

GURUKULAM

VOLUME V • 1989

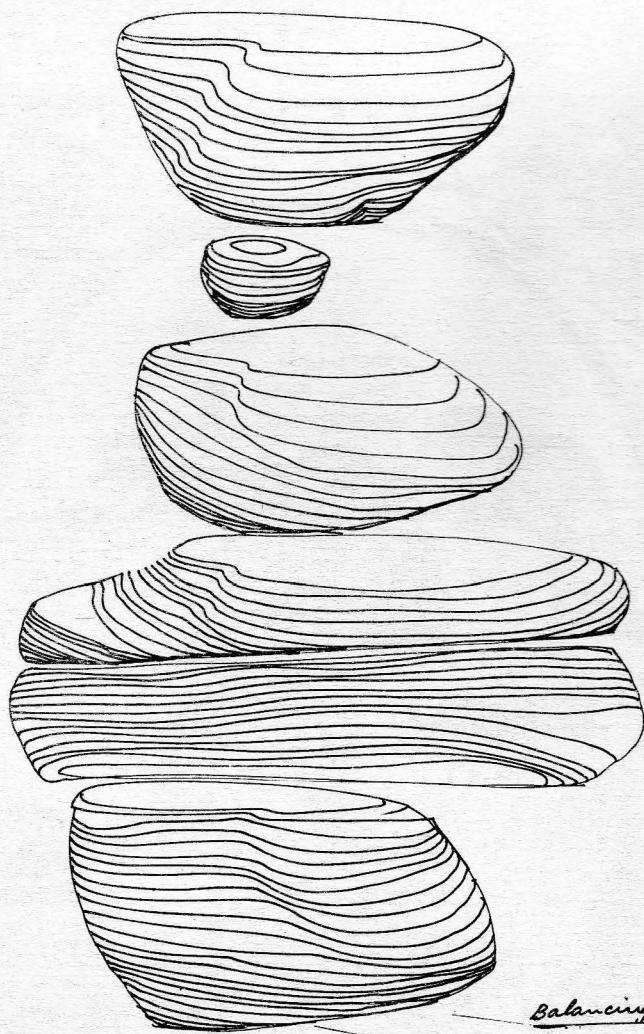
FIRST QUARTER



GURUKULAM

WISDOM BEGETS KNOWLEDGE

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Balancing

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GURUKULAM

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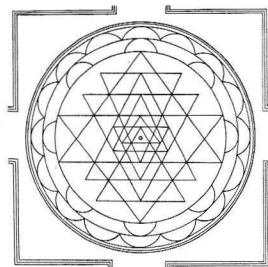
COVER: Hariharan's Sculpture of *Śiva Linga* at Brahmaidya Mandiram, Varkala, India, photograph by Gulf Studio.

Buried Treasure

One hot afternoon, as I sat on the stones that long ago had been a temple dedicated to Devi, the Goddess, looking out over a green sea of gently waving tops of coconut trees to the blue of the Indian Ocean beyond, I noticed a beautiful butterfly nearby. Unlike the other birds and moths who serenely swooped and soared on the up and down drafts of the wind around the hill, it was describing an intricate pattern as it flew near me, almost as if it were trying to catch my attention.

I watched the bright sun glint off it in iridescent colors which changed hue as it changed direction. It flew away a short distance, then back, then away again in the same direction and back again, giving me the distinct feeling that it was enticing me to follow. This was confirmed when I did get up, as it persisted in flying ahead, then back, then on again, leading me down one side of the hill to the opening of a large cave. When the butterfly flew into its dark interior, smelling of bats, I hung back, preferring to sit on the root of a large tree near the entrance and enjoy the cool shade.

My friend returned and came so close that I could feel the soft flutter of its wings on my cheek, communicating reassurance. I took a few hesitant steps into the cave, then discovered that a faint gleam of light was radiating from far inside. Intrigued, I went further and soon found myself in a large chamber, each nook and cranny of which gleamed and sparkled with multicolored gems. Awestruck, I followed the butterfly through twisting passages to dozens of chambers, some tiny, and some huge like the one I had first entered. As we explored, I realized that the treasures unfolding before me were not the stolen loot of bandits or pirates, but a shimmering collection of the bountiful symbols of Indian mythology. The light radiating out from them took on all colors and intensities, grading from the most delicate of sheens to a blinding brilliance.



After wandering about for some time, I had the distinct feeling that we were approaching the very center of the underground cavern and that it was directly beneath where I had been sitting. Unlike the rainbow colors I had been seeing, the chamber we entered was so flooded with the radiance of magenta that I felt all the freshness of dawn, though it was the middle of the afternoon. Just as dawn marks the transition from night to day, the magenta seemed to incorporate dark and bright streaks which faintly appeared at the corners of my vision. Centrally, though, ultra-violet and infra-red melded into a magenta so pure and brilliant that it seemed to be vibrating with infinite possibilities. I felt as though I was filled with the very essence of beauty, the formless quality which manifests as countless beautiful forms.

Enraptured, I stood still for a long time until the now magenta-drenched butterfly subtly drew my attention to three particularly bright areas in the cavern. As I stared intently at the first, I became aware of the pattern of the *Śrī Cakra* – a geometric design of intersecting triangles around a central point, with two rings of petal-like shapes around them, all enclosed by three concentric circles and finally by three squares with four openings. I recalled that it came from the ancient tradition of *Tantra* which valued such proto-linguistic aids to meditation (*yantra*-s) for their power to reveal aspects of truth not accessible to the purely rational mind. Unfortunately, as in all religious traditions, the more esoteric practices tended to shade off into murky, even fearful, areas of complicated rituals performed without understanding of their meaning. Śankara, one of the

clearest thinkers in Indian philosophy, sought to preserve this treasure, untarnished by dubious practices, by writing a poetic treatise, *The Upsurging Billow of Beauty*, seen as emanating from the *Śrī Cakra* before which I stood.

Bathed in its magenta sheen, my eyes traveled from petal to petal around the circles and then around the points of the triangles until they reached the center. As my eyes rested at each spot, the *mantra* (sacred syllable) associated with it sounded within me, opening up deeper and deeper aspects of reality to my understanding. It was as though I was slowly merging into an ocean of beauty. Then from the center my attention was rhythmically pulled to the periphery and back to the center, then back out, while the first two lines of Śankara's poem sang in my mind: "Only when united with Śakti does Śiva have the power to manifest; if not, the Divine is unable even to pulsate."

As the words repeated, five triangles with their bases down glowed brighter in resonance with "*Śakti*" and four with their bases up with "*Śiva*."

Then I noticed the figures in the glowing areas of magenta light on either side. One was the *Śiva Linga*, a short rounded pillar inseparably joined to a flat base with gracefully curving sides. I thought of the hundreds of times I had seen the same image in stone -- sometimes as a carefully carved, substantial sculpture and more often as small, ancient stones set into sandy soil, pock-marked by their many years of exposure to the elements in wayside shrines, often between the spreading roots of majestic "holy-fig" trees. The other was the *Ardhanariśvara*, a gracefully poised human figure, the right half of which was male and the left half female. Unlike the pervasive *Śiva Linga*, I had seen this form rarely, usually only in temples. In both, the conjoining of male and female is used to nourish the unitive vision which has the power to transcend paradox. Mystics of all religions, in their attempts to express the inexpressible, have found the sexual union of male and female to be a cogent

metaphor of the individual's longing for and final union with the Absolute, such as the Christian way of speaking of the soul as the bride of Christ. However, the glowing images before me did not convey the longing engendered by separation or even the ecstasy of coming together, but rather the profound peace of complete identity.

The ineffable beauty which surrounded me evoked many images of the Mother Goddess and Father God -- she, bedecked with all possibilities, gracefully performing the *lasya* dance of elaboration, and he, streaked with the ashes of transcendence, bringing purification with his great *tandava* dance. Śakti, the pure energy out of which everything is fashioned, and Śiva, the correlating parameter, the catalyst turning chaos into cosmos; she, the beautifier of the three 'cities' of human interest-- psychological, social and cosmological -- and he, freeing humanity from the bonds of all three with the all-consuming fire of wisdom. Female and male, horizontal and vertical, perceptual and conceptual -- as the opposites reverberated within me, it was as though the entire universe was unfolding around me: energy coming in patterns was giving rise to forms of every description, proliferating, interrelating. In that infinite swirl, a steady pulsation continued, like gentle breathing, constantly including both counterparts in the whole.

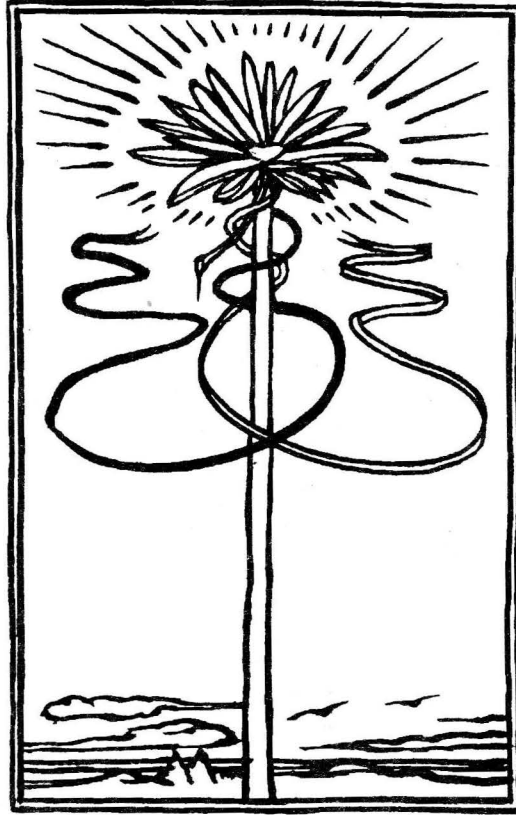
I was so engrossed that I would have remained there indefinitely had my butterfly friend not come near to draw me away with the brush of its wings. Clambering through the dark and dirty passage that led out of the cave, I thought sadly of how ignorance and superstition have obscured the great value of such symbols. But as I followed the butterfly back up to the Gurukula which had been built out of the rubble of the old temple, I rejoiced that they continue to enlighten us when the accumulated debris of the ages is cleared away.

Nancy Yeilding

Svānubhāvagīti Śatakam:

Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



Verse 33

Oh Gracious Lord, your sportive game is
revealed to me by your Grace.
And that revelation is a precious scripture to me.
The blessedness of your Grace flanked on either
side by darkness and light --
Oh Meaning of Meaning dancing in my heart.

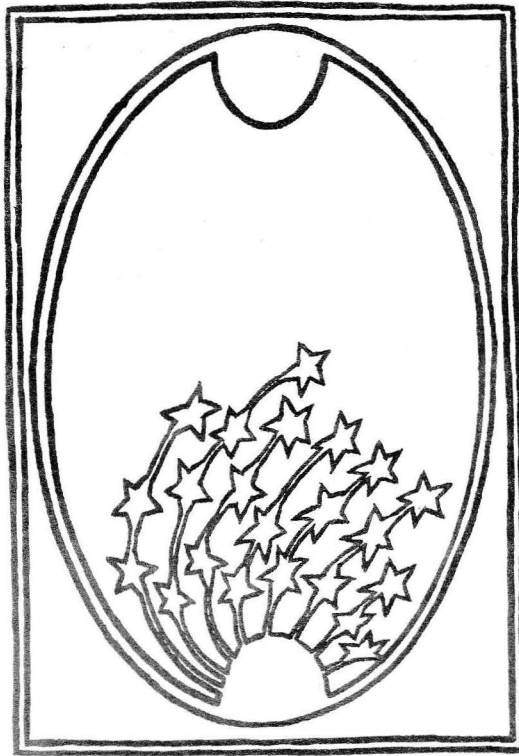
The orient sky is painted bright in expectation of the rising sun. Astronomers say that the earth has only one sun which rises and sets every day. But to us, children of light and admirers of beauty, everything is new. The sky is new. The mountain is new. The earth is new. The mist is new. The sea is new. And the changing colors of sky, earth and sea are always unique painted by the invisible hand of the Lord, not to last even for a second. At the same time, nothing vanishes abruptly. Instead everything is transforming. The blue changes into grey, the grey into magenta, magenta into crimson, golden yellow, orange, greenish blue. The colors overlap and blend harmoniously so that we never miss anything. The wondrous joy of seeing the beautiful is ever made new and fresh. Why the universe? Even the face of a child epitomizes the cosmic wonder because it is never the same for two minutes.

This moment it is tearful and crying. Before the teardrop dries the child is mirthfully laughing. Did God learn of changing moods from a child or is the child mimicking God's sportive drama?

I could have been a clod of earth insensitive to my surroundings, having no eyes to see and no ears to listen but my Lord has given me five senses and each one is receptive to a thousand shades of perceptual beauty. He has given me this coordinated mind which can put together the phenomenal illusions and my poetic dreams into a tapestry of the most magical excellence. It is as if both God and I are participants in these never-ending lessons of sensibility. It is with gratitude that I acknowledge that He sits behind my ear and listens to the choir of the spheres.

I don't have the drudgery of religion. God does not expect me to undergo the tedium of reading heavy books nor of listening to the arguments of great doctors. I only have to keep my senses open and mind attuned to His presentation. I am told the scriptures are revealed books of wisdom. To me this grand word is written in a common language and illustrated with living figures of the changeful world. This is more than a revealed scripture. He leads me in the wakeful light to the grand avenues which lead to the temple of light. For contrast He also guides me to tip-toe into the valley of desolation, sadness and agonizing aloneness. But He is always careful to give me His hand to which I can hold just as I held on to the apron-stings of my mother. Thus I am assured of the sweet blessedness which is always with me. Life has its thorns and flowers, mornings and evenings, days and nights, sweet dreams and nightmares, jubilation and moments of wretchedness, plenty and poverty. Like a wizard He changes the scenario from the brightest to the darkest and back again to the brightest.

Unlike a scientist who is always pestering his little brain with questions such as "what causes which?" and "what for?", I do not torture my logic generating mind. He will be always pleased to fill my mind with the never-ceasing narration of his tale, the painting of his world-pictures and the projection of His fairy tales. He is the most central figure merrily dancing all the time as a joyous elf. I am lucky that he has chosen my loveful heart as the stage for His mirthful dance. When He dances, the world also dances. Then my heart too dances in love and gratitude.



Verse 34

Oh Plenum of Perfection, it's a mystery that
you're haloed by fragrance.
Bless me, the Essence of all Meanings,
that I may not mount the wheel of phenomenal becoming.

A bunch of buds in which each one is perfect in itself... on the same stalk is a flower in bloom. Its soft petals and stamens full of rich pollen - what an arresting beauty it has. It's perfect in form. From it comes the most pleasing fragrance. On the same rose bush are thorns. Each one is sculptured in perfect shape and beauty. Even a cat's claw cannot be more sharp. They are as strong as the beak of an eagle.

There is nothing that is without its shape nor without perfection. The green grass is like a perfect velvet carpet spread in the garden. The mighty trees that stand majestically in the valley raise their heads above the tallest hill. It is as if each one is so pleased with itself. Above the trees silver white clouds are floating.

What is lacking in this world? Nothing, if you have the sensibility to appreciate beauty and the penetration to see the one changeless being which is taking care of every notion, every change and every becoming in this world. The mountain peaks have a deposit of ageless ice-caps. The Himalayas, the Alps and the Rockies all look like an eternal repository of strength and stability. It is astonishing that from the crust of the ice there trickle clear beads of water. It is as if the most powerful can change into the most tender. The gentle flow of water gurgles down the hill with no hatred or bickering with the thousand rocks

that obstruct its path. The little rivulet clings around every peak and slowly licks them into shape amidst the cheerful laughter of the cascades.

The Lord is said to be seated firmly in His lotus posture on the highest peak of the Himavan. But His consort is restless. It is as if She has a heavy schedule. As She passes by the hills and dales and trees and creepers, there is no being which does not get a thrill. Branches of the trees sway and the slender leaves of the bamboo bush shiver as if the hill is horripilated. The bumblebees know exactly what the Supreme Lady loves. They bore holes in the stem of the bamboos, and when these reeds are ready, the mountain wind accelerates its speed and blows through these flutes and fills the air with the shrill voice which becomes a backdrop for the songs of divine singers like kinnaras and gandharvas.

The spouse of the Lord is affectionately treacherous. She takes with her mischievous Kama who shoots the arrows of erotic longing to the hearts of young boys and girls. The Supreme Lord who has not yet revealed the truth of himself - whether embodied or bodiless - remaining steadfast in unbroken meditation, is a perfect picture of the plenum. His own consort fills the entire world with the enticing fragrance which activates in different beings as varying stimuli. The Lord is like a black hole. In the silent whirlpool of his absorption everything manifested disappears, and yet new stars are generated in the ever-new firmament of the Supreme Lady's unceasing imagination. She is not decorated with flowers because She is the most chosen flower in the garden of the Lord. She is the very magenta which includes in it all the colors ranging from the ultraviolet to the infra red. She is not sweetened because She is the sweetness which makes the entire world cling to life. She is not besmeared with fascinating smells, because She is the fragrance of the Lord. She is not decorated with jewels because She is *śankara paraṇam*, the bejewelled neck of the poison-drinking Lord.

Such is the amazing picture of the Lord conjoined with the Lady. The fragrance that is spoken of is the magic thread of memory on which all manifested beings are strung. Even when they all perish in the deep abyss of the Lord's meditative absorption, She keeps the eternity of being by allowing them to hibernate during the period of *pralaya*, the cosmic dissolution. The *vāsana*, the essence of the life one lived on earth, will be revived by her. In each life, like the telling of the beads in a rosary, each person is revived cyclically. Such is the game that is played between the non-sportive silent Lord and His ever sportive consort. It is exciting to mount the wheel of creation and go round and round. But the aspirant who sees the meaninglessness of simple repetition is imploring the Meaning of Meanings to take him also into the lap of the Silent Lord to merge in the deep meditation of the Lord's blessedness.

Verse 36

Oh Supreme Transcendence, Prime Leader
who sets the goal of all manifestations of immanence,
Oh Lord of All Beings, please do not hesitate to call me
from here, where otherwise I would be stranded indefinitely.



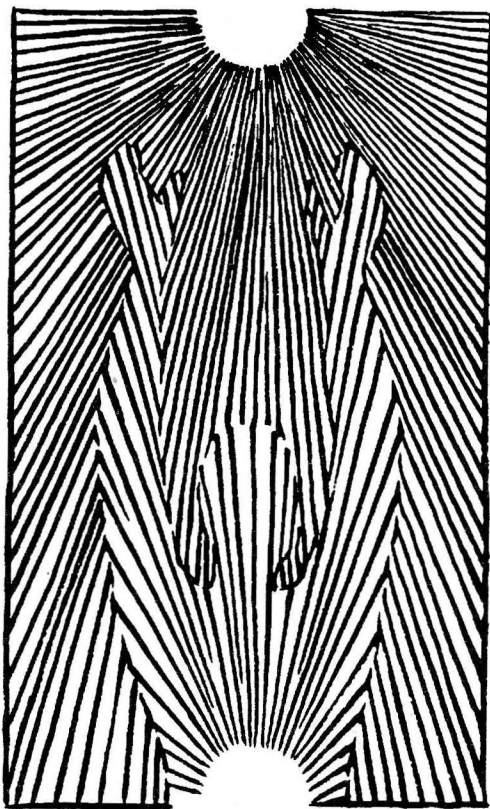
The sun is a grand seducer of all living beings. Even before the dawn paints the eastern sky with the colors of the day's cheerfulness, he tickles the cock to crow aloud, heralding the coming of the day. The cock's crow has in it the wine of life, as it were, and his enthusiasm is infectious. It is as if there is a direct line of communication between one species and another.

The lotus in the pond, the rose in the garden, the jasmine creeper on the mango tree, the bees in the honeycomb, men who are dreaming of their farmlands and workers who have not finished their work in the factories get up in a festive mood to their day's program. This world is a symbiotic system in which the orchards, groves and vineyards are waiting with gratitude for their nurturing farmer to come and gather all the sweet fruits and berries and nuts which the trees and vines are joyously holding out for the farmer to gather.

Nightlife is as variegated and busy as is the day. If the sun is the seducer of the day, the moon is the manager of night's dreamworld. The indwellers of the day are transformed into the magical world of dreams, and the night dwellers (day-dreamers) are called to commence their busy transactions of hunting, mating and killing in the half-lit dark shades of night. Between day and night all beings have their chance and assigned occasion to play the role for which each one is commissioned. The luminaries of the sky, the vitalizing power of the air, the warmth that is held captive in the bloodstreams of animals, the sap of life that runs like rivers in the body of the vegetative world and the unfailing dreams with which all living beings are infested can be attributed to the Grand Manipulator of immanence.

Whatever is nurtured in the womb of immanence has a goal to attain. That is a sharing of the freedom of the transcendent. In the flux of becoming all are alternately caught and released. Life is a fascinating hitch-hiking until the hitch-hiker ultimately comes to the pinnacle of search from where there is not another step to climb.

From the humblest worm to the proudest man, all are in the caravansary of search. Being blindfolded with natural instincts, traditional hang-ups, conventional conformities, hide-bound prejudices and ignorance of various sorts, many do not know what they seek and in what vicious circles they are caught. They go round and round entering again and again into the blind alleys of birth and death. In a thousand years one in a million is fortunate to be liberated from *karma's* blindfold. Then lo, there the Supreme is graciously beckoning the liberated one to share the indescribable bliss of transcendence.



Verse 36

It is impossible for a finite earthling
to define your glory - you who are like the
all-enveloping sky.
Without your Grace
could the finitude of my self have any existence?

Like shimmering fireflies, the sky is festooned with twinkling stars. The tiny sparks of light which look like they are sitting adja-

cent to each other are said to be so far from each other that it takes years for the light radiating from one to be interlocked with the light emitting from the other. When such is the story of the crowding space in the stellar world, who can ever imagine the vastness of your dimension which is said to be the all embracing infinitude which has within it many schematic dispalsys of spatio-temporal patterns of interrelatedness?

Even the sun of the solar system to which earthlings belong is a tiny star tottering in the fringe of the Milky Way. Are we sure that all the planets and moons running around the sun are enumerated by our astronomers? In that system how small earth is and yet how huge that it has within itself all these mountains and hills and dales and oceans with their innumerable beings. Have the biologists taken an exact survey of all the species that live and multiply on this good earth? Homo sapiens is only one species out of so many mammals. The total number of humans is said to be more than four and a half billion. In spite of such a huge number I am not left here, unclothed, unfed, or uncared for. I am not an unrecognizable nobody here. There is hardly anybody who looks exactly like me. In and around my place I am easily recognized by others and known by my name. Isn't it surprising that in the four and a half billion people that crowd this earth, there is not another guy with fingerprints like me?

It is a wonder of wonders that You are not only enveloping everything but also setting rules with loving care for every particle to have its appropriate place and function. Quantitatively looked at, this enormous mass with immeasurable dimensions blows ones mind to put the whole within the comprehension of an idea. Yet in this pulsating brain You have your throne to preside over every little thought that passes my mind and to grace it with your approval of its meaning. It is this wonder at which I always marvel and prize most as the bond between the finite and the infinite.

(Continued in next issue.)

How can I see you?

Are you not my eye?

How can I hear you?

Are you not my ear?

How can I smell you?

Are you not my nose?

How can I touch you?

Are you not my finger?

How can I speak you?

Are you not my word?

How can I remember you?

Are you not my mind?

How can I say you are?

Are not you and I the same?

Giridharan

Katha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

xviii

This Self or the knower of the Self is neither born nor dies. This Self did not come into being from anything. From this nothing whatsoever came into being. This is unborn, eternal, everlasting and the ancient one. This is not destroyed on the destruction of the body.

One who relies always on the one imperishable Truth meant by the monosyllable *AUM*, and thus adored in the domain of the Absolute, is referred to as a *vipaścīt* (the wise one) here. No one can deny the actuality of one's own existence or the existence of the actual surroundings in which one has to live and move. When I am fully convinced that the existence of myself and of the world around me is caused by the one imperishable Truth, and that I and the world have no existence apart from that Truth, I have the immediate awareness that I am nothing but that Truth. This awareness is called

aparokṣānubhūti in Sanskrit. The great dictum or *māhāvākya*, *aham brahma asmi* (I am the Absolute) conveys the same awareness. For such a person whatever could be said of *brahman* (the Absolute) is true about him also. So what is stated here in respect to the man of wisdom (*vipaścīt*) is meant also for the Self or Absolute.

This Upanishad presents a wisdom teaching with death as the central theme. Birth is the counter-aspect of the phenomenon called death. The status of birth and death according to the philosophy of the Upanishads could be better understood with the help of the analogy of the ocean and the waves. When a wave emerges on the surface of the ocean it can be understood as the birth of that wave. When it reemerges into the ocean again, it is the wave's death. But water is the only existing substance - before the emergence of the wave, during the wave's existence, and after the reemergence. The place of the individual living being is only that of the wave. When I suppose that I am a wave with an individual existence of my own, then birth, death and the life in between are all realities. But when the wave understands that it is only water and observes that reality, it finds that water is never born nor dies.

In this analogy we have to see each one of us in the place of a wave and the meaning content of the syllable *AUM* as the ocean. When the identity of the individual entity and the meaning content of *AUM* becomes accomplished, that experience itself turns out to be the experience of the birthlessness and deathless-

ness of 'I', the Self, which is nothing but the meaning content of *AUM*.

The metaphysical standpoint of Vedanta is called *sat karana vada*, i.e., considering only the cause as the Real. Everything here is changeful. There is nothing static. One state of existence emerges from another. That state causes another to emerge. This phenomenal world is the sum total of this beginningless and endless series of changes. So it is called *jagat* in Sanskrit, meaning that which is always on the move.

The Vedantin asks, "Is there a reality existing always which provides for this change?" This reality which exists as the cause of all changeful effects (*karya*) is called *sat* (existence). This *sat* is given primacy by a Vedantin, thus the standpoint *sat karana vada*. Cause is the only Existence and effect has no existence of its own. This is the essence of this philosophy. Pots, pans, plates, etc., that are made of clay have no existence apart from that clay. Similarly waves, surf, vapour, mist, snow, and ice are all different states of existence of water, which is the cause. They don't exist apart from water. In the same way, if everything that is changeful in the phenomenal world is the effect, there should be a cause behind it. According to Vedanta, the Self or the Absolute (*brahman*) is that causal Reality. The question "Whence this Self (*ātman*)?" is not to be asked. It never came into existence. It has always been. It IS.

The wave, by identifying itself with the form of its existence, could claim, "I came into being from water." Similarly the pot could claim, "I came into being from clay." But when the wave experiences its identity with water, what it could also say is, "Only water is. Nothing has come into being other than water." In the same way, the man of wisdom who realizes the meaning content of the mono-syllable *AUM*, i.e., the Absolute Self, does not consider himself as the son or daughter of such and such a person. In his inquiry for Truth he sees himself as nothing other than the eternal and

changeless Absolute Self. Nothing else has come out of It (*kaścit na babhūva*).

In this mantra, first it was stated, "This Self did not come into being from anything (*kutaścit na babhūva*)." That means the Self is not an effect. Then it says, "From this, nothing whatsoever came into being (*kaścit na babhūva*)." That is, it is not a cause also. In other words, there is no relevance of causation at all in It. In fact the cause-effect relationship is only an idea projected by our imagination on the happenings of the cosmos, micro and macro, in order that they can be made reasonable. We are not sure that such a relationship is really there.

We could say that its place is in our mind when we try to analyze and systematize all the events in our life and its experiences. Casuality could be considered as a device or frame of reference with the help of which we systematize events. Whenever we fail to find out a casuality in any particular event we stand awe stricken. This perplexity is only because we then feel that we are losing the grip of our life. In short, causality or the duality of cause and effect is not in the experienced life as it is, but in the reasoned out understanding of it. This reasoning power is only an aspect or particular way or functioning of the consciousness. The duality of cause and effect itself is caused by awareness, which is nothing but the Self. It is in this sense that the Vedantic standpoint is called *sat karana vada* (argument which gives primacy to cause).

Everyone knows that death is inevitable. Still, death is the most gruesome and frightening event for all. Self is the dearest object for all living beings. Narayana Guru says, "Nothing is dearer than the Self for one, devoid of the mortal body." That is why everyone tries to avoid self-destruction at any cost. It is usual to see parents willing to sacrifice themselves to save their offspring. This is because parents do not see their children apart from their self-existence. So they see their own peril in the destruction of their children. The animal in-

stinct and the necessity of nature, the preservation of progeny, compels parents to save the lives of their children even if risking their own. This identity with one's own offspring is a kind of prolongation of one's identity with the body.

This self-identity with the body is called *dehoham buddhi* in Sanskrit. So long as this Self-identity with the body is there, the destruction of the body will be considered as the destruction of the Self. And avoiding this Self-destruction would be treated as of ultimate value in life. But when one has the conviction that the Self or the Ultimate Truth is never destroyed at the annihilation of the body, just in the same way as clay is not destroyed when clay pots and pans are broken, one would not be worried about the withering away of the body.

This mantra could be considered as giving a definite answer to the problem raised by Nachiketas. The question was as to the existence of the soul after death.

Yama's answer is that ultimately death itself is not true, but only a phenomenal appearance. Truth is neither born nor dies. It is the birthless and deathless eternal Self. What we call death is only the destruction of the body, which was only a transient configuration that occurred in Truth or Existence. Nothing happens to this Truth or the Self during the never-ending changes occurring in its endless configurations. This does not mean that the soul of the dead man will be lingering over somewhere waiting for a body to reincarnate. It only means that the Self has no birth and death, and that what we call living and non-living beings, and their totality which is none other than the world, are only phenomenal appearances occurring endlessly in the Self, and that they have no reality in themselves. So, in reality there is no question as to the existence of the soul after death as only the Self exists and it never dies. The fact that this mantra is repeated almost verbatim in the *Bhagavad Gita* (II: 20) underlines the importance of the message it is meant to convey.

XIX

*If the slayer thinks
that he slays, or if
the slain thinks he
is slain, both do not
really know. It never
kills and is never killed.*

One living being being killed by another, one living being being hurt by another: such occurrences happen in daily life. One who kills thinks, "Here I killed it." The one who is killed thinks, "Oh, I am being killed." The killer assumes that he caused the self-destruction of the other. The one who dies thinks that his self-destruction is caused by the other. It is true here that the gross body of the killed disappears. But when examined carefully, it becomes evident that even the gross body is not annihilated. It only changes its form. The gross body is disintegrated into its component elements and merges with the atmosphere and the earth, or it turns into some other form. It never ceases to exist. In the ultimate sense, as we have seen, only the Self which is never born and never dies exists. Thus in the physical sense as also in the ultimate sense, nothing is annihilated here.

The occurrence of events ceaselessly continues in the process of becoming. Newer and newer forms emerge and the older ones merge. In the continuity of this process one event might turn out to be the immediate efficient cause of another event. Normally the preceding event is taken to be the cause of a succeeding event. In this manner, when one aspect of becoming precedes a succeeding one, which might be the emergence or merging of another aspect, we suppose that

the second one is created or destroyed by the other proceeding one. What is basically wrong in such an assumption is that one is taking upon oneself the responsibility of action and thinking that one is the doer of the act, which in reality is only part of the necessary process of becoming that goes on forever. This sense of being the doer or agent of acts is called *karṭṛva abhimāna* in Sanskrit. The false assumption that I am the doer of acts is followed by the false notion that something that exists can be destroyed.

When we have a pleasurable or painful experience occasioned by someone else or when we experience the result of our own acts, we have a sense of being the experiencer or enjoyer of it. This sense of being the enjoyer is called *bhokṭṛva abhimāna*. The most painful of experiences is the feeling of one's own existence being put to an end. That is the frightful sense of being killed. The basic false notion in *karṭṛva abhimāna* and *bhokṭṛva abhimāne* is the same. Both these senses are the result of self-identity with the body. As stated in the present mantra, neither of these know the Truth. The Truth in which newer and newer forms always emerge and remerge is never born and never dies.

This mantra indicates that the Self or the Ultimate Existence has no sense of agency of action or no sense of enjoyer while meditating on its essence. This mantra is also repeated almost verbatim in the *Bhagavad Gita* (II: 19). But in the *Gita* Krishna told Arjuna these words to clear his mind which was confounded on

what was meritorious and what was not.

This mantra lays stress on the existential aspect of Reality. In that sense, what exists is not killed when one person kills another. This could be misinterpreted as scriptural permission for killing anybody. To avoid this misinterpretation, the Reality that is viewed here as Existence has also to be viewed as the Ultimate Value. The Reality which is visualized as Existence (*sadvastu*) has also to be actualized as the value factor (*priyavastu*). The Self is the dearest of all for every living being. That means when I exist as the Self, the Self is the dearest for me. It is the same with you or anybody else too. When we remember that the Self is non-dual and all-inclusive, what is dear to me as an individual should be dear to you also. When I kill you, I am treating you as different from me and denying you your dearest value. That is against the oneness of the Self. So Narayana Guru says, "That act which causes good to one and suffering to another, it is against the principle of the Self" (*Ātmopadeśa Śataka*, verse 25). One who is really aware of the secret of the Self sees every aspect of becoming in the being of the Self and the being of the Self in every aspect of becoming, as categorically stated in the *Īśā Upanishad* (mantra 7). Only one with such an awareness is to be called a *jñānin* (man of wisdom). A real *jñānin* sees his identity with every living being and feels their happiness and suffering as his own.

(Continued in next issue.)

Just as belief in many gods is incorrect, so when humanity is considered relativistically as consisting of closed groups, however big or justified in the name of power or practicability, such a view violates the first and fundamental principle of the indivisible unity of man.

Nataraja Guru

The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sūtra I:42

*tatra śabdārtha jñāna vikalpaiḥ
sankīrṇā savitarkā samāpattiḥ*

tatra: in it, there

śabda: indication with sound, word

artha: meaning

jñāna: idea

vikalpaiḥ: choices, options

sankīrṇā: blended, mixed up

savitarkā: that which obstructs
the flow of consciousness

samāpatti: thought transformation,
fusion

The thought transformation in which the options of word, meaning and idea are blended is called *savitarkā samāpatti*.

This sutra will yield its full meaning only when we have undergone the disciplines given in the second section and have made ourselves familiar with the consequences given in the third section of the aphorisms. Here we are only introduced to certain procedural aspects of the discipline.

From the very early days of our childhood, the free flowing energy of our consciousness was interrupted naturally with the presentation of objects to the senses. This was supplemented by elders drawing our attention to specific objects with conscious deliberation to link percepts with names and names with concepts. As a result, when sensory confron-

tations come, we automatically shift our consciousness from the arresting object to its name and to the meaning that both the name and the object have for us. When such a confrontation comes, the first occurrence is an oscillation of consciousness between the perceiver and the perceived. On the side of the perceived, we note its form and name. On the side of the perceiver, we observe the impact in terms of pain and pleasure, attraction and repulsion. As every experience is to be processed and retained as part of one's culture, the substance of the name-form content and the accompanying psychic state are blended and kept in memory. Thus the mind has three areas of interest: the object, the subjective reaction to the object, and the idea of the object which can be recalled to the mind as a mental object or word image.

In our attempt to attain concentration, we try to inhibit the continuous fluctuation of the changing modes of consciousness by stabilizing consciousness in one of the three areas. However, the force of habit cannot be immediately restrained. The mind will compulsively go again and again from the object of perception to the ego which tries to reckon with the ongoing consciousness, to the unconscious formation of the impression through the process of reducing the entire experience to its essential quality and preserving it like a seed. It takes quite a while for consciousness to stabilize, to come to *samāpatti*. Until then, there will be a mixing

up of all three aspects of the perceptual mode. The intermediate stage is a confused state with a stable image arising out of the confusion.

When we try to contemplate, we do not get full concentration immediately. The mind will be fluctuating. But after a while we experience occasional lapses in the frequent flowing in of stimuli where non-perception manifests and thought becomes arrested. If after some struggle, a full identification with one of the three areas, such as the object of perception, is established, that is *savitarkā samādhi*. Until a complete stabilization comes and the mind is concentrated in contemplation, the fluctuating state exists. In that state there is the complex experiencing of confrontation, *sankīrṇā savitarkā samāpatti*.

Sūtra I:43

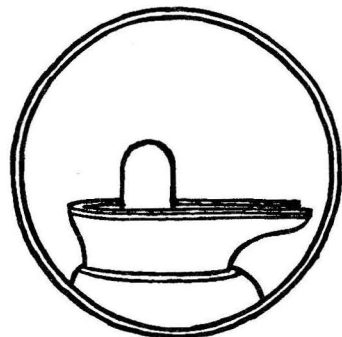
*smṛti pariśuddhau svarūpa śūnyeva-
artha mātra nirbhāsā nirvitarkā*

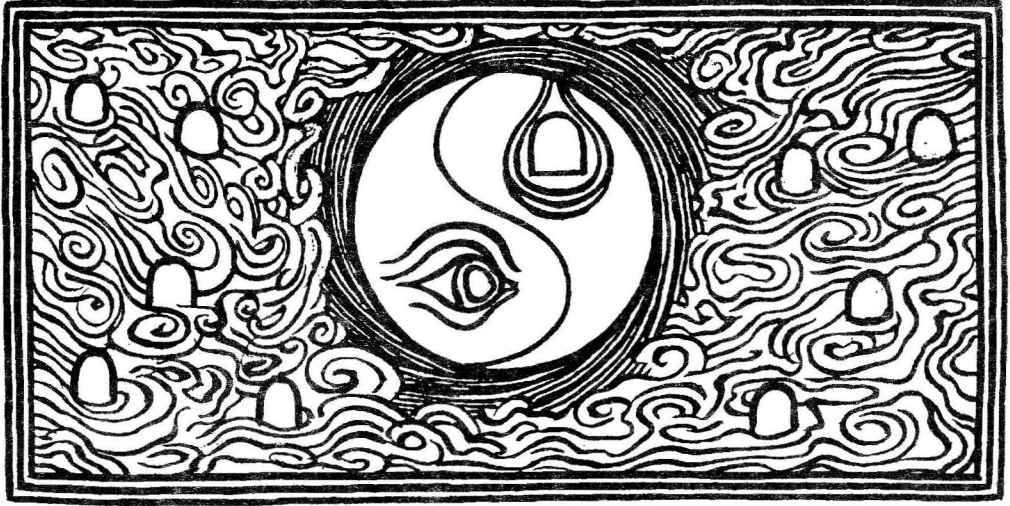
smṛti: memory
pariśuddhau: purified, clarified
svarūpa: own nature
śūnya: devoid of
iva: as if
artha: object
mātra: alone
nirbhāsā: illuminated
nirvitarkā: absence of obstruction
in the free flow of consciousness

When the memory is purified, the mind appears to be devoid of its own nature (i.e., reflective consciousness) and only the object (on which it is contemplating) remains illuminated, it is called *nirvitarkā* (*samāpatti*).

Before we can understand *nirvitarka*, we need to know the meaning of *tarka* and *vitarka*. The five senses in the body are like five look-outs. Each gives a different kind of experience such as sound from the ear or sense of hearing, touch from the sense of touch or skin, etc. When our individuated consciousness is flowing out

through any or all of the organs of perception, it is again and again confronted by the indication that something is being presented to it. The indication of a presented object is first recognized with the idea of "this." It is immediately followed by the question, "What is this?" This places an obstruction in the free flow of consciousness. Let us take an example. A person enters his room for contemplation. When he sits and looks at an object of worship, his mind is first confronted by the idol. Then he explains it to himself saying, "This is a *śiva linga*, an idol of Lord Śiva." The initial specification of the object is *tarka*. Considering the object by naming it is *vitarka*. When he begins to contemplate on the object of confrontation, his consciousness becomes split. While he is looking at the idol *śiva linga*, he also remembers how that word is written in a language familiar to him. The written word is only a verbal symbol. When it is pronounced, it produces quite a different sound image. Neither the written nor spoken word, *śiva linga*, bears any resemblance to the idol. The word belongs to the world of verbal function. From that, his mind shifts back to the particular form of *śiva linga* which he perceives with his eyes. Then many associated ideas come rushing into his mind as a historical narration of the evolution of the concept of Śiva from the prehistoric days of Mohenjodaro to the present, and the presentation of the story of Śiva in *Śivapurāṇa* and many other Hindu books. Other presentations of Śiva such as the dancing Śiva or the androgynous Śiva come to his attention. There is a





confused commingling of the verbal, the visual and the symbolic aspects, all caricatured by his own memory. As this presentation in memory is opposed to concentration, it is called *vitarka*.

The yogi adopts the discipline of letting go of all irrelevant aspects such as one's personal relationship with that idea and with things which are unrelated to the particular gestalt taken for contemplation. This is a process of purifying one's memory. One by one, distractions are dropped. The external object and the internal contemplation become identified into a single entity. Then consciousness is filled with what is presented without being dragged into any tangent of association. Therefore, there is no experiencing of confrontation, because the duality of the perceiver and the perceived comes to an end. As the *vitarka* is no longer there, the *savitarka samāpatti* changes into *nirvitarka samāpatti*. In the yogi's *sādhana* (practice) this is a major crossing over. The most important thing to be noted here is the initial success of the aspiring yogi in liberating himself from the clutches of memory.

Sūtra I:44

*etayaiva savicārā nirvicārā ca
sūkṣmaviśayā vyākhyātā*

etayaiva: by this (sūtra) also

savicārā: the meditative
nirvicārā: the ultrameditative
ca: and
sūkṣmaviśayā: having the subtle
for their objects
vyākhyātā: are explained

By this (sūtra), the meditative and the ultrameditative, having the subtle for their objects, are also explained.

Literally, *vicāra* is the linear flow of consciousness through ideas which are related to each other as cause and effect or in a syllogistic manner. Indian syllogisms are a little more elaborate than Aristotle's syllogisms. Apart from stating a cause, they also present an example. After establishing an argument, the mind goes to a consequent proposal or submission. That kind of argument is *tarka* but when *vicāra* is taken for *samāpatti* and *samyāma*, the linear movement of thought is verticalized until it becomes *manana*, which leads one to *dhyāna*.

The four modes of mentation are compulsive repetition (*cinta*), linear movement (*vicāra*), vertical absorption or contemplation (*manana*), and stabilized absorption (*dhyāna*). Confrontation (*vitarka*) is presented to consciousness by the perception of an object. When an object is perceived with the senses and corresponding sensations are evoked, the afferent stimulation is immediately met

with efferent reciprocation. Efferent reciprocation comes from interpreting the afferent stimulus in terms of concepts. When the outer form is presented through the senses it is reciprocated by a conceptual idea. After a relationship is established between the formal perception and the conceptual interpretation of it by the mind (translator in the hypothalamus), it is not possible to say whether ones experience resides entirely in the object outside, i.e., the percept, or in the subjective consciousness in the form of a mental image or concept. These counterparts present a unified vision in which the somatic and psychologic are inseparable. At that point, a chain of reasoning can commence in the mind because the experience evokes previously associated memories.

For example, when the mind recognizes the percept (a *śiva linga*) as a here and now expression of the Śiva principle, a number of ideas come to the mind such as how the conjunction of Śiva and Śakti is the causal factor for the creation of the world, or the idea that Śiva is pure transcendence, belonging to the past, the present and the future, followed by umpteen notions of Śiva lore. If the mind is allowed to get into the turbulent river of recurring thoughts, one will have no stable ground. The yogi does not want to be carried away by the multiplication of his or her thoughts. He wants to remain at the central locus of his consciousness and verticalize his mental energy to be centered in a single idea such as that of Śiva. So he adopts a formula to merge deeper and deeper into his own Self with the aid of the *nada* (sound vibration) emanating from the repetition of a sound system such as *nama śivāya*. *Nama* means obeisance and *śiva* means supreme peace, so he is offering his worshipful obeisance to the archetypal notion of peace.

The yogi first cultivates *savicāra samāpatti* which brings him to *nirvicāra samāpatti*, having no modifications supported by word images. Consequently, the recurring and repetitive modifications of *cinta*, the compulsive habitual

function, automatically come to a close. Then he is in a state of *nīścinta*, having no thoughts. This leads to a state which is as if he has no mind, *amanaścata*. Here he enters *nirvicāra samādhī*, absorption without any thoughts. This sutra introduces us to the depth of such a subtlety which can initiate one into the realm of transcendence.

Sūtra I:45

*sūkṣmaviśayatvam cālīṅga
paryavasānam*

sūkṣma: of the subtle
viśayatvam: the province
ca: and
a: up to
līṅga: mark
paryavasānam: ending or extremity
ālīṅga paryavasānam: reaches up to the noumenal

And the province of the subtle reaches up to the noumenal.

When we walk on this earth we experience the concreteness of the ground beneath our feet. Earth is also called the supporter (*dhāra*). We deduce the objectivity and tangibility of earth from the concreteness that we feel. Although it appears like direct perception, we are not perceiving the hardness but inferring it. That inference is a concept which is mentally deduced from an incomprehensible and unexplainable concomitance of certain evidences. Narayana Guru calls the experience of concreteness *sthūla saṅkāḥpanamāyī*.

When we contemplate on what is very impressive as physical materialistic things, etc., we come to see that our experience is constituted of a plethora of concepts. When these concepts are dropped one by one the mind will go to subtler and subtler areas until it comes to what may be called the very stuff of consciousness. When one contemplates on the mark of odor in the subtle particles of earth, taste in water molecules, form in

the manifestation of heat, touch in air and sound vibration in ether, they all fall away from the integrity of perception and appear to be only modulated ideas in consciousness. When the concretization of the elements and the functional modification through qualities are all dismissed there remains only the value of pure awareness which exists. Through *manana* (contemplation), one ultimately reaches the core of the phenomenon which is only the noumenon. Then we say contemplation has gone from the specific to the non-specific and there is no mark (*linga*) to be observed. That also brings the contemplative to the void of manifestation.

Sūtra I:46

tā eva sabījaḥ samādhiḥ

tā: they

eva: only

sabījaḥ: seeded

samādhiḥ: absorption

They are only seeded absorption.

Even after the pollination of a flower, it looks fresh, as if nothing has happened. But the fact is that the pollen dust brought by an agent of pollination has gone into the ovary of the flower. It is seeded. When time passes and nature is favorable, the seed matures and will present itself through its germination and growth as a continuation of the species from which it has come.



Within us, the culture that has gone into the repository of an action propensity will ultimately present itself in the form of an action when the seeded impulse becomes mature. Such kind of seeding comes from the gross physical external environment. That is suggestive of *vitarka*. Thus even when *savitarka* changes into *nirvitarka*, its potential is not gone. Even before the physical mating of two people, the desire can remain in them and prompt them to actualize their desire. The subtle makes its impact on the gross. Even after the cessation of *vitarka* and *vicāra*, the seed for both can remain unhampered. It is only that they are in a cloistered state. Hence, *savitarka samāpatti*, *nirvitarka samāpatti*, *savicāra samāpatti*, and *nirvicāra samāpatti* are to be looked upon as only seeded states of absorption. A yogi who has disciplined himself or herself to that extent still does not escape return to physical manifestation.

Sūtra I:47

nirvicāra vaiśāradye adhyātma prasādaḥ

nirvicāra: the ultrameditative

vaiśāradye: undisturbed flow

adhyātma: subjective or spiritual

prasādaḥ: clarity, lucidity

The undisturbed flow of the ultrameditative causes subjective clarity.

What is usually recognized as immediate perception is only mediate perception. For instance, when an object such as a red flower is directly seen with the eyes, we call it immediate perception. On examining this experience, we realize that the light reflected from the red flower is falling on the retina and causing certain agitations. It is the interpretation of those agitations which is recognized as immediate perception. Between the seeing subject and the object there is the medium of the apparatus of the eye and the biological and physico-chemical

intervention of the central nervous system. So such experiences should be termed as mediate.

When there is no cognitive function or cogitative reasoning, consciousness flows like a pure streak. The clarity of that consciousness is devoid of the impurities of an intervening medium. Hence what is present is only the pure light of consciousness. That is termed as a transparent vision of the Self, *adhyātma prasāda*.

Sūtra I:48

ṛtambharā tatra prajñā

ṛtambharā: pregnant with
factual potentials
tatra: therein
prajñā: the faculty of cognition

Therein the faculty of essential and truthful cognition.

In our three states of consciousness, the wakeful, dream and deep sleep (*suṣūpti*), the stuff of consciousness is called *prajñā*. In the wakeful consciousness, the subject and object stand apart. Perception which is happening in the wakeful can easily be spoiled by various illusions. So the truth of wakeful experience is debatable. In that state consciousness is called *viśvābhimāni*. The individual self in the wakeful is the perceiver of the world, hence it is called *viśvātma* (*viśva*- universe, *ātma*-self).

In the dream state there is almost no truth. The dream that is seen is a perversion of memory in which many memory factors are untruthfully put together. The subject and the object are both happening within the dream consciousness called *taijasa*. The self in that state is called *taijasātma*.

In the deep sleep state consciousness is unmodified (*avyākṛta*). The mass of consciousness in deep sleep has a pure and an impure aspect. The impure aspect comes from incipient memories. When these impressions are from the present

life they are called *samskāras* and when they are from previous manifestations they are called *vāsanās*.

When all impressions of the past are flushed away with yogic disciplines, only pure consciousness remains. It has no impurity so it is absolutely truthful. Hence it is the ground for all truthful perceptions, inferences and actions. The entire yogic discipline is to purge ones consciousness of all its impurities and make it pregnant with a reality that can be actualized in the here and now.

Sūtra I:49

*śrutānumāna prajñābhyām anya
viśāya viśeṣārthatvāt*

śruta: verbal
anumāna: inferential
prajñābhyām: from those of cognition
anya: different
viśāya: object
viśeṣārthatvāt: as it refers to
those of specific meaning

It has different objects from those of verbal and inferential cognition as it refers to those of specific meaning (which comes as a transparency of vision).

The state of *ṛtambharā* mentioned in the previous sūtra is further explained here. This sūtra implies the entire scheme of the contemplative discipline involved in the transference from *vitarka* to *saṁvitarka* *saṁāpatti*, to *nirvitarka* *saṁāpatti* to *nirvitarka* *saṁādhi*, and from *vicāra* to *savicāra* *saṁāpatti* to *nirvicāra* *saṁāpatti* to a purificatory effect which the individuated consciousness undergoes.

A natural purification happens when the mind goes into the state of absorption.

The fluctuating tendency of the oscillation of consciousness between subject and object is transformed into the fixation of consciousness in the *saṁvitarka* *saṁāpatti* or *saṁādhi*. Subjectivity becomes entirely identified with objectivity and the I-consciousness does not have a separate ex-

istence. Similarly, in *śavīcāra samāpatti*, the specificity of the object is replaced by the specificity of the species revealed by the concept. When both of these are transmuted into a harmonized or homogenized consciousness in *nirvīcāra samāpatti*, mind becomes cleared of several impressions of the past. Thus a new transparency comes to it. After gaining that transparency, even when one is functioning in the wakeful and in the subjective consciousness there is a transcendent vision which is not clogged by the specific inertia to which consciousness is usually subjected.

A lot of confusion about things happens because of the specificity of forms. A contemplative can also exercise valid assessment of things without being caught in the fanciful imaginations of a non-yogi. For instance, if a contemplative is going to buy a gold chain or bangle, he or she also recognizes a chain as a chain or a bangle as a bangle. However, the specific attraction of formal differences is looked upon as a secondary aspect. Thus, the contemplative has another sense to appreciate the specificity of things in terms of classes. In the course of time, the breakthrough he or she makes in the appreciation of the general truth of the generic aspect of things enables him or her to see time as one stretch without breaking it into segments of past, present and future. A similar breakthrough can also be made with regard to differences of masses and with regard to spatial separation.

Sūtra I:50

*tajjah samskāro 'nya samskāra
pratibandhī*

tajjah: born from (*nirvītarka samāpatti* or *nirvīcāra samāpatti*)

samskāra: residual potencies or impressions

anya: other

samskāra: residual potencies or impressions

pratibandhī: impede

Residual potencies born from (*nirvītarka samāpatti* or *nirvīcāra samāpatti*) impede other residual potencies.

In India, it is a common custom to say *AUM śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ*, at the end of a prayer. In that invocation, *AUM* represents the ground of everything. The sounds *A, U, M*, have reference to the wakeful, the dream and the deep sleep, respectively. To a yogi who is undergoing discipline, they refer to *vitarka, vicāra* and *samādhi*. *Samāpatti* or *samādhi* comes when *vitarka, vicāra* and all causal potencies have been cleared. The yogi's three references to *śāntiḥ* imply going from *nirvītarka* to *nirvīcāra* to *nirbīja* (non-seeded) *samādhi*. In the state of *nirbīja samādhi*, as the yogi experiences a transcendental clarity of knowing the Self in its purest form, all residual potencies are thrown out and there is no chance for new potencies to be deposited.

This can be followed by a question as to whether the perfected yogi becomes incapable of functioning as a person. To this the answer is "no." With full consciousness and deliberation a man can accept the role of a king, a judge, a police officer, or a thief. When the role is finished, the actors can walk out of the theater without carrying with them the state of mind in which they were for a short while. The man who acted as king knows he has no regality when the play is over. The person who pronounced judgement knows he has no power or authority to judge anyone. The policeman need not be rigid or unfriendly to the man who acted as a thief. The actor who played the role of a thief does not carry with him any sense of guilt. The transaction of life can continue without any new *samskāra* being created. A yogi who has realized the Self looks upon the transactions of the world only as role-playing which is assigned to him in the drama of life. He has no false identity to torment him later. A unitive discrimination (*akhānda vivēka*) pervades his consciousness and thereafter he sees everything in the right perspective.

*tasyāpi nirodhe sarva nirodhān
nirbījaḥ samādhiḥ*

tasyāpi: of that also
nirodhe: by the restraint
sarva nirodhāt: owing to the
restraint
nirbījaḥ samādhiḥ: seedless
absorption

All being restrained, by the restraint of that also comes the seedless absorption.

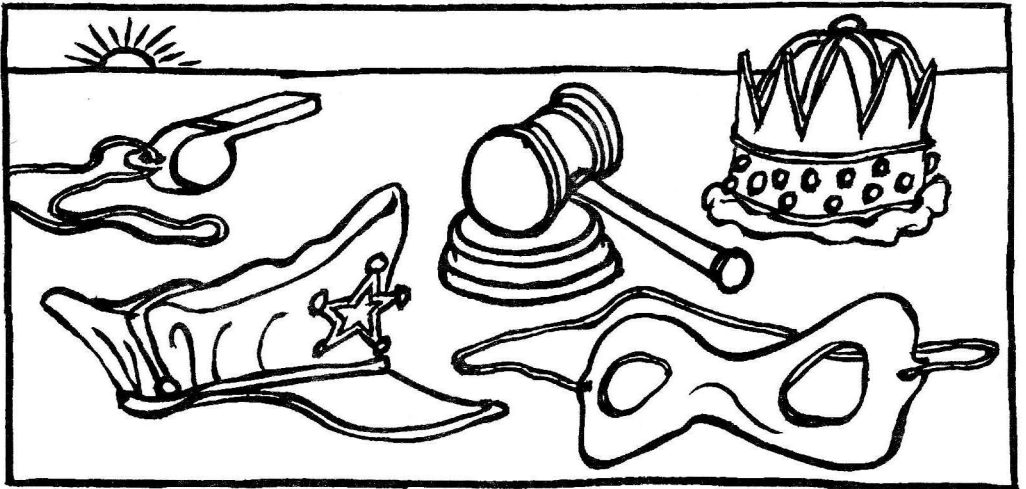
In the *Nirvāna Darsāna* of the *Darśana Mālā* of Narayana Guru, the highest aspect of realization is described as that of the *brahmavit*. If a *brahmavit* (knower of the Absolute) prefers not to retain the central locus of his consciousness, then the last vestige of orientation also leaves him and he becomes more established in the Absolute. Then he is called *brahmavitoṣāra*. After becoming established in a state where bodily functions become negligible and consciousness is not affected by environmental factors or inner urges, the final state of *nirvāna* comes. Then the knower of the Absolute is called *brahmavit varīṣṭha*. When a person arrives at the last stage where he does not know anything by himself and others cannot rouse him to consciousness, no incipient memory remains with him to con-

stitute a causal consciousness or causal body. Consequently he has no return to the cycle of birth and death. He is said to be completely burned out.

The state of *nirvāna* as described in Vedānta corresponds to what Patañjali calls the state of *kaivālya*. The word *kaivālya* is derived from *kevalam* which means aloneness. Individuation comes because of the proximity of *puruṣa* to *prakṛti*. In that state *puruṣa* is not alone. But the aspiring yogi disciplines himself or herself and withdraws from the impressions laid by perception. On transcending them, the yogi attains *nirvītarka samādhi*. But the memories already gathered in him or her can still cause trains of thought. With further self-discipline, the yogi transcends the dynamics of incipient memories and comes to *nirvicāra samādhi*. When such transcendence is maintained and the yogi denies further impact of *prakṛti*, the latent potentials to act or to desire are removed and he or she comes to a state of total liberation. Then the *puruṣa* is alone. Hence it is called the state of aloneness, *kaivālya*.

At the commencement of the first paṇḍa of the *Yoga Sūtras*, yoga is defined as the restraint of all mental modifications. In the present sūtra, we have come to a stage where all modifications are restrained. That is the final goal of yoga according to Patañjali.

(Continued in next issue.)



The Sun, Moon and Stars

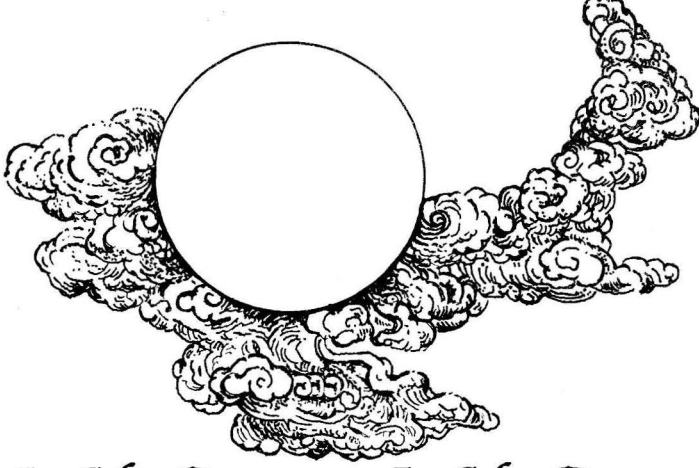
*Come Moon, Come Moon, called out a boy,
Who was going in a rocket.
The Moon wanted to go,
But the Sun said, 'No you cannot go',
The Stars said, 'Yes you can go',
The Star bigger than the Sun said,
'Oh, you can go, but don't be late'.
The Moon came late
And the Star bigger than the Sun
asked 'Why did you come late?'
The Moon said, 'I am late because
The boy asked me not to go back.*

Gokul Divakaran (5 years)

The Jellyfish Jamboree

*The Jellyfish
had a jamboree
They had
it in
a tall
oak tree
They ate
the leaves
and drank
the trunk
and after
that the
oak tree
sunk.*

Sam Tepperman (9 years)



In My Dreams...In My Dreams...

*Oh, every night in my dreams things are strange
And I think they are real.
But when I wake up it is not there.
One time when I woke up it was real,
In my dreams...in my dreams...*

*It's always so real - its always in my mind;
But other times that doesn't happen at all.*

*Every night in my dreams I see purple rain,
Green snow and orange hail,
And the ground seems to be the color of the sky.
The sky seems to be maroon colored and
The houses are just shadows in my dreams and
It seems as though the people are chanting
In my dreams...in my dreams...*

*Yes, and another time long after the first time,
I woke up and it was true -
In real life...in real life..
Yes, in real life...in real life..
The clouds seem to be mere imagination,
And then everything seems to be blurry.
Everything seems to be a swirl of colors,
And then everything is normal.*

Emily Teitsworth (7 years)

Wonder Journey With a Wandering Guru

Nancy Yeilding

A few days after my arrival at Fernhill Gurukula, we set out for a two week stay at Kanakamala Gurukula near Tellicherry in tropical Kerala State. Guru and I were accompanied by Jyothi and Giridharan, both permanent Gurukula residents and disciples very devoted to Guru, and Maya, a distant niece of Guru's. We made the long drive in what is known in India as a "Tourist Taxi" -- a car for hire which is in sufficiently good condition to make long trips. The local taxis in Ooty, though lovingly cared for by their owners and drivers, are so old and worn out from the terrible roads that they often seem barely capable of making the few kilometers up the hill from the town to the Gurukula. Having been carefully instructed by Jyothi and Giri about Guru's bad back, the driver took special care on the deeply pock-marked roads to make our ride as smooth as possible. After leaving the Gurukula early morning we went straight to a "hotel" (restaurant) in Ooty where Guru treated all of us, including the driver, to *utapams* (similar to a spicy pancake) and coffee. On the way there, he told us that whenever he would set out on a journey with Nataraja Guru, Nataraja Guru would ask, "Is Nitya going to get *dosha* (another kind of pancake) for me today?" and they would make it a point to stop somewhere at hotel along the way to enjoy treats not usually a part of the Gurukula diet.

Then we set out on one of the most beautiful drives in South India. After leaving Ooty, the road winds through stands of majestic trees spreading out grandly overhead from their huge trunks,

then through groves of hundreds of tall, silvery eucalyptus interspersed with wide grassy areas around lakes and reservoirs. After we passed many hillsides covered with tea plantations, and started our descent in earnest, Guru pointed out a bush at the side of the road covered with violet-blue flowers similar to honeysuckle. He told us that they were *nila kuriñi*, a flower that blooms only every twelve years. Excited, Jyothi asked the driver to stop the car so she, Maya and Giri could jump out to pluck a few branches. Soon the car had springs of blossoms on the dashboard along with the typical framed pictures of deities installed there and a big bouquet tucked in by the bags at Maya and Jyothi's feet. When we were underway once again, Guru told us that when he had first come to Ooty in 1952, the sides of the mountains had all been blue, as in those days the bush had grown everywhere. It was this appearance that had prompted their name -- *Nil-giris*, Blue Mountains.

We continued down the mountainside through areas of thick jungle where the bright sunlight of the day filtered through to treat our eyes to a feast of greens. The roadside was sprinkled with the pinks, oranges and yellows of *lantana*, Mexican sunflowers and trumpet plants, while high above the brilliant reds of the flame of the forest leapt out of the top of their trees.

The beauty we traveled through softened the arduous journey, as did the lunch and rest thoughtfully arranged by Jyothi's relatives at a Tourist Bungalow along the way. Still, we were all ex-

hausted by the time we reached Bharatan's house in Kuthuparamba where we were to spend the night. Despite his fatigue, Guru, after only a quick bath, willingly obliged his host by giving a class to the family and their friends who had gathered there. When he started, he was so tired that he could barely form words, but as he spoke, it was as though he was being filled from within with energy and a light that lovingly glowed ever brighter from his eyes. Over the years I have lived and traveled with Guru I have seen this happen to him many times – the illness or weariness of his physical being slowly fades away as he turns he and his listener's attention to the imperishable reality, whether it is through a vision of peace or truth or beauty. The motivational dynamic always seems to be that of love – he responds to the needs and aspirations of those around him and that compassion frees him from the fetters of bodily suffering.

In his talk he used a Japanese Noh drama with four characters as a symbol for present-day Kerala society. One of the characters in the play sits in meditation without moving or speaking, two of them spend their time speaking in a ridiculing way or screaming, while the fourth gets into dialogues with everyone else. Along our way, we had seen a prodigious display of the endemic political demonstrations which constantly disrupt daily life in Kerala without ever resulting in constructive change. We passed five different processions of five political parties, each waving their special color of flags and vehemently shouting their particular slogans. Although the Marxist, Hindu Fundamentalist, Muslim, Christian and Congress party political activists have very different programs, Guru saw them as the same in their motivation, mode of conformity, and stupidity in simply shouting for total and complete change.

He then talked about it being far more effective to actually *make* small changes each day, first cultivating peace within oneself, then creating a peaceful



atmosphere in one's family which can be shared with the neighborhood and then beyond. He mentioned his experience of attending a gala performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The huge audience had parked their hundreds of cars in neat rows in the parking lot, then found their seats in an orderly manner, following directions given by the young women who were volunteer ushers. By the time the show was scheduled to begin, everyone was quietly in their seats. The conductor was greeted by as hearty round of applause when he entered, then the hundreds of people sat in pin-drop silence, waiting for the movement of his baton to begin the concert. The enthusiastic attentiveness of the audience encouraged the musicians to give a soul-stirring performance which even Guru, at that time a total stranger to Western music, found deeply moving.

Cars parked in neat rows, orderly movement and a silent audience are virtually unimaginable in most of India where chaotic traffic patterns are coped with by the constant horn honking of all vehicles, crowds of people are characterized by disorderly pushing and shoving, and the proceedings of religious, cultural and political gatherings are blasted over the surrounding neighborhood by loudspeakers.

ers. Guru offered his experience of the Beethoven concert as an example of behavior which showed an inner discipline and a dignity which each of his listeners could try to cultivate in their own lives as an antidote to such dis-ease.

After Guru's talk, Jyothi took Maya to her family home nearby, Giridharan went to Kanakamala and Guru and I went to bed, I to a fitful sleep disturbed by mosquitoes, the unaccustomed heat and the constant traffic of family members through the room, and Guru to have a most amazing dream which he related to us in the morning class as follows:

When two people come together and desire to relate with each other, they look into each other's eyes. The bridge of relationship is built between the watchful eyes of two transacting people. Thus transaction begins in silence. The eye has a tremendous power to convey messages. Just as it is a transmitter, it is also a receiver. What the eyes receive is passed on to the heart that governs them. Strangers have both curiosity and hidden fear. When the fear is great, the heart refuses to open and pass itself through the eyes. When the eyes reveal more of the other person's nature, character and motivation, the heart either opens up in favor or closes tight. Thus the eyes are the windows of the heart. The seeing eye is also the commentator that translates everything in the language of the heart. The intellect is called in to scrutinize the secret signs and symbols conveyed by the eyes and make a realistic assessment of the transaction.

When two people have decided to relate with each other the interest in each one becomes progressively intense. All four inner organs are alerted to relate to the other person. The mind brings in a series of interrogations and memory tags are pulled so that all relevant previous experiences are summoned to provide comparisons and differences. The intellect becomes critical and the ego takes its place to command orders of acceptance or rejection. In the West the transacting

mind and its awareness were presented by Freud in terms of consciousness. He postulated a pre-conscious state which ultimately becomes conscious and an unconscious state behind it. In India the consciousness that is established in the wakeful state is called jagrat, which literally means 'becoming awake or critical'. Wakeful consciousness is critical or judicial and takes precautions not to allow one's counterpart in the objective world to know that about one which is to one's disadvantage and to highlight areas which can be conveyed to the other with advantage. Thus the transactional bridge is not a freeway but a well-guarded causeway which gives permission for the expression of certain ideas and debars others.

All five senses and the mind are intensely active during the time of communication. A reflex arc is made from the stimulating object to the senses, from the senses to the memory, from the memory to the intellect and from the intellect to the ego. Then the ego commissions the same sense organs to act as executives. Along with that, the whole person spiritually or ideally moves towards its counterpart to entrench itself for a closer or deeper relationship.

It is as if each person is equipped with two different measuring rods. One is to measure external objects. It is a static measuring device. The subjective measuring norms of the dream are comparatively more dynamic. While perception conforms to a static scheme, dream consciousness is a schema motor, capable of reshuffling and transforming its scheme with a lot of motions implied. It comes much closer to the Self than the external instruments of the senses and the mind.

What I have said so far is by way of introduction to the dream I had last night. Ordinary dreams are like several threads of memories entangled to make a chaotic presentation of displaced forms, names and meanings. But the dream I am going to narrate now is of a different order. When the concealed anatomy of one's value vision is to be properly re-

structured and presented to equip oneself with a perennial understanding, the tai-jasi in one takes certain measures to show a vision of truth.

Because of a long drive during the day, I was physically exhausted. As soon as I lay down, I fell fast asleep. It was as if time also went into a deep sleep -- when one is asleep nothing ticks. Then a new awareness awakened in me as though someone so sacred and saintly like Lao Tsu had planted his wisdom in me where formerly my mind, memory and intellect had existed. It was as if my ego faded out and its place was taken by a universal awareness and identity. When I was thus equipped with a universal mind, it was as if I was ensconced in a spaceless, timeless awareness which was absolutely homogenous. Then it became circulimited as an ellipse which had a sort of polarization. One part of the polarized ellipse was like a projecting light with its beams elongating. From each beam many other radiations went in different directions. The other tip of the ellipse was also increasing, not with the beams of physical light but with an intensity of awareness that was going into a far, far, mysterious realm. That which elaborated as physical light then entered into a world where

everything flowed. It was like a deep ocean with an unbounded surface with millions of waves, each changing into forms of life, various elements.... It went on elaborating itself until it became solid rocks, mighty mountain peaks, blue sky, floating clouds and everything we see in the present world of objective reality. For the first time I sensed relative time as different from pure duration, relative space as different from pure awareness and relative dimensions as different from pure bliss as the foundation of everything.

All the while, it was as if the wisdom of the sage Lao Tsu was interpreting to my personal mind the value and significance of the vision. This very instructive, informative and absorbing vision made me lie motionless from 11:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m., instead of getting up several times as usual. After I woke up at 4:00, marveled at it, and went back to bed, everything was revised in my mind once again in a more epitomized manner for about two hours. Such is the compassion of the Supreme which comes as our perennial teacher even when we are physically asleep. This is the marvel I wanted to share with everyone as soon as I woke up.

(Continued in next issue.)





Virtuoso Listening

Scott Teitsworth

Few of us have the luxury of being musicians, but almost all of us listen to music. Many of us listen a great deal. Often we envy the musician, without realizing that the art of listening has a similar status to performance when considered from the standpoint of Yoga.

Like musical technique, listening properly is a demanding discipline with varying levels of accomplishment. But because we listen for pleasure, and are so naturally drawn to music, we tend to overlook the potential listening has for a yogic focusing of the mind. Our religious heritage includes an unconscious belief that spiritual progress is the by-product of suffering and denial of pleasure. Who would dare think that "taking in" entertainment could be more than a rest break from the serious work of seeking realization? At best we might think of listening to someone else's divine inspiration as a kind of secondary blessing conferred on us from outside, acting upon our souls like the grace of God. If we could see listening as a spiritual discipline in itself, we would be more likely to make the effort this art form deserves, and in the process become much better listeners.

Some form of actively centering the mind must be practiced in order to truly appreciate music, or anything else for that matter. *Ekāgra*, or focusing of attention, is seen in Yoga as the most beneficial aspect of consciousness. It results from a strong attraction to the object of awareness coupled with the weeding out of distractions. If we can attend to music to the extent that our ego suspends its labeling and evaluating habits, we have arrived at the first step in Yoga, *savitarka samādhi*. This is effective listening.

Our minds are quite naturally drawn

to music. Because of this it is an ideal art form for the centering discipline associated with the beginning stage of Yoga. In the 13th century work, *Sangīta Ratnākāra* of Sarngadeva, this was summarized quite well:

Salvation is attained...by contemplating the formless, the limitless reality; and that is not approachable by all, even though that is the accepted goal of human existence. It is not possible for everybody to meditate upon the attributeless Brahman, because it requires one-pointed concentration of mind to be held without the aid of a visible object. It requires a code of Self-discipline without any external stimulus or any other source of inspiration.

Considering these difficulties, the sages have discovered a technique of attaining liberation through the meditation of the unmanifest *nāda*, i.e., the primordial sound which is heard inside the head if carefully listened to with an unburdened mind. This sound is produced without any content of matter, i.e., without any friction; it is natural and spontaneous and that is why it is called *anāhata* (unstruck).

But even this is found to be of little interest by common people because this sound is pure and untinged by emotional colour and therefore uninteresting to them. That is precisely why music becomes more useful, and a treatise on the science of music necessary, so that people can easily cultivate both the ends of life, viz., experience of the world and salvation from its limitations through a pleasant and convenient means like music which is universally approved and considered attractive.*

Despite the existence of a scientific

evaluation of music in respect to liberation, as well as wide variations in the quality of compositions, the distinctions that might be made regarding the value of a particular piece or type of music are not important to this discussion. Whatever is most attractive to the individual, based on his own taste, is what is appropriate.

Several progressive gradations in focusing attention on music may be delimited based on the elemental structuring of the psyche. These represent degrees of removing ourselves from our normal preoccupation with the fluctuating states of our own consciousness. Most of us are already familiar with them from our own experience, but it may be helpful to clearly sort them out.

Ordinary listening on the most gross level of the psyche is the semi-attentive registering of sound vibration impacts. Here music is at the extreme periphery of ego awareness. At least in America, where recorded music predominates, this is by far the most common level of appreciation. Live music, even if less perfectly performed than a recording, tends to elicit more effort on the part of the audience to pay attention. A constant low-level din of music, played with virtually no volume variation (dynamics), pervades work places, stores, cars and homes to the extent it is barely noticed any more. The effect is said to be "soothing"--in other words, numbing to the mind. It is a kind of impersonal companion that allows us comfort in isolation. That this type of music has become a powerful defense mechanism can be demonstrated by turning it off. People get upset and even angry when this happens. It is not surprising that much of the music involved with this charade is produced automatically by machines. Even interesting live music can be unheard in this manner, now that our psyches are supersaturated with sound. At many American concerts the audience sits in a kind of stupor, and the performers must resort to outlandish special effects to rouse them to any kind of response at all.

The first degree of responsive listening is achieved at the emotional level. The attention placed on music is strongly affected by expectations based on memory. Emotional listeners gravitate to repetitious songs they know well, or songs very similar to ones they know. Familiar tunes may activate sentimental memories, or intensely powerful music may crash through the crust of a deadened psyche to stimulate a range of feelings. It is difficult to react emotionally to something new and different, since the mind is busy recording and pigeonholing the experience. Even minor variations in a well-known piece can disturb the satisfaction of expectations highlighted here. Nowadays, if a performer cannot be exact in repetition he is often asked to "lip-synch"--merely move his mouth while a recording is played.

Franz Liszt's brilliant technique and intense music was able to activate powerful emotions in the stolid audiences of the mid-19th century, as women hurled jewelry and occasionally articles of clothing onto the stage. In the modern era, the screaming frenzy of teenagers at concerts is a cliché. Modern audiences have learned how to produce their own emotional response even when the music itself is inadequate to do so. It is the expected ritual performance of the concert-goer.

Musically educated people tend to listen to music on the next level, that of intellectual appreciation. An intelligent effort to really listen can bring a great deal of satisfaction. The academic approach is explained in the preface to *Learning to Listen*, by Grosvenor Cooper:

The aim of the course is to center the student's attention on the individual work of art. In music, this is done as follows: first, by bringing him to reflect upon the expression and construction of a work itself without recourse to other considerations; second, by having him think about a work in the context of the formal procedures used in it; finally, by making him aware of its stylistic context as well.

Unfortunately, the analyzing tenden-



cy of the mind can also deaden the musical experience. Here we can see the similarity between instrumental performance and listening performance. We cannot be fully aware of music when we are listening to our own inner voice, since the immediacy of experience is lost when the mind begins to mediate. The flow of unity is disrupted each time our thoughts intervene, either as listener or performer. The musician gets instant feedback in the form of audible errors when he entertains even a brief thought. The listener, however, may drift for some time before he is aware of being immersed in his thoughts. He must again and again bring his mind back in focus on the music. When we are trained to be good listeners and good performers in the intellectual sense, we often consider our thoughts to be essential to the experience, and so lose the spontaneity that is the mark of greatness in art or artistic appreciation.

Just as we may erroneously come to believe that thinking about spirituality is the same as spirituality, the intellectual

may feel his understanding of music is true musical appreciation. Music critics are frequently seduced in this way, as it is a requirement of their profession that they have well-formulated opinions. One of the great amusements in reading biographies of great composers is seeing how far off the mark critics can be in their assessment of works that history has shown to be of the highest caliber. Often what we now consider the finest accomplishments are those compositions that broke new ground in their day, and these are also the most likely to reveal the critic trapped in his point of view. My all-time favorite has to be the following critical assessment of Beethoven's Second Symphony, a beautiful and easily accessible work: "a crude monstrosity, a serpent which continues to writhe about, refusing to die, and even when bleeding to death (Finale) still threshes around angrily and vainly with its tail." Even the opinion that one is open-minded can become a static, fixed viewpoint over time.

The most valuable level is reached

when the individual is able to shed the various types of self-indulgence to become an unencumbered participant in the musical experience. This is not only satisfying to the individual, it adds a subtle but important factor to the exposition of the music. It is seldom acknowledged, but nonetheless true, that a great performance springs from the subtle interaction between artist and audience. The artist intuitively gauges the degree of attention the audience has to the music, just as a teacher takes into account the intelligence and alertness of his class. When the listener is fully focused on the subject at hand, the artist can go as deeply as possible into his performance. Conversely, when the attention level is low, the performer is easily distracted and senses invisible barriers to a penetrating presentation.

Successfully centering our consciousness on a vibratory manifestation such as music is a great achievement. When the mind is focused on the music to

the extent that it holds steady and is undisturbed by distractions, experiencer and experience become one. As stated before, the listener who accomplishes this has attained a beginning stage of Yoga, *savitarka samādhi*. The importance of this should not be minimized any more than it should be maximized. It is possible to progress to deeper grades of *samādhi*, those unified with nonobjective states, but this is outside the scope of the present article. Their elucidation can be found in the *Yoga Sūtra* commentary serialized in the *Gurukulam*, among other places. It is sufficient here to understand that learning to listen is an art form in itself, and one that has all the potential of other artistic endeavors to bring us to Self-realization. ♦

* Translation and commentary by Dr. R.K. Shringy and Dr. Prem L. Sharma; Motilal Banarsidass, Varanasi, 1978.



Book Reviews

Sitāyana: Epic of the Earth-born, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Madras, Samata Books, 1987.

Chanted in rhythm, infused with hope, magic and wisdom, the Song of Rama has been the sustaining poetry of India throughout the past 2000 years. The king of righteousness, Vishnu's avatar, Rama, is the inspiring central actor of India's great epic *The Rāmāyana*. As exiled prince, warrior and loving husband, he has been the ideal that has nourished the living culture of India. His story has been resung in the various languages of the subcontinent, and travelled eastward to inspire the drama and dance of Southeast Asia. As Rama strode through the hills and plains of Greater India, the consoler and redeemer to both art and religion, his wife Sita was always at his side. Sita was Rama's support and reflection, the gracious counterpart to his achievements. Over many centuries, Sita and Rama have been the twin masculine and feminine ideals in Indian literature, and Sita has been the wife who sustains, suffers and acquiesces.

In *Sitāyana: Epic of the Earth-born*, Professor K. R. Iyengar retells the saga of Rama's adventures. Here Sita moves from her often static role to become the dynamic focus of the story. Sita's life is seen from within, with its own logic and vision. In the *Rāmāyana*, Rama is the upholder of *dharma*, the warrior-king who reestablishes the rule of righteousness. His life is the embodiment of divine principles. The drama revolves around the clash of opposing values - the demonic *rakshashas* in rebellion against the valorous gods.

In Iyengar's book, when Sita assumes center stage, the perspective changes. In



contradistinction to the divine vertical principle that is Rama, Sita represents the shifting, fluid nature of Life Itself. The hierophantic world view of the traditional *Rāmāyana* is expanded, and in *Sitāyana* life is not seen as a clash of rigid principles but as a web of subtle and flexible interrelationships.

The story of *Sitāyana* revolves around the same dramatic pattern. The rightful heir, Rama, is exiled from the kingdom of Ayodha when his father is held to an old pledge by a jealous second wife. Accompanied by Sita and his faithful brother, Lakshmana, Rama wanders the forests of Dandaka for fourteen years. At the end of their sojourn, Sita is abducted through treachery; she is stolen by the *rakshasha* king Ravana and taken to his kingdom of Lanka. After a year of imprisonment Sita is finally rescued by Rama and the monkey warriors led by Hanuman. Ravana is defeated, and Rama and Sita are returned to Ayodha and joyously installed as king and queen. Upon this traditional tale, Iyengar weaves the "saga sublime" of Sita, who is the essence of all manifested life.

Iyengar's vision is a revaluation of the traditional, male-defined man-woman relationship. Historically, woman has been misunderstood by men and forced into the oppressive structure of a patriarchal society. There are many painful scenes in the *Rāmāyana* that highlight this inequity. Part of Iyengar's revaluation in *Sitāyana* is to view those scenes through the eyes of the women characters and to see the effects of the men's egoistic actions. A poignant example of this is the war between Rama and Ravana where the brute violence is witnessed through the emotional suffering it causes the women of Lanka. The tender-

ness of these women as mothers, wives, and sisters is wounded by men's pride and arrogance. Sita is the living symbol of the Earth's beneficence, and she is called upon to restore the balance in human life, especially in the male/female dialectics.

It is her restorative power that will heal men's distortions.

Another part of the revaluation of *Sitāyana* is enlargement of the focus of the story to include exploration of the nature of manifested life. Sita, literally meaning "a furrow," is born of the Earth itself and she is its living spirit, that joyful, determined, exuberant yet bound force of *prakriti* (nature). Sita is again and again described as flame-pure and full of delight, then as suffering and pain. This contradiction is addressed in *Sitāyana*.

How is it that these two, joy and pain, coexist? Why is the spirit of Life itself marked with suffering? Traditionally a one-dimensional and prejudiced reply sufficed: it was the fate of weaker woman to suffer at man's hand and be his subordinate. Iyengar, however, is not interested in this easy alignment of inequity. He wants to penetrate the mask of social arrangements and come to an elucidation of our inner core of being. It is out of the furrow in the earth, dark and pregnant, that each of us emerges as an indi-

vidual being. Male or female, we come as a *persona*, an individual expression of absolute vertical values. It is this process of becoming specific that creates the dual nature that is Sita and is our very own nature. Individuation, becoming, specification - all have implicit within them the delimitation of absolute good. And so with joy in living comes pain and with delight comes suffering.

As well as being a study of Sita as *prakriti*, *Sitāyana* is a study of the relationship between the vertical values that Rama the avatar god represents and the horizontal values of manifestation that find expression in Sita. It is here that Iyengar's book comes into its own. He approaches paradox openly, recognizing its vitality. Between Rama and Sita, between the vertical good and the horizontal living of it, there exists a mutual reciprocity. This relationship as developed in *Sitāyana* can best be understood in light of the opening verse of Śankara's *Saundārya Laharī*:

*If Śiva is united with Śakti,
he becomes able to manifest;
If otherwise, this god
is unable even to pulsate.*

(Nataraja Guru, translation)



Sita's foundation is certainly Rama. She is his devoted wife who relies on him for sustenance and guidance. This outward relationship has an inner corollary. In her two times of great trial, while held captive in the garden at Asoka and in the forest after her second rejection, Sita turns inward to meditate on Rama as her ground and deepest reality. It is not the external behavior of Rama that is of greatest consequence to Sita (he even shows himself quite cruel at certain moments), but his sustaining reality as a principle of good. For Rama's part, he is the godhead, the king and the divine emanation of Vishnu. Yet he is actually lifeless and unable to effect action without Sita, who is the dynamic and animating daughter of the earth. When she is abducted by Ravana, Rama becomes listless and unable to carry out his role; it is only the encouragement of Lakshmana, the assurance that they will find Sita, that activates him. And later on, when he pridefully rejects Sita a second time, he becomes savorless and "a prisoner/ in his self-forged loneliness/ and has made himself a burnt offering/ to his stone image, Dharma" (Canto 75, verse 708).

Three crucial scenes highlight the mutual interdependence between Rama and Sita. The first is the moment in Dandaka when Sita becomes irrationally fascinated with the golden deer that is Ravana's magic lure. The other two scenes are Rama's rejections of Sita - first on the battlefield after defeating Ravana, and then back in Ayodha after hearing careless slander against her. Each of these scenes, its emotional tenor and lapse of faith, underscores the problems that occur when either pole of the *Śiva/Śakti* pair tries to singularly assert itself and distort the balance between them. Sita's obsession with the deer divorced her from Rama's protection, showing how glittering phenomena can seduce us and cut us off from the vertical reality of our lives. This momentary lapse sets in motion so many varied actions: the war against the *rakshashas*, Ravana's death, and Sita's year-long imprisonment and inner *tapās-*

ya. In the garden of Asoka, Sita must sink deeply inward to view the necessary consequences of her short-sided fascination. Here is where she must reaffirm her commitment to Rama as her inner reality.

Rama, after fighting a horrendous and exhausting war, all to win back Sita, then coldly rejects her in front of the assembled armies. He hardheartedly lauds his own powers, not noticing Sita's pain. *Dharma*, which Rama has continuously stood for, has cut itself off from the waters of Mother Earth and finds itself arid. Righteousness without compassion, without love, is the dead hand that stills the spirit. Agni, the God of Fire, stands as Sita's fierce witness, causing Rama to shed his skin of solitude and to see Sita in her purity. This relationship of acceptance lasts for a few glorious years as *Rama Raja*, the rule of tender goodness that Rama and Sita bring back to their kingdom.

Later, the third incident of distortion occurs. Rama takes some gossip to heart and though knowing Sita to be blameless, and in fact pregnant with their first child, abandons her in the forest. The anguish written into this canto in *Sitāyana* is palpable, and one feels both anger and contempt for Rama. As man and king he rejects what he knows as true. He plays the person blinded by his own pride who is curried by others' opinions.

"But confronted as he was by a dark/ inconscience that was the sum/ of human folly, prejudice and spite,/ he felt his certitudes fail./ Frailty was apt to feed upon itself,/ make frailty the law of life." (Canto 68, verse 99)

Rama represents the vertical good, yet he has no power to *be* without Sita. In rejecting her truth, he nullifies himself. It is only after twelve years of separation that Rama finally, through a compelling and lyric series of events, accepts Sita and their now-adolescent twin sons. There is a painful twist when he readily recognizes the twins but requires one more proof from Sita. At that moment she cries out to her mother the earth for vindication and is reabsorbed into the

ground.

After initial anger, Rama comes to realize his folly. Then, in this state of remorse and bereavement, Rama turns inward to find Sita, not as his wife but as his own innate self. This is an important part of Iyengar's retelling of the story: Rama is Sita's inner reality, yet as his life-giving spirit she is equally essential to him. When Rama sees her as such, the years of confusion, isolation and separation are surpassed, and Rama and Sita become one as a presiding spirit.

The dialogue between Rama and Sita is certainly the major focus of the traditional *Ramāyana* and of Iyengar's *Sitāyana*. There are, however, many supporting dynamics that add subtlety and depth to the story. Ravana is the ten-

headed demon whose lust and wildness have terrorized the gods as well as men. The lines describing him leap with energy and fear. Yet in *Sitāyana* he is not the singularly evil being we might wish. His personality both repels and intrigues. Though still the host of the demons, Ravana is also a more sympathetic character in *Sitāyana*. Much of his power results from boons granted for his great *tapas*; and as that powerful being he rules the vast and wonderful kingdom of Lanka. While he terrifies Sita and has ravished innumerable women, he also has a wife and consorts of tremendous beauty and character who care deeply for him. Ravana's undoing is his unbridled obsession, a lust that never finds rest, even in countless conquests. Ravana's talents are



many but they are undercut by his unrestrained egoism. Iyengar makes him a truly tragic character who is undone by his desire. A haunting passage describes Ravana's dreams just before his final battle with Rama. In it his ambiguities and even tenderness come to the fore, and in a strange way we mourn as well as rejoice at his death.

Also Iyengar's depiction of the relationship between Rama and Ravana is less clear cut than in the traditional story. In a symbiotic way, they seem to call one another to action. More emphasis is placed on Sita as the connecting bridge between Rama, exemplar of the world of righteous *dharma*, and Ravana and his kingdom, where obsession blinds good. She is the daughter of the earth and it is through her that Ravana is redeemed, though this means his death at Rama's hand. It is to her power that both "good" and "evil" must bow, and it is her purity that realigns aberrations.

An important secondary theme in *Sitāyana* is the development of the women characters. Iyengar pulls them out from the shadows of female stereotypes. His women do not remain as mere appendages to the male characters and are given their own personalities and histories. This includes Sita's sisters, the women anchorites in Dandaka, and even some of the *rakshasha* women in Lanka. Additionally the women in *Sitāyana* are shown linked by their femininity. In each meeting there is a recognition of unity and affection. This is important historically since women have often been portrayed as egoistically aggressive towards other women, and it is important as a balance to the separation and solitude of many of the men in the story. The women are a circle of companionship, friends in the more mundane sense, but also examples of the nourishing concern of all living beings for one another. Traditionally the wives of Ravana are also Sita's tormentors in Asoka. They harass her and demand her submission. But in *Sitāyana*, all the consorts and especially the main wife Mandodari, are identified

with Sita and take her suffering as their own. Two of the nieces in particular, Trijata and Anhala, become Sita's companions. They are like her psychic self and her rational self externalized to help her survive in Lanka. When Sita retreats inward in her harrowing *tapas*, Trijata and Anhala are her links to the unfolding events of the actual world.

Iyengar has written *Sitāyana* as the story of Sita but also as the tale of our own time, and the drama of Rama and Sita is the structure on which Iyengar explores some of the problems of modern life. The characters of *Sitāyana* speak to us out of a "living past;" their voices tell us of the Heroic Age in Indian history and they also speak of the immediate and powerful paradoxes of our own modern age.

It is Iyengar's grounding in Indian tradition along with his affectionate knowledge of English literature that gives a reverberant depth to *Sitāyana*. There are echos of Valmiki, of the important Tamil *Rāmāyana*, and then allusions to Shakespeare and the mystic English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Because of Iyengar's skill these double references do not confuse but add a special character to *Sitāyana*.

Written in unrhymed quatrain, *Sitāyana* walks the line between poetry and prose. In the earlier, descriptive passages about Sita's childhood, the prose element predominates. But in the later cantos - such as Rama and Sita's wanderings among the *ashrams* of Dandaka and Sita's year in Asoka - the verses spark with intensity and convey the poetic emotion of the story brilliantly. In writing an English version of the *Rāmāyana*, and one written from a feminine perspective, K.R. Iyengar was attempting a creative synthesis of many diverse traditions. The convincing beauty and vision of *Sitāyana*'s cantos attest to his great success.

Deborah Buchanan

Mirror by the Road, A Transforming Journey of Spirituality in Everyday Life, Peter Oppenheimer, Novato, Inner Wealth Press, 1988.

Peter Oppenheimer's new book, *Mirror by the Road*, captures for me the feeling of being in South India, long after I have returned from my own first trip there. Parts of the journal which Peter transformed into this larger work were published in Gurukulam as *Tropics and Other Topics*, *The Flights of Fact and Fancy of a Traveler's Journal*.

Having been to India seven times in the last fifteen years, Peter has a wealth of experience from which to weave his stories. He does so aptly. One of the main ideas of his book is that interaction with India and her people, as with any culture and place on earth, can have a transformative effect on one's personality, way of seeing, thinking and being.

Peter doesn't hide behind his writing or try to exaggerate what he has seen and experienced. He reveals himself like a mirror for what he is and how he is. He does the same for the culture, people and places he describes. The author is not afraid to confront commonly-held misconceptions about life in India and America. He is bold to point out both the strengths and weaknesses of each. Woven into his days' events and journal entries are reflections on such topics as: wealth and poverty, the economics of abundance vs. the economics of scarcity, spirituality and self-knowledge, technology and material progress, traditional and non-traditional systems of education, Ayurvedic healing methods, the Western "pursuit of happiness" and the Eastern "search for the cause and end of suffering," the maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships, appreciation for one's natural environment, friendship, cooking, cross-cultural sharing of music, and guru-disciple relationships. The latter are viewed with the understanding that "a guru functions as a mirror for the

student's own inner resources of enlightenment. Ultimately, each of us carries the guru-principle within ourself, and an outer guru is at best a reminder."

I agree with Oppenheimer's assertion that one need not go to the "far-flung corners of the earth," in this case India, "in order to attain the ultimate in self-realization, self-expression, and self-fulfillment." It resides within us as our own true nature. We are reminded to "commune with the joy and wisdom which resides like a hidden splendor at the core of our own self." Peter, and his teacher, Nitya Chaitanya Yati, advise us to remember this steady state of being, from which we can unitively view and appreciate the world as an extension of our own Self. The world of stars and moon and television, bananas, curried vegetables and jumbo jets, water, waves and city buses, coconut trees, sand and sun, are all to be seen as a manifestation of the seer's own consciousness. Reuniting ourselves consciously with this source of life which is also the goal of life here and now, is recommended.

The book's cover and jacket design are done in stunning hues of blue and sunrise colors, as if heralding the wondrous glories that await humanity when we come together more and more as One Loving Family. Another plus of the book is that Peter has included two sections of some of his best black-and-white photographs taken during his sojourns to South India. The photographs alone are worth the price of the book. They give silent testimony to the living joy and unity the scriptures say is at the heart of humanity and creation.

Reading Peter's journal entries always leaves me in that together place in myself where I feel in harmony with my environment, my feelings, and my being. I feel elevated, soothed, more focused from seeing as Peter sees. His book and his insights are therapeutic. Read it!

Peter Moras

East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



Guru Nitya's New Year's Message

I take great pleasure in sending to all of you, our friends, New Year Greetings from all the heads of Narayana Gurukulas in all countries of the world and also sharing with you a few of my personal thoughts on this occasion of entering the time span of the year 1989.

Time and space cannot be comprehended objectively. They can be understood only as our subjective habit of placing things, persons and events in a network of assumptions that can give orientation to us of what is where and in which direction things move relative with each other in terms of values which can be relativistic or of an absolute and perennial significance.

Our Gurukula and the East-West University have achieved many outstanding spiritual, philosophical and cultural growths in 1987 and 1988. It is a matter of great satisfaction that seventeen of our Malayam books and eight English books were accepted by the public with enthusiasm and we have held five seminars which included: "The Theoretical and Applied Aspects of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patañjali," "An Experiential Study of



Eastern and Western Musical Concepts," "Comprehensive Psychology," "A Study of the Psychodynamics of the *Prāṇava Mantra*," and "An Imperiential and Experiential Assessment of the Dynamics of Beauty," based on Narayana Guru's *One Hundred Verses of Imperiential Poetic Exaltation -- Svānubhāvagīti Śatakam*.

Mr. Garry Davis, World Citizen, who resigned his U.S. citizenship in 1948, representing the World Government of World Citizens, contested for the offices of Mayor of Washington D.C. and U.S. President, knowing that he would not be elected for those posts. But he created a precedent that even a non-citizen can stand for the highest office of a country while representing humanity at large. He visited India in 1987 and 1988 and was given good press coverage by all the major newspapers of India.

Jenya Osborne of Sydney edited *Edda's Journal* and it was beautifully brought out by Penguin Books of Melbourne, Australia. Another beautiful book illustrating the inside life of the Gurukula was written by Dr. Peter Oppenheimer, *Mirror by the Road*, which has been favorably reviewed by American journals.

Gurukula students Andy Larkin, Peter Moras, Bob Tyson, Reuven Goldstein and Nancy Yeilding came from the United States and the last visitor to mark the close of 1988 was Jeannette Novy, daughter of Celia Novy of Australia.

From Bainbridge, under the editorship of Nancy Yeilding, the English *Gurukulam* magazine has been getting published regularly and has now come to Volume Five. *The Psychology of Darśana Mālā*, edited and introduced by Mr. Scott Teitsworth, printed by All India Press, Pondicherry, is now going to be followed by Nataraja Guru's *Autobiography*, also to be printed as a deluxe edition by the same press. The book is expected around April-May, 1989.

Our publication department is proud that Nataraja Guru's English translation and commentary of *Saundarya Lahari* has ultimately been brought out in a beautiful format and released in January along with my *Introduction to Indian Psychology* (Malayalam).

At Somanahalli Gurukula in Bangalore, Karnataka, under the directorship of Vinaya Chaitanya, a new project of Malayalam-Kannada bilingual translation has been introduced. Narayana Guru's *Universal Prayer* and *Narayana Guru's Life and Teachings* have already been translated into Kannada and the poems of Akāmaha Devi are being translated into Malayalam.

N.C. Kumaran, Madras, has kindly donated a beautiful spot of land on a hill overlooking the ocean in the city of Tellicherry for the founding of a new Narayana Gurukula on the west coast. We also published his thoughtful work, *Narayana Guru: Relevancy Today*, this year.

Thus, on the whole, 1987 and 1988 were very encouraging and enthralling years for the Gurukula for both its teachers and students. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all of you who have been very supportive and this cannot be otherwise for those who have dedicated everything to the will of the Tao and the grace of God.

Varkala, 12-29-1988

In late 1988 and early 1989, Guru Nitya traveled extensively in Kerala and Tamilnadu, visiting, giving classes and attending Guru Pujas at Gurukula centers at Kanakamala, Edappally, Malayatur, Erode, Erimayur, Alathur, Konni, Madras and Bangalore, returning to Fernhill for the Guru Puja there on February 19. His 65th birthday was celebrated in Tellicherry with a day of classes, music (South and North Indian and original compositions of Gurukula students), and the release of his 65th Malayalam book, a translation of Pablo Neruda's *Memoirs*.

The Annual Convention of Narayana Gurukula was held at Varkala, December 23-29. Morning sessions at Brahmaavidya Mandiram began each day with a fire ceremony (*homam*) and Upanishad chanting and discourses by Guru Nitya and Muni Narayana Prasad. Guru Nitya also gave classes on One World Education and One World Economics and Prasad shared excerpts of his work in progress on the *Vedanta Sutras of Narayana Guru*. Afternoon classes included presentations by Gurukula heads Charles, Gopidas, Vidyadharan, Giridharan, Vinaya Chaitanya, Mantra Chaitanya, and Nancy, and by Gurukula students Arulananadan, Omana and Mahilamoni on topics ranging from poetics and contemplative freedom, to traditional Indian medicine, a new outlook for women and living the values of the Gurukula in daily life.

Brahmaavidya Mandiram is nearing completion with the roof having been tile-textured and the second floor enclosed with sliding glass doors. The flooring on the second floor is planned to be installed this year. Along the path up the hillside to the Mandiram the wonderful sculptures of Kerala artist Hariharan have been installed, fulfilling a long-standing dream of Guru Nitya to have art works there depicting different phases from ancient art to modern art.

The East-West University Music Festival at Fernhill was so popular that it will be repeated this May, with many dancers and musicians already preparing for their performances. ❖



Sculptures at Brahma Vidya Mandiram by Hariharan
Ancient Art, East and West

