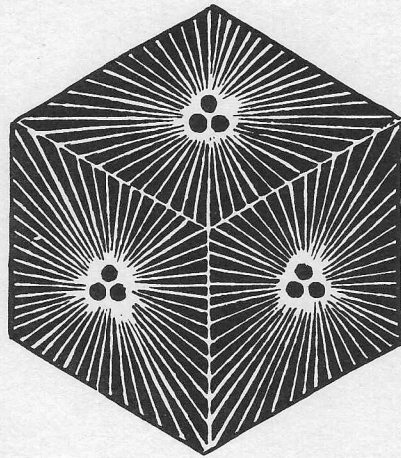


GURUKULAM

VOLUME XI • 1995

FIRST-SECOND QUARTER





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- 3 NATARAJA GURU'S UNITIVE VISION by Nancy Yeilding
- 5 EXPERIENTIAL AESTHETICS AND IMPERIENTIAL
TRANSCENDENCE: Commentary on Narayana Guru's
Svānubhāvagīti Śatakam by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 13 THE KATHA UPANIṢAD
Translation and Commentary by Muni Narayana Prasad
- 17 THE SCIENCE OF HARMONIOUS UNION
Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Śāstra*
by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 22 THE ALCHEMY OF ACCEPTANCE by Nitya
- 24 BIOGRAPHY OF NARAYANA GURU by Nancy Yeilding
- 31 SELECTIONS FROM AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN
ABSOLUTIST by Nataraja Guru
- 34 JUDGEMENT by Rabindranath Tagore
- 36 LIBERATION THEOLOGY by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 40 NATARAJA GURU: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HIS MASTER
by N.C. Kumaran
- 44 PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

GURUKULAM

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Nataraja Guru's Unitive Vision

South India in the 1890's was a sleepy land of humble homes and villages, of rice paddies and coconut groves drenched by the sun. Plentiful fish rice, coconuts and vegetables provided ample sustenance to the residents. School children learned to write the alphabet in the sand floors of their schools, and lessons were recorded on palm leaves with a stylus, as paper was just beginning to be available. Local transportation was by foot or canoes or on carts drawn by bullocks. Entertainment was provided by wandering minstrels, fortune-tellers, snake-charmers and acrobats. Villages, towns and cities were strictly divided along the lines of caste and class by stringent rules governing social interaction. They cast a shadow over all aspects of life, made even darker by superstition mingled with religious rituals.

Nature's abundance contrasted with the constrictions of the human heart, while the grace of a simple way of life was marred by tragedies caused by disease and ignorance. Out of this patchwork pattern, Nataraja Guru grew first into a sincere and promising young idealist and ultimately into a writer and teacher who strode firmly into the twentieth century. His feet found the firm ground of Indian wisdom hidden beneath the swampy social terrain and he used it as a basis for his explorations through the salient avenues of modern thought, whether of science or philosophy or the cultural developments of East and West, art, literature and music.

In many ways he was a simple human being in other ways a colossus who left the family, social patterns and world views of his youth far behind in his progress towards becoming a very remarkable human being. He left us a great legacy in his writing - philosophical works which bridge the gap between physics and metaphysics, East and West, ancient and modern, and well thought out practical applications of a one-world vision to economic, education

and politics. At the same time, his autobiography is a special treasure of reflection on the transformation of India from a collection of small kingdoms under British rule to a modern nation and his own transformation from a person defined by his time and place to a universal person. Although by the age of fifty-five, he was publicly acknowledged as a Guru, a teacher par excellence, and he wrote his autobiography many years later still, he does not stint to share with us the confusion and awkwardness of his youth, his mistakes and failures as he tried to make his dreams come true. As a result we have the precious gift of knowing him both as an ordinary and flawed human being like ourselves and as a repository of wisdom who dedicated himself to living and sharing that wisdom, whose light shines ever bright as the years go by.

This year marks one hundred years since his birth and more than twenty since his death. As we celebrate his centenary year, we do not remember him with a sentimental sense of attachment or loss. Rather it is occasion to acknowledge how much his way of life, the crystal-clear quality of his thought, both analytic and synthetic, the force of his example, his guidance and inspiration, the priceless indications given in his commentaries are a part of who we are, how we see the world and ourselves in it, removing darkness and bringing clarity to every aspect of life.

He represents that wonder of a person who is not a person, fully human, yet going beyond the usual bonds which mire human beings in the muck of necessity, imprisoning the self in a restricted sense of being. A couple of incidents in Gurukula life are very telling:

From its inception, following the example of Narayana Guru, the principle of non-violence (*ahimsa*) has been honored in the Gurukula. For most Indians, a vege-

tarian diet is the norm and especially is expected and observed by all in a place dedicated for the pursuit of wisdom. Throughout his travels and stays in Europe and the United States, Nataraja Guru maintained his dedication to non-violence. As a result of his travels, several friends came from Europe and the United States to study with him at the Gurukula in India.

One time, a man from France was visiting. When he was served his first meal of rice and spicy vegetables, he looked at it, became red in the face, and went into his room. This was repeated each meal time for the next two days. The Indian disciples were floored by his strange behavior and half-expected Nataraja Guru to become angry when he heard about it. Instead, Guru himself went to the market the next day and came back with bread and fresh vegetables. He made a salad and some soup prepared with chicken bouillon cubes which he had also brought. Then he took them to the room where the Frenchman was lying face down on the bed. When Guru came in, he started sobbing, saying that he was afraid he would have to go back to France since he could not tolerate the food. Nataraja Guru calmed him down, saying: "I know what delicious food you eat in France. We live a simple life here and most things you are used to are not even available. But perhaps you will find this food more to your liking." When the man realized that Guru had brought him chicken soup, breaking the long-standing observance of vegetarianism in the Gurukula, he again started to cry. But Nataraja Guru reassured him that his happiness and well-being was more important to him than clinging to a certain practice in the face of his misery.

Another time, an Indian disciple confronted a Western disciple, very upset because he was smoking at the Gurukula. Tempers were flaring until Nataraja Guru came to know of it. That evening before class, he asked that a lighted cigarette be placed next to the incense which the Indian disciples were fond of burning. Tension lifted and, after that, neither were consid-

ered to be necessary by the disciples.

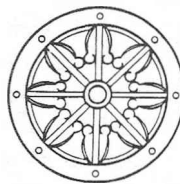
In these simple incidents we can see the practical working out in daily life of the Guru's unitive vision. He not only could transcend the barriers between people, he could lead others to do so as well. Guru means "dispeller of darkness" and Nataraja Guru dedicated himself to removing darkness whether it took the form of the social blindfolds which separate people and doom some to wretched lives, the clouded thinking of a student of philosophy, the emotional storm clouds which boil up inside of us, the dark superstitions of religion or the obscuring biases of science. To use his own phrase, he assumed unlimited liability for all and devoted himself to removing darkness wherever he found it. In his *Wisdom: The Absolute Is Adorable*, he wrote:

If we are to save ourselves from the impasse that faces humanity at present, the Guruhood of mankind, whether particularly or universally viewed, when understood with all these implications, must become once again an operative and living principle in human affairs.

Freedom and proper spiritual orientation to unitive wisdom are crying needs of the present-day. We must know the Truth that shall make us free. In this task which presses on us imperatively, the Gurus of mankind, whether contemporary or belonging to the long vertical line of Gurus who have lived at all times and in all climes, have a role to play which is neither new-fangled nor outmoded.

Nataraja Guru represents that ideal of a wisdom teacher whose roots are in a stable tradition which has long addressed the most serious problems of life, whose vision encompasses past, present and future.

Nancy Yeilding

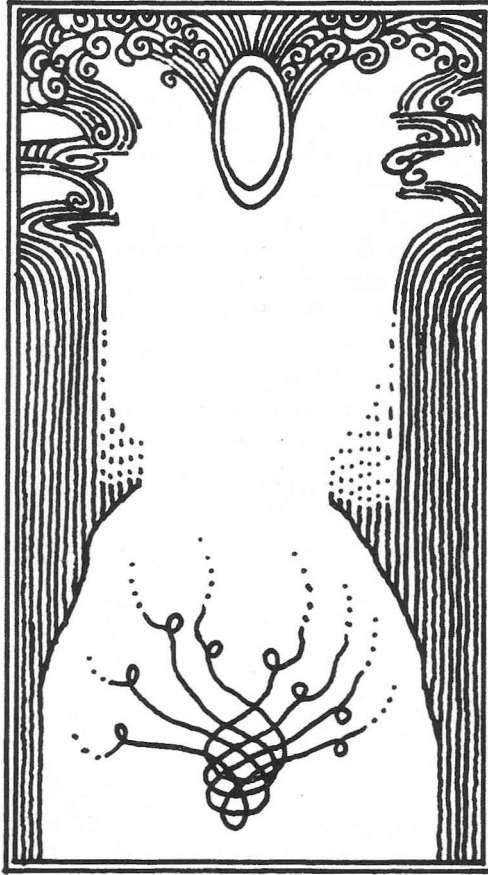


Svānubhavagīti Śatakam:

Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



Verse 85

All these shifting scenes are of a false drama.
Knowing this to be such,
by Your mercy may the inner knots of my heart be loosened.
The waves that billow on Your Head, Oh Destroyer of Erotics,
when they overflow in white froth,
where do You retain the sweetness of Your feet?

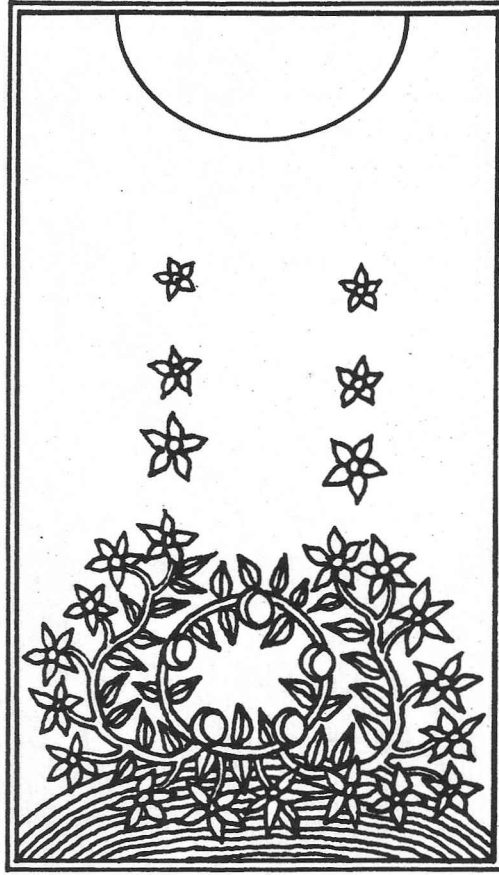
The mythical figure of Śiva is depicted as both male and female. The right side of the body is male, and the left side is female. On the peak of the Himalayas, Śiva sits in repose. From the head of Śiva is shown the Ganges river streaming down as in a cascade. Its overflowing waves show the endless white froth coming from the cascades. Śiva is immobile, and the river is ever-flowing. Thus the changeless and the changing are included in the same ideogram. Śiva and Parvati are in eternal union. But the god Eros who brought about their union has been burned to ashes. Thus there are many enigmas combined in this unified ideogram. Parvati is ever-engaged in creation. Śiva dissolves all creation into his all-absorbing silence.

We individual beings belong to this paradoxical situation. From the moment an individual enters it, he/she starts witnessing the kaleidoscopic changes projected in the make-believe of a drama in which no scene lasts even for one minute. If one flows with the ever-flowing current of the river, one won't know that he/she is witnessing the sequences of eternal change. Only when they are contrasted with the steady state of Śiva does one see how false the shifting scenes are. Those who are witnessing only the tragi-comic story projected will fall into the grip of duality and will have several problems to resolve. But if one is convinced that what one witnesses is only a make-believe show, then there are no knots to untie.

Śiva is in a state of pure duration. By identifying with that spirit, the Śiva-lover also can transcend the triple states of past, present and future. The aspirant is praying for the Grace of the Lord to have such a transparency of vision. As Śiva is ever seeming to be cleansed with the flowing river of Ganges, there cannot be in him anything which can cater to the pleasures of the senses. Hence the poet wonders if the feet of the Lord retain any sweetness in them. This reminds one of the words of St. John of the Cross who says, "During the ascent of Mt. Carmel, there is nothing, nothing, nothing. And on the summit there is nothing, nothing, nothing." In the realization of the Absolute, there is no secondary reward other than the realization.

Verse 86

Without getting distraught,
I shall ever offer my mind-flowers to you,
my Lord and will bow down in supplication.
As You well know, I suffer here endlessly,
having taken this birth and gotten caught in many a trying snare.
How painful it is!

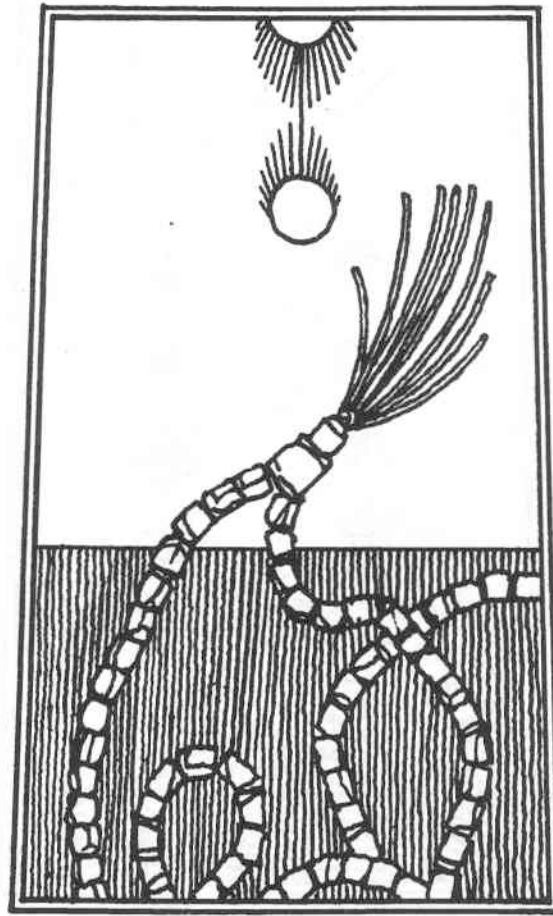


The conscious mind has a periphery where the senses are like wide-spreading creepers that go into the world of sense objects and fasten the individual self to the phenomenal world. Thus a bipolarity is established between the lower self and the illusoriness of the phenomenal world. This is the bipolarity between *jīva* (individuated self) and *māyā* (the illusoriness of nescience). This perpetuates the round of birth and death which is so very painful to an individuated self. To release *jīva* from *māyā* a more intimate bipolarity is to be established between the individual self and the universal Self.

The bond of the self with the physical body is established in the inner organ where the light of the Self is entwined with ones ego-identification. By turning that ego to be an instrument of the divine, ones bipolarity with the true Self is made intimate. Constant remembrance of the true being as ones own self is spoken of here as offering mind-flowers continuously.

In the *Darśana Mālā* of Narayana Guru, continuous remembrance is equated with contemplation, and that is spoken of as true devotion (*bhakti*). In verse twenty-nine of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* also, the Guru recommends the offering of mind-flowers as the best way to be released from *māyā*:

For the man who offers his mind-flowers to worship God,
 there is no other work to do;
 pick flowers of the forest; or if not that,
 by ever repeating the *māyā*-formula, *māyā* will disappear.



Verse 87

Worthless are these objects of desires,
fated to become intimate by your failure, my mind.
By constantly meditating on the rosary, you
may get established in a meaningful state,
which might lead you again to happiness.

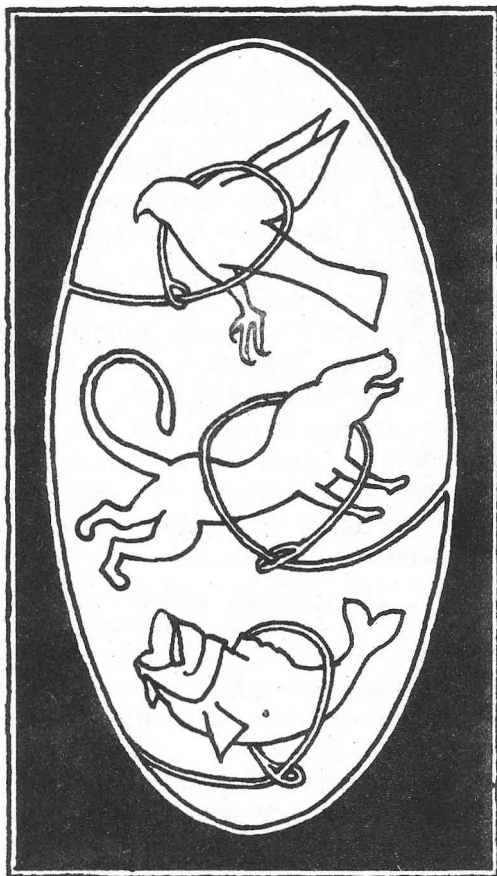
It is customary in the *Upaniṣads* and other spiritual books like the *Gita* to suggest alternative disciplines if one cannot take advantage of a rigorous one. In the *Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad* unitive action is recommended for those who cannot live in unitive wisdom. In the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* several alternatives are given to those who cannot stick on to the best. In the previous verse, offering the flowers of one's mind to the Absolute is recommended as the best discipline to purify the dross of the mind which in its turn vitiates the senses. Verse 29 of the *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, , which was quoted to elucidate the meaning of the previous verse, also offers this alternative of resorting to a more physical form of contemplation or ritualistic concentration as the second best.

If the mind had proper discrimination, it would not have entertained any desire for externals. The fact that the sensory-motor system is already conditioned to act mechanically in response to external stimuli should be considered a spiritual failure on the part of one's mind. The *Gita*

says the higher Self should raise the lower self. In the present context, it is the higher Self which is giving a timely admonition to the mind to rectify its mistake. All egoistic actions are prompted by compulsive behavior established by conditioning based on mistaken or misplaced values. According to the *Gita*, God is not responsible for one's meritorious or non-meritorious acts. Each *jīva* is a free agent to choose the worthwhileness of each value. That is why discrimination (*viveka*) and devotion (*śraddha*) are considered the two major aids in spirituality.

The rosary is a device for repeating a chosen *mantra* or the name of God so that the outgoing mind and the meditating mind can be kept in unison. This is a well-known method to dissuade distraction. *Mantras* like *nāmāśivāya* (obeisance to You, Oh Lord Śiva) can be repeated many times as in units of 108 sequentially ten thousand times. The tedium of doing that is suggested as a penalty for being indiscriminate and getting into intimacy with worthless values. In the Indian context this comes as part of the discipline called *tapas* (burning away).

What is important to notice is that this discipline is not offered as a sure panacea to rectify one's failure. It only suggests that such counting of the rosary may help to establish a sense of restraint, which in its turn might lead one to a state of happiness. From this it is evident that the correct approach is to cultivate wisdom and meditate upon ones self, developing proper contemplative devotion, *bhakti*.



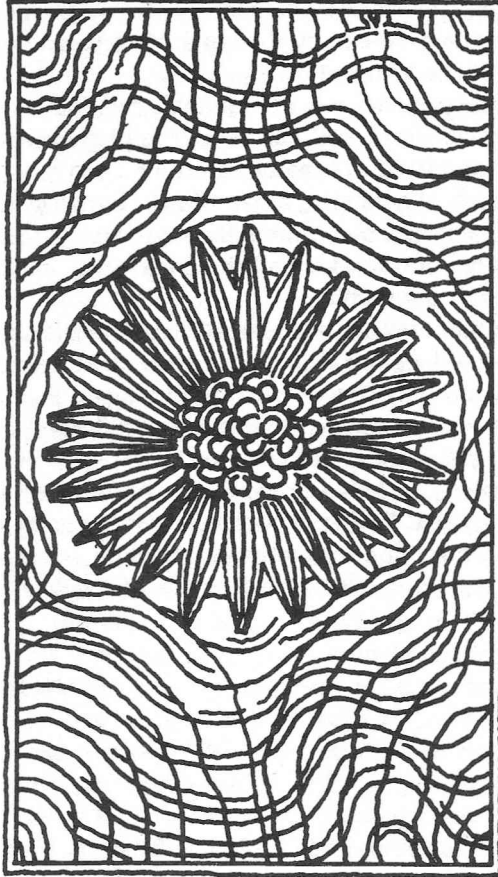
As the stress is put upon this, that, etc.,
the intrinsic relationships in this of the Lord, the being
and the bond are hierarchically unknotted.
The moon, the sun, earth, fire, space, wind and water
can be looked upon as the form of the Lord,
and one can serve at His feet.

There are many philosophical and theological visions of the world system such as: the Semitic concept of "God the creator and the world created by Him, with man as the governor of that world on God's behalf;" the Vedāntic concept of "the world as a projection of nescience which conceals the true being (*brahman*);" the scientists' view of "the Big Bang and the spreading out of chunks of matter to burn and radiate as millions of stars, with a corner of it undergoing biological evolution;" etc. In the religion of Śiva followers, they think of a system in which all beings on earth are considered to have mediocre intelligence like animals (*paśu*) who are held on the leash of their karmic bondage (*paśam*), which literally means a rope. The leashes of all living beings are held by the Supreme Controller (*pati*).

The Śiva religion thus upholds not monism nor dualism but a trinity of truth: The Lord, living beings, and their bond with the Lord (*pati*, *paśu*, and *paśam*). If people are not conscious in their day to day life of such a ruling principle and put their stress upon whatever is immediately presented to their senses, or look upon the necessities of life as the only reality that matters, in the course of time the philosophical system of the trinity will be undone. If people were to live without proper adherence to their Lord, in the course of time this world would have no coherence, and all consistent parts would fall apart.

The Śaivite concept of the Lord is different from that of all other religions. They do not assign any superiority to the concepts of God with form or God without form. They look upon the Lord as having form, having no form and transcending the dualities of form and the formless. For all practical purposes they see aspects of the Lord manifesting as the sun and the moon, the earth, water, fire, air, space and the priest who is propitiating the Lord. Even if a person is not consciously propitiating the Lord, he/she will be indirectly serving the dictates of the sun and the moon and the five elements. Thus unconsciously he/she will be serving the Lord at the physical level by participating in the functions of nature. This natural existence of the common person can be improved with the cultivation of the consciousness that one is being controlled by a supreme principle which gives one a life-supporting environment and that one's *jīva* is kept alight by the Lord to be used as an instrument for the purpose of the divine.

This verse is a departure from the Vedāntic world-view. It is developed more or less in accordance with the invocation given in Kalidasa's *Kumārasambhava*, the story of the birth of Subrahmanya. In this verse there is no reference to the priest. That is probably because the propitiator is held here as the one who looks upon the Śiva manifestation.



Verse 89

Various jewels are made out of the same gold.
Even so, whatever is here is designed by Your eyes.
To your graceful feet, I offer myself as a flower.
Oh Ocean of Serenity, as You rise, spreading in all
directions, please hold me close to Your bosom.

In The Old Testament the creation of the world is said to have come from the Word of God. Before a word is uttered it sits in the mind as a configuration of a word-image.

What is seen only by an individual mind or eye is a private experience. What is seen by all minds in the same time and place is a public fact. Images that can be shared by all onlookers as identical are transactionally valid.

If there is one light surrounded by a million mirrors, the same light can be seen in all the mirrors. The flames and the descriptions of the light will all be identical. Similarly the one eye behind all seeing eyes, the one ear behind all hearing ears, and the one mind behind all knowing minds is only the Lord's eye, ear and mind.

There is an old saying, *yatha dr̥ṣṭ tatha sṛṣṭi*: "How you see it, you have created it." As Parameśvara, the Supreme Lord of creation, causes

everything with His word and phenomenality, every form seen in this world can be described as seen by the Lord and created by Him as a consequential result of His conception.

In Vedāntic parlance a common analogy given to prove the oneness of all variegated forms and names of the phenomenal world is the fashioning of various jeweled ornaments out of a block of gold. The finished products can be a gold ring, a pair of gold bangles and a gold necklace. The stuff of each of these ornaments is the same gold. Similarly, Siva is the supreme value out of which all these precious forms in the world are fashioned, by His own will.

The propitiator of the Lord is no different. He is also fashioned by the Lord and hence does not think that he is worthless. He describes himself as a fresh and pure flower worthy of being dedicated to the Lord. He says, "I offer myself to be laid at your feet as a flower."

The very many things of this world are seen by him as an arrangement of ripples, one behind the other. Yet he does not conceive of the Lord as a stormy sea. Rather he looks upon it as a calm sea of serenity. The idea of a lone flower floating on the bosom of the sea is fantasized, and the supplicant says, "Lord please receive me, and hold me to Your bosom."

(Continued in next issue.)



Kaṭha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

VI: 4

If one is able to know (Iṣim) here on earth before the falling down of the body, one is liberated. If not, for that very reason, one becomes fitted for embodiment in the world of creations.

VI: 5

As in a mirror, so it is seen in the body. As in a dream, so in the world of ancestors. As if in water, so in the world of the gandharvas. As if in light and shade, so in the world of Brahma the Creator.

All of us live as embodied beings. That is why death seems to be a nightmare, since dying means leaving one's body. What happens at death? Does the Self leave the body or does the body leave the Self? This question has never been answered definitely. We see that the body decays after death. We do not see the Self or its decay. So we are under the impression that the Self leaves the body at the time of death. Then what happens to it?

If one's identity is with the body, then by the destruction of the body one loses one's self identity. If one's identity is not with the transitory body but with the immortal Self, then by that very understanding one is freed from bodily bondages. For that person the Truth has neither birth

nor death. He is that very Truth. Thus the notion of the destruction of the body can be understood in two different senses. One is death in the ordinary sense. The other is the state of being released from identity with the body.

Even the person who sees one's self identity with the body does not think that the Self is mortal and does not desire to be mortal. When the body crumbles down, what is possible for him is only to see self continuance in a new body with a new form. This continuity is also seen as part of the total and eternal flux. Even in that, one likes to attain superiority and think that there is an upward progress of downward regress in this continuity of life after death. This is based on one's own value concepts. Thus the world attainable in the hereafter could be supposed to touch the here and now at the lowest extreme and the Absolute or the *brahman* at the highest. Four monomarks of such a scale of value are indicated here, namely, the world here, the world of ancestors (*pitr-loka*), the world of *gandharvas* or celestial musicians, and the world of the Absolute. From the four similes in the fifth mantra it is to be understood that the continuity of oneself in these value worlds of the hereafter is conceived by oneself as one's own reflected image.

The reflection of oneself seen in a mirror will have the same shape, size, color, and all other details of the original. It is also directly perceivable. In spite of this one-to-one correspondence, it is only a re-

flected image. Just like that, one who thinks of the life hereafter as a continuation of the same embodied state imagines it to be a replica of the present one.

The image we see in a dream does not have the same kind of correspondence to the original. There might be no original at all. Dream images are not perceivable in the wakeful state and no dream can be seen twice. Continuation of the same dream at the next instance is also not possible. In short, the dream images are more vague. If one imagines going to the world of ancestors after death, the idea of the life in that world is as vague as a dream image.

The world of *gandharvas* or celestial musicians is supposed to be just below the heaven of the *devas* or gods. There is a belief that those who do meritorious deeds in this life go to that world after death. But our idea of that world is even more vague. If we look at the water in a bowl we'll see our own image in it, though with a much distorted shape. The disfiguration depends on the small ripples on the surface of the water. But this disfiguration is compensated for by our imagination and thus we recognize our image in it. The same is the case with our idea of the life in the world of the ancestors.

The highest status one can think of attaining after death is that of merging with the Absolute. The visualization of this life in the hereafter is compared here to light and shade. The image seen in a mirror will have clarity and one-to-one correspondence in all respects. But the shade seen in a light will be completely dark, which is the opposite of light. But what is seen in a mirror and in a shade are both images. Here it is not stated which is the shade and which the light. If the world of the Absolute is imagined to be the light, our world here could be taken as its shade. This shade thinks of its continuing in the hereafter in the form of its original, i.e., light.

The fourth mantra mentioned one's becoming fitted for embodiment in the world of creativity. The fifth mantra indicated the wide scope of this world.



VI: 6

On knowing the separateness of the senses which have arisen as separate entities, and also of their arising and setting, the wise one suffers not.

When we fully concentrate on what we hear, the objects perceived by our other senses do not come to our attention. When our attention is shifted to the forms perceived through sight, other objects go into obscurity. Only the function of one sense occupies our attention at a given moment. The physical world is to be seen with the help of all the five senses, yet the five senses do not function together at any one time. That means we do not directly see the world as a whole at any time. What we think of as the total world is only a mental combination of the different pictures that we cognize at different times. Suppose the functions of all our senses come to our attention together. Then the picture of the world we would have would not be the same as we have at present.

When the function of one sense is the focus of our attention, the other senses are in a state of oblivion. The shifting of the focus from one object to another and the going into oblivion of the former happens every moment. This could be taken as a continuous process of a refuting and a re-setting of the senses. This separateness of the function of senses is true from the biological point of view also. When we see an object, the light reflected from the object falls in the eyes and it makes some physi-

cal changes in the retina. This physical change is transformed into electrical energy and is carried to the visual area of the brain with the help of synapses. The movement brought in by this electric change in the visual area is experienced as vision. This is the biological explanation of the act of seeing. The brain has separate areas for visual experience, auditory experience, etc. The sensory nerves which convey the message in the form of electric changes are different, and the senses which come into direct contact with the objects are also different. This is the framework in which to understand the words, "the senses which have arisen as separate entities" (*prthag utpadyamānānām indriyāṇām*).

The seers of India have a different way of explaining the process of sense perception. According to them, it is the same external principle (*ākāśa*) that transforms itself into the sense organ for hearing in the individual and that is why the ear is capable of having contact with sound, which is the specific quality of sky. Similarly, it is the air principle (*vāyu*) in the cosmic system that, remaining as the psychic entity of the sense organ for touch, perceives a touch, the specific quality of air. So too the cosmic fire principle (*agni*) that has transformed into eyes and perceives forms, the specific quality of fire. The cosmic water principle (*ap*) becomes the sense organ for taste and causes the knowledge of taste, the specific quality of water. Finally the cosmic earth principle (*prthivī*) has transformed into the sense organ for smell and causes the knowledge of smell, the specific quality of earth.

Thus the *rishis* see all the elements of perception as belonging to an integral cosmic system and at the same time differentiate the functions of each of the senses. When one entity that we had been perceiving in the world of perception becomes imperceptible with no possibility of perceiving again, we say that that entity is dead. We take this event as a cause for suffering only because of the personal interest we have in that entity. But the Ab-

solute Truth that this Upaniṣad has been trying to expound, which is also mentioned as represented by the monosyllable *AUM*, is not subject to sense perception but is the life principle behind all the sense perception. One who has understood this fundamental Truth is not afflicted by a sense of separate functioning of senses and by the incessant rising and setting of the senses. For him the only Truth that exists is the immortal Absolute.

How to see the Absolute Truth that is beyond sense perception but at the same time is the primal cause for all sense perceptions is explained in the next two mantras.

VI: 7

*Higher than the senses is the mind.
Higher than the mind is true being.
Above true being is the Great Self.
Above the Great is the unmanifest.*

VI: 8

*Higher than the unmanifest, however,
is the person, all pervading, with no
mark of differentiation. Knowing
which, a living one is liberated and
attains immortality.*

How one who sees the Absolute as the substratum of everything and beyond everything and how one appraises everything in the world of actuality and how that appraisal makes one fixed on the ultimate goal, is expounded in these two mantras. Though almost the same structural pattern adopted in the tenth and eleventh mantras of the third *Valli* is resorted to here, there the context was of pointing out the ultimate goal, while here the context is of the state of one who has reached the goal. How such a one sees the extensive vista ranging from the field of sense perception to that of the unmanifest as not-different from the all pervading person (*puruṣa*). *Puruṣa* is the epithet given to the Absolute to suit the Sāmkhya structural pattern adopted here.

The Person is identified as not having any qualifying marks of differentiation (*alīnga*). The differentiation which enables us to distinguish one from another is called *līnga*. Each entity that belongs to the whole range, beginning from the field of sense perception to the unmanifest, has its own differentiating marks. The Person or the Absolute is the only one with no such mark of identification. There is no necessity to identify one part of the all-pervading Truth as different from another, hence the Person has no need of such marks.

Two benefits are mentioned that accrue to the one who sees the Person as such. The first is that of liberation. Liberation from what? From death, which is the theme of discussion in this *Upaniṣad*. Put in another way, the benefit is that of becoming liberated from the identification with everything that begins with the domain of sense perception and ends with the unmanifest. The other benefit is that of attaining immortality. What is the dif-

ference between liberation from death and attaining immortality? There is no real difference except in the mode of statement. This difference is not in the meaning intended by these statements. In the first statement something is to be gotten rid of as undesirable. In the latter something is to be attained as desirable. These two are only two statements, the former from the negative side and the latter from the positive side, regarding the same truth. This truth is nothing but an inner experience of a vision, which is neither positive or negative in content. Here we see how the differentiation natural to the world of thinking (*cit*) is canceled out by the neutrality of the world of existential content (*sat*).

The next two mantras show that the content of non-dual Self Happiness is beyond the grasp of the senses and the mind and that the subsisting content in all such limited functions is nothing but the same nondual Existence.

(Continued in next issue.)



The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patāñjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sūtra II:46

sthira sukham āsanam

sthira: steady
sukham: comfortable
āsanam: seat, posture

The seat should be steady and comfortable.

The mind is mercurial. Even when the physical limbs remain quiet, the mind can go far and near, to the past and to the future. When it becomes centered it comes to a steady state. Bringing the body and mind to remain centered in the here and now is finding one's own foundation, *āsana*. Living in the here and now is living in the present. Everything in the present falls together to make a meaningful ensemble which leaves out anything irrelevant. Thus the present is an overt recognition of the factors of one's life interests manifested at a certain time and place.

Life becomes meaningful only if one can hold oneself onto an adorable value. When one finds a consistent value to live for, he or she strikes a root in the reality of life. Jesus speaks of it as the wise man who builds his house on the foundation of a rock. The unwise man builds his house on sand dunes. A house built on shifting sands is sure to crash. This image which Jesus gives is very significant. Most people live in the fleeting present. Only the wise

one lives in the eternal present. It is the continuity of perceiving a value and giving perfection to it that makes life worthwhile.

There are many foundations of human culture which have been nourishing the life interests of people all over the world. According to the *Upaniṣads*, *brahmavidyā* is the fountain source of all sciences. What is basic to *brahmavidyā* is the unitive vision of the One to which the many belong. The Jewish people developed their culture by putting their faith in a law-initiating God whose law is at once powerful and binding. They conceive beauty as the central hub to which all the spokes of law converge.

The Christians restated the Jewish concept of law by conceiving of God as love. They put their faith in a God whose loveful sharing is similar to human love. Loving God and serving humanity are the two wings of Christian dedication.

Muslims look upon the Absolute as incomparable and yet complemented by the attributes of Allah which accommodate all the essential values that can make life on earth graceful and caring. The leveling of all differences to the impartial love of Allah is the model for humanity. Latter day scientists adhered to the reliability of a mathematical logic which gives relevance to valid reasoning.

There are many well-established roots to which people give themselves with unflinching trust. In the wisdom context of

a guru and disciple, the *guru* is the foundation and root of the disciple. In the family context, for sexual ethics and loyalty, the husband is the root of the wife and the wife is the root of the husband. In a constitutional government, the preservation of law and the maintenance of equal opportunity is the root of the government. In creative art the noble envisioning of truth that can enhance the dignity of man is the root of the artist and writer.

There is no field in which one cannot find a stable seat on which one can be established to make the pursuit of one's life, growing richer and richer. Then we may say one's seat is firm and comfortable. The *āsana* to which a yogi should aspire is certainly not the physical posture of an acrobat. Unfortunately, many protagonists of Yoga have taken such a low and almost worthless view of this very profound *sūtra* on which the entire practice (*sādhana*) of Yoga is based.

The truth which surpasses all wisdom and, on being found, becomes a light forever is indicated here as the seat on which one has to establish oneself. That will be firm. That will be comfortable.

Sūtra II:47

prayatna śaithilyānanta samāpattibhyām

prayatna: effort

śaithilya: reducing

ananta: endless (nature of perfection)

samāpattibhyām: continuous meditation

Reducing the effort with continuous meditation on the endless nature of perfection (brings stabilization of one's seat).

Nature's program can be looked upon as a good model for the perfection of a yogi's attainment. Nature arranges things as if it has all of time at its disposal. If you watch a cycle of life beginning with a seed and culminating in a seed, you will see that nature does not throw out its effort like a volcanic eruption. Like a steady quantum pulsation, there are many piece-

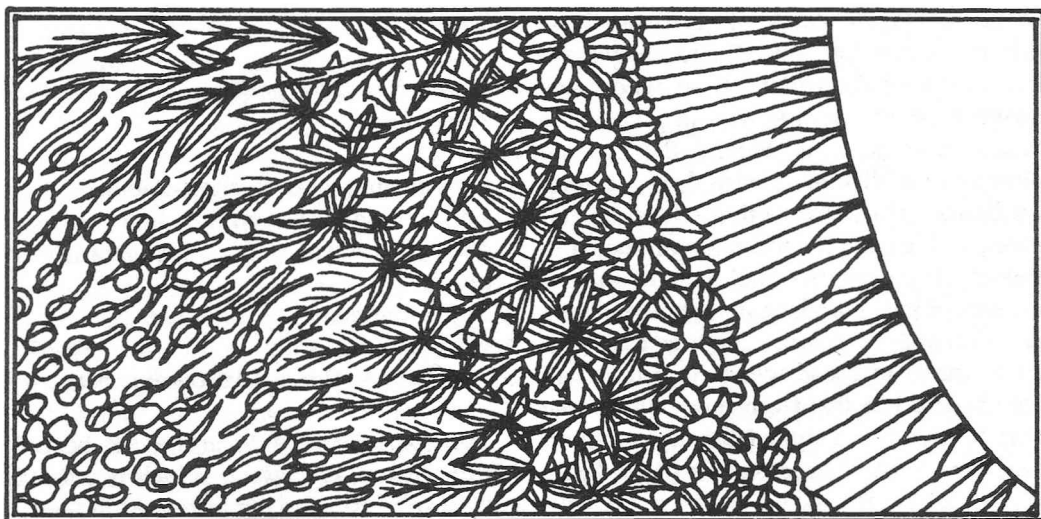
meal programs arranged within a long term holistic program.

The seed waits until it is laid in the proper soil which has enough moisture. First it swells up. Cracks come on the shell of the seed. It breaks. Slowly the sprout comes. The root goes down and secures a firm position for the germinating seed. The first leaves begin to show. In between two phases a pause comes. For some time the sapling shows nothing but the sprouting of new leaves. Then a new program begins and branches go off in all directions. More leaves come. The leaves become smaller and smaller.

Then like a surprise the flower comes. The bud takes its own time to become a fully bloomed colorful flower and get pollinated. Again a pause. Then comes a tiny fruit. The petals of the flower wither away. The fruit becomes mature and colorful. The seeds in it grow hard. There is no hurry. There is no excitement. Such is the way which nature points out.

At Kanjeevaram near Madras there is an ancient temple called Ekamreśvara, dedicated to a single mango tree. According to scientists, that mango tree has been bearing fruit for more than four thousand years. The tree is not excited; it does not bring all its fruit at once. Year after year when the season comes, it puts forth its flowers. After blossoming it takes two to three months to bring tiny little mangos. After the appearance of the fruit, it takes another couple of months for the mangos to become fragrant, sweet and edible. Comparatively we can say that mango tree has an endless program, *anantam*.

If we believe the evolutionary theories put forward by biologists, we have come a long way from our bacterial ancestors to become bipeds with nervous systems and organized brains that discern right from wrong. Now we have discovered that we have before us a way to perfection. It will not bring the desired fruit miraculously. Some effort is to be applied, but it does not bring results by quantitative pressurization. Our effort should have the quality of quantum pulsation. It has to be regular, repetitive, and consistent.



The word used in the *sūtra* for apportioning the effort is *śaithilya*, which literally means "broken up into small bits." A yogi should perform action thinking of the whole cycle the universe goes through to complete one round, only to repeat it again. After the maturation of wisdom, one regulates one's organs of action in such a manner that only minimum effort is expended.

One speaks in sweet and gentle words which come from a depth of serenity. One cannot speak without inspiring and expiring. When we come to the study of *prāṇāyāma* we will be told that vital energy (*prāṇa*) is to be conserved. Silence (*mauna*) is a natural way of conserving *prāṇa*.

The yogi does not run around with any wanderlust or pursue ambitious projects which involve unnecessary hard work that can wear out one's stamina. Thus there is an apportioning of effort. In each pause one brings composure to oneself and, thus being mindful of the eternal quality of perfection for which one is aspiring and moving toward all the time, one accomplishes everything by not doing anything. The entire text of Lao Tse's *Tao Te Ching* can be read as a beautiful elucidation of this *sūtra* of Patañjali. One ultimately becomes an unmoved mover whose seat is stabilized and yet who moves everything and everyone. Such is the beauty of the concept of *āsana*.

Sūtra II:48

tato dvandvānabhighātaḥ

tataḥ: from that (stability in which mind fuses with *samāpatti*)

dvandva: pairs of opposites

anabhighātaḥ: will not be assaulted

From that (stability of *āsana*) no assaults with pairs of opposites.

Stabilization in one's own seat is the beginning of *samādhi*, union with the Self. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Yoga is defined as *samātvam*, sameness or the harmonization of opposites. The plenum is such that it allows additions and expansions without being disturbed in its fullness or perfection. No act of reduction makes the Absolute less than the Absolute. Resolving this paradox is not accomplished by reducing contradictories into uniformity. It is resolved by the transcendence of pairs of opposites. The glaring contradictions are: birth and death, commencement and termination, coming together and splitting apart. The world is continuously tormented by these dualities. A yogi develops a neutrality in which the plus and minus do not cause attraction or repulsion. One leaves the fluctuations of becoming and remains in a state of being.

If we look at any part of the body or mind, glaring contradictions can be seen.

With our eyes we can lovingly caress those whom we care for. With the same eyes we can suspiciously watch those whom we suspect. With our lips we can give a bewitching smile. Just behind the lips are shining pearl-like teeth with their flashing brilliance. The same teeth are hard as diamonds. We can bite and tear another into pieces. The eyes can shed tears of sorrow or tears of joy. Hands that embrace in love can also stab to death. The legs that help us to move to those whom we love can also be used to flee from those whom we fear or conduct us away from those whom we hate. In the upper portion of the body is the head in which many brilliant thoughts and loveful intentions can shine, while at the other end of the body feces and urine are stored. The heart that entertains hope and love can also broil with hatred and an unquenchable sense of revenge.

In spite of all these contradictions, the yogi excels in transcending all pairs of opposites. Narayana Guru, in his *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, says: "Do not wake up again and remain without sleeping." The person who seems to be engaged in ceaseless activities can believe that he or she has no agency of action. We can thus see action in inaction and inaction in action. A contemplative sitting apparently quiet can have inner activity which both centripetally and centrifugally affects the cosmos to which he or she belongs. In such a yogi, becoming and being are reciprocal functions of a truth that cannot be adequately explained with words.

The entire theme of Yoga is conceived in the discipline of *āsana* as a mystical state of being. From this glorifying of *āsana* in the *sūtras*, we can easily see it is not one of those postures which is said to be the most appropriate posture for this or that kind of healing. The word *āsana* is used in a very comprehensive sense; being established in *āsana* corresponds to terms like *guṇātīta* (one who has transcended the effects of the three nature modalities), *brahmavidvarīṣṭha* (one who is totally merged with the Absolute) and *yogārudha* (one who is fully established in the state of aloneness).

Sūtra II:49

tasmin sati śvāsa praśvāsayor gati vicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ

tasmin: on this (perfection of *āsana*)

sati: having been accomplished

śvāsa praśvāsayoḥ: of inspiration and expiration

gati: movement

vicchedaḥ: cessation

prāṇāyāmaḥ: the regulation of *prāṇa*

This (perfection of *āsana*) having been accomplished, *prāṇāyāma*, which is cessation of inspiration and expiration, (follows).

In the elucidation of the previous *sūtras* we have seen that *āsana* is a comprehensive concept which includes the preliminaries of discipline leading to the perfecting of one's Yoga, which brings *samādhi*. The present *sūtra* focuses on the most dynamic principle, *prāṇa*, which on one side relates the manifested individual to the cosmos and, on the other, relates the psycho-physical system to the Self. As the present study implies many subtle principles and their correlations, the student needs to diligently apply his or her mind to get a comprehensive idea of what is going to be said. We will proceed in a systematic manner.

First, think of the pure source of everything which can be identified either with *īśvara*, the inner regulating, governing and manifesting principle, or with *pratyak ātma*, the homogenous state of the Self which is unconditioned. Then picture a phenomenal principle in which the *īśvara* or *pratyak ātma* mirrors itself. That is the phenomenal self, *jīva*. The nature of the Absolute is unalloyed bliss, hence the phenomenal self also is basically blissful. For that reason, Indian philosophers think of the individuated self as a phenomenon woven out of the blissful principle. They call it *ānandamaya* (bliss through and through) or *ānandamaya kośa* (enveloped in bliss). *Maya* means through and through and *kośa* means sheath.

As the individuated person has five

sense organs, five organs of action and the capacities to cognize, cogitate, evaluate and be affected, experiencing bliss comes through the bringing together of a specified existential factor with an imperiential recognition of bliss, where the conjunction happens in knowledge. Such a specifically structured knowledge is like an accomplished talent. It is called *vijñāna*. The specific knowledge which has become part and parcel of the personality corresponds to the mutations that are effected in the genes in which, according to modern genetics, the RNA acts both as informant and conveyor. The specific talents which one has achieved are deep-seated aspects of personality which are obscured by the unconscious. When an artist is about to accomplish a creative work, ideation comes from the unconscious and all previous experiences line up to give the execution a certain amount of perfection. The artist consciously manipulates the in-built coordination to achieve the desired results. Hence it is said that *vijñānamaya* is enveloped by *manomaya*, the sheath of the mind.

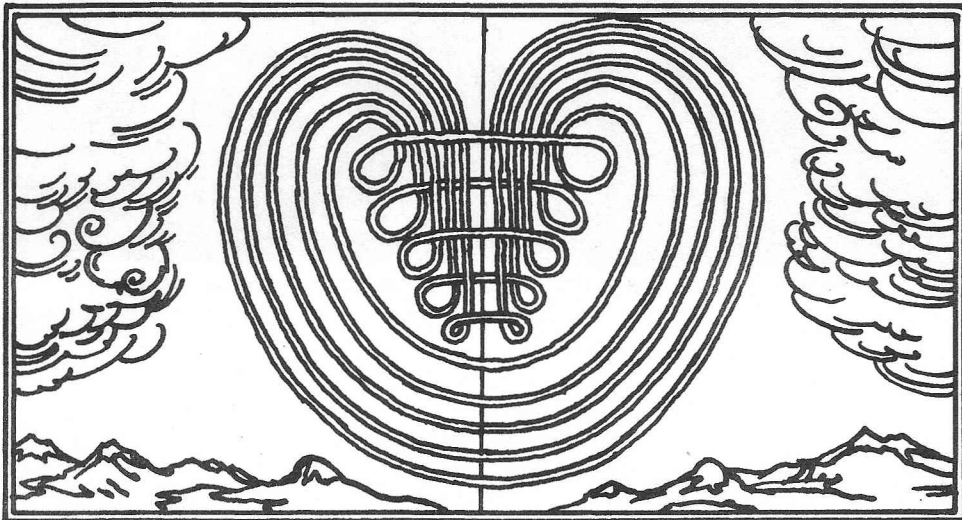
For mentation, words are structured in the mind and there has to be a direct channeling of the electrical energy which is stored up in the body. *Prāṇa* is the vital principle which supplies energy for both the conscious and unconscious functioning of the organism. Therefore, *prāṇāmaya* is said to be enveloping *manomaya*. For the flames of *prāṇa* to burn, it uses the physical world as its fuel. So it is said that *anna-*

maya (the sheath of food) envelopes *prāṇāmaya*.

Thus we come to the most important concept of a great energy functioning in us from the periphery to the core. Most people think of *prāṇa* as the air that is breathed in and the air that is breathed out. But it is incidental that such a bodily function is happening. A yogi is expected to retain the circulating energy provided by *prāṇa* within one's individuated organism. The *prāṇa* that is to be circulated is the main bulk of the electrical flow and consolidation within a person. Hence yogis have developed a mode of directing *prāṇa* in resonance with *āsana* or the state of being in which nothing is expended.

Practical guidance is to be received to coordinate the physical body and the mind in regulating the *prāṇa*. The meditation of *gayatri* at eight points within the body and two points outside it is recommended as one device. Such a device is given with the intention of circulating even the grossest aspect of *prāṇa* in an ascending and descending manner. Our common experience is bringing the breath upward and then expiring, then bringing the breath inward, taking it down to fill the lungs. In the yogic discipline, *prāṇa* is taken upward all the way from the toes to the crown and the *apāna* is taken downward from the crown to the toes. This and similar practices are to be directly learned from a preceptor.

(Continued in next issue.)



The Alchemy of Acceptance

*You have gone far
from your native soil;
yet you breathe in ease
as if you are on the couch of your porch.
You are confronted by strangers
whose language and custom vary from yours.
You seem to greet everyone
as if it is a reunion with your old kinsmen.*

*I want to learn from you
the secret of melting into another's soul
with such ease and poise
and the dignity of a saint.*

Nitya

श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः



SARVA VEDANTA SIDDHANTA GOCHARAM TAMAGOCHARAM

Biography of Narayana Guru

Nancy Yeilding

Vaikom Satyāgraha Continues

After six days, on April 6, 1924, the District Magistrate sent an arrest warrant to Kesava Menon, A.K. Pillai, T.K. Madhavan, K. Velayudhan Menon, K. Kelappan Nayar, and T.R. Krishnaswami Iyer. The leaders decided to go ahead with the *satyāgraha*. The eye-witness report of one of the *satyāgrahis* continues as follows:

That day, the main satyāgrahis were Kesava Menon and T.K. Madhavan. There was a large crowd following them. They were arrested and taken to the Magistrate Court. A Magistrate read out an order that they would be imprisoned if they did not present two guarantors and five hundred rupees. Kesava Menon read out the following statement:

*I am aware of the fact that "low-caste people" are restricted by the government from using the road near Vaikom temple. I agree that I have induced Elavas, Pulāyas and other such people to break the government ban and I will continue such inducement until the government revokes its present ban. A road that is used by caste Hindus, Mohammedans and Christians cannot be claimed to be private. Those who are called "untouchables" should have the same freedom. I am trying to gain this freedom for them also. There may be misunderstanding about our intention. We are not attempting to take the untouchables to temples but only to gain the elementary freedom to use public roads. After making many petitions and representations to the government we have resorted to the *satyāgraha* only because we are now convinced that no other way is open to us. Any award [sentence] you might give we are willing to accept because that will only speed up the realization of our intention.*

After Kesava Menon read this statement,

the Magistrate questioned T.K. Madhavan, who gave the following statement:

*When I came walking in the road near the Vaikom temple I was informed of the District Magistrate's ban and I admit that I have done the crime of breaking the ban. My intention to use the road was not because of its proximity to the temple. But it was constructed and maintained by public tax. Any institution, like a road, maintained with public funds is for the use of the citizens and citizens should have equal rights. Restricting such a road to a section of Hindus is painful and humiliating to me as a Hindu. With my act I wanted to bring to the notice of the people this sorrowful state of the caste implications in Hinduism and I have adopted a non-violent method of *satyāgraha* because it is done according to the instruction of Mahatma Gandhi who is revered by the entire world. As this method was successfully used in different parts of the country. I am using this method to defend my personal rights. I am compelled to break the District Magistrate's ban. I will accept the award [sentence] of this sanction with restraint and without any sense of retaliation. They were both given six month's imprisonment according to the Criminal Procedure Code of Travancore. ⁸³*

Although he was not present, Gandhi sent instructions to the *satyāgrahis*, trying to guide them through the intricate twists and turns of his ever-changing interpretation of *satyāgraha*. He described himself as a disciple in search of co-workers in his experiments, saying that he and they were known as *satyāgrahis*.⁸⁴ The experimental nature of his involvement in the Vaikom *satyāgraha* is evidenced by his letters, speeches and interviews which included statements that the Congress Party should not conduct or advise any-

satyāgraha campaign in any area of India not under British rule (Kerala was not),⁸⁵ and that the Kerala Congress Committee should have been the first body to take it up because "Congress is pledged to bring about the removal of untouchability by all peaceful and legitimate means."⁸⁶ He expressed concern about whether there were enough volunteers to sustain the struggle, while discouraging support from outside Kerala or from non-Hindus. He continually spoke of the Vaikom *satyāgraha* as a local, limited struggle, not worthy of all-India financial support or leadership, while urging the *satyāgrahis* to consider the loss of a few hundred lives not too great a price to pay for the freedom of the untouchables.⁸⁷

The following excerpts from an interview between representatives of the Vaikom *satyāgrahis* and Gandhi illustrates their understandable difficulties in following the torturous twists of the Mahatma's directions concerning allowable and forbidden forms of exerting influence:

Q. Mahatmaji, you have stated that fasting as a weapon cannot be resorted to by a *satyāgrahi* except against friends. The Travancore Government is either a friend or a foe that opposes the wishes of its subjects. If it is a friend, the sufferings undergone by the *satyāgrahis* evidencing the intensity of their feelings in this matter are sure ultimately to melt the heart of the Government and induce it to grant the demands of the *satyāgrahis*. The Maharaja of Travancore, though orthodox to the core, is a kind ruler and loves his subjects and he will not be able to look with equanimity on the sufferings undergone by the *satyāgrahis*. He is not a tyrant who does not feel for his people. Under these circumstances, why cannot the *satyāgrahis* adopt fasting to melt the Maharaja's heart and to conquer him through their sufferings?

A. *Satyāgraha* implies absolute love and non-violence. Fasting as a weapon can only be used against a lover, a friend, a follower or co-worker who, on account of his love for you and the sufferings you undergo, actually realizes his mistake and corrects himself. He purifies himself of an evil which he knows and ac-

knowledges to be an evil. You recall him from his evil ways to the correct path. A son can fast against a father addicted to drink to cure him of his evil. The father knows it to be an evil and realizes the enormity of it by the sufferings of the son and he corrects himself. My followers and co-workers who resorted to violence in Bombay knew that violence was against the principle of non-cooperation. Only they deviated from that fundamental principle. My fasting brought home to them their mistake and they corrected it.

But you cannot fast even against a friend when other considerations than actual realization of his evil ways are likely to make him yield. For example, when I proposed to introduce an untouchable as a member of my household, my wife objected. My fasting against her under such circumstances might have obliged her to give in, but it would be the fear that my fasting would lead to my death and the loss of her husband that would influence her to surrender her opinion and not the consciousness that she was committing a wrong in regarding a human being as untouchable. I succeeded in the case not by converting her to my opinion but by tyrannizing over her and doing violence to her feelings. In the same way, the Maharaja of Travancore may be a kind man who may not bear to witness with equanimity the death of a *satyāgrahi*. Your fasting may compel him to yield, but he yields not because he sees the error of his ways and believes untouchability to be evil, but because he cannot bear to see the death of a person who, in his opinion, perversely chooses to die. This is the worst form of compulsion which militates against the fundamental principles of *satyāgraha*.

Q. Supposing the Maharaja is not a friend, but a foe and a tyrant, it is impossible to win him over by the sufferings of the *satyāgrahis*. In such a case, will it not be right to force the hands of the Government by the creation of a strong public opinion and by putting the Government in a false position? This implies the use of pressure. To quote an example in Kaira, the Government that opposed the people was not conquered by love but by pressure. A sustained fight is necessary to bring about this pressure to bear fruit and a weak people can not hope to put up such a

sustained fight against an organized Government with immense resources without outside help. If satyāgraha excludes even this pressure, you may call the fight at Vaikom by any other name—say, passive resistance, civil disobedience or non-violent assertion. In such a case, what objection is there in receiving outside help? By preventing us from adopting fasting or accepting outside help, don't you deprive us of the method available to us in a fight both against friend and against foe?

A. I do not admit that in Kaira or Borsad it was the pressure of public opinion that made the Government yield. Moreover, no outward pressure was brought to bear on the Government. I refused all outside help (in the case of Kaira), though many offered to pay me money. The intensity of the feeling manifested by the preparedness of the people to undergo any amount of suffering opened the eyes of the Government and they yielded. It was conviction that made the Government concede the demands of the people of Kaira. Such conviction can come only by the purity and strength of your sacrifice. Outside help weakens the strength of your sacrifice. The opponent sees no sacrifice in you and his heart is not touched and as a result his eyes are not opened. The volunteers, fed and financed with outside help, appear to the opponent more as mercenaries than like satyāgrahis who are prepared to sacrifice their all for their principles. Such a fight is the trial of material and not spiritual strength. It is not true satyāgraha. Almost the same question was raised at Chirala Perala. I strongly advised Mr. Gopalakrishnayya to continue the fight unaided and the fight was carried on successfully. Non-violent assertion of your rights with outside help may be passive resistance but no satyāgraha.

There is a world of difference between passive resistance and satyāgraha. The passive resister does not and need not love his opponent, while a satyāgrahi ought to. Passive resistance is a weak weapon adopted by a weak people, while satyāgraha is a strong weapon wielded by a weak people. Passive resistance can be resorted to by the suppressed classes of Kerala, but I will not advise anyone to resort to it, nor do I wish that any Congress worker should countenance it. The ideal satyāgraha is the satyāgraha offered by the individual or

individuals who suffer wrong without any help from outside. In the case of Vaikom, the ideal satyāgraha is the satyāgraha offered by the non-caste Hindus of Vaikom and their caste-Hindu sympathizers alone. If that is impossible they may descend from the ideal a little and receive help from people of such area that can visualize the situation and feel with them.

Q. Is not the removal of untouchability and unapproachability an all-India question, and Vaikom being the first pitched battle in the war against these two evils, will not a defeat there speak a disaster to the movement in general, and if it will, is it not the duty of all Indians to help in the fight? What is the significance of the word, 'local' as applied to Vaikom? If help from outside is pressure and over-awing repugnant to the principles of satyāgraha, can Vaikom non-caste Hindus seek aid in the form of money or volunteers from any place outside Vaikom? Can even Travancorians belonging to places other than Vaikom participate in the struggle? If they can seek and receive such help from people of Travancore and even from the people of the Madras Presidency, why can't they receive help from the Hindu Sabha and similar bodies?

A. The question is partly answered in the answer given before. In the sense that the prohibition of the use of every well, tank, roads, etc., in every part of the country is the result of a common evil affecting the Hindus, the Vaikom struggle may also be regarded as an all-India question, but every such matter arising locally must be fought out locally and it is neither desirable nor permissible that the whole [of] India or the central organization should fight out such questions. It will lead to chaos and confusion. The consequence can better be understood if there are a number of such fights going on at the same time. The central organization will be considerably weakened by the frittering of its energies in such a way. The local area will not develop the necessary strength to tackle such questions unaided. Self-reliance and self-sufficiency of each local area will make the whole of India strong and enable it to undertake the great fight that is in store. The solution of the problems at Vaikom will not solve the question of untouchability for the whole of India. India may share the vic-

tory it gains, but will not be responsible for the defeat it sustains.

Q. We do not understand your injunction against the participation of non-Hindus in the Vaikom struggle. You called upon the Hindus to help the Muslims in the matter of the Khilafat, a purely religious question. Hindus and Muslims, forming component parts of the Indian nation, it was then considered the duty of the Hindus to help the Muslims and thereby facilitate the early attainment of swaraj. The removal of untouchability being necessary for solidifying Indians into a nation, is it not the duty of every Indian, Hindu or non-Hindu, to have the evil removed?

A. In the case of the Khilafat, the fight was between the Muslim community and a non-Muslim power. If, on the other hand, it was a fight between two sections of the Moslem community, I would not have asked the Hindus to participate in the fight. It is the duty of the Hindus to free the society of the evil rampant in it. They cannot and ought not to call in the aid of outsiders in the reform work it carries on. It demoralizes you and unnecessarily offends the orthodox section whom you have to convert and conquer through your love and who will surely and legitimately feel insulted by such non-Hindu interference.

Q. In view of the fact that the struggle at Vaikom is directed to the establishment of a civic right, that is, the right of way along public roads, is it not the duty of every citizen irrespective of religion to assist in the struggle?

A. The Congress Committee has no business to interfere in the internal administration of a Native State. The Kerala Congress Committee has launched the campaign only because the Congress has called upon the Hindus to remove untouchability rampant in the Hindu society. The fight at Vaikom hinges on the disability of a certain class of people to use a road because they are unapproachables. This is a purely Hindu question and, therefore, the non-Hindus have no place in the struggle.⁸⁸

Juxtaposed with Gandhi's complex and confusing tangle of ideas about *satyāgraha* was the suffering of the volunteers at Vaikom:

The government believed that when

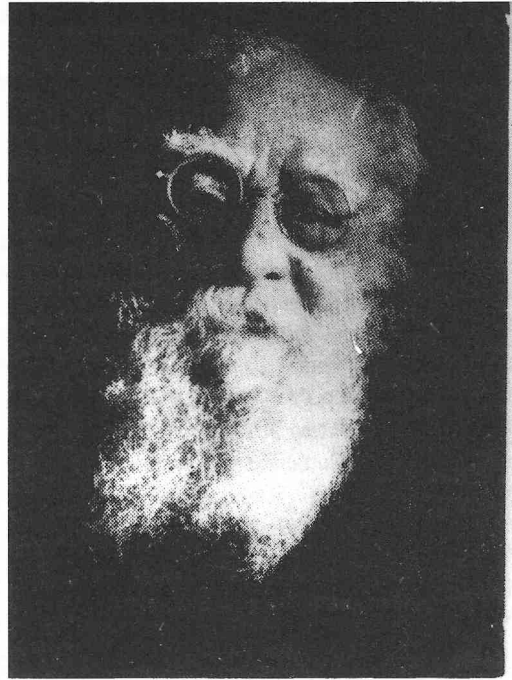
threatened, many followers could be weaned off from their mission. So, for a period, the police approached the parents of the volunteers with all sorts of threats. Mere imprisonment of the volunteers and keeping them behind bars did not help either the government or the agitators. So, from the government's side, they decided not to arrest them but only to stop them from going beyond the road block. To change the tactics, Krishnan Pachan and Chatakutty Nayar decided to fast. April and May are very hot months in Kerala and the place where the volunteers were fasting was on red hot sand with the blazing sun above them. They were both lying in the middle of the road, not only not eating but also not drinking water. In a couple of days, marveling at the sight, hundreds of people came from all over the country to see them. Soon they became more adorable to people than the deity at the Vaikom temple. Visitors threw themselves at their feet and whatever money they had brought was also placed at their feet. Seeing the courage of the fasting volunteers, more and more people started fasting. Despite their mortifications, the authorities showed no compassion. The reverence shown to the volunteers was matched by the daily shower of obscenity that came from the mouths of the policemen. People from local restaurants threw the water used to wash dishes and other dirt on the volunteers. From the neighboring houses, dirt, stones, and filth were thrown on them. On



seeing that the volunteers were not giving up, the police started hitting them. The temple authorities wanted to torture the Pulaya volunteers, but as they were unable to tell the difference between volunteers of different castes, all the volunteers were ruthlessly hit.⁸⁹

These incidents in a remote village of Travancore became international news. When mere hitting had no impact, more physical atrocities were showered on the volunteers. Their eyes were smeared with calcium carbonate (lime). But even that was not considered a crime by the government. Even after they had suffered two months of continuous persecution, no desired result had been achieved. Naniamma, the first woman volunteer, came from Trivandrum. She organized a big meeting to solicit the help of women. In her speech she said that women were willing to take up the fight if the men were tired. Mrs. Mangalamol Naidu offered her service for satyāgraha. June 20th was a very special day because that day five women volunteers entered the field as fighters for equality. They were led by Mrs. Naicker, the wife of the great Dravidian leader Ramaswami Naicker. The police questioned all of them, then asked all of them to go except for Mrs. Alumuttill Channar, who the police considered to be of a low caste. But Mrs. Naicker said, "We are sisters and cannot leave her behind." Protesting the police contention that she was not allowed on the road because she was low-caste, Mrs. Naicker said, "If a Muslim fish vendor can go this way with rotten fish, why not a Hindu woman with clean habits?" When the authorities thus were made aware of the women's determination to stand for justice, the police were instructed to treat the women volunteers like men and to manhandle them.⁹⁰

This news of the continuing vicious attacks inflicted on the volunteers caused Gandhi to doubt his position against more general support for the struggle.⁹¹ He declared the struggle to be in its last stage, urging the organizers to greater sacrifice and even martyrdom.⁹² When the satyāgraha first began, he telegraphed: "We have to conquer opponents by perfect love."⁹³ Throughout the struggle he exhorted the satyāgrahis to be truthful, pure,



Ramaswami Naicker

gentle, non-violent, without revenge, self-disciplined, always asserting: "If they can brave all the sufferings that may be heaped upon them with dignity and without retaliation, success is assured. Their silent sufferings will make their opponents realize that they have nothing but disgrace in return for their inhumanity."⁹⁴ He made it clear that he predicated the success of the satyāgraha on the "soul force" generated by the penance and loving suffering of the volunteers. But the volunteers were not blessed with the same saintliness of character that the Mahatma brought to such a situation. They endured but they hated. Despite Gandhi's propaganda, they felt natural resentment towards those who attacked them, a resentment that was revealed by their faces and words.⁹⁵ They were confused by their supposed leader who seemed to block crucial support for their cause as it began to grow. But they were sincere in their opposition to the caste restrictions which undermined human dignity and deprived much of the population of basic rights. Despite their suffering, resentment and confusion, they continued month after

month.

During the many months of the campaign, Narayana Guru remained consistent in his potent non-recognition of caste and caste barriers. An interview between the Guru and a reporter was published in May of 1924 which revealed the wholesale nature of the Guru's viewpoint:

Guru: How is the Vaikom Satyāgraha at present?

Mr. Kesavan: It is being vigorously conducted. They are probably drenching themselves in the rains.

Guru: Why should it be so? Could they not use umbrellas?

Mr. Kesavan: What Mahatma Gandhi says is that by forbearance the satyāgrahis should enlist the sympathy of the opponents and of the government and should thereby achieve their object.

Guru: That is quite true. There must be the power of endurance. It is required not for exposing oneself to rain nor for starving oneself. One should enter where he is prohibited from entering, and he should endure the consequent troubles. If belabored, that should be calmly put up with, and it should not be retaliated. But if any barricade is put up, one should not remain on this side of it. It is not sufficient to walk along the roads, but one should enter the temple itself. Temple entry is not to be conducted in one place only. One should enter all temples, at all times; and all people should enter the temples. When palpayasam (temple sweet) is prepared one should go and eat it, should go to the feast and should sit with others to dine. Reports (of such actions) should be sent to the government then and there. One should not fear even to lay down life. Those who believe that they will be polluted by man, if touched, should not be permitted to do anything without pollution....Let people know this has our complete approval. There should be no violence or assaults. If any such thing occurs we should put up with it.⁹⁶

Gandhi misinterpreted the Guru's words about being an effective change agent. He even went so far as to take the totally unwarranted step of publishing his opinion that Narayana Guru advocated vi-

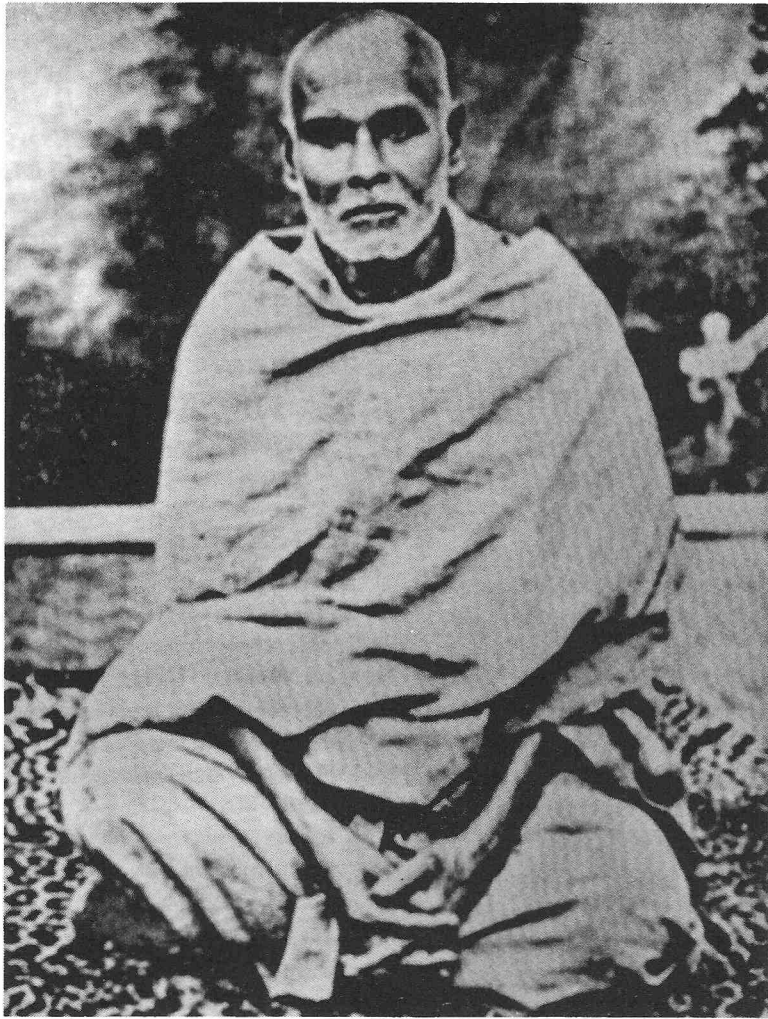
olent opposition. However, he withdrew that opinion after receiving the following statements of a disciple of Narayana Guru and the Guru himself:

What the Swamiji says is this. It is true that he spoke in favour of entering temples and sitting with others to dine, because he has always been an advocate of temple-entry and inter-dining. But he lays great stress on non-violence. . . The volunteers must be of exemplary character and they must not even show signs of distemper at the greatest provocation.⁹⁷

The Guru wrote:

The removal of untouchability is quite essential for the attainment of social harmony. I have no objection whatsoever to the satyāgraha movement started by Mahatma Gandhi to fight this evil nor to the cooperation of people in that movement. Any method of work that maybe adopted for eradicating the evil of untouchability must be strictly non-violent.⁹⁸

In his interpretation of the Guru's words as advocating violence, Gandhi ignored their deeper import. The Guru was aware, as Gandhi himself was,⁹⁹ that the satyāgrahis were filled with repressed anger. The Guru had himself undergone great ascetic discipline (*tapas*) and his life exemplified the love and energy which such a purification can engender. However, his pragmatic assessment of the volunteers was that their suffering was neither purifying them nor "melting the hearts of their opponents." Gandhi was extrapolating from his personal experiences of *satyāgraha*, not taking into account the different needs of those without his vision or understanding. The volunteers who were exposed to the blazing sun and drenching rain month after month, being beaten by thugs and ostracized by their own families, were men of active temperament who needed a freer mode of expression for their convictions. The Guru, as he had all along (and as Gandhi had originally), encouraged freedom of movement and ex-



Narayana Guru

pression, including the entering of all temples at all times. In itself that would have been an actualization of the sincere and justified aspirations of the people, encouraging them all to experience more and more liberation. The compassionate and non-violent nature of the Guru's whole life, together with these direct statements, make it very clear that the issue of violence was one that was falsely raised.

NOTES

83. Sadhu M.P, Nair, p. 83-84.
 84. M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works*, Government Publications, India, 1967, Vol. XXIII, p. 470.
 85. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, 471.
 86. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 68.
 87. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 348.
 88. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 90-93.
 89. Sadhu M.P, Nair, p. 142-154.
 90. *Ibid.*, p. 193-195.
 91. M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works*, Government Publications, India, 1967, Vol. XXIV, p. 332.
 92. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 346.
 93. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 339.
 94. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 333.
 95. T.K. Ravindran, *Vaikom Satyāgraha and Gandhi*, Sri Narayana Institute of Social and Cultural Development, Trichur, 1975, p.114-115.
 96. *Ibid.*, p. 339.
 97. M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works*, Government Publications, India, 1967, Vol. XXIV, p. 364.
 98. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 364-365.
 99. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 296.

(Continued in next issue.)

Selections From:

Autobiography of An Absolutist

Nataraja Guru

I Prepare to Leave the Shelter of the Sannyasi

While I spent my days with Swami Bodhananda in the little cottage in a sort of treasure valley on the outskirts of Coonoor, my plans were being incubated within me for a residential secondary school on independent, original and Upanishadic lines. . . . During my wanderings in the countryside I had found a neglected small-size tea-factory which was in a large tea estate on the southern slope of the Nilgiris on the way to the plains. This was Cleveland Estate, owned by one Ramaswami Pillay. Swami Bodhananda knew this generous proprietor who had once given hospitality to Narayana Guru himself on one of his early visits to the Nilgiris sometime before 1920.

This neglected tea-factory stood near a lonely rock with a stream of water trickling by. In front was a precipitous valley, but beyond the depths there rose a mountain named Bakasura Malai which was a peak that raised its massive head dominantly above all others and seemed to peer into the distance sphinx-like, from where, through rising smoke or mists, one could see the hot plains full of toiling, sweltering millions, ploughing, sowing or reaping in the fields spreading below.

There was a cascade too not far off, and the bushes had eglantine, wild orchids, lilies, and that wonder-shrub strobilanthes that flowered once in twelve years, turning whole hillsides into a heliotropish deep-blue shade of colour, when the cycle of twelve years was counted again. Freak strobilanthes however, did not observe the rule, but their rebel flowerings were few and far between. They had to obey the law of nature taken as a whole.

The crested bulbuls sang in the bushes

at early daybreak. Washing and bathing in the stream that went over the rocks and through ferns and moss were the delights of sunny noons. Strolling with the senior Swami kept me generally occupied, while great plans were being hatched within. . . . I was trying to justify my life by making bolder plans for doing good through an educational institution in the tea-factory house which I was to name the Gurukula.

I thought of many alternative names for the Gurukula that I was ever to be wedded to. The consideration that prevailed finally in the choice was that, besides the name of the Guru there were only the minimum letters which made it into the right name for an educational institution.

How My Reveries Started

Once, when spending my holidays in an out-of-the-way corner of Kerala, a sight reminiscent of an ancient picture had somehow sunk deep into my consciousness: it was a teacher of Sanskrit who lived in a rich man's country house, earning a livelihood by teaching a group of boys and girls, sitting on the verandah of the house, in the antique way of old India. Although it was a simple sight, this had a strange attraction for me.

The pandit, who was something of a poet too, taught Sanskrit declensions and conjugations of irregular verbs, but he was a man not too full of dry grammar. He taught Kalidasa's *Śakuntala* and other poems, and enjoyed doing it. Kalidasa's poetry excelled in a pure eroticism that, however, did not hurt anyone's morality, but only rubbed off the prudery perhaps, that sat awry on some bachelors and spinsters. Kalidasa's pure eroticism agreed well with the type that this full-blooded

teacher represented. His pupils too were attracted toward him with more than usual regard, verging on personal affection.

I happened to watch a good looking young man who was devotedly attending to the Guru's needs at a bath he was taking in a brook that crossed the rice-fields, through rushes and strange wild flowers. The sun was shining and the young man was washing the clothes of the Guru impeccably white. A piece of antique India was seen surviving, and the highlight shed on the spot just then seemed to be meant for me to take special note of it.

Here was something interesting, not seen in modernism - the sacred sight in which teacher and taught lived a common life, in the intimacy of a family. The memories and suggestions were too deep and rich for me to miss, and I cannot recall this event even now without emotion. Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Peripatetic Institute of teaching were nothing compared to this Upanishadic model. It was a pastoral paradise that I saw, nowhere well described except in Rousseau's *Emile*, or here and there in Upanishads or *Purāṇas*. It moved me deeply for no reason and prompted me to act many years later. I felt that the wicked world could be excused and all its faults forgiven if rising generations could absorb wisdom from their elders in this beautiful way.

I felt for a moment that I could lay down all to see even a fraction of such an ideal felicity realized in this earthy life of ours hereunder. There was nothing so impossible about it, I thought, but I hardly realized that even things easy of accomplishment could be too good to be true. My later life has not totally shattered my dreams, but the troubles I have had in following the alluring lead of this strange desire are yet to be recounted. Woe unto the simple idealist led from one favorite dream to another; but it is better far to have made the mistake than not to have erred at all.

Planning the Gurukula

Once the building and five acres of land were promised on the lovely Cleveland Estate, in surroundings of natural

beauty at five thousand feet altitude among the delectable mountains, the first matter that received my attention was a plan which had to be printed as a prospectus setting forth all the special features intended. The basis was a Vocational and Normal Secondary Boarding School for boys up to the age eighteen, and beginning with the secondary classes, after elementary education.

Where were the funds? What kind of boys were take advantage of this kind of private enterprise which cut against the grain of the recognized institutions? Many warned me about being impractical. Even an Englishman, the friend of an old lawyer classmate of mine, living in Coonoor, went so far as to speak chidingly to me on being one who would never make good like some of the bright Indians he knew back home in England, who were smart and practical in their outlook.

I did not know then how right he was, but, looking back over the years I have no inclination really to regret my decision, to which I adhered willfully against all others. I had to be original in my own way, although that might have some tragic touch about it. Nemesis had to work out its chance somehow through my willful personality, and I became blind and deaf to all advice. They call this *Eigensinn* in German, and I had much of this trait. It was made of stern stuff of tragedy, although not outside the right idealistic track. If it succeeded it would do so only as success could, and if it failed again, by the very utterness of the failure, it could be considered, in effect, a sweet form of adverse circumstance which, by a sort of double negation, became a stepping stone to success. It was good both ways. Such was the absolutist dynamics going on within me.

The plan had to be put on paper and, being one who insisted on being original all through, I had great difficulties in outlining the plan. So that I could be sure that I had done a good job of it, I decided to go away from where I lived with the *sannyāsin* to the public gardens called Sims Park. With two slices of bread and some pickles packed in paper hidden under my shawl, I

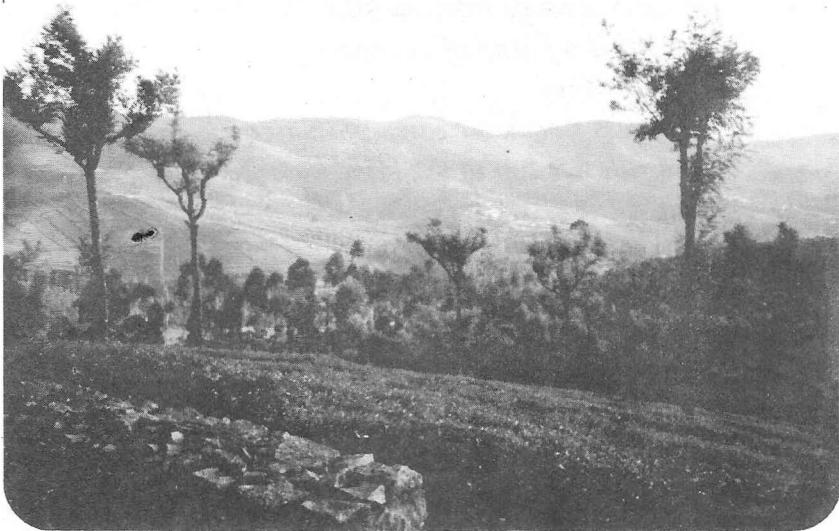
went to the park and sat there ruminating and giving shape to a new kind of boarding-school which would have vocational training side by side with subjects of cultural value drawn from both the Eastern and Western cultures. . . . The Socratic and the Upanishadic worlds were to be blended into one. I composed paragraph after paragraph, with an inner agony that none could see, as I sat on different seats of the park until the shadows of evening fell, and I returned to the hermit's roof to eat my plate of rice and sleep next to the sparrows again. This went on each day for a week or so.

Except a vague hope that all would be well, there was no sign on which I could build. It was like going through a dark tunnel in the hope that there would be light visible at the other end. But the loneliness did not deter me. I was prepared to pay the last penalty for wanting to be original and minority minded as I was, if what I thought appealed to my reason. What others said, or what the cheap books said, did not change me. Such is the way of absolutism which is full of repeated tests of one's dedication and integrity at every step. One has to be alone with one's best thoughts. All who have tried to walk the path of absolutism have been left alone or have left others alone. Absolutism is thus a "flight of the alone to the alone" which-

ever way one might look.

I Print My Plans

At last the manuscript was ready. I also found a friend who was running a press at that time. He was favourably disposed and offered to print it free of cost for me. Generous intentions, however creditable, were one thing, and effective generosity quite another. The press was always engaged for work that was readily paid for, and every time a paragraph of my manuscript was composed, there was always another job that had to be given preference. As a result, I had to attend the press at least fifty times for over a month before I could get the prospectus out. I have calculated that I walked about the distance of two hundred miles before the work was ready. Some price had to be paid somewhere and, whether one wanted to go to the next deck above by climbing the steps at the bow or the stern of a ship, the number of steps would mostly be the same. Nothing of value can be gotten without sacrifice in one form or another. This can be a mystical ascent or the brute physical labor of a Sisyphus. It works out as the same, whether paid for in one coin or in small change. One escapes nothing that one deserves, good or bad. Such is one of the secrets of the way of absolutism which the earlier one learns, the better. ♦



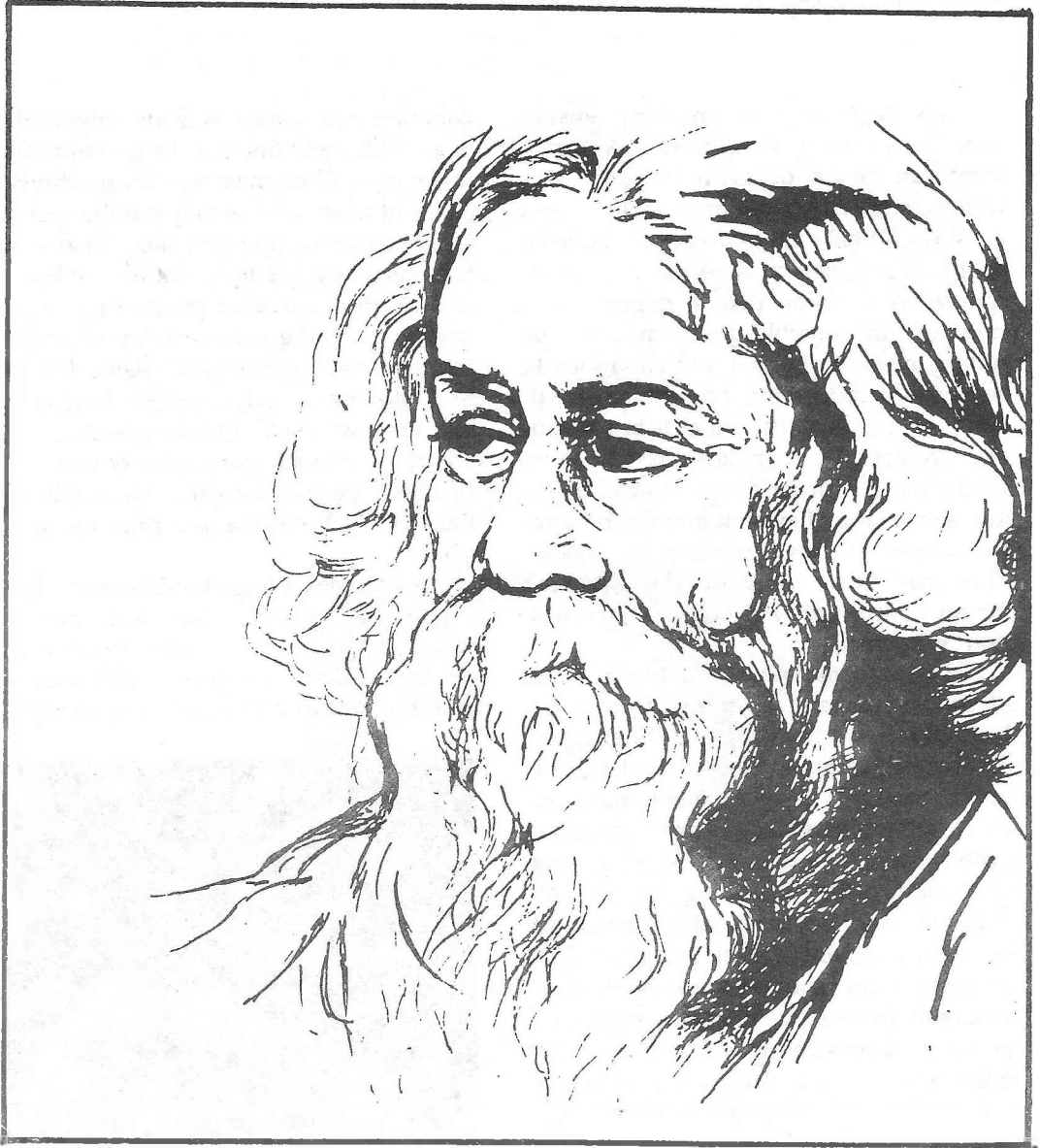
Judgement

Do not judge -
Where you live is but a small corner of this earth.
So far as your eyes reach,
They encompass so little,
To the little you hear,
You add your own voice.
You keep good and bad, black and white,
Carefully apart.
In vain you make a line
To draw a limit.

If a melody is hidden within you,
Awaken it as you go along the road.
In the song there is no argument,
No call to work -
He who pleases will respond,
He who pleases not will pass it by.
What matter if some men are good
And some are not?
They are all travelers of the same road.

Do not judge.
Alas, time flies by
And all debate is vain.
Look, the flowers blooming at the forest's edge,
Bring a message from the sky.
For she is a friend of the earth;
In July rains
The grass floods the earth with green,
And fills her cup to the brim.
Forgetting self,
Fill your heart with simple joy.
Traveler,
Scatter freely long the road
The treasure you gather as you go.

Rabindranath Tagore



By Sasi
November 24 - 94
Fernhill, Ooty

Liberation Theology

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

The beginning of anything ensues from the question "What next?" Any moment can be an occasion in our lives which requires us to answer our own question, "What am I to do next?" To most people, this question is perplexing. In response to it, some people experience a rush of uncountable problems to be solved, needs to be met and situations to be encountered. They become so bewildered that their very attempt to sort out one problem from millions blinds them with a sense of uncertainty. Instead of doing something, they sink into the bottomless abyss of their inability to choose. They may sit for hours or days, looking for an appropriate answer to their question "What next?"

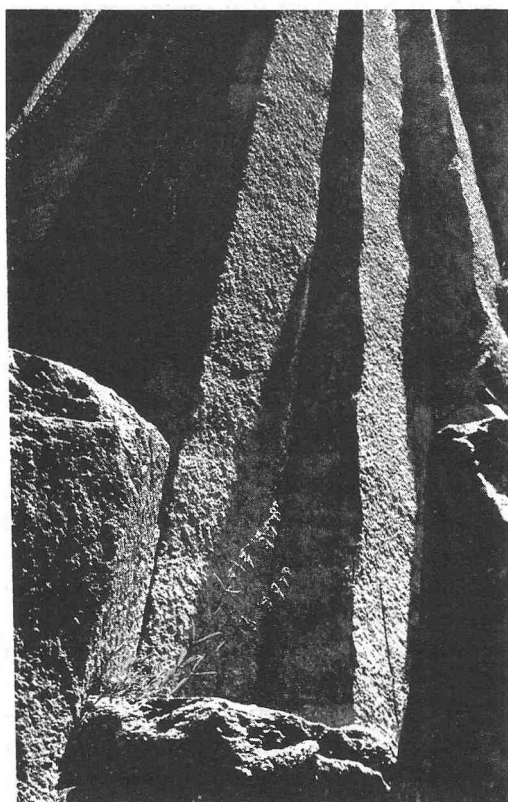
Human consciousness is like a streak of water, a stream. When its flow is not lucid, it is like a streak of oil. When a person is not prompted to carry out what is appropriate at a given moment, more and more thoughts gather and one's confusion grows into a stagnation. Any stagnation of thought brings mounting uncertainty. It has not only a horizontal surface width but also a depth of darkness that is increasing from moment to moment. Consequently depression comes. A person exposed to depression is like a fly that has fallen into oil or a thick syrup of honey. Oil and honey by themselves are not dangerous, but when a fly becomes immersed in such a substance, its wings get soaked and then it cannot rise up.

In India we have an *Upaniṣad* of release or liberation called the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* in which the frog (*māṇḍūka*) provides an allegory of bondage and liberation. When a frog lays eggs, no egg is free from the next egg. The egg is born to live, but it is already imprisoned by the

cohesion that comes from its neighboring eggs. Who will liberate the potential frog in the egg? Human beings always think in terms of their duty to help another person to live and grow to perfection. That is not the lesson we get from nature. When a seed sprouts, no other plant or tree in the garden takes the responsibility of grooming the newly germinated plant. It is entirely the personal duty of each form of being to save itself, liberate itself, from whatever obstacle comes in its way. No plant is expected to break a coconut before the idol of Vināyaka and pray for its release.

Sometimes a huge boulder may sit on a germinating seed. The little plant is weighed down by the huge stone, but it sits in the dark and dreams of liberation. Holding on to the cotyledon firmly, it





slowly sneaks from under the boulder, led by the faint light that comes from one side. Ultimately the sapling will bring its head into the open. It has succeeded in liberating itself. We should not think that we are incapable of finding our way out, even though we have forgotten how we were confined to the dark cellar of a womb where we hopefully gathered our strength, projected our various faculties and, after six or seven months, were literally kicking at the walls. There was no God to pray to, nor did we have words to pray. But we needed liberation. Only the breath of our mother that was fed into us through the umbilical cord and the mucous-like covering around us enabled us to come out of the womb with the exercise of a fluke. From a little seedling to a growing baby, all seek liberation without depending on anyone. Yet there is an empathy in all environmental forces to effect release.

Once we are born, that is the end of freedom for a whole lifetime. Alas, it is fateful to be born in the family of a relig-

ious person. The temple bells ring; the church bells toll; the call of the faithful comes from the mosque; the congregates in a synagogue or Sikh temple or Buddhist lamasery will make a fuss to put a stamp on the forehead of the soul of a child. If a child is baptized, christened, as Mary or Thomas, that child is given the dead weight of the Christian religion to carry on its neck for the rest of its life. In another family, the child can be Rāma or Sitā. They cannot escape from these names - they will always be confined to the Hindu tradition. Mohammed or Amina can be the fateful burdens which Muslim children have to carry around. St. John says: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." But the word becomes the dictates of religious fundamentalism which the new-born child has to carry as a cross. Thus bondage begins at the moment of birth and lasts all through life.

When the frog eggs hatch out of their froth, what comes out are tadpoles which can swim freely in the water, moving upwards, downwards and sideways. But in no other set-up is the social integration so binding on the newly born as it is on tadpoles. An entire crowd of them, numbering more than a thousand, will move around for weeks as if they are in one body. What is true of tadpoles is true of the families, clans and tribes of human beings. Every member of your family or clan is glued on to you with the special gum of love-hate complexes. In the family circle, the more you want to show interest in your brothers, sisters and cousins, the more you are hated. The more you want to get away, the more they want to cling on to you in the name of love. Life simply becomes impossible. Liberation is required.

Now, who will liberate you? Religious people sit around and pray for liberation but their version of liberation itself is monstrous. It is the God of religion who frightens people into slavery, submission and weakness of soul. When Nietzsche said this, he was branded as a madman. When Jesus wanted to liberate people

from Jehovah, the angry God, who was more jealous than jealousy itself, the high priests nailed him to the cross. It was not only Jesus that was nailed to the cross, but the very sermon of liberation. Out of Jesus, the new priests have created a ghost, a threatening ghost, always holding before you the stinking carcass of your sin, whispering into your ear that you are no longer divine, you are not a pure person, but a sinner, already booked to stand for trial before the same Jehovah. They have transformed Jesus into another Jehovah.

Recently a young priest came to me, a free, frank, loving person who can still speak truth in spite of his thirteen years of brainwashing by the Holy Church. I asked him: "Were you ever a Confessor?" He answered, "Yes." "What do people confess to you?" "Terrible, sinful things." "Such as...?" "Scheming against the life of a person, committing adultery, shamelessly indulging in incest, almost daily making breaches of trust." "What do you do after they confess?" "I absolve them from their sins." "How?" "I pray for them, saying, 'I absolve you from your evil intention which was sinful, by the power that has been given to me by the Church.'" "From where does the Church get that power to invest in you?" "Jesus gave that power to the Church." "Was there a Church in the lifetime of Jesus Christ?" "No. But it was constituted afterwards." "So, a sinner is no longer a sinner after you have absolved him?" "Right." "Does he sin again?" "Yes, he will go and indulge in the same sin and again come and confess. Then I absolve him again." "Does he have to make a payment to you for this?" He was a little hesitant. Then he said, "Not to me but to the Church." "So you have made God commercial and sin an investment in lieu of capital to run the show of the Church." He could not speak. He was afraid of sinning against his Church.

This kind of sham is not of just one religion. If we walk to the nearest Hindu temple, we will see a long list of rites and rituals bribing this god or that god to liberate one from the fateful crises of life. It is not Christianity or Hinduism at fault

here. It is the fear that can never be adequately lifted from a person. Then where is deliverance? Deliverance comes only when you can give it to yourself. The Hindus have a special name for it, *mokṣa*. What is *mokṣa*? When a malfunction or dysfunction of a bodily limb or faculty gives a person a symptom of uneasiness, he or she has an urgent need to be relieved of that disease. Relief may come from physical manipulation, administration of curative medicine, changing one's diet or moving to a place where fresh air, good water and sunlight are available. That brings deliverance from physical uneasiness. That is *mokṣa* - enabling a person to go from dis-ease to ease. The physical bodies of human beings, like those of other living beings, are governed by meticulous chemical laws. If two wrong chemicals come together and interact, that can cause an emotional uneasiness. An emotion is half in the body and half subjectively manifested as a thought or idea. If it becomes a psycho-somatic illness, it can have two origins - a pain of the body transferred into an idea or a wrong idea that becomes established in the body as a physical illness. Thus psychosomatic diseases are of psychogenic or somatic dysfunction. Engaging in an active dialogue with a person who has insight into both the psyche and the somatic system can take away the psychic misconception or the somatic cataract. Then that person is liberated and comes again to a normal, easy functioning of both body and mind. Instead, the system is often polluted with highly poisonous drugs that go straight to the hypothalamus and cortex and cause biochemical interactions which can go directly from the brain to freeze various agitated muscles. Then the cure is by contracting another disease. Many who seek deliverance from muscular atrophy accompanied by mental atrophy or asphyxia are shown their path to the grave by the saviors called medicine men.

When their place is taken by religious charlatans and shamans, *swamis* and *gurus*, they indulge in heightening the panic syndrome of a person, making the case ir-

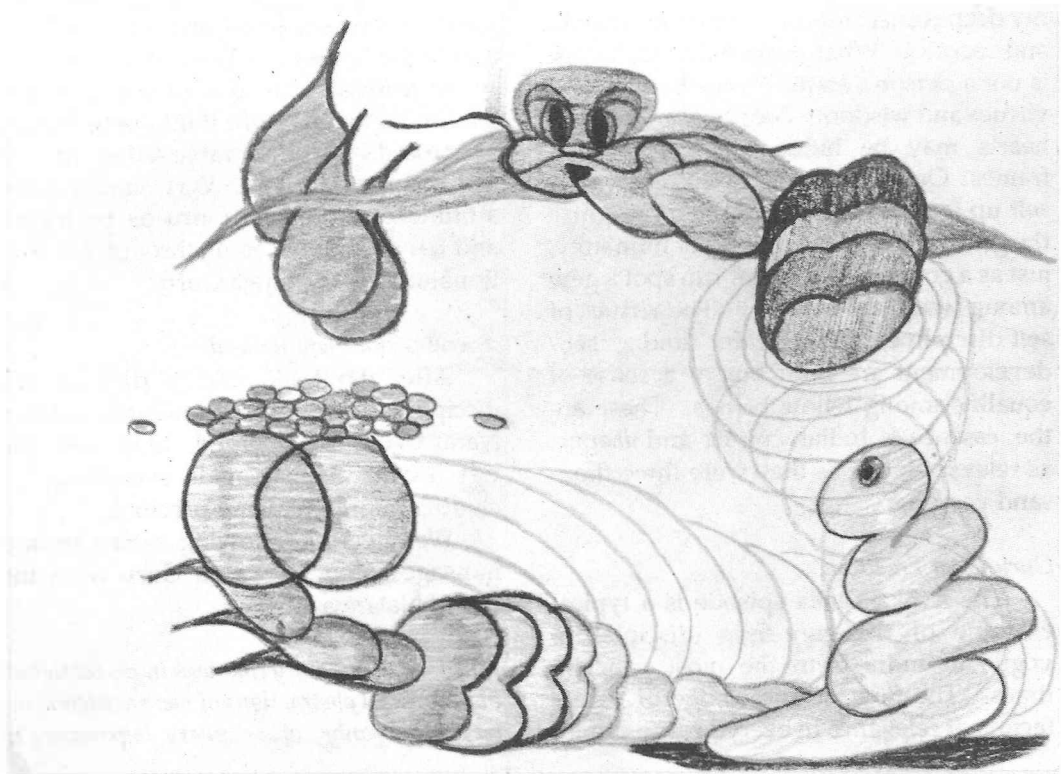
remediable or incurable. They need only one name such as the word God. Hell on earth can be precipitated by inventing a name such as anxiety neurosis, compulsive mania or schizophrenia. If grain and chaff are dried in the sun together, it is easy to separate the chaff from the grain. We need to train the light of our intellect to make such discriminations. Otherwise we can be taken advantage of by those who turn simple fear into life-long panic which has become the most complex of socio-economic themes. Registering patents for devices that turn simple diseases into fatal diseases is the new culture of the world.

All sections of humanity indulge in this malpractice: medicine, science, health food, nature cure, politics, religion, anything. And it is really quite unbecoming of us to expect that we will be delivered from this terrible global catastrophe with the advent of another Christ or Kṛṣṇa being born on a certain midnight indicated by moving stars. We should stop all the

baby talks of religion and still more should we turn away from the cliché-ers of aimless science.

Liberation rests with us, each one of us. In the case of the *māṇḍūa*, which usually gets caught in a deep, narrow well, when its tail withers away, it can, by its own effort, hop from one step to another of the well and ultimately find its deliverance in the wide world outside the well. The tail is the repository of all memories of the past. We are bound by wrong memories, concepts, theories and ideologies. Like the *māṇḍūa*, when we let go of that tail, we become like free frogs, hopping from one place to another in freedom.

To become delivered persons, we have to leave the narrow confines of our homes, our traditions, our schools, our countries. That is true *mokṣa*. It cannot be advertised, patented or commercialized. It is not in our hands to deliver another person. Each person's deliverance is always with them. ♦



Nataraja Guru: In The Footsteps Of His Master

N. C. Kumaran

Introduction

According to the spirit of India's cultural traditions, highest honor has always been reserved for the sage and the ascetic, rather than for the king or his ministers. Renunciation rather than acquisition, restraint rather than indulgence, are the essence of Indian culture. In other words, a person's true progress is judged by moral and spiritual standards, and not by material or physical standards. The finest example of that is the well-known story of Emperor Aśoka, a true follower of the Buddha, who made it an invariable practice to bow in reverence before Buddhist monks. His minister Yasha thought it was improper for a great emperor to bow before monks. Aśoka's answer was: "After all, I am doing obeisance to them as a mark of my deep respect for their learning, wisdom and sacrifice. What matters in life, Yasha, is not a person's status or position, but his virtues and wisdom. The finest minds and hearts may be hidden in ugly mortal frames. Only when you have raised yourself up from ignorance can you recognize the greatness of a few in a sea of humanity, just as a good jeweler alone can spot a gem among worthless pebbles." The virtues of self-discipline, self-restraint and self-development are born out of a sense of equality among fellow beings. These are the essence of Indian culture and *dharma*, as relevant today as they were three thousand years ago.

Guru-śiṣya Tradition

The Aśoka-Yasha episode is a typical example of the *guru-śiṣya* (disciple) in vogue in India from the most ancient times. The flow of knowledge of value-factors of relevance in everyday life cannot

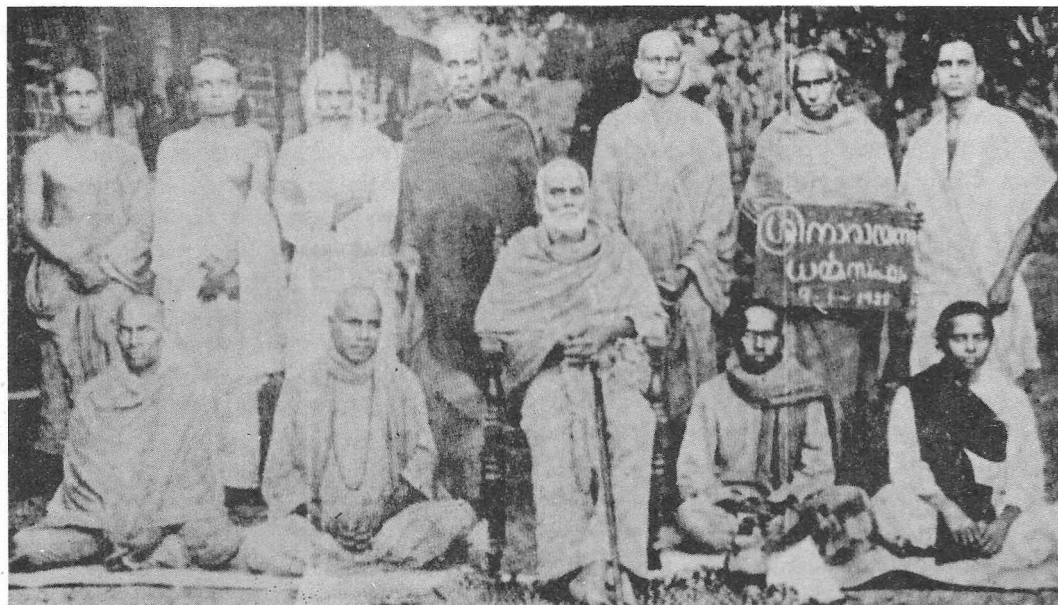
take place unless and until there is a proper rapport between teacher and taught. This is so because wisdom teaching is concerned primarily with the internal, the unseen essence of all religions, the higher perception of the truth behind life, as distinct from the external or social aspect, consisting of institutions, rituals, customs, manners, etc. We often come across passages in the wisdom texts of world religions in the form of dialogues which help us in the search for truth and elucidate value-factors involved in everyday life. The student-disciple plays the role of an anterior skeptic and the Guru is the dispeller of the darkness of ignorance. Instances of such illuminating dialogues occur in wisdom texts such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* (between Guru Kṛṣṇa and śiṣya Arjuna), in the Bible, (between Jesus and his disciples) and in the *Upaniṣads*. The conversation between Jesus and his disciples in Matthew 25 shows how the Guru thinks of humanity as one and sees the adorable self as his own self and the self of all. Very similar is the attitude of Narayana Guru as portrayed and handed down to us through his continuator-śiṣya, Nataraja Guru.

Socrates and Plato Relived

After about six years of rigorous self-discipline as a yogi in a mountain retreat, Narayana Guru emerged blest with the vision of truth that made everything including himself real and precious.

We have the following extract from a message about Narayana Guru from the pen of Nataraja Guru:

It was Humanity that was in his thoughts. Philosophical abstractions of mere academic interest were only of secondary importance to



Narayana Guru constituting the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham of Sannyasins at Trichur - 1928 (Nataraja Guru sitting far right.)

him. "How to make man's lot better" that was what concerned him constantly and primarily. "Man must become a better man" and fulfill his role as Man in life fully and consciously. Man must attain to the status of Manhood so that each man could contribute his share of goodness to the total heritage of humanity as a whole. Such were the lines along which his contemplation guided him. When he attained to full certainty on these matters of supreme human interest, he left his mountain retreat and made his abode again in the midst of fellow men. There his life as a Guru became more and more identified with that of the common man. He thus became the Guru of the people at large and thus Guru of Humanity, a Jagat Guru in its correct sense.

In Guru Narayana we had the combination of a correct man of the world to whom spirituality was not divest from life. Religion and politics may be said to have met in him. Science to him was not divorced from spirituality either. While accepting the findings of the positive sciences, he was able to carry the same scientific discipline into the domain of true spiritual life. He was able to formulate a veritable Science of Sciences which is that of Brahmanvidyā, the Science of the Absolute.

Narayana Guru was at all times firmly

established in the Absolute as *samadharma*, God's unseen presence in the world of the senses which the wisdom texts praise as the Most Supreme. This is nothing other than the string on which all the values of the manifested world are strung as a classified series of precious beads. Narayana Guru was fully committed for the welfare of all, regardless of any man-made dividing wall of caste, race, religion or status in life. Since he saw nothing but the blissful beatitude of the Self in everything, he went from place to place like a rain cloud, showering love and compassion. He must have felt the need for a suitable disciple-successor who could appreciate the high ideals he espoused and was qualified to propagate these values of global relevance in English to suit the scientific idiom and climate of the times.

Accordingly, we observe the Guru carefully grooming the twelve-year old son of his friend, Dr. Palpu. Natarajan proved his worth and became well-versed in both Eastern and Western philosophy and psychology. He earned his doctorate from the famous Sorbonne University in Paris, supplementing the Vedanta lessons he had mastered with the Guru's guidance. Teaching science at the International

School in Geneva enabled him to get acquainted with the thought of great philosophers of the era like Bergson, Rousseau and Romain Rolland. At the mature age of 55, Natarajan was publicly acknowledged as a Guru, being uniquely qualified to present the universal teaching and attitude of his Master. Needless, to say, he carried out his mission with dedication and produced many valuable books based on Guru's philosophy. He also established institutions known as Gurukulas to translate into practice the Guru's ideal of "One Caste, One Religion and One God" for all of humanity. Without Nataraja Guru, the simple yet profound teachings of Narayana would have remained a closed book to the world outside Kerala. We may truly conclude that the relationship between the two is what existed between Plato and Socrates.

What Does One Religion mean?

In his *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* (verse 49), Narayana Guru defined One Religion as follows: "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." It was up to Nataraja Guru to elucidate the implications of this teaching for everyday life. He did this in a comprehensive essay entitled "The Unitive Approach to Religion and Theology" in *Wisdom: The Absolute is Adorable*. In the opening sentence of the essay he defines religion as "a whole-hearted relationship binding man with his fellow-men or with some unseen value-factor." This value-factor is nothing other than the *karu*, the core which is centrally situated in an organism like its nucleus which is responsible for its functionality. When the Guru asserts that in the world the secret of This is one alone, he means "God is All, God alone is." This is the essence of religion. Those who do not acknowledge this secret of Oneness as that which is beyond race, religion and country are like the five blind men who each felt a different part of an elephant and were thus subject to ignorance due to relativist or partial ideas. The error that is always made is to mix up the

actual and the perceptual, the Self and the self-identity of the individual. As a result, one gains a number of pseudo-identities like those of one's family, caste, language, religion, etc., which stress duality. According to the Guru's non-dual approach to religion, the domains of thought have to be kept separate, each in its proper place, as belonging either to the domain of Caesar or that of God. If considered this way, it follows that differences between religions are only incidental and should be treated as mere individual variations of the One Religion of humankind, an integrated way of life in which the Absolute is the most central principle.

Non-dual Vision

Nataraja Guru, like his Guru, was a man of few words. He was an absolutist to the core in all his transactions with the outside world. Being so, he was often misunderstood and even ignored by the so-called high and mighty. For them, he seemed like one viewing the incidents of the earth from a world beyond. When it came to raising a huge fund for constructing a building to house the *Brahmavidyā Mandir* for the East-West University at Varkala, he was against taking out any loan from a bank, preferring to leave it to the Tao, as he used to call the Eternal Presence. Thanks to the Tao and all around efforts, the project was completed, with donations from people of all classes, from all over the world. This is a typical example of the Guru's firm faith in the Supreme and its impact on his way of life.

A Common Mistake in Philanthropy

While a post-graduate student at the Presidency College in Madras, Natarajan used to organize feeding of the destitute families in the Chintadripet area. Natarajan always felt a sense of elation and goodness as a good Samaritan whenever he could arrange for feeding. He felt that the Guru would be happy at this philanthropic work. On a certain day when the food was being served, Narayana Guru made an appearance. He asked what was going on. Natarajan replied that he was feeding the

poor. "Which poor?" Guru asked, "We are all poor in a certain sense." Then he left. Natarajan became confounded by this enigmatic remark. He was able to unravel the mystery behind the words only in his mature years. In his autobiography he records: "A new clarification about the very nature of altruism dawned upon me. . . . I began to realize that the real poverty resided in my heart and, when I came under the influence of a dualistic sense of pity and felt myself to be a benefactor, the very purpose of beneficence in a total or absolute sense was defeated."

Conclusion

To sum up, Nataraja Guru was a great lover of humanity, nay a thorough-going absolutist with whole-hearted dedication to the Supreme Truth at all times. As a man of science, he could critically evaluate

Truth and interpret it in a form to suit the idiom and climate of the present age of science and technology. We have to treat the spiritual and material as one indivisible whole but each in its proper place. They are not two, but are like the two sides of the gold coin of life. The Guru recommends a binocular vision in everyday life. To conclude, I can do no better than quote from Narayana Guru's *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, (verse 24) translated by Nataraja Guru:

*What here we view as this man or that
Reflection reveals to be the Self's prime form;
That conduct adopted for one's Self-happiness
Another's happiness must also secure at once.*

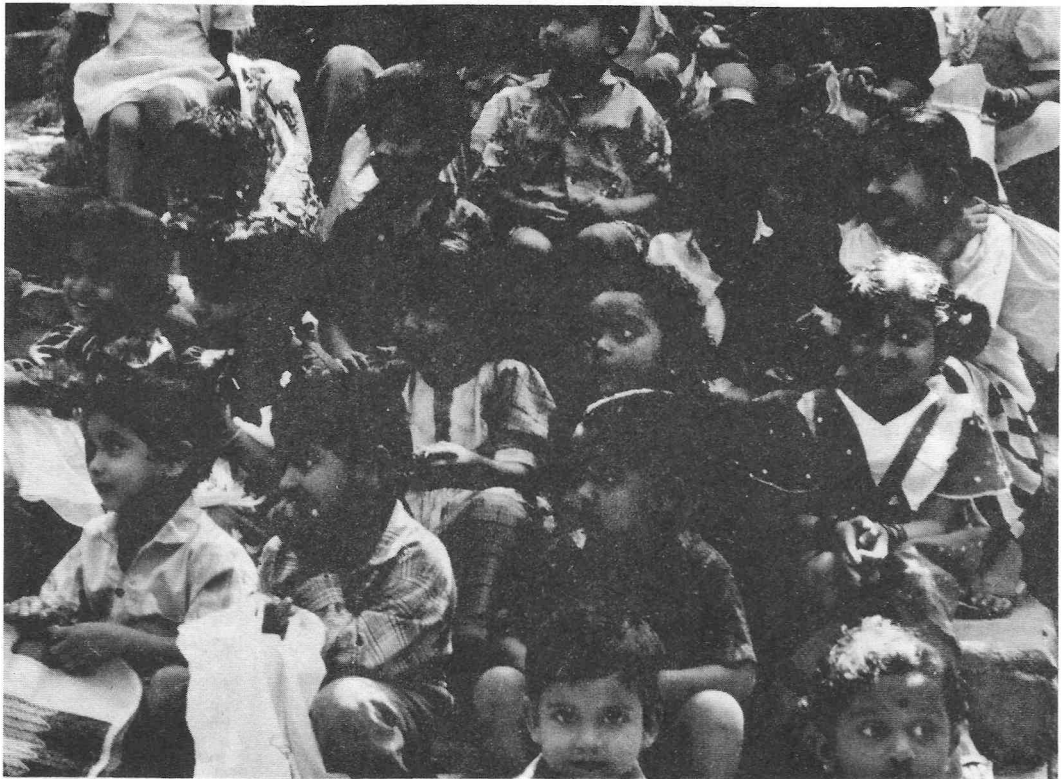
Let us re-dedicate ourselves afresh to that Supreme Value that Nataraja Guru represented in his person on the occasion of his one hundredth birth anniversary. ♦



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