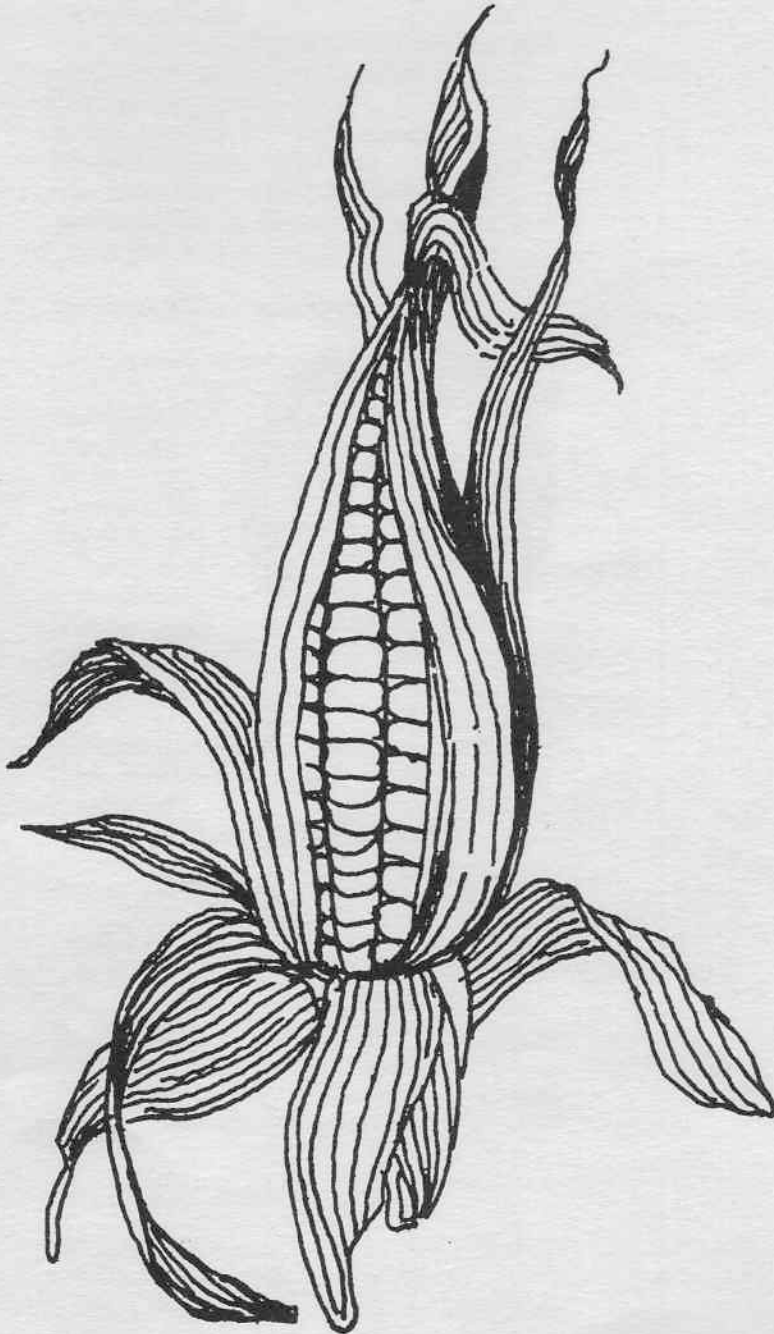
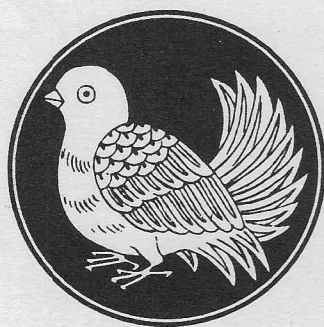


GURUKULAM

VOLUME XIII • 1997

THIRD QUARTER





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- 3 ELEMENTAL VISIONS by Nancy Yeilding
- 5 THE SCIENCE OF HARMONIOUS UNION
 Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*
 by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 12 REMEMBERING by Deborah Buchanan
- 14 ONE HUNDRED VERSES OF SELF-INSTRUCTION:
 Narayana Guru's *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*
 Translation and Commentary by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 22 HONORING WISDOM'S LIGHT
- 24 THE PRAŚNA UPANIṢAD
 Translation and Commentary by Muni Narayana Prasad
- 28 SILVER DOVES AND GOLDEN THREADS by Peggy Grace
- 32 FACING PAIN AND PLEASURE
 by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 36 BONDAGE AND LIBERATION by Nitya
- 38 OF CATERPILLARS AND CHILDREN
 by Peter Oppenheimer
- 42 ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN
 Victoria Luke
- 44 PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

GURUKULAM

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Elemental Visions




Let me sing the song of space, where the world begins. Space is not a thing, but it gives every thing, every being, the possibility of existence. Time gives rhythm to the song of space. No material thing can be without having a space/time to occupy. Two separate things cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

The emptiness of space is vast, infinite as far as we can discern. But the beingness of any given thing is always somewhere. It is located. So space also provides the possibility of location. Within the infinitude there is a locus, a point, of being for each thing that exists. Each conscious being is at the center of what it knows as existence and space offers infinite potentials around it.


Within space, freedom and motion are possible. The movement of things, from the stately march of the planets in the sky to the buzzing of a bee, follows discernible laws which give the dimension of meaning to freedom. Any movement can be conceived of as made of points. The all-pervading extensionless mathematical point expresses the nature of the time/space continuum.

Space also gives us sound. Space allows sound to move freely through it. From the center point of an event, sound radiates out as waves, concentric circles of meaning-carrying vibrations. They interact with the faculties of hearing which are precisely constructed to receive the messages of sound and thus intimately connected with the world around.




Let me pace the dance of air, invisible but powerful, spread thickly around the globe. Air twirls and pirouettes, spirals high and swishes down. It is known by its impact on more visible things. Its touch can be a gentle tickle or caress, a wild thrashing or scouring. The hexagon is the symbol for the disorderly movement of air, represented by multiples of two and three the numbers of inanimate nature. Air fills in all the nooks and crannies of space within the

boundary of the atmosphere. Fire, water and earth are all permeated by air. Air flows in and out of beings and things, bringing nutrients in, carrying waste materials out. Air is intimately shared: the breaths one being breathes in have been exhaled millions of times before by other organisms, and swirled again and again through space and time. Air connects all, so it is the medium of touch, of feeling.



The flames of fire dance and sing their own songs. Fire has many moods. It rises up as the sun in the morning, enlivening the earth, twinkles in the night sky as stars and glows serenely as the moon. The triangle represents the upward movement of the fiery element. The radiant energy of fire brings alchemy, transformation. Fire burns in creatures as metabolic functioning and sensory awareness, in plants as photosynthesis. Fire also consumes and purifies, reducing all to ashes. So fire can be both a great destroyer and a great redeemer.

The soul of fire is air and the soul of water is fire. The effulgence of fire illuminates and thus becomes the source of vision. The same kind of correspondence that exists between ear and sound waves can be found between eye and light waves. The meticulous reciprocity of sense organ and the data it receives from the world around it, when pondered, brings awe.



Like fire and air, water has movement, symbolized by the wave. It circulates throughout the world and in living beings as the very sap of life. It even defies gravity in its push to carry nutrients from under the ground to the tops of tall trees. Water rises up as steam and evaporation, attaches to tiny motes of dust to form great floating and swirling clouds, pours down as rain, drifts down as delicate snowflakes, hammers down as hail, flows as rivers, creeks and streamlets from the mountains to the seas. Water moves with grace, giving way to more solid objects in its path. But, given

enough time, it can carve deep canyons in even the hardest of rock or change the shape of a continent. Water is the master solvent, dispersing other substances within itself, transforming and purifying. It carries the essences which reveal themselves as taste.

Like earth, water has substance. Roused by wind or massive movements of earth, it can form terrible pounding waves and typhoons which bring great destruction. But also like earth, water has the capability of remaining with contentment in any size container, from a thimble to an immense ocean.



Earth is stability, the foundation on which all things and beings stand, rest and move around. It is substance itself, the primordial matter that takes form as all other substances and which absorbs all back into itself. The square represents the earth, the many-sidedness of extension. Earth remains as the solid fact of existence, whether as craggy rocks, fertile plains, vast sandy deserts, gentle sloping valleys or high mountain peaks. But earth also has movement: the unimaginably slow sliding of tectonic plates which eventually unleashes violent earthquakes, the invisible flow of magma deep below the crust which occasionally breaks through with great force as volcanic eruptions and thrusting mountains, and the myriad dances of microscopic airborne and seaborne dust. As such, earth permeates water and air. Floating particles carry the messages of odor to receiving stations in living beings which are specially designed to interpret them.

From the beginning of their existence, human beings have sought understanding of and harmony with the world around them. They did not start with any scheme in mind; rather they encountered and responded to those encounters. They found themselves in intimate relationship with earth, water, fire, air and space. Slowly they registered their encounters, began to record them in sounds and pictures, and eventually to conceive of and codify the relationships between them.

The concept of five interrelated ele-

ments as the basic components of the universe evolved early in the history of humankind. It has since been far surpassed by the findings of modern science which has identified more than one hundred fundamental substances. Knowledge of these elements and how they interact is far more precise and detailed than the knowledge which ancient peoples had about the world around them. However, in the analytic process of gaining that knowledge, human beings have become estranged from the world being studied. Everywhere we look, we see the tragic results of human beings damaging and destroying the purity and harmonious balance of the elements.

We need to regain the lost understanding of reality reflected by the ancient scheme: that of an undivided though differentiated whole. Knowledge of the physical structure, properties and actions of each element, and the role each plays in human life, was sought after and revered. However, it was not separated from a total vision which included the allegorical or spiritual aspects of the elements. Scriptures and philosophical texts of all traditions used the elements to reveal the unity underlying the manifold appearance of reality. such as the verses of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III.17.3-7) which tell of:

The one who inhabits the earth (water, fire, air, space), yet is within the earth (water, fire, air, space), whom the earth (water, fire, air, space) does not know, whose body is the earth (water, fire, air, space), who controls the earth (water, fire, air, space) from within, that is your Self, the inner controller, the immortal.

These ancient verses are echoed in the poetry of Narayana Guru who sang to re-voke our sense of harmony with the world around us:

*The one Self alone
burns as fire, blows as wind,
showers as rain, supports
as earth, and flows as river.*

Nancy Yeilding

The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patāñjali's *Yoga Sūtras*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

We have seen how posture (*āsana*) and regulation of the vital energies (*prāṇāyāma*) both affect the conjunction of the body and the Self. In the organization of the material to serve us, physical mechanisms and instruments play a large part in the mind-like substances which account for the production of sensations. Localized illuminations of organic awareness, which can huddle together to generate corporate function in a body, are always fashioning material devices out of non-material subtle forces to act as part of an organism, ranging from the manifestation of a cell, to bigger communities of cells in tissues, to the very subtle conductors of the psychodynamic and electromagnetic networks of a living organism. There is a neat interlacing of the physical and psychic to make an ensemble of awareness. The discipline of *pratyāhāra*, also impacts the same area.

Each of the five senses is accompanied by specialized forms of consciousness such as hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling. Once you turn to any one of the senses you find that there is a large quantity of message-bringing stimuli coming to that faculty. It is pleasant to see a fully-blossomed flower with pearl-like dew drops on it. However, it is not very essential for life that you see the flower. But an angry snake annoyed by one's interference suddenly coming out of the bush and charging at you should be seen vividly so that you can run away before you are bitten. Thus every signal of sight has a different message to deliver. There are several million luminous objects parading before

you which you can safely ignore. But in whatever state of being you are, or in whichever *āsana* you are, there are certain signs which you cannot and should not avoid. This is also true of the millions of messages brought to you by sound, smell, touch and taste. They can be very endearing as well as crushing you to death; all these should be looked into.

Pratyāhāra functions as a discriminating guard over the highly sensitive areas of the organism which can adversely affect both the person's physical energy as well as psychosomatic and spiritual energies. Most animals have a mastery of *pratyāhāra*, turning away from any incentive that is likely to be dangerous. They are cautious to avoid the snares and traps of life by developing their alertness to sight, sound and smell. These same sensations, however, are the killers of human beings. The drunkard or the drug addict has almost a seventh sense to detect where he can get his abominable stuff. All over the world, in the name of ethics and good behavior, sexual union between male and female is looked upon with contempt and many social customs and laws are maintained by society with vigilance so that man and woman should not easily come together. As a consequence, the erotic touch is sought after almost with a vengeance. Rarely is a person deterred from an object of erotics once he or she has been bitten by passion. The dog is very sexy, the cat is sexy, but they have long holidays from erotics. Man is not similarly restricted. He has to restrict himself; it is here failure comes. It is like

putting a chocolate in the mouth and asking oneself not to eat it. It is in this dangerous area where one's passion is aroused by all the senses and the mind, that one is asked to stop advancing towards the specialized forms of pleasure-giving objects.

Hārana is taking away that to which you want to cling. Each sense has a counterpart to relate with. Feeding the sense organ with the object of desire and then trying to prevent it is unnatural and also dangerous. Mechanically breaking a sense organ from its desired counterpart is the source of neurosis and psychosis. Repression and suppression are two vultures hatched out of the same egg. When the mind is tired of desiring or inhibiting, it passes on its pains to the body. When the body is tired of bearing pains, it passes them on to the mind. If such things happen, there is no *āsana*, there is no *prāṇāyāma* and all that is said about yoga is futile.

Instead of giving religious sermons on spiritual life, if a clear scientific explanation is given on how our breathing system, nervous system, digestive system and glandular system function and are pathologically afflicted, we will learn to have better yoga. The hitching of all the weaknesses of man to an imagined God, and then making God excuse all good as well as bad, is a self-deception. Patañjali teaches the way of common sense which is very practical and sensible for anyone who has not lost the faculty of good reasoning.

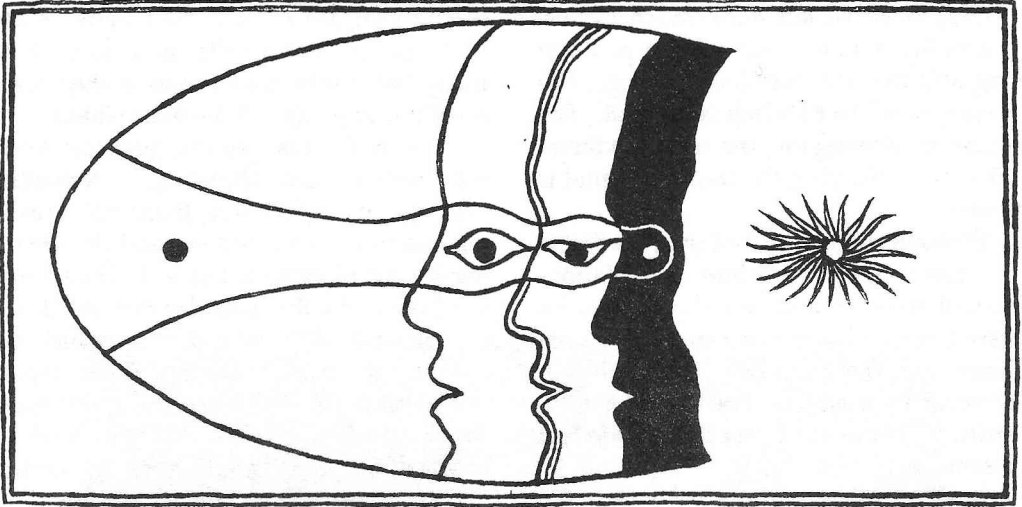
The Operational Link Between the Transactional World of Empirical Validity and the Transcendental Usually Called *Param* or the Beyond

Each of the three altering states of consciousness is said to be dominated by a separate kind of manifestation, which is the nucleic ground of each state, called its 'body' or *śarīra*. First is what is called the gross body (*sthūlaśarīra*), the psychosomatic organism which functions for about 10 to 18 hours a day in the wakeful state, to which every part of the organism is well-attuned. Although we speak of it as the gross body, its functional details are im-

plemented by many subtle instrumentations, meticulously carried out by the electro-magnetic principle that is implied in every function of a living body. The main stress is on the integrity of the physical body which belongs to the specific sensory and motor areas of the five organs of perception and the five organs of action. We can refer to the function of this two-fold system as happening 'here', but we cannot say it is 'now', because it is very much influenced and controlled by the long-term programs of biologic growth accompanied by hidden memories which are essentially controlled by the autonomous system of each living body.

The wakeful state may be only for ten to eighteen hours, but it occurs repeatedly and we can continue our programs with consistency for a long time. In a sense, we do so from the moment of birth to the moment of death, which, in some cases, comes only after a hundred years. There are many studies on the nature and function of this individuated gross body from the perspective of several delimited fields such as biology, physiology, physical chemistry, psychophysics and neurobiology. The gross body, supported by the light of intelligence controlled by an overall personality, functions to make life meaningful by directing the program of each day to relate with the previous days and also point towards future achievements. The achievement of each person is called *puruṣārtha*, the sum total of the meaning of a person's life.

The first step in *puruṣārtha* is becoming familiar with one's personal *dharma* as a growing individual. One needs to become fully acquainted with every potential of one's integrated body/spirit system in its totality so that one can arrive at a certitude about all the possibilities in one's life. The bodily system and reasoning faculties are equipped with several instruments or devices which can be helpful in developing one's potential to an amazing degree. The second *puruṣārtha* is making life meaningful. 'Meaning' in Sanskrit is *artha*. Having any kind of means, whether the ability in perception, talent in physical performanc-



es, possession of granaries or landed property or cash in hand, are all part of *artha*. Thus *dharma* and *artha* in a person are discovered side by side. There is a mutuality between the science of potentials, *dharmaśāstra*, and finding the resources, physical, moral and spiritual, which come under the study of *arthaśāstra*, the science of wealth.

The second body is the subtle body, *sūkṣmaśarīra*, is associated with the dream state of consciousness. Any specific or particular imperiential cognizance we have immediately leads to an inquiry regarding its universal application. All facts are accompanied by their subjective elaboration in a chain of reasoning. We also call it the rationale of our life. Its pure state can be seen in the elaboration of dream, when we are between the wakeful and the sleep. Then there is nothing to witness, only a fragmentation of the central nucleus of awareness to be like a million mirrors, each reflecting the other with the central point of consciousness swayed by the fluctuations of the dream consciousness. Although such a state looks chaotic, it is the most helpful process by which the gross experience of the day is reduced to the inner requirements of arranging and putting into order all the impressions that have come through the sense organs. Several emotional impulses of like and dislike, pain and pleasure, are restructured to form an inner person which is like a mirrored body

that is kept between the total unconscious and the most elaborate consciousness. The experiencer of this subtle body is called 'the perceiver of the inner light and its effect,' (*taijasābhimāni*). Not knowing all this, even eminent scientists and psychologists think that dreams are wasted hours in our lives, which are to be analyzed to find out the derangement of consciousness. Our world is certainly a very uneducated patchwork of presumptions and conjectures. What is not attained in the hours of wakeful consciousness is idealized and sometimes idolized in the dream. Thus there is partial achievement in the dream as well.

The third body is associated with deep sleep, the state where all vestiges of awareness melt away. It is called the causal body. In the course of 24 hours, every living person is given an experience of death, an ability to give up everything. There, a person is not even lonely because personality is effaced. There is no consciousness whatsoever. The entire person is epitomized into a mathematical point as it were. It is a seeded state in which nothing in the total person is lost. And in that state a person is nothing other than the pulsating consciousness called *prajña*, in which the active consciousness (*samprajñāta*) and the total unconscious (*asamprajñāta*) merge into a hibernating state. The causal body can re-emerge as a subtle body in a dream, or can again assume the monitoring of the gross body.

Only when we know this much, can we say how there is a link between the physical being and the transcendental being. The stepping stone to that link is *dhāraṇā*. The process of evolving into the transcendental is *dhyāna*. Achieving the transcendental is *samādhi*.

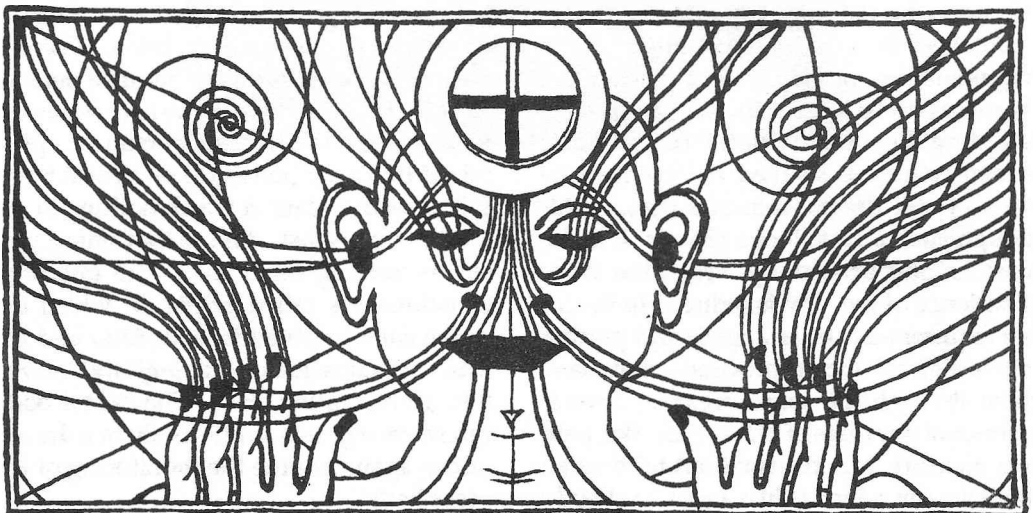
Whether in Yoga or Vedanta, the Self is real. The Self always comes into relationship with the non-Self. Relationship can be organic, integral and external. In external relationship, there can be a relationship of biological necessity or one of proximity. Proximity arises out of situations of life and is alterable.

In all these cases the watchword of a yogi should be to relate with the auspicious and not with the inauspicious. If a person aspiring to become a yogi can preserve the inner harmony of well-being and outer harmony of perfect understanding, it is called *kuśala*. When we are in a state of *kuśala*, that is a pure state. When we sit in a place full of smoke or dust or dirt, the environment is unclean. Therefore the relationship that gets established in such a situation is to be avoided. That is why in the Bhagavad Gītā also, it is said that as far as possible one should sit in a clean place where the atmosphere is pleasant and it is neither too cold nor too hot, on a seat which is neither too high nor too low. To gain the maximum benefit of promoting an auspicious impulse for a long time, one should not get distracted. All distractions and

discomforts are to be looked upon as impure. So ancient people used to observe many behavioral patterns as if they were accepted as pledges to be maintained.

We have this organic physical body into which many things go. Naturally when there is a taking in, there will also be a going out. The incoming and the outgoing are both foreign to the Self. The air that we breathe in, the moisture that affects us, the comfort of the situation in which we remain for a long time - all these impact one's ability to maintain a correct attitude. Sweat goes out from the body. Various kinds of particles fly off from our bodies and get mixed with the air around us. Air, water and food are all taken in. They can be contaminated. Fresh air is necessary and the food and water should not contain any substance that will put the digestive system into disarray.

The five senses in us are open gates through which external stimuli can come. The cleanliness or uncleanness of a thing, whether sound, touch, form, food, drink, odor or smell, is judged by how it impacts our harmony when it goes into us. What enters our eyes, ears, mouth, etc., is rather superficial. What goes deeper into our system gets deposited in the faculty of memory. Therefore any contaminating thought or prejudice that we listen to or accept can be a serious impurity. All desires are expressions of the impure. When we are absolutely pure, our harmony is



automatically maintained.

Jesus Christ said that what goes out of you is more important than what comes into you. So far as human beings are concerned, what goes out in large measure is our words. There should be purity in the word. Purity of word is assessed with the truth that every word reflects. For this reason yogis restrain their words to the maximum. They reconsider every word before they utter it. That also enhances the purity in deliverance. There are certain norms for expressing oneself to another. Flattering or praising a person in the course of a dialogue is considered very impure. Observing the norm of being clean is enough by itself to carry one to one's own absolute nature, called *kevala*.

Life is so poised in each organism to have a purposive outlook and an insightful interpretation of all relationships, both passive and deliberate. It is one and the same principle of consciousness that interlinks the external objectivity of environment and the subjective consciousness which instantly elaborates into a pattern of awareness that is discernible as a plethora of forms. Every form is registered in the focal point of consciousness by centralizing the essence of the form and embellishing it peripherally with all accompanying features that are conjoined to it, which is mainly called ratiocination.

The main instrument of fixation is an idea that can be expressed through a name. Name can be a traditional tonal image recognized by all those who are involved in communication using a common language. The outgoing agent of observation takes time to bring more clarity to consciousness by continuously observing features which were not seen at first sight. In that, collaboration takes place between the functions of the relevant sense organs. What is seen is supplemented with what is heard. What is heard and seen is further elaborated with the quality of touch.

We are presently speaking of the formation of an idea in the human being. In other living organisms there is a concentration on their main purpose, which is none other than self-preservation. The

purpose of human beings has many dimensions which require more building material of the thinking stuff in a person, which is usually called 'mind'. The first superstition of humans is to believe consistently in an idea called 'mind'. The basis for such a belief is the alchemy that is generated by the physical chemistry and psychobiology which is all the time operating to meet the demands of biologic laws. To understand it a little more clearly, we should begin with the archetypal organization which we see in the formulation of a living cell. The constituents that go into the manifestation of a cell can be analyzed objectively into chemical particles, for which water is a solvent, and the thermal and magnetic principles of solar energy or similar energies that seem to be magically brought together to put a certain order into the chaotic presence of microbotic arrangements.

This is described differently in the science of harmonious union which speaks of two counterparts coming into confection, one from the side of matter and the other from the side of what may be tentatively referred to as the possible origin of awareness or consciousness or knowledge, which, for the purpose of explanation, is called the 'spirit'. In religious parlance several such concepts received as tentative starting points have become crystallized into morbid concepts like god, mind, self, etc., which are meaningful only to a person who accepts a tonal or verbal image to stand for a certain assemblage of ideas. Once it is named, such a concept gains the currency of a transactional fact or reality. For instance, if some irritable dust is breathed into the mouth, and the contaminated air is about to enter the respiratory system, phlegm gathers in the throat instantaneously to keep the foreign particles from going into the lungs. Consequently, through an autonomous function, there will be a cough or a sneeze. Although people have no way of knowing which unidentified particle is causing the disturbance, people accept the explanation that they are coughing or sneezing. Thus hundreds and thousands of words we use are

only verbal substitutes for the understanding of human discomfort. We live in a jungle of irrational words which claim the allegiance of our reasoning ability.

It is to make a dent through all these facades of ignorance that Patañjali asks us to have an insight into the unconscious that is generating in it a spark or speck, which is felt only as an element of disturbance causing the organism to come to a state of tension. Where tension arises, attention comes. This is where the so-called mind originates. Many people think that mind generates ideas. But we have to accept it in the reverse order: disturbance evolves into mind. Once we understand this, we are no more at the mercy of the mind.

There are three phases within the nucleus of an impulse. One is its ability to magnify itself as a picturesque awareness of several shades of bipolarity, such as a postulated cause that dynamically elaborates itself into an effect. The same, when theoretically put forward by the philosopher of consciousness, is called *jñānaśakti*, the dynamics of knowledge or the power to know. This is like the eye spotting a danger in the signal of a form and ringing out an alarm to be watchful of what is seen. If that comes from the spirit, the counterpart of the body, the ensemble of the constituents in every cell is alerted to reformulate and restructure almost all parts of the body for an emergency. The concentration of attention given to knowledge, shifts to a dynamic impulse to take action called *icchaśakti* or will. From knowledge we shift to belief. This makes the disturbance a little more intense and the two combine into a point of explosion. When the explosion actually takes place, it is called action. Thus at every microbiotic point, knowledge, will and action center. Until these three happen, the ego which presides over the innate functions remains in the lurch.

It is very interesting to note that in anything of the world we want to explain, there is a bracketing of three entities, all of which have an unknown source in the fourth. In life, the main scheme is a quaternion in which the one gives ground to three separate entities. When we elaborate

this principle a little more, we arrive at the triple phases of the altering states of consciousness - the wakeful, the dream and the deep sleep. Yet the three have only one basic origin, one sustaining principle and one final merging point, called the fourth, the *turīya*. We have been referring to a parameter, which is as formless as a mathematical point which is sometimes called monomark. And from that there comes the elaboration of what is called the universe. Whether it is to pinpoint the monomark of an origin or to understand how we live through misery and joy and are exposed to a million encounters with factual people or embodied beings, there is only one scheme. That is to continuously recognize the imagery and to return again and again to the essential.

Yoga shows us how to become one with the essence. It gives a two-fold scheme, first showing us how to trace the personality built up from microbiotic principles. The personality can be examined in terms of universally binding laws, having their own mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. That is what we call the aggregate of masses governed by the innate needs of a living organism which makes several conditions of life so imperative that no one can avoid getting conjoined to certain states and disjoined from certain other states.

Even the minutest basis of anything in this structure has a counterpart which is not visible, audible or tangible, but has an inner light which spells out the meaning of the situation. That is called *prajñā*. The rest is mentation that is held out by the logic of cause and effect. From the threshold of *prajñā* to the skin with which our body is wrapped and the other sense organs, there is a whole world of confusion, which the scientist says is fact and the Vedantin says is the ignorance of educated minds.

The path of *prajñā* to *mokṣa*, *prakṛti* to aloneness, or necessity to transcendence is the other half of the picture. To see how from the world of words, ideas and logic go back into the matrix of nucleus, tissues, cells and plasma, etc., there is no difficulty. There are ever so many books, experi-

ments, reference notes. With all this one gets a good salary as a professor. But the snare of life will continue. To move in the other direction, to *mokṣa*, *nirvāna* and *kaivalya*, no one can help you. You yourself have to find it. The process is called *pratiprasava*; the regressive way back to the origin. *Prasava* means giving birth. The child returning to the womb and becoming a fetus, and the fetus going back to the sperm and ovum are all *pratiprasavas*.

If an embodied being does not come to *mokṣa* or *nirvāna* or *kaivalya*, then the life in that being is like a continuing gestalt. The Samkhyan philosophy speaks of a binary principle which polarizes, such as in the case of light and darkness. The bright is called *puruṣa*, and the shadowy element is *prakṛti*. If the light has a positive absolutism, darkness has a negative absolutism. Darkness is independent of light. Light always becomes contrasted with darkness.

This is a very difficult paradox to resolve. In Vedānta philosophy the Self or *ātman* is described as expressive and consistent. The being is not only being, but it expresses itself as if it is revealing its characteristic nature of luminosity. It is defined as 'that which shines by itself'. It therefore may be of some help to look at words like light, and go on from light to luminescence and to fluorescence, phonon and photon. In the dictionary of physics we can find all these terms explained in physical terms and as facts. But to understand the implication of *ātman*, we will not be able to find any dictionary other than our own innermost core of consciousness. It all depends on our training and ability in the transcendence of reasoning. Hereafter all the lessons of the *Vibhūti Pāda* of Patañjali help us to go from *dhāraṇā* to *dhyāna* and ultimately to lose ourselves in *samādhi*.

(Continued in next issue.)



Remembering

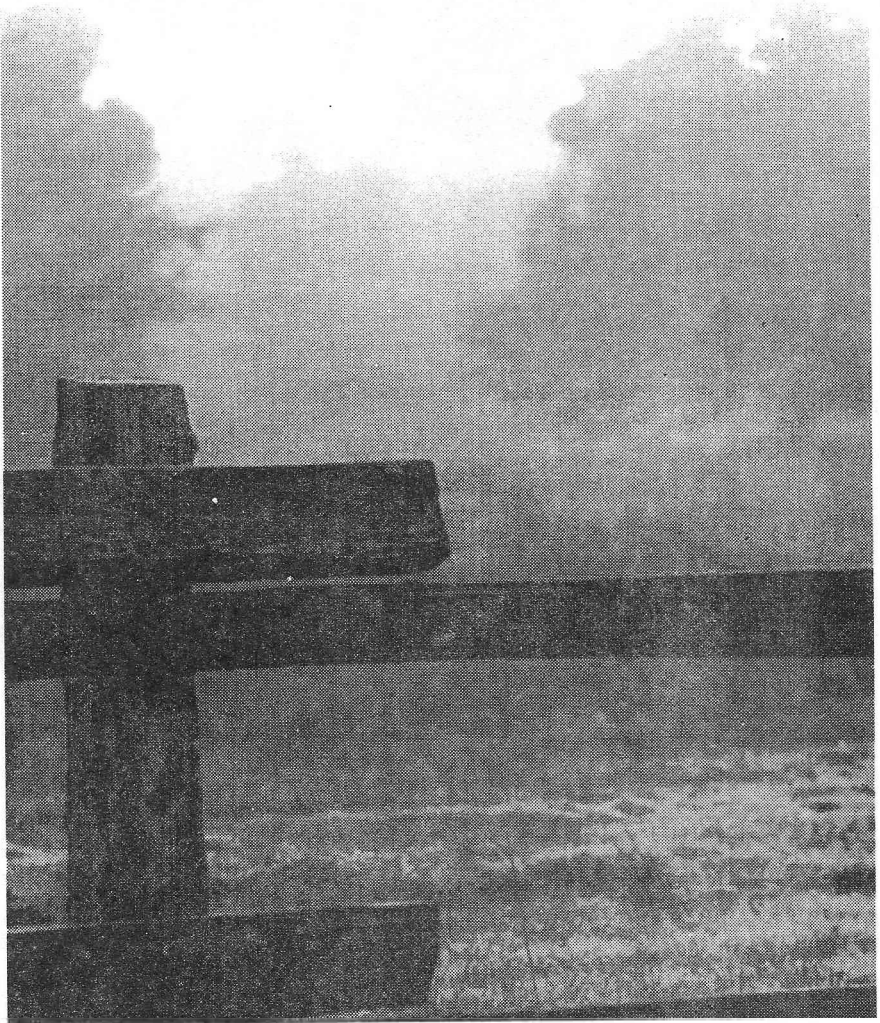
I prayed to your fingertips--
a pale, translucent pink--
so small and barely curved,

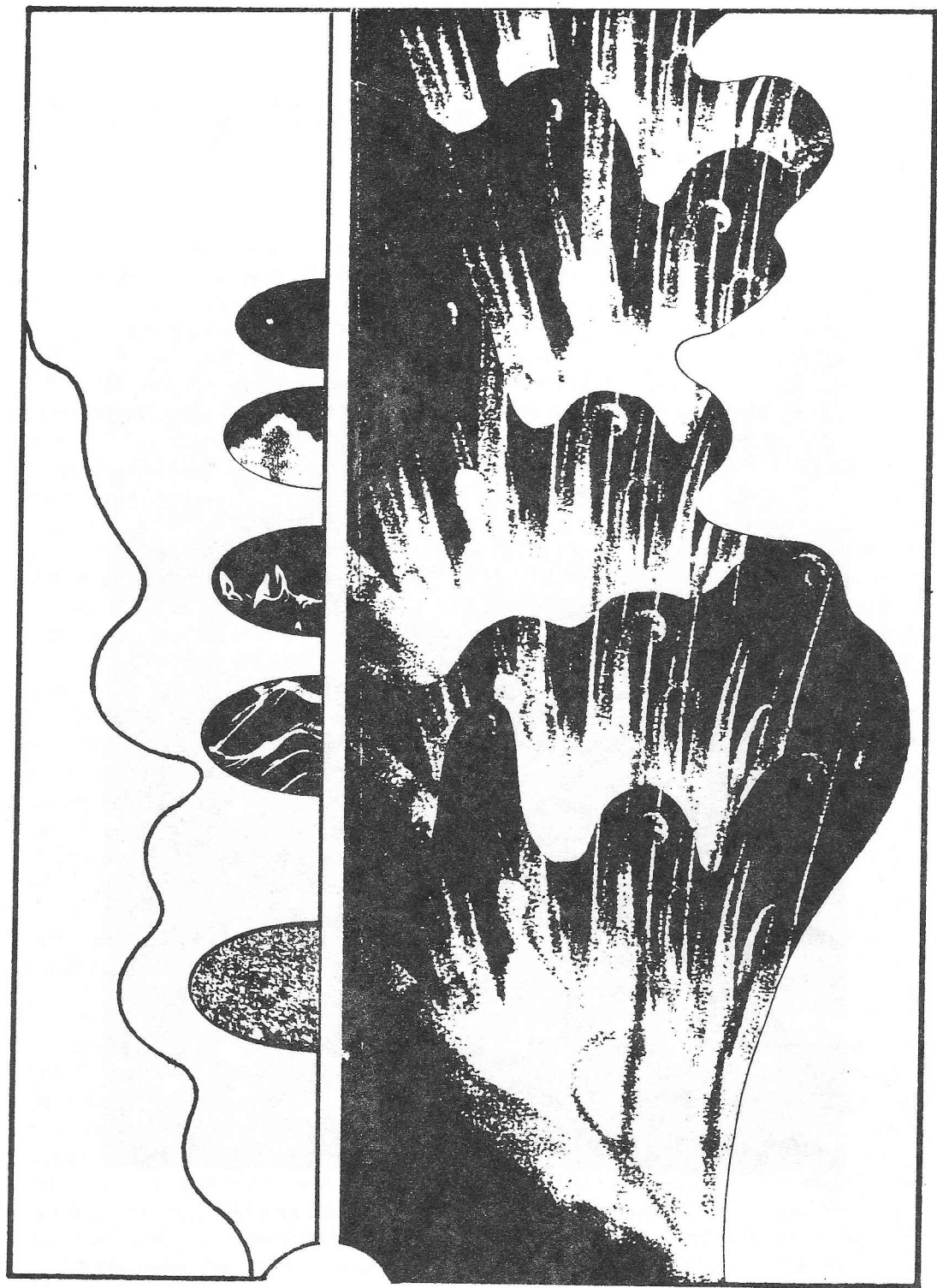
they would one day
feel the wavering greenness
of grassy fields,
touch the white
incandescence of flame,
or cup themselves
to hold
the cold rush of
a mountain freshet.

I prayed to your fingertips
that I might kiss them,
holding their shape
to my warm mouth.

Death responded
with the dusky color
of eggplant
that crept into
your fingertips,
claiming them,
and answering
my prayers with
his own dark indigo.

Deborah Buchanan





Ātmopadeśa Śatakam:

One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Verse 3

*veḷiyilirunnu vīoarttamiṅṅu kāṇum
velimutalāya vibhūtiyaṅcumōrttāl
jalanidhitanniluyarṇṇiṭum taraṅgā-
valiyatupōleyabhēdamāy varēṅa*

Existing outside and, as specific modes, seen within,
the five specific elements, like sky, when contemplated,
should become like waves rising in rows
from the treasury of the watery deep,
without any separate reality whatsoever.

The symphony of music, the feast of colors, the fondling and gentle caressing of an affectionate friend, the relishing of delicious food and sweet aromas, make life on earth an unforgettable experience. Who would not want to come to this magnificent world again and again just to hear its music, see its beauty, be enticed by its fragrances, drink to the lees the sweetness of its promise, and cuddle it in a big hug of fond affection? Yet this is not all. When the head aches and the limbs are worn out, the heart is restless and the mind is murky, gentle sleep comes with sweet solace to throw a magic spell over the soul. Every impression of the world fades out. There is deep and profound silence. Not a thing stirs. Nothing is known. Peace reigns supreme. No one would regret it if that peace lasted forever. How blessed are we that we can go from the world of bounty and variegated richness to the world of profound silence and peace.

The uninformed minds of little people make a mess of this wonderful world because they take the wrong for right and right for wrong.

There is a tricky blind spot somewhere in man's fate that makes him stumble and go into real tangents; this makes most things go badly with him. The world to which he has come to have a feast and celebrate his individuation turns into a nightmare. He sees around him only spiteful people with pitiless hearts, scornful of his intentions. The extremes of nature are against him. Diseases of all sorts plague his body and mind. He sheds pails of tears, curses fate for being born a wretched creature, and seeks to drown his disasters in the bottomless pit of the unconscious. This is the lot of most people, unfortunately. The *Upaniṣads* say: "Those who stray away are 'killers of themselves', and find themselves in a diabolic state enveloped by a blinding darkness."¹

Here are the philosophers, who have sharpened the blades of their logic and are equipped with the laws of grammar and the regulations of rhetoric. They want to examine minutely the knower, the known and knowledge. The great master Sankara proclaims that the effect has no reality other than that of the cause. Do you want to go all the way with him and have a scrambled egg instead of a chicken roast? Who doesn't know that the chick comes from the egg? If he is understood as sneering at the poor wretch who is fantasizing a possible feast of phantom chicks, which is only in the phenomenal world of effects, who cannot say that the transcendentalist is not a wee bit wrong in the proper application of the sound laws of logic?

It might sound as though the philosopher is going too far, but don't be too impatient. Let us stay with him until he has his final say in the matter. Could there be two truths? That is a logical impossibility. Could truth be one thing in the morning and another in the evening? Certainly not. At least in principle we can agree that a truth without a second, without change, cannot have a beginning or an end. If there is not a second thing to compare it to, no qualities can be predicated of truth because predication implies the principle of comparison. If you cannot compare, you cannot judge. Further, such a truth does not permit any dichotomy within it, such as of knower and known. So we should excuse Sankara for making an attempt to illuminate the source of illumination. As it has become imperative at this point to dismiss the duality of the subject and object, both Sankara and his argument fade out into nothingness. Nor are we there, to know the rest of the procedure.

What now? Hmmmm....

No, there is hope. Here comes the philosopher Ramanuja. According to his way of looking at truth, the chick walks, squeaks, cocks its head, looks hither and yon, scratches the dirt, pecks at grains and swallows worms. All these efficient functions are not seen in the egg. That means cause is not the whole reality. The whole, the total, should include not only the egg and the chick, but even the whole genealogy of the chicken family and the inestimable future of its propagation. According to him, truth is identical with experience and should not be tampered with by the limitations of logic. This makes things much better! Once again the world is restored, with all its gaiety, pomp and colors. Once again we can gather around the table and taste the delicious goodies.

Ramanuja, however, lands us in another sort of trouble. This whole universe, from the far-off stars to our fingernails, is to be seen as the physical body of the Supreme Lord. Every atom of it is animated by the one divine principle, *nārāyana*. If you are sensitive, this philosophy will

raise your blood pressure, because you cannot put the kettle on the fire and boil a part of the Divine in it. When a man eats a man, he is called a cannibal. Has anyone coined a word for eating God?

But wait a minute! That cannot be true. No one would mistake a hard stone for strawberry ice cream. The world of experience cannot be a homogeneous whole. A pinprick on top of your nail is hardly noticeable, but a pinprick under your nail will make you howl. That means there is a qualitative difference between the degree of consciousness in a nail and the nerve endings of the skin or muscle. We do not think with our feet, but with our brains. The software of the brain is such a superb system that it can even appreciate and produce subtle values, like beauty.

We should not be fanatical in our craze for unity. It is far more convenient to think of a spirit that knows and a matter that is known. We can have a subject and an object clearly marked out. It is a neat arrangement that each of us has our own autonomous system with which to digest our food, and we can think our own private thoughts without them being peeped into by someone else. Madhva is the philosopher who agrees that the independence of truth prevails without being compromised by countless specifications of the differentiae which operate to account for all names, forms and functions, provided they are all treated as dependent factors.

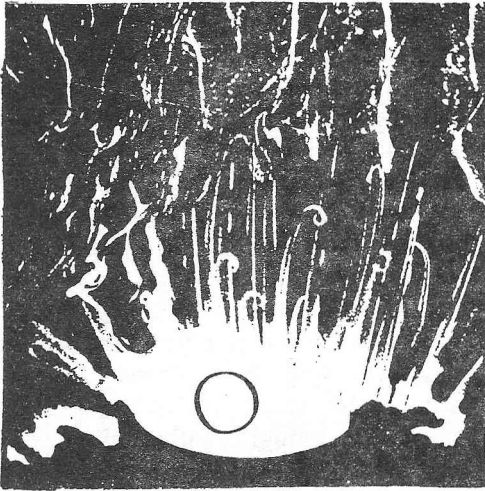
As a separate individual I can boil my vegetables and drink my apple juice, while my friend cooks his steak and drinks his beer. This is certainly a clear indication of our freedom of will. How I wish I could have the same freedom in deciding not to grow or in deciding to suspend time for all eternity or have my own sunrise and sunset specially programmed, just like the little prince of Antoine de Saint-Exupery! Well, there is a limit. I cannot push my free will to that extent. This means I am not my master. Who is the master then? Here Madhva agrees with Ramanuja that this world show is run by the one independent Absolute, which both call *nārāyana* or *viṣṇu*. What Ramanuja calls *vibhūti*, or the innumerable spiritual, psychic, moral and physical qualities of the body of the Lord, are simply renamed by Madhva as dependent factors of the one independent Absolute, which he calls *tattva*.

Sankara now reappears with a smile. He does not speak, but his profound silence gives assent to what Madhva says: "That alone is."

At this point Narayana Guru whispers to us in his gentle voice, "Know all this: individual gold-crested waves, surging on the surface of consciousness, are inseparable from the oceanic treasury which is at once the independent and the dependent, the spirit and the body, the effect and the cause." What a relief! Now we can agree with all the great masters, and also appreciate our personal stands in relation to the transpersonal and intersubjective world of experience as well as the non-dual truth of transcendence.

In the present verse, Narayana Guru calls our attention to the external world with a reference to the classical notion of the five elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. These are actual, objective realities, as well as symbolic representations of all that we experience in life. Earth is the most gross of all the elements. The term refers to the actual solid ground, and also symbolically represents the physical and concrete aspects of life. Certain attitudes are even described as being earthy or "down to earth."

Water is not stiff and static like earth. It has the quality of flowing,



and assumes the shape of its container. It easily mixes with liquids of like nature. It represents both the actual element water and the vital fluids. Our emotional life is sometimes compared to water. It has depth like the ocean, and yet our emotions fluctuate like surging waves. Jesus spoke of the water of life and the water that quenches the eternal thirst. The famous story of Jesus converting the water contained in six earthen jars to wine

of great excellence is a good study of a symbol of transformation.

As we pass on from water to fire, we encounter a still more rarefied element. Fire is indispensable in our lives. Apart from visible fire, like the flame of a candle or the sun in the firmament, the whole universe undergoes transformation in the alchemic fire called thermodynamics. Just as a fire consumes everything in its path, our lower mind is ever curious, wanting to taste everything. The lower mind goes on licking the unconscious into conscious shapes. We have the gastric fire in our stomachs to digest our food, and the divine fire known as the warmth of the heart.

Next in the series is the element air. Just as fish live in water, we swim around in an ocean of air. It carries our life-giving breath, *prāṇa*. Air symbolizes our psychic life. Its quality is touch. All the other elements share in this main characteristic of air. Smell is a stimulating touch in the nose, taste is a tickle on the taste buds of the mouth, and sight is the contact of light on the rods and cones of the retina. Even hearing is effected by sound vibrations touching the eardrums. No other quality has a wider span than touch. We experience it on the entire surface of the body.

Crossing the threshold from air to ether, we enter a world of mystery. It both is and is not. In a sense it is the space that allows objects to exist separately and distinctly. Space keeps items from all being squashed into a single dimensionless point in the same way that time is nature's way to prevent everything from happening at once. The Michelson-Morley experiment failed to prove that ether exists as a physical element, yet we cannot localize objects and juxtapose them into picturesque ensembles without somehow conceiving of space. In ether or *ākāśa* we find the link between the psychic world of the configuration of sound ensembles and the physical world of vibrations.

On the whole, the physical manifestations of earth, air, fire, water, and space, are taken for granted as objective phenomena. When we see each other, speak and listen to each other, fondly embrace or hatefully push away, we are sure we are interacting with an objectively valid physical world. But the study of a little science immediately topples these conventional notions. The various kinds of sound we seem to hear, whether musically resonant or dissonant, turn out to be manufactured

mostly inside our brains as an interpretation of the vibrations that have tickled our eardrums. Sound vibration, as such, can never be studied in isolation from its interference with the psychochemistry of the brain. What is true of sound is also true of the other four senses. The vast space in which we see and hear all the objects of our perception is also projected by the mind. The whole process is called *vivarttam*, meaning the superimposition of mental images on an elusive ground which at best can only be inferred. This inference in most cases is no more than a presumption.

In spite of the subjectivity of the phenomena belonging to each person's private mind, there is an astonishing degree of public agreement with regard to the homogeneity of what we experience as the world. You seem to see what I think I am seeing; this prevents the world of transactions from collapsing in ruins. To account for this universality, philosophers imagine that all individuals' minds are made up of what Spinoza called the "thinking substance."

Instead of leading us into a metaphysical speculation of hair-splitting and logic-chopping, the Guru introduces us to the sense of wonder that can evoke in us a feeling of reverence and devotion to the Unknown. The Unknown presents itself to us as our own consciousness, which is continuously fed with a visual world of colorful panorama and an enjoyable world of musical symphony. The key word used here to describe the Absolute is *jalanidhi*, the oceanic treasury of inestimable value. Although Narayana Guru supports Sankara's non-dual philosophy, in the present instance his idea of the Absolute is very closely akin to Ramanuja's concept of the Supreme as a repository of all auspicious values, *samatha kalyana guni*.

The world of the five elements, which is experienced within yet recognized as being outside by an act of superimposition, should be understood as a series of waves of modifications of consciousness rising one after another from the divine treasury of an ocean of cosmic consciousness. Such a recognition will inevitably bring a mystical feeling of poetic appreciation that is bound to touch our spiritual heart. The part we play in the creation of the world is not insignificant. We are co-creators with the Divine. Without us, the world would be without color, sound, or any of the sensory qualities that we know. It would be an inert mass of no meaning. Yet, when individually taken, each of us is nobody. The possibility of a collective consciousness in which we participate should necessarily fill us with deep reverence and devotion for that which is at once the unknown and the only known.

The world we experience is like a feast of immeasurable abundance. The common man sees in it recognizable forms, admirable shapes, beautiful colors, and a perennial supply of things to gratify his several needs. Apart from the world's immediate presence, we also experience our memory of the past and imagination of the future. This gives it a vertical aspect of depth and height. If you are a poet you can find an infinite variety of symbols, allegories and ideograms with which to interpret the rich meaning of life. Artists will never exhaust the themes of inspiration presented by nature. Philosophers can endlessly ruminate on the world's hidden cause and its hypothetical purpose. For the scientist, every atom is literally a challenge to probe and investigate. The fact remains that no one goes outside their mind to experience or prove anything other than what is conceptually produced within their own prodigious brain. Sir

Arthur Eddington recognizes this fact and agrees that the physicist is not studying any physical entity as such, but only what can be conceptualized as a rational entity.

In Newtonian physics, the ultimate entities of matter were the autonomous and self-monitored atoms that were like loose grains of sand on a shore, just touching each other but getting no closer than that.

*The stage of the Newtonian universe, on which all physical phenomena took place, was the three dimensional space of classical Euclidian geometry. It was an absolute space, always at rest and unchangeable. In Newton's own words, 'Absolute space, in its own nature, without regard to anything external, remains always similar and immovable.' All changes in the physical world were described in terms of a separate dimension, called time, which again was absolute, having no connection with the material world and flowing smoothly from the past through the present to the future. 'Absolute, true, and mathematical time,' said Newton, 'of itself and by its own nature, flows uniformly, without regard to anything external.'*²

Today, the picture given to us is very much like that of half-melted salt crystals in a saturated saline liquid; a boundary line can no longer be drawn between one thing and another.

*At the subatomic level, matter does not exist with certainty at definite places, but rather shows 'tendencies to exist,' and atomic events do not occur with certainty at definite times and in definite ways, but rather show 'tendencies to occur.' In the formalism of quantum theory, these tendencies are expressed as probabilities and are associated with mathematical quantities which take the form of waves. This is why particles can be waves at the same time. They are not 'real' three-dimensional waves like sound or water waves. They are 'probability waves,' abstract mathematical quantities with all the characteristic properties of waves which are related to the probabilities of finding the particles at particular points in space and at particular times. All the laws of atomic physics are expressed in terms of these probabilities. We can never predict an atomic event with certainty; we can say only how likely it is to happen.'*³

This is not only true of the inner structure of matter, but also of the boundary between matter and consciousness. It is as if everything is in everything else. From such a unitive philosophy or unified view of science, Guru calls our attention to the adorable Absolute.

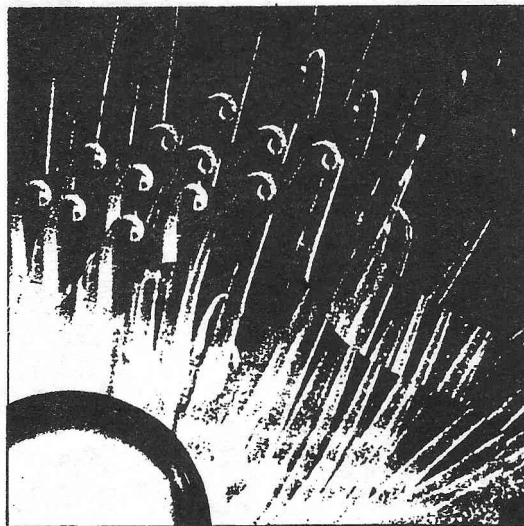
Before us are two main possibilities, two directions we can go with our life. One is, we can retire from our consciousness and enter into the unfathomable depth of the unconscious. Every night we taste the joy of reemerging with the totality, at least for the little while we are in deep sleep. Actually, joy is not the right word exactly, because in that state there is no pleasure or pain. The only quality is undisturbed peace. If sleep is very peaceful, death should be a state of everlasting peace. Unfortunately, though, we are afraid to die. The yogis have an alternative to death. They promise us an immortality which has the same quality as deep sleep, with one major difference. While sleep is retiring into the total inertia of matter, the yogi's absorption is one of entering into the boundless realm of spirit's unmodified consciousness. In both cases of sleep and spiritual absorption, bodily functions are reduced to a minimum.

To worldly-minded people, the prospects of sleep or spiritual absorption can look like poor substitutes for the excitement and promise of an outwardly directed life. The wakeful world of transactions has great visual attraction and many and varied rhythms and harmonies of music. We can get into communion with the co-dwellers of our earth. It is up to us to cultivate our liking for what can be painful or hazardous.

These are our two paths, the world of physical awareness and the world of spiritual absorption. If we are not in one, we are in the other. It is both beautiful to live and beautiful to die.

To see life as a series of waves rising up and merging back to the ocean of All fills one's mind with beauty, peace and joy. If you do not know the world this way, then other people become symbols of threat or hostility. A unitive vision makes each of us the keeper of our brothers and sisters. Our hearts attract each other and souls merge with one another. In every person we meet we see a new opportunity, a new possibility, and a fresh avenue of friendship. In this verse, Guru leads us to a meditation that can free us of all sense of separation. There is no longer any boundary between the self and the other. Gleefully we jump and immerse ourselves in the oceanic treasury of wonder.

In the first verse, Guru asked us to turn to the Supreme, which he compared to a mold that is seen as manifesting into everything, both the world outside and the psychological reality inside. We were asked to prostrate before that non-dual reality, which is neither cause nor effect and yet is always a cause changing into an effect. In the second verse, he compared it to a sun of supernal glory in the void of consciousness. In the present verse, Guru wants us to know that we are emerging from the depth of the Absolute's treasury of immeasurable value as a wave of its manifestation, only to fall and merge once again with the Absolute.



Notes

1. Dr.K.B.Ramakrishna Rao, *Isavasya: An Invitation to Infinite Living*, (Mysore University, 1977), p.13.
2. F.Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, (Bantam Books, New York, 1975), p.43.
3. *Ibid*, p.56.

(Continued in next issue.)



*Many-Tiered Light
Before Statue of
Narayana Guru at
Vidyaniketan*

*Entryway,
Nataraja Guru
Centenary
Research Library*

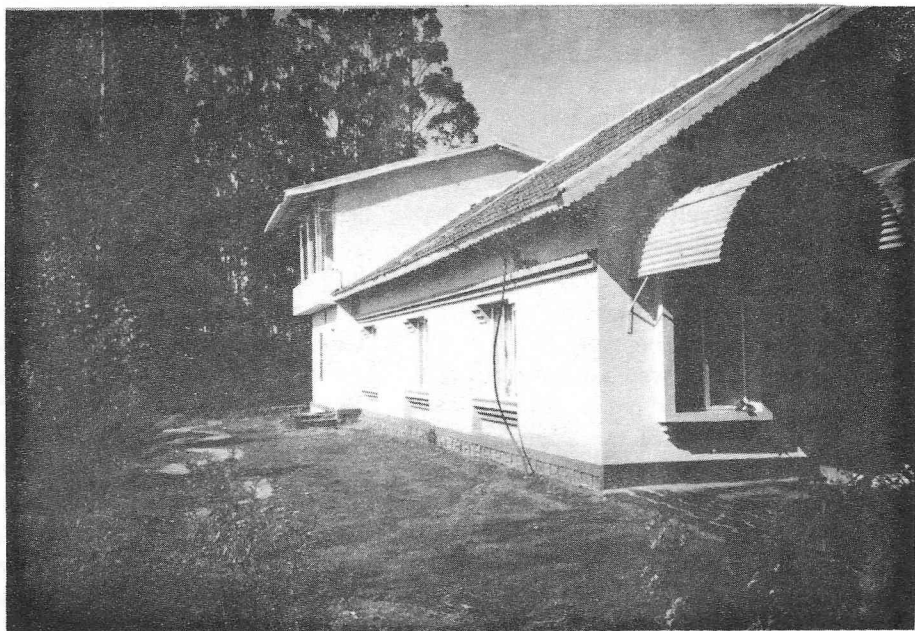


Honoring Wisdom's Light

*Temple to the
Goddess of Wisdom,
Vidyaniketan,
Konni, Kerala*



*Nataraja Guru
Centenary
Research Library,
Fernhill Gurukula*



With Symbol and Shelter

Praśna Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

Mantra 6

Now the sun on rising enters the eastern side. By that he bathes all life (in the East) in his rays (prāṇa). When he illumines all the other sides -- the South, the West, the North, below, above and in between, by that he bathes all living beings in his rays.

Seeker: I read this stanza many times last night, but I couldn't make anything out from it. I know the sun shines in the East and sheds light in all directions, but I cannot think of the sun rising in all directions as stated here.

Guru: The sun mentioned here is not the ordinary sun. As we are familiar with the sun that rises in the East, the first reference is also to the sun rising in the East. We are being gradually led from this level of understanding to that of the sun which is the *prāṇa* that functions everywhere. The statement that the sun rises in all directions indicates figuratively that the *prāṇa* understood here is an all-encompassing one.

Seeker: It is said, by his rising, the sun bathes all in his rays. Does it indicate the life-giving power of the sun?

Guru: The sun was conceived of as a symbol of the cosmic *prāṇa*. In the same way, it is a symbol of the dynamics by which the cosmic system keeps us living. The sun bathes all life with its rays in all directions. The sun's vitality which can energize all living beings is on the one side. On the other is the vitality of each living being. This latter vitality, in its cosmic sense, could be conceived as the energizing principle in the total systems of life. Thus we become unable to say whether this cos-

mic vitality is energizing the sun or the sun energizes the world. Really these are not two. They are simply facets of the vitality or dynamism inherent in the one Reality.

Seeker: The directions of the compass are only four but above and below are also indicated here. Why?

Guru: We think of the four directions of the compass by only looking at the world horizontally. The expansiveness of the cosmos is in all directions. For this reason, Indian thinkers also considered above and below as two directions. Sometimes they count the directions as ten by including Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest.

Seeker: Still, it is puzzling to me.

Guru: There is a structure to the cosmos as well as to our knowledge. When closely observed, we'll see that opposing factors or forces always remain together in life, making it paradoxical. We will see this in our life in the world, as well as in our knowledge.

Seeker: It is not clear to me.

Guru: For example, take the case of a gold ornament. We know it is made of gold. Gold as a substance is indestructible. But we can destroy the shape of the ornament. We can thus see the entity before us as the indestructible gold or as the destructible ornament. These are merely two opposing views of the same entity. Whether we see it one way or the other, it does not affect the one entity. The same is true with our life and the world. We can look at it from its constantly changing appearance and also from the never changing reality. Looked at from the former stand we are mortal beings and from the latter, the reality in us is

immortal and therefore we are immortal.

It is one entity alone that is perceived from two opposite poles. We could say that the one entity is the meeting point of these two opposing perspectives or axes of reference. Perceiving the reality as immortal could be considered as the vertical axis, the other as the horizontal one. The entity is at the meeting point of the two axes.

Seeker: How is this related to the directions we were thinking of?

Guru: We were trying to understand just how consciousness functions when it comprehends something. The same structural pillars could also be discerned in the world. The directions of the compass we are familiar with thus constitute the horizontal axis and the upward and downward directions of the vertical axis. The physical world of all living beings (*sarvam*) thus is the meeting point of the two axes.

Mantra 7

That sun is the vaiśvānara who assumes every form, life and fire who rises (every day). This very doctrine is declared in a Rg Veda verse.

Mantra 8

Who has all forms, constituted of rays, goal (of all), the sole light, the giver of heat, possessing a thousand rays, existing in a hundred forms -- thus rises the sun, the life of all creation.

Seeker: I have read of *vaiśvānara* in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. It is the name given to our consciousness in the wakeful state of the external world. Is it the same *vaiśvānara* cited here?

Guru: The *vaiśvānara* of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* and *Praśna Upaniṣad* belong to two different contexts.

Seeker: What do you mean?

Guru: Let us examine the contexts in which the name comes in the two *Upaniṣads*. The *Māṇḍūkya* portrays the Self (*ātman*) as pure unconditioned consciousness which functions alternately in four states: wakeful (*jagrat*), dream (*svapna*), deep sleep (*suṣupti*) and the fourth (*turiya*). *Vaiśvānara* is the name given to the Self in

its wakeful state as the enjoyer of external objects. The issue dealt with in the first chapter of the *Praśna Upaniṣad* is that of the creation of beings.

At the beginning it was stated that *Prajāpati* become desirous of offspring and that he heated himself up in this desire. *Prāṇa* and *rayi* were born as a result. *Rayi* is defined and described in stanza five. Stanzas six, seven and eight describe *prāṇa* where it is given the epithet *vaiśvānara*. We have to distinguish this difference in the context in which the word is used.

The word *vaiśvānara* has numerous meanings in Sanskrit literature. It is often used as 'that which is common between human beings, the Supreme Brahman and the sun'. It is a compound word formed by combining *viśva* and *nara*. *Viśva* means the whole or that which excludes nothing. Though the word *nara* means man, etymologically it means one who brings anything into one's own control. The word *vaiśvānara* thus means, one who brings or one who is in control of everything distinct or indistinct in the realm of *rayi*. It is the cosmic aspect of *prāṇa* previously equated with the sun that is given the epithet *vaiśvānara* here.

Seeker: Then how does a vital power assume the forms of everything (*viśvarūpa*)?

Guru: *Prāṇa* was first equated with the sun as the vitalizing power that is all-pervasive. Stanzas seven and eight give a deeper philosophical insight into it. The entire world is to be seen here as constituting *rayi*. *Prāṇa* is the vitality that permeates every atom of it. We could thus say that *prāṇa* assumes the form of the apparent world, though it (*prāṇa*) has no definite form of its own. Conversely, it could be said *prāṇa* makes the forms of the universe, its own.

Seeker: The philosophical vision of the *Upaniṣad* has not yet become clear to me. Still I understand that it teaches the oneness of Reality and also that this one Reality appears as the many.

Guru: Yes, Narayana Guru, at the beginning of his most important work, *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* (One Hundred Verses

of Self Instruction), clarifies it in a succinct way as follows:

The mental faculties, senses, the body and the tangible changeable worlds many in number are all, when thought of, sacred embodiments of the Supreme Sun that shines in the void beyond. One should attain it with relentless searchful thinking. (Verse 2).

Mental faculties are considered as the most evolved sign of life. All aspects of our existence from our mental faculties to the physical body and the extensive world that exists as a continuation of our body, are all forms or modes of expression of one Reality according to the intuitive vision portrayed in the above verse.

We usually think of ourselves as constituted of body and soul. But Narayana Guru does not approve of such divisions. Instead, he visualizes mental faculties or the signs of life at the one pole of Self-existence. The gross body which is part of the gross world is at the other pole. Self-existence encompasses these two opposite poles and all that comes in between. In other words, instead of seeing the Self-existence as constituted of body and soul, the Guru visualizes it as the Reality which has mind and body for its two opposite facets or poles. *Ātman* or the Self is the Reality that underlies everything from the subtlest mental faculties to the grossest and most extensive universe.

Seeker: I do not understand how my own physical body extends as the expanding universe.

Guru: Well, do you breathe now?

Seeker: Yes, of course.

Guru: What do you do when breathing?

Seeker: I inhale oxygen and exhale carbon monoxide.

Guru: Is the air you breathe part of your physical body, or is it different from it?

Seeker: It is part of my body when it is within, when exhaled it is not part of it.

Guru: Suppose no air surrounds your body. Do you think it can thus exist?

Seeker: No.

Guru: Then is not air part of your physical existence?

Seeker: It seems so.

Guru: How far is the air around your body extended?

Seeker: So far as the atmosphere goes.

Guru: Then can't we say that your physical existence extends as far as the atmosphere goes?

Seeker: Yes.

Guru: Your body is constituted not only of air. There are many other elements in it. Indians classify all such elements as earth, water, fire, air and space. If we examine our physical existence with reference to space we'll have to say that our physical existence extends as far as space goes. Now, can we say that the extensiveness of our body terminates with our outer senses?

Seeker: No. It had never occurred to me that my existence is such an extensive one. I think I should be very cautious to use the word 'I'.

Guru: This 'I' that fills everywhere is called *ātma* in Vedanta and is usually translated as the Self in English.

Seeker: Our attempt to understand *prāṇa* ended up in *ātma*. Should these two be taken as the same?

Guru: *Prāṇa* is a word used in the *Upaniṣads* in various contexts. Its meaning ranges from a mere respiratory process to the one ultimate *ātman*. In this first chapter of the *Prasna Upaniṣad*, the word is used in its most primary sense. Yet it is suggestive of even the most sublime sense possible, which we shall see in the coming chapters.

Seeker: How is it that all these are considered as fire?

Guru: It was *prāṇa*, one of the dual aspects born of *prajāpati*, that was first considered as the sun. Did you notice that it was not the common visible characteristics that were taken into account with regard to the sun?

Seeker: No.

Guru: It is the heat and light of the sun that we feel directly. *Prāṇa* was conceived then as *vaiśvānara* and *viśvarūpa*. The same *prāṇa* is also conceived of as fire. The heat and light which were not taken into ac-

count in the case of the sun, are present as fire. There is a basic difference in the functions of the sun and fire.

Seeker: What is that difference?

Guru: Pervading energy is the peculiarity of the sun, while that of fire is flaming upwards. The mantra emphasizes this aspect when it says 'the fire rises' (*āgnir udayate*). The word *udayate* literally means 'goes upward by itself'. This rising up or going upwards is pertinent in the case of fire as well as of the emergence of the world. The search in this chapter is aimed at the mystery of creation. The *Upaniṣads* in general teach that phenomenal appearances surge up in the one Reality as the self-expression of its own creative urge. The rising up of the fire in this stanza could also be seen in light of this basic stand. In short, each epithet used here has its own significance. *Prāṇa* signifies the inherent vitality, the sun points at the all-pervasiveness and fire shows upward surging. *Prāṇa*, the counterpart of *rayi*, is to be visualized as the creative principle that inheres in all these peculiarities.

Seeker: What is the significance of mentioning fire, one of the five elements of nature, here?

Guru: Each of the five basic elements of nature has its own distinguishing quality. Sound qualifies space, touch qualifies air, form qualifies fire, taste qualifies water and odor qualifies earth. Form is thus the distinguishing characteristic of fire. The all-pervasiveness of the sun and the vitality of *prāṇa* have no form of their own. Form being the distinctive characteristic of fire, no formulation is possible without the involvement of the fire principle. The sun and *prāṇa*, which by themselves are abstract, become concretized in the form of the world (*viśvarūpa*) because of the fire principle already inherent in them.

Seeker: The epithet, *harinam* is used here. Is it of any special significance?

Guru: The word means one who is constituted of rays of light. We know how the sun and light rays are related. *Prāṇa*, as understood here, is also of the essence of light and not merely the function of the respiratory systems.

Seeker: What is meant by *jatavedas*?

Guru: It is another epithet of fire, but literally it means, one who knows all that is born or the one who is born as a form of knowledge. Both meanings are relevant in this context. We know, birth and death are phenomena pertaining to *rayi*. *Jatavedas* therefore is the one who remains as witness to all that takes place in *rayi*. In the latter sense, all knowledge is born of or is a conditioned form of the one pure unconditioned consciousness which is conscious of itself. This pure consciousness is nothing but *prāṇa* as understood here.

Seeker: It is no wonder that such *prāṇa* is the final goal to be attained, that it is the sole light and, that it undergoes a constant process of heating up.

Guru: The heat of fire and the sun are also to be seen in our meditation as another form of *tapas* or this 'heating up.'

Seeker: It seems the rest of the epithets of *prāṇa* in stanza eight are understood in the light of all these. Now I shall try to summarize what I have learned so far:

Prajāpati became desirous of offspring. He underwent *tapas* with this desire and as a result *prāṇa* and *rayi* were born. This couple is analogous to the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* of the *Samkhya* system. *Rayi* is the realm of phenomenal becoming, where the appearance and disappearance of distinct forms are normal. The pure, vital principle that witnesses all transformations is the *prāṇa* whose pervasiveness could be seen both in individual being and the cosmic system. *Prāṇa* naturally tends to move upwards like the flames of fire. By the way, could this upward function of *prāṇa* and the urge in us for attaining higher levels of understanding be understood as related?

Guru: Yes, the *prāṇa* understood here is not simply the respiratory function. It is the sole light, which is nothing but pure consciousness, a consciousness which is always aimed at attaining higher levels of understanding. The phenomenal appearance of the world is also a result of this creative upsurge of pure consciousness. Another facet of the same creativity will be seen portrayed in the next stanza.

(Continued in next issue.)



Silver Doves and Golden Threads

*Everyone's known of gypsies.
Throughout history all cultures hold
tales of these mischief makers,
yet one tale has yet to be told.*

*The most notorious gypsies who ever lived
were quite a rowdy crew,
devout in the arts of thievery
and the magic of dancing, too.*

*Though myth might claim all gypsies steal
for wealth and jewels,
these most notorious gypsies
never ever broke those rules!*

*And yet they stole! Oh, they did steal,
but not what you might guess,
for they stole sadness from each town
and replaced it with happiness.*

*Ne'er a town these gypsies stopped
whose grip on sadness could not drop,
and always the folks who let them in
remained with hearts filled to the brim!*



*Though the loads grew heavy
as the towns were sad,
no hearts were left a 'saggin',
for this noble band of gypsy thieves
kept loading up their wagon.*

*Then by the fire they would dance
and sing their gypsy tunes
while all the bags of burdens
would transform beneath the moon.*

*Their dancing feet would free their soul
from a long day's tired chore
as silver doves and golden threads
replaced sad hearts once more.*

*Word spread fast! The spell was cast!
All villages wanted their chance –
"Please stop here and steal!
We'll give you a deal!
Please teach us your magic dance!"*

*Well, yes indeed! The gypsies were pleased
and they traveled the world with passion,
but their numbers were few,
and burdened hearts grew
much faster than dancing feet fashioned.*



*With weary legs, the gypsies sat,
"Oh, woe! Oh woe is me!"
while all their gypsy spirits became
as depressed as a gypsy's can be.*

*The world grew impatient and mad,
"Where are those gypsy thieves?
We've still more burdens for them to bear.
Our hearts are still bereaved."*

*Even the folks who'd learned the dance
forgot their steps and seethed,
"Find those selfish deserters!
We must steal the magic they weave!"*

*The tired gypsies just had no choice
but to flee deep into the woods,
for the people wanted to capture them
and this would kill what's good.*

*The world hunted and scoured and cursed,
creating a trampled hell.
In time they decided the gypsies had died
and thought it just as well.*



*But safely hidden in ferns and trees
the gypsies continued to thrive.
(Not only do gypsies never die,
they remain quite profoundly alive!)*

*Though their songs are more quiet,
their dances more light,
and their fires burn a soft hidden blaze,
these gypsies will wait
and weave more happy hearts
until the world again wakes
from its haze.*

*And when it awakens,
the gypsies reappear
with a happiness which teaches no hate,
and how the present can be one's destiny,
the fulfillment of one's fate;*

*a happiness which dances
all sadness and dread
into fine silver doves
and bright golden threads.*

Peggy Grace

Facing Pain and Pleasure

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Ignorance has two sides, one is pleasure and the other is pain. Although pain and pleasure are counterparts of physical agitation, qualitatively they are very different. Pleasure can be easily forgotten. When we are in a state of pleasure our thinking power is very subdued. We are almost oblivious of the fact that we are pleased. It is not so in pain. Pain has sharp edges. It is more vivid. It induces us to philosophize about why there should be pain. There is an intrinsic connection between self-consciousness and the experiencing of pain. If there were no pain, then there would be no need to look for liberation. The liberation we seek is mainly from pain.

In Sanskrit, pain is *dukkham*. *Dukkham* implies a convergence of consciousness to a specific area. One feels that there is a caving in from all sides, bringing with it heavy oppression. One feels smothered, imprisoned, trapped. Pleasure is light while pain is always heavy. We can easily explain pain as a state of ignorance. Pleasure is also a state of ignorance but you feel no urgency to remove it. In the case of pain, you feel a great urgency for it to be immediately removed.

There is anticipated pain and unanticipated pain. If you are exposed to an accident, it comes unexpectedly and you have no chance to prepare yourself. When an unexpected occasion of pain comes, you suddenly realize that very few are with you to share that pain. At that time, you feel a terrible loneliness. You feel deceived that you have been left alone to suffer. The consolation that is offered to you at such a time through medical aid, physical aid, etc., seems shallow, slight, inadequate. It

comes from people who are unwilling or who are not experts. At that moment there is a lack of faith in you that you will soon be redeemed from that situation. Your faith in God dwindles: "Oh God, why must I suffer this?" Even Jesus said, "Oh Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" Human beings rely on God's mercy, omnipotence and omniscience. But at such a time, you feel a vacuum instead of God. When you stand looking into the immeasurable depth of the vacuum (*śūnyata*), non-beingness, you not only feel deceived by God, but also by philosophy and wisdom. Everything goes pale. Because of this dynamic, it is very hard for you to believe that it is only ignorance, it is only a passing phenomena. Pain has within it a duration of time which seems immeasurable. In happiness time is momentary. It comes, you sit in pleasure, and then suddenly you realize it is all gone. But even if your pain lasts only for two seconds, you feel as though eternity was residing in those two seconds.

In pain, your psyche changes. Suppose a man goes mad. He knows that people are looking at him as a mad man. He knows his behaviour is irregular and that he should not speak certain words. But he hears himself speaking those words. Underneath his madness, there is another consciousness of himself, not as a madman, but as a sane person. In the case of pain, something similar takes place because your soul is not pained. You know that the pain is closer to your physical and moral consciousness, yet there is a lack of faith that you will return to your normal state. That is what makes pain so confusing. It comes to you like a nightmare. In a nightmare you might see that you are going to be attacked

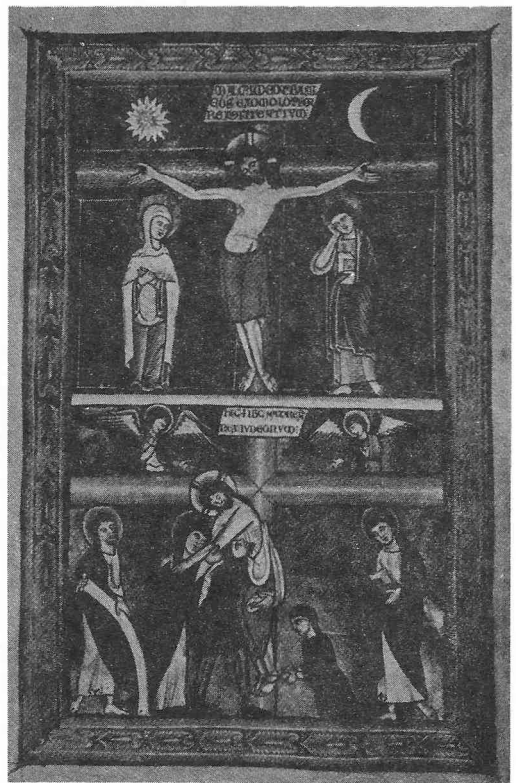
by an elephant or a bull who is going to kick you or pierce you. Even when you realize in half-consciousness that it is a dream, you have no monitoring power to wake up. You know that it may go away if you wake up, but you cannot wake up. You want to run away from the crisis but your feet are heavy and you can't move, you want to cry out for help but your tongue won't work and you cannot make any sound. Similarly, it is not just pain you suffer from, it is your helplessness about relieving the pain. Pain is an effect, but its cause is somehow obscure. It doesn't seem like a flimsy cause should bring a very serious pain. The entire world seems to be outside you and you feel like a solitary person, standing at the verge of annihilation.

A real dialectical polarity arises between you and the world. You may be surrounded by people, but you feel like they are all against you or they are all blind to you. Suppose you have a terminal disease and you are in a proper hospital with good physicians and nursing staff. Plenty of money is there to meet all your needs. Even then, you draw a line between you and others. It is not a mere line, it is more like a ditch which cannot be easily crossed. At that moment somebody may suggest, "I will pray for you." But in your heart of hearts you feel, "Your prayer won't work for me. Thank you for offering the prayer, but I know it won't help me." You feel desolate. That is the aloneness to which you are driven. It is called *dukham*. All of space shrinks to a sharp pin point and you are sitting on it.

It is there, in spite of your lack of trust, that you want to know that there is a way out. That way out is what we call liberation. It is not only the quenching of pain. It goes beyond cause and effect to a greater reality where they are both negligible. Here also time is a factor. At the moment you are in great horror. But you know that many who went through such depressions and denial of life's benevolence ultimately came out of their darkness. Maybe you are also going to be liberated. When we try to consider the meaning of *brahman*, the supremely real, it is very fascinating. Now,

when we try to consider the absoluteness of pain, it appears to be several times more real. There is a real and there is a reality of the real.

According to the Vedantic philosopher, Suresvara, no amount of philosophical consideration will help you to remain quiet, withholding yourself from the anomalies of the present moment, if pain is there. Many studies of this aspect of pain have been made. Sankara and others tried to explain it by saying that it is ignorance. But it is an ignorance which you cannot tolerate, it is so biting, so burning. It makes the prospect of liberation categorically necessary. It has an imperativeness which cannot be slighted. So when you come to that point in philosophy or religion there is an apprehension: "Will death overtake me before I get any peace of mind? Will this pain persist till I get an anesthetic to remove it?" An intense feeling of death comes, pain and death. Dreading pain without an end which terminates only in death, can even take away the prospect of finding any means for liberation.





So there is an urgency to let people know that there is a goal, there is a light and there is a way. It is here that people like Elizabeth Kubler Ross thought that, however terrible a terminal disease like cancer is, the horror of it can be taken away if you share whatever joy you have with the patient and allow him or her a little space to sit back, time to ruminate and a unitiveness in which to put together his or her being. When you enter into darkness, when you are in the middle of a wasteland or an unruly crowd, the first shock comes to a pause. Then it passes away and you start seeing a new light coming from within. A new ability arises in you to squarely see the situation before you. That gives you a new courage to accept it, to go with it. When that prevails, you start finding solid ground under your feet. A new philosophy of life comes and a new psychology of life becomes feasible.

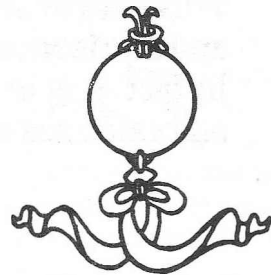
You can look into very many anthologies of scriptures in which those who have gone through great pain and finally found their way out speak with great enthusiasm. Everything does not make sense to you at first because there are many things within you which are still vague. Religion is not altogether convincing to you. But you yourself can become a votary of a new religion, a new spirit, a new consoling thought. You venture to open it before others. You no longer feel that you have gone all wrong -- something is still right there.

There are several kinds of pain which a person can feel. Each of your many separate faculties, areas of sensation and organs with which you can relate can be an area of pain. In addition to the physical pain, you also seem to accuse yourself of causing the situation with your wrong thoughts, muddled mind or lack of good behaviour. Then the pain gets the added dimension of guilt. You have done nothing to merit it, but guilt won't leave you. Guilt can be very intense or may give way to justification. Unknowingly, you associate your pain with sin, hell and a dark destiny of life. You want assurance that there is no hell, sin or pain of guilt. You want to be-

lieve it, but you cannot.

But those who become strong find a certain stability and steadiness in their faith. They restructure their world with a new goal before them. That goal is not a public goal of sharing anything with anyone. For the first time one sees the possibility of one's individual person making a breakthrough and coming to a world which is based on itself and which has a norm of its own. Then whatever you have lived up to a certain point is annulled. You find that whatever was morally, intellectually and existentially painful is of no consequence. You have gained another world to live in irrespective of pain and pleasure. That brings you a new strength. Just like the eye gets greater power to see by resting in the dark for a long time, you start seeing things before you, not by means of the sunlight and the nerves of your eyes, but by the receptivity of your soul to the light of the spirit. This is the kind of transformation you can undergo through pain.

You start seeing the Absolute, not as a philosophical conjecture or perception, but as something very real on which you can depend. When people see you suffering, they are impressed by your non-suffering face. Is there still pain? Yes, there can still be terrible pain. But there is also a transcendence of the pain. A maturity comes to you, a depth, a new clarity of vision. You do not want any more words to support you. Silence supports your world. Thus, although you start out thinking that you are very much alone in facing darkness, weakness, pain or alienation, you ultimately find that these are all constituent aspects of a new programming of life. Then you gain a conviction and a strength which can rarely be defeated by anyone or anything. ♦



Bondage and Liberation

My best friend
hammered my old bones
to take away my sloppiness
and make me upright.
Before I stand vertical
I have to lie down horizontal,
confined in a hospital bed.

I have heard of the Ganga
coming from the heavens.
My mini-Ganga is hung over my head.
Through a sharp needle
it goes into my vein
. . . drip, drip, drip.

A pipeline is taking sewage out of me
draining my urine,
and it also goes
. . . drip, drip, drip.

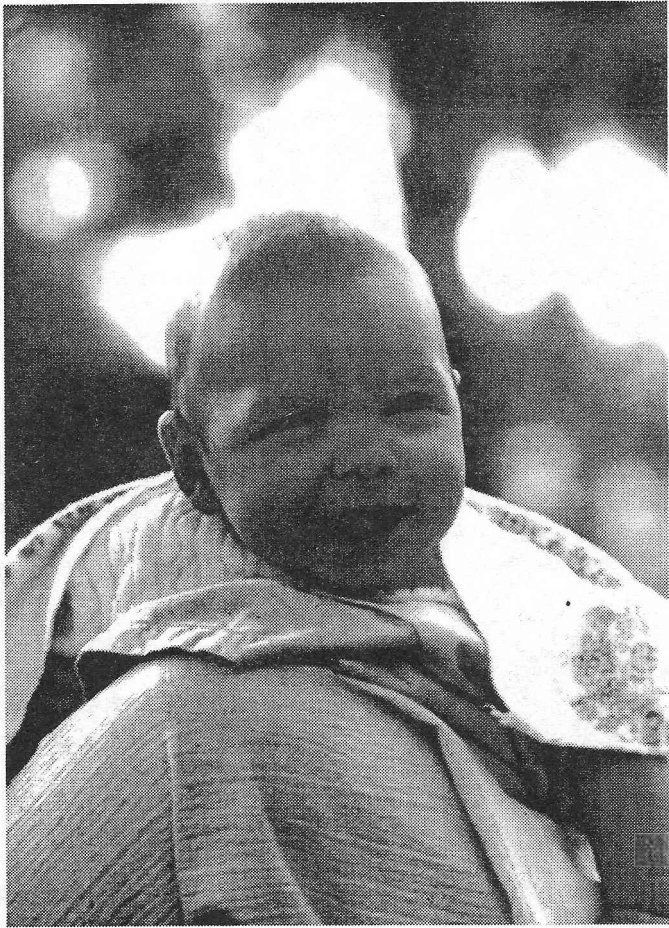
I am caged in a room
to have pleasantries
with the children of Florence Nightingale.

Literally,
I am bound,
but spiritually I swim
in the boundless ocean of my mind's freedom.

This soul is said to be
an imprisoned splendor.
In fact, it is in the splendor of my soul
all bondages of life are imprisoned.

Nitya





Of Caterpillars and Children Education for Liberation

Peter Oppenheimer

Education has always fascinated me, because true learning is a spectacular and rewarding thing. Look at a baby. From being relatively helpless and non-ambulatory, babies learn to crawl, stand, walk upright, run and jump without school bells or disciplinarians telling them when it's time to learn these things. In the same couple of years they learn to speak a language fluently. By nature we don't lose our curiosity nor ability to learn all of a sudden when we become school age. Rather once we enter school our inclinations are stunted, and it is our obedience which is honed.

On the other hand, what if we educated for freedom rather than obedience? The question that fascinates me is, "What would that look like?" What if we modeled and honored self-discipline rather than discipline by outside forces. How different that might be. Liberation is what a butterfly must feel busting free of its cocoon, having entered as an earthbound caterpillar. Education for self-reliance, responsibility and liberation contributes to a similar metamorphosis of the individual. Who could ever say what might emerge from each individual once liberated to follow their own curiosities.

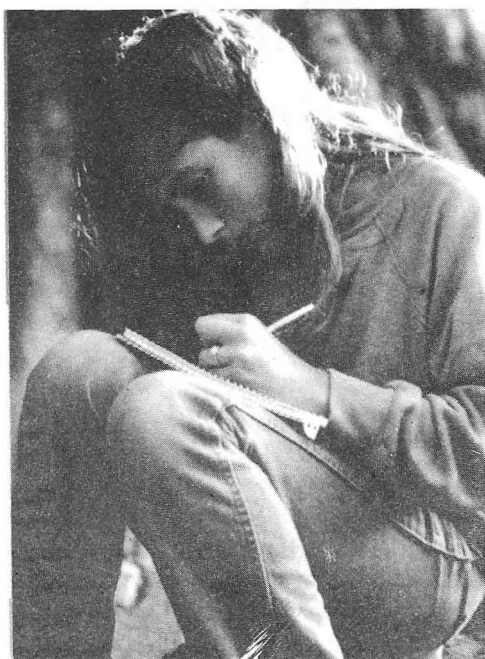
Humans don't just learn technical skills such as walking and talking. We learn emotional arts too, and although we learn these through an organic and often painful process of trials and errors, the loving, affectionate, humorous, collaborative relations we can form with others prove worth the effort and growing pains.

Until recently I had never heard of a school which attempted to teach one to be free without at least a minimum of coercion. Even in the gurukula schools I visited

in South India, where *mokṣa* (liberation) is one of the highest goals, the teaching is administered through dictated hymns at dictated hours. The gurukula system has many rewards and usually instills very noble values, which is way more than you can say for orthodox Western education, universal though it may be. Whereas our education system boasts that it is universal (and compulsory), Eastern education actually addresses the Universal.

Finally I have learned of a model school which exerts no coercion and proffers no predetermined curriculum. The Sudbury Valley School in Framingham Massachusetts accepts children from age four to eighteen and even some "re-entry" older folks. What happens at school all day is determined by each person there. What? Yes, someone could cloud-gaze all day. One boy did nothing but fish at the campus pond for several years. Then one year he got bit by a curiosity bug and became a computer whiz. By seventeen he and a friend established their own successful company in computer sales and service.

Staff at the Sudbury Valley School are there to model effective adult behavior and are quite often used as resources by the students when they decide they want to know how to do something such as reading. When I was in graduate school studying about education, I read studies reporting that a vast majority of children can learn to read up to 8th grade level in two years when they are ready. That's evolving from non-reader to 8th grade level in two years. Of course, as we all know, if we tell them when and for how long they are going to learn and practice reading, it may take them eight years or longer. There is



no reason to believe that the same is not true for other physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual aptitudes and skills.

In addition to a lack of coercion (even to the extent that the campus is "open," and students come and go when and as they please) another feature of the Sudbury Valley School is the democratic process by which it is run. All school business is conducted by a weekly School Meeting, including the establishment of rules, budgetary expenditures and even the hiring and rehiring of teachers. Every person at these meetings, child and adult alike, has one vote. Like all else at the school, participation in the School Meeting is voluntary, although students quickly learn that if they do not exercise their democratic right to debate and vote, they have no right to complain about the outcomes.

Disciplinary problems are handled in the same manner by a Judicial Committee elected to serve three month terms by the School Meeting. Any member of the school community can bring charges against any other member for breaking any of the agreed upon rules. The case will be thoroughly heard and investigated by the Judicial Committee which then determines what if any consequence is appropriate. For example a student who had left his

lunch dishes out on the table might be asked to pick up some litter on the campus grounds.

In one case I personally witnessed when visiting a school based on this model, two eleven year old girls brought up charges against a boy who had loudly played a rap song the day before with the repeated refrain, "Get your woman down on the floor." They claimed that this violated the rule, established in the School Meeting, against putting down any person, class, or group of people. The girls not only objected to the image of "down on the floor," which they pointed out was violently depicted in the MTV video of the same song, but one of the girls added, "Yeah, and what's up with the 'your woman' bit? I object to the idea that a woman is a man's possession."

This is pretty sophisticated stuff for eleven year olds but seems to develop quite naturally in an atmosphere where personal freedom, interpersonal responsibility, and communication are treated as more central to education than any particular academic subjects or preordained curriculum. Ultimately the boy in question was not forbidden to listen to this rap song at school, but was requested to do so in a way that others who might object not be subjected to it.

According to the founders of the Sudbury Valley School, age mixing is the school's "secret weapon." By not segregating groups along age lines, but rather allowing a free flow of movement and exchange, the younger kids are forever being inspired and guided by older kids, and the older kids learn the rewards and responsibilities of being models and mentors. Their experience has been that without the arbitrarily constructed constraining walls of a social order imposed by adults against which to rebel, the restless seeking of adolescence must find positive outlets to creatively express itself.

This is not some impractical utopian pie-in-the-sky fantasy. The proof is always in the pudding, and the history of the Sudbury Valley School bears out the efficacy of the model. In their thirty years of

operation thousands of children have passed through their doors, and a book of autobiographical essays by former students entitled, "The Kingdom of Childhood" reads as a testament to the school's success. Every single student who wanted to go on to college has, most of whom were accepted by their school of first choice (Harvard, Yale and Stanford to name a few). Never having received grades or transcripts, their acceptance is always dependent on the admissions interview in which their character, accomplishments and motivation made them stand out. From the ranks of Sudbury Valley have arisen mathematicians and musicians, lawyers and landscape designers, authors and auto-mechanics, each according to their own innate talents and inclinations and at their own pace.

As we approach the new millennium it is a perfect time to rethink our entire system of education. Can democracy be fostered through autocratic institutions? Can social responsibility be cultivated in a climate of dog-eat-dog competition. Can self-discipline best be developed in an authoritarian atmosphere? Can personal and

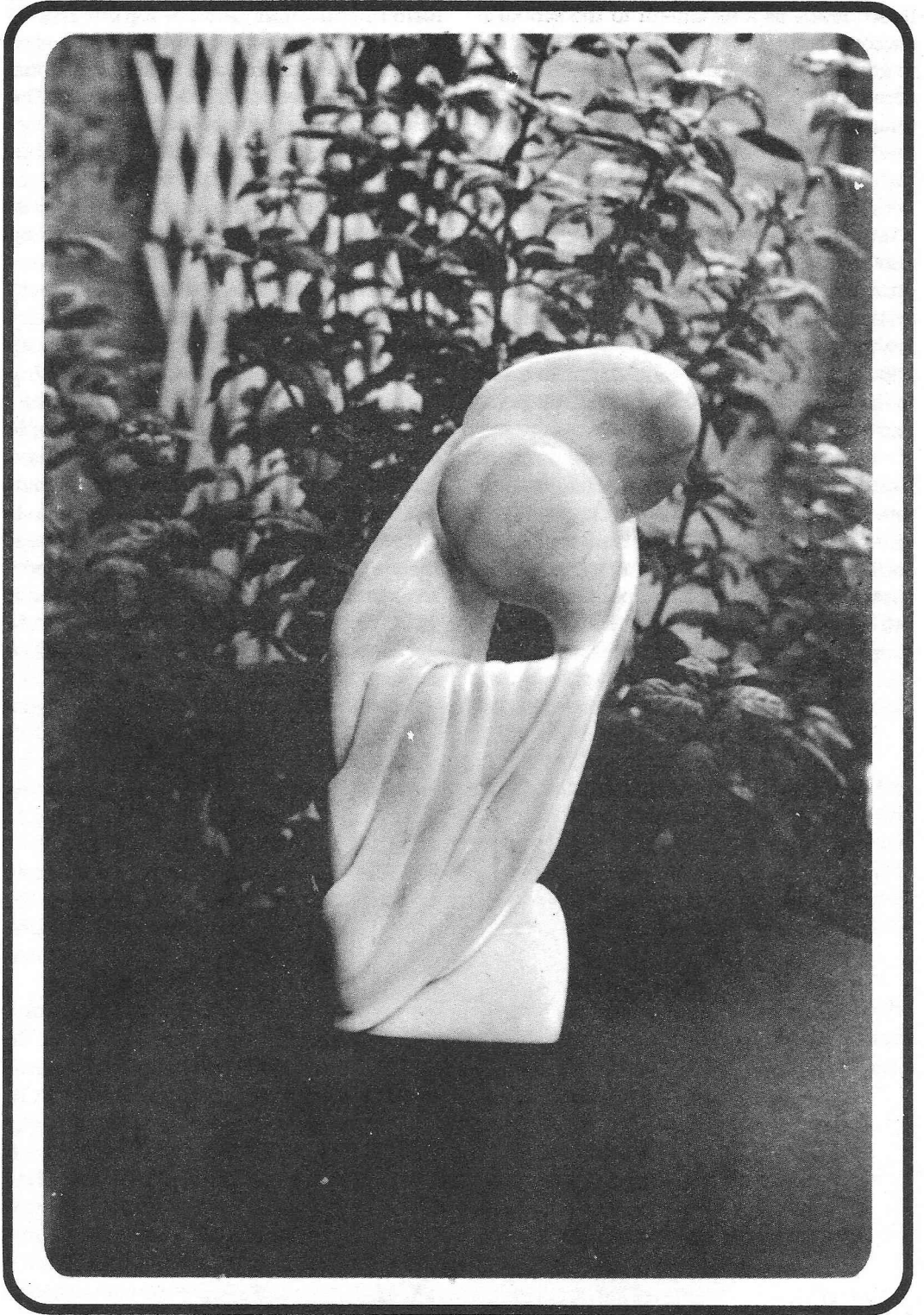
collective liberation and social transformation be nurtured through the demands of obedience and conformity?

It is not tinkering that the prevailing form of education calls out for but radical revolutionary change. A child is not coerced into walking and talking. The bud need not be prodded into blooming. The caterpillar need not be seduced into becoming a butterfly. What is necessary in all these cases is a safe environment of nurturing, support and protection against restraining, constricting and undermining influences.

It is emboldening to know that there already is a model for such revolutionary change. There are already another fifteen schools nationwide functioning according to this model. For the past nine months I have been working with a group of people who are dedicated to the founding of a new school in Marin County, California patterned after the Sudbury Valley School. If anyone would like to learn more about these schools, offer comments or perspectives or become involved, please write me at PO Box 487 / Forest Knolls, California 94933. ♦



Especially for Children



Living My Life

You go through life
livin' transitions.
You can't help wondering
what comes next.

You know that something
is coming for you.
You don't know what,
and you don't know who.

All that you know
is that YOU WILL GROW
and that LOVE
will be right beside you.

Victoria Luke

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