

**IX Yoga Darsana,
Transpersonal Union**

Verse Three

All this name and form is Brahma indeed. Thus, in the Absolute, mind always merges well. That is ascertained as yoga.

10/23/7

The meaning of the verse is fairly straightforward. Everything we encounter, although it is invariably cloaked in the guise of names and forms, concepts and percepts, is in reality the Absolute. It is no wonder that we can attune so readily with the Absolute, since it is not at all far off. It is right here with us. The only catch is it is morphed into shapes and colors, as well as our ideas about them. When we get snagged by shapes and ideas we can easily forget what they are made of. We become mesmerized by the surface play. Yoga is simply the process by which we re-access the veiled depth all around us. With a fair amount of instruction and a modicum of effort in the form of paying attention, we can merge right back in to the unitive Source of the multifaceted world we inhabit.

This doesn't mean we drop our contact with the surface world and strive to remain ever beyond its reach. We add the universal perspective back into our temporal and spatial adventures so that each enhances the other. We become less likely to be mesmerized and fly off the handle if we know the universal ground of everything that is transpiring. And by living our life fully and with care we give expression to the inexpressible.

Jan gave us a wonderful example of how this can work. Her son has struggled with serious medical problems, and because of the steroids he has been given he has grown very little. Lately he has been having persistent terrible nightmares. Giving sympathy is well and good, but sometimes clear instructions can accomplish what nonverbal support cannot. One night before bed they talked about how he feels trapped and haunted by his dreams. Jan explained that everyone has nightmares, and that when we have feelings we are afraid of looking at, our fears can turn into monsters in our dreams. The words were well timed, and Louis understood them. Vague and fearsome forms were given names and became somewhat comprehensible. The other night he had a dream where the monsters were small creatures attacking him in a cave. He realized that they just wanted to be bigger than him, and he let them. Once he did, they stopped assaulting him. This is a beautiful example of how our ever-creative mind can picture our fears in symbolic conceptual terms so they can be dealt with, if we are brave enough.

Anita shared two examples from her recent experience. She has been visiting her son and his wife, members of an exclusive religion. She sat up late one night talking with the wife, struggling to get across to her why she, Anita, had left their church. They were unable to get through to each other. Where both people had the best of intentions, they were unable to bridge the gap because of the younger person's rigidly held concepts. It takes real wisdom to step out of our preferred framework of mental pictures, of the names we use to describe and buttress our world view. When we are unsure we cling all the harder. Anita's feeling was that if she had been able to say the right thing, it might have worked. We can but try, but this is a perfect instance of words becoming an impregnable fortress. Nothing can get through until the person on the inside decides to open the gate.

Anita's second example was a positive one, maintaining proper balance. She was reclining in a chair reading *That Alone*, with her pet cat curled up on her chest. After a while they sank into a meditation together. First Anita was conscious that their hearts were beginning to beat in synch, and then their breathing became more and more gentle and also synchronized. She felt that there was no longer a separate and distinct cat and woman on a chair in a room, but only the numinous Absolute as a looming benign Presence.

This is exactly what Narayana Guru was getting at by saying that the mind always merges well. We need to peek right into the heart of name and form to discover the Absolute. We begin with occasional scraps of reconnection, and these gradually seep into our everyday awareness to become a continuous normalizing factor in everything we do. It takes a certain kind of effort. If we don't do it, it won't happen. But the joy it brings makes it an easy effort, not in any way drudgery.

Adam told us about meeting Zakir Hussein, the tabla master, in Poland many years ago. He was invited to a gathering to learn drumming from him, and went dressed in his tough guy leathers. The party was hosted by a spiritual group, artsy and vegetarian. Adam felt very out of place, felt that he was being judged negatively. Then Zakir Hussein arrived. He was warm and unpretentious, and made Adam feel completely at ease. Soon Adam's spirits were soaring and he was laughing unselfconsciously. Even though he had no desire to become a drummer he had a lot of fun trying it.

Wouldn't this be a wonderful world if we all could be this way! The judging comes from our attachment to concepts. If we can see the humanity beneath the faulty conceptions—that everyone without exception harbors—we will be forgiving. More than that, we won't even need to forgive, because there is no sense of transgression to begin with.

Late in the class we examined how we are prone to take a saint of our favorite religion and dress them up in our prejudices and conceits. We don't have the slightest idea what Narayana Guru or Shakespeare or Jesus or Buddha was like, but we build a whole universe out of our projections about them. Then we bow to our concepts and call out names to proclaim our fidelity to our imaginary graven images. If whichever saint was present, they would surely be disgusted at our ignorance, at the total disconnect between the image and the actual person, but since they aren't we can continue the charade as long as we want. Usually there are fellow worshippers around to egg us on.

As Deb reminded us, our job is not to reform other people. Our task is to reform ourselves, to drop the names and forms and go straight to the core, without imagining what we might find there. It is always greater than what we imagine, so why ever do we limit ourselves with paltry concepts? If we can let go of them, we will evince a tacit invitation for our fellow beings to do the same, and that is as far as our evangelizing should ever go.

* * *

1/30/18

Yoga Darsana verse 3

All this name and form is
Brahma indeed. Thus, in
the Absolute, mind always merges well.
That is ascertained as yoga.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*All this consisting of name-form (knowing)
As verily the Absolute, the mind ever merges*

*In the Absolute, what constitutes such,
As Yoga is ascertained.*

Our opening meditation was enhanced by listening to Claude Debussy's impressionist piano piece *Reflections in the Water*, something Jan had mentioned in the examples she sent in before class time. For a verse on perceiving the unity within multiplicity, music in general is a fine example. It is made up solely of individual notes, which are put together to make a new kind of unity whose impact utterly transcends anything the individual notes are capable of. It demonstrates that unity is much more, not less, than the endless horizontalizing implications of separateness.

The music reminded Deb of the opening of Nitya's Foreword to *That Alone*, where Narayana Guru describes the essence of Vedanta as knowing that ripples and water are not two. You can reread it in Part II. She liked that what it and this verse are both saying is that all the ripples that we see and the names we give them, are the fleeting names and forms that go back to being water when you look at what they're made of. Paul added that the reflections are the images we see virtually appearing in the water or another mirror. They not only aren't really there, but are made hazy by the wave action and altered by the color and clarity of the water they are reflected in.

The point Narayana Guru is making in both places is very elusive and goes against much of our natural predilection: all that we perceive and conceive is nothing more or less than the Absolute, and that's why the mind so easily merges into it. The Absolute isn't elsewhere. All this is also us, and we are the Absolute. Paradoxically it is our learned ideation that reality is something other than us that keeps us unsettled and dissatisfied. Yet it's something we can easily and naturally get over if we want to.

Much of Nitya's commentary is a review of the building blocks of the world consisting of name and form:

Almost from the moment of the child's admission to the empirical world, the great process of the structural composition of the empirico-critical world is commenced, and it snowballs into the 'self and the other' world of the individual. Its growth, concretization and persistence as the facts and figures of an empirical world continue until one's death.... In this tremendous unconscious creation, names and forms are the two main constituent elements.

This tells us immediately that the desire to sweep away the apparent world is a misplaced effort. What we need to do is retrace the connection of seemingly disparate elements to their unified source, and it changes everything.

Bill likes to underline what a challenge this is, that whenever we cognize name and form we forget that the waves they generate are nothing but water. Yet that is exactly what Narayana Guru intends to counteract here. If you do remember, you know that name and form are comprised of the Absolute, and this is the key to not being drawn out of our center by events. And it's a cinch.

As the commentary is mostly review, we moved quickly to talk about the examples several of us brought of how yoga is put to use to solve practical problems. The Gurus are telling us that bringing in the unity we often name 'the Absolute' is the resolving yogic act. We enjoyed hearing and thinking about them, especially learning that they really made a difference.

Susan (who earlier had joked that Jan, who invited the examples, had better start us off with three or four) started us off herself. Once again, we are sharing these because many of us have the same foibles, and they are meant for all of us to use. People are grateful for good examples, and no one in the class would ever

make fun of someone for their foolishness. We know that would just be an ego mask to cover up our own foolishness, and we aren't playing those games, at least in Darsanamala study.

Susan woke up the other day and immediately regretted something she had said at her book group the night before. She now knows she has a longstanding bad habit of beating up on herself. She wrote: "I started thinking about some comment I made last night at book group and how I wish I hadn't bothered, and then I was off, thinking about how I say things I regret, and how it must make people think less of me, but it wasn't more than 30 seconds before I caught myself. Look at what you are doing. This is one of your routines. This is guilt. Let it go. And once I see it, I can. Instead I breathe, concentrate on my breath. I widen my perspective. I open up to something that isn't about me. It helps." Susan said she felt more open, and much less stressed. I should think so! Guilt and regret squeeze us tight, so throwing them off feels so light in comparison. Thirty seconds is pretty minimal, after all. Many of us have histories of regretting our follies for days or weeks. Catching old habits quickly like this is a major leap in the right direction.

Yet Susan was not done. She had a second superb example that used a specific image, showing how we can use name or form to take us straight toward that unity. "Then there are the times when I feel slighted or taken advantage of." Nods of recognition all around. "These can happen while driving, if somebody cuts me off, after being awake too long in the middle of the night, during some disagreement with my brother, who always got a better deal and is everything I'm not. It's a strong, deep, righteous feeling and it sends me right down a path of blame and victimhood. Physically, it is like hackles rising on a dog's spine and my gut starts to churn and grind. Through the years and with the help of this class and my related reading, I have been able to put some revealing light on these episodes that helps to defuse them. An image came to me a

few years ago of a little girl of maybe 5 or 6 pulling a red wagon piled high with big rocks. The girl is pulling the heavily laden wagon and she is whining, 'It isn't fair!' Once I started seeing this image, I not only could clearly see what I was doing when I went into my feelings of being slighted, but the fact that there was this little girl behind it all made me more compassionate with myself. She also makes me laugh and that always helps bring down the shackles."

This is such an excellent example! Susan is using a meaningful image that addresses her injurious habit, instantly bringing all the insights she has picked up in her spiritual quest to bear. She isn't denying name and form, she is using them in a healing way. Without them she might well be back at square one whenever she felt slighted. Honestly, that's why it drives me nuts every time someone says oh words just get in the way. No, we need them, badly. We just need the right words in place of the wrong ones, with their wrong concepts, that have been tripping us up. Susan used to say to herself, "I've been slighted!" and so reinforce her victimhood. Now she says (or pictures) something liberating, and it releases her from so much suffering. Her healing is directly connected to her well-thought-out concepts, handily identified by name and form.

Karen could relate. One thing she does when she starts to get negative is use the international symbol for no: the slash drawn through an image of someone smoking or driving where they shouldn't. She visualizes a big sign with a slash: don't go there. And then she can easily change direction.

It's hard to image Karen ever getting angry, but that must just be a testament to her success as a yogi. The same goes for Bill, who I've known for 45 years but have maybe seen him fuming once in all that time. He told us: "I use that kind of yoga practice every day. I'll be driving down the road and getting angry. The Tibetan Buddhists have what they call the silent witness — he sits

in perfect equanimity, without getting involved. I've used that concept to assess how I react to things. The silent witness is me in a quiet state, and it reminds me how to keep my cool. It's the same with yoga, when you can see what's going on in your life before the ego and the intellect get involved. What they start to do before you react. And then I don't have to go there."

Jan shared two fine examples, and she did me the honor of writing them down in advance, so you can read them in Part II, along with one of my examples that I may share next week, since we ran out of time.

Though Deb was off the hook because of sharing last week, she had another example from earlier in the day. Our daughter Emily called up to say that there was a minor glitch in her plans to come visit with her partner and his children, and she was very upset. Actually, she thought it was a major glitch, but it wasn't, and Deb handled it easily, reassuring Emily that it would be fine, not to worry. It was the kind of stupid thing that could easily have been blown out of proportion, but because Deb didn't go there, the potential for misery was diffused. Friends can help friends, even if they are related! And of course it took words to make the difference. It's ever so much harder to reassure someone if you don't say anything.

The daughter thing clicked with Paul, who is confronting a serious problem with his own Amie. He and I had talked a while back, and he had gone on and on about what he hoped for as an outcome. Then I asked him what *she* wanted, and at the time he had been incensed: who cares what she wants? I'm the father. But thinking it over in terms of yoga dialectics, he began to see how essential it was to take her side into account, even if it was plainly wrong from his perspective. Which it is and was. He could see it was her life after all (she's in her late twenties). Paul realized if he enforced anything arbitrarily it would be like another form of religious control. Ultimately he realized that forcing her to do the

right thing would fail in that she would be doing it to make her dad happy, and not because it addressed her own needs. This is a wise and difficult realization for any parent, certainly.

Jan's first example was about her relation to her daughter, and we all agreed that our children go right to the crux of yoga, because they are so important to us. Many things we can just shrug off, but not our kids' problems. If we turn away, they know just how to zip around and get right in front of us again. Because Jan's problem was really about herself, as you can read below, it had a rapidly positive resolution. Paul definitely has a heavier wagon to pull with a real tough situation, but he has lightened its load somewhat by taking one or two of his extra rocks out and tossing them aside.

So then it was my turn. My good (I hope) specific example is down in Part II, but I had a more general, everyday one that was grist for the mill. I started by comparing it to a story of Nitya's, of how when he was a wandering sannyasi he arrived at a place of tremendous realization about the meaning of life. He was exploding with love and excitement about all and everything, and hugged everyone he met as a long-lost soul mate. After a while, though, he noticed that many good people were horrified at being hugged by a wild, energetic stranger. India is not big on hugging—it's all about keeping a respectful distance. So he pulled back and modified his tactics. To some degree it was a veiling of his light, but he was able to share so much more as a teacher, offering wise words and concepts energized by the tremendous joy he never lost but now kept discretely within bounds.

I am similarly a very ardent person full of love, and in the heyday of the Sixties I was part of a psychedelic movement where many of us vividly remembered that we were eternal beings gathering on this planet after far wanderings through the galaxy. It's a lot like something Nitya said to his disciples in Australia once upon a time, recounted in *Love and Blessings*:

I concluded with a conviction that had been growing within me as my teaching role had expanded. “This learning situation is eternal. We gathered in Egypt and we gathered in Sumeria. We gathered in Babylon and on the shores of Galilee. And we gather here today in this prehistoric wilderness, children of a New Age, to give praise and thanks to the Absolute.”

Many of us were deeply convinced that we were part of an intergalactic emergency team that was sent to planets at the critical moment, perhaps tipped off by the discovery of atomic fission, when the sentient species must change course or risk destroying the planet it inhabits. At the time, 50 years ago, it seemed like we might yet turn the tide, now it looks like we may have failed. The point here, though, is that we felt a similar explosion of love and connectedness to everything, and the community consciousness greatly amplified it. Now though, on a daily basis I have to restrain that exuberance, because humans are universally swathed in defenses, and love naturally overcomes barriers. “Something there is that doesn’t like a wall, that wants it down” and all that Frostian nonsense. Finding the balance between reaching out and holding back is a delicate yogic art form.

From my childhood in a moderately hostile environment I learned to do—reluctantly—what pretty much everyone learns to do: guard my self by erecting layers of defensive protection. My yoga training is aimed at removing those, but yet I have to keep in mind that even if my barriers are down, others are very content with theirs. The rub is that to be effective at trying to influence the world for the better, you can’t just stay bottled up. And I know that under all those layers of batting, souls are crying out for release. They may or may not even know it. Plus, every person is unique in every way. So it is a challenging and fascinating avocation to stay in what I called the green zone: the middle range between being

too outgoing and overly restrained. It's a daily, if not moment to moment, practice, and it takes place not only in relation to others: it's an internal balancing act as well.

Deb added that in all these situations we have to think of how we are, how we know ourselves, how to relate to people. To see how people are defended, and how to be with each individual person and still be ourselves. Quite so.

Bill thought of it in terms of the pain of not having your love reciprocated, but for me that was laid to rest a long time ago. Of course I still like it to be reciprocated, but if you rely on such things you are bound to feel impoverished. He also thought that most accomplished yogis don't think of reactions, but that is exactly the point of Nitya's story. Taking other people's needs into account is intrinsic to yoga, though ideally it doesn't hamper your own internal openness. Maybe what Bill meant was that you should not let other people's reactions bring you down, even as you are constrained by them.

Several of us had been to a powerful movie about Joan of Arc a few days back, and Deb used it as an example of how Joan kept her purity of spirit even as she was under tremendous pressure from the politicians and church officials, who had preconceived ideas and demanded certain answers. Her responses came from a deep place that they were wholly ignorant of. Her innocence baffled them. It was like she was in the water and they were holding on to the ripples. It was all about how you are innocent and yet you are in a difficult position, how do you learn from it and stay in your true nature, being loving and expressing it. Of course, humans have often been killed for staying true to their heart, which is another reason for prudent caution.

This got Paul thinking of his expectations about his daughter and he generalized the idea nicely. He could see that if you drop your expectations piecemeal it doesn't work. You have to drop

them wholesale. If you drop one, ten more spring up from your pride about that one act.

Thanks to the online Gita class he is now in, Paul was reminded by Sraddha of Nitya's video class, which he watched the other night. He was thrilled by it, and one thing that really struck him was the idea that there is no enlightenment without the transient and the transcendent existing together. Trying to keep them at bay, trying to hold back on attachments thinking that if they leave that's all you need, is futile. Nitya says they both have to be combined as opposing forces, and only then do the attachments go away. Yes, that's yoga, folks. Here's the link to the video that so inspired Paul: <http://aranya.me/watch.html>. Then, [Nitya's Gita videos](#), on YouTube. Lots more of those links are available here: <http://scottteitsworth.tripod.com/id2.html>.

The conclusion of our yoga sharing was the realization that the norm is to take a position and hold onto it desperately. Even fight over it. The yogic secret is to incorporate the whole, which has to include what you disagree with as well. As Paul put it, "I'm doing the same thing that everyone else is doing in picking one half of a dualistic proposition and holding on to it." By contrast, Joan's answers, as well as Narayana Guru's like the one shared last week, go straight to the center. They open us; free us from the tyranny of posturing. It's very heartening to see how the work of the Gurus is bringing out the best in those who are studying it.

And so, let's get back to the teaching of this specific verse. We'll talk about more yoga practicalities next week.

As Jan notes in Part II, often references to vasanas are really about samskaras. With enough effort we can manage how our memories affect us, but we are helpless to alter our genetic makeup. The memories that most define us began in the prenatal state or soon thereafter, and so have the feel of coming from an ancient source. While the use of the two terms, vasana and samskara, is somewhat slipshod, the point of their often

unwelcome influence is spot on. Nitya first traces the ground of all our mental operations in memories:

Nobody can think without using word images in their mind. All word images are concepts. Concepts are processed and recreated memories.

Where we can work effectively on ourselves is in becoming aware of how our deep memories are coloring our experience in the present. Fortunately, we don't have to actually know what the memory is, we can presume it from observing its influence compared to a reasoned assessment. Any deflection is produced by vasanas or samskaras or a combination of the two. This is most tangible as the mood we are in, which is something an honest contemplative can readily feel. Nitya puts it this way:

Conceptually recalled images are confections of names and forms neatly blended, and each such unit becomes animated with the prevailing mood of the individual whenever it is assigned a place in the range of experience. Thus all experiences of pain, pleasure, and indifference are stimulated, nurtured, and continued by name and forms.

And those names and forms are “animated with the prevailing mood of the individual.” As we acknowledged last week, our moods, including negative ones, are very comfortable once we become “civilized” or “socialized,” so we tend to hold on to them and defend them. Narayana Guru is inviting us to let them go instead, and Jan's invitation to explore our “hang ups” brought some excellent examples into the discussion. This has to be a practical exercise. The ego is expert at talking tough and doing little. The Guru is suggesting we stop theorizing and do something meaningful instead. It turns out this is quickly and easily

rewarding, at least after we have grasped the concepts which he has so carefully laid out. They really do make good sense, and that's the place to start. As Nitya says, actually doing to work is what separates the contemplative from the non-contemplative:

In the case of a non-contemplative, extroverted person, the proliferation of the images of name and form goes on without the individual giving any special attention to the validity of the impressions created by the name-form complex. Of course, there is not anyone who is totally devoid of contemplation. But in the case of one who is an avowed contemplative, apart from merely experiencing name and form, such a person will also develop a critical faculty to moderate and improve their modes of appreciation so that the presiding consciousness can be in full control of the constant interplay of concepts and percepts.

Well, “full control” may be overstating the case, but it is helpful to be aware of the process even as life sweeps us along with its irresistible momentum. Even a little of this way of life has a beneficial impact, as the Gita tells us, and the examples we shared gave ample evidence of this.

Positively influencing our lives is a skill like any other, and it improves with practice:

Although at a beginning stage of self-discipline such critical apperceptions of gestalts are far apart and varied, when the discipline increases all the structural details of the presentative consciousness and its representative character are scrutinized for the purpose of integrating all infrastructure and meta-structure to become fully harmonized in the idea of the universal.

Happily, our class members have had quite a bit of practice scrutinizing ourselves already. It doesn't have to be an obsessive deconstruction of every detail. Relaxing into the flow is an important aspect of how we let go of our rigidities. The hard part is *admitting* we are perverting reality with our conditioning, and in consequence not accepting our immediate perception as the God-given truth. If we know we are inevitably twisting the facts—both intentionally and unintentionally—we will be more open to listening to criticism and more circumspect about our own ideas and motivations. That doesn't mean we stop functioning. The intent is to function better, and every example we shared had an upgraded ending to evidence its efficacy.

For those who recall the wonderful section of Narayana Guru's Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction dealing with *sama* (sameness) and *anya* (otherness), Nitya expresses the gist of the verse in those terms for us:

Narayana Guru calls the specific variance *anya*, and the integrated universal *sama*. Contemplative discipline is to go from the multifarious *anya* to the unitive *sama*.

Again, we aren't leaving name and form behind to discover some exotic hidden territory, we are simply seeing how the apparent variety is united at its core. Which is much, much easier. Nitya's most important paragraph is his summation at the end, underlining this skill with a *mahavakya*:

In the present verse the word *brahma*, meaning the Absolute, stands for *sama*. The *anya* or the variant has the ability to color the consciousness that apprehends it with its specific property. To escape from the impact of it at the time of its occurrence is most difficult. Here exactly is the need for disciplining the entire mechanism of mentation, by which one can reverse the

power of streaming consciousness from the effect to the cause and from the manifoldness of names and forms to the unitivity and universality of the one Absolute, Brahma. When this is achieved, one cuts across all forms of phenomenality and gains the transparency of yogic vision. Then it can be said, “All this is Brahma,” *sarvam khalvidam brahma*.

The enthusiasm generated by the sharing of examples had to be stopped abruptly because of the lateness of the hour. The entire Yoga Darsana will afford us opportunities to keep coming back to practicalities, and the invitation is open to readers to contribute their wisdom as well.

Part II

Swami Vidyananda’s commentary:

As stated in the previous verse, it is not easy to restrain mental activity and to remain in the unconditioned and calm contemplation of the Absolute, fully free from tribasic prejudice (*triputi*) and operation of the three nature modalities (*triguna*). It is difficult to remain always in a kind of peace which is without any mental activity at all. Even if we should repeat the word *Brahman* (the Absolute) any number of times, the world of name-form made manifest by attributes does not disappear from being operative within consciousness. When the reasoning mind is distracted by interests of ordinary life consisting of worldly thoughts, the attainment of *samàdhi* (peace) is not possible. Then how is it possible to accomplish such a Yoga?

This verse intends to give the answer to such a question for the aspirant who wishes spiritual progress through Yoga, and puts the question with an intense desire to know an alternative way. Instead of trying to see this visible world as consisting of name-

form, and, thus, as entirely false, it is recommended here as easier on the basis of the *mahāvākyas* (great sayings) such as “Everything here is the Absolute,” to look upon the whole phenomenal universe as consisting of the Absolute. It is not easy to turn from the long mental habit, enduring through many births, telling us the world is real. Even though to a discriminating mind the world is philosophically false, the appearance of the world as real still continues to be operative.

Narayana Guru now makes reference to a verse in his *Advaita Dāpikā* (Lamp of Non-Duality), which states that even when discrimination has abolished the reality of the world, it continues to be given to the senses just as to a man who has lost his sense of direction, the error could persist for some time even after the orientation has been intellectually corrected. A mistake might continue to persist for some time even after its recognition as a mistake merely by force of habit. There is also reference to another verse in the *Atmopadesa Satakam* where Narayana Guru states the converse possibility and says that all things are real enough but that the man of philosophical disposition could comprehend the unity underlying all things.

This alternative case can be easily practised and is here recommended in view of an aspirant, who, by practising this kind of Yoga for a long time until the incipient memory factors are eliminated, will accomplish the same purpose of Yoga otherwise more difficult. It is to underline the continued practice that the word *nityam* (always) has been used. Patanjali also underlines this same verity when he says that by long practice without interruption in a reverent spirit of service, one is capable of stabilising certitude. Such an unceasing practice is itself Yoga.

* * *

Here’s the first part of the Foreword to That Alone:

Narayana Guru once asked a young novice, “Do you know Vedanta?”

The young man answered, “No. What is there to know about it?”

“Do you know what water is like?” replied the Guru.

“Yes.”

“Do you know what wave is like?”

“Yes.”

“Do you know that water and wave are not two?”

“Yes.”

“That is all.”

“If Vedanta is so simple, why do people spend so much time studying it?”

“Because people forget the wave is water.”

“Why do we forget?”

“Because of maya.”

“How do we get rid of maya?”

“By knowing that wave and water are not two.”

“What is the use of knowing they are both the same?”

“So you won't put such questions!”

This story was told to me by my Master, Nataraja Guru. As he himself was a disciple of Narayana Guru, it is even possible that he was the novice mentioned.

The point, however, is that truth is so very simple we don't need to make any effort to know it, but an undetectable ignorance conceals what should be obvious. Then we take a lifetime of beating around the bush to arrive once again at what is already known to us. Once the lost truth is regained, the search comes to a close and there is no need to utter another word.

Between the effortlessness of the obvious and the silent wonder of regaining the forgotten truth, there are many hurdles to be cleared. The truth we speak of is neither fact or fiction. It is not

the object of immediate perception or the subject of mediate inference. Either you unconditionally know it or you do not. This is the knowledge which cannot be taught but, paradoxically, it dawns upon you on listening to one who knows.

* * *

Jan wrote up her two examples for us. She later added: “I realize I was probably talking about samskaras more than vasanas, but they are interrelated.” Mira is her university-age daughter, who is starting her semester abroad:

I thought we had a great class last week talking about yoga, dealing with our vasanas, and the heart place.

My first example of how I recently experienced these ideas had to do with Mira. I had a moment during her last evening with me (before her leaving for Switzerland) of wanting to bring up with some topics that I knew would be problematic, about something I wanted from her. It was clearly all about me - but I thought a reasonable ask. As I thought about how to ask for it, I saw lots of those emotions and vasanas coming up inside me. My wise self recognized the tension as a sign of something unhelpful coming. Instead of pushing my ego forward and my needs, I opened up instead to my deeper self and “let go” of those wishes. As I tapped into my more vast self, I felt a wonderful clarity and freedom. It was easy to let go of my needs. I quickly understood that I was tapping into the loving part of me, which was connected to love itself and that I could trust that loving energy to resolve this as it was meant to be. I trusted the right outcome was evolving, and I knew not what that would be. So what I recall about it that strikes me as similar to this verse is the letting go my ego, the freeing myself from my vasanas at that

moment, and the basking in the loving energy and larger Self that really can guide us and bring us peace.

I thought it helpful to also pay attention to how we do not always perfectly manifest these ideas. I think the more we all discussed our incomplete or not fully realized efforts, the more we would learn from each other. My second example was more here. I have always had lots of vasanas around “entertaining” but I love to do so. I was feeling some of those come up this weekend about an event I was hosting. Although I was not able to 100% calm myself down, I did tend to my inner beasts moment by moment throughout the day and it helped keep me centered. I also tried to let go of expectations more. As the evening started happening, I found keeping up the same practices helped a lot (letting go of expectations, calming my ego and defensive thinking) as did staying connected to my heart center. It really felt like a wonderful evening of much loving going all directions.

[In class she added: I was trying to stay calm throughout the day and look at the feelings that were coming up. As the evening started, I kept up calming my ego, and because of this everything went better. There was lots of loving energy. It was a real reminder about letting go of ego needs and tapping into deeper heart, where we connect to the Absolute.]

That kind of became the theme to the weekend as other events fed into it, the theme of staying connected to our deepest heart in a profound way. I found it beautifully expressed in the first piece of Debussy’s *Book of Images*, *Reflections in the Water*. That music portrayed for me the transformation of opening into the light filled vertical plane by releasing, in small measures, our little self...dissolving the ego, and finding the luminous core of the heart.

* * *

From my response to an exercise in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad study group of 9/24/18:

Exercise 2 is also right up my line: to take a fresh hard look at my blemishes. Nitya writes: “Every passing moment is an opportunity to have a hard look at the facts of one’s life to see what blemishes are there that can be steadily removed.” I should say that all hard looks are fresh, automatically. That’s what makes them hard.

One thing I’ve had lots of practice with in the blemish removal arena is responding to insults. Where I grew up, in a diverse region, insults were part of ordinary social communication. From the dominant culture I learned to give back as good as I got—a milder version of the way Donald Trump was raised: which was to hurt others MORE than they hurt you, and have no reservations about it. Although my agnostic parents intuitively followed the teachings of Jesus, counseling me to be kind, considerate and compassionate, reactivity (whether for good or ill) was strongly emphasized in the culture at large. It’s very hard to hold to your ideals in a gentle way when everyone is traumatized by the level of argumentativeness inherent in schooling and the struggle for success in the pecking order. We can hurt each other very much simply by struggling to secure our minimal place in line. I also happen to have grown up in a period when old ideals were being cast into the fire and replaced by more idealistic ones. It’s REALLY hard for an American to be both gentle and transformative. Gentle gets ignored, while “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” It takes a lot of noise to get us truly motivated on the transactional plane.

Under Guru's tutelage I began to see how my "educated" reactions were pure ego, almost always the result of defensive drives. I began to wonder why it was so important to maintain an untarnished persona, especially since no one except me believed I had one. Could they be right? And what did it matter after all? I adopted a strategy of presuming the insults to me were well founded and of swallowing my pride. I looked for the truth of them, granting the accuser quasi-divine status as an unwitting mouthpiece of God. It was a very hard thing to internalize! If I wasn't able to be grateful for an insult, at least I could refrain from smacking the tennis ball of accusation back across the net. Plus, by remaining calm I could sometimes see the hidden motivations of the person taking umbrage with my behavior. It turned disagreements into a fascinating exploration instead of a head-butting exercise. There was almost always a measure of truth present that I wouldn't have noticed if I was busy defending myself, so I wound up with lots of blemishes revealed, giving me a rich spectrum to investigate. It doesn't look like I will run out of blemishes this lifetime, so I should never be bored.

Here's an example of how it looks in the present. The other night a friend announced to the twelve people over for a potluck dinner that I was a very opinionated person. I hadn't been saying anything, it just came out, aggressively, right in my face. In our society, opinionated mainly means small minded and bigoted. Naturally the ego wants to immediately defend itself, proclaiming "I am not!" I watched as my normal reaction of denial pulsed out of my body, but I didn't give it any support. I just smiled in tacit acknowledgment of the truth of the accusation. Still, there is a chemical reaction, adrenaline and more, which doesn't settle immediately. I processed the anger prompt by musing that I did hold opinions, because I was a caring, interested person, but that was not necessarily a bad thing. I am respectful of other peoples' opinions, and do not insist that anyone agree with me, but I took

this as a reminder to always be careful in that regard. There is a lot of samsaric sting in people's feelings that makes us all presume we are being attacked even in the midst of a polite discussion. I further mused that no one was likely to change their opinion about me based on this person's revelation. Lastly I recognized that this person was bossy and self-righteous at times, and I had stood up to her in the past, which was likely the cause of the whole outburst. She had tried more than once to have me agree to something I didn't accept, and I refused, to her chagrin and astonishment. Being pushy had been a pretty successful strategy for her, I'm sure, and our sexist society forces women into an underdog position, where being feisty makes a lot of sense if you don't want to give in to the prevailing injustice. In a subterranean way her zinger might have been a justifiable plea for ratification of her as a valuable person, which she very much is. But I know my default setting is to highly honor women's intelligence, so such feelings are more the fault of society than of me personally. My refusal to be pushed around was what made me "opinionated" in my friend's eyes—I didn't meekly accede to her opinion, though I certainly honored her right to disagree with me. I had not been pushing my opinion on her (though by disagreeing she might well have imagined I was). After this extended meditation I could let it all go. Except it made a perfect example for our exercise of taking a hard look at the facts and blemishes of my life. I thought I might report on a recent success story, with a more or less happy ending. By not protesting my friend's statement, the attack fizzled and the pre-dinner conversation resumed a friendly cast.

It's one thing to be pigheaded, holding tight to a bad idea despite the attempts of good people to get through to you, and quite another to believe in your own carefully considered ideas and not be swayed by public opinion or expediency. To me, that's called integrity.

[The person was, obviously, Bushra.]

* * *

Last but not least, Dipika contributed, too:

This is so sweet ...the sharing bit...
Am lagging behind as you can see :)

I thought I would add a bit to the sharing...if it is not too late..

I recently quit a job where I had been working ...at a Music School...a new start-up, teaching in - depth Western music theory and practice to kids in Bombay. I had been with them since inception 4 years ago. I was Head Administrator to a 15000 sq foot property and the entire running of the premises (except for Teachers /Music curriculum)was under my supervision. The School has been pulling along but not really making any profits and getting continuing investors has been a challenge.

Well one fine day a couple of months ago, two of the senior managers called me in and rattled off how I was not up to the mark, as I was not helpful , I was not technically qualified , I made a Senior Founder ' lose his temper' and I was always 'arguing'. I was a bit taken aback as we had had no run-ins as such,except for one with this Senior Founder, who had lost his temper over a petty issue.And I think personally didn't particularly like me.

However it was enough for them to call me in to be ticked off.

Listening to them go on about my negativeness made me wonder where we were headed...eventually on being asked what I was going to do about it, I was a bit stumped, so said ...would you like me to resign ?

They were a bit surprised as they may not have wanted me to leave (this is what HR told me later...that this was not their intention) but

were so caught up with the righteousness of berating me...that they said yes.

Whatever the reason - personal or cutting of overheads, I was in a way relieved as to carry on now with nothing right in what I did, was a bit off-putting.

I have to say I was a bit upset when I left that day but all through their talk I kept very neutral, listening and assessing. I did not get into any panic, anger or even hatred towards these two. I kept breathing deeply and did not give in to the urge to defend myself. I did think about it that evening and did some very deep introspection but did not get low, depressed or self-pitying. And within two days I was actually buoyant happy and looking forward to what else life would bring. I even thought, this is now a push for me to change cities and move to a less expensive, less polluted one. Maybe retire !!!

I am pleased to say that in a very short while, I was in a correct frame of mind and not dwelling or harping on the disagreeable circumstances and actually seeing this as an opportunity for change.

And within weeks have been so gainfully occupied & busy - am working towards a big event in April - that I have to really catch up with the Class notes !!

This bouncing back seems to be happening more smoothly and with less pain ever since I started being aware of my reactions and I now consciously, try to keep balanced.

love n rgds

Dipika