

The Psychology of Darsanamala is the magnum opus of Nitya Chaitanya Yati, an increasingly well-regarded Vedantic philosopher and writer from South India. The work is presented as a commentary on the Darsanamala of Narayana Guru, one of modern India's most brilliant mystic philosophers and poets. It was Narayana Guru who instructed Nataraja Guru, who in turn taught Nitya Chaitanya Yati, so there is a direct line of understanding represented in this book.

The Psychology of Darsanamala is a thoroughgoing exposition of psychological states from the origin of individual consciousness to its extinction in nirvana. In the past, such large-scale undertakings have been to a greater or lesser extent heterogeneous and unsystematic. By using the elegant framework of Darsanamala to properly organize the structure of the book, Guru Nitya has added an important dimension to this perennial study and at the same time made a significant contribution to the presentation of Indian psychology and philosophy. The reader will find that such a systematic presentation helps bring Indian psychology out of the realm of hypothetical speculation and into the arena of everyday life where it can be of immediate and practical use.

In the Spring of 1958, Nitya Chaitanya Yati was completing his Ph.D. thesis in Social psychology at Bombay University. Just as he put the finishing touches on his work, entitled 'The problem of adjustment in the physically handicapped', his faculty guide transferred to another university. The head of the Sociology Department had been a rival of Nitya's, in true scholastic fashion, and he proceeded to block his thesis presentation.

"You cannot present your thesis without a guide," he said.

"Then you present it for me, please," requested Nitya.

"I cannot. I was not your guide."

"Then will you appoint another guide for me?"

"No. The work is finished, so you cannot have a guide."

While Nitya was pondering and fuming over this catch-22, his spiritual teacher, Nataraja Guru, came to visit him. In his

inimitable style, rather than give sympathy he upbraided his disciple.

“You have gotten all your information from American textbooks,” he said. “In ten years you will renounce all this borrowed knowledge.”

It was almost exactly ten years later that Nitya, without his doctorate but now a Guru, perceiving many of the flaws of Western psychological technique, began formulating *The Psychology of Darsanamala*.

The genius of the West has traditionally been expressed in an analytic methodology, developed in the ancient physical sciences. This has carried over into the modern field of psychology, where its application is more dubious than, for instance, in the categorization of animal species. A proper conception of the mind in toto is very much needed. Thousands of psychological studies are produced annually, painstakingly detailed and with great inner cohesion, but they fail to satisfy us because they do not belong to a meaningful picture of the psyche. They only depict isolated units of behavior. ‘What’ is described from every possible angle, while the more fundamental question of ‘why’ is studiously avoided. The process of breaking the subject down into smaller and smaller parts through analysis has led to such specialization by individuals that almost all of Western civilization is deeply dissociated from an integral understanding of the whole. The situation is aptly described in the classic story of the blind men and the elephant, where each imagines that he can accurately project the nature of the beast from the part he is in contact with, while disdaining the suggestions of a sighted person who can plainly see it is an elephant.

In India and some other parts of Asia the situation is the reverse. Intelligent thinkers have been contemplating the “big picture” for more than 5000 years, resulting in well-systematized schemes of synthetic, rather than analytic, reasoning. In contrast to the specialists in the West, every Indian is a philosopher, though

often at the expense of everyday details. While the West is full of excellent plumbers who are unhappily divorced from their spirituality, India has an abundance of happily integrated people whose plumbing is permanently in a state of chaos.

While the twentieth century has seen some cross-pollination between the analytic and synthetic extremes, they generally remain entrenched as the rival polarized camps of materialism and spiritualism. Narayana Guru and his principal expositors, Nataraja Guru and Guru Nitya, maintain that the most beneficial attitude is one that combines the best of both in a dynamic conception. In the present work the common root where the material and spiritual worlds join is examined in some detail. In fact, the dialectical integration of the conceptual and the practical underlies the entire study of Darsanamala.

In much of Narayana Guru's work, and especially Darsanamala, there is a fusion of the best of modern scientific understanding with the traditional wisdom of India's ancient seers. This is in keeping with the purpose of a long line of Vedantic revaluators. As humanity evolves there is a periodic need to restate the basic truths of life in a form that is relevant and comprehensible to the thought-patterns of a particular age. In Vedanta this is taken as a matter of course. There is a proud tradition of revaluation stretching back to the Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita, written around 1000 BC, is an early and important example, and its continuing relevance is such that it is cited throughout the present work. Sankara revalued Vedanta in the context of the world of the first millennium AD, and Narayana Guru should be considered among the most important revaluators of the present era. The verticality of truth is such that Narayana Guru could modestly state, "what we have to say is what Sankara said." Or, as Nataraja Guru puts it with reference to the particular needs of the age of reason, "Narayana Guru has been able to state the gist of ancient Indian wisdom tradition in a manner lending itself to be integratively understood in a unified fashion." The Psychology of Darsanamala is the distillation of this modern

restatement of Vedantic values into the specific field of psychology. Still, since mind as viewed here is the source of the entire universe insofar as it is knowable, psychology is a much broader subject in the Indian context than it is in the West, where mind is considered to be just one subject among thousands of independent categories.

No one will argue that the twentieth century has seen extremely rapid changes in virtually every facet of life. Even the freest thinkers of only 200 years past could not conceive of any part of the present way of life, let alone those of 1000 or 2000 years ago. Our sociological and technological development has vastly outpaced the adaptivity of philosophers. Such a time has a powerful need to have traditional wisdom interpreted in its own terms. Much of the current confusion and strife in the religious and political arenas can be traced to attempts to squeeze modern, global humanity into the confines of philosophies created for semi-barbaric tribal peoples of the distant past. It is high time for the kernels of eternal truth in those once-useful ideologies to be separated from the chaff of their historical trappings of tribal ethics and politico-economic power struggles, to be restated in the language of the present day.

In belief-systems where there is no provision for change one expects such conflicts, yet even in India, with its time-honored tradition of revaluation, there is tremendous resistance to the kind of opening up of entrenched attitudes recommended by Narayana Guru and his successors. Admittedly, and to their credit, they have hit hard at precisely the weakest points, where unquestioned habits have done the most to degrade human values. Like scar tissue over a wound it is here that society's skin tends to be the thickest. But the task of the revaluator is just this—to break us free of the horizontalized stasis of mind that sets in over the years, even against our best intentions, with fresh infusions of verticalized truth. For India this means philosophical surgery on the twin evils of the oppression of women and the maintenance of inflexible casteism, which is India's version of the more general problem of

racism. While even the ancient and revered Bhagavad Gita mentions that Self-realization is not dependent on relative factors such as sex or caste, at least a de facto discrimination has been in operation well into the so-called modern era. It is often the case that theoretical truths only penetrate the hard shell of social conditioning through a prolonged process. Narayana Guru and Guru Nitya wish to make it clear that equality on the actual as well as the theoretical level is the birthright of every human being. How can one profess a universal and all-encompassing belief system and yet make slaves of women and children? How can we advocate freedom and liberation while building artificial barriers between arbitrary groups? Simple enough questions, but ones that are even now being rejected with vehemence and violence, not just in India but around the globe. What were reasonable patterns of understanding thousands of years ago have slowly lost their value-content to become a straitjacket for the human soul. The subtle faults in those schemes, which through the years have been greatly magnified, are overdue for correction.

While the West fully shares the onus of racism and sexism, in fact all the isms, its deepest-rooted faith is placed in scientific skepticism rather than spiritual accepticism. In *The Psychology of Darsanamala*, Guru Nitya demonstrates at great length the similarities between the attitudes of scientific materialism and religious theism. How both orientations emerge from a universal ground of consciousness is examined in the very first darsana of the book. He points out:

As a result of the conditioning of the faithful by the established religions, and of the skeptics by the categorical statements of science, man has become bifurcated in his sense of his true beingness. Having thus separated him from his true ground—that substratum that gives rise to all beings—those responsible for this have largely repressed in him the sense of wonder and delight in which one who knows his true being lives all the time. Looking in vain for some religious statement or scientific

formula which will neatly encompass the whole mystery of being, so that we can file it away in our box of consumer goods and calendar maxims, we have forgotten that the mystery we seek to penetrate is our own mystery.

From the absolutist perspective adopted in this book, religion and science are seen to be nearly indistinguishable in their philosophical limitations and their effects on the psyche. Nonetheless, at the horizontal level of everyday life these two systems are very much in opposition.

The renormalized structuralism revived by Narayana Guru, developed by Nataraja Guru, and used as a springboard by Guru Nitya in this work, provides a solution to this conflict-causing confusion of values. Truth is an eternal, vertical value, while its historical context is horizontal and undergoing constant evolution. Mistaken notions that horizontal values have the same eternal verity as absolute truth need to be sorted out by reference to an orderly scheme of correlation such as is presented here. Orthodox religious thinkers tend to give an eternal, vertical status to the transient horizontal factors making up a large bulk of their scriptures. Rationalist thinkers err in the opposite direction, so to speak, by attempting to include truth with the horizontal factors as limited by time and place. While both of these may be termed one-legged arguments that must sooner or later fall down due to their lack of balance in the integration of horizontal and vertical elements, at least the skeptic is less likely to burst from his ivory tower with sword flashing or guns blazing.

Narayana Guru was born August 20, 1854 just north of Trivandrum in Kerala State, South India, and died nearby in Varkala on September 20, 1928. During his lifetime he became a major force in the spiritual regeneration of his region, and is now becoming recognized throughout India as an important reevaluator of Vedantic wisdom. He lived a life of quiet yet intense contemplation in the forests and mountains of the South, where he

scrupulously, even passionately, avoided the limelight. The few of his words that were recorded by his disciples are almost entirely in brief and cryptic verses given for the contemplation of those in his immediate circle. They are penetratingly absolutist and nondual. No explanatory concessions are made; the reader is expected to enter into the verses through his own meditation and substantial intellectual efforts. Such a writing style, coupled with his personal habit of walking away from people as soon as they gathered about him, is almost a guarantee of obscurity. We are exceedingly fortunate that Nitya Chaitanya Yati has both understood the contemplative insight compressed into Narayana Guru's poetry and is able to expand it into its proper scientific framework in a language that the reader can readily grasp.

Narayana Guru's disdain for fame actually serves to heighten his absolutist reputation for those who do become familiar with his life and works. Fame tends to water down and dilute the importance of great men and women, who must cater to the demands of their public. Certainly, those Indian pundits who have become well-known in the West have often purveyed a 'pop' message mixed with unabashed sensationalism that has attracted mainly the gullible and offended the scientific and philosophically-minded, who have the most to gain from an in-depth study of oriental contemplative science.

While a profound depth of non-dual philosophy is presented in various guises throughout Narayana Guru's recorded words, the highest degree of structural organization is to be found in Darsanamala. Such a well-organized methodology is a real departure from the rather loose-knit tradition of South Indian composition to which his other major works like Atmopadesa Satakam and Svanubhavagiti belong. Its thoroughness and scientific organization have made it the perfect vehicle for Guru Nitya's present exposition of Indian psychology as well as for Nataraja Guru's crowning achievement, *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*, which integrates science and mysticism over the skeletal structure of Darsanamala.

Towards the end of his life, in 1916, Narayana Guru was asked by his disciples for a definitive work on Vedanta philosophy. This he agreed to do under certain guidelines. He would chant the work and Swami Vidyananda was to take it down. There were to be no repetitions. If he was asked for any he would stop. The disciples agreed to the conditions.

Early in the day the Guru would go for a walk, and Swami Vidyananda accompanied him carrying his water pot. With the Swami's hands thus engaged, Narayana Guru chanted ten verses, which Vidyananda would have to commit to memory. When the Guru finally took his water pot and wandered into the jungle, the Swami would immediately sit down and begin writing feverishly. Thus even the production of this timeless masterpiece was used as a tool to further the training of a disciple.

After this routine was repeated several times, Narayana Guru said simply, "That's all." He then asked Swami Vidyananda to read the verses back to him, and he gave his tacit approval. Finally he told his disciples that there were ten visions, gave their names, and titled the work *Darsanamala*. Later, Vidyananda wrote a brief commentary on each verse that was based as closely as possible on the Guru's own words. It has been reproduced in *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*.

Darsanamala is perhaps the work most suited to be used by the modern scientific thinker. The subject matter is consciousness, and the occasional reference to religious terms and deities is not intended to substantiate hierophantic notions, but rather to relate particular principles of the mind with their traditional symbols. Nothing is expected to be taken on faith, beyond the belief that much is to be gained by pondering over an idea that may not be immediately clear. In fact, Guru Nitya explicitly recommends that the reader maintain an attitude of healthy skepticism and critical scrutiny, both in his approach to this book and to his search in general.

The structure of the work is a marked advance over the heterogeneity of many other textbooks in either field of

psychology or mystical contemplation, demonstrating a comprehensive overview of the entire subject where others have been busy building an edifice piece by piece. Darsanamala means 'A Garland of Visions'. The garland likens consciousness to a series of ten flowers strung together on a golden thread, with a precious jewel pendant in the center. Each flower is a unitive vision, and is described with the utmost economy in ten succinct and evocative verses pregnant with implications.

Indeed, the image of the garland to epitomize consciousness by itself conveys a number of significant ideas. First, it is a decorative article of dress that is put on and taken off. The clear implication is that the essential Being wears consciousness as a kind of ornament for a time, and when it is removed the wearer remains unchanged. This allusion is in keeping with the Guru's absolutist perspective, and is typical of the vivid poetic imagery which infuses his writings. The perfection of the image is such that we can go on extracting meaning upon meaning: a garland is often given as a gift from one to another, just as we cannot claim to be the creators of consciousness, but rather receive it from the Unknown. It often marks a significant event or celebration, just as our life has an overriding importance to us, and deserves to be celebrated. Each stage of our conscious growth is so like a flower: complex, symmetrically beautiful, complete in itself; and its tinting reminds us of the coloration of our psyche with moods and biases. The golden thread that runs through the whole is an important image, implying an invisible continuity linking the stages of life into a meaningful progression. Even the shape of the garland as it hangs around the neck is significant. The first darsana begins high up on the shoulder with the very origins of consciousness, which may be taken either in general terms or in relation to the birth of the individual. This distinction is in any case minimized in Vedanta. There is a progressive development as the garland is traced in a graceful curve of increasing objectification and subjectification down to the pendant jewel at the center of the

neck: the supreme teaching and keynote of the whole, *tat eva sat*, “That alone exists.”

Following this high point of awareness, as it were, the garland ascends toward the other shoulder. During this second half of the work, consciousness is progressively turning inwards again. Narayana Guru’s highest ideal does not, therefore, come at the close of the work proper, but slightly before the end, in the fifth verse of Nirvana Darsana:

Having burned everything with the fire of wisdom,
aiming the good of the world,
doing action according to injunction,
the knower of brahman remains firm in brahman.

In fulfillment of methodological requirements in keeping with the Indian tradition of a complete presentation, Narayana Guru then goes on to include the progressive extinction of consciousness in the absolute ground.

While it is possible that the garland, after it disappears behind the wearer’s back, forms a complete loop to the first shoulder again, any such speculations are scrupulously avoided by both Narayana Guru and Guru Nitya. Their concern is a total presentation of consciousness, and no claims are made based on faith. Speculation on life after death, or any type of speculation, is placed by them in this work as belonging to a psychological reality based on the superimposition of personal values on universal values, and as such it is only a hindrance to the reduction and integration process that receives primacy here.

It is doubtful that we are extracting more symbolic meaning than is justified from Narayana Guru’s metaphor of a garland. The reader will find throughout his work that the Guru’s imagery—non-visual as well as visual—is a seed or kernel which, when watered and tended by the student’s intellect and intuition, yields an impressive harvest of insight.

Briefly, the work is in two parts of five darsanas each. Part I may be said to deal with the origin and extroversion of consciousness, while Part II treats its introspection and reemergence. The first darsana, Adhyaropa, presents the creation and essential structure of consciousness. Perception is examined in some detail, and is shown to be of the nature of projection or superimposition on the actual ground of being. The Vedantic approach makes it clear that in this we all share a kind of generic defect in our awareness; the same is transformed by everyone into personal, specific variations which merit the attention of the psychiatrist only when they become exaggerated. As Guru Nitya says on page 65: “The world we think to be real has in fact very little objective reality. It is padded out in all directions with half-baked conceptual notions and hidebound prejudices.” The aim of the second darsana, Apavada, is to correct this universal condition through recognizing and refuting that which is false. In the course of this several dual aspects of existence are highlighted, including cause and effect, unity and multiplicity, and the self and the other. How the individual attains knowledge is also treated here.

The Asatya Darsana is based on the principle that the knowledge of what is false is the most potent way to eliminate it. Knowing how the unreal appears real to us, and how we substitute mental pictures for reality, can motivate us to undertake the discipline of correction for our own benefit instead of merely treating it as an interesting abstraction. Up to this point of the work there are parallels with conventional psychotherapy, as the subject matter is generally the correction of errors in cognition. Beyond this point Darsanamala takes the reader further to discover his own true nature, something that has yet to come within the purview of the Western science of psychology.

The next four darsanas relate to a proper understanding of the world and the individual’s place in it. When wrong notions are uprooted, there should be normalized notions offered to replace them. The Maya Darsana presents a corrected perception of the empirical world and its transactional verity. How false

suppositions proliferate into the manifold world and the negative factors which conceal truth from us are also within its scope. The Bhana Darsana complements this with a normative notion of awareness in its several aspects, including the traditional scheme of a four-fold consciousness. This leads naturally to the great dictum *tat eva sat*, “That alone is” at the midpoint of the work, described by Nitya as “the precious pendant and secret key of the entire ‘Garland of Visions’.”

In the second half of Darsanamala, Narayana Guru reverses the normal scientific methodology of seeking truth through its effects. He wants us to discover the original cause from which all effects follow. This can be viewed as the wholesale, as opposed to the piecemeal, approach. His disciple, Nataraja Guru, expressed seeking truth through the study of its effects as opening a door from the hinge side. Certainly it can be done, with a great effort, but isn't it easier to open it from the side of the latch? In *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*, (vol.I, p.239), Nataraja Guru describes this important difference between Parts I and II:

The methodology and structuralism tacitly presupposed in the Darsana Mala implies both a reduction and a construction by which multiplicity is first reduced to negative unity in the first five chapters. Both plurality and duality get abolished by a method of elimination of what is doubtful and unessential. Having touched the rock bottom of ontology by this negative reduction, the last five chapters aim at a more positive construction implying the normalizing of existence with its own rational subsistence. There is a construction implied in the method here by which ontology gets transformed into a value-world where teleological first and final causes gain gradual primacy. Even at this stage of reconstruction there are always the Self and the non-Self involved as irreducible counterparts related by complementarity, reciprocity and cancellability.

The second part of Darsanamala commences at the gross level of action with the Karma Darsana. Action is generally taken for granted, but it becomes elusively subtle when carefully examined. That we are actors initiating action is shown to be a faulty assumption that binds us in chains of misery-producing cause and effect. Our attachment to action transforms the I-consciousness from the source of awareness to an object of awareness. The remedy for this is to relinquish attachment by turning to the unmoved mover of the Self. Similarly, the Jnana Darsana contrasts conditioned knowledge, based on I-consciousness, with the unconditioned knowledge that is free of I-consciousness. To arrive at a total awareness of the Self, the various forms of knowledge are given a philosophical structuring and value orientation. In the earlier darsanas, knowledge was viewed from the standpoint of how it affects the individual, while here it is given its absolute status in the overall scheme of existence. This completes the normalized vision of reality offered by Narayana Guru, setting the stage for the reemergence in the blissful state of the Self described in the final three darsanas.

The Bhakti Darsana presents the science of values and their interrelationships. Certitude of awareness is gained through bhakti, defined as continuous contemplation of one's Self. This comes about by a resolution of duality that is an outcome of the unifying and focusing of the psyche through its natural interest and joyful devotion. Identification with the Self automatically dissipates the disturbances and restlessness caused by our conjunction with the non-Self. In the Yoga Darsana this joyful orientation to the Self is augmented with the intentional uprooting of binding tendencies like conceptualization based on name and form and the compulsive action arising from incipient memories. The aim is the total cessation of the part of consciousness that fluctuates and thereby automatically produces the duality of subject and object. A number of specific suggestions are made for putting this into practice. In these two darsanas the psyche is realigned with its Self, first

through a bipolarity based on love and devotion and then through contemplative absorption.

The various grades of absorption in the totality of consciousness are discussed in the final vision, Nirvana Darsana. Nirvana is here translated as extinction, meaning the extinction of limited awareness in the bliss of the Absolute. Still, the term 'extinction' can have some rather frightening connotations. It is important to realize that the final verses do not represent the goal of Narayana Guru's teaching, but are included to round out the thoroughgoing presentation of awareness that is required by the Guru's methodology as well as by Indian philosophical tradition. To misunderstand the significance of the last five verses could have a negative effect on the seeker. Nataraja Guru points out: "Here it is the inner enjoyment of the high value implied in the notion of the Absolute that serves as the diagnostic factor. The outer evidence of such enjoyment might be feeble in the eyes of an onlooker who is not conscious of the Bliss of contemplation of the Absolute." As stated earlier, Narayana Guru's highest ideal is closest to that given in the fifth verse, where the knower of the Absolute retains his realization while interacting with the world for its own benefit. This is poetically presented in verses 11 and 12 of his Subrahmanya Kirtanam, in a free English translation by Guru Nitya:

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.

Narayana Guru was a living example of his own highest ideal. The news that a person has attained Self-realization is common enough in India to cause barely a ripple of interest. What distinguishes the best from the generality is how that realization is lived and shared with humanity as a whole. The story of the Guru's life is an exciting and inspiring one, a drama of a quiet crusade to revitalize the highest of human values amongst a downtrodden people. But it is his role as a revaluator of wisdom that brings the Guru's influence out of a localized context and into the world arena. As put by Nataraja Guru in *The Word of the Guru* (p.61): "His method and approach to the subject of non-dual wisdom for the first time conforms not merely to 'objective' or 'critical' standards, but—and this is of epochal significance—even comes up to the requirements of a 'normative' or 'experimental' science, as far as that will probably ever be possible."

We are fortunate indeed that the fierce one-pointedness of contemplative withdrawal necessary for the Guru's realization was complemented by an unusually high intellectual ability and an extensive grounding in academic and spiritual classical literature. This and his later exposure to Western scientific thinking are combined in his momentous breakthrough in the form of a philosophical revaluation. In addition, the brilliance of his insight attracted some of India's most intelligent seekers to his ashram, and these have served to keep this revolutionary wisdom alive and growing. This includes his disciple Nataraja Guru, and his disciple

Nitya Chaitanya Yati, who have dedicated their lives to the incorporation and extrapolation of the Guru's teachings. It is of more than passing interest to note that both of them chose Darsanamala to form the core of their most definitive written works.

A well-known novelist once described his method of writing. First he writes a scene of one particular event, just a simple vignette of a few pages. Later he produces another scene, then more and more until he has a good-sized stack of them. All he needs to do is put them in a sequence with a few connecting sentences and he has his book.

Our everyday thinking is very much like the writing style of this novelist. We proceed in a linear fashion through a series of disjunct incidents seemingly held together by common characters and settings. The significance of each event depends solely on the particular context, and we derive the meaning of our life from the progression of several of them through time. This type of orientation to our surroundings becomes habitual as we progress through childhood, and is firmly fixed by the time we attain maturity.

In producing Darsanamala, Narayana Guru had a very different perspective. Contemplating intensely for year upon year he evolved a unitive vision of the whole of the mind and its universe. Then, for the benefit of others, he divided his unitive awareness into major categories using a scientific methodology. This type of word production, where wisdom emerges from a holistic appreciation that transcends linear thinking, is called darsana. It is a philosophically presented mystical vision. Our habitual mode of thinking becomes a major impediment when we seek to grasp the kind of word-wisdom found in Darsanamala. Where our minds tend to follow a one-dimensional line, so to speak, we are confronted here with a multidimensional solid. Even with the able assistance of Guru Nitya providing a kind of interdimensional bridge, the reader must make an intensive effort

in an unaccustomed direction in order to penetrate to the heart of it. Where reading a novel is natural and entertaining, assimilating Darsanamala is a concentrated process, with the major rewards apparent only after a wholesale appreciation is attained.

If it were not for the compassionate guidance provided by Guru Nitya every step of the way, the work would undoubtedly remain the unappreciated masterpiece that it has been up to now. It most definitely requires an interpreter, for which role the Guru is eminently suited. Not only has he dived deeply into the mystery of the work's content, he has a sympathetic understanding of the point of view of the seeker gleaned from his worldwide exposure to stumbling students of every stripe. He never loses sight of the fact that the reader is a seeker of wisdom bent on self-improvement to achieve his own happiness, rather than an "armchair philosopher" with only a superficial interest.

The Psychology of Darsanamala is not written to prove a point, but as a guidebook for seekers of Self-realization. Certain ideas which might be passionately defended in the average book of philosophy are taken here as a matter of course. The reader is expected to make the effort to grasp the meaning of what is offered, and the benefit will be in proportion to the effort expended. In this, the reader will be much better served by a leisurely and sympathetic approach. If he can take the time to absorb it verse by verse, perhaps spending even a day in reflection with each, adding as much of his own insight as possible, then he will discover the truly extraordinary nature of what is printed here. One hundred years of continuous contemplation by three of the modern world's most original and intelligent thinkers is encapsulated here, and one cannot hope to have it all in a week's casual perusal.

The intricacies and details of the structure of Darsanamala are not especially examined in the present work, as Nataraja Guru has already done so with great thoroughness in *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*. For the student who is interested in discovering the full scope of Darsanamala, *An Integrated Science*

of the Absolute is eminently suited as a companion book to *The Psychology of Darsanamala*. The former work covers the implications of Darsanamala from the theoretical side, while the latter is more a practical guide for a personal search or self-examination based on Narayana Guru's visions.

Guru Nitya is an expert at explaining complicated ideas in ways that make them easily accessible. However, the reader should note that the disarming simplicity of his presentation belies the depth and radicality of the content of the present work. This is word-wisdom with the power to draw the mind out of hiding to discover for itself its true nature. The book is not for anyone clinging to the vested interests of their ego; it is for those who have already decided to give up their small comforts for a greater bliss and are prepared to make substantial efforts towards this end. *The Psychology of Darsanamala* makes unusual demands on the reader, not through any exterior coercion or threats of damnation, but through "reason, steadily applied." Such a tool can be quite effective in unmasking the depth of one's being, which is well guarded by fear and psychological defense-mechanisms. On page 413 we read, "To those who are constantly under the spell of their ego-infatuation, forgetting or forgoing the ego is wrought with the fear of being destroyed. Such a prospect always brings to them a plaguing sense of insecurity. So they always prefer to have some sense object to be associated with, or other paranoiac people to make friends with. This emotional dependence and sense indulgence keeps the mind always at the periphery of consciousness, and it becomes incapacitated either to dive deep or to fly high." While it is quite proper to keep the bliss of the Absolute in mind in our goal-orientation, we should not forget that part of ourselves may be wholeheartedly opposed to the success of our quest.

Since this is by no means a beginning work in Vedanta, some familiarity with Sanskrit terminology on the part of the reader is assumed here. While almost everything is explained in detail

within the text, a few peculiarities need to be pointed out beforehand.

It will be noted that the word 'self' is sometimes capitalized and sometimes not. These are two distinct terms. When capitalized, 'Self' refers to the universal or true 'I', defined as sat-cit-ananda, existence-knowledge-bliss or value. It is the source of the 'self', the totality of parts that go to make up the individual. So 'self' is the individual, and 'Self' the absolute ground or being from which the individual emerges.

The focus of awareness within the self is called the I-consciousness. It is the monitor of the personality, and is colored by the social ego. This localized identification is the basis of polarization between the 'self' and the 'other', from which arise the manifold dualities of our perception. The text will examine this and the relationship of the self to the Self in great detail.

Generally speaking, consciousness is used here to include the entire range of existentiality, meaning both the conscious and the unconscious in the Western context. Awareness is the term which closely corresponds to the Western idea of consciousness. Unfortunately, due to the grounding of the author in Western as well as Eastern disciplines, such distinctions are not always adhered to. A perceptive reader should readily be able to note this from the context and make the appropriate adjustments.

The terms 'horizontal' and 'vertical' are used extensively in this work. They refer to the two axes of the cross or Cartesian coordinates, and while having their origination in the distant past, they have only recently been developed by Nataraja Guru into their proper philosophical stature as a frame of reference for wisdom. The interested student can turn to Nataraja Guru's writings for a more complete understanding of the subject. For the purposes of this introduction we need only say that vertical elements have an eternal quality, while horizontal ones belong to what is transient. Where the horizontal is conditioned, the vertical is unconditioned. Dual factors that may be integrated by this scheme include truth and supposition, spirit and matter, contemplation and action,

oneness and multiplicity, and conception and perception. Christians intuitively use this relationship in the idea of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man. It forms the basis for the distinction between 'real' and 'actual' highlighted in this book.

The four states of consciousness according to Vedanta can also be superimposed on the coordinate axes. Waking consciousness, jagrat, corresponds to the horizontal positive, while the dream state, svapna, is placed at the horizontal negative. Susupti, the deep sleep state, is placed at the vertical negative, and turiya, the transcendental, is represented by the vertical positive. Thus the horizontal covers the range of perceptual values from objectivity on the plus side to subjectivity on the negative, and the vertical comprises conceptual values which rise from the alpha to the omega in a graded series. Such is the frame of reference which comprises the core of the Science of the Absolute, of which Darsanamala is a textbook.

As a byproduct of the emerging equality between the sexes, the word 'man' and its correlates 'he', 'him' and so on, have been recently called into question as perpetuating a sexual bias. Historically, 'man' has referred inclusively to both sexes, and has a rich and important etymological significance, being derived from the Sanskrit word Manu, the fourteen progenitors of mankind. In recognition of this neutrality, Old English had prefixes for each gender, of which the male was dropped and the female evolved into 'woman' over a period of time. The disappearance of the male prefix probably reflects the male dominance of this period, coupled with the Christian Church's effort to superimpose a male God on the face of the all-embracing Absolute. The process of rectifying this discrepancy has begun only lately, with the word 'person' replacing 'man' in compound words such as 'spokesperson', "chairperson" and the like. However, it would be more fitting to extract the notion of 'male' from our concept of 'man' in the way that 'female' was during the European Dark Ages. Terms currently in use, such as 'he or she' and 'him/her', are unwieldy in sentences

with four or five references, and must be considered intermediate steps in the development of proper terminology. It is hoped that a normalized language in respect to gender will be developed in the near future as a result of the current creative ferment. As stated earlier, the author fully supports the equal status of any and all subgroups within humanity. The Science of the Absolute is open to anyone, male or female, with an earnest desire to enter in to it. In the present work, therefore, the word 'man', and 'he', 'him' and 'his' referring to it, should be taken in the original all-inclusive sense, unless specifically excepted.

Quotations from Narayana Guru's writings found in the text are Guru Nitya's translations. The maximum effort has been made by him to incorporate the subtle implications of the originals in a readable and poetic English, and the results speak for themselves. The frequent excerpts from the Bhagavad Gita are all Nataraja Guru's translations, in our opinion the finest rendered so far in the English language. They are generally unattributed in this book, but may be found in his commentary published by R + K Publishing House, New Delhi.

So now the stage is set and the actors have been introduced. The lights of phenomenality are dimming down, and the crowd grows quiet. As the curtain rises, the audience is invited to participate in the fullest possible measure.

Scott Teitsworth
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