J. Grace '93

# Especially for Children



## Freckles

The devils come up  
from the ground  
and poke you with their spears.

The angels come down  
from the heavens  
and kiss you there and here.

The angels' kisses  
make you feel better  
and turn your skin  
spotted and tan.

Once the devils saw the angels  
they got up and ran.

Tha angels did not run after them,  
for they knew it would be a waste,  
so they turned around  
and went back  
to their most favorite place.

Tori Luke



# East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



In the beginning of 1994, forty years of discipline and study and two years of intense work culminated in the publication of the first volume of Guru Nitya's exhaustive commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in both English and Malayalam. D.K. Printworld in Delhi, the publisher of the English version, has also brought out a new edition of Guru Nitya's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* and two works of Muni Narayana Prasad: *Karma and Reincarnation* and a commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.

In 1993 Guru Nitya's commentary on *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* was published in both India and the United States. The publication by D.C Books of his Malayalam commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* won an all-India award as well as becoming out-of-print virtually overnight. His books and articles in Malayalam annually earn him the distinction of being one of Kerala's best selling authors. Through them, he influences changes in many aspects of Kerala's social, political, aesthetic and intellectual life.

In July of 1993 Guru Nitya traveled to Singapore, Australia, Bali and Fiji. In Fiji he was hosted by the Geetha Ashram in Ba and gave a series of public talks in the

major cities of Fiji.

Guru Nitya's seventieth birthday was celebrated in friends' homes and Gurukulas throughout Kerala in October and November. On November 2, hundreds of well-wishers and Gurukula heads gathered at Kundaliyur Gurukula to participate in one of a series of "Love Dialogues" (*Sneha Samvada*) which Guru conducted throughout Kerala. The hundreds of participants were all fed a delicious feast.

At the Eastern Headquarters of East-West University, the *Brahmavidya Mandiram* is receiving its finishing touches of carved wood eaves and doors. The Varkala Gurukula also has a beautiful new cottage and reception office. At the Guru's headquarters in Fernhill, a new guest cottage has been built and a new well and plumbing system have made running water available to all the buildings and for irrigation of the potato fields. Other improvements continue to add to the beauty of the prayer hall and gardens.

On page 41, you will find a beautifully framed empty space. If it triggers your memory of a favorite quote which you would like to share with all our readers, please send it to us for inclusion in future issues. ❖

# Photo and Illustration Credits

5-11: Graphics by Andy Larkin

16-21: Graphics by Andy Larkin

22-23: Photographs by Nancy Yeilding

25: *Nagas* (Snake) Icons

27: Śarada Temple of Narayana Guru,  
Varkala, photo by Srinivas Sivakasi

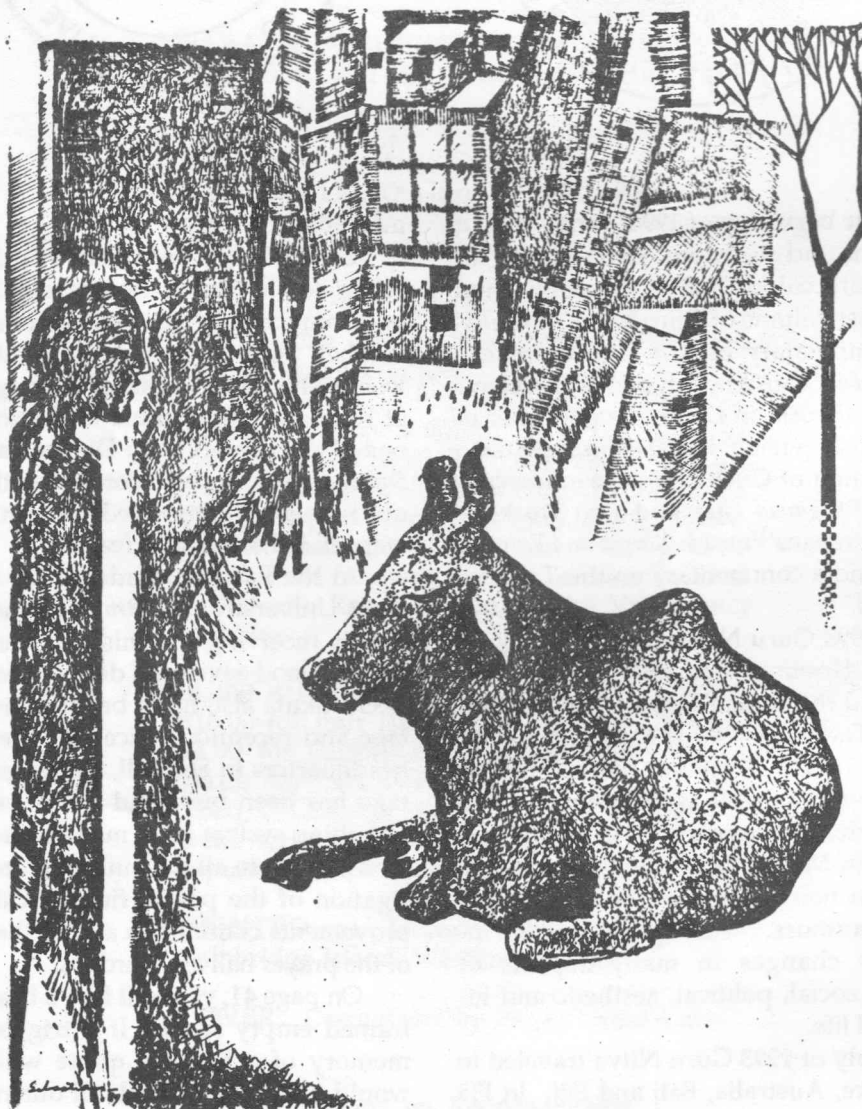
29: Sri Subramanya Temple of Narayana  
Gurur at Kunnumpara, photo by Srinivas  
Sivakasi

33: Rishi, Bengal, early 19th c.

34: Ravana

39: Dwarf, Maharashtra, 1st c. B.C.

44: Drawing by Sebastian Varghese



# East-West University and Narayana Gurukula Publications

## By Nataraja Guru

An Integrated Science of the Absolute (Volumes I, II, III)  
Autobiography of an Absolutist  
The *Bhagavad Gita*  
The Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru  
*Saundārya Laharī*  
The Search for a Norm in Western Thought  
Vedanta Revalued and Restated  
The Philosophy of a Guru  
Towards a One World Economics  
World Education Manifesto  
Memorandum on World Government  
Anthology of the Poems of Narayana Guru  
Dialectical Methodology

## By Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, Volume I: *Madhu Kāṇḍa*  
The Psychology of *Darśana Mālā*  
The *Bhagavad Gita*  
Neither This Nor That But... *AUM*  
Love and Devotion  
The Haunting Echoes of Spring  
A Bouquet of Verses in Praise of the Supreme Mother  
Experiencing the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*  
Śree Narayana Guru  
*Daiva Daśakam* (Translation and Commentary)  
Psychology: An Eastern Perspective  
*Bhakti*  
*Vināyakāṣṭakam* (Translation and Commentary)  
God: Reality or Illusion?  
*Prāṇāyāma*  
*Arivu* - Epistemology of Gnosis

## Other

*Dhyāna Mañjuṣā*  
East-West University Prospectus and Yearbooks  
Mirror by the Road - Peter Oppenheimer  
Edda's Diaries - Edda Walker  
Śrī Narayana Guru - Dr. S. Omana  
A World Academy of Wonder - J.L. Ascharyacharya

## Publications Available From:

Narayana Gurukula  
Srinivasapuram P.O.  
Varkala, Kerala  
695145 India

Island Gurukula Āraṇya  
8311 Quail Hill Road  
Bainbridge Island  
Washington 98110 USA



