

GURUKULAM



SPRING 2012

GURUKULAM

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EDITORIAL

“Honesty is the bedrock of spirituality.” This is one of the first instructions I heard from Guru Nitya. It sounds self-evident. We know what honesty is. It means saying what you really know and behaving accordingly, without bias. And spirituality? That is the world of intelligibles, a place divine and eternal. But to take the phrase “Honesty is the bedrock of spirituality,” and make it our own, to understand and live it, we must pierce the covering of what seems obvious. We first need to know more of what honesty and spirituality are.

Let’s start with some of the dictionary definitions for honest. They are “fair, just, free of deceit, sincere, genuine”—all of which indicate being in internal resonance with oneself, and then in resonance with the world around us. We express our essential beingness without distortion. There is no masking of intent or result. In other words, *dharma*. The *dharma*, or honesty, of a tree is to begin growing from a seed, continue as a sprout, and come to fruition as an overarching plant. An oak cannot be an apple tree, and neither of them is a dog or cat. When we are true to our essential nature and its unfolding, without repression, we are honest.

Some of the synonyms for spiritual are “philosophical, mystical, intuitive, eternal, impalpable and transcendent.” The common thread in these definitions is being grounded in a reality that is not bifurcated into small, independent parts, and that continues through time as well as space. What is spiritual unites and carries forward. It implies an open generosity. To be spiritual, as Guru Nitya was implying in his statement, is to be part of a reality that is neither separatist nor destructive. You are open to your own inner nature and to others’. You see how we are mutually interdependent. And when you see that, there is a sense of gratitude for what is there. You respect yourself and your fellow beings. You accept and allow.

In this issue of Gurukulam there are two articles which particularly express this honest spirituality. In *The Skinny on the Color Solid* by Charles Erickson, he writes about his time with Nataraja Guru. Not only is Nataraja Guru’s teaching recounted, but then how that relates to Charles’ own individual interests and how that is relevant to the greater world. Which, again, is a tack followed by Thomas Palakeel in *Narayana Guru: The Novel*. As a writer, he is immersed in the world of words and books, and in both the early American Pragmatists and in modern Malayalam novelists he sees echoes of Narayana Guru’s teachings. It is that mix that he is living in his own life and sharing with us.

This is not a prescription for us to write articles on art or novels. Rather it is a hint to ponder deeply on the teachings, find their connection in ourselves,

and then follow the arrow of expression. It may be words or music, digging in the garden, mechanics, or academic scholarship. There is not a formula here but a beautiful meandering path.

The continuing series by Guru Nitya is properly re-labeled with the original title, *One Hundred Steps to Self Realization*. It is one of the many ways in which he explicated and commented on Narayana Guru's *Atmopadesa Satakam* and was his last work.

The photographs in this issue were taken at the Jain temple site, Ranakpur, in Rajasthan, near Udaipur. The various temples there were constructed in the fifteenth century CE and are made of a pale white marble. Ranakpur is still an active pilgrimage site surrounded by the wild Aravalli hills.



ATMOPADESA SATAKAM

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

BY GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

VERSE 49

*akhilarumatmasukhattinay prayatnam
sakalavuminnu sadapi ceytitunnu;
jagatiyil immatamekamennu cinti-
ccaghamanayatakatar amarttitenam.*

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

The central teaching of the Upanishads can be given in one sentence: *tarati sokam atmavid*, the knower of the Self crosses over all pains. *Tarati* means crosses over; *sokam*, sorrow; and *atmavid*, the knower of the Self. The mark of knowledge is *asokam*, having no sorrow. Where there is sorrow there is ignorance, and where there is no ignorance there is no sorrow. You can easily find out whether you are ignorant or not by looking at yourself. If your mind has sorrow, if you are sad or in misery, it means you are in a state of ignorance.

The whole concept of Buddhism and the teaching of the Buddha is based on the redemption of misery. The Buddha does not go into a metaphysical inquiry of what this world is or what it is not. He only wants us to know that our common lot is misery and pain. This he calls the first truth about our own being. The second truth is that pain or sorrow comes from ignorance. The third truth is that this ignorance can be removed. The fourth truth is that the cessation of ignorance is called a state of happiness or *nirvana*. Of course, what he means by happiness has nothing to do with pleasure.

The central teaching of Christ is to love your neighbor as your own self. Nobody wants his self to be in misery. So care for the happiness of your self, and then extend that to all.

Narayana Guru's main teaching is given in the form of a maxim or motto. If you go to India and ask what Narayana Guru taught, the first thing you will hear from

any mouth is, "He taught that man is of one kind, he is of one faith, and he is of one God." There are three factors here.

In the *Atmopadesa Satakam*, the Guru first establishes what we might call one God. He does not assign any name to it. In fact, he never even brings in the word 'God' except by implication. In India, gods are referred to as Siva or Vishnu or Brahma. He never brings in any of those things. He uses the word *isan*, which is used in the Isavasya Upanishad also, and only means 'the inherent principle'.

The first part of this book deals with the one God. That one God is explained to us as that which is shining at once as the world which you see here and the world that you experience within. It is a very existential way of presenting it. Your very first experience is your existence and the world's existence. If you take the world that you see out there together with what you experience within, bracket them as one whole and then consider the reality of it, you can reduce it to one fundamental principle which is an unchanging reality that has within it the scope for continuous change. You see it inside as the stream of consciousness and outside as the changing phenomena. This is how the Guru first presents it.

Then he takes it further and gives both a structural as well as functional explanation of it. He begins with the very origin of consciousness, where from an absolute state of inner darkness, as it were, consciousness comes in the form of an inquiry, extends itself as an observation, makes a judgment, and culminates in the reaching forward and experiencing of a particular universe of interest. Then it moves on to the next universe of interest. All the changes which take place from the primeval beginning of a question to a final satisfaction are all transformations of one consciousness. The Guru reiterates that the one God he speaks of is changing into all this, without changing. It is not a new idea. It's in the Upanishads. It's in the Bible. It's at the basis of all the great philosophies and religions.

Narayana Guru goes on to allude to the same one God as a treasury of immeasurable value which is like an ocean, on the surface of which is the manifestation of the changing modalities. Pain and pleasure abound on the turbulent surface, but when you vertically dive deeply into it, all those superficial experiences disappear and you become convinced of one total existence, one total awareness, and the value of all values. We have heard of the trinity in Christianity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is one and it is three simultaneously. Like that, the one God here is existence, subsistence and value, *sat-cit-ananda*.

The Guru leads us from our initial experience of the world to the deeper core of the whole of existence until, in the sixth verse, we are told that hardly anyone knows the true nature of beingness. We are caught up in the conditional states of each passing moment, such as wakefulness, sleep, and wanting to eat or mate, that separate us from an understanding of the unconditional state itself.

As he proceeds with his elucidation of the one God or Principle, Narayana Guru brings in the next issue: how, from that very one God, is the self of the

individuated person, as a nondifferentiated factor, derived. When we come to verse ten, we are asked to think of a person sitting in a dark room, who, suspecting the presence of another, asks "Who is there in the dark?" He receives the reply "I," which he understands in terms of his own 'I'. In this way the Guru introduces us to the second thesis that man is one in the Self, though not one in the body.

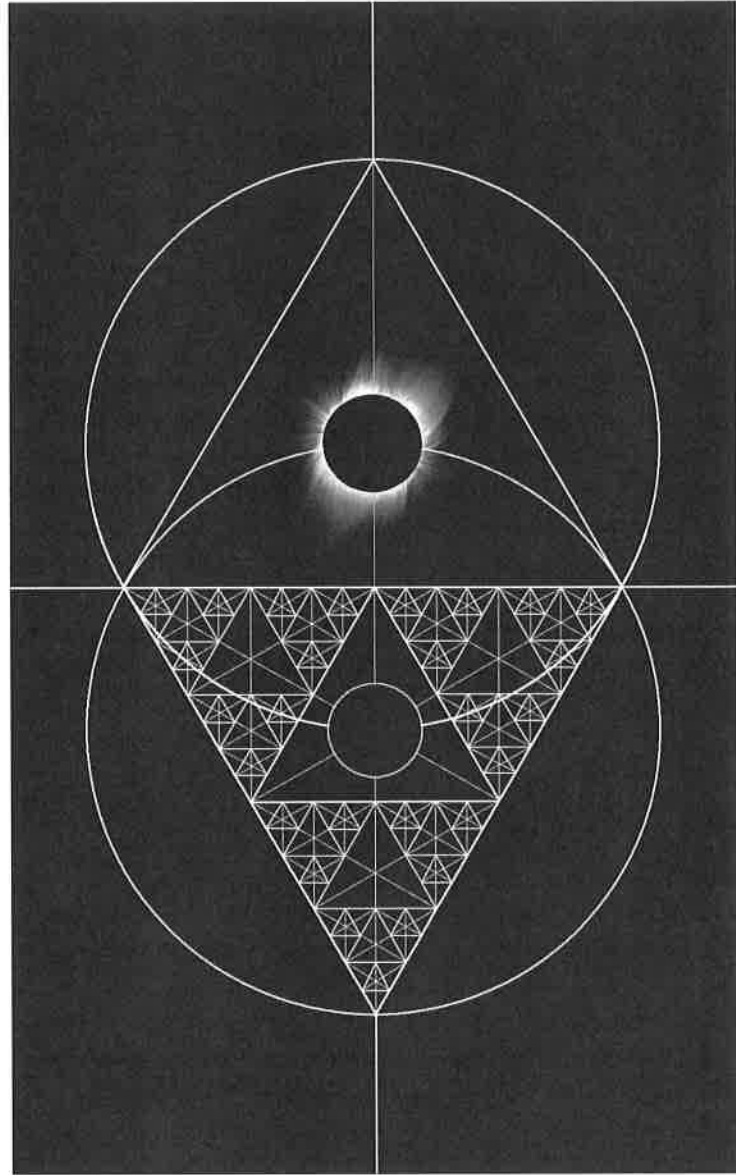
With the dark room, the Guru presents a kind of experimental situation where all differentiations can be annulled. In the darkness you do not see a person's form, color or other superficial aspects. Everything is shut off except what is most central in each person, i.e. how one identifies himself. A person identifies himself with one monosyllabic sound, "I." That's enough. When another person says "I" and I hear it, I look upon the 'I' within me to know that someone is existing there. Thus, in a very subtle way, the Guru passes on from the question of one God to one mankind or one Self, the Self of all.

From that he brings us to a consideration of interpersonal relationships, and gives us an ethical code of aspiring for such happiness that includes the happiness of others. My happiness should be your happiness. Your happiness should be mine, too. He is not postulating either the oneness of God or the oneness of man for a metaphysical elucidation of some theory, but for the very practical purpose of living it here and now. He brings in the idea of one God so that we can meditate on that source and find our own unity.

In the thirteenth verse, he asks us to meditate on that Supreme Being which transcends the triple modalities of inertia, kinetics and sublimity, in order to transcend all forms of becoming. That very meditation will make our senses turn from the objects of enjoyment to the very source of the enjoyer. This cools us off feverishly running after sensual objects, and we become grounded in our own source. Narayana Guru proceeds in a very beautiful and subtle way, making God accessible to us and known to us as our very own source. He draws our attention to experiencing that God in our brother, in our neighbor, in the 'other'. On proper consideration, the 'other' is not an other. He uses special words to express this, like *aparan*, one who seems to be the other, but on consideration is not.

Then the Guru develops the third aspect regarding differentiations of opinions. He focuses on the structure of the mind and how it functions both analytically and synthetically, how it has an a priori function and an a posteriori one, how it stands by the nondifferentiated knowledge which is presented in a word like 'this,' and from there how it goes off on the tangent of its qualification. The qualifying or the specifying aspect takes us to the individual, to the particular, to the details and the effects. On the other hand, consideration of that which is the same in all takes us to the primal cause. We can gather our thoughts from the many to the one and find our unity.

After explaining to us how we can either be experiencing the separate entities or the one, he also gave a correlation by which we can have a coordinated



understanding of the many and the one as part and parcel of one life. From that he brought us two possibilities. One is when the vaporous substance of our breath strings together many organs and keeps us bolted together as one piece; we become identified with the physical body and feel our separation from everyone else. We have become ego centered. By being ego centered, we become motivated by pain and pleasure. In this there is every likelihood of our rejecting or turning away from the 'other'.

The alternative possibility the Guru gave us is something that even a person of no understanding, in a very instinctive way, accomplishes. It is to go beyond the limit of the body and see our happiness as joined with the happiness of the other. There can be a unitive understanding in the very common man and even in animals. A dog loves its master and, in that love, transcends its own bodily limitations. It is very much influenced by the moods of its master. If even a dog can understand its unity with other beings, the superior man can certainly have a much better appreciation of this unity.

After showing these two examples to us separately, Narayana Guru now asks us to consider the very secret of all motivations, urges and drives that occur in all beings from bacteria to human beings. If you observe any species at any time, in any action situation, the primary motive is to move from a state of uneasiness to one of easiness, from discomfort to comfort, from maladjustment to better adjustment, from chaos to order, and from disharmony to harmony. This is a movement within the consciousness of all sentient beings.

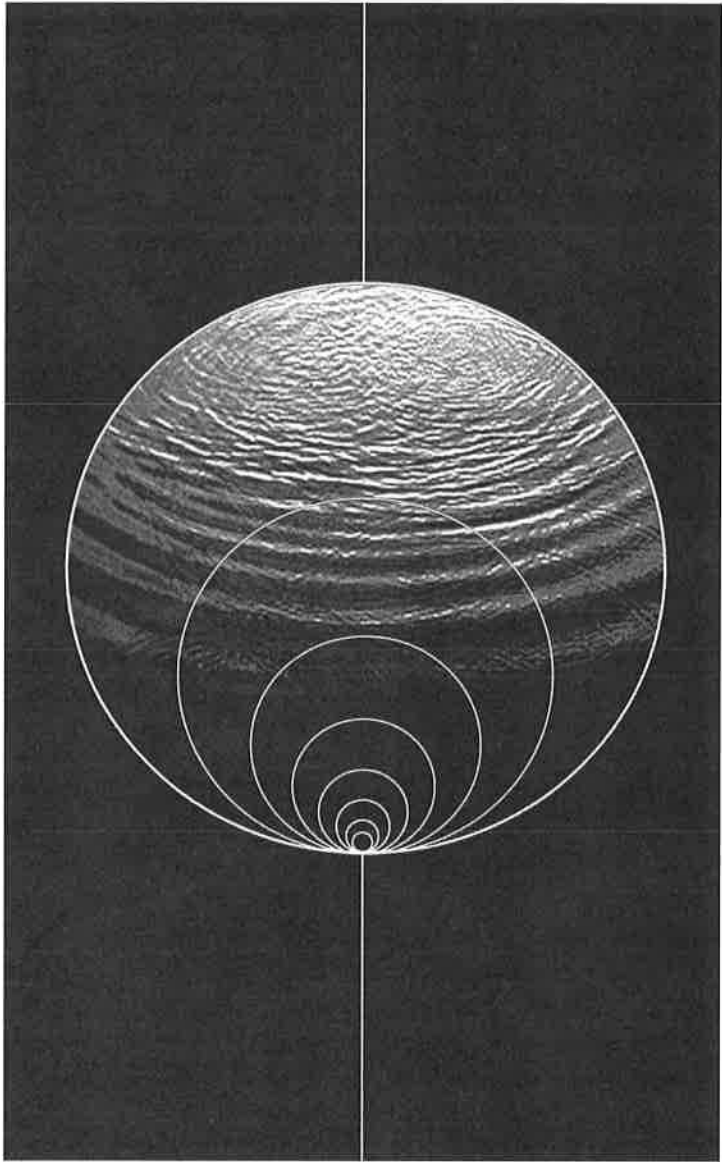
We were taught earlier that the Self we speak of is that great knowledge which remains hidden within this seeming darkness. The consciousness we experience on the surface is only a tiny speck of the greater knowledge that remains hidden from us in the unconscious. We were also told that the world we see here is nothing but a manifestation of that supreme knowledge. We come to know this knowledge through its gradual manifestation and growth. After a very long period of development our earth was able to produce life, which became more and more organized through various stages. Its culmination so far is the human mind, with its very specialized sense organs supplemented by a higher understanding in which there is a mathematical unity on par with the mathematical harmony of the whole universe. Without leaving its own room, by its own meditations and calculations, that mind can see clearly how the moon moves around the earth and how the earth and other planets move around the sun. It can devise a mechanical instrument that can be accurately propelled from the earth to any other body in the solar system, or even sent beyond it to wander among the stars. How does it do it? The cosmos out there, the macrocosm, is regulated by certain laws that can be reduced to mathematical terms. Such a reduction is possible within human consciousness; thus all this movement is within consciousness.

If you are aspiring for happiness, that aspiration is happening within your *akatar*, within your inner organ. Part of that inner organ is well-equipped to understand

everything, because it is in liaison with the knowledge of the whole universe. This universe is a transient one. The Guru uses the term *jagat*, meaning transient, ever-changing. In all its changing it has a changeless law. Through the advancement of mathematics and physics we have come to know that the original matrices, the norms of measurement, which were used in studies like plane geometry, are no longer applicable once we go beyond the local stretch of space and time. We have evolved and are evolving a new methodology which focuses on the relationships between bodies moving at different velocities in different directions. By bringing in a topological approach, our understanding of the movement of another body in another plane means we have found a way to transcend changes and movement.

Using this kind of a mind, with its new eye, when you look at the changing world you see that all people, all beings, at all times and in all their endeavors, are motivated by this one drive for happiness. Narayana Guru says, "Know that to be the only religion." He builds up the whole thing in such a wonderful way that you can never escape its impact. If it is true that we are of one God, if we are of one kind, and if our drive is for one happiness, then restrain your mind so that you won't go off on a tangent where you differentiate your brother from you, where you alienate your happiness from the happiness of another. That will bring you to the mainstream of the happiness of all. Here the teachings of Christ, of Buddha, of Lao Tze—all teachings and no teachings—converge into one understanding, fully coordinated, fully correlated, unified.

Now we have a body of knowledge given to us in these forty-nine verses. The Guru uses another fifty verses to bring it to be a part of our life. Then he uses one final verse to sum everything up. That makes the total one hundred verses. With this forty-ninth verse, we close the section which may be called the pure aspect of the teaching. From the fiftieth on, we step into what we call the applied aspect. The application begins with the next verse.



VERSE 50

*nilamotu niratupole karru tiyum
veliyumahankrti vidyayum manassum
alakalumaziyumennu ventayella-
vulakumuyarnnarivayi maritunnu.*

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

The first reference in this verse is to the firm earth, where we sit, walk, work, and where we retire and sleep when we are tired. It is our ground. In fact, it is called terra firma, the firm ground. The Malayalam word Narayana Guru uses is *nila*, meaning firmness, solidity, existence. When you say it has a *nila*, it has an existence. The Guru could have used another word for earth, but he especially chose this simple one. It is that which you experience under your feet as your very base. We begin here with something firm and also the very basis of everything, the ground. Jesus says that you do not build your house on the sand, but on a firm rock. *Nila* has the same implication.

The Guru then moves on to something with a different quality, water. He has chosen the word *niru*, meaning water in its functional sense: when it rains and makes pattering sounds on your roof, when it makes puddles, when it flows. When you turn on the tap, water gushes out. You can see it as a big river and as a gigantic, shoreless ocean. These are experiences which are very different from the firm ground. It is pliant, ever-changing.

When we breathe, it is so gentle and subtle an action that we hardly notice that we are passing air in and out. When a little stir is caused in the air it becomes an enjoyable breeze. It comes and tickles the leaves and flowers, and plays with the shrubs and trees in the garden. When it becomes a little stronger we call it the wind. With greater intensity it can become a whirlwind, and grow even more violent as a hurricane. Such is another experience, different from earth and water: the blowing wind.

If you take a match and strike it against the matchbox or the ground, it bursts into flame. Fire is our great friend. We cannot even live without it. It dwells within us, keeping our bodies warm. It fills the hearth, the fireplace, the stove, our lamps and lights. It is in the clouds as electricity. It blazes forth as the sun in the sky. Even the far-off stars are nothing but fire. This is yet another experience.

If you fling wide your doors and come out, you are in the open. For this Narayana Guru especially chose the word *veli*, meaning the open. When you go out into the open and look, there is no end to it. You can see the far distant horizon.

The whole world is out in the open. To come out, you don't even have to get up from your bed and leave the room. All you have to do is open your eyes and you see the whole outside. What is not inside is outside, and it is paradoxically true that everything outside is inside.

Who has all these experiences? The Guru says *ahamkriti*, there is an 'I' generating event taking place. It goes on generating 'I'. The 'I' generating thing is experiencing all this. It is just like when you light a lamp. The lamp not only shows itself, along with the light comes a world which is illuminated by it. Like that, when this 'I' is generated it does not stand by itself, it shines its light on everything and illumines it. In fact, once the light is turned on you almost immediately forget about it. What is illuminated becomes more important than the source of illumination. Similarly, as soon as the 'I' is generated, it becomes interested in whatever it sees, and focuses on it.

This is knowledge, *vidya*. Nataraja Guru calls it cognition. The cognizer cognizes and has a cognition. And who cognizes? 'I'. Who am I? That which cognizes. How do I know 'I'? By putting together whatever is known to 'I'. Thus "I," "me," "my" and "mine" are being generated endlessly inside us. When we look at it we don't see any special 'I' in it, only whatever is being cognized.

If you put all this into one big circle, it becomes the greatest fiction we could ever think of. It is called the mind. What is mind? A fiction that is uniting all the facts. All the facts are held together by a fiction called mind. Can you see this mind anywhere? It is just like going to look for the ocean. You go and look for it, but it is completely cluttered with waves. There is not even a little space left where there are no waves so you can see the actual ocean. But you can send a frogman into it. He will dive deep and say, "Hey, there are no waves here. The vast ocean is underneath them." Philosophers and psychologists are commissioned as our frogmen to dive deep into the fiction called mind. Then they come and tell us, "It has a depth. It has more than what you see here as your thoughts, your perceptions and conceptions, your ideas, feelings and emotions. These are only surface things, waves and ripples on the surface. We have gone deeply into it. We found it is very deep and unconscious." They are our frogmen. We believe them when they tell us there is a depth.

So what have we come to ultimately? The firm ground, the water that flows, our experience of firmness and of movement, fluidity, viscosity; of warmth and wind, of the openness of the universe: all these have now become like waves. In Narayana Guru's prayer, *Daiva Dasakam*, he says, "Let me come to know this equation, that you are like these waves and your phenomenal power is like the wind that causes the waves. The depth of the ocean is unfathomable. Even so, let us see that your glory is unfathomable." Thus, everything becomes one unfathomable glory. When we ponder over all our experiences, ranging from the most firm, solid ground, to this ideation of a "me" here or an "I" there, with all its qualities, everything rises

to one single experience of knowledge. That's the gist of this verse. We meditate on this for our onward march.

We have come to a turning point in Narayana Guru's instruction. In the last forty-nine verses, the Guru was speaking to us more or less from a transactional point of view. Of course, we were given an idea of what we are besides this body. He also saw us as part of a society in which there are other individual members just like us. There are various kinds of relationships existing between people. There is this world, the society, and the individual. All these were taken into full consideration. He worked out a system by which we first can find peace with our environment, with the social setup, and peace on earth and good will among people. These are the first requirements. Now we are going to have a more serious entry into our own real being.

In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, after the initial discipline is given he asks you to cultivate a posture where you can sit peacefully and comfortably, to make yourself stable for your practice. He did not say you should sit in a *padmasana* or a *mayurasana* or anything. Those were all invented by others. They may be good as exercises, but they don't especially aid your pursuit. All Patanjali wanted was a firm, steady posture so that you can forget about your body.

Likewise, in forty-nine verses Narayana Guru has prepared us to sit in peace so that now we can commence our search. We no longer have any quarrel with our neighbor. Let our neighbor be a Jehovah's Witness or a Hare Krishna, who cares? We have no quarrel with them, in fact we agree with them. If the Jehovah's Witness comes and asks, "Do you accept the only God, the true God?" you say "Oh yes. We have no quarrel with you." If the Hare Krishna person comes and demands, "Don't you agree that the only God is Krishna? Oh, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Krishna!" we have no quarrel. Now we can just sit very quietly.

What next? What comes next is very important. We commence the real probe. You are sitting here firmly. Close your eyes. What is that firmness underneath that you experience? It becomes very strange as soon as you try to look at it. You take the firmness of the ground for granted, but when you isolate it as an experience and try to understand it, it becomes quite vague. Just what is that firmness? You can borrow clichés from the scientists and say it is a gravitational pull you are experiencing, but with equal plausibility you could say that in the middle of the earth is a great green demon that is pulling you down with invisible claws. If you were to make a tunnel to the center of the earth you could see he is a very big, monstrous green demon. Who really knows? It may be the demon or it may be the force of gravity, but for us it is merely a strange experience. All you are sure of is your own knowledge. You know that there is a firmness. The firmness is your knowledge. Can you draw a line between the knowledge of the firmness and the one who is experiencing firmness? Can you say, "Up to this point is the knower of firmness and from here on firmness itself begins?" Not really. This is why I said that all the facts are put together by a fiction. They are all held together by what's called the mind.

It is true, though, that you do experience a quality called firmness. When you turn on the faucet and water flows out of it, you know that this is very different from the solid spout of the pipe which just sits there and never moves. The water is flowing, and if you're not careful your cup or your sink will overflow. This is quite a different experience from firmness. Yet with all the difference, is it any different from your knowledge of the flow? Just what is this thing called flow, anyway?

In our everyday experience, all these things look very clear-cut, very definite. In winter we know it is cold outside and we should sit as close as possible to the fire. Its warmth gives us a very good feeling. In the spring we don't like the wind blowing; we keep the house closed up tight. When we go out it blows hard. We all know that experience, but what is it really? When we meditate on it, when we ponder over any aspect of our experience, we see that we have only one whole instrument: our knowledge. Arbitrarily we trifurcate that knowledge into the knower, the known and knowledge.

We have been asked to deal with the 'other', the other person. When you say "I" and the other person says "I," you can see that the 'I' in the other person and the 'I' in you are not two. Now we are asked to go still further. Not only the 'I' in you and the other person, but everything that constitutes the awareness centered around an 'I' is none other than consciousness. Somebody says you are very good and you are pleased. Somebody says, "I know you are an idiot," and you are suddenly very angry. Did anything happen? Nothing happened. Why are you so angry? "That's my nature." And what is your nature? "When my knowledge changes, I change. I was under the impression that I was a good guy, but now you say I'm bad. Now I'm meditating on badness. It makes me feel very negative." Can you not remain as free as before? "No, I cannot, because I don't stop at this one. As soon as you say something else it becomes part of me too." Why? "Because you are part of my knowledge, and I identify with that knowledge."

Is there no way out? Oh, yes, certainly. That is to know that if you say I am bad and I think I am good, it is all only knowledge. And because it is only knowledge, I can straighten it up even if you mess with it. All I have to do is remember it is knowledge and not get carried away by it.

The central pivot in all this is called *ahamkṛiti*, the 'I' generating rascal who is sitting in the midst of it all. This is a tremendous problem. You don't know the nature of this machine that goes on clicking one 'I' after another—like drops from a leaky faucet—the consciousness of 'I'.

Let me share a secret with you. The Guru began with terra firma, something very firm and solid. Then he watered it down. He poured water onto the firm ground, to make it more flexible. So I say, "You stupid fools! Water down your 'I' a little. Why should you keep it so rigid? Why should your 'I' be so solid that you hold onto it as the dearest thing in existence? Let it go. What a great relief it can bring! You have no idea. So water down your ego a little." Then the Guru said, "Let it blow in the wind." First it was firm ground, *nila*, existence. Second, "Let it flow." Then he

said, "Let it fly in the wind." Where is the answer? It is blowing in the wind. Then ultimately burn it! Bring fire upon it!

There is nothing more beautiful than this meditation. You have to do it every time this horrid 'I' comes and sits. Pour water on it, dilute it. This going around asking, "What did so-and-so say about me? What does he think?" Is it so important? "It is all-important to me." What is this 'me'? It's completely fictitious. If you can learn this much you don't need psychiatrists, you don't need mental hospitals, you don't need any of that stuff. It will bring you great peace by itself.

It's not that there shouldn't be a lovely device called an 'I' as the central orientation point of your world. That's very good. But it should only be for that one purpose of orientation, and nothing else. You don't really need other peoples' opinions in order to know how to feel. So don't make your 'I' your pet baby you're always fawning over. You make it your lap dog. You have to pet it all the time, taking it around for walks and asking your neighbor "how do you like my dog?" You feel very happy if somebody says "beautiful!" but you are upset if they say "I have seen a better dog!"

My friends, there is nothing more beautiful than this freedom of which I am speaking. Try to experience it. The whole day can be so wonderful! Whenever someone is making you turn and churn inside, causing a knot within you, remember it is time to add water and make things flexible once again. The world is so stupid! Someone or other may breathe poison in your ear—cast it into the wind or onto the fire. Do not take it seriously. Know that it is all happening where the generating of the 'I' is going on. This is the only place where real darkness prevails. Moreover, it is without our knowledge that the 'I' is being generated and passed on to us. We have no idea what tricky hand is doing it.

Narayana Guru could very well have said 'ego' in this verse, but he did not. He did not say just 'I'. He said *ahamkriti*. *Kri* means to do; *krit* means one who does; *kriti* is the doer. So *ahamkriti* is "the doer of the 'I'," "the 'I' doing fellow." Karl Jaspers says that you cannot study philosophy, you cannot think of philosophy, you can only philosophize. Like that, you are always 'I'-ing. What do you 'I'? You 'I' this knowledge.

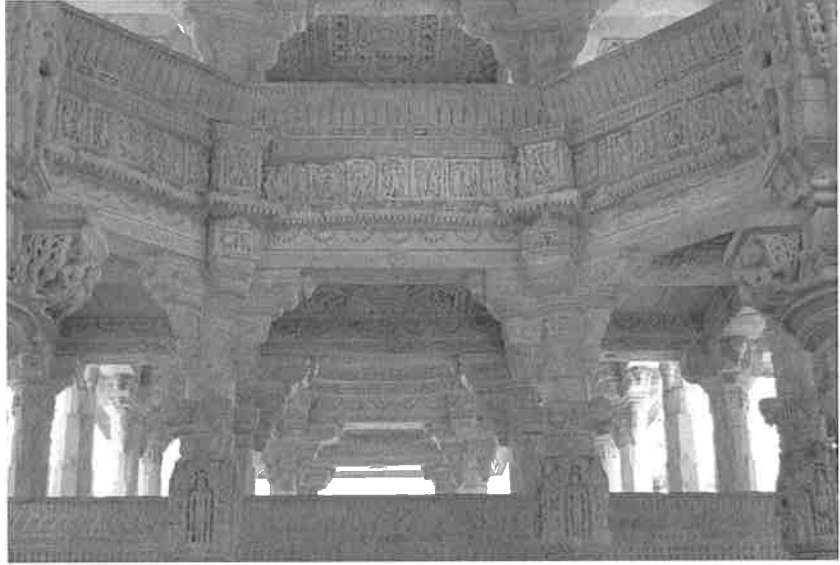
Cognition has the same meaning. It is from cogitation that Descartes derived the basis for his philosophy. He concluded, "I think, therefore I am." We have to go beyond that. Can you not say, "If the thinking is me, then I am not. It is only the thought." Buddha came to that same conclusion. He said, "If you take an experience, such as a toothache, we grant that there is a tooth. We grant that the tooth has nerves. We grant that those nerves are rotten. We accept that the rotten nerves are agitating and that that agitation is painful." But when you say, "It is my pain," where did that 'my' come from? Buddha says, "I do not see any place for that. I agree with everything else." Only the thought content is there. Why should that thought content be an 'I'?

When you tune yourself to this inner mechanism in your meditation you get a whole new freedom: the freedom not to be agitated, the freedom to enjoy or not

enjoy, the freedom to relate or not relate. From the most gross you can slip away to the most sublime, the most subtle. If you want, you can go back to the terra firma and experience its solidness. When you open the window and the papers flutter, it is helpful to put a heavy weight on them. Like that, you have come to the most gross and found a use for it. In the world of uses, everything has its place. But don't get glued on to anything. Move freely within this whole realm of earth and water and fire.

In Nataraja Guru's commentary he placed the five elements and the three principles of 'I', knowledge and the mind in a circle on one side. Then he took the ocean and waves as the other, outer side, to show we are not only thinking of the subjective world but also of the objective one. In my translation and commentary, however, I relate the ocean and its waves to the first group of eight items as an analogy to decipher them. Both Husserl and Jaspers speak of deciphering, and I agree with their idea. First we have all the ciphers, and we use the analogy of the ocean and its waves to decipher them.

You cannot get rid of all the waves and just have a pure ocean. That is what everybody is trying to do—sit firm and close the eyes so that you get rid of all thoughts and ideas, and then finally you are left with the pure, pure ocean of the Self. Narayana Guru says this is like someone taking a cake of soap to the washtub and trying to wash all the lather out of it. No matter how much you wash, it cannot be done. The more water you pour and the more you rub, the more the lather comes. Trying to get rid of all the thoughts and ideas in the mind in order to come to pure consciousness is like that. It is in and through all this that you have to see pure consciousness. It is not that you kill everyone in the world and then find peace. Let your good neighbors be there. Their dog may bark, but you can still be peaceful. See how it works for you today.



SRI VASUDEVA ASTAKAM

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

BY GURU MUNI NARAYANA PRASAD

*visnum visalaruna-padma-netram
vibhantam isambuja-yoni-pujitam
sanatanam sanmati-sodhitam param
pumamsam adyam satatam prapadye*

Vishnu, the one whose broad eyes look
Like the petals of a red lotus just bloomed,
The one who shiningly manifests
As all specific apparent forms,
The one worshipped even by
Isa (Siva) and the lotus-born Brahma,
The primeval and eternal one,
The one who remains in pure form
In the pure minds of the virtuous,
The transcendental one,
The primordial *purusa*
The primeval source—
Him I incessantly take refuge in!

O Lord, you are Vishnu. That means your being fills everywhere. For this very reason you are well aware of everything that happens and your eyes are everywhere. This is symbolized by you having broad eyes.

In essence you are pure and unconditioned consciousness, and being such are the one substance that underlies the being of everything. Such existence is termed in Vedanta, *sat* or existence. This unconditioned being is also sometimes termed *kevala*, meaning the abstract. Then its conditioned aspects, its own manifested forms, are termed *sakala*, meaning that which is composed of minute parts or *kalas*. Such manifest forms, comprising both mind and matter, constitute the world. Each fleeting apparent form is given a name. These names and forms are thought of as the elements of the world. This phenomenon of the world appearing in the one pure consciousness

is known as *bhana*. To have all such *bhanas* is but natural with each of us, and in this context we think of ourselves as *vibhanta*, one who shinningly appears.

Everything that happens here is thus nothing other than events taking place within your being. You being consciousness in essence, nothing happens in you, in the world, without you knowing it. This is why you are often thought of as the witness of everything, *sarvasaksi*.

Our lives and their vagaries form part of such happenings that appear in you and are known to you. On having the perception that one's own life is part of such happenings, the unexpectedness or uncertainty of life no longer unsettles us and life is kept in balance. Such is the way the lives of those who take refuge in you become blissful, become an experience of beauty. They constantly perceive only your playfulness finding expression as the events in their lives. The beauty and blissfulness of such an experience in life is signified by your having broad eyes, beautiful like the petals of a red lotus.

You, as is well recognized, are the one all-underlying Reality. Inherent in yourself is a certain urge that unceasingly makes you assume the form of everything that appears and disappears in this world. Really the aggregate of all such apparent forms is what we call the world. The emerging of new forms is commonly known as birth, and its disappearing as death. No appearance of a new form actually occurs without the disappearance of one or more other older forms. The destruction of an egg, we know, is what appears as the birth of a chick. Eggs emerge from the grown chicken and the life cycle thus rolls on endlessly. All these are but the one creative urge in your life expression.

Though you, the all-underlying Reality, are one in number, the unfoldment of your creative urge is expressed in multiple ways. Each such facet of your self-expression is figuratively conceived in the Vedic tradition, by the ancient rishis, as presided over by a different deity or *deva*. No matter how numerous such *devas* are, their function is always controlled by your being, by your will, by your creative urge. Of such numerous *devas*, the presiding deity of the merger of apparent forms is imagined to be Siva or Isa, and the one of emergence, Brahma. The functioning of both is seen as willed by you, and both always pay obeisance to you.

Many deities like Vishnu, Siva, Brahma, Devi, Subrahmanya and Ganapati are acceptable to the Vedic and mythological traditions of India. And each such deity, when praised, is seen as representing the one ultimate Reality, and all the others then become subsidiary deities, *upa-devatas*. For example the Saivite tradition considers Siva as standing for the absolute Reality, and all the other deities are dependent on Siva. According to the Sakteya tradition that follows the *Devibhagavata*, the Devi or Mother Goddess, is the one ultimate Reality and all the rest of the deities function by paying obeisance to her. In this way, I think of Siva and Brahma as always worshipping you.

The appearance and disappearance of beings, as we conceive of them, takes place in time. Put in another way, what we call time is our experience of the

uninterruptedness of the coming into being, existing for awhile, and disappearance and reemerging of the countless individual entities. And you are the one substance that provides for this incessant phenomenal becoming. In this sense, you are timeless, *sanatana*.

Where should one look to find you? Nowhere else than in one's own being. One has only to intuitively perceive what one's own consciousness is, to realize that one unconditioned consciousness-content, when it has become conditioned, functions as the individual's consciousness. Each person is that unconditioned consciousness. This realization alone makes one satisfied with having known oneself. Really, that unconditioned consciousness is exactly what you are. This is realized only by those who seek you in themselves and with a pure mind. Thus you are *sanmati-sodhitam*, "the one who remains in pure form in the pure minds of the virtuous."

Being such, you are neither thinkable nor understandable as an object, because you remain subjectively in everything. Whatever is thinkable and understandable is an appearance. It has a name as well as a form that is changeful. Its existence thus is of a conditioned nature. The causal Reality in all such appearances is your Self, and your existence is unconditioned. Thus you always remain transcendental, *param*.

Individual consciousness sometimes is referred to as *purusa*, person, and the sense that it rests in the city called the body, *puri dehesete iti purusah*. You as the causal consciousness, repose or rest in the cosmic body. You are the cosmic *purusa*. Another word for *purusa* is *puman*, meaning one whose inner urges are boundless, *puman purumanah bhavati*. You being such, I always take refuge in you.

A CRITIQUE OF CASTE: *JATI MIMAMSA*

BY NARAYANA GURU

TRANSLATION BY NATARAJA GURU

Man's humanity marks out the human kind
Even as bovinity proclaims a cow.
Brahminhood and such are not thus-wise;
None do see this truth, alas!

One of kind, one of faith, and one in God is man;
Of one womb, of one form; difference herein none.

Within a species, is it not, that offspring truly breed?
The community of man thus viewed, to a single caste belongs.

Of the human species is even a Brahmin born, as is the Pariah too,
Where is difference then in caste as between man and man?

In bygone days of a Pariah woman the great sage Parasara was born,
As even he of Vedic aphorism fame of a virgin of the fisherfolk.

NARAYANA GURU: THE NOVEL

BY THOMAS PALAKEEL

Two recent Malayalam novels about the life of Narayana Guru (1856-1928) have made me think of his contemporaries on the other side of the globe, especially William James (1842-1910) and the group of intellectuals associated with the school of philosophy known as Pragmatism. It may be comically ironic that the Pragmatists were Brahmins of the Boston variety, but the Indian Brahmins the future guru encountered in his village shunned him as an untouchable, and the absurdities of caste were such that his family could not enter a temple—they worshipped from outside the walls. The Harvard intellectuals and the self-taught Indian philosopher-saint might appear to have shared nothing in common, until one considers the fact that Charles Sanders Pierce, Oliver Wendell Holmes, William James, and John Dewey came out of abolitionist homes and that they fought to end slavery, not unlike Narayana Guru, who fought slavish customs that perpetrated extreme inequality.

The two novels present Narayana Guru as a contemplative who turns into a social reformer in his midlife. The public phase of Guru's life begins in 1888 with the caste-defiant act of consecrating a Shiva temple at Aruvipuram in southern Kerala. From a cultural history perspective, the Guru belongs to a much older tradition of great *bhakti* saints of the Indian renaissance which dates back a thousand years. The Pragmatist School can shed light on the contemplative's dilemma. In Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club*, an evocative history of the Harvard intellectuals and the Pragmatist thought, we can find an explanation for Guru's decision to declare that a stone is Shiva. Developed as a branch of empiricism, pragmatist thought concerns itself with the relationships between ideas and their consequences. According to William James, ideas are made true by action; the verity of an idea lies in the process itself. The uniquely anti-ideological bent implied in the pragmatist view is understandable given that it emerged in an age known for the certainties of Spencer and Marx, and it emerged partly in response to the Civil War. In the words of Louis Menand, pragmatism is a "belief that ideas should never become ideologies—either justifying the status quo, or dictating some transcendent imperative for renouncing it."

In the more substantive of the two novels, *Guru* by K. Surendran (1922), we get an intimate portrait of the Narayana Guru as a pragmatist in the best sense of

the word. K. Surendran, whose earlier works include biographies of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, has acknowledged that his approach has been that of a historian taking the license of imagination. The novel *Guru* presents a young untouchable boy's spontaneous development as a contemplative, who slowly comes to play a public role and ends up ushering in modernity to a region that had remained aloof from the cultural ferments elsewhere in India.

The shorter novel, *Narayanam* by Perumpadavom Sreedharan (2004) focuses on the Guru's inner struggles as he awaits his death. Enduring much physical suffering, the dying Guru attempts a re-evaluation of his life's work. In the same manner as the Pragmatists who base a philosophical truth on its consequences, Narayana Guru in his deathbed reconsiders his life as a contemplative and his engagement with his fellow beings in his later years.

The Narayana Guru we see in the two novels, especially in the final chapters, becomes surrounded by disciples who openly question mystical truth and yet they embrace the Guru, obviously finding in him what William James calls "a value for concrete life." In his ideas and actions, Narayana Guru asserted the value of humanity freed entirely from caste and religion, and in his declaration of "One Caste, One Religion" the oneness nullifies caste, which can thrive only in absurd multiplicity.

Born in 1854 in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore, the young Narayanan taught himself Sanskrit with the hope of taking up his father's profession as the village teacher. It was not uncommon for relatively prosperous yet 'untouchable' Ezhavas to practice traditional medicine and astrology. A census taken in 1875 revealed that 16.5 per cent of the total population of Travancore belonged to the Ezhava caste, and that contrary to legend the upper castes did not enjoy majority; male literacy of Ezhavas at the time was only 3.15 percent. By 1930, literacy among Ezhava males would reach 43 percent and the rate would keep up with the general literacy, which would grow to 68 percent within the decade.

In 1891, only 30 Ezhavas in the region were literate in English. This was also a period when the Christian population, primarily through the conversion of many castes still lower in status, started to increase rapidly. The particulars of the future Guru's life reflects the available statistics and also corroborates M. N. Srinivas' theory that Sanskritization and Westernization drove social change in India. As late as the 18th century, Brahmins in Kerala, who were only one per cent of the population, owned 99 per cent of all the land. Through over a thousand years of unquestioned hegemony they controlled the means of production and every aspect of culture, especially temple rituals and the Sanskrit language. The moment the lower castes started acquiring Sanskrit and began to dabble in medicine and astrology, the trend toward social change got under way. Had he been a Brahmin or a Christian, or if he had been younger by one generation, Narayana Guru would have had access to English education as well. In his final years Guru famously recommended English at the expense of Sanskrit, and humorously credited the British for giving *sanyas* to the Ezhavas, who were prohibited from the monastic path.

The protagonist in Surendran's *Guru* is an exemplary product of Sanskrit education. Extremely sensitive in nature, he is drawn early to the spiritual quest, not knowing that even contemplation is a monopoly of the higher castes. His teenage years bring him endless bewilderments owing to his caste status, but the cruelty of discrimination never angers him. When he observes his own mother discriminating against castes lower than theirs, he turns inward, the questioning begins, and he makes repeated attempts to run away from home.

At home he hears his own mother complaining to an old man that her son has not understood caste proprieties and obligations. His father routinely punishes the boy for the crime of eating at the hut of a poor Pulaya playmate whose caste is the absolute lowest; in contrast, Narayanan's family is respected, thanks to his father's Sanskrit education. Although not middle class, the Ezhavas at the time were already beginning to prosper through tenant farming.

Robin Jeffrey, a historian of the rise and fall of the Nair caste, has documented where all the various castes stood, literally, in comparison to the Brahmins: a Nair polluted a Brahmin from 12 feet, Ezhava from 32 feet, and Pulaya from 95 feet; a Brahmin's entourage typically included a Nair whose job it was to shout warnings to the lower castes like the Ezhavas to get out of the way lest the sacred body of the Brahmin suffer pollution; if a lower caste failed to oblige, the servant had the right to kill the offender. By the time the novel's protagonist (based on Narayana Guru) reaches middle age and settles down after what turns out to be a prolonged wandering as an unaffiliated *sannyasi*, he has had exposure to a vast range of experiences of the horror of caste.

In one of the first death-bed recollections in *Narayanam*, Narayana Guru recalls witnessing a peasant woman being beaten for unwittingly polluting a Brahmin, and remembers questioning himself: Who created the upper castes and the lower castes? What makes anyone upper or lower for that matter? Aren't we all creatures of flesh and blood? Who is to say a Pariah can't be in the proximity of a Brahmin? He hears his dear father uttering slavish words, cautioning his son against inviting the Brahmin curse, and he grapples with memories of his gradual drift away from home and beginning an itinerant life, shaped by his Sanskrit education and the pieties of *bhakti*.

In Surendran's novel *Guru*, the young man's well-wishers call him a *bhakta* or devotee. When the *bhakta* returns home briefly to try to take up his father's teaching profession, he ends up marrying Kalikutty whom he had long admired with tender brotherly love, if not avuncular affection. Both novelists have captured the inner drama of the awkward bedroom scene from which he flees, and a prolonged mendicant life begins as he walks the caste minefield of southern India. Often nourished by the generosity of the poor, so many of them fishermen from the Christian and Muslim communities, he briefly settles down in the Tamil region as a bookstore clerk with the sole purpose of reading the books. The long list of *sangam* and *bhakti* classics he reads include Tolkappiyam, Silapatikaram, Tevaram,

and Tirukural, with no exposure to Western ideas other than through Christian priests eager to convert.

Soon the shy *bhakta* comes under the influence of the vivacious, upper caste ascetic who will become Chattampi Swamikal, and it appears the two might work together in pursuing the rigorous contemplative path. But averse to staying long under anyone's influence, the young Narayanan reaches Maruthwamala, where he lives in seclusion in a cave in the woods, for eight years. It is in this period the unknown swami starts acquiring a reputation as a healer and yogi and attracts followers, some of them oppressed for centuries by caste. His followers build a cottage for him by a stream in Aruvipuram, and it was here in 1888 he jots down the verses that include arguably the most famous Malayalam lines: "One Caste, One Religion, and One God for Mankind." It was here he defies the Brahmin caste hierarchy by picking a stone from the river and declaring it Shiva. When an official Brahmin priest questions the flagrant usurpation of the Brahminical right to consecrate temples, Guru tells him that he only consecrated an Ezhava Shiva. The astonishing clarity with which he begins to speak and act from this moment onward inspires nothing short of a renaissance in the entire Malayalam speaking region.

In Surendran's novel *Guru*, the most serious questioning comes not from any Brahmin priest, but from Chattampi Swamikal, a former mentor and fellow-traveler, who asks: What business does he have in consecrating a stone? When Guru replies that he did it for the ordinary people who needed comforting, Swamikal asks why then did he have to abandon his wife and pursue the path of the yogi? Accused of abandoning his mysticism for stones, Guru invokes Jesus, Buddha and Sankara, who all left pure contemplative life and returned to the midst of ordinary people. Although never eager to argue or win, he nevertheless declares that conscience is his God and that everything he does will be dictated by his conscience and that he recognizes no other religion or God.

Viewed in terms of its pragmatism, Guru's declaration signals a philosophical shift. As William James has described the shift in his classic book *Pragmatism*, the philosophical debate is between the 'tough minded' and the 'tender minded'. The former group is the non-religious type whereas the tender-minded group needs religious expression. It is also a debate between principles and facts, rationalism and empiricism, monistic and pluralistic. Whether Narayana Guru moved from 'tough minded' to 'tender-minded' or vice versa is open to question, but James's famous statement that our children are now born almost scientific can also help us see that in spite of his commitment to contemplative life the Guru had to reckon with scientific truth and lend a hand in aiding the process of humanization. In philosophical terms pragmatism is the axiomatic tool that enables the philosopher to move beyond a dispute, to a common ground where empiricism and mysticism are no longer in competition but both aim at identifying practical consequences. In James's words, any idea that will carry us meaningfully from one experience to the other beyond ideology is "true, instrumentally."

The pragmatist school is sympathetic to the practical imperatives of daily life as well as to the mystical aspirations of human beings. William James, whose magisterial *Varieties of Religious Experience* declared mystical truth unknowable, concerned himself with authentic life. He proposed the pragmatic test not only as an acknowledgement that reality cannot be verbally formulated but also as a signal to the possibility of striving toward a constructive truth. In other words, what Narayana Guru finds in an Ezahava Shiva is an axiomatic tool to help render life meaningful for a vast number of people. I also want to note that William James was aware of the Buddhist version of the axiomatic tool, known as 'the expedient,' *upaya*, and scholars haven't failed to acknowledge the *Mahayana* tendencies of the American Pragmatists.

The novelists offer only limited exposition of the philosophical side of Narayana Guru, and even less in presenting his close disciples, who brought to him conflicting philosophies and character traits, but the arc of the story is that of a young man's earnest search for truth and his genuine attempt to help others break free from bondage, never wavering in his absolute trust in *Advaita* philosophy while engaging history.

In both novels, only the better known episodes in Guru's life are dramatized: his childhood, his early life as a student, his rigorous spiritual pursuits in the company of other contemplatives, the coming of the disciples, the founding of temples and educational institutions, his encounters with Mahatma Gandhi and the poet Rabindranath Tagore in the final years of his life when he also attracted a large number of secular intellectuals. With the appearance of the future poet Kumaran Asan, and Dr. Palpu—Nataraja Guru's father—Guru's pragmatism takes another turn. Europe-returned Dr. Palpu informs Guru that he has had discussion with Swami Vivekananda himself, and that he urged the doctor to get hold of a spiritual leader if he ever hoped to confront caste in any meaningful way.

Surendran depicts Dr. Palpu's forceful character and his methodical pursuit of the Guru, which culminates in the founding of the organization SNDP in 1902, which was an immediate success, imitated by every other caste group, including the Brahmins. In spite of his increasing disenchantment with the organization and the direction some of the leaders were pulling it, Narayana Guru works tirelessly in the new century, raising funds for more temples and schools. By the time Guru sets out on his last round of peregrinations, founding temples and new institutions all over Kerala and Sri Lanka, in the manner he upholds his ideals it is clear he is on the road not only in the name of truth but out of a concern for the consequences of truth.

Narayana Guru's final years are portrayed in the novels as sorrowful, not because of the pain his body had to endure but caused by the divisiveness in SNDP. On the legacy of SNDP, the famed Marxist leader and historian E. M. S. Namboothiripad has written that what the Guru succeeded in raising was only

bourgeois consciousness and that contrary to his goal of fostering a casteless secular consciousness his movement fanned only a lower caste Hindu separatism.

In the novel *Narayanam*, the opening scene shows Guru grappling with memories of his long and eventful life. In bed, his eyes riveted upon the yellow sunlight filtering through tree branches at dusk, Gurudevan thought it was the radiance at the end of the long tunnel to the further shore. For a time, in the grip of a great peace, he gazed at the light, free of the present pain. Soon the voice wins over the reader as Guru's ruminations take him to Sivagiri hills and from there to the seashore and to his beloved Kumaran Asan, who had emerged as Kerala's greatest twentieth-century poet. But the poet had died in a boat accident, leaving Guru in deep sorrow at the

loss of his true intellectual successor. It was a fact that neither Kumaran Asan nor the rationalist K. Ayyappan, who tried to embrace Buddhism, was able to stem the rising tide of caste politics in the SNDP. Still lower in the caste hierarchy, Ayyappan as a Pulaya felt more and more alienated, and on his own he formed a small group of brothers



committed to eradicating caste through organizing communal feasts and inter-caste marriages in defiance of the strict caste taboos. When he starts receiving death threats, Guru advises Ayyappan to follow the example of Jesus, whose bold defiance of all iniquities of the world Ayyappan readily points out, but Guru tells him that he must forgive his enemies and engage in the right action without personal hostility of any kind. In *Guru*, there is a scene devoted to Ayyappan's trip with Guru, who was asked to mediate between warring Ezhava factions, both prohibiting the Pulayas from the Ezhava temple. When Guru asks the disputants to welcome the Pulayas as a first step, the warring factions refuse. Displaying no anger at all, Guru gets up to leave; the anxious disputants beg him to stay to help end their dispute. Guru tells them that he sees complete agreement among them about prohibiting their Pulaya brothers in the temple.

After the Guru walked away, a much bewildered Ayyappan asked how he expected to change people by walking away, and the answer is that it can't be done. People have to do it themselves. Some Ezhava leaders who dreaded integration with lower castes spread falsehoods about the Guru, even claiming that he denounced communal meals and mixed-marriage. It was to counter such propaganda that the

Guru gave it in writing: no matter what religion or appearance, there is only one caste, and there is nothing wrong in the marriage between fellow human beings, let alone dining with them. In the final scenes of the novel, Guru suffers more on account of his disciples than his own illness. Hearing news of his temples denying entry to castes lower than Ezhavas, Guru grieves deeply, but all that Ayyappan can do is report on the increasing caste pride sweeping the land.

In the shorter novel *Narayanam*, one of the significant deathbed recollections involve Guru's flight from the marital chamber, and indeed from the life of a contented householder living within the confines of his caste and class. Awaiting his death, he muses about the one hundred year long dalliance of Shiva in Parvati's bed. Sailing through the memories, he asks himself: What did the Buddha find out? Everything is transient. Nothing lasts. The world is burning as if every element has caught fire. In another archetypal moment in the novel, Narayana Guru thinks of Jesus. In the stillness of the night, Jesus went up the hill to pray. You, too, come with me, he told Peter, Jacob, and John. On the mountain, when their teacher sat in contemplation, his disciples watched from a distance. Next, his thought shifts to Mohammad's thirty days and thirty nights in a cave and finally Aruvipuram flashes in his mind and he recalls the moment he stepped into the water and picked up a stone and declared it Shiva and then Ezhava Shiva.

Surendran's novel *Guru*, offers several more thoroughly realized archetypal moments, but the Guru's famous wit is missing in both novels, as is the evidence of all the contemplation that went into the composition of renowned verse treatises such as *Atmopadesa Satakam* and *Daiva Dasakam*. When some of his disciples suggest a conversion to Christianity or Buddhism as a solution to caste oppression, Guru doesn't counter them. He hardly takes the dogmatic Hindu position that Gandhiji often took. For him, religion was as an opinion, and he found nothing wrong in abandoning an opinion, and he had no interest in debates or holding mass audiences in thrall, unlike some of his restless disciples who gained much fame and political clout in the national movement.

When Mahatma Gandhi and Guru meet at Vaikom to demand temple entry for lower castes, it is Gandhi who appears to hold fast to notions of Hindu identity whereas Guru takes the more pragmatic position. There is a final encounter with his erstwhile mentor Chattampi Swamikal, who continues to criticize Guru for straying from the mystical path to consecrate stones and for traveling around the country raising funds for schools. Guru compares his actions to lighting a new lamp with an old one and the Narayana Guru brought to life in the two novels seems to be the lamp, both old and the new.

THE SKINNY ON THE COLOR SOLID

BY CHARLES ERICKSON

The Guru touched my back and said, "The lights in the basement and at the top of this skyscraper are alright, but the lights here in the middle are shorted out."

His thinking was influenced by the spirit of the times he was living in when he lived in Europe between the two world wars. His skyscraper analogy calls to mind the architectural avant garde of the day, the Bauhaus in Germany, and particularly in France, Le Corbusier. This is the type of minimalist building made of glass and steel that we see everywhere in the world, which is still called "modern".

The Guru used the word "structuralism" to describe his theories. This word in France especially brings to mind the anthropological theories Claude Levi-Strauss. The Guru was not a disciple of Levi-Strauss but by using the term he was suggesting a parallel. Pairs of opposites as the universal building block of human thought is at least one common feature. Vedanta has been structuralist in method for centuries, but Vedanta is usually considered to be metaphysics and, therefore, unscientific by European intellectuals. Levi-Strauss as a Marxian anthropologist was recognized and respected as a scientist.

Henri Berson as a philosopher, Le Corbusier as an architect, and Levi-Strauss as an anthropologist had in common a method of the reduction of an event or an idea to its simplest, most basic elements. It was the spirit of the times, the spirit of modernism. In some ways it was a return to the primitive, parallel to contemporary movements in art like Cubism. It was also a simplification, the radical elimination of the superfluous, as well as an obsession with structure and schematism. It is comparable to a color photo reduced to black and white tonality.

We might naively have guessed that with the reduction of their fields to the simplest elementary elements, these modern thinkers would have written their explanations in a style easy to understand, like Descartes, for example, who radically simplified his field and made every effort to communicate his ideas to the layman. But the modern avant garde theorists, Bergson, Levi-Strauss, Le Corbusier, are obscure and difficult. As is Nataraja Guru.

At the Sorbonne, the young P. Natarajan discovered that his presentation of philosophical ideas was too clear, simple and easy to understand. His dissertation was at first rejected, and he had to learn to write in a more prolix and obscure style. He had to learn a magisterial style to be acceptable in academic circles. This

was the origin of the style he used in *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*. It was unfortunate that his writing developed this way, mainly because his ideas were not acceptable to academics. The very title, I suspect, was enough to scare most of them away. And for the rest of us, as it turns out, it's not an easy read at all.

There was another side of the Guru, though. In person, he was a versatile, charming and fascinating performer. As a child psychologist, he could speak to the child in the adult. It's unfortunate that we don't have documentary film recordings of his hundreds of hours of monologues given in both Europe and America at the end of the Sixties. Some people took notes but these caught only a fraction of his total message, his magic, his protolanguage. Those who heard him then are forgetting as they age, and many have already passed. Finally, what remains will be his writings.

Commenting on his writings comprehensively is a huge work, which will probably fall to someone in Kerala who understands the works of Narayana Guru in their original languages.

For myself, now an old man, the best I can do in the time I have left is to quarry some parts of the magnum opus. When I first met the Guru in Belgium he was talking about the color solid. This is a part of his teaching that I understand somewhat in terms of my own life experience and work as a picture maker. What I say will be based on a structural drawing by Jean Letschert, which I commented on in a previous issue of Gurukulam.

The Guru advised his students to take his hints from this, that, or the other context, and put them together intuitively. I will try to arrange fragments as I remember them in a mosaic form, with the visualization of the color solid in mind.

First, imagine the color solid as a cylinder. Like a cucumber, it may be cut into slices, any one of which is roughly circular. We may speak broadly of a cucumber slice having a center, a radius and a circumference. Taking the cucumber as an unsliced entity, we may note the distance between one end and the other as the altitude of the cucumber, if we stand it up vertically.

The Guru usually referred to this altitude as the vertical axis, rarely specifying the vertical axis of what. It is the cylindrical coordinate system or color solid that is the frame of reference here. The world of color is the world of objects outside us. What we actually see outside us is nothing other than surfaces variously colored. The brain makes of this a world of the objects surrounding the observer. The fascinating thing about the color solid is that any color you can point to out there can be exactly located as a point within this cylindrical coordinate system and exactly replicated in a painting.

In words similar to what the Guru would use, there is a one to one correspondence between percepts and concepts. "Percepts" here are the colors that fall on our retina, and "concepts" are the points which are merely locations determined by numbers. They are entirely different and one is not reducible to the other. They are epistemologically distinct, yet the correspondence between the two sets is exact and consistent. Although the color manifold around us changes, color

doesn't change. Magenta now is just what magenta was a million years ago. There is no coming into being or passing away, and no evolution. The spectrum doesn't change. Light doesn't change. Points and lines and geometric forms like the circle and the cylinder, don't change. All things considered, the color solid must be one of the eternal ideas of Plato. And yet, fascinating for the Guru, is the fact that this set of one to one correspondences was put together by paint merchants as a practical way to match colors.

Looked at this way, color has three dimensions: hue, saturation, and value. Hue is what we call color in ordinary conversation, as when we say the sky is blue, blood is red, grass is green. If you take a cross-section of the cylinder, hue is defined by a position on the circumference. As on a clock face there are positions which we identify by numbers: twelve o'clock, one o'clock, and so on back around to twelve. We can list the correspondence of hue and number like this: 12-violet, 1-blue-violet, 2-blue, 3-blue-green, 4-green, 5-yellow-green, 6-yellow, 7-yellow-orange, 8-orange, 9-red-orange, 10-red, 11-red-violet, and back to the beginning. The twelve o'clock position is not necessarily a point on the circumference, it could be a point anywhere on the radius between the center and the twelve o'clock point on the circumference. We are looking at not just a circle of twelve points but a wheel of twelve spokes or a star of twelve rays.

Saturation is the degree of intensity or brightness of a color. The higher the saturation the more vivid and intense the color. In a cross section, the saturation of a color is expressed by the distance of the point (representing the color) from the central point. The central point is zero saturation. The farther out the point being considered is from the center, the greater is the saturation. The vivid hues are out towards the edge. Closer in, they turn brown and nearer the center they tend to one or another shade of gray.

There are concentric zones of saturation resembling the concentric rings going outward from a dropped stone in the pond, or the orbits of planets around the sun. The stone dropped in the pond or the sun in the solar system is the point of zero saturation and each ring going outward is a higher degree of saturation.

The cross sections, one above the other like a stack of coins or poker chips, make a cylinder. Say each chip is one unit thick, ten of them make a cylinder ten units high. This is the altitude of the cylinder, altitude being the third dimension of color: value or brilliance. There is a scale of value which runs from black through shades of gray to white. Readers of Nataraja Guru will recognize "scale of values" or simply value as a key term. If you take a color photo of an object, you can determine its hue, saturation and value. But if you take a black and white photo, hue and saturation drop out and what remains is value. The scale of value can be divided into many degrees of gray between pure black and pure white. It's arbitrary, but let's say there are five degrees: black, dark gray, medium gray, light gray and white.

Having sketched in the outlines of the color solid, I may now say that in the structuralism of the Guru, the radii of hue and the concentric zones of saturation

are not important. The cross section at right angles to the vertical scale of value is treated as an undifferentiated geometrical unit plane. Chromatic color drops out of the picture by a process of abstraction and generalization, and color is reduced to black and white. Furthermore, he doesn't use actual achromatic colors as protolanguage. By a process he sometimes referred to as "evaporation" we leave the actual pigments of the paint shop and are now at the thinner perceptual level of a colored plate in the encyclopedia. Percepts evaporate into concepts so that a color red that we can see becomes the word "red" and the range of dictionary meaning associated with it, which is essentially invisible.

Finally the conceptual evaporates into the nominal. The names become algebraic. The vertical axis is by now a number of points evenly spaced in a line, however many you want. Let's say five. The points aren't dots on the blackboard. They are locations only. They aren't black or white or any shade of gray. So the scale of value has only nominal relation to the achromatic colors. With another degree of evaporation, the names of the colors drop away from the points and we can assign whatever value we choose to the point locations. The guru often used the five elements in these point locations.

So finally this is the skinny on the color solid: it's an ordinate, as thin as can be, entirely virtual.

By the time I met Nataraja Guru in January 1969, he had finished the *Science of the Absolute* and was giving monologues about the *Saundarya Lahari*. He was developing his own Tantric language. Having evaporated to pure nominalism, he was precipitating back into imagery. Starting with verse one, the vertical axis was made to correspond to Siva and the horizontal to Sakti. Having abolished hue and saturation, or chromatic color, in the *Science of the Absolute*, he brought it back in *Saundarya Lahari*. Although he had talked of protolanguage in the abstract, there was none to be found in his magnum opus, so he was talking, when I met him, of a spectacular Technicolor film, which would teach Vedanta to the hippies proto-linguistically. What could this mean? It was all about a dialectical unity of opposites, both of them necessary.

In Tantric imagery, the feminine principle is represented by red pigment and ashes represent the masculine. We may say, using the color solid as our frame of reference, that ashes are the achromatic colors and the scale of values. Red pigment is the chromatic colors, hue and saturation, and the cross-sectional slice of the cylinder.

More, semen is the masculine and blood the feminine; bone, bone marrow and the core of the spine, are masculine; and heart and veins, muscle and fat, feminine.

Nataraja Guru, when he completed his magnum opus, the *Science of the Absolute* was fully virtual and solidly gone into the valley of dry bones we find described in Ezekiel of the Old Testament, Chapter 37: "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the valley

of the bones and caused me to pass by them round about, and behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry.”

Next, in a moment of unaccustomed idleness, the Guru glances at Kumaran Asan’s Malayalam translation of *Saundarya Lahari*, and he glimpses possibilities. Or: “And he said unto me, son of man, can these bones live?”

The Guru thinks of proto-language. “Again he said unto me, prophesy unto these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones. Behold, I will cause breath to enter unto you and ye shall live.”

He thinks of making his own translation infused with scientific insight. He now sees the entire project adumbrated in chapter one of the *Saundarya Lahari*. “And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live.”

So the Guru begins his round-the-world tour as well as his translation of the *Saundarya Lahari* with his own commentary. “So I prophesied, and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking and, behold, the bones came together.”

By this time the Guru was in Belgium, and this was when I came onboard and saw the amazing performances he was able to do with the special rapport he enjoyed with the folks in Ghent, at the Gaeverit family compound. “And when I behold, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above.”

But now comes the sad part. “But there was no breath in them.” Breath means *prana sakti*. The *prana sakti* would mean the enthusiastic endorsement of the Guru’s revaluation of Tantra by the religious goddess-worshipping fold of South India, ushering in the New Age. So having made his symbolic world-encircling journey, the Guru returned to South India, and many of us made the journey expecting the apocalypse.

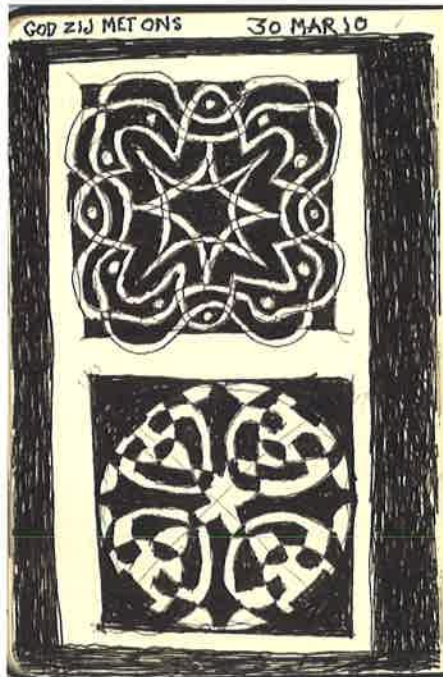
Now this is what we were hoping would happen:

“Then he said unto me.” This must have been the spirit of Narayana Guru. “Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”

But alas! By that time the Sixties were over. The promise of verse one was not fulfilled. Siva was not united with Sakti.


Printed in the following pages are excerpts of notes and designs from the many journals that Charles Erickson has kept while painting and living in the United States.

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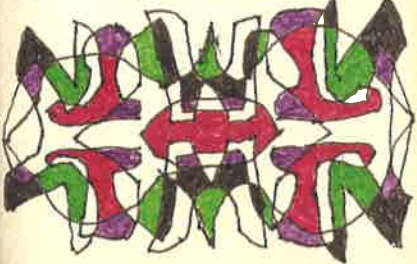


UP IN THE AIR
 YOU CAN PULL ANY CITY
 OUT OF THE SKY
 WE'RE DRIVING
 TO SEATTLE FOR TENEBRAE
 SEE THE CONQUERING HERO COMES
 ON ALL CLASSICAL FM
 A PHRASE OF DUTCH
 COMES BACK FROM DAYS WITH JOOST
 GOD ZIJ MET ONS
 GOD IS WITH US
 THE DORMER UP TELLER TOLD ER
 KAFKA'S GRANDCHILD WILL BE
 BORN IN ARIES
 WE'RE DRIVING TO SEATTLE
 THIS MORNING PARKED AT 10:40 AM
 CAUGHT IN ZENO'S PARADOX
 TO GET TO SEATTLE
 WE'VE GOT TO GET TO IS
 TO GET THERE
 WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE
 IT'S THE LAW OF FOUR, FOUR WORDS
 EACH WORD IS THREE LETTERS
 GOD ZIJ MET ONS
 ALL THE FAMILY ARE MEETING THE BABY
 THE SEA BELL TOLLS
 THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BARBARA SEA QUEST

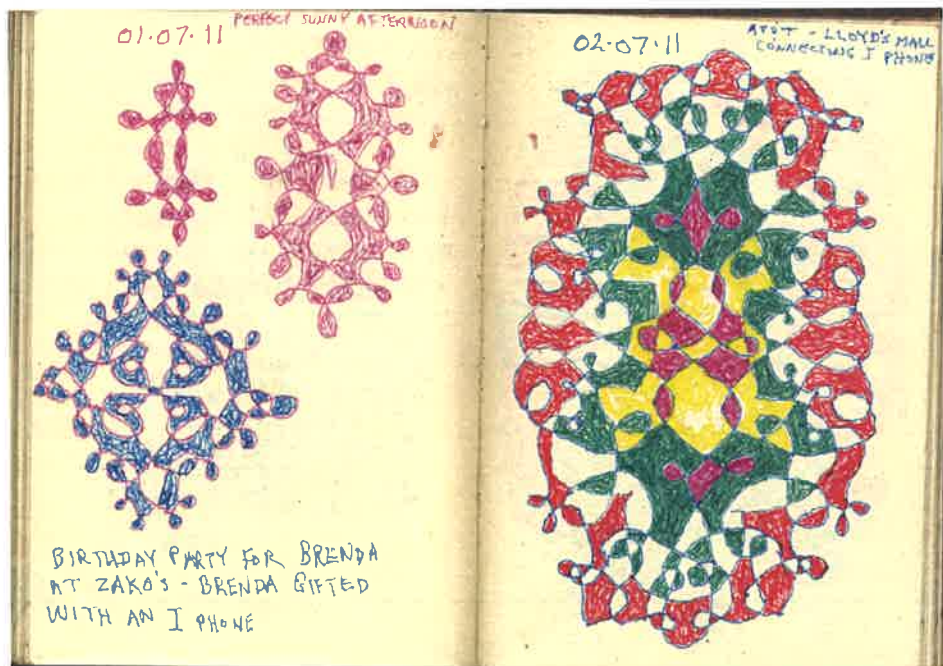
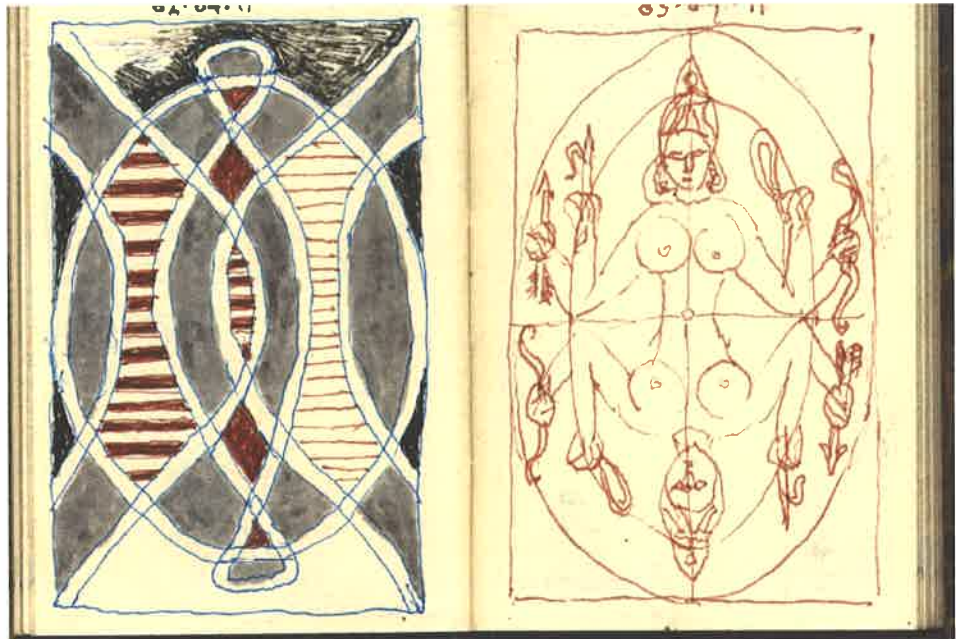
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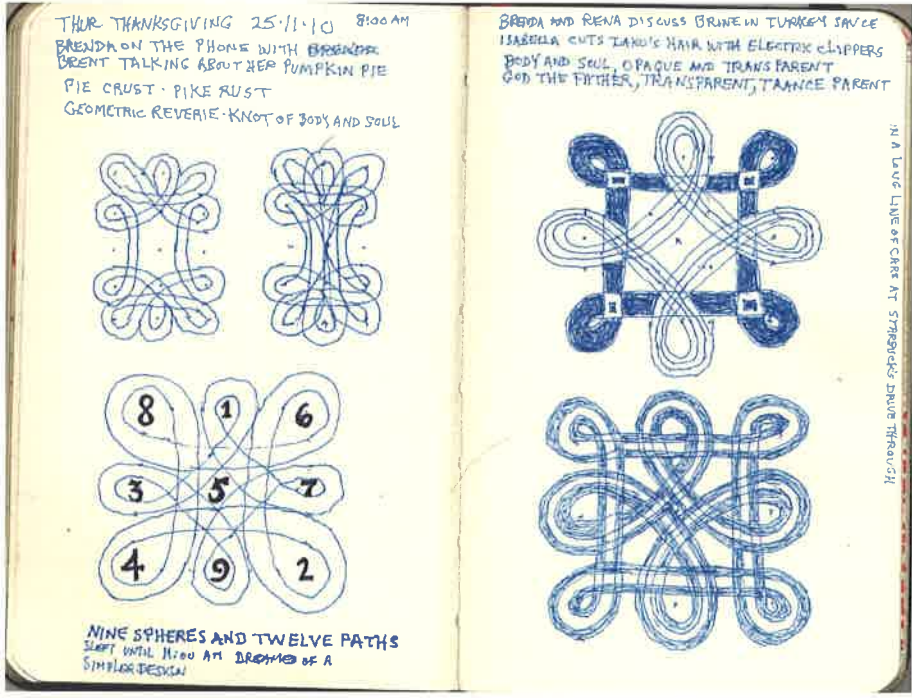
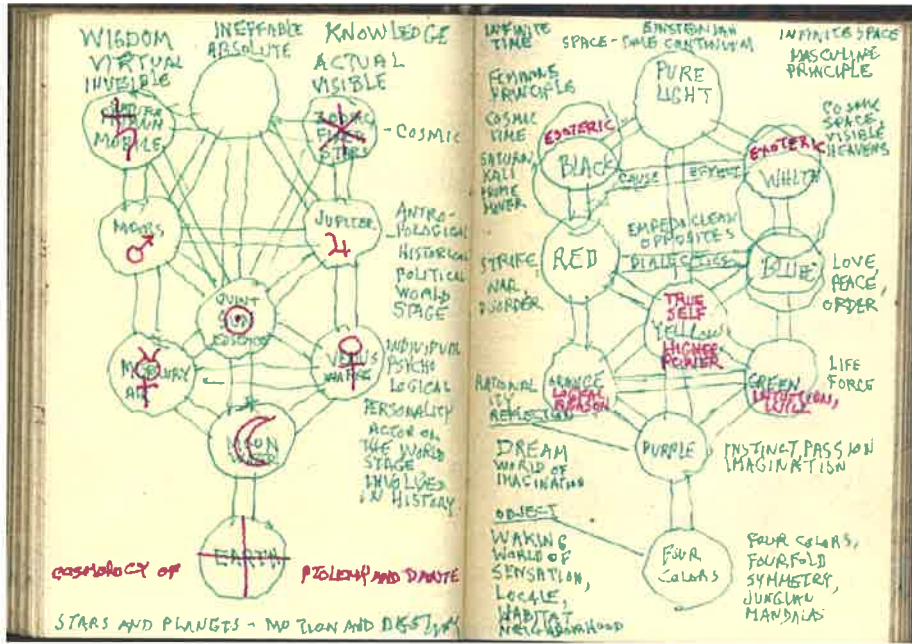


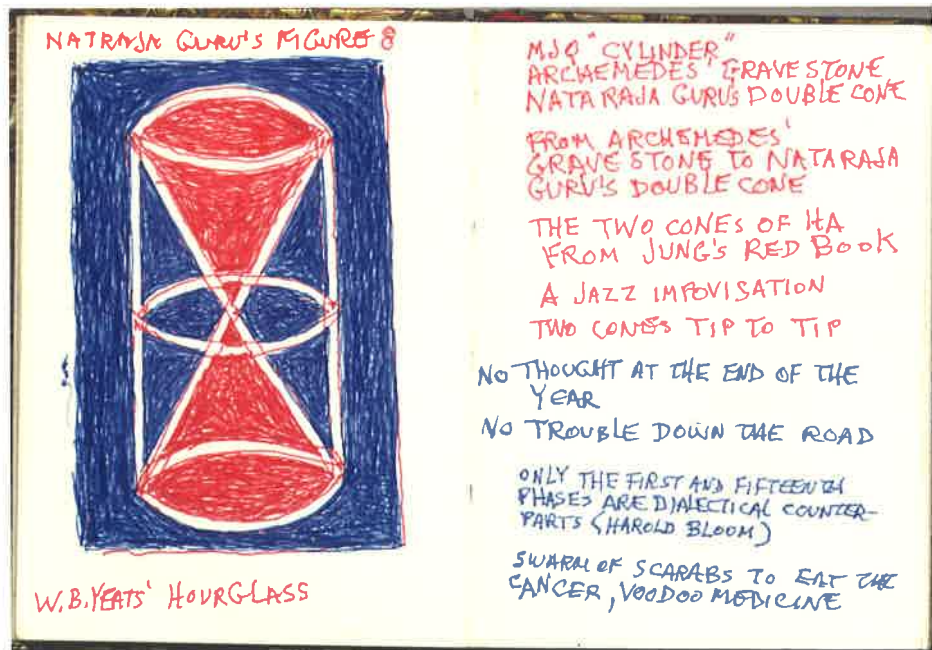
WITH REGARD TO THE CYLINDER, I AM THE
 AXIS OF ROTATION
 OF RIGHT TRIANGLES, I AM THE ISOCELES
 OF FINGERS THE THUMB
 OF CLOSED CURVES THE CIRCLE
 OF QUADRILATERALS THE SQUARE
 AMONG THE TEETH AM THE TONGUE
 THE 3RD
 I DREAMED ALL MY TEETH FELL OUT
 BUT MY TONGUE LIVED ON TO TELL THE TALE
 FERLINGHETTI

WITH REGARD TO THE SPECTRUM
 I AM LIGHT







EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF SRI NARAYANA GURU

BY PETER OPPENHEIMER, EdD.

Part Two: Prescription

This section will elucidate epistemological assumptions, epistemology being the philosophical science of the source, nature, and limitations of knowledge and of truth:

In his *Atmopadesa Satakam, or One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction*, Narayana Guru slowly and deliberately reveals the nature of the self to be of an entirely different order than that which is currently presumed and promulgated in Western society. Before we discuss the implications of this vision of the self for education, social life, and fulfillment in life, let us take a look at some of the distinguishing features of this vision of the self. In the opening verse, Narayana Guru lays bare an epistemological consideration fundamental to the educative process. The verse reads as follows:

Permeating the knowledge which brilliantly shines
at once within and without the knower
is the *karu*; to that, with the five senses withheld,
prostrate again and again with devotion and chant. (V1)

In this opening verse the Guru points to the core of the self as consciousness. It is this core of consciousness, which shines at once within and without the knower. Immediately the Guru is pointing out the union of subject and object in and as consciousness. This is a radical departure from the common Western way of understanding the self as the subject separate from the object. In consciousness there is a union of subject and object, self and other.

Although this may seem counter-intuitive, in fact it is true to our own experience. Nataraja Guru, Narayana Guru's immediate successor, pointed out, "While in the sentence, 'I see a tree,' it is grammatically correct to say that 'I' is the subject and 'tree' is the object, in the actual experience of seeing a tree it is impossible to say where the seeing I ends and the tree begins. The experience is all of a single piece. We do not experience any such division."

There are ninety-nine more verses in this single work on self-instruction in which the nature of the self will be convincingly clarified, but this is the first indication we get that the self under reference is universal as opposed to merely individual.

In the second verse we are introduced to the two different orientations toward self that are possible, one horizontal and the other vertical. Here, as presented masterfully by Nataraja Guru, the horizontal axis stands for all that's spread out in the world of percepts and concepts. These factors belong to the world of becoming and can be seen to be both ever-changing and ultimately transient. The vertical axis represents pure being as opposed to becoming, and hence implies that which is unchanging, universal, and eternal.

The psychic dynamism, the senses, the body,
the many worlds known by direct perception-
everything, when contemplated,
is the glorious embodiment of the sun that shines in the sky beyond;
this should be realized through relentless search. (V2)

The first orientation to the self is individual, separate, changeful and fleeting. The second is universal, all-inclusive, changeless and eternal. These are the horizontal and vertical views of the same Self. The former we will henceforth refer to as self with a small "s," and the latter as the Self with a capital "S." The self consists of such factors as the body, senses and psychic dynamism, whereas the Self includes all that plus the many worlds known by direct perception and, as we shall see, the often overlooked or neglected vertical dimension besides. That Self is referred to here as the sun that shines in the sky beyond. This Self can only be distinguished from the other self and realized in itself by "relentless search." Here we are put on notice that a lazy or half-hearted approach to Self-realization will not yield the fruit of realization.

It is important to note here, that while the wisdom about the true nature of the Self is relevant to the alternative model of all levels of education, including the primary level, this is not something which is to be directly taught at the primary level. This particular study is to be undertaken by mature and earnest educators, so that the vision they have in the back of their minds of the true nature of the reality of the children sitting before them can radically inform their approach (which will then be communicated as surely as the presumption of the separate and competitive nature of self which currently prevails is communicated to students as a part of the pernicious hidden curriculum referred to above). These epistemological considerations about the nature of the self and reality are crucial to be understood first and foremost by the educator himself or herself.

The Guru returns to this same theme of discriminating between the self and the Self in verse twelve, which reads:

See the skin, bone, dirt and inner urges which end tragically
to which the I-identity is conjoined;
this which perishes is the other; oh, grant the cherished boon
that the great I-identity increases to perfection. (V12)

Here the distinction is made between that personal aspect of the self which undergoes change, deterioration and death and the universal aspect of the Self which is changeless and eternal. Elsewhere in this same work, Narayana Guru makes the case that what is ultimately True and Real must be true and real in all places and for all time (V79). Therefore that which undergoes change and dissolution cannot have that degree of reality. This is like saying that what is real in gold ornaments is the gold itself and that the ornament form is a provisional and temporary expression of that golden reality. We make a mistake, misplace our identity and forsake our well being when we mistake the form for what is real within the form.

Another favorite analogy of the Guru is that of waves and water. Each wave appears to be separate, though in truth none is in any way separate from the ocean, nor hence from each other. What is real in each wave is water, and that one water is the same reality in every wave.

Existing outside and seen within, through an act of superimposition,
the five specific elements, like sky, when contemplated,
should become like waves rising in rows
from the treasury of the watery deep,
without any separate reality whatsoever. (V3)

The bottom, the top, the end, that is real, this is, no, that is-
in this way people quarrel; the one primal reality is all that is;
all this inertial matter is transient;
except as a form of water could a wave ever arise? (V19)

Like waves arising in the ocean,
bodies one by one suddenly arise, then merge again;
alas! Where is the end to this?
In the primal ocean of consciousness potent action is said to exist. (V56)

Without knowledge I do not exist;
without me there is no knowledge; light alone is;
thus, both knowledge and knower, when contemplated,
are of one substance; there can be no doubt. (V59)

Similarly one can say that just as a wave can never be separate from the ocean,
for wherever the wave goes, by definition, the ocean is there too, so it is impossible

for anything at all which we experience to be separate from our own general consciousness. Therefore everything known is at once a part of the knower's own self. Such a vision results in a very different way of conceiving and experiencing one's self, which has dramatic implications for both the process and product of education as well as for the development of human relations in general, as suggested above and which we will examine in more detail presently.

One more analogy to clarify the unitive, universal and undiminishing nature of the Self is given as innumerable sparks emitting from a central fire:

Existing in knowledge, as the being of non-being,
countless sparks arise, causing the appearance of the world;
So, apart from knowledge there is not another thing; thus one should know;
This knowledge bestows the state of oneness. (V89)

In addition to presenting these rather artistic and somewhat fanciful metaphors to establish the ultimate oneness of the self with other selves as well as to whatever is known by the self, Narayana Guru resorts to a more modern scientific approach in verse ten of this same work:

"Who is sitting in the dark? Speak, you!"
In this manner one speaks; having heard this, you also
to know, ask him, "And who are you?"
To both the word of response is but one. (V10)

In this attempt to suggest the unitive nature of the Self, both within an individual (as indicated in the following verse eleven, through considering the succession of "I's arising within oneself) and between one individual and another, the Guru creates a situation similar to a laboratory experiment in which the darkness referred to serves the dual purpose of controlling for or removing extraneous variables as well as suggesting that in seeking to know the nature of one's self one should be looking inward contemplatively as opposed to outward, as is the case with the five senses. Elsewhere in the *Atmopadesa Satakam*, the very definition of the self is given as "What remains aware in darkness, the self indeed that is." (V27) The self is a light unto itself, which requires no external light to illuminate it.

Here the one Self, which is within each and all, is similar to the "I am that I am" of the Bible. There is an "I am" within each of us which is undiminishing, unchanging, unconditioned and unlimited by all the qualifying factors we attribute to it, such as "I am a human" or "I am a man" or "I am Peter" or "I am cold" or "I am generous." That pure "I am" in the Bible is identified with the godhead itself and by Narayana Guru here as our own inmost Self.

The conclusion drawn by Narayana Guru in verse ten and the following verse is that just as the many different "I's arising within an individual can ultimately

be resolved into a single “I,” so is the case as between the “I”s of two separate individuals. The type of reasoning required to make this leap is dialectical rather than linear and is to be grasped through intuition rather than pure reasoning.

That such reasoning and insight is not easily attained is freely admitted by Narayana Guru in a later verse in this same work:

To subdue even somewhat the obduracy of the “other”
is hard indeed without wisdom’s limitless power;
By such, do gain mastery over it and unto Her who is Wisdom
the anti-sensuous One, close access attain. (V37)

And yet, at the same time, the Guru points out that all of us, to some extent, already have such a profound realization as to the oneness of self and other.

The dweller within the body from its existential body-view
in respect of all things, treats “that” or “this” as “mine”
transcending physical limitations; when we consider this,
we should concede that any man immediate realization has. (V48)

In his commentary on verse forty-eight Nataraja Guru writes the following;

“It is usual to speak of immediate realization as a rare thing among men. Here the Guru asserts the converse of this verity when viewed from the context proper to contemplative thought. All men have Self-realization already implicit in their relational life.

“When a man says that a certain thing belongs to him, he is in reality establishing a relation between two entities, one of which is physical and the other that has only a psychic status. His body, which is physical, cannot establish any direct (logical) relationship with another discrete body, because of the property of matter known in the textbooks of physics as impenetrability. A chair is not able to consider another chair as its own. We have therefore to postulate a subtler substratum of the physical body so that the bipolar interest-relation involved between the self and the non-self units of the situation may become understandable.

“The only reasonable postulate that can admit the possibility of this inter-physical and trans-subjective or inter-subjective and trans-physical basis of interest or participation as between inert and living entities can be that the medium in which the interest thrives or can function is a neutral psycho-physical stuff. This neutral psycho-physical stuff can be neither totally material nor totally mental in status. It has, in fact, to participate transparently, as it were, with the very stuff of the reality of the Absolute itself on a homogeneous ground.

“It is in this sense that we have to understand the Guru to assert that when we come to analyze the situation we lay here the very basis of all interest-relationship.

This basis implies in principle Self-realization, which from the standpoint of the common man, is often thought to be a very rare or precious possibility in human life. We associate Self-realization only with people like Socrates. The Guru here asserts it to be every man's prerogative."

Nataraja Guru, *One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction*

From this very simple example of our recognizing the possibility of declaring inanimate objects as "ours" or as a part of us, Narayana Guru takes the same process of phenomenological reduction to very sublime heights in verse fifty which states:

With earth and water, air and fire likewise,
also the great void, the ego, cognition and mind,
all worlds including the waves and ocean too
do they all arise and into awareness change. (V50)

This unitive nature of all, established in the consciousness of the Self, is true everywhere and for all times, whether we recognize it or not:

Even when knowledge to egoism is subject in any predication
and one is unmindful of the ultimate verity of what is said,
yet as with the truth, however ultimate, such knowledge
can never fall outside the scope of the knowing Self. (V60)

Narayana Guru posits the Self as the unchanging substratum of all that changes. Just as motion can only be detected and measured as against something which remains still, so all change and becoming must have as its background some beingness which remains unchanging. In verse sixty-six of *Atmopadesa Satakam* the Guru spells this out by saying that in the world of becoming things eternally arise, transform and then disappear. He declares that there is one alone that remains not subject to becoming (what in Sanskrit is referred to as *sacchidananda* or pure being, unconditioned consciousness and ultimate value). In the second half of this verse, the Guru asserts that knowledge, what is known, what we are and all others too are but conditioned and particularized forms of that one eternal and unchanging Self.

Earthy factors shall come to be ever more;
One alone remains not subject to becoming;
What we know, what it is, what we are, are that same;
And all others too remain conforming to its form. (V66)

This establishing of the ultimate oneness within the Self, between the self and seemingly non-self objects, and between apparently different selves, as indicated

in the verses above, is not simply a sterile intellectual exercise. It has direct and dramatic implications for practically every aspect of social life in general and education in particular, as we will soon see.

Before presenting some key interpersonal, ethical and sociological implications of Narayana Guru's educational psychology and then concluding with the crowning glory of the values to be attained through the educational process as envisioned by Narayana Guru, I would like to pause and remark upon a few methodological considerations that will help in the process, pursuit and attainment of the highest goals of education.

Methodology is the study of the procedures of a particular discipline and enquiry into the way in which that discipline is organized. In the very first verse of the *One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction*, the Guru sets forth some initial methodological suggestions. Once again repeating that verse:

Permeating the knowledge which brilliantly shines
at once within and without the knower
is the *karu*; to that, with the five senses withheld,
prostrate again and again with devotion and chant. (V1)

The methodological suggestions in this verse are implicit in the words "senses withheld," "prostrate" and "chant," and can have direct implications for the conducting of any fruitful educational endeavor. Withholding the five senses indicates that the direction in which to look for the deepest insights under study is not to be found simply through looking outward, but by turning our attention inward to our own core. Whether the subject under reference is an abstract one such as mathematics or as concrete as geography or geology, the process will only be enhanced by relating it directly to the self of the student and that student's own particular nature, values, gifts, aptitudes and appetites.

The implications of "prostrating" here are simply that in order to get the full benefit of the ultimate wisdom to be gained (i.e. Self-Realization, which is the goal of the set of verses presented in this work) it is necessary to also be able to tone down one's individual ego with its private complex of hopes and fears, desires and revulsions, in order that the deeper, more universal and changeless version of the same self can make itself felt.

And by "chanting," the Guru is indicating that the educational search we are embarking upon is to be treated not as something ponderous or merely academic, but rather of the nature of a song or a dance with elements of playfulness to keep it from becoming too heavy. Would that these three initial suggestions be adopted by our institutions of learning, whereby the process of education could be made both more fruitful and more enjoyable at the same time.

Another helpful tip to be kept in mind is suggested in verse five:

People of this world sleep, wake and think many thoughts;
ever wakefully witnessing all this shines an unlit lamp,
precious beyond words, that never fades;
ever seeing this, one should go forward. (V5)

The Guru is suggesting here that we discriminate between whatever is observed by the self, which includes the worlds perceived through the senses and conceived as one's own thoughts on the one hand, and the observing Self, also called the witness, on the other. This implies the initial steps in discriminating between the Self and the non-Self, whereby whatever is witnessed is considered non-Self, or not the Witness.

Ultimately one discovers that what is witnessed is none other than the witness's own self, but it is helpful initially to identify this witnessing aspect of the self, because it alone remains unshaken by the turmoil of success and failure, applause and criticism, pleasure and pain, and any number of other dichotomies that otherwise rock the self and vitiate any search or project we undertake.

In verse seven, Narayana Guru counsels us to adopt a neutral position between an overt exteriorized fascination with the outer world and a totally interiorized state of numbness, dumbness, dreaminess or inertia. He further characterizes this neutral state as "remaining as knowledge."

The translation reads, "Do not wake any more, and without sleeping, remain as knowledge." In our normal waking state, we are easily swayed by people, events and circumstances around us, whereas when asleep we easily mistake our own fantasies for reality or simply conk out all together. It can be very helpful to undertake a certain discipline to adopt a neutral attitude that is free of the exaggerations of either of these two poles.

In verse thirteen, we are again counseled to maintain a cool neutral posture, avoiding the over-heated responses of either reveling in the pleasant or wallowing in the unpleasant, which can otherwise cloud or distort our perceptions, reasoning and intuition.

Near the middle of *Atmopadesa Satakam*, Narayana Guru presents a set of seven verses dedicated to the proposition that there are two fundamental movements within consciousness. The first is horizontal seeing difference and plurality wherever it looks. The second is the verticalized view of the same phenomena, which is capable of seeing the underlying unity and sameness of the apparently disparate items of experience, in and as consciousness.

He advises us to maintain a holistic view, which is capable of acknowledging the reality of both horizontal and vertical dimensions of experience and consciousness. But in verse thirty-eight, he makes clear that these two movements within consciousness do not bear the same fruit, and in that sense, one is to be cultivated above or beyond the other.

What appraises manifold variety, the “other” that is,
and the “same” is what unitively shines;
thus understanding the state aforesaid, into that state
that yields sameness, melt and mix and erect sit. (V38)

In commenting on this verse, Nataraja Guru spells out the benefit accruing from following its advice:

“Unitive vision and seeing plurality are twin aspects of reality, between which (the wise) choose the path of unity as against that which is based on plurality. Some pragmatic philosophers might be justified in insisting that plurality is as much real as the One of the idealists, but it does not follow that such an attitude which accepts the pluralistic manifold interests or motives gives any peace or happiness to man. Torn between rival interests, he would be steeped in the world of conflicts and sufferings. Philosophy should satisfy, not merely the intellectual or academically valid aspirations of man’s interest in truth, but must bring him nearer to happiness, which is his goal in life.

‘Multiple interests in the relativistic world of plurality spell troubles, and unitive interest in life in the absolutist sense spells peace. The movement in self-consciousness tending to reveal the underlying unity of realities may be said to be vertical, and the other which tends to reveal the multiplicity, the horizontal.

‘These two axes are to be recognized by what they lead to, rather than by any innate characteristic in themselves. In themselves they are just tendencies or movements in contemplative consciousness. As a tree is to be known by its fruits, the distinction is based on the end they serve in the contemplative life of man.’

Ibid. p. 144

Another discipline recommended by Narayana Guru as helpful in any educational pursuit is the ability to remain present to the here and now, without getting distracted by memories of the past or anticipations of the future. This may sound easy to one who has not tried it or noticed how difficult it is to accomplish. Our entire desire/fear complex is intimately connected to countless memories of past pains and pleasures, which then get projected onto an equally removed future. A classic meditation technique is to try to remain present with one’s breath simply for the count of ten breaths. This turns out to be very difficult and it is surprising how easily we get pulled off task into some other line of memory-charged thinking. Recognizing all this, the Guru advises:

Dismiss your memories of each object of interest,
which cause a state of obstruction;
the vast expansive memory, which can reveal
the priceless ultimate knowledge, is not unjustified. (V64)

The one exception to this rule given in the final two lines of this verse is “the vast expansive memory, which can reveal the priceless ultimate knowledge,” i.e. the memory of our original oneness with the source of all, from which we have arisen as wave from ocean, fruit from seed or spark from central fire.

These then are a few of the methodological considerations, which taken separately or together can be seen to suggest a very different type of mental discipline as being conducive to learning than that which is currently adopted and promulgated as part of the educational systems prevailing today in the world at large.

[To be concluded in the next issue. Verse translations are by Nataraja Guru and Nitya Chaitanya Yati.]



THE TENTH LABOR OF HERCULES

BY SCOTT TEITSWORTH

In a bookstore the other day I peeked in a new book on Greek myths to see what it had to say about Herakles, who we now know better as Hercules. What I found made me happy I have been digging into these myths below the surface. The following is from *The Treasury of Greek Mythology*, by Donna Jo Napoli (Wash. DC: National Geographic Society, 2011, p 143)

“Heracles was the most famous hero of a particular type in ancient Greece: He was strong, confident, and courageous. But he was either thoughtless or dense. He solved problems with brawn, not brain; he slew person after person, army after army, monster after monster. He made mistakes and felt awful about them, but he never changed his ways, he never learned from his mistakes. Yet at times he seemed almost jolly. The Greeks revered him, but they laughed at him, too.”

This is typical modernist dogma: that nothing prior to the present paradigm has any meaning or significance, beyond allowing us to momentarily indulge in a ripple of pitying laughter before passing on to better things. Then there’s this:

“Although Herakles’ labors have multiple determinants and levels of meaning, a recurrent theme is his attempt to demonstrate masculinity and potency, to meet and overcome sexual challenges (e.g., the daughters of Thespios, the Amazon queen).” (<http://www.greecetravel.com/greekmyths/argos8.htm>)

Herakles must be seriously embarrassed by the trivial way his labors have been interpreted in modern times! After scouring the net, I did find one site that hinted at but did not explore very far into the possibilities:

“Behind its outer meaning, Greek religion often hid an inner mystical tradition, and thus the labours could be interpreted as a symbolization of the spiritual path. This is particularly evident in an analysis of the eleventh, in which Hercules travels to a garden in which grows an apple tree with magical fruit, the tree of life, guarded by a dragon and some sisters—a parallel to the biblical legend of the garden of Eden where a snake encourages the use of an (unnamed) fruit tree, granting the

knowledge of good and evil. The last three labours (10-12) of Herakles are generally considered metaphors about death.” (<http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Mythology/HeraclesLabours.html>)

However, beyond connecting the labors to certain constellations, the site doesn't provide any spiritual exploration. Basically, in every source I have examined, the bare outlines of the myth are repeated, but no one hazards a guess as to whether there is any symbolic meaning beyond the cover story.

So, let's see if we can do better. Unfortunately, the tenth Labor appears to be somewhat less lucrative than its fellows, though I think we can tease out some worthwhile ideas. Inevitably we are working with only partial information, as the original myths have long been lost.

The Cattle of Geryon

The last three of Herakles' twelve labors employ the symbol of three: Geryon is a triple-bodied giant, the Hesperides are three nymphs dwelling in an Edenic garden, and Cerberus is a three-headed dog who guards the Underworld. Three generally signifies completeness, as the universe is often described in triplicate. Among other trinities, the Greeks had animals, men and gods; Indians, heaven, earth and the in-between; Semites, hell, earth and heaven; and today we have microcosm, everyday scale and macrocosm. The so-called "Holy Trinity" is another matter entirely.

The Greeks associated the west with death, since the sun sank into the ground there, and all three Labors are set toward the west, with the last being in the underworld itself. According to Dr. Mees, "With this [tenth] Labour the Mystery-stage of the Path is entered." (200)

Herakles' tenth Labor was to steal and bring back the beautiful red cattle belonging to the triple-bodied giant Geryon. In Dante's *Inferno*, Geryon makes an appearance as the Monster of Fraud in the depths of Hell. Geryon was not only a monstrous creature with a human face, but he employed the dog Orthrus, a two-headed brother of the three-headed hell-hound Cerberus, to guard his herd.

The stealing of the cattle was fairly straightforward, but the trips to and from were convoluted and arduous. On his way there, Herakles had to travel through the Libyan desert. He got so hot that in frustration he shot an arrow at the sun. Helios, the sun, thought "Aye, this is a cheeky fellow!" and gave Herakles a golden cup in appreciation. The cup was actually the crescent moon that the sun used every night to sail under the earth back from his setting place in the west to where he would burst out of the ground in the east. Herakles used it to sail to mythical Erytheia, the island home of Geryon.

Herakles was immediately confronted by Orthrus and his handler, who he quickly dispatched with his club. When Geryon came to investigate, Herakles shot

and killed him with one of his arrows dipped in hydra poison. This part does strike one as “brawn over brain” and not much else.

Herakles had many adventures shipping the cattle home, with Hera throwing up hardship after hardship. We can treat them as examples of typical challenges that anyone meets in trying to accomplish a major undertaking. Suffice to say that Herakles was persistent in not giving up in despair, which is a tempting option when things go exasperatingly wrong in our endeavors.

A couple of things occur to me. First, both the oxen and their island are red in color, suggestive of sunset, of the sun sinking into the earth, toward Hades. Hell—often pictured as blazing red with fire—is the realm of duality. When we plunge into dual thinking, we forget our Self that lives and breathes in the realm of light, and we must make our escape—a Herculean task—by learning how to withdraw from duality and regain our inner unity.

The two-headed watchdog is the very picture of duality. Duality engenders doubt, and spiritual explorations are often curtailed due to confrontations with doubts or other distracting forces. One of the first principles of spirituality is to hold your ground and not be deterred by hostility or scorn. When doubts rush at you, you have to neutralize them: kill them in a sense. If you merely beat them back, they will soon return, and with a vengeance! Sometimes they have to be forcefully put down, symbolized by whacking them with a club; at other times more subtle means do the trick. In any case, we have to be determined to achieve our objective, lest the guardians of the gate drive us away. This skill will serve us well when we meet Orthus’ big brother Cerberus, who stands at the borderline between the conscious and unconscious realms, welcoming entry into Hades but barring any return.

The advice to “go with the flow” is important in meditation, but falls short in some other places. When the watchdog barks, the flow might urge us to flee the scene. Doing so indicates a lack of confidence in our enterprise. A certain amount of determination is required in spiritual life, so that we don’t wind up as just another complacent sheep in some strange fold. Nataraja Guru said, “Follow anything wholeheartedly, and you will get the truth.” In his Isa Upanishad commentary, Nitya urges: “Even for the person who is well equipped, action is directly related to one’s motivation. One has to say, ‘I want. I should. I will.’” (21)

In this rather vague Labor, the *Sacred Mythoi of Demigods and Heroes* stands out with an excellent exegesis. It points out that the guard dog Orthrus, whose name means “dawn-darkness,” is the guardian at the threshold of duality. Furthermore, “the Golden Boat of Helios or Apollo is like the divine impulse or will, which carries the Soul over the sea of objectivity.” Sacred Mythoi’s explanation is as follows:

“The task of Hercules in this Mythos may be expressed as that of gaining Prudence to prevent the force of Providence being perverted by dualistic imprudence. In other words, it is the Soul’s conquest over the limiting conditions of duality.

“Providence is always good in its essence, but when participated in by secondary natures its force may be perverted or subverted, and thus, by the dual law of cause and effect, limitations and fetters are produced, which it is the labour of the hero-soul to remove.

“Therefore, Eurystheus (the Inner Monitor of the Soul) bids Hercules go forth into the transient regions to gain control of the cosmic forces (oxen) which have been drawn down to the very last of things (Erytheia, the reddish land in the west, where the sun sets), by the unsubdued, boisterous expressions of the threefold objective nature (Geryon), into whose keeping they have been given.

“Before embarking on its quest the Soul must manifest its inherent power to control the fluctuating realms of duality, hence Hercules slays the two giants, Antaeus and Busiris, the adversaries who denote the reactionary effects of the soul’s outgoing operations; he also erects his two Pillars, evincing thereby the Soul’s prepotency over all transient opposing forces and principles.

“The Soul is unity-in-multiplicity, being one in its essence but plural in its activity, therefore it is able to produce duality and multiplicity from unity and yet also resolve them back again.

“However, the divine urge is needed ere the Soul proceeds from its unific essence into diversity of action; Hercules, feeling the fiery influence of Helios, responds with a shaft of aspirational-prayer (arrow) to the Lord of Light, who gives the Soul the power (golden boat) to sail over the trackless seas of transiency to the far country.

“The slaying of the Guardians of the Oxen is only the first stage of this complicated Labour, which enables the Soul to release the cosmic forces; but when liberated they are not easy to control. All the resources of Hercules are called into play in the arduous undertaking of directing the forces back to their source through numberless pathways and in the face of manifold difficulties.

“Even Hera opposes him, but since Hercules is “the Glory of Hera,” as his name suggests, Her opposition is simply instrumental in educing further his latent powers, so that eventually the forces of which She is Queen are consecrated to Her Service, when the Oxen are sacrificed by Eurystheus.

“The Mythos is readily interpreted in terms of Man, the Microcosm, and the full elucidation of all its details affords a portrayal of the extraordinary ordeals and experiences which confront the Soul when it aspires to elevate and transmute the inherent powers and forces imprisoned in the very deeps of the body.” (21-22)

Lastly, Dr. Mees adds some insights, particularly about our theme of resolving duality into unity, which is the whole point of the spiritual path in the first place. Whether you call it returning to God, knowing the truth, merging with the Absolute, or what have you, “out of many, one” is the goal made explicit. By accomplishing this nearly impossible task, Herakles will open the way for him to enter the Greek version of the Garden of Eden next.

In his exegesis, Dr. Mees first addresses Herakles' journey toward his goal:

"From [Crete, Herakles] went to Libya and wrestled with the Giant Antaeos, a son of Gaea, the Earth. Antaeos obtained fresh energy and strength as long as he was in touch with his mother, the Earth. Herakles conquered him by lifting him in the air and pressing him to death. Antaeos represents the dynamism of materialism and corresponds to the Giant Muck-Calf of Norse Mythology. Materialism can only be overcome by lifting it up in the Air, the realm of the Spirit."

Next, the denouement:

"Geruones [Geryon] possessed a herd of beautiful redbrown cattle and was a Monster with three bodies, three heads, six arms and six feet. His three heads and bodies represent the "schizophrenia" of the Fall.... Geruones was killed by an Arrow in the center of his body, where the three trunks joined into one. This symbolism significantly hints at the approaching attainment of Advaita or At-onement. The three aspects of Geruones have a parallel in the symbolism of the Trident."

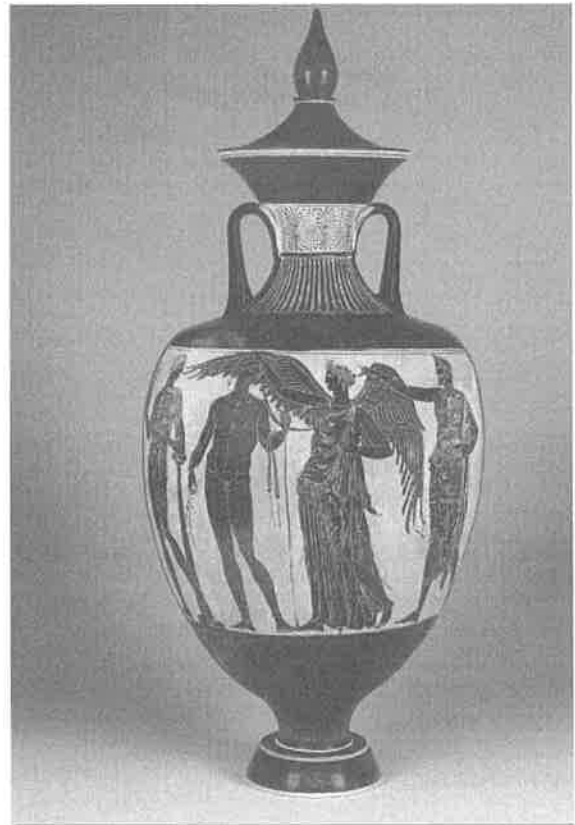
And some interesting details about the return journey:

"Herakles returned with the cattle through Europe to Greece, everywhere meeting with new adventures. Hera, having had to give way before the Sun-Arrow, put more difficulties on the hero's Path. When the herd approached Greece, she sent a gadfly and scattered the cattle, causing Herakles much toil in "gathering the fragments." The fragments are scattered at the stage of the Heights of Manifestation, as we have seen in connection with the Tower of Babel and the Tower-symbol of the Tarot. Hera's gadfly is one of the flies of the Fourth Plague of Egypt, symbolizing gossip, idle, fickle and vain talk, and other forms of anti-social dynamism. They also symbolize, of course, anti-Traditional activity of a subtler nature. It is significant that one of the titles of the Devil is Belzebub, actually the Kanaanite word Baal Zebub, meaning "Lord of flies"... Herakles managed to assemble most of his herd and to take it before Eurystheus."

Lastly, Mees muses about Herakles' challenge in herding the cattle:

"The task of being a shepherd—of the lost sheep within and without—is a supremely difficult one, because the Shepherd represents Life and the esoteric Tradition, while the sheep live largely in accordance with the exoteric tradition of established religion and custom." (all Mees' quotes are from *Revelation in the Wilderness*, Vol. III. 200-3)

The tenth Labor is a vague myth that paints an overview of the spiritual path, where Herakles confronts duality head on and resolves it to unity, afterwards learning to shepherd his personal galaxy of abilities in his chosen direction. It may be that accomplishing all the previous Labors has made this supreme achievement possible. From here he has only the cosmic Garden ahead, and after that to journey into the realm of Death, in which resides eternal life.



ONE HUNDRED STEPS TO SELF REALIZATION

BY GURU NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

STEP TWENTY

What do you call the world?

I think of this planet Earth as my world.

Why do you think so?

Because I have read that what you see with your eyes (*locanam*) is *lokam*. *Lokam* means world.

Do you see any other world?

I see many celestial bodies like the moon, the planets and stars.

Why do you think only of Earth, with its many sentient beings?

I don't have access to any other celestial bodies seen in the outer space.

Do you think there are any other worlds like the planet Earth with the same kind of formation and structure, where beings like animals including man live social lives?

I don't know. From my experience I think Earth is the only world.

Do you think there are worlds of angels and gods or that there are hells and heavens?

I think these are all imaginations of certain people.

Why do you not accept such imaginations?

Because human beings are mainly guided by common sense and reason. The concepts of religion and fictitious imaginations do not tally with reasonable and scientific outlooks of clear observation, experimentation and validated intuitions.

Don't you think there are appearances which mislead us? So shouldn't you give credence to appearance also?

Yes, of course. That is why for scientific scrutiny and common sense acceptance we look for the right mark of the real and distinguish it from the unreal. The unreal has only appearance, and it has no real content.

Can you give an example?

Yes. If a beautiful garland made out of colorful flowers is kept in the dark, on seeing it one may mistake it for a venomous snake and get frightened. If the frightened person sees the same garland in clear light he will surely correct his mistake. Therefore, it is necessary to make critical scrutiny of any appearance that is not convincing.

STEP TWENTY-ONE

What item of value is most dear to you in your social life?

I should be in a position that will be appreciated by my social circle as a man of integrity who aspires for gaining merits in life which are flawless and commendable for a worthy citizen.

Specify an item of that kind.

My first love is to be a writer of beneficial books, moderately priced, which can inspire my fellow beings to improve their value visions and prompt them to adopt excellent lifestyles.

If another person is also holding the same desire, won't there be competition between you?

If another person has a similar ideal and if he is conceited, there can be rivalry.

If such rivalry brews, how can you resolve it?

Rivalry means disadoption. I am advised by my Guru that bipolar disassociation can bring double loss and bipolar adoption can bring double gain.

How can you make bipolar adoption?

Usually where there is competition it is difficult to achieve bipolar adoption. An incumbent rivalry breeds a negative attitude. So the person who wants to be amicable and wishes to maintain his adoption should develop a broad-based attitude in which he and his rival can both be looked upon as well-meaning humans to whom one can show whole-hearted compassion.

What will happen if there is no compassion in either of the two people who want to contest?

In such a case each person may look for a group of loyal friends who can be used to push the other away from them, and unhealthy political rivalry can arise. There is no harm in two members of a society both being enthusiasts to become benevolent educators of society. Instead of one pushing away the other they can help each other by sharing their noble ideas, and become fellow champions who can both be benevolent to the society.

What will happen if that kind of sharing fails?

If this cannot be done there will be anger and hatred brewing between them, and each will try to blackmail the other. The situation will become tense. The social atmosphere in which they live will become dark; confusion will grow in everyone's mind. Both parties will lose respectability and the trust of the common public. It is like two vehicles wanting to pass through a narrow bridge abreast. Reason should prevail, and one should allow the better-equipped person to go ahead with his means of execution.

What makes a person adamant in not giving the right to pass in such a situation?

It is blatant egotism and greed on the part of either of them or both.

When such an impasse comes how do you tide over the deadlock?

This is the right time to control your mind and show your compassion to the other by exercising your preparedness to relinquish your rights. It may look like it brings a partial defeat to you. Swallow your shame. Even if you feel hurt you can show your patience for the good of all.

STEP TWENTY-TWO

How do you find harmony in your daily life?

When my precedent beliefs and actions agree with my present beliefs and courses of action, then there is a continuous, harmonious flow in the stream of my consciousness. That is how I gain harmony in my day to day life.

If you come to realize that your previous actions were not ethically correct, how do you change your course of action and how will you adopt an ethically correct ideology?

If such a circumstance eventually would happen, I will become remorseful and will decide to understand and correct my ethical norms. If and when I become convinced of the right ethical norms, I will make necessary efforts to normalize my behavior.

What methods will you adopt to change your course of action to actualize the right norms of social behavior?

I will resort to self-criticism.

What is self-criticism?

Self-criticism is making a critical re-examination of my normative vision and also trying to find out from knowledgeable people what mistakes I have made in

adopting my previous course of action. Further, I will look at myself as if I am another person, with a fresh attitude towards life. I will have thoroughgoing discussions with other people who have dissimilar norms than what I am holding.

When you find out from others that your concepts were wrong and there are other ways to carry out actions, can you find a common ground with people who think and act differently?

From finding out from other people what the alternative norms are and what courses of action are possible, I will reconsider my own norms by making an intimate study from a fresh critical angle. Also, I will prepare myself to be reformed by reading source books explaining socio-ethical norms. After seeing clearly how morality stems out of philosophical considerations presented in ethical classics, I will compare each theory given in different books dealing with social norms. Eventually I will learn how to actualize my ethical visions of non-conflicting resolution.

What are the ethical classics among religious books?

In Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads teach the right norms of truthful knowledge and right actions. In Christianity, in the gospel of Jesus Christ written by St. Matthew, St. Luke, St. Mark and St. John we get norms of Christian truth and behavior. In the Holy Quran we get a comprehensive study of right norms and correct behavior which bring out the Islamic concepts of compassion and justice. Similarly, among Western philosophers ethical theories are postulated by Spinoza, Henri Bergson, Immanuel Kant and other thoughtful people. From the dialectical teachings of unitive understanding I will learn how to adopt the golden mean of resorting to altruistic spiritual norms.

How do you arrive at the common ground of human solidarity?

Self or *Atman* is the common ground of oneness of humankind so I will equate my needs with the needs of several other people and will evolve a methodology that can enable me to participate with the ways of action which others adopt. Also, I will learn to take a neutral position which I can share with others.

What is unitive understanding?

When desires of different people come to clash with each other, it is each person's unilateral approach to their desires that causes conflict. Learning how to include the desires of others into your own desire and by making an all-out effort to find one common path for all is how you get the secret of unitive understanding.

What is that secret?

That secret is the ability to apply norms of spiritual unity of our common Self in all matters of individual preference.

How do you unlock that secret?

I should learn how to see that another's interests are similar to my own intimate interests.

How do you do that?

I should educate myself to look upon the other person's interest as if it were my own, and see how it is also beneficial to me.

Is it easy?

No, it is difficult.

Then how can you accomplish it?

I should make the course of my conduct discreet.

What principle should you adopt to maintain discreet behavior?

Narayana Guru gives the following advice: "All acts aiming at each person's self-happiness must spell the happiness of all other fellow humans." That is the secret of unitive understanding.



GURUKULA NEWS

At the Varkala Gurukula the re-translating of all of Narayana Guru's works into English continues. An exhaustive biography of Narayana Guru with much unpublished information has just been written by Dr. S. Omana and is to be published by the Kerala State Language Institute. Guru Muni Narayana Prasad's commentaries on the works of Narayana Guru have been compiled into three volumes, also to be published by the Kerala Language Institute. And finally, short biographies of both Nataraja Guru and Guru Nitya are in the process of being printed by them as well.

Evening classes at Varkala Gurukula are focused on the translation of Nataraja Guru's *One World Economics* into Malayalam.

On Guru Nitya's *samadhi* day, May 14th, the Gurukula at Fernhill conducted the annual Guru Puja.

At Somanahalli Gurukula they are working to construct a deeper well to provide water through the dry season, and all contributions to the project are appreciated.

Scott Teitsworth has had his book *Krishna in the Sky With Diamonds* published by Inner Traditions Press. It is a commentary on the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, with verse translations based on Nataraja Guru's work, and is available through www.innertraditions.com. Making the leap from academic reading to deep spiritual understanding is the theme of this book. KSD is a commentary on the famous chapter in the Gita where Arjuna is face to face with Krishna as divine reality. Scott probes the hints that this vision was granted through the help of psychedelics and comes up with an exegesis that illuminates not only that multifaceted vision but the understanding that allows Arjuna to lead an aware and integrated life post-soma endeavors. Whether one uses psychedelics or not, this book is insightful, contemporary and helps explicate the nuances of ancient symbolism.

The Gurukula website: www.narayanagurukula.org

Ongoing internet classes on *Atmopades Satakam* and *Yoga Sutras*:
islandaranya@toast.net

Book introductions, articles, class notes from the Portland Gurukula:
scottteitsworth.tripod.com

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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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 Guru Muni Narayana Prasad.

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