

# GURUKULAM



AUTUMN 2006







# GURUKULAM

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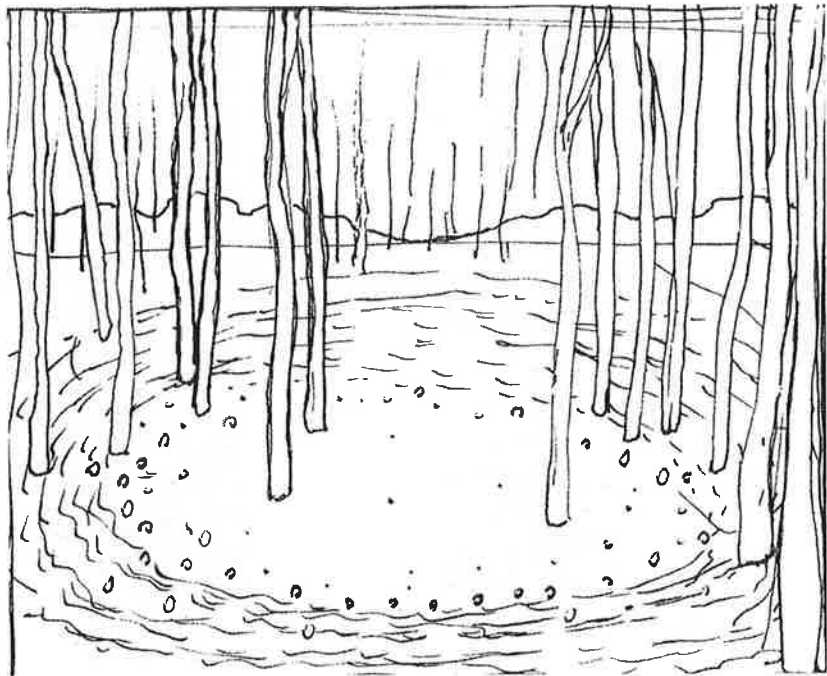
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# EDITORIAL

BY DEBORAH BUCHANAN

In the English dictionary two words are spelled the same but pronounced slightly differently and have two individual but complementary meanings: commune and community. The first is defined as a profound intensity and the intimacy of sharing one's thoughts or feelings; the second indicates a close knit group of people who share a common interest and sometimes are a specific administrative unit.

When put together these two meanings lead us to another related word, community, which is a social grouping of people who live together and may share a linguistic or historical background, or a group whose members understand themselves as related to one another and different from others. In communities we are with people with whom we commune, with whom we share and exchange ideas, art, livelihood, and aspirations; and it is through this personal and social intimacy that communities are created. Communing and communities: they each define and reinforce one another.

It is to the many permutations of these words and meanings that a number of this issue's articles speak. In his writing on Sri Aurobindo's poem *Sāvitri*, Y. Balasubramanian elucidates Savitri as the symbol of the conjunction of human attributes and divine potentials. She is one person, with her own particular fate, and yet she also represents that very situation, the community of all human beings, where each person must acknowledge death and then work out how to live. How does she mesh her human and divine characteristics? How does she transcend the finality of death? Each of these questions finds a general as well as individual answer in Aurobindo's poem.

Thomas Palakeel's essay explores the life of Song Dynasty poet Li Qingzhao who, along with her husband, was an exemplary model of China's traditional philosophic and artistic community. In China the scholars, collectors, writers and artists—with their creative work and educated appraisals—kept alive a self-cognizant community indebted to tradition, respectful of it, and yet reworking it to present demands.

At the end of her life Li Qingzhao found herself caught in the middle of a violent clash between two very different communities, China and the nomadic tribes of the Eurasian steppe, who were in a long drawn out war over China's border. What happens to individuals who live in the midst of such conflict and destruction, when two communities feel they can no longer live together, can no longer tolerate the other's demands or existence?

This is the painful field explored by Aga Shahid Ali in his poems, reviewed in the essay *Exile and Return*. How do we go from communing about our innermost



intimacies to frightening communal violence? What are the effects on the communities involved? How does an individual resist the pull of anger and revenge?

Or what happens when a community exiles one part of itself, defining it as “no longer us”? Johnny Stallings writes about the isolation and fear that create prisons and are created by them. Central to his experience is the observation of the inner transformation that occurs when a person is able to transmute separation into a deeper understanding of the self and the group. This is also an essential part of Aga Shahid Ali’s writing on the dislocation of grief. Underneath the sorrow, beyond it, is the unifying experience of love.

We come to that deeper level of connection, as Garry Davis tells us in his recounting of his conversations with Nataraja Guru, through an understanding of what limitations we place on ourselves and how we can learn to consciously let go of them, by no longer remaining fixated on tribe or nation or religion but adhering to the community of humankind itself. This article was written in the 1980s as part of a birthday celebration for Nataraja Guru.

These ideals of a boundary-less wisdom accessible to all are further developed by Swami Vinaya Chaitanya in his article on Narayana Guru as Wisdom Teacher. And in her article on moving beyond one’s home world, Tori Luke explores the new ways we can learn and how that leads to a redefinition of self and community.

Narayana Guru wrote that we attain the Absolute when we see the same Self in all, each individual and each group a luminous expression of the divine ground. Not one Self above the other, not one given to the other, simply one Self everywhere. In that trans-personal, trans-gender, trans-national community we find ourselves communing in delight and acceptance.

Special mention needs to be made of the unique artistic expression that arises out of various communities and which, in turn, helps to explain and define a community. Baird Smith’s essay on Pacific Northwest Native art and his painting in that tradition; Peter Oppenheimer’s review of the multitudinous world films at the Film Festival in Kerala; Scott Teitsworth’s review of Indian musical mantras given fresh form with Brazilian rhythms—all these are representative of the endless and beautiful manifestations of the one absolute substratum of life. Sebastian Varghese’s works in the magazine are simple, straightforward black line drawings, but which embody in themselves a profound artistic perception of the symbolic world which animates our daily lives.

It is our hope that *Gurukulam* continues to embody and inspire in each of us a sense of the larger community affiliated with the Narayana Gurukula.

# ĀTMOPADEŚA ŚATAKAM

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

BY GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

VERSE 27

*irulil irunnariyunnataḥkumātmā-  
vaṛivatu tānatha nāma rūpamāyum  
karaṇamotindriya kartṭṛ karmamāyum  
varuvatu kāṅka mahēndra jālam ellām*

Sitting in the dark, that which knows is the self;  
what is known then assumes name and form,  
with the psychic dynamism, senses, agency of action and also action;  
see how it all comes as *mahēndra* magic!

When we look at a deck of tarot cards, it begins with the card symbolizing the Fool and ends with the Magician. Along the way from the Fool to the Magician we come across various representations of life, including even the Judge and Death. Like that our life also begins as an untutored fool and ends in the wonder of magic, *jālam*.

In this verse, the Guru is equating the Self and the world to a grand magic. Here the magic is in the way things are experienced. When we experience things they are there; and when we do not experience them they are not there. Ultimately we cannot say whether they are or are not. They are, otherwise we would not experience them. But at the same time they are not: if they really existed they should continue, but they don't. That's a great magic.

At one moment, two lovers hug each other and whisper in each other's ear how much they care and what wonderful love they are having. In the next moment they behave like strangers. Everything said up to then no longer has any value. They cannot even remember it. Then again their mood fluctuates and changes. They are willing to bury everything for a new deal. And so, on and on.

The Magician comes with his five children for entertainment. He is the mind itself, and his children are the five senses: onlookers as it were. Together they start a big magic show. The senses are really more like angels than children, so they are called *indriya*, a name derived from Indra, the shining one. Even though the eye,

for instance, is made up of inertial matter like skin, water and nerves which by themselves have no ability of knowing anything, the eye is sensitive to sunlight and it can clearly see everything. It is like a *deva*, a luminous angel. So all five senses are called *indriyas* or *dēvas*.

Mind is a superluminous thing that sees what the eye sees, hears what the ear hears, touches what the hands touch, smells what the nose smells, and tastes what the tongue tastes. In addition, it is capable of producing all these effects even when the senses are out of commission, such as in a dream state. Thus mind is called *mahēndra*; *mahā* means great, and *indra* means that which brings ideation. This *mahēndra* in us, the mind and the senses, is producing the world jugglery, the world magic.

Everything we experience comes within the scope of this magic. If we go backwards from the effect of the magic to its cause, the first thing is of course the magic itself. Behind it we see the senses and the mind. When we examine the mind, we see that we experience everything as a series of events. All kinds of activities are going on. Somebody is running, walking, sitting, talking, coming to you, having interactions, loving and hating. One of the main features of this magic is endless activities or *karma*.

Behind each activity you can sense yourself as an actor: “I talk; I look; I see; I do.” And doing all this either pleases or displeases you: “I am very happy to see this; I am ashamed of this; this is horrid; I am getting bored; I don’t want anything; I want all this.” Someone is going on shouting all the time “I, I, I,” as the actor, the knower and the enjoyer. It is always the same ‘I’ but the emphasis changes to accommodate the various angles.

The actor, the knower and the enjoyer have their negative aspects also: “I am not the actor; I do not know; I do not enjoy this.” So the ‘I’ takes roles and denies roles, which leads to questions of identity. In an action situation you either identify yourself or you do not identify yourself with it.

So just who is this ‘I’ which clamors and makes so much noise? When you scrutinize it you will find that its nature is consciousness and that consciousness has a centralized notion where “I, I” is throbbing all the time. It is an ‘I’ consciousness, *ahamvṛtti*, that is affected by whatever is going on. There is an affective ego, an affective ‘I’ consciousness, engaged in this grand magic.

When we look further at this ‘I’ consciousness that engages in activity, feels pleased or displeased, wonders and gets frightened, we are amazed to see that it is not just one static, identical consciousness functioning as all this. It is much more like a stream of water. In the stream of consciousness, before the ‘I’ consciousness decides upon something it moves around propounding arguments. Endless arguments are going on within it: “this is such and such; this is related to such and such, and therefore such and such.” There is a judging quality, and affectivity comes only as a consequence of it. Before it decides what a thing is, its affectivity is not yet decided. Whether it is going to be positive or negative, painful or pleasurable, is held in abeyance.

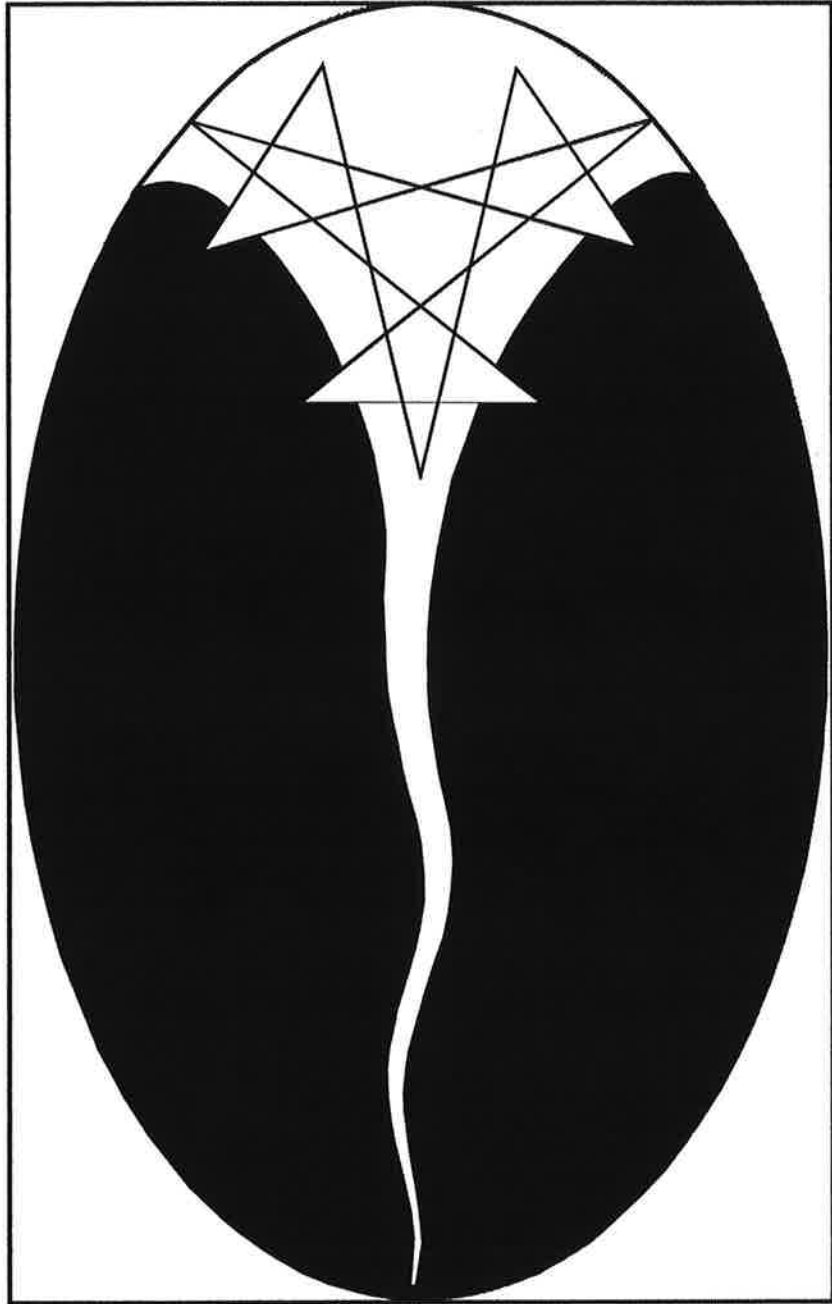
This is the stream of consciousness as it is used for reasoning. When we look into it, we see there are hundreds of memories, associated ideas, everything of the past recalled in order to understand the present situation. After these are recollected and used to identify something, they don't disappear. They go back and hide where they were before so they can be used at a later time. Thus an affective judgment is coming as a consequence of active reasoning. Active reasoning is facilitated by a series of memories and memory recall. Something is stimulating this memory recall, these questions and affectivity. There is a compulsion to judge, to compare, recollect, examine. That compulsion is called *manas* or mind.

Where does this compulsion come from? It is like the Fool of the tarot. The Fool does not know anything, but it wants to know. We begin, not from the Magician's magic, but from the Fool who is crying out, asking, "What is this? I don't know anything. Tell me please!" The Fool comes in the form of an interrogation on the surface of consciousness. Consciousness itself is frothing out like a white foam made up of many tiny bubbles. The bubbles are coming up from the depths of the unconscious. If we try to look beyond these bubbles rising up into consciousness, it becomes very frustrating because we cannot see anything clearly there. One idea bubbles up, is examined and lived out, and then perishes. Even before it perishes another idea is already in the mind, enlarging, growing into an activity, an affectivity, and then it also is forgotten. As these come sequentially, one after another, you can definitely distinguish what was, what is, and what will be. It is played out in a time sequence. So there is not only mind, there is also time.

There is a vastness in which what sequentially arrives is all placed in various ways, either one above the other or beside each other, or three things put in a triangular relationship or intertwined or even separate. For all these, space is required. The time operation is functioning within space.

So there is a time-space continuum. Within the time-space continuum, individual bubbles of interest are coming and bursting into meaning. Meaning is registered in the form of a language symbol, such as a name. Once we have left behind the stage of the newborn, the Fool, no ideation comes into the mind without its being presented with a label, a name. And when you call out a name, a corresponding form comes to mind. Seemingly out of nowhere all these factors, all these categories have come: names and forms; time and space; actors and action; the doer, knower and enjoyer; and the interrogating faculty, memory, judgment and affectivity.

Let us go to the prime source which has produced all these. We don't know where they all came from, so all this knowledge is resting on non-knowledge. Or, as someone once described it, there is a cloud of unknowing. It is from the heart of the cloud of unknowing that all this knowing is happening. Is it total unknowing? We cannot say. If there was total ignorance, how could all these things come? We see them clearly, so the light with which we know them must have come from that cloud of unknowing. Behind the cloud of unknowing is an all-knowing principle.



It is never known as itself, it is known as all this. When it spreads out in this fantastic way we experience it all, from the naive questioning of a Fool to the final elucidation of a Magician.

If you consider all this as one total effect, then it is complemented by its cause. What causes all this? Self-luminous *atman* or the Self. The self-luminous *atman* itself is not known, but its effect—all the pluralities of the phenomenal transformations and modifications that come into being—is all we see. What is, is not known; while what is not, is known. Hence it is called the grand magic.

Spiritual seekers are struggling to demolish all this magic and find the Magician. But when the magic is demolished you still do not see the Magician. The Magician is. That's a certainty; but you don't know him as a Magician when he is not playing his role. Thus we take away the possibility of knowing the source by merely denying the phenomenal. The being is to be known in the becoming, and becoming is known because of its beingness.

The Guru has given here the two aspects of a nondual reality. It is nondual, and yet it contains a duality. The dual aspects are the pure Self that hides in the dark as an unknown entity; and the so-called non-Self, consisting of this grand magical world of name and form placed in time and space, where there is a centralized 'I' identity which is asking questions, recalling memories, making judgments, and assuming roles and thereby getting into various peripheral identifications.

This is highly paradoxical. The non-Self should be the not known, but it is the known. The Self, the knower of everything, is not known. It is as if it is sitting in darkness. At least once in a while you should move away from the grand magic of your life, sit quietly and ruminate, and try to penetrate beyond the cloud of unknowing. You are seeking to know what is luminous there which casts its shadows in so many ways here. This is the eternal theme for the contemplative. Occasionally he revels in the magic, but all the same he knows it is magic and so he is not fully satisfied with it. He is fully satisfied only when he knows the manager behind the curtain, who is also himself. This is the grand theme of this verse.

VERSE 28

*aṭi muṭiyatṭaṭi tottu mauliyantam  
sphuṭamaṛiyunnatu turyya bōdhamākum;  
jaḍamaṛivīlatu cinta ceytu collu-  
nniṭayil irunnaṛivallariṇṇiṭēṇam.*

Without bottom or top, from the bottom to the crest where it terminates—  
what is known vividly is *turīya* consciousness;  
inert matter does not know; having understood this,  
know that what is said to remain in between is not knowledge.

The Self was defined in the last verse as pure awareness, which is born of itself and remains concealed in total darkness. This leaves us with the impression of two distinct entities: a darkness which doesn't know anything of itself, and a knowledge which fully knows that it knows.

When we consider our individuated being, we can see this dichotomy there very clearly. What we have is some knowledge of certain things of a certain kind and to a certain degree. In the world of form, our vision extends to the horizon and there it stops. We cannot see what lies beyond the horizon. If we fire a rocket into space, we can follow it with our eyes for a certain distance. Then it vanishes. We can see things of decreasing size until they become less than a dot. Then we can use a microscope to follow a ways further. If something becomes still smaller, we can no longer see it. Thus there is a spatial limitation to our knowledge of things. Our range of vision of forms in space is delimited.

If somebody reads out a passage of Arabic or Chinese or some other language with which we are not familiar, we can hear the sound just fine but the words don't have any meaning for us. If we put together the lexicons of all the languages of the world, we would not know even ten percent of the various articulated sounds used by our own fellow beings, let alone the various kinds of sound symbols other animals make. In the world of names also, our knowledge is very limited.

Again, if we look into our own past, we have only a faint idea of what we did only yesterday. Most of the details are forgotten. Generally, the farther into the past that we think about, the more we will have forgotten. And when we look into our program for today, we have only a vague idea of what we are going to do, who we might meet, and what we might talk with them about. So there is a circumscribed time span in which our consciousness operates. To those of us who have traveled about, our spatial limitations are all too apparent. So we can see that we are limited in the fields of name and form, as well as temporally and spatially.

In theology the existence of God is argued in terms of cause and effect: everything which is an effect should have a cause; the world is an effect and its





cause is God. We know the relationships between certain simple causes and effects, but we come to an impasse when we try to push back to primary causes. So when we ask what caused God, we won't be able to answer. If you say God came by itself, then why have a causal theory at all? Then you can say the world came by itself also. The theologian will abandon the causal theory altogether at this point. When we come to ultimate questions we really don't have any certainty.

Up to now we have covered the limitations inherent in time, space, name, form, cause and effect. Furthermore, if we examine the knowledge we have, it belongs either to our five-fold sensory perception, our recollection of memory, or to a composition we make out of concepts. This is why Schrodinger called the world a construct of percepts and concepts. We have five sense organs, therefore we know five kinds of qualities. If we had ten senses, we would know ten kinds of qualities. From this it is evident that these five qualities do not exhaust all possible knowledge. Our sensory knowledge is only a projection of the properties of our sensory system, a projection that is made by the individuated being.

I like to compare the individual to a common insect, the spit bug. The spit bug is very tiny, smaller than a coriander seed. All the time it spits out a kind of foam all around itself. When you go for a walk in the morning, you can see its spittle all over the leaves and grass. It looks just like spit, but if you examine it you will find this tiny bug concealed in it.

Like that, individuation goes on spitting out constructs all around it. The tiny, fearful ego continually spews forth clouds of obfuscation in order to conceal its sense of insignificance, but its delusory images of glory appear to be no more than unwholesome excrescences to passersby. This is also what the single cell of the fertilized ovum is doing. It goes on spitting out more and more cells until it becomes a fetus. Then the fetus becomes a child, and the child a grown-up. We are still creating spittle all around. We spit out potentials; those potentials in us can be actualized at any time. Our daily wakeful experiences are expressions of motivations which lie buried in what is spewed out of an original program.

If we believe the geneticists, we come to this world with our blueprints in our chromosomes in the original cell. Then the program is copied over and over, proliferating itself into a multicellular body. Within every cell is the same blueprint. There is a coordination between one cell and another because of the homogeneity of the plan.

We are equipped with a system that is self-agitated. If light passes into us, we are agitated in a certain manner. If a sound vibration falls on us, we get agitated in another manner. We react in other ways to the agitations of atmospheric pressure or the pull of gravity, for instance. We can even see simple illustrations of this in protozoa. Imagine a creature like a microscopic fish with no fins, a tail, and a head with no eyes, only a rudimentary nerve where an eye might later evolve, which can be agitated when exposed to light. When light falls on it, it jerks its head end and moves away. When it bumps into another object, it caroms off in another direction.

Our own behavior, even though it seems very complex, is in principle the same: a kind of agitation in response to a certain stimulus. Agitation in one field alone, when recorded, can fill volumes. More agitation produces more and more encyclopedias. We have already filled volumes upon volumes of encyclopedias, lexicons, histories and geographies. All the various elaborations of agitation: sensory agitations; agitations of the brain system, such as recall of memory, composition of memory, and dreams; and various kinds of glandular secretions creating panic, and by which you become angered, frightened, or harmonized, by which you feel love or empathy; all these are just magic created by some elaborating secretions.

When a man feels amorous toward a woman, he doesn't know what produces the amorous feeling. It happens despite himself. His sex glands are already stimulated and mucous formations occur even before he touches her. The woman can also have a similar secretory function in her just at the thought of a man. It may be only an idea, but the idea can produce liquids and chemicals. The bodily system is such a wonder; many rare enzymes are made by it which can't be manufactured commercially, even with millions of dollars and the most modern equipment.

Where do all these things take place? In between the light and the darkness. And what is the light we are speaking of? It is a pure light, one that transcends the concrete, gross world of wakeful experience, the subtle world of dream experience, and the non-activated potentials of the deep sleep experience. If we push these three states—tainted by darkness, by relativistic nature—away, what remains is a pure consciousness which witnesses the other three states. This consciousness has no beginning or end; it is not limited to any body. Everything that happens is within it. Such a state is called *turīya*, the fourth. It does not come within the three. Yet without the light of the fourth none of the rest can ever function.

Our consciousness is made up of two entities: the three states taken together, and the one that witnesses. The witnessing reality or pure consciousness alone is nonconditional. It is not a dependent factor in relation to anything. It is totally independent. The great saint and philosopher Madhva called it the pure principle of independence, *svatantra*. *Sva* means its own; it is its own *tantra* or tool, its own operation. The self-operating reality is called *turīya*, and the three states are called *paratantra*, dependent factors.

We go to schools and colleges and walk around with fat books under our arms, thinking we are learning. Certainly we are learning something, but our learning is confined to the world of agitations of the nervous system. We do not go beyond that. Narayana Guru qualifies this as the knowledge that happens in between pure darkness and pure light, and says that it is not worthy of being called knowledge. If you do call it knowledge, then the funny noises the little puppy makes when it is tied up and can't see its mom are also great knowledge. We have only refined that agitation or excitement or dissatisfaction more elaborately.

Once upon a time, earlier scientists thought they were getting definite knowledge with absolute certitude. Then along came some sober people with more

honest minds, like Einstein and Heisenberg, who said “Wait. Don’t go that far. What we know is only from the standpoint of this individuated being who is using his senses and mind. All that we have to work with are data born of our sensory perceptions and our ability to calculate. This is understanding of a personal nature. We are unqualified to answer fundamental questions.” Bertrand Russell calls this “piecemeal annexations of our impressions.” That’s all. Narayana Guru says it is what we articulate when we sit in between light and darkness, and that this is not the real knowledge we seek. So where do we turn when we wish to seek definite knowledge with absolute certitude?

This is the point where the need arises to transcend the triple states of deep sleep, dream and wakefulness. How do you know you have transcended? There comes a new clarity in the form of a transparency of vision where you see through the past, present and future. Your vision is not checkmated by any frontier: it is a frontierless vision. It is not confined to name and form. It does not come under the category of cause and effect. We cannot say it has a beginning or an end. In fact, words that we use and thoughts that we cerebrate are all of no use. This is the realm of infinite silence into which we can merge, where the present faculties which are very useful to us become of no use.

Now we come to a very difficult situation where we must go around a curve, so to speak, in our understanding. All the conditionings which we have so far called learning are no better than the salivating of Pavlov’s dogs. All the rewards and punishments which you have had so far in the form of education help you only to salivate when the bell rings. Don’t you want something better than that?

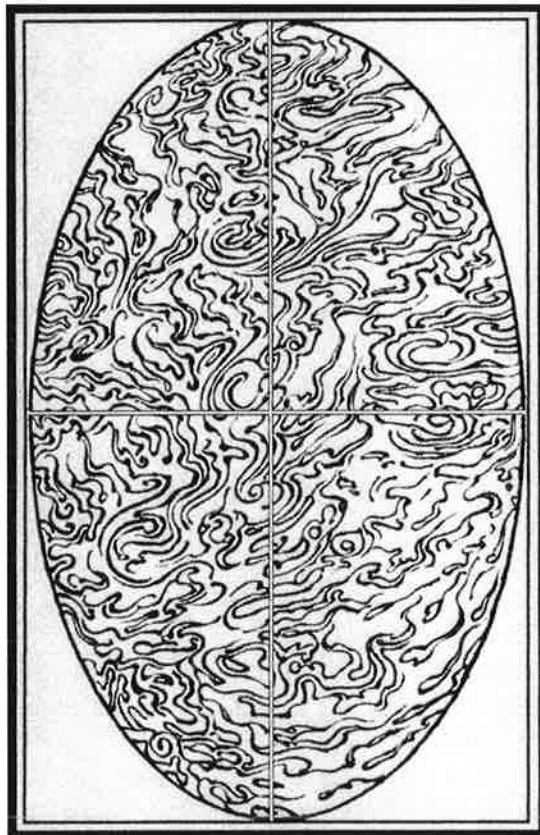
The Isavasya Upanishad says that those who rejoice in *avidyā*, ignorance, live in darkness; but those who rejoice in knowledge live in even greater darkness. Then it goes on to say that those who know the secret of the world of ignorance transcend death. To transcend death we must thoroughly review the world of ignorance, to which belong all the comedies and tragedies of life. An interesting exposition of this idea is given by the great playwrights of ancient Greece and later by Shakespeare and Shaw.

It is well worth knowing the secret of ignorance, but if you are indulging in that ignorance you live in the darkness and are not benefited by awareness of it. Most of us find ourselves oscillating somewhere between total ignorance and absolute enlightenment. What I try to do for one who is caught between these two worlds is to give a secret hint: that you go to the zoo only to marvel at it, not to get behind the bars. Perhaps one day a friend goes to visit the zoo and does not return. When we go to find him, he has gotten into one of the cages and is putting on a performance. We say, “Why are you here?” He answers, “I am experiencing the zoo.” “Stupid man, come out. We sent you here only to have a look at the different animals in their cages, not to join them.” He says “I am experiencing it. Give me a banana,” and he becomes another monkey. We can only pity him and give him a banana and come away.

Another friend went to a department store to buy something. He found so many things to buy—it was very interesting. Soon he was spending all his time there.

I asked him to come away: "You went there only to make some purchases. Enough. Come out. Your real nature is somewhere else." But he always found one more interesting thing to examine.

A compassionate man called Buddha once came and said, "Come out of this world of ignorance." A few people came away with him. Then along came another compassionate one. Unfortunately, he was in another part of the world, and when he said "Come out," people became angry and nailed him to a cross. They said, "This is how we come out." Still, compassionate people return again and again and ask, "Please, enough of this zoo business. Come out and be free. So it is very important to know how you are ensnared and how to get outside of it."



# PRISON STORIES

BY JOHNNY STALLINGS

Every Wednesday I go to prison. Every Wednesday I am astonished. It is my great good fortune to get to spend every week with men who have found happiness, peace, wisdom and even freedom while living inside an elaborate, high-tech cage.

I first visited Two Rivers Correctional Institution a couple years ago, on a kind of field trip organized by a county commissioner from Central Oregon. A prison is currently being built in Madras, Oregon, near where I lived, and the commissioner thought that local citizens might like to see what the inside of a prison is like. The prison did not match the images that I had in my mind from seeing prison movies. The administrator who gave us the tour was intelligent, friendly man who seemed to have no interest in punishing people, but who was very interested in the problem of how to reduce "recidivism", which is the term for someone who is convicted of another crime within three years after serving his sentence. The guards and other employees reminded me of people who you might see working at the corner market. The whole place reminded me of a social service agency, which is kind of what it is.

I was impressed by what I saw and said that I would like to come perform my solo version of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In the spring of 2005 I did perform *Lear* there and had discussions afterwards with the inmates. The inmates said that they would like me to come back and perform again. In the fall of 2005, I performed *Silence*, an original piece about meditation and spiritual search. Everyone who came was given a copy of the script. The discussions after *Silence* were fantastic!

I suggested that they should get together like that in a big circle and talk about big questions with each other. They said they are not allowed to congregate in groups of more than three because of concerns about gang activity. The only way for them to be able to get together and talk in that way would be if someone from the outside, someone like me, would organize it. I said I would look into it, but I got busy with other things and didn't get around to the project. This past spring I performed my solo version of *Hamlet* there. When I arrived, many of the inmates greeted me warmly. Some said that they appreciated having a copy of *Silence* to study. I felt that I had a lot of friends in Two Rivers.

In the discussion following *Hamlet* we talked about this passage:

**Hamlet:** What have my good friends deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither?

**Guildenstern:** Prison, my lord?

**Hamlet:** Denmark's a prison.

**Rosencrantz:** Then is the world one.

**Hamlet:** A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons. Denmark being one o' the worst.

**Rosencrantz:** We think not so my lord.

**Hamlet:** Why then, 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.

**Rosencrantz:** Why then your own ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow for your mind.

**Hamlet:** O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space—were it not that I have bad dreams.

All seemed to agree that there are people outside of prison that live in prisons they have created for themselves. It seemed to me that everyone there was keenly aware of how what they thought affected what life was like for them in prison.

I made a proposal to the prison that I lead three-hour dialogues, twice a day, once a week, called "The Stories We Tell Ourselves: A Symposium Exploring How Our Thinking Shapes Our Lives." I chose topics like silence, freedom, love, and violence. After submitting the proposal I was telling someone about my project and he said his foundation might be able to help me get it off the ground. I have been doing these dialogues now for five weeks. The few visitors from the outside who have come to them have been surprised and, I think it is fair to say, overwhelmed. I'm overwhelmed by what happens every week.

It seems to me that three of the men in the afternoon dialogue are free. One of them said, "I don't feel like I am in prison." He is about 25 or 30 years old. He has spent eight years in prison. I asked him how much more time he expects to serve. "Thirty years to life," he said. When he wakes up in the morning he "whoops and hollers"—thrilled that it is a new day. He reads every book of philosophy, psychology and religion—all religions—that he can get his hands on. He said quite matter-of-factly that about five years ago he experienced love for the first time. Until that time he had never felt love from or for anyone. Now he is soft-spoken, thoughtful and utterly delightful. His loving spirit is contagious. Everyone seems to love him. Me included. I think if you stopped a hundred people on the street, none of them would have this young man's earnestness, humility or wisdom. It's sad that he may have to live the rest of his life behind bars.

The first words another inmate said were, "I'm a monk." He has ten years left to serve. "It's no problem," he said. "This is my monastery." A group of Benedictine monks in California have told him that when he is released he can join their community. They send him books and tapes to study. He said that when he went to confession, he told the priest that it would take him a very long time to confess his sins. The priest said that his penance would be charity. He spends a lot of time in his cell alone, in prayer and study and contemplation. When he comes out he does



whatever he can to help others. One thing he mentioned was protecting some of the weaker inmates from being extorted by the stronger ones.

My favorite guy is one who has been in prison for forty years. He is fifty-eight years old. He shines like the sun. He has no bitterness or anger. He's a great listener, quick to smile or laugh, thoughtful, kind, always generous in things he says about the others in the group. It seems to me that he is at peace: free of craving, fear, or uncharitable thoughts. I listen carefully when he speaks. I know I'm going to learn something. I look forward to seeing him every week and would be honored to have him as a friend.

Many people hate the people in prison, whom they have never met. They call them the "scum of the earth." Legislators and talk show hosts make scapegoats of them and entertain revenge fantasies against them. There is little talk of love and forgiveness or little belief in redemption and transformation.

But I've met some beautiful people "inside," and I believe.

# ADVAITA DĪPIKA

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY

GURU NARAYANA PRASAD

## VERSES NINE AND TEN

The entire world, in the state of discriminative awareness becomes separated out as having no existence of its own. Thereafter also it continues to be perceptible to the senses. Even after becoming free from the confusion of directions, To the viewer's eye, the confused directions continue to be the same.

Really the world has no existence;  
Yet it looms as real as before even after being completely annihilated as a result of discriminative awareness. Even after becoming fully convinced that doubtlessly no water is there in a mirage, it looms to be so as before.

The analogy of mistaking a piece of rope for a snake was relied on in verse eight. Bringing forth a light makes the apparent snake disappear and reveals the real rope. The snake will no longer be seen, only the rope remains as real and visible. But such is not the case of the world. Even after discriminating the real and the unreal and becoming certain that the world has no existence, it continues to appear, it continues to be perceived by the senses. Laying bare this problem with the help of two analogies is what verses nine and ten do. Its solution forms the rest of the work.

A real *jñānīn* intuitively perceives the world that never ceases to appear and the one all-underlying Reality (*sat*) non-dually. No denying of the apparent existence of the world is done by the Guru. The apparent world, on the other hand, is the form in which the One Reality exists. Such is the perception of a *jñānīn*. As a part of the world he cannot realize his oneness with Reality by denying his own existence. Contrary to it, it is through intuitively perceiving himself as well as everything else as One Reality become manifest. Suggestive of all this are the two verses that occupy the very center of this composition.



Already seen is the certainty that what ultimately exists alone is real. Whatever is other than that has therefore to be unreal. That too was made clear: that “everything else is fleeting and thus unreal.” Even after attaining this conviction, the world continues to appear as when one was still an *ajnāñin*. How is it so? We’ll see this question answered in the remaining verses. Here in the present two verses the nature of the problem is laid out simply before us.

Many, arriving at unfamiliar places, get confused as to which is the east and which is the west. The south is sometimes taken for the east. Seeing the sun rising the next morning clears all doubts. Despite this, one may continue to feel, “Here the sun rises in the south.” This is because the confounded sense of directions had become fixed in his mind. Such ideas become settled in us concerning knowledge of the world also. Vedanta calls it “conditioning” (*upādhī-paricchinnata*) of knowledge. Pure and unconditional though in essence, consciousness never remains functionless. Functioning, it appears in conditioned forms which in no way affect the essential purity of consciousness. Such conditionings are simply superimposed on the Real, and are known as *adhyāsa*. That which appears in conditioned forms then is called *adhyāsa*, and the unconditioned Reality is called *anadhyāsa*.

Someone becoming confounded about directions in no way affects the real directions of the compass. They remain the same as ever. Likewise, even when the superimposed appearances are seen in what is Real, the unconditioned Reality remains unconditioned and unaffected. This point is further clarified in verse ten with the help of the mirage analogy. Water appears as flowing in desert lands in midday light. Knowing that no water exists there does not make the appearance of the mirage vanish. Whether we see water there or not does not affect in any way the real nature of the desert. Our understanding alone is what undergoes change.

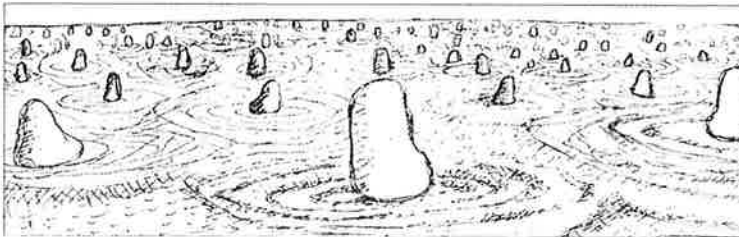
“Really the world has no existence,” is the enlightened awareness a *jnāñin* attains and is suggestive of the basic stand of the *advaita* school of Vedanta. It is almost equivalent to Sankara’s famous words, *Brahma satyam jagat mithya*, (*Brahman* alone is real; the world is unreal). Yet this philosophical or rather logical conviction does not put an end to perceiving the world as existing with our senses. How to explain it is the problem the Guru poses here. The need of addressing this problem, hitherto unasked in any major Vedantic text, could have been the inspirational force behind writing the present work. It is further elucidated in the following verses and commentary.

# POEMS

BY SWAMI TYAGEESWARAN

## Delusion Remains Until I See You

How could I go separately  
as you are everywhere?  
The delusion will remain in me  
until I see you  
If I reach you, I will become free.  
The truth is reverse—I am always in you.  
You are the very sight of my eyeball  
and exist as consciousness in me.  
How to separate? I am always in you,  
to be known by you.  
You are in me as consciousness.  
Am I to speak of oneness?  
There is nothing that remains  
If all are One,  
The language of silence.



## As It Is

All this time You have been within me  
As I myself, as well as each experience, as it is.  
Yet, still I haven't seen You.

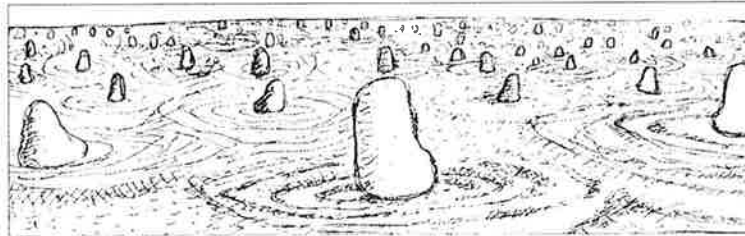
You manifest as time and space  
But remain untouched by them.  
Even then You are coming as the world, as it is.

You made me also as a changing phenomenon,  
While remaining Yourself as a hidden reality  
Without the slightest change.

These words, coming incessantly, may be controversial.  
Yet You are the content of them,  
Never seen or heard.

You are the meaning of all sound  
And the meaning of silence.  
Just as You are in me as my "I am"  
Without my seeing You.

No more words to say, such as "I" and "You".  
Both are merging  
Into an effulgence of full light.





Up in heaven the star-river turns,  
in man's world below  
curtains are drawn.  
A chill comes to pallet and pillow,  
damp with tracks of tears.  
I rise to take off my gossamer dress  
and just happened to ask  
"How late is it now?"  
The tiny lotus pods  
kingfisher feathers sewn on  
as the gilt flecks away  
the lotus leaves grow few.  
Same weather as in times before,  
the same old dress--  
only the feelings in the heart  
are not as they were before

Li Qingzhao  
(translation Stephen Owen)

# RECORDS ON METAL AND STONE

BY THOMAS PALAKEEL

The famed Song Dynasty literary couple Li Qingzhao and Zhao Mingcheng married in the year 1101 AD and lived in quiet contentment, the wife composing verse and the husband indulging in the expensive hobby of collecting reliquaries and historical artifacts while holding down an important position in the imperial government. But an unexpected turbulence of history altered their story, for Li Qingzhao suddenly found herself a widow and a refugee. She was also overburdened with her husband's priceless possessions that had grown into a veritable private museum—cartloads of manuscripts, rare books, inscriptions on steles, stone disks, bells, in other words, a treasure house of the ancients.

Qingzhao survived. She prevailed against unending adversity and she lived to write about it all. Nine centuries later, Lady Li Qingzhao is still revered as one of the finest poets in the Chinese language—her poetry keeps reappearing in newer and better English translations—and her husband, too, is remembered through his magnum opus, a catalog of his grandiose collections, *Records on Metal and Stone*, to which Qingzhao added a brilliant autobiographical narrative that has preserved for us her personal history as well as philosophical reflection.

As a privileged couple of the Song (960-1279 AD), it is clear that Quingzhao and Mingcheng subscribed to the sober virtues of Confucian conservatism—the fact that Qingzhao chose the pre-existing “song-lyric” tunes to create her poetry hints at her conformity and her aristocratic bearing. And her early poetry is suffused with a sense of decadent abandon in the pleasures of feasting and love and the eroticized intimacy.

In the poem “To the Tune of Dream Song,” Qingzhao paints the picture of a couple watching the sunset at Brook Pavilion; they are “drunk with beauty,” and the elegant poem conjures up a scene in which a woman and man are in intimate communion yet silent with nature. Together they watch the sunset fade, and slowly the ecstasy fades and the day dims and they turn their boat home, but they lose the way (“drunk with beauty, we lost our way”) and get stuck in a deep cluster of lotuses; playfully the loving couple row hard, and suddenly the entire shore erupts with herons and gulls.

The poem is reduced to a few spare images that beautifully evoke not only their marital bliss, but the Confucian satisfactions they take in the world and its small manifest wonders and the surprises bursting forth in every step of the way. Even

when they are lost, they gain knowledge, they rejoice. The poem captures profound mutual connection between a man and a woman, which in turn is emblematic of the greater connection, the human connection with the world, a motif evident in every one of her early poems.

In “To the Tune of Crimson Lips Adorned,” Qingzhao paints an exquisite picture of a girl who gazes at a stranger; in her languorous gaze, her stockings loosen and her gold hairpin slips; shyly she runs, but she does not flee; she leans against the door and looks back at the stranger in the ruse of sniffing a green plum. This moment reminds one of the famous love-gaze in Kalidasa’s *Sakuntala* where the love-struck pastoral virgin gazes at her beloved, pretending to be pulling out a grass needle stuck in her sole.

Qingzhao’s early poems primarily allow us glimpses of a true marriage of bodies and minds—her husband is known to have been deeply jealous of the supernatural brilliance of his wife’s verse. I suspect the husband’s knowledge—he was so knowledgeable—made him stop writing poetry and take up historical scholarship, which became the central focus of their marriage. The couple spent a considerable amount of time and money building up a collection of historical artifacts and documents. Even in the middle of a busy administrative career, the husband started taking several days off to travel and to hunt for ancient steles and stone disks found in the ruins of ancient shrines and palaces all over China. Mingcheng’s model was the celebrated poet-historian Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072 AD) who had produced such works as *Postscripts to Collected Ancient Inscriptions*, *The History of the Tang* and *The New History of the Five Dynasties*. The couple imbibed the romanticized image of the poet that Ouyang Xiu promoted through his alter ego, Mr. One-six, who never parted with the six most important things: wine, chess set, library, zither, and his antique collection, and the sixth item, himself. Xiu is also credited with refining and popularizing the song-lyric an art-form that Li Qingzhao herself adopted in her work—and of course, she excelled at it.

Qingzhao has written that in the evenings she spent together with her husband they used to sit in the hall with their cups of tea ready in front of them, playing a guessing-game about which historical reference could be found in which book or manuscript; whoever guessed correctly got to drink the tea.

“Whenever I got it right, I would raise the teacup, laughing so hard that the tea would spill in my lap, and I would get up, not having to been able to drink any of it at all.” Qingzhao adds: “I would have been glad to grow old in such a world.”

In her postscript to her husband’s masterpiece, Qingzhao admits that her husband’s antiquarian pursuit came close to a disease; it was no ordinary greed but a delusive passion that made him neglect his work and squander money that he often earned by selling off his own clothes to acquire inscriptions, stone disks, bells, tripods, steamers, kettles, washbasins, ladles, goblets, and other remains of the ancients. His one hope was discovering some old, old song that Confucius might have overlooked

while gathering the *Classic of Poetry*, (circa 600 BC), a canonical anthology of about 300 songs that basically illustrate the Tao from a Confucian perspective.

In the evenings that they were able to share together, the couple would sit facing each other in perfect satisfaction, fancying themselves personages of some ancient age of perfection. Then soon enough, her husband would set out again on the road on one of his grandiose expeditions.

As Zhao Mingcheng started to travel longer distances, his expensive curatorial interest also broadened to include pricey manuscripts, apocryphal histories, folk tales, tomb inscriptions, calligraphy, sculpture, paintings. Soon Qingzhao found her husband pawning their household possessions, for he was now overcome with an insatiable hunger to possess everything that was important and beautiful. Once her husband brought home a prohibitively expensive painting of peonies by Xu Xi, which he kept for a few days, and then had to return it, bringing him so much sorrow.

Qingzhao's poems of this period betray no anxiety about her husband's obsessive pursuits, even though she was frequently left behind in lonely longing. In her poems, her husband's return from any trip is treated as an event greater than the arrival of spring—her jubilant claim preceded by the most germane images of spring: the new grass is “kingfisher green,” “peach-buds are unopened balls,” and “clouds are milk-white jade.” Over the next decade, even as Zhao Mingcheng rose in rank, the couple had to live frugally, but Qingzhao only took pride in her husband's unrivalled accumulations.

The Qin Tartar invasion of 1126 turned the couple's lives upside down. The invasion came while Zhao was away in Nanjing, and Qingzhao had to flee alone, bearing fifteen cartloads of their invaluable accumulations—she had to hire a string of boats to ferry the precious cargo across two rivers, Huai and Yangtze. Bear in mind that she had already abandoned ten rooms full of metal works, antiques, and books, all of which burned down. The couple separated by war was briefly reunited, but in the autumn of 1128, the husband received a new appointment, he was caught up in yet another wave of invasions, and yet again it was Qingzhao who had to do all the moving because her husband had to rush ahead to the capital to answer a summons by the Emperor. He galloped off on a horse with an instruction to his wife: “Abandon the household goods first; then the clothes, the books, the scrolls, and then the old bronzes—but carry the sacrificial vessels. Live or die with them.” And indeed, Zhao Mingcheng fell ill at the capital and died.

The Emperor and the court fled south. As the siege was in progress, Qingzhao began to let go of the household goods and the lesser possessions. Everything had to be given up, save for their own manuscripts, and the works of the greats, Li Po, Tu Fu, Han Yu, *New Account of Tales of the World*, *Discourses on Salt and Iron*, and few dozen copies of the rubbings her husband had acquired with such labor. As the Tartars advanced, it was by trailing the Emperor's entourage heading south Qingzhao managed to survive.

Even after the end of the invasion, Qingzhao's troubles did not end. Now living in Hangzhou, her second marriage had to be ended hastily, and her final days she spent alone, writing and recollecting the beauty of her past and the terrors of the present. She writes: "All that remained were six or so baskets of books, painting, ink, and inkstones that I hadn't been able to part with. I always kept these under my bed and opened them only with my own hands."

Li Qingzhao wrote the postscript to her husband's *Records on Metal and Stone* when she was fifty-two. Having much of her Confucian certainties worn off, Qingzhao adopts a new philosophical attitude that she reveals in the postscript: "How much calamity, how much gain and loss I have witnessed . . . when there is possession, there must be lack of possession; when there is a gathering together there must be dissolution—that is the constant principle of things. Someone loses a bow; someone else happens to find a bow." The pendulum-swing between Confucian sobriety to Taoist and Buddhist equanimity and the radical gloom is a common phenomenon traceable in many of the great Chinese poets, but Li Qingzhao's autobiographical postscript attached to the *Records on Metal and Stone* clearly articulates it. She describes the moments when she chances upon the relics that used to belong in her husband's collection—many of them stolen and now back on the market for sale—and she gazes at those objects as if she were meeting old friends.

She writes: "It must be that the passions of human nature cannot be forgotten, even standing between life and death. Or maybe it is Heaven's will that beings as insignificant as ourselves are not fit to enjoy superb things. Or it might be that the dead too have consciousness, and they still treasure such things, give them their devoted attention, unwilling to leave them in the world of the living. How hard they are to obtain and how easy to lose!"

Li Qingzhao authored six volumes of poetry and seven volumes of essays, some of them critical work on song-lyric, but fewer than hundred of her poems are extant. Much of her poetry either celebrates the marriage or grieves over its passing. One of the most unforgettable images of marital loss can be found in the poem written to the tune of "Silk Washing Stream;" it is an image of a woman alone in her small courtyard, playing on a jasper lute while clouds hasten dusk and wind and drizzle bring a quiet gloom.

In the poem written to the tune of "Southern Song," Qingzhao reveals a lovelorn widow's dreamy diffidence by juxtaposing the present with a youthful memory of intimacy of dressing up for her beloved; now, alone in the dark, she startles awake and takes off her gossamer dress and asks, "How late is it now?" and she is caught in a daze, as the scene of the lotus pond depicted on her own now threadbare dress blends with the memory of a real lotus pond of the past (the same weather as in times before, the same old dress—only the feelings in the heart are not as they were before.)

In "Free Spirited Fisherman," the Heavens show great solicitude for her and inquire after her dreaming soul where she is to set out for; her reply is that she



wishes to journey to the world of the immortals, rising up like Chuang Tzu's immeasurable cosmic bird, P'eng. The surprising inclusion of the famed Taoist image of P'eng is emblematic of her own philosophical transformation; her later poems seem to reveal a new willingness to embrace the supernatural as a counter to her usual imagery, mostly products of her unique feminine gaze: fog, rain, ponds, wine, wild geese, bamboo curtains, silk dresses, chrysanthemums, tea cups, boats, all simple objects of this-worldly certainty that her poetry affirms, and yet she moves toward a detached acceptance of the beauty and the terror of reality. In several of her poems she bounces two aspects of her being, her past beauty, decked gloriously in green feather-dress and narrow snow-white sash, and her present aloneness, which she reveals as a haggard state, her hair tangled, her heart diffident even out among flowers; she is seen loitering in the dark, bitter about the laughter of others. Rain for her is a thousand lines of tears, sky a river of stars where one thousand sails dance; she wakes up alone in the night just as the candle dies out, she wakes up to darkness; her grief is characterized by immobility, she has lost her will to light the lantern or even to walk in the snow; she is too lazy to comb her hair. She knows that there is a possibility of spring and beauty elsewhere, but she fears that her grass-hopper boat is too small to carry her grief.

Images of heaviness and being weighed down are frequent in her poetry—from her postscript to the *Record on Metal and Stone* we learn why. Memories of youth she experiences as a burden because, literally, this woman bore so much burden. The woman in “Spring in Wu-ling” grows teary in the late afternoon, though she wants to go out into the spring air; but she fears the little boats at the Twin Stream “would not budge if they are made to bear the weight of this much melancholy.” In the poem written to the tune of “Silk Washing Stream” the woman sings about all the wine that is done, the songs sung, and the cups lying empty; the lamp flickers, now dim, now bright; she thinks she cannot bear this quiet grief, yet there comes still another addition to the weight: a cuckoo's call. In sorrow she feels that even her gold hairpin is heavy.

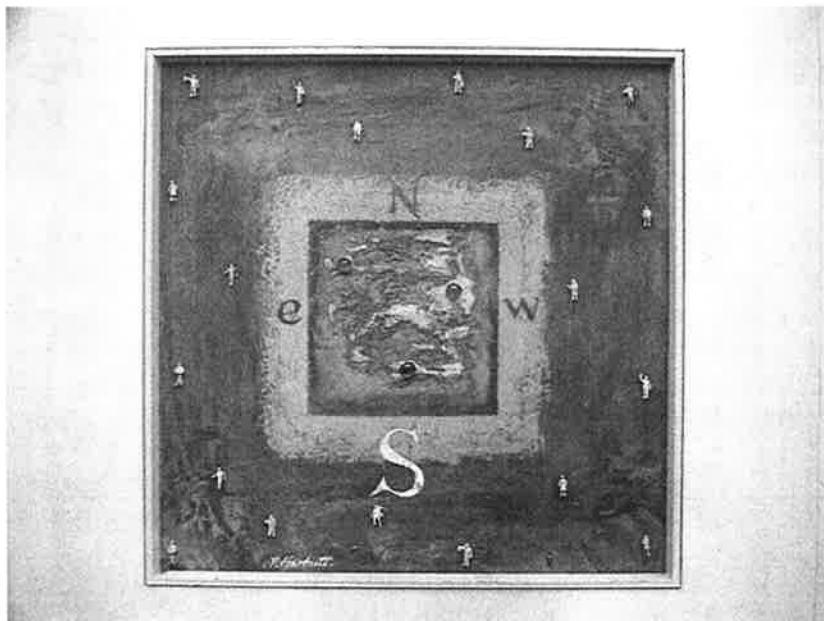
At the end of her postscript to *Record on Metal and Stone*, the author discloses the reasons for recording her story in such detail (a warning for “scholars and collectors” and to all those who are blinded by acquisitiveness), but no one would blame Kenneth Rexroth, Ling Chung, Stephen Owen, K.Y. Hsu, Tony and Willis Barnstone, Sun Chu-chin, all scholars and collectors, all passionate, who have brought us Li Qingzhao's old, old poems that feel so fresh, and so modern.

# UNCHARTED VOYAGES

BY TORI KLEIN

85 days down, introspections called upon  
“Write about these days of passing, and what you’ve reflected on”  
Return to my laptop, and all the lyrical playing  
Skim through my journal: profound thoughts, concepts, sayings  
Rummage through the papers, scrutinizing every word  
Uncovering curious evolution, and conclusions that are absurd.

Limited pages allow me to harness thoughts and reflections  
“Keep it to five pages, but share *all* your introspections”  
But growth and progression transcend electronic pages  
They extend beyond the horizon and have multiple phases  
Therefore art must rely on art to aid in lengthy digressions  
Of three months at sea, around the world, and personal progression.



Each crew member on this vessel passes by the image (included here on page 30) on his way to work. Each senior adult passenger walks by this image on his or her way to the panoramic comfort of the adult/faculty lounge. Each student scurries past this image while heading to global studies in the union. This image is one piece of art from a series inlaid in the wall of the sixth deck's main hallway. Though abstract and interesting, it does not demand attention. It patiently waits to be discovered. Embedded in the wall, its colors in the painting match all the others in the row. But its clandestine camouflage does not trick me.

It draws my attention every day. This image lures me in like a hungry fish in the sea. I stop and stare as my fellow students speed past. Its abstract contents symbolize my crazy voyage and provide the tangible description I have been searching for in each journal entry and each rambling, confused email home. It represents new ideals, techniques, beliefs, and understanding. The image encompasses all that I have experienced on this journey of discovery, though the darkest corners of my mind cannot be explored in such a short paper. It represents my progression and development on this ship as a writer (shape), a feminist (figures), a student (compass), and a lover (size).

The shape of the image represents my growth as a writer. An elaborate piece of art set inside a tiny half meter by half meter frame. To understand it, one must look beyond the boundaries of shined glass and polished wood. In order to grasp the profundity of the art one must think outside the box. This ship has taught me how broader thinking is vital when attempting to write creatively. As a journalism and pre-law student, I am forced to adhere to strict writing guidelines. However, in these last thirteen weeks of my life I have been taught that in order to explain life through words and phrases one cannot be confined to strict regulations. Placing limitations on your mind directly affects the quality of your writing. Forcing myself to only view life from "inside" a tiny little frame—whether it is a geographical frame of living in one city all my life or subconscious restrictions I place upon writing techniques—will hinder my creative expression. On this voyage I have absorbed more multifaceted sights, sounds, and scents than ever before. Although I still struggle with diction and syntax, I understand the overall need to allow my mind to explore as my body does.

The figures included in the image represent my progression as a feminist. Eighteen little figures are organized within the picture, just enough to make them unnoticeable at first glance—but remove them and the art piece would not be complete. Before this journey I never considered myself a feminist. I thought that my drive for influence, power, and authority was due to my mother's encouragement and there was nothing more to it. But on this voyage I have learned that as an empowered female, attempting to be a catalytic leader for other females, I am a feminist. My thoughts and devotion to my generation of females and males as feminists has progressed. With my goals in mind, I now realize that we need to find a common goal or cause in order to make a

difference. This has occurred in many of the countries we have visited. It is time for us to organize, and if need be fly under the radar to make a difference, but be useful enough that our void would be noticed.

Traveling to thirteen countries (now my lifetime tally is seventeen) and observing political, economic and social dynamics within the countries has been eye opening. I never realized before the effect that our nation has on the rest of the world, and how little we have allowed the rest of the world affect us. I mean this directly in terms of women in authority positions. Initially the trip was supposed to be humbling. I thought I would finally understand how small I am on this massive earth, and this has definitely occurred. But while others have become discouraged, feeling as if they can't do anything that would impact the overwhelming issues of the earth, I am somehow empowered. It may be because challenges and obstacles have never deterred me, but more inspired me and served as a catalyst to work even harder to get things done. Then I move on to the next impossible task. Maybe that's why I am one of the only females over the age of six who still adamantly believes she can be the President of the United States. This image reminds me that my goals are sound, and that I am on the right path of empowerment and organization.

The compass included in the image represents my growth as a student. At first glance one would assume the directions on the compass are correct, but look again. Two directions are switched. A compass is universally relied upon for direction and it always indicates north, east, south, then west—in a clockwise rotation. However, it is not depicted this way in the art piece, proving that even the most concrete thing can be changed around with a swipe of a brush. As a young woman in constant search of knowledge, this is an important concept to grasp. The world is constantly evolving and the first step to knowledge is knowing that I know nothing at all. Even though I have traveled the world and assume so much worldly wisdom, this voyage reminded me that there is so much more to learn. The values, ideas, and beliefs that I hold dear are ever changing and very different to other peoples in other cultures, regions, and age groups.

One major idea that has changed on this voyage of discovery relates to something that Americans hold dear: freedom. I thought that I would venture into lands of oppressed peoples everywhere. Instead I found people who may not enjoy some of the liberties that I have at home and yet are freer than I am. Also, these cultures pointed out that I am not as free as I thought. I am bound by a capitalistic world, forcing me to strive for monetary security in order to survive. Why can I not live off the land and be “energy neutral?” It is because my society will not allow me to work that way. Is that freedom? The last eighty-five days have taught this traveling student to step back and look a second time at issues, concepts, and ideas that I used to know I was right about. That is what I call education.

The size of the image represents love. Such a small framed picture contains so much depth and meaning, similar to the word love. So many ideas, feelings, emotions, and actions can be concentrated into something as small and trivial as a

four letter word. This journey has stripped me away from the things that I love at home—tasty doughnuts, mouthwatering vegetarian dishes, hugs from my mother, driving my own car. It has also reminded me of things that I love but neglect—my sister living in an upstairs apartment, rainy wood chip running paths, the comfort of an oversized sweater, and the relief of loneliness and solitude. The list goes on and on: actions, people, places, foods, books, expressions, thoughts. All of which are connected to a simple word, love.

This image, and the trip it accompanied, help illuminate a word that otherwise cannot be easily understood. Traveling the world has shown me that love is expressed differently in different cultures and by different peoples. I have learned that it is an intangible word everywhere; that is what is universal about it. These last two and a half months have forced me to reconsider my previous ideas of love. I have developed a personal understanding by observing other cultures' ideas of the word, and through continual inquiry about my love life. Love is all around me. It is reality. It is life. It is in the pictures I gaze at before I fall asleep at night. It is in the hug I get from Marissa when she notices hidden tears. It is in the hours of discussion about Christ I have with Angie. It is sent to me in the mail and over the internet. It is transferred from smile to smile and hug to hug. It is shown through the tears of longing and lovelorn aching. It is in the joy of true experience. Love can be a multitude of things to a variety of people. The image serves as a reminder to look past physical size, and notice substantially covert desires and meanings.

Unveiling each connection between the image and my progression would take countless months and endless pages. The unexplored colors of the image represent the growth that will come in following years. As time passes, certain colors will fade and others will become more apparent. Specific artistic techniques of the painting remain unexamined, similar to the discussions, thoughts, and ideas I have had on this trip. Many ideas I have developed have no tangible root, like the reason for a paintbrush stroke going a certain way—it just fits. Time will allow further discovery and renewed relations to emerge between this image and my progression, not only because the meaning of a piece of art slowly evolves over time, but also because time grants freedom to explore. More time to sense. More time to think. More time to write. I conclude, then, with one more key progression: an oath to create more time for creativity—something I have never entirely found to be a priority before this voyage.

# EPITOME OF EVERYTHING

BY GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

*What is ātman?*

That which knows without being aided by another agent.

*What is Brahman?*

The realm where fearlessness reigns supreme.

*Why is there no fear?*

Because there is no ego boundary to demarcate the duality of “I” and “this”.

*What is realization?*

Rectifying the semblance of the unreal that seems to persist as an adjunct of the real.

*What is God?*

Total inherence and the indissoluble residue after everything else has been rejected as unreal and impermanent.

*What is meditation?*

The cessation of the association of ideas and of the firing of urges.

*What is the secret of centering the self?*

Enshrining the beloved in the heart as the only reality to adore.

*How does one become steadfast?*

By gaining certitude.

*How does one adore?*

By becoming intrinsically intimate with the sacredness of silence.

*What is the wonder of a miracle?*

The sudden realization of the enormity of an effect in relation to a cause that is obscure.



# LOVER OF HUMANITY

BY GARRY DAVIS

While strolling amongst the stately trees at Ooty with Nataraja Guru one day in the spring of 1956, he said, "To be a lover of humanity, one first must acknowledge its existence. This is difficult for most people to do. It means giving up many false notions." We continued walking in silence. The immense calm of the forest, with the sun's rays scarcely penetrating the foliage, the wonderfully mild climate and his homely yet strangely impersonal kindness soothed me immensely after the hurly-burly of America and Europe.

Lover of humanity? It was the first time I had heard the phrase. It had a strange ring. How could one love all humanity? Wasn't love a strictly personal emotion one felt toward another individual or to one's family, or to a sport or a favorite food, in other words, to some one or some thing with which one identified personally? How could you identify personally with humanity as such? How could one even grasp the reality of humanity in order to "love" it? True, I had read much science fiction in my teens. "Humanity" was often pitted against alien races in distant galaxies or far-off star systems. Invariably the "home" planet was Mother Earth, and I came to regard this notion as natural, even banal, as most self-evident facts are. My "travels" in space and even time thanks to Issac Asimov, Arthur Clarke and Ted Sturgeon allowed me to "leave home" mentally and emotionally and to return not without theoretical appreciation. But to accept the reality, the existence of "humanity," as the Guru demanded for its "lovers", required a dimensional leap in sheer comprehension, almost an acceptance on faith bypassing one's already established acceptance of lesser groupings such as family, nation and even corporation. Yet was not the extension more than logical, more than reasonable? Did not all lesser groupings by definition derive from "common" humanity? To love the part therefore without loving the whole was to be ignorant of its very source.

As I was pondering these thoughts, the Guru stopped and looked at me, his head slightly cocked. I think, he started slowly in that deliberate way of his, "You are a true lover of humanity." I stared at him, my feelings mixed. "Love" and "humanity" were not yet a pair in my mind. Love was personal and humanity an abstraction. Yet somehow I sensed the rightness of allying them, even the necessity. I was strangely pleased, if not fully comprehending the significance. Now, more than a quarter of a century later, I am beginning to understand just what it means to be a "lover of humanity." And to what commitments such an individual is enjoined.

Narayana Guru and Nataraja Guru, as indeed all "proper" Gurus, identified directly with humanity as they identified with humanity's creator. The two were recognized as corollaries, as inseparable as the individual with his/her creator.



(“Love thy humanity as thyself” was as valid an injunction for the 20th century human as “Love thy neighbor as thyself” was for the 1st century human.) Just as they refer “back-wards” to their own teacher, so they acknowledge former masters or sages as proponents or examples of this dynamic relationship.

Thus, the human microcosm and macrocosm became in their person’s dynamic bipolarities—to use the language of dialectics—to be taken always and inevitably together. When contemplating the precious dialectics of this mystical yet ever-regenerating union flowing inexorably through time, the Guru once told me he could not repress a sense of ecstasy coursing through him.

Through the years, in my work as world citizen, I have found few fellow “lovers of humanity.” Many acknowledge humanity’s existence and proclaim its right to survive and prevail, but that is not the same as loving it. To love is to be willing to die for one’s love. There are millions willing to die for their country or maybe their religion, though that is less evident. Nationalism is the 20th century religion, the latter day “golden calf” around which humans gather in worship and love. But die for humanity? For planet earth? Who or what is threatening it? We are not being attacked from outer space...yet. And though the insect world seems to be deadly and hardy enough to out-survive the human race, still we are holding our own it appears.

Yet the threat to humanity itself has become increasingly apparent since 1945. Just as humanity has not only endangered other species on its home planet but forever eliminated them in its crude and thoughtless expansion, so it is today endangering itself by itself with the unthinkable potential of eliminating itself entirely at least from earth.

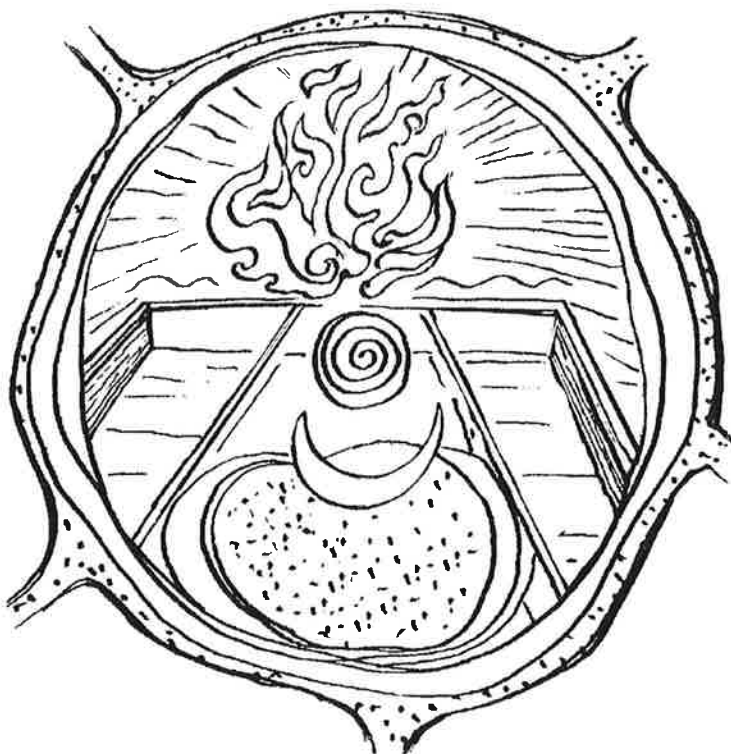
When Nataraja Guru was teaching at the International School in Geneva in the late 1940s he used to listen to the daily broadcasts of the United Nations’ debates. It soon became apparent to him, he said, that what was missing was a representative of humanity itself at the U.N. Among all those state delegates, no one “loved” humanity enough to place humanity’s interests above those of his particular nation.

Then later, when I met him for the first time on the S. S. America in 1950, going from Europe to the United States, he told me that renouncing my United States nationality was equivalent to an Indian taking a vow of *sannyāsa*—both being requisite steps for a direct affiliation with humanity’s wisdom heritage. My claim to world citizenship, he added, was nothing more or less than a manifestation of wisdom-seeking. I immediately rebelled against this ludicrous notion that I was seeking wisdom rather than a political solution to the nation-state’s dilemma of war-making. “If you are a true wisdom-seeker,” he said, sensing my rejection, “you will have to test my claim to be a Guru or wisdom teacher. How else can you find out whether it is valid or not? On the other hand, if wisdom does not interest you, you will simply run away.”

As I was in the “wilderness” of intellectual depression at that precise moment, secretly I would have listened to the devil himself if he had promised to teach me wisdom. Besides, I had enough confidence in my own value structure and

intelligence to be able to discern a true teacher from a phony. Inconsistencies would eventually reveal themselves, I told myself, besides the obvious fact that deeds and words had to equate.

The fulfilling lesson I have learned since then is that the maturing of wisdom in one goes side by side with the capacity to love. This again may seem banal to the reader, yet upon reflection the relationship between knowledge and love has, to my



mind, not been realized fully by many otherwise qualified teachers.

Nataraja Guru's statement that I was a "lover of humanity," came only after I had traveled to India to sit at his feet, as it were, as a wisdom disciple. Though I was at that time only a humble disciple, the mere fact of recognition of his Guruhood, and therefore the "existence" of Wisdom itself, confirmed in his mind that my claim to world citizenship—and thus membership in Humanity as such—qualified me as humanity's "lover."

The religious world has difficulty with "humanity." Inclusive humanity confronts exclusive religion head-on. What the former affirms by its very existence, the latter denies by its partiality. While God is affirmed as sole creator and ultimate sovereign by religion, His creation is denied in its entirety. For example, it is written that Jesus Christ gave two commandments to his followers: Love God and love thy

neighbor (as thyself). He did not admonish them to “love humanity.” It wasn’t until the 19th century that a latter-day prophet, Bahauallah, stated boldly that “The world is one country and mankind its citizens.” To this revolutionary notion he added, “Let not a man glory in that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.”

In commemorating Nataraja Guru’s birthday, we implicitly are recognizing a “lover of humanity.” We are thereby acknowledging humanity’s existence and in turn our own vital and vitalizing kinship with it as a “being” in itself.

Humanity’s “birth” is recent, concurrent with the worldwide communications network. The “baby” is demanding our attention, our resources and ... our love. Eventually, and we trust soon, historically speaking, it must become “reasonable,” accepting to abide by the Creator’s already established rules.

Nataraja Guru, with Narayana Guru preceding him and Guru Nitya following him, as all Gurus and saviors before them, manifest these divine rules for the good of all and the general good of our Mother/Father: Humanity itself.

Let us dedicate ourselves anew, as “Lovers of Humanity” for in that divine lover is both our communal and personal “salvation.”

# NARAYANA GURU AS WISDOM TEACHER

BY SWAMI VINAYA CHAITANYA

Another *Guru-jayanti* and another *samādhi* anniversary have passed, and as usual there was a lot of newspaper publicity about Narayana Guru, with all the politicians competing to praise him, which should gladden the disciples of the Guru. But the fact is quite the contrary, and it's also very sad. Even though much lip service is paid to the Guru as a social reformer, hardly ever do we find any mention of him in speeches and writings on philosophy in India.

A good friend asked me to elaborate on this for the benefit of fellow students and interested parties; otherwise I'd rather leave it well alone, and concentrate more on the translations of the Guru into Kannada and similar things that I am busy with these days, apart from the routine chores at the gurukula.

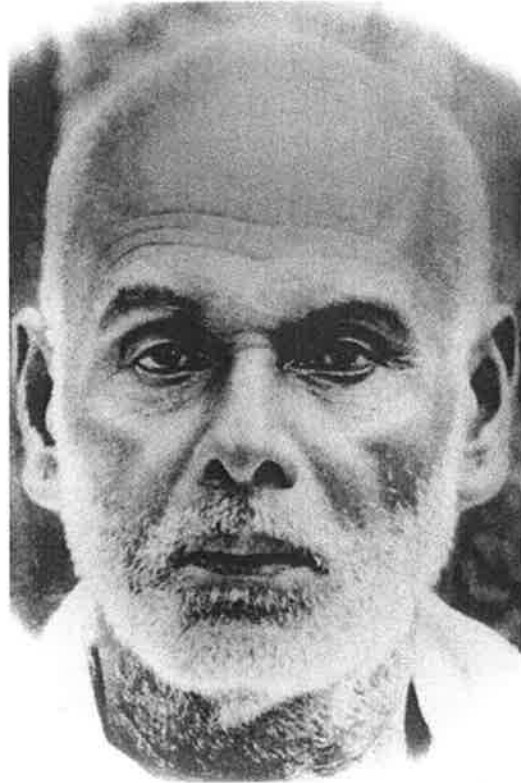
The first thing to note is that it is not so much as a historical figure that we study Narayana Guru, but more as a World Teacher and model Guru, in the context of perennial philosophy. Not that he didn't respond creatively to the historical situation in which he found himself in the light of his wisdom vision, but that part is not to be mixed up with the far more important role of a Guru whose teachings are relevant to one and all, anywhere, anytime, who seek answers to questions that haunt humanity at levels far deeper than the social or historical questions. The reformer is forgotten once the social problems are redressed, but a Guru's message is timeless. This understanding—the ability to discriminate between the eternal and the transient—is the first qualification for a seeker of wisdom in the Guru tradition.

In the long line of Gurus of India, it was the Buddha who frontally dealt with the despicable issue of caste. Gurus who followed have often left much to be desired on this front, in spite of being staunch proponents of *Advaita*. Narayana Guru was unequivocal on this question, declaring the oneness of the human family through his writings as well as establishing centers where this could be lived. This must be the reason why he's usually excluded by speakers and writers on philosophy, who prefer to champion their own groups at the expense of others.

Narayana Guru's great cause of universal unity is not helped at all by the almost successful attempt by certain communities to see in him a "social reformer" and leader of a particular tribe struggling for social and economic justice. To be affiliated to the name of the Guru for wrong reasons is just as bad as neglecting or ignoring him. It cannot be over-emphasized that the Guru Narayana was NOT

for any one group of people as against another. He wanted humanity to recognize itself as belonging to the one caste of Humanity, as made clear in all his writings, especially the *Jāti Mimāmsa (Critique of Caste)*.

Philosophy does not live in a vacuum. Falsehood has to be denied before truth can be founded firmly in the human heart. Guru does this not only in the social realm, but in all realms, as evidenced by his bringing in an *Asatya darśanam (Vision of Untruth)* in the *Darśana Mālā*, where he integrates all possible philosophical points of view in terms of the Absolute Selfhood of the human being and its dearness to one and all. This integration at all levels is part of the uniqueness of the philosophy of Narayana Guru. *Brahmavidyā* is the integrative or unitive understanding of all, and not simply another system among systems, and the Guru restated it in clear and simple terms that befit the dignity of the human kind as a whole. This is the real reason he should be universally revered and his name celebrated. May such understanding bless us all.



# SRI AUROBINDO'S SĀVITRI

By Y. BALASUBRAHMANIAN

Advaita is associated with the philosopher Sankara. The “integral advaita” or “integral non-dualism” of Sri Aurobindo, while asserting *Brahman* or the Absolute as One fundamental reality, affirms the reality of the world as well as of the Absolute. All-inclusive integral advaitism does not deny the reality either of the world or of the individual. Sri Aurobindo has developed with great profundity and thoroughness the immortal and idealistic system of Vedanta, Integral Advaitism, in his magnum opus, the *Life Divine*. He says, “The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognize not only eternal spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves Constantly his garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansions.” Thus his philosophy synthesizes and integrates two negations: “the materialistic denial” and “the refusal of the ascetic.” According to Sri Aurobindo, if matter is to ascend to the spirit, there must be a corresponding descent of the spirit. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, works out an integral view in which both spirit and matter are given their importance. He also sees that *Brahman*, though being spiritual, can accommodate in its heart the principle of matter. He feels that in the cosmic consciousness there is a meeting place of matter and spirit where matter becomes real to the spirit and the spirit becomes real to matter; whereas to Sankara the world which apparently looks real is metaphysically merely an illusion created by the ignorance of the individual.

The exquisite epic of *Sāvitri* drawn from *vana-parva* of the Mahabharata (cantos 291-297), contains the quintessence of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual adventure which endeavoured to bridge the gulf between Heaven and Earth. Thus *Life Divine* and *Sāvitri* are complementary works, both offering a crystal clear exposition of Aurobindo's philosophy in which he presents the theory of spiritual evolution, culminating in the transformation of the human being and the advent of a divine life upon earth. The legend from the Mahabharata becomes the symbol of the human soul's spiritual destiny. Sri Aurobindo began the composition of *Sāvitri* in 1910 and finished in 1950, just before he left his body.

The legend of Savitri is a story narrated by the sage Markendeya to King Yudhisthira, when the latter was in a despondent mood. Ashwapathy, King of Madra Desha, is without a child. He is loved and respected by all in his kingdom. For eighteen long years, he performs austerities and offers oblations in various sacrifices. At last

he is blessed with a daughter named Savitri. She grows up but there are no offers of marriage due to her towering personality. She proceeds on her personal quest, as advised by her father, returning after two years to announce that her choice is Satyavan of Dyumatsens, the blind king of Shalwa, living in exile. Narada, being present on the spot, speaks against the choice because Satyavan is fated to die after a year. Savitri does not change her decision. The marriage is celebrated. She stays with her husband, leading a simple married life and serving his aged parents. The year passes and on the fated day, Yama, god of Death, appears in the forest where Satyavan is felling a tree for fuel with Savitri by his side. A noose around the spirit of Satyavan is thrown and Yama walks away. Undaunted, Savitri follows him and by virtue of her purity, Yama is finally obliged to return Satyavan to life. Savitri and Satyavan return to lead humanity and transmute earth into heaven.

Sri Aurobindo unveils the symbolism behind this simple legend. Ashwapathy in Aurobindo's epic is a representative of the human race, eager to fulfill the inmost aspiration of humans by leading a kind of perfection in life. He ascends as far as his powers and capacities lead him and from there calls out to the Divine to descend. He succeeds in persuading the Divine Mother to offer Her Grace. She grants him the boon and says, "I will send down an emanation of myself on earth and that will help mankind conquer ignorance and death." The boon is granted and Ashwapathy returns to earth after his ascent. Savitri is born. Ashwapathy is the symbol of the yoga of ascent. Savitri is the symbol of the yoga of descent. Grace of the Divine descends and although divine, she is also a person in flesh and blood. When she is face to face with Yama, the god of Death, she is not just a human being but a being with the charge of divinity in her.

Aurobindo's *Sāvitri* thus speaks of the ascent of man and the descent of the divine. The ascending aspiration of Ashwapathy and the descending ray of Savitri are the twin movements of integral yoga. He has turned the simple legend of conjugal fidelity into a memorable testament of affirmative spirituality for humanity.

*Sāvitri* begins with a reference to the dawn and ends with an emphatic greater dawn: "It was the hour before the Gods awake." It is a *mantra*, a living person and, indeed, the whole world that is in front of us. The dawn is yet to arrive. The time is primordial; the Gods are still at rest. The dawn is to become the turning point for Savitri and Satyavan who was destined to die on that fateful morning. "This was the day when Satyavan must die." It is this event which forms the core of the epic. "And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn." Sri Aurobindo has transformed the legend of Savitri into a symbol of the greater dawn.

Sri Aurobindo has drawn an impeccable portrait of Savitri. For her, this is not just the dawning of another day. This fated day will demand her focused attention and courage, for she will soon have to "confront death on her road."

"Even her humanity was half divine," for she is poised between her humanity and her divinity; between the darkness of night and the light of dawn. If she had just been divine, she would not have bothered and would have been deaf to the

cries of the world. If she had just been human she would be filled with the cries and pains of humanity and would have broken down, seeking mercy from God and assistance from fellow beings in her hour of great anguish. Being both divine and human, her suffering is very intense. The poet says she “takes up the load of an unwitting race.” The burden of agony which she is carrying is not just her own. Her mission is to impart the quality of the divine to the suffering world.

In Savitri’s character the poet explains the essence of his philosophy. His philosophy is the balanced poise between spirit and matter. Savitri cannot forget her divine heritage and lineage, nor can she reject the world and its sufferings. Her divinity alternates with her humanity. The poet describes her alternating mood: “In a deep cleft of silence twixt two realms, she lay remote from grief, unseen by care, recalling nothing of the sorrow in her. Then a slow faint remembrance of a shadow-like thing moved and, sighing, she laid her hand upon her bosom and recognized the close and lingering ache.”

Then the poet says “even in this moment of her soul’s despair, in its grim rendezvous with death and fear, no cry broke from her lips, no call for aid. She told the secret of her woe to none.” He further says, “calm was her face and courage kept her mute. Yet only her outward self suffered and strove.” For that matter, “A dark fore-knowledge separated her from all of whom she was the star and stay,” informing us that even during a previous year when she lived with a feigned joy and happiness, there was all the time this shadow of the destined day looming large in her mind. She never told about this day to Satyavan, nor to his parents. None had a even a glimpse of what was to happen. The poet describe her, “Aloof, she carried in herself the world.”

The sun has risen and she wakens. Her memory surges up and she finds that “Earth and Love and Doom, the ancient disputants, encircled her like giant figures wrestling in the night.” But also, “the Universal Mother’s Love was hers.” Savitri realizes, notwithstanding “the daily oblation of her unwept tears.” She will have to confront death on her road. The poet writes: “Her soul arose confronting Time and fate.” She gathers strength, for she has to face Yama, the god of Death, alone, on this day, “when Satyavan must die.”





# EXILE AND RETURN

BY DEBORAH BUCHANAN

A skeleton of glaciers and arctic breath are what Aga Shahid Ali carries with him in exile. His family came from Central Asia, the trading crossroad of Samarkand, and their complex history animates his life. It is an intriguing world: his family claims descent from the Prophet; the great-grandfather was a sahib who whipped his servants; his grandfather recited both the Sufi mystics and Plato; and his father taught him a love of Beethoven.

Shahid was born into this legacy in Kashmir, into an idyllic world of snowy Himalayan peaks and lush valleys. Yet, as Sahid writes in the poem Farewell, "I am being rowed through Paradise on a river of Hell." Kashmir has long been part of India's cultural orb and is officially part of the Indian state, yet it is also heir to the world of the Moghul rulers, to their Islamic culture, and to the wandering world of Central Asian nomads. Since 1949 Kashmir has been caught in the bloody conflict between India and Pakistan, both of them claiming it. As Shahid's poems make excruciatingly clear, Kashmir has become a world of terror and pain, blood-soaked pathways and the daily disappearance of friends.

Beauty and loss are the twin threads that twine through Shahid's books. *The Half-Inch Himalayas*, first published in 1987, begins with that ancestral skeleton of ice and snow as Shahid, in quiet, simple lines explores his world, the legacy of his family. In a hauntingly elegant poem he visits his parents before his birth, on the night of his conception. In another he evokes the world of the plains, where his mother grew up, a world not just of the Koran and the muzzein, but a world where the songs of Krishna's flute are heard in the monsoon season.

There is a poem on the old Dacca gauze saris that his grandmothers used to wear, woven so finely that six yards could be pulled through a gold ring. It is not just a poem of remembrance, however. Sahid reminds us that no one knows how to weave these anymore because the British cut off the hands of the Bengali weavers so they could ship raw cotton back to English mills. Politics, its irrational cruelty, is never far below the surface in these poems. Shahid's poems arise out of a Muslim-Hindu conflict but also point to something much deeper in the human psyche, to a persistent greed and aggression.

Beauty and loss. Pain and love. At the end of his first book, Sahid has a poem titled "A Wrong Turn," and he writes:

In my dream I'm always  
in a massacred town, its name

erased from maps,  
no road signs to it.  
Only a wrong turn brings me here.

It is not just Shahid but all of Kashmir that has taken this lethal wrong turn and in his second book, *A Country Without a Post Office*, the poems are like surreal telegrams, fragments of war found on paper. What makes people enemies? Why are we torturing each other?

In his first poem, "Farewell," in this book, Shahid writes:

In your absence you polished me into the Enemy.  
Your history gets in the way of my memory.  
I am everything you lost. You can't forgive me.  
I am everything you lost. Your perfect enemy.  
Your memory gets in the way of my memory.

In these poems we see the everyday consequences of this anger and separation. Old friends are never heard from, a village is destroyed, the old family house is abandoned, boarded up against depredation. These poems re-create for the reader Shahid's feeling of unreality, of strange, violent acts. There are disjunctions, distortions, misunderstandings. Past and present and future are intermingled. We find ourselves wandering in a world rent by fear and violence. One poem speaks of the casual closeness of death: everyone carries his address on a small slip of paper in his pocket, so at least his body can make it home. With this telling detail Shahid has brought us into his world.

It is a world that he had to leave, and the violence of Kashmir is now overlain with the melancholy of exile. But how does one leave that world? Is it possible to start anew? Here, Shahid is ambiguous. He left Kashmir and had another life free of war and violence. But only partially so. That world of discord is just a small step away, always breathing at the back of his words. And the conflict is becoming worldwide. How do we escape, any of us? Lines from two different poems offer clues:

What can one surrender but the heart?  
I yield my remaining years to you.

If only somehow you could have been mine,  
what would not have been possible in the world?

Aga Shahid Ali's poetry is grounded in Kashmir, in Islam, in the ghazals of its singers. Arabic has been called the language of poets and has a long tradition, first in the camps of nomads and then in the luxurious, cultured courts of rulers. In

much of Arabic poetry there is a place that one has lost or is separated from, there is an ideal beloved that one sings to, that one longs for, and there is a coming into a sacred place. This longing initiates a dialogue with the Beloved. Or, as was said of Arabic poetry of Moorish Spain, one “loses in order to rediscover.” So underneath the specifics of Kashmir, there are in Shahid’s poems deep echoes of the Arabic poetic tradition of love and loss, of sensuality and longing.

These poems, in fact, are redolent of the world, tender, with beautiful images of our natural surroundings: “rosaries of ginger/of rustling peppers.” The poet’s hands are stained with grief and with “the crushed red of saffron threads.” The later poems especially become more and more elaborate, evocative, almost as if they are songs sung in rounds so that the singer and the listener both are caught in the spell of incantation. Images—of paisley weavings, of a small, bronze statue of a Harrapan girl, of a flower’s heartbeats—float on the undulating current of words.

Shahid’s last book, *Rooms Are Never Finished* was published posthumously in 2002, and is a distraught, exquisite meditation on grief. The destruction in his homeland is intermingled with the death of his adored Mother, who herself adored Kashmir. A long series of poems begins in the hospital with his mother dying from a brain tumor, then moves through the plane ride home with the casket, and to the eventual burial in Srinigar. These poems attain a white heat of lamentation and even rhapsody. Shahid recounts the key story of the assassination of Hussain, the Prophet’s grandson, and the sorrow of his sister Zainab. This event becomes the motif around which all grief is patterned—for his mother, for Kashmir, for himself.

“In the Name of the Merciful” let night begin  
I must light lamps without her—at every shrine?  
God then is only the final assassin.  
Prayers end. Emptiness waits to take her in.  
With laments found lost on my lips, I resign  
myself to his very Name. Let night begin.

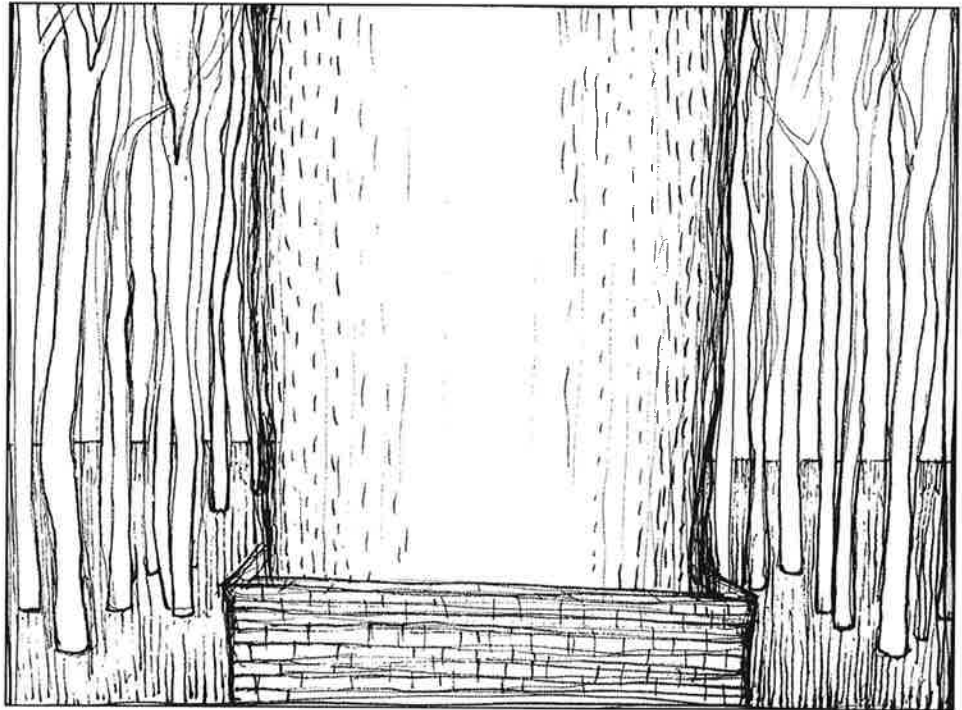
It is not just the world of Islam that suffuses these works, though. In longing, Shahid sings to the Dark God, Krishna, who he supplicates and adores. Without saying any direct word, Shahid knits together the two often conflicting traditions of Indian spirituality.

Dark god shine on me you’re all I have left  
nothing else blue god you are all I have  
I won’t let you go I’ll cling on to your love

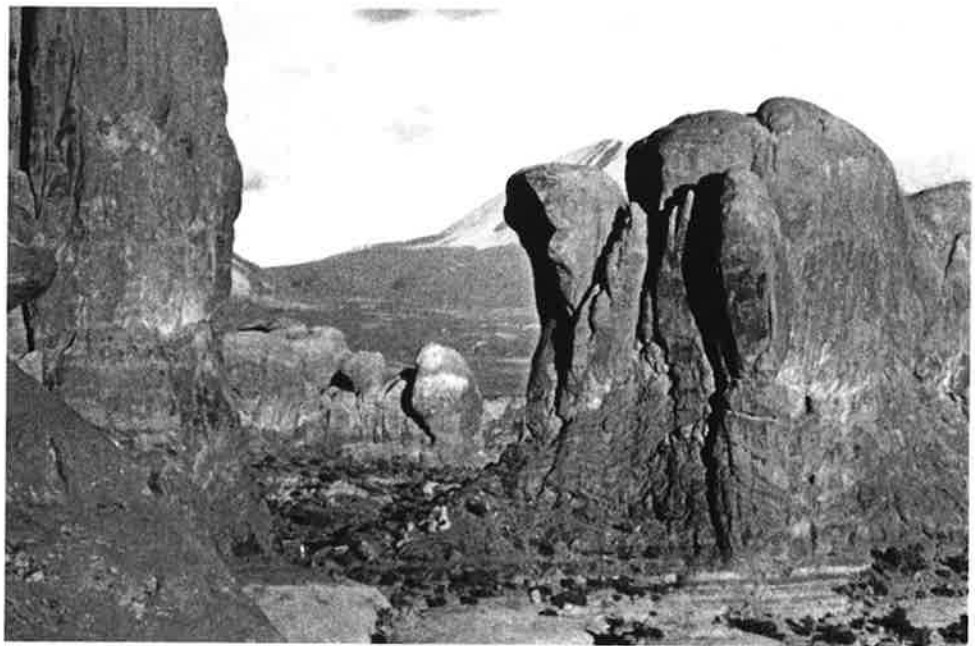
I am yours your Radha my bangles break  
I break my bangles my heart is glass come back  
blue god there's nothing you are all I have

There is an incredible musicality and rhythm in these poems, with Shahid using a wide variety of styles (ghazals, sonnets, terza rima) to try and express his profound loss. Punctuation has given way to breath as a way of metering the poem; as you read them out loud, an internal pacing takes over the words and the reader is carried along by Shahid's images.

In all three of his books, we are carried along by Aga Shahid Ali's intense awareness of his world, his refusal to turn away from violence and pain, his refusal to give up love, or to give up beauty and compassion. Despite the intensity of his emotions, I found myself returning to the poems again and again, unable to stay away from their evocations and visions.







# HAIDA ODYSSEY

BY BAIRD SMITH

When I moved to Portland from New York in 1990, I was mysteriously attracted to the art of the Northwest Coast Indians. The recursive eyes—peering spiritually from hundreds of years ago and set in a beautiful symmetric web of formlines—especially intrigued me. So I set out to study these designs at galleries and museums in Portland, Seattle, and eventually in Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia.

In addition to the well-known totem poles in this region, there are flat representations painted on storage boxes and house fronts. All four sides of the lidded boxes are made of one piece of western red cedar which is bent by kerfing and steaming the corners. These paintings are all different, yet remarkably similar in their inclusion of totemic icons and use of space filling formlines. There are obviously rules which discipline the designs—reminiscent of medieval Orthodox iconography in Christian art.

Each tribe, or band, along the Northwest coast developed its own variation of this art form. These differences include variations in the use of color and in slightly different rules for the formlines, such as concentricity. But these differences are subtle, and it is often difficult to identify the specific band from which a given piece originated. There are some very interesting similarities between the Northwest coast Indian designs and those of the Ainu tribes in northern Japan. This is a hint that the people sharing these ideas may have traversed a much larger area a long time ago. There is now some thought that the prehistoric Kennewick man from Washington State was a part of this group.

I was most attracted to the style of the Haida, the band living on a group of islands eighty miles off the coast of British Columbia. The inhabitants called this place Haida Gwaii. We call it the Queen Charlotte Islands. After studying the Haida I decided to take a tour of these islands, and so we chartered a boat and guide for a week of visits to the old villages in the now protected Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site. Although the Haida lived in these islands for many thousands of years, and had a population of about thirty thousand, they were all but extinguished by contact with the Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at which time smallpox killed ninety-five percent of the population within a very short period. So these villages are empty and overgrown but intact, and the carved designs are still visible.

While sailing through these beautiful islands, we had a seminal experience. Each morning, when we came out on the deck, we saw a bald eagle in a nearby tree. We assumed that it was the same eagle every day, so we called it our Guardian Eagle.



The Haida have a matrilinear social structure based on moiety lineages—two groups divided as the Ravens and the Eagles. So we interpreted this experience as a sign of our kinship with Eagles.

After several years of study and observation, I began to recognize authentic Haida designs. Although there are some recognizable rules, such as bilateral symmetry, and common basic elements such as ovoids, it is very difficult to articulate the principles which guide the creation of such balance and relationship as are found in these designs. The objective content depicts spirit animals as heraldic crests or mythic creatures. But they are depicted abstractly and often only represented by traditional symbolic clues such as a blow hole for a killer whale and a turned down beak for an eagle. Surrounding these elements is a connected network of black formlines which pull it all together into a harmonious whole.

Next, I decided to create a design of my own in this style. I included traditional elements like the salmon trout heads in the lower corners, eagles to the side as our family crest, and a prominent tongue recalling communication between spirits and man. I painted the first version on wood and framed it to look like the front of a large bent wood box. When I hung it in the family room of our house, I wondered how it might affect us to live with these ancient spirits. It took some getting used to because the images are dramatic, but eventually we decided that we liked living among these entities from day to day. The Haida had a saying that they were already in heaven because they were so blessed with the two things that supplied all their needs: cedar and salmon. So although the images appear somewhat fierce, there is also a sense of divine satisfaction.

Finally, I set about to create a house front version by painting the design on the door of our double garage. This turned out to be a long process because of the size and special requirements of being outside. People often ask me, when they first see the size and complexity of this painting, how long it took me to make it. I answer “six years” because that is about how long my Haida journey took. I feel somewhat guilty at times because I am not a Native American and thus have borrowed from another culture, but I do so out of a love and respect for the deep spiritual roots which come alive through these depictions. I call it “Spirit of the Northwest”.

Baird Smith’s painting is on the cover of this issue.

# MOVIE MUSE

BY PETER OPPENHEIMER

One of the glories of art, in general, is that it represents the phoenix of hope that from the ashes of humankind's cruelty, foolishness and insensitivity can arise a new civilization based on wisdom, love, creativity and celebration. Furthermore, it is my belief that never in the history of mankind has any single art form had the potential power to transform millions (nay, billions), as does Cinematic Art. These two propositions were dramatically reinforced during my recent attendance at the 8<sup>th</sup> annual International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) in South India.

During the eight days of the IFFK I was fortunate to view 33 films from 19 countries. Sitting in those darkened halls, I felt as though I traveled to 19 different countries, getting an intimate and bigger-than-life view of the landscape, architecture, dress, family set-up, lifestyle, mindset, morals and mores of each particular country. My senses were dazzled, my mind stimulated and my soul stirred. I suppose I could also sum up the week by saying, "My heart soared, while my butt sored."

Among my top three favorites was *Osama*, a gem from Afghanistan. The movie was introduced with a quote by Nelson Mandela, "I cannot forget, but I can forgive." In the remarkable and spooky opening scene, we see a demonstration of thousands of Afghan women, veiled and covered from head to foot, agitating for work. There are signs with such proclamations as, "We are not political. We are hungry."

Shortly we see armed Taliban soldiers coming to break up the protest. Shots are fired and the women stampede. As the chaos settles we meet a woman and her daughter who have fled the scene. She is a recent widow who in addition lost her only brother in the war against Russia. She is a trained doctor, but under Taliban rule women are forbidden to work (or even leave the house without a male escort). She lives with her aging mother and twelve year old daughter. The only way they can devise to eat is to dress the daughter up as a boy and send her off to work at a tea shop.

One day while at work she is rounded up by the military with all the other boys in the locality and herded off to a Taliban indoctrination center consisting primarily of fundamentalist interpretations of the Koran and military training. Needless to say, all of this, along with the male horseplay at recess and a mullah's lecture on "wet dreams," is extremely alien to her. *Osama* is the name she adopts after being given it by the one young friend she has in the camp who knows her secret.

The unfolding drama of her deception, discovery, punishment and response is hauntingly suspenseful and moving. *Osama* was justly rewarded by winning the Festival's Audience Award for Best Picture.

My second favorite film of the Festival also dealt with societal oppression of women and one woman's courageous stand against it. From India comes *Chokher Bali—A Passion Play* (The literal translation of the title is “Sand in the Eye.”), based on a story by the brilliant Bengali poet, playwright and novelist Rabindranath Tagore.

In *A Passion Play* we meet Binodina, a lovely young woman (barely twenty-one) already widowed and henceforth condemned by tradition to remain for life with her husband's family in a permanent state of mourning, asceticism and servitude. Even a cup of tea in the afternoon is considered an excessive indulgence for such a one. Yet this woman is a free spirit who, while humbly and lovingly serving her elders, sneaks not only tea but chocolate and has the audacity to love two men—brothers, one who is already married and the other who has adopted a life of celibacy. In spite of the sparks that are thus made to fly in all directions, she miraculously manages to maintain her dignity and self-respect even in the midst of some ensuing humiliation and shame.

Binodina is a masterfully drawn character. It is laudable that she is presented as neither a saint nor a martyr, and her actions are not always noble, though we can also see all three of these elements present in her situation and bearing. On the other hand, she can also sometimes be a seductress, egoistical and greedy. She is very human, in all the complexity that implies, yet it is inspiring to watch her consistently struggling to be as true as possible to herself and others. This is a marvelous film of great depth and passion.

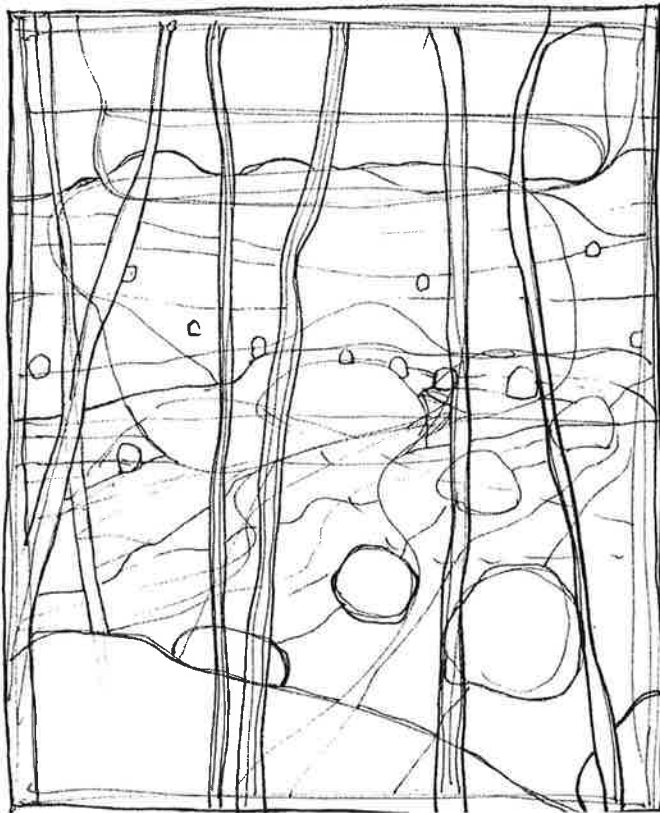
My personal Best of Fest Award goes to *The Price of Forgiveness* from Senegal, which was also recognized as the Best Film from a First-Time Director by the IFFK's international jury. *The Price of Forgiveness* is a fable of mythological proportions dealing with the themes of guilt, repentance and forgiveness. The narrative is extremely dramatic and compelling; the colors are rich and vibrant; the music by the magical singer/composer Wasis Diop is moving; the acting is superb; the African coastal village backdrop is fascinating with its brilliant fabrics, primitive yet exquisite cooking tools, tribal rituals and lifestyle; and the themes dealt with are universal. There is playfulness and humor to balance the gravity of the central issues.

As an audience member, I too (along with the villagers in the film) was forced to struggle with the question of if, when and how to forgive a man for a most heinous crime against his own best friend. What is the meaning of justice? Is retribution the way to restore harmony? If so, how much is enough? Is reconciliation possible in the wake of great crimes? If so, how to attain it? The film did not attempt to provide any easy answers, but did suggest some alternatives as food for thought.

In addition to these top three, I'm giving Honorable Mention to three other films one would do well to keep an eye out for at video/DVD rental outlets or theaters which feature international films. These include *Interview* (Holland) about a sexually charged face-off between a young starlet and the grizzled and world-weary reporter sent to interview her; *The Man Who Copied* (Brazil), a

very playful variation on the theme of "The Loveable Loser;" and *Dolls* (Japan), a moody, engaging, quirky, evocative meditation on the difference between attraction and infatuation on the one hand and undying devotion and sacrifice on the other.

An over-riding theme presented by these maestros of cinematic art from all around the world was a very tender and touching compassion for the many kinds of struggles and problems faced by men, women and children of all types and stripes. For me, the overall affect was to feel myself sensitized anew to the particular challenges facing the poor and the disenfranchised, the aggrieved and the bereaved, the physically infirm and the mentally afflicted, the taunted and tempted, the wealthy and ambitious, the lonely and those whom others refuse to leave alone. Moreover, it was not only the challenges that struck me, but the seemingly infinite array of resourcefulness and resiliency humankind can exhibit in meeting all manner of such challenges. As the curtain fell on the Festival's final day, I felt myself at once exhausted and exalted.



# MANTRAS IN TUNE

BY SCOTT TEITSWORTH

Music is a harmonious dialectic synthesis of physical vibrations and metaphysical enjoyment. As such it is a superb expression of the “value-form of delight,” which perfectly exemplifies the notion that matter and spirit are meaningless without each other. Anything physical must be perceived before it can be said to exist, and a vacuous spirit with no manifested forms to appreciate would be devoid of content. Each springs into being as a kind of mirror image of the other.

Of all the ways that spiritual beings have had meaningful interactions with matter, music is unique in how easily it gets under our skin and becomes part of us. Many people enjoy meditating to music. It draws them inward without seeming to require any mental gymnastics, and assists in maintaining focus and even staying awake.

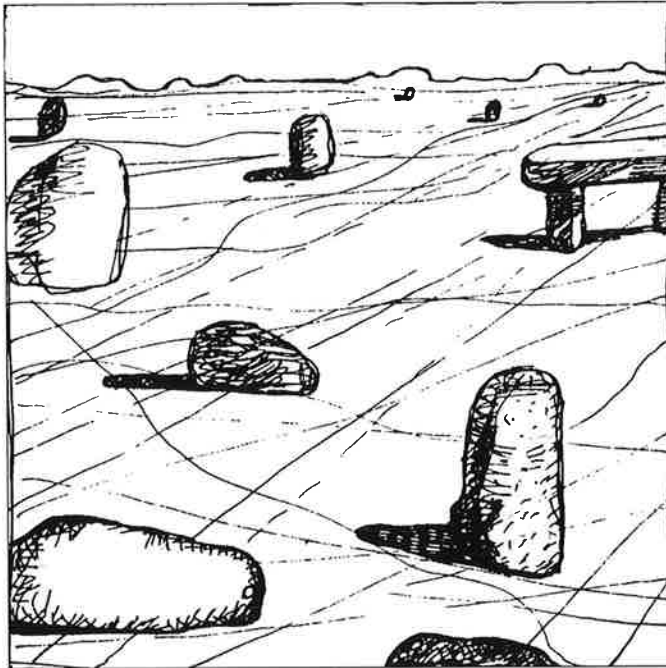
*Mantras* are repeated strings of words, like short and simple poems, which have the power to calm and center the mind to help induce meditative states. Often they have been claimed to produce types of enlightenment. When they are set to music their power is amplified. Music has the ability to carry the words deep into the core of consciousness, where meaning can pulsate throughout the whole system with ease.

Ananda Jyothi has bequeathed us two highly enjoyable CDs of his original music, and one would expect lots more to be on the way from this talented fellow, who has taken up residence in Brazil. If you enjoy meditating to music, these would be terrific additions to your library. The first, titled Bhadrakali, is the more upbeat, with tunes in reggae, samba and rap modes, along with basic rock styles. Jyothi has captured the breezy lightheartedness of Brazilian music admirably. The first song, Jai Ganesh, is a dynamite reggae tune with heavy bass, with all the earmarks of a number that could hit the charts. I'd say it's worth buying the CD for that song alone, but there are others ranging from pretty good to great, including Shakti Om, Jai Hanuman, and Samba Sada Shiva. Nice variety. These are songs you bop around humming, rather than sit and meditate to.

The second CD, *Mantra Mandala*, is closer to traditional Indian bhajans for the most part, though with a modern touch and spectrum of instruments that sounds fresh. It features a 25 minute version of Narayana Guru's *Bahuleya Ashtakam* that really takes you far on an inward excursion. There is another song to Ganesh, a couple around the Gita, one to Krishna, and a nice *Gayatri Mantra* rendition. The insert features the great picture in which Nataraja Guru posed as a traditional Guru sitting in lotus pose on a leopard skin, and a nice one of Vinaya Chaitanya and Margaret of Somanahalli Gurukula, who Jyothi studied with. This is the record to really sit down and concentrate to. Overall, very centering and peaceful music.

Both CDs are very well produced and feature excellent musicians, with sitar and tabla complementing the familiar range of Western instruments. Anand Jyothi has a website: [www.mantrabrasil.com](http://www.mantrabrasil.com).

While we're on the subject of records for meditation, the greatest one I've ever heard is *Music for Zen Meditation and Other Joys*, featuring Tony Scott on clarinet, Shinichi Yuize on koto and Hozan Yamamoto on shakuhachi, a traditional Japanese bamboo flute. It was recorded in Tokyo in 1964, but has been reissued as a CD, still by Verve Records. If you can find one, grab it and hang on tight.



When the Portland Gurukula started up in 1971, we played this music for our morning yoga exercises. Thirty-five years later, I still use it for my off-and-on yoga practice, and have never once felt tired of it. The music flows like water, limpid, clean, ungraspable, sparkling. Koto and clarinet blend together perfectly, conversing with each other and trading riffs. Absolutely still and yet gently gliding forward, the atmosphere expresses the ecstasy of the eternal moment. Without effort the listener feels raised to another plane of existence, one that persists in the calm state of mind it instills long after the equipment is switched off and the transactional world readdressed. Sometimes not having words makes the music even more profound, depending on your mood. I get enough words in daily life so that purely instrumental music is my favorite source of solace. Either way, music brings meaning to life.

# GURUKULA NEWS

Two important books by Guru Narayana Prasad have recently been released: his commentary on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (DK Printworld, Dehli) and *The Collected Works of Narayana Guru* (National Book Trust of India).

Guru Narayana Prasad has been recuperating from an operation, first in the hospital in Trivandrum, and now at the Gurukula in Varkala, where his health is improving.

The end of year Gurukula Convention will be held in late December at Varkala, Kerala. For information contact the Gurukula there.

The annual seminars and the initiation of children to the alphabet were held at the Kanakamala Gurukula under the leadership of Swami Tyageesvaran. Brahmachari Gireesh, who manages the Kanakamala Gurukula, ably organized all the details. The attending swamis, teachers and students were able to use the new floor of the Gurukula building, and the nearby cave is being used for meditation as well. A love-dialogue, attended by the public, was addressed by writers and poets and marked the end of the four day event.

Guru Puja was held at the Island Aranya in Bainbridge Island, USA, with Swami Vyasa Prasad and Gurusharan Jyothi attending. Both are visiting various Gurukula friends in the United States.

Swami Vyasa is also working with Nancy Yeilding on Guru Nitya's commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, doing final preparations for publication.

Copies of Ananda Jyothi's CDs, reviewed in this issue, can be obtained by writing: jyothibai@yahoo.com. Website: www.mantrabrazil.com.

Garry Davis can be contacted at worldlaw@globalnetisp.net.

## Web Addresses:

<http://www.geocities.com/islandgurukula> (Gurukula homepage)

<http://homepage.mac.com/vyasa> (Swami Vyasa Prasad's homepage)

<http://www.sraddha@ispwest.com> (Sraddha Durand's photo page)

<http://scottteitsworth.tripod.com> (Scott Teitsworth's homepage)

There are now four email-based study groups centered around *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, which enable participants from all over the world to join together in spiritual community and deep Self-study. For information contact Nancy Yeilding at [islandaranya@toast.net](mailto:islandaranya@toast.net).

Sraddha Durand is translating Guru Nitya's taped talks and chantings to CDs. Those available are: Hymns and Poetry of Narayana Guru; What is Meditation?; *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* recitation in Malayalam and English; meditation on the Chandogya Upanishad; and class on *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, verses 1-4. These, along with a price list, are available at: 8311 Quail Hill Rd., Bainbridge Island, WS. 9810, USA; email is [sraddha@mac.com](mailto:sraddha@mac.com).

Online class notes for the Portland Gurukula's class on *Darśana Mālā* can be received by writing to [tapovana@hevanet.com](mailto:tapovana@hevanet.com)



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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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