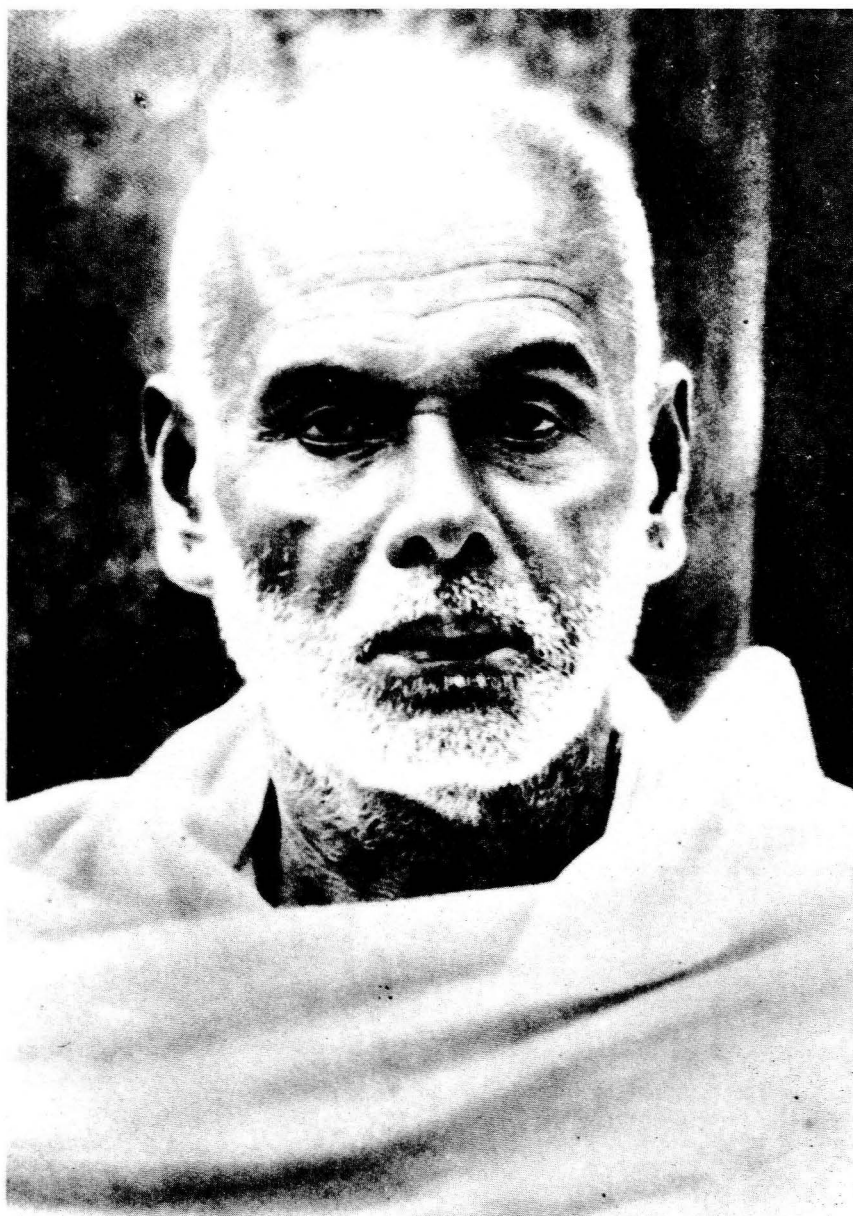


GURUKULAM

VOLUME VI • 1990

THIRD QUARTER





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GURUKULAM

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Meeting Narayana Guru

Soon after I first met Guru Nitya in San Francisco in 1973, he gave me a small anthology of Narayana Guru's poems, translated by Nataraja Guru. Though the nineteenth century English seemed quaint to me, many lines spoke to my heart as I browsed through its pages. They conveyed love and a compassionate understanding of human nature and the challenges we face. Reading Narayana Guru's uncomplicated ways of dealing with problems both of philosophy and human interaction, I sensed a mind that was serene and clear like a beautiful still pool.

Whenever I felt troubled or confused, I would pick up the little book and flip through its pages. Soon many passages became dear friends which offered solace, guidance and inspiration. Some of the verses reminded me of my highest values and helped me to regain stability when my feet slipped:

*Grace yields blessedness;
a heart Love-empty
Disaster spells of every kind.
Darkness as Love's effacer
and as suffering's core
Is seed to everything.*

*Grace, Love, Mercy -- all the three --
Stand for one same reality -- Life's Star.
"He who loves is he who really lives."
Do learn these syllables nine by heart,
In place of lettered charm.*

(Scriptures of Mercy)

*Man's humanity marks out the human-kind, even as bovinity proclaims a cow...
One of kind, one of faith and one in God is man; of one womb, of one form; difference herein none.*

(A Critique of Caste)

*Snapping, if one should say
he in the dark
Is ones own fellow, suffering snaps;
Round that very one spreading radiance.
(Descending Inner Experience)*

Although it took some years for me to gain enough familiarity with Malayalam (the language these verses were composed in) to have a sense of the lyrical poetry of the original, the translations had a magnetic quality and they would sing in my consciousness again and again, "Grace, Love, Mercy, Life's Star," "He who loves is he who really lives."

When I felt lost, some of the simple visual images evoked by the verses were very reassuring:

*The gang of fears that running come,
On seeing light
shall quickly sneak away,
Even like the lowering darkness
that came
Becomes once again,
open light's honey-water.*

*Certitude comes inside, like holding a
gooseberry in the palm of your hand...*

*We see this golden glory
spreading all round
As before the dawning
of the lustrous moon
We see the tender
moonbeam-radiant space.*

(TenVerses on Phenomenal Clarification)

Other verses gave expression to the experience of a reality I only dimly sensed at the time but ardently longed for:

*One thousand names, one thousand forms,
With whom, abiding therein,
there are one thousand interests.
Such is this world, uncritically viewed:
it is real only until the dream is past;
On waking, the awakened one
is all that remains.*

(The Lamp of Non-Duality)

*That which always unites the mind
With the reasoning Self, and also gets
united with it,
And which is in the form of restraint,
That is praised as Yoga.*

*That unbroken function of reason
Which in the Self, like a streak of oil,
Finds incessant joy -- such as Yoga
Is by Yogis recognized.*

(Vision of Meditation:

A Garland of Visions of the Absolute)

*Should ten million suns rising all at once
Eclipse the earth, fire, water
and all else,
That ascendent presence of Thine
Radiant ever abide.*

(Thought and Inertia)

I found one of the small works in the collection very intriguing. The simple words of *Five Verses on Inward Release* were immediately appealing:

*What name? Caste? Trade? How old?
From questions such, when one is free
He gains release.*

*Come! Go! Go not! Enter! What seekest?
From utterances such when one is free
He gains release.*

*Departest when? When arrived?
Whence and even who?
From questions such, when one is free
He gains release.*

*I or thou; this and that; inside or out;
or none at all;
From cogitations such, when one is free
He gains release.*

*To the known and unknown equalized;
differenceless to one's own
or that of others;
even to the name of such indifferent
From all considerations such, one freed
Himself -- becomes He, the one Released.*

Though the thoughts were simple, the more I pondered them, the more I realized that they represented a radical challenge to all of society's conventions and socializing processes. But the challenge is in the form of an inner transformation, not as an attack from without. I was deeply drawn to the freedom they

pointed to. The epitome of that lifestyle was described in a work which Narayana Guru wrote after visiting Ramana Maharshi. Entitled *The Way of the Recluse*, it is equally an apt description of Narayana Guru's life style as it is of Maharshi's.

*For the hermit whose
attachments are gone,
His arm, makes it not for him a pillow?
The earth whereon his footsteps fall
gaining sin-dispelling power,
makes it not for him a couch?
For such as he, what use of goods here?
Ever merged as his mind is
in the verity of "That thou art,"
His bliss transcends inclusively
all forms of joy.*

*Desireless, as he is
for nothing ever asking,
Partaking of food
brought to him by chance
The body just to sustain,
From all cares free,
sleeping on the thoroughfare,
Ever immersed in the vision of the Self,
The hermit, attaining to the unity
of Life and Self-Supreme,
He comes to his own state, radiant--
everlasting, of Being-Knowing-Joy.*

Each of these verses was like a seed crystal planted within me which, as time went on, grew into many dimensions of understanding of Narayana Guru's very remarkable yet very simple life, his unique form of social activism and his comprehensive philosophical and psychological teachings. The wonder of Narayana Guru is that, even in this organization bearing his name, founded and perpetuated in dedication to what he represents, the individual human being is consistently effaced into the universal principle of Guru -- Light--Dispeller of Darkness. He is like the air we breathe, the ocean we swim in, the solid earth under our feet. In this, his birthday month, we wish to inaugurate a two-issue series which focuses in on his life, teachings and impact.

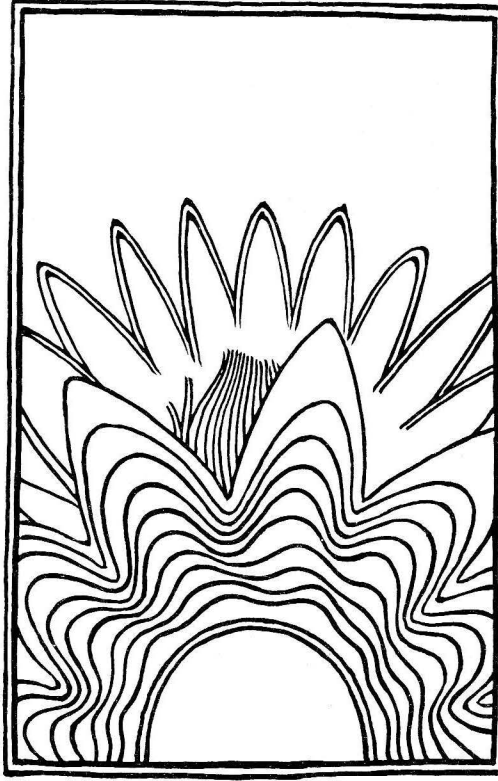
Nancy Yeilding

Svānubhavagīti Śatakam:

Experiential Aesthetics and Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



Verse 48

Oh High Tide which blows across from beyond,
devoid of the articulated Word and its conceptual intent,
does it make the ocean scanty
if a few drops are taken to moisten a parched tongue?

To announce the coming of another day the orient sky only blushes and does not articulate in words. The coming of the day proclaimed in silence is immediately apprehended by one and all. Like an errand boy, the breeze enters flower gardens and fondly embraces all the blooming flowers. When it is time for the sun to rise, he just appears from behind a hill holding absolute silence. Even though the sun is several times bigger than the earth and it is all aflame, it does not make even as much hum as a bumblebee when it comes. As the sun rises into the sky and reveals the blue-green beauty of earth more fully, he becomes more and more bright. The flowers which receive the first rays of the morning sun open their petals with a bewitching smile. But they do not burst into noisy laughter.

Such is the directive the Lord gives to the world without articulating words with conceptual meanings. This cosmic dance being staged with a silent word of the Supreme has no need to have dialogues or any language device. Without a spoken word every item involved in it knows its place and plays its relevant role as if fully instructed.

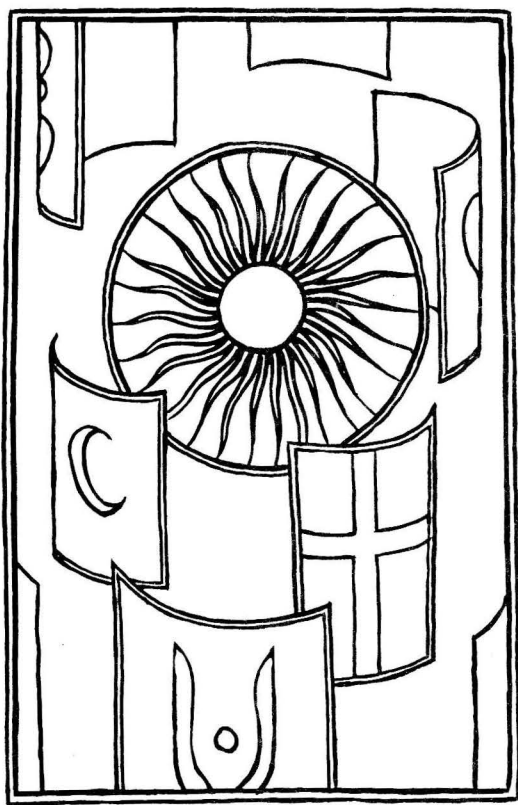
When we raise our eyes and look to far-off stars it may appear that this universe is immensely vast. But after all, what we see is only a flickering of light in the retina, and therefore everything that is visible can be looked upon as a wave of illumination. What is the ocean to which this wave belongs? This wave is not roused by the winds of *maya*. It's a tide coming from the sea of divine love and compassion. The loving care of it can be seen everywhere. For a lotus blooming in a pond, the sun is in the sky with the energizing touch of its fond affection. The bumblebee moves around the petals and tickles the lotus flower. Sweet honey is kept hidden in the flower for the bumblebee. Thus there is no dearth of mutual understanding and love.

Yet there is some paradox lurking in the heart of all this to create confusion and disturbance. If someone falls into the deep of the elixir of immortality, will he die if he does not know how to swim? Man is a rare fish born in the water, living in water, and swimming with water above and water below him, and yet he is always thirsty. He is born of *satcitānanda*, the blissful substantiality of supreme existence, and yet when such a soul is appended to a body, it is always afraid of being wiped out of existence. It is as if he has entered into the wilderness of a desert and has become thirsty for a single drop of water. It is for that water he craves and prays.

To whom does he pray? To whom else than the high tide of divine love? When the Lord is infinitely larger than any ocean on earth, will it be too much to take a cupful of water from it? If a drop of water is taken from the ocean and smeared on the lips to moisten them, will the ocean become poorer for that?

Verse 49

For crossing over, the scripture you seek
can be considered defective.
There is no perfection.
Does not the Lord know all these secrets?



In this verse the word given as a synonym for scripture is *māra*. *Māra* is commonly used both in Tamil and Malayalam to mean the Veda or scripture. Both in Tamil and Malayalam the term *māra* has two meanings. One meaning is "concealing veil." The second meaning is "the wisdom text that reveals a hidden truth."

All living beings are always in search. The hidden, the unknown, is a challenge. It is as if everything is covered up by a veil of ignorance. Even when one veil is removed there are a hundred others sitting around the truth thus revealed. When a hundred hidden entities are revealed, a thousand are waiting in the dark for revelation. Nobody can claim that all veils are sundered. Going in search is like navigating from one shore to an unknown shore. Even when the other shore is reached, there is another land yet to be discovered. Beyond that land there are other oceans to cross.

There are two Vedas to enlighten man. One is the revelation that is being continuously given by nature around us. When the sun appears in the sky, there is no need for another to reveal the sun. When a person is hungry or thirsty, he is not in need of another to reveal his hunger. Thus most of our knowledge comes to us spontaneously through the channels of perception. That is why Cattambi Swami called this world the only Veda there is which is not monitored by any human author. That is not a Veda for chanting. It is beginningless and endless.

No one knows everything that nature presents to him or her. Even though there are billions of activities going on in our bodies, we do not know even a small percentage of them. It's true that once in a while

a surgeon who opens another's abdomen or chest sees another person's kidney or spleen or heart or liver. But even that surgeon does not know how many such faculties are wrapped up in mystery and kept hidden in his interior.

In spite of all this fragmentation of knowledge, man has been keeping records of whatever he has seen and heard for thousands of years. His articles of faith are pinned to those records. Some of these are extolled as of the status of infallible scriptures revealed by God. Israelis, Huns, Romans, and Persians all make such claims. In exaggerating the claim, the Hindus excel all. The dictates of their Vedas are beginningless and endless and are revealed by the Veda himself. Although the Veda is said to be self-revealed, in the Vedic text we see the mention of the names of rishis who have sung most of the cantos. The prophets of the *Old Testament* were supposed to have direct hot-lines with God. Yahweh appeared to them not only to instruct but also to warn, chasten and give diabolical threats. The claim of revelation is even more aggressively made in the *New Testament*. God sent His only begotten son to reveal His intentions to man. But the Muslims say that God was never born and has never begotten children. He appointed only prophets and the last and most faithful messenger was Mohammed. This claim is challenged by the Ahmadiya sect. Chinese denounce the claims of all, saying that centuries ago they were the only civilized people and all others were barbarian, so the key of wisdom lies in the Chinese hand.

Each man claims, "My religion is the only true religion. Yours is defective." Narayana Guru in the *Ātmopadesa Śataka* says:

One faith is despicable to another;
The *karu* (core) described in one
is defective in another's estimation;
In the world the secret of this is one alone;
Know that confusion prevails until it is known to be thus.

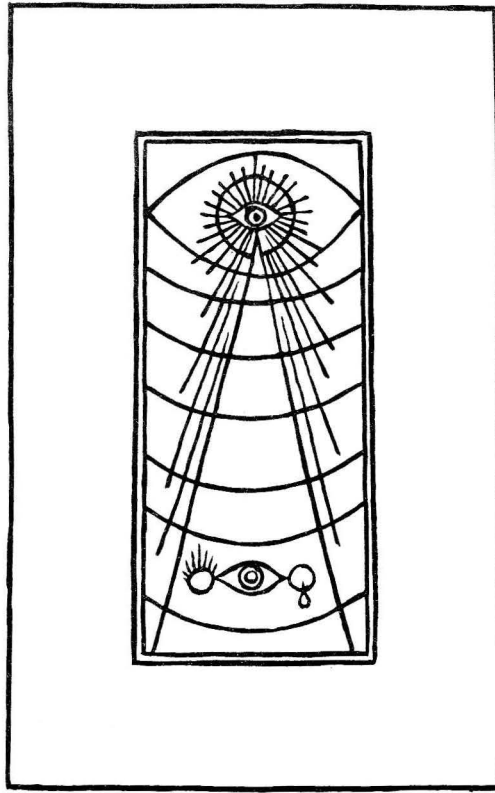
-- Verse 45

In the name of this despicability people have been killing each other all over the world for thousands of years.

The totality of being is conceived in the fragmentary mind of an individual. No one knows how great or variegated the Absolute is. The part can never conceive the whole. Whatever conclusion a person arrives at will still be defective. Absolute truth is a conception at best. Only the plenum can know the plenum. Infinite are the possibilities. Finite are the probabilities. Even much less are the actualized. Therefore all agencies of revelation, whether natural or discovered by man, are only meagre. God alone knows His secrets.

Verse 50

The way is seen when everything goes into aloneness
and all disappear in oblivion,
O Great Name that is called upon, having gone into fullness
in the company of saints like Seneca.



In every atom of this body there is embedded the conditioning of the past which causes the dual behavioral pattern of being attracted to certain stimuli and repelled from certain others. A sound that is heard can turn out to be a meaningful symbol that can evoke a chain of memories. That which is seen only for a flickering moment can rake up in the mind a thousand doubts. A word can generate hope or frustration. Life can be full of doubts. Even the dearest person can be suspected. Thus all relationships in life are held together with the links of memory.

Attraction and repulsion are the two main bonds which tie a person to his or her post. Loveful sentiments make a person responsible and obligated to many. If the sentiments are exaggerated one may also become too confused to take any sensible decision. When one hates, he loses even his living space. The horizon of hatred can cave in from all sides and smother oneself. There is a limit to the carrying of one's burdens. One can put up with much pain, but even that cannot be endured always. There come crossroads in life when one is obliged to break all ties and throw away all burdens. Life is complicated by adding confusion to confusion. When the thread of a pearl necklace is broken all the pearls may come off. Even so, one cannot predict one's own integrity.

The true nature of the self is to live in freedom, and as social obligations and expectations increase, one may become obliged to say "My life is mine and your life is yours." Narayana Guru in the thirteenth verse of *Ātmopadeśa Śataka* gives an instruction which is far superior to the Existential Prayer of Fritz Perls. The Existential Prayer says:

I do my thing, and you do your thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations
and you are not in this world to live up to mine.
You are you and I am I,
and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.
If not, it can't be helped.

The alternative given by Narayana Guru is:

Having offered the flower of your mind to that Lord
smeared with sacred ashes of the three gunas,
having cooled down the senses, unwound everything,
and become calm,
when even the glory of aloneness has gone,
become established in *mahas* (the boundless source of creation).

--Verse 13

Even when a person is in a state of bondage, there is enough discretion to conduct oneself in the right manner which a transactional situation would deem one to adhere to. For example when a person is driving a car, he conducts himself by looking into a small mirror placed in front of him. In the mirror he sees the image of whatever is happening to the rear of the car. Thus by looking forward, he understands what is in the rear. Similarly by looking into the weird interactions of people, one has to regulate ones relationship with others.

Life is streaming into us with all kinds of hallucinatory provocations. Out of them we have to distill what is right before us. It is with the normative notion of truth one also distinguishes untruth. Mind seeks the pleasurable because the Self (*ātman*) is basically of the nature of unalloyed joy. But when one knows that the love object is only mirroring what is truly abiding in the Self, confusion arising out of the external leaves one. By tasting a drop of water taken from one ocean, one gets an insight into the taste of all oceans. One need not go from sea to sea and examine all the seven seas. Once you know how a human mind is attracted and repelled, you will become wise enough not to make an exception of anyone.

This world is not coming to our sight little by little. It is presented all at once. In the *Darśana Māla* Narayana Guru describes it as "instantaneous creation." Dissolution also comes in the same manner. When you realize that what was taken for a snake is only a rope, it does not take any time for the snake to crawl out of the rope and glide into a nearby bush. It just disappears. It is not by knowing $2 + 2 = 2 \frac{1}{2}$, $2 + 2 = 3$, and $2 + 2 = 3 \frac{1}{2}$ that you come to the knowledge $2 + 2 = 4$. Realization does not come as a result of searching in many places nor probing for a long time. It comes all at once. In this verse that path is praised which can bring you to the supreme vision of the only One, upon knowing which there is nothing more to be known.

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the light and the goal." It is different from the way, the light and the goal understood in a relativistic manner. In the relativistic world light has to come from some source to illuminate a path and one has to walk a long time to arrive at the goal. That is not the way which Jesus speaks of. There is no separation in

his vision of the light that illuminates the path from the path that is to be taken. By entering the path you already arrive at your goal. After knowing that you are the very Self that you seek, you don't need any light other than your knowledge. That knowledge is at once your path and your realization.

In this verse a word of confirmation is sought from those who know regarding where you have arrived and what you have accomplished. Actually nobody is bound. There is no one to seek freedom. It is as if a free person is dreaming that he is bound and in prison. One word of the Guru is enough to rouse the sleeping person. The dictum "That Thou Art" is such a word. Upon hearing that, one realizes that one is that Absolute. Thus the way that takes you to your goal of aloneness and the word of confirmation that comes from the wise are not two. A man can be in a fool's paradise and can think he is allright, but if his Guru also agrees then it may be a true paradise and not a fool's paradise. That is the word of confirmation spoken of here.

(Continued in next issue.)

That Thou Art

That Thou Art

That Thou Art

That Thou Art

That Thou Art

That Thou Art

That Thou Art

That Thou Art

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

III · 7

One lacking in understanding and of unpossessed volition and always impure, he does not attain the goal, and is caught in the phenomenal becoming.

III · 8

One of proper understanding and of possessed volition and always pure, he attains the goal whence one is not born again.

The teaching of this Upaniṣad is centered around the problem, What happens after death? The answer to this perplexing question, given by Yama to Nachiketas, is a very long one. The problem was introduced in the first chapter, and in the second chapter, it was clarified. Also in the second chapter seekers underwent varying disciplines directed for one ultimate aim. That aim was described as the birthless and deathless state which

could be designated by the monosyllable *Aum*. It was also stated that a contemplative outlook and calm mind were requisites for the attainment of this goal.

The present chapter shows how the charioteering expedition of life is to be directed to attain this end. In *mantras* three and four we saw what the chariot was, who the master and charioteer were, what the horses were, and what the rein was. The last two *mantras* have shown how to drive the chariot properly.

The present two *mantras* show what will happen to the ill-driven and well-driven chariots. The ill-driven one will not reach its goal, and a journey with no final end in view will always be one of changing over flickeringly from one object of transient interest to another. This kind of changing over is called *samsāra* in Sanskrit. The state of the Self, of this kind of changing over in the phenomenal becoming, is termed *samsāra*; the word *samsāra* thus becomes a synonym for the worldly life of repeated birth and death.

Such an aimless travel is always tragic, so *samsāra* is used even as a synonym for the misery found in life.

Yet the same life would always be an experience of unbroken happiness if the chariot were well-directed with a goal always in mind and with the help of a charioteer who knows how to rein the horses properly. Such an unbroken happiness of driving - in other words, of the means - renders the happiness attainable as the goal, of the end, indistinguishable from it. This happiness where the ends and means are indistinguishable is the ultimate aim of *moksha* meant by the

seers of the Upaniṣads. There is no duality of joy and suffering in that happiness. All the joys and sufferings of life are only different facets of the supreme happiness or the Self. Birth and death are unknown here: one who attains this happiness never comes back to the phenomenal world of birth. One who is never born never dies either. In other words, phenomenal birth and death never happen to be realities for him who attains this state but are only alternating states that take place in the birthless and deathless Reality. Our question is about the state after death: where there is no death there is no after- death.

III - 9

*The man who has
discriminative
understanding for the
charioteer and volition
for his rein - he
reaches the end of the
track, that supreme
abode of Viṣṇu*

What is specifically mentioned in this *mantra* is that the destination of the life chariot, after traversing the entire track, is the supreme abode of Viṣṇu. In the Hindu pantheon Viṣṇu is the god of sustenance, and the word *viṣṇu* means that which is expansive in nature or that which has pervaded everywhere. That which is everywhere has no differentiation between the track traversed and the end reached. That means that state beyond the duality of ends and means.

We always work hard to gain knowledge. When the knowledge sought is gained, we realize that the effort that we had been making was in knowledge itself. Here the end becomes the means. Thus the knowledge which is beyond the differentiation of ends and means, beyond

the conditioning of time and space, is to be understood as the supreme abode of Viṣṇu.

III - 10

*Superior to the senses are
their objects; superior to
the objects is the mind;
superior to the mind is
the intellect; superior
to the intellect is the
Self, the great.*

III - 11

*Superior to the great is
the avyākta (the
unindividuated or
the unmanifested);
superior to the
avyākta is the
Person (*puruṣa*);
superior to the
Person none there is;
that is the destination,
that is the final refuge.*

It was stated in the last *mantra* that the final destination of the charioteering expedition of life is the abode of Viṣṇu. It has also been made clear how to arrange the expedition, who should arrange it, and who should rein in the chariot to reach the destination. Leaving aside the analogy of the chariot, the present two *mantras* state the same in terms of the Samkhyan philosophy.

Though the Samkhyan system is only one among the six systems of Indian

philosophy, the methodology and terminology of this system have crept into almost all the other systems. Though Vedanta does not approve of the duality of *prakriti* and *puruṣa*, nature and spirit, of the Samkhyans, it had to seek the help of Samkhyan terminology, and to a certain extent methodology also, to present Vedanta as a comprehensive system of thought and to explain the cosmogony and cosmology acceptable to that system.

The Samkhyan doctrine claims that there are two truths, *prakriti* and *puruṣa*, nature and spirit. *Prakriti* is also called *pradhāna*, that which subsumes everything in it, and *avyākta*, the undivided or the unmanifested. For the Samkhyans, *prakriti* means the material cause of the entire physical universe. It is indestructible, beginningless, indivisible and limbless. It can only be inferred from its effects. Along with *prakriti* is the other truth, namely *puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* is the animating spirit in every living being. *Prakriti* cannot exist without *puruṣa* and *puruṣa* cannot exist without *prakriti*. This union of *prakriti* and *puruṣa* is beginningless and endless. Their interdependence is often compared to a lame man travelling on the shoulders of a blind man. The entire physical universe is the result of this eternal union of *prakriti* and *puruṣa*. The three *gunas* or modalities inherent in *prakriti* cause the incessant changes and evolution happening to the visible world. Samkhyans have enumerated twenty-four categories as evolution of the *prakriti*. It is because of this enumeration that the system is called Samkhya, *samkhya* meaning number. With *puruṣa* as the twenty-fifth, the Samkhyan system accepts twenty-five categories or *tattovas*.

Though Vedanta does not subscribe to the doctrine of two truths, the Samkhyan concept of *prakriti* is adopted by Vedantins to explain the nature of *māya* and to show how it causes the phenomenality of the world. Instead of considering *puruṣa* and *prakriti* as two truths and *prakriti* as having twenty-four evolutionary categories from the most subtle to

the most gross, Vedantins visualize *prakriti* as having an ascending order of aspects beginning from the most gross to the most subtle, and *puruṣa* as that which is above and beyond *prakriti*. With them, *puruṣa* and *brahman* are not two. Here we see the Vedantins accepting the Samkhyan methodology after revising it to go with the doctrine of nonduality. This revision of Samkhyan methodology by Vedantins is very clearly seen in the Bhagavad Gita in such stanzas as:

*It is taught that the senses are beyond;
beyond the senses is the mind;
beyond the mind is reason; and
beyond reason is He.* (III: 42)

This could be cited as an example of the above-mentioned revision, as could *mantras* ten and eleven of the this Upanisad.

Here all the twenty-four evolutions of *prakriti* of the Samkhyan system are not enumerated but all the important stages of evolution understandable to the common man are touched upon. *Puruṣa* is introduced as the last stage in the ascending order. The *puruṣa* of the Samkhyan system and the *puruṣa* mentioned here have a fundamental difference, i.e., with the Samkhyans *puruṣas* are as many as the number of living beings, but for the Vedantins the *puruṣa* is only one which is none other than the Absolute Self.

The gradation of superiority mentioned here is not to be taken to mean that any of these categories has an existential superiority over another. Here the superiority is to be understood as relevant to the chapter, and as such that which is nearer to the final goal and more helpful to attain it is to be considered superior. In order that the life expedition should reach its destination, our interest has to turn from the subtle, as indicated in the second chapter, and finally we should see ourselves as the most interior Self.

The next *mantra* states that this witnessing Self is not seated anywhere else, but it is the mysterious meaning and content existing in and as all beings.

(Continued in next issue.)

When You Rattle Your World

*So what has happened to your golden dreams?
Rusted?*

Or have you just traded them all away?

So what has happened to the pretty, pretty child?

Has your heart darkened?

Oh... and what of your peace?

You are so disturbed.

And what have the thieves taken from you?

Look! There, behind you.

There's your beauty.

There's your softness.

Can you turn back?

What? what do you see through your darkened eyes?

What day?

*Why does your imprisoned light yearn to dance
again so soon?*

Will it not just enter another dualism?

Look again - no - wait until the ripples fade away.

Look! See it? Wonderful isn't it?

Do you not feel foolish?

What have they taken? What have you lost?

There she walks away - what did you call her...Maya?

Well, let her not fool you again.

Just keep this knowledge of divinity.

Just keep it.

Chippy Ajithan

The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sutra II:12

*kleśa mūlaḥ karmāśaya
dṛṣṭādrṣṭa janmavedanīyaḥ*

kleśa: obstacles

mūlaḥ: root causes

karmāśaya: reservoir of the
conditioned or processed
impressions of *karma*

dṛṣṭa: visible, present

adrṣṭa: invisible, future

janma: lives

vedanīyaḥ: appear

The root causes of the obstacles remain dormant as conditioned or processed impressions in the *karmāśaya*. In an invisible or visible manner, (from the in-built propensities to act the obstacles) appear in this life or in another one.

Individuated human life is born of processed or cultured impressions. These impressions pass through several life forms before coming to the present life. They can be compared to the propagating power of seeds or to the genetic continuation of whatever culture these life forms have experienced. What is termed as *samskāra* (culture) closely resembles the Western notion of neuro-biologic conditioning. The dynamics of an instance of conditioning are based on the accompanying pain or pleasure. The general behavior of the various life forms which we see in nature are said to be guided by

natural instincts. In Sanskrit this is known as *prakṛtam*. When the same is sophisticated, refined, cultured, and presented in a manner acceptable to others, it is called *samskāra*, a refined outcome or sublimated end result. The ethos or cultivated behavior of a regional culture can appear quite refined to the people of a particular geographical area or religious context. But the yogis are not thinking of social norms which please some particular group. They set their goal of refinement on the model of the purest of the pure Self which is in no way contaminated by the physical, physiological, psychological and sociological requirements of an individuated life.

The conditioning to which we are subjected is not a few random incidents of life. Right from the structuring of the hydrogen atom to the complex structuring of the human bio-computer which decides our action/reaction patterns, we have a story of several millenia. Thus it looks impossible to regress in the stream of life to arrive at the original nature of the spirit which is only a triad of existence, subsistence and value significance. Considering the closely packed information bits with which a gene is equipped through ages, they all hardly get a chance to become operative in one lifetime. It is postulated that everything we bring with us in the form of latent potencies is not lived in its entirety in one lifetime. So we think of the psychophysical organism only as a conveying

vehicle that is given up when the life that is passing through it enters into another.

Like the momentum of a river decides the motion of the stream, the quality of causal factors of action decides how we act or react as the stream of our life flows over changing contours of time and space. What is thus channeled through each one of us as an incessant flow is to be looked upon as the *karmāśaya*, the most subtle medium through which actions can be perpetuated and precipitated. From the *karmāśaya* there comes the desire to enjoy and to avoid painful situations. A flowing river is always coming to a new situation, a new contour. Thus, there arises the need to choose the pattern of action that is most appropriate to a given situation. The choice and reaction can be clumsy or efficient. Thus, the personality formation and development are a direct outcome of the action-reaction dynamic which in turn gives expression to the innate propensities that are ever going through an endless process of evolution. It is as if our past is offering us the present and the future. The present is the only reality we live and our response to the here and now is the link between the past and the future. Thus *karmāśaya* not only gives us the incentive act in a certain manner but also decides the uniqueness of individual responsibility.

Exercise:

Write the hierarchy of values as it occurs in your mind. Then underline, with a colored pen or pencil if possible, the values which have great resemblance to your father's possible choices. With another color, mark the values which closely resemble your mother's choices. Underline the values which do not seem to be bright or praiseworthy. Mark the tendencies which are likely to lead you in the path of negativity and tragedy. Mark that which makes you conform to it obsessively with compulsion. By examining all this, conceive a value which you can adore as an inspiring goal to which you can return again and again.

Sutra II:13

*sati mūle tad vipāko
jātyāyur bhogāḥ*

sati mūle: as long as the root
cause is there

tad: it

vipākaḥ: must evolve and result
in the formation of

jāti: class

āyuh: which is programmed
for a certain duration

bhogāḥ: experiences (that naturally
pertain to such a class living
for a certain period
under certain circumstances)



As long as the root cause is there it must evolve and result in the formation of a class which is programmed for a certain duration, and it is sure to have experiences (that naturally pertain to such a class living for a certain period under certain circumstances).

In this sutra, *karma* is to be understood in both its broad and precise senses. It is the action which decides the kind to which the organism has to conform. It's again the same *karma* that has to decide for what period the organism has to function in a certain manner. Again, as action is always value motivated, it decides for how long by interacting with what agency the individuated person has to experience which kind of value ensembles.

From the simplest particle onward, there are organizations of classes or kinds. In Sanskrit, class is called *jāti*. To understand all the implications of this sutra, let us try to understand the evolutionary origin of classes. There are so many classes to which living beings belong. Humans are said to belong to the class of *homo sapiens*. In the world of chemistry, basic elements are said to belong to classes which have universal characteristics that are mainly determined by the number of electrons and protons which constitute an atom and the patternal arrangement of the atoms in a molecule. The atomic number and weight

of elements like hydrogen, helium, sodium and carbon are different so they belong to distinct classes. If *karma* is the cause of quantifying electrons and protons by which a certain class has come into manifestation, whose *karma* is that and from which agent do such actions come? What is the meaning to be assigned here to the word action (*karma*)?

Wheat, corn and beans belong to different classes. What kind of action has caused these special species? Humans, rhinoceroses and frogs all belong to different species. A species has homogeneity; class difference comes from heterogeneity. That is why Narayana Guru, in his work, *Jāti Mimāṃsa*, writes, "Within a species, is it not, that offspring truly breed? The community of man thus viewed, to a single caste belongs." Among human beings there are Aryans, Negroids, Mongoloids, Caucasians, and even among them, other sub-species can be seen because of geographical and other differences. Among the blacks of Africa there are tiny figures, the pygmies, and the tall people of the East and the North. Among Aryans there are contemplative brahmins and aggressive Nazis. Even in the same family one man may be introspective while his own brother is a very outgoing extrovert.

When we analyze class on the basis of *karma*, we can see two incentives to act. One is that which marks the character



of an individual and the other is that person's allegiance to the clan or racial group or ethnic community to which he belongs. Also, historical, cultural and political ideologies decide group behavior. Geographic and climatic conditions can even affect with compulsion the gait and movement of a person when he or she walks. When snow is falling and cold winds are blowing, nobody can have a lazy, leisurely stroll down the streets of New York, London or Frankfurt. One has to walk with quick paces to keep the blood circulating and the body warm. In South India where the temperature is almost always very warm, one will get tired if one walks very fast. So it is even considered a virtue, especially for women, to move around like an elephant or wobble like a goose. Considering all this, in the Gita we read that even for great scholars the path of *karma* is difficult to discern. India is a country where even villages are divided in terms of caste. And yet, so far no scientific study has been properly conducted to discern what caste is and how, in spite of its irrationality, it has such a strong hold on the minds of people so that one cannot rid another of his or her prejudices.

Action and the experiencing of pain and pleasure are both value-oriented. For the realization of certain highly coveted values one needs a whole lifetime. A virus, on the other hand, does not have to retain its identity for a period longer than a few seconds. Once it gains entry into a living body, it automatically replicates in a fraction of a moment. Its action of replicating its class and being nourished by the host cell has a fleeting nature. For the functioning of such a being no voluntary deliberation is required. It can fully submit itself to automation. It has no questions, no cogitation and no memory recall. It is not the same for an oak tree. Immediately after sprouting from an acorn it cannot produce a similar acorn. It has to have years to grow into a mature tree, for branches to stretch in different directions and new acorns to come. Thus the *karma* of the oak is bound to be

complex. It has to function through many parts of the tree such as the root, leaf, bark, ascending and descending saps. For other species, symbiotic actions are required for the perpetuation of two species such as between a flowering plant and the insects which feed on its pollen and help it pollinate. The *karma* spoken of here thus has a wide range from the assemblage of particles to the highly organised and programmed action of a responsible member of a sophisticated community.

The duration spoken of in this sutra is not that of an organism's bodily existence but the unit of time required for an action to evolve from the first inception of a desire to the fruition of a programmed action in results. In certain species like man, there can be the concept of an action which stretches beyond the duration of a lifetime. In a historical action in which countless millions of people are involved, the development of a socio-economic and cultural action can stretch through several centuries. For instance, the revolution started by Lenin and others in Russia, even after passing through one third of a century, is only beginning to show some far-off goal which is to be reached by the entire community in which the death of the old, birth of the new and maturation of the young into new awakenings of consciousness are all part of one national action. Just as the continuous birth of many cells and death of many cells in a human body seldom affects the integrity of a whole person's identity, in group life also, while individual action is contributory to national action or universal action, the universal action has a decree to make with regard to the *modus operandi* of each individual's choice of his field and execution of his action.

The chance element which religious people recognize as grace or the providential factor is again something to reckon with. When one is fortunate to be grafted on the action programs, thought streams, value vision and goal orientation of a great person, such as Plato emerging as an inseparable continuator of Socrates or Marx revising and restating the political

philosophy and epistemological stand of Hegel, the quality of action which is so intertwined with the value significance of the goal chosen can completely transform even the personality make-up of a person who is brought to toe the program of a great visionary.

Vyasa gives an elaborate commentary to this sutra. If the cause for conflict resides as a dormant tendency in the *karmāśaya*, it will mature in the course of time. To abort that possibility, the nucleus of that cause should be squashed. If wheat or paddy rice are husked, they cannot germinate again. A fried seed also loses its potential to germinate. Such is the relationship between the potencies of impressions laid by previous actions and the conflicts that arise from the maturity of those impressions. Nescience, ego, attachment, hatred and infatuation should be carefully discerned and rendered impotent with the practice of opposing energy channelization.

Right knowledge is the means to destroy these negative forces. If that is not done, then these tendencies will assume three evolutionary forms of development. One is that the accumulated tendencies will get into relationship with each other through permutations and combinations and will assume the format of a fresh individuation which thereafter becomes the main mark of the class to which one belongs. The various tendencies that line up, one behind the other, to present through the organism will decide the period which is required for all the unfinished *karmas* to complete their sway in life. That decides the longevity of the individual. Also, the faculties that are to be developed by the organism are intrinsically connected with the experiences which the individual is expected to have. If there is nothing in a person which is drawing him or her to become a connoisseur of music, there will not be any incentive for him or her to develop a high sensibility in his or her listening power. In the same way, the variety of experiences to which one is to be eventually exposed can only happen through a

long period of organizational growth. These three kinds of formations and fruitions are called the three-fold maturation (*trivīpaka*). Vyasa recommends that we look into certain important questions that can be asked in connection with the three-fold maturation of the tendencies that are brought over from the previous life. First, does each *karma* necessitate a subsequent birth to work out all the details of that *karma*? Is it true that even one *karma* can precipitate many births? Do many *karmas* bring in their train several births or are we allowed to live the implications of several *karmas* in living one life?

Vyasa does not think that each *karma* requires a separate life. The urges to act, born of previous impressions (*vāsanās*), are not presented to the conscious mind and volition in any definite order. The priority of a certain *karma* to perform comes more as a reciprocal polarization between incipient memories and environmental factors which are conducive to the performance of the required action. There are also incipient memories which, when not given opportunities to actualize, wear out their potential and become defunct, unable to present again. A number of incipient memories belonging to different orders can be presented in the same life because the external world is presented to the individual in a kaleidoscopic manner and a variety of interests can meet with satisfaction as the individual goes from one context to another.

What matters is mainly the dynamics that find their inclusion in the causal body which is transferred from the present life to the next both as a witnessing principle of the entry of life into the sperm of the father and egg of the mother and as the architect of the manifesting embryo into its maturation. If multiple interests are already present and if they are seeded as separate package programs in the causal body (*linga śarīra*), it is possible that in the next life the person may have a schizophrenic personality which can be a simple split as in the case of a dual personality or a fragmentation

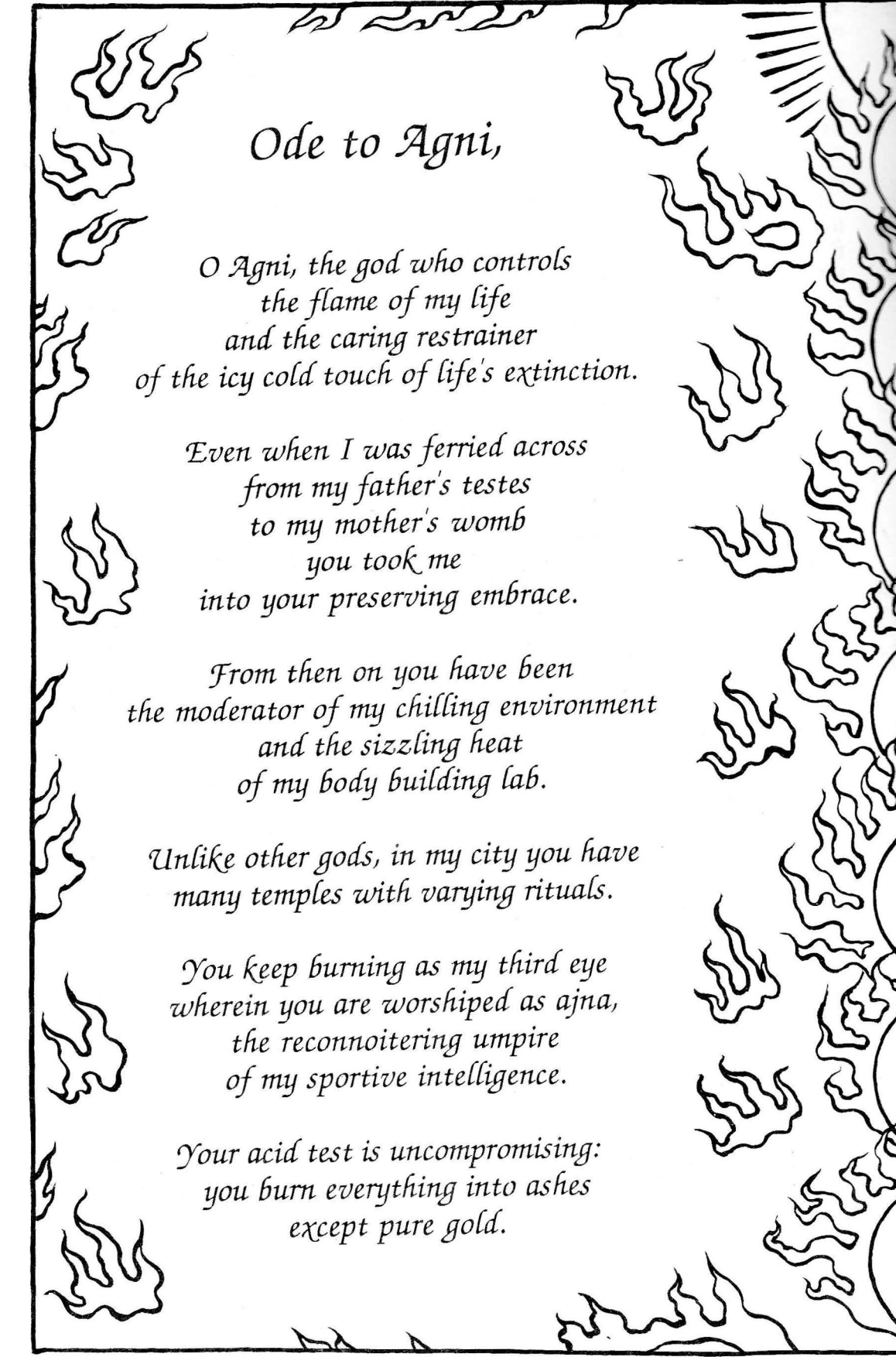
as seen in multiple personalities. In spite of the multiplicity of interests, if a person has a unifying principle which governs the whole being, one may develop the personality of a genius like Leonardo da Vinci and show several interests and talents where each is promotive of the other. Incipient memories, like biological genes, are the net products of several lives whereas the *karmāśaya* is the sum total of the mutations that have come into the personality development and evolution of a single lifetime.

There is no rule that all the potentials of causal consciousness should be lived and fructified in the same life just as all the genetic potentials which a per-

son has are not developed or lived during his or her lifetime. Death is the best of all purificatory disciplines imposed on every individual by nature. A number of half-attempted action programs and values of lukewarm interest are all nullified by death. It is like the night sleep which comes each twenty-four hours and wipes away most of the unprofitable memories and eradicates the toxic formations of several bio-chemical products in the body. Thus, *suṣupti* (deep sleep) and death are man's best friends to make him again and again fresh and replenished to return to the arena of life.

(Continued in next issue.)





Ode to Agni,

*O Agni, the god who controls
the flame of my life
and the caring restrainer
of the icy cold touch of life's extinction.*

*Even when I was ferried across
from my father's testes
to my mother's womb
you took me
into your preserving embrace.*

*From then on you have been
the moderator of my chilling environment
and the sizzling heat
of my body building lab.*

*Unlike other gods, in my city you have
many temples with varying rituals.*

*You keep burning as my third eye
wherein you are worshiped as ajna,
the reconnoitering umpire
of my sportive intelligence.*

*Your acid test is uncompromising:
you burn everything into ashes
except pure gold.*



My Soulmate

*In the secret chamber of my larynx
you keep the stash box of unarticulated alphabets
and spew my thoughts out of it
in effective words.*

*Your changing flames
dance to the tunes of my heart,
causing within me erotic chagrins
or musical delight.*

*Your smoldering volcano
is deep down in my genitals.
Although confusion reigns in that area
I am in adoration of you
because in my dreams
you play around glistening dew drops
and cause rainbows of changing colors.*

*O Agni, my soulmate,
you are my messenger to the sun.
I am beholden to you
for watching the birth of my thoughts
and the performance of my action.*

*You are my witness while I breathe
and my accompanying shadow
when I will ultimately vanish.*

Gee You Are You

Scott Teitsworth

In one way of looking at things, *Guru* is the name for the invisible, blissful force which guides us through our lives. One may have a greater or lesser personal relationship with this Factor, but despite our varying attitudes about its influence, it is constantly penetrating our life. Those with a theistic or exteriorized orientation tend to associate the Guru with a person, others see it as a benign form of energy, while many others merely take it for granted, carrying on as though they were the only ones "in charge" (triple pun intended). Some, like myself, choose D) All of the Above.

The Guru to me is a constant benign factor that appears throughout our lives in various guises, its existence inferrable from whatever tangible events are transpiring. Since most of the so-called tangibles involve interactions with other human beings, the Guru factor is readily associated with those people who have had the greatest influence upon us. Mother Nature, for example, may be a tremendous source of inspiration to me, but she does not deign to explain herself in the ideational terms that form the essential history of the personality. So I treat her more as a goddess--perhaps even as the manifestation of "the" Goddess--but not as a Guru concerned in some way with an individual person.

I'm not a particularly metaphysical person, but once when I assisted in the birth of a baby I very clearly "saw" a gigantic cupped hand bringing the child out to us, cradling it with utmost care and love. I understood that this hand would be there for her entire life as a directing impulse, guiding her through beautiful

times and ugly times, assuring meaning even when to every appearance there was none. During the semichaos of post partum I could feel the power of the hand but no longer see it, and later still it was no longer sensible at all. But I knew it was there. When I conceive of the Guru in concrete terms, this is the image I return to most frequently.

I don't agree with Andy Warhol that each of us is famous for fifteen minutes sometime in our life, but each of us does get a really big hand.

I suppose it is my prejudice that associates the Guru especially with the most beneficial and positive effects, instead of with the entire course of the incarnation. After all, the hand is there to guide us through all of our existence, and is in no way absent during our follies. Yet how many of us cripple ourselves spiritually by giving the Divine credit for all the plusses, while taking full responsibility for the negatives upon ourselves? I know I tilt the Balance Sheet that way all the time. It must be a deeply ingrained hangover of our religious culture disguised as Right Thinking. Yet when I contemplate the meaning of the Guru clearly, the question of credit (and its corollary, guilt) dissolves into nothingness. It is a unitive relation we have, the Guru and I.

Since the immaterial Guru is only perceptible through its effects, perhaps I should review a few of the most significant changes: points where the Guru principle helped produce the greatest amount of growth.

Like everyone else, I suppose, the Guru was first manifested to me in the guise of my parents. I received a good grounding

in unconditional love, which has stayed with me all along. I was also asked many unanswerable questions in the liberal mold (what is beyond the universe? what was before the past and after the future? etc.), which stimulated some rather oceanic contemplation in my young mind. And I was trained as a liberal, which was an important part of pre-television America: all beings are created equal, skin color doesn't matter, don't take anything on faith but find out for yourself, and so on. Even though much of this was in the form of platitudes, it went deeply into my psyche and was taken very much to heart. It could only have been the Guru who passed these koans on to me through the medium of my unsuspecting parents.

On the negative side, my father could have written the book on how not to raise children. Unthinking obedience to authority, right or wrong, was paramount. Moralisms were not explained, they were true "because we said so." Behavior modification was from the manual *How to Train Your Dog*, by Dale Carnegie. A friend recently showed me a book on the psychology of parenting, which contained a list of what not to do to your children. I burst out laughing: *every* item on the list was gospel in my household. Traditional parenting is virtually the perfect recipe for producing neurotic adults with no self-esteem and no ability to realize their potential. This aspect of the Guru has had the most profound effect on me of anything, I suppose. Its given me problems enough to work on for a lifetime--the gift that keeps on giving.

All through school the Guru stimulated me to ponder the human condition. There was so much petty injustice, so much meanness, so much cynicism! I was very frequently beaten, insulted and intimidated. And while I was not always kind to others, kindness seemed to me such an important value to have and to practice. At about age 14, I began to seriously think about the meaning of existence, and to strive mightily to understand all the conflicts being waged within and between people. Having no relig-

ious training at all, I had no recourse to any ready-made answers. I was totally on my own, digging down to a foundation I didn't even know existed. I am very grateful that I never had the option to accept a pseudo-solution based on any religious or philosophical system, but could only go it alone. This rather miserable period dramatically increased my independence and self-reliance.

Late in my teen years the Guru squeezed itself into a tiny drop of LSD, and eradicated a lot of confusion in the twinkling of an Eye. I saw directly the substratum of existence as love in the form of light. I understood the meaning of my life, with all its vicissitudes, and could clearly see the geometry involved with convoluted and linear thinking. So many doubts were overwhelmed with bliss! After wandering far and wide, I had come home to myself. This provided the impetus for all my adult life, and it would be foolish for me to give it less than the full value as the most significant single event I have experienced.

Soon afterwards, still feeling rather disjunct from the world, my future wife and always Guru, Deborah Buchanan, and I launched ourselves towards a rendezvous with Swami Nitya in Portland, USA. The meeting was "accidental" and extremely fortuitous. Here was a guy who had so much of the Guru infusing him that someday people would call him one himself! We had a brief fling as Guru and disciple at the Overton Gurukula in Portland, which gave me years of work to do and gave him an upset stomach. But mostly I hung out on the sidelines and listened to the wisdom pouring out of him. It was all wonderful stuff, and best of all, it made sense. Finally someone who knew what he was talking about! And someone who lived what he taught, rather than treating it as a kind of academic exercise to be hypocritically laughed off in private. What I learned in those classes kept me from many blind alleys and led me out of as many others, for which I am eternally grateful.

One day as I was chauffeuring the

Swami around in my Volkswagen, he said to me, "meditation is not just sitting somewhere with the eyes turned up, it can be anything you do. Music, for instance, is an ideal way of meditation." The Guru was speaking to something long dormant in me, my intense love of playing the piano. The person squeezed into the little car could have no way of knowing of my musical interests, but the Guru guiding us certainly knew. For many years I had considered attaining realization through traditional yoga practices to be my sole motivation in life, and music had been dumped in a heap with so much of the other worldly junk I was abandoning. In a short time, though, I was ecstatically involved with the piano again, learning from the profundities of the Masters of composition just as I was learning from the Masters of Oriental philosophy. Music was then and there restored as a major theme in my life.

My intellect was another thing I was trying to abandon in favor of a hypothetical spirituality that was to be unencumbered by it. Obviously, my steps carried me to the wrong Guru in this regard! Right from the start my intellect was being strongly challenged to wake up and get to work. But it was many years before I fully signed on to that program. In America, intellect and spirit are to be kept as separate as church and state. Even highly intelligent Americans snub Vedanta philosophy as "too intellectual" to be spiritual. So they willingly give up thinking for themselves. The Christian Church eats those people for lunch, with barely a burp. "Climb aboard the salvation bus, and leave the driving to us!" Although I exhibited the classic schism, I certainly was not going to relinquish my birthright to some wowser dingbat, and that's a fact.

Guru Deborah has been helping me through all my adulthood. Her impetus has been to overcome the neuroses of childhood and to avoid becoming complacent or satisfied in a static way. All spouses do this for each other, but she has a special ability here, too. And she loves

her work. Early in our relationship she sensed my defeatist attitudes and attacked them ferociously, which was really the only way to get through my excellent defense mechanisms. Reluctantly, I developed a modicum of self-respect. She is always on hand to challenge any assumptions, to dump me out of the easy chair of complacency, and to inspire me to be, if not the best I can be, at least passably tolerable. Most of the time, I really appreciate this aspect of the Guru, I really do. And I love her. That's a good way to relate to one's Spouse-Guru. All in all, I am chronically indebted to her for her help with my psyche, and chronically indebted from her liberal use of the credit card.

Looking back, it is amazing to me how much energy I have expended just to counteract a few of the typical misunderstandings I emerged from childhood with. They never seem to give up without a fight. That's because the protagonist invariably sides with his own foibles, and only his best friends and teachers will brave the storm to point out the error of his ways. Again, it was most often Deborah who took her Big Stick and her umbrella into my low pressure areas to present Guru-corrections to me, while others sensibly ran for cover. What a gal! I guess I should take her out to dinner pretty soon....

For all the sound and the fury, it looks like my path has been to painstakingly move some boulders out of the way so that I could just take a tentative step or two forward. My journey of a thousand miles has essentially been in one place. So much effort for so little! This is why I try my damndest to not block up the paths of other children. May their energies be better spent than mine have been! That is, unless rolling boulders is what we're really here for in the first place....

I remember one colossal rock that was lodged, not on my path, but directly on my head. Its name was Authority. Then one day it struck me (an insight, not the rock) that we invest authority in other people because we are taught to do so. Further-

more, only a few antisocial prigs and misfits think of themselves as authorities; the rest of us wander through life imagining that everyone else knows what's going on while we haven't a clue. In other words, authority is something we invest in the imaginary Other, and the hierarchy of power is merely a delusion with which we are enslaved and subordinated! The realization that we are all equally in the dark, as well as equally in the light, dissolved that boulder instantly. The relief was so great that I laughed for joy, and felt light-hearted for a long time. And I no longer fear those perennial muscle-flexes from the local martinets: hey, they're just jerks like me! Its amazing how the tension dissipates when one party doesn't play along in that game. This was the first time that a Vedantic renormalization was responsible for untying one of life's little knots for me. I could only imagine the Guru (personified) wiping his brow with a handkerchief in relief at my *finally* solving one of the more obvious of riddles.

This idea can be conceived as a dialectic synthesis. Society has been postulating rules and notions of authority for a very long time. The antithesis to this is rebellion in its various forms. Where there were strictures, now there are to be none. The rule is not to have rules, which breeds a kind of antiauthority authoritarianism in the name of freedom. Clearly, authority and rebellion are two sides of the same coin, with a similar range of moral implications and similar limitations on true freedom. But rejection of societal standards *per se* is not freedom, it is merely a negative relation to the same authoritarian system. The renormalized approach which strikes a dialectical balance between these allows the freedom to act outside of authority while preserving meaningful behavioral patterns based on the legitimate inclinations of the individual.

It was only recently, after much work on the rock pile of self-delusion, with a few more successes, that I met the Guru as personified in Nataraja Guru and Narayana

Guru. At least I met them through their written works and their ideas as interpreted by Guru Nitya. A couple of heavy dudes, it goes without saying. And they have had an increasingly powerful influence over my thinking, if not my decadent Western lifestyle.

Our initial meeting was not auspicious. In 1971, Nitya was giving an early morning class on *The Science of the Absolute* at the Overton Gurukula. The material was dense and the commentary even denser. I was the most dense. After only a few days, Nitya called me the quasi-polite equivalent of a brain-dead Bozo and threw me out of the class. So for years I nurtured a kind of stinging respect for Nataraja Guru as an extremely erudite man. Seven years later, we Sipa-Shisyas dived into an in-depth study of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, at Hall St., Portland, with somewhat better results. During this period, I mentioned my awe for Nataraja Guru's incomprehensible writings to a friend, who responded, "Yes, but Nancy was reading *Dialectical Methodology* the other day as if it was *Be Here Now*. She was laughing, even." So I figured it was time to try again. This time I waded through the Bhagavad Gita commentary, (admittedly one of the lighter works), and was rewarded with a tremendous amount of valuable insight, so much so that I have never since been able to enjoy *Be Here Now*.

The *Ātmopadeśa* class at Hall St. was also having a profound effect on me. Narayana Guru's inimitable verses were brought home to me through Nitya's penetrating commentaries. In particular, the center portion of the work dealing with *sama* and *anya*, the self and the other, was a powerful blow to the subtle forms of egotism still rampant in me. Again I was stung to the core, and again I resolved to root out those blind spots that were being so clearly pointed out to me. The overall effect of our intense involvement with the work was to bring Narayana Guru's theories of spirituality into the core of my being as a living presence, deepening my inner commitment to truth. I think that

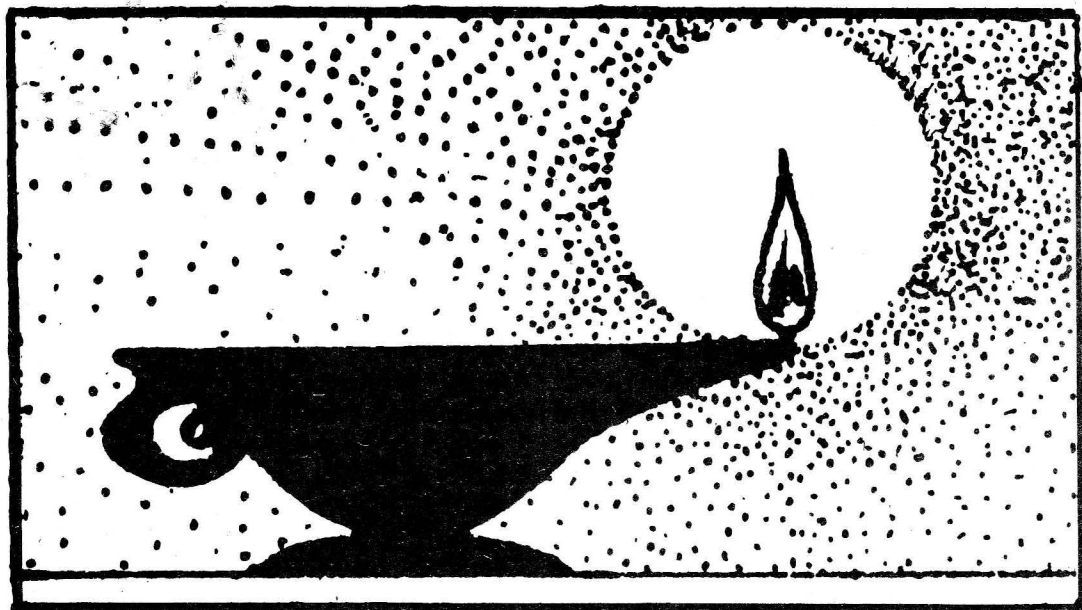
all of us who shared in that experience were profoundly affected.

During the mid-Eighties, I was privileged to do the final editing on Guru Nitya's commentary on Narayana Guru's *Darśana Mala*. This gave me the opportunity to study the work carefully, for one cannot make an editorial correction until he is confident that he understands exactly what is intended. While the process of editing was an important discipline in itself, and was extremely satisfying when done correctly, the opportunity to apprentice myself to the *Darśana Mala* was a tremendous experience. Through it I really began to understand what an incredible mind and incredible spirit were wedded in the person of Narayana Guru. And I finally came to see that the value of an intelligent appraisal was more than just su-

perficial, it was central to the renormalization I was undergoing. One of the most important themes in Nitya's commentary is the unitive basis of the apparently divergent elements of matter and spirit, of materialism and spirituality. The case made is airtight, the proof is there. I had to capitulate to reason. My intellect and my self, long rent asunder, were married to each other once again.

Well, maybe not married, exactly. Cohabiting would be more like it.

Inwardly I incline before the Guru, who has brought me so many blessings through so many wonderful people. And I incline before your Gurus, who do the same for you, and wear a new face for each and every one. For I know that these many Gurus are all one and the same principle. AUM. ♦



Narayana Guru's Dream of Consciousness

Muni Narayana Prasad

We, in our daily life, experience the alternating states of wakefulness, dreaming and deep sleep. Our life is an outward flow through the alternation of these states. We feel that our consciousness slowly slips into a dreaming state from wakefulness and from there to deep sleep.

Again it turns back to a dreaming state leading to full wakefulness. These three states are called *avasthatrāya* in the text books on Vedānta. In the wakeful state we are aware of the external objects of interest. In deep sleep we are unaware of anything; it is an unconscious experience of bliss, of the self merging in itself. In the dreaming state our mind creates a universe of enjoyment and then enjoys it. This dreaming could either be of the wakeful state or of the sleeping state. Poets and artists do their artistic work by creating a world of dreams while remaining in the wakeful state in the eyes of others.

One of the basic tenets of Vedānta is that *ātman* (Self) is consciousness in nature. For this reason a study of the altering states of consciousness is considered an easy way to understand the real nature of the Self, and as a result a study of the three states of consciousness find a respectable place in the traditional Vedāntic speculation. However, Narayana Guru takes an original approach to this matter. Guru presents his philosophy in his unique way in the work called *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* (*One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction*). Instead of the above-mentioned three states, only two states of consciousness find a place in Guru's book. At the beginning of the work,

verse five, Guru views with pity the state of life in which we are always interested in momentary objects in the the altering states of consciousness, which has wakefulness and deep sleep for its two extremes. Guru says that there is an invaluable lamp that witnesses all these altering states and that this lamp always has to be kept in mind as the ultimate norm. Evidently this alternation of states refers to the consciousness of the individual. Guru does not divide the functional states into three watertight compartments. Instead he visualizes it as an onward flow touching alternatively the two extremes of wakefulness and deep sleep. Any number of states could be assumed in between these two extremes. (The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* also recognizes states like *jagrat swapna*, wakeful dreaming and *swapna jagrat*, wakefulness in dreams, etcetera.) Narayana Guru ignores the dreaming state and mentions only the two extremes inbetween which consciousness always oscillates.

The word *ātma* (Self) is used in the works of Narayana Guru- and mostly in the Upaniṣads- not in the sense of soul, the animating principle or spirit existing in the body. Nor is it used in the sense of a universal spirit or soul. *Ātma* is understood as the neutral matrix in which what we understand as the specific and the universal, mind and matter, are fabricated. The three states of consciousness are apparently manifest in it. What is ultimately real is only the Self. The three states, the duality of mind and matter, the universal and the specific, are all ephemeral configurations appear-

ing in that matrix. That means the same Self abides in the specific and the generic aspects of consciousness. Hence, alternation of consciousness should also be occurring in both these aspects. In other words, the alternation taking place in the *elan vital* of the Self has necessarily to appear in the individual consciousness on the outside and in the universal consciousness on the other. But what we have a direct intuitive experience of is only the alternation taking place in our own individuated consciousness. Here, the Vedantins make use of it as a methodological device to have a proper understanding of the nature of the Self.

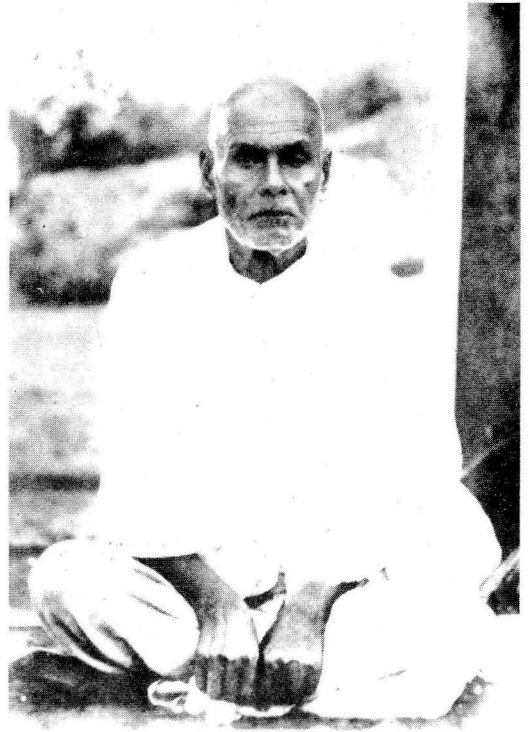
In the fifth stanza of *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* Narayana Guru says:

*In sleep the wakeful state
does not exist.
And in wakefulness
no trace of sleep remains.
Day by day, in this way,
these two having emerged
from the primal māyā woman,
arise and alternate.*

The first half of this stanza would seem to be related to the individual consciousness as we have the experience of the alternation of states in our daily life. But the context in which Guru mentions this is one in which he expounds how the one Reality, through its own inherent principle of *māyā*, creates this multifarious universe in itself. The latter half of the verse could be interpreted as denoting both the individual and the universal aspects of phenomenality. Hence the two states of wakefulness and deep sleep mentioned in the former half have to also be understood as referring to both the aspects, and the duality between them has to be transcended, treating them as the dialectical counterparts of a unitive context. The universal aspect of waking up is nothing but *prabhāva*, which means becoming or creation, and that of deep sleep is *pralāya* or final absorption or deluge or destruction of the universe.

Narayana Guru does not have any dislike for the concept of *swapna* or dream. But in his vision, it is to be accepted as a state: the entire phenomenality is an endless dream. What we call dream in our personal experience is the state in which the mind creates a world of its own and enjoys it. The same is the case of the phenomenal world as related to the Self. The Self creates the phenomenal world in itself and enjoys finding its own nature in it. Such is the philosophical vision the Guru represents in *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*. In the very next stanza, number six, the Guru depicts the dream-like status of the phenomenal world. He says:

*A long dream is this; like sleep,
this perishes every day.
in the same way, dream also;
the perishing intelligence does not see
what belongs to aloneness, and
hence is constantly confused.*



Narayana Guru

In other words, if dream is accepted as a state of consciousness, both wakefulness and deep sleep cease to be states and they become only the two extreme limits of the dream. In the wakeful state, one is fully aware of what one has created, while not knowing that it was one's own creation. In the deep sleep one is fully unaware of anything at all. Such is the nature of the stuff of consciousness which in itself is neither individual or universal. This vision is not peculiar to Narayana Guru. We see the same in the Upaniṣads as well. We quote here one passage as an example. It is from the Brihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, stanza 2.1.17. It says:

That Ajatasatou said, 'When this being fell asleep thus, then the person who consists of intelligence, vijñāna, having' by the intelligence of these breaths, rests in the space within the heart. When the person takes in these he is said to be in deep sleep. Then the breath is taken in, speech is taken in, the ear is taken in, mind is taken in.'

It would seem that what is denoted by this passage is the falling asleep of an individual when viewed with a mind which is already conditioned by the notion that the states always occur only in the consciousness of individuals. But the stanza which follows (2.1.20) categorically says that what emerges from this sleeping consciousness when awakened is the entire world:

As a spider emits its own web, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this Self come forth all the breaths, all worlds, all divinities, all beings. It's secret meaning is the Truth of truth. Vital breaths are the truth and there the truth is It (Self).

When these passages are read together we will not be in a position to say whether the consciousness that fell asleep and woke up was the individual one or the universal one.

The Maṇḍukya Upaniṣad is the only Upaniṣad which defines the four states of consciousness. Evidently it is individual consciousness that is analyzed there. But the ultimate goal of this analysis is not knowing the nature of individuated consciousness, but it is knowing the implied meaning of *Aum*. In the very beginning of the Upaniṣad, *Aum* is equated to the totality of existence, *sarvaṃ*, which is equated to *Brahman*, which in turn is equated to the Self. It is such a Self that is studied as having four *padas* or quarters. The word for state of consciousness in Sanskrit is *avastha* and the three states together are called *avasthatrāya*, that is, indivisible. Attaining the indivisible Reality, making use of the divisible appearances as a tool, is the uniqueness of the Vedantic way of thinking.

Narayana Guru wrote another work called *Darśana Māla* in which he follows more or less the traditional way of thinking. But when he comes to the treatment of the four states of wakefulness, dream, deep sleep and the fourth, *turiya*, instead of seeing them as states of consciousness, he presents them as four aspects of *bhāna*, functional manifestation of consciousness. He calls them *stula bhāna*, gross manifestation of consciousness, *sukṣhma bhāna*, subtle manifestation of consciousness, *karana bhāna*, causal manifestation of consciousness, and *tūrīya bhāna*, the fourth manifestation of consciousness. All these are superimposed on the unmanifest. What we can say about that unmanifest Truth is *tat sad* - that existence. Here the final goal is attaining the unmanifest which was superimposed upon. All the four *bhānas* or manifest forms of consciousness are used here only as a means for that attainment, and their value is only for serving as a methodological device. This also does not mean that these four are the only manifest forms of consciousness. There could be many. The real Self is that which remains as the Truth of truths, as indicated in the Maṇḍukya Upaniṣad. ❖

Biography of Narayana Guru

Nancy Yeilding

Nature Naturing

A golden flower of a green tree is framed against the background of a clear blue sky. Tops of coconut palms wave in gentle sea breezes, their shade offering respite from the sun which bakes the reddish earth into burning dust. Birds call from clumps of bushes at the sides of the paddy fields where the greens and golds of the growing rice make patterns of stripe and patchwork. Here and there are the figures of field workers, bending to the plants while they stand knee deep in the quiet water, or walking the narrow paths on the dikes between the fields. At the southern edge of the field stands a simple dwelling with thick mud walls and a roof of thatched palm leaves. Named *Vayalvaram* (the ridge of a paddy field), the old family home is part of a village known as Chempazhanty, near the city of Trivandrum in the tropical state of Kerala, South India. It is here that Narayana Guru was born in 1854. ¹

He was born on the third day of Onam, an ancient festival celebrated throughout Kerala. The festival revolves around the legend of the good King Mahabali. When Vamana, a dwarf, asked for the boon of all the land he could cover in three strides, the king readily granted it. Vamana was actually the god Visnu in disguise and his first two steps covered all of earth and all of heaven. In reverence and humility, King Mahabali offered his own head for the third stride. It is believed that he has had to dwell in the underworld ever since, but his goodness won him the boon of visiting his subjects once a year. The legend goes that he comes Onam morning and returns to the underworld two days

after, i.e., Catayam, which is the day of Narayana Guru's birth. The auspicious timing of the birth was highlighted by a baby who did not cry. The attendants, somewhat surprised and worried, examined the new baby, but found him healthy and breathing normally. ²

Narayana Guru's mother "was a sensitive and pretty woman known as Kutty. This simple name which means 'child', fitted the simplicity of her nature and social status. She just happened to be there, as if by nature's own conspiracy, and neither titles, sophistry, nor any extra embellishments of dress or ornament happened to be superposed on her. Nature had given her grace and kindness, which the son inherited, with wisdom. The sensibility of the Guru Narayana has to be acknowledged as drawn from this simple woman who gave him birth, and who in her quiet ways seemed to merge into the background of nature itself and seemed hardly to exist at all. Her personality did not make itself felt on the surroundings with any loudness or gaudiness. Neither trimmings nor frill were added to it. Her ancestry and that of her husband belonged to a simple human context." ³

His father was Kochuvilayil Madan Asan, or Madan Asan. *Asan* is a name of respect given to teachers or other men held high in the regard of their communities. Although Madan Asan was a farmer, his appellation indicates he was more than that. He came from an educated family and was well versed in Sanskrit, astronomy and Ayurvedic (traditional Indian) medicine. Besides helping his fellow villagers in matters of agriculture and revenue, he also would give them weekly expositions of the two an-

cient epics of India, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Māhābhārata*, when they gathered together on the veranda of his house.

Little Narayana (Nanu) was often said to resemble his mother's uncle, Kochan Asan, who, like Nanu's father, was a scholar and important member of the community. At that time, sacred books were inscribed on palm leaves. This was an art at which Kochan Asan excelled. He was also responsible for establishing the temple of Manakkal near the ancestral family home. This temple was supervised and used by members of both the Ezhava and Nair communities (considered to be different castes) who lived in harmony in that area for some time. Despite the rigid rules of the hierarchic theocracy which forbid temple access and privileges to most members of society, in this temple both Ezhavas and Nairs were free to worship and perform *pujas* (rituals of worship usually limited to members of the priestly "caste"). After some time, government authorities interfered and the tenuous harmony between the two groups broke apart under the pressures of caste prejudices and power struggles.



It was into such an atmosphere that Narayana Guru was born. Early stories from his childhood show us how he reacted. Those reactions demonstrate a finely tuned capacity to distinguish right from wrong, an ability to dismiss the unessential while holding on to the essential. A very lively and active child, he used to delight in eating the fruit and cakes intended as offerings to the deity in the *pujas*. When scolded for this, he would reply, "If I am pleased, God will also be pleased." Also, he loved playing with his younger sisters but would chide them for lying. 4

Nanu had two uncles on his mother's side, Raman Vaidyar and Krishnan Vaidyar. The name *vaidyar* indicates their scholarship and skill in Ayurvedic medical practice. Both of them were influential in their community. Krishnan Vaidyar played an important role in helping the Ezhava people come up in society. Both uncles, however, persisted in closed-minded and prejudicial attitudes towards groups they considered to be beneath them in society. They were meticulous in enforcing the vicious conventions of untouchability. Nanu delighted in showing the ridiculousness of such attitudes. At about the age of four or five, he had become very fond of one worker who was considered an untouchable by Nanu's family. Nanu was told that he would go blind if he touched him. He went running to hug the man, immediately proving the falsehood of such superstitions. He simply laughed at his relatives' shocked insistence that he perform the ritual of purification that they considered necessary to ward off blindness and other such dire effects of "caste pollution." 5

One day when Nanu was going to school with other village children, a *sannyasin* (wandering mendicant) with matted hair and ragged clothes was walking on the same country road. His unusual looks startled the children and they started to jeer and throw stones at him. He walked serenely on, as if unaware. When Nanu saw this, he started crying and left the other children to walk



after the *sannyasin*. When the *sannyasin* noticed Nanu walking behind him in tears, he turned to console the child and asked why he was crying. Nanu answered that it was because he couldn't stop the boys from throwing rocks at such a good man. Hearing this, the *sannyasin* lifted Nanu to his shoulders and carried him to his parents. He blessed Nanu and told them he would one day become a *ma-hātma* (great soul). ⁶ This incident foreshadowed hundreds of protests against injustice given by Narayana Guru during his life. It demonstrates the passive dynamism which was to characterize his way of bringing correction.

It is a custom in South India to formally initiate a child as a student when he or she is about three or four years old. The child's family approaches a renowned teacher with an offering of fruit, flowers, incense and rice arranged on a tray. The rice grains are spread out on the tray and the teacher guides the child's forefinger through the rice to write the letters 'A', 'U', and 'M'. These letters make up the mystical word *AUM*. This is followed by the mantra *Hari Śri Ganapataye Namaḥ* which invokes auspiciousness for any beginning. The child is initiated into the study of the alpha-

bet and thence into all knowledge in an atmosphere that is beautiful and wholesome.

At the same time, an astrological reading of the child's stars is often performed, as astrology has accompanied and guided every significant event in South Indian life for centuries. There is a story that when Nanu was initiated, the well-known astrologer who was asked to give his reading predicted that Nanu would become a great man worshipped by many. He also told Nanu's parents that they would be able to keep him only until he was sixteen. ⁷ In this connection, it is interesting to note that Nanu's mother died when he was sixteen. By that time he had already begun to spend time away from the family home and compose devotional hymns.

When he was six Nanu's grandmother died and the family showed their grief with frozen faces and the traditional outbursts of wailing and loud crying. A couple of days after the cremation Nanu disappeared. A search party was organized to look for him and he was found sitting in the forest lost in thought. When his family asked him about his behavior, he replied: "The other day there was a death. You were all crying so much

I thought you would be sorrowful forever. But the next day everyone was laughing and behaving as if nothing had happened. I felt so strange about it that I wanted to sit in the forest instead of staying in such a place." 8 In this we can see his turning away from the conventional patterns of social interaction, which prescribe the histrionic dramatization of grief about one's loss, followed by a complete lack of interest in gaining any profound understanding of life and death. His gesture came as a correction to behavior that was blindly motivated by relativistic concerns instead of being tuned to more universal values.

Nanu was first taught by his father, Madan Asan. Following the practice of that time, he was taught to write in the plentiful sand which blankets the ground under the tall coconut palms. He learned Malayalam, the language of Kerala (Tranvancore at that time). He also learned Tamil, another language of South India and one of the world's most ancient languages. 9 In addition, Nanu was given three Sanskrit texts to memorize: *Sidharupam*, *Balaprabodham* and *Amāra Koṣam*. 10 Sanskrit is the scholarly, non-living language in which many of the ancient philosophical texts and famous epics of India were written. For many centuries the study of Sanskrit was forbidden to anyone not considered to be of the brahmin or priestly class. This was carried to the barbaric extreme that a person considered to be of a lower caste who even accidentally heard or was believed to have heard the Vedas (ancient Indian scriptures) being chanted would have molten metal poured in his ears. The lust for power and the fear of losing their privileged position in society led the brahmanic groups to employ such inhumane methods of subjugation throughout much of India's history. Even though many such practices persisted in the time of Nanu's childhood, it was by then common for non-bramin boys of educated families to be taught to chant the verses of some famous Sanskrit treatises on literature or philosophy as Nanu was. It is likely

that he also received some instruction in Ayurvedic medicine and astrology from his father and uncles. Other than this, educational opportunities were meager.

Nanu spent most of the time outdoors, more in tune with the beauty and harmony of nature than with the crude life-patterns of the people around him. Personal hygiene was sorely lacking. Houses were often dark due to the lack of lighting and the smoke of cooking fires. The common practice of the time was for married children to live under the same roof with their parents and grandparents and often aunts, uncles and cousins, in large joint families. Though such extended families naturally created an atmosphere of mutual cooperation and support, they also formed a firm link in the network of society's bonds, breeding superstitious practices and unthinking conformity to self-destructive codes and traditions.

Nanu preferred the open skies and sunlight, the birds singing and flitting from bush to bush, the creepers entwining the shady trunks of the trees -- Nature in her purity and beauty. He had a vegetable garden which he tended with care, his own sensitive nature nourished by contact with the process of germination, growth and fruition. He dug a well by himself which was still being used for drinking water and irrigation at the end of his life. He planted bushes and trees around it to make it a lovely place. Many years later he recalled his love for that spot while speaking to one of his disciples.

His uncle would sometimes ask him to help with the plowing which he would willingly do, in his own unique way. Unwilling to ever beat the bulls or otherwise mistreat them, he would yoke them to the plow, then follow them wherever they chose to go instead of trying to force them. 11 We can see in such early stories the compassion that filled and guided him throughout his life and became a high-water mark of his teaching and example to others.

In song, dance and story, the legend of the divine cowherd boy, Kṛṣṇa, cele-



brates a theme of Indian life that has its roots in pre-history and continues to this day – the young boy wandering through the days of his youth in green fields, peacefully attuned to his gentle cows as they graze and sleep, languidly watching the flight of birds against the blue sky overhead, enjoying the shade and company of stately trees, happy in joining his exuberance with that of Nature. Nanu, too, passed his childhood and youth this way. His voice became his Kṛṣṇa's flute to express his growing sense of devotion and joy by chanting the Sanskrit verses he had memorized and singing hymns he himself had composed, the lyrics flowing from his own heart's grateful melting.

Culturing

After the death of his mother when he was sixteen years old, Nanu became increasingly detached from his family, although no less loving. He would often visit relatives in other towns. As he grew older, he studied the scriptures more and more deeply and adopted a life-pattern of devotion and contemplation. During this time, he continued his study of Tamil

and Sanskrit. It is not known if he had a Tamil teacher or picked it up from Tamil speakers in the area. He began absenting himself from home for weeks at a time, without saying where he was going or where he had been. He wandered through the countryside on foot, sometimes staying in the forest and living on nuts and fruit growing there. At other times he visited Trivandrum and begged in the town for his food. While there, he often frequented a Tamil bookstore where he spent hours reading and even minding the store in the owner's absence.¹² Later in life he would often quote the ancient Tamil scripture, *Tirukkural*, and other works, giving his listeners fresh and profound interpretations of the verses. He also started writing some poems in Tamil.

During these years, Nanu suffered an attack of small pox. As he didn't wish to endanger anyone else, he went to stay in a Bhagavati (Goddess) temple in Chempazhanty that was entered only on festival days. Though he had a high fever and became covered with sores, he continued his meditation and study. Many years later he told his disciples that he sat in a cashew nut tree on the temple grounds

and studied the poem *Vairogyol Pādakam* (Beginning of Detachment) by Mel-pathur Bhattathiri. 13 After eighteen days his fever abated and the danger of the illness had passed. He bathed and returned home. The family had been worried and his uncle, Krishnan Vaidyar, was very angry with him until Nanu told him what he had done and why. His uncle was happy that he was all right and impressed that the boy had stayed in the temple alone without fear.

Some time later, the same uncle, while walking in the fields, heard Nanu's voice coming from the foliage of a tree, singing a beautiful song. When it was over, he approached and asked Nanu from whom he had learned the hymn. Although Nanu was too shy to admit it, his uncle realized that Nanu had spontaneously composed the song. The uncle decided that Nanu should be given further education, especially in Sanskrit *kavya* (poetry). In 1877 he was sent to Karunagapalli to live with the family of Varanappally and study with Kummanpally Raman Pillai Asan Puthupally, a famous teacher in the area. There is a story that his father and uncle were planning to give Nanu some money as he started his trip to Karunagapalli but he stopped them, saying, "I don't think I need any money. Let the money be here. It is not good to part with me and the money at the same time." 14

The custom at that time was for wealthy families to honor worthy teachers. Not concerned with making money, these teachers freely shared their knowledge with ardent students, who were supported by the same generous families. The caste restrictions in force at the time prevented Nanu from living with the rich students in Cheruvannu house where the classes were held. However, he was taken in by the Varanappally family. They were well known for their generosity and guidance which enabled many young men from the poorer classes of society to receive a good education.

Raman Pillai Asan soon recognized Nanu's enthusiasm to learn. Nanu asked

his permission to attend the senior classes in addition to the beginning classes. The Asan asked; "How can you understand the senior class?" Nanu replied, "By your grace." Then Raman Pillai Asan chanted a Sanskrit verse and asked, "Do you understand?" Nanu again replied, "By your grace." Asan then gave the literal meaning of the verse and Nanu responded with the more profound implied meaning. The Asan cried, "You don't need to learn from me, but don't leave me!" He was deeply impressed by the boy's ability to grasp the hidden meanings of the Sanskrit classics. After this incident, the Asan would turn to Nanu for help when he was in doubt about the meaning of some phrase. Nataraja Guru explains this: "the secrets of the Vedantic and Upanishadic wisdom became an open book to him by sheer dint of his straightforward simplicity, his purity of life, and with his alert purposiveness of mental outlook and discipline." 15

In the evenings discussions would sometimes take place between the students, guests and family at the home where Nanu stayed. He would usually sit silent, only speaking when the head of the household, Kochu Krishna Panikkar, would ask him to resolve their questions. Nanu was held in great regard and affection by all, although some of his fellow students felt jealous at times and mocked him for his quiet and austere habits. He preferred being alone to joining in their diversions such as writing erotic poetry. His teacher instructed K.K. Panikkar to give Nanu facilities to live alone so he could peacefully follow his own course of study, meditation and self-discipline.

His studies with Raman Pillai Asan also continued and he learned Sanskrit grammar, logic, poetics and other literary topics. Although he was an excellent student, Nanu was rarely seen sitting over his books outside of class. He tended his teacher's cows and continued his old habit of studying, chanting and composing as he sat outside with the peaceful animals.

Traces of the Inner Path

Although he grew more and more erudite as a scholar, Nanu did not get entangled in merely intellectual disputes. His meditation opened up an inner world: mystical ecstasy filled him and overflowed as a sense of deep devotion. He wrote:

*Released from the mundane
worries of life,
the world re-absorbed in the Real,
the sweet melody of the eternal
world dissolved away in silence,
the curtain of māyā is raised,
revealing the celestial stage
where Kṛṣṇa of radiant blue hue,
glorious in his resplendent halo
and adorned with the
Koustabha jewel,
dances in divine celebration.*

(Translated by

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati) 16

Although this verse specifically refers to Kṛṣṇa, other early writings of Narayana Guru refer to other deities such as Siva and Vinayaka. He was not a devotee of any particular deity. Rather, these first works initiated a life-long pattern of re-valuing and universalizing the symbolism and devotional integrity of the entire pantheon of gods and goddesses.

A simple story of this time lucidly illustrates Nanu's already deep compassion for all beings. Each day he would

feed a little dog some of his rice. Very often a big dog would come and frighten away the little one and eat its food. Although Nanu was very sympathetic to the little dog, he did not try to stop the bullying of the big one by harming it or pushing it away. Instead, he would quietly say: "We are sorry. What can we do when its heart is evil?" 17

Just as it is often impossible for the seeker to articulate the inner ecstasies and sufferings that he or she is experiencing, it is even more difficult for another person to report on these inner happenings. Even were Narayana Guru's contemporaries of these early days still alive to report to us, they would be able to give us only approximate and external perceptions. But we can say from early accounts that Nanu did not indulge in exaggerated or excessive displays of emotions, and that, as he continued on his inner path with dedication and steadfastness, he grew in love and understanding. Before he left the Varnappally household, he asked his friend, Govinda Panikkar, to give him a small copper pot such as those usually carried by *sadhus* (wandering mendicants). When questioned about this, he replied: "I wish to sink down into this ocean of *samsāra* (ignorance) to collect pearls from the bottom and present them in this pot for the welfare of the world." 18

(Continued in next issue.)

NOTES

1. Kottukoyikkal Velayudhan, *Biography of Sree Narayana Guru*, (Quilon: S.N. Press, 1975).
2. Ibid.
3. Nataraja Guru, *Word of the Guru*, (India: Paico Publishing, 1952).
4. Velayudhan.
5. Kumaran Asan, *Biography of Narayana Guru*.
6. K.K.Panicker, *Sree Narayana Paramahamsan*.
7. Velayudhan, op.cit.
8. P. Parameswaran, *Narayana Guru, The Prophet of Renaissance* (New Delhi: Suruchi Sahitya, 1979).

9. Both Malayalam and Tamil have their origins in the languages of the Dravidian people who lived in India long before the advent of the Aryan peoples speaking languages of Indo-European origin which later evolved into Sanskrit.
10. Moorkoth Kumaran, *A Biography of Śrī Narayana Guru Swami* (Calicut: P.K. Brothers, 1971).
- 11, 12, 13, 14. Ibid.
15. Nataraja Guru, op.cit.
16. A member of the Varanapally family remembered this verse and chanted it many years later for Nataraja Guru and Guru Nitya when they visited Puthupally.
17. Velayudhan, op.cit.
18. Ibid.

East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



During the Narayana Gurukula-East West University Seminar/Camp in the month of August at the Portland Gurukula in Oregon and Island Gurukula Aranya in Washington, one of the focuses was on providing leadership for American children. Guru Nitya and Muni Narayana Prasad and friends from Singapore, Alabama, Indiana, Illinois, California, Oregon and Washington were present and the discussions included representatives of all ages from five to seventy. We wish to widen the participation to include all of our interested readers, as the following two letters explain. We also would like to make an *Especially for Children* column a regular feature of the magazine, which would feature children's own articles, poetry, and art, as well as contributions meant especially for them.

Friends:

In a recent dictation on dream, Guru spoke of the images formed in his youth, images from stories, parables and myths, and of saints and inspirational people, heard and learned at an early age which became the building blocks and icons that formed the archetypes of his dreams and eventually became part of his waking experience as well. In a conversation after

the dictation, he was asked what we could do as parents and friends to give our children such a foundation, to help them develop their own symbols and myth to define their dreams and develop a rich store for their experience. He was also asked how we might provide a climate for and an expression of the spiritual values that we hold most dear and want to share with our children.

From this conversation came several suggestions and Guru thought it would be a good idea to introduce this topic of conversation to the larger group and to get the input of the many friends that share the same concerns. As an introduction Guru brought up the questions asked and gave us the challenge of mutually creating cultural and spiritual guidance that would nourish the next generation. He brought up the fact that our culture in America is young and inclined to success in technology and production, but not particularly inclined to introspective understanding or a cultural history carried on through our elders and generations. He pointed out the necessity of realizing that our children are our greatest resource and of developing an understanding and sharing with them that will develop that potential.

Many ideas were brought up in that meeting that were exciting and useful. We write this letter to encourage more ideas and participation in developing resources and interaction that can aid all of us in giving children the best possible climate for their own development. This is still in the formative stage and we welcome your suggestions. Some of the general areas that were talked about were:

- * Providing children with the information to develop their own myths and symbols. This could take the form of reading lists, creative ideas, videos or any other resource.

- * Informing each other, through a medium such as the *Gurukulam* magazine, about successful ways of sharing enriching experiences with children.

- * Story telling -- from all traditions, from our own experiences and those of our families, and from the children themselves; helping them share their stories with others.

- * Finding out what our kids want -- what stories, activities, ideas they would find exciting or interesting. And how to encourage them to formulate these ideas.

- * Developing ideas for a children's camp or activities for the time around Guru Puja. The kids were a wealth of great ideas. Some of their suggestions were to themselves build a special kids area, complete with benches and tables, where they could tell stories, do different crafts and art projects or play games, to have activities such as planting an orchard, to have classes of their own with Guru, Prasad, some of the parents or friends.

These were some of the ideas which came up and we hope you will send us your suggestions. We will definitely start a resources and reading list to share.

In Love and Devotion,

Bill Hughes Peggy Grace Luke

Dear Bill, Peggy and Other Friends,

I feel very grateful to you for positively considering my suggestions about providing a new leadership in the United States to bring children into the mainstream of their progressive march into the culture of a world family. For the last twenty years I have been a frequent visitor to the United States and had several occasions to identify myself with the spiritual and moral excellence of this country. The United States can be compared to a quartz crystal with an absolutely clear and exceedingly bright socially-oriented consciousness and an exceedingly dark and smoky historical guilt consciousness which is continuously polarized at the tail end of the crystal. Militarily and economically nobody will dispute the superiority of the USA. However, when it comes to spiritual far-sight and insight, it is muddled and has not so far created leadership with an idealistic motivation that can inspire American youth from the outset to give them a correct perspective of the human race as part and parcel of their teleologic reality.

I think it is in this area that we should work as one team to provide American youth with a homogenous stamina from beneath their feet to keep them energetically moving on with the same spirit with which Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman once dreamed of humanity and gave moral leadership to it. Ralph Waldo Emerson, like William Blake, went into a frontierless myth of humanity which was both occidental and oriental. Other people who had similar insight into the myth of humanity were C.G. Jung and Joseph Campbell. As we do not have grandmothers any longer to tell stories to children and give them a wider outlook of space and time, there is a need to rediscover our myth. The only myth which American intelligentsia has given to the last quarter century is the Star Wars. Its impact is not anything that ennobles the mind and ideals of a growing person. Recently, when Peter Brook

tapped the resources of India's epic, *Māhābhārata*, he was not reviving an Indian myth. He showed that traditional psychology has a greater and deeper perspective than type psychology and what Jung was trying to say. This deeper aspect was seen by classical scientists like Bohr, Heisenberg, Plank, Jeans, Eddington, and Schrodinger. More recently, our attention in that line has been stimulated by the enthusiastic investigations of Carl Sagan, Fritjof Capra, Guy Murchie, Douglas Hofstadter, Ken Wilber and Gary Zukow.

Although they are all deeply committed to modern science, they are all seeing a face of myth that is at once ancient and modern. As children are fast growing and they will be followed by more children, I want to make a few suggestions in this letter:

* Do not wait for children to become mature enough to go to conventional academies. Make your home itself a university, putting the stress on the unity of the world and not the conflicting multiversity of specialization.

* Make as many children's groups as possible where they can individually and collectively share their creative imagination and mythmaking dreams. Let there be a child's studio and theater which is protected from the public gaze of adults.

* Periodic exhibitions can be held in which children can present their creations, not to be graded on a competition basis but for a public sharing of the ingenuity of the child's creation. Incentive should be given by knowledgeable people for improving their creations in both beauty and utility.

* Any person who knows a creative trade should offer himself or herself as a volunteer to teach and train at least ten children of his or her vicinity in the kind of artifact that person can positively accomplish.

* Like story telling, there can be sessions to share dreams. By giving more and more purposive attention to dreams many dreams can be salvaged to attain

the status of novelettes, short stories, fairy tales, poetry and cartoon comics.

* There should be a listing of all ancient cultures such as those of Native Americans (e.g. Hopi, Inca, Mayan), Northern Europe (e.g. Slavic, Anglo-Saxon, German, Gaul), the Mediterranean (e.g. Babylonian, Sumerian, Hellenist, Egyptian), the Middle East (e.g. Arabian, Jewish) and the Orient (e.g. Aryan, Dravidian, Mongolian, Japanese, Chinese), Polynesia, New Zealand Maoris and Australian Aboriginies. Nowadays many enthusiasts of these cultures are bringing forth reproductions of their art, stories and sagas for all to benefit.

The present Gurukula centers can extend their horizon by incorporating many families and being local radiating centers of throbbing ideas and ideals. The materials introducing ancient cultures can be stocked and displayed in several homes for sharing with the new generation. Gurukula associates can present programs in the network of educational radio and local TV channels. A concerted effort is to be made to keep at least a few channels free of commercial interests and as active media dedicated to one-world ideals.

Everybody can suggest a bibliography with which they are familiar. On my part I suggest the two great Indian epics, the *Māhābhārata* and *Ramayana*, the compendium of Indian stories known as *Kaṭha Sarit Sāgara*, wisdom tales such as the *Pañcatantra*, the *Jataka Tales*, which give the Buddhist myth of reincarnation, the Chinese myth of *Monkey and Avalokateśvara*, the Tibetan stories of Naropa and Milarepa, the fairy tales of Aesop and Grimm, the *Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer.

With other's suggestions we can make a fairly exhaustive bibliography of myths and stories. I appreciate the earnest guidance which friends like Bill and Peggy are willing to give. Others are also wholeheartedly invited to join our happy chorus.

Guru Nitya

Fertile Soil

*From the depths of our hearts, souls and minds
we shower our children with kindness.*

*The seeds that were planted, fertilized, sown
we nourish and till as they grow.*

*We give stories for food and songs for light,
we give goodies, skills and guidance.*

*We give and we give with the best of intention,
yet why do some grow to defiance?*

*We give and we give, and the children will please
us by playing their role we create,
as they drink in our stories and guidance and song,
instead of learning to give, they learn to take.*

*Defiant and taking, the children play their role
only wanting to please those they love,
and we wise ones are baffled at all they display
and assess that they need more instruction.*

*They are the teachers, they know what they need
if our minds can be quiet to hear.*

*Not vessels to fill but beings who will
grow sincere as our vision grows clear.*

*Through sharing ourselves and our cultural history
while allowing for natural spontaneity
by honoring myths and wisdom of old
while mutually creating new stories untold.*

*If we want to give,
give them the brushes, give them the paints,
give them multitudinous means of expression
for the essence of what we want them to know
is not found in a sound education.*

*They will make beauty, they will make "mistakes."
They will become noisy and spill.
They will not always paint what we wish they would see,
but be patient, kind parents, they will.*

*They may even paint what we do not see
and broaden our visions inconceivably.
Though allowing expression of their visions and voices
may at times feel to us like embarrassing choices,
their myths and their wisdoms,
their dreams and their needs
brought forth through expression
makes a flower from seed.*

*Fear not ourselves, and fear not our children.
All wisdom and joy is inherent.
Trust in this process, know the Tao of allow,
and the path of a parent's apparent.*

Peggy Grace Luke

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By Nataraja Guru

An Integrated Science of the Absolute (Volumes I, II, III)
Autobiography of an Absolutist
The Bhagavad Gita
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Saundārya Laharī
The Search for a Norm in Western Thought
Vedanta Revalued and Restated
The Philosophy of a Guru
Towards a One World Economics
World Education Manifesto
Memorandum on World Government
Anthology of the Poems of Narayana Guru
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God: Reality or Illusion?
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Other

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Publications Available From:

Narayana Gurukula
Srinivasapuram P.O.
Varkala, Kerala
695145 India

Island Gurukula Āranya
8311 Quail Hill Road
Bainbridge Island
Washington 98110 USA

