

IX Yoga Darsana, Transpersonal Union

Introduction

10/2/7

Nitya subtitles this Darsana “Transpersonal Union.” We have an urge to unite with what we see or visualize as outside of us. This is symbolically described in ancient tales like one in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, where the original single soul splits into two halves, named male and female, and then the male aspect pursues the female all over the place trying and occasionally succeeding to mate with it. The blissful sense of wholeness is only restored when both halves are rejoined. This copulative event is known as yoga.

What prevents and blocks a consistent union with the other is referred to here as intrapersonal discord. Instead of opening up and pursuing our interests, we lurk behind a thick shell of defenses and lament our losses. Eventually the lamentation becomes a semi-adequate substitute for love. We take consolation in feeling sorry for ourself, and resist emerging from our womb of sorrow.

Of course, what we’ve been studying for these two years of Darsanamala classes is how to come out of the closet, so to speak. We have been throwing off our entanglements one by one and gaining the courage to step out into the light as ourselves. Slowly but steadily we have dared to bask in the brilliance we are increasingly aware of on all sides. From Bhakti Darsana on we are on a steady trajectory toward union with the ‘other’ in more sublime and vaster guises.

Nitya counsels us here in his introduction that there is a challenging period for us just at the moment we begin to break free of our chains. Doing so does not automatically bring enlightenment to the people we encounter—they are still embroiled in their own intrapersonal disharmony. We become especially sensitive to others at this transition stage, and we have to strengthen our connection with the unified state before we can safely interact with people who may well project their own problems onto us and insist they are our problems.

A friend related a dream recently that bears on this. She was on a ship cruising through serene waters, when she was overtaken by a storm. Down in the depths of the ocean there were many beautiful creatures, including a rich blue abalone under its gray shell. People were harassing and destroying the creatures, and my friend cried out for them to leave them alone.

Our inner beauty is like these exquisite deep-sea beings, screened off from harsh exposure to greedy and thoughtless invaders. We cannot share or even experience their beauty properly until the attackers are repulsed. There is a real paradox here: the value of our inner wonders is unitive but they have to be protected from harsh reality and so duality is inevitable. Our spiritual development may be said to be the progress we make in protecting these “natural resources” so they can be allowed to live and breathe, overcoming our initial reaction to sequester them out of sight. Thus, what could be a sudden, wholesale transformation becomes a gradual process of expanding one’s comfort zone to engulf more and more of the other.

As the love of this bhakti becomes increasingly global, the point source of the self merges into the ocean of the Self. One of the lines that has stayed with me ever since editing this book back in the 1980s is “When this happens in an enormous and continuous manner...” Nothing petty in this. It’s a very powerful transformation. The full paragraph is highly revealing:

When the ‘other’ is not merely another person but the collective Self to which the individual self also belongs, and one treats the universal Self as the ‘other’, otherness is not a bar to union because the personal self serves as the nucleus of the universal Self. In this case one may feel like saying “I am the Absolute,” or one may feel enveloped by the universal to the extent that one can easily turn to the ‘other’ and say, “That thou art.” When this happens in an enormous and continuous manner, the differentiating quality of the individual becomes more and more flushed with the universality of fundamental existence, subsistence, and value, and then one is no longer tyrannized with the congenital idiosyncrasies of the person concerned. (396)

There is an intentional ambivalence in “the person concerned.” Nitya has been speaking of the difficulties of relating to another person, but I think he also had in mind one’s own idiosyncrasies, which lose their grip in a parallel release of dominance. And tyranny is the right word. Where we should be free, the ghosts of our vasanas and samskaras step in to pervert our interactions and warp our perceptions. They have it their way—actually, they have US their way. This notion embodies the central Vedantic belief that our faults are only fully cured by bathing in the ocean of the Absolute. We can tinker with them forever, but they shape-shift into new forms, keeping just out of reach. At some point we have to let go of them and turn squarely to the light, which of course is a simultaneous occurrence and not a cause-and-effect scenario. Chapter II of the Gita puts this truth poetically:

59) Even the residual relish reverts on the One Beyond being sighted.

And the same elaborated:

64) But he whose Self is subdued, whose attachment and aversion are both within the sway of the Self, although his senses still move amidst sense-interests, he wends toward a state of spiritual clarity.

65) By spiritual clarity there takes place the effacement for him of all sufferings, and for one whose spirit has become lucid, very soon reason becomes properly founded.

Nitya speaks of this as an all-out purification in which “one falls in love with the only love there is.” The state of delight should be our normal condition as we live our lives, and will be examined closely in the upcoming verse.

The class spent a lot of time on what might seem a contradiction but really isn't: depression. We came to be very aware that a lot of spiritual jargon is a false front, projecting a cloud of make-believe that only fools some of the people some of the time. We want to become grounded in a courageous honesty that sees things as they are and dares to admit that we aren't saints but “human merely beings,” (Cummings) with all flaws typical of such creatures. In that way we can make real progress and not make-believe progress.

Many class members talked about their serious struggles with depression. As has been mentioned before, everyone gets depressed. It's a normal and natural state of human beings as we cycle endlessly up and down, and it is one of the most important incentives to seek truth for enabling release from our suffering. Only in the last few decades has it become viewed as a terrifying disease to be squelched at all costs. Not coincidentally, the drug companies that make billions of dollars peddling pills of dubious efficacy are the prime purveyors of that viewpoint. If depression

“unmans” us, then we should find a way back to who we are, and each person will have a unique struggle that is their personal spiritual quest. The sight of the One Beyond, the all-absorbing interest uniquely tailored to our own value vision, lifts us out of all depression and even out of recession.

Susan shared that she has had chronic depression, but that the more she studies the Gurukula philosophy the less debilitating the episodes have become. This is as gratifying as can be, by the way. The Gurukula isn't an assembly line to produce enlightened seers who sweep the globe like an army of Buddhas or Muhammads or Jesuses, just a place for restoring and reinforcing simple sanity. What you make of it afterwards is your own affair. We're just regular folk, a bunch a chronic outsiders huddled together on the banks of a mighty river, sharing the little we have.

Jan also felt she has had significant improvements in how she felt about her life from her studies, and looks forward to more. Moni mentioned standing at the bus stop with people looking lost and forlorn and thinking how sad it was that they hadn't been exposed to such a wonderful and heartening philosophy. How truly lucky we are! And yet, being human, we sometimes doubt whether anything has any value, even (or especially) the wisdom of the ages.

Deb told us how when she was in Australia with Nitya in 1971, someone said to her, “Oh, aren't you blessed to be travelling with a saint!” Deb became furious. Probably she didn't say but only thought, “If he's a saint I don't want to have anything to do with him! He's just a human being, like the rest of us.” A similar tragic error is made when Jesus is imagined to be a deity instead of a human. If he is human we have hope of becoming like him; if he is not, then we have no hope. We are nothing but sinners.

A letter Nitya wrote to Ananda should have found its way into Love and Blessings but didn't. I will keep submitting it to the Gurukulam editor until it finds its way into print, but for now it

languishes on my computer and in the rarity, Nitya's *Love Letters of a Sannyasin*. It concludes with the same idea:

A strong chinaware is made of a proper blend of white granite grains and pure china clay. The goodness in me is my china clay and the absurdities are my granite grains. Do not wash away all my grains; then I won't hold any water. My Guru once said, "Do not attempt to wash away all the lather of soap, because the more you wash, the more it lathers." I may become divine by transforming into a Buddha or a Christ. My humble prayer to God is to give me a few more births from the earth as a human being, with the virtues and vices of that species. I hope he'll listen.

* * *

1/9/18

Yoga Darsana Introduction

At last we're back to our weekly probe into the mysteries of the psyche. It seems like ages since we finished the Bhakti Darsana, a mere month ago. All right, let's go!

One way of looking at the overall structure of Darsanamala is that the first half opens with the inception of existence and grows into the full spectrum of what that implies. Duality is fully recognized, even as it springs inextricably from an original unity. In the second half there is a gradual closing of the gap between subject and object. The Yoga Darsana very nearly completes the process insofar as individual effort is concerned, and then the last, the Nirvana Darsana, celebrates the panoply of unified states, arriving at the end to "seeming" nonexistence once again.

Remember the opening line of the very first verse? "In the beginning it was as if non-existence." By the end we will return to

that “as if” of nonexistence. Existence and nonexistence are both “as ifs,” apparent contradistinctive states floating on the substratum of the Absolute. Appearances. Like maya, if you will. In yoga we are actively reducing those types of duality to a minimum, contemplating all the ways they are intimately related and working to maintain balance. How could you possibly have one without the other? Doesn’t work that way. Yet humanity often carries on as if half of the picture is the whole business, and that leads to all kinds of absurdities. By this point in Darsanamala we have been properly instructed on how and why to continually bring in the full purport of every situation.

The majority of spiritual programs conceive of the inner realm as an escape from the chaos of the outer world. In Advaita Vedanta, by contrast, the inner and outer are both included, and brought into a state of harmonious balance. This is an incredibly important feature. There is nothing escapist here. One side in ignorance of the other is a recipe for failure. We are allowed to consider inner and outer separately for purposes of clarification, but never to imagine they are somehow unconnected. They are two aspects of a single reality.

Nitya opens his introduction to the Yoga Darsana with a veiled exhortation to “make it real,” to make the philosophy connect directly with our life:

Yoga or union suggests the joining of two things. Even though in philosophy the mind/body duality is well known, the schism implied in that situation is appreciated only as a semantic problem and not as one substantially experienced at the levels of feeling and willing (emotion and volition).

This is not an academic exercise! It goes right to the heart of our behavior in relation to our environment, including other people. Our dissatisfaction over general ideas is something we can take or

leave according to our temperament. Our internal disquiet about our state of mind is a more pressing matter, as it affects our ability to cope with said environment. In other words, our mental state colors our experience, and needs to be stabilized before we can hope to have a beneficial influence on the course of our life. Nitya suggests that we feel the pinch of duality most vividly when in one-on-one situations:

The real problem stems from the disharmony which arises between two hearts or two minds, and the incompatibility that is grievously felt in that union of two bodies. The answer to such a primary problem comes from the harmony that ensues from the quality of interpersonal union.

To the uninstructed, interpersonal conflict is obviously due to the stupidity of the other person. Wisdom science demonstrates that it is our own partial awareness that is imposed on our relationships, and once this is accepted the high road to resolution in amity is open to us. Nitya nails this in one sentence: “The root cause of interpersonal disunity lies in intrapersonal discord.” The discord is within us. Sure the other person has their own discordance, but focusing on that is the way to eternal conflict. We have to heal ourselves first.

While restoring our wholeness usually does have a healing effect on our world, we shouldn't expect it to automatically cure the other. If we are ever adequately healed, we then confront a different type of challenge:

This problem does not end even when the person makes themselves whole and psychologically solid to interact with others, because anyone with whom such a person wants to relate cannot be expected to be free from their own intrapersonal heterogeneity.

Conflicts at this stage are opportunities to let go of our unreasonable expectations and selfish desires. We're moving toward the kind of relationship a guru has with a disciple, where the pivot is not individual needs but universal values:

The sole aim of centering one's I-consciousness around the nucleus of a universal value such as love, compassion, justice or truth is to effect an inner cohesion and unity at the intrapersonal level.

In other words, only when we move from a selfish orientation to one based on a universal shared value does union become a possibility. When we stabilize on a ground of selflessness, the doors open wide to the unified state many of us like to call love. It's Love with a capital L, inclusive of the other. The other can be an abstraction, like God or the Divine Mother, but when it includes the outer as a living presence, there is someone involved who can give us fine-tuned feedback and guidance, and this is of inestimable importance:

A great alchemy that can interrelate two persons through the process of fusing their interests in identical values comes from the conflagration of love in which two such individuals are gracefully brought together by the Divine or by Benevolent Chance.

If we are no longer an isolated "doer" we can begin to appreciate how the so-called randomness of life brings opportunities for supreme love to gestate. Although Chance is making everything happen, we still do have a role in energizing our participation. We could picture it as Chance arranging the horizontal elements to support our vertical development, and our conscious role is to

foster those elements that are most conducive to this, while eliminating those that aren't.

In Part II I've added several crucial excerpts from Nataraja Guru's *Integrated Science of the Absolute* relating to the Yoga Darsana. The most important of all of them is his understanding of Patanjali's famous definition, *citta vritti nirodha*: "Yoga is the restraint of mental modifications." Nataraja Guru, along with a Vyasa who commented on the Yoga Sutras in the distant past, maintains that this refers to the horizontal aspect only, that vertical aspirations are not to be restrained:

This is only a partial definition. We see that, when it is taken literally, it suggests a complete inertness or inactivity.... Vertical activities should not be restrained but must be allowed to rise progressively to higher and higher levels of attainment of the Absolute.

There is a longer excerpt addressing this in Part II, and all of those I've included are extremely helpful to dealing with the present darsana.

Nitya expresses a lovely example of vertical aspiration as "preparedness to live in amity," and the class made much of this brilliant stroke. First off, here's the full quote:

Love is universally experienced as a process in which an effort of union is made through conscious aspiration and an effortless union is happening by Providential Grace. In the present chapter yoga is said to be such a beautiful incidence, in which the knowledge of togetherness – of being one and identical – is beautifully complemented by the preparedness to live in amity.

Deb thought this was a perfect definition of yoga. Here again we have the apparent duality of effort and effortlessness being brought

very close together—synthesized if you will—bringing about a state of transcendent love or bliss. Undergirding all this effort is the awareness of a ground of oneness. Oneness is something we all intuitively remember from our seemingly almost infinite time in the womb. We were incepted in oneness and stayed within it until we suddenly emerged into a world filled with otherness. There is an element in everyone that longs to be restored to that blissful unity, and it is a healthy longing if it motivates us to grow.

There is an interesting place where Nitya draws a parallel between the Freudian conception of the mind and the Vedantic:

In Indian schools the function of the id is assigned to *vasanas*, the ego is *ahamkara*, and the place of the superego is assigned to *dharma*. As dharma is morally and spiritually identified with righteousness (at least in India), the appetite of the id-like *vasanas* is decried as a psychological menace to be effaced. This process is generally recognized as the cultivation of detachment and the repetitive practice of moralizing tendencies so that one's habitual choices will be in agreement with what is rated as one's integrity in dharma (righteousness).

Nitya might have said more about this idea, because the *vasanas* include both our beneficial and retrograde tendencies, and it is the role of the ego to sort these out. The ego is the mediator of duality, with the power to either exacerbate it or minimize it. A blanket condemnation of the ego can pit a person against themselves, a truly harmful posture or *asana*. *Vasanas* are very like our genetic makeup, the source of our greatness as well as our shortcomings. Dharma at its best is also considered a natural innate faculty rather than any outside set of rules to live by, which is what Freud accorded to the superego: the internalizing of the moral strictures of the society and its caregivers.

Paul brought up the suppression of vasanas by the ego. He rightly thought that Freud's scheme was meant to be inclusive of the three aspects of the mind working in concert, and not to set up a hierarchy. He thought the ego should become more transparent, intentionally limiting itself and its role. Unfortunately, much of our social and religious training (residing in us as the superego) leads us to struggle to hide our negative impulses, which as Deb pointed out drives them underground and at the same time strongly energizes them. Then they re-emerge in all sorts of insidious ways, like the proverbial politicians in sheep's clothing. (We're working to rehabilitate the honor of wolves here.)

A much healthier way to dispense with negative vasanas is to carefully watch them as they bubble up to the surface, acknowledge them, and then laugh about them or bring in a countervailing tendency. Without support—or repression—they will wither on the vine.

It's amazing how many American terrorists are described by those who knew them before their explosive outburst as quiet, unassuming, good people. We are experts at hiding our ugly vasanas, but not so good at diffusing them. No one is taught how to handle them. It's an ongoing tragedy, where either the self or the other will someday pay a large price.

Again, many religious systems advocate the suppression of our positive tendencies along with the negative, relinquishing personal motivation to a remote external power. An imaginary power to boot. The Narayana Gurukula does not—or should not—support anything of the kind. Narayana Guru taught the restoration of human dignity, not its abnegation. He supported people doing what they felt called to do by their best internal impulses, and the result speaks for itself.

Nitya touches on contemplating the Great Dicta of Vedanta as a salve for the troubled soul, as a means to achieve the transpersonal union he is advocating:

When the 'other' is not merely another person but the collective Self to which the individual self also belongs, and one treats the universal Self as the 'other', otherness is not a bar to union because the personal self serves as the nucleus of the universal Self. In this case one may feel like saying "I am the Absolute," or one may feel enveloped by the universal to the extent that one can easily turn to the other and say, "That thou art."

The secret is staying with it:

When this happens in an enormous and continuous manner, the differentiating quality of the individual becomes more and more flushed with the universality of fundamental existence, subsistence, and value, and then one is no longer tyrannized by the congenital idiosyncrasies of the person concerned.

The Yoga Darsana makes a passing reference to an arcane yoga practice in its ninth verse, which Nataraja Guru suggests is meant to implicitly include all other such practices. Purification through various acts is so popular in India, and now elsewhere, that it bears a mention even here where it is not considered particularly useful. Nitya follows suit in his introduction:

Such an all-out purification, which can ultimately result in the effacing of the 'self' and the 'other', may have to include even physical exercises such as controlling breath and regulating synergic centers. Even in such practices, what matters is not the mechanical adaptability of a certain technique but its worthwhileness in touching at the fountain source of the one bliss to which all forms of happiness belong.

Synergic centers are Nitya's term for chakras. He always downplayed specific practices as largely beside the point, if not fuel for egoism. The only excuse is if the vertical goal remains as the lodestar, beckoning us to seek out the fountain source of bliss and not get distracted by wishful thinking. He elaborates:

In other words, one falls in love with the only love that is, whereby one's existentiality and subsistentality can both become the structural and functional dynamic of ananda, which is at once the ground of the personal self and the universal Self.

In the interest of making this sentence somewhat more sensible, this means that the actuality of our life and the understanding we use to support it are aimed at the highest vertical value of universal oneness. Our vertical goal is what gives our life meaning, making it worthwhile and enjoyable. Anything less than the highest tends to drift off into horizontal side-tracks.

Jan resonated with this as something she is not only working on diligently these days, but is finding it opening up into rewarding possibilities. She can see how some vasanas are leading her toward the fountain source and others away from it. She hasn't yet found one that grabs her totally, but she is testing out some of them to see how they feel, especially as she has an inclination to be extraordinary. Or to realize her extraordinariness. This is a very healthy process at a changeover moment in life. Rigid religions always try to specify certain lifestyles, and these may satisfy those doomed to be followers, but Narayana Guru's teachings leave the door open to individual predilections. Each thoughtful and open person is the best judge of what works for them. All we are trying to do in our classes is support healthy and meaningful choices. The final determination is up to each individual.

Moni agreed that yoga meant the harmonious union of the Absolute and the individual self. It isn't about the deletion of

individuality but its empowerment, and every moment affords us an opportunity to put this into practice.

Paul gave a nice analogy from a movie he saw recently, “*Victoria and Abdul*.” In it, a rug maker wove a bird into the design that was seen by Queen Victoria. The bird was symbolic of freedom, yet it only existed because of being woven into the confines of the rug. Its value speaks to us through its shape, in other words. It spoke to Paul about how our perceptions and conditioning have constrained us to be dependent on the weaving of laws, society, expectations, and so on. The scene, which is quoted in Part II, shows how certain conditions are inevitable to our expressions. Erase everything and you have no bird, no rug, no concept even of freedom. We will touch such a state at the end of the final darsana, but it’s not necessarily anything we would aspire for. Why work to erase yourself when that will arrive unbidden soon enough?

This led to a discussion of imprinting, which is also displaced to Part II. Imprinting of birds was a way scientists were made aware of how confining our conditioning really is. If we don’t know we are bound, we won’t even bother making efforts to liberate ourselves. The success of our conditioning lies in how natural it feels after a few years of humiliating constraints.

Nitya ends with the unification of the two main streams of yoga, call them thought and action or word and deed, in relation to the above citation of saccidananda:

The insight of that togetherness is evidenced in *jnana yoga*, and its functional veracity is vouchsafed by *karma yoga*. In yoga there is no duality. The seeming duality of *jnana* and *karma* is accepted only for the convenience of describing what is otherwise indescribable.

We closed with a brief meditation on the vertical essence to which we intend to direct our efforts, while ignoring any stray horizontal thoughts that obtruded. The final chant always leaves us with a loving sense of togetherness, tinged with forgiveness for the misery which so many foist on others in hopes that it will miraculously bring about surcease of sorrow. The only real cure passes through unity, yet this remains a persecuted secret in much of our planet. Thankfully, the secret is safe with us. Aum.

Part II

I have finally caught up with our class in my proofreading of Nataraja Guru's *Integrated Science of the Absolute*, so my quotes from there will be more timely. Here's what's gone into the Highlights doc so far about the Yoga Darsana, which Nataraja Guru titles Meditation:

It is the union of the Self and the non-Self that brings happiness.
(ISOA Vol. II, 350)

Yoga has often become a branch of sterile speculation because the items are not easily referable to their corresponding experienced counterparts. (350-1)

Yoga as a central value given to the vision of an absolutist contemplative is capable of being viewed from different angles or points of view. Even the most traditionally recognized definition of yoga, found in the second verse of the Yoga Sutras, which is considered the basic book for the elaboration of all ideas on yoga, states that yoga consists of restraint of the activities of the mind. This is only a partial definition. We see that, when it is taken literally, it suggests a complete inertness or inactivity. It is with a view to amend and modify such a possible initial interpretation of

this definition that Vyasa's commentary indicates which of the two sets of items are to be subjected to complete restraint and which are still to be given some kind of free play. (362)

Vertical activity is not so objectionable as horizontal activities based on sensuous interests in ordinary life. Vertical activities should not be restrained but must be allowed to rise progressively to higher and higher levels of attainment of the Absolute. In other words, restraint should not be mechanistically conceived, but must be fitted organically and in a more living fashion within the alternating process taking place within the fourfold structural possibilities within the scope of which the life of a yogi has necessarily to live and move. Yoga as a contemplative discipline is oriented towards the goal of a general happiness for the Self, but when the Self is oriented to wrong horizontal values it gets caught in suffering instead of progressing on the line of ultimate happiness. (362)

The reciprocity, complementarity, compensation and cancellability of counterparts have to be kept together in mind before their dynamism as a whole can be visualized correctly as intended by this way of life, which always implies a high and perfect vision of the Absolute. This is always to be kept in view at every stage of the discipline, whether referring to particular items of continued practice as in *pranayama* (regulation of vital tendencies), or in the contemplation of *Isvara* (the Lord). Brute processes as a denominator must always have a numerator consisting of a high aim of intense contemplation of the Absolute, recommended as centered in the *pranava* (the mystic syllable AUM̐), which is the target in the middle of the eyebrows to be reached by an arrow shot from a bow imagined to be situated at a lower level of the mind. Thus there are two ambivalent disciplines, one referring to the level of instinctive dispositions which have to be progressively

purified by long practice and the other depending upon the cultivation of correct and higher contemplative attitudes referring to the highest value called the Absolute and named by the syllable AUM. (362-3)

As long as the *vasanas* (incipient memory factors) persist in any individual case of a yogi, his efforts to purify them have to be incessantly and willfully maintained. When by a double negation the yogi has risen higher, he always correctly keeps his verticalized orientation leading to the higher goal. The importance of discipline then recedes into the background. It is only when the *vasanas* (incipient memory factors) have been sufficiently purified that any kind of respectable yoga may be imagined as taking place between such a purified mind and its own reasoning self (*cidatma*) as its positive counterpart. Any respectable yoga has to treat these two counterparts as having a homogeneity of epistemological status between them, without which true yoga cannot take place at all. (363)

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Thanks to Paul, here's the quote from the movie "*Victoria and Abdul*."

- Abdul Karim: This is a very nice one (handmade rug), for example. Very, very tight knots. The art of carpets, uh, came to India from Persia with the great Emperor Akbar. The s-skill of a carpet is to bring all the different kinds of threads together and weave something we can all stand on.
- Queen Victoria: You seem to know a great deal about it.
- Abdul Karim: My family were carpet makers, but now I write in the book. Life is like a carpet. We weave in and out to make a pattern.

- Queen Victoria: That is a very beautiful image.
- Abdul Karim: Look. Here is the bird of freedom, caught forever in the design.
- Queen Victoria: So, in India, you are a poet?
- Abdul Karim: No. In India, I make a ledger of the prisoners.
- Abdul Karim: Abdul. Abdul Karim.
- Queen Victoria: We are all prisoners, Mr. Karim.

* * *

Speaking of psychedelics and their role in realization, I recently encountered two excerpts from Jay Stevens' *Storming Heaven*, the second of which I talked about in class. First there was this about Aldous Huxley's last thoughts before his death in 1963:

Psychedelics had made Huxley, in some quarters, an object of ridicule, what with his cheerful espousal of mysticism and drugs, and his rather schoolmarmish pep talks about human potentials. *Island*, while enthralling members of the psychedelic movement, had received lukewarm or negative reviews elsewhere. As Sybil Bedford, Huxley's biographer, observed: "To a number of his readers [*Island*] with its happiness and kindness and good sense was immensely moving.... To a great many others, and this must be faced, the book was a boring tale of preachy goody-goodies." Having fun with fungi, was the way one reviewer dismissed the book. And in *Playboy*, [his last interview] Huxley responded: "Which is better... to have Fun with Fungi or to have Idiocy with Ideology, to have Wars because of Words, to have Tomorrow's Misdeeds out of Yesterday's Miscreeds?"

In a world of "explosive population increase, of headlong technological advance and of militant nationalism," *Homo sapiens* had to discover, and very soon, "new energy sources for overcoming our society's psychological inertia." Mankind could no

longer afford the luxury of a Bronze Age psyche in a world of hydrogen bombs. What was needed, Huxley wrote, was a specialized course in education:

On the verbal level an education in the nature and limitations, the uses and abuses of language; on the wordless level an education in mental silence and pure receptivity; and finally, through the use of harmless psychedelics, a course of chemically triggered experiences or ecstasies—these, I believe, will provide all the sources of mental energy, all the solvents of conceptual sludge, that an individual requires... if the number of such individuals is sufficiently great, if their quality is sufficiently high, they may be able to pass from indiscriminating acceptance of their culture to discriminating change and reform. Is this a hopefully utopian dream? Experiment can give us the answer, for the dream is pragmatic; the utopian hypotheses can be tested empirically. And in these oppressive times a little hope is surely no unwelcome visitant. (206-7)

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Then this about imprinting:

Momentarily free from the political and professional disputes that have drained so much of his energy during the past eighteen months, Leary returns to his old love, behavior change, and to his old problem: how to explain, in scientific terms, the mechanism that allows psychedelics to change behavior. Convinced psychology offers few fruitful avenues, he begins exploring the latest discoveries in genetics, quantum physics, and biology, and eventually zeroes in on ethologist Konrad Lorenz's theory of imprinting. Lorenz happened to be present one day when some goose eggs hatched in an incubator. Consequently he was the first

large thing the goslings saw after pecking their way out of the eggshells. To his utter astonishment they reacted by treating him as their mother. The attachment was irreversible: Lorenz's goslings would have nothing to do with other geese. It was as though, in those first moments of consciousness, the mind had taken a snapshot of reality—"a sudden, shutterlike fixing of the nervous system" was the way Leary described it—that was inalterable:

Once taken, the picture then determines the scope and type of subsequent "lawful learning." Imprinting, a biochemical event, sets up the chessboard upon which slow, step by step conditioning takes place.

Aldous Huxley had theorized that psychedelics temporarily disrupted the mind's reducing valves, thereby allowing information that was usually screened out to flow freely into consciousness; Leary was now proposing that these same drugs momentarily neutralized those primary biochemical imprints, those deep behavior patterns, those metagames. But as every psychedelic therapist knew, the open cortex lasted only so long before the patient started to slide back into old behavior patterns, before the imprints reasserted themselves.

But was this inevitable?

Leary doesn't think so. (210-11)

Part III

We also talked about stilling the mind, and how fMRI reveals that the mind is always active even in the deepest meditation, although different parts come into play. These are perhaps those that relate to our "vertical" aspect, while the more superficially apparent relate to the horizontal and can be turned off with intent. Along these lines (or not) Mike sent a response:

The experience that is manifesting in this realm of existential probing has brought me to contemplate on the oneness of union in all of its expressions so that there is no inner or outer and no subject and object.

To silence the mind is a fiction.

There is no mind and in fact only words, thoughts, and imaginations prevail in a completely virtual reality that is never sustainable. This virtual reality I call ego-mind has no validity once pure consciousness has been revealed as an indescribable presence that cannot be captured within a space/time frame of reference.

In the presence of Nitya, all mental modulations melted away effortlessly leaving only the union of oneness.

Every moment and every experience is an opportunity to let go of personal identities and transcend without effort revealing the silent, indescribable presence of the Absolute.

In this, the ego attachments and vasanic imprinting is absorbed into the supreme Absolute, thus complete union is recognized as that which is already present at all times.

I feel so weird discussing this which only removes me from that which is pure, natural, and indescribable.

Not even sure if these expressions have any validity intellectually.

Aum...