

7/31/18

## MOTS Chapter 4: Return to the Source and Establish Reunion

Knowledge, the object of interest,  
and one's personal knowledge are nothing other than *mahas*;  
merging into that infinite, Supreme Knowledge,  
become That alone.

The free translation:

Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and one's cognition of both are in fact only variations of a beginningless Being. By merging in that knowledge of infinitude one should become undifferentiated with it.

All you lucky people don't have to start your Wednesdays sitting before a piece of virtual paper overwhelmed by the immense amount of material that needs to be filtered and arranged from yet another amazing class session. As I imitate the Wicked Witch of the West and gradually shrink away to nothing, the ambit of our collective ponderings expands at a rapid rate. The contrast is surely daunting.

I'm going to lighten the load slightly by inviting a contribution that some of you might actually enjoy making. I may as well start off with it, though it is based on Nitya's last paragraph, which begins:

Regaining identity with the Absolute is like going back home from a long and tedious pilgrimage through several lives, and sitting on one's own seat in calm repose, with the recognition that there is nothing else to gain in the three worlds other than the Self.

Bushra was struck by these lines, and we spent some time talking about the wonderful feeling of being home after a long and

engaging journey. I'm sure everyone is quite familiar with the specialness of the feeling, each in your own way. It's not different from finding your True Nature or your dharma, but more often it is a partial intimation of what those ideals hold. Which is okay.

Bushra noted there are times when you feel at home, and then you lose it. Those are more superficial versions, but they are all touching something important. I think it would be lovely for several of you to send in your experiences of returning to a sense of belonging, of being home again, deep or shallow. How did you get there, and what does it mean to you?

We brought up several versions we experience regularly. Groups often have a sense of familiarity that humans find enabling, maybe stemming from our not-too-long-extinct tribal consciousness. Our class is one of those. Shared events like concerts, movies, plays, where every mind in the room is attuned to the same focal point surely generate that feeling. Nita, a retired high school English teacher, talked about how each of her classes had a character of its own, and if one member was absent for a time she could sense a subtle shift in the "tone" of the class. So we are home in many ways and at various times and places. A corollary to think or write about would be to note when you are *not* feeling at home. What's missing? Or what's present that takes you away from that reassuring sense of belonging to a greater reality?

The Bible refers to this subject in the parable of the prodigal son, a really dissolute character who is welcomed home and celebrated by his father after "spending his inheritance." (Could this mean renouncing his vasanās and saṃskaras?) From a social perspective it seems so unfair! He doesn't deserve his father's welcome home! The good son who behaves and sticks around can't believe it. The implication at the very least is that being lost increases the joy of being found, which must be because we discover so much by wandering off the beaten track. We discover why being found is valuable. If it home merely taken for granted, it doesn't amount to anything. The message really flies in the face of

orthodoxy, which does not encourage kicking up your heels. Almost the whole history of Christianity is pitted against it.

In some ways, the return to the Self is more fantastic if you didn't expect it and weren't trying for it. The more miserable you are, the better the rebound. Yet intentionally making things miserable doesn't work—it has to be natural miserableness. The story I related last week about trip guide Zeff and the photographs marks the moment of departure: we leave home when we surrender our sovereignty to the social setup, most dramatically when we start school, though some parents work hard to inculcate socialization as early as possible. I don't think we need to exacerbate the process, but you do have to lose yourself before you can find yourself. You have to “become somebody before you become nobody,” as Ram Dass has put it. Again, this is the opposite of social reality, where it's our “somebody-ness” that is the goal. In spirituality, we find ourselves by losing ourselves: by relinquishing our stuff and becoming nobody we discover who we really are under all the garbage and verbiage.

I related how in the audio book *Liberating Ourselves*, I suggested the malaises that would arise if the various chakras were not fully awakened. The first chakra, *muladhara*, is where we feel at home, it is the solid basis of our life. If it is closed down we will always have a sense of not belonging, of not being where we are supposed to be. Internal homelessness. Bushra was fond of a well-grounded youngster in one of her film classes for homeless teens, who asserted “I'm roofless but I'm not homeless.” His first chakra was alive and well.

Okay, let's get back to the beginning of the evening. You can write about home later. Deb felt the chapter is reminding us to not be overly enamored of phenomena, meaning to see how they are not nearly as solid and outside of us as they appear to be. We are so identified with situations and other people that we lose our own identity and think of ourselves more as reflections of our surroundings than as embodying significant reality.

Nitya does a fabulous job here in comparing the waking and dreaming states, showing that they are much more similar than we realize. The wakeful state, like the dream, is self-generated, though we presume there is some sort of outside reality that impacts it. We have to give it more credence because our well-being depends on a successful interaction with the wakeful world. This always reminds me of something Nitya said in *That Alone*, verse 54:

We tend to imagine the unconscious in terms of consciousness, timelessness in terms of time, spacelessness in terms of space. This is an injustice, squeezing the unconscious into the mold of the conscious in order to try to understand it. It is also partisan: you are in favor of consciousness.

Waking consciousness is our “somebody,” and the rest is relegated to the status of “nobody,” even by those of us who believe in the value of the unconscious and the unknown. It takes directed effort to let go of who we think we are.

Knowing that the wakeful is manipulated by the mind, crafted, and presented as a seamless story that we fully accept as real nudges us toward being co-creators of our world. We are already participating unconsciously, so let’s work with it consciously. Even if it’s a feeble force compared to our inner talents, we can have some positive effects. Life would be a meaningless survival exercise if it wasn’t possible to do anything. But it is, it is!

Deb noted that in dreams, many things happen that are like a teaching. She gets some of her best poems from dreams, or at least their inspiration. Bill told us about working with Stanley Krippner in the Dream Lab on an article on dreams and creativity. There are a number of scientific discoveries that were famously revealed in dreams, and they well knew dreams are fertile soil for that kind of imagining. It was the supposition of the article that most forms of creativity make something new out of disparate but familiar elements. The creation of something truly new is much more rare.

This reminded Andy of a neurologist's summation he once read, of the near identity of the waking and dreaming states: waking life is *constrained imagination*. It's perfect, though as Deb chimed in, the constraints are necessary in a transactional framework. I suggested that while they are necessary, as adults we have the freedom to set them aside if we have the fortitude. We all brought in tons of constraints as young children (making us somebody), but now that we are stabilized in ourselves and presumably capable of making adult choices, we can allow ourselves the creative freedom of less constraint (temporarily making us nobody, however briefly). At least everyone agrees that creativity is bubbling away beneath our willful constraints. We could.... Ah, never mind.

So even while dreaming we can have an effect on what takes place. Usually it means working hard on a problem and/or going to sleep with affirmed intentions, and this prompts the inner genius to respond within certain parameters. Based on this week's lesson, we could work with the wakeful state in a similar fashion. That's what we're doing in these ridiculous Gurukula classes, too, by the way: opening ourselves to vaguely intimated possibilities. Hopefully they have had some transformative influence in your life; otherwise they don't amount to much as pure entertainment....

Bushra feels that dream insights are a coalescence of something that has been building inside of us. Dreams reveal what you have been thinking about, even if in reality you don't want to admit it. There are times when she wakes up scared by what she has dreamt, but she knows if you stay with the dream you realize you can't deny it. It's already in you. This shakes the foundations of your whole being or reality. They are being questioned. You meet them in your dreams because you cannot quite face them in waking life.

Bill has been noticing more keenly that we really do craft our world—we make up what we see. It's an inviting revelation! All the realignment of our psyches according to the high values of

Vedanta that we have been working on is actually beginning to bring about change. It's kind of exciting.

We discussed how we synchronize with others around us without even trying, showing there's some interior connection beyond our awareness. Bushra noted how women living together wind up with their monthly cycles at the same time; she didn't report (perhaps no one ever will) on what that does to the communal mood. I shared a lovely account from Peter Matthiessen of a meeting of conflicted hearts, that I'll tuck in Part II. Also there you can find Baiju's deep meditation and Walt Whitman's exuberant celebration of the spirit of our study. If anyone sends homey thoughts, we'll have a Part III later.

Susan added how a room full of dancers feels like a single entity, when you're a part of it. She had also recently shared some insights on synchronicity from Ursula LeGuin that I can't find, pendulums synchronizing and so on, but while looking for them I came across a gem that fits right in with our class:

The daily routine of most adults is so heavy and artificial that we are closed off to much of the world. We have to do this in order to get our work done. I think one purpose of art is to get us out of those routines. When we hear music or poetry or stories, the world opens up again. We're drawn in — or out — and the windows of our perception are cleansed, as William Blake said. The same thing can happen when we're around young children or adults who have unlearned those habits of shutting the world out.

Moni was overcome by the many ways we are touched by encounters to reveal our inner self. She talked about how Guru Nitya always came to her in her dreams to teach her, but she knows it is only her consciousness. As she put it, "in my dream there is an independent state of mind, allowing the true knowledge to come out. Only in my sleep I drift into that place where I need that help

or answer. You go to your source. That is the self. That is the Absolute within you.”

Dreams are crafted by our brains—we know this—but they are presented in a similar format to the wakeful presentation, which should strike us as odd. Of course we don’t seem to register oddness in the dream very often—we can put up with just about anything short of tyrannosaurus bites. Nitya muses about a dream he had involving Nataraja Guru, and how strange it is that his consciousness can split into a self-contained subject and object:

When I experienced seeing Guru in my dream, I also saw myself as distinctly different from him. After putting questions to him in the dream, I had to wait for answers, as if he was outside my consciousness. When an answer came, it had the quality of novelty and uniqueness which are characteristic of another person’s ideas, yet I know that both the question and answer came from my own consciousness.

What we lose when we forget the projected nature of reality is close contact with our essential beingness. Nitya was a vivid dreamer, meaning he had a stronger awareness of himself while asleep than most of us do, most of the time. I don’t think he was really surprised, but he shares a surprising fact:

What surprises me is the unaltering identity of the I-consciousness in the dream and the wakeful, and my experience of this identity as an unbroken and ever-present core of my own consciousness.

That mysterious and scientifically unsubstantiated self-identity holds up through all our states of awareness. Meaning awareness has a deeper foundation than anything we play around with in the wakeful and dream states. Nitya notes the various changing roles that are played out as his threefold experience of knower, doer and

enjoyer (or sufferer), and how these are governed by an inner agency in the same way our autonomic systems are regulated.

I'm sure we're all familiar with the *triputi*, or the tri-basic division of consciousness, but for review, knowledge, action and enjoyment have a unitive basis, but in our ordinary state of non-contemplative awareness we divvy each of them up into three parts. Take enjoyment: we have our I-sense as the prospective enjoyer, an event or object to be enjoyed, and the resultant sense of joy we crave to experience. It's termed as the enjoyer, the enjoyed, and enjoyment. Or knower, known and knowledge; actor, acted upon and action. Nitya relates the crucial point: "There is no hope of realizing the true and pure form of the Self unless one can transcend this."

I meant to explain this to new visitor Nita, who had admitted to being "vague" about triputi in an email. But she already had gotten the gist from the reading, and referred to it as a delicate dance: for instance, when you're listening to a musical performance and you perceive it as being a magnificent performance, the very act of recognizing this comes out of a consciousness that somehow contradicts the existence of the experience. She clarified what she meant: "I am creating the beauty of this performance because I'm hearing it. It feels good to be hearing beauty. At same time, I'm isolating and identifying it stands between myself and the experience." Turns out Nita was already prepared to teach me something! And that's what a teacher does, quite naturally. Too bad she will be teaching in California (at Aaron Eden's old school) for the next year, but she plans to stay tuned via the notes.

In our meditations, contemplations and reflections we should aim at unity, which is the source from which manifold reality derives its existence, such as it is. Nitya puts it this way:

If we can somehow manage to return to the source, where knowledge, abstracted and held out as a notion in our mind, is identified as non-differentiated from the knower and the

known, and by the same token know that the knower and the known are the same, we achieve what is called unitive understanding (*advaita darsana*).

Normally we attend a concert as an enjoyer, and the entertainment is what we enjoy. We are led to think that our enjoyment is being supplied by the entertainer, and is dependent on it. Thus there is a feeling of loss when stimulations are not available. Is that the story of modern civilization, or what?

It is worthwhile to reframe it as the wonder we're experiencing is the Absolute context showing us how amazing we already are. If the joy was not present within us, it could not be created by our experience. It must be there already. On our daily walks Nitya would often stop to admire a flower or a sunset, take a deep breath and say, "How beautiful I am!" It took me a while to figure out what he meant, but he was implying that everything should be reminding us of our divinity. A rose is nothing if not perceived, and more than that, loved. Appreciated. If you really look, you are bound to see wonders. What are you waiting for?

Vedanta affirms that our very nature is joy, ananda. Events touch on our nature to remind us of what it is, and once we open back up to it, everything resonates with our joy, even, oddly enough, the terrible tragedies we know happen all the time. They don't make us joyous—we are joyous, encountering the whole range of happenings. It isn't something that can be destroyed by tragedy, and if it is, we were not truly unified. It's probably easier to distinguish our dualistic and unitive states through tragedy than through benign events, though again, it's not something we need to intentionally cultivate. There's plenty of tragedy already. Sharing our joy in meaningful ways might diminish it for a moment, but we'd be deluded to imagine we could erase one of the pillars of existence, no matter what we did.

Nitya concludes that the person endowed with the realization of unity can easily understand the four great Upanishadic dictums, and this chapter is a perfect place to return to refresh your memory

of what they are. They amount to an affirmation that we and everything are the Absolute through and through. Gurus of the past found that humans tend to forget this truth, so *sishtyas* (disciples) are expected to remind themselves of it until it actually sinks in. Give yourself plenty of time.

## Part II

### Baiju's contribution:

In meditation #4 of the MOTS, Guru Nitya has lucidly demonstrated with the example of his dream that consciousness is just one-the cardinal principle of the Unitive Philosophy. To convince others of the philosophic postulates and conclusions, the modern philosophers from the east and the west have been struggling where Guru Nitya's smooth elucidation of the Advaita principle is like a gorgeous piece of art or a honey-sweet melody, at once to our minds both soothing and enlightening.

Guru Nitya: "...easy for me to abstract the knowledge content of my mind as a pure notion which is different from what I call 'I', and what I recognize as the object of my knowledge." In the dream, when analysed, it is found that from the same knowledge came the questions of 'I' and the answers of the 'object of my knowledge'. If in dream the 'great knowledge' could make such magical wonders, why can't this phenomenal world be a similar creation, by the same great knowledge, in the waking state? The Guru asserts that to be the truth.

Narayana Guru has, in verse 4, proclaimed that *triputi*, the tri-basic division of consciousness into the knower, the known, and the knowledge is in reality nothing but the great unitive knowledge which is the one and the same substratum of unbroken consciousness. And we should merge back into the same great unitive knowledge.

In Vedantic terms, the veil of ignorance (*Maya*) that causes the apparent perception of *triputi* everywhere is due to the “great fall” from the original state. Instinctively yet unconsciously man keeps striving hard to return to the place from where he has fallen. The “master impulse” makes him do everything that is pleasure-seeking with the misapprehension that the pleasure-giving objects will take him to his original state of *Ananda*, the absolute bliss which is the nature of the Self. The attempt thus to go back “home”, it’s clear, is not a conscious one and so he seeks pleasure in all objects outside, which are only the magical show of the ignorance-creating *Maya* dividing the pure consciousness into *triputi*.

Narayana Guru says one has to make conscious effort to always bear in mind that the division as the knower, the known and the knowledge is only a superimposed fallacious appearance over the pure consciousness or otherwise referred to be the great unitive knowledge; therefore continue to work towards merging back into the Self.

The Guru highlights this important point in his other works as well. For example, we see his reference to *triputi* in the first verse of his Malayalam composition, *Janani-Navaratna-Manjari* (Nine stanzas to the Absolute as Mother):

From that unitive mind-stuff, all encompassing,

A thousand tri-basic rays (of knowledge-knower-known) come  
and,

Lo and anon, self-consciousness gone,

There awakened love of food and such;

Fallen thus into the ocean of need and lost altogether,

Say when, O Mother, shall my inner being regain that path of hope  
To be merged within the domain of pure word-import,  
Bereft of all tri-basic prejudice  
And, within the core of the radiance outspread of reason pure,  
Reabsorbed in communion cool, ever remain.

(Nataraja Guru's translation)

No returning home unless we get rid of the tri-basic prejudice  
(*triputi*) which obscures the way home.

Verse 4 of *Atmopadesa Satakam* ends: *Ammahattam arivilamarnnatu matramayitenam*. Literally it means: push yourself and enter into that Great Knowledge– the Self–, merge with it, and become that alone! Our awareness that identifies ourselves to be individuated selves is the problem. Now when the Guru clearly explains to us we realize that the dawn of the awareness of each one of us as a separate individuated self, and the formation of its concomitant I-my-mine nature are all because of the tri-basic division. Man must be able to distinguish between his central goal and the peripheral activities of his worldly life, and the central goal should never be out of focus while performing the worldly functions. The ability to do so is defined as *viveka* (discrimination). The Guru emphasizes (as implied) that consciously ignoring the apparent experience of *triputi* and continuing the effort to be the Self is the way forward to attain the central goal.

Here is an analogy from the Vedantic literature: it is about the life of a professional stage actor; when he is on the stage acting a

particular role he is aware that he is participating in a drama and he is only playing his part in it, and inside the stage costume he is just the actor who plays the role he has assumed. In those moments on the stage, the actor tries his best to live the part he plays and the spectators appreciate if he performs well. It is but a performance.

He has always been his original self for sure whether or not he dons his stage costumes. In his peripheral role as an actor, he is able to switch to the stage role, internally remaining unchanged himself. Tomorrow the role he has to play may also change – only a minor change in the periphery, having his regular life unaffected.

Worldly life is a drama to be played well according to the dramatic rules, just wearing the worldly costume that is appropriate for each individuated self. The professional actor on the stage is not attached to his stage role. Every one of us should play his role, as an actor in this world, with all the sincerity the role deserves, but with little attachment to the role as such; because we now know that our individual role-play in the life in this world is the display of the *triputi* the Guru has just described. Our central goal is to win over the apparent tri-basic divisions and merge back into the Self.

*Aum tat sat.*

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Author Peter Matthiessen's contribution to the book *Zig Zag Zen*, about the intersection of psychedelics and Buddhism, has a lovely account of how we can share our "awake" dreams sometimes. In writing about his transition from drugs to unassisted spirituality, he comments on the 1960s: "What we needed was a teacher and a discipline. In those days, instant gurus were turning up as thick as bean sprouts, but true teachers were very hard to find." Those of us fortunate to land with Nitya are made even more grateful by this fact. Many people only know the failed guru stories, which are legion. There were no ratings in advance of

taking a plunge, so disasters were easy to come by. One of the moments of “coming home” that stands out in my life is the first class with Nitya in 1970, realizing that here was an authentic knower of the Self, one who knew what he was talking about. We had won the guru lottery! There is no way to explain it; only gratitude for it.

Matthiessen did lots of trips with his companion Deborah Love, referred to as D. The best one is worth recounting. LSD made telepathy happen on occasion:

I remember an April afternoon in 1962, when we had taken LSD together. She came out onto the terrace of a country house and drifted toward me, down across the lawn. D had black hair and beautiful wide eyes; in the spring breeze and light of flowers, she looked bewitched. We had been quarreling in recent days, and recriminations rose, tumbling all over one another in the rush to be spoken, yet as we drew near, the arguments aired so often in the past rose one by one and passed away in silence. There was no need to speak, the other knew to the last word what would be said. Struck dumb by this telepathy, our mouths snapped shut at the same instant, then burst into smiles at the precise timing of this comic mime of our old fights; delighted, we embraced and laughed and laughed. And still not one word had been spoken; only later did we discover that all thoughts, laughter, and emotions had been not similar but *just the same, one mind, one Mind*, even to this: that as we held each other, both bodies turned into sapling trees that flowed into each other, grew together in one strong trunk that pushed a taproot deeper and deeper into the ground. (87)

(Compiled by Allan Hunt Badiner and Alex Grey, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002)

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Susan wrote this morning, in relation to Nitya's "Aren't I beautiful!":

I was trying to find the quote that Bushra mentioned from Whitman [if I don't send the sunset out of me, I will die] but even this beginning is so relevant to class.

Wow.

1

I CELEBRATE myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me, as good belongs  
to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease, observing a spear of  
summer grass.

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes—the  
shelves are crowded with perfumes,  
I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and  
like it,  
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I  
shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste  
of the distillation, it is odorless,

It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,  
I will go to the bank by the wood, and become  
undisguised and naked,  
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,  
Echoes, ripples, buzzed whispers, love-root, silk-  
thread, crotch, vine,  
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my  
heart, the passing of blood and air through  
my lungs,  
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of  
the shore and dark-colored sea-rocks, and of  
hay in the barn,  
The sound of the belched words of my voice,  
words loosed to the eddies of the wind,  
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching  
around of arms,  
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the  
supple boughs wag,  
The delight alone, or in the rush of the streets, or  
along the fields and hill-sides,  
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song  
of me rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckoned a thousand acres much?  
have you reckoned the earth much?  
Have you practiced so long to learn to read?  
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of  
poems?

Stop this day and night with me, and you shall  
possess the origin of all poems,  
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun —  
there are millions of suns left,  
You shall no longer take things at second or third  
hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead,  
nor feed on the spectres in books,

You shall not look through my eyes either, nor  
take things from me,  
You shall listen to all sides, and filter them from  
yourself.

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the  
talk of the beginning and the end,  
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is  
now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there  
is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge, and urge, and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance —  
always substance and increase, always sex,  
Always a knit of identity, always distinction,  
always a breed of life.

### Part III

We got a few responses, mainly “in-house,” for tales of coming home, but I’ll take whatever the traffic will bear. I thought maybe someone would mention the so-called nesting instinct, when just before a baby is born the parents rush around cleaning, neatening and preparing the home, constructing a welcoming environment. There is plainly an inner controller at work, and the drive is undeniable, exciting, and very likely sanitary. It may not strike us as coming home, because right then we sense we’re

diving into the unknown rather than regaining the familiar. Only later does it feel like home. But it is, it is!

From Deborah:

Home can be so many different places or experiences and those may change over our lives. But that immediate sense that “this is home”, that is always recognizable. My first memory of that is from the age of four or so, a time of only a few recollections. We lived in Dearborn, Michigan, a part of Detroit, in a townhouse complex. In the front area were a trees and a grassy lawn. Some part of this had a tree, either dead or partially so, with a section of the trunk hollowed out, just the kind of place an animal would want to hide or use for a home. There was a metal fencing around it, and I remember my parents telling me to not go in there, that it could be dangerous. But the memory of “home”, which wasn’t exactly what I felt, more like simply being where I wanted to be, drew me there and I remember moving or crossing the wire and going into the hole alone, sitting there quietly in the dark. It was not premeditated, it wasn’t a thought, not even a rebellious act. Being in there was simply what I wanted and needed and I went. I still have that sensation of being in the tree, alone and silent. In a home.

Another important recognition of home began when I was 10 and my family went to the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and Montana—the crystalline, clear lakes, the snow fields, the quicksilver creeks in the valleys, the scattering of Indian paintbrush flowers, the fresh, high air. From a lifetime in the Midwest this was all a revelation. And yet it felt in like a return to something precious in me, a welcoming home. Which it has continued to be.

In both these experiences of home, the home was both in me and something I saw or felt outside of myself. It was a uniting of the two and a realization of that.

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Jan:

I identified with your prompt about when you are not feeling at home in yourself, and what is missing?

I had a self-realization earlier this week that I was in that place. I saw myself stuck in obsessive thoughts about the other and habitual negative modes of thinking. Some deeper awareness came forth and helped me strive to shake it all loose....then I went to sleep and awoke truly feeling liberated. I felt more connected to my deeper self and my sense of belonging in my life.

Symbolically, I returned to my early childhood school days. I had a clear vision of myself and some of my positive qualities going back in time. I felt the excitement and vast potential that would come in the cool morning air of approaching fall and school beginning (I loved school as a girl...) It felt like a gift, a reminder that there was a world of possibility ahead of me, and I was eager to meet it. I know I was still grounded in my individual self but in a deeper way.

Other times, I feel the rejuvenation that comes from meditation and contemplations, where returning to a vast self-less place happens and less thinking or identification happens. I think the verse is talking about that more, but often we cannot just go there and take steps toward it, which is probably what the above example shows.

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Scott:

From a very early age I have felt that I didn't belong to the human race. I just didn't get it! Everybody else seemed to know what was going on, what to do and how to do it, which to my mind meant they knew something I didn't. But I had no idea of why anything was necessary, or how to go about it. My questions about this were mostly answered with platitudes that boiled down to the circular adult argument "It's so because I said so," or the tautological one: "That's what we do."

I grudgingly went along with all that was expected of me—school, sports, chores, friendships, schedules—but always in the back of my mind was a nagging doubt. Being a kid, I of course assumed it was just my own lack, and I was a flawed person. But it made me eager to figure out what was going on, and why things were the way they were.

I'm a natural outsider, obviously, and got along decently with the 'out crowd' in high school, yet I remained an outsider even to that. Occasional warm friendships were heartening, but were mostly about goofing around, making fun of everyone without being aware of any alternative. Being a cynical wanderer was interesting in that very rich period of history, but it didn't satisfy me all the way to the core.

To make this short, two major restorative moments occurred. The first was an early LSD trip, maybe my second or third. (The first trip was at a Cream concert in New Haven, so there was amazing music but no room for reflection.) When I finally tripped alone my first flash was, "Oh my God, I'm home! I was right—all that stuff *doesn't* make sense! This is where I belong, where I exist." And so on. It was a tremendous relief. It launched a long period of sarcasm about what others take for granted, but that gradually faded away as I gained comfort with my new state of mind.

That supportive condition remained as a background until the rare trip I have alluded to before, which met all the criteria (put together later) of an optimal mystical experience, the tip of

Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid. True Self-actualization. I visualized it as I had been rushing away from myself, trying to escape my inadequacies, but my beeline to elsewhere was slightly curved, so my trajectory actually described a huge circle. By going forward I had mysteriously arrived back at my self, and the realization blew my mind. I had come home to my true being.

In addition to the core realization of universal oneness and love, I knew I now needed a guru to guide me back to that place without medicinal assistance. Though I may never have come all the way back down to social reality, there was definitely an improving ability to interact with the world and maintain my equipoise, a.k.a the integration of horizontal elements with the newly discovered vertical impulse.

Some six months later, in September of 1970, Deb and I attended the first class of then-Swami Nitya on the Bhagavad Gita, in Portland. The Matthiessen quote above is true: "In those days, instant gurus were turning up as thick as bean sprouts, but true teachers were very hard to find." By some beneficence of fate we had hit the guru jackpot. It felt like a true arrival at a place that mattered immensely. I was no longer alone, floating in the Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter, I was in the company of fellow Earthlings not so different from me. Deb and I agreed as we left the room after the initial class that here was the first person we'd ever encountered who actually knew what he was talking about. It was another coming home moment, one that felt like it had roots in many lifetimes, and that has persisted through all the intervening zooms and crashes. Even now it recalls to mind the lovely quote from Nitya in Love and Blessings, about a talk he gave to his acolytes in an Australian National Park:

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.

\* \* \*

Dipika is studying at her own pace, and sent this a few weeks after the rest:

somehow talks on spirituality were always like a 'coming home' for me too.

As kids in a Convent school, we non Catholic children had a 'Moral Science' class.

I remember being wide awake and present and all ears.....

later in life as my meditation has got stronger...whenever I sit....and get deeper into the vast empty space that opens up....it settles my soul.

So we all seem to have this thread in common....yes !!