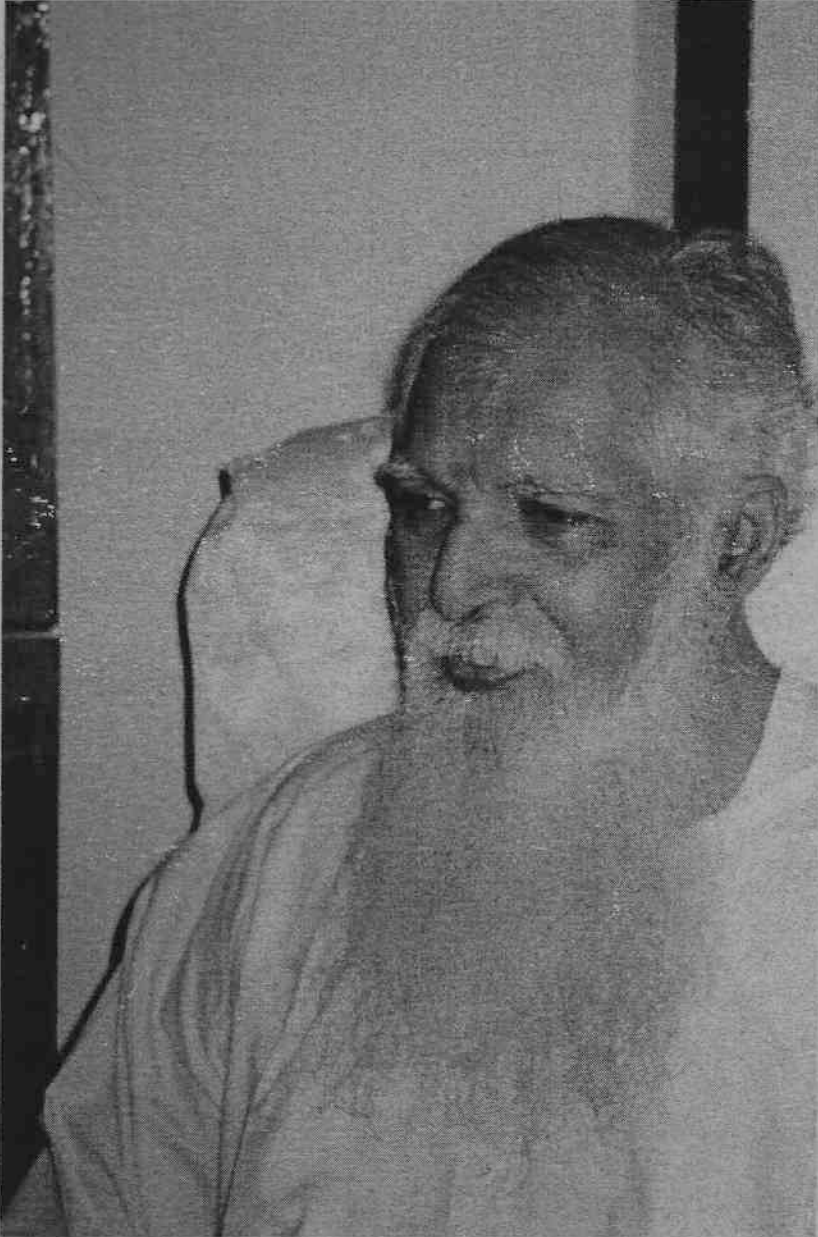
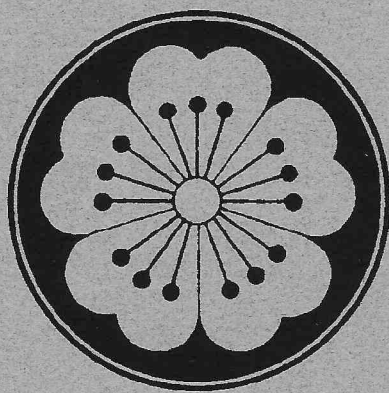


GURUKULAM

VOLUME XV • 1999

FIRST-SECOND QUARTER





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Facing Immortality

AUM, may we be lead from untruth to truth, from darkness to light and from death to immortality, AUM, peace, peace, peace.

For many years, Guru Nitya has been preparing us for his *mahāsamādhi* which took place on May 14th of this year. In his article, *Facing Death*, written in the early 1980's (reproduced in this issue), he wrote:

Death is not an event here. It is the vast area into which we slowly dissipate, merge and become one with that. The very idea gives you a sense of liberation. What is most rewarding and helpful is this 'vasting' of you, this melting of you. You become like an invisible light, the light of all lights.

Similarly, in the scriptures, mystical literature and philosophical texts of world traditions, death is referred to as liberation, release, becoming one with God or the All. For those of us who remain, death is a momentous event, yet Guru specifically wrote that death is not an event. It was the simple melting away of the last boundary between him and the vastness he had already become. His teaching of a lifetime, both with verbal eloquence and even more eloquent silence, makes our contemplation of May 14th and all that it means to us more a process of facing immortality than facing death.

As we yearn to be with him, to follow in his footsteps, in both our living and our dying, we are guided by his precious indication that we "vast" ourselves by reaching beyond that which limits us and separates us in any way from our universal reality. He has shown us over and over that in whatever direction we look, we will find guidance and nurture for our heart-felt aspiration.

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

Isaiah 60:11

Pass to thy Rendezvous of Light,
Pangless except for us –
Who slowly ford the Mystery
Which thou hast leaped across!

Emily Dickinson²

The Light even of lights,
That is said to be beyond darkness;
knowledge, the knowable and what is to
be reached through knowledge;
particularly located
in the hearts of everyone.

Bhagavad Gītā XIII:17³

Like ten thousand suns coming all at once,
the modulation of discrimination arises;
the veil of transience
covering knowledge is *māyā*;
tearing this away,
the primal sun alone shines.

Narayana Guru⁴

Be a lamp to yourself.
Be your own confidence.
Hold to the truth within yourself
as to the only truth.

Buddha⁵

God is the Light
Of the heavens and the earth.
The parable of His Light
Is as if there were a Niche
And within it a Lamp:
The Lamp enclosed in Glass:
The glass as it were
A brilliant star:
Lit from a blessed Tree,
An olive, neither of the East
Nor of the West,
Whose Oil is well-nigh
Luminous,
Though fire scarce touched it:
Light upon Light!

The Holy Qur'ān⁶

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a
light unto my path.

Psalms 119:105⁷

See yonder, leafless trees against the sky,
How they diffuse themselves into the air,
And, ever subdividing, separate
Limbs into branches, branches into twigs,
As if they loved the element, and hasted
To dissipate their being into it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson⁸

This rock of your body believing in an I
Must be ground to powder, Nāropa.
Look into the mirror of your mind,
the radiant light.

Tilopa⁹

The sages perceive that indescribable supreme joy as "this is that." How shall I know that? Does it shine in its own light or is it effulgent in another's light? The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings, and much less this fire. When that shines, everything shines after that. By its light all this is lighted.

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad V:14-15*¹⁰

This moment
this love
comes to rest in me,
many beings
in one being.

In one wheat grain
a thousand sheaf stacks.
Inside the needle's eye,
a turning night of stars.

Rumi¹¹

I am the light that shines over everything.
I am the All. From me all came forth, and
to me the All has returned. Split a piece of
wood, and I am there. Pick up a stone,
and you will find me there.

Jesus¹²

Gaining enlightenment is like the moon reflected on the water. The moon doesn't get wet; the water isn't broken. Although its light is broad and great, the moon is reflected in a puddle even an inch wide. The whole moon and the whole sky are reflected in one dewdrop on the grass.

Dōgen¹³

"When the sun has set, Yājñavalkya, and the moon has set and the fire has gone out and speech has stopped, what serves as light for a person?" "The Self, indeed, is one's light, for with the Self as light, one sits, goes out, works and returns."

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV:3:6*¹⁴

Limitations gone:
Since my mind fixed on the moon,
Clarity and serenity
Make something for which
There's no end in sight.

Saigyō¹⁵

O lamps of burning fire
In whose translucent glow
The mind's profoundest caverns
shine with splendor
Before blindness and obscure,
With unearthly beauty now
Regale their love with heat
and light together.

St. John of the Cross¹⁶

Now that light which shines beyond this heaven, beyond the whole creation, beyond everything, in the highest worlds which are unsurpassingly good, it is certainly this which is the light within a person.

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad, III:13:7*¹⁷

The light of the Guru is everywhere, within, around, beyond – in the words of the seers, in the wonders of Nature, in the beauty of art, music, literature, in the precise constructs of science and math, in the laughter and tears of our children, in the reflections of our elders, in the smiles of our friends, in the faces of strangers walking by us on their way to work.

Moment after moment, may it lead us away from the untruth, darkness and death that comes when we succumb to pettiness, narrow our circle of concern, indulge in self-pity, become parochial in our identification. . . May it lead us to the truth of our one happiness, luminous consciousness, immortal essence.

Nancy Yeilding

The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patāñjali's *Yoga Sūtras*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sūtra III:16

pariṇāma traya samyamād atitānāgata-jñānam

pariṇāma: transformations or evolutionary changes

traya: the three forms of

samyama: by performing attunement on

atīta: past

anāgata: future

jñānam: knowledge

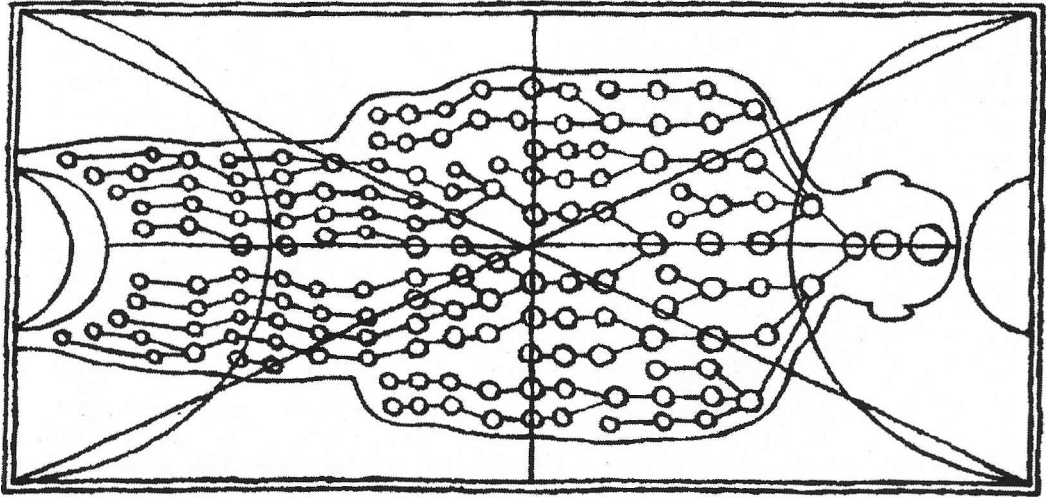
By performing attunement on the three forms of transformations, knowledge of the past and future.

In the first section of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, *Samādhi Pāda*, the subject matter ranges from the search to the ultimate attainment. It is a theoretical presentation of Yoga which prepares a student to enter the path. In the second section, *Sādhana Pāda*, a number of disciplines are given which the student needs to understand, appreciate and practice systematically. For a student who has already become an initiate in the transformation of his or her own being, the current section guides one to look into one's own personal experience of the practices and the changes that have taken place, where one stands now and from where one has come. From there the student attempts to bring himself or herself to the state of aloneness described in *Kaivalya Pāda*, which is the hallmark of the supreme spirit (*puruṣa*).

According to the Samkhya philosophy

of Kapila, everything began with the great principle (*mahātattva*: *mahām* - great; *tattva* - principle), which was indistinct, giving no clue about its nature. Then he proposed that the great principle was not singular but of a binary nature. The two aspects, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, were postulated as something akin to what we experience in our own physical and biological organisms. For both man and woman, the individual is a person with common characteristics. Both have male and female attributes within them. The person has a physical origin. In that, the first given substance is an amalgam of unknown dimensions. But when life begins to show its characteristics, we find the occurrence of sensation. It has a dichotomy of something being sensed and an agent sensing it.

The sensing agent is looked upon as a self-luminous principle which has in it the element of knowledge, the element of a knower and the element of activity by which knowledge continuously changes. In this process of continuous change, the knower affiliates to aspects of knowledge which arise from the unknown entity which has no consciousness of its own. An element of the unknown is absorbed and transformed by a quality of the knower. The knower, known and knowledge are segregated for the purpose of explication only. Both the unknown and the knower have to be presumed to be there from the unpredictable beginning. There is a constancy, a continuity and a contiguity between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* which neces-



sarily implies a homogeneity despite the heterogeneous principle involved. On the basis of heterogeneity, the individuation of a person is possible.

In this there are three phases: what is given, the past; what is not given, the future; and, in between them, the present. All studies, searches and recordings of experience are to be kept strictly within the present. In between that which has come and gone and that which has not yet come is the principle of continuous change and movement. This study is therefore mainly of evolution. In Samkhya, the fundamental categorization goes from the binary principle, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, through various elaborations to a fully functioning human being with a mind, ego and a body. The body has instruments of gathering knowledge and manipulating the available forces of knowledge. So there is the aspect of the actor which cannot be extricated from the knower aspect; the action proposition is fully identified with the process of knowing.

It is necessary to find various strata on which these assumptions are built. The Samkhya philosophy postulates counterpoints that account for any experience that can be located in a person. In the placement of the evolutionary aspects of becoming, there has to be a word before a deed. The materialization of the word principle is located in the deed. The word itself comes from a state of consciousness

that slowly evolves as an idea. An idea becoming a word becoming an action is all seen in an individuated organism.

As Samkhya philosophy holds itself very close to nature, there are many parallels in it between the explication of spirit and the explication of matter. Spirit, or the knowledge aspect, cannot be the first phase of one's search for understanding because in pure spirit, there is no one to know and nothing to be known. To say there is a knower, there has to be something to be known. These are limitations of the very epistome of the truth we are speaking of. Therefore there has to be the error of duality at the very beginning.

In the process of Samkhyan evolution, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are like light and darkness. It is our prejudice that light and dark are incompatible. There is nothing absolutely light or absolutely dark. Out of the different gradations of light and dark come the specific functions. Three specific aspects are considered to emerge from the great principle, the most general of the general, in the continuous process of evolution. The most positive is *sattva*, the principle of knowledge and luminosity. The most negative is *tamas*, the principle of unknowability. Between them is *rajas*, the principle of kinetics. These are not to be understood as material entities. The polarity between the dark pole and the light pole is the origin of all motion. The oscillation between them causes different

possibilities and generates many transformations. Slowly the light encroaches on the dark and brings out more items of knowledge. This is what Bertrand Russell calls the piecemeal affiliations of the relative.

The Samkhyan theory provides a detailed structuring to account for the emergence of a living being out of an original nothingness. First nothing; then something happened and something arose; now we know what is. By looking at the present, we can know the past and the future. That is why both Samkhya and Yoga think that the principle of evolution is essential to our understanding. At the core of a living organism is the self-luminous consciousness to which is assigned the principle of manipulation. Knowledge is imperative for doing and doing is imperative for knowledge. This is the secret implied *samyam*: continuity in knowing and continuity in doing to change oneself into what is postulated through a contemplative process of empathy. This is change which is not change yet partakes of the principle of change in all.

The principle of uncertainty runs through all forms of certitude. *Samyam* is the conscious factor in which many unconscious, unknown factors are involved. Through the light of *samyam* many dark factors are brought into the line of evolutionary change to transform a seeker into a yogi. In all the themes of search and accomplishment, the normative notion adopted to know the unknown has a possible variegation of environmental aspects which pertain to both time and space. From initiating yourself into the search to the final accomplishment to which the search takes you, there are several changing phases of procedure which mysteriously create unity and alienation from time to time.

A person who postulates a goal is space-wise and time-wise placed far from it. At the same time, the goal is introjected into the search so that every step on the way is made toward the goal. The final goal of Yoga is the cessation of the modulation of the relative changes that come to

the consciousness of the seeker. Then it is identified with the finalized state of consciousness of the seer. In Vyasa's commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, the theme accepted for a thorough-going study is, in epistemological terms, the stream of consciousness. Like the underlying current of a flowing stream or river, consciousness has an inner dynamics that gives reality to the stream. Continuous motion is its nature. The quality of the quantum pulsation of the stream is generally called the rapidity of the flow, *cittam*. For convenience, we are here considering the stream of consciousness which is apparent in the life of a single person.

There are ever so many environmental motions going on apart from the motion of the stream we are considering. The continuous revolution of the planet earth and its rotation around the sun, the alternating phases of day and night, the climactic change from midnight to midnoon and vice versa, are all part of the field where the stream is in motion. We have no control whatsoever over the changing course of the stream and the dynamics which consistently propel it. Yet our focus here is primarily on the evolution of the individual in question. The evolution of an individual is both horizontal and vertical. Vertical evolution commences from the moment of the formation of the zygote and continues through embryonic changes, into the fetus, into a living body separate from the mother which passes through infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, the mid-term of life, old age and finally death. The horizontal aspect of evolution alternates between the day and night of every twenty four hours.

An incumbent yogi, once initiated, undergoes the discipline of controlling the external factors affecting the organism as well as managing the behavior which consciously and unconsciously manifests internally. When the ongoing flow of the stream of consciousness (*kṣipta*) changes into a specially directed modification, either because of environmental factors or through one's own inner supervision and control, it is called *vikṣipta*. In either case,

one has to note what it was, what is presently happening to it and into what it will change as a result of the current course. When *kṣipta* changes into *vikṣipta*, consciously or unconsciously, the streaming consciousness is directed towards the genuine interest and away from distractions in the environment. All irrelevant input that would impede the rapidity of the flow in the chosen direction is screened away. This is called *nirodha*. It is not consciously made to happen but is instead a resultant factor which comes when one increases the attention given to maintain the steady flow of the stream towards the final goal.

Every encounter of the stream of consciousness with the external world brings resistance to the flow (*vitarka*). Resistance is reduced when the flow is aided by favorable thoughts (*vicara*). When *vitarka* is minimized and *vicara* is employed to enhance the quality of the flow, that fosters a precision in the course assumed by the flow to reach out to the goal. This is called *ekāgram*. Every passing moment, the purity of the flow is safeguarded with the help of screening on one side and perpetuation of one-pointed interest on the other. Then the intelligence implied in the process of search naturally becomes equipoised (*samādhi*). Here *samādhi* should not be understood as the spiritual absorption of the individuated consciousness in the core consciousness of the Self. As the student lives in a physiological organism which is sociologically and psychologically conditioned, a number of horizontal currents are criss-crossing one's path. But, by being absolutely faithful to the goal in one's mind and having trust in the word of the master, one is helped to maintain the one-pointedness of the stream of consciousness. The process has within it a two-fold balancing mechanism: the feeding in of one's central interest and a correction of previous experiences to keep the flow absolutely steady and unwavering.

Through all this, we have to see how the evolutionary process has both a temporal aspect (*kālapariṇāma*) and a spatial aspect (*deśapariṇāma*). They combine in

continuously impacting the mass of the organism in terms of physical, chemical, biological and ultimately spiritual laws. Time is conventionally maintained in society with devices which measure the revolution and rotation of the earth. The effect of the solar rays is a continuously changing phenomena. Therefore, the external measuring devices of time are to be modified by one's bodily behavior where time is imperientially admitted and one is experientially conscious of it. Similarly, the spatial aspect is relevant in several ways, such as the geographical area in which one is functioning from moment to moment, and the changing internal environment of the body which is getting exposed to different flows of energy from different bodily faculties. When one swallows a mouthful of food, the different areas which are affected, from the mouth to the rectum, have a spatial significance.

Such being the elaborate set-up, a yogi has to be conscious of where he or she stands, where he or she breathes, what is eaten and how it is converted to energy and distributed throughout his or her system. All these things are governed by laws of feedback. When a person becomes conscious of something, it is only a partial knowledge. Knowledge is *prajñā*. A yogi who has become fully established in consciousness irrespective of external consciousness, body consciousness and the unconscious operation of the body is called a *sthithaprajñā*. In such a person, the conscious core of the self has become equally distributed so that inner and outer are equally balanced. The highest aim of a yogi is not to become a scholar, well-versed in the information advertised by institutions, but to become a *pūrnāprajñā*. Then it is as if that person is light through and through, with no shade of darkness to interfere with the transparent consciousness of the Self. Whenever transparency is interfered with, stupidity enters the system. The functional limb of the inner anatomy becomes functionless.

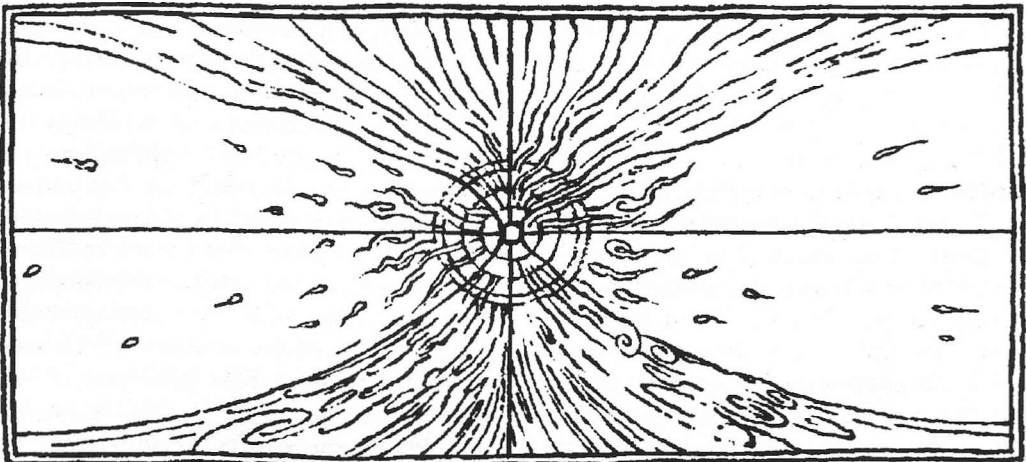
In order to foster the one-pointed flow of the stream of consciousness (*ekāgrata*) all the way to the final attainment, the ul-

time goal should always be in the mind of the yogi. Most of it will remain theoretical for a long time, but there is the slow tearing away of blinding affectation from moment to moment. That is why one-pointed attention is to be complemented with an uncompromising attitude of never falling in the groove of distraction (*vairāgya*). The entire mechanism of physical, biological, moral and spiritual evolution has to be understood in order to see how one can save oneself from being a *rogi*, one whose body is diseased, unstable and restless, or a *bhogi*, a person whose animal zest for living impulsively comes from biological sources. The progress is from a diseased *rogi* to a normal *bhogi*, to a natural yogi.

Knowledge is a prerequisite to achieve any goal. An action program complements the knowledge with which one motivates one's life. That particular aspect which sustains a person's inner growth from where he is to where he wants to be is through the performance of *dharma*. A person is influenced by environmental factors and by the inheritance of certain abilities and seeds of motivation. All people have some motivation to further themselves and to act with expediency and accuracy in their chosen field. For that, they need to look at the field in which they are placed and the time available for action. A socially oriented person's main goal is to become successful in his society and to

be accepted by his friends, neighbors and social group. For that, he has to become familiar with the path taken by most of them to live a life of ever-growing satisfaction. For everyone, the inner source of all consciousness remains as the ground of being as well as becoming fashioned to suit daily activity and thoughts. Everything comes from the Self or soul. According to the *Bhagavad Gītā*, every person has a foundation (), a given provision to live what one wants to live. That alone evokes in a person a search for new ideas and for a technically correct action series to fulfill the goal. For that, the person requires various instruments, some of which are built into the body-mind complex, and some of which are to be fashioned from the resources available. The social environment also provides differing amounts of inspiration, support and challenge. All these make each moment of a person's life a situation of thought and action. Every person has before him or her that which has already been achieved (*atīta*). All programs of action go from what has been accomplished to what one wants to accomplish (*anāgata*). Both the past and the future belong to the stream of time, which is going into the past and coming out of the future.

In this Sūtra, there is no reference to the present because it is the link, the correlation, between what has gone and what is coming. *Samyama* is assimilating the past



with the acceptance of the future to develop yourself into a person with new attainments and new challenges of the here and now. The particular methodology adopted by each person for *samyam* will vary from person to person. The *samyam* of a social person is to achieve his or her place in society. It is the pattern of the extrovert. That is different from a more inwardly developed person who looks at himself or herself instead of at the world. Such a person has a long term memory of all that has been lived so far since the dawn of one's origin.

This process of *samyam* is going from where you are now to where you were before and then to the future, assessing and utilizing your knowledge stock for achieving greater and more useful knowledge. Out of your concern for the wholesomeness of the life lived so far, you gather an idea to be nurtured in a pool of your stream of consciousness. All previous memories are reshuffled and restructured in the light of the dynamic energy of light arising from your own soul (*cidiśakti*). The idea of what you want to be is held within the embryonic aspect of the self. That keeps you inwardly very busy. Coming to that idea is *dhāraṇā*. That brings in two aspects of psychic life. The first is what has been physiologically lived so far and the resulting training given to the sense organs, intelligence, thought processes, judgment, etc. Then comes what you are going to be which has a magical appeal. You do not know what it is. It is built on what you have become and that which you have become changes into that which you are going to be. Every new fulfillment of the idea you are holding on to adds a new dimension. That is the magical formation of your new personality.

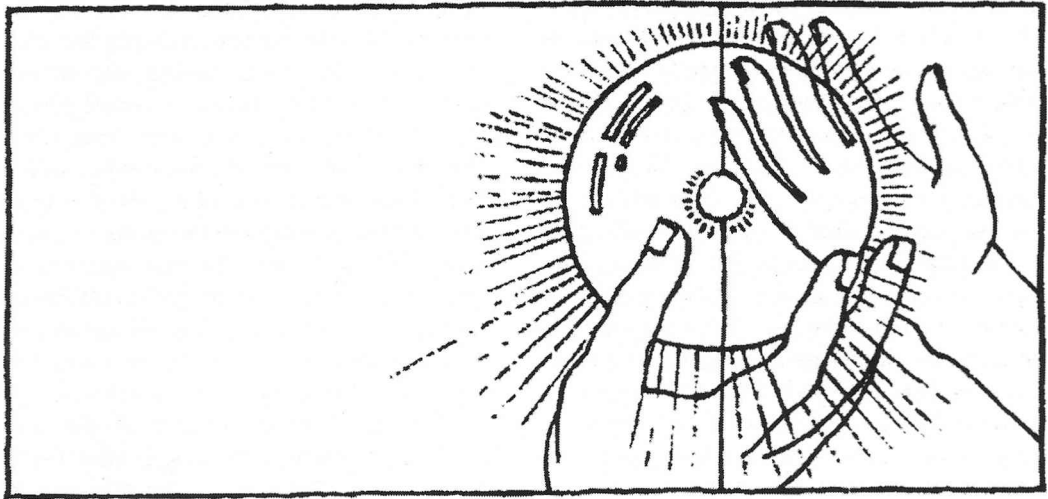
To understand this, you have to see the inner structure of your psyche and how it is shaping your somatic aspect. From your psyche there is an inflow of energy to restructure the somatic side. This is all happening in the dynamics of *cidiśakti*. Through continuous contemplation on the inflow and outflow of time, that which has been lived up until now

and that which will be, the past and future, get into a confection and the glow of knowledge arises. Each time the past, present and future come together, the idea of what you are going to be is nourished. You go deeper into the core of your own being and wait until it is fully formed. Then you get a new picture of what you are emerging into. It is as if by your own aspiration, a corresponding aspect of creativity is being generated within you. *Dhāraṇā* is transforming into *dhyāna*.

The coming together of the past and future is like husband and wife. They have to commune together in order to give rise to a new reality. *Samyam* happens in a state of *dhyāna*, where all distractions are kept away and an almost magical vision is fondly cherished. As each new awareness is crystallized, it touches your previous awareness. Even your previous sensory, somatic awareness is drawn into your psychic awareness. We all know that male and female are pulled to each other by the dynamics of erotics. The libidinal energy in each acts on the other, like an electromagnetic pull. The inner excitement of eros acts directly on the psyche which is kept on fire with enthusiasm. In the yogic process, the cruder aspects of the libidinal energy are transformed into super-fine consciousness. The erotic feelings are abstracted and sublimated. The desire to kiss, embrace, and lie together is not pursued physically. Instead, thinking of fusion, of oneness is given more importance than physical oneness. That is the beginning of sublimation.

For an ordinary person, aesthetics is mainly employed as a means of *dhyāna*. All one's imaginations about doing this and that, giving and getting, are re-examined. You become critical of yourself and look at yourself as if you are some other person. You don't want to tolerate things which are crude, animalistic or barbaric. They make you feel ashamed. Shame is one of the greatest influences to change your life. This is all part of *samyam*.

When you go deeply into what has gone before and what is coming in, you



see that there is a common interest between them. That brings you a sense of resignation, a feeling of surrender. It is not the surrender of a slave, but a willing offering of the best in you, what you value the most. At the social level, a young woman may feel that the most precious gift she can give the man she is to be conjoined to is her virginity and, in return, the man may feel that he should also give his unspoiled virginity. A yogi's virginity is that of the I-consciousness that has the agency of seeing, touching, tasting, etc.

The ego is sitting in the central core of consciousness as the owner of all the limbs of the body. It is slowly weaned away from the ground of the personality and that place is given to the super-ego, God, the divine principle of light, to preside over all the thoughts and actions of your life. Your thoughts and actions are made more and more sublime by the process of looking at them as if you were the totality of being, God, and determining what is acceptable and what is not. That brings sublimation, the state of pure accomplishment, *samādhi*, which you have been aspiring for. The yogi undergoes many short-term aspirations, short-term exertions and short-term *samādhis*.

This process of change goes on in your sleep state as well as in your wakeful state. When you go to sleep, your memories don't leave you. They find kinship with other memories which causes a re-

shuffling of all your memories. This restructuring of the self goes on in deep sleep where your waking experiences of name and form are taken to deeper aspects of the unconscious. Then only God is there to give provision for your improvement. In the dream state, symbols come from your inner manager which uses the raw material of your inner psyche to create visions, some of which are horrid and repulse you and some of which are lovely and give you a sense of ecstasy. Each day, in all three states of your consciousness, energies are stirred inside you to make something new in you. That is *pariṇāma*, evolution, of both the past and the future, which brings you again and again to a state of *samādhi*.

In each of us there is an ignoramus on one side and a knowledgeable person on the other side. This technical expert does not use hands or words but psychic energy to shape your future. When the dynamic aspect of the Self is made operational by *samyam*, then it is able to choose from among your environmental and hereditary factors. From among your incipient memories, it chooses some to be dissolved, some to be strengthened and some to be the raw material for your new persona.

When a yogi comes to this field, the teacher gives *samyama* to help the student gain a central vision of the height to which he or she has traveled so far and what

new abilities have been attained. When the teacher shows all the obstacles, the student uses that knowledge (*jñāna śakti*) to gain an estimation of the action (*karma śakti*) and volition needed to overcome them (*iccha śakti*). Volition or will power typically comes from the individual ego. In the place of that ego, a spiritual ego is substituted. That enables you to draw new energy from a deeper source of life to get over the obstacles. In place of your individual weakness, you resort to the universal reality which you invoke as your own true nature to transform yourself. If you think of your self as a separate individual, then the other presents you with a challenge to get over. That is why you need new knowledge and a universal ego. That is why the teacher gives the teaching *tat tvam asi*: That Thou Art. The process is from *dhāraṇā* to *dhyāna* to perfection (*samādhi*). This you have to go through a series of times until you come to your full perfection.

* * * * *

Our outer self is identified with what the senses bring us. In the presence of sound or light, or another sensory input, we are affected by our previous experiences of sound, light etc. If we examine what is happening, we notice three things. First is the external energy in contact with our body system. Second is that the energy stimulated by it is not a partial response but a total response. This is the theme of the encounter. When the energy comes from outside into the body, it results in specific interactions with the external world. Thirdly, with form, the memory of the relevant name comes. If our organs of action are not programmed to react, we will slowly dwell on the name aspect and enter the conceptual world. That can take us far from our actual locality to other spaces of the mind through memory. It is a two way movement: the present sensory impact and our prior memories from any previous time when an impression was made as a result of our libidinal aspect being aroused. Libido (*rati*) and desire (*kāma*) are complementary in the psychic functional operation of both

cognitions and emotions.

Fulfillment comes through the alchemy of a word-image taking you to associated memories. This is a verbal process. A concentrated effect comes from choosing one word out of thousands, with all the others grouped around it. For example, in the contemplation on the thousand names of God (*sahasrānāma*), one name is chosen, but every name in the complex refers to a central idea. This reduces the distractions that will take you far away from your contemplation or meditation. If you are chanting or remembering the word again and again, giving special attention to the core meaning, that evokes an emotional upsurge. If two people are erotically related, every action is to be responded to with its counter-action, a kiss with a kiss, a touch with a touch, a love offering of words with the response, "I love you." The exchange at the verbal level deepens the mutuality of the erotic relationship between male and female.

The same kind of process can be seen in situations which are not erotic. The libido is the joy aspect that accompanies any process of continuous operation in the mind, such as singing, chanting, reading a favorite passage over and over. It is like the inner soul catching fire. In an ancient fire sacrifice, the fire was started by churning two sticks together until they generated a spark which could burst into flames. Like that, the yogi's chanting can generate an emotional flame, a burning up. Entropy rises and one's inner metabolism changes. But the final aspect of yogic experience is better not related to physiological or pathological studies. A lot of leisure and observation in silence is required for the maturation of *dhāraṇā* to mature into *samādhi*.

When a person passes from the world of memories or imaginations to where there is a lull, a silence, then a change comes - the tendency to seek inward rather than outward. The afferent interest of the sensory system is withdrawn and the efferent is waiting for a message from the inner coordinator. Here one is dealing with an unfamiliar energy, psychic energy

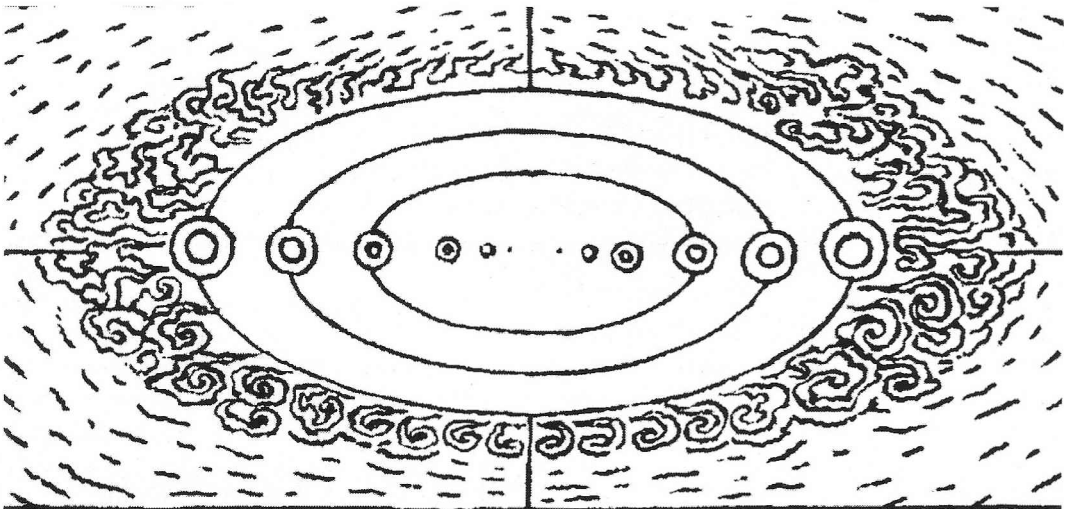
(*cidiśakti*). First there is the evoking of energy and then energy takes over and the yogi doesn't have to do anything. Patañjali gives the details of the termination of word energy (*savitarka samādhi*) and the slowing down and termination of mentation (*savicāra samādhi*).

Then it is only *ānanda*, the meaning aspect, which remains. First *ānanda* is experienced at the ego or personal level. That is *sasmita samādhi*. But when one relates to the fountain of joy that goes beyond the individual, it is as if the psychic energy is spreading out on all sides. That is *sānanda samādhi*. Narayana Guru describes this with the analogy of a flood inundating a whole area, so that no special area needs to be earmarked for attention. It is possible to experience this if you sit quiet, not feeding the ego with things, images, words or mental attitudes. Then the very nature of the ego changes. The social ego withers away and only a philosophical core of identification is kept up. Then you get into a frenzy, the stream of consciousness becomes very rapid, your breathing becomes very heavy and you feel as if an uncontrollable energy is enveloping you and you are merging or dissolving in it. The narrow line of consciousness changes its format to an expansive width. It is as if the horizon of consciousness is expanding to infinity. Then there comes an alternation of the rise and fall of energy over which you have no

power. The rise is like a burning sensation, as if you are in the middle of a fire. Your heartbeat increases, tear drops may flow, there may be a slight tremor all over your body. Your power to articulate wanes, and along with it, your remembrance of words ceases. You forget your own name, even your identity.

In this transformation of the individuated physical identity with your ego, space becomes a new reality. Space is substituted for your body and you no longer have any body limits. There is no near or distant frontier. There is no longer any time ticking, you are going beyond time. Therefore it is not an event, because where there is an event, there is time consciousness. Narayana Guru describes it as a thousand eons being like a single moment. You experience a confection of *anāhata*, the inner sound, and *ātmajyoti*, the inner light. They combine as if you are hearing light and seeing sound. Without your knowledge, cerebration terminates. There is nothing to cognize or connate. Yet there is affection (*ānanda*) in the Self. In your consciousness there is no singularity or plurality, no recognizable qualitative aspect or quantitative aspect. When you pass on from *sasmita samādhi* to *sānanda samādhi*, it is as if your own ground is being transformed into the common ground of the Absolute.

(Continued in next issue.)



Poems, May 14th, 1999

1.
The slate-grey stone drops
into the water,
a sounding of the strike,
then the stone is swallowed
into the blue and dark
opaque water.
Sound follows stone
down into the silence.
On the surface, rippling
with light and movement,
the air is ringing.

2.
The bell is struck, resonant and full.
It is being struck continuously
and the reverberations ring out,
moving in clear circles,
announcing themselves,
constantly calling out,
speaking our names.
We can turn away,
muffle our ears,
pay no attention—
but the bell continues
to be struck and to call out.

3.
A lit stage, open and empty,
with glistening wooden floor,
waiting for words, gestures,
the play to continue.
The wisp of a presence just left,
vibrating in the air: our
invitation to step up,
to make the space our own.

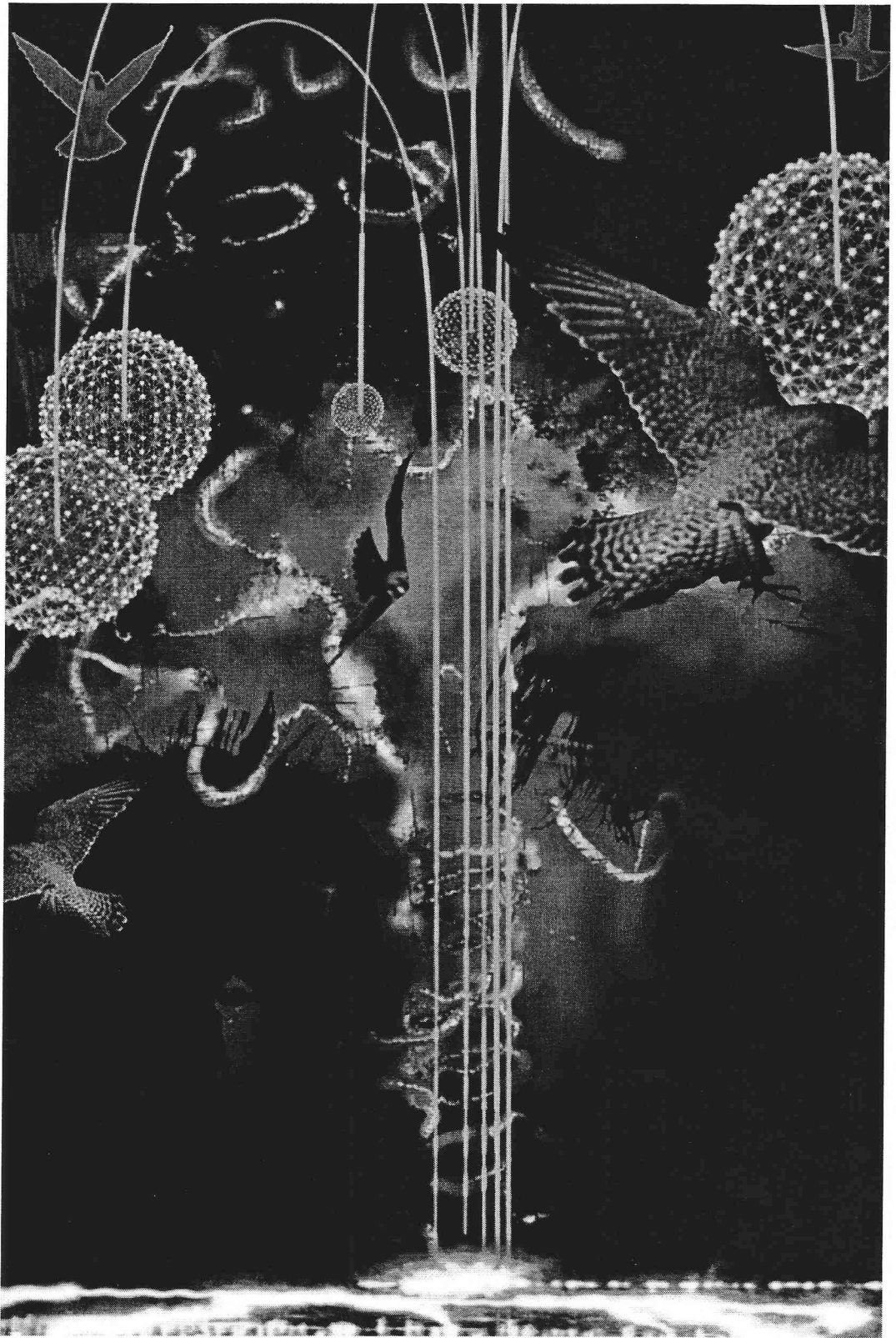
Deborah Buchanan

"But it was spring..."

The landscape was cold and lunar
and looked like winter
but it was spring.
Birds were petrified on frozen nests
and grass gleamed dully
with hardened dew.
No sound pierced the still air
or rustled the waiting wind
but I knew that spring was only hiding.

And when that one crystalline drop
of liquid light fell to earth
in a deliberate dance
I waited and watched
and finally could do nothing
but hope for life.
The light landed and took shape
though I never saw it form-
I heard the birds begin to sing in chorus
and I knew at once that I had never been alone.

Emily Aruna Teitsworth



Ātmopadeśa Śatakam:

One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

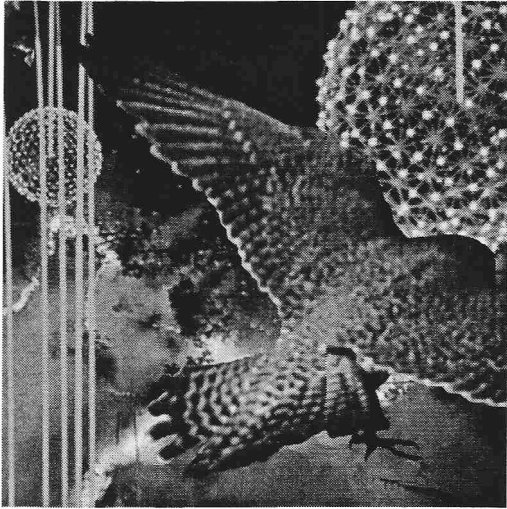
Verse 8

*oḷimutalām palamañcumuntu nārūm-
nalikayilēri nayēna māriyāṭum
kiḷikaleyañcumariññū kiḷmaṛikkum-
velivuruwēntiyakam viḷaṅñiṭṭenam*

Enjoying the five fruits, such as beauty,
mounted on a foul-smelling gun and evasively flying back
and forth
are five birds; having brought them down, through an inversion,
that radiant inner awareness should fill one's entire being.

The first ten verses mark the introduction to *One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction*. Among these, verse eight is of crucial importance. In it, an ontological assessment is made with a teleological goal. Metaphysics comes to grips with aesthetics and ethics. Further, this verse exemplifies the structural plan of the work as a whole. The reader with a careful eye can see the circulation of libidinal energy, which explains many secrets of human woe and happiness. There are also several paradoxes to resolve, which we will examine one by one.

First of all, let us get a picture of the structure of the allegoric gestalt of this verse. The simile is of a tree with birds hovering around its branches and a hunter standing beneath it. The fruits above and the hunter below mark a vertical parameter. The tree has five kinds of fruit, symbolizing the objects of the five sense interests. The birds are said to be flying back and forth evasively, enjoying the sensuous fruits. The range of their movement should be understood as a horizontal perimeter within which life urges become actualized at an ontological level. The Guru is using a mixed metaphor, alternating the tree with a foul-smelling gun. As we go into the details of this metaphor, we should notice some of the glaring paradoxes which are placed side by side. A tree



symbolizes life, growth and fruition. On the other hand, a gun is a symbol of fate, uncertainty and destruction. Both of these aspects are merged by the literary device of depicting their outlines as vaguely as possible. The person standing beneath the tree is the enjoyer, and the five evasive birds are none other than his or her own sense interests. This person is required to act with hostility towards the intention of the sense appetites. Thus, two contrary in-

tentions are bracketed by the implied relationship between the person beneath the tree and the birds playing hide-and-seek in the branches. It would seem that the annihilation of one's senses would spell great disaster, plunging one into a grievous darkness. Instead it is pointed out that one becomes filled with a great light by striking down the five birds. So this metaphor has in it six factors to reckon with: the birds and fruits, the tree and gun, and destruction and illumination.

In this verse, Narayana Guru lays the groundwork for both the aesthetics and the ethics he wants to develop in the rest of the book. Aesthetics will be considered first in the Kantian sense, and then in the context of the historical transformation that the concept has undergone.

Our knowledge has two aspects. We arrive at one through intuition; the other is what we experience as our sensibility. In a number of cases, these two aspects go hand in hand. When intuition aids us in deciphering the meaning of a sensation, we arrive at an empirical notion. Our common experience is to put sensation on the side of what is generally looked upon as matter: the realm where names and forms are important. Intuition, on the other hand, is taken as a natural device of operational efficiency, with which the mind structures the logical relevancy of the connectedness between things and ideas within the matrix of cause and effect and other relation-relata complexes. According to Kant, there are a priori principles governing both intuition and sensation. In fact, he even calls the pure form of sensibility pure intuition. He says:

Thus, if I take away from our representation of a body all that the understanding thinks as belonging to it, as substance, force, divisibility, etc., and also whatever belongs to sensation, as impenetrability, hardness, color, etc., yet there is still something left us from this empirical intuition, namely, extension and shape. These belong to pure intuition, which exists *a priori* in the mind, as a mere form of sensibility, and without any real object of the senses or any sensation.

The science of all the principles of sensibility *a priori*, I call *transcendental aesthetic*. There must, then, be such a science forming the first part of the transcendental doctrine of elements, in

contradistinction to that part which contains the principles of pure thought, and which is called *transcendental logic*.

In the science of transcendental aesthetic accordingly, we shall first isolate sensibility or the sensuous faculty, by separating from it all that is annexed to its perceptions by the conceptions of understanding, so that nothing be left but empirical intuition.¹

It is important to understand the fundamental nature of sensuous knowledge as Kant explains it in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. It comes very close to the unique role that a person's subjectivity plays in their appreciation of an empirical experience:

In order to prevent any misunderstanding, it will be requisite, in the first place, to recapitulate, as clearly as possible, what our opinion is with respect to the fundamental nature of our sensuous cogitation in general. We have intended, then, to say that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of phenomena; that the things which we intuit, are not in themselves so constituted as they appear to us; and that if we take away the subject, or even only the subjective constitution of our senses in general, then not only the nature and relations of objects in space and time, but even space and time themselves disappear; and that these, as phenomena, cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. What may be the nature of objects considered as things in themselves and without reference to the receptivity of our sensibility is quite unknown to us. We know nothing more than our own mode of perceiving them, which is peculiar to us, and which, though not of necessity pertaining to every animated being, is so to the whole human race. With this alone we have to do. Space and time are the pure forms thereof; sensation the matter. The former alone can we recognize *a priori*, that is, antecedent to all actual perception; and for this reason such cogitation is called *pure* intuition. The latter is that in our cognition which is called cognition *a posteriori*, that is, *empirical* intuition. The former appertain absolutely and necessarily to our sensibility, of whatsoever kind our sensations may be; the latter may be of very diversified character. Supposing that we should carry our empirical intuition even to the very highest degree of clearness, we should not thereby advance one step nearer to a knowledge of the constitution of objects as things in themselves. For we could only, at best, arrive at a complete cognition of our own mode of intuition, that is, of our sensibility, and this always under the conditions originally attaching to the subject, namely, the conditions of space and time; while the question: "What are objects considered as things in themselves?" remains unanswerable even after the most thorough examination of the phenomenal world.²

In the first line of verse 8, *oḷimutalām*, *paḷamañcum* and *untu* should be carefully examined to understand their aesthetic interconnectedness. *Oḷi* means light, with an affective quality. It does not stand by itself as an ab-

straction. It immediately suggests its counterpart: the 'I' that is attracted by the light. The word *mutalām* implies the initiation of the chain of events that are imperative whenever the attraction of light is registered in an appreciating eye. It is followed by the suggestion *palam*, an edible fruit. The allegorical force engendered by putting the images of the attracting light and the edible fruit side by side subjectively creates a pleasurable situation through the complementary interaction of the two images. Even at the word level of suggestion, the Kantian intuition of transcendent aesthetics—the *a priori*—is maintained.

Thus, in this verse a psychological phenomenon comes on the heels of an ontological urge, and is followed by its own pattern which is typical of each person concerned. The subtle nuance of the suggestion is so forceful that one wants to hide from oneself on hearing these words, because the hint given by them recalls to one's mind many anecdotal memories one might well want to bury or forget. Then, like the bang of a rifle shot, comes the reminder of death. From an attitude of playfulness one is abruptly called to consider the serious eventuality of death. This is like suddenly calling the attention of a clown who is doing pranks in a circus arena to the grim reality of the gas chamber. Even when a person is indulging in the trivialities of life with an outward show of gaiety, he is often reminded of the possibility of tragedy that may be encountered at any moment. This is a peculiar context, but so very common in life. Two imperatives come from opposite sides, as it were, and both claim the pursuance of their path by the ego consciousness, which is caught between the conclusive compulsions of incipient memories and the moral dictates of a volition that cannot be superseded without aggravating the tragedy of one's placement in a consequential chain of events. One says "enjoy;" the other says "withdraw." It is a perennial dilemma.

Some of the deeper aspects of the problem which is presented in a muted form in this verse will be further explicated in verses 69 and 70. In verse 69, the organs of perception, such as hearing, are compared to horses that are yoked to a chariot of libido. The ego which rides in it is described as a shadow of the Self, which is always drawn towards objects of pleasure. Irresistibly, the chariot is driven in pursuit of these ephemeral items of interest. In verse 70, the same libido is presented as a phenomenon of magical potency that unfolds itself as the inner organ, the senses, and the body and its very many hedonistic urges. We should bear these descriptions in mind when we think of the five birds who are enjoying fruits such as visual beauty.

The movement of the birds is qualified as *nayēna*, evasive. The word *naya* has several shades of meaning. The tactics of a diplomat are called *naya*. The implication is that in outward form one seems to be upholding ethical norms and correct behavior, while at heart one is maneuvering with conceit. The defense mechanism of concupiscence is *naya*. In the Holy Koran one can find hundreds of passages decrying this kind of conceit. For a spiritual or moral life, one is asked to be straightforward and simple.

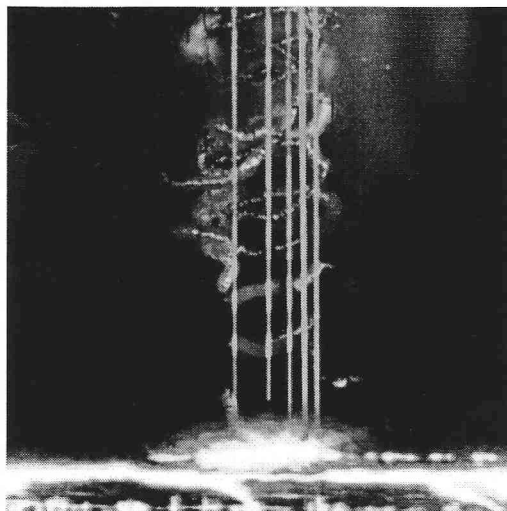
The Freudian concept of the clash between the id and the superego being reflected in the neurotic behavior of the ego, can be used to more fully understand the connotation of the term *naya*. The operation of the moral authority of the superego is a kind of mirroring within oneself of a fake image of public expectations. One then tries to conform to the re-

quirements of that pattern with continuous deliberation, while at the same time indulging in a secretive enjoyment of forbidden pleasures, privately painting them with altruistic motives to look as bright and acceptable as possible. The ethical considerations of trying to please both oneself and the public are as enigmatic as the Sphinx. The kind of morality upheld by that kind of attitude is what Henri Bergson describes as "closed and static." It is opposed to the morality of an Absolutist, which is both open and dynamic. In *The Devil's Disciple*, George Bernard Shaw tries to show the distinction between these two kinds of morality. The *dharma* that Narayana Guru wants adopted is what the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* describes as the ethics of a truthful person, *satyadharmā*.

The final instruction given in this verse is to subvert one's interest in the gratification of desires, which was exemplified in the first two lines of the verse by the tactual enjoyment of the fruits by the five birds or sense interests. The straight, literal meaning of *kīlmarikkum* is 'bringing down'. There is also an implied sense of 'inverting the situation'. This can be better understood in the light of the Freudian concepts of the topography of the unconscious, preconscious and conscious factors, and the movement of psychic energy either horizontally or vertically. In the present context, the Freudian id is to be taken as the incipient memories which have within them the potencies of karma in various stages of maturation.

Although Freud speaks of the topology of consciousness, the situation is so mobile that the landscape is constantly fluctuating. There are two kinds of energy spoken of here which have a mutual affinity. One is the light that is revealing the presence of an object of enjoyment, which is recognized by behaviorists as a stimulus affecting the receptors. The other is a quantum of energy, which Freud recognized as a libidinal cathexis coming from the depth of the individual's unconscious and flowing towards the source of physical stimulation.

To understand this a bit better, let us take the example of a certain variety of sesame seed grown in South India. Usually it is sown in February and blossoms in April. If, by mistake, the same type of seed is sown in May, you still have to wait until April of the next year for it to blossom. So it is not merely the physical environment that makes the seed unfold its characteristics. It has within it a genetic encoding of its program. Similarly, each incipient memory has its own inner rhythm of releasing its libidinal energy. In this process, every instance of experiential encounter with an object of interest results in the diffusion of energy. When energy is taken from one area, it naturally loses that much energy. Understood in this sense, the overt enjoyment of pleasures is a continuous process of the exhaustion of



one's reserve of psychical energy. So there is a paradoxical element of self-destruction involved.

In certain cases the expression of libidinal energy circulates inwardly rather than being directed toward an external object. Freud had occasion to notice this only in some pathological cases where a person was indulging in autoeroticism. Freud here confuses the body and the self, a common misunderstanding. But limiting pleasure to autoeroticism is still directing the energy to an objective expression and not to the core of oneself. Thus, his was only a partial view.

What Narayana Guru recommends here is a healthy way of turning one's energy inward: conserving and directing energy by centering all interests within one's own self. This brings about a process of sublimation, which unfortunately has not been explored very much by psychologists. Alfred Adler, who had an intimation of this depth, tried to pinpoint it by examining the insights of Dostoevsky, who he quotes as saying, "I have a mad love of penetrating to the limits of the real, there where the phantastic begins." Adler continues:

His attacks he describes as making him feel as though an intoxication of joy enticed him to the furthest limits of the sensation of living, where he felt himself near God, so near indeed, that only one step would have sufficed to cut him off from life. This picture recurs again and again in all his heroes and has a profound significance.³

Going to this depth can be either pathological, bordering on the symptoms of epilepsy, or it can be one of the highest forms of spiritual absorption, so powerful as to make one's body tremble when external consciousness is withdrawn into such a profound sense of inward ecstasy. Once, when Sri Ramakrishna casually viewed the flight of some white herons against the background of a dark cloud, the beauty of the birds gliding in harmony was so telling that he entered into an ecstatic spiritual absorption. In such an experience, the energy is not going outward to the object. Rather, it is received into the vortex of the soul or psyche in an inversion of the energy flow. Instead of a sensuous experience triggered by an external stimulus, the entire psychic field spirals centripetally to the core of one's deepest consciousness. One experiences both the inside and the outside as a continuous whole of the same blissful Self. Dhan Gopal Mukerji, in *The Face of Silence*, speaks of another such experience of Sri Ramakrishna:

Wherever Rama Krishna looked, he saw Light, Light, Light.

"I have found you, I have found you."

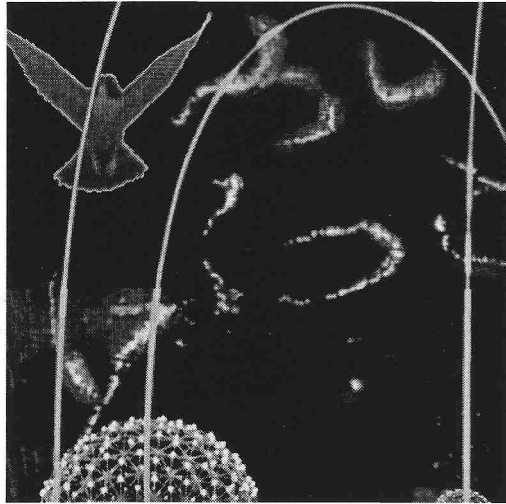
Crying, he dashed out of the temple. Wherever he went he saw nothing but light. The Ganges curved at his feet like a sickle of gold. The shore on which he stood was but a rock of solid flame. The trees in the distance, the boats and their boatmen in the middle of the river, the birds coursing through the sky, and the very sky itself sang possessed of the Divine Light. "I have found you, I have found you!" He cried with the Rishis of old:

"Harken unto me, ye sons of Immortality.

I have found Him the Person Supreme!

Even the Gods--those dwellers in the
highest spaces--are humbled now that I
have found Him the sun-clad One!"⁴

Although in these words of Dhan Gopal Mukerji's there is a poetic exaggeration of the seer's inner sense of wonder, it is nonetheless a portrayal of the true experience of the spiritual inversion which Narayana Guru wants us to understand. Between the object of interest and the pleasurable experience of the self, there is a numerator/denominator relationship. The object of interest is the numerator, and the ego-oriented self which seeks gratification is hiding in the unconscious as the denominator. When the situation is inverted with the envisioning of the Supreme Self as the occasion of all happiness, the Self is pushed into the forefront as the numerator. The object that was initially instrumental in verticalizing the self, its awareness, and its blissful nature into a unitive whole, effaces its individuality and goes into the denominator as the existence that precedes the essence.



Notes

1. Robert Maynard Hutchins, ed., *Great Books of the Western World*, Vol. 42: Kant, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 1952, p. 23-24.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 29-30.
3. Alfred Adler, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964, p. 283.
4. Dhan Gopal Mukerji, *The Face of Silence*, E.P. Dutton & CO., New York, 1926, p. 37-38.

Facing Disease: A Stroke of Good Luck

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Today I want to speak on a stroke of good luck. People are generally afraid of three kinds of disease: heart disease, cancer and stroke. When a person has a heart attack, one cannot predict whether he will survive. Even if he does, with by-pass surgery or something, he may live only a short while after surgery but he can tell his friends how the attack came, etc.

When cancer comes and spreads all over the body, death is immanent. So people are afraid of these. Another one of the major killers is stroke. A person who looks in perfect health with no suspicion of any calamity, can be struck down in one second. And what happens in that one second can determine life or death. And if the decision is to die, it can happen in a few moments or he may survive a few days. Another aspect of the stroke is that it usually affects the brain. According to the severity and the location of its impact, the person becomes crippled and he may not be able to explain to people how it came and how he experienced it because he may not have the language to speak or the ability to form words. And therefore, a stroke is considered more frightening than heart attack or cancer.

But I want to speak of stroke as a stroke of luck, as goodness. Now I am suffering from a stroke and I see it as god-given. People speak of God punishing people with disease but that is not the Indian concept. When Narayana Guru speaks of suffering, he says God comes as *āriya* (truthful God) and he takes you to *sāyujya* (union with God). And when you are one with God, you have the highest possibility of human life: you are given a chance to live with God as well as the world.

Nataraja Guru also had a stroke. And whenever I was sitting with him he would tell me, "Nitya, this is a very bad disease, you should not get this disease." And I thought that since he was specially telling me I should not get that disease, that this was his blessing. Even then I was afraid that some day I would get it.

I went for a very exhaustive treatment by a great Indian physician, Cheriya Narayanan Namboodiri of Vaidya Madham and thus I was hopeful not to get a stroke. After the treatment the physician (*Vaidyar*) told me that the treatment has its own discipline. If I deviated from the discipline, the consequence would be terrible. For most people, when you talk about the consequence of breaking a discipline, they will take it as a punishment. But I never thought of it that way. My discipline was that I was not to travel and not to talk. But the day I was leaving the clinic, I wanted to go see R. Kesavan Vaidyar since he was ailing and very old. So that night itself I went to see R. Kesevan Vaidyar. His wife was also there and she came to give me gruel.

The next morning I bade farewell and traveled extensively for six days. Traveling by car in very hot sun, I went to three Gurukulas. That caused great exhaustion. From there I went to Mr. Anandan's place in Tellicherry. At 5:00 pm was to be the ground-breaking of the new main building at the Kanakamala Gurukula. But at 4:00 pm I had the stroke. The stroke took just one second, but in that one second, everything I had learned in seventy-six years left me. I forgot even my name and identity. Everything was gone.

I know nothing of that time, but I was laid on a bed. Later I came to know I had

the most feared stroke. Slowly consciousness came. Then it was just like a dead body with a single sign of life - breathing alone. After some days, consciousness started coming. The physician who had treated me wrote a letter to me immediately and sent medicine as treatment for the stroke. It is called *pathyam* (keeping on the path): I should observe it properly. He gave me medicine for twelve days. I did not find any relief in it. Then it was followed by another twelve days. Then he invited me to his own place to get treatment there.

This is where I want to say that there is a difference between this attack and the usual attack or disease. The physician called my attention to my right leg and asked me to move my toes. However much I tried, there was no movement in my toes. Then I could move them a little. The first sign of life came to me. That very day he told me it would come back one by one and then he said you will come back to your original self. One by one everything you have forgotten will come back. That gave me confidence, so from that day I was not to be afraid of this disease. Then I began to see the wonder of re-manifestation. I was dead and from death I'm re-manifesting little by little. My right eye and my right ear were not functioning properly. Then I started seeing a little light. Then I could see with the right eye as before. The ear started hearing and thus these two faculties which are very important to life became clearly reestablished.

And then I remembered two verses of Narayana Guru's *Daiva Daśakam*:

*nīyallo sṛṣṭiyum sraṣṭā-
vāyatum sṛṣṭijālavum
nīyallo daivamē
sṛṣṭikkulla sāmagriyāyatum*

You are the act of creation, the Creator,
and the myriad variety of what is created;
Oh, God, are You not the very stuff
of which everything is created?

*nīyallo māyayum māyā-
viyūm māyāvinodanum*

*nīyallo māyayē nīkki-
sāyujyam nalkum āriyanum*

Are You not *māyā*, the wielder of *māyā*,
and also the rejoicer in *māyā*?
Are You not the True One who,
having removed *māyā*, grants the Supreme
Union?

I was waiting for that union (*sāyujya*)
every moment. I was tuned to these three
things: creator, creation and created be-
ings.

It is true that there is a supremely be-
nevolent God, which is transcendence. In
that transcendence there comes the true
manifestation of one's spirit. And once
that transformation has started, there is no
time lag. Even when I sleep, if I cough, all
the vital parts in my body experience new
life. Thus a hidden life is coming from an
old dead body. It is becoming a miracle. It
is worthwhile sitting and waiting for a lit-
tle movement that is happening in my
body because it is life coming back. My
memory has mostly come back. My lan-
guage which I had some difficulty with
has mostly returned. Within a few days of
the stroke I was able to speak. At first
words that I wanted to remember
wouldn't come to me, but now I am get-
ting over that and usually I remember the
words I want.

Now I have the left leg which is alive.
The right leg which in one way was dead
is now slowly becoming cooperative with
the left leg. Similarly, my right hand was
dead. I started painting but I couldn't hold
anything with the fingers of my right
hand. But I could use the left hand to as-
sist the right hand to make the lines. In
that way, I painted twenty-nine sunrises
at Kanakamala. Only four or five were
done with just the left hand. With the left
hand I put the chalk in the right hand and
held it with the left hand. I painted what I
was seeing in colors. When you look at it,
you will not know anything happened to
me. My aesthetic sense and color combina-
tions and color scheme - everything is
right. Thus I was reluctant to leave Ka-
nakamala. But I heard that there are beau-

tiful sunrises here also.

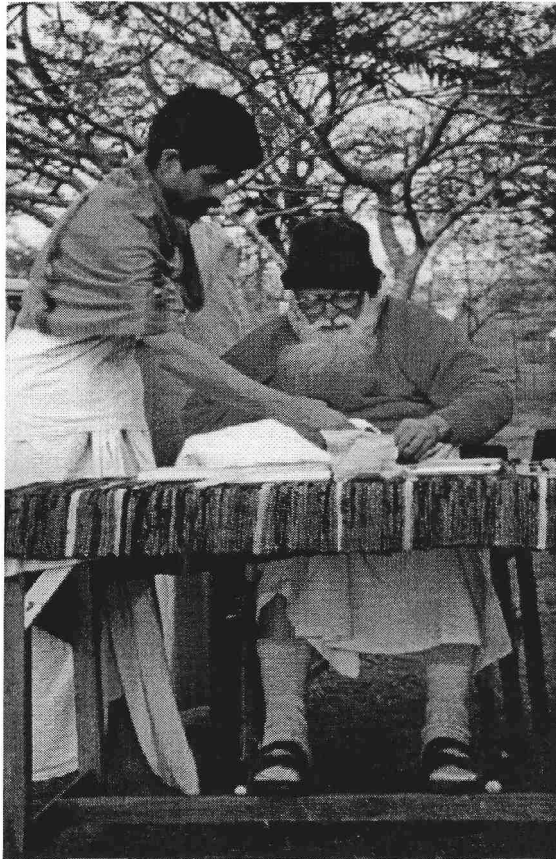
I was inside for a few days. But yesterday for the first time I went to the Eastern side at 6:00 am and sketched. I found out that the sun rises at 6:47. Today I got up more slowly and went to the place and sat calmly and sketched. It was all very easy.

What Narayana Guru calls *āriya*, the truthful one, is in what we call the potential. If you take an egg and look for a chick in it, you won't see it. Similarly, the first formation of matter shows no sign of life. But when you keep the egg for twenty-one days under a hen, transformation happens in the egg. A live chick emerges from the egg. Similarly now in every part of my body a transformation is happening. So instead of lamenting that I have a disease called stroke, I say, "How lucky I am that I had this stroke." It is helping me to know the wonder of God: how out of the potentiality of matter life can evolve, and have a

new face each day, a development which grows along with a sense of wonder. The wonder is myself. One part of my body that was dead is now working as if it is wanting to grasp the lost life and live once again in beauty and joy.

So I have accepted the challenge given to me by God through his own miracle. God is not a careless God, but a careful, ingenious God who cares for everything in this world, every facet. Now we have learned how, with patience, life comes back and passes through all the possibilities where life is. Our previous understanding was that growth and change are life. But now we have to think of it in another way. That to which life comes is dead, so stroke is the opposite of death. It brings us the great joy of creation which God makes. Such is my idea of God and disease: disease is a language of creation of God. ❖

(March 4, 1999)



Facing Death

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

No word is more awful, haunting, intriguing and horror-filled than 'death'. There is something definitive and absolute about it. And yet to many people death is the one consolation, the promise of the end of all their troubles.

Death comes alike to the fearful and the one seeking death. Although nothing is more certain in this world than death, most people do not want to think about it, so it is always pushed aside. It can be frightening to think about death.

At the same time, death (in India) is called *samādhi*, which in the case of yogis is seen as the final merger. When a yogi enters into *mahasamādhi* (the great absorption or merger), he is considered to be liberated from the mortal coils. From then on he lives in eternity.

Thus death is also seen as the gateway to immortality and infinitude. There is something paradoxical about death. It is at once the most coveted and the most feared experience there is.

The fear about death stems from our ignorance about it and about what happens after death. It is a big question. This subject is taken up for a very detailed study by Socrates. In a couple of Plato's dialogues we hear Socrates speaking of death with great love and anticipation. In certain countries the importance of death is minimized because of a faith in the belief that there have been many previous lives and that after dying one always returns for another life. In that case the next death is only one of several, only one of a million deaths a person passes through. That takes away much of the importance of it. For others who think of only one single manifestation on earth as an individual and who think that after leaving the body there is no more chance to come here, the death that is going to be is *the*

death, so it is very important. In that case, if this life on earth is enjoyable, then this death is not only going to snatch you away, but it will never give you another chance to come to this beautiful world again.

Life here means living in the company of so many other people whom we love as our relatives and friends. We admire great people. When we are here on earth many ties are formed with people. The death of a person is the breaking of a string. If it is a loved person, then it is a heartstring that is breaking. It is very painful when such a person is dead and gone. Many do not want to believe that person is gone forever. Our clinging is such that we want to postulate an immortality for the departed. We want the departed to be waiting for us somewhere to which we will go and meet them. Without that hope many cannot face death. Again, the greatest fear is born of doubt, a doubt as to whether our belief in a world of the departed can be justified. If it is not true, those who so believe will be deceived.

Nobody knows when exactly death is to come. Sometimes a person may wait expectantly for years and years, and yet death may not come. Another person may think everything is safe here and that he or she will live another twenty, thirty or forty years; that person suddenly falls down and dies. This uncertainty of something so certain adds to its fearsomeness.

All of us, one day, have to face it; so it is good to think about it. What is this thing called 'death'? I think of it as something happening every day, every moment. All the joys, all the fears, all the pains, all the problems we live at this moment are dying in this moment. Some of them are reborn in the next moment. That's one way of looking at it. Another is

that when we say, "we are growing", we are actually marching toward death, the death of this body.

One kind of death that we are undergoing is the very painless unconscious death of the various cells in us. The individual cells in us have a more or less autonomous life. When one cell dies, it is easily replaced by another cell. In one sense we are not a person but a great colony of many autonomous units. The individual decay of one cell or one autonomous unit may not cause much difference, just as the death of one person does not affect humanity as such. Humanity is a collective generality of all the individual humans put together. Similarly, in this psycho-physical organism of ours, there are individual thoughts which come and go, individual passions that come and go, and there are also aggregate ideas (ideas also socialize) which gather and disperse. The collective or corporate function of this body, the innumerable faculties of this body, also work together. If one or several of these faculties fail, others share the labor. Somehow the work is carried on, even with certain dysfunctions and malfunctions.

We think we are far away from death, but we have already died to some extent. When I think of the souls of my fallen teeth, I wonder where my fallen teeth have gone. They are dead. They are gone. But still I do not think that I am dead. I have already died so far as my fallen teeth are concerned. Each time I cut my nails, I pity that part of me which is going away. When your hair is cut, you don't think that a little of you is gone. There are some people who have even had their arms and legs amputated, and still they, as the same persons, are there.

This raises the question, "What is the person in us?" The idea of 'I' or the self is not curtailed when the arms or the legs are amputated. The person can be whole even when minus a limb. We are actually limbless. There is a limbless person within us, a person without faculties, an overall person, an over-soul, in addition to these millions of souls, these millions of limbs,

these millions of constituent factors.

Thus we have partial deaths, individual deaths and then finally a total or collective death. I am told that even when that death comes, death is not happening to all parts of the body at one and the same time. Even after the death of the heart, the kidney may remain functional, good enough to be transferred to some other person. The eyes can be replanted in another person and be with them for a long time. The bones can be transplanted in another person and serve them for forty or more years. Although I am not a great believer in the gospel of the Reader's Digest, I read in it that nine parts were taken from one person and planted the same day in nine other persons. This person's heart was functioning in one person, his kidney was functioning in another and his eyes were functioning in another, etc., so that man was now living in nine people. Some people think that God lives in their heart. But when the heart fails and is replaced by a plastic heart, which God lives there? A plastic God perhaps? Does that person thereafter think and love like a normal person? We all know that blood can be easily transfused from one person to another person.

Which part of us is really 'we'? Is it the food we eat, the nourishment that transforms into the marrow of our bones, the cells of our brain or our central nervous system or our muscles? There are parts of us which can be removed without greatly lessening who we are, and there are other parts which if removed will cause us to die. The latter must somehow be related to the most vital aspects of who we are.

This type of study is not undertaken by anyone. Yet people speak of ghosts, spirits, soul, and life and death. On the whole it looks as if we are living in a community of superstitious people who have not made any thorough study of this great subject of life and its death.

We often, particularly in India, hear very strange stories about memories of a previous life and instances of rebirth. There are also counter theories which can

undermine our suppositions about rebirth. One reason given to believe in rebirth is that sometimes a person at the young age of three, four or five narrates a story of some murder which happened many years ago when this boy had no chance of knowing about it. He can identify persons connected with that murder. He can give a description of the murder. Then he identifies himself as the person who was killed. People then proclaim this must be a case of rebirth.

The counter theory is something like Jung's theory of a collective unconscious. When an important thing is happening in a community, it goes into the deeper layers of everybody's mind, and it is pushed deeper and deeper as they continue to live in and concentrate on the many activities of daily life. This is not just an individual memory but a socialized collective memory. Like individual memories which circulate and find opportunities again and again to come up into the surface of the mind, the collective unconscious also revolves and spearheads its memory through one person's mind, such as a child. That child need not necessarily be a reborn child. It can be the collective unconscious finding a channel. If there is a bacteria or virus or cause of some disease lying in your system, it can remain dormant for a long time, and then when there is less resistance in one part of the body, it surfaces there. Similarly this can also happen. Then there are also theories of clairvoyance, telepathy, etc. But in spite of the counter theories to rebirth, people remain fond of anything unreasonable and peculiar. This touches the myth-making element in us.

When I strike a match, it bursts into flame with a special sound. Then when I light a candle, it makes no such sound. The candle burns like a yogi and the matchstick burns like some rowdy. This is because of the constituent elements. Similarly we can think of ourselves as being like candles. A candle is ignited and from that day it is burning. Finally the wax and wick will run out, and that's it.

This is the theory of Lord Buddha

when he speaks of the 'burning out' which is *nirvana*. He does not think that the burning out of one body will do the trick. He thinks of a series. According to him, when you are eighty or ninety and you kick your bucket, only the bucket is gone and the worthwhileness of the bucket will continue as the aggregate of *karma* taking another form. *Karma* is the momentum that we put into a system. When every part of that momentum is arrested, and it is no longer fed with fuel, then it burns out. This death of a series of *karmas* is very much like a candle or a fire burning out.

Should we think that we are a series? Why don't we think that we are individual cases like individual candles, each with its own fine fragrance or bad odor. One person's fragrance is another person's stink. If you look at life like the burning of a candle, then the fear of death goes. "How can I be frightened. I am a candle. My wax is limited. I know that all the time it is burning. With every breath some energy is escaping. With every pulsating of my heart some energy is burning out. Each time my stomach has to work on the food that is put into my belly, it is expending itself." Like Gandhi, some people want to live for 120 years. For that reason Gandhi did not want to overwork his belly. The factory was always kept closed. Occasionally he would eat a few nuts. He did not want to overwork his digestive system. This is a kind of economizing to extend one's life. Instead of shouting and jumping, one can sit quiet so that less energy is expended. This can possibly prolong your life.

But what is the point? I don't think that life has any particular meaning. There is not any headmaster coming to the class of life and assigning to each life a special project to be worked out. The Christians say there is such a project, but that is because they have to sustain the church. Many lies thus have to be told. There are many complications within religion which have hindered our proper consideration of death from a reasonable point of view. As I am neither a Christian nor a Hindu, death is not a matter of great concern to me. That makes me quite qualified to

think about it in a very sober manner.

We should begin from what we already know. One thing I very clearly know is that I do not know anything of a previous birth. One thing I do not expect to be able to know is what things will be like after death. Death may be something like sleep, but even in sleep it is hard for me to make out whether the things in the dream are right or wrong. When I go beyond the dream, nothing is known. It is certainly not likely that this faculty called 'the central nervous system' will be of any use in discerning anything after death either. I should think of death without a central nervous system. To think of death without a central nervous system I have to train myself to think in an altogether new way. Even the word 'think' does not apply, because thinking can occur only when the brain functions.

The theory which came to me yesterday was that this body and all its organs are like the various appliances and equipment in a person's house, like a wood stove, a kitchen stove, an iron, a typewriter, a guitar and things like that. When I am interested in music, I go and play the piano. At that time the piano is part of me. Similarly when I am interested in eating, I go to the kitchen and eat. Then the eating is part of me. Narayana Guru taught us that we are not just in here, but we are also that which we are experiencing. That helps me to come out of this body and be also this tree and Steve and Peter and all of you and the dirt and the filth and the toilet, everything, whatever I see. That takes away from me the sense of individual holiness. I am not 'His Holiness' because the septic tank is also part of me.

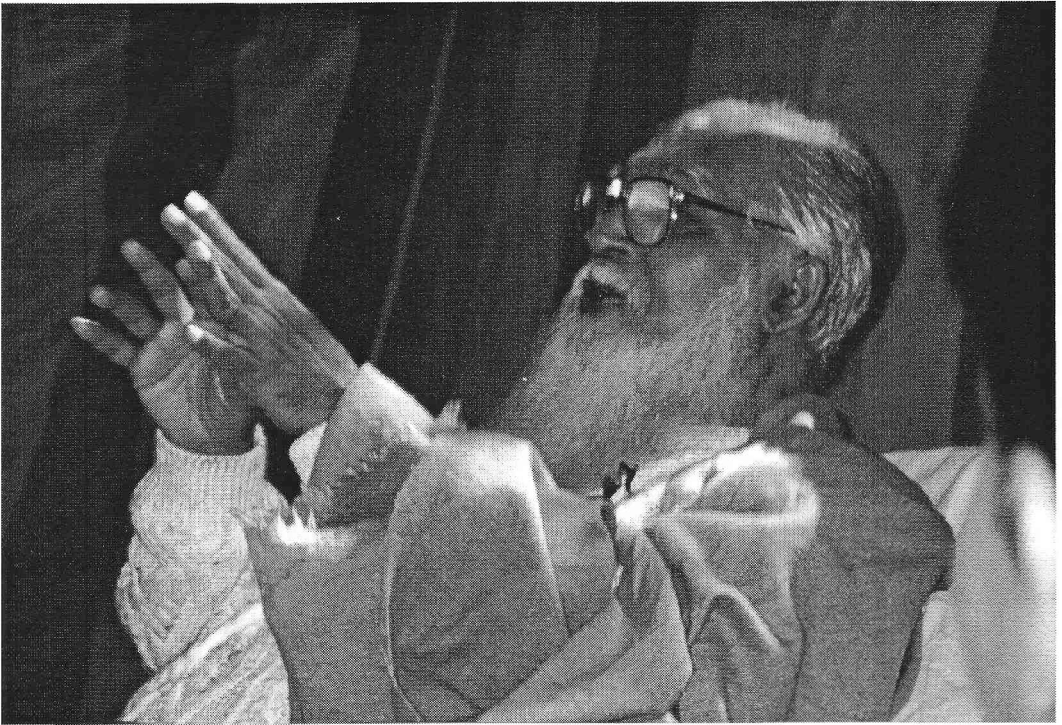
Everybody and everything has first to be my knowledge for me to know them. The great help I received from Narayana Guru is the experience of becoming identical with this universe. What is happening in this small body of mine is just like my functioning inside my small study when I attend to my correspondence. But at other times I am also going out and meeting people.

Sometimes people do not come to me; only their letters come to me. Yet each letter is that person. I relate to that letter just as I related to the person who sent me that letter. Thus I have spread out.

If I am such a spread out person, will I die? My poor father, he thinks that he died, but I am always thinking of him. When I am thinking of him, his form and his words and his jokes and his many experiences all live in my memory and in my brother's memory, my sister's memory, and my mother's memory. So how much of my father died? Only a little. He was a teacher with thousands of students during his forty years of teaching. Wherever I go people say, "Oh, I know your father. He was my teacher." They all think of him. For instance, how can a person like Mahatma Gandhi die?

There is a kind of taboo about the subject of death. Particularly if you speak of death before some women, they put their hand over your mouth and say, "Don't speak of death. Speak of something else, something good." These very same people are also often the best contributors to a person's death. Recently I was near a person who was dying. His mother-in-law was sitting and reading out from the *Bhagavad Gītā* about God and the heavens and what will happen to the soul, etc. Then she looked at him and slowly put her finger up to his nose to check if he was still functioning or not, to see if she had to continue with the reading. This is a great paradox. We want a person to live forever, and we want him to die immediately, especially with the room rents in modern hospitals. Once people know a person cannot be revived, then most do not want him to continue. This is a paradox. You want your most beloved person to die and you want your most beloved person never to die, to be immortal.

Recently I had my sixtieth birthday celebration in Trivandrum. Somebody said, "Let him live as long as he can." Some people said, "Sixty is only the half-way point. Let him live 120 years." I thought, well, tomorrow if I become immobile on my bed and pass my stools on



my bed, will this fellow, who is now blessing me to live another hundred years, come to help clean me and change and wash my sheets?" I don't think so.

There are certain things I personally want to say about my death. I think when once life is no longer a joke, then it is no longer necessary to remain in this body. In a couple of *Upaniṣads* it says, "When a person has realized that he or she is one with the Supreme Self and that this phenomenal existence here is a kind of drudgery, then he or she can either jokingly live it or terminate it."

Once when I was in Rishikesh, about 150 of us were given a feast by a *sannyasi*. We were all sitting on the banks of the Ganges enjoying an excellent lunch. After the sweets were distributed, one man came and touched everybody's feet. He turned to the Ganges and chanted some words of adoration and serenely jumped into the raging current. I was disturbed and shouted, "Somebody save him." But everyone else folded their palms with the same serenity and bid him a prayerful farewell. Everyone felt very satisfied. The man who jumped was not disturbed or ailing from anything. He simply felt that

he had come to the fulfillment of life and that he could go. At that time it shocked me, but now it wouldn't shock me. I think that's one good way.

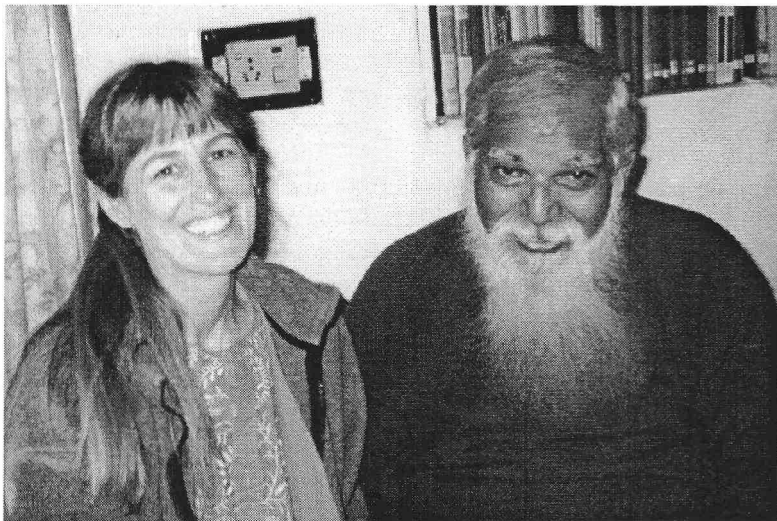
I think every person has the right to decide whether to live or not. This big fuss made about suicide is mainly because of people's fears about their own death. There is a psychological horror of death which has colored the collective concept of suicide. I think it's permissible if a person wants to end their own life, and others need not try to stop them. Sometimes if a person comes to me and declares his or her desire to commit suicide, I may even say, "That's beautiful." Of course, if it is a mistaken notion that is leading them to this decision, I try to correct their mistake. But if they want to do it as a beautiful thing, I let them do it.

Once a man came and told me he wanted to commit suicide. He wanted my help in deciding the kind of suicide that would suit him. I said that hanging looks grotesque. He agreed. I said that after poison one's face becomes blue and disfigured. He agreed. Jumping before a train can be good unless you make some mistake and only your arms or legs are cut

off. We decided the best thing was to walk on the Marina Beach in Madras. There is an area there called the Lover's Garden. There are a lot of good feelings in this place. We decided that we should plan it on a night on which the waning half-moon rises over the water just at midnight. At just that time all the waves have silver crests. We decided that would be the ideal time to enter the ocean and merge with the vast expanse. We went there, and at 11:00 p.m. a policeman asked us what we were doing there. I started reciting Sanskrit verses. He was very impressed and went away. At 12:00, I said, "Now is the ideal time." I went into the water with him. He hugged me to give me a last embrace. I said, "You fool. This ocean will be here tomorrow also. Why do you want to go into it today? Tomorrow morning some luck may turn up for you. So why don't you go and wait for your luck tomorrow. If you finish it off now, you'll have no chance to go back into it." He agreed and came with me. The next day I put him on a train to Ooty where he became quite happy. To some people we should say, "Good," and others we should dissuade. On the whole I agree it is a good thing. When you have a natural death, you have no say in the matter.

Now when I die the first thing I insist upon is that there should be no chanting

or other noise pollution going on around me. People should mind their own business. If the body is just left lying around for some time, it will stink. So it should be disposed of. I have been thinking of various kinds of disposal. One possibility is to burn it. But then the question comes to me, "Am I totally dead when I am dead?" Part of me is still alive, such as my bones. In that case, cremation can be tragic. If I am given some time in a grave, then I can slowly continue the death process month after month. But then worms will come, and I don't like to think of worms in my mouth and in my entrails. One good thing is that I won't know it. At least in that case I would be contributing to life. Think of the 10,000 worms which have been eating my body coming upon the area of my grey matter where the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, etc., is stored. Perhaps the worms will become very wise. Maybe some naturopathic medicine should be made out of my brain or perhaps a spread to be put on bread. The law may not permit these things, because after all, people are foolish. Under the circumstances I request a simple burial. But suppose there is something called a soul and it goes with my body into the pit, then there should be an easy way for it to escape. Also often *sannyasis* are buried in a sitting position. I do not like that. Even now I have back pain. I want to lie down



on my side. A small pillow will also be fine. A small writing pad and a pencil should also be placed there, so I can sketch any interesting goblins that I may encounter. Of course, this is the kind of thinking that led to the building of pyramids. There is an archetypal myth in the human mind which is stimulated when death is spoken of.

Now I want to go a little deeper into the philosophical and eschatological implications of death. There are two aspects of death to be distinguished and examined. One is the eschatology and the other is the philosophy. The eschatological aspect is where this physical earth is not the only realm in this creation. According to the Indian school, there are seven worlds above and seven worlds below. And even when we are in this one world, a part of us is also in these other worlds. After death we don't necessarily leave the whole system. It is only in this physical world that we have the physical body. This physical body is constituted of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. These five disintegrate and dissipate at death. Earth goes back to earth; water goes back to water; and so on.

Physical death can be called death number one. Anyone who is a parent has contributed a little of themselves through their vitality to their sons or daughters. And even after one's death, a part of one is living in one's kith and kin. If one does not have children or if one's children die out without reproducing, that can be considered as a second death. The third death is in the world of one's reputation. Many people live in their reputation. One's reputation outlives one's physical body for quite some time. Initially people are remembered with great fervor, and then afterwards that cools out, at which time one is further released to the next world which is where one remains as a subconscious psychic influence on people. Perhaps this is a kind of haunting. The next realm beyond that, according to the Indian system of thought, is where you become a kind of guardian of the world. Here you don't have a personality of your own. The

rhythm of the universe is kept alive by the contribution of forces at this level. Beyond that you are simply a part of the law, the mathematical, physical and moral law of the universe. Then you come to what is called the *Brahma Loka* where you are one with this universe forever. You can return again to the physical world from any realm except the *Brahma Loka*. All the other realms have some phenomenological envelopment which attracts forces to descend to more and more concrete or gross levels of manifestation and finally to be reborn here.

This is one theory. It is particularly held by the Buddhists. According to this theory, when a person dies, somebody here on earth should aid that one in going from one realm to the next without hanging around for a long time and causing suffering. The Hindus have not developed such an elaborate scheme as have the Buddhists in this area. Most Hindus subscribe to *Vedānta*, and according to *Vedānta* the world of name and form is *māyā*. Life and death have only a phenomenological status and are not to be considered real. The Indians have thus killed their eschatology.

The Buddhists were the great psychologists of India. They considered the psyche as something more than the physical body. They have also created many demiurges and semi-divine beings who can fly or live hidden in the atmosphere or who can manifest in a physical body and then return to pure energy, etc. Their theories are very different from the theories of prophetic religions such as Christianity or Islam. I think that to be born as a Christian or a Muslim is very boring. After death you have to wait endlessly for the judgment day. All the ones who have died over the last 2,000 years have still not been called.

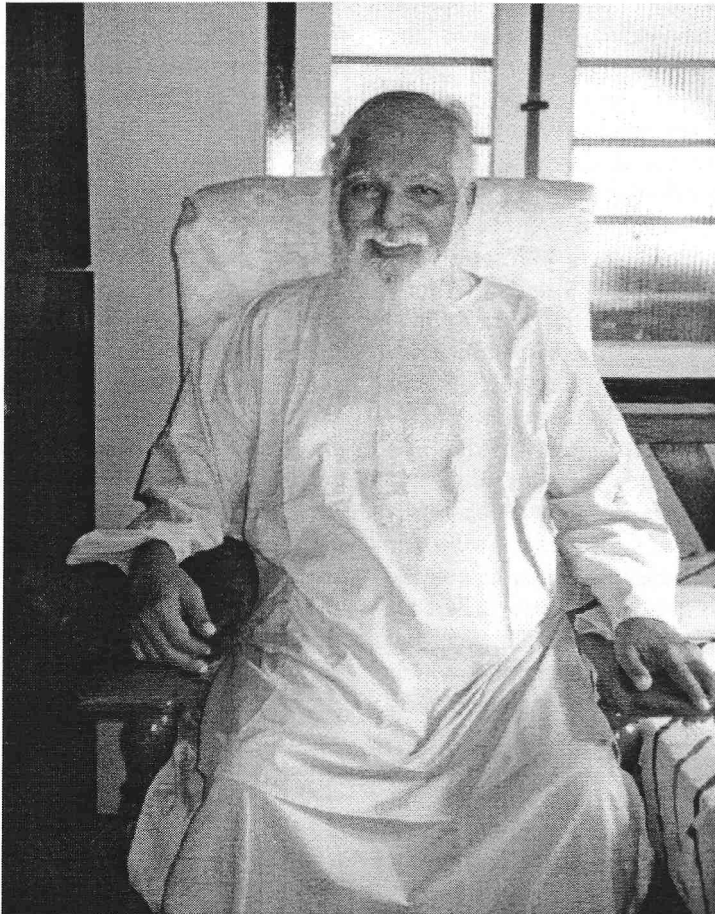
Aside from Buddhist ideas, India's greatest contribution to eschatology is the relation between death and time. The God of Death is called *Kāla*. *Kāla* means time. Time kills. Yet Indian time does not actually kill, it only suspends. It only punctuates life with a comma or a semi-colon,

bur never with a full stop. Another name for *Kāla*, the God of Death, is *Yama*. *Yama* means a pause. So death is seen as a pause that is given to us from the way in which we are functioning now. And this pause (*Yama*) is also given to us every night. We are tasting death night after night. Whenever there is a pause from any activity, *Yama* is with us. One should not be afraid of *Yama*, because he is our constant companion. Even when we talk, there are pauses. Thus *Yama* is our most wonderful friend, caring for us and seeing that we have sufficient rest. Otherwise entropy would have burned us up long ago. *Yama* is the negentropy that keeps the world from degenerating into total chaos.

The best book on death is the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. In this brilliant story a young child is polarized with death. On one side we have a representative of the eternal becoming, the flux of life, this beautiful

young boy who looks at all the possibilities. Suddenly he thinks that this whole phenomenal game is very uninteresting. Instead he contemplates transcendence. So life and death are on one side, and the possibility of transcendence is on the other. The science of transcendence (*mokṣa vidyā*) is given in the *Upaniṣad*. *Mokṣa* means liberation from the duality of life and death. It is not that you won't physically die. Rather it becomes immaterial whether you physically die or not. The fear of death and the pain of death can be done away with. When you attain this, then even when you are alive, it is as if you are already dead.

What a living person wants to do with physical life, physical energy, physical systems and faculties, etc. – all these are considered of no use to one who has transcended. And yet one is willing to use them just like children play. Life becomes



a *līlā*, a divine sport. There one is sharing the grand *līlā* of whoever created this world. The mentality of whoever created this world is that of a child who builds up castles and then mashes them and then again rebuilds them. One who transcends life and death also becomes like a child. This is what Jesus must have meant when he said, "Unless you become like a child, you won't enter the kingdom of God."

Even this very idea liberates you. When I was a student in the Alwaye Christian College, my logic professor came one day and said, "I have a great secret. Will you come and have lunch with me today?" I went and had lunch with him, after which he looked all around to make sure no one was around. Then he said, "The most wonderful thing in this world is what the Hindus say about this world being *līlā*, a sport."

Transcendence means accepting that everything is part of a game we play. When once you know it, the transcendence is not only helping you to get over life and death, but all relationships with all people. At once you solve all problems. Somebody appears to be immoral. Who cares? Whether you are moral or immoral, it's a game. The game is going on. You are no longer vexed. The pain is here, and some of my best friends cannot get out of feeling badly that "So and so is doing some underhanded dealing." But if you are liberated and you have accepted that this is a sport, then you simply say, 'AUM.'

When I say that it's a game, I don't mean in the sense that games are played in America. In America even games are very serious. I mean the kind of game one plays with a small child. Sometimes I have played cards with a child who had her own rules and I had my own rules. She said, "Put your card." I put it. She said, "You lost it," and she took it away. She said "Put again." and I did. She said "You got it." I don't know how I got it, but I gathered in the cards and she said "I won." Such an attitude in life is possible only if you have passed death. My playmate does not know of death and life. She has an in-

nocence which transcends both. Only after you are introduced into all the stupid wisdom of this world, then you have to again pass through the other side and come through wisdom into the other game and become like a child again. To come into a second childhood in this world is very difficult.

I think that the sweetest and most wonderful thing in this world is to become fully familiar with death. It is always with us. We should come to terms with it and also know the secret of transcending it. We do not transcend it by being afraid of it, but by knowing it is a joke. Death comes to people as a joke. I am very cross with the Christians who have drawn so many fearsome caricatures of death with so many skulls, etc. Only after you cast away the skull are you dead. How can you be a skull afterwards? There is no skull in death at all. This caricature of death as a skull with the eyes gone and teeth showing is misleading. Death has no teeth. I have seen death, and it has no teeth. It is very beautiful. You could just as well say it is jasmine fragrance.

We should revise the idea of death to the point where it is natural to refer to the beautiful fragrance of death, the beautiful song of death, the spiritual voice of death. When you spiritualize it; then the morbid gross thing is gone, and the essence spreads out. Death is not an event here. It is the vast area into which we slowly dissipate, merge and become one with that. The very idea gives you a sense of liberation. What is most rewarding and helpful is this 'vasting' of you, this melting of you. You become like an invisible light, the light of all lights.

Life comes like the rising sun
from the unknown.
It has all the shades of
the twelve hours of the day.

Death does not come,
Only we merge into it.
It is miniature-return home
to the nearest garden of the
eternal garden of the soul. ❖

Autobiography of An Absolutist

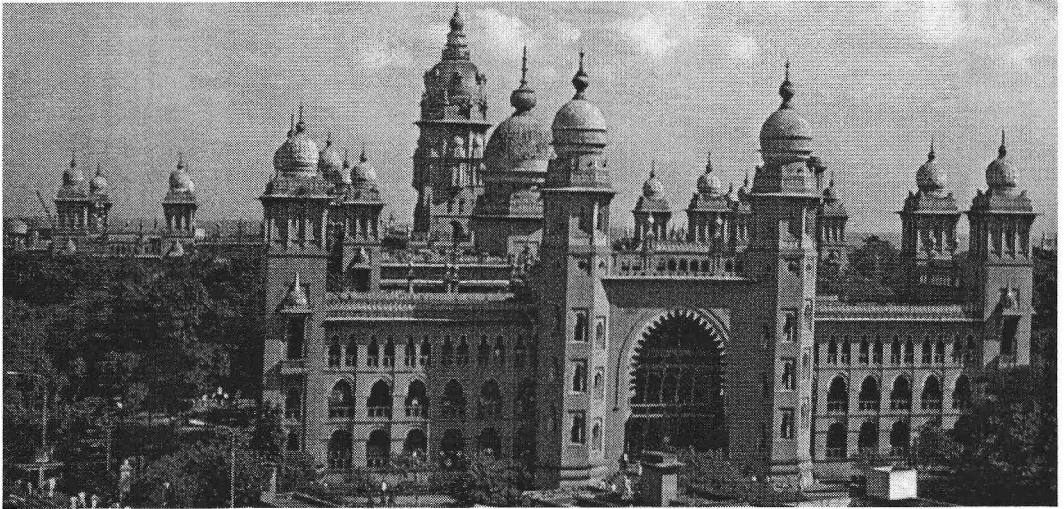
Nataraja Guru

CHAPTER FIVE Academic Life in Colonial Style

Macauley knew Madras when he had to visit India in connection with the famous dispatch by which English was to be adopted as the medium for public instruction for the 'natives' under British rule. Colonialism in Madras was at its zenith at that time. Indians however became aware of what it implied stage by stage. In the days when I was a student in the Presidency College, Madras, the cry for home rule' by Indians was beginning to be heard in nooks and corners of the country.

Tar roads were scarce and underground drainage was unknown except in European quarters, though trams ran in the city creaking over the rails from the Beach through Round Thana to Luz Church or Triplicane. Electric light was there in some parts but only mechanically made and not from hydroelectric projects. Duplex was still remembered in Pondicherry as were Clive or Munro in Madras. The 'Black Town' was just being re-named 'George Town' to efface the stigma that attached itself to the former name. Interpreters, contractors and commission agents mixed with clever 'native' lawyers and a new era with new classes was just coming to be. English professors came all the way from the mother country to fulfill the whiteman's heavy burden of civilizing the rest of the world. The black-man's world consisted of coolies and rickshaw pullers with half-naked fishermen with their catamarans on the palm beaches. Men and even women often substituted the bullocks in carts of sand drawn by surprisingly able-bodied humans nourished only by sunlight and salt, and sup-

plemented by rice in water with onions and green chilies on which whole families nourished themselves, year in and year out. Modern dietetics was thus challenged. Macauley mentions the Marina of Madras even then famous as a heat relieving lung for the town dwellers during the sun-set hours. Madras was the seat of the Governor and one of the oldest universities of India was established there. The half-naked population were slaves useful for pulling the *punkahs* (fans) but there were plenty of liveried servants too, dressed like Nabobs, who hung round the offices and bungalows of the white servants of the Queen or of Edward or George the Emperors, helped by *dubashes* (interpreters), contractors, clerks and lawyers. Old Madras was a well known state of mind just as Brooklyn or Manhattan is to New Yorkers at present. Drab actualities and the intimate personality of the slum-filled city blended into an interesting confection with the lazy cries of street vendors, the willful crows and the other birds like the curlews or gulls with strange cries that strayed occasionally into the terraces from their natural habitat in the Coromandel Sea. The air of Old Madras had some life-giving elements in spite of its humidity and sultry summers which lay heavily on an ill-clad, half-starved, seething population. Madras still held out chances for the intelligent 'native' youth to shine and have the most alluring attraction of a career as a paid Government servant as seen from his own world of abundance from where even a little opulence had a magnified interest for him. Job-hunting was the strongest spur to the adventurous spirit of Indian youth in those days and to pass examinations in English



and to hold degrees was the dear dream of every parent who sent his son to school. Matters are much the same even now, with the difference that the bottle-neck is narrower and the jam and rush more close knit. All this involved the transition from the economy of abundance to that of opulence where cash-value left the use-value of things far behind. The agonies of the transition from the one to the other were not over at the time I became a student in an Old Madras that still retained the colonial flavor lingering on after its days in India were beginning to be numbered.

At the Presidency College, Madras

Beyond the surf-washed, sandy beach and the broad marine drive which was used illegally by fishermen to mend their nets or spin their twine, as the tarred road-surface made for mirage effects to dupe the lazy minded, the noble edifice of the Presidency College raised its pyramidal spire above the expansive vista of the sea front. It was a red brick-and-sandstone building, a replica of similar public buildings in London, with perhaps the cloak-rooms omitted and only otherwise very slightly modified. In the way that this first of educational institutions of the Presidency of Madras functioned too, there was not much of a difference between the original model in England which the institution copied, except for the fact that the lesser members of the staff were turbaned

and dark-skinned men instead of regular Englishmen. The Indians however, were selected because of their capacity to resemble the English they were meant to substitute as near as possible rather than because of any intrinsic or native genius. This was all the more evident when oriental learning was professed by pundits who had to keep in mind two different models at the same time -- the indigenous one that belonged to the soil itself and another that of some Western orientalist or others who had influenced them as admirable scholars and whose style of speaking and writing, even when the scholarship belonged to a foreign and not necessarily an English context, was the commodity which had high exchange value in academic life under colonial governments of the time. A turbaned professor with high pundit qualifications but who conformed to far-off models of strange cultural growths while trying to preserve his own orthodox love of his own traditions, resulted more often than not in a caricature model rather than a genuine sample, and only rarely did the genius of a scholar combine the best of both and live through without sacrificing the best of both in favor of some insipid stuff that passed for high learning. More often the compromise which succeeded was the one in which the discipleship to the West was more pronounced than any first-hand substance that was basically valid.

When it came to science subjects the atmosphere was much more refreshing. Shakespeare, too was studied under professors who themselves learnt under distinguished scholars of England and could transmit to Indian students something of the enthusiasms which true culture implied. Mark Hunter, Allen, Duncan, Littlehales were some of the familiar names of professors of the Presidency College of my time under whose teaching several generations received their intellectual formation; mostly Madrasees with a majority from Mylapore, which supplied the greatest number of recruits for higher offices under the Government and many astute lawyers. Our rival College in the city was the Christian College which too had to its credit perhaps an equal number of intellectuals who came out of its portals each year, and which had as many professors at least of equal quality but who taught under the aegis of Christianity rather than the Empire. The Bible and the gun with an over-all commercial interest of a brand of a mercantile colonialism, came into touch with an ancient civilization that had gone to seed and become effete on the soil of India itself and a resulting combination produced mostly 'natives' with an English mind and rarely some Englishman with a native mind. The latter phenomenon, when it took place, was derided and successfully driven under by the fully colonial elements both black and white and mixed who dominated the atmosphere. There were thus Indian authorities on English pronunciation who used more Oxford accent than Oxonians themselves, the premium put on them being high in the services, and the inducement to imitate them by young professors or their senior disciples was very compelling. Many freaks thus came into being in the main and secondary institutions all over India who slurred their 'r' or lisped or haw-hawed their phrases or with many 'rathers' and 'gollys' as they spoke, so as to outdo their counterparts in good old England itself. Their legacy has not vanished still in present day India; but much Americanisms coming from the film world have

been added to the stock of ever accumulating dross of jargon journalese on which much modernist pretence tries to erect its imposing but false facades and big fronts. Some still say 'yah' for yes and '-kyou' for thank you. As a result genuine scholarship suffered much and still suffers as many orientalist publications have become mostly unreadable in our days. Publications coming from academic bodies amply bear witness to this. That similar academic bodies existing by their own right in the West secretly laugh at such books that they reviewed or discussed in group studies, is little known here. Outmoded models of punditry die hard. Where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise. Such was the academic context of the Presidency College, Madras, where I was admitted in the year 1915. Shaking oneself free from the stilted ways of such a hybrid education was more important for me than to retain what was learnt.

Science in a Turkish Bath

Besides Shakespeare and English literature and Sanskrit courses for the intermediate classes, the real subjects that I had to study as optionals were physics, chemistry and natural science. One of my sisters took history for optional but the remaining three consisting of two brothers and one sister were in the science group. The last although belonging to the sister institution for women had common science classes with the men by mutual arrangement. The first disadvantage was present in the change in climate due to transfer from a height of three thousand feet to sea level as between Bangalore and Madras. A coat and cap were compulsory at college as according to the words in the educational code that was brought into force 'good manners required a coat and a suitable covering for the head'. The lecturers were to wear pith turbans or plain white ones mostly starched and put on like thick bandages round the head. Most of them wore black long-coats like Christian priests as laid down for Government House receptions with stockings preferably so as not to shock the gentle ladies at

the banquets. Otherwise it was possible when Indians were allowed their own ways that they took off their shoes and sat crossed-legged on sofas of the Western drawing rooms. These details of obligatory dress had the nuisable aspect too of making the climate of Madras unbearable altogether.

I remember how in the Chemistry practical work we had to spend a whole afternoon in laboratories with many bunsen burners in a steam-bath-like room with windows too big ever to be opened, after what obtained in London. Here most of the time we were engaged in weighing salts or dealing with acids, minerals or alkalis in which even the vibrations of the needles of the balances had to be recorded. Half the clever boys finished their work to my surprise one hour at least before me. I found myself lagging far behind and considered myself inferior in intelligence till I discovered that one could cook the data to be recorded if one knew the theoretical answer roughly in advance. My honesty in this matter made me a fool again as the cleverness of the others only wielded their dishonest ways. Falsehood appeared true. The heat of the laboratories depressed me and the thought that I

might really be a dullard added fuel to the state of mind. I remember on many an evening wending my way along the Marina towards Mylapore, unhappy about everything both outer and inner, wet and sticky with perspiration to the skin relieved only by the land breezes that come in the evenings as I walked near the waves.

Fishwives were seen waiting weepingly for their men at sea who had to work. Sometimes in stormy weather when the billows showed each a foamy crest, a lone fisherman was seen near his catamaran laden with his net performing a *pūja* with lighted camphor. At first I thought he was praying because he was afraid of the anger of the gods but a little extra gesture on his part revealed what was uppermost in his mind. While walking round the catamaran with the lighted camphor, he made a special additional waving of the flame round the net meant for a good catch and suggested no fear at all. Greed had the upper hand over fear in his case.

I studied the herbs that grew on the beach such as *Ipomea biloba*, cleome thespesia, the cactus and *vinca roseas* of the marina gardens and watched the butterflies that visited the zinnias and lived a





rich inner life promenading peripatetically in contact with nature.

The waves washed and the sun fell and all the beach passed through twilight into dark as I sat on many an occasion in those days trying to meditate on the seashore. No real meditation would come however as I was still ignorant of its technique and went about it the wrong way. But all was not a loss. The effort that I put in at least made me aware that true meditation was different from what many people pretended to know and teach. Every failure paved the way to some kind of success. One has to be clear about what to meditate about and with what inner instrument to do so before any worthwhile meditation can take place. This division between the Self and the non-Self is just that which has puzzled Western philosophers till the time of Fichte and Indian philosophers till the time of Śankara although known to the *rishis* who wrote or uttered the Upanishads. My aspiring spirit went through this form of subtle agency on many twilight evenings. It was only after many such years that some light seemed to come as it were from the other end of the tunnel.

Science and Understanding

More than the humanities that I studied at College what did me good was the study of science subjects. Once upon a time during the days of Aristotle, Natural Science was called Natural Philosophy. How and why science and philosophy displaced each other is a mystery. Nature Study is more than the mere cataloguing and describing of animals or plants. Running through the scheme of life one has to see the process of one becoming many through growth and division and how the process is kept on through time fitting the immortality of the protozoa and the dignity of man as *Homo sapiens*. Laboratory and field studies, both microscopic and megascopic, with attention to details and data are important but one should not fail to see the forest for the trees. Modern thought prides itself in being analytic rather than synthetic. Over-specialisation and stress on the objective has brought us to the brink of compartmentalization and the philosophical vision which implies an over-all knowledge of the implications of a given situation globally and totally viewed has largely been shut off in modern Western education. Histology and morphology were all interesting in Botany

and Zoology but evolution and the insight one got into the process of creative becoming as distinct from mere static being was that part of the study of nature which gave it the philosophical touch and it was exactly this part which received less attention than static aspects studied objectively *in situ*. The patience with which data were accumulated in minute detail was admirable but although frogs and cockroaches were dissected or sometimes even vivisectioned week after week and year after year for seven or eight long years in my life at college, the genuine weight of true knowledge other than the information these killings yielded was minimal. Even now some like Sir Julian Huxley think that evolution is a fact while it is no more than a hypothesis or at best a theory. Based on it there is even a rival religion coming up in modern times with a doctrine opposed to that of *Genesis* of the *Bible*.

As for physics and chemistry the hardest part of these twin branches of the positive sciences was the calculations involved. 'An elephant rolled down a grass slope and came with an impact of so many units of weight or momentum on a lower level. What was the difference of the levels?' Such were some of the problems in which in order to succeed in solving one had to subtract the actual visible or observable aspect completely and think abstractly of a world without color or poetry. Poetic temperaments were thus unfit for applied though not for higher mathematics and if one belonged to a type that contained the poetic and the mathematical in equal proportion the genius in one tended to be stifled in favor of the other only one at a time. In my own case I happened to be a type in which both prevailed in a weak dosage and both science and humanities offered me equal difficulties. Calculables when too complicated were beyond my reach and observable aspects of science were too easy to really hold my interest. As it happened at the intermediate examination each general scientific question was inevitably followed by a calculation problem carrying more than double the marks. What I gained in the former I lost in the

latter but it so happened that when put together the total was above the average and pushed me over to the next class automatically. Thus mediocrity had its advantages when genius was neither pronounced on one side nor the other. Again I muddled through years of the intermediate and although I fell ill with enteric fever and again once with acute amoebic dysentery, having eaten questionable food from hotels when the family was away and I was left to myself, both of which brought down my weight considerably, I still found myself in the second half of the four year's course an over-sensitive, weak and emaciated young man about to enter manhood and torn between the trials of adolescence and adulthood and the regular sentimental life that all young men in normal spirits are bound to pass through.

The attack of dysentery just before joining College for B.A. was so severe that one day I was in a rickshaw going to the General Hospital for admission. On the way a classmate of mine accosted me, not knowing that I was in a low and poor state of health. I did not have strength to return the attention I received and this evidently upset my friend. The grudge was carried over to college days and continued to strain our relations for the rest of college life. As he would not speak to me at all and I could not make any apologies if he did not listen, one friend at least was thus lost for no fault of commission. On my part I could not mend it and thus it ended.

Phonetics was taught by the eminent professor Marc Hunter and minor poems like Keats' 'Isabella' by a professor from England newly recruited. He invariably came about half an hour late and even on the days when he did make his appearance he took it easy, in right Oxonian fashion, taking a full seven or eight minutes to call the attendance in the afternoon. The minor poems were dismissed without even being read in class and all that he did was to get down from the platform without telling us which verse was being taught. He went to the blackboard, wrote a word with its Greek equivalent in beau-

tiful printed letters, returned and took his seat again mumbling something about Boccaccio in full Oxford accent, punished one or two in the name of strict discipline and went away as the bell rang. Hardly half the regular classes were actually thus taken while on most days, a slip came from his retiring room, with the word 'Indisposed' written in impeccable writing, through the elderly peon of the English Department. As was eagerly expected on most days, after twenty minutes the expected slip came and all dispersed gleefully. If the professor made his appearance at all, we could see that he was all red in the face, due to the heat of Madras to which he might not have been used or, as we guessed, it was due to some unsoft drink that it might have been his practice to imbibe during lunch hour. The high Oxford style of professing English with all the excuses mentioned, left the students free and happy, and we expected that he would not be exacting in the exams. On the contrary they proved more exacting than usual and we came to understand that students were expected to do most of the work themselves. Good in principle as this undoubtedly was, the possibility of it being carried to an extreme was forgotten.

Walking the Corridors

College life had its other miscellaneous though not minor diversions when we walked the corridors or sat under the Powell Statue, our common rendezvous at lunch hour. It was the time for us to get together and make new friends. There were many Malayalam-speaking students from Cochin and Travancore who were fond of moving in groups like their Telugu, Kanarese or Tamil counterparts. Hindu and Muslim were brought together in college life. Linguistic barriers were rubbed off and a nationhood with common values was vaguely dangling before the youth of the generation. Women too passed from one side of the class to the other and bevy of pretty girls from the women's college had to go past the boys many times in the day when changes of class rooms were involved. Unused to

mixed life of this kind there were many annoying situations when there were many secret goings on, mostly invisible and inaudible. A group of giggling girls was a greater threat any time than an equal number of boys under similar circumstances and what most wise young professors did on such an emergency arising in class was to dismiss the class. Unwarranted cat-calls and shrieks from unexpected corners were sometimes heard when a specially good looking girl had to cross the platform in front of the gallery of boy students. In one case in the Central College, Bangalore, a pretty maid had to decide to leave college altogether because there was general excitement when she entered or left the class. In more recent years, it would seem, conditions have eased to such an extent that as in USA it is common now to find Indian students dating and valentining with boy or girl friends as the case may be. In my days all was rigid still and co-education had its problems both to the sexes involved and to the parents at home who were on tenderhooks till the grown-up girl especially, returned home after classes. Many girls were caught between the ire of an angry father on one side and the pathetic implorings of an infatuated young man on the other. Dagger-drawn glances were exchanged in the corridors and once too, a Mussalman student of all people, gallantly dropped his silk handkerchief for a Brahmin girl to pick up, which became a general gossip item trumpeted at least for the next seven days. Some of the more chivalrous boys would lie in wait for their prey just at that point of the Marine where the girls of the Queen Mary's College had to cross the sands to the surf beach, timing their walk exactly to that of their counterparts of the fairer sex. How far the fairer and more innocent looking girls were to be implicated in such affairs, God alone could decide.

As for myself being involved in such activities, I was reputed to be reserved and dignified. After forty years a friend who knew me confirmed this trait in me. I tried to be full of respectability or virtue

but whether I was really so inside is another question which I shall not answer now. My reputation for such had the better of me and I myself trudged behind the ideal that I constantly tried to reach.

Once, as I paced the corridors up and down steadily and in my usual dignified manner, I remember that some kind of emotional disaster befell which remains unforgettable to this day. Under the staircase leading to the entrance to the Chemistry laboratory on the ground floor of the College were waiting a whole group of girl students, silent and together like a shoal of fish. They were hidden from my view as I paced up and down as full as ever of my sense of importance. As I passed a certain point I was all of a sudden face to face with this bevy of pretty girls. I was flabbergasted, but as it would have been wounding to my pride to show any overt sign of my confusion, I resolved, mustering all my reserve strength, not to change anything in my demeanor. I kept up the same slow pace and had a hard time getting past the girls.

On their part the girls seemed equally

affected in the opposing sense emotionally speaking. They burst altogether into laughter. Although again I had committed no overt fault other than to insist willfully on keeping my own dignity, the circumstances were enough to confuse me and to steep me in deep tribulation. The only other occasion in my life in which anything similar had happened to me, was once about five years later, when at Alwaye I went to my favorite evening haunt which was a neglected field off the main road round a corner. I had been there many times before but on a certain day, turning the same corner I found forty wild elephants big and small stabled there. I could not believe my eyes for a minute or two. Emotionally speaking and thinking in terms of vectorial psychological space, the herd of wild elephants (which they happened to be) when set upon without notice could be less upsetting than a bevy of pretty girls more especially at a certain age of the life of a young man, and under certain circumstances. Coming events cast their shadows before.

(Continued in next issue.)



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NOTES from Pages 3-4:

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