

II Apavada Darsana, Truth by Constant Refutation of the False

Verse 7

When all parts are separated one by one, then one sees everything as consciousness alone—far from maya—and not any other.

2/28/6

Here we find further support for contemplative analysis, as opposed to the mere shutting down of the mind as attempted by most religions. A favorite Vedantic example of the analytic process is cloth. I imagine that's because cloth stands for religion: different colors of "habit" are worn to distinguish one from another. We say a preacher "takes to the cloth." At the same time, a story made out of whole cloth is completely "fabricated" and false; we swallow the whole cloth if we agree to a social or political claim supplied from outside our own good sense.

When a cloth is closely examined or pulled apart, it turns out to be made of threads. If you separate the threads one by one the cloth disappears. Likewise, unexamined beliefs disintegrate when the assumptions that they are created out of are diligently separated. They only "hold together" because one false assumption supports the next, ad infinitum.

Then threads can be unraveled to discover that they are constructed of cotton fibers. When the fibers are laid side by side no threads can be found anywhere. At this stage the contemplative is studying the root structures of complex mental imagery,

watching the process of building ideas out of the mind's structural orientation.

The cotton can be further reduced to organic molecules, which are akin to the vital urges being emitted from vasanas. Molecules are formed from atoms, which are almost entirely empty space but contain subatomic particles. Nature being what it is, things can always be divided into smaller and smaller components, as well as larger and larger conglomerations. Eventually subatomic particles will be found to have smaller constituents, sub-subatomic particles. On the large-scale end, physicists have recently discovered galactic clusters and are angling for multiple universes. Some day they will probably speak of clusters of universes.

There are numerous science fiction stories that liken solar systems to atoms and galaxies to cells. One that I read had some travelers get far enough away so that they could see the universe was actually a gigantic glass of beer that was being drunk by a titanic person in a bar in some mega-universe. The fabulous "He Who Shrank" by Henry Hasse chronicles a man who is given a shrinking potion and passes down through the atomic world into the vast space of another universe, over and over. Quickly he learns to select inhabited planets to shrink through on his journey ever inward.

The gist is there is no end to the process of reduction or inflation, but at some point one is thrown back to the realization that all is consciousness alone. Stuff is all made out of other stuff, which has existence only in consciousness. In and through all the apparent things of which our universe is comprised is the total emptiness of the shining void, the divine and mysterious Source of all. Once that is realized, the mayavic impulse of the cloth is made irrelevant. You may still think "Ah, that cloth suits that person perfectly," or "That's a poor fit," and you are bound to have to wear something in public, but you yourself no longer identify with your psychological clothing.

Most people are powerfully and even lethally identified with their cloth: their race, nationality, employment, religion, political persuasion, etc. I recall the frustration of one of my high school Huck Finn classes—Huckleberry Finn is American Vedanta—when I wouldn't answer their question "What do you do?" I would say some of the things I did, such as take walks or play the piano, eat food and so on, but I resisted telling them what they wanted, which was my job identity. After each item, they'd ask more stridently, "But what do you DO!!??" Sixteen or seventeen years old and already bound fast to the wheel. The lucky ones may in middle age learn to opt for being over becoming, but the process of becoming—one thing causing another so you can then seek the next—is so deeply stressed in modern society that perhaps most never will.

Moni spoke eloquently about how we shouldn't identify with our jobs or social roles, but only with our true inner being. As Nitya puts it in the commentary, we must realize our being is "none other than Being itself, which is the One manifested as the All." Nataraja Guru's own commentary concludes:

When knowledge operates nescience becomes abolished and with the help of such knowledge one is able to see the causal status in reality of each one of the items ranging from cloth to atom. Such awareness is a kind of everpresent and lasting witness, having an ultimate status of its own. Awareness itself is without further cause and is self-evident. All others have dependent causes, one behind the other. Therefore, it is knowledge alone that remains supreme and eternal. All other things are unreal. (ISOA p. 330)

Nitya speaks at length about Indian materialism in his comments. He very often did this in classes, to challenge us to sort out what we truly knew from what we lazily assumed. It's a very good

meditative exercise. Narayana Guru asked Nataraja Guru to meditate on the world without him in it, and at another time to meditate on himself as the lone existent entity with no world around him. A true materialist throws off memory, inference, analogy—indeed most of what we take for granted. Although likely impossible beyond short stretches of meditation, the attempt allows a person to start from scratch if it is done wholeheartedly. At the very least it can give a clear insight that what passes for materialism in the West is too often a half-baked amalgam of desires and prejudices masking contempt and ignorance, and gilded over with a veneer of quasi-scientific beliefs of the moment. A particularly itchy cloth to wrap oneself in. It is to free ourselves of such uncomfortable readymade clothing that we press on with the challenge of intelligently sitting at the Gurus' feet via Darsanamala.

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4/5/16

Apavada Darsana Verse 7

When all parts are separated
one by one, then one sees
everything as consciousness alone –
far from *maya* – and not any other.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*Dividing all parts one by one
Everything then is seen there
As mind-stuff alone and as no other:
As thus banishing maya (relativity) far away.*

Narayana Guru invites us to closely examine the world and thoughtfully reduce it to its essence: a unified Source or Ground of Being. By implication, we should be dissatisfied with surface appearances, knowing that despite being perfect expressions of the unified ground as far as that is possible, they are inevitably misleading. They are partial representations of a total situation, and all of us fill in the absent terrain automatically based on our own prejudices and conditioning. The present darsana is aimed at minimizing those distortions.

This is a very challenging and important verse, and it led to a complex struggle to come to grips with it. There is also a deep-seated resistance to wrestling with complex concepts that inevitably muddies the waters. Why can't we just consider realization a done deal? My ego has better things to do.

This verse is central to the darsana named truth by the consistent refutation of the false, and it offers an intelligent technique to unbind ourselves from innumerable invisible restraints.

Nitya begins with a reprise of a classic analogy, used also by Vidyananda: progressive reduction of a cloth to threads, to cotton, to molecules, to particles, to nothingness. Cloth is used in part because a certain kind of colored cloth symbolizes a sage or sannyasin. Even an image of wisdom should be analyzed to determine its reality. That Alone has touched on this several times. From verse 14 we read:

In India we use an image of light and shade. Light drives away the shadows of the tri-basic divisions such as knower, known and knowledge. The secret of this is not known to the pretender called *kapatayati*. *Kapata* means false; and *yati* means a seer. In Sanskrit, *patam* means cloth, and *ka* means what or why is it? People might ask “why do you put on this cloth?”

“Because I am a yati,” I answer.

“You become a yati just because you’ve put on peach colored robes?” If you are a yati only because of this cloth, it is meaningless. People who become ascetics just because of the *patam*, the cloth, are focusing on the external aspects, and they won’t get any special knowledge. But we are not speaking of the *yati* of cloth alone in a disparaging way. We only say that he has not arrived yet, he’s on the way, he’s in the queue. One can get into the process and slowly move forward, and some day unitive understanding will come from inside.

And verse 62 adds the denouement:

When you see cloth, you do not think of cotton. When you see a pot, you do not think of clay. And when you see people, you do not think of the one evolving energy out of which they all have sprung up. When you see the world, you do not think of the Absolute. So forms operate as a kind of shield of a thing’s intrinsic nature.

One of the drawbacks of psychedelic insight into the unity of all things—something many of us share—is that it arrives without effort (seeking out the often-illegal medicine doesn’t count as dedicated effort). The effortlessly achieved insight feeds into the ego, and the ego may well become complacent. It *likes* to be complacent. “Who needs the dedication of a Narayana Guru to achieve what I already know?” The problem is, the insight has become a memory from the past. It needs to be renewed at every moment, and this requires a measure of alertness we don’t always bring to the table.

It’s true we are all always the Absolute in essence, but the belief we already know everything there is to know is stultifying and constricting. It breeds complacency in place of dynamism. Even in our class of dedicated seekers basking in the afterglow of

one of humanity's greatest mystics, scant appreciation is accorded him. It's as though, like Jesus, he has done the hard work, so we don't have to. I'm pretty sure their example was meant to energize us to try harder rather than sink into the ease of fortunate circumstances, like being on the winning team. At least we might honor such selfless teachers by striving to bring what they have revealed to life in ourselves. This "honor" or "activation of the teaching" is what makes it real. Nitya underlines the practical implications:

A serious penetration of the meaning and workings of the external world must inevitably take us step by step into the sources of our own subjective causes. What may at first appear to be infinite and immeasurable shrinks into a point of acute awareness, and it is located as the center of consciousness. Without knowing the pulsation of this consciousness, which can converge or contract to a point of awareness that is infinitesimally smaller than a conceivable mathematical point, and which can also expand with variegated forms, shapes, colors and names into an infinite universe, one will be unable to wipe off the misery of life in a wholesale manner. Piecemeal techniques or shortcuts are of little help, though they may give a momentary respite. (140-1)

Nitya gives us a lovely sketch of Narayana Guru's diligence:

Narayana Guru did not begin his spiritual life as an evangelist of wisdom. First he withdrew himself from everyone and everything. For more than a decade he examined the lifestyle of his fellow men. Then he withdrew from the world. After that he withdrew from the physical body. Finally he withdrew from the tumult and feverishness of the mind. Eventually came the experience of the realization that his own being was none other

than Being itself, which is the One manifested as the All. Only after the actualization of this experience had saturated and transformed his emotions, thought, volitions and specific identity did the Guru begin to reveal his gospel of love and unitive understanding. (141)

The class stipulated that none of us has that kind of dedication. We have our lives to live, and in large part we welcome his realization into our lives to spare us the superhuman effort required to break through the cotton-wool batting of our ego. Instead we take his word for it. Lucky us. Yet at the same time we should be willing to make a small effort to bring his teachings to life in our own being. I can't imagine why else anyone would attend our humble gathering.

I asked everyone what form "revealing the Absolute" takes. We tend to think of it as some exotic, supernatural event that lifts us out of our ordinary self. Yet Narayana Guru keeps reminding us that whatever we do reveals the Absolute. All of it. Maya is the Absolute becoming manifest, and each of us is an agent of the process. Our creativity is birthed in a point-source within us and expands into manifestation in the allegedly outside world. Our efforts have a significant impact on the result.

In our own lives we dig into the intuitive depths to bring forth germs of enlightened ideas, which we then craft into all kinds of art forms, buildings, technological marvels, and all the rest. We were sitting together in one such place. Long ago, Nancy visualized the house we now live in without any of it being real. It emerged as a unique form from her intuition, and she added her knowledge of practical matters to shape it into something that could be built. She teamed up with her husband to put it together in actuality, compromising where necessary and tinkering with details. It might be helpful for all of us to think of our lives in these Vedantic terms: vasana-germs arising from the depths of our being

to expand into expression in the world we inhabit. Most often we take it for granted, but it is as miraculous as anything. Knowing we are expressions of the Absolute could well make us happier and more interested in the contributions we make.

Bushra expressed a common misunderstanding of Vedanta: arriving at the Absolute is not an intellectual thing, it is thinking deep inside yourself. In India, though, thinking deep inside yourself is precisely what the intellect does. The mind, on the other hand, is the surface aspect of the psyche that processes sensory perception, and that is the aspect that gets in the way of our inner balance. Bushra added a beautiful expression: “my being is attuned to beingness around me, in tune with everything – no perception and no thought.” That’s exactly right, yet that unconditioned state leaks out into our thoughts, and how we think about it colors our perception. And this is a very good thing.

To more fully understand this verse we should definitely reread verse 68 of *That Alone*. I’ll clip the whole document into the mailing, but the diagram in the book is better reproduced. Look it up. In the center is I, the ego. Going off one way is mind, connecting the ego to the body and the outside world. Going the other way (the direction is meaningless) is the intellect, connecting the ego to the Absolute. Here’s a droplet of how Nitya describes it:

Mind relates the ego consciousness to the identity with the body, and intellect relates it to an identity with the Absolute. So we can say an individual is composed of body, mind, ego consciousness, intellect and, as a total ground, the Unknown. This last is given many names, such as nothingness, beingness, existence or transcendence. Call it whatever you like—all these names suit it very well.

You should have a very clear picture of this scheme in your mind. (465)

Many people routinely discredit the intellect, and as we have often pointed out, this severs the conscious link with the Absolute, bringing typical dissociation. What they really mean is the mind, in Vedantic terms. We are fortunate in being the Absolute through and through, so it's present at all times despite our ignorance, but pretty much the whole point of our study is to strengthen our affiliation with it, and the intellect is how this is accomplished. Remaining content that we are the Absolute leaves us smack in the center of our ego. It enlists the idea of the Absolute in the ego's glorification, which is not only unseemly but potentially hazardous.

After establishing this, Nitya in *That Alone* 68 characterizes the role of the intellect:

No matter what the ego wants, the intellect is willing to help. When it is employed in simple problems with mundane work, after a few days it becomes nostalgic for the realm to which it really belongs: pure knowledge and higher wisdom. It turns that way, and as it turns it drags the ego along with it to this new world. From the hamburger world the ego turns to the world of the Supreme. Then it says, "This is so different from all that I knew previously." A kind of shame comes upon it. "My God, how could I ask this intellect, which is always with this wonderful light, this blissful knowledge, to do such mean things for me? Oh intellect, will you please tell me a little more about this world?"

The intellect assumes the role of a teacher. It says: "Thus far you have had a wrong identity. You are identifying yourself with the body and things like that."

"What is wrong with the body?" asks the ego.

You'll have to read the rest to find out. It includes the definitive explanation of the resolution of our duality in unity, from the Gurukula's perspective. A perspective, dare I say, that few even in

the Gurukula give proper credence to. Verse 68 is so fabulous (truly!) that I'll clip in some more:

You should take this as an invitation to intuitively keep yourself at a neutral zero in orientation. You are not asked to run away from home or commitments. You have a body, and until it drops away everything pertaining to it is relevant. The complaint here is about the lopsidedness that comes when you exaggerate the value of one side and become blind to the other, as is often the case. You should never be blind. When your bodily needs are to be met you should still be aware of your spiritual side. And when you are experiencing spiritual ecstasy or joy, don't forget you have a body and that many important laws pertain to it.

To have this fully balanced state is true wisdom. In this you do not give an exaggerated importance to your bodily comforts or your bodily pains. You don't exaggerate spiritual gains, nor do you negatively condemn the spirit as nonfactual or dreamy. This brings great peace to your mind. It is a peace that makes you efficient on both sides.

You know that some day the body will drop off, but until that time it is to be treated as an excellent instrument. It is magnificently equipped with both senses and a sensory interpretation system. When all is working harmoniously you have a healthy mind, a wonderful gift through which the great joy of the Absolute can be lived in a million ways and can be understood and appreciated in a million forms. (469)

Not bad, eh?

Nancy offered, "You can carry that with you. As you go about your interactions, you have that deeper sense of it being deconstructed." Jan agreed with both Bushra and Nancy: "If you watch a sunset it might be beautiful, but the Absolute is never 'out

there'. I have to go deep into my self and find the sunset within." I added that perception doesn't have to trip you up when treated intelligently (as everyone was recommending). It can be an aid to easing us into the neutral state. Depends on how you take it, which again involves the intellect.

Of course, just because the intellect takes center stage in this verse doesn't mean it is the only way to snuggle into the arms of the Absolute. Yet it is centrally important, and Narayana Guru is advocating its exercise in no uncertain terms. In honor of this, Bill reprised perhaps the most important sentence in the commentary: "A close scrutiny of the apparent reality of things restores all individuated objects to their primeval status as the Absolute." Anything less is half-baked thinking. Paul added the important consideration that it has to be a wholesale effort. This isn't about taking one thing apart and examining it to death, but seeing how the whole is based on a unified context, including a pulsation that expands from a singularity to full expression and back to a point, over and over. The point was called by Jung and others the pleroma. (Thanks to Wikipedia: According to Jung, pleroma is both "nothing and everything. It is quite fruitless to think about pleroma. Therein both thinking and being cease, since the eternal and infinite possess no qualities.")

Jan concluded by affirming that this philosophy includes evolution: it is not a static state but a living, open-ended exploration. In this it is worthwhile to examine our learning and see how we get disconnected from our inner ground. It is an active process, rather than an ignore-it-and-it-will-go-away one.

The infamous pot makes an appearance throughout the commentary. It reaches its peak near the end, in a statement about identity that amused Andy no end:

The seeing eye and the seen world are complementary aspects of a universal homogenous principle. This principle is looked

on by the Vedantins as unbroken, continuously flowing, primal consciousness....

Perception, according to Vedanta, is a temporary transference of the circumscription of the ego consciousness to become identified with the modulations of any unit which becomes an object of perception. So close is this identification of the knower with the known that it is not possible to say whether we manifest ourselves as a “pot-identity,” or whether the pot is formulating itself where we experience the I-identity. Thus perception in Vedanta is an indiscernible confection of the observer and the observed happening within the realm of the Absolute. It is an experience of an apparent duality within the ambit of the nondual Absolute. This is why the Guru says a close scrutiny of the apparent reality of things restores all individuated objects to their primeval status as the Absolute. When viewed from this standpoint, *maya* becomes irrelevant. (143-4)

So are we “pot” or “I”? In other words, are we the persona we have built, our many and variously prized characteristics, or are we a neutral basis on which the characteristics hang like a suit of clothes? Are we who we seem to be or not? Our social environment wants us to identify with our “potness,” our superficial characteristics. If we take the time to probe into these questions, *maya* becomes irrelevant. Nataraja Guru’s parenthetical idea that *maya* means relativity here, clarifies it nicely. We exist, pure and simple, and that trumps any of *maya*’s hierarchical considerations. Trying to escape or overcome *maya* is just another meaningless conundrum that humans amuse themselves with. Instead, we are urged to make the best of what we are capable of. Live life to the fullest! What that means exactly is for you to decide. What you come up with enriches us all.

Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary is the same classic Vedantic reduction that Nitya also presents:

To understand this let us examine the reality of a cloth. In the first place we can divide the cloth into its threads. When the threads have been taken out there is no cloth to be seen. Thus, we know that it is the threads that take the form of cloth, and the cloth (itself) has no reality. The reality of the cloth merely resides in the thread. If we proceed once again in the same manner to examine the thread we see that it gives place to cotton. Now we understand that it is cotton that appears like thread, and the reality of thread is not in the thread but in the cotton. If we further examine this cotton we find, it consists of atoms composed of the five elements. Now the reality is not even in the cotton, and (instead) it is in the atoms where reality resides. If we further examine these atoms by means of instruments, or even by the instrumentality of the mind, we find these atoms without being, given as objects for the instruments or even the mind which is subtler than the subtlest instrument, all perception hiding in a sort of darkness or ignorance, which is nescience. That is to say, nobody is able to know how all this originated. Now by this kind of enquiry, cloth, thread, cotton, elemental atoms and ignorance, we know that for all these there is only one reality and from cloth to atom everything is the effect of nescience. But even this nescience is capable of being abolished by knowledge or science. It is this aspect of knowledge that is attributed to the Lord. The absence of knowledge is what constitutes the stuff of ignorance. When knowledge operates nescience becomes abolished and with the help of such knowledge one is able to see the causal status in reality of each one of the items ranging from cloth to atom. Such awareness is a kind of ever present and lasting witness, having an ultimate status of its own.

Awareness itself is without further cause and is self-evident. All others have dependent causes, one behind the other. Therefore, it is knowledge alone that remains supreme and eternal. All other things are unreal.

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I suggested everyone tell us about an occasion when they had an immediate impression and then on deeper reflection their attitude changed. We do this all the time—the process elucidated by the gurus here is known to everyone, but we tend to employ it sporadically and half-heartedly. By taking note of its benefits, we might be inclined to ramp up our efforts. Do some reflection on this for your own benefit, and if you are brave, please share the gist with the rest of us. By putting together a number of different instances, we can make this crucial meditation more a factor in our lives.

Bushra boiled the question down to its essence: How do you do it? How do you arrive at the Absolute intellectually? That's a great invitation to us, because each of us embodies a unique method, and it's usually unconscious.

Nancy offered that everything we undertake is a process of interactions, and the processes have to be tuned toward something. Her example was in cooking, where she often finds herself with a diverse pile of ingredients and is able to put them together without any particular forethought to invent a delicious meal (I can attest to the truth of this!).

I think I've told this story before, but it is a good illustration. When I was around 5 years old my mother told me I was going to get a shot so I could enter school. Certain vaccinations were required, but all she said was a shot. I became terrified. For what must have been hours I was screaming and crying and utterly miserable. My mother stuffed me in the car, fighting her every step

of the way. I could already feel the pain of the needle. She carried me from the car into the doctor's office. I kept bawling as I was taken behind a closed door. Finally I stopped crying long enough to sob out to the nurse, "When are you going to do it?" "It's already done." I had never felt a thing. Even as a small child a creeping embarrassment rose up in me, and I could see that my fears had been totally unjustified. I had made a complete fool of myself. Without being able to put it in words, I knew I should not get carried away by imaginary fears, or, as my family would express it, make mountains out of molehills. I have never forgotten that day.

In the class I offered a couple of more general examples. As teenagers we were hypercritical of everyone who didn't closely resemble us and share our beliefs. Gradually some of us came to realize that our disdain was a projection of our own ignorance, and we began to accord others more respect. With each decrease in disdain, a more salutary image of the other took its place. In all sorts of ways we overcome our natural fear of the other by getting to know them. If we are afraid of different types of people, for instance, if we get to be friends with one we soon see the common humanity we share, and the strangeness is banished. On this level the verse is urging us to break such barriers and come together in amity.

If you give this a little time, I'm sure you can amuse us with a learning experience of your own.

Part III

Jean submitted a story of how our native intelligence can permeate the mind despite our mulish resistance:

My grandparents lived by the waters of Puget Sound. There was a dock nearby, and boats for rent. I was very young, and it was perhaps a first visit. I liked the beach, the shells, and the crabs

hiding under rocks. But when my mother rented a boat and insisted that I come along for a small excursion, I was filled with terror! I did not want to get into that little wooden boat! Though my mother was a primary school teacher, she showed no pedagogical finesse, just ordered and commanded me to get in that boat because there was "absolutely NOTHING to be afraid of!" I cried angry tears of fear, but there was no escaping the situation. We didn't go out very far. We just rocked a little on the waves near the dock. She started to show me the kelp, and how it stretched way down to the bottom. The jelly fish were pretty fascinating, too. I became quiet and tried not to show my grudging interest. We got back to the dock safely, too. The boat did not sink, and no one drowned. I have enjoyed boats and the water ever since.

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Susan also donated to the cause:

In thinking about the question, I came up with a few ideas of how the Absolute is revealed through everyday transformations and realizations. Of course there are so many examples — I feel as though I am constantly recalibrating my impressions, depending on the things I hear and the people I meet and the mistakes I make. This is a daily thing. But I like this one example from many years ago. I was driving down Beaverton Hillsdale Highway on my way to a store and there was one of those impatient drivers who cut in front of me. I hadn't yet gotten into the Zen of driving and so I honked nastily at this person and got very out of joint about the whole thing. Several blocks later that driver turned into the very parking lot where I was going and we ended up having to park next to each other. I looked over at her and she got out of her car and went into the store. There was no exchange between us but I was

suddenly thrown up on the shore of reality — this wasn't some faceless mechanical menace but another human being, just like me. I hadn't realized how swept up I'd gotten in my own little fantasy of righteousness. I really appreciated coming back to earth, though I felt ridiculous and ashamed. But that's another story. The point is that this episode helped me to be closer to the center of my being and the being of all. It was a way of taking away the facades, distractions, walls and seeing what was truly there.

I would say that going to class every week is a similar exercise. Not only do we go deep into meditation before and after our discussions (one way to reach and rest in the Absolute) but we also take apart a verse and its commentary, something like taking apart the cloth that is mentioned in the most recent verse of Darsanamala. Although, the Absolute is unnamable and not something the intellect can ultimately grasp, our grappling with this material helps us to get closer and closer to that cloud of unknowing because we are stripping away the conditionings and strong ego sense that often keep us from sinking into oneness. Being in that oneness does not necessarily mean that we are sitting in deep meditation all day but rather that as we are out in the world, we are more and more able to feel how connected we are to everyone and everything.

I second that rereading of Atmo Verse 68. Great stuff!

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Nitya submitted his own “response” of a sort: my proofing and Brihadaranyaka Upanishad study group included relevant comments made by him. First, from the Brihadaranayaka:

The entire phenomenal world of confusion and commotion (*samsara*) is generated by fire, the fire of life. Ajatasatru turns our attention to the very basis of all that, the Absolute, which is said to be non-modifying and functionless. This paradox lurking at the heart of the Absolute brings a contemplative to a neutral silence where pairs of opposites are cancelled out. (I.348)

In other words, the intelligent option is to *turn our attention to the Absolute*. Neutral silence does not normally appear as if by magic, it is achieved. Next, jumping ahead to the seventh darsana, verse 2, we find:

Earlier, when we were discussing the Vedantic concept of perception, we explained how pure consciousness becomes circumscribed and modified to assume definite forms of awareness. Such modification of consciousness is called *vritti*. According to Narayana Guru, *vritti* is the *upadhi* or condition we are discussing in this darsana. It is very important for us to know what these conditions are, how they arise, and how they constitute experiences of pain, pleasure, and indifference. The sole purpose of our present study is to release the mind from all painful conditioning and to lead it to its original state of pure unconditioned consciousness. (331-2)

Lastly, la crème de la crème, from That Alone, verse 21:

Often there arises a tendency for us to become self-critical if what we like is not liked by others. Yet if we are all human beings, there should be an underlying happiness regarding what we like. I like vegetarian dishes, and some of my friends like non-vegetarian dishes. So should I give up my vegetarian diet in deference to the others' non-vegetarian tastes for the sake of unity? Of course not.

We have to think more generically about what we like. Vegetarian food and non-vegetarian food are both essentially food. I love to have food, and my friends also love to have food. At this level we are not different. So I can go with my friends to a restaurant and I'll have what I like and they can have what they like. We are all partaking of food. Basically, our need is the same and our fulfillment is the same. The differences are only in the particular details. Of course, the differences are also important and can't be overlooked. When I am hungry and you are hungry, I cannot just say that as both of us are one, I will eat for you also. You have to take care of your side of the business.

We have to distinguish how we cater to the general happiness, and what implications it has in its particular aspects. A husband and wife may love each other very much. They live a unified life, but that does not mean that they do not have two toothbrushes. Having separate toothbrushes does not take away from their friendship in the least. When we shift our focus from particular objects back to the Self, we will stop getting so confused on this issue.

Four elements are involved from this perspective: the Self, the ego, objects and our interest in them. An interest usually comes between the ego and the object; actually it is the interest lying buried behind the ego that directs it to the objects. All this happens in the light of the Self. Unfortunately, the light is the part we completely forget. It is in this light of the existence of the Self that we derive the idea of the existence of the object. It is from the knowledge of the Self that we derive the notion of what we know. And it is from the value of the Self that we derive the enjoyability of the object. These three basic facts we forget when we are concerned only with the objects themselves.

Even after we learn this wisdom, when we go out in the world our life is again governed by preferences. 'My' comes instead of 'our'. "He is my friend, my Guru. I have a right to

protect my friend.” “No, no. He is *my* friend; he is my Guru. I see it like this.” Then they fight. The combat is in the ego field. From there if you can get into the spirit field it is very wide; there is enough room for everything. When Alice wanted to join the tea party, all the animals said, “No room! No room!” Alice was indignant. “There is plenty of room. Why do you say there is no room?”

There *is* plenty of room. You don't have to fight and say that because that person is there you don't have any space now. Your space is not taken away by anyone. The space you occupy is always there for you, and the space occupied by the other is there for them. The Absolute is big enough to include everything and everyone. (153-4)