

VII Jnana Darsana, Consciousness and its Modifications

Verse 8

On going near the object to be ascertained and recognizing, “this is the form of the animal whose marks have been heard of”—that by which such knowledge comes is analogy.

6/12/7

Analogy and inference go hand in hand. Both overlay a static picture onto reality, useful enough for identification and transaction when accurate, but a block to coming alive spiritually nonetheless. Yet since the Absolute is indescribable, in communication all we can do is offer analogies to it. Narayana Guru is a perfect example of someone who was fully realized, who was also painfully aware of how impossible it was to share it verbally, and yet who felt a powerful call to help his fellow humans trade in their ignorance for more synergistic sentiments like kindness and compassion. Much of his teaching was by example, as when he invited two “untouchable” boys to sit on the dais with him at a large festival where their group had been segregated. Speakers had been arguing about it all evening. The Guru didn’t argue, he acted, simply and directly, in accord with absolutist principles. His only comment was “They are God’s children as much as the others,” and shed silent tears of compassion. The crowd was left to adjust to the new paradigm as best it could. At the same time, Narayana Guru went very far in his teachings with analogies of various stripes, including metaphors and similes.

As Nitya reminds us, phrases like “children of God” and “the kingdom of God” are metaphors. Even words, including ‘God’, are metaphors for what they indicate. What Narayana Guru is trying to say here in a few words is that we begin our search for truth with the metaphors of words, and seek to bring those metaphors to life in practice, thereby converting analogies into a unitive presence or experience. Such a simple verse bursts with implications in every direction, providing a rich subject for class discussion. Analogy is a form of comparison. Nitya says:

Comparison is the most familiar form of logic which we consciously or unconsciously adopt, as much in science as in poetry. As a matter of fact, the entire theme of our conscious life is a continuous deciphering of the immediate present with the aid of antecedent marks of an analogous previous experience. In other words one’s whole life is a continuing series of metaphors and similes. (359)

Once again, the very least we can do is define ourselves by healthy and workable metaphors and similes. Preliminary spiritual effort is directed to upgrading the unhelpful and damaging beliefs we have accumulated in the unexamined portion of our life. Beyond that, we intend to find a way to step outside of analogy completely, if only temporarily.

The Jnana Darsana is placed between the Karma and Bhakti Darsanas because that is where the transition from duality to unity occurs. In karma, action, duality is necessary and appropriate. In bhakti, conjunction with Light, duality must be discarded for the conjunction to be possible. Jnana, intelligence, provides the bridge, and like a bridge there is two-way traffic between the opposite banks. At times we act in the dual world and at times we concenter in unitive contemplation. As we go farther, action and contemplation are brought together in Yoga, until each

complements and infuses the other. Lastly, we merge progressively into the Source in the Nirvana Darsana.

Each person has to find their own level in this continuum. It is good to have a complete picture, but it is unlikely that we all want to zoom up to the very last verse and then consider our task accomplished. Narayana Guru's own comfort level was around X, 5. Many of us will be content to hang around somewhere in the seventh, eighth or ninth chapters. We should keep in mind that this is not a linear program. It is a series of visions, which are more spherical or flowerlike. I'm sure everyone noticed right away that linear thinking is an analogy, as is spherical or multidimensional thinking, in which we are comparing thought to a mathematical line or a geometrical solid. Useful analogies, but all the same often unnoticed as such, and usually under-appreciated because of being taken for granted.

What we *believe* to be true is precisely what keeps us from seeing the truth. In a simile, we at least retain some cognizance that we are making a comparison: our thought is *like* a straight line, for example. We go a little farther off the deep end when we move to metaphor and baldly claim that thought is linear. Linear thought. At this point we stop looking for the similarity in the comparison and act as if we aren't making a comparison at all. The cliché becomes accepted as a substitute for what it describes.

Much of the class was focused on how we take much for granted because of such logical failures, and this can lead to perilous conditions. When we go along with the fads of popular mythology or propaganda, we become vulnerable to manipulation. I trust this has been adequately addressed in past notes. Another issue also arose, regarding judgment. Judging is often scorned, but is it not another form of comparison? As such, some types of judgment are best avoided, while other types are very important to spiritual development.

The higher judgment is also called discrimination. We compare what we are confronted with to our well thought out standards and values, in order to decide if a thing is true or worthy of our engagement. Ganesha's nose symbolizes this primary spiritual ability. We "sniff out" falsehood. Otherwise we can be led very far astray, accidentally or on purpose. Anyone who has raised a teenager or been one themselves has probably observed how the wildest claims are instantly accepted as gospel, while well reasoned, tried and true, commonsense values are rejected with vehemence. Probably it is teenage "wisdom" that rejects judging, because it fights to be free at all costs. Unfortunately there are costs, and there is much to be said for taking them into account. The point being that we should view comparisons positively as well as negatively. As Nitya says, they are of extreme importance to the seeker of truth.

Negative judgment is perhaps more familiar to us. It is a way for the mind to stay closed against all better information. At its worst it is used to hurl calumny on others, up to and including subjecting them to genocide or murder. The class had some urges to move into the exciting agitation of complaining about all the faults of others who judge harshly, usually in the name of some god. But Deb and Anita brought us back to a focus on ourselves. We cannot cure the world, but we can cure ourselves. In fact, the world may well be as screwed up as it is because of all the people trying to fix it.

This put Adam in mind of his uncle, who used to say, "If everyone believed the way I do, we would live in a utopia." Adam knew even as a child that it would be a nightmare world instead. He thought, that's exactly what we *don't* want. People take a simplistic model and want to expand it to everything. When the Absolute creates the result is harmonious and complex, rich and diverse. Why is it we have urges to play God and assume the role of creator, for which we are so poorly qualified?

All that aside, we need to be clean and expert about how we assess our comparative analysis of the world in which we find ourselves. The analogy that comes to mind is a fellow named Harry Truman who lived in the shadow of the active volcano Mt. St. Helens. He was an old geezer who had spent his life there, and the damn mountain had never erupted before! When earthquakes and tremors began to increase in the core of the volcano, scientists urged him to evacuate. Well, he knew that scientists were just damn fools. He had eighty years of data in his memory in which the mountain had not erupted, and none in which it had. There was the mountain, and here were his memory banks. He judged he could stay. Soon after, when the mountain erupted spectacularly, it was unlikely that even two molecules of his being were in contact with each other for more than a couple of seconds.

We don't often pay quite such a price for failure to correctly assess conditions, but sometimes we do. Sometimes a small price is more than we wanted to pay, too. So it behooves us to stay awake and alert, and consider many factors. As John said admiringly, this is really practical stuff!

To free ourselves of hurtful judgments and to put this all in perspective, I read the following advice before we sat quietly in stillness to close the class:

Verses on the Faith Mind

by Chien-chih Seng-ts'an, The 3rd Zen Patriarch, 606 A.D.

The Great Way is not difficult
for those who have no preferences.

When love and hate are both absent
everything becomes clear and undisguised.
Make the smallest distinction, however,
and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart.

If you wish to see the truth
then hold no opinions for or against anything.
To set up what you like against what you dislike
is the disease of the mind.

When the deep meaning of things is not understood
the mind's essential peace is disturbed to no avail.

The Way is perfect like vast space
where nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess.
Indeed, it is due to our choosing to accept or reject
that we do not see the true nature of things.
Be serene in the oneness of things
and such erroneous views will disappear by themselves.

When you try to stop activity to achieve passivity
your very effort fills you with activity.
As long as you remain in one extreme or the other,
you will never know Oneness.

Part II

Regarding the highly germane question of how to relate to aggressive fundamentalists who have successfully co-opted the political sphere, I encountered the following paragraph from Nitya's Gurukula guidelines of December 1973, found in Love and Blessings:

Let one weigh in one's mind the worthwhileness of whatever religion has come to have a hold on one by birth or proselytization, and discover for oneself the tentacles of fear and superstition that have imprisoned one's spirit and alienated one's understanding from the rich legacy of the

spiritual and cultural heritage of humankind. Let one spare no effort to break away from the folly of being riveted to the compulsive illusions of fanaticism. Let the flames of truth demolish all walls of separatism and kindle the light of understanding and sweet reasonableness. Let one's compassion for all strengthen the solidarity of all and enhance the dignity of humankind... [and] let one value the freedom of one's spirit above all. (402-3)

The paradox has always been a dilemma for children of peace: how far can we tolerate people who are not only intolerant but hostile and dangerous? The initial urge is often to oppose them head on, but then you wind up exemplifying the same qualities you intended to oppose. This is precisely the conundrum in which Arjuna found himself at the outset of the Bhagavad Gita. Ordinary options are fight or flight. We are to turn to a third choice, a yogic or dialectic synthesis of the polarity, here expressed as "Let the flames of truth demolish all walls of separatism and kindle the light of understanding and sweet reasonableness." This could serve as a vivid translation of Gandhi's satyagraha, for now our finest success story for wisdom in action on a grand scale.

Additionally, as Anita reminded us the other night, we shouldn't presume everyone is our enemy based on generalizations. We should look at the other side and see our brethren standing there, with our same motivations and desires. More than half the problem is between our own ears. We should at least do away with the made up part so we can address the real issues more honestly. Ultimately, the wise person knows to do what is possible, to teach and demonstrate peace, and is prepared to retreat to the periphery when the public sphere goes mad, as it regularly does. For this we have to stay awake and alive to the enveloping situation, and not pretend that we live in a fairytale.

* * *

8/29/17

Jnana Darsana verse 8

On going near the object to be ascertained
and recognizing, “this is the form of the animal
whose marks have been heard of” – that by which
such knowledge comes is analogy.

Nataraja Guru’s translation:

*On going near to an object to be ascertained
What, in the form of "this is the animal known by such marks,"
Is the functional basis for certitude,
Is (said to be) analogical awareness.*

In the lead-up to Gurupuja, three venerable friends joined a full contingent of the regulars. We were boosted by Peters M & O and Michael B. For the record, regulars these days (in order of length of service) are: Deb and Scott (began hosting the class in our home in summer 1978), Bill and Nancy (early 1980s), Andy (late 1980s), Moni (2000), Susan (2001), Jan (2004), Paul (2005), Bushra and Karen (2015), Naguib (2016). Quite a family!

Because the commentary is so short, and due to the surprising reference to the venerable Zen story “The Taming of the Bull,” I added a short chapter called The Wonder of the Guru from *In the Stream of Consciousness*, where Nitya mentions the story and then is asked about it and spins a somewhat extended version in the Reaction and Review of the chapter. In those days (and for most of the rest of his days) he was eagerly being asked questions great and small, so several of his books (in English, notably *Stream of Consciousness* and his Gita) feature lots of disciple questions and

preceptor responses. I have tacked the relevant section into Part II, and highly recommend reading the whole chapter, which is classic Nitya expounding on a few key points of his wise and loving philosophy.

Briefly, in the Taming of the Bull, a person hears about a special creature—a wild bull—living in the deep forest. He goes in search, and soon finds some footprints, which he follows. They lead him to a creature, and he compares the marks he has been told about with what he has come upon. Eureka, it is the same! He captures the bull and rides it home. When he goes to show it to his fellow villagers, there is no bull there, nor is there any seeker. Nitya adds a few flourishes, but that's the gist. He would certainly have been familiar with the famous version retold in Paul Reps' *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*. You can read it here:

http://www.zenguide.com/zenmedia/books/chapters.cfm?t=10_bulls

Deb recognized the analogical character of the bull story, saying that when we follow footprints, we go from what we know to an unknown place of greater knowledge. Going from a domestic bull to a wild one is having an idea or theory made alive, a concept vivified. It's not simply learning more stuff, accumulating more knowledge. And then when it all disappears it erases the schism between what we know and have, and the new.

Deb shared a nice example of what that kind of realization means in practice. Some years back, at the Center Family hippie commune that Nitya often visited, there were once two Swamis along with us, Swami Baskaranya from Singapore and another fellow from the Fiji Gurukula. The latter was utterly out of his comfort zone and quite miserable, while Baskaranya was wholly relaxed. Wherever he went it was like he was in his personal living room. In the identical situation, one man was very ill at ease and trying to hold on to the forms he knew, the other had confidence that whatever came along was just more of heaven, and he was

eager to check it out. Both attitudes are of course equally available to us anytime, but there is a world of difference in their effect. Freedom and openness are attainments, by no means our default states, at least as adults.

I noted that the bull is captured through a struggle, as it initially appears quite threatening, and in Nitya's words we have to take it by the horns. Paul also noted a subtlety of Nitya's version, where the bull is tied to a tree on the seeker's return. Doesn't this show how we denature the wild world and domesticate it, thus in a way killing it? It would certainly fit with Nitya's attitude and the point of his commentary. The Zen version only has the bull led by a rope, not tied, but it is the same idea. If you read the Reps version you will also note the East Asian tone as compared to Nitya's Indian one. There the wild bull is conquered and tamed—its freedom is not the issue. Stanza 5 reads:

The whip and rope are necessary,
Else he might stray off down some dusty road.
Being well trained, he becomes naturally gentle.
Then, unfettered, he obeys his master.

Very un-Indian, eh? At least in our interpretation. While there is something to be said for this domineering approach, most people in our part of the world are overly restrained already, so such strictness might be unduly inhibiting. Regardless, the Gurukula version is that humans are in essence “naturally gentle,” and it's the whips and ropes that make us vicious. Our job is to reduce their impact on our psyche.

While we often take analogies as reducing reality to a domesticated version of the wild, Bushra suggested that analogies can also lead us to be more open. She gave the example of the word *household* in Bedouin culture, where it means those who eat together. Whoever you are eating with is part of your household.

So the analogy leads you to be more inclusive, at least when you are directed to invite the stranger in for your dinner. It could just as easily go the other way, if you excluded dinner guests so they didn't become part of your household. But Bushra is right that how we frame these ideas makes a huge difference.

In Part II you can read about a similar reframing program that Susan has lately undertaken, in her own words. It's very encouraging, very important. This is not armchair philosophy. Deb also mentioned how Chinese poetry has many shades of meaning because each word or character (letter) conveys shades of meaning depending on its pronunciation. And Andy spoke in visual terms, how a geometrical image like a circle can have many meanings. We cannot say this or that is what a circle means, yet there are circles everywhere demonstrating certain truths of relationship. It is a reverberating image with many meanings. Analogies at their best don't limit us in any way, they give us fresh opportunities.

Peter O summed it up as, in our spiritual search from the known to the unknown, analogies can erect contours and limitations on who we think we are. I agreed that our interpretations of our experience should not diminish the meaningfulness of what we are doing, rather they should enhance it. Vedanta is excellent at offering expansive readings of our actions, while taking due cognizance of the ideas that shut us down. We are aiming at feeling fully alive, and our exuberance is the very definition of meaning. Along with what Andy said, meaning isn't definable, not something that should be canned for resale. It comes when we are able to experience the present and include past ideations only to the extent they enhance our aliveness.

Nitya addresses the central role of analogy in everyone's life, as it is the context from out of which we are to reconnect with direct experience. Direct experience is not analogical. Afterwards, we draw our analogies to affix meaning and permanence to what

otherwise would be a pure, unfettered flow. Both are crucial aspects of our lives, but all too often immediate experience is buried in limiting analogies that keep ananda at bay. Nitya first adroitly reminds us of our dependence on interpretations:

Comparison is the most familiar form of logic which we consciously or unconsciously adopt, as much in science as in poetry. As a matter of fact, the entire theme of our conscious life is a continuous deciphering of the immediate present with the aid of antecedent marks of an analogous previous experience. In other words one's whole life is a continuing series of metaphors and similes. (359)

Spiritual frameworks are meant to replace constricting beliefs with liberating ones, and Vedanta is particularly astute in doing so. Nonetheless it is important to remember that we are all operating in the same way; we are all limited by the same needs and modes of thinking. Nitya always reined his students in from believing themselves superior to others. He could see how people in every walk of life thought that their way was the best, and looked down on those who did not share their style. The divisions this emphasized were unnecessary and could even become tragic. Narayana Guru does not take sides, but unites all factions by minimizing the differences and generalizing the ways we all think alike. Everyone uses analogies. Nitya writes:

To make a point clear even common folk give examples. All the elaborate performances of experiments in the scientists' laboratories are nothing but the proof of a postulated hypothesis through the arrangement of an analogous experiment with which the hypothesis can be compared. The poet makes full use of the technique of comparison by devising many metaphors which are simple or intriguing, direct or suggested. (359-60)

“Becoming spiritual” does not entail turning off our analyzing feature, but according it its rightful place in the total context. In case we imagine we are above analysis, Nitya simply avers, “Inference by analogy or comparison is of extreme importance to a seeker of Self-knowledge.”

One really important point here is how an analogy is a kind of hypothesis that is confirmed by experimental (living) proof. This dichotomy delineates the continuum between the a priori supposition and the a posteriori confirmation. Most people grow to live primarily in a world of suppositions, with very little confirmation except by other people’s suppositions, making it a house of cards. In Darsanamala study we are aiming to move to another arena entirely, basing our decisions on a confirmed or realized basis. Nitya gently prods us in this direction, saying:

The marks to be ascertained, whether for recognizing the wild bull or one’s true Self, are held before one’s discerning eye and take the form of an *a priori* notion. An experiment conducted by a scientist is to experience the proof of the assumed hypothesis. In spiritual life also the proof stands squarely on experiment. Then alone does *a priori* knowledge become ascertained with *a posteriori* conviction. (360)

We often take experiment to mean playing around with gizmos and trying to demonstrate an idea, but I’m quite sure that to Nitya the connection between experiment and experience was very important. The words even look alike. We experiment with ways of living and record how they work. So it is more direct than its Western version, which is more of an abstraction than a realization. Bill clarified it by saying we experiment with our ideas and analyze them, asking how does it feel? And that is our experience.

In the Stream of Consciousness has a reference to mirroring that will mainly be covered in Part II, and Deb read out a poem of William Stafford called *Your Life*, where the subject flows into a mirror at the end, but Peter M closed the class with a lovely thought stream of his own on the topic. He quietly put forth that flowing into the mirror occurs when he sinks into silence. Gurus use words, but they mainly use silence. Like a deep ocean, pure consciousness is mirrorlike. Around Guru Nitya, Peter always felt a profound undercurrent of silence, even when he was conversing or working, and he had to learn to admit that silence into himself. If we know at the beginning the guru principle of silence, even if words are used, we can see how those words emerge from silence. There is guru and disciple, seer and scene, and the coming to be at home in oneself. To return to the radiance of our own equanimity, we can use silence as a steadying force. Aum in deed.

Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary:

A man who has not seen a certain rare animal on being told about it by another who has seen it or on reading about it in a book, when he keeps his mind on the specific characteristic (of the rare animal), i.e. keeping in his mind certain analogous traits between the unseen rare animal and some other familiar animal, if he should then go to the forest where such a rare animal has its habitat and then sees it, he gets a functional form of awareness as indicated by the sentence. "This is the animal having the marks I have heard about." This kind of awareness resulting under such a circumstance is awareness by analogy.

The word *meya* means the object to which something is compared. It (i.e. *meya*) refers to the object which is the referent for the analogy. When we say, *gavayam* is what resembles a cow,

the latter is the referent analogy while the former is a referring abstraction made from the actual cow. We have to understand here that in all cases where the mind operates from the object of analogy to that which it refers, is the awareness to be distinguished as awareness by analogy.

* * *

Here's the retelling of *The Taming of the Bull* from *In the Stream of Consciousness*, including the excerpt from the chapter The Wonder of the Guru that brought it up:

Finding one's guru should not be confused with the commonplace event of entering into a contract with a fellow member of your society. The only test and final proof that you have found your guru is life becoming meaningful to you, because what is happening is not at all outside you. The man or woman "out there" is only a mirror of the occasion of your birth.

When a child is born, the placenta is thrown away. Nobody mounts it on a frame and says, "This is the most benign placenta from which I got the child." What is important is the emergence of your true Self. You are That, and your Guru is also That. Everything else is to be treated as incidental. This idea is well expressed in the Zen story of "The Taming of the Bull."

Reaction and Review - # 3

Question: Can you tell us the story of "The Taming of the Bull"?

Response: The idea of canceling out the seeker and the sought in the seen is typical of Zen philosophy. In "The Taming of the Bull" a man hears of a spectacular bull living deep in the jungle. He goes in search of it. After beating the bush for a long time he notices

some footprints. Carefully examining the prints, he infers “There must be some animal around here that makes these kinds of marks.” He follows the footprints deeper and deeper into the jungle. Soon he sees some movement in the foliage, and knows that his quarry is getting closer. Creeping in that direction, he comes upon the rear end of the bull. He thinks, “At last, I have found it!” To have a better look he circles around to the front. To his horror, the bull suddenly charges at him. He realizes his search will cost him his life, so he takes the bull by horns. It’s a long and desperate fight, but the bull is ultimately conquered and the man climbs on its back. After another long journey, he finally succeeds in bringing the bull home and tying it to a tree. He is so proud to show off his prize to those in his village. Then he takes a good look at the bull. There’s nothing there. There is no bull, nor is there anyone who brought the bull.

* * *

Susan has agreed to share the letter she wrote me the other day, as it amplifies what she said in class about reframing her self-image. Self-image is after all just an analogy. Some analogies are liberating and some are constraining. Her idea is that she fears letting go of her familiar constraints because they once were very necessary, but now they are not. Letting go of our samskaras can certainly feel like dying, or in her case losing her mind, but it is in fact a very positive, freeing process, one that is aided and abetted by the simple reframing Susan has permitted herself with the encouragement of her doctor, functioning here as a kind of guru. She writes:

I’m in the midst of another breakthrough epiphany and this one seems significant. As you know, I keep worrying about myself as a bear of little brain and less and less brain. As a matter of

fact, I've talked to Dr. Trafficante at length because I'm sure I need neurological testing, But he is quite insistent that I wouldn't be so articulate about my problems if I were really declining. He says I wouldn't come into his office and be able to give a detailed list of the reasons why I think I am losing my mind. He was very convincing but I still went away from my appointment last week (a followup to the first) with a feeling that something wasn't being addressed. I felt more reassured but still concerned.

Then in the last few days, a thought has arisen. My brain has always worked in a way that is frustrating. I am not articulate like my brother or like you, I cannot hold the floor in any situation and talk about something with precision and nuance. I have always been more of a listener and encourager. I have always had trouble taking things in and I get confused about the facts in things I hear and read. This has always been true and it has always bothered me. I have also, for as long as I can remember, been hyper vigilant about everything going on around me — noticing all details, projecting wildly about possibilities, worrying, feeling the need to control situations.

So if you take all that past way of thinking — confused, deliberate, doubting, controlling, stressed — as my normal and then you start to realize that this is not normal. Then I am fighting against a change in my psyche, brain, stress that is meant to maintain all the ways my brain has worked for my whole life. Does that make sense? In other words, it is possible that the ways in which I find my brain different are actually something good happening. Perhaps I am letting go of some of the stress and hyper vigilance and it just seems as though I'm losing my mind. Perhaps losing the mind that I have always had is a better thing. I always thought that I wanted to get back

to that very precise ability I had to remember details but maybe that was not serving me well after all. Maybe it was just making me more stressed.

The bottom line is maybe I don't have to fight so hard to get back what is lost. In fighting for what is lost I lose sight of all I am gaining. What am I gaining? I'm not completely sure yet — it's very hard to fathom what is happening. I do feel more at peace for sure and maybe that's a good place to start.

This all goes back to the idea that there were ways of coping when I was a child that are no longer useful now. If those ways of coping are starting to fall away, how would I recognize a new way? What would it all look like? I would have a whole new orientation to myself in a way. I would feel different. I think I need to allow that possibility. I am fighting it I think instead of allowing it. I need to remember what we talk about all the time in class, that I am already there. I need to open to what is there. I am releasing the ropes that are binding me.

* * *

Several ideas from *In the Stream of Consciousness* were discussed in class, but I've included them in Part II since they aren't directly connected to the verse. Nitya gives away a lot of the game in two short sentences:

Realization may be the final end of life, but finding one's own roots is an immediate necessity. This happens only when you are reborn.

Peter O added that the roots are buried deep in silence.

Most intriguingly, Nitya distinguishes the guru-disciple relationship from the normal person-to-person version:

Finding one's guru should not be confused with the commonplace event of entering into a contract with a fellow member of your society. The only test and final proof that you have found your guru is life becoming meaningful to you, because what is happening is not at all outside you. The man or woman "out there" is only a mirror of the occasion of your birth.

Jan wondered about the idea of the guru as mirror, which is a whole class subject in itself. She wanted to know how a guru works as a mirror to bring forth our true self. A worthy question! We talked about the neutrality of a guru, how they don't bring their own agenda to a relationship, and in this way are able to reflect the agenda and idiosyncrasies of the disciple back to them. What you see in a guru is what you want and ideally need. That's the basis of the idea of chastity for the guru: purity to allow for pure reflections. If two people have divergent agendas, it produces a spectrum of interactions, with varying degrees of success accorded to each. It may well spawn endless conflicts in the long run. And for that matter, two people with no agenda at all might as well not be in a relationship. But if one is neutral and the other has a program, with all its loose ends and half-baked notions, then much work can be accomplished. This sets the guru-disciple relationship apart from the typical one where both participants are striving to optimize their half of the pie. No matter what, Nitya describes the urge in each of us to evolve:

The need to know and the imperativeness to be arise from the very depth of man's soul. They will go on tormenting him until he finds his roots, discovers his path, and is assured of his goal.

Lastly (at last!) Vedanta makes much of the idea of *sphota*, the way words burst into meaning in our mind. When you think about it—which we normally don’t—it’s another everyday miracle. An idea is thrown to us, and we receive it with a blast of recognition. Wow. What could a species put together if that didn’t happen? While we have dealt with it before, in writing about the Wonder of the Guru chapter, Nitya mentions it:

Every time a word is signaled by a script to the eye or articulated as a sound in the ear, it bursts into meaning like a bombshell in consciousness. In Sanskrit this explosion into meaning is called *sphota*. Nothing bursts in you with a more terrific blast than the word “guru.”

After class, Peter O. shared an epiphany he’d just had that the word *epiphany* was the English word that most closely matched *sphota*, to which there is no true English equivalent: both indicate the revelation (or explosion) of meaning. In *sphota* it comes from the impact of words; in epiphany the meaning is similar but more intuitive or contemplative. We might say the former comes from without and the latter from within. After a couple of religious references, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary’s third definition, part a, is what Peter was talking about: (1): a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something (2): an intuitive grasp of reality through something (such as an event) usually simple and striking (3): an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure.

Happy epiphanies to all!

Part III

The heart of an analogy is an a priori revelation through word-wisdom. When a Master or Guru opens up a great secret to a disciple, on his side is a belief that what he has attained is attainable by others. He sees the one Self in himself and in all which is the source of all knowledge and which lends its light in the form of reason in order for us to comprehend. He puts his trust in that Self. He sees his unity with others via the link of the Self, and thinks, "Because of this homogeneity, what I have experienced I can reveal to others, and they will understand it. They may also even get the same experience." (That Alone, verse 75)

* * *

Michael B sent a link to the bull story without Reps' commentary, a nice, clean version:

Here's a link to the version of the 10 Bulls that I've typically resourced, from Paul Reps 'Zen Flesh, Zen Bones'

<http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/ox.html>

I thought it might worthwhile for belated follow-up to last week's class.