

II Apavada Darsana, Truth by Constant Refutation of the False

Introduction

11/29/5

Just in the nick of time we finished with falsehood and moved on to truth. We have now left the Adhyaropa Darsana and entered the Apavada Darsana, the vision of how to arrive at truth through continuous refutation of the false. Nitya describes this succinctly in his introductory essay:

The systematic method of correcting a false notion is in Sanskrit called apavada. When the qualities or properties of one thing are wrongly projected or superimposed on another it is called adhyaropa. Apavada is the antidote for adhyaropa. Thus apavada is a philosophical method used to reclaim and reestablish truth. After clearly presenting various aspects of the mental projections we are prone to make because of our ignorance and the limitations imposed by our generic psychophysical nature, Narayana Guru wants now to provide us with a method with which we can eradicate from our minds all false identifications. (106-7)

As we've noted before, limitations of a generic nature are called original sin in the western context, while ignorance corresponds to individual sin. Dialectically speaking, if an individual is going to sin, make it original, for God's sake!

Due to certain negative conditioning around the term sin, it has had to be abandoned in favor of more obviously neutral terms.

Curiously, Nitya spends most of the introduction examining the similarities between materialism and spiritualism, between the beliefs in the primacy of matter or the primacy of God. We spent some time wondering why.

On the surface, materialism and spiritualism are opposed and have often been in violent conflict. Yet once you begin to intelligently examine their core beliefs and aims, they look remarkably similar, separated-at-birth twins you might say. Here Nitya has presented us with apavada in action, paring away the false assumptions causing conflict to reveal the truth that is common to both. We are left with no impetus to fight for “our” side at all, in fact we want to embrace our opponents because we can plainly see their motivations are the same as ours. As Nitya describes it:

Both sides want truth to prevail; both want the mind to be systematically directed towards truth, so that whatever an individual does will be consistent with a truthful conviction; both hold that only truth will set man free from incorrect beliefs and wrongful conditioning; and both want their votaries to be happy. In addition, both spiritualists and materialists believe they should share happiness with others and work towards the perpetuation of peace, justice, love, and happiness for all through the achievement of the goals of their philosophies. (106)

The image from the Upanishads that Narayana Guru revived in the last darsana of a seed growing into a tree which produces a seed is an apt metaphor. Our finalized beliefs are like the branch tips and leaves at the outer edge of the tree, and they are all different. If that’s all we see, we might be tempted to argue over the differences. But all the different leaves and buds are grouped together on twigs, which are grouped together on branches, and

these are connected to a trunk and root system that is the same for every part of the tree. Knowing this unites us all, while looking only at the surface variegations makes us seem to be in opposition.

A unitive, all-embracing vision doesn't bring all conflicts to an end. In real life, we have to be prepared for the continuation of hostilities from the other, since many people have staked their identities to being opposed to someone else. Still, if we can understand their side we don't have to be the straw dog they are seeking, and the enmity will gradually dissipate.

To me the most interesting aspect of this is why we want so badly to hold on to our separateness. We have developed an ego sense about our particular leaf and branch that causes us great misery, yet we insist on clinging to it and ignoring our commonality. What we claim to be truth is nothing more than a collection of fictions we have become habituated to as a "comfortable" cocoon. Our idea of who we are was manufactured in early childhood as a means of self defense. At that age we aren't really sure of what we believe, we either accept what we're told or put up a brave front constructed out of ideas that generally follow the path of least resistance. None of this is particularly "true" but we identify with it. It seems more true if we can posit it as being under attack from an evil enemy, and once we realize this we have a stake in fighting.

Charles pointed out that blame was an important factor in this self-development. We want to divert the blame of hostile adults from ourselves to someone else, and if we can avoid punishment, it brings powerful feelings of relief. Very often we'll endorse a degree of falsehood to save our own skin.

As adults we continue the process of separation by elaborating and defending a philosophical outlook. We may join a church or school or loudly support our country in order to reinforce our fictitious self-identity. Anyone attacking our favored institution is therefore attacking us, precisely at the point where we are

wedded to false constructs. All too often it is easier to get angry than to wake up.

Anita wondered how we can maintain necessary defenses while entering into the truth-seeking process. As Swami Vivekananda said, don't kiss the hissing cobra. Mick brought up the classic image of the pond reflecting what's going on around it. When it is calm it reflects its environment accurately, but when it's stirred up everything gets murky and confused. Therefore, the best defense is clarity of vision, brought about through relinquishing fear and other agitations. Calmness reinforces calmness, and sitting in a somewhat calm group once a week or so is very helpful in allowing the pond to become a mirror. Faith in the wisdom of our Self is hard to beat, too.

[Comment from 2023: While realizing the underlying unity is crucially important, we live in a time when we could be discriminated against or even killed solely on the basis of our external characteristics. Knowing unity does not preclude taking such externalities into consideration, but it does help us to not permit our life to be ruined by deranged people who don't even know us.]

Having spent many years studying Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism, Nitya points to Lenin's *Empirio Criticism* from 1909 as a fine example of materialist apavada. Unlike the Guru, I haven't read the work in question, but found an excellent excerpt at:

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/mec/05.htm>

In it Lenin is eloquently and incisively undercutting a criticism stemming from the new scientific insights of the day which would eventually lead to the uncertainty principle, i.e. that mind and/or perception is an integral part of existence. According to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, in his book "Lenin defended dialectical materialism on the chief points at issue, particularly the

status and character of matter and the nature of knowledge. Opposing the view that matter is a construct of sensations, Lenin argued that matter is ontologically primary, existing independently of consciousness. Likewise, space and time are not subjective modes of ordering experience but objective forms of the existence of matter.” Reading the above excerpt I found myself in wholehearted agreement with old Vladimir, despite being absolutely certain that matter is indeed a mental construct. At the very least he demonstrates that the arguments propounded back then don’t get to the root of the question. In his apavada he eliminates a number of spurious ideas that satisfied lesser minds on more casual perusal.

The Vedantic idea that the world is essentially unknowable in finalized form means that any well-developed philosophy can be as true as any other. The key to living in harmony is to become aware of our limited grasp of truth, that everyone’s grasp is limited. No one has the sole keys to truth, whatever they might claim. Likewise no one is damned for failing to grasp a particular slice of truth. We can all relax and breathe a sigh of relief that the persona we constructed to fool everyone else into believing that we knew truth was just a joke.

This is just the bare beginning of our Apavada study, so I don’t want to go any deeper at the moment. Nitya has introduced the topic with a tour de force, and we can be content with that. Aum.

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2/9/16

Apavada Darsana Introduction

Truth by Consistent Refutation of the False

The introduction to the second darsana is a little less weighty than the upcoming verses, so it left room to continue our discussion of the ground or core of being and how we experience it. Happily this subject was food for thought this week for several of us, and those who read the class notes were further inspired by Jan's and Deb's written responses. This is a great example of how words can prompt us to travel far on very rewarding trains of thought. Without the prompting, most of us simply wouldn't bother, wouldn't even know what to look for.

We will cover some of the ground of being discussion later. First though, Nitya defines the subject matter of the next darsana, as is fitting for an introduction:

The systematic method of correcting a false notion is in Sanskrit called *apavada*. When the qualities or properties of one thing are wrongly projected or superimposed on another, it is called *adhyaropa*. *Apavada* is the antidote for *adhyaropa*. Thus *apavada* is a philosophical method used to reclaim and reestablish truth. After clearly presenting various aspects of the mental projections we are prone to make because of our ignorance and the limitations imposed by our generic psychophysical nature, Narayana Guru wants now to provide us with a method with which we can eradicate from our minds all false identifications. (106-7)

Unfortunately, prejudices cannot be easily eradicated. But *apavada* is an effective method we can use for this purpose. It addresses itself both to prejudices arising from misguided spiritual enthusiasms, and to those stemming from the slogan-chanting exaggerations of materialism. (108)

That's an understatement if ever there was one: prejudices cannot be easily eradicated. Their tenaciousness is legendary. Scotty visualizes them as mental cocoons. Yet by making a dedicated

attempt to come to grips with our prejudices, they can be greatly diminished. With effort the impossible becomes possible.

We began the class with a nod to Nitya's dialectic uniting of spirituality and materialism, which has much to teach us in terms of technique. Regarding the professed opposition of these two camps, Nitya writes:

Both groups try to prove their stand with the aid of reason. If we examine the contention of the contending forces, we shall see that their apparent differences contain a large measure of agreement. Both sides want truth to prevail; both want the mind to be systematically directed towards truth, so that whatever an individual does will be consistent with a truthful conviction; both hold that only truth will set man free from incorrect beliefs and wrongful conditioning; and both want their votaries to be happy. In addition, both spiritualists and materialists believe they should share happiness with others and work towards the perpetuation of peace, justice, love, and happiness for all through the achievement of the goals of their philosophies.

What both groups are trying most sincerely to do is remove false notions or wrongly indoctrinated convictions. It is wonderful to see that except for doctrinal points there is almost complete agreement between them. (106)

When we compare the doctrines, aims, and methods proposed to achieve these goals by both the spiritualists and the materialists, then the materialists may be amazed and not a little discomfited to see there are no essential differences between the two groups. The continuing warfare between them arises from the obscurantism caused by a confusion of tongues. As Bertrand Russell rightly said: "Man can never attain lasting peace without finding adequate measures to solve his semantic problems." (108)

Of course Nitya was speaking of the most exemplary members of both sides of the argument. In America at least, there are many religious people who want happiness only for the chosen few, and who delight in imagining the rest of humanity roasting in misery for all eternity, and there are many materialists who only want to exploit the rest for every drop of blood they can wring out of us. That's a different matter. Nitya was limiting his remarks to compassionate open-minded idealistic people. He had in mind Marxists and similar materialistic idealists, rather than non-philosophic physicists, for instance. And there are plenty of open-minded religious people on all hands, though they seldom merit media attention the way that bigots and loudmouths do, and Nitya was thinking of them. Emphasizing the positive, showing the way.

I asked the class to notice what was askew in the seemingly exemplary positions of the two sides as presented in the introduction. The reason these ideals are never realized is not specifically noted, but it's worth paying attention to. Both are aimed at fixing problems "out there" in the world. Other people's problems. Humans are allergic to admitting our own shortcomings. In Narayana Guru's philosophy we are charged with recognizing our natural limitations. Because all positions are necessarily partial, they are inadequate for bringing about the ideal states they envision. The proper place to work, then, is within ourselves. As many Chinese philosophers have insisted, the social world is an expression of the inner state of individuals, and we bring harmony to society by being harmonious ourselves. Or we bring chaos by being chaotic. People will always be eager to solve problems in their surroundings, and in so doing will create new problems to be solved. That's okay. But we want to be happy *before* all the world's problems are solved, because we likely won't live long enough to find that heavenly state realized. We should see how the world as it is now, with all its flaws, is not only perfect, it is more than perfect.

It is miraculous, through and through. Dialing in to the essence of everything is an open door to meaningful and transformative happiness. Nitya mentions that here:

If a man comes to know this reality he will see everything as a manifestation of the Self, and such a realization will automatically make him a lover of the manifested world. So far as his interpersonal relationships are concerned, he will neither hate nor wish to possess or dominate anyone, for he will see all men as manifestations of the one Self. If all men saw the Self everywhere we would live in a world of absolute peace, with a spontaneous sharing of joy and happiness. (107)

This goal seems no closer now than it ever has been. So we have to take another piece of advice from Nitya: to “save the world” add one more happy person to it: yourself! This is done at home, out of the public gaze.

We talked about how seductive it is to identify with a certain popular group. Since we tend to feel uncertain in ourselves, we graft ourselves onto an appealing movement that gives us a sense of being right. We proudly extol our chosen group and hurl insults at those who prefer something else. We also take offense when we are the recipients of baleful attitudes. As a “hippie” myself—a believer in love, kindness, generosity, universal happiness and all that—I well know how cutting it is to be written off as the scum of the earth by another person who has a very different conception of what a hippie is. I have been despised because of some word label, not for anything I actually happen to be. And so it goes.

Even the best of labels can turn against us. Once upon a time, *liberal* was a high compliment. Who could fault a progressive, open-minded, generous attitude, free from prejudice? Now it has become a curse word in much of America, one step this side of ‘terrorist’. Public dialogue has descended to glorified name-

calling, and if we identify with the name being called, it is bound to be hurtful. But why do we need that kind of superficial identity? What we are is not expressed by any label, and yet we are tempted to cling to them nevertheless. The best move would be to wean ourselves from dependency on such unreliable crutches.

I mentioned Nitya's wonderful essay that addresses this point: *What Religion Is To Me*, which is now up on his website. I'll also post it here in Part II. Nitya believed truth was everywhere, and he eagerly took it in wherever he could find it. He had the most ecumenical attitude of anyone I've ever known. I don't recall him ever labeling himself, either. He lived what Deb described: "if we are able to be settled in ourselves, then we can be involved in issues and we don't become aligned one way or the other." But oh, to be settled in our selves! It's a lifelong challenge.

We live in a world where fixed groups cling tenaciously to their identity and often come into serious conflict. The cure envisioned by people like Narayana Guru is to broaden the identity to ideally include everyone and everything. It isn't a matter of getting everyone to agree on certain core principles, which is impossible. Much less agree with us. Rather, by apprehending the core of unity in the ground of existence, unity quite naturally becomes a tangible reality. Within its ambit, everyone is free to pursue their own visions and associate as they will, yet the impetus for conflict is dissolved.

Karen observed how our political system in the US is almost totally based on labeling and demonizing the other. It is indeed a time-honored technique for stampeding the gullible into your camp. Scotty added that the one liberal in the fray, Bernie Sanders, wants to find allies, to find common ground, so he's ignored by the media, which thrives on fighting, on divisiveness.

Speaking of common ground, Karen wasn't comfortable with "the ground of being." It seemed too solid, too earthy, for her. Her honest assessment propelled us into that important subject.

I suggested to Karen that “ground” here meant basis, the unmanifested potential out of which everything, including the physical ground, arises. Of course we are free to use whatever term most suits us, and many of us prefer the Absolute as a thoroughly neutral, inconceivable term. Rest assured there are those who think of the Absolute in terms like the political absolutism of the Nazis, so they can’t abide it, either. No label is going to satisfy everyone. “God” worked for a long time, but it no longer serves its purpose for modern thinkers. Karen did change her view: “Oh, I see. The ground of being is that spark inside us, the never changing place.” Perfect. No dirt there at all.

Several people offered versions of what Kant called the a priori and the a posteriori: the before and after of manifestation. The ground is the a priori, the yet-to-be-manifested. When we conceive of it, label it, and assign it a value, it becomes a posteriori. You cannot go backwards: you cannot retrieve the original from what it was made into. Paul recalled that the Absolute cannot cross the threshold of consciousness—waking consciousness, that is. We read only last week that “the core is forbidden to consciousness.” It is present, but unrecognized. The minute we identify it, it is no longer the core. It has become manifest, if only as an idea. Paul felt that this concept has helped him be less rigid in his positions, and that is likely to save him from repeating some of the mistakes that he has made in the past. I am sure that’s true. But we can always make new mistakes, and probably will. 😊

I couldn’t help but offer a meditation I had had the previous evening related to the core. Deb and I were at the symphony, where the last piece of a terrific concert was Gustav Holst’s *The Planets*. It was a spectacular performance of our excellent orchestra, and the music gently launched me into outer space, pondering the solar system from out in my home turf of the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. I was first struck by how ridiculously miniscule the

living surface of our planet Earth is compared to even the local region of the galaxy, let alone the whole universe. I just looked it up and got one estimate: 0.000000000000000000000042 percent. Seems a little generous, but it's kind of what I was thinking. Then I was reminded that "empty space" is not empty—it is filled with light, though the light is dark (invisible) until it encounters an object. Between lives we are beams of light, which take no time at all to reach every corner of the universe. It's a great feeling, I'm sure. Maybe a little lonely. But what a miracle that it has become possible for those light beams to take on flesh, to become actualized as living beings on a stupendously gorgeous planet! It reemphasized my inner dedication to experience every moment to the utmost, to share love with friends, to care for all living things, to notice the glories of expression all around me. (I know this sounds liberal, but bear with me....) That light can become all this, and then dissolve again into its essential elements, is the greatest miracle of all. So I was visualizing the core, the ground, in my seat high in the concert hall, as the all-pervading light rather than the more typical singularity of no dimension. I well knew, thanks to Darsanamala, that however I conceived of it, it was only a metaphor, only a simulacrum. The core cannot be delineated. But the right metaphor can inspire us, and this one worked just fine for me.

The importance of cherishing life as we are given it reminded Susan of what a difference our attitude can make:

I just heard about a friend's sister-in-law who was paralyzed two weeks ago by a huge wave while swimming in the ocean in Mexico. The wave hit her and luckily her husband was right next to her and could carry her out of the water or she would have drowned. I asked how she was doing, assuming that she was a wreck emotionally. My friend said she is doing well. She's tough, she said, and she's so happy to be alive. I felt

really inspired by this, thinking that this woman was not clinging to her identities (such as being a walking person) so much that she could not still see the beauty of her being.

The space theme led Deb to mention that astronaut Edgar Mitchell, who had a famous epiphany while returning from the moon, died recently. Unique among US astronauts, who were chosen partly on the basis of a lack of imagination as a kind of protective barrier against the unknown hazards of space travel, Mitchell became an explorer of inner space. Here's a bio from the IONS website, the institute he founded after he came back to earth:

Traveling back to Earth, having just walked on the moon, *Apollo 14* astronaut **Edgar Mitchell** had an experience for which nothing in his life had prepared him. As he approached the planet we know as home, he was filled with an inner conviction as certain as any mathematical equation he'd ever solved. He knew that the beautiful blue world to which he was returning is part of a living system, harmonious and whole—and that we all participate, as he expressed it later, “in a universe of consciousness.”

Trained as an engineer and scientist, Captain Mitchell was most comfortable in the world of rationality and physical precision. Yet the understanding that came to him as he journeyed back from space felt just as trustworthy—it represented another way of knowing.

This experience radically altered his worldview: Despite science's superb technological achievements, he realized that we had barely begun to probe the deepest mystery of the universe—the fact of consciousness itself. He became convinced that the uncharted territory of the human mind was the next frontier to explore, and that it contained possibilities we had hardly begun to imagine. Within two years of his

expedition, Edgar Mitchell founded the Institute of Noetic Sciences in 1973.

Deb read that in his epiphany he realized that the molecules of the spaceship and the moon and his body were all made up of the exact same dust from a stellar explosion, so there was no essential difference in any of it. A core idea for sure.

Prabu, visiting from California, told us of a crew in Antarctica searching for neutrinos. Neutrinos are almost totally invisible. Thousands of them are passing through us all the time, and we never know it. I suggested that neutrinos were the sannyasins of the particle world, since they don't interact with anything.

Moni agreed that the core is very subtle, and we can't say what it is. She knows she has carried her core with her wherever she goes. She also well knows she has a core in her that helps others. It engenders empathy and truth.

The unifying thread in all our accounts was that, while we cannot know the ground of being in the way we know our physical world, we can turn toward it and invite it to inspire us. If we don't, we are likely to miss many opportunities it is dying to offer us. When we do open ourselves to it, in whatever way suits us best, exciting possibilities continually arise. Not material things. Empathy and truth, for instance, are not material: they are far more valuable than any matter.

Scotty realized this past week, after our initial discussion in class, that his childhood illness he described last week had led him—practically forced him—to accept life as a great gift. Barely alive on the edge of death, he chose to live, and so he did. This is a deliberate and momentous decision we might all renew on a regular basis. Scotty feels that his own renewal has led him to shed many cocoons in which he has been incubating, and now he is ready to flutter free as an unfettered butterfly. Letting go of the

cocoons is a critical stage of the process. His new motto: *chaos, cleanse, purge!* Right on.

Part II

Susan shared a few quotes from Astronaut Mitchell:

“The desire to live life to its fullest, to acquire more knowledge, to abandon the economic treadmill, are all typical reactions to these experiences in altered states of consciousness. The previous fear of death is typically quelled. If the individual generally remains thereafter in the existential state of awareness, the deep internal feeling of eternity is quite profound and unshakable.”

— [Edgar D. Mitchell, *The Way of the Explorer: An Apollo Astronaut's Journey Through the Material and Mystical Worlds*](#)

Instead of an intellectual search, there was suddenly a very deep gut feeling that something was different. It occurred when looking at Earth and seeing this blue-and-white planet floating there, and knowing it was orbiting the Sun, seeing that Sun, seeing it set in the background of the very deep black and velvety cosmos, seeing - rather, knowing for sure - that there was a purposefulness of flow, of energy, of time, of space in the cosmos - that it was beyond man's rational ability to understand, that suddenly there was a nonrational way of understanding that had been beyond my previous experience.

There seems to be more to the universe than random, chaotic, purposeless movement of a collection of molecular particles. On the return trip home, gazing through 240,000 miles of space toward the stars and the planet from which I had come, I suddenly experienced the universe as intelligent, loving, harmonious.

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Here is Nitya's essay on religious identity, which has been posted on [his website](#) also:

WHAT RELIGION IS TO ME

I was born and brought up in India. When I was at school, once a year the teacher asked the class to respond to a classification. On my first time, he called out "Muslims," and some of my friends stood up. Suleyman was my best friend and he stood up. As I believed that I belonged to whatever he did, I naturally got up and stood with him. The teacher looked at me with unbelieving eyes and asked me to sit down. I could not understand this high-handedness that separated me from my best friend, but, respecting the teacher's arbitration, I sat. "Christians!" the teacher shouted next. This time I saw that my good friend Peter was standing up. As I did not want to lose both Suleyman and Peter, I stood up again, and again the teacher told me to sit down, this time with a note of annoyance. At this point I decided I did not understand what game the teacher wanted us to play. Finally he said, "Hindus!" Next to me sat Paramesvara, the carpenter's son. He stood up, but, as I had never joined him in any of his endeavors, I sat where I was. The teacher looked fiercely into my eyes and shouted at me: "Stand up you stupid ass. You are a Hindu!"

This made me think "Hindu" was another name for an ass. I knew that I was not an ass; how then did I classify as a Hindu? When I returned home, I told my mother that my teacher had ruthlessly characterized me as a Hindu, which seemed synonymous to an ass. When my mother confirmed that I was indeed a Hindu, I felt crestfallen, but she continued by explaining that Hindu did not mean ass, but referred generally to the majority of Indians who did

not go to churches on Sundays or mosques on Fridays. In those days there was no temple nearby and I did not see the inside of one until Mahatma Gandhi came to our village to open a temple for all Hindus. For a long time the word Hindu was a contemptuous term in my mind, and Christian and Muslim were horrifying categorizations that segregated many of my friends, at least on certain days or hours in a day. This experience of mine is shared in varying degrees of shame or horror by at least the three-fourths of the population of India who are financially deprived and are considered socially taboo.

After considerable exposure to education and religious display, I have come to terms with my Hindu grass roots and I have taken pains to understand the philosophy, mythology, ritual, ethics and above all the psycho-cosmologic dimensions of this mammoth, ancient culture which is at once dynamic and lethargic, universal and parochial, impersonal and individualistic, transcendental and exploitive. In spite of my devoted study of the vast Hindu literature and that of its aftergrowths—Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism—I am still as much an outsider to Hinduism as I am to Christianity, Islam, Judaism or Shintoism. The main reason for such a sad alienation from my own hereditary grass roots is the natural aversion and anger that has grown in me towards the cancerous social observance of caste and all the anomalies connected with it. No one who cannot accept the caste system will ever become an ardent protagonist of Hinduism.

This deep, agonizing conviction of the otherness of the very unconscious to which my mythic and archetypal emotions belong, is not a solitary freak incidence with me alone. There are millions of well-meaning, educated Indians who feel a natural abhorrence to the claims that Hinduism makes upon them. However, this gives little or no impetus to show love or sympathy for other religions. There is, of course, the glowing exception of Dr. Ambedkar, who sought refuge in Buddhism out of sheer exasperation, though

history proved this to be a false step which was suicidal and self-defeating. Fortunately Hinduism is not felt in the average Indian life as an organized monolithic institution, even though many politically ambitious fanatics have, time and again, tried to exploit the people's emotional affiliation to it for the purpose of building up a Hindu fundamentalist India. This has not succeeded and will not succeed, because a more genuine and immensely valuable spirit prevails upon the Indian mind. This is none other than India herself.

India is a unique country of calm and serene contemplative insight, and her children are deeply embedded in her unarticulated commitment to the search and realization of a truth without frontiers and of a beauty that manifests universally in the very music and poetry of life. It is this genuine Indianness that has created such worthy sons and daughters as Mira Bai, Kabir and Tagore.

Such an open and dynamic sense of belonging to the essential spirit of India more than compensates me for any spontaneous or studied aloofness from all religions, including Hinduism. The adherence to or the avoidance of religion of any sort does not affect in the least one's spiritual growth and dynamic acceptance of the truth and value of perennial philosophy, irrespective of its source being the Upanishads, the Enneads, the Gospels, or Buddhist lore. A human being is primarily and ultimately human, and there is nothing more tragic and shameful than if his religion should cripple him into being a creedist or a cultist.

Nitya Chaitanya Yati 12-8-1981

Part III

Susan expanded on something she touched on in class, moving into some valuable insights:

Dear Scott,

After last week's class I was really thinking about this particular point, that you covered wonderfully in the class notes:

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. 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.

I was thinking about this and then I spent Tuesday morning with my Aunt Sue. She is more than 80 years old and I've known her my whole life. She has three sons and so I have always been one of her adopted daughters. She was dear to my mother and she is dear to me. We have fun together, talking about books and laughing about many things. But I always find that she brings out a certain side of me that makes me crazy. I get so irritated with her and so defensive, with just a few words or a look or a cackle. She gets very anxious about things — like disorder and messiness and driving issues. I see her about once every two weeks and we talk on the phone in between. For the last few months I've really been trying to figure out why I get so irritated with her. Before that I was just irritated that I was irritated and I think I saw it as only Aunt Sue's problem. But now I've come to my senses and have realized that I can't change Aunt Sue to suit my comfort. I have to dig in and figure this out from my end. I think it is hard to let her be right, it is hard to be around her anxiety related to disorder. But that is because I like to be right and I have my own anxieties about my failings with neatness. Perhaps if I let go of the identity I have

of myself as a struggling neat person and a driver who always knows where she is going. Perhaps if I just laugh when she comments on my messy car or the squeak in my car door. I will just say, “You’re right, Aunt Sue. My car is a mess and I do need to put some WD 40 on that squeaky door.” I think there is more to it. She triggers something very deep in me. There’s something about her not really listening to me or hearing me that bugs me, but that also has to do with identity. Perhaps there’s my realization and disappointment that she doesn't really know who I am. But that’s not going to happen. After all, I’m still trying to figure out who I am beyond all the superimpositions — how then would anyone else really know me? Why is that something I want? It’s frightening to let go of my identity, as it’s been constructed over 55 years.

In a related topic, I really appreciated the thoughts you sent out from Jan and Debbie and Michael and Hercules. One of the ways in which I experience the ground of being is in relation to other people — that ultimate kind of connection that is beyond identity and words. More than experiencing it (because it is hard to experience directly) I have faith that it is there. But as it is, I am struggling to get out of the way of the parts of my conditioning that keep me from connecting with others. In particular, I am thinking of how I jump in too quickly with suggestions when someone is hurting or upset. I want to help them and so I often suggest solutions and remedies, rather than just reflecting their pain and making space for them to feel it. This is more about my ego and my need to be right and an authority. And of course suggestions are not always bad but I know how vital it is to allow an opening for that connection of two people that is beyond their identities. With only good intentions I meet my friends with my whole bag of remedies (words and sometimes salves and little jars of homeopathic medicines). But what would happen if I got together

with friends and didn't bring my remedies or my identity or my conditionings? I think there would be more room for the dialectic of our beings. I think it involves faith and surrender. Faith, in that just acknowledging our common ground of being can help to release the tight hold of our self-perception. Surrender, in that we have to make a kind of leap or a step off a high dive, a step that isn't part of our well trodden routine and path. I think of all interactions with others as meaningful and important, but when two or more people can meet at the core, how wonderful! I have felt this before many times, sometimes because I was able to consciously get out of the way of myself and sometimes just because the circumstances of the interaction allowed for more opening. I have even felt this with Aunt Sue! Looking forward to more of my own undoing.

Thanks as always for class and the class notes,
Susan

Part IV

Jean has also been contemplating our topic:

What is the "ground of being"? For me, this is a very neutral thing-- the blank screen, the unwritten page, the clay, the white canvas awaiting the paint. The "ground of being" is what underlies the dubious words **It's okay, What of that? Never mind, I don't care.** The very existence of this "ground of being" is what can stabilize and calm us in the heat of trauma and passion, so it's good to know about it. But it's nothing I'll spend much time with every day: now is the time for life's mixed ideas, vague feelings, and strong emotions. Even the moments of strange "harmony-with-the-universe" and everything in it, the moments of ethereal light and joy, are part of the painting/movie/pot. While alive, we

are filled with faith, hope and love (or their opposites). As long as hope springs eternal-- such as before a major operation, or buried in an avalanche-- hope will nullify any “Never mind, I don't care.” Human emotions just don't mix with the “ground of being,” for there, no emotions exist at all. Our lifetime is for subjective consciousness and interactions between people and nature, pulsations outward and inward, finally back to the alpha point. We *do* like to feel in control and the master of any situation, but when all hope is out, if we know the secret of the “ground of being,” then we can “take control” in a new way: just give up, in thankful acceptance and understanding. When there is nothing more to be done or felt, then **It's okay. What of that? Never mind. I don't care.**

I just read Nancy Yeilding's memories of meeting Nitya (newly posted by Scott), and once again the words “seek, and ye shall find” have proven true. I see “ground of being” described another way, by the master himself: *You come to a neutral area of unity. Once you know that there is an aspect of knowledge which effaces or cancels out the physical world, the heaviness of phenomena is not felt anymore. From this, you gain a new freedom. The freedom is to relate yourself to the phenomenal world, with all the laws which operate in it, and yet to keep within a calm repose by which you can sit on your own seat of absolute certitude as a witness.*