

QURUKULAM



AUTUMN 2007

GURUKULAM

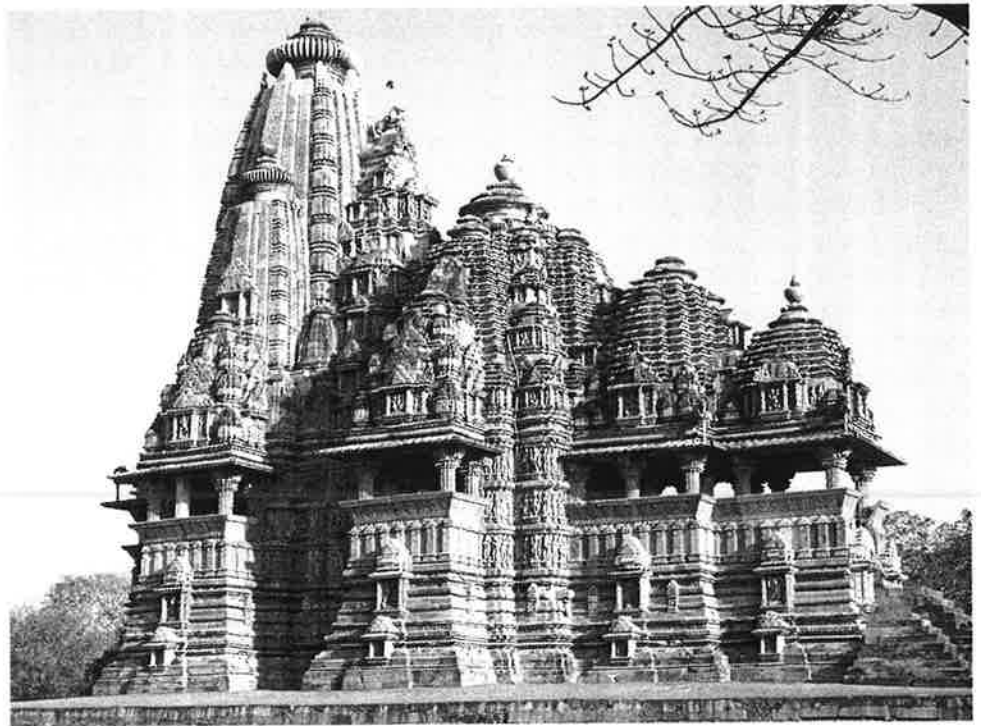
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EDITORIAL

BY DEBORAH BUCHANAN

How do we know when something is poetry, something else prose? Length, style, vocabulary? The dictionary only says that poetry is written in verse and that it rhymes, and prose refers to the ordinary and everyday—not very helpful, or exact. When we look at poetry there is such a large field: small haiku, long epics, the lyrics of love and longing, the haunting couplets of ghazals. What could possibly be the unifying element among all these? They certainly don't all rhyme. And, in fact, rhyme came late to European poetry, by way of pollination from Arab poetry to the 11th century Provençal troubadours.

However, we do always find rhythm in poetry, even if muted and suggested. Breath is the most basic rhythm—in and out, again and again. Or our ordinary speech or our meandering thoughts—a pace, a rhythm, that keeps pulling us forward into the poem itself. But rhythm is not the defining feature or we would call military marches poetic.

Reading through numerous books, I finally came across an appropriately short and dramatic line of Ezra Pound's that coalesces what I had been thinking: "To poetize is to condense." In other words, what poetry does is reveal the essence—of an event, a person, a relationship. Vision and word look for that essential line which will tell with vitality, with intensity, what many longer lines never can.

What poetry also does—and this may seem contradictory to its condensing role—is to imply different meanings, different states of being. It creates overlapping possibilities: this *and* that. This paradox is crucial to poetry: an essential, pared down vision and the tangled, reverberating allusion. These two are like oil and water, but in poetry they mix. In some alchemical way, they recreate the writer's experience. Together they allow us to enter into his experience as well. What was static or anchored in time is made available, through the poet's mysterious creative process, to us. We are not told, we are not even shown—but we are invited into a particular world that is made alive again.

There are no formal poems in this issue of *Gurukulam*. Yet each article, each of the illustrations, has its own poetry that reveals a unique experience and insight. We invite you in.



ĀTMOPADEŚA ŚATAKAM

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

BY GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

VERSE 31

*anubhavamādiyil onnirikkil allā-
tanumitiyillitu munnamakṣiyālē
anubhaviyātaturuṅṅu dharmmiyunte-
nnumitiyāl arivṅṅarivṅṅitenam.*

Without prior experience there is no inference;
this is not previously perceived with the eye;
therefore, know that the existence of that in which all qualities inhere
is not known by inference.

Now we come to three verses which provide a methodology to assist us in our search for truth.

There are three fundamental questions we can ask about the world in which we find ourselves. The first is ‘what is matter?’ Furthermore, how does it originate and how does it function? We see things which we consider to be concrete and existing outside of us. They are part of our experience and can be seen, touched, heard, tasted and smelled. Certainly they must have originated at some point. Where and when was that? And what really is the substance we call matter? How can things as different as air and earth be included under this one category? How can matter include both the living and the inanimate in its purview?

The second fundamental question is ‘what is life?’ How does it originate? How do you distinguish between a biologic factor and an inanimate object? In other words, what particular quality in matter causes it to live? How does life evolve? What laws are operating and where is it taking us? Do evolutionary processes move according to special laws in order to achieve anything? Are they purposive? Does the world go by itself, or is it guided by something else?

The third main question is ‘what is consciousness?’ How does it originate, and how is it different from life itself? What is the extent of consciousness? How deep is it, and how far can it be stretched? What are its foundations? Naturally the additional consideration arises of what is not consciousness.

The entire gamut of psychology comes under the question of 'what is consciousness?' All of biology comes under 'what is life?' and the entire world of physics and chemistry comes under the consideration of 'what is matter?' These three questions lead us to make ongoing probes into the nature of our universe.

A fourth question comes as a natural corollary. 'What do you want to find out?' If it is truth, how do you discern it? You set out to find some great truth. Are you sufficiently familiar with truth to know it when you come face to face with it? You see many things in your dreams which seem to exist, but when you wake up they are no longer there. What you experience in the wakeful state is not present in your dreams, either. So how do you know which of these is true?

Take an orange for example. How do we know an orange is an orange? What really exists, what is the truth of it? We see a spherical shape, orange coloring and a kind of skin on the outside. When we peel it, the inner contents are juicy. It has a particular smell and taste. We can analyze the orange into its many constituent properties. These are called *dharma*-s. If we take it for granted these properties exist, only one thing will still be missing: the orange. Our analysis has only come across shape, taste, color, touch and smell. We do not experience the orange when we touch it; we are only experiencing touch. Or we are experiencing color and shape. Then where is the orange? It is only a composition we have made in our minds out of all its properties.

Thus, we have a synthetic understanding which integrates many divergent factors. If we go further into the constituents of a thing, they are synthesized of still more basic properties. So what you see is not what is inherent in a substance, but only what is inferred about it.

The need for a proper methodology to arrive at fundamental truths was demonstrated very early on by philosophers like Parmenides and Zeno. Zeno is famous for his paradoxes that illustrate the limitations of our reasoning by showing how mathematical logic can sometimes contradict perceptions or common sense. In Western philosophy there was a great struggle over proper methodology up to the time of Descartes. He decided that philosophy would never be scientific and stand on its own unless a proper methodology could be developed. All credit goes to Descartes for laying the groundwork in this effort. But even the Cartesian methodology was not complete in itself. Afterwards, Immanuel Kant added a critique of pure reason and a critique of practical reason. He thought a theory should be feasible, acceptable to the mind, operative at a transactional level, and practical.

There should always be applied knowledge alongside pure, theoretical knowledge. The pure aspect is postulation. Applied science is performing something on the basis of that truth. Only when you have a proof, only when you see it with your own eyes, does information become convincing. In a physics class, for instance, a certain postulate expressing a natural law can be given by the teacher in the morning. Then, in the afternoon class, the instructor should show how it can be applied.

In this verse Narayana Guru is saying that in order to really know *brahman*, the Absolute, you have to experience it at least once. It should be as real as a berry in the palm of your hand. Only if you experience it can you truly be a knower of the Absolute.

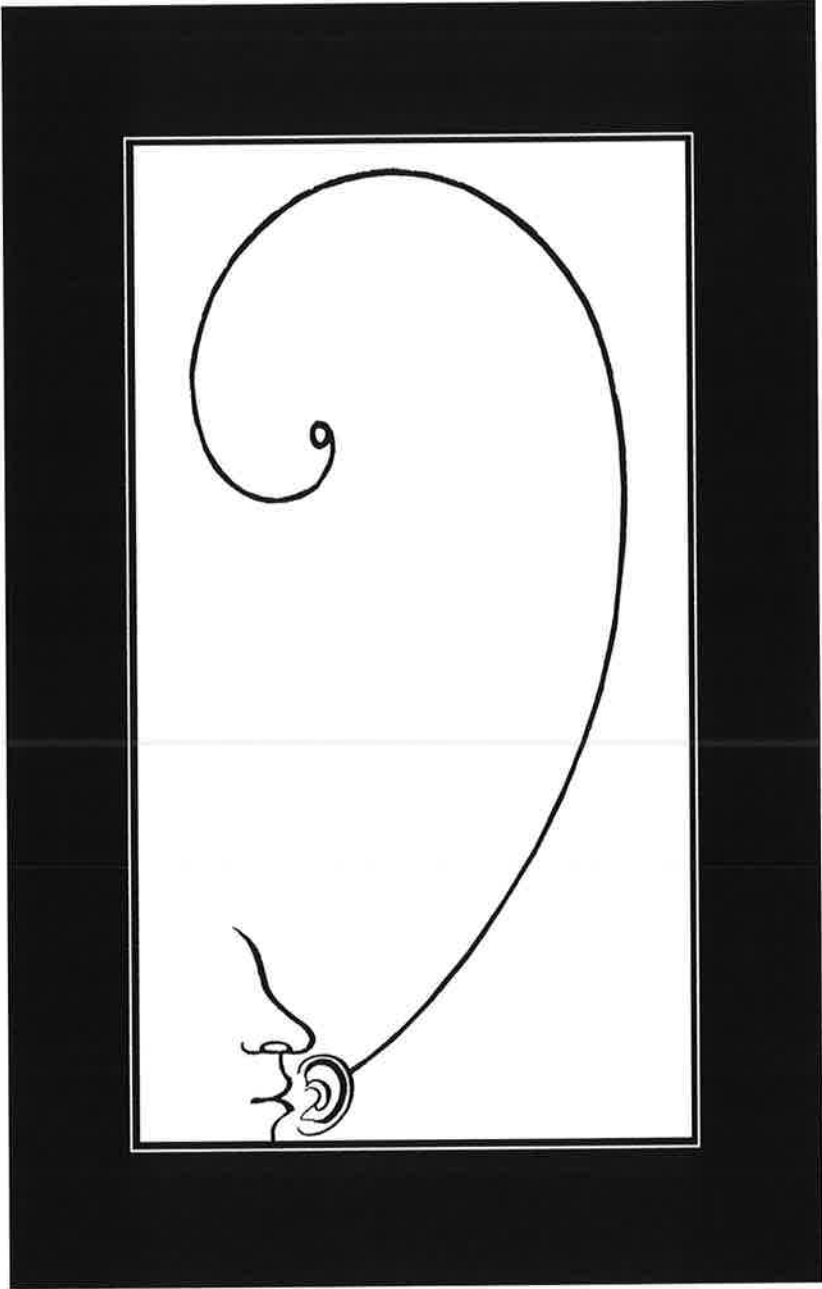
In the previous verse we were given a very sweeping vision that inert matter has no knowledge, and pure knowledge does not cogitate or articulate. We are caught midway between two absolute forms of silence: the silence of inert matter and the silence of that unknown, inaccessible Reality. Both of these lie behind closed doors, so to speak. In between them is a twilight region in which we are living, moving around, making observations, yelling, shouting and carrying on. This is *itayil irunnarivu*, that which is in between, which the Guru has already discredited as non-knowledge.

There have always been disputes going on among people who are steeped in ignorance. And what is their method? They use inferences. Nothing is fully known to them. They see only a little bit and then assume the rest. Pedagogues in our university classes, schools, churches and other social institutions rant and rave solely on the basis of the blatant assumptions of their preselected inferences.

All that we notice here is only partial; the rest we imagine. Even when we think we have fully observed, we have only half observed. Our imagination, fueled by our prejudices and predilections, fills in the gaps. Is this kind of methodology useful for knowing the Absolute?

Narayana Guru says no. You have to truly experience a thing in order to know it, and what you are here trying to discern does not come under that category. It is not a *dharma*, a property which sustains a thing as it is. Rather, it is that which contains all properties, *dharmā*. To arrive at the Absolute is a very frustrating challenge. All the pride of our understanding and learning must be taken away from us. To get over this hurdle, Kant brought in the idea of the main division between knowledge which is a priori and knowledge which is a posteriori. A priori knowledge is what is prior to your experience, while a posteriori knowledge comes after your experience. How does one get a priori knowledge? The Guru is going to tell us after a couple of more verses. At this point he just wants us to know that whatever knowledge we have gained so far is relativistic understanding which has some value in our interpersonal transactions but won't help us to know the Self. In order to realize the Self another kind of discipline and understanding is needed.

Two methods have been adopted by the rishis of the Upanishads to arrive at what is not known. They share the assumption that there cannot be many truths. Truth should be one, without a second. It cannot be one thing now and later something else. It cannot have a beginning and an end. Furthermore, there cannot be anything or anyone outside truth to be a witness; that imparts duality. All these are axiomatic reasonings, mathematically conceived. When you correctly arrive at the conception of theoretical truth by an axiomatic method, what you see cannot



be anything other than the only truth. Otherwise, if you presume that it is not truth, you are assuming that truth can be many.

The first of the two methods of the rishis is to affirm everything. They go on repeating *asti, asti*, 'and this, and this'. They say, "What I see is also truth; what I hear is also truth; what I touch is also truth; what I think is also truth; what I imagine is also truth; what cannot be imagined is also truth." Anything which comes within the frame of awareness is affirmed as also being true. They know that each time they affirm something they are affirming only a part, which they presume belongs to a whole. This is in anticipation of someday arriving at a notion of the whole.

Even before that they axiomatically believe that there is a whole. From where did that arise? Who revealed it to them? How is the truth of axioms revealed to begin with? We do not know, and yet we experience it. This is called *vibhāprāṅgavāda*, the argument of affirmation. The basis of the argument of affirmation is the revelation which comes in the form of an axiom that does not need to be proved.

The other method is to go on denying everything, *neti, neti*, 'not this, not this'. "Am I this body? *neti*. The senses? *neti*. The mind? *neti*. Anything visible? *neti*. Anything inferential? *neti*. Anything not visible? *neti*. Anything not inferential? *neti*." In the fourth quarter of the Mandukya Upanishad, there is a whole set of such denials. After denying everything, you come to a certain mystical silence in which you cannot further deny anything and yet you know that you cannot deny the existence of that state. You are enveloped and engulfed by an undeniable experience.

In the Brihadranyaka Upanishad, Yajnavalkya uses the method of negation, while in the Chandogya Upanishad, Aruni uses the method of affirmation. With either method you arrive at the same truth.

There are two basic types of people, introvert and extrovert. Introverts tend to be withdrawn, introspective and contemplative; extroverts overt, externally minded and craving action. Clearly the method of negation is more suitable for introverts and that of affirmation more suitable for extroverts. In either case, both accept that there is truth to be found. Without ever having experienced the totality of truth, they intuit its existence. Such intuition is not supported by any reasoning. It doesn't come as part of emotional life. It is as if the very truth of being reveals itself through its own beingness.

This gives us a clue for our search. At first we may have been disappointed when we were told that pure knowledge does not think, reason or speak. How can we ever approach the unthinkable through thought? If we dismiss the world of our cogitations, the world of our inner reasoning, and the silent way of conversation within ourselves, what tool is left to us for our search? If all these inner voices and dialogues are not coming from the right source and we drop them, we become very quiet. With a kind of frustrated helplessness we take our hands off everything. We are surrounded by the din of silence. It may look as if we have lost our ground

and are floating in thin air. We may even have to dismiss the very idea of a floating entity: there is no one to float, no one to know.

After all this tearing down and destruction, something still prevails. The seeker does not name it, he doesn't even call it an experience, but he knows he is That. It was with That he first spoke and first knew everything, and what he thus understands he cannot limit in any way. He cannot give any distinction, any name, any form to it. It overwhelms him and fills him. For him there is no 'I,' there is only That. The very This which otherwise remains indistinct and indiscernible has grown to fill everything. Now there is no need for anything to illuminate because this is the same which remains in the darkness as the only luminous truth. It is self-luminous, an existence which proclaims its own existence, a knowledge which is knowledge through and through but not a knowledge of any thing. It is not deep; it is depth itself. It is not valuable; it is value itself. It is not making anyone happy or blissful, because there is no subject/object differentiation to say "now I am blissful." Yet it is devoid of all disturbances.

One who arrives at this comprehension is not assailed with any doubt. There is just Being. All that you can say is "It is." Even that is wrong to an extent, because 'it is' is a kind of judgment. If you can somehow compress Thisness and Isness into one and remain in the silence of pure Beingness, rid of all the colorations given by the sensory system, the mind, and your expectations and prejudices, that is the only reality.

If you are fully merged into that pure state, there is no ideation of the subject as 'I'. Words become useless. One knows the sublimity of height, the oceanic depth, and the boundlessness of infinity. Only after fully knowing what that is will you be able to look upon this world as a passing show, a shadow without substance. At the same time, once you are fully convinced of that, it is a sheer joy to come and play this game of Indra. You are a child playing the game called life on the expanse of nothingness.

This is only a preliminary entry into the true depth. We have to go a few steps more, and they are given in the next couple of verses. It requires more meditation and contemplation. If you touch it even slightly, it is the greatest wonder you have ever experienced. You are transformed.

VERSE 32

*aṛivatu dharmmiyeyalla dharmmamāmī-
yaruḷiya dharmmiyadrśyamakāyālē
dhara mutalāyavayonnumilla tānṅu-
nnoru vaṭivāmaṛḷlivullatōrttiṭēṇam.*

What is known is not that in which all qualities inhere, only the qualities;
as this, in which all qualities are said to inhere, is not visible
earth and all else do not exist;
remember that there is only a form in knowledge which supports.

In order to get the full implication of this verse, you will have to read Sankara's commentary on the fourth section of the first chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. It's a very elaborate piece, and as easily readable as Sankara always is. Or you should very carefully read the *Critique of Pure Reason* by Kant. Both Sankara and Kant want us to examine two aspects in knowledge. One is what we call experience, the other may be called the cause of experience.

We are very familiar with experience: everybody says you should have experience, and that it is very important.

What exactly is experience? In short, it is the knowledge of "what is." This is different from "why it is." What is, is one thing; why it is, is another. I am now talking to you and you are listening to me. You understand that I am talking and you are listening. This is an experience. Why is it that you should experience that I am sitting here and talking while you are listening? Why don't you think this is a phantom sitting here and that you only appear to be listening? Why don't you doubt like that? What necessitates a compelling feeling in you that this is true, that you are not sleeping and this is really a wakeful experience, that all of us are sharing the experience so it cannot be untrue? Where does that kind of compelling necessity come from? Is that also experience? When you and another person have experiences, what makes you feel that it is a universally shared experience rather than a private one? Kant draws a line between what is and why it is. He calls the 'why' an a priori judgment, and the 'what' an a posteriori judgment.

Sankara asks, "What is the source of this thing you call *aṇubhāva* or experience?" The source is the body. All your experiences are derivations of a sensation, a perception or a memory. Whatever grand name you give it, these things happen only as a result of certain bodily states. As they all come from bodily states, they cannot be called the Self. Their source is already contaminated with the properties of the non-Self. Sankara wants us to turn away from experience itself to that which is the cause of experience.

Combining what Sankara and Kant say, Narayana Guru draws a line between *dharmam* and *dharmī*, between the ground and what is manifested on it.

The Western conception of memory likens it to calling a person in from another room. He is not currently present and we want him so we call to him. From the next room he enters, and we identify him as the person we wanted. But is there really anything coming into one part of your brain from another part that we can call the memory bank? Is there a dark chamber somewhere in your brain that is kept locked up, from which something pops out and goes to another part of the brain, saying “here I am!” when you recall? Despite the theory, no such thing has yet been found.

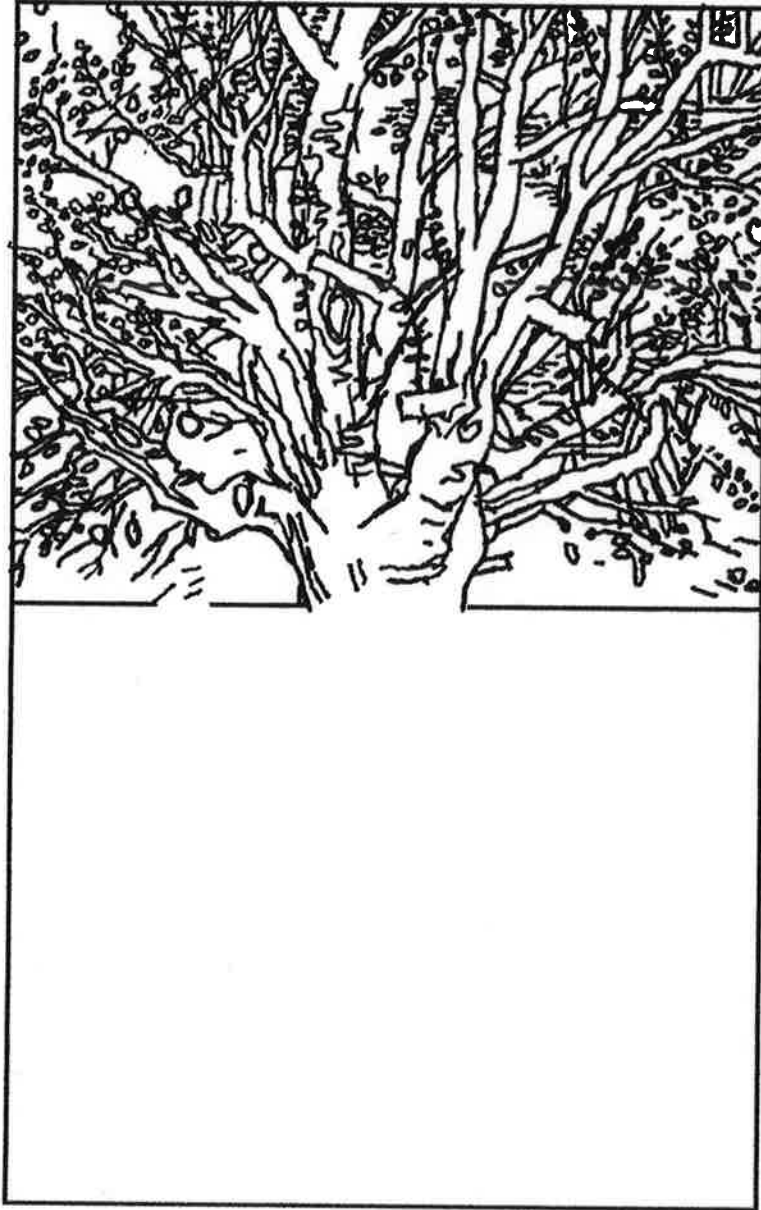
The brain is made up of all this gray matter. When you examine it under the microscope you see nothing but some liquids in which nerve cells are floating around. The nerve cells have ends, called synapses, which interlock with other nerve cells. When something happens, your energy is tickled in a certain way. The only thing experimenters have been able to observe that might correspond to a memory recall is a change in the physical form of synapses. They observed changes in them which were very like ripples on the surface of water or a whirlpool being formed by ripples moving in a certain way. Otherwise everything remains the same. The quality and movement of the ripple, and the bulges and depressions that appear, are imagined to be memories.

This is as stupid as saying that Beethoven’s Appassionata Sonata is caused by twangs on the strings of a piano which cause vibrations of certain frequencies. How can you say that? Naturally to play piano music you will touch keys that are connected to hammers that strike strings to produce vibrations of certain pitches. But it is putting the cart before the horse to say that music comes from the vibrations or that bulges produce memories.

The scientists do admit one element of truth: they say there is no special thing called memory sitting anywhere. There are only bulges and depressions. That is the most one can observe on the basis of the physical and chemical background of knowledge.

Narayana Guru further says *vaṭivu*, meaning a form. In your pure consciousness there is a certain form which comes. When you cut off that portion alone it is what you call empirical knowledge. People who call themselves empiricists concern themselves with the experiential part. Although we call Locke, Hume and Berkeley empiricists, this is an incorrect classification because Locke alone gave primacy to sensuous experience. Hume questioned it and Berkeley rejected it. Simply because of the context in which they were hitting at each other we call them all empiricists, applying a wrong methodology of classification.

If you do not have a background knowledge of all the philosophers, just making references is a waste of time, but I presume you at least know Locke, Hume and Berkeley. According to Locke there are no innate ideas. Man comes to this world with a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate of a mind. A child’s mind has nothing written on it at first. Afterwards he gets exposed to the world through his senses. He formulates ideas from impressions of pain and pleasure, from pleasant and



unpleasant agitations. People speak names to him and show him forms; in this way the coordination of names and forms are established in his mind. Slowly the child comes to relate cause with effect, and after some time it becomes fully indoctrinated in the cause and effect theory.

This is questioned by David Hume: is there any validity in formulating a causal relationship between two things simply because one comes after the other? For instance, we see water boiling and fire burning. The precedent factor was the burning fire, the antecedent was water boiling. So we relate one to the other and say the fire is the cause of the boiling water, and these concomitants always come together. Because of the concomitance of two things in a sequential order we think one is the cause of the other. He says this is only because we are psychologically impressed in this way and that there is no necessity for it.

Necessity is a principle which was brought to formal thinking by Descartes. He said there is one source of knowledge where your thinking is validated by an evidence which is inherent within, and called it self-evidence. This is found in mathematics. Whichever way you put two plus two, it is always four. It cannot be five or three and a half. There is an inner compulsion for everyone to agree that two and two make four. Such self-evident truth is a mathematical necessity. Hume accepted this, but he asked if there was any mathematical necessity in believing fire boils water. Since other possibilities can be imagined, it is only a psychological necessity.

Thus Locke's empirical stand was questioned and refuted. Even though it was not fully discarded, it was kept suspended by Hume. Then Bishop Berkeley said that what seems to be a universal experience is after all only your private idea. You formulate all your impressions using your own sensory system, so they are modulated within your mind and everything is your own idea. In this respect, although his theme was empiricism, Berkeley should actually be considered an idealist rather than an empiricist.

Kant started where Berkeley left off. When he wrote, he had before him Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Locke, Hume and Berkeley. Sankara had before him the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* people, who said if you do a certain action it should yield a certain result, because every cause should have an effect. That means if you evoke a certain god with a certain mantra, that god should come before you and give you peace. They had formulated an elaborate system based on the psychodynamics of the Word. They saw the earth as a manifestation of water, water as a manifestation of fire, fire as a manifestation of air, air as a manifestation of ether, and the substance of ether as sound. Therefore the whole world is basically made up of sound vibration. If the vibration of sounds can become all the geometrical properties around us, then by hitting them with different kinds of sound their properties can be altered. The *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā's* research went on formulating and structuring sounds that could be used as antidotes. In other words, if one formulation of sound causes this,

this other one will undo it. Then you can redo it in another way. You can create many parallelograms of forces with your sounds. Thus they evolved an elaborate semantic system of mantras. They claimed a relationship between chanting a certain mantra and rain coming, and everyone believed them. They were another kind of empiricists, basing their philosophy on action and experience.

Then the Buddhists came along and said that they didn't agree, that those people were making a duality of subject and object. To them, subject and object are both aspects of the same total reality. Any differentiation between them is at best a kind of quasi-truth, both true and untrue. They summed it all up as ignorance.

Then there were the Sankhyans, who believed neither in action nor the ignorance of the Buddhists. They argued: take anything, take earth. Earth is an element. How many qualities does it have? It has the quality that it can be touched, tasted, smelled, heard, and seen. Then they would analyze its fundamentals until they arrived at the "thing in itself," *tan mātra*. Why does a thing in itself activate? There must be at least two principles, one which gives intelligence for an action and another which gives the capacity for action. A principle of self-luminosity and a principle of self-volition. They called these *purusha* and *prakriti*.

Finally there came another school which maintained there should be some relevancy between one idea and another. Logistic is the most important structural secret by which the relations of things can be understood. They can be grouped by species, which in turn belong to a genus. Within a genus can be many coordinated species. These divisions are made on the basis of specific and general qualities. In this way the whole world was divided into generalities and specificities, and the relationships between them. This is the relation-relata complex. Philosophers of this school are called *Nayayikas*, or *logicians*.

So Sankara had all these schools before him. He put them all on one side and said, "You all line up here. I have to put questions to you." Kant also kept his six empiricists on one side and questioned them. After rigorous and thorough questioning, they both rejected all their predecessors' arguments. Kant said their arguments were all tainted by aspects of their physical and sensual experiences, which they mixed with their knowledge. Sankara said essentially the same thing: "All that you say is tainted by experiences that can be traced to your bodily consciousness or an ego factor."

The cream of the best things said by these two grand philosophers, one of the East and one of the West, is expressed by this one verse of Narayana Guru. He says all our experiences are of the *dharmā* and not of the *dharmī* because the *dharmī* is not amenable to our experiences.

The other day we saw how we can affiliate ourselves with body consciousness and the social ego. These two affiliations can cause many modes of thinking and judgment within us. What we call our meditation is no meditation at all. It is only certain body postures; it is being self-conscious about many of our physical aspects such as breathing, sitting in a certain way, or imagining a certain part of the body.

We think that directing the mind inward means actually looking inward at such and such a place, which is essentially an action. Thus we are doing an exercise, not meditating. Sankara asked, "Why do you call it meditation? It is fun. It is some physical exercise. At best it is a psychological exercise. Even so, it has nothing to do with the Self."

Real meditation is not very easy. First you must drop from your mind all the names that you know, including your own. Drop not only the names of persons and things but also names of ideas, such as compassion, patience or whatever. I don't believe you've given up all names, but let us tentatively suppose you no longer know any nomenclature. Nomenclature means a label which you give with a sound or an oral or written sign.

Now drop from your mind all memories of forms. You should now not be able to say "Deborah" or recall a form which conforms to Deborah. Forget the distinction of past, present and future. Efface your location, such as Hall Street House, Portland. Next throw away all directions: north, south, east, west, and above and below.

When I ask you to give something up, you suddenly think of just that. It was not previously in your mind. You poor people are not thinking of your breathing at all until I say to forget it. Breathing is an action. Along with breathing, give up the whole world of action, any kind of movement. Now cancel away the duality of cause and effect. Forget that you are capable of knowing, feeling, breathing. Erase the distinction between 'I' and 'the other'. Make the usage of 'I' totally meaningless. In short, all the injunctions I have been giving you are not to do anything, but to do away with everything. You are not asked to think, but not to think. You are not asked to recall, but not to remember; not asked to win, but not to win.

Suppose we have achieved such a state, even though we clearly have not. It is evident that even in this ideal state there will be a presentation of consciousness. You can do away with virtually everything, but still a residual space and duration will remain for your awareness to exist. It is an irremediable impenetrability.

Kant says this has a categorical nature, a persistence that is unavoidable and universal. He argues two necessary conditions to go along with the quality of a priori judgment. One is universality, and the other is that it is imperative, categorically imperative. Sankara quotes the Upanishads, which say that to meditate should not be taken as an injunction. If you take it as an injunction you are merely thinking of a bodily function. How can knowledge be, other than by being knowledge? This is apprehended through what is called meditation.

The two qualities which Kant mentioned—the imperativeness of knowledge which is luminous through its own nature, and the universality which operates in and through all forms of manifestation all the time—roughly correspond to the images used by Narayana Guru throughout this work. At the core of all is the *karu*, or the manifesting yolk which is shining both inside and outside as the supernal sun in the firmament of consciousness; as the one light that enables you to think

your many thoughts, wake and sleep, eat and mate; as the one which is sitting as a witness beneath the tree of manifestation; as the one identity when two people say "I"; as the one ocean which floods and fills the vast desert of our lives, turning every grain of sand into a pearl of priceless worth.

All through our study we have been seeing this one light which is us. But as soon as we act, we miss it. We pollute it with our sensations, with our body consciousness, with names and forms, time and space, cause and effect. In fact it is the most spontaneous thing, happening without any effort on your part to sit cross-legged, to concentrate on your heartbeat, or to breathe in a way that tortures your nostrils. It is always there by itself. You don't have to do anything. Yet it is the most difficult thing to know because you are already caught in the grip of the competitive world where body, mind and senses are focused on values which are extraneous to your own Self. To reclaim yourself from that feverishness, to bring you back to the pure, spontaneous happiness within: that is the only reason you have to sit cross-legged, turn inward or regulate your breath. It is all so you won't run into the marketplace again and again and hit your head against things which have no value for you.

First you imagine a certain necessity. It begins to haunt you. It comes like a devil and catches you. Then you get caught in the frenzy of it. *Karma* is waiting for someone to say there is a necessity, then it pounces upon them.

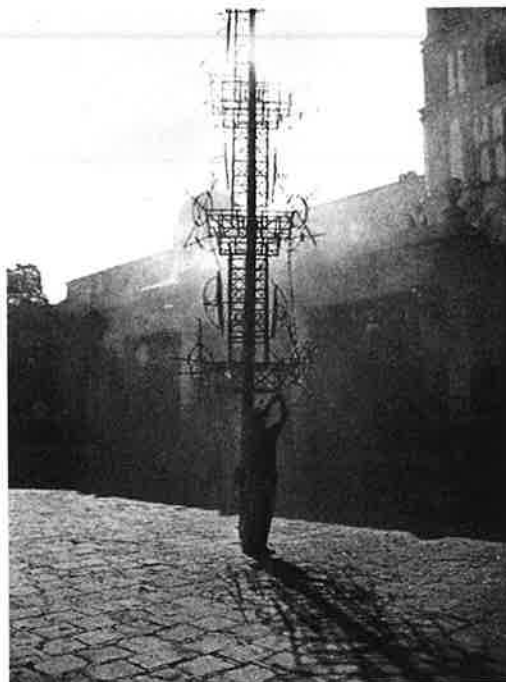
Not being caught up in action is not an excuse to be lazy. Please try to understand what the Guru is saying here. It is almost impossible, since for at least the last one hundred years in European universities the poor minds of every man and woman have been put on the anvil of conformity and beaten into the shape of the empirical religion. This verse looks so simple, so innocent, but in a way it makes all the difference. So at least for a fraction of a minute, enjoy the great freedom of your own Self by throwing out all this garbage called name and form, cause and effect, obligation and society.

IN THE SPIRIT OF SAN MIGUEL

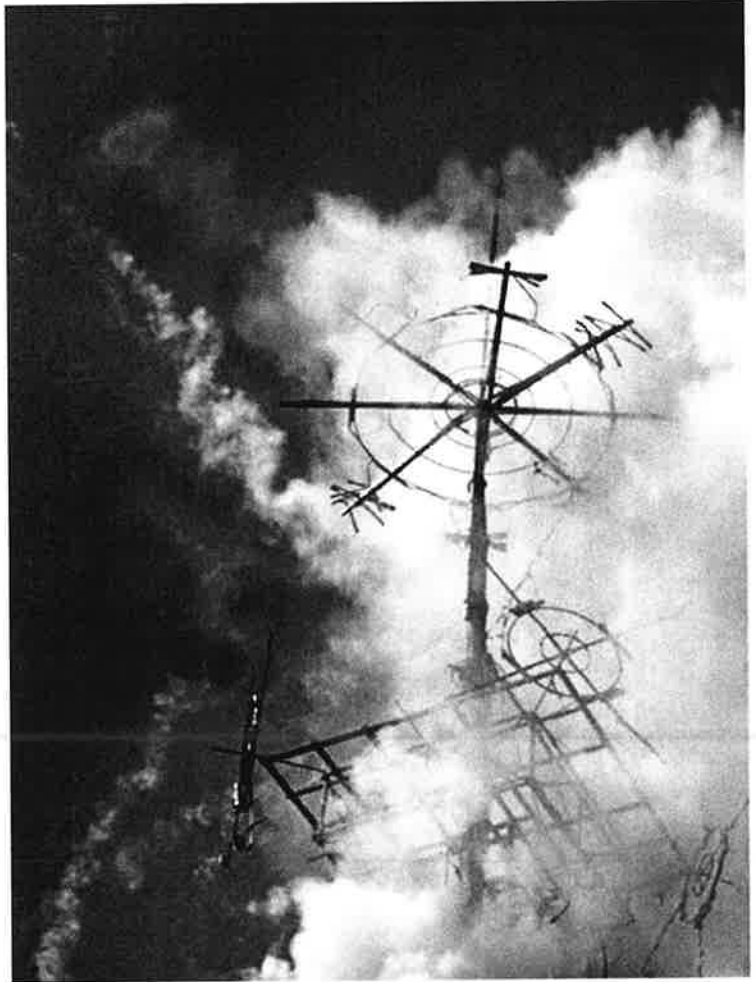
BY SUSAN PLUM

The cueteros, or firework builders, start their day at dawn on the birthday of Saint Michael, San Miguel de Allende's patron saint. They drive the fireworks tower, the castillo, from Comonfort, a town about 30 minutes from San Miguel, the night before and begin assembling the structure. The castillos are made of carizo, a local cane indigenous to the region, and ironwork.

At eleven sharp in the morning of the 29th of September, the chief cuetero walks toward the castillo with a flint or match and lights the first wheel on the tower. Bells begin to ring, filling the air with anticipation. The castillo is creating a whirling sound: the spirit of St. Michael is being awakened in order for him to be present for his mass. It is the only day of the year that a castillo is lit during the daylight hours. At noon the mass begins, the church is filled with all the San Miguelenses celebrating St. Michael's birthday!







ADVAITA DĪPIKĀ

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY

GURU NARAYANA PRASAD

VERSE 13

Entirely separated out one after another
and one step after another,
The world, lo and behold, it ceases to be!
Those separated-out parts too, further inquired into, cease to be real.
Everything thus is but self-aware consciousness, the Real, alone.

The knotty problem we are trying to resolve here is this: the world appears to be real to the senses even after one becomes convinced of it being unreal. Why is it so? Answering it, verse 11 pointed out that what appears to the senses as the world is nothing but one consciousness, or *sat-cit-ānanda*. That this is one causal Reality alone, that it is what exists underlying all that appears to be, and that the visible world does not exist apart from and other than as a manifest form of that one causal Reality was underscored in the last verse. In the present verse, the Guru pinpoints how one can become enlightened and resolve this otherwise perplexing problem by the method of analysis well familiar to modern science. Only that such analysis has to be an open one unconditioned by preconceived notions and prejudices.

Seen from afar, a forested range of hills will look like a single entity having a bluish hue, shaped according to the nature of hilltops and valleys. Come very close, and what we see will be neither the forest nor the hills nor the one, but will be wildly growing trees and undergrowth, green in color. Forest seen, trees go unnoticed; trees seen, forest goes unnoticed. The case is similar with the perception of the one Reality and its innumerable manifest forms. The Reality seen, the manifest forms become unreal; the manifest forms noticed, the Reality goes unnoticed. In this example, the forest stands for the universal and trees for the particular. Not stopping our analysis at the point of the particular, let us go on with our analysis further, as was done in verse 3. Then we see that the piece of cloth loses its existence in the being of yarns; yarns lose their existence in the being of cotton fibers; cotton fibers lose their existence in the being of basic elements; the basic elements lose their existence in the being of consciousness unanalyzable further, and that which

has analyzable constituent parts thus is unreal. The undeniably existing Reality, one indivisible Reality, is consciousness alone, which the Guru calls here *nija-bodham*. *Nija*, in the Sanskrit and Malayalam languages, means “one’s own” as well as “the real.” The word thus means “one’s own consciousness—the Reality that is Consciousness,” rendered here as “self-aware consciousness, the Real.”

The I-sense of each individual entity, the consciousness that is conscious of its own beingness in essence, is none other than this one Consciousness, the ultimate Reality. Only that perceiving it as Real requires an intuitive, penetrative eye.

That the mutual eclipsing of the part and the whole, of appearance and reality, is due to *avidyā* (ignorance), that the one consciousness Reality continues to exist even after this *avidyā* and its effects vanish, is given emphasis in the next verse.

VERSE 14

Yarn is what is real in cloth;
Water is what is real in bubbles;
Lo and behold! Similar is the way the world ceases to be real,
For it (their seeming duality) is caused merely by *avidyā*.
Meditatively searched, it (*avidyā*), along with its effects, becomes extinct;
Still a lone Reality continues to be: the one Consciousness.

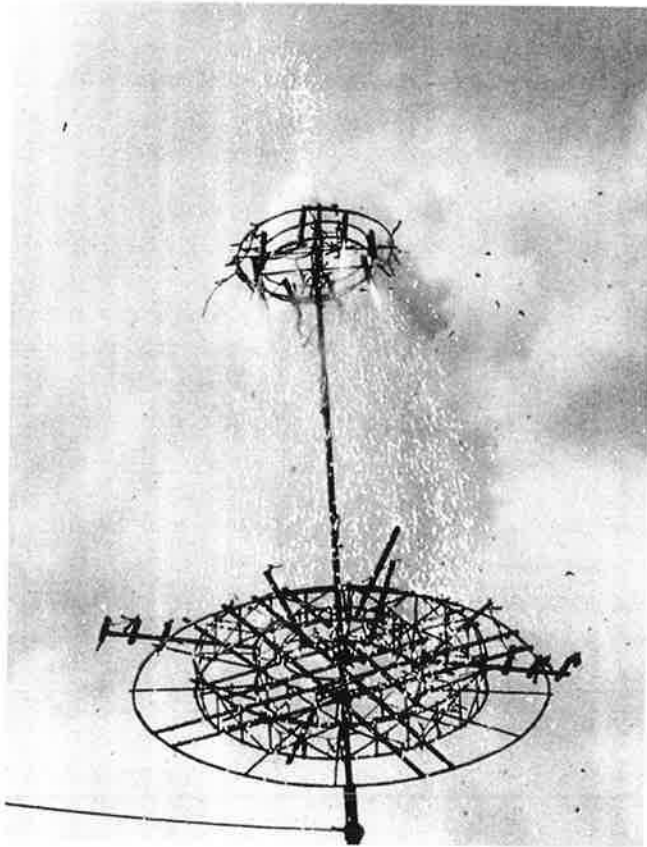
The Guru, continuing the answer to the question of how the world continues to be perceived by senses even after becoming convinced of it being unreal, gives further clarification with the help of two analogies. The first again is that of yarn and cloth. What is real in cloth is yarn alone. Yarn thus is reality and cloth appearance. Seeing the cloth eclipses the reality of yarns, and seeing yarn eclipses the appearance of cloth. The fact, nevertheless, is that the two are inseparable. Even after understanding yarn to be real, the cloth continues to appear as cloth, no one taking the trouble to take the yarns apart.

The other analogy is that of water and bubble. It is the eternal water-substance that assumes the fleeting form of bubbles. Actual separating out of bubbles from water is impossible; their separateness has meaning only as an idea.

The same is true with the apparent world and the Consciousness-Reality. Separating them out is not possible, their separateness being mere human ideation. Without the consciousness-substance the world never appears to be; without appearing as the world, the Reality never remains purely abstract either. The Reality, in Vedanta, is known as *sat*, and appearance as *bhāva*. Thinkers, biased by either, create theories of correlating the two. Between two separately existing entities alone is possible any correlating. Imaginarily separating the inseparable

and then trying to put them together reasonably is the wrong all of them do. This imaginary separation happens unawares only because of the *avidyā* (nescience) they are still subject to. This *avidyā* is defined by the Guru himself elsewhere as “that knowledge by which the Self (*ātmā*), the Real, is taken to be unreal, and the non-Self (*anātmā*), the unreal, is taken to be real.” Yarn and cloth are inseparable; *sat* and *bhāva* are inseparable; reality and appearance are inseparable; cause and effect are inseparable. The lamp of nonduality, *advaitā dipikā*, becoming lit within alone makes transparent the inseparable oneness (*advaita*) of the apparent world and the Reality. The meditative search for that illumination is what is referred to in the original text as *ālocanā*, and freely rendered here as “meditatively searched.”

The extinction of *avidyā* thus attained results in the vanishing of the dualities of appearance and reality, cause and effect, *sat* and *bhāva*, subject and object, and the like. What remains then is only the effulgence of nondual being of consciousness. It is the manifest form of this consciousness or *ātmā* alone, that is perceived as the world, as the phenomenon of life in it and its problems and pleasures and pains. It being so remains simply oblivious to us only because of *avidyā*.



COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

At this year's Guru Puja at Bainbridge Island Gurukula, after the *homam* the participants shared both experiences and readings that were helpful in their daily lives. As we sat in the afternoon light, talking and listening, a wonderful community conversation took place. Many suggested that we print it in the magazine so that others could also participate.

Nancy Yeilding

Usually, after the *homam* (fire ceremony) we do some creative activity together as a celebration and expression of that which guides and inspires us—the Source of all creativity that is equally within each of us and pervades everything around us. This year we'd like to do something a little different, but with the same aspiration. Each of us is a treasure house of great value, holding jewels of truth, goodness, and beauty, but we rarely have the chance to focus on them together. Today we are gathered for Guru Puja, "honoring guru." Guru literally means "dispeller of darkness." We invite each of you to join in that honoring and celebration by sharing a reflection of the light that dispels the darkness of ignorance, of suffering—that which guides, inspires, consoles—especially that has been very meaningful to you in the last year. It may take the form of a wisdom saying or anecdote, a scriptural passage, an image, the lines of a poem or song . . . whatever the form, it is a precious opportunity to hear from all.

Carolyn Eden

I would like to begin this afternoon with some poems of the Persian poet Hafiz, who I have been reading in *The Gift*, translated by Daniel Ladinsky.

We Might Have to Medicate You
Resist your temptation to lie
By speaking of separation from God,
Otherwise,
We might have to medicate
You.
In the ocean
A lot goes on beneath your eyes.
Listen,

They have clinics there too
For the insane
Who persist in saying things like:
I am independent from the
Sea,
God is not always around
Gently
Pressing against
My body.”

If God Invited You to a Party
If God
Invited you to a party
And said,
Everyone
In the ballroom tonight
Will be my special
Guest,”
How would you then treat them
When you
Arrived?
Indeed, indeed!
And Hafiz knows
There is no one in this world
Who
Is not upon
His Jeweled Dance
Floor.

The Sun Never Says
Even
After
All this time
The sun never says to the earth,
“You owe
Me.”
Look
What happens
With a love like that,
It lights the
Whole Sky.

Bushra Azzouz

For the last year or so, I have been editing a film project which engages Turkish and Greek Cypriot women in discussing their attempts at reunifying their divided island and bridging years of hurt, distrust and lies. The women are beautiful, wise and funny in the face of adversity, and I enjoy spending time with them.

I want to repeat two stories told by Fatma and Zehra. Fatma's story is about an event that happened soon after the partition of the island in 1974 into a Turkish North and Greek South. People had to be displaced according to their ethnicity. Fatma's story:

"My mom and my grandma's new village is Exemedos. The new name is Dozova, Mesaria plateau. In this village they gave a house to everybody, but in the house they gave to my grandma there was a dog that didn't know Turkish, of course. So I was saying "Out" in Turkish and he was just looking. We realized, Ah maybe in Greek. So we learned how to say go out, sit down, all these words in Greek and the dog obeyed them. Then in time she learned Turkish, and so began to obey the Turkish also. Then she gets so old and forgets Turkish. So we begin once again to say "exo, exo Rex" ("out" in Greek) because otherwise she is just sitting and looking at us. Then she dies and mom gets so sad about it."

Zehra's story is about returning many years later to her grandmother's house in the south where Greek refugees from the North had been settled:

"I was a member of the folk association in the North, and we were invited here for a limited amount of hours. Aristonomos, one of the members of Sigali, his mother lives somewhere here and he said, 'Zehra, do you want me to take you to your house?' And I said, 'Yes!' And without legality, nothing, we came here, we knocked at the door and we saw Vassiliki and Lefki. I was shocked when I saw that Vassiliki looked like a younger period of my grandmother. It was like a young grandmother in my house. And they said, 'Welcome to your house.' But for me, this house belongs to two families, the family before 1974 and the family after 1974. And I feel like some of my relatives are living here, I feel like that."

Andy Larkin

I was just in the Midwest visiting my older parents. My mother wanted to give me all the family photographs and said if I didn't take them she would just throw them away. One of them is of me and my brother sitting on a dock when we were young and looking into the lake's water. I exactly remember that picture, that lake, and how absolutely clear it was. You could see all the way to the bottom. How many times I have remembered that lake and the clarity of the water, seeing all the way through it to the bottom.

Stella Tyson

I know the pain of being alone, separated from your own people, land and faith. For the last 18 years, almost half of my lifetime, I have spent my life here, in

Wenatchee, Washington. I know how in daily life in the States race plays a roll in everything I (and my kids too) experience in society.

In India it is religion that is like race in America. The main religions are Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Coming from an old, very traditional Catholic family, we are somewhat afraid of the Hindu way of looking at life. Guru Nitya is the first one who gave a light to me and gave me the freedom to be a Catholic and still study Hindu philosophy. As a poet, philosopher and a great father figure, I have known him and admired him. I feel so much love towards to all of you when I think of how much Nitya loved all of you. I loved him dearly!

And what I am now saying to my dad, who is starting a new life is: One never chooses happiness if you are hurting others or giving pain to others. It is not true happiness and it is not worth having. Then life is not balanced. My deep love and good thoughts are always with you. Have a beautiful life!

Anita Carpenter

I spend a lot of time driving my car over the Interstate bridges on the Columbia River as I commute from Vancouver to Portland. For some reason, insight and inspiration often come to me when I am driving my car and I've shared some of my experiences with my classmates in the Portland Gurukula. Out of concern for my safety, they have cautioned me to stay alert and not be too caught up in my reveries.

Recently, I was driving home from class late in the evening with a classmate. The harvest moon was radiantly beautiful that night but I was unable to really look at it as I was responsibly staying alert to driving. My passenger tried to tell me about it but it just wasn't the same. I was so disappointed. I felt that I had missed something special.

The next week, I was driving home again from class late in the evening, but this time alone. The bridge traffic was stopped to allow a ship to pass through. As it happened, my car was halted just at the peak of the bridge. At first, I thought, oh, I'm going to be so late getting home tonight. Then, I glanced out my car window and caught sight of another beautiful harvest moon. I turned off the engine in my car and rolled down my window.

The moon filled the night sky and appeared to be sitting right on top of the water reflecting dazzling dancing diamonds on its now-gentle surface. The moonlight seemed to beam directly onto/into me on the front seat where I sat. The gentle late summer breeze was warm and luxurious and I was utterly enchanted. I felt that special connection or oneness with the universe that we often speak of in class, and I was reminded how such experiences can happen at any moment if I only remain open to them.

Bill Hughes

When Nancy asked all of us to share a reflection of a light that inspires or guides us and has been particularly influential this year I was reminded of a particular quote from Narayana Guru. Several years ago a friend who shared a conversation about the teachings of Narayana Guru calligraphed a favorite saying about the nature of devotion and our day to day practice: “Continuous contemplation on the true nature of the Self is *bhakti*.”

The saying hung on our wall for many years and continues to remind me to remember my true nature and the essence of being.

We are currently reading the *Darśana Mālā* in the Portland Gurukula classes. In Nitya’s introduction to the *Bhakti Darśanam* he begins:

“Love, devotion, compassion, empathy, and consequent rapture of mind come spontaneously rather than as a result of mechanically practiced discipline—that comes as a result of the evoking of a deep interest which is centered around a value that is most dear to one’s mind.”

That quote continues to guide me as I seek to remember this most basic devotion in the hope that more of these values that I hold dear will indeed come spontaneously.

Scott Teitsworth

I would like to read out an excerpt from my online commentary on the Gita. This is from Chapter II, verse 9, describing the moment when Arjuna has just presented himself to Krishna as a prospective disciple:

Sanjaya said: Having spoken thus to Krishna, Arjuna, the Terror of the Foe, saying “I will not fight,” lapsed finally into silence.

The wording of this verse leaves the impression that Arjuna is sulky and sullen, and his silence is a negative state of withdrawal. Hardly. He has just finished stating his case perfectly and asked Krishna to accept him as a disciple. His silence is wholly proper. He must now listen with all his heart. Anything more he might say would be carping.

The ability to listen is actually a rare and exceptional accomplishment. The usual way for humans is to mediate everything coming into the ear with a stream of commentary inside the head. We are busy interpreting all input in terms of what we already know. This inner voice must be brought to a standstill before anything new can get past the filter. It would be tragic if the flow of grace from the Absolute were to be changed into a sterile image stuck in a pigeonhole in a person’s memory banks, but unless the interpretive process is interrupted that’s exactly what would

happen. Listening with an open mind is thus the ultimate prerequisite for learning from a guru. Religious warnings against idolatry refer to this same problem. Instead of admitting the light of the divine into ourselves, we make a “graven image” of interpretive words as a substitute. The substitute is only a poor caricature of the original, but it satisfies us enough to turn to it instead of the light.

Arjuna’s silence means he has disconnected his graven image-making apparatus, opening himself to whatever ineffable grace Krishna, representing the Absolute, will offer.

Many seekers approach a guru eager to obtain some benefit, wealth or power or a spiritual talent, for instance. Desire-based seeking lies wholly outside the wisdom context. While there are many purported benefits to spiritual life, telepathy or clairvoyance for instance, they are to be treated as incidental side effects of a proper focus on the undifferentiated Absolute. In a sense, having a personal desire means you haven’t yet become quiet in the way Arjuna has. You are still packing baggage. The Gita makes it clear that all such desires are to be relinquished as a prerequisite to instruction. Decommissioning all possible alternatives to arrive at a state of psychic balance is the Upanishadic method Arjuna has just demonstrated.

An extraordinary example of dialectic occurs in this verse, where Arjuna is described as the Terror of the Foe and simultaneously avers that he will not fight. These contrary movements cancel each other out to bring him to the expectant neutrality from which his discipleship will grow and flourish.

Additionally, a couple of people this weekend have mentioned how for many, many years they have felt like outsiders, banished to the periphery of the in-crowd of the Gurukula. I want to remind everyone what Peggy said a couple of years before, that one of the things we all have in common is that we are outsiders, and that we should be aware of each other on that basis. What she said has stuck with



me because I had felt that way from the beginning also, even though later on others began to imagine I was part of what they were outside of themselves. So I add my own thought, that this is a habitual state of mind akin to our feelings of distance from society, friends, or even the Absolute. We humans maintain our separate identity through positing an imaginary “other” to which we feel both attraction and repulsion, and many of us are very attached to our vision of ourselves as outsiders. Whether we eventually overcome this imaginary stumbling block or not is largely up to us, but knowing that this is a common attitude should sensitize us as to how others may feel, no matter what endeavor we are engaged in.

Lisa Berman

Brian and I have been doing work in German/Jewish Reconciliation for a number of years now. Last year we lead a delegation called Compassionate Journey in Berlin, Germany. Our group listened one morning to an ex-SS officer speaking of his experiences during World War II, as he expressed his deep regret and sorrow for what he and his country had done. The next morning we listened to an amazing survival story of a Jewish Holocaust survivor. When he finished talking to our group, there was a knock at the door and the German officer came back in. He was so touched by our group that he wanted to bring us a gift and introduce his wife to us. There stood the Holocaust survivor and the former Nazi. They actually held each others’ hands and listened to each other. It was very moving and profound moment of reconciliation for all of us.

Brian Berman

I didn’t share anything in the *homan* that morning. As I mentally reviewed all the profound and inspirational lessons of life that I have learned, with a main focus



on the gifts received from Guru Nitya, I continued to hear similar messages in each person's sharing. I continued to rest in the stillness of having my voice spoken by each one in our group. Then I remembered a time in San Francisco where, in one of our gatherings, I asked Guru Nitya an important question about my health and he gracefully moved to some other point. I had directed the question and it had been heard by everyone and yet there was no response and no acknowledgement of that question. I sat with the not knowing, I sat with my impatience to know the answer to my question. I sat and surrendered to being without my desire to know. Later at lunch, Guru Nitya gave me a book and asked me to read a specific chapter. It was from his Guru and the essence of the reading was that the greatest gift of the Guru is his silence. *Aum Tat Sat Aum.*

Brenda Erickson

A few weeks ago I fell and broke my arm and have had a very hard time since then. I have had to learn the lesson of accepting, of learning to accept others' help. I have had to let go of my control in life, of being in charge of whatever situation, and accept support and care. I'm still learning that lesson.

I would also like to share a quote from Henri Bergson that was in a review I was reading and speaks to something very important.

Suppose then, we imagine a mind always thinking of what it has just done and never of what it is doing, like a song which lags behind its accompaniment. Let us try to picture to ourselves a certain inborn lack of elasticity of both senses and intelligence, which brings it to pass that we continue to see what is no longer visible, to hear what is no longer audible, to say what is no longer to the point: in short, to adapt ourselves to a past and therefore imaginary situation, when we ought to be shaping our conduct in accordance with the reality which is present.

Moni Pillai

This last week there was a tragic event in my apartment building and I went to spend the night with some friends. While I was there I was reading through some old *Gurukulam* magazines and found this little story by Guru Nitya. I felt that it

spoke to the events that had just happened, in fact spoke to so many situations and relationships. Here is the story.

The Indelible Impression

Once there was a yogi called Atita. He had a water pot made out of coconut shell. Once he went to a river to take his bath. The name of the river was Karmavahini (carrier of karma). He placed his water pot on the bank of the river and took his bath. After the bath he decided to do his meditation there. While Atita was sitting with his eyes closed, the water level of the river rose and carried away the water pot.

A fairy called Kusumangi (soft like a flower) came to the same river to take her bath. She had with her a beautiful glass bowl. While she was taking her bath the bowl slipped into the river and started floating.

In the river there was a dam called Nyatighatta (juncture of fate). There the water pot and the glass bowl came close to each other. Both of them were caught in an eddy and for awhile they were going round and round. The glass bowl had never liked to be alone and now she found a good friend in the water pot. Encouraged by the love of the glass bowl, the water pot came very close.

Then the glass bowl said, "My good friend, your nature is always to float in water and my nature is brittle. If you come too close to me, I may break. So we have to have a companionship. We should not touch each other. Be close but not too close." The water pot was very thoughtful. He said, "What you say is most real. We are now at the fateful dam of Nyatighatta. We do not know which way we will go when we are released from this eddy. Even if we are destined to be separated from each other, our pure and innocent love which we cherish in our hearts will always keep us together."

Just as he said this, he was surprised to see the yogi Atita picking him up. And, of course, the fairy Kusumangi was there to take away her glass bowl. Each walked in a different direction. They were never again to come together. But in the heart of the water pot, there was a numinous impression of the glass bowl and in the heart of the glass bowl there was a numinous impression of the water pot.

Sraddha Durand

I have an excerpt from *The Path to Tranquility, Daily Wisdom* by the Dalai Lama. I feel that this gathering of kindred souls is high on my list of what will bring about happiness.

One great question underlies our experience, whether we think about it consciously or not: what is the purpose of life? From the moment of birth, every human being wants happiness and does not want suffering. Neither social conditioning nor education nor ideology affects this. From the very core of our being, we simply desire contentment. Therefore, it is important to discover what will bring about the greatest degree of happiness.

Peter Moras

The poems of Hafiz that Carolyn read lead me to the poems of Kabir that I want to share today. They are from *The Kabir Book* by Robert Bly.

19

Friend, hope for the Guest while you are alive.
Jump into experience while you are alive!
Think . . . and think . . . while you are alive.
What you call "salvation" belongs to the time before
Death.
If you don't break your ropes while you're alive,
do you think
ghosts will do it after?
The idea that the soul will join with the ecstatic
just because the body is rotten –
that is all fantasy.
What is found now is found then.
If you find nothing now,
you will simply end up with an apartment in the City
of Death.
you will have the face of satisfied desire.
So plunge into the truth, find out who the Teacher is,
Believe in the Great Sound!
Kabir says this: When the Guest is being searched for,
it is the intensity of the longing for the Guest that
does all the work.
Look at me, and you will see a slave of that intensity.

25

Are you looking for me? I am in the next seat. My shoulder is against yours.
You will not find me in stupas, not in Indian shrine
rooms, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals:
not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding
around your own neck, nor in eating nothing but
vegetables.
When you really look for me, you will see me
instantly –
You will find me in the tiniest house of time.
Kabir says: Student, tell me, what is God?
He is the breath inside the breath.

I laugh when I hear that the fish in the water is
 thirsty.
 You don't grasp the fact that what is most alive of all
 is inside your own house;
 and so you walk from one holy city to the next with a
 confused look!
 Kabir will tell you the truth: go wherever you like, to
 Calcutta or Tibet;
 If you can't find where your soul is hidden,
 For you the world will never be real!

Steve Bryson

I would have loved to have known Nataraja Guru, but I never met him. However, I love this quote of his, "Every act is a mistake." This is so freeing, it lets us go ahead and do what we love, since every act is a mistake.

Ruth Tyson

I have a book at home with pictures of cats in it and different sayings with the photos. On one of the pages, it has a cat with a butler in the background with a champagne bottle, and the saying is, "Humans are the only animal who doesn't know that the purpose of life is to enjoy it."

Alex Tyson

At home in a birthday book we have, in an astrology book, there is a saying about my birthday. It says I can be one of two things. Either I am talkative and excited and like to be praised or I just get F's in class. So I'm glad that I'm wild and talkative and I don't want to get F's in school!

Lily Mongeau

These last two years I was teaching in a small town in rural south Texas as part of Teach America. It was a very difficult experience and I found it hard to stay there. Often on my way to work, I would think, "Why am I staying? I could just turn and drive North and leave." But I never did that, hard as it was to stay.

What was it that kept me there? I realized that I stayed because of various people—students, friends, fellow teachers. I had gone into the program thinking that I would help others, I would make a big change, I would do so-and-so. Changes happened and both the students and I learned. But at the end what made it possible for me to stay was other people.

Nancy Richmond

This summer Bill and I were in Ashland at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and saw the William Saroyan play *Tracy's Tiger*. In the playbill there was a wonderful quote from Saroyan on life and living that I would like to share.

In the time of your life, live—so that in that wondrous time you shall not add to the misery and sorrow of the world, but shall smile to the infinite variety and mystery of it. Seek goodness everywhere, and when it is found, bring it out of its hiding place and let it be free and unashamed. Neither love nor hate, nor any order of intense adherence to personal involvement in human experience, may be so apt to serve the soul as this freedom and this necessity to be kind. Encourage virtue in whatever heart it may have been driven into secrecy and sorrow by the shame and terror of the world. Try as much as possible to be wholly alive, with all your might, and when you laugh, laugh like hell and when you get angry, get good and angry. Try to be alive. You will be dead soon enough. Good people are good because they've come to wisdom through failure. We get very little wisdom from success, you know.

Deborah Buchanan

I would like to share two of my experiences with Guru Nitya. The first is something that would happen whenever I was with him and I would make some pronouncement, a declaration of something I thought was true. His response would be a quiet nod and an “Oh, really....” I’m not sure if he ever even said those exact words, but there was always a sense of questioning any finalized statement. Could your knowledge, could truth, be encapsulated so easily? Was there something more to understand? This attitude served to push me out of an easy satisfaction, towards something more subtle, more nuanced.



My second experience was a dream I had of Guru Nitya after he died. It is the only time he's ever appeared in my dreams and was at a time I was very unhappy. In the dream, Nitya was sitting in a circle with many other people and I was sitting right behind him. He turned around to look directly at me. He said nothing but just looked intently at me and smiled, this great smile of joy and happiness. That smile was the answer to all my difficulties, all my questions. It was as if he was saying, "This is where you can be, this is You, just be here." The feeling I had from that was so reassuring, so joyful. It didn't argue but simply was.

I feel these two attitudes balance each other out—or rather balance me out.

Jane Swanson

I have only a short quote, but one which I feel is relevant to our discussions here today. It is from a longer poem by Theodore Roethke: "In a dark time the eye begins to see."

Spruce Shoenemann

I was listening to the phrase Dispeller of Darkness as a definition of the Guru. And I was thinking of the recent lunar eclipse. I went out to see it in the middle of the night, and at the fullest point the earth's shadow was completely covering the moon, with the light from the moon showing as an orange glow at the edges. It was so amazing I called up my girlfriend who is living in Colorado and asked her to go and look at the eclipse. Here we were, separated by about a thousand miles, and yet looking at the same moon.

Calder Hughes

I also was thinking of the term Dispeller of Darkness, and in a way find it difficult to talk about that in this group, since all of the people here have been just that, dispellers of darkness, for me in my life.



Gayatri Eassey

I came to many Guru Pujas when I was little but don't remember much other than the homam ceremony. I am here to experience and remember all the other parts of this celebration and to participate in it as an adult.

Bob Tyson

When I was younger I came across a photograph of a middle aged man that had a saying of his printed underneath. I read that sentence and laughed. But it is a *mahāvākya*, a spiritual dictum and teaching, which has been very important in my life. The man was Meher Baba and his message was, "Don't worry, be happy." It is a teaching that is both consoling and challenging. It is consoling to know you don't need to worry, that you can be happy. And it is a challenge to let go of your worries and preoccupations, to let yourself sink into your natural happiness. So even now, after so many years, I find great meaning in that one phrase.

Anne Pangborn

This is really my first Guru Puja and I have had a wonderful time and can't remember when I have laughed more and felt more connected. I marvel at this group of souls who have come great distances in time and space, from vastly divergent backgrounds, to form this other, vibrant entity.

Before Bill lit the fire, I asked if I could put two things in it. In the Apache tradition, tobacco is offered to the gods, some to the fire, some to the ground. It's my way of saying, Thank you for the blessings bestowed upon me, the acts of grace, unearned and unexpected, for the forgiveness shown by the universe for my ignorance and stupidity, and the forgiveness and love of my friends who are my true family. The second thing I put in the fire was a sprinkling of the ashes of the dearest dog friend I ever had. He was special to me above all other creatures and died at 18 months of age. When I put his ashes into the fire, I thought, Now you have been here with me too. Fly free, Captain, fly free.

We recently had a ceremony at Our House (for AIDS patients) in Portland, in which an African tribal priest performed a ceremony asking us to call on the souls of all who had passed. "They are here. We need them. We need their strength to help us bear what we must. Call upon them now." Then slowly, as he chanted, people began to call out the names of friends lost to AIDS and all of the other means by which we leave this life. A blessing was said after each name. It was very moving and powerful and comforting.

I have had two difficult years filled with many losses in which I have longed for the wisdom and strength and comfort of departed souls. At the Guru Puja I can feel their presence in the company of this group who, like me, seek the unity of all things and are occasionally blessed to find it together.

Desiree Hunter

For the past few years we have been subjected to constant fear-mongering from our government and the media, used to justify acts of war and torture in our name. This tactic can only work if we believe that our lives should be exempt from fear, if we believe that we are entitled to live a life free from being afraid. As if such a thing were possible! Or even desirable, as William Stafford reveals in the following poem.

For My Young Friends Who Are Afraid

There is a country to cross you will
find in the corner of your eye, in
the quick slip of your foot—air far
down, a snap that might have caught.
And maybe for you, for me, a high, passing
voice that finds its way by being
afraid. That country is there, for us,
carried as it is crossed. What you fear
will not go away: it will take you into
yourself and bless you and keep you.
That's the world, and we all live there.

Nancy Yeilding

I would like to share two verses from Narayana Guru's *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, in reverse order from how they appear. The first says:

As countless grains of sand ceaselessly blown onto
the surface of a pond generate ripple after ripple,
by untruths successively blown,
the inner self is transformed from within into various forms.(76)

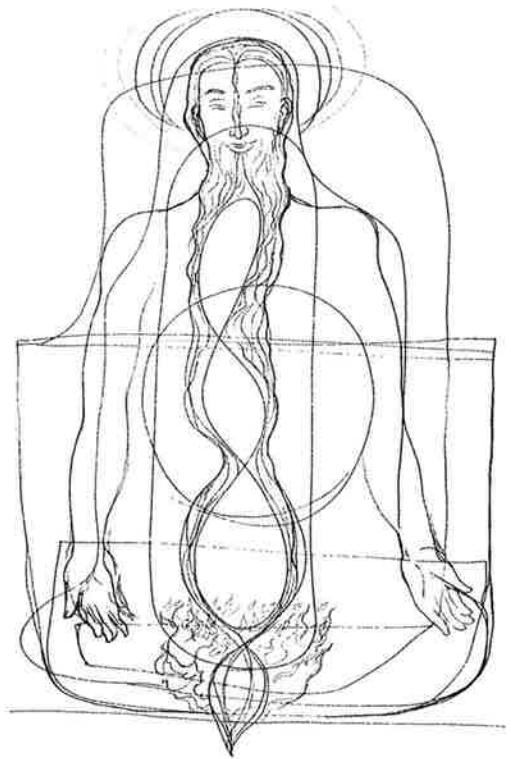
I had an experience similar to Andy's many years ago while hiking in the Sierra Nevada. I was looking into a river rather than a lake, but can still vividly see the beauty of absolutely crystal clear water and the way the light illuminated the rocks and sand at the bottom, as the water flowed, making a play of light waves. The clarity and brilliance of such scenes in nature remind us of the possibility that our inner being can be clear and beautiful. But we are subject to the influences that Narayana Guru describes in this verse: untruths that disturb our surface consciousness, cloud our understanding, and obscure our true Self.

At the same time, as the Guru reminds us in the previous verse, we are (everything is) more than that:

Nature is water, the body is foam, the Self is the depth;
“I am, I am”—thus, a restless repetition like a series of waves;
every inner blossom of knowledge attained is a pearl;
indeed, whatever each finds delight in is the nectar of immortal bliss. (75)

In this verse he uses the image of water to help us see ourselves as integrally part of an all-embracing whole in which our individual beings are like bubbles of foam on the crest of a wave: they seem to be separate bubbles but are at the same time part of water, of Nature. The depth is the universal Self: not a “thing,” but a dimension or quality. It is there in everything. So even in our day to day experiences that come to us as varying thoughts, memories, assessments, and feelings such as “I am hungry, I am happy, I am sad...” we can also see the absolute core. Each “I am” can be seen as a reflection of the “I Am That I Am” of the universal Self. Each time we attune ourselves to the unchanging at the heart of all our changing experiences, it is like seeing a beautiful blossom opening; it is like finding a precious pearl. The wonder Narayana Guru is revealing to us is that this is true everywhere and always—not in some special place or under some special circumstances. The nectar of immortal bliss is right there for us to sip in each moment of our lives.

Thank you all for sharing your precious treasures—your pearls and blossoms—making this a very touching and meaningful honoring of that which dispels the darkness in our lives.



MOTHER IN THE MIDDLE

BY JEAN NORRBY

WHY THIS PLAY?

Like fire that emerges from churning sticks,
the boundless discrimination that arises from contemplatives
burns as the sun that has attained the firmament of supreme consciousness;
to this everything is fuel.
(*Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, verse 82)

It has been said that writing a book is like giving birth to a baby. From conception and gestation, to the actual birth moment, an author struggles to give form to ideas and feelings deep within. Each book, painting, prelude, poem or play is an attempt to share with others a vision (or anyway, a version).

From whence cometh inspiration? We rub our sticks of ignorance together until there is a spark. A flame takes hold! The fire of wisdom flickers skyward. Then many can come and sit beside the bonfire, warm themselves and share stories.

In the fall of 2000, I decided to hone my language skills and signed up for an adult education course in Swedish. This entailed an overview of Western literature. After reading Cervantes, we were put to group-work and asked to write a modern version of *Don Quixote*. I was at that time deeply involved in our local amateur theatre club and suggested we write a play to act out. In my mind, I saw our teenagers at home and the usual turbulence that follows them, as a tail follows a comet. Revolt, upheaval, and the dangers involved in saving the world were daily fare. I could discern a modern Quixote at my very dinner table, and writing a play about it all was a great way to vent a mother's vexations. Thus, Version One was born.

The year 2001 dawned with darker undercurrents. Sweden became chairman of the European Union for six months, and youthful reformers got a more international audience to play to. In June, as the grand finale for its prestigious chairmanship, Sweden planned a top meeting in Gothenburg for all European leaders. Lo and behold, who decided to plump down to visit, the day before it all started, but George Bush, the first U.S. president ever to visit Sweden. There was already tension in the air before this announcement, but now the vibrations, pamphlets and magazines that passed review were getting scary.

Thousands of protesters descended on Gothenburg those June days to protest a spectrum of worldly ills. By cleverly barricading part of them into a school for the 24 hours Bush was in town, the authorities created a diversionary action, but

it poured gas on the fire. The city then exploded into a frenzy of violence, and one young man nearly died when police shot into the rioting crowds. Any parent with a child there was sick with worry, and the young people who returned home were marked with their own brand of post-traumatic stress for years to come. In July, a G8 summit followed in Genoa, Italy. Same scenario. This time, one dead.

Life's drama is played out on big stages and on small. Here at home, it was now September and school had started. The Parent's Association had advertised its annual business meeting, in hopes of involving new parents. There's no PTA here, as overworked teachers have opted out. Even many parents avoid further drains on their time, so the Parent's Association is always small and struggling, but brave. We had invited the town's police chief to be our guest speaker, but I felt we could do more to make it an attractive meeting. Perhaps present a revised version of *Don Quixote*? It might even give the police chief insight into the current situation for young people and their parents.

And then September 11th hit us.

It hit us in mid-afternoon in Sweden, and we spent that evening huddled before the TV. It was too sobering and sad for words. But mental sticks were churning, churning, churning.... What to do with this tragedy? How to explain it, use it, decontaminate it, purify it? How to channel the energy released by this explosion into something constructive? And what do we have for this, at first, BUT words?

The next morning I left the house early and headed for a corner of the library. Quietly, intensely, I rewrote my small play of a year before, and a new version of *Don Quixote* was born. In this darkest hour, I worked with concentration, determined to clear debris and find life in the ruins. It felt like a blessed work, having something worthwhile to do. The morning was transformed for me into one of strange joy, intention and creation, even though this small insignificant play could never do that for the world.

In the next few days, I fixed the play's cast. I grabbed some kids off the street and enlisted three members of the theater club, and we rehearsed the play. It played three weeks later to a pitifully small crowd at the annual meeting. It wasn't much, but it was "my baby," and as any baby, it has gone on to live a life of its own. Perhaps in a very small way, its light can shine forth to illuminate the whole world, so that "the dark, inert mass of matter changes into the all-knowing consciousness."

This play was presented on October 3, 2001, for the annual meeting of the Parents' Association of Vallhalla Middle School in Oskarshamn, Sweden. Only ten parents came, plus the school's rector and the town's chief-of-police, who was the featured speaker of the evening.

Time: a Tuesday in September, about 3 p.m.

Place: "Home, sweet home," in the kitchen

The Players:

Mamma, tries to be there for her children and keep up on developments in society and the world;

Mattias, 16, has just entered high school;

Kalle, 12, has just begun middle school;

Per, 12, Kalle's friend;

Zebula, 15, sister of Mattias and Kalle, a female variant of Zebulon McCahan in wanting to make the world a better place.

The kitchen timer rings. Mamma enters and takes banana bread out of the oven. She sits down at the table with a cup of coffee and course literature for her European Computer Driver's License course. Mattias enters, looking tired and hollow-eyed.

Mamma: How was *today* at high school?

Mattias: (curt) Stressful. Crowded. Noisy. It just sort of buzzes when everyone is moving around. (Pulls up a chair, glass, chocolate drink. Looks down, stirring silently.)

Mamma: Yes, there are lots of people. It's a big school. (Kalle and Per rush in.)

Kalle: Mamma, there was a drunk man in the park who pushed me off my bike! (Mamma and Mattias look up, startled.)

Mamma: What are you saying?!

Per: We were riding by the courthouse, just by the hotdog stand, and a man and a woman were having a fight...

Kalle: So we biked farther over to get around them...

Per: Then the man came out on the path and pushed over Kalle!

Mamma: What did the woman do?

Kalle: She tried to hold back the man.

Per: She said, "You're dumb in the head, to push down small kids."

(Mattias has come to life. He runs and gets a baseball bat.)

Mattias: Let's go back there. I'll beat up that damn wino!

Mamma: Mattias! You will not! That is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard!

Mattias: Yep, I'll show him that Kalle has a big brother who can protect him!

Mamma: Put down that bat right now! It won't help a bit. We're not going to have any vigilantes here! (To Kalle) How's your bike?

Kalle: It's okay.

Mamma: How are you?

Kalle: A bruise, here... (shows inside of right knee)

Mattias: How did the man look?

Kalle: A big man. He was drunk.

Mattias: Let's go get him, the stupid idiot! We can't let him get away with this!

Mamma: Mattias, revenge is stupid, and you'd probably just get charged with assault yourself. Give me that bat! (Kalle and Per run by her to get a basketball.) Where are you going?

Per: Back to school to play basketball.

Mattias: But what if it happens again?

Kalle: Then I'll go to the police.

Mattias: They close at 3 p.m. They won't do anything anyway.

Mamma: Don't you want a snack to eat first?

Per: No, we have these...(He holds up small plastic bottles of powder.)

Mamma: What is that?! Where have you gotten those?

Per: It's powder. You lick it up.

Mamma: It looks very suspicious. It looks like drugs!

Kalle: (Laughs) No, Mamma! It's from the candy story!

Mamma: It'd be better if you ate a snack.

Kalle: We don't have time! Bye!

Mamma: Dinner is at six!

(Mattias has given up and sprawls in front of the TV to relax, watching a soapy afternoon sit-com. Mamma reads a little in her computer notebook. Zebula rushes in.)

Mamma: Hi, Zebula.

Zebula: Hi. What are you doing? (Sits down at the table, hungry.)

Mamma: Studying for my computer class this evening.

Zebula: Oh, that. You don't need to take a class. You can learn it by yourself—just do it. Experiment a little! (Picks up the milk) Good! Finally, ecological milk!

Mamma: Two crowns more expensive than regular milk.

Zebula: But you understand that it must cost a little more to help the environment and support the farmers who choose ecological production. (Lifts up Mattias' glass scornfully) A Coca Cola glass! Do we have to have these around? Coca Cola is one of the worst multinational companies. In Chile, for example, they cheated their way to getting water rights for the only good clean water in the Atacama Desert and built a factory there, and now the indigenous Indians don't have enough water for their crops. (Chooses a Finnish milk glass from the shelf instead) We can show a little solidarity, can't we? (Looks around) Is there anything to eat?

Mamma: I've just baked banana bread, my grandma's old recipe. Can't you smell it?

Zebula: Did you use organic bananas?

Mamma: I can't always find organic bananas here in town. No, I had some other ripe bananas I had to use up.

Zebula: But Mamma... People are dying on Central America's banana plantations! Poor banana workers in Nicaragua live with their families in shacks right in the middle of the banana crops, and Chiquita and all the other capitalist swine just spray their pesticides over everything. (Pulls out a magazine called "We".) Just read this article! People are dying of uterine cancer, sterility, skin cell changes, their hair and nails are falling off, just so we can gorge on bananas!

Mamma: I know, Zebula. I hardly buy any bananas these days, in case you haven't noticed. Well, there are soyaburgers if you are hungry...

Zebula: No, I'm going to quit eating soya products. Did you know that 50% of the world's soybeans are already genetically manipulated?

Mamma: Genetic manipulation can be a way to create more abundant food for poor countries, and food that can withstand transport better.

Zebula: No, multinationals make a small genetic manipulation in a plant, then apply for a patent on that change. Maybe it's a plant that poor people have always used, and now they have to buy back the plant for a high price, due to the patent. Rich countries have always sucked out poor countries! But the earth's limited resources must be divided fairly!

Mamma: Okay, Zebula, I have neither the time nor the desire to meet all your arguments about raw capitalism, speculation economy, class warfare, Shell, McDonald's, animals' rights, one more time. Here, you can eat a carrot and a bag of almonds!

Zebula: (provocatively) Thanks! Yeah, how does it feel to go around with dead corpses in your stomach? To live on killing? (Looks down at her t-shirt with the "Meat is Murder" motif on it.)

(Several lines censored here, about animals' rights and the freeing of caged minks. A pre-reading at home led to compact and angry insistence that this be deleted. A real sore spot! "Free speech" bowed to "consideration for the sake of harmony." The mechanics of censorship were laid bare.)

Mamma: Zebula, why can't you respect other people's ideas and feelings? I get really scared and angry with people who think they have solitary rights on The Truth. It can be animal activists, neo-Nazis, anti-Fascists, it doesn't matter.

Zebula: Are you equating Nazis and anti-Fascists?!

Mamma: Yes. Skinheads versus AFA (the Anti-Fascists Association). I often think that they dress alike, shave their heads the same way, paint graffiti and demonstrate the same way, shout the same slogans. “Crush capitalism!” “Down with the State!” The only thing that’s different is that Nazis don’t want immigrants here at all, while anti-Fascists want to protect and help immigrants and refugees.

Zebula: Nazis kick down people on the street! (Irritated silence ensues. Both sit reading, ECDL and Stockholm Free News respectively.) Wow, cool! The king got pied!!!

Mamma: I really disagree. How totally childish!

Zebula: A face full of whipping cream and cake. He deserves it. Think of all the tax money that goes just for upkeep on his little local summer castle!

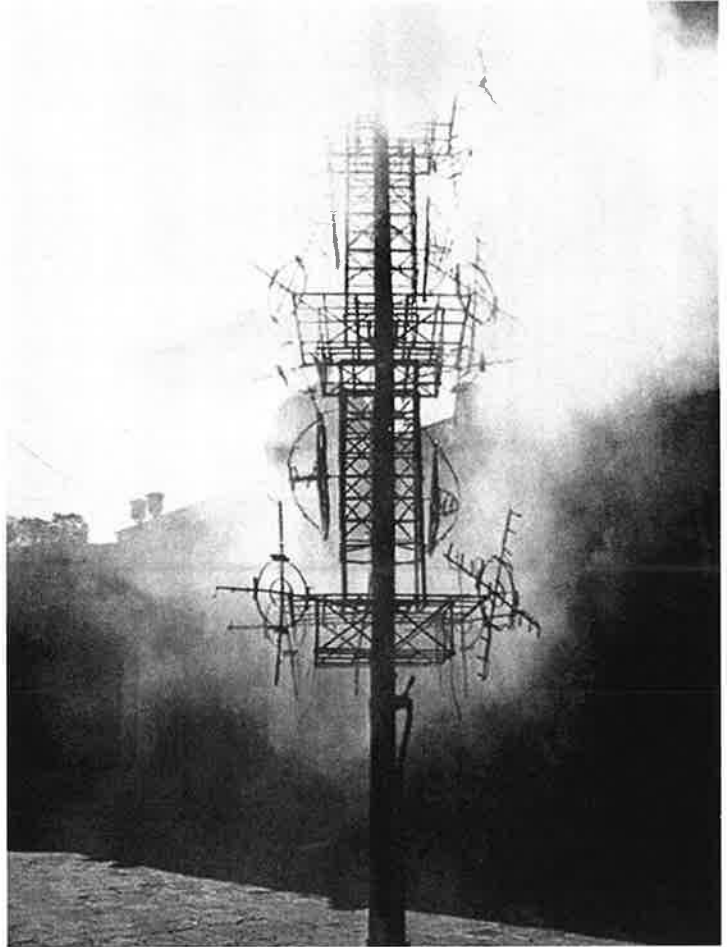
Mamma: Envy is never pretty. He and Queen Silvia do a good PR job for Sweden. (Thinking aloud) I read that charges will be pressed against the 16-year-old only if the king himself decides to. I think the king and the 16-year-old ought to sit down in a room together, and then the king should push the 16-year-old’s face into a cream pie, with lots of strawberry jam, then take a few pictures of the boy and put them up all over town, and see how he likes that!

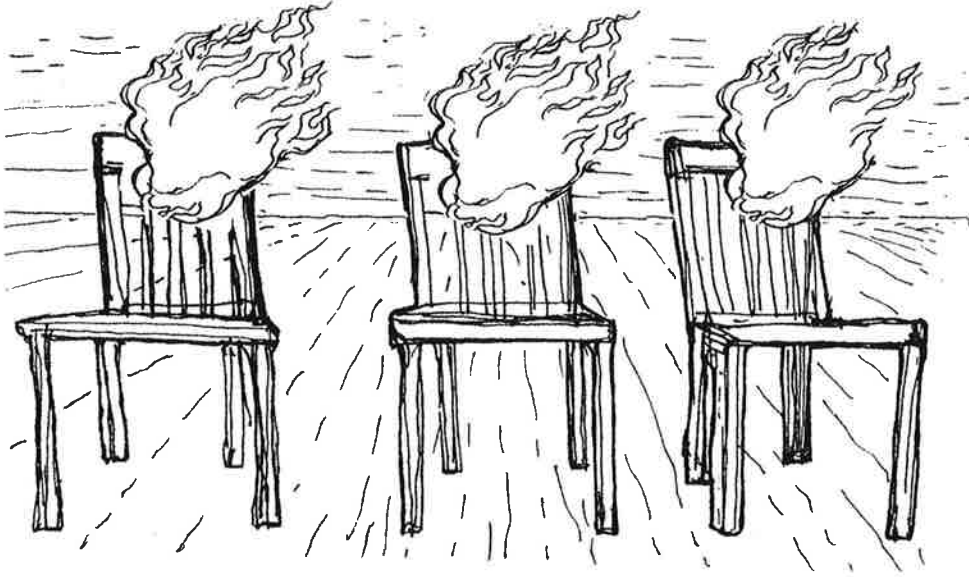
Mattias: (calls in) Mom, don’t you hear what you’re saying? What were you just telling me about REVENGE?

Zebula: At any rate, I think that the monarchy should be abolished. Everyone should be equal.

Mattias: Come quick!! (New picture appears on TV: “Twin Towers Tragedy— Terror in NYC”. Mamma and Zebula go over to the TV and stand behind Mattias, looking in surprise. After a short pause, he mimics the woman in the park earlier) “They’re dumb in the head, to push down small towers.” And here comes Bush with the baseball bat: “Bush promises revenge.” What do you say now, Mamma?

Mamma: I have no words.... Deep inside, I know that revenge is wrong. It’s never helped anyone, anywhere, ever. Whoever did this was also trying to get even for something. Revenge has no end. It only creates HATE. And no land, no life can build upon hate. (She puts an arm around each child, and they all look at the TV in sadness) It’s better to try to understand instead.





EPILOGUE:

Time marches on, on to 2007. What has happened in the years since this play was performed?

- 40% of all bananas sold in Sweden today are organic.
- Fair Trade foods are prominent in all local grocery stores.
- The nearby mink farm has closed down.
- Nationalists, some with neo-nazi sympathies, have been voted into the parliament by 4% of the population. They call themselves “Swedish Democrats” (it sounds so like the established “Social Democrats”) and their platform is “Sweden for Swedes.”
- AFA follows them around *en mass*, and material damages always follow.
- The monarchy lives on, as do the arguments for a republic.

But never think you can't make a difference!

And what has happened to our players?

Per stayed home sick from school one day, and a Rumanian robber came knocking on the door. He tied up Per and stole the family gold, but he got caught. After the trial, Per's parents took him to the Canary Islands to help him forget—and got him a dog for a pet.

Kalle lives a charmed life, has good grades, good friends, and high hopes.

Mattias is going to sea / to see / if this is what he wants to be.

Zebula has cloned into two. One is a mason and union activist, promoting workers' rights and feminist values. The other's heart beats for preserving forests, fishes, and biological diversity.

Mamma has forgotten everything about Power Point and Excel, but remembers how to email. Sometimes she gets philosophical and considers the mysteries of time, being, and awareness. Everything is always changing, but is it getting better? Chaos becomes order, order becomes chaos. Can we, by investing love and energy, transform chaos into order? It works when you clean house, anyway. Time to go do it!

ENTROPY

BY FRED CANTOR

Entropy. Everything put together comes apart. We build worlds upon worlds out of nothing but imagination and ego. It is a tremendous feat of creativity and consumes our life's energy. It is a huge leap of faith, knowing as we do that in the end these empires of our mind must come to naught, that these worlds are ephemeral. No matter how staunch the walls, how intricate the constructions, we know in our hearts they will not stand. Yet we are compelled by some inner force to keep building, to let it be known that we are here, were here, and that it somehow matters.

After my father dies we are left with the parts of a life undone. What do you do with those things that meant so much to someone? The artifacts of existence, edifices that for him loomed larger than any pyramids, and built at as high a cost. There are degrees and diplomas representing years of struggle and achievement, representing someone's endeavors and identity. Once grasped so tightly, now useless and empty. Like paper money they have no intrinsic use value, Their only worth was in the power invested in them by their holder. Somehow it feels as if these once hallowed icons should have some prideful resting place. It seems a shame to relegate them to the ever-growing piles of black plastic bags of garbage sitting by the street curb, but they have no meaning left in them, they are as hollow as a corpse. Thousands of pieces of paper, all emblazoned with his name like some Pharaonic cartouche. Kept for all these years like they meant something, like they meant everything. Time is erasing the footprints cast in the sand. Black plastic bags; body bags stuffed with the corpses of a life lived for 93 years. Entropy.

Now I sit in this emptied out house. I can feel the emotions of the lives lived out here, my father's, my mother's, mine (although I never lived here), my sister's. I can hear the laughter of the parties, the music that was played here, the arguments and tears shed here. I can feel my father. He feels released. For so long he clung fiercely to the meaning of each piece of paper, the validation given by every photo and certificate and award. But now he is released. It's hard to cling to the black plastic bags that sit by the curb. There is no meaning or identity to be claimed there. There is only entropy, and release. I am released too, having discharged my filial duties. Able to let go of the loves and hatreds that were part of the worlds we built, and begin constructing the next world, and the next, knowing full well that in the end they too will be reduced to rubble, the remains left for someone else to set out by the curb.

There are multitudes of platitudes. Every ending is a new beginning, they say. When one door closes another will open. The door of death slams hardest, I guess. The opening remains a mystery. My father was a difficult man and I spent many years estranged from him, so feeling like a fatherless child isn't unfamiliar or uncomfortable. He lived a long life that he probably considered successful, and he died as he wished, at home in his own bed without pain. In the end, there is release for all of us. Entropy.



*"Since everything is but an apparition
perfect in being what it is,
having nothing to do with good or bad,
acceptance or rejection,
one may well burst out in laughter."*

LONG CHEN-PA

The Natural Freedom of Mind

ONE HUNDRED STEPS TO REALIZATION

BY GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

Step Four

Are you in a wakeful state?

Yes, I am.

How do you know it?

Because I am conscious of what is happening.

What is happening?

I am cognizing the explication of knowledge in my mind.

Whose mind?

The cognizer's mind.

How many types of things do you refer to as knowledge?

Three: conscious awareness, the knowledge of the object of cognition, and the person who has that cognition.

Are these three separate entities?

No! There's only one and the same awareness. It is looked upon from three angles to suit logical habits. Truly there is only one knowledge which upholds Truth; its nature is to reveal its sustenance and value significance.

Even though we call it knowledge, the objectivity of that knowledge and the knowledge of the knower are not different?

Yes, that's right. The knowledge that comes now only in the present instance must have been there all through my life. If I had several lives before, then also this same knowledge must have persisted without a sense of the lives that I have passed through, like a continuous magic.

So knowledge is continuous and contiguous, with no break?

Of course, yes.

Can we say it was always present as pure duration?

Yes, we can say that. The primordial unit is to be seen as a universal grace. Why do you color it and chip it into fragments? Merge back into it and be Knowledge alone, all the time. It is the conventional fragments of time's sense that projects its manifold variegations.

To what conclusion have you come to now?

That I am pure Knowledge, continuously. I am the same Self from the beginning of time, and I can go beyond time also here, unaltered.

What do you call it?

My realization of the knowledge of Knowledge.

Could it be identical with the Self?

Yes, all the time. The Self alone is. Now have a review of the relativistic anomaly that is again and again creating confusion.

Step Five

Do you have an identity with this world?

Yes, a superficial one. I was born on this earth as a human and was brought up by fellow earthlings.

With what thought do you go to bed and with what thought do you wake up?

I go to bed with a partial sense of fulfillment and also of failure. I wake up with many ambitious projects in my mind.

In your enterprising programming during the day and your summing up a general review of your achievements at night, is there any witness meticulously watching all your functions?

Yes, my conscience takes cognizance of all my thoughts, evaluating my sense of failure at the turn of every event and noting the preparations for initiating new developments out of my ambitious motivations.

Do you see in that witness a proponent of a great goal in your life?

Yes, as the years pass my goal is becoming more structured, and I can see the light of a benevolent dictator guiding me.

What is this benevolent dictator's identity? Can he be identified as a god-fearing man, a religious propagandist, a doer of good for fellow beings on earth? Is he a

wisdom seeker, a lover, a soldier for a noble cause, a scheming politician, or an educationalist?

These roles are not prominent in my inborn guide. I am more or less of a meek follower of the dictator of conscience who has matured between philosophic search and poetic vision.

Do you see any glimmer of the light which your inner guide is holding aloft?
The light not only flickers, it is also sometimes unsure of gaining clarity.

When you take the sum total of the energy that is fed into you and the enthusiasm given to you so far, do you feel that there is spiritual growth and fresh clarity coming even after frustrations and ambiguity?

Of late, especially after my long search for the right path, this witness or spiritual minister in me has emboldened me very much. I am seeing in the distance the light of a beckoning power which gives me guidance and is welcoming me to a citadel of strength.

Are you sometimes assailed by strange and disturbing thoughts coming from many nondelineated areas?

Yes, I am. One personality development in me is warning all the time that I should not succumb to my fortune of abundance. That enables me to take a meek path of the humble and walk away from the gaze of crowds of enthusiasts.

Do you feel a great optimism in going along with this spark of your inner guidance?

Yes, I do.

Step Six

Are you awake now?

I suppose so.

When did you wake up?

Around five o'clock this morning.

When will you go to sleep again?

Probably for a short nap at 2:00 p.m.

After the nap what time will you wake up?

Maybe around 3:00 p.m. and then I'll be awake till half past ten at night.

Can you keep vigil without sleep hindering you, even when you look like you're dozing or sleeping?

Keeping vigil and being awake are not the same kind of psychophysical activity.

What is the distinction you draw between physiological sleep induced by biological law and spiritual and psychological vigilance without being distracted by sleep?

Even when I go to sleep I may only be lying in the bed with my eyes closed; that need not necessarily be called sleep. Similarly, biologically waking up does not mean that I have to break my vigilance of my spiritual or psychic attention. Bodily sleep is a routine habit of restoring energy after heavy expenditures of it and thereby replenishing the dynamics of the sense organs to carry out all their functions promptly. It can be handled with the utmost ease.

Is there any difference between mental energy, body energy, psychic energy and spiritual energy?

Yes, of course there is. Read *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* by Dr. C. G. Jung.

What is physical energy? Where is it stored and how is it facilitated for activity?

In practice, electromagnetic energies which are available in a living body are mainly in the form of physical energy. That power can be directed through the nervous system to put motion of a controlled nature into specific limbs and sense organs as well as the large areas of the body where the internal movements are autonomically controlled by the spinal cord and brain. As this function is going on from birth to death there is an ingenious reflex agreement to let a person's ego know when the body is running out of energy, which is felt as fatigue, leading to dysfunction in carrying out commands. Thus the energy flow is not always obvious to the conscious mind.



In Step Five we found that there is an extravagant expenditure of energy in a person who is socially, politically, economically or sexually oriented. To conserve energy, many of those channels have to be kept closed. As noted, digestive functions, respiratory functions, and bodily motor movements require a great quantum of energy, which is not usually controlled by the ego. Out of the three faculties of reasoning, aesthetic feeling and physical activity, the volition acts as a monitor. We need full volitional control of our spiritual, psychic, and moral energies. If I am to become conservative in spending my rarefied psychic energy for spiritual purposes, I have to keep very special control of my inner volition and not generously let out all my sacred energy reservoirs.

In the Sixth Step a most serious expectation of the aspirant to realization is to sublimate all raw and gross energies into highly sophisticated psychic and spiritual energy, in which the avenue of aesthetics is used more than reason or physical activity.

How does that help?

There has to be a master interest that is very precious to us for unrepressed body/mind management. Energy which is generally expended through physiological channels can be kept pending in the reservoir of the circulating blood, vital energies and fat storage.

There is possible an unbroken maintenance of a universal value vision that can stop the dissipation of energy, which we come to master only through a long period of conscious deliberation and control. I suppose that some day I can maintain my harness of the altering states of waking and sleeping satisfactorily.

The aim of the Sixth Step is to go into a detailed discipline of all energy expenditure and keep a value vision in which the psychic dynamic function of the thermal faculties of the body and the continuous transfusion of aesthetic energy can always be maintained in the core of consciousness.



GURUKULA NEWS

The annual Gurukula Convention will be held in Varkala the last week in December 2007. For details contact the Gurukula there.

A building campaign is underway at the Varkala Gurukula and will be adding new living accommodations, dining hall and kitchen. Donations can be made directly to Guru Muni Narayana Prasad.

Nancy Yeilding will be leading this year's Sneha Samvedhas at Fernhill Gurukula (January 5-6), Kanankamala (January 12-13), Divya Shanti Niketan/Malayatoor (January 19-20), and Edapally (January 26-27)

Another, the seventh, of online study groups of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* has begun. For information contact: islandaranya@toast.net.

This past spring Jean Letschert passed away in Bangalore. Jean was a student of Nataraja Guru, exploring the esoterics of philosophy with his art. He and his wife Nicole were the guiding forces behind the Vythiri Gurukula for many years.

We also note the passing of C.P. Parvathy in April 2007. With her husband, P. Narayanan, she hosted many Gurukula members at their home in Fort Cochin. She was the granddaughter of Cheruvari Payyanadan, who accompanied Narayana Guru to Ceylon as his private secretary.

Current Gurukula web addresses

www.narayanagurukula.org (Gurukula website)

<http://community.webshots.com/user/sraddha1> (Sraddha Durand's photos)

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

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

Adam Rupniewski's art can be seen on:

www.adam.rupniewski.dew.pl

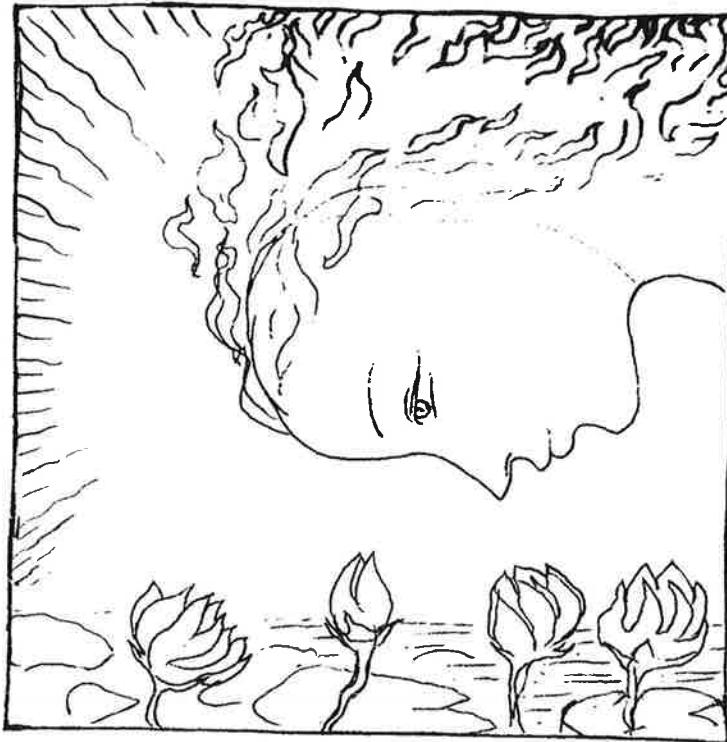
Sebastian Varghese's art can be seen on:

www.absolutearts.com/portfolios/v/varghese/

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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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