

GURUKULAM

VOLUME III • 1987

FOURTH QUARTER





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GURUKULAM

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GURUKULAM

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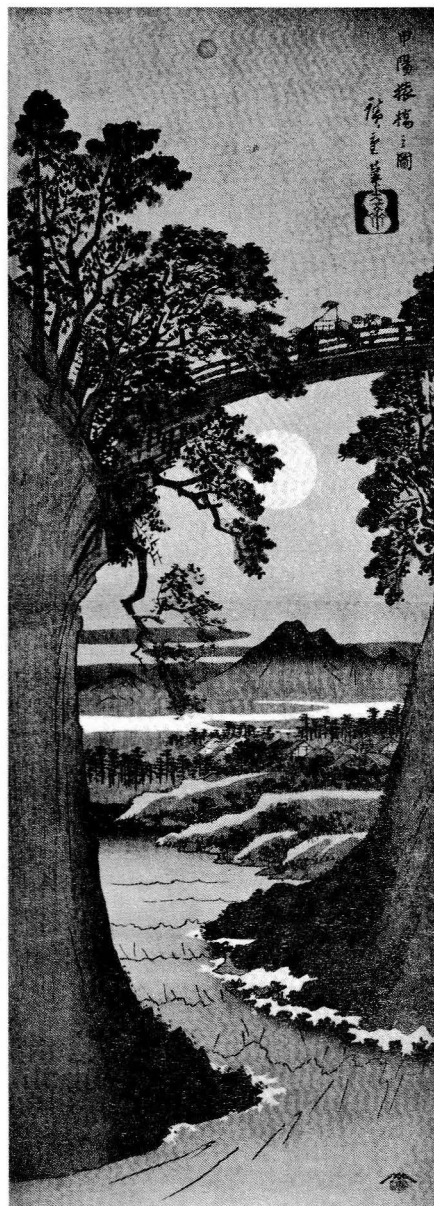
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COVER: Compassionate Buddha in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, photograph by Nancy Yeilding.



Translations of Saigyō's poems are from *Mirror For The Moon* by William LaFleur, New Directions, 1977, and Bashō's from *An Introduction to Haiku* by Harold Henderson, Doubleday, 1958.

Wandering With the Moon

Just as I finished packing my suitcase, I heard some voices outside and went to see who was there. I found two quaint-looking men sitting on boulders near the plum trees. Greeting me warmly, one said, "We know you are traveling to Japan because of your wish to understand more of the land which nourished us spiritually as well as physically." As I was wondering who they could be, he went on, "Saigyō and I, Bashō, both experienced the great value of wandering and have come to wish you well on your journey."

"Saigyō! Bashō! Welcome, welcome. I have been deeply touched by your poems. Though you wrote them centuries ago, they have a freshness that never grows old. I do want to know more of you."

Bashō continued, "As young men, we both left the soft, indulgent life of courtiers to face the hardships of wandering which Saigyō described so poignantly:

*The sound of water
Gets to be my sole comfort in
This lonely, battered hut:
In the midst of mountain storm's fury
Drops drip in the holes and silences.*

"When wandering brought you such sadness, why did you leave your friends and comforts?" I asked gently.

Saigyō answered first. "I lived at a time when the flowering of a great culture had begun to fade. Centered at Heian-kyō, 'Peace-and-Tranquility Capital', it lived up to its name from its founding in 794 until my time, the middle of the twelfth century. Over the centuries, an elaborate bureaucracy was developed along with a wealthy, pampered elite. Although our culture, nourished by Buddhism, produced much of great beauty, it was eroded away from within by decadence, blind to the plight of the poor masses upon whose backs the privileged society rested. The Buddha's teaching of compassion for all beings mutated into a high cultural refinement with very narrow bounds of empathy. Buddhist practice became increasingly ritualistic, focused more on vain attempts to preserve

the status quo than on guiding its adherents to true peace. But indulgence in all the pleasures of life only increased the nobles' lust for more, and social tranquility proved to be a frail commodity when greed led to struggles for power. One such struggle in which members of the Imperial Family turned against each other shook the noble household where I served in the guard corps. That opened my eyes to the falseness of society's values:

*Delicate dewdrops
On a spider's web are the pearls
Strung on necklaces
Worn in the world man spins:
A world quickly vanishing.*

Although I was only in my twenties, I became disillusioned about finding happiness in fleeting pleasures and social status. So I petitioned the Emperor for permission to become a wandering monk:

*So loath to lose
What really should be loathed:
One's vain place in life,
We maybe rescue best the self
Just by throwing it away."*

Bashō nodded, "I was also in the service of a nobleman. As he was only a few years older than I he was more my friend than my master. The upheavals that began in Saigyō's day lasted for centuries but had settled down before I was born in the mid-seventeenth century. But my world also fell apart while I was still in my twenties when my beloved friend and master died suddenly. Shortly after his death, I entered a monastery and 'renounced the world', seeking a deeper meaning of life.

I remained in the monastery for a while, then went to study poetry in Kyōto and Tokyo and eventually founded my own school of poetry. It became famous and my verses were often published, but success did not fulfill my inner yearnings. Again and again I felt the need to make long, arduous pilgrimages like Saigyō did in order to break body and mind away from habitual patterns which cloud the clear perception of reality. On one jour-

ney to the interior, I was awakened to the fundamental beauty of agrarian life where human beings tune their efforts to nature to gain sustenance:

*The beginning of all art:
a song when planting a rice field
in the country's inmost part.*

I often undertook difficult journeys to the mountains, finding saving clarity there:

*Thin shanks! Even so,
while I have them -- blossom-covered
hills of Yoshino!"*

At the mention of Yoshino, Saigyō murmured, "Ah, Yoshino," with a sigh like the wind. As he went on, his words were more like music than speech:

"Journeying alone:

Now my body knows the absence

*Even of its own heart,
Which stayed behind that day when
It saw Yoshino's treetops.*

Hard as it was, wandering yielded the blessings of nature's beauty and the profound serenity of solitude. Gradually it helped me to change my habit of equating happiness with the pleasures of social life and physical comfort:

*Hoped-for, looked-for
Guests just never made it to
My mountain hut--
The now congenial loneliness
I'd hate to live without.*

*Today's satori:
Such a change of mind would
Not exist without
My lifelong habit of having
My mind immersed in blossoms."*

He glowed with an inner illumination that filled me with joy. Bashō smiled and said, "I, too, was deeply nourished by solitude, which led me to exclaim:

*On the moor: from things
detached completely --
how the skylark sings!*

By stepping away at least now and then from the framework of established society, I found that, like Saigyō, my circle of concern began to expand to include those usually ignored:

*Poverty's child--
he starts to grind the rice,
and gazes at the moon."*

Saigyō spoke in tones of sweet resonance: "One comes to feel a companionship not only with all of humanity but with all of nature:

*We would together
Make the journey, I on land
And it in the sky,
If the moon comes out to stay:
Empathy both ways.*

*'Detached' observer
Of blossoms finds himself in time
Intimate with them--*

*So, when they separate from the branch,
It's he who falls...deeply into grief."*

Bashō spoke with great reverence, "In a similar way, your physical detachment from society only enhanced your empathy for those within who were locked into mutually reinforced patterns of denial which blinded them. Your reflections on events from a distance were full of clarity. On hearing that war forced the abandonment of the capital, you wrote:

*'Above-the-Cloud-Ones':
A name for courtiers of a capital
Which once was;
A fact about the brilliant moon
Which, unchanging, still is."*

Saigyō's face bore the serene smile replicated on statues of the Buddha all over the world. "True happiness and knowledge come when the mind is tuned to the unchanging reality which ever shines like the moon --

*In the mountains' deep
Places, the moon of the mind
Resides in light serene:
Moon mirrors all things everywhere,
Mind mirrors moon...in satori now."*

His words faded into silence as we watched the full moon rise, filling the world with its luminous presence. As I bowed a reverent farewell, I was filled with gratitude for their compassion, extended across time and space through their verses of eloquent beauty, encouraging all who wish to travel away from the beaten track of habitual patterns of thought and behavior to an ever-widening circle of empathy.

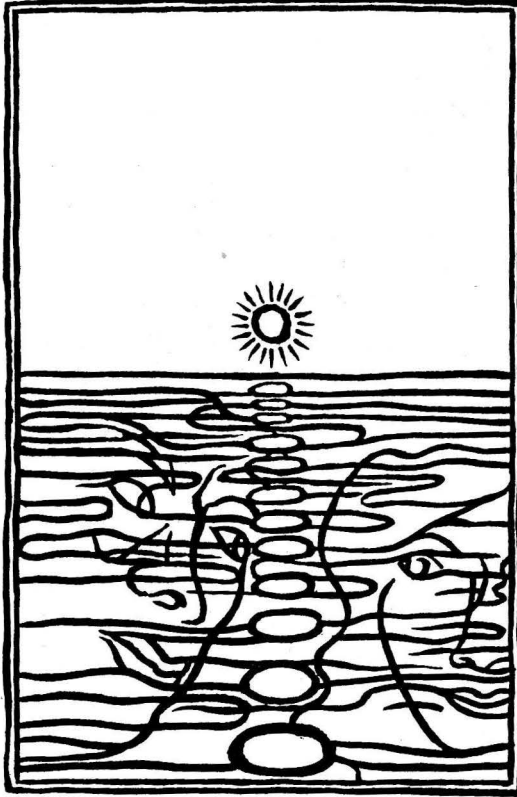
Nancy Yeilding

Svānubhavagīti Śatakam:

Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



Verse 5

In the snare cast by the erotic hunter
the bird of mind falls down and gets into distress.
Infatuated with curly hair and sportive glances,
why go round and round in a vicious circle?

Life is rich with changing moods. According to Bhārata, the Indian authority on dance dramas, there are eight major moods: erotics, valor, compassion, humor, anger, revulsion, fear and wonder. Bhojaraja, a grand critic of Sanskrit poetry and drama, added a ninth mood, serenity. From these major moods, forty-eight minor moods are derived. A mood is capable of transforming into another mood. For example, erotics can change into humor, sarcasm and anger. After reaching the peak of anger, it can change into compassion and serenity.

In the Bhagavada story of Pralada, the young prince Pralada affirmed to his father the presence of Lord Vishnu in everything, including a blade of grass, the pillars of the palace, and so on. At first, King Harenya Kasyapu was filled with a slight sense of humor, which soon changed into sarcasm and revulsion towards his son. His anger became roused, and he struck a pillar of the palace with his sword. At once Lord Vishnu, in the form of a man-lion, sprang from the broken pillar, filling the king with both wonder and fear. While the king underwent all these varieties of moods, the son was experiencing the moods of devotion, wonder, compassion and serenity. This is just one example of the transformation of moods.

Mood in Sanskrit is *rasam*. The essence of a thing is also *rasam*. So the essence of one's state of mind in a given situation is one's mood. Among Western thinkers, some give priority to essence and others to existence. When Descartes says, "I think, therefore I exist," essence precedes existence. Jean Paul Sartre says, "I exist, therefore I think." In this case existence comes prior to essence. Neither existence nor essence are stable or static. Both are in a state of flux. And there is a complementarity between them. It is this complementarity that gives a certain value to a mood, as well as to the object that stimulates the mood.

Of all the moods, erotics is considered to be the highest. *Sringaram*, erotics, literally means "the peak mood." *Sringa* means peak, *ram* is pleasure. In erotics there are two aspects. One is physical involvement and the other is of a contemplative nature. Contemplative erotics is the essence of physical erotics. When physical love is sublimated, it changes into devotion. St. Augustine agrees with Plato that erotics can be either earthbound or heavenbound.

Sympathetic identification with another's mood can also be satisfying. The erotic love of a dramatized Krishna and Radha is depicted in so many ways in India--in poetry, music, dance and drama. The main theme of Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* is of the ensnaring power of erotics. Krishna is in distress because of Radha's love, and Radha is in distress because of Krishna's love. Most of the pathological states of mind are lived by each of them. They want to escape each other, and they also want to dominate each other.

Freud was right when he said that the wheel of life revolves on the hub of the libido. Most of the world's major tragedies have stemmed from the erotic infatuation of a man for a woman or vice versa. The main theme of the battle of the *Māhābhārata*, the *Rāmāyana*, and Homer's battle of Troy center around someone's erotic infatuation. It is from such worthless pursuits that one should extricate oneself at all costs.



Verse 6

I have news that you hold away those who
might be wanting to chase me.
I give my obeisance to your lotus feet.
Do grant me freedom from the snare set by erotics.

Spring comes. The mango tree is overladen with flowers. The wind comes and carries the fragrance of the mango blossoms far and wide. This is just the time when mango flies are hatching out of their eggs. The hum of the flies attracts the koil, the Indian cuckoo, nestling in the foliage of the trees. The male cuckoo clears his throat and sings with his heart panting for love. The koil's melody is a stimulant to lovers. Men of youthful vigor lose sleep and roll in their beds. To add anguish to their plight, the god of love pierces their hearts with the shafts of erotics. They can be appeased only when they are in the sweet embrace of their beloveds. Consequently women become pregnant, and the progeny of man increases.

Are these all chance occurrences, or is there a Grand Coordinator arranging things from behind? If loving, mating and begetting is the only law of life, who is there to liberate the soul that craves for liberation?

There is an old story connected with the birth and emancipation of the Tamil saint Tayumanavar. Once there was a young woman living on the banks of the South Indian river Vaigai. The young wom-

an's husband was a trader. He went to a far-off land. She was pregnant, and the time of her delivery came. On the day when she was to be in labor, her mother went to the other side of the river on an errand. Unfortunately, a big storm came and the river swelled into a flood. The old woman became very anxious, as her daughter was all alone in the house. The night grew, and the flood did not abate. The mother stood across the river praying.

When her labor pains started, the young woman saw her mother standing attentively by her bedside. The old woman nursed her and took delivery of the child. She bathed it, wrapped it in new clothes, and laid it near the young mother. Then day broke. A ferryman brought the anxious old woman from the other shore. She frantically came and knocked on the door. The young woman felt perplexed. Who could be knocking at the door when her mother was already inside with her? But when she got up and opened the door, she found it was her mother.

The mystery of the first old woman was easily solved. Listening to her prayer as she was stranded on the other shore, Siva himself came and helped the delivery in her guise. So the old woman called out in devotion "*on tayumanavar*," which means "Oh Lord, who has also become a mother!" From that day on the child was called Tayumanavar.

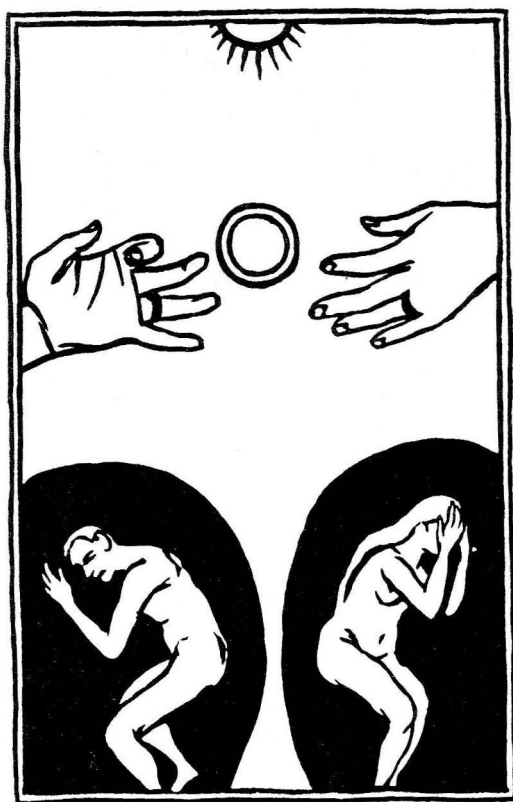
Tayumanavar grew up into a young man of exquisite charm. He was a brilliant poet. Many young damsels came, infatuated with his good looks and poetic talents. His relatives arranged a marriage for him. When his friends and relatives came to lead him to the wedding ceremony, Siva entered the young bridegroom as madness. For a few hours he went stone-mad. This led to the cancellation of the wedding. Tayumanavar became a free man, and in gratitude he sang *pittappira cudīya perumāne nitatuttukontene*, "Oh God, donned with the lunar crescent, you have stopped the marriage enthusiasm and saved me from bondage." This is the story alluded to in this verse.

Verse 7

Coming close in intimacy,
exhibiting their agitating breasts,
these vampires, wanting to feed on the soul,
increase my fear for them.
These corpses which manifest in the objects of sensuousness
try to entice me,
but I can never be friendly with them even in a dream.

Verse 8

Wanting to be united with you,
why should I remain in the dark,
wasting my time with whores devoid of all virtues?
The instinctive urges to embrace and mate fill me with fear.
To be freed of such fascination,
I am screaming my supplication.



Like day and night, erotic life also has two sides. The maturation of spiritual life in India is conceived as a growth through four stages. These are *brahmācārya*, the days of studenthood; *gṛhastya*, the householder's life; *vanaprastha*, years of retirement; and finally *sannyasa*, renunciation. They are called the four *aśramas*, like the four-fold colors of the psyche, *varna*.

For several centuries it was the general style of Indian people to conform to this fourfold pattern of life. In the course of history decadence set in, with people becoming more and more hedonistic. Sincere endeavor for perfection waned. Irrational passions increasingly made lives less and less disciplined. Thus, during at least the last thousand years, Indian life has been in chaos. *Vanaprastha*, official retirement from public office, is all that remains of the ancient pattern.

Originally the period of *brahmācārya* was meant for imbibing insight into the higher values of life, *dharma*, which the young student gained from both the instruction and example of the gurus with whom he lived. *Brahmācārya* has lost this meaning, and is now looked upon as the first twenty-five years dedicated to school and university training. In modern schools there are no gurus. There are only paid teachers. Consequently, the young people coming out of them are not prepared to accept the role of the householder.

On the one hand, in a country like India where sexual repression is pushed to the extreme, the secret passion to live in the company of the opposite sex borders upon infatuation. At the same time, men and women are afraid of each other. Both the male and the female accept

marriage as the loss of their personal freedom. Premarital friendship or courtship are looked upon as a sin in India. Therefore men and women go to meet each other in the nuptial chamber with great expectation and anxiety. All those who lived in conformity to social norms are almost totally ignorant of sex and its accompanying demands and excitements. There are very many cases in which the first night turns out to be a night of terrible consequences. Overnight, men develop castration complexes and women become frigid.

For centuries slaves were employed in the kings' courts and harems, and they were castrated to ward off sexual anomalies within the harem. Thus fear was perpetuated in society in the social relationship between the weak and the strong. In the course of time any kind of domination could inculcate the fear of being castrated. The Indian stories of the female vampire, *yakshi*, are also believed by many. A *yakshi* is considered to be always charming in looks and behavior. Casting a hypnotic spell, a *yakshi* feeds on the blood of her lover. Many men who cannot give sexual satisfaction to their wives secretly entertain the fear that the wife may be a *yakshi*. Inside they live in shame and fear.

In such dire situations the woman sometimes takes the initiative to become pregnant with sperm received from outside her marital relationship. This puts the husband in a ridiculous situation. He has to accept somebody else's child as his to uphold his manhood. At the same time he has the constant fear of living with an enemy. This state of affairs is increasing in India now as never before. Such incompetence of the husband is often taken advantage of by cruel wives, and they may push their dominance into several other areas. Resultant crimes based on sexual jealousy are increasingly common. Without looking into the social fabrication of family life, psychiatrists simply diagnose such cases as schizophrenia.

Physical intimacy between a man and a woman should produce automatic changes at several levels, such as the hormones and various other secretions that release the right amount of energy for a satisfactory union. When either or both partners suffer from inhibitions or blockages, the spouse often becomes a symbol of psychological threat. Certain men, when they are roused, lose all sense of propriety and behave like brutes. This shatters the woman's idealized image of a man, which she might have been carrying in her mind even from the time of her adolescence. In countries like India where sex is treated with prudery, mothers do not discuss the sex problems of their daughters with even helpful hints. Girls kept absolutely in the dark, even about puberty, are shocked when they unexpectedly experience bleeding. Such apprehensions foster dark images of sexuality. It is no wonder that some women think of a man as an octopus who would smother them to death, and some men think of a woman as a vampire wanting to feed on their blood. Those who discover these fears early in life often seek the privacy of monasteries and nunneries.

In these two verses such fears are highlighted. Not only does one need instruction on wisdom matters pertaining to realization, but even more distinct and clear instructions are to be given on the transactional matters which can have such dire consequences as driving men and women to madness, afflicted with the fear of the unknown.

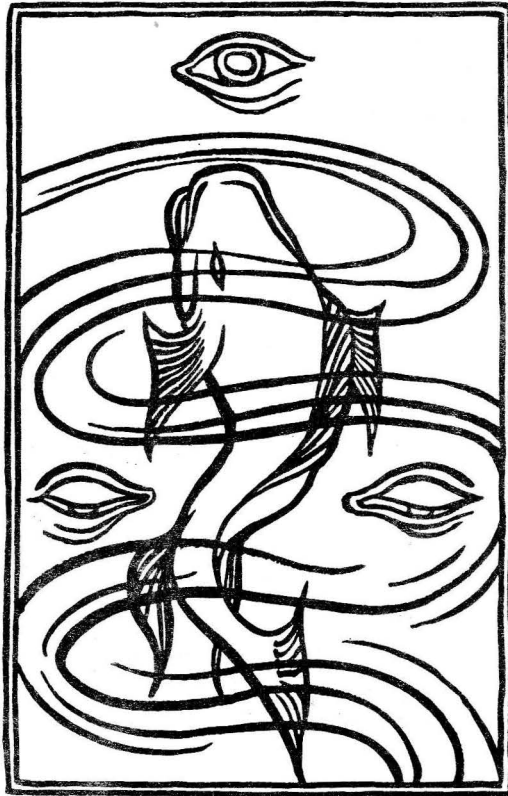
In the Western world it is not so often repression that brings tragedy, but promiscuity and the use of drugs, including the drugs that psychiatrists administer. Fear and confusion in sex is allayed not merely by having adequate information about it, but by raising one's mind to higher and more sublime levels of consciousness as well. In the present work we will come across several verses in which this sublimity becomes the keynote of some picturesque presentations of harmonious man-woman relationships.

Verse 9

Alternating glances, inviting and avoiding,
a vivacious girl, engaging and dominating,
draws me into her games.
O Lord, help me not to lose my wits.

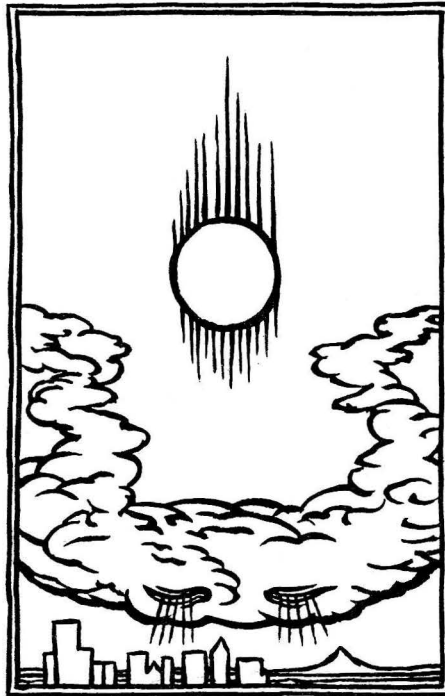
Verse 10

Do not send me to share the nuptial bed
of a voluptuous one.
Please combat my infatuation,
and send me not to share love games.
Keep me always close to your ever-enthralling being,
O Annihilator of Kama.



From the excavations made at Harappa and Mohenjodaro archaeologists recovered certain seals showing hieroglyphic signs. One sign was of a fish with a special mark on its body. Father Harris, who deciphered these hieroglyphics, interpreted this sign as a proto-Tamil picture-word meaning *ita minnum minu*, "This is a glittering fish." The most famous temple of Tamil Nadu is Meenakshi. The goddess of that temple is described as one with beautiful eyes which resemble a glittering fish. The silver-colored scales of the fish reflect light when the fish changes its position, which it does with great frequency. The glances of a woman have thus always been a favorite subject of poetic imagination from prehistoric times to the present.

The goddess Meenakshi of Madurai is venerated as the spouse of Sundarīśvara. Sundarīśvara is one aspect of Śiva, that of a god of supreme beauty. In these verses, what is spoken of as the seductress quality of the female is to be seen as the nature counterpart of the Absolute. Aesthetics (*lavānya*) and transcendence (*saundārya*) are two complementary terms in Sanskrit. One does not get to the transcendent until one transcends the aesthetic. The emotive values associated with libidinal appreciation of good looks, sweet sounds, stimulating touch, taste and smell are described with the term *lavānya*. *Lavānya* means "salt." Libidinal appreciation has in it the biophysical quality of sensuousness. The world of perception is not relevant in the case of transcendent appreciation, *saundārya*. Perception is an act of subject-object encounter. Instead of relating oneself with an external factor, one can have an inner identification of the self with a higher principle. When this happens it is an imperiential transcendence. Here the aspirant's plea is for help in sustaining a state of imperiential transcendence as opposed to coming again and again under the sway of the vivacious seductress of aesthetic orientation.



Verse 11

The Omniscient in whom we are united
will bestow on me his grace.
Without being attached to anything here,
my eyes will find true light in the
destroyer of Eros.

The unity of the prime substance is broken into many in the process of creation. Even though children are born as the offspring of parents, after attaining a body each one has a separate existence. During the years of existence the specific identity of each is maintained. When dissolution comes, there is only the eternal solvent of all. Like the ocean into which several salt dolls are dipped and in which they lose their separate identities, Śiva is the ocean of finality into which all sentient beings ultimately go in dissolution.

The entire manifestation has come from the undisturbed peace of Śiva. Ultimately all will return to that peace. Even a short spell of sleep is comforting and peace-bestowing. People are afraid of death because it brings the idea of separation from those whom they love. Aloneness in Śiva transcends both life and death, separation and comingling.

In partial knowledge there is confusion and fear. Śiva is knowledge through and through. In becoming one with him all barriers of time disappear. The auspiciousness of grace which Śiva confers is the burning away of the dross of physical existence in which the spirit is imprisoned. The device of perception with which the self is equipped in its physical existence is only adequate for experiencing the sensory illusion of separateness and plurality. When one obtains the eye of a philosopher, all separateness is merged in the unity of Śiva. Then one has a clear vision of the aloneness of the Supreme in whom there is no room for entertaining sentiments of love or hatred.

When a dreamer dreams with his own conditioned mind he creates nightmares and scenes of voluptuous indulgence. When the clear vision of wakefulness comes, he will realize that the dreamer alone exists and that all the fanciful images which he was encountering in the dream were only the figments of his own mind. Here the supplicant is aspiring to have the vision of one who has awakened from the long-drawn dream of life, in which waking, dreaming, and deep sleep are all part of one fictitious tale.

Verse 12

The stream of images
from objects of perception
enter the eye and vanish.
In the same manner all vibrations of sound also
enter the ears and become obliterated.

Verse 13

The sense of touch along with
the six distinguishable tastes
become merged into a magical confluence
of the cutative organ.
Even so are the urges to act
which are projected and withheld into silence
by the bodily limbs.



The greatest wonder of sense experience is that it occurs in a meaningful sequence, manifesting moment after moment like the ticks of a clock. The central focus of attention is like the moving tip of an artist's brush or the fingertips of a pianist that are rumbling on a keyboard. And like the artist's brush, poet's pen or pianist's fingertip, the attention that is given to the interest of the moment by way of expression or impression leaves behind a conditioning or recording of the experience. A mosaic pattern is formulated in the reverberation of a memory, giving continuity and a sort of poignancy to the act of gestaltation which can be either unitary or pluralistic.

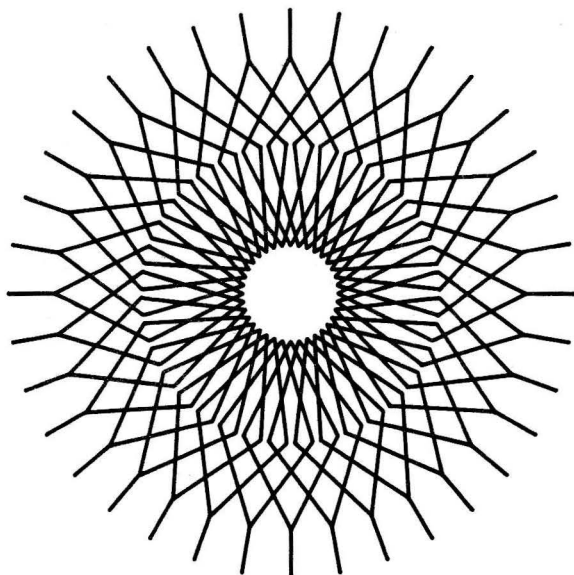
When a candle is burning, the flame looks identical in two consecutive moments. Actually the wax and wick that are burning in one moment are exhausted in that moment. The flame of the second moment

is nourished by another quantum of fuel. An idle observer does not notice the change in the flame. In the apparent continuity of life there is a similar momentariness of manifestation. This can be easily noticed from the fact that the stimuli that kick up nerve impulses in the eye and ear always come in a series, implying the passing of time. Everything is born, given the status of existence, and instantaneously dissolved. What is termed as the present can be as short as a fraction of a second, or it can be the span of living an experience.

In all items of perception, a number of stimuli with varying quantities and qualities of power to provoke an interest are presented all at once. Each experience is like a confection of several items changing into one. In a colorful panorama, several gradations of reflected light fall on the retina to assault the innumerable rods and cones. This is registered as seeing any or all colors of the spectrum. It takes only a fraction of a second for each quantum of energy to be conveyed from the receptor to the corresponding brain center to reveal the experience of a specific object of perception. Like the rapid movement of the stills in a strip of movie film, the overlapping of sensory provocation gives the illusion of a certain unification. What is true of the organs of perception is also true of the organs of action.

Life is a passing show of parading images in which we go from the assessment of the value of one image to another. At best we can only speculate how a lifelong culture is established and maintained with the aid of the changing patterns of stimulus and response. The Earth spins. Every atom is dancing. The flux of time is a reality, and yet, in the study of chronicling everything in the integrated circuitry of the brain, the packing and storage of memory eludes all detection. A changeless witness is all the time witnessing a kaleidoscopic march of events. The dancing Śiva is quickly pacing around and trampling over the infinitude of space and time, which are laid down as the warp and woof of consciousness.

(Continued in next issue.)



Katha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

II. 8

This Truth which is thought of in different ways, is not easily gained if taught by an inferior teacher. But when taught by one who sees everything as not different from himself—then there is no uncertainty. This, which is subtler than the subtlest, is not accessible to logical reasoning.

Both scientists and thinkers are in search of the truth that is at the root of everything. Scientists try to find it through their laboratory experiments. The device that is at the disposal of the thinker is his own mental power. Among thinkers there are those who give primacy to sense perception, those who rely on ratiocination, and also those who look for what is beyond the grasp of the intellect, through intuition. For this reason there is variation in the facets of Truth that the different schools of thought and science have found. The conclusion of one school may contradict that of another. Though none of these schools are wrong, the conclusion of none of them is final and complete in itself. Each one is only a partial vision. The vision of a particular school depends on the perspective from which they view the Truth. The history of thought reveals that different schools of thought and science have been fighting

each other over their creeds, not knowing the partial nature of their vision. Even when thinkers and scientists take different stands regarding the Truth, Truth is always present in its entirety. But no one realizes it. This phenomenon in the world of the search for Truth was evident to Narayana Guru when he wrote :

The bottom, the top, the end,
that is real, this is,
no, that is--
In this way people quarrel;
the one primal reality is all
that is.

(Ātmopadeśa Śatakam)

The words, "this Truth which is thought of in manifold ways," of the present *mantra* have the same meaning.

Having such a partial vision of Truth is inferior (*avaram*). When taught by one of inferior vision, the teaching will also be inferior. Such teaching is not helpful to attain the total vision of Truth. So it is said, "This is not easily understandable if taught by an inferior teacher."

One who has visualized Truth in its entirety has the direct experience that one's own existence is none other than that of the Truth. When taught by one of such experience, the seeker also finds the door to Truth opened before him. When he gets the full vision of Truth by his contemplation and identification with it, he becomes convinced that that is the end of his search and he no longer has any uncertainty.

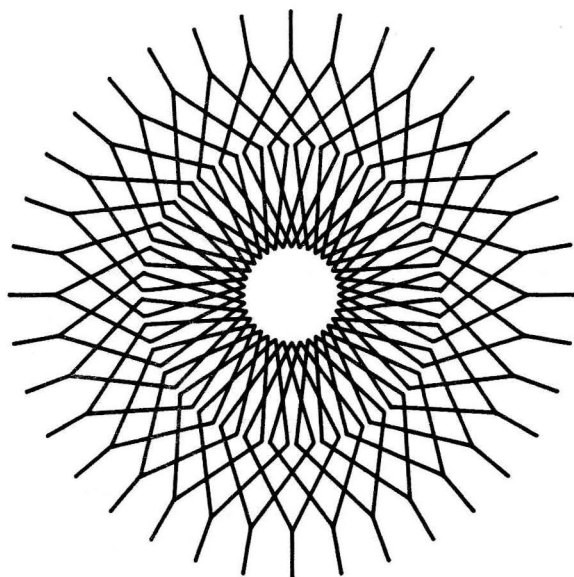
We are used to differentiating things

is nourished by another quantum of fuel. An idle observer does not notice the change in the flame. In the apparent continuity of life there is a similar momentariness of manifestation. This can be easily noticed from the fact that the stimuli that kick up nerve impulses in the eye and ear always come in a series, implying the passing of time. Everything is born, given the status of existence, and instantaneously dissolved. What is termed as the present can be as short as a fraction of a second, or it can be the span of living an experience.

In all items of perception, a number of stimuli with varying quantities and qualities of power to provoke an interest are presented all at once. Each experience is like a confection of several items changing into one. In a colorful panorama, several gradations of reflected light fall on the retina to assault the innumerable rods and cones. This is registered as seeing any or all colors of the spectrum. It takes only a fraction of a second for each quantum of energy to be conveyed from the receptor to the corresponding brain center to reveal the experience of a specific object of perception. Like the rapid movement of the stills in a strip of movie film, the overlapping of sensory provocation gives the illusion of a certain unification. What is true of the organs of perception is also true of the organs of action.

Life is a passing show of parading images in which we go from the assessment of the value of one image to another. At best we can only speculate how a lifelong culture is established and maintained with the aid of the changing patterns of stimulus and response. The Earth spins. Every atom is dancing. The flux of time is a reality, and yet, in the study of chronicling everything in the integrated circuitry of the brain, the packing and storage of memory eludes all detection. A changeless witness is all the time witnessing a kaleidoscopic march of events. The dancing Śiva is quickly pacing around and trampling over the infinitude of space and time, which are laid down as the warp and woof of consciousness.

(Continued in next issue.)



Katha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

II. 8

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We are used to differentiating things

as big or small, long or short. This is quantitative measurement. Quantitatively the smallest thing conceivable is an *anu* (atom). This *anu* need not be conceived of as the atom of modern physics. *Anu* only means the smallest quantitative unit. In the modern sense *anu* could be compared to a subatomic particle. When the enquiry of atomic physics reaches the realm of subatomic particles, scientists hesitate to say definitely whether they are particles of matter or waves which are non-matter. That means that at the subatomic level matter gains a new dimension which tends to be more qualitative than quantitative. This is what we have gained through experiential physics. But in ancient India, the *rishis* or seers who relied only on intuition for their search attained the conviction that Truth or the Self is subtler than the subtlest or beyond what is quantitatively measureable. But at the same time they experienced it as vaster than the vastest. What they visualised as smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest is none other than consciousness, or *cit*. Consciousness is without beginning or end, spatially or temporally. The words *anu-paramāṇāt anīyān* (subtler than the subtlest) are to be understood in this context.

To say that something is smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest is a contradictory statement which is not logically tenable. Logical reasoning is based on the principle of causality. Differentiating cause and effect and trying to find out the cause of an effect is the proper method of ratiocination. But we are totally unaware that the differentiation between cause and effect exists only in our minds. In other words, the primal source of even the cause-effect duality is in consciousness. So, naturally, no ratiocination is possible about consciousness, as all ratiocination comes out of consciousness. So it is said that it is *atarkya* (not accessible to logic).

II. 9

O dearest, this knowledge which is not attainable by reasoning is easy to understand only when taught by one who does not rely on reasoning.

O Nachiketas, your steadfastness in Truth is a wonder. May there be more questioners like you for us.

The function of the intellect is called reasoning. It progresses by starting from a known premise and going on to further and further postulates, finally coming to a conclusion. This middle term follows a minor premise which states something already known to everybody. But, in the case of the Absolute or the Self, nothing predicable is already known to the seeker. That means the seeker cannot be guided with the help of logic. In this Upanisad, Yama does not put forward evidence to prove the Absolute. Instead, as a seer, he verbally reveals the Truth which he realizes is not different from himself and thus leads Nachiketas to also visualize the Truth as his own self. So it is said, "Only when proclaimed by another does it become easily understandable."

Such a transmission of wisdom is effected only when the Guru is really a seer of Truth and the disciple is uncompromising and steadfast in his quest for Truth. The establishment of bipolarity between such a Guru and a disciple is very unusual.

The words, "Your steadfastness in the Truth is a wonder," have all of these implications.

If this wisdom is not to be lost, the process of passing it on from Guru to disciple should go on without a break. For that purpose questioners like Nachiketas are needed. Yama says, "May there be more disciples like you for us." The word "*naḥ*" (for us) is to be specifically noticed. Yama here recognizes his and Nachiketas' identity in the Truth. He hopes for the transmission of this teaching

to posterity through Nachiketas and other seekers like him in the future.

II. 10

I know that what we call treasure is not constant for that which is constant is not obtained by those who are not steadfast. Still, the sacrificial fire called the Nachiketagnī is kept by me and I am obtaining that which is inconstant by means which are also inconstant.

Yama is well-founded in his wisdom. He sees what underlies transient phenomena. On receiving a treasure an ordinary man would be overjoyed. But wise ones like Yama take into account the value of a treasure in the transactional world, while maintaining the awareness that it is only a means for ensuring pleasures which are not at all constant. The wise person knows that such a treasure will never ensure eternal happiness and could perhaps even spell danger.

To experience life as an uninterrupted flow of happiness, one has to realize the ultimate Truth which is the Existent, Subsistent and Value (*sat, cit and ānanda*). One who is in that state of being does not see anything as "other." Yama knows that this state is not to be obtained by any means which are inconstant, as is made clear by the first half of the *mantra*. Still, Yama claims that he continues to keep up the sacrificial fire which he knows yields only inconstant results.

Here we have to see the difference between Nachiketas and Yama in respect to wisdom. Nachiketas is a seeker who is facing problems regarding uncertainties and the meaning of life. Such seekers have to hold on to the helping hands of Gurus like Yama to ascend to the realm of Truth; while the Guru firmly takes his

stand on the Truth and, at the same time, reaches out with compassion to help seekers like Nachiketas who are struggling in the sea of inconstancy. Gurus like Yama see everything manifested in the Self and the Self in everything manifested. For such a Guru it is possible to come down to the ordinary world and help others attain the heights of wisdom, while always remaining at that height. The words of Yama, "Still the sacrificial fire is kept by me and I am obtaining what is inconstant by means which are also inconstant," have to be understood in the sense that action is normal and natural in life. In the *Bhagavad Gita* also we come across such a statement by the Guru Krishna. He says:

There is nothing in the three
worlds that I am obliged to do,
O Pārtha (Arjuna),
nor anything unaccomplished
to be accomplished,
while still I remain active.

Two aspects of the process of attaining wisdom have to be distinguished here. The first state is that of the seeker who is full of doubts. He ascends to the state of realizing that what he was seeking was himself. This process can be called ascending dialectics. Then he sees everything in himself which gives a new dimension to the actualities of life. No actuality is denied, but everything is seen as not different from the Self. This can be called descending dialectics. Only he to whom these two aspects have become the obverse and reverse of the same reality can be a real *jñānin* (man of wisdom) and a compassionate Guru.

II. 11

Having seen as your aim the substratum which is the culmination of all desires, the basis of all the world, the endlessness of ritualistic action

*and the safe shore of fearlessness,
the praiseworthy and the one
which holds within it the great
expanse of dynamism, O Nachiketas,
as a wise and brave one, you have
let go all that is inconstant
with steadfastness.*

In the last *mantra* we saw how the ascending and descending aspects of wisdom were Yama's own. In the present *mantra* Yama shows where Nachiketas, who has the same goal, is standing at present. Nachiketas became a seeker of Truth when he had to face the problem of what happens after death because he himself was sent to death by his father. His inquisitiveness can take him to the Absolute Self which is beyond birth and death, to be realized as not different from him. This vision of the Self will save him from death, a cause for great fear, and he will find his final refuge in the Self. Seeing this eternal refuge as his end in view, he gives up the parents' enjoyments with unswerving steadfastness. That means Nachiketas is fully prepared for the ascending aspect of wisdom. When one has a desire, there is something desired which we call the object of *vishāya*. A seer of Truth doesn't see anything apart from himself, so he has nothing to desire. Everything is in him. In that sense we can say that visualizing the Self is the culmination of all desires.

The universe is called *jagat* in Sanskrit. The word means that which is going

on or changing. This eternal change is felt as if it is a flow (*pravaha*). If we take the analogy of a river, the process of flowing is natural to it. In order for the process of flowing to happen, there should be something to flow. Water is what flows in a river. Similarly, there should be an existing content behind the eternal flux, which provides the opportunity for the flow. The Upanishadic seers of India found that this basic reality is the Absolute Self. It is here declared to be the basis of the world (*jagataḥ pratishṭhā*). Though water is one, the potentiality of flow in it is endless. Similarly, though the ultimate Truth is one, the possibility of action in it is endless. The inner dynamic principle behind each of the changes going on here is to be understood as action or *karma*. All the scriptures are meant to help man have a total awareness of life. The necessary aspect of action is symbolically recognized in scriptures by way of recommending rituals, *kratu*. The possibilities for such rituals are endless in the same way as the possibility of action in the universe is endless.

As long as the Truth which is the abode of the endless possibility of action and the ultimate refuge has not become one's own, it remains adorable and praiseworthy. When realized, the same Truth becomes not different from oneself. When the stuff of the Self is seen as manifested as this multifarious universe and also as the knowledge about it, the implicit dynamism reveals itself as a wonder. It is this wonder that is before Nachiketas as his ultimate aim.

(Continued in next issue.)

Faith can move mountains only within the world of contemplation to which the value called mountain need not be considered outside.

Nataraja Guru

The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sutra I:15

*dṛṣṭānūśravika viśāya vitṛṣṇasya
vaśīkāra sañjñā vairāgyam*

dṛṣṭa: seen, perceptible,
anūśravika: heard, scriptural,
revealed

viśaya: objects, enjoyments
vitṛṣṇasya: who has ceased to thirst
vaśīkāra: supremacy
sañjñā: consciousness
vairāgyam: desirelessness

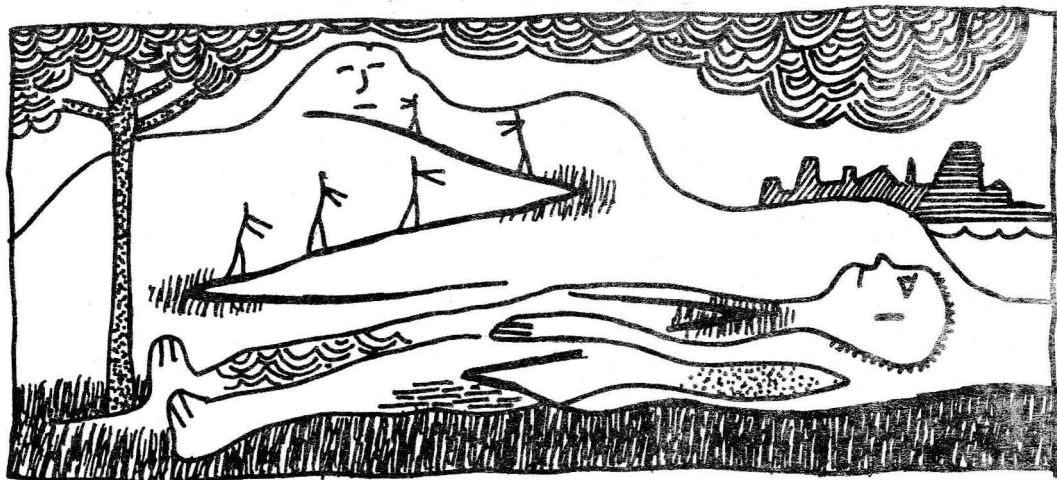
Desirelessness is the consciousness of supremacy in him who is free from thirst for perceptible and revealed enjoyments.

For most people, their thoughts and deeds are in the form of reactions to the encounters to which the body and its sense organs are exposed. There is a strong identification that they are their bodies.

Like a musician who is tuning his instrument to sing an appropriate song in a given situation, people who have deep body consciousness think that they are always called upon to look and appreciate, to listen and admire, to touch and feel elated or excited, to taste and enjoy, to smell and appreciate the shade of fragrance presented to the nose. After long years of discipline and through proper understanding, some people, like Janaka, become oblivious of the ego-body relationship. The yogi in such an instance is called a *videhi*.

A *videhi* may breathe, eat, drink and function like a normal person, but he is always oblivious of his physical state. It is not pain and pleasure that decide his behavioral pattern. In heat and cold he behaves as if he is not aware of the heat and the cold. The body may have sensations but the sensations do not connect with his value-cognizing field where he prefers one over the other. In the matter of hunger and thirst, he does not go in search of food or water. He partakes of food and drink only as a routine course and does so only when his attention is called to it by someone else. He experiences no strong attraction or avoidance. It is not that he suffers or tolerates whatever is happening around him. Instead, the witnessing consciousness becomes more strongly established than the reacting consciousness.

A *videhi* does not shun community or his natural station in life. He doesn't do anything peculiar. While being very normal in his disposition to everything around him, he sets a model for others of not exaggerating one's physical body ownership. For such a person, there is no entertaining of pleasurable situations. Buddha considers the root cause of all human sufferings as *trṣṇa* or *tannaḥ*, which means an unavoidable thirst to satisfy one's desire. When a person is not hungry and not thirsty, he is perfectly poised and is not assailed by a sense of need. This *vitṛṣṇa* or lack of lust or any sort of thirst is the main mark of a *videhi*.



There is a sect in Northern India known as the *udasins*. Their discipline mainly centers on the ideal of *videha*. The novices of the *udasin* school are called *sannyasis*. They are people who have discarded environments which can strongly remind them of their bodily existence. That is the first step. Thereafter they become indifferent. They transcend social obligations and feel free to behave as they automatically feel in situations where they are not subjected to any enticing encounters. Then they mature into a state of *virāktas*, unattached on all sides.

They look upon values which are considered most important in social circles as meaningless or, rather, they don't look upon any values at all. They are naturally very withdrawn people. Their example doesn't really square with the model which Janaka, a legendary *videhi*, set for the people of his time. His ideal was to be absolutely normal in transactions and never to exaggerate anything on the basis of physical obsession or inhibition.

The example of the *udasians* actually comes closer to the ideals of the *prakṛti layas*, those who have merged into nature. They treat their bodies as part of this world. The sun, moon, stars, mountains and rivers all exist in the world and they think of their bodily selves as part of the same phenomena. They behave somewhat like lower animals which have no norms of ethical behavior, but act upon the pressing needs of the body. However, instead of becoming indulgent

as animals are, they drift away from *prakṛti* to *puruṣa*, that is, from the externality of their nature to the witnessing consciousness within. You may find a *prakṛti laya* person sleeping under a tree or dwelling on a riverside, walking naked or eating raw food. They don't mind if other animals also come and share their food and they are not bothered by what others think of their nudity or seemingly uncouth behavior. In spite of such external crudity, their minds dwell always in the serenity of the pure consciousness of *puruṣa*.

These two examples can throw some light on the transcendence of desire and obligatory conformity. Freedom from desire and the transcendence of obligation remove from the mind all sense of fear. The two possible forms of fear which can afflict a person are the fear of one's physical cessation and the fear of ceasing to be of any importance or value in the estimation of one's contemporary society. A *videhi* or *prakṛti laya* has no desire to live or die. Physical death can come any time. That does not disturb them. Apart from the pure light of *puruṣa* and the constantly changing mechanics of nature, there is no separate person to which separate merits and demerits can be attributed in the eyes of others. These are some ideas which can be developed in the context of a person who has no thirst for pleasure or recognition.

Those who are in resonance with the Self-luminous light of pure consciousness



become aware of the bondage to which a person is subjected in the world of phenomenality. The best example of this can be seen in Plato's cave allegory. When people are attuned to their identity with the shadow-world, they are instinctively led by nature's urges and live like pigs or brutes of the jungle. Once they know that their nature is of light and not darkness, the love for freedom emerges. In the cave allegory, Plato describes the utter discomfort which a person experiences when he realizes that he is bound to phenomenality. In works like *Vivekachudamani*, this discomfort of a person who is turning to spirituality is compared to the desperation of a deer which finds itself surrounded by brush fire. Another analogy is of a fish in a pond in summertime when the water is fast evaporating. Sri Ramakrishna describes it as the struggle of a person who is forcefully kept immersed in water. How such a person struggles to breathe is like a person who realizes that he is in bondage.

In the world of transaction, linear thinking and logical reasoning, both deductive and inductive, are helpful. But true spiritual insight comes from intuitive flashes of which Henri Berson speaks in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The intelligence which does not depend on previous conditioning is *nirvikalpa buddhi*. The aspirant knows how his incarnate (flesh and blood) aspect func-

tions at a lower level of biologic evolution. From that, he longingly looks towards his pre-incarnate reality which is of pure light, not imprisoned in the cage of a body. When one can discriminate between the pure aspect of the disincarnate and the morbid aspect of the incarnate, a new discriminative power is developed. It is called *prasankhyāna* or *viveka khyāti*. In the state of the incarnate, experiencing pain and pleasure through sensations is considered very important by embodied beings. That state is called *ābhoga*. Its opposite is non-experiencing, *anābhoga*. Sankara discredits *anubhava* (experience) as not pertaining to the Self (*ātman*). The English word experience clearly indicates the limitation of that kind of enjoyment. It is knowing something outside the Self, i.e., the non-Self. Sankara substitutes *anubhava* with *anubhuti*. That means an identification comes through the establishment of an inner unity aided by intuition. It can only be imperientially comprehended.

Where *viveka khyāti*, the discriminative light, is well-established, one gains the power of *vaśikāra*. *Vaśikāra*, the most mature aspect of detachment, comes in three stages. The first stage is called *yatamāna*. A *yati* is a person of inner control. With consistent restraint, holding before oneself the normative notion of *nirvikalpa buddhi* (intelligence free from dependence on previous conditioning), one establishes oneself in the *yatamāna* state. It is followed by *vyatireka*. When two values are before you, a discriminative judgement should be applied to see which is conducive to your liberation and which leads to bondage. Stripping yourself away from the wrong value is *vyatireka*. In life, one has to turn away from many things which are likely to have miserable consequences.

The third aspect is establishing oneself in the *ekendriya* aspect. When the five sense organs are receiving their separate sensations, the mind becomes a blend of the data received from all five. Mind is dampened with the cumulative effect of heterogeneous sensations. When

a yogi separates out the data received through one sense organ and detaches from it all the previous associations with which the sensation from that particular organ is conditioned, the individual's reaction will be decidedly different. Only by practicing the detachment of the associated ideas of all senses other than that with which one is concerned can one understand what exactly is meant by *ekendriya* concentration, that is, giving one's full attention to the exact stimulus that comes through the ear as a sound or the eye as a flash of light, etc. All this will be further studied in the section on practice.

Sutra I:16

*tat param puruṣa khyāteḥ
guṇavairiṣṇyam*

tat: that

param: highest

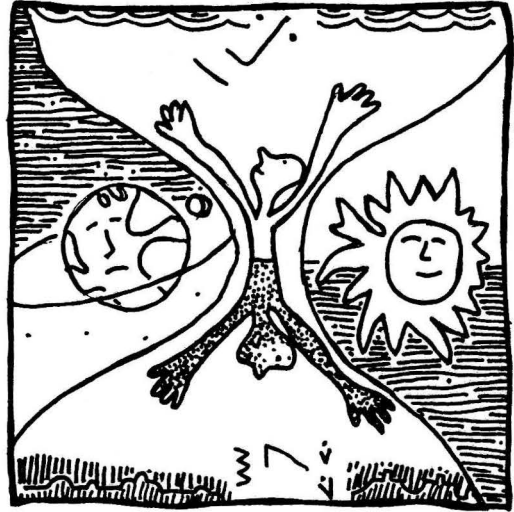
puruṣakhyāteḥ: by or from awareness of the *puruṣa* (the Self)

guṇavairiṣṇyam: freedom from the least desire of the *guṇas*

That is the highest (*vairāgya*) in which, on account of the awareness of the *puruṣa*, there is a cessation of the least desire for the *guṇas*.

The common tendency of people is to look around and see what is impressive, to listen to the testimonials given by a number of people in high-sounding hyperbole. This is not only for meeting the daily needs of life and receiving therapy for whatever physical illness one has, but also to tide over social repressions, familial obligations, mental imbalance and the discipline one seeks to attain the highest goal of one's life.

Scriptures of most religions treat their votaries as if they are immature people with animal instincts and a discrimination which is not better than that of children. Moral norms are taught with the help of anecdotes and parables which forcefully describe how wicked-



ness is drastically punished and the good is always rewarded. Believers' minds are fed with the lures of an enchanting heaven, a place where the most exaggerated hedonistic pleasures are lavished on those who are selected to enter paradise. Each religion has its own special concept of a heaven. In the same manner, hell is described as a terrible place of torture. Both the preachers and their congregations forget that when they die their brains and sensory systems transform into dead matter and thereafter the dead have no bodies to experience pain or pleasure. When the faithful are told that they might go to hell and be cast in the burning flames of brimstone, the fear of being scorched comes to them. Such outright stupidity is enshrined in the most adorable scriptures of all religions. Most people remain ethical in their outward life, fearing such punishments, and do good to others, coveting an honored place in heaven. Henri Bergson, in his *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, exposed the dubiousness of static religion and closed morality. The alternatives are dynamic religion and open morality.

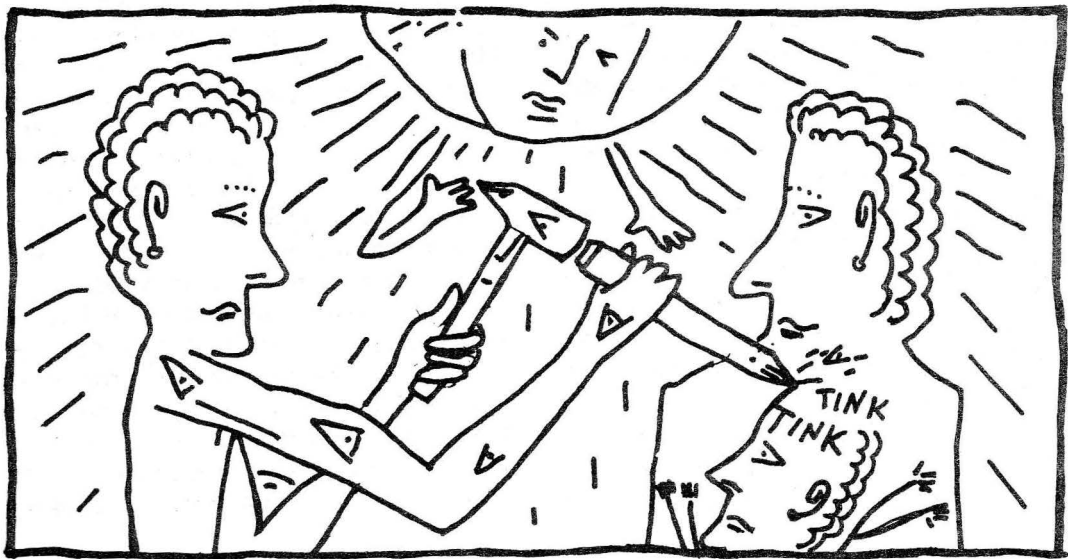
When people fall sick, they look for hospitals which have the largest number of beds, the biggest building complex, where doctors come and go in the most costly cars. Boasting of the amount of money that is spent on medical bills is more important than having a safe recov-

ery. For education, children are sent to schools where admission is difficult to get, where the fees are the highest, and where children of the wealthiest section of the community attend. Little consideration is given to the quality of the teachers, the worthwhileness of the syllabus that is adhered to, or the quality of life imparted to children during their school days.

This is the tendency against which Patañjali warns. Your choices should be based on right knowledge which you can find manifesting in your own innermost soul. The knowledge spoken of here is *puruṣa khyāti* or *ātma vidya*. It is a recognition that the brightest light one can have to guide a harmonious life which blossoms with higher values is already your heritage. You can find it just like a great work of art is brought to light from a granite or marble piece by chipping off whatever conceals that form in the block of marble or stone. All forms of yoga arise from a conviction that nobody is lost, totally and forever. There is hope of reaching the highest perfection that is possible for each to attain. This is called the Third Noble Truth of Lord Buddha. The First Noble Truth is that life is miserable on five counts: birth is painful, ignorance is painful, disease is painful, separation from those whom one loves is painful, and death is painful. The Sec-

ond Noble Truth says that misery ensues from desires. The Third Noble Truth says that it is possible to get over all the pains of life. The Fourth Noble Truth is described as the renunciation of all desires. Hope in life should not be the false hope of a fool. True conviction of deliverance comes from the knowledge that one's innate reality is the Supreme Self which is indestructible, pure, and not tainted with any confusion that arises from the phenomenality of life.

What was previously described as *prasankhyāna*, or the discrimination of the Self from the non-Self, is the right reason to rejoice. Having a proper perspective on the horizontal principles of the phenomenal world and the vertical unfoldment of the spirit helps a person to pursue the path of righteousness with all earnestness and to eschew the path of evil with determination. Such a seeker is not in any state of frenzy. Earnestness keeps the enthusiasm unflagging and consistently steady. When a person's needs are few and he or she doesn't exaggerate his or her social placement, life becomes so very simple that it can be handled with great ease. The *Bhagavad Gita* says that the lust for pleasures may be weakened by starving oneself of them; but if one sees the Absolute, one will become totally free of all craving. What is important is to gain *viveka khyāti*, the



knowledge that one is already a manifestation of the highest spirit which is most pure in its essence.

The ideal of a yogi is to establish a voluntary governorship over the autonomous functioning of his or her psychosomatic system whereby conditionings and colorations of the operational system are always attuned to an approximate perfection of normalcy so that the innate balance can be consistently maintained. Life of an organism can be described as a rhythmic alternation in the release and control of energy. The two kinds of energy that are constantly released for the growth, maintenance and continuance of the system are physical and chemical. The physical can also be termed as electrical. The conveyor of electrical energy is the nervous system. Chemical energy is endocrinal, also known as hormonal. The physical or electrical aspect belongs very much to its parent cosmologic system and chemical or endocrinal energy stems from the purposive intentionality of the individuated living organism. Although chemical energy is produced in the glands which belong to the somatic counterpart of the psyche, the engineering of its potent chemistry is governed by the purpose at hand from moment to moment, as well as by what is designed for the long-term efficiency of the system. In relation to the electrical energy that is released and controlled, neuronal devices are meticulously controlled by synapses. This is a self-educating system in which all the stored up information of the individual, the conscious planning of one's reaction to the environment, and the biologic, genetic scheme of unfoldment operate as a tri-basic function of the *prāṇa*, mind and physical instrumentality of life. The role of this aspect is very much that of a designing engineer whose needs are looked into and supplied by the endocrinal system.

It is significant that the endocrinal glands are named *grandhi* in Sanskrit. A *grandha* is an authoritative book. *Grandhi* is one conversant with authentic injunctions and commandments. The reci-

procal relationship between the nervous system and intra-glandular reactions has a very peculiar device through which the rational is guided, governed and controlled by the irrational. The irrational is not, however, chaotic. It responds to the slightest suggestion from the conscious mind about the ultimate purpose or goal to which one's life is attuned. The chemicals involved in the hormones are so rare and unique in their composition and function that they can hardly be synthetically produced by any human device. Yet they can be plentifully manufactured in one's own body by arranging one's thoughts in a certain manner and directing one's vital breath or *prāṇa* in a significant way. It is not by resorting to artificial means that this rare feat is accomplished, but by merging oneself closer and closer to the inner texture of nature's ingenuity. When one can forget the carrying out of one's private and vested interests and be in full attunement or rather at-one-ment with the higher intentions of nature, one automatically comes to a state of oneness or aloneness (*kaivalya*). Thus, for the *prakṛti laya*, one who is merged in nature, *kaivalya* comes as a logical conclusion.

This beautiful function can be seen by studying the marvelous control system of the endocrinal glands. When the gland receives a message to release hormonal energy, the first thrust that comes is a little more than what is needed. The overseer of psychophysical welfare, which belongs to what the yogis call *prajñā*, described in the *Mandukya Upaniṣad* as the overseeing principle of control (*sarveśvara*), neutralizes the excess energy that is released with what physiologists call a negative hormone. This is very similar to what physicists call negentropy which counters the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Thus the physico-chemical interaction in the biologic set up makes a person alternate between non-knowledge and all-knowledge, *kincitjñāttva* and *sarvajñāttva*. This is the grand scheme of attaining *kaivalya* by regulating values.

Sutra I:17

*vitarka vicāra ānanda asmitā
rupa anugamāt samprajñātah*

vitarka: of perceptual curiosity
(perceptual confrontation)

vicāra: linear reasoning

ānanda: of elation

asmitā: I-consciousness

rupa: appearances

anugamāt: is accompanied by

samprajñātah: cognitive absorption

Cognitive absorption is accompanied by the appearance of perceptual curiosity, pondering, experiencing of value and identification with one's ego.

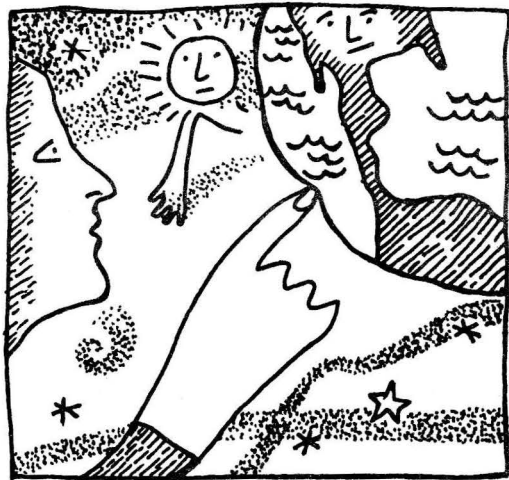
A living organism has a vertical continuance of its life (will to live) and a horizontal placement in an environment which is mostly conducive to the meaningful prolongation of that particular life form. In infra-nature where lower forms of life thrive, adverse environments are avoided through natural means such as the extinction of the species or a process of evolution by which special features of adaptation are accepted in a marked manner through varying degrees of mutation. Higher animals and even some lower forms like birds and fish are capable of migrating from one place to another which gives them the ability to choose suitable environments for habitation.

In modern psychology, for the purpose of scientific brevity, only observable and measurable physiologic changes are given primacy in the study of sensory perception and consequent physical and mental reactions to environmental demands. This limitation has considerably affected the validity of the results. The sense organs are like the doors of perception and they are not to be considered as the real percipient in a living organism. There is a constantly reverberating inner core where the individual being identifies its central consciousness. It is somewhat vulgarly designated as the ego. The word used in this sutra, *asmitā*,

means a demarcation of consciousness within the bounds of which the intensity of a particular value significance is vividly experienced from moment to moment. There is nothing good or bad about the pooling of consciousness with a personal identification. It is a natural event that occurs as the nucleic core from which consciousness is outwardly spreading centrifugally and inwardly converging centripetally. The purpose and meaning of one's life is felt most strongly within the bounds of this consciousness which is kept ever alive, vigilant, scheming, planning and operative for all the general and specific purposes for which the individual lives. The consciousness of that area presides over a treasure chest of memory bits which have been accumulated through several life forms in the passage of the genes or the persona from body to body.

According to modern physiology, stimulus comes in the form of energy such as sound vibrations, light beams, tactual pressures felt in the form of heat or cold, gravitational pulls, etc. It spatially affects the receptor ends of a number of neurons and the spatial summation decides the intensity of the stimulation to focus the cognizing power of attention. Another dimension given to physical stimulus is the temporal duration of the bombardment of the sensory receptor. With the pooling of spatial and temporal summation, the organism reacts.

To the yogis this approach is very superficial. The depth aspect of the indi-



vidual's life history and the consequent priorities the person has are not given any attention at all by the physiologists. As we have mentioned earlier, according to the yogi, attention is directed as a selective function in terms of the priorities of the individual's preservation, growth, reproduction, and continuance, and the efficient coordination of the organism's psychic and somatic organic functioning.

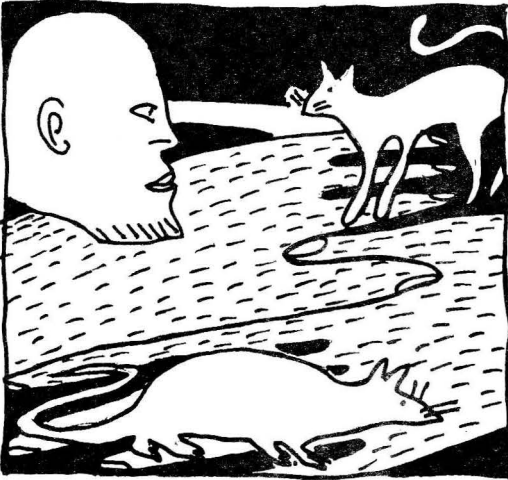
This is mainly established on the basis of conditioning which is called *samskāra* when it is still in the process of consolidation, and *vāsaṇa* when it has become an established inner conviction, a memory consolidated in depth, which is not in need of fresh modification. A rat instinctively recognizes the presence of a cat and vice versa, even before these two creatures see each other. Similarly, when a person has the intense inner need for a certain environmental factor, that need gives priority to the reception of certain stimuli which are sure to be found in the vicinity where the organism experiences urgency. The spatial and temporal summation of stimuli that would normally be expected in a given circumstance are overridden by an intense inner need. Thus the perceptual confrontation which an individual experiences is not always a static witnessing but involves many topological factors of high emotional or intuitive significance. In any case, out of the millions of stimuli that come to the organs of perception, only those which contribute to the gestaltation of one particular val-

ue configuration are given attention at a time. This is what is called *vitarka*.

Vitarka is a logical confrontation. Whatever is cognized is to be reconstituted in the mind, as well as with language and logic. Even a person who is well-versed in different languages has to choose, at any given time, the particular language form in which his perception is to be assessed, his reactions and thoughts to be spelled out. This immediately makes him adhere to the semantic requirements of that particular language. Subject, predicate and object are interrelated with proper syntactical consideration and the logistics of each word formation are looked into. When this is done with satisfaction, it can also lead to relating the situation to previous experiences with the recall of memory. Thus one enters *vicāra* from *vitarka*.

The value assessment that ensues can be pleurably elevating or painfully agonizing, or it can prepare the mind to give up further consideration and slip back into the *kṣipta* (volatile functional core) state so that consciousness can step into another realm of interest. The perceptual experience has a circular motion. From I-consciousness, attention flings itself into the awareness of a new theme indicated by 'this'. Then, after *vitarka*, *vicāra* and *ānanda*, it comes back to the I-consciousness, *asmitā*. The *prajñā* or consciousness which undergoes *ṛtti* (modification) at every stage of this circular movement can be stabilized at the *vitarka* aspect. Then it becomes *samprajñāta savitarka*. If it stabilizes at *vicāra* it becomes *samprajñāta savicāra*, if at *ānanda*, it becomes *samprajñāta sānanda*, and if at *asmitā*, *samprajñāta sasmitā*.

The scheme of this *sūtra* also implies the scheme of the *pranava*, AUM. The first three aspects, *savitarka*, *savicāra* and *sānanda* are to be understood in the light of the wakeful transactional consciousness, the conceptual world of dreams, and the causal consciousness of conditioning marked a by deep sleep where pain and pleasure are both negated. The final aspect, *sasmitā*, has a dual



nature, microscopic and macrocosmic. The central focus of personal consciousness where one experiences the pulsation of "I am" is a timeless and spaceless notion. The same can be extended to its utmost infinitude. The combination of these two aspects of the Self is presented in the great dictum, *aham brahma asmi*, "I am the Absolute," in which *aham*, the personal self, and *brahmam*, the transcendental totality of being, are interchangeable.

Sutra I:18

*virāma pratyābhāsa purvaḥ
samskāra śeṣaḥ anyāḥ*

virāma: of cessation
pratyābhāsa: the notion
purvaḥ: the former (preceded by)
samskāra śeṣaḥ: in which remain
only the (*śeṣaḥ*) residual
anyāḥ: the other

Preceded by the constant repetition of the notion of cessation is the other; in which the residual potencies only remain.

The discipline of yoga is based on a descriptive psychology of the functions of the faculties. The four inner instruments of cognition are the interrogating mind, the recalling memory, the evaluating intelligence, and the affective self-consciousness. These four work normally in all persons with short spells or quanta of energy. Consequently, the interest that is held in each item of cognition is of short duration.

For instance, when a thing is presented before the organs of perception, the question arises, "What is this?" The attitude of interrogation ceases as soon as the intellect is programmed to evaluate the given subject based on the recall of previous experiences. Once the subject is predicated with its mark of distinction and identification is established, the intellect ceases to work on that program. Then, unconsciously and spontaneously,

the recorded identification is stacked away in the unconscious and the memorizing faculty goes into silence. The affection that has been caused by cognitive consciousness in the form of questioning, evaluating and registering may bring a surge of pain or pleasure. Then, that also abates so that the stream of consciousness can go to a fresh item of experience. Thus, all perceptual confrontation has a natural beginning and a natural termination.

As a self-discipline, the yogi can take any such experience and prolong the duration of the modification of the inner organs in an identical state by precipitating a reverberation of the same order continually and contiguously so that consciousness is held in the same location for an extension of time. When that is attained, he is not a mere enjoyer, *bhogi*, but becomes a disciplined perceiver who is oblivious of time. In such a state he is a yogi who is experiencing concentration, *ekāgra*. This is when the yogi, or the neophyte, is using a positive experience as a plank for yogic discipline and consequent achievement of contemplative balance.

In the same manner the yogi can use the negative counterpart, i.e., the cessation of an experience, for another discipline. Where a cognition disappears into a state of oblivion, the entire stream of consciousness can also vanish. Perception, recall of conception, and affectivity are all transcended and the yogi remains in a state of absorption. For such absorption there can be four leads: absorption into the vanishing point of a perceptual encounter, absorption into the vanishing point of a conceptual or intuitive insight, absorption into the vanishing point of the cessation of pleasure or affectivity, and finally, absorption into the vanishing point of the conscious self merging into the cosmic or universal self. Such absorptions do not terminate any experience that has once been registered. Registered experiences still remain as potentials for future life. They are technically called *samskāras*, processed and conditioned experiences.

(Continued in next issue.)



HALFWAY

*Glistening white peak, stark against rich blue airiness;
Glacial snowfields a chill cape flowing in the wind
Cascading down in all directions.
I stand awed by this immense impassivity,
Unable not to believe
This unseeing face cares for me most tenderly.*

*I do not dare climb higher than this meadow
Above the last straggling trees.
Such dizzying purity will not admit a wanderer,
Timid, unfit to brave the feat
Of overstepping empty space.*

*No sacrilege is it though
To creep above the alpine forest
And imbibe the radiance of this magnificent scene.
It is freely given to all who come here.*

*The meadow, a mere shelf hanging astride the Ghost,
Filled with life for just this one instant each summer
Before being abandoned to the elements again.
It is dinned with music:
Wind through flowers, freshets strumming boulders,
Pulsed by the warm beat of the shining sun.*

*Clouds of rain, finest distillation of the world below,
Frozen to the slopes of this spire;
Slowly soaking out in midyear heat,
Gathered into the bosom of rocks in secret darkness:
Purest of the waters--
Rippling down under the snows in an unbroken sigh
To spring up in meadows such as mine.*

*Dazzled, I bend to the ground,
Knees soaking into dampened earth next the plashing brook,
My nape tingles with the presence of this mountain above
me
As I stretch hands to midstream rocks,
To bring my face as low as I am able.*

*I kiss the perfect coolness, drinking it in:
Melted snow, so full of life it tickles, tingling,
Spreading a paradoxical warmth to every extremity.*

*I drink and drink until I can bear no more,
And still I cannot pull away
But continue to gaze into crystalline limpidity.
The waters rush past my lips, grazing them,
Mesmerizing, pushed by boulders this and that way,
They plunge through this ecstatic meadow,
Winding down into the trees that shield this place
To nourish the far land where eyes are turned away.*

Scott Teitsworth

Meditations On



Painting by Andy Larkin

The Bhagavad Gita

Arjuna Viṣāda Yoga

The sky is pale like a dead man's face . . . stretches of arid desert without a single blade of grass . . . a withered tree with no promise of sprout or flower. Smoke is emitted from the quiver of a soldier. An unshed tear remains glistening, a cosmic tear of compassion. In it are reflected the ghastly faces of dying kings and comrades. The poison tips of arrows, still held firm in their quivers, give the foreboding of a boomerang. The banner of victory is torn off its mast and the corpse of prospective crime sits draped on the banner decorated with the insignia of the great monkey. A crown lies tumbled beneath a decapitated head. A lark sits perched on the handle of a beggar's bowl. And in the farthest corner the flame of an unflickering lamp burns on.

Verses 31 - 37

Commentary by Guru Nitya

Tropics and Other Topics

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

Peter Oppenheimer

Rejoining The Guru: Ambalapuzha, Kerala State; November 30, 1986.

I have rejoined Guru's entourage in the middle of their so-called "Gypsy Semester." The present troupe consists of five Malayalee boys, three Malayalee girls and myself, plus dozens to hundreds who attend talks given at each new locale through which we travel. Except for a sixteen year old girl and me, all the regulars are in their twenties. For the first time in the fifteen years of my association with Guru, he is now occasionally mobbed by autograph seekers. I'm not sure if that is a good or bad sign.

My dear friend Jyoti is here and showing me the playfulness of a sister and the watchful care of a mother. She was the one to meet me when I flew into



Peter with Sugata, a young "gypsy student" of the East-West University of Unitive Sciences.

Cochin from Madras. Guru is recovering from a bad case of the flu, but seems generally strong, especially considering the demands made upon him.

Two of the boys are great sports enthusiasts. It does my heart good to see them horse around and to watch the dance they went through to "sneak off" to find a T.V. for today's championship cricket match. One of them, Prince, shyly had me present his proposal to Guru for a Physical Education program to be added to Guru's East West University. The idea was readily endorsed.

In the three days since my joining the group, I have slept on the ground at a new two-hut gurukula, on a bed under a fan in a rich man's house, and now on the floor of a large meeting hall. This morning I walked alone (initially at least) to the beach and swam out in the Arabian Sea to an anchored fishing boat. I climbed up to sun-bathe while nearly three dozen children whistled, hooted, waved and laughed from the shore. On the way back in, about fifty feet off shore, I reached with my feet to check for the bottom. To my horror and revulsion instead of touching sand, my feet sunk momentarily into a soft mushy goop that could only be decomposing human fecal matter. Instantaneously a most pleasing outing became repulsive. Hurriedly I floated back to shore, mentally canceling my plans for regular morning and evening swims the next three days we're here.

Some unmitigated pleasures have included banana pulichery (a sweet yogurt curry), more cold water bucket and dipper

Attracting a crowd on the beach near Ambalapuzha.



baths, daily tender coconut juice, numerous spicy dishes, and early risings before the onset of the sticky heat and mad commotions that characterize Kerala towns by day. On the pain side of the scale, my sciatic nerve continues to hurt, making sitting down problematic. Neither lying nor standing are acceptable in social settings here.

It is noteworthy that the backpack I had to borrow from a friend at the last minute after the zipper broke on mine, is holding up well. It is tipping the scales (not to mention my back) at forty five pounds. One of the boys calls it my "mobile home," and indeed it is, with clothes for heat and cold, bed-sheets, sleeping pad, book-lite, flashlight, dop kit and dipper, clothesline & five pins, vitamins, minerals and herbal remedies, cup, bowl and silverware, portable water purifier, notebook paper, ten disposable razors, money, a couple of plastic bags, the gifts I brought for friends here, and an elastic "bungy cord" to hold down automobile trunks that won't close around the whole lot when it is added to the luggage of others with whom I will be traveling.

Man at Leisure/God at Work: Ambalapuzha; December 2, 1986.

Today has been a deliciously slow day. Last night was very long, as the Malayalee man who bedded down next to me on the floor had the irritating habit of loudly groaning and grunting in his sleep several times a minute. By dawn, as we were getting up, I was curious to learn if he was aware of this trait. I approached him and said, "All night long you were moaning and groaning." He looked strained and asked, "What?" "You - moaning and groaning," I said. "What did you say?" he appealed. "Moaning. Moaning," I repeated. Relief flashed across his face, "Ah, yes, Good Moaning, Sir." And he walked away.

At 6AM Guru dictated to me some of his commentary on Narayana Guru's *One Hundred Verses on Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence* (some of which appears in this issue). That is the only time of day Guru can squeeze in any English these days. During the rest of the day he was shuttled along with his retinue to and from four different functions in which he was the featured speaker.

Dreading the voluminous Malayalam and the sciatic pain of prolonged sitting, I stayed behind in his room, which has the only fan in the place. I read from Dogen's *Moon in a Dew Drop*, a book on Zen, and sat for some zazen meditation.

Later I talked with a Malayalee young man who had also stayed back so he could speak with me about his drug addiction and fragile recovery. After four months of sobriety he has finally gotten over the physical torment of withdrawal but is still suffering from wide mood swings and lack of concentration. As for the emotional swings, I shared with him Nataraja Guru's "secret" of even-tempereness:

"Emotions will always fluctuate up and down to some extent. It is not possible to pull yourself up when you are feeling down. But if you want to get a handle on the process, it can be done by reigning yourself in and restraining a bit when you feel yourself going high. That way when the inevitable down swing comes, it will go down less than it would have if you had let yourself get carried away in ecstasy. In any case there will be a balance, and if you want to soften the drasticness of the swings, you can do so only by moderating the 'up' cycle." The Guru's three word code for this technique was, "Don't Shout 'Hallelujah.'"

As for the trouble concentrating, I suggested that at this tender stage of his recovery he needn't expect too much from his mind in this regard. It is not yet used to self-discipline. Rather than trying to maintain constant *concentration*, I suggested he be happy if he could maintain constant *intention* for his recovery and continued self-development. At this stage consistent intention alone should guarantee success.

I also spent hours reading through a book entitled *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener* by Martin Gardner, in which the former editor of "Scientific American" discusses many perspectives on such subjects as Prayer, Evil, and Immortality. For variety I read some in *The Great Railway Bazaar* by Paul Theroux,

chronicling his journey by trains from London through Asia. I wrote a letter to a friend in California who is planning to join me in January for one week in Kerala after his trek in Nepal. Of course there was also time for rice, curry, and napping.

When Guru came back hot and tired between his third and fourth public talks of the day, I expressed sympathy for his plight. He responded, "So, you don't want to be a Guru then?" When I declined, Jyoti shared with me a story that Guru had told that very day:

It seems Jesus and Peter were walking along a country road one day. Peter was proclaiming the glory of God and speculated, "How I would love to be God for just one day." Jesus remarked, "Better you start with a half day first." Just then they came upon a woman who was tending a group of ducks. As they were passing, she put down her staff and started walking away. Jesus asked her, "Where are you going?" She said, "I have a wedding to attend." "But what about your ducks?" "Oh, God will look after them," she said as she hurried off. For the rest of the afternoon, Peter was chasing here and there trying to keep the ducks together with only minimal and short-lived success. After a few hours the woman returned and gathered up the ducks. "So now what do you think?" Jesus asked Peter. Peter answered, "Enough of this God business. I don't want it."

Three years ago, when I was last in India, I accompanied Guru to the village of Malayattoor to visit the proposed site of a new gurukula. The site consisted of a finger of land laying between a rubber tree estate and a lake. At that time I had been very impressed with the peacefulness and beauty of the place.

Tomorrow Guru is sending me to this remote lakeside retreat for ten days of treatment (and retreatment) for my persistent sciatic pain. A famous Ayurvedic (ancient Indian science of health) Physician who lives in the locality will come daily to administer special oil massages.

My desire to visit this gurukula increased when I learned from Kumaran in

Madras that the swami in charge at Malayatoor is Anandan, my dear friend for the last thirteen years. We first met at the Bangalore Nature Cure Hospital where we were attending on Nataraja Guru during his final days. From that time onwards Anandan has been for me a model of good-natured and untiring service and devotion, lightened by humor and given weight by wisdom.

Each night in the hospital before laying down to sleep on the floor at the foot of the Guru's bed, Anandan would take care to aim the crooked-neck table lamp (sitting beside the Guru's one functional arm) so that the beam, when lit, would strike Anandan square in the face and awaken him with a start. This method of calling would be used by the Guru numerous times each night for requests ranging from help getting onto the toilet to answers for questions such as, "What time is it?" and even once, "Where did they shoot George Wallace?" "I think it was Corvallis" was Anandan's half-wakeful yet immediate

response, more out of the rhyme-logic of dream than out of any notion of veracity.

Thus when the promise of some significant treatment for my pain and disability was added to the allure of the setting and the pull of a good friend, my eagerness was strong enough to overcome my reluctance to leave Guru after traveling all this way to be with him. I will rejoin him in Trichur after ten days. I have a sense that something very precious awaits me in Malayatoor.

The Road to Malayatoor: Kerala; December 4, 1986.

There is a touching ritual-like interchange that I periodically participate in with the simplest of Kerala folk. This is a sort of verbal dance in which the Malayalee, out of deference to me, speaks in a very basic broken English, and I, out of deference in return, speak my own form of pidgin Malayalam. Thus an entire conversation will take place in two languages, connecting almost as if by magic in a common meeting-ground of mutual human regard.

One such conversation occurred this morning between myself and the conductor of a bus I had just boarded with my friend and escort, Babu. The conductor's words are in English, and mine are in Malayalam:

"Where going?"

"Eniku Angamali pogunnu. Etre pice?"

"For two?"

"Adai, runda."

"Twenty nine."

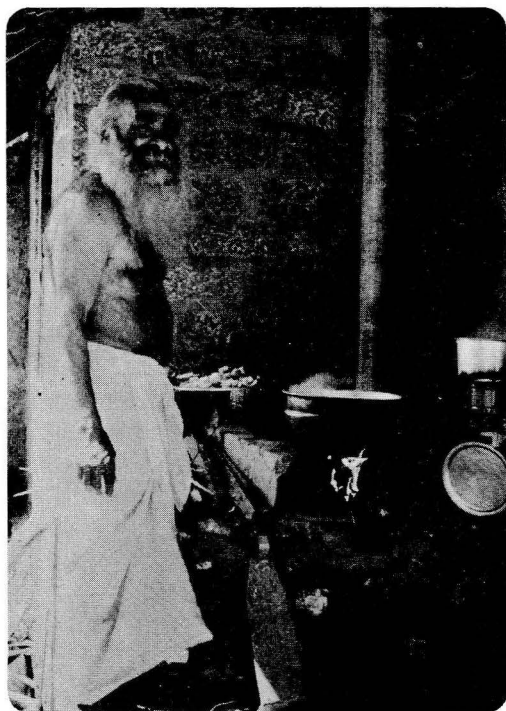
"Eru pat umbata?"

"Yes."

"Sheddi."

"Thank you."

That bus ride was the first of three to eventually take Babu and myself to the Malayatoor Gurukula from where Babu continued on to his family's home which is also in Malayatoor. Babu and I had risen at 5AM in order to travel and arrive in the cooler part of the day. But due to misinformation regarding bus schedules and the usual unprogrammed delays, we



**Ananda Swami at the kitchen stove,
Malayatoor Gurukula**

arrived at Malayatoor at midday to the news that the one and a half miles of road to the lake were closed for repairs and we would have to walk.

The heat of the tropics at midday is itself like a weight. Added to this weight I hoisted upon my shoulders the back-pack that was lightened slightly by the sense of irony that here I was on my way to have my weak back treated. I set my odds as comparable to those laid by Jesus on a camel passing through the eye of a needle or a rich man entering the Kingdom of Heaven. With each of my first few steps I said a thanks to Jyoti who had offered to take a parcel of some of my excess gear ahead with them to Varkala.

Soon my mind was taken up with the distractions of the road and roadside. Having no motor traffic on the road made the walk an uncommon pleasure. All along the way children would appear, running from the naturally camouflaged compounds within the jungle on either side of the road, calling back over their shoulders as they came in order to alert their family and neighbors to the passing show of the white man with the big load strapped to his back.

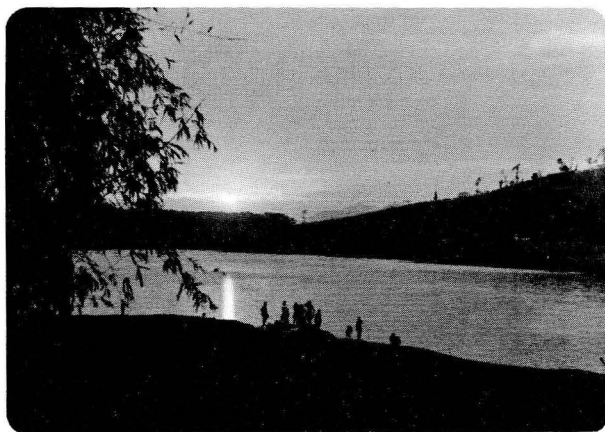
Mothers with broad smiles, holding babies on their hips appeared at doorways. They would point and say something to their young ones - perhaps, "There is one of the Strange Ones we will send you to if you don't behave." In previous visits I had had such a role of the

ogre cast upon me by clever mothers frustrated in their attempts to get their young children to behave on buses and trains.

We stopped at a couple of small shops along the way - literally "holes in the wall" - and purchased tiny bananas, wheat buns and cold bottles of mango soda pop from a refrigerator which looked at least a century ahead of its time in the dark hut with the dried cow-dung floor. We passed the labor-intensive road crew in which the women carried baskets of rocks upon their heads and dumped them where the men distributed and beat them (the rocks!) into place. There was a special smile of recognition between the women workers and me which acknowledged our respective loads.

Finally we reached the lake. Half-way around it we came to the gurukula where Swami greeted us with a quiet unflappable joy. He had not received Guru's letter announcing my arrival and in fact had been planning to leave the next day for Varkala. If we had arrived one day later, the gurukula would have been locked and abandoned. With the ease and cheer characteristic of *ānanda* (the blissful nature of the Self), he now changed his program in order to remain with me for ten days and then accompany me with Guru to Varkala. I could hardly wait to plunge in the lake. By the time I returned, a pot of rice was bubbling on a wood and coconut husk fire.

(Continued in next issue.)



Lake at Malayatoor Gurukula

Book Review

Scott Teitsworth



The Psychology of Darśana Mala, by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati, a publication of East-West University of Unitive Sciences, printed at All India Press, is now available from Island Gurukula Aranya.

The Psychology of Darśanamala is the *magnum opus* of Nitya Chaitanya Yati, an increasingly well-regarded Vedantic philosopher and writer from South India. The work is presented as a commentary on the *Darśanamala* of Narayana Guru, one of modern India's most brilliant mystic philosophers and poets. It was Narayana Guru who instructed Nataraja Guru, who in turn taught Nitya Chaitanya Yati, so there is a direct line of understanding represented in this book.

The Psychology of Darśanamala is a thoroughgoing exposition of psychological states from the origin of individual consciousness to its extinction in nirvana. In the past, such large-scale undertakings have been to a greater or lesser extent heterogeneous and unsystematic. By using the elegant framework of *Darśanamala* to properly organize the structure of the book, Guru Nitya has added an important dimension to this perennial study and at the same time made a significant contribution to the presentation of Indian psychology and philosophy. The reader will find that such a systematic presentation helps bring Indian psychology out of the realm of hypothetical speculation and into the arena of everyday life where it can be of immediate and practical use.

In the Spring of 1958, Nitya Chaitanya Yati was completing his Ph.D. thesis in Social psychology at Bombay University. Just as he put the finishing touches on his work, entitled "The problem of ad-

justment in the physically handicapped", his faculty guide transferred to another university. The head of the Sociology Department had been a rival of Nitya's, in true scholastic fashion, and he proceeded to block his thesis presentation.

"You cannot present your thesis without a guide," he said.

"Then you present it for me, please," requested Nitya.

"I cannot. I was not your guide."

"Then will you appoint another guide for me?"

"No. The work is finished, so you cannot have a guide."

While Nitya was pondering and fuming over this catch-22, his spiritual teacher, Nataraja Guru, came to visit him. In his inimitable style, rather than give sympathy he upbraided his disciple.

"You have gotten all your information from American textbooks," he said. "In ten years you will renounce all this borrowed knowledge."

It was almost exactly ten years later that Nitya, without his doctorate but now a Guru, perceiving many of the flaws of Western psychological technique, began formulating *The Psychology of Darśanamala*.

The genius of the West has traditionally been expressed in an analytic methodology, developed in the ancient physical sciences. This has carried over into the modern field of psychology, where its application is more dubious than, for instance, in the categorization of animal species. A proper conception of the mind *in toto* is very much needed. Thousands of psychological studies are produced annually, painstakingly detailed and with great inner cohesion, but they fail to sat-

isfy us because they do not belong to a meaningful picture of the psyche. They only depict isolated units of behavior. 'What' is described from every possible angle, while the more fundamental question of 'why' is studiously avoided.

The process of breaking the subject down into smaller and smaller parts through analysis has led to such specialization by individuals that almost all of Western civilization is deeply dissociated from an integral understanding of the whole. The situation is aptly described in the classic story of the blind men and the elephant, where each imagines that he can accurately project the nature of the beast from the part he is in contact with, while disdaining the suggestions of a sighted person who can plainly see it is an elephant.

In India and some other parts of Asia the situation is the reverse. Intelligent thinkers have been contemplating the "big picture" for more than 5000 years, resulting in well-systematized schemes of synthetic, rather than analytic, reasoning. In contrast to the specialists in the West, every Indian is a philosopher, though often at the expense of everyday details. While the West is full of excellent plumbers who are unhappily divorced from their spirituality, India has an abundance of happily integrated people whose plumbing is permanently in a state of chaos.

While the twentieth century has seen some cross-pollination between the analytic and synthetic extremes, they generally remain entrenched as the rival polarized camps of materialism and spiritualism. Narayana Guru and his principal expositors, Nataraja Guru and Guru Nitya, maintain that the most beneficial attitude is one that combines the best of both in a dynamic conception. In the present work the common root where the material and spiritual worlds join is examined in some detail. In fact, the dialectical integration of the conceptual and the practical underlies the entire study of *Darśanamala*.

In much of Narayana Guru's work,

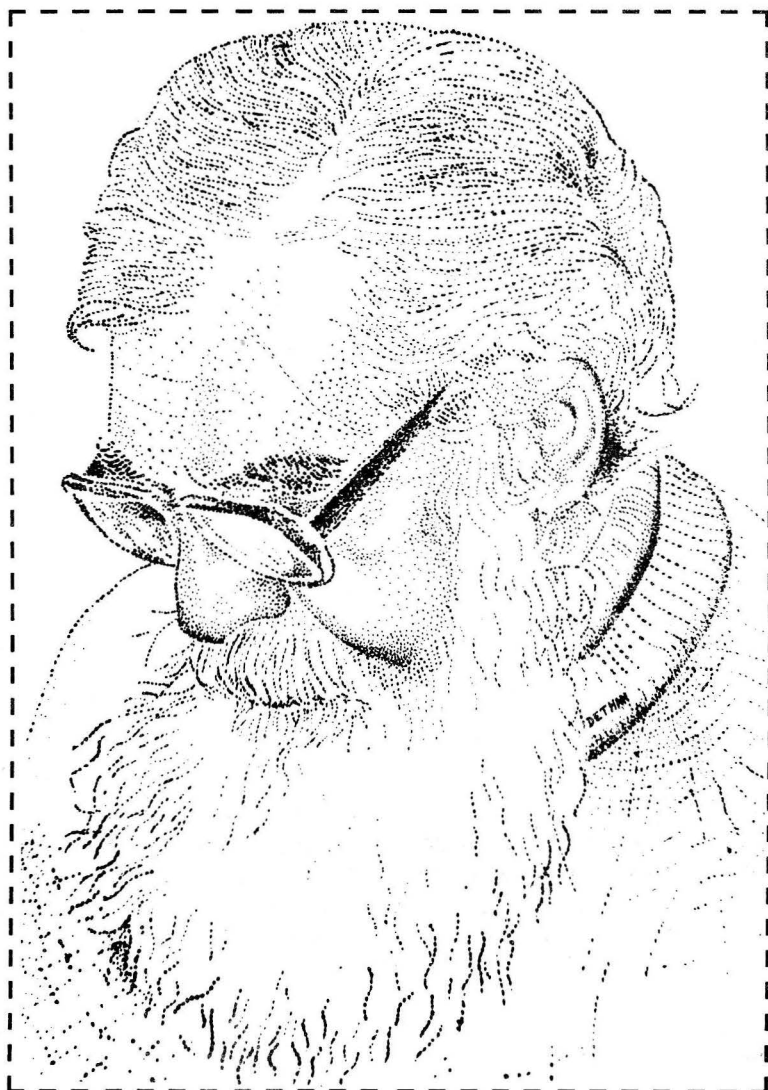
and especially *Darśanamala*, there is a fusion of the best of modern scientific understanding with the traditional wisdom of India's ancient seers. This is in keeping with the purpose of a long line of Vedantic revaluators. As humanity evolves there is a periodic need to restate the basic truths of life in a form that is relevant and comprehensible to the thought-patterns of a particular age. In Vedanta this is taken as a matter of course. There is a proud tradition of revaluation stretching back to the Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita, written around 1000 BC, is an early and important example, and its continuing relevance is such that it is cited throughout the present work. Sankara revalued Vedanta in the context of the world of the first millennium AD, and Narayana Guru should be considered among the most important revaluators of the present era. The verticality of truth is such that Narayana Guru could modestly state, "what we have to say is what Sankara said." Or, as Nataraja Guru puts it with reference to the particular needs of the age of reason, "Narayana Guru has been able to state the gist of ancient Indian wisdom tradition in a manner lending itself to be integratively understood in a unified fashion." *The Psychology of Darśanamala* is the distillation of this modern restatement of Vedantic values into the specific field of psychology. Still, since mind as viewed here is the source of the entire universe insofar as it is knowable, psychology is a much broader subject in the Indian context than it is in the West, where mind is considered to be just one subject among thousands of independent categories.

No one will argue that the twentieth century has seen extremely rapid changes in virtually every facet of life. Even the freest thinkers of only 200 years past could not conceive of any part of the present way of life, let alone those of 1000 or 2000 years ago. Our sociological and technological development has vastly outpaced the adaptivity of philosophers. Such a time has a powerful need to have traditional wisdom interpreted in

its own terms. Much of the current confusion and strife in the religious and political arenas can be traced to attempts to squeeze modern, global humanity into the confines of philosophies created for semi-barbaric tribal peoples of the distant past. It is high time for the kernels of eternal truth in those once-useful ideologies to be separated from the chaff of their historical trappings of tribal ethics and politico-economic power struggles, to be restated in the language of the present day.

In belief-systems where there is no provision for change one expects such con-

flicts, yet even in India, with its time-honored tradition of revaluation, there is tremendous resistance to the kind of opening up of entrenched attitudes recommended by Narayana Guru and his successors. Admittedly, and to their credit, they have hit hard at precisely the weakest points, where unquestioned habits have done the most to degrade human values. Like scar tissue over a wound it is here that society's skin tends to be the thickest. But the task of the revaluator is just this—to break us free of the horizontalized stasis of mind that sets in over the years, even against our best inten-



Guru Nitya

tions, with fresh infusions of verticalized truth. For India this means philosophical surgery on the twin evils of the oppression of women and the maintenance of inflexible casteism, which is India's version of the more general problem of racism. While even the ancient and revered Bhagavad Gita mentions that Self-realization is not dependent on relative factors such as sex or caste, at least a *de facto* discrimination has been in operation well into the so-called modern era. It is often the case that theoretical truths only penetrate the hard shell of social conditioning through a prolonged process. Narayana Guru and Guru Nitya wish to make it clear that equality on the actual as well as the theoretical level is the birthright of every human being. How can one profess a universal and all-encompassing belief system and yet make slaves of women and children? How can we advocate freedom and liberation while building artificial barriers between arbitrary groups? Simple enough questions, but ones that are even now being rejected with vehemence and violence, not just in India but around the globe. What were reasonable patterns of understanding thousands of years ago have slowly lost their value-content to become a straightjacket for the human soul. The subtle faults in those schemes, which through the years have been greatly magnified, are overdue for correction.

While the West fully shares the onus of racism and sexism, in fact all the isms, its deepest-rooted faith is placed in scientific skepticism rather than spiritual acceptance. In *The Psychology of Darśanamala*, Guru Nitya demonstrates at great length the similarities between the attitudes of scientific materialism and religious theism. How both orientations emerge from a universal ground of consciousness is examined in the very first darsana of the book. He points out:

As a result of the conditioning of the faithful by the established religions, and of the skeptics by the categorical statements of science, man has become bifurcat-

ed in his sense of his true beingness. Having thus separated him from his true ground—that substratum that gives rise to all beings—those responsible for this have largely repressed in him the sense of wonder and delight in which one who knows his true being lives all the time. Looking in vain for some religious statement or scientific formula which will neatly encompass the whole mystery of being, so that we can file it away in our box of consumer goods and calendar maxims, we have forgotten that the mystery we seek to penetrate is our own mystery.

From the absolutist perspective adopted in this book, religion and science are seen to be nearly indistinguishable in their philosophical limitations and their effects on the psyche. Nonetheless, at the horizontal level of everyday life these two systems are very much in opposition.

The renormalized structuralism revived by Narayana Guru, developed by Nataraja Guru, and used as a springboard by Guru Nitya in this work, provides a solution to this conflict-causing confusion of values. Truth is an eternal, vertical value, while its historical context is horizontal and undergoing constant evolution. Mistaken notions that horizontal values have the same eternal verity as absolute truth need to be sorted out by reference to an orderly scheme of correlation such as is presented here. Orthodox religious thinkers tend to give an eternal, vertical status to the transient horizontal factors making up a large bulk of their scriptures. Rationalist thinkers err in the opposite direction, so to speak, by attempting to include truth with the horizontal factors as limited by time and place. While both of these may be termed one-legged arguments that must sooner or later fall down due to their lack of balance in the integration of horizontal and vertical elements, at least the skeptic is less likely to burst from his ivory tower with sword flashing or guns blazing.

(Continued in next issue.)

East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News

Guru Nitya continues in good health at the Fernhill Gurukula where he is conducting classes on the second part of Patañjali's Yoga Sutras and concentrating his writing on *The Symphony of Values*.

In 1987, close to twenty of his books in Malayalam were published, including his commentary on the great dictums of the *Upaniṣads*, *Tat Tvam Asi*, his meditations on Narayana Guru's *Svānubhava-gīti*, and a response to the *Identity Crises and Confusion of Values* prevalent today.

He was visited at Fernhill by Garry Davis on his around-the-world trip to gain support for his candidacy for president of the United States. His platform

calls for the recognition of the reality of one world and one humankind in the form of a World Government which protects all as world citizens instead of national governments pitted against one another, not only depleting the world's resources with the madness of the arms race, but threatening to destroy the world completely. Nataraja Guru, in his *Memorandum on World Government*, and Guru Nitya, in his *Memorandum on Self-Government and a Harmonious World Order*, have given full support to World Government as a natural extension of realizing one's identity with all of humanity. ♦



Garry Davis and Guru Nitya with the World Government Flag

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