

I Adhyaropa Darsana, Cosmic Projection

Verse 10

11/2/5

He from whom this world manifested, as a fig tree from a seed—he is Brahma, he is Shiva and Vishnu, he is the Absolute, he alone is all.

Today is Nitya's 81st birthday. 81 is 9 X 9; nein nein in German is neti neti in Sanskrit, "not this not this" in English, so that must be the best Guru birthday there is. Last night the Guru presence was palpable in a group effort that rounded off the first darsana, revealing it as the masterful and enlightened vision it is. Today I incline my brow to the mysterious happenstance that brought this particular manifestation of the Guru into our lives. Aum.

Now let's look at the verse. As Anita wondered toward the end of class, what's with all these guys, anyway? Now that women have been admitted into the picture of polite society, it definitely seems old fashioned to have only male gods. We discussed how gods in general came about as poetic descriptions of scientific principles that eventually became codified and worshiped by superstitious people; before long the principles were forgotten and only the imagery remained. As with all contemplative studies, our task is to bring those principles back to life and dispense with the confusion of empty or misleading imagery.

I double checked the dikker and noted that sah, the word translated as 'he' here, is neuter per se. Bringing this very important verse into the modern era we could rewrite it,

“That from which this world is manifested, as a fig tree from a seed—that is Brahma, that is Shiva and Vishnu, that alone is all.”

I especially like that this brings us to *That Alone*, making a clear connection with Atmopadesa Satakam. The All—That Alone, the Absolute—must certainly transcend or include all gender issues, which concern a limited but significant slice of manifestation, the part blessed with sexual separation. This translation reveals what I think Narayana Guru’s intent is, which I’ll attempt to explain.

Traditional dualistic thinking conceives of intelligent designers acting at a distance from creation to fashion a world. Thus the three gods named here would bring about through their activities creation, preservation and dissolution. Narayana Guru is a nondualist and is saying very poetically and succinctly that the underlying unitive substance mysteriously expresses itself through manifestation impelled by an inherent vital urge, which might be described as having those three parts but which are not being supplied from outside by external, godly forces. Each element of manifestation, including every human being, exemplifies the unfoldment of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Without the process of manifestation they don’t exist. In the most real sense possible, we are That.

Everything existent must first come to be, last a while, and then disappear. Ridiculously simple, but powerful enough to create universe after universe. And it happens on many different time scales simultaneously, from the briefest instant to an individual life to the birth and death of galaxies.

The present view of physics on the creation of a universe is amazingly similar to a fig tree sprouting and developing from a seed: a point source that has at its inception a coding for all future unfoldment in the form of natural laws. This source then expands and proliferates into an infinitely branching, budding and flowering universe, one of possibly an infinite number of

universes. Everyone has seen the trees graphing species development in biology textbooks. Our individual life is an epitome of the macrocosmic process, springing from an invisibly tiny seed to expand into a being capable of a myriad complex actions and accomplishments. The vital urge driving each of us is so powerful that even the chains and wet blankets of religions and social strictures can only keep it inactive for a brief moment in the cosmic scheme. For all the efforts of the chronically unhappy, the fig tree's exuberant growth cannot be curtailed.

The class brought up so many important and practical ideas, I dearly wish I could repeat them all. But then this would be so long no one would read it.... Probably the most important branch of our collective class fig tree was Chris' response to the analogy of the gooseberry in the palm of one's hand that Nitya presents in his commentary. A berry is so simple and undeniable; very here and now. But what, she asked, of wishing, of striving, of wanting to grow instead of just unfolding? In other words, what's the place for volition in this picture? This question was expanded by Jan's allegorical image of standing in the kitchen trying to prepare a meal while her children bring problem after problem to interrupt her perfect focus on the task at hand. Meaning, when is life ever so simple as what we have sketched out in our abstract imaginings? Anita has a similar experience at work, where she could almost never stick to one job but had to juggle and sooth many people's needs and demands. I'm pretty sure everyone could relate to this stressful aspect of life. Are volition and multitasking and so on, valid spiritual endeavors or not?

Deb and Charles suggested that being in the present was not necessarily simple or singular. Undeniability can hold for complex issues as well as gooseberries. For many human beings, complex activities are deeply satisfying, as long as they're in tune with their natural inclinations or svadharma. Like a fig tree, many skills start out simple and evolve into breathtakingly complex expressions.

Part of what impels this development is dissatisfaction and a desire to be something more than what you think you are. Many such “unspiritual” attitudes have an important place in the scheme of things. Not all growth must be unconscious to be properly in tune with our dharma.

I think of learning to play the piano as an example. You start out with very simple, one note at a time melodies, and gradually build up to more and more fingers being involved, weaving several lines simultaneously. At the high end it's the most complicated activity human beings are so far capable of. I suppose real musicians achieve what they do through a purely natural unfoldment, but for ordinary folk we are pushed along by our desire to do better, and by our love and admiration for things which we aren't capable of but others are. As long as such attitudes fuel the enjoyment of learning, I can't see that they aren't worthwhile. And believe me, there's plenty of frustration on backsliding days. It's not always a bed of roses. I guess the difference is that if you are doing what you love, many different mental states contribute positively, but if you hate what you do then it's time to get back to the Core and realign your life.

Another favorite example of mine is the attitudes of children towards growing up. We adults recognize the wonders and beauty of being a child, but often kids are striving so hard to be older that they aren't satisfied with being their own age. They think by growing up they'll become free, magically. When they arrive at adulthood, many never again even think of freedom, much less express it. But try to tell a child to be satisfied with being their present age! It's not easy. We know perfectly well that their growth will happen without any special effort on their part, but they don't.

Mick, who has an extensive background in Buddhism and the Martial Arts, kept us centered—as always—with the importance of Zen-like pure action, in which all extraneous thoughts, hope, fears and the like have been screened off by intense concentration. Such

contemplative practices bring us back to the point source, and so are key to staying happy throughout our life. But I don't think they are meant to be a fulltime business, at least for most of us. Our awareness moves from a single concentrated point to an outer world of complex expression and then back again, pulsating between the extremes. All stages of the process are important. Since this will be examined in our next two classes on Cosmic Projection, the ancillary essay to this darsana, I'll cut it off here. There's plenty more to this discussion, without a doubt.

At the close of the class, Mick fairly gasped out "That It! That's everything there is to say. There's nothing more!" Deborah pointed out that yes, that's how you feel after each darsana, but then you read the next and another whole vision opens up.

There is such a vast content to this masterwork, a twentieth century Upanishad, and we've only just begun.

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1/12/16

Adhyaropa Darsana Verse 10

He from whom this world manifested,
as a fig tree from its seed –
he is Brahma, he is Siva and Vishnu,
he is the Absolute, he alone is all.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*He from whom, like a fig-tree as from seed,
Came out this world manifested:
He is Brahmà, He is Siva and Vishnu,
He is the Ultimate; everything is He indeed.*

The Portland Gurukula class began 2016 with an intimate gathering “wrapt in the old miasmal mist” of Oregon winter, striving, like T.S. Eliot’s hippopotamus, to take wing. It is a testament to group consciousness that we assisted each other to fly far into the empyrean.

Deb’s opening comments included that in this final verse the Gurus are saying that despite differences, there is a cohering structure or principle that we are capable of understanding and which gives value to our lives. The class ruefully acknowledged that in addition to this, there is a dividing tendency that attracts our attention far more readily than the quiet, intuitive principle of unity, though that fortunately affects us with or without our being aware of it. The dividing tendency, being inevitably partial, is defined as ignorance in Vedanta. Ignorance—or what we don’t know—is so vast as to be debilitating if it is not counterbalanced with some level of self-assurance.

Nitya provides eminently useful instruction in his comments, about how we can proceed as dedicated seekers of truth and happiness in the face of our monumental ignorance, making this one of his most important essays to be found anywhere. Before bequeathing us his guidance, he recapitulates the need for a unitive basis of understanding to make our intelligence coherent. To achieve this, a reductive examination is called for:

For there to be a general agreement among all peoples there should be a simultaneity in the intellectual functioning of individual minds in spite of all personal differences. Moreover, there should be a common parameter which can be used to prove to every mind the validity of a truth, when that parameter is used by every individual. When one speaks to another person, he takes it for granted that the capacity of the other mind is the same as his own. In fact this is very often not the case. How is it that sometimes the best argument of one man

can seem totally irrelevant and unacceptable to another? It is because each has a different standpoint and angle of vision, which leads to diverse assessments of the same situation. Is there some way by which everyone can be brought to the same point of view? The answer is yes, there is such a way. The method is direct perception, unmodified by conditioning or mental aberration. When able to use this method, all people of good will can set aside individual or racial conditioning and dispassionately accept explanations of the physical world as it is presented to the senses. The Indian analogy for this is a gooseberry in the palm of one's hand. This means: I hold the fruit in my hand and directly perceive it; how, therefore, can I doubt its existence? (84-5)

The existence of the “gooseberry” is a fact; what we think of it is our opinion. It is only natural that some of us will love gooseberries and others will be less enthusiastic, but our disagreement only makes sense if we are talking about the same thing. For us to have a meaningful discussion, the subject has to be clearly agreed upon, and getting to this simple starting point is often a challenge.

Opinions routinely masquerade as facts. The juvenile mind loves to insist that its desires are based on absolute truth, and what it wants is backed by divine sanction. Those habits are carried over into so-called adult life, unless we intentionally rein them in.

Bushra asserted that facts are meaningless, and it's only our opinions which give them meaning. I would slightly adjust this to the Vedantic view: facts are *neutral*, which is a meaningful position, and our opinions about them are polarized to a greater or lesser extent. Our polarized take is another level of meaning, and the one we are likely to fight over. Facts are particularly meaningful in that they are the basis of our opinions, the anchor to which they are tied, or should be at any rate. In keeping with the

verse image, they are the seeds from which the world of opinion—maya, as Andy suggested—grows into the gigantic, fruit-bearing tree of everyday reality.

Andy wondered how we are to detect opinion as opposed to fact. What are the hallmarks of opinion? Jan added that she has seen in medical science a reliance on opinion and dogma that undermines its effectiveness. By limiting the scope of a medical examination, important factors are necessarily left out. It is particularly challenging to detect prejudice on the part of highly respected authorities, yet it is of preeminent importance. We can still respect their opinions while keeping our minds open to alternative possibilities that they are not willing to consider.

Deb made an important point that the facts in question are not simple knowledge facts, like the population of Kerala or who invented spaghetti, but the layer of indelible interconnections that undergirds existence. We are talking here about core reality, which is independent of everyone's opinions, as well as distinct from all the miscellaneous facts of transactional verity.

I suggested that there are no special hallmarks of opinions. Every conflict situation demands that we carefully examine its elements, and if we do so we will spot the logical inconsistencies. It is helpful to always look for the essence of any argument, and the closer we come to it the more germane our interpretation will be. No matter what, though, we should recollect that we all fall short of perfection, and so should respect the other person's opinion even if it differs from our own.

Deb remembered Nitya telling us that we should never believe what our rational everyday mind tells us. He wanted us to be sure to doubt everything, otherwise we would remain mired in complacency. She added that we should always take the time and care to sink into our own selves, and not just be the reactive punching bags of life's turbulence.

What we loosely call self-examination is making an effort to penetrate the cloud of prejudiced interpretations, both ours and others', to access the source from which they have sprung. In *Atmopadesa Satakam* this was called returning to the *karu*, the Core. Here it is a seed, which specifically emphasizes the potential to proliferate. Retaining awareness of the existence of a core reality unifies our relationship with the world, whereas losing contact with it breeds the kind of hysterical eruption of violence and insanity that is once again ascendant in the political discourse of the allegedly civilized world. Nitya offers specific suggestions for correcting this kind of imbalance:

Rene Descartes, the French mathematician, and David Hume, the English philosopher, give this same idea in other ways. According to Descartes, all items of explanation come under the headings of either fact or opinion. People may disagree with regard to their opinions, but when it comes to matters of fact there must be universal agreement. According to Hume, the compulsion to agree can arise from either a psychological or a logical necessity. The former may arise from a religious conviction, a fixed notion, a blind spot in the mind, uncritical acceptance, association of events, superstition, or prejudice. Here there can be differences of opinion. But an imperative may arise that is born of logical necessity. This imperative will compel everyone to accept the same truth. Even the theory of cause and effect approved by scientists is, according to Hume, based solely on a psychological necessity. (85)

So, our psychological compulsions should be converted to logical necessities, by rooting out our blind spots. Since we can't see our blind spots, most people are not interested in performing this exacting self-discipline. There has to be an intimation, at least, that it is a worthwhile enterprise, or why would anyone bother? Instead,

we adjust ourselves to be comfortable with our prejudices, superstitions, fixed notions, and all the rest.

Once again, it's easy enough to see that other people are bound by their ignorance, but the thrust of our study is to turn the arrow back on ourselves: if everyone else has these faults, then we must also. In a sense they are the inevitable means of functioning on the transactional level. At least by admitting them we become more tolerant and understanding of other people's anomalies.

Bushra brought up an important principle for us to keep in mind, stemming from statements like this that are typical of Indian philosophy:

The ultimate conviction of truth is a certitude which can be termed as being self-evident. Thus the final criterion as to whether something is true rests with the self itself. In mathematics this would be called an axiom.

Many of us consider whatever we believe, no matter how wild and baseless, to be axiomatic and beyond question, and we will fight anyone who suggests otherwise. Our beliefs are almost always "self-evident" to us, unless we start to examine them. Ergo, if we don't examine our beliefs, they remain self-evident, which is what we are seeking anyway. It's a neat little trap—no, it's actually a huge bottomless pit we as a species rush to fall into. It often looks like there is no valid certitude possible, only partial ideas that we can run with, in hopes of fooling others to the extent of becoming highly successful. Outwardly successful people don't have doubts, and we long to be doubt-free ourselves. So the temptation is to jump on the bandwagon, full speed ahead!

Obviously, there is a reason that a course of study like Darsanamala should exist. Narayana Guru saw that living on the surface and forgetting our roots being nourished in the absolute ground of unity led people to miss out on the joys of a direct

relationship with their deepest Self. Without the sense of connection, there remains an aura of emptiness that can be glossed over but never eradicated. Here is where Nitya makes the *raison d'être* perfectly clear. He first explains what Paul talked about as the “wholesale intellectual approach,” where the missing elements of life are intelligently restored through examination and contemplation. This approach is epitomized here as the tiniest of seeds that produces the grandest of trees, which then gives birth to new seeds, essentially forever. This can only be known to a retentive mind, not observed directly. The intellectual grasp is an important aspect of the search for truth, but it is not the whole story. It is to be harmoniously joined with an intuitive trust in a beneficent context. Nitya says:

Apart from a wholesale intellectual approach there is an alternative way to the totality of this world-experience. It is to approach the appreciate adorable Absolute with a warm and devotional feeling engendered in one's heart. This approach from the heart, though a very private and personal matter, is shared by all, including the scientist and philosopher. The limitations of experimental science and theoretical speculation bring an enquiring mind to a certain frontier of imagination. Beyond that lies the vast expanse of human ignorance. (86)

Again, this is not about choosing an intellectual over an intuitive route, or vice versa. Both these aspects of our self have great value, and deserve to be cultivated. “Alternative” in Nitya's statement does not indicate a separate choice, but rather an additional choice. If you pick one over the other you are only half of what you could be, except that—fortunately for us—our talents don't disappear when we ignore them. Sometimes they continue to support us no matter what we believe.

This idea led to an appreciation of dialectical thinking, of bringing the two sides of an argument together. Paul affirmed that meaning comes from the uniting of opposites, and Susan guided us through a review of the four seasons of the year we enjoy in the North, each of which arrives in glory and dies away to our regret, to be replaced by the next season. She thought this could also teach us humility and surrender, since the old has to pass before the new can be ushered in. The renewal is all the more delightful precisely because it replaces what was extinguished. The joy is more acute thanks to the preceding melancholy.

Deb reflected that those who thank God for their blessings should also thank God for the tragedies. We learn and grow through conflict. This inspired Jan to tell us of a time in college when a band of students called themselves Reds for Reagan—communist advocates who supported the ultra-conservative Reagan to be elected President to accelerate the collapse of Capitalism and hasten the arrival of the workers' paradise. Reed College is itself famously progressive, so for anyone there to support Reagan seemed an uproarious sarcasm. But they meant it. And they had a point. Contented people don't generally foment revolutions.

Unless we become frustrated by our ignorance, we may just skip our way through life with nary a care. But some of us have realized how stultifying our limitations are, and want to press beyond them. This is not something that can be done without outside aid, although there are plenty of fairytales that make it look like a lone effort of detachment from our fellows. The thirty years in a cave routine, and all that. Nitya brings in an unusual metaphor to elucidate what seems to me to be a perfectly balanced attitude:

At this point it is likely that the quest for truth will emerge from the heart in the form of an appeal to a higher source of understanding. This will have the quality of a prayer. Here one enters into "the cloud of unknowing," or what St John of the

Cross calls “the dark night of the soul.” It is here that the skeptic may be transformed into a believer. An aircraft may be coming in to land on an airfield shrouded in dense fog, with only radar to guide the pilot. He must trust his instruments and the remote voice from the control tower, and make what mental calculations he can. He must approach what he thinks is the runway, cut back the speed of his aircraft, and commit it irrevocably to contact with the ground. And he must do all this in the firm belief that everything will turn out for the best. What he does blindly, but with an intuitive certainty of the validity of his calculations, will have a good and safe ending. Perhaps only once in a million such operations will a disaster occur.

The lives we conduct from day to day are not so very different from this analogy of the jet pilot. If, allowing our intuition to inform us, we too make every possible effort to penetrate the mystery of truth, then it is very likely that we shall eventually do so. We share this grace of intuition with all creatures of nature and with the vegetative life. It is from this deep source that the honeybee, for example, finds her own guidance back and forth between her hive and the distant flowers from which she is to gather honey. (86)

We humans have become cut off from our vast inner powers, due to an exclusive attraction to rationality and sense perception. Yet it is a fairly simple matter to open our mind to our intuition, and use our rational faculty mainly to distinguish between the valuable and the diversionary impulses that arise in us. It requires a degree of humility, of awareness of our limitations, before we can adequately surrender to the greater whole. Humility is a hard sell in an aggressive world of selfish brutality. It takes a little time before its joys are revealed and it becomes a natural and easy state of mind.

To the exclusively rational thinker, a unitive context is “preposterous.” Yet Narayana Guru has demonstrated the utter necessity of it in this first darsana, and if we have been paying attention we are almost certain to agree.

Even in our class we regularly hear echoes of the truism that “judging is bad.” I had to counteract it once again last night. Judging is essential, and one of the key elements to being human. If someone throws us a ball, we judge its trajectory in order to catch it. Without judgment we would just stand there stupidly and ignore the ball. But don’t we want to join the game? We judge whether it is safe to cross the street, whether it is safe to live with carnivorous bears or better to admire them from a distance, you name it. Without judging we would be nonreactive to our environment, and would rapidly die. Part of our work is making our judgment healthy and intelligent, rather than exclusive and selfish. It is *judgmentalism* that gives judging a bad name, but the cure is not to abandon judgment but to open our mind and heart, replacing selfishness with selflessness, or what we might describe as a universal Self-ishness. Narayana Guru gives the key distinction in Atmo 21-25, which I will clip into Part II.

Nitya didn’t want anyone to be put off or diverted by the vestigial reference to Hindu gods, so he closes with a paean to the Absolute that puts them in their proper place:

When a religious person makes the statement that God creates, sustains, and recalls, the apparent irrationality of this exceeds even the most preposterous claims which scientists think to be rational. Narayana Guru wrote the Darsanamala with the beliefs of the Indian people as its background. The one Supreme Truth which generates, sustains, and dissolves is described in this present verse as Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, respectively. That Truth, which is looked for and spoken of by scientists, philosophers and psychologists, is the same as that which is

approached with reverence and spoken of with humility by theologians. As this truth is beyond our comprehension, the Guru describes it as *para*. And as there is nothing else that can be spoken of, he also describes it as the All. (86-7)

Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary:

Just as from a (minute) seed a (large) fig-tree arises (so too), that Lord from whom this whole wonderful universe became manifested. He is Brahma, He is Vishnu, He is Siva, He is the Supreme Self (*paramàtmà*), and He is everything indeed. By this, Brahmà the creator (in the Vedic context) of the (Vedic gods), Indra and Varuna and others, as well as, Vishnu who is the Lord of the Vaishnavas and Siva who is the Lord of the Saivites, and the Supreme Self of the *vedàntins*, are all treated as one and the same. Because of this reference to the three-fold gods (*trimurtis*), it is indicated that this world originates from the same Lord having this three-fold character, and that it originates in Him, endures in Him, and dissolves into Him once again. Further, by the statement that He is everything, it is affirmed that there is no world outside of the Lord. It further states that by the words, *sah parah*, i.e., 'He is the Ultimate'. It is indicated that the Lord is not subject to any kind of transformation (*vikàra*), and that He is without any kind of specific attributes, being Himself the Supreme Self. The world is only seemingly present in the Lord, and it is indicated that the instrumental and material causes (*nimitta-kàrana* and *upàdàna-kàrana*) are none other than the Lord.

In fact, the attribution (wrongly thought of) by the mind of the phenomenal aspect to that which is non-phenomenal, is what is referred to as 'superimposition' or 'supposed position' characterising this chapter called *adhyàropa*. All *gurus* (spiritual

teachers) and *shàstras* (texts) are known traditionally to indicate and take an initial supposed position in respect of the subject-matter, before giving instruction about the attributeless Absolute (*nirguna Brahman*). Following the same tradition, the section on *adhyàropa* has now been terminated. In the next vision of truth (*darsana*), the *apavàda* (i.e., neutralising this supposition) is to be dealt with.

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Narayana Guru's essence of ethics, the basis of sound judgment, from *Atmopadesa Satakam*:

Verse 21

Endearment is one kind; this is dear to me;
your preference is for something else;
thus, many objects of endearment are differentiated and confusion comes;
what is dear to you is dear to another also; this should be known.

Verse 22

The happiness of another—that is my happiness;
one's own joy is another's joy—this is the guiding principle;
that action which is good for one person
should bring happiness to another.

Verse 23

For the sake of another, day and night performing action,
having given up self-centered interests, the compassionate person acts;

the self-centered man is wholly immersed in necessity,
performing unsuccessful actions for himself alone.

Verse 24

“That man,” “this man”—thus, all that is known
in this world, if contemplated, is the being of the one primordial
self;
what each performs for the happiness of the self
should be conducive to the happiness of another.

Verse 25

What is good for one person and brings misery to another
such actions are opposed to the self, remember!
those who give great grief to another
will fall into the fiery sea of hell and burn.

* * *

Our diligent and kindly typist, Beverley, wrote:

I see verse 10 is not the end of Adhyaropa Darsanam. There is a sort of appendix called Cosmic Projection, Applied Psychology. I have a lot of notes on this so am looking forward to focusing on it again. I wonder if Nitya added this on after finishing the book? But maybe he decided only this Darsanam required more comment. I think he adopts a different plan in Darsanams 5 and 6 by writing reams on each verse.

Incidentally I feel pleased that you are finding the DM useful for your class notes.

The dragon's training continues well, although quite a way to go to learn how to use it with voice only. My arms and hands are

getting weaker gradually so it is comforting to know that it will be possible to continue enjoying my computer when the time comes. Actually it may never get that bad but it's still nice to know I have my pet Dragon.

She later added: I love learning new things on the computer and solving problems.