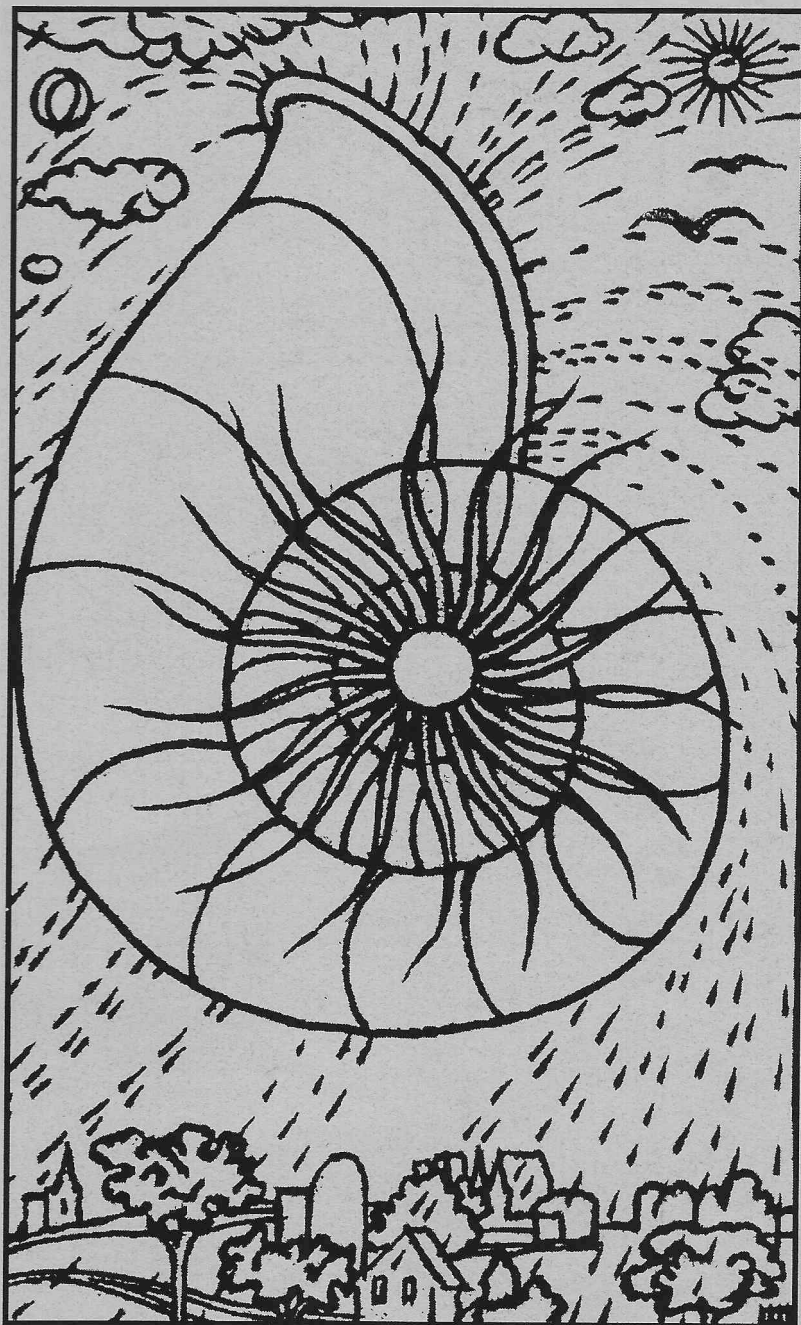
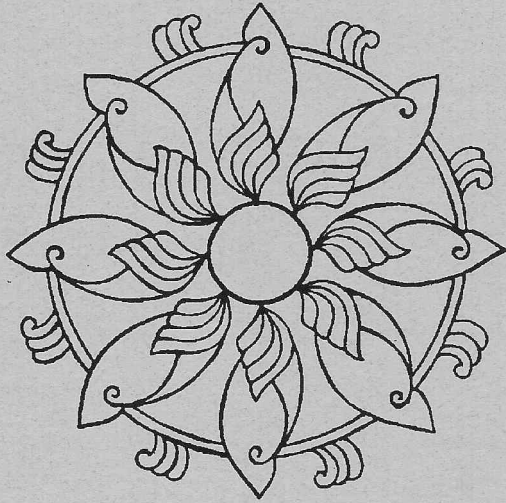


GURUKULAM

VOLUME XVI • 2000

SECOND QUARTER





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Wheels of Fortune

Early one morning when I walked out into the garden, I found a friend sitting near the pond, looking distressed. He said,

My life is so confusing right now, I just needed to come to a serene place for awhile. When I got here, I was drawn to this pond. My life feels so fragmented and full of misfortune. I've lost my job and it makes me wonder if I want to continue doing that kind of work, even though I have done it for 20 years and I'm not sure what else I would do to make a living. My marriage seems to be over and I'm not at all sure why but my wife seems sure that she doesn't want to live with me any longer, so what was my home is no longer there for me. I know I can solve the pragmatic issues of shelter and job, but I am feeling deeper needs opening up like crevasses. I don't want to just cover them over, but they disturb me, and the sound of the water softly gurgling, the green fronds around the pond, and its full round shape are comforting to me in a way I can't really explain.

The circle or sphere is an archetype of wholeness, something we feel deep within, whether we consciously think about it or not. It is the shape of all the planets and of our planetary home. I think round things remind us of the ever-repeating cycles of existence and of our own completeness.

I don't feel complete at all. In fact, I feel broken, shattered into pieces. And I don't know how to put them together. I only know they won't go together the way they used to be.

In every culture the circle has been used as a potent symbol and as a way of teaching to lead those who are fragmented to wholeness.

That is certainly what I need. Can you tell me more?

Well, for example, in Native American culture, medicine wheels are ways of understanding one's rightful place in the world. They include the Four Directions, joining East, West, South and North in one circle. They open our eyes to envision the sun and fiery light in the East as represent-

ing illumination and enlightenment, as well as our spiritual aspect. To the West is the source and substance of the physical being of all, the earth that holds the secrets of roots and seeds until they are ready to sprout. It represents the power of intuition and dream, introspection and regeneration.

Regeneration...I feel like I need to remake myself to be more the person I want to be. But I don't know how. I have always been strong and healthy, but nowadays I can't sleep or eat well and my body is cramped up and full of pain. I have been having amazing dreams though: vivid reflections of my childhood, visions of landscapes that somehow represent my emotional states. They feel like they could be fertile ground for creative expression, but everything feels all jumbled together in an intensity of feeling that makes it very difficult for me to focus.

In a medicine wheel, emotions are placed in the South, along with water, the very sap of life. It also represents trust and innocence. To remake yourself you need to approach the process with openness, with fresh eyes.

But what I have been going through is very painful most of the time. I often feel like just retreating and protecting myself. Other times I am angry and I feel like lashing out. I know that won't help anything but I don't know how to handle all these simmering feelings. At the same time, I have found some people reaching out to me with so much insight and I have been reading some books that make me realize that there is a lot of knowledge that I can put my trust in.

The North of the medicine wheel stands for your mind, knowledge and wisdom. Though you have been suffering pain, it has had the beneficial effect of opening your mind to reach beyond its habitual patterns and find knowledge that has been there but you couldn't see before. It is like the wind, not seen, but acting upon the world. Now that you are searching more deeply, you are seeing more.

That is true, but it feels very hit and miss, like I am stumbling about in the dark, now bumping painfully against unforeseen obstacles, now being illuminated by flashes of inspiration or unexpected consolation.

The teaching of the medicine wheels is that you have to place your seeking, learning self at the center of all the aspects. You are not outside of this reality, but completely integrated with it. Sun, earth, water, wind—they are the elements not only of the world around you but of your own being—the fire of life, the substance of life, the sap of life, the breath of life.

Oh, just for a moment, I could glimpse that and I felt such wholeness, but it was a fleeting sense. How can I come to have that more permanently?

The circle or squared circle, such as in the Four Directions of the medicine wheel, has been used as a guide for contemplation in many spiritual traditions. Like the medicine wheels in Native American cultures, in Jewish mysticism, Christian art, Aboriginal culture, Tantric Buddhism and Hinduism, Sufism, Paganism, and other traditions, circles and their special forms such as mandalas, are drawn, painted, woven, danced and meditated upon. If you think about creative expression you have seen from all around the world, you will realize how often the circle appears.

Drawing and painting. . .yes, I can see how creating circular patterns could have a calming, cohering effect. I think I would like to try painting some.

If you keep the symbolism in mind as you do so, it will help you to experience your own integration. Yantras, cakras, mandalas, and medicine wheels all symbolize the forces or elements of the entire cosmos at the same time they represent the individual. In your own artistic creation you'll want to open yourself to that synthesis.

I can grasp that, at least conceptually, about a drawing or painting, but I have trouble understanding how you could dance a mandala or medicine wheel.

The dancers create circular patterns, conveying integration and wholeness with their motion. Similarly, we need to not

only contemplate our wholeness but also give it expression in our daily activity.

That's a tall order. Sometimes I hear my father's voice speaking when I open my mouth, sometimes my thoughts remind me of my mother; sometimes I feel like I'm acting like I am ten years old, sometimes like I am a hundred; with some of my friends I am like I was in high school, with others I am like a brand new person; the work I have been doing for many years doesn't appeal to me any more, but I don't know how to deal with necessity; I am drawn to several forms of creative expression and excited at times about pursuing them, at other times I am despondent and listless, or shocked by my own anger and meanness. How on earth could I express wholeness in my daily activity?

There are many forces in our lives which influence us to see ourselves as disparate energies and aspects. That gives us a sense of tangled complexity. Consumer culture constantly communicates to us that we are incomplete and that we need to possess many things to be happy. So it is no wonder that you feel so fragmented. That is the perspective from the edge of the turning wheel. But in its essence, at the hub of the wheel, life is simple. For example, in all the experiences you describe, you were breathing. No matter what your emotion or expression, through it all, you were inhaling, exhaling, inhaling, exhaling. In the midst of your activity, you can focus on that again and again. That will remind you of the breath of life, one of the unifying factors of all existence.

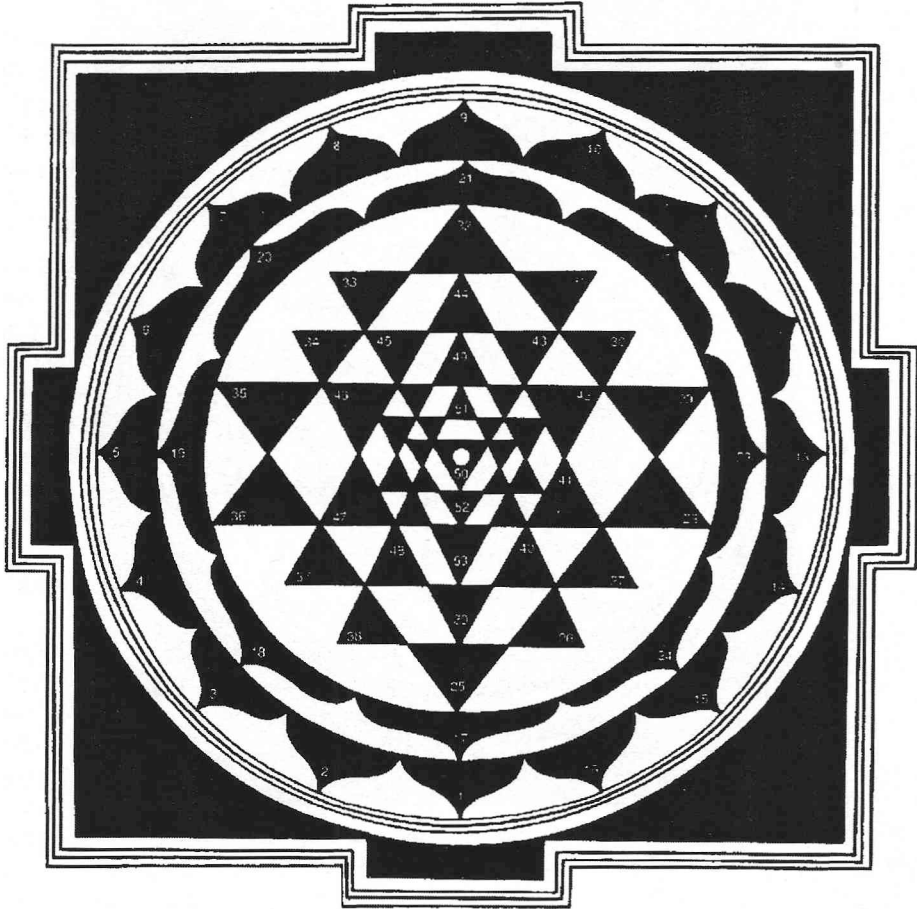
Hmmm. And, whatever I am doing or feeling, it is all on this planet earth, and whoever or whatever I am relating to also shares that home.

Yes, whatever you are experiencing, it is all within the context of East, West, South, North, above and below. It is all with one organism existing at the juncture of time and space. If you keep the kind of vision lent by the medicine wheel or mandala vital within you, your activity will become more and more like a dance of harmony and good fortune.

Nancy Yeilding

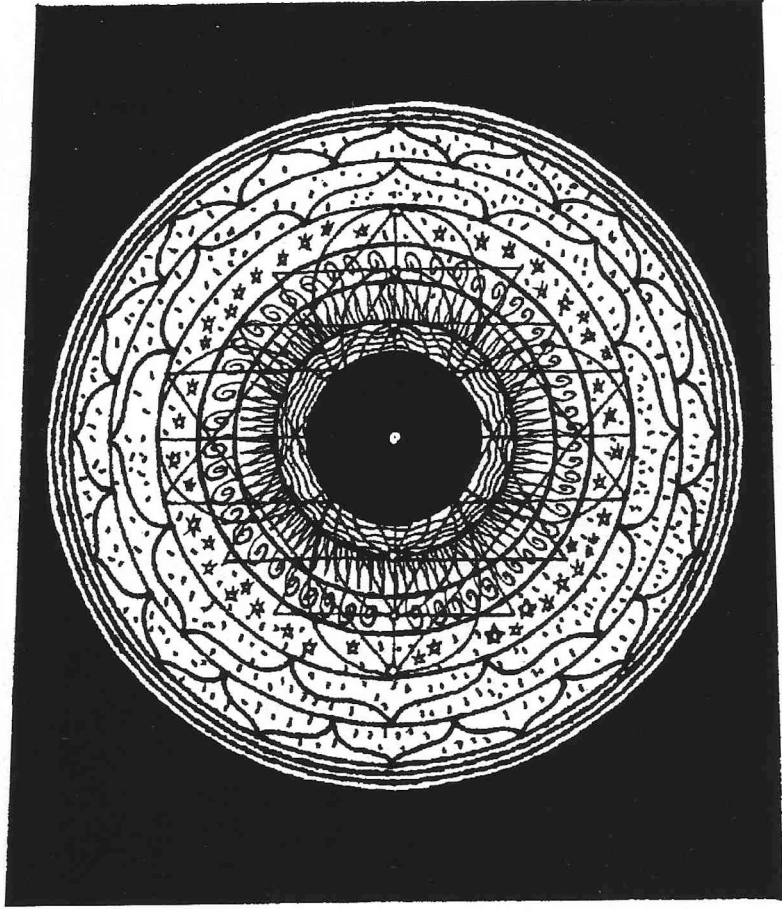
Meditations on Śrī Cakra

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



In 1990, while staying at the Portland and Bainbridge Gurukulas, Guru Nitya gave a series of meditations on Śrīcakra (above), a proto-linguistic depiction of a person functioning within a cosmic system. In this diagram (*yantra*), the four upward-pointing triangles represent the supreme spirit or universal consciousness (*puruṣa*) and the five downward pointing triangles represent nature composed of the five elements (*prakṛti*). They are so interlaced that no aspect of reality can be seen as entirely physical or entirely spiritual. Each of the two rings of petals represents a fully opened lotus flower, indicating that both the microcosm and the macrocosm unfold like the blossoming of a flower.

Śrīcakra is an aid to meditation which is intended to become unnecessary as the mediator comes to recognize his or her functional and essential unity with All. Meditation begins with the petal at the alpha point of the diagram, proceeds clockwise around the outer petals, then around the inner petals. Then, beginning with the triangle placed at the alpha, it proceeds counter-clockwise around the exterior points of the triangles until the final four which are placed on a vertical axis. Each petal and point has a seed mantra associated with it, as well as an aspect of divinity envisioned as the Supreme Mother. Each meditation reflects the transcendent power of beauty to lead us to the oneness of Reality.



tr̥ṃ rasākars̥iṇī

Meditation Eleven

O Mother, you delight in everything and you are the delight of all. From a central point you magically move without moving and cause lines, triangles, and circles. You make all geometrical figures, simple and complex, and your several mandalas make this vast universe. When I praise you with my words I see you as the delightful essence of the four *śivatattovas* and the five *śaktitattovas*.

A child forgets himself or herself in the lap of the mother. The heart of that joy is fearlessness. The lap of the Mother is differently called the Kingdom of God or the *tūṣita* heaven. When we sleep, and even when we are devoid of any consciousness, you do not leave us. As inert pieces of discarded instruments, you keep us alive in so many ways. You keep us busy with transactions in the wakeful, dreams in our sleep, and give us the power to become evanescent to fill your infinitude.

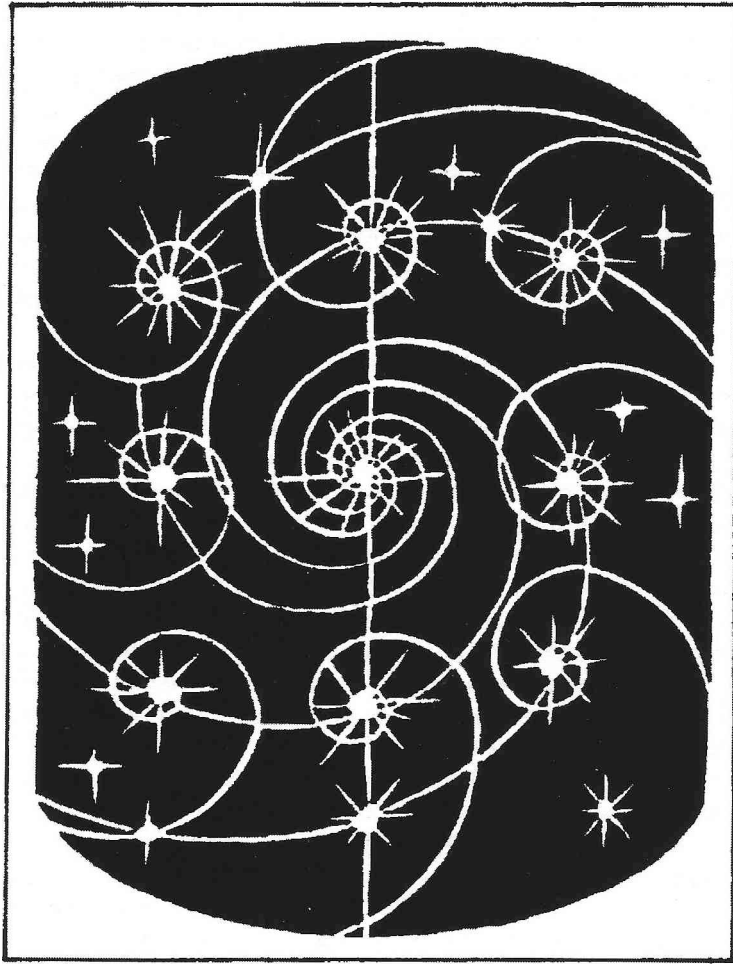
It was in his zest that your lord emptied the cup of poison and became Śrīkaṇṭha. Thus, he has become the only Lord of you and me and the entire world. Although every atom is suggestive of the dance of Śiva, he is also the unmoved Mover, the ever-effulgent radiance of truth, Sadāśiva. He has transferred half of his existential reality into you. Thus you have become our Parameśvarī, supreme controller and protectress.

When in the deep darkness of the indiscernible a stir is produced by the Lord's intention to create, the here and the beyond get separated. Science and nescience come like a spontaneous dichotomy. From the seat of silence articulated words vibrate and come into the open. They can again be called back into silence. Such is your delight. Even when a spoken word is hushed into silence, its meaning will go on flashing until its place is taken by another configuration. Out of the perishable you make the imperishable. Through word symbols I receive the imperishable and treasure it in my memory to pass on to posterity.

After spreading out your godliness, pure wisdom and phenomenal magic, you give all this an existential presence with the quintification of the elements: space (*ākāśa*), air (*vāyu*), fire (*agni*), water (*jala*) and earth (*pṛthivī*). However great is the world you have created, I am invested with such receptors that I can epitomize and hold your entire creation as a thought, a dream or a fantasy. I see the world as the *śrīcakra* which is at once your whole being as well as a cryptic symbol. Because of this interweaving of everything into everything, I see in my sensory pleasures, mental delights and intuitive ecstasies your changing moods and fluctuating realities.

You have no outside or inside. Although many are the attractions, the essential happiness (*rasa*) is your omnipresence. *Ānanda* is the Self (*ātman*). *Ātman*, the Self, is the Absolute (*brahman*). If my Self is always radiant like this, I will never experience any lacuna in my understanding. Spatially and temporally you fill my inside and outside so I am always experiencing the ceaseless pulsation, *trāsam*, of your *rasa*.

trīṃ rasākarṣiṇī



um rūpākarsīṇī

Meditation Twelve

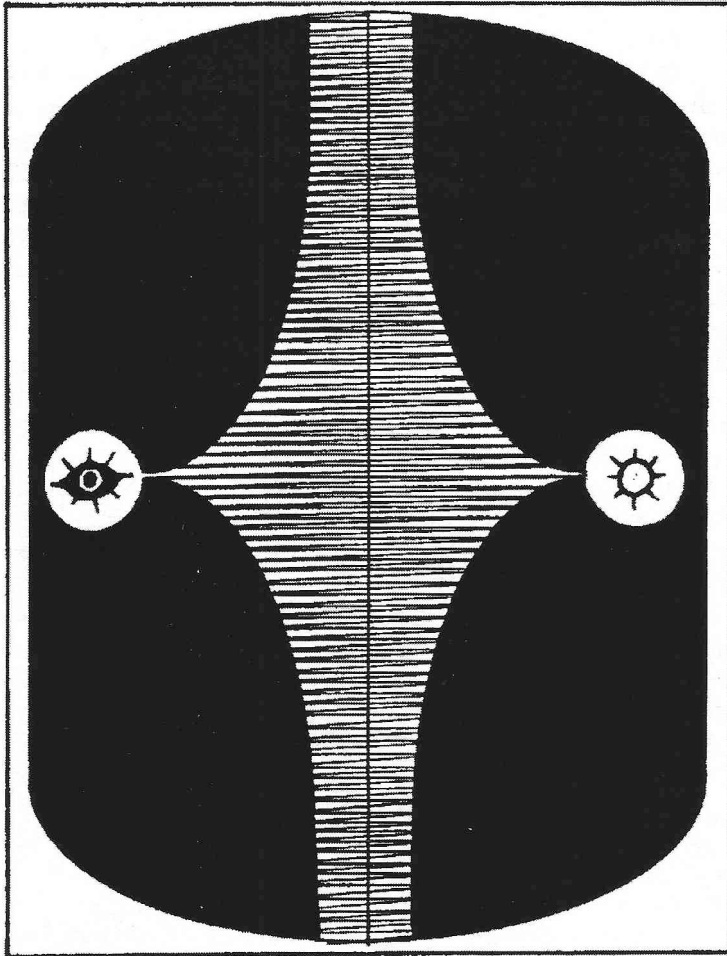
O Mother, the beautifier of the three worlds, countless are the dew drops illuminated by the morning sun. At midday the same sun presents a world which is so different from the world revealed at dawn. The sky is repainted in crimson for the departure of the sun. The moon gives another dimension to the beauty of the world. Even though stars look minute, they are countless and nothing excels the starry heavens.

Thus, many are the themes of your beauty. However varied they are, the beauty in all these presentations is one and the same – it is your joyous smile reflected in so many mirrors. Poets and artists and connoisseurs of beauty are always aspiring to see a glimpse of you but you are ever lost in the ecstasy of contemplating on the incomparable beauty of your Lord Śiva. Human beings and *devas*, shining gods of paradise, think that the best models of beauty are the dancing girls of Indra. They, in turn, are desirous of stealing one glance of your Lord, but they know it is impossible to see him without propitiating you.

When the creator Brahmā conceives a specially decorated dawn or the rich feast of a vernal forest, he meditates on you to draw inspiration for his creation. He considers your varying tastes in presenting beauty when he spills crimson in the floating clouds, fills a lotus pond with red and white lotuses or makes the jasmine flower so pure and simple with four white petals. Even when his creation transfigures according to the changing moods of the triple modalities of nature, you cannot be totally erased from behind your concealing veils.

Many a beautiful world consisting of innumerable galactic systems is swallowed by cosmic dissolutions. Never getting tired of your creative urge, again you usher in another phenomenal world more beautiful than before. The craft of creation intrigues the mind of even small beings like a beaver building a dam, a bird constructing a nest or a bee making a honeycomb. The places of worship which human beings have built all around the globe show how many are the dreams to which you have exposed the architects and the artisans of the world who give shape to its temples, cathedrals and masjids.

um rūpākarsinī



um sparśākarṣiṇī

Meditation Thirteen

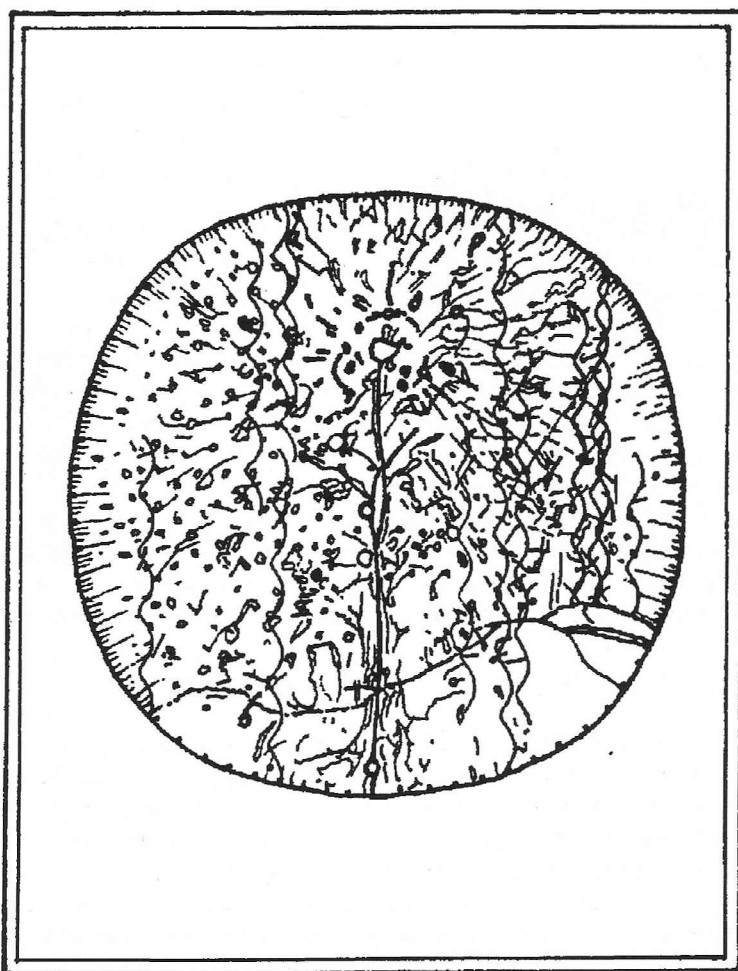
O Mother, the bestower of life, in the vast region of your vibrating voice, there is no distinction between the psychic space and the cosmic space. Your transcendental light descends as the energy of immanence and animates all beings in the phenomenal world. When the respirator of the body inspires and expires, the body becomes energetic to do all its functions. In the same manner you are respiring for the entire world. In fact, you are not a person out there. You are in our arteries and veins. You are reconnoitering our state of mind and body by passing through every nerve cell and capillary.

When fire burns and becomes a conflagration, the flame coming from polished wood and thorny bush is the same. It is bright and it is hot. That is all that matters. Although your grace is equally shared by all, those rare wise men who have attained a permanent foothold in the stable ground of your unflickering flame of wisdom can represent you to others. It is as if such a person can fetch your life-giving light to those in the dark.

When a child sucks its mother's breast it does not see the milk that goes into its mouth. It recognizes its nourishment only by its sweetness. No one has to teach it how to concentrate on the milk it is sucking. It is with such a secret relationship that we enjoy your grace. It is not poured out into a chalice, rather it wells up in the cup.

The whole body is wrapped in one skin, the organ of touch. It becomes specialized in the eye as the lens, in the ear as the tympanum, in the tongue as taste buds, in the nose as olfactory nodules. The same fills the skull as the brain and branches off as sinuses. Like the lightening that suddenly appears and pierces through the dark ranges of clouds, you flicker and bring our inner illumination. There is no difference between a spark of fire and the sun that illuminates the whole world. Both are fire. You are the all-embracing Mother. Because of the infinite variegations of your manifestation, I often forget that you are the sapidity of water and the fragrance of the earth. May I realize that every touch is a tickling coming from the Absolute, *brahmasparśa*.

um sparśākarṣiṇī



em śabdākarṣiṇī

Meditation Fourteen

O Mother, streaming word of wisdom and joyous melody, out of the amorphous you generate vivid designs and explicit meaning. You have given me a language which has silence for its medium. It spells out my happiness and sorrow when it gets into communion with my sensory system. You have also given me a language of symbols which is readily understood as my most powerful word of communication. You have given me the language of the metaphor. Just as I can speak out with a brush or a pen, I can impress my thoughts in so many concealed ways. The proto-language you have given us has enriched our culture by enshrining symbols in our cathedrals and temples. Of the cosmic phenomena, we do not speak. Instead, we merge their presence in our joyous spirit. As the seers of the world we complement the scene with all the attributes we desire to see in it. Every language has within its affective

marks your moving power. Thus, nothing lives for one second without representing one or another message that you are passing on to us.

When the stir of a desire percolates into our psychic body from the transcendent source, you envelop it in such silence that it is not detected even when that sperm of energy is undergoing changes to become a future image. You do not take us into your confidence. You wrap each idea in the garment of vocabulary. Only when the breath carries the creations of our hearts into the larynx do they creep into the vocal system as actual sounds that can be pronounced. Even before we speak, you have decided what we should say, in which language. You use your own chosen words to string a sentence; its correct syntax and forceful logistics are all decided by you.

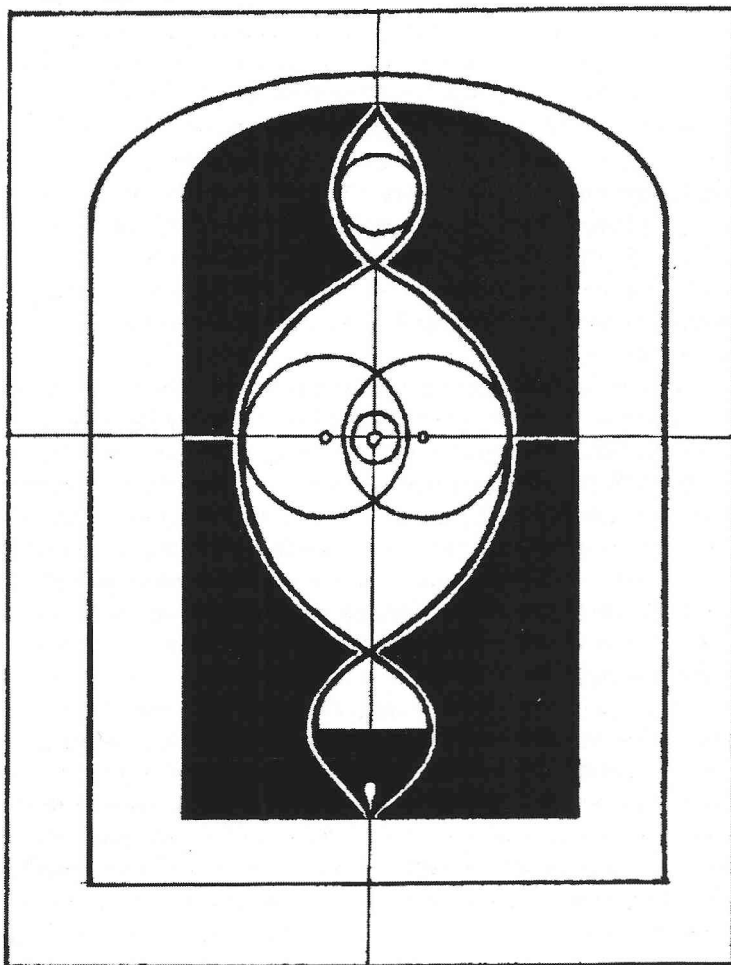
It is easy to see how you nourish us with the sweet milk of your breasts, but no one sees how you animate our organisms by infusing your breath into every self and by filling every labyrinth of our brain cells with such rich imagery that, as your instruments, we can bring forth imperishable poetry and perennial art. I do not know what I am surrounded by. You have a gentle way to relate me with my neighbors, the trees of my garden, the passing shadows of the road. Strongly attracting people with many demands around me, you put a gentle word in my mind to whisper to the blossoming flower, to turn my eyes to far-off stars to recognize their friendly twinkle.

You know how tired I am. You gently rub my eyelids and put me to sleep. While I sleep, you are busy transforming the food I eat into the energy required to replenish the deficiencies of my body. You pour out your grace to me as Mūkāmbika. From the first entry of the sperm in my mother's ovum, you have been sitting right beside me watching over my growth. You made sure that when I came out of my mother's womb I would have strong arms with which I could work. All through my lifetime you have made sure that I have strong legs to move around on the surface of this globe. You are a perfectionist. When I came to the prime of youth, by your grace I became a paragon of beauty. Using your energy hidden in my navel, you make me radiant. By sitting in the core of my psyche, you program the unfoldment of my personality. You make me sufficiently aggressive and fill me with unsatiated ambition. Nothing is too mean or worthless for me to desire. You always prompt me to go from one actualization to another.

How many varieties of rhythmic beat you are producing in my innate instruments of percussion! In my heart you are the diastole and the systole; you are both my ascending and descending breath. Even in the wink of my eyes, the pace is meticulously rhythmic. You alternate my interests to resonate with the objective and to flow with the subjective. My changing moods are like the elaboration of life's choreography.

You have divided my life into years, months, weeks, days, hours, and seconds. Each second is to be filled with a jubilation of the soul, a festivity of my mind's delight. Such is the rich life you have given me here on earth. No human mother can anywhere approximate the love and affection with which you care for my passing moments. Perhaps you are keeping a separate identity for you and me, so you can fondle me and I can cling to you with loving devotion.

em śabdākarṣiṇī



aim ahaṁkāraḥkarṣiṇī

Meditation Fifteen

O Mother, the archetypal female person, when the indiscernible effulgence of eternal Śiva (Sadāśiva) impresses in your mirroring mind, the first ripple of phenomenality emerges from your core as *aham*, the I-consciousness. From there on, the entire universe arises from you as a continuous creation of your beauty sense. Thus, for the entire universe you become the pulsating central locus. As seasons change you reveal to the world your intentionality kept latent in the magic of each season. Your pain-pleasure philosophy of changing seasons is the eternal theme for artists and poets to dwell upon.

You are fond of contrasts. In the spring season you make trees and creepers laden with flowers. When summer comes you make all the flowers wither away, leaving in their places sweet edible fruits and nuts. The autumn is your time to distribute the abundant gifts of bumper

crops. When you see the need of the world, you do not hesitate to bring rain clouds and pour out from the heavens the shower of your grace. Those who know you in the spring and the summer find you most incomprehensible when you strip all the trees in winter and decorate their naked branches and twigs with glittering icicles.

You have a well-programmed schedule of birth, growth, evolution, decay and termination. The time of each being's life is allotted with forethought and insight. To some of your prettiest beings you give at the most a day or just a few hours. You allow your restless human children to indulge in their exploits from sixty to a hundred years. To the more silent and contemplative ones, like the Sequoia, you do not hesitate to give several millennia. O Mother, you do not wait for poets to sing in exultation or for chroniclers to record the growth and development of science. Instead you have a program of revelation beginning with sunrise to instruct your heliotropic children. And, in the gentle fondling of the moon sheen, you give other lessons.

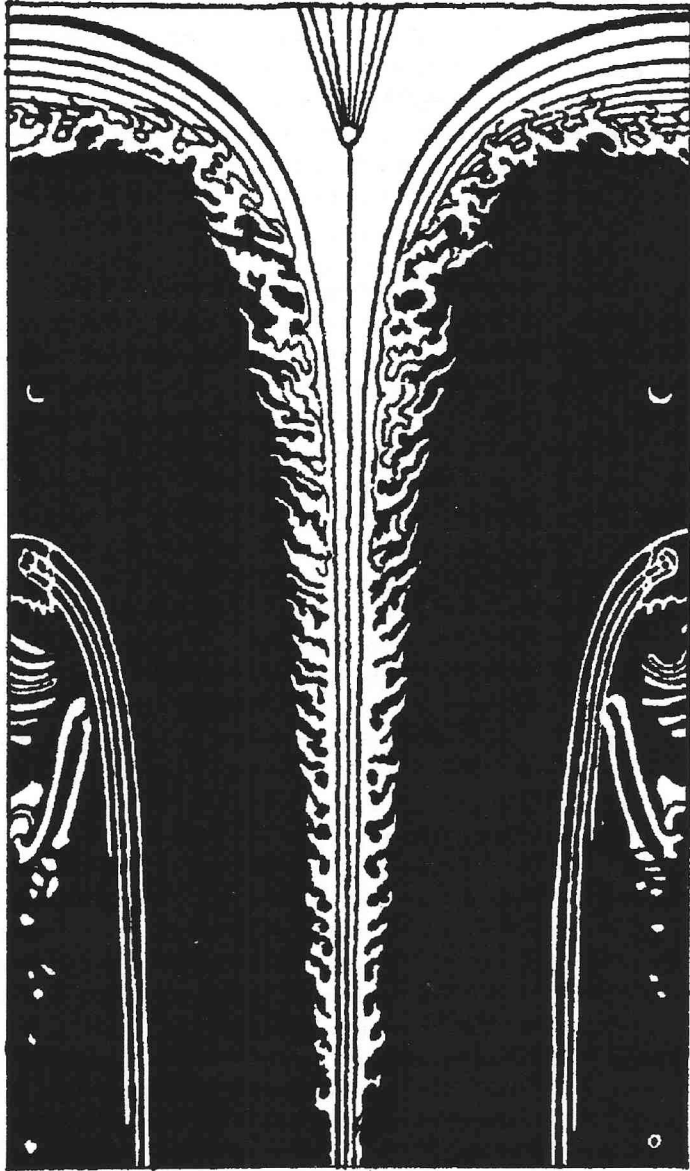
It is well known that you are the beautifier of the three worlds. You bring with you the wine of erotics concealed in your genitals. You surprise the world by issuing out of your secret chambers the sacred images of both Siva and Śakti. Thus the input into erotics is drawn out as a joyous dawn of creation. In your love games you play with your lord with the sportive balls of your breasts. When the game is over you change the same breasts into brimming reservoirs of sweet milk and gain the approbation of the whole world as the Mother Supreme. When you kiss your Lord, it is as if you find his physical frame a wall. You try to penetrate into his very vital breath by expiring your soul into his and in return you inspire yourself with your Lord's vital breath.

When, through a unified synthesis of love, a new person comes from both of you, from your same lips come the sounds of language, the device with which each person conducts his or her life to the very end of the transactions to which they are summoned day after day. Thus, to us you are the perennial wine, the ever-flowing milk, and the sweet honey. Like the honey hidden away in the calyx of the flower, every word born of your speech has in it the honey of perennial wisdom.

The *soma* that is praised in the Vedic *Brāhmaṇās*, the ecstasy of artists, poets, and musicians, which they find themselves unable to share with the scanty means of brush or word or voice – this I receive in full measure directly from you as though you have given me a taste of your beauty-embellishing secret. Thus in every passing moment my ego finds its identity with you. We have mutual attraction.

A river running into desert land will sooner or later disappear in the thirsty sands. Even so, my Mother, I am traversing the desert land of infinite space and vanishing time. Like a dewdrop I will also evaporate and vanish in the blue sky. When my ego identity no longer has any substantiating reality, may I disappear in your thoughts and be reborn again and again as your renewed dreams. From the day of my birth my mother was fondly swinging my cradle, singing lullabies. She was only a device for you to fill me with the luster of your love. If I am to rejoice in my ego, help me to give it the status of a true knower, a doer of the kindest actions and an enjoyer fortunate to share my bounty with all.

aim ahaṁkāraḥ



Ātmopadeśa Śatakam:

One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Verse 12

*toliyumelumpu malam durantamantaḥ-
kalakaḷumēntumahantayonnu kāṅka!
poliyumitanya poliṅṅṅu pūrṅṅamākum
valiyorahanta varā varam tarēṅam.*

See the skin, bone, dirt and inner urges
which end tragically
to which the I-identity is conjoined;
this which perishes is the other;
oh, grant the cherished boon
that the great I-identity increases
to perfection.

We have been describing in the previous verses two juxtaposed aspects. One is the witnessing self. The other is the consciousness that is caught in these bodily functions and various kinds of modifications of the mind. When a person wants to discover his reality, it is likely he will be caught either in his physical identification or in his spiritual identification. Most of us, when the idea of 'I' comes to mind, think of the body and its mental functions. This is a fictitious 'I'; it does not exist. It is only developed as a convenience to hold together the many biologic functions and mental ideations taking place. The growing child has no idea of an 'I' when it first comes to this world. People refer to it as 'you'. Afterwards the child, imitating older people, says "I." Eventually this 'I' identity takes hold in the child.

The body is part of all that is within

the 'I' identity. Outwardly, what we see is skin. Inside, the anatomical structure is made of bones, and is filled with all kinds of dirt, *malam*. In America, you might prefer to call it blood and guts. But however much you try to preserve all this, it will come to a tragic end.

The inner organ in us belongs to this organism. Within it are so many previous conditionings, called *vasanas* or incipient memories. When these come up they provoke the interrogating aspect of consciousness, and awareness bubbles up in the form of questions. Then memories are associated with these questions, and we make certain judgments. This leads to our affective volition, the actualization of many desires. The ego-identity, *ahanta*, carries all this.

The body is covered with skin, and skin is sensitive. It is a sense organ which covers our whole body. From all around us, our sensations are always producing the awareness of our bodily existence. The eyes, ears, nose and tongue are also only modified forms of skin. The skin in the eye is made extra sensitive to light; the skin in the ear is made into a drum which vibrates; the skin in the nose has its olfactory nodules; the skin in the tongue has its taste buds. After all is said and done, it is only skin. Narayana Guru here uses skin to represent the sensory system. It is a very ingenious way of combining the physical entity with the mental. The skin belongs to the mind because it is a sensory

organ, and it is also the most peripheral cover, like an envelope, for holding together the muscles, tissues, nervous system and bones.

The skeletal system gives the body its specific form. When we are alive, we can run and jump and do all kinds of acrobatic feats. It looks like the system is very well structured. The bones are all well arranged and held together in their sockets. But if our very simple breath leaves the body, all these bones will come apart. If we were to go to the burial ground and dig up an old body, there wouldn't be any flesh, any skin on it. None of the organs would be seen, and even within the skull the brain and everything would be gone. It would have all been reduced to clean bones. If we were to try to pick them up, they would all come apart. Anatomists have to tie the bones together with wires to make them stand. In life, what is holding them together? Only this breath. The physiological organism of ours is very perishable.

Between the skin we spoke of and the consciousness of 'I', which in the present case means the ego, many desires arise. According to Freud, the seedbed of our desires is in the rapture of the skin, in the various visceral areas of the body. These are easily tickled. The child gets an erotic pleasure when the inside of its mouth, the skin of the inner part of its lips, is rubbed. When it sucks the mother's nipple, there is an erotic stimulation in the nipple which sends electrical charges through her to produce lactation. She secretes milk into the mouth of the child. When the child is having this rapture of the lips it is having a pure erotic pleasure, and sweet, nourishing milk also comes as a reward. It is encouraged to do more of it.

When the same milk goes to the other end, the child urinates and purges its bowels. It experiences an anal pleasure with each purging. So the child's first pleasures are sucking the mother's milk, urinating and excreting. Then the mother adds to it by touching the cheeks and under the chin. She tickles its sides, hands and legs.

All over the body there are ticklish areas. The pleasures people crave mostly come from tickling. Seeing something beautiful is an erotic pleasure where the sensitivity of the eye is tickled. The ear has harmonic pleasures from the tickling vibrations of voices and music. The nose is tickled by various odors. On the whole, we live for the pleasure of the skin. The urges for these pleasures are deep down, but they are lived at the level of the skin. So, in a sense, the pleasures of life are only skin deep.

We are very fond of touching, but if we get burned or the fingers are scalded, we are afraid to touch anything. If a thorn pricks us in the toe or the sole of the foot, it makes us nervous about touching the ground. Where pleasure is, there pain is also, living very close by. The pursuit of pleasure often brings us pain.

As if physical pain were not enough, religious people have added moral pain through the invention of guilt. In modern man, many of the pleasures of the skin are intimately connected with a moral conscience of great sin, great guilt. In America and some other places, if two men or two women are found sleeping together a lot of fuss is made about it. Instead of being praised as friendship, it is condemned as homosexuality. The whole issue of skin touching skin leads to so much fuss and so much guilt. "God in heaven will be mighty upset if skin touches skin!" whine the pious. Is it really such a big deal? Its just a small affair on a minor planet, someone's skin touching somebody else's, but we have penal codes and moral codes with so many items, labeled a, b and c, on and on endlessly. And lawyers argue in the courts, "Did touch, didn't touch," and show proofs and evidence.

The whole world is a mess. Mostly it is a mess because of the destruction towards which it naturally trends. The rest is due to our own foolishness: the whole affair of the ego is essentially a stupid business. What little of value remains?

Guru here says *itu poliyum*, this will perish. From the skin to all the *kala*, the dynamisms of all the inner urges which

are seeking pleasures, this whole system will come to an end. Meditating on it won't help us much. That wouldn't give us the idea of *svarupasiddhi*, of attaining one's own nature. You won't find the eternal by meditating on the body or the mind or any of the senses or sensory pleasures that disappear after a while.

One should turn to the pure awareness that was present even when one was in the mother's womb as a fertilized ovum, a developing fetus, and as a child who was pushing itself out through a strange kind of interaction between itself and the mother, finally to come to its own liberation. All these things are done by another awareness residing within. It is the same in the mother, the child, the father, and all the living beings all over the universe. It is a common life principle, a homogeneous principle of life, which can remain dormant, come into a form of manifestation, and assert itself in all shades of awareness, yet it is never itself affected. It is immortal; it never dies. It is called the *ātman*.

To meditate on it, the ancient wise ones made a formula, *ayam ātmā brahma*. It means, this *ātmā* is *brahman*; this self-luminous awareness that resides in all beings is the Absolute. That which is other than that which lies between the skin and all the other urges, it never perishes. When we contemplate this, when we meditate on it continuously, there comes the perfection of that awareness.

The highest form of devotion is called *bhakti*. In his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Sankara defines *bhakti* as the continuous contemplation of one's true form. And what is our real form? That is what realization is: the apprehension of our own true beingness.

"That increases and becomes Absolute," *anya poliññu pūrṇamākum*. In this process, we must continue to maintain our primary identity, "I am the body." Otherwise, we are putting together two incompatible things: the ego-identity born of the body and mind, with the suggestion given by the rishi that "you are the Absolute." The meaning then becomes that this embodied ego is the Absolute. This is the

strange position which many religious and even spiritual people unfortunately assume. Then they become megalomaniac, saying "I am Christ," "I am God," "I am an incarnation," "I am Bhagavan," or "I am an avatar." And what is that "I am" there? It is the perishable stuff which we were denouncing just a little while ago.

Sankara calls this filling the dog's skin with sacred milk. In India and Arabia, people make a kind of bucket for carrying water by sewing up the skin of animals--cows, camels or dogs. Arabs use them for drinking purposes, while Indians usually use them only for carrying water at construction sites. They are considered to be very dirty, so if you bring milk in one nobody will drink it. The milk is no longer sacred when you put it in a dog's skin. Like that the ego is a dirty, foul thing. It should not be identified with the Absolute, but by mistaken notions people often do it. This not only obstructs their path to realization, but causes them to swell up with pride, become arrogant and aggressive, and create a lot of nuisances for the world. They become very fanatical, create various kinds of personality cults, and make everyone kowtow before them. It is hard to be sure of the difference between surrender to the Absolute in the guise of a Guru, and servitude to some aggressive fellow. Unknowingly we think we have chosen the right one when we have really chosen the other.



I was reading a friend's journal yesterday. She was struggling with this very problem regarding her teacher. Quite rightly, she asked herself "am I his slave in servitude, or is he an image of the Divine to whom I am surrendering myself?" This is where big trouble comes in. A person may think that this man with a beard is the Guru or God. This pot-bellied, bearded man, or this bald-headed scarecrow who are called Gurus are not Gurus. They are perishable creatures, full of dirt like anyone else. They smell as much as anyone. It is only the light shining through the words of wisdom that is imperishable. Fortunately or unfortunately, sometimes the sound comes through an instrument which otherwise is reeking with all its dirt. This is a great warning against false identification, both for spiritual adepts and their associates.

So Narayana Guru says that if we just look at this body, we can understand how impermanent it is. On the other hand, it is not difficult to see that the Absolute never perishes. But he foresees a great danger in this perishable ego hitching itself to the imperishable Absolute, and then falsely believing that it is the Absolute. "Oh, God! Here I really need your help. Please come and give me the great blessing that I won't become a megalomaniac, that I won't have a false, bloated ego. I am unable to help myself here. You, God, should come and help me." He says *valiyorahanta varā varam tarēṇam*, "O, God, give me this great boon, that I won't become a spiritually egoistic person."

The spiritual ego is very hard to overcome. If ten people bow before you and show reverence, you may be able to retain your sanity, but it will soon leave you when more and more people show an attitude of reverence. It is extremely difficult to maintain a proper attitude.

We have a story in India that some people decided to make fun of a simpleton. He wanted to sell a small goat, so he was carrying it to the market. These people stood at different places along the way, knowing that he would soon be passing. The first man said, "What kind of a

joke is this? Where are you going with that dog?"

The simpleton replied, "Dog? This is a goat."

"Goat, eh? Can't you see its a dog?"

"Dog?" He looked it over and said, "Its not a dog, its my goat." He took the first man for a fool. But when the second man asked him about his dog, he began to suspect something was wrong. He wasn't sure if the problem was with himself or the other people. When he came to the third man who called it a dog, he was all the more troubled. How can you disagree with three people? He thought, "This is probably neither a dog or a goat; it must be a devil. The devil may be showing itself to me as a goat, and showing itself to others as a dog."

When he came to the fourth man, who said "Hey, man! Is that dog for sale?" he thought, "This is really a dog. I am absolutely mad, thinking a dog is a goat. This is a real devil, and I am carrying it around!" He walked a little farther, and when nobody was around he threw it down and ran away. That was just where the fifth man was hiding; he picked up the goat and went to join his friends.

Like that, when the first man comes and says, "Oh, great Guru!" you say "No, man! Don't make fun of me." Then two people come and say "great Guru!" "Eh? Am I? No, I am not." Then ten people come and bow and call you a great Guru. You look at yourself and ask, "Am I a great Guru, or not?" Then a hundred people come, then ten thousand in seven jumbo jets. Now you cannot deny that you are really a great Guru, it's all confirmed. So you have to say, "God, come and save me. This is where you are needed. I won't be able to get over this temptation by myself."

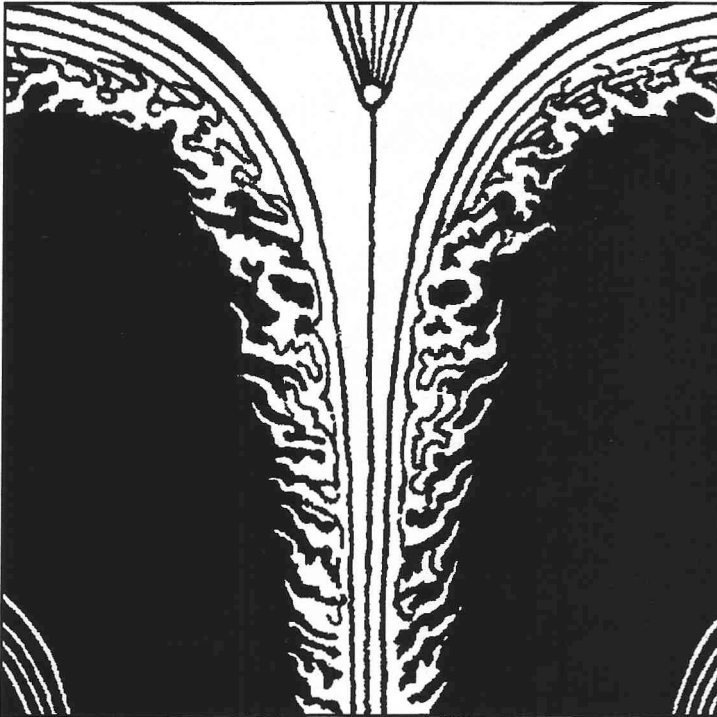
The New Testament begins with the same idea. The very first event is Jesus being taken to the top of the tower and told to jump. "See the whole world. It will be yours!" Jesus said, "Satan, get thee behind." This kind of firm attitude is what is needed. "Satan, get thee behind; you should not tempt your Lord. I am here to

bow before my Lord and not before any worldly temptation." If we substitute the term 'ego' for the devil or Satan, we will never go far wrong in our interpretation of the old scriptures.

This verse asks us to discriminate between the perishing self and the imperishable Self. Identity with the imperishable Self comes by divine grace. It is not by mere intellectual pursuits or internal argumentation that we come to it. It is a di-

vine gift, and it has to come by grace. So here, out of the philosophical scrutiny and analysis, the Guru is bringing us closer to an attitude of piety, of adoration even, of one who is helpless without divine grace. This verse instructs us to resort to prayer, to prayerfully seek divine help in knowing the true nature of things, and not to be misled by the world of phantoms.

(Continued in next issue.)



Discipline and Beauty

The best of all disciplines
is to have no discipline.
Tagore asks, "Whom dost thou worship
in the dark corners of the temple
with the doors all shut?
Leave this chanting and singing
and telling of beads,
for your God is not before thee,
he is where the tiller is tilling the hard ground
and the path-maker is breaking his stones."

If you ask me in all earnestness,
"What next?" I would say,
"Leave aside whatever is not natural to you.
Breathe fresh air and bathe in the sun
and share your laughter with chirping birds
and gurgling streams."
To fantasize is your prerogative,
but I advise you to shake off your dreams
and factualize a million consolations
you can give this world
with your loving care,
words of assurance, gentle looks
and the magic touch of a mother, a sister or a nurse.

Beware, only misery greets
anyone in waiting.
Be like time and tide and do not wait
for anyone, or for anything to happen.
Sing with Walt Whitman,
"I do not seek any fortune, for I am my fortune."
You don't need anything in the three worlds
to make you whole.
Sit in the throne of your heart and say
"Thou art that."
Do not debase yourself
by standing at the door sill
with your hands stretched in want.
Realize you are the mother of beauty
the best ever of all gifts.

It Is Longer Than You Imagine

Spring is here,
song on everyone's lips,
harps, lutes and mandolins
fill the air –
such melodies unheard of before.
Old Khayyam is frantic,
seeing the speed with which
the wheel of time spins.
He empties and refills his cup
as if the world is about
to fall apart.
But the egret stands
poised on one leg,
as if to say,
nothing is going anywhere,
eternity waits in pure duration.

The Fall

Leaves turn yellow;
southern winds spell their peril.
I sit here unconcerned,
now gazing through the window of my past,
then of my future,
while trembling leaves of my immediate present
seem to appeal to me
in their voiceless fear.
"Your turn is over dear ones.
Life is cyclic.
Yield, just yield now to your fate.
I shall sit here and wait for your return
to these very same branches
as tomorrow's fragrant flowers
destined to die the very next day,
but qualified to change into silver stars
that can forever bedeck
the infinite sky of eternity."

Nitya

Values and Life

Selections from *Values Magazine*

Nataraja Guru

Why Values?

Wisdom is the highest of human values. The Absolute, whose mystery it is that Wisdom will unravel, is not a thing, an entity or even a mere reality. Neither by logical reasoning nor mere philosophical speculation, however systematic, methodical or correct, can that be reached. If however, the Absolute is not conceived as a human value it would remain a mere abstraction. It could never quench the eternal thirst for knowledge abiding at the core of human nature.

However, when the notion of the Absolute is filled with a living human content it becomes a matter of absorbing interest above all other interests. These other interests become like small change before the supreme Gold Coin of Absolute Wisdom. It is in this sense that the title of this new magazine should be understood.

The word "values" covers all things that are good, beautiful or true, from the most commonplace to the most sublime. The actual or relational world which is in front of everyone is a feast of varied values. The hunger for values itself has different degrees or kinds. When a clear-sighted man knows what he wants he is able to select unitive values belonging to every department of life in which he lives and moves. A science of norms in absolute or contemplative values guides each man to select and adopt as his own that unitive value which will give him peace or happiness without coming into conflict with the larger happiness of all life. Thus man threads his way through a tangled network of values from which he is called

upon to select at every given moment.

Through values that are still steeped in the domain of drab necessity, the eye of the contemplative is raised through intelligent appreciation of a unitive scale of values to that highest of states of the spirit in which the Self rests on itself and finds the Absolute Value of all in oneself.

September, 1955

Relaxation

The stress of the last world war opened the eye of modern man to the value referred to as relaxation. Office tables had neat little signs asking people to smile. In many cases, as a cure, doctors recommended complete rest. "Stop Worrying" became a slogan for assuring good health and success. When surprised by press cameramen, politicians and statesmen in anxious conversation put on forced smiles, trying in vain to hide their care-worn looks. Almost against his own will the busy man of the modern metropolis has come to recognize the need for cultivating a new attitude if civilization is to be saved.

To smile and relax are matters more easily said than done. One has to have a sense of leisure, to be able to see a joke or to possess a sense of detached humor. In such a seemingly simple way of life a contemplative attitude is implied. In fact one has to reverse the very urge and forward rush of active life. Every activity, especially collective effort, implies a strain or a tension which tends to accumulate a momentum that is difficult to restrain. Con-

scious effort to control such a tendency leads to frustration.

Relaxation and repose come only from the cultivation of an attitude of neutrality. The mind has to lie fallow, empty as it were of all emotions and intentions. One must want nothing, living neutrally in the joy of the eternal present where yesterdays and tomorrows have no more any meaning.

November 1955

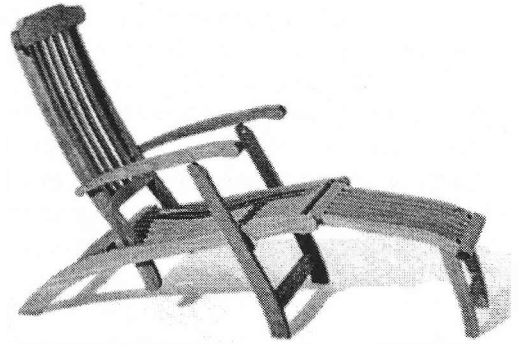
The Philosophy of Necessity

Philosophers are of two kinds – those who work upwards and dialectically ascend from the given, objective, empirical reality to a supreme or pure reality free from all worldly taint; and those who work downwards digging deep into the potent principle of "necessary " or given existence.

The dictum of the scientists as seen emblazoned on the insignia of the Royal Society of Science, London, says, "We believe what we see." Any philosophy, therefore, that stems out of the scientific outlook gains its impetus from the "objective" mode of investigation and has a down-to-earth quality which could be included under the philosophies of necessity.

As against such philosophers of necessity there are large numbers of philosophers who approach reality from a high ivory tower of luxury, as it were. Rare Platonic concepts and hypostatic entities are postulated by such philosophers who miss the common touch. Such an attitude of the privileged is often open to the charge of trying to run away from the facts of life.

While philosophers tend to ascend into the rare world of intelligibles or hypostatic entities, there is at the present time a large and growing volume of philosophizing that puts accent on the existent or the necessary. Rational or ethical religions such as Buddhism and Jainism could also be included among those that follow the objective trend of science. When we find such factors as "suffering" and "hun-



ger" being treated as the central notions in old schools of thought such as the Buddhist or even in such new ideologies that implied in the Marxian movement, it is easy for us to see that the trend which distinguishes the "philosophy of necessity" is neither outmoded nor even new-fangled. Like the Lokayatika or the Samkhya schools in India which date back to Vedic times, the tradition of the philosophy of necessity has been perennial.

Food as a High Value: The Tamil Kural (verse 18) has this characteristic outlook when it states that the gods of heaven would forfeit the offerings made to them if there should be no rain falling on earth. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.4.10) refers to the jealousy of the gods when philosophers become over-wise. The *Bhagavad Gītā* (Chap. 18) preaches the downright philosophy of Absolute Necessity when it asks Arjuna to "do or die."

In the West these two complementary and compensatory movements in thought have been represented by the schools of Plato and his disciple Aristotle. The former may be called the philosopher of contingent ideas and the latter the philosopher of necessary fact.

The philosophy that *Values* represents has been one that follows the middle way of dialectics which neither descends into matter nor ascends into thin air. At the same time it attempts to reconstruct a world philosophy which is not the preserve of the privileged intellectual aristocrat. This middle path is the line which

strings vertically or in the form of a garland all unitive, universal and essential human values in a series touching all possible items of human happiness, joy or bliss, from those "of earth earthy " to those that belong to "the pure worlds above." All these values may be conceived serially or could be brought under one supreme head of human Value called Happiness with a capital "H."

Let us take the case of food as a primary human necessity. Manimehalai, the wisdom heroine of South India (whose story was told in the prior issue of *Values*), while preaching the Wisdom of the enlightened Buddha, is described as follows:

To those suffering from pain of the body,
Being eaten away by hunger,
Manimehalai appeared
with the feeding vessel.

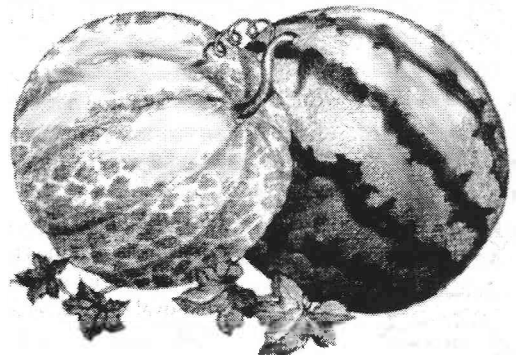
If we should think of a man about to die of starvation, we can easily imagine what a loaf of bread or a bowl of rice would mean to him. His need could attain to the white heat of an Absolute Necessity. The Bread on the one hand and the Absolute Hunger on the other are counterparts in a common human situation or "moment" which could be subjected to a dialectical philosophical treatment. The two factors could be made to equate to each other, canceling themselves out into a central human value which could be indicated as "Food." When viewed in the universal context of human necessity and unitive understood philosophically or contemplatively, the Food would gain the status of an Absolute with a capital "F," which would glorify or spiritualize it as a supreme Value. Such a Value would fill with its content the vacancy implied in the notion of the Absolute understood in any academic philosophy.

Common Need for Happiness: The Vedantins of the Sankara school treat Pure Being (*sat*) as the content of the Absolute. The Buddhist *Vijñāna Vadins* give the same status to active understanding or conscious will (*vijñāna*). Even the Gram-

marian school of Pāṇini which approaches philosophy through semantics (word or *logos*) has the concept of the *Sphota* which gives content to their notion of the Absolute. Those Buddhists who belong to what is called the Middle or Central Way (the *Mādhyamikas*) treat the purer notion of the *Shunya* or *Prajña* as the core of the content of the notion of the Absolute. If all these precious values could be treated as giving content to the notion of the Absolute, it could be legitimately claimed by us without any violation of the canons or norms of philosophical thought that actual values of everyday life within the framework of a true human situation could fill the same vacancy as that of the Absolute with a more living, real and practical content than in the instances given above.

Thus we arrive at an everyday philosophy of necessity in which a ripe fruit would gain as holy or spiritual or Absolutist a status at least as important as a hypostatic entity such as an angel or godhead. The Upaniṣads refer to *Annam* (Food) as *Brahman* (the Absolute) on this same principle.

Ranging from the most ordinary of human values which fall within the domain of necessity we could enumerate unitive human values which go beyond "practical" necessity but continue into "purer" items of necessity that could quench the intellectual or spiritual thirst of man. Knowledge is itself an inevitable necessity that is natural to the human species (*homo sapiens*). Thus the distinction be-



tween "mundane" and "celestial" necessity would be abolished and all necessities would attain an equal unitive status and fill the same vacancy that the Absolute represents. The *Bhagavad Gītā* refers to such a string of pearls representing all values: "All that is here is strung on me as rows of gems on a string" (VII.7).

Taking the whole of humanity, if we could think of one general item of necessity which motivates and regulates each and every action or strife of man it could be stated both philosophically and scientifically to be Happiness. Happiness is a supreme Necessity and constitutes the common goal of all beings, especially all human beings. The goal of the philosophy of necessity leads us to recognize Happiness with a capital "H" as the supreme common unitive and universally necessary Value for humanity. Happiness may even be said to constitute the One Religion of humanity.

August 1956

Contemplation Cannot Be "Practiced"

The word "practice" refers to an overt act which is repeated a number of times until, by habit, a certain perfection is approached. We hear of the practice of "concentration," which is one-pointed attention given to an object of perception. Some people do crystal gazing in the name of this kind of spiritual discipline. Others employ a slightly more respectable term by using the word "meditation." Worshipers are supposed to meditate on their gods either in the abstract or through the help of holy objects before which they sit, kneel, stand or prostrate. Yogis are said to practice silent meditation, and various ways are recommended in the books for attaining to perfection as understood in yoga. In regard to these matters there is a vast volume of popular opinion and, according to the temperament or type of each person, one or other aspect of practice is considered important.

Equation of counterparts: However, what is practiced in the overt sense can never truly apply to contemplation or yoga properly understood. It is the *Bhagavad Gītā* which makes this point strikingly clear in its famous paradoxical verse:

One who sees inaction in action and action in inaction, of all men he is the wise one; he is the harmonized one even while occupied in every sort of work. (IV. 18)

The practice of spirituality in the *Bhagavad Gītā* unmistakably implies a certain neutral or middle way. The yogi is balanced or harmonized between two possible extremes. The word yoga implies the equalization of ambivalent tendencies in the spirit. It is a canceling-out or equipoise arrived at through the equating of contemplative counterparts. These counterparts may refer to factors of inner life alone, or they may comprise the immanent or the transcendental aspects of the Real or the Absolute. The spiritual or philosophical background of each person should alone determine what these counterparts are. Each type of person, each temperament, humor or disposition has these spiritual counterparts which, in order to accomplish the equation which is called yoga, have to be brought together and "yoked."

Each chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā* has its own pair of contemplative counterparts arranged so as to cover every possible type of person or situation. The yoga of Patañjali may be looked upon as an ascent in the scale to the perfection called *kaivalya* (aloneness). Lesser disciplines belonging to the yoga school of spirituality may have strenuous breathing or other practices prescribed for initiates. But it is the *Bhagavad Gītā* which succeeds in revaluing all these varieties of spirituality under the heads of "sacrifice," "gift" or "austerity" and is able to bring all the disciplines under the single aegis of a respectable Science of the Absolute.

Practicing no-practice: When the *Bhagavad Gītā* refers to *abhyāsa* or practice,

as it often does, such practice is not overt or positive. Instead of being asked to meditate or concentrate on something, the yogi is asked on the other hand not to think of anything and to keep his mind void (*vide* VI. 25). Even a man who has left off the practice of yoga a lifetime back is, according to the *Bhagavad Gītā*, capable of catching up with the path of yoga from which he fell, merely by his willingness to affiliate himself passively to the contemplation of the Absolute (*vide* VI. 44).

Sankara himself in the opening verses of the *Viveka-Chuda-Mani* (Crest-Jewel of Discriminative Wisdom) decries the efficacy of even hundreds of breathing or other usual spiritual practices. Knowledge of or meditation on the Absolute can be most effectively initiated only by the effort to know it immediately without any extraneous factors—even in the form of practice—intervening (*vide* verses 13, 55, 56).

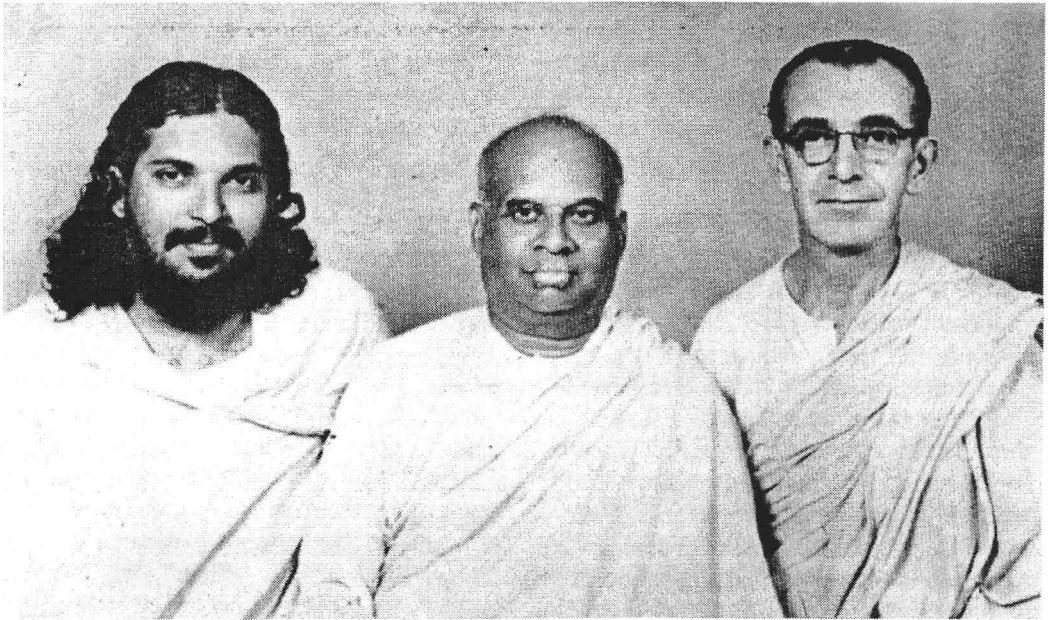
The Absolute, pure and above all duality, has to be approached by a method

which itself is not to be tainted by duality. In the *Ashtavakra Gītā* this neutral contemplative discipline is accepted uniformly throughout as the basis of the discussion of spiritual practice. In fact all practice is discountenanced in this work. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, however, this uncompromisingly pure positive is apparently relaxed so as to suit popular standpoints. But even in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, this neutral *advaitic* (non-dualistic) standpoint is fully maintained by the author Vyāsa, as a close scrutiny of the structure of the *Bhagavad Gītā* fully reveals to the careful student.

Yoga is therefore practiced at its best when it is conceived in terms of a neutrally balanced attitude of non-dual harmony. This neutrality is lodged in that awareness placed between the *Tat* (That) and the *Sat* (Exists) of the *Maha-Vakya* (Great Saying) "Aum Tat Sat."

March 1956

(Continued in next issue.)



Nitya, Nataraja Guru and John Spiers (Editor of *Values*) - 1954

Heartsongs

*You sit, eyes closed Buddha-like in your radiant
SMILE.*

*What nectar do you drink from?
Is it a blend of milk
and HONEY?*

*That nourished smile, softly, sweetly; like a hummingbird
quickly, precisely moving from flower to flower
gathering her essence.*

*Your forehead reflects the light
like the snow crystals reflecting the sun's rays.
Your Smile's sheen glows vibrantly
expressing a joyous, loving heartfelt moment.*

*How is it that your breath glides
with each note of the flute player
And your heartstrings vibrate with each note of the guitar's?*

*The music flows as a stream whose course moves in and out,
around and over the reed bed shoreline to a larger vessel.
On its way each note a new chord
opening another chamber a deeper sense,
an enlightening moment, a quietness.
Then the resounding final note merging;
breath to breath,
uniting HEART and SOUL and SMILE.*

John Sausedo

Nāma-Rūpa:

Inspired by the kind of thinking Nataraja Guru was modeling, I woke up one morning with the idea in mind of superimposing the *Śrī Cakra* on Raphael's *Three Graces*.

On the one hand, it incorporates Renaissance Neo-Platonic Greek mythology (Raphael), and, on the other, Advaita Vedanta (*Sri Cakra*).

They make a *nāma-rūpa* complex, with the *nāma* being Advaita Vedanta and the *rūpa* being Greek mythology. This combination is implicit in Nataraja Guru's articles about Greek mythology.

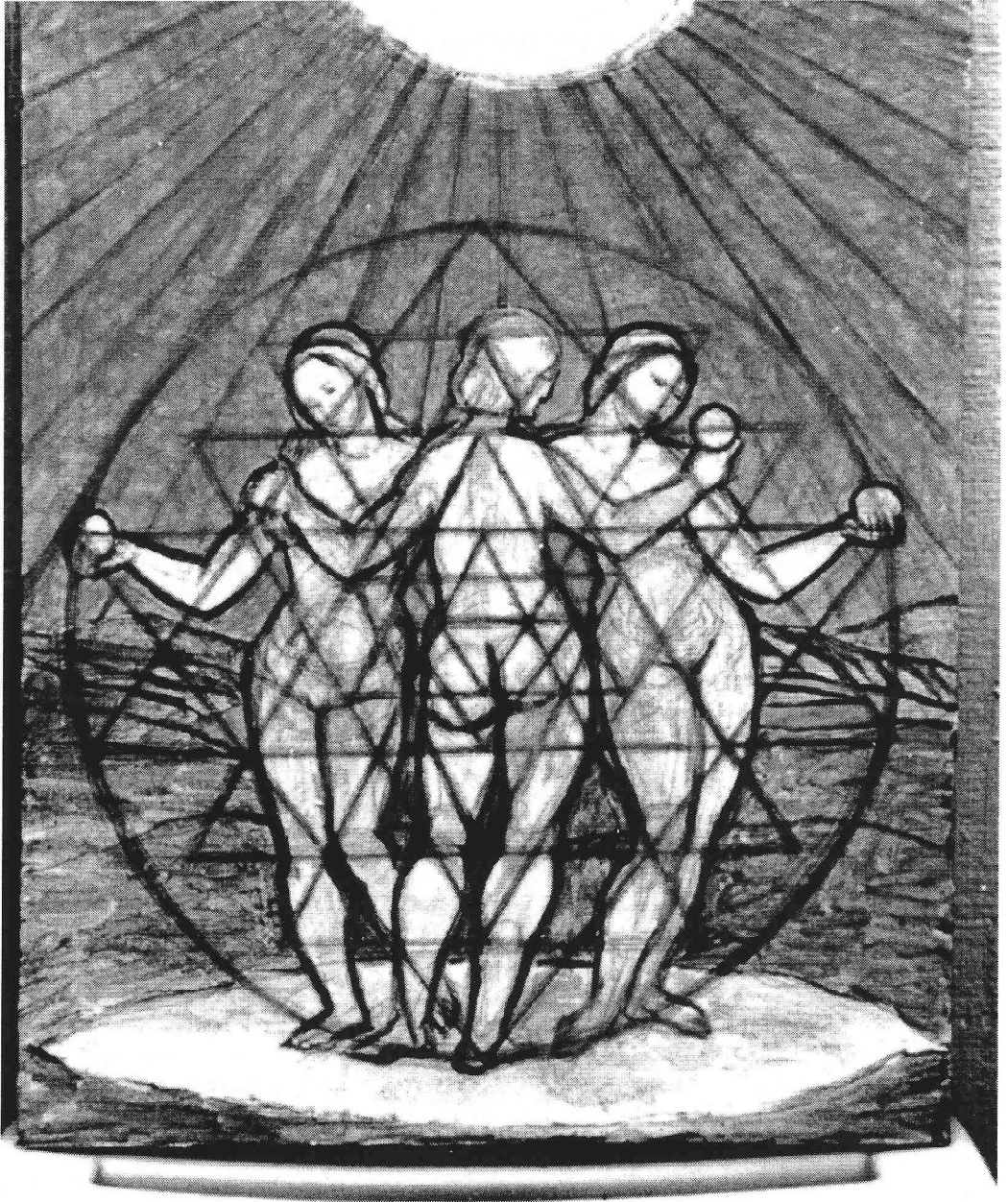
The Three Graces are *Rājarājisvarī* (The Queen of Queens) who, as Mogappa Swami used to sing, is both *Tripurā Sundarī* (The Beautifier of the Three Cities) and *Tripurā Bhairavī* (The Fearful Goddess of the Three Cities).

There is a passage in *The Word of the Guru* where Nataraja Guru discusses *triputi*. He is essentially talking about the quality or character of the number three. Seen from the side of masculine *Logos*, three is *Tripurā Bhairavī*, a sort of shady, tricky number. That is balanced by a more centrist view of *Tripurā Sundarī* which includes feminine *Eros*. Here I am using *Eros* and *Logos* as Carl Jung would use them.

The masculine counterpart of the Three Graces is Apollo, the god of the Sun. On Mount Parnassus, Apollo plays the lyre while the Three Graces or the Nine Muses dance. Nine is the three-fold expansion of three; the Muses are a complication of the Graces. I have added the Sun at the top of the picture rather than an anthropomorphic Apollo. The Sun is *Puruṣa* and the three ladies are *Prakṛti* as *Trigunamaya Śakti*.

Charles Erickson

The Three Graces and the Śri Cakra



An Intelligent Person's Guide to the Hindu Religion

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

ŚIVA

Paśupati or Śiva Guru

The spiritual history of India begins with Śiva. He was not a God in the sense in which he is understood today. To know his real significance one must go back to the unrecorded civilization of pre-Vedic India. But for the Śaivite literature the only historic clues we have today to decipher the ancient civilization of Śiva are small tablets of clay on which figures are inscribed. One of the inscriptions which has become very famous in Indianic study is the seal of Paśupati or Śiva Guru. This seal shows the picture of a man seated with crossed legs. He is depicted apparently with the silence of a contemplative wisdom teacher. In this figure birds of the air, human beings, animals of the forest and fish of the sea are all shown around Śiva Guru as if they were all learning wisdom imparted by his mystic silence. It is for this reason Śiva was primarily recognized as the first Guru.

Dakṣinamūrti

Śri Śankara, the great *Ācārya* or *Jagat* Guru who was born at Kaladi in Kerala, was the first among the eminent philosophers of India who succeeded in re-establishing the status of Śiva as the Supreme Guru of silence by giving a picture of Him in the *Dakṣinamūrti Stotram*, a hymn composed for praising Śiva. In this figure Śiva is shown as a very young man seated under a banyan tree, facing the South, with a beaming face and gesture of wisdom. Before him are seated five old men who are extremely happy that the silence of the young Guru can completely

dispel their age-old ignorance and doubt. Contemplative non-dual wisdom is the heritage of India. The votaries of this civilization were not good warriors. They never amassed wealth. Neither did they indulge in luxuries, because their ideal was Śiva who cared for the *via-negative* or the negative path, known in Sanskrit as *nivṛtti mārga*. The other aspect of Śiva is equally negative, which is familiar as Natarāja.

Natarāja Śiva

In the drawing room of a businessman of New York, in the study of an artist of Paris, in the Museum of London or in the shrines of India, the form of Natarāja—the dancing Śiva—can be commonly seen as a mark of the human appreciation of a high aesthetic and spiritual value which becomes all the more profound for those who have an element of contemplation in their aesthetic sense. The famous temple in South India dedicated to Natarāja is Cidambaram. Cidambaram means the *ākāśa* or the void of *cit* or consciousness. In the vertical scheme of values there can be all degrees of joy ranging from the pleasures of senses to the highest spiritual realization. The highest degree of this joy is represented by Natarāja of Cidambaram. In South India there is an idiomatic expression "from salt to camphor," which means the complete range of values. Common salt, which is the cheapest commodity we get, is all the same an absolute necessity in our everyday life. Without a pinch of salt food cannot be tasty. Life can be quite miserable but for this pinch of salt. But man does not live by bread alone. His emotions and intelligence also have their appetite, for which he requires art and literature. The human yearnings for happi-

ness can never be satisfied with the mere pampering of the senses and intellectual quibbling. So a deep plunge into the bottomless sea of spiritual bliss or an ascendance to the etheric heights of a spiritual climax is necessary. When the camphor is lighted and waved before the deity one's own ego becomes as fluorescent as the camphor, and finally, like the disappearing camphor, the ego also vanishes into the sublimity of spiritual transcendence.

The Symbolism of Natarāja

Natarāja is represented as dancing with one leg raised into the sky and the other firmly rooted on a dwarf, face downwards. He is shown with four hands, of which one shows the gesture of wisdom and another the symbol of grace. In the other two hands which are held raised he keeps a bowl of fire and *damaru*

(a tiny drum). According to Pāṇini, the great Sanskrit grammarian, the alphabets of the Indo-Āryan languages first came into existence as the different sounds emerged from the *damaru* of Śiva when he began his cosmic dance.

It is significant that the voice represented by the drum has the counterpart of wisdom, shown as the blazing fire in the other hand of Śiva. The dwarf on whom Śiva dances is the physical ego of man. Physically the sun around which our earth moves is only one among the multitude of stars belonging to one of the infinite nebular fragments of the great universe. It is but a dwarf when compared to the universe. In its turn the universe itself is a dwarf as compared to the Absolute. But spiritually viewed, this dwarf is the footstool used by the Absolute Itself as the Supreme *Puruṣa*.



Natarāja



Nandi and Śiva-linga

The *Ṛtam* of the Dance

If the silent Dakṣiṇamūrti is representing *Satyam*, the dancing Śiva symbolizes *Ṛtam*. *Satyam* and *Ṛtam* are the counterparts of the Supreme Reality. *Ṛtam* gives harmony and meaning to the expression of life. The dancing molecules of the atom, the floating corpuscles of the blood, the rising clouds from the sky showering in torrents and flowing back to the sea as rivers, the changing cycle of seasons, the fluctuating emotions of the human mind, the frenzied ecstasies of the poet, the dialectical spirals of human history, the unsteady rise and fluctuations of the market are all aspects of the cosmic dance of Śiva which keeps the world moving in an eternal flux of rhyme and rhythm.

Śiva as Śiva-linga

The Śiva-linga was the theme for great controversy among iconographic scholars. For a long time most of the western scholars, prejudiced with the Christian bias of Puritanism, were interpreting the worship of the Śiva-linga as a spurious and degenerated form of worshipping the generative as the phallus. This has been contradicted by many pious Hindu scholars who wanted to be apologetic about their religion.

But in ancient India the healthy-minded ṛṣis were realistic enough not only to accept the sex urge as a vital aspect of human life but they were also capable of treating it with the dignity of a spiritual theme. Those who suspect this can refer to the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, First Adhyāya, Fourth Brāhmaṇa, where the genetics of man and woman are treated as a divine subject, as divine as *brahmavidyā*. The Śiva-linga shows the great harmony of the vertical principle of the spirit (*puruṣa*) and the horizontalization of nature's fecundity represented by the lower part of the Śiva-linga.

Nandi, the Bull

Śiva is depicted as riding on a bull. The bull is the libido of the human psyche which is the fountain-source of all biological, aesthetic, psychological and spiritual pursuits of life. When we see a man of brute force we call him a bull. The bull within us is to be tamed and used as a vehicle for our spiritual pursuits. That is why those who aspire to have spiritual excellence practice sublimation of the libido. The success in this brings us *śiva* or eternal life. The failure makes us *śava* which means a lifeless corpse.

Dedication to Śiva

Those who choose the via-negative of Śiva must burn the desires born of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* into ashes and with a deep sense of desirelessness they should slowly merge into the timeless supreme devoid of qualities that brings *śānti*.

CONCLUSION

We have here given only the main clues to the understanding of the symbols behind Indian religious thought which is like a ladder of values. There are thousands of lovely and intriguing details on

the ascent which the sincere student with the keen eye can discover for himself or herself. Far from being, as it is too superficially assumed, a mere exhibition of superstition, just because of ignorance of the language of stone and symbol, we hope we have shown this very language to be one of the richest devices, one of the best methods for the all-round teaching of wisdom, where everything in terms of imagery sings its contribution like a great choir, in praise of the Absolute which is none other than the secret name for the Eternal Self of all.

AUM



*Dancing Nataraja
Sculpture by Hariharan at Brahavidya Mandir, Varkala, Kerala*

In Preservation of Ourselves

Water drips from foliage, runs in gullies,
floods depressions--the sound a rush of raining echo,
itself drowned out by a cacophony, complex,
textured of thousands and thousands of insects,
calling to the monsoon's watery whirl.

On the roof's eaves a tangle of vine, flower and moss,
protective cover for humans and dogs who wait inside.
Rain has surrounded, isolated each building--we wait,
a cup of tea, a thalli of rice, some quickly-picked bananas.

The startling blue of revealed sky: clouds white,
no longer low-lying and dark. Hurriedly plants are checked,
rivulets re-routed, a stair repaired, the cow tended.





A large turtle is in the pond, hidden
amongst the waterlilies; rescued from neighboring boys,
she waits to be released deep in the jungle, alone.

By the shade house a covey of orchids:
from small, pale blooms barely fingernail size,
to wild tangles of purple, to the hidden,
underground flower no one sees. Or the ferns:
prehistoric, pre-dating any building or path.

Hands sift through the soil, cradling root and sepal,
nurturing what strives to unfold, each bud lovingly
tended against destruction and indifference.

Nestled in a neglected section of dense jungle,
the botanical preserve outlasts the incursions of armies,
malaria's decimation, alone until tea and wood cultivation
made even the losses profitable--
Here, guarding wild remnants, in these rain-soaked hills,
a generosity takes hold, opening our hearts
to the bounty of damp breath, outstretched leaf
and the intertwining of vine and human persistence.

Deborah Buchanan

A Sect is the Mausoleum of the Guru

Scott Teitsworth

We of the Narayana Gurukula are currently confronted with a age-old problem calling for expert finesse and delicate handling. With the death of Guru Nitya last year, it has suddenly become important for us to clarify our relation to him, and to reassess how we treat him when speaking with those who never knew him but are nonetheless interested in the philosophy he so ably expounded. In other words, how do we properly deal with the passing away of our own guru, both internally and in relation to others? This is one of the times in life when what appears to be obvious can be deceptive, and our best intentions can produce unfortunate consequences.

Almost with Nitya's last breath our position was irrevocably changed. And yet it takes time to realize that we need to adapt ourselves to a new situation and make some alterations in our orientation. In some ways it is as if we have been thinking it is sacrilegious to touch anything of what once existed. But this is a misunderstanding, which needs to be dealt with as soon as the grieving period has passed. Those who cling to the memory of one who embodied the guru principle, even with the best intentions, are in fact building a mental crypt to hold the dry bones of a once-living philosophy. Moreover, it is impossible for a group focused on the past, no matter how glorious it might have been, to avoid becoming exactly like a cult or a minor religion. That is why Kabir Das' son and disciple said, "A sect is the mausoleum of the Guru." Jesus said the same thing: "Let the dead bury the dead." So how do we pay due homage to our fond memories of Guru Nitya, while avoiding the pitfalls which have

undone so many before us?

To me, the question hinges on one point in particular. Up to now we have been indulging ourselves in a false notion, because it was pleasant and had no visible negative ramifications, that this friend of ours who recently died was the guru. No matter how often he insisted that the guru was a principle which could occasionally be *expressed* through people and things, but was really independent of them, we smiled and nodded and went on deceiving ourselves. We knew we were in the presence of the guru, and we began to think this man before us was what was meant. Perhaps we even intellectually reminded ourselves that the guru is merely the educational principle of the universe that can manifest in various ways, but deep down in our hearts we began to believe it was this person sitting there.

Now that that person is no longer sitting there, where has the guru gone? Is it buried under the ground as a decaying corpse? Has it entered another person? Has it become just a memory of what it used to be?

The unfortunate truth is that at this point, following the death of the one we respectfully called Guru, many of us have enshrined the memory of that material representation and bow before its memory in our minds. The living guru may be tapping us on the shoulder, so to speak, but we are focused so much on where it once *was* we are not open to where it *is*.

As Narayana Guru has made very clear in *Darsanamālā*, such superimpositions as this, where the immanent is mistaken for the transcendent, can bring us ample confusion. But they are also relatively easy to cure, once we take a good

look at them. The death of one who embodies the principle of the guru is precisely the time for us to strip away our wrong notions and remind ourselves of the truth, that the guru is not any particular person or icon or idea, but a living light which leads us through our lives, teaching and guiding us. It never goes away through the vicissitudes of life, but is with us all through. It is in some way in everything. But if we identify it with some material object, it can turn to dust and leave us.

This not only cuts us off within from the living sap of life, it detracts from the value to others of the person who once embodied it. For us to truly represent the teaching of our own lineage, now is the time for the spark of light within ourselves to be gently fanned into a bright flame. If instead we seek to teach others only how great and wonderful this man we knew was, we will become no better than a cult, and no one will any longer seek the magnificent teachings which we have been privileged to hear from a great teacher.

When a group of disciples shifts their focus from the person who kept the flame of the guru alive within himself to the memory of how wonderful that was, and dedicate themselves to sharing that memory with others, they have become the gravesite of the guru. With the best intentions, and the deepest delusions, they have helped kill off the spirit of whatever was true and valid in their teacher. And this is indeed a tragedy.

How often have we visited temples and shrines dedicated to departed preceptors and holy men? All that remained was a building, perhaps beautiful, perhaps in ruin, and maybe a sense of peacefulness, but nowhere was there anyone who could present the wisdom of the long gone glory days when the temple was built. At some a concessionaire might sell a few tracts, or a historian might sketch a few details, but the temples are really nothing more than statements that "The Guru was once here, but has gone elsewhere."

The art that we now have to practice is to embody the meaning of the teachings we have been given but not to stay stuck

on the forms. Then alone will the Narayana Gurukula avoid the tendency to become a crypt and remain a living center of philosophy. We have the best examples of this already before us. Both Nataraja Guru and Nitya taught Narayana Guru's philosophy, but they also brought it to life within themselves. They gave it their personal stamp. They never thought of the Guru as having departed with his own truth, but as one who opened a door for anyone to walk through, forever. Their role was to share this with their contemporaries in the language of the times. When they spoke of their predecessors it was not with sentimental affection, but to make a point more clear by example. And they were very careful not to appear overly enthusiastic about the Guru with people who might not yet share their feelings.

It is truly hard for those of us who loved Guru Nitya to separate out all we learned from him as a personal experience from what we learned from him as training in universal values. In us they are inextricably mixed together, since his personal charisma affected us so deeply. And there is nothing wrong with gathering occasionally to reminisce about that wonderful, talented fellow we once knew. But those who never knew him will be put off rather than drawn to such reminiscences. They will most likely feel they are on the outside of a cult, and quickly move on. Speaking avidly about the particulars of a person will drive them away, whereas speaking of valuable ideas might pique their interest. It is very important we separate these two distinct elements, the universal and the personal, so that those who ask us, "Who was Narayana Guru? Nataraja Guru? Who was Nitya?" don't get merely a sentimental tale of everyday interactions, but receive a transcendental presentation of the meaning of three of the great teachers of the modern world. It won't do to just say they were great. It must be demonstrated by a living presentation of the excellence of their insights, by teachers who are not merely bowing to the past but alive to the present. ❖

East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



14 May 2000

Fernhill Gurukula

When asked to speak on the occasion of the anniversary of Guru Nitya's *mahāsamādhi*, I gave the following short talk to the friends gathered there.

It is difficult to be here and not be flooded with memories. I'd like to share just one with you all.

Many years ago, when I'd first met Guru, I would have characterized myself as a generally *unhappy* person. One morning as I was listening to Guru give dictation on *In The Stream of Consciousness*, he stopped and looked at me. He said, "Śraddha, you look happy."

I was totally taken aback, and after reflection said, "In your presence, I am."

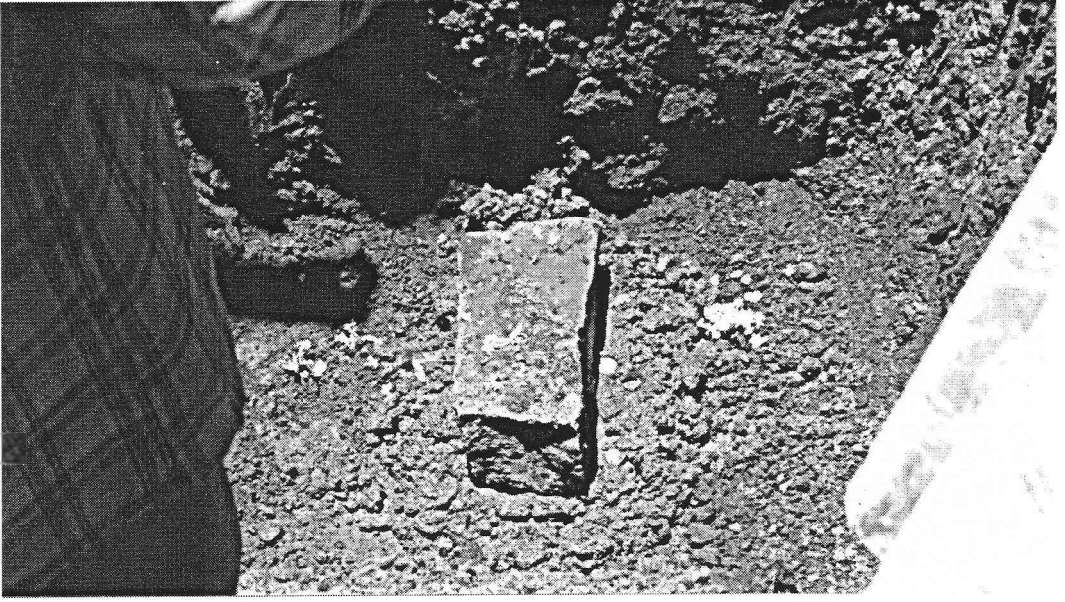
"Then be in that *presence* always!"

That's what I want us to remember today:

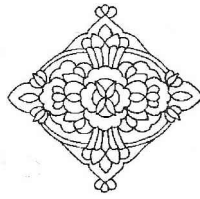
'To be in the *Presence* always and go forward.'

Śraddha Durand





The cornerstone for Guru Nitya's mahāsamādhi mandir.

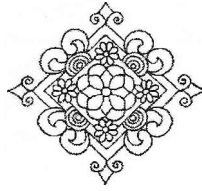


'Lunch is served.'



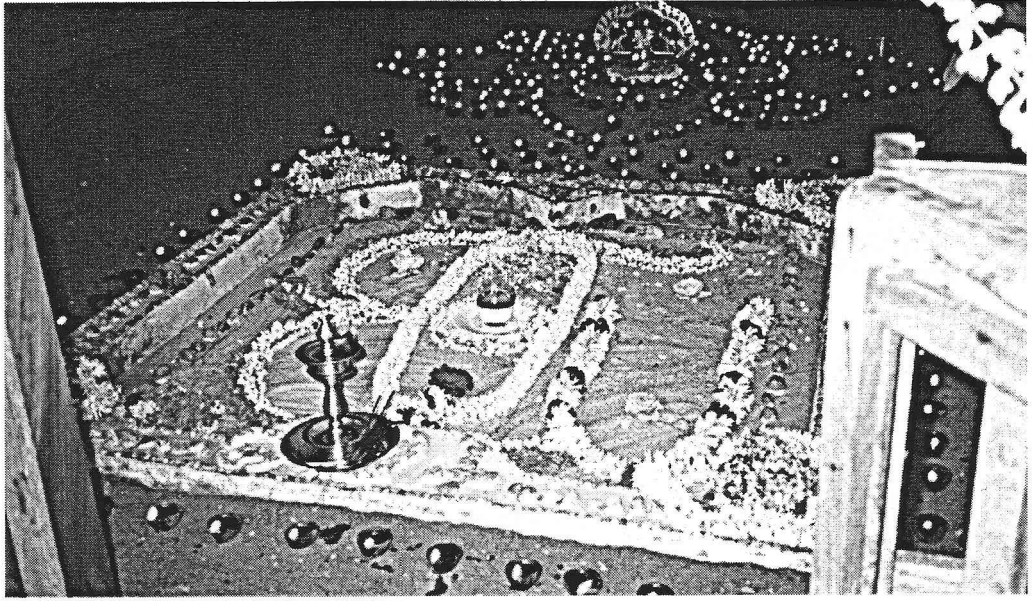


Guru Nitya's samādhi on the edge of the woods he loved.

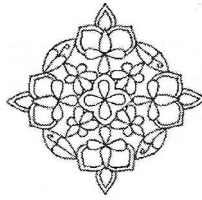


Planting of native trees and shrubs.





Tiny oil lamps were lit at dusk.



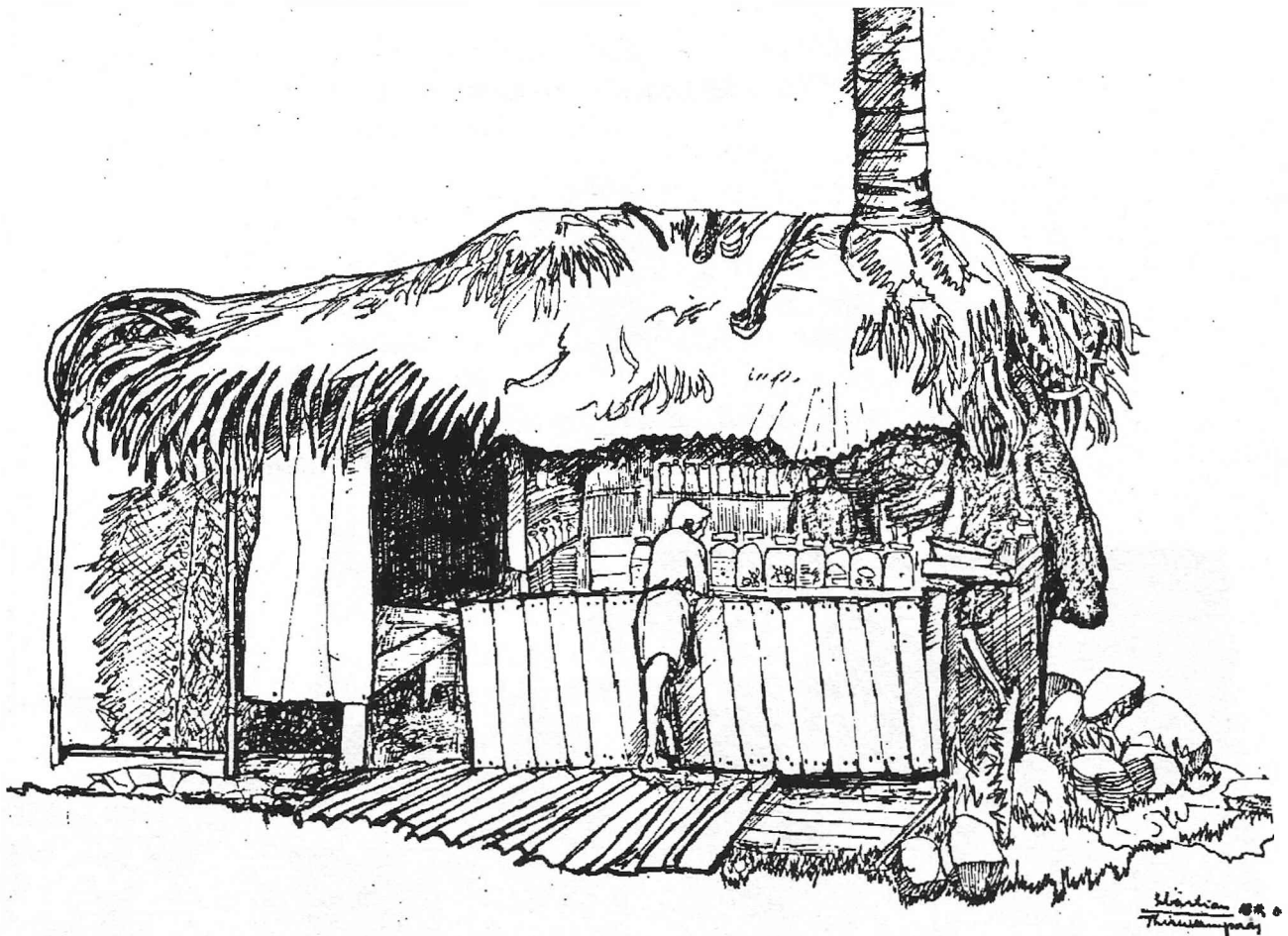
Some of the friends who gathered at Fernhill Gurukula.



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