

I Adhyaropa Darsana, Cosmic Projection

Verse 4

9/20/5

“The power, however, is of two kinds, known as the bright and the dark; thus, there is no coexistence between these, as with light and darkness.” (I, 4)

Nancy and others brought up a point of confusion around the word coexistence: probably the intent was to mean intermingling or mixing, because certainly opposites coexist, they literally inhabit the same neighborhood (*sahavasah* is the word Narayana Guru uses). Here at the beginning of the bifurcation of unity into duality, light and dark are pure extreme principles. If you are one you are not the other, you are either the tree or the tree’s reflection in a mirror. But it is certainly true that they coexist together.

Nitya often spoke of how looking into pure light such as the sun is blinding, there’s just too much brilliance and it overwhelms all distinctions. Similarly, in a totally dark place like a cave you can’t see anything. Only when light and darkness are mixed in approximately equal proportions does a perceptible world become possible. We inhabit the mean. Absolute cold doesn’t allow even molecular movement, while anything over 3000 degrees Kelvin prevents particles from joining together. Like Goldilocks, we have to get it just right somewhere in between or we can’t exist.

The balance we require and experience springs from the rotation of the bright and dark principles. Anne talked about the yin yang symbol, which shows how the longer you’re in one aspect the closer you are to moving into its opposite. The symbol is by no

means intended to be static. It implies circular movement as perfectly as any still image possibly could.

We had a long class exploring some of the vast implications of this verse, and barely scratching the surface. Light and dark stand for so many dichotomies: existence and nonexistence, consciousness and unconsciousness, life and death, and so on. One very important idea to glean from all of it is that light and darkness, while distinct, spring into existence together and operate in tandem—they do coexist! As sophisticated adults we've thrown our voting bloc behind light and turned our backs on darkness, and go about wondering why our world seems out of balance. We want everything to be good, and become undone when it doesn't happen.

When we underline the light and suppress the dark, powerful countervailing forces are produced, which burst into warfare and other traumatic eruptions. But those who feel they need to exercise their dark side as a corrective often become embroiled in negativity as well, causing pain and suffering to themselves and others. The safest way to unify this paradox is to step back and contemplate it. We can only properly act from a state of yogic equanimity, otherwise we tend to wander away from the happy median and into danger. Gathering together in harmonious discourse and meditation on these matters, as we did last night, helps move us from bombs to balms.

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10/13/15

Adhyaropa Darsana, Verse 4

The power, however, is of two kinds, known as the bright and the dark; thus, there is no coexistence between these,

as with light and darkness.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*The power however, as of two kinds,
Is to be known as the bright and the dark;
There is no co-existence between these two
As with light and darkness.*

One of our best discussions ever took place last night, and that is saying something. You could almost hear the clunks as key ideas fell into place. It seems we are really ready this time to meet Narayana Guru on his own ground, rather than overlaying his visions with our own partial perspectives. That is the right and proper way to relate to a guru!

It helps to realize that there is an unfolding process throughout all ten verses of this darsana. We began with non-existence. This contained a potent ground, which elaborated itself like a tree emerging from a seed. As the tree takes shape the unitive essence of the seed is naturally divided into two contrasting aspects, as depicted in the present verse. They are treated as distinct here at the outset, but immediately they begin to interpenetrate each other. As we know, all of one thing is a steady state, and only when there is another state does their interaction produce transformations, or for that matter, existence. Voila, another universe is born! Let me quote from my book, *The Path to the Guru*:

There is a continuum between the apparent opposites of light and dark. In pure darkness you can't see anything. Pure light is likewise so bright you can't distinguish anything. Only when there's a mixture of the two do objects become distinguishable. In one sense it's the dark (evil!) that makes us able to

apprehend light. So we shouldn't lean one way or the other; what's called for is balance. This is true in physical as well as metaphysical situations. Consider also the binary computer. All information of one type of bit is no information at all. There has to be an alternation of on and off or yes and no to produce a meaningful stream of data. (99)

Nitya often referred to this idea, but it was easier for me to find a summation of it in my book, so please forgive the interjection.

The class offered several variations on the light and darkness duality, all of which are implied in it, but that also elaborate the implications. Andy favored the known and the unknown, Paul the objective and subjective. Bill wondered why the two were considered distinct, and Andy's example makes it perfectly clear: when something becomes known it is no longer unknown, and conversely if it is not known then it is unknown. Later on we may find these realms overlap in a fuzzily mysterious way, but for now we recognize their distinctness.

Jan wondered about the threshold, the region where the known and the unknown, conscious and unconscious, meet. This is an important question, since we usually stick as close to the center of the known as we can. We want to be squarely surrounded by what we know and have determined to be safe. After all, for much of our lives it was the primary aim of our development. It takes a willingness to move away from our familiar comfort zone to begin a serious quest for new knowledge. Jan's reflections brought up the question of why we search for truth, which became one of the themes for the evening.

Deb thought that since the unconscious envelops consciousness on all sides, the threshold must be everywhere. Which is true, but nonetheless we have to open ourselves to it. And the feeling of impending infusion from the interior is almost

always disconcerting, so unless we are determined to stick with it, we will quickly turn away and go back to our center of transactional consciousness. Which is likely to be very far from being centered.

Narayana Guru has by now described the creation of the universe as it relates to an individual in four succinct verses. Afterwards there will be a presentation of some of the implications. Nitya is eager to get to those, and touches on at least two big ones, the first being:

We come to know an object of interest by remembering, hearing, or reading its name, and thus causing within ourselves its corresponding mental image. By relating a name to a form, the idea of it becomes a coordinated concept forever in our memory. Of itself the object of interest has no name. It is by our human deliberation that the name is attached to it, but the name thus given in no way modifies the nature or composition of the object. In the same way, the concepts surrounding our perception of an object arise only in the subject. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the concept has a one-to-one correspondence with all the properties of the object. (60)

In fact, we could say that it is guaranteed that no concept can *ever* have “a one-to-one correspondence with all the properties of the object.” This is a humbling realization. Where formerly we have learned to bluster and prevaricate that we are in command of a large area of knowledge and certitude, when we address the unknown we begin to realize how tiny our awareness is. If we are honest, most of what we take for granted about our immediate environment is a projection of our memories, and not at all a true appreciation of what is there. We think we know our friend, but she is very different than we (or even she) imagine. We are certain we see a tree, but it is actually a construct of memories cobbled

together over the barest hint of the actual tree. In other words, most of the known is also unknown. When we overlay the mysteries of our surroundings with imaginary knowledge, we do it a great disservice. What did Narayana Guru call it in verse 94 of Atmopadesa Satakam? A great iniquity:

The world and the truth exist intermixed;
this state is one of great iniquity;
in this, which is beyond the grasp of word and mind,
how can any right reason operate?

This is a fine commentary to refer back to in That Alone if you want to go into the idea further.

A careful witnessing of the world leads us to realize we are seeing almost entirely projections of our own mental framing. The world as such remains almost a complete mystery to us, yet we have to act, so we go forward on memory suppositions. I wondered if anyone realized how transformative this idea is. By giving up our false belief in our certainties, we become open to what actually is. By reducing the grip our fixed picture of the world has on us, we open ourselves to manifold transformations. We listen harder, with our whole being and not just our ears. We invite intuitions. And by doing so we may find ourself on the threshold of a much larger version of reality.

Once we realize our concepts do not measure up to present circumstances, those of us who do not give up in despair or indifference begin a search for a way to attune to more of it. We could even say the whole unfoldment of the evolving universe is the process of the Absolute coming to know itself in ever more refined ways. Bill paraphrased Jung at this juncture, supposedly saying “God cannot observe—that’s my job.” Paradoxically, we have to become limited in order to apprehend the unlimited, even if our best efforts are inevitably limited

This leads us to the specific outcome of the bifurcation of unity into two poles: “Concepts which were thought to be valid in past experiences may undergo a process of modification or correction as our knowledge becomes more intimate and precise.” Yes, that is what we’re doing here. The example Nitya gives is of a husband and wife, noting how the spouse’s concepts may change, but the other’s reality does not. This may be true enough from a totally absolutist point of view, but in actuality the other does change too. The object as well as their subjective conceptualization is undergoing continuous transformation. Living beings are dynamic entities, and our view of them as static is one of the many fixations that prevent us from even beginning to appreciate them as they are. This sentence is one of my objections to minor aspects of the commentary: “In both cases the objects remain what they were and are; only the concepts change.” In living beings—especially spouses, but also most notably children—the object is always changing and it is our job to not inhibit those changes by trying to hold our loved ones to a static viewpoint based on what they once were. Needless to say, this has dramatically practical implications.

Nitya does salvage his perspective beautifully by immediately getting to a very important corollary:

Thus it is that the nature and composition of an object can never be known to us in its own reality. When we view an object there arises in us a self-luminous concept, and we presume that it is appropriate to consider the object as having the quality which the concept gives to it. As consciousness arises out of unconsciousness and recalls a little of its hidden aspect, so does the unknown allow some unveiling of itself to give us a glimpse of its nature. (60)

What he means is that we can learn a lot about ourselves from the way we misinterpret what we perceive. In other words, our failings

are our lessons. Our mistakes are revealing our projections, our superimpositions. The first realization is that we need to be less sure of what we know, so we can listen to our friends and foes instead of shutting them in a casket of our surety. The second is that our unintentional iniquity is a door to self-awareness if we dare to open it. Narayana Guru wants us to know that this is an exciting prospect, so thrilling it should be impossible to hold us back! Yet something in us dreads the admission of ignorance, so when the opportunity presents itself, we resist with all our wiles. This is a simple change of orientation we could easily implement, if we can just teach our own ego to lighten up and relax.

Deb talked about how when she was in college she was forced to do many things she didn't want to. She felt they were a drag, until she decided (somewhat reluctantly) okay, this is what learning is. I should just do it. And suddenly it was okay.

Perhaps we're always reluctant. Yet so long as we know there is a benefit lurking in the struggle, we will make the effort. Jan has a friend who is dealing with anxiety issues. The friend wants to hold tight to a bygone version of her life, but that is not possible. Jan is trying to help her learn to accept new possibilities, but she is having a very hard time getting through. The resistance to what seems obvious is always so frustrating to bump up against.

Our daughter Harmony was held out as an example of someone who was totally fearful of anything new. The good part of the story is that through persistent gentle pressure, she learned that there was little or nothing to be afraid of. At the end of her teens, she thanked us for making her do all those things, because otherwise she would have stayed under the bed for her entire childhood. Nowadays she does public speaking and all sorts of difficult things with hardly a twinge. She even loves it, sometimes.

We talked a lot about the challenge of accepting this need for positive change in real life. Psychologists shake their heads over the many examples of their patients who can never be convinced to

take even one simple step that would do so much to improve their lives. Outsiders can often see what is necessary, but the person locked in to their position will accept anything but that one key solution. All we can do is make sure we don't make the same mistake. And of course, when we gather the courage to look, we see we are blundering too, just like everyone else. We imagine this is because our good intentions are being resisted by fate, but this is another learned attitude based on the resistance of our caregivers to our natural aptitude for exploration and discovery as children, as Paul described it. Nitya says:

As far as what is unknown in the physical world is concerned, there is no deliberate intention on the part of that unknown to keep knowledge of itself hidden from us. Man can expand his observations into what is now hidden from him, and fabricate for himself increasing numbers of methods to penetrate into the unknown. In any case, the known and the unknown cannot be thought of as being the same, by definition. (61)

This stimulated my question for all to answer: why do we quest into the unknown? Why aren't we satisfied with what we have? Is it a fool's errand, or essential to our growth? Should we resist the urge to explore as a distraction, or allow it to carry us where it will? While we discussed it at length, it remains an open invitation for you to contribute your thoughts.

Jan and Paul agreed there is an innate impulse to connect with our greater reality, with Paul adding that this paradoxically requires us to detach from contemplation of the pure Absolute in order to observe specific instances. This whole business is in fact fraught with paradox. Does dynamism arise out of a passive attitude, as is often thought, or is action required? What kind of action? And how can we maintain a unitive attitude if we think of

our motivation as coming from the unknown? This is a powerfully tricky business.

Those in the class who don't feel much affinity for this type of self-examination brought up Nitya's worshipful attitude as an antidote. If we adore the Absolute, won't all else follow, without painfully mucking about with our fixations? Nitya's adoration of the Absolute—which was very gentle and dignified, although monumentally intense—stemmed from the awareness we have been discussing, the realization of our own inadequacy, coupled with the exaltation in the adequacy of life as a whole. This brings up the second major point Nitya makes:

If the unconscious is seen as total darkness, how does it operate as if with an awareness of the insecurity and possible destruction to which the organism and the individual self are exposed? Clearly, *something* seems interested in our welfare and takes adequate measures to enable us to avoid such threats. Here we have to accept the paradox or enigma of the unconscious operating as a super-consciousness. (63)

By allowing our inner superconsciousness to guide us, we can learn to surf through life rather than slog, yet it is always based on a combination of critical self-examination and enlightened optimism. Nitya never held that one was unrelated to the other. Adoration can certainly be seen as yet another threshold, opening us to the infusion of the wisdom of the whole mind or being, but by itself it does not normally eradicate our misunderstandings.

I admitted that adoration has gotten a bad name, because it has been trivialized by any number of religious sects. This is yet another potent field for upgrading through thought: we can reject the tawdry adorations peddled by manipulators and charlatans, and see it the way the Gurukula gurus have, as the bliss of experiencing beauty in all its forms. When a piece of music brings tears of joy to

our eyes or makes our body get up and dance, we can reach with our innermost being to that lofty height that somehow makes it possible. We don't have to define it—that only cheapens it. The irrefutable evidence is the beauty we experience. We could downplay it in the case of music as simply vibrations impinging on our eardrums in a meaningless universe, but why? Why kill joy? If everything arises out of a transcendent neutrality, why should we opt for misery in place of delight? The choice is ours. You already knew that, didn't you?

Sometimes the reason for our exploratory gyrations—to reclaim our joy—does become obscured by the intensity of the efforts we are making. Deb turned “randomly” to a later page (90) and found: “The intention of the first *darsana* is to give us the discipline of recognizing our general experience as a superimposition, and then to work our way into the primal state previously mentioned as the ground of all experiences.” Simple enough. We work our way into the ground of being by relinquishing our superimpositions. We aim to minimize our projections, if not surrender them entirely. As an aid, we are invited to reframe our quest from one of dread, anxiety and fear, to one of excitement and optimism. The ground of all experiences is the source of our creativity, the superconsciousness that infuses our being with ecstatic aliveness. Why in the world would we prefer to hold back?

Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary:

The aforesaid power of the Lord, however, is to be understood in two distinct ways: (first) as *taijasã*, or belonging to the light (i.e., heliotropic); and (secondly), as *tãmasã* as belonging to darkness (i.e., geotropic). We can divide the (specificatory)

power of the Lord into two (ambivalent) divisions referring respectively to light (*tejas*) and darkness (*tamas*). Light and darkness cannot co-exist. It is the same with these two (ambivalent and specificatory) factors or powers of the Lord.

Part III

Jan elaborated on her friend's dilemma, written to me but meant for everyone:

I was touched how Verse 4 shed light on my experiences this week. In particular, I mean the ideas of the known vs. unknown, and the conscious and unconscious, and how Nitya says the unconscious functions are vastly more extensive than the voluntary, conscious ones.

As I mentioned in class, I'd been helping my friend that very day in her struggles with these divisions in her life, and how they are producing much anxiety and depression. I didn't have all the answers my friend wanted and needed, but I reassured her that many of the answers lay within her, even within this unknown, unconscious realm. We talked about the need for her to open up to her inner springs and deeper self, to quiet her mind so that the answers could bubble up.

I know it is easier said than done. I think the ego resists these unconscious parts of ourselves because it loses control when we open up. But I think it's a critical process as our growth, insight, and evolution as divine organisms are often tied to what is streaming in from these unknown parts of ourself and the universe.

Verse 4 and our class discussion also made me think of Jung's idea of the individuation process. To me, that process seems to be one

of integrating the conscious and unconscious, of carving out of the vastness some rendition of who we really are, and thereby finding our intimate connection with, and our unique expression of the Absolute. At least in myself, I feel this to be an innate process, an urge toward wholeness and greater connectedness with everything. As I have said before, I cherish the notion that this is how the universe comes to know itself also.

I wanted to convey to my friend the exciting part of her process and struggle, that she can create some new balance and awareness that is more expansive and fulfilling. I liked your words in class of about how our guiding star can and often does come out of this darkness. That idea, the guiding star, reminds me of the many other rich symbols from mythology, dreams, Jungian stuff, etc., which describe the valuable matter we gain from this work; i.e. symbols such as the pearl from the deep, or the golden treasure or golden egg, or the elixir, etc. I wish for my friend that some golden nugget could appear soon without too much more pain and suffering and loss, but I fear that will not happen yet. This dark night will stretch on longer.

I do find comfort in the Verse's other idea about superconsciousness also (which is related to the guiding star above but sounds like something vaster). My friend's crisis is being guided and nudged along by something larger and wiser. I can trust that somewhat. It makes me think of Joseph Campbell's phrase "the beneficent nurturing force of the universe." And I realize I need to keep looking within myself and at my superimpositions upon the situation, as no doubt I am being called to grow by all this also.

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Jan also shared a relevant excerpt in Carl Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, from his time traveling in Africa. A clear subtext here is his fear of letting go, of merging with the mystery that was so palpable to him while there. Keep in mind the text of the verse while reading this:

At that time I understood that within the soul from its primordial beginnings there has been a desire for light and an irrepressible urge to rise out of the primal darkness. When the great night comes, everything takes on a note of deep dejection, and every soul is seized by an inexpressible longing for light. That is the pent-up feeling that can be detected in the eyes of primitives, and also in the eyes of animals. There is a sadness in animals' eyes, and we never know whether that sadness is bound up with the soul of the animal or is a poignant message which speaks to us out of that still unconscious existence. That sadness also reflects the mood of Africa, the experience of its solitudes. It is a maternal mystery, this primordial darkness. That is why the sun's birth in the morning strikes the natives as so overwhelmingly meaningful. The *moment* in which light comes *is* God. That moment brings redemption, release. To say that the *sun* is God is to blur and forget the archetypal experience of that moment. "We are glad that the night when the spirits are abroad is over now," the natives will say—but that is already a rationalization. In reality a darkness altogether different from natural night broods over the land. It is the psychic primal night which is the same today as it has been for countless millions of years. The longing for light is the longing for consciousness. (269)

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Mike continues his absolutist take on the verses:

All is manifesting from the One Source inherent in all things that appear and disappear. The substratum that supports all of this is That which has no form, no name, no gender, no identity, etc.. Where one goes awry is when one sees ones' self as a person with a personality and identifies continuously with virtual identities of mental imaginations. It is OK to live in this realm of virtual phenomenon for a while. But, if one seeks to know the truth then one must see the whole view instead of a tiny speck of an identity that is unstable and that changes from one moment to the next.

The only permanence in this life is the substratum where all existence comes into being. The potential for phenomenal existence is made possible only by the emptiness of a substratum that allows all possibilities to exist. When we look at Yin and Yang, we see two sides of the same coin. In this analogy, the coin makes it possible for Yin and Yang to exist. The substratum is not affected by anything that is manifested.

If ones' identity is solely based on the phenomenal, then one is only seeing a tiny speck of what is really there. The limitless emptiness of the Absolute provides all possibilities and potentials for creativity. The whole of ones' identity must include all appearances and disappearances; manifestations of all phenomenon; and the Source from which all of this is derived.

If one asks, "Who is experiencing this?" and does not attempt to answer with the mind or imagination and observes as a witness, then all that is experienced is the Absolute. The mind cannot have this experience. The person cannot have this experience. Only That can have its own experience of That alone.

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I offer a contrasting idea to the last paragraph above from Nitya's Brihadaranyaka Upanishad commentary: "The seers of the Upanishad give primacy to the mind by imagining it to be a spirit principle which from the outset became the primordial problem-solving device." (260)

It is crucial to realize that in fact, it is the total mind that has all experience. The Absolute—That alone—cannot have experience, which is why we are here. We sentient beings are the very aspect of the Absolute that makes experience possible. What is often called mind in the West is the ego, or at best the waking aspect of consciousness. Or as Mike rightly describes it, our identity based on the phenomenal. Vedanta carefully distinguishes between those aspects of mind and the greater whole mind that makes our existence comprehensible, and the aligning the lesser with the totality is one way of conceiving of what we do in our quest into the Unknown. The experiential dynamism of this position is why life remains eternally interesting.