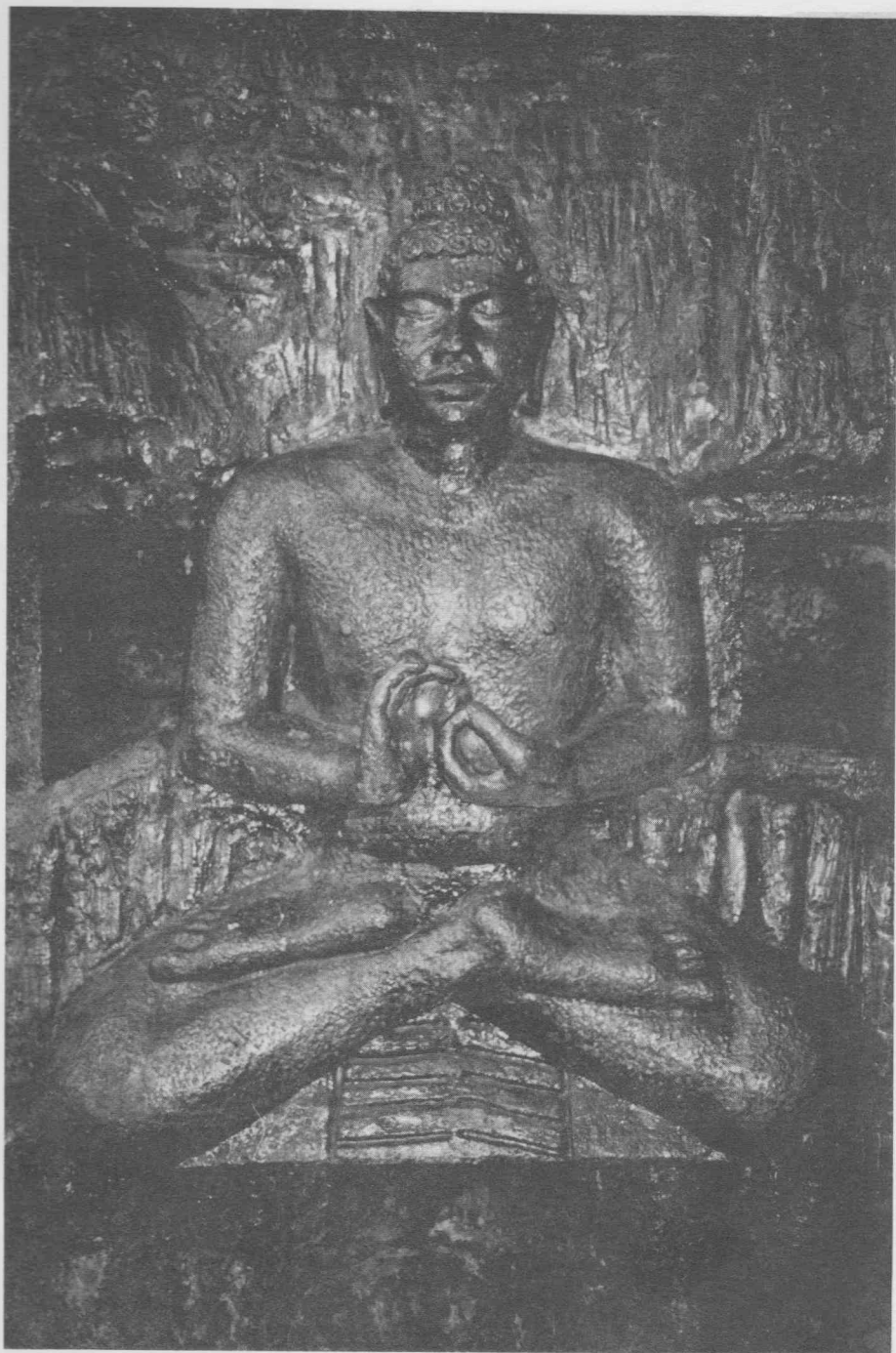
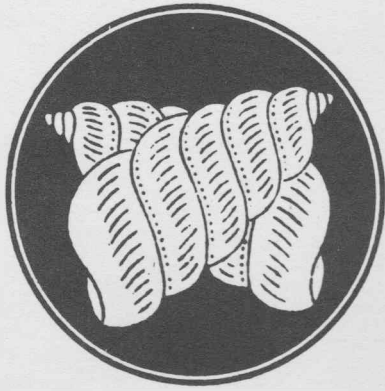


GURUKULAM

VOLUME X • 1994

SECOND QUARTER





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- 3 DAWN by Nancy Yeilding
- 5 EXPERIENTIAL AESTHETICS AND IMPERIENTIAL
TRANSCENDENCE: Commentary on Narayana Guru's
Svānubhavadgīti Śatakam by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 12 THE KATHA UPANIṢAD
Translation and Commentary by Muni Narayana Prasad
- 15 SILENT SINGING by Peter Moras
- 16 THE SCIENCE OF HARMONIOUS UNION
Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Śastra*
by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 22 AFTER STORM AND MOONRISE by Nitya
- 24 BIOGRAPHY OF NARAYANA GURU by Nancy Yeilding
- 30 THE FOUR GOALS OF LIFE by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 36 IS THE UNIVERSE CLEAR? by Deborah Buchanan
- 38 NARAYANA GURU'S CONCEPT OF GOD
by N. C. Kumaran
- 42 ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN
Emily Teitsworth
- 44 PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

GURUKULAM

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Dawn

As the earth turns on its axis, dawn slowly comes to one part of the world after another. If you have been sleeping by the ocean's shore, it is almost as if there is a lull in the crashing of the waves, a stillness that calls you to raise your head and watch a dark gray world become tinged with pink and then vibrant with color. In a riverside meadow, the sunrise is greeted by the sweet chirping of birds which rises to a full chorus. Then the warmth of the sun releases the fragrance of the flowers and bees start humming. In a mountain forest, the roar of the wind in the tree-tops drops to a quiet murmur and you are stirred to watch sheer cliffs turn magenta and gold.

Since ancient days, dawn has brought, and symbolized, hope, renewal, a momentary pause in necessary action. The light of the sun — brilliant, ever-returning, self-effulgent, life-sustaining — has inspired human beings from the beginning of history to either see the sun itself as a divinity or its luminescence as a symbol for the divine. From the very beginning, human aspiration has risen upward in poetry and song, in religion and art, trying to approach and to manifest the qualities of the sun and the heavens where it resides.

But the light of the sun does not always reach the earth. Daily it is replaced by the darkness of night. It is often obscured by clouds which can bring with them terrific storms of lightening, thunder and rain. These forces of nature have also been seen as divinities, sometimes personified and sometimes more vaguely conceived. They evoked fear and uncertainty about how to stay in harmonious relationship with the overwhelming powers which could as easily bring destruction as blessing.

Because of its effulgence and warmth, fire became an earthly corollary of the sun. Though lacking the sun's immensity, grandeur and unapproachability, fire partook of its essential qualities. In cultures around the world, it came to be seen as a stand-in or messenger for God or the gods. Delectable foods, precious herbs and liquids, flowers and grains, prized animals — all were entrusted to fire to be carried to the distant divinities, along with prayers for protection and bounty. Gathering around

the fire was a time of knitting the community together in a shared affirmation of their highest values. The acts and words of worship lifted spirits and attuned vision to the beauty and vastness of the world of which they were a part. Originally, the gestures of offering were simple, undorned expressions of gratitude and supplication. The treasures which were consigned to the flames were not thought of as being destroyed, but of being transmuted — reduced to non-existence on the physical plane so that their essence could be transferred to an immortal plane.

In most religions, the rituals associated with sacrificial transformations through fire became more and more elaborate over time, reaching perhaps their most exaggerated expression in ancient India. Burnt sacrifices were used to greet each day, each change of season, and every important social function from birth to death. Among these, the Royal Sacrifice or Horse Sacrifice stood out in its dimensions — it was capable of depleting the resources of large regions, in addition to causing a great deal of bloodshed. When a minor king sought to become like an emperor, establishing his rule over all the neighboring kingdoms, the Horse Sacrifice was the means by which he declared his claim, pursued it and celebrated his victory. In this sacrifice, a steed of magnificent proportions was allowed to wander at will, followed by the supporters of the king. When the horse entered another kingdom, the local king either had to declare his allegiance to the aspiring emperor or do battle, in which he would either be vanquished and subjugated or win and undermine the other's bid for supremacy.

When all the neighboring kingdoms were brought under the sway of one king, then the horse was ceremoniously killed and burned in a sacrificial fire. Gifts and substantial tribute were offered to the emperor by the other kings and he, in turn, offered to the gods as well as sharing the wealth with his priests who performed the sacrifice. Needless to say, the slaughter and burning of such a large animal was a bloody and grisly affair. Even more heinous was the impact on the countryside

where nature's bounty, reaped by the hard work of agricultural laborers, was taken away from those most deserving and needful of it and converted into luxury for the kings and priests who became more and more like scabs on the rest of society.

There were thoughtful and gentle people who viewed these developments with sorrow. Poets and artists, seers and teachers, they pulled away from the cities where such practices were becoming common. They moved to the forest, either literally or in spirit, where they could merge into a more peaceful context in which to think and write, study and create. As they regained their connections to and harmony with the natural world, they reflected on the human needs that found expression in sacrifice: yearnings for an enduring sense of security, interconnectedness and immortality. They knew these things could only be achieved by a transformation of identity, like a seed allowing itself to burst open in order to let a new sprout of life emerge, the eternally recurring rhythm of day fading into night and night glowing into day, the incoming breath merging with the being of the individual and the outgoing breath merging with the globe-circling wind.

They responded with compassion, taking sincere seekers by the hand to lead them from what was familiar but inadequate to that which could fulfill their highest aspirations. One of the wisest of them all was *Yājñavalkya*, whose loving guidance is presented in a myriad ways in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. The first of these is a reconsideration of the Horse Sacrifice in which the horse is not an animal but a symbol for the entire cosmos:

AUM. The head of the sacrificial horse is verily the dawn, the eye of the sacrificial horse is the sun, the vital force is the air, the open mouth the fire named vaiśvānara, the trunk the year, the back the heaven, the belly the sky, the hoof the earth, the flanks the four directions, the ribs the intermediate directions, the limbs the seasons, the joints the months and fortnights, the feet the days and nights, the bones the stars, the flesh the clouds, the half-digested food in the stomach is the sands, the blood vessels are the rivers, the liver and spleen the mountains, the hairs the herbs and trees, the forepart the rising sun, the hind part the setting sun. Its yawn is lightning, its shaking the body is thunder, its

making water is rain, its neighing is indeed speech. (I.1.1)

Although our society is not riddled with sacrificial rituals like the Horse Sacrifice, we suffer no less than ancient Indian society from estrangement from each other and the world around us. In fact the scope of the havoc we wreak in senseless sacrifices of life would have been completely unimaginable to those ancient peoples. And the inequitable distribution of the world's resources is as pervasive now as then. When we read the words of the ancient poet, it is like the moment when we face the rising sun. We feel a quiet sense of wonder as our intuition grasps the significance of the horse becoming a metaphor for all of existence.

But we need the guidance of a modern teacher to reveal how *Yājñavalkya's* wisdom can guide us to fulfill our own aspirations. Guru Nitya's commentary on this *Upaniṣad* leads us step by step from this opening image to the realization that we are the horse and our lives are the sacrifice in which we renounce one stage in order to grow into another, offering our physical selves, the movements of our hands and legs, our ingoing and outgoing breaths, our spoken words, into the fire of spiritual transformation. He helps us to discover how to bring alive the saving meditation that *Yājñavalkya* points to:

So even now the universe is manifested only as name and form — it gets such and such name and such and such form. This Supreme Self has penetrated into all these bodies up to the nail-ends, just as a razor lies in its case or as fire lies in its source. One who meditates upon each aspect of this totality does not know, because, being qualified by each aspect of the totality, it is incomplete. One should meditate upon it only as the Supreme Self, because in it all these become one. Of these, this entity called the Self alone is to be known, because one knows all these through it just as one can find a missing animal through its footprints. One who knows thus attains knowledge of unity and liberation. (I.4.7)

Nancy Yeilding

Guru Nitya's commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is available at Island Gurukula Aranya and Narayana Gurukula, Fernhill.

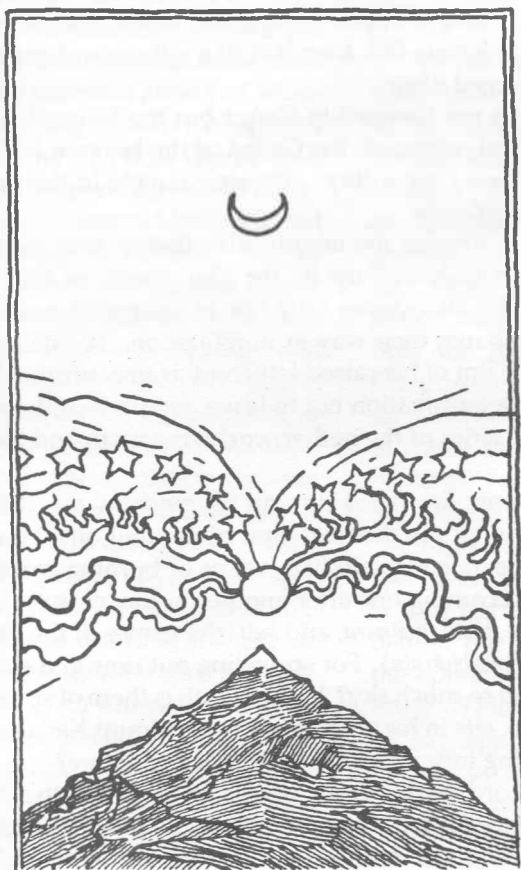
Svānubhavagīti Śatakam:

Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



Verse 76

Without big, small or intermediate waves arising,
Oh Infinitude of Consciousness,
graciously bestow blessings upon me,
so that my mind may not be caught
in the fluctuating confusion of the blemish of *māyā*.

The pilgrims who climb from the foothills of the Himālayas with a desire to scale the glorious height of the king of mountains, upon seeing the magnitude of the first hill before them, stand stupefied, admiring its girth and majesty. When they push on, stung by curiosity, they are surprised by the sudden emergence of another hill, taller than the one they have encountered, and even more beautiful. They wonder where such a mighty hill was hiding when they were turning their first round. Next come a few small hillocks causing almost a panic in the mind that what they have seen is the total glory of the Himālayas to be witnessed.

No, it is not so. The pilgrims are now closer to the mighty peaks. After going to a certain height they dare look neither up nor down. The soul-stirring wonder is still beyond. Ultimately the pilgrim sees the unexpected. A glorious peak, thrusting itself through a girdle of clouds, shows its snowy mantle as if the mountain is sculpted out of pure silver. What else need be there to remind one of the Lord of Kailas (Śiva).

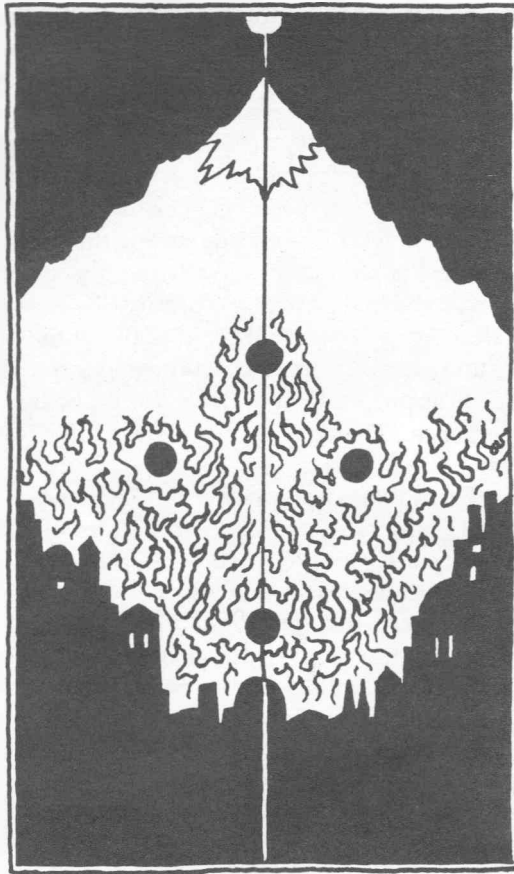
The frozen peak wrapped in snow is not even half as impressive as the tumultuous leap of Ganga where she cascades with white pearl-like froth. For one moment she holds her breath like a blue lagoon with a surface not betraying a single ripple. When the water surges over the edge and makes a thunderous fall, then it is like a thousand man horses galloping down the rugged drop.

What matters is not the earthly Gaṅgā but the heavenly one. (In India our galaxy is called *vingaṅgā*, the Gaṅgā of the heavens.) Even the sun of our solar system is only a tiny glittering bubble in the heavenly froth of multitudinous galaxies.

In the course of time all the mighty suns that go into the making of the galaxy will be swallowed up by the black holes of dissolution. Everything related to Śiva also shares with him his cosmic dance. It is not only time and tide that dance their way to annihilation. The flame which Śiva holds aloft in the palm of his raised left hand is uncontrollably leaping skyward with the determination not to leave any trace of the cosmos after burning the triple cities of the nether world, the earth and the heavens.

Where the cosmic fire flares up and ranges how can the whirlwinds of time remain quiet? In the final hour of dissolution all the starry heavens fly off in the cosmic tornado like wisps of burning cotton. The formation that are seen coming one after another in the cosmic dance of time are the *yugas - kṛta, tretā, dvāpara*, and *kali* (the names of the cycles of creation given in the *Mahābhārata*). For spreading out time and space like this, where can one find so much sky? What dearth is there of space when the silent God Sadāśiva sits in his yogic posture on Mount Kailas and lets his mind go on dreaming infinitudes of both space and time?

Oh Supreme Lord, in this grand drama, projected with a sense of humor, is there any place for anything other than the intoxication of bliss which You display both in the enraptured embrace of union and in the total erasure of the confusion of formal vision? If by Your grace we get an entry into the arena of Your dance, we will also be liberated from the meagerness of our earthly existence and will be turned into a silvery sheen that beams forth from Your beautiful crescent.



Verse 77

Oh Grace, this darkness with which You are enwrapped,
 the light the mediate state and generality,
 Oh Heart, the grace that dwells in the heart,
 Oh Burner of the three cities.

Verse 78

Holding blazing fire in the palm of Your hand,
 You descend into the burning city of consciousness.
 Remaining in the city and yet burning,
 such graceful presence of Yours is a great wonder.

The union of Śiva and Śakti was previously described with the analogy of a golden creeper entwining an ever-new stalwart tree. Now we are at the stage of Śiva burning away the triple cities beautified by Śakti. Here the apt description of the beautifier of the three cities (Śakti) is not the golden creeper.

The emergence of phenomenal individuation can happen only after the true light of the noumenon has been shielded. Śiva is through and through pure consciousness. The verse given here has two versions.

In one it says "As You are wrapped with darkness," and the second version says "You are decorated with darkness." Both these versions are relevant in this context where the phenomenal shines in all glory, concealing the truth of Śiva. Therefore we can say "the darkness with which You are wrapped." In the thirteenth verse of *Ātmopadeśa Śataka* Guru gives the analogy of Śiva's body decorated with the three modalities of nature. That implies Śiva's approval for the phenomena of nature to have its primary presence felt. In which ever sense we take it, the reference is to Śiva's divine consort who is well-known for the manifestation of the world of triple times, triple spaces, and triple phases of consciousness. Now Śiva is going to burn down all the beauty She has created.

As the true being of Śiva is devoid of the of the dualities of name and form, cause and effect, actor and action, and also the eight moods of aesthetics, it is only appropriate that these should be burned down to arrive at his true essence. That is why the glory of the *devi* is described as "darkness."

Here the Guru refers to four factors: 1) darkness; 2) brightness; 3) the mediate; and 4) generality. Of the triple states of consciousness, the one which conceals the Absolute by causing total opacity, is the empirically brilliant wakeful consciousness in which the gross world of form and name is projected. Those who are caught within the ambit of transaction will certainly find it impossible to think of immediate perception as a falsifying agent. Metaphysical ignorance or nescience is generated by the impressiveness of immediate perception.

Most people think that the gross world is perceived because it is illuminated by light. But objective vision is actualized by dark shadows which give contrast to the illuminated parts. Thus recognition of a form and its shape are visually contributed by darkness. Among the magical impressions of *māyā* the most mysterious to discern is the one caused by the forms and shapes of things. Recognition of a form has little or no relationship with its size and color. Also the dynamic of a form can be magically interjected into its name. The mere suggestion of the name can recall the form with which the name is associated. Thus the stuff out of which form and name originates is darkness.

Embodiment of forms has the prerequisite of claiming a delimited space for each form to occupy. There is another kind of darkness sitting between spirit and matter, *cit* and *jada*. That is the obscuration of causal consciousness. That is mentioned here as the mediate. Just as the bright light which illuminates objects presents the most gross in the transactional world, similarly the articulated sound is the most gross factor in the world of verbal consciousness. In the semiotic process, in order for a spiritual impression to be transformed into its verbal expression, it has to be processed into sound form in the mediate region of *madhyamā*. *Madhyamā* is the mediate. In the triple states of consciousness, the mediate is represented by deep sleep.

Even when there are variations and variegations, a thing is accepted as part of being only when it can be referred to a principle of generality. That generality is here referred to as the fourth factor. It can also be called the commonality of things of homogeneity. In Sanskrit it is called the fourth, *turiya*, which is the same as *Sadāśiva*. *Sadā* means "eternal." *Śiva* is peace or auspiciousness.

The Supreme Lord (*paramēśvara*), before taking upon himself the

agency of creation, accepts the word and phenomenality as the two aids to creation. Phenomenality, the word, the intelligence implied in creative procreation, and the act of creation are all made possible only with the borrowed light of Śiva, the Supreme. Hence the Lord is remembered here as the most precious presence in the heart of the poet who makes the supplication.

Even though the Supreme Goddess is meticulously fabricating this boundless universe in and through the four long cycles, like the so-called big bang which scientists speak of, it will all be blasted away by the Lord in no time.

In the Indian context, there is a geographical suggestion of ascent and descent. Kanyākumāri is where the three oceans meet at the tip of India. The temple there which almost juts into the ocean is dedicated to the virgin Goddess who is ever in prayer for union with Śiva. That is the alpha point of a vertical parameter. If a vertical line is drawn from Kanyākumāri to the Himālayas, it will pass through Kailas, a peak of the Himālayas where Śiva is said to be sitting in *samādhi* (mystical absorption). Kanyākumāri marks the alpha of creation. She has before her the supernal sun of manifestation. Śiva of Kailas marks the omega beyond which the height of manifestation can never go. Towards Kanyākumāri is a descent. In Christian mysticism we read only of the ascent to mountain summits and not the descent from them. In the present case there is a perfect dialectics of ascending and descending.

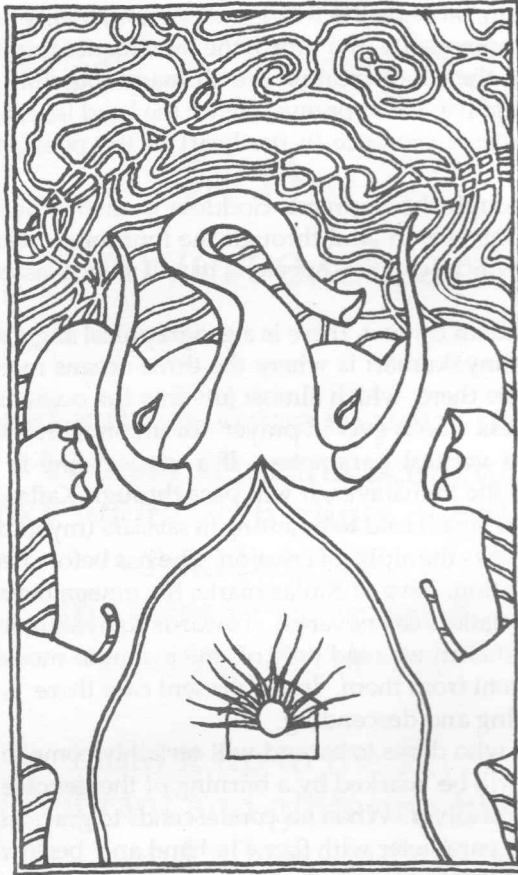
Anyone who dares to ascend will certainly come to a union with the Lord. That will be marked by a burning of the devotee in the flames of the Supreme Dissolver. When he condescends to grace us, Śiva himself comes down this parameter with flame in hand and bestows his grace by burning away all marks of finitude. The greatest wonder is that the very city in the south of India which was dedicated to him was shown his benign acceptance by being burned in a conflagration. He resides in the city, and yet the city being enveloped in flames is a great wonder.

Verse 79

Fresh mango fruit, newly drawn elixir, molasses,
palm wine, sweet fruit, tasty juice -
Oh my Lord, who was sought after by Brahma and Viṣṇu,
Your feet alone are the refuge.

Verse 80

To this humble slave you give refuge.
Oh Pure Light of Consciousness,
wrapped in the hide of an elephant which you have skinned,
please grace me with a boon
to cross over the deception of darkness.



Verses seventy-nine and eighty are to be taken as a fraction in which seventy-nine represents the numerator. In the last line of seventy-nine and in the whole of verse eighty the same is taken down to the denominator level. The Goddess of Creation, differently called Śakti, Devī, Pārvatī, Gaurī, and Umā, is the sweetener and beautifier of this world. All the attractions with which she makes life on earth a hedonistic feast are alluded to in verse seventy nine with various kinds of suggestive terms which have special reference to the Śiva-Pārvatī context.

The fresh mango fruit with which the verse commences has reference to Subrahmaṇya who, in his eagerness to get this rare fruit from Śiva and Pārvatī, agreed to a race with his brother Gaṇeśa. He rode on his peacock and made a circumambulation of the universe. He lost the race because his brother went around Śiva and Pārvatī and claimed that he deserved the mango fruit, as he had made a circumambulation around the cause while Subrahmaṇya was wasting time going around the horizontalized manifestation. Thus there is a reference to deception and the subtle defeating the gross.

The second reference is to the elixir of immortality for which the gods and demons churned the milk ocean. When the *devas* got the elixir, the demons felt betrayed. They did not get anything. Śiva fared even worse, because his share in the churning competition was to drink the poison vomited by Vāsuki, the snake that was used as a rope to churn the sea. Again the analogy recalls a great deception.

The third reference is to molasses, the sweet essence of sugar cane. The sugar cane represents the bow of the god of erotics. The essence of the sugar cane thus naturally represents the intoxicating infatuation arising out of erotics. The fourth reference is to the juice of the palm tree out of which intoxicants are made (*madhu*). This is very addictive and can make a person alcoholic. The sweet fruit given in this verse as the fifth has reference to a black berry (*nava*) which Subrahmaṇya used to curb the pride of an erudite female sage, Ovvai.

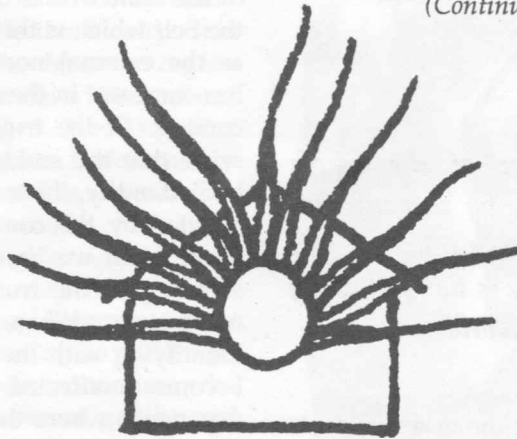
The final reference is to *rasam*, the sapidity of water. What is common to all the items is a sense of taste. Life itself is described as *rasātmakam*, "constituted by the nine flavors of moods of life." Śiva knows only one *rasam*. That is *śantam*, peace. All the other eight moods belong to his consort. The pure and verticalized essence of Śiva and Pārvaṭī is pure bliss. Its contaminated horizontality comes in the form of the highly horizontalized deceptive projections on which the five senses of an indiscriminate person are fed, and thus such a person is caught in the snare of *māyā*.

The futility of searching for the secret of Śiva is alluded to here with a reference to the mythical story of Viṣṇu changing himself into a boar and burrowing into the earth to locate the feet of Śiva and Brahma turning himself into a swan to locate Śiva's head. Both these gods failed miserably. Thus all the references here are suggestive of phenomenal deception.

It is with Śiva's consent that his consort manipulates her world of magic. Unlike other gods Śiva takes pleasure in hiding away in obscurity. Although his essence is the pure light of wisdom, he conceals it by wrapping around himself the gross and ugly hide of a dead elephant which offers a hideous contrast to the sublime beauty of Śiva. Śiva is called Sundareśvara, the god of beauty.

Umā, the consort of Śiva, is described by the great poet Kalidasa as a willful woman who could never be restrained. When she wanted to do impossible penance to become the spouse of Śiva, her mother warned her and asked her not to go. *Umā* means "Do not go." She did go and had her union with the Lord, at the cost of merging herself totally in Śiva. Thus in the final union with the Lord nothing is left which one can claim as his or her own. Śiva's mark is *jyotis* (resplendent light). Those who merge with him also become *jyotis*.

(Continued in next issue.)



Kāṭha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

V: 10

Just as the one air entered all the world and became corresponding in form to every form, so the inherent Self corresponds in form to every form and yet is external.

This mantra uses the analogy of air to convey the same idea expressed by the analogy of fire in the previous mantra. Though fire and air are two of the five elements of nature it is not as representing the five elements that they are mentioned here. The specific characteristics of fire and air exemplify the dynamism of the truth or the Self. Fire burns upwards and engulfs everything. At the same time wind blows in all directions and enters everywhere. These represent respectively the vertical and horizontal dynamics of the immortal Self.

V: 11

As the sun, the eye of the whole world, is not sullied by the external faults of the eyes, so the inherent Self in all that has become is not sullied by the sufferings of the world.

The sun is a self-luminous lamp which illuminates everything in this world. So

the sun is considered to be the eye of the world. It is with our eyes that we see the sun. The sun is only one. But there is no ground for the claim that the form of the sun seen by one person is the same as that seen by another. The form one sees depends on the functional qualities of the eye and of the mind. Viewed thus, we can only say that each person has their own visual experience of the sun. We have the conception that all have the same visual experience only because we give the same name to the experience each one of us has. Though the experience of the sun thus may vary, it does not affect the unity of the sun. The defects of the eyes and the mind, when looked at from the point of view of the sun are only external.

It is in the place of the defects of the eye and the mind which perceive the sun, the eye of the world, that the rishi of the Upaniṣad presents the worldly afflictions of the man who is desirous of perceiving the Self which is the inner content as well as the external norm of everything that has come out in the eternal process of becoming. If the truth is sought with the sense that the seeker or the 'I' is an embodied entity, the truth found will also be affected by the conditions of the seeker. Even when we have a deformed understanding of the truth, the truth remains unaffected. When the seeker gives up identifying with the body, the perception becomes unaffected. It will be a non-dual experience where the experience becomes identified with the experienced.

V: 12

The One, the controller, the One who is the inner self-content of all that has become, who, being of one form, becomes multifaceted; the wise one who perceives that One as abiding in oneself, to such a one there is eternal happiness, and to no others.

In the last mantra we saw that in the one and only truth there is no differentiation of the seer and the seen. It goes without saying that the same truth is the self-content of every being. It is the very truth that phenomenally appears as the 'I' who seeks and that which is sought. The one who sees this truth which is always one and at the same time manifests as many, as one's own self-content incessantly, is called here a *dhīra* (wise one).

Affliction in life is caused by someone or something else. But in the vision of the *dhīra* mentioned above, there is no 'other'. He sees everything in the one truth. When there is not anything else, there is no cause for affliction also. This puts an end to all sufferings in life. The happiness thus gained is eternal. Though everyone is in search of happiness, no one knows that the eternal happiness is of this nature. Between the lines of this mantra and the next we hear a call of the rishi to turn our attention to this eternal happiness at least from now on.

V: 13

The One who is the eternal and the transient, the animating consciousness in all animate beings, the one in the many, provides for the accomplishment of all desires - the wise one who incessantly perceives that One as abiding within, for such a person is eternal peace and not for others.

What Yama began in the sixth mantra of this *Upaniṣad*, emphatically announcing "Come, I am going to declare to you the truth of the eternal and secretive Absolute," is being continued here. As we know, death is the theme of this teaching. Death here is not visualized as an event concerning a particular person, but as belonging to the context of the Absolute. Every living being is transient. Transient beings are experienced only as existing and not as non-existent. That means that beingness is in all transient beings. Though every being is eventually extinguished, non-existence never happens. Existence always has one form or another. When one form disappears, another form comes. The same eternal existence manifests in every transient being. Eternal existence never dies and is never born.

When an animate being becomes inanimate, we say that it is dead. All the individual living beings become inanimate, but the system of the universe always remains animate. It is only as participating in that total system that every individual animate being comes into being and disappears. Hence it is said here that the Absolute is the animating consciousness in all animate beings.

Every being is born here and dies, viewed from the standpoint of the individual. That is where there are many, where there are beginnings and ends. But when all the changeful forms are intuitively understood as phenomenal appearances of the same existence by a wise one, he sees the one in the many. That one never dies and is never born.

One of the characteristics of all animate beings is that they have natural desires. This universe is so structured that every living being is provided with the facility for accomplishing these desires in accordance with its inner nature and for the resultant actualization of happiness. This structural coherence is another characteristic of the absolute truth that is the one, the eternal and the animating consciousness. So we can safely say that the absolute truth is the accomplisher of all desires.

Self-protection and preservation is the highest of all desires in living beings. Attaining immortality is the highest form of this desire. So that is considered to be the ultimate human value (*parama puruṣārtha*) by Indians. The attainment of this highest of all desires could also be understood as facilitated by the absolute truth or the Self. It is actualized by the intuitive awareness, "I am that truth," or "I am the Absolute" (*aham brahma asmi*). For the one who knows thus, the immortal is not something else, but is oneself. Such a one has already gained immortality. The attainment of eternal peace is nothing else.

V: 14

'This is it,' thus they become aware of the supreme happiness that cannot be pointed out. How, now, shall I understand That? Does It shine as it is? Or does it shine as having specific forms?

The elucidation of the most secretive and eternal Absolute that was begun in the sixth mantra continued until the last one. The conclusion reached was that those who visualize the Absolute in one's own being have eternal peace. Here Nachiketas raises an epistemological problem which arises from this.

If my state is such that I do not visualize the absolute truth as abiding within as the 'I', and eternal peace is assured only to those who are immersed in such a non-dual vision, how can I be led to this state of experience? There is an inherent paradox here. We can point out an external object and say that it is such and such a thing. But how can some one else point out to me what is in me? As it can never be pointed out, will it not remain unattainable for me?

Something can be pointed out only with the help of the indicative marks in it. Indicative marks belong to the attributes (*dharma*) of the object and not the substance (*dharmin*). Truth remains always as

the substance. all the attributes are only superimpositions on the substance. That is why the ultimate truth is said to be indefinable and not able to be indicated. Truth has indicative characteristics only when it manifests with specific qualities. Only that which has indicative characteristics can be pointed out. This paradoxical situation inherent in the Absolute is succinctly made clear by Narayana Guru in his conclusion of the *Bhāna Darśana* (Vision of Consciousness) of his *Darśana Mālā*:

What is the object of consciousness,
that is conditioned.

What is unconditioned

is not the object of consciousness.

What is conditioned is non-existent.

but what is unconditioned,
itself the Existent is That.

Pointing out is possible only in the realm of the conditioned objects of consciousness. Then how could I know the real truth which is the unconditioned substance behind all attributes? Does the Absolute shine as itself so that I could see That? Or does it shine in and through all the specific forms of manifestation? If it shines at all, how can I get over this paradox? The epistemological problem of attaining absolute knowledge in terms of self-awareness is presented by Narayana Guru in his *Arivu*:

Where can that knowledge be, so that
It could be pursued
by the same knowledge
to know what it is?

V: 15

There the sun does not shine forth, nor the moon and stars. Lightning does not shine forth, much less this fire. After the One who shines does everything here shine. All here is illumined with specific forms by Its brightness.

The epistemological problem raised by Nachiketas in the last mantra is here answered: that which is the unconditioned existence shines forth always, as all that exists in specific forms.

If we examine this answer carefully, we can see that it does not really answer the question. The question was epistemological, while the answer is ontological, relating to the self-luminous causal substance. Logically the answer is irrelevant. But Indian seers see the self-luminous substance (*sat*) as the thinking substance (*cit*) also. That means that ontological existence is pure knowledge in content. So the most basic function of knowledge turns

out to be the most basic function of existence also. The seer is saved from the paradoxical situation of having to indicate what cannot be indicated by the vision that basically the consciousness that knows (*cit*), the ultimate existence (*sat*) and the final goal of happiness or immortality (*ānanda*) are not different. This way of leaving behind subsisting knowledge and catching up existence and visa versa is compare to the play of a trapeze in a circus by Nataraja Guru in his *Vedanta Revalued and Restated*. The next *Valli* takes us to the intricacies of this problem.

(Continued in next issue,)

Silent Singing

*I sit at the feet
of the mountains
and know in my heart
I am them.*

*I sit calm
under a heaven of blue sky
and know that all-filling nature
of pure consciousness.*

*The apple that slowly digests
under the gentle rising
and falling of my stomach
is none other than
life-giving rain in a solid form,
kissed with sunlight,
honey sweet.*

*And I know in my bones
the knowledge of the earth
whence this body came.*

Peter Moras

The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patāñjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sūtra II:37

asteya pratiṣṭhāyām sarva ratnopasthānam

asteya: honesty, non-misappropriateness

pratiṣṭhāyām: on being firmly established

sarva: all

ratna: precious things, gems

upasthānam: self-presentation

On being firmly established in honesty, all kinds of precious things present themselves (before the yogi).

Of all the vices which a person can cultivate, the most subtle is the stealing of virtues, values and advantages which do not naturally belong to one. Pilfering, stealing someone's valuables, etc., are all *steyam* in some sense, but the kind of stealing from which a yogi has to desist is not the thieving of a highway robber. There are incomparable masters of the world like Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, the Prophet Mohammed, Guru Nanak, Śankara, Rāmañuja, Mādhva, and, in our own days in India, Śrī Rāmakrishna, Dayananda Saraswati, Swāmī Vivekānanda, Narayana Guru and Mahatma Gandhi, who all represent precious values in the hearts of people. It is common knowledge that these glorious names have become commercial propositions and that, all over the world, very subtle forms of thieving the glories of great people are precipitated.

The great number of Buddhist viharas,

churches of all kinds, masjids, and so-called spiritual and welfare institutions that have risen in several parts of the world are the best example of the subtle way in which people make a living in the reflected glory of great people. One has to wean oneself away with great care from such dishonest sharing of the booty of religious and spiritual exploits. The great masters have given up everything for the sake of their love for all sentient beings and they are naturally held in great glory by humanity, moved by gratitude. When, through historical chance, others assume the positions of these great one's, they are verily great deceivers who don the raiment of glory without paying for it.

Think of a great *guru* who has toiled for several years, mounted rugged peaks with great earnestness and, after years of penance and prayer, comes to realization. Most naturally, he is worshipped by humanity. If a person who incidentally stood by him is acclaimed by his friends as the successor to the *guru* – does he have the same inner worth? If he repeats, parrot-like, what his *guru* has taught, he is stealing the glory of the *guru* without knowing the illumination of the blessed one. This is the kind of stealing spoken of here.

Jesus was dragged in the muddy roads with a heavy wooden cross on his shoulders. On the Mount of Calvary he was crucified on the very cross he had been carrying. It was with agony, pain and death that he earned his Christ-hood for

himself and the world. How ridiculous to see a well-fed man who knows only the enjoyment of a pampered rich man's comforts donning a religious robe and decorating himself with jewels and a golden cross suspended on a golden chain -- is that not stealing of the worst order?

This stealing is more subtle and more prevalent in other fields such as poetry, music and other creative arts. As long as a person wants only to steal the design or idea of another, he will never find original inspiration in his own heart. Great treasures are hidden deep in the unconscious. When one looks within for original ideas with absolute sincerity, one will find the *ratnagarbha*, mine of precious stones, in one's own intuitive world.

When Patañjali says that a person well-established in *asteya*, honesty, will be amply rewarded with the power to detect the great treasures of the world right where one is, it is to this end that the honest endeavor of a person (*tapasya saparya*) is to be expended. Unfortunately, most commentators have taken this in the very vulgar sense that the yogi will find hidden precious stones. You are a treasure unto yourself: seek and find.

Sūtra II:38

brahmacarya pratiṣṭhāyām vīrya lābhaḥ

brahmacarya: walking in the path of the Absolute

pratiṣṭhāyām: on being firmly established

vīrya: energy

lābhaḥ: gains

On being firmly established in the path of the Absolute, one gains energy.

Spiritual life is considered to have four aspects, each with its own identity. They are of the *brahmacari*, the seeker and student who is learning to recognize the path of the Absolute; the householder or *dharma* who walks in the path of *dharma* and fulfills several roles that come as a consequence of the *dharma* that is being unfold-

ed; the *mumuksu*, one who is intensely desiring to be liberated from the entanglements of karma which have ensued from acceding to the demands of *dharma*; and the *brahmaniṣṭha*, one who is fully established in the identity of the Absolute.

Although one's entire life is to be an incessant flow in the path of the Absolute, embodied life requires people who happen to have intense proximity with nature (*prakṛti*) to set apart at least a quarter of a century to participate in the fulfillment of their nature which stems from the body/mind complex, from what they have inherited, and from the personality traits which have been pursuing them through several lives.

With the conjunction of nature, the mind deviates from identity with the Absolute and many specific roles are assumed within one's world of interests. One sees oneself as an individual belonging to a family or clan, a certain community of parochial coloration. When such specificity enters into one's consciousness, collective *dharma* dissipates into several relativistic identities. Then one looks for the norms which guide the particular role which is congruent with whatever one has imbibed from one's position. The *dharma* that one seeks is that of a specific person with a unique personality. The consequences of this are the roles of a lover, a husband or wife, a father or mother, and a responsible member of the community. Many pragmatic, utilitarian considerations are to be compromised with. Endless obligations and compulsive actions come in the course of life, for which one has to ex-



pend one's physical, vital, mental and spiritual energy.

When one weans away from family and social obligations and again assumes the role of a seeker of the Absolute, one returns to the mainstream of *brahmacarya*. The dissipation of energy ceases. Once again there is a channeling of all energy with a single-minded concentration on the final search. The inner reservoir of energy for the final attainment of the Absolute is amply gained by one whose only interest is to walk in the path of the Absolute.

Sūtra II:39

aparigraha sthairyē janma kathamā sambodhaḥ

aparigraha: non-possessiveness

sthairyē: being confirmed, becoming steady

janma: existence, birth

kathamā: the 'how' and 'wherefore'

sambodhaḥ: knowledge

Non-possessiveness being confirmed, there arises knowledge of the 'how' and 'wherefore' of existence.

In the world of transactions one becomes a possessor or an owner only when one buys something for oneself or when a thing comes to one's possession by chance or choice or as a gift from someone. This is

how we understand possessiveness in our daily transactions. But this is not the order of nature. A child comes to have a consciousness of 'I am' or 'mine' only when it reaches the age of one or two. Much before that, the child that was to be was a sperm in some man and an ovum in some woman. The sperm and ovum come together, become a fetus and grow to maturity in the mother's womb. When it comes from the mother as a child, it already has all the faculties of a living body, the ability to perceive and to cogitate. None of these are taken into possession by the child. Everything is given. Thus, in nature, one who possesses does so without his or her desire or will.

From a worm which is wriggling in the dirt to the proud person with many possessions, all have come from nature, all are sustained by nature and all will return to nature. When the time to leave comes, it cannot be delayed. In between, only human beings come under the delusion of thinking that they are the owners of things. The sense of possession makes them so infatuated that they try to hold on to things.

Sri Rāmakrishna said that God has laughed twice. Once, two people divided land and put up a fence to separate the two pieces. When they said, "This is mine and that is yours," God laughed. When a self-confident doctor assured a patient that he would take care of the patient's life, then also God laughed. Many who have



claimed this earth have become the dust under our feet. These physical organisms of ours are only temporary arrangements. When the time comes, they will disintegrate. Many plays, novels and stories have been written on this theme of a person's illusory identity as a possessor. Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* contains many beautiful couplets on this idea. In the *Mahābhārata* it is written that the greatest miracle in this world is people's forgetfulness about their imminent death.

A knower of the 'wherefrom' and 'how' of things cannot entertain the thought of possessing something at all. When such is our state it is ridiculous that people go so far as to think of another person as theirs - 'my daughter', 'my son', 'my wife', 'my husband'. Until recently, men in all countries thought that women were chattels which they possessed. In this sūtra, non-possessiveness is given as the cause for the knowledge of the 'how' and 'wherefrom' of things but non-possessiveness actually becomes a reality only when this wisdom becomes known.

Sūtra II:40

śaucāt svāṅga jugupsā parair asaṃsargaḥ

śaucāt: from purity

svāṅga: one's limbs or faculties

jugupsā: disgust

parair: with others

asaṃsargaḥ: disinclination to have contact

From knowing what purity is, disgust for one's limbs and of others arises which causes disinclination to have contact.

In the Taoist culture a dichotomy is made between *yin* and *yang*. A similar dichotomy is in almost all spiritual disciplines. The Vedantins call it *cit* and *jada*, the Jains, *cit* and *acit*. The Christians speak of the godly and the worldly. When two pure elements are combined as a mixture or compound, the purity of each is replaced by an amalgam. Thus everything in this world is devoid of its primeval purity. We

cannot see pure spirit anywhere nor pure matter anywhere. Spirit interpenetrates into matter and matter articulates the spirit.

If the animating spirit leaves a body, it becomes a corpse. It has no sensation or knowledge. It has neither pain nor pleasure. Spirit cannot manifest itself and become a percipient or cognizer to perceive, to cogitate and to evaluate. Spirit has to shine through physical entities such as the various faculties of one's body. As the body is constituted of material or physical elements, it is governed by physical laws from which it cannot deviate. The biologic aspect is a meeting ground of spirit and matter. The very basic function of biochemistry is a variety of modes of absorption and secretion. When physical and chemical energies come together to form biologic organisms, a given state transforms into another through a continuous process of organization and disorganization.

If you watch your mouth for a little while you can notice the ceaseless emitting of saliva from the salivary glands. Anything that is thrown out of any part of our bodies is an excretion. We know it to be dirt. That is why we do not allow secretions from our nose, mouth, etc., to come into contact with other parts of our body, our clothes or other persons. Considering all this, people are very dirty. From the pores of the skin perspiration is always coming, as gas or in beads, which contains chemicals like sulfur which have strong odors. If a person does not wipe and wash oneself and change into fresh clothes (in tropical countries, several times a day), one can stink more than a pig. And yet out of vanity people spend hours before mirrors looking at their own faces, combing their hair, adjusting collars and ties or what not. Those who are endowed with the brightest light of the spirit lose their track and fall into the filth of their physical secretions.

But if a person sees the worth of the thoughts that can shine in one's mind, the ideas that can bring beauty and happiness to all around, one will find the same body a helpful tool to focus on the great and

forget about the non-essential. Many people spoil nature's purity by painting themselves with chemical substances of various kinds. In their vanity they think they are beautifying their bodies. In this respect the tribal people of Africa who paint themselves with mud are far better than those who support multinational enterprises that create needs in people to dirty themselves every day with chemical substances. It is a pity that people take dirt for purity and the purity of nature for unattractiveness.

If people only had the wisdom to know that it is not painted lips that speak truth but the sincerity of one's heart; it is not painted eyes that are attractive but an honest look; it is not a cultivated voice culture that holds people spellbound but the irrefutability of the truth which a person speaks. *Śauca* thus implies a discipline by which the essential is discriminated from the non-essential, the precious from the worthless, the spirit from outward appearance. Those who have come to appreciate the essence will cast away the chaff. Those who discriminate in this way have only disgust for all the pretensions of the world. They treasure the pearl of priceless worth which is at the core of every one's being.

Sūtra II:41

*sattvaśuddhi saumanasya ekāgra indriyajaya
ātmaśānta yogyatvāni ca*

sattvaśuddhi: purity of the inner organ
saumanasya: cheerfulness, amicability, fair-mindedness
ekāgra: one-pointedness
indriyajaya: control of the senses
ātmaśānta: vision of the Self
yogyatvāni: fitness for
ca: and

From inner purity arises cheerfulness, one-pointedness, control of the senses and fitness for the vision of the Self.

The verity of science is derived from

the belief that truth is one. Physical sciences unify everything on the basis that matter is one and from it all forms of energy manifest. In chemistry all elements are considered to be only arrangements of primordial energy. However different pure elements, their compounds and mixtures appear to be, the chemist is a monist. The biologist is not confused because of the size or behavior of any species seen in the biologic world. She is also a monist who believes in the unity of life. The religious person thinks of God as one and of God manifesting as all this.

An analogy will be helpful in understanding the dialectics of the one and the many. If a certain area has a powerhouse, the power generated there goes to many individual units such as homes, public institutions, factories, theaters, etc. Each unit has its own power control but the supply for all is controlled by the powerhouse. Analogously the powerhouse represents the supreme Self, the nature of which is *sat-cit-ānanda*. The individual unit is very much like a person with an inner organ which controls one's wakeful, dream and deep sleep hours. Although the power in the powerhouse and the individual units is the same, at each individual unit it can be stepped up or down as required. When power is transmitted through a stove, it gives heat, through a fan, it makes a current of air, through a refrigerator, it freezes, etc. Similarly, when the pure aspect of Self (*pratyak caitanya*) is directed into the individual, it is only a reflected reality or self (*abhāsa caitanya*).

The pure light that comes into the individual has the same quality as its absolute source. But the individuated person experiences only the reflected image of the Self. The medium through which the reflection comes is nature. That aspect of nature which gives a pure clear replication is *sattva*. When it is not contaminated it is *sattva śuddha*. The two impurities that can cloud or pollute the mirror are *rajas* and *tamas*. *Rajas* brings exaggeration and perversion. *Tamas* brings black out, concealment, veiling, depression. The present sūtra gives the characteristics of a person-

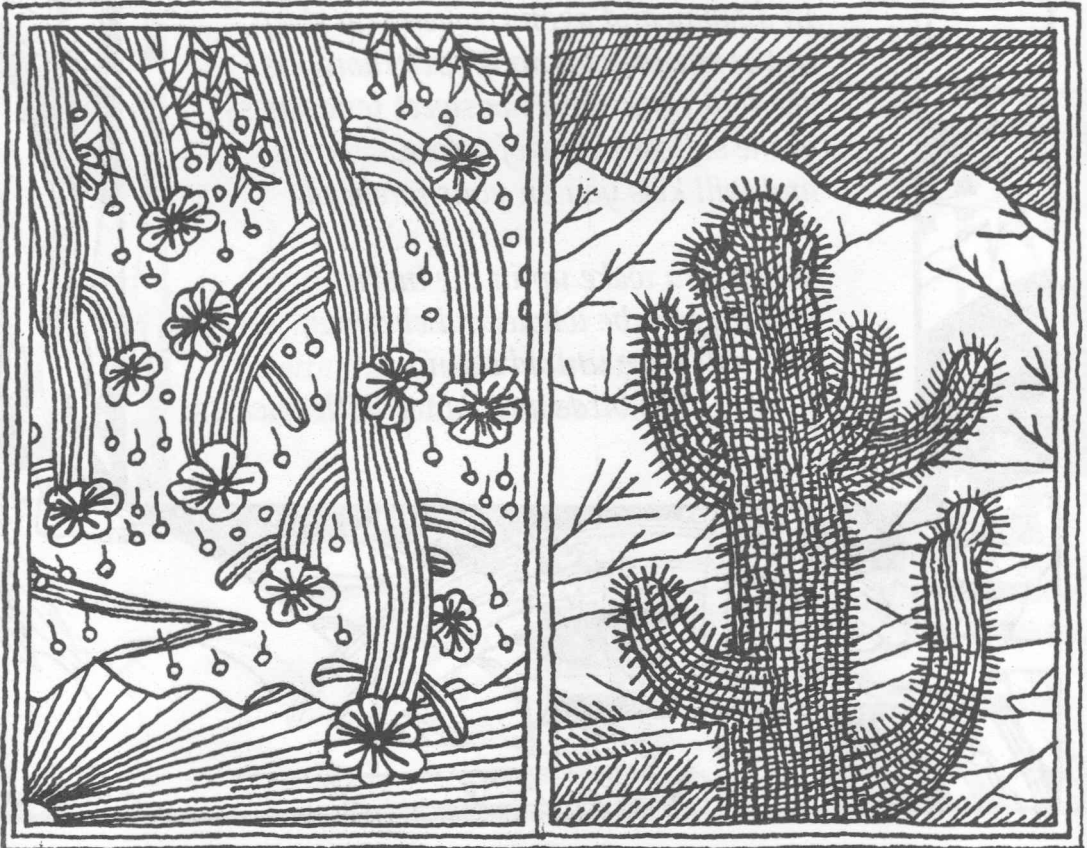
ality which is stabilized by pure clear *sattva* alone.

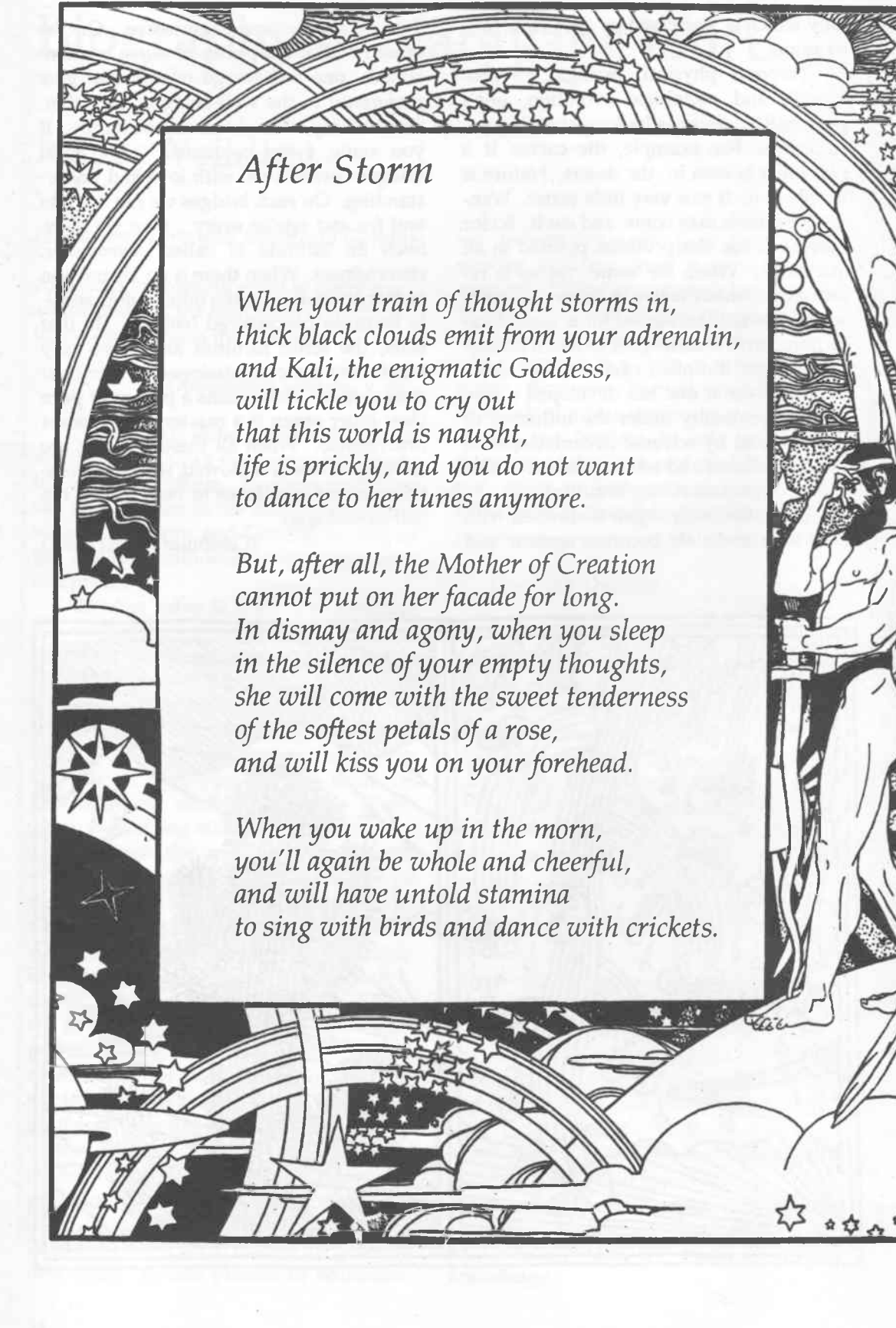
Through physical, biologic, psychological, and sociologic evolution, one's personality assumes its long-standing peculiarities. For example, the cactus is a plant that is seen in the desert. Nature is hostile to it. It gets very little water. Wandering camels may come and eat it. So for defense it has sharp thorns pointed in all directions. When the same cactus is removed and made to live in an environment where it is not threatened for a considerably long time, it undergoes so much change that we get thornless cacti. In the same manner, even if one has developed a grotesque personality under the influence of genetics and by adverse circumstances of one's childhood and adolescence, it can be changed into something beautiful.

When the inner organ is clouded with *rajas* it immediately becomes egoistic and

the person becomes aggressive. On the other hand, if the purity of *sattva* is maintained, one will forego oneself and give preference to the well-being of the other. One will say, "Go ahead and be happy. If you smile, I feel contented." We build bridges between us with love and understanding. On such bridges we can walk to and fro and rejoice every time we meet. Such an attitude is called *saumanasya*, cheerfulness. When there is no distraction of fear or confusion, the mind automatically becomes centered (*ekāgra*). In that state, the sense faculties are active only when they are commissioned to carry out their duties. That means a person of pure clear inner organ is a master of the senses (*indriyajaya*). When all these qualities are developed one is endowed with the competence and excellence to be a seer of the Self (*ātmadraṣṭa*).

(Continued in next issue.)



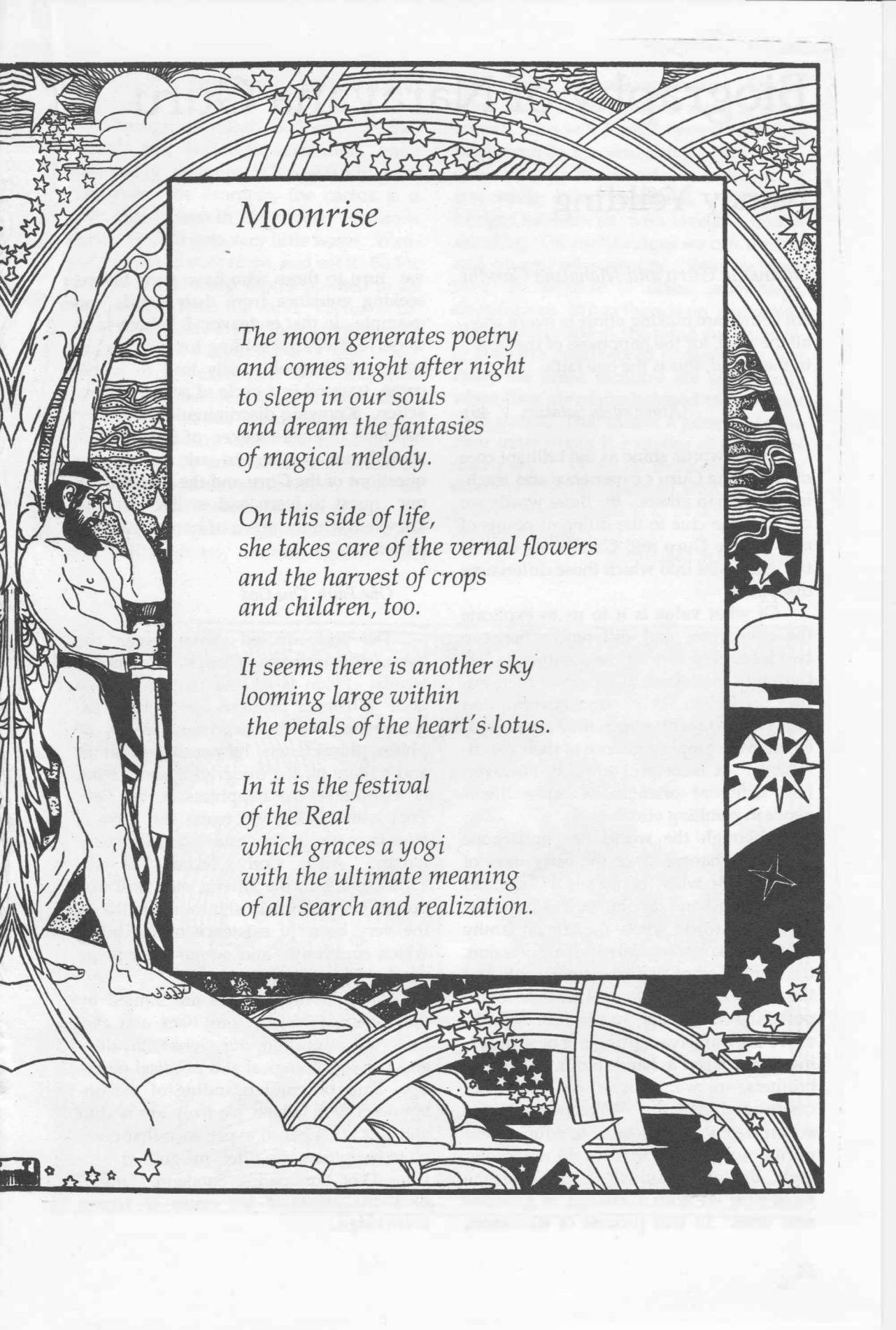


After Storm

*When your train of thought storms in,
thick black clouds emit from your adrenalin,
and Kali, the enigmatic Goddess,
will tickle you to cry out
that this world is naught,
life is prickly, and you do not want
to dance to her tunes anymore.*

*But, after all, the Mother of Creation
cannot put on her facade for long.
In dismay and agony, when you sleep
in the silence of your empty thoughts,
she will come with the sweet tenderness
of the softest petals of a rose,
and will kiss you on your forehead.*

*When you wake up in the morn,
you'll again be whole and cheerful,
and will have untold stamina
to sing with birds and dance with crickets.*



Moonrise

*The moon generates poetry
and comes night after night
to sleep in our souls
and dream the fantasies
of magical melody.*

*On this side of life,
she takes care of the vernal flowers
and the harvest of crops
and children, too.*

*It seems there is another sky
looming large within
the petals of the heart's lotus.*

*In it is the festival
of the Real
which graces a yogi
with the ultimate meaning
of all search and realization.*

Biography of Narayana Guru

Nancy Yeilding

Narayana Guru and Mahatma Gandhi

All beings are making effort in every way, all the time, for the happiness of the Self; in the world, this is the one faith.

(*Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, V. 49)

These words shine as the brilliant core of Narayana Guru's experience and teaching in human affairs. In these words we can find the clue to the different points of view of the Guru and Gandhi, as well as the end point into which those differences disappear.

Of what value is it to us to explicate the similarities and differences between two leaders of turn of the century India? Certainly the historical record of their impact on Indian society and beyond, and the gratitude with which they are regarded, provide ample evidence of their contributions. It is helpful to see, however, how different orientations cause divergence in resulting effects.

Although the world has undergone extensive changes since the early days of this century when Narayana Guru and Gandhi lived and taught, we still find ourselves in a world where the human family is subject to many forms of oppression, the aggression of strong against weak, and the threat of ignorance and disease overpowering knowledge and health. Whether we are ourselves struggling or attempting to reach out a hand to our sisters and brothers, we want our efforts to be successful and enduring. Whatever path of action we choose, we need to educate and purify ourselves so that we do not knowingly or inadvertently perpetuate the same evils we wish to change, or generate new ones. In that process of education,

we turn to those who have gone before, seeking guidance from their words and example. In that endeavor it behooves us to delve deep, not settling for popular answers which could easily lead us to become trapped in a cycle of action and reaction. Knowing discrimination to be the hallmark of a true seeker of freedom, we should not hesitate to ask penetrating questions of the Guru and the Mahatma in our quest to learn and to live out that knowledge in the arena of human emancipation.

One Faith, One God

The verse quoted above reveals the basis of Narayana Guru's oft quoted words: "Man is of one faith and one god." Whatever religious (or political) organization, beliefs, practices, creeds or philosophical tenets human beings adopt and adhere to, the underlying motivation is to achieve the happiness of the Self. That which is beyond name and form is seen in many images and called by many names: Allah, God, Īsvara, Yahweh, Christ, the Tao, the Divine, etc. Still that numinous unknown shines eternally as the very basis of existence of the being which supplicates and as the inner value of what is sought.

Our individual selves are limited by our personal history, our likes and dislikes, our education, our closed loyalties and our psychological and physical makeup. Thus our understanding of the unbounded Self which we truly are is dim and our attempts to experience that complete happiness are often misguided. In verse 43 of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, Narayana Guru identifies the cause of wrong knowledge :

Even those of good action
are caught by nature and
whirled around in vicious circles;
one should know that non-action does not
bring release from perverted action,
only non-desire for the fruit of action.

All living beings live by means of respiration, yet that does not preclude many of us from suffering from faulty respiration. In the same way, the goal of seeking happiness is one, but the means chosen may bristle with contradiction. That is why the *Gītā* says that one becomes emancipated and free of all cravings only on seeing the Absolute.

Narayana Guru lived forever joined to the happiness of the Self and thus could see the thread on which are strung all the efforts, religious or otherwise, undertaken by human beings. All contest and conflict are dissolved in his penetrating vision of that as the one faith and the one goal. Personally, he maintained no affiliation to any particular religion.

M.K. Gandhi dedicated himself to the cause of *swaraj* (self-rule), independence for the Indian people from the oppression of British rule. He wished to unite all the separate regions and kingdoms of the sub-continent into one nation. One of the major stumbling blocks to that unity was the intense hatred persisting in many areas between various religions including Hindus, Sikhs, Moslems and Christians. Gandhi was aware of the political efficacy of a united people in the attempt to throw off British rule. He was also doubly wounded by the human tragedies perpetuated by religious hatred. With his inspiration, people of all religions lived and worked together in his camps. He often poured all of his moral, psychic and physical energy into attempts to bring peace to areas where fighting was taking place, many times putting his own life on the line. He took his campaign from village to village in troubled areas, his own earnestness helping others to give up their fears and find mutual acceptance. When Calcutta was torn by vicious fighting in response to the partitioning of a Hindu In-

dia and a Moslem Pakistan, Gandhi took up residence in a Moslem household there and vowed to fast until he died unless the fighting stopped. He very nearly died, but his determination brought an end to bloodshed in the troubled city, with both Hindus and Moslems surrendering their weapons at his bedside.

Gandhi taught tolerance of other religions. He believed that human beings should love each other and live in harmony despite their differences. However, he persisted in his identity of himself as a Hindu and that identity sometimes worked to blind him to a universal vision:

In my opinion the idea that interdining or intermarrying is necessary for national growth, is a superstition borrowed from the West. Eating is a process just as vital as the other sanitary necessities of life. And if mankind had not, much to its harm, made of eating a fetish and indulgence, we would have performed the operation of eating in private even as we perform the other necessary functions of life in private. Intermarriage is a still more difficult question. If brothers and sisters can live on the friendliest footing without ever thinking of marrying each other, I can see no difficulty in my daughter (he had no daughter) regarding every Mohammedan as a brother and vice versa. I hold strong views on religion and on marriage. The greater the restraint we exercise with regard to our appetites, whether about eating or marrying, the better we become from a religious standpoint. I should despair of ever cultivating amicable relations with the world I had had to recognize the right of or the propriety of any young man offering his hand in marriage to my daughter or to regard it as necessary for me to dine with anybody and everybody. I claim that I am living in terms of friendliness with the whole world. I have never quarreled with a single Mohammedan or Christian, but for years I have taken nothing but fruit in Mohammedan or Christian households....The fact is that intermarriage and interdining are not necessary factors in friendship. I hold it to be utterly impossible for the Hindus and Mohammedans to intermarry and yet retain intact each other's religion. 67



The attempt of Gandhi's Congress Party (a primarily Hindu organization) to join forces with the Moslem League for a united India was impeded by his inability to understand the Moslem objections to a national anthem which was repugnant to their faith. That insensitivity contributed to the Moslem fears that, as a minority in a Hindu India, they would be a subject people. Those fears ultimately resulted in the partition of India and Pakistan which was accompanied by horrible massacres.

Narayana Guru taught that knowledge would bring understanding of the essential unity of all religion, and thus an end to disputes about what are only superficial, though potent, differences:

All religions aim at one thing. When the rivers join the sea they lose their separateness. The function of religion is to turn the hearts of men upward, onward. When that is accomplished they will discover the truth for themselves. For the seeker of truth religions are the finer-posts. But to those who have already attained the truth, religion is no authority. They

are the authors of religions. Buddha preached the way of liberation not by studying Buddhism. He attained liberation and preached the way he had discovered. That became Buddhism. What is the good of Buddhism to Buddha? Christ needs not Christianity. This is true of other religions also. Buddhism is useful for the Buddhists and Christianity is useful for the Christians. So are the other religions useful to their respective adherents. . . Conflicts between countries and peoples and countries end when one party defeats the other. The fight between religions is never ending because one cannot finally vanquish another. If there should be an end to religious quarrels, all religions should be studied with a free mind; and then it will be discovered that in essential they do not differ considerably. The discovery so made is the 'One Religion'. Religion so called has two sides--the inner and the outer. Change of the outer religion is really a social conversion. Among thoughtful people the religion of the heart goes on gradually changing. The change is brought about by cultural growth and increasing experience of life.

One Kind

In his *Critique of Caste (Jāti Mimāmsa)*, Narayana Guru says:

Man's humanity marks out
the human kind
Even as bovinity proclaims a cow.
Brahminhood and such are not thus-wise;
None do see this truth, alas!
One of kind, one of faith
and one in God is man,
Of one womb, of one form,
difference herein none. ⁶⁹

He made no distinction between human beings on the basis of any hereditary factors, placement in society or occupation. He said:

Authors of caste may say that it will prevent unhealthy competition. Those who get all the benefit of the system may say so. Probably their happiness is built on the sufferings of others. Man is not made for castes, for the world or any such thing. All these are for men. If men are degenerating, what is the good of talking about less competition and so forth? Caste degenerates man and so it is not wanted. There is no caste; it is foolishness to think there is. ⁷⁰

The Guru was content to call himself a man. He once shared a train compartment with a prince and a brahmin who were impressed by his wise conversation. When they asked to know his caste, he replied, "Don't you know it by sight?" Upon receiving their negative answer, he asked, "If you don't know by seeing, how will you know by hearing?" ⁷¹

We have seen how the Guru's life exemplified this understanding. How did Gandhi's approach differ? He repeatedly stated his belief in the Hindu system of *Varṇāśrama* (duties of caste) which restricted persons to the occupation and thus status in society of their parents: "I am one of those who do not consider caste to be a harmful institution. In its origin caste was a wholesome custom and promoted national well-being." ⁷² He regarded

Varṇāśrama as an eternal and beneficent law.

He initially refused to participate in a Round Table Conference in London in 1930 with the British because, in addition to representatives of the Congress Party and Moslem League, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was to be present. Dr. Ambedkar had been born to parents who were leather-workers, considered to be the lowest of the low in Hindu society - untouchables. Through sheer will power he had earned money for his own education in a Christian missionary school and, later, in England where he earned a degree in law. The British recognized him as a legitimate spokesman and leader of Indian people and gave him equal rights with Gandhi's Congress party. Gandhi's narrow views led him to declare he would "Fast until death" before he would sit down at the negotiating table with Dr. Ambedkar. ^{73 74}

However, Gandhi soon came to realize that the practices of untouchability had created and continued to perpetuate great rifts in Hindu society which threatened his attempts to organize and unify the Indian people. He realized that the nationalist movement needed a broader base of support in order to succeed. As an ardent Hindu he was also distressed by the growing tendency of those who were considered low-caste and untouchable to join other religions in an attempt to escape the oppression of the caste system.

Gandhi thus was led to include the removal of untouchability in his, and thus the Congress Party's program of action. However, they had no serious plans of how to effect a cure of this widespread disease in the social consciousness of India. Although he retained his belief in the value of the caste system, Gandhi's stand against untouchability initiated his education in the breadth and depth of the humiliation and degradation suffered by the majority of the Indian people at the hands of their fellow Indians and fellow Hindus, not any foreign oppressor. T.K. Madhavan outlined the abhorrent practices of untouchability and even unapproachability in his home state of Kerala and told

Gandhi of local attempts already under-way to bring about their redress. Madhavan presented their attempts to open temples to all as a way to give concrete representation to what had theretofore been, to Gandhi and the Congress Party, only an abstract idea of the removal of untouchability. Gandhi affirmed their actions of civil disobedience (non-violent entering of temples), encouraging them to "enter temples and court imprisonment if law interferes."⁷⁵ When Madhavan mentioned the Congress Party's reluctance to support such steps, Gandhi emphatically directed the local chapter to make temple entry a part of their program of action. This initiated the Mahatma's and the Congress Party's participation in the movement which soon became famous all over India as the Vaikom *Satyāgraha*.



T.K. Madhavan

NOTES

67. M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, February 25, 1920.
 68. Dharmatirtha, *Prophet of Peace*, Sree Narayana Publishing House, India, 1931, p. 106-108.
 69. Narayana Guru, *Critique of Caste*, *Anthology of the Poems of Narayana Guru*, Nataraja Guru, translator, Gurukulua Institute, Bangalore, 1977, p. 40.
 70. T.K. Ravindran, *Vaikom Satyagraha and Gandhi*, Sri Narayana Institute of Social and Cultural Development, Trichur, 1975, p.13.
 71. Lecture by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati, Kerala, 1978.

72. M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, February 25, 1920.
 73. M.K. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXI, p. 186.
 74. Gandhi's attempt to undermine Ambedkar's leadership position had some impact. Yet it was Ambedkar who became the author of India's constitution, Ambedkar also founded Siddhartha College and promoted conversion to Buddhism among untouchables. Thousands converted at his cremation.
 75. M.K. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXI, p. 188.



The Four Goals of Life

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Dharma

According to Indian philosophers and mystics, the prime goals of humanity are *dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa*. *Dharma* refers to the intrinsic life potentials of a person. It is the seed cause for anything to be what it is and for what it will become. These potentials develop in the course of one's life. That which is in one's *dharma* ultimately expresses itself through one's knowledge, actions, and motivations. A motivation can be emotionally or intellectually oriented. The energy to substantiate that motivation comes from the latent seed-aspect in a person. This is called *dharma*.

In India, the entire period of a person's life is roughly divided into four parts. The first twenty-five years are set apart for a person to become familiar with his or her innate nature. Nowadays, we have some knowledge of the science of genetics. We know that children bring with them the genetic potentials of their parents - they are a part of a person's *dharma*. But Indians also believe that the life that expresses through an organism had previous occasions to live in other bodies. Whatever the previous individual experienced deposited new information into the software of a person which unfolds when one comes into this world again. So the concept of *dharma* includes genetic potential plus the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious aspects of a person which retain recordings of the experiences of previous lives. This is like a tail of memory or what is now referred to as a memory tag.

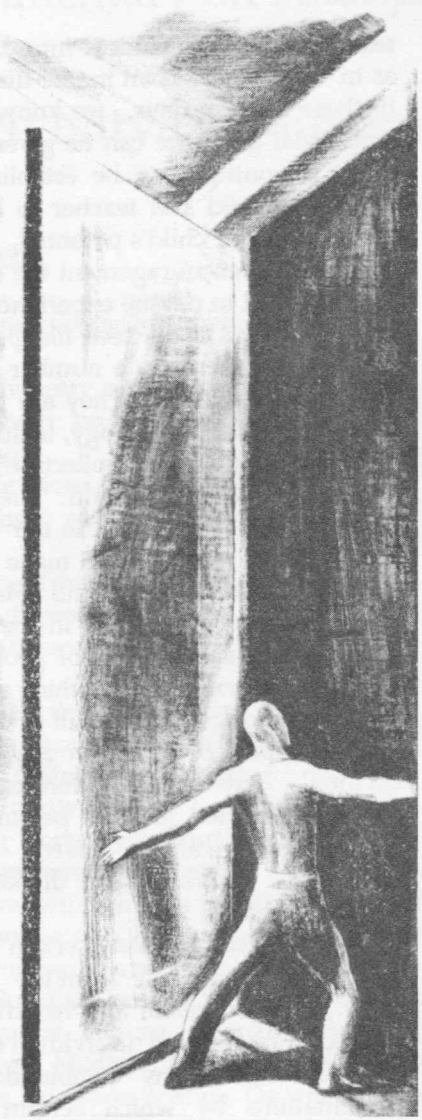
When a young person is sent to a *guru* or preceptor, it is for the purpose of discovering what potentials are there. The

teacher guides the student into those areas in which there is an innate disposition. In these modern days, we know that occupational guidance can be given to children. A contract can be established between the child and teacher to look into the areas of the child's potential. Through the teacher's encouragement the child can feel inspired to pursue experiences which will fructify his or her seed-like potentials.

In India there are a number of books called *dharma śāstras*. They are primarily books on social psychology, including the psychology of both the collective mind as well as the individual mind. The individual mind is like an island in the ocean of the collective mind. It can make a contribution to the collective mind. Since these *dharma śāstras* are mostly in the form of systematic classifications of people, they describe general types to which each individual belongs. There will of course be an overlapping of aspects in any given individual. But the most dominate types can be identified and a person's basic characteristics can be slowly oriented around the central value disposition of the individual.

Each person also has certain kinds of influences which come from the environment. Environmental and hereditary impacts on a manifested individual can have between them many combinations and permutations by which certain genetic characteristics are weakened or inhibited while others are encouraged and enhanced. On the whole, it is a very difficult task to find out the exact nature of one's inner potential. However, the *Bhagavad Gītā* gives guidelines for making a four-fold analysis to clarify the *dharma* of a person. This analysis is concerned with the inner nucleus of the cognitive faculty of a

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growing person, and how a field is woven around it out of the experiences of the nucleic individual. The *Gītā* calls this *kṣetra-kṣetrajñā vibhāga yoga* - the dialectical polarity of the seer and the seen. The personality is analyzed to determine what characteristics belong to the seer in the person, and what characteristics belong to the environment. An analysis of the ambivalence between a positive appreciation of life which is creative and a dark disposition which tends to make a person negative and destructive is given in the *Gītā* as *daivāsura saṁpad vibhāga yoga*.

Every person has a body. What we call mind is also a part of the body, having a physico-chemical and psycho-chemical basis. The mind very much belongs to the gross world of physical substances that go into the constitution of a person. As such, it participates in having three tendencies called nature potentials (*guṇas*). The three *guṇas* are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Their changing phases within consciousness are described in the *Bhagavad Gītā* as *guṇatraya vibhāga yoga*.

In the phase of *sattva*, all experiences are clearly registered in the mind in a pure and accurate manner. When *rajas* takes over the dominance of the mind, experiences become distorted and emotionally oriented. Both the negative and positive sides of life become exaggerated. However, *rajas* is also to be understood as an energizing factor. One cannot function very well without a certain amount of *rajas* to complement *sattva*. The third nature modality is *tamas* which is inertial. At the same time, it has a cohesive power which keeps experiences permanently established in the mind. But it can also create a lot of opacity or darkness in the registration of one's experiences. A thorough study of *guṇatraya vibhāga yoga* will help a person to analyze and get a substantial picture of one's individual character and inner potentials. In order to make a comprehensive study of personality and personality types, this approach is essential. In fact, there can be as many personality types as there are human beings. That is why the great psychologist, C. G. Jung

gave only a few basic types, while Vyāsa in his *Mahābhārata* portrayed hundreds of types both among the male and female personalities.

Since *dharma* has very much to do with both our subjective and overt behaviors, it plays a great role in deciding the good and evil in a person's performance as well as in one's innate character. This aspect is emphasized by Indian writers who translate the term *dharma* as righteous behavior or the performance of one's duties. That is a very narrow way of looking at *dharma*. *Dharma* is not only in human beings - it is in the molecule; it is in the atom, it is in any element which we see in nature. It is in the constitution of any body - whether sentient or not. The innate character of anything is its *dharma*. If fire does not give heat or light, it is *adharma*. If water does not wet, it is *adharma*. Similarly among human beings, if a teacher is teaching untruth, it is *adharma*. If a surgeon kills, instead of saving a patient, it is *adharma*. Thus, we can see that the two terms *dharma* and *adharma* have a wide range of meaning.

In the course of the first twenty-five years of one's existence, through undergoing instruction and training in schools and academic institutions, one becomes acquainted with one's *dharma*. However, there are limitations in a person's ability to unfold inner potentials. One's potentials may come from a wide spectrum of value arrangements. A person may be a good musician and fail to be a good engineer. A person can be a good mathematician and yet may not understand history properly. There are many variations in the makeup of an individual. That is why a study of types is necessary to aid one in choosing one's career, occupation, or expression of life to be in perfect tune with one's *dharma*.

Now we come to another aspect of *dharma*. A large fount of interest or ability may be lying dormant in a person, but if that person is not put into an environment or situation where the potential can be made use of, the energies lying dormant will not be released. *Dharma* awaits

a situation where it can be expressed. The expression of this intrinsic potential comes through two main channels - through a person's cognitive power and as motivational performance through action. We can roughly call them knowledge and action.

Indian philosophy and psychology has recognized two kinds of personality orientations. One orientation revolves around a system science and the other a value science. When one tends to know more and more with greater clarity and sees a logical chain of relationship established between cause and effect aspects, a system science evolves in that person's orientation. While a system science is program oriented and leads to action, it is subservient to the demands of value science. Every value has a direct reference to the satisfying of a demand which a person feels either in the world of necessity or in bringing satisfaction to one's aesthetic quest. These values are to be ultimately realized through physical, biological, moral, and spiritual accomplishments. Therefore, every value science utilizes the integrity of existing system structures and functions to facilitate and satisfy a demand to execute and accomplish a particular goal or produce a product. Consequently, a person of knowledge who goes into the study of one's own personality or the knowledge of the world in which one lives tends to be more on the theoretical side, as a visionary, seeing everything through his mental eye. Here, the *dharma* which he sees is correlated with every other phenomena, and he gets a comprehensive view of the totality of things. When the *dharma* of all individual entities is allowed to merge into the whole, or totality, then *dharma* itself is called *brahman*.

In actual life there is a feeling, a kind of appreciation, that wells up in an individual towards experiencing a value which has in it the promise of unfolding one's innate nature. When that becomes a dynamic of life, everything known is tested to determine its pragmatics. This happens very often in almost all living beings - not only in humans but in the subspe-

cies as well. When the provocation comes to the whole of one's being to act upon one's knowledge, *dharma* becomes predominately *karma* or action. From the unconscious depth there comes an incentive to act. That incentive surfaces in one's mind as *kāma*.

Kāma is the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious dynamics to push a motivation from a vague idea to a dream, and from a dream to actuality. One passes through several states of mind from the inception of a desire to its fulfillment. The whole field is intrinsically connected with one's *dharma*. The first aspect is a general sense of disquiet, a sense of inadequacy, as if there is a thirst or hunger for something to be added on to one's life to make it more enjoyable. After this disquiet, there comes a vague idea of what one craves for. At this time, more than one single desire can come and invade the preconscious mind where one is in a dilemma of trying to decide what the disquiet is. This is called the manifestation of a universe of desire.

This is like a cluster of states in which each desire is twinkling competing for attention. When one particular desire gains prominence out of the universe of desire, it is because it is encouraged by either *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas*, helped by a divine or demonic tendency, or enhanced by its closeness to the seer or the seen. A desire that enters into the threshold of consciousness is called a wish. When a wish is promoted to a constant urge to accomplish and becomes energized by the *élan vital* of a person, then it becomes will. When the will comes to disturb the ego like a child making a demand on its mother, the ego sides with the will and looks into the area of its own knowledge about the unfolding of a will and also the ways and means of accomplishing the will. Then the will becomes a motive. When the motive succeeds in getting the organs of perception and the organs of action to volunteer for its realization, it becomes an act. When an action is performed, what was lived within the consciousness of the individual comes to the public. The world

can witness the typical performance of a person through one's words and actions, and the kind of continuous stand one takes in the social set up.

These are the special aspects of *dharma* we have to look into. Then we will make ourselves competent to understand what instrumentality we have to adopt to carry out an intention, because the motive is an intention. Therefore a study of *dharma* naturally leads to a study of *artha*, the second major goal in life.

Artha

Literally, *artha* means meaning, the meaning of anything that is cognized. Cognition is the primary function of a conscious mind. All rational beings are endowed with this faculty if they are physically in good health and normal in their mental capacity. There are two states in which the cognitive consciousness is under suspension. One is in a state of spiritual absorption called *samādhi*; particularly a non-modifying state of absorption called *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Even when a person is in a trance or seemingly unconscious of his surroundings, there can be a vague functioning of one's cognitive consciousness; when this is absolutely suspended, it is called *nirvikalpa*. If there is no possibility of recalling what happened at that time, it is also called non-seeded absorption (*nirbīja samādhi*). This is not normal for most people. It is a special state into which only yogi's go.

A more normal state of suspension is in deep sleep, when there is no trace of dreams in one's consciousness. In the dream state, the external faculties of the functions of the five organs of perception and the organs of action are suspended. But the subtle imagery that lies dormant in the pre-conscious or sub-conscious mind can produce effects of memories almost with a creative perfection. In dream, cognition is allowed even though the faculty is not related to the sensory system which is in active contact with the external world. The impressions of previ-

ously acquired sensory images are fed into the channel of the cognitive faculty which functions in dreams. The ego (*ahamkāra*), intelligence (*buddhi*) and the faculty of remembrance and recall (*citta*) retain a very slight coordination, and cognition can be followed instantaneously by the questions: "What is this? What is its meaning?" If the same happens in the wakeful consciousness when the entire psychophysical system is alert, the cognitive faculty will be coupled with the connoting faculty.

There is a constant dialogue between the two parts of a wakeful mind. One part goes on asking questions about anything presented before one's organs of perception. The other part, aided by memory and intelligence goes on giving a running commentary of the meaning of what is experienced. That is the connoting aspect. Connotation has to account for the *artha* or the meaning of whatever impression has come to the organs of perception. It is passed on immediately to the mind which presides over the function as a representative of the ego. Questions that come are to be answered immediately after the question is consciously felt by the experiencer, as it is then and there passed on to the agent of perception, the agent of conception and the agent who can take up any necessary action.

Ahamkāra or the ego will become affected, sometimes even afflicted by the meaning suggested by the judgment of the intellect. Thus the cognitive faculty works simultaneously with the connotative faculty and the affective faculty. It is an absolute necessity for the entire organism to be briefed then and there, about whatever is happening in life. Therefore *artha* is the mainstay of life. Unfortunately though humans have lived as rational animals for several millenniums, they have never gone into the engineering of their own minds and have very little knowledge about the hidden functions below the surface consciousness of the mind.

The world has great economists who have gone into the science of getting and spending. They all think that there is

nothing more meaningful than the profit or loss of a transaction. Therefore the word *artha* became very narrow in its meaning, suggesting only the concept of people's objective identification with wealth. Eminent theorists of wealth like Smith, Moore and later economists like Marx, Engels, Lenin and people of other schools like Ruskin, Tolstoy and Gandhi also gave credence only to the external political economic aspects of wealth. As Tolstoy, Ruskin and Gandhi were spiritually oriented, they elaborated on the subjective aspect of the mind which evaluates external wealth. However, all great scriptures of the Semitic, Aryan and Dravidian religions, and the oriental schools of Zen and Taoism considered it worthwhile to interpret meaning as significance in everyday life, both in the depth of the human spirit or soul, as well as in one's interpersonal relationships in the family circle, domestic circle of one's native town, the



politics of one's country and international relationships. Very few people have had a truly holistic attitude about discerning the meaning of life, manifested as peace with oneself, peace with others and peace with the all-governing law of the seen and the unseen which some people interpret as God, and some others as the Absolute or the spirit.

The most meager concept of *artha* is the recognition of wealth as a physical entity of transaction at a very objective level. Unfortunately, the shadow cast by this interest has veiled even the prospects of examining the meaning of life in other areas. It is not that humans are not interested in other values. We are interested in mother and father, husband, wife and children, the love we receive and the love we give. But these things have never been considered to be of economic viability, because we cannot sell our mother or father in the market place nor barter our wife or husband or child. To understand the implication of *artha*, or meaning, in its widest possible sense, we should ask "What comes next?" when our inside is brought to life and *dharma* is aroused.

Every arousal of our *dharma* culminates in our eagerness to act according to a certain motivation. When we have a conscious intention to carry out we are in great need of instruments to make our actions perfect. But our physical organs of action are feeble, inadequate to meet all situations. When our eyesight cannot take our vision beyond a few feet or a few miles, we need aids like telescopes. When we cannot see very small entities, we need microscopes. If we are short-sighted, we need eye glasses. The functions of each of our sense organs have similar needs for magnification to give us enhanced action possibilities in our daily life. These are the instruments that can aid motivation or intention.

We have not only physical instruments; even the mathematical device is an instrument to enhance our rational ability. Whatever our interests are, we are in need of instruments of elaboration that help make functions efficient. *Artha* is

also that which enables us to get to the meaning of each situation by bringing the situation intimately close to our organs of perception, our power of retention and the methodology by which we analyze complex situations, and the techniques by which every singled out item can be clearly examined and deliberately studied. From this we can see that *artha* is the most dominant part of the cognitive and connotative aspects of life. Without its help, the affective faculty comes to great grief.

One person who gave very serious thought to this aspect of our consciousness was a rishi of India, called Yājñavalkya. When he reviewed the life he had lived as a student, becoming familiar with the various urges of his inner potentials, he thought it necessary to make an direct test of his understanding in a social situation. He married and had two children with his wife. Then, by chance he became associate with another young woman who was not at all interested in his manhood, but was very enamored with his wisdom. In her eyes, he was meaningless as a lover, meaningless as a man with physical prowess, meaningless as a husband. Many of the values that people see in a young man were discarded by her. Instead, she valued him as a person with boundless wealth of wisdom, a person who was a light unto himself, and who could be a beacon-light to guide her to her own liberation.

An area that is not usually recognized by society was found most meaningful in this man by his second wife Maitreyī. Here we get a clear explication of the second aspect of *artha*. Of the two imports of that concept, one is of worldly importance - social political and economical - and the other is a value which goes beyond one's youthful age, activity, physical efforts and physical strength. That is the value of the subtlest of all worlds - the world of pure ideas. Philosophers and poets have been preoccupied with this value throughout history.

When this challenge was thrown to Yājñavalkya by his young wife, he gave consideration to the kind of wealth that

would satisfy his two wives. Normally, wealth is an answer to the primitive and natural needs of a person. The natural needs of a person are nourishment of the organism so that life can be maintained in it until death comes. Even after death one to continue in some sense through his or her progeny. After food, sex is the next most important item for the immortalizing of a person. To maintain a family around the hub of erotics, one has provide one's children with food and the other amenities of a home. As sex is a very dynamic source of energy, once you turn to it, all other values become secondary. But one who is stung by the spirit knows that the hand of the spirit on the soul of a person is so vast and forceful that another kind of meaning can be realized.

When Yājñavalkya found that his second wife was not keen on nourishing her body or having a child, and that she was bent upon having spiritual realization in this very life, he was puzzled. He did not know how to provide for her. It was easy for him to settle the rights of the two women with regard to physical wealth. In so doing, he set the precedent of a husband arranging for the settlement of property amidst his dependents. The Hindu Law Code begins with the episode of Yājñavalkya deciding to dissolve his marriage alliance with two women and making a settlement between them by dividing his wealth of landed property, grain, cattle, gold and the availability of man power for service. Maitreyī interpreted wealth differently. She looked upon the wealth of Yājñavalkya as his wealth of knowledge. So she entered into a dialogue with her husband with regard to the several areas where the meaning of life can be seen.

This has never been looked into in the teaching of economics or the science of wealth, in any of our schools or colleges or other academic institutions. Now and then a visionary has come to humanity who cognized that aspect. One was Jesus Christ. His economics were mainly to alleviate our sense of anxiety about non-security. Jesus turned to his disciples and

asked, "What are you anxious about? Is it the insecurity that you face, which prompts you to think - what will I eat tomorrow or what will I wear tomorrow?" As an answer to that, Jesus did not advise his disciples to go and fish. Nor did he ask them to go and cultivate food on a farm or to go to the woods and gather fruits and berries. Instead he called their attention to the birds of the sky and said that they do not sow, reap, or collect grain in a barn, yet they are not insecure. That security comes from the grace of the unknown, the invisible, the spirit was the advice of Jesus. Christian churches thrive even today as the richest of all institutions, yet the economists have not given any credence to this master economist, Jesus Christ.

In establishing a business, the main consideration of primary investment is capital. People think in terms of money, symbolically as gold and pragmatically as the high finance which makes banks do their business of lending and borrowing. But in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Krishna suggests that if you have no peace, there is no use in gaining the whole world. The number one value which we can think of in the transaction of life is to have peace and security within oneself not to be alarmed by any kind of fear.

Yājñavalkya knew this too, but before leading his dear wife into the nothingness of spiritual security, he wanted her to say in so many words that what she sought was not perishable wealth, but the imperishable wealth of wisdom. Then he had no hesitation in taking her by the hand and teaching her as a dear disciple, delighting not in conjugal pleasures, but in the fulfillment of a great mind realizing the highest of all truths, the truth of the Self. Such is the vast world to which *artha* belongs.

If the world knew the proper meaning of *artha*, the life of individuals and communities and the world itself would be a veritable heaven on earth.

(Continued in next issue.)

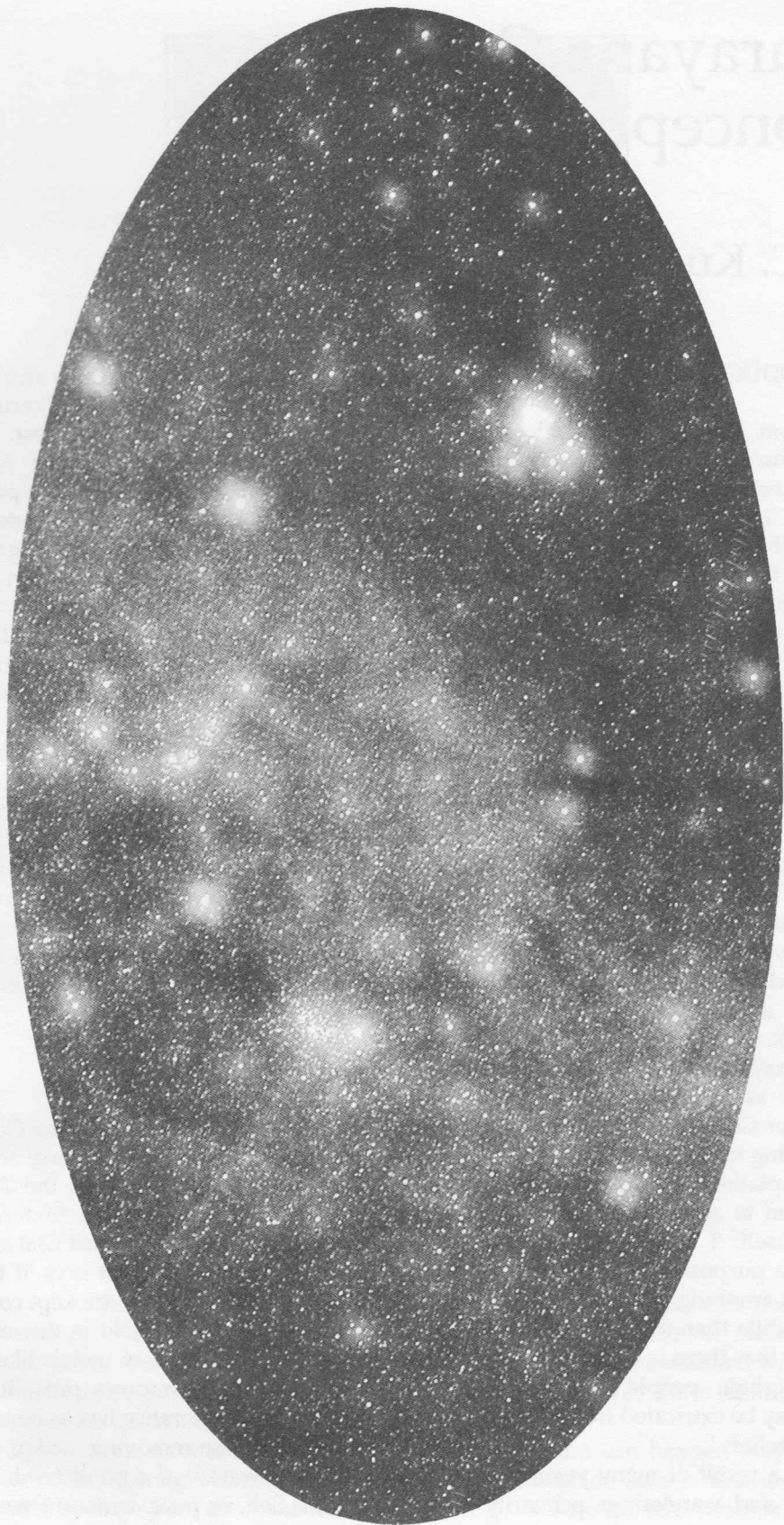
Is The Universe Clear?

Hold a moonstone in your hand.
You see its translucency,
milky white with glints of yellow.
And behind:
the lines of your hand
cradling the stone.

Hold it up to the sky.
A vibrant and glittering blue,
and all around
the sound of the wind,
moving in eddies and whirls,
but with a silky surface, so close
to the moon.

Hold the stone close to your self.
It is warm and pulsing.
You look and it is invisible.
The universe is all around you.

Deborah Buchanan



Narayana Guru's Concept of God

N.C. Kumaran

INTRODUCTION :

From childhood onwards, we have been hearing about God, but do we have a clear understanding about what God is? If God is Truth and God exists, as revealed by the seers, how are we to be certain of this in everyday life? For the answers to these questions, we have to turn to our wisdom teachers who enjoy direct experience of godhead at all times. They are not to be mixed-up with pontiffs and dignitaries of institutionalized religions. The wisdom teacher or sage does not identify with any particular religion nor teach any religious belief or code, but responds to the deep human need to express reverence and to aspire for higher values in life. Right from the beginning of history, India has assigned primacy to such an open type of life style, not as a book-centered tradition, but founded upon spirituality as a living experience for everyday use.

Narayana Guru (1855 - 1928) set for himself as his mission early in life the quest for God. His words, uttered just before going to Maruthvanmalai for a life of contemplation and *tapas*, show his determination to achieve the goal he had set for himself: 'I have dedicated myself for the sole purpose of finding out whether there is anything of a divine nature, more worthwhile than family life. If the search reveals that there is nothing of that sort, I can enlighten people accordingly, so that they may be extricated from their superstitious beliefs.'

As a result of many years of contemplation and wanderings primarily aimed

at relieving man's sufferings and 'to make his lot better', he attained full certainty on all problems of human interest. Thus he became a guru of humanity, a *jagat-guru* in the correct sense. As a sage-poet (*kavi-rishi*) and mystic par-excellence, he belongs to the glorious band of gurus like Thirumular, Thiruvalluvar, Sri Ramakrishna, and Ramana Maharishi.

Narayana Guru revalued and restated religion and all that it connotes to suit the idiom and climate of his times. He enunciated in the form of a dictum the ideal of 'One Caste, One Religion, One God.' This great dictum of universal brotherhood is the echo of what our ancient rishis in India had proclaimed *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the world is one single family). As we shall presently see, both these dictums, which are relevant even today for our industrially oriented society, stem from the right concept of God, as the Guru envisages it.

GOD AS THE ABSOLUTE :

The Guru's God is not the God of religion, as understood popularly nor that of the temple or church. It is the Truth behind life, so simple and undeniable as when you say 'I'. *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of it as mysterious when it says 'it is like a wonder'. All valuables are kept covered to avoid public gaze. Gold in the mines occurs alloyed with base metals like tin and copper. As Śankaracarya puts it, the innate human ignorance has to be removed, very much like removing sedge covering the clear waters of a pond (which stands for the Self, or pure consciousness) in or-

der to expose the human intellect so it can reflect the glorious Divine Sun. As long as we are subject to the principle of error due to our psycho-physical imprisonment in the world of senses, which is nothing other than the relative aspect of the Absolute, there can be no correct understanding of the Absolute as God. The Absolute or *brahman* will be truly absolute only if it has the relative absorbed into itself. The Absolute also cannot be plural, divided among beings. For appreciating the relationship between the Self and the Absolute, we may imagine consciousness as a dynamic circle with its center as the Self, representing each one of us, then *brahman* or infinity will form the circumference of the circle.

God as the Absolute is thus both the Absolute and the relative at the same time. To appreciate the two-fold aspect of Absolute as God consisting of both the spiritual (vertical) and the physical (horizontal) aspects, we may compare these two of opposite natures with pure white light and the polarized light in a rainbow. Just as light can shine on its own, whereas a rainbow cannot exist without the light even for a second, that which exists always and is not subject to change is the Self. This is the *ātman*, meaning the 'I' in a person, as pure consciousness, free from identification with the body and all that is associated with it. As for the non-Self, the idea is best explained by the categorical statement in the Holy Qur'an: 'If you have seen it, it is not God.' Whatever appears as cognizable to our senses is a case of superimposition, implying thereby that the ego-sense is responsible for our not having the correct concept of godhead. This is the case with a vast majority of people who erroneously identify the Self/Absolute with the perishable body, although the fact remains that the Self/Absolute is very much the source of the 'self', the totality of parts that make up the individual.

How does Narayana Guru demonstrate that God as Truth exists as names and forms of our visible world? The Guru poses an experimental situation to show it is the self-same verity in man that

exists as the world outside him, since both of the verities (*ātman* and *brahman*) consist of only consciousness. The experimental situation consists of two people in a dark room, whence they, out of curiosity, ask each other 'Who are you?' The response to both the questions is one and the same, viz. 'I'. The Guru therefore draws the conclusion :

"I, I", thus, all that are spoken of,
when carefully considered,
inwardly are not many; that is one;
as the receding I-identities
are countless in their totality,
the substance of I-consciousness
continues.

(*Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, v.11)

In the original text in Malayalam, the Guru uses the word *aham-poru1*, translated as 'Substance of I-consciousness', as distinct from the countless 'ego-identities' (*ahanta*). These correspond to the two axes of reference corresponding to the vertical and horizontal of one single entity, which the Guru for convenience calls *arivu* (Knowledge), used in a total sense to denote the Absolute. In a later verse the Guru makes the point that the world has no reality other than the Absolute: "Other than this the world has no reality; "there is" - all such that people say is without reflection." (v.20)

Thus the Guru takes us step-by-step to the goal when the aspirant discovers within himself the Self, as the changeless behind the changeful, the eternal behind the ephemeral and the infinite behind the finite. This is verily what is revealed to us in capsule form by the rishi in the *Chāndogya Upanishad* when he declares: "*tat tvam asi*" (That Thou Art), in which 'That' refers to the Absolute.

Basically that is *nija-bodham* (inborn awareness), immortal in nature, the Ultimate Reality, within and without man, brimfully filling everywhere, beyond time, space and causality, nay, even the spoken word is nothing other than That (*Advaita Dipika* 3, 13 and *Daiva Daśakam*, 7). It is readily recognized as the precious

pearl of wisdom, spiritual and aesthetic in nature and touching the inner-most core of man's sensibility. The Guru goes a step further than what is in the Upaniṣads to give us a simple means to feel the presence of the Most Supreme in each one of us when he says : "Sitting in the dark that which knows is the Self" (*Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, 26), implying thereby that *ātman/ brahman* is that which shines without the agency of a second and also knows of its illumination and what is illuminated. In everyday life what the common man does is to identify the universal or true 'I' of eternal nature, with the perishable body. He mixes up that aspect of the Absolute called *sama* (sameness) of impersonal, general, ego-less and actual nature with its counterpart of *anya* (the other) of personal, specific, ego-centered and perceptual. Hence he is not able to feel his oneness with the universal ground of consciousness. The Guru enjoins us to regard everything in this world as belonging to One and only Reality, unitive in content. A holistic approach to both worldly and spiritual to achieve the goal of life as happiness with a capital 'H' to denote its eternal nature is what the Guru advocates in his prose composition *Advaitajivitam*. In the last two verses of *Apavada Darśana* of his *Darśana Mālā* the Guru defines the Absolute as *sat-cit-ānanda*, (existence-subsistence-pure happiness, happiness being interpreted as that which sustains the value of everything in life):

Ānanda alone shines as real,
not anything else; therefore,
everything is *ānanda* through and through;
apart from *ānanda* nothing else is known,
All is indeed existence, consciousness,
and happiness;
in this there is not even
a trace of the many;
he who sees this as many
goes from death to death.

(v. 9 & 10)

Finally, in the exact center (verse fifty) of *hid Darśana Mālā*, Guru declares in a nut-shell 'the only reality is that which is

not the object of consciousness, and is not therefore conditioned; It is the basis of all effects of consciousness, while itself is without basis except in itself.' In a tone of supreme reverence, the Guru concludes: That alone exists (*tadeva sat*), implying thereby "God is All. God Alone is."

USEFUL HINTS:

From what has been presented in these pages on the Guru's concept of God, we may extract certain lessons:

(i) Many think of God as an entity segregated from the visible world, attributing qualities and motivations to God which gives scope for delusion, guilt and religious hatred. For instance such people say : "I am suffering because of my sins," "God has chosen us as his special people," and so on. Such an attitude leads to developing a relationship with God confined exclusively to prayers, pilgrimages and auspicious times with the danger of religion being driven to the periphery of life centering round the ego of the person concerned. On the other hand, when God is understood as the ever-unfolding totality wherein all qualities clear and mysterious are necessarily included, an understanding of godhead opens up resulting in experiencing ourselves as fully integrated with our fellow beings in the cosmic functioning of an on-going creation, steering past duality that gives rise to intra- and inter-personal friction and even riots among different religious groups.

(ii) When the Guru enjoins us to merge the otherness (*anya*) with sameness (*sama*) to have a vision of *anyasamya* we have to understand the latter as the whole viz., as the Absolute symbolized as *Ardhanārīśvara* (half-woman, half-man deity) with its neutrality and harmonious symmetry. This is exactly the binocular vision exemplified by the story of Mary and Martha in the Bible. The goal of man in life is reached not by giving primacy to the worldly or the spiritual (rival aspects) but by transcending both through a neutral unified (yogic) attitude. This is also the unitive vision of the well-informed

ones referred to in the *Gītā*: "In regard to a Brahmin endowed with learning or humility, a cow, an elephant, and even a dog, as also one who cooks dog for food, well-informed ones see the same differenceless reality."

(iii) Guru's concept of God as the Absolute leads to the unitive approach to religion and theology which is very much relevant in the present-day context of worldwide phenomena of religious bigotry and blood-baths. We may recall Nataraja Guru's definition of religion as "a whole-hearted relationship binding man with his fellow men or with some unseen value-factor" and his prescription to achieve the unitive goal: "Equating himself with the objective aspect of his own environment of values, religion amounts to a whole or integrated way of life in which the Absolute is the most central normative principle." Just as the perfect human form can admit of differences between male and female, brother and sister, father and son and so on, so differences between religions are only incidental and should be treated as mere individual variations of the One Religion which Narayana Guru identifies as the search for happiness as the Absolute in all conscious and unconscious motivations.

(iv) Human life being an undivided whole, no line can ever be drawn between its different compartments, nor between ethics and politics. A trader who earns his wealth by deception only succeeds in deceiving himself when he thinks that his sins can be washed away by spending some amount of his ill-gotten gains on so-called religious purposes. On the other hand, according to Narayana Guru a responsible custodian of Truth, as God, is always dedicated to the welfare of all sentient beings:

"That man, this man,"
thus all that is known
in this world, if contemplated,
is the being of the one Primordial Self;
what each performs
for the happiness of the Self
should be conducive to

the happiness of another.

(*Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* v.24)

(v) When the outward zest for pleasure is seen more and more within the Self, ego-boundaries get effaced and love flows easily in all directions and we begin to experience "God is Love" as Tirumular puts it, corresponding to what the Guru teaches: "He who loves is he who really lives" (*Anukampa Daśakam* 3).

(vi) In the emerging scenario of an industrially oriented society with its accent upon 'high-tech' enterprises and with the background of secularism, a disconcerting feature observed is the increasing loss of faith in our traditional values of God and the Scriptures, not to speak of the words of sages and seers. Religion, unlike what it was in the past, has ceased to be a living force and its place has been taken by ego-worship and mad rush for power and wealth. Such an increasing trend in worldliness had made Sri Ramakrishna remark. "The natural place of the river boat is water, but water should not enter into it to render it unfit for use." Gandhiji echoes the same idea when he says: "True religion and true morality are inseparably bound together. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil." Can we afford to ignore ethical values which form part and parcel of true religion with its emphasis on realization of the purpose of life, viz., the manifestation of Buddha-nature and Christ-nature lying hidden in each one of us, without which the Upaniṣads say life is a great waste.

To conclude, we can do nothing better than quote Narayana Guru himself beseeching the Absolute for both *sreyas* and *preyas* (spiritual freedom and worldly prosperity) keeping in view a comprehensive imagery of the ocean with its depth dimension of unfathomable nature representing the Absolute.

As ocean wave, wind and depth,
Let us within see the scheme
of us, nescience, your glory and you.

(*Daiva Daśakam*, v.4) ♦

Especially for Children

Sunshine

*The sun: liquid fire,
Shining across millennia.
A million beams of radiance,
Sparkling on a drop of dew.
Shattering the darkness of deepest space.
Sunbeams shattering on a pond,
Each in its own direction.*

*People sitting outside on the dew covered grass,
Drinking in the sun's radiance
like clear refreshing water.
Dancing in the haven of a new day.*



Emily Teitsworth



Alone

*Water was falling over my face,
Dripping like lonely tears
On a cold England night.
Maybe I was really crying then,
Maybe just laughing at the rain.*

*The solitary wolf's howl wafts to me,
Reminds me that you have gone from here
Into another place in another time*

*You have crossed that river,
The mists veiled your path.
When I ran off to find you,
I lost my way.
I reached you just in time
To see your shadow stop at the gate,
And watch as you melted in to the mist
On the other side of the river.*

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