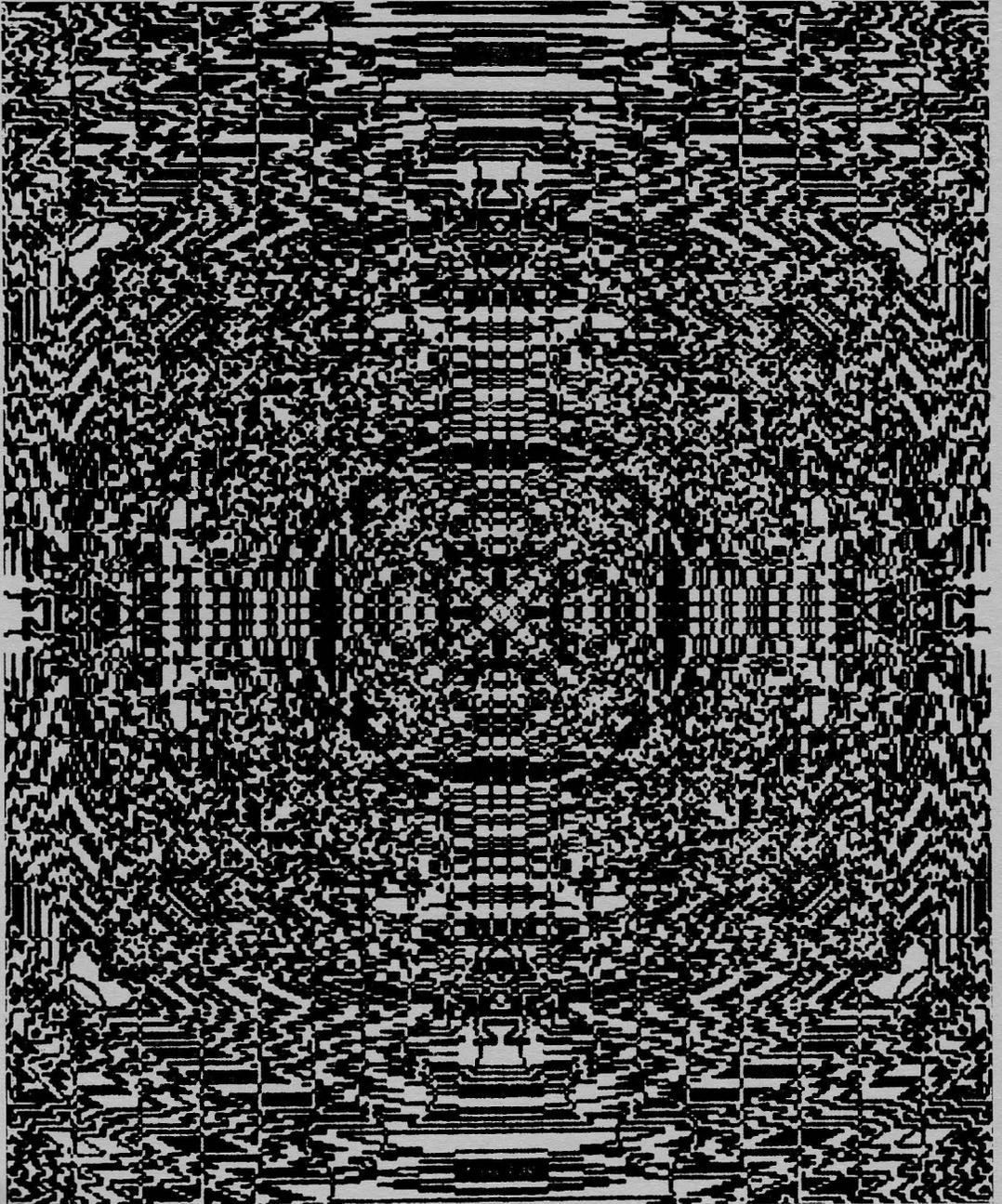


# GURUKULAM

VOLUME II • 1986

FIRST • SECOND QUARTER



# GURUKULAM

VOLUME - I PART - I FIRST-SECOND YEARS



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VOLUME II • 1986      FIRST•SECOND QUARTER

- 3    KĀLĀDARŚANA by Nancy Yeilding
- 5    MUSIC OF MY INNER SELF by Edda Walker
- 6    THE MĀṆḌŪKYA UPANIṢAD  
Translation and Commentary by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 15   THE KATĪHA UPANIṢAD  
Translation and Commentary by Muni Narayana Prasad
- 18   MY PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE  
by Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati
- 26   SWEEPING DUST by Steve Weckel
- 27   WONDER JOURNEY WITH A WANDERING GURU  
by Nancy Yeilding
- 32   UGLYFIN by Claire Nail
- 37   SYMPTOM OF A DISEASE by Muni Narayana Prasad
- 40   PRE HOLOCAUST MEMOIRS by David Evans
- 41   EAST-WEST UNIVERSITY SEMINAR: THE DIMENSIONS  
OF PEACE by Peter Oppenheimer
- 47   NITYA CHAITANYA YATI ON THE GITA  
by Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar
- 51   MUSICAL MANDALAS by Scott Teitsworth
- 55   EAST-WEST UNIVERSITY NEWS AND NARAYANA  
GURUKULA NEWS
- 56   PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

# GURUKULAM

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# Kālādarśana

A young woman was making her way through a meadow of wildflowers. At first, enticed by their beauty, she ran here and there in great delight. As she ran, heedless in her ecstasy, thorns scratched her legs and she stumbled on sharp rocks, so she slowed her pace. But again entranced by the loveliness of the day and the brilliant colors, she twirled and skipped until, suddenly, she fell into a mud hole. Her spirits thoroughly dampened, she cleaned off the mud as much as possible and trudged slowly on. Gradually she became aware of someone walking just behind her. Glancing back she shivered to see a craggy-faced man in a dark cloak following her intently. She had the strange feeling that he had been there all along but that she hadn't really noticed him before. She quickened her pace, then broke into a run, but when she had to stop, panting for breath, she realized he had effortlessly kept up with her.

She cried out, "Who are you?" She was surprised and yet strangely calmed when he gently asked, "Who are you?" As she stared at him, his eyes became vibrant mirrors. Reflected there, she saw herself walking in many cities, along rivers and beside mountains, shining with joy in her lover's arms, giving birth in agony and wonder, holding her child with hope and anxiety, weeping alone in despair, avidly reading about the nature of the world, discussing the mysteries of human behavior, fashioning clay into beautiful shapes, singing in exaltation, shouting and fighting in anger, absorbed in contemplation, offering a consoling word and a helping hand. Bewildered by swirling emotions, she turned away and wonderingly asked again, "Who are you?" He said, "I am kālā, time, which gives birth to all possibilities."

He started to walk quickly away and she noticed that the dark cloak was gone and he was dressed in a suit that shimmered with all the colors of the rainbow. Intrigued, she ran to keep up with him. "Wait," she cried, "you are going too

fast!" Silently he turned and she was again captivated by the images in his eyes. She saw sun and planets swirling ever farther apart, becoming dimmer and dimmer in the dark reaches of space, mountains forming out of tremendous explosions of lava only to be buried under the ocean, towns springing up beside rivers and growing into grand cities, centers of civilization, then decaying and perishing, friends and family appearing and one after the other dying from accidents, disease or age. Screaming in horror, she covered her eyes. Kālā spoke quietly and firmly, "I am also death. Time devours all things."

Frightened, but sore and tired, she walked on slowly, hoping to get away from him. He lagged behind but every time she looked, he was still following her. In great frustration she cried out, "What do you want?" His answer came as a sweet whisper, "My dear, what is important is not what I want but what you are." Startled to find him so near, she turned sharply. His features were softened by a kind smile and she could not resist looking into his eyes again. She saw herself as an old woman, surrounded by loved ones of three generations. Children were playing while their elders discussed one of her books. She was offered a cup of tea and it brimmed over with the shared love of the gathering. Sipping it, she gazed at the last rays of the setting sun knowing she would not see it rise in the morning. She smiled peacefully, fearlessly, with a profound sense of fulfillment.

Kālā winked his eyes and the image disappeared. Tears of joy ran down her face. "Yes, that is what I truly am! But it seems so far away. Instead of peace I have ecstasy and anguish. I am plagued by fear, anxiety and yearning." Embracing her with a compassionate look, kālā asked, "Can you accept me as your friend, your companion?" Thinking of all she had experienced with him, she shuddered, but he gazed at her lovingly and steadily held out his hand.

Irresistably drawn to him, she took his hand. His eyes drew her in until she was immersed in a pool of bliss. She surfaced only when he spoke again: "My essence is in my name. Ka is what; la is merges; I am that which merges."

She smiled and walked with him hand in hand. Whenever she looked in his eyes myriads of possibilities arose and disappeared and arose again, trans-

formed. Tuning herself to the harmony of interweaving cycles, her fears gradually faded away. Though always with her, kālā became more and more evanescent. Instead of running this way and that after the alluring fancies of honey-filled flowers, she saw him shining at the heart of each as its source and destination. Singing of that glory to all she encountered, she gracefully made her way toward the setting sun.

*Nancy Yeilding*



## MUSIC OF MY INNER SELF

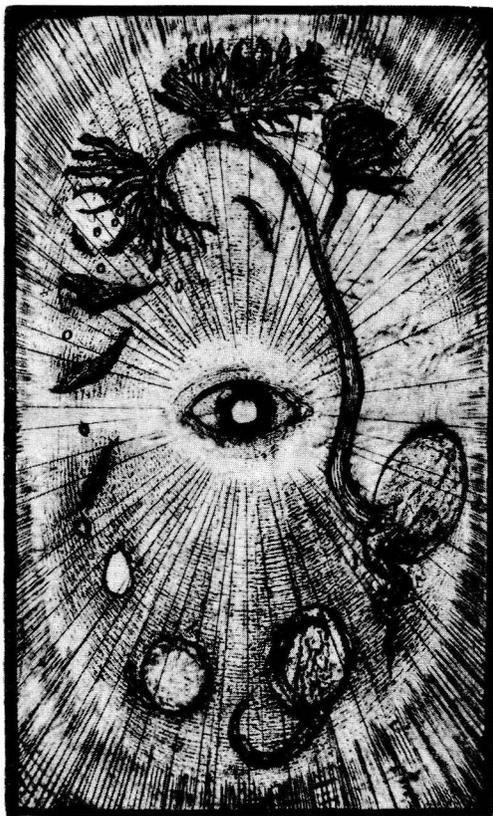
Birds and flutes  
make music for my ears,  
and for my eyes  
quivering palm fronds  
weave a sunlit tune.  
Behind the twisted forms  
of waking trees  
the sky stands still.  
Birds, flutes and dancing fronds  
play only surface melodies,  
there is deeper music in my mind,  
silent quartertones  
that by-pass my ears  
and no twisted forms  
obscure the limitless views  
so tirelessly and tenderly offered  
in my radiant inner sky.

 EDDA WALKER

# The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad

*Translation and Commentary by*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



## First Mantra

ōmitye tad akṣaram idam sarvam  
tasyopavyākhyānam  
bhūtam bhavad bhaviṣyad iti  
sarvam omkāra eva  
yaccānyat trikālātītam  
tadapyomkāra eva

That (eternal) syllable, AUM, is all this; its further elaboration, past, present, and future, all is this AUM indeed; even what is beyond, transcending the three times, that too is AUM.

The Upaniṣad is commonly described as a secret science. By secret it does not mean that the Upaniṣad is an esoteric science. Although Truth is everywhere and the knowledge of it is available to all, paradoxically untruth hides Truth and people have to sharpen their wits to realize Truth. An intense search is required to discover it. It is for this reason that the Upaniṣad is called a secret. Another meaning of the Upaniṣad is to sit close so that the preceptor can easily show where the supreme knowledge resides. For a well discerning seeker, a mere suggestion is enough to get an idea of the whole Truth. The Upaniṣad is such a suggestion or pointer. In that sense also the Upaniṣad is a secret.

For a wise person, the world is like an open book. Everything in this world speaks to him. A blade of grass, a small worm, a bird in the bush or a floating cloud - anything can reveal to a seeker the hidden meaning of this world. Dattātreya received his instructions, according to legends, from 24 gurus, and most of them were not human beings. Even in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, we read of a canine saint, Śunaka, who was teaching a group of puppies how to intonate certain mantras like the "hiṅkara". The rishi of the Māndukya Upaniṣad, at least in name, is a frog. When the frog's eggs hatch we see tadpoles coming from them. In the second stage of the tadpole's growth it develops hind legs. In the third stage, it swims around with four legs and a tail. Finally in the fourth stage, when the tail is fully absorbed, the frog jumps out of the water. This is suggestive of the wise man who is not bound to society with the memory of his obligatory duties, and who can also jump out of the fish pond of samsara. In the present Upaniṣad there is some similarity between the four stages of development of the frog and the four aspects of consciousness. As we proceed from the wakeful to the transcendental, one aspect of consciousness is merged in the next. Most of our reflex functions and body movements are controlled by the spinal cord which is a repository of our genetic information bits. The tail is nothing but a prolongation of the spinal cord, hence the allegorical reference to the cessation of the tail amounts to transcending of one's genetic memory, which in Vedānta is described as vāsanā. Narayana Guru, in his Ātmopadeśa Satakam instructs the seeker to transcend all memories on which one might stumble from moment to moment (see verse 64). The only memory he recommends is the primeval memory of one's true Self.

Awareness occurs in consciousness with an act of calling attention, as it were, to what is often expressed as "this". "This" is suggestive of an undefined occurrence of a general sense of awareness. All the same it has become an object for consideration. There cannot be an object of awareness without a subject to apprehend the object. The

subject reveals itself as one's I -consciousness, aham, the ego. When the awareness of the knower relates itself with the object indicated by the general apprehension of "thisness", the most primary pulsation of the mind has already taken place. The I -consciousness or ego awareness makes a judgement, a prediction about the object of awareness. Unlike in grammar, in formal logic the object of awareness is called the subject. The predicate consists of the special characteristics attributed to the subject. Suppose the general knowledge comes as "this". It is immediately followed by the question "what is this?" This is suggestive of the two main components of one's apprehension: they are the "this" and the "what". If the mind readily comes out with an answer: "this is a pot", "this" is qualified with the characteristics of a pot. "This" remains, and the "what" is substituted with the idea of a pot. In a number of such predications you can see that the general idea "this" remains unchanged and the interrogation "what" is substituted with object identities such as "this is a pen", "this is a watch", "this is a stone" etc. When F.H. Bradley says: "this 'this' is different from this 'this' because of the difference between the 'what' of this 'this' and the 'what' of this 'this'", he is not playing with words but putting his finger on the primeval incidence of specifying awareness entering the uncharted field of consciousness.

In the present opening mantra of the Māndukya Upaniṣad, "this" is qualified with "all" (idam sarvaṃ). In this case, the specifying predication is as vast and wide as the general awareness that came up for apprehension. Both at the object side and the subject side, consciousness is modulating without specifying boundaries. The subtlety of the mantra makes it a fit subject for reflection. To get into the spirit of it, one should sit quietly, if you prefer, on a hill-top where you have a vast panorama to watch. Then say to yourself: "this all". When you say "this", you will experience a sudden convergence of awareness to the central focus of the knower's attention, and from there, instantaneously, the awareness expands in all directions and you are compelled to believe that something is taking you even beyond the seeming bounds of the horizon.

This expanding universe of awareness not only transcends space, but it also transcends time. Instead of saying "all this", if you were to say "this dew drop", "this flower", "this rainbow", you could also think of the dewdrop disappearing in evaporation, the flower drooping and falling off, and the rainbow vanishing. In all these specific objects of experience one can see the stamp of phenomenality. Like an Omar Khayyam you can sigh in frustration: "this will pass away". In the present mantra you are in the company of a joyous teacher and not a weeping philosopher. When Keats said: "a thing of beauty is a joy forever", he was seeing eternity in the beauty of the otherwise transient

world of phenomenality. It does not trouble the poet or the artist how short-lived are the dewdrops, the butterflies, the sunrise, the rainbow and the smile of recognition. From the very dawn of the human appreciation of beauty, poets were singing the glory of all these enchanting visitations of the divine. Thus, a philosophically trained eye can see the imperishable dwelling in the very heart of the perishable. So it is not a poetic exaggeration to say "all this is AUM the imperishable".

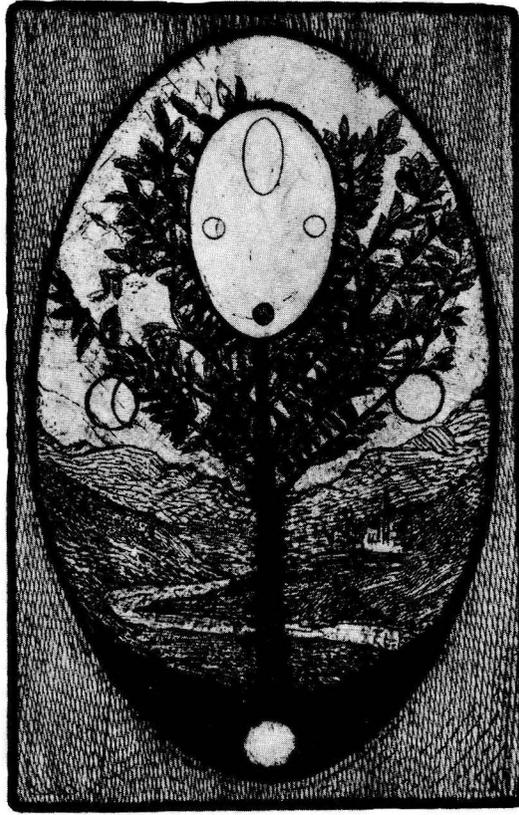
The contemplative who has taken this mantra for reflection should first dive deep into the meaning of "all" (sarvam). There cannot be an all without including one's self also in that all embracing awareness. The imperishable in Sanskrit is called akṣara. This is bound to bring confusion to the mind of Indian people whose regional languages have close affinity with Sanskrit. In the Sanskrit language, vowels are called svarā and consonants are called vyañjanā. Together they make the alphabet, which in turn is called the akṣara. AUM is also written using two vowels and a consonant. For that reason, AUM is an akṣara. Because of this language background, one may interpret the mantra as meaning that everything seen in this world is an alphabet. Nobody can see the sign ॐ written in Sanskrit or any other language anywhere in the sky or earth or water. In many popular commentaries we can see this grave error committed, and as a result, even serious students of this Upaniṣad are grievously handicapped. They fail to see how the blue sky, the gorgeous mountains, the running rivers, and the sprawling cities with innumerable people are the Sanskrit syllable AUM.

On the other hand, they should know that their attention is called to appreciate the existentiality of things and the philosophical validity of reducing everything to the persistent verity of erasable existence. This is certainly not the approach of an idealist. Even highly respected Indian pandits like Dr. Radhakrishnan could not see the methodological correctness of the Indian rishi who gave primacy to sat, Existence. "Existence precedes essence" was not any new invention of Jean-Paul Sartre. As Dr. Radhakrishnan did not see this point, he depicted Vedanta as an idealist view of life. It is the existence that is then interpreted, described and restructured to suit the conceptual clarity of the perceiver. The seer did not give up the theme simply by saying "this is all" (idam sarvam) but he equated the indestructibility of the existence of "all this" with AUM. That can be confusing. The sound AUM is produced with the wisp of a man's breath. A mere articulation of a sound can be even more transient than the disappearance of a dewdrop. Hence, such a pronouncement should be followed with an explanation. That is why the rishi says: tasyopav-  
yākhyānam (this is thus explained).

The Gospel According to St. John begins with a pointed

reference to the Word. He says: "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God". The confusion in the Gospel is of the same order, which we have already taken pains to elaborate. The English word "word" cannot really be compared with "the Word". In the original Bible, John used a Greek word, *logos*, meaning the causal and primordial intelligence which has gone into the creation of the world. He borrowed that term from his personal instructor, Philo the Jew. Philo, a contemporary of Jesus, was an enthusiast of Plato's philosophy and he borrowed the term *logos* from Plato. All credit should be given to Heraclitus for conceiving of the *logos* as an ambivalent principle of creation and destruction implied in the ascending and descending fire of the Word. In the light of such a study, the Word, equated with God's creation and God himself cannot be a three-lettered or a four-lettered word spoken by someone somewhere. Only by comprehending the imperishable existence of everything covered by time and even not touched by it can one grasp the connotation of AUM implied in this mantra. To make it explicit the three aspects of time are specially underlined here for further reflection. Only by experiencing a thing do we become impressed by the truth of its existence. As we move in time our appreciations of existence are piled one over the other and everything of the past is still held close to the present by converting the existentiality of the past into an ever present memory. It is by the relevancy of that memory that we give our present its vast magnitude both in time and space. There is no past sitting anywhere other than in the immediate awareness of the present. Similarly there is no future except in the anticipation of an individuated mind. Existence cannot support itself, at least for the recognition and appreciation of it by the human mind, unless every form of existence is substantiated by a comprehending consciousness. This shows the methodic excellence of the Indian rishi who placed cit, Consciousness, immediately after sat, Existence. These two aspects of Truth are inseparable. That is why Nataraja Guru defined science as a discipline which transforms visibles into calculables. It is not necessary to get into all the jargon of philosophy to appreciate the perennial persistence of fundamental values. That is why even a sentimental poet can readily see the truth of a perennial joy dwelling in the heart of beauty. Here we see the relevancy of ānanda coming as the culminating mark of our search. Bishop Berkeley insisted that the validity of the world is perception. He said "esse es percipi". When asked what would happen to the world when there was no one to look at it, he said: "In such a contingency, God will be perceiving it". We quote Berkeley here to show the limitation of human consciousness. Granted that there is something existing outside the scope of time, the rishi wants us to know that even that is imperishable

and should be included in the notion of AUM. This first mantra of the Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad should be read along with the great dictum "That Thou Art" (tat tvam asi) given in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad.



Second Mantra

sarvam hyetad brahma  
ayam ātmā brahma  
so'yam ātmā catuspāt

All here is the Absolute (Brahman) indeed;  
this Self (Ātmā) is the Absolute; this same Self  
(he) is four-limbed.

The first part of this mantra appears to deal with three entities: "this", "all" and "Brahman". The word sarvam, "all", is the description of "this", etat. When sound is being emitted from a single point its vibration goes expanding in all directions. It looks linear only when you draw on paper the modulation of a sound wave. The reference to "this" also suggests a nucleus from which there can go in all directions an expansion of "thisness" which can be in the form of sound, light and all kinds of ideational and emotional energy forces. If this eruption, energy and its accompanying consciousness are not delimited by any conceiving mind, they expand into an infinity, in which time and space become negligible. Such is the connotation we attribute to the word sarvam. In such a picture this marks the alpha of an eventual apprehension and sarvam carries it to an omega where the mind cannot reach. In such a context the eventual perception gets absorbed in the non-eventful "all". It is this "all" that is termed here as Brahman. The seeker has no prior experience of comprehending Brahman; hence there is no point in asking anyone to meditate on Brahman. In specific references such as "this is a pot", "this is a leaf", or "this is a cloth", consciousness is directed to specific objects with specific qualities. This is not the case when one's attention is called to "this all". To understand this let us think of "this" as a spark coming out of a hidden world of consciousness.

The second mantra calls our attention to the widest span of perception. From the shimmering stars placed hundreds of light years above the tip of your nose, everything can be included in one single physical vision. From the feeblest voice dying out in the farthest fringe where our ear can reach, to the loudest din, all can be included in the auditory perception that goes along with the visual perception. Let that experience be enriched with all the data that are provided by the other senses also. After presenting such a universe of immensity, if one were to ask "what is this?", a straight answer to it is "this is Brahman; this is the Absolute". The answer is categorical because the mantra says "brahmani", the Absolute indeed. This simplifies the search for the Absolute. The seeker is in the here and now and is already having a direct encounter with the Absolute from above and below and from all directions and from inside out. Here the seeker is not treated as an alien to the situation; he is an integral, indivisible part of what is already described as "all". The term "all" has no religious connotation; it has no theistic coloration; all the same, it has the irresistible quality of involving us in it. There arises in us immediately our positive participation in all and everything as we sit and meditate on this mantra. It is not by first knowing Brahman that we interpret all this. On the other hand it is through our immediate perception of everything presented to our senses and mind at this very moment

that we conceive the Absolute. We are in the stream of consciousness and in the flux of becoming. The "all" that we experience is not a static, frozen clay image of the Absolute. On the other hand, it is plastic, flexible, moving, transforming and transmuting, and yet the old and the new have an unbroken continuity. The perception and the modulating consciousness with which the flowing perception is occurring are not separate entities. When will it come to a close? No one can say. With poetic permission one can say: this is beginningless; this is endless. That which increases, and thereby involves in it more and more of what was hitherto unknown and will never be filled is an operational connotation that can be attributed to Brahman. Here the seeker is not imagining things; he is in a factual world with all his senses fully opened to every possible avenue of understanding. He does not inhibit his sense of wonder or his natural curiosity. The more he sees, the more he understands the rich possibility of the Brahman which he is comprehending through this simple act of perception. How wonderful is such an experience with which you can relate yourself with the far-off galaxy, with which you can commune with the gentle breeze that comes to you. Even a beautiful panorama is breath-taking; then how much more magnificent it is to be placed within a panorama, within a melody, within a wonder, within a sweetness, within a majesty which has no end. As we sink more and more into it, ecstasy grows on all sides, and the only reaction that you are capable of by way of self-expression is to say: "all this is Brahman". It is something quite similar to what Mansur al Hallaj said: "an al haq, an al haq..."

The next part of the mantra is "this Self is the Absolute". However wide this world is, however immeasurable is its dimension, the central focus of my world is where I experience the agency of its cognition and the wonder of my enjoyment. "I" the perceiver, "I" the cognizer, "I" the enjoyer, is the most central core of experiencing all this. Is that "I" consciousness a static point of any fixed notion? No, it is like a radiance that goes in all directions that becomes an unbroken illumination of all that is experienced. Now which is the world, and who am I? There is no separation, there is no duality. If all this is Brahman, I am also included in that. If all this is a modulation of consciousness, the self and the world are not two. This is not a conjecture. It is an immediate experience. The conclusion is again categorical. "This Self is Brahman". What a magnificent meditation we get in this mantra. The expansion of the Self has happened without any effort. The union of the world and the Self was effected without even giving a thought to it. At this point the rishi wants to give us a caution. Although we now think we have seen all, our kind mentor wants us to know that there are other worlds, seen only from the periphery, which we have not incorporated. There are depths

to gauge. For a tadpole, its world is a frogpond, but for a frog who can come out of the water, can hop around, and can see a much wider world, the horizon is far larger. The world of perceptual experience, although physically immense, is a prison house of the soul. There are fixed patterns such as sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell by which we know this world. It is a poor man's menu. Those who stop at the empirical level do not realize what they miss. In the world of creative imagination, from the mind of a Shakespeare there can hop out hundreds of heroes like Othello, Hamlet, King Lear, Richard III, Henry V, and heroines like Ophelia, Portia and several others who have become more real to the reading public than any man who lived in flesh and blood in England at any time. There is still another world to look into, which is the treasure house of all secrets. Scientists, artists, poets and mystics spend years at the doors of the secret vault to have a word with the hidden oracle of the most concealed of all depths. Even after being blessed with the divinity of secrets, man has covered only three-fourths of his search. The last quarter is paradoxically not a quarter; it is the whole, containing all the other quarters within it. We make a full circle and come back to the Absolute, the unnamable which no man could ever encounter. This is the ocean where the salt doll gone into it to measure its depth loses its identity. In this fourth, the world and the mind go into eternal silence. Such a marvel is this ātmān with its four quarters: "ayam ātmā catuṣpāt".

# The Katha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

**V.**  
*Nachiketas thinks: "Among many sons I am of the first grade. Among many sons I am (at least) of the middle grade. That being the case, what obligatory duty is my father going to perform by giving me away to Yama?"*

Nachiketas thinks about himself and his father on hearing his father's unexpected words. He knows that he is a dutiful son of the highest order, or at least of the middle order. A son who strictly adheres to the instruction of his father, true to the spirit, is called a son of the highest order (uttama). Those who are true to the word of their fathers are called sons of the middle order (madhyama). Those who don't care for the instructions of their fathers are called sons of the lowest order (adhama). Nachiketas knows that it is not proper for him not to abide by the words of his father. But he wonders what his father is going to gain by giving him away to Death. But it will be beneficial to Nachiketas. Knowing the secret of Death, the main teaching of this Upaniṣad, is the benefit. This is not a worldly benefit. Nachiketas' father is a man who has no consideration for spiritual values. So the teaching is not going to be of any value to him. Nachiketas' question indicated that the teaching of this Upaniṣad will be of value only to those who are able to go beyond the domain of worldly values to eternal spiritual values. To be a dutiful son is a value that belongs to worldly relations. The interest of Nachiketas is not worldly matters, but he does not deny the worldly values altogether. However, he is aware of their nothingness when considered in the light of all-embracing eternal values. The same worthless worldliness could turn and be a tool to

attain the highest value of Self-knowledge. It is in this context that we need to understand the case of Nachiketas.

**VI.**  
*Father, please look back and see what happened to your ancestors, and also see what is happening to those who are living here. Man perishes just like vegetables. Again he emerges like vegetables.*

Nachiketas' father might have been sorry for the words which he uttered in his fury. Nachiketas consoles him in this mantra. It is Nachiketas who is to go to Death, but he is not sorry about it. He has the expectation of learning the secret of Death so he is happy. But his father who has only a worldly mind feels the great loss of his son. Here we see the two value-worlds which are represented by the son and the father, and how these value notions affect our life.

In the physical sense, man is born, grows and dies just like vegetables do. But there is an innate difference between vegetable life and human life: the life of a vegetable is not controlled and led by any value consideration inherited from its ancestors. Though human beings are born, live and die just like vegetables, the influence of the memories of their ancestors, and the values inherited from them, are of vital importance in human life. Eternal values thus transcend the transience of life, and it is such values that make man really human. Nachiketas is aware of such values, and that is why he is particular that his father's words should not go unheeded.

A fundamental problem of life is going to be discussed in this Upaniṣad. Nachiketas plays the role of a pūrva pakṣa or a questioner in the dialogue.

Only someone who is capable of discriminating between the value-worlds can play such a role. In this mantra it is evident that such discrimination is natural to Nachiketas. He is thus fully competent to be a questioning counterpart of the Guru who, in the present context, is the God of Death.

## VII.

*A brahmin-guest entering a house is like a fire. To put down this fire the host welcomes him after washing the feet of the guest and offering flowers. O Yama, bring water and receive this brahmin-guest.*

The father has permitted his son to go to Death after hearing his words of consolation. When Nachiketas reached the abode of Yama he had to wait at the gate for three days without food or shelter. It is not mentioned in the text whether Yama wanted to test the earnestness of Nachiketas or was simply not there. Both meanings are acceptable and the ṛiṣi who composed the Upaniṣad might have left it vague so as to imply both meanings. The present context is that of ascending from worldly matters to the realm of pure thought. A blending of worldly meaning and spiritual meaning has special pertinence in this context. Nachiketas remaining outside the gate because of the absence of Yama is the worldly meaning, and Yama's testing the earnestness and competency of Nachiketas is the spiritual meaning.

Nachiketas did not go to Yama to be received and treated as a guest. His intention was to learn the secret of Death. The intensity of his thirst for knowledge is brought to light by this dramatic situation. Nachiketas is proved to be a true disciple (sat śiṣya). Discrimination between the eternal and the transient (nityānityavastuviveka), the state of being without passion or attachment (vairāgya), calmness of mind (sama), checking and turning away the senses from distractions (dama), cessation of self-motivation (uparati), endurance of troubles in life (titikṣā), faith in the teaching of the Guru and the scriptures (śraddhā), a state of mind fully settled down in the Absolute reality (samādhāna), aspiration for liberation (mumukṣutva) – all

these are the qualifications stipulated by tradition for a true seeker.

Yama has not been informed of the intention of Nachiketas. In India it is customary to receive guests by the host washing their feet and offering flowers. Brahmin guests entering a house are treated like fire approaching. It is to pacify this fire that the feet of the guest are washed with water. In the present case, the guest happened to have been starving at the gate for three days. Thus the intensity of the fire has grown manifold. In this mantra attendants in Yama's palace are requesting their master to bring water to receive the guest. Here the relation between Yama and Nachiketas begins as a worldly one. But it is a relationship that is to develop into a Guru-disciple one which is purely spiritual.

## VIII.

*If it happens that a brahmin-guest entering a house-hold had to starve, the fieriness of that suffering will annihilate the hopefulness, expectations and their benefits, all the merits of honesty, good deeds and all the prosperities of progeny and wealth.*

In India guests are usually treated as gods. The host should be willing to starve to feed a guest. The Taittirīya Upaniṣad instructs:

matr devo bhava  
pitr devo bhava  
ācārya devo bhava  
atithi devo bhava

Be one to whom mother is as a god.  
Be one to whom father is as a god.  
Be one to whom a teacher is as a god.  
Be one to whom a guest is as a god.

If a guest happens to suffer starvation, all the property and fame of the host will be destroyed. This is only a worldly concept. But it is made use of here to set the stage for a wisdom dialogue. The mistake of not honoring a guest that is committed by Yama, deliberately or not, is redressed by his offering of three boons to Nachiketas as mentioned in the next mantra. It is as the last boon that Nachiketas requests Yama to teach him the secret of Death.

### IX.

*O Brahmin, guest fit to be revered, you had to stay in my house without food for three nights. Salutation to you for the very reason. O Brahmin, may well-being be on me (May nothing untoward happen to me). In return, please choose three boons.*

As a compensation for the suffering that Nachiketas had to undergo three boons are offered to him. This gives Yama the opportunity to bring out every desire in the mind of Nachiketas. Nachiketas is here given a chance to ask for whatever he desires in life. It is in such circumstances, when it is sure that we will gain whatever we desire, that all of our inner cravings are expressed. We have already seen the relentlessness of Nachiketas. Now what remains is to know what he is inexorably interested in. This may be treated as the second stage of Yama's test.

### X.

*O God of Death, let Gautama, my father, be calm and well-disposed in his mind and with no resentment towards me. When you send me back let him greet me with joy and speak to me after recognizing me. This I choose as the first of the three boons.*

In this mantra Nachiketas chooses the first boon. His father may be feeling sorry and restless about losing his son, or may even be angry towards him. So the first boon chosen by Nachiketas is that his father should have peace of mind and not be offended by him. He

also desires that he should be recognized by his father when he returns home after finishing studying with Yama, and be greeted with joy.

The implications in this mantra are not to be left unnoticed. Final liberation, which is beyond birth and death, can be attained only by those who are vigorous and eager enough to snatch away the ever-binding tentacles of relationship with kith and kin. The giving up of worldly relations is not because they are despised but because of a more intense aspiration for the final emancipation to which worldly relations stand as hurdles. Instead of having no consideration for his parents. Nachiketas desires that, after his crossing over to the other side, they will not have any suffering because of him.

Nachiketas will return to his father only after becoming a vimṛtyuḥ (a deathless one) by becoming a wise one (jñānin) after learning the secret of death from the God of Death. It is likely that his father, who still continues in the world of the fear of death, may not recognize him. So Nachiketas prays to Yama that he will be recognized by his father on his return. By recognizing him, his father may also gain the discrimination between the transient which is always fraught with death and the world of eternal bliss which is beyond the ken of death. At the same time it implies that the teaching of this Upaniṣad has consideration for the actualities of life. It takes them all into account and, at the same time, goes beyond them to where they dissolve in the all-encompassing effulgence of the Absolute.

# My Personal Philosophy of Life

## Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Physical philosophers such as Eddington suggest that when you see or experience a thing, you make a construct by selecting certain stimuli out of all that are presented. Your experience is an end product of selective structuralism. I would like to add to this idea. In order to make a selection, you should have a choice. You should consciously see all the data so that you can reject some, structure what you have accepted into a meaningful whole. But things are not presented that way. An autonomous presentation and a voluntary cognizance take place simultaneously. Therefore, a natural selection happens within a context in which you are partially conscious of what you are looking for and partially forced to accept the data that has already been autonomously screened by your own system. For instance, if the light that is coming into your eyes presents an image with an irregular edge because of the limits of your peripheral vision, that irregularity will automatically be corrected so that a picture can be formed. This is not accomplished by an intelligent, voluntary performance but by an autonomous system within you. Through half unconscious selection and half conscious selection a structure is created and you only know that structure for the time being.

Mind has this very wonderful way of eliminating all irrelevant subjects for the time being. When concentrated attention is given to a particular object, that alone is held before you and everything else becomes irrelevant. That introduces the wonderful thing called time. The time that you see in a watch

is only a mechanical symbol of time. It is not time at all. The only time you experience is a sequential consciousness of one thing after another. Human consciousness is such that, when it is permeated with sheer joy, you have no consciousness of time passing, but when there is drudgery you are very conscious of it. Biological time, physical time and psychological time all vary. This is very beautifully discussed by Henri Bergson in his Duration and Simultaneity of Time. In the selective structuring of any program which makes it presentative and gives it meaning, the factor of time enters in.

Every experience is also placed within a spatial picture. It has a spatial ground. Thus, all our experiences take place within a time-space continuum. This spatialization is a psychological happening which is absolutely phenomenological. You and I can participate in space. There is an overlapping of your spatial projection and my spatial projection and a third party's spatial projection. There is a common consent available in phenomenality for the space that we share. However, even when we share, the space that is known to me is the space entirely spatialized by my own mind – and I believe it. But I do not deny that you have an equal right and that you are also engineering a space from your own point of view. They do not conflict. This non-contradiction of the space that is spatialized by me and the space that is spatialized by you enables us to have a working possibility of using this world, however phenomenal it is.



That takes me to the next step - I am not part of the combat between the idealist and the materialist. I do not make a special claim that this world is all physical, materially made. Nor am I on the side of the idealist who claims that everything is subjective, and that what is called matter is only an impression in the mind. I say both are right. There is no need for a quarrel, because of the complementarity of my space and your space. You only know the presented world with a representative knowledge of the phenomena. I also only know the presented world through the representation of my phenomenal world. But, behind your representation and my representation, there is a presentation which we will never fully verify. However, verification does not matter because, when I make a cup of tea and hand it to you, you can sip it and you will get over your tiredness. So, for all practical purposes, the world is there. For all practical purposes, all the qualities which we assign to the physical world are accurate. When Einstein spoke of the 4th dimension and the "n"th dimension, the Empire state building in New York, which was built according to the Newtonian laws of physics, did not crumble! They still hold good. I have no quarrel either with the idealist or with the materialist and that puts me on very safe ground.

I began with the ALL, then placed the world and myself in it. You and I and this are all there. We all share a very common experience. After some time, we will all go and sleep. But we will not sleep for twenty-four hours.

After sleeping for several hours we will yawn, get up, and look for a cup of tea. Who puts us to sleep? and who wakes us up? If you wind your alarm clock and set it to ring at 4 o'clock in the morning, it rings. That means it is programmed. We are similarly programmed. In fact, the entire universe is programmed. The earth rotates and revolves around the sun. Mars, Neptune and Saturn also rotate and revolve. In the ALL, when all the possibilities start functioning, they take the form of a program. But it is not pre-programmed. Rather, it is instantaneously programmed from moment to moment by virtue of the innate law within everything. The ALL which I was speaking of previously was an inoperative entity. Now, it has become a functional entity that is programming everything, including you and me.

Further, when I wake up, I look into the day's schedule and say, "Today, I have to give a lecture at 7 o'clock." That is my program. There is a universal programmer; I have a limited scope of programming myself to do and not to do. When I ask my friend to drive me to the lecture hall, he gets into a machine and programs it. The car is an inert thing, full of mechanical stuff, but it behaves - it takes a turn, it stops, it goes. It is a machine being programmed, monitored, by a human being. My hand is also a machine, my eyes are machines, my vocal system is a machine. Thus, behind a machine there is an animating principle. Behind all this animated and inanimated world, there is an unknowable principle which

is animating and programing it. I see a relationship between the principle which animates and programs the universe, my programs, and a machine. All these come in one line. I cannot program everything – there is an element of compulsion in life, along with an element of freedom. I can program where I have knowledge of programing, but cannot program something of which I have no knowledge. So, unless I extend the scope of my knowledge, I remain a very limited programmer of my life. The more I know, the more talents I develop, the more I experience, the wider the scope of my programing. Knowledge enables me to become a more efficient programmer and to have a wider arena in which to operate so that I do not remain caged in a small prison.

That brings me to the next item of my philosophy: I am now using words and through these words I am reaching you. Suppose I had no words at my disposal, and you had no word meanings at your disposal. How could we relate to each other? The simple little thing called a word is such a magical entity that it opens up a vast world of communication. You may be in America and simply speak some words into a telephone to a person in Australia or India. Just because of those few words, the other person may be elated or depressed or may even commit suicide. This is all because of the power of the word. What does the word do? In some way, everything in this world which has a form, a structure, a function, is epitomized into a meaning which is introjected into a sound capsule. That sound capsule can take you anywhere. We think that airplanes, trains and cars are great things because they can convey us great distances. But the greatest conveyer in this world is the word.

The more attention I give to a word, in making its meaning precise, the more I make my world precise. I have been reading a book about biochemistry in order to learn more about genetics, RNA and DNA. It is full of many Latin words which are unfamiliar to me. If I simply skip those words, then the meaning will remain vague. So I need to turn to someone who knows them and ask their meaning. Even though I did not know the word before, when I hear

its meaning, I find it is composed of elements which are familiar to me from other contexts. A new composition of elements is made. Earlier I mentioned the selective structuring of a program, a picture, or a gestalt. Similarly, a word is a composition of concepts. These compositions of concepts are sometimes flat and square, like calling a spade a spade.

At other times it is helpful to speak poetically, musically. So my world of words has another element in it. In addition to the direct meaning, which is conceptually rigid, there is suggestiveness in language. Suggestiveness, dvani, is the most important element in Sanskrit poetry. It leads to sphota. When a bomb is thrown it blasts. Similarly, there is a blasting of the meaning of a word in the mind. I throw a word at you and the word enters your mind. Then, from within you there is the bursting forth of a meaning. What a great magic this is! No one has yet succeeded in revealing all the inner secrets of semiosis.

I have found an understanding of semiosis most essential in studying philosophy and evolving philosophical clarity. If I know one language, then the words of that language give me clarity about many things. My main studies are in Malayalam and in English. I can also read and understand a little Hindi, Tamil, Sanskrit and Kanarese. When I relate the word of one language to the word of another language, etymologically, philologically, etc., that opens up new avenues of knowledge. A proper study of philosophy will be handicapped if you do not have a sufficient vocabulary and insight into languages. One of my main searches during the last 15 years has been to bring as much clarity as possible to every word that I speak and every word that I hear. I have structured my philosophy in my own mind in terms of clear words. If it is clear to me, I can make it clear to another. If it is muddled in my head, I cannot put it across to another person. Thus, language and philosophy are intimately related.

The next stage of my philosophy is perhaps the most important, one's swadharma. A friend told me that his wife could not attend my lecture because

the next day was a school day. She is a teacher and she needed to prepare the lessons for her students. That means she has a sense of responsibility. The fulfilment of her life as a teacher comes when she carries out her profession perfectly, efficiently. This can be done in a duty-bound way or as the sheerest joy of one's self-expression. Dharma here means just not duty, but the inner structure of a thing which sustains it. That structure is conceived for a particular function. That which supports and retains a thing, structurally and functionally, is called its dharma. I am also an organized body, an organized system, which has within it an intrinsic structuring for a certain purpose. I might have given this purpose to myself as part of my personal programming, but I doubt it. I think that in the unfolding of all the possibilities of the ALL to which I belong, my structure and its function arose as part of the general programming. Thus, my dharma has been instituted in me by the general law of manifestation. Of course, within that there is room for various kinds of evolutions or changes. I think certain things evolve and change in a limited way, but not in an unlimited way. So my programming, which is half voluntary and half autonomous, decides that I have a swadharma, my own dharma.

You can discover your own dharma through a test. The test is that of perfection in one's functioning. A watch is perfect when it regularly shows the right time. Similarly, I am perfect when I function in the right manner which brings me utmost satisfaction. I derive that satisfaction when I teach. When I learn and share in the form of teaching, I find the greatest joy in my life. So, my swadharma is that of a teacher. Early in life, I was attracted to a teacher and to the mode of his teaching. For many years, teaching was impossible for me without holding chalk in my hand and standing near a blackboard, even if I didn't write anything on it, because I was so influenced by one of my best teachers, A.S. Narayana Pillai, in Trivandrum. He was my philosophy professor. Whenever he taught, he would draw some line on a board and then say "this" and "therefore." I was so taken by his mannerisms that I was

also teaching "this" and "therefore." This imitation shows that is the profession I liked most. We all have our own swadharmanas. I am satisfied by my swadharma as a teacher. So my philosophy is a philosophy which suits a teacher.

A teacher is supposed to be a person who is shaping the minds of other people or who is sharing statements about Truth with others, so I have to be a very careful person. I should not pollute the minds of others by sharing wrong understanding. The Bhagavad Gita says that you should not confuse people. If you do not know how to teach, it is better to keep quiet. I had another professor called Seshadri. When I finished my degree at the University of Kerala and went to take leave of him, he asked me what I was going to do. I said that I had already accepted the role of a sanyasin so I would be a wandering monk. He said, "Fine. But, even if you don't become a philosophy lecturer, and if as a wandering monk you are teaching, never teach anything of which you are not absolutely sure." In spite of his warning, I was a lecturer at Vivekananda College for three years where I had to teach things about which I had not conviction. I was teaching several books like Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and Bradley's Appearance and Reality. As I was teaching in the classroom, I questioned the bonafide of the teacher in me. I wasn't sure that what Kant says is the exact arrangement of consciousness. But I had to teach only whatever was given in the book because the students had to pass examinations by reproducing what is in their text books. What a bad world is the world of Universities! I felt very guilty, so I gave up that job. Now I am convinced that I am in my right element. I speak only about things of which I am absolutely sure. When I have a doubt I say, "I doubt." It is not at all a shameful thing to be ignorant. We are mostly ignorant, so you can admit your ignorance on many counts.

As the basis of my swadharma, I have a certain foundation. If something is not in my foundation, I cannot develop it. I am so very fond of music. I have tried to learn music many times. I sat there with other people saying 'sa', 'pa', but it did not go beyond 'sa, pa'. Then

I thought, if I couldn't learn to sing, at least I could learn to play some instrument. I bought many musical instruments: harmonium, violin, flute, veena, etc. But I found that being a musician is not in my foundation. I tried to become an artist. I am full of visions, ideas, that I want to paint, but my hand does not go the exact way it should. I won a few prizes for painting, but that's because people do not know anything about art. I won the medals in India. There, any color presented is considered quite valid, but I was never satisfied. In my foundation, those two things may be there, but they are meager. What is in my foundation which can unfold without any kind of resistance? Philosophy or the expounding of philosophical knowledge. For that, I have a rich endowment from within. I am confirmed in my swadharma by what is in my foundation.

In my foundation I should also have kartrtva, the sense of agency to expound and express my dharma as a working program. I should be the manager of it with full responsibility. Once I accept that responsibility, I examine the feasibility. The environmental factors need to be conducive for one's swadharma to operate. If the environment is not conducive to teaching, I think it is better to keep quiet, and move to a different environment. People ask me why I go to America and Australia and other countries outside India. It is because I found some receptive people there. No person can live in a vacuum for long. If you go into philosophy, you soon become a very unpopular person. You cannot open your mouth and have many friends around you. You need an environment which is conducive to bring out the best in you.

Your swadharma also cannot be fully expressed unless you have the necessary instruments at your disposal. For a philosopher, the most important instrument is his own brain. You need a fairly good brain which is not diseased, and a body which is sufficiently healthy. I consider this body of mine as my instrument. I have a foundation which is half genetic. It is only partly known. Based on that foundation I have this instrument of a body-mind system. My word is an elongation of that instrument by which I can reach you. Just like I

can touch you with my hand, I can touch you with my words. I have sharpened my words by sharpening their logic. I also give beauty to my words by choosing ones which will not offend another person, but which give clear ideas. Recognizing one's swadharma not only means that you know that you are a teacher, engineer, doctor, or someone else, but also that you make that a very profitable, satisfactory performance.

Next comes a very great question, which a friend recently asked me - "Why we?" If you do not ask this question, life is probably very easy. The contented pig which is rolling in the mud and eating filth does not ask such questions. But this discontented man puts the question "Why we?" - "Why are we here?" This was my question, too, for a long time - "Why am I here?" Bergson once said, "God created man so that man may create God." We cannot sit quiet; it is our nature to question. It is part of my swadharma to ask "what is the meaning of life?" In my search for the meaning of life I found the traditional trio: Goodness, Beauty and Truth. They are like three stars guiding my life. Why we? - I say, to know Truth, to know Beauty, to know Goodness; to uphold Truth, to uphold Beauty, to uphold Goodness. Once I decided that these give meaning to my life, I could walk into every way of life. I can see how beauty manifests in a play, how goodness is presented in a tragedy or comedy. Some lesson is being taught at a Satsang. I can see how truth is expounded there. I have a pass which enables me to walk into different spheres of life. I have a pass to walk into the arena of beauty and joy because I am interested in aesthetics. I have a pass to walk into the contemplative life and know what the transcendental aspect of Truth is. Life has become so fulfilling. There is nothing like it: joy after joy, day after day is a fulfillment. Every day is a feast, every day is a joy.

Thus, dharma takes us to artha. Many people think that artha means going to a bank, working there to get some money, depositing it, and then buying this and that. That is not artha. We have made the exchange value look like the use value. Money is only an exchange value, but it has taken the place



of a use value. The artha which our forefathers were speaking of was not the acquisition of wealth, but the discovery of the meaning of your life. Your dharma should be so well structured that it teaches you the meaning of your life and how you can live it. I think I have found the meaning, the artha, of my life.

That is to realize. What is this thing called realization? If you sit somewhere and get bored, time comes and falls dead before you. It is not really time but the ghosts of time. If you fill that moment with something meaningful, that time becomes real, a realized time. The meaning of my life is to make every moment a reality.

Perhaps I am in a plane and the man sitting next to me says that he is a pig breeder. I ask "Sir, what fodder do you give to your pigs?" He says, "Barley and wheat, some vitaminized things." Then I ask about the quantity which a pig consumes daily. He is very interested in telling me how much water and fodder it consumes. Then I ask him when he sells his pigs. He says, "When they weigh so many pounds." "And how much do you get for that?" He says, "So many dollars and cents per kilo." I ask, "Aren't there fluctuations in the market?" He is very interested in answering. Then I ask about emotional behavior patterns of the pigs. When are they in heat, and he tells me. In a short time, I become very well educated about pigs, and my friend feels so good that he could act as an instructor to me about pig breeding. So my time has not been wasted, my time has become - realized.

People think realization means some great light comes into your brain and you become dizzy. No. It is a very simple thing - making every passing moment into a reality that is filled with the most joyous experience of the time. My criterion of artha, of meaning, is one of normalizing time.

I was invited by some friends to have lunch with them. I said, "Alright, I'll come, to please you." When I went there I found that ten other people were also invited. They were all smoking cigarettes and blowing the smoke into my face. They were talking about a certain man being a drunkard, and his wife not being good, etc. There was no interest in that for me. I didn't know why they invited me there, but there I was. So, I took out my sketch book, and started drawing a bald-headed fellow there. Instead of getting bored, I always make the best of the situation. I had to wait at the airport in Hawaii for about two hours between planes. How can one spend two hours? Write poetry, sketch the people, write something beautiful, and share it with the man sitting next to you, have a joke. There is a joy in it. The criterion of meaning is making a moment valuable. When a relationship is established between your inner joy, ānanda, an existence and a knowledge of that existence, then realization comes.

If you project your inner joy onto a thing and regard it as bringing you happiness or joy, that creates a desire, kāma in you. With the desire comes compulsion and that leads to action. Here, there should be a difference be-

tween a philosopher and a non-philosopher. A philosopher should be critical of anything he is about to perform. He should ask, "What compulsion is making me behave in this way?" Then his life becomes an examined one. Kāma is inevitable. But, if I know where it originates, how it is going to function, and how many people or things are going to be involved, where it will lead, and whether the consequences will be painful to someone or not, then kāma helps me to understand my social placement. One's philosophy should help one to have a social estimate of oneself and the situation in which one is placed. A well-harmonized person knows his kāma, and it should ultimately lead him to the highest of realizations.

How can you defuse your compulsion so it does not lead you into problematic action? One way of defusing compulsion is to highlight the rationale of what is going to happen. If something is inevitable, there is no point in your resisting. Just accept it. One beautiful person said, "Do not push the river." There is no point in pushing the river. If the river flows, flow along with it. I like to be as harmonious as possible. One way to do that is not to break laws. Go with the law, be law abiding. As a philosopher, I make it a point not to break any law for which there is sufficient justification. But, if there is a law which is socially unjust, it is unfair to lie down and accept it in the name of harmony or in the name of the path of least resistance. I should protest against it. That brings upon me unlimited liability to my fellow beings. I consider this unlimited liability to expose injustice and to act for justice as part of my life.

How does my philosophy guide my orientation and placement in the world? I have a family, my mother, brother, and two sisters. My father is dead. How do I relate to them? I have placed them in the totality of the human race. I can relate to some other members of humanity much more closely than I can to my brother and sisters. I see my mother in all mothers. By the process of inclusion, I have merged my family with the world family. Therefore, I don't have a special family as such. Although, in the minds of certain people,

I have a caste because I was born in a certain community, I am fully convinced that there is no such thing as caste. It is only a social prejudice which is perpetuated in India. I consider caste to be part of human ignorance, a great irrational social phenomena that has become the most cancerous part of the Hindu way of life. I eschew it. I do not relate myself to any situations where any kind of reference to it can be acceded.

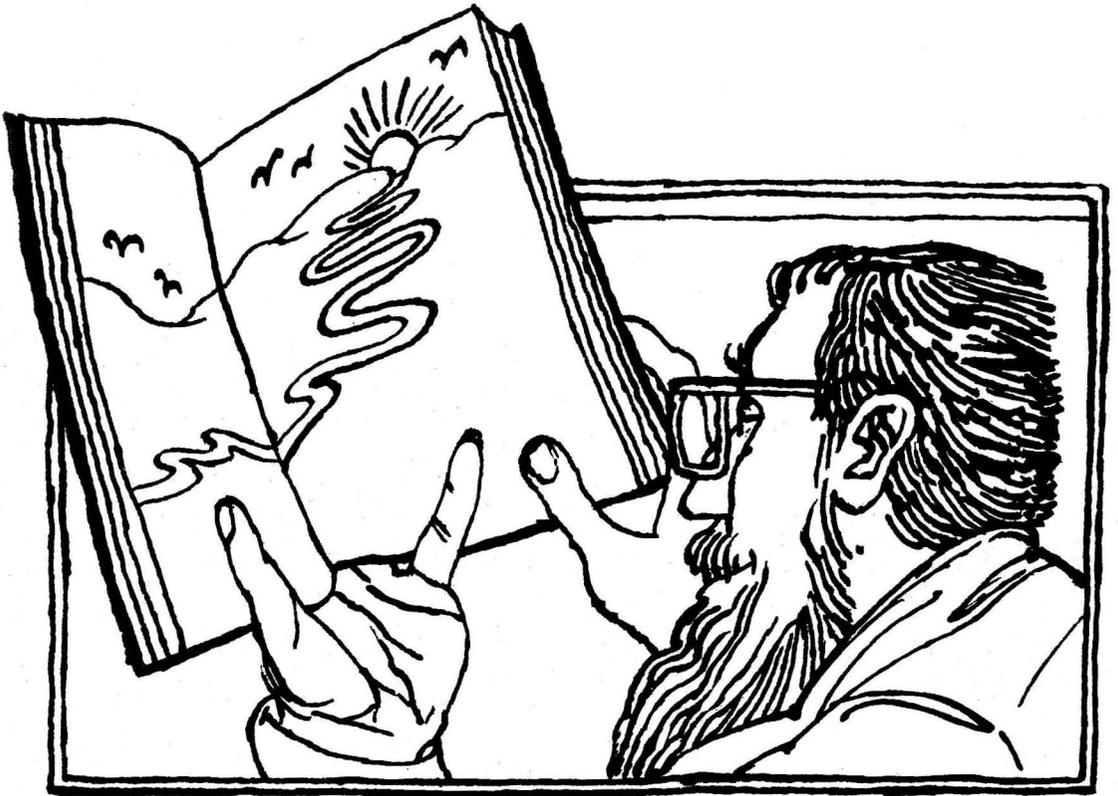
Then, what is my linguistic allegiance? It is very easy for a person to speak his own mother tongue. When we get into trouble, we automatically speak in our own language. In that sense, I have a great allegiance to the language which my mother spoke, but I have no pride about that language. Today, I think in English. Even when I am writing something in Malayalam, I first write it in English and then translate it into Malayalam. At the same time, as I am convinced of the word power, when I am in India, I try and speak and write in the language of my mother tongue. There are certain beauties of every language which cannot be conveyed through translation. This is particularly true of Malayalam. I am fascinated by the very word Malayalam. It has two derivations. One is mala plus ala. Mala means a hill, which is stable. Ala means moveable. There is a combination of stability and movement in Malayalam. The other derivation is mala, meaning height, plus alam, meaning depth. It is a language which has a height as well as a depth. I love that language very much, but I do not take personal pride in it.

I have a little negative provincialism. I somehow hate to go to Kerala, my homeland. I never feel very comfortable there, because of the special behavioral pattern of the people which is far inferior to that of a Tamil person or a Kanarese person. I prefer to be with Tamils and Kanarese than with Malayalees. I don't have any kind of national pride. I never think I am just an Indian. When I was a child, we were asked to stand before a map of India and sing the glory of our country. At that time, Singapore, the Federated Malaya States, Sri Lanka, Baluchistan, and Afghanistan were all part of India. That

is the India which is still in my mind. When any portion is removed from it and regarded as a rival to another part, that does not appeal to me. I think a philosopher should think that the world is his country, and all human beings are his brothers and sisters.

Having this orientation, do I have a life mission? No. Just like the jasmine bud which opens and offers the fragrance

of the jasmine flower, and the rose bud which opens and offers the fragrance of the rose, I am also a flower in the garden of God. I open and offer whatever fragrance I have, whatever beauty I have. That is my only mission. Then - facing death. It is inevitable, so I have no qualms about it. What about the future? It's an open book.



# Sweeping Dust

Steve Weckel

I am standing in an empty room. Not a room empty of people but a room empty of all those things which define it. This particular room had been defined as a kitchen sometime in the past; but at the moment we have removed all of the props which define this room as a "kitchen."

When there are no cabinets on the walls and there are no cabinets with stoves, refrigerators, and sinks built into them to define a space as "kitchen," this particular room has a feeling of strength. There is nothing within its four walls, ceiling and floor to restrict it, to bind it, to define what it is or what it could be. There is nothing in this room but me, a broom, a dust pan, and the debris left by removing all of those things which "central casting" had installed as props to define this room as "kitchen."

My intention is to sweep up the debris, and after the larger pieces have been disposed of I get down to the fine particles of dust that require the dust pan to be moved several times to accommodate the small amount of dust the broom picks up. Squatting to re-

lieve the muscles in my back and grasping the broom closer to its head make this task less tedious, and in that position I see very fine particles of the dust that I am sweeping floating up into the air, illuminated by the Sun.

We have all seen those magical particles of dust at one time or another. There is something about seeing tiny, glowing specks of "particulate matter" floating in the air, glowing in the Sun which causes time to stop; causes the Universe to pause in its enfoldment and allows our minds to glimpse infinite peace and beauty; to appreciate the "emptiness" of a room.

I stand up, dump the full dust pan into the garbage can gently and a whole galaxy of fine particles rise into the air and are illuminated by the Sun. The room is silent yet there is a cacophony of life ringing in its emptiness. I feel an inner joy of being a part of this room's emptiness. As I carry out the can filled with debris of the room's previous definition, I give thanks for a timeless moment shared within its walls with the particles of dust and the Sun.



# Wonder Journey With A Wandering Guru

Nancy Yeilding



Stepping down onto the hot runway surrounded by baked red clay earth and scrub brush, I walked slowly to the makeshift adobe terminal, scanning the clumps of people waiting for disembarking passengers and looking for a familiar form or face. As I walked I thought of the friends who had met me on each of my previous arrivals to India, even the first time, although then they had been known to me only by letter and photo. That first time I came with a sense of the unknown which carried both fear and wonder. But those of us traveling with Guru were greeted with such warm affection that India opened up to us like a mother welcoming her children.

Each succeeding visit has only deepened familiarity and friendship with an ever-growing sense of the world-wide family of the Guru. Ducking into the shadow of the adobe doorway, I found Guru standing there, conveying in an instant, with utter simplicity, an overwhelming sense of rock-firm stability and love despite his physical fatigue and fever.

With my bags stowed in the trunk of a friend's car, we were soon on our way. Driving into Coimbatore, and the next day from there to neighboring Trichur, I soaked into the beauty of the countryside, feeling my soul expand and take wings like the white egrets rising out of the flooded green rice paddies.

We arrived in Trichur on the day of Narayana Guru's mahāsamādhī. That evening Guru spoke in nearby Irinjalkuda to a group gathered in Nārāyana Guru's honor. As he spoke in Malayalam, I could only catch a phrase now and then but I could feel the calm attentiveness of the large audience to Guru's words that was creating an atmosphere of thoughtful peace. At one point I understood that he was speaking about the third verse of Daiva Daśakam, the same verse that we had studied at the Portland Gurukula when I visited there the night before leaving for India. We had discussed the vital importance of the blend of pragmatism and devotion in Nārāyana Guru's vision, and the sense of wonder evoked by even a small glimpse of his experience of reality.

After the meeting Guru told me that he had been making a distinction between cult and culture. The meeting had been opened by three women chanting Daiva Daśakam. Guru said that when a prayer becomes ritualistic that encourages the development of a cult mentality in which people are joined together by superimposed behavior patterns and mindsets. But as we go deeply into the meaning of Nārāyana Guru's words each of us is aided in understanding and living our own personal value systems, thus developing a culture of beauty, compassion and truth.

Later that evening as we sat outside under the moon and stars to escape the stifling heat inside, Guru said that he had begun developing this idea in classes given during his recent trip to Calcutta and Sikkim and would like to develop it more fully. As we talked quietly of other classes and works in progress, I was filled with a familiar sense of a limitless expanse opening before me, a sense of joy and optimism which comes whenever

I read or edit Guru's works, participate in his classes, or attempt to distill that same wisdom in my own words. Despite a power failure which meant a night of unbearable heat and mosquitoes, I was buoyed up by the gratitude which has become my familiar companion, bringing hope and stability.

The next day we rode from Trichur to Varkala on the Island Express. Whenever I make this trip I wish I could stop the train dozens of times to photograph the scenes of Kerala life which we pass, wanting to convey to friends and family in the United States the beauty of lush tropical growth - every possible shade of green punctuated by flowers of brilliant reds, yellows and pinks, rice paddies, lakes and inland waterways, coconut groves sheltering thatched adobe huts, red tiled traditional homes and concrete block houses symbolizing the import of Persian Gulf wealth and the accompanying poverty of aesthetic sensibility. In front of huts and in the courtyards of houses, children play contentedly, free of any sense of want, despite the total absence of brightly colored toys, while their parents also sit talking relaxedly.

Many scenes of Kerala agriculture are also seen, revealing every stage of rice cultivation from plowing to separating and setting in the small starts to harvesting and beating of the stalks to separate the grain. Coconut cultivation and the harvest of nuts for cooking oil and food (coconut is a prominent part of Kerala curries), the beating of husks for fiber and mats, and the weaving of palm fronds to make thatch for roofs and walls all attest to the importance of the coconut to Kerala economics as well as aesthetics.

Tea stalls also appear, where half a dozen men sit reading the many daily newspapers published in Kerala, an outgrowth of a high literacy rate and well-developed educational system; or a group is engrossed in an animated discussion of politics, Kerala's favorite obsession.

Beginning in his own lifetime and continuing to the present, Nārāyana Guru has been a potent force in Kerala society and politics. That potency derived from the purity of his example, uncompromised by partiality or self-serving activity. His compassion went out to the poor, the outcaste, the oppressed, but was not

thereby withheld from the rich, the elite, the oppressors. He lived his own teaching that humanity is one, based on his realization of the one Self as the Absolute. Also beginning in his lifetime and continuing to the present day, however, his name has been entangled in movements based on caste prejudice. Certain groups claim him as theirs and hold him up as a banner around which to cement group solidarity.

A slogan currently being touted which carries such implications is "the propagation of the culture of Nārāyana Guru." It is in response to the close-mindedness behind this slogan that Guru has been speaking about the difference between cult and culture. As we rode through the countryside where Nārāyana Guru lived and taught, Guru elaborated this idea more fully. He said: "If we are going to speak of Nārāyana Guru's culture, we need to ask how he lived, what institutions he founded (their purpose, not how they are operating now), and what his philosophy was so that we can distill the essence of it and apply it to our lives. Each of Guru's four sets of one hundred verses - Ātmopadeśa Śatakam, Daśana Mālā, Śiva Śatakam and Anubhūti Daśakam - represents a process of culturing. The first verse of each is a certain beginning point. When we go deeply into the meaning of each verse we are cultured by that process to arrive at the conclusion of the last verse. The last verse of Ātmopadeśa Śatakam states, 'Neither this, nor that, nor the meaning of existence am I, but existence, consciousness, joy-immortal.' Here Nārāyana Guru clearly refuses to identify himself with any one group. In fact, he sheds all identities except that of sat-chit-ānanda, the Absolute. When you go into the meaning of each verse in one of Guru's works you enter into an alchemy which transforms you. You do not become a replica of Nārāyana Guru but you do not remain as you were originally."

Guru explained that in his talk the night before he had spoken about two verses of Daiva Daśakam, emphasizing the difference between elaborate musical presentation of the verses, which fosters a ritual and a cult mentality because of the emphasis given to superficial detail, and soaking into the meaning

of each verse. He presented two verses of Daiva Dasakam as examples, the first being: "Ever having given us food and clothes and providing for all such needs, making us rejoice in our contentment, you are our only Lord." He talked of his recent trip from South to North India where all along the way he saw people working in fields growing and harvesting rice and jute, wheat and cotton. He said anna vastrādi (food and clothing) kept running through his mind, along with gratitude to the workers who are providing them to us all. When we come to see them not as our servants but as our benefactors, whose identity is not different from the universal factor of Benevolence, then we are becoming cultured.

He also spoke about the fifth verse: "You are the act of creation, the creator and the myriad variety of what is created; oh God are you not the very stuff of which everything is created?" Guru said it is important to note that the act of creation is given primacy as an on-going reality rather than a centralized creator initiating the world at a certain point in time. Individual aspects of creation are also given their place in the grand scheme. Then Nārāyana Guru asks us to take a leap with a totally new idea in theology - that of understanding God as not outside creation but as being the very substance of all. Brahman, the Sanskrit word translated as the Absolute, comes from the root word br̥hati which means something which encompasses. Brahman is thus to be understood not as a singular noun, a particular entity, but the collective noun which leaves nothing outside its scope. Such an understanding of the Divine does not conflict with scientific discovery when both are approached with an open mind. Once a man came to Nārāyana Guru with the argument that the universe was not supported by sat-cit-ānanda but by electromagnetic and gravitational forces. Guru asked, 'Is that not the same as ānanda (which means endless)?' Nārāyana Guru's deep contemplative experience of reality incorporated both the mystical and practical. When we use his verses to culture ourselves we come to share that experience more and more."

As we came near to Varkala, our destination, Guru added: "The East-West University does not exist as a

parallel university training people for jobs. It plays a very different role. Just as scientists need a laboratory that provides a protected or isolated environment in which to study anything from lasers to serums, the East-West University needs to stand apart in order to understand causes and effects most fully. We are not activists but we show the activists where to strike to create effective change. We do not define ourselves as Marxists, Rationalists, Indians or Americans, but as seers who have compassion for all."

After our arrival in Varkala, we walked from the Gurukula to the Brahmanavidyā Mandir. When I had left India two years previously, the pouring of the main pillars to support the roof was just beginning. Now we walked up wide stairs to the second floor under the high sloping roof rising to a circular apex. Inside I had the same experience of being lifted up to the infinite beyond which is generated by the ancient cathedrals of Europe. We walked down to the first floor to stand silently for a moment beside the carved śiva linga stone which marks the mahāsamādhi place of Nataraja Guru. As I stood there beside Guru, the thought suddenly came: "I have reached the center of my world." Flooded with a feeling of having crossed many bridges and having traveled many miles, I was surprised to find tears running down my cheeks with a profound sense of relief. Surrounded by the books of the library and the soft shades of dusk, the configurations of my personal history were momentarily swallowed by a timeless reality.

The next day I read out to Guru an editorial I had written about using the scheme of AUM given by the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad as a guide in our lives. Afterwards he spoke about how Nārāyana Guru emphasized that it is to be understood not as a static scheme but a schema motor. Guru elaborated: "It is an intersection of the epistemological (paired with the teleological) and the ontological. We are always moving in life from our alpha, our beginning, along the vertical axis to our omega, our culmination. But we live every point along the way in the here and now actualities of the horizontal. It is like a swimmer in a race who has a starting point and a goal, but at

every moment along the way he will be on the surface of the water."

I felt grateful for this analogy which gave one more dimension to my understanding of and capacity to explain this scheme which is so helpful in gaining a facility to deal with the contraries and contradictions within oneself, between oneself and others, or in any field of human thought or endeavor.

That evening a group of young men, some employed in the local bank and some students at the local college, came to see Guru for the first time, full of questions. Guru noted that in previous years people who came to see him were only interested in job recommendations, or his blessing on their finding a match for their son or daughter, etcetera; but that society has been changing and now more and more truth-seeking youngsters are coming and asking questions that are dear to him.

One young man asked about pre-determination, especially in reference to a spiritual path, wanting to know if it is preordained for only certain people to be interested in spiritual matters, adopt a certain lifestyle, or experience spiritual attainment. Guru pointed out that as the young man had been speaking, he had been unconsciously using certain hand gestures. He said, "When you say a certain word, you hold your hand in a certain way which is uniquely yours. Thousands of genetic imprints as well as your lifetime of experiences are all involved in those gestures which you are not even aware of. In that way we can say they are predetermined. But they are not predetermined by some outside factor. You carry it with you. On the end of a piece of wood, a match-maker places some material which will burst into flame when it undergoes friction. It is the nature or property of that material to do so. In the same way, the impact of the physical, psychological, biological and social laws which affect us is built into our nature. When you want to start a fire, you have a determination to strike a match. But there is no predetermination in the sense of so and so will strike a match at a certain time. You came here with the predetermination to have this conversation, but that is the determination of your own free will."

When one of the other young men questioned how Guru could be saying there both is and is not predetermination, Guru said, "This is one of the problems with your education. You are thoroughly trained to think everything has to be either/or." The young man responded, "But contradictions are not logical." Guru said, "There is a greater logic than the formal logic which you have been taught, which is dialectical logic, and in which contradiction is absolutely necessary. Dialectical logic has a long history in both Eastern and Western philosophy. It takes some effort to go deeply into the secrets of it, but it is very rewarding."

Another of the young men asked how this could all be applied to the common man. Guru replied, "To me there is no common man. Everyone is uncommon. I have no program that I want to impose on everyone. Wisdom cannot be democratized. If someone is satisfied with his life, don't bother him. Each person has his or her own niche. If you have an interest, if you come to me with questions, then I deal with you as a particular case. Each person has been differently made for billions of years and each follows a different path, so I say different things to each."

The first questioner had been practicing a kind of *sādhana*, a technique of concentrating on a flame, and wanted to know Guru's thoughts about the spiritual benefits of such practices. When Guru asked him what he had experienced he replied that he had gained increasing power of concentration and started seeing the flame in his dreams. Guru said that such practices do settle the mind, helping in the process of going from the many to the one. However, as the young man had recounted, the technique was physical and the results were at that level of experience, offering no real spiritual benefit since the very nature of the Absolute is that it is unconditional and can't be experienced.

The same young man wanted to know if sexual activity was a hindrance to the spiritual path. Guru replied that in the context of marriage and for two people who were sharing the same spiritual path and coming together in love, sex could be very beautiful and not a hindrance when not excessively sapping their

energy. He said that he had no moral strictures in mind, but that, "each person has elements deep within him, mostly unconscious, that can cause guilt and other negative reactions if he has sexual experiences outside marriage. In our own lower chakras we carry many influences which need to be contended with." When Guru mentioned that he taught those who came to him a way of sublimating the energy of the lower chakras, the young man asked what it was. Guru replied: "I am a wholesale merchant, not piecemeal. I need to feel that there is a long term commitment so things can be worked out over time. I need to know I will see a person again and again so they won't be left stranded. That is why we say a disciple should make a commitment for twelve years."

These questions took me back to the questions I had when I first met Guru twelve years ago. I had been exposed to the mass movement style of eastern philosophy brought to the west in which standard techniques are taught to all and the teacher is a distant object of projected feelings ranging from veneration to pathological fantasies of intimate psychic relations. In such an atmosphere, little scope is given for penetrating questions and the development of intellectual discrimination. Such movements play upon natural human needs for emotional succor and belonging to ensure moral and financial support for the group. Catching a ring of truth now and then, and having a full supply of youth's romantic illusions to fill in the gaps, I had invested a lot of my time and energy. But the serious questions of life persisted unanswered.

When I came to Guru, I found no movement to contend with, no demand for money or for anything. Instead I found a human being with whom a personal relationship was possible, yet in whom an uncommon measure of trust was evoked by the unique experience of love and compassion without any strings. There was no sense of transaction which is a normal part of other human relations. From the beginning, Guru asked and encouraged questions penetrating into psychology, physics, sociology, neurophysiology, art and music, as well as philosophy and mysticism, fostering intellectual as well as emotional wholesomeness in all those around him.

The dialogue which has continued from that day has been one of steady expansion in breadth and depth, exploring the mysteries and revealing the wonder of both the inner and outer world.

The next morning we went to Sri Narayana College at Chempazhanty where Guru had been asked to address the students of the psychology department. However, the whole school wanted to hear him and students and faculty filled the auditorium and stood in large groups at every window. After the talk (in Malayalam), we went to see the house where Narayana Guru was born. It is a large mud hut with thatched roof on a slight rise at the edge of a field of rice paddies. A small ashram sits at the entrance to the grounds which are landscaped with beautiful plots of plants and flowers and lily ponds surrounded by white sand. The swamis who live there maintain it as a pleasant and peaceful place to reflect on the Guru. Guru sat on the ledge around the house, framed by the doorway, just as he had sat at the doorway to Sankara's hut in the Himalayas when we traveled there in 1979. He conveyed such a sense of being at home and at peace that I was very touched with a quiet sense of timelessness.

Guru said, "This is the site of the causal factor for your having come to India." By the time of my first visit in 1979 I had been with Guru for six years.

Over that time, I had had the opportunity to study the teachings of Narayana Guru and Nataraja Guru through their own works and through Guru Nitya's example, classes and writings, and to experience that light as a transforming factor in my life. The original apprehensions I had about life in India had faded as my desire had increased to touch the soil where this wisdom was rooted. Although Narayana Guru had asked Nataraja Guru to complete his education outside India (at the Sorbonne in Paris) as the only way of escaping the ingrained caste-consciousness of Indian culture, other aspects of the same culture, equally ancient, had nourished the expansion of Narayana Guru's sense of Self into an unlimited identity with all, transforming him into a seer whose words speak across space and time to yearning seekers around the world.

# Uglyfin

Claire Nail

Once, before the oldest of us can remember, and before the mountain was old, an Enchanted Forest was born.

The trees grew tall, the ferns nestled in the shadows and violets opened their eyes in the first of spring.

In the middle of the forest lived a witch.

She was neither bad nor cruel but ugly enough to make the sun hide its eyes.

Her name was Uglyfin, though nobody knows who named her because for hundreds of years no one had looked upon her or heard her speak.

At the edge of the Enchanted Forest lived a kindly old woodcutter and his wife. They were known to all the children as Poppo and Nana for they loved all children and had none of their own.

Though they loved all the neighbor children, Poppo and Nana were very sad that they had no children of their own. Every night they lit a candle to the Mother of God, praying for a child.

One day while standing at the edge of the Enchanted Forest, Poppo heard the most beautiful bird song. Though his good sense told him the forest was dangerous, his ears told him to follow the bird just awhile. He could turn back before the middle of the forest where Uglyfin lived.

"Ah, what a beautiful song, dear bird," said Poppo. And the old man followed that song until he came to a hollow tree. In the tree, to his amazement, was something shimmering and golden.

Just as he was about to grab the gold, he heard a terrible cry. "Stop, thief!" cried the voice. Poppo turned around to look for the voice but he could see nothing.

"I'm sorry," he said, "I did not know that gold belonged to anyone. I am just a simple old man, I have no need for treasure."

"Nor do I, but what one has one must love, especially if one has no friends. What good is treasure without friends, but it is all I have, old man."

"You have no friends? How can that be?" Poppo wondered for everyone was his friend.

"Do you not know why I am hiding from you? I am the hideous Uglyfin. They call me a witch and run from me!" The voice sounded less terrible now and very sad.

"Are you a bad witch? Do you hurt children?" Poppo was a little afraid though he was a brave man.

"Never in my life have I hurt anyone, except by scaring them because I am so ugly..." said Uglyfin. "In fact, I have powers to do good magic, like make gold, but what use is gold except to comfort me a little. I guess I should give it away...I'm sorry I called you a thief. I recognize you now, you are kindly Poppo. I have watched you play with the children. How lovely your children are..."

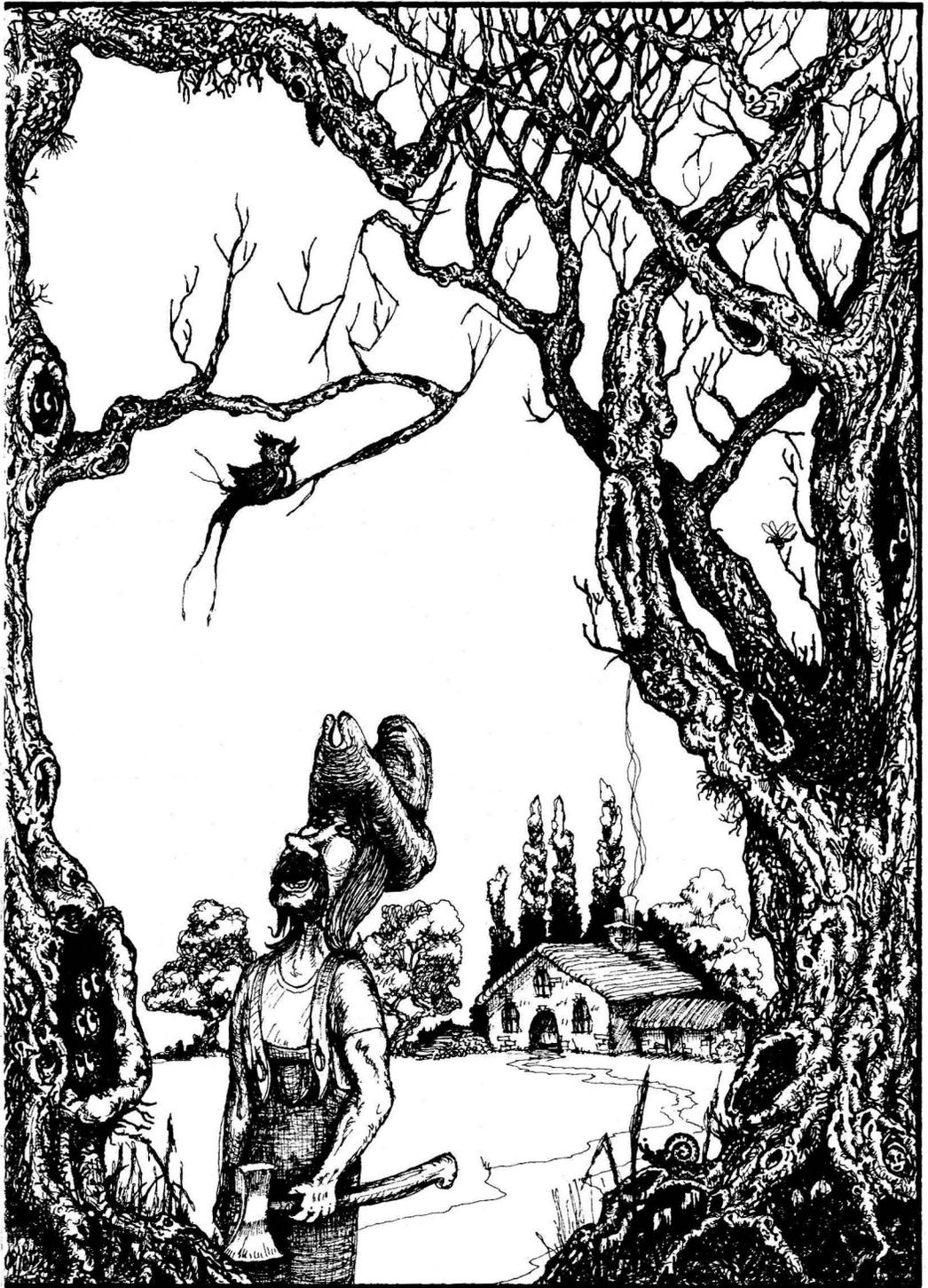
"Alas, they aren't mine. I have none," said Poppo.

Suddenly the witch hissed. "Quick, you must depart! I can feel myself becoming visible. Take the gold and buy toys for the children or whatever they need."

Poppo ran as fast as he could to the edge of the Enchanted Forest. His tearful wife stood in front of their cottage.

"Oh, Poppo! Are you all right? You went right into the forest and I was so afraid." She ran to him and embraced him.

"Dear Nana, there is nothing to be



afraid of. I have spoken with a kind old woman..."

"The witch!" she cried. "Oh, Poppo you will go blind."

"No, Nana, I will not go blind. She hid from me. She is kind. She gave me gold for the neighbors' children."

"I can't believe you, Poppo. Please stay away from there. Perhaps she hopes you'll return there so she can hurt you. Don't go back there ever!"

Poppo bought toys and sweets for all the children. He bought his wife a new apron and soon all the money was gone. But never did he forget the sad voice of Uglyfin, the loneliest voice he had ever heard.

When he told his wife about the witch she was at first afraid. "Oh, Poppo, she is trying to trick you! Stay away from that forest." But later, she who loved her husband so, was also touched by his story. "What can we do, Poppo? We too are lonely for we have no children, but at least we have each other and the neighbors and their children."

Soon they decided that they had nothing to lose. They would go into the middle of the forest to look for the lonely old witch and try to befriend her.

They were kind old souls yet they were almost ready to turn back as they approached the deepest part of the Enchanted Forest. Their old knees trembled with fright and they began to shake when they arrived at the hollow tree.

"Uglyfin. U-U-Uglyfin!" stuttered the old man, "We have come to see you."

For a long while they heard nothing. The old woman felt suddenly sad. "Oh, Poppo! She has died friendless in this lonely wood." She began to cry so compassionate was her good heart.

"How I would have liked to have seen her," cried the old man. "Perhaps it would not be so bad and I could look at her a moment and then rest my eyes by

closing them. No one should be friendless."

Suddenly they heard a rustle in the trees. There stood the ugliest witch the world has known. She was as twisted and gnarled as a dead tree and her skin was grey and slimy. She looked more like a toad than a woman. But Poppo and Nana were not afraid. In fact, they were so happy that the poor witch had not died that they ran to her rejoicing.

"Oh, Uglyfin, it's you, you aren't dead!" cried Nana. "At last I can thank you for my beautiful apron!" And she ran to embrace the poor witch who cringed a bit at the touch of a human being.

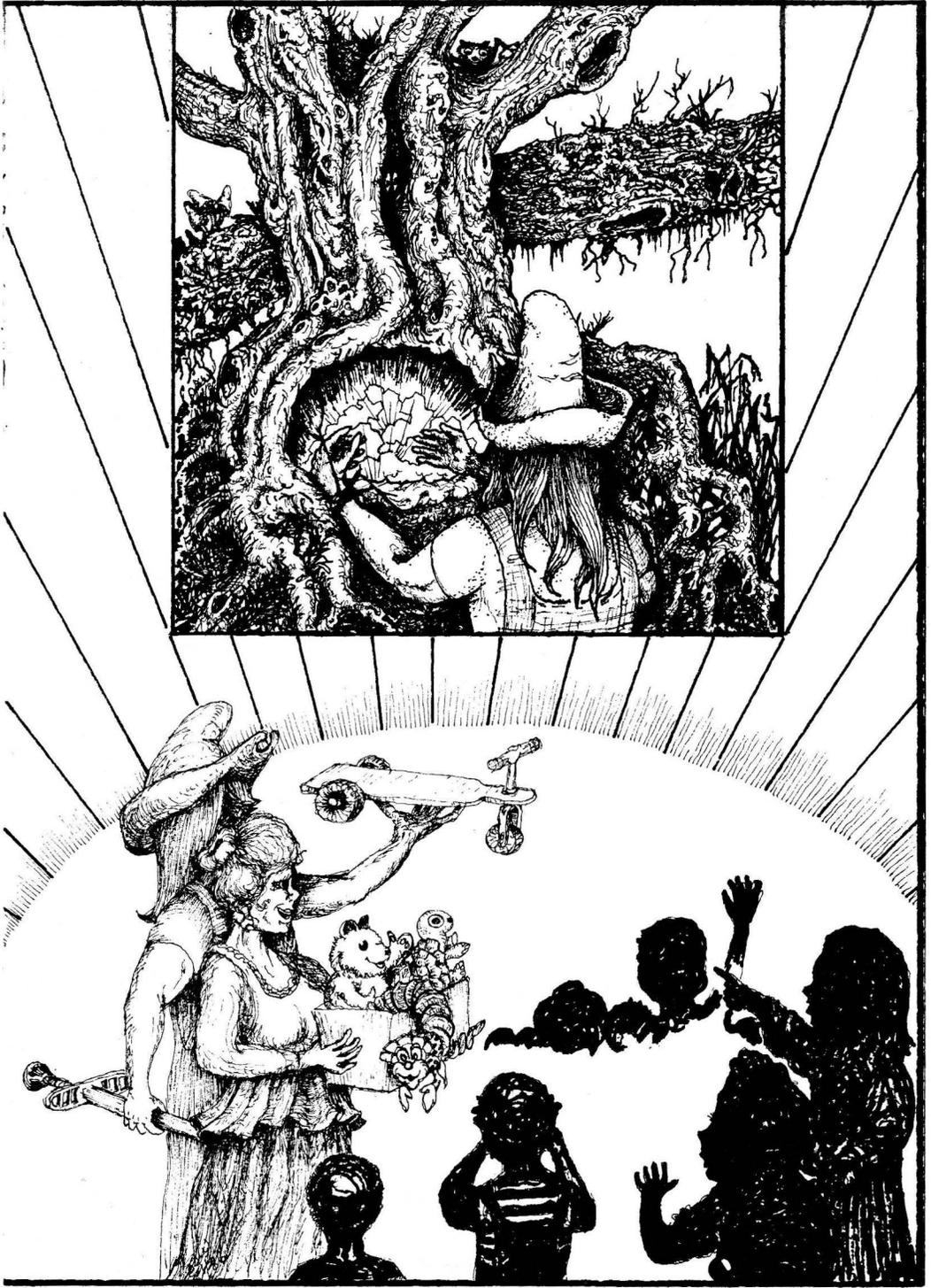
Again the forest was filled with the song of the wonderful bird, then another and another until the joyous music drowned out the witch's voice. "The first time I've ever been touched," said Uglyfin, if anyone could have heard her hoarse whispers through all that music.

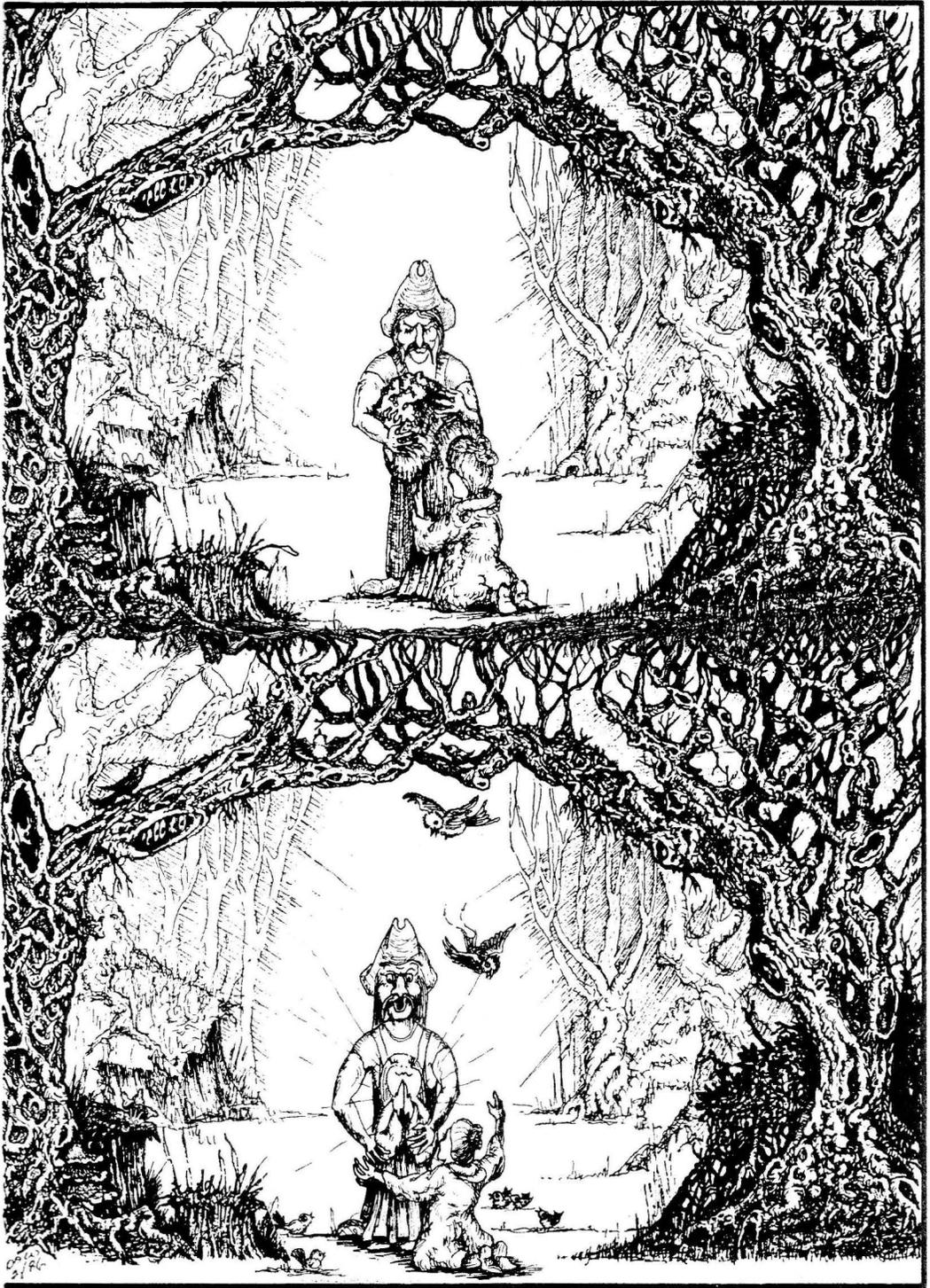
Nana and Poppo had both closed their eyes and were listening to the song of the joyous forest. When at last they again opened their eyes, they saw they were not holding Uglyfin but a beautiful golden-haired child.

"But where is Uglyfin?" asked Poppo in utter astonishment. "And who are you, lovely child?"

"Why, I am Uglyfin, daughter of the Forest..." she smiled. "The spell is broken. Your love has freed me from all ugliness. Now I am able to be loved because you could open your kind hearts even to an old witch."

They renamed her Forestina, because she was reborn in the forest, and she went to live with Poppo and Nana as their daughter. And so they got their wish to have a child of their own and they lived happily ever after.





# Symptom of a Disease

Muni Narayana Prasad

Humanity is passing through a critical stage in its history. Expecting the unexpected is normal with human life, but when this happens as a consequence of situations created by human planning then one starts to think of relating planned life with universal human values. Terrorism has always been one of the phenomena of this category and recently it has grown shockingly out of proportion. The explosion of the Air India jet over the Atlantic, ending the lives of more than three hundred; the hijacking drama that dragged on for about two weeks in Beirut in which human life was played with like a cat playing with a mouse; the huge war preparation that the U.S. made behind the scene of this drama; the ruthless killing by both the Tamil Tigers and the military in Sri Lanka; the Sikh terrorists of India who are prepared to do anything anywhere in the world: all are the latest developments of terrorism. Besides these, numerous other terrorist activities that are not deemed newsworthy are going on all the time. People everywhere, even the governments of superpowers, are afraid of terrorism and they do whatever is humanly possible to avert it. But the terrorists are never defeated.

In fact, terrorists have not become so out of choice. It is the helplessness they feel that arises from their situations in which human values are being torn asunder that causes them to take up terrorism as a last weapon for survival as human beings. Palestinians turned to terrorism only because they had to live as refugees in their own native land for two generations. Though it was decided by a U.N. resolution at the end of the second world war that the Palestine region should be divided into two states, one of the Jews and the other of the Palestinians,

the Jews overruled this U.N. resolution and declared the formation of a state of their own, Israel, which the U.S. recognized immediately. With the help of America, Israel seized the whole of Palestine. The Jews who had been scattered all over the world were brought back and reinstated in Israel. The Arabs were ousted from Israel with nowhere to go. They became a nation without a state. It is in the name of God, on the claim that Israel is the Promised Land, that the children of God, the Arabs, were denied the right to live on earth. The moral sympathy and physical help of America has aided Israel against the Arabs. Life in America depends on the regular flow of oil from the Middle East and American investment in the multinational transporting corporations in the Arab region is considerable. Naturally, also, the U.S. wants to have a strong military base in that region and Israel provides facilities for that. In such circumstances, America has to bear with whatever atrocities Israel commits with the use of arms that America has supplied. It is in such a miserable and helpless situation that the Palestinians took to terrorism for survival.

When Sri Lanka was a British Colony, Tamils from India were brought over as laborers for the estates owned by English planters. All of the Tamils were Hindus. The Buddhists who currently rule Sri Lanka want the progeny of these people to be ousted from the country, while the Tamils are struggling for survival against all odds. They have organized themselves under names and started terrorist and guerilla activities against Buddhists and the government.

The Sikhs in India have always had the dream of having a state of their own. As the richest members of the Sikh com-

munity are scattered all over the world, their struggle is a worldwide one, though their interest is in gaining secession from India. Here also religious fanaticism works behind the scene. Whatever propaganda the government puts out on the secular nature of the problem, the religious rivalry between the Hindus and the Sikhs is deeply rooted in the Punjab. In spite of the agreement the government has recently had with the Akalis, the political organization of the Sikhs, the terrorists are still active. If a faction is willing to abide by the government, it is only because they are not capable of combatting its iron hands. Sikhs are born militants and their religion itself compels its believers to always be armed.

Numerous other terrorist activities are going on in different parts of the world. Everyone curses the terrorists. Everyone is afraid of them. It is this aspect itself, the fear and hatred, that prompts people to resort to terrorism. If we try to find out the cause for which the terrorists are fighting, we can see a demand which is most fundamental and humanistic. It is only when the freedom to live is denied that terrorism is resorted to as a last straw. Though religious difference is there behind all these various terrorist struggles, it is not a religious interest that helps this difference grow to enmity. Religion has always been a tool of organized struggle, a struggle which would generally safeguard the vested interests of an individual or a few individuals. In the case of terrorism also, religion is made use of just to organize the struggle.

Religious affairs and political affairs have been promiscuously mixed up throughout the ages, especially by extremists. That is a result of the organized growth of religions which have attained proportions undreamt of by their founders. If we study the history of religions, we see that it has not been the interest or belief in fundamental doctrines but the greed for political power that has enabled religions to become more and more organized. It has been forgotten that religion and politics belong to two entirely different domains of interest in human life. The fundamental value of religion is avoiding emotion-

al conflicts and making the life of the individual peaceful. The aim of politics is ensuring physical security and the means of sustenance in the external circumstance called society in which man is destined to live. The political history of the world shows that the number of rulers who have strictly adhered to this basic value of political activities and ruled accordingly is very few. Whether kings or elected representatives of the people, the first priority of the rulers has been to safeguard their throne or chair, while the civic interests of the people received second priority. Of course, this has not always been the case; exceptions are many.

The accepted principle of the democratic system of the modern age is, "maximum happiness of the majority." A democratic attitude can never treat humanity as one. As a result, separatism will always be present with a democratic framework, especially in the large countries. The case of religion is entirely different. If religion has a generic end in view, it is, "Let the entire world be happy." The emotional content underlying religiousness is all-embracing. When religion is made use of for a political end, the mistake committed is that of confining an all-embracing and universal feeling to a narrow and closed circle of interest.

Here another difference between the age of the emergence and growth of religions and the present age has to be taken into account. Though every religion has a universal and open attitude, each expressed and formulated that attitude in living terms in a language and style natural to its prophet and the people around him, who were living in a particular cultural and geographic background. That does not mean that the teaching of a prophet has relevance only in that context, in the particular way it was presented. The world known to any one prophet was in those days very limited. Now the situation has changed completely. With the development of modern travel and communication facilities anything that happens to anybody anywhere has become a matter of concern for others anywhere in the world. Interrelation between peoples of different regions has become not only possible but necessary. Thus a

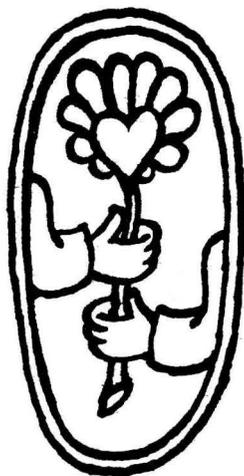
new culture which transcends all separatism is emerging from behind the scene. The religious affiliations of humankind also need to be revised and revalued in line with the changed situation. Otherwise the achievements of modern science will push human life forward as religious affiliations continue to pull it back.

While the scientific advancement calls for treating the entire human race as one cohesive unit, the existing political systems compel man to be a separatist. Thus a gap is becoming more and more pronounced there also. This inability of man to cope with his own achievement is only due to ignorance, and that puts him in a state of helplessness and dejection. Here and there certain high spirited ones try to cross over this widening gap through terrorism. Falling into a deep chasm and perishing there is their only achievement.

To save ourselves from this perplexing situation we have to go back to the wisdom of the seers who founded the religions in the ancient world and to the spokesmen of a universal and unitive attitude in the modern age, like Narayana Guru. Originally the word religion meant binding oneself to something. We should be willing to bind ourselves only to something that is valuable and that makes our

lives meaningful. This affiliation can be at the level of universal values or at the level of personal preference. In the latter sense, each one has one's own religion. In the former sense, everyone has the same religion, that is the search for happiness. In either case there is no place for religious rivalry. Rivalry becomes a phenomenon in religious life only because affiliation is not to the real spirit of the religion but to the external organized form of it and to its politicalization. It is from this ignorance that man and religions have to be saved.

In short, terrorism is not a disease that can be treated as a simple case. It is only an external symptom of a complicated sickness. A rejuvenation of the entire system is needed so that there will be no chance for such peculiar symptoms. A new awakening of the conscience of mankind in the wake of the latest developments and achievements in human life has to be effected. A new outlook with a holistic attitude which denies neither the external multiplicity nor the experiential unity has to be brought into being as the basis for a proper global education. Only in that way can mankind be saved from terrorism and similar symptoms of a sickly human conscience.



PRE-HOLOCAUST MEMOIRS

Oh my Lord,

There is a world  
on my shelf  
in the corner

The war comes on at seven,  
then again at ten.

In between,  
my soul is saved  
my pocket picked  
my washday cannonized.

That which is Most Holy  
is sold as a product.

"Recently-owned God!"  
"Low mileage!"  
"Financed with Low interest!"  
"On sale this Sunday only!"

That which is most Dispiteous  
is held in Vaunted Reveille.

"Courage is Killing! TA-DAH!!"  
"Feeling is Weakness! TA-DAH!!"  
"Don't worry,  
the Hero won't 'get it',  
this is a series!"

Music rings out: "TA-DAH!!"

"Get yourself OUR HERO  
and you can be a series too!"

Oh my Lord,

When do I pause  
for station identification?

Oh my Lord,

Is that the Reality,  
my Self the Illusion?

No use checking the news report —

The war came on at seven, somewhere,  
then again at ten, somewhere.

And my soul, pockets and washday  
got about the same treatment.

All of the faces were serious,  
all the blood red

As sad little comicstrips  
passed for Valid Reality

In that world  
on my shelf  
in the corner.

# East-West University Seminar

## Peter Oppenheimer

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

#### Third Dimension: International Peace

In the third session of our workshops we determined to make the leap from the intimate subject of inner peace and the ever-present issue of interpersonal harmony to the global riddle of international relations. This did not prove to be an easy leap. We were all intent on not forsaking the experiential and practical foundation upon which we had erected our reflections regarding personal and interpersonal peace. And yet Kabul, Managua, Moscow and even Washington D.C. seemed worlds away from where we were sitting and from the issues with which we each were dealing in our day to day lives. In fact, the tenor of the first hour of the session can best be characterized as floundering.

Sometime during the second hour a dramatic transformation in perspective took place, and we began to identify with the roots of international conflict within our own hearts and minds. It was this revelation, at once disturbing and exhilarating, that also reside in our same hearts and minds. Our fruitful exploration followed along the lines of first postulating the inner roots of war, secondly envisioning the outlines of a world at peace, and thirdly examining approaches which could effectively uproot the causes of war.

When we began reflecting upon the roots of war, a shocking revelation surfaced. In addition to the well-publicized horrors of war, it seems that war also serves many "positive" functions as well. For the purposes of our discussion we distinguished between these "pos-

itive" functions, for which alternative outlets need be found, and the "pathological" causes of war, for which education and therapy are necessary in order to eradicate or at least minimize our warlike tendencies.

It is disturbing yet important to realize that war has in fact been an activity that men and women have played and loved. They have also hated it, but if we are ever to eradicate war, it's crucial that we recognize what it is about war that satisfies various individual and collective desires. War provides moments of individual exhilaration, camaraderie, leadership, nobility, courage, glory and heroism that other human activities seldom match. One aspect of war that is exploited by political leaders the world over is that external danger binds a group together, reduces personal animosity and promotes self-sacrifice. A society surrounded by "enemies" tends to be unified and strong; whereas a society without "enemies" tends to be more divided and lax. Another social and psychological function fulfilled by war addresses the universal hunger for initiation rituals marking the passage from boyhood and ties to the mother to manhood and identity with leading males of the community. Related to this is the fact that war provides a sense of divine purpose (eradicating evil) and gives meaning to one's life.

Other "positive" functions served by war were suggested during our workshop discussion and included boosting the economy, a sense of renewal, research which often ushers in new tech-

nology, population control, "productive" use of criminals, exposure to other cultures, and entertainment. Certainly none of these so-called benefits of war would seem to outweigh its horrors, and yet any plan to uproot causes of war must take these factors into consideration and devise alternative means of satisfying each one. Such a process would lead to what peace activist Robert Fuller refers to as "a better game than war."

In addition to the above list of what could possibly be called positive causes of war, there are an equal number of what can be seen as pathological causes of war. Perhaps the single most universal and insidious habit contributing to the perpetuation of war is the way that foreigners or outsiders are stereotyped and despised. In almost all cultures throughout history the human baby is taught to trust its familiar group and distrust strangers. Children are taught suspicion or even animosity toward those with strange language, clothes, religion, food, eyes, skin, etc. "Enemies" the world over (and both sides of every conflict) are categorized in the minds and propaganda of their opposition in similar ways - treacherous, cruel, brutal and frequently subhuman.

This enmity is fueled by the deluding psychological dynamic which Carl Jung referred to as "projection of our own shadow." That which most disturbs and threatens us in our own "shadow," the darkness we will not acknowledge in ourself and thus project on others and despise them for it. There is a particular energy of unforgiving hatred surrounding the qualities that we try to keep from seeing in ourselves and instead find in others to an exaggerated degree which also obscures the good qualities in the other.

An example of this projection in U.S.-Soviet relations is provided in an interview with Robert Fuller reprinted in the Autumn 1983 issue of In Context magazine:

"The Russians are our shadow. We project on them what we fear in ourselves, and they project on us what they fear in themselves. The Soviet's paramount social values have to do with providing a sufficiency for everyone, with some rough ideal of material equality;

so they guarantee housing and education and medical care and safety in the streets. Our ideals have less to do with the substance of equality and more to do with the process of individual realization - with freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and so on.

"Each side feels vulnerable when attacked for falling short of its principles. For example, when we were criticized for denying Blacks the vote twenty years ago, we felt embarrassed and exposed. Similarly, the Russians squirm when instances of privilege are pointed out. Neither society yet lives up to its own ideals, and each projects on the other its own failures to do so and denounces it accordingly."

In an article entitled "The Archetypal Roots of War" Virginia Hoyte points out the following:

"Shadow projection is epidemic on a national scale, and sooner or later almost invariably invites hostilities. The true richness and multiplicity and humanness of the identified enemy is denied or ignored. The unconscious need to see only their threatening and sinister aspects - which usually are also present - is too great. There is always some truth in what the shadow projection finds, but inevitably exaggerated because it leaves out any impressions that contradict what it needs to see. It also fails to notice that the very same aspects it detests in its enemies are present in its own policies and spheres of influence.

"We in the United States are now demonizing the Soviet Union to a frightening degree. Our present leaders blatantly, and with incredible unconsciousness, project onto the USSR what they cannot recognize in themselves, just as rulers of the Communist Bloc have been doing to us for years. Quotations from two of our Presidents help to show this process in action. Former President Nixon writes in his book, The Real War, 'It may seem melodramatic to treat the twin poles of human experience represented by the United States and the Soviet Union as the equivalent of good and evil, light and darkness, God and the Devil: yet if we allow ourselves to think of them in that way, even hypothetically, it can help clarify our perspect-

ive on the world struggle.'

"President Reagan in a speech to the evangelicals last spring declared, 'We must reject those simpleminded appeasers who declare themselves above it all, and who label both sides equally at fault, who ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, who simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove themselves from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil!'

"This is the archetype that divides the world into 'us' and 'them.' It sees all evil as out there, and all good as within its own borders... Neither side seems able to glimpse or acknowledge the monstrous, brutal side of their own shadow that continues to make nuclear bombs that would kill millions upon millions of innocent men, women and children. Each side rationalizes its arma-

the outlines of a world at peace with itself. Somewhere it was written that would-be peacemakers who have an answer to the question, "What would I do if peace broke out?" are apt to be more effective in their work.

For the most part, the outlines of a world at peace were developed in our previous workshops on inner personal peace and interpersonal peace (see preceding three issues of Gurukulam). On this evening we closed our eyes and allowed ourselves to merge into peace and allowed images of a world at peace to arise. After this exercise, people spoke of envisioning a dissolution of borders, of a world in which differences were celebrated rather than suspected, of harmony with the natural world, of international peace gardens, of the universal emulation of models such as Gandhi, Buddha, Jesus, Thoreau, Sadat and the U.S. children who have



ment buildup as merely needed defense without realizing that these armaments are a totally ineffective defense against that which most disturbs and threatens them - their own shadow."

Other pathological roots of war which were mentioned during our workshop discussion were injustices such as: racism; imperialism and militarism; greed and hoarding; a hierarchical approach to society whereby a number of dominant aggressive males take charge; a fascination with power; the desire to test various diabolical inventions; an exaggerated territorial imperative; a divisive competitive system of education; the desire to force one's opinions on others; and the notion that to be feared is to be more secure.

Before concluding our discussion with an examination of ways in which we might begin in our own lives to uproot the numerous causes of international strife, we paused to envision some of

gone to Russia to promote peace, and of a prevailing atmosphere of "live and let live."

The current threats from war are as dark as the promise of peace is bright. A growing number of people throughout the world are yearning to know what we can do both individually and collectively to reduce the threat and achieve the promise. For this to occur a significant number of human beings need to understand the patterning in their own minds that throughout history has led to war. Only when this awareness spreads and there begin to be changes in the way groups see and treat "outsiders" can we realistically expect to actualize the dream of world peace. Ultimately the notion of "outsiders" itself dissolves as we learn to see our self in all and all in our self. Again a quote from Robert Fuller illuminates the extent to which this process of reconditioning can go:

"The key is finding what you love in what you hate. You might admit that you sometimes hate the Russians, for example, but if you can remember what it is you love within all that and use it as a handle, you can hold your hatred in its proper, subordinate place. Until you know what you love in what you hate, your hatred can assume command value over your behavior. But when you've found what you love and can maintain it as a clear vision, it becomes possible to surround your hatred and get past it.

"The minute you find what you love in someone else, you're bigger yourself and stronger; you're more powerful. That will be, I think, the meaning of power in the 21st century. It's power that comes from the completion of self, from the incorporation into your behavioral repertoire of the other person's (or culture's) secrets' . . . We need our enemies in order to complete ourselves.

"It is interesting to trace the first stages of this process. As the sense of threat diminishes, we redesignate our former 'enemies' as 'adversaries.' With the first hint of positive mutual value, 'adversaries' become 'rivals,' a term which acknowledges each as a secret teacher of the other. And then 'rivals' recognizing their mutual dependency come to see themselves as 'partners.' "

All this is not to say that establishing world peace requires nothing more than this shift in perspective. The second half of the formula is the active compassion that naturally flows from a sincere identity of the self with the "other." Pope John stated this very simply by declaring, "If you want Peace, work for Justice." To do this work, we Americans must face the fact that we personally benefit (at some levels) from the disproportionate distribution and exploitation of resources which is at the heart of much war-like tension. Some thought needs to be given to how each of us can minimize the amount of injustice that arises as a natural consequence of our patterns of consumption. Once we stop placing the enemy archetype onto other human groups, we can move it instead to the common enemies of all humankind: nuclear war, pollution of the planet, inequality and hunger.

Another corollary that arises natur-

ally from the vision of identity discussed above is a redefinition of the concept of security. Currently the philosophy of so-called deterrence which is fueling our massive arms build-up implies that we can increase our national security by reducing the security of our neighbors. Our international relations or "foreign policy" seem to be based less on distribution of goods than on threats of "bads." In fact, just as it is our insecurity which can lead us to strike out at our projected source of fear, by increasing the insecurity of our "enemies" we increase the likelihood of escalated conflict. Real security, whether in a person or a nation, is a function of a consolidation of fundamental inner values. In an article entitled "Real Security" Amory and Hunter Lovins concluded:

"Our nation's basic strategic assets include a freedom of expression that shields us from ideological invasion by exposing concepts to the critical scrutiny of an informed public; an ecosystem much of whose once unique fertility can still be rescued from degradation; a diverse, ingenious, and independent people; and a richly inspiring body of political and spiritual values. To mature within these strengths, which are more fundamental and lasting than any inventory of weaponry, will require us to remain inwardly strong, confident in our lives and liberties no matter what surprises may occur. This in turn will demand, in the spirit of our political traditions, a continuing American Revolution which expresses in works a sincere faith in individual and community effort. It was that faith which inspired our Republic, long before strategists became preoccupied with the narrower and more evanescent kinds of security that only a faraway government could provide. It is that faith today, the very marrow of our political system, which alone can give us real security."

Undoubtedly one of the most confounding stumbling blocks to the radical establishment of international peace is the widespread (if not universal) feeling of hopelessness. The conventional wisdom states that the problem is too large and complex to ever be resolved. The thinking is that war has always been with us and always will be. I must admit that

I myself felt resigned to this view until recently. One of the primary factors which began to break up what I now feel was simply a log-jam or morbidity in my thinking was a passage I read from an interview with Robert Fuller. When the interview was shared with the other "Dimensions of Peace" workshop participant, a similar illumination and sense of promise became evident in the minds of others too.

"It's illuminating in approaching war to look at the histories of some other human scourges such as illiteracy, slavery and hunger. A thousand years ago the only persons who knew how to read were priests and the very wealthy, and it was believed at the time that you could not learn to read unless you were close to God, unless you were a priest or else rich enough to have a tutor. This special knowledge was hoarded and transmitted selectively from elite to elite. Gradually though it dawned on people that anyone who went through a certain process could learn to read. Through new institutions for literacy, called schools, and then via universal compulsory education, a great transformation occurred: from the idea that anyone could learn to read to ultimately the idea that everyone learn to read and write.

"This is a prototypical example of what I call a psychotectonic shift. It is not a shift in genetics or biological evolution; it is a shift of our deepest assumptions about ourselves, a shift in what we take for granted, in what we think we are capable of... It is a reconceptualization of what it is to be human - a transformation of our 'self-model'; and it projects a shift in human destiny with a full range of legal, political, economic, social and spiritual consequences.

"A psychotectonic shift with profound implication for mankind was the one surrounding slavery. For thousands of years it was considered a natural thing, if you could manage it, to enslave other people. Sometime about the eighteenth century, in England and in Europe, significant numbers of people began to raise doubts about the justification of one human being owning another. By mid-nineteenth century the issue came to a head in America, and what was still a widespread practice rapidly became totally unacceptable and outlawed. As decades

followed, instances of slavery around the globe were eradicated, so that now it is essentially nonexistent. This does not mean, of course, that all exploitation has ceased. Someday 'wage slavery' will undergo a similar transformation.

"These shifts in the shape and structure of the world mind are what I am calling psychotectonic shifts. Winston Churchill said, 'We shape our buildings; then they shape us.' Just as our architecture shapes physical space, which in turn shapes our movement and behavior, so too there is a psychotectonics, created by us, that thereafter shapes our thought and action. Psychotectonics is the invisible 'architecture' of the world moral 'space.' And although often appearing as given and rigid, it is in fact quite malleable. It is we who create it and we who change it. This is the real power of this concept: we begin to take into consciousness, and assume responsibility for, powers we have unknowingly abdicated."

The workshop session which had begun with frustration and pessimism came to a close with a feeling of involvement and hope. We felt a growing understanding for the psychodynamics of a collective consciousness which held within itself all the keys to both war and peace. We no longer felt outside the collective consciousness nor removed from the keyboard that orchestrates its tunes. We realized that the process of evolution, the process of the history of consciousness, the process of the planet itself was leading us and millions of others to ask these questions and feel these aspirations. This sense of being a part of something inconceivably big inspired us to be still and tune ourselves to this planetary mind. The emphasis shifted from the urge to control and change all the things that are wrong to the desire to cooperate with the process of the divine consciousness which is within each of us, which unites all of us and which transcends even the totality of us.

This sense of connectedness which we were feeling was a very appropriate jumping off point for our following week's session, which was to explore and cultivate the meaning and experience of Spiritual Peace. The report on that session will appear in the next issue of the Gurukulum.



# Nitya Chaitanya Yati on the Gita

Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

The Bhagavad Gita is a scripture of infinity, a universal gospel of right thinking, doing and being. "It is only incidental that the Gita was written in India," and "its subject matter has no geographical or ethnic limitations," says Nitya Chaitanya Yati. And Sri Aurobindo declares: "Its teaching is universal, whatever may have been its origins." We are no doubt baffled by the Himalaya of Gita exegesis that teases and challenges and invites the student to make the climb, now in one direction, now hair-pin fashion in the opposite direction, and presently negotiating every direction - *viśāda*, *sāṅkhya*, *yoga*, *jñāna*, *karma*, *bhakti*, *Rāja Vidyā*, *Rāja Guhya*, *sannyasa-tyaga Kshetra-Kshetrajañā* and so on until at last, reaching the heights, Everest itself (XVIII,66), the aspirant receives Krishna's supreme word and his sovereign assurance: "*mā śūcha* (Have no fear! Do not grieve! Do not despair!)."

It was Śankara perhaps who, for the first time, commented at length and in depth on the Gita and raised it to the level of the triune scripture, *Veda-Upaniṣad-Brahma Sūtra*, and made it eternal human drama and an eternally relevant guide to liberation and right action. A hundred or more commentaries have appeared, yet while the Gita's heartbeats are heard as distinctly as ever, nobody has quite wrested the heart of its mystery. Although we are all so many Arjunas perched at the center of Life's Battle, each is moved by an agony, a perplexity, a *viśāda*, rather uniquely his own. The Arjuna in each of us makes a desperate appeal to the omnipresent Krishna of the Gita. And the commentators - Śankara, Rāmānuja, Mādhva, Dhyāneshwar, and (in our own times) Tilak, Sri Aurobin-

do, Gandhiji, Vinoba - have been the needed paracletes bridging the distance between each caught in his own predicament and the Lord of the Gita.

Of the latter-day commentators, Nataraja Guru, direct disciple of Sree Nārāyana Guru, has a place of his own. His elaborate commentary was issued by Asia Publishing House twenty years ago, but it has been out of print for quite some time. Now, in the massive and finely produced book under notice, the Gita reappears with Nataraja Guru's English translation of the verses along with word for word glosses. Of equal significance is Swami Nitya Chaitanya Yati's own commentary, mainly in the form of a sustained dialogue between a modern Arjuna (or student: it may be you or me!) and the modern elucidator or teacher of the Gita (Nitya himself). It was in 1970 that Swami Nitya Chaitanya Yati gave a talk on the Gita to the Theosophical Society at Portland, Oregon, and the next year he taught the Gita at Portland State University. The present work has arisen out of those exciting and fascinating teaching sessions, each a complex of exposition, explication and answers to questions; and may be expected to take its place among the other classical exercises in exegesis. Structured as a contemporary dialogue between student and teacher that has its interpenetrating affiliations with the original Arjuna-Krishna *samvāda*, Nitya Chaitanya's has a distinctive structural aptness and immediacy. We often have the feeling that it is ourselves that play Arjuna's role. Krishna, too, is sometimes content to make Nitya his spokesman, his mediator, his paraclete.

Almost at the very beginning, Nitya gives us a table which reveals, as it

were, the bone-structure of the Gita: Arjuna speaks 85 verses, and Krishna answers with 574. For the rest Sanjaya speaks 40, and Dhritarāshtra only the opening sloka. Arjuna asks 38 questions, and the Lord answers them all. In traditional dialectical terms, Arjuna is the purvapakshin (or anterior sceptic), and Krishna is the siddhāntin. The argument has to zig-zag a good deal, and sounds repetitive and even contradictory at times. But on closer scrutiny it will be seen that all is organically - or architecturally - held together, the eighteen chapters being arranged, in Nitya's words, "as spokes on the hub of brahmavidya." Or, call the Gita an 'arch': "the first and last chapters rest on the horizontal actualities of life, while the ninth and tenth chapters have reference to pure and vertical values." There is an ascent from the 1st to the 9th, and a symmetrical descent from the 10th to the 18th. Nitya can use the right images to reinforce his meaning.

I have been privileged to know Swami Nitya Chaitanya Yati for about fifteen years. We have stayed together in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, New Delhi, and at Ban Nivas at Naini Tal, basking in both places in the sunshine of Sri Surendranath Jauhar's hospitality. For Nitya, it has been a remarkable transformation: from a would-be soldier in the Indian army to the reality of spiritual ministry in both the old and the new worlds. Nitya has a well-stocked mind and an unflinching sense of humor. He is a marvelous story-teller and he can mesmerize children whether young or old, into a responsive frame of mind. His moorings as Head of the Nārāyana Gurukula and President of the University of Brahmavidyā may be in Kerala, but his is verily a global ministry: he is now in India, now in Malaysia, now in USA or Europe, now in Australia, and presently back in India. With his seraphically free and unified consciousness, he is at home everywhere; and no wonder his discourses too have this taste of universal humanism.

The Gita is the great and unique Indian scripture that has come down to us through 2000 years or more. As Nitya discourses on the various strands

of thought, speculation and argument, he brings into the discussion ancient and modern thought in its diverse formulations. He presents Krishna's teaching in the light of the lives of other messiahs. What's the difference between sannyāsa and karma yoga? Nitya cites the examples of Gautama Siddhartha and Jesus Christ:

"Having found nothing greater than nibbāna, the Great Liberation, he (the Buddha) lived the life of a renunciate. He typifies sannyāsa. Jesus of Nazareth found his self-identity with God and guided all his actions on that sense of identity... 'Thy will be done and not mine'. He typifies the highest form of the unitive way of action."

The reference to the aswatha tree in Chapter 15 is linked up with the cosmic tree in Kaṭha Upaniṣad and the plant of heavenly growth mentioned in Plato's Timaeus. In his comparative sweeps, thinkers so various as Marx, Sartre, Bergson, Galton, Spinoza, Einstein, Karl Popper, Jaspers, Lao Tse, Suzuki, Jusserl, Freud, and a host of others contribute to the richness of the argument. It is not a question of 'dropping names,' it is the merging of the different streams of human thought in the perennial ocean of the Gita.

It is not possible, nor is it necessary, to follow the dialectic from canto to canto, or verse to verse. Experiential wisdom and spiritual largesse are spread over these 500 pages, and the reader loses and finds himself again and again. The standpoint is basically advaitic or unitive. Nataraja Guru often takes us in hand, and Nitya's own nylon threads bind the Gita and its message to the student. One reaches at last the Lord's supreme word, Param vachah. The disciple is exhorted to become one with the Divine, abandoning all else. After citing from Narayana Guru, Nitya interprets the 'charama sloka' thus:

"Leaving all dharma is negative and taking refuge in the Absolute is positive. Both these are happening simultaneously. In the highest sense, nothing is happening. It is only like waking up from a dream."

For those not wholly committed to advaita, the Aurobindonian gloss is perhaps the more satisfying:

"And now comes the supreme word

and most secret thing of all, guhyata-  
man, that the Spirit and Godhead is an  
infinite free from all Dharmas and  
though he conducts the world according  
to fixed laws and leads man through his  
Dharmas yet the Spirit and Godhead  
transcends all things; and if we too can  
cast away all dependence on Dharmas,  
surrender ourselves to this free and  
eternal Spirit, unafraid and ungrieving,  
accept only his guidance, then that is  
the truest, the greatest release..."

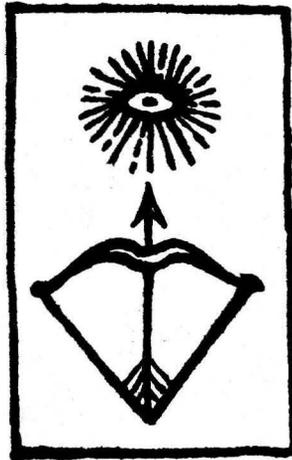
In conclusion, for a massive com-

mentary weighted with so many techni-  
cal terms and purposive discussions,  
the Dialogue (Arjuna and Krishna as  
well as that of their present-day proto-  
types, the Student and Nitya Chaitanya)  
has an engaging and enlightening quality  
for Krishna and Nitya gently lead us on,  
and we too can say at the end, echoing  
Sanjay himself:

"Thus have we heard this wonder-  
ful Dialogue between Nitya and the Stu-  
dent, and between Krishna and Arjuna,  
and we feel fulfilled and grateful."

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\*The Bhagavad Gita: A Sublime Hymn of Yoga composed by the ancient seer,  
Vyāsa; translated from the Sanskrit by Nataraja Guru; with explanatory dialogue  
by Nitya Chaitanya Yati (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, pp. xv+472. 1981,  
\$25.00).





# Musical Mandalas

Scott Teitsworth



Most musicians of our rational age believe that music is constructed solely by the mind. A composer takes a theme or a sequence of notes, amplifies and extends them through known rules of composition or the calculated breaking of such rules, and writes out the finished product. Some refinement is done by the 'ear,' which is merely a comparative organ for judging pleasant or unpleasant reactions to sound. Such a composition's inspiration emerges from the composer's subconscious collection of patterns and experiences, and is meaningful to others by its resonance with their corresponding mental constructs.

This of course is the way most music is composed. But it is not the whole story. The few examples we have of truly transcendental compositions demonstrate the fallacy. These pieces exhibit an inspiration which springs from a much deeper source than personal experience, and affect us as listeners by revealing to us regions beyond our subtlest imaginings. Their effect on us is uplifting because we are actually taken out of the context of our mental constructs and freed for a few moments from the gilded prison we fashion for ourselves out of thoughts, emotions and actions. The materialist theory of art omits or at least devalues these great works of history by refusing to recognize what we call intuition, that is, 'teachings from within.' The human mind is no

more the center of the universe than the Earth is, and it is time to outgrow such theories. Earth and mind are just tiny specks whirling amidst unimaginable vastness.

So where is this music that so inspires us with the challenge of the infinite? Most often it is produced from the contemplative depths in secret, performed in private, and left unrecorded. It is an expression of the bipolarity of man and the Absolute; writing it down may disrupt this equilibrium. We are most fortunate that at least a distillation of this musical experience has been recorded for us by the master composers of history. One man in particular was so disciplined and well-schooled in composition that he could write out this divine music even as he was flooded with such intense bliss that his body and mind were literally dissolving. Ludwig van Beethoven spent his lifetime translating the heavenly music he was blessed to hear within himself into the physical substantiality of notes and their imprints on paper. Where others have accepted such blessings as their own, Beethoven was moved to share his with humanity as a whole. He was conscious from early on of a special role bequeathed him by what he called God to share his inspiration and clearly felt an intimate closeness with the personified Absolute. Such intimacy did not spare him from intense suffering, which may be the lot of all who try to embrace and possess the Absolute rather

than allow it to fly away at its own rhythm. But we are so much richer for it.

Beethoven's suffering is an important element of his work, but what is often misunderstood is that it is not a suffering from the vicissitudes of the world or the tragic side of nature. It is the suffering of a fragile body overwhelmed by titanic inspiration, unable to contain it all within its psychophysical bounds. Spectacular bliss bursts from every seam of Beethoven's music, and his sadness was only that earthly instruments were such miserable failures at reproducing the celestial music he heard within. His suffering is akin to the tribulations of many great saints, in that it serves to prove that those who attain these glories are humans like us, not a special category of person we can never be. The message is that we can attain the same beatitude. Modern fundamentalist Christianity, by claiming Jesus Christ as the only Son of God and therefore not human, has destroyed this element of hope in our ultimate divinity and perfectability, and rerouted the Christian path to God through its cash registers. Beethoven, with his well-documented human failings, will always appeal to us as a fellow traveller. But the scenes of heaven that leap from his music reveal the same potentiality made manifest as Christ once proclaimed.

The story of Beethoven's battle to accept and translate this inspiration has made for many interesting biographies. But truer by far than the accounts of contemporaries and musical historians is the autobiography written in the music itself. The chronology is clear. Early in his compositions divine energies appear as momentary episodes which intrigue but do not transform the composer to any great extent. Through the middle period Beethoven struggles to comprehend and incorporate greater and greater floods of energy, at once striving to raise himself and his instruments to their splendor and to capture their beauty for his fellow earthlings. His awareness of this task is entirely conscious, though somewhat immodestly stated through a contemporary: "Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy, the wine which inspires one to new generative processes, and I am the Bacchus

who presses out this glorious wine for mankind and makes them spiritually drunken... Well I know that God is nearer to me than to other artists; I associate with Him without fear; I have always recognized and understood Him and have no fear for my music - it can meet no evil fate. Those who understand it must be freed by it from all the miseries which the others drag about with themselves." The statement is not so outrageous when seen in the context of Beethoven's world, with its dearth of quality artists and a superstitious fear of God. In any case, the music of his middle period has been understood by the world and is greatly loved. Virtually all of nineteenth century music was based on it, or at least freed by it to explore new territory.

Beethoven's late music, however, has only recently been appreciated. It reveals a beatific contemplation and universal wisdom that the musical world has yet to surpass. It is the summation and final analysis of Beethoven's long struggle to embrace God, but it makes few concessions any more to the ordinary man. That was done earlier. Now Beethoven is steadily forging ahead into uncharted realms, and they are far outside our everyday mentality. He is the philosopher who can sit with God and ask probing questions in the manner of a true sisya or disciple. We are hearing more than Beethoven's experience of this state, we are presented the actual dialogue in all its subtlety. Divinity is pouring into Beethoven and it is faithfully and brilliantly recorded. We must listen to this music in an entirely new way to appreciate its profound meditations. Its significance was ignored for 100 years, until the Hungarian composer and philosopher Bela Bartok began to explore this celestial landscape that is opened up only through intuition and cannot be approached by logic and cleverness alone.

We will leave an examination of Beethoven's greatest works for the next issue of Gurukulum. Our concern now is a more useful model of the creative process, one that can adequately explain the appearance of the transcendental in art. Fortunately, Nataraja Guru and G.H. Mees have already provided a mathematical scheme for understanding

creativity and its dialectical elements of humanity and divinity. Mees' scheme, which is drawn from sources of Traditional Psychology, is given below.

ELEMENT	REALM	CHAKRA
SUN	BEING - Pure Consciousness	LOTUS
MOON	Reflected Consciousness	AJNA (3rd eye)
ETHER	Intuition - Spirit	THROAT (word)
AIR	Higher Mind	LUNGS
FIRE	Lower Mind - Digestive Thought	STOMACH
WATER	Emotional	SEX ORGANS
EARTH	Physical	ANUS

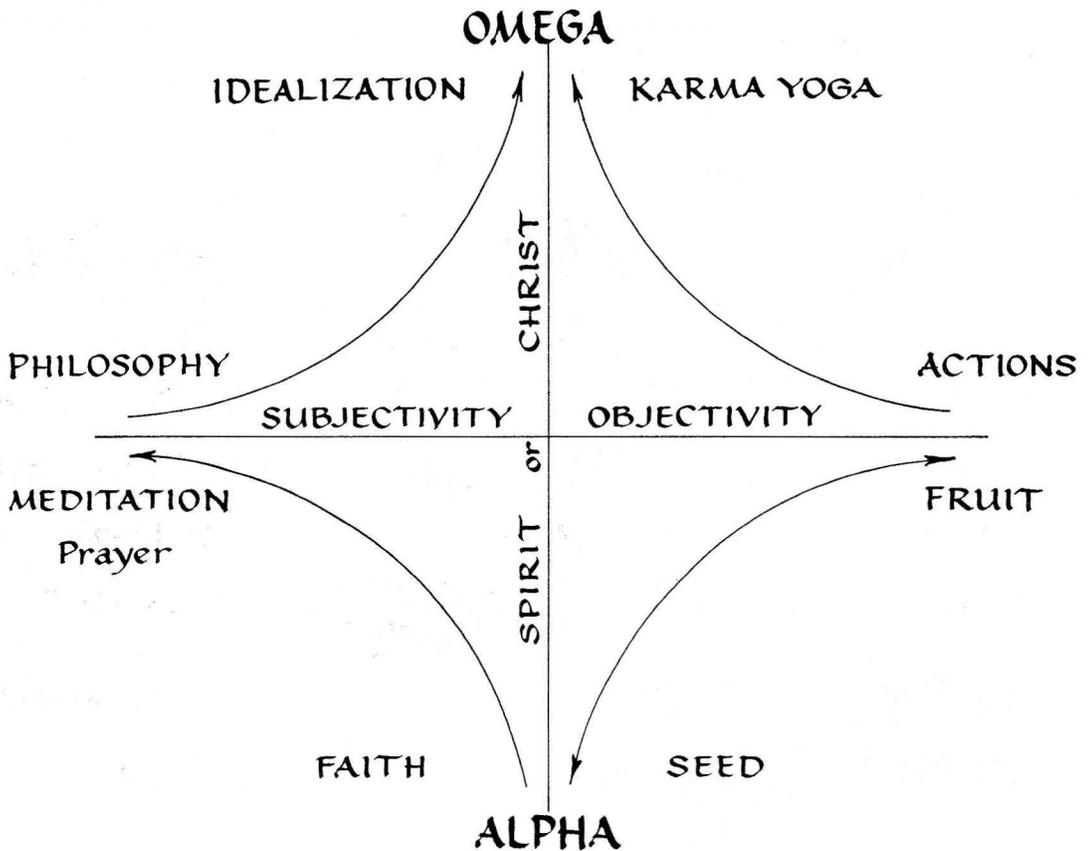
Earth, Water, Fire and Air make up the material universe that we are all familiar with. The fifth element, Ether, is invisible, but still part of our universe. It is described as the space which allows things to exist. The Sun and Moon are only symbols for what lies outside our boundaries entirely.

Ordinary commercial music consists primarily of emotional and physical elements, that is, a mixture of Earth and Water. Even small children know this is an unailing recipe for mud. When the superficial thoughts of everyday mind are added, this fire element bakes the mud into a useable but easily broken ceramic. The finest possible compositions of the materialist genre are conceived in the Air element, where the artist's most sublime thoughts are constructed out of his or her distillation of experience. Such works can teach us and inspire us to a degree, but are yet fashioned by humans within their

own sphere.

It is the realm of Ether, where our psychophysical systems dissolve into the universal consciousness and oneness, that in-teaching or intuition occurs. Music that has the marks of revelation springs from this substratum of existence. Only the exceptional yogi-seeker will have opened his system to this inspiration, and it is more rare still that this person will effectively record the experience for the benefit of the rest of us. Rare or not, it has been done, and it stands as a clear refutation of the materialist, constructionist theory of composition.

Nataraja Guru's technique for Cartesian graphing of the psyche provides another framework for understanding creativity. Shown below are some of the movements on the part of a created being, some or all of which may be combined in any degree to make a composition.



The vertical axis represents the spiritual pole, while the horizontal is the axis of creation. The vertical plus represents perfected being or God as the creator, while the vertical negative extends up from the secret seedbed of the unmanifest. The horizontal plus side represents the objective world and the horizontal minus its counterpart, subjectivity. The interaction of the horizontal and vertical produces the infinite variety of the universe. The graph shows several general lines of movement from the seedbed into manifestation and from manifestation to realization. The hyperbolic nature of these curves demonstrates manifestation approaching ever closer to perfection. Mathematically there are asymptotes, which approach the poles gradually but never arrive. Rational, linear thinking can at its best approach God asymptotically as the vertical absolute. Truly creative impulses, on the other hand, spring out from the vertical pole, the creativity that is the source of our entire universe. Beethoven's finest music

also comes from here and is highly instructive and spiritually satisfying. Mere 'constructionist' music, as a counterpart of philosophy, can only approach from the outside, as it were. It can describe its subject but never really be its subject.

I suspect that real spiritual insight also emerges from this 'Christ' within instantaneously, and that our linear, pilgrim's progress ideal of the spiritual path, while approaching infinitely closer and closer to realization, is doomed to fall short of the actual goal. One must somehow step completely outside of his or her own context to truly participate in this spiritual core. Calculus takes the unwarranted but successful approach that if a curve is asymptotic to a line it eventually arrives, even though it is mathematically impossible. This method can only be proved by its success per se, and it does appear to work in both the mathematical and spiritual fields. The question is how to make that ultimate leap of faith.

# East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



The Annual Convention of Narayana Gurukula was held between December 26th and January 1st at the Varkala Gurukula. For the first time, the Convention was organized with a workshop format, giving everyone present the chance to more directly participate in their own education as they discussed the problems and goals of education in all its aspects: home, school, self-education, and the role of Guru and the Gurukula in society and the world community as well as in their own lives. Guru Nitya and Muni Narayana Prasad also gave classes on Kena Upaniṣad and one of the ecstatic mystical works of Narayana Guru, Jananī Nava Ratna Mañjari.

Classes were held on the half-completed second floor of Brahmavidya Mandiram. On the final day Prasad reported on the remainder of the work to be done and the necessary funds. Representatives of different cities and areas each took responsibility for raising funds to complete one section of the wall and windows.

Guru Nitya is currently giving classes and writing books in both English and Malayalam on "Yoga and Psychology" based on Patañjali's Yoga Sutras, the translation and commentary of Kena Upaniṣad, and a lyrical rendering of Jananī Nava Ratna Mañjari. In

January and February Guru will visit Gurukula centers in Konni, Thottuva, Edapally, Kanakamala, Kollur and Bangalore. Guru Puja at Fernhill Gurukula will be held on February 9th. On March 14th Guru will visit the Singapore Gurukula for three weeks and then return to Ooty.

From April 15 to May 15th, the faculty of Arts is organizing a padayatra – a pedestrian pilgrimage for artists through the hilly and forested region of Wynad in the Northern part of Kerala led by Ascharyacharya Letschert. The intention of this padayatra is to invite artists to become more in touch with the natural environment and, through the impact of art, to draw the attention of the public at large to the importance of environmental harmony. The works done during this artistic pilgrimage will be displayed in exhibits in the cities of Kerala after the monsoon this year. The padayatra will begin from Amṛtabindu Ashram, Vythiri, seat of the faculty of Arts.

Mangala Press, Varkala, is currently printing Nataraja Guru's The Philosophy of a Guru, and Guru Nitya's Malayalam Gita commentary. At the completion of these works, they will begin printing Nataraja Guru's autobiography in Malayalam.

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# East-West University and Narayana Gurukula Publications

## By Nataraja Guru:

An Integrated Science of the Absolute (Volumes I,II,III)  
Towards a One World Economics  
Dialectical Methodology  
Wisdom's Frame of Reference  
World Education Manifesto  
Anthology of the Poems of Narayana Guru

## By Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati:

Love and Devotion  
The Bhagavad Gita (Commentary) (Vikas Publishing)  
Neither This Nor That But...AUM (Vikas Publishing)  
Iśa Upaniṣad (Commentary)  
Śree Narayana Guru  
Daiva Daśakam of Narayana Guru (Commentary)  
God: Reality or Illusion?  
Beyond Cause and Effect  
An Intelligent Man's Guide to the Hindu Religion

## Other:

Dhyāna Mañjusha (A Bouquet of Meditations)  
Nataraja Guru's 90th Birthday Souvenir  
The Philosophy of Śri Narayana Guru - Dr. S. Omana  
Functional Democracy - Muni Narayana Prasad  
The Blessing of Being Not Educated - Peter Oppenheimer  
Gestures in Silence - Deborah Buchanan  
What Narayana Guru Is Not - Nancy Yeilding  
A World Academy of Wonder - J.L. Ascharyacharya  
East West University Yearbook - 1978  
East West University Yearbook - 1981  
East West University Prospectus  
East West University Seminar Report, Kanakamala - 1980

## Publications Available From:

Narayana Gurukula  
Srinivasapuram P.O.  
Varkala, Kerala  
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