

**IX Yoga Darsana,  
Transpersonal Union**

**Verse Eight**

When mind, the bumblebee, sips the honey-like sweetness of one's own bliss, fluttering ceases and is drawn into union by yoga vayu.

11/27/7

The bumblebee metaphor is well known in Indian teaching stories. No one knows the origin of the word bumblebee, but I like my dictionary's stab at it as a combination of the words bungle and stumble. The seeker of truth sets out as a half-aware tourist, sometimes more like a hobo, who bungles and stumbles through life until, wafted on a gentle spring breeze, a delicious scent arrives. Quickly the attention is focused on the fragrance. Where does it come from? The bumbler craves to discover its hiding place. A few steps in a likely direction—no it's getting fainter. Another try—not this one either. Down a well-worn path—no, just dust down that road. Back this way—ah! the scent is getting stronger. This is the way to go. Tentative steps are taken in the right direction, but before long the allure is so strong that you are practically rushing ahead. You are no longer a bumbler but now know your calling. Other bumblebees are converging on the Source, and you may finish your search in company with some of them. And at last, the flower! Or, as the Gita has it, the One Beyond is sighted.

It is a silly bumblebee indeed who turns back at this point, returns to the crossroads, and begins selling maps of how to find the source in your own spare time at home. Or who boasts about

his adventures to timid bees who smell something but aren't sure what it is or whether it would be okay to go look for it themselves. Or who builds the Temple of the Holy Fragrance to have regular talks about it. A proper bee dives into the flower and sips the honey and revels in the pollen. What happens next is not its concern. What will happen will happen. First, get the honey!

The Bhana Darsana talked about the fluttering of our minds, the electrical pulsation fluctuating between subject and object that produces the illusion of an actual world. Now we are prepared to let it cease and see what else there is. The Guru has instructed us that the 'else' is the Self, which is the same as ananda, which is the same as the Absolute. Allowing the fluctuations to cease is almost unbearably simple, so simple that we embroider it with all kinds of activities that prevent our sinking into it. This is abetted by those enterprises that owe their existence to catering to superficial attractions at the expense of a solidly grounded inner happiness. Nitya mentions a few: trade, commerce, therapy and religion, all of which use various techniques to externalize human interests. We go along because the fluttering also produces our ego sense as one more illusion in the house of mirrors, and we're kind of attached to it.

Isn't it odd that this ego, an epiphenomenon of the fluctuations of awareness between subject and object, becomes such a stern taskmaster, deflecting all attempts to deflate it by becoming peaceful and centered? The game would be relatively easy if the ego would only play along, but it is fearful, profoundly fearful. We cannot detach it from its illusions by a head-on assault or any charge of the light brigade. Narayana Guru recommends becoming absorbed in some delightful involvement, so that our progress is natural and positively reinforced. This engenders less resistance from our superficial side; in fact, the whole program can be easy and fun. The fragrance of the Absolute draws us gradually in via our natural affinities, otherwise known as our svadharma.

Like taming a shy deer, it can be accomplished with patience and love, and force tends to be counterproductive. Nitya puts this very well in his comments:

The peace that comes when the mind is no longer distracted... is the enjoyment which a yogi seeks. Such a rasa can come only when the mind is fully drawn to the most lovable object. Man loves nothing and no one more than his very Self. Even when a man kills himself it is because he pities himself. So the most stable of all rasas comes when mind is guided to the discovery of the sweetest of all ecstasies that lies buried in the Self. However, the mind is like a brute. It is to be tamed and educated, controlled and disciplined. Any discipline involving threat and suppression will be reacted to by the mind, which in its bitterness and sourness becomes neurotic and psychotic. So it is to be disciplined with great care and with healthy incentives. (420)

It is not just in matters of the spirit that the ego resists discipline, it is in every aspect of life. Tragically, it may well develop a mind set in which the world is the source of unfair discipline and it is the lone hero resisting for all it is worth. Then, even when there is no negative stimulus the mind imagines it. It internalizes a permanent state of oppression and becomes like a beleaguered city on the hill, eternally under siege. Such an attitude, very common in our modern world, reinforces the ego and powerfully resists all attempts at incursion, benign or hostile. Vast amounts of energy are expended to reinforce defensive walls and place armaments.

In contrast to this, the class reported a number of very positive breakthroughs, which could make for a very lengthy report if I'm not careful. Anita altered her feelings of separation and distance from her family by realizing that whenever she thought of

them she was with them in her heart, and the bond was much happier when she didn't think of the separation but only thought of the love. Susan talked about how when she feels the fragrance of something beautiful she always wants to solidify it with a practical program. Now she is learning to simply accept the beauty and relinquish the urge to repeat it. She knows beauty will come, so she doesn't have to be anxious about making it happen, which used to make her very tense. Eugene told us about riding the bus during high school rush hour, how he held back from getting aboard a bus full of obnoxious teenagers, but then steeled himself with the thought that they were after all aspects of himself. He found himself laughing at their silliness, which diffused the tension to an extent at least. All these are brave and intrepid examples of self-discipline based on brahmavidya, the Science of the Absolute. There is no need to commend them, especially, for they are their own reward. This is what Narayana Guru wants us all very much to be able to do: make ourselves intrepid based on our improved understanding of how everything fits together, drawn ahead simply by the joy occasioned by clearheaded understanding.

Somehow we ended on an odd but helpful tack. When we identify people with their jobs, or identify ourselves with our jobs, we squeeze us all into small boxes. I suggested that instead of asking chance encounters "What do you do?" we might ask "What do you love?" or, less threatening perhaps, "What do you like?" Brenda related that when seeking caregivers for her mother over the last several years, she always asked prospects if they enjoyed what they were doing. She found that more than half didn't like their work, many of the rest were equivocal, and only a few would say yes, they really loved what they did. Those were the ones she picked, and they always turned out to be excellent choices.

Our Puritanical society is fixated on work, so not only do we identify with our jobs, but we don't feel adequately human unless we are totally in harness to some respected occupation. Anne

talked about going to a big reunion of her son's class ten years out of high school. Many were lost and confused about what they should be doing, and only a few were set on a career. The ones who were doing what they loved exuded great confidence; the rest were dubious and unsure of themselves. Isn't it a shame that unless we know our "calling," which can only be a job, that we can't feel like we are of any value? In a sane society, everyone would know they were sparks of the Absolute. They would be confident that whatever intrigue caught their fancy, if persistently followed back to its source, it would lead them to Self-realization. But because we only recognize a small number of "useful" expressions, the vast majority think of themselves as misfits and rejects from the in-crowd. What a waste of hearts and minds!

There is so much need for an intelligent world view, such as the one Narayana Guru has compassionately tried to share with everyone. It is heartening to see that at least in a few cases it has touched the lives of some of our friends. May its sweet fragrance continue to be sniffed out by dear bumbling bees here and there throughout the garden!

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3/13/18

Yoga Darsana verse 8

When mind, the bumblebee, sips  
the honey-like sweetness of one's own bliss,  
fluttering ceases and is drawn  
into union by *yoga vayu*.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*When the mind-bee drinking*

*Of the nectar-sweetness of Self-Bliss  
Is drawn into union with the Yoga-breeze  
And does not flutter (Yoga takes place).*

The careful student may remember the Bhana Darsana begins with the same mind-bee, exemplifying how unitive consciousness bifurcates into subject and object, flashing back and forth between those poles like wings beating so fast as to become invisible:

Present within as without,  
constantly fluttering like a bee,  
awareness is divided into just two kinds:  
generic and specific.

Generic and specific are the same as Plato's intelligibles and visibles, or our metaphysics and physics, etc. In any case, we have progressed far enough in our Darsanamala work that the bifurcation can be knitted back together again, restoring the state of unity. Unity is so blissful that we busy bees can let go of all our compulsions to simply abide in it for a time. Fluttering between our Self and our non-Self can be temporarily put on hold. In the final chapter, Nirvana Darsana, the cessation of fluttering will be depicted as progressively deepening into a permanent state, one that even Narayana Guru held back from. At this point we are entering the final stage of our examination of the entirety of living consciousness, melting away in a sense.

Nitya's commentary is mainly a review of some key concepts, arriving at the essence of the verse only at the end. I'm going to try to present it backwards, which may be more logical for the reader. Let's see.

While we were meditating as usual after the reading, our dog Lucy peeked into the room with her "Nurse Jane" look of tender concern. Usually both dogs soak up the vibes from a remote

location and are banned from the class, but she broke the rules and tentatively came on down. She checked with me and then went over and nuzzled the one of us whose dog had just died and was grieving heavily. That person had not said anything, wanting it to remain a secret, but the dog could feel it.

I thought it was an example of being called by the *yoga vayu*, the yoga breeze. Lucy heard the call and responded with her natural compassion. The deceased dog was one of her friends, yet she knew nothing about it in the way we think of knowing. Some inner connection was involved. Though the context was sad, her reaction was exquisitely beautiful. We don't want to anthropomorphize, yet it was surely a kind of blessing. She was responding to an invisible need of the moment, and was sensitive enough to go ahead in spite of existing regulations. It's something humans might aspire to.

The best example of yoga vayu I know of is the chapter The Piper at the Gates of Dawn, in the transcendental classic *The Wind in the Willows*. I can't summarize it; you should just read it. For that matter, the wind in the willows is itself akin to the yogic breeze: the invisible yet tangible call of life to us to join in and frolic in Joy, the way the exuberance of spring pulls us out of our sleepy burrows to wake up again and again, right around this time of year.

Nitya waxes poetic in sharing his blissful insights about this silent call:

The flowers that bloom in the forest need the service of bees to pollinate them. However great this need is, no flower leaves its place to go in search of a bee, but the flower can give an incentive to the bee by being fragrant and colorful. The fragrance of a flower can travel to far-off places carried by the breeze. That is enough for bees to set out in search of the flower. Like that, the fragrance of the blissful experiences of

yoga can be presented to the mind with the winds of yoga (*yoga vayu*) such as *pranayama*.

There is a related verse in the Gita that Nitya loved to talk about, and I've clipped my commentary on it in Part II. In it I explain the role of prana that Nitya touches on here.

Paul wanted to know where the dividing line between the Self and the non-Self should be drawn, which led to a lively discussion based on the idea that we are dissolving any such imaginary line as of right now. More, how do we fix our attention on the Self that doesn't include the non-Self, when the non-Self is what we've been living in all our lives? Isn't this a very demanding restraint? By way of answer, first, Nitya vivifies Narayana Guru's imagery:

Attracted by the hidden joys of the Self, once the mind enters the portals of the Self it becomes as excited as a bumblebee caught within the petals of a full-blown lotus flower which is full of honey and pollen dust. When the bee begins to sip honey, it is pacified and does not flutter its wings any more. Similarly, when the yogi becomes attuned to his Self, he comes to know that ananda is his very nature and that there is nothing to seek outside. In fact, both the inside and the outside become one universal Self for him.

I held that this is a reversal of everything we've been taught from birth in Western society, based as it is on the sinfulness of everyone, including children. Spare the rod and spoil the child, and all that. It was my grandfather's favorite Bible quote. The Vedantic understanding that our true nature is optimal as is, is the exact opposite of what we've been drenched in. Instead of needing to become someone other than what we are—and an unattainable

ideal at that—we are invited to sweep away the accumulated delusions to become what we have been all along.

The conceptualization of ourselves being other than what we should be, turns us against our very self. Grasping “That you are,” *tat tvam asi*, is the revolutionary cure. We are already what we seek, already a miracle. It’s something we have to spend time adjusting to, because our misunderstanding is so deeply rooted.

The billion years or so of psychological time we were in the womb grounded that blissful state totally as our core reality. By denying it we are condemned to a lifetime of feeling like strangers in a strange land, displaced from our true Self.

Being divorced from our inner contentment is a bonanza for commercial interests, which are free to substitute salable commodities with the promise of ameliorating psychological malaises, even though any improvement is only temporary, if not imaginary. Nitya invokes a venerable American image of a donkey pulling a cart. Donkeys are hard to make slaves of, but if you hang a carrot (which they love) just in front of their face, they will chase it and even pull a heavy load, never catching on that they will never be able to sink their teeth into it. Since the carrot is attached to the cart by a long rod, the donkey or ass can never catch it. Like that, we can go through a whole lifetime without catching on to how we’re being falsely tantalized. Nitya says:

The actualization of egotistic pleasures is exploited by the facilitators of all interests in life, such as trade, commerce, therapy, religion, etc. In all these spheres a number of devices are used to externalize human interests. The carrot that is held before the ass of the mind is one *rasa* or another.

If we can find the source of happiness in our self, external attractions no longer make categorical demands on us. We can enjoy them as adjuncts, but they are no longer essentials.

We may not have studied *rasa* in the Darsanamala up to now. The main place we have is in *That Alone*, where Nitya lists the nine moods (rasas) and says a little about them on page 397. Here he first introduces them:

Rasa is the essence of a temporary appreciation, such as erotics, fear, wonder or dread. In Bharata's *Natya Sastra* he mentions eight basic moods or rasas. Bhoja added to these a ninth rasa called *santih*, the peace that comes when the mind is no longer distracted. This is the enjoyment which a yogi seeks. Such a rasa can come only when the mind is fully drawn to the most lovable object.

Paul's comment was "when the true self is experienced, both internal and external become one — the phenomenon and the transcendent together." That should bring us to *santih*.

Jan elaborated on this very nicely: There is a difference between the *idea* of bliss and being connected to the greater Self and actually experiencing it. To do this we have to sink into ourselves more and reactivate that memory in our being. Hinting at the *yoga vayu*, she added, "If we relish it and value our true nature, we'll be drawn to things that bring us to our deeper selves." Openness allows us to sense the divine fragrances.

Nancy joined the parade: "We're talking about a reciprocal state between the bee and the flower. When you find bliss in yourself and you hold it in the things you pursue and the people you interact with, it spreads out. This allows you to experience more of the blissfulness of the Self, and it turns out that that Self is in everything you're perceiving and interacting with. All of this allows you to resonate with your life and with others."

Paul liked what he was hearing. "After a time, the remembrance of that way of thinking and sinking into the Self becomes a siren call to come back to it, for it's always there. I want

that memory to be an identity of mine.” In other words, he wanted to know how to make it real. Yes, it’s a rhetorical question, but nonetheless one that needs attending to. Recovery is a slow process when we’ve been convinced forever that what we are to seek is far away from us and impossibly difficult to grasp, and that leads to frustration. Paul regretted his lifetime of a perceived identity that didn’t include the true Self, and he resolved to put an end to that old self and be more open to spirit.

Jan chimed in that it is helpful to be receptive and seek out other people’s ways of doing that, say in the various arts like dance and poetry. All this opens you to your own heart. Prabu added that in order to practice meditation you focus your mind and attune it with breath, say. Before long the mind will start to flutter. Then there has to be effort to keep the Self and the non-Self together.

Well, yes and no. If rightly understood, there is no gap, no distinction, between the self and the other. The effort should be to understand, not to hold on.

Part of the secret is that this should be an enjoyable activity. If you think about it, every smidgen of life is the greatest miracle that could be imagined. We could stop taking it for granted and be richly rewarded with joy every moment. To do this we have to include the other in our self-definition. I referred to something Deepanjali wrote in our online Gita class (the Guru in question is Nitya):

I once spoke to my Guru about how ‘the others’ are making my life hell. Then he nonchalantly replied that ‘the others’ are always problem-creators. Later my frame of mind got better and I could reason out that I am also a part of the problem. That is when I realized that this linear thinking is a quagmire and it seldom solved any problems. So when I approached Guru with more searching questions he tried to show me the different

aspects of the Reality and how my ‘problem’ was one of its forms. So seeking solace is not same as seeking liberation.

Part of my grateful comment for this reminiscence was “Earth is a school for souls, and a good school always has problems to keep us interested and alert. We graduate when I and the other become one. As long as there is an Other, there will always be problems.”

Sometimes bliss or enjoyment seem too trite to suit the dire context of life. Nitya liked to suggest a prevailing interest or a master drive. Prevailing interest will serve. Deb and I recently went to the Georgia O’Keefe Museum in Santa Fe, and in a brief documentary she denied that happiness meant anything to her. What she had was interest. Her whole life was sustained by her interest in doing what she loved. It didn’t have to make her happy, and often didn’t. But she always had that enthusiasm that only a deep interest can sustain. She was fortunate to be able to pursue her interests even though her family and society were dead set against any such thing.

Sure, enjoyment is in many ways a partial experience. Nitya adds that the secret of enjoyment in *rasa* is connected with memory, and:

In remembrance there is an implied concept. Each concept is a conditioned state of both the body and the mind. Concepts also act as prejudices. Prejudices can be favorable or unfavorable. The favorably conditioned states of conceptually established prejudices attract the mind. The opposite repulses it.

Any experience that has a moment of excitement followed by a dulling down of interest is less than the unalloyed Absolute. By contrast, a bee settling into nectar-sipping as the most profound meditation is stabilized, and does not need to search elsewhere for

satisfaction. Still, our ingrained habits urge us to get up and get going. Nitya says:

The most stable of all rasas comes when mind is guided to the discovery of the sweetest of all ecstasies that lies buried in the Self. However, the mind is like a brute. It is to be tamed and educated, controlled and disciplined. Any discipline involving threat and suppression will be reacted to by the mind, which in its bitterness and sourness becomes neurotic and psychotic. So it is to be disciplined with great care and with healthy incentives.

Having healthy incentives is the most crucial point! So much of spiritual goal-orientation is based on a learned dissatisfaction with who we seem to be. Threat and self-suppression are typical religious techniques, and if we view secular stances with this in mind we will see the same pathways to neurosis and psychosis. More slippery slopes than pathways, actually. In many cases this is intentional in the purveyor, as a sick mind is much easier to manipulate than a healthy one. This led Karen to wonder about the madness Nitya mentions:

In madness there is a gloating of the ego, and in such a state the ego will be infatuated with a highly emotional need to relate with a certain form or object of love. When the madness is of a negative order, the ego will be under a compulsive spell to destroy the hate-symbol.

Sweet, gentle Karen doesn't spend a lot of time indulging in hatred and resentment, so she wondered what is this compulsive spell to destroy the hate symbol? To the white supremacists, who are currently having yet another violent burst of ego, foreigners, dark-skinned people, Jews, reporters and liberals all fill the bill. There

are well-armed nut jobs all over America eager to do God's will and kill some liberals as soon as the opportunity presents itself. So what if liberals are kind, generous, concerned citizens trying to help themselves and others to have a better life, to such brainwashed people they (we) symbolize the Anti-Christ. We stand for everything that has ruined the imaginary life they wish they were leading. This kind of disconnect between beliefs and realities is nearly ubiquitous, only not always so lethal. In a world where truth is being shredded all around us, we should be very careful to distinguish between those elusive concepts in our own hearts. You think it's tough now, check out [the article Michael sent](#) in after the class: Whoa, baby!

Implied in Nitya's statement is that there is also madness of a positive order, which we can see in evangelisms and worshipful cults and the like. He was always trying to get us to calm down if we were possessed with some unbalanced fervor about even the most wonderful aspects of life. I remember in the first Portland Gurukula there was a craze for Macrobiotic diets, and the votaries would segregate the dining room and lecture Nitya on his eating habits. He began to privately call it the Macro-idiotic diet. It's certainly fine to have a diet to follow, but humans tend to inflate its benefits to divine heights that are by no means justified. Just as an example. You can fill in your own.

Our ordinary fluttering mind follows a pattern of attraction and repulsion that Nitya sums up as "When mind is tired of one object of pleasure, it leaves it and goes on to the next." He uses love as a prime example:

Where one can trust love, mind is easily attracted and clings onto the object of love, such as a beloved. When there is the least suspicion of that trust, mind withdraws and becomes hesitant. And when the distrust becomes serious, mind is repulsed and a context of love no longer exists.

So even that best of all *rasas*, love, is usually externalized, and therefore subject to decrease. Instead we should turn to the Absolute, the perfect Unity that does not fluctuate. In the Gita's immortal words (II.17):

Know That to be indestructible by which all this is pervaded.  
None can bring about the destruction of This that knows no decrease.

As the class wound down, Moni recounted a tale from her youth. "When I was a child, in the evening in the garden you would see a big black bee, busy going to all the flowers. As kids we wanted to chase them. Then it lands. When it lands it pulls in its wings and enjoys the nectar. All busyness is gone. While hearing about this example, I was picturing that experience. Our mind has a tendency to be extroverted, so bring it inside. Go enjoy it and bring yourself into that nectar state. Then next time that comes, you fly to another experience and then you bring it back. That way you will be centered, not a workaholic." Moni is probably the most easygoing workaholic on the planet, by the way.

We closed with a fine imitation of happy bees asleep in flower-bliss, caressed by the fragrant breezes beckoning from the far reaches of Within. Aum.

## **Part II**

Swami Vidyananda's commentary:

The mind has been compared to the bee which keeps fluttering its wings and wanders from flower to flower attracted by any flower that it sees. The mind is also full of unsettled alternating motions, and because of its random attractions to whatever interests are

presented to it, has been compared to the bee for the reasons mentioned. When the bee is engaged in drinking the nectar from the flower, it attains to stillness, likewise the mind, when it has attained to Self-Bliss, also becomes stilled. Just as the bee is carried along by the breeze, by the continued practice of Yoga, the mind is also carried along to its goal of happiness. Just as the bee becomes still by the enjoyment of the honey, so the mind becomes still by the sweetness of the honey of happiness found in the Self. When such a stillness is firmly established, such a state is to be understood as Yoga.

As for the term *vasikritya* (being attracted to its side), we have to remember that the natural tendency of the mind is to be dissipated by outward interests, and so this term applies to the withdrawal and canalising of such dissipations. The mind is always restless and it is necessary that the *yogi* should insist with a determination to make it enter into union with itself. By the use of the term *vàyunà* (by the breeze of wind), the reference is to be understood as recommending such practices as *pranayama* (restraint of the breath), etc. The term *madhu-màdhurã* is to be understood as the highest bliss afforded by the Self.

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The Gita's XV.8 bears on the present verse. Here's my take, from [my Gita commentary](#):

When the Lord takes a body, and when He leaves it, He takes these (mind and senses) and goes, even as the wind gathering scents from their retreats.

Verses 8 and 9 touch on the pole of immanence, in contradistinction to the transcendental aspect of verse 6. They

employ a highly poetic image of the Creator as a kind of invisible force or wind scented with the perfume of sensual experiences.

The wind here symbolizes prana, the vital or life force that animates everything. The notion has been covered in a number of places, most notably IV, 29; V, 27; and VIII, 10. The easiest way to visualize it is in the difference between a corpse and a living body. Barring any damage they might have suffered, both possess all the material attributes necessary for life. While invisible and intangible, what sets them apart is at the same time undeniable and obvious. Our state of health is thought to depend on how much prana is invigorating the system, and there are exercises and activities that can increase it, including such things as physical exertion and living at high altitudes. It is closely associated with breathing, so air purity is also important.

The Gita does not include a treatise on pranayama, the science of increasing the prana in the body, in part because it is not something that should be learned from a book. It must be studied with a competent teacher. All we have here is a beautiful image of how prana links our physical aspect to the Absolute, which can help us to transfer our identity from its fixation on the senses to something more central and profound.

The scents we gather as we go through life are the meanings, the loving contacts, the learning and growing. A life lacking these is barren, fragrance free in the sense here. A life not worth living. When we offer our friends the subtle perfume distilled out of our contemplative insight, in the shape of loving communion, they are free to offer us the same, and the interchange is mutually uplifting. Everyone benefits. Remember, the “Lord” in the Gita’s sense is all of us, not just some single remote deity having experiences unilaterally. There is a geometric expansion of meaning through the interaction of everything. For instance, the universe contains perfect reciprocity, in that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. That’s simply how it’s made.

The wording of this verse might lead us to imagine that a godlike Lord travels around with a little gizmo consisting of mind, nerves and senses, plugging it in whenever he enters a body and yanking it out and taking it along when he moves on to another. By no means! The last verse was clear that the Lord—the sentient wind or energy—comes to preside in a body already equipped with this spectacular arrangement of aptitudes. When the Lord, which is us, is present, sensory input is registered, and when absent it is not. In other words, the mind and senses are just as dead as the rest of the body without the animating principle of conscious life, which is much greater than their sum total. That which knows and experiences is not an epiphenomenon of matter, but a spirit that can interact with nature via this circuitry, and presumably it can appreciate the more complex abilities afforded by wide awake beings with well-developed nervous systems over the dull repetitions of rudimentary creatures.

We must remember not to anthropomorphize this Lord, particularly by claiming the title ourselves; it remains a “qualitative unit” of the Absolute: formless, nameless, incomprehensible. If we conceptualize it, we make it less than what it is, and so in a sense we would be killing it. Whenever we formalize our conception of the Lord, we simultaneously truncate what we are.

Although most Gita translators eagerly add “Lord” all over the place, the word for it in this verse, *Isvara*, has only appeared twice before, in IV, 6 and XIII, 28, In the first instance Krishna said, “Although I remain ever unborn as the never-diminishing Self, while I am the Lord of Creation too, grounded in my own nature I assume being through the negative principle of my own Self.” Other than its connotation as the Lord, as the Master who reigns, *Isvara* means (MW) “able to do, capable of.” Clearly the Absolute as a manifesting reality is what is meant by the Lord reference in Chapter IV. In Chapter XIII, the reference is likewise

to the immanent aspect: “He who sees the Lord seated equally everywhere... attains the supreme goal.”

Isvara is the name for the supreme Absolute used by Patanjali in his core textbook on Yoga, but in the Bhagavad Gita it is accorded to the embodied aspect alone. This is one notable difference between the two generally compatible systems. The Gita’s Lord is not the transcendental Absolute, but refers to the manifested Absolute, that which interacts with nature. As we have asserted in our introduction, the idea of a ruling Lord is anathema to the Gita. In fact, the term Isvara as it appears in XVI, 14, is clearly the boast of a deranged egomaniac.

The only other remaining references to Isvara are in XV, 17 and XVIII, 61. The former speaks of the principle that pervades and sustains the three worlds of manifestation. In the latter, Krishna tells Arjuna “The Lord dwells in the heart-region of all beings, causing all beings to revolve through the principle of appearance, as if mounted on a machine.” Undoubtedly a distinction is being made between an immanent Absolute and the transcendental Absolute Krishna is attempting to describe in this chapter.

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati reveals another implication of the verse’s imagery in his commentary on the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

The individual soul’s love for the Absolute is like a great attraction. When the fragrance of a flower comes from a distant place on the wind, bees and other insects and birds are all attracted to go in the direction from which the smell comes. Similarly, when a teacher of superior wisdom speaks, the fragrance of the meaning of the words comes like a cloud [to lead] us. It floats towards the teacher and the aspirant naturally follows the direction of the cloud. (96)

