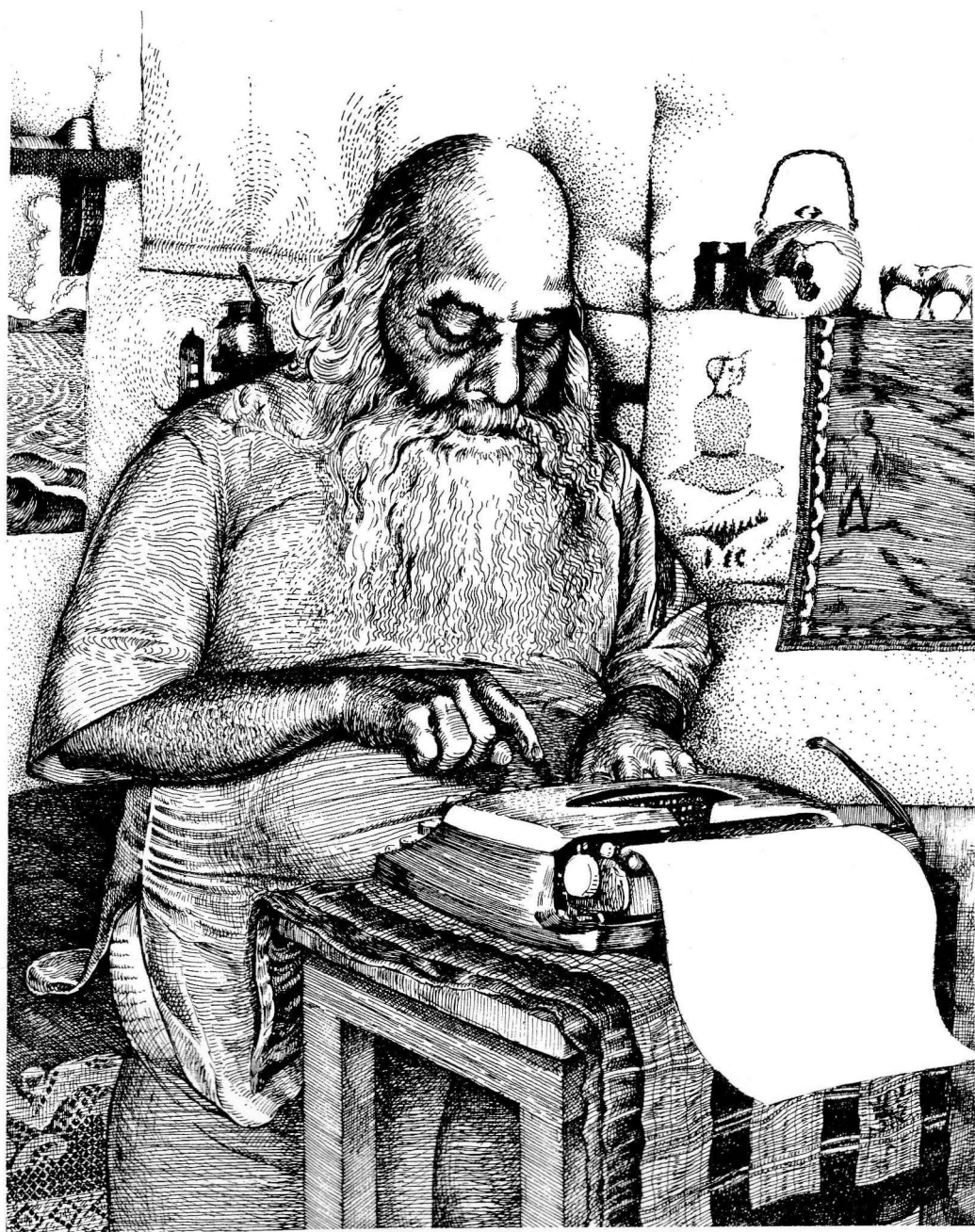


# GURUKULAM

VOLUME II • 1986

THIRD QUARTER





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# GURUKULAM

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# Moments of Wonder

*Bending down close to the damp, firmly packed earth, she filled her palm with white powder. As she breathed in the fresh air of morning, the smoke of her kitchen fire cleared from her lungs, taking with it her domestic cares. Rising early, she had prepared food for her family and then walked quickly up the hill to join her two friends at the clearing in the pine grove. They had greeted and visited as they sprinkled the ground with water; now they allowed the silence of the grove to fill them.*

*Her hand moved slowly and gracefully as powder slipped through her fingers, creating delicate patterns on the ground. The designs she traced were ancient, much of their significance forgotten or vague, but as she concentrated on her task, images came of her grandmother and mother, squatting and painting, guiding her hand to trace the traditional patterns of sacredness and celebration. She felt as though the essence of flowers and trees, rivers and rocks, stars and clouds passed through her fingers and reflected back from the designs.*

*As the designs were completed one after another, her familiar companions - feelings of anxiety and frustration, exhaustion and bitterness - began to dissolve. Buried springs of energy hesitantly began to flow as she began to resonate with the beauty she was creating. The designs would be worn away by the traffic of feet during the day, but their value was not in their permanence. They would welcome all who came, gently touching each with wonder.*

*When she finished, she stood quietly with her friends for a moment.*

*Their faces looked freshly washed; care and fatigue had faded from their features. Their eyes glowing with inner contentment, they went to help with the busy preparations for the feast.*

Although our surroundings, physical and cultural, and our daily tasks may be different from those of this village woman of India, we share the experience of spending most of our days enmeshed in responsibilities and activities. Providing the necessities of life for ourselves and our families, pursuing study and career interests, living lovingly and honestly in

relationships with family and friends, addressing local, national and global community crises in cooperation and equable sharing of the earth's resources -- to all these, we earnestly devote our time and energy and are amply rewarded with the richness of experience. But as we carry on, adopting and maintaining certain roles and stances, other parts of

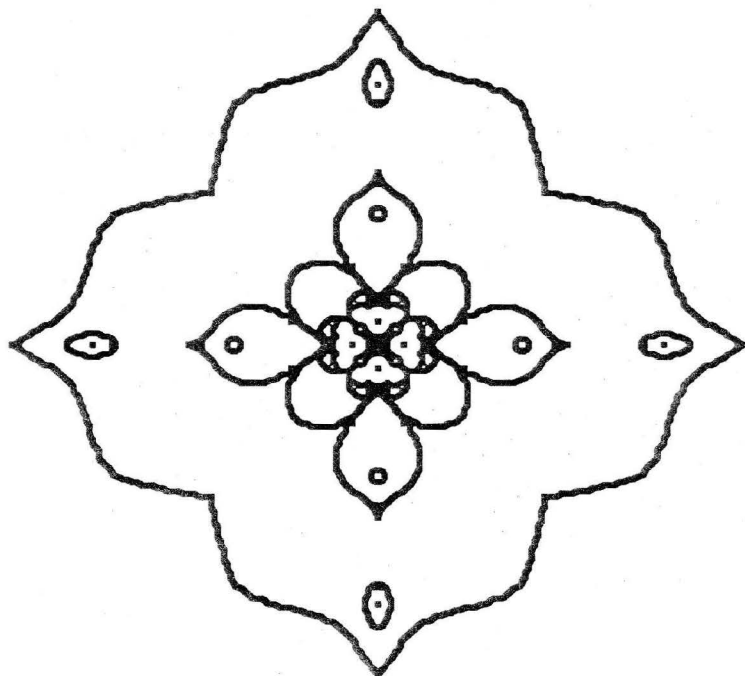
ourselves are cast aside, many potentials begin to atrophy because of disuse, and we find our energy often lagging behind the tasks before us. This can take the form of physical, emotional or mental lethargy or even disease.

However, just as the village women stepped out of their daily routines to participate in a creative process which brought them a renewal of energy, we also can lay down our mantles of care now and then. Unlike the villagers, we have access to myriads of possibilities to actively enter the realms of art, music, poetry, dance and drama, which act as doors to the hidden treasures of the psyche, individual and collective. But we rarely take the time to pick up a pen, a paintbrush or a musical instrument.

Often we are intimidated by the gap between our skills and those of "real artists." Or, we fear such activities are non-productive and self-indulgent.

We need to shift our focus from the object or piece being created to the creative and healing energy that is released within us. The external product has value, but more as a symbol of inner transformation than as an object to be admired or criticized. The moments thus given to more direct involvement in the process of creation can be deeply satisfying, clearing away obstructions which block our communion with the source of creativity. Gradually or suddenly we come to realize our identity with that which makes every moment a new creation of wonder, full of joy to be shared. ♦

Nancy Yeilding





## There Is Something Wonderful

There is something wonderful  
about the little things in life –

Like the smell of dew on a fresh new morning  
or the feel of sunlight on the face.

They are hidden behind the shadows of the "big things,"  
the things sought but rarely caught.

On a quest for the larger things,  
many little things will be encountered.

Do not pass them up,  
for they are the most precious parts of life.

*Aaron Eden*  
(age 13)

# The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



## Third Mantra

*jāgaritasthāno bahiḥprajāṇaḥ saptaṅga  
ekonaviṃśatimukhaḥ sthūlabhug  
vaiśvānaraḥ pratamaḥ pādaḥ*

In the waking state, (he is) overtly conscious,  
having seven parts and nineteen faces, nourishing him-  
self on the concrete, the Universal Man, the first limb.

The world is enormous, but it has an inner coherence and unity which makes it a universe. The universe is like a person with complementary limbs and several faces to enjoy himself. I am a finite being and yet I am privileged to act in unison with the world and be its interpreter and commentator. The program of the cosmic person is to enjoy. He is like a voracious caterpillar gobbling up everything on all sides until he is ready to go to sleep in his cocoon and dream of transforming into a butterfly that can emerge from the pupa with widespread wings and fly into the sublime heights of heaven. The cosmic person's head touches the world of the luminaries and his feet are planted firmly on earth. He is like a vertical parameter touching the earth and the heavens. Between the earthly alpha and the heavenly omega he has many worlds to enjoy. With his cosmic eye, the sun, he fashions forms and colors.

Simultaneously, the visibles are fed into the admiring eyes of sentient beings. Seeing sunlight, the vegetative world blushes with lush green vitality. Plants burst into laughter with flowers. Birds fill the sky with lustful songs. Man prowls around looking for fresh forms of fascinating beauty. The whole world is alerted. All are programmed like busy bees. All get immersed in their varied activities. The biosphere of earth heaves rhythmically. The ancient winds of stormy seas blow into the land and mountain winds hold them in sweet embrace. Between them they generate the invisible *prana*, the life-giving energy. The *prana* installed in a living organism is like a cute little motor that sets into motion a million movements, even in an organism as small as an ant. By breathing in and breathing out, man receives into every cell of his being the cosmic promise of life. The cosmic *prana* is called *matarisvan*, the grand assigner of duties. The enjoyer in man is a hard task-master. Even in listening to a single sound there is a wide range of harmonics. For conscious enjoyment the senses are to be disciplined and well attuned to every shade of meaning and nuance so that the individual person may perfect himself as an aesthete.

The world is said to have originated from the self-sacrificing fire of the primeval person's urge to transmute. The individual person keeps the fire in his hearth to cook his food. The man has that fire in his generative organ to create a replica of himself in the sacrificial fire of his woman's yearning for motherhood. That fire sits in the pit of one's stomach and burns as alchemic flames that can transmute the nourishment of food into a growing phenomenon of a living person. The same fire fumes, sparks and leaps into verbal expressions of blasting words that can fill the hearer's ear with conceptual meanings out of which a world within a world can be created. In this gross world of impenetrable matter each body has a natural claim to occupy its own required space, space to be in and space to move about. In that variegated world of multitudinous bodies each has its own stamp of uniqueness. Even a microbe has its place in the infinite scheme of things and a role to play. Life breeds only where there is moisture. Water is

a carrier of life; it fills and empties. It enters the body as nourishment. When the day's bread is enjoyed and digested, the same water flushes out the filth and purifies the organism.

Perhaps no one notices that at least half of the the grand program of this world is in the form of its creation. The child's first pleasure is the sucking of the mother's breast; the breast excretes; the child sucks. The child excretès and derives anal pleasure. Anal pleasures can range from the anus to the mouth, and from the procreation of the species to the creation of music and literature. Artisans excrete their energy into unfashioned raw materials, and transmute them into consumer products with a concretization of their ideas and energies. The earth supports man and in turn man measures it by pacing over it with sturdy feet. When resources become lean in one area, he transports himself to another pasture of abundance. Such is the grand scheme in which the universe conducts itself as a grand designer of action programs to enjoy. However, the world would be a meaningless place shorn of beauty and wonder if there was not the consciousness of man to be the enjoyer of the whole of which he is a part. For this reason the world is honey to man and man is honey to the world, with his five vital energies, five senses of perception, five organs of action and the fourfold functioning of his inner organ - - questioning, remembering, deciding and becoming affected as a person. Man is privileged to enjoy to the maximum. Why call this world a world of thorns and thistles and pestilence and fury? For the discerning person, it is a world of figs and grapes, a carnival of colors and music, a world to love and be loved. This is the picture we get of the conscious experiencing of psychophysical enjoyment. The rishi calls it the first quarter of the cosmic person with seven limbs and nineteen faces to enjoy.

#### Fourth Mantra

*svapnasthāno antaprajñāḥ saptaṅga  
ekonaviṃśatimukhaḥ praviviktabhuk  
taijasa dvitīyāḥ padāḥ*

In the dream state (he), the inwardly conscious, with seven parts and nineteen faces, nourishing himself on the well-selected, is the luminous one (*taijasa*), the second limb.



Erwin Schrodinger thinks of this world as a construct. It is constructed with percepts and concepts in a very private part of this world which is none other than the human mind. There is no studio or workshop more busy than the human mind where artistic, formal, symbolic, mythical and pragmatic compositions are continuously attempted. The fabrications that go on within the human mind are not without purpose. Man does not even scratch, sneeze or cough without a biological need for it. Even a worm squirms because a change of position brings greater comfort. The composition of mental images and the construction of the world are attempted by the mind to create a universe out of the chaotic onrush of all sorts of energies which pour into human awareness through the several inlets of the body. The subjective, creative functioning of the mind is to be performed with great technological skill so that the parade of forms that represent the world can give the experiencing of a continuous, organically knit story which can at once be beautiful and meaningful. It is very disturbing to see any lacuna in such a creative process.

The psychology of subjective creation is a fabulous subject which has been studied by scholars all over the world. The *Mahabharata* and the *Yoga Vasistha Ramayana* are among the books



that describe this superhuman ability which can be seen in even the feeblest human minds. The great ability of the myth-making mind can be directly experienced by reading great books like the epics of Homer, the *Tales of One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, the *Fables of Aesop*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, *Monkey of China*, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of India, and the *Panchatantra* tales.

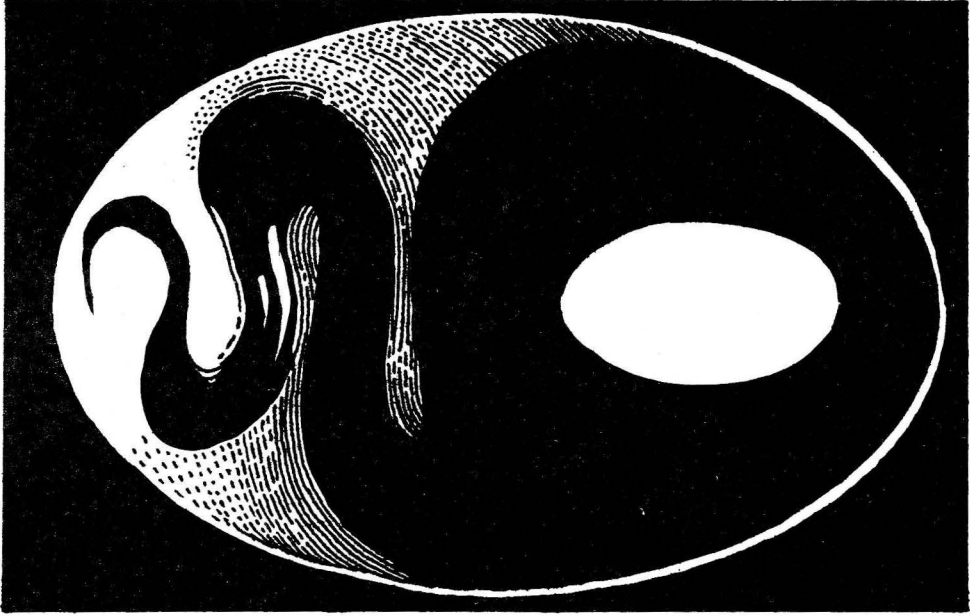
Equally brilliant literature is confined within the treasuries of each culture, such as Mayan, Incan, African, and that of Australian aborigines.

It is as if mind presides in the workshop of ideational engineering where the raw material for world structuring first comes through the five senses and is later stored in the black box of memory. In the storage of memory a cataloguing and coordination is made of all the transformed variables of basic symbols. This is the hidden house of the archetypes of which Carl Gustav Jung speaks with awe and admiration. From a mere point the mind can make a locus of events; out of three points it can make a triangle. From a smudge it can reproduce the masterpiece of a forgotten artwork. If God is a creator, and he is still creating his work, that is happening right here and now within the folds of our own brains. Even a small mimicry of it is fascinating. For example, while passing through the funhouses of Disneyland such as the 'Caribbean Pirates', 'Passage Through Inner Space', 'The Haunted House' and 'The Country Bear Jamboree', even well-informed, mature-minded people who know how one can be tricked with light and sound feel thrilled. When we see these artistic creations we forget that the same creative process is generated with immense perfection at least 20 to 22 hours a day, while we take it for granted as a world outside us and a few dreams inside us. The economy of energy that is carefully looked into and adhered to with parsimony is another hidden story which man has not understood much. All that we know is that the eye refuses to record light and sound when the vibration of these phenomena are of a low frequency or high frequency. Many things which we see explicitly are not actually warranted by the data given to our senses. That is why it is dangerous to ask an imaginative person to proof read. He will always read what he knows.

It is strange that man makes so much of the transactions of the wakeful life and gives almost no attention to the subjective phenomena, described here as *swapna*, dreaming. Only the psychoanalysts give some credence to the symbolic language of dream. All major scientific inventions were first presented to the minds of individual scientists as fictional hypotheses. Poets, artists, playwrights and mystics are first cradled in the magic of dream. Now we should ask who the programmer is of this wonderland of creation. The programmer is called *taijasa*. He is none other than *iśvara*, who is all brilliance, and has an inexhaustible resource of energy. He appears from the future, passes through the present and stealthily takes with him the cream of his creation to the storehouse of the past. He knows all the cunning of the sophisticated society of man; in children he will create tantrums and the role of the underdog, so that they can drag their parents by the



nose. He can make the most aggressive woman play magnificently the role of the weaker sex, just for the joke of playing hide and seek with a psychiatrist. He can change the symbol of apple jelly into a viper with black and white stripes and easily transform it into a nun with black robes and white hood. If one day man fails to dream, doomsday will literally come upon him. The seven limbs and nineteen faces mentioned in the previous mantra are fully complemented and exploited by *taijasa*. Let us be grateful that we can dream.



### Fifth Mantra

*yatra suptō na kāmāna kāmam kāmāyate  
na kāmāna svapnam paśyati tat suṣuptam  
suṣuptasthāna ekābhūtaḥ prajñānaghana  
evānandamayo hyānandabhuk cetomukhaḥ  
prajñāstrīyaḥ pādah*

That (state) wherein, on falling asleep, one desires nothing at all, that is the well dormant (*suṣuptam*) (which), attaining to a unitive status, filled even with a knowing-content, made of bliss, nourishing himself on bliss, of a sentient mouth, is the knower, the third limb.

From the moment of the fertilization of an ovum to the hour of the birth of the child, the fetus is in deep sleep. In that state it has no desire and it does not see any dream. This long period of the unconscious state of the growing fetus can be called *susupti*. In spite of having no conscious desire or semiconscious dream the growing fetus is active. This is one of the greatest miracles of this world. A thick and slimy drop of vital fluid is transferred from the male generative organ to the female womb where it joins another drop, then duplicates and replicates in a strange manner. Without the conscious deliberation of anyone it becomes fully formed into a small person with perfect hands and legs and senses to perceive. It is paradoxical that the child is growing in the womb of the mother without being attended by either of his parents. Narayana Guru remembers this pre-natal state with gratitude:

Within the womb, O Lord of good,  
Was that lump in hand - this humble self.  
With what exceeding love,  
Who but Thou, kind One, nurtured it into life!  
Ordered by Thee, all comes about.  
Thus knowing, this thy servant  
To Thee now surrenders all.

Of earth, water, fire, air and ether too,  
From each gathered, and firmly shaping in the palm,  
Who confines me within a cell with blazing fire alit -  
Even from the oppression great of such a feminine divinity,  
Protect and nourish me in Thy nectarine immortality...

For months full four and five,  
Growing, becoming by slow degrees,  
Even Thou it was who eyes formed one after one,  
Ever warding off Death's hand.  
All that is now past,  
But to my recollective weeping of that prime fetal time,  
Listen, oh Lord of Good.

Yea, semen it was that mixed with blood;  
And thus by sound matured and taking form, I lay mediate.  
Then for me there was no mother or father;  
So by Thee alone raised, sole parent mine,  
All that I am is here today.

*Prenatal Gratitude, v. 1,2,5,6*  
Translated by Nataraja Guru

Perhaps this is the only period when man is not tormented by the problems of this world. So it is only natural that man seeks the security and warmth of the womb of the unconscious night after night and feels comforted and rejuvenated when he is blessed with deep sleep. In the Gita it is said that what is day to a worldly man is night to a yogi, and what is night to the worldly man is the time for the yogi to keep awake and be alert. This is also true of the unconscious which is busy when the conscious mind is inoperative. Even the vegetative world reveals this secret. Flower buds which look unimpressive in the evening change overnight into fully bloomed flowers. This is a silent zone; the unconscious does not speak. From the beginning of the birth of consciousness in man, he has been curious to find out how everything comes into being without the hustle and bustle of planning commissions and construction engineers. Those who are poetically inclined listen to the whisperings of the muses and become informed of a God who created everything, and they believe that God is never tired of continuing the creation in secret. Some conceited earthlings who are proud of their power to coin equations claim that it all happened with a big bang, of what, they do not know. What being, laboring and fashioning the world, was doing it, in silence and in loneliness? For example, if we go with the scientist and believe that there were only whirling clouds of nebulae to begin with for millions of years, the clouds were whirling without deciding into how many stars they should split to make a neat and well-formed galaxy. Sri Aurobindo, in his legend and symbol of Savitri, refers to this in his inimitable style:

It was the hour before the Gods awake.  
Across the path of the divine Event  
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone  
In her unlit temple of eternity,  
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge.  
Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,  
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse  
The abysm of the unbodied Infinite;  
A fathomless zero occupied the world...

As in a dark beginning of all things,  
A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown  
Repeating for ever the unconscious act,  
Prolonging for ever the unseeing will,  
Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force  
Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns  
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.

*Savitri*, p. 1.

Such was the prenatal sleep of the cosmos through which the galaxies, stellar systems, planetary systems and life on earth emerged. The human prenatal unconscious is only a feeble echo of the cosmic formation in silence. Emminent psychologists like Robert Ornstein want to believe that man only recently became really awakened from the somnambulism of his race. What a grand theme is this unconscious, this *susupti* which the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* speaks of as the third quarter, from which the dream of the second quarter and the transaction of the first quarter emerged. This well correlated, well coordinated, neat scheme of the rishi helps us to make a breakthrough into the dark abyss where our fateful lives are pre-discussed, pre-designed and pre-determined by the gods of destiny who alone are present for the selection and coordination of chromosomes, whenever innocent parents, drunk with orgiastic wine, copulate in madness. Even the pious fakir Jalal al-din Rumi thinks: "First you were mineral then vegetable, then man. You will be an angel and you will pass beyond that too." Like one who has made a great discovery, he further adds: "The worker is hidden in the workshop."

Thus everywhere, ancient savants and modern men of science vaguely realize that there is a super-cosmic intelligence hiding its plan from everyone, while keeping itself busy creating everything from a subatomic particle to a supernova. When we chant the mantra *Aum*, this sonic vehicle transports us to the last terminus of the journey of rational intelligence and brings us to the very home from where the song of creation has emerged. The master magician who lives in another world of creation is described as *prajñānaghana*, consciousness through and through. No hungry mind lusting after desires enters this world, and no fool is allowed to have any mind games. Dreams are barred. Hence this region is christened as the domain of *ānanda*, pure and simple, *ānandamaya*.

The god who dwells in *susupti* is eternally nourished with self-generated bliss. He is called *ānandabhuk*. The captain's room is out of bounds for passengers, but whenever he pleases, through his chosen channels, he can reach all passengers individually and collectively. The same is the privilege of the god of the unconscious. He can let loose his Ariels and Pucks to entertain individual minds with dreams and he also knows how to keep animated beings on the leash of rationality so that they may behave according to the norms and conventions of a universally concrete world, which is repeatedly revealed at regular intervals. Take any branch of science and walk through the corridors of its research laboratories - sooner or later you will come to the house of ignorance, beyond which the physicist, the chemist and the biologist cannot move another step. This is the *mysterium tremendum* in which everything is fused into one which the rishi describes as *ekībhūtam*. The seer of the *Upaniṣad* takes pity on us and offers yet another mantra to look at this still unidentified spirit, *yakṣa*.

(Continued in next issue.)

# The Katha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

XI.

*The God of Death grants the first boon and says: On seeing you released from the mouth of Death, Gautama, your father who was the son of Aruna and the adopted son of Uddālaka, will recognize you as he used to formerly, and will be having no resentment towards you. His sleep at night will also be comfortable.*

XII.

*Nachiketas turns to the second boon. He says: It is heard that in the heavenly world there is no fear. Death also is not there. No one suffers there from old age. With no hunger and thirst, everyone lives there joyously.*

XIII.

*O Death, you, being such, know the secret of fire-sacrifice which leads one to heaven. Please teach me that. I have full faith in you. It is heard that the people of heaven enjoy immortality. I choose this as the second boon.*

By the first boon Nachiketas chose the happiness of this world. By the second one he chooses the other-worldly or heavenly happiness propound-

ed by the Vedas. According to the Vedas this happiness which belongs to the conceptual or symbolic world is to be attained by performing sacrificial rituals. It indicates that the supreme happiness intended by Vedanta is not to be realized after mechanically giving up everything that belongs to the perceptual or conceptual level. Nachiketas is going to choose as his third boon, knowledge of the secret of death which ensures ultimate Happiness. That state of unitive awareness is called *amṛtatva* because it transcends birth and death. The *amṛtatva* or immortality as understood in this *mantra* is attainable by performing Vedic sacrifices. This immortality stands against mortality. The Vedic heaven has earthly mortality as its counterpart. But non-dual awareness, as understood in Vedanta, has no place for such dualistic considerations. In short, immortality also can be understood in the relative sense and in the absolutist sense. The immortality enjoyed by the gods of heaven is the relative one.

XIV.

*O Nachiketas, I know the secret of fire-sacrifice which leads one to heaven and I will teach you that secret now. Learn that from me. Know that it is the means for attaining the endless world and also as its basis, and that it is set down in the secret abode.*

XV.

*Death taught him the secret of fire-sacrifice as the beginning of the world. He also instructed him what kind of bricks are to be used, how many of them are to be used, and how to build the altar. Whatever he (Nachiketas) was taught he repeated back. Thus Death was very pleased with him and told him again.*

*Brahmavidya* as taught in the Upaniṣads is an outgrowth of the Vedic culture. Fire-sacrifice is the focal point of this culture. So, naturally, Vedantic teachings were formulated as a revision of the Vedic concepts, giving them a new meaning content. The indication of such a revision is implicit in this *mantra*.

The Upaniṣads do not lead us to the path of rituals, but liberate us from their bondages through wisdom. That is why the details of the fire-principle taught to Nachiketas are not mentioned here.

The fire-principle is here depicted as the beginning of the world (*lokādi*). Thales is the first known Western philosopher who inferred that fire is the basic truth behind this multifarious world. There are many references in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads to the primordial person or *puruṣa* doing *tapas* or heating himself up, in order to bring this world out of himself. There is a heating up happening in consciousness also when our thought goes into subtler and

subtler aspects. Even the existence of our physical body depends on the warmth that is self-created. Life on this earth is possible only because of the warmth received from the sun. In short, the fire-principle is at the basis of all vital functions whether material or mental, gross, subtle or causal. It is this truth that makes man, who turns his mind naturally to basic truths, feel obliged to perform fire-sacrifice in one form or another in almost all cultures or religious followings.

But when this understanding turns into an obligatory ritual, as enjoined in the Vedas, the formal aspects become more pronounced and obligatory, and one feels the necessity to perform it true to the world. There the world of rituals tends always to be rigid, and one gets the feeling that the rituals will yield the results intended only if performed in strict adherence to the instructions in the scriptures. These rituals are always binding in character. This obligatory and binding nature of the rituals, in contrast to the liberating and emancipating character of the wisdom-teaching that is to follow, is brought to light by the mention that the God of Death taught Nachiketas what kind of brick was to be used to make the altar for the fire-sacrifice, how many of them were to be used and how to use them. That means Nachiketas became fully familiar with the relativistic aspect of knowledge which Kant calls the immanent, and is called *aparavidya* in India, as mentioned in the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* (1.1.4). Next, he is going to cross over to *paravidya* or transcendental wisdom which constitutes the teaching of this Upaniṣad.

(Continued in next issue.)

Life consists of the central paradox. Life and death meet, as it were, from opposite sides each moment of the eternal present. In other words, the plus and minus of life are ever cancelling out into the neutrality of the Absolute.

Nataraja Guru



# My Personal Philosophy of Life

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

As a student and teacher of philosophy, I have always been intrigued by the relevancy of many things which are included in both the pursuit and study of philosophy. Two traditional questions always asked by Indian aspirants were: "Whence this world?" and "Who am I?" A subsidiary question that ensues from these two primary questions is: "How am I to relate to this world?"

When we look at the present arrangements, the first question is dealt with haphazardly by religion. A lot of superstitions and fanciful imaginations are proffered to explain cosmogony and cosmology. I do not think

a philosopher has adequate tools and a sufficiently precise methodology to observe the world in all its aspects so that he can correctly arrive at a conclusion with regard to the origin and nature of the world in which he lives. So I give myself entirely to the pursuits made so far by the physicist, the chemist, the astrophysicist, biochemist, biologist and all other positive scientists who have evolved a reasonably acceptable technique of observation and the pursuit of truth wherever it is possible. Although my main preference is for dialectical reasoning, I am willing to approach the linear pursuits of scientists from whom I am sure to get at least



severally examined data which I can conveniently use as reliable material to understand the phenomenological confection into which such material goes when my subjective consciousness is confronted with perceptible objects.

Ever since Indian universities came into vogue, the study of philosophy has been part of the curriculum. The syllabus that has been pursued up till now is a study of the history of philosophy. These studies do not help any student to formulate his own questions. Few are the scientists of the world and many are the technicians. Similarly, only one in a million has a real quest or philosophical search. Most reiterate half-digested arguments of eminent philosophers like Spinoza, Hume and Kant. Maybe a familiarization with the philosophers of the past helps a student to sharpen his wit and organize a viable assault on the enigmatic problems of philosophy. But it is a pity that most of our youthful time and stamina are expended in preparation rather than in one's commitment to an original search. Even when I was undergoing my academic courses I was well aware of the fleeting time that I was wasting in understanding the subtleties of Kant and Hegel. I was hurriedly moving to a position where I could leave the history of philosophy aside for old cronies like Will Durant to restate in the same spirit in which Shakespearian tales were re-told by Lamb.

The questions that I took up in all sincerity are still live coals in my palm. I do not dare to say that I have come to satisfactory conclusions in answering them. My first question was: "What is truth?" Naturally its corollaries are: "Is truth possible?" and "Why should I be truthful?" Before we answer the question "What is truth?" we should look at the person who puts the question. I cannot answer for others. The one person who is absolutely close to me for a thorough-going critical observation is myself. I am convinced that the only equipment I have with which to see, observe, judge and arrive at conclusions is my organs of perception and mental

faculty which itself is part of a whole that is to be looked into. The clarity of mind can be clouded such as when emotional storms brew in my psychosomatic system. Granted that I have sober moments available for critical observation and cool judgement, I am certainly capable of countering the question, but I am far from being adequate for a whole-sale exploration. For the most part, I am an outsider receiving relativistic impressions from several shifted angles of observation. The best among philosophers may fare a little better than I but the little spark of reason that shines in a body, which is mostly managed by biologic and biochemical forces, does not reveal many of the secrets which govern the structural and functional operation of the body-mind system. So I cut my ambition to tally with my limited power of perception and my format of reason. I do not regret this inadequacy which I commonly share with all. So, in quality, my conjecture of truth can be only superior to that of a mouse or a monkey. However, my conjectures are quite handy for me in programming myself in this complicated system called world to gain from it maximum hours of satisfying experiences which can enrich both my personal life and the circle in which I share my imperiential and experiential assessment of life.

Carrying a bee in one's bonnet and admiring its buzz as the perennial hum of eternal truth can at best be nothing short of finding one's niche in a fool's paradise. Philosophers have coined a cliché to dismiss such trespasses - solopsism. If one wants to be more public both in his utterance and commitment, he has two ways of approaching truth. One is the traditional path of epistemology. The other is the course of ontology where many modifications are admissible by conveniently resorting to empiricism and psychologism. My first preference is not to don a straight-jacket of classified thinking where one can nail himself on the cross of self-contradiction.

The first immunity that I want to proclaim to my readers is that of tautology and contradiction. Without





the elements of tautology and contradiction, a total situation can never be conceived. Here I solidly stand by my Guru who cautioned me from the outset that a paradox is lurking in the very heart of the Absolute. I see this paradox and admire its tenacity. At the same time, I am not very comfortable with the concept of an Absolute except when, for convenience, or by sheer helplessness, I allow all relativistic aspects of a situation to fade into the vagueness of a general homogenous principle which can temporarily dismiss from philosophical vision the special claim of individual things. Words like 'infinity', 'all', and 'total' are, at best, only the maximals the mind can put forward with the ambition of equating them with the romantic concept of the Absolute. For all practical purposes, the mind can be again and again focused on any interesting individual item that goes into the collage or composition of any matrix of consciousness that is looked upon from time to time both as my being and the being of the world to which I relate myself from within. Such being my stand, what I aim at is not absolute truth, but the approximation of a truth that can be safely considered to be a reliable foundation on which I can stand and hold

hands with my fellow humans, to the satisfaction of all concerned, including myself.

Another heavy load I want to shed from my philosophic shoulders is the ambition to know everything and the paranoia of being challenged to answer all possible questions relating to this world and to the knowledge which is highlighted as the perceiving and conceiving spirit that presides over the passing show. Now I am at a very comfortable place to get along with the portion of the world that is allotted to me for my rendezvous, and the small kitchenette where I am to prepare all the essentials to make life on earth both meaningful and enjoyable.

I want to list here some of the cardinal points on which I am going to sit squarely. I give top priority to the facts of life. A fact can be something "out there" or a need "in here" which can provide a sound basis for planning and carrying out a program of action. In the world of facts, no one is alone except for short moments.

The second principle to reckon with is that life has challenges to be met here and now. A challenge that has a physical or physiologic relevancy has to be met as part of one's individual

or social response. Challenges which relate to one's cultural, romantic, or sociologic cooperation do not have the same imperative forcing one to accept them. Personally, I give great importance to those challenges where my response can positively lead me and my associates to a social or cultural growth wherein human relationships and values can be furthered in their dignity and brilliance. This also has the positive effect of minimizing all exaggerated emphasis placed on what is apparently categorical and imperative. Dissuading myself more and more from compulsions in life and adhering more and more to the permissive has consequently enlarged my existential space. I am not very sure that my example can be copied by others in a way that they will be benefitted.

Third, the norm of reliability can emphasize pragmatic continuity in the consequences in a chain of events. In the choosing of the right norm, however, many people go astray with mechanistic calculation suggested by surface tendencies. If a person has the sensibility to have full sympathy with the innate needs of human beings, with which the long-term changes in a society can be envisaged, one may develop a clear insight into the enigmas and paradoxes that are to be steered past to arrive at vantage points which can relate the past with the present and the present with the future. In addition, one experiences a continuous and sustaining flow of energy which comes from the poise one has both with external nature and one's internal vision.

Linear thinking is latitudinal and, at best, results only in ratiocinative conjectures which can be true in the estimation of the past and in a factual assessment of the present. However, it sorely lacks a prophetic vision of the future. In the physical universe, quantitative variation produces unexpected and spectacular qualitative changes. In a like manner, when latitudinal reasoning is thrown into the mold of longitudinal apperception, human intelligence gains an altogether new dynamic which people like Bergson call intuition.

Instinct, intelligence and intuition have all become clichés in the philosopher's parlor. However, a wisdom-insight can be reasonably gained by dismissing conclusions which one has latitudinally arrived at and merging into undercurrents of universal history, allowing oneself to be carried beyond the hinterland of the present. This cannot be done with a mathematician's precision, but can be achieved with the deepest thrust of a poet who unreservedly accepts the influx of the future into the present which is again and again experienced as a vista of poetic vision.

My philosophy has one disadvantage. It brings me again and again to bridgeless chasms. I find all



words used so far by fellow human beings totally inadequate to describe what I consistently perceive before my mind's eye as the ever-growing framework of a world which is in a state of perennial creation. However, that shouldn't dissuade me from my search and it shouldn't plague me with any agony of

helplessness. What cannot be explained is only the future. A little patience can bring newly annexed areas of understanding to the present. What the world has not known yesterday it will surely understand today. The credit of it being discovered need not necessarily be mine. It can be attributed to the dreaming intelligence of the nature that is naturing and the world that is creating itself by weaving fresh tapestries of dreams fastened with logistic determinants.

Any philosophy worth the name should provide a rightful place for the unknown so it can sit adjacent to clearly conceived and well-systematized principles of reasoning. Allowing the unknown to take over is somewhat similar to going to bed to sleep without qualms even though we do not know what sleep is and what will happen to us when we are not on the seat of judgement and maneuvering. This area can be pleasant like the wide-open sky with its shimmering stars, or it can be filled with the nightmares of a pitiless hurricane. Many people clutter that space with thoughts on fate, belief, and the irrational conjectures of magic, white or black.

What I have done is to leave that area absolutely untampered with, like the room of one's best guest into which one does not look whether or not it is occupied. This saves me from dark fears and apologetic commitment to the hodgepodge arrangements of religion. When we watch the intricacies of the area of the unknown such as witnessing a most unpredictable accident which could spell total destruction or absolute escape, or in between, the safest thing is not to have the mind of a grown-up. A little babe in innocence, watching the movement of colorful things, is entirely limited to what is happening in the present and the fright of expectation does not come to torment such a mind. Every now and then a person is obliged to slip through the cloud of unknowing. Nothing can be done to hold oneself firm until once again solid ground is felt under one's feet. For this reason, I have given a very honorable place on my bookshelf to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. It has



the same halo which reverential books like the Gita, the Gospels and the Qur'an have. Conscious life, like the iceberg floating in water, shows only its tip. But the person who lives it not outside to watch this tip. He or she is evenly spread out in the entire block of the iceberg. So I do not venture to make a philosophy that is explanatory of all that we are. On the other hand, I shall be content with the flash of a little light that can give me an orientation for what is immediately ahead.

If a person's philosophy of life does not find adequate expression in his or her art of life, that philosophy can be considered as only a bunch of cliches. A person is to be looked upon not only as a product of nature but also as raw material which can be fashioned into something exquisitely beautiful and extremely precious by drawing out of one's natural substance something which excels what is unphilosophically termed as the supernatural or meta-natural. The Chinese people make a dichotomy of the earth below and the heavens above. Their art, poetry, language-characters, word symbols and philosophy are all examples of

effecting the greatest possible harmony between the earth below and the heavens above. A philosophy is mostly a composition of hypostatic ideas which are thought of in abstractions. The art of life is essentially ontological; it is lived here and now in terms of the physical, biological, psychological and social realities of life.

In the process of culturing a person, many things which belong to his or her earthly origin are to be pruned, heated, mellowed and purified. There is a slow transference of each person's life from its belongingness to the hearth of the family to the central core of the universe where one becomes more and more receptive to the choir of the heavens. One thus becomes partly impersonal and partly super-personal, always carrying within his or her heart a magical core which is at once selfish and selfless.

A person sees in his or her earthly parents the meaning of father and mother. Then that meaning is expanded into two universal concepts. One is the law that prevails all through the cosmos. The other is the structural/functional complex which operates in resonance with the law that is articulating through a series of organizational facilitations that are being carried out by the unknown. Thus, in one sense, I have a father and mother. In another sense, they are not persons, but the very warp and woof on which the universe rests.

Fraternity is a philosophical notion, but it is derived from the recognition of your brother or sister, then seeing the same brother or sister presented as a plurality of images with one unitive value of actualizing fraternity. Similarly, one looks upon his household as a well-structured cell within a honeycomb in which other families are represented by the other cells. The honeycomb is one. The uniqueness of your family is a must to nurture your personality. Yet, the universality of these individual cells contributes to the manifestation of human culture. Thus, every person has to be enlightened with a philosophy of life and live his or her intrinsic understanding of it through the

perfecting of the art of life.

This is a beautiful world where one mind supervises our organs of action as well as organs of perception. One person cannot develop all his or her talents but, fortunately, many have entered into different fields such as shaping tools of farming and industry, exploring the vast realms of the unknown and the unconscious, and developing areas of aesthetic perfection such as art and literature. In short, we live in a living museum which represents all aspects of life. The perfecting of oneself can be achieved by patiently and slowly annexing to one's own clear understanding and performance the already acquired areas of value and attainment to which one's fellow human beings have given their best time and attention. Such a search for value and intimate acquaintance with every performance that enhances the dignity of mankind will certainly make each person a treasure chest of the best which humanity represents on earth. Continuous pursuit of such values will automatically make every person self-employed and, in that way, an equal of one's human brothers and sisters anywhere on earth, as well as helping one to live in dignity and freedom with an absolute sense of equality.

Man is easily provoked and he gets into conflict with almost everyone and everything he is confronted with. The paradox of life that governs man is the vigorous opposition between an adventurous curiosity that prompts him to go into the unknown and navigate in uncharted waters, and an in-built fear and instinctive clinging to the security of place, people and manners that are well known. Every person expects his neighbors, friends and relatives to be consistent in their attitudes and beliefs and not to contradict whatever they have once proposed as their belief. This I consider the most fearsome shackle of life. Only a few books like the Gita approve of contrariety of positions and possibilities. The logic of "this or that" is given up in the Gita to put a stress on "this as well as the other." I think the fear inculcated by people's non-



acceptance of contradiction is a tyranny that is to be faced vigorously to make oneself fully conformant with one's conviction, even if the conviction changes from time to time.

A series of chances, which has in its texture the quality of destiny, has made me revere and follow three great masters - Narayana Guru, Ramana Maharshi and Nataraja Guru - who were all looked upon by contemporary historians and scholars of philosophy as the finest examples of the votaries of Vedanta, especially Advaita Vedanta, the non-dual version of the Upaniṣadic teachings. All three were bachelors who gave the highest priority to *mokṣa*, the supreme goal of human life according to the Indian evaluation of the achievement of higher values. Without violating the intrinsic requirements of a sannyasi pattern of life, Nataraja Guru ventured to make many experiments to see how much of one's personal nature, permissible pleasures of life and programs of action contributing to universal welfare could be accommodated within the sphere of the discipline of a Vedantin. Without any fear or hesitation, I should frankly admit here that I do not follow suit.

I do not know if the present life can be continued in another body with a full recollection of all the disciplines I have given to myself and all the conclusions at which I have already arrived. So, even if the whole world is going to reproach me and think it shameful for me to wear the mantle of my predecessors, I should declare to my friends that I do not think Advaita Vedanta is the highest form of life. In this respect, I hold in reverence the teaching of the Qur'an and the ponderings of Guru Nanak on the meaning and significance of life. Life on earth is to live in full, accepting both the social contract of family and society, and also making oneself competent to be fully conversant with the transcendental sublimity and immanent depth to which one can go, with the fullest freedom of one not chained by obligations and sentiments.

In other, words, I have my utmost respect for married people living in

patience, co-suffering with their spouses and progeny. I consider their life immensely rich in spite of its very many distractions and apparent sense of bondage. However, I did not dare to accept this model which I hold in great esteem. Man cannot be everything. The personal freedom that I tasted as a bachelor and a lone-wayfarer became so addictive to me that, without regret, I have to count myself as belonging to an inferior model, which at the same time has certain values which are very laudable. As I live in a borderland of a social householder and a reticent recluse, I allow myself to be shared by all those who come to me, irrespective of the attitude they maintain.

I know there are despicable and unethical ideas associated with the legendary figure of Kṛṣṇa. He proclaims in the Gita, "I approach everyone in the manner they approach me." This is approximately my attitude, too, with certain slight changes. While many people feel lonely, and are not fortunate to be loved by others, I enjoy thick and thin friendship lavished upon me by thousands of people. They expect from me a reciprocation, in color, warmth and quality, not very different from what they hold out to me. Without the scruples of what society considers ethical conformity or social morality, I go as far as possible to meet the expectations of those who come to me. But I have not made that a creed, as certain cultists do. In other words, my criterion or norm to love is not one of social acceptance. It is based entirely on the honesty of feeling that binds me with another person. A person can love ten thousand others without minimizing the intensity and honesty of the wholeness of a rich affection which is flowing from within him to another who is willing to enter into a bi-polarity. My love to each person is exclusive yet my general treatment of them is inclusive.

Because of such departures from the rigid discipline of a Vedantin, I warn my friends that my interpretations of my Gurus are likely to be colored by my specific stand. I do not consciously distort

their philosophy, but sometimes I have the arrogance to feel that I am called upon to complement their philosophical visions, which to others may look contradictory or falsifying. However, I have a clean conscience in this matter. I do not think even the best rishi has given the last word. That does not mean there is not a finality in the assertions of great masters, including Narayana Guru and Nataraja Guru. But there is always a new way of putting a song to give another delightful melody.

I am not a monogamist in my ethical evaluation. In matters of love, nature has an upper hand, and I am willing to accept its grossness, rudeness, imperativeness and even tragic results. However, I also hold in highest reverence a unifying golden thread of the spirit that humanity has always cherished as one's commitment to all those whom one loves to square with the justice that is praised without reserve in the Gita and the holy Qur'an. The Gita calls it *druva niti* and the Qur'an describes it as the *rahim*-ness of Allah.

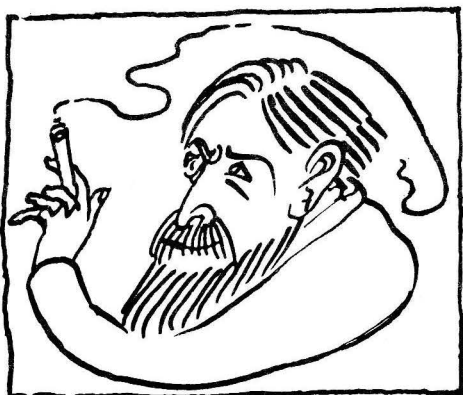
Both the above-given ideals had an irresistible impact on me because those ideals were exemplified in the life of Nataraja Guru, a person with whom I have intimately associated for a quarter of a century. Nataraja Guru was a thorough-going scientist. He received academic training in geology, zoology and psychology. In other words, he was a good teacher to instruct me on questions relating to matter, life and consciousness. In the same Guru I could also see a poet of great sensibility. He wrote only a few poems but he accepted the world around him with the intuition and good humor of a poet par excellence. For this reason, I tell my friends that my gurus are scientists and poets. What I get from the scientist is only half the truth. It is to be complemented with the ascent of the poet. I agree with Dr. Jung that all the biological and biochemical explanations of the structure and function of the human body cannot give us a total picture of the psyche of man, let alone his spirit.

We are all born at the animal level, entirely depending on biophysical



and biochemical laws. At that level, compulsive behavior is the only raw material we are given to shape into relationships that have to emerge later as guiding value-principles. I have no quarrel with Freud when he asserts that the rapture of the visceral areas in the relationship between child and mother is basically libidinal arousal. This is evident both in the sucking of the child and the suckling by the mother. This instinctive level of behavior is the seed-bed from which the tree of culture has to sprout, branch forth into disciplined behavior, and ultimately bring forth the flowers of the finest relationship that can exist between human beings.

This can be compared to the sprouting of a lotus plant from the marshy filth of a stagnant pond. Although coming from a stalk which is planted in the filth of ages, the blossoming flower opens itself to the brilliant light of the solar orb which is shining in the highest firmament. However sexual or libidinal the first instincts are, the outcome in maturity is the adorable altruistic acceptance of a noble feeling that is revered by the whole of humanity. Here I see clearly why both Plato and St. Augustine made a definite distinction between earthly eros and heavenly eros. The transmutation of the libidinal urge into the flight of spiritual freedom is universally



recognized as that which enhances the dignity of man in his triumphant emergence from the decaying body to the immortal glory of supreme love, so very beautifully illustrated in the life of Lord

Buddha and Jesus Christ.

Even such a small thing like breaking oneself loose from the orbit of the earth to enter into the gravitational belt of a satellite like the moon or a planet like Mars is difficult to achieve. In the same manner, to be emancipated from one's animal urges and to fly high into the sublimated state of a true human is the greatest challenge which a hero should accept. The struggle for emancipation is portrayed in the life of Buddha, Jesus Christ, Sri Ramakrishna, St. Augustine, Ignatius Loyola, and Narayana Guru (as is evident from four of his poetic supplications). In our modern age, the liberation of human consciousness into the expanse achieved by scientists, poets, musicians and other artists has made it far easier for us to sublimate our vital energies and gives us wings of transcendence to fly into the freedom of the one spirit in which all truly exist in their unitive final cause. ❖

### *Gifts of God*

*If I were a flower  
with petals red and all,  
I would spread my fragrance sweet  
to miles and miles around.*

*If I were a little bird,  
with wings that take me high,  
I would sing a lovely song  
to people in need of joy.*

*If I were a spark of fire,  
with the golden light of the sun,  
I would give my warmth  
to the down-trodden poor.*

*If I were a little breeze,  
that passes quickly though the trees  
I would blow in the hottest place  
to give comfort to all.*

*But I am just a humble human  
with no supernatural powers,  
except the blessing that God has given,  
that is to love one and all!*

*Swapna*

## The Thread That Ties...

It was started about a year ago  
as a gift for my mother.  
On a square of white linen,  
from hundreds of strands of softly shaded threads,  
Thousands of tiny stitches would grow  
into a rendition of Christ  
gazing lovingly into the eyes of a child  
kneeling at his feet.

Stitched into the clouds and distant landscapes  
is the changing of the seasons:

The dry heat of summer  
Sun blazing on golden hills  
Gardens ripening toward harvest.

The crisp air of autumn  
The nourishment of gentle rains  
The first blades of green reappearing.

Dark winter nights with rain pouring down  
Waterfalls and creeks rushing  
Trees bending in the fury of the wind.

Wildflowers and budding leaves awakening in spring  
Lush green hills seeming like they could never  
Fade again under summer's blazing sun.

Caught in the stitches are:  
The warmth of the wood fire  
Smells of dinner cooking  
Sounds of music playing and children laughing  
Conversations among family and friends  
Siblings enjoying and rivaling  
The peacefulness of silence  
Kisses goodnight.

Since it was my mother  
who passed on to me  
the joy of creating with needle and thread,  
She will know when she looks at the Christ  
hanging neatly framed on her wall  
That stitched into his image  
are such passing moments  
from her daughter's and grandchildren's lives.



## But Does Not Bind

What she won't know  
is that stitched into the folds  
of the robe on Christ's knee  
Are the words of the Guru.

Intermingled with the browns and golds  
is the wisdom of the ages,  
past, present, and future.

Tucked into the folds are  
Sankara's praises to the Goddess  
Elucidations on Absolute Beauty  
The hymns of Narayana Guru  
Exaltations to the One without a second.

Draped over the Good Shepherd's knee are  
The ideals for a world government  
that excludes no one  
and looks to God as the presiding Sovereign.  
There is guidance for living in peace  
with oneself, one's world, and one's God.  
Lessons are gleaned from stories of the Awakened One,  
the Prophet Mohammed, the parables of Christ.

In the center of each criss-crossing thread  
is the symbol of transcendence where horizontal and vertical  
meet in Pure Existence, Pure Consciousness, and Pure Bliss.

Though our visions of Truth cross each other  
only here and there,  
There is still an unending golden thread of universality  
on which both my mother's heart and my heart are strung.  
I cannot stitch for her  
a meditating Buddha  
or a Nataraja dancing,  
But I know when she stands before the image of Christ  
framed on her wall  
She will be reminded of  
my love for her,  
Christ's love for her,  
and know herself to be a child of God.

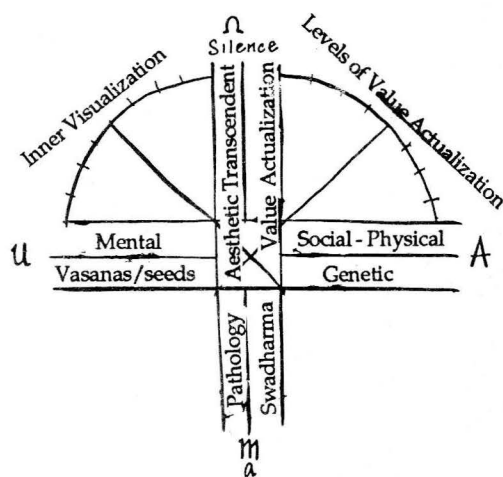


*Carolyn Eden*

# Wonder Journey With a Wandering Guru

Nancy Yeilding

After staying three days at the Gurukula in Varkala, we went to the nearby city of Trivandrum where friends had been very busy, hastily arranging a three-day lecture series offered by the East-West University on the topics of "Identity Crisis," "Confusion of Values" and "Leadership Crisis." Although such a series had long been discussed, a definite plan had only been made after our arrival in Varkala. Notices had been printed, the press contacted and many people called. The results were that the hall which could hold 300 was full to capacity each night, and most of the audience was young people not previously having any association with the Gurukula. They came with ideals and frustrations, doubts and hopes, eager for a new perspective on their personal problems and those of their country. In preparation for the first talk on identity crisis, Guru drew a diagram of the main areas he wanted to cover:



He elaborated as follows:

"Personality unfoldment, with genetic inheritance as its basis, has reference to seven areas: personal, familial, vocational, social, religious, ideological groups and God's plan. We are always making a personal evaluation of our self-image. If we behave in a way we do not approve of, we feel shame, and if we are involved in something painful, we feel regret. On the other hand, if we feel good about ourselves and what we are involved in, we feel pride and approval.

"The next arena of identity is our family, our parents and brothers and sisters. Relations with all are important, but if relations with a brother or sister are not good and relations with our parents are, we have the capability of dismissing the bad relationship or holding it in abeyance.

"Many factors enter into our identity in relation to our vocation such as our efficiency, our interpersonal relations, our ability to manage, etc. Whether we feel we have found a niche in society or are a misfit is very important to our wholesome sense of identity. Religion can be just a social group, or it can be a realm which fosters our relation with the Divine. The ideological groups we involve ourselves with have a great impact on our sense of identity. Finally, if we see ourselves as part of a universal scheme, our identity becomes more and more expansive.

"In every one of these arenas, conflicts can arise and pathological reactions enter in. The extreme cases are those of someone wanting to kill someone

else, whether known to them or not, because they are seen as standing in the way of the full expression of one's self-identity, or of wanting to commit suicide because no hope is seen of finding a niche or mode of expression which tallies with one's self-image.

"Our physical identity has both fixed and variable aspects. Our fingerprints and teeth formations are so unique that they can be used as a worldwide system of identification. These, and many other aspects of our physical appearance and development are genetically predetermined. With other aspects, such as our clothes and hair/beard styles, we can alter our appearance and make overt statements about our identity. That image can change as we age, causing traumatic reactions and frantic efforts to retain a youthful image such as dying ones hair. Our names are a given part of our social identity, but if our reputation is soiled, we can move, take a new name, and establish a new social identity.

"Value actualization emerges from our corresponding inner visualization. Through that, our identity is established in the world at various levels. The horizontal represents the zero point of a completely unknown person. Creative activity may address itself only to aesthetic concerns, with resulting appreciation ranging from a small group to a large following. But it will be necessarily limited. Someone whose creative vision extends beyond the purely aesthetic to the transcendent has a universal appeal. Those who have identified most fully with the Absolute, such as Buddha or Jesus, are known to all humanity."

A major phenomena in South India, especially Kerala, that has developed since my first visit in 1979 is the emigration of thousands of Indians to the Gulf where oil has brought prosperity to a largely unskilled and uneducated population. Kerala's educational system has produced more educated people than can be absorbed into government positions or accommodated in professional schools, virtually the only

vocations which are respected in the society. A businessman, no matter how wealthy, is still considered somewhat uncouth, despite the fact that his wealth may have come from far greater ingenuity and management capability than that of someone serving in a government office. So young people in droves have been rushing to the Gulf countries where they have a much higher earning power. However, their life-style is very restricted because the Moslem states want their skills but definitely do not want anything of Indian culture or the Hindu religion to percolate into their society. Everyone goes there with the idea of staying just long enough to build a big house back home and ensure their financial stability. Guru describes this as a modern gold rush where everyone is running without thinking about what they are running after. Everything traditional is being abandoned, except for empty rituals, while everything conceived to be modern (i.e. Western) is mindlessly sought after and imitated. The trappings of sophisticated society are imported - expensive alcohol, modernistic furniture, polyester clothing, high-tech gadgets - but, as has been typical of the *nouveau riche* in all cultures and times, there is a glaring absence of aesthetic sensibility, of living gracefully, or even knowing how to operate and maintain all that their money can buy.

In this context of flaunted wealth, the educated youth not fortunate to gain a Gulf position, or not wanting to leave India, feel a rising sense of frustration at finding few opportunities to both express themselves and prosper, much less to do so with the concurrence of their parents. An ever-proliferating number of main-stream and radical political parties, including the political arms of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, not to mention various caste organizations, compete with each other to draw on this pool of frustration for their support, holding out various images of a better future. Each, however, is as prone as the current establishment to corruption and power-grabbing. So there has been a rising tide of disillusionment

leading to an increase in the wealth of pill-pushing psychiatrists, suicides and violent skirmishes between various political and religious groups.

Into this atmosphere of tension and frustration Guru's recent articles in major journals and these series of talks have come with fearless clarity and open caring. He is daily sought out, in person and by letter, by young people who see in him their only hope for a meaningful life. The first lecture, on Identity Crisis, offered a framework in which to place themselves in reference to the world around them, as well as to understand more of their inner dynamics.

Guru introduced the subject by recounting a number of encounters with persons from different parts of India, all of whom feel an identity more with a subgroup than with India as a whole. This estrangement takes many forms - religious, cultural, economic, political - leading to a national identity crisis of such proportions that the Prime Minister could be assassinated by her own body guards. Guru then said that he would like to offer an approach which could help the individuals there get over their personal identity crises so that they could make a positive contribution to the stability of the country and the peace of the world. With a series of real examples, Guru developed the points he had outlined. He talked about a father and son who had come to see him with a very common problem: the father's wish for the son to continue in medical school, insuring their mutual economic security, and the son's wish to become a poet. Guru continued:

"The friction arising from the dissimilarity of ideals of father and son exemplifies the many conflicts that can arise from our individual need to live our inner potentials in an overt manner, in relation to others. This can lead to a split between our inner sense of ourselves and the public image we attempt to project. If a split persists between our idea of how we should be to gain public approbation and our inner emotional experience, we are heading for mental disease.

"But we have examples before us of those who have integrated their inner and outer selves in a consistent manner. We need to see how we can actualize the values they represent each day in the process of unfolding our own psychophysical, cultural, moral and spiritual potentials. The dynamic of that actualization can take the form of adoption or correction of the values presented to you. It can also be innovative. If you feel stifled, you can look around and see the many others who are also muffled and you can act to change the system. Thus, your personal identity crisis results in action which addresses the suffering of all."

Guru thus showed how the resolution of a personal identity crisis lies in establishing one's identity with the universal. How can we know when the steps we are taking are bringing us closer to the fullest actualization of our highest values in our daily life? Guru told of his once having asked Nataraja Guru how he could know he was living his *swadharma*. Nataraja Guru replied: "When you live your *swadharma*, at the completion of each item of your action you will be filled with a satisfaction which is beyond all measure. After completing your day's work, you have the feeling 'I have done well now. This day is wonderful. I am amply paid for this work.' When you look into yesterday you will have a feeling that today is much better than yesterday and you feel a hope that tomorrow will be even better. There is a progressive contentment in your mind where you prospectively see that you are nearing your own perfect image."

The next evening's lecture was on "Ideological Crisis/Confusion of Values." As a framework for his talk Guru used a dialogue from the Upanishads in which a student asks his teacher about the highest value in life. The Guru responds by asking him to inquire into his own needs and faculties. The first answer that the student gives is that the highest value is food. Guru explained that our usual understanding of the Absolute is that it is something very big, but that we should understand that when we are very

thirsty or very hungry, the first sip of tea or morsel of food that we take is an absolute fulfillment.

In his discussion of the value of food, Guru began with the first economics that human beings know, the economy of abundance which nature provides. Like the yolk surrounding the nucleus of an egg which nourishes its growth into a chick that can peck its way out, nature first provides us with the nourishment we need, which gives us the energy to work. He then talked about how from food, many other values arise regarding production, labor, collective effort, preservation, distribution and sharing.

"Through human interaction with nature's economy, the polarity of sharing and greed has generated a variety of social contracts and economic systems. Unfortunately, greed has more often been the primary motivating force in corporate life, leading to slavery where human beings have been treated as machines, fueled by a minimum of the food they toiled to bring forth, to feudalism where slightly more of the fruits of their labors were shared with the laborers, to capitalism where the worker bartered his freedom and energy to the manager/owner in trade for life's necessities, to communism where promises of the fruits of collective action and a status-free sharing of them were

shabbily fulfilled, while personal freedom was severely restricted.

"Each of these systems has manifested many varieties throughout human history, each with its own theoreticians, apologists, purveyors and enforcers. And they have necessarily clashed, leading to conflicts ranging from loud arguments to war preparations around the world, and even all-out war such as in Vietnam where hundreds of thousands of lives were sacrificed in an attempt to prove the ideological excellence of democracy over socialism, or the Iraq-Iran war over the relative merit of the Shiite or Suni ideologies."

Guru gave an indication of how we can go beyond such clashes of ideology when he recounted Nataraja Guru's description of the best prayer: "Each time you take your first morsel of food, ask 'How did this come to me?' That brings to mind the cook who has prepared it, the people who were involved in transporting and marketing it, the farmer who toiled to grow it, -- the collective effort of the many people who were involved in bringing it to you. That evokes a great sense of gratitude to the unknown people by whose grace you are being fed. Along with that naturally comes a sense of responsibility to those who are nourishing you with their labor. That leads to a deep sympathy with





another Upaniṣadic seer's words: *kasya sviddhanam* -- 'Whose is wealth?'; *ma grdah* -- 'It belongs to all, so do not grab.'

"The value of food gives rise to all of these issues, as well as naturally leading to the next item of value which the ancient student discovered -- our breath, our vitality. We have vital emotional needs that are not met by food. Husbands and wives have need of each other and parents feel a great satisfaction of life in caressing their children. It is one continuous energy that animates us through all the modes and phases of life. But that energy can take the form of hatred as well as love, of frustration as well as creativity. Urges surface from deep within us, taking form as our words and actions.

"Need and freedom form a dialectical relationship out of which evolves the framework of culture in varying patterns which reflect different conditions of climate, vegetation, terrain, types of food available, etc. Thus the cultural heritage of India is very different from that of the West. Music and art forms, food, patterns of relationship, rites and rituals have all evolved very differently, rooted in the soil of this land. But with the advent of T.V., Indians are being exposed to Western culture and have been blindly imitating it. Traditional and imported modes of expression are being indiscriminately mixed or juxtaposed, creating great confusion of values. To sort through it one needs to come to an understanding of an appropriate interplay of one's own and one's culture's uniqueness and one's universality.

"The next level of value which the Upaniṣadic student identified with the Absolute was mind. This arena also is one of ideological clashes between the materialists who claim that what we call mind is simply a by-product of the physical organism and consciousness is a neurological response to external stimuli, and the idealists who feel that awareness is self-generated and, for each human being, the world is structured not of concrete external facts but of one's own conceptualizations. To those who have

gotten caught in this controversy, Narayana Guru offers a unitive perspective which makes it unnecessary to fight. He says that the idea is in matter and matter is in the idea. In the first verse of his composition, *One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction*, he speaks of the *karu*, the creating function which is continuously shining within as ideas and without as the physical world. Mind does not exist. There is the biochemical apparatus of the brain, and there is a universal consciousness which manifests in each human organism. We can understand this with the help of an analogy: when a candle burns, it is not the wick or wax that is important, but the light that radiates in all directions. Similarly, in us it is not the physical details which are important but the scheme of the universal mind, the radiance of consciousness.

"That brings in the next item of value, *prajñānam*, knowledge. In order to avoid being caught between warring ideologies, you need to cultivate an open way of looking at situations, identifying more and more with the universal mind which manifests in so many variations. That gives you increasing capacity to deal with your own self-generated and self-perpetuated psycho-physical diseases, as well as to offer others a perspective which aids them in going beyond their restricted viewpoints.

"The culminating value which the ancient student identified with the Absolute was *ānandam*, the value-factor itself. Actually, I should have begun with *ānandam* because it is the basis of all transformations of value. *Ānandam* can be understood as happiness in the sense of ultimate value, such as Narayana Guru speaks of in his *One Hundred Verses* when he says that all beings everywhere are seeking the happiness of the Self at all times. He adds that we should understand this as the one religion of humanity. That understanding provides a framework in which varying perspectives can each be given their place, not as opposing one another but as different conceptions of highest value."

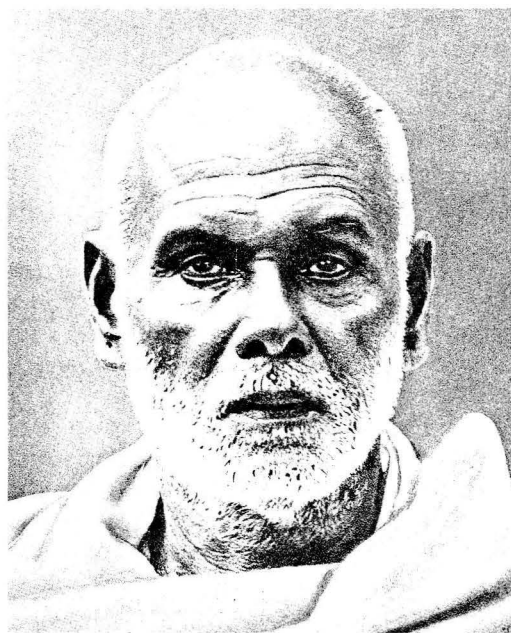
Since gaining its independence in 1947, India has been plagued with religious and ethnic conflict. In present day Kerala, these two factors are intermixed with politics, and strife often reaches a pitch of physical violence between radicals of rival groups. This is the context in which Narayana Guru wrote, and the context in which Guru is giving new life to his words, helping young people to find ways out of the ideological prisons in which they are trapped. One of the young men in the audience later came to stay with us at Ooty and was repeating some things he had read in political pamphlets. Guru said: "All these boys' minds are polluted with the politics of various splinter groups based on the egoistic posturing of their leaders. They just unthinkingly accept whatever they read, even though it has no application to their lives or their problems. They become terribly confused."

Turning to the young man, Guru said, "In fact, you are slightly mad. Only slightly, but you need to put all of this out of your mind and concentrate on what is really before you." After two or three days of Gurukula life, including classes where he had a chance to speak openly of the pressures and, as he put it, tortures he had suffered in his school days, listen to others who had similar experiences, and join in the preparation of an East-West University paper offering guidelines by which to change education, the strained look on his face eased and a beautiful smile appeared more and more often. One by one, Guru aids those who come to him to leave the dark cages of their own and others making, and come out into the sunlight of a productive and wholesome life, lived in fellowship with a community of world citizens.

The third lecture in the series was on Leadership Crisis. Guru began with a description of two different kinds of leaders: "If you see a graceful butterfly and turn to your friends and say, 'Look! It is so beautiful', you spontaneously become a leader because of your love of sharing beauty, wonder, joy. The world has known many leaders like this such as

Tagore, Buddha, Akbar and Jesus. The other kind of leader is one who sees the cruelty and injustice of the world. They ask all of humanity to look and take action to abolish or correct it. Marx was this kind of leader. The great poets, philosophers, economists, scientists and musicians, etc., of the world are natural leaders who have had a great impact on the world, whether they sought to or not. Each one shared some aspect of value, either asking us to increase some positive value or denounce a negative value in order to bring better possibilities."

Guru then talked about the current crisis of leadership in Kerala, in India and in the world, because of the paucity of leaders with genuine caring for humanity. He proposed some norms by which a true leader can be distinguished, giving primary emphasis to having a vision which deals with here and now problems as well as understands future results of actions taken today. He talked about the leadership of Narayana Guru who never called a press conference, advertizing his own importance. In fact, he didn't even like to have his picture taken. He would glare at the camera, asking, "Why do you want to preserve my face? You should look more into yourself and, if you care for me, look into my words."



Guru continued: "He was a leader who saw the light of eternity and shared it through his way of life as well as his compositions. But even with this kind of leadership, Indians are just trying to imitate the English or Americans. Our constitution is being falsified day after day. It says that any citizen of a certain age can be the representative of the people, but it should say that any citizen with a bank balance of so many lakhs of rupees and a supply of so many crores of black money can be elected. In this kind of a system, voting does not represent the real wishes of the people. Those who can stand for election are a closed group representing only certain ideologies. Many people who have a vision which would enable society to grow never have a chance to share it in this context of a rich, powerful few dividing the spoils. We need leaders who can share new vistas. Today Narayana Guru is becoming more and more irrefutable and irresistible because he showed a grand vista towards which we can walk."

Guru then encouraged the young people not to get caught up in the dividing of spoils and petty fighting, but to stand up as stalwarts who see new visions. He asked them to say to the old guard, "If you can't change, get out of the way. Let us carry our family, our village, our country, our world to a new future." He asked why no current leadership, political, religious, etc., was questioning or improving the state of the roads, the way mental patients are treated, the educational system which does not reach the poor at all, the way poison is used on farms to fatten foods, but which kills life. He said, "We need leaders who look into both the negative and positive aspects of life. If we are not being properly led, we should use our own eyes to see and legs to walk the path which will take us to our goal."

When Guru got up to leave after the talk, he was immediately surrounded by excited young people who all wanted to speak to him. A number of them had questions, many asked if they could visit the Gurukula. All wanted to come into closer relationship with the enthusiasm,

fearlessness and hope which Guru emanates.

Thus, the first of our East-West University lecture series ended with ample proof that this is indeed an effective mode of teaching, of bringing the University to the people instead of asking them to come to it. The content and impact of the series exemplified Guru's description of the contribution of this university which fits no known model of educational institutions:

"The East-West University of Unitive Sciences is founded with the intention of doing here and now what each person can do wherever they are placed. We are not activists, but, at the same time, we want to share with activists the ideals that can inspire them. We are also willing to promote the feasibility of an ideal which is taken as an action program by committed individuals and groups. The Bhagavad Gita attributes two functions to the absolutist. One is to give ones approbation to the right thing and the other is to expose the wrong and prevent its precipitation or perpetuation. So we highlight the good and pronounce against the evil.

"The ambit of our function is not confined to a region or time. We are committed to unlimited liability. Whatever happens anywhere in the world is our concern, and yet we fill our daily interest with the facts of life that concern the people immediately around us. Consequently, we are engaged every minute of every hour in small matters which have intimate relationship with the perennial and the universal.

"We keep ourselves as an island of succor, restoration and healing for those who are badly mangled and battered by a blind society. We share with those who come to us the place and facilities that are at our disposal so that they may become rested in body and mind and have enough leisure to sit back, and even dream their future. Then, once again with preparedness, they can plunge into the mainstream of life, fully replenished and revitalized."

*(Continued in next issue.)*



# An Hour With Robert Penn Warren

Penelope Diebold



Who these days speaks of hermetic wisdom? Seldom do we hear profound truth or of an experience that takes us beyond the ordinary into the super-ordinary. Rarer yet is the creative genius, in either modern literature or art, bent or swayed by spiritual depths and the value of wisdom. When contemporary literature does expound upon the classical integration of philosophy and psychology, we may find John Updike our modern-day guru. However, this may only be true for those of us who neglected some of our high school readings of Robert Penn Warren's poetry. Prose is not as subtle as poetry, nor as glassy or symbolic. While John Updike achieves those qualities to some extent in his poetic musings, as do Doris Lessing and a few others, the fiction writer can not achieve the profusion of intellect and emotive and psychic implications of a poet. Why?

The poet must reduce all drama into a few succinct and intellectually satisfying emotions. Within the creases of limited lines, the poet forces him or herself to accomplish the feat of a hundred pages of fiction. Poetry is more sublime, yet less read, because it demands of its reader the personification of life in an unusual manner. When reading poetry, we are asked to contemplate the transformation of our life experiences. We are required to be more than observers: we are asked to be reflective and intelligent about the meaning implied in a single instance of an encounter. Our absolute requirement is to be sensitive and acutely aware of all experience in a poetical light.

In his Mediterranean Basin, *Rumor Verified*, Robert Penn Warren goes beyond the ordinary and transforms our limited perspective into a psychological truth as lived through a philosophical dictum.

At arch-height of every  
stroke, at each fingertip, hangs  
One drop, and the drops -  
one by one - are  
About to fall, each a perfect  
universe defined  
By its single, minuscule, radiant,  
enshrined star.

What, does Penn Warren imply by "at each fingertip hangs?" or by "a perfect universe defined?" I feel we must reflect and contemplate the meaning of his ordinary use of words with extraordinary understanding of the poetic meaning and symbolic depths of the human experience. It is the transformative quality of Penn Warren that so inspires and moves one to read more, to know more, and to more deeply understand.

How did I find myself one summer morning sitting in the living room of this great poet with my Guru from India, and two long time friends? We did not have an invitation to the esteemed man's home, except perhaps, as an echo of poetry Guru Nitya heard reverberating

through his mind as he departed from India. When he telephoned me that he was coming to America, he said, "I want to meet Robert Penn Warren. Please find out where he lives, and phone him for me." Since we never located Penn Warren's phone number, we weren't able to request an invitation. Our plan then was to go directly to his home and hope for the best.

The day came when Guru Nitya's visit to my house ended, and the next adventure began. Our plan was to visit Penn Warren on our way to New York. Driving down the freeway, Route 91, the Fairfield exit appeared. Nitya asked me to pull off the freeway and locate Reeding Street. After a few wrong turns and the good directions of a postman we found Reeding, a long street with many stately homes, though not one indicated the residence of Penn Warren. It was the week of the Dogwood Festival and the trees danced in sweet pinks and white blossoms. I noticed a woman gardening by her home and drove up the driveway to ask for directions to Penn Warren's. The woman, pleasantly eccentric, walked over to our car and said, "Oh my, yes, yes, what have we here? Robert Penn Warren? I don't know exactly where he lives, its up there though," as she pointed vaguely up the road. "Why don't you go over to Maggie Dallie's house, she lives up the road." The woman warmly showed us the way down her drive and pointed toward a long driveway that lead the way to Maggie Dallie's home. I followed the driveway up to a large Japanese-styled home. A heavy brown door looked challengingly at me. I nervously walked up to it and knocked. After several good pounds a tiny woman with silver hair, twinkling blue eyes, and a sandwich in her hand, peered suspiciously at me through a glass window in the door.

"Are you Maggie Dallie?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, smiled and opened the door.

"I'm looking for Robert Penn Warren's house. I've misplaced the directions I had."

Maggie brightened up and swallowed the last bit of her sandwich. "Of course, you go up this street and after the intersection look on your left for an old barn fixed up, with a large bay window in the front."

We drove back down the driveway, and followed her directions. The sun was shining over lustrous green lawns, spattered with a streaming array of daffodils and tulips. Dogwoods laced the slender paved road and old-fashioned homes breathed a history of architecture. All of us were enjoying the playful air of muses who seemed to be leading our way.

We found Penn Warren's home at last. Eleanor Clark, his wife and well-known author, came to the door. After some persuasion we were escorted into the living room: a lovely, quiet room. An exhibit of old pottery, a library of history, poetry and literature, and a well-used old grand piano filled it with a serenity of open and abstract space. From the simplicity of decor I could sense that Penn Warren would not be an arrogant or self-indulgent person.

Soon we could hear the footsteps of someone approaching. I turned around to see the lighted figure of the poet we had come to see. He entered and warmly greeted us by telling us how touched he was that we had come to meet him. I looked at this man with a sense of wonder: he was kind, dearly loving and his eyes appeared like those of a mythical Santa Claus whose delightful charm was magical. Between the folds of his modesty, I could see the knowledge and clarity of his years and experience. I felt full of awe and shyly slipped into a state of deep reverence.

Our conversation followed various paths. He told us about the first poem he ever wrote. It was for a newspaper while he was in the military. His task was to fill a small space in the back of the paper with a poem. This first attempt at poetry was about a parade he had just witnessed. The poem was successful and published.

I asked Penn Warren, "When did you take yourself seriously as a poet?"

He chuckled and said, "From the beginning, when I wrote the poem on the parade. In fact, I took writing poems more seriously then. I weighed each word carefully and eliminated all unnecessary words. Now, I just write and use any word I want to. It doesn't matter if its unnecessary or not."

I pursued it further: "How does a poem emerge in your mind? Do you visualize a moment, a thing, or an experience, and then feel inspired?"

He pointed towards a small building attached to the house and said, "I have a room at one end of the building and my wife, Eleanor, has a room in the other end. There is a wall between us and no communication. I sit in that room, at my desk and just wait. Sometimes I use lines from poems I started twenty years ago, which I threw in a box. I have a box full of lines and poems I haven't used. Maybe I'll use those lines twenty years later."

I looked over to Guru Nitya, who was sitting quietly in reverence for the

man speaking. Then Guru motioned for us to begin to leave: "Thank you so much for your time."

Penn Warren repeated once again, "I'm touched that you have come, it really is an honor for me, please stay a little while longer." He continued to talk about his children, marriage, and his travels overseas. He asked Guru if he had ever been married. Guru replied, no. "Well the best thing about marriage is having grandchildren," Penn Warren said.

Eleanor entered the room again, and asked us to forgive her for her role as the villain, but it was time for her husband's doctor appointment.

As we were leaving Penn Warren said, "If only you had come tomorrow I could have spent the day with you." The loving smile and gentle spirit of the poet echoes through each and every poem as I read them now, with a new life and deeper understanding of the poet and his poems. ♦

### A ROBERT PENN WARREN SAMPLER

I have shut my eyes and seen the lark flare upward.  
All was as real as when my eyes were open.  
I have felt earth breathe beneath my shoulder blades.  
I have strained to hear, sun high, that Platonic song.

*Another Dimension, Rumor Verified*

Why should the heart leap? We  
Are old enough to know that the world is only the world, and the  
Heart is like fingers idly outspread while, slowly;  
The grey seeds of Time, or gold grain,  
Trickle through.

But we often forget.

*Glimpses of Seasons, Rumor Verified*

In darkness we cannot see  
How, all night long, slow ages shift and crumble  
Into the noble indifference of Eternity.  
But all night do see how the dream, anguished or funny, strives  
To decode the clutter of our lives.

*After Restless Night, Rumor Verified*

# The Silence of God's Long White Beard

Mahasamadhi Robert Greenspon

## 1. The Upadesa of the Circle

0/0 = ODE TO O

Oh, I should not omit to love you/  
The law of O is in ordinance/  
In owe we are indebted/  
To own is overtly one's own onus/  
To contemplate O until we attain  
to the obituary/  
The Upadesa of the orb is oddly  
obvious in optics, ego and ova/  
Old oafish ogres oath of occasional  
occult oblations of obedient  
obeisance to 'O' /  
It's the first of the last,  
the omen of omega/  
Open opinions in orations as opus/  
As 'Om' it prefixes omniscient,  
omnipotent and omnipresent  
as eternity does to Siva (Sadasiva)/

'O' is the fully rounded vowel produced by raising the back of the tongue towards the soft palate with rounded lips. Now 'O' was all alone in One and 'O' said "let me be many." 'O' is first and last in 'one' and 'zero', the middle term in 'God'. Our 'O' is observed both in 'whole' and 'hole', 'no' and 'know'. Only one God alone is a wonder. When all is one then one is all alone. All + one = alone. When one is alone then one is the one and only. Also we need an oracle of the orb to refer us to the Om.

ONLY WONDER ONE ALONE

## 2. Nonsense Attains to Paradox and Reveals the Absolute

O rolls on in locomotion, appears  
in zero, in one, then two.

0/0 = 1 "Anything divided by itself equals one," -- this is a basic law of mathematics. By dividing any self by itself you never arrive at zero but the self-cancellation always yields the same prime and pristine digit, one. Above it was stated that the circle as the English letter 'O' appears first in 'one' and last in 'zero'; circle as O is observed both in 'whole' and 'hole' (entire, full, one/void, empty, zero). This observation qualifies for further elaboration, interpretation, extrapolation and interpolation. "How can one come out of nothing, how could the whole come out of a hole, consciousness from unconsciousness?", may remain as the most poignant question of all eternity. Many may claim that nothing divided by nothing yields only nothing, i.e., 0/0 = 0. Jesus Christ says he is the alpha and omega, he who always was and always will be. This remark has obvious reference to belief in a beginningless One, an immortal eternal person, the basis of all theology and mythology.

To the 'scientist' it is repugnant or unacceptable to postulate such a one so for the sake of science they resort to postulating or presupposing an original beginningless zero or something even more ridiculous than one or zero, (i.e., that everything conceivable and perceivable,

consciousness and awareness, came from nothing, that before the 'Big Bang' or original electron or proton emission or whatever else happens first in their theory, there was absolutely nothing or worse than nothing). This is the 'scientific' view. The views of science are more acceptable or believable to scientists than the views of religion.

The pursuit of wisdom, we could agree, is the attempt to acquire knowledge, insight or intuition into the cause, source or origin. Therefore in the best interests of science and religion we must attempt to understand these two contradictory concepts, an original zero or a primordial one, whichever gains final primacy. The belief in zero underlies physical science whereas belief in one forms the basis of mythology, theology, and *brahma-vidya* (Science of the Absolute). Either you try to know a lot about nothing or you try to know something about one. Frankly restated, belief is either in 0 or 1. Perhaps it is easier or causes more self-happiness or gratification to put blind faith in one belief or the other. For convenience or relief people simply decide to trust in some theory. The views of science or religion are perhaps equally difficult to grasp, believe or comprehend; (that everything comes from absolutely nothing, 0, is as least as absurd or difficult to grasp as that everything comes from Almighty God, the Absolute, 1. Circle as a symbol implies center, source, core or fullness such as a full orb of sun or moon, but circle as zero implies emptiness, void or vacuum. Scientists adhere only to 'fact' whereas the approach of mythology is discredited as fantasy and fiction. A philosophy of physics cannot be less theoretical than a philosophy of metaphysics. As A.S. Eddington used to say "it is the concept that matters." Therefore let us consult the literature for some background information concerning zero and mythology:

"The moment of quiescence is the hiatus between episodes of energy. It is this appearance of stillness resulting from two equal and opposite forces which

underlies the symbolism of the mathematical zero, which the ancient Hindoos invented. Quiescence is an apparent calm which is in fact a perfectly balanced tension. Zero is the transition point between opposites; it symbolizes the true balance within divergent tendencies. Zero is the productive All and None, the matrix of positive and negative, of generating and destroying capacities. It is the productive point of indifference and balance between the opposites of extreme greatness and extreme smallness.

"The great myths transcending the limits of mundane causality create an infinitely complex mosaic. The conflicts are resolved not into a static icon but into the constant motion of a pendulum whose animating force is the eternal paradox of the myths. Mythology celebrates the idea that the universe is boundlessly various, that everything occurs simultaneously, that all possibilities may exist without excluding each other. Myths rejoice in all the experiences that stretch and fill the human spirit; not merely moments of pure joy nor the tragedies and transition that transform and strengthen us, but all the seemingly insignificant episodes and repetitious encounters of banal reality which myth, with its minute detail and its awareness of simultaneous scales, teaches us to sanctify and value. Untrammelled variety and contradiction are ethically and metaphysically necessary. The combination of many facets of paradox is made possible through use of recurrent symbols. This process is facilitated by weaving as the interplay of natural powers, problems which we might otherwise view in moral, ethical or philosophical terms. There is no one 'myth' but rather a vague, ectoplasmic substance whose outlines constantly change, containing somewhere within it the essence of the myth. Physicists tell us that because of the constant motion of surface atomic particles of a table, the table can only be located somewhere within a statistical area, so too the myth has no final delineation for there will always be yet another variant containing

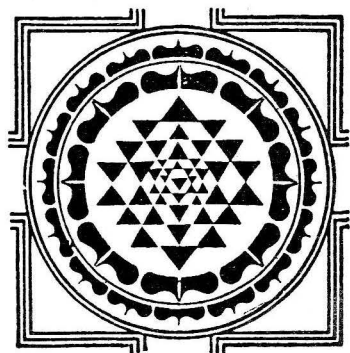


some mythological motif, which, like electrons escaping from the surface of the table, extend the myth beyond the bounds established by all other variants.

"Myth as it was understood by the scholars of the ordained classics were metaphorical struggles of divine powers and personalities; above this on the cosmic level of the myth was the expression of universal laws and processes, of metaphysical principles and symbolic truth, and below in terms of folklore, is the human level, the search for meaning in human life. Myths take over where philosophy proves inadequate, only involvement in the eternal cycle of myths can reveal the answers to paradoxical questions. As Levi Strauss says, 'It is the nature of myth to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction. The structure of myth is a dialectical structure in which opposed logical positions are stated, and the oppositions mediated by a restatement. The expression of contradiction in myth is significant, even without the possibility of resolution, for problems are difficult to face and understand, and myth brings them to a level at which they can be confronted'. Myth expresses unconscious wishes which, being in some way inconsistent with conscious experience, cannot be expressed directly. Irrational answers to insoluble problems occur in myths where reason is trapped; love overcomes rational barriers, and an appeal to emotions can transcend a rational impasse. Since the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction (an impossible achievement if, as it happens, the contradiction is real), a theoretically infinite number of isolated inter-related themes will be generated, thus myth grows spiral-wise until the intellectual impulse which has produced it is exhausted. Mythological thought is imprisoned in the events and experiences which it never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search for a meaning. Though not being able to consider all possible variables, for analysis we can establish a reasonable basic vocabulary. There is no real end to mythological

analysis, no hidden unity to be grasped once the breaking-down process has been completed. Themes can be split up ad infinitum. Just when the themes are separated they knit together again in response to the operation of unexpected affinities. The final 'explanation' of the myth is the myth itself, reread with a richer awareness of at least some of the resonances and harmonies behind the flickering images." [Most of the above concerning 'zero' and 'myth' is quoted loosely and at my own risk from the scholarly work *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Shiva* by W. D. O'Flaherty.]

The contemplative analysis of myth employs a vocabulary involving re-occurring themes, cycles, episodes, motifs, patterns, variables variants, equations, multiform archetypes and protolinguistic monomarks. A prime example of a contemplable myth is that of the Biblical Garden of Eden. The equation presented to us is the bare fact of an original pair or 2 living within the radiant grace of a theological One until, due to furtherly related variants, the pair increases to 3 and 4. What seems at first sight mostly mere nonsense unfit for contemplative consideration finally attains to the status of being a recognizable paradox and hence becomes worthy of being dealt with scientifically. The crux and central core of all paradox, the essence of paradox and contradiction itself, resides in the above outlined concept that all and everything comes either from one, the absolute, or from absolutely nothing, and it is to this primordial paradox we must try to apply and attune our science.





Why so-called 'Advaitins' who promote the formless aloneness of the self resort to writing poetry involving mythological archetypes (Gods and numinous presences) is also a question which is perhaps nonsense worthy of attaining status as paradox. How can this paradox be dealt with scientifically? For example, the literary works of renowned advaitins Sankara and Narayana Guru treat of Siva, Ganga, and dancing Kali in *Saundaryā Lahari* and *Kali Natakam*. Herein we can graph out mythological variables and equations where mythology is treated as scripture (holy word of truth or law) and hence authoritative source of knowledge and information. If we are asked to find truth through poetry full of mythological reference written by saints and hence regarded as scripture, we must wonder the scientific validity of myth, the nature of values worthy of contemplation enshrined in myth, and the intentions of poetry assigned status as scripture. Myth is a popular story embodying belief or faith. Hence myth is a prime or primitive form of science and religion. To the mind of the common man a mythological explanation is as least as good or even easier to believe or remember than scientific explanation. According to the myth expressed by *Saundaryā Lahari*, Parvati, as a bright solar godly value, is Siva's properly wedded wife who, in verse 86 takes a famous dance step to kick Siva's forehead when he inadvertently refers to her as Ganga, of whom she is scornful in verse 51. In the terms of the myth Siva is allowed and attributed two wives, a proper wife and an extramarital mistress who is also the deific form of an existential river which flows down, perhaps representing the spinal chord. This Ganga is lunar, representing the world of the fathers and ancestors. Hence, she is the presiding deity concerned with caste, clan, family name and ancestral lineage which are all subordinate and relative to her fullness as a moon goddess.

Ganga personifies the archetypal mistress, the presiding deity of illicit relations which are illegal to the

common man who must carefully guard and maintain his good name and reputation, but the name and reputation of the absolutist Siva is such that he is wedded to this goddess of illegitimacy as well as to his legitimate spouse, hence inclusively transcending the paradox and relativistic fixations of good name and reputation, i.e., Siva's relations with the archetypal prostitute are legal because he regards her philosophically as a value to which he is properly wedded. The English colloquialism 'to take something upon ones head' means to assume responsibility for and Siva as 'Gangadhara' literally takes Ganga upon his head before she flows down through the worlds of cultivators who prayerfully await her fecundizing Grace. 'Taking Ganga upon his head' means to assume responsibility for the illegitimacy of the lunar worlds. Hence, we recognize that mythological reference has overtly mystical and metaphysical significance. To be married to Parvati means to be joined and united with bright shining dynamic spiritual values, whilst marriage to Ganga implies an unconditioned blissful non-attachment to the relativistic dross of ancestors and family relations. In yogic terms, to attain to the solar world, one must purify, dissolve, or transcend the fixations of ancestry and family name, perhaps by holy ablution in the waters of the sacred river Ganges. Myth has been restated as paradoxical nonsense worthy of scientific contemplation. To understand or make sense out of such non-sense, seemingly unrelated bits of data or information are intuitively cancelled into a mystical gnosis or a unitive understanding. Some nonsense does not attain paradoxical status and must be identified and discredited as unworthy sheer nonsense.

There are myriad forms of divine knowledge (*brahma jñāna*) and it remains man's inherent mythological plight to realize at least something of the 'divine'. Hence, myths are not mere stories but an inherent aspect of the human spirit. Those who believe in O see myth as romantic fiction but to those who believe in I, myth is the wealth-source of

information on that most paramount subject, God, the supreme personality and nature of the Absolute. The mythological philanderings of Zeus, the incest and masterbation of Brahma, the statutory rapes of Krisna, the homosexuality of Visnu and the adultery of Brahma and Siva perhaps reveal that human psychology and human nature consists of mythological archetypal factors comprising the firmament of a universal personae. In his scriptural poem, *Kali Natakam*, Narayana Guru postulates a Siva and a Kali. Again the question arises why Advaitins resort to these personifications and seem to kow-tow to orthodox Hindu stigma or superstition. Rather than attempting to impress the public that he is a 'true learned Hindu', the Guru's poem shows that his mystical achievements have initiated him into

the same cosmological and theological mysteries revealed to his predecessors. In non-dual terms, the more male Siva-hood one attains within oneself, the more aspects of the cosmological female dance are revealed; the more one's spiritual third eye is opened, the more one sees and appreciates. His spiritual continuator, Nataraja Guru, often boldly attributed a long white beard to the Absolute. He once remarked, "I pull the beard of God," while pulling on his own long white beard. This was a lesson in advaita vedanta. Not only did his own beard belong to God, but it was implied that this character Nataraja Guru had some pull with the Almighty, his own way with the One; amidst the myriads of multitudes his own auspicious pathway of oneness and aloneness within the Absolute.



## Contemplative Values Upheld

"When the myth is ready the myth-maker appears." Man is scientist, theologian and myth-maker. The more one realizes immortality, the more one feels affinity with and meaning within the myth. Perhaps conversely immortality is affinity to the myth. From the standpoint of myth, everything (all modern science and discovery) must be included in the continuing restated myth. As Śankara is the archetypal *drāvida śiṣu*, so the re-occurring character of Vyasa is the archetypal myth-maker. When the time is ripe to brush-up-on or dust-off an old myth, revise, restate, rearrange as also initiate or usher in the dawning of a new myth, the Vyasa appears. We hear about God from Kalidasa; the Trimurti and their adventures exist only because of Vyasa. Historically man is beset by warfare and tragic turmoil. The capacity of man to live in a worldly paradise of heavenly peace dates back to the Garden of Eden myth before the Adam's apple. After the fall of Eden, it is clearly stated that man would have to find hope of redemption (a religious concept meaning to recover by expenditure of effort, to be delivered back into an original state or condition) which mythologically the Christians find in Christ and the Contemplatives find in *sannyasa*, the contemplative branch of existence. *Sannyasa* is postulated as a mythological entity; it is a mystical marriage between the mystic practitioner (*sannyasi*-absolutist) and the contemplative high-value system (the Absolute).

The Narayana Gurukula Foundation was designed to uphold the institution of *sannyasa*. Our founding-father Guru Natarajan, who first conceived of the Gurukula, impressed upon his close disciples the paramount need and necessity to take *sannyasa* seriously; properly understood, *sannyasa*, like Christianity to Christians, is mankind's greatest gift. The noble sage-sannyasi Asvalyana

spoke (*Saraswathi Rahāsyā Upaniṣad*): "May the goddess Saraswati come and sit upon the tip of my tongue" – a mythological reference to the eternal female; "With my tongue may I say what is Good" – the truth is good; "Five factors are there here: Being, Shining, Loving, name and form, too. The first three pertain to Brahman, the two others constitute the world. Leave aside the two, always be intent on the three, either inside your heart or without, reside always in contemplation" – expression of Vedantic philosophy.

We can easily identify at least three modes or ways of teaching philosophy and at least three renderings of the term *sannyasa*. We have: 1) The teaching of philosophy as the study of the works, writings, and thoughts of famous men who were recognized down through history as philosophers; 2) The original 'philosopher' who declares his own truths, convictions and theories; and 3) The teaching of philosophy that instills in its students the inspiring love of pure wisdom itself, initiating its disciples into the taste of this very high value called wisdom, which as stated above from the mythological standpoint is a value to which man must be redeemed. For *sannyasa* we have: 1) A kind of old-age retirement from worldly duties or transactional responsibility after attaining the age of 65 years; 2) Renunciation of all works, fruits and benefits of action, renouncing the world as being unreal; and 3) *sannyasa* as a psychic accomplishment and spiritual attainment in which the *sannyasin* has attained to the 'white heat' of absorptions into higher degrees of self-realization. By adhering to the third point of these two enumerations, we can see that Nataraja Guru as a *sannyasi* was not a mere teacher, philosopher or renouncer in any mundane sense, and that by revealing any of the Guru's philosophy, love of the Absolute, or way of thinking we are gaining an initiation into the knowledge of the Absolute or Self. "*Sannyasa* (according to the Guru) is not just vacuous abandonment, leaving emptiness, but to be understood as a life

lived in the fresh breezes of Yoga and Vedanta, where conflicting factors are brought into the 'white-heat absolutism' of a crowning discipline, *brahma vidya* (Science of the Absolute, or self-realization), which is always the theme of the Bhagavad Gita." *Sannyasa* has been restated to designate a man who has attained profound degrees of contemplative absorptions, beyond relativistic frames of reference. The term 'absolutist' has been coined for such a *sannyasi*. An absolutist is one whose unitive understanding and attitude has gone beyond static outlines of mere philosophy and attained a 'high-voltage' love of pure wisdom by entering the 'white-heat' of genuine absorptions into the Absolute.

The physical entity of the Gurukula is a space sanctified as a holy Yogashram where absolutists can live undisturbed lives in expectation of a miracle that comes from the Absolute by itself. Narayana Gurukula Foundation was conceived of by its founder with the intention of promoting the wisdom teachings of Gurus, the mystical values of enlightenment and Yoga, as also to present and preserve the classical heritage of the Guru-disciple ashram way of life where due reverence and sanctity is attributed to man's phenomenal capacity to experience bliss and peace and cherish the wonder of life and existence in a contemplative spirit. The Gurukula as a spiritual abode gives reverence, pays homage, and grants primacy of import to the profound peace, meditations and contemplative absorptions of Gurus and disciples. Rather than offering worship to temple idols or statues, worship is paid directly to the word-wisdom, samadhi and silence of the contemplative. Hence the motto: "The contemplation of the Absolute is the Absolute." The pneuma and profundity of the contemplative high-value system moves the minds of superior contemplatives into various degrees of silence which is the blissful wonder of the Absolute. Divine Wisdom has been restated as the silence of the Absolute.

(Continued in next issue.)



# East-West University Seminar

Peter Oppenheimer

THE DIMENSIONS OF PEACE: An Exploration and Cultivation of Peace  
at the Personal, Interpersonal, International and Transpersonal Levels

## Fourth Dimension: Spiritual Peace

The first question that arose during our workshop session devoted to the exploration and cultivation of spiritual peace was, "What is the difference between personal peace and spiritual peace?" There is a subtle yet profound difference. Initially the word chosen to describe the spiritual dimension of peace for this seminar was "transpersonal." Transpersonal implies that which goes beyond the person, as in transcend, and that which goes between and connects persons, as in transport.

The difference between spiritual and personal is the difference between "Being" and "being something." One refers to one's personal identity with statements such as, "I am Jean," "I am Steve," "I am pleased," "I am ill." On the other hand the spirit identifies itself as in The Biblical statement, "I am that I am." The "I am" which remains like a constant through countless self-qualifying identities is indeed the mark of the transpersonal spirit. Another difference is that whereas the person can be said to move about in the world, the world moves about in the spirit.

In Indian Psychology there is a distinction made between the self with a small "s" and the Self with a capital "S." The former is used to refer to the ego, which is separate from other egos. The latter refers to the spirit which is universal and "One without a second." The spirit has characteristics which the person does not, such as being immortal,

common to all, complete in itself, untouched by emotional fluctuations, etc.

We recognized that in order to make sense out of the notion of spiritual peace, we needed to come to a greater realization of the meaning of spirit. To further clarify the content of the word "spirit" we first reflected upon a number of common usages of the term. For example, a horse can be "spirited." We often speak of distinguishing between some matter and the "spirit of the matter." Some people are spoken of as being "spiritually oriented." A person may be "inspired." Rather than expound verbally on the implications of each of these usages, we allowed ourselves to ponder briefly in silence and feel each reference inwardly.

Next we went around the room, and each person contributed their own qualifications of the term spirit, while still affirming the basically unutterable nature of its omnipresence. For our group, spirit denotes a pervasive underlying thread which is ever-present, self-luminous, vibrating love, the force within every particle, non-dual, beyond paradox, resolving within itself all contradictions such as big/small, near/far, one/many, the object of faith in wholeness, and accessible as one's own inmost self if one chooses to deny the ultimate reality of one's separate ego.

In spite of the intimate omnipresence of spirit, there is no denying that there are moments when we are



brilliantly aware of it and other moments when it seems to be obscured as a sun behind clouds. The name we commonly attribute to the illumination and activation of the spirit within us is "inspiration." Therefore one initial approach to the exploration and cultivation of spiritual peace is to examine the sources of our inspiration. Again we went around our circle, and each person contributed one or two of his or her own most dynamic sources of inspiration: raw energy (as a creek in spate), the quality of light, nature's grandeur and detail, the outdoors, plum blossoms, a baby, children at play, levity in a person, the ingenuity of people, the compassion of a friend, selfless giving (altruism), books, knowledge that leads to wisdom, courage, beauty, focusing on the larger Self, and the recognition of God's Grace.

Such a list could be endless, and each person could add several favorites. What is most striking is that the crucial ingredient in inspiration seems to lie within the perceiver rather than residing as an inherent quality of the perceived object. In fact all so-called spiritual disciplines seem at least partially aimed at awakening within us this quality of perception which allows us to be inspired by an ever-widening circle of items of awareness. Ultimately the source of inspiration resides within the very spirit that is awakened. It is as if all inspiration is a case of the spirit seeing itself reflected in outward forms and feeling itself liberated from its imagined status as an "imprisoned splendor" within the body boundaries, circumscribed by time and space.

This provides a key to the understanding of the nature of spirit itself as well as of spiritual peace. As spirit, by definition, is all-pervasive and One without a second, its very nature must be peace. If one reflects upon one's experience of the *lack* of peace, one will find that it is always characterized by the agitation of desire and/or fear. Where there is no fear and no desire, there is peace. Yet both fear and desire presuppose some "other." Desire implies some sense of deficiency and some sense of

something other to be attained. Similarly, all fear is of something or someone other that poses a threat. Hence where there is no "other," there is no desire and no fear, and therefore peace. This dramatic insight is presented in the *Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad* verse which states:

"For one who sees his own self (spirit) in all beings and all beings in his own self, what fear or what craving can there be for him who sees only this oneness."

Thus, as the very nature of the spirit which constitutes our true self is peace, spiritual peace is not so much something to be created and developed as it is simply to be discovered and accepted. However one may seek to explain it, the very essence of peace seems to be something that we absorb, something that comes like a gift in the very depth of our being. This is described very well by John MacQuarrie in his illuminating book, *The Concept of Peace*:

"There is something abundantly peaceful at the core of existence, and this same existence is at the core of human nature as well. This may be the reason for finding both religious and secular writers describing peace as somehow a gift to be accepted or absorbed, for it means in this sense accepting ourselves, accepting what is most fundamentally given in our humanity, though in actual life this given is distorted and covered up by innumerable distractions and errors. In the pursuit of peace we are summoned to engage in many active enterprises, but within them all and beyond them all we are being asked to accept what man truly is. We are being asked to give free course to a wholeness that is already part of the gift of being."

This is why all spiritual disciplines from diverse traditions throughout the world and throughout the ages have emphasized a persistent process of self-recollection and a very gentle merging with the depth of one's own being as the pathway to spiritual peace. Along these lines, which all merge in the peace of the self, there are countless variations on the theme. Some traditions recommend chanting, others



breathing exercises, some "just sitting," some an approach to activity which treats ends and means non-dualistically, others a rigorous examination of questions such as "who am I?", some dancing, some prescribe devotional exercises where ultimately the boundaries melt between the worshipper and the object of worship. Whatever the technique or practice, the value implicit is the same: (1) the dissolution of all illusory boundaries between self and other which give rise to the delusory struggle for existence of seemingly separate beings, and (2) a resolution of all into the peace of the one eternal and infinite Self.

In the yoga philosophy the yogi is described in terms of peace. The yogi is characterized in the Bhagavad Gita as "One who does not disturb the peace of the world and one whose peace is not disturbed by the world." The yogic cultivation of this Supreme Peace which is also identified as Supreme Happiness is beautifully described in a series of verses in Chapter Six of the Gita:

"When the subdued relational mind stays in the Self itself, desireless of all desires, then it is said to be united.

"As a lamp set in a windless place does not flicker, such a simile is thought of in regard to a yogi who has brought under restraint his relational mind, ever uniting thus in the union of the Self.

"That state where the relational mind attains tranquillity, restrained through continued cultivation of a yogic attitude, and where also the Self by the Self enjoys happiness;

"That which having obtained, there is no other gain thought of which could be greater in value, in which when established, there is no swerving even by heavy suffering;

"That should be known by the name of yoga - disaffiliation from the context of suffering. Such a yoga should be adhered to with determination, free from spiritual regret.

"Abandoning completely all desires originating in the will for particularized ends, curbing the collection of sense-functionings on every

side -

"Slowly, slowly, activities should be brought to a standstill by reason steadily applied, establishing the mind reflexively in the Self, without thinking of anything whatever.

"Whatever caused the changeful, unsteady mind to go out again and again, from each such, restraining it again and again, it should ever be led to the side of the Self.

"Such a yogi, verily, of calmed mind, of pacified passion, who has become the Absolute, and free from all dross, comes to supreme happiness.

"One whose Self is united by yoga sees the Self as abiding in all beings and all beings as abiding in the Self, everywhere seeing the same.

"By establishing an analogy with the Self, he who sees equality everywhere, whether in pleasant or painful situations, he is considered a perfect yogi."

(Translated by Nataraja Guru)

Another question that arose during our session was, "What are the characteristics of spiritual peace by which it can be recognized in oneself and in another?" Again such a list could be endless, and we recognized that the items we came up with on the spot are suggestive rather than comprehensive. Still they serve as springboards for further self-reflection and observation. The first thing that came up in this regard was an equanimity and even-temperedness which is characterized in the Gita as "one who is the same to foe and friend and also in honor and dishonor, who is the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain and who is free from attachment; to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent in manner, content with whatever happens to come, having no fixed abode (at home anywhere), yet mentally constant" (XII:18, 19).

Other characteristics that were mentioned were lightness, a faith that everything will be all right, a compassion that flows freely like a river, and the ability to allow others total freedom. An interesting factor that was

mentioned was a shift from an instrumental to a sacred perspective of things. The instrumental perspective evaluates things in terms of their utility or accessibility to exploitation, whereas the sacred perspective sees things as intrinsically valuable in themselves.

Finally we spoke of transformation of loneliness into aloneness. Loneliness implies a separation from others, whereas aloneness (an abbreviation for aloneness?) implies a sense that there is no other and that one is all whole within oneself. It is this spiritual sense of aloneness that inspired Henry David Thoreau to write:

"I have a great deal of company in my house; especially in the morning when nobody calls....I am no more lonely than the loon in the pond that laughs so loud or than Walden Pond itself. The sun is alone. God is alone. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook or a dandelion in a pasture, or a bean leaf, or sorrel, or a horse-fly or a bumblebee. I am no more lonely than a weathercock or the north star or the south wind or an April shower, or a January thaw or the first spider in a new house."

Recognizing this subtle paradoxical truth Jules Renard wrote, "There are places and moments in which one is so completely alone that one sees the world entire." This harmoniously echoes the insight of Dr. Carl Jung, who once declared, "When you look within yourself, you will see the infinite stars and the whole universe spread out objectively."

Once again the group spontaneously slipped into a silence which seemed rich with the very spiritual peace about which we had been talking. Out of this silence emerged the question of one member as to why, if the peace of the spirit is a constant given, there is such a grave lack of it in the world. We could only conjecture on the basis of our own experience and what had already been discussed that this is due to an epidemic of mistaken-identity, a widespread ignorance of our true nature, and the anxious fear and restless desire that

results from dualistic notions of separation between self and other, and between self and the world. A passage, spoken by the Indian sage Ramana Maharshi, which sheds much light on the process under question, was read out:

"The body is a mental projection; the mind is the ego; and the ego rises from the Self. So the body-thought is distraction and strays away from the Self. For whom is the body or birth? It is not for the Self, the Spirit. It is for the non-self which imagines itself separate. So long as there is the sense of separation there will be afflicting thoughts. If the original source is regained and the sense of separation is put an end to, there is peace.

"Consider what happens when a stone is thrown up. It leaves its source and is projected up, tries to come down and is always in motion until it regains its source, where it is at rest. So also the waters of the ocean evaporate, form clouds which are moved by winds, condense into water, fall as rain and the waters roll down the hill in streams and rivers, until they reach their original source, the ocean, reaching which they are at peace. Thus, you see, wherever there is a sense of separateness from the source there is agitation and movement until the sense of separateness is lost. So it is with yourself. Now that you identify yourself with the body you think that you are separate from the Spirit - the true Self. You must regain your source before this false identity ceases and you are happy.

"Gold is not an ornament, but the ornament is nothing but gold. Whatever shape the ornament may assume and however different the ornaments are, there is only one reality, namely gold. So also with the bodies and the Self. The single reality is the Self. To identify oneself with the body and yet to seek happiness is like attempting to cross a river on the back of an alligator. The body identity is due to extroversion and the wandering of the mind. To continue in that state will only keep one in an endless tangle and there will be no peace. Seek your source, merge in the Self, and remain all alone."

Before the group dispersed it became evident that we were not yet of a mind to discontinue our weekly sessions although this was to be the finale. The sessions had come to serve as a touchstone and center-piece giving perspective and meaning to much of our daily activity. We agreed unanimously to continue meeting every week with rotating moderators and to continue to share and support our individual and collective aspiration toward the attainment, maintenance and promotion of peace in all of its dimensions.

The session was concluded by the reading out of a passage entitled "Beyond Words" written by the Chinese Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu:

"The universe and I exist together, and all things and I are one. Since all things are one, what room is there for speech? But since I have already used speech to say that all things are one, how can speech not exist? Speech and the One then make two. These two (separately) and the One (the two together) make three. From this point onwards even the best mathematician cannot reach the final number. How much less can ordinary people! If we go from nothing to something and arrive at three, how much more shall we reach if we proceed from something to something. So let us not proceed. Let us stop here. Let us allow things to take their own course." ♦



# Dialogue

*I give you all the flowers of my garden;  
haphazard, wild (and many weeds  
unfortunately which, in my haste  
I pull as well)  
please let them go.*

*And instead, be lightly touched  
by fragrances which drift across  
like birdsong in the bush:*

*it comes and goes, in sparkling waves,  
and translucent, always pure.*

*There are freesias, gardenias,  
geraniums and a rose,  
and pretty pansies,  
their sweet, sunny faces  
delicately exposed.*

*And may lilies and nasturtiums  
float gently past your nose and eyes  
and not pause in their passing;*

*small bells of scent and color  
ringing high and clear,  
and gone at once.*

*And*

*they are not mine to give you anyway  
and will thus evaporate  
into the consciousness from which we came  
but may they touch you, gentle, on the way.*

*Jenya Osborne*



*You say it right  
'they are not for you to give'  
the flowers, the scents  
the visual sensations  
not even their faint evaporation.*

*But your wanting is  
for you to give  
and you give it  
dearest  
in full consciousness  
non-evaporating,  
remaining,  
as a solid beauty  
hanging there  
among deeds  
for all to enjoy  
who brush past.*

*Edda Walker*



# Record Reviews for Big Ears

## Fred Cantor

The *kora* is a traditional instrument from the Gambia in West Africa. The DX-1 is a digital synthesizer from Yamaha of Japan. That these two instruments should meet is interesting in and of itself. That you and I can buy the record, *Village Life*, from Columbia (FC 39870) is a tribute to the clout of Herbie Hancock; that the music works so well is a tribute to his sensitivity as a musician - a sensibility too often hidden in the depths of turntable-scratch Rockitt Band music. The *kora* player is Foday Musa Suso, and the music is clean, uncluttered and refreshing. Most of the themes and melodies are traditional with Herbie providing support and embroidery, but not overstepping the borders.

A cross-cultural dialogue like this one can become overly crowded when too many hands start to play. Following the recording of the Columbia album in Japan in August, 1984, an album was recorded in New York, again featuring Foday Musa Suso, with Herbie Hancock appearing on two tracks. This time, however, there are almost a dozen players. This results in a higher energy level but diminishes the sense of a real dialogue between two master musicians. The band here is called Mandingo and the album title is *Watto Sitta* (Celluloid 6103). Again all songs are written and arranged by Musa Suso, but producer Bill Laswell has made this into a party record - and as such, it's pretty good. If you like King Sunny Ade, you'll enjoy this.

The traditional role of *kora* in the Gambia is praise music, and the greatest praise goes to Allah. The master of this tradition in our lifetimes was Alhaji Bai Konte. He is dead, but his music is available from a 1973 recording now more-or-less available from Rounder Records (RR5001). Rounder is one of the



small independent labels that spare us from the commercial "product" the major labels want us to listen to, and they deserve support.

This album gracefully incorporates all sorts of natural sounds in a folkloric atmosphere, worlds away from the complexity of *Watto Sitta*. Yet the complexity of technique and depth of feeling and communication between the player and his instrument is more strongly felt on this record.

The legacy of Alhaji Bai Konte is continued by his son, Dembo Konte, and his nephew, Malamini Jobarteh, who were both taught by the master. They have been playing the traditional material together all their lives, and a recent recording from London allows us to hear them.

This is the best of all these recordings from a technical point of view, and does an excellent job of capturing the delicacy of the *kora*. If you want to know what the *kora* actually sounds like, this is as close as you're going to find on record. The musicianship is also superb, shining with the true spirit that makes you giggle and say "amen" at the same time. The name of the album is *Jaliya* and it is from our friends at Rounder (RR 5021). This is a brand new release and *can* be ordered.

Listen to a copy of *Village Life*, and if you want to hear more of the *kora*, pester your local record store for *Jaliya*. Good things await your ears. ♦

# How Art Works

Andy Larkin

Some time ago, while rummaging in the deep recesses of a dimly lit bookstore, the present reviewer came upon a large green volume called *The Rare Art Tradition* by Joseph Alsop. Although Alsop is better known for his conservative political commentary during the Vietnam war, this book is a fascinating examination of the phenomenon of art collecting, the function of art and the sociology of art. It was published as part of the famous Bollingen series in 1982.

What is the role of art in society? A number of other writers ranging from Leo Tolstoy and John Ruskin to Harold Rosenberg and Leo Stienberg have discussed the question. Alsop's answer is that art in the modern era functions primarily as a collectable commodity on an art market. While this much seems obvious, Alsop's discussion is unique in its depth and scope, for he has combed the record of human artifacts, from prehistoric hand axes to the latest multiples of Andy Warhol in his effort to understand the phenomenon of collecting and its effect on the function of art through history.

Alsop proposes two great models for viewing how artworks function. The first is "art for-use-plus-beauty," a definition which has prevailed through most of human history in a vast majority of the world's cultures. Included in this category would be utilitarian objects, so-called "ritual" arts, and arts gathered by patrons as treasure. Contrasted to this model are the "rare art traditions" of the title. They are rare because only seldom in human history have the arts become completely detached from a functional context. This situation has occurred only five times according to Alsop: in ancient Greece, in ancient Rome, in China, in

certain parts of the medieval Islamic world, and in western art since the Renaissance. In each of these settings, a higher than usual degree of historical self-consciousness has given rise to the comparative ranking of the works of competing artistic personalities, the accompanying birth of art history as a discipline of study, art collecting and an art market, museums, forgeries and a notion of the antique. The avant-garde arises to throw off the imprisoning canons which each new art-historical revaluation, endorsed by the market, creates. Alsop cites the example of an artist of Tang dynasty China, who dipped his long hair in ink and used his head as a paint brush. In the Chinese rare art tradition, as in the modern western one, novelty had become a measure of artistic success.

Other critics, like Coomaraswamy, have gone further in condemning the modern art situation as being thoroughly abnormal. These writers point out that the divorce of art from industry has left the world full of unartistically mass-produced trash, and that modern artists, with their market and media induced self-consciousness, constantly risk being co-opted and divorced from their inner voice. Alsop, while he agrees with this assessment, adopts a more whimsical attitude. Frankly, this is to his credit. Arguments like this can be honed to a very cynical edge, for in the end, they become, through their obsessive focus on one idea, oblivious to the real possibilities even a "post Renaissance" work of art can contain.

If, according to the foregoing arguments, modern art fails to function reasonably, Alsop's big green book has functioned admirably to prop up our T.V.

set at the end of our bed. And it was on the tube that we one night beheld a kind of antidote to these ruminations: a Broadway musical, Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*.

The title refers to George Seurat, the great French pointillist painter, neglected during his own lifetime, who died at age 31. The show is about the creation of his greatest painting, "*La Grande Jatte*" which depicts a park full of *fin-de-siecle* Parisians done with millions of tiny dot-like brush strokes. In this musical the people in the painting are all characters in the show; the sets of the show are details of the painting, continually being lifted or dropping back into view as they recombine in George's driven imagination. He's a fanatic worker and this completely frustrates his girlfriend, who can't understand him or his seemingly inhuman distance. George finishes the painting; she marries another. George dies.

The second half of the play concerns George's great-grandson, who is a successful New York artist, coincidentally also named George.

George the younger is in fact very talented but he's let success go to his head. We get a glimpse of his withering inner world during a long musical soliloquy at a cocktail party, where he sings of the methods he uses to get grants and get his work shown. But certain people, an elderly critic and George's assistant, are wise to the way things are actually going. George is commissioned to do a commemorative piece about his great-grandfather on the site of his forebear's painting, the island of La Grande Jatte, now an industrial slag-heap. Only one tree remains of the landscape that George Seurat had painted. While young George muses on this lone tree, he enters a visionary state, conversing with the re-embodied characters of the painting, who confess all that Seurat and the painting have taught them about life, about value, about love.

Normally, the present reviewer hates musicals. But, for all its corniness, this one caused the tears to flow. What is so impressive about *Sunday in the Park*

with George isn't anything about the musical itself. As musicals go, its probably O.K. The stunning thing is the loving communion through space and time of a great appreciator, Stephen Sondheim, with a great artist, George Seurat. Here a true appreciation, like a true commentary on a sacred text, has given life, has sanctified the original and given it rebirth.

Many thousands of visitors to the Art Institute of Chicago see "*La Grande Jatte*" every year. For each of these viewers, what untold possibilities lie latent in the canvas? The repeated failure of the communion does no damage at all the ever new possibility that the communion will occur. When the creative touch of the artist meets the truly creative beholding eye, a wonderment that transcends time and space can actualize.

Society may become increasingly artless. Art may become socially irrelevant. But is the meaning or function of art something gauged against greater or lesser social relevance, or is its meaning inward and perennial? The present writer here begs the indulgence of the reader while he "California backstrokes" into the sunset, leaving both of these interesting works strongly recommended. ♦



# East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



Guru Nitya returned to Fernhill Gurukula from Singapore in April, then traveled briefly in Kerala before returning to inaugurate a month-long East-West University seminar in music. The seminar participants included our Dean of Music, Scott Teitsworth, Deborah Buchanan, and their daughter Emily, from Portland, Oregon, Anusha and Sujatha Nathan from Singapore, classical music teacher Surendran and other musicians and students from north and south India.

Guru's current projects include translation and commentary of the *Brahma Sutras*, one of the primary texts of Advaita Vedanta philosophy, final preparation of his translation and commentary on Sankara's mystical poem, *Saundārya Lahari* (Upsurging Billows of Beauty) which will be serialized in upcoming issues of *GURUKULAM*, and further work on Narayana Guru's *Svānubhāvagīti* (Experiential Mysticism Sung as a Song of Exaltation). His many writing projects will be facilitated by the new HCL computer, nicknamed Jyothi, which has just been installed at the Fernhill Gurukula.

The cataloguing of the . 6000 volume East-West University Library at Brahmadevya Mandir in Varkala has recently been completed. All the wood

necessary for the construction of the second floor walls, windows and doors has been delivered and Muni Narayana Prasad is busy with collection of funds to cover carpentry and lumber costs.

Mangala Press in Varkala is currently printing Nataraja Guru's *Search for a Norm in Western Thought*. Their next project will be Nataraja Guru's *Memorandum on World Government* together with Guru Nitya's *Memorandum on Self-Government*, published in *GURUKULAM* First Quarter, 1985.

Computers have also been installed at Portland and Bainbridge Island Gurukulas to do both the type-setting and lay-out for *GURUKULAM*, which has greatly improved the production process, as well as many details of the magazine format. The same equipment will also provide the first step in word processing/typesetting for our book publishing projects.

Island Gurukula Āranya celebrated its fifth anniversary and Guru Puja on July 6th, with homam, readings from scriptures and mystics of all religions, group singing and drawing, and a wonderful east-west feast. Friends from Portland and Indiana, as well as Thomas Palakeel from Kerala, currently studying at Eastern Washington University, also joined in the day's celebration. ♦

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55: Symbols by Guru Nitya and Nataraja  
Guru

56: Photograph of Guru Puja at Island  
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# East-West University and Narayana Gurukula Publications

By Nataraja Guru

An Integrated Science of the Absolute (Volumes I, II, III)  
Towards a One World Economics  
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Other

Dhyāna Mañjūṣā  
Nataraja Guru's 90th Birthday Souvenir  
East-West University Yearbooks - 1978 and 1981  
Functional Democracy - Muni Narayana Prasad  
The Philosophy of Śrī Narayana Guru - Dr. S. Omana  
A World Academy of Wonder - J.L. Ascharyacharya  
The Blessing of Being Not Educated - Peter Oppenheimer  
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What Narayana Guru is Not - Nancy Yeilding

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