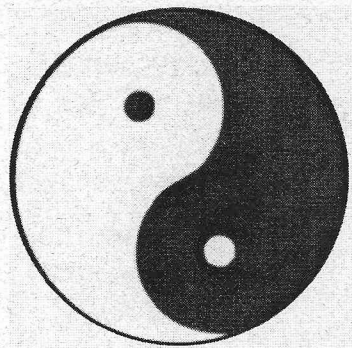


GURUKULAM

VOLUME XVIII • 2002

THIRD-FOURTH QUARTER





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GURUKULAM

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITION

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

NARAYANA GURUKULA was founded by Nataraja Guru in 1923 as a world-wide contemplative community. His Successor, Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati, continued the wisdom teaching of unitive understanding from 1973 to 1999. The current Guru & Head is Muni Narayana Prasad.

PUBLICATIONS BOARD: Deborah Buchanan, Sraddha Durand, Scott Teitsworth, Robert Tyson, Nancy Yeilding.

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION USA: Yearly: \$20.00 for three issues. Outside USA add \$4.50 for surface mail, \$14.50 for air mail. Write to: GURUKULAM, 8311 Quail Hill Road, Bainbridge Island, WA, 98110, USA.

E-mail to: islandgurukula@foxinternet.net.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION INDIA: Yearly subscription for 4 Issues is Rs. 100. Write to: Narayana Gurukula, Srinivasapuram P.O., Varkala, Kerala, 695145, India.

PRINTED on recycled paper at East-West University Press, Bainbridge Island, WA, USA, and Mangala Offset, Varkala, Kerala, India.

COVER: Earth from Apollo 17, courtesy of NASA

Inside Cover: Yin-yang Symbol of the Tao

Dear Friends, Dear Self,

Each time I have sat at my desk with pen in hand, contemplating the editorial for the current issue of *Gurukulam*, I have been writing to you, seeking to share words that would offer encouragement, inspiration, and guidance. And each time I have been writing in joyous recognition of the Self that is my innermost being, dearest friend, and at the same time, the embracing Self that pervades not only each of us, but all that is. I am especially aware of this as I write in the capacity of the editor of *Gurukulam* for the last time, passing on that responsibility in order to gain more time to explore the possibilities presented by sharing through books, seminars, and classes.

The *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* reminds us that other than the pervading In-dweller of all, whatever is in this changing world is of the nature of change. To be alive is to be in motion, to be intimately entwined with the cycles that are one of the central facts of the universe. Every moment of our lives, blood is pumped by our hearts in continuous cycles through our body, matched by the unceasing cycle of in-breath, out-breath, in-breath, out-breath. We cycle through waking and sleeping as the earth turns, creating day and night. The solstice and equinox celebrations treasured by humanity from ancient times to the present—taking form today as holidays such as Christmas and Easter—are tuned to the cycles of the Earth traveling around the Sun and the Moon circling around the Earth.

From the most essential level to the most encompassing, everything is in motion, interconnected motion. Primary materials of life like hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon, are in constant re-circulation. The *Tao Te Ching* says it this way: "Returning is the motion of the Tao. Yielding is the way of the Tao." The water we drink and then excrete or perspire eventually joins water droplets evaporating from the ocean and rising up to form clouds that travel over land and release their moisture as rain to

water fields that grow the food we eat and to fill the rivers and reservoirs from which our drinking water comes. The energy of sunlight is absorbed and packaged in edible form for animals by plants that also take in the carbon dioxide that animals exhale and release oxygen for animals to inhale. Our lives themselves can be seen as cycles within the on-going exchange of energy of the living Earth. Just as we are composed of material that has been alive in many other forms before us, when we die, we will feed back into the virtually closed system of circulating life materials that is our planetary home, to be used and re-used by other life in the future.

So it is natural that we see cycles in our actions and speak about "coming full circle" when a task is complete or a phase of life comes to an end, or note that "what goes around, comes around," when an action has brought about a predictable reaction. Like the Earth turning on its axis takes place within its orbit around the Sun, which rotates with the whole solar system around the galaxy that spirals through the universe, the actions of our lives are cycles within cycles.

Implied in the act of writing on paper is the growth of a tree, its absorption of carbon dioxide and water, its photosynthesis of sunlight, human effort and the burning of carbon in the form of petroleum to cut and transport the tree, the distressed flight of the birds whose nest was destroyed as the tree fell, and the electrical and chemical energy used to turn wood into paper. An even more complicated set of processes makes possible the pen that forms the letters of the words on the paper. Enormous numbers of words would be needed to describe all the cycles of actions that resulted in the production and functioning of the computer and printer that gave final shape to the words you now see. And what of the writer? The vast fields of biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, literature, biography, and more have to be taken into

consideration to glimpse the cycles that guide the formation of these words.

The complexity of each aspect of life often results in our ignorance about the cycles of action, of rippling causes and effects, that we are inextricably intertwined with on our passage through the world. Unlike the not-too-distant past (or not-too-far-away lives) when a family might have cut the trees or made the bricks to build their own home, grown the food and slaughtered the animals they ate, and directly witnessed the interwoven cycles of life and death, creation, destruction and recycling, most of us live unaware. Unknowingly or heedlessly, we daily generate cycles of action that contribute to the breakdown of the fundamental processes that make life possible. At the same time, this ignorance contributes to our feelings of separation, loneliness, fear—a sense of being alienated from the whole of which we are inextricably a part.

Reconnecting can seem a daunting task. To learn about all the interwoven threads in just one aspect of life—such as how we are contributing to the destruction of the tropical rainforests and marine ecosystems that human life depends upon and how we might change those cycles— involves many fields and many hours of study. Yet our interconnectedness takes many forms, and the caring investigations of scientists and other lovers of life are readily available to help us see the links and guide our conscious participation in creative and nurturing cycles of action.

And, as William Blake reminds us, we always have available to us the capacity to look deeply anywhere and see the connections, see the whole:

A Robin Redbreast in a Cage

Puts all Heaven in a Rage
The wild deer wandering here and there
Keeps the Human Soul from Care

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour

If we delve into the knowledge gleaned by others, a single forest wildflower can teach us about all the interconnected cycles of life necessary for it to exist and for its descendents and neighbors and even ourselves to continue to be able to exist. At the same time, if we deeply contemplate the fragile, exquisite beauty of the flower it will mirror the light that shines at once within and without. Each single aspect of being can enlighten us about both the infinite interpenetrating cycles of the changing world and the unchanging, eternal source of all.

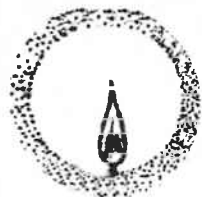
Looking from that perspective, each moment, each "now," becomes a glimpse of the eternal present in which all the cycles merge into one meaning glowing with love. As this particular cycle of seventeen years and fifty-two editorials comes to an end in a fresh yet eternal "now," I write with gratitude to you, dearest friends, for the opportunity again and again to look deeply into the hearts of the heavenly wildflowers of life, and to lovingly open to the Self that is for all of us the seer, the act of seeing, and the seen.

May the blessings of that One be with you as certainly and intimately as a crystal of sand shining in the palm of your hand.

AUM TAT SAT

Nancy Yeilding

Enclircling Light: Preparing the images of Gurukulam—watching them change from opacity to clarity in the darkroom trays—I have found an apt metaphor for the invaluable learning experiences that these years of working on the magazine have offered me. As we pass that opportunity on, I look forward to exploring fresh avenues of growth. I have several projects in mind including posting photos and articles on the web and archiving as much of the great legacy that Guru Nitya has left us as I can. Tamaso mā jyotir gamaya.



Sraddha Durand

Meditations on Śrī Cakra

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Meditation Forty-five

O Mother, adorable excellence of beauty. Knowledgeable seers describe your Lord as truth, the serenity of beatitude, and beauty (*satyam, śivam, sundaram*). Is beauty added to Śiva as an ultimate dimension because of your inseparability from him? Philosophers are searching for the most dependable norm of truth. Contemplative mystics are disciplining themselves to lose themselves in beatitude. But nothing gladdens the entire world more than a vision of beauty. Does it not mean that truth and beatitude are implied in beauty?

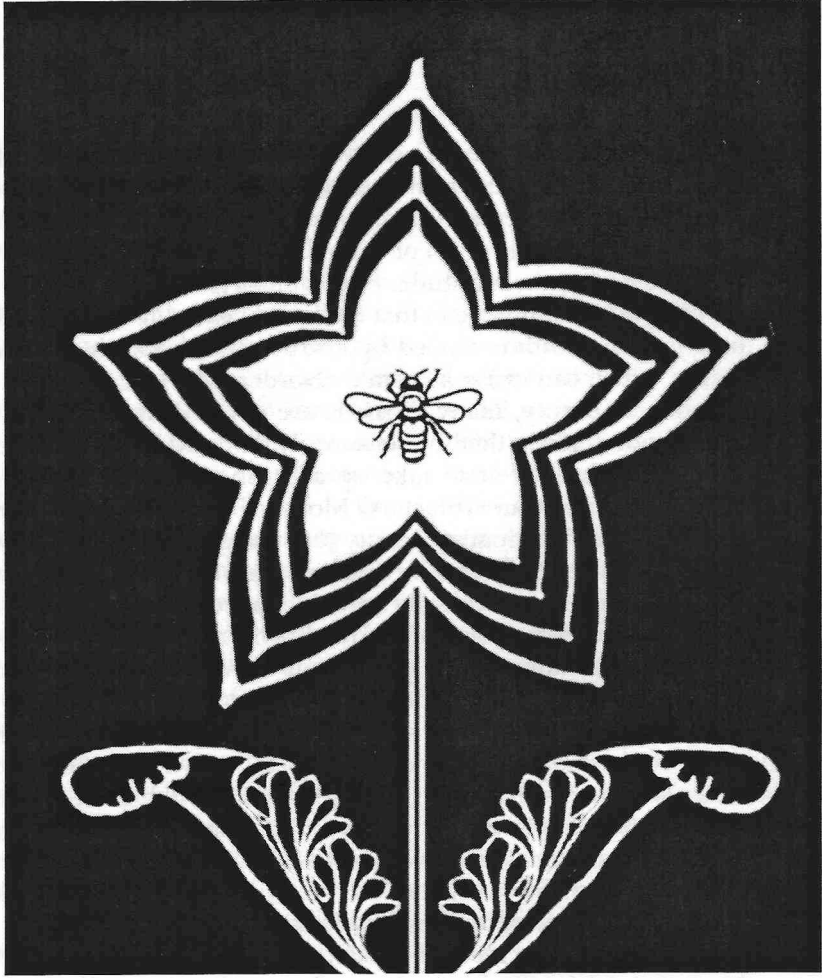
One thing is clear. Truth is rivaled by untruth and beatitude is disturbed by the slightest dissonance which can cause a cosmic disorder. Maybe because of these conditional factors residing in beauty, many illusions are covered up with the facade of the pretty to look at. It is not unlikely that the sensuously disturbed may become intrigued to write a poem eulogizing beauty or to take up a brush to dabble in colors, mistaking themselves to be creating beautiful artifacts. O Mother, have you set any dependable criterion for understanding and evaluating beauty that can give us lasting deliverance from the snares of illusion? Maybe you yourself represent to us the definition we are seeking.

You have made flowers universally adorable. In your choice of colors for the petals, you have lavishly used every color of the rainbow. Probably because you have been painting leaves, fields, and lawns with green, you have chosen other colors for your flowers. Even in the most remote and hidden forests you are careful to give your full attention to bring forth flowers of all kinds, designs and colors. Certainly they were not meant to be seen by we human beings who conceitedly think that you created everything for our enjoyment. To you the little winged bugs, the bees, the butterfly and the hummingbirds are the rightful heirs to enjoy the creation of beautiful flowers. Some imaginative people know that we humans are unworthy to fondle flowers. That is why they have invented fairies to dance on the soft petals in the day time and sleep in floral beds at night. Perhaps we get the first idea of beauty by looking at your flowers.

We know you have a secret with which you smile at us. The crimson sky, the golden rays of the sun, colorful flowers in the garden, neatly illuminated wings of butterflies and birds, and shimmering stars are all telling us that beauty has something to do with brightness. We know that you love everyone and everything very dearly. But certainly you were not very clever to conceal your preference for the red and the golden. We thank you, Mother, that you did not make the heavenly bodies triangular or cubical. You preferred to make them spherical. How ugly we would all have been if you had made us like bamboo poles! Instead you decided that sinuous curves make the most beautiful of appearances. Is it because you are a female that you erred on the side of exaggerating it in women?

Certainly the bee and the butterfly are both great lovers of flowers. But the ancient poets gave their preference to the bumble bee because that fits with your emphasis on beauty as being circular and spherical. Females cannot get bumblebees to sit around their faces, so they manipulate their hair to make it as curly as possible. You don't have to go to a beautician to get dark curls for your Lord to fondle. He does not mind when the southern breeze comes and disturbs your curls. Perhaps he appreciates the display.

In the heart of the dark sky, you present the golden disk of the sun. And how beautifully you contrast the full face of the silver moon with the night sky. From this we



pm sarvamṛtyupraśamanī

learn another lesson: that contrast is a must in the creation of beauty. Another criterion of beauty is the purity on which you make an uncompromising emphasis. Perhaps you have given the highest mark of excellence to the lotus flower which is born out of mud and filth (*pañkaja*) because that humble plant knows the secret of transcendence. The lotus lives in the water but it never allows even its leaf to be wet with the water on which it floats. Great seers look at it and marvel. They expect a wise person to be like that, to live in the world and yet not belong to the world.

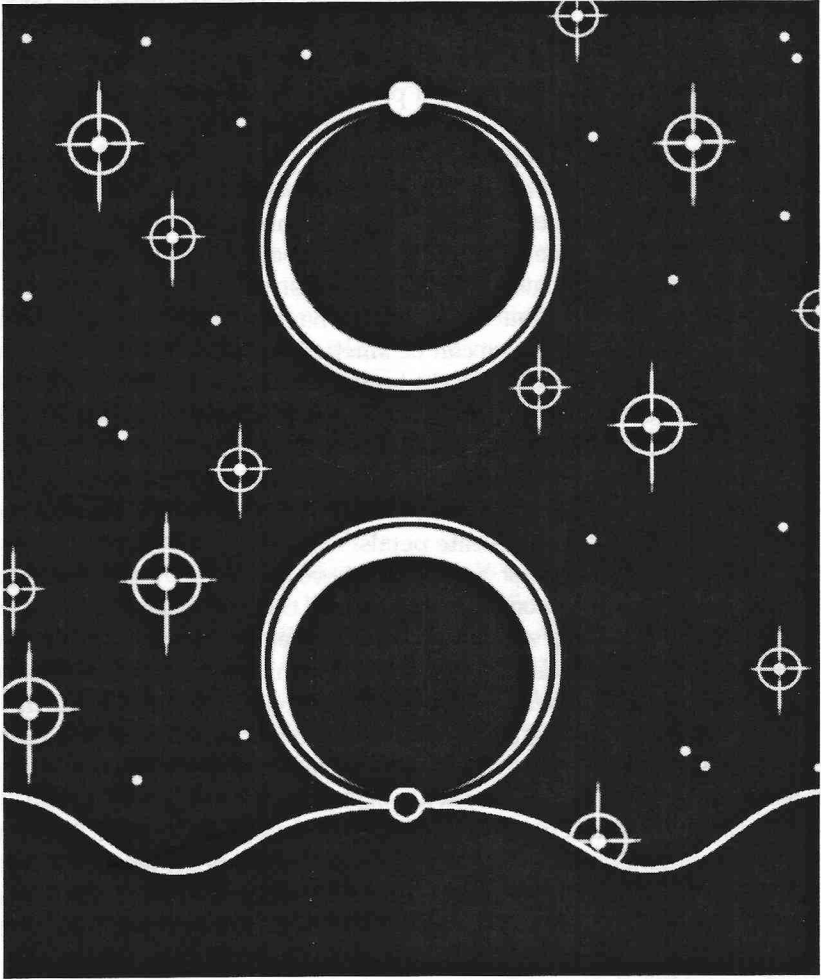
When you made the flowers you probably wanted us to learn some of their hidden secrets. You gave an invisible fragrance to their petals. Even when we do not see a jasmine or rose or magnolia, we can detect their presence by their distinct smell. Two men may look alike but they have different fragrance in their characters. Who can excel you in the art of creation when you mark the negativity of the fragrance with stench? How can a poet put fragrance in his words or an artist put fragrance in his painting? Somehow they do it. It is the hidden fragrance of style that distinguishes a master from an undisciplined practitioner. That is not all you have to say about the beauty of a flower. The color can be seen, the fragrance can be smelled. You have also invested in the flower something even more precious, the sweet honey which is kept hidden. Only the true lover of the flower knows how to tickle a flower and get its honey. O Mother, what engineering skill you have shown in giving special wings to the hummingbird to keep balancing over the flower until it can suck out all its honey. You are certainly to be admired for the special beak you have provided that beautiful being which can be inserted without causing the least hurt to the flower's delicate petals.

Can we find a master of aesthetics more profound than you in all the three worlds to share with us the secret of beauty? All these humble creatures make us also thirsty for the honey of beauty which you have hidden in the core of the beloved. For that you give us a key. Our own dark eyes almost resemble your bumble bees. Our eyes do not leave their sockets but their fluttering glances can reach the beautiful eyes of our counterparts. In the interlocking glance we have the key to unravel the beauty of a loving mind. Timid ones will walk with their eyes cast low and their cheeks blushing crimson, but once their souls are touched, they will also be eager to look back. Then, like the lightning which cannot be hidden for long behind a dark cloud, a faint smile appears. The floodgate of beauty is about to open. The lover sees the sparkling glint of light coming from the jasmine bud of teeth. No word is needed. No promise is to be made. Between a sense of awe and a delightful thrill of wonder, a subdued smile proclaims the true feeling of the heart. The beauty of union is still untapped.

How cleverly you teach us the secret of beauty without any verbosity or class notes. You place before us a simple flower, a lotus, and you make a bumble bee crawl in it. Then you show how it flutters its wings in ecstasy. So simple as that! The poet may write a whole page, running into a million verses. Yet he is dissatisfied after writing the last line and marking it with a period. Has the world ever seen an artist turning away from his painting with a heart leaping with joyous satisfaction? Never. Can a musician honestly come to the finale and go to sleep with a tranquil mind? O Mother, there is no one even dreaming of excelling you.

Only a poet of inferior breed could suspect that you are jealous of the beauty of your creation. You are proud even of the spherical polish on a mustard seed and of the little dots you have painted on the wings of ladybugs. Probably a Zen master or Taoist can appreciate you best because the highest water mark of beauty is the spontaneous simplicity you put into everything. To this day the world has not learned how to make a blade of grass or an all-mirroring dewdrop. Is it any wonder, our dear Mother, that you have elicited from your Lord all the great secrets of the science of the Absolute by simply overwhelming him with the most gentle of your smiles? Adorations to you.

ṣṛī sarvamar̥tyuprasāmanī



bhṃ sarvavignaniṅvāraṇī

Meditation Forty-six

Omnipresent Mother, lovers of Śiva and Śakti seek you in the caves of their hearts. Irrespective of the pluralities of bodies, Śiva resides in everyone. In the energy that enables every animated creature to move their limbs or even to breathe, you are there. Your Lord is called Kalādhara because he is decorated by the crescent moon. It is a paradox that Śiva sits on earth and his matted hair is decorated by the crescent moon. He is not wholly himself; you are also present in him. Your forehead is resplendent like a half-moon. This is suggestive of the immanent principle of the Divine being complemented by the transcendent.

As the third eye of the Lord is the burner of the three cities, the world is afraid of it. It is normally expected to be in the Lord's forehead. When we see the cool sheen of the moon in your forehead instead of the burning fire of the third eye, it is both paradoxical and comforting. For you, sun and moon are the altering states of consciousness. In daytime you keep all your creatures engaged in the activities which naturally ensue from their *svadharmā*. At night when dream time comes, you preside in the minds of all and give a lyrical quality to their thoughts and dreams.

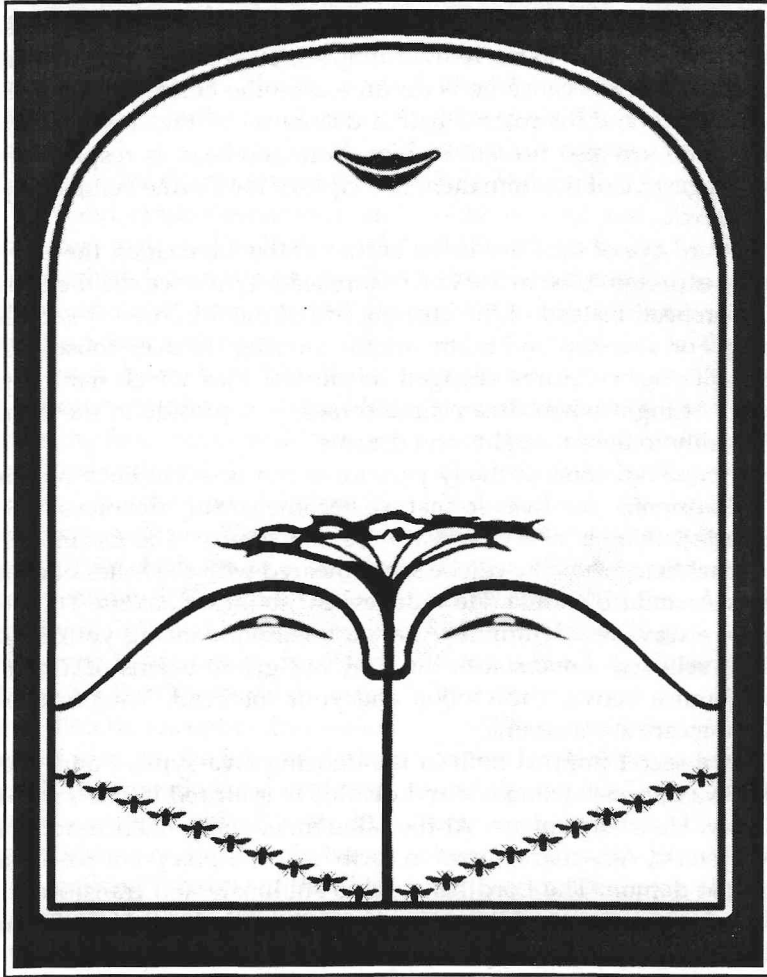
In the Śiva-Śakti concept many paradoxes can be seen. Each one brings to us a deep lesson to harmonize our lives so that we become worthy devotees of Śiva and Śakti who are the perfect models of truth, beatitude and beauty. The favorite haunt of your Lord is the charnel field where he can be seen smeared with the ashes of cremated bodies and dancing as Ānanda Bhairava. He induces fear in all onlookers. To alleviate such a tragedy you are always beside him as Ānanda Bhairavī, dancing your *lāsya*. On seeing you, people feel relieved. Lovers seek the cool and gentle beams of a half moon. Here there is no difference between the moon and your forehead. Your forehead and your thoughts of loving care are the same.

There is a secret implied both in the dancing Śiva symbol and you, our moon-faced Mother. Śiva dances beyond life and death. He is attired in the transparency of the substanceless sky. He is Digambara. At the same time, under his firm foot he is pressing the demon of hysteria, Apasmāra, down to earth. At the alpha point we are all crude and confused like that demon. The Lord helps us to sublimate and transform our ontologic present into a teleologic future. His own crescent is an indication of the moon waxing into fullness. Its frailty and sublimity is also contrasted to the crude demon.

It is not the physical moon and the physical light that you are bringing to your dear children. You are the daughter of a mountain. However earth-bound you are, your crown is above the clouds and your lofty thoughts are as sublime and beautiful as that of a resplendent half-moon. Thus both your Lord and you teach us to rise above our earthly nature and reach out to the *ānanda* which is beyond the height of manifestation.

The ecstasy of beauty which we derive from your sublimity is not something that excites us or enthralls us. It is a cool serenity like lovers get when they walk in the moonlight. This gentle gesture of yours will always be remembered as characteristic of your compassion and loving care. Our obeisance to you.

bhṃ sarvavignaniṅvāraṇī



bṃ sarvāngasundarī

Meditation Forty-seven

O Mother of disarming beauty, the sun is said to be the eye of the world and the eye is said to be the sun of the soul. In all your creations you have made a reciprocal bipolarity between the seer and the seen, the subject and the object. In the act of seeing, the shaft of attention is shot from the eye as from a bow to every visible point in the object that is seen. It is the attentiveness of the Bowman that marks the accuracy of the arrow he shoots. The bow and arrow are relevant in the context of defense. As the Supreme Mother of the world you are mindful of the welfare of all, from the most negligible bug to an

enormous galaxy. The span of your vision is unlimited. Poets look at your two brows as the two halves of a bow held in position to shoot. Your quick glances that go from right to left create a fantasy of a line of bumble bees that can easily be taken for the bowstring.

For a careful artist, no detail is unimportant. You are not only a creator of the animate and inanimate but you are also a grand architect of beauty. As such, you can rightly be looked upon as an archetypal artist who sets a model for the creation of beauty in every form. That is why you have given so much care to each limb of the beautiful. Take for instance the beauty of your vigilant eye. Suppose an artist paints a portrait and does not draw or paint in it the life-giving eye. Will anybody appreciate such a portrait which will be easily passed for a dead person's inanimate face? What a difference it makes when a highlight is marked right in the dark pupil of the eye. You have the same archetypal model for creating the heavenly luminaries and the eye that sees them. That care is shown even to the eye of an ant, not to say of a gazelle or an innocent child.

Each eye has a mystical depth, a heavenly lake in which one can see dreams diving and surfacing like fish in a clear pond. A look from an eye can be so compassionate that it can make timid person fearless and an intimidated person courageous. The speech of a person is considered to be the most winsome method to capture another's soul. However, the eloquence of tongue can never compete with the stunning steady look of a lover's gaze.

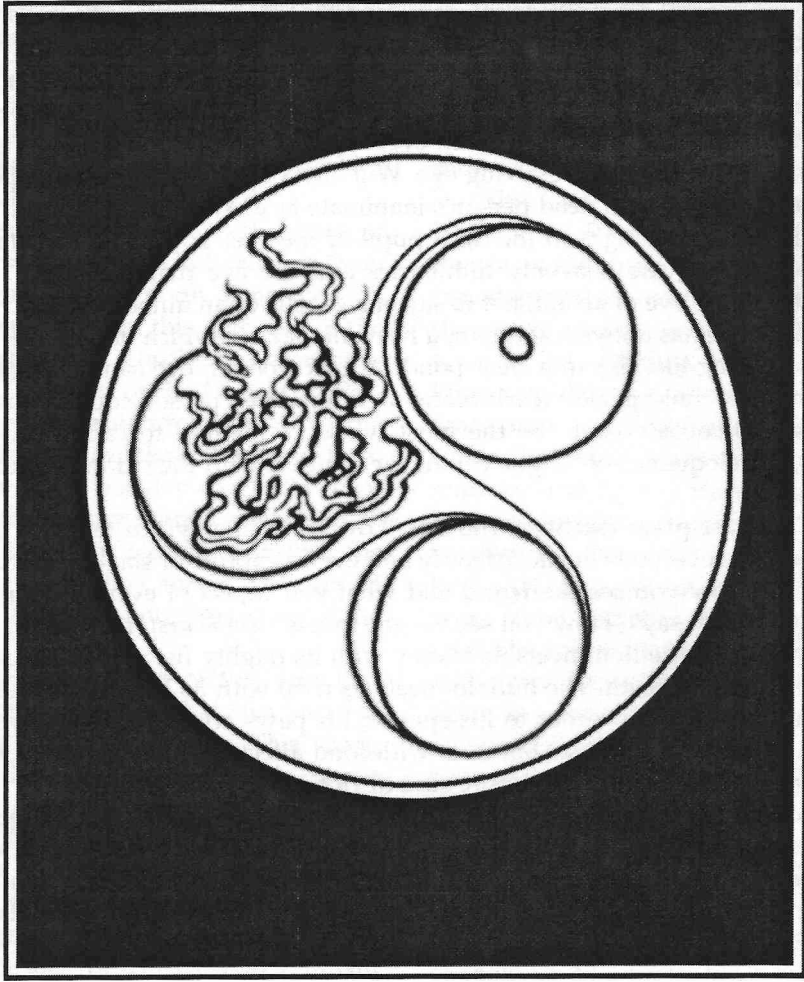
There are great teachers who say "Love your enemy." In fact you have no enemies. You make everyone docile, friendly and even a captive or slave by letting the world know exactly how you see the world and what you expect of every person. There is an old proverb which says "How you see, so you create" (*yathā dr̥ṣṭi tatha sṛṣṭi*). In the world of hatred and fear the lion meets its enemy with its mighty fist and sharp claws. It grins and shows its sharp teeth. The buffalo meets its rival with its heavy and steel-like horns. But when the same lion comes to his spouse, his paws are soft and his eyes are tender like morning flowers. He licks his mate with fond affection. Thus in the world there is a weapon for hatred and there is a more sure device for love.

Sometimes you are worshipped as Mahiṣasura Maṛḍinī, the vanquisher of the buffalo demon. Hardly anyone knows the secret weapon with which you vanquish. In fact we are all born as brutes. We become stubborn in our tantrums. You are in every mother and you know how to tackle a brute. With your loving look you disarm us, you fondle us. Laying us in our cradles, you sing us lullabies. The buffalo in us is lulled to sleep. when night after night you expose us to your compassion, the demon in us is transformed into a loveful angel. O Mother, that is how you vanquish, not by beating on the buffalo demon with a cudgel. You are the greatest tamer in the world. We see this magic in the circus arena when a seventeen year old girl comes and bewitches a lion or a tiger to follow her like a pet dog. She even dares to put her pretty head into the mouth of the ferocious animal only to be licked or kissed.

It is no wonder you have handed over to the god of love flower buds and not poisoned arrowheads to shoot at the romantic hearts of people. Is it with that intention that you fashioned all flower buds like arrows? If only we could learn from you how you set up your defense without the slightest blemish of offense included in it, we could live a life of absolute peace on earth. Your Lord destroys the world. After a pause, you restore it. He burns the god of love into ashes. With a smile you restore him to dance in the lover's heart.

Teach us, Mother, to win the world with a winsome smile and capture the world in the noose of a loveful look. We give ourselves entirely to you because we believe that only he lives who loves.

bṃ sarvāngasundarī



phṃ sarvasaubhāgyadāyinī

Meditation Forty-eight

O Mother, you are our true fortune. What we have lived and transformed into our disciplined talents, well-groomed knowledge and cultivated wisdom is like your thoughtful guidance walking before us. Nothing is more fortunate than having wisdom itself as our guide. We enjoy our immediate present which is like listening to the poetic enthrallment of one who has mined the deep serenity of the soul. If our past is like living with your sun, the present is like living in your moon. Both the past and present are finally to be fulfilled with the future. The future is not an outside factor but is like a fire that is kindled within. You are that unlit lamp which is ever burning in us, supplying us with the will to live, the path to tread and the light that shows us the way and the goal.

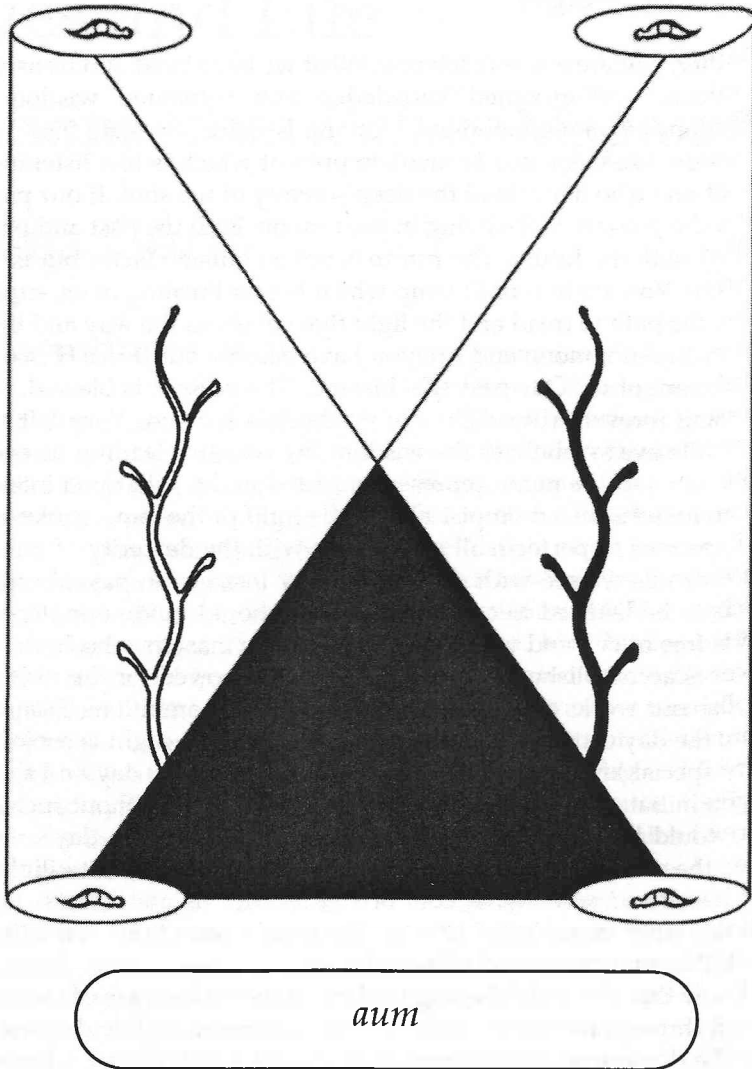
Thus as the sun, moon and fire you have become our thrice blessed fortune. You have taken full care of us. Our past was blessed. The present is blessed. And the future will be a blessing forever. Your right eye symbolizes the sun. Your left symbolizes the moon. The middle eye symbolizes the wisdom fire which is leading us ever to carry out your will. The sun and the moon represent day and night. What you intend us to create in the day is to be scrutinized empirically in the light of the sun, employing all our five senses. You expect us to perform all our actions with the dexterity of our hands guided by the minute details we see with our eyes. Every instruction passed on by the experienced elders is to be listened to carefully, and we should guide our steps unerringly in the path that is free of evil and which was tread by the masters who have forged our culture. Whatever is accomplished in one day will be preserved for the next day. You help us to accomplish our works and to carry out our desirable ambitions (*kāmya karma*).

Before the day commences and where the day ends, night is conjoined to the day with two very special kinds of twilight: the dawn to begin the day and the dusk to close it. At dawn you initiate us into each day's working program. Without such an assignment life on earth would be meaningless and a frustration. After the day's work, when we come to dusk, the sun slowly disappears in the west. This second twilight brings an atmosphere of peace and serenity. A cool breeze fondles us and brings us into our own dear self. All thoughts are gathered into us. The mind comes to sit in meditation at the altar of the soul. We get into a prayerful mood.

We know that like a child going to sleep in the loving care of the mother, we will be with you all through the night. Your fairy tales come to us like dreams of moonlight. The rigors of the day are no longer there. You are not a task master when the moon presides. There are no debts to be paid. There are no obligations to be filled. There is no contract with anyone. Life becomes light for us, as light as the moon that shines upon us. If we do not fall asleep, the muses are there to play with us. We can have music. Moonlit nights have a lyrical quality. Like playful fairies we can hold the hands of our friends or lovers and dance out in the open. Like children we can treat the whole world like a doll to play with. Finally, the second twilight leads us to the silence of the soul and even helps us to transcend all dualities, leaving behind both the subjective ego and its problems of possession. Forgetting everything, with no differentiation of you and I or anyone, we can go into deep sleep until the cock crows again. When we sleep, you make good use of our silence to replenish our bodies and restore the energy of our minds. Again when the sun rises, you call us back to our routines with strong and healthy bodies and the resolve to carry out your bidding with courage and enthusiasm.

Thus our past, present and future are fully taken care of. The sunny days, moonlit nights and peaceful twilights come cyclically and, through alternation, refresh our consciousness and make our lives always new. There is always a fresh value to live and a new wonder to reflect on. Your will be done. Please help us to identify our will with yours so without conflict we can say, "Our will be done."

phṃ sarvasaubhāgyadāyini



Meditation Forty-nine

O Mother, in the here and now you have assigned each one of us a firm ground to stand on, a field of operation to work in and a goal to accomplish. Each person is given a separate identity with a unique form and a special name. Like a teacher, you look into our eyes with expectation, wanting us to carry out your instructions meticulously. We see in your eyes our guiding star. In that respect, you are our revealer. To us you are like a ready reckoner. We do not want to go wrong so we look into your eyes. When you nod your assent we proceed. If we sense your disapproval we correct ourselves. In this world of our transactional operations you are our task master. We know that you expect expediency and perfection from us. We become established in unitive action only when we function as your co-creators. For that purpose we follow your footsteps with absolute sincerity. You have spotted the goal for us. Your eyes are where your heart is. Your heart is where your treasure is. Your treasure is where our accomplishments are. So we look into your eyes to know exactly what you expect us to become.

When you move with us from the transactional wakeful life into the wonder garden of dreams you take away our empirical eyes. Instead you give us the eyes of a poet, an architect or an artist. You give us a special ear for music. In our nimble feet you

put rhythmic steps to dance. You even align our heart beats with the percussional music of the choir of the heavens. With your magic wand you call the moon and stars to watch from the heavens how you revel with your children.

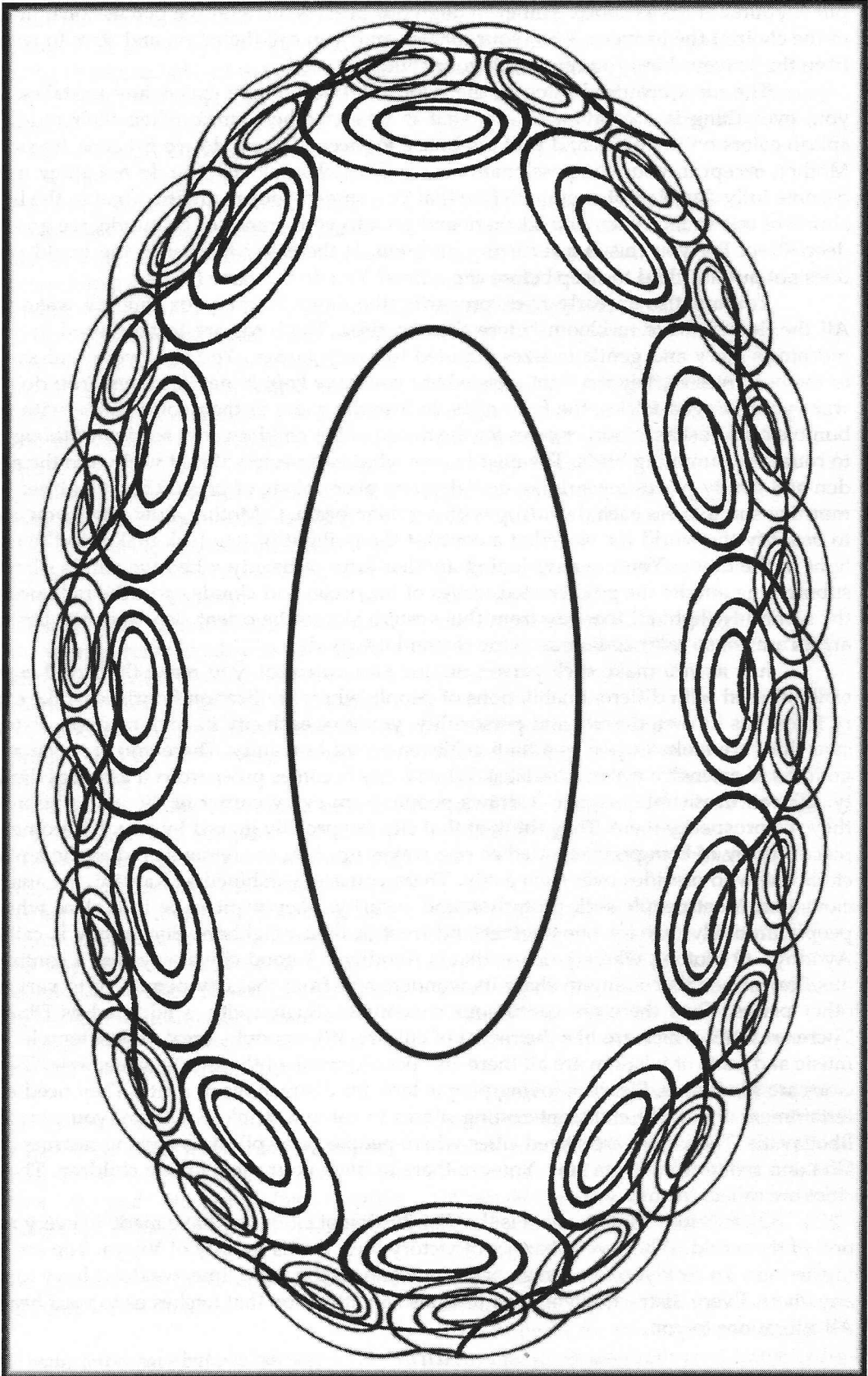
The most beautiful thing in that world is that nobody makes any mistakes. To you, everything is a creation of art. That is what mothers think when their toddlers splash colors on the walls and pull the house to pieces. Where do we get such freedom, Mother, except in your compassionate vision of matchless love? You do not allow us to become fully depleted of energy. Before that you spread your meditation mat in the little shrine of our souls. When you sit there and go into your trance of beatitude, we go into deep sleep. For you this is a recurring program. Is there any mother in the world who does not put her child to sleep before she retires? You do the same for us.

You are also an early riser, preparing the dawn before your children wake up. All the flowers have to bloom before the sun rises. The birds are to be roused to sing morning's glory and gentle breezes deputed to every garden. You send your emissaries to the bee hives so they may not miss where you have kept honey for them. You do not want your winged fairies, the butterflies, to lose the game in their competition with the bumble bees. Just as a mother cares for the tiniest of her children, you send your thoughts to rouse the humming birds. The mist knows what is expected of it. It wafts into the garden and gently places a pearl-like dew drop on every blade of grass. Then you brief the morning sun to bless each dew drop with a golden beam. O Mother, how much you care to beautify the world for us. What a contrast the twilight of the dusk makes to the twilight of the dawn. You are envisioning another kind of beauty when the sun is silently submerging amidst the gold-crested waves of the ocean and clouds carry the radiance of the second twilight all the way from the western sky to the orient sky. Even the best of artists are not so color conscious as the sky and its clouds.

Just as you make each person unique and universal, you make the world especially blessed with different habitations of people where civilization flourishes. Like every forest has its own dignity and personality, you give each city its own triumph. Extensive cities are looked upon as a high achievement of humanity. There you are seen as a goddess of extensive vision, Viśālākṣī. When a city becomes prosperous it assumes dignity. Like an irresistible magnet, it draws people from every corner of the world because they see prosperity there. They think of that city as specially graced by you. It becomes a place worthy of being remembered as one wakes up. You are remembered as the auspicious one who presides over such a city. There you are worshiped as Kalyāṇī, the auspicious one. Most people seek protection and security. They want to be in a place where people mutually care for one another and trust in their neighbors. Such a city is called Ayodhya. O Mother, where you are, that is Ayodhya. A good city always has a continuous flow of people coming to share its wonders and from that city people go to various other places. Thus there are continuous concourses. Such a city is admired as Dhara. There are cities which are like the mecca of culture. Wise people, great artists, temples of music and seats of wisdom are all there and people speak of them with sweetness. Those cities are Madhuras. Pleasure-loving people look for distractions in a city. They need entertainment and night clubs, interesting places to eat and drink. For them, you provide Bhogavatis. Then there are sacred cities where people go as pilgrims seeking nearness to God and redemption from sins. You are there to bless your most loving children. Those cities are called Avanti.

O victorious Mother, such is the distribution of cities you have made to every nation of the world. Where your banner of victory flies, that is the city of Vijaya. You are so mysterious. To seek you, we can go anywhere and, at the same time, we don't have to go anywhere. Every distraction you give us is also an attraction that fetches us to your heart. All adorations to you.

aum



Ātmopadeśa Śatakam:

One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Verse 19

*aṭi muṭiyar ramatuṅṭituntatuṅṭe-
nnaṭiyiṭumādima sattayullatellām;
jaḍamity sarvamanityamām; jalattin-
vaṭivine vittu taraṅgamanityamāmō?*

The bottom, the top, the end,
that is real, this is, no, that is—
in this way people quarrel;
the one primal reality is all that is;
all this inertial matter is transient;
except as a form of water
could a wave ever arise?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven." One great need in this world is peace and peacemaking. There is always a tendency to fight. Another precious teaching from the Bible is "Peace on earth and good will among men." Seemingly there are so many reasons to lose our peace and come to blows. Even the words of the greatest seers and saviors have caused bloodshed. In their great names and in their great love, man has shed more blood than in the name of cruelty. Such is the sad state to which we have come. The philosophy we learn in this study of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* is a philosophy of life. Its aim is to unite in peace rather than divide by endless arguments.

In the previous verse we were asked to share, but when we come to share something we want to do it on our own

terms, in just the way we like. Fights come when someone else wants to have it their way. When R.D. Laing speaks of the 'I' and the 'other' he is touching on these same elements, where the 'I' becomes solidified as an individual with a personal interest. He and his interest are the same. It is in that sense Laing calls it the self. The 'other' is the other person, who has a similar vested interest. He is wholly identified with his interest. However limited it may seem, they each have their own philosophy and vision to guide their actions.

Narayana Guru begins this verse with *aṭi* and *muṭi*, the alpha and omega factors. Philosophers who give primacy to intelligence generally look at the source of things: what causes this effect? The fundamental question is very important to them. The early Greek philosophers, from Thales to Heraclitus, all asked where the universe came from and what its nature was. Philosophers like Socrates asked "Who am I?"

In the Indian context, Sankara said these effects have all come from a cause. What is not in the cause can never become an effect. In the effect we see so many ramifications and elaborations of differences. If you go back to the cause you do not see all the separations. For example, a seed does not tell us what kind of leaves, flowers, roots and branches will develop from it. It is just one single item, where all that is to come is the same. Thus from the effect you should go back to the cause. That means you go back to your own al-

pha, your roots. So Sankara is a philosopher of *aṭi*, the base.

After Sankara came Ramanuja, who did not feel impelled by a logical necessity to reason. He had a greater need to experience love here and now, to experience the love of God as a person. He didn't want to think of impersonal facts like pure existence or pure knowledge. He thought if there was a Lord, he should be able to see him with his own eyes. He should be able to touch him and serve him. For Ramanuja to see, the Lord should manifest visibly; to listen, the Lord should come and speak to him.

In the Christian context we have God, the Word, and the Word that becomes flesh. Only when the Word becomes flesh and stands before us as a person, as in Jesus Christ, can we look into his eyes, see his smile, and have the touch of benediction. Then we can carry in our minds his sweet image, his tenderness, his calmness, his soft speech. We can have a number of recollections of that personal aspect.

Ramanuja said, "This is what I want. I want my Lord to be Vishnu. I should be able to see his lotus eyes, his pearl-like teeth, his cherry lips, his gentle touch, the lotus in his hand." He went on with a full description: "This is the final thing to which I am aspiring, the omega, to see and serve my Lord, to be with him. My Lord should be inside me as well. I should experience the Lord in every atom of my being as the indwelling immortal reality. There is no maya; everything is real. All these effects are the effects of the Lord. Don't say this is inertial matter. There is no inertial matter. Matter is constituted of atoms, and every atom is animated. The heart of the atom is the supreme Indweller of the psyche. Thus everything becomes divine to me." So Ramanuja's is the philosophy of *muṭi*, the omega, where the effect is as real as the cause.

There are other philosophers who say, "You claim that your God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, but this is a finite world. How can there be an infinite in the finite?" Aristotle asked the followers of Plato, "Have you ever seen an ar-

chetypal horse? You don't see any archetypal horse anywhere. You don't see the universal. You are there; I am here. You and I are particular realities. It's only for the sake of language that you are abstracting and generalizing and saying 'we' or 'horses.' There are only white horses, brown horses, black horses, lame horses and galloping horses. All these are individual factors. The infinitude you speak of is only a theorization. Everything is finite; everything has an end."

Previously in classical physics we thought of an infinite space in which the cosmos was set. At present there are several notions. Most say that space is very big but not infinite; it must have an end. Others maintain you cannot say anything definite. You can argue whether we are in a big bang or a steady state. Is it a particle or a wave? Red shift or violet shift? Black hole or white hole? They go on fighting in a pool of uncertainty. So scientists argue as much as philosophers. But what is really important is our daily life. The often-forgotten purpose of philosophy is to give us a philosophy of life, a framework to orient our lives by.

Fritz Perls once formulated some basic presumptions into a prayer: "I do my thing and you do your thing. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations and you are not in this world to live up to mine. You are you and I am I. And if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful. If not, it can't be helped." This is one way of not quarreling. However, it is not the compassionate way of looking at life. You are not only you, you are also me. I am not only myself, I am also you. I should care to live for you, and you should be able to care for me. Otherwise the world will fall to pieces. It will become a chaos of opposed interests and opinions vying with each other. If we fight over everything, about the alpha and the omega, finitude and infinitude, and the self and the other, for example, we will have the confusion of tongues of the Tower of Babel. We will have the divided self and the politics of the family, as described by R.D. Laing.

Narayana Guru says there is a key to

resolve this situation. We must look for the animating principle, the numinous factor, as well as that which is inertial and dead. The inertial matter, *jaḍa*, is the basis for differentiation. The animating Self is the unifying factor. Even physicists have to think of a unifying matter rather than the myriad individual cases of its manifestation. Then they don't have to bother whether something is a piece of iron or a piece of cheese. It can all be reduced to a primal substance from which it has sprung, in other words, the Mother of all phenomenal things, the *mātru*. The word matter is derived from *mātru*, meaning mother or the Mother of all beings, all things. You have to reduce everything to one principle, without which there cannot be any physics, or chemistry, or whatever. That is the animating principle, while all the specific instances are the *jaḍa*.

In our personal life also we are presented with a flux of everything moving and changing. Even as we sit quietly our blood is surging through us. A tidal flood of air passes in and out of our lungs. Body cells are dying and being replenished. The carriers of energy in the circulatory system are exchanging dead matter for new energy at a tremendous rate. Within the body are so many separate, individual items, yet there is a collective consciousness which rules the whole organism as one single piece. Everything in the body mutually aids and supports the rest. The will in me is a collective motivation for the benefit of the entire organism. In the same manner, society is a collective whole to which each individual belongs, and the physical universe is a collective factor of which life on earth is a part.

When you look at these things from the numinous side it unites you, while if you look at them from the phenomenal side it separates you. There has to be a conscious effort on our part to recall our drifting interest and drifting mind to come back again and again to the numinous center. Then in our relationships with the rest of the world there will always be the consideration of unity.

In corporate life we tend to become

very critical of others' attitudes or behavior, we go about hunting the opinions of people, building up cliques, groups within groups, blowing things out of proportion and pitting one against the other. There is an old saying that "two is company, three is a crowd." Two people can get into a bipolarity fairly easily, but when a third comes it is easy to become confused. Ideas proliferate geometrically. Now we have to choose, and we may become unsure of what is right. But after all, it isn't very difficult. We should easily be able to accommodate the third factor, the triangularity.

This verse has a very practical bearing on our life. It encapsulates the art of living together, the art of reconciliation, the art of harmony. Narayana Guru here presents the example of the ocean and the wave. What makes a wave look different from water? It is only the formation of a crest on the surface of the water. The essence of the wave is the same water. It is the form we are fighting and not the essence. We should discipline ourselves in such a way that we can turn from the form to the essence every day, all the time.

Two strangers see each other. They look at each other spontaneously. One feels an attraction to the other, and the same attraction is felt in the other heart also. Unknowingly, the joy of seeing wells up in their hearts and they both open up with smiles. Something pulls them together. They introduce themselves; they talk;



they discover common interests. They become animated with their interest. When the time comes to say good-bye, they have already developed tentacles to hold onto each other. They exchange addresses and phone numbers. So even when they leave, they have not really left. When each goes home they are more lively than ever, feeling closer than when they were talking face to face. Even in absence, their presence becomes more meaningful. That presence has a profound influence on them. It grows. They carry the memory of the other around with them wherever they go. They want to speak of that person to their other friends and have their friends meet them.

What is this strange phenomenon? This mutual attraction is what has been keeping the world going through the millennia. Although countless people have been born, lived and died on this earth, the heritage of humanity is maintained by this simple sharing. We have not seen the Buddha, we have never met Jesus Christ, nor Socrates. We have never seen Kant or Spinoza, Shakespeare or Shelley, Kalidasa, Valmiki, or the philosophers of far-off China. Bach, Mozart and Beethoven were isolated within a tiny section of our planet. Still, our human heritage is molded by the brilliant thoughts of all these wonderful people from all around the world: the poets, storytellers, those who made the myths and legends, the inventors, composers, scientists and discoverers. Whatever they have contributed is still present in our lives, guiding us, teaching us, and helping us every moment.

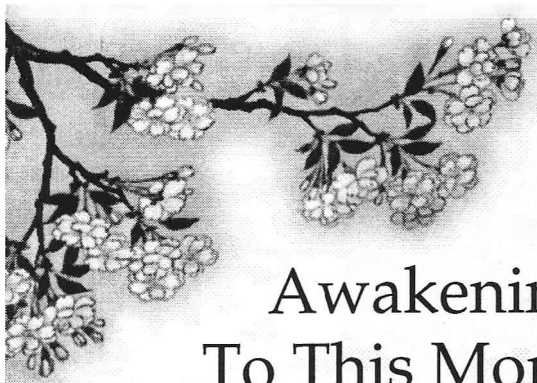
Even when you do something as simple as sip a cup of coffee or tea, think about what you are doing. Your morning tea begins in some far-off land, where very poor people get up at four o'clock. They crowd onto a battered bus, then walk to the plantation where ripe leaves are waiting to cut into their fingers. Leeches climb on them to drink their blood. All day long they fill their baskets, then they go home to a meager supper.

The tea leaves are hauled to huge mills employing hundreds of people, where they are cleaned, dried, and made into the kind of blend you want. Then it is put in tins or boxes, and sent by truck down the mountains and out to the coast. The shipyard is filled with more poor laborers, who load the tea onboard ships. Then across the ocean it comes to your port. The distributors parcel and package it and send it to your local market, where you buy it and take it home. Thus the whole world participates in one cup of tea. If you like sugar with your tea, there is another world of production and distribution behind that spoonful of white grains you tip into the cup. So should you not look into the numinous aspect of just a cup of tea?

If you become sensitive to the numinous aspect of life, gratitude will naturally fill your whole being. Each time you put a morsel of food in your mouth or sip your tea or coffee, you will become so grateful to the corporate life of humanity for giving you so much. You will see nothing but the unity underlying the many forms of the world. Great will be your joy to share, to give, to receive. Then you won't fight. The belligerency comes in where you see only your own personal interests—"my home," "my family," or just "my self." The superficial form of your self interest should be subsumed in the ocean of the general interest, and you should feel the world is your country, your home. That humanity is your family, filled with your brothers and sisters.

The Guru wants us to really feel this: to stand united, to find peace and become peacemakers. We have to first be peacemakers in our own lives. We bring peace to ourselves. By putting all the peaces together, we make peace with the world. If you fragment it, you lose it. So let us gather all the peaces together in one meaning, in one divine thread of love and compassion and understanding.

(Continued in next issue.)



Awakening To This Morning

The rooster's wakening call mingled in
the sky's pale pink edges.

By the flowering cherry tree a small frog croak
and in the angle of the trunk a striped cat,
four white paws glowing in the grey light.

The air tinged with orange and blue,
and below in the valley
a blanket of fog--the inland sea--floating at our feet.

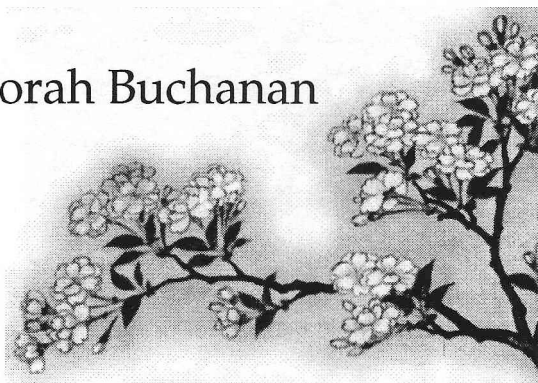
The red twigs of blueberry bushes dripping translucent dew,
the quinces' lush, over-ripe smell, their yellow
turning brown and soft into the grass.

In small declivities of grass and garden dirt,
a wet, reflecting spider's web, transparent,
and herbs that release their scent into the crush of fingers.

Two pale yellow rosebuds and raspberries swelled with rain,
in their watery taste only a hint of summer's rich juiciness.

Above all a V of geese: no call, only the sound
of air as their wings cut through it.

Deborah Buchanan





Learning a

*My walk to school takes
The familiarity of the sights made
At first the trees
I felt like they were forced to grow
By paying more attention to
that wanted to see
I was suddenly aware of how happy they were
I slowly grew to sense their individuality
It was like discovering a side to a friend
something so latent that it took years of time
Not necessarily alarming
to a road that once had*

*The trees, they smile and speak
a secret language
I am left to get the drift of the conversation
like an attempt to figure out a conversation
I am left smiling and nodding
that I piece together
Each day we are revealing
and now a fondness has developed
The trees are watching all that happens
Some of them being taller get a better view
There is so much they share
the shade, the
The weary homeless man
The calming breeze instantly takes
into a deep hypnotic sleep,
where he is in paradise, an illusion he has*

*The sky above painted
Smudges of colored cotton
it leaves me guessing at
It speaks and
The color and the shapes give a clue
Sometimes expressing strong emotions and
like that of two people
At times I feel like I am a tiny speck walking
but at other times I feel like
and keeps me amused by all the
The wonders of nature
All it took was leaving*

Savitha

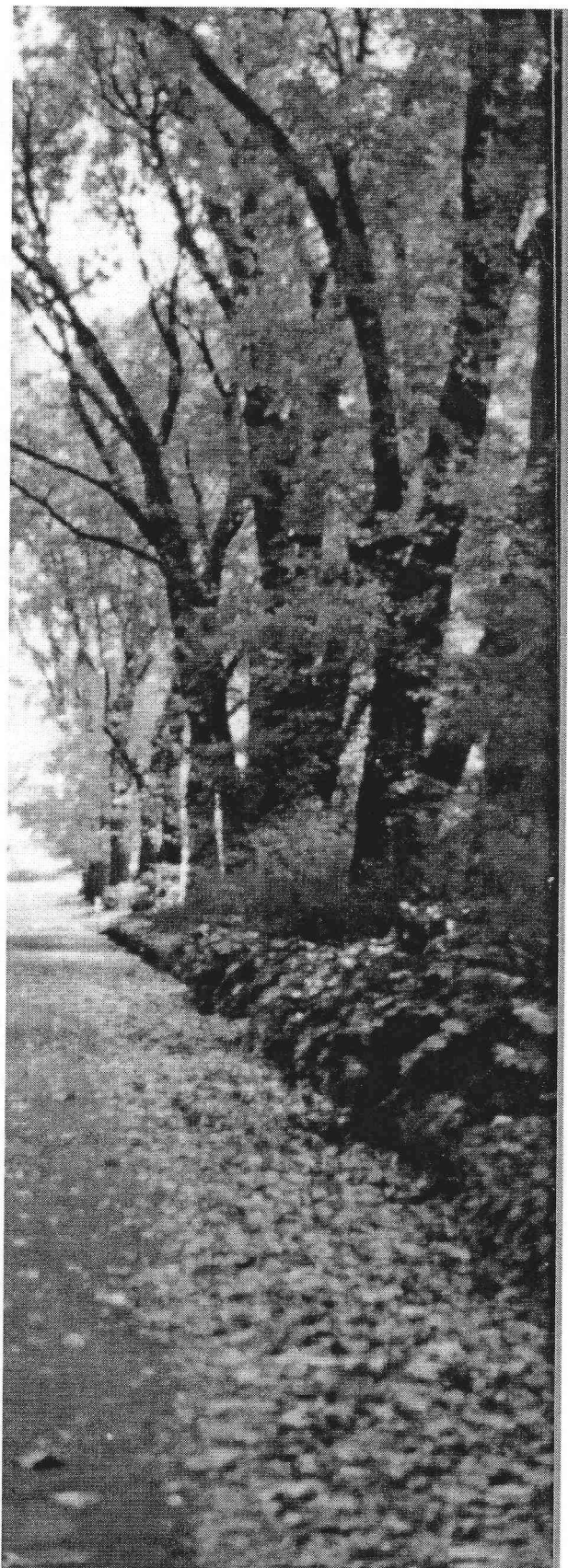
New Language

a new meaning each day.
es me feel a connection with them.
eemed so artificial.
v there and they were so unhappy.
em and seeing through the eyes
their inner beauty,
were, and could see they had so much life.
s, almost like you would sense with people!
l that you never imagined could surface,
ng with the person to come out to the open.
g, but indeed an opening
a "Do Not Enter" sign!

peak to each other in whispers,
nly they understand.
rsations from those gentle whispers,
ion in a language you barely understand.
ding at the bits and pieces
of their conversations.
more and more to each other,
pped and it makes us so happy!
is around them, the good and the evil.
and share with the others what they can see.
re, their beauty, the shelter,
ruit and the love.
akes shelter under this tree.
away all his worries and puts him
ere he has no more problems,
s each time he takes shelter under the tree.

new pictures each day.
ndy in varied forms and sizes,
o what it is trying to say.
her language.
s to what it is trying to communicate.
at other times speaking gentle, sweet words
p passionately in love.
n I look up at the vast expanse of the sky,
it envelops me, protects me
surprises it has for us each day.
never cease to amaze me.
ing a new language!

Tarayanan



What Narayana Guru Is Not

Nancy Yeilding

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

The light of the One Self that manifests in all beings is what we recognize as the Guru coming through the medium of a person, yet in many missions, ashrams and homes, the form of Narayana Guru is worshiped, the object of ritual and reverence, while his teachings are ignored or trampled upon. It seems that the administrators have forgotten the simple ways of the Guru they think they are worshipping by erecting huge statues and performing elaborate rituals. The possibility of slipping into forgetfulness exists in each of us but in *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* the Guru has blessed us with one hundred visions of the universal sense of Self which he experienced and explicit guidance to help us transcend our own narrow sense of ego identity and loyalty to experience that Self. For example:

*Endearment is one kind; this is dear to me,
your preference is for something else;
thus, many objects of endearment
are differentiated and confusion comes;
what is dear to you is dear to another also;
this should be known.*

*The happiness of another –
that is my happiness;
one's own joy is another's joy –
this is the guiding principle;
that action which is good for one person
should bring happiness to another.*

*For the sake of another,
day and night performing actions,
having given up self-centered interests,
the compassionate person acts;
the self-centered man is
wholly immersed in necessity,*

*performing unsuccessful actions
for himself alone.*

*"That man," "this man" –
thus all that is known
in this world, if contemplated,
is the being of the one primordial Self;
what each person performs
for the happiness of the Self
should be conducive to
the happiness of another.*

(Translation by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati)

Such lucid instructions also offer the solution to the boundaries and blocks created by the sense of possession that arises in people toward Narayana Guru. In fact, he is not anyone's possession but it is very natural that devotion and attentiveness to the Guru's Word leads to a sense of owning. The more we understand that "our joy is another's joy" the more we can share Narayana Guru so that we can be owned by more and more people. Proselytizing is not appropriate or necessary but when we understand that Narayana Guru is not a treasure to be hoarded but a treasure which grows richer the more it is shared, the more we will naturally become exponents of his wisdom.

The more our actions reflect the truth that the happiness of another is our happiness, the more people will be drawn to discover the wellspring of empathy within us. We miss the point if we think we become great by the reflected glory of his name or reputation. We need to tune ourselves to follow his example. When he was praised by Rabindranath Tagore for the great work he was doing he replied simply and quietly: "Neither have we done anything in the past nor is it possible to do anything in the future. Powerlessness fills us with sorrow." {*Word of the Guru, Nata-*

raja Guru, p. 34). When we also can resonate such humility and do not seek to establish our own importance or to gratify our desires at the expense of another then we begin to realize the true meaning of taking Narayana Guru as our Guru—by gaining an inner transparency to his eternal essence.

It may seem surprising that we would say that Narayana Guru, the very essence of compassion, was not a friend, but that is so. And even though one can very accurately say that he had a mother and father, sisters, aunts, uncles and even a wife, he was not a relative of anyone. The usual social sense of a person as one's friend or relative can no longer apply when a person has transcended all such limiting definitions. When one accepts an unlimited liability for all, as Nataraja Guru puts it, then one becomes a friend and relative of every other being. At the same time, it is no longer possible to participate in the specific social contracts that subtly regulate human behavior. We can see in the life of Jesus and the Buddha the similar need to leave home and shed the relational ties which bound them to particular roles and people in order to realize their fullest being. At the age of twenty-eight, Narayana Guru left the following note when he left his home:

"Let me search and find if there is any spiritual truth greater than domestic services and familial obligation. My life is dedicated for that search. So I should carefully and critically examine everything. Ultimately, if I do not see anything worthwhile in such a pursuit I can disclose that to the world and help many from wasting their time in such a futile search."

Obviously, he found that it was far from futile and his dedication has brought us verses such as these from *Anukampa Daśakam*, translated by Nataraja Guru:

*Grace yields blessedness; a heart Love-empty
Disaster spells of every kind,
Darkness as Love's effacer
and as suffering's core.
Is seed to everything.*

*Grace, Love, Mercy – all the three –
Stand for one same reality – Life's Star.
"He who loves is he who really lives."
Do learn these syllables nine by heart,
in place of lettered charm.*

*High scripture's meaning, antique, rare,
Or meaning as by Guru taught,
And what mildly a sage conveys,
And wisdom's branches of every stage,
Together they all belong,
As one in essence, in substance same.*

And this from *Advaita Dipika* translated by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati:

*A thousand names, a thousand intelligibles
between them comprised a thousand interest
items; such the world is real enough when not
inquired into, only until one wakes from
dream is it true; when awake,
the awakened one is all there is! (1)*

*The visible here is not real. Viewed without the
seer, one sees it as non-other;
the universe makes thus
a mirage-wise flow of consciousness.
What as effect stands without its cause is non-
other; what makes the wave is water alone. (2)*

*From cloth to thread and cotton, and then
to complex prime elements thus traced back;
all is seen like a river in desert sand
to spring from consciousness;
the ultimate limit is consciousness alone. (3)*

Despite the astuteness of such penetrating descriptions, Narayana Guru was not a psychologist. He was not licensed to practice by some board, he had no office where he received clients for enormous fees, he is not recognized as a leader of any avant-garde school of psychology. Yet his teachings offer us a full-fledged psychology – not just a study of human behavior or methods of changing aberrant behavior, but a thorough explanation of the workings of consciousness, meshing psychology and cosmology in one unitive vision. Thus we have guidelines that lead us from the most precise and particular manifestations of consciousness through

vague, half-hidden motivations to its unbounded, shining possibilities. All of his works add to our understanding but I will quote here only a few verses of *Jñāna Darśana* of *Darśana Mālā* as example:

Knowledge is one indeed – unconditioned and conditioned; that devoid of I-consciousness and so on is the knowledge which is unconditioned. (1)

That knowledge which exists as I-consciousness inside, outside as thisness, accompanied by corresponding modulations of awareness. is known as the conditioned. (2)

That by which one experiences the witnessing of the non-Self, such as I-consciousness and so on, is Self-knowledge, by which alone immortality is enjoyed. (3)

That by which I-consciousness and innumerable such effects, which belong to the non-Self, are known is said to be knowledge of the non-Self. (4)

By the mere presence of which alone everything is illuminated - that is characterized as knowledge of immediate perception and also as inner perception. (6)

(Translated by Guru Nitya Chaitanya)

When we think of philosophy, Western or Eastern, the sense of elaborate systems of thought, of tomes full of densely-packed terms and almost impenetrable prose, of discussion and counter discussion, argument and rebuttal of propositions and proposals comes to mind. In such a milieu, Narayana Guru would not be considered a philosopher. After his early student days, he did not keep, nor was he seen to read any books. He did not write exhaustive commentaries on any of the ancient scriptures. He broke his silence rarely, usually to make simple, though profound, statements or ask engaging questions. He exhibited no sense of at-

tachment to or pride about his writings. Many of his works have come to us because of the devotion and steadfastness of Swami Vidyananda who was granted the privilege of receiving and recording the Guru's works only if he never asked for anything to be repeated and wrote each verse only at the end of the walks which the Guru would take while composing. And yet, those verses contain an inexhaustible mine of philosophic vision. *Darśana Mālā* deals with each of the age-old questions which philosophers of every cultural tradition have tried to answer relating to creation, cause and effect, good and evil, Self and non-Self, and so on. Not only does the Guru raise each question, but his vision penetrates beyond divisions and polarities in such a way that all schools of philosophy are accepted and form a working synthesis. *Advaita Dipika* and *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* as well as his devotional compositions all participate in giving us a wholesome philosophy which leaves no area of human life, struggle or aspiration untouched.

Narayana Guru did not have any of the credentials such as university degrees which in the modern world are regarded as the only legitimate measures of a person's worth, their intellectual attainment, and their capacity to contribute and thus become successful and worthwhile citizens. In fact, he was not an intellectual. In many renowned intellectuals—scientists, authors, professors, administrators, government leaders, economists—we can see the vivid flashes of an intellect cultivated and polished to serve the needs and wishes of a powerful personal ego or tribal or national affiliation. In Narayana Guru we find the rare example of an intellect that has been cleansed of its confusion and purified so that the pure light of knowledge can shine through without obstruction. In him the energy of the ego has been channeled to support and serve the intellect's clarity and direction. This makes possible a consistency of intellectual brightness and a flexibility of thought that is ever-ready to respond to the situations of life and the questions of earnest seekers

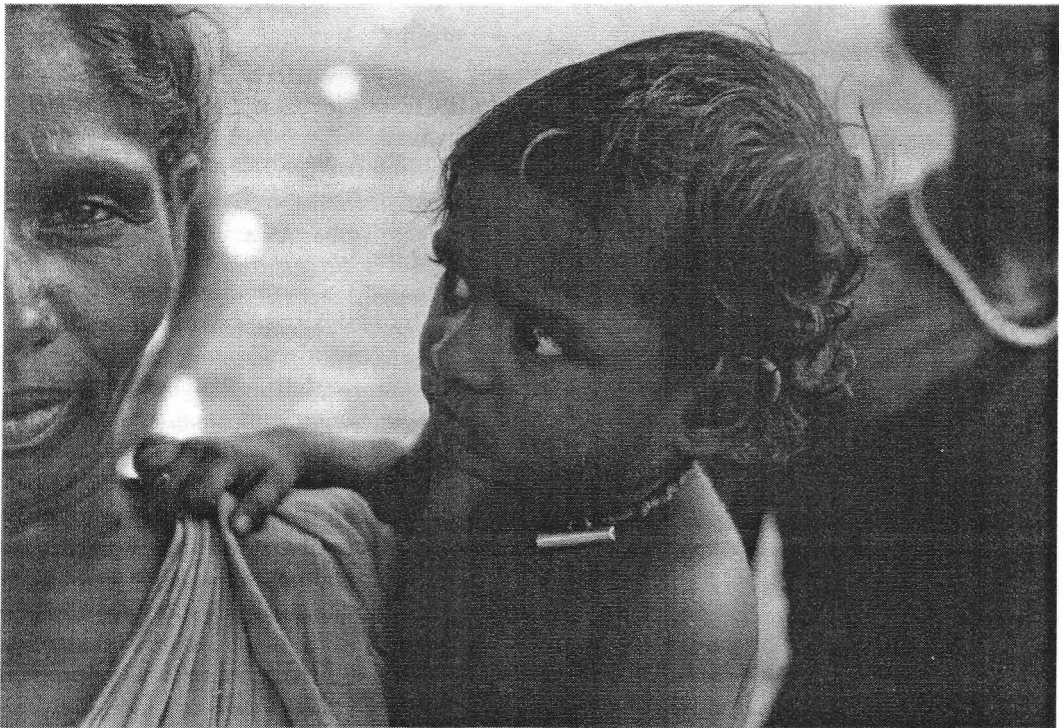
with critical acumen, universal applicability and humor. This ever-present attunedness of the intellect to an absolute norm engenders an insight which can penetrate the most complex of philosophical truths to know its essential simplicity and communicate it just at the moment it is needed and in the way it can be understood. Nat-araja Guru recounts one such incident in *Word of the Guru*:

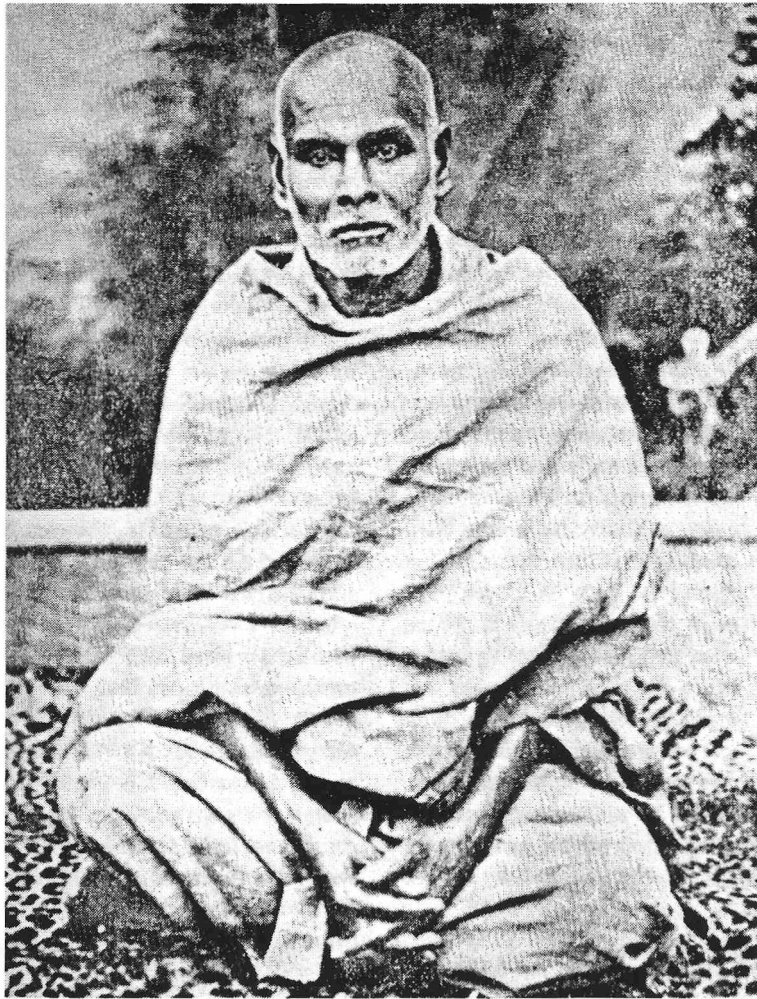
There came a night dedicated to the memory of Siva, the ancient leader of the Himalayas, which kept a large crowd awake, hearing orators, musicians and lantern-lecturers and waiting for the elephant procession at midnight and the fireworks in the morning. They made the secluded riverside into a town for the night, and young and old gathered at the spot which was the seat of the ascetic life of the Guru. The Guru sat protected from the crowd at a distance, finding out from the by-standers all that was happening. He spoke of the vulgarity of elephant processions and the waste involved in fireworks. He made no speeches, but the crowd heard his views through the speedy medium of rumor; so that, while he pronounced no judgement, the people carried

out his suggestions as if responding to their inner voices.

At midnight the Guru came into the crowd. There was to be a meeting and the Guru was to preside. A deep unconcern sat on his features while he sat at the head of the crowd. Orator after orator rose to his feet and spoke on the ideals of the Guru as they understood him, as the Guru sat silent behind them. They moved the crowd, mixing their voices with the subtle emotional atmosphere of the midnight vigil.

A group of women and children, more sunburnt than the rest of the crowd, sat segregated from the others. They were poor peasants, who, after a day's hard work had come in search of consolation to the festive scene. For ages these poor laborers and their ancestors had tilled the soil for the richer people who took advantage of their goodness. On the basis of their caste, these people had been condemned to age-long suffering, and were segregated and spurned. The Guru's watchful eyes lighted on the group. He asked the orators to wait a moment. He asked the crowd if these people should be segregated. Why should they not come and feel equality with the others? The Guru arranged that two of the boys from the





crowd be brought on the platform, and seated them, after kind questions, one on either side of him: "They are God's children as much as the others," he murmured, and tears of compassion more eloquent than speeches carried home his silent message to the crowd. Even they who would have growled at such a departure from tradition, could not resist the winning power of the Guru's eyes... While others spoke and became excited over the past or the future, striving for hours to direct the popular mind, the Guru sat silent, and acted.

From such accounts of the Guru it is clear that he was not a preacher nor an orator. He was not a political leader even though his uncompromising stand awakened new awareness of political issues and inspired many people to undertake direct political action to change the power

structure of Kerala and India as a whole. Unfortunately, many of those who entered the field of politics lost sight of the subtle dialectics necessary to sit peacefully and steadily in one's center while at the same time maintaining a dynamic compassion of universal scope. Even among the people who have chosen or been led into political action by the sincere wish to actualize their highest values and ideals for the common good of all people, it is rare to find a person who has not succumbed to the trap of dualistic vision, whether of the gross form of seeing divisions such as friends and enemies, our party and rival groups, or more sophisticated versions of the same polarization, such as "progressive thinkers" vs. the unenlightened or uneducated. Narayana Guru gives us an example of the possibility of sitting at a

neutral point which enables one to respond to all the persons or factors inherent in a situation without slighting one in favor of the other. This is almost impossible to approximate if one begins with any particular frame of reference because one is then inevitably caught up in weighing relative merits and balancing rival claims. If we can proceed from the universal as our ever-present home base, as the Guru did, then every person, group and factor has its role and meaning which can be woven into a dynamic and purposeful life situation. In the interactions between Narayana Guru and Mahatma Gandhi we can see this approach coming face to face with the highest development of altruism proceeding from particularized concern.

Before he was influenced by the Guru's teaching, Gandhi was immersed in enthusiasm and struggle for the freedom of the Indian people from the British. Within that framework he earnestly desired and dedicatedly worked for that liberation. But his particularized vision limited his capacity to see that the ramifications of the caste system which divided human beings led Indians themselves to deny full freedom of life to their fellow Indians. Through the Guru's influence he began to discover that the fight to end untouchability and other caste distinctions had to be included for any struggle for freedom to succeed.

Later on—in connection with the Vaikom Satyāgraha which protested the restrictions made to keep persons considered to be of lower castes from walking on the road near the temple—the differing effects of these two orientations can be seen. Narayana Guru supported the Satyāgrahis and gave one center for their use. The struggle went on for twenty-two months. Gandhiji—with his vision of the strength of the blow to be dealt to the power structure of South India—exhorted the volunteers to persist in their grueling task of blocking the road in the hot sun, even though many of them did not truly believe in non-violence and were seething in repressed anger which spurted out in occasional retaliation and polarized the rheto-

ric of their speeches.

Narayana Guru asked: "Why should people mortify themselves in the Satyāgraha by standing in the hot sun and getting beaten up by the temple authorities?"

Gandhi's reply was: "It is not mortification. It is a purificatory process by which one can gain moral force. Spiritual force is mightier than physical force."

The Guru: "Is the spiritual force gained by *tapas* (ascetic discipline) qualitative or quantitative?"

Gandhi: "Qualitative."

The Guru then wanted to know: "Is it not better that a person of moral excellence and purity like you do *tapas* instead of exposing a multitude of ignorant people to the cruelty of nature and man?"

Gandhi did not reply to the Guru's questions and the Guru did not push him. His ways of correction were gentle. He did not surrender his overwhelming compassion for every being to any idea or the expediency of a cause and was recommending that Gandhi use his powers to influence the authorities himself instead of using them to encourage ignorant young people to suffer for what finally was only a half victory. Gandhi was content to let the aim be limited to gaining permission for "untouchables" to pass on the road in front of the temple while Guru drew no such limits, affirming the soundness of the people's feeling that all restrictions on temple access should be removed and encouraging them at all times to freely walk into and worship at any temple. Gandhi had in mind the specific goal of that agitation and how it fit into his overall scheme, while the Guru stood firm on absolutist principles that are true under any circumstances, for all people.

When we hear the phrase "absolutist principles," prevailing prejudice about the concept of something absolute may conjure up the sense of rigidity or close-mindedness, but the Guru has given new life to the expression through his emphasis on "continuity in human endeavor." He did not involve himself in enthusiasms and causes which come and go but kept

himself true to the realities of each given situation and to the underlying principle needing to be exemplified to better human life and understanding. His unswerving adherence to the highest of human values in each situation enabled him to stand firm, without compromise, yet without creating any situation of enmity. Each of his responses indicated a freshness, a flexibility that made the establishment of any doctrine impossible.

Narayana Guru is not the exponent of one path. In casual conversation as well as in his works, he found numerous occasions to note parallels, whether between beautiful places, characteristics of persons, word derivations or religious feelings, sensitive to the human value threading through each. His intuition transcended a merely pragmatic or rational understanding, incorporating mystical affinities, mystery and wonder without violating the requirements of common sense and sensibility. That intuition expressed itself with an ever-fresh vitality as the Guru's abiding experience of unity transformed a particular person, situation, or place into an opportunity to grant those around him a glimpse into the underlying connections of the universe.

The depth of his experience enabled him to transcend all religions and philosophies without negating any of them. As he experienced the essence of each, both in their aspirations and final goal, he is able to teach us to look for that essence underlying any practice, study or belief and to understand that the differences are related only to different frames of reference.

From the experience described in verse thirty-eight of *Ātmopadeśa Satakam*—

*What is known as many is the other,
and that which shines forth as one is sameness;
having known the state, which is going to be
spoken of, and attained release, remain
dissolved and blended in the state of sameness.*

—he proceeds to these crystal-clear and profound verses on faith:

The many faiths have but one essence;

*not seeing this, in this world,
like the blind men and the elephant,
many kinds of reasoning are used
by the unenlightened, who become distressed;
having seen this, without being disturbed,
remain steadfast. (44)*

*One faith is despicable to another;
the karu described in one is defective
in another's estimation;
in the world the secret of this is one alone;
know that confusion prevails
until it is known to be thus. (45)*

*By fighting it is impossible to win;
by fighting one another no faith is destroyed;
one who argues against another's faith,
not recognizing this,
fights in vain and perishes;
this should be understood. (46)*

*To become of one faith is what
everyone speaks of;
this the proselytizers do not recognize;
wise men, freed of objections to another's faith,
know this secret in full. (47)*

*The self encased in a body
in his eidetic consciousness,
understands all such as, "That is mine,"
and "This is mine," bereft of body identity;
on considering this it is evident
that everyone has truly experienced. (48)*

*All beings are making effort in every way,
all the time, for the happiness of the Self;
in the world, this is the one faith;
pondering on this, without becoming subjected
to sin, be controlled. (49)*

(Translation by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati)

These verses give us a far-reaching commentary on Guru's simple words: *oru matam* (one faith). When we study these verses our understanding of the meaning of *matam* expands to include every realm of human experience, whether it be religion, philosophy, science, culture, politics, or social interaction. When we understand all human activity in the light of the common impetus for the happiness of the one Self, that gives us a universal frame of ref-

erence in which all can be included and understood. We are daily presented with opportunities to avoid the confusion and even destruction which is generated by regarding another's faith as defective and getting involved in arguments. Instead, we can turn again and again to the one unitive principle which motivates all faiths and underlies all existence. In verse fifty of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, Narayana

Guru describes the awareness into which we can penetrate when this unitive understanding is cultivated:

*The ground, together with water, wind, fire
and sky; the functioning ego,
right knowledge and the mind –
waves and ocean: what else is there?
All these worlds, having arisen,
are changing into knowledge. (50)*



Narayana Guru closes *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* with a definitive statement of what we, as well as he, are not:

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



Values and Life

Selections from *Values Magazine*

Nataraja Guru

The Sacredness of Sex

Prudery is a by-product of civilization. Cave-men cannot be imagined as subject to this subtle vice. They were protected by a natural honesty. Later on, in the progressive development of human life through different phases, sex became taboo. The sacred became contrasted with the profane, in the name of unseen values. Doctrines of original sin and man's fall from his birthright of purity, and salvation through grace or merit began to influence the human conscience. Sex and sin have been considered almost synonymous in the religious context of Buddhism no less than Christianity – two of the world's greatest religious growths. The happy state of natural innocence was overcovered by guilt-sense obsessions and repressions from which humanity has continued to suffer, and from which, to a large extent, humanity still suffers.

When sex became a matter of shame rather than one of pride as with ancient peoples, marriage became discredited in favour of celibacy. Women became despised. A married saint was an exception. Heloise became dishonourable to the spirituality of Abelard and the rumoured love of Joan of Arc was enough to kill her spiritual reputation. Rousseau's name became anathema to the orthodox. Much sex hypocrisy however, passed unnoticed under the cloak of monasticism. To consider sex as necessary or normal smacks of paganism or heresy even today. It was only recently that Freudian psychology entered by the back-door of academic life and created a stir. Notions about sex and sin are being revised drastically by the mod-

ern generation. It is time to rethink this matter with thoroughness.

The Absolute as Eros: Vedic texts are not religious in the same sense that Christianity follows, because their "paganism" is sometimes shockingly sexy. Even when the Vedas give place to the Upanishads which hold up the models of wisdom and renunciation, this Vedic attitude to sex has persisted. Max Muller preferred to translate some too honest Upanishadic passages into Latin rather than plain English, like the other parts of the text, in the name of decency. The *Bhagavad Gita* which continues and upholds the Vedic tradition and way of life in a revalued form goes even as far as to state that the Absolute Itself consists of *kama*, the erotic value-factor, when not against righteous conduct (VII, II). Cupidity and concupiscence are not such sins as the active objective aspects of desire or anger such as implied in *rajas*, the active pursuit of desire. (The subtle difference between the two forms of desire or attachment is clearly implied in the *Gita*, III, 7).

The four ends of human life (*purusharthas*) viz.: righteousness (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), value-motive (*kama*) and release (*moksha*) glaringly includes this urge for full living called *kama* as an important component of a purposeful life. The Upanishads refer to spiritual betterment (*sreyas*) and here and now values in life (*preyas*) as both desirable even to a spiritual aspirant.

Erotic Mysticism: When we touch the stratum prior to the Vedas, sex looms large in it. We have referred to the sacredness of fecundity and virility of prehistoric man. The worship of the phallus (*lingam*)

is an unmistakable indication. This tendency has culminated in the Androgynous God Siva who is an unrepressed Bacchus in Whom sex attains to a high sanctity. In Him male and female meet in a Sex which is with a capital S.

Some ancient South Indian temples have images of divinities to whom nudism is normal and representations of coitus in frieze or panel are so common that passers-by take them for granted, while even a modern tourist boasting of "free morals" might well be shocked out of his wits by them. The subtle dialectical interplay between the profane and the sacred as preserved in such ancient places of worship is at least the joy of the dilettante at present.

In and through the ban and taboo of sex, however, it persists and flourishes in the very precincts of religion. Erotic mysticism has its place at the core of the sacred scriptures themselves. The *Song of Songs* of the Bible and the *Gita Govinda* (aptly translated *Indian Song of Songs* by Sir Edwin Arnold) are glaring examples of this ironical phenomenon. The Pastoral Krishna's morality with the cowerd girls cannot be easily explained away by Hindu apologists who wish to see their favorite deity appear more respectable in the eyes of other critics. This is because they are beginning to forget the idiom or language proper to contemplative mysticism. Sanskrit, though "dead" as a modern tongue, lives by virtue of contemplative values it preserves. Sex and love find in it a natural habitat. This "civilized language of the Gods" (*Devanagari*) combines sex and love delectably into a pure joy legitimate to man. Vulgarity becomes impossible here because of its primitive purity.

Due Place for Sex: Whether sex made men feel morally or spiritually inferior or superior, it has been present all through and has exerted its pressure in human life almost uniformly from the beginning. Talk of controlling it or suppressing it is out of the question. (The *Gita* recognizes this verity of the irrepressible nature of vi-

tal tendencies in III, 33 – "Even a man of wisdom behaves in conformity with his own nature. All creation goes on subject to nature. Of what avail is control?"). Human decency makes us ashamed of it and we vainly try to abolish it, but the more intelligent way would be to give it its due place in human life and to take full advantage of its potentialities to raise the level of human goodness or perfection. Rousseau in Europe first broke the stigma of sex taboo by composing simple love-songs. Then came psychologists and educators who advocated co-education and a free development of the personality. Bergson's epoch-making work touched the core of the problem in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, as the title itself indicates. He established that there is a mystical morality which is free, dynamic and open as opposed to a social morality which is closed, static and obligatory in character. These stages in the development of modern thought have made the modern adolescent thinker very alive to the problem of sex.

Art and Contemplation: Spurious or sensational literature on this subject whether in the name of *brahmacharya* (a much-misunderstood term), or, on the other side "psychiatry" or "psychopathology" which is swallowed down with avidity by modern readers, is helping to confound and confuse adolescents. Mal-adjusted and distorted personalities arise out of a perverted attitude to this item of life urge.

The faint line which divides lewdness from a liberally educated refinement or good taste, especially in the field of art, is an elusive one. Good taste actually involves an element of wisdom, which latter depends on equalizing two opposing tendencies within human nature. It is art that can help in sublimating sex and making it pure. The principle of sacrifice (*yajña*) referred to in the *Gita** which the Creator put into human beings at the very start of creation, is the other potent factor which

*III, 10: In ancient times, having created the peoples with sacrifice as pertaining to them (necessarily), Prajapati (the Lord of the Peoples) said 'By this shall you grow and multiply: Let this be to you the milch-cow of all desires.'

can lift mere sex and transform its value contemplatively into something noble and sublime. Sex has to be canalized and made to flow through contemplative channels.

The Epic of Kalidasa: A supreme example of a whole epic composition devoted to this subject is found in *The Birth of the War God (Kumara Sambhava)* of Kalidasa. Shakespeare or Dante could also be quoted with equal advantage.

Here we return again to the story of the ancient people's God Siva, whom stone-language and myth conceived as androgynous. Here in this epic, one of the twin aspects of the Absolute as represented by the Daughter of the Himalaya (Parvati), representing nature, meets Siva the Supreme Man (Purusha). Resulting from their union is the positive spiritual principle, Subramaniam or Kumara, who is also known as the "War God" in Sanskrit, the vanquisher of all dark forces or forces of relativism. He represents the victory of the Absolute.

The striking feature of this epic that we should notice here is that Siva burnt to ashes Eros the God of Love. This sharp tragic note is at the core of the epic. Sex or love of a different order however pervades the whole epic and every metaphor or figure of speech reveals a philosophical scheme of reality into which sacred love enters to reveal the good, the true or the beautiful in life. Sex in its most intimate aspects is not excluded from the string of graded interests which the master-poet fingers alternately. The dialectical paradox round which the epic is constructed consists of the fact that while the flame emitted by the middle eye of Siva tragically reduces Kama (Eros) to ashes as Rati (consort of Eros) watches weeping and voices of unseen spectators call for mercy through the winds, Siva Himself is not without his love affair with Parvati. This develops at the pace of eternal becoming. Parvati undergoes long penances for the favor of Siva in the forest where He meditates.

Sheer Joy: After long austerities, standing in neck-deep water or in scorching sun or in rain, emaciated, and pallor

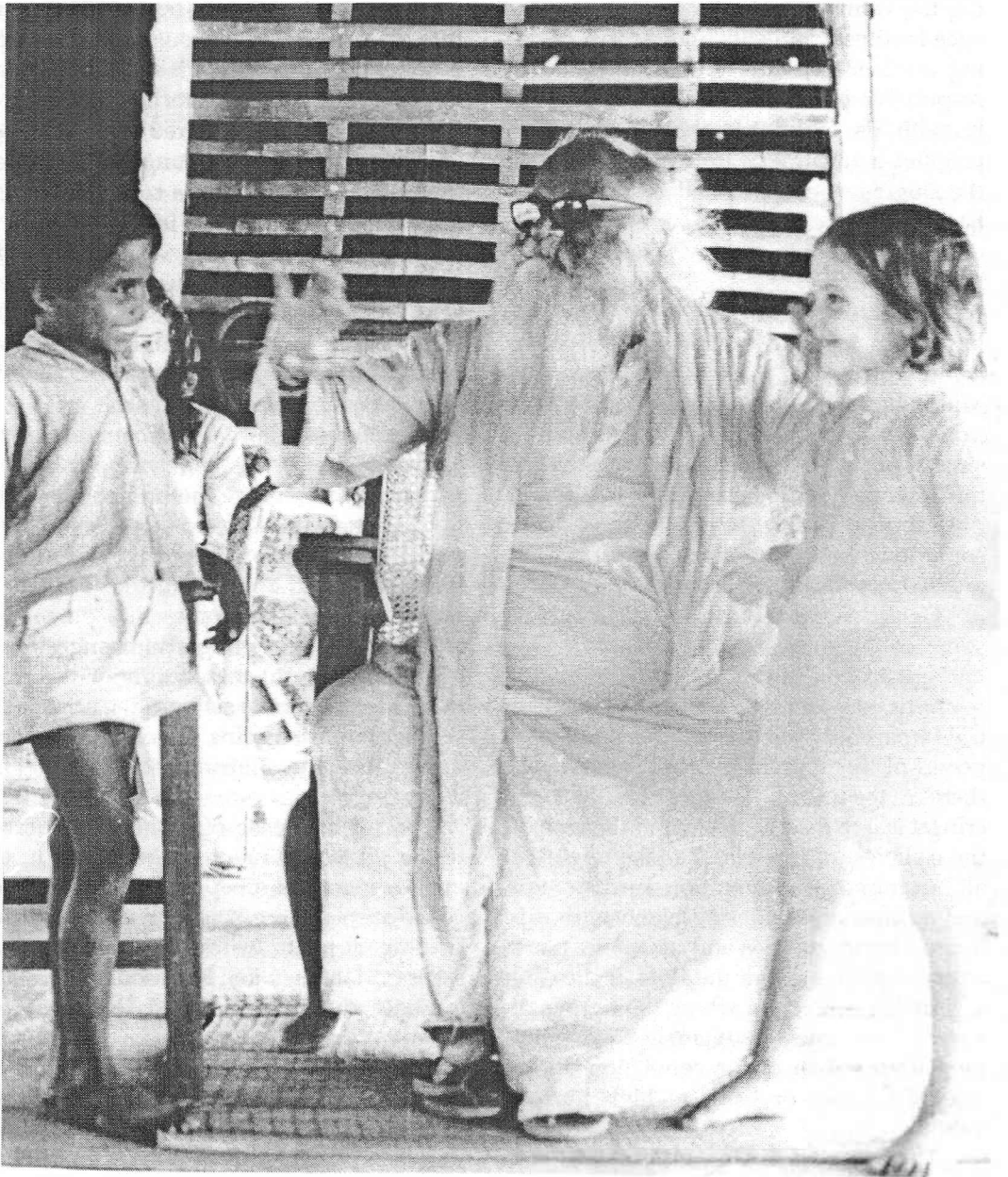
invading all but the redness of Her lips, Parvati makes an offering to Siva in meditation in mid-forest. The eyes of Siva open in sympathy that has nothing but sacred love implicit in it, but when the eyes light inadvertently on the red lips of Parvati, Kama (Eros) is about to assert himself readily aiming an arrow at Siva at that moment of rare advantage.

The God meets the situation by the burning of Kama, with all tragic vehemence or indignation. This inner happening, depicted in overt epic form gives us the secret of this noble poem, in which Love or Sex with a capital letter, that knows no decrease, is contrasted with sex that passes and fades like summer's blossoms. Relativist and Absolutist values with sex and love as the central items are here juxtaposed, compared and contrasted masterfully. Sex attains a sacred status here. Art, philosophy, morals and mysticism come together to accomplish this task. The subtle dialectical interplay of sex and love values can be seen in this composition to weave the fabric of a sheer joy which is sublime and sacred at once, in spite of sex or love being the central interest.

Can A Science Be Sung?

Science has been considered as dispassionate. There is no room for enthusiasm or emotion in a scientist. It is a cold-blooded investigation of the facts of life, and excitement or exaltation would be a form of prejudice when applied to the matter or method of the scientific way. Such are some of the notions we hold about this branch of knowledge. In spite of this however, there is still Science that raises its head above this limitation and soars to the sublimity of a song of the soul of man.

The *Bhagavad Gita* claims to be a song and a science at once. As conceived by its author there is no innate violation of principle in singing of a science in the ecstatic state of wonder. Absolute truth is a wonder and hardly anything more than that. The flash of lightning in the far-off hori-



zon is both a plain fact and a wonder at once. The sunset that a scientist watches is both a glory and a fact. It is not necessary to banish the appraisal or appreciation of one in favor of the other. The plainest of facts could still be a wonder of wonders.

Blending of Values: The scientist need not be ashamed of this element of the emotion of wonder if it tallies with his scientific attitude. The discovery of a new star in the firmament has been referred to

as highly exciting in a personal sense to the fact-finding observer who first succeeded in bringing it within the range of vision of his telescope. When Eddington came down from his observatory one night, after seeing a long-looked for astronomical phenomenon, his hair is said to have stood on end. He felt like a sailor who looked at land after the despair of a long voyage.

Song and science can blend, enhanc-

ing the value of each other, when the science involved fulfils its highest role. Singing a science would become normal and respectable when the song agreed perfectly with its own high theme. A raving prophet or an angry Jove could meet in the singing scientist a kindred spirit, perhaps of a more normal type. The dancing dervish could only add to the joy of such a happy company.

The blending of the antinomies of humdrum fact and exalted wonder is an art in which great masters like Dante and Milton have excelled. Vyasa is perhaps the purest example of a poet who was able to sing a veritable Science of sciences without any part of it becoming threadbare. The fabric of poetry that he wove was like some long-lasting homespun stuff whose glossy luxury was enduring.

Gentle sarcasm itself finds its place in some of the verses of the *Bhagavad Gita* without marring its character as a strictly scientific composition. The attitude of neutral impartiality maintained in some of the verses of this type hidden away here and there in the text of the *Gita* needs the keen critical eye to discern. Except in the case of the cleverest of readers, the joke might be all but missed. Exaggeration, sarcasm, wit and a sense of wonder all blend with different literary devices and idiomatic turns of expression, making the style of the *Gita* a veritable confection where the figures of speech are most advantageously employed to enhance our conviction about scientific verity or truth of high human value.

The Scientist as Guru: It is a hard fact worth recognizing that the mind of man is so constituted that it seeks to soar into the domain of freedom which dwells beyond mere facts. We tend to shut out our appraisal of verity to the extent that the sense of wonder is excluded from our own personal attitudes, in our common human pilgrimage to the temple of supreme Knowledge. We are obliged to speak of truth with a certain zeal which should not be considered out of place when properly moderated by its own opposite corrective tendency.

Science is or should be guided by our interest in worthwhile pursuits of values in life. In its first phase it seeks objects of satisfaction. When material wants and comforts have been catered for, the mind seeks to satisfy subtler hungers and appetites. These are taken in a certain order of importance and human intelligence then penetrates the whole range of human values till it arrives at one supreme or absolute Value. This is to be sought, not outside oneself but within the range and limits of one's own consciousness. The vision thereafter refers to oneself.

As soon as unitive and contemplative values become thus the normal subject-matter of science, the method of scientific investigation itself has to be reversed. The very instruments of knowledge have to be changed. It is the higher faculty of dialectical reasoning that comes into play. The nature of the reasoning also changes. The dearest object to oneself cannot be anything other than the self and the science of self-knowledge begins to touch the emotions. It becomes alluring and absorbing in its nature.

When the sense of wonder in regard to the Truth that one feels in oneself lures one deeper and deeper into one's own consciousness, the scientist improves, to become a poet. Instead of walking, he skips or dances in joy. Rhapsodic or ecstatic states overtake him and the sense of wonder permeates his ways. The true scientist, however, holds the balance between the two tendencies, and sits in the neutrality of the Absolute. He represents the Absolute in himself in a simple and normal way. He can be silent or he can sing of the Absolute in words, and point his finger to the Absolute that is beyond. All these functions combine in him, blending into what he represents in his thoughts, words and deeds. Like Vyasa of old, the singing scientist pointing his finger to the Absolute becomes both a personal and an impersonal Guru, representing a priceless value to humanity for all time.

Allah the Absolute

The status given to God in the Quran by Muhammed is what gives Islam its one excellence among the latest revaluations of religious life in the world.

In Islam God is not to be mixed up with a demiurge, a holy presence, or even a Deva or an Ishwara. He represents the Most High. He is not to be confused with other gods or deities, ancestral or heavenly. His unity is to be beyond suspicion. His supremely absolute status is not to be compromised. He is the high Ruler of all worlds and His law cannot and should not be transgressed. Man's multiple relativistic interests here should not be allowed to color or vitiate God's high purity and aloofness. God is not merely good, but Goodness itself. There should be no watering-down of the intense or fervent content of the reality of God by loose analogy, comparison, substitution or transferred holiness through any indirect representation by imagery or impotent symbolism. He is unique and only comparable with His own High Self. Literary, philosophical or theological indirectness in the approach to God are to be discredited. The messenger of God, his apostle or prophet should not be encouraged to shine with any glory which truly belongs to God alone, as that might confuse or confound the supreme Goodness or Value of God in the eyes of the common man. Such is the zeal of the simplest member of the Islamic fraternity with which he safeguards the absolute status of the One God that knows no second. "None but the Most High" is thus the true watchword of Islam.

Enigmatic Epithets: Although thus the most exacting God and One always to be obeyed and feared, stern in His decrees and inexorable, the most favorite and oft-repeated epithets applied to Him are that He is *Ar-Rahman*, *Ar-Rahim* – The Beneficent and The Merciful.

To fear God and yet consider Him loving is a double-edged challenge presented by Islam. Neither the lukewarm "believer" in something indirectly and conventional-

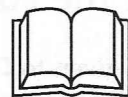
ly accepted as God, nor the disbeliever can by-pass in a lazy indifferent mood this challenge which Islam poses before him. Those who are not with God are against Him. Such is the firm position that the religion of Muhammed offers for one to accept or reject. All cant and double-talk are ruled out by the Quran in such final terms that some have mistaken the zeal for fanaticism.

God's will must prevail one hundred percent and yet there should be no obligation, compulsion or coercion in religious matters as the Quran clearly lays down (34, 256). There is thus a major enigma in Islam which is that in Islam there is the meeting of two factors – Freedom and imperative Necessity. The God of Islam is at once the highest and only hope and the categorical and imperative necessary factor for happiness or salvation.

Challenge and Recognition: Khatija the first wife of Muhammed first saw through this secret enigma that her husband taught her with love. His cousin Ali responded to the message with characteristic enthusiasm and fervour. Aisha, his younger accomplished wife, responded also to the verity thus revealed, though in a less clear way. But the Arab tribesmen and various kinsmen of Muhammed mistrusted and disadopted him, and thus the tearful growth of Islam began to trace its keen note through the pages of its long and troubled history. Humanity has still to travel in order to see through the challenge that Muhammed has placed before it.

Understood in the same strict sense that Muhammed himself intended, the absolute status and value of God to be recognized by humanity—the open, dynamic and scientific verity that the God of Islam represents—remains unquestionable. Presented in its pristine purity, it is a revealed or *a priori* verity that each must accept wholeheartedly in the interest of the humanity which is dear to every member. Then let Allah be praised as He ought to be; let Him be understood as evermore He should be. Such is our fervent prayer.

The Lost Idiom of the Bible



The Bible has become more or less a closed book to moderns. Its subtle parallels, enigmatic sayings, the paradoxes with which it abounds, its figures of speech and even its highly suggestive style, not to speak of its turns of expression, have lost their ancient flavor to the matter-of-fact and mechanistic tastes of moderns. The living waters of the Biblical message are beginning to taste queer at least to a half of our own generation.

Instead of relying as they did in older times on the thoughts and sayings derived from the Bible, even the pulpit sermons of a Sunday have begun to borrow many analogies and examples from the sporting field or from the banalities of everyday life as reflected in mass produced magazines and newspapers. It would seem that in certain ultra-modern circles Jesus himself has to be presented in a streamlined setting to be acceptable.

The appetites of children pampered by artificially enriched foods or flavors both in respect of physical as well as mental enrichment can hardly be expected to turn with relish from comic strips and crime stories available in large profusion with Sunday morning breakfasts to the sad historical anecdotes of the Old Testament. The hated hours of the Sunday School if any, come side by side with the tune for cowboy or bandit games with revolvers in either pocket

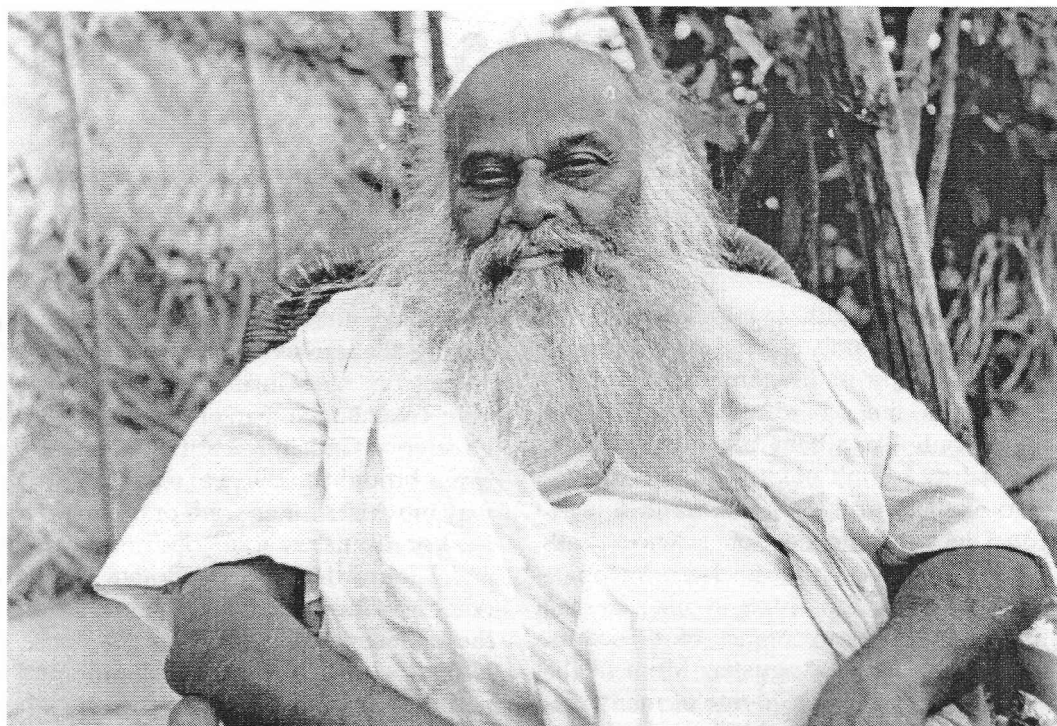
God must hurry up to answer prayers if faith in such methods is to continue. Pious works must have quick results in the manner of slot machines. The modern man is impatient with anything that does not 'work' as in the familiar world of gadgets.

Two Categories of Thought: The truth is that the Bible belongs to literature of a perennial and contemplative order. The modern man's idioms on the other hand are derived mainly from physics and mechanics. The spectacular success of the machine has invaded the sub-conscious of

the present generation. Contemplative modes of thought and expression have receded to the background.

It is true that the admission of biology to a respected position among the sciences has done something to break the rigidity of the mechanistic pattern of thinking that was most in vogue at the end of the nineteenth century. Vitalism has displaced rationalism to some extent. A biological organism had necessarily to be thought of in terms of life duration or functioning. Thus a new time dimension had to be added to our notion of the physical world. From this notion of organic duration to that of the process of evolution, whether conceived with a mechanistic bias as with Darwin or more 'creatively' as in the case of Bergson, the transition was only normal. Some sort of belief in 'evolution' whether treated as a 'theory,' 'hypothesis,' or even loosely as a 'fact proven beyond dispute,' may be said to be at the bottom of the modern man's pattern of thought.

Crossroads: Taking a backward glance we could say that the Bible derived its idiom from Socratic or even pre-Socratic literature known to the Mediterranean world which itself was the melting pot of more ancient tongues whose confusion was heard at the time of building of the tower of Babel. Neo-Platonism had much in common with the thought patterns found in the Bible. As theology passed through the Dark Ages and emerged into the Age of Reason these patterns became effete. The stunning blow of the age of mechanistic modernism all but killed it outright. The shock was relieved by the living vitalism of Bergson. We stand today at the threshold of an era in which this generation still views the whole of the Biblical mode of thought with great mistrust. To choose between the creative process as in the first chapter of Genesis and the same viewed in the light of evolution represents the crossroads at which we may be said to be still



lingering at the present time.

Wisdom-reasoning: It would be safe to assert that the language of Genesis which reads: "And God said, Let there be light and there was light; And God saw the light and it *was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. . ." is poles apart from the thermodynamical picture of a universe that is presented to us by the scientists. We cannot blame altogether the young people of our generation if they refuse to be enthusiastic for both these forms of expression in one and the same breath.

In spite of being so different, however, they need not be considered as mutually exclusive versions of reality. They are still reconcilable in the light of a certain unitive approach in which Human Values are given their legitimate primacy. This way of wisdom was a way of higher reasoning known to the ancients and is not altogether unknown even at the present day in certain so-called recessive parts of the world. This way is akin to the intuition which is able to see the middle ground between two reciprocal propositions which seem mutually exclusive of each other.

Zeno and Parmenides were ancient exponents of this way of reasoning. Plato referred to it as the 'Hymn of Dialectic' and Plotinus paid homage to it referring to it as the Eye of the Soul of Man.

The great kings of literature, irrespective of the time or clime in which they lived, have been master dialecticians in their own varied ways. In fact their works may be said to have derived their very greatness from the secret element of Dialectics contained in them. The works of a Kalidasa, a Dante, a Shakespeare or a Milton, not to speak of the great Vyasa, author of the *Bhagavad Gita*, that scientific text-book of Dialectic (which is none other than what it refers to as *Yoga*), breathe the full flavor of the idiom proper to the Science of dialectical reasoning.

The Bible itself would not have come to be considered 'The Book' if it were not permeated from beginning to end with that particular dialectical idiom which makes it a treasured book of humankind for all time. The generation of moderns needs badly to re-learn this lost idiom of the Bible if the interest in this treasure of contemplative wisdom writing is still to continue amidst us. ❖

Nataraja Guru As I Know Him

Prof. V. Ramachandran

It fills me with joy to speak about Sampoojya Nataraja Guru. I do not turn to his philosophy or his famous works, for they are, to me, a hard nut to crack. I feel myself only like a baby playing with pebbles when I think of the gigantic dimension of the Guru with his sound knowledge in all branches of science, both Eastern and Western. Still I am fortunate that I've seen the Guru in his physical form—with the appearance of a Socrates in the West or an Augustiar Muni in the East. Guru was like a "dome of many colored glass." I have heard him speak on different subjects, ranging from sex to super-consciousness, without any inhibition. He could be viewed from different angles, from different branches of knowledge, which found a harmonious blending in him. My intention here is to narrate some of my experiences with the Guru, to reveal certain aspects of the person he was.

I've heard that all Gurus try to break the conditionings of the ego of their disciples in their peculiar ways. Nataraja Guru's method was to torpedo the very foundation of all conditionings and reset and restructure the whole being to a new orientation, which leads one to unitive understanding. He was fond of mathematical precision in anything he touched.

I met Nataraja Guru for the first time in 1963. An inmate of the Gurukula introduced me to the Guru who wanted me to sit down and asked my name and native place. Though I was afraid of the Guru, a thousand and one questions were bubbling inside seeking for expression. I began with the question: "What is truth, Guru? Immediately the Guru gave me a list of three or four truths such as empirical truth, ideological truth, etc., and asked which truth I meant. I was puzzled and

perplexed, not knowing the answer. Then during the conversation the word "God" came from me. Guru then said, "What is your God? I am a man of science and must have your God in scientific terms." I was again brought to silence, surprised at the way in which things were put to me. Then I asked: "What is soul?" Guru kept mum and I found him deeply drawn inwards. After a while I said that Bertrand Russell, the philosopher, in his book, *In Praise of Idleness*, says that soul is mind and mind is nothing other than memory. And when man ceases to be, memory also ceases and there is an end of soul as well.

Guru blurted out: "Who told you Russell is a philosopher?" Then he said "Anyone is free to speak anything."

Then Guru turned to Shakespearean plays and compared many characters with Greek characters, revealing a lot of things unknown to me till then. Guru did not like people saying that there is high philosophy in Shakespeare. I felt that everything I had prized fell far below my expectation. With a deep sense of unhappiness and with the realization that I knew nothing, I left the Guru on that day. Later I realized how compassionate and considerate the Guru was to me, though the whole thing seemed to me very rude at the outset.

On my second visit, Guru uttered these words at the very beginning: "Today you have come without doubts." I then said, "Guru I do not know any thing. I am a very ignorant man." With a sudden change of face he immediately turned to me and said: "You are great." On hearing this never-expected tribute I was dumbfounded. Tears rolled down my cheeks. I could not guess (to this day) in what respect I was great in any way.

Then I mentioned the type of *upasana* I

was practicing in those days—*pranayama*, chanting a mantra and focusing the attention on the ajna chakra (between my eyebrows). Guru said: "Pranayama is done by hatha yogis. You need not do it. Focus your attention on the ajna chakra and forget everything, even the breathing."

Once a professor from Oxford University visited the Guru to clear himself of certain doubts about mob psychology. As soon as the question was asked, the Guru went on speaking on it for about one and a half hours, the whole of which was tape-recorded. Afterward, as I walked the professor to where he was staying, he said, "I've never seen such a wonderful man."

Once a girl suffering from madness was brought to the Guru. She was using obscene language profusely; She was given a cup of tea, which she poured on the very face of the Guru. The tea was dripping down from his beard. But the Guru remained as though nothing had happened. There was not even a trace of change to be noticed on his face. He gave a feather touch on her forehead with his soft fingers. She became quiet and calm. Then the Guru went inside the small hut where he stayed and closed the doors. After some time he came out with a plate full of grapes and gave her some of them with the words: "Narayana Guru is giving these." The girl ate the grapes and appeared to have gained her normalcy, although when she left for home the Guru turned to us and said "She will fall ill of the disease twice again."

The Guru used to speak in English whenever we were alone, which I liked very much. Whenever I went wrong in correct English usage, he immediately brought it to my notice, corrected me then and there. I am reminded of the following lines from *Gitanjali* in this context.

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls,
Where words come out of the depth of truth,
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection,*

*Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit,
Where the mind is lead forward by thee into
ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake.*

These famous lines of Tagore can most fittingly be applied to Nataraja Guru because this is the type of the world he always aspired for. The only difference is that while Tagore speaks about "My country," Nataraja Guru speaks about the world as a whole. Just a glance through the titles of some of his books bears testimony to his global outlook—*The Autobiography of an Absolutist, Towards a One World Economics, A World Education Manifesto, Memoranda on World Government.*

He was never infected by relativistic vested interests of castes, country or even blood relations. His mission was to bring all the major interests of man—from food to ultimate liberation—to a global appraisal of values and appreciate the collective effort of humanity to live a better life and to enhance the dignity of man. He was in short an absolute lover of humanity. Since my meeting with the Guru he has been an ideal, a norm or standard for me in all walks of life from the mundane to the spiritual. I think this must be the frame of mind with anyone who saw him at least once.

Every time we confront a so-called dignitary, Nataraja Guru as a standard makes his appearance in our mind dwindling the dignitary into nothing. Nataraja Guru set a norm both through his life and teachings. It has been well said that "Great men are like meteors that consume themselves to light the earth." Nataraja Guru was one such a very rare phenomenon before which, with prayerful hands, I bend my head in deep reverence and gratitude for what he has been to me so far. He has withdrawn from this physical world, and now it is up to us to prepare the ground and make ourselves suitable so that the Guru can blossom through us. ❖

East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



English *Gurukulam* is moving!

Starting in 2003, the editing and publishing of English *Gurukulam* magazine will move from its home of 17 years at Island Gurukula Aranya on Bainbridge Island to the Portland Gurukula. We welcome your continued support and submissions in the form of articles, poetry, photography and drawings. Please send them to:

Portland Gurukula, 11290 Skyline Blvd., Portland, OR 97231, USA.



Spiraling out from this center, a labyrinth was constructed and walked in celebration at Island Gurukula Aranya in conjunction with the annual Guru Puja there on August 25, 2002.



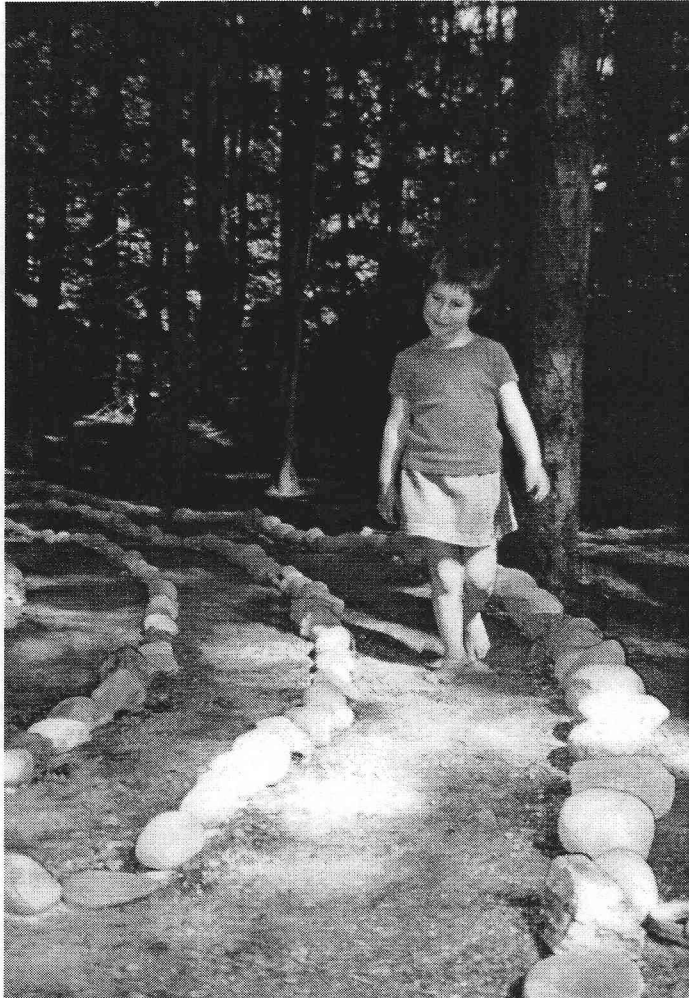
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Skipping and Walking the Turns of the Labyrinth



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