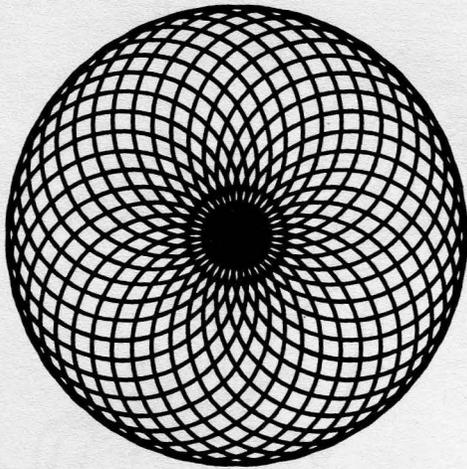


GURUKULAM

VOLUME VI • 1990

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GURUKULAM

VOLUME VI • 1990 FIRST•SECOND QUARTER

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GURUKULAM

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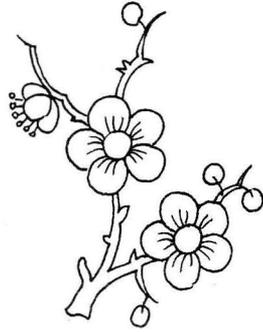
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Ah!

*Of late the nights
are dawning
plum-blossom white.*

Buson



Ah! The drawn-in breath of delight and wonder with which we spontaneously respond to a scene of great beauty like a mountain sunrise or the fragrant unfurling of a flower -- the haiku poet evokes the same response in us as we read his poem. The haiku form is spare -- few words are allowed -- but, as practised by the masters, very potent. The evocative power of the words comes from a process of distillation of complex psycho-sensual experiencing to utterly simple expression:

Out of a whole life, this year.

Out of a whole year, this spring.

Out of the whole cycle of day and night, dawn.

Out of the many sensory stimuli and needs and preoccupations which flood consciousness on waking, white plum blossoms.

The haiku discipline is far from being merely one of craft. The power of a few words to evoke a vivid experience with layers of meaning comes from the honing down of the personality of the perceiver until it becomes a clear reflection of a given moment.

When we read the poem and delight in both that which so deeply touched the poet as well as his power to use words to re-create it, what we experience is more than an aesthetic appreciation. However briefly, we participate in the poet's clear vision. In that moment -- Ah! -- of wonder, we participate in the poet's singular vision. However briefly, there are no piles of worries or tasks to be accomplished. There is not even the 'I' that perceives. There are only plum-blossom-

filled dawns. The usual back and forth movement of consciousness between the object of perception and the subjective consciousness of the perceiver is temporarily suspended. Whether this is precipitated by a beautiful scene or music or a poem, the intense identity of the perceiver with the perceived brings with it joy and serenity. When there are only plum-blossoms, there is no 'I' to protect or care for, no duties to fulfill, nothing to fear, no desires to satisfy. When it is simply dawn in springtime, future anxieties and past regrets melt away like insubstantial shadows.

Though such moments are brief, we treasure them. When our awareness once again begins to alternate between perceiver and perceived, it is more attuned to the brightness in the world and within. When we return to our duties and concerns, we do so renewed. Typically, we associate the possibility of these moments with childhood, with being exposed and receptive to the creative work of humanity or with opportunities to be in tune with nature, in combination with the chance factor which brings us to a crest of a hill just as a rainbow appears or sends a shaft of sunlight to the forest floor just where a trillium is blooming. But our access to the peaceful joy of such moments does not have to be limited to chance occurrences. We all have the capacity both to initiate and sustain moments of absorption and to enjoy their renewing benefits more regularly.

Both the Zen tradition in Japan, with which the haiku tradition is closely

linked, and the yoga tradition in India foster this natural human ability. Though much can and has been said and written philosophically, in practice they both emphasize simplicity. They say:

Sit. Just sit. Simply. Erectly. Comfortably.

You are always breathing. Naturally. Simply. Focus on that breathing. Gently let go of the 'I' which focuses, the 'I' which breathes. There is only breathing in and breath going out, breath in and breath out. Breathing is. Movement is. Being is. 'I' is not.

Or focus on a single endearing form. As ideas and trains of memory arise in the mind, drop them one by one. As consciousness becomes more and more filled with that form, let go of the 'I' which sees it. Let go of the 'I' which is endeared. Then only that is. Only endearment is.

Or listen. As you become aware of sound after sound, shift your focus away from it. Slowly you will become aware of an inner sound. Like the tambura drone that accompanies Indian music or the sigh of ocean waves, it is always there. Oh -- you realize it has always been there. As it fills your ears, let go of the 'I' which hears. Naturally, you are drawn within until only sound is.

The joy of these moments comes as naturally as saying Ah! when seeing a sunset or reading a poem. Nothing is being imposed from outside. Nothing is being denied. It is simple. For a few moments, sweet peace.

Such experiences are brief. And they don't protect us from being disturbed in the future. But when we return to activity after sitting quietly, we do so with more resilience and creativity to face what comes. And repetitive practice reminds us again and again that our true nature is not limited by what we outwardly lack or gain, suffer or enjoy. When our inner equipoise is repeatedly re-established, our identity slowly shifts away from the 'I' who suffers to that which is beyond suffering. This does not mean that we do not continue to exist or

fully participate in life. We do. But we do so with increasing happiness and serenity, less plagued by pain and fear.

Buson wrote the poem above from his sickbed, the night before he died. Rather than being plunged in self-pity, or focusing on his physical suffering or fearing what was to come, he was free to mirror nature's beauty, to resonate with the cycles soon to go on without him. He had achieved what the Bhagavad Gita gives as the definition of yoga, "disaffiliation from the context of suffering:"

That state where the relational mind attains tranquility, restrained through continued cultivation of a yogic attitude, and where also the Self by the Self in the Self enjoys happiness;

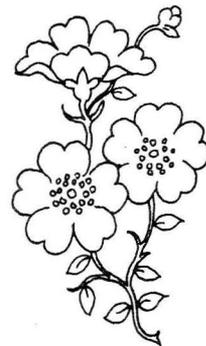
that which cognizes the ultimate limit of happiness which can be grasped by reason and goes beyond the senses, and wherein also established, there is no more swerving from the true principle;

-- and which, having gained, there is no other gain thought of which could be greater, in which, when established, there is no swerving even by heavy suffering;

-- that should be known by the name of yoga -- disaffiliation from the context of suffering. (VI: 20-23)

Then, even in the face of disease and death, we will be able to see our nights dawning plum-blossom white -- Ah!

Nancy Yeilding



Svānubhavagīti Śatakam:
Experiential Aesthetics and
Imperiential Transcendence

by Narayana Guru

Translation and Commentary by
Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati



Verse 45

Wrapped in an insensitive hide, Oh Great Dissolver,
pressing under your feet the monster of libidinal passion,
the state of the dark of Kali is getting finished off
under your trampling feet,
the crowning head of all finalized states.

Purposive life on earth is symbolized by the Śaivite ideogram of the dancing Śiva. Śiva is portrayed in the famous South Indian temple of Cidambaram as a dancer who, with a firm foot, is pressing down to earth a monstrous dwarf while his other foot is held raised in the sky. With one hand the dancer shows the gesture of refuge suggesting the devotee should have no fear. With another hand he indicates the position of his two legs. The dancer is depicted as having two more hands, one holding a small drum, and the other holding aloft flames of burning fire. In the matted crown of the dancer is shown the slight figure of a crescent moon.

Between physical death and spiritual dissolution there runs a parameter, the negative pole of which suggests death and the positive or plus pole which indicates final redemption, *kaivālyā*. The transference from death to immortality is also suggested by the parameter implied in this symbol of the dancing Śiva. The monster held under his foot is called *muyāḷaka*, recognized as *apasmara*, (misplaced memory). It can also mean "superimposed memory which hides ones own true nature."

In the confection of the self and procreative nature (or spirit and matter, *cit* and *jada*) the nature of the self is the existential recognition of the supreme value of ones own true being. This is covered up with the conditioning which comes from ones physical nature which is replete with the three modalities of: *sattva*, the pure-clear; *rajas*, distorted with passion; and *tamas*, the inertial darkness of ignorance. In the monster *muyāḷaka* or *apasmara* the dross that is to be transformed is the superimposed memory which is covering up a person's intrinsic nature.

Only through a person's painful experience of continuous neurosis does transformation take place. The process of culturing is what the psychologist recognizes as sublimation. The crude monster trampled upon by the Lord transforms into the sublime symbol of transcendence which adorns his crown as a crescent moon.

Just as *māyā* has no existence apart from *brahman*, Kali, the dark force under Śiva's foot has no separateness from Śiva. Hence in this verse both the monster and the Lord are called Kali. This alludes to the Gita verse which suggests that ones lower self should be raised by ones higher Self. In that verse both the lower self and the higher Self are referred to as *ātman*:

By the Self the Self must be upheld;
The Self should not be let down;
The Self indeed is its own dear relative;
The Self indeed is the enemy of the Self.

-Bhagavad Gita VI.5

The Lord is depicted here as one wearing the insensitive hide of a dead elephant. That means he does not recognize the value of this ephemeral world of phenomenality. He is animated by one single passion, the passion of pulverizing the three cities of the past, the present, and the future, so that a scenario is set for the next cycle of creation. Dissolution spearheads its antecedent creation. Usually death is

looked upon as the last in a series of transformations. But it is also the ground on which creations are enacted again and again. Thus Śiva is at once the head and tail of creation.

There is a legendary story alluding to the Lord both as changing time and the ever-present of eternal duration. At the time of the wedding of Śiva with Parvati, the priest who was solemnizing his wedding asked him who his father was. Śiva promptly gave the name of Brahma as his father. Then he was asked who the father of Brahma was. Śiva said "Viṣṇu." When further questioned as to Viṣṇu's father, he recognized himself as Viṣṇu's father.

The transference from the conditioned state of memory manifesting out of the three modalities of nature to the expansive and unitary memory of ones own primordial state as *satcitānanda* - pure existence, subsistence and value - is the great scheme of spiritual purpose highlighted in this verse.



Verse 46

You have the dual faces of darkness and light.
Also you bestow grace.
You are a divine tree for a creeper of endearment to entwine.
Difficult to discern what pleases you;
incidentally, obstructing evils are stealthily removed.

The alternating faces of consciousness are the wakeful and sleep. Within the sleep there are the alternating states of dream and deep sleep. The ground of the altering and alternating states of consciousness is the indescribable which is also the transcendent. The transcendent is said to be never afflicted with the blemishes of any conditioned state.

Creation is happening in the gross world of physical manifestation. It is sustained within a framework of the subtle (*sukṣma*) and the causal (*kāraṇa*). In the phenomenal world usual consciousness is said to be alternating cyclically within the wakeful, the dream and deep sleep. In Sanskrit these are called *bhāva trēya*. The fourth is the ground which, being indescribable, is called by Vedantins simply "the fourth (*turīya*)."

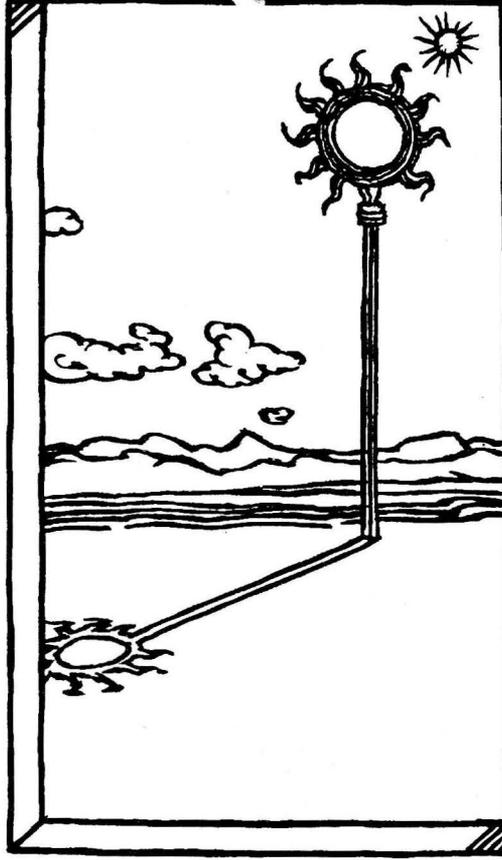
The theistic concept of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva is confined to the triple states of the wakeful, the dream and deep sleep. What is being transacted in the wakeful is too mundane to be worshipped. Therefore religious people do not take heed of Brahma. Viṣṇu symbolizes the grand dream or the subjective phenomena which manifests within. In the dream vision both the dreamer and the dream belong to one subjective consciousness. In the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad the stuff of that consciousness is called *prañāna*. Even when the transactional world and the world of dream are drowned in the unconsciousness of deep sleep their substance is not dissolved away, but remains there in a seeded state, *bīja-rūpa*. It can come back with all the details that were once experienced. Hence the content of deep sleep is said to be causal consciousness, *kāraṇa caitanya*. For this reason the essence of Viṣṇu is said to be maintained by Śiva. Such a personalized vision is only out of theistic consideration. In pure Vedānta there is no Brahma, Viṣṇu or Śiva. There is only the wakeful, the dream, the deep sleep and the indescribable transcendent.

Deep sleep and the transcendent have a common identity -- in both these aspects there is no duality of a subject and object. In deep sleep the subject is enveloped by *tamas* and hence cut off from all objects. In the transcendent there is no conditioning factor. What prevails is consciousness through and through. Thus total consciousness and total unconsciousness have a striking similarity in which there is no pulsating ego. The mythology of theistic legends is maintained in the present study. At the same time the non-theistic concept of the eternal that never changes is also maintained as a backdrop of the theistic concept. In the present verse there is a drastic symbol of transformation effected by combining in an interdisciplinary manner both the theistic and non-theistic concepts.

The Śiva/Śakti context, with Śiva sharing his body with the being of his consort, is picturesquely compared to a creeper of endearment on a divine tree. The tree symbolizes the changeless, and the creeper symbolizes the ephemeral that envelops the tree, sometimes to the extent of making us altogether oblivious of the tree.

The removal of evil forces may sound like the angry Jehovah destroying enemies. In the present context it is not to be envisioned as a fight between light and darkness. The true nature of Śiva is the all-transcending purity of the non-dual. Release from the conditional automatically defuses all acquired stains of conditioning. Hence their re-

moval is especially stated as incidental. One need not say darkness leaves when light comes. There is no pitched battle between light and darkness. Similarly where the blessedness of the peaceful prevails there cannot be any dissonance.



Verse 47

Your story will do to enunciate the truth.
 For that this alone is equal.
 What is the truth that is spoken of?
 What is that Absolute which can never be known
 with knowledge?

The relative is known with its marks of distinction. Categories are called *padārthas*. Analytical philosophers examine the world with the enumeration of categories. The substance that is categorized is *padārtha*. Conception is possible only by calling a word to the mind. Word is *pada*. A footstep is also called *pada*. Foot is *pada*. One moves with the pacing of steps. In linear thinking one word is followed by another word. Each word has a connotation (*ārtha*). It is with the correlation of connotations that a meaningful sentence is formulated. Arrangements of words by which an idea is conceived are called *vākhyā vṛtti*.

Even though the Absolute is indescribable, several attempts can be made to highlight aspects. When such an attempt is made the commentator of an experience of the Absolute is wanting to approximate his or her idea of truth by stating complementarities. In systems of philosophy like Vedanta, perception is recommended to comprehend physical bodies belonging to the gross transactional world. Normal perception is however considered inadequate to describe the Absolute. Hence word testimony, *śabda*, is accepted as valid to arrive at an *a priori* notion of the Absolute. Word testimony given in authoritative scriptures is often given in the form of an example (*dṛṣṭanta*). What is experiment to modern science to prove a case is analogical examples to Indian philosophers. In all Indian systems which accept the testimony of the word, the most important methodology employed is stating examples which can reveal certain essential marks of the Absolute. A mark is called *lakṣana*. A single example can at best highlight only one aspect.

The philosophers of India resorted to a number of devices to narrate the highest of truths given in the Vedic lore. In the Veda praises are lavished on personified spirits in which the mystical insight of the *ṛṣi* comes in the form of poetic allegories. Only another person who can get into similar flights can appreciate the purport of such praises (*ṛks*). Another device put forward was reducing the main purport into highly cryptic aphorisms. These expositions turned out to be impositions which were never satisfactorily comprehended by any. A third device was writing elaborate exegesis called *ārthavāda*. A very popular device put forward in later years was clothing the teachings in mythical stories, parables and legends called *purāṇas*.

In India there came preferences to adhere to a certain deity. There are followers of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devi and so on and so forth. The followers of Śiva acquaint themselves with the story of Śiva given in *Śiva Purāṇa*. The Vaisnavites have *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* as a rival story. The popular notion of Śiva is conceived from the stories of the greatness of Śiva given in the *Śiva Purāṇa*. Even though Śiva is incomprehensible, this Purāṇa has helped many to be stirred very deeply in their souls.

All over India there are Śiva temples where Śiva is depicted as a monomark called *śiva linga*. *Linga* and mark are the same. The word *linga* is etymologically related to the word *lingua* from which the word language is derived. There is a Śiva language. There is a Viṣṇu language. There is a Devi language. The proto-linguistic expression of these is depicted in the stone of the temples dedicated to these deities. Between the impersonal monomark of a *śiva linga* and a fully personalized and stylized dancing Śiva there are several depictions of the proto-linguistic image of Śiva as the Absolute. One hundred and ninety eight postures are taken from the dancing form of Śiva, and each posture is given a special name.

Considering all this, one can say that Śiva's story sung in the mythical lore, praised in hymns and installed in temples can roughly approximate the idea of the Absolute. But the poet knows that this is only a partial truth. So he immediately says "You are incomparable. There is nothing equal to you. You can be described only by equating you to yourself." And yet the ancient method of knowing the general by looking at the particular is accepted here as a second best.

There is a popular hymn in the Tamil language in which the Supreme is praised as Lord of the Southern land who is also the lord of all lands. The Guru here brings in the same idea by saying that an attempt is made "to know you with these approximations, but in all truth you are one who is never known with the ratiocination of individual minds." Only through such statements of paradox can one arrive at the numinous. When opposites cancel each other out, there arises a silence pregnant with a mystical dynamics which can lift the mind of a contemplative into the void of the wordless from where all words come. Thus it is the one word in which all words disappear.

(Continued in next issue.)

The Joke

This is, my friend, a joke...
well-meant to break the yolk...
of eggs that we all lay when we "aren't kidding"...

Now if humor's just a cloak
that you wear when you can't bear
the side of life that takes itself so serious...
then puzzled will you be cause
you can't see the other side
that makes itself so damned delirious...

We are, my friend, a joke...
if still we chafe the yoke...
of bondage we perceive in life's illusion...
when we could rise above...
even learn of love...
and save ourselves from painful dissolution...

David Evans

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

Translation and Commentary by

Muni Narayana Prasad

III · I

In the visible world of proper performance of action, there are two (selves) who drink or enjoy the fruits of functional truth, lodged in the secret half of the transcendental. The knowers of brahman speak of them as shade and light, as also those who perform the five-fold sacrificial rituals and those too who perform the triple Nācīketas fire sacrifice.

It was shown in the second Vallī that it was the Self symbolized by the syllable AUM that makes life meaningful and purposeful; and that birth and death were only two extremes of the cyclic process of becoming, which actualized it and made it flavorsome. The paradoxes implied in this Truth are elaborately shown in the third Vallī.

Though everyone is aware of the Self

as one's own consciousness, no one knows where it is seated. So it is taken for granted that the abode of the Self is a secret one, which is metaphorically called a cave in the Upaniṣads. Narayana Guru also defines Self as "that which knows, seated in darkness."

Normally our search for truth begins when we realize that we have no escape from the necessities of phenomenal becoming and that everything that happens within the phenomenal world is only transitory. Nothing of this world exists forever. This endless becoming is considered by Vedantins as, "the Self, by its own māyā principle does actions assuming various forms," as Narayana Guru puts it in the *Darśana Mālā*. If we ask, "Why?" the only answer would be, "Knowledge, to know its own nature here has become earth and other elements: spiralling up, back and turning around like a glowing twig, it is ever turning." This is what Narayana Guru himself states in the *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*. That is, whatever action is performed is only an attempt to see one's own nature actualized. The end result is the joy of self-expression. Such action could be considered an action properly performed (*śukṛta*). The *Taittīriya Upaniṣad* also presents *śukṛta* in the same sense where it says, "Non-existent, verily, was this world in the beginning. Therefrom, verily, existence produced. That actuated itself and made itself manifest. Therefore it is called *śukṛta* (action properly performed)."

When being or truth (*satya*) is subject to becoming in the realm of actualities, it

is called *ṛta*. Changes, their consequences, and the experiencing of them, all have their place in the realm of *ṛta*. The actual experiencing of joy is possible only in the world of *ṛta*. The Absolute Truth, when it is considered as the enjoyer in the realm of *ṛta*, is called *ātma*. *Ātma* means one who eats or enjoys. In the present *mantra* the Self is depicted as drinking instead of eating.

Two selves are portrayed here as drinking the results of activity. And it is stated that these two selves, which are seated in the secret half of the transcendental, are considered as light and shade by the knowers of the Absolute, by those who kindle five kinds of sacrificial fire desiring for heavenly pleasures, and also by those who perform rituals only as symbolic actions, like Nāchiketas. But it is not made clear which is the shade of which.

When one is engaged in activities thinking that one is the doer of actions and the enjoyer of their results, though that is only a phenomenal appearance of becoming caused by the *māyā* principle, the doer does not know this truth. For him all his activities, their consequences, and the happiness and suffering caused by them are all real. For him that is the world of light, and Reality is fully in the dark or shade. He is ignorant. But the one who knows that the Self is not bound as the doer or enjoyer or anything but is eternal and free, lives engaged in activities natural to him and faces happiness and sufferings with a sense of detachment, treating them only as normal within the total system. For him the Self is the only truth or light. The world of activities and their results is only the dark side implicit in the principle of light as its counterpart. He is a wise one.

Both the ignorant and the wise have bright and dark sides in their awareness as normal to their knowledge of truth and sense of value. That means, the Self emerges in the life of every individual being with two facets, one bright and the other dark. The contemplative mystic has to find himself beyond this duality,

which is a state beyond words. That is the theme for contemplation in the present chapter of the *Upaniṣad*.

III · II

That which is the bridge which leads the sacrifices to their destination, the imperishable supreme Absolute, and also the abode of fearlessness for those who are desirous of crossing over from the world of phenomenal becoming, that we are capable of understanding as the principle in the kindled Nāchiketas fire also.

It was stated in the last *mantra* that there are two selves dwelling in the secret cave of the transcendent half, which are like light and shade, and that these two selves are accepted by the wise ones and also by the sacrificers. In fact, it is self-happiness which prompts the wise ones to lead a contemplative life and the sacrificers to perform rituals. This end in view is neither light nor dark. It is beyond both. This imperishable aim makes the life of every living being purposeful. Though it is beyond all dualities, it is not beyond knowledge; it is knowledge itself. This *mantra* assures us that the nondual Self is understandable thus.

No one is afraid of oneself. Fear is caused by someone else. If only the Self exists, there is nothing to be afraid of. Thus the Self is also the supreme abode of fearlessness (*abhayam*).

III · III

Know the Self as the lord of the chariot, and body, verily, as the chariot. Know the intellect as the charioteer, and the mind, verily, as the reins.

III · IV

And the senses, they say, are the horses, the sense-objects the paths they range over. The Self, yoked to the body, senses and the mind, the learned ones declare, as the enjoyer.

In the normal course of events we do not worry about the meaning of life. Still there are certain moments when we are induced to think of the meaning of life. Every moment we live with a hope for what might happen in the next moment. If there were no such hope, there would be no zest for life. This state of disinterestedness in life is called *arati* in Sanskrit. In that state all of life appears to be meaningless. In the hope for the future, which pushes life forward, there is the expectation of the actualization of happiness which has not yet been actualized. In other words, desire for happiness (*ānanda*) is the eternal push for life. The desirable, ultimate aim would be the actualization or rather realization of happiness forever. This eternal happiness is called *mokṣa* or *mukti*, and this happiness and the imperishable referred to in the last *mantra* are not different.

The imperishable Absolute is to be understood as the eternal happiness that

is realized while living here and now. It is not some thing to be attained in an unknown world of the hereafter. We live here and now with a body. This body causes a limitation to I-consciousness, which when so limited, is called *śarīrābhimāni*. The body is here imagined to be the chariot on which the embodied Self rides as master. The chariot is the vehicle used by the embodied Self to attain its goal mentioned above. A vehicle needs a well trained driver to lead the vehicle to the destination intended by the master. Intellect (*buddhi*) is that charioteer. If the driver does not guide the vehicle on the right path, the life expedition might miss the goal. The chariot is pulled by horses. Our knowledge finds expression through the senses and hence they play the role of the horses. Though it is only knowledge that finds expression through the senses, when we have sense knowledge by the contact of the senses with their respective objects, what we are usually interested in are only the objects. This interest might make the senses lead us astray. Lest this should happen, there has to be a rein in the hands of the intellect, the charioteer. Mind or *manas* is stated to be the reins in this case. *Manas* here means the volitional function of the mind. In other words, the intellect has to direct the senses with volition as the rein to lead the life expedition to its ultimate goal. This Self, conjoined with the body, senses, mind and the intellect, is called the enjoyer (*bhoktā*). One can be an enjoyer while experiencing external objects and also when one feels internal joy. The happiness that is aimed at by the Upanisads is not the experience of such an enjoyer, but that delight which is beyond the differentiation between the enjoyer and the enjoyed.

Life is here depicted as a charioteering expedition with the attainment of the imperishable Absolute as the final goal. A chariot is neither the wheel, the axle, the platform, the roof, the horse, the charioteer, nor any other of its components. It is a structural system specifically designed for a particular end. Life

is also just like that. *Mantra* II points out the ultimate aim of life and III and IV show how the components are structured so as to attain the goal.

Narayana Guru used this same analogy in his *Atmopadeśa Śatakam*, Verse 69:

*Hearing and such as horses yoked,
occupied by the Self-image,
the dexterious psychic dynamism drives
the chariot of rati; mounted therein,
the ego is continuously chasing
each pleasing form outside.*

If the Upaniṣad compares the body to the chariot, Narayana Guru considers *rati* or libido as having the function of a chariot in life. While the Upaniṣad speaks in biological terms, Narayana Guru speaks in psychological terms. Both are only two facets of the dynamism of life.

III · V

One lacking in understanding and always with undirected volition, for him the senses are uncontrollable like the wicked horses for a charioteer.

III · VI

The one of proper understanding and always with well directed volition, for him the senses are under control like the good horses for a charioteer.

Life was compared to a charioteering expedition in the last two *mantras*. If an expedition is to be successful, its goal

should be well understood and defined in advance. The charioteer should know which way the horses are to be directed and how to direct them. Here intellect is the charioteer. It should not take into account merely the convenience of driving. The primary concern should be the destination. It should have the discerning power to decide how to make the journey comfortable and how to traverse the adversities on the way, always with the ultimate aim in mind. Such a discerning power is called *uhāpohāvicākṣanata* in Vedantic philosophy. A person with such a discerning power is here called *vijñānavan* (one of proper understanding). When such a person of proper understanding faces problems in actual situations of life, he or she will solve them only by keeping in mind the goal of crossing over the difficulties, not by paying attention to the convenience of the moment.

In the conscious charioteering expedition of life, we are pulled onwards every moment by our senses. Halting the function of the senses is not only useless but also harmful. What is required is to normalize their function by making the attainment of the final goal the norm. Conjoining the state of the volitional mind to the ultimate value which makes life worth living is called *upārati*. To one who practices this, the senses never stand in the way to Self-realization. Rather, they only help in the attainment of the goal, just like well-trained horses aid in charioteering. But in the case of one whose mind is not well directed, the same senses will stand as a hindrance both to understanding that there is a final goal to be attained and to its attainment as well.

To the one who sees in every instance of sensory knowledge only a particular aspect of the spontaneous expression of the Self, the senses only clear the means for the attainment of the end. But when we engage the senses in their objects, induced by our interest in them, we are led astray just like untrained horses.

(Continued in next issue.)

The Science of Harmonious Union

Commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Śāstra*

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Sutra II:8

duḥkhānuśayī dveṣaḥ

duḥkhā: misery, pain

anuśayī: accompanies

dveṣaḥ: hatred

That hatred which accompanies pain is *dveṣa*.

Hatred is a defense mechanism of the individuated self which becomes operative either when a person is exposed to misery or when he envisages the possible manifestation of pain. Happiness and misery are two faces of the same coin. To understand these two terms it is helpful to look into the Sanskrit terms given in Patañjali's aphorisms. The term that indicates happiness is *sukham* which literally means the space that is bright and beautiful. Its opposite, *duḥkham*, means the space that is dark and infected with evil. We human beings alternate between these two living spaces, of which one is positive and the other is negative. The positive adherence to the bright and beautiful space of life has the quality of attraction. The struggle that is put up for the avoidance of the painful and evil forces is characterised by repulsion. The factor that brings repulsion can be from the environment or from the emergence of a thought or memory that fills the here and now with belching darkness.

From a microscopic entity like a virus or a bacteria to a powerful nation on earth, all are again and again called upon to fight forces that are destructive to their continued existence. To change these basic responses in a living organism is as hard as changing the basic structure of the universe. Many people glibly say, "You should only love and not hate." These two polarized forces are the very warp and woof of life. Without understanding human nature, and not only human nature but the nature of all living organisms, one cannot change it. One has to watch continuously to see what attracts and what repels, what brings joy and what brings misery. You cannot transcend one without transcending the other. One cannot hold onto the pleasures of life and boycott the pains of it. True happiness which the yogi postulates is neither embellished by pleasures nor embittered by pain.

There is the space in which the sun, moon, stars and galactical systems exist. This we may call the grand space of outer manifestation. Part of our wakeful hours are lived in it. In our subjectivity, dreams, fears, expectations, deep sleep, psychic and spiritual absorption, we live in an inner space. Outer space is illuminated by self-luminous stars, most much bigger than our sun. When that light is cut off from us, our outer world sinks into darkness. Even when the sun is blazing and the world is illuminated, if the inner

space is tormented by an inconvenient memory or a tyrannizing urge, then we will be condemned to the darkness of the spirit. Thus we live in two spaces, the gross space ruled by the light of the heavenly bodies and the inner space illuminated by the light of one's own Self. How we destroy the light within is narrated in verses sixty-two and sixty three of the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita:

Meditating on objects of sense-interest there is born in man an attachment for them; from attachment rises passion; in the face of passion (frustrated) arises rage. From rage is produced distortion of values, and from distortion of values memory lapse, and from memory-lapse comes loss of reason, and from loss of reason he perishes.

Exercise:

Recall to your mind its obsessions and inhibitions. Know these factors to be a product of your habitual thinking. Dismiss from your mind the reality of your obsessions and inhibitions. Remain quiet as a witness and not as a participant.



Sutra II:9

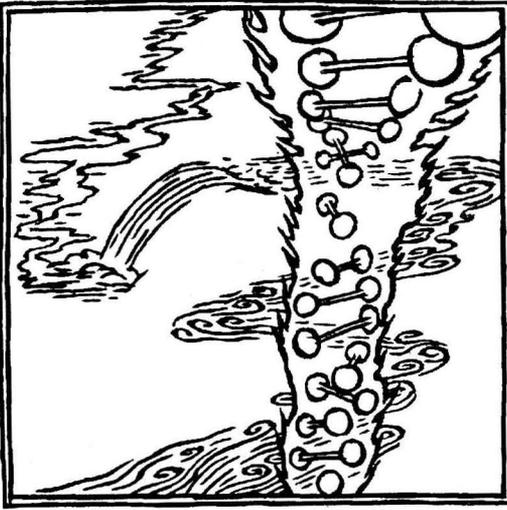
*svarasavāhī viduṣo'pitathā
rūḍho'bhiniveśaḥ*

svarasa: by the dynamics of ones own deep interest
vāhī: that which flows
viduṣahapi: even in learned people
tathā: as the same (ignorant people)
rūḍhah: deeprooted
abhiniveśaḥ: infatuation to cling on to life

Even in learned people also (as in ignorant people) because of the dynamics of ones deeprooted interest to cling on to life.

The propensity that is expressed in all living beings as the will to live (*elan vital*) is compared in this sutra to a fountain of irresistible interest that is governing the multi-faceted interests of life. The usual sense in which infatuation is understood is when young lovers aspire to possess each other for the consummation of love. In their wanting to relate to each other it is as if there exists between them a continuing gestalt. The instinct that governs such an infatuation is self-propagation. Self-propagation is the easiest and most popular way to attain immortality: even when one dies one continues through ones progeny. When a river is in spate, it often becomes muddy and carries away anything that obstructs its course. Sometimes it is detrimental even to the trees or buildings which are on its banks. Similarly, when erotic passion is maximal, mind becomes disturbed and the power of discrimination becomes drastically lowered. Infatuated lovers are often uncouth and don't care into what tragedy they are leading themselves or how they disturb the social harmony of the society to which they belong.

Genetically speaking, the river of life has been flowing through millions of years and its power of persistence is almost unimaginable. All the interests of a person are interrelated and mutually sup-



ported, the will to live becomes a mad frenzy when motivation is directed to the achievement of a certain goal. Even the trivialities of life such as wanting to have a cup of tea or coffee or a smoke can look so very important when the environment is not conducive to getting a drink or a smoke. In such situations people may even develop panic and anxiety. Love for life is expressed from the primal scream of a baby until one comes to the last pangs of giving up the ghost. Even someone so perfect as Jesus was obliged to say, "Father, Father, hast thou forsaken me?"

The deeprooted desire to perpetuate ones self, at least in the memory of posterity, is one way of gaining immortality. Lord Buddha, before entering into his final absorption of *nirvāna*, summoned all the elders to make sure they had all understood his teachings perfectly. He wanted to make sure that there would not be any mistakes in what his disciples would pass on to posterity as his word. Poets, philosophers, scientists, artists and adventurous people like mountaineers and soldiers all are attempting to remain forever by immortalizing their names.

Once in a while we come across the example of a person who has freed himself even from such a desire. We do not know the author of the I-Ching. The author of that amazing book did not leave

any trace of his or her identity. Even though *The Cloud of Unknowing* has been read with great veneration by aspirants all over the world, especially of the Catholic Church, no one knows who wrote it. Such self-effacement is very rare. The great author of the Mahābhārata reveals himself simply as a black native of India (*vyāsa*: writer; *kṛṣṇa*: dark-colored dweller of the island - sub-continent of India). Vālmiki is accepted as the author of the Rāmāyana but the name Vālmiki only means "one who is covered by an anthill." Kaṇada, the *rishi* who expounded the philosophy of Vaiṣeṣeka, is so-called because his theory is an exposition of atoms (*kaṇa*: atom; *kaṇada*: atom-eater). The theory of reincarnation and the concepts of eternal life, hell and heaven, are all symptomatic of man's fear of extinction. There is a sense of relief when a departed person is thought to be in another world - Hades, Paradise, etc.

Exercise:

Before performing any action, think of the motivation behind it. See:

1. Whether it is the natural unfolding of your intrinsic nature, from which you cannot withhold yourself. Then treat it as the unfurling of a flower and be a passive witness of it.

2. If the motivation is to increase your means for the purposive achievement of a certain goal, consider how beneficial such an act will be for all other sentient beings.

3. If there is a surging emotion which is blindfolding your discrimination, go slow and take time to reason it out in terms of cause and effect to deplete the pressure that is compulsively accumulating in you. Reason gently and watch what others do without positive or negative exaggeration. Do not be in haste to establish your point.

Sutra II:10

te pratiprasava heyāḥ sūkṣmāḥ

te: these

pratiprasava: resolving them

backward into their origins

heyāḥ: can be reduced or avoided
or abolished

sūkṣmāḥ: potential (obstructions)

These potential (obstructions) can be reduced by resolving them backward into their origins.

The five rudiments of obstruction, nescience, egoism, attachment, hatred and infatuation for life, do not reside in us as gross or subtle entities. They are causal factors. In a general sense, they are equivalent to what Freud and Jung call the unconscious. As causal factors are beyond the pale of consciousness, nobody knows where they reside. If they have a psychobiological and psycho-chemical basis, that is also not known to us. In Western biology, certain chemical substances are postulated to be the vehicles of the information bits that are said to be hereditarily brought from ones family tree into the embryo that has to develop into a fetus and subsequently into an individuated person. The Indian concept is not that of genes but of a causal body (*linga śarīra*), a subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) and a gross body (*sthūla śarīra*). Just as in the Western concept of embryology, Indians also think of an evolutionary growth commencing from the causal body to the subtle body and from the subtle to the gross. The Self is said to develop different dimensions when it has to act as the supervising principle in these three stages of development and in the altering states of consciousness already mentioned as the wakeful (the consciousness that oscillates between subject and object), the dream (subjective or paraconscious), and the deep sleep (unconscious). The technical terms used to refer to these three roles of the Self are the empirical self (*viśva*), the creative self (*taijasa*), and the indis-

tinct self of pure consciousness (*prajña*).

Whether Western or Eastern, all psychologists presume that the cause of disturbance comes from a certain depth. Pioneers of Western psychology such as Freud, Jung, Adler and Rank, were all convinced of this depth aspect. Pavlov, Skinner and other behaviorists gave very little credence to the unconscious or subconscious and tried to interpret disturbances as well as learning habits as stemming from mainly from physico-chemical conditioning of the biologic organism. Both the behaviorists and the existentialists therefore suggest measures for deconditioning a conditioned state. Both in psychoanalysis and in analytical psychology, bringing the dormant causes of disturbance from the unconscious to the conscious level is considered an essential feature of psychotherapy. Dream analysis and deciphering of symbols are considered as the main instruments of therapy.

Patañjali, on the other hand, suggests the removal of ignorance by flooding ones interior with the true light of ones own nature and transcending both pain and pleasure as the ultimate means of resolving psychological and spiritual maladies. Surface disturbances, personality maladjustments, and disfunction of the psyche, including the physical organism, are all considered to be maneuvered by the built-in or deeply engrained maladies which can be satisfactorily corrected by providing a person with the right normative notion of a wholesome life and helping one to have the right perspective of the unique features of ones own personality make up.

It is not easy for a person to have a regressive reemergence into his own system without knowing how the microcosm is integrated into the macrocosm and what psychological forces are sculpting within oneself the symbols of a secret language which is entirely individualistic. It is true that in psychiatric classification certain patients show symptoms which are universally shared by patients of that particular classification. But the

conceptual developments which happen in each person have varying external incidents and internal value-visions which interact differently. Thus, the symbol of one person's thoughts, dreams, and fantasies can be very different from the symbol of another. No psychologist can trace the entire development of the psychosomatic growth of any person to have a full understanding of their idiosyncracies, antics, unconscious gestures, recurring dream symbols and grouping of analogies on which basic concepts are hanging.

In India, the psychologist's place is assigned to a spiritual master, a guru. The usual time prescribed for therapeutic correction and shared growth between a spiritual master and a disciple is a minimum of twelve years of absolute bipolarity. It is through this bi-polarity that the vertical parameter of the master's spiritual visions resonates with similar visions of the aspirant. The master has a chance to compare the variations in reactions and behavior of both the master and the disciple when both react to the same situation and horizontal tendencies go in different directions. There is a constant attempt to verticalize the visions of both so that maximum resonance is established in their insights. Ultimately all personality differences are transcended until they come to a sameness of vision.

In the discipline of phenomenological reduction instituted by Edmund Husserl,

further amplified by Martin Heidegger, and brought to a greater finish by Karl Jaspers, we have in the West a discipline very close to Patanjali's regressive reemergence resulting in existential transcendence. How this can be applied in life we will come to know as we proceed deeper into *kriyā yoga*.

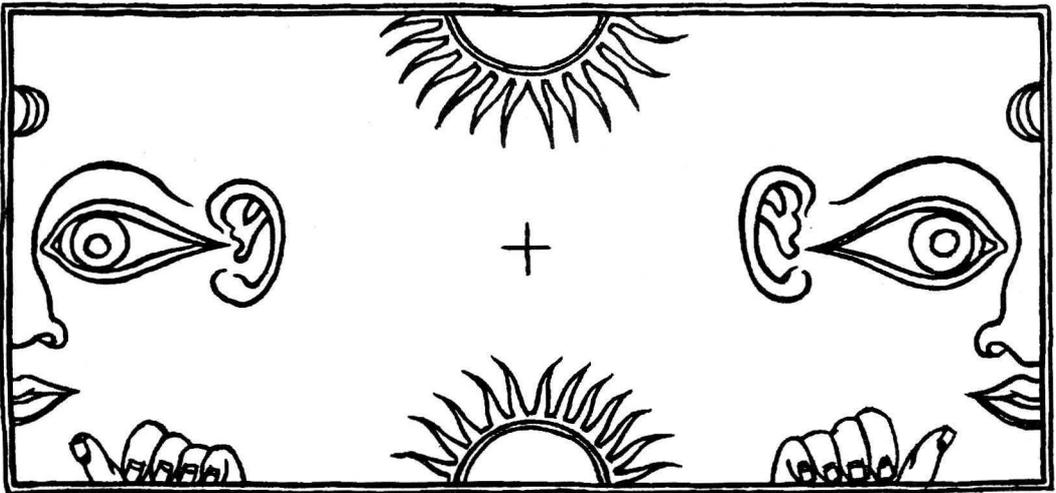
Sutra II:11

dhyāna heyās tad vṛttayaḥ

dhyāna: contemplation
heyās: removed
tad: their
vṛttayaḥ: modifications
 (of obstacles)

Their modifications (of obstacles) are to be removed by contemplation.

One actively enters into contemplative discipline after being initiated into yoga. Initiation, technically called *dikṣā*, is mainly intended to bring about the purification of the modifications to which the inner organ of individuated consciousness is subjected. Each of the aspects of the inner organ (questioning mind, recalling memory, reasoning intellect, and affective ego) has its specific kind of impurity. For instance, the curiosity to know spiritually and morally unprofita-



ble occurrences outside oneself is an impurity of the interrogating faculty. Purity of the reasoning cogitation is dampened by the craving for pleasure. The impurity of the recalling faculty is the inability to discriminate essential memories from non-essential and irrelevant memories. The core aspect of the inner organ, the ego, is the most soiled and easily afflicted with moral and spiritual lacunae.

The discipline called *dikṣa* is essentially to keep this four-fold aspect of the individuated consciousness free from all blemishes. The Sanskrit term *dikṣa* is very important because it suggests absolute bi-polarity and continuing attention being given whole-heartedly to the persons, things and events with which one is involved in the situation of ones search. Only the most attentive can find his or her path inspiring. In such a discipline, one does not excuse himself or herself. Actually, initiation is from the side of the initiated rather than from the side of one who is initiating. The person who is seen to be ritualistically giving an initiation is at best only a witness. Absolute dedication has to come from the initiate.

In the Mahābhārata, Bhiṣma, the patriarch of the Kuru dynasty, is respected for being uncompromising in the pledge that he took upon himself, even when those who demanded it later excused him from it. It is easy to be excused by another, but if ones conscience is always on the alert to be responsible then we may say that person is an initiate. The Guru or preceptor who is seen outside as a person is an exemplary model for ones moral excellence and watchful conscience. In the contemplative life of a disciple he or she is always trying to look as perfect as possible to the watchful and critical eyes of his preceptor. The initiate is expected to be in a continuous state of contemplative dialogue with the Absolute which is spoken of differently as God, Guru or ones higher Self. The initiate has to bring his or her thoughts, words and actions in a vertical line so each can support the other in maintaining ones moral integrity.

Nowadays *dhyāna* is loosely used to

mean both meditation and contemplation.

Meditation is not *dhyāna*. It is only a serious form of pondering. *Dhyāna* is contemplation. In both discursive reasoning and critical examination, the mind goes from the center to the periphery or from the conclusion of one syllogism to another.

In the contemplative discipline consciousness is to be drawn from all sides to ones own center with rapt attention and an attitude of devotion which is as close as possible to intense love. In the Bhagavad Gita and such texts of contemplative wisdom, *dhyāna* is described as a state in which the mind is not invaded by imaginations or apprehensions of any kind. It is such a *dhyāna* that is prescribed here for the eradication of the impurities which come in the form of attachment or hatred, ego-identification with strong social emphasis, and the persistent will to commit oneself to programs which one thinks will ensure ones name or fame or power over others. In order to vacate all the four zones of ones consciousness of the darkness of nescience, one should know how the mind functions.

Exercise:

Take a piece of paper. In the center of the paper draw a very small circle and around it draw bigger and bigger circles, always keeping the distance exactly the same and making sure that the line is always equidistant from the circle which is next to it. This is to be done several times until one can draw all the circles with perfect precision. When that is achieved, reverse the order by drawing a big circle and then smaller and smaller circles until one comes to the center point.

Another exercise is to write four mantras - *Aum, Hrim, Srim, Aim* - on a paper, leaving half an inch between each mantra in both directions, without using ruled paper. This should be repeated many times so that the mantras are in columns, each exactly below the other. This helps the mind to remain in one position and go deeper and deeper in its interest.

(Continued in next issue.)

It Is You My Lord

O! What is in this tiny brain?

A grumbling dog of past and future,

A turning wheel of depression and anxiety.

The teaming beauty is here and now.

But the sneaking thoughts are lurking behind.

Kill it, quell it and subdue it.

O! What a wonder! A soothing heart,

A dip in the depth of a honey lake.

The trees on the mountains are wiping the sky,

In a never-ending manner.

The leaves are embracing with whispering.

Ai! The chilling kiss of morning wind.

Look yonder, again he is peeping,

From far behind the peaks of mountains.

He is starting anew, afresh, without

The hangover of a thousand dreams he dreamt.

"Who are you?" I ask violently.

He puts forth the same query towards me,

"Who are you?" with a stunning smile.

Even my smallest breath

Has a correlation to His splendid glory.

He is the solid ground where I crawl.

But he never asked me anything in return.

And he never articulated a single word,

Except "the Word" with a capital 'W'.

Listen, a tiny sparrow cried from within,

It is you, my Lord.

Sanil

Science and Spirituality

Dr. Suvarna Nalappat

I have always been fascinated by the famous quote from Aristotle: "The philosopher must begin with medicine and the physician must end with philosophy."

But who am I? Am I Suvarna, born on the sixth of May 1946, and destined to die on a particular day after a brief sojourn in this world? Am I a pathologist trying to learn the science of diseases and the disharmony of the harmonious human body? Am I a housewife who racks her brain with a thousand household problems and plans for a better future for her family? Am I the body, the mind or the brain? All of which are limited by space, time, name and form, and yet keep the spirit of enquiry alive forever!

These questions have haunted me and made me seek through the various fields of science, art and history of the human race. My acquaintance with science has shown me the harmony of natural law: in the living body, in the atomic and subatomic structure of elements, and in the vast universe itself. I have gazed and gazed with a rapturous amazement at this harmony, which reveals the existence of supreme intelligence or a force, compared to which all the systematic thinking of humanity (systematic thinking being equivalent to science) becomes utterly insignificant, or rather a feeble imitation or faint reflection of it. Spirituality lies in the comprehension of that harmony. It has nothing to do with customs, languages, ceremonies or rituals.

A scientist is one who observes natural phenomena and deduces general theories or laws from his observations. He predicts certain results making use of these general laws. The predictions are verifiable by the observations of others.

If a clash occurs between prediction and observations, the scientific theory loses validity. In other words, verifiability based on observations is the hallmark of a scientific theory. A theory becomes truth only if it can stand the test of time through generations of the human race.

A scientist seeks to explain the world. Explanation of the material world or knowledge of what you call *prakriti* is common for the scientist and the spiritualist. But after learning and explaining the world, the spiritualist goes a step further. He tries to direct human behavior. Therefore, a spiritualist is a scientist who utilizes his knowledge for the direction of human behavior for the common good of all humanity.

In this sense the *rşis* of the ancient world were scientists, and *visa versa* the great scientists of the modern period (like Albert Einstein) are *rşis*. Einstein's spirituality can be seen in his words, "True value of a human being is primarily determined by the measure and sense in which he has attained liberation from the self, and the example of a great and pure individual is the only thing that can lead us to noble thoughts and deeds."

I would like to raise a question: Are these ethical theories of Einstein verifiable hypotheses (and hence scientific) as are his theories on relativity? Which one is more scientific?

The theory of relativity is an accepted scientific theory. The more modern supergravity theory, which is a gauge theory of the supersymmetry theory, is only an extension of Einstein's theories. That means this scientific theory has been modified by scientists from time to time, following clashes between observations and predictions. On the other hand, the

spiritual vision of a truly good man's value to the community is always true. It has been tested by time, as history teaches us over and again. Science gives us verifiable theories in a laboratory. Spirituality gives us verifiable theories with human experience. The latter is more long lasting than the former.

Science aims at a comprehensive and complete understanding of the connection between sense experiences and at an accomplishment of this aim by the use of a minimum of primary concepts and relations. That is, science aims at seeking a logical unity in the world picture. As Meyerson puts it, "All science is the reduction of multiplicities to identities."

This logical unity is attained by the *advaita* philosophy of Śankara. A minimum of primary concepts -- only two, namely *Brahman* and *prakriti*, and their relationship -- is used for this purpose. To comprehend the real oneness of the universe, astronomical and mathematical expressions were used by the sages. Einstein observed that, "To reach the elementary laws of the cosmos, there is no logical path; only intuition resting on comprehensive understanding of human experience can reach them." This intuition, resting on a comprehensive understanding of human experiences makes man a scientist as well as a spiritualist.

To explain *advaita* in astronomical terms, let us first imagine a space. We may imagine it as empty, but actually it is not empty because a field-free space does not exist at all, i.e., even though we are asked to imagine a *śunya* or zero space, it is actually vibrant and lively with an electromagnetic force or energy which is called the *cit*. The space is represented by the diagrammatic representation \bigcirc , or a snake that tries to swallow its own tail.

The next step is trying to describe various objects that fill the space, originate in it, and exist in it, depending upon coordinates like time, inertial systems with metrical properties, and space itself. These objects are many - planets, stars, nebulae, comets and so on. When

you try to imagine these objects in space, you naturally think about a beginning, or a starting point at which the objects became manifested in the space. According to the theory of relativity, the space and the objects which fill the space have no separate existence, so that if the space is endless and beginningless the objects that fill it also must be endless and beginningless. And hence the question of a beginning or an origin is meaningless. Yet for comprehension, the human mind has to attribute a beginning or *aadi* for one of them. *Brahma* of the *advaita* philosophy is equivalent to the space and *prakriti* is equivalent to the objects that fill the space. One is given the property of the beginning and hence it must have the property of ending as well. In this way, *prakriti* is imagined as a changing finite system and *Brahman* as a changeless infinite system.

The *Nasadiya Sukta* of the *Rgveda* speaks of this when it describes a nothingness, a darkness, in which everything was hidden. This infinite womb of time, this *thamodwara* or blackhole, is represented as a zero, the discovery of which was a landmark in the history of human thought. This concept of a blackhole or the *khahara* reemerged when Kerr tried to solve Einsteinian equations and was further generalized and modified by Newman and others.

Bhaskaracharya describes it thus: "The *bhūtas* enter and exit from the endless and deathless one during *prabhāva* and *pralāya* times. But it always remains the same with no change whatsoever. It is always the *pūrṇam*. Whether you add or subtract *rasis* to it the *khahara* remains the same *anantham* and *achyutham*."

$$x \times 0 = 0 = \text{Infinite}$$

$$\frac{x}{0} = \text{Infinite}$$

$$0^2 = 0 \quad \sqrt{0} = 0$$

$$0^3 = 0 \quad \sqrt[3]{0} = 0$$

This *sat, cit, ānanda* with no limitations of *dik, deśa, gati* or *phala* is misunderstood by the ignorant as empty.

Hitherto, we have been describing the astronomical blackhole and the electromagnetic field or quantum mechanics associated with it. We know these things exist outside us. But the moment your mind or intellect conceives the idea of it, it is located within you as well. That is, the infinite now fills a space within you which is called the *cidākāṣa*. Now, instead of a changing *prakṛiti* occupying a changeless space, you see or experience a changeless infinite within the changing perishable framework of your body. That is within you: *Brahma* exists in *prakṛiti*. O and X thus become the same. They have no separate existence.

O + X = X
is the same as
O + O = O
X - X = O
is the same as
O - O = O

Or, only one thing exists and that is *Brahma*. But then, if *Brahma* and *prakṛiti* are the same, why does Śankara call *prakṛiti* "*mithya*"? *Mithya* is a relative truth, true only to a particular period or area or person. Therefore the I who is known as Dr. Suvarna with a working body, a thinking mind and a changing form, who had a birth (or a beginning) and therefore is bound to have a death (an end) is only a relative truth or *mithya*. But the cosmic experience or the *brahmānubhāva* which exists in me is

the absolute truth. It has been there since time immemorial and it will be there even after this perishable frame or body decays. *Namarupathmaka jagath*, limited by name, forms, etcetera, is relative truth. But the universe as a whole with the everlasting stream of life is absolute truth.

The experience of this absolute truth, or the harmonious existence within you of all animate and inanimate objects, is spirituality. I am a *jīvan*. I am *Brahma*. Every *jīvan* is *Brahma*. There is nothing except *Brahma*. In this way a true scientific mind finds out the oneness of all existence and becomes a lover of this world. One believes "*vasudaiva kutumbakam*" and attains the highest *sādhana* of compassion to all. The universal love and tolerance of *ṛṣis* sprang up from this pure and simple scientific explanation of the universe. Their dialectics is only a means to help the human mind realize the absolute truth.

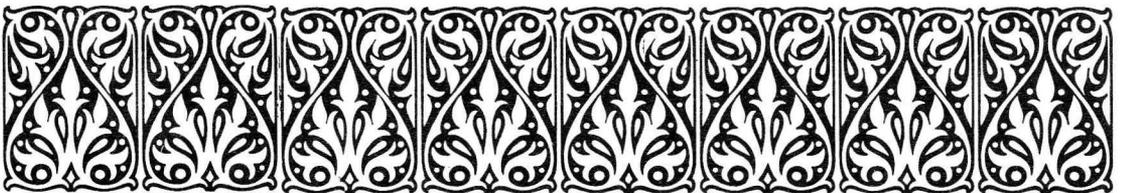
Each and every scientist begins by negating the eternal or *Brahma* (represented as + 1) with the finite external world or *prakṛiti* (represented as - 1).

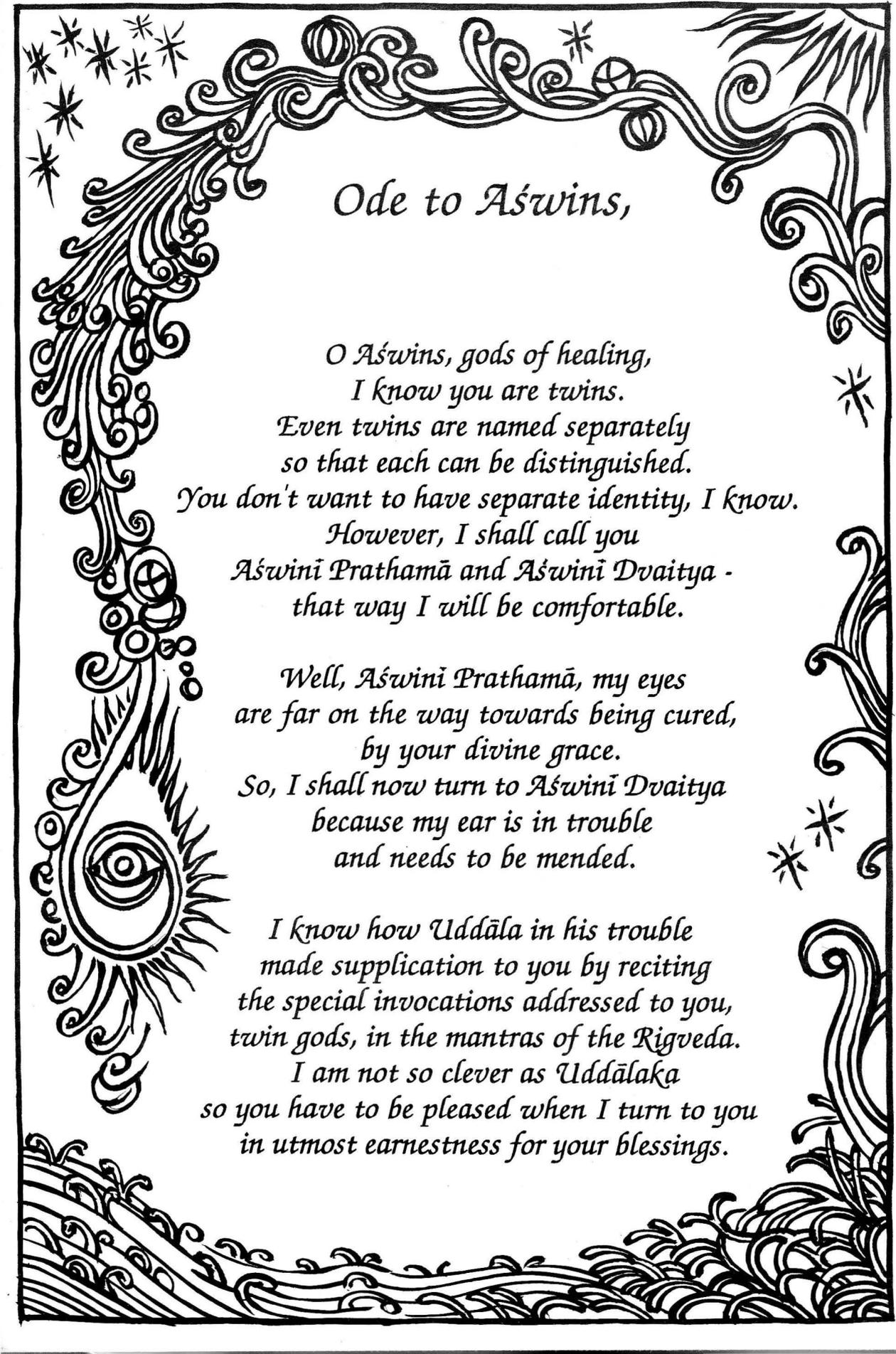
$$+ 1 - [- 1] = 1$$

When they get complete knowledge of this external world, slowly they start negating it by an infinite principle:

$$- 1 - [+ 1] = 1$$

And thus they become spiritualists. A scientist turning spiritualist and a spiritualist turning scientist is no mystery. To borrow the quotation from Aristotle: "The scientist begins with spirituality and the spiritualist ends with science." ❖



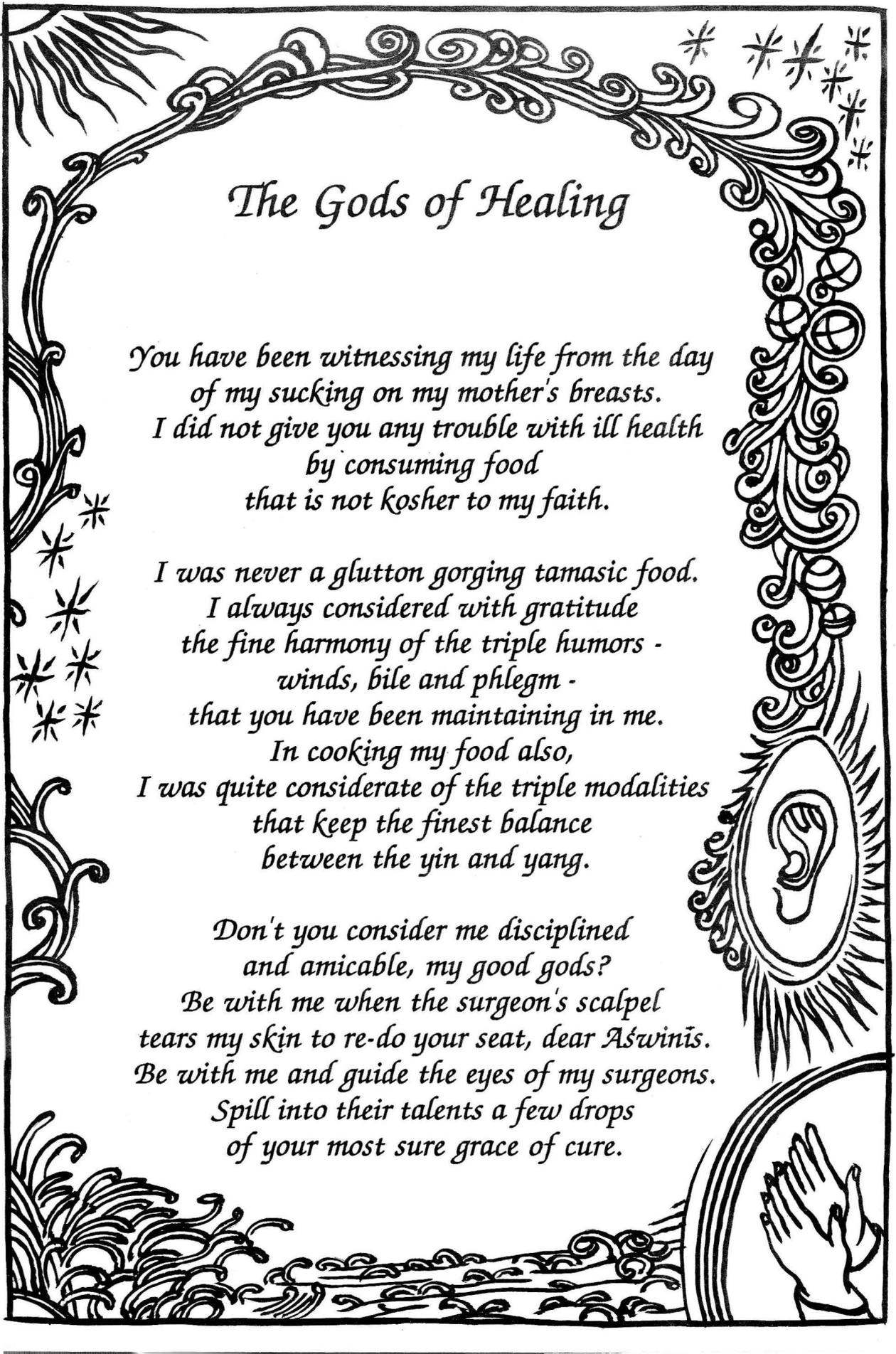


Ode to Aświns,

*O Aświns, gods of healing,
I know you are twins.
Even twins are named separately
so that each can be distinguished.
You don't want to have separate identity, I know.
However, I shall call you
Aświnī Prathamā and Aświnī Dvaitya -
that way I will be comfortable.*

*Well, Aświnī Prathamā, my eyes
are far on the way towards being cured,
by your divine grace.
So, I shall now turn to Aświnī Dvaitya
because my ear is in trouble
and needs to be mended.*

*I know how Uddāla in his trouble
made supplication to you by reciting
the special invocations addressed to you,
twin gods, in the mantras of the Rigveda.
I am not so clever as Uddālaka
so you have to be pleased when I turn to you
in utmost earnestness for your blessings.*



The Gods of Healing

*You have been witnessing my life from the day
of my sucking on my mother's breasts.
I did not give you any trouble with ill health
by consuming food
that is not kosher to my faith.*

*I was never a glutton gorging tamasic food.
I always considered with gratitude
the fine harmony of the triple humors -
winds, bile and phlegm -
that you have been maintaining in me.
In cooking my food also,
I was quite considerate of the triple modalities
that keep the finest balance
between the yin and yang.*

*Don't you consider me disciplined
and amicable, my good gods?
Be with me when the surgeon's scalpel
tears my skin to re-do your seat, dear Aświnīs.
Be with me and guide the eyes of my surgeons.
Spill into their talents a few drops
of your most sure grace of cure.*

Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata

An Introduction to the Treasure-trove of Myths and Symbols, Poetry and Psychology in the Two Great Indian Epics

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati

In the introductory chapter of a great epic and saga like the *Rāmāyaṇa* we might expect the author to impress upon us the magnitude of his work by referring to great events or something of profound philosophical import. But the poet is not in any great hurry and takes his own time to develop his subject. He begins by saying simple things: "My dear disciple you may place the water pot on the ground. You can now give me my raiment of wooden bark. I am going to take a dip in the sacred Tāmasa river." The disciple carries out the wishes of his master. After donning the wooden bark, the seer who engages his senses only to go to objects of his choice, *niyatēndriyah*, looks at the vastness of the forest before him.

The seer leisurely begins to pace into the depth of the forest, admiring all that he sees there. He is attracted to a pair of egrets who never part from each other and who, fondly singing to each other, sweeten their voices with all the love of their hearts. There is another person, a hunter, also watching the same couple. He is a man of no compunctions who by nature rejoices in hunting. He does not give any attention to the seer who is admiringly looking at the egrets as if he is seeing a visual expression of the sweetest rejoicings of love. The hunter aims his arrow at the male bird and in no time it comes crashing to the ground, its feathers stained with blood.

Valmiki's first verse, which comes as the fifteenth verse of the second canto, gives a clear model to the poet on how

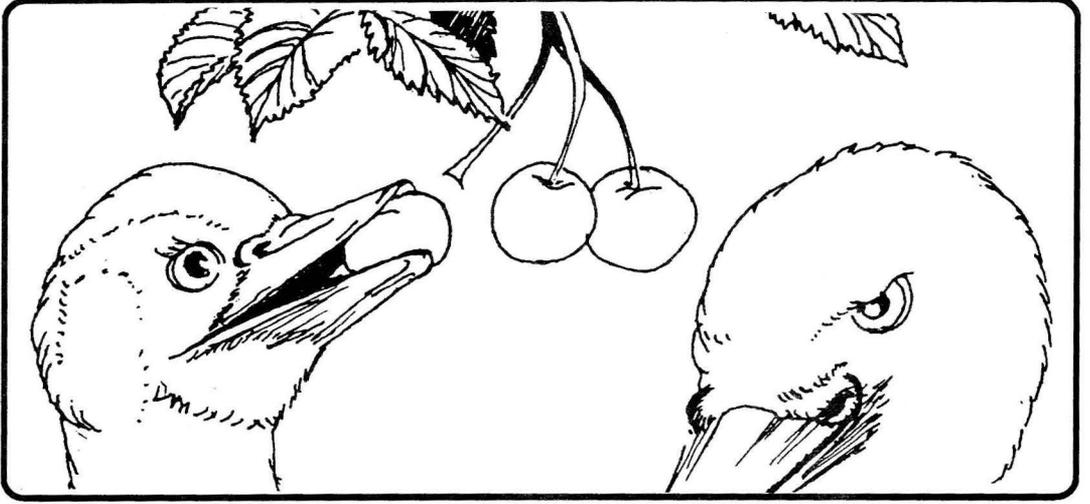
poetry should give vivid pictures with chosen words:

*ma niṣada pratiṣṭam
tvamāgamaḥ syasvatih sāmaḥ
yad krauncamitūnadekam
avādhi kāma mōhitam*

Every word he uses has both beauty and a message which only a master poet can present. He describes the head of the dying bird as a comely head with a copper hue (*tambrasirsenā*). Then he calls our attention to its wings, and then contrasts the past and present moments. In the past the bird was infatuated with love, *mathena*, and at the same time was so very caring not to leave the mate even for a second (*sahacarena sahitena* - moving along always; sitting behind always).

He uses the word *dvijena* to refer to the birds. *Dvija* means 'the twice born'. Like the brahmana the bird is also a *dvija*. First it is born as an egg and then from the egg the fledgling is born. It was from such a comrade the female is separated.

In contrast to the hunter, who rejoices in the catch, Valmiki is presented as one who is the embodiment of law and a seer of truth in whom arose compassion, *karuṇa*. In the next verse he is given the same epithet with which he refers to the bird in the previous verse. He is called *dvija*, the twice born. In the present context 'the twice born' is doubly significant because Valmiki was also at first a natural man like the hunter. He was then spiritually reborn as a seer of the law. On seeing the



bird shot, the words that spontaneously come to Valmiki's lips are "*ayam adharma iti*, this is not *dharma*."

Commentators have elaborated on this verse in many ways, but one which seems appropriate in the context is the reference given to the inseparable birds presented in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad:

*dvā suparnā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte
taylor anyah pippalam svādvatti
anaśnann anyo abhicākaṣīti*

"Two birds, always together and companions, perched on the self-same tree. Of these two, one eats sweet fruits; the other looks on without eating."

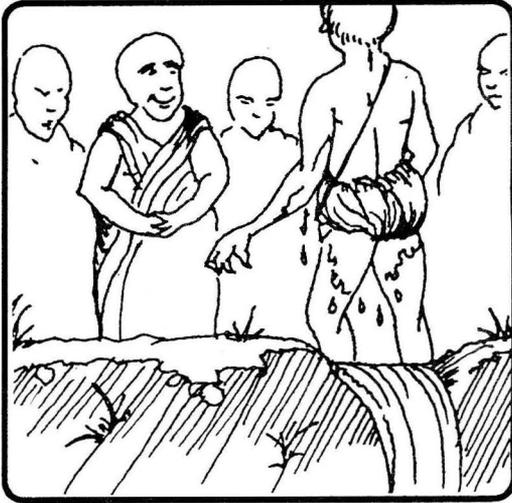
After spontaneously reciting his verse, Valmiki was struck by the beauty of what he had said. He recalled, "From me, who felt deeply distressed, the words that came are of equal measure. They also give a symphony such as the micro-tones that come from the strings of a *vina*, and that has become a *sloka*." *Sloka* means 'verse' as well as 'that which is auspicious.' Valmiki immediately adds, "May this not mark the opposite of auspiciousness."

Wisdom is like a stream. Its course never stops. What comes from a master is received and carried on to posterity by a disciple. Hence it is also written that

when the seer sang the true feelings of his mind, the disciple memorized it. The master was pleased to see his disciple taking upon himself the task of extending the wisdom of the present to posterity.

In section III of the *Adi Parva*, in the *Mahābhārata* we are given some classical examples of Guru-disciple relationships. To modern ears these accounts might sound harsh and uncouth. The first example given is of Ayodadhaumya and his three disciples Upamānyu, Aruni, and Veda.

One day Ayodadhaumya called his disciple from Pancala, named Aruni, and asked him to go and stop a breach that was on the water course of certain field. Aruni tried his best to plug the breach. When he found it impossible, he decided to carry out his preceptor's instruction at all cost. He went into the breach and lay down there. The water was thus confined. When Dhaumya saw that his disciple Aruni did not return, he enquired about him to the other disciples. On hearing that Aruni was still in the field Dhaumya became very concerned about his disciple's safety. He rushed to the field along with his disciples. On not seeing Aruni there he shouted, "O Aruni of Pancala, where are you? Come here my child." On hearing the voice of his Guru Aruni freed himself from the breach and stood before Dhaumya. He said, "Sir, as I could not stop the water escap-



ing I myself entered into the breach and plugged it with my body. As you were calling me now, I came out and the water is escaping. Please tell me Master what should I do?" On hearing Aruni's account of what he did the Guru said, "Now you have opened the water course so I shall call you Udālaka. As you carried out my instruction with diligence you will obtain good fortune. In you all the vedas and ethical scriptures will shine." After receiving such blessings from Dhaumya, Aruni retired to his own country.

After testing Aruni, Dhaumya called his second disciple Upamānyu. The Guru asked him to go and take care of his cattle. After some days when Upamānyu returned, Dhaumya asked him how he had supported himself when he was away grazing cattle. Upamānyu said that he supported himself by begging. On hearing this the Guru said that if a disciple begs then whatever he gets as alms should be first offered to the Guru. Upamānyu thanked his Guru for his advice. After a few days he brought to the Guru whatever he got by begging. The Guru took for himself everything that was brought without showing any concern for his disciple. Upamānyu did not feel sorry about this and went again to look after his Guru's cows. When Upamānyu returned to Dhaumya the Guru saw his disciple looking fat, so he asked, "Upamānyu, how do you now support

yourself?" Upamānyu answered, "My Master, it is not difficult because these cows have good milk. I suck the milk directly from these cow's teats." On hearing this frank admission of Upamānyu, Dhaumya expressed his horror and said, "Upamānyu my child, the cow's milk is for its kids and not for you. You should not rid them of their food." Upamānyu agreed to this and went again to take care of the cows.

When Upamānyu returned again to the ashram he was looking plump so his Guru expressed his surprise and said, "Now you do not beg for food, you do not suck the cows teats, then how do you support yourself?" Upamānyu said, "We have several cows and calves. When the calves suck milk some drops of milk flow out of their mouths and after sucking there is froth sitting on their lips. I lick all this and support myself." On hearing this honest account of Upamānyu the Guru pretended to be very angry. He said, "You are disturbing the minds of the calves and so they do not suck their mother's teats and get full milk. You should not hereafter taste the froth which you may see on the lips of the calves." Upamānyu agreed to this and again went to the forest.

In the forest Upamānyu became oppressed with hunger and so he ate some leaves of the arca plant. The leaves were poisonous and Upamānyu lost his eyesight. While he was crawling back to his Guru he fell into a dry well. The Guru came to the forest wondering what had happened to Upamānyu. He called his disciple aloud. On hearing his Guru's voice Upamānyu revealed that he was lying in the bottom of a well and that he had become blind by eating arca leaves. Hearing this Dhaumya advised Upamānyu to glorify Aświni, the twin gods of medicine, to get back his eyesight. The following was the praise given by Upamānyu:

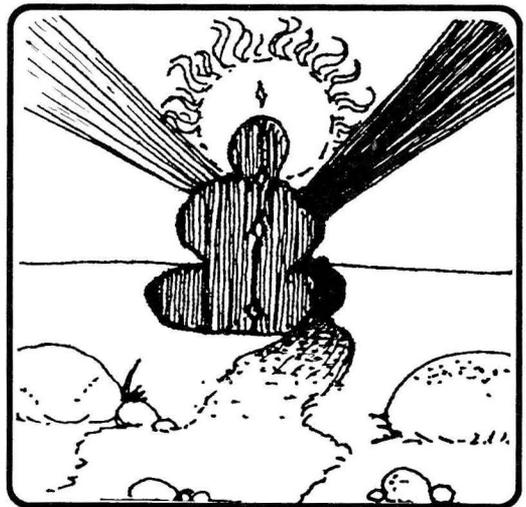
You have existed before creation,
You first born beings,
You are displayed in this wondrous

universe of five elements.
 I desire to obtain you by the help
 of the knowledge derived
 by hearing and meditation,
 Oh you are infinite,
 you are the course itself
 of nature and intelligent soul
 that pervades that course,
 You are birds of beautiful feathers
 perched on the body
 that is like to a tree,
 You are without the three
 common attributes of every soul,
 You are incomparable,
 Through your spirit you are existing
 in all created things and
 therefore you pervade the universe,
 You are golden eagles,
 You are the essence
 into which all things disappear,
 You are free from blemish
 and you do not know
 any deterioration,
 You are of beautiful beaks
 that would not unjustly strike anyone,
 and in your encounters
 you always emerge victorious.

You certainly prevail over time,
 having created the sun you weave
 the wondrous cloth of the year by
 means of the white thread of the day
 and the black thread of the night,
 With the cloth so woven
 you have established the two
 courses of release and bondage
 which are respectively called
 the path of the shining ones,
devayāna, and the path
 of the manes, *pitriyāna*,
 The bird of life seized by time
 represents the strength and
 infinitude of soul.
 After a period of its
 sportive games here
 you deliver it to
 the infinite region of happiness.
 Those who are in deep ignorance
 being infatuated
 with the delusions of their senses
 wrongly identify themselves
 as belonging to nature.

But you know that they are in essence
 pure consciousness and
 are independent
 of the triple attributes of matter.
 You release them from the nests
 of forms in which they are caught.
 360 days are like 360 cows,
 they give birth to one calf which is
 none other than the year,
 That calf is the creator
 and destroyer of all.
 Seekers of truth go
 in different directions.
 They draw the milk
 of true knowledge
 with the help of this calf.

Oh Aświns
 you are the creators of that calf.
 The year is but the nave of a wheel
 to which is attached 720 spokes
 representing as many
 days and nights.
 The circumference of this wheel,
 represented by twelve months,
 is without end.
 This wheel is full of delusions
 and knows no deterioration.
 It affects all creatures, whether
 of this or of the other worlds.
 Oh Aświns, the wheel of time
 is set in motion by you.
 The wheel of time is
 represented by the year.
 It has a nave represented



by the six seasons,
 the number of spokes attached
 to the nave is twelve, representing
 the twelve signs of the zodiac.
 This wheel of time manifests
 the fruits of the acts of all things,
 The presiding deities of time
 abide in that wheel.
 Subject as I am
 to its distressful influence,
 Oh Aświns,
 liberate me from the wheel of time.

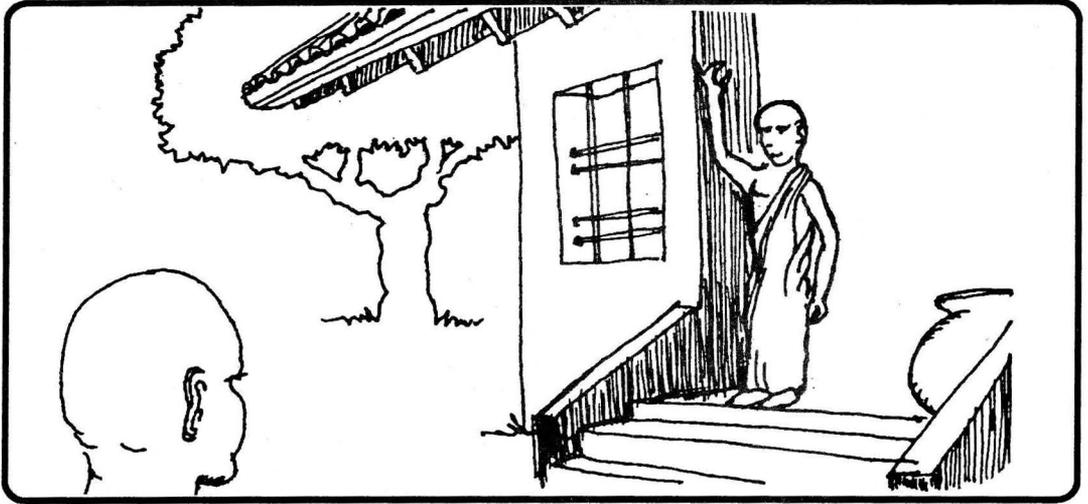
Oh Aświns, you are
 this universe of five elements,
 You are the objects that are enjoyed
 in this and the other worlds.
 Make me independent
 of the five elements.
 Although you are
 the supreme brahman,
 You move over the earth
 in forms enjoying
 the delights that senses afford.
 In the beginning you created the
 ten parts of the universe, then you
 have placed the sky above it
 and fixed a sun in it.
 The risis, according to
 the course of the same sun
 ,perform their sacrifices.
 Gods and men,
 according to whatever is appointed
 to them to perform their sacrifice and
 enjoy the fruits of those acts.
 Mixing the three colors you have
 produced all objects of sight.
 It is from these objects
 that the universe has sprung.
 In that universe gods and men
 are engaged in
 their respective occupations,
 You have infused all creatures
 with life, Oh Aświns,
 I adore you, I also adore the sky
 which is your handiwork.
 You are the ordainers
 of the fruits of all
 acts from which
 even the gods are not free.
 All the same you yourselves are free
 from the fruits of your actions.

You are the parents of all.
 As male and female
 you swallow the food
 which subsequently develops
 into life creating fluid and blood.
 The new-born infant sucks
 he teats of its mother.
 It is only you who are taking
 the shape of the infant.
 Oh Aświns,
 please grant me my sight
 and protect my life.

The two Aświns invoked by Upamānyu appeared before him and said, "We are very satisfied with your devotion. Here is a cake for you, eat it." On hearing this Upamānyu said, "Oh Aświns, your words will not be untrue, but I cannot partake of this cake without first offering it to my preceptor." Then the Aświns said, "Formerly your preceptor had invoked us. Thereupon we gave him a cake like this but he did not offer it to his Guru so why don't you follow that example?" Upamānyu replied, "Oh Aświns, please pardon me, but I cannot eat this cake without first offering it to my Guru." On hearing this the Aświns said, "We are most pleased with your devotion to your preceptor. Your master's teeth are of black iron, but your teeth shall be of gold. You will be restored to sight and will have good fortune."

As blessed by the Aświns, Upamānyu recovered his sight. He immediately went to his Guru, saluted him and told him everything that happened. The Guru was very pleased with Upamānyu and said, "You will obtain prosperity even as the Aświns have. All the vedas and all the dharmasāstras will shine in you." Such was the trial of Upamānyu.

After the departure of Upamānyu, Ayodadhaumya called his last disciple, Veda, and said, "Veda my child, stay with my family and do service to your preceptor. That will bring you spiritual excellence." Veda agreed to this. When an ox is under the yolk of its master it slaves in heat and cold, hunger and thirst. In the same manner, Veda served



the preceptor's household without ever making any protest. This ordeal continued for a long time. Finally Dhaumya the preceptor was pleased and he blessed Veda. Consequently Veda became enlightened.

When Veda received permission to leave, he left the household of Dhaumya and entered into the domestic mode of life. While living in his own house, three pupils came to him. When he was thus put into a seat of authority he remembered how his preceptor had treated him and his fellow disciples. He did not want to give such hardship to his disciples. He became filled with compassion and treated his disciples like his own sons. After some time Janamejaya and Paushya came to the residence of Veda and requested him to become their spiritual guide. It was not a convenient time for Veda to leave his household but he entrusted all responsibility of the house with his disciple Utanka. When he was leaving his house Veda called Utanka and said, "Whatsoever should have to be done in my house, let it be done by you without neglect." After giving these orders to Utanka, Veda went away to be the teacher of Janamejaya.

To keep up the continuous flow of the stream of wisdom, the great bard Vyasa put his stress on establishing proper bipolarity between Guru and disciple. In short, the ancient dialectical method of

the Upaniṣads is taken as a model in the *Mahābhārata*.

Valmiki was no less aware of the need to establish traditional hierarchies of Gurus and disciples to continue spiritual traditions. Valmiki, however, enunciated the great tradition of poetry being used as the main vehicle of inspiration to his posterity to become established both in the mystical and ethical foundations of religious life. There was no deliberation on his part. He looked upon incidents as providential spring-boards of ever new manifestations of higher values. In and through events that look incidental there runs a golden thread which is like an ever growing spirit of the culture and country. Valmiki highlights each such milestone as an occasion of wonder. Nothing comes closer to the apprehension of the Absolute than the experiential or imperiential sense of wonder. Not only the beautiful and the spectacular bring the sensibility of wonder, but also the blood-curdling or horrifying occasions of the terrible that provoke us to an intense experiencing of the negation of values, which in the final analysis will show that their basis is also spiritual.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* the first event of significance is the unexpected meeting of the celestial bard, *devariṣi* Nārada, and the terrestrial seer, *brahmarīṣi* Valmiki, which is suggestive of the heavens coming into communion with the earth. The



next scene full of rejoicing is the wandering of Valmiki in the woods of exquisite beauty on the bank of the river Tamasa. Even though Valmiki is described as a man of unitive wisdom who had perfect control over his senses, he is said to have had an overwhelming sense of delight on seeing a couple of kraunca birds delightfully singing and flying over his head sportively engaged in the enchanting expressions of their love. The sense of surprise is brought suddenly from a negative side with the presentation of a hunter ruthlessly sending an arrow into the heart of the male bird, which falls to the earth bleeding profusely. To heighten the traumatic sense of the tragedy the poet calls our attention to the female bird piteously crying at the loss of her mate. In this incident the main feature emphasized by the poet is the unexpected turn of each event. When deeply touched by the tragedy, Valmiki's spontaneous reaction to the thoughtless act of the hunter comes out in the form of the verse we have already quoted. Immediately after the utterance, the poet's mind was filled with a great sense of wonder. He repeatedly asked himself, "What is it that happened to me in this hour of distress?" He told himself four lines of eight syllables each, and each sound came rhythmically like the melody of the strings of a vina. He christened that verse a *sloka*. The mystery of an auspicious verse, *sloka*,

coming from distress, *soka*, was a wonder to the poet. There cannot be any continuation of wisdom if there is not a fully devoted disciple to receive with open hands what is passed on to him by his Guru in compassion. When Valmiki gave utterance to the first verse, instantly, joyfully, Bharadvaja memorized that *sloka*.

In ancient days when everything was orally transmitted, the precious wealth of disciples was what they had heard and memorized. A tradition which Valmiki added to oral communication was the musical delight of poetry and the metaphorical language which always helps the listener to visualize the poetic imagination of the master who sings the effusions of his spiritual visions. Thus, Valmiki became anointed with the sweet blessedness of poetry on the bank of the Tamasa river. He was thrice pleased with the blissful experience of discovering poetry. Wishing the world auspiciousness and recognizing that his wisdom was treasured by a very devoted disciple, he then had his holy dip in the sacred Tamasa river. This reminds one of the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan. Until Jesus came to John for baptism the latter was only a cry in the wilderness. Every Guru should have a proper disciple to carry on the legacy of the Guru's wisdom. Lord Buddha had Ananda, Socrates had Plato, Jesus had Peter, Valmiki had Bharadvaja. Bharadvaja did not merely

escort his Guru with a waterpot filled with water, he also filled his devoted ears and grateful heart with the precious utterances of his master. Such is the beautiful beginning of the *Rāmāyana*, sung more than two millennia ago, and which is even now on the joyous lips of every Indian who treasures the hoary tradition of this country.

Those who are engrossed in discursive thoughts, ratiocination and meditation belong to the triple states of consciousness. Only when consciousness transcends the duality of body and mind do they become established in contemplative transcendence. Only then can we say that the light of the Self has returned to the center. This is the imperiential sublimity to which a poet goes when he is about to envision the final gleamings of truth. When Valmiki comes out of his dip in the sacred Tamasa river he becomes withdrawn and finds himself to be established in the serene equipoise of his mind. When he is sitting in that state of withdrawn serenity he is described as *dharmavit*, which is different from being a *brahmavit*. *Dharma* and the law are the same. Valmiki is about to commence the great epic *Rāmāyana* which is to serve for several millennia as a compendium of ethical laws and is to expound to posterity the normative notions of truth, goodness, and beauty.

One of the greatest privileges of man is that he is bracketed with the creator to carry on the works of the divine as a co-creator. This world manifesting in the time/space continuum, with aggregates of names and forms, is said to be the objectified version of the creator's imagination. Every item of creation has a name, a word image, to represent it. The name is given by man, who it seems, has the privilege to christen every visible or tangible form. The contemplative man and the god of transcendence come together in the state of *dhyāna*, spiritual absorption. When Valmiki sat comfortably on the seat of yoga, Brahma, the Creator, is said to have arrived and blessed Valmiki with a spiritual visitation. We read:

*It was then that Brahma,
four-faced creator of the worlds,
radiant, Self-born divinity,
appeared before Valmiki.*

*Surprised and speechless,
Valmiki rose quickly and humbly,
stood there with palms
joined in añjali,
he offered puja and provided water,
to wash hands and feet.
He brought a seat for the Lord,
Bhagavan Brahma
made himself comfortable,
And motioned the rīṣi Valmiki
to sit down.*

*Valmiki obeyed, absent-mindedly,
though the creator of the worlds
was facing him,
Valmiki slipped into a reverie,
his mind focused
on the fowler's crime.
It was a cruel deed, he was thinking,
to kill a sweet-voiced crane,
in his innocent love-making.
He recalled the grief of the female
and repeating the sloka
in front of Brahma,
he pondered its meaning,
and the poignancy was too much,
and once again sorrow overcame him.*

*Brahma smiled and said to Valmiki,
"May this sloka bring you glory!
There is no need to brood,
Oh great rīṣi,
The poetry that flowed
through your lips was inspired by me.
The time is now ripe
for you to narrate to the world,
The story of Rāma,
excelling Lord of Dharma,
Narrate the known
and unknown deeds of wise Rāma,
Of Sumitra's son Lakṣmana, of Sita,
and of the rakṣasas.
You will be inspired great rīṣi!
The unknown will be opened to you,
And will be revealed to you,
Nothing you say in your poem
will be untrue.*

*Sing then the sacred song of the
Enchanting exploits of Rāma,
So long as the mountains
and the rivers of this earth
stay on the face of this earth,
So long will the story
of Rāma endure,
so long will your fame remain,
In the realms of heavens above,
and the kingdoms of earth below."*

Good poetry is such that it can paint pictures with words and give a vivid presentation of the scenes it describes. From the very opening of *Rāmāyana*, we see in Valmiki such a gift of portraying persons, landscapes, panoramas and events from which any aspiring poet can always draw inspiration. Valmiki's *Rāmāyana* sets a model for poets.

The *Mahābhārata* being a great epic written for setting norms to restate and re-value *dharma*, Vyasa includes hundreds of anecdotes which expose people to inconceivable situations of unjust obligations, conflicting values, embarrassing situations, and riddles which cannot be easily solved. Mostly he makes people responsible for the complications of the snares which they bring upon themselves.

Throughout the book a thorough-going display of the intricacies of *karma* is presented. Between impulsiveness and thoughtful deliberation, life is woven into a tapestry which is at once enchanting and dangerous.

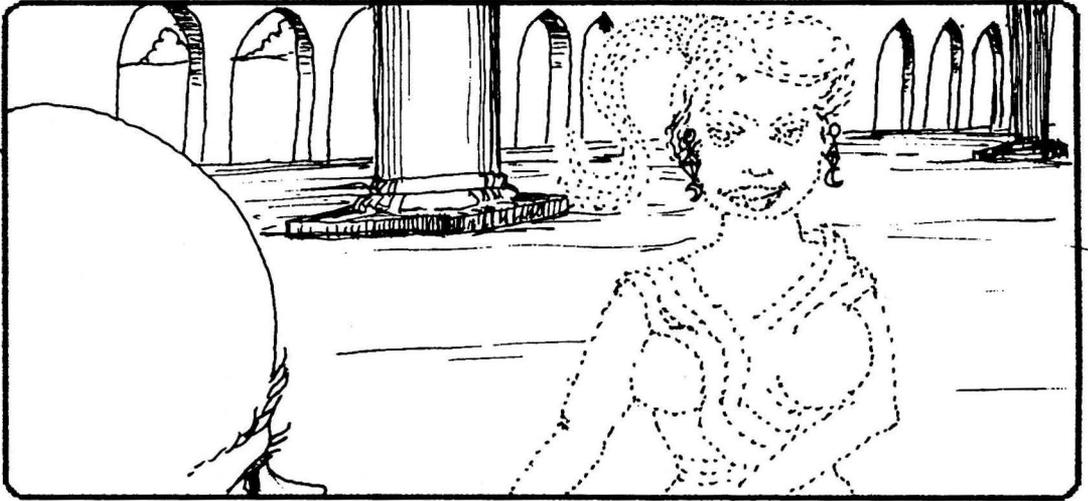
Utanka was very devoted to his preceptor, so he wanted to give his best service to the household, especially when the preceptor was away. A very strange request was made to him by the womenfolk of the household. The females came to him and said, "Oh Utanka, your mistress is in that season when connubial connection might be fruitful. The preceptor is absent, so you please stand in his place and do the needful." Utanka never expected such a request from his preceptor's womenfolk. He said, "Ladies, it is not proper for me to do such a thing. I have not been asked by my teacher to do anything improper." After a while his

preceptor returned from his journey. He came to know of the improper request made to Utanka and that he did not take advantage of master's absence. The preceptor was very pleased and said, "I give you all my blessings. You are now free to leave."

*Utanka could easily have bid good-bye to his preceptor and gone back home, but he wanted to give some special service to his master. He said, "Those who give instruction contrary to usage, and those who receive contrary to usage, one of the two is likely to die, so let me not leave you at once. Please allow me to give you some honorarium that is due to you." On hearing this the preceptor said, "In that case you please wait. I do not really need anything, but since you very much want to oblige me, you please ask my wife if she wants any help from you." The preceptor's wife was pleased that Utanka was willing to bring a present for her. So she said, "Go to king Pausya and beg of him the pair of earrings worn by his wife and bring them to me. The fourth day from today is a sacred day and on that day I am feeding brahmins. I want to put on those earrings and appear before my guests. So Utanka, go and accomplish this. If you can accomplish you will have good fortune, otherwise what can I say?" There is a colloquial saying that the call of *karma* comes unsought. Utanka took up this command.*

In works of art there is scope for using many surrealist images. Vyasa was a master craftsman with words. He could create instantaneous worlds of mystery with a bulwark of truth holding his creation together.

When Utanka got onto the road he saw a bull of extraordinary size with a man of uncommon stature mounted on it. The man addressed Utanka and said, "Please eat the dung of this bull." Utanka thought it was unclean to eat the dung but the man said, "Oh Utanka, eat of it without scrutiny. Your master ate it before you." The situation was trying, but there was a compelling force urging him to eat of the dung and drink the urine of



the bull. He then washed his hands and mouth and went to king Paushya.

On arriving at the palace Utanka saw king Paushya seated on his throne. Utanka approached the king with words of blessings and told him that he came with a petition to beg of the king a pair of earrings worn by the queen. King Paushya asked him to go to the female apartment and directly beg from the queen. On reaching the female apartment Utanka was surprised that he could not see the queen. He thought that the king was deceiving him. He returned and said that he was unable to see the queen. On hearing this the king revealed that his queen, being a very chaste wife, could not be seen by anyone who had eaten impure food. Utanka then remembered that he had performed his ablutions in a hurried manner and was not clean. He took his ablutions again and after purifying himself went to the queen's apartment and was able to see her. When he revealed to her that he was asking for the earrings not out of his greed, but to give them as a gift to his preceptor, the queen was pleased. She gave him the ear rings and said, "These ear rings are very much sought after by Takṣaka. You should therefore take utmost care of them." Utanka assured the queen that Takṣaka could not deprive him of the earrings. When he went to Paushya to thank and bid him goodbye, the king could have

said farewell. Instead, he wanted to do an extra favor to Utanka and asked him to take meals and go. When the food was placed before Utanka he found it cold and unclean with hair in it. Seeing this Utanka became angry and cursed that king should go blind. This made the king Paushya also very angry and gave a counter-curse that Utanka would not have issue. Then king Paushya looked at the food and became satisfied that it was indeed cold and unclean. He repented and asked Utanka's pardon. Utanka replied, "What I said must come to pass, but having become blind you will then recover your sight again." In return Utanka wanted the king to revoke his curse, but the king said, "A brahmin's heart is soft like butter, so it is only proper that you pardoned me. But, as I am a kṣatriya, my heart will not melt. Further, I am still angry!"

Right in the heart of fortune misfortune can brew. This is one of the greatest mysteries of the world which people call fate. Nobody can predict where the calm and tranquil river of grace and providence will suddenly change into a torrential river of fateful calamities.

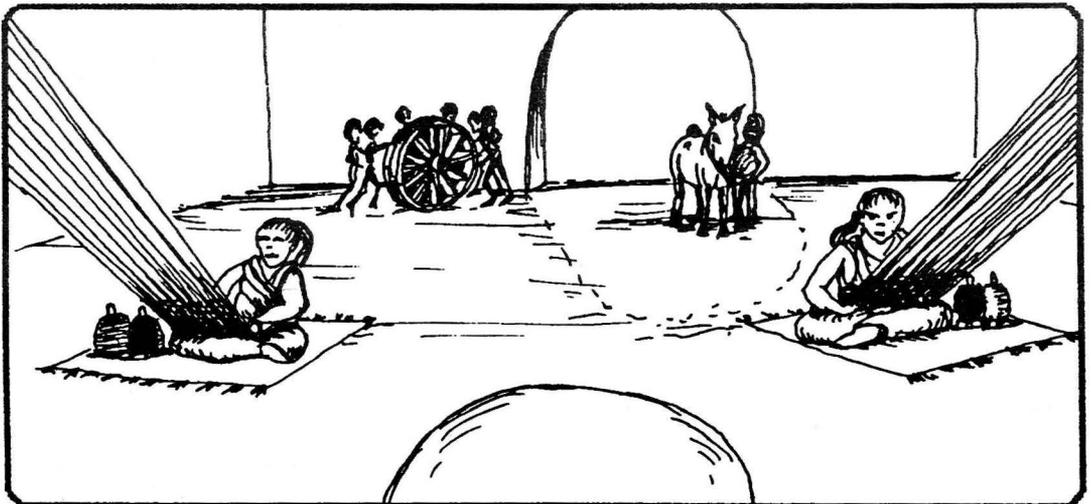
Utanka did not want to have more trouble from the king so he hurriedly went away with the earrings. As Utanka hurried towards his Guru's place holding the earrings in his hands, he saw on the road a beggar in rags, looking famished.

Sometimes the beggar came close to Utanka and sometimes he was not seen. As Utanka felt thirsty he placed the earrings on the ground and started drawing some water. At that moment the beggar appeared like a flash of lightning and picked up the earrings and bolted away. The old proverb came true - pride goes before a fall. Utanka remembered what he had bragged to the queen. The beggar was none other than Takṣaka. Soon after stealing the earrings Takṣaka changed into a snake and disappeared into a hole. Utanka tried to dig open the hole with a stick, but that was of no avail. Seeing the distress of Utanka, Indra inserted the energy of his thunderbolt into the stick. With the thunderbolt Utanka widened the hole and entered into the world of serpents.

We have already given the symbolism of Takṣaka earlier as none other than the genital of the male. When Utanka reached the world of the serpents he was astonished to see that it was a hedonistic city with many mansions and turrets with several wonderful places for enjoyment. The world of the libido is fascinating to everyone. The male genital looks famished like a beggar when it is not aroused. The queen's earrings are suggestive of female attraction. When Takṣaka saw the earrings, it was like a male genital becoming aroused - the beggar changes into a thief. The symbolic suggestion of this story is very far reaching.

Mahābhārata is written both as a surrealist and a realistic story. In fact, the triple states of consciousness, wakeful, dream, and the unconscious (*jagrat*, *svapna*, and *susupti*), are intertwined in Vyasa's style of narration. We can see a similar style adopted by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Shakespeare also employs spirits and fairies in his plays along with human characters. Understanding *Mahābhārata* as a poetic display of the drama of human life on earth is very rewarding.

Whenever a brahmin finds it difficult to fight an enemy he employs cunning. So Utanka started praising the serpents. He even pretended that he was an admirer of Takṣaka. These pretensions were of no avail. Takṣaka did not come out and the earrings were not given. In dismay when he looked around he saw two females weaving clothes with white and black threads. He also saw six boys turning a wheel with twelve spokes. He also saw an handsome man standing there with a magnificent horse. Utanka could easily see the symbols depicted in this vision. He interpreted the females as representing universal nature weaving with day and night the tapestry of truth and untruth. He recognized the man to be Indra, and the horse to be Ugraśravas, the horse that came from the churning of the milk ocean. Indra became pleased with Utanka and asked him to blow into the horse. When he blew into the horse,



smoke and flames came from all over and the serpents were afraid that the naga world would be burnt to ashes. Thus cornered, Takṣaka came out and gave the earrings.

Utanka was now very far from his preceptor's home and the appointed hour had come for him to present his preceptor's wife with the gift. Seeing poor Utanka's plight Indra asked him to get on that divine horse and speed up to his Guru's place. Just as Takṣaka is libido, Indra is mind. His horse is the power of thought which can reach any place with the speed of mind. Utanka returned in no time to his Guru's wife and gave her the earrings. She was about to emerge into the brahmin assembly to feed them and was worried that Utanka had not come with the ear rings, but when she saw Utanka, who presented her the earrings as he had promised, she bestowed her best blessings on him.

Utanka told his master everything that happened from the time of his departure from the preceptor's household until he returned with the earrings. He wanted his master to give him the meaning of everything he said and experienced. On hearing this the master said, "The two women who were at the loom weaving with black and white threads were dhata and vidhata. The six boys were the six seasons. The man you saw was Parjanya, the horse was fire, Agni. The bull seen on the road was Airavata, and the man mounted on Airavata was Indra. The dung of the bull which was eaten by you was amṛta. You returned alive from the world of snakes only because you ate the dung. Indra is my friend, that is how you came back safely." With these words the Guru gave blessings to Utanka and asked him to go his way.

Even wise people, when stung by humiliation, behave like ordinary people. Utanka was moved by his anger for Takṣaka. To take revenge on Takṣaka he went to Hastinapura and saw king Janamejaya. He told the king that his father Parikṣit was killed by Takṣaka and that

not only did Takṣaka unjustly bite Parikṣit, but he even bribed Kaśyapa, the prince of physicians, and turned him away from saving the king. Thus, Utanka prompted the king to do a snake sacrifice by which Takṣaka could be burnt alive. In this way Vyasa weaves the story of the *Māhābhārata* by mainly dwelling on the inexhaustible course of karma. The main incentive for karma comes from greed (*lobha*), desire (*kāma*), and anger (*krodha*). In the present case it is of *krodha*. The Guru's wife prompted Utanka to go to king Paushya because of her *lobha*, greed. It is said in the Bhagavad Gita that greed (*lobha*), desire (*kāma*), and anger (*krodha*) are the three gates of hell.

A wise person who is competent to write a great poem and chronicle depicting a country passing through many generations will have three inspired and blessed faculties to perform his unusual creation. They are respectively, the vast knowledge of the person, the great ability of execution, and a high sensibility to enjoy every creative unfoldment of his talent. These three can enjoin upon him the agency of knowledge, action, and enjoyment, which in Sanskrit are termed as *jñātrtva*, *kartrtva*, and *bhogtrtva*.

In spite of the depth of Valmiki's knowledge, his skillful execution, and the great sensibility with which he conceived and presented all items, he never wanted to paint an imposing picture of himself writing the epic. He was only copying the model of creation which God himself has presented before us. Even though the sun reveals the world to us, he takes no pride as an illuminator of the universe. Even to the humble blade of grass that pops out of a crevice in a rock, the cloud brings its sap of life in the form of rain. It does not brag that it is the nourisher of the universe. This is the secret of true creation. Valmiki does not refer to himself in the first person. In one of the famous dialogues of Plato, where he speaks of Rhapsody, Socrates finds out that if a poet is inspired by the Muses, or a goddess, or such divine agency for a cer-

tain performance, the poet has no right to steal the credit for it. Valmiki only too readily agrees with this. He gives all credit for the inspiration to write to the universal creator Brahma. He receives the gist of the story from Nārada and in the craftsmanship of elaborating it he takes the position of a workman or a mason who puts together bricks and mortar as asked by the overseeing engineer. It is with such humility that Valmiki carries out the role of writing *Rāmāyaṇa*. When the epic was composed he did not come into the limelight advertising himself as a great poet, but instead presented the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a recitation given by Rāma's sons, Lava and Kuṣa, in the banquet hall of Śrī Rāma. Although all knowledge and blissful experiences are immanent in the soul, the soul, or absolute craftsman, does not claim ownership. It is seen only as a superimposition of the ego. So we may say that the spirit or self of *Rāmāyaṇa* is Valmiki, and yet he is as invisible as the Self.

The first canto of Bala Kanda is used for this purpose of setting a model of presenting a great work. A new tradition is also started of requiring the description of a city. After localizing the area where the *Rāmāyaṇa* story has to commence, Valmiki gives a graphic description of Ayodhya where king Dasaratha ruled. It is an archaic style to praise every king as the sovereign of the world, even though he ruled only a small township. After giving reference to the lineage of Rāma, Dasaratha is presented as the sovereign ruler of that country.

We see that both the epics *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* begin with a reference to animal sacrifice. Sita's father Janaka is the main character in the Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad. We do not know if the *Rāmāyaṇa* was written before or after the composition of the Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad which presents a turning away from the previous vedic culture of burnt sacrifice. Horse sacrifice is the subject with which the Bṛhadāranyaka opens, but the horse referred to is not an actual horse. The sunrise is described as

the face of the horse and sunset is the behind of the horse. Thus, the entire cosmos, made up of names and forms and the relationship between actor and action, is depicted as the horse of phenomenality that is to burnt away in the flames of knowledge. According to the Upaniṣad only by the realization of the Self can one cross over the ocean of misery. The seekers in the Upaniṣad are not desirous of anything except the realization of the Self.

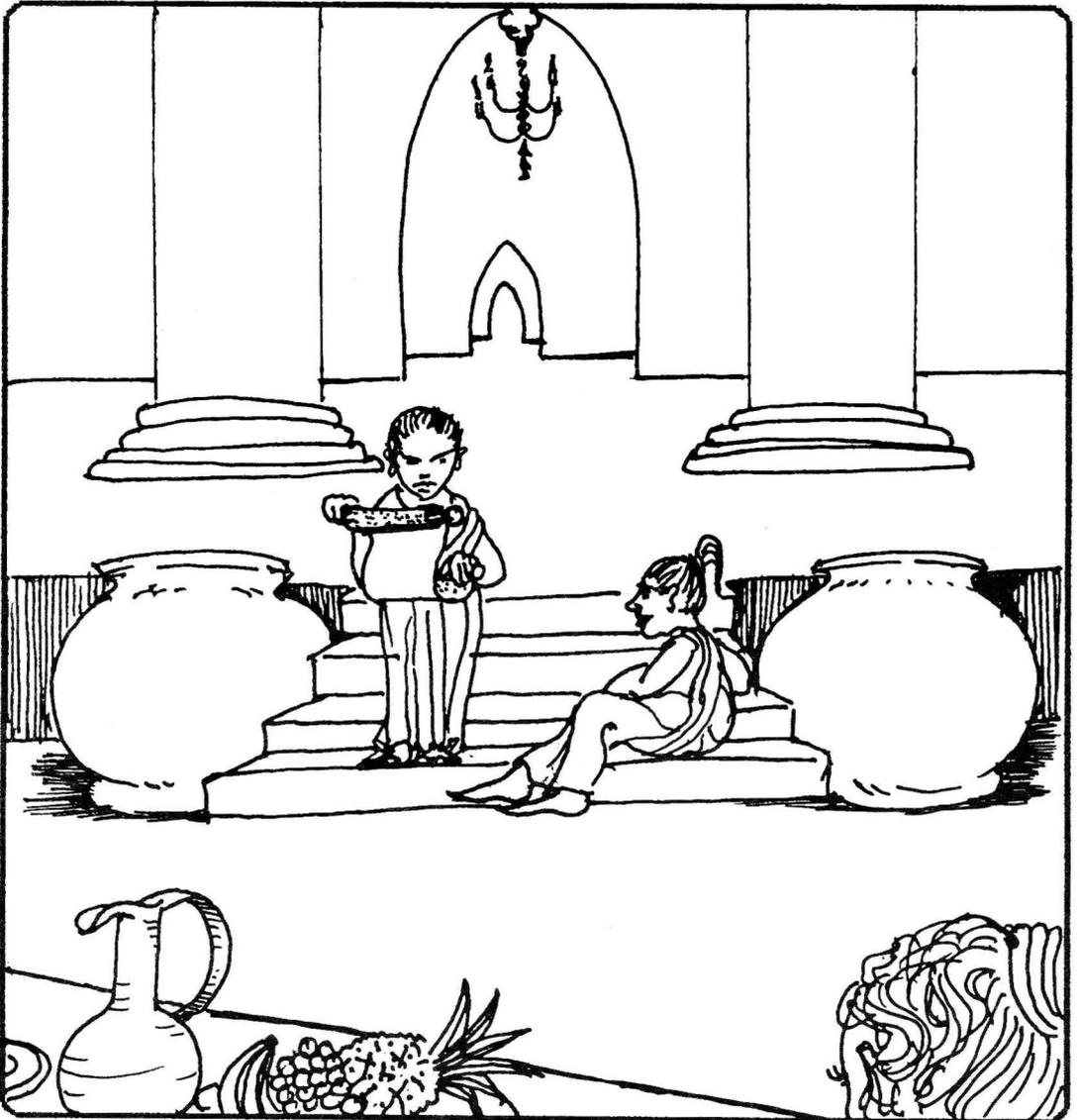
In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, on the other hand, we see that Dasaratha is distressed not because of his ignorance of the Self, but because he was desirous of having a child. There is a qualitative difference between the horse sacrifice mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the horse sacrifice mentioned in the Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad. We see also in the *Mahābhārata* a resolution taken by Janamejaya to kill all the snakes. Both these sacrifices are in conformity with the crude culture of that age. Animal sacrifice is unclean, cruel and barbaric. We don't have to be annoyed with the authors because they are chroniclers who have only correctly mentioned what took place in days of yore. But it is different when we come to the texts of the Upaniṣads where the risi, whose hearts were never tainted with any desire, wanted to correct people. So when we contrast the sacrifice mentioned in the Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad and the respective sacrifices of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* we can see the ambivalence that was going on in the cultural formation of the land and the counter-culture initiated by the contemplatives. If we do not study the chronicles of Valmiki and Vyasa with a historic formula, as Toynbee says, of blast and counterblast, our studies will not help us in any manner.

An Indian is likely to take books like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* as sacred and venerable, to be studied worshipfully, and he is likely to be filled with a certain sense of reverence. Human growth comes from examining everything of the past with a critical enquiry. There

were many things upheld by our ancient people which are worthy of being cherished. Similarly, there are ideas and ideologies which are repugnant to human solidarity and are to be discarded as the scum of a morbid culture. The idea of sacrifice is something to be revalued and restated as given in the Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad. Dasaratha was not vexed by a spiritual urge, he only wanted a son to hold the power of the monarch after him. Janamejaya was moved only by a sense of revenge. These ideals do not come anywhere close to the goals of the upaniṣads.

In these epics we can see the bone of contention between the Veda and the

Vedanta. From the very same *Ramāyana*, using the same Rama as the hero, Valmiki has spun the story of *Yoga Vāsiṣṭa* which gives some of the purest tenets of Vedanta. Similarly, Vyasa has generated right in the heart of the *Mahābhārata* a text book of great wisdom, the Bhagavad Gita, which urges Arjuna to go beyond the goal of the Vedic people who think only of a hedonistic heaven, *svarga parāyana*. A forceful appeal is made to go beyond the Veda guided by the three *gunas*. Such should be our thoughts in a comparative study of *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* in the light of upaniṣadic wisdom. ❖



Come To Me Again

*All night's blossoms of sadness,
so much more in love I know
I cannot hold you.*

*Yearning that makes distance,
that tells me in this emptiness I am
and am unfilled.*

*Untrue desire that lives me, discontent
in stillness; that aches my legs for miles
and compels my drawing hands, that says
by learning I will know.*

*And swollen I, still empty, seek still
to flag my pride in empty lands.*

*Come to me, again, sweet moment's dawn,
o light that shines from everything.*

*May I see my tears your river,
and may I, too, rise.*

*O breath, do not hold me, be as free
into me, as away. And ring the stars
in your soft course. And lead my steps
by your soft pulse.*

Mark Lamers



Book Review

Deborah Buchanan



Naomi Shihab Nye is an Arab-American poet who lives in Texas but travels frequently, to Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia. Three of her books of poetry have been published by Breitenbush Books: *Different Ways to Pray* (1980), *Hugging the Juke Box* (1982), and *Yellow Glove* (1986).

In these books Naomi Nye writes of her numerous journeys, in which inner revelation is inextricably interwoven with outer event. Nye moves easily through different cultures and she is sensitive to the small details of peoples' lives. Her poems focus on those gestures that act as talismans to the underlying world of spirit where disparate actions are made coherent. In her travels Nye observes not only others' lives but her own as well. In both cases, her words are used as mirrors of contemplation.

The poems convey a sense of wonder and a recognition of the unspoken connections that link us all as beings alive in a mysterious universe. This is touchingly expressed in the poem *For Lost and Found Brothers*:

For you, brothers.
For the broad rivers
invisibly harbored.
For the grandfathers who
murmured the same songs.
And for the ways we know each other
years before meeting,
how strangely and suddenly,
on the lonely porches,
in the sleepless mouth of the night,
the sadness drops away,
we move forward,
confident we were born
into a large family,
our brothers cover the earth.

While reading Nye's first book, *Different Ways to Pray*, the image that keeps returning to mind is that of a luminous ball resting gently in one's open hand. She looks on this glowing ball with delight and expresses reverence for it. Whether walking alone on the empty Texas plains, traveling by bus through the jungle, or sitting at her sick father's bedside, Nye discovers that intuitive vision that clarifies life's often chaotic busy-ness.

Nye approaches this inner reality in two ways. One is by honing closer and closer to the bone of everyday life, by paring down to bare and elemental gestures. The other way is by traveling unencumbered into unknown landscapes. Her travels in Latin America are this kind of trip: when one doesn't know the details of another culture - the "facts" that one is educated into - life's mysterious reality is more easily seen and experienced. It is as if events are telegrams from a reality one knows but has forgotten, and poetic vision is the language of translation.

Throughout *Different Ways to Pray*, and into *Hugging the Juke Box*, an optimism sustains Nye's travels. The poems are direct, uncluttered and spoken with assurance. But in the second book a shift in tone begins to surface: the world is still luminous but it is not as lucid. Vision comes clothed, not in doubt, but in suggestion. There are questions with several answers, and contradictory possibilities await one's contemplation. The positive quality of Nye's wonder has become tempered. She uses her words like lines in a Zen painting: they have now been shaded to add depth and dimension. In

Sleeping and Waking Nye writes:

All night someone
is trying to tell you something.
The voice is a harbor,
pulling you from underneath.
Where am I, you say, what's this
and who are you?
The voice washes you up
on the shore of your life.
You never knew there was land here.

In the morning you are
wakened by gulls.
Flapping at the window,
they want you to feed them.
Your eyes blink, your own hands
are pulling you back.
All day you break bread
into small pieces,
become the tide
covering your straight clear track.

In *Yellow Glove* that shading of line gives way to shadow and a strong note of sadness pervades many of the poems. Nye is no longer traveling through new and exciting landscapes but turning to her own Arab background. Here is a landscape both foreign and familiar, one often clothed in subtle paradox. This world is neither so simple as the cup on one's table nor so exotic as the Mayan temple. Many of the poems highlight the beauties she found living in her grandmother's village, and then that beauty is counterposed to the unexplained violence now rife throughout the Middle East.

In her most recent poems, Nye's travels are through the contradictions of life. There is a sense of pain and confusion, a feeling that the world has unexpectedly become sorrowful. The poem *Streets* shows one facet of this.

Each thing in its time, in its place,
it would be nice to think
the same about people.
Some people do.
They sleep completely,
waking refreshed.
Others live in two worlds,

the lost and the remembered.
They sleep twice,
once for the one who is gone,
once for themselves.
They dream thickly,
dream double,
they wake from a dream
into another one,
they walk the short streets
calling out names,
and then they answer.

Nye turns her unblinking, poetic eye on the painful absurdities of life. She puzzles at the ragged edges that are usually kept at a distance from our awareness. These poems at first seem in a different framework from the earlier ones: Has she lost her way? Has her inner vision gone cold? These questions, however, belie a superficial reading of the poems, a misunderstanding of the intensity of Nye's inner journey. For she has now traveled into that landscape where sadness and joy are inevitably bound to one another. It is the place where the paradoxes of these emotions both haunt and explain one another.

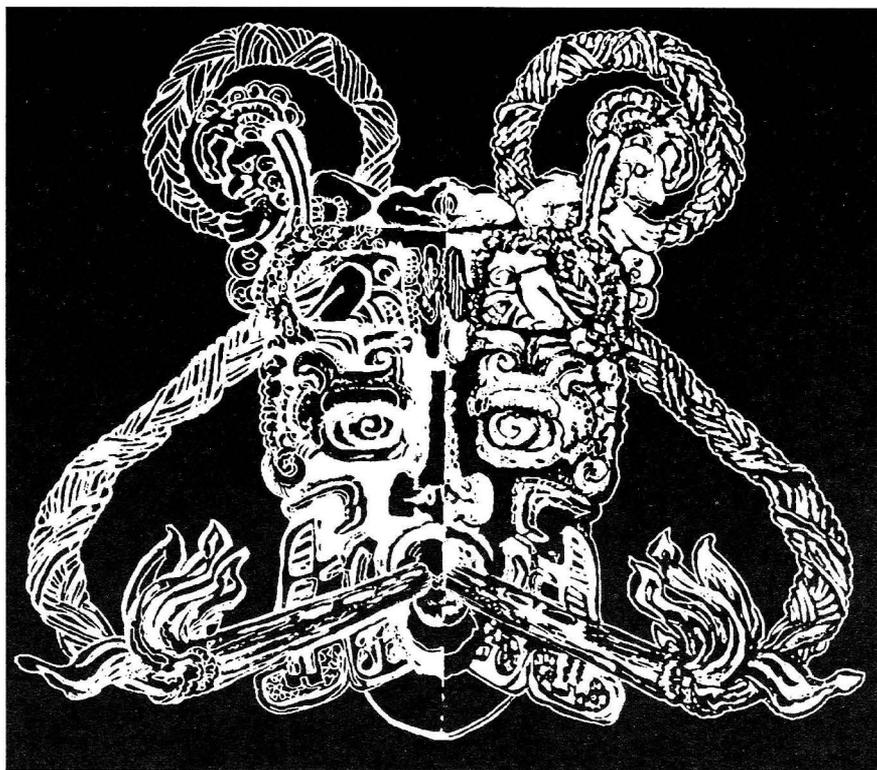
In the poem *Defining White* Nye details the process where we so strictly define our categories that life's vitality is neglected. This attitude of rigidity also does not allow the difficult and the good of our lives to intermix. But intermixed they are, and it is by acknowledging their relationship that one can fully appreciate - fully live - the multifaceted aspects of existence. This understanding is foreshadowed in the early poem *Kindness*.

Before you learn
the tender gravity of kindness,
you must travel where the Indian
in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed
through the night with plans
and the simple breath
that kept him alive.

In Nye's third book the title poem is about a precious possession of childhood, a yellow glove, that is lost. For its owner, poor and young, it is a very difficult loss, kept secret all winter long. But in the spring, completely unexpectedly, the glove returns. It is a magical and consoling return; a confirmation of grace that

gives no explanations but offers gifts.

The luminous ball that Nye held so easily in her poetic hand in the first book is still there in this third book. But the ball is no longer clear. It has a vibrating quality to it, a depth of emotion, and an inner dimension that adds to its luminosity. ♦



The Mayan Secret of Time

"To the Mayans, the past and the future were indistinguishable."

The past and future were a rope.

The Mayans held both ends.

The past and future were married.

The Mayans were the bed

on which children were born.

The past and future were flutes.

They could be played simultaneously,

any day you wished,

in the courtyard under the trees.

Naomi Shihab Nye

East-West University Report and Narayana Gurukula News



1990 *was greeted at Brahmavidya Mandiram, Varkala, India, with the following thoughts.*

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE I: Guru Nitya

The Guru and the heads of the various Gurukulas in India and abroad send this greeting to all our friends (and foes - who do not exist) and wish to everyone a prosperous and benevolent New Year. It is our hope that the rich experiences of the past will be taken advantage of to make 1990 both fearless and flawless, making it as happy as possible.

When Alvin Toffler wrote his book *Future Shock*, it spread a gloom over humanity everywhere. Then he himself generated in his readers' minds a fresh lease of hope by presenting his next book, *The Third Wave*. It seems that instead of a third wave standing apart as a phe-

nomenon of organized movement, it is the ocean proclaiming its unity; and that all molecular water drops, constituting both the infinite breadth of the oceanic surface and its multitudinous inner content that makes the oceanic treasury a homogeneous reality, are beginning to open every person's inner eye to different degrees of insight. Consequently the neighbor ceases to be a stranger. He or she is no longer a featureless shadow. Even before the neighbors take our hands into theirs, we become assured of the warmth coming from their confidence and loving trust in us.

This century's last decade is going to recapitulate the great dialectical play of romance and tragedy in which many countries emerge into their political freedom after a millennium of bondage, and several countries both old and newly-born are thrown into the cataclysm of irrational militancy. Science has so grown in its stature as a life-prolonging and mind-

blowing agent that we have lost the purpose for which humankind developed its mathematical acumen. We have now come to realize that science can also be *Mahādeva* (the grand annihilator of the human race) when it is ruthlessly placed in the hands of some madmen of the nuclear club.

Almost all gods, ranging from inert stone icons to the representatives of institutional religions' hypocrisy and political ambitions, have been killed one by one. Except for a few ambitious gods, most were buried beneath the piling debris of human anger and shame. Now those gods, born of irrational myth, are in a long queue to reappear in our path of life. Happily, most of the mythical gods that have been indolent in the dark folds of the collective unconscious are now without their fangs of poison. Instead, each one has a special note to play in the growing orchestration of the soul's fresh music of hope and advancement toward the actualization of dreams, ever mounting like the blossoms of the cherry or apple after a benumbing winter of cold realities. The dividing walls of the establishment's language have already crumbled, and humankind has developed a language of the heart with which to communicate with the huge trees, winding creepers, migrating birds from the other side of the globe, and even with the very air one breathes. Consequently, ecology has become a necessary harmony to be kept alive always in the conscience of the new age.

Aldous Huxley saw and admired the brave new world. Unfortunately the vainglorious brave new man degenerated into a Don Quixote: his meglomaniac feats and shouts have not only made individual schizoids, but have created an epidemic in which the entire populace of several countries has become sleepless, directionless, and frustrated, requiring treatment in the clinics of psychopathologists.

In our own time, 1990 shows a sign of relief in that political repression is fast waning, and a number of hearts previous-

ly held in bondage by politicians are now being released to join with all their brothers and sisters in a long-awaited embrace. The instinct of *The Dragons of Eden*, which continued as a negative conditioning of evolving organisms, is now giving way to a reason which ascends from the heart rather than a ratiocination descending from the brain.

Nobody has corrected the world in any beautiful manner by putting emphasis on "ifs" and "buts." Wisdom is like a growing fetus or a sprouting seed. It requires years of patience, sometimes millennia, to come out of the shackles of social-physical realities and emerge as an innocent child of serene splendor. Usually ignorance goes with innocence. For a change, wisdom now sits on the throne of loving innocence. It is as if new doors of perception are opening up without the aid of L.S.D. The insight enables our eyes to perceive the golden thread of loving care which runs through the precious beads of friendship, a friendship not tainted with the thirst for recognition nor the hunger for domination.

The loud roars of nuclear-fitted missiles and the metallic clangs of industrial homes now occasionally become silent and give us a respite to sit quietly within ourselves and listen to the whispering of leaves as they cheerfully dance in recognition of the love of foundling breezes or hear within the melody of a gurgling stream of consciousness. We put our faith in the new dreams which can never be fully actualized and consequently will not turn into fossils.

Ours is not a brave new world but a continuing world of hope in which the flowing stream has the crystal clear water of love and many recurring cascades, each different in its expression of proclaiming the bond of human kind, which is hereafter to be looked upon not as a bondage but as a voluntarily resolved pledge of dedication.

Once again our loving greetings to everyone.





Library at Vythiri

Founded in the early 1970's by Jean and Nicole Letschert, Amṛtabindu Ashram became a bright spot in the lives of the neighboring village children who were given brushes and paint and encouraged to give expression to their inner visions. Vidyādharan, the current head of the ashram, maintains an international gallery featuring their work which is open to the public.

In March of 1990, a Seminar on Art, Ecology and Literature was held at the Amṛtabindu Ashram of Narayana Gurukula, in Vythiri, South India.

Located on a hillside overlooking Pookode Lake in the Wynad, the Gurukula is one of the few places in the area where the natural rain-forest has been preserved. This has come to the attention of local authorities who are now cooperating to aid the Gurukula's preservation efforts as well as the Art Gallery and art classes being conducted at the center.

Devi Carving at Vythiri



NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE II: Peter Oppenheimer

In the United States, New Year's Eve is a major celebration observed with great fervor. The outgoing year is always represented as an old and feeble man tottering around on his cane with not much time to live. The new year, by contrast, is always pictured as a brand spanking new baby with a fresh lease on life.

An interesting facet of this imagery, especially coming as it does in the non-reincarnation believing West, is that the symbol of renewal belongs to one and the same person or one and the same Father Time, with Father Time himself becoming a baby at each new year. Thus within us also the new year is to signify just such renewal and rebirth, as indicated by the tradition of new year's resolutions whereby old habit patterns are shed and new personality traits are to be adopted.

This year, as we enter a new decade, the final decade of the present millennium, I find myself taking a slightly different angle on this process. When last seen, Narayana Guru was an old man.

Yet if we determine to take him within our heart, he becomes again like a small baby. The image is apt in that to thrive a baby needs constant care, attention and nourishment, and also in that an entire life full of unforeseen possibilities lies before a baby.

In a sense Narayana Guru is reborn within us, and our thoughts, words and deeds are like fresh applications of the same spirit and illumination that we recognize as uniquely his. This is not simply true in the case of Narayana Guru but of any saint, sage, hero, or model that we intently plant in our heart as a seed. Just like a seed, if properly and consistently tended to, that model will blossom forth in dramatic fashion within the actualities of our own daily life.

This is my vision for the 1990s as we prepare to enter the next millennium: that human kind will recognize and

awaken to these potentials within. The great luminous models of all time are not simply dusty relics of memory but rather potent seeds of our own (their own) future.

In a very real sense we are living out the dream of Narayana Guru by sitting here as an international contemplative fraternity/sorority in this beautiful research library, which was once but a spark of a dream of his foremost disciple Nataraja Guru. We are living proof of the efficacy of their dreams.

Now it is our turn. It is our turn to dream. And if we so choose, we can be continuators of some of the countless dreamers who have gone before us illuminating a more peaceful, loving, harmonious way of living on this earth as favored children of Mother Nature and the Holy Father.

When I look out upon this gathering, I see the faces of many dear friends and at the same time, if I look closely with my wisdom eye, I also see baby Narayana Gurus, baby Buddhas, baby St. Teresas.

What a world this will be when we see our inspiring predecessors not as dead and gone but as youthful aspects of our own selves. We can allow ourselves to be more fully shaped by the models we choose, and in turn we are in a very real sense giving them new shape within us and as us. The choice is ours. Civilization is nothing if not ever-changing and thus ever-changeable. A new world awaits us, a new millennium. The shape that world is to take is only limited by our own imagination and commitment.

Happy New Year.

Happy New Decade.

Happy New World.



During most of 1990 Guru Nitya will be traveling to Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, the United States, England, France, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Italy and Greece.

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This year, as we enter a new decade, the final decade of the present millennium, I find myself taking a slightly different angle on this process. When last seen, Narayana Guru was an old man.

Yet if we determine to take him within our heart, he becomes again like a small baby. The image is apt in that to thrive a baby needs constant care, attention and nourishment, and also in that an entire life full of unforeseen possibilities lies before a baby.

In a sense Narayana Guru is reborn within us, and our thoughts, words and deeds are like fresh applications of the same spirit and illumination that we recognize as uniquely his. This is not simply true in the case of Narayana Guru but of any saint, sage, hero, or model that we intently plant in our heart as a seed. Just like a seed, if properly and consistently tended to, that model will blossom forth in dramatic fashion within the actualities of our own daily life.

This is my vision for the 1990s as we prepare to enter the next millennium: that human kind will recognize and

awaken to these potentials within. The great luminous models of all time are not simply dusty relics of memory but rather potent seeds of our own (their own) future.

In a very real sense we are living out the dream of Narayana Guru by sitting here as an international contemplative fraternity/sorority in this beautiful research library, which was once but a spark of a dream of his foremost disciple Nataraja Guru. We are living proof of the efficacy of their dreams.

Now it is our turn. It is our turn to dream. And if we so choose, we can be continuators of some of the countless dreamers who have gone before us illuminating a more peaceful, loving, harmonious way of living on this earth as favored children of Mother Nature and the Holy Father.

When I look out upon this gathering, I see the faces of many dear friends and at the same time, if I look closely with my wisdom eye, I also see baby Narayana Gurus, baby Buddhas, baby St. Teresas.

What a world this will be when we see our inspiring predecessors not as dead and gone but as youthful aspects of our own selves. We can allow ourselves to be more fully shaped by the models we choose, and in turn we are in a very real sense giving them new shape within us and as us. The choice is ours. Civilization is nothing if not ever-changing and thus ever-changeable. A new world awaits us, a new millennium. The shape that world is to take is only limited by our own imagination and commitment.

Happy New Year.

Happy New Decade.

Happy New World.



During most of 1990 Guru Nitya will be traveling to Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, the United States, England, France, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Italy and Greece.

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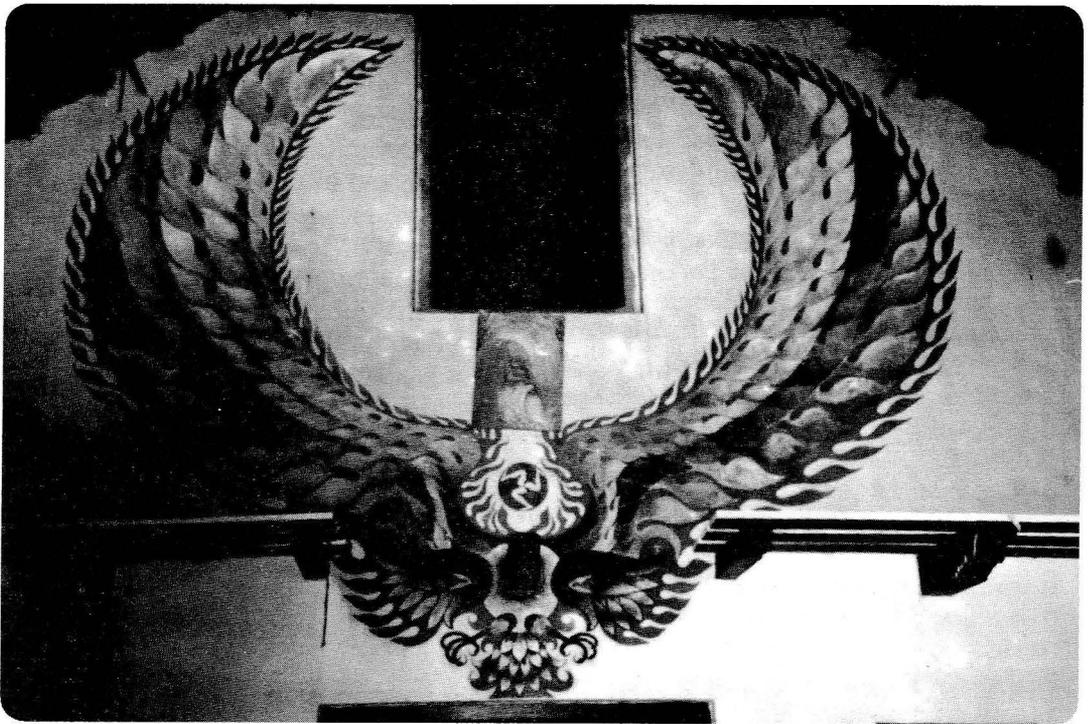
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