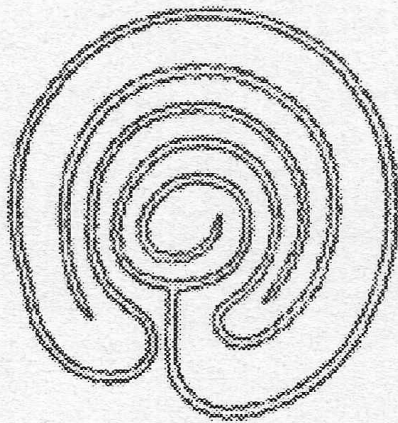


GURUKULAM

VOLUME XVIII • 2002

SECOND QUARTER





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GURUKULAM

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COVER: Cactus Flower, photograph by Nancy Yeilding

Inside Cover: Halelbid Labyrinth, India.

The Language of Labyrinths

As I was working in the clearing we had selected for the labyrinth, a friend came by to lend a hand. As we raked twigs and branches away, she reminded me of the small labyrinth we had discovered deep in the forest. A spiral of three circuits outlined in small stones at the top of a knoll under huge fir trees, it had naturally drawn us to walk its well-tamped path to the center and back out again. We had pondered its origin and meaning and had been prompted to learn more. She asked me what I had been learning about labyrinths around the world.

"I have discovered that drawings, paintings, and engravings of spirals are as ancient as human beings. They have been found on every continent, all dating to roughly 13,000 years ago!"

"That is amazing! It gives me an eerie feeling. I'm picturing small groups of people with no means of being in touch with other far-flung groups all being motivated to carve spirals on the walls of their caves. Why?"

"Humans from that day to this have been sensitive to and used a language of symbols—what Nataraja Guru calls protolanguage—in addition to languages of sounds, alphabets, and words."

"So protolanguage is non-verbal? Is that sort of like McLuhan's 'the medium is the message?'"

"Yes, it is nonverbal, in some ways a deeper form of communication. Shapes found in nature have always resonated similarly in human consciousness around the world. For example, the crescent universally represents birth, change, and transformation; the circle symbolizes wholeness, unity, perfection, the sun, and the origin of life; and the ever-turning

wheel of the spiral signifies origination, opening, and light as well as wandering, death, and dissolution."

"Do you mean that a spiral meant the same thing in prehistoric Europe as it did in prehistoric India, Africa, or Australia?"

"In Neolithic times the spiral and then other representations of labyrinths were drawn and carved on special cave walls and tombs, traced in earth, created out of pebbles and paving stones, and elaborated in caverns. The attention given to the symbol and the settings it appears in confirm the notion that the spiral and other labyrinthine forms were a universal human representation of the mystery of human destiny, the on-going cycle of birth and death, and a symbolic attempt to relate with that mystery.

Over several millennia, the symbols were elaborated with a variety of myths and rituals, all pointing to its connection with the sacred, the profound, initiation, birth, death and renewal, and both the protection and the revelation of secrets."

"If it was so pervasive, why does the recent interest in and appearance of new labyrinths around the world seem so novel?"

"Like many other ancient ways of encountering mystery and understanding reality, the labyrinth was discredited during the Age of Reason by the emphasis on the rational, linear approach to truth, patriarchal suppression of representations of the divine feminine, and the industrial revolution's emphasis on efficiency."

"Oh, yeah, like 'the shortest distance between two points is a straight line'."

"And the pejorative use of the word *labyrinthine*, meaning confusing."

"But that is different now. Even the word *labyrinth* is starting to have a good connotation, like with exploring the internet, sort of like wandering through many possibilities to new, broader learning. And what about chaos theories and fractal geometry—aren't those labyrinth-like?"

"Yes. The current understanding of the universe (filled with spiraling galaxies) much more resembles the labyrinth's dynamic depiction of energy moving in and out than earlier more static representations. Correspondingly, new value is being seen in ancient teachings about energy centers such as *chakras* and *yantras*."

"I have heard about *chakras*, but what is a *yantra*?"

"A *yantra* is a protolinguistic device, a sign or symbol, emanating from ancient Indian spiritual understandings of reality. For example, the Sri Chakra is a *yantra* that symbolizes the Universal Goddess—incorporating male and female, physical and spiritual, energy and intelligence, creation, preservation, and resolution or dissolution. It non-verbally depicts the equilibrium of counterparts, offering a non-dual vision of reality. It is made of interlocking triangles set within two rings of lotus petals. It is a meditative device. Like walking a labyrinth, the meditator proceeds mentally around the petals and triangles from the edge to the center."

"Oh, I've seen that and always thought it was pretty but I had no idea about all those layers of meaning."

"Like the perfect spiral of a Nautilus shell, an exquisite flower blossom, or a light-reflecting crystal, most *yantras* have the capacity to evoke the experience of beauty, an experience in which the observer and the observed meld, at least momentarily, into one 'Ah!'"

"Oh, the moments when that happens are far too seldom!"

"In modern society, the drive for efficiency has pressurized humans to move faster and strive to do many things simultaneously to 'save' time. But this life-style offers few opportunities to tune into the values that give life meaning or to the planet that is being destroyed by our head-long rush to increase production and consumption. Affluence is afflicting those who have it as well as those whose suffering supports it.

We need time to stop and reflect on what we are doing, to get back in touch with the whole cycle we are a part of. That is why labyrinths are being newly created around the world. They provide opportunities for slowing down, for contemplation, for healing."

"When we walk the labyrinth in the forest, it is very calming. I am lifted out of whatever has been bugging me and I feel reconnected to the earth and the cycle of life."

"That makes me think of a quote of Emerson's: 'Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is another dawn risen on the mid-noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens'."

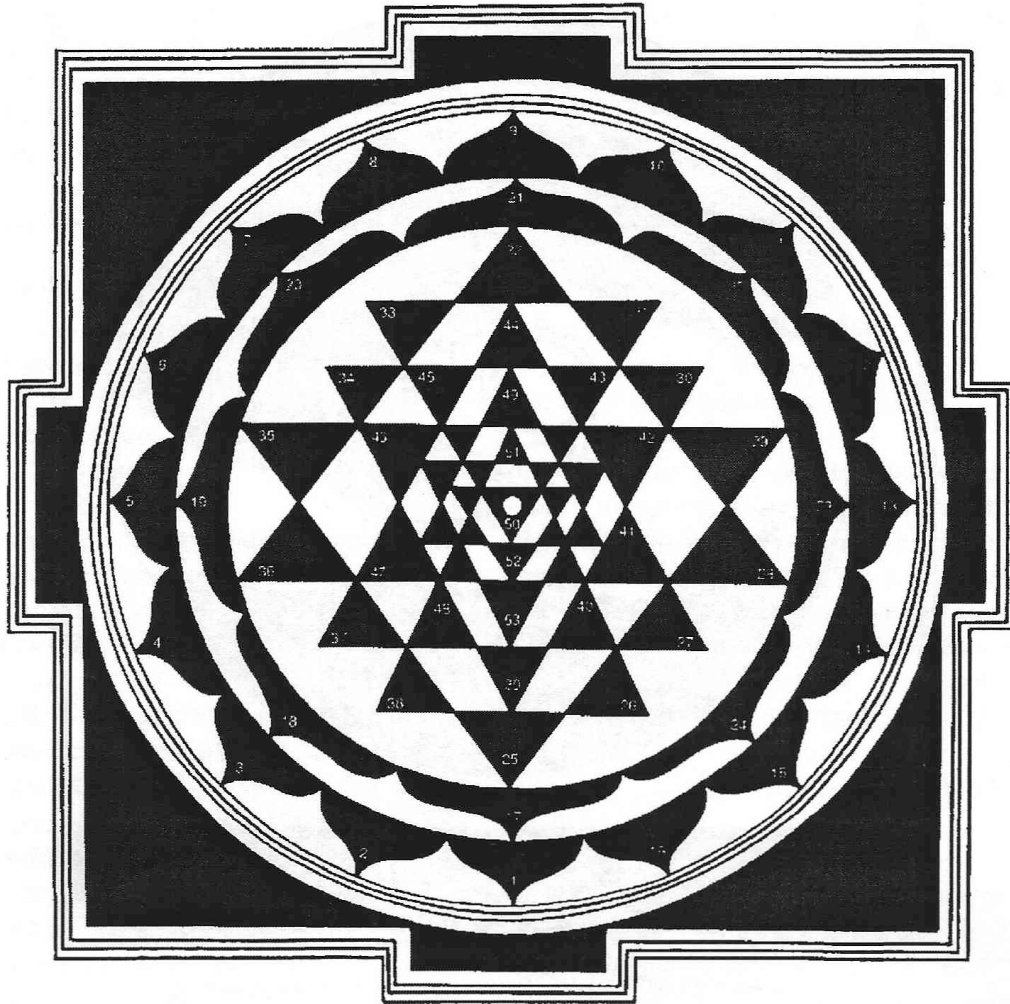
"Walking the labyrinth is like walking around a ripple pattern; it is so fluid, it helps the chatter of my mind settle down. The movement in and out on the same path has a rhythm like that of my heart, or day and night, or the changing seasons."

"And the moment of pause in the center is an opportunity to rest in the circle of wholeness and balance, the neutral place, the source from which everything arises and into which everything dissolves. We can bring that peaceful, embracing perspective with us as we walk the labyrinth of life."

Nancy Yeilding

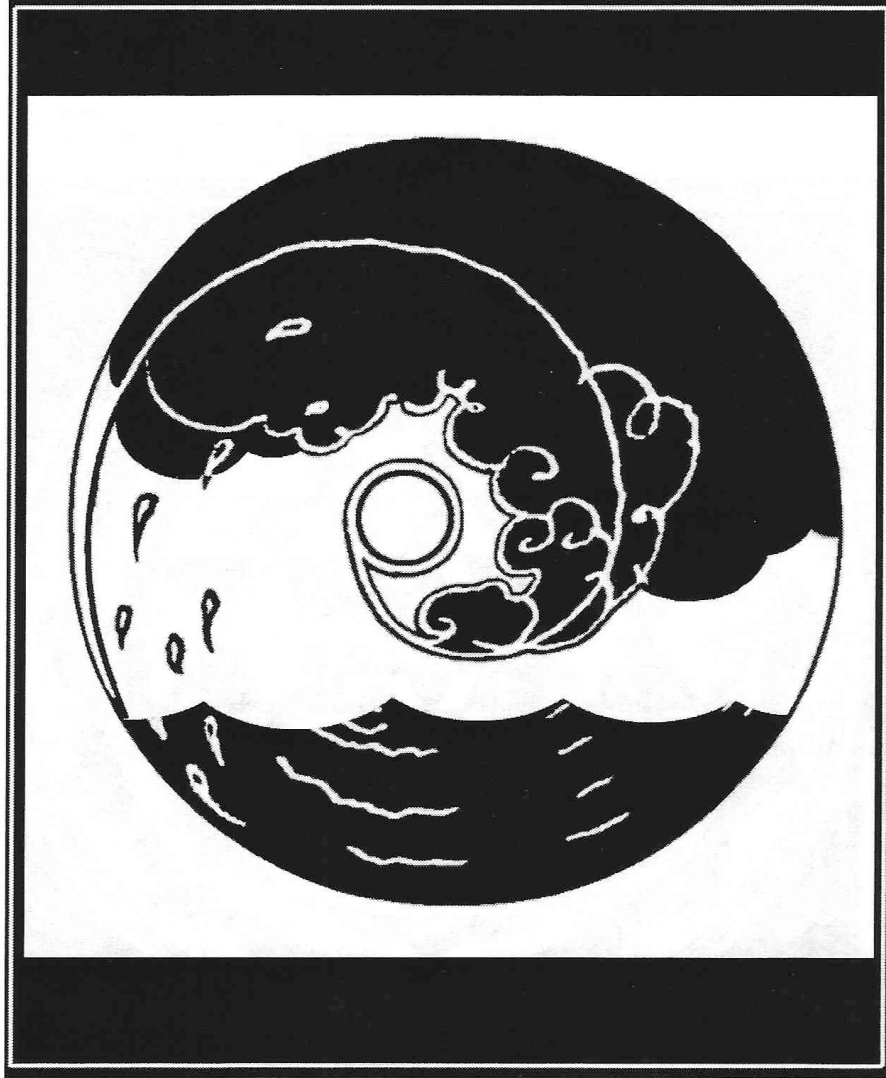
Meditations on Śrī Cakra

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 meditator 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.



ṭṃ sarvasampadpradā

Meditation Forty

O Mother, the supreme initiator into the spirit, when you are conjoined with your Lord, is the ocean lifting itself to the sun or the sun shining upon the ocean? When a tiny drop of water, seeing the bright sun, climbs on the wings of aspiration and rises into the atmosphere as a wisp of vapor, who recognizes this trivial incident which has a cosmic significance? The ascension of one drop initiates the formation of a rain cloud. Hour after hour, day after day, the descending grace of the sun is transforming the ocean into the ascending climb of the cloud. When the sky is overcast with dark clouds, the sun is so completely covered that not a single ray is allowed to thrust its finger through the precipitated darkness to touch the frozen earth. In an hour of darkness one does not suspect the apocalyptic flood of events that are waiting on the other side of the dark cloud.

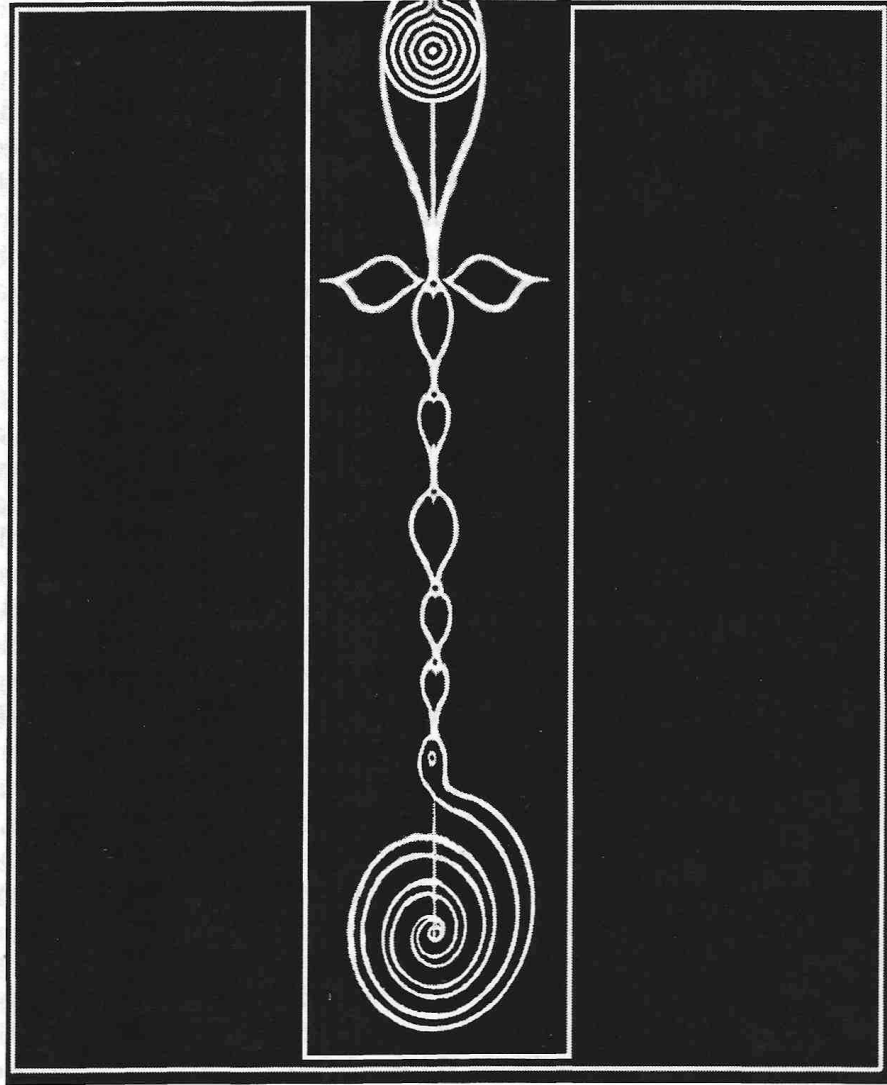
A small flash of light, not more visible than the glow of a firefly. Lo—it is followed by a streak of lightening, tearing the dark cloud into bits and running from edge to edge with the blinding light of a silver hue. It is followed by a thunderclap as if the god of gods, Indra, has hurled his thunderbolt from above. The earth quakes. Heaven breaks into a downpour. It is as if a million Gangās are flowing from Kailāsa all at once. All over the globe, there is a flood that hides all the desert lands and irrigates every garden of the world. The clouds left behind are all silver-crested. The gliding waves are all shining in the bright sun that is now allowed to cascade over the flooding water. It is as if the pearl of perfection in your *maṇipūra* has scattered its rays all over. Both earth and heaven are filled with many a supernova, each one radiating its colorful rays in all directions.

O Mother, when the scorching sun burns up everything on earth, no one guesses that you are gathering the beautifying rain clouds to bring out of the very ashes of your Lord's destruction a fresh surge of life that can once again fill the deep ocean, the earth and the sky with another jubilation of your colorful manifestation. With the union of you and your Lord, nothing more than a throb (*spanda*) was predicted by the poet. Now life is throbbing in abundance. In the sky the stars are twinkling. On earth, flowers by the million are blooming. The bumblebee has to contest with butterflies to find its entry into the petals of fully-bloomed flowers. The birds also join in the festival of spring.

All the brooks, streamlets and rivers have become lively with their gurgling waters joyously flowing towards the ocean. Winds come and fondle the branches of trees. The trees in their turn dance as if taking over the sportive behavior of you, O Mother, and the Lord, combining *lāsya* and *tāṇḍava*. Many think of the Lord only as the dissolver of the world. Now everyone can witness how he distributes himself as the glowing spirit that is planted in the bosom of every living being.

The oyster is a humble creature, crawling in the beds of the ocean. Within it forms the nucleus of a pearl that slowly grows into a marvel. From out of the depths, the world gets its pearl of immaculate beauty. Even so, in the dark crevice of the flesh of human beings is concealed a tiny spark of Śiva that ultimately grows into the perfection of brilliant beauty (*śivajyothi*). When a person attains the power of deliverance, the word of wisdom issues forth from him or her as a pearl of excellence (*cintāmaṇi*). Until then nobody realizes the secret of even the humblest of your manifestations.

In the dry heat of summer, people look in frustration at the blazing sun above and the dry woods which are ready to burst into flame. Then, O Mother, you open the flood-gate of the heavens and once again, all sing your praise. The cool rain is received like your delicious breast milk. Who suspected that in the scorching sun there was the blessedness of a nourishing rain? You are the bringer of fortune. In every step of your dance, a fresh joy, a new blessedness is awaiting us. O Mother of benevolence, please initiate us into your deeper and greater secrets. Supreme Adoration.



ॐ sarvapriyamkarī

Meditation Forty-one

O Gracious Mother, abundant are your riches. You are described as a serpent with three and a half coils lying hidden in the base foundation. We are told that in the vertical parameter that runs from the tip of the spine to the thousand petaled lotus at the crown of the head there are three passages for energy, the *iḍa*, the *piṅgala* and the *susumna*. Below the heart there are the three synergic centers, *mūlādhāra*, *svādhiṣṭhāna* and *maṇipūra*, where all the unconscious functions relate the biological to the psychological. These centers are contemplated upon by yogis. Between the two eyes that see we have the psychic control (*ajñā*) which endlessly generates word power. Streams of thought originate from

there. When we hear the melody of your enticing *mantrā-s* we experience the sweetness of word meaning and those words' magical power. We remember with pride that we were an integral part of you when you had your watchful eyes on our growing forms that lay as fetuses in your womb.

From the most humble forms of life to the highest, you consider it a personality embellishment to be disturbed by erotic fever, when thoughts, words, and emotional upheavals are all brought in line with the hidden urges that mount from the subliminal depths to your contemplative beatitude. You belong to us here on earth as our immanent reality and we see you there in the heavens as a transcendental monomark. From your sleep in the hidden hollow of the base foundation you stir and suddenly rise like a dancing cobra. We become startled, incapable of deciphering whether the Lord standing firm on the demon of our ego is raising his foot to give his frenzied dance of destruction or you, our beloved Mother, are circumambulating him with your graceful gentle dance.

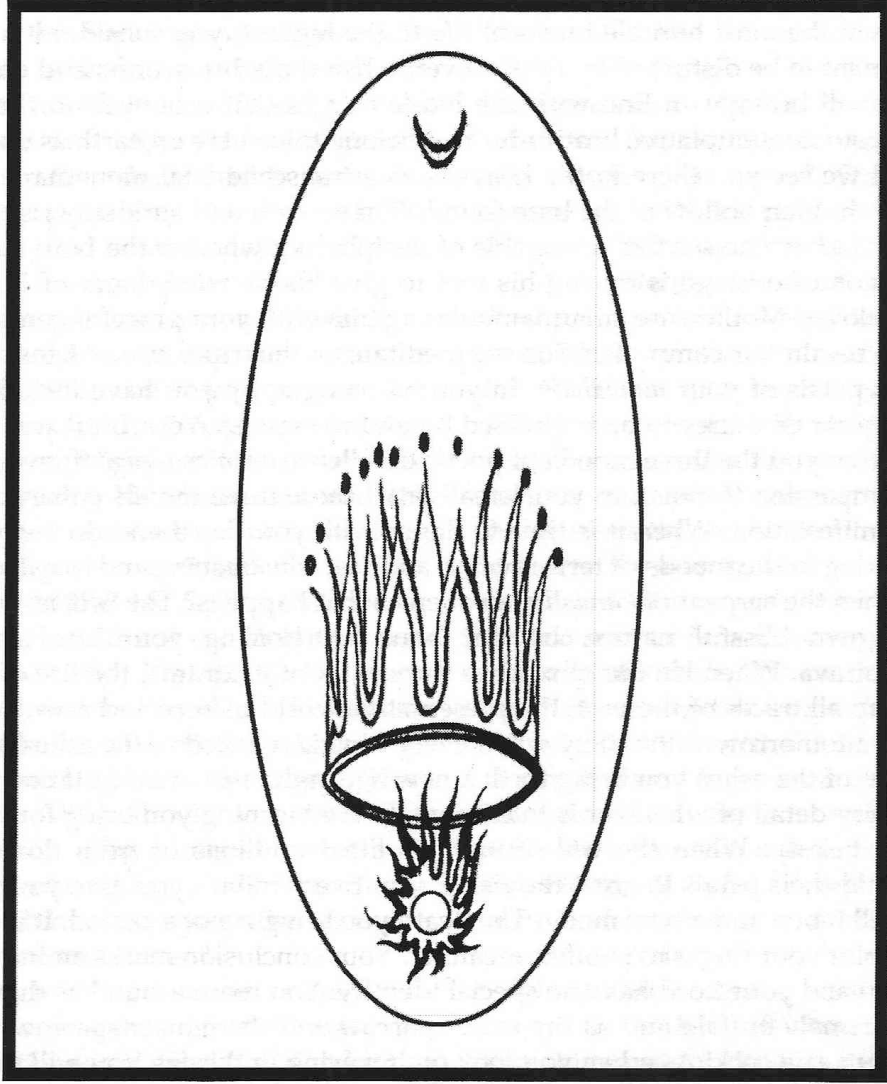
To regain our comprehension we meditate on the triple *mantrā-s* inscribed on the three lotus petals of your *mūlādhāra*. In your choreography you have included the nine moods for your creatures to be impressed by and to express. Your Lord was considerate to expect from you the three moods of poetic excellence: erotics (*śṛṅgāra*), wonder (*adbhuta*), and compassion (*karuṇa*). In your creative art these three moods enhance the beauty of your manifestation. When it is time to dance with your Lord and do away with creation, you bring in the moods of terror, valor, and fear (*raudra*, *vīra*, and *bhayānaka*).

When the serpent of *kuṇḍalini* awakens, what happens? The Self rejoices and revels in its own blissful nature. In that hour of rejoicing your Lord manifests as Ānandabhairava. When his dance reaches the climax of its drama, the fire of dissolution swallows up all traces of the past, the presentative world of here and now, and even the promise of a tomorrow. Ultimately when everything is reduced to the ashes of aloneness, *kaivalya*, out of the ashes you bring forth a new age and a new manifestation which have in them every detail of whatever is lived now. Every morning you bring forth a new sun of crimson beauty. When the veil of night is lifted, millions of fresh flowers in lotus ponds unfold their petals to greet the rising sun. Every month you give your alternating gifts of a full moon and a new moon. The death you bring is not a period. It is only a semicolon to point your finger to another meaning. Your conclusion marks an introduction.

You and your Lord have no special identity. You roam around as the male buffalo and the female buffalo and as the male sparrow and the female sparrow. He heralds the rising sun as a cock. As a hen you look on, rejoicing in the egg you will soon present. He is the lord of your breath, *prāṇanātha*. You are his life breath, *prāṇeśvari*. Thus you have made every species as pairs of generators and generatresses (*janakā-s* and *jananī-s*). You become formal when you assume iconographic images or specify yourself in the biologic world with morphological designs. In the world of lines and angles, you assume geometrical forms. In the world of secret similes, you become algebraic notations.

When you move from one location to another, I relate to your vibration, meditating upon you as the innumerable centers of this world. With unpredictable motions, you fill the universe with the figures of all possible constellations. I meditate on your universal gestaltation by relating it to the central locus of my focusing consciousness. When the entire figure is woven into a tapestry, I learn from it the orchestration of the choir of the spheres reverberating both in the sky and here on earth. Even when your figure covers the three worlds, I know you are not more than a mathematical point with a shifting locus and no other dimension. Such is the meditation I offer each day to your secret symbol, *Śrī Cakra*. O Mother, admit me into the unspoken secret of the unutterable, the invisible and the unimaginable. In full assurance let me conclude, "This is it, this is it."

thm sarvapriyamkarī



ḍṃ sarvamaṅgalakarāṇī

Meditation Forty-two

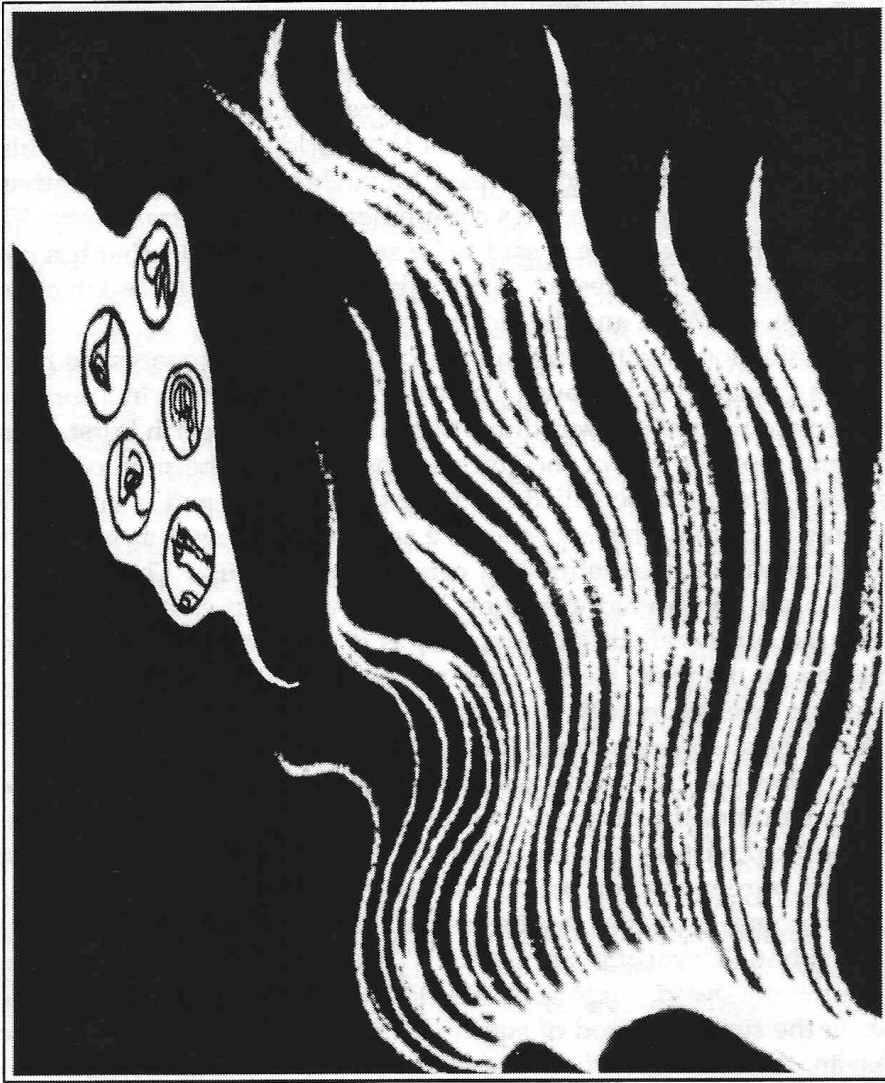
O Mother, bestower of auspiciousness, by your direction, the One becomes many and each one is assigned an appropriate function. Although there is only one sun, Āditya, each month he is known by a different name and bracketed into a different constellation. The benevolence the sun brings each month is distinctly different from that of other months. Aries marks the beginning of all creative activities on earth. The sun at its beginning is looked upon as the architect of the world, Viśvakarma. In this respect the sun looks in all directions and conceives a hierarchical scheme of creative action. The world is called *loka* because of the sun's comprehensive vision, *avalokanam*. Thereafter the sun enters into deep thought. He is said to be seated in the lotus that has come from the navel of Viṣṇu. Brahmā the Creator, as Viśvakarma, has four faces which look towards the East, the South, the West, and the North.

Seeing rain clouds gathering in the sky, the farmer prepares his field and brings seeds out of his granaries to be sown. The sun changes its status in Taurus and is called Pūṣan, the one who nourishes everything. Seeds sown in the earth burst open. Sprouts of new plants come up. The fire of the sun and the water of the rain join in a benevolent creative process. Pūṣan is also called the bright, Kāntimān, and is considered to be the younger brother of Sūrya. This aspect of the sun has the power to make everything enchanting. Thus *māyā* becomes intimately connected with Pūṣa. That is why adolescence and early youth are considered charming. The rainy season enters into its final stage in Gemini. Now the sun is called Pārjanya. It is as if the sun wants to fill up all the reservoirs for the rest of the year. Heavy rains mark the end of Gemini. This is followed by Cancer. Trees are overladen with fruit and nuts. Wheat, rice, and corn get ready to be harvested. Now the sun presides over Cancer as Amśumān.

Then comes Leo that is so rich that granaries are again full. Like the Greek god Apollo, Āditya becomes the most gracious and glorious of all gods, called Bhagavān. He has godliness (*tīṣitva*), virtues (*dharma*), reputation (*kīrti*), grace (*aiśvarya*), wisdom (*jñāna*) and the qualities of renunciation or sacrifice (*tyāga*). When Leo changes into Virgo, once again the sun becomes a creator. As the cosmic carpenter he is Dvastrī. He has three distinct features, Ribhu, Viśvarūpa and Savita. When he comes as Savita he is propitiated with the chanting of *Gāyatrī*. Virgo gives its place to Libra. When Libra comes Viṣṇu himself presides in the sun as the god of equity. When Libra changes into Scorpio, the sun is called Vivasvān, the one from whom the world physicians, the Aśvins, have come. Scorpio is exchanged for Sagittarius. Then the sun is called Āryamā, the bringer of wisdom and fulfillment. When Sagittarius moves away, Capricorn comes. The sun that presides over Capricorn is Mitra, the friend of all living beings who is earnest in bringing benevolence to every one. He prepares everyone for the Aquarian life. When Aquarius comes, the sun is newly designated as Yama. He brings a pause, a kind of moratorium, so everyone can be impregnated with an ideal for tomorrow. Death marks the rebirth. If Aquarius is symbolized by a pot containing a sperm, Pisces is symbolized by a fish swimming in the boundless ocean. Then the sun becomes Varuṇa, the bestower of blessings.

O Mother, your crown is decorated with these twelve shining aspects of the sun. You share this radiance of light with your children. Above these twelve rubies of the sky you have another decoration, the sublime crescent moon. With that your beauty comes to its climax. It becomes truly indescribable. Confused, the artist lays aside his brush. The sculptor does not dare to take up his chisel. Not finding adequate similes and metaphors, poets withdraw into meditation. You are certainly compassionate. You may withhold many more of your decorations. It is no wonder that the poet of this composition decided to call the maddening ecstasy of billowing beauty *saundaryalaharī*. Words and mind recoil from descriptions and come again and again to prostrate at your lotus feet.

dm sarvamaṅgalakarānī



ḍhṃ sarvakāmapradā

Meditation Forty-three

O sportive Mother, you are well known as the rejoicer in your *līla*. We do not understand why you make darkness so attractive. When the world is wrapped in the dark veils of night, you bring out the twinkling stars to make the contrast of the dark even more appealing. When you cradle us into sleep we forget the glory of daylight and the certitude of wisdom we have been seeking at the feet of masters. When we become sympathetically affected by the dark tresses of your abundant curly hair, we are delighted to go into the inertial states of deeper and deeper sleep. Then our only joy is reveling in hallucinatory dreams. We know such dreams will take us only to the detestable darkness of desire (*Bhadrakālī*). When, from the audible, we go into silence and from the visible, we go into deep sleep, nothing crosses our minds. It is true there is neither joy nor pain there. Does that bring realization to us? It is doubtful. Lethargy, laziness and sleep take over our minds and for the time being we feel relieved of all our assigned duties of life. Even the catatonia of a depression is accepted as a state of absorption. When we are bound by desires and attachment, we think of it as a blessed state of being relieved from the responsibilities of life. When we are incapable of accomplishing anything, we mistake it for a state of beatitude.

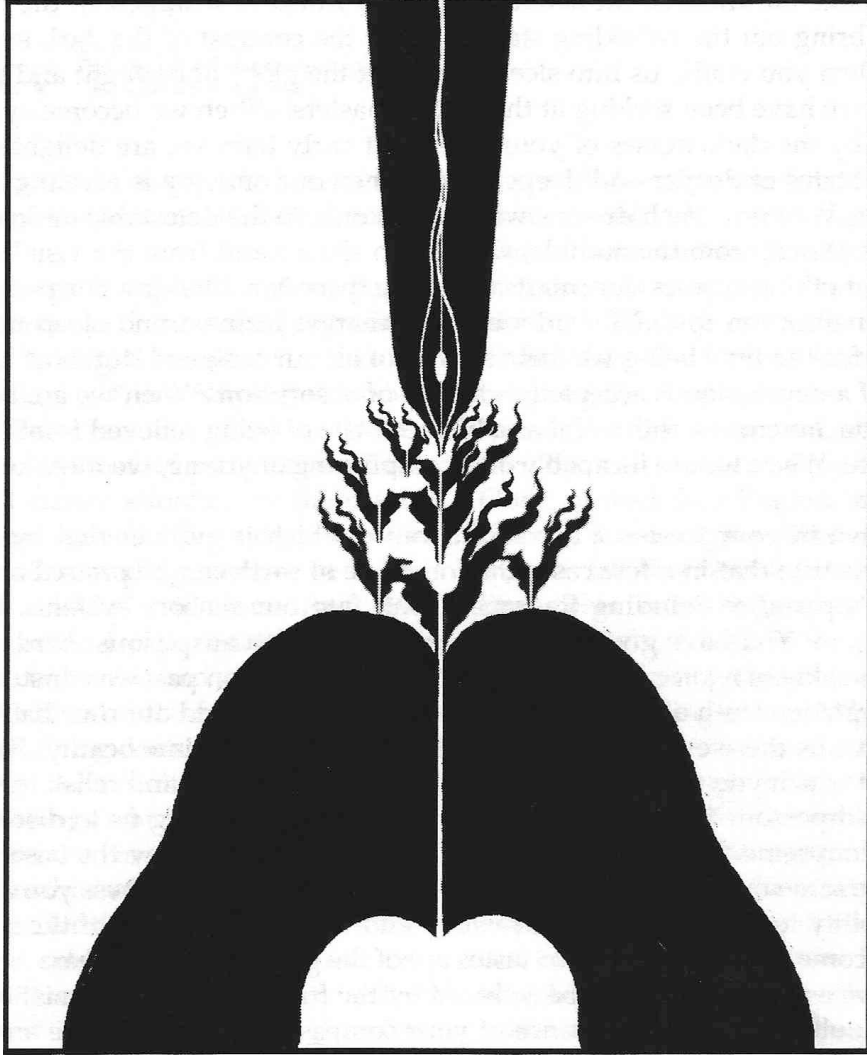
You have in your tresses a sacred fragrance which is even envied by the celestial damsels. It is true that in a few cases the fragrance of earth can be praised as sacred. But from Indra's paradise deluding fragrances waft into our sensory systems. We go from doom to doom. You have given us these ears to listen to auspicious words of wisdom. We in our weakness rejoice in voices that exhilarate our mean passions. Instead of paying heed to the golden truth of wisdom, we listen to gossip and add our own babble to it.

You gave us these eyes to see the ennobling forms of sublime beauty. Forgetting the purpose for which you gave us eyes, we look for erotic models and relish the passions of an infatuated person. You gave us sensibility of touch, expecting us to discern the presence of the supreme. Instead we like to be fondled and tickled by the base and the unclean. In the same organ where there are taste buds to relish sweetness you also invested that rare ability to articulate musical melody and the sacred praises of the supreme. But we have become gluttonous and our tastes are of the gross and the vulgar.

What we aspire for is not to be seduced by the fragrance of a hedonistic heaven but the austere sublimity of the fragrance of your compassion. We know we are taken from one cycle of life to another by the essence of our past actions, *vāsanā*. It is not in our interest to nourish our quest for worldly pleasures. We are like ignorant children. We cannot distinguish between right and wrong.

Instead of granting us the favors of what we like, O Mother, lead us to the right discrimination. Grant us only what is desirable (*hitam*). O Mother, lead us from darkness to light, untruth to truth and from death to immortality. This is our only prayer.

dhṛṃ sarvakāmapradā



ṇṇī sarvadukhavimocinī

Meditation Forty-four

O Mother, rejoicer in bringing hope to us. It seems the Absolute is riddled with enigmas and paradoxes. You and your Lord have chosen an infinite stretch of time and space, spotlighted with a here and now, for dancing your gentle creative *lāsya* and your Lord's frenzied, traumatic dance of destruction, *tanḍava*. The extension of your creation is boundless and the span of our vision is so limited. We do not see anything beyond the frontiers of the horizon or what is concealed from us by the blue canopy of the sky.

The present is never longer than the wink of an eye. The veil of the past is drawn over every moment that passes, and we can recapture what we have once lived only if our faculty of memory saves an impression that can be recalled as a fragmentary essence. You have put a thick fog in the gateway of time and therefore what is concealed in the future cannot be seen even by the keen eye of a prophet who claims to have a transparency of vision. Your alternating fixations of day and night cancel out each other and leave us with a mind from which both the transactional and transpersonal are erased after the day is done and the night is over.

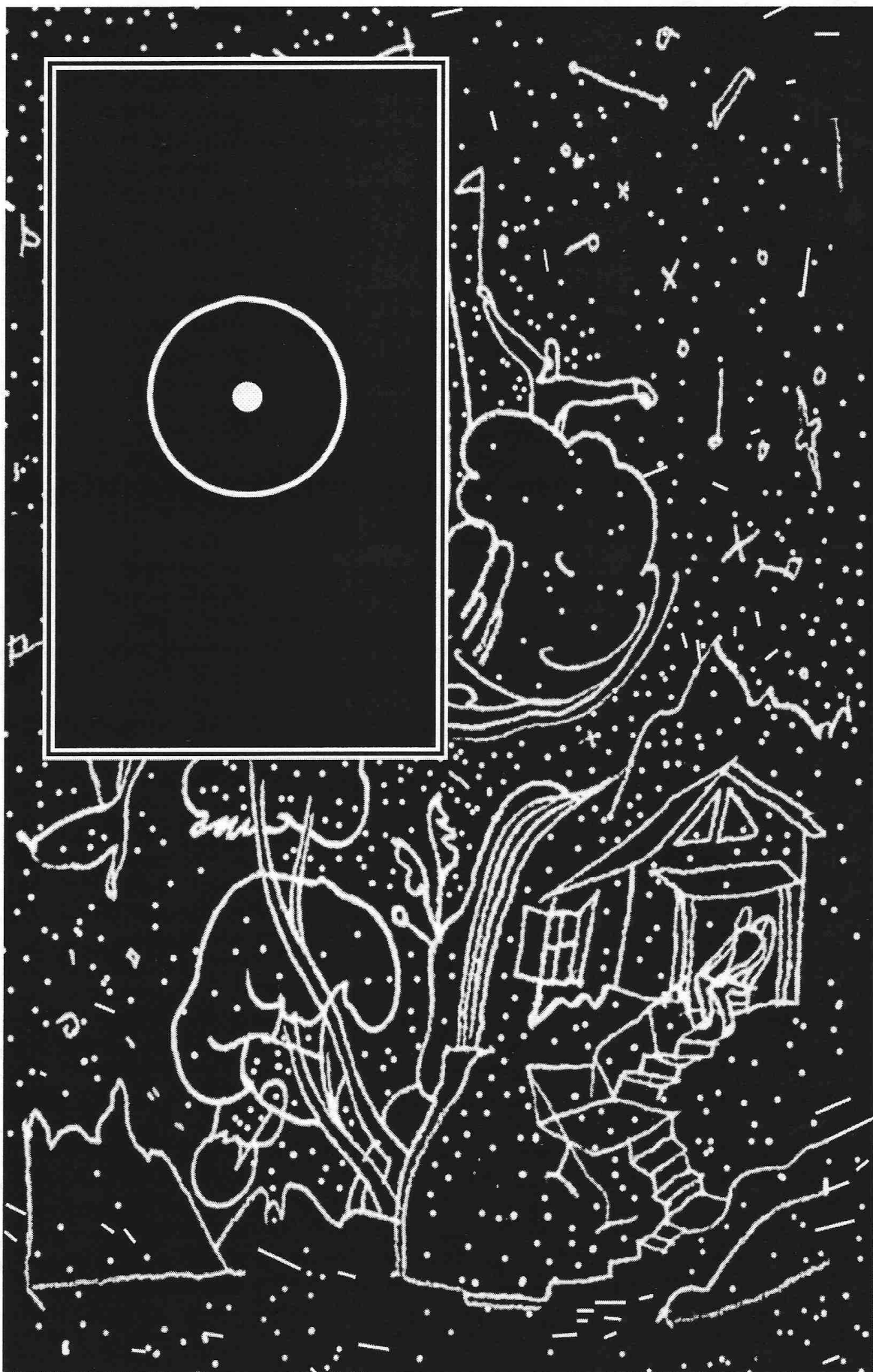
Of course, we are grateful that you are not burdening us with all the recollections of our painful encounters. However, our status is that of the ever-ignorant. For you, our beautiful Mother, the dark tresses of your hair only enhance your charm. Darkness is not always the most coveted charm for us because it makes our minds so opaque and our understanding so muddled. Who knows for what length of time we were in the stream of life's manifestation until at last we evolved into ovums in our mothers' ovaries and somnambulist sperms that found temporary residence in the testes of our incumbent fathers? Poets speak of the imprisoned splendor. I know I was imprisoned within the dark confines of a womb. In spite of the potential seed of gnosis, I had no knowledge whatsoever of how I was taken care of in the dingy and painful biological workshop of child manufacturing. Thus life began in darkness.

In this vast universe of darkness you have put only a few luminary bubbles. So you are as much in the dark as I am. How can I ever complain of my faint vision and muddled understanding? After receiving responsibility with my ego-consciousness as a knower, doer, and enjoyer (or rather sufferer), I got into the tunnel of grooming. I had to pass through rigorous disciplines imposed on me and spend my childhood, adolescence and early youth in servility to pick up the tools of learning. After graduating from academies of learning, we human beings still remain basically ignorant, even of the functions of our own bodies. Even an octogenarian or centenarian has little knowledge about why and how his heart beats, not to mention how his kidney or pancreas works.

When the night is dark, if I am dead asleep, I don't care how long I have been sleeping or when I will wake up. But when sleep is disturbed and insomnia makes me mad, I crave for the light of the sun. When I finally see a crimson glow in the east, I am gladdened. Even so, my Mother, when I see the crimson streak in the part of your hair, where you have proudly marked your dedication to your husband, I become hopeful. It is such a simple, almost inconspicuous symbol. But for us, your children, even the slightest hint of your presence fills us with hope that your compassionate glance will turn in our direction and you will pick up each one of us to rest in your lap, our seat of fearlessness.

In a world which very often drives us to our wits' end when we see only frustration before us, O Mother, nothing sustains other than the hope that you have planted even in our darkest dreams. Hope is only where there is a possibility. The faith in the possibility is implanted in us by the regularity with which you recycle your days and recreate this universe day after night and creation after dissolution. With heartfelt gratitude we thank you, Mother, for sustaining our hope. Let there be tomorrows and the happy return of this day again and again. *Aum.*

ṅṅ sarvadukhvimocinī



Ātmopadeśa Śatakam:

One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Verse 18

*ahamirulallirilākil andharāy nā-
mahamahamennariyātirunnitēṇam;
arivatinal ahamandhakāramalle-
nnarivatiniṅṅaneyārkkumōtiṭēṇam.*

The "I" is not dark; if it were dark we would be in a state of blindness, unable to know even "I,I"; as we do know, the "I" is not darkness; thus, for making this known, this should be told to anyone.

Occasionally we get into a state of emotional crisis. A kind of depression comes, and we feel very wretched. At such moments we may even say, "I don't see any light. I am in a state of absolute darkness." Because of the negative attitude we are in, we do not see the contradiction in this statement, which is that, even for us to know we are in a state of ignorance, we have to have knowledge. If there is no knowledge at all, one would not even see that one was in a state of darkness. At least there is that much faint light.

This light of knowledge, which is always shimmering like a spark within us, is not brought from outside. It is self-luminous—it is our own awareness. With this awareness we can at least say "I am." When we say "I am ignorant" we have to first say "I am." Then it is not ignorance.

When Descartes was assailed by great doubt, he became very confused. He wanted to find out if he knew anything for

certain. First he examined the many general laws which were the foundations of his knowledge, such as: this world is created by God, and the world exists and can be perceived with the senses. He started doubting all this. For instance, how do I know the world is created by God? Because the Bible says that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. How do I know that what is said in the Bible is true? Because it is a book of revelation. How do I know it's a book of revelation? It is stated in that book. Is this not begging the question? The authenticity of the Bible cannot be revealed by the Bible itself. That isn't authentic. If the Bible is not authentic, I cannot put my trust in it. If I cannot put my trust in it, I don't have to believe that God created this world. In this way Descartes rejected idea after idea as unexamined statements.

Socrates said the life that is not examined is not worth living. Descartes felt the same way, so he wanted to examine everything critically. In the light of reason, the testimony of the revelations seemed to be dogmatic, arbitrarily made, so he saw it as conjecture. Then he turned away from word testimony to sensory perception. A man with jaundice sees everything with a yellow cast, but it is a defect of the eye and not of the world. Even when our sensory systems are of normal health and without defects, we see many optical illusions. We see blue in the sky when there is neither a sky as such nor any blue color. It doesn't exist. There is only vacant space filled with invisible air, but because of a certain

diffraction of light coming from the sun we see a blue dome-like thing above us. If you're traveling by road and speeding along in a car, nearby things seem to run by very fast while far away objects look stationary. How can the world move and not move at the same time? We cannot believe our eyes. Again we may see a man hammering in the distance. We see the hammer falling on the object, but only later do we hear the sound. They are not synchronized. How do we know, then, that the sound is produced by the hammer?

In this way Descartes doubted everything. One thing he could not doubt, though, was that he was doubting. Everything else can be doubted, but you cannot doubt that you are doubting. From this he came to the conclusion that there is something imperative in knowledge. There is even a categorical imperativeness, and there is a logical necessity in accepting this categorical imperativeness in reasoning. Thus he arrived at an axiomatic basis for philosophical thinking. He said *cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am." Or *dubito ergo sum*, "I doubt, therefore I am."

In this verse, Narayana Guru is using a similar argument, which says that even in your darkest moment don't you say "I am?" Of course you do. When you sit with your eyes closed in a dark room, are you not absolutely sure of your own existence? Don't you see that very clearly? What kind of light is that? From where does that awareness come? When we look at the clarity of the awareness "I am," we are astonished by the self-luminous principle which seems to reside within us. This inner light is called *cit*, or *caitanya*, gnosis.

There is another work by Narayana Guru, called *Ariou*, or *Knowledge*. It is a very beautiful work. In it he presents such questions as when you know a thing, what is the knowledge with which you know? If you take away that knowledge, is there any known remaining with you? When you consider carefully, can you differentiate the knowledge by which you say "I am" from this knowledge? What constitutes the knowledge of the known?

Don't you see that there is only one knowledge, which is seen to be the knower, the known and knowledge?

So when you say "I am," it is a very clear case of self-evidence. All the proofs that we use in science are in order to bring a certain certitude to us. The highest form of certitude is one you don't have to prove. In mathematics this is called axiomatic. Axiomatic knowledge requires no proof, because it is self-evident. What we are saying is that it is evident to our self. Thus, self becomes the measuring rod of all knowledge; in other words, the self is the normative notion with which we measure truth. All other truths are derived only by using this normative notion.

Until an experience becomes your own, it remains extraneous to your real knowledge or wisdom. You have to own your knowledge: it must become part of your own experience. And nothing is more clearly experienced than the awareness "I am." Even a simple person knows this. From a little child to the most profound philosopher or scientist, this knowledge is common to all.

We have seen in the previous verses' meditations that our experience can have within it a bright spot and a dark spot. Between the range of these two extremes there can be many gradations of consciousness. When we turn only to the dark element, life appears full of crises. It may look negative, depressing, bleak, meaningless. Even at such dark moments it is with the consciousness of 'I' that we say it is bleak and dark. Turn to the very self with which you say this, and that brings you back to the brightest spot within yourself. Then you won't lose the stable footing of your life. You are reclaiming your own Self-awareness. If you habilitate yourself in the bright center of your own self, then you can withdraw from that which frightens you, that which makes life dark.

Most of us think that realization is very hard to achieve, that it is a rare attainment of only a few people. The Guru wants us to know it is not so. Realization is of all people; everybody is already ex-

perceiving it in some measure. It is just that we do not know it is Self-realization. We are under the impression that some day this world is going to disappear and some other kind of reality is going to assert itself, but this is just another of the many illusions created by the exaggerations of religious people. Such beliefs only increase unhappiness by convincing people they are ignorant and unrealized. It is a very simple thing to know you exist. This can be the starting point for you to reclaim more and more of your world into the realm of awareness, into the light of the Self.

After we realize that the knowledge we have within us is Self-knowledge, Narayana Guru wants us to go one step farther and tell it to another person. When you do that, the other person at least knows that someone is speaking to him. When I say "I know I exist," the other person says "yes, I also know I exist." There is a homogeneity in the understanding of two people of the concept 'I'. Just as I say "I exist," you also say "I exist." There is an identity involved: the quality of awareness of the 'I' in me is identical with the 'I' in you; in a third person, fourth person, of all the people in the world. So at least we all have one common knowledge—we all recognize "I am."

In this basic awareness "I am," the Guru wants us to see the unity of all awareness. This is the common platform on which we can link ourselves as part of the one binding knowledge of all beings. You can't talk to your dog about Shakespeare, but you can communicate by looking into its eyes. It understands. One friend of mine even writes letters to her dogs. There is communication in their souls, even though the dog does not read the letters. As she writes, she somehow feels that within their souls there is some kind of resonance or union, a oneness. In all living beings there is this one awareness. First we know it ourselves, and then we make it known to others.

Siddhartha, called Gautama, mortified his body for six years, going from teacher to teacher to look for truth. He became



very disheartened. Finally he thought of giving up the pursuit. He said, "There is no meaning in this life, there is no truth. I don't see anything. It's all dark. I'll just sit under this tree. Let me die; let the body fall off. I won't get up from this seat unless I come to know truth."

Then a girl named Sujata came. She thought it was some kind of tree spirit sitting there. She wanted to make an offering to the spirit, so she brought some milk pudding and gave it to Gautama. He was very hungry and accepted it. After a while, he was miraculously filled with a great light. He became awakened. When he was so awakened, he marveled at the truth he saw. He said to himself, "What a wonderful truth this is! So magnificent; so perfect! But will anyone have an open mind to receive it? The whole world is steeped in ignorance. I don't see one person worthy of receiving this great knowledge, so I will not speak of it to anyone."

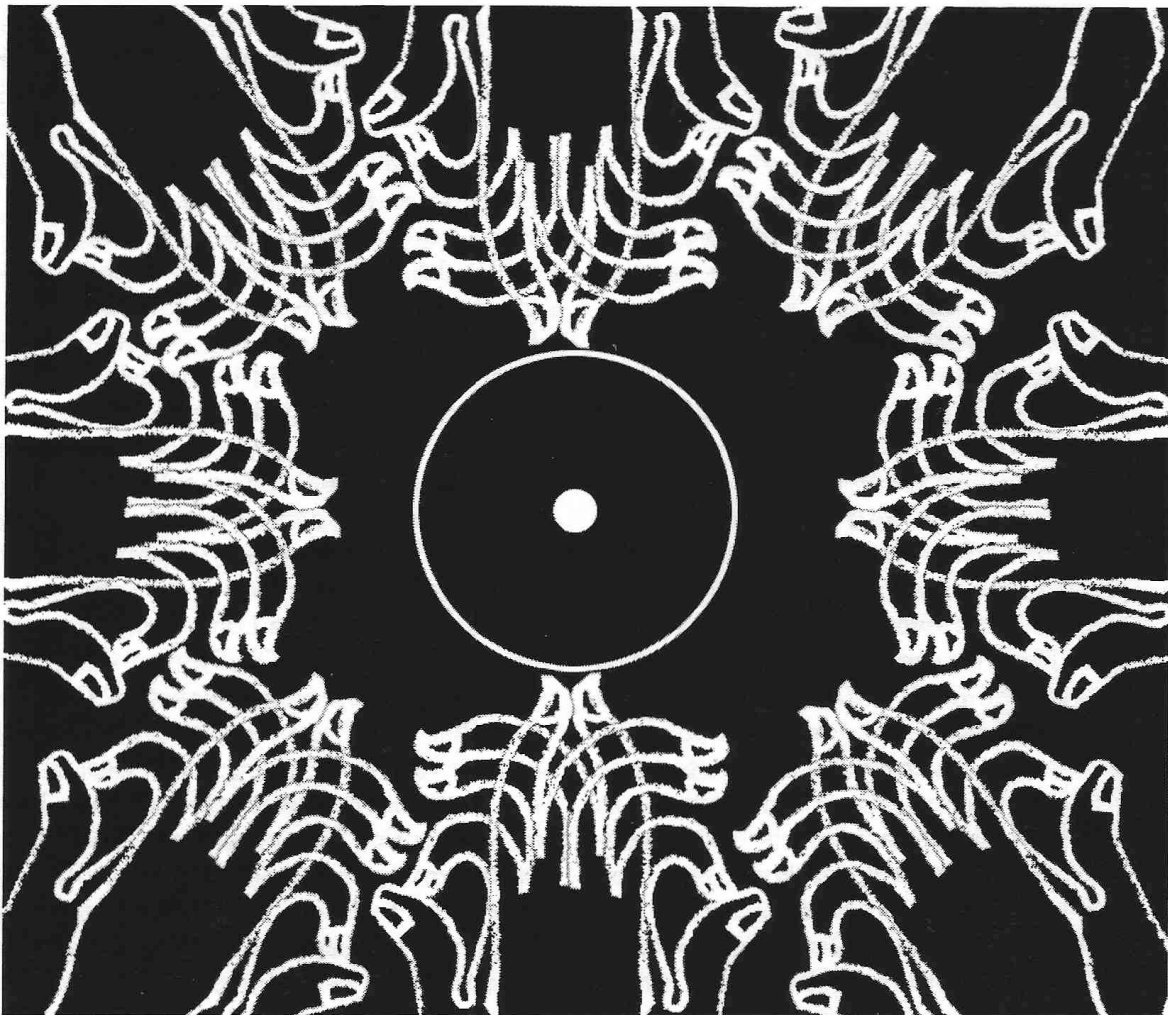
At that point the Lord, Brahmasampati, came and said, "Oh Blessed One! Now you have become an Awakened One, the Buddha. What you have come to know is a great knowledge which can heal all the ills of the world. Be compassionate. Look at this world. The people are not dirt as you seem to think; they are not blind as you seem to think. There is only a little stupor. You can wake them. A little dust of ignorance is veiling the truth from them. You can brush that off their eyes

and they will all clearly see. Just as you have now come to know the truth, they will also come to know it, because the truth is already within them."

Jesus said the Kingdom of God is within you. It is this truth which is within you. We must first discover it, and then we know that the same truth is in the heart of all people, of all beings. Thus your own self-awareness will bring you to the awareness of, and the kinship of, the Self of all. "If you once know the Father, then you know the brethren." Here what is equivalent to the Father is the most certain knowledge which is within you. Then you see the same certain knowledge within all the brethren. You see your own Self in all, and in all your own Self.

From the knowledge of the Self, you go to the sharing of the same knowledge. What is vertically true becomes also a horizontal fact. *Prajña*, the known; *karuṇa*,

compassion; and *maitri*, fellowship: each one follows from its predecessor. First I know that I exist. Using the same principle, I know that you also exist. If you do not see and are wailing and carrying on, and I see there is no reason for it, that it is only because you don't see the divinity and imperishability of your own being, then I feel compassionate. Then I come to you and say, "Now look here my brother, my sister, why should you cry like this? You are all light, imperishable and immortal." So we get into friendship and fellowship. With our fellowship we mutually recognize each other as belonging to the same truth. We get into a bond of love based on truth. Like the warp and woof that make up a whole cloth, I have my Self-knowledge and the knowledge that the same Self is also in you. The whole universe can become part of our own Self, and all can come to realize it together. ❖



All Welcome

Oh what sheer joy to live without labels
Openly flowing no preconception
Glimpsing rare truths in myths and in fables
Spring-cleaning hearts in delighted perception

Openly flowing no preconception
Growing together Hindu and Quaker
Spring-cleaning hearts delighted perception
Equal the king and the candlestick maker

Growing together Hindu and Quaker
Prophet agnostic socialist Tory
Equal the king and the candlestick maker
Welcoming all to life's endless story

Prophet agnostic socialist Tory
Harlot and prelate playboy idealist
Welcoming all to life's endless story
Admiral miner dreamer and realist

Harlot and prelate playboy idealist
Valued together both poor and wealthy
Admiral miner dreamer and realist
Black white and yellow sickly and healthy

Valued together both poor and wealthy
Poised in between all opposite notions
Black white and yellow sickly and healthy
Sharing in silence wordless devotions

Poised in between all opposite notions
Glimpsing rare truths in myths and in fables
Sharing in silence wordless devotions
Oh what sheer joy to live without labels

Sheilah Johns

Spirals of Life:

*Where all the
like the spokes in
the Self pulsates, I
Meditate on the*

Success to you in crossing t

*This all-knowing
wisdom Self
whose glory is
manifest
as the world*



*is seated in the luminous space
within the lotus of the heart,
appearing as mind, the vital forces, and the body.*

*The wise know the fullness of this Self
as the blissful, the immortal.*

*Seeing that Self in the high and the low,
the knots of the heart are untied,
all doubts are dispelled,
and all karmas are dissipated.*



*All this is the im
In front, behind, to
below an
the universe is pervaded*

*Mundaka Upa
(Version by N*

Untying The Knots

arteries meet
the hub of a wheel
becoming manifold.
at Self as AUM.

to the shore beyond darkness.

In the shining lotus of the heart
is the Absolute, unblemished and indivisible.
It is pure, the light of lights.
It is what the knowers of the Self attain.

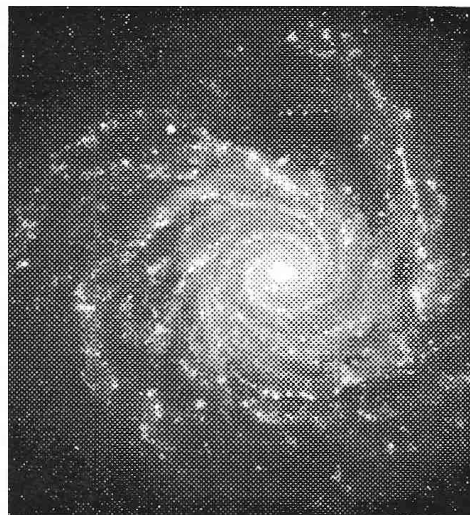
It is not illuminated by the sun, the moon, or the stars;
nor by lightening flashes,
much less by this fire here.

By Its light,
all this is illuminated.



mortal Absolute.
the right, to the left,
and above—
by the supreme Absolute.

niṣad II.ii.6-11
(ancy Yeilding)



It shines,
everything
shines.

Solving Life's Problems: The *Gita* and Narayana Guru

Swami Muni Narayana Prasad

Thinking is the faculty that differentiates humankind from other animals. It is a quality even considered divine and marks the dignity of human life as well. Yet it is the very same divine gift that renders human life miserable, replete with all sorts of problems. All problems arise from thinking. No thinking, no problem in life.

Non-thinking beings are born, they live, and they die, as part of the eternal flow of nature, seeing no problem in life and not seeing life as a problem. Why is such a peaceful life out of reach for we humans? Only because of our ability to think.

The only way, therefore, to bring back peace in human life, is for we humans to make use of our divine faculty of thinking to perceive ourselves as one with the whole, as one with the totality of Nature or *prakṛiti*. How this can be accomplished is what is taught by Vyasa in the *Bhagavad Gita* and Narayana Guru in his *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*.

Seeing oneself as existing apart from the whole; perceiving the totality of nature as separate from oneself, is what is known as ignorance or *ajñāna*. This ignorance leads one to see events in life as problem-creating. One solution alone exists for such problems: bringing in the light of wisdom or *jñāna*, which in essence is nothing but perceiving oneself as inseparably one with the whole, perceiving that what is real in the whole is what underlies the being of oneself.

Many are the problems ignorance incites in life. And all of them are temporal. No problem is eternal. All these many and temporal problems have one solution alone, an eternal one. This one eternal solution to all the varied and transitory life problems is what both Vyasa and

Narayana Guru taught.

The Problems

Vyasa, in the first chapter of the *Gita*, details the problems Arjuna faces. They could well be summarized as coming under two categories. First, he is constrained to kill in battle his own gurus and kith and kin. Secondly, he feels impelled to violate traditional caste-based and class-based values. Both of these imperatives, according to hearsay, are likely to land him in hell. Though personal, these are problems of social significance, as both are based on certain common notions.

The problems on which Narayana Guru's wisdom could shed light were also many. Among them, those of apparent social significance were mainly three: First, caste-based social prejudices; secondly, rivalry existing among different religious followings, and thirdly, prevalence of certain social customs that were further impoverishing those who were already poor.

Solution to the Problems According to the *Gita*

Arjuna is an individual, and every individual being is an inseparable part of the cosmos that has a functional system of its own. Even thinking of an individual existing apart from nature is impossible. One's natural identity, therefore, has to be with the whole, has to be with nature or *prakṛiti*. Arjuna, therefore, was taught to see himself one with the whole, not as an independently existing entity. Arjuna the individual, is nothing but the one all-underlying Reality manifesting itself in a particular form with the specific qualities of a warrior. He being so, his perception of himself also has to be so. All that an individual does, Arjuna's fighting included, is

nothing but part of the beginningless and endless unfoldment of potentials hidden in this one all-underlying Reality, hidden in nature.

Finding this new identity results in bringing about a total change in Arjuna's perception of life: that he does not exist apart from the whole; that all the actions (*karmas*) he performs are but a minute part of the activity (*kyti*) of nature (*prakryti*). Any action becoming sinful is meaningful only when it is treated as performed by an individual. Nature's actions, on their own, are neither sinful nor meritorious; they are just *karmas*. The realization that no individual has any *karma* of one's own absolves one of all sins. Making this point amply clear, the *Gita* in verse III. 27 says: "Action takes place everywhere in Nature in accordance with its modality. One, deluded by I-sense, thinks, 'I am the doer of *karmas*'."

No non-doer of *karmas* can be a sinner. Such is the absolutist and firm hand with which Vyasa holds back Arjuna from falling into the quagmire of being a sinner. Arjuna's sense of sin was a result of his identifying himself with what he appeared to be, not with what he really was.

Arjuna, like many of us do, treated himself as belonging to a particular caste (*kshatriya*) and to the clan of the *Kurus*. This caste-identity and clan-identity were the root cause of his guilty conscience of violating the traditional higher values. Shifting his identity to the Absolute Reality could free him of all such otherwise shameful guilt.

It is the one Absolute Reality, *atma* or *brahman*, that unfolds itself as all the worlds. If a hell reached by sinners does exist, if a heaven attained by those of meritorious deeds does exist, they too are none other than the one *atma* become manifest variously, and thus not different from the Self or *atma*.

It is this one all-underlying Reality, the one manifesting-as-all Reality, that Krishna refers to as 'I' (*aham*) or 'Myself' in the *Gita*. This 'I' in Krishna and the 'I' in Arjuna in essence are not two. This oneness of Reality, one's own oneness with

the Absolutist Reality, is to be realized. What appears as all the worlds is nothing but one *atma*, the Self, oneself, manifesting itself variously. Once this realization is attained, one finds life as problemless.

The Solutions Narayana Guru Taught

Like Arjuna and his people in the days of the Kurukshetra battle, humans of the present day mentally live in clusters of different "caste" groupings of religion, class, caste or other distinctions. The caste-concept presumes certain groups as superior and certain others as inferior or even untouchable. We witness the atrocities of mass killing even now in certain parts of India and around the world. Such is the outcome of this absurd discrimination. The way that Narayana Guru taught to dissolve moral corruption, is not different in essence from the one Krishna taught to Arjuna in the *Gita*: one's only real identity is with the Absolute Self. All other identities are artificial and mistaken.

There is only one criterion of *jati* or species in the life system into which the Absolute Self unfolds itself. It is that the begetting of offspring through the mating of males and females happens only within a species or *jati*. And the said system of self-propagation is nothing but part of the self-unfoldment of the one *atma*. All caste-prejudices have only ignorance and selfishness for their basis. Identity with such ignorance-born and non-existing castes is to be given up by becoming enlightened about our one and only identity, our natural and real identity, with the one *atma*. Human beings in no way are "of different kinds, but are of one self-fraternity (*atma sahodarar*). Proclaiming this eternal and unquestioned Truth, the Guru said:

Those discerned differently, as 'that person' or 'this person', when given thought to, are revealed to be one primeval Self alone appearing in various forms.

(*Ātmopadeśa Śatakam 24*)

Of these different forms of appearance of the one Self, none is superior or inferior to another.

No one desires to do anything harmful to oneself. Seeing oneself alone in everything brings about a total change in the mode of one's activities. What one does for one's own happiness naturally ensures the happiness of all else, for 'the others' are not different from oneself in essence. The Guru portrays how the realization of oneness of the Self becomes reflected in actual life as follows:

Whatever is performed for the sake of one's happiness, should be for the happiness of others as well.
(A. S. 22)

The Guru thus did also provide the science of ethics with a sound criterion for morality, which it hitherto was lacking.

All religious feuds and holy wars are precipitated by the identity humans develop with certain dogmas and behaviour patterns and with their institutionalized machinery. Despite such differences, one purpose alone is served by all religions in human life: enabling one to harmonize oneself with the whole and thus make life peaceful and meaningful. Let us, therefore, in the place of nurturing loyalty to different dogmas and establishments that propagate them, find ourselves one with the whole. Then alone we find that the essence of all religions is one alone; then alone we realize how foolish we were in arguing for or against religions. The Guru therefore said:

Not perceptive of the one essence of all religions, people foolishly argue for or against religions using various logical methods and reach nowhere, like the blind men who went to see an elephant. Let us wisely calm down ourselves.
(A. S. 44)

Now about traditional customs: the sources of such customs could well be classed into three:

1. Man finding harmony with the total nature makes his life systematized in a well defined way. Such behaviour patterns, when stabilized, become traditional customs.

2. Some symbolic customs, like rituals, are often introduced with a view to enlighten the public on the need to find their

oneness with nature. Such customs or rituals become part of the social system even without their real intention being known.

3. To these customs are at times appended, mostly by the rich, certain religious-like practices, simply meant to show the extravagances they can afford. Such practices psychologically make the poor also follow them at the cost of making themselves poorer.

It happened in course of time that such different kinds of customs got mixed up, making it impossible to discern which were meaningful and purposeful and which were otherwise. With no one to disillusion the people, they continued unhindered and people took them as necessary for the upkeep of social integrity.

Narayana Guru, enlightened as he was, enlightened the people as to the meaninglessness of certain practices and discouraged them from extravagant spending of wealth. He did, of course, encourage all healthy and educative practices. His enlightened conviction made him bold enough to declare such things openly to the public. And the people, in their turn, could not but abide by his authoritative directives. He, on the strength of his wisdom and holistic perception of life, served as a catalyst for a total change in the perception and practices of the people at large, particularly of the lowest stratum of society. Notwithstanding all these revolutionary changes happening around him and because of him, he always remained an unattached and undisturbed man of wisdom, an real *jñānin*, an ideal *yogin*, as conceived by the *Gita*.

In short, the basis and essence of the teachings of the *Gita* and Narayana Guru are common in details; one complements the other. Instead of leading a life confined to artificially created closed circles—such as one's own individuality and personal interests, one's family, one's caste, one's clan, one's religion, one's own political party, one's country—we can wipe out all such imaginary circles, and find our real identity with the boundless whole, with the all-underlying: Reality, with *atman*, with *brahman*. Becoming aware of

this real identity, which in fact we already are, is the ultimate solution to all problems in human life.

The One Wisdom the Two Teach

The wisdom that the Gita represents in its integrity and universality, is encapsulated in one of its verses thus: "The wisdom that keeps you no more deluded, is this: perceive all that has come into being, without remainder, in your self-being, and your self-being finally in Me."

We are enjoined to perceive all the worlds and all the beings in them as merging in our own self-being, and our own self-being as merging in the being of the Absolute Self or *brahman*. Put conversely, what absolutely exists, pure and unconditioned consciousness, manifests itself as the self-consciousness of the knower as well as what one knows. The world, appearing dualistically as subjective and objective, in other words, is one consciousness or *cit* alone unfolding itself variously. This perception wipes out all problems from life.

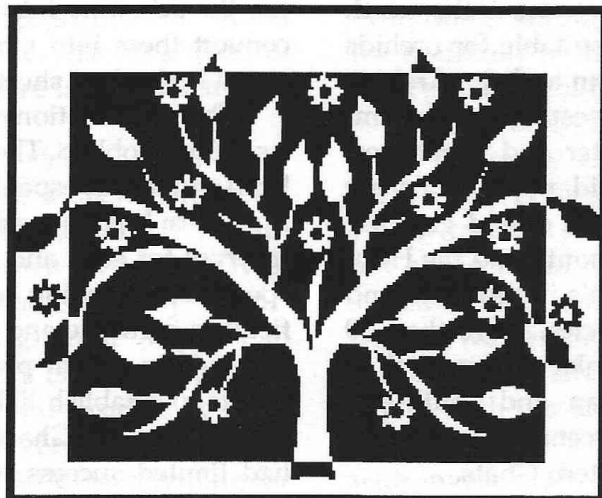
Imparting this wisdom theoretically alone is not what Krishna does. He, as the embodiment of the one Reality, shows himself to Arjuna, as having assumed the form of the entire cosmos (*visvarupa*). In that form is seen by Arjuna, all the worlds, everything that happens in them, the Kurukshetra battle-field and even the two armies arrayed against one another, himself included in it. The suggestion is that each one of us should see ourselves as having our own place somewhere in the

cosmic system in the form of which the one Reality manifests itself. In the cosmic Tree of Life, each one of us is like a leaf, a flower or a fruit, each having a role to play as part of the Tree. One's role by nature may be different from another's. This diversity in personal traits and functions in no way affects our oneness with the Tree. Our responsibility, my responsibility, is to make a self-examination and find out what kind of person I am as part of the whole, and live a life fully congruent with my personal traits, seeing them also as forming part of the Cosmic Form. This perception of life, or rather this living perception, transforms itself as supreme peacefulness and the absolute sense of freedom or *mukti*, the ultimate goal one can attain in life as taught by the *Gita*.

Exactly the same is the vision Narayana Guru depicts in the second verse of his universal prayer, *Daivadasakam* (Ten Verses on God). He says:

As all that could be counted one by one merge and cease to be in the perceiving consciousness, so too the innermost being of the perceiver should merge pulsationless in your being, O God.

All problems in life are felt by human beings individually. Each individual should see oneself as one with the Total Being. All problems also will then be seen as having merged in the Total, as having become one with the Total, as do waves along with their individuating factors, merge with the ocean. One thus sees oneself as free of all problems. ❖



Preserving Orchids and Ferns at Narayana Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary

W.D. Theuerkauf

A Refuge for South Indian Orchids

The Botanical Sanctuary of the East-West University is situated in the very environment whose flora it seeks to preserve. On the edge of one of the last surviving forests of the region, the setting is ideal for the establishment, maintenance and study of a living plant collection for the *ex situ* preservation of the threatened plants of the Western Ghats of South India. Though the objective of the Sanctuary is the preservation of the entire endangered flora of these hills, special attention is given to the members of the orchid family represented in the region.

These orchids deserve our interest and attention for two reasons. One is quantitative, i.e. their number of species places them in fifth place in rank among the South Indian plant families. The second reason is qualitative, because of their comparatively high endemic element. The high endemism has a direct relationship with the particular geography of the Western Ghats. The hills, which constitute a perfect environment for orchids, are isolated by arid country toward the north and east which is not suitable for orchids and by the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea in the south and west. Across an immense distance of water and semidesert the South Indian orchid populations are influenced by the nearest orchid growing areas: Sri Lanka in the south and the Himalaya and south-east Asia in the north and east. Of about 200 species, more than 30 are shared with Sri Lanka and more than 60 with the Himalayan and south-east Asian region. Fifty percent of the species are endemic to the Western Ghats.

Most parts of these hills receive a fair amount of rain and in fact some are among the wettest spots on earth. This rainfall supports a lush tropical rainforest, the home for some 60 genera of orchids. The majority of these orchids grow at an altitude from 500m. to 1300m. Forty percent of the plants are terrestrial and 60% epiphyte.

No exact records of the destruction of the forests of the Western Ghat are available, but not more than 10% of the original forest may be left. Only the most hardy of orchids can survive the destruction of their habitat and nearly all disappear with the receding forests. Habitat destruction therefore is the primary threat to these plants, as in South India they have not been much endangered through collection by orchid lovers. Most of these orchids are rather inconspicuous and that saves them from over-collection. Although this may prevent them from disappearing due to the orchid craze, it may, on the other hand, also hasten their extinction. They will disappear unnoticed, attracting at the best, or worst, only scientific interest. Often the scientific interest merely helps to convert them into more or less well prepared herbarium sheets!

The preservation of these plants poses a serious problem. They often occur in isolated situations, especially the rare endemic species. It is impossible to create nature reserves for each and every species. Their specialized growing habits make them difficult to cultivate and this presents an obstruction to *ex situ* preservation. Previous efforts to establish living plant collections of the Western Ghats orchids have only had limited success so far. Generally the

more delicate plants do not survive because their specific requirements cannot be re-created in cultivation.

A detailed survey of the ecological conditions of each species, and great care to simulate these conditions in cultivation, have helped to overcome these problems with the orchid collection of the Botanical Sanctuary. Presently more than 150 species thrive well in their simulated natural environment. A comprehensive record of data is kept for every accession, started at the time of collection. Place and time of collection, ecological conditions, time of flowering and fruiting and details of cultivation and propagation are noted. About three-quarters of the orchids listed as rare and endangered in the region are already in cultivation; to mention just a few, *Dendrobium microbulbon*, *Disperis monophylla* and both of the most threatened South Indian *Vanilla* species. In addition to the plants already recognized as threatened, there are several species which should, at least, be regarded vulnerable. Different lists of rare and endangered plants report about 40 orchid species from South India. Realistically this number could well be doubled. For example, none of the lists mentions the miniature orchids of genera

such as *Oberonia* and *Eria*, of which nearly all are in a precarious situation. All in all, at least one third of the Western Ghats orchids deserve the care and attention of conservationists.

The primary function of the collection at the Botanical Sanctuary is to provide plants for re-introduction to the wild. Another purpose is the supply of material for research, and last but not least, to function as a conservation collection to promote environmental education. The last role is of particular importance in developing countries, where education tends to be pragmatic, with an outlook directed towards instant utility. The collection in the Botanical Sanctuary is open to the public and thereby helps in the creation of awareness of the beauty and value of the native flora. A program for individuals with special interest in orchids is also organized which gives an introduction to the cultivation of native orchids and provides them with plants from the nursery.

The same factors that relate to the cultivation of rare orchids apply also to transplanting them back into the wild and it is an operation that is faced with a number of difficulties. The re-introduction of epiphytic species presents an especially



difficult test of the perseverance of conservationists. At present no satisfactory answer to this challenge has been found but nonetheless further ecological research and accumulating experience in handling the plants should enable us to achieve favorable results.

The terrible threat to the world's biological diversity calls for utmost dexterity, tenacity and efficiency on the part of conservationists: to save what can be saved before the dismal predictions made become reality. *Ex situ* preservation, through the agency of botanic gardens, offers a powerful tool to support preservation *in situ* towards an effective world conservation strategy.

Preserving South Indian Pteridophytes

Introduction

Like pollinating insects, humans seem to be impressed by flowering plants. Whatever the reason for this, the ferns and their allies have too often been neglected by botanists and lay-persons alike. Nevertheless, merely in terms of their numbers, more than 12,000 species, this group needs to be considered if we want to understand the ecology of our world. As well as their aesthetic or economic value, their antiquity and cosmopolitan distribution makes them a fundamental element of the biosphere. Pteridophytes play a vital role in tropical ecosystems, particularly in the rainforests, where it is estimated that 65% of them occur.

India has a wealth of pteridophytes, with some 900 species of ferns, together with 85 species of clubmoss and several other fern allies. Most occur either in the Himalaya or in the Western and Eastern Ghats of southern India. The World Conservation Monitoring Centre lists 82 pteridophyte species as threatened, or in some cases extinct, in India.

The pteridophyte flora of the Western Ghats

Most of the southern Indian pteridophytes are found in the Western Ghats. These mountains, the principal geographical feature of southern India, extend 1,400

km along the west coast, about 50 km inland. They rise steeply to an average altitude of 900 m (reaching up to 2,600 m). Like the rest of India, the region has a monsoon climate dominated by the southwest and north-east monsoon winds. The annual rainfall is 2,000 - 6,000 mm, with the western slopes receiving the greatest precipitation. The rugged terrain and abundant rainfall support a diverse and unique flora.

Because of the region's geographical isolation, with the sea on three sides and a vast arid area to the north, the flora of southern India has a high level of endemism. This is less pronounced amongst the pteridophytes, although recent studies have shown that about 18% of the approximately 270 fern species found in southern India are endemic to the region.

The shade and moisture loving pteridophytes thrive between 700 and 2,000m altitude, their altitudinal range directly related to the amount of precipitation. Thus, a species which will grow only at an altitude of, say, 1,300 m with an annual precipitation of 1,000 mm will occur at much lower altitudes if rainfall increases. These plants grow in varied habitats, from high altitude forests to aquatic habitats, terrestrial, epiphytic and epilithic. Although they are generally more adaptable than tropical angiosperms, many species are still restricted to certain environments. About 23% of the species have a wide altitudinal range, whereas the rest are restricted to certain elevations. This proportion also applies to the light requirements of these plants, around 75% of the species being sun-loving and about 25% found in both shady and sunny sites.

The epiphytes and more than two thirds of the terrestrial species grow in forests, which with wetlands are the most threatened ecosystems of the region. India's 2.7% annual rate of deforestation is among the highest on earth. New roads, the timber industry, hydro-electric projects, settlement schemes and population pressure put the few remaining forest areas in a precarious situation. Only about 5% of the southern Indian mountains still

have intact forests and even these are partially tampered with by man. A recent survey, which enumerates 252 species and varieties of pteridophyte in the region, lists 90 as rare and many others as only locally common. With so small an area remaining under forest cover and the threat of further deforestation about half of the pteridophyte species of southern India can be regarded as either vulnerable, threatened or endangered.

The fern collection

The *ex situ* conservation of southern Indian pteridophytes has for more than a decade been a main concern of the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary. The site of the garden, at an average elevation of 750 m, with a climate of high humidity and rainfall, and its proximity to a large tract of rainforest, provides an excellent environment for the cultivation of pteridophytes.

The fernarium of the Sanctuary is set out according to the ecological requirements of the plants, with special consideration being given to their varied light requirements. Intrasectional structures provide room for epiphytic, terrestrial and aquatic species; each section has greenhouses and mist-chambers for the very tender and difficult species and for the acclimatization of new accessions. The sections are divided into nurseries, where studies on the horticultural requirements

of species and small-scale propagation are carried out, and field gene banks, where cultivation and propagation take place on a large scale. At the time of collection from the wild, extensive ecological data are recorded. These data form the basis for the layout of the field gene banks and the cultivation regime for each species.

Although the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary concentrates almost exclusively on conservation we consider it important to keep the garden open to the public and to offer them an insight into the state of the environment, the threats it faces and measures taken towards its preservation. Visitors can enjoy the garden just for its aesthetic setting and also for the educational value of the exhibits, backed up by interpretative labels and boards. Researchers and scientists use the facilities of the Sanctuary, which include a library, nurseries, gene tanks, plant records, access to the forest. The nursery provides ornamental plants, including robust species of dophytes, free of charge to the interested visitor. Guided group tours are also arranged.

Far from being insignificant, pteridophytes play an important role in nearly all the world's ecosystems. It is time that their status be recognized, and that we give them the attention and protection they deserve as indispensable members of organism Earth. ❖



What Narayana Guru Is Not

Nancy Yeilding

*Presented at the 1979 Annual Convention
of the Narayana Gurukula, Varkala, Kerala.*

When I was first asked to give a paper on what Narayana Guru is not, I felt a little strange at taking a negative approach. Then, one day, as Guru Nitya was talking about the Guru to some friends in Nainital, he unfolded before us a vision of the power and clarity afforded by the use of the negative as a cutting edge and the depth of understanding one can be led to when it is wielded with love. And as I started to work, I experienced the effect that the Vedantic method of *neti neti* (not this, not this) has on the mind, both focusing it and refining one's awareness of that which is beyond definition. By exploring a number of things which Narayana Guru is not, perhaps we can gain a glimpse into the subtle realms of the spirit that do not easily surrender their mysteries and treasures to the cold onslaught of direct enquiry and thus come to a closer understanding of why and how he has touched—and continues to influence—thousands of lives.

Although we are all sitting together in the headquarters of Narayana Gurukula, specifically situated in Kerala, where he was born and where he taught, the memory of the talk in Nainital calls to mind one thing which Narayana Guru is not. He is not fixed in any locale or country. That afternoon in Nainital, Guru Nitya taught the Guru's composition, *Vāsudevāstakam*, to a friend who is a classical singer and brought out some of its subtle meanings. As he spoke, a familiar look appeared in the eyes of all present, indicating that each spirit, so often sleeping in lethargy, was enlivened by the beauty and vision of the verses. This look found its epitome in a shared tear drop of wonder as later that

day we listened to our friend put the verses to music. The open quality of the Guru's word enables it to again and again transform from inspiration to fruition, the universal finding expression in many individual modes. I have seen the same look brighten the faces of many students and friends, well-known and newly met, as they have chanted the verses of Narayana Guru, or read their English translations, or listened to an explanation of their meanings, or felt their applications to their own lives. This same brightness can shine in eyes in Calicut and Bhilai, Chicago and San Francisco, Sydney and Auckland, London and Singapore. Although Narayana Guru lived and taught only in South India, and though many thousands of people cling to him as Kerala's own saint and many centers and organizations there now bear his name, the purity of his living example is universal in its nature. His perfect blending of the highest ideals of contemplative philosophy with the deepest understanding about and compassion for the pragmatic demands and struggles of daily life gives his wisdom a solidity that appeals to and answers the burning life-questions of people regardless of their cultural background or native place. In the same vein, he is not fixed in time. Although he lived between the years of 1854 and 1928, his impact can be as intense now or a hundred years from now as it was then on a heart opening in hope, a soul searching in agony, an intellect striving for clarity and a life yearning towards meaning and beauty.

Narayana Guru is neither high nor low. Although he is exalted and honored by many, with many pompous occasions, elaborate ceremonies, costly statues and ornate temples, such things have their origin in the needs of individuals and organ-

izations to flatter their own sense of worth rather than in the Guru, for his life was one of simplicity, simplicity in its most profound sense. His years of penance and solitude eradicated every vestige of particular preference, social pretension, parochial loyalty, emotional attachment and self-importance from his beingness before he emerged to share his light with the world.

One day, while wandering near the area where Ramana Maharishi stayed, to gratify the wishes of both of their disciples that they meet, he sat on a rock on a nearby hillside. Ramana Maharishi came and sat on another rock some distance away. After they sat for awhile, Ramana Maharishi went inside. Narayana Guru turned to Ramana Maharishi's disciples and asked them: "Do you know him?" They answered: "Yes." He turned to his own disciples and asked: "Do you know him?" They also answered: "Yes." After some time he said: "Then only we do not know." *(It was Narayana Guru's custom to refer to himself as "We.") Then he dictated the verses of *Municarya Pancakam (The Way of the Recluse)* to one of his disciples. They were given to Ramana Maharishi and forgotten. Years later, when Swami Mangalananda visited there, Ramana Maharishi pulled these verses from under his pillow and gave them to him:

*For the hermit whose attachments are gone
His arm, makes it not for him a pillow?
The earth whereon his footsteps fall
Gaining sin-dispelling power,
Makes it not for him a couch?
For such as he, what use of goods here?
Ever merged as his mind is
in the verity of "That thou art,"
His bliss transcends inclusively
all forms of joy.*

*Desireless, as he is for nothing ever asking,
Partaking of food brought to him by chance
The body just to sustain;
From all cares free,
sleeping on the thorough-fare,
Ever immersed in the vision of the Self,
The hermit, attaining to the unity of Life
and Self-Supreme,*

*He comes to his own state, radiant-everlasting,
Of Being-Knowing-Joy.*

*In discourse the recluse excels,
But often restrained in words, he is seen here
as one ignorant.*

*Wandering, sitting, or standing still
Having once come to this changing body,
sanctioned by time,
He ever contemplates the state
Of Selfhood's uncut Consciousness Supreme.*

*Outside the scope of what is spoken of as
existing or non-existing
As unthinkable, ungraspable, minute,
non-short, stainless or supreme.
Immobile, erect, or most exalted,
He seeks to attain that all-fourth (turiya) state,
Turning away from this and that
As one who aims properly
To reach beyond both being and non-being.*

*Let him live in his own home, or in the forest,
Or at the water's edge — no matter;
With mind ever fixed in the Absolute
The yogi ever dwells seeing all here
in terms of Selfhood.
Like a mirage in a desert land,
He enjoys bliss, that Silent one,
Contemplating That Absolute supreme
which is beyond all compare.*

(Translation by Nataraja Guru)

After remarking that he did not know Ramana Maharishi, the Guru then went on to compose these verses so full of insight—he thus pointed out that our usual sense of knowing a person based on accumulated information and various social interactions is an altogether different experience from the inner attunedness that can reveal and commune with the essence of another's being. Although the Guru was ostensibly describing Ramana Maharishi, the verses are also an accurate picture of his own life. He dressed without ornamentation, ate whatever was given to him, sat or slept on couch or ground with equal ease. He responded to everything which came with an equanimity which was never upset by desires or disturbances, preferences or dislikes. He walked quietly

from place to place, aware of every living being around him, always ready to respond to a need, whether that of a hungry, dirty child, a small scraggly dog, a sick old man or a troubled ruler. As he responded to each situation without being motivated by any vested interest or personal opinion, his quiet comments and uncluttered directions penetrated to the heart of the situation presented to him with effectiveness and empathy. We can see in his ways a healthy respect for the hardness of the facts of life upon those who are suffering from their pinch and a capacity to respond to immediate needs. At the same time, he had an unwavering identity with the fountain-spring of all existence, all sustenance and all bliss which he brought to bear on every situation. This never-ceasing identity with the One did not stand in the way of but only enhanced his everabiding compassion and brotherhood with the many. At one of his ashrams, a man was caught stealing jackfruit at night. The Guru asked him: "Did you come and take the jackfruit in the night?" "Yes," was the reply. Everyone thought that he would be punished but the Guru said: "Don't come at night; there might be snakes. Come in the day and get plenty." He was often known to tend the hungry and sick himself, washing, feeding and

caring for them with his own hands.

This same consideration extended to all living beings. The Guru was to install a Virabhadra (manifestation of an aspect of Siva) in a temple at Ayiramtengu. Guru already had the image in his hand when he saw some ants crushed dead on the spot where he was to place the stone. After standing still for awhile he put the image down and asked the mason to do the installation. This heightened sensibility was often spiced with a robust sense of humor that drove his point home. He was asked by a protagonist of non-vegetarian food: "Don't we drink the milk of cow and goat? Then what is wrong in eating their meat also?" Guru replied: "Nothing wrong." After some time, with a smile, he added: "Is your mother living?" "No, Guru, she is dead." Then Guru asked, "Buried or eaten?" Even so, he once instructed his followers not to make the people of an area feel bad or guilty about eating fish when he saw their extreme poverty and discovered that was the only nourishing food they could get. Through such anecdotes of his life and his compositions we gain a clearer and clearer picture of the neutrality and universality we can aspire to in our own lives. Every minute of his time was devoted to contemplation of the Self but (contrary to the images or ide-



as that are often aspired to and held about a contemplative way of life) that contemplation was ever ready to take the form of common sense and caring.

Although some may look on his family caste, his unassuming way of life, or his willingness to minister to what is regarded as the dregs of society with not even a hint of the sense of top-dog and under-dog, as indications of a lowly position, his inner light that saw no duality and his complete non-participation in the fabric of society place him beyond any consideration of status. His absolutist stance gives him a stature that transcends social modes yet can be recognized by any sincere and thoughtful person. He inspires reverence again and again, even in those for whom that is not a common or culturally-biased experience.

Narayana Guru is not of any caste. Before coming to India, I would not have thought this so important to mention, knowing that he is loved and even worshiped by millions for his contribution to the eradication of the stranglehold of caste hatred and restrictions in South India. But I want to relate to you an encounter that took place in South India just a month ago and which I have been sorry to learn is quite a common type of occurrence.

One friend was sitting in the reception area of a photo studio while another was inside having his picture taken. The receptionist, a young man, asked: "Can I help you?"

F : "I'm waiting for my friend who is having his picture taken."

R : "Are you a journalist?"

F: "No."

R: "What do you do?"

F: "I live in an ashram."

R: "What ashram?"

F: "Narayana Gurukula."

R: "Oh! We are also followers of Narayana Guru. What caste are you?"

F: "Human."

R: "Yes, but"

F: "You say you are a follower of Narayana Guru. He says: 'Do not ask, speak or think caste'."

R: "But you must belong to the Ezhava

community."

Just then the friend who was having his picture taken came out. He is from Europe.

F: "This man is also a follower of Narayana Guru but he surely cannot be an Ezhava."

R : "Yes, but he is a foreigner."

One of the reasons for the occurrence of such encounters is that right among people who reverence the Guru are many who have become so blind to the substance of his teaching that they use his name to prop up organizations that benefit members who identify themselves with a certain caste. This group claims the Guru as theirs, making it difficult for people to come near enough to discover the Guru's teachings for themselves. This unfortunate development began even in the Guru's lifetime to the extent that he found it necessary to declare to a gathering of this group: "I am not of your caste. I have no caste. I belong to humankind." This universal outlook has been exemplified by the Guru's successors, Nataraja Guru and Guru Nitya, whose life-patterns and teachings have made the Guru accessible to friends around the world and brought the light of his wisdom to bear on many lives, regardless of caste, nation, religion or cultural background. Unfortunately, in India caste prejudices have become handy tools in the hands of politicians to exploit people. Political groups are formed on the basis of caste allegiance and age-old wounds continue to fester. So I think it pertinent that we remember that Narayana Guru has shown us in many ways how we, like he, can truly be of no caste, neither seeing nor making any divisions between people.

Even from his childhood there are stories of how he purposefully touched someone regarded as of a lower caste and then laughingly touched members of his family, thus gently mocking their prejudices and subtly attacking the foundation of the whole social structure of untouchability. Later in life, he drew near him students, disciples and devotees of all religions and caste backgrounds. He would see

a small boy, aimless in hunger and filth, cast-off by family and society. With his own hand he would wash and feed that boy and later teach him to correctly chant Sanskrit verses. Such boys would live with him in his ashrams and help with the preparation and serving of food. Devotees of the Guru and other interested people who came to the ashram had to surrender their caste prejudices because of the Guru's complete non-recognition of such barriers and his compassion for all.

This compassion was not limited to the down-trodden. Once an orthodox Brahmin came to see Guru and was discussing a very intricate aspect of Sanskrit grammar from Panini with him. Narayana Guru was giving his elucidation and the questions and answers went on a long time. Lunch time came and the scholar was invited to join. He replied that he was sorry but he could not eat food that was not prepared by Brahmins. Narayana Guru asked that he be given a fresh coconut so that he could drink its water but the people around grew very angry. Then Guru said: "Why should you be angry with a person who is already punishing himself by not taking food? You can at least show him some sympathy and give him some coconut water."

Although his example inspired a whole movement that reformed many injustices in the social fabric of Kerala, the Guru himself was not a social reformer. Social reformers spiral out, with varying degrees of effectiveness, from a central locus of identity of themselves as helpers and as some other person or group as those needing help, as top-dog and under-dog. In such an approach, one pitfall after another is encountered that stems from this inherent sense of superiority and agency, no matter how well-intentioned the efforts are. Narayana Guru comments on this in *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* (v. 43):

Even those of good action are caught by nature and whirled around in vicious circles; one should know that non-action does not bring release from perverted action, only the non-desire for the fruit of action.

(Translated by Guru Nitya)

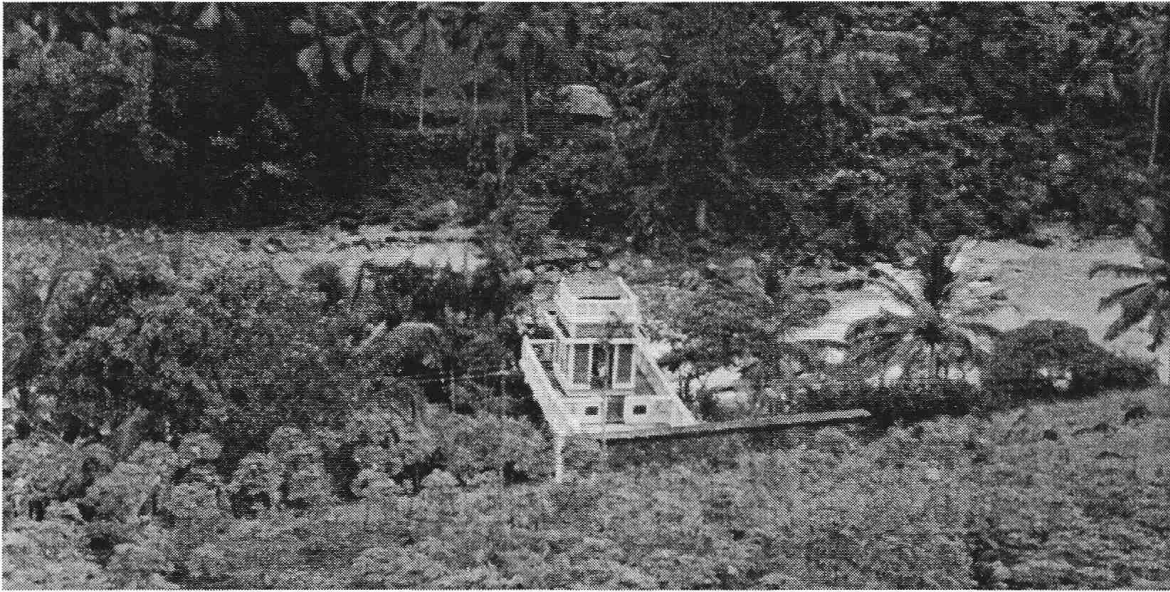
In his autobiography, Nataraja Guru relates an incident which outlines the Guru's absolutist way. Nataraja Guru had collected money during his college days in Madras and had organized a "poor feeding" for the people of the locality. When Narayana Guru visited and asked him what was happening, he replied that he was "feeding the poor." The Guru's response was: "Which poor? Are we all not the poor?" Nataraja Guru continues:

A new clarification about the very nature of altruism or philanthropy dawned on me when I looked at the silent and sedate face of the Guru who put me a simple question: "Which poor people?" He seemed to suggest that all of us were poor internally if not externally, or none was poorer than the other. By feeling sympathy for the so-called poor section of society the poverty becomes shared at once in principal at least and the division between the two sections becomes or ought to be automatically abolished. This was a subtle difference that one might dismiss as highly dialectical but all the same it did the trick for me forever, because I began to realize that the real poverty resided in my heart and, when I came under the influence of a dualistic sense of pity and felt myself to be a benefactor, the very purpose of beneficence in a total or absolute sense was defeated.

In addition to the ease with which one, with the best of intentions, can slip into this sense of duality, martyrdom often enters such endeavors. Nataraja Guru recounts a further explanation which offers us guidance to strike the subtle balance necessary to avoid this:

The Guru himself on another occasion clarified the matter when he put the delicate question in the form of an arithmetical problem. Supposing there were one hundred hungry people to be fed and ninety nine had sat down for the meal, while one remained over to serve the others, remaining hungry when all were happily going through with the feast. The suffering of this last man would reflect on the total situation as a negative element which would detract from the general happiness and compromise it all together. Philanthropy has thus its own dialectical laws which do not brook violation... In popular maxims such as

Temple at Aruvipuram



"Charity begins at home," and the other that indicates the opposite, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," we have the two different approaches to doing good to fellow man. Both are true in the context of the over-all absolute Value, and how to reconcile one with the other is an art which the absolutist way of life alone could justify. It was the Guru Narayana who, in his own unobtrusive way, put me on the path of the Absolutist approach to this problem, and once the new approach was grasped in spirit it could be made to apply to other and in fact every other department of thought or activity. There is always a relative and an absolutist approach to problems and the former spells tragedy while the latter solves all problems.

It is this same unequivocal approach that enabled Narayana Guru to bring about many religious reforms and inspire the very core of the religious instinct to rise to more sublime repressions in hundreds of thousands of people. And yet he was not a religious leader. He did not espouse any religion, nor did he teach any set of beliefs. He encouraged people to rid themselves and their temples of dead rituals without meaning, cloudy esoteric practices and limited loyalties. At that time the temple was the spiritual and social center of power in the villages of Kerala. That power was jealously guarded by the theocrats who employed ritual to mystify the uneducated and restrictions to prop up their own privileged position. Thus there

was a whole descending hierarchy from the priests who could enter the inner sanctum to the next level who were the caretakers to those who could just enter the grounds of worship from a distance, to the unfortunates who were never allowed to come within sight of the temple even though their money supported it.

In this context, Narayana Guru entered with gentle dignity and consecrated a series of temples to different deities open to all. Although he himself no longer experienced any duality between the Divine and his own Self, he was aware of the needs of the people around him who were steeped in ignorance. For them, being able to come to a place free of the noise, dirt and struggle of daily existence was calming and uplifting. He recognized that worship, tuning themselves to the divine transcendent aspect of existence, could have a very purifying effect on their lives. He responded to these needs with an ever-fresh spontaneity that recognized the specific requirements of each situation so that the temples were dedicated to different aspects of the divine and each founding of a temple was allowed to develop in its own way. Whenever he installed a deity, he would also teach a hymn which revalued the meaning of the deity, thus leading the people from the known to the unknown, from where they stood to look at where they ought to stand. In Aruvipuram he

lifted up a smooth river stone in the shape of a *śivalinga* and installed it in an atmosphere of purity and simplicity. At first:

To some present it all seemed strange and suspicious. Was the young ascetic fitted to perform such a serious ceremony? Was he orthodox enough for it? Had they not heard him talk of Siva as a mere historical figure, some ancient hunter who lived in the Himalayas who, because of his virtues as a leader of his people, was loved and began to be worshipped with godly attributes? Was he pretending to be a devotee? Would the wrath of God descend on the village for such breaking away from tradition? These were the thoughts that passed through the mind of some of the crowd as, standing nearer to him than the rest, they watched his features to find a reply to their doubt.

No answer to these separate questions seemed available. He stood in the center, his face eloquent with expression, and with his eyes lifted in silent prayer. "Let increased blessing come! Let the poor and needy be comforted! Let them prosper and let not their daily bread fail them from day to day! May they learn to be truthful and seek the ways of happiness each in cooperation with the other! May they learn to be cleaner day by day! Let all hatred and dissension vanish from among them! Let them learn to respect the feelings of the least little creature of God! Let at least a portion of the Great Truth dawn on them and bring them consolation!" These were the wishes with which he lifted up his eyes.

As he thus prepared himself for the act which was to be the living link, not only between the past and the future, but also between his deepest feelings and those of the ignorant millions for whose sake he was performing the act, in outward evidence as it were of his earnestness, the questioning villagers saw on his resolute features, rolling down in unceasing streams, just simple childish tears.

Silence prevailed while the crowd, moved by the same contagious emotion, looked at one another in the starlight. Soon the installation ceremony was over. The day had dawned. The clarion call of the conch rent the sky and as the white-clad crowd began to disperse beyond the hills, each felt the petals of a new hope unfolding within; and victory seemed to reign.

(*Word of the Guru*, Nataraja Guru p. 19-21)

Whenever a temple or center began to become established, with different groups taking over its administration and asserting their power, the Guru quietly moved on. He would go to some new place of beauty and add his serenity to its peacefulness. Soon people would begin to gather around him and the need for a temple or a school would evolve. He was also aware that in time, the influence of modern education would lead to a growing lack of interest in temples and a mistrust of the use of images. Although many of his followers found this hard to believe he clearly foresaw this development. In the founding of the temple at Śivagiri, he stressed that if the image is very beautiful, it would be preserved irregardless of this trend. He called in many sculptors, artisans and architects to contribute their best inspiration and skill to create a temple of great beauty, flooded with light. After looking at images of gods and goddesses from Rome, Greece and India he followed his own aesthetic sense and installed a Saraswati in a blooming lotus made of *pancaloham* (alloy of five metals) so it would have a golden gleam. Many years later, when a team of American professors visited the temple, they stood in the fresh ocean sand strewn around it, looking over a vista of winding river, rolling hills covered with coconut trees, rice paddies and the ocean in the distance. One of them remarked: "You don't have to tell us that the man who created this was a visionary. We can perceive his aesthetic sensibility from the place he has chosen." This is a fine example of his universal and timeless appeal.

Once the Guru was approached by some Christian missionaries who wanted to convert him to Christianity. At this time Guru was around sixty and the missionaries were around forty years of age. They asked him to accept Jesus and be saved. He replied that he had been saved much before they had been born. They were confused at this and said: "But you are a Hindu Guru." Then he asked them if Jesus

Christ came only for a few people. They said: "No, he came for all humanity."

Guru : "I also am among them."

Missionaries: "No, you haven't been baptized."

Guru : "What about the people who came before Christ? They weren't baptized."

Missionaries: "That is all right. But those who have come after Christ need to be baptized to be saved."

Guru (to those present): "Look at their wonderful faith. I want to learn the Bible."

He made them promise to send someone to teach him the Bible. Mr. K. M. John was sent to teach Guru. He asked John a question about Jesus' teaching and then gave an answer to it that was so profound that John decided to stay with him for life. They kept reading the Bible but with the Guru as the teacher and John as the student.

As these incidents show, the Guru did not try to teach any particular religious belief or code but he responded to the deep human need to express reverence and to aspire to higher values; by his example he showed that this can be done without proselytization. This is carried out today in homes and Gurukulas around the world when time is set aside for sitting together with a sense of peacefulness and gratitude and to receive the timeless Word with an open mind and seeking heart. Any program repeated daily can be encroached upon by layers of ritual on the one hand or become sloppy and empty on the other, but we can again and again turn to the spontaneity of the living Guru within us for guidance.

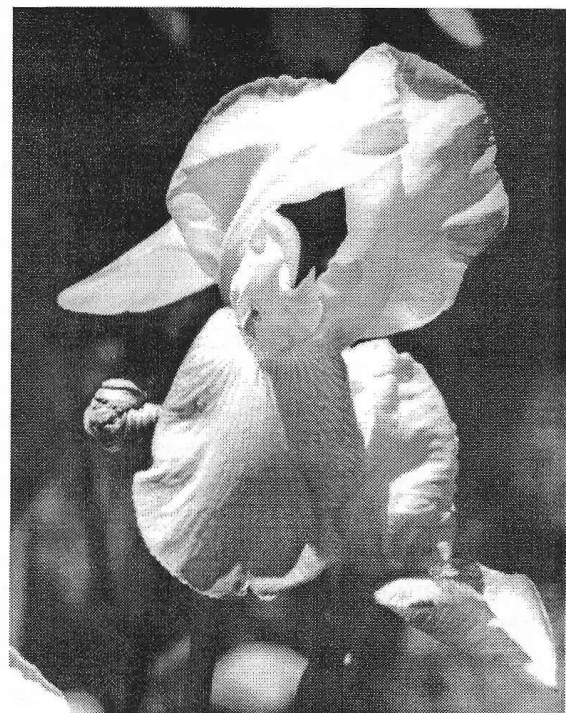
Each time we turn within to attune ourselves to the Guru's essence, we affirm that the Guru is not a person fixed in any particular physical body or defined by a certain personality. In the Guru's life we do not find the same kind of personality traits or flavorful anecdotes that usually fill the pages of biographies of famous people. Before he emerged into public view, he purged himself of the particularized preferences, urges, loyalties, mind-sets, thought patterns and desires that

usually define and demarcate an individual. He understood that these are the blindfolds that prevent us from seeing the one Truth and the walls that block us from experiencing our Self in all. So he withdrew from all the pleasures and nourishments of societal existence into his own inner realms where he gained the strength to shed all such props and to emerge with a boundless sense of beingness. In verse fifty-two of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* he gives a description of his inner experience:

*The sky will glow as radiant sound-
on that day, all visible configurations will
become extinct in that;
thereafter, the sound that completes
the three-petaled awareness
becomes silent and self-luminous.*

The Guru-essence in Narayana Guru lives in his teachings and shines through his life, not in his physical form. It is the very shedding of identity with that form and purification of egoistic colorations that enabled the spirit in him to attain a transparency to radiate the pure effulgence of the One Self that is enshrined in all beings.

(Continued in next issue.)



World Government News

Kashmir "Mondialized"

Garry Davis

In a letter of May 26, 2002 to both India's Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf, Garry Davis, founder/head of the World Government of World Citizens, authorized both leaders to stand down their military forces over the territory of Kashmir. He further enjoins the national leaders to observe Article 42, Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter authorizing only the Security Council "to maintain international peace and security." Copies have been forwarded to the United Nations and other national leaders.

"Neither India nor Pakistan 'owns' Kashmir," Davis wrote. "It is part of the entire world territory which, spiritually, belongs to God—Whom both Muslims and Hindus worship—and, in earthly fact, to humanity in its familial wholeness. In humanity's name, therefore, I am declaring that part of the world territory known as 'Kashmir' to be 'mondialized' in accordance with the Charter of Cahors,* the first mondialized community." The Mondialization movement, beginning in 1949 in France, now comprises over 900 cities, communities and states throughout the world.

"No national leader, including Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin, can or will propose a global solution for the status of Kashmir," continued Davis, acting World Coordinator. "Our government, since its founding on 1953, has registered tens of thousands of individuals from Kashmir, Pakistan and India as World Citizens. We have the right and responsibility, therefore, to condemn any national initiative which could endanger our fundamental human rights, in particular the right to live enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by

Article 1: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of fellowship."

"Heads of state are today bound by what is euphemistically called 'international humanitarian law'," said Davis from World Government House in South Burlington, VT, "which defines the so-called rules of war. But, in a recent advisory decision of the International Court of Justice, the production, threat and use of nuclear weaponry has been declared illegal. Only if a nation was threatened with extinction, the Court argued, was the use of nuclear arms justified. Neither India nor Pakistan, both members of the United Nations, fall into that category in the present conflict over Kashmir. Hence both states are illegally using the nuclear threat not only against each other, but against humanity itself as radioactivity, revealed by the Chernobel meltdown, has no frontiers. Thus the Indian Prime Minister and Pakistan President can be indicted within the context of 'crimes against humanity,' a Nuremberg felony, by the International Criminal Court at The Hague."

Davis, now 80, a former Broadway actor and WWII B-17 bomber pilot, renounced his United States nationality in 1948 in Paris and declared himself a World Citizen. Thus began the world citizenship movement which evolved into the World Government of World Citizens in 1953. With offices in Washington, DC and Tokyo, Japan, the WGWC counts over 1 million registered citizens and has issued over 3 million documents based on UDHR articles, the main being its World Passport which has been recognized by over 150 nations on a case-by-case basis.

***The Charter of Mundialization
Cahors, France -- July 3, 1949**

We, the inhabitants of Cahors declare through this charter that our town hereby becomes world territory.

Our action means that:

1) We declare that our security and welfare are linked to the security and welfare of all towns and districts of the world, these standing like ourselves today under the menace of totally destructive war.

2) We wish to work in peace with all towns and districts of the world, to cooperate with them so as to establish a world rule of law which will assure our common protection under the aegis of a democratically elected and controlled world federal authority.

3) We call on all towns, districts and organizations of all kinds to join us in sending their delegate to the first World States General so as to prepare world elections for the organization and safeguarding of world peace.

4) We claim the right of direct election

to the People's Constituent Assembly: one delegate per million inhabitants.

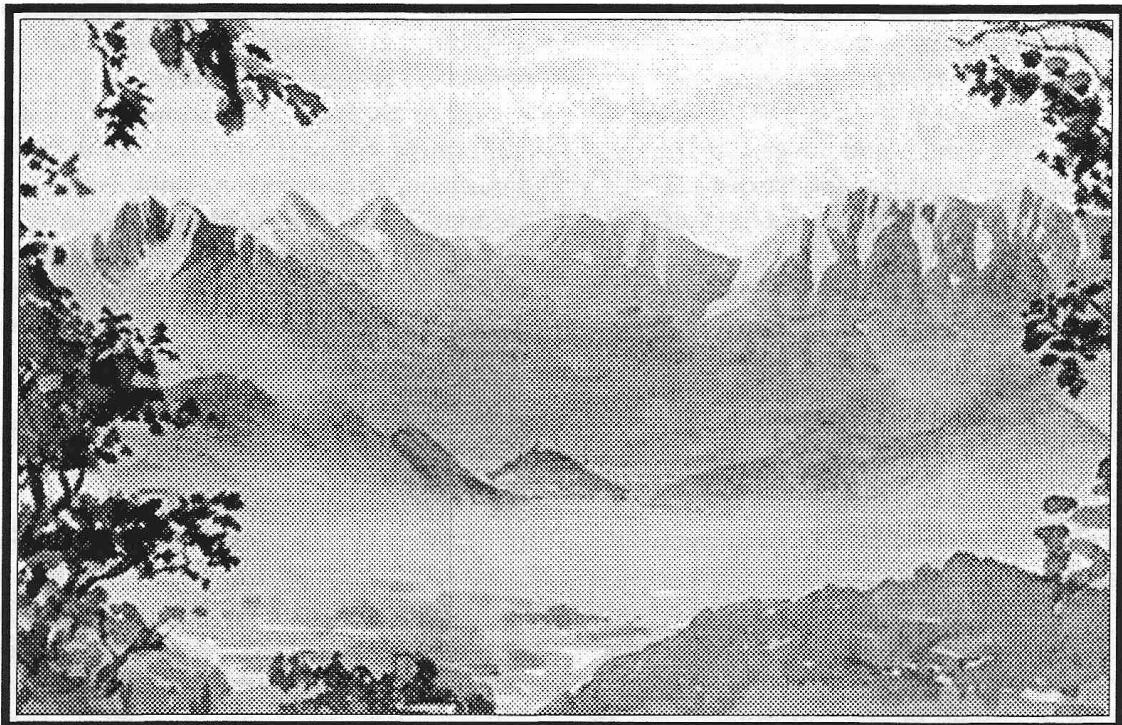
5) We request of our own government that funds be made available from the military budget and transferred to an international world fund which can be used for the financing of the above world elections.

6) Without renouncing anything of our attachment, our duties, and our rights toward our own region and toward our nation, we declare symbolically that our territory is world territory and, as such, it is joined to the community of our whole world.

7) We call on all towns and all districts of the earth to join us in this charter of solidarity, a charter for those who live under the present menace of destruction.

This Charter of Mundialization was adopted by the Cahors Town Council, then by 59% of the Cahors population.

Email: info@worldservice.org
[http://www.worldservice.org/
mondialization](http://www.worldservice.org/mondialization)



East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



Narayana Gurukula, Fernhill, Gurupuja 2002

The days leading up to the annual Gurupuja are like churning a giant flywheel into motion. Paintwork to planning, fund raising to provisions, one by one the details are worked out in the spirit of the Upaniṣads:

*Having an eye on every side
and a face on every side,
Having an arm on every side
and a foot on every side,
The One God forges together
with hands, with wings,
Creating the heaven and the earth.
Svetasvatara Upaniṣad (3.3)*

As events unfold the flywheel dissolves into a nebulous wisdom cloud engulfing everybody. The very nucleus of the nebulous warmth is the love and Grace of the Gurus. Like one sun reflected in a hundred mirrors, we experience the One reflected in each and everybody.

Gurupuja on the 12th of May was a special day. A cool westerly wind wafted across the colorful marquee as everybody sat around the sacrificial fire. The reverberation of the Homam mantras rose into the air, followed by the sonorous chants of the Isavasya Upaniṣad and the Madhu Brahmana. As the prasadam was being

distributed words of wisdom, rich in universal values were also shared. According to the program we heard speeches based on the life and teachings of the Gurus.

If the 12th was a special day, the 14th was an extraordinary day. Most of the ceremonies were centered around the Dhyana Mandiram of Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati. Everybody was touched with a rare mixture of reverence, gratitude, soul searching, and an all pervasive Grace that persisted throughout the day.

Guru Nitya's Symphony of Values came alive through the visions of poets, danseuse, film-director, globe trotter and the indefinable grace that flowed in abundance. The inspiration of the day turned solemn during the 5 pm meeting around the Dhyana Mandiram. And finally turned sublime as darkness accentuated the flickering flames of hundreds of oil lamps, which created a magical atmosphere, fully complemented by the crescent moon, stars and shining planets.

A simple and tasty meal of soup and bread prepared us for a presentation on the Traditional Values of the Todas. We were taken through a fascinating slide show covering many important aspects of Toda culture: their rituals, myths, traditional relationship with the environment, and understanding of herbs and flowers.

Seminars were conducted on the days that followed, interspersed with poems, impromptu musical recitals, and video shows. We felt the portals of our minds open and new ideas stream in, transporting us to new levels of consciousness. Finally when all the words had been spoken, the songs sung, and presentations complete, there remained a numinous elation, in the silence of which we experienced a well-celebrated Gurupuja 2002.

Vyasa Prasad

The Narayana Gurukula in Fernhill, Ooty, continues to be an oasis of sustenance in the increasing desertification of life. And the recently concluded Gurupuja celebrations served not only to provide waters of spiritual nurturance to *sisyas*, but to reactivate the well-springs of the *sisyas* themselves.

Some of the highlights of this year's Guru Puja celebrations included the Mahasamadhi Day of Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati and seminars on Vedanta, Taoism, Confucianism, Zen, Life in the Gurukula, and Guru Nitya's Symphony of Values. Each day began with Yoga classes, followed later by a homam, pravacanam, music and then the Seminars. In the evenings there would be dance recitals, art movie screenings, slide shows, etc.

The atmosphere was one of enquiry, camaraderie, and humor. Was it Stephen Seacock who once said, "Students should go, warm with the glow of learning, from the class room to the library?" Some of the topics, particularly those on Taoism, Confucianism, and Zen, certainly sent me to the library.

In my own paper on "Poetry as a Symphonic Value," I underscored the homage that the *Agnipurana* and *Kavyalan-kara* pay to the poet, celebrating him as the Supreme Creator, Brahma, who transforms the universe as he desires – if this universe appears to be made of Name and Form, the poet's province is the world of Name, while Brahma's is the world of Form. I also pointed out that the Tang and Sung dynasties (618-1279 C.E.) were



known as the Golden Age of China; to artists of the time, poetry and painting were ways, glorious ways, to realization of the Truth. The artists' visions were held to be revelatory; painting and poetry were meant to put men in touch with the Absolute:

Life's as we
Find it – death too.
A parting – poem?
Why insist?

Daie Soko

The mountain – Buddha's body
The torrent – his preaching.
Last night, 84,000 poems.
How, how make them understand?

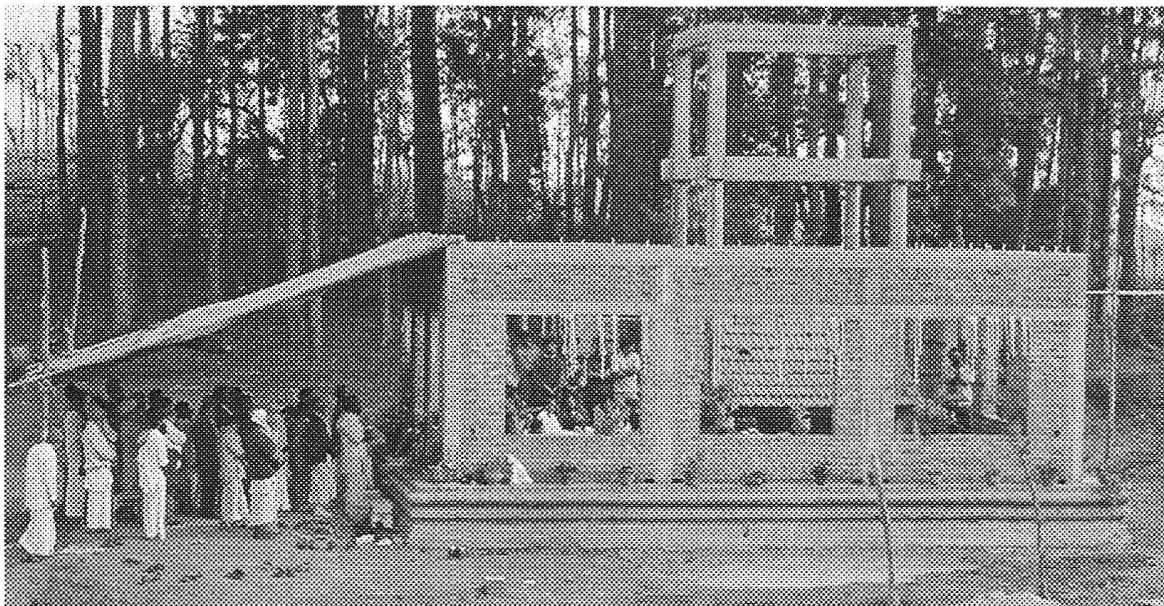
Sotoba

Indu K. Mallah

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43: Photograph by Vyasa Prasad of Vinita performing *Mohiniattam*
44: Photographs by Peter Oppenheimer



Scenes from Fernhill Guru Puja 2002



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