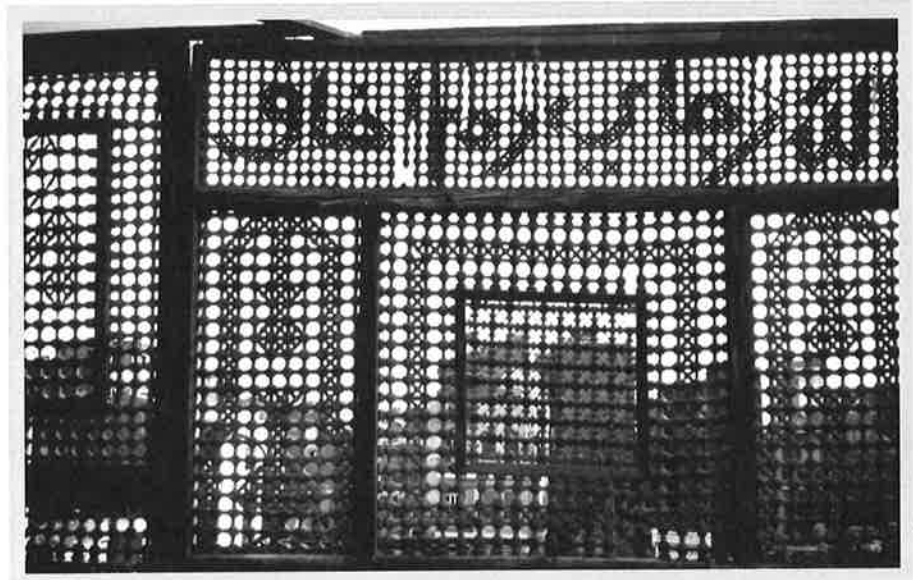


GURUKULAM



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A Journal of Philosophy and the Arts

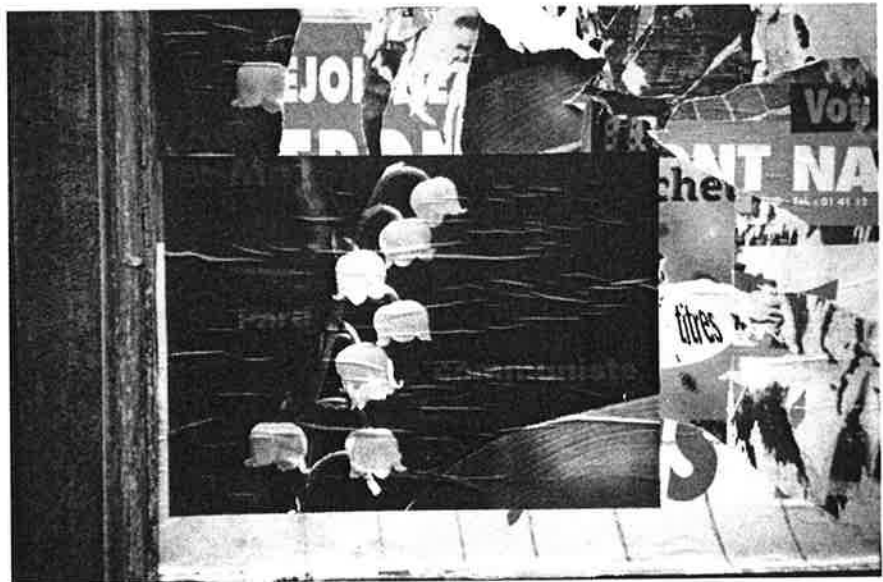
Spring 2005

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EDITORIAL

BY DEBORAH BUCHANAN

Siva first emerges in the Rig Veda as Raudra, the Wild One. He is sung to and sung about, and out of the words of the song itself “Raudra,” the cry or howl of existence, is “carved” (Sanskrit: *atakṣan*). Raudra is Siva’s primordial manifestation, the first agent—intense, ambiguous and chaotic—of creation.

What is unexpected and intriguing in these Rig Veda verses is that the god is created by the words of the hymn. Out of the chanting of the poem, out of its rhythm, the god arises. Not only is it the god who howls, who utters the primeval sound to inaugurate the universe, but also the sounds themselves give birth to the god: a fluid, interpenetrating, self-perpetuating world of word and divinity. There could be no more profound image of the intimate relationship between language and creation. A verse is chanted to the god, to sing his exploits, and out of that chanting the god is born. The god then speaks and that language becomes, like the poem, a vehicle of creation.

In Sanskrit the word *vac* is used to denote speech in the active sense: to tell, to utter, to recite or declare. And when the spoken word bursts into meaning, when it flashes across the mind, it is referred to as *sphoṭa*, or the vehicle of meaning and expansion.



These ideas and insights weave the backdrop to Nataraja Guru’s life and his philosophical explorations. One hundred and ten years ago, in February 1895, the Guru was born in Bangalore, India, at a pivotal time in Indian history, when India was both confronting and assimilating the colonial influences of Europe. The interaction between traditional Indian values and Western ideology became an important leitmotif in Nataraja Guru’s writings. Educated in India, then at the Sorbonne in Paris, his life studies revolved around the elucidation of a structural framework for universal values.

An important focus in Nataraja Guru’s studies was the nature and function of language. What is language? What kinds are there? How do we use them? These questions were explored in many of the Guru’s articles that were first printed in *Values* magazine and which are to be reissued this year by DK Printworld as *Unitive Philosophy*.

Nataraja Guru was the direct disciple of Narayana Guru, who revalued and expressed the Upanishadic vision of unity and coherence. Intrinsic to this outlook is a concern with knowledge. How do we know anything? What is knowledge, and what is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? How do we communicate what we know, and what languages best suit our understanding?

In honor of Nataraja Guru's 110th birthday, in this spring issue of *Gurukulam* we present a number of articles on language, on the diverse and complementary ways we understand ourselves and our world, and the various ways we communicate with one another. Suellen Cupp's paintings of American Sign Language illustrate the silent but active language of the world of the deaf. All of our actions are a form of language, which tell stories and explicate values. This idea is elaborated on in the article on living in a Gurukula by Swami Vinaya Chaitanya and the one on compassion by Swami Advaitananda. How we act in relation, not just to

other humans, but to the earth itself is a language of sustenance or destruction, as Vandana Siva pointed out in her lecture that is reviewed here. Johnny Stalling's small poems are epigrammatic observations on life. Finally, in a continuing series of translations and commentaries on Narayana Guru's works, by Guru Nitya and by Guru Muni Narayana Prasad, there is the language of mystical insight and contemplative wisdom.

Images, as protolanguage, speak their own tale. Charles Erickson's graphics give visual form to Nataraja Guru's sun and moon dialogue. Adam Rupniewski's photograph gives visual expression to his poem. The Pre-Columbian gold pieces are inscribed with symbolic signs of myth and power. And the temples of India, of which we are printing a number of line drawings, are a three-dimensional language that reveals a sacred order as well as creates a point of connection between the divine and the human worlds. Bushra Azzouz's photographs give us an interpretation of language as architectural element, calligraphy or as graffiti. And, as always, Andrew Larkin's images give visual presence to the philosophical insights of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*.

Underneath the surface of each of these languages, visual or written, we can hear the echo of the original howl of Raudra, that utterance that creates being and is created by it. From listening springs our response, our own song or chant, and a dialogue begins.





TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

BY NATARAJA GURU

On a certain full moon evening, the moon was rising on the eastern side of the horizon, and on the western side the sun was setting. The following is an imaginary conversation intended to show that duality and unitive understanding are not the same.

RISING MOON:

Hey, you there! What is the relation between you and me?

SETTING SUN:

Don't you agree that we are basically the same?

RISING MOON:

Do you mean to say that I have no individuality?

SETTING SUN:

Your individuality, which if it exists at all, does so only in so far as it tries to make a distinction between you and me, has no basis in reality. Truth is always one, and you cannot divide it into a half-truth and a full truth. It's either one or the other and there's no alternating. There's no choice left. If truth is always one and the same, the light with which you shine is the light I have lent you. You shine with the light you have borrowed from me. Thus, we are two apparent versions of the same light. Let us both renounce whatever superiority we might claim for ourselves and we can come to a solution which is both just and favorable to each of us. Such a solution implies double gain and a cancellation of counterparts by double negation. *Omnis determinatio negatio*. We are both indeterminate factors. Let us agree about this and the great solution is right here. It is the greatest contribution of Advaita Vedanta and an example of what I prefer to call unitive understanding. That is all. *Aum*. Peace, peace, peace.

RISING MOON:

Aum. Śantiḥ, Śantiḥ, Śantiḥ.

This conversation was dictated by Nataraja Guru on November 1, 1972, at Trivandrum Medical College Hospital and published in the *Gurukula Newsletter*

ĀTMOPADEŚA ŚATAKAM

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY GURU NITYA

VERSE 22

*priyamaparanteyatenpriyam; svakīya-
priyamaparapriyamiprakāramākum
nayamatināle narannu nanma nalkum-
kriyayaparapriya hētuvāyvarēṇam.*

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.

Watching the lives of various beings, anything from worms to the most contemplative yogi or seer, it is easy to see that all actions are motivated by the desire for happiness. Our motivations can be conscious or unconscious. Even so minor a thing as shifting your position as you sit here is only to make you more comfortable. If you cough, it is because there is an irritation you want to remove so you can feel better. The slightest movement we make is in search of a better adjustment for greater happiness, because happiness is the main goal of life.

In the search for happiness, and in the actualization of it, our primary tools are the senses, the organs of perception, the organs of action, and the mind. Our hands itch for doing something. When we sit somewhere for a long time, we feel like getting up and walking. We cannot be silent for very long before we wish to talk and express ourselves. The five organs of action and organs of perception are all to be engaged in something. We find our happiness in engagement through these organs.

We have five senses, so there are five kinds of happiness. In seeing alone there are millions of varieties of things to be seen. We look at very minute things, we look at very large things, we look at bright things and dark things, at the colorful and the colorless. In the same way, each sense organ has its own world of variegation. Our affectivity lies between our perceiving mind and the things that are perceived.

There are two real causes of happiness. One is obvious and the other is hidden. First let us discuss the former, which is when the cause is known to us. We have many latent urges in our mind, all waiting for a favorable environment to provide

an opportunity for their actualization. Hunger is a biological urge of this type. A hungry person is looking for an opportunity to get some food. It may begin as an unconscious motivation, but it soon becomes conscious. So we go to a place where food is available, such as a kitchen or restaurant. Inside is hunger; outside is the availability of food. When these are brought together, we are satisfied.

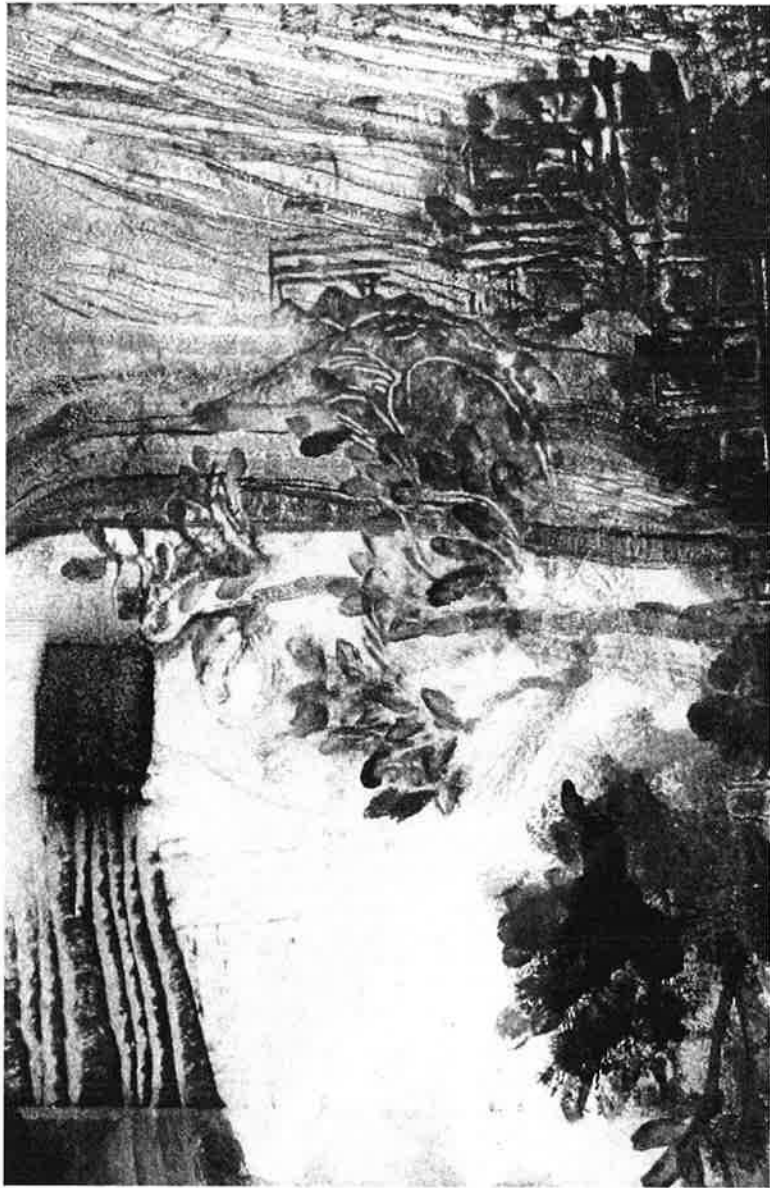
Of course, we don't want to just stuff something in our mouths. The whole presentation is important. We like it to be served on a neat table, properly set with nice utensils, by someone who is friendly. It should please the eye, and smell delicious. In India people enjoy eating with their hands also. When foods are mixed with the fingers they have a special kind of feeling, so even before the food hits their mouth they can enjoy its touch. Then it is tasted. Finally the food becomes nourishment, creating metabolic changes in us, and we have sensations of satiation and relaxation. This whole range of pleasures is involved in the simple act of just satisfying hunger.

There are many preferences involved in this *priyam*, or this main item of the fulfillment of an urge, to make us really happy. We prefer to eat in a certain restaurant, to be served by a certain person, to eat food prepared in a certain way. Some people like their food boiled, others steamed, and still others fried. We stress the quality of the object as the main condition for happiness. Happiness is thus considered as an external factor which is coming in to us. Our desire is inside; happiness is manifesting outside. So it becomes a conditional factor. Narayana Guru tells us that we become confused by thinking of happiness as an external factor.

The Guru begins this verse with a word that has an equivocal meaning, *aparan*. When you see a total stranger, that person is entirely different from you. You have your own body and that person has theirs. But when you look at each other, you find something pleasing. That person becomes an object of happiness. Now you greet each other and enjoy each other's company. Each of you says, "I am so-and-so." There are two separate I's. I and you. You and I. Two separate people. Then later you say, "Let us sit here and talk." The 'I' has now been transformed. There is an 'us' where before were two I's. The other is now melting into the not-other. *Paran* is other; *aparan*, not other. When 'I' and 'you' change into 'we' or 'us' the other has changed into no more another. This is the implication of the word the Guru uses. We are no more the other.

"Now let us both go to the restaurant and eat something." You both go. One asks, "What do you want?" "You tell me what *you* like." "No, no, no. You please say what *you* like." "How about this particular dish?" "Yes, let's both have that." So they order it. Each wants to make a great concession to the other, conceding to their wishes. At least five minutes will be wasted finding out what the other person likes because each is being a kind of martyr in the cause of love. It's very beautiful.

I read in a novel about two middle-aged women who were living together. One wanted to get up first so she could make tea and bring it on a tray to the other



before she woke up. She stealthily got up and tiptoed to the kitchen, where she was surprised to find the other one already making tea for her. All through the story they were making little martyrdoms to please each other like that. This is called *svakīya priyam*. Let my own happiness be your happiness; let your happiness be my happiness. It is this commonality of happiness that unites two people; then there is no more the other.

When we desire something, it is because of a latent urge. In the coming together of two people there is a need to love and a need to be loved. There are needs to eat, to do some work and to find fellowship. All these motivations come from urges. When an urge becomes strong, it becomes a desire. When a desire is promoted it becomes a wish, and when a wish is promoted it becomes a will. A will when actualized becomes an action. Thus it begins with desire and ends in action. All actions in which we are engaged have behind them a motivation, and they involve things or persons outside us, so to speak. This entire process is implied in the term *priyam*.

If things and persons outside us are within the scheme of our action, we have to see that it is not unilateral. We must make bilateral arrangements in the action set-up. A brute is only motivated by his own urges; he does not look for a bilateral agreement. He unilaterally charges at the object of pleasure.

Lovers do the same things that rapists do with their victims. Physically, there is no difference in what they are doing. The distinction is that one is unilateral and the other is bilateral. In rape, the happiness of the other person is not considered. One is only caring for his own happiness. What was beautiful then becomes an abominable crime, instilling fear and revulsion in the victim.

There is also a hidden cause of happiness. We are not merely the senses, the mind and our latent interests. Behind all this is a self-luminous light, which assures us of the existence of everything. In fact, it is the primeval existence. It is the ground of all existence. It is only because of this existence that anything is possible. Yet we only see the existence of a person or the existence of an object, and not existence as such. We forget that it is through our participation in the general existence that we become existent. This existence is the existence of knowledge, of a great awareness, of an illuminating consciousness which covers the knower, the known and knowledge.

The existence of one thing and another thing have between them a homogeneity. I can present you with an existing apple and an existing pear in the same dish because the apple exists, the pear exists and the dish exists. When I poetically say, "Here is an apple, a pear, and also my love for you," you can see the fruit but you do not see what we call 'love' in the dish. In the words "I am giving you my love," is an idea. The other person who feels sentimental about this expression becomes resonant to it inside, experiences a similar sentiment, and replies "Yes, truly this is offered in love." The existence of the pear and the existence of love are not of the same order, yet because of the knowledge of love in you and the other person there is a homogeneity of that particular kind of knowledge.

The pear and the apple can come together as pure existential knowledge, and the love with which they are offered comes phenomenologically. The existential and the phenomenological are different and yet they become one. In anything you see or experience, all your concepts and ideas, and your entire social, moral and spiritual history, also come along as part of your perception. Therefore, all existential experiences automatically change into phenomenological experiences.

There is still one more aspect here. The overall existence, this all-embracing consciousness of knowledge, is also revealing how one happiness pervades everything. The happiness of seeing a sunset, the happiness of eating a good breakfast, of holding the hand of someone we love, of reading or writing poetry, of painting, of listening to beautiful music, the happiness in all the variety of things you enjoy through the five senses or that are performed by the five organs of action, conceived by mind and enjoyed by mind—are all part and parcel of one universal experience of happiness. You are That. When you realize your real nature from within, there cannot be another because what is seemingly another is only due to external diversity. In reality it is part of the same existence of the same consciousness and the same happiness. Thus, the *aparan* or the otherness ceases. There is no other; there is only That. Calling attention to this, the Guru says, “That thou art.” You are That.

Through a realization of the Self, we come to know there is no other. I cannot pinch my left hand with my right and expect to not feel it since they are separate things. I still feel the pain. If I hold my left hand in the right one, the tenderness, the happiness is neither of the left hand or the right; it is my own happiness. Thus from inside, when you see the oneness of all things, there cannot be a separation of my happiness and another’s happiness. For a realized soul, an awakened one, whatever he or she is doing is a spontaneous expression of Self-love. It is not an ego-centered love; it is the love of the supreme Self for itself.

The reason God created the universe, if you believe in that, is for God’s own joy, not for anyone else’s. This is why in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad it is said: “No husband loves the wife for the sake of the wife, but for the sake of the joy of the Self. No wife loves the husband for the sake of the husband, but for the sake of the joy of the Self. No parent loves the child for the sake of the child, but for the sake of the joy of the Self. No man loves wealth for the sake of wealth, but for the sake of the joy of the Self.” In none of these places is the reference to the ego as the self; it is to the universal Self, the Self that is in all.

Two things, then, can bring us together. One is the actualization of an interest or an urge in us, and the other is the universality of the Self. When someone like Jesus Christ or the Buddha comes to the world and engages in an action, they are filled with the universal sorrow of mankind. They engage in activity in order to reverse this pain and suffering. This can be compared to and contrasted with our individually oriented actions. Take for instance a person who takes delight

in becoming a physician. It fulfills a certain drive in him to find self-expression through service to others. In addition, it is a means of livelihood and a way to express his talent. In the orientation of an ordinary person who does not have the deep insight of the spirit, it is only the motivational urge to be a physician that is getting actualized here.

There is another person who is ill, and there is a need for him to be cured and recover from his illness. He comes to the doctor and asks, "Please heal me. I am suffering." The doctor replies, "I am most pleased to render my service to you. I want you to be cured. You should not suffer." Thus the physical, personal need for a patient to be cured and for a doctor to render his service bring them together. They enter into a bipolarity. They are no longer two separate entities, they belong to one common context of therapy from which both benefit. By rendering the service the doctor becomes happy, and by receiving the service the patient becomes happy.

If the physician also has the mind of the physician of all physicians, like Christ, Buddha or Krishna, then he is not only seeing his action as a means of livelihood and expression of talent, but as a correction which he is bringing to his own universal body that is now ailing. He is curing only himself. If the patient is also oriented this way, he sees that the universal benevolence is acting in the form of a doctor. He is filled with gratitude, not especially to this doctor—though that's also there—but to the universal benevolence in the manifestation of this world.

An engineer has his skill and the need to perform it. He invents a machine. Then he makes it, sells it, or installs it for someone who has a need to be relieved of some kind of work. That person feels happy for the engineer's service, and the engineer has the satisfaction of doing his job well. Whatever role we are playing, whether carpenter, smith, plumber, teacher, anyone, there is a bipolarity involved in it. In that bipolar situation we become dialectical counterparts in which a common interest fuses us together. Then the other person ceases to be just another; there is a coming together. So we can come together from the side of the latent urges as well as from the side of realization.

Narayana Guru, as a realized person, is revealing to us: "Oh Man, please do not think that there is any other. It is only seemingly so. Let all your actions be directed to universal happiness, to the universal actualization of happiness." When you engage yourself in an action, look for your counterpart. That comes from above. From below you also realize that this counterpart is your own Self. In this way you get a double correction and a double incentive to ensure the happiness of all concerned.

VERSE 23

*aparānu vēṅṭiyaharṇniśam prayatnam
kṛpaṇata viṭṭu kṛpālu ceytiṭunnu;
kṛpaṇan adhōmukhanāy kiṭannu ceyyu-
nnapajaya karmmamavannuvēṅṭi mātram.*

For the sake of another, day and night performing action,
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.

When a person looks at his own life, he sees certain topological limitations. He draws a circle around his own ego consciousness and marks in its center his ego. He places everything especially dear to him inside the circle, calling them 'I' and 'mine'. Outside he places everything alien. This circle is the ego boundary spoken of by existentialist psychologists.

There are many kinds of ego boundaries. There is a "home front" where, if you are not certain of your neighbor, you make a strong barricade. Of course, as Robert Frost has said, you are fencing yourself in as much as the other out. You only think you are keeping an alien world outside, when actually you are putting up a wall and imprisoning yourself.

So there is a personal ego boundary and one for your home. Then you make a powerful boundary for your prejudices. Religion can never be meaningful to one who has such a boundary. His religion is only a fanatical dogma in which anyone who does not share the same faith is a rival and an enemy, and so they are pushed outside the circle of his beliefs.

There are some Frenchmen who will not speak English, even though they know how, because of a kind of linguistic patriotism. If you travel with one of them from Paris to Marseilles they will speak no English. Yet as soon as you cross the Belgian border, they become normal and begin to speak English with you. This kind of fanaticism exacerbates language barriers. So there are several topological boundaries with which people imprison themselves. Narayana Guru uses the term *kṛpaṇan* to describe someone caught in these self-centered limitations.

On the other hand, for the person who sees his counterpart as frontierless, the whole world is his. He cannot brook any kind of differentiation, whether by caste, race, color or creed. Even though for the sake of communication such a person uses the word 'I', in his mind it means 'we' or 'all of us'. Such a person is here called a compassionate one, *kṛpālu*.

All of us, whether compassionate or selfish, have to do action. Even breathing is an action. The Bhagavad Gita says that no person remains for even a moment

without engaging in action. Our actions are of three kinds. One is *nitya karma*, the daily activities which you have to perform necessarily for the maintenance of your own life. In the morning you have to wake up, clean yourself, eat and evacuate your bowels. No one else can do these things for you. They are imperative actions, because you yourself have to perform them.

The second kind of action is called *niyata karma*. This refers to your placement in society, where you have accepted a certain role due to your vocation or career. You may be a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, businessman, teacher or whatever; you have some work assigned to you by your own option or a contract. It requires you to do a certain kind of work for certain hours each day, and if you don't do it there is a breach of contract or somebody will suffer. You and everyone else expects you to do it. This type of daily, expected work is called *niyata karma*.

The third kind of action is *naimittika karma*. It is incidental. There is no regularity to it. Say you go for a walk or a ride and you see someone fall down unconscious. This is not a daily occurrence. If you are a compassionate person, a good samaritan, you stop and see what happened. You call for help or try to get him to a hospital or his home. Perhaps you cover him with your coat or administer first aid. All this is done incidentally, and little or none of it is prescribed. This is *naimittika karma*.

Of the three karmas, *nitya karma* is common to all people. It is for one's own creature comfort. There is nothing good or bad about it. You don't eat because it is a great virtue: you have to eat. And you don't consider someone's morality or immorality just because they are breathing. They have to breathe.

Leaving this type of action aside, there are really only two kinds, *niyata* and *naimittika*. The motivation to act in either of these ways can come from two entirely different sources, namely selfishness and compassion. This is where your whole life pattern is decided. The person who is basically selfish has to limit the world around him to make himself secure. The more he thinks of himself, the more glaring is the contrast with what is his non-self. An increasing strangeness comes between him and the rest of the world. He becomes suspicious of the outside, which brings feelings of insecurity. The suspicion and insecurity compel him to build a fortress around himself. As this becomes exaggerated, he becomes paranoiac. He needs to always cover up, to do things secretly and calculatingly. He holds his cards away from others and secretly senses what profits everyone is going to make. Then he wants to play tricks, as his only concern is how to gain. He does not believe others, and so others do not believe him. As he is feeling insecure, he cannot be open with others, and this lack of openness makes him unacceptable to others. Thus every day he is losing some ground. He makes his life more and more difficult by shunting himself away from others. Ultimately his life becomes very shallow. He cannot have any real truths or any great culture or tradition. There is no sublime height to go to. His world of interest is very cramped.

We see millions and millions of such unfortunate people all around us. It's just terrible. They live within their own prison walls, incarcerated by their own selfishness. I see hundreds and thousands of families who live this kind of wretched life—no meaning, no value before them. All day and all night long they think only of their eating and drinking and their one particular family's interest. Everyone else can go to the dogs. They are always in trouble. Each day they further cut off their vital links with the rest of the world. Such miserable beings.

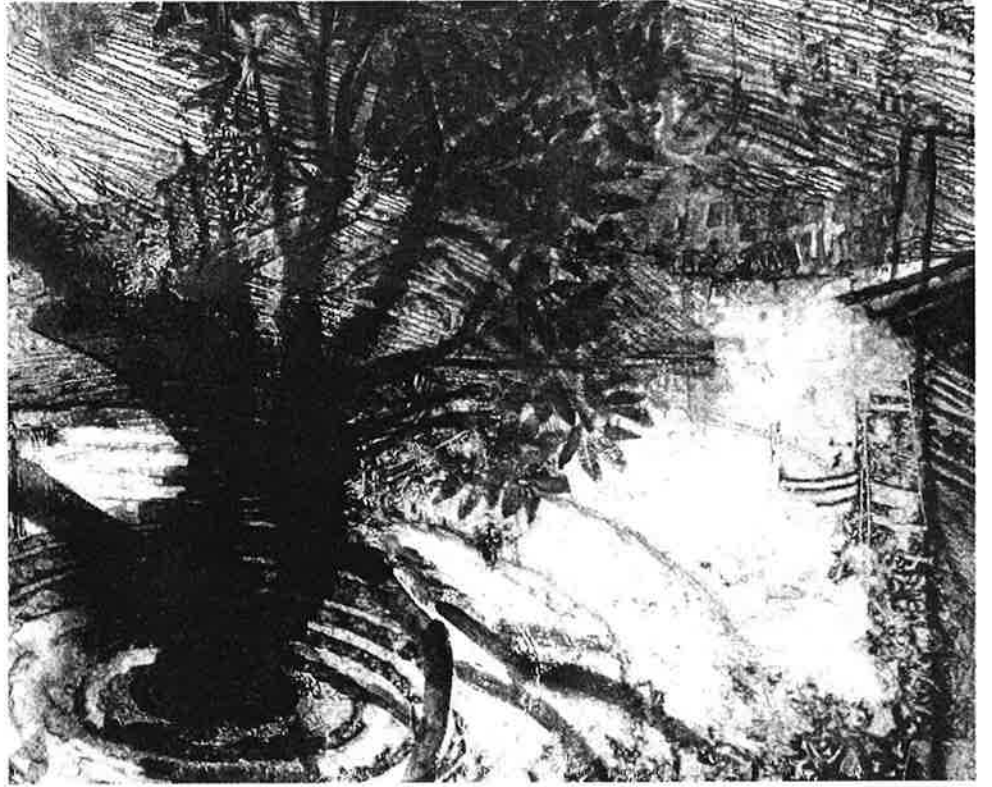
The Guru says here that their face is always down, they cannot face the world. They are living in shame, living in vulgarity and greed. They are engaged in actions which will never succeed. They are living only for their own sakes. Even if you try to help such people, they can never be helped. As soon as you lift them out of one quagmire, they get into another. This is the terrible situation where both daily and incidental actions are monitored by selfishness.

Compare this to a compassionate person. The dominant theme in his life is, "We are one. I care for you. It doesn't matter who you are, I care for you." In Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, there is a bishop who knows nothing but love for mankind. He lives for all. He uses his office, his position, everything, only for the sake of redressing the pain and agony of his fellow man. Reading Hugo's great work and getting into the spirit of the bishop is many times more profound than reading religious scriptures. What a wonderful character; what a beautiful life! You shed tears for him. You want to go live with him. At least once in your life you want to see a person like him, who can inspire you for the rest of your life.

The compassionate one. As he has no ego boundary, he uses the word 'I' only for the sake of centralizing thoughts and relating ideas. It is only a philosophical reference point, a focus for consciousness, not a fixed social structure. It's not an ego. For this reason he can relate literally anything to the central notion called 'I'. As he is not putting walls around himself, he comes into relationship with the rest of humanity and all kinds of animals, birds, and plant life.

When you read the poems of Robert Frost, you are so thrilled that he can get into an easy conversation with a bird, a flower, a tree, bush, brook, stone, road, anything. Wherever he turns, he sees nothing but friendship. The whole world is open to him. What a wonderful way to live!

We don't have to just think of saints. Saints are living all around us. A man may be very humble but yet open up many windows, many life interests, so he can commune with everyone around. He keeps his door open for people to walk in. He boils his pot not for himself alone, but for anyone who is hungry or thirsty. Jesus said, "Ye come to me, those who suffer. Leave your load on my shoulders." Such a compassionate one easily relates himself to others. In his word, the world finds consolation. He is their light and inspiration. Anyone who encounters such a person easily affiliates themselves to him. Naturally, his base is becoming stronger than that of the selfish person: "I love you; you love another. Therefore your friend



becomes my friend.” Thus, every day his influence grows, his friendship spreads. He is generous and gives everything without question.

In a reciprocal way, everything wants to pour into him. Whatever he gives, ten-fold, a hundred-fold, it comes back to him. So he is always successful. He is always influential. His word is taken with honor by everyone. They believe him and trust him. He has no axe to grind. Therefore what he says rings true. It is hard to resist the word of such a one.

These are the two contrasting principles underlying our actions. One is the selfishness of the self-centered egoist, the other the compassion of the spiritually open person. These are the two possibilities before us, and it is up to us to choose between them. It’s a pity that most people make themselves lost to the world by opting for the egoistic stand. It is equally easy to be compassionate, to be open, to not push away.

Previously we saw how our joy should also be the joy of the other. Here we are bringing this same idea to a deeper level. Begin by looking for your counterparts in life. If I am a teacher, those who want to learn are my counterparts. If I am a doctor, the patients are my counterparts. If I am a businessman, those who will be benefited by the things I want to supply are my counterparts. If I am a parent, my children are my counterparts; if a husband, my wife; and if a friend, another friend is my counterpart. Everybody has their counterparts in life. It is not just one person, but so many people and so many fields. And between ourselves and our counterparts we can open up a floodgate of reciprocal relations based on compassion.

You may be doing a strict business deal, but once you are in the situation you can open up to the other person as a human being. Instead of just scheming how you can make a profit off of him by exploiting the situation, you can look at how you would want to be treated if you were in his place. Then it would be easy to imagine what kind of security the customer should have and what kind of benefits he should receive. If you look from both sides, from the side of the business executive *and* the side of the customer, you can come to a neutral position which is optimally beneficial to both. When you take this approach, you are not afraid of what you are doing. There is great moral support for it, looking out for the well-being of your brother. And the customer trusts you and feels encouraged to always come to you in the future as the person to provide his supplies. The good will always increase.

This will never fail in any field. When a doctor cares for a patient by thinking first of the fellow human coming to him and not just of the money to be made, the very look or word or touch he uses is like nectar. The patient may be healed even before any medicine is administered. In this way we are all saints and we can be saints here and now in our daily life. This is the great lesson Narayana Guru is giving us for our meditation today: how to move away from selfishness to compassion, and how to break down the barriers around us.

As a footnote I want to say something to all of you. Some of the letters I get here from very beautiful people are full of darkness. The only cause for their darkness is the lack of compassion and the self-centeredness in their egos. In the last couple of days, I received word about two families breaking up, each of the women with two children and the man finding it impossible to live with her. The woman finds she is caught up in darkness. Innocent children suffer tremendously because of this lack of compassion on the part of their parents.

I sometimes wonder, is there anything called love which unites people in this country? How shallow, uncouth, rotten is the thing called love here. It is terrible, selfish to the core. Dark souls, never caring for anything but their personal interests. Brutes. And yet how beautiful they look. It is so painful to see.

Only this morning I wrote a letter to a young friend to get back immediately to his wife and two little ones. It is shameful, an utterly shameful situation. And these people have been running after swamis and gurus for years. They have been claiming to live a spiritual life. Still they claim to be spiritual, yet not caring the least for each other. What a painful, shameful thing. Where is compassion in them? Why do they speak of love? Do they understand what love is?

A little baby not six months old to be throw away by a father, saying "I don't care for that child any more." Is he a father? This is a rotten place. I think this country has lost something very, very precious. It is high time a search should be made in the heart to discover the treasure called compassion. Instead we run after fantasies and never want truth at all. I am not just here philosophizing. I am speaking to you of hard facts of life, of stark realities of life.

I am not asking you to become such a great saint as living for the Eskimos or saving the whales. Save your own child before you go out to save the whales. You are so compassionate that you want to preserve rare species. Your child is a rare species. Why don't you show some compassion to her? Americans are very clever to find out what is on Venus, but they are not clever to find out what is in their own child's mind.

Allow this to percolate deep into your soul, then make a serious self-examination. You can make your life many times more precious, more worth living.

THE SUSTAINABLE TABLE

BY DEBORAH BUCHANAN

Vandana Shiva, the Indian physicist and activist, was speaking to a room full of friends. She was in Portland, Oregon, in the fall of 2004 to address the annual convention of Tilth, which was celebrating thirty years as a loose community of farmers, state university researchers, seed sellers, and food co-ops, all of whom are dedicated to the establishment of an organic, sustainable food system.

The word tilth originally meant, in Middle English, "to labor." It later evolved to mean the cultivation of land or the tilled land itself. Now its meaning also includes the structure and quality of cultivated soil and the cultivation of wisdom and spirit. All of which are compatible, mutually reinforcing definitions for an organization dedicated to both sustainable agriculture and social equity. Here sustainable means that the agricultural processes will continue, year after year, to provide nourishment to people and the earth. It is an agriculture that uses continuous nourishment rather than short term monetary profit as the measure of success. Being socially equitable means that resources, both for production and consumption, are fairly accessible to all.

These goals of sustainability and equity were enunciated in 1974 when Tilth was formed, and it was the thirty years of successful implementation of those ideals that was being celebrated at the conference. It was also in 1974 that Vandana Shiva changed her focus from academic physics to an activism for sustainable farming in India. She was, she said, inspired by a local women's movement in the Punjab region of Northwest India, where village women were protesting the region's deforestation. Their courage and perseverance impressed Dr. Shiva and turned her attention to a problem that, while manifesting locally in the Punjab, was representative of a much larger, global crisis.

This problem was the changeover, often enforced by governments, from a traditional agriculture which was local and organic to an agriculture that relied on chemical fertilizers and pesticides and farmers' debt to finance it. In her talk, Dr. Shiva traced the origin of this switch to the period after World War II when the explosives industry was looking for a new market for its products. The same chemicals were no longer being used to make bombs but to create fertilizers and pesticides. In tandem with this was the hybridization of new seeds, marketed internationally. These seeds were often idealistically developed by international seed banks to produce more food in poor, heavily populated countries. However, the hybrid seeds usually required excessive amounts of water, leading to desertification,

and had to be purchased each year from the international seed companies rather than saved from year to year by the farmers themselves. The cost of seeds plus the cost of chemical fertilizers put the farmers in debt, and a new cycle of dependence and poverty was instituted. At the same time this kind of farming literally sucked up all available water, and the chemical fertilizers instead of replenishing the tilth of the soil made it more compact and less friable. Forests were cut down for new farm land as the old became less productive. And at each step the local farmers were required to go further into debt to finance the new agriculture. All of which lead to the deforestation protests that caught Dr. Shiva's attention. The women were agitating for local autonomy as well as against agricultural practices. They wanted to be able to save their seeds and they didn't want to have to purchase chemical fertilizers. The federal government, however, was enforcing the new system with law and power, as well as with debt.

The Punjab situation is a window on a problem that is playing out in countries all over the globe, whether developed or developing. Local farming communities are targets (euphemistically called markets) for international agri-business, which seeks to supplant local farming with large farms managed for profit and export and farmed with chemicals, using genetically modified, patented seed. It is an agriculture based not on local self sufficiency but on the needs and profits of multinational corporations. It is a strange round-robin circle where the governments of poor countries are pressured by foreign aid stipulations and the selling finesse of corporations; farmers who are forced by banking and agriculture regulations to switch from traditional to chemical agriculture; local seed companies that are bought up by multinationals who then hold patents on hybrid plants; and wide-ranging free trade agreements that favor the wealthy multinational corporations. Dr. Shiva calls this system of free trade our contemporary version of slavery and a system where primary producers are turned into dependent, debt-ridden consumers. It is a system she is passionately working to undermine, and she travels the globe both as lecturer and activist.

Dr. Shiva also points a finger at a political sleight of hand that is very little known but which has numerous contemporary ramifications. This is the intentional manipulation of religious and communal antagonisms to divert attention from the agricultural problems, so that issues of control and profit are not addressed. This happened, she said, in the Punjab region at the time of the

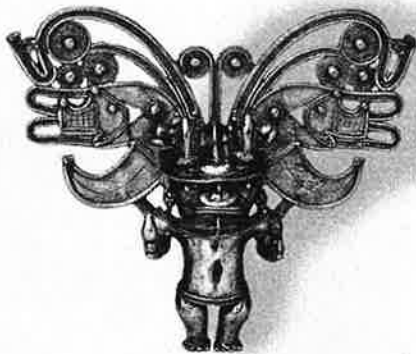


women's protests. It was then that the Indian government, with Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister, began to cultivate some of the extremist Sikh groups. Through both media attention and contributions, these groups became in the public eye the real challengers to the government, ones which the government could with a clean conscience oppose and supplant. Of course, the local farming advocates were destroyed in the process. So what was presented emphatically as an extremist religious challenge to society was in fact the muffled distortion of a local farmers' protest against chemical agriculture and the whole world of connections it entails. The current versions of this confrontation are many and widespread, ranging from the struggle for the right to save millennia-old seed from patenting by rapacious seed companies to the vilification of Islamic extremists so as to obfuscate the grab for oil fields and the intentional political destabilization.

All of these issues are important concerns, for both developing and developed countries, for farmers and city dwellers alike. A sustainable, socially equitable food system, both for growing and for distribution, affects everyone for the better. Dr. Shiva cited the various problems that result from a distorted agriculture: hunger, most often for the farmers themselves; malnutrition and obesity in the richer countries; fresh water scarcity; long term toxicity in the soil and water; and climate change. And, concurrently with all these, permanent international discord.

Each of these areas can be addressed by two simple questions: What do we eat? How do we grow our food? Eating, as the author and farmer Wendell Berry said, "is an agricultural act." It is an act, he could add, that is revolutionary, if one chooses healthy and sustainable food over patented, genetically modified and chemically treated food. Eating is also, as Dr. Shiva notes, related to fear and violence, for those who fear what is alive will fight against it with violence. She encouraged everyone in the Tilth audience to change the world not by rushing out to fight but by beginning

with themselves, with what they eat, what they share, what patterns of connection they reinforce by their food choices. What each of us puts on the table and shares with family and friends and how it was grown is governed by a long line of relationships and responsibilities. We choose not only for ourselves but for succeeding generations as well, and we choose not just for human society but for the intricate web of sustenance of all living beings.



The man who finds his homeland sweet
is still a tender beginner. He to whom
every soil is as his native one
is already strong. But he is perfect
to whom the entire world is as a foreign land.
The tender soul has fixed his love
on one spot in the world;
the strong man has extended his love to all places;
and the perfect man has extinguished his.

HUGO of ST. VICTOR (12 c. monk from Saxony)

AT THE EDGE OF DAYS

BY ADAM RUPNIEWSKI

*At the edges of days
I think of you
in spaces of
solitude
like from Edward Hopper.*

*What does one remember when one is dead?
Or let us say, even now,
if not only this sky at dusk
and the ocean line.*

*Un-presence – a constant state,
when details are hunted*

with the precision of a hidden thought.

*Nothing can be unnoticed by a traveler
who has no place
of destiny,
nor desire to live.*

*Strings of sunlight on someone's hand
with a glass of water and an unnamed face,
an illusion is dancing again
on thirsty waves,
who whisper, "somebody great passed away"
and
who is the one left?
Yes, that's true,
I lost the meaning
and the will to search
for the sense.*



ADVAITA DĪPIKA

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY GURU PRASAD

VERSE THREE

Cloths are nothing but yarns,
Yarns are nothing but fibers,
Fibers are nothing but primeval elements clinging together;
This way of understanding,
When extended to its extreme,
Reveals that all come to sight out of one consciousness
As water flow comes to sight in desert land.
Ultimately what exists thus is consciousness alone.

Notwithstanding being a rishi of the ancient wisdom tradition of India, Narayana Guru was a product of the Age of Science and his thinking was imbued with its spirit. Analytical searching is the method most familiar to science, and even such an enquiry leads us to the conclusion that the one causal substance underlying the appearance of everything is nothing but consciousness. This is what the Guru underscores in this verse.

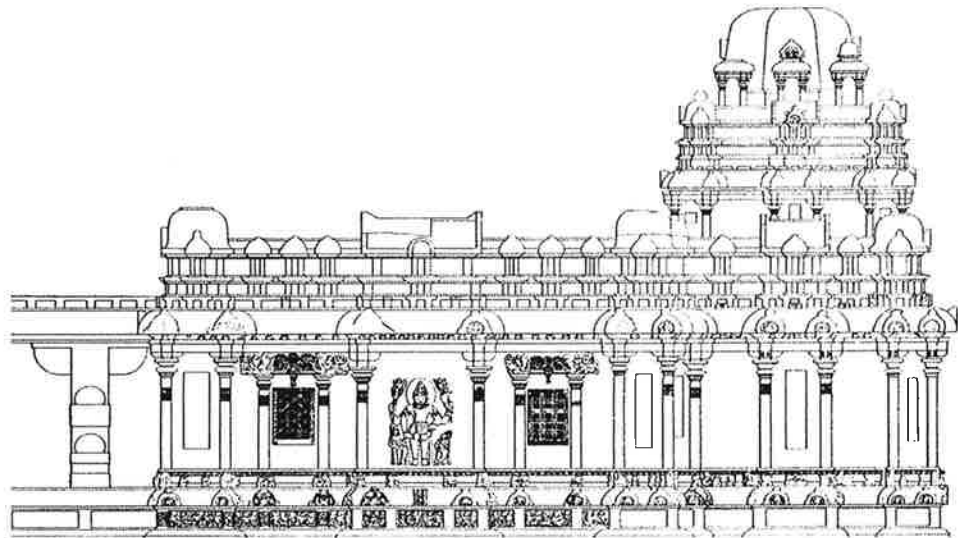
Consciousness alone is the causal reality even in what we consider inert matter. Take, for example, a piece of cloth. Taken apart it turns out to be made of yarn, and the existence of cloth disappears in the existence of yarn. The yarns in turn, when analyzed, are found to consist of cotton fibers. The fibers can be analyzed further, taking our search to ever more subtle levels of existence.

The ancient Indian scientific mind conceives that all physical entities are constituted of five basic elements: earth, water, fire, air and space. None of these elements exist in their pure state anywhere, for they are too subtle to be physical. All actual physical existences are their various compound forms. The basic substance that underlies physical reality, in other words, exists only as ideas in our consciousness. Individual consciousness is nothing but a functional mode of one universal consciousness. It is in the existence of this consciousness that the existence of physical elements are imagined, and they in their turn make the physical entities and the world loom as real. Thus what ultimately exists is consciousness alone, itself assuming the form of basic elements, fibers, yarns, cloth and so on, and finally the world as well.

Let us now look at what constitutes the fiber from the point of view of modern science. Carbon atoms form the basic content of a cotton fiber. Atoms as such have never been seen by anyone, either with the naked eye or microscopically. Their undeniable existence is only found in the mathematical calculations of scientists. Such calculations are considered real simply because they work.

Atoms have been found to be constituted of a nucleus with some electrons revolving around it. Electrons are negative energy in essence and the nucleus is positive. Some even more minute particles have also been traced out by scientists as forming part of the nucleus. The existence of all these particles is mainly conceivable and theoretical, never perceptible. Yet they are so real that their fusion as well as fission results in the release of energy so immense that it can devastate huge cities at one stroke. That these theoretically existing energies must have a unified field in which they find unity is a dream of scientists, not yet actualized even theoretically. The existence of energy particles, their multiplicity, their unification—all are theories, and thus have their being only as functions of thinking mind or consciousness. That consciousness alone is the one underlying reality is admitted, though, through the back door, even by modern science.

The ancient Indian way of thinking as well as the modern scientific search for reality thus take us to one and the same conclusion: what is ultimately real is consciousness, *cit*, alone. How can this extremely subtle consciousness-Reality assume the appearance of the gross world? The answer is that the appearance of the world is mirage-like. The world, we that form part of it, our thinking and theorization, and atom bombs are just mirage-like visions seen in the infinite desert land of consciousness.



VERSE FOUR

In the consciousness that underlies all functions
Does exist no world, nor ignorance, its causal seed;
Light brought in, no darkness will there be in the vicinity;
The burning wick blown off, the light
is extinguished and darkness appears.

That even a very common physical object like a piece of cloth, when closely examined, is found to be pure and unconditioned consciousness in essence is what was laid bare in the last verse. And to always be functioning is but natural with consciousness. Functions constantly change, and as a result the experiences that get formulated in consciousness also alter incessantly, giving the impression that what is experienced changes. But ornaments, whatever their form, never cease to be gold in essence. So too are our ever-altering experiences; whatever their forms, they never cease to be consciousness in essence.

In the case of the piece of cloth we examined in the last verse, the cloth's existence is not there or it disappears in the existence of yarns; its nonexistence alone is there. Likewise the yarn's existence is not there in the cotton fiber, only its nonexistence. So too, the existence of none of these is there in the existence of consciousness, the ultimate reality. Though not existing, there is inherent in consciousness the possibility of the appearance of all these. Such nonexistence of something in which inheres the potential of it appearing is known as *prāg-abhāva*, anterior nonexistence. For example, the *prāg-abhāva* of pot is there in the clay. Likewise it is the *prāg-abhāva* of the world in the existence of pure consciousness.

That the *prāg-abhāva* of the world exists means the world does not really exist, and hence the words "In the consciousness that underlies all functions /Does exist no world." Why does the world, which is simply nonexistent, appear to be existing? Because of *avidyā*, ignorance. What is *avidyā*? That possibility of error because of which one does not perceive what is really real and perceives the unreal as real is called *avidyā*. Under its impact it is but natural that one does not see consciousness as real and sees the apparent world as real. As a result we happen to think that each of us, while being only transitory functional modes of expression of one consciousness, has our own separate existence. Consequently we feel the meaningfulness of life depends upon others and other objects. Contact with them, if favorable, is thought of as making life meaningful, and, if unfavorable, as making life miserable. Life is then felt to be fearsome, and the most fearsome of all phenomena is death. Death should be avoided at whatever cost—such is the way we treat death. There is one ultimate means alone to avoid death as well as to be saved from all fears: getting rid of *avidyā*, the cause of all of them.

How do we get rid of *avidyā*? First we should find out where it exists. If it does

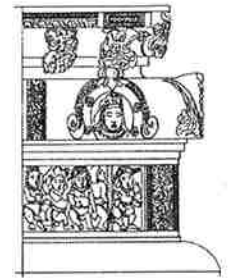
exist anywhere at all, it should be in our consciousness, for the simple reason that consciousness alone has real existence. To think that ignorance or the absence of true knowledge that *avidyā* is can exist in consciousness is simply absurd. And nothing other than consciousness has existence either. Thus, ultimately *avidyā* can have no existence of its own, and hence the words “nor ignorance, the causal seed of the world, does exist.”

What then is it that we call *avidyā*? It is simply like calling the absence of light darkness. Darkness has no being. Brightness can be present or absent. Darkness is merely the name given to the absence of light. Likewise, *avidyā* is the absence of *vidyā*, knowledge.

If consciousness alone does exist, then how can there be the absence of knowledge? Consciousness or knowledge in fact does not cease to exist nor does it disappear; simply we remain oblivious of the reality that consciousness alone does exist. Whether we do or do not see consciousness as what really exists in no way affects the existence of consciousness as such, but it does affect us. Not seeing what really exists causes us to think of what is not real as real and live accordingly.

Why do we not then see the real as the real? Suppose you go to a jewelry shop to buy ornaments. Inside, you examine the type of ornaments you want, looking for the particular design you like. All the ornaments are different in your perception, but the jeweler sees all of them as gold in different forms, and he fixes their price simply by weighing the gold. Likewise is our case. Our perception of ourselves and of the world is so conditioned that we see each of us and everything perceptible as different realities, never perceiving the one all-underlying substance. This conditioning is called *avidyā*. We have to de-condition ourselves to see all different looking appearances as one Reality manifesting itself in various ways.

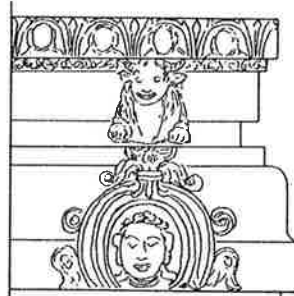
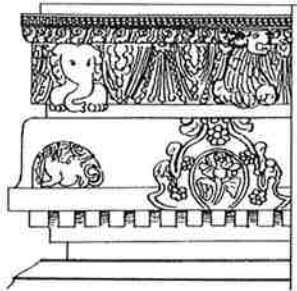
And that Reality is what we just now saw as consciousness in essence, popularly known in Vedanta as *ātman* and *brahman*. De-conditioned thus, we find all the endlessly multiple entities as merging and disappearing in the being of the one *ātman* or *brahman*. The most intriguing factor is that without assuming such modes of appearance, the one Reality (consciousness, known as *ātman*, individual, or *brahman*, all-inclusive)—cannot exist pure and simple, and the manifest forms end up in becoming a veil that hides the one Reality from being perceived. The potential for such self-hiding is mysteriously inherent in the one Reality, and this



mystery is what is known as *māyā*.

One way alone is open before us to remove the darkness of *avidyā*, the bringing forth of a lit lamp, to remove darkness. Bringing forth the lamp of nondual wisdom, *Advaita Dīpika*, dispels the darkness of *avidyā*. Then alone is it revealed that the world that appears real has no existence of its own, nor does *avidyā*, its causal seed, and that all is a magic-like *māyā*.

A lit lamp sheds its light all around; so too if the lamp of wisdom is lit in life, then no *avidyā* can overrule. The world will then be found to have no real existence; no suffering; no fear, not even the fear of death, will then have any place in life. Nonetheless, our predicament is that even when the lamp is already there within us, it is as though it is already put out. The lamp in us needs relighting. Otherwise life totally will sink in the darkness of *avidyā*.



FELICITATION AND REALIZATION

BY PETER OPPENHEIMER

Innu ivide enikku valare sukham
I am very happy to be here today

Iduh ende sukham matram alla
The happiness I feel is not mine alone.

Ningalude sukham jnan ariyunnu
I can sense your happiness.

Enikku ariyam ningalkku ende sukhavum ariyam ennu
And I know you can feel my happiness too.

Sukhathinde oru kadal
In fact there is a great ocean of happiness.

Kadal wellam ningalkku kudikkan pattilla
You cannot drink the water of the ocean.

*Pakshe ningalkku sukhathinde kadalil ninnu
dharaalam kudikkam, appozhum kudikkam*
But from this ocean of happiness,
you can drink deeply whenever you want.

*Varunna ezhu divasam ivide sukhathinde kadalil ninnu
dharaalam kudichu aanandikkan ningalkku swagadam*
In the next seven days here, I invite you to drink
deeply of the bliss ever-available from the depths of this vast ocean.

Until the other day when I read the program for the 2004 Narayana Gurukula Annual Convention, I was not aware that I was going to be asked to speak before you. After learning my name was on the program, I asked Guru Prasad what sort of presentation I was to make. He told me it was meant to be a "Felicitation Address."

This sent me to the dictionary. Felicity means happiness and felicitation means “to make happy.” That is why I now spoke of the great ocean of happiness, and that is why, in spite of my mostly mangled efforts, I just now attempted to speak a few words in Malayalam. If nothing else, my pronunciation seems to always be good for a laugh.

There is more I wish to say on the matter of happiness, but I find that nowadays I cannot fully explore or express my joy unless I, at the same time, honestly acknowledge my suffering too. I consider myself a World Citizen, and yet I am also a citizen of the United States of America. And as such, in my name many crimes against humanity and the natural world are being perpetrated on a daily basis. From the military devastation in Fallujah, Iraq, to the corporate takeover of water rights in Karnataka, India, much real suffering is being inflicted on hundreds of thousands of my fellow world citizens.

As a side note, I would like all of you here in India to know that there is now sufficient evidence of gross intimidation and outright fraud during the recent presidential election to suggest that a majority of the people in the United States of America, in fact, do not support George Bush nor his war-mongering, poverty-ignoring and environment-degrading policies. Even according to the officially sanctioned version of the election results, there are tens of millions of American voters who stand with the peoples of the world against George Bush and his cronies.

We need not look to far off locales to find that suffering is a fact of life. There is suffering right in our own communities and in our own families. In fact most, if not all, of us here carry our own burden of personal sorrows. Who among us does not carry the burden of present or past wounds (physical and emotional), losses, disappointments, disabilities, and deficiencies? Thus a common challenge of great urgency is how to find and maintain happiness in the midst of such great sorrow and, conversely, how to hold the suffering and the sufferers in our heart even in the midst of our own happiness or well-being.

This, to me, is the great theme of all spiritual search and at the heart of all spiritual practice. And it is here that we must distinguish between pleasure and happiness and between happiness and spiritual well-being or bliss. Pleasures, which come from stimulations of our senses and mind, do give us momentary glimpses of joy or happiness and release from our cares. But as the sensation inevitably recedes, we may feel we are still, or again, in a dark unsatisfactory state. Happiness, on the other hand, is not the effect of any stimulation. Rather it is a disposition or a state of mind. Under the influence of this disposition of happiness, we may even take delight in many things which otherwise would not give us pleasure. This is why in the holy Talmud it says, “We don’t see things as they are. We see them as we are.”

I was recently riding in a car with my good friend Peter Moras, Gita, a dear friend visiting the U.S. from India, Gita’s niece Ammu and Ammu’s two year old son Prahalad. We were driving to Yosemite National Park in California. Prahalad, as

is natural at his age, was being very fussy, whining, crying and demanding that we stop the car every few minutes. I was becoming very restless, frustrated and anxious to reach our destination. I kept thinking that only once we arrived at Yosemite, then everything would be alright and everyone would be happy. During one such unscheduled stop, Peter looked over at me and, with his usual infectious smile, cheerfully proclaimed, "Happiness is not a destination. It is a way of traveling." Thank you, Peter.

From a dependency on pleasure to a cultivated state of happiness is a big leap, but it is not yet the final step. Being a state of mind, a mood so to say, happiness (although more stable than mere pleasure) is also bound to wax and wane, appear and disappear and reappear again. The moods and modalities of nature are forever revolving.

Then what are we to do? What and where is that wellbeing that is deeper and wider than happiness, which can embrace and absorb all the sufferings as well as all the joys of life without losing its own blissful nature? Our gurus, as do the teachers of all spiritual traditions, tell us that this eternal, all-encompassing bliss is within us. But it is deep within, while most of our attention is only on the surface. It is dark, while we are so fascinated with and carried away by all the bright lights and colors of the changeful world. And this bliss is silent, while we are always making noise and chasing after sounds.

This deep, dark, silent ocean lies within us, holding out all its promise of a "peace that surpasses understanding," a peace that is not disturbed even by all the wars in the world and all the conflicts within us. This is our legacy. This deep ocean of bliss is more like a well-spring, because we can drink deeply of its waters. On this ocean of bliss, the pleasures and pains of a lifetime are but ripples and waves, and joy and sorrow ebb and flow like its tides. But at its depth, the ocean remains undisturbed by any of these surface variations and changes.

This ocean of bliss, or spiritual well-being, is our inheritance from our gurus. What do we have to do to claim this inheritance? Only cultivate an abiding intention to do so. And what is the price to be paid? We have only to pay attention, attention to this still, silent voice and this invisible, ineffable light deep within our own self.

Please, I invite each of you during these coming days here to drink deeply and taste slowly and thoroughly the waters of bliss that are always flowing within you, as an undercurrent, just waiting for your intention and attention. Welcome.

SPEAKING IN SIGNS

BY SUELLEN CUPP

In 1968 I was in my junior high school homeroom and I wanted to secretly talk with Kara Johnson. This is where my interest in signing began. Kara and I learned the American Sign Language alphabet together and very slowly made hand signals to each other when we thought the teacher wasn't looking. This didn't last long. Our clumsy hand movements drew far too much attention. We then took to sending notes written in longhand, folded up into tiny squares of top secrets.

Twenty-nine years later, the president of Western Oregon University (WOU), where I had just begun teaching, was giving her welcome speech to the new faculty. I could not hear her because I was so distracted by watching the graceful, awe-inspiring interpreter signing the speech for the large deaf community who work at the university. As I watched the interpreter sign, I visualized a series of paintings of life-sized figures. I could create an image of a word or idea, using American Sign Language (ASL) as a model. The hand and body gestures, the angle of my sight, and heavy velvet curtain behind the signer stimulated my recollection of single figure grisailles paintings of the Christian virtues and vices by the Italian painter Giotto.

Soon after this event, I began a series of meetings with a group of deaf people and interpreters to share ideas. These became heated discussions about deaf culture and the misunderstandings many people have about communication in general and, more specifically, in regard to the deaf. After a number of lunches together, the group established a list of words for concepts I could use in the paintings.

These words were: care, respect, wonder, awe, attention, silence, graceful, exchange, bridge, paradox, equality, humble, information, culture, listen, belief, community, oppression, interpreter and touch.

Once I began sketching ideas, I realized photographs would be needed for the specific gestures each sign uses. Otherwise my paintings would be muddled. Each sign or movement would have to be represented by at least two or three positions. Many friends and models volunteered for the long photo shoots. During one of these sessions, a deaf friend and I spoke of the fact that it is not the deaf person and hearing person that are communicating with each other. Rather there is the deaf person, an interpreter and a hearing person as well, creating a three-way conversation. We saw the interpreter's role as extremely significant in how feelings and tone or spirit are communicated. Also, a person's physical presence and body language convey so much information.

After this discussion, I decided to include hearing people in the painting series.

In order to imply their given word or concept, these models would choose to use a common gesture or a movement particular to their culture. For instance, for “care”, a friend touched a plant gently. Or for “awe”, a Japanese student touched her chest and bowed her head. In the finished series, the paintings and drawings are grouped in threes: the deaf person, the interpreter and the hearing person. The collaborators chose the particular words in each grouping. A painting entitled Culture was created on it's own to be an entry piece for an exhibition.

Late in the process of making the paintings, the models expressed an interest in meeting other participants and sharing the project with friends in the deaf community. We chose to have a party at my house where I was working on the series in my studio. As I cleaned the house, I danced around while listening to Aretha Franklin singing. In one song she sings, R-E-S-P-E-C-T. I thought of the painting I had made of Laurene signing the word respect—she would never hear this music or Aretha singing. When she came to the party, I asked her about music and Aretha Franklin. She expressed a love of watching movement and feeling the vibrations and the fact that she does not feel a loss, rather an excitement, just as a hearing person feels about music.

It was the quietest party I have ever been to. And the most moving. In spirit it resembled the opening reception for the exhibit of paintings: quiet but alive with animated signing, and filled with vibrant people completely involved in relating to the art and to each other.

In the five years since those first meetings, I have completed eleven paintings and ten drawings in this series. I feel this work is an outgrowth of an instinctual interest in watching people move. I learned a tremendous amount about a beautiful language and about deaf culture, first by shamelessly staring, then by watching, listening and sharing.

I am grateful to Western Oregon University for giving me a grant to support the project; to the Regional Resource on Deafness, located on the WOU campus; and to the many people who worked on this project with me. The series has been shown on the WOU campus, Gallaudet University, Portland State University, the University of Oregon, and a few national juried exhibitions. A number of them are now in private and public collections.



Andrea, a hearing person, is here making a gesture that to her represents the idea of care and caring.



This painting is the first in a series of three. There is one panel for a hearing person, one for a deaf person, and one for an interpreter. In this panel Kizumi, who is a hearing person, is signing the word awe.



Camille, a deaf person, is the second in the series and she is signing the word graceful. Her double right arm positions indicate the full sign for the word.



Nick is a sign language interpreter and in this painting he is signing the word belief. The double right arm is showing the movement of the sign, from the head to the other hand.

THE GURUKULA EXPERIENCE

BY SWAMI VINAYA CHAITANYA

Writing about the Gurukula experience is like trying to describe a river: you can describe the banks, the rocks, the falls, but the river flows on, ever the same, ever different. So, in order to convey the experience, one has to talk about the experiencer.

The Gurukula experience, in its essence, has been known from the earliest days of human aspiration. The silent, youthful teacher seated under a banyan tree, surrounded by students who are old, is an idiom which is still very alive in Eastern cultural traditions. The old disciples represent the age-old questions of humanity while the silent youth stands for the newness of the answers in each situation, as well as the nature of the teaching, which transcends words. Gurus, as representatives and exemplars of the perennial wisdom of life have always lived in every time and clime, even as they do now.

Wisdom refers to finalized knowledge, thoughts and feelings that are understood in living, dynamic terms. A Guru revalues and restates perennial wisdom to answer the need of his or her time. The wisdom heritage of humanity has always been upheld by Gurus or world teachers, since their lives and teachings are constantly reaffirming universal core values of life, such as love and kindness and equality and justice. Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Gautama Buddha, Mahavira, Jesus Christ, and the Prophet Mohammed are some of these teachers. It is indeed a great pity that we have lost the names and traditions of the numerous women teachers, even though it is mostly through the grandmothers that human wisdom has been preserved.

Narayana Guru (1854-1928), who inspired the founding of the Gurukula, was such a wisdom teacher. He emphasized the need to transcend parochialism, whether in the name of caste or race, language, sex or religion. This was not to be reached through any homogenization but through recognizing the underlying unity of human aspiration. His teachings are summarized in the dictum, "Humanity is one caste, one faith, one goal."

His disciple and successor, Nataraja Guru, founded the Narayana Gurukula as an educational institute where the ideals of self-realization and world citizenship can be actualized through an open, dynamic way of plain living and high thinking. While considering religious and spiritual traditions as the common heritage of all humanity, it also remains neutral between belief and skepticism and all such bipolarities. Such a way of seeing "both together" instead of "either/or" is known

as yoga in India. Yoga means union, the union of the wave with the ocean. Nataraja Guru saw the Gurukulas as “islands of neutrality in an ocean of insanity.” He also called them “Narayana Gurukula Unlimited”, meaning the liability of each to all and all to each is unlimited. He saw the whole world as a Gurukula.

This is a general background of the Gurukula. The place in Bangalore where we live is one of the many Gurukula centers. There are sixteen others in India and a few in other parts of the world. Margaret and I have been living here for the last twenty-seven years. We met in the Gurukula as Nataraja Guru’s students and were married twenty-five years ago. We have four children, aged twelve to twenty-four. The eldest, Hypatia Anasuya, has just qualified as an Ayurvedic doctor. The other three are in school. As far as I know, they are the only children in their schools whose caste and religion is Humanity.

Some incidents may be cited which may help understand the role of the Gurukula today. Last year a young man and woman came to us. They were from Kerala State, the man a Muslim and the woman a Christian. Both were from educated, wealthy families, and very much in love with each other. The families were both strongly against them having anything to do with each other. The young couple had waited for a number of years, hoping the families would come to their better senses. Not only did that not happen, the woman was locked up in her own house and frantic efforts were being waged to get her married off to someone, anyone, as long as he was a Christian. The man’s family, not to be outdone, was threatening to murder him if he did not give her up. Somehow they managed to run away together and reached Bangalore where they had a few friends. They went to many churches, mosques and temples wanting to get married. They wanted a religious ceremony but nobody would marry them unless one or both of them were converted to a particular religion. They did not want this and neither were they willing to do with a registered or civil marriage. Finally, some friends brought them to us. After talking to them, we agreed to marry them. We had a ceremony where prayers from the Koran, the Bible and the Vedas were recited by all. We issued a certificate as well, recognizing their love and devotion to each other. They are now living in their own hometown and the families are slowly becoming open to them.

Closer by, in a village 4 kilometers away, there is a young mother and father with two sons. The father is an “untouchable” while the mother is “high caste.” We are thrilled at such efforts, however minuscule they may be, that show us we need not give up hope, that it is possible to transform the lives of individuals while waiting for ‘total’ or ‘global’ revolutions to change the human lot for the better.

I also remember receiving a postcard from someone who had visited us twelve years before. The card had only one line written on it. “The seed has sprouted,” which reminds me of the sower of seeds in the parable of Jesus.

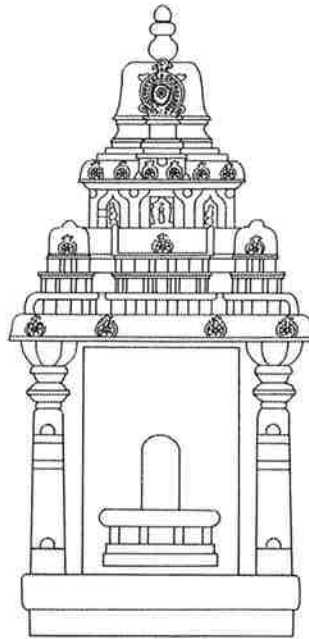
These are a few examples cited in the hope that they will reflect some aspects of the Gurukula. But they remain incomplete as the whole way of life, in each of its

moments and days, is unique and different. Maybe the only constant is the intensity of purpose to fulfill each moment. We are also involved in organic, natural farming and reforestation efforts as part of the spiritual discipline we try to live. Agriculture, thus practiced is an easy way to gain insight into how all life is interdependent and grows together.

The numerous friends who visit the Gurukula from different parts of the world keep in touch regularly, making for an ever-growing network. The Gurukula is also in close contact with some twenty villages nearby. We are invited for weddings and other community events and often are able at least to raise some questions about their age-old sustainable ways that are being mercilessly eroded by the all-pervasive consumerist “development” models.

We seek to revitalize liberating elements in the spiritual traditions of the people and are involved in translating into and from the indigenous poetic expressions of Kannada, Malayalam, Sanskrit and English. A translation of two hundred poems of the twelfth century Kannada poetess, Akka Mahadevi, is ready for publication.

In the word Gurukula, kula means family. So the Gurukula is a wisdom family. It excludes no one, no thing. Right now, the core family here consists of six humans, eleven cats, three cows, one dog, and numerous trees, lots of butterflies, and many birds, snakes, mongooses and jackals. Talking of birds, I am reminded of the beginning of a poem of wisdom that is 2,500 years old. The student asks the teacher, “Is it through contemplation or through action that one attains liberation?” The Guru answers, “Verily, my dear, just as a bird soars up to the heavens on both its wings, it is through contemplation and action together that one attains liberation.”



THE TAKER OF LIFE HAS NO REFUGE

BY SWAMI ADVAITANANDA

Compassion is therapeutic. Compassion is the only therapeutic medicine that can heal bleeding souls. It has a great transforming power like electromagnetic waves. Compassion is like cooling moonlight received in our hearts.

A piece of soft metal becomes magnetic when an electric current is passed through the coil surrounding it. The field starts to radiate waves. This phenomenon is called electromagnetism. Compassion is somewhat like electromagnetism.

The more a person is transformed into a compassionate being the more he radiates spiritual waves. Such a person becomes therapeutic. A compassionate person is a great healer. He is a reservoir full of positive vibrations. Both action and inaction belong together to the same Self, the one reality without a second. Therefore it is not unphilosophical to proclaim that "All are of one same fraternity." Here "all" means the entire manifestation of the one Self.

The practice of those who are initiated into the mysteries of life is called mysticism. In other words mysticism is the practice of putting oneself into direct relation with the Supreme Lord, the Absolute, or any unifying principle of life. There are three general tendencies in the speculation of mystics:

- to regard God as residing outside the soul, in which the mystic rises to God by successive stages of practice;
- to regard God as dwelling within the soul, to be found by delving deeper into ones own reality;
- to regard all beings as the manifestation of one Supreme Lord and showing compassion to all beings.

The third approach is called absolutist mysticism. Mysticism as understood in the Vedantic context makes an important distinction between what is called pure action and ordinary activity. In nondualism, it is a verticalized version of mysticism that is important. All other mystic expressions are either active or dark, and are of an inferior, non-spiritual order. In the mysticism of nondualism, the key words are peace and non-killing, because of a general love of all life. The vision of a nondualist is all-embracing. Absolutist mysticism can't draw a line between human happiness and the happiness belonging naturally to the rest of life. The negative

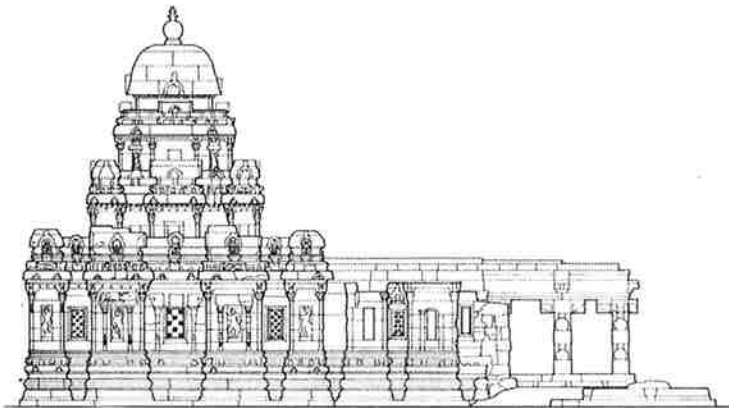
notion of non-killing is balanced with the positive love of all life. To a Self-realized person, peace and non-killing are natural behavior. The following are the five verses on kindness to life that were composed by the mystic poet Narayana Guru:

All are of one Self-fraternity,
Such being the dictum to avow,
In such light, how can we take life,
And devoid of least pity go on to eat?

The non-killing vow is great indeed,
And, greater still not eating to observe;
All in all, should we not say, O men of righteousness,
Even to this amounts the essence of all religions?

If killing came to be applied to oneself,
Who, as a favor, would treat such a dire destiny?
As touching all in equality, O ye wise ones,
Should that not be our declaration for a regulated life?

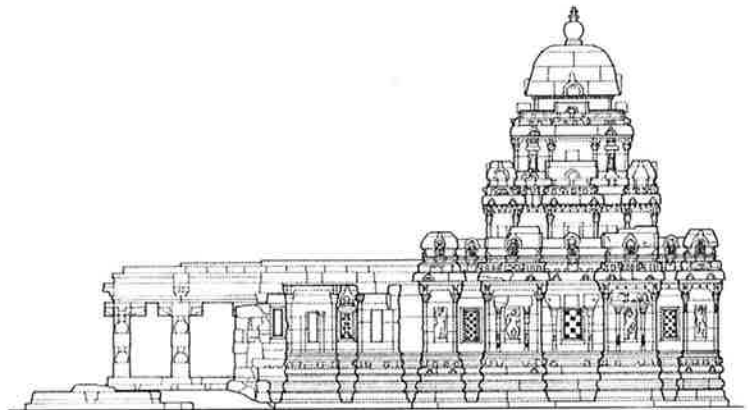
No killer would there be if no other to eat there was
perforce, himself must eat!
In eating thus abides the cruder ill,
In that it killing makes.



Non-killing makes a human good.
Else an animal's equal he becomes,
No refuge has the taker of life,
Although to him all other benefits accrue.

In the vertical scale of values, grace, love and mercy are considered the guiding stars of life. Man without the gift of grace is like a plastic flower, without any fragrance at all. Self- Realization or encyclopedic scholarship in philosophy will be incomplete without compassion. One has to be transformed by oneself. All the masters and scriptures are only informative. They are just like signboards. No savior shall descend from the sky up above the space-station to save the humanity! The best savior of man is none other than himself. Other than the Self nothing exists. The Bhagavad Gita is very clear in bestowing the nectar of non-dual philosophy:

By the Self the Self must be upheld;
The Self should not be let down;
The Self indeed is its own dear Friend;
The Self indeed is the enemy of the Self. (VI,5)



EVERYTHING I TOUCH

BY JOHNNY STALLINGS

Everything I touch
touches me

empty mind
open eyes

little red finch
on the chimney outside my window
sings
flies away

our little lives
so precious to us
and to those that love us
one moment long
this one!

do you imagine
there is some other day?

say "I am"
and leave it at that

the things we think we know
are the stones of the prison
in which we live

forget everything
know nothing

when I take off my shoes and socks
I am surprised by
my bright red toenails

no rain on the skylight
a crow calls

all these people walking around imagining
that the ideas in their heads
make them different
from each other

what you most deeply desire
is not far away

My Foreign Policy:
there are no foreigners

History of the World:
Somewhere, at this moment,
a woman is giving birth.
Meanwhile, a soldier is loading
his rifle.

Our Job:
our job
is to make this world
a paradise.

THE SUKHAM DUHKHAM CASTLE

BY SCOTT TEITSWORTH

In 1977 I was meditating in the apparatus bay of the fire station where I worked, when I was visited by a vision of the following multidimensional psychodrama. I had a strong feeling at the time that the image was being presented to me by Nataraja Guru, who had died four years earlier and who had had a number of unfulfilled theatrical ideas floating through his mind late in life. Perhaps he'd like to take credit, perhaps not...

THE CAST

RJ – a young person, employed by Mr. K

MR. K – managing director of the Crescent Moon Herb Company

SUE GOODER– blond; her innocence is somewhat feigned; a transparent personality

ROGER – an anxious ex-athlete, redheaded

THOMAS - the timorous henchman of Sue and Roger; a very swarthy fellow

THE ACT

The outside curtain, a thick gold-embroidered tapestry, opens, revealing a second, brightly colored one. An expectant pause. The second curtain pulls away to the sides. Behind it is a blackish veil, which is being moved from behind in several disconcerting directions. It appears to pulse with trapped, rounded motions. The movements die down gradually, and cautiously the black curtain draws up to unveil the stage.

We are in the interior of the castle. The center-stage area is somewhat bright, where RJ sits tied to a chair closely guarded by Thomas. Roger is pacing around as if waiting for something to happen. Sue sits near a window to the rear, stage right. She is calmly looking out into the darkness, occasionally rearranging herself in the reflection of the glass.

The castle, while somewhat light and comfortable in the center, becomes increasingly dark towards the periphery. Cobwebs abound. Some dark and vaguely sinister shapes loom in the recesses. No light or sound penetrates from outside.

There is a feeling of being cut off, of a nervous detachment.

RJ- What do you want of me? *Silence. The three captors continue as before. RJ struggles with his bonds. What do you want of me! Thomas gets a bit edgy, moves away from his guardpost a couple of steps. You want to tell me what this is all about? Struggles. Nice knots you guys tie! In his struggle he slides the chair a short ways, causing a screeching sound. Thomas lets out a loud, worried moan.*

Roger- *Rushes over, slaps RJ.* Shaddup, will ya! And you too, Thomas. I've got enough to do without worrying whether you'll stick by your part in all this. Just keep him where he is.

Thomas- Hey, I'm doing the best I can, man. What do you expect? Just leave me alone.

Roger- Eh! *He begins pacing around some more. He goes over to a table, slightly to the rear, and writes furiously. Meanwhile, RJ continues to wrestle with the chair. He tips it over. Thomas immediately jumps him, holding the chair down over him. Roger crumples up the paper he was writing on and throws it over his shoulder, rushing to the pile. Here now! How am I gonna keep you out of trouble? Get up, come on, get up!*

Sue- *Still looking out the window. Do I hear something? Struggling noises. I wonder if something's amiss? A bang. She looks around spacily. Ohhhh! Isn't that sweet! Airily she gets up and approaches the others. Now is this a mess, or is this a mess?*

Roger- A lotta help you've been!

Sue- La de da de da, sweetcakes.

Roger- *Glaring.* In case you haven't noticed, this is the abduction scene! We're in this up to our necks! *Sue bends a bit, scrutinizing his throat. Roger takes no notice.* We've got a lot to accomplish if we want to pull this off. So far I've done all the planning. Why don't you get in gear and show us you're part of this operation?

Thomas - *Disentangling himself, querulously.* Hey man, I've done what I could. You just don't realize how much I helped. I stood guard just like—

Roger- I wasn't even talking to you, stupid! Don't you ever get anything right?

Thomas- But I—

Sue - Raager! Why don't you leave the little punk alone? Can't you see he's uptight?
Then to Thomas: Take it easy now. It'll be all over before long. Just settle down now, mmmm...that's it.

The scene returns to the original state. Sue is back in her seat, looking out the blank window. Thomas and RJ are in the center, RJ still tied to his chair. Roger struggles with the note he's writing.

Roger- If I can make this sound convincing, we'll all be rich. *Silence.* Hey, how do you spell 'decapitated'? *RJ jumps violently, dragging the chair behind him around center stage. Thomas restrains him, pushing him back toward his spot.*

Thomas- I bet you don't even know why you're here, do you?

RJ- Hmmm. Now that you mention it, no. *He carefully returns his chair to its exact previous spot and sits.*

Sue- *Not looking up:* B-e-h-e-a-d-e-d. *RJ screams and struggles violently. He knocks Thomas over, so that Roger must run up and hold him.*

Roger- Easy there, big fella! I'll make a deal with you if you'll just cool out. *The chair stops thrusting about.*

RJ- What kind of a deal?

Roger- How would you like it if we untied you? Will you stay mellow if we do it?

RJ- Sure thing, buddy.

Thomas, *as Roger unties RJ:* You can't let him go! You'll blow our whole plan. And after I risked my neck!

Roger- *In a feigned tough-guy voice:* Well Ah wouldn't worry about it too much there, greaser-buddy. The way I see it, ol' RJ ain't neva gonna leave this hyere castle anyway. Even if he DO find the door, he'll be right back, what with the dragons and the alligator moat an' all.

RJ, freed from the chair at last, bursts toward stage left. As he reaches the dark recesses of the stage he looks up, screams, and comes charging back. Leaping onto the chair, he pulls the rope back around himself as if trying to hide behind it, occasionally glancing furtively over at the dark corners.

Roger- *Laughing, still in his 'tough' voice:* Ya see, good buddy, they're all like that! *He grabs the rope and recklessly tosses it away.* Nope, we sure don't need this no more. Hey, transparent lady! *Sue looks around dreamily.* Yeah, you. Ain't you gonna help me with this note?

Sue- Looks like you boys are pretty well taking care of things already. I've got no axe to grind, Sweetie. We'll get our ransom sooner or later....

Roger- Not if we don't even mail off the note, we won't. In this world, lazy buns, you gotta put out to get yours! And when I get mine, you sure won't get your greedy little fingers on any part of it!

Sue- *Shrugs.* Eh, I don't worry. What's meant to happen will happen. And I know you have a way with words.

Thomas- Oh, I knew this would happen! Bunglers! Why can't we get this over with? I know we're going to get caught, I just know it! *Bursts into tears.* You're the ones who got me into this mess, now you get me out! *Looks around. Sue stares noncommittally out the window. RJ edges away from him. Roger fumes with his note. Fresh tears.* Oh, it's hopeless! It's just so hopeless! If only I was any good at it, I'd scream!

Sue- *Coming forward.* There, there. Relax. Have faith in us. Roger will make sure that it all comes out all right.

Thomas- That's easy for you to say. And what do you ever do? Always sitting and staring, rearranging yourself whenever the mood moves you. I wish I had it so easy! But no, a guy like me has to pay dues for every inch. It's a fight all the way. I'd do anything to have it as good as you've got.

RJ- *Musing.* There oughtta be a law....

Roger- Listen, you guys. This is our big chance to make a killing. *RJ groans.* We've got to be sure that Futzbungler here (indicating RJ) doesn't escape. *Poking Thomas:* That's mainly your job! Ms. Gooda here is supposed to keep us all together and harmonized. As for me, I'm the brainaround here, which means I'm really up against it with you two turkeys. Hey, it's a great system! So if you'll just do your jobs, I'm sure we'll succeed.

Roger starts pushing Thomas around. Thomas quarrels loudly and defensively. Sue attempts to keep peace, but gradually gets drawn into the argument. RJ slowly

backs toward the fringe as the three tussle ever more ferociously. He watches their different personalities clash and spin, and a light begins to dawn in his face. At this point Mr. K strides in, magnificently dressed and brandishing a Tute, and approaches RJ. The three captors quiet down and look at him, although there's still some jostling and bickering.

Mr. K- Where in the world have you been?!

RJ- I...I....

Mr. K- *Pointing offstage.* Time to get in gear, RJ. We've needed you! And here you sit, frittering away the morning. Come on, let's go outside!

They exit. The captors watch them go off, then confer amongst themselves. They turn, and with looks of great attachment begin approaching the audience as...

THE CURTAINS FALL, ONE BY ONE



MEDITATIONS ON ŚRĪ CAKRA

BY GURU NITYA

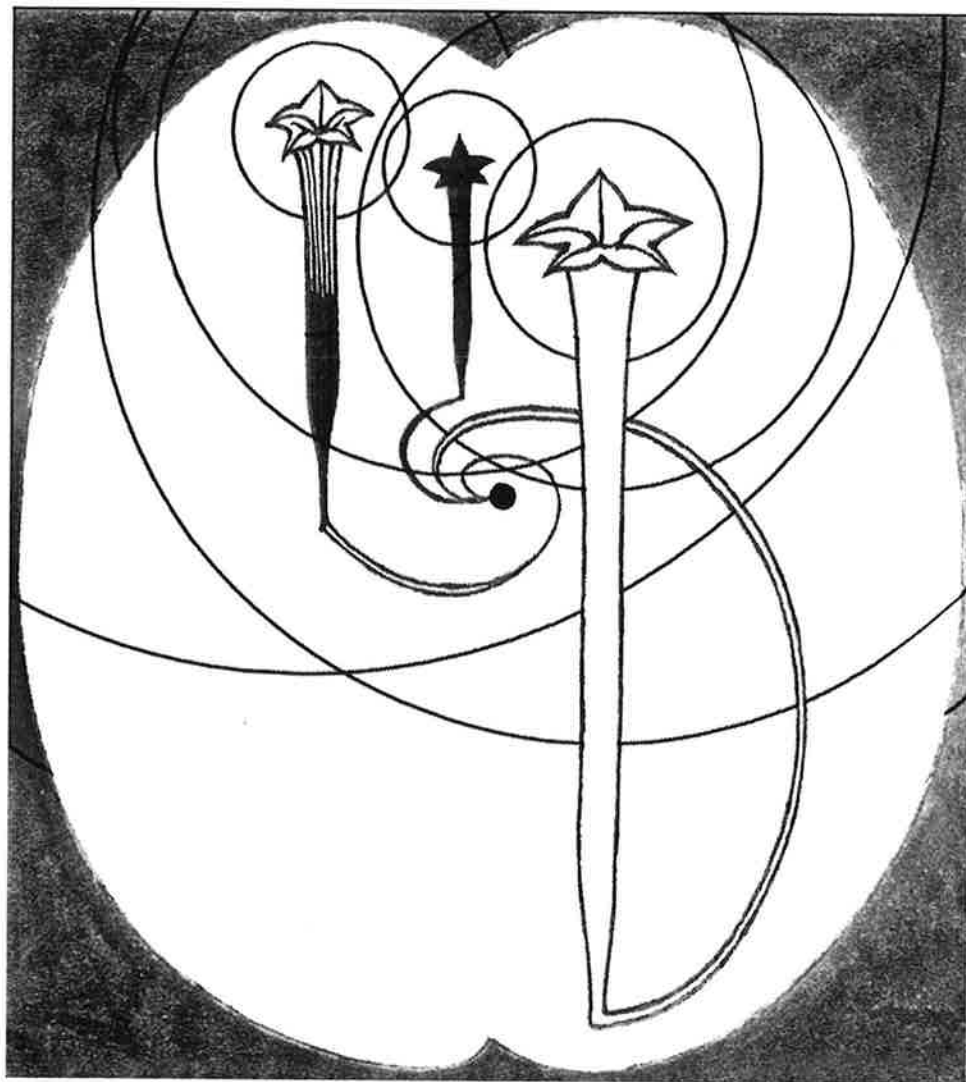
MEDITATION FIFTY-ONE

O Mother, manipulator of the drama of life. To understand the concealed secret of the grand performance of your world drama, one should know its three stages: concept, role assignment, and ultimate effect on the participants. Your conceptual world is the inception of the germinal dynamics by which you elaborate a cosmic performance from a mathematical point (*bindu*) to a multifaceted dimension which is spatially and temporally co-extensive with the grand universe; this is the theater where the drama of life is being performed (*kāla*). Like the two cotyledons that share the nourishment of a sprouting seed, the first stir or pulsation takes place between you and your Lord. That is praised as the union of the spirit and procreative nature (*Śiva-Śakti yoga*). This marks the opening scene of the drama of life. It is described in all ancient scriptures as a desire to create or manifest.

The second stage is the proliferation of the agents of performance. In a theater this happens through the assignment of roles to actors and actresses. Each one is instructed to adhere to the script of the drama which brings out each character in full detail. Every role is to be played with a display of emotional moods, gestures and manner of speaking so as to convince the audience that the actor has complete identity with the role.

In the green room each actor is given his or her appropriate costume. Either masks are used for a clear display of moods or the face and body are painted in an impressive manner. The beauty of an actor or actress is not to be judged with the norms used in a beauty contest. Instead, it is judged in accordance with the ability of the character to mirror the correct impression in the imagination of the on-looker. The spectator should be able to discern the villain from the noble hero. The director gives detailed instructions to each actor or actress.

In the present situation, O Mother, you are the manager, you are the director and you are the playwright. The success of the play lies in your ability to direct each actor to play his perfectly. The choreography of a play lies half in the instruction given in the green room and half on the stage in the setting of each scene, the environmental controls that are given and the duration of time assigned to bring out each scene's full effect. This can be seen in great evidence in actual life situations, such as when you bring forth a million progeny from certain bacteria



in less than a minute's time while you patiently wait for an elephant to bring forth its rare progeny once in a blue moon. After finalizing your choreography you bring into the limelight your fully instructed actors and actresses to carry out their performances in a sequential order.

The total effect you expect from the display is complete entertainment for your spectators. For that, you have a normative criterion by which the audience can have a highly subjective participation in the objective performance of the ongoing drama. Each role is to be played by a single person as an actor or actress. Every member of the audience immediately gets into identification with the role and a subjective reciprocation takes place by which the on-looker goes through the performance of the role with a full emotional sharing.

This sharing has three modes. The first is an appraisal of the situation in the light of pure reason. Even the most muddled thinking of a character has to be based on a systematic distortion of the reasoning the character should have. The second mode is almost like some forms of modern art in which the artist systematically distorts and redistributes the parts of the subject very artfully in a painting. The hero who is meant to be noble and ideal is shown as conforming to the highest demand of rightful thinking and the noblest of ethical standards. His villainous rival shows a contradictory value vision by which the opposite approach is made feasible with an antithetical value assertion. Other characters show the third mode in which higher and more beautiful reasoning is lost to the vision of an idiotic person. In ancient days such roles were assigned to jesters.

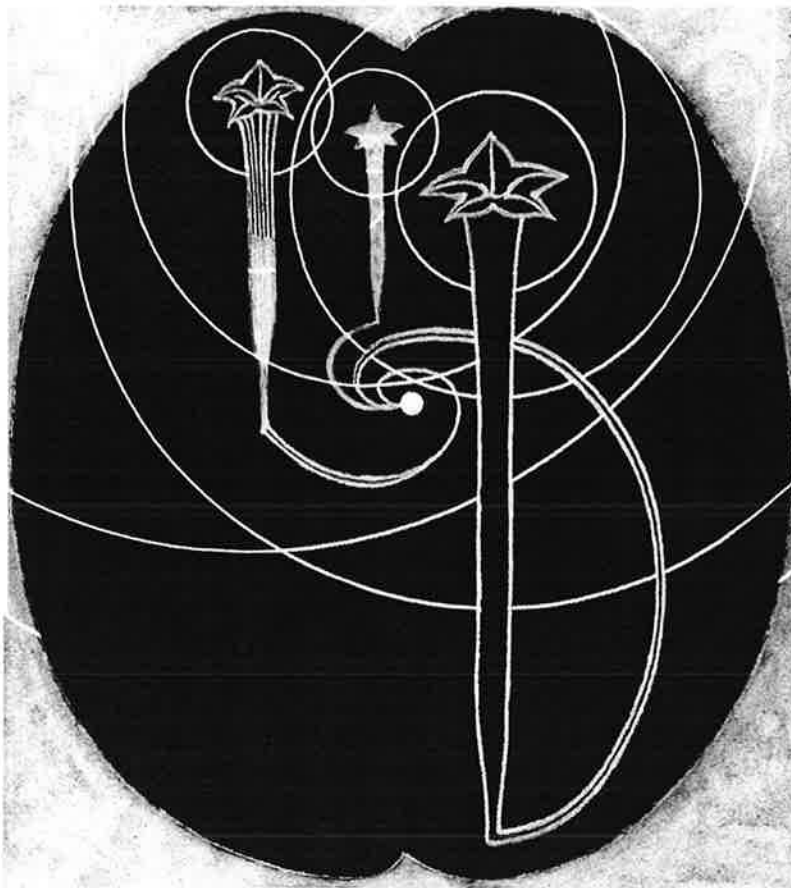
Another area which operates with three modes is that of overt action. The first mode includes restraint of emotion, expediency in action and dexterity in performance, such as in demonstrating skills in self-defense techniques. Then the actions of a kind person can be distinguished from the actions of a cruel person and both can be contrasted with the clumsy behavior of an inferior person. The three modes also operate in the dynamics of the play, the apportioning of energy and will to each character to flow steadily from the beginning to the end with a commitment and a persistence that tries to win the admiration of the audience.

O Mother, the modes reflect the triple modalities of your nature: the pure-clear transparency of *sattva*, the distorted agitation that comes from *rajas* and the inertial confusion which is spilled into the character by *tamas*. Dissonance, when it is strategically displayed by master musicians like Debussy, only adds to the charm of music. Even so, the proportionate balancing of the three *gunas* only enhances the beauty of your play. Artists have a full mastery over their colors knowing where to paint a stroke that is cold or hot, pure or impure, according to the mood they want to evoke in the connoisseur. Your choice of themes in the drama of life is also like that. You know after all it is only a drama. That is why poets praise you as the manager of the pretentious drama or false drama art.

According to the three modalities of nature you create different moods in

your characters. When you bestow the grace of *sattva* it elicits the sense of wonder (*adbhuta*), compassion (*karuṇa*) and peace (*śantiḥ*). In erotics (*śrīṅgāra*), heroics (*raudra*) and valor (*vīra*) your choice of *guna* is *rajas*. In the mood of revulsion or sarcasm (*bībhatsa*), fear (*bhaya*) and humor or clumsiness (*hāsyā*) your preference is for *tamas*. Thus behind all the nine moods it is your coordinating tactics which are giving guidance to the actor or actress.

O Mother, actually, the entire drama is your dream. Otherwise, who will expect you, the most compassionate of all mothers, to show a veiled pretension of jealousy, anger and rivalry, not to say fear and clumsiness? If only we could learn the lesson that life is a humorous display of drama that we are asked to play! Then we would be able to keep our balance and not land in prisons or asylums. The appropriate name for you, Mother, is *lila*. All victory to you.



NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

2005

BY GURU MUNI NARAYANA PRASAD

We wish everyone a graceful new year enlightened by the memory of the gurus of the past. It is such memories, in fact, that enable us to look forward confidently to a bright future. We are enabled to look forward with a positive attitude through finding the bearings of eternal Truth, taught by the gurus, on contemporary affairs of human life. Two events of the recent past stand out as deserving of mention here.

One story is that of a young college girl who committed suicide. Although a solitary event, the circumstances that led to it are of universal relevance. Life, in the girl's perception, had become meaningless when she found that the expected financial resources necessary to complete her education were cut off. She had a sweet dream of a future life built simply around the job she was likely to get, enabled by her engineering studies. That castle in the air crumbled down one day, resulting in her feeling that life had become worthless. Events in life, it is to be remembered, do not unfold in the way we might choose. No one had taught the girl that her particular life was part of the endlessly expansive total existence, in which events do not take place only as part of individual dreams. A path becomes blocked but a new one may open up, perhaps a better one. Endless are the possible opportunities in life. Unfortunately, no one was there to give this girl such an insight.

This expansive and open attitude toward life is necessary to be inculcated in the minds of the young. Life, in the words of Narayana Guru, is to be perceived as: "A divine sport going on beginninglessly in the Absolute Reality or *arivu*."

If this young girl had had this clarity about her life, a tragedy would have been prevented. In fact, the entire new generation is growing up with this lack. A few choice professions, the money you earn from them, and the family sustained by that money—this constitutes the full range of vision taught to the young in this age of globalized capitalism. Human hopes, particularly those of an immature mind, do not always get fulfilled. The failure of this one narrowly conceived hope incited the young mind to do away with life itself. This pitiable tendency is on the increase.

Basically, what is needed to prevent such tragedies is to teach the young generation about the indefinability and the uncertainty of life. The words of all our gurus and the scriptures, especially the epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, abound in such teachings. What Sri Rama did, when faced the dramatic event that put an end to his glorious future, was not to commit suicide. Instead, he simply

accommodated himself to the new situation, which eventually led to his greater glory and to the good of the world order. Such events can take place in one's life at any time. We have to always remain prepared to expect the unexpected. Instead of insisting that life should follow the line we have chosen, we should be willing to follow the unpredictable line that life chooses for us.

Our personal life is simply part of the incessant sport, or *lila*, that goes on in the one Supreme Reality, or *paramātmān*. In sports what do we do when we lose one game? No one commits suicide. Instead we prepare ourselves to better play the next game. This should be the same spirit that we have in the game of life.

It is not just the young who become desperate in the face of the uncertainties of life. Some adults also take the recourse of killing themselves, particularly when caught in inescapable financial traps. Such difficult circumstances are faced mostly by those who mortgage their real estate holdings in order to avail themselves of a loan from a bank to help in farming or business. Factors beyond human control ultimately decide the success or failure in such matters. Those who are incapable of accommodating themselves to the unexpected failure and takeover of their property by the bank, those who aren't bold enough to conceive of such eventualities as part of the uncertain game of life, should not take the risk of loans. Mortgaging one's property virtually means giving up one's real possessions and acknowledging that ownership is with the bank, not with them. With this attitude, a loss will not result in suicide. And such loss, though unbearable in the present, could even pave the path for a better, unexpected future. Who knows what the future hides within itself?

What is important in both the cases of youngsters and adults is to become fully aware of the nature, meaning and uncertainty of life. India's culture is rich with literary classics and scriptures that shed light on these matters. What we lack is the aptitude to use these resources and the wisdom they impart. Forcefully distracting us from such a basic need for wisdom is the tempting greed for money and comforts and social position. The recurrence of suicides is simply an external symptom of this devastating psychological malady.

Yet another major problem that has arisen out of administrative measures of the State and has rocked India's cultural conscience is this: Is a *sannyāsin* above the laws of the State? As people who have renounced worldly affairs, *sannyāsins* are often considered in the popular mind to be above the level of law. But such an attitude is sometimes over emphasized by political leaders.

A *sannyāsin* is one who has renounced everything (*nyāsa*) in a methodical way (*sāmyak*). He renounces even his self-respect and for this reason he cannot even claim damages for defamation. He does not perceive himself as forming part of the worldly social system, though he gives all the guidance needed for the proper running of such an order. He simply finds himself existing in *brahman*, as *brahman*. Narayana Guru describes an ideal *sannyāsin* as follows:

An abode owned by him,
Forest areas, water's edge,
Or even an uninhabited place—
Wherever be that, he lives,
The yogi's mind resides
Always in *brahman*,
Perceiving everything well
In the Self or himself,
And treating the entire world
Merely as mirage-like,
The *muni* enjoys incessantly
the blissfulness of being
One with the Supreme *brahman*
Beyond all compare.

(*Municarya Pancakam*)

Having to wander around as a mendicant monk or living in a palatial math with all comforts, even to be living in a dungeon, all these happen as a result of the social system controlled by the society's laws. It is the *sannyāsin* who is to be the inspirational force for these laws. Whatever the particular condition in the transactional world, the true *sannyāsin* sees one *brahman* alone functionally manifesting as all individuals, and he should experience the blissfulness of being in *brahman* in and through all these conditions. One is not a true *sannyāsin* no matter the social position he holds if he does not have this experience.

A politician's interest is in worldly matters. Availing political support to uphold *sannyāsa* indicates a degenerating *sannyāsa*. *Sannyāsa* is, in fact, one major ideal contributed by India to the world, the only ideal life pattern India has ever upheld.

Should a *sannyāsin* honor the laws of the State? This question, in an ever-green and telling way, has been answered by Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher. He was charged with the crime of having corrupted the youth by teaching them a new philosophy, and was condemned to death by drinking poison. Socrates honored the court's verdict one hundred percent, and drank the hemlock they provided. But he died declaring his innocence with a firm and calm mind.

It is an ideal *sannyāsa*, uncorrupted by the transactional interests of politics, communalism and religious bigotry, that should lead us to a brighter future, a brighter New Year. May there be all around us more living models of ideal *sannyāsa*, rich with the enlightened aptitude to renounce everything, to renounce even the ego.

We wish a bright and peaceful New Year to everyone!

GURUKULA NEWS

The yearly Gurukula Convention was held at Varkala, Kerala, with daily seminars in the Brahmaidya Mandir Hall and evening prayer sessions at the Gurukula, all for nearly a week. A permanent prayer hall is being constructed at the Varkala Gurukula. Guru Muni Narayana Prasad's book, *Life's Pilgrimage Through the Gita*, and his commentary on the *Chandogya Upanishad* will both be published in 2005. Also being published this summer will be Nataraja Guru's *Unitive Philosophy* by DK Printworld. It is a compilation of *Vedanta Revalued and Restated*, *Search for a Norm in Western Philosophy*, and *The Philosophy of a Guru*. Recently released as well was Nataraja Guru's translation and commentary on *Saundarya Lahari*.

For Guru Nitya's Mahasamadhi Day, May 14th, there was a gathering and meditation at the Ooty Gurukula in Fernhill, India.

On September 4th the annual Guru Puja will be held at the Bainbridge Gurukula, Washington, U.S.A.

For online classes contact Nancy Yeilding at islandarayana@foxinternet.net and Scott Teitsworth at tapovana@hevanet.com.

We would like to begin collecting reminiscences from people about their experiences with both Nataraja Guru and Guru Nitya, as well as with Swami Mangalananda. Please send your writing to the editor of the *Gurukulam* in Portland. We will collect them first and then begin to edit for the Archives.

Web Addresses:

<http://www.geocities.com/islandgurukula>

<http://www.homepage.mac.com/sraddha/gurukula>

<http://homepage.mac.com/vyasa>

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GURUKULAM

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITION

GURUKULAM magazine is a publication of the Narayana Gurukula, a spiritual and educational organization dedicated to sharing the teachings of Narayana Guru and his successors, as well as to the exploration of the world's many philosophic and artistic traditions. Our attitude is best expressed by Narayana Guru: "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 from 1973 to 1999. The current Guru and Head is Muni Narayana Prasad.

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