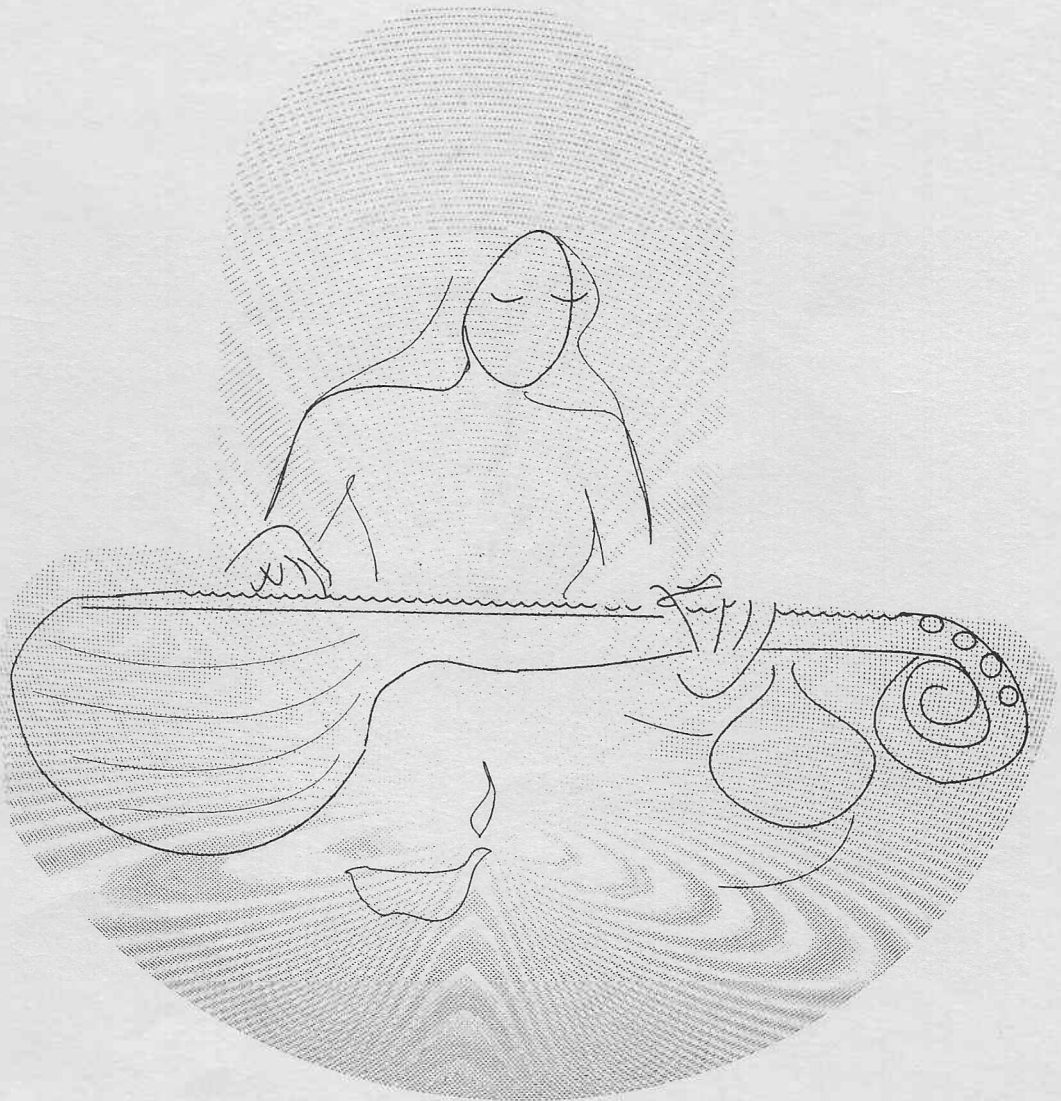


# GURUKULAM

VOLUME XI • 1995

THIRD-FOURTH QUARTER





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# GURUKULAM

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# Like a Leaf in the Wind

*Love for Certain Work*

*Traveling is as refreshing for some  
as staying at home is for others.*

*Solitude in a mountain place  
fills with companionship  
for this one,*

*and dead-weariness  
for that one.*

*This person loves  
being in charge of the workings  
of a community.*

*This one loves  
the ways that heated iron can be shaped  
with a hammer.*

*Each has been given  
a strong desire for certain work.*

*A love for those motions,  
and all motion is love.*

*The way sticks and pieces of dead grass  
and leaves*

*shift about in the wind  
and with the directions of rain  
and puddle-water on the ground,  
those motions  
are all a following  
of the love they've been given.*

Rumi

In the Fall, brilliantly colored leaves of deciduous trees are loosened by the wind and sent floating to the ground in a seemingly aimless way, now drifting to one side, then the other, sometimes being carried aloft again, only to plummet to earth. Now and then, we find ourselves standing for a moment in reverie, watching a single leaf fall slowly, and poets of many ages and cultures have mused upon the falling leaves of autumn. We watch wistfully, knowing that the leaf which was once pulsating with green energy has now become

dried up, no longer a useful part of a tree, soon to become compost again. The leaf becomes a symbol of aging, separating from vital connectedness. At the same time, we envy and long for the lightness with which the leaf meets its fate.

If we watch with great attention, we may be able to predict one or two of the next movements a falling leaf might make, but we can't map out with any accuracy the whole course of its progress from branch to ground, and it is utterly impossible to predict the movement of all the leaves of even one tree. The frail leaves which the wind can whip up, set madly whirling, and slap against rocks or buildings, can also be gently turned in graceful pirouettes and tenderly laid to rest upon the earth. At times we feel no more in control than a leaf in the wind; the world, like the wind, having the power to randomly support us, give us a good ride, or crash us against the hard facts of life.

To insulate ourselves from such feelings, we build up castles of possessions to make life cozy, bulwarks of preferences which we dedicate ourselves to satisfying, and bastions of attitudes to contend with life's quirks. We act, and through our actions try to convince ourselves of our worth and power. From early childhood, children are taught, sometimes by encouragement and sometimes by adversity, to develop a sense of self and to impress the mark of that self upon the world through their actions. Parents and teachers often attempt to convey to their children the myth that life can be planned out and lived in an orderly step-by-step manner, even though their personal experience of it is more like that of a falling leaf. Modern educational systems are in the forefront of human attempts to control both human nature and the natural world. Time is divided into rigid segments marked off by bells and calendars. Children sit in rows

inside square buildings, following prescribed curricula, day after day and year after year. The omni-directional interests and energy of growing children are blocked off and channeled into society's accepted molds. From an early age, young people are asked what they are going to be when they grow up. They soon learn that the appropriate answer to the question is one career or another. Though the scope of human possibilities is vast, the range of acceptable answers is usually very small, fenced in by the fear of a leaf-like existence. From the three year old who is interested in everything, a person travels the narrowing road to the thirty year old who is limited to a given career, particular lifestyle and set of companions and possessions.

Both science and religion have sprung from the principal human response to this fear: an attempt to control reality by understanding it, figuring out the deepest secrets of how the cosmos operates and how it impacts us. Science has followed the course of developing and following a systematic course of discovery and study to reveal the laws and resources of nature and how we can use them to our benefit, while religion has attempted to control reality through faith in and supplication of super-human beings and forces.

Science has been tremendously successful in its pursuit, having uncovered many of the secrets of the cosmos and how to change its impact on human life. But human beings are as subject as ever to anguish, guilt, suspicion, insecurity, hatred and fear of themselves, each other and the twists and turns of an uncertain fate. The solace offered by religion has been paid for in the blood of those who differ.

Although the scientific method is known for its emphasis on logic and orderly progression, science has traveled its long road of exploration and classification only to come face to face with uncertainty. Correspondingly, human beings have increasingly come to despair, seeing life as having no meaning. But science has continued to push at the boundaries to look fearlessly at the chaotic nature of existence. Thinkers at the forefront of fields as varied

as physics, astronomy, mathematics, earth sciences, meteorology and social sciences have become fascinated by the study of chaos. They are making some surprising discoveries and developing ways to see order and the operation of the laws of nature even in random events such as the movements of a falling leaf. Chaos theory is stretching the limits of scientific endeavor to incorporate uncertainty. And what they are finding is that beneath the surface of randomness there is order. In order to understand it, a whole field of new theory is being developed. The scientists at the forefront are so convinced that they have actually redefined chaos from meaning the absence of order to meaning that which only appears to proceed according to chance but is actually governed by precise laws.

This is what the mystic Rumi saw centuries ago. The way of the mystic is different than that of either science or religion. Instead of trying to control reality and bend things, persons or events to his or her will, the mystic tries to come into intimate relation with what is. That intimacy brings deepest insight and enables the mystic to guide us to see in a way that we can use to improve the quality of life. Like the scientist, he asks us to look beneath the surface of events and different ways of being and doing. When the scientist speaks of law, the mystic speaks of love. It is the same reality, seen differently. The mystic is taking us by the hand, whispering gently in our ear, singing exuberantly in joy and asking us to surrender ourselves to the dance of life, so that we too may find the key to going beyond fear.

*Nancy Yeilding*



# *Svānubhavagīti Śatakam:*

## Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by  
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



*Verse 90*

As the waves of high tide rise in the sea,  
when knowledge blasts ignorance with raging storms,  
it breaks away many an attachment made in the past.  
Many negligible fights arise from controversies  
concerning cause and effect of pot and cloth, etc.  
But, Oh my Lord, before this pot breaks, please  
accept me and fill me with Your blessedness.

When a rich man is in the final crisis and life is ebbing out of him, his mind is full of all the treasures he has amassed and all the investments he has made and all the profitable relationships he has established with people. To break away from each such item is of utmost pain to him. His mind is criss-crossed with many cords of bondage.

If by chance such a person suddenly realizes that he cannot take anything with him, even his own body which he was loving and pampering, it is like a storm surfacing from beneath and blasting away all the love-hate relationships he has established with imaginary items of bondage. Disillusions come one after another, each breaking away some idol of his fantasy. When all illusions are gone, it is as if the storm too is gone, leaving only the serene waters of the sea.

Pundits and philosophers sit for days on end engaged in hair-splitting arguments to prove what they imagine as matters of consequence. In spite of all that they establish, the world will continue with its own relativistic laws. When one says "The pot does not exist, and it is pure illusion to speak of the existence of the pot," the other says, "Pure clay can never be a pot because there must be a potter, a consumer and the expertise of a potter to fashion the clay into a pot." There are hundreds of such arguments in which people are engaged. Such metaphysical discussions never change the course of one's life.

Sri Ramakrishna gives a wonderful example to illustrate this. A conscientious botanist goes to a mango grove, scrutinizes the leaves and the mangos grown on each tree. Another man attracted by the fragrance of sweet mangos enters the garden, plucks a few ripe mangos, sits in the shade, peels the mangos and relishes the sweetness of each. Then the gardener comes and chases them both out. One leaves the garden with his stomach full and mind contented. The other leaves with several sheets of paper filled with ambiguous information.

Here the supplicant prays that he does not waste any time on the relationship between the cause and effect of a pot. He himself is a pot which may break any moment. This reminds us of two verses from the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam:

And strange to tell, among that Earthen Lot  
Some could articulate, while others not:  
And suddenly one more, impatient cried --  
Who is the Potter, pray, and who is the Pot?

Then said another with a long drawn sigh,  
"My Clay with long oblivion is gone dry:  
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,  
Methinks I might recover by-and-by!"

(Verses 60 & 65)

The "old familiar juice" referred to here is *ātman*, the Self.





*Verse 91*

Fragrance and all such sensations  
that we relish in our physical life –  
even when the sources of such feasts of mind  
are brought to naught by the decaying world,  
the steady light that animates the mind with  
its gentle glow will not extinguish.  
This receptacle which brings within it the most  
adorable values has no matching treasure anywhere.  
May You, Oh Incomparable Wealth of Auspiciousness,  
bring us always our welfare.

If the audio-visual mechanism of the brain were not animated in a certain manner as is done now, the earth and sky and all the luminaries and the orchestration of sounds that are appreciated as the choir of the spheres would not have been existing although the earth, sun and moon would still have been spinning on their axes.

At a vegetarian feast in a European country a guest remarked that, when he was touring in India, he saw some fat cows crossing the road, blocking traffic. Upon seeing those cows, his mouth watered as he

thought of how enjoyable the steaks made out of those cows would be. A large percentage of the properties of the external world are projected onto it by one's sensory experiences and one's mode of appreciation.

The two extreme poles enumerated are still maintained as the pivotal aspect of this study – spirit (*cit*) and inertial matter (*jada*) – polarized from opposite sides. Matter stands for the changeful which operates within time. Spirit is timeless and unchanging. However, in all life-forms the container determines the longevity of the contained. When the pot breaks, its content is also forgotten.

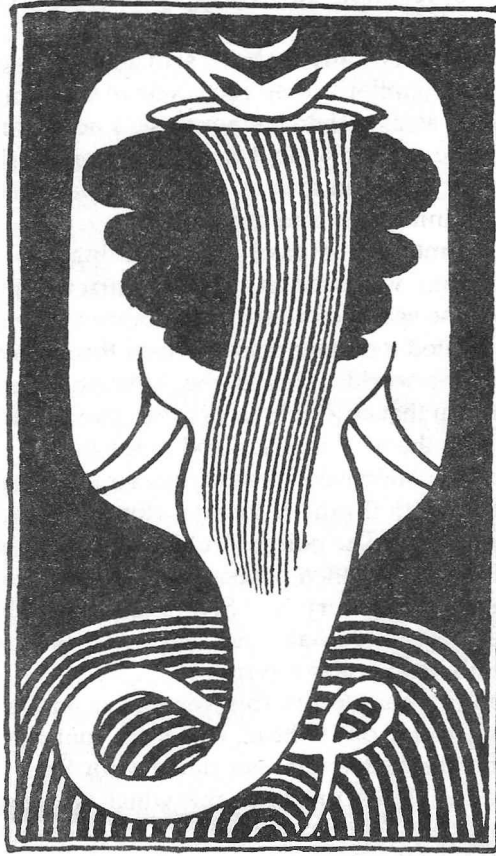
The analogy of the pot and its breaking given in the previous verse is to be understood in a special way. If a pot is immersed in an ocean, the water in the pot looks so limited in relation to the water of the sea. The water of the pot and the water of the ocean are the same. Even when the pot breaks, only the clay of the pot is lost and not what it contains. Instead the meagerness of the water imprisoned in the pot is released into the abundance of the sea. Similarly the spirit in the body and the universal Self are not two.

An embodied life can look meager and meaningless only because of its condition restricted by the container. Water depends on the container only if the container is held separate from the water in which the pot remains. For the common person, because of her identification with her physical body, death may seem terrible. If she has the knowledge that it is the body that restricts her, she will gladly accept its demolition.

The spirit of self (*cit*) spoken of here as Śiva is compared to a cosmic receptacle which is ever brimming with incomparable values. Sri Ramanuja describes Viṣṇu as the source of all auspicious values. The poet is imploringly looking at Śiva, the matchless source of all adorable values, as the only reliable refuge in a world where everything is fast decaying.

In this collection of one hundred verses, we began with a verse describing the Lord as the bestower of auspiciousness. In the last ten verses with which this series closes, Narayana Guru returns to the same idea of propitiating the Lord who can provide the finality of life with ever-lasting auspiciousness. In this verse he does not separate the container from the contained. Japanese confectioneries make a sweet pastry which can be eaten along with its container, which is similar to an ice-cream cone where finally the cone too is eaten. Guru refers to the container here as the pot of beauty.

God is often described in India as a triad of existence, subsistence and bliss (*sat cit ānanda*). In the triad of gods also, Brahma brings the world into existence; Viṣṇu sustains it; and Śiva, who represents *ānanda* (bliss), withdraws everything into himself. Thus the closing section of this centenary of verses upholds an attitude of total surrender which is the essential teaching of all religions. In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to discard all *dharma*s and take refuge in the Absolute. Every day a Buddhist chants three times, declaring his refuge in the Buddha, the *dharma* and the *saṅgha*. Jesus gives the assurance that he is the goal, the path and the light, and in him alone one should take refuge to enter into the kingdom of God. The *Qur'an* teaches its votaries to live in total trust of Allah. In both the Śiva and Viṣṇu religions the perfection of devotion is achieved through taking refuge in the Lord. Such an attitude in life is called *ekāntika dharma*, adhering to the ground of all virtues to the last.



Verse 92

Although his throat looks dark like a rain-cloud  
for having partaken of the world poison,  
He is compassionate to shower His benign blessings.  
Carrying a pot of Beauty, ever flowing with the water of life,  
He resembles an elephant with  
a large fount of water on His head  
and is decorated with the wisp of a silver crescent.

*Sadāśiva* is the unimaginable primeval reality which, like an archetype, can never be related to. The only access to it is through the symbols of variation provided by myth. One myth alluded to in this verse is Śiva's partaking of poison. There is a story of the churning of the milk ocean, which is the abode of Viṣṇu, the sustainer of the universe. The milk ocean represents the nourishing reservoir from which each cyclic age is issuing forth with the latent potentials (*dharmas*) which can evolve into actual worlds. In this ocean there is a symbolic serpent called Vāsuki. Vāsuki coils up and makes a bed for Viṣṇu to sleep on.

Viṣṇu is a deity who is placed between the wakeful and sleep. He sustains everything by dreaming. Dream is a fantasy created out of memory bits. Like an artist who makes compositions with his imagina-

tion, Viṣṇu is ever-retaining all archetypal images of the world by combining replicas of them.

The snake periodically molts its skin and comes out of its old skin like a new creature. Similarly after each cycle of creation, the world molts its skin and casts it away. Then it emerges as a new world. The symbol of the molting snake and the symbol of a dreamer endlessly fantasizing are to be put together to get an idea of the milk ocean that was chosen for churning by the shining ones and the dark forces.

A tall mountain was used as a churning rod and Vāsuki, the snake-couch of Viṣṇu, was used as a rope to turn the rod. Several treasures came out of the sea. Before the appearance of the elixir of immortality, Vāsuki vomited a cosmic poison which threatened the immediate annihilation of all the worlds. Neither the shining ones nor the dark forces knew what to do. In that crucial hour of great panic, Śiva promptly filled his conch shell with the world poison and drank it.

This poison counter-balances the nectar of immortality. It is like life being balanced with death. If Viṣṇu's domain is the promise of life, Śiva's world is of death. The poison drunk by Śiva turned his throat into a deep blue color so he is called Nīlakaṇṭha, "blue throated."

Another mythical story is of Śiva receiving the heavenly Ganges into the folds of his matted hair. So whenever Śiva is described, the Ganges held on his head is also referred to.

The picture presented in this verse is of an elephant holding a large reservoir of water on its head which is contrasted with the tiny semblance of the crescent moon associated with Śiva. Thus the whole picture is vague and almost unimaginable which is as good as saying that Sadāśiva can never be described properly. It is somewhat like the disgust of an artist at his failure in presenting what he cannot adequately depict. Once Picasso said, "The artist presents you with untruth so that you can arrive at truth by looking at the untruth." Combining a number of mythical figures into a collage such as in this verse is a favorite style of Narayana Guru.

*(Continued in next issue.)*



# Kaṭha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

VI: 9

*His form does not come under the  
domain of five sense perceptions.  
No one beholds Him with the eye.  
To the interiorly perceived vividity,  
He is the controlling heart region  
of mentations.  
They also know That and become  
immortal.*

VI: 10

*When and where the five (sense)  
perceptions hold back  
together with the mind,  
and where the intellect stirs not, That,  
they say, is the highest goal attained.*

It is normal in the world of the knowables to have a distinguishing mark, but in the last mantra the Person was shown to have no distinguishing mark. The present two mantras present the same Person as not to be grasped by the faculties with which we grasp the whole range of perceivables, and show at the same time how to attain an inner experiential perception of the Person.

The principle that enables the senses to perceive is naturally not perceivable by the senses. The functions of the senses are controlled by the mind. Though the controller of the senses, the mind is sometimes looked upon as a sixth sense (to the other

five). The mind, however, is a functional aspect of consciousness. So too are the senses. The mind and senses do not have any existence unless there is a functional basis. As the controller of the mind, this functional basis is called *manīt*. That the Person is to be intuitively seen as this controller is indicated by the word *manīṣā* (as the controller of mind).

This controller being the central regulating principle of all the faculties, it can be imagined as the central or heart region of one's own existence as is indicated here. This kind of perception is only an inwardly experienced vividity. It is said to be *manasā abhikṣpta* (interiorly perceived vividity).

When we are engrossed in the world of sense perceptions and mentations, our identity is with the perceivables and conceivables which are changeful in character. In that state, death and the state after death are matters of concern. But if we are attentive only to the basic principle or Person who enables the senses and mind to engage in their normal functions, our identity is only with That. This letting go of one's self identity with the mortal makes one immortal. In that experiential immortality neither the senses nor the mind have their specific functions. But the one who experiences this immortality sees the immortal truth in all the specific functions of knowledge. This mantra can be meditated upon side by side with the following verses, the first from the *Kena Upaniṣad* (1:6) and the second from Narayana Guru.

That which one thinks not with mind,  
That with which they say  
the mind is thought of,  
That indeed is the Absolute,  
Not this that people worship as this.

Not known when subjugated  
to the otherness,  
This supreme secret of the pandit  
Who doth see that?

VI: 11

*That persistent steadying of the senses  
is considered as yoga.*

*Thus one becomes vigilant.*

*Yoga truly is emergence and  
remergence.*

The concept of yoga is redefined here in the light of what has so far been said. It is defined from two different standpoints. The first is that the persistent steadying of the senses and mind as intended in the previous mantras is yoga. The second definition brings the emergence and re-emergence of phenomenal entities under the concept of yoga. The benefit of this understanding of yoga is of always being vigilant and undistracted. Steadying of the senses does not mean stopping the functioning of all the senses. The previous mantra has shown a state when the senses, mind and intellect have no specific function. That state is not attained just by stopping the functions of these faculties. It is only through an intuitive vision that it is the central controlling principle or the Person that acts in and through the senses, mind and intellect that these faculties are then seen as functionless. A mechanical stopping of the senses will result only in mental disorders. A healthier, more spontaneous directing of the senses founded firmly on the vision mentioned above is what is recommended. Here the word used is *dhāraṇa*. It means support for protection. The yoga mentioned cannot be taken as a discipline to undergo in order to attain the final result, as such an instruc-

tion is irrelevant at the closing part of an Upaniṣad. It can only be taken to mean a permanent feature of life resulting from the wisdom expounded so far.

From where do the sense perceptions, doubts and imaginations of the mind and the ratiocinations of the intellect incessantly and changefully emerge? Only in knowledge. Where does one remerge when another emerges? That also is in knowledge. This knowledge, the basis for all conscious functions, never emerges nor reemerges. What do we perceive with our senses, mind and intellect? The world. Where did it come from? It did not come from anywhere. What always exists is the ultimate Truth. What appears as existing in the form of the world has no real existence of its own. Its apparent emergence and re-emergence is only in the ultimate Truth or the Self. Thus, being aware that the emergence and re-emergence of the entire objective and subjective world is only in the Absolute Self, which is Existence, Subsistence and Value at once, is the yoga intended. Those who are always in this state of yoga are never distracted from Truth. They are called here *appamatta* (the vigilant and undistracted one).

This redefinition of yoga can also be considered a reevaluation of the eight-fold path of yoga recommended in yoga philosophy. The incomparability of this state of yoga is shown in the next mantra.

VI: 12

*Neither by speech nor by mind nor by  
sight can He be attained.*

*Other than by someone's instruction  
that "He is Existence,"*

*how can He be comprehended?*

From words we grasp a meaning. Our knowledge is so structured that every idea can be communicated to another in the form of words. When an idea is transformed into words and when an idea is comprehended from words, there is something behind it which gives room for it and

makes it possible. That is the Self or pure Awareness, which is under discussion here. It is this Awareness that exists as a homogeneous matrix that for the uttered word is external and that for the comprehended idea is internal. We can say words and their meaning have their existence and function only in and as an aspect of that Awareness. This Awareness can never be understood as the meaning of a word. It is that which makes the word a word and the meaning a meaning. This can also be meditated upon along with the following statement in the *Kena Upaniṣad* (I.4):

That which is unexpressed  
with speech,  
That with which speech is expressed  
That indeed know as *brahman*,  
Not this that people worship as this.

The function of mind (*manas*) is to imagine and to doubt. The mind is so changeful that imaginations come and go every moment. If we ask whether the mind can make an image of the Absolute, the answer will be, "No." Why? Because the mind and its functions exist and move only in and as the Self. So this Self can never be an object of imagination for the mind. Again the *Kena Upaniṣad* states the same more clearly (I.5).

That which one thinks not  
with the mind,  
That with which they say  
the mind is thought of,  
That indeed know as *brahman*,  
Not this that people worship as this.

We see objects outside with our eyes. It is not possible to see just because the eyes are open or just because the light rays reflected from the object fall in the eyes. There should be something inside which makes the eyes powerful to see and which makes the object of vision visible. But this empowering some thing can never become an object of vision. The same is expounded in the *Kena Upaniṣad* (I.7).

That which one sees not with sight,

That with which one sees sights  
That indeed is the *brahman*,  
Not this that people worship as this.

Narayana Guru in his *Advaita Deepika* (*The Lamp of Non-dual Wisdom*) states it in another way.

The eye sees if opened;  
if closed, knowledge,  
One is blind, as the knowledge  
that resides inside does not come out.  
Knowledge does not come out  
of its own,  
The eye should be there  
for it to come out,  
Just as the eye should have brightness.

Then how could this be known and communicated? There are rare wise ones who have the conviction that what really exists is only one Truth and that Truth is the speech of the speech, mind of the mind, and the eye of the eye. It is only with the help of the instruction of such masters that Truth is attained. Their instruction will not be of the nature that the Self is such and such, but that only the Self exists (*asti*) or that Existence (*asti*) itself is the Self.

Again, a conundrum remains here. A guru's instruction will also be in the form of words. But what has to be grasped is not words but meaning. This puzzle is resolved in the next mantra.

## VI: 13

*He could be perceived as Existence  
and also as a comprehensible principle.  
Of the two, to those who have  
perceived it as Existence,  
the comprehensible principle aspect  
becomes self-evident.*

It was stated in the last mantra that Truth is attained only through the instruction of a guru who has perceived the Truth as Existence. What we gain from the word of a guru is its meaning in the form of a comprehensible principle. That is only the

theoretical aspect of wisdom. But the guru's knowledge is an intuitive perception of Existence, and his intention is that the seeker who is being taught should also attain to that perception. The perceptual experience of Existence is not a mere theoretical understanding. To those who have this intuitive perception, the theoretical understanding will be naturally self-evident.

The experiential and theoretical aspects of attaining the Truth are discriminated here in a very subtle way. Experientially, Truth is perceived as Existence (*asti* or *sat*), Subsistence or subsisting awareness (*cit*) and Ultimate Happiness or Value (*ānanda*) all united in the unity of a vertical parameter. Of these three, the awareness aspect has a horizontalized version where there is relevancy for the duality of the word and its meaning. The total vision that comprises *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* is the horizontal version of the *cit* as well. Thus the theoretical understanding becomes by itself a part of the total vision of Existence. These two aspects of understanding are implied in the two ways of instruction on the Truth referred to in the *Kena Upaniṣad*, namely, *adhidaivatam* (referring to the lustrous experience) and *adhyātman* (referring to mentations). The same differentiation is intended in Henri Bergson's classification of knowledge in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The divisions according to him are going around an object and knowing it and, two, going into and becoming one with the object and knowing from that inner identification.

VI: 14

*Where all the desires lodged in one's heart are set free, man the mortal becomes immortal and, thereby, experiences the bliss of the Absolute.*

In this verse we are shown the worldly life of one who has an intuitive perception of Truth as Existence, as mentioned in the

last mantra. It is also stated that such a person attains immortality and the supreme felicity of the Absolute.

It is natural that we have a desire for anything that seems to make us happy. A thing is desired not because of the love of it, but because of the love of the happiness that seems to be bestowed by the thing. That means every desire is for self-happiness, in one way or another. But the happiness bestowed by desirable objects endures only for a short while and in the next moment we will be seeking another object. We are to be convinced that every desirable object is desirable only because of our love for the Self, that ultimate and eternal Happiness is never bestowed by desirable objects. And one should understand that Happiness is not to be attained but to be realized as the essence of the Self, and that this Self is the only Existence, as mentioned in the last mantra. For one who has this intuitive experience of Existence, that is the only Truth and nothing else exists. When there is nothing else, there are no more desirable objects. When there is no desirable object, all desires leave. Here the instruction is not to have any desire. It is only a statement that all desires leave by themselves.

Man is called *martya* in Sanskrit, which means the mortal. We think we are mortal only because there is a beginning and end of life. Nobody lives with the impression that life is unreal. But Reality is the One, which has no beginning and end and which is to be intuitively perceived as mere Existence. Nothing is apart from this Existence, including I or me. One who experiences this truth at every moment has already transcended death and has attained immortality of the Absolute. This is referred to with different names such as *ātma brahmaikyam* (oneness of the self and the Absolute), *brahma prāpti* (attainment of the Absolute), *vaṣṭulabdhi* (attainment of the existing Reality), *ātmasākṣakāra* (realization of the Self), *aparokṣānubhūti* (immediate intuitive perception), *mukti* (liberation), *mokṣa* (liberation), etc.

(Continued in next issue.)



# That Holy Mountain of Nilgiris

Going down the mountain by train for the first time,  
that holy mountain of Nilgiris,

Passed Runnymede, and that broad river  
that passes over boulders the size of classrooms,  
that drops through chutes  
turning white with energy,  
disappearing out of sight  
down around a bend.

Sometimes I only caught a glimpse of it far below,  
but it made me pray with exaltation and reverie  
until the next vista came and unfolded itself.

The steam train chugging itself downhill in a calculated  
descent in the most pleasant company of a  
dark-skinned, Tamil-speaking, easy-to-smile  
government clerk who makes 3000 rupees a  
month.

Greenery like you wouldn't believe, radiantly pink, orange  
and yellow flowers against every shade of  
verdure on God's infinite palette of color.

Rock massifs and feathering waterfalls, cloud forests on  
whose sight brought forth spontaneous  
recognition and praise of "Namah Sivaya," Hail to  
the presence of the Lord, Most Glorious and Pure,  
Sublime and Auspiciousness, into whose silence  
words merge and emerge.

Natural beauty rivaling the best of Thailand and Vietnam,  
Switzerland and Canada, South India lives in my  
heart supreme.

Ancient trees, canopied forests, Oh God, you are visible in  
this vaulted watershed of Consciousness, from a  
thirty-two rupee, second class seat on a wooden  
bench, soft with the light of constant effulgent  
Awareness.

What would pass for jungle in most people's psyche of 23,000 years ago in their intimate remembrance of ancestral homeland, is just forest here. with elephant-eared leaves, two feet long, big enough to be an umbrella, where vines are so thickly growing up and over trees that the host tree is nowhere in sight. You only guess it's there. Otherwise, they appear as foliage magically suspended in space.

What space! Sometimes, crossing a bridge, to the right looking down, there is no bottom under the train, only an edge. It's your train window, then three to four hundred feet of air-filled chasmeous space. Looking down is an understatement. Oh I trust these rails and this trip to arrive in One peace and not lose anything, but gain in knowledge, wonder and joy.

Jungle becomes dry, evergreen forest and grasses growing out of, and holding down, rock and two inches of topsoil. Palm species start to crop up, indigenous in their homeland which this God of biologic profusion has created for them, out of them, not them.

You stop in a few villages. Change trains in Metapalyam . Sweet coffee, unasked for, never tasted so good served on the platform after five hours of breathing or trying not to breathe train smoke, sun-filled air, and fleeting visions, and being bone-jarred, muscle-tugged tired.

Happy, peaceful good-byes, a refreshing trip to the latrine, and then the nice, saintly-looking, aged, red-shirted coolies that work for the train station want to overcharge me by three hundred percent for hauling my luggage and grass mats.

Aum Tat Sat.

Peter Moras

# The Science of Harmonious Union

## Commentary on Patāñjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

### Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sūtra II:50

*bāhyābhyantara stambha vṛttir deśakāla samkhyābhiḥ paridr̥ṣṭaḥ dīrghasūkṣmaḥ*

*bāhya*: external

*ābhyantara*: internal

*stambhavṛttih*: suppressed or stopped modification

*deśā*: place

*kāla*: time

*samkhyābhiḥ*: number

*paridr̥ṣṭaḥ*: regulated, measured

*dīrgha*: prolonged

*sūkṣmaḥ*: serenity of a subtle nature

It is in external, internal or suppressed modification, regulated by place, time and number, (one gets into) a state of prolonged serenity of a subtle nature.

Just as a certain physical posture is not *āsana*, the gross form of breathing exercises is not *prāṇāyāma*. The aspiring yogi (*sadhaka*) belongs at once to the cosmos and to the spirit center of the universe. Whatever a person does, it is done to achieve a certain result. An aspiring yogi undergoes self-discipline to ultimately come to a state of aloneness (*kaivalyam*). Aloneness has no social significance. The action that is implied in dissolving one's self in aloneness is an action that cancels out all other actions. Hence it is called *nirvṛtti*.

Humans are active in the daytime and replenish their energy at night with sleep.

As the physical and mental states of day and night are different, the discipline one pursues in the daytime and night cannot be the same. For this reason the time factor is reckoned with in this *sūtra*. Just as the time of day is significant, the place where one does *sādhana* is important. A person sitting in a dingy room with doors and windows shut is different from a person sitting outside who is aware of the vast expanse surrounding him. Time and space both have an impact on a person's *sādhana* (practice).

In ordinary breathing one is not very conscious how much air one is taking in or breathing out. But when one starts watching one's *prāṇa* and *apāna*, it is only natural to count the duration of the breathing in, keeping the breath inside, breathing out and keeping the breath outside. The counting of the time familiarizes one with the pattern of one's respiration. Just as one withdraws from the five senses of perception and the five organs of action and withholds from external aids, one should naturally not be dependent on external air. So one who is aspiring for nothing but aloneness gradually reduces his or her dependence on external air. Like in hibernation a suspended animation is gained by not breathing in.

Consequently, the multitudinous impressions of the mind become quiet and the time that the yogi can sit in the deep serenity of inner aloneness is slowly prolonged. In the prolongation of the restraint of the breath outside, serenity increases

until one finds that the sublimity of *samādhi* brings aloneness.

Sūtra II:51

*bāhyābhyantara viśayākṣepī caturthaḥ*

*bāhya*: external

*ābhyantara*: internal

*viśaya*: objects of interest

*ākṣepḥ*: going beyond

*caturthaḥ*: is the fourth (variety of *prāṇāyāma*)

That (variety of *prāṇāyāma*) which goes beyond the sphere of external and internal objects of interest is the fourth.

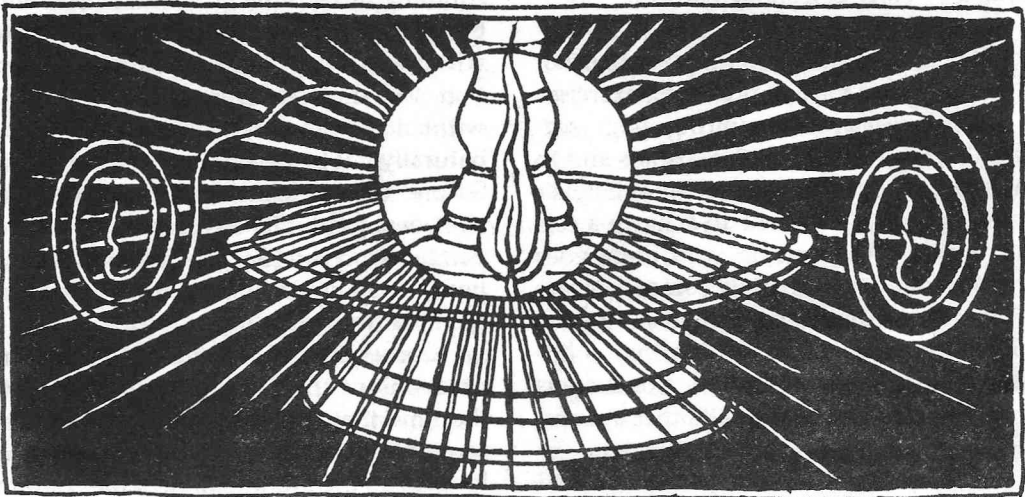
For both stimulus and response there has to be the channeling of energy. Any energy that is evoked, channeled and expended is of the *prāṇa*. *Savitarka* and *savicāra* are the two occasions of stimulus affecting the mind. When provocation comes from the external world such as in *savitarka*, the stimulus originates from an object of interest which is outside one's self. The recall of a memory or the maturation of a latent instinct which comes in the form of an ideation is *savicāra* in which the stimulus comes from within. In either case, a reaction is imminent. So there can be two sources of demand upon the energy of the mind-stuff which can also be identical with the libidinal energy.

The breath connected with the evoking of energy and its channelization is like a mechanical device. Before it is turned on, there has to be the registry of an interest in the unconscious or preconscious. Without the rousing of an interest, there is no demand for the expending of energy. When a person is internalized, first with *āsana* and then with *prāṇāyāma*, he is cut off from all external interests. That naturally develops into the abandoning of catering to inner urges. Thus the demand on the body/mind to rush energy to any part of the body is negligible. That means the inner movement of energy comes to a standstill.

Before we come to the *sūtra* on *dhāraṇā* (concentration) Patañjali wants to distinguish it from the inner preparedness for total composure which comes at the end of the discipline of *prāṇāyāma* as the most gentle acceptance. This Patañjali recognizes as the fourth kind of *prāṇāyāma*. The triple modalities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and the three states of consciousness (wakeful, dream and deep sleep), are transcended by the fourth state, *turiya*. Similarly, the fourth aspect of *prāṇāyāma* has no reference to any stimulation whatsoever, either from perceptual objects or subjective transformations of the mind-stuff.

Sūtra II:52

*tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaram*



*tataḥ*: then  
*kṣīyate*: dissolves  
*prakāśa*: light  
*āvaraṇam*: covering

From that is dissolved the covering of light.

Sūtra II:53

*dhāraṇāsu ca योग्याता मनसाह*

*dhāraṇāsu*: for concentration  
*ca*: and  
*योग्याता*: fitness  
*मनसाह*: of mind

And then the fitness of mind for concentration (*dhāraṇā*) comes.

The five sense organs are five howlers, always bringing provocation by spotlighting objects of interest. An interest can be conditioned with pain or pleasure. When the *prāṇāyāma* is in the fourth state where the only interest is unbroken *ānanda*, the sense organs are all withdrawn from *anna-maya kośa*, *viññānamaya kośa* and *manomaya-kośa* and *prāṇa* is in perfect union with *ānandamaya*.

This is the opposite of someone in *suṣupti*, deep sleep. In *suṣupti*, *tamas* envelops *rajas* and *sattva* and therefore *sattva* has no chance to mirror individual things. When *prāṇāyāma* restrains all channels of the manifestation of *prana* except its resonance with *cit*, instead of *tamas* shrouding the individuated self, the supreme light of the Self obviates the impact of physical light, that is, the physical energy that is directly responsible for creating perceptual discrimination.

The mind is usually very busy creating images or inferring them out of partial illumination and a big commotion is created based on each such provocation. In the transactional wakeful experience and the dream state, a lot of energy is expended in the act of perception and the act of imagination. In the fourth aspect of *prāṇāyāma*, these two out-going flows of energy are neglected and the concentration is only on

the nature of the Self which is *ānanda*. This is conducive to the mind going into *dhāraṇā*. As the three aids for *dhāraṇā* suggested earlier, *maitri* (friendliness), *karuṇā* (compassion), and *mudita* (gladness), are based on the imperiential unity of seeing all in one'self, there is no verbalizing of any mantra nor any creative auto-suggestion of the purport of *maitri*, *karuṇā* and *mudita*. *Dhāraṇā* strongly manifests as pure *ānanda* when all specific modulations are automatically negated. Hence these two *sūtras* are complementary and are to be taken together as a consequence of the highest achievement of *prāṇāyāma*.

Sūtra II:54

*sva viśayāsaṃprayoge citta svarūpānukāra  
ivendriyāṇām pratyāhārah*

*sva*: their own  
*viśaya*: objects  
*asaṃprayoge*: not coming into contact with  
*citta*: of the mind  
*svarūpa*: the nature  
*anukārah*: follow  
*iva*: as it were  
*indriyāṇām*: by the senses  
*pratyāhārah*: abstraction

*Pratyāhāra* (abstraction) is that by which the senses do not come into contact with their objects and, as it were, follow the nature of the mind.

The first thing to notice in this *sūtra* is that *pratyāhāra* is interposed between the first mention of *dhāraṇā* and the more serious mention of *dhāraṇā* with which the third book commences. We have to understand the entire mechanism of attraction/repulsion in the organism which has at the extreme plus point of verticality the pure Self (*pratyag ātma*), and at the extreme plus pole of the horizontal, the object of interest. Unless we know how the whole matrix of the psychophysical system is arranged, it is very difficult to make heads or tails of this *sūtra*.

After the detailed discussion of the

disciplines of *yama* and *niyama*, we were given the unusual way in which *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* are used by Patañjali. With *āsana* alone, one comes almost to the brink of *samādhi*. Then we were told how *prāṇāyāma* takes a person to the farthest point in discipline by which one can at least vaguely sense *pratyag ātma*, the reflected image of which (in *cidābhāsa*) is to be transcended to arrive at the blissful state of the Self. Thus both *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* are placed on a very high pedestal before the mention of *dhāraṇā* which comes first as a premonition of how one is going to be stabilized in *āsana* and be purified by the three screening disciplines by which one arrives at the fourth stage of *prāṇāyāma*.

Now let us have a schematic look at the arrangement of the several layers ranging from the numenon to the phenomenon. We begin with the pure bright spirit center, *pratyag ātma*. The unaffected, unpolluted light of the *pratyag ātma* is borrowed by the individuated self for its own phenomenal basis. Once the phenomena is structured, it becomes magical. It has what the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* calls *marīci* for its psychic stuff. It is in this realm that the individual carries with it the essence of its psychobiologic life up to that point. The *karāṇa śarīra* (causal body) contains the essence of all previous lives and the conditioning achieved in the present life.

*Karāṇa śarīra* is constituted of four main factors. First, it has the light of the Self as its ground. Then it has the dynamic of the blissful Self to push consciousness to a new level where its inherent value essence and an existential factor can be brought in conjunction with an experience. The third factor is an archetypal impact that can propel unconscious energy into the preconscious field of the subtle. Finally, it has the magical power to make the archetypal thrust change into the establishment of an interest with a certain identity. A man who is infatuated with love identifies his archetype with that of a lover. A person who is soaked with fear identifies himself to be a fugitive. An angry man shaking with hatred identifies himself as an enemy. Thus the archetypes we speak

of are not identical with Jung's archetypes of Mother, Father, Trickster and Magician. There is a much richer literature of archetypes to be found in the *Māhābhārata* and similar books. In any case, when an archetype dominates, it uses causal energy to become a manipulator of dreams and the dream percolates into the wakeful by giving the wakeful both the status of a day dream and of an action program.

Thus, when an interest is evoked there is a two-pronged activity going on. One is the conscious mind choosing to apply external senses, with deliberation, and the other is a value-discernment operating in the unconscious, regulating the out-flowing energy of the desire to actualize. Hence it is necessary to rectify value-norms so that the external world will not have an undue impact on the mind. At the same time, the deliberating mind is to be trained to withdraw the external senses from objects of interest. So it is said that just as the mind, when enlightened about right and wrong values, decides not to feed a stimulus with associated memories, the external senses also, as if they were imitating the mind, withdraw themselves from objects of distraction. We will get a more detailed picture as we examine the presentation of *dhāraṇā* in the opening *sūtra* of *Vibhūti Pāda*.

Sūtra II:55

*tataḥ paramā vaśyatendriyāṇām*

*tataḥ*: then follows

*paramā*: the greatest, the highest

*vaśyata*: mastery

*indriyāṇām*: over the senses

Then follows the greatest mastery over the senses.

In the evolution of life, the first sign noticed in a sentient being is its ability to react on the basis of a sensation. A primal form of life such as a protozoa has no eyes or ears; it has no brain. It has the nucleus of a sensory organ which cannot be discerned from its body. It is almost a limb-

less being and yet it can differentiate between light and darkness and has a tendency to jerk and deflect away from light. What is primary will live with a being even through many phases of evolution and cannot be dismissed as of no consequence. Further, all the elaborations of physical evolution stem from the primary phase, i.e., sensation. Mastery over sensation is, therefore, mastery over all parts of the body/mind complex. *Āsana*, which is given immediately after *yama* and *niyama*, is not the beginning of *Yoga*. It marks, so to say, the ascent from a base camp to the peak in a pilgrim's progress. All the preparations for the start are given in *yama* and *niyama*.

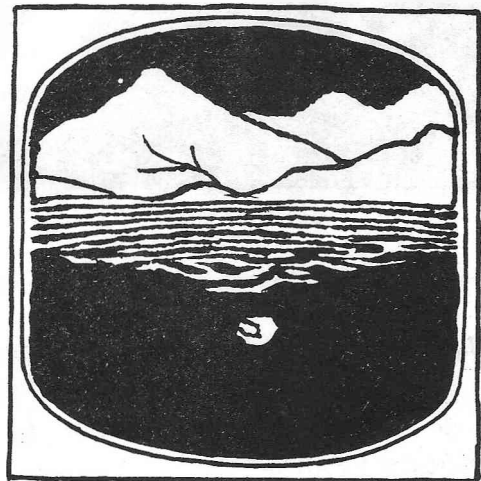
An analysis of sensation noticeable in the primary forms of life will show the external world of the cosmos confronting the manifestation of a conscient being. No living being is immune to the challenge of its external environment. If a pebble is thrown on the surface of a lake, it is immediately followed by a formation of a wave-let at the place where the stone is dropped. Then the ripples recede to farther and farther reaches. Each living being is like a highly sensitive pond or lake of a chemical reservoir. Like the hitting of one billiard ball by another, any chemical molecule colliding with another creates chain reactions. The original Sanskrit word for sensation is *vedana* which means "being hurt." This world is an arena where everyone hurts everyone else. At the zero point, sensation begins as a hurting of the equilibrium of the constituents which are put together to make individuation. As an organism grows, new devices are developed to meet inevitable offenses that come from all around. Ultimately, when the organism grows to the magnitude of a mature human being, one is like a martyr thrown into the jaws of hungry lions in a Roman arena. To restore the spark of consciousness which originated in the spirit back to the spirit is the theme of *Yoga*. With *yama* and *niyama* the individual has already undergone a rigorous discipline. In the combat of life the ego, aided by intelligence and memory, equips itself to return again

and again to the center of neutrality. The first establishment of stable tranquillity is designated as *āsana* and the retention of that tranquillity all through one's life is vouchsafed by *prāṇāyāma*.

At this point the aspiring yogi has a choice. One can prefer to remain in this world as a comrade and friend of one's fellow beings and dedicate one's self, or one can bring an ultimate termination to one's individuation by returning to the plenum of the spirit and becoming one with it. If the second is one's choice, one has to go beyond *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* by developing the ideology of transcendence, that is, a new *dhāraṇā*. *Dhāraṇā* is an understanding that retains a certain state of being.

In the maturation of *dhāraṇā* both the prospective and retrospective sprouting of imagination and memories are abandoned. That is a very drastic step to take for those who retain their love for this world. Hence the triple steps of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* are given only in the third book, *Vibhūti Pāda*. Although the second book terminates with this *sūtra*, to give a finish to the theme, we need to incorporate a few *sūtras* of the third book. For people preferring to live the normal life-style of an individuated person, the instruction in the discipline of *Yoga* is now complete. It is optional whether one goes beyond this.

(Continued in next issue.)





*The papercuts reproduced here are done free-hand, with a razor-type knife attached to a handle. They are not drawn and then cut. They are sketched from life with the blade. This is an extreme medium. Everything is in contrast. There are no greys. There are no mistakes.*





*One has to approach the paper with decisiveness and certainty, a comforting and balancing endeavor in a world in of uncertainty and change. My hope is to engage the viewer in seeing common subjects with an uncommon eye.*

**Karen Balos**

# Biography of Narayana Guru

Nancy Yeilding

## *Vaikom Satyāgraha Concludes*

As it was, the stagnant form of the demonstrations wore down the spirits of the demonstrators and the support of the people instead of encouraging them. Despite Gandhi's propaganda, the *satyāgraha* was felt by the orthodox as a coercive tactic, not an educating force. They became even more polarized and rigid in their position, lashing out with increasing intolerance and viciousness.<sup>100</sup> The struggle dragged on for a year and Gandhi finally came to Vaikom to see if he could negotiate a settlement. He asserted his continued faith in the value of caste and differentiated between such practices as inter-marriages and inter-dining and the aspirations of the *satyāgraha* for common relations between human beings and open public places.<sup>101</sup> He tried to reason and plead with the orthodox but was surprised by their close-minded and unyielding stance against any education of untouchability and unapproachability.<sup>102</sup> All his proposals to them (arbitration, examination of the scriptures, a referendum) were met with adamant refusals as they chose to cling to their privileged position at the expense of their inhumanity.

Yet when he met with the *satyāgrahis*, Gandhi asserted:

*We must not be impatient and we must have an undying faith in the means we are adopting. I know that it is a difficult and slow process. But if you believe in the efficacy of satyāgraha you will rejoice in this slow torture and suffering, and you will not feel the discomfort of your position as you go and sit in the boiling sun from day to day.... You must not be tired and say "how long", and never get irritated. That is only a small portion of*

*your penance for the sin for which Hinduism is responsible.... I regard you as soldiers in this campaign. It is not possible for you to reason out things for yourselves.... If we are to become a powerful nation you must obey all directions that may be given you from time to time. That is the only way in which either political or religious life can be built up.*<sup>103</sup>

He encouraged the *satyāgrahis* in their sacrifice with the expectation that "our efforts may result in amelioration of the general condition of the untouchables and unapproachables."<sup>104</sup>

Gandhi sent Vinoba Bhave to Narayana Guru to plead with him to support the Vaikom Satyāgraha issue only for the use of public roads, not for the freedom of temple entry, on the grounds that temples were private property. (The temples actually were supported by obligatory taxation of all members of society.) The Guru replied as follows:

*Guru: Are you not a sanātini (one who believes in all the caste rules of Hinduism)?*

*Vinoba Bhave: Yes.*

*Guru: Do not Vaiśnavites believe in: samipya (coming near the deity), salokya (looking at the deity), sarūpya (worshipping in the shrine) and sayujya (merging)? Why should some people be asked to stop at the first step?*

*Vinoba Bhave was silenced by the Guru's question.*<sup>105</sup>

Gandhi eventually settled for an agreement with the police that they would withdraw the order prohibiting public travel on the road and remove the barricades on condition that the *satyāgrahis* would not cross the boundary but only stand or spin in the same place.<sup>106</sup> He then let the movement peter out to the in-

conclusive withdrawal of all *satyāgrahis* in November of 1925 on the occasion of alternate roads being constructed farther from the temple which were open to all. 107 Freedom of temple access and entry for all did not come until 1936 when the Hindu government recognized the political efficacy of such a move in the face of the threat of massive conversion to Christianity and wide-spread agitation for political and economic advancement. 108

When Gandhi visited Kerala he also met with Narayana Guru. He was invited to the Guru's Śivagiri ashram at Varkala on March 13, 1925. The subtle difference in their understanding and approach were brought to light by their conversation:

*Gandhi: Besides the removal of untouchability, what does the Swamiji think is necessary to solve the problems of the low castes?*

*Guru: They need education and wealth. Like everyone else they should have opportunities to become better.*

*Gandhi: Some people say that non-violent satyāgraha is useless and violence is necessary for getting rights. What is the Swamiji's opinion?*

*Guru: We do not think that using violence is good.*

*Gandhi: Do the Hindu dharma śāstras enjoin the use of force?*

*Guru: In the purāṇas it is seen as being necessary for kings, etc. and they have made use of it. For the common people, use of force would not be right.*

*Gandhi: The high-caste Hindus and the low-caste Hindus are both the sons of Hinduism. The high-caste Hindu is the elder brother who shoulders responsibility, and he therefore exercises certain privileges. The low-caste Hindu is his younger brother who is to be cared for. If the elder brother turns out to be somewhat rough and aggressive that should not make the younger brother a runaway from his mother – Hinduism.*

*Guru: If a Hindu has no belief in his religion and has belief in another religion. it is good that he embraces the religion in which he believes. Such a conversion will help Hinduism in getting rid of a non-believer, and the religion to which the man gets converted will have*

*the benefit of adding one more believer to it. Moreover, the man will be benefited with the love and sympathy which he will get from his fellow-believers. There is nothing wrong in such conversions.*

*Gandhi: Does the Swamiji think that the Hindu religion is sufficient for gaining spiritual liberation (mokṣa)?*

*Guru: Other religions also have ways to liberation. Religion is one.*

*Gandhi: Let the matter of other religions be. Do you think the Hindu religion is sufficient for gaining liberation?*

*Guru: Plenty sufficient for spiritual liberation, but it is worldly freedom that people are seeking.*

*Gandhi: The convert is embracing Christianity not for the spiritual worth of that religion but for the social and economic benefits he gets from that religion. We are working for worldly liberation. Will we have success?*

*Guru: Should a man remain unfaithful to his religion and also lose socio-economic benefit? Or should he become a Christian and at least be benefited socially and economically? Caste is the scourge of India. If you want to liberate the people politically you should first liberate them from their prejudices. If we think of the deep-rootedness of that, Mahatmaji will have to incarnate again for gaining the full fruit.*

*Gandhi: My belief is that it will become fruitful in my lifetime. Even among the lower castes, there is the observance of untouchability. Is everyone allowed in Swamiji's temples?*

*Guru: Everyone is allowed entry. Pulāya and Parāya (groups considered untouchable) children are staying and eating with all others here at Śivagiri. They study and take part in the worship too. 109*

When Gandhi chose to lightly brush aside his admonition that the removal of caste was necessary before political liberation could be a true reality, the Guru only gently offered the example of life in his ashrams. After he left the Guru, Gandhi told someone nearby that the different castes were like different types of leaves on one tree, some small, some big, some fresh and green, some dry and faded. This was related to Narayana Guru some days later. His response was that if Gandhi

conclusive withdrawal of all *satyāgrahis* in November of 1925 on the occasion of alternate roads being constructed farther from the temple which were open to all. 107 Freedom of temple access and entry for all did not come until 1936 when the Hindu government recognized the political efficacy of such a move in the face of the threat of massive conversion to Christianity and wide-spread agitation for political and economic advancement. 108

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*Gandhi: The high-caste Hindus and the low-caste Hindus are both the sons of Hinduism. The high-caste Hindu is the elder brother who shoulders responsibility, and he therefore exercises certain privileges. The low-caste Hindu is his younger brother who is to be cared for. If the elder brother turns out to be somewhat rough and aggressive that should not make the younger brother a runaway from his mother – Hinduism.*

*Guru: If a Hindu has no belief in his religion and has belief in another religion, it is good that he embraces the religion in which he believes. Such a conversion will help Hinduism in getting rid of a non-believer, and the religion to which the man gets converted will have*

*the benefit of adding one more believer to it. Moreover, the man will be benefited with the love and sympathy which he will get from his fellow-believers. There is nothing wrong in such conversions.*

*Gandhi: Does the Swamiji think that the Hindu religion is sufficient for gaining spiritual liberation (mokṣa)?*

*Guru: Other religions also have ways to liberation. Religion is one.*

*Gandhi: Let the matter of other religions be. Do you think the Hindu religion is sufficient for gaining liberation?*

*Guru: Plenty sufficient for spiritual liberation, but it is worldly freedom that people are seeking.*

*Gandhi: The convert is embracing Christianity not for the spiritual worth of that religion but for the social and economic benefits he gets from that religion. We are working for worldly liberation. Will we have success?*

*Guru: Should a man remain unfaithful to his religion and also lose socio-economic benefit? Or should he become a Christian and at least be benefited socially and economically? Caste is the scourge of India. If you want to liberate the people politically you should first liberate them from their prejudices. If we think of the deep-rootedness of that, Mahatmaji will have to incarnate again for gaining the full fruit.*

*Gandhi: My belief is that it will become fruitful in my lifetime. Even among the lower castes, there is the observance of untouchability. Is everyone allowed in Swamiji's temples?*  
*Guru: Everyone is allowed entry. Pulāya and Parāya (groups considered untouchable) children are staying and eating with all others here at Śivagiri. They study and take part in the worship too. 109*

When Gandhi chose to lightly brush aside his admonition that the removal of caste was necessary before political liberation could be a true reality, the Guru only gently offered the example of life in his ashrams. After he left the Guru, Gandhi told someone nearby that the different castes were like different types of leaves on one tree, some small, some big, some fresh and green, some dry and faded. This was related to Narayana Guru some days later. His response was that if Gandhi

picked the different kinds of leaves and chewed them, he would find that they all tasted the same. <sup>110</sup>

The Guru's words and example stayed with Gandhi, shedding light on the experiences he had as the many-layered dynamics of all-India politics revealed themselves. Gandhi changed the name of his journal from *Navajivan* to *Harijan* (Children of God), the name by which he referred to those considered untouchable. Eventually Gandhi began to realize that the degradation of untouchability was not a tumorous outgrowth of the caste system, but a clear example of the disease and deformity inherent in any system based in the abrogation of privilege to a few and the denial of full human dignity to the many. He wrote about that recognition in *Young India* under the heading, "Caste Must Go", repudiating much of what he had previously said in support of the caste system. <sup>111</sup>

So Gandhi evidenced in his own experience the effects of the Guru as a change agent. With gentle words and a powerful example, not through any overt pressure, the Guru enabled Gandhi to begin to rid himself of prejudices that blinded him despite his sincere caring and great sacrifice for the welfare of all. The Guru's life again and again demonstrated that the most effective way of changing the world is to change one's self. One's very life becomes the medium of change rather than any tactics or maneuvers aimed at reforming others. His example of a love without bounds paired with a rigorous non-acceptance of social forms of discrimination created an atmosphere in which oppressed and oppressors alike could tune their lives to true freedom for all.

Let us close our discussion of these two leaders with the profound insight of Nataraja Guru:

*The Mahatma represented a wave of reform that, starting in a political ideal, tried to make the people spiritual. He believed in Satyāgraha as a special weapon of self purification for the masses. They were, therefore, called upon to believe in this doctrine. The*

*thought of the welfare of the masses haunted him day and night. He sought to serve their cause with all the earnestness that was at the command of his frail body. When his plans failed or produced a reaction, he took the blame on himself and confessed before the public that he had committed a "Himalayan blunder", and implored the mercy of God in the most supplicant terms.*

*To the Guru, the elements of continuity of the Principle were more important than the particular extensive application of a doctrine or method to a given situation that arose. Rules served their purpose for a time and had to yield place to others. Each situation called for its own special intelligence and there was no one panacea. The mind was to be left free to thread its own way through the maze of situations that presented themselves before it, and rules were straight lines compared to the zig-zags and curves of the course of right action. He emphasized only two platforms of thought. One was that of the every-day world of facts, and the other that which belonged to the Reality beyond. He carefully avoided preaching or lending his assent to special philosophies or standpoints to serve temporary or temporal purposes, lest such creations should continue to haunt the minds of the ignorant after the creeds had ceased to serve an immediate cause, and thus add to the heavy load of superstitions with which the poor people confused their honest brains. Popular agreement in a course of action was not to be the result of faith in a doctrine or the appreciation of a special philosophy, but the natural outcome of tangible realities, of everyday life interpreted as simply as possible for the sake of the people.*

*The Mahatma saw special use in declaring himself a Hindu and a Vaishnava, besides preaching the doctrines of Satyāgraha and soul-force. He also believed in Varnashrama Dharma which he elaborated and interpreted in his speeches and writings. The Guru was content to call himself a man, and to call upon man to recognize God and the simple realities of life. One tried, as it were, to reach the heart of the masses from the circumference, with variety as the starting-point; while, to the other, the starting-point was the recognition of the One without a second. It was natural that the leader of All-India politics should differ from*

the solitary Guru in the point of view that he accepted as the basis of activity. One represented the peripheral and the other the central compromise of the same abstract Principle. The Mahatma emphasized and voiced the master sentiment of the nation, while the Guru stood for the neutral Principle.

The Mahatma represented the rare case in which the logic of the emotions coincided in its essential aspects with the logic of pure reason. The test of both these kinds of logic was in action and this was the sure point of contact between the Guru and the Mahatma. As with the Guru at Varkala, Gandhi had "untouchable" children with him at Sabaramati. The Mahatma still stood for Hindu-Muslim Unity. Both of them were keenly interested in cottage industries; and the type of saintliness both represented, had marks of a common lineage. Although, therefore, in the interview with the Guru the Mahatma seemed to differ from him in what concerned Hindu Dharma and Varnashrama and the dogmatic aspects of Satyāgraha, theoretical differences converged until they met in practice. The Guru for example, subscribed to the Khaddar Campaign (for popularizing homespun cloth). After exchanges of mutual veneration the Mahatma took leave of the Guru.

The Satyāgraha struggle terminated in a partial victory for the cause of the masses. On the land which was the scene of the historic event, the Guru erected a school for the poor children of the locality. It stands there to commemorate the noble efforts of many youthful souls, who suffered.

The Guru liked to see continuity in human endeavor, and, as continuity is the essential factor in a principle he discountenanced events which were mere expressions of seasonal enthusiasm. While the waves seemed to advance and recede at the circumference, the centre remained undisturbed. At Varkala the winds wafted their message as usual and the gurgling streams interpreted the continuity of the Guru's silent hours. The Brahmachari who read by the bed-side of the Guru, had his usual course of grammar and pronunciation. The inner brilliance kept the Guru self-absorbed, while his influence spread into action all round. He showed in his life that principle and practice, ends and means, were

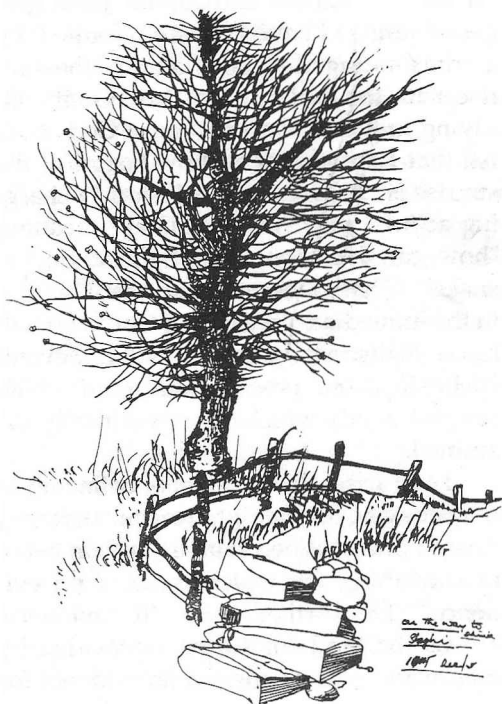
related to one another like the stem and branches of a great tree. Withdrawn into the central core of all practice, he remained silent. His life was continuous commentary on the words of the Bhagavad Gītā:

*Mentally renouncing all actions, the sovereign dweller in the body resteth serenely in the nine-gated city neither acting nor causing to act.* (V-13) 112

#### NOTES

100. T.K. Ravindran, *Vaikom Satyāgraha and Gandhi*, Sri Narayana Institute of Social and Cultural Development, Trichur, 1975, p. 114-115.
101. M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works*, Government Publications, India, 1967, Vol. XXVI, p. 266.
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(Continued in next issue.)



# What Makes a Belief Valid?

## Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

### Dictionary Meaning and Operational Meaning

Every now and then I am asked, "Do you believe in God?" This question embarrasses me. Usually I keep quiet and hurriedly leave the questioner. Hardly any two people mean the same when they pronounce the word "God." Most words have a dictionary meaning which is likely to be different from an everyday, operational meaning. For instance, God is connoted in the Random House Dictionary as, "The One Supreme Being, the creator and ruler of the universe." I know that many people hold the Random House Dictionary authentic. However, I cannot accept such a being which sounds to me like an anthropomorphic concept, as if God is a person, or a thing among things.

Let me explain what I mean by my operational meaning. In the morning I look out of my window and see the most gorgeous sunrise I have ever seen, framed by a crimson-tinged cloud. I admire the sunrise with the exclamation "My God!" By saying "my God" I do not mean God at all. All that I am saying is how beautiful the sunrise is. If I see a cobra furiously charging at me I may say "Oh God," meaning "how can I escape from that venomous snake?" That does not mean that I believe in the immediate presence of God who will hurry to distract the cobra or kill it. Several clichés lie in our preconscious mind which suggest words which are not critically examined.

Here arises the problem of believing or not believing for the right reason. Bertrand Russell once defined faith as "a firm belief in something for which there is no evidence." He further said, "If 'evidence' means the kind of support provided by reason and science, there is no evidence for

God and immortality." Here I cannot accept the verdict of Russell either, because he has not defined the term 'evidence'. If he expects a material proof to be produced as evidence, Russell unwittingly classifies God and immortality as belonging to the class of material things. In spoken, as well as written languages, poetic expressions can be used which do not require any objective demonstration. William James gives us an alternative to understand faith or belief. In *The Will to Believe* he quotes a schoolboy remark: "Faith is when you believe something you know ain't true." This is not a good definition either. When riddles make us look for a more acceptable reason, Pringle Pattison recommends the postponement of judgment until we can come to an appropriate argument to settle our issue of acceptance.

### Tracing from First Cause

The difficulty in defining belief or faith is a special contribution to man's embarrassment by religions with conflicting first premises and consequent questionable conclusions. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* postulates that in the beginning there was nothing whatsoever in the universe. This universe was enveloped by Death or Hunger alone. In other words, Necessity was the first cause. Meeting necessity with an adequate solution was the first cause of the projection of the world. This does not imply any creator or creation. From cause is projected its effect. The Sanskrit term for projection, *srij*, is etymologically akin to the English word 'surge'. It is everybody's experience that each day, nay each moment, some new form emerges with substantial content which comes under some classification already made, or which necessitates being newly named and classi-

fied. Also, we see a familiar form with an established name belonging to a well-categorized classification, waning and vanishing without causing considerable damage to the class to which it belongs. On such occasions nobody asks for any explanation to account for a new appearance or for the disappearance of that with which one was in intimate familiarity. In such cases, to bring in God as a necessary contingent to explain such phenomenon is quite unwarranted.

### The Study of Behavior for Accountability

The smooth transformation presented by nature in an understandable expression of cosmic law offers no challenge to an honest ordinary man. As Bishop Berkeley puts it, "only the philosopher kicks up the dust of doubts, and asks for queer answers to his queer questions." What is similar to the arguments connected with natural law and harmony is what Karl Popper offers in *The Open Universe* in his essay on "The Study of Behavior and the Principle of Accountability." Popper writes:

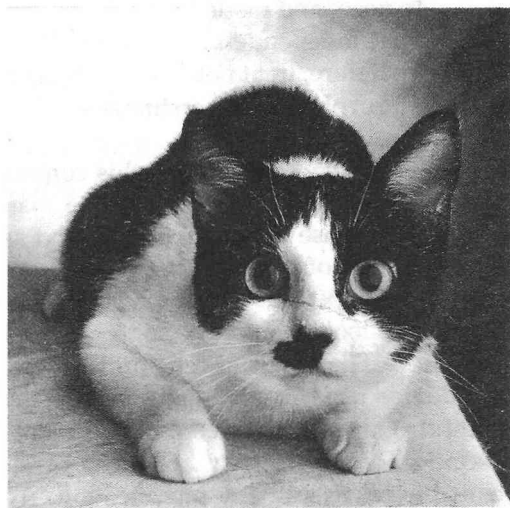
*This argument – 'the argument from the study of behavior', as it may be called – is good common sense, and in my opinion very telling. But it does not achieve its aims; not even if we grant, as I am ready to do, that there is no limit to the possible improvement of our predictions of animal and human behavior through its closer and closer study. As an attempt to support determinism, the argument from the study of behavior is simply invalid. . . . To show this, we need only refer to the principle of accountability. 'Scientific' determinism does not merely assert that we may improve our predictions by increased knowledge, but it demands that we shall be able to calculate, from our specified prediction task, the degree of precision of our initial information that is needed to carry out the prediction task.*

*In predicting what my cat will do next: whether he will jump onto my writing pad, or whether he will jump on my window sill and from there into the garden. . . . The behavior I am learning about consists, in the main, either of (a) significant (or 'goal-directed') actions, or*

*(b) tricks of habit, or ways of doing things. Studying the latter may help to fill in some details in the broad schemata of the former. Nevertheless, when I predict that he will settle on my writing pad, there are many details which I cannot predict. For example, I may easily be wrong by several inches. . . . But we simply do not know what kind of initial conditions may be relevant to the prediction task of reducing these inches. It is not only that we have no theory of behavior which satisfies the principle of accountability: up to now we have not even an idea of where to look for such a theory. . . . It will be objected that a precise study of the nervous system, especially the brain, would do much towards closing the gaps in our predictions. This may be quite true, for all I know, and for argument's sake, I will take it for granted here. But it means giving up the argument from the study of behavior.<sup>1</sup>*

### The Validity of Common Sense

An average person of commonsense has a good enough reasoning faculty to make sound inferences to program his immediate future to keep him consistent in his person, only if his courage and power to deliberate are not sapped by his sense of failure, guilt feeling and fear of unpredictable punishments. It is not a rare contingency. Social affiliation with religious faith makes it legitimate to leave his normal power to deliberate with the norms that help him or her to maintain social ac-





countability. Then alone, as an alternative to commonsense reasoning, man resorts to the alternative of religion or psychiatric correction.

### Religion as an Alternative Angle of Vision

Religion is not opposed to our common sense inferences and prediction. We read in the Holy Qur'an of *Dhuha*, or The Glorious

Morning Light (93, 1-9):

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful,*

1. By the Glorious Morning Light
2. And by the Night When it is still,--
3. The Guardian-Lord Hath not forsaken thee, Nor is He displeased.
4. And verily the hereafter Will be better for thee Than the present.
5. And soon will thy Guardian-Lord give thee (That therewith) thou Shalt be well-pleased.
6. Did he not find thee An orphan, and give thee Shelter (and care)?
7. And He found thee Wandering, and He gave Thee guidance.
8. And He found thee In need, and made Thee independent.
9. Therefore, treat not The orphan with harshness.<sup>2</sup>

The difference we find in this context of a religious faithful from that of a man of common sense is the affixing of God as the better part of his self. The normal common sense expectation of the benevolence of nature is looked upon as God's help and guidance. The praxis of religion is a literary device used to give assurance to the faithful. Otherwise, the commonsense expectation of an ordinary person is maintained here without any modification. To



understand the commonality in the religious faithful and man in general, we have to see where each person puts himself into a frame of reference in which he is at ease. Religions are like other universal items such as sports, each with its special frame of reference and internal norms of right and wrong. Whereas in the Qur'an Allah is held as an intimate personal guide and guardian at all times, in the Bible, Christ is looked upon as a personalized aspect of God (His son), with whom a Christian can relate with reverence and love as one does to an elder brother or superior brother. A person can confide in him the faithful's mistakes with the device of a confession in repentance and can ask for succor and guidance, even though the supposed Christ with whom one is intimate intimacy is only a generated spiritual image of one's own more acceptable and optimistic self. Another alternative to God is the concept of the Self stripped of its relativism. In the Bhagavad Gītā, it is not God that is resorted to, but to each person's higher self. We read in chapter VI, verse 5:

*By the Self the self must be upheld;  
the self should not be let down;  
The Self indeed is (its own) dear relative:*

*the self indeed is the enemy of the Self.* <sup>3</sup>

Although the Bhagavad Gītā is given as a part of the epic Mahābhārata, it is to be separated from the chronological narrative of the Kuru dynasty and treated as a scripture in itself, weaned off from the anthropologic personalisation of the Self. In the Vedantic context, its epistemology is not of monotheism but of monistic philosophy, at least in Śankara's version. The Self is not a historic concept but a universal idea of the Being which can validate all individual items of becoming. If a person is interested in making a comparative study of religion, that person should evolve a scheme of common epistemology. The epistemology of all separate religions should receive adequate attention, given re-interpreting terms which nominally resemble in sound, but are at variance in the conception, due to the difference in the application of such term's operational application. Without formulating a scheme of overall epistemology, methodology and axiology, one should never attempt to compare religious faith.

#### **Need to Have an Overall Frame of Reference**

To attempt the schematization of overall epistemology, methodology, and axiology of religions, the student has to overcome some of his/her basic prejudices about religion. Those who personally think of themselves as having no faith in established religions are also as much drawn to certain convictions which are not only similar to religious beliefs, but which also have similar psychological compulsions to hold on to their fundamental criteria. These are not dissimilar to religious maxims or even dogmas. Ninian Smart, in *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, suggests that we make ourselves familiar with the dimensions of religion. To this I want to add that political activists, patriotic activists, loyalists to a particular language or school of philosophy, all have very dynamic convictions which are not dissimilar to religious beliefs. Marxists, Christians, Socialists, Democrats, votaries of separate

medical disciplines, literary critics who represent the mode, style, diction and criticism developed by groups like Romanticists, Existentialists, etc., are also to be studied with the same intention to know the dimensions of their faith.

#### **Ninian Smart's Concepts of the Dimension of Religion**

1. The Ritual Dimension
2. The Mythological Dimension
3. The Doctrinal Dimension
4. The Ethical Dimension
5. The Social Dimension
6. The Experiential Dimension <sup>4</sup>

In the "ritual dimension" Smart focuses his attention on the expression of religion through such rituals as forms of worship, prayers, and offerings. Secondly, ritual is to be understood either as an inner dynamism that can regulate everyday life, or as an outer conformity which makes religion closed and ineffective.

The "mythological dimension" is the preservation of the deeper grassroots of the culture in the form of anecdotes and stories, mainly recalled to mind to reassert the value for something dear to people, even when they cannot fully account for their doctrinal validity.

The next is the "doctrinal dimension". To unite a number of people to work out a way of life systematically and with clear motivation, documents are to be formulated. In scientific treatises, the doctrinal dimension is to get universal acceptance, whereas in established religions, doctrines come to become dogmas. So one cannot expect the entire human race to accept a doctrine, in the sense in which gravitational law or the principle of thermodynamics is accepted.

Then we come to Smart's "ethical dimension." Both in religious practices and in political calls for loyalty, ethical adherence to behavior based on value systems is suggested, or in most cases, made imperative to be lived. Ethical dimensions are behind their mores, conventions and traditions.

The most important aspect of estab-

lished religions is the "social dimension" incorporated in them. According to Smart, "religions are not just systems of beliefs; they are also organizations or parts of organizations. They have a communal and social significance. This social shape of a religion is, of course, to some extent, determined by the religious and ethical ideals and practices that it harbors." For instance, Japanese fishermen find it very natural for them to take the life of fish even though they are Buddhists. Similarly, Christians will go for a crusade in case they have a national crisis, during which time they can excuse themselves from the teaching of the Gospel.

Ultimately, a firm conviction of any sort gives one's religion the "experiential dimension." Even a logically plausible doctrine can be forsaken if one's experience goes contrary to it. It is for this reason that Marxism does not include itself in religion, though it possesses doctrines, symbols, a moral code and even sometimes rituals, because Marxism denies the possibility of an experience of an invisible world. Neither a relationship to a personal God, nor the hope of an experience of salvation or Nirvana can be significant for the Marxist.

### Where Logic Insists on the Irrefutability of its Validation

Experiences can vary. In *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*, Nataraja Guru quotes Wittgenstein to uphold the belief that science seeks certitude. Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, says "Every proposition must already have a sense. It cannot be given a sense by affirmation. Indeed its sense is just what is affirmed. And the same applies to negation, etc.." And further on he states (in 6.125): "It is always possible to construe logic in such a way that every proposition is its own proof." <sup>5</sup> Nataraja Guru takes examples from modern science to explain the unity in the scientific presentation of truth.

*Modern science consists of findings which are capable of being expressed in the form of equations. Einstein, Planck or Schrodinger,*

*each has his famous equations expressed not only in algebraic symbols, but also incorporated into their structural counterparts which are geometrical in status. Equations in analytical geometry answer to graphs and vice versa, and they may be said to prove each other giving a fully scientific character to the certitude involved. Post-Hilbertian geometry is now an independent self-sufficient discipline, whose theories and actual objects come together, yielding high scientific certitude in the field of mathematics.*

Pratyaksha, a Vedantic term, which refers to the empirical evidence on which the positive sciences normally rest, is given its due place in the methodology of the Vedanta. Ontology, in Vedanta, refers to the very first item of the triple categories that finally compose the Absolute, which have been referred to collectively as sat-cit-ananda (existence-subsistence-value). Vedanta is therefore not an 'idealistic' philosophy as some authorities tend to think, but one that is a normalized version of truth arrived at from both the ends of existence and value. <sup>6</sup>

### The Same System Can Have Variable Fundamentals

Although Vedanta maintains a rational outlook and keeps its reasoning as close as possible to empirical and ontological considerations, it has a common ground with other religions, especially prophetic religions which have as their mainstay the bona fide of revelation. Nataraja Guru puts it as follows in which he also quotes Henry Bergson:

*At the other pole of the knowledge-situation, Vedanta fully recognizes what it calls sabda-pramana, the validity of the Word. This refers to the a priori or the axiomatic in the domain of pure names where each proposition can fully prove itself without any consideration of contradiction entering into it. At the very core is to be located the normalized neutral certitude, which is no less scientific than the other two and on both of which it depends. This verity is not unknown to some modern thinkers. Bergson strikingly refers to these 'two efforts of opposite direction' as follows: 'Coinciding with this matter, adopting the same*

*rhythm and the same movement, might not consciousness, by two efforts of opposite direction, raising itself and lowering itself by turns, become able to grasp from within, and no longer perceive only from without, the two forms of reality, body and mind? Would not this two-fold effort make us, as far as that is possible, re-live the absolute?' 7*

It is however, a mistake to generalize logic as a universal system. In the history of logic we come across the formal logic of Aristotle, Deontic and Modal Logic, Indian Logical Systems (Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika), Arabic Logic, Medieval Logic, Kantian Logic, John Stuart Mill's Logic of Induction, Bradley's Logic, Logical Positivism, Godel's Logic, and the Symbolic Logic of Lewis Carroll.

### **Historical Criticism Helps to Know Religion Better**

In the outer conformity of religion, the ethical and aesthetic dimensions are more important. In the aesthetic dimension, the temple of worship and its architectural motifs are made very elaborate to impress the public and also to impart the aesthetic

concepts of the particular religion to its millions of followers. This is evident in the historical monuments of ancient synagogues, medieval cathedrals, and modern mosques. Even non-theistic religions like Buddhism and Jainism elaborately beautify everything connected with their worship places. Even within the Christian religion William James points out distinct aesthetic tastes between the Catholics and the Protestants in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*:

*Although some persons aim most at intellectual purity and simplification, for others richness is the supreme imaginative requirement. When one's mind is strongly of this type, an individual religion will hardly serve the purpose. The inner need is rather of something institutional and complex, majestic in the hierarchic interrelatedness of its parts, with authority descending from stage to stage, and at every stage objects for adjectives of mystery and splendor, derived in the last resort from the Godhead who is the fountain and culmination of the system. One feels then as if in (the) presence of some vast encrusted work of jewelry or architecture; one hears the multitudinous*



*liturgical appeal; one gets the honorific vibration coming from every quarter. Compared with such a noble complexity, in which ascending and descending movements seem in no way to jar upon stability, in which no single item, however humble, is insignificant, because so many august institutions hold it in its place, how flat does evangelical Protestantism appear, how bare the atmosphere of those isolated lives whose boast it is that 'man in the bush with God may meet.' What a pulverization and leveling of what a gloriously piled-up structure! To an imagination used to the perspectives of dignity and glory, the naked gospel scheme seems to offer an almshouse for a palace.*

*The strength of these aesthetic sentiments makes it rigorously impossible, it seems to me, that Protestantism, however superior in spiritual profundity it may be to Catholicism, should at the present day succeed in making many converts from the more venerable ecclesiasticism. The latter offers a so much richer pasturage and shade to the fancy, has so many cells with so many different kinds of honey, is so indulgent in its multiform appeals to human nature, that Protestantism will always show to Catholic eyes the almshouse physiognomy. The bitter negativity of it is to the Catholic mind incomprehensible. To intellectual Catholics many of the antiquated beliefs and practices to which the Church gives countenance are, if taken literally, as childish as they are to Protestants. But they are childish in the pleasing sense of 'childlike'—innocent and amiable, and worthy to be smiled on in consideration of the undeveloped condition of the dear people's intellects. <sup>8</sup>*

### **Religion and Its Multidimensional Growth**

People associate something sacred with religion because of the antiquity of religion. People who care for facts are less concerned with the original cause or the origin of cause, than with the facts that are tied up with certain values, which either fall on the side of happiness or are tied up with miseries. The scientific study of man from a materialistic point of view suspects that all states of mind are neurally or neurotically conditioned. Thus, the reasonable man wishes to follow not a sentiment

which sanctions a criterion, but a superior intellect that can give the conviction of its judgment.

Religion cannot be established on terms of definitions. What supports religion is the historic fact that religion is more enthusiastic than cold-blooded philosophy. Religious enthusiasm stems from the solemnity of an emotion. As biological needs also presuppose the worthwhileness of a goal, the solemn and the divine are terms that call for attention.

### **Living Between the Seen and the Unseen**

The main theme of religion is the reality of the Unseen. The Cartesian separation of the body from mind influences one to give credence to being convinced by unreasoned experience. Religious belief supports the idea of the Unseen as opposed to the cold facts of life which are ontological and empirical, but they give no promise of a hopeful tomorrow.

Before going into the miseries of life one can feel one's healthy attraction towards the strong and the beautiful and the good, who walk in the forefront of the leaders of man. A known religious person like Walt Whitman presents in himself the nature of a Napoleon/Greek feeling, and the systematic healthy-mindedness of sweet reasonableness. When the materialistic view whole-heartedly supports stress and action, religious contemplativeness recommends salvation by relaxation.

On the whole we see the religious front binding people with clouded minds, suggesting that their souls are sick. Between hope and pessimism, pathological unhappiness and morbid fears are developed. As we walk on the road, studying our quarrelsome neighbor and interfering cousin or uncle, we stumble on the possibility of heterogeneous personalities. It is not always a conversion to religion that safeguards one's sanity but counter-conversion in which the religious rebel or the non-conformist stands out firm, holding before him a law unto himself.

There is certainly a lacunae or no-man's land in group life. Here, morally-threatened, physically weak, and rationally

infantile people generate the atmosphere of an asylum, which like a malevolent bacteria, infests more and more people to be involved in that dungeon of uncertainty. All the same, we cannot dismiss as irrelevant that in the caravansary of sick peoples' search, there occasionally arises one with the voice of an Archimedes proclaiming his or her discovery of the direct presence of the deity. We often hear of the lost and the found.

### Retrospective and Prospective Insight

In religion there is an easy passage from the present to the remote past, and also into an unforeseeable future in which we see historical figures and promising geniuses arrive to make their impact. The former belong to the group that swear by sages, and the latter are optimistic of the astounding possibility of logic bringing in a new effect where several old experiments have failed. Religion without its saintliness cannot justify the call made to the faithful. Saints of the past and the future are expected to be the product of devotion, absorption into the Beyond, impeccable purity and the natural ability to surrender in sacrifice. Asceticism symbolically stands for the heroic life. In militarism such kind of heroism often culminates in the shattering of the hero, whereas in religion, the sanity of a saint cannot be lost, in spite of all the social anomalies that prevent a saint from attaining immediate success.

### Mysticism

The most difficult arena in religion is mysticism. On one side, mysticism looks negative when it is supported by alcoholic spirits and mind-blowing drugs. Then once in awhile we come across the God-intoxicated person in whom the Buddha nature or the Christ nature configure benevolence as a direct outcome of mystical love. A dangerous field in mysticism is where the personal ego is promoted to give a mandate of authority to oneself as a savior or a prophet. Then one does not want to share that authority with anyone else. At the same time, mysticism breaks down the exclusive authority of rationalistic states.

In spite of the weirdness in which religion gets stuck as in a morass of irrationality, it is saved by a systematic building up of philosophy which comes as a dogmatic theology. Philosophy can succeed only when pragmatism as a test of value of conceptions can make a breakthrough.

(Continued in next issue.)

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# Music Research Report - Music and Painting

## Ānanda Nadayogi

Recently I had an experience during an evening bus journey. When I could see an open field I was absorbed by the vast sky, birds flying, cattle grazing in the field and a little pond in the middle of the ground. It all seemed like a picture to me first. Then everything seemed to transform into music. I could see only sound waves in the cows, birds, field, pool and the sky. This led me to the thought that if music could create visual images in the human mind, why could not scenery produce music in our hearts. It is just the same harmony existing in both. It is the melody and harmony in music that contribute to aesthetic enjoyment. So this incident made me keen to study the relationship between music and painting.

I happened to come across some Ragamala pictures and to hear more about this field. The visual expression of music had been done in India through the medium of miniature paintings. This is a field where not much research has been made. In the not-too-distant future I intend to meet some painters, philosophers and poets to play some Ragas for them and ask them to express through their own mediums what they feel.

An American Scholar, Mr. Close Ebeling is one of the persons who did some research in this branch of art form. All art forms can be subjected to some sort of interpretation. Ragamala pictures are considered to be the pictorial expression of musical Ragas. Indian classical music has two great traditions, Hindusthani music and Karnatic music. Miniature paintings originated in North India. Therefore the Ragamala pictures are based on the Hindusthani tradition of classical music. Ragamala pictures are found to have vividness even in their subtle drawings. These

pictures, drawn with cute brushes, are very rich in the symbolic representation of Ragas.

Raga is absolute music developed from a scale and elaborated to expose all its beauty and emotions. Ragas are broadly classified as masculine, feminine and neutral. Ragas have relation to time also. There are Ragas such as Bhupala to be sung during the early morning hours, Bilahari to be sung after the sun ascends to some height, Atana to be enunciated in the afternoon, Todi in the night, etc. It is also supposed that Ragas can cause rain, light a lamp, etc. It is logical to interpret these effects in a psychological dimension. Listening to such Ragas can cause the mood of a rainy day or bring light in the listener's mind. It is no wonder that these concepts helped the artists to depict the Ragas effectively.

Ragamala painters did not draw the pictures just from their imaginations. They depended on their previous knowledge and concepts about this subject. Thus the portrayal of human beings became an essential element of these pictures. The corner of a palace, a royal balcony, steps, ponds, trees, plants, animals, etc., are some general features of these paintings. That is why the Ragamala pictures possessed some similarity through they were drawn during different centuries and at distant places.

Some Ragas are given names having a bearing on the seasons. Thus Vasantha is named so because it is to be sung during the spring season. (Or is it because it will create an atmosphere of spring season or herald the coming in of spring season in the listener's mind?). The Raga for the rainy season is named Meghamalhar and a morning Raga is called Lalith. Folk mu-

sic is the origin of what is now called Classical music. The Raga which came from the land of Gurjarath is Gujari. Daughters of the farmers used to make sounds similar to Thodi to chase deer entering their farm. Snake charmers of the Saveri mountain tribals used shades of Asaveri Raga to draw in the snakes.

A lonely lady deprived is a common subject of Ragamala paintings. When her husband has gone out for quite a long time, she suffers from the pain of parting and starts to spend time painting her sweet-heart's pictures. This image is represented symbolically from the Raga Dhanasri. Raga Malsri depicts her expecting a message of love and plucking lotus petals with her beautiful hands. She wanders in the forest with peacocks and deer. The corresponding Ragas here are Kakumbha and Thodi. The Raga Bhairavi is pictured as she prays to the Lord Siva for her husband's safety till he comes back. Raga Gambhvati is shown as she is doing a sacrifice to Brahma.

When she becomes a Sannyasini like the Goddess Parvathi, it is the picturisation of Devagandharam, Bangali, Kamod or Setmalar. When she hears the good news of her husband's arrival she arranges and decorates the house with flowers which is pictured from the Raga Gunkali. Her wearing of the nine traditional ornaments is drawn corresponding to the Raga Bilaval. Another subject usually handled by the Ragamala artists is that of the reunion of separated lovers. Raga Ramkali is pictured as a lady showing her anger with love towards her husband when she sees some marks on his body implying that had intimacy with some other woman while he was away from home. Afterwards she is placated by her husband and finally she becomes happy and she dances. This picture is shown for Hindolam. A picture of a music concert represents Ragas Sri and Malkons.

Ragas Biragi, Malavi and Deepak are represented as the arrangements for the coming night of union. Vibhasa Raga is shown as the next day morning after the previous night of sexual play. Here while

his lover is still sleeping the husband goes out of the room with a garland in his hands.

Pahari artists used to paint Ragas based on the meaning of the names of the Ragas. That is why they drew a picture of girls swimming for Sindhuri Ragini, a woman with a hen for Kunkini Ragini, a worshipper of the moon for Chandra putra, a farmer couple milking their cow in the morning for Bhaskara putra, a man and woman sitting together chewing Betel leaves for Harsha putra, a man embracing two ladies for Vinoda putra.

Some Ragamala painters depended on Ragamala poems for their drawings. It is from Mesakaran's poems that artists drew a cat accompanying the Padmanjari Ragini, Abhiri Ragini feeding snakes, deer listening to Gurjari Ragini, a pet dog playing with Saveri Ragini and Saranga Ragini stirring curd. We should note that these Raginis are personified in these pictures.

This art form needs further research and it needs to be probed into. Perhaps that may lead to the unfoldment of new horizons and visions in the fields of music and painting. ❖





# Guru's Walks

Deborah Buchanan

*Introductory Note: This past summer of 1995 I spent a few weeks at the Fernhill Gurukula in Ooty with Guru Nitya. As always, he was busy with letters and visitors and working on his Upaniṣadic commentaries. In the mornings, however, we often found time for walks through the hills, either alone or with other friends who were there. During these walks Guru would tell stories or answer questions. The following series, of which this is the first entry, will try to record those conversations.*

Guru had been awake early this morning. While the rest of the Gurukula slept in the pale darkness of dawn, Guru was at his desk writing letters and listening to music. Only Karunan was up with him, bringing hot chai and milk biscuits. Finally at seven or eight o'clock everyone else was awake, drinking their own chai and waiting in line for the shower. It was before morning class and time for Guru's walk.

This July the monsoon weather was only half-hearted. A few clouds and showers would give way to sunny afternoons and a clear blue sky behind Ooty's folded green hills. Or a light mist would hover over everything, holding a quietness and softness onto the villages and tea fields. Yet it was still cool and we bundled up for the mountain chill. As Guru put on his hat, someone ran to get his walking stick. The paths could be wet and slippery.

Guru's walking stick is a short and simply cut piece of dark wood, perhaps mahogany, with a small handle for gripping. It is covered with elegant patterns of silver metal pieces and is both beautiful and functional. A friend, a retired Indian army officer who also lived in the Nilgiris Mountains, had given it to Guru. It had come to him when he was one of the officers attending an Indian/Pakistani

peace conference held during a pause in the many acrimonious skirmishes along the Northwest border. The walking stick had belonged to the head Pakistani general who, in a feeling of reconciliation, gave it to his Indian counterpart. It had then come to Guru's friend, and finally to him. Now the Pakistani stick rested in a corner of Guru's sleeping room, next to a shelf of philosophy books, and came out for walks around the paths of Fernhill village.

Guru and I were alone today. As we walked out the Gurukula path to the main roadway the morning mist rose up around the trees, swirling around the branches of the cypress and eucalyptus and carrying a faint trace of their pungent scents up into the clouds. A young brahmachari ran ahead of us to open the gate. He seemed all scurrying long legs and solemn intent. As the gate swung open, I saw that already this morning the path had been swept clean of leaves.

We walked past the cows just put out to graze. "Lakṣmi, Lakṣmi," Guru called to the older one, but she was too busy eating to look or come over. Guru pointed out the honeysuckle bushes planted along the barbed wire to cover the sharp twists and to offer nectar to the birds.

Going down the path to the lower village we came to the site where on all my previous visits the sacred tree had grown. It had been an old, big-leaved tree, gnarled and spreading, and held holy by many of the local people. Always there were offerings of flowers or sandlepaste or oil at its base. I have many memories of Guru hugging this tree, his ample bulk stretching to enclose the living force of an even larger benevolent spirit. Then last year the tree had fallen over from internal rot, and it was now the stump that received offerings--a small Śiva trident, a painting of

some deity, and flowers.

The air was filled with a clacking call as if wooden Japanese temple bells were being struck, again and again, forming a tapestry of sound. The sound would come, then die out, and come again from another location. I thought it was crickets or some insect roused to voice by the coming rains, but Guru said, "No, those are little forest toads. I have been listening to them for nearly forty years and yet I have never seen one. They are very shy." Their enigmatic call haunted the valley.

At the curve of the road Guru stopped. The mist swirled up again, mixing with the light drizzle coming down. Below us, before the turn to the village, lay a valley. Opposite was a steep hill covered with tea bushes and their sheltering companions the silver oak trees. In the valley and beyond the tea fields were thick stands of native woods.

"Nataraja Guru called this the valley of meditation, the valley of silence," said Guru as he held out his walking stick, touching the ground in front of us with a certain resolution and electric connection. We stood quietly together. Some villagers walked quickly past us on their way to work. Then Guru began to speak--part chant, part prayer, part conversation--his

words resonating in the floating space around us.

"This grass is as if in meditation.

This cloud is as if in meditation.

This dirt is as if in meditation.

This mist is as if in mediation.

These frogs are as if in meditation.

This valley is as if in meditation.

This hill is as if in meditation.

These sounds are as if in meditation.

This sky is as if in meditation.

It stretches out limitless, encompassing all, filled with generosity and love.

Meditate on this sky and you will be filled with the same compassion."

We stood for awhile after Guru had finished, then turned back to the Gurukula and walked up the path together without saying anything. There was a sense of quiet companionship between us, a tenderness and friendship that needed no words.

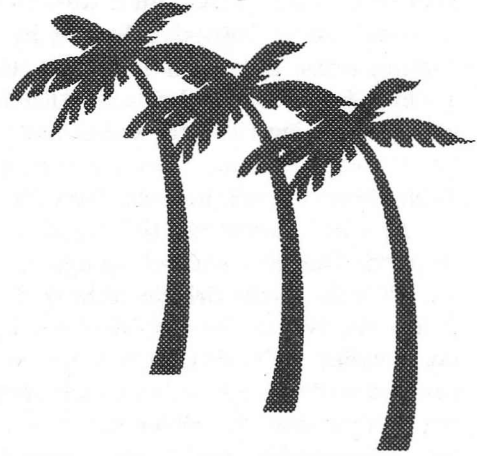
Dark, shiny spots on the road marked the large rain puddles. On their surface a grey sky reflected a transparent world. They were spreading out, their liquid edges stretching and changing. Soon that wet glossiness was everywhere, covering all the road before us.



# Especially for Children

## *Trees*

*Trees are very big  
They have some little twigs  
They have green leaves  
They swing with the breeze  
They have little flowers  
They protect the earth like a cover  
But man destroys the trees  
Which are like trembling knees  
They grow as they live  
They carry beehives  
They shed their leaves each season  
And grow new leaves the next season.*



## *Hare and Mouse*

*There lived a hare  
Which was very fair  
It lived in a small house  
There also lived a mouse  
They were good friends  
They also lend to each other  
Mouse was very naughty  
There was food in plenty  
Once they fought with each other  
And they were separated from one another.*

# Thankam Suresh

## *The Sea*

*There are small creatures in sea  
There are also creatures  
That we cannot see  
There are fishes and snakes  
There is no idea which we can make  
Sea is very deep  
It is not heap  
There are small plants in the sea  
No one can go there including bee  
It is really blue  
I can give you a clue.*

## *Alice in Wonderland*

*Alice went to Wonderland  
In the sound of thunder band  
She hurried down the rabbit hole  
And was frightened to see a mole  
After so much wonder  
She thought about the thunder  
When she was in Wonderland  
She had a cap  
But when she woke up from her sleep  
She was in her sister's lap.*

# East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



The celebration of the centenary year of Nataraja Guru, founder Guru of the Narayana Gurukula Foundation of India and abroad, began with the forty-fifth Annual Convention of the Narayana Gurukula at its headquarters, Varkala, Kerala, with papers based on the major books of Nataraja Guru, presented by Guru Nitya, Muni Narayana Prasad, Dr. S. Omana, Dr. P.V. Unnikrishnan, Chidambara Teertha, Sadar Deviner Singh Sodhi, Prof. J. Mahilamony and Vinaya Chaitanya.

Over the year celebrations were held in the various Gurukula centers in India, Fiji, Singapore and the United States. On January 14, at a program in Coimbatore, Guru Nitya presented Nataraja Guru's life and teachings and released all the major works of Nataraja Guru.

In February, the Gurukula Management took a decision to establish the Nataraja Gurukula Search and Study Center at Fernhill Gurukula which will house a research library, press and desktop publication arrangement as well as facilities to accommodate five research scholars. Construction is now underway.

On May 21, the members and friends of Geeta Ashram, Ba, Fiji, remembered Nataraja Guru with talks by Swami Damodarananji of the Ramakrishna Mission

and Vyasa Prasad of Narayana Gurukula.

On August 27, residents and friends of Island Gurukula Aranya, Bainbridge Island and the Narayana Gurukula Foundation of the United States gathered from Oregon, California and Washington states to celebrate the light of the Guru's wisdom which continues to provide living guidance for our lives.

*From Guru Nitya:*

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Fernhill, which is emerging into a paradise of flowers, bees, butterflies and songbirds. We hope you will be pleased to make this newsletter a welcome bridge between us to share our joy, our thoughts, and programs of common interest, as well as to use this as a medium for inviting you to participate in one or another program in which you might be interested.

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati and Gurusaran Jyothi were invited by the family of the late Sri Ulaga Nathan of Singapore to solemnize the wedding of Sow. Sujata in June. We were sponsored by Sri. Jayadev Unnithan, president of Narayana Gurukula of Singapore. Our visit to Singapore from the 4th to the 24th of June 1995,

turned out to be loveful reunion with several friends in thirty homes, and also of attending group talks and discussions arranged by the Narayana Gurukula, Sri Aurobindo Society, the Theosophical Society and the Bahai Community in Singapore. Our good friend and well-wisher Sri N.C.Patel provided the Singapore Narayana Gurukula with a Hewlett Packard Laserjet 41, which was donated to the Fernhill Gurukula.

The new books we have recently published are in English and Malayalam. The English books are the commentary on the Muni Kānda of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad; Nataraja Guru's *Wisdom's Frame of Reference*; *The Saundarya Lahari of Śankara*, with Nitya Chaitanya Yati's commentary on *Ānanda Lahari*; and also Nitya's latest book, *The Gita-A Managerial Science*. Nitya's *Love and Devotion* and *Neither This Nor That But AUM* have now been reprinted by D.K. Printworld of New Delhi. Our new Malayalam books are *Indiaye Nasattil Ninnum Nasattilekku Kontu Pokunna Matavum Rashtriyavum*, followed by a sequential, *Panca Darsana Manjusha*, and *Gitanjali*, of Sri Rabindranath Tagore, a *bhava prakasa* in Malayalam; and a Malayalam rendering of Herman Hess's *Wanderings*, entitled *Hesseyute Desatanam*. These books are to be followed by the Third Volume of the Brihadaranyka Upanishad, the *Khila Kanda*, and five more books in Malayalam this year.

### Symphony of Values

For the last ten years we have been in pursuit of materials for an audio-visual presentation of the value vision we are holding very dear to guide the destiny of mankind. This is meant to be a silent revolution, not much of the head, but more of the good we can expect from hearts dedicated to the jubilation of beauty, truth and goodness. Our project is ambitious, because this work is to be spread out in many countries, putting together the achievements of several civilizations through the millennia, so that the cosmos of space and the history of time can give us a valid frame of reference in which to

place the on going story of Man. We are optimistic enough to believe that this small rivulet of our fanciful reconstruction of dreams in several fields will gain sufficient momentum to flow through time with the elegance of Ganga, the historical rapids of the Nile, Euphrates, Mississippi and Volga, the mystical fairy tales of Hwang Ho of China, the Parana and Amazon of South America, the central African river of the Congo and the Niger of West Africa, and of course the dear Darling of Australia. We also do not belittle the St. Lawrence of Canada. In short, we will insist on flowing through every country of the world, examining what they have contributed to man's culture.

### Architecture

The first major item on our Agenda is Architecture. We want to present the ancient architectural models of the Greeks and Romans, ancient Indian Hindu Temples, and the Buddhist stupas of India, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Cambodia, and Japan. We want to give special attention to the 11th and 12 century Romanesque and Gothic styles of Europe, especially of England, France, Germany and Italy. This will naturally take us to the Islamic architecture of Arabia and the Middle East. In Western architecture the most profound musical conception of architecture is depicted in the Chartres Cathedral in France.

A deep bond was established between the music of masters like Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven and the architects of Europe, especially those who were building cathedrals. As we intertwine architecture and music, we assign to the same faculty music in general, conceived geographically and chronologically. We intend to focus on the different schools of music by country and also interrelate music as a global phenomenon.

As we go on organizing one faculty after another we shall give the details.

Yours in fraternity,  
Nitya,  
For Narayana Gurukula Foundation

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**By Nataraja Guru**

An Integrated Science of the Absolute (Volumes I, II, III)  
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