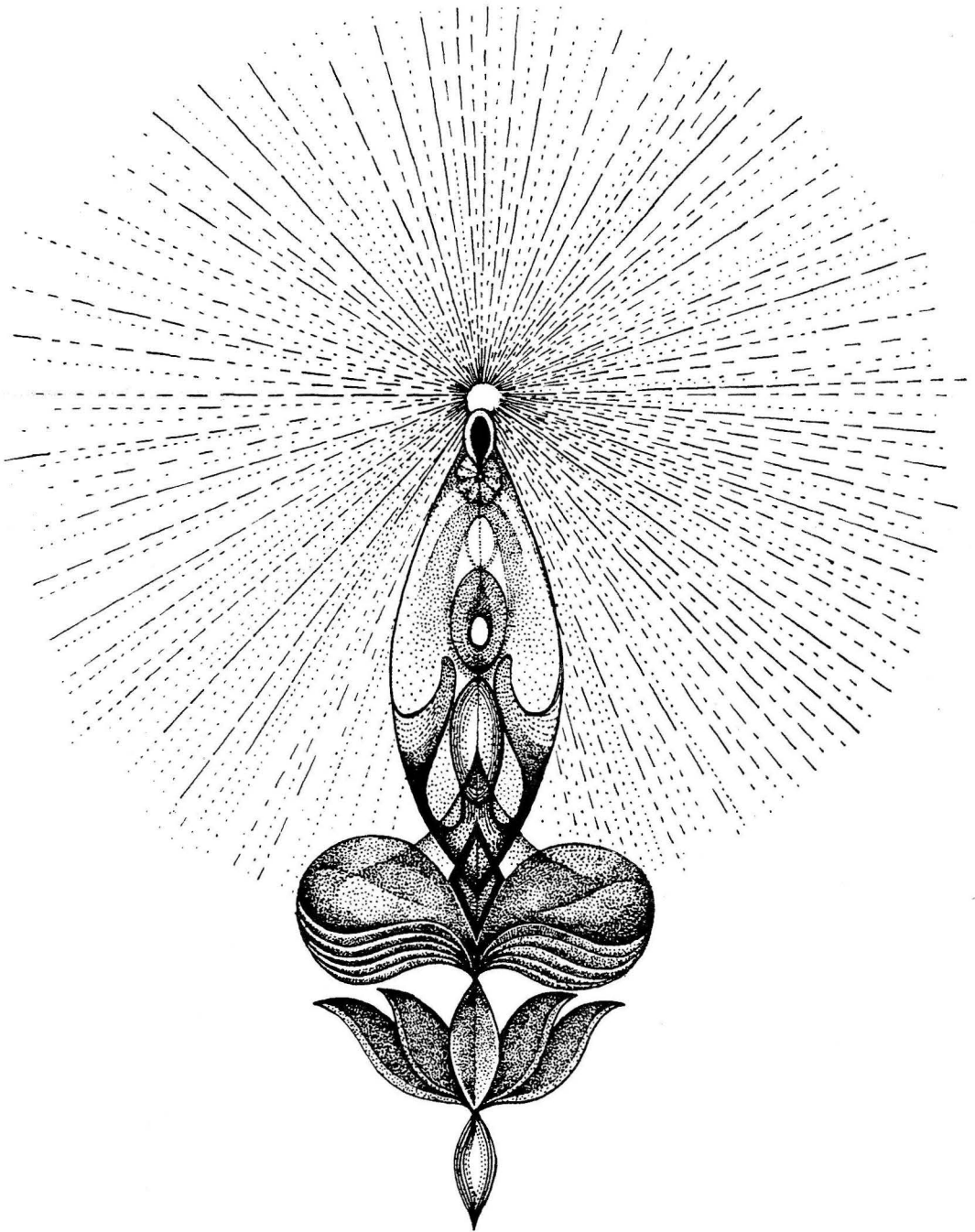
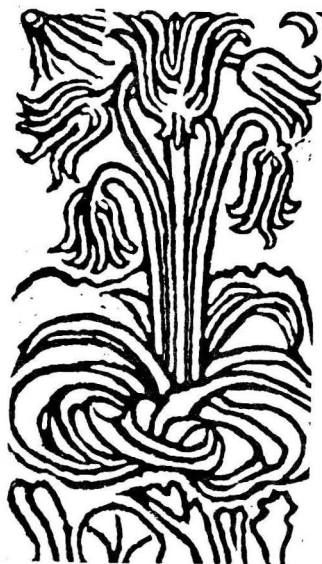


GURUKULAM

VOLUME III • 1987

SECOND QUARTER





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GURUKULAM

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COVER: Drawing by Andy Larkin

Pearls of Beauty

Little Narayana, "Nanu," never liked being indoors. The thick mud walls of the hut had no windows so it was always dark inside. The coconut-thatched roof provided some shade but little real protection from the heat of the tropical sun. The smell of sweat and coconut oil mixed with smoke from cooking fires created an atmosphere which he found suffocating. He much preferred being outside, walking on the thin paths raised up between the rice paddies, dabbling his feet in the irrigation streams, or sitting in the shade of the coconut trees where occasional breezes brought fragrances of the jungle and relief from the heat.

So he was happy when it came time for his education to begin and his father asked him to sit beside him outside. In the sand under the palm trees, Madan Asan wrote the letters of their Malayalam alphabet, then held Nanu's hand and traced the curling figures until Nanu could do it by himself. A farmer, Madan Asan also was educated in traditional fields, both folk and classical. He was respected in the community as a knowledgeable man. It was natural that he should be his son's teacher, passing on to Nanu not only the Malayalam language, but also the ancient sciences of medicine and astrology. As he grew older, Nanu was also taught Sanskrit, the language in which a great heritage of literary masterpieces and philosophical treatises had been preserved through ages. He learned to chant the great epics, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, and memorized texts related to both literature and philosophy. His education was then considered complete.

As Nanu grew, he became aware of a whole network of superstition and prescribed behavior which divided society

into groups and doomed many to lives of ignorance and poverty. Although his family participated in some reform efforts, they also observed some of the worst traditions. Nanu's sensitive nature rebelled against such practices and he protested in gentle ways, often simply ignoring the barriers and freely associating with all.

He continued to spend as much time as possible outside, helping with family chores such as planting and tending a vegetable garden, grazing the cows and plowing. He dug a well, then planted fragrant and flowering trees and bushes around it. Keeping company with nature fostered in him a sensitivity to her many forms of beauty. Following her lures, he roamed the countryside, hiking many miles through the jungle and along inland waterways. Often, he would rise and go out very early, preferring to go without food and to feast instead on the singular beauty of a lotus opening to the sun. Or, entranced by moonlight sparkling on the ocean, he would spend the night on the beach rather than return to the confines of the hut. He often felt that his very soul flowed out until he became one with the beautiful scene around him, remaining for hours in a peaceful bliss.

As he wandered he ruminated, chanting the verses of poetry and philosophy he had memorized. He yearned to know more of the unfading splendor and timeless balm for suffering of which they spoke. Devotion to that unknown source grew in him as days went by. Gradually, the songs of his own heart also took shape as poetry. One day an uncle chanced upon him as he sat singing on the branch of a tree. Realizing that the beautiful hymn was the young man's own composition, Nanu's uncle decided that

further education should be arranged for him. Nanu spent the next four years studying poetry, drama and literary criticism with a well-respected teacher, Raman Pillai Asan. During this time, he lived away from home where he continued his habit of studying, composing and chanting outside while he grazed his teacher's cows.

As he matured, his sensitivity to beauty naturally extended to the young women he encountered. How much more attractive than the lotus was the flowering of a young woman's smile and how much more engaging than the sheen of moonlight was the light of a young woman's glance. But such encounters were few since social contact between unmarried men and women was virtually forbidden. His friends' practice of composing erotic poetry to express their longings and frustrations did not appeal to him. He saw such pursuits as distractions from the search for the source of beauty to which he felt increasingly drawn. He wanted to discover if there were any truth to the promise of a deeper meaning of life.

On the eve of leaving the school, he asked a friend to give him a small copper pot like those usually carried by wandering mendicants. Instead of being content to be buffeted about on the surface of the ocean of ignorance, enjoying its pleasures and suffering its woes, he expressed his wish to sink down into it to collect pearls from the bottom and present them in the pot for the welfare of the world. After reluctantly returning home, he made a final break from his family and society. He spent some time in the company of a yoga teacher, then set off for a long so-

jour in the solitude of the jungle where he could sink undisturbed to the depths of his own consciousness.

When he returned from the silence of those years, the pot was indeed full of pearls. Wherever he sat, people would come to be healed by his serene presence. Wherever he walked, they felt the bracing atmosphere of truth and justice and were encouraged to rid themselves of the bonds of ignorance and oppression. Whenever he spoke, his sweet compassion evoked confidence and loving kindness in others. Whenever he sang his compositions, his listeners came to know of the timeless light and beauty within them. Nanu, Narayana, had become a *guru*, a dispeller of darkness. He continued to move freely for the rest of his life, not only outside dark huts, but outside all the darkness of superstition and social convention. And, as he wandered, he continued to compose and chant.

Four different times his compositions took the form of a set of one hundred verses. Two of these, *Ātmapadeśa Śatakam* and *Darśana Mālā*, are the culminating wisdom-instruction of one who has discovered the source and become filled with radiant inner awareness. Two others, *Śiva Śatakam* and *Svānubhavadgītī Śatakam* (which begins in this issue) contain all the agonies of the search, revealing to the seeker the mysteries of the process of transformation. Here, Narayana Guru stands together with us as seekers, giving voice to our suffering and yearning and joyously singing of the brilliance with which we are filled and surrounded.

Nancy Yeilding

He whose Self is subdued, whose attachment and aversion are both within the sway of the Self, although his senses still move amidst sense-interests -- he wends toward a state of spiritual clarity. By spiritual clarity there takes place the effacement for him of all sufferings.

Bhagavad Gita II: 64-65

Svānubhavagīti Śatakam:

Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Rose and jasmine flowers have a very pleasing fragrance. Rotten fish and deteriorated meat stink. Both the stink and the sweet fragrance are sensations conveyed to the brain by the nose. The flower fragrance is discerned to be pleasing, and the stink is discerned to be unpleasant. These evaluations (value ratings) are said to be a function of the mind.



But where is the mind? Nobody knows where it sits. Rose and jasmine flowers are things, as are rotten fish and meat. The body with its various faculties is also a thing. The odor of a physical thing is conveyed by molecules. In fact, what happens is only a molecular rearrangement of things through the interaction of one thing with another. As a superimposition upon that, we postulate a substanceless thing called "mind" as a constituent of the experiencing of odor.

This is surprising. If there is nothing other than the physical interaction between pieces of matter, how is it that a man in deep sleep does not experience either sweet fragrances or bad smells even when objects that can cause the sensation of odor are placed before his nostrils? Is a sleeping man's mind intact? What is missing in him? What is that extra something which is pressed into service when a person wakes up?

If the value-discerning principle is mind, where and in what state does it remain when a person has no consciousness?

Suppose a person is only under the effect of an anesthetic and he is watching an operation that is being performed on his own body. While he sees the surgeon rip open his body and make stitches, does he have a mind that is quite conscious to experience? The only difference is the absence of pain or pleasure. The effect of anesthesia is caused by the presence of certain chemicals which interfere with the communications of the nerve impulses involved in sensation. Here also we have no evidence of any mind functioning as such when the bio-chemistry of the body undergoes certain changes.

Our present understanding of physiology and the bio-chemistry of nerve impulses is fairly adequate to explain most of the sensations we experience and how certain chemical interactions, particularly of potassium and sodium, are mainly responsible for sending impulses from any part of the body to the central nervous system. What is surprising is the collective effect of the participation of a number of brain cells which, when firing together, can vary in their patterned complexes and be experienced as consciousness that is presented both as sensations and as representative models of verbal explanations. For thousands of years we have attributed those effects to a separate entity called mind.

But that has amounted to the creation of a ghost in this self-conscious organism.

When a candle burns, the flame looks stationary while its light is seen as a radiance filling a room. The light has no particular shape, and it can be seen as distinct from the candle, so we say, "a burning candle and its light." When the same phenomena is more critically examined, we can easily see that the light belongs entirely to the radiation of the flame which in its turn is a conversion of the fat and the burning wick of the candle. The quality of the flame is entirely different from the quality of wax and fiber. The quality of light is also entirely different from the quality of flame. So there is justification for using three separate terms such as candle, flame and light. In a similar way, we press into service the pragmatic dynamics of language when we speak of body, electrical impulse, sensation, consciousness of sensation, and the mind which is conscient or inconscient.



The power of language is exaggerated in this context by unnecessarily bringing in one imaginary word to give cohesion to several imaginations. There is no harm in being luxurious in the use of words, but the generation of an extra phenomenon out of such word complexes has now led to an incredible field where word proliferation has gone into several tangents that spell tragedy. The new field of psychopathology, the

classification of diseases and gimmicks for psychotherapy, has grown into unhealthy proportions of gigantic distortions in which hundreds of insubstantial imaginations are based on equally unsubstantiated speculations. Hence, people who are not used to critical reflection hardly distinguish fiction from fact.

We have now come to a critical stage in the understanding and appreciation of psychosomatics. It has become necessary to evolve a meticulously examined epistemology to accommodate the physical and the idea of the physical, and both are to be made relevant and meaningfully cohesive as aspects of a unitive system in which all parts can be equally real and lend support to each other.

Of all the physical, chemical, and physiological functions of the organism only a very small percentage are voluntary. Almost ninety nine percent of bodily functions are carried out by the autonomous system. A similar system is shared by all living organisms subject to the same biological laws. The rotation and revolution of planet earth bring periodic changes of season and the alternation of day and night. Similarly, even apparently conscious changes in our moods are basically controlled and regulated by the cosmic system to which we belong.

Thus on one side we have the enormous system of the physical ranging from our toe-nails to the countless galaxies which seem to exist outside our own galactical system, and on the other side is the unfathomed and uncharted mystery into which we should probe for the substantiation of the idea of a personal self, a universal Self, and even God.

Among earthbound living beings we see heliotropic organisms which come to active life when the sun rises and in whom energy becomes depleted when the sun has gone. As the night advances, geotropic animals and plants become energetic and begin their natural activities. Man is not an exception to this natural rhythm of earth's biosphere. Many natural instincts in man, like hunger, thirst, and libidinal urges, are shared by all living species. Only man has falsified such needs with extra sophistication.

It is the quality of sensation which mostly determines both the personal and interpersonal behavioral patterns of man. Pleasure and pain, followed by attraction and repulsion, fashion the instrumentality of life. Man gives his attention to an object in accordance with the tension that is generated in him, mostly by the autonomous biological function. Such devices can to a great extent be defensive. Only where the manipulation of a device has to incorporate sensory data and the appraisal of a factual situation does consciousness become more and more prominent. It seems that there is a certain natural economy deeply ingrained in a living organism so that the manifestation of consciousness happens only where a physiological function cannot be entirely controlled by the autonomous system.

A pivotal operation to increase the efficiency of the functioning



of a organism rests upon the mechanism of conditioning. When Pavlov first brought it to people's attention that "conditioned reflex" is largely employed as part of the learning process, many physiologists and later psychologists accepted that discovery as a landmark in the understanding of behavior. It is thus evident that the conscious behavior of a person and the experiencing of moods such as elation and depression are all part and parcel of biological functioning. It is rather arbitrary to chip off a part, giving to it a separate mandate as "mental." Basically, all functions, whether autonomous or voluntary, are carried out with the generation and release of electrical energy which is accelerated or retarded in many ways. We still do not know the exact nature of the controlling power within nor the exact relationship between chemical and electrical consolidations.

Unfortunately, with the phenomenal growth of what is presently known as psychology, factual aspects of consciousness are mixed up with fictions generated in pathological systems which have given room for wild speculations. Today mind is looked upon as a labyrinth with many secret chambers and as the repository of countless Pandora's boxes. A number of so-called mental diseases are fabricated on the basis of hunches, and therapeutic measures that have been proliferated by the so-called psychologists have only imaginary grounds. Much worse is the invention of highly poisonous drugs which can act only at a physiological level but are imagined to be curative of moods and tendencies. Anxiety, oppressive compulsions, inhibitions, boredom, agitation, emotional outbursts and disorientation are all looked upon as growing in the mind just like weeds or rice or barley grow in their respective fields.

"Know thyself" is a great dictum honored by philosophers of all countries through all time. In the course of time the idea of self became replaced by the idea of mind. Now it seems as if everybody's pursuit is to investigate the mysteries of the mind. As every year hundreds of doctoral theses are added to the already existing theories of mind, psychology is becoming an unwieldy, pretentious science in which no two psychologists can agree with each other.

It is in this dangerous world of bombast and speculation that we are rocked by highly compulsive urges which are intertwined with our sexual needs. Due credit should be given to Sigmund Freud who considered sex as the hub around which life spins. For this reason and for the purpose of stabilizing a certain harmony, Narayana Guru presents the incomprehensible dynamic of sex as the foremost subject to be discussed in his *Hundred Verses on Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence*.

Introduction to Verses 1-10

The first ten verses of this work are called *Mananatitam*, meaning "beyond comprehension." They deal with the compulsive urge to relate sexually with a desired person and the varieties of experience which a person undergoes at different levels of consciousness.

Conscious volition is felt and exercised only much after the organism is set to move in a certain direction in accordance with a motivation that is unconsciously interjected into the whole system. It will be to our advantage to consider the Indian view of the relationship between spirit and matter, *cit* and *jada*. The mind/matter or spirit/matter duality is termed differently by various Indian schools: *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, *śiva* and *śakti*, *caitanya* and *jada*, *brahman* and *maya*, *para* and *apara*, *svatantra* and *paratantra*. In all these pairs one factor stands for consciousness and the other for the object of consciousness or the animated instrument. *Puruṣa*, spirit, is conceived of as the source of all awareness; it has within it none of the qualities that can be attributed to *prakṛti*, nature.

As in Leibnizian Monadology, there is a gradation in the degree of the presence of spirit influencing matter. The Western notion of matter is substituted by the substantiality of a procreative nature, *prakṛti*, which, like a mirror, has a quality of receiving the light of consciousness from the spirit with varying degrees of clarity. The most clear mirroring in nature comes from the *sattva* aspect. At another level the clarity is lost and various kinds of distortion set in. This is the area of *rajas*. Finally it ends up in a dark area of opacity, *tamas*. These three areas of interaction between spirit (*cit*) and nature (*jada*) are what is experienced by human beings as the mind.



Instead of treating the phenomenon of specifically manifesting consciousness as one single entity, Indians think of a four-fold inner organ belonging to the body but constituted of subtle things-in-themselves (*tanmatra*). *Tanmatra* means "that which is measured only by itself." The four-fold aspects are : 1) the interrogative aspect of consciousness, 2) the recall of memory, 3) the faculty of judgement and value-assessment, and 4) the affective consciousness of the individual which is the main mechanism for molding all actions and reactions into a conditioned state. The core of this last faculty operates during the wakeful and dream states as the ego-orientation of the individual. The homogeneity of consciousness that is common to all manifestations of spirit and to spirit itself, as such, is the link between the universal and the

specific.

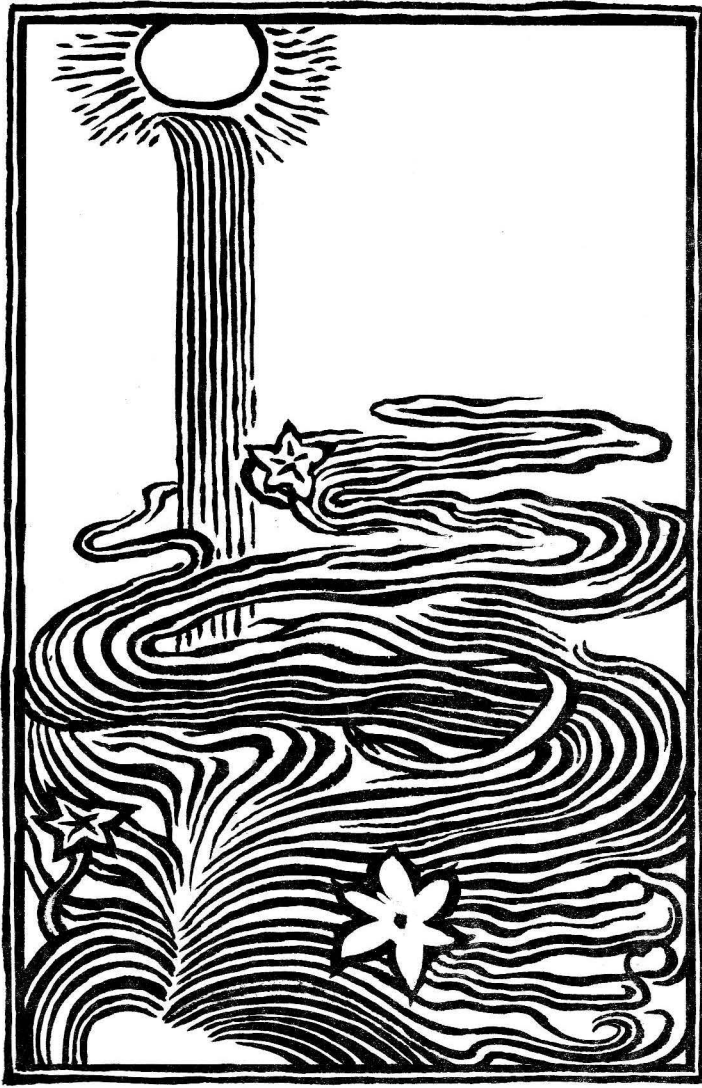
In the present work the spirit is extolled by giving it the attributes of the Absolute and addressing it as "Lord Śiva." Nature, or what we nowadays call the psychosomatic system, is looked upon as a female principle of the Absolute. Most Indian theories have been developed in the form of mythological stories and allegorical descriptions of personified principles. The interlocking of spirit and matter, for instance, is looked upon as Śakti sharing the left half of the body of Śiva, whereby the Absolute becomes androgynous. In this concept, the libido or sexual affinity of all living organisms is imperative. The right half of Śiva's body, which is free of nature's complementarity or reciprocation, symbolizes freedom. The left half, permeated with the presence of Śakti, is thought of as symbolizing necessity from which arise all forms of inhibition and obsession experienced at both the conscious and unconscious levels.

The opening theme of this work highlights the contradiction between the right and left which is paralleled in the modern theories of the left and the right hemispheres of the brain which are said to function differently. The theme is not a new one. The Greeks also have many legendary stories of a person being claimed simultaneously by the goddess Artemis, who represents celibacy and wisdom, and by Aphrodite, who represents erotics and the coupling of lovers.

Our intention in writing the English rendering and commentary of *Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence* is to de-emphasize the mythical and legendary references and make this treatise easy to read for those who are not familiar with the archaic mystical styles of Indian writing. However, we do not want to sacrifice the mystical insights of this work, even when they come clothed in allegorical and poetic language, because such language has the power to lead one from the prosaic and rational methods of scientific thinking into the deeper layers of imperiential transcendence.

Verse 1

Infatuated with the dark tresses of pretty maidens,
with my wits lost, this worthless slave lives here in confusion.
Separated from thy tender feet and forgetting
your compassion which streams forth as Ganga,
what right do I have to prolong my wasteful life?



This verse begins with a mythical reference to the dark tresses of females which are distracting the mind of the supplicant from the flower-like tender feet of the Lord, Śiva. There is an implied polarity here between the attraction of nature and the attraction of the spirit. Two mythological stories are epitomized in this reference:

There came a king, Bhagīratha by name, in the dynasty of the emperor Sāgara. In one of his wanderings he saw a number of ghosts, famished without food and thirsty without drink, lying with their heads down and lamenting their fate. On seeing the king, these dead souls appealed to him to come to their rescue. They all belonged to the family of Sāgara. They could be restored to their normal state only if

the heavenly river Ganga could be brought to the earth. This was not an easy task, but Bhagīratha promised to help. He did penance for a thousand years, propitiating the river goddess Ganga. When the goddess finally appeared, she agreed to bring the river but was afraid that its force might wash away the earth, which after all is only a clod of mud. She wanted the fall of the river to be broken by the strong head of Śiva who would have to stand with his two feet strongly planted on the high Himalaya mountains while he received the river on his head.

Bhagīratha had to do penance for another thousand years to propitiate Śiva in order to get his consent to receive Ganga on his head. Finally Ganga came upon the head of Śiva with terrific force. Śiva received all the water into the locks of his matted hair. Not even a single drop escaped. This made the dead souls even more unhappy.

Bhagīratha again did penance for a thousand years to get Ganga released from the matted hair of Śiva. Finally Śiva released her. For the safety of the world, Śiva has to maintain the same position until Ganga drains off completely. This puts Śiva to the terrific task of standing firm for millions of years. This task is comparable to the adventure of Atlas who is supposed to be holding the earth on his shoulders even today.

In this verse the supplicant bemoans his fate that he has been distracted from the refuge of the Lord's feet, having been attracted by the fragrance of dark tresses of pretty women. The sweet-scented dark tresses of the female have allusion to another mythological story:

When Śiva's consort Parvati came to know of women perfuming their hair and placing sweetly scented flowers in their locks, she asked for Śiva's boon to have her hair a natural fragrance which would surpass all sweet smells. Another boon allowed her to share one half of the Lord's body (left side) from within. Śiva's one attribute which distinguishes him from all other gods is his transcendence of specific qualities. So it is a contradiction that the attributeless Śiva has sitting right within his personality a female with the most mundane of all properties - fragrance, which is said to be the special quality of earth.

As in the Greek stories in which many a valiant hero is caught between the pulls and pushes of Artemis and Aphrodite, the supplicant is caught between the most earthly and selfish desire to enjoy sex and the ultimate desire to be one with the eternally transcendent Śiva and enjoy total release from the mundane.

It is significant that life on earth is presided over by the sun that shines in the far off firmament. The sun is called *prasvara* (profoundly and repeatedly heralding), because he seems to be going around the earth rousing all beings from sleep and programming all heliotropic animals to perform their daily chores. When dawn heralds the coming of the sun, the flowers in the garden bloom, and the bees come out to pollinate the flowers and to gather honey and pollen. Thus

two species of different orders symbiotically help each other to increase their progeny. Although the sun is far removed from the proliferating drama of life on earth, it unintentionally becomes the promoter of nature's programs. Similarly, Śiva is always established in his unshakeable state of meditation, but as he is the Lord of Nature, the increase of life on earth through the act of erotics is happening with his tacit consent.

According to legends, when Kama, the god of eros, first aimed his darts of erotics at Śiva, he was burned to ashes with the fire from Śiva's third eye. Afterwards, to appease Parvati, Śiva allowed the god of love to continue as a bodiless being. He is said to be protected by Parvati, residing in her vagina. In the present verse many such mythological allusions are all crowded into the allegory of the fragrant locks of the female's hair and the reference to the tender feet of Lord Śiva.

In the Upaniṣads it is admitted that of all pleasures erotics is the most irresistible and supreme. In the hypnosis of infatuation and erotic ecstasy, one forgets one's own body. A person involved in that situation is reduced to a state of pure ecstasy, *ānanda*. According to Greek legends, God's first creation was neither man nor woman. It was a lump, like a ball, which was both male and female. This self-contained being bumped about as a veritable ball of ecstasy. It had no remembrance of God, so the Creator split it into two halves, one male and one female. From that day, man has sought woman and woman has sought man. When the two meet, they embrace with great love. In the ecstasy of consummation they forget everything. It is the desire for this state of ecstasy that is alluded to here as the trap in which the supplicant is caught.

The reference to fragrance is further suggestive. The cause of bondage, according to Hindu philosophy, is the essence of one's previous karma. That essence is called *vāśana*. *Vāśana* is also a synonym of fragrance. All lower forms of life are said to be guided by the smell of their love-object. In the present case the fragrance comes from the female's locks of hair. Indian women apply scented oil to their hair, and one erotic conditioning that a male is subjected to comes from the smell of his spouse's hair.

The reciprocity and complementarity between Śiva and Parvati is well-balanced between the contradiction of the realms they rule - immanence and transcendence. The supremacy of the Absolute comes recurringly with the cancellation of all forms of duality. Nature subjects all to the devastating dictates of death. Like the Phoenix, nature resurrects from the ashes of its own destruction. Thus the entire theme of life on earth is summarized in this one verse. It touches all four aspects of the internal structure of the Absolute: reciprocity, complementarity, contradiction and cancellation.

(Continued in next issue.)

Katha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

II.1

*That which is good beyond
here and now (sreyas)
is one thing and that which
is good here and now (preyas)
is another. Of these two,
he who chooses the former
is superior and he who
chooses the latter fails in
his aim in life.*

On seeing that Nachiketas is steadfast in his decision and no promise of worldly gain can dissuade him, Death becomes pleased with him. He glorifies Nachiketas' discriminating power and sense of value. Man leads his life while all other animals simply live. Leading life with an end in view is the distinguishing characteristic of human beings. The end in view is determined by what one thinks is most valuable in life. One's way of life depends on one's value notion which can be understood as coming under one of two categories. Owning as many objects of enjoyment as possible, having a healthy body and a long life span, having a good reputation and reputable progeny are all worldly values in which most people are interested. This category of value concept is called *preyas* in Sanskrit.

But there are a few who think that becoming aware of the meaning of life and realizing that meaning in the actual

process of living has more value and will ensure ultimate happiness. Because of their interest in this Supreme Value, their interests in worldly values recede and gradually disappear just like stars disappear in the sky when the sun shines in its full glory. This is called *sreyas* here.

Whether it is *preyas* or *sreyas*, we are bound to whatever we are interested in. Only the manner of bondage differs. Being bound to *sreyas* brings final release from all bondage. That is why it is glorified here as *sadhu* (good or superior). But the one who is bound to worldly values lives unaware of the meaning of life. Such a person does not 'live' in the real sense of the word in the human context. In other words, he deprives himself of life. Nachiketas, in his last boon, chose to be bound to *sreyas* which Yama glorifies in the next mantra.

II : 2

*Both sreyas and preyas
approach man to be chosen
and to be accepted by him.
The wise one, after due
discrimination
differentiates them and
chooses sreyas rather than
preyas. But the stupid one,
being very acquisitive and
conserving by nature,
chooses preyas.*

Sreyas and *preyas* approach man to be chosen. Man does not go in search of either of them. From what is presented, each person chooses what is most valuable and acceptable to him. The Sanskrit word for man is *manuṣya*. It is derived from the root *man* which means 'to brood on'. The word *manuṣya* means 'one who thinks persistently'. By persistent thinking, man is able to differentiate right from wrong, good from evil, acceptable from unacceptable.

Man does not have to accept everything that is presented before him. There is a whole range to choose from, with worldly pleasures at one end and the realization of Self-happiness at the other. It is man's ability to think which enables him to decide where to point his attention. One's thinking power can lead one to either *preyas* or *sreyas*, but one's thinking is guided by one's value notion. That is why it is stated here that the wise one differentiates between the entire range of attractions presented to him.

Such a wise one is here called *dhīra*. *Dhī* means intelligence. One who is intelligent is called *dhīra*. The word *dhīra* can also mean brave. A real *dhīra* is one who fixes his intelligence fully in what he considers to be of highest value. One is called brave when one is inexorable in his sense of value and acts accordingly. A real *dhīra* or a wise one gives highest value to Freedom, called *mukti* or *mokṣa* in Sanskrit. *Preyas* will always be a hindrance on the way to Freedom. *Sreyas*, though a kind of bondage, always leads to Freedom.

One question arises here. It is stated that both *sreyas* and *preyas* pose before man to be accepted. But all do not either attain Freedom through *sreyas* or enjoy worldly pleasures. There are many who live miserably, not attaining Freedom. There are also many who live in indigence and are unable to choose *preyas*. Why is this?

Though *sreyas* is presented to everyone, it is not always chosen. Only those who feel the need to lead life with an

awareness of its meaning and know that that meaning is beyond the range of momentary pleasures have the courage to accept *sreyas*. Such brave ones (*dhīras*) are very rare. The Bhagavad Gita reminds us of the same when it says:

"Among thousands of men, one per chance strives for perfection. Even among the striving who have attained, one per chance knows Me according to proper principles." (VII. 3)

It is not that *sreyas* is not offered. It is not accepted, either because man is not capable of seeing it, or because he is not wise and brave enough to choose it.

Choosing *preyas* does not require any special quality on the part of the chooser. Man's covetousness is only an extension of the animal instinct for self-preservation. Man is always covetous of wealth, wife and children. These are called the three *ēśanas* (intense desires), i.e., *vittēśana*, *darēśana*, and *puttrēśana*. The world of *preyas* approaches man on its own to be chosen by him. Even though man desires the values of *preyas*, some have to live in poverty. At the beginning of the *Īśa Upaniṣad* a question is asked, "Whose is this wealth?" It is nobody's. Or it is everybody's. Man forgets this and grasps the *preyas* that is before him as if it is his alone; as a result the next man is denied the right to choose it. What is stated in the *Upaniṣad* is fully correct. Man has gone wrong in the way he practices it in life.

II. 3

O Nachiketas, you, being such, meditating on desires which are very dear and also of very dear form, renounced them. You did not accept the garland (bondage) in the form of wealth in which many people get enmeshed.

In the last stanza Nachiketas was depicted as one who chooses only *sreyas* when *sreyas* and *preyas* both present themselves. Yama here praises his wisdom and courage. Something can be longed for because of its use value or its aesthetic value. What Yama had offered to Nachiketas was a royal life, matchless in dearness both in use value and aesthetic value. But such a life only has the value of a flower garland which is very beautiful to look at for just a few moments before becoming unattractive and worthless. Yama glorifies this understanding of Nachiketas.

II. 4

*Widely opposite and difficult
to bridge are what is known
as ignorance and what is
known as knowledge.
Though many desirables
were offered, nothing
could distract you.*

The duality of *vidya* and *avidya* (knowledge and ignorance) is brought in here. While the duality between *sreyas* and *preyas* relates to one's goal in life, this duality is more concerned with the

means adopted to achieve that end. It is one's value notion that induces one to discriminate between options. The wise and brave one always chooses *sreyas*. This is not to be understood in the sense that people always discriminate between the two and then choose one of them. If they are discriminating they choose only *sreyas*. Those who do not discriminate always choose *preyas*. Ignorance, *avidya*, veils the need to discriminate. Those who are under the spell of *avidya* mistake *preyas* for *sreyas* (the ultimate aim). There are also some who discriminate between *sreyas* and *preyas*, but who are not brave enough to fix their interest on *sreyas*. They are also under the spell of ignorance. Reasoning power alone will not help one to escape this ignorance. It is also necessary to persevere in pursuing what one thinks really valuable. That is why the difference between *vidya* and *avidya* is portrayed here as *visuci*, difficult to bridge.

Nachiketas does have a desire, the desire for *vidya* or knowledge. That is why the other desires do not distract him. This does not mean that he rejects the joys of life which he naturally experiences. But he does not desire them and think about how to achieve them. Even in their presence, his interest is only in *sreyas*.

(Continued in next issue.)

BURSTING WITH JOY
MY HEART OVERFLOWING
IS BROKEN
LIKE THE CRYSTAL GLASS
HELD IN MY HAND

Albert D'Ossche

The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sūtra I:8

*viparyayaḥ mithyājñānam
atad rūpa pratiṣṭham*

viparyayaḥ: unreal cognition
mithyā: of the unreal
jñānam: knowing
atad: not its own
rūpa: form
pratiṣṭham: occupying

Unreal cognition is the knowing of the unreal, possessing a form not its own.

In empirical knowledge, the mark of truth comes from the irrefutability of a perception about which there is common consent. The idiom, "calling a spade a spade," is a classical example of the irrefutability of empirical facts. However, individual persons do not always see a physical thing as it is. It is even worse when the cognition involves psychologically or sociologically significant overtones. A mal-perception often arises from a misconception. Misconception is a phenomena that is to be studied in its origin, formation and maintenance, which can all be emotionally tainted with circumstantial conditionings due to personality traits and sociological conventions.

In a snake-infested place which fosters a hidden fear of getting into an encounter with a snake at any moment, a paranoid person who sees a small piece of

rope lying in semi-darkness may forthwith take it for a snake. This is an instance of mal-perception generated by a conditioned fear of a snake form. Another person, hanging his naked feet down from his bed, when touched by a cat's nose, may shriek in fear thinking a snake is slithering by his leg. This is a similar mal-perception caused by a conditioned fear of touch. The coldness of the touch is taken by this frightened person for the touch of a snake. A child cries on seeing a stranger with unkempt hair and long beard, taking him for a weird character of whom the child heard in a fairy tale. In the first two instances, fear was roused because of memories of previous perceptions which had partial resemblance to what was being presented. In the third instance, fear was roused on the basis of an imagination which was put in the child's mind by verbal descriptions in a story.

Instead of these three instances, in our own lives we can see that we are fed not with three but three million occasions of such conditionings. The human bio-computer can, in most cases, pull the wrong tag of memory and a vaguely presented complex can be easily complemented with an inappropriate concept. Sometimes the arousal of a strong emotion can be stimulated not by what one sees, but by the absence of what one expects to see. A negative perception can have an even worse effect than a posi-

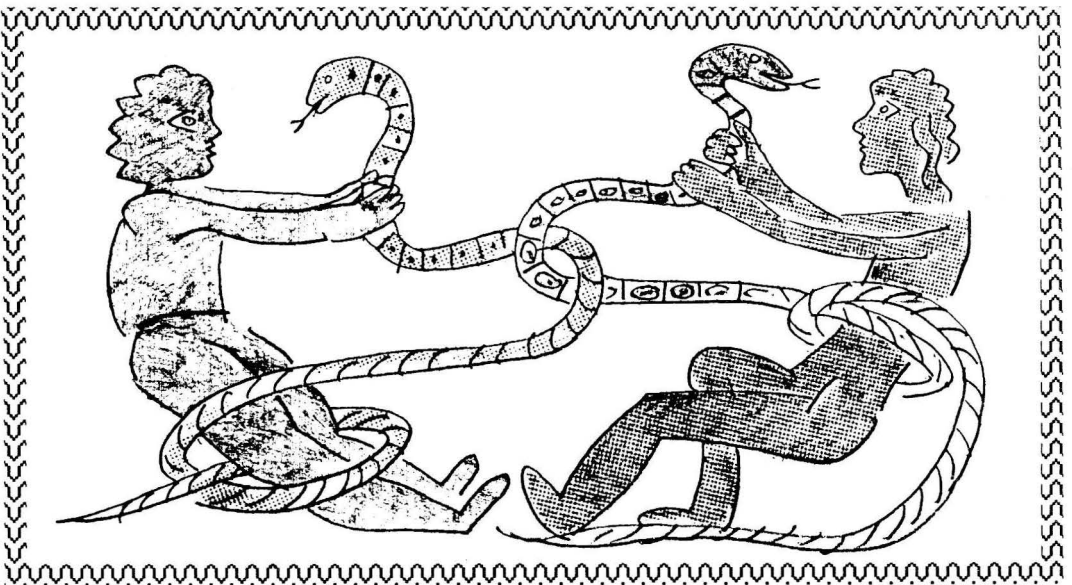
tive perception. If a person expects another to smile but sees a frown instead, a negative reaction can occur.

The crucifix above the altar of a Catholic church is a piece of bronze or marble and there is no Christ in it. The *Śivalinga* of a Śiva temple or on the altar of worship in a home is only a fashioned piece of granite. There is no Śiva in it. Yet, the social convention of the Catholics makes it valid for all Jesus-worshippers to identify the bronze or marble piece with Jesus. Similarly, the social convention of the Śiva-worshippers makes them reverentially look upon a piece of stone as Śiva. If a nonconformist treats the crucifix as a mundane thing or tramples on a *Śiva linga*, the public will even condemn him for acting in a sacrilegious manner. Thus, it is not the physicality of what one perceives that always corresponds to the expected reality of an object.

In the quarrels of married couples or lovers, one can hear one of them lamenting that he or she is at a loss to show to the other the fire of love that is burning in his or her heart. In self-pity, many people lament that they are not understood by others. When a person thinks he is absolutely honest, it becomes unbearable for him to know that others treat him as a hypocrite. Thus, we can

go on adding several varieties of examples in which the inferential perception of *viparyaya* abounds.

A two year old child asked for biscuits. Biscuits were not immediately available, so the mother said: "Wait for ten minutes until I send somebody to the shop for biscuits." But the child protested and said "I want biscuits that are not bought." Not knowing the tantrum of the child, the mother asked for time to buy them. But the child raised her voice and continued to shout, "I want biscuits that are not bought." Here is a case of *viparyaya* in which the child's mind is immediately tuned to a contradictory situation. The posture of the child is the same taken by opposition parties in parliaments, politicians who counter their rivals, and in the case of super-powers who hold out menacing threats to each other in a cold-war situation. Not agreeing with the adversary is a defense tactic for self-existence. A hooded cobra can easily twist its neck to the right or left, to bite and discharge its venom. This natural ability of the defense mechanism to shift from one psychological set to another is not merely an incident of erroneous cognition but a wantonly-held bigoted position used to push away a threatening situation and aggressively support one's defenseless, gregarious stand.



In both the macrocosm and the microcosm, the two extreme limits are blinding darkness and blinding brilliance. Darkness is not merely the absence of light. It has the power to conceal. It shares with inertia the power of obstructing mobility. In his monadology, Leibnitz speaks of the gradation of monads which range from the darkest to the most brilliant that can clearly reflect all other monads. In the West we come across concepts like the conscious and the unconscious. *Avidya* or nescience includes both the unconscious and the unknown. This is contrasted with *vidya* or knowledge which is also sometimes identified with wisdom. What man always prays for is to be led from non-existence to existence, from darkness to light and from death to immortality. Thus darkness is identical with non-existence and death.

Vyasa classifies the obstructing darkness into five states. Darkness is also called *tamas*. *Tamas* is one of the three properties of nature and is a condition for delusion. Darkness and inertia make memory corrode and consequently partial or total forgetfulness can arise. Forgetfulness is called *moha*. When one forgets one's own true Self, false identification can easily follow. Thus *moha* is not mere forgetfulness. It can also indicate desires born out of forgetfulness. When forgetfulness is extreme, it is *mahāmoha*. *Mahāmoha* also indicates the generic forgetfulness by which all sentient beings are afflicted. In the power of cognition, people experience different degrees of confrontation with darkness. Beyond stepping up reason to a certain degree, many cannot move, and complain of noncomprehension. Such a state is called *tamisram*. When a person's *vāsana*-s or *samskāra*-s are so very deeply conditioned, it is as if that person cannot raise himself or herself, even to imagine that there could be unconditioned states. Such absolute darkness to which individual minds are tied up forever is called *andha tamisram*.

Sutra I:9

śabda jñānanupātī vastu śunyo vikalpah

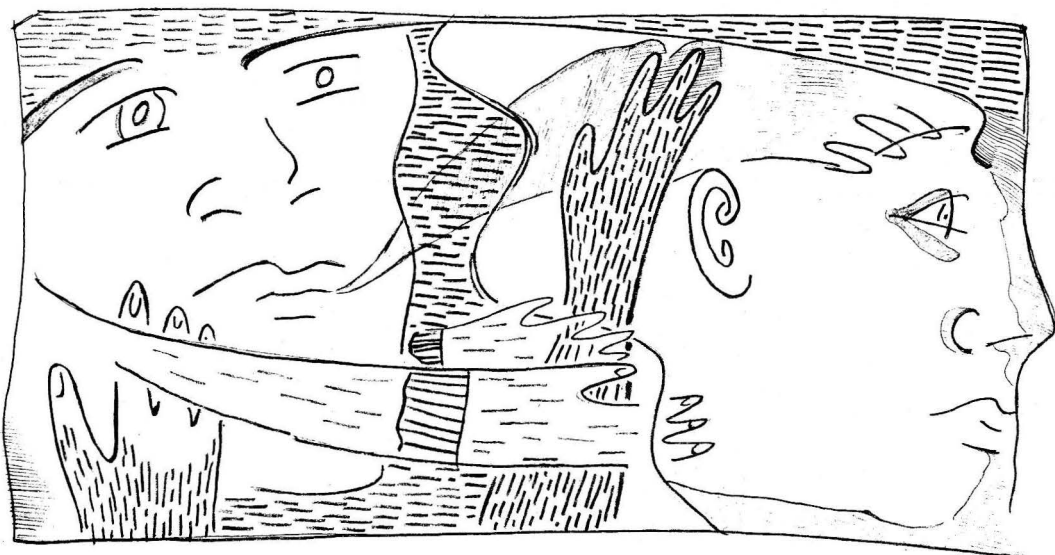
śabda: by verbal expression
jñāna: by knowledge
anupātī: followed in sequence
vastu: reality, an objective substratum
śunya: devoid of
vikalpah: imagination

Imagination is followed in sequence by verbal expression and knowledge, and is devoid of objective substratum.

In the Yoga Vāsīṣṭha a good example is given of *vikalpa* (imagination) in the form of a story retold to children. The story goes as follows:

"Once there was a king and his queens were all barren. A hundred princes were born of the barren mothers. The princes mounted horses which had no legs and no heads and went galloping to the banks of a river which had no water. There they cooked food in pots which had no bottoms and fed a thousand brahmins who had neither mouths nor bellies."

A child's interest is only that of listening to a story. It need not make any sense. Even expressions like a 'square circle' or 'palaces in the clouds' produce some corresponding idea in the mind of listener. It is a basic requirement of the consciousness associated with hearing to conjure up a form that can offer a basis for spoken words to be retained in the mind. These are like the ghosts of concepts. Like an artist making a collage, fragments of memories can be disassociated from their original context and a fresh composition can be made which has only a verbal basis and not any precise meaning as such. If someone says "In a forest I saw a chianchuchi which is a hybrid species of the praying mantis and a giraffe, with the spirit of a mosquito for its soul," the listener's mind will not altogether reject the possibility of such a composition. Further, the thought may



even have a lyrical fascination and an artist may be tempted to paint it. Some of the most brilliant literary expositions which are considered classics, fall into this category, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the *Viśvarupa Darśana* of the *Gita*, *Interior Castle* of St. Teresa of Avila and the famous vision of Ezekiel of the Old Testament.

One may ask, "Why should one study such phenomena?" In society, we do not live in empty psychic space. Like straw and waste paper that are abundantly used in packing cases to hold fragile things in position, people use a lot of meaningless word-garbage to ensure certain relationships and to accomplish deep interests of their own. When young lovers are together, they are so fond of listening to each other's voices that they speak what is commonly recognized as sweet nothings. Each one paints their future in glowing colors and offers a thousand promises as a mark of their love and dedication. Thus, a family unit is very often erected on a false foundation; disillusionment comes when the couple starts living together and facing the facts of life. Erotics stimulate illusory and hallucinative thinking which can be exaggerated to such an extent of infatuation that the votaries can lose their grip with reality.

Similar situations arise when mass hysteria is whipped up by politicians who incite the imagination of the potential voters of a constituency with many false promises. Soon after the election is over, people sadly discover the emptiness of words. This can lead to political discontent, strife, and even civil war. Much more disastrous are the false imaginations priest create in the minds of their congregates. Imaginary hells and heavens are painted in such vivid colors that even a man of science can be tempted to give the benefit of the doubt to the imagination-monger. Another terrible field of imagination is the advertising of consumer goods with fascinating media techniques such as of musical and colorful movies. Thus, the world of *vikalpa* can be considered man's number one social as well as personal enemy. Like junk mail, from all sides we are bombarded with stimuli for indulging in false imaginations. They can adversely affect our creativity and the social reality of the situation in which we live and work.

There is a Tibetan story which illustrates the negative dynamics of *vikalpa*. It is customary in Tibet for a lama to give a present to his disciple when the disciple leaves the lamasary for good. A poverty-stricken lama had nothing with him to give as a gift to his departing disciple.

He had an old donkey which was very sickly. The Guru gladly gave away the donkey to his disciple. With much hesitation the disciple led the donkey down the steep terrain. When he reached the valley the donkey died. The disciple dug a pit and put the corpse of the donkey in it. While he was burying it a caravan came that way. The traders inquired what he was doing. He said he was burying his old guru. On hearing this, with great reverence the merchants made offerings of money and clothes at the burial site. Seeing the chance for a lucrative business, the disciple stayed there. Soon there arose a fabulous temple and all kinds of sickly people trudged their way to the new lamasary for spiritual healing. When the guru heard of his disciple's success, he also came to pay his obeisance to the sacred relic of the saint on whose mortal coil the lamasary was built. Then the disciple confessed to his guru that it was not a saint but only the donkey the guru had given him. On hearing this the guru was very pleased. He said, "You are my most sensible disciple. The temple of my lamasary is built on the mortal coil of the mother of this donkey."



Such stories can be told about every religion of this world. Nothing is more handy for exploitation than colorful lies. So it is absolutely necessary that people should be spared from the evils of *vikalpa*.

Sutra I:10

*abhāva pratyaya ālambanā
vṛttinidrā*

abhāva: of non-existence, of voidness
pratyaya: the cause, the feeling
ālambanā: substratum
vṛtti: modification
nidrā: deep sleep

Sleep is the mental modification which has for its objective substratum, the cause of non-existence.

To understand sleep one should know what modification is. We have already dealt with modification as coming into confrontation with sense objects or the recurrence of associated ideas in the form of thoughts or the recalling of memory. Thus there is always something to know, something to be confronted by. This we have already mentioned as *prakhyā*. Outgoing search is for objects, and turning in is to be with oneself. The awareness of an object matter or a subject matter can both lead to a reaction ensuing from the knowledge that is illuminated. This reaction is what we call *pravṛtti*. While *prakhyā* is an undisturbed state, *pravṛtti* is the generation of a lot of energy that circulates through the sensory and motor system. To remember each experience, the internal changes that happen electrically and chemically need to be held for some time that they become consolidated into a deposit of an information bit for further recall. Thus there is a pause, an intermittent silence, a state of inertia, which comes naturally after every *prakhyā* and *pravṛtti* as an inevitable consequence. This is *stithi*.

When *stithi* over-rides the situation, *prakhyā* and *pravṛtti* subside. *Stithi* being a state of inertia, it is conceived of as an enveloping or veiling principle ofnescience, the darkness of the tamasic property of nature. In such a case there can be only one *prakhyā*, the knowledge of non-existence or *tamas*. But the cognizing con-

sciousness does not become inoperative. It turns on itself. So after a spell of sleep, one can recall that one's sleep was undisturbed. Thus, during sleep there is no cessation of modification but modification is not of the nature of external perception, nor of the nature of engaging in any action. Even when a person is sitting in jet black darkness, he can look around and see darkness. A person confined to absolute silence can certainly listen to silence. But silence has no specific mode to be copied. Sleep comes when one disengages one's mind and sense organs from carrying out any mission. The senses are not particularly directed to any object. The motor system is not asked to carry out any errand. The peace to which one puts oneself helps one just to be. Where *prakhyā* and *pravṛtti* were dominant, *stithi* now comes. The seer is cut off from all objects of perception. As modification is still going on, this state cannot be identified with *samādhi* or absorption.

Sutra I:11

*anubhūta viśaya asaṃpramoṣaḥ
smṛtiḥ*

anubhūta: the objective mental,
perceived

viśaya: impressions, subjects

asaṃpramoṣaḥ: not stealing away
alone, not slipping away

smṛtiḥ: memory

Memory is the not slipping away of mental impressions.

Memory is one of the most mysterious experiences which all of us have every day. What we presently experience disappears from our cognitive attention. Where does it go? Afterwards, when we want to mentally reconstruct a situation that we have already lived, images which have approximate correspondence with what we have experienced reappear in our consciousness. Factually, what we see in such a recall is not physi-

cally presented to our senses. The recall is a purely subjective experience. Subjective means that it has no objective counterpart or corresponding data sitting outside. That means an experience which has gone out of awareness remains in some form within the cognizing system in a concealed manner. Freud and others in the West prefer to infer that experiences go out of consciousness into the unconscious and, on recall, present a corresponding image to our attention. This phenomenon presents many questions and cannot be easily explained.

What is basically implied in the study of memory is this body and its constituent parts. We have memory of sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste. We have memory of time and space. We have memory in which all these factors are harmoniously blended to give meanings of situations. The senses and the mind contribute to the registration of experience. In that registration, some process takes place which condenses the experience into a mysterious code or information bit. The most impressive fact about life is that there is a will to live. Even simple reflexes like the winking of an eye, the pulling of one's feet from where they rest, sneezing or coughing, are instantaneously programmed to aid the biologic continuance of this body with its sensitivity and manifesting states of consciousness. So, everything is happening within this body, and it is with a definite purpose - self-preservation, self-continuation, and self-propagation. These being deeply ingrained biological principles which we share with all other living beings, most of the self-programmed actions and reactions of the psychosomatic system are not presented to the conscious mind. That is why we have to infer and make many shrewd guesses to understand the intricacy of the memorizing and recalling system.

We live in a world where the microcosm is poised to relate with the macrocosm and the macrocosm, without any conscious effort, aids the microcosm to be in alignment. Like the monads of Leibnitz,

each one of us mirrors most of everything and everyone around us, with different degrees of clarity. The mirroring is happening with systematic selection and screening to suit the type to which each individual belongs and the motivations that are functionally operative in each individual. Mirroring also implies mimicking or imitating. The learning process is also a process of reflecting, imitating, and repeating what others are doing, saying, or experiencing. This is the general situation in which we are all placed.

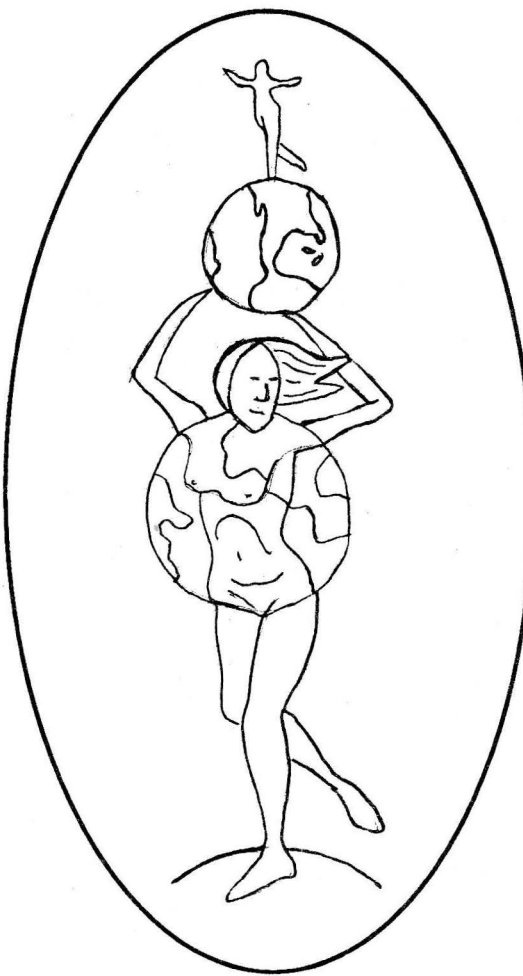
We should also have a picture of this macro-micro setting to understand how the microcosm evolves to its maximal capacity to reflect and imitate the world around it. According to the Sāṅkhyan philosophy, which Yoga accepts, the self-conscious principle that is imprisoned in nature's device of the psycho-physical system is *puruṣa*. It has its own stamp of existentiality. It exists by its own merit. It is *sat*. Or simply, it is. Secondly, it is self-radiant. Its radiance is not light, but knowledge. That knowledge not only illuminates surrounding things, but also transforms itself into a conditional state of homogeneity by which it assumes the property of that which it reflects. All such reflected illuminations become meaningful to the perceiving consciousness of *puruṣa*. The meaning arises out of its own normative notion which the yogis recognize as *ānanda*. This is a simplified

picture of *puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* can be conceived as a mathematical point having only location and no dimension whatsoever. In its elaboration in the spatio-temporal physicality of things, it can assume all geometrical forms and can be specific with the advantage of innumerable nomenclature. This elaborated system is known as *prakṛti*, or the somatic aspect of the psyche. Corresponding to the *sat*, *cit*

and *ānanda* of the *puruṣa*, the basis of the somatic elaboration (*prakṛti*) is composed of identifiable factuality (*satṭva*), operational dynamics (*rajas*), and stabilizing fixations (*tamas*).

Although we cannot demonstrate the existence of any spirit as such, the anatomy of consciousness and its elaboration into the learning, remembering and imitating mechanism can be seen in the morphologic structuring of the living body. At one end of the trunk is the head with sense organs for the input of various information. At the other end are the excretory organs of which the genitals are the most impor-

tant faculty. In the mid-region of the trunk are the heart, the lungs and belly which are continuously replenishing the system with the physical energy that is required for the functioning of the organism. We have already mentioned the biologic requirement of the organism to grow to adulthood and propagate the species through its multiplication. The very word *prakṛti* means "that which



replicates through its natural power of propagation." The existentiality of things is recognized with the cogitation that is taking place in one's head. The pleasure of reproduction is experienced by the genital end of the body. All the emotional flurry that arises from the relating of existence with propagation is experienced in the mid-region, i.e., the heart. The ear, the eye and other sense perceptions automatically create in a person a subject-object duality of the perceiver and the perceived with which the perceiver is continuously relating through the acts of knowing and doing. If the sensory system declares the presence of a pleasurable object, messages pass from the head to the lower faculties and founts of energy are released from the lower region.

This reciprocation between the two extremes of the trunk is charted by the yogis who conceive of a parameter running vertically from the lower end of the body to the crown of the head. This parameter is marked with the channels through which vital energies traverse up and down. The ascending vital energy is recognized as *prāṇa* and the descending flow is called *apāṇa*. The slightest contact with the psychosomatic organism can alert the mechanism of vital energies.

Just as there is a physical source of light outside to illuminate physical objects, and the spiritual source of light within to receive the stimuli from outside, there are also two references in knowledge which an individual has: what is innate or genetic, with which the individual has come into being, and what is acquired from outside. Thus knowledge is a continuous process of modifying consciousness by relating innate knowledge with acquired knowledge. The unfolding of the innate and the comprehending of the external are continuously changing the matrix of consciousness. Elaborations of this can be seen in the experimental and descriptive studies made by modern neurophysiologists. An organism is placed in the physical field of the mass that makes the body, the extension in which the body is placed with other bod-

ies, and in a temporal scale of sequential and progressive change.

In correspondence with this physicality of the organism, it is also endowed with a consciousness in which every unit is labeled with appropriate names. Thus, two sets of functions are aligned from moment to moment - the perceiving of things and the recalling of their names. If perceiving is formal, with physical emphasis, recognizing is conceptual and essential. For the factual brevity of the functional disposition of the living organism, it has a self-imposed delimitation of its value-horizon. A few themes are chosen as vital for its existence and many possibilities are allowed to slip away, mostly unconsciously, and sometimes with regret. Such is the composition of this organism in which memory plays its most important role to make life a purposive and meaningful reality.

Each cognition is pioneered with the presentation of a non-specific indication like the calling of attention. What occurs to the mind is the idea, "This is." The elaborated meaning is, "This is what is presented to you." "This" being non-specific, it is immediately followed by the question, "What is this?" That presents an occasion to look into previous experiences and assemble before one's mind all relevant memories. Before the focusing of one's attention on what is presented, an uncritical flash of judgement comes from the frozen past held together by *tamas*. Consequently, the first phase of cognition is bound to be prejudicial. Every occasion of cognition thus has a "This" and a "What?" to look into. It is "What?" that makes each cognition specific. After the first flash of uncritical cognition, a need arises to connote the experience with more objective or critical confirmation. This is not a mere judgement of the data presented, but also an evaluation of the worth of what is presented so that the right reaction can be made to it. Rating the value of anything leads to affectivity and, hence, three questions are before the mind of the cognizer: 1. Is it pleasurable and, in that

case, can I possess it? 2. Is it painful and should I run away? 3. Is it passive and can I be indifferent to it? The answer has to come from one's memory. Thus, memory is essentially a conditioning with the colorations of pain, pleasure and indifference.

In the Sanskrit language memory is called *samarana* and the Indian God of erotics is called Smara. This is an indication that the most remembered things are tied up with one's libido or libidinal urges. Where the libidinal urges are pleasurably appeased, the sense of aesthetics is heightened. Consequently, one develops attachment to the beautiful and pleasurable. When Keats says, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," he is equating beauty with aesthetic pleasure. In Indi-

an mythology, Devi, the Creatress, is said to be harboring erotics in her genital and the Devi is described as the beautifier of the three cities or the beautifier of one's past, present and future, the gross, the subtle and the causal. This aspect is polarized with transcendence which is characteristic of Śiva. He is called the burner of the three cities. Memory is the cause for bondage, and avoidance of relativistic memory brings freedom from the phenomenality of life. In short, the bulk of the content of mind is memory. And memory persuades a person to live obligatorily. The final goal of Yoga is transcendence, *kaivalya*, and hence *smṛti* or memory is considered a major obstacle or obstruction in the path of freedom.

(Continued in next issue.)



Śiva

What is that flute whose music
thrills me with such joy ?

The flame burns without a lamp;

The lotus blossoms without a root;

Flowers bloom in clusters;

The moon-bird is devoted to the moon;

With all its heart the rain-bird

longs for the shower of rain;

But upon whose love does the

Lover concentrate His entire life ?

Kabir

translation by Rabindranath Tagore



Taoist Temples in China

Deborah Buchanan

Taoism is well known in the West for its cryptic and intuitive aphorisms and its meditative paradoxes. Running parallel to this philosophical current in China has been an equally dynamic stream of religious Taoism, sometimes separate from, sometimes intermingled with the philosophy, and with its own temples and priests. So strong were these temples in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D) that the Imperial court felt it necessary to break their statewide power in self-defense. At the local level, however, these temples remained vital centers of Chinese cultural and philosophical life, as well as centers of magic and alchemy and a vigorous proto-scientific experimentalism. Despite the localism of these Taoist centers, they all drew their inspiration from Lao-tsu, a native of Shandong province, and from the third century B.C. text attributed to him, the *Tao te Ching*.

Our tour of March and April 1986 focused on Shandong province and the new economic and social changes taking place there. Yet, being in Shandong, the home of Taoism, we had access to many of the important Taoist temples. Our experiences at these temples gave us a multifaceted look into China's philosophical and religious legacy as well as into the current alignments that are evolving in contemporary China.

On our first day in Shandong we toured some of the springs for which the capital city of Jinan is famous and strolled around historic Daming Lake. It was early spring and everyone was still bundled in the many cotton layers of winter clothing. Yet parents and children were everywhere around the park. At the end of the lake path, we came to a steep stone stairway leading to a Taoist

temple. Some children, using their many layers of clothing for "sleds," were sliding down the stone siding. We were laughingly invited to try it ourselves. At the top of the stairs we found ourselves in a courtyard, nearly empty, facing a small but beautifully kept building. Soon a young Chinese man joined us, taking the role of unofficial guide. He spoke very good if somewhat stilted English (he was self-taught --did we have any extra books?). He explained that most of the building had been vandalised during the Cultural Revolution, but that now the government (with a combination of state and national funds) was restoring it, using old plans and people's memories as guides. The Jade Emperor and Empress, rulers of the world, were the center deities; they were made of intricately carved wood, beautifully painted and nearly lifesize on raised platforms. There was only a small area in front of them where we were allowed to enter, but on either side of these main statues were numerous protectors and guardians, or accompanying deities, one truly a fierce denizen of the underworlds, another a delicate maiden. All were life-size and had a verve and dynamism to them, compared to the complete otherworldliness of the Jade Emperor and Empress. Behind the figures on either side of the room were intricately painted murals depicting scenes from Taoist mythology. Our young guide's explanation for the restoration of the temples was their importance in China's cultural history, although his intimate knowledge of Taoism and his affection for this temple seemed to add another note to that reasoning.

Jinan was the jumping-off point for one of the major visits of our trip, Mt. Tai. There are four sacred mountains in Chi-



na, one for each of the cardinal points. Mt. Tai is the easternmost one from where the sun can be seen to rise over all of China. For each new emperor a pilgrimage to this mountain both confirmed and proclaimed his "mandate from heaven." Philosophers, scholars, and hermits also came seeking retreat and sustenance. Hidden temples and magical groves are scattered throughout the mountainside.

The main temple at the base of the mountain is Dai Temple, a very old complex dating from the Chou dynasty (1122-481 B.C.). The buildings were basically unharmed during the Cultural Revolution; they had been quietly closed and guarded. As we approached the temple, our guides joked that only believers were allowed through the main entrance. And though this was said in humor, we noticed that we were still driven around to the back entryway.

The inner hall was vast with three large from doors opening into a deep, fair-

ly dark area. Along the back and side walls were the real treasures of this temple: beautifully intact and preserved murals of the Sung dynasty (976-1276 A.D.), these ones depicting journeys in the Taoist realms of magic and philosophy. Muted colors, large areas of clouded space, and an angular perspective all worked to create a mood that drew the viewer inward. One of the local translators was giving a synopsis and commentary on these murals, yet his difficulty with English and the large space all worked to swallow his words. While we were trying to listen, an old woman came in, helped by what appeared to be her sons. They eased her down to kneel at the center altar. She was intent and deeply absorbed, kowtowing in the traditional manner. Except for her family who helped her, no one paid any attention, and she did not notice us. Lighting incense and giving money, she then left.

Outside there were two other very old women. They were peasant women, dressed in traditional black clothing with deeply wrinkled faces and small bound feet fit into triangular shoes. They let us take their pictures, certainly with no smiles, yet they were interested and amenable. There was also a crowd of young men watching us and intently discussing what they saw. Each of them wore at least one article of stylish modern clothing.

From the main temple we walked along paths through a garden park. Many couples and families were strolling around or relaxing on benches. Beneath huge old cypress trees were many plants neatly potted and set out among the paths. A pond featured an island of craggy rocks set to look like a mountainside. Unexpectedly we found ourselves within a series of garden areas, their main focus being a variety of stone stelae, engraved with calligraphy. Our guides never stopped or explained them, yet their beauty was immediately obvious. I later read that each Emperor and many of the poets who came to climb Mt. Tai would erect one of these pillars with a commemo-

morative engraving in his own writing. So these gardens of stelae were a museum of China's calligraphy history.

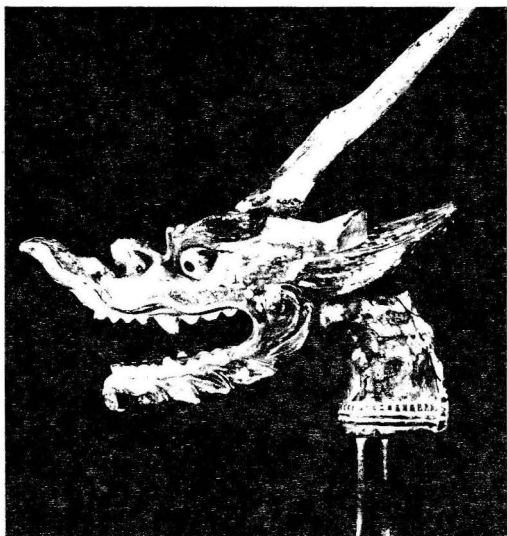
I was enthralled by the beauty of the carved characters and the serenity of the stones, and didn't care about risking the admonishment of our guides to keep pace. The beauty of these stones was too great to pass up. There was a marvelous stone tortoise - the Chinese keeper of tradition - who was carrying a twelve-foot inscribed pillar on his back; even with the weight he had a slight smile. In one garden courtyard two little girls were playing hide and seek amongst the pillars.

After being left behind many times, though, I was determinedly brought in tow to join the group. We were to visit a small side temple. At the outside were two attendants dressed in Ching dynasty (1644 A.D.-1911 A.D.) costumes; they were there for us to pose with and to take photographs of. I found this too reminiscent of American tourist sites and soon found an excuse to wander outside.

From the Dai Temple we travelled in our Japanese minibus up the mountain road to the Mt. Tai airtram station. The road we were on had been completed only in the last few years and was truly a marvel - all large stone slabs perfectly joined and smoothed together. Again a stop at another rest house and time for tea. Then we were crowded into the new Japanese and Chinese-built airtram that would carry us to within an hour's walk of the summit. The scenery changed from that of quickly modernizing China to the sparse and empty valleys of history...craggy hills, sculpted trees, and small, rushing streams enveloped us. After we left the tram our larger group began to disperse into smaller ones and soon we were absorbed into the push of people all moving up the mountain. We came on the main stairway where many were slowly pacing themselves up the 7000 steps that lead up to the summit. Amongst the crowd were young men with poles carrying small bundles at each end; these were hired porters for the climbers

who spent three or four days at it, stopping at all the small shrines along the way. As we stood watching the people, I was amazed at the number of old women climbing the stairs with bound feet. Their steps were small but they never seemed to falter. Many of them stopped at the intermediate landing to place eggs in the bushes in hopes of securing a son or grandson. Along the edge of there was a wide stone boulevard walk with little stands hawking wares: food and drinks, as well as mementos of the climb, incense, paper money, and eggs (in case yours had broken on the way up).

There is a rather small temple right at the top of Mt. Tai, but I never got there, being drawn into the activity and spirit of Bixia Temple, the largest complex on the mountain. Streams of people were going in and out of the entrance gate, making sure not to trip on the door frame that was raised to keep out evil spirits. The courtyard here was small and there was little evidence either of earlier vandalism or of new restoration. The simple altars, with few murals or statues, looked well-preserved and cared for. There were three of them, the main one being opposite the entrance. In the center of the courtyard there was a small house to shelter the main golden diety (whose identity I never found out); worshippers promenaded around this separately, rubbing the golden face and offering food and money. The people here were mainly middle-aged or old, both men and women, and the emotional tenor of the temple was, despite the bustle and busy-ness, very attentive and serious. The ritual actions of religious Taoism covered the emotional surface of the courtyard. But infusing and supporting all this motion was a great center of contemplative absorption. Being here I was singularly touched by a feeling of an older spirituality, rarely seen anymore in either China or the West. Again I was inconspicuous and spent nearly an hour sitting in a corner quietly observing. The only one to really notice me was the priest at the head altar, a very striking looking, young man.



He alone seemed startled to see a western woman.

Opposite the entrance gate was a large side stairway leading to a partially open oven where all the worshippers were burning paper money. A huge fire flamed inside, dwarfing all the people who offered money and letters to be burned and sent up in smoke to the gods and their ancestors. The smoke was rising as was the earlier mist. Side clouds were now revealing open and wild valleys. The mountain breathed a sense of aged timelessness, and I walked alone down the stairway, past the old women climbing up on their knees.

An hour's ride outside the port of Qingdao - once a German concession and now a special economic zone for development - is Laoshan (Old Mountain) and Taiqing Palace. This Taoist site is a connected series of courtyards and temples. At the center of the many sections is a large bamboo grove, evocative of the ancient scholar's and hermit's retreats. As we walked by one section, we noticed that delicately carved into the bamboo stalks were poems and epigrams, the characters barely visible in the green shading. At this temple there was a monastery and training seminary, and the head priest is well known throughout China as the country's leading Taoist.

Before touring the complex we were

given a formal group welcome with the ubiquitous cups of tea. Our guide was a young monk, and though he did not speak English we were given a chance to question him through our translators. A number of the people in our tour who had been to China previously remarked that they had never been allowed access to temples before, let alone to the residents. All of us felt a genuine sense of openness from our Chinese hosts. Still, the interview was interesting on a variety of levels, not just for the face-value answers we received. There were often confusions between the translators themselves or with the monk; some questions were easily and simply translated, others required much conferring before they were rendered into English. Some of the monk's answers were deeply philosophical and my feeling was that our translators had difficulty with his ideas, as well as some political objections. Afterwards one of our guides, who had difficulty with the monk's responses, told us quietly that his beliefs were just superstitions and could not really contend with the complexities and realities of dialectical materialism.

After our interview we met with the old teacher and monastery head. Everyone nodded respectfully; there wasn't much to say due to the language barrier, but a few people stepped back to take photos. The local Party guide then stepped up to shake hands with the teacher. How incongruous they looked together: the Taoist sage in traditional blue gown and hat and a long, wispy beard, and the Party guide in regulation Mao suit and cap, a cigarette in hand, a bit overweight. Yet we could only guess how many fissures in Chinese history and social change the handshake was crossing or attempting to cross.

Before we all left Laoshan I went back to the main temple. It was quiet but for the attendant young priest. I gave him some money in exchange for incense, which he then lit for me. In the silence that surrounded the altar I held the incense for a few minutes before placing it in front of the deities with my own prayers.

The Bearded Tree

Steve Weckel

We sat there staring at one another, the tree's many beards waving in the gentle morning breeze, and I with eyes half-closed.

On this particular morning's walk, I paused to listen to the birds singing their morning songs and, seeing a log near by, sat down on it to enjoy the chorus more fully.

Listening intently, I began to hear a deep, gravelly voice which I attributed to the gentle breeze blowing through the trees. It was so soft and faint that the sound acted as a backdrop for all of the other morning sounds. Once I became aware of its presence, it became more audible and I realized it was coming from a squat, deformed, moss-covered willow tree some thirty feet into the woods directly in front of me.

"Hrrummp. Murfeshed schatzwakle. Devilish feather beings make too much noise. How can a respectable forest being expect the Sun to hear its meager incantations for health and long life with all those feathered freaks shrieking their prayers?" The Tree kept saying this over and over as though somewhere deep in its roots was a scratched record, with the needle stuck, playing a few r.p.m.s too slow.

Speaking softly but firmly (you have to speak firmly with trees because they are old and set in their ways and they will ignore you unless you speak so), I asked the Tree, "You there, old bearded father of the forest beings (a little flat-tery helps when first striking up a conversation with a tree). Why are you haranguing the feathered beings? Why do you not ignore those flighty fellows and direct your supplications directly to the Sun?"

"Hrrummp, mufstiiplewitch, what would you know of it, little pedopod? You have only four limbs and no roots. You never stay in one spot long enough to fully comprehend the grace showered on forest beings by the Sun. These raucous, hurrummp, winged beings, piffill messtiffle, at least follow the ways of Father Cloud. Blast-o-varve, garrrrformmm it knasch," he ended, in what sounded like total disgust.

A small bird lit in an upper branch and started to sing a beautiful morning song. The old tree started grumbling again.

"I beg your pardon, o wise one, if you'll excuse my ignorance....what if you raised your voice with the voices of the feathered beings and sang your incantations to the Sun as a choir? Perhaps you could teach those flighty fellows a few proper verses," I ventured.

Silence, not even a grumble, just an occasional swish of the wind through the long, mossy tendrils of the squat tree's upper limbs. At first I thought that he had not heard me, but I realized he was considering what I had said when a flock of starlings lit in his branches and he didn't utter a sound (and we all know how noisy a single starling is, imagine a whole flock!). The Sun inched a few more degrees into the heavens by the time the tree finally said (in a voice seeming strained and much too loud), "I have considered your suggestion, pedopod. Your idea has merit. I am not basically a grump but for years I have followed the laws of the forest beings, chanted my verses and incantations and, as you can see, I, am squat, my limbs sag, this insidious moss covers my branches and the feathered beings will not quit making their

revolting racket. Perhaps, no, not perhaps! I shall try what you suggest! Do you think the feathered beings will cooperate?" His voice rose in pitch and timber at this last question.

I squirmed a bit on my log thinking, "Now you have gone and done it! What are you going to do now? You're supposed to be on your morning walk and now you're giving spiritual counsel to a disgruntled, bearded old tree!" Taking a deep breath, I said in my most confident voice, "Of course those flighty fellows will cooperate! They love nothing better than singing a rousing song of supplication and praise to God. Any God: Sun, Cloud, Mother Earth, Brother Stars, Sister Moon...even Dirt-clod, the worm god.

"Please don't think me too presumptuous but I would suggest that you start the chorus by singing an invitation for all of the beings, forest, earth, and air alike, to join in a unitive song of praise to the Sun. Why, you can even teach them the words and tune!"

Again there was a long pause....silence.

Had I been too bold? Had I insulted or otherwise offended this squat, mossy, grump of a willow tree?

There was a great rustling sound. Around me all types of birds were alighting, some on the very log on which I was sitting, though most were landing in the branches of the willow tree and the trees around it. The birds were quiet except for a few juveniles who were quickly hushed by elders. I overheard, "Shush, listen. There is a new song in the air. The bearded one there is singing a new song! Listen and learn." Then I heard it. A soft, rich baritone of a voice. As I listened the voice grew stronger, fuller and the notes it sang caused goose-bumps to flutter about on my arms and the back of my neck. I breathed deeply and closed my eyes to more fully listen. Individual birds began to take up the song.

Through slitted lids the Sun reflected off of my eye lashes. I felt warm and alive. The forest rang with the song of the bearded tree. My voice joined in that wondrous chorus and a bird lit on the top of my cap.



Tropics and Other Topics

The Flights of Fact and Fancy of a Traveler's Journal

Peter Oppenheimer

**Before the Beginning: November 15, 1986;
Woodacre, California.**

This morning I can sense my upcoming trip, indeed the rest of my life, as stretching before me with the mystery and promise of the blank pages of this empty journal. That emptiness is perhaps the greatest wealth one can possess, for it provides the arena for adventure, discovery and creativity. Just as this empty journal is a most loving and empowering gift given to me by a dear friend, so is this Vast Unknown into which I step the greatest gift granted to each of us by the Unseen Giver.

In our culture, emptiness tends to be feared and avoided as a poverty rather than appreciated and embraced as a treasure. Every corner of every room is to be filled with objects, and every hour of every day has its pressing activity. This is why I have decided to take it as a personal aspiration to, at the very least, be "good for nothing," only after which do I care to be good for something.

Hopefully, as my upcoming journey proceeds through Hawaii, Singapore, India, Bali and points unknown, and as I fill these perfectly blank pages with images, thoughts, observations and experiences, a bit of that regenerating blessedness of emptiness will still shine through and between the lines.

Three Steps: November 16, 1986; Manoa Valley, Hawaii.

My consistent experience of traveling is that the first step of each journey is a



step 'away from'. Last night as I climbed aboard the bus that would take me to San Francisco Airport, I was vividly conscious of what I was leaving behind. For me this included dear friends, a comfortable and familiar community, the soothing rolling hills of West Marin County, job, the security and ease of a home, the reassurance of the daily *Chronicle* newspaper, my wardrobe and other possessions, local entertainment.

For the adept traveler the very next step, the second step, becomes a step 'towards' in which the pull of the future becomes equal to or greater than the drag of the past. This need not be a callous disassociation from dear ones and famil-

iar environs, but often consists of a two-fold recognition that affirms the inner presence of those apparently left behind, and the realization that the first step away from a friend is also the first step in a circuit that eventually leads one back again to that friend. In celebration of this paradox, the South Indians have a declaration of leave-taking, the 'good-by', which translates literally as, "Let me go, so I may come."

Next, for the master traveler, of which I claim only to be an aspirant, the third step is neither 'away from' nor 'towards', but simply 'on the path itself' or 'in the moment itself' whereby each new encounter becomes at once the way and the goal.

Thus it was most welcome when my reminiscences and reveries of past and future were interrupted by a fellow passenger on the airport bus who began chatting with me about many things from jobs and man-woman relations to sports and vacations. There was something charming and disarming about this young man's sincere and unassuming candor. I thought to myself: as much as I love the friendly and welcoming manner of the people of India, it's great to be reminded on this very first leg of my trip that I need not travel 10,000 miles to enjoy this most basic of human characteristics. He seemed almost awed by the extent or scope of my journey (he was flying to San Diego) and seemed touched when I said that I would recall with gratitude the gift of warmth and affinity with which I felt he had christened my voyage.

Close Enough to Pretend: November 17, 1986; Coconut Beach, Hawaii.

There is a lyric from a Grateful Dead song titled "Saint of Circumstance" which goes, "Well, this must be heaven/ Or close enough to pretend." That line keeps dancing across my mind as an apt caption for my present experience. Half-prone, propped up against a small brick barrier on the sand of Coconut Beach just outside of Waikiki, feeling the sun on my bare skin, listening to the sweet warbles

of tropical birds counterpointed by the gently lapping surf of jade water reflecting swaying coconut palms set against a blue sky dappled with clouds which periodically break the heat, with faint plumeria fragrances punctuating the salt freshness during breaks in the soft offshore breeze, my sense of inner well-being and comfort is as full as this sentence is long.

My dear friend John, with whom I am staying my five days in Hawaii, dropped me here this morning on the way to his nearby landscaping job. "What's the other name for Coconut Beach?" he asked his coworker as I was slipping out of the truck. "Nude beach," was her smiling reply. If that is true, the three women and one man with whom I am sharing this 200-yard stretch of paradise are not honoring its intent.

Last night's dinner at the Little Shanghai restaurant was worthy of note and recommendation. The four-star dishes were spicy eggplant with mushroom sauce and gluten puffs, green beans with tiny tofu cubes and black mushrooms on a bed of crispy noodles, and rice mochi and mixed vegetables. After dinner Ginelle and Kiaro, the four and five year old daughters of the two couples with whom I had dined, created and presented a dramatic play for us on the marble stage in the Chinese courtyard outside the restaurant. This made me want to ponder the meaning and relationship of innocence and joy.

My immediate plan is to baptize this body in the Pacific (literally, peaceful) Ocean, read a bit of the unpublished manuscript of Nataraja Guru's *Autobiography of an Absolutist*, and write a letter to a friend in Vermont before rejoining John. This afternoon we are invited to some friends' house on a river out near Kaneohe Bay on the other side of the island. They tickled my fancy with promises of a swimming hole at the base of a waterfall with big rocks for diving and sunbathing. That is to be followed by dinner and a Monday night football t.v. game, my last game of the year as I am changing cul-

tures in mid-season. In all, this day makes me wonder if maybe the airplane that took off in San Francisco might not have just kept going up without coming down.

Garbage in Paradise: November 18, 1986; The Kailua Dump.

Yes, even paradise has a dump. Most fittingly, after reveling in the exquisite sensuousness of tropical luxuriance yesterday, I currently find myself in the cab of John's truck at the Kailua dump. The windows are rolled up (itself an oddity in Hawaii) to keep out the stench and wind-blown particles of matter in various stages of decomposition. This then is the end of the line for rubbish. If one had the stomach for it, one could discover more than anyone would want to know by rummaging through these forsaken traces of the waste of our materialistic 'throwaway' culture. As I already have one doctorate too many, I will leave such a study for another. For me it is enough to have received this graphic reminder of the inevitable balance in this world between light and its own shadow. Pleasure and pain, life and death, purity and filth are like head and tail of the self-same creature. By trying to deny or hide from the shadow side, we wind up actually increasing it just as the pressure increases in a pressure cooker when the lid is tightened down to keep the pressure in.

Time Flies (Coach Class): November 21 or 22, 1986; over the Pacific.

It is hard to take time seriously when it can be monkeyed with so perplexingly. The calendar and the watch lord over modern society, demanding absolute allegiance. But now and then a peep-hole is glimpsed through the veil, no less disillusioning than the unmasking of the puny little man masquerading as the Wizard of Oz at the climax of that fable. Six hours ago (or so it seems) it was 3:30 a.m. on November 21, and now I am to believe it is 4:30 a.m. on November 22. That means the whole of November 21 was squeezed into five hours. Am I a day old-

er even if not a day wiser? One could age very rapidly by continuously flying westward around the globe.

This also calls to mind the recent decision by the United States Congress to extend daylight savings time by moving all clocks forward one hour, three weeks earlier than the traditional manipulation in April. And what precipitated this latest monkey-business? Was it some scientific discovery regarding the rate of rotation of the earth perhaps? Not quite. The successful lobbying effort, fueled by hundreds of thousands of dollars, was spearheaded by the charcoal briquet industry whose marketing researchers estimated a windfall of several millions of dollars per year in extra sales of charcoal, given one additional hour of daylight per evening for backyard barbecues during the first three weeks of April.

Presumably if the flashlight industry had gotten its act together, we might have done away with daylight savings time altogether. Time now is revealed to be more a collective agreement than a thing in itself. As Baker Roshi, a Zen teacher once remarked, "If three or more people get together and decide to call a rock a turtle, it is a turtle."

My final couple of days in Hawaii (and the USA) were mostly spent running last minute errands: buying small gifts to take to people in India and Singapore. I'm taking colored pencils, audio cassettes, lighters, pickles, sushi, ginger, miso, macadamia nuts and See's chocolates. My errands include processing and sending photos taken at a two-year old's birthday party the day I left San Francisco, completing my traveling stock of vitamins and herbs, taking care of last minute business regarding insurance, finances, etc., purchasing a cap, chapstick, suntan cream, and paying daily visits to Honolulu's Chinatown for acupuncture treatment for my sciatica from Dr. Suen Hang Yee, a genius at his art who charges a mere ten dollars per session.

Throughout the running around I would frequently be stilled by some physical reminder or another of the lush trop-

ical setting which would otherwise recede behind the horizon of my task-oriented consciousness. At such moments, as much as I would be taken by the particular feel of sun and breeze on my face, or the glorious rainbow, or haunting bird call, I would be even more struck with the role that consciousness or the lack thereof plays in determining the quality of our experience.

For example, we each take tens of thousands of breaths each day, and so long as they remain unconscious, they are 'no big deal.' But if in any given moment we pause and consciously observe and appreciate even one single breath, we can hardly help but be filled with a sense of Grace and Wonder.

(Continued in next issue.)

INEVITABILITY

I wish I could stop time
and keep this moment alive forever
but if time stopped, there
would be no 'forever'...



LOVE

Because yesterday
when it rained, you
touched your finger to the
tip of a water-dripping leaf,
today, inside me,
a forest of green leaved trees
awaits you.

Kala Krishnan

The Indelible Impression

Once there was a yogi called Atita. He had a water pot made out of a coconut shell. Once he went to a river to take his bath. After his bath he placed his water pot on the bank. The name of the river was Karmavāhini. While Atita was sitting with his eyes closed, the water of the river rose and carried away the water pot. A fairy called Kusumangi came to the same river to take her bath. She had with her a beautiful glass bowl. While she was taking her bath, the bowl slipped into the water and started floating.

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

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

Just as he said this, he was surprised to see yogi Atita picking him up. And of course the fairy was there to take away her glass bowl. Each walked away in a different direction. They were never again to come together. But in the heart of the water pot there was a numinous impression of the glass bowl and in the heart of the glass bowl there was a numinous impression of the water pot. Neither the yogi nor the fairy ever discovered the secret love of the water pot and the glass bowl.

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Record Reviews for Big Ears

Fred Cantor



Miles Davis has stood as one of the giants of jazz for many years and through many eras, from bebop to "the birth of the cool" and through to fusion styles. He is a major innovator and always in the forefront when it comes to incorporating new sounds and technology into his music. He continues this trend on *Tutu* (Warner Bros. 25490-1), his latest release. This album is named for Bishop Desmond Tutu, and reflects Miles' concern and anguish over the situation in South Africa.

The feeling of the album is one of starkness and conflict, reflected in the black and white photographs on the cover and emphasized over and over in the musical content. It is not always an easy or pleasant album to listen to, although it is very well produced and recorded. From the outset, Miles sets his trumpet against a background of electronic instruments so that he becomes a human voice crying against an almost overwhelming mechanical sound. The various synthesizers and drum machines are played - or, more accurately, programmed and sequenced - by Marcus Miller. Miles' trumpet is muted, but his playing is not. You can feel the pressure of each note squeezing out, much as the cries of humanity are squeezing out even through the water cannons and machine guns of the apartheid system.

There is a feeling of darkness to the whole album. On "Tomaas," the synthesizers dominate, with the trumpet playing a very economical line that is

more color and comment than melody, at times being almost buried in the heaviness of the drum machines. "Portia" starts with a spacey, cosmic feel but again retains a certain darkness. The effect is almost like a surrealist landscape - expansive but somehow unnerving. Miles' trumpet here is more lyrical, at times almost reminiscent of the feel on his classic *Sketches of Spain*. Side one closes with "Splatch," a funky, almost dance tune with lots of weird synthesizer sounds and a melody that brings to mind James Brown shouting, "Good God!"

Side two has a lighter, more human feel to it, contributed largely by George Duke. There is even a hint of a human voice in "Backyard Ritual," which opens the side. "Perfect Way" is more of a blues, with a lighter and more up feeling than anything on side one. The melody is simple and happy, but Miles always keeps it moving ahead. "Don't Lose Your Mind" shows a reggae influence with Miles playing an airy introduction. The trumpet sound here is thin, almost reed-like, and is set off by Michael Urbaniak's electric violin which echoes Miles' sound while playing a more linear counterpart to Miles' circling trumpet. The side closes with "Full Nelson," with a hint of Oliver Nelson in the intro before the ever-present synthesizer drums begin beating us again. The melody is very pretty, and he seems to be having a little fun here.

This is a heavy record, in every sense

of the word. It is troubling at times, uncomfortable, and challenging. Not an easy-listening l.p., by any means, but a strong statement by a major artist. It stands at the cutting edge of music technology, incorporating all the newest electronic devices. Yet Miles' superb artistry prevents it from becoming the computerized product it surely would be without his presence. As a statement of what life is like in the late '80s, it hits the mark with chilling accuracy.

On the other extreme is *Water From An Ancient Well* by Abdullah Ibrahim (Blackhawk 50207). Abdullah Ibrahim is an exiled South African (known on earlier recordings as Killar Brand) who obviously shares Miles' anguish over apartheid. But this record is much more human. There are no synthesizers or music machines here - all the instruments are acoustic, and the textures are much softer and more inviting than *Tutu*. The opening song is dedicated to Nelson Mandela, but the sense of conflict which is so strong on *Tutu* is replaced here with feelings that are somehow both deeper and gentler, while no less pained. Instead of a lone human voice struggling to be heard and felt against an oppressive, mechanical world, there is a sense of deep spirit flowing even as it encounters obstructions and barriers. The traditions and rhythms of Africa are more resilient here, and will touch a responsive chord in anyone who listens. It is indeed water from an ancient well, and as such is clear, pure,

and revitalizing. A beautiful and touching record.

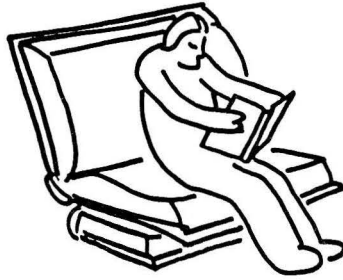
Paquito D'Rivera is an exile too, having defected from his native Cuba several years ago. But one senses that his motives are less political than musical - he is a great player who simply wanted to play with the best players in the world, and he found them in New York City. His latest release is *Manhattan Burn* (CBS FC40583) and while it retains a lot of Latin flavor it is by any reckoning a jazz album. (anyone interested in hearing Paquito in a Latin salsa context should pick up an album called *Super All-Stars* [Caiman CLP 902] which features him with Tito Puente and other Latin greats.) The key word for this album is 'burn,' and it truly is hot! Paquito plays alto and clarinet, and he's got the best chops around. Most of the album is good, current jazz, meaning that we have interesting melodies stated by the whole band and then a round of expansive solos. A wonderful exception to the format are two Venezuelan waltzes, featuring the work of Fareed Haque, a very talented young guitarist from Chicago. This is a fun-to-listen-to album that any jazz fan will enjoy. And if you like this one, you should also pick up *Why Not* (CBS 39584), recorded in 1984 with Toots Theilmans playing guitar and harmonica. In fact, you can buy anything with Paquito D'Rivera on it and be assured of some good listening!

Actuality and substantiality meet as value in relation with the normative principle of the Absolute; all happenings in human affairs, whether tragic or romantic, have to be fitted into the general context of the Absolute if they are to make any sense at all.

Nataraja Guru

Book Review

Fred Simpson



***Critical Path* by R. Buckminster Fuller, St. Martin's Press, 1981.**

In 1927, at the age of thirty-two, Buckminster Fuller was one of society's discards. He was married with a child and wife to support, unemployed, broke and owing substantial amounts of money to friends whom he had induced to invest in a failed business scheme. At the age of eighty-five when *Critical Path* was published, he was world renowned as an engineer, inventor, philosopher and poet. On one level, *Critical Path* is Fuller's story of the intervening fifty-three years; on another, it is his philosophy of life and his prognosis for the future; finally it is a blue print for achieving a self-sustaining world of plenty for all of mankind.

Fuller's writing style is unusual. He freely creates words for concepts he doesn't find adequately described in the existing language. His usual practice is to assemble strings of words, prefixes and suffixes, each of which adds a nuance of meaning until the reader has a feel for what is intended. The sentence structure is often the same. Words are strung together in unusual combinations, sometimes seeming to run on until the reader forgets which is subject and which is object. The effect is at first annoying, but for the reader who will persevere Fuller's strange words and syntax provide a new and brighter vision of the world. I found the best way to get into the work was to begin with random browsing, sampling a little here and a little there. Fascinating ideas, facts, anecdotes and history abound and after a short time the style and vocabulary become familiar.

Fuller's story is a good one. Undeterred by his failures, in 1927, he determined on an improbable experiment: to learn whether an unknown, economically insecure individual could make significant contributions to the well being of humanity; contributions that could not be made by the great nation states. The guinea pig would be himself and the duration of the experiment would be the rest of his life. His hypothesis was that technology was gradually providing the means for mankind to cross over from a world of scarcity into a world of plenty, and that his own life would be most successful if he worked to benefit the greatest numbers of fellow human beings without regard to benefitting himself. Based on his pre 1927 experience he felt that he could most benefit mankind by inventing and developing the tools that would be required by humanity to make the leap from scarcity to plenty. He established a time frame of fifty years as being the probable time required for the necessary evolution of technology and then decided on a list of necessary "artifacts" and set out to invent and refine them. The whole concept of forecasting what tools and artifacts would be needed twenty, thirty and fifty years in the future is challenge enough, let alone thinking about inventing them. Fuller saw himself as doing what no one else seemed to have time to do. He would plan and forecast on a global scale and he reasoned that if his inventions were available when they eventually were needed, they would be adopted and mankind would be the beneficiary. The grand experiment was documented meticulously in journals, patents and newspaper clippings.

Critical Path is the report of the ex-

periment and concludes that the initial hypothesis was correct. We have in fact entered an era when there is no technological reason for scarcity. Technology and resource development have progressed to a point where the means are available for providing all of humanity with a standard of living higher than that enjoyed by the wealthiest individuals of any past age. A substantial portion of the book traces the historic shifts between human needs and the ability to meet those needs and to Fuller's demonstration that it is now possible to meet all present and future needs of all mankind. The typical university economics curriculum teaches that we live in a world of scarcity and shortages and that there will never be enough resources to provide for everyone. The comfortable life of one can only be at the cost of depriving others. Fuller gives the lie to the economics of scarcity. His economic theory is based on what he terms "ephemeralization" which he identifies as a universal principal of evolution whereby more and more is accomplished with less and less. For example in the 1700's it took a huge ship and crew of men months to transport a few passengers across the Atlantic Ocean. Now it can be accomplished in hours with an airplane weighing a small fraction of what the ship weighed and with a crew of only two or three. Examples of doing more and more with less resources and less energy abound. Making the first metal objects required tremendous commitments of resources to prospect, mine and refine the necessary metal. The second generation of metal objects, however, took only a fraction of the energy to remelt the first generation objects at the end of their useful lives and to create the new objects. Another example is the continuing process in computer technology where smaller and smaller computers do more and more. In the 1950's computers were gigantic machines with thousands of vacuum tubes filling whole rooms, and requiring powerful air conditioning systems to carry off the heat generated. The machines were constructed at enormous cost, operated and

maintained by highly trained individuals, consumed great amounts of electricity and had no greater capabilities than today's desktop computers operated by children in grade schools all over the world. A handful of silicon chips assembled on a plastic board in an automated factory and requiring the electricity of a light bulb has supplanted the most powerful computers of only thirty years ago.

Ephemeralization is the key concept missing from traditional Malthusian economics. Fuller argues convincingly that if ephemeralization is included in the equations comparing the needs of mankind with the available resources that there is more than enough for everyone and that further, the system is fully regenerative and stable.

Fuller's attitude toward implementing the social changes to achieve the technically possible plenty is equally unusual. "I sought to reform the environment, not the humans. I determined never to try to persuade humanity to alter its customs and view points. I resolved never to attack or oppose undesirable socioeconomic phenomena, but instead committed myself to evolving and cultivating tools that would accomplish humanity's necessities in so much easier, more pleasant, and more efficient ways that, without thinking about it, the undesirable ways would be abandoned by society." Social reformers come and go, but necessary and enduring social and economic changes are not imposed from above; rather, they are accepted and embraced in response to felt need or crisis. He consistently saw evolution rather than revolution as the general principal of Universe and saw his proper role to be working to develop the necessary technology to speed natural evolution.

Fuller leaves a rich legacy of original perspectives on life and the human condition. *Critical Path* is a fine survey of that legacy. The conclusion of his grand experiment must surely be that each individual can make a difference if they live their life with integrity, striving always for the truth.

East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



Guru Nitya is back at the Fernhill Gurukula, continuing his good recovery from a back injury early this year. Though he was bed-ridden for some time the injury did not hinder the flow of his work which he describes as follows: "we have been experiencing an indescribable depth to which we were drawn by the unknown and we were all reduced to mere spectators or listeners of a marvel that was revealing itself through the one hundred verses of Narayana Guru and Upanisadic lore of the the past." He completed the English translation and commentary on Narayana Guru's fourth set of one hundred verses, *Svānubhavagīti Śatakam*, recently compiled from previously scattered works (beginning in this issue).

He has also been commenting on the cream of the wisdom of the Upanisadic rishis contained in the four great dictums: That Thou Art (*tat tvam asi*), This Self is the Absolute (*ayam ātma brahma*), Consciousness is the Absolute (*prajñānam brahma*), and I am the Absolute (*aḥam brahma asmi*). The theoretical or philosophical aspect has been completed in both English and Malayalam and Guru is now working on putting the practical aspect into English.



Many publishers in Kerala state are interested in publishing Guru's Malayalam books so he is very busy completing many works. The *Psychology of Darśana Mālā* is currently being printed and should be available in August or September. Edda Walker's journal of her inner adventures recorded while she traveled the canals of Europe with her family will be published by Penguin books in Australia. It will be titled *Edda's Diaries, Crests and Undertows*.

Muni Narayana Prasad attended a Round Table Conference in Moscow in March. The reception of the paper he presented was enthusiastic and conference authorities arranged for it to be translated into French, German and Russian and to be published in Moscow.

At Island Gurukula Aranya construction is just being completed of a second bathroom and a larger kitchen, using donated fixtures and appliances. The press also has a newly constructed plate burner which is safer and more efficient. Weekly classes continue on *The Science of Harmonious Union*, a comprehensive study of the philosophy and application of Paṭāñjali's *Yoga Sūtras* guided by Guru Nitya's commentary which is being serialized in *Gurukulam*.

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Altar at Amritabindu Ashrama, Vythiri, India

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Psychology: An Eastern Perspective
Arivu - Epistemology of Gnosis (Translation and Commentary)

Other

Dhyāna Manjūṣa
Nataraja Guru's 90th Birthday Souvenir
East-West University Yearbooks - 1978 and 1981
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