

IX Yoga Darsana, Transpersonal Union

Verse Two

Where the seer, the sight and the seen are not known, there the heart should be joined while vasana is present. Such is yoga—thus the yoga knower.

10/15/7

We talked a lot about what this heart is that is so glibly spoken of far and wide. Obviously heart is one of those many words that has come almost intact from the Sanskrit, where it is *hrt*, pronounced hreet, more or less. Nitya says it is an ancient metaphor for the right side of the bicameral brain, while ‘mind’ refers to the left side, in the predominance of humans at least. ‘Right and left brain’ is not nearly as poetic as heart and mind, so he advises we retain it. Either way, he seems to be making a division where ego is situated in the heart and intellect is located in the mind. The heart can ideally be pure, but it can also be tainted with a selfish orientation.

In his Malayalam language masterpiece, *One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction*, Narayana Guru begins with a focus on the *Karu* or Core. For Darsanamala he was enjoined to universalize his teachings, and so translated the terms to Sanskrit. Hrt is Sanskrit for karu. In double checking the dictionary to make sure karu isn’t one of the many words common to Malayalam and Sanskrit (which it isn’t), I noticed the similarity with karuna, compassion. Malayalam being an invented language that drew heavily on

Sanskrit, there is likely a connection that was made between the heart and compassion even long ago.

Now on to the mysteries of the verse.

When we fall out of touch with our true nature and no longer know who we really are, we feel compelled to create a tempest in a teapot to seemingly ratify our existence. We imagine that as long as we are actively seeing things and identifying them, it proves we exist. The form this hardened type of desperation takes is called the ego. It is a shadowy creation of projected images, and its very tenuousness makes us even more fearful of its dissolution. This is each of our personal versions of “I think, therefore I am.” Vedantins say, “If you see what is to be seen, you temporarily imagine you exist as the seer.”

As seekers of truth we have hopefully come to know ourselves as much deeper beings than that kind of projected existence. Having established a rapport and trust in the greater context, we can step outside of the house of mirrors for a time. When we transact we have to be seers of the scene, but we can also bathe in our core at times. As Deb put it, we are refreshed and rebalanced by those dips in the pool of the Self. A few people may not ever want to come out, but most of us do. We have lots of excellent vasanas we are still eager to foster, lots to offer our friends and our world.

Vasanas, incipient memories, have gotten a bad rap. Yes, we should stand clear of them when we can, but they are both good and bad, both flowers and weeds. We can pull the weeds to promote the flowers, providing inspiration to all who pass by. But we need to remember that all our best urges, including the ones that lead us to seek wisdom, to sacrifice for the greater good, and to nurture our fellow beings, also come from vasanas. These are the flowers we might want to leave in the well-tended ground of our being. Narayana Guru consciously retained a bit of his vasana. There is a quote from him about this in the Introduction, taken

from his *Subrahmanya Kirtanam*, which is beautiful to read many times over. I'll tuck it into Part II.

It will help to realize that vasanas are now called genes. The rishis in ancient times didn't know about genes, but they studied how people worked so closely that they could see their effects, so they postulated vasanas. Genes may well be a late stage in whatever process creates the shape of beings, but they are as far as we've yet uncovered with modern scientific investigations. Anyway, vasanas are either expressed through genes or are the genes themselves. So who ever claims they have to get rid of their genetic makeup? It is very much who and what we are. We can wish all day long, but we are not going to turn into birds and fly up in the sky, or be able to dive into the ocean like a fish and breathe water. So please, think of vasanas as your genetic inheritance or your innate talents, and not as some affliction to be cured of. When the gurus ask us to stand above them, or even metaphorically speak of roasting their seeds so they won't sprout, we have to be sure we understand what they mean. Wisdom is the fire that roasts the seeds. Vasanas operate at a very deep level, and can easily carry us away with them. We need to bring our enlightened intelligence to bear on our actions so that their upsurging energies are directed into healthy channels, and are neither suppressed or magnified.

One in a million may want to try to do away with all genetic motivations to be able to exist in complete and utter freedom, but the vast majority are more interested in harmonizing their lives to bring joy to themselves and others, provisionally accepting the shape that naturally surrounds them. Again, this is something that should be appropriate to a person's dharma.

In this verse, Narayana Guru advises us to work on reforming the ego with yoga. What he means is that right in the midst of the dance of the vasanas we are to step out of our habitual framework and go into our core. This will strip away all the excess baggage that we cloak our "God given" urges and abilities in, all that stuff

that Nitya describes as intrigues in which the ego and intellect, heart and mind, collude. Heretofore we have hitched them together in the service of all our petty desires fostered by ignorance, and now we want to redirect them to more noble ends. But we don't have to wait until the urges are quieted and conquered to know peace. Yoga takes us directly to the realm of stillness, and the chaotic noise rolls away into the distance. Nitya says:

An aspirant yogi has to become vigilant in stopping this unhealthy alliance between ego and intellect, which are bent on aiding incipient memories. This is achieved by making the light of pure spirit prevail upon heart with a discipline that constantly diffuses the ego's craving for power, glory and pleasure. Until this is accomplished, yoga is not achieved. When the heart has known the undisturbed depth of the silent spirit, yoga is achieved. (404)

We concluded the class with a brief excursion into the stillness of the pacified heart. There is much more to learn about this, and we will be hearing of it in the coming weeks.

Part II

I guess we haven't discussed vasanas adequately yet. The other night as I settled into a hot bath I got a real good feel for one aspect that may help give a clearer picture.

Imagine you are your vasanas. You pack a billion years or more of accumulated power in potential seed form. After a long and possibly frightening or uncertain transition, you have regained a new body. How wonderful to have another opportunity to strut your stuff! What you want to do requires real existence. But—waaah!—you have to begin the game as a baby that basically can't do much of anything. Patience, patience. Soon you will be doing a

few things, each of which is supremely ecstatic and satisfying. Much more to come. The possibilities are endless! Your energy is virtually infinite!

But before you can even get to your best and most coveted activities, the people around you start to curtail what you want to do. Mostly this is done without offering any alternative: just stop that! You become confused. You came here to play with everybody, and they don't want to play. They are very serious, and would rather you weren't even there. Of course, they can't curtail everything, so there are still moments of bliss. Then one day they take you to school.

Slowly and carefully your little package of vasanas is taught to suppress all its urges, creative or destructive, and substitute a long-term learning program designed to convert it into a cog in the wheel of the motor-carriage of society. The central tenet is how to put those urges on hold until later, which is the same as forever. They always have to be put off. But they don't go away, so they are first hidden from others. After a while they even disappear from your awareness.

But they have not lost their true character as very, very potent urges continually seeking expression. If they can't get out they are going to throw tantrum after tantrum until they shatter their container. Their keeper has to be ever vigilant to guard against their surfacing in public, which can turn into an anxiety neurosis and eventually a psychosis if the steam is not let off. Which is the key to staying sane. Crude urges are never going to be acceptable, but if they are sublimated into creative outlets they can become extremely beautiful means of expression.

Too bad you aren't going to be taught anything about how to handle your vasanas, but even mentioning them is sinful. We pretend they don't exist, that good little children don't have them, only bad ones do. Double and redouble that attitude and you are fit to become an adult.

Adults spend much of their free time medicating themselves so they can accept the misery of having their talents squelched. screens, shopping, drugs, busywork, can fill a lifetime and almost eradicate the suspicion that something is seriously amiss. After all, that's what everyone else is doing, so it must be okay.

Pretending we've laid all our ghosts to rest is psychic castration. But no matter what we do, underneath the surface calm all that energy is boiling and fretting and fuming. Oh, that long and painful struggle to become human, with the greatest potential for expression in the known universe, and then to discover all the doors are locked shut! Wait until you get to heaven, or your next life, to do what you want, to have fun. Not here. Not now. No way. Never.

When depression, or worse, settles on your soul like a dark blanket, you are hearing the rage and frustration of stifled vasanas. They will do anything, even drive you insane, to try to force you to DO SOMETHING! This cannot be papered over. Our modern world, with its endless rules, prohibitions, lack of privacy, armed guards everywhere, and all the rest, is dedicated to crushing all our genetic potency, levering it into the procrustean bed constructed by the most domineering minds among us. No wonder the incidence of mental illness is skyrocketing. Well, we can quell that with some stupefying or tranquilizing pills.

What we should be doing instead is expressing our abilities and—yes—desires and interests, and grappling with them with the full measure of our wisdom and intelligence. We can be honest with ourself and with others, and tolerant of variety. That would make for a very fulfilling life. So go out and promote one of your favorite vasanas today!

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Verses 11 and 12 of Narayana Guru's *Subrahmanya Kirtanam*, in a free English translation by Guru Nitya, presents a similar idea to my rant in his gentle, compassionate style:

All discernible forms disappear where light is not paired with shadows, and all imaginations cease where beatitude reigns supreme. Such is the resplendence of your supreme state. It is as if your brilliance has swallowed the sun and the moon. Your lotus feet rest in the brilliant fire of the wisdom of the third eye. Oh Lord, reposed on the colorful wings of the phenomenal peacock, my supplication to you is not to disappear.

The moon has gone beyond the horizon. With it also have gone the fantasizing dreams of the night. The sun has risen in the firmament. The moon and the shimmering stars are no more to be seen. It is a good time to immerse deeply into the depth of beatitude. Alas! That does not befit the occasion. It is not the time to be lost in spiritual absorption. Look, here is the world drowning in the dark ocean of misery. In body and mind millions are diseased. By drinking they have increased their torpor. These unfortunate wretches are to be roused from their drunken madness. Oh ye people, wake up now! It is time for you to enter into the cleansing river of eternal wisdom and perennial joy.

Part III

Oh my God! Proofreading Nitya's commentary on verse 32 of *Atmopadesa Satakam* (That Alone) for the next issue of the magazine, I discovered a passage exactly parallel to what we have been talking about in the *Yoga Darsana*. For those unfortunates without their own copy, I'll tack it on here:

The other day we saw how we can affiliate ourselves with body consciousness and the social ego. These two affiliations can cause many modes of thinking and judgment within us. What we call our meditation is no meditation at all. It is only certain body postures; it is being self-conscious about many of our physical aspects such as breathing, sitting in a certain way, or imagining a certain part of the body. We think that directing the mind inward means actually looking inward at such and such a place, which is essentially an action. Thus we are doing an exercise, not meditating. Sankara asked, "Why do you call it meditation? It is fun. It is some physical exercise. At best it is a psychological exercise. Even so, it has nothing to do with the Self."

Real meditation is not very easy. First you must drop from your mind all the names that you know, including your own. Drop not only the names of persons and things but also names of ideas, such as compassion, patience or whatever. I don't believe you've given up all names, but let us tentatively suppose you no longer know any nomenclature. Nomenclature means a label which you give with a sound or an oral or written sign.

Now drop from your mind all memories of forms. You should now not be able to say "Deborah" or recall a form which conforms to Deborah. Forget the distinction of past, present and future. Efface your location, such as Hall Street House, Portland. Next throw away all directions: north, south, east, west, and above and below.

When I ask you to give something up, you suddenly think of just that. It was not previously in your mind. You poor people are not thinking of your breathing at all until I say to forget it. Breathing is an action. Along with breathing, give up the whole world of action, any kind of movement. Now cancel away the duality of cause and effect. Forget that you are capable of knowing, feeling, breathing. Erase the distinction between 'I' and 'the other'. Make the usage of 'I' totally meaningless. In short, all the injunctions I have been giving you are not to do anything, but to do away with everything. You are not asked to

think, but not to think. You are not asked to recall, but not to remember; not asked to win, but not to win.

Suppose we have achieved such a state, even though we clearly have not. It is evident that even in this ideal state there will be a presentation of consciousness. You can do away with virtually everything, but still a residual space and duration will remain for your awareness to exist. It is an irremediable impenetrability.

Kant says this has a categorical nature, a persistence that is unavoidable and universal. He argues two necessary conditions to go along with the quality of a priori judgment. One is universality, and the other is that it is imperative, categorically imperative. Sankara quotes the Upanishads, which say that to meditate should not be taken as an injunction. If you take it as an injunction you are merely thinking of a bodily function. How can knowledge be, other than by being knowledge? This is apprehended through what is called meditation.

The two qualities which Kant mentioned--the imperativeness of knowledge which is luminous through its own nature, and the universality which operates in and through all forms of manifestation all the time—roughly correspond to the images used by Narayana Guru throughout this work. At the core of all is the *karu*, or the manifesting yolk which is shining both inside and outside as the supernal sun shining in the firmament of consciousness; as the one light that enables you to think your many thoughts, wake and sleep, eat and mate; as the one which is sitting as a witness beneath the tree of manifestation; as the one identity when two people say “I”; as the one ocean which floods and fills the vast desert of our lives, turning every grain of sand into a pearl of priceless worth.

All through our study we have been seeing this one light which is us. But as soon as we act, we miss it. We pollute it with our sensations, with our body consciousness, with names and forms, time and space, cause and effect. In fact it is the most spontaneous thing, happening without any effort on your part to sit cross-legged, to concentrate on your heartbeat, or to breathe in a way that tortures your nostrils. It is

always there by itself. You don't have to do anything. Yet it is the most difficult thing to know because you are already caught in the grip of the competitive world where body, mind and senses are focused on values which are extraneous to your own Self. To reclaim yourself from that feverishness, to bring you back to the pure, spontaneous happiness within: that is the only reason you have to sit cross-legged, turn inward or regulate your breath. It is all so you won't run into the marketplace again and again and hit your head against things which have no value for you.

First you imagine a certain necessity. It begins to haunt you. It comes like a devil and catches you. Then you get caught in the frenzy of it. Karma is waiting for someone to say there is a necessity, then it pounces upon them..

Not being caught up in action is not an excuse to be lazy. Please try to understand what the Guru is saying here. It is almost impossible, since for at least the last one hundred years in European universities the poor minds of every man and woman have been put on the anvil of conformity and beaten into the shape of the empirical religion. This verse looks so simple, so innocent, but in a way it makes all the difference. So at least for a fraction of a minute, enjoy the great freedom of your own Self by throwing out all this garbage called name and form, cause and effect, obligation and society.

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1/23/18

Yoga Darsana verse 2

Where the seer, the sight and the seen
Are not known, there the heart
Should be joined while *vasana* is present.
Such is yoga – thus the yoga knower.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*Where, the seer, the sight and the seen
Are not present, there the heart
Should be joined as long as incipient memory factors (are
present);
Such is Yoga, (says) the knower of yoga.*

Coping with vasanas is a key element of yoga—we might even call it *the* key element—and the class did a masterful job of scrutinizing the most important instructions woven into Nitya's commentary. Vasanas are famously resistive of transformation. They do not readily respond to mere thinking or willing. Rather they have to be “defunded,” with the energy they demand being redirected to better purposes.

In review, the difference between the two forms of conditioning, samskaras and vasanas, is that the former are memories from the present life and the latter come from previous lives. In other words, vasanas are our genetic dispositions, a concept from thousands of years before the advent of microscopes and consequent gene theory, but remarkably similar in practical terms. It hardly matters what we label our conditioning, since both types participate in shaping our actions all the time. Our genetic propensities are clothed in present-life concepts which are bestowed on us and reinforced by all the conditioned people already present on the planet when we arrived here ourselves. We would have been very fortunate if any of them had suggested that the way we perceive and conceive the world is the basis of our psychic oppression: instead, they were all eager to “show us the ropes” and help us to “fit in” by being identically bound in the way they are. As Narayana Guru laments in Atmo 56, “Where is the end to this?” How about the Portland Gurukula?

The point is that we cannot just decide to change and voila! change will happen. Most of the process is outside our immediate control. We are only beginning to have a neuronal theory that makes sense of the laborious process of rewiring our brains. The sages of the past often enough had no clear idea of how their miraculous escape from bondage happened. They talked it up as a terrific state of mind, and wove all kinds of wild fantasies about what brought it about, but most of those look a lot like fairytales to the modern mind. The state was true but the route to it was imaginary. There is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but both gold and rainbow are only symbols representing something highly mysterious. Narayana Guru was a rare version of high intelligence combined with exceptional erudition, which resulted in an understanding that was steadily pared of its excesses all through his life. By the late period when he composed Darsanamala, he had deconstructed his philosophy to the bare bones, to the essence of what is going on psychologically. He didn't make up fairytales to explain how he got to an amazing place. He just looked inside for a long time and found who he truly was.

Narayana Guru refers to the heart in this verse, and it can be somewhat misleading that the commentary talks about head and heart or brain and heart. Heart is the core, the central, neutral space (or non-space) that we have called the Karu or the Absolute. It's the real pot of gold. It may be symbolized by the heart organ, but is not merely that. It is the locus of intuition. To be in that core, that pacified core, all our scheming and promotional activities (though they have their place) have to be set aside. Nitya first addresses head and heart together:

What is relevant in localizing consciousness in the head and the heart is warranted by two specific features of consciousness. One is the urge to know, the attention that is sustained, the manipulation that one feels somewhat compulsively to make,

and relating to the goal as the main motivational factor connected with one's primary drive, to which every shade of one's behavior is intrinsically related.... On the whole this aspect of consciousness is responsible for the total involvement of the entire organism to make a performance of action.

It sounds like it, but I think Nitya isn't dividing the two organs, rather he is affirming they are both doing the same thing. Deb clarified it a bit by saying our heart is where our values and emotions are, and it is also where we get lost and where the incipient memories arise. The heart is an arena of multiple tangents and distractions. We can bring them back into ourselves and sit undisturbed. Only in a pacified heart does yoga become established.

Jan loved the sentence near the end: "This is achieved by making the light of pure spirit prevail upon the heart with a discipline that constantly diffuses the ego's craving for power, glory and pleasure." It isn't that we have to force the issue, but only to let in the light. Light and pure wisdom are the same thing. And then Jan added that we do have to restrain the beasts that want to take over.

Deb seconded that emotion, agreeing that a restraining discipline is needed, and that's what Narayana Guru recommends in joining the heart with the Unknown. Doing that allows the spirit to be the actor, rather than the ego, so that we act on the basis of a universal harmony instead of as separate individuals.

I added that light is let in when we take away our programs. The light is already in us, but our programs obscure it. Even when our programs are intended to let in the light, it's the *programmed* part that gets in the way. We wind up doing a program rather than basking in the light, and the ego is satisfied because it is all very explainable, and thus defensible. Only, it's dark.

Curiously, Susan had just been listening to a talk by Alan Watts where he said if you search for truth you are in fact pushing it away. We are already truth, so any search is bound to lead away from it.

This got Bill musing on the complexities of the ego's collusion with the intellect. We need our intellect to function effectively in the world, yet it can turn nefarious. He felt that if you follow a light that isn't merely self-interest, you can act honorably.

This of course is the exact opposite of the modern religion that enthrones self-interest as its absolute value, its God. Well, this does too, in a way, only its self-interest is modified by knowing that the Self includes everyone and everything. It's a Self-interest that isn't limited to an excruciatingly small version of the self, one that doesn't care what misery and destitution it leaves in its wake. It cares very much, on a grand scale.

Nitya definitely warns us about the collusion of the ego and the intellect, in a complex paragraph:

As both retention and affection are closely linked with the ego, the ego should be further examined. The ego as such has no power to do anything unless it can wield the faculty of illumination and the faculty of discrimination. The Self is the only source of illumination. The Self is not the ego. Ego is a projected identity on the subtle aspect of nature which has gone into the procreative matrix of a person. In other words, ego is a shadowy person. It is and it is not. It is this aspect of the ego which says 'I know' or 'I do not know'. Its power to discriminate is the more vital and functionally efficient aspect. This, of course, is to be associated with *buddhi*, or intelligence. *Buddhi* is again a link to the Self or the spirit. Its power to perceive and discriminate is the borrowed light of the Self. At the same time, it is loaded with the incipient memories retained by a person. Furthermore, it is subject to the influence of the

triple qualities of procreative matter, such as being pure and sublime; being kinetic; and being retentive, inertial or opaque.

So the intellect has its flaws, but when defended by the ego it may find itself safely beyond criticism. This is where it can really lead us into disasters of all sorts. Intellect- and ego-driven actions often backfire, if not explode.

I have been reading Narayana Guru's biography that Nancy Y. is preparing for publication. He magnificently embodied the yogic approach to conflict, the way to be successful as a neutral participant. I will tuck one typical story into Part II as an example. One day you'll be able to read the whole biography. It's so uplifting to see how wisdom can carry the day. The peaceful revolution Narayana Guru inspired may well be the largest one of its kind in history, a testimony not only to him, but to the many great souls among the downtrodden people of the time, burning for a chance to express their thwarted vasanas for peace, justice, tolerance and much more. The Guru showed that by going into the pacified state, you are where the power of truth resides. We have to get below the conflicting turbulence to rediscover this source, and that's where he directs us to "join our hearts."

Paul brought up a familiar adage of his, that the ego should not be the master, but is more reliable as a servant. In the light of the Yoga Darsana, I suggested that neither position was adequate: the ego should be a Good Citizen, and neither a slave nor a master. There is always a balanced position in between the extremes, and that's where yoga aims its arrow. A master gives orders and a slave or servant takes them. A good citizen acts according to their best understanding, making an optimal contribution to the needs of the moment. Giving and taking orders are outside of the purview of healthy citizenship. Knowing what's best is the key, and it is disturbed by any imbalance.

This brought Jan back to the idea of discipline. It has to be an internally directed choice, and not a set of rules to follow. It isn't a one-time accomplishment, where once you get it you never slip up ever again. We slip in and out of successful actions, but that's okay. Our blunders show us where to work, where to try to let the light back in.

Deb reprised an idea we have kicked around, that the measure of the depth of your understanding isn't that you never make mistakes but how quickly you recover from them. Do you spend days regretting your slips and kicking yourself for them, or do you pick yourself up and carry on with head held high? I noted that so many spiritual biographies make it sound like there is one moment of realization and then everything is perfect ever after. That means if anything goes wrong then you weren't enlightened after all. Eternal perfection may have happened a few times in human history—more likely it's a tall tale—but for the rest of us we learn by doing, and especially by screwing up. Much of our work has been to stop amplifying our mistakes by adding guilt and deception to the brew.

We could easily imagine that the source of behavior is in both the head and the heart, but we usually divvy it up the way Nitya relates it:

The act of mentation, which is allegorically said to be of the head and not of the heart, has direct reference to the illumination of a gestalt, a theme, or on an ensemble, which is amply made available through perception and the logical orientation of it with one's cognitive ability.

Karen recalled hearing that the longest and hardest journey is for the mind to travel 18 inches, down to the heart. So true.

Our genetic makeup can be read in every cell of our organism, and we are coming to understand scientifically that

memories are also held by the whole body as well as in specific parts of the brain. No matter how we conceive of the process, urges are arising in the hidden depths and surging up through our whole being, getting modified by more peripheral parts of our personality that correlate it with the cultural and physical demands of our environment, and being expressed in a rough approximation of our presumed intentions. The whole business is so profound! The tragic aspect is that we only express a tiny percentage of our true capacity. The original impulse contains universes of possibilities, yet we are experts at whittling it down to a toothpick.

The way I think of this, and it is admittedly blasphemous, is that some vasanas are expressing our best potentials, while others are detritus from the ancient past that are no longer useful or relevant. Our ego (hopefully armed with real intelligence) decides which vasanas to promote and which to consign to the ash bin. Higher values are attended to and lower selfish desires are stifled. The traditional belief is that all vasanas are bad and should be burnt to a crisp so they don't influence us. I see that as little more than a trick to fool the ego, which does very often fail us by making poor choices. It's a way to take decision-making out of the ego's hands, so to speak. But I think a contemplative person can discriminate in a healthy way. I quoted the I Ching: "He who acts from these deep levels makes no mistakes." I would say "makes fewer mistakes." Or better, acts well.

We have discussed earlier how our vasanas are able to arrange the world around us to provide them the opportunity for expression in a way that conforms to the situation. Now we are going to really manage them. The verse's advice is that so long as the ego is having prejudicial ideas about the vasanas, we should have recourse to the stillness of samadhi and not give them any energy at all. If persisted in long enough, they will eventually expire, leaving the contemplative in a vast empty field:

If yoga is to be understood as *samadhi*, the modulations which spontaneously happen at the cognitive level should be quelled, and they should also be made inoperative at the affective level. This is why the Guru recommends the triple absence of individuation – that is, the perceiver, the perceived, and the act of perception – as an accomplished fact of the pacified heart. All we have said hitherto is to be visualized entirely to connote the word *hrt*, heart, used in this verse by the Guru. The affectation of the ego will persist as long as the ego is infatuated with the glamour of the incipient memory. (403)

The Guru, through his foil Vidyananda, amplifies this idea in his commentary, posted in Part II. It definitely is what he epitomizes in the verse itself.

Deb responded that what Nitya underlines here is that in any experience, whether positive or negative, if we are actualizing it with the triple factors of perception and perceiver and perceived, we are caught in illusory world of individuation. To get to that deep core, we must try and see through that division of consciousness.

That's right. The triple division works well in practice only if you see it as one in essence. Then the other is also you. That awareness changes everything you do. You no longer have the urge to dominate and control the other, and you can't turn your back on suffering. It is impossible to continue as a small isolated unit adrift in endless space. You are "a piece of the continent, a part of the main," in John Donne's immortal words.

To me, the crucial thing is to remove the ego from its perch as the controlling operator of our life. Using contemplative insight, to teach it humility. The ego is one essential part of a long train of magnificent operations, and it is the beneficiary of all the profundities of our being. Instead of burying them in the subconscious, some of them could be let out to play. A fearful ego

won't allow anything other than its petty hopes and desires to hold the field. It has to be reassured that letting go will be to its benefit, along with the rest of our whole being, not to mention our neighborhood.

The most salient point here is what does this mean in a practical sense? Jan invited us to come back next week with an example to share of how we manage vasanas. She made a beginning by thinking of them as manifesting as self-talk, words that you repeat that keep a familiar cycle going in your head. It helps to be aware of your self-talk, to treat it like a train going by in the distance that you aren't riding on. Later on we wound up with a couple of terrific examples, so stay tuned. And once again we invite any email participants to send us your thoughts, any time. We all agreed that we manage our vasanas naturally to some extent, so it isn't anything overly arcane. Sharing our successes is definitely helpful, however.

Bill first summarized that vasanas are urges. They act as motivation, and when they bubble up, the ego interacts with the intellect to reassert the dynamic of perceiving, which colors how we react to the world. Then we retain the resulting coloration, imagining it to be the world's true colors instead of the result of our own prejudices. This is of course where we have to be careful to discriminate between the merely appealing and the truly cosmic urges. I added that we should always question our impulses. If they are worthwhile they won't be defeated by being examined, yet we don't want to overly inhibit ourselves, either.

Paul asked if biological imperatives were vasanas, and he got a resounding yes. Then he reasoned that it isn't like pulling out rotten teeth, that we aren't aiming at an absence of vasanas, but only that they take their proper place infused with greater understanding. After all, how could we do away with our genetic inheritance? What would be left? It's something we have to work with, one way or another. Deb added that if you suppress such

things, they don't go away, they gain more power when they're out of sight. The trick is to drench them all in the light of the spirit.

Karen and Deb gave their examples of managing vasanas. Karen talked about how she had been very frustrated by her son recently, who promised to help her with a home-improvement project and then was always busy. She was getting really irritated about it, so she decided to work on feeling differently. She substituted gratitude for her irritation, which always makes her laugh when she thinks of all the beautiful aspects of her life that she easily feels grateful for. When she finally got her son to come over, she heard how busy he was with many important tasks, and her upset just went away. She realized her thing wasn't that important and could wait. This is a great example of how getting the facts in place of our worried imaginings can be a major upgrade, especially coupled with wise intentions to regain a peaceful state.

Deb admitted that there are times when she finds herself under a black cloud. She feels dissatisfied, unhappy, and rejects the whole world. She could easily fume ferociously. Several others recognized how comfortable that kind of state can be. *We like* it. It feels so good that everyone else is wrong and we are the lone right one, so let's just stay here. Now Deb can see how her ego colludes with her intellect to project the blame outward and let her off the hook. She has learned to not take that periodically recurring state so seriously, to give it less credence, and accept that even she can have a few faults and it's okay. She has found—not at all surprisingly—that this reduces the misery that her state of mind used to keep boiling for a longer time. It's a winning situation for everyone, including her.

Again, these are not mystifying processes. We have all made significant progress in managing these unhealthy urges. Most of us still have room for improvement, though.

Paul mentioned hunger as a vasana, and we joked that vasanas like that should not be defused. If we don't eat, we die. But here's is how it can be visualized by a yogi. We have a genetic disposition from long history of near starvation to gobble up whatever comes our way. Sweet foods, rare in the wild, are especially craved. Now that we live in a time of food abundance, that vasana or group of vasanas can cause us to overeat to an unhealthy degree. Probably we were encouraged to eat excessively as children as well, so there is a samskaric element too. Managing these impulses is a familiar way we wrestle with our conditioning. Hardly anyone thinks it is a simple matter to just decide what to do and do it—there is a tremendous inner urge that thwarts us quite easily. That's why weight-loss diets famously fail. The vasana often operates by giving the ego permission to do exactly what it wants to do, and the ego supplies the rationalizations necessary to clear the road, making all kinds of excuses and defenses... in short, we effortlessly cave in to the vasana, to our eventual regret. Nitya points directly at this weakness:

Ego vastly depends on the intellect both for discrimination and manipulation. Thus heart, which is said to be the seat of the ego, also becomes the seat of all intrigues continued by the ego and intellect in collusion. An aspirant yogi has to become vigilant in stopping this unhealthy alliance between ego and intellect, which are bent on aiding incipient memories. This is achieved by making the light of pure spirit prevail upon the heart with a discipline that constantly diffuses the ego's craving for power, glory and pleasure. Until this is accomplished, yoga is not achieved. When the heart has known the undisturbed depth of the silent spirit, yoga is achieved. (404)

Here Nitya is using the heart as the repository of the feelings we act on egotistically, which is very different from the core or Karu.

It's also the sense Narayana Guru means: the source of desire. No matter how we think of the heart, if we spend time in an oceanic place where the triple functions are not operative, it is a curative period. It's a vacation from ordinariness.

We recalled how duality—and its correlate *triputi*, the tribasic function—arise out of unity. There is only unity, through and through, yet it takes on the appearance of a subject and an object, plus the way they interrelate, which is the third factor. In yoga we are spending time in a refuge that isn't a subject operating on an object, manipulating it or trying to erase it. There is only being. As the Gita says, a little of this releases you from a lot of fear. Fear comes from the other, from the object. No object, no fear. Or at least the gradual draining away of fear. It is kind of stupid that we live in very safe environments yet we still act as if we were wandering through a veldt filled with hungry predators. Now there's a *vasana/samskara* complex worth de-energizing!

In summation, Deb recalled the end of the last verse for us:

Instead of entertaining an assumed false identification, the Self remains established in its truest form because it is freed of its obligation to fulfill the instinctive wish of a *vasana*, an incipient memory. Narayana Guru praises such a reversion of transcendence within immanence itself as yoga, and he qualifies it as *vasananasa*, the reduction of the potential into the impotent.

Moni closed the evening with an original translation of the verse. Basically, there is no remedy for *vasanas*. The only solution is to gain union with the Absolute. A remedy would be taking place in the triple aspect of horizontal consciousness, but only when we see and know the One does *vasana* lose its grip over us.

We separated thoughtfully, wondering what fine examples we were going to bring in for the next session.

Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary:

The seer, the seen and the sight, or, in other words, the knower, knowledge and what is known, are called in Vedànta *triputi* (tribasic prejudice). In the true form proper to the Self there is no *triputi*. When the outgoing activities of the mind have been restrained and the attitude of *samàdhi* (peace) is reached, there is no room for the operation of *triputi*. In that state of peace, the form of the Self free from *triputi* becomes revealed without any hindrance. Patanjali has also described this state as, "then takes place the attainment of the proper form of the seer." This form is free from *triputi* and is of the status of *sat-cit-ànanda* (existence-subsistence-value or bliss.) As soon as one comes out of the state of *samàdhi* the tribasic prejudice (*triputi*) asserts itself and the many activities of the mind produce attachment and aversion and the consequent sensations of pleasure and pain. The incipient memory factors (*vàsanàs*) which remain in the inner faculty of the mind is the subtle and potential source causing all the varied activities of the mind. Therefore, until such time as these *vàsanàs* are weakened and completely destroyed it is necessary to unite the mind with the Ultimate Self which is free from tribasic prejudice (*triputi*), and, thus, to practise (the art of) *samàdhi* (i.e. the wisdom of supreme peace which is that of Yoga). It is such a kind of Yoga that has been stated by qualified persons who have experienced this type of peace as consisting of true Yoga.

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Here's a story illustrating Narayana Guru's neutral way of bringing light to conflict, from the biography Nancy Yeilding

serialized in Gurukulam Magazine, and is now in preparation for publication. Ezhavas were a very low caste and Pulayas outcastes:

K. Ayyappan (1889–1968) was one of nine children of a poor Ayurvedic doctor. He had come to Guru as a teenager, burning with the clear light of reason and the desire to clear away the chains of superstition and prejudice that bound his brothers and sisters. He came to be known as Sahodaran (brother) and was one of the first leaders to interpret the peoples' problems in terms of class struggle, in addition to the constrictions of religion and caste.

He was upset by the Guru's disciples who used his name to achieve their own emancipation while participating in the oppression of others. Restrictions against those considered to be outcastes were being enforced at Kidanganparambu Temple in Cochin. As a gesture against such hypocrisy, he organized inter-dining between those considered Ezhavas and those considered Pulayas (thought lesser because of their past enslavement and harsher present circumstances of life). The inter-dining, which was seen as breaking one of the major "caste" restrictions, took place in 1917, just after he finished his B.A.

Immediate reactions were vicious: biting ants and burning oil were thrown on them. When the families of the young men who participated found out, they were told to drink *pañcagavyam* (a mixture of cow dung and urine, ghee and milk) to "purify" themselves. Those who refused left their homes and joined K. Ayyappan. They were excommunicated; the barber and person responsible for burial rites were forbidden to go to the family of any participant who refused to undergo a purification ceremony, and women from those families who had been given in marriage were sent back. The bad feelings erupted in a fistfight between them and the orthodox elements of society. The police had to be called in to quiet things down and an injunction was declared

against the annual celebration of the temple, which was soon to take place.

One night the news spread that Narayana Guru was coming to the temple. He had asked that there be no lights. In the darkness the crowd gathered peacefully, waiting for the Guru. No one could see who else was there because of the dark. A chair covered with a white cloth had been set out for Guru. Guru came in quietly and sat down. They could tell he was there only by a faint shadow on the white cloth. The sea of people was absolutely silent.

Guru asked, "When did Vallabhassery come?" Out of the dark Vallabhassery said, "This humble came this afternoon." Then Guru asked after the health of Muloo, the uncle of one of the young men who had been at the feeding (Guru Nitya's father). The young man replied, "He is all right now." Guru asked him, "You are studying here now?" He answered, "Yes." Guru then asked him, "What was the trouble here?" and the young man told the story. Guru said, "Ask all the people of both sections to come before me tomorrow morning."

They all came the next day. He asked the old people their grievance. They said, "You gave us a temple and a good life. We want to protect the traditions. The youngsters are ignorant of the tradition. They are disrupting everything." Guru asked, "What did they do?" They answered, "They had a public feeding with a Pulaya." Then the youngsters had their turn. They said, "You taught us that man is of one caste, one religion, one God. We want to live that in our lives. We don't want that to be just an empty slogan."

Guru said, "I don't see anything wrong here." He turned to the old people and asked, "Can't you agree?" "Never," they replied. The young people also said, "Never." Then Guru said, "You both agreed that you don't agree." Everyone laughed. "One agreement can lead to another." He said, "The young people cooked last time. Now the old people can make *paysam* (a sweet,

festive pudding) for young and old to eat together.” In that gesture the incidents were ameliorated and the temple was open to all.