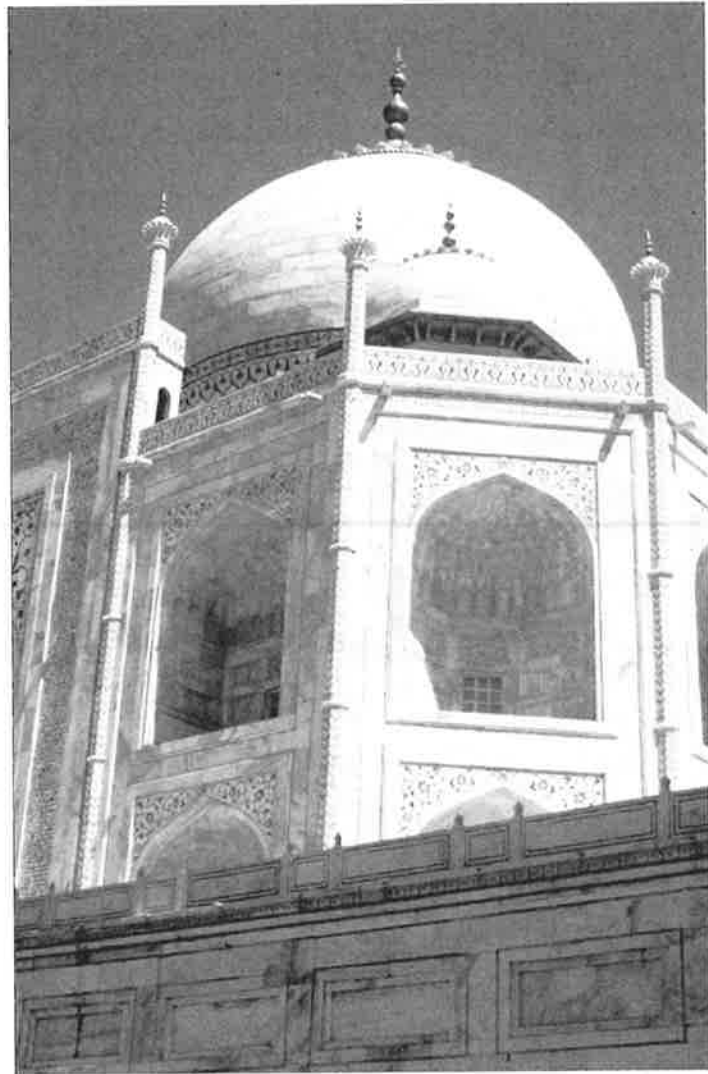


GURUKULAM



SPRING 2008

GURUKULAM

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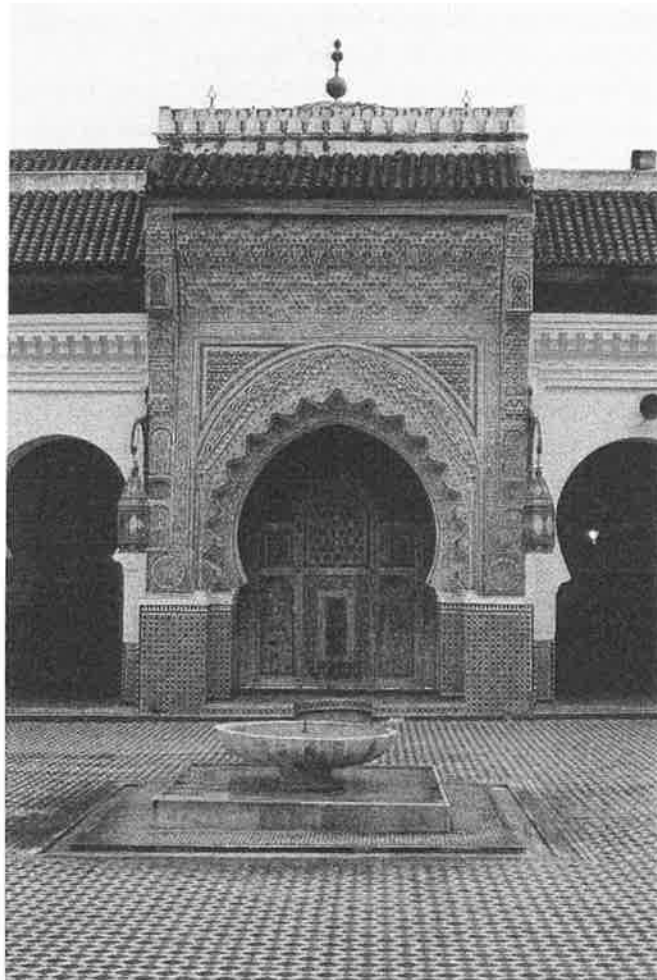
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EDITORIAL

BY DEBORAH BUCHANAN

As cultures we transmit our knowledge in a multitude of ways: orally, through stories recited bard to listener; through symbolic codes that abstract our daily experience, as in music and math; and through written language that, symbolic code itself, can convey our doubts, affections, and philosophical ponderings.

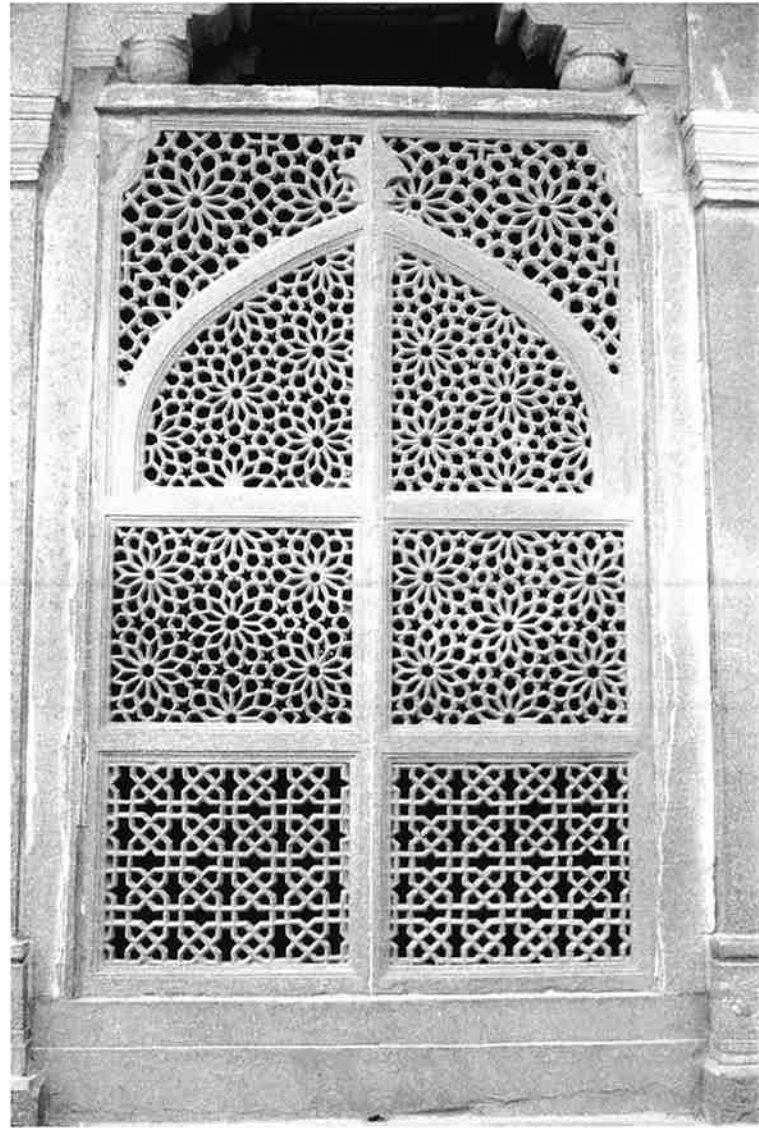
Most of this knowledge is organized and shared in books. Rectangles of varying sizes with paper pages and printed text, with or without illustrations, books have for centuries been how we store and pass on our experiences and understandings to the future. When books are destroyed there is a greater loss than simply paper and ink. It is our memories, our histories that are damaged.

In this issue we are presenting Mutanabbi Street Starts Here, a project that grew in response to the bombing, as part of the current war in Iraq, of Baghdad's traditional booksellers' market, Mutanabbi Street. War violently eradicates our bonds of connection, dividing people into abstract groups of ally and enemy. Literature, on the other hand, finds ways to underscore our interrelationships. The poems of the Iraqi poetry project give voice to people too often ignored. By speaking these poems, by listening to them, we open again the dialogue of genuine global citizenship, that quiet moment where, as the poet Naomi Shihab Nye says, we all sit under "this same sky."

In these poems there is sorrow and celebration, anger and consolation. All of them are expressions of Iraqi culture and, more broadly, a pan-Islamic culture that has developed since the 7th century, now covering a wide swath of the globe. In the Islamic world there are overarching artistic patterns which form a cohesive aesthetic and which are expressed in many very different media, from paper to ceramics to metal to architecture. A few examples of these are shown in this issue to complement the poetry broadsides.

The article on Hercules (second in a series) continues Scott Teitsworth's exegesis of that strongman hero of Greek mythology. From a gathering at the Fernhill Gurukula, we have excerpts from a discussion on education, and, as well, the haunting poems of our Gurukula friend in Ooty, Indu Mallah. Peter Oppenheimer again shares some of his insights about the Kerala International Film Festival, and a visitor to the Somanahalli Gurukula writes of her experience at this year's Guru Puja. All of these articles are centered around the core of Gurukulam: the writings of Narayana Guru and his successor Gurus.

So here is our little book, ready to join it's many compatriots in the tribe of knowledge. May its way, and that of all its friends, be peaceful.



ĀTMOPADEŚA ŚATAKAM

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

BY GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

VERSE 33

*arivu nijasthitiyinnariññitānāy
dhara mutalāya vibhūtiyāyi tānē
mariyumavasthayil ēri māri vaṭṭam-
tiriyumalaātasamam tiriññitunnu.*

Knowledge, to know its own nature here,
has become earth and the other elements;
spiraling up, back and turning round,
like a glowing twig it is ever turning.

People of all ages and in all parts of the world have tried to account for creation. They have invented many stories in the attempt. For instance according to the Semitic religions, in the beginning there was nothing but God living in an abyss of darkness. Then he decided to make a world; in six days he created everything that is now in existence by his mere will.

The scientists who do not believe in a myth of creation think there was a big bang. A highly condensed substance became spread out into various nebular, galactic, star and planetary systems. In due course life came about, and after a process of evolution consciousness appeared. Even today, both religious and scientific adherents are trying to ascertain a meaning for conscious, living being.

In this verse, Narayana Guru is offering his approach to this question. It is not merely to satisfy curiosity to know how this world evolved. The centerpiece of the discussion here is the Self. We have already established that the Self we are speaking of is not just the soul of one individual being. It is the only reality behind all manifestation, the very consciousness in us with which we see, hear, think, feel and experience. Everything is a manifested aspect of that supreme Self and, for that reason, only a feeble glow of its effulgence.

Through the agency of the Self we can look out upon the world, but we can also reverse our attentions and come to know its very source. When we look outward and perceive it is called knowing. When we turn inward, though, it is not-knowing. As we are conditioned to knowing things we have a feeling that realization must

be a similar kind of knowing, but it is not. It is being. Being of what? Being of knowledge itself. If in Realization knowledge was knowing Knowledge, it would be a subject seeing an object. This is not the case. Being ceases precisely when a subject and its objects arise.

When being is turned outward, why does it seem to be all this? In the myths of creation we hear that God felt himself to be alone. He wanted to have company, so he decided to create all this. In some of the Upanishads, similar stories are related of the aloneness of the first spirit. The Brihadaranyaka and other Upanishads, which are highly philosophical and metaphysical rather than legendary, say that the same knowledge that is within us as being shows itself only by becoming *vibhūti*, specific manifestations.

So the Self itself changes, transforms. In those transformations are many new possibilities. It is like an artist who wants to express her artistic talent. If she does nothing, no one will be aware of her abilities. So she makes a sketch. But there are so many other possibilities. She can also paint, sculpt, build and combine materials, creating a tremendous variety of compositions. With a single pen or brush she can make innumerable artistic creations. All this variety is nothing but the expression of one single mind.

Similarly, when we speak we use only our single mind and our organ of articulation, but when properly manipulated it can produce an infinitude of sound systems. With the utterance of each word, a new concept arises, new meaning arises. These are also *vibhūti*.

A musician can make different kinds of tonal effects. With the aid of a poet, words and shades of meaning can be brought to expand the possibilities. By combining the rhapsody of poetry with the melody and harmony of music, a musician can make endless variations. Each variation is a revelation of the potentiality of his own musical nature.

The Self which we speak of is not a bland nothingness. Our very Self is like an ocean of potentials. Its own nature is just beingness; at the same time it is infinitely creative and expressive at the level of life. Where it expresses, it is as if knowledge, to know its own potentials, is changing into all this. Think for a moment of a beautiful sunrise in the mountains and no living being with eyes turned to see it, no conscious mind to appreciate what is happening. Doesn't it seem like a total waste of all the form, colors and beauty when there is no one to witness it? In the Spring all the flowers would come and there would be no one to be stirred by them, no bees to buzz deliriously.

When we consider all this, the human mind and senses are not the private preserve of the individual who wears them. They belong to the entire universe. They are the universe's way of perceiving itself.

Those who believe in evolution think of an earlier stage preparing for a more advanced form of organization. They think of the body as nothing more than matter organized in a certain form. If we trace the history of life on earth over

billions of years, it looks as if it has all been pointing to the development of man. If that is indeed the culmination, it would seem that the entire universe has been in the plight of trying to know itself by evolving matter into living matter, living matter into organisms, and organisms into more advanced organisms until consciousness was developed. After consciousness was attained it needed to be refined and expanded by developing the faculties of sensation, feeling and cognition, ultimately putting together all these into a framework of cause and effect. Only then could consciousness have a full comprehension of the universe. And who is seeing that universe? The universe itself is seeing it through the developed faculties which it created over billions of years. That's the scientific theory.

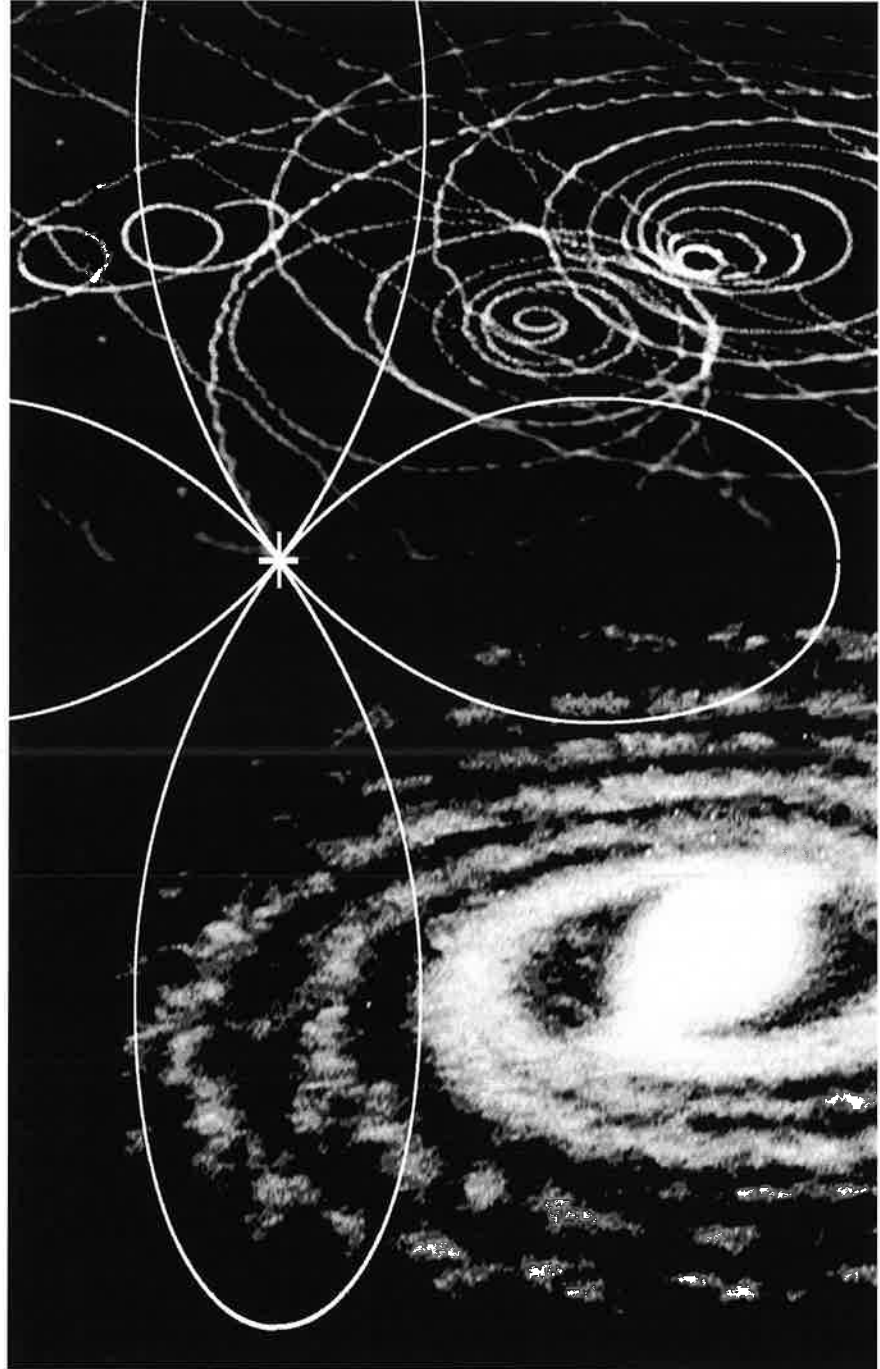
In our study of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, we have learned how to go beyond time, space, names and forms. When considered from this perspective, the Self is beginningless and endless. It is not confined to any form or name. In spite of having no special attributes, every attribute that we can give to conscious life is part and parcel of it. So we may say that in order to know its own nature, the same knowledge has become all this. This is not very different in practice from the scientists' approach.

One key characteristic of consciousness is that it alternates. At one moment it goes back into the darkness; there is nothing, it just remains there. In the very next moment it becomes many subjective fantasies in the world of dreams. Then it wakes up and comes into the outer world of transactional awareness. Here it interacts as if it is separate from everything else. It goes into flights of imagination and thought, experiencing all sorts of moods. Then again it enters the stillness.

The Guru is here comparing the wonder of what we are to a person taking a burning twig and swirling it around in the darkness, making a figure eight movement representative of the movement of consciousness through its various states. There is just the one burning point where it glows, luminous, but when it is brandished about it looks like many fiery lines and shapes. It is like writing with a pen: there is only one tiny point from which a little ink is coming, but as you write the ink makes different formations, and each formation has a meaning of its own.

What is the difference between your writing and your thinking? Your own mind is a point of consciousness which moves like the tip of a pen. If you turn inward in your own mind, the point of your consciousness is just a glow. If that glow is allowed to operate and unfold, it is like the pen writing. It is more than just putting ink on paper, though. The ink can become a *Rāmāyaṇa*, a *Mahābhārata*, an *Odyssey*, a *Divine Comedy*—the magnum opus of a great writer.

All our philosophy, history, poetry and even art have passed through the tip of a pen. Like that, this whole universe which we see, with all its vastness, is the composition and organization coming from our own individual consciousness. No one else sees for us or knows for us. Even what are considered to be the experiences of other people have to be recycled and made our own before we can truly know them. The vastness we see is what we have created out of something so small: a tiny spark.



This is one of the greatest miracles of life, that the very creator whom we praise for having made all this universe is still sitting here and creating the very nucleus of our own being. Your nucleus and the nucleus of the universe are not two. When you attain that identity in every moment of your daily life, you become the centerpiece of the universe; your actions, your ideas and your thoughts become the very thoughts, ideas and variegations in the composition of your universe. This brings you to an ultimate identity with the creating faculty. You are at once the Absolute and the very many relatives within it. You are the one unconditional Being who is also causing the many conditional states.

VERSE 34

*aranoṭiyādiyarāḷiyārnniṭum tē-
ruruḷ atil ēṟiyuruñṭiṭunnu lōkam;
arivil anādiyatāy naṭanniṭum tan-
tiruvīlayaṭāl itennariñṭiṭēñam.*

Mounted on the rotating wheels of a chariot
which have half-moments and such for spokes,
the world rolls on;
know this to be the beginningless divine sport
that is ever going on in knowledge.

When we think of the world as we experience it, we are aware of a vast space around us. We are always placed in the exact center of a space in which it is equidistant to the horizon in all directions. We can never go near the horizon, and we can never be away from the center. No matter how hard you try, even if you run as fast as you can you will always be in the center of the space bounded by the horizon.

We know that vast space, incomprehensible and ungraspable, lies beyond the horizon. We can only refer to it as the other side. In the spatial context, this is what is presented as behind and before us. Although we are experiencing only a part of space, we conceive of a whole to which the part belongs.

Space is only half the world picture. The other half is experiencing this moment. Just as there is a horizon around us delimiting our spatial experience, there is also a horizon of time. In space we have a front and a behind; in time we speak of a past and a future. In between the past and the future is the present.

In Indian mythology, time is looked upon as the son of Visvavan, the sun. The sun begets time naturally. From its rise and setting we experience dawn, morning, noon, afternoon, evening and midnight. Time is considered a cycle of the sun, a

recurrence of mornings and evenings. This is why Kala, or time, is considered to be the son of the sun.

In his *Confessions, Book II*, St. Augustine takes up the issue of time. He struggles very hard to understand the paradox of the passage of time or change in eternity. He addresses God, saying, "Oh my Lord of Eternity, why do you make time trickle drop by drop?" In his day hourglasses were used to tell time, in which sand drops little by little: the sands of time. He said, "When you call, the hours flee." Ever since St. Augustine's day, time has been a problem and a paradox to Western thinkers.

In his analysis of time, Augustine asks, What is past? Is there anything called past-time? He argues there is no such thing. We have only memories of things that happened. Memory becomes a memory only when it is relived in the present. When you recall something you have once lived and then experience it again in the present, you see that its contents have become pale, the carcass of something previously alive. The nonsubstantiality of it is remarked as 'past'.

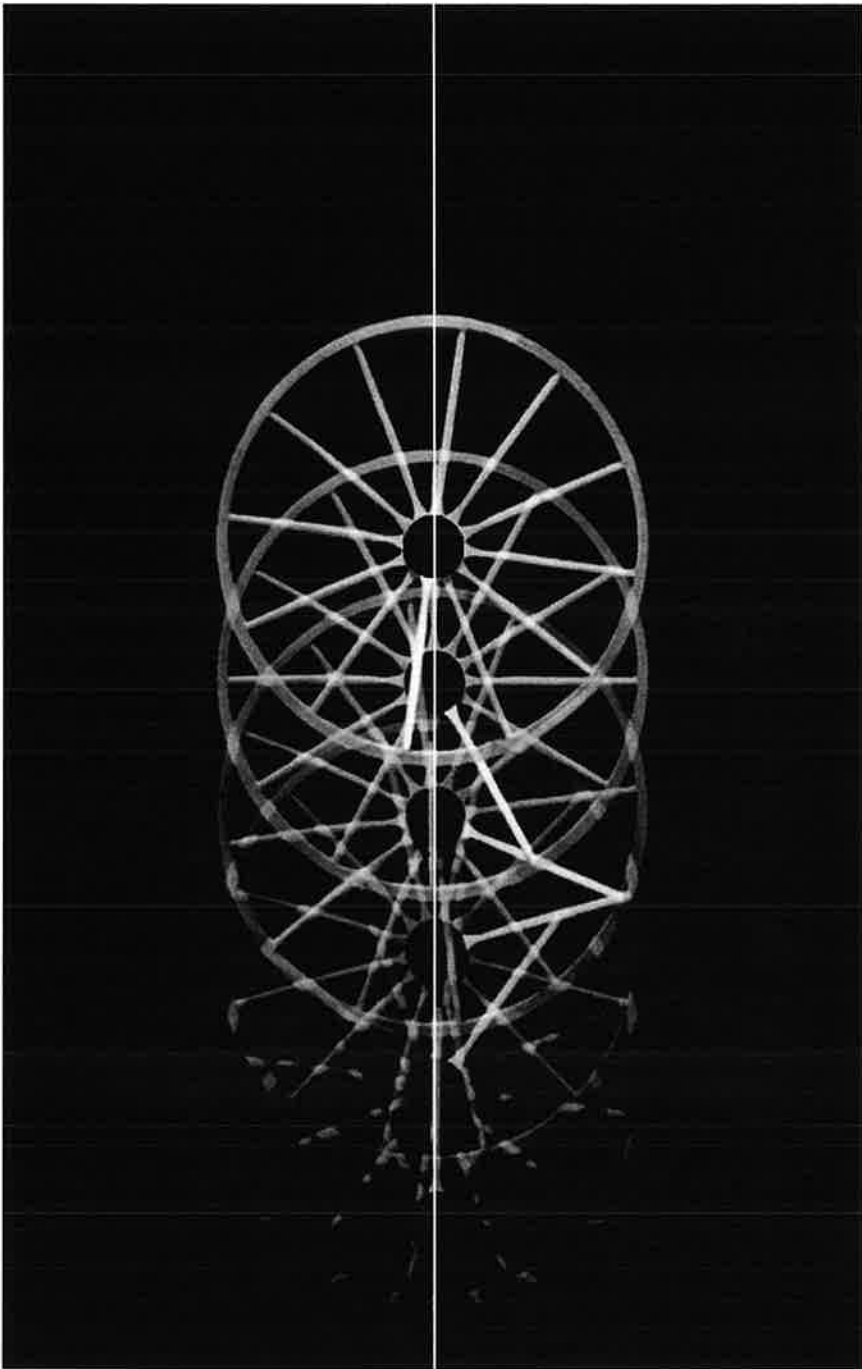
There is also nothing called 'future'. When we imagine in the present how it will be, the content of that imagination is called the future. Since we are imagining in the present, the time is present. But how big is it? Augustine says we can at least measure space and say it is two square miles or ten square miles, but how big is the present? And before you have looked at even one moment to measure it, half of that moment has already slipped away from you. It's not even a full moment.

Narayana Guru says *aranoṭi*, half a moment, time is constituted of half moments. The Buddhist school of *Vijñāna Vada* thinks of this world as coming into existence in one-third of a moment, remaining as an experience for one-third of a moment, and disappearing in one-third of a moment. Before we recognize it, one-third of the whole moment has already gone by.

When it comes to time, we have to think in terms of eternity. The greatest paradox is that in eternity we experience something so fleeting. Although it appears to us as very minor, nothing has more confused the minds of philosophers and scientists alike than the very elusive problem of time. Everyone knows time, but at the same time no one knows time. You only know that there is a clock on your wall with hands that move. The clock on the wall is not time. The best minds in the world have all tried to figure out what it is.

Newton thought he could fix at least two categories of absolute in space and time. That started the trouble. Then came Lorentz' contractions and Einstein's special theory of relativity, which invalidated Newton's concept of absolute time. Minkowsky speaks of the rotation of the time-space axis, how the time axis and the space axis are to be taken together. These are very complicated issues.

St. Augustine's confusion was later attributed to what is called the confusion of passage: you think time is passing from the future to the present, that there is some hidden place called the future that time is popping up from. It comes rushing along like the rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*, saying, "No time, no time!" and then it is



already gone, into the hole. From where did the rabbit appear? Alice didn't know. Where has it gone? It has already disappeared into the hole. It looked at its watch and said "There's no time." That is called the present, only that much. The passage of the rabbit is the whole story of time. But if you read St. Augustine you will see he is putting both hands on his head, howling and crying, lamenting and calling to God to come and clear up the issue of time.

Others say that the old man is crying because he thinks of a passage of time. One part of the "myth of passage" is thinking of an ocean of time which we are walking into, conquering time moment by moment with our forward progress. The ocean of eternity is just lying there and we are entering into it. That is one fallacious way of looking at it. Another is that we are standing still and the stream of time is flowing past us. These are the confusions of the philosophers. When we come to the scientists, the confusion becomes not doubled or tripled but manifold.

Bergson brings in the idea of pure duration. He says you have already vulgarized the physical time you are speaking of by relating it to a machine. Thus you have spatialized your time, labeled it and made it convenient. This is not at all the same thing as time as duration.

Does machine time really exist at all? When you fly from Honolulu to Fiji, for instance, somewhere on the way our modern, packaged time inexplicably slips off. You can sit on the plane with your eyes open or whatever you want to try to hold onto time, but when you land a whole day is missing. What nonsense is this?

St. Augustine also wondered about how time could be measured. You cannot measure time like you measure space. If you want to measure a table, you just put a yardstick on top of it and read thirty-six by forty-eight or whatever. But you cannot use the same kind of measuring rod on events. When you try to apply it, some parts of the event are already past. They do not stand there for you to measure them, they change. How can you measure change in the midst of change, when you don't have a baseline to compare it to?

The sun—the original timepiece—is not stationary. It is moving at a very fast rate of speed, taking with it the whole of the solar system. The planets within the solar system have their own motions, while the galaxy that contains this solar system is moving in a completely different manner. Each system, from the atomic to the galactic, has its own set of relevant measurements. If you sit in a plane going five hundred miles an hour and throw something up in the air, it should be at least five miles behind you by the time it comes down. But that doesn't happen: it comes right back down into your hand. Outside the plane it would happen, inside it does not. Somehow the inside space is kept intact and separate from the space outside through which the plane is traveling very fast. The same happens with the planets in the solar system: despite the speed of travel there is a kind of immunity within the local system, where a neutral stasis prevails.

At each level of the system, different vectors are applied to what you are trying to measure. The more you take into account, the more complex the whole thing becomes. Eventually it seems to be nothing more than a vast, confusing flux. You can go mad trying to pin everything down.

The Guru says, "Don't be silly, don't break your head on this. The whole thing is a divine sport. Why do you worry about it? Whoever had the fun of making the world just did it this way. So take it easy. It's only a joke." The ancient rishis didn't worry their heads about time. They just sang a song for it. The confusion started with St. Augustine and by the era of philosophy we find Henri Bergson and Bertrand Russell calling each other names.

It was Einstein who promoted time as another dimension. A thing has not only a spatial relevancy but a temporal relevancy. Everything exists within a time-space continuum. Narayana Guru did not read Einstein or his special theory of relativity, but he saw the whole thing as being constituted of fractions of seconds and moments. He pictured the world as a chariot, with its wheels providing the movement. The wheels are made up of spokes of half seconds. Using half seconds for motive power, the world rolls along for all eternity.

In this verse the Guru brings in flux as the numerator factor, and eternity as the denominator factor. In the first half he speaks of fleeting time, and in the second half of *anādi*, the beginningless. The numerator and the denominator are brought together in such a beautiful way, one seeking the other out, that you get a numinous presence of the whole without any confusion about the time factor.

What is this *ādi*? *Ādi* means etcetera. We have already mentioned that what we call our world experience is constituted of name and form. We hear so many names. Many are identified with forms but some are not, and they probably never will be. For instance, everybody has heard the name God, but no one has yet identified him, pointed and said, "Here exactly we have that fellow called God. This is it." Of course, there's plenty of mistaken identity. Many are called God. God must be sitting somewhere and laughing, seeing the folly of people calling this man "God" or that icon "God". God says, "I will never reveal myself. They can go on looking all they want!" And God, why don't you want to reveal yourself? "Because I am not. Only if I am can someone find me out. I am not, yet these foolish mortals have invented names for me. It's their folly. What can I do?"

So there are billions of unidentified names. Also, there are many mysterious forms. We don't exactly know what they are, but we don't want to admit defeat so we give them names. We don't know what time is either. God only knows. We do know a little of space. For instance, we know how to walk from here to the corner store. And that's about all we know.

Name and form, space and time, actor and action. I am speaking now, so I must be an actor. What I am doing is called an action. If you think of the world, you also have to think of who moves it and what kind of movement it has. Then there

is cause and effect. Things are to be related as effect stemming from cause. We do not know exactly where cause becomes effect. Is the fruit the cause, or the seed, or the germinating seed, or the sprout? Aren't they also all effects? These are all just arbitrary distinctions we make, because we really don't know.

Universal and particular. The forest and the trees. How many trees make a forest? Fifty-two or fifty-three? There are so many categories. We assemble them all within this tiny glow or spark of our own consciousness. But they do not really exist, they are just postulates made by the tiny spark. They are the showmanship of the great magician. Whoever that is, it goes on making the projections of space and time, name and form, cause and effect, and so on.

This is my joy. I dip into the unconscious and come back into consciousness and make all these things, play with them for a time, and then go back. Then I come back and start doing it again. That's the joke which is going on. God is a little baby sitting in the center of our own consciousness. Out of nowhere he creates an infinity of space. Out of half a moment he makes pure duration. With that infinitude of space and infinitude of time he fills a world of wonder and rejoices.

And yet, within that same world, fully knowing all this, we cry out, "I cannot adjust to that fellow. He has become so nasty." Or "Today has been a very negative day. It makes me unhappy." Or even, "I can't take any more of this life, so I'll just commit suicide. There's no other way." Knowing that all this is a joke, why don't you laugh at yourself? That's all that is to be done.

IRAQI POETRY PROJECT

BY LISA RAPPOPORT

Beau Beausoleil, a Bay Area bookseller and poet, started the Mutanabbi Street Coalition in August 2007 to protest the bombing of Mutanabbi Street, Baghdad's traditional center of bookselling. On March 5, 2007, a car bomb killed over thirty people and injured many more on this street named for a 10th century Iraqi poet, Al-Mutanabbi. The Coalition and associated groups have arranged readings, exhibits and forums, first in San Francisco and subsequently around the world, to bring attention to the bombing and to raise money for aid to Iraq.

Beau and a fellow organizer, Kathy Walkup, sent out a call to action for letterpress printers, inviting each of them to contribute at least ten copies of a broadside. These broadsides have been made into ten portfolio sets and are being sold to benefit Doctors Without Borders and other organizations doing relief work in Iraq. Many of the over 40 participating printers donated additional copies to be exhibited and sold individually; to date sales of these extra copies have raised over \$2,300. The completed sets will sell for around \$2,500 each.

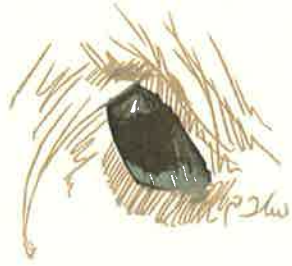
A broadside is simply a single-page presentation of text and/or illustration, most often poetry. When printed letterpress, a process that dates back to Gutenberg and earlier, the result is usually a beautifully designed and executed small edition that reveals the hands-on nature of the process. The type, often set by hand, creates a palpable impression in the page. Broadside from their inception have been employed as a means of spreading the news of the day, and printers have often been in the vanguard of politics, sometimes at great personal risk. So it felt natural for printers to respond to an attack on a literary hub by turning to this old and still vibrant form of broadcasting the news. To accent the brother and sisterhood we printers, writers and booksellers feel with the printers, writers and booksellers in Baghdad, the portfolio was given the title "Mutanabbi Street Starts Here": "here" meaning anywhere and everywhere: here not there.

Since the bombing of a booksellers' district so poignantly references the silencing of voices, I thought it was important to make this project an opportunity to hear voices of that region, and equally important for the project to avoid any appearance of speaking for Iraq. For similar reasons, I included some Arabic in the two broadsides I printed, as well as on the cover sheet to the portfolio and other printed matter accompanying the local exhibits and readings. I sought out and contacted Iraqi poets, obtained permissions from them and from publishers, and created an archive of their poems, which was available to interested fellow printers.

Many availed themselves of the opportunity to print poems by Iraqi writers, both historic and contemporary.

Publishers waived their usual fees and expedited the granting of permissions. The Mutanabbi Street Coalition donates all monies received; this would not be possible without the gracious cooperation of publishers, poets, printers, and volunteers.

Nearly a year since it began, the Coalition continues to organize readings and other events. Anyone interested in learning about its work or in volunteering is invited to visit www.mutanabbistreetreading.com. Currently more broadsides are being solicited; Florida Atlantic University will digitize all of the Mutanabbi broadsides and create an online archive soon; and Red Hen Press in Los Angeles will publish a Mutanabbi Street Starts Here anthology.



O land between two rivers,
O land between two swords,
On you, O land of peace,
On you, O land, peace.

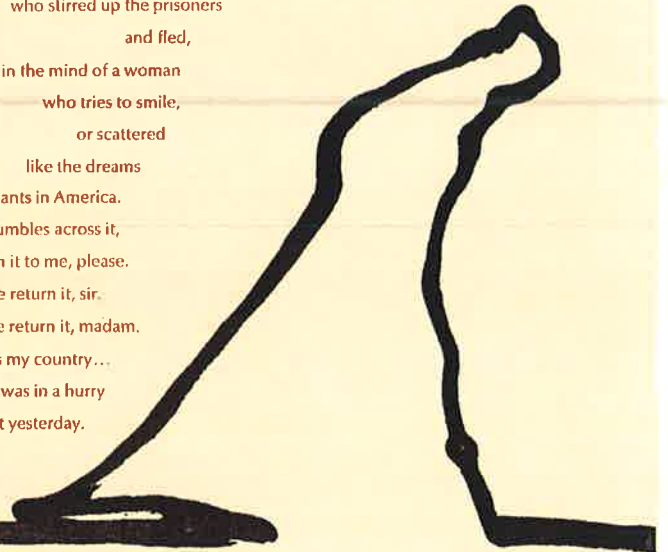
Saadi Yousef

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I Was in a Hurry

Yesterday I lost a country.
I was in a hurry,
and didn't notice when it fell from me
like a broken branch from a forgetful tree.
Please, if anyone passes by
and stumbles across it,
perhaps in a suitcase
open to the sky,
or engraved on a rock
like a gaping wound,
or wrapped
in the blankets of emigrants,
or canceled
like a losing lottery ticket,
or helplessly forgotten
in Purgatory,
or rushing forward without a goal
like the questions of children,
or rising with the smoke of war,
or rolling in a helmet on the sand,
or stolen in Ali Baba's jar,
or disguised in the uniform of a policeman
who stirred up the prisoners
and fled,
or squatting in the mind of a woman
who tries to smile,
or scattered
like the dreams
of new immigrants in America.
If anyone stumbles across it,
return it to me, please.
Please return it, sir.
Please return it, madam.
It is my country...
I was in a hurry
when I lost it yesterday.

Dunya Mikhail



This is a happy coincidence. The title of the poem and the name of the poet are the same. The poet is a woman. The title of the poem is 'I Was in a Hurry'. The poet is Dunya Mikhail. The title of the poem is 'I Was in a Hurry'. The poet is Dunya Mikhail. The title of the poem is 'I Was in a Hurry'. The poet is Dunya Mikhail.

Jill Littlewood

The Departure of Friends Daryo Mikheil

The country left my jar,
My friends left the country.
Everything perished, except the country's dust.
I took a handful,
and formed a statue from the darkness.
I held up a mandelabra to the statue,
Whose tear is this?
What is this that melts?
Why do things return to dust?
I took a handful,
and formed another jar.
I urged the jar to leave the country.
Why is the jar empty inside?
Whose absence drops
and makes the rain fall like the gods?
I want something new under the sun.
I bear the rain with my stick,
Dust from a broken jar
flows into my hand.

Translated by Elizabeth Winslow

خروج الأصدقاء دنيا ميخائيل

خرج البلد من جرتي
خرج الأصدقاء من البلد
لم يبق غير التراب من البلد
أخذت حفنة وسويت تمثالا من العتمة
قربت منه الشمعدان أو أصابعي
دمعة من هذه؟
ما هذا الذي يذوب؟
ولماذا تعود الأشياء الى التراب؟
أخذت حفنة وسويت جرة أخرى
حركتها لأخرج من البلد
لماذا التجاوبف فارغة؟
غياب من هذا الذي سال
وأنزل المطر مثل الآلهة؟
أريد شيئا جديدا تحت الشمس
أضرب المطر بعصاي
فيساق في يدي
تراب
من جرة مكسورة



On the park path
the water was silent, and the dry leaves
and the deep shadows.

On the park path
the sparrows didn't sing
and in the garden
the whispering brook didn't sing.

God of drowned alphabets,
where, where is the shiver of drowsy shadows?
Her hand is in mine
and in my chest a garden.

2.

1.

A clock rang for the tenth time,
it rang ten o'clock,
it rang ten.

Across from the church tower
a star flickered and disappeared
and a nightingale vanished in the pines
fading into a green mirage of night.
Come to my house, girl,
My house is my shrine.
My house is a shrine.
The church shut its doors
and the candles were put out
and the kerchiefs were stained with wine.

Land where I no longer live,
distant land
where the sky weeps,
where the women weep,
where people only read the newspaper.

Country where I no longer live,
lonely country,
sand, date palms, and brook.
O wound and spike of wheat!
O anguish of long nights!

Country where I no longer live,
my outcast country,
from you I only gained a traveler's sails,
a banner ripped by daggers
and fugitive stars.

Algiers, 8/16/1965

3.

Solos on the Oud * * * *Saadi Yousef*
translated by *Khaled Mattawa*

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SANDYA RĀGA

BY INDU MALLAH

This time,
This no man's land between day and night,
Is sacrosanct.
This light,
Mysterious, mystic,
Is ethereal.
This place,
Is transformed
Into an island of insight.
The rain-washed world
wears a verdant mantle,
And bedecks itself
With glittering diamonds of rain drops
Flashing in the setting sun.
I bathe in this luminous light,
Splashing it joyously
Over my breathless body.
I wrap the silken serenity around me,
And adorn myself with the golden glow.
The air is orchestrated
With the domestic chatter of homing birds.
The flames of the torch lilies turn inwards
In their lamps of leaves,
In *dhyānam*.
A conch from a nearby ashram calls;
There is a hushed expectancy,
The world holds its breath;
The light seeps through the crucible of my body,
I feel translucent.
Full to the brim of my being,
I light the lamp in the puja room;
I am alone,
But...who else is here?

ADVAITA DĪPIKĀ

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
GURU MUNI NARAYANA PRASAD

VERSE 15

Ānanda alone manifestly exists (*asti*);
It alone manifestly shines (*bhāti*);
That one alone is oneself; considered as other than oneself
What manifestly exists would seem not to exist;
The whole world then would seem not manifestly shining.
The mirage-water, the sky blue, the bloom of the sky—
all these are simply non-existent.
The ultimate reality in them,
when well thought of, is sky alone.

The answer to the vital problem this work tries to solve is this: One Reality, Consciousness, alone has its own existence. It is this Reality that manifestly shines as the existence of the world. Yet this understanding of consciousness alone as real does not stop the phenomenal world from manifesting. The reason for the continued perceptibility of the world even after one becoming convinced of its unreality is the subject of this verse.

The one underlying and self-unfolding Reality, as we saw in verse 11, is definable as *sat-cit-ānanda*. These three become manifest as individuated beings and are directly experienced by the very same individuated beings as *asti*, *bhāti*, *priya*, as was seen in Verse 8. The *sat*, existence, aspect of the Absolute or the Self is experienced as one's own existence; *asti* as the *cit* consciousness aspect of one's own altering states of mind; and *bhāti* as the *ānanda* aspect as pleasure and pain.

Ānanda, as the essential content of the Absolute Self, is itself conceived as manifesting as all the three—*asti*, *bhāti* and *priya*, for *ānanda*, as existing, is *sat* as well, and as conscious experience is *cit* as well. Any one of these three (*sat*, *cit*, *ānanda*) could also be considered as manifesting individual beings as *asti*, *bhāti* and *priya*. Treating the Self as *ānanda* is all the more significant here in view of the joy of the unfoldment of the Self—the creation of the world—depicted in the next verse.

It is the self-aware *ānanda*—the beingness of the Absolute Self—that becomes manifest, that appears as the existence of every individual entity, as every mental state, as every value sense. The individual who perceives the unreal world as continuing as perceived object is in reality *sat-cit-ānanda*. The perceiver's existence and the perceived's existence are thus really one existence. In other words, what is perceived as the world is nothing more than the perceiver's existence. Seen as separate from oneself, the world is theoretically unreal; but when seen as part of oneself, the world is as real as one's Self. As realizing the one *ātma* alone as real in no way makes oneself unreal, so the world that one perceives is real and unified.

The puzzle we deal with here becomes relevant only when one sees the world as existing separate from oneself, only when Reality is treated as an object to be known. Then the world seen as unreal may sound correct, may sound that such a statement has meaning. But such a denial of the world virtually implies denying the existence of oneself, an impossibility. A realized person, a *jñānin*, perceives the world and himself continuing to appear to be as one *ātma*'s various manifestations. In short, the puzzling question, as with almost all questions in Vedānta, arises from the ignorance of the questioner. Rescued from this ignorance, the questioner feels the meaninglessness of the question and becomes enlightened about the non-duality of the world and Reality.

An example is the case of sky or space. Remaining imperceptible and one, it appears as the unreal water seen in a mirage, as the blue hue of the sky, and even as imaginary flowers blooming in the sky. All these are mere illusory phenomena, *pratibhāsa*, yet they are not alike in being unreal. The water seen in a mirage appears somewhat tangible. Not so the blue of the sky; it is far away and its seeming existence is because of the distance it involves. When approached, it recedes into the depth of space. It is this unreal sky blue, reflected, that appears as the flowing water in a mirage. The flower that blooms in the sky, on the other hand, is merely a human fantasy. Yet all of them have one causal ground: the space or sky. As long as Reality exists, the world, life with all its pleasures and pains, the perceiver included, continues as phenomenal appearance.

Advaita Dīpikā, the Lamp of Non-Duality, is the title of this work and suggests the dawning of the inseparable oneness of *sat-cit-ānanda* and the world of actualities, as in the oneness of water and waves. How the one Reality unfolds itself and appears unceasingly as the world is answered in the next verse.

VERSE 16

Ātma is devoid of I-sense.
It, as with a yogi, owing to Its own *māyā*,
Sportively unfolds Itself in varied forms.
A yogi, unmoved from his state of being well-founded in yoga,
Assumes myriad forms, sportively moving around.

That innumerable names, innumerable ideas and innumerable corresponding objects comprise the world, that the world has one underlying Reality which alone has everlasting existence, and that that Reality is consciousness, we've detailed in the first half of this work. That one Reality is here named *ātma*, the most crucial word in the philosophy of the Guru, which the Guru uses in the present work only once. The word consciousness, *arivu*, or *bodham* in the original Malayalam, conveys the idea of something inconceivably abstract while being bright in essence. Whereas *atma* signifies the directly experienced beingness of oneself. The word is derived from the verb root *at*, meaning to pervade. The substance that pervades the being of something, for example clay in a pot, is its *ātma*. The substance that pervades one's own beingness, as with all else, is nothing other than consciousness.

The way the one consciousness, *ātma*, unfolds itself as the world, subjective as well as objective, is always thought of as a mystery, often described in Vedanta with the help of the concept of *māyā*. It, in the present case, is compared by the Guru to the phenomenon of *siddhis* seen at times in the life of yogi. A yogi is a person in a state of yoga, the state of being fully absorbed, the state of realizing oneself fully as pure consciousness, as already inseparably absorbed in the pure consciousness that is the essential substance of the entire cosmos. In such yogis there are sometimes seen unworldly phenomena known as *siddhis*, for example being seen at two places simultaneously. The phenomenon is conveniently made use of by the Guru to show how mysterious is the way of the unfoldment of the world.

How *ātma* unfolds itself and appears as the world becomes clear if one understands how a yogi, remaining himself, appears to be at different places at the same time. A yogi's self-understanding, by necessity, is entirely different from that of a normal person. The former perceives himself fully one with the whole, as a wave with the ocean, and the latter perceives himself as a separately existing entity. It is just such a perception of the latter that makes the yogi seem separate and miraculous. What is normal and natural with a yogi is something uncommon and supernatural in the perception of a non-yogi. "I am everything," is the common and natural experience in which a yogi resides. He sees himself in everything and everything in himself. This state of natural, full identity with everything appears to a non-yogi as being here and there at the same time. He counts it as a *siddhi*. Yogis, in other words, do not show any miracle; what is natural with them is merely seen

by non-yogis as miracles. Yet such phenomena seen in them are no mere mental fantasy of the spectator either.

In his book *Jonathon Livingston Seagull*, Richard Bach portrays the natural beingness of a yogi and how it can be seen by others as a miracle. Jonathan the seagull practices flying at the highest speed possible. When the maximum speed attainable in this world is attained, he reaches another world where the highest speed he knows is only something very common. A master who can teach the maximum speed attainable in that world lives there. He, finding a real seeker in Jonathan, teaches him the secret of attaining the highest speed. To increase flying speed means to decrease flight time. By bringing down flight time to zero one reaches the maximum speed attainable. Making flight time zero means reaching somewhere in no time, in other words, being at two places at the same time. The master who taught this secret to Jonathan dies very soon, but the latter practices on his own and finally actualizes it. Then the other sea gulls in the community began to see Jonathan as sitting here and there at the same time. So is the case with yogis. They live finding themselves in the being of everything, but others see them as appearing as everything. If the individuality of a yogi, *ahamkṛti*, is kept apart, then what is seen as the miraculous phenomenon is nothing but one *ātma* assuming the form of and appearing as many. In this sense, the Guru says, “*Ātma* is devoid of I-sense. It, as with a yogi, owing to Its own *māyā*, sportively unfolds Itself in varied forms.” The yogi, counted as an individual being, experiences himself as unfolding and appearing as the world; and counted as the one Reality, *ātma*, becomes manifest as the world, itself undergoing no intrinsic change. This self-unfoldment of *ātma* is nothing more than a sport for it, an occasion for experiencing the joy of bringing out and seeing for itself all the potentials hidden within.

Sat-cit-ānanda, in essence *ātma*, never remains inactive, never remains without unfolding itself as the world. And for this very reason, It remains hidden from our perception. This mysterious self-hiding, self-manifestation of *ātma*, which we the perceivers are part of, is known in Vedanta as *māyā*. Though non-existent in itself, it causes us to see *ātma* appear as the world.

What we always perceive, what we continue to perceive even after realizing the unreality of the world, is *ātma* alone. We the perceivers are also nothing but *ātma*. *Ātma* seeing *ātma* is what happens, for nothing other than *ātma* exists. *Ātma*, by unfolding and assuming the form of the world, provides for Itself an occasion to perceive Itself. Confounded by *māyā* as we are, we think we are perceiving the world. Logical reason is not what controls this mysteriousness of *ātma*, for reasoning is simply part of Its manifest form, and hence *ātma* never becomes revealed to reasoning. In the case of those who transgress logical reasoning, and through intuitive perception realize themselves being *ātma*, no more doubt remains either. This point is given special emphasis in the next verse.

ZEN

BY INDU MALLAH

Dhyānam. Roshni.
Bare Bones. White spaces.
Resonant. Redolent.
Raga of echoes and silences.
Nothing. Everything. More.
Distilled essence of fragrance
lingers in the soul.



IRIS THE MESSENGER

BY CHARLES ERICKSON

Introduction: The Queen of Bohemia

Today is my seventh wedding anniversary. I want to tell how I came to Portland to see a play, made a clairvoyant picture and found a wife.

In February 2001 I journeyed across the country by airplane from Catoclin Mountain, Frederick County, Maryland to Portland, Oregon. I came to spend a month with my old friend Johnny Stallings. Back in the early seventies he and I were fellow disciples of Nataraja Guru in South India. Johnny is an actor, and several times I have traveled long distances to see him perform. This time he was playing the part of Feste in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. In the Middle Ages the Twelfth Night of Christmas was a major feast in the liturgical year. Today we call it the spirit of the play, and the play is a celebration of life, love, marriage and folly.

While the play was in rehearsal I walked around seeing the sights of beautiful Portland; otherwise, I read, made pictures or daydreamed in Johnny's attic studio. One picture in particular I want to talk about in detail was of Iris the Rainbow Messenger. This picture I made seven days before the opening of the play. I did not know it at the time but looking back I now believe that this was a clairvoyant picture, an epiphany, and an announcement of beautiful things to come.

Johnny had mentioned over the phone some months before that there was a lady in Portland that he was sure I would like to meet. Mysteriously, he described her as the Queen of Bohemia.* Then on opening night he arranged for Brenda Ewing, that very Queen of Bohemia, to drive me to the theater, where we had front row seats. Brenda came as a surprise blessing with her gorgeous daughter Isabella, then a student in Middle School. It was an epiphany. My life was transformed by a vision of beauty. One thing led to another and two months later Brenda and I were married at the White House in Portland, with Johnny officiating as the minister.

*"Like Christianity, for which it has in many ways functioned as an emotional substitute—emerging in the nineteenth century at around the very time when Christianity began to lose its grip on the imagination—Bohemia has articulated a case for a spiritual, as opposed to a material method of evaluating oneself and others. Like Christianity's monasteries and nunneries, Bohemia's garrets and cafes, low rent districts and cooperative businesses have provided a refuge in which that part of the population uninterested in pursuing the Bourgeoisie's rewards has found sustenance and fellowship." (Alain de Botton, *Status Anxiety*)



The Archetype of the Angel

Our English word angel comes from a Greek word which means a messenger. The archetype of the angel includes a wide variety of messengers or messages from above, from on high: from heaven, from higher planes, from God or the gods. The winged beings dressed in white robes which are such an important part of contemporary religious folklore are only conventional representations of divine messaging. We think of them as etheric beings present in our lives but invisible to us. Angels can be higher human beings. Abraham fed three angels a meal under the oaks of Mamre, and Lot offered his virgin daughters to the mob to protect those angels from sodomy. The angels that Jacob saw in his dream were evidently not winged like birds, or they would not have been ascending and descending on a ladder. The Evangelist tells of how an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and urged him to take Mary and the Child and flee to Egypt, but this might have been a literary device, a way to picture the clairvoyant dream of an intuitive man. In other words, the messenger is a personification of the message. Essentially the angel is the message. In this sense, the rainbow sign that God gave to Noah was an angel not in human form. The angel is a semiotic event of transcendental origin. An inspired dream can be an angel; a work of art can be an angel.

The angel archetype appears in many different times and places, not just in the sacred histories of the prophetic religions. In classical mythology Iris and Hermes are angels, messengers to humans from heaven. They are pictured as winged and swift as thought. The wings symbolize the spirit. Iris and Hermes are the ancestors of our winged angels. Iris was the original divine messenger, but she had no personality. There are no stories about her. In Homer's day Iris was replaced as divine messenger by the more interesting Hermes. Yet she reappears in that role around the time of Christ in Virgil's *Aeniad*:

On saffron wings dew-glittering Iris
glides across the sky, drawing a thousand
shifting colors across the facing sun.

Dr. Mees in *The Book of Signs* writes: "Iris was the messenger of the gods and especially of Juno, representing the moon sphere. She was known for her quickness. She is an aspect of spirit. Light is thrown on the iris of the eye in connection with these traditions." In Greek the word Iris meant, as in English today, a certain flower, and the rainbow and the rainbow personified as a goddess. The rainbow was thought of sometimes as the mantle of Iris and sometimes as Iris herself. In Spanish today the rainbow is know as arca iris, the arc or bow of Iris.

Seven days before the opening of Johnny's production of *Twelfth Night*, I made an ink brush drawing of Iris. (The chestnut clouds were added seven years later.) It happened one rainy afternoon without premeditation as if I were watching

my hand acting on its own. I remember using a live Iris flower as a model. Without the iris flower there is nothing in the picture that would suggest the Greco-Roman Rainbow goddess. Iris was not associated with dragons. She holds the sort of watering can used by gardeners of the present day. This suggests rain, and at that time of year in Portland there is rain in abundance, and there are rainbows, and the irises are in bloom.

Sources of the Picture

“I am far too aware of my own ignorance to suppose that any of these ideas can be my own. The explanation must be that I have been filled from some external source, like a jar from a spring, but I am such a fool that have forgotten how, or by whom.” (Socrates, quoted by Plato in Phaedrus)

There is nothing in the picture to suggest the rainbow goddess Iris except the flower she holds, and looking back on it now I think the source of that flower signifier was the Angel Gabriel as he is shown in traditional Christian iconography. But why was I making a picture of Iris at all? I wonder. In the fall and winter of 2000, before I came to Portland, I had no thoughts of Iris, but I thought a lot about Kwan Yin, the Chinese Bodhisattva of Mercy. I carried a small Chinese image of Kwan Yin standing on the head of a huge dragon, rising out of a stormy sea. The clouds and waves and dragon are dark, and by contrast the small figure of the bodhisattva clad in white shines forth as the center. She holds a vase containing *amṛta*, divine elixir, and bears the image of the Buddha Amitabha, Endless Light, in her headdress. It reminded me of Jesus stilling the tempest and walking on the water, and the dragon reminded me of Leviathan as described by William Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.**

Tragedy was transformed into comedy. The Leviathan of the stormy sea ascended into the sunny air and became an auspicious celestial dragon. This dragon in the brush drawing is a variation of the dragon we all have seen in Chinese shops and restaurants. It is symbolic of the yang power of heaven, the auspicious

**“Beneath us now was nothing to be seen but a black tempest, till looking East between the clouds and the waves, we saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire, and not many stones’ throw from us appeared and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent; at last to the East distant about three degrees appear’d a firey crest above the waves; slowly it reared like a ridge of golden rocks, till we discover’d two globes of crimson fire, from which the sea fled away in clouds of smoke. And now we saw the head of Leviathan; his forehead was divided into streaks of green and purple like those on a tyger’s forehead: soon we saw his mouth and red gills hang just above the raging foam, tinging the black deep with beams of blood, advancing toward us with all the fury of a spiritual existence.”

masculine principle. It is described in the first hexagram of the *I Ching*, called The Creative. It is symbolic of the electrically charged force that is manifest in a thunderstorm. That would be a logical reason for pairing it with the Goddess of the Rainbow. The girl and the dragon are drawn so that the forms are interfused to suggest the togetherness of cloud and thunderhead.

Iris thus lost her saffron wings but gained a dragon vehicle. How this came about I could not understand since the classical Iris wasn't ever associated with serpents or dragons. It was only a couple of months ago that I remembered an image of Athena painted by Gustave Moreau that I had seen back in the eighties. I was in Paris to catch a plane for the States and had a free afternoon to go to a museum. The Louvre would be crowded, I knew, so I chose the little known Musée Gustave Moreau, which was Moreau's studio preserved as a museum. There I saw a gigantic canvas, as big as a billboard, of Odysseus with his bow and arrows destroying the suitors who had been courting his wife before his return home to Ithaca. Presiding over the slaughter, suspended in the air, was the Goddess Athena, the divine patron of Odysseus. This image of Athena was an icon unto itself such as only the illustrious Gustav Moreau could paint, framed in a rayed nimbus. She is accompanied by a large serpent coiling around behind her. I believe that this image was imprinted in the back of my mind and provided the inspiration—though I wasn't conscious of it at the time—for the dragon in the Iris drawing.

And that Iris is really Kwan Yin relabeled. She still carries the image of Amitabha in her headdress, which is the identifying mark of *Avalokiteśvara* in Mahayana iconography, but the form and costume of the girl who rides the dragon came from the Italian Renaissance. A letter from France had come to me the day before I made the drawing. It contained an article, illustrated, about a drawing of a girl by Raphael that had been rediscovered after 500 years. I copied that image directly from the magazine article and added the Chinese restaurant menu dragon free-hand afterward, then the spiral clouds last September. Iris herself was thus the messenger from many places and times, bringing these different images together in my spontaneous, intuitive drawing, itself a message.

HERCULES' SECOND STEP

BY SCOTT TEITSWORTH

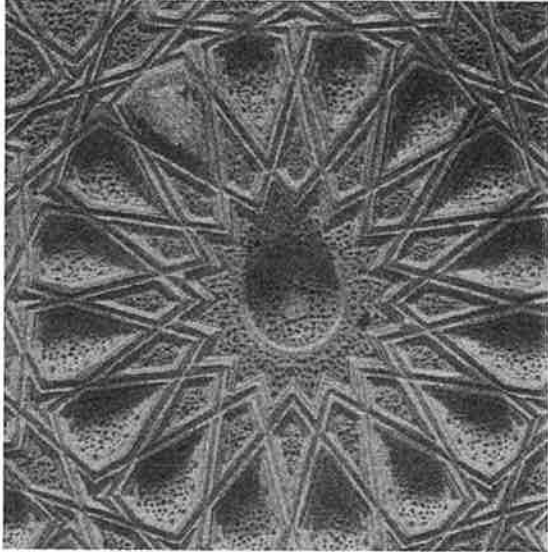
Symbols are archetypal images that can transcend linear history to communicate their message without depending on interpretations by any intervening person or institution. This is quite fortunate, since the meaning of most of the symbols from humanity's distant past have been lost to us. Ancient initiates of the secrets of so many rich traditions have died without heirs. Even where there is a hierarchical lineage still in existence, degeneration and perversions of the traditions have made their interpretations dubious if not downright contrary to their original intent.

It is a Herculean labor left to us in every era to revivify the symbols with fresh understanding, taking into account the suggestions of current opinion but not being excessively weighed down by them. This is certainly the case with the Greek myths, which are now viewed through the lenses of modern science and religion when examined at all. Christianity has recently been blessed with discoveries of some ancient scrolls that bypass thousands of years of revisionism, but such "acts of God" are far too rare. The discoveries remind us all too clearly that the present day institution bears little or no resemblance with the aims of the ancient philosophers.

This is by way of admitting that while I have studied several sources regarding the meaning of Greek myths, the interpretations I am offering are not sanctioned by any official imprimatur. In most cases, scholars have been content to relate the stories without probing for hidden meanings. This is fair enough, as it allows everyone to draw whatever conclusions they can from them, and no one can be certain what the originators had in mind or even who they were. But it is clear to everyone that the stories have significance, that they are brimming with implications. They speak to us directly in our hearts. Great art was ever thus. So in this series on Herakles I have done nothing more than what each of us might do with any myth or other work of art, given the time and inclination. I read several versions of the story and what I could unearth about what they might mean, and then I sat with them for awhile and just mused about them. Whenever I have had a flash of insight I jotted it down, and when what I jotted looked good after a few days reflection I didn't throw it away.

To a degree it is actually a blessing that so many of the ancient stories have come down to us without being bowdlerized by didactic interpretations, which poison so much of the purity of the ancient tales in "living" religions. Our task is to be the disciple to the myths' position of guru: we are to ponder and learn from them. This being the case, perhaps I am doing a disservice by sharing my own insights, but I

do it in the spirit of bringing the dead to life. It should not be taken as gospel, but only as a jumping off place for a personal exploration of your own.



Having cleared that up, let us examine the overall myth before moving on to the second labor. Dr. Mees, that wizard of mythology himself, reminds us “It is significant that the name Herakles, Latinized as Hercules, means ‘renowned through Hera’. The Consort of Zeus represents the Mother-Goddess of the Moon-Sphere. Her garments were said to shine like the summer sea and she wore jewels like the stars of heaven.... She was said to be the fairest of all the Goddesses, even fairer than Venus.” (*Revelation in the Wilderness*, ii, 78). Mees

it was who revealed that myths speak to us on multiple levels, physical, emotional, logical and intuitive, corresponding to earth, water, fire and air. The combination of all the elements results in spiritual catharsis, bringing us to the quintessence or fifth realm, corresponding symbolically to *ākāśa* or space.

A rare and curious book, *Sacred Mythoi of Demigods and Heroes*, published by The Shrine of Wisdom, reveals some excellent insights on Herakles. It sets the tone with a quotation of Proclus, (fifth century CE), from his *Apology for the Fables of Homer*:

“He who has established Intellect (Spirit) as the leader of his life, such a one will most opportunely participate in the illuminations concealed in mythoi; but he who is devoid of instruction cannot safely engage in their speculation....

“Mythoi inspire the hearers in an all-various manner to the investigation of Truth; attract us to arcane knowledge; so that we are not content with superficial conceptions and apparent probability, but are impelled to penetrate the inner significance of the mythoi, to explore the veiled purpose of their authors, and to survey the natures and powers which they intended to signify to posterity by means of such mystical symbols.”

It seems that once upon a time people understood that myths were far more than merely entertaining stories. Yet Mees and this anonymous tract are the only sources I’ve encountered that provide an exegesis of this myth. Here’s how the booklet sets the stage:

“In the legends and mythoi of all nations there appear great characters, heroes, demigods and immortals, who stand out for all mortals to behold as the personification of sublime ideals, profound truths and grand purposes.... Hercules stands for all the redemptive powers which the soul must learn to exercise in order to free herself from all her bonds.

“According to the Mythos, Hercules was given the choice of a life of pleasure and ease, or one of virtue and service, and, like all great Heroes, he unhesitatingly chose the latter. This is the original expression of the Soul’s inherent elective power, by which it makes the Great Choice. For every son of God is originally free, although when united with the body of the Mundane World, the memory of this pristine freedom becomes dim.

“And since it was to be his to make manifest the inherent strength and greatness of the human Soul, it becomes more explicable why Hera should persistently oppose Hercules rather than assist him in his labours; for the Soul’s own greatness is made manifest in the manner in which it overcomes obstacles by its own latent powers, rather than by the way in which it triumphs when co-operating with other powers. Thus, Hercules is indeed a Hero of heroes.”

Finally, regarding the labors: “The perverted human will misuses the force of Providence through selfishness, ignorance, or other reasons, and thus produces all manner of abnormalities. These are symbolized by the monsters and inordinations which Hercules has to overcome.”

My own take on the monsters is that they are not only the products of selfishness and stupidity manifesting as incredibly hostile external forces, they also reflect normal ignorance and the natural proclivities of human beings. Occult works tend to delight in playing up the good vs. evil polemic. Vedanta, on the other hand, treats this dichotomy as part of the overarching problem of ignorance awaiting the light of unitive wisdom. The monsters are our own latent powers unleashed. Still, the Western heroic tradition is very much with us, using excitement and fear as goads for us to face up to the spiritual hurdles that for the unmotivated loom up out of the darkness to keep them bound in their place. It is certainly possible as well that the original version of the myth has been inflated and “sexed up” over the course of time to enchant the later generations.

Herakles’ second labor is the first task he took on after arming himself with an invincible philosophy. There are some variations in the story, but the gist is this. Herakles was asked to destroy the Hydra, a water dragon or serpent, living in the Swamp of Lerna. It had many heads, at least nine, and was so venomous that its very breath was poisonous. Herakles lured it out of its lair with flaming arrows. It caught his foot in one of its coils and the battle was on. Herakles smashed a head with his club, but it would grow right back. In some versions two grew back. Luckily Herakles was accompanied by his friend and charioteer (reminiscent of Krishna?) Iolaus. With his help the Hydra was conquered. First Herakles would bash a head, then Iolaus

cauterized the neck with either a torch or a red-hot iron. That took care of all but the last head, which turned out to be immortal. Herakles cut it off and buried it in the earth, rolling a huge stone over it to keep it in place. Then he dipped his arrows in the poisonous blood of the serpent, and headed off for his next labor.

Even ordinary activities have a proliferating nature resembling the Hydra's regenerative powers. When we decide to do something simple, more and more sacrifices are necessitated by it. For instance, a person wants to have sex. They can't just walk up to someone and do it, they have to preen and make themselves look respectable. They have to earn money for a date. They may even have to get married, which means they have to get a job first, which means they have to study in school first, and so on. I'll have to restrain myself from suggesting that the actual sex act might be a colossal anticlimax....

Or you want to start a business. It starts with a simple impulse, but then there are so many details to be attended to. It becomes a never-ending nightmare of attending to minutia, while the simple act of buying and selling is overwhelmed in regulations and compromises, in scheming and deceit. And once we engage with this "monster," whether through marriage or enterprise, we become caught in its coils. There is no escape.

We can see this myth played out all around us in the transactional world. But the ancient rishis didn't write myths to caution us about courting or business practices. As Dr. Mees reminds us, "[Myths'] purpose is more profound. The aim of religion is to make man happier and to help him find peace and bliss, within himself and in his relation to the world without. It does not make anyone happier to know how the material world is created (assuming that such knowledge is possible at all) and how the physical processes take place and can be controlled." We must look deeper yet to unmask the Herculean myth.

Invincible philosophy in hand, the first order of business for a budding spiritual aspirant is to confront the negative aspects of the psyche lying buried in the subconscious. In Vedanta these are referred to as *samskaras* and *vāsanās*, the seeds of past actions and misunderstandings, which sprout and proliferate primarily as hindrances. A novice treats these as "evil" and desperately tries to suppress them, and especially to keep them out of sight of other people, who might then judge the novice as being evil or inferior. Fearing exposure, the ego strives mightily for suppression of these "monsters from the id," but suppression causes them to come back Hydra-like, with redoubled force. Like a steam boiler without a relief valve, pressure builds up and up. At first the system is poisoned, but eventually the whole tank may rupture, causing a psychic explosion. It is thus critical to find a way other than repression to curb chaotic inner urges.

Much of what passes for spirituality is the dominance of libidinal inner pressures by a hyperactive ego dedicated to their forceful eradication. By contrast, the healthy spirituality that Herakles is seeking will be a harmonious expression of the same inner forces, which are not innately good or evil, but only subterranean.

Antisocial, or even impolite, you might say. The Bible refers to this aspect in Luke 19:37-40. Jesus' disciples are excited and carrying on, and the guardians of social propriety insist that he shut them up, make them behave. He replies, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." He knew they needed to let off libidinal steam.

Actually, processing these inner urges is one of the most complicated tasks set before the aspirant. The Greek myth counsels us that fire, representing conscious intelligence, is the key. Herakles first coaxes the demon out of its cave with flaming arrows, which are well-directed and penetrating devices. The heads are later seared with a torch, ever a symbol of the light of wisdom shining forth in the darkness. Luckily, Herakles is armed with an excellent philosophy, full of light. Plus, he has a helper. This is one task he cannot possibly do alone. Our low grade personal fire is not likely to be bright enough for the task, but a wise teacher can help bring the necessary intense heat to bear in the right place.

Indian rishis speak of roasting the seeds of karma (*vāsanās*) so that they can't sprout. The cauterization of the Hydra heads is the same process. They must be destroyed by the fire of wisdom. Until you really grasp how harmful they are, how useless, part of the mind wants to trot them out and take a look at them one more time. It keeps a few in reserve, just in case it wants to play with them. When you truly understand how past conditioning binds you—like being held fast in the coils of the Hydra—the realization can develop enough heat to finally scorch the *vāsanās* once and for all.

Tapas, referring to the effort involved with spiritual striving, literally means generating heat, or transforming with heat. Often this is taken to mean the heat of repressed emotions, stemming from the conflict between personal desires and scriptural injunctions. The myth and the rishis suggest otherwise: *tapas* is the white heat of uncompromising awareness, of being fully cognizant of what normally lurks in the shadows. Bringing light automatically dispels darkness. All we have to do is keep ourselves from shrinking back or running away. There is real bravery involved in entering the demon's lair.

The Bhagavad Gita refers to the Hydra myth thusly: "Here (in yoga) the well-founded reasoning is unitive, but many branched and endless are the reasonings of them in whom reason is ill-founded." (II, 41) This means that the original unity of reality can be viewed as either pro or con, good or evil. Once that happens, each side can be taken in isolation, and they will be found to have ever more pros and cons. Each of these increasingly peripheral arguments has its strong and weak points, and so on, ad infinitum. At each stage the original unity becomes more remote, until it is obliterated entirely.

The club Herakles uses to smash each head represents the crude examination of ordinary, or ill-founded, reason. It is obviously inadequate for the task at hand. Luckily this is followed up by the application of the fire of intelligence by Iolaus, who may well be acting as his guru. The fire is applied with a red-hot iron,

indicating intense determination, as in a will of iron. When the coils of *karma* want to sweep you off your feet, you have to put all you've got into standing firm, even sometimes to holding on to your sanity, which may be severely shaken.

Nitya Chaitanya Yati, in *That Alone*, verse 82, speaks eloquently of this same situation:

“When you come to this level, all single items of experience are like fuel for the fire of your understanding. That is why the Bhagavad Gita says the fire of wisdom burns away all ignorance. And what is this ignorance we speak of? In Vedanta, ignorance is considered to be that which creates a desire.

“Desires create the visualization of ways to satisfy them. The visualization of means to satisfactory ends initiates action; the idea of action builds momentum in you to act; and ultimately the action brings about an apparently new situation. As the new situation ebbs it is replaced by a sense of loss, which in turn initiates another desire. From the new desire arises the need to have another action. Thus one action leads to another, endlessly. This is called bondage.

“[To be released from bondage] you have to make a distinction between taking a relativistic path through life, with many compromises and half-baked notions about things—in other words, a pretentious life—and a thoroughgoing search made with great intensity, into which you put your whole mind and spirit, and where you will accept nothing less than complete understanding in every situation. This allows you to own your life entirely and live it with absolute clarity. Until it becomes totally clear to you, you refuse to take it. That changes your stature from a relativist to an absolutist.

“The contemplative... is not just a person who sits in lotus pose in a room with his eyes closed, meditating, but one whose whole life is engulfed in the white heat of a meaningful search. The search can take any form, but it is its thoroughness, the intensity of the pursuit, and the minute details to which one's best attention is given in all earnestness, that [are what is required]. You don't slack up even for a second.”

Herakles exemplifies this intensity in his battle with the Hydra. If he slacks off for even an instant he will be destroyed! Sharp fangs and poisonous breath are assaulting him from every angle. But he stays with it, full of righteous intensity. One by one the heads are crushed and then cauterized with determination.

The last of the heads turned out to be immortal, unkillable. This refers to the eternal nature of *vāsanās*. Everything we do, good, bad or indifferent, plants the seeds of future travails. Therefore the last vestigial urges of selfishness cannot be totally destroyed, but they can be pinned down under a rock of wisdom so that they cannot rise again. I also see this as possibly communicating the sympathetic humor of some bygone guru, letting us know that we will never be fully free of *vāsanās*

until we are liberated by the grave. Only when we are safely tucked in the ground with a stone over our head will the Hydra leave us in peace....

And then Herakles does an interesting thing: he dips his arrows in the poisonous blood of the monster. This demonstrates that we must take what we've learned from every encounter. We don't just walk away and that's it. The very thing that caused the repulsion and the striving can become a positive factor to bring to bear on the next challenge. As Nataraja Guru would tell us, there is no principle of the excluded middle in this philosophy. Ancient wisdom is dialectic. Good never triumphs over evil, nor evil over good. Through wisdom they are brought together in harmony. The modern cliché is we learn from our mistakes. If there is no connection between our good side and the evil we encounter, the conflict would be essentially meaningless.

Oddly enough, precisely because Herakles relies on his teacher's expertise and not purely his own, this labor "didn't count" toward expiating the guilt that propelled him into his spiritual struggles. Eurystheus, the Mycenaean king who set the labors, did not consider this a victory by Herakles. This may be an afterthought, a later addition to the myth. Triumphant over the *vāsanas* is a tremendous accomplishment, and few if any of us will ever achieve it alone. Kings, however, are famous for their ill-considered opinions in myth and fable and even actuality. By rights he should represent a wise teacher though. Probably, like Marpa, or for that matter Nataraja Guru, he is using a technicality, a trick to keep Herakles busy with his spiritual unfoldment. And it's reasonable to posit that whatever we do on someone else's coattails is preliminary to us exercising our full recognizance.

However you read it, Herakles' second labor speaks to us from the primordial past in vivid pictorial language, imparting a timeless spiritual lesson for those to read who will.



DIALECTICS IN EDUCATION

BY PETER MORAS

This January several Gurukula friends from our worldwide community gathered for Nancy Yeilding's Sneha Samvada at the Ooty Gurukula. While together, we responded to an invitation from our friend, Sri Madhavan Nair, to formulate some thoughts on unitive education and teacher training that would be helpful to the governing board of Calicut University in Kerala. Scott Teitsworth took the lead in focusing several morning and evening classes on the topic. We enjoyed stimulating discussions and responded to a homework assignment to come back with a short summary of recommendations we could offer the University. Ideas were contributed by Scott, Debbie Buchanan, Ramakrishna, Peter Moras, Fred Cantor, Swami Tanmaya, Swami Vyasa Prasad, Swami Vinaya Chaitanya, and Nancy Yeilding.

Calicut University sees a great need to educate students who are more caring, more responsible and kinder to their society and the environment. We were challenged to frame our ideas in a way that would appeal to the thinking patterns and values of Marxism, Calicut University being a hotbed of that philosophic persuasion. We endeavored to do this by universalizing the principles of human learning, honoring the facts and urgent challenges of the given world we live in, and utilizing the ability of dialectical understanding to resolve differences in unitive comprehension.

The main thrust of the recommendations are: to remember the personal character of educational relationships; to nurture independent, creative, and cooperative thinking through mentorships; and contact with excellent teachers, interactive learning situations, projects and service in one's community. We would be wise if we would culture our inner potentialities as much as the dynamics of effective communication and a nuanced understanding of the world, its problems and its guiding and regulating principles, the respect of which grants harmony, peace and fulfillment. We agreed that you can't be a good teacher if you aren't continuing to learn, if you don't love what you do, and don't encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.

Students should learn to question, to access information using networking technologies, to contemplate, to explore freely subjects that are of interest to them and to express themselves in new and challenging ways free from the fear of failure or ridicule. It's not enough to get preparation for a career or to be trained to be a good citizen. Each person needs affirmation, acceptance and discipline to be a living, breathing human being with humane qualities of kindness, intelligence,

peace and initiative. Each person, each student, needs to know how to help themselves out of an overflowing sense of inner completeness, to be attuned to the energy and being of our ecological connection with humanity and Mother Nature, and to also reach out their hands and hearts to others to offer support, comfort, inspiration and hope. In that way, students can stand together to bring a new world into being each moment. We envision a world free of prejudice and cruelty, alive with happiness, well-being, respect, sensitivity, efficiencies, abundance and beauty, which is the only thing that is. Read on if you want to peruse the rest of these folks' recommendations and write us to join in the conversation. It's pretty bare bones, but isn't that what our skeletons are?

Scott Teitsworth:

The quantum field within every being is almost infinite. Each being deserves full respect, as all are growing in their own way and at their own pace. India already has the best model for teaching: sitting near a wise preceptor with mutual trust and respect (called *upaniṣad*). The British system inculcates a pyramidal structure, with only a few successes against many failures. A simple change in attitude could restore the benefits of the older model.

Students learn best when they see the meaningful relevance of what they are studying. "To make money" is the most basic meaning, one that encourages selfishness and exploitation of the environment. More exalted meanings must be offered, such as self-realization, global unity and peace, harmonious evolution, and so on. Universities should widen the parameters of educational requirements so that students are free to pursue subjects that interest them. And we should realize there is no fixed truth in education; it is an ongoing process.

Recommended books are *Science and the Akashic Field*, by Erwin Laszlo which gives a scientific vision of human potential, imparting inspiration and excitement, and *Ishmael*, where Daniel Quinn artfully presents the imperative nature of attunement with the environment.

Swami Tanmaya:

Dialectical thinking is important in education. It is dialectical reasoning that is the realm of value.

Ramakrishna:

The education we are getting now is mainly to explore the outer world, to become "a somebody" in the society. But there is an inner world as well, which we usually ignore, mainly because it is intangible. Man lives as if one half of his being is paralyzed. So in the education process we should devote more time, at least one half of the time, for poetry, art, meditation, etc., which will help us to go within.

A teacher is no longer needed as just an information provider since there are computers for that. But a teacher can be a facilitator, a model human being whose

presence will help to evoke the inner potentialities of the students. That implies a lot of responsibility on the part of the teacher. The good news is that success in life is not just success in one's career, nor in attaining power and prestige but in being a happy human being who spreads positive values around.

Deborah Buchanan:

A teacher training program must be set up as you wish the teachers to teach their students. This entails small, supportive, interactive groups, as well as information and instruction. Mentoring and apprenticeships provide the personal interaction necessary to true learning. Individual exploration for both teachers and students is necessary, since you can't be a good teacher if you're not learning.

Peter Moras:

We should select teachers of the highest integrity and moral character. Good teachers have self-chosen the teaching vocation. They love life, love to learn, and love to share with others in a respectful, open manner.

Teachers and professors should remember that even though they are teaching a class, they are teaching individuals. They should cultivate respectful, encouraging, one-on-one relationships with each of their students. The way to teach is simple. Pay attention to yourself and to yourself in the form of your students and your environment. Follow the directions that reason, intuition and common sense suggest to you. Feel free to change and be flexible.

Fred Cantor:

In teaching, independent thought should be encouraged. Classes should be as small as possible, and there should be an emphasis on mentor-student relations. The best learning situations are interactive. Teachers will teach as they themselves have been taught. Students should be given the opportunity to produce "exams" for the teacher on the relevant subject matter and then "grade" the responses.

Nancy Yeilding:

In educating students, we need to remember that each person is a treasure house of potential and invite the treasures to manifest. We should encourage self-expression through creative projects such as journaling, poetry, writing, art, music, dance, and experimental challenges. Both teachers and students should listen well, and they should be exposed to inspirational examples of teaching.

Swami Vyasa Prasad:

The teacher and the student are counterparts of the knowledge situation, and education is a lifelong process. Nataraja Guru's World Education Manifesto mentions four stages in an education: 1. negative; 2. naturalistic; 3. pragmatic;

and 4. idealistic. In an age where information is easily accessible, students should be given freedom to explore and discover for themselves. Teachers can help to distinguish appearance from reality and provide emotional content to the educative process.

Swami Vinaya Chaitanya:

Nataraja Guru refers to education as a weaning process (weaning from limiting identities), as well as a lifelong process. The first and the last stages of this weaning process especially require the involvement of a Guru. He also refers extensively to J. J. Rousseau, the father of modern education, and quotes him on the impossibility of educating a good human being and a good citizen at the same time. A good human being can always act as a citizen, when necessary. An example is when Socrates took up arms to defend his city. But if you educate a citizen, he may not rise to the full stature of a human being. So the question of nationality and citizenship is quite crucial to any discussion of educational theory and practice, and the need for educating world-citizens is to be stressed. These are interrelated polarities that can be resolved into syntheses.

We need to squarely address the economic, historical and ecological realities that confront us. Service learning projects can be organized with the collaboration of governmental agencies, NGO's, scouting groups, religious groups and citizens that get students out working in their communities to study and solve problems of importance to them. Service learning increases a student's sense of connectedness to their community and natural environment, it fosters a greater sense of social responsibility and civic pride, and strengthens the sense of personal efficacy in solving problems. We should take from the earth only what we need.

We are not interested in a future state for which we have to sacrifice the present. We are for loving and honoring the present and making it as beautiful and as fair as possible.



ONE HUNDRED STEPS TO REALIZATION

BY GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

STEP SIX ALTERNATIVE

What is your initial impulse after waking up in the morning?

The first impulse in the morning is that another day is at hand. Each day is to be specifically programmed as a continuing process so that it will supplement and complement the achievement and attainment of the previous day.

What is the item that looms largest, to begin with?

It is certainly to keep the body and mind clean and fresh, like a cleansed instrument, properly tuned and lubricated, to do my daily chores efficiently.

What is the order in which you keep your system ready to activate?

I clear my body of all the filth accumulated in the previous day. I wash my mouth and brush my teeth, take a bath, change my clothes, and do bodily exercises so that every limb is flushed with energy. Then I settle down in my study to work on a regular project which will give me insight into the physical, physiological, moral, and spiritual discipline that can continuously bring new insight into the meaning of my life.

Also, I make a critical observation of the structural and functional details of my body-mind complementarity. Wherever there is a defect I try to correct it. If any alien infection has gotten into my system I take therapeutic measures to heal that part of the body, to put it back into service for fresh activities. To do all these things I need sufficient energy. In the intake of food, I choose a manner which will not be hard upon my body. I take a light breakfast, and to tune myself to peace, dignity, and universal harmony with the world, I resort to a contemplative, aspirational prayer. In the same way I regulate my lunch and evening meal.

Although I am not a married person obliged to have sex with anyone, I cordially receive people of all ages and genders in an amicable and warm manner. I maintain a very low profile of showing physiological appreciation to anyone. One spiritual discipline I maintain is not to tickle any of my sensory or libidinal tendencies. This is very beautifully rendered in the *Jewels of Remembrance* by Jalaluddin Rumi, (III, 166-171):

The smell of pride and greed and lust
will betray you when you speak
as much as the onions you have eaten.
Many prayers are rejected because of their smell;
the corrupt heart reveals itself in the tongue.
But if your meaning is pure,
God will welcome even your clumsy expression.

Do you have socially and psychologically based promptings which come and dissipate your spiritual clarity?

I used to have many unwanted thoughts and stimulations. Now, after having accepted the yoga discipline of observing correct behavior patterns and the repetitive and positive yoga practices, I am not exposed to unwanted, wrong identities.

What spiritual lessons do you take?

Following the advice of Nataraja Guru I contemplate on Sankara's *Viveka-Cūdāmaṇi*, verses 167 – 183 (with a special emphasis on 174) printed below.

Conditioned by the five organs of action this vitality becomes the *prāṇamāyā* sheath through which the embodied ego performs all the actions of the material body. 167

The *prāṇamāyā*, being the modification of life-breath and the comer and goer, in and out, like air-currents, is also not the *ātman*, because it cannot by itself discriminate between good and evil, or the real Self and another, it is always dependent on another (the Self). 168

The organs of sensation together with the *manas* (mind) form the *manomāyā* sheath which is the cause (*hetu*) of the differentiation between "I" and "mine"; it is the result of ignorance, it fills the former sheath and it manifests its great power by distinguishing objects by names, etc. 169

The fire of the *manomāyā* sheath, fed with objects as if with streams of melted butter by the five senses like five *hotṛs*, and blazing with the fuel of manifold desires, burns this body, made of five elements. 170

There is no *avidyā* besides the *manas*. *Manas* itself is the *avidyā*, the instrument for the production of the bondage of conditioned existence. When that (*avidyā*) is destroyed, all is destroyed, and when that is manifested, all is manifested. 171

In dream, when there is no substantial reality, one enters a world of enjoyment by the power of the *manas*. So it is in waking life, without any difference, all this is manifestation of the *manas*. 172

All know that when the *manas* are merged in the state of dreamless slumber nothing remains. Hence, the contents of our consciousness are created by the *manas* and have no real existence. 173

Cloud collects by the wind and is again dispersed by the wind; bondage is created by the *manas*, and emancipation is also produced by it. 174

Having produced attachment to the body and all other objects, it thus binds the individual as an animal is bound by a rope, afterwards having produced aversion to these as if to poison, that *manas* itself frees him from bondage. 175

Therefore, the *manas* are the cause of the bondage of this individual and also of its liberation. The *manas* when stained by passion are the cause of bondage, and of liberation when pure, devoid of passion and ignorance. 176

When discrimination and dispassion predominate, the *manas* having attained purity become fit for liberation, therefore these two (attributes) of a man desirous of liberation and possessed of *buddhi*, must at the outset be strengthened. 177

In the forest land of objects wanders the great tiger named *manas*; pure men desirous of liberation, do not go there. 178

The *manas*, through the gross body and the subtle body of the enjoyer, creates objects of desire and perpetually produces differences of body, caste, color, and condition, all results of the action of the qualities. 179

The *manas*, having clouded over the absolute consciousness which is without attachment, acquires notions of "I" and "mine", and through attachment to the body, organs, and life, wanders ceaselessly in the enjoyment of the fruit of his actions. 180

By ascribing the qualities of the *ātman* to that which is not *ātman* is created (the series of incarnations). This ascription is produced by the *manas* which is the primary cause of birth, suffering, etc., in a man devoid of discrimination and tainted by *rajas* and *tamas*. 181

Therefore, learned men who have seen the truth call the *manas avidya*, by which the universe is made to wander as the clouds are by the wind. 182

For this reason pains should be taken by one desirous of liberation to purify the *manas*. It being purified, liberation is at hand. 183

Can you maintain yourself at least for a short time in the serenity of the inner core of consciousness?

If you try to tame your inner promptings and you find it difficult pass on to the next step, accept a master who can be your exemplar.

STEP SEVEN

Are you fully awake now?

I think I am.

What do you experience?

I am experiencing the sounds I hear, the sights I see, the rise in temperature of the air, the saliva that secretes in my mouth and the odor that I smell in the atmosphere.

That only means you are awake to the phenomenal world. Is there any other world to which you can wake up?

Yes, I can wake up to my Self.

What is this Self?

What you hear is the phenomenon of sound which is the effect of your Self that hears, what you feel is the effect of the Self that causes the sense of touch on your skin, what you see is the effect of the Self that makes your eyes perceive, what you taste is the effect of the Self that tastes, and what you smell is the effect of the Self that brings the smell in your nose. It is to that Self I should wake up.

What you earlier called the waking state is a combined effect of phenomenality produced by the effect of solar energy causing thermodynamic sensations in your body cells and tissues. The interpretation was given that that was only a mirror-like response to physiological stimulation, to electromagnetic interaction with external energy by the biologic and psychic energy. The mirror effect of the epiphenomenon of life is called chidabhasa. That means you are still sleeping in yourself. What you now think of yourself is only an image, a counterpart that is

falsely generating in you a conditioned mental image. You are still deluded by your sensory perceptions.

My sensory perception is very clear as the audibility of sound, as the tangibility of touch, as the vision of sight, as the taste in my tongue and as my olfactory sensation of smell. I share all these experiences with all other similarly embodied creatures. Yet a million mirrors can give the same reflection of the images of phenomenality but that does not mean the images are self-subsisting.

What is a mental image?

We are all individually placed in an imaginary time and space frame of consciousness, which continuously makes ephemeral effects like cloud formations in the void of the sky.

Can you get out of it?

I cannot escape from it until my conditioned state that generates the non-dimensional modulation of ignorance, called *abhasa vṛtti*, conditioned state, comes to an end.

So what should you do?

I can relate myself with a person who has freed himself with Self-knowledge, who is not fettered by the compulsion of going round and round in the cyclic path of birth and death.

How can you know such a true contemplative (mūni) who has delivered himself from ignorance with the right knowledge of the Praṇava, A-u-ṛi?

I have to live in the intimate observation of a realized knower and know how he or she clearly discerns the subject-object duality of the phenomenal wakeful state (*jagrat*), objectifies the subject in generating mentation (*svapna*), becomes absorbed in the state of the canceling out of the dual states of subjectivity and objectivity (*sushupti*), and remains never shaken out of the universal identity with the Self (*turīya*). Then alone will I become initiated into the state of the ever-wakeful in the Self. I should bear in mind that there is a universal basis for consciousness in all, irrespective of individual variation. This universal basis of consciousness is called the fourth, *turīya*, which is the same as the Universal Self. A fully realized person retains his identity with the Self always in the Silence of the *turīya*.

MOVIE MUSE

BY PETER OPPENHEIMER

Of the nearly two dozen films I saw from fourteen different countries at this year's International Film Festival in Kerala, most were good and a handful were very good. What follows is a synopsis of my Top Three, all three available now on DVD, each worthy of noting down for future reference, enjoyment and enrichment.

Maroa, a striking Venezuela film with a contemporary urban edge, is about an eleven year old girl, Maroa, who is a Caracas street scamp, selling lottery tickets, used pornography magazines and small images of saints to help support herself and her grandmother, who tells fortunes and works assorted scams to make ends meet. Maroa's boyfriend, Carlos, is a pickpocket and petty criminal poised on the brink of getting himself deeper in crime. One day while acting as lookout for Carlos' car-jacking project, Maroa hears the haunting tones of a clarinet echoing through the underground parking lot, and she is transported to another realm of human experience previously unimagined by her.

Through a series of rather unlikely but not implausible coincidences, a gripping story is set up of love and karma, striving and strife. The man playing the clarinet turns out to be the car's owner, and in the process of the musician chasing Carlos, Maroa swipes his car stereo and CD collection (which deepens her fascination with the music). Several weeks later the same man comes to teach music at the reform school to which Maroa has been remanded by the police in an attempt to get her to rat out Carlos on a murder charge. What then follows is a complex story of: loyalty, stubbornness, aspiration, impulsivity, intergenerational intimacy, perseverance and backsliding, all in this suspenseful exposition of a precarious quest for personal salvation. At once tender-hearted and hard-hitting, *Maroa* is a rewarding way to spend 99 minutes.

Me, Myself (Thailand) is another very smart modern urban fable. Ooh is a twenty-something professional woman climbing a career ladder in an advertising agency. As *Me, Myself* opens, Ooh is driving through her tears, grieving the break-up with her up-and-coming advertising executive boyfriend. Preoccupied and distracted in the dark rainy night, she knocks down a person standing on the side of the road. She then rushes him to the hospital. Nearly hysterical and profoundly remorseful, she signs a paper accepting responsibility for the accident and the victim's recovery.

When he awakens with amnesia and no identifying cards, he is signed out of the hospital into her custody. Initially she wants nothing to do with him and coldly drops him off at a bus stop. When he is still sitting there staring into space the next

morning, she begrudgingly takes him in at her apartment, which she shares with her ten year old nephew for whom she is caring.

Now we have a male lead, whom the female lead is initially afraid of and repulsed by, trying to piece together his own identity while trying to figure out who this woman is who ran him down and has taken him in. Each of the three main characters (the nephew included), thrown together by chance and karma, are appealing in their own multifaceted and imperfect ways.

The rest of the film is an intriguing and suspenseful revelation of who these characters think they are and who they really are, told as an off-beat yarn in the key of romantic comedy. What briefly appears as if it might become a fairly stock romance takes an extremely unexpected twist when the man's past comes to light.

Ultimately the tale is about the challenges and rewards of being who you are deep down and accepting others for who they are, even when it is not what you might wish them to be. The film most enjoyably raises the question of how can we be sure we are living our life, true to ourselves, as opposed to how others want us to be. This question and the treatment it is given in the quirky *Me, Myself* is neither simple nor trivial.

Rounding out this Urban Trilogy of Festival Favorites is a hip puzzler of a film from China, *Lost in Beijing*, winner of the Special Jury Award at this year's Bangkok Film Festival. As with the previous two films, dealing as all three do with themes of poverty, infirmity, misfortune and/or abuse, a superficial treatment of the plot makes the experience of watching it sound heavier and more ponderous than is actually the case.

The precipitating incident of *Lost in Beijing* is the rape of a masseuse, Ping Gue, by her boss Ling Dong, an act the denouement of which is witnessed by Ping Gue's husband. The husband decides to use his knowledge to blackmail Lin Dong. Further complicating matters is the uncertain paternity of Ping Gue's ensuing pregnancy, exacerbated by the fact that Ling Dong and his wife have been longing and trying unsuccessfully to become parents.

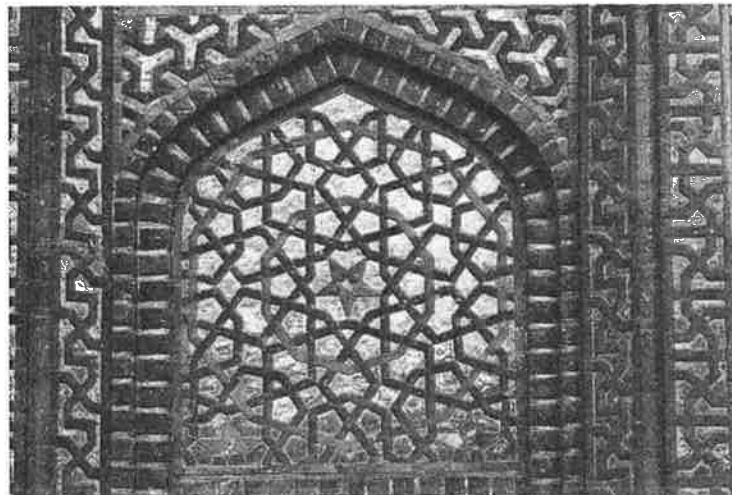
Out of this extremely volatile confection of circumstances and motives, a rather bizarre arrangement is made which impacts each of these four characters in profound yet different ways. Things play out in an atmosphere in which selfishness, cunning, treachery and greed vie with loyalty, integrity and sacrifice, sometimes within the same character. Alliances form and shift. Characters make promises and then come through or falter in unexpected yet realistic ways. And here again, all four characters are shown to be complex and multi-dimensional, neither pure saints nor abject sinners. All have their redeeming qualities as well as blind spots and shortcomings.

As the plot thickens and the characters deepen, it is very fascinating to watch and wonder who will do what next and how things will eventually wind up. In spite of the twisted behaviors and character flaws set forth, I came to care deeply

about these people and did not want to leave them even at the films surprising and satisfying resolution. *Lost in Beijing* is a very well-written and well-acted peep into the rapidly modernizing psyche of present day China and its participation in some rather universal inconsistencies and incongruities of interpersonal relationships.

One last good film I must mention in passing, particularly as it was noteworthy for its spirit of levity and celebration amidst a festival of films characterized by gravity and protestation (the three films above being relatively balanced exceptions): *I Was a Swiss Banker* (Switzerland). This is a light-hearted fable about an upscale professional launderer of black market money who, about to be found out at a Swiss-German border crossing, abandons his new Porsche and plunges into the lake to get away. Rescued by a mermaid, he is set a task by a weird witch whereby he is to meet and select three women of his choosing and find one to love him back or else he will belong to the witch.

He forthwith sets out on a merry and harrowing adventure of fights, flights, and flirtations, flashes, crashes and splashes, advances and retreats, affections and rejections, betrayals and reversals, apparitions and aberrations, intimations, intimidations and intimacies, undressings and redressals, sirens and sirens (as in “horns” and “temptresses”), jests and arrests, escapes and escapades. In the end there is even a moral about how there are certain things you have to let go of if you want to be rescued or to find your own salvation.



NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE 2008

BY GURU MUNI NARAYANA PRASAD

Greetings to everyone with a prayer: may the coming year we look forward to with great expectation be a peaceful one!

It was in November of 1970 that Nataraja Guru convened the World Conference for Peace Through Unitive Understanding. The message given there was this: only the non-dual vision (*advaita-bodha*), the vision of oneness, will ensure everlasting peace for the world. Though many topics were discussed at the Conference, all pointed toward and shed light upon this single message. I myself had the privilege to present a paper and be one of the organizers of the Conference.

The Conference convened on the isle of Ezhmalai, one of northern Kerala's most remote locales, where even vehicles could not yet access. Difficult indeed was organizing a world conference in so remote a place. Some participants asked Nataraja Guru, "Do you think lasting peace in the world can be ensured by conducting such a conference in so remote an area?" He replied, "No license is required to dream. Everything one dreams need not necessarily be realized. Sitting here in this isolated place, I am seeing a dream."

Since that day Nataraja Guru dreamt, the world's lack of peace appears to have increased manifoldly, so to speak. The Conference's venue itself, the Gurukula Island Home at Ezhmalai, has since been taken over the Government of India to prepare for war, where it now runs its Naval Academy.

Today the United States of America is seen as the strongest country in the world. On the other end of the spectrum there are very tiny island states such as Fiji, in the Pacific. Yet in both countries, and many between, the political and military leaders are fearful of the prospect of suicide bombers. In India too the scare created by such attacks has steadily increased. After each attack, politicians make statements in condemnation of the attack and for the need for tighter security measures by the Government. But this tightening loosens in due course. Attacks recur, sometimes aiming at newer targets. And so the overall predicament continues with no clear-cut solution in sight. The government machineries are so far only effective at making bold statements that such terrorist activities will never be tolerated and will be effectively eradicated. But such declarations only help escalate terrorism in the world by escalating the sense of tension and separation between mankind.

Such avowals and terrorist attacks, we should remember, are caused by the divisive and sectarian attitudes of people in general, with the leaders at the helm. Forces such as the increasing greed to exploit natural resources, racial discrimination, religious rivalry and their like, are motivated by such a sense of separateness.

Another factor prompting man to act without humanitarian concern is caused by a growing trend in modern education and the working world. The attention given to what is most human in people is being increasingly left out for the sake of training them to better serve machines. These machines were initially invented to make human life easier and to allow for a greater diversity in life. Machines were to serve humans by allowing more time and energy to be human. But now, on the contrary, man is beginning to turn into the machine's servant, with the sole aim of making money. This trend, contributing really to cultural degeneration, has drastically accelerated since the rise of the computer age.

As this machine culture advances, man becomes more and more forgetful of his necessary concern for others, as well as for a safer, healthier world. Man's concerns are becoming more circumscribed within a world of passing personal and sectarian interests. Unless we remain aware of this cultural degeneration, human life will be reduced to machine-like existence. Peace can only suffer under such circumstances.

The lack of peace will only grow in our world until the individuals who operate the administrative machinery become purer in mind and are able to comprehend that the entire world is really one entity, one political unit, one humankind, and all have one overall goal—to be happy. Perhaps only when the current world trend of becoming more and more divided and sectarian reaches its only natural apex, a dead end, will political leaders and the world at large realize the need to acknowledge the real oneness of mankind, whereby political consensus and tolerance will be possible. Until then, we can at least dream of a perfectly peaceful world, firmly based on wisdom. Let us remember that Narayana Guru's great dictum, "Of one kind, of one faith, of one goal is man," clearly envisages such a future world order that is firmly based on Reality. All masters and prophets the world over have had the same perception.

One thing is definite: the only way to ensure lasting peace in our world is a universal acceptance that the world forms but one country and humankind forms but one race, and that all living beings, including all of the human race, have the common right to responsibly share in the world's resources.

Let us continue to dream this ideal of a peaceful world in the hope that it may be realized in some unknown future. Even now, this dream, with its underlying wisdom, can make the life of individual humans peaceful. Realizing this peace as an individual requires no waiting for an unknown future: it is realizable instantaneously upon becoming enlightened as to the oneness of Reality. Of all knowledge, it is the easiest we can attain in life. Let us bring peace into our own lives as individuals and we will stir the most powerful force that will prompt the realization of world peace. Let the New Year arouse in us the inspiration to do so.



A GATHERING

BY JUDY SUTEL

Preparations for the annual celebration of the birth anniversary of Nataraja Guru at Somanahalli Gurukla started several days before the actual event took place on Sunday, February 17th. People had come in from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Japan, and France, to name but a few places, a microcosmic convocation of souls. It was an all hands-on movement to get the buildings whitewashed, the gardens weeded and watered, and the rooms and tents set up for the innumerable gods who might appear. Hundreds were expected. A gaggle of village ladies worked tirelessly the day before the puja to clean the expansive ten acre grounds from the Devi Temple to the Library. Every path and open space was swept meticulously before being purified with sacred cow dung, preparing a dustless surface for the rangoli. Three local women in sarees colored blue, red and yellow gracefully moved about, bent at the waist, fists full of white-ground stone-powder that they used to draw the auspicious, intricate, symmetrical designs at their feet, invoking the Gods. It seemed to have worked. This year's Guru Puja was a blessed event indeed.

On Saturday an L-shaped ditch was dug to serve as the fire pit. Stone blocks were hauled in to line the hearth as logs and kindling were gathered and piled close by. The kitchen was officially opened only after Ma conducted the ceremonial puja and lighting of the fire where both ends of the 'L' were blessed and touched with turmeric, saffron and red. The fire started effortlessly and burnt for days.

Ravi and Mahima were at the helm of the outdoor kitchen. Friends had gathered on Saturday evening around 8 p.m. for what seemed to be a rite of passage at Narayana Gurukula, Bangalore, staying up all night chopping vegetables. Heaps of tomatoes, coconuts, ginger and herbs among other delectables awaited preparation. There were twenty or so people seated on three huge blankets within the tapestry walls and under the tarpaulin ceiling that housed the outdoor kitchen for the puja. Several cutting boards and knives circulated among them as first hundreds of garlic cloves and onions were peeled and chopped; then mounds of green chilies carefully sliced; eventually bigger and sturdier tubers were peeled and soaked (finally something to be coarsely chopped!). There was enthusiasm at first when we all gathered early in the night ready to work, but around 4 a.m. when we were still there, covered in potato skins and coriander leaves, hands and eyes burning from the onions and chilies, what kept us going was the love that had brought us all there in the first place; the love and also the tea and coffee that fueled us till dawn.

The kitchen wasn't the only part of the well-oiled machine working through the wee hours. Prakash and Muniraj were busy making fresh flower garlands for some eight straight hours. Mounds of marigold, carnation and jasmine flowers were systematically strung into lines of color, turning the already glorious prayer hall into a sacred space in full bloom, albeit short-lived, a metaphor for the impermanence of life and maya.

By 9 a.m. the Gurukula was sprawling with children and kavi-clad swamis. There was a buzzing of activity everywhere. The wedding ceremony of Manjari, Vinaya Swami and Ma's youngest daughter, with the Sacred Fire as witness, was being conducted in the prayer hall while others obliviously bustled in the kitchen over huge, piping hot cauldrons full of curries, sambar, curd and rice. The younger brother-disciples, all dressed in white kurtas, laid out banana leaves on the ground in lines, five or six deep, for the guests, and finally served the food that had been so lovingly prepared by the indefatigable crew. In yet another corner of the Gurukula sat the musicians gearing up for a day and night of jamming. Tablas, a sitar, guitars, harmoniums and mellifluous voices assembled.

Past Ma's resplendent rose garden, a long rangoli-decorated path led to the quiet spot around the Devi Temple where devotees sat under palms' shade and chanted. Simultaneous activities kept the place alive all day, through the night and well into the following day. As the crowd thinned out, those fifty or so who remained gathered under the palm canopy outside the prayer hall. Sadhus smoked and sang for hours.

Parvati Baul, with bells on her feet, a percussive duggi slung across her chest, and an ektara, the single-stringed traditional instrument of West Bengal and Bangladesh, played and danced and sang the tales of not only her native place but also vacanas in Kannada. A true mystic—a high soul, one might say—Parvati Baul, with her knee-length locks, whirled and enchanted us all. The musicians' circle carried on after her performance unbroken for the remainder of the night, singing in the rising, first of the moon and then the sun, all the while the fire burning steadily.

And the fire burns on still as I find myself back here at Narayana Gurukula, Bangalore, two months after the Guru Puja. A friend had brought me to the event as a newcomer, and what an introduction it was to Vinaya Swami and Ma! After the puja we had agreed that I would come back and stay upon completion of a one yoga month course I was set to attend. Having been a student of yoga (although a distorted, diluted Western version) for several years, I came to India to explore the culture and context out of which yoga has evolved and found the Gurukula to be an ideal place for study of yoga and living wisdom. Like many others on the path I hope to cultivate a piece of land of my own with other like-minded friends one day, and recognized Narayana Gurukula as a place where necessary knowledge can be acquired.

Before my return I had some preconceived notions. I envisaged leisurely strolling in Ma's gorgeous gardens picking herbs and flowers for various teas and

tinctures. I saw her kitchen in my mind's eye as an alchemist's den, smoke rising from myriad copper pots brimming with multifarious healing powers. She would also, of course, teach me every cook's trick she knows, knowledge passed to her from her mother and her mother's mother and so on.

I pictured Vinaya Swami and me discussing the threads of the Upanishads, all 800 of them, endlessly. However, my initial expectations of learning everything that both Vinaya Swami and Ma know have dissolved into the daily routines dictated by natural rhythms here. Trees drop their leaves and fruit, animals need to be fed, milked and loved. Food must be prepared for the Gods. And so it goes as we mindfully go about our daily duties.

All gather in the morning for coffee class. We have been reading many things, from Nataraja Guru's works to Fritjof Capra, to Ramana Maharshi, to C.G. Jung. Vinaya Swami's insights elucidate the dense readings for me, and I have begun to grasp a deeper understanding of not only the Absolute, but also human psychology, agriculture, history, and literature.

Furthermore, the Gurukula, the family of the guru here, just so happens to be a "normal" one, consisting of husband and wife and children. Vinaya Swami and Ma have been partners on the path of *dharma* for 35 years and can truly offer great insights into many aspects of the human experience.

I imagine the knowledge I have gained will have a time-release effect and slowly integrate into my system in the years to come. And since I anticipate future visits, surely it will take time for all of this to digest. But with that digestive fire burning bright, transformation is certain.



GURUKULA NEWS

In 2007, Swami Tyageeswara received an invitation to travel to Japan. The invitation came from Reverend Genyu Nonaka, a Buddhist priest from Japan whom Swami Tyagi had met, along with his wife, Tsuruyo, at last year's May Festival at the Fernhill Gurukula in Ootacamandalam. Swami's chanting and poetic description of Narayana Guru's homam mantra had captured the priest's heart. He wanted to reciprocate the visit from his own place and culture. Swami Tyagi accepted the offer to come to Japan and visited Kyushu Island, Japan in early April 2007. During his stay, Manikkoth Krishna Kumar served as his translator. Ms. Norie Ohga accommodated him in her beautiful guest house near the ocean. Ms. Mieko Kamada acted as his personal guide.

Swami Tyagi participated in a press conference, gave talks and engaged in discussions in homes, temples and at a junior high school. He attended an intimate piano concert given by Noriko Iwata at Ms. Ohga's residence, enjoyed a gracious tea ceremony performed by her and visited the crater of the great, active volcano, Aza. He was invited by two Zen Buddhists to their respective viharas (temple and residence) and was taught a form of Buddhist meditation.

Each morning he delighted in the sunrise over the Pacific Ocean visible through the plate glass windows of his home. The beauty and uniqueness of each sunrise energized and inspired him throughout the day. An enchanting, full moon evening was spent in the mountains sightseeing the cherry blossoms at Mochimo Park. An elderly lady cooked and served rice which she had grown in her own paddy to the entire group.

The focal point of Swami Tyagi's visit was his participation in the fiftieth Imayama-daishi Festival in Nobeoka City, Miyazaki Prefecture. This annual festival commemorates the installation of a statue of Kobodaishi, one of the most famous Buddhist priests of Japan who had lived in the eighth century. Its construction honored the martyrs who died in World War II. Kobodaishi's statue is the largest in Japan. On April 13th, Swami Tyagi presided at the opening ceremony of the festival in the main hall of the Imayama-daishi Temple. Two days later, he took part in the grand memorial service at the temple.

The impact of Swami Tyagi's simple but pure poetry was again felt. During a natural pause in his presentation, his hostess, Norie, brought up a copy of three verses of a poem he had composed in honor of Kobodaishi to read out to those gathered. He did so and on the spot, she sang in Japanese a translation of the same.

Near the end of his visit, Tyagi participated in the Ohga Festival at Usa-Jingu in Oita Prefecture. This is the site of one of the most famous Shinto temples in Japan. He spent his last night in a hotel in Fukuoka City before flying back to India via Bangkok and Bangalore. There he got his first experience of traditional

Japanese baths, enjoying waters from a sulphur hot spring. Swami Tyagi came away very moved by the love and truthfulness of the Japanese people and the beauty and cleanliness with which they keep their country. Whether with young or old, Tyagi's heart touched and was touched by that place in us that knows no written language and doesn't require words; where only the feelings of love, the gentleness of transcendence and the camaraderie of kinship prevail—it is from there true poetry springs.

The annual Guru Puja of the Narayana Gurukula, Vidya Niketan, Murinjagal, Konni, was celebrated on November 2, 2007 in honor the birthday of Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati. Swami Tyageeswara and Sri Anil hosted the function. The morning began with a homam, a discourse by the Swami, and then singing of some of the works of Narayana Guru. Swami Vidhya Raja and Brahmachari Ramakrishna also spoke. In the afternoon, people were treated to an energetic and masterful Carnatic music concert conducted by Mrs. Jayakala. She was accompanied by Mr. Nedumangad Sivanandan on violin, Manu on clay pot. A fresh rain shower came as benediction near the end of the day. Tea was enjoyed, then four speakers shared their thoughts on education to finish the day's program. The speakers were Dr. Peter Moras, Professor Madhavan Nair, R. Subash and Sadhu Gopidas. under the canopy of coconut palms, mango, guava, hibiscus, and native trees.

In the days following the Guru Puja at Narayana Gurukula, Vidya Niketan, Murinjagal, an environmental cleanup of the ashram and about one hundred meters of the adjoining stream was conducted. About two hundred pounds of trash was collected and sorted for recycling or disposal. It is hoped that a critical mass of informed and caring Indian citizens will take responsibility for organizing local and regional waste collection and recycling in their communities. Processing waste costs money and the costs should be borne by governmental outlays and residential, commercial and institutional user fees. These cooperative efforts can be successfully supported by a long-term public education program on ecologically-conscious handling of materials in modern society.

At the Varkala Gurukula the new guesthouse-kitchen complex is under construction and is slated to be complete by the end of 2008 in time for the annual Gurukula Convention.

In May the annual seminar of the East West University of Brahmailydia was held. The theme of the seminar was the comparison of modern philosophies to the works of Narayana Guru, with nearly thirty papers presented and discussed.

Nataraja Guru's Bhagavad Gita commentary has been given to DK Printworld, having been thoroughly re-edited by Scott Teitsworth. It will be available in June 2008.

Other English books given for printing are new commentaries by Guru Muni Narayana Prasad on the Isavasya Upanisad and the Mandukya Upanisad. *The Minor Philosophical Poems of Narayana Guru*, with commentary by Guru

Muni Narayana Prasad and edited by Dr. Peter Oppenheimer will be sent to the printers shortly. The number of Narayana Gurukula books has now reached 190 in Malayalam and 70 in English.

2008 has been special at the Ooty Gurukula because of the large number of friends who have visited from the USA. Nancy Yeilding conducted a two day Sneha Samvada on January 5th and 6th, which was followed by very interesting classes together with Scott, Deborah, Harmony, Fred, and Peter (see the article Dialectics in Education in this issue). There was also a poetry evening with local author Indu Mallah. Later Bill and Nancy from Portland visited.

On 18th of March Prof. Joseph Kicken, a scholar from the Netherlands, gave a talk on Spiritual Teachers from the East and the West. His talk focused on modern spiritual masters, followed by a question and answer session.

The annual Guru Puja was conducted on the March 23rd. It was a subdued event this year because of heavy unseasonal rains, making it difficult for people to travel from distant places. Nevertheless, the atmosphere had both solemnity and warmth. There was an excellent classical Karnatic music performace in the afternoon.

In March, Swami Thampan and Swami Vyasa Prasad attended a seminar on Biodiversity of Natural Sholas and Its Conservation in Nilgiris, organized by the Emerald Heights College in Ooty. Several years ago planting of native tree species at the Gurukula had been initiated and the saplings are growing well.

During the first week of May, Mr. Jayamohan along with a group of Tamil poets gathered to conduct a poetry seminar at the Gurukula.

The *māhāsamādhi* of Guru Nitya was celebrated on 14th May with a homam followed by talks, music performances, and a short play in the evening. First the Ekta Kalamanj Group from Wayanad sang folk songs. This was followed by Compostions of Narayana Guru, sung by Mrs. Jayakala Sanalkumar. There was then a prayer at Guru Nitya's *samādhi* shrine. In the evening Dr. Tarun Chhabra gave a talk on the Today Relationship with Nature. The evening ended with a short dramatic presentation by Rajivkrishnan and Rajan Moolliar.

In January many friends gathered to share their creativity, inspirations, and love at weekend-long Sneha Samvada (Love Dialogue) seminars at four Indian Gurukulas—Fernhill, Kanakamala, Malayattoor, and Edapally—based on Guru Nitya's commentary on *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam: That Alone, the Core of Wisdom*, and conducted by Nancy Yeilding.

On May 23-26, the East-West University of Unitive Sciences offered a Spring into Life: Celebration of Creativity and Its Source at the Island Gurukula Aranya, Bainbridge Island. It was inspired by Guru Nitya's traditional May Arts Festival at the Fernhill Gurukula and was an opportunity for all the participants to explore, manifest and celebrate their inner treasures of truth, goodness and beauty.

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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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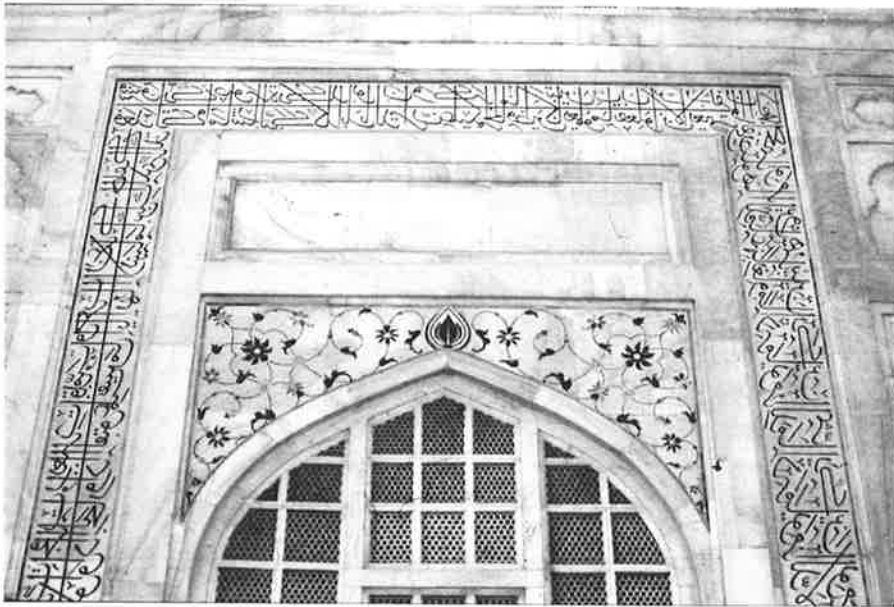
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