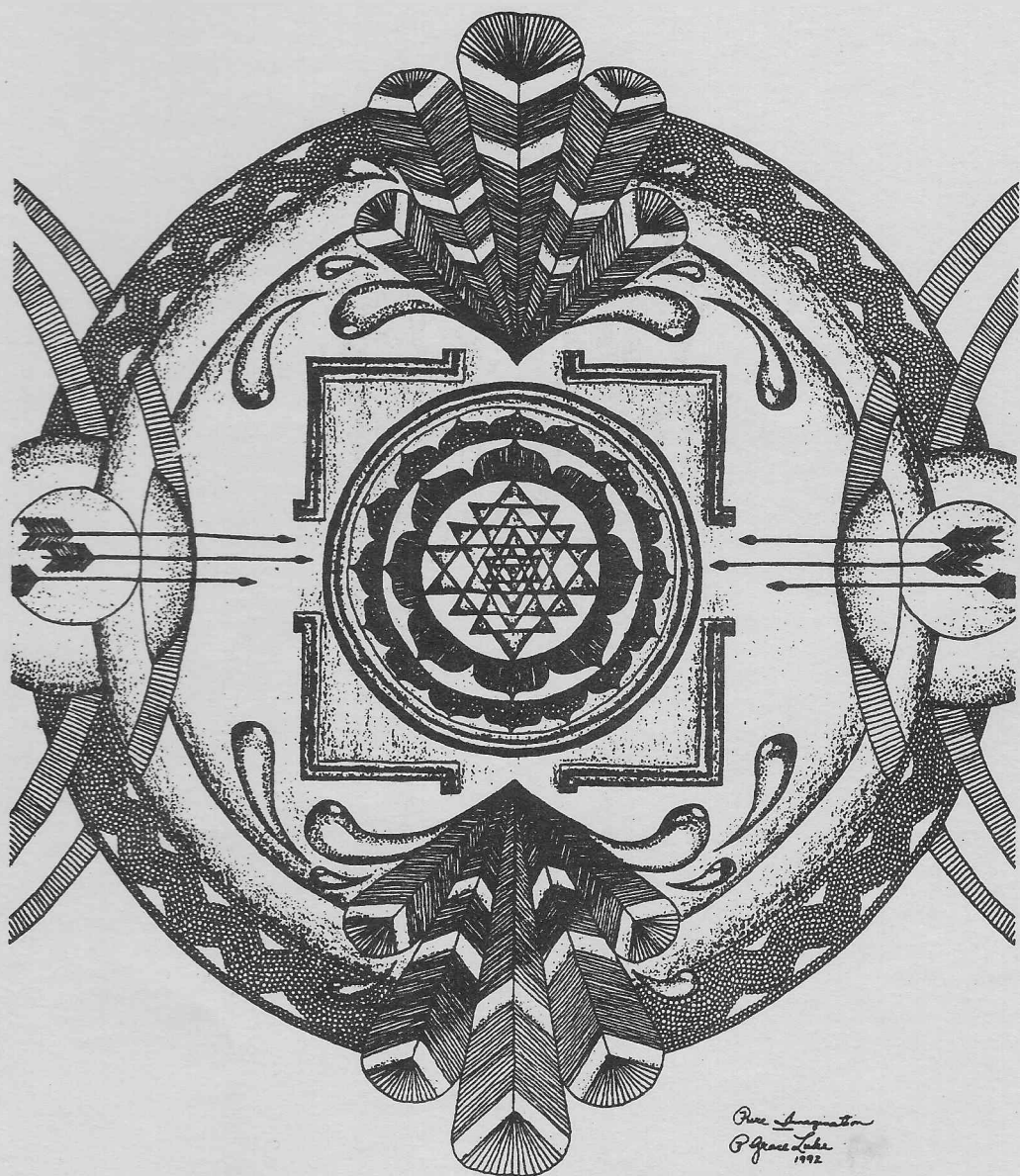


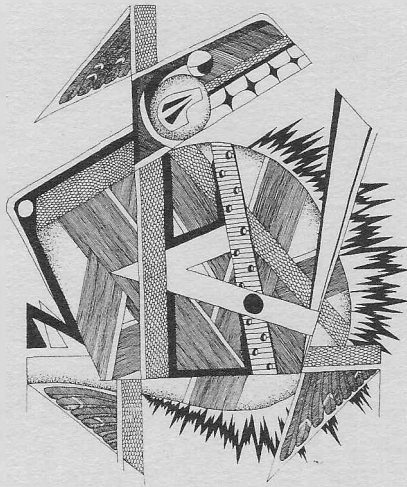
GURUKULAM

VOLUME XII • 1996

FIRST-SECOND QUARTER



P. V. Srinivasan
P. V. Srinivasan
1992



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GURUKULAM

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITION

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

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

FOUNDER: Nataraja Guru
GURU and HEAD: Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
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PUBLICATIONS BOARD: Deborah Buchanan, Sraddha Durand, Scott Teitsworth, Robert Tyson, Nancy Yeilding.

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: Yearly: \$20.00 for four issues. For outside USA add \$4.50 for surface mail, \$14.50 for air mail. Write to: GURUKULAM, 8311 Quail Hill Road, Bainbridge Island, WA, 98110, USA. In India write to: Narayana Gurukula, Srinivasapuram P.O., Varkala, Kerala, 695145, India.

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

COVER: *Pure Imagination* by Peggy Grace Sava

Printed on Recycled Paper
With Soy Based Ink

Approaching the Real

The day was gray, at the fag end of winter, and the facades of the old stone buildings shared the grayness of the day. A light rain fell, making small puddles in the uneven cobblestones of the streets. It was cold, our packs were heavy on our backs and we were weary of travel, but we were on a pilgrimage, so we continued to walk. We had come halfway across Europe, led only by the promise implied in a name: Brancusi. I knew nothing about him except what might be implied by the words, "modern sculptor." But there had been a special light in my friend's eyes when he had told me there was a show we could go to. We had already been dazzled by the beautiful paintings in the Uffizi, stood in awe before the works of Michelangelo in Rome, and felt our spirits lifted up into the soaring vaults of the great cathedrals. Most of the art and architecture we had seen had been done in service to the Church, following the lines of an artistic tradition which sought to inspire and chasten the populace.

Shivering in the cavernous stone cathedrals, we had looked up to stained glass windows that depicted scenes from the life of Christ and stood before niches holding paintings that graphically demonstrated the agonies of the martyrs. We had discovered mythical beings carved into borders and archways and noted how the cathedral architecture inevitably drew our attention to the gruesome though often golden crucifix centrally placed in the nave. Traveling from city to city, we had slowly evolved a sense of the classical repertoire of images, symbols and decorative devices used to convey religious meanings. But they did not speak to us. Their style was of an earlier age, a worldview that did not match our reality where demons and devils wore all-too-human faces and the ever-present threat of man-made, universal destruction rendered God's day of judgment almost meaningless. We admired the craftsmanship but

our hearts were not touched, our souls not instructed.

That had changed when we stood in the presence of Michelangelo's *Pieta* at St. Peter's Basilica. Though the material was cold stone, it conveyed the restrained grief of the mother holding her broken son. The purity and glossiness of the white stone beautifully molded by the artist's passion and dedication spoke to the soul of the possibility of perfection, of transcendence of the ordinary. The elaborate trappings of Catholic Rome had seemed far away from the important issues of life, sometimes ridiculous in their superstition, sometimes even abhorrent in the exercise of power and victimization of the poor and ignorant. But there in the middle of it all was the flame of a living soul, reaching out to the yearning in our own. The classical images and methods had been explored, reworked and refined until they reached a culmination in works such as the *Pieta*. But a master like Michelangelo comes along very rarely. Since his days, human thought had broken free of the strictures of the Church. Science and technology had irrevocably altered the outline of human culture. But the need to look beyond and within continued.

So we found ourselves on a different kind of pilgrimage, to a museum of modern art, to see what someone of our own century had to say to us. We saw many images that day, but one was so singular that it pushes all the others out of memory. There was no music, no tapestries, no gold-plated altar, no vivid red, yellow and blue-colored light streaming down from above. There in a silent room with bare walls and floor was a single piece of metal. But somehow that piece of metal was itself a song, evoking an answering song in the heart. Clearly in flight, it gave the spirit wings on which to soar to that which lies beyond words. We stood in silence, in timeless wonder, until soft bells indicated the museum would soon close. Then we

spent a few minutes reading about its creator, Constantine Brancusi:

Born (1876) of a well-to-do peasant family in a village in Romania, he was a shepherd in his youth. He then worked as an artisan, showing so much promise that his employer aided him in attending an arts and crafts institute and then the Bucharest School of Fine Arts. After finishing school, he made a pilgrimage of his own, to Paris and thus to Rodin, whom he saw as having "transformed everything" in sculpture. But he chose not to study with Rodin, feeling that "nothing grows in the shadow of great trees." He lived a simple life, admiring the dedication of the traditional icon-makers he knew in his youth who would undertake long fasts before beginning a new painting. There were also quotes from Brancusi about himself and his work which made it clear that the effect his work had on us was no accident:

I said to myself: I must express the spirit of the subject. The spirit will be alive forever. . . It grows in the viewer like life from life.

I am not Surrealist, Baroque, Cubist, nothing of this kind. My new I comes from something very old.

Simplicity is not a goal in art, but one arrives at simplicity in spite of oneself by approaching the real sense of things.

We will never be grateful enough toward the Earth that has given us everything.

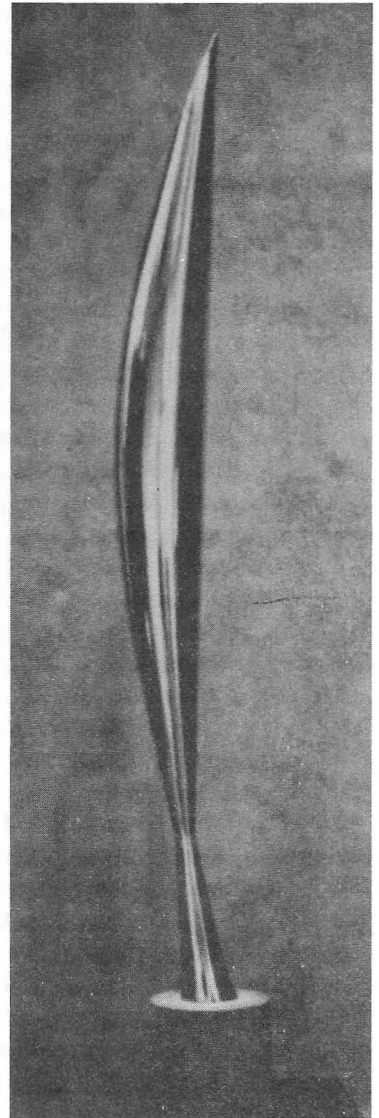
They are imbeciles who call my work abstract; that which they call abstract is the most realist, because what is real is not the exterior form but the idea, the essence of things.

Sculptures are occasions for meditation. Temples and churches have always been and have remained sanctuaries for meditation.

Brancusi is a good example of the modern artist, freed from convention, whose work still serves the purpose of indicating the essence that is described by Narayana Guru as being "In and beyond the knowledge which shines at once within and without the knower." Narayana Guru continues: "to that, with the five senses withheld, bow down in devotion

and chant." By putting himself at the disposal of the process of attaining deep insight into reality and creating images that embody that insight for others, Brancusi helps us to understand how one can transform one's whole life into a chant through one's dedication and work.

Nancy Yeilding



Bird in Space, 1928

Quotes and photo from Roger Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own*, Shambhala Publications, Boston, 1989, p.231, 242-246.

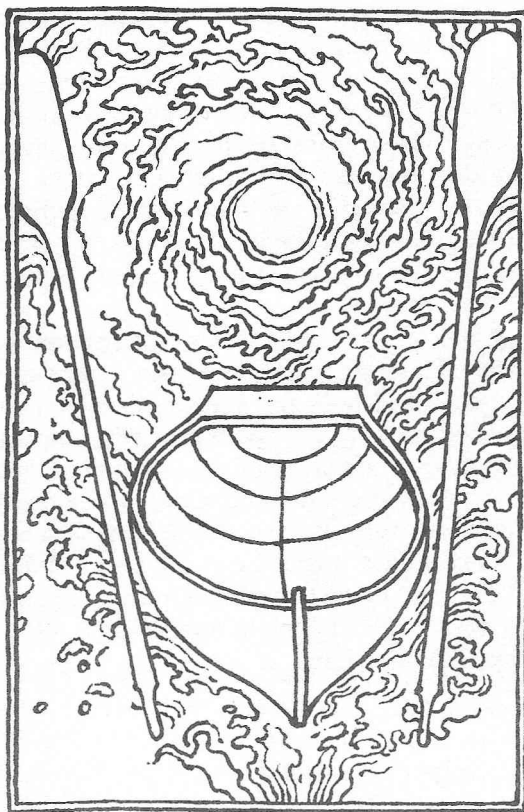
Svānubhavagīti Śatakam:

Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



Verse 93

Having swam and crossed over the boiling ocean of distress,
desiring to rest my eager eyes on You,
You are nowhere to be seen.
All the same, from all around, Your penetrating
wisdom sweeps into me,
and I stand in supplication to receive Your Grace.

The phenomenal world in which we live, engaged in the transactions of the day and the dreams of the night, contains strange undercurrents originating from unknown sources, which are moving in unpredictable directions like typhoons. In that sweep several mutually unrelated people are affected and afflicted by these submarine forces. For no reason directly known to us, we behave in a weird fashion. As if stung by a poisonous cobra of depression, we are exposed to irrational anxieties.

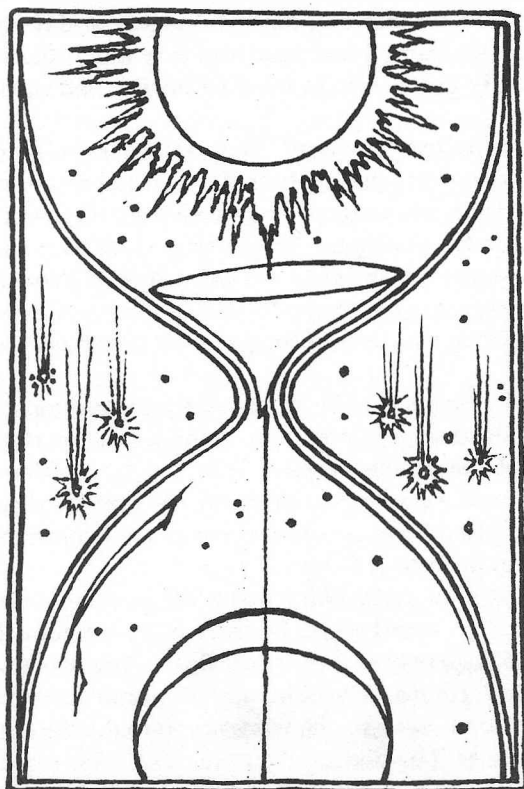
When several times such unknown causes bring lesions and bruises, our faith in the good and self-confidence in our prowess are deeply afflicted. Pathological states set in physically, and moral weakness or culpability make the mind less and less sure of its goal. Aspirations and ambitions put forward with enthusiasm are systematically thwarted as if the world order is chaotic and a person has no rightful place in it. When misfortune rains from all sides even the best mind becomes paranoid, and several escapes are planned unsuccessfully. In the quest to flee, the thought of suicide is not uncommon. Turning masochistic or sadistic is also not unusual.

When the aggressive ego cannot prop up its confidence with the normal devices of transactional skill and cunning, as a last resort faith is lifted out of its personal basis and is projected onto the super-normal or the supernatural possibilities of an unknown hand guiding such a person to a new pasture with the magical intervention of God's Grace coming to save the drowning fugitive. Most people take a hint about the existence of a savior from descriptions given in religious books and from the romantic fantasies precipitated by poets and artists. In the minds of people there are familiar figures of the saviors they seek. To ward off the evil of such fantasizing, the Qur'an decreed that God has no form and that caricaturing God is blasphemous.

In this poem we have already seen the frustration of the poet in describing *Sadāśiva*. He admits that after a great struggle, when he got out of the broiling ocean of distress and somehow crossed over to the other side, he was greeted by only the absence of what he was eager to see. However, the supplicant is not totally disappointed, because haunting words of the wise which might have occurred to them by the grace of the Lord are coming to him from all sides. It is as if the God of the Word is the nearest one can experience when one is still plugged into the living organism where mind and intellect continue to be a receiving station. We have here a description of the mystic in one of his plights which still holds out hope and inspiration to him.

Verse 94

O Grand Juggler who plays with the two balls
of sun and moon, alternating day and night,
it must please you that they rise slowly in the sky
and from above hunt and devour us insignificant
creatures in the course of time.
May you be ever victorious.



When life is too much and people do not see any end to their suffering, the only hope they have is the intervention of God as a magical performer of miracles. Miracles can happen only when predictable consequences are averted and the laws of nature are forestalled by an unknown factor. This is only so in the case of people who want a God who will always be a do-gooder and will carry out all the pious wishes of a devotee.

It needs a more perfect understanding to have an insight into the real functioning of the divine order. When Jesus was crucified and the crowd around was mocking him as he was undergoing the last pangs of death, probably he also wished that God would interfere and save him from the cross. His last wish was to moisten his lips and wet his throat. But the cruel people standing by gave him only a piece of cloth dipped in vinegar. When Jesus saw the inevitable coming to its worst, he was forced to say, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Immediately after saying that, true wisdom prevailed upon him. He knew that the ordained laws can never be altered. So accepting, in good faith, what was ordained, he said, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." The Buddha reiterates the law in simple terms. "Whoever is born has to die. Everything created will be demolished. Whatever has come together will be separated."

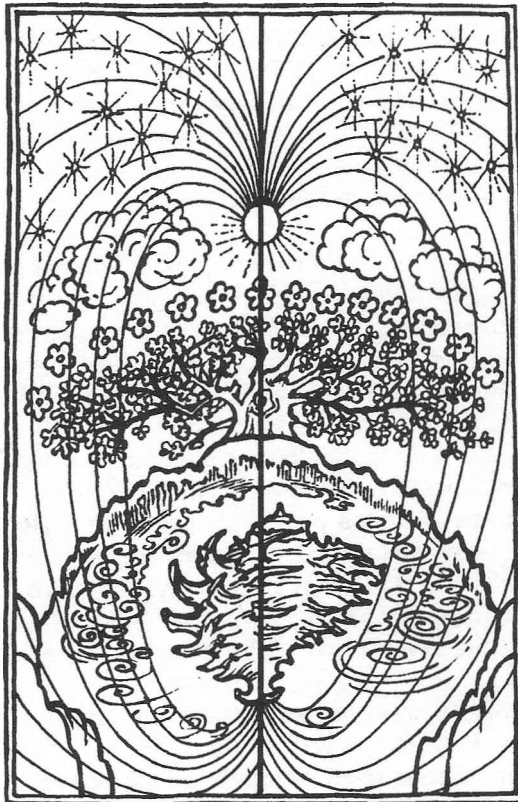
In the present verse the supplicant is asking for no favor. He willingly nods his head to the Will of God. He says "You are engaged always in your humorous sport of juggling with heavenly bodies. You perhaps do not realize how hard it is for us to put up with your two balls,

sun and moon, that are marking day and night. A day lived means we have gone closer to death. How beautiful they look - the sun and moon - when they gently gently rise in the Eastern sky and again set with the same gentleness.

But what do they do here? They are the most merciless hunters who divide between them the spoils of the world. They stand at a vantage point in the sky from where they can stretch their hands in all directions and grab us insignificant beings. They wring out of us the very essence of our life. You are playing and they are also playing. What does it matter, so long as ultimately you are pleased? You are the vanquisher of all. Who can stop you sending the darts of time against which we have no ploy by which to escape?"

A true devotee has to be an absolutist in recognizing the plenum of truth. He or she does not look for a compromise, so does not pray for any remission of the divine decree. That is why in Islam a Sufi never prays that he should be saved from death nor that his disease be cured. His only prayer is that he be made courageous and strong to accept even the most dreadful decrees of God.

In the present verse Narayana Guru is only stating the factual *modus operandi* of this world which is created to be demolished. It is well recognized by all wise people that we are dust. From dust we are created and to dust we will return. The Guru says, "I admit we are fashioned out of dirt, and you don't have to change your eternal laws for us. Be victorious always. Thy Will be done."



Verse 95

Oh God, You and I are one.
I do not have any desire but to entertain
such a thought of unity.
There are many ways if one seeks only distraction.
Whichever way one goes, ultimately they
will all come to You.

On the top-most branch of a tall tree, a bud opens into a fully bloomed flower. Its petals are turned toward the sun that is shining in the sky in full glory. In the clear light of the sun, the flower looks gorgeous. Is that flower an entity in itself? It has colors, fragrance and sweet honey. It comes as a result of a conspiracy between the earth below and the sun above. It is an offspring born of the mating of earth and heaven. This flower has its origin in the genetic characteristics of a particular species of tree which knows how to distill from its earthen base the right salts, minerals and other nutrients that can ultimately be processed into such a fine flower.

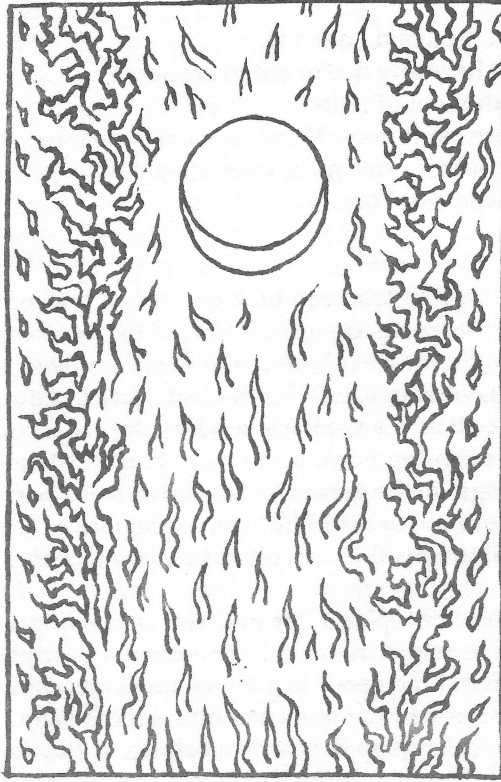
From the atmospheric air and the alternating rays of sun and moon, an invisible magician might have secreted the right energy to process the chemistry of the petals to give the flower its color and smell and transform the essence of the tree's sap into sweet honey. In this context, the sweet flower belongs to the earth; it belongs to the sky; and it belongs to the river of life flowing through millennia as the genetic continuation of a certain species of the botanical world.

When a person looks into the act of creation, the creator, the created and the stuff of creation with such an insight, it is not difficult to see how everything belongs to one order. Such unitive knowledge does not always prevail. One thinks a localized fragment alone to be true. The present poet, who is endowed with unitive vision, is not asking for any alteration in the system. He only wants to have a penetrating vision that can pass through the entire parameter ranging from the alpha to the omega.

When a person does not know the unity of all things, he/she will be tempted to look for alternatives. A person can climb a steep hill with a short-cut which goes directly from the bottom to the summit. Another can go with less effort by a circuitous road which winds around the hill and ultimately reaches the summit. What one gains in time, the same one loses in effort. Here the supplicant endowed with unitive vision says that he is not going to be betrayed by thoughts that there can be alternative ways. In short, there is only one truth, and we all belong to it.

Verse 96

Oh Crescent Bearer, when I reflect deeply,
I know I've no other God than You.
Oh Pillar of Fire, you put to shame even a golden lamp.
Mind and all such factors that constitute this
life are licked away by you into nothingness,
Oh Transcendence, the very embodiment of sweetness.



The full moon and the crescent moon are the same. Although the exaggeration of the full moon is curbed in the crescent, the crescent still represents the moon. In the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*, before the rishi identifies the person in him and the person in the sun to be the same, he requests the sun to gather its blinding rays so that he may have a good look at the true being in the sun. In that context the rishi is identifying himself as *satya dharma*, the truthful performer of righteousness. The consideration that is shown in that mantra, comparing the person in the individual self to the eye that sees and the person in the heavenly orb to the light that shows is expressed here in a more metaphorical manner.

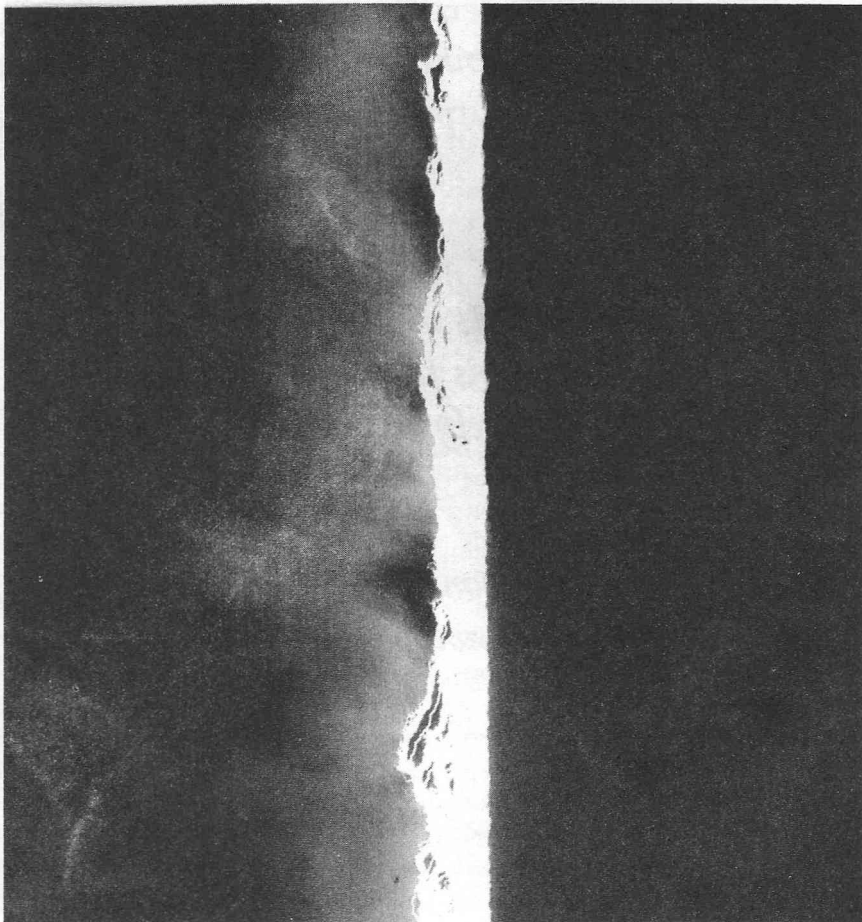
The crescent bearer is Nataraja whose symbolic meaning has already been described in the present study. Under the foot of Nataraja is the dwarf, Ego, representing the libidinal urge with which we start our life. If this dwarf marks the alpha of a vertical parameter which Śiva represents, the crescent is the omega which shows to what sublime height one has to sublimate oneself in one's adoration of the Lord. Going from the gross libidinal upsurge of a self-centered ego to a faint light which still belongs to the noumenon is to be understood here as the careful reflection referred to in the first line of this verse. The conclusion the aspirant arrives at is the certitude that he has no other God than the Crescent Bearer.

There is a mythological story that Śiva once appeared as a dazzling column of fire. Neither the bottom of the column nor its top could

be seen. In this verse even the brightest light which a person can think of is said to be nowhere close to the luminosity of this column of fire. In Bergsonian terms the brightness of Śiva is a gold coin which can never be fully paid for by all the copper coins of the world. The brightness spoken of here is not of the order of the dazzling light of the sun, because the climax of the Lord's luminosity is represented by the crescent that He wears in His matted hair.

Śiva's role as the absolute dissolver of all is again remembered. Humans are proud of being endowed with mind. In higher realization mind is to be dropped as a peripheral glow. Only in a state of total absorption does the seeker become one with the Supreme. In the frenzied state of a God-intoxicated person, the coherence of mind is lost, and what matters is the white heat of mysticism which manifests in a lover of the Absolute. In *Ātmopadeśa Śataka*, verse 13, the Guru refers to the highest state as where the wonder of union even subsides to a zero point as a mark of one's final culmination in supreme attainment: "having cooled down the senses, unwound everything and become calm, when even the glory of aloneness has gone, become established in *mahas* (the perennial source and terminus of creation)."

(Continued in next issue.)



Song For Today

*Oh Glory be to God for All that is
That laughs shouts sings soft whispers cries for joy
As boys and girls explore new ways to be
Run swim dance leap climb play pretend to fly*

*As daisies with white faces roses pink red flame
Slim bluebells violets stock primroses vetch
Gnarled oaks straight pines gorse grasses apple-trees
Ripe plums grapes purple green sweet nectarines*

*In butterflies loud gulls that sail the wind
Ants swans and bats mosquitoes gentle doves
Sleek tigers lions fleas and crocodiles
Proud cats that surely love so well they know*

*Stars planets moons expanding universe
So many suns wee atoms molecules*

Sheilah Johns

*Vast oceans mines volcanoes streams
Peaked mountains snowflakes waterfalls*

*Our bodies - forests deserts rivers lakes
For microscopic breeds bacilli genes
Each mouthful downed one million lives supports
This unsung population health maintains*

*And what of man? What mysteries are here?
Where hides the roving mind? How are we made?
And what formed Mozart Einstein Angelo
Blake Bronte Shakespeare Nitya Picasso?*

*Imagination soaring intellect
The rainbow colors of our human race?
Awake in All behold One Consciousness
Where Light and Life present unceasing God.*

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

VI: 15

*When all the knots of the heart
are cut off thus,
here in this life,
a mortal becomes immortal.
Thus far is the instruction.*

In our life we are all bound by different identities, desires, obligations and responsibilities. We do not become involved in them deliberately. All of them have become a natural part of our existence without our premeditation. Of these bondages, the most subtle and the most binding is the sense of identity with the body. It is these bondages, evident and implied together, which are here called knots (*granthi*).

It is this state of finding ourselves attached or knotted that makes us emotionally attached to anything. Consciousness as the source of all these emotional attachments is called *hṛt* in Sanskrit, which literally means the heart. The peculiarity of heart is that the emotional attachment it causes is not caused deliberately. Etymologically also the word *hṛt* means unknowing.

It is because of our sense of identity with the body that we become afraid of the destruction of the body, which we then take as death or the end of life. When one realizes the truth that Ultimate Reality, symbolized by the monosyllable *Aum*, is the only thing which exists, one becomes free of all the knots, which begin with our sense of identity with the body and end in

our death. Thus we are freed of the false notion that we are mortal. That means we have attained immortality even while living in this body. Then there is no question of the state after death. No Guru and no scripture has any instruction beyond that: making immortality real here and now.

The Upaniṣadic instruction given in this mantra is not that man should become irresponsible with no liability. The interest in and the identity with the ultimate Truth, realized as the Self, cuts off all other interests and identities. The Self being the ultimate Truth, one's love for the Self also becomes transformed as the love for everything, thus making one responsible in the fullest sense with unlimited liability.

VII: 16

*There are a hundred channels,
and one of the heart.*

*Of these, one passes up
to the crown of the head.*

*Going up through it
one attains immortality.*

*The others come into being repeatedly
in variegated forms.*

According to the system of Yoga philosophy, the human body has a central nerve called *suṣumnā nāḍi* passing vertically through the vertebral column with thousands of branch nerves that spread sideways from either side of the *suṣumnā*.

Making use of this concept as a metaphor, the structural peculiarities of self-knowledge are elucidated here. The necessity of cutting off the knots of bondages and prejudices in order to find the essence of self-existence was pointed out in the last mantra. Such knotted nerves are divided here into two classes. One class contains only one nerve and the other a hundred. Here a hundred stands for the many. We can relate to the world around us in two ways. The first way is that of relating to everything that is other than me. There is no end to this kind of transactional relation. The second way is that of relating to everything with the attitude that it is only the Ultimate Truth that is in everything including me. In this relationship we actualize the oneness of Truth through one fact of the Truth being related to another and finding its unity of content and interest. This kind of attitude and interest are depicted here as the channel of the one (*ekā*) nerve. It is also of the nature of moving upward vertically. Our bipolarity deliberately cultivated with the Absolute Truth is the one nerve mentioned here. The countless transactional interests of the horizontal plane are represented by the one hundred nerves. Those who see the transactional as the real find it too complicated to cross over. That is what we call worldly suffering. The only solution to this suffering--and also the only way to transcend death--is to verticalize our outlook, attitude and interests (which are knotted in the complexity of horizontality) with the unity of the master interest.

"The One" could also be taken to mean Reality and "the hundred" to mean unrealities. Unrealities can be countless, while Reality will always be one. There is a popular belief in India that the souls of the liberated ones leave their bodies at the time of death by moving up through the central nerve and breaking through the skull at the crevice in its crown.

VII: 17

That Person of the measure of a thumb

*is the innermost self,
ever seated in the heart
of all individuals.*

*Him one should draw out
from one's own body
to its Absolute status*

*like an arrow shaft out from a reed,
with firmness.*

*Him one should know as the Pure,
the Immortal,*

*Yea, Him one should know as the Pure,
the Immortal!*

It was common with Upaniṣadic seers to imagine the individuated self as a person the size of a thumb in order to emphasize the minuteness of the self when compared with the grossness of the body and the physical world. That same style is resorted to here. This does not mean that the individuated self is a physical object the size of a thumb. In order to emphasize that the self is a central subtle vertical principle the simile of a reed is also used. The growing reed has an arrow shaft that goes vertically through the middle of it. This shaft is the most vital part in the reed's growth but it remains invisible. If we peel the outer layers of the reed off, one by one, in order to find the shaft, finally there will be nothing to see. But the reed can never be denied its arrow shaft. The self in an individual body is here compared to this arrow shaft. But this self has to be freed from the status of an embodied one and brought to its free, all-inclusive and refulgent status. Seeing this refulgent Truth as the all-pervading Existence itself is immortality. Those who are well established in this conviction always experience their own non-separateness with this immortal Truth and become immortal. This is the final instruction that can be given in respect of death.

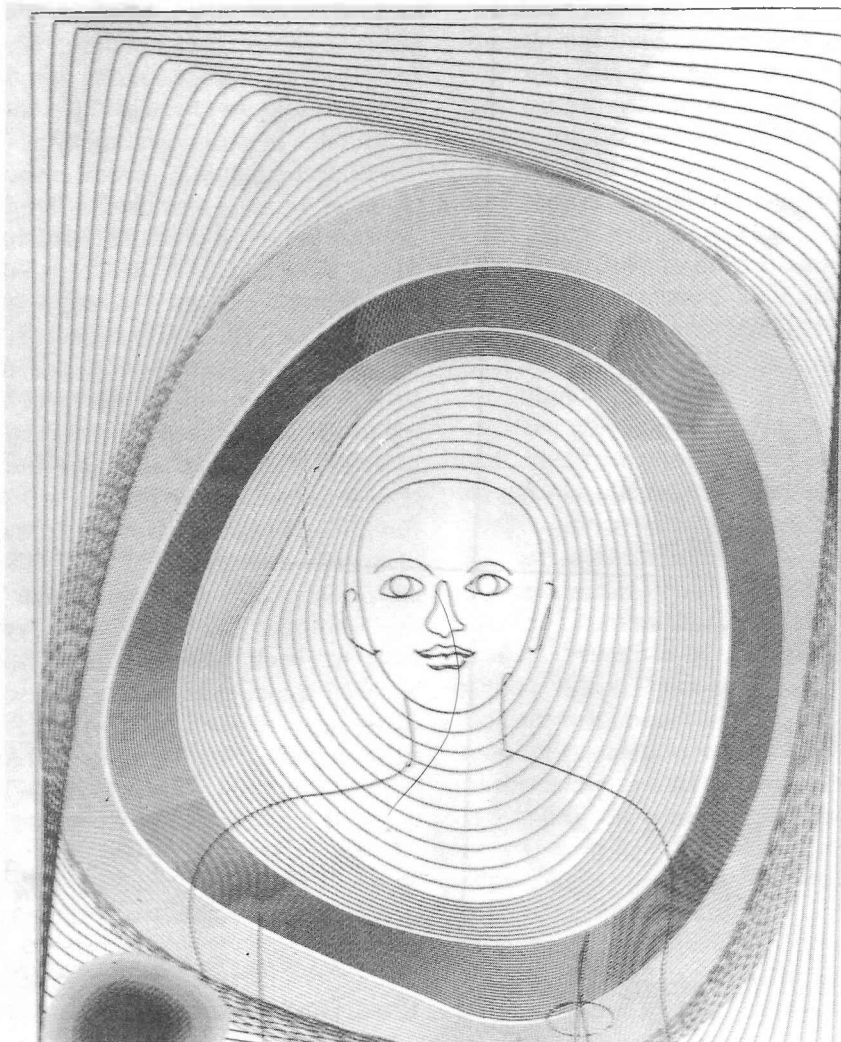
VII: 18

*Then Nachiketas, having gained
this wisdom and the entire discipline of*

dialectics (yoga) attained brahman, and became free from the world of change and free from death. As so may anyone who knows this with regard to the Self.

This mantra is the concluding envoy of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. It assures us that what Nachiketas gained from Death can be gained by anyone who goes through this teaching with full attention and devotion. What is to be especially noted is the statement that Death taught this wisdom to Nachiketas along with the entire discipline of yoga; yet we have seen that this *Upaniṣad* contains no teaching on the system of yoga.

In the sixteenth mantra the yogic concept of *nāḍi* was conveniently made use of as an instrument to expound Vedāntic doctrine. Vedāntic thought goes well beyond the Yoga system. As such the reference to the *nāḍi* in the sixteenth mantra can be treated as a reevaluation of the system of Yoga. Yoga is a mental and bodily discipline of the individual. In Vedānta there is a methodological process in accord with the goal and yoga gains a new dimension. In the thirteenth mantra of this *Valli*, understanding of the Truth was stated to be of two types, one of seeing it as pure Existence and the other of a conceptualization of it. When these two are brought together in the nondual awareness of the Absolute, that is the end of the yogic discipline acceptable to Vedānta. ❖



The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patāñjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sūtra III:1

deśa bandhaḥ cittasya dhāraṇā

deśa: area, place

bandhaḥ: limited, binding

cittasya: of the mind

dhāraṇā: concentration

Concentration is the confining of the mind within a limited area.

There is a spilling over of the subject that was under discussion in the *Sādhana Pāda* to *Vibhūti Pāda*, the section dealing with specific attainments. There was a similar extension of the first section into the second. As Patāñjali presented the exposition of Yoga in the form of sūtras, each aphorism is like a pearl strung on the Science of Union. It is therefore not advisable to fragment the book and look at only one or a few formulas.

In the present sūtra, *dhāraṇā*, which was casually mentioned even before the discussion of *pratyāhāra*, is presented. All perceptions are supported by corresponding conceptions. Conception is the formulated impression we have within us of everything with which we are familiar in some manner. It is based on the conviction of the verity of whatever impression we have of anything we deal with. The yogi also has basic postulates and conceptions. They are his or her *dhāraṇā*.

A *dhāraṇā* can be real or unreal. The amount of discrepancy between the conceptualization and the actuality of things,

ideas and theories enables a person to act either efficiently or clumsily. The more definite and valid one's concepts are, the greater is the chance of effectively applying one's knowledge in any field. In other words, we live on our *dhāraṇā*. In this sūtra, we have Patāñjali's definition of *dhāraṇā*: the concentration of the mind in a binding manner in one particular place.

We can compare ourselves to dew-drops in which the entire world is reflected. The world is very big, extensive on all sides and contains countless millions of things. However vast and varied is the outside world, no detail of it is left out of its reflection on a dew drop. We are also like that, with the reflection on small, specifically qualified areas of the skin that covers our body. The skin that covers the eyes is both transparent and sensitive. Although the physical area of the retina where visual perception is registered is very restricted, its counterpart is the unrestricted cosmos outside. In spite of the vastness of the area covered by sight, it can be traced to some area of the brain where an electrical consolidation changes into a chemical consolidation. From the farthest star to the tip of one's nose which one sees, all can be traced to one point of convergence in the body. It is as if the entire world is held in its position of visibility by this visual point.

So we have two options. One is going out from our eyes into the details of every form and color that is spread about within the ambit of the horizon. The other is leaving all forms and the vision of all objects and coming to one center, the central

locus of vision. It is this centripetal convergence with which one achieves one's *āsana* and carries out one's *prāṇāyāma*. It is very enigmatic or paradoxical that the infinitude of space which we all experience has only a single point of view for each person and that point is within oneself. It is just at the point of conjunction where the inertial matter and the luminous spark of consciousness come together.

How big is this area from where we are looking into infinite space crowded with numerous forms? Both for time and space we think in terms of a here and now. Once a philosopher asked this question, "This place where we exist, this moment where we experience, how big is it? Is it only of the size of the head of a pin or is it as big as a saddle on which the individual can comfortably sit?" The localizing of the point from where awareness centrifugally radiates itself to register its horizon and the point at which all experiences centripetally converge to become an imperiential transcendence defies all our concepts of dimensions. It is not to be understood as a physical point at all. It is the very center of awareness. If consciousness is held in absolute focus at that center without any need to fluctuate, then the yogi can be said to have come to *dhāraṇā*.

Sūtra III:2

tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam

tatra: there

pratyaya: content of consciousness

ekatānatā: stretching or streaming unbrokenly as one

dhyānam: contemplation

Uninterrupted flow in unitiveness is contemplation.

The epistemological relationship of the higher or pure Self, the individuated self and their final union represents the same scheme held by theistic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam and non-theistic religions like Buddhism. Three stages are conceived: an original state, a

state of transformation and a state of final union. In Semitic religions the original state is considered divine, the second state as the egoistic phase of rebellion, fall and regret, and the third state as the return to the source. In Buddhism the three states are the mindless state, the conditioned state of habit formation making many cascades of turbulent karma, then coming to the state of *nibāṇa*, the cessation of streaming. In Samkhya and Yoga, the original state is the equipoise of the triple modalities of nature in which the association of *puruṣa* with *prakṛti* cannot be discerned. The second state is the impact of the three modalities and three states of consciousness affecting the *puruṣa* through wrong identity, and the final is the release of *puruṣa* into the state of aloneness through the discipline of *pratiprāsava*, regressive reemergence.

We do not know, except through speculation, what was before the origin and what will be after the cessation of our bodies. Only the middle region is known. When the mind enters into the wakeful consciousness of a gross, transactional world, awareness flows like a stream. That flow is called *kṣipta*. The streaming of consciousness is confronted by five kinds of sensory provocations. It is as if there are five rocky blockages in a river. Then the water of the river cascades with great turbulence and the mind is fragmented into multitudes of names, forms and relationships of values. The mind is in a state of *vikṣipta*. However, there is a common element running through the transient sensory experiences. In the final analysis the affectivity can be attributed to *ānanda*, the blissful state of the Self.

Even in our daily experiences the data brought by the five senses is empirically tied together to give orientation and meaning to every gestalt. Thus the turbulent state of the mind flows out of awareness into a more unified stuff of consciousness. If the yogi does not aggravate the situation with the associations of ideas and previously formed habits, consciousness once again becomes transparent and void of both memories and imaginations at the

point of concentration or *ekāgrata*. A state of pure duration is established. Then the mind has come to its spontaneous culmination in contemplation, *dhyaṇa*. One can meditate but one cannot contemplate. Contemplation is not a causal factor, it is a consequence. The ground on which centered consciousness flows is of pure existence (*sat*), subsistence (*cit*), and the basis of all values (*ānanda*). Therefore the accompanying consciousness also participates in the triads of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*.

Sūtra III:3

*tad evārthamātra nirbhāsam svarūpa śūnyam
iva samādhiḥ*

tadevārtha: of the same (*dhāraṇā*) retained
mātra: only
nirbhāsam: shining
svārūpa śūnyam: the void of one's own egoistic form
iva: as if
samādhiḥ: absorption comes

Absorption comes when the *dhāraṇā* alone shines and there is a void of one's own egoistic form.

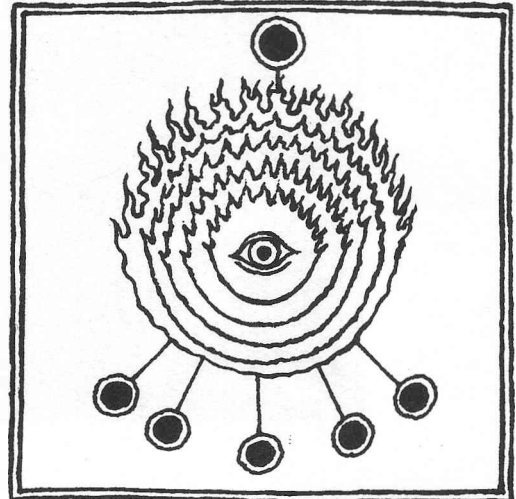
It is *dhāraṇā* that leads to *dhyaṇa* and *dhyaṇa* to *samādhi*. For *dhāraṇā*, the inner organs are to be trained in a certain way which consists of two withdrawals. One is the withdrawal of the senses from objects of interest. The other is the withdrawal of one's identity from one's ego. Until Self-realization comes, the ego is wrongly identified as the Self. So if the mind is withdrawn from objects of interest, its immediate reaction is to center around the ego. In the case of perceiving external objects, there are certain empirical limitations which prevent a person from seeing what the sense organ does not permit. But in the case of the visualization of one's ego, the stuff of the ego itself is imagination and so egotistic imagination can go wild. Thus it is far safer to perceive an external object than to dwell on one's ego.

In the *mahāvākya*, *aham brahma asmi* (I am that Absolute), a radical transformation

comes to the ego identified with the functional dynamics of the living organism, whereby the finite ego is changed into the infinite without any specific name or form. Knowing oneself to be *brahman* (the Absolute) is *svārūpajñāna*. Instead of *brahman*, if there is only identification with the ego, one might mistakenly think that is *svārūpajñāna*. In contemplative life, such identification with the ego is a pitfall to be avoided. Hence the entire stress is on making one's *dhāraṇā* as vivid as possible which will automatically help one to withdraw from objects of the senses outside and fanciful identifications of the ego within.

The alternative is offered by *dhāraṇā* - dwelling on one of the several spiritually rich imaginations such as the *samyam* (concentration) on an ideal like *maitri*, *karuṇā* or *mudita*. Suppose one takes fellowship with others for continuous actualization. Significance is not assigned to any particular item to which fellowship is extended. What is important is the unitive vision of seeing all as points of contact in a network of fellowship. In that total abandonment of oneself into the vision of fellowship, the idea "I am" never occurs at all. The intelligence stands unassailed by the data brought in by the senses or by the egotistic thrust of wanting to possess anything or anyone. This unflagging steadiness of the intellect between the world outside and the ego inside brings *samādhi* (absorption) in the *dhāraṇā* taken for *samyam*.

(Continued in next issue.)





The Detour

My wagon jolts silently,
Along the golden promenade
That meanders lazily in a spiral course
With the beginning and the end
In a passionate embrace,
inseparably locked.

Seven sages with a halo each
Adorn the desolate lane
And pearls of wisdom,
from them emanate,
Compactly packed
in seven blending notes.
Crossing a crystalline stream,
the sages meet
And the constellation,
an awesome radiance exudes.

In its whiteness I lose myself,
Only to awaken
In a new hue, a new attire,
But, on the old texture!

Abhilash N.U.

-1-

*Like treasure hidden beneath the earth
Like taste hidden by the fruit
Like gold hidden by stone
Like oil hidden by the sesame seed
Like fire hidden by the wood
The Lord, beautiful like the jasmine,
hides behind becoming.
No one knows him.*

-2-

*When I did not know myself
where were you, tell me.
Like the golden color in gold, you were in me.
Though you were in me,
I saw you as different
See oh Lord of jasmine-like beauty.*

Vācanas of Mahādeviyakka

Mahādeviyakka was a poet, rebel and mystic born in the 12 th century in Karnataka, southern India. At the age of ten she was initiated into the Viraśaiva 'path of Oneness' worship of Śiva. The specific form of the deity in the Śiva temple in her town was Cennamallikārjuna, the beautiful Lord white as jasmine. That epithet became the signature by which she identified herself when she started writing poems (*vācanas*). The local chieftan, Kauśika, who was a Jain, fell in love with her and prevailed upon her parents to let him marry her. But she considered herself as betrothed to Śiva. Her poems reflect her struggles against her condition as a woman, against social expectations, against a man who was a prince who espoused a different religion, and against being limited to a specific space and time.

-9-

*Please cut away the delusion of my Maya,
take away the darkness of my body.
Please remove the restlessness of my spirit.
My God, beautiful like the jasmine,
may your grace loosen
the bonds of the world
that bind me.*

-769-

*The self-same thing
when hearing of one's strange glory,
became the ear,
when touching, became the skin,
when seeing, became the eye,
when tasting, became the tongue,
when smelling, became the nose
you became all these,
oh Jasmine-like Lord.*

Translated by Vinaya Chaitanya

She used the metaphor of illicit love for her intense, all-encompassing relationship with the Lord. Her abiding theme was the complete sufficiency of her experience of the oneness of the self with the Divine. Eventually she became a wanderer, giving up conventional life and, in a gesture of ultimate social defiance, stopped wearing clothes. At Kalyāṇa, she encountered Allama and Basavra, the two principal saints of the Viraśaiva movement. She and Allama entered into an extensive philosophical dialogue, which she continued in many of her poems. She was accepted into the company of saints, but continued her wandering until she died in her early twenties. The sisterhood she felt with all beings is expressed in the epithet, *akka*, added to her name, meaning elder sister.

Biography of Narayana Guru

Nancy Yeilding

One World

In the closing years of his life Narayana Guru gave his disciples and followers many precious instructions to guide them towards the freedom and peace of his unitive vision. Like a painter making bold, broad strokes, he outlined the areas where the highest of human ideals and their pragmatic application could meet and come to fruition. In a world which faces total destruction because of the fear and hate engendered by nationalistic and religious rivalries, his gestures continue to offer invaluable guidance for those who are sincerely seeking the way to peace. By looking carefully at these potent indications given by the Guru, we can see how an all-encompassing experience of oneness becomes the basis for active transformation of the world.

Sarva Mata Sammelanam

In 1924 the Guru sponsored a gathering of representatives of all religions at his Advaita Asrama in Alwaye. It was called *Sarva Mata Sammelanam - A Confluence of All Religions*. This conference gave active expression to the Guru's teaching that religious conflicts will be settled not by fighting but by an open-minded study which inevitably reveals that all religions are the same in terms of essentials. With the inspiration of the Guru's posted watchword, "It is not to argue and win, but to know and let know", the delegates were encouraged to share their treasures rather than to assert their superiority.

East-West University of the Science of the Absolute: Brahmavidyā Mandiram

During the conference, the Guru also shared his vision of a *Brahmavidyā Mandi-*

ram, a university for the study of the Absolute. Such a university would have as its arena for study the spiritual, philosophical, religious, scientific, cultural and aesthetic traditions of East and West. In the light of that vision, the Guru arranged for his fully dedicated young disciple, the future Nataraja Guru, to pursue a doctorate in education at the Sorbonne University in Paris. His study and travel in Europe and later travels in the United States and other countries, combined with his thorough education in Indian philosophy and guru-disciple dialectics, fully prepared Nataraja Guru to carry on Narayana Guru's vision. In 1963 he laid the foundation of the *Brahmavidyā Mandiram* at Guru Narayana Giri in South India. At that time, he prophesied that it would grow into a world-wide university.

That vision was imparted to his own dedicated disciple and successor, Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati. Since Guru Nitya's inauguration of the East-West University in South India (March 19, 1974) and in Washington State of the United States (September 7, 1974), the University has been steadily growing. Student/professors from countries around the world are now involved in its programs, studying the unitive vision which integrates "all ways of life and patterns of behavior, all systems of knowledge and disciplines of study, whether physical or metaphysical, and all ideologies and value-systems both personal and collective." 113

Home Is Where The Heart Is

Having early in life adopted the life style of a *parivrajikka* (a wanderer), Narayana Guru continued in it to the very end of his life, even having himself carried from place to place on a stretcher when his last



*Nataraja Guru
at Sri Narayana Giri, Varkala*

illness prevented him from walking. Prior to that illness, his travels took him beyond the borders of Kerala to the neighboring principalities of Tamilnadu (1926) and Ceylon (1919 & 1923). At that time, such travels were unusual among the people of South India who rarely left their own village areas. They regarded other states as foreign and preferred to keep their loyalties closely tied to their local family clan and territory. To the Guru, used to finding shelter and sustenance in a multitude of homes from the most meager hut to the grandest villa, no place was strange. For him, the whole world was home. The all-encompassing love in his heart evoked an answering spark of love in all he met. In his later years, the Guru was always accompanied by a number of followers wherever he went. To help them get over their sense of strangeness and thus to partake more fully of his unitive vision, he was fond of noting similarities in anything from geological formations to personal resemblance's.¹¹⁴ He also expressed his wish to remain for the rest of his life both in Tamilnadu and Ceylon, noting the beauty of the land and the loving nature of the people.¹¹⁵

These hints found fertile ground in his disciple, Govindananda, who braved prejudice against him as a non-Tamil *sannyasi* with such love that soon the entire city of Kanchipuram (in Tamilnadu) responded with love. Through their cooperative efforts, an ashram and *Ayurvedic* hospital were founded there in the name of Narayana Guru. In Tamilnadu Narayana Guru continues to be regarded as a great teacher by serious seekers of wisdom who find his example as illuminating as the saints and seers of their more familiar traditions.

Wisdom Knows No Boundary

Founded in the Guru's name, the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam increasingly deviated from his example and teaching. Having initially disagreed with the Yogam's adherence to the cause of the Izhava community rather than the world community, Narayana Guru tried to lift the Yogam out of its cast-bound point of view

for many years. Despite his efforts, the Yogam continued to seek the benefits of one group at the expense of others, using Narayana Guru's name and resources given in his name. Seeing this, the Guru registered a formal will and testament in 1926 which transferred all the ashrams, mutts and temples in his name to the order of *sannyasins* (renunciates) which he had established. Through his influence, the order included swamis of all classes and communities, including a Britisher, Ernest Kirk, who had dedicated himself to the Guru (and received a suit and tie as his *sannyasins* robes).

The *sangham*, as an order of renunciates supposedly divorced from materialistic acquisitions and family and tribal loyalties, was intended to provide the opportunity for a clear stream of wisdom-teaching to flow freely to future generations. However, disputes marked even their initial attempts to come together, leading the Guru to question whether he was one among them or not.¹¹⁶ Although they organized themselves under his name as the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham, the jockeying for position within the newly formed organization took them away from the simple and pure path of Narayana Guru. Their interest in power, possessions and status flamed even higher when the Guru died and a number of rival leaders and groups became involved in a series of court cases regarding his inheritance.

Fortunately, Nataraja Guru picked up the thread of the Guru's intent and conveyed it intact in the Narayana Gurukula, a world-wide contemplative fraternity fully dedicated to wisdom teaching, unfettered by any closed loyalties to clans, religions or countries. Sincere seekers of truth can find the guidance of a fully committed teacher and attune themselves to the teachings of Narayana Guru and teachers and seers of all ancient and modern traditions at Gurukula centers around the world.

Passing Into The Peace Beyond

During the year 1927, the Guru's health steadily deteriorated as old age began to

assert itself. In *Word of the Guru*, Nataraja Guru shares some of his personal reminiscences of the ways in which even this illness of the Guru's was transformed by his inner light into many lessons for his disciples and devotees:

As the writer stood before him, he was resting, seated on his bed and supporting himself erect with his now emaciated arms. His breathing was difficult and he could not speak except in monosyllables. "These", he said, meaning the sounds of his obstructed breaths, "have come as escort". The people came to visit him and expected that, being super-human as they believed him to be, he would not feel any pain when he was ill. As if to contradict this idea, the Guru was heard to cry like a child at every cause. While the crowd of villagers waited outside, they could hear the Guru's voice from inside murmuring like a distressed child, "O Mother! O Mother!", again and again conveying to them, through the tone in which it was uttered, a message that rang in their ears ever after, and containing the same attitude, the same essence of devotion and simplicity to which he had dedicated the rest of his life.

As the image of Jesus carrying his cross has served as a symbol of his love and service to humanity, so also great masters make even their sickness and suffering serviceable to their fellow beings. The life of the Guru was in every detail of it an example of the principle which he enunciated as follows:

Acts that one performs
For one's own sake,
Should also aim the good
Of other men.

In fact this maxim maybe said to form the key-stone of his whole life. By apparently trying to be selfish he on many an occasion impressed a useful principle or habit on the many who came in contact with him. Himself an adept in the art of healing, he missed no opportunities, whenever he was ill, to call together a little group of medical men of different schools of medicine in order to discuss with them the various bearings of the case and make them discuss the details. In the system of medicine called the *Ayurveda*, which is the

ancient Sanskrit system, there lay, buried and forgotten, gems of ancient experience which he found valuable to unearth and apply, suffering himself to be the subject of the experiment.

His last illness was rich in such opportunities. He would find some point in which one system failed and in which some one else knew better. Suffering and bedridden as he was, he would argue the minutest details with his doctors and those who attended on him. He went to Palghat and traveled about four hundred miles North-East to Madras, carried in stretchers and transported from place to place, from one doctor to another, from the care of one devotee, who loved to keep him under his care, to another. Then he came back to Travancore from where a strong deputation had arrived to take him to Varkala. One of the stations on the way was Alwaye, where on the platform were gathered all the students young and old of the Sanskrit School and Ashram for which he had given long labors. The coming event was still unknown to them but a deep emotion at the illness of the Guru sat on the features of each one.

He arrived at Varkala. Some of the symptoms of the illness which the experts of one school of medicine had declared incurable, were demonstrated to be curable by others of a different school. For some time the Guru seemed quite well. The radiant glow on his features had never disappeared. He still retained his good humor, and, although he was weak in body, he never yielded or compromised except where it was necessary. He guided the deliberations regarding his property and legal affairs with a perfect sense of justice and awareness of all shades of opinion. He regained a stage in which he took little walks on his own and, though highly emaciated, was still the same alert, radiant, and kind Guru. 117

As the illness took its course, Narayana Guru gradually withdrew from life. His body slowly wasted away as he became more and more absorbed in "the silence which was his joy and the culminating point of his life." At one point his earnest devotees attempted to feed him but he gestured to his shrunken stomach saying, "It no longer is asking," indicating the compassion for the needs of his body

which had theretofore led him to eat was no longer necessary.¹¹⁸ Nataraja Guru explains this process of wasting away in a gradual and willed fashion as a special kind of death which comes to those who live lives of earnest dedication to "transcendental values which lie on the side of the Ultimate and the Supreme." He continues:

*The body of the Guru was absorbed by gradual stages of unconsciousness into peaceful samadhi or Passing into the Peace Beyond. Such a happening can be normal and possible if the two-sided nature of the psyche is imaginatively understood and applied to the case of understanding of the phenomenon known as death. The lyre becomes its music and this is seen to be its death here. But contemplatively it is a fuller life.*¹¹⁹

The Guru entered that fuller life on September 20th, 1928, at 3:30 in the afternoon. He was attended by a number of Ayurvedic physicians, a surgeon, and 13 swamis of the sangham. He had not spoken for two days, but broke his silence an hour before to say, "We are swallowed by Rahu. Now it is time to go."¹²⁰ The attendant who heard these words thought the Guru was asking to be taken out so he called for others to bring a stretcher. When they tried to lift the Guru, he said, "You do not understand what I say. Now I should go." He then asked for *giraka vellum* (cumin water). Receiving it he sipped, gargled and spat three times.¹²¹ He then peacefully merged into the great silence with which he had spent his life in joyous communion.

Word of Narayana Guru's *mahasamadhi* quickly spread throughout South India by telegram and word of mouth. Hundreds of people poured into Varkala within a couple of hours, by train and on foot, starting a steady influx that continued for days. Thousands came in person or sent telegrams in homage to the Guru whose simple life and quiet words had transformed their lives and the whole society. Washed, coated with sandal paste and covered with garlands, the body was bur-

ied at seven the next evening, with special *samadhi* rituals performed by Tamil *sannyasins* from Madurai and Karikudi.¹²²

It was thus with great devotion and ceremony that the Guru's body was laid to rest. Against the Guru's explicitly stated wish that no monument be put up to remind people of his death (and be a place for bats to gather), an elaborate temple has since been erected on the site. It is visited by thousands of devotees each year. Out of these thousands, a few have turned their devotion and dedication away from the shrine marking the Guru's dead body to his Word which lives vibrantly in his compositions, the shining example of his life and living exponents of his wisdom. For all who sincerely tune their lives to it, that legacy is one of great freedom, peace and joy. In the closing words of his *One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction*, Narayana Guru offers us a final understanding of the vibrant silence which is the culmination of that path:

*Neither that, nor this, nor the meaning of existence am I, but existence, consciousness, joy-immortal; thus attaining clarity, emboldened, discarding attachment to being and non-being, one should gently, gently merge in SAT-AUM.*¹²³

NOTES

113. East-West University Prospectus, p. 4

114. Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*, p. 127-128.

115. Kottukoyikkal Velayudhan, *Biography of Sree Narayana Guru*, S.N. Press, Quilon, 1975, p. 263-264.

116. Dharmatirtha, *Prophet of Peace*, Sree Narayana Publishing House, India, 1931.

117. Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*, p. 53-56.

118. Lecture of Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati.

119. Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*, p. 369-370.

120. The reference is to the moon "swallowing" the sun in a solar eclipse.

121. Pazhamballi Achyutan, *Memories of Narayana Guru*.

122. Pazhamballi Achyutan, *Memories of Narayana Guru*.

123. Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *Neither This Nor That but . . . AUM*, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1982, p. 221.

(Continued in next issue.)

What Makes a Belief Valid?

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Aesthetics and Ethics

Two beautiful areas where religion is at its best are in the fields of aesthetics and ethics. What art and music gave the people of Europe was not merely a representation of the Biblical stories. Several Christian concepts of God, Jesus, the punishment for sin and atonement underwent rapid and drastic change. Any idea presented in the realistic art of the early days helped to build Christianity. A big change was caused almost single-handedly by Constantine the Great. He made the fateful decision to move the capitol of the Roman Empire to the Greek town of Byzantium. The history of early Christian and Byzantine art gives us the full story of the re-making of Christianity, both in painting and sculpture.

Renovation and Reformers Did More to a Religion Than Its Founder

Byzantine art came on to the scene as a continuation of Christian art which began in 200 A.D. in the Roman catacombs. The catacomb painter used his traditional vocabulary to convey a new symbolic content and the original meaning of the forms was of little interest to him. The first symbolic art of Christ the Savior can be seen now in the Acropolis Museum in Athens. Instead of conforming to the Gospel stories the artist quite often mixed up anecdotes of the pre-Christian Old Testament stories with anecdotes connected to the life of Jesus Christ. Thus, the historical Christ soon changed into a mythical Christ. This tendency to present Jesus as super-human considerably changed the course of Christian history. The Roman influence of accepting regality as a symbol of power and greatness characterized Jesus both as the King of Heavens on one side, and as the

Good Shepherd on the other.

The ethical and aesthetic history of the Christian religion was also part and parcel of the expansion of the Christian empire. By 630 A.D. the Byzantine army had recovered Syria, Palestine, and Egypt from the Sassanid Persians. This Christian thrust was not to go unhampered because soon the religion of Islam was established. The Arabs under the banner of Islam overran the Near Eastern and African provinces of Byzantine. By 732 A.D., after the death of Mohammed, the Arabs had swallowed up all of North Africa and Spain and threatened to add southwestern France to their conquest.

Islamic Art Takes a New Course

If representing every idea in marble, stone and terra cotta, and painting colorful pictures was the secret of the Church in its establishment of a new impression of Christianity, Islam was bent upon breaking every idol that was put forth in the name of God. Thus, there came an interdependent dualism of spiritual and political authority of church and state, using artwork as a medium for capturing the imagination of people. While Christian art thrived on anthropologically conceived presentations of God, both of the Jewish description as well as of Christ, Islam was systematically bringing in a reformation in faith by going back to the commandment of Moses to not represent God with any form. Islam went on to create a new civilization stretching from Spain in the West to the Indus Valley in the East, a civilization that reached its highest point far more rapidly than did the Medieval West. Baghdad on the Tigris, the capitol city of Charlemagne's great contemporary, Harun al-Rashid, rivaled the splendor of Byzantium. Islamic art, learn-

ing and craftsmanship had a far-ranging influence on the European Middle Ages. Examples range from Arabesque ornament, the manufacture of paper and Arabic numerals, to the transmission of Greek philosophy and science, to the writings of Arabic scholars. It is well, therefore, that we acquaint ourselves with the achievement of Islam, along with the Judeo-Christian cultural triumphs.

Islamic Art

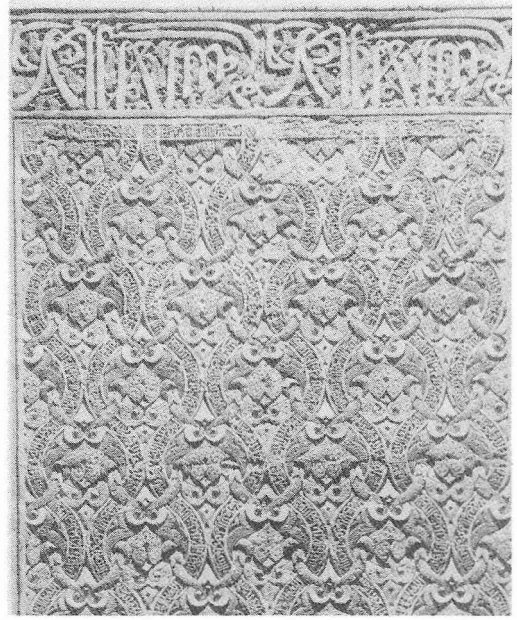
Islam owes many of its essential elements to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The word "Islam" means *submission*. Muslims are those that submit to the will of Allah, the one and all-powerful God, as revealed to Mohammed in the Qur'an, the sacred scriptures of Islam. The Qur'an often draws upon the contents of the Bible and counts the Old Testament prophets as well as Jesus as the predecessors of Mohammed. Its teachings include the concepts of the last judgment, heaven and hell, and angels and devils.

Ethics in Islamic Art

The ethical commands of Islam, too, are similar to those of Christianity. When we consider that Islam got rid of the Jewish and Christian rituals which generated the heavy load of priesthood in those two religions, we can say Islam was a revalued "package deal" of the Semitic religions. Every Muslim has equal access to Allah and the observances required of him are simple: prayer at stated times (alone or in a mosque), almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca. So all true believers are brothers, members of the great community according to Mohammed.⁹

Christian Art

Islamic art, by totally avoiding figurative representation of all kinds, has given a new avenue of art representation. Its aesthetic fundamentals are carried out in great dignity without the vulgarization of bringing anthropomorphic representations of the divine anywhere. This also gives a new way of looking at the concept of God and man. In contrast to this, Chris-



tian art gives a very dark and gloomy picture, always harping on the cruelty shown to Jesus and his first hierarchy of disciples by their contemporaries. What was thus precipitated in visual art has an exact parallel in presenting the solemnity of the Divine and the painful lamentation for the crucified. Every European church reverberated with the acute feeling of sacred lamentation. Occasionally, there came a revolt from artists like Hieronymus Bosch who vulgarly presented humanity at its worst. The net result was a confused Christian community, some very much elated, others mentally tormented, and still others like Nietzsche, who ardently wished God to die, epitomized in his book, *Beyond Good and Evil*:

The faith demanded, and not infrequently attained, by original Christianity, in the midst of a skeptical and southern free-spirited world that looked back on, and still contained, a centuries-long fight between philosophical schools, besides the education for tolerance given by the imperium Romanum --this faith is not that ingenuous and bear like subalterns' faint with which, say, a Luther or a Cromwell, or some other northern barbarian of the spirit, clung to his god and to Christianity. It is much closer to the faith of Pascal, which resembles in a gruesome manner a continual suicide of reason--a

tough, long-lived, wormlike reason that cannot be killed all at once with a single stroke.

From the start, the Christian faith is a sacrifice: a sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of the spirit; at the same time, enslavement and self-mockery, self-mutilation. There is cruelty and religious Phoenicianism in this faith which is expected of an over-ripe, multiple, and much-spoiled conscience: it presupposes that the subjection of the spirit hurts indescribably; that the whole past and the habits of such a spirit resist the absurdissimum which "faith" represents to it.

Modern men, obtuse to all Christian nomenclature, no longer feel the gruesome superlative that struck a classical taste in the paradoxical formula "god on the cross." Never yet and nowhere has there been an equal boldness in inversion, anything as horrible, questioning, and questionable as this formula: it promised a reevaluation of all the values of antiquity ¹⁰

Contribution to Enhance Faith by Individual Artists

Today when an average Christian reads about "The Last Supper of Jesus" in the Bible the picture that comes to mind is of Leonardo Da Vinci's mural painted in the church of St. Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy. The "Virgin of the Rocks," also by Leonardo Da Vinci in the Louvre in Paris, will surely take us to a world of awe and serenity. Our Moses is the "Moses" sculpted in marble by Michelangelo which he executed at St. Pietro in Vincoli, Italy.

The unforgettable incident of Pontius Pilate washing his hands of the guilt of ordering the crucifixion of Christ comes from Tintoretto's "Christ Before Pilate" kept at Scuola de San Rocco in Venice. The Vatican interior of the Sistine Chapel in Rome was the creation of Michelangelo. There we also see his famous painting "The Creation of Adam" in which God stretches out his index finger to touch the index finger of Adam.

The saintly face and the sense of holiness mainly came to Christian connoisseurs of art from Rafael. He painted the "Madonna del Granduca" in 1505, found now in Florence's Pitti Palace. Several are the beautiful works of Rafael. His masterly influence can be found in the brush of almost all who came after his generation. The realistic art of Rafael, such as of "Pope Leo the X with His Nephews," in some other manner influenced Giorgione and Titian.

Musicians Complemented Visual Art with Musical Modes

The creators and conductors of musical orchestration inspired the love and compassion of Jesus Christ in their listeners by leaning on rhythm and tempo. Ecclesiastical music moves the worshipers in a church with the broad "largo" and slow "lento" and the ease-giving "adagio." Just as the listening congregation would rise during the service to the mode of "andante," the worshipers would be aroused



through "moderato." Even if the liturgy sung by a group brought a shade of sadness and melancholy to the faithful, when they listen to "allegretto" or "allegro" which is fast and cheerful, it surely would reveal the smiling face of Jesus to his worshipers. 11 When the congregates are asked to sit and go into meditation, it is as if they come to "accelerando," quickening. When we think of the millions of churches and cathedrals around the world chiming their bells to call the faithful to the altar, it is like all the churches are being brought under one symphony.

Instruments like strings, horns, trumpets, drums, flutes, oboes, clarinets and trombones, are able to weave their magic in the soul of the listener. They are all like the emotionally-roused heart-strings of the worshiper upon which the instrumentalists play. The first name to be remembered is Haydn (1759). He continued in the tradition of Baroque and Classical music. When Haydn, (1732-1809) wrote 104 symphonies and Mozart, (1756-1791) wrote 41 symphonies, they were providing the church with a new voice to cultivate new sensibilities in its congregates. To some extent, Jesus was also made the centerpiece of dramatic symphony. The credit for that goes to Beethoven in his 9th Symphony and the Romanticist composers such as Berlioz and Brahms. We can also see the same tradition kept up by Schuman and Schubert. The influence of Berlioz can be seen in Liszt's *Eine Symphonie zu Dante's Divina commedia* in 1855. 12

The Individual Has to Walk Alone

Ultimately, one has to come to the conclusion that each person shares in both human virtues and errors. However good one's religion, one needs documentations and fundamentals. Each person has to seek his or her own portion which can give him or her satisfaction in the core of his or her own bosom. One also has to adjust as well as possible with those with whom he or she has to break daily bread. There the invisible and the unknown are often seen partially in the visible and the known, and the ideal is tasted as the actual denomina-

tor of life. In the long search for truth, universal truth casts its semblance in several individual manifestations, and the faith one proclaims will turn out to be faith in oneself.

Sufism Makes a Breakthrough

In the tradition of Islam, no model is greater than Al-Muhamed Mustafa Russel Karim. We give the following quotations from the *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* written by Annemarie Schimmel:

THE VENERATION OF THE PROPHET

In his Mathnawi Rumi tells how the infant Muhammad got lost and his nurse Hali-ma, dissolved in tears, was consoled with the words: 'Do not grieve: he will not become lost to thee; nay, but the whole world will become lost in him (M 4:975). Since Muslim tradition forbids figural representation, one finds, instead, accounts of Muhammad's lofty qualities (hilya) written in exquisite calligraphy hanging on the walls of the house; such hilyas are still sold in the courtyards of some Turkish mosques.

The personality of the Prophet became the medium of religious experience, although, phenomenologically speaking, the center of Islam is the Koran as direct divine revelation, not the messenger who brought it. But the Muslims felt that the figure of the Prophet was necessary for the maintenance of the Muslim faith in its "legal" aspect (as indicated in the second phrase of the profession of faith). The Prophet, as Rumi says (M 3:801), is a divine test for man; in contrast to Iblisian tauhid, which will bow only before God, the Prophet is put in between to destroy this temptation, which may lead, ultimately, toward pantheism and confusion of religious creeds. Muhammad constitutes a limit in the definition of Islam and sets it off from other forms of faith. Mystics who used the first half of the profession of faith exclusively, without acknowledging the special rank of Muhammad, were prone to fall into a sweeping pantheistic interpretation of Islam.

Some of the early mystics might have claimed that their love of God did not leave any room for a specialized love of the Prophet. "One night I saw the Prophet in my dream He said: 'Do you love me?' I said: 'Forgive me, but the

love of God has kept me busy from loving thee.' He said 'Whosoever loves God, loves me' (T 2:41). Others might have been reluctant to mention his name together with God's name in the call to prayer (Q 17). But the beginning of a genuine Muhammad mysticism dates back to the early eighth century. Muqatil idealized the person of Muhammad in his work; and it was this mystic who interpreted the second sentence of the ayat an-nur, the 'Light verse' of the Qur'an (Sura 24:35), as pertaining to Muhammad, whose light shines through the other prophets. ¹³

Physical Light is Only a Symbol of Divine Vision

The most famous prayer ascribed to Muhammad is a prayer for light, which has been treasured by the mystics of Islam. Abu Talib al-Makki quotes it; Ghazzali taught it; and the eighteenth-century Indian mystic Mir Dard wrote it down as his last orison before his death:

O God, give me light in my heart and light in my tongue and light in my hearing and light in my sight and light in my feeling and light in all my body and light before me and light behind me. Give me, I pray Thee, light on my right hand and light on my left hand and light above me and light beneath me. O Lord, increase light within me and give me light and illuminate me! ¹⁴

Only the Pure of Heart See the Divine Within

The fact that Muhammad is called *ummi* in the Qur'an (Sura 7:157), a word usually translated as "illiterate," was considered to have a special mystical implication. Only a man whose heart was not spoiled by outward intellectual achievement and learning, but was as pure a vessel as Mary's virgin body, could be a worthy receptacle for the divine word. When later mystics boasted of their alleged or real illiteracy, which permitted them to read only the letter alif, the symbol of divine unity and uniqueness, they had the Prophet's example always before their eyes—the model of pure love and surrender, as opposed to cold reasoning. ¹⁵

Equally beautiful is the Islamic poetry that comes from the lips of the great Sufis like Jalaluddin Rumi who has written the three volumes of *The Mathnawi*:

How the heavenly voice spoke to 'Umar, may God be well-pleased with him, while he was asleep, saying, 'Give a certain sum of gold from the public treasury to the man who is sleeping in the graveyard.'

Then God sent such a drowsiness upon 'Umar that he was unable to keep himself from slumber. He fell into amazement saying, "This is (a thing) unknown. This has fallen from the Unseen, 'tis not without purpose.' He laid his head down, and slumber overtook him. He dreamed that a voice came to him from God: his spirit heard That voice which is the origin of every cry and sound: that indeed is the (only) voice, and the rest are echoes. Turcoman and Kurd and Persian-speaking man and Arab have understood that voice without (help of) ear of lip. Ay, (but) what of Turcomans, Persians, and Ethiopians? (Even) wood and have understood that voice. Every moment there is coming from Him (the call), 'Am not I (your Lord)?' and substance and accidents are becoming existent. If (the answer) 'Yea' is not coming from them, yet their coming from non-existence (into existence) is (equivalent to) 'Yea.' Listen to a goodly tale in explanation of what I have said concerning the friendliness (awareness) of stone and wood. ¹⁶

Christ as the Model

Christianity is not the story of one crucifix. The Catholic Church is built on the mortal remains of thousands of martyrs. Even then, the model for excellence is Jesus the Christ. His very first exhortation is given in Chapter Four of Saint Matthew: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Chapter Five exemplifies the spiritual excellence of Jesus as a good pastor. We quote here from verses 3-16 which lay out his exceedingly clear, core teachings to help man live a happy life on earth in tune with his perennial Spirit:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the

kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in Heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. 17

Ethical Revaluation of Zionism

The ethical revaluation of Jesus is given in Chapter Five. We specifically quote here from verses 31, 32, 38-48:

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and

take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;

That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if you love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

In Chapter Six he gives us the Lord's Prayer in (9-14):

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Jesus Conceives the Christian Society

In Chapter Seven, verses 1-20, Jesus teaches how to live a harmonious social life:

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold,

a beam is in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do

to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Just as in Judaism we have prophets of great spiritual worth such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we have also several saints who were exposed to great conflict between their flesh and soul, to perfect themselves to walk in the path of Jesus. We want to cite here only St. Augustine,

Thomas Aquinas and St. Francis of Assisi. Several great thinkers have enriched the Christian life of which we want to make at least a passing reference to Pascal, Meister Eckert, and Thomas Merton.

The First Substantial Theology of the Christian Church

What things are predicted by Isaiah concerning Christ and the Church:

The prophecy of Isaiah is not in the book of the twelve prophets, who are called the minor from the brevity of their writings, as compared with those who are called the greater prophets because they published larger volumes. Isaiah belongs to the latter, yet I connect him with the two above named, because he prophesied at the same time. Isaiah, then, together with his rebukes of wickedness, precepts of righteousness, and predictions of evil, also prophesied much more than the rest about Christ and the Church, that is, about the King and that city which he founded; so that some say he should be called an evangelist rather than a prophet. But, in order to finish this work, I quote only one out of many in this place. Speaking in the person of the Father, he says, "Behold, my servant shall understand, and shall be exalted and glorified very much. As many shall be astonished at



Thee." This is about Christ.

But let us now hear what follows about the Church. He says, 'Rejoice, O barren, thou that barest not; break forth and cry, thou that didst not travail with child: for many more are the children of the desolate than of her that has an husband.' But these must suffice; and some things in them ought to be expounded; yet I think those parts sufficient which are so plain that even enemies must be compelled against their will to understand them. ¹⁸

After reading the amazing words of St. Augustine in his *Confessions* and then in *The City of God*, we come to the beatific vision in Book 22, Chapter 29:

Of the Beatific Vision

And now let us consider, with such ability as God may vouchsafe, how the saints shall be employed when they are clothed in immortal and spiritual bodies, and when the flesh shall no longer in a fleshly but in a spiritual fashion. And indeed, to tell the truth, I am at a loss to understand the nature of that employment, or, shall I rather say, repose and ease, for it has never come within the range of my bodily senses. And if I should speak of my mind or understanding, what is our understanding in comparison of its excellence? For then shall be that 'peace of God which,' as the apostle says, 'passeth all understanding' --that is to say, all human and, and perhaps all angelic understanding, but certainly not the divine.

Then we must understand him to mean that neither we nor the angels can understand, as God understands, the peace which God Himself enjoys. Doubtless this passeth all understanding but His own.

For we must remember how great a man he was who said, 'We know in part, and we prophesy in part, until that which is perfect is come,' and, 'Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.'

This vision is reserved as the reward of our faith; and of it the Apostle John also says, 'When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' ¹⁹

Then let us consider the study of Thomas Aquinas who gave credence to Boethius and Saint Augustine in his *Summa*

Theologica. We share here passages of their dialogue found in his "Treatise on Grace" and the "Treatise on Faith."

Article 1. Whether Without Grace Man Can Know Any Truth?

We proceed thus to the First Article: It would seem that without grace man can know no truth.

Objection 1. For, on I Cor. 12.3: No man can say, the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost, a gloss of Ambrose says: 'Every truth, by whomsoever spoken is from the Holy Ghost.' Now the Holy Ghost dwells in us by grace. Therefore we cannot know truth without grace.

Objection 2. Further, Augustine says that 'the most certain sciences are like things lit up by the sun so as to be seen. Now God Himself is He Who sheds the light. And reason is in the mind as sight is in the eye. And the eyes of the mind are the senses of the soul.' Now the bodily senses, however pure, cannot see any visible object without the sun's light. Therefore the human mind, however perfect, cannot, by reasoning, know any truth without Divine light. And this pertains to the aid of grace.

Objection 3. Further, the human mind can only understand truth by thinking, as is clear from Augustine. But the Apostle says: (II Corinthian 3:5) Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God. Therefore man cannot, of himself, know truth without the help of grace.

On the contrary, Augustine says 'I do not approve having said in the prayer O God, Who dost wish the clean alone to know the truth; for it may be answered that many who are unclean know many truths.' Now man is cleansed by grace, according to Psalms 50:12 Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels. Therefore without grace man of himself can know truth.

I answer that, to know truth is a use or act of intellectual light, since, according to the Apostle (Ephesians 5:13) All that is made manifest is light. Now every use implies movement, taking movement broadly, so as to call thinking and willing movements, as is clear from the Philosopher. Now in corporeal things we see that for movement there is required not merely the form which is the principle of the

movement or action, but there is also required the motion of the first mover. Now the first mover in the order of corporeal things is the heavenly body. But it is clear that as all corporeal movements are reduced to the motion of the heavenly body as to the first corporeal mover, so all movements, both corporeal and spiritual, are reduced to the absolutely First Mover, Who is God. And hence no matter how perfect a corporeal or spiritual nature is supposed to be, it cannot proceed to its act unless it be moved by God; but this motion is according to the plan of His providence, and not by a necessity of nature, as the motion of the heavenly body.

Treatise on Faith, Hope and Charity.

Question I (Of Faith) (In Ten Articles)

Having to treat now of the theological virtues, we shall begin with Faith, secondly we shall speak of Hope, and thirdly, of Charity. The treatise on Faith will be fourfold: (1) Of faith itself; (2) Of the corresponding gifts, knowledge and understanding; (3) Of the opposite vices; (4) Of these precepts pertaining to this virtue. About faith itself we shall consider: (1) its object; (2) its act; (3) the habit of faith.

Under the first head there are ten points of inquiry: (1) Whether the object of faith is the First Truth? (2) Whether the object of faith is something complex or incomplex, that is, whether it is a thing or a proposition? (3) Whether anything false can come under faith? (4) Whether the object of faith can be anything seen? (5) Whether it can be anything known? (6) Whether the things to be believed should be divided into a certain number of articles. (7) Whether the same articles are of faith for all times? (8) Of the number of articles. (9) Of the manner of embodying the articles in a creed. (10) Who has the right to propose a creed or faith? 20

(For more details read the original text of St. Thomas Aquinas from page 380 onwards.)

Saint Francis of Assisi

Rarely do we find a follower come on par with his master's perfection in living the highest bid of his Source Command. In this matter, nobody excelled St. Francis of Assisi.

In 1202 he took part in a war between Assisi and Perugia, was held prisoner for almost a year and on his release fell seriously ill. Setting out once more to join the forces of Walter of Brienne, he had a vision at Spoleto that bade him return to Assisi. He began to give himself to solitude and prayer.

Several other episodes make up what is called his conversion: a vision of Christ while he prayed in a grotto near Assisi; an experience of poverty during a pilgrimage to Rome, where, in rags, he mingled with the beggars before St. Peter's and begged alms; the incident where he not only gave alms to a leper (he had always felt a deep repugnance for lepers) but also kissed his hand. One day at the ruined chapel of S. Damiano outside the gate of Assisi, he heard the crucifix above the altar summon him: 'Go, Francis, and repair my house which, as you see, is well-nigh in ruins.' Taking this literally, he hurried home, gathered much of the cloth in his father's shop and rode off to Foligno, where he sold both cloth and horse. He then tried to give the money to the priest at S. Damiano. Angered, his father first kept him at home and later cited him before the civil authorities. When Francis refused to answer the summons, his father called him before the bishop. Before any accusations were made, Francis, 'without a word peeled off his garments even down to his breeches and restored them to his father.' Covered only by a hair shirt, he said: 'Until now I have called you my father on earth. But henceforth I can truly say: Our Father Who art in heaven.' The astonished bishop gave him a cloak, and Francis went off in the woods of Mt. Subasio.

Francis had renounced material goods and family ties to embrace a life of poverty. He repaired the church of S. Damiano, restored a chapel dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle and then the now famous chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, the Porziuncola, on the plain below Assisi. There on the feast of St. Matthias, Feb. 24, 1208 (1209?), he heard at Mass the mission of Christ to the apostles: 'Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses: Nor scrip

for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence' (Matthew 10: 9-11).

Probably no one in history has ever set himself so seriously as did Francis to imitate the life of Christ and to carry out so literally Christ's work in Christ's own way. This is the key to the character and spirit of St. Francis. To neglect this point is to show an unbalanced portrait of the saint as a lover of nature, a social worker, an itinerant preacher, a lover of poverty. He considered all nature as the mirror of God and as so many steps to God. He called all creatures his 'brothers' and 'sisters,' and in his 'Canticle of Creatures' (less properly called the 'Praises of Creatures,' 'Canticle of the Sun,' etc.) he referred to 'brother Sun' and 'sister Moon,' the wind and water and even death, 'sister Death.' His long and painful illnesses were nicknamed his sisters, and he begged pardon of "brother Ass the body" for having unduly burdened him with his penances. Above all, his deep sense of brotherhood under God embraced his fellow men, for 'he consoled himself no

friend of Christ if he did not cherish those for whom Christ died.'

(Continued in next issue.)

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St. Francis in Ecstasy by Bellini

Guru's Walks

Deborah Buchanan

This is a continuation of my series about the walks and conversations I had with Guru Nitya and friends while at the Ooty Gurukula in the summer of 1995. Many readers will have had similar experiences on other pathways throughout the world, as Guru is always generous with his abundant wisdom and humor.

The nightly clouds of cold rain had again cleared for a crisp morning. The air was edged with wet mist against a brilliant blue, and the soaked plants glittered in the sun. This morning my older daughter Emily joined Guru and me for his daily walk.

Only a few late stragglers for school and work were on the road. But as we walked down to the lower village, an older man and his school-age daughter approached us. Usually the villagers would nod at Guru or offer a quick namaste with their hands. Many were members of the local church and they regarded him as a neighbor, maybe as a source of money or help in times of need, but not as a spiritual teacher. The old man who now approached us related to Guru differently, with a respectful sense of devotion. You could see that Guru was not just a neighbor to him but occupied that particular role of spiritual emblem and guide.

He was a lean man, not actually skinny, but certainly with no excess in his food or life. The old blue suit coat he wore was shiny from many washings on the river rocks. His head was wrapped in a wool scarf yet his feet were bare to the mud and cold. Walking up to Guru to greet him, this man carried himself with both humility and self assurance. There was not any forced humbleness. After coming up to Guru, he bowed in the full prostration of disciple to teacher, lying on the path with his face on Guru's feet.

I had been with Guru many times when people would offer him their prostrations, and often he would look past the

devotee out to the horizon, then gently offer them a smile or namaste in return. He had told me once of the first time that someone had prostrated at his feet, just after he had taken sannyasa. An old family friend, much revered, had touched his feet in homage. Guru recalled that he had jumped away in horror, feeling embarrassed that such a person was touching his feet. Then his mother had sternly reprimanded him, "Do you think it is you as a person that she is bowing before? No, it is the path of renunciation to which you have given yourself that she is honoring. You have no part in this." So whenever someone touched his feet, I could see Guru himself acknowledging that path of dedication, stepping to the side, as it were, from the whole concept of ego and adulation.

When the village man stood up it was his eyes that I noticed. He looked into Guru's face with such an intensity and love that it was startling. His dark eyes, set in his rich, almost creamy dark brown skin, seemed to stretch inward forever. Yet he was not lost in some other, remote space. He was right here, his brilliant eyes open and present to all of us.

The teenage daughter then offered her own greeting with folded hands and bowed head, her eyes shy and averted, truly the doe-like eyes of Kalidasa's Sakuntala. Then they took their leave and were gone on to work and school. Guru, Emily and I walked down the road talking, but I don't remember what we said. I kept thinking of the man's eyes and the vibrant expression on his face.

At the end of our walk, we turned into the Gurukula pathway. After passing the gate, we noticed two women waiting by the side, half hidden in the shadow of the tall evergreen trees. One seemed much older--a mother or grandmother, it was hard to tell which--and another teenage

girl. They walked up to Guru hesitantly, stopping when only somewhat near. This young girl's eyes were not fawnlike. They darted, but more out of uneasiness, and they seemed shadowed by pain. Her arm and hand and one foot were covered in what appeared to be an extremely sore skin rash, and the arm and hand hung loosely, shaking spasmodically.

The older woman was talking to Guru in Tamil and asking questions and advice, or so it seemed from her voice and how Guru was listening. He waited patiently until she was done and then spoke to both of them. From his tone and his gestures it seemed he was giving directions, after which he nodded and turned towards the prayer hall. As we walked into the building he said, "I have sent them to a friend of mine, a doctor at the public health clinic, who will help them." Then he went back to his room and to his letter writing.

Finding Suellen and Dr. Thampan chatting in the sun room alcove, Emily and I stopped to visit. We brought up the puzzle of the two women. Dr. Thampan shook his head. Oh, yes, he knew them. The young girl--she was maybe sixteen--had leprosy. Her parents had come to the Gurukula with her over a year ago when the first signs of the disease began to appear. At that time Thampan had taken them to the health clinic and they had been examined and then sent home with medicine

and prescriptions for more later on. But they did not believe the diagnosis. What was leprosy to them? They didn't know it. And when they had to pay for more of the pills, it all stopped. The signs of the leprosy had first shown themselves around the time when the girl had begun her menstrual periods, and they believed the rash to be connected to that. Over the last year she had been to many local healers with no success and had now come back to the Gurukula.

"They can go to the clinic where Guru sent them, but it won't help," said Thampan. "In the early stages, leprosy is curable. We have the medicine. But now it is too late. The disease will only progress. We also know that leprosy is transmitted through the air and most likely all of her family is infected at this point." He shook his head. He had tried and he could have helped her, but now it was past that time.

I remembered the arm hanging by her side, shaking uncontrollably, and her eyes darting from the dirt edges of the road to Guru's face. Her eyes were so different from those of the young girl I had seen earlier. Both had a naiveté from growing up in small rural villages, but for the one with leprosy there was a flatness in her eyes that came from ignorance and isolation. Guru could offer help but he could not make it be accepted.

(Continued in next issue.)



East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



The celebration of the 100th birthday of Nataraja Guru with a year of world-wide programs ended with an international seminar from February 18 to 21, 1996, held at Narayana Gurukula, Fernhill. The seminar was inspired by the words and ideals voiced by Nataraja Guru in 1954:

Primarily, Conventions in the Gurukula Movement are intended to reassert human solidarity and fellowship across all divided frontiers or other factors. The last man who was judged by exclusive orthodoxy must be given first chance here, and those opinions which also sound most heterodox must be listened to most patiently. None is excluded.

The Gurukula movement has no active politics, no economic strife and no propaganda motive. Truth that is freely known or let known to others without rivalry must emancipate. It should never make further fetters of obligation or of necessity.

It is in this spirit that all religionist or various schools of philosophic thought must be welcome, and be given a symmetrically thought out place in the Convention Program.

The seminar began with a fire ceremony and talk by Muni Narayana Prasad on the contribution Narayana Gurukula will make as we move into the twenty-first century. Then Father Harshajan Pazhayattil spoke about healing and sustaining

physical, emotional, psychological and ethical health, drawing on his studies of Christian teachings, Āyurveda, Yoga and the human spirit. Like Jesus, Narayana Guru would ask those who came to him for healing if they believed it would come true if he said so, tapping the healing power of the spirit. We may not be capable of the kind of miraculous cures attributed to such great healers, but when we listen to a person's tale of woe and our own eyes fill with tears, it lets them know that we resonate with their inner self, and that has a great healing power.

Next Dr. R.K. Prasad talked about Āyurveda in life. As a trained M.D. as well as a practitioner of the ancient Indian medical science, Dr. Prasad had a wonderful perspective on what aids and what hinders good health. He discussed the impact of the environment, the season, diet and exercise on our health. His talk was a good reminder of Narayana Guru's response when people tried to put responsibility for their well-being on him, making it clear that each person has a responsibility to care for their psycho-physical system.

In the evening, Miss Lathika of Singapore performed classical Indian dance to dramatize the mystical poetry of Narayana Guru. Watching the flowing movements



Divya Parvati with Guru Nitya

of the human body as an embodiment of grace brings a sublimation of one's more aggressive nature. Now that Narayana Guru's works have been set to music and choreographed, we are better able to appreciate his vision of beauty in life which is a necessary aspect of attaining a higher state of mentation. Several aspects of Narayana Guru's aesthetic transcendence are used by the Gurukula to engender a new awakening of Guru's high aesthetic sense.

The second day of the seminar began with a talk by Swami Viviktananda of the Cinmaya Mission on living the Upaniṣadic way of life. He had a very gentle way of showing what the *Upaniṣad* is and how we

come closer to our inner self, the outer, gross, egoistic self melting away as the love for the Absolute becomes love for all. That was followed by Dr. Joseph E. Varghese's talk on living Christian ideals in everyday life. Just as we can understand Narayana Guru as a higher consciousness spreading into the conscience of all, living the Christian ideal in one's heart helps others to live, not by force but by example. Jesus and Narayana Guru can be understood as not being limited to a certain caste or religion, but as examples of a way of life that can be experienced as coming from one's innermost heart, divorced from propaganda.

In the evening Divya Parvathi pre-

sented Narayana Guru's *Prapañcaśuddhi Daśakam* in classical dance form. As the work represents the purification of the gross body sense, it was a difficult challenge. But Divya Parvathi merged into it and made herself into still images. Although she was frozen, she was radiant. All the viewers were lifted up by these new innovations from a beautiful soul.

The next day began with a *Qur'an* recitation by Moulana Abdul Gafoor Shaik from the Sri Abubabagi Religious and Festival Mission Trust. It was fortuitous that the electricity went off, so that the natural voice of the Moulana could be heard. It reverberated in the hearts of all with exquisite beauty, taking away any prejudice that the Islamic way of life is drastic. Sri K.T. Soopy Master's spoke on living the ideals of the faithful according to the Holy Qur'an. He presented the compassion of God as a way of interpreting life. Compassion means feeling with the other and that is Islam. He presented the faith, beauty, peace and order of Islam very touchingly. Sri K.P.A. Rahim also shared his loving soul and mystical insights in his presentation on Sufi ideals.

In the evening Kapila brought to life the traditional dances of Kerala. Though she is very young, she has performed in great cities of the world like Paris and New York. She is fearless. At the same time, she presented the dances with a certain innocence that shone as a glow, bringing great serenity to the minds of the on-lookers.

The final day of the seminar began with a recitation of the *Thevaram*, the cream of South Indian culture, by Sri R. Kuppusami. It was followed by a poetry reading of modern Tamil poetry and a discussion led by Sri Jai Mohan. Narayana Gurukula thus is a functioning as a center for the new renaissance of South Indian culture.

The seminar also provided an opportunity for many people from all over to live together like brothers and sisters. Everyone made mutual adjustments to learn how to live together in harmony, without any caste, creed or race consciousness. It was a chance for all to experience new dimensions in social-ethical life. These were Guru's dreams - the coming together of East and West, men and women, science and art. ♦



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Spain, 13-15th c.

31: The Creation of Man, Sistine Chapel,
by Michelangelo
35: The Prophet Isaiah, Sistine Chapel, by
Michelangelo
43: Photo by Wilson Studio
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Just in time for the opening of the seminar, the main structure of the new Nataraja Guru Search and Study Center was completed up to the roof stage.

East-West University and Narayana Gurukula Publications

By Nataraja Guru

An Integrated Science of the Absolute (Volumes I, II, III)
Autobiography of an Absolutist
The Bhagavad Gita
The Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru
Wisdom: The Absolute is Adorable
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The Saundaryalaharī of Śankarācārya
The *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, Three Volumes
The Psychology of *Darśana Mālā*
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Neither This Nor That But... *AUM*
Love and Devotion
The Haunting Echoes of Spring
A Bouquet of Verses in Praise of the Supreme Mother
Experiencing the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*
Śree Narayana Guru
Daiva Daśakam (Translation and Commentary)
Psychology: An Eastern Perspective
Bhakti
Vināyakāṣṭakam (Translation and Commentary)
God: Reality or Illusion?
Prāṇāyāma
Arivu - Epistemology of Gnosis

Other

Dhyāna Mañjuṣā
East-West University Prospectus and Yearbooks
Mirror by the Road - Peter Oppenheimer
Edda's Diaries - Edda Walker
Basic Lessons on India's Wisdom - Muni Narayana Prasad
Taittirīya Upaniṣad - Muni Narayana Prasad
Narayana Guru's Relevancy for Today - N.C. Kumaran

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