

I Adhyaropa Darsana, Cosmic Projection

Conclusion, Part 2

11/22/5

This last section of Adhyaropa Darsana is actually the introduction, but for literary suspense the clarifications it offers have been held till the end of the chapter. It has taken a long time for me to wrap my mind around it, but now that I finally have, it seems like the most cogent description of the human condition imaginable. Well worth a close look for anyone seeking to grasp the vision of Darsanamala.

Nitya uses the analogy of a mathematical point surrounded by three concentric spheres. Each impetus of life begins at the origination point and expands through the first sphere of vasanas or incipient memories, where it is shaped according to the structure of the particular universe and consciousness where it occurs. For instance, it is directed to re-experience pleasurable memories and avoid painful ones. Then it expands into the realm of thoughts and words, where the conscious mind apprehends it, further crafts it to comply with present circumstances, and takes full credit for it to boot. Lastly it splashes onto the outer sphere of the horizontal world of material and transactional events, where it achieves full expression. Very often the fallacious ego identification with it is reinforced at this point by others, who naturally see the particular expression as “yours.”

After this, the energy or force contracts again. Ramifications and modifications occur in the horizontal, which are observed and then processed by the conscious mind into freshly modified and refined memories, eventually to be epitomized as consolidated

memories in the unconscious inner sphere. Ultimately the vital urge returns to the point source, which is simultaneously the alpha and omega, the seed which sprouts into a tree of life only to return to a seed at the end of the cycle.

One of the many corrections implicit in this model is that we should not so firmly identify the flow of life passing through us as “mine.” Our personal stake is very much less than we imagine, but we have been trained from the beginning to call the localized mystery “ours.” A better attitude is to watch and cherish its unfoldment, recognizing its source in the absolute ground, and appreciating our opportunity to participate with it. A lot of frustration can be avoided through this kind of humility, but first we have to realize how much bigger the picture is than what we might imagine. Knowing this helps substitute gratitude towards the Unknown for anxiety over our own shortcomings.

Nitya points out that by stopping our activities, releasing our egoistic fixations, and sinking into the quietude of the depths, we can actually have a hand in directing our energies to valuable ends. We have to drop below the level of “mine,” and if possible even below our vasanas, to have the maximum effect. Waiting until the vital urge is fully manifest in the outside world is far too late. That’s the tail end of the process, if it may be said to have an end. At least, it’s fully objectivized. We spend our time mucking about in the outside world striving to have an impact, but Nitya suggests we engage with the other pole of the pulsation instead.

Another corollary of Nitya’s model is an answer to an often-asked question about what is the point of using words. It is true that words are to be dropped off before one can sink to the core, but life doesn’t remain only at the core. It pulsates from core to periphery and back, over and over and on many different wavelengths and time scales. Words as explicit thoughts are an integral part of the connecting links between the pure source of the core and the world in which we live and interact. By stifling or

degrading the use of words in the intermediate sphere between vasanas and the outside world, that world loses its sense of meaning and becomes random and chaotic, because we have severed or curtailed our connection with it. Again, this is a very common condition, and one that will be addressed in more depth in the next Darsana.

The healthy unfolding of vital urges without undue disruption may be considered being harmonized with truth. The initial impulse arising from the ground of being is very pure.

Unfortunately, we have learned to warp, twist and suppress it as it emerges into the field of actuality, where the society further batters it “for its own good.” The outward result therefore is usually very much less than pure. Furthermore, as Nitya says on page 95: “If by some chance the actualizing incipient memory is stifled or repressed by a counter-memory, all that we come to experience is perhaps a muffled uneasiness, or a dark and choking depression, or even an irrational outburst of hysteria. We will never consciously know what triggered the ‘irrational’ anguish of the psyche.” Each of us knows for ourself to how great an extent such feelings color and degrade our life, and how futile it is to attempt to “rationalize” them.

One of the high dialectical/yogic art forms of living is to promote our vital urges in a healthy and harmonious fashion, channeling the dangerous or negative aspects into constructive outlets while avoiding repressing them. It goes without saying that a society such as ours that is highly invested in suppressing individual expression is going to turn out misery-filled humans who are ticking psychological time bombs on the verge of exploding at any moment.

Probably that’s why humanity takes its fitful steps towards civilization only in the wake of wars, after the repression has finally broken through the dead crust in yet another volcanic

outburst. Again to quote Nitya, in one of his most delightful statements:

What seems at first to assail a person as his darkness can be a virile source of spiritual dynamics, which can ultimately transform him from a conventional conformist into a genuine being fully committed and dedicated to a truthful life—the existential validity of which arises from the very essence of his beingness. When one is ultimately in resonance with his own vertical nature, he may emerge in the society as a dark threat to its prestructured stability and a challenge to its social norms. The truthful man makes his breakthrough and causes serious dents in the shell or crust of society. Sooner or later, others who love and aspire to the same truth turn to the voice of the rebel; they read prophecy and promise in his words. In this case what appears in the beginning as a dark force confronting the individual finally proves to be a fresh lease of life coming from the perennial fountain-source of the Eternal, the ground of all. (98-9)

Early on either Chris or Anita (their voices are nearly identical when one's eyes are closed), visualizing Nitya's pulsation analogy, asked, "Then what is truth?" One is always tempted to try to answer such a question, but in reality it's a koan, like "Who am I?" to take you into the heart of the matter. Luckily, the question helps us segue into the next darsana, Apavada, subtitled "Truth by the consistent refutation of the false." We'll be looking at truth from many fresh angles in the weeks to come.

Part II

Two more corollaries to the "pulsation model" I thought were worth mentioning. At birth we spend a great deal of time hovering

near the alpha point, pulsating between it and the first sphere of incipient memories or what are commonly called instincts. The outer two spheres are under construction during this period. This is why we are so deeply imprinted by what happens during our early years: any input lodges very close to the core. Parental directives have the power of Biblical law, and our image of God can look a lot like grandpa. We are surrounded by giants. Conditioning at this level is difficult to correct or throw light on without getting back to those primal depths. Tinkering with the outermost spheres merely adjusts the result, the persona, the window dressing. It is mainly cosmetic. We must “become as little children” to enter the republic of heaven and have a lasting effect.

Secondly, when we do get quiet and centered as adults, we are in a position to rectify injustices suffered by our psyche in childhood and later. Some quaintly call it absolution of sins. But we are also vulnerable to the power of suggestion. When we meditate and pray in church we become very open, so that if poisonous beliefs are presented by the minister they easily convince us of their verity. Of course, we are also open to wisdom, but I can't help but think of the damage being done by the large number of hate-filled preachers around the globe. And this effect is not just limited to church, either. I remember when we'd take acid trips and someone would say something bizarre, we'd be convinced it was true for months. Women in childbirth often imprint some detail of their environment, and its recall epitomizes the whole experience for the rest of the lifetime. So whenever we have dropped our armor, forged in the second sphere for conflict in the third, our “soft parts” are exposed. As everyone's armor tends to be invisible, even our own, we need to be very careful of the things we say to others as well as what we listen to, because they can have a profound impact.

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2/2/16

Adhyaropa Darsana finale

Cosmic Projection – Applied Psychology

Second Half

Continuing our exploration of this superb essay, the second half elaborates the implications of what we have called the pulsation model, tracing the evolutionary energy of the psyche:

The first movement of pulsation arises from the alpha point, provoking incipient memories to wake up and gather the momentum to push through the subjective world of desires, fantasies and deliberation, in order to become an actuality in the objective world. As all through this movement the primal momentum comes from *ananda* or the ground of values, its actualization in the empirical world is experienced in terms of affectivity. This is the reliving of a memory.

The experience then changes into a subjective impression, contracting from the outer circle to the middle circle, then transforms into a seeded potential to reoccupy the unconscious core as a continuing incipient memory. The momentum which carried it all through is again reabsorbed into the alpha point. Thus, the omega and the alpha are both at the identical center. (94-5)

From out of the core of our being an impulse arises, gathering focus as it spurts to the surface. Eventually it encounters the “outside world,” where it interacts with all manner of sharply defined forces. It is curtailed, conscripted, contorted, as well as welcomed with varying degrees of selfish or loving motivations. Its reception is relayed back toward the central core, where new impulses are generated, somewhat shaped by the expectations of

how they will be received by the physical and social realities at the interface of conscious awareness. While we have often stressed the negative impact of this outer shell of the transactional, we should also acknowledge its positive side, where our generous and creative proclivities are given opportunities to be expressed. Though small compared with the cosmic forces, our intentions do impact the world around us in significant ways. The complex interplay of core values and environmental constraints produces the passion play of our lives.

Deb opened the discussion by asserting that everything we experience in our vision outside is a marker to something unconscious in us. Part of our task is to recognize it as an inner world to comprehend, and ultimately to merge with it in a fluid way. This calls for the transparency of vision Nitya extols here once again.

Her thoughts inspired Scotty to report on some work he has been doing in processing his childhood traumas. He feels like he is on the cusp of a new stage of unfoldment, and letting go of them should clear the way to a fresh lease on life.

At age four, Scotty was hospitalized with pneumonia. He was taken in unconscious, and never really knew where he was. He spent a long time recovering. His parents never came to visit him, and the doctors and nurses were seldom present either. He was seldom touched, never asked how he was doing. His parents admitted to him when he was an adult that they couldn't deal with it, didn't know what to do, so they did nothing. He remembers being utterly baffled, barely in his body. Now he is determined to transcend the suffering and remorse he imbibed by not getting what he wanted and needed. By recalling the memory, he has a good chance of perceiving its tentacles and freeing himself from their grasp in the preconscious mind.

This inspired Deb to tell us about an article from this week's NY Times Magazine, pairing veteran soldiers with PTSD and

damaged parrots for mutual healing. It's a terrific essay you can find here: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/magazine/what-does-a-parrot-know-about-ptsd.html?_r=0. The particular relevance to our discussion is that the healing seems to be fostered by the ability of both species to meet outside the boundaries of “normal” behavior, which both have found to be incredibly injurious. Instead of relating themselves unfavorably with the status quo, they are helping each other discover the all-encompassing ground of being, where their self-worth can gradually be restored. It gave Deb the renewed sense of an incredible living intelligence everywhere.

Karen noted similar healing programs underway with prison inmates and dogs, though in this case the dogs are not traumatized. The prison where Deb volunteers has six dogs now, and the clamor for them is intense. The men *love* working with the dogs, which feeling is so healthy for them. It gives them the sense that the greater world is on their side, even if human society is not.

The epitome of cosmic projection is that our vital urges emerge from a core of pure potential. They impact a more or less static world of innumerable demands, where they are battered and dispersed, like waves pounding on rocky cliffs. We may spend our whole life trying to attach our waves to the cliffs, with modest success. Yet only when we are at odds with our world will we try to uncover what really matters to us. Then we might dive down into our own depths in search of a more authentic beingness.

Jan really understood how outer darkness can propel us to the light, which resides in the ground of being. While we talk about this often in the class, it takes a while before it is appreciated as a great truth. But it's an essential thing to realize.

One aspect we harp on, because it is so hard to accept, is that the problems we encounter are opportunities to know ourselves better. When things go well, we tend to go to sleep—who needs to change?—but when we are challenged all sorts of personal

idiosyncrasies leap into the foreground. If we can accept them and recognize them for what they are, we can grow from of them.

Susan offered an example. She now lives alone, really for the first time in her life. Sometimes in the evening she starts to feel lonely, which seems to her a result of these surface kinds of expectations and habits of living. The feeling of loneliness has so much behind it, ready to immerse her in sadness—memories, regrets, fear. But she has found again and again in recent weeks that she can push that specter of loneliness away, not by repressing it but by talking to herself gently and reminding herself that she doesn't need to stay in that place. Almost immediately when she does this, she opens into a different space and things quickly become much better. She is cultivating "the right attitude," from Nitya's line "The rishis believed in the redressal of fear by cultivating the right attitude." (99) I'd add that what we have to talk to ourself about, which Susan didn't specify, is the source of our feelings, and it starts with Jan's recognition that these feelings don't have to be suppressed, but merely noted. Once they are processed, we are likely to feel sincere gratitude for their coming up.

Paul felt we have to learn to live with fear, unless we are experts at ignoring experience. Experience after all can be dangerous, and fear may well be a healthy response to it. Paul is amazed at how our systems naturally assert a balance, and can come back to a neutral place on their own, after encountering a noxious stimulus. Deb felt this required a non-rational but attentively awake state. Bill added, an intuitively awake state.

Deb told us about taking tea with Bushra not long back, where Bushra asked her if she actually experienced the ground of being. Deb laughed, because it was such a huge question. We talk about it all the time, but is it something we can grasp? Deb proposed that we could all write what we thought it was, and share

it through these notes. I hope many of you will send in your thoughts. We also hashed it out for a while in the class.

I talked about the Bhagavad Gita quote from the chapter on meditation that Nitya cites:

slowly, slowly, activities should be brought to a standstill by reason steadily applied, establishing the mind reflexively in the Self, without thinking of anything whatever. (VI. 25)

If you look closely, you can notice that there is effort—bringing activities to a standstill by the use of reason—and there is also bringing discursive thought to a standstill, which would tend to undermine or at least counterbalance the effort. Effort and effortlessness together do the trick.

Paul ran with the idea, asserting you can't get to that place by deciding "this is what the ground of being is." Nailing it down turns it into something it isn't. We think of ourselves as consisting of all our experiences, but those are accretions on the purity of the ground itself. This is where *neti neti* is appropriate: we intentionally sacrifice our persona to regain our original being. We still do things in the world, but push away what we are not.

Deb added that everything we do is an expression of the ground of being. Paul supplied the image of the clay and the pot, where the clay is the prior absence of the pot, its purely potential state. Our ground is the same for us as the clay, and our persona is the pot. How much are we holding on to a false self, the one possibility out of many? Because of this, I thought of the ground of being as simply what hasn't been projected yet. Cosmic Projection—both good and bad—erupts out of the ground of being. Without it we wouldn't be alive. Yet its potential had to be there first.

Susan felt that our artistic moments connect us to our ground—heck, they emerge from our ground, if we let them. She

mentioned poetry and painting, but she has begun a new writing project, which appears to be more in keeping with her talents, and she is very excited about it. She is getting over something like writer's block: "I find that when I start each session I doubt the whole process, but then somewhere in the middle I lose myself and find a different place inside." That self she loses is the doubting part of her that constantly sells her short. She is made from the same star stuff as the rest of us, and some of the stellar glow is starting to reveal itself.

The transactional world wants to equate us with our external image, so we have to retain our independence from it in our heart, even as we are taken for granted as our appearance. It's pure smoke and mirrors, but we can smile about it, and then it won't hold us so tightly. Jan said that when you let go of your view of yourself, that itself would be experiencing the ground of being.

I suggested a simple practice to help with this. It is very liberating to stop clinging to a certain identity. I am not who you think I am, and moreover I am not who I think I am, either. Most of us habitually defend our self-image, using an armament of wiles, especially when we are falsely accused. I have been forced many times to own up to false accusations, or ones I believed were false. I know we can fool ourselves on this account. But what if we surrendered and agreed with our accusers? It subverts our own egotism, and the urge to defend becomes less. It helps us to stop identifying so much with our well-crafted persona and instead dive into our core, unformulated being. For all you admirable people, you can do this with compliments too. After all, there is an element of ignorance in whatever others think of us, both good and bad. It is only their perception, and not the whole truth. Either way, it's a simple but effective technique. Just remind yourself it's only a partial perception, and it is not you. You may recall Nitya wrote about this in *That Alone*, at the end of verse 37:

Each day begins a new series of encounters. Each encounter is to be taken as a challenge to reestablish your inner serenity, inner quietness, inner sense of sameness through an act of adoration, an attitude of worship and a sense of the sublime.

There is no need for you to win all the time. Your greater victory lies in your acceptance of defeat, allowing the other to win. You may be in an argument. What does it matter if you win or not? Give the other person the chance to win. Even if he uses some falsehood, when you allow him to win he rethinks the situation. In his heart of hearts he knows he did not deserve the victory. He knows the truth of your silence. You do not become egoistic and you don't make the other person egoistic either. It will chastise him as well as purify him.

Thus, through the cultivation of silence, sameness and serenity, you come to a unitive understanding from within. This brings peace and harmony. Where there is peace and harmony, love spontaneously comes. When you give yourself into the hands of grace, the hands of the Divine, things which are difficult to attain become abundantly possible. Then you can say you have attained the discrimination of the unbroken, by which every 'this' is brought under the spell of the universal sameness.

It was only recently, in the West at least, that the unconscious began to be appreciated. To the contemplative, it changes everything to realize that our conscious appraisal is merely the last stage of a lengthy sorting process. We can then replace the anxiety of conscious deliberation with an optimistic openness to the powerful currents naturally available to all of us. Nitya writes:

An incipient memory is a pre-established habit, which remains in the system as a potential waiting for an opportune moment to actualize once again as a manifested reality. Conscious

deliberation is not an imperative to initiate the actualization of the incipient memory. Before a person becomes conscious of an urge or need, the incipient memory unlocks many hidden reservoirs of inner forces, which, for example, stimulate the glandular system and turn on the secretion of hormones. Thus only half of the story of the reaching forward from nothingness to beingness is shared with our conscious mind. (95)

“Half the story” is an exceedingly generous estimation. I would say more like one percent. Our conscious mind resembles a chip of wood being propelled by a wave of whitewater. We may learn to enjoy the excitement of the ride, but any sense of control is largely delusory. Thankfully we can sometimes alter our impulses enough to avoid crashing on the rocks dead ahead.

So we are made up of constellations of vital urges zooming to the surface to try to find expression. Hey—we’ve got to make it happen while we’re alive! We have lots of creative potentials, and not so very much time. Unfortunately, most of them are not welcomed by our social reception committee. We wind up spending our conscious energy trying to accommodate ourselves to the requirements already in place. The deal is pretty much to abandon our exuberance and conform to what other people have already accepted as their fate. Out of necessity we become masters of self-suppression. Spiritual effort is primarily an attempt to reclaim our authenticity in the face of the severe repression it inevitably undergoes at the transactional level. But who has the time or energy for that? Nitya notes the devastating impact if we join with the forces arrayed against us, which is the normal response:

If by some chance the actualizing incipient memory is stifled or repressed by a counter-memory, all that we come to experience is perhaps a muffled uneasiness, or a dark and choking

depression, or even an irrational outburst of hysteria. We will never consciously know what triggered the irrational anguish of the psyche. (95)

Nitya gives the example of a man who is struggling to break free of the social constraints he has voluntarily taken on, and he uses this to present a recapitulation of the first darsana. We are bound to be treated as a saboteur or even a criminal if we abandon the mainstream paradigms, so there is a real struggle taking place, and self-delusion is an all-too-common technique for coping with our restraints. After all, we once agreed to them ourselves, and our friends and family (the devil?) want to hold us to our contracts. This effort to break free in a successful way really brings home the potency of Narayana Guru's opening salvo, as described by Nitya:

The will to justify his stand and the rationalizing of his guilt are likely to interfere with his search, and will recreate the memory inexactly by drawing curtains on what he does not want to see, yet the fear of a leak-out of incidents which are utterly shameful to him will highlight the memories of the same. In these memories one can definitely spot the archetypal intentionality of phenomenal creation as suggested by Narayana Guru in his first six analogies of the Adhyaropa Darsana: the dreamlike, myth-making fantasies; the actualization of latent potentials favored by ignorance and passion, and commonly shared by all; the fecund thrust of the will to live, as seen in the bursting of a germinating seed and its consequent irresistible growth into a tree; the overwhelming aesthetic sense which so lowers the frontiers between fact and fiction that poetic fancies and wishful fantasies can stand on a par with the stern facts of life; and the crippling fear of hypothetical ghostly projections born of ignorance, that can

create a kind of third world, as it were, fit for a neurotic or a schizoid. (96)

This hints at the difficulties we face. Happily, Narayana Guru has a well thought out program to help us meet them successfully. And most of us have already made significant strides! We can quit the game at any point, but the bliss of keeping at it makes it irresistible. Liberation is its own reward. Nitya expresses the bottom line perfectly here:

What seems at first to assail a person as his darkness can be a virile source of spiritual dynamics, which can ultimately transform him from a conventional conformist into a genuine being fully committed and dedicated to a truthful life—the existential validity of which arises from the very essence of his beingness. (98)

Part of being true to our Self is being immune to the demands—reasonable and unreasonable—of society. These are poles of a dichotomy, and can only be creatively integrated dialectically. It is not one or the other. We need both. But we've been stinting on the truth end of the spectrum, and it desperately needs restoration. The inculcated urge to not rock the boat is fatal to the search for authenticity. Nitya reminds us:

When one is ultimately in resonance with his own vertical nature, he may emerge in the society as a dark threat to its prestructured stability and a challenge to its social norms. The truthful man makes his breakthrough and causes serious dents in the shell or crust of society. (98)

We also need to accept that our vital urges begin as potentials, which are essentially infinite since they are undefined. As they

become manifest, they naturally are reduced to a specific form. We try and try to do our best and express the totality of our vision, but we have to also accept that only a sliver of what we hope for will ever come about. Some do better than others, certainly, but the limitation is merely how reality is structured. As Nitya puts it:

Even at its best, no expression represents the total potential of an urge. And whether it is an outburst of an inner conflict or the manifestation of a creative urge, all our expressions stem from our incipient memories propelled by a vital urge. (97)

The Adhyaropa Darsana has introduced us to a radical program of transformative contemplation. Now we move on to the Apavada Darsana, subtitled Truth by Constant Refutation of the False. That's *neti neti* in a nutshell. We welcome all you nuts to come along.

Part II

Jan shared some vivid insights:

Hi Scott,

I was thinking about your last class notes, and somehow they seemed to fit just what I was experiencing today. I'm talking about the section of the notes relating to this paragraph of Nitya's:

It has become almost impossible for an adult to have at-one-ment with his or her original and spontaneous experience except on rare occasions, as when we experience a musical rhapsody, mystical frenzy, poetic vision, a sexual orgasm, or spiritual absorption. The eagerness to know what is going on impels the mind to give a running commentary, as it were, of all inner experiences, by

remolding the experience into a conceptual framework of words. Words are manufactured to suit as parts of speech. Parts of speech are designed by the grammarian and the logician, and both of them are cold-blooded pragmatists. To clothe an experience in all its richness, mystics, musicians, poets, and for that matter all those who are endowed with a high degree of sensibility, have to choose mediums other than precisely connoted words, as, for instance, icons, ideograms, symbols, or even emotionally surcharged theatrical gestalts and pregnant forms of silence. So when those of us who are not as brilliant as such creative geniuses have to formulate a linguistic experience for what is being felt, we struggle for words and then look for the most approximate one; this makes the experience more and more meager as we practically mutilate it in our own conscious appraisal of it. By doing this we make our conscious recognition sophisticated. This sophistication is what is referred to here as superimposition. (90)

What I was thinking was how often in our lives, mine included, just below our conscious thoughts and typical reactionary thought patterns are intimations of what we really want in our life. Truly precious things are waiting there, waiting to be realized about ourselves and our purpose in life. Often they are clues about what we really want in our primary relationships, what we need to do to find love and meaning and beauty around us. I was marveling, somewhat sadly, somewhat hopefully, how I still keep discovering these things, how I realize I can try harder to live them. And mysteriously, we can't go at them directly, they really must arise in some organic way, from a deeper place within us, and almost be discovered through misty eyes. In this experience I had recently, I really felt these blessed ideas lurking in some vague place inside my being, below my rational mind. Unformed things wanting to be born. It was exciting. I sensed they were realizations about being more present, more alive, more heart and soul centered in

relationships. It all felt like what we talked about in class, where we look to the world of becoming rather than the world that is manifested. It is a bold process of letting go, of being patient and gentle, of listening to ourselves.

Thanks for the inspiration in the notes! Jan

* * *

Beverley has also shared an epiphany:

I have decided recently to play Bridge again. When I was at University I spent most of my first year playing Bridge when possible and made the University Bridge team. All five of the others were male mathematicians. In those days I played instinctively. I had played cards with the family all my life and Bridge since I was about 15. At University I did not think about it mathematically and could not analyse things really. I had to stop in the second year and focus properly on History and English. That was over 50 years ago.

Now I have lost the inner knowing and have to learn all over again. I tried a group that had already learned a lot of the complicated ACOL bidding system. Complex Number 1 was now activated.I am stupid..... I can't do this.... they are not teaching it properly ... the people don't like me. It took me three weeks to realise that leaving this group would not be a despicable failure and that I am not in the early stages of dementia!

I tried again in a more positive way. I joined a new organisation for those no longer in full employment called the U3A (The University of the Third Age) It is run entirely by volunteers. The aim is to 'Live, learn and have fun together'. I volunteered for the

Committee as well as getting a Learn Bridge Group going. Those who have joined have turned out to be beginners. This has worked very well. I have always learned best by teaching. I can relax and easily keep a jump ahead.

However, the Committee is a mess. Things are not organised well and I can see so clearly what should be done. So Another Complex has taken over. I have spent hours thinking what should be done and fuming. I think critical thoughts about individuals I see as incompetent. I do not like myself one bit for being like this. I think I will resign. It is not good for me to get worked up. This week I have been pacified somewhat. I was asked to be the Webmaster by the Chairman as I had already mentioned I had computer skills. I said I was not skilled enough. However, I discovered that it is quite easy actually, as the U3A site is already there for Groups all over the country to use.

So now.... maybe Complex Number 1 will trip me up again.... maybe I will find it very difficult to see the Committee's activities as creative chaos and that I can make mistakes too, and no-one will mind or criticise me. In other words I can enjoy not being efficiently in control.

It's like that 'hole on the road' one keeps on falling into. It's as if I walk down a street and fall into a hole. I think carefully after the event and analyse where I have been going wrong. Then I walk down the same street again. I know the hole is there in terms of having experienced it before, but it's as if the complex renders me blind or oblivious in some way. I KNOW I need to take a different street as there are several which will get me where I want to go.

Actually, there will always be a complex waiting to trip me up . Perhaps they are all offshoots of the main one. I need to accept that I am ' human merely being' (e e cummings). and don't have to get

it right anymore and that being me is OK - even at the bottom of the hole.

* * *

Deb loved Amara's lesson "I am not special." It's especially appropriate for those who have been over praised and admired (we don't all have that albatross to carry). I often say to people, "You are special—just like everyone else." The trick is to add the opposite of what you suffer from, to bring about neutrality.

Be Not Special Meditation Half Day Retreat 1/17/16

Forget every teaching ever offered.
Give no credence to what I may do.
There is no one that is truly special.
There is nothing here that is fully true.

Allow the Whole to be the teaching.
Alive with paradox and with names.
The mind's confusion is a smoke screen.
The flood of feelings is the same.

We make a boundary to keep our self in.
To house persona we hope will change.
Imagining specialness, a sword with edges.
We have forgotten, that we're All the same.

Accept the character's flawed appearance.
No need to focus praise or blame.
The goal of life is to dive much deeper.
Look beyond forms, beliefs and names.

The depth of Being has no boundary.
Release the separate one, to dance her way.
Inward treasure is full with nothingness.
An endless knowing, devoid of pain.

Our way as people is to free our own self.
Then rules and restrictions fall like rain.
The truest Ground transcends all suffering.
“I “ then shines without ego, belief or name.

Love, Amara

The myth of specialness is introduced to us when we are very young.
Its seed may have been an experience either pleasing or painful.
Perhaps a mother’s praise or a fairy tale story or a song we heard.
But we soon understood that some things are called special.
With the many special things came an experience of feeling separate.
These two dance as partners in the core of our discontent.
Child psychology now tells parents not to over praise their children.
That the developing ego feels conflict when told that something is special.
This may be because a young child is still alive to life's flow.
For them everything simply is, without concepts like judgement or accomplishment.
The preference toward specialness haunts many of us, and the opinions of others loom large. We believe that we are loved for our doing or saying, and life becomes a game to win.
We search to improve our self, and we look for ways to stop feeling separate.

This becomes our spiritual journey, which in itself may subconsciously seem quite special.

We hope that being in the presence of a spiritual teacher may be helpful, and there is some truth to that.

But the joke begins to reveal itself here, and we can see that any teacher who speaks of specialness is not teaching the Whole. Our heart tells us that inward there is a wisdom so true that it cannot be labeled as either special or separate.

When this occurs all of life is seen as Special, while nothing separate can take that name.

The heart overflows in peaceful happiness, and the paradox of specialness is no longer in our game.

Part III

Jan came through with a lovely contribution in response to Deb's request. Deb and I occasionally offer prompts like this because there is plenty of room for more exploration based on what we have discussed in class. This is a most helpful addition to our understanding of Bushra's question of whether or not we truly experience the ground of being. Enjoy!

Hi Scott, thanks for your great class notes. I was thinking about Deb's important question of what experiences we recall where we connected with the ground of being. I thought of some experiences, which I describe below, and then I read some more of Nitya and it all got more complicated (but still rich in meaning).

1. I remember one time about 10 years ago watching the sunset from a sand dune at Cape Lookout with Mira, holding her little hand. I vividly recall melting into something divine and expansive, something quite beyond myself. I felt connected to everything, and overcome with love, gratitude, total bliss and euphoria. I was

literally bursting open and cried with joy. My understanding is that I was experiencing the Absolute, and those very values that Nitya talks about as expressions and qualities of the Absolute which I know are our true nature and a part of us.

2. But I don't need to go so far back. These experiences happen enough. Lately, I've been having moments of connecting to the ground of being within myself, through music, contemplation, moving my body, dreams, crying, etc. In this difficult time of my life, I'm trying to promote growth in myself. So I try to quiet my mind and the constant repetitive thoughts, and tune into the more vital, essential parts of my being, and to access parts of myself I often repress. When I'm lucky enough to let go and connect with something vital and new, I study it over some time and find it often represents the values of the Absolute that we talk about, and/or some expression of myself that is less cluttered with nonself, more pure and truthful, more free and expansive. I don't feel that I can control what comes to me, or whether I find any new truths in a particular moment; there is a "wait-and-see" and sometimes, magically, these gifts arrive.

Nitya says:

This means we sit quietly. If we also make this happen to our mind by not feeding it with memories and by not hooking one association to another, then functionally the body and the mind come to a certain nothingness. It is in this nothingness that we find the ground. We do not see the ground, we are the ground. P. 92

Maybe I am doing something close to what he describes. I know that when I see myself as evolving, and use my newly found Vedanta skills to try to pull back the superimpositions and traps of

my mind, and genuinely seek truth, great things come sometimes. Where they come from I think is the ground.

Nitya wrote in Verse 10 of the *Adhyaropa Darsanam*:

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. P. 86

What really excites me about all this is how we are guided by this deeper source (if we allow ourselves to be) toward greater understanding and connection to Self, to more liberation and happiness. Some of what guides us is intuition, some of it is our genuine interests in life. For myself, like Susan, I am being guided to more creative expression; I am seeing in dreams and visions incredible vitality and joy wrapped in color and symbol that I think needs expression.

I found this discussion in Atmo (Verse 91, That Alone) that spoke to all this:

There is a very alive core in us that is like a honeycomb in a beehive, in which there are newly laid eggs, eggs in the process of hatching, and busy bees engaged in building up the system. Our growing personality has many eggs that have not yet hatched, some in the formative stages, and some that are very much alive to the external environment. The eggs are called vasanas - innate dispositions or incipient memories - and they are all looking for opportunities to express themselves. p. 649.

Some of this process is what I was describing in my last class comments about sensing unformed parts of myself wanting to be born.

Where I got confused again was with Nitya's distinction between the ground as the alpha point and the small circle surrounding it which he describes as the repository of all incipient memories. (p. 93-5). I wondered if I was only accessing the small circle of incipient memories? Of course, the ground in its totality is never understandable fully or describable. After more thought, however, I am trusting that I experience the ground and that we all do in class in many different ways.

But one more interesting thought Nitya talks about is how the "primal momentum [of the actualization of incipient memories and impulses] comes from *ananda* or the ground of values." p. 95. To me, this speaks to the idea of grace and how we have no control truly over this process of reintegrating, how aspects of our self arise up from our unconscious of their own accord. A pulsation occurs that begins at the alpha point. To me that notion of pulsation from the ground explains why some realizations have that quality of having arrived from beyond, certainly not from our ordinary self. I could be going out on a limb, but I think they also tend to have a quality of light or energy (I think of Joseph Campbell's description of the shimmering quality) and of movement and transformation, because like a pulsation, some realizations send shockwaves through our prior conceptions, rushing away limited understandings and helping us see a way to greater unity with the All. Naturally, we are flooded with values of the Absolute; we open up to being a part of the vast ocean of Being.

That's all I have to offer now. I look forward to reading what others write too! Jan

* * *

Deb also rose to her own challenge:

We both laughed, looking at each other. What a question: “Have you ever felt the ground of being?” So deep, so overwhelming, so impossible.

Certain poems, in the lightning of insight, the great wells of understanding revealed—in those words I've felt a ground which seems endless and endlessly prolific.

When music has rivered itself right into me, through me—again that dark ground, that glittering shadow is present.

Moments when I have sat quietly, wanting nothing. Moments when friends and I touched fingertips, touched hearts.

Climbing a high ridge in the Goat Rocks, Mt Rainier on one side and St Helen's on the other, and watching the moon rise over our darkness; meandering around a small stream in the desert lowlands of Arizona; sitting in a snowy field in western Connecticut—all these moments, both small and grand, have been doorways to a cosmic bellows that ceaselessly gives forth.

When my children were babies, when they learned and grew, when they became adults and my friends—always there was the presence of the never-ending source.

And when our son lay dying in the hospital I understood how Narayana Guru could look at little ants, thoughtlessly crushed, and weep at their death. I understood how precious anything that comes from the ground of being is. And when I held Nate in my arms in his last living moments the electricity in the air was the electricity that surrounds us at all times, no longer muted.

That ground of being is everything around us, under us, in us. We see the vanishing forms. If we close our eyes, we might feel the nothingness. The nothingness that breathes into us, the ground that speaks our name.

* * *

Mike M from Georgia sent this, presumably as another answer to Bushra's question:

To eradicate from our minds all false identifications, one has to stop identifying with ones' mind. All of this is intellectual, utilizing the mind to express purely mental concepts.

The true reality is that all of this is a phenomenal state which is experienced in a changing conceptual environment that has no real validity to substantiate its reality other than using passing thoughts flowing thru one's mind. There's nothing here to hold onto or to authenticate its validity. It's just changing phenomenon utilizing mental gymnastics to play the intellectual game of unreality.

When one shifts ones' identity to the Absolute Self, all is seen in context with a clarity that witnesses the phenomenal as being purely a mental construct that has no reality in itself. It's purely conceptual and just a bundle of thoughts passing through.

It's necessary for some to experience this unreality until it becomes useless. Then, one sees the illusion and shifts ones' identity from the mind to the true Self which is indescribable. I call this "Grace".

Postured in a witnessing consciousness one sees the phenomenon like clouds passing in the sky. They come and go. Anything that comes and goes is not actually real. If this is truly experienced, one can appreciate the existence of this nonexistence simultaneously, while experiencing an acceptance that enables one to remain in a neutral state of non-attachment. Unattached to the phenomenon, one can continue to participate in these transactional experiences of everyday life pretending that they are real. Nothing becomes problematic because nothing can affect the real Self which is neutral to everything.

When scrutiny is practiced, contemplation of every experience is utilized to constantly reveal the unsubstantiality of the changing phenomenon which provides a true frame of reference to differentiate the real from the unreal.

When one unplugs from ones' mind and doesn't provide any energy or attachment to thoughts, one becomes a seer and is not fooled by the manifestation of phenomenal experiences and transactions. Participation in the transactional manifestation still exists and is seen from a completely different frame of reference.

To observe who is seeing the witness or perceiver of everything will bring one to a silent state where the pure Self/Consciousness is untainted by anything and detachment is quite natural. Ones' natural state is all pervasive and free of any conditions.

* * *

Since I have written ad infinitum about this topic, I thought I should recuse myself. And a friend has just written echoing the time-honored truism that “words always get in the way.” Yet I have started revising my Hercules series, and it gets right to the issue of why we don’t truly know the ground of being and offers hints on how to rediscover it. In its current form my exegesis begins this way:

The first Labor of Hercules was to defeat the invulnerable Lion of Nemea. Its hide was impervious to all weapons; it turned out it could only be cut by its own claws. The symbolic reference is to spiritual vanity or spiritual ego, which parries all attempts to destroy it and yet contains the seeds of its own unraveling.

All of us are wrapped in a thick skin of words that has been growing thicker since birth. Words are very enchanting, but they only represent reality, they are not real in themselves. By adulthood we have all pretty much substituted word reality for essential reality, which we often refer to (in words, at least) as spiritual reality. It is not enough to merely recognize this. Somehow the beast must be killed and the skin cut away. The myth tells us how: we must use the claws themselves, nothing else will do the trick. This means that only through words can we slice through the web of words which binds us.

Many of us recognize the conundrum we’re in due to being caught in word reality, but few understand the power of words to extricate us. We fail to realize that everything we think and do is based on words. False and misleading words can further entangle us, but wise words can actually set us free. The fact that this occurs in the very first Labor means it is of preeminent importance.