

10/19/21

In the Stream of Consciousness – Part Two
Chapter 17G – Sharing, and Economical Distribution

The second of today's stories is the only one I added in preparing the second edition, and I no longer have any recollection of where it came from. I did rename a few of the stories and rearranged their order for the sake of continuity, so if you're one of the lucky few who's using the first edition, you might be moderately confused. The stories are all there, somewhere.

Both stories being on the same topic, we read them together at the outset. There is a Taoist change factor at work here—in the 50s or early 60s when they took place, India was full of beggars and the West was not. Now the situation is reversed, with begging rampant in the West and India much less afflicted, as it was taken seriously, and the criminal element prosecuted.

The other day Karen was in a big department store, paying at the register, and she saw a man with a loaded shopping cart just walk out of the store with it. The cashier told her the company policy was to not do anything. It's the new normal here in the US, and with a little stretching it is in accord with Nataraja Guru's advice. The "needy pots" just come and get filled by the cartload.

Deb's opening comment was that in both stories Nataraja Guru does not lose sight of the bigger economic picture. He knows that hunger is much more immediate need: exemplified by a trusting person holding out their hand. Changing the world economic system is too glacial a process to alleviate pressing needs. The question is what can you do as one human being for another?

Bill felt it was an issue of compassion, also. For several months he has been meditating on Buddhism's Four Immeasurables: loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. The third, sympathetic joyousness, includes being able to alleviate someone else's suffering. Your joy comes from meeting the Absolute in your own nature, and the joy that comes

from that should be shared with other people.

Deb noted that this was also expressed by Narayana Guru, in Atmo 22:

The happiness of another—that is my happiness;
one's own joy is another's joy—this is the guiding principle;
that action which is good for one person
should bring happiness to another.

I added that *intentionally* sharing joy is fraught with problems, because it amounts to evangelism, and it's as likely to rebound negatively as help. The idea is to first find true unitive joy within yourself, and then it naturally shares itself with those around you. It's energizing to be around someone who is centered, harmonious and alive to the situation.

Humans like to see a problem and go fix it, but if we haven't attended to our own problems yet, the good intentions often go awry. So it's important to be grounded in a joyful, transcendental outlook.

Steven offered that the way a society taxes citizens and redistributes the wealth to those in need may be less personal, but it is addressing the same needs. At least with that system you know (or expect) you are contributing to the common good. Unfortunately, we have come to a place where those who are the wealthiest do not contribute their fair share, and they now control the political process. As a result, we see all this need around us, but we don't see public institutions addressing that need. Many good-hearted people try to step up and fill the gap by volunteering, but the problems are too immense. He averred we should take every opportunity to demonstrate compassion.

Deb and Moni had recently talked about when Moni first started working in Oregon. Back then there was huge government support for mental health, but it was cancelled long ago. They are trying to work through the political system to regain society-wide support.

I remember about 25 years ago when they closed the mental health institutions, put the inmates in vans, and dropped them on the streets of the city. Good bye and good luck!

Steven admitted what we all face now, in the US: every day he is constantly coming in contact with people begging. What to do? Most of the class time we mulled over this, but it isn't the central issue of the stories, and I want to focus on what is. There are many safe and smart options for helping the needy, where just handing out money is likely to have a poor result. Deb promised to make a list of local options and share it, though it may take a few days, as she's going to visit her grandson in California. Her list will offer some efficient work-arounds to begging on the street. I'd bet there are lists already up on the internet, for wherever you live.

Nataraja Guru had confidence in the beneficence of the earth to provide for all, but humans have trashed that, overdrawn our account. He distinguished between abundance and opulence: abundance is the natural state, and why the earth was so successful for 3/4 of a billion years in supporting higher life forms. All those creatures thrived on nature's abundance, maintaining a balanced economy, or eco-nomy.

Deb lamented that the human race has turned to opulence, not being content with mere abundance. For instance, a large share of crops is left to rot on the ground, if it isn't perfect enough to sell at high prices in the market. We talked about gleaning, where the leftovers are salvaged from the fields, which is substantial in our area. Nancy ruefully noted we don't have that problem in our neighborhood, because the deer and elk take it all, though often before harvest time.

In addition to opulence, we seem to be greedy about accumulating things we don't need. Deb mentioned that when Nitya was given something, he might use it a little, but quite soon he would pass it along to someone else. He did this with money, too. Peter O told us about one instance, that I wrote about in the PG50 Day Two recollections of last month:

Nitya wanted to get a new manual typewriter, since someone had given him some money. He asked Peter to take him to a place where they were selling typewriters, so they went to Portland's old department store, Gill's, which was upscale but had a good assortment of office equipment. He picked out a green Olivetti, and Peter said, "I'll take you for lunch and then I'll do some comparison shopping, so we can get it cheaper." Nitya protested, "No, we'll buy this one. I have a financial consideration: if I don't spend money in Portland this week, the money from San Francisco won't come to me. It's like turning on a spigot." It turned out to be true, and Peter eventually found that it works for everyone, in terms of energy. Whatever you put out keeps the flow going.

On that note, Nancy extolled the giveaway, an essential part of Native American culture. In the potlatch of the Northwest, tribes gave away all their possessions, and other things come back in abundance. She reasoned if we clean things out, the energy of the universe moves back in. We need to keep passing it along. Use what you need, but you don't need so much.

Deb added that the potlatch taught that part of being wealthy was giving it all away, because it nurtured community. There is a continuing fluidity of gifting, along with sharing compassion and openness. We have to pass gifts along, and not hold them to ourselves.

Nancy harrumphed that our city is now filled up with block after block of storage units. She finds it alarming, a kind of constipation. We are clinging to stuff; it's that kind of mentality.

Jan put in that a lot of that storage is because people are homeless, and they need a place to put their belongings, which is sadly true.

Paul nudged us toward the key idea of these stories. In the one about tomatoes, instead of calling making off with them stealing, Nataraja Guru said it was the most economical distribution system. For Paul, that meant there was no longer good

and evil. The Guru turned a crime into a response to need, and Paul found that really refreshing. His heavily-churched upbringing hangs around his neck like a ship anchor, the way that community loved to classify and condemn, assign a negative or positive value to everything, and delighted in smugly hating the negative.

Just about my favorite line from the Bible is “judge not, that ye be not judged.” I think it hints that the act of judging tears the judger apart also—it’s as damaging to them as to the one accused. There’s another level of not judging intended here, where you yogically synthesize the polarity. It’s not about choosing good over evil or love over hate, they are combined, unified, in a creative and constructive way. Becoming evil in support of good ideas reveals the fallacy in duality.

There is also a subtext I wanted to mention: In many of these stories Nitya is playing the fool and Nataraja Guru is supplying a contrary attitude. He was a master contrarian, always taking an exactly opposite position to any rigid belief, to get to a balanced place, and avoid deciding which is the proper side to be on.

Deb recalled an anecdote like that about Narayana Guru, where a man was caught stealing money from the offering box. The Guru said, “Great! He likes money. He can be our Treasurer.” (The slightly longer version appears in Nancy Y’s *Narayana Guru: A Life of Liberating Love*, on page 137, along with several other amusing vignettes.)

Steven told us about a book that his dissertation advisor wrote in 1996, Bellah (with a team of sociologists) — *Habits of the Heart*. It’s an update on de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, to see if its basic findings are still valid. The argument hinges on individualism, the “self-made man,” versus community, which in the nineteenth century was mainly people joining together in churches, in all denominations. That’s the tension in American culture, when we discuss policy issues. We all need to take care of each other, yet we have abandoned community for the cult of the individual, and it’s devastating us. He gave the example of vaccinations: a small sacrifice that would be highly beneficial to

the community at large is resisted as diminishing the individual's right to do whatever they want. And thousands needlessly die.

Community organizing might work better if propaganda wasn't so efficient these days. Now what the individual wants is likely a mass-merchandized piece of commercial manipulation, hammered home in infinite iterations, drowning the voices of amity.

Deb agreed that fear-mongering is working against the well-being of community spirit. Individuals can reduce the fear with an inner joy that spreads out as a vehicle for generosity in the common good.

Bill acknowledged the idea of community is predicated on feeling that if other people are suffering, it's hard to be happy yourself. If you are intent on reducing suffering, you have to open up to that level of compassion. It reminded Steven of something Martin Luther King, Jr. quoted: if there is even one person who is suffering, none are free. King's meaning was we have a role in suffering and a responsibility to address it. And Nitya says right in *The Stream of Consciousness*, socialism and democracy are the best systems, because of their sense of responsibility for the common good.

Although it's a familiar sentiment throughout the liberal universe, readers of Vonnegut are familiar with an identifiable source of that powerful saying, from an important character in US history. Next to The Beatitudes of the Bible, the lines atheist Vonnegut quoted most were from his fellow Hoosier Eugene V. Debs: "As long as there is a lower class, I am in it; as long as there is a criminal class, I am of it; as long as there is a soul in prison, I am not free." If you don't know about Debs, who my wife was apparently named after, take a peek:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugene_V._Debs

We maintain an almost-manageable sized community one night a week at the Portland Gurukula, probably the most miniscule entity that could rate any level of community. Political accord gets harder as you add people, and by the time you get to 40

or so, it's already too big to handle democratically. It's almost impossible, especially now, to cope with an entire country of a third of a billion people as a community. People our (advanced) age, can remember when a myth like that permeated our sense of belongingness, and it was wonderful, and occasionally constructive. But now we know it by its absence, and we have to learn to cope. We all know Margaret Mead's summation: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." I've added some excellent ideas on hope and activism from Jane Goodall, in Part II.

Because of this, I recommend we don't wait for US politics to solve our problems. It's too easy to sabotage anything of importance. One of my mottoes is, don't expect the criminals to fix what they've broken.

We should continue to imagine the world as our country, and our country as our community, but realize we have to act locally. Action includes much more than hopping up and down in frustration, or anger. We can act intelligently. Please remember there are millions of concerned citizens wandering in a similar direction already.

Paul wondered whether sentiments like love and compassion were innate or acquired. Deb, inspired by her current reading of Alison Gopnik's *The Philosophical Baby*, answered that young children can be truly loving, and they all eventually learn to say "mine," and stake out their territory. Scientist Gopnik claims that it's well established that traits like these are a mix of heredity and nurture, and each one influences the other.

Paul mused that maybe, in conditioned behavior, our feeling of compassion comes not so much from understanding but delayering or detachment from who we have learned to become. When we get to the core of the onion, we discover we have a shared consciousness, and when we understand our interconnectedness, compassion and love become automatic. Well said!

Bill brought in Patanjali, since he's good at making us understand all the layers of memories, cultural influences and person idiosyncrasies that cloud our consciousness, as well as how to let go of them so you can get back to your essential core. (A revisit of Patanjali's Yoga Shastra is the most likely next project for the class, by the way.) In the calmness of meditation or other spiritual discipline, you gain the ability to see your true nature.

Steven added kindly that the importance of congregating with others in the company of truth, a satsang, increases those positive qualities. So true!

Last night we were six in person and seven on Zoom, those in the room outnumbered by the electronic connection, yet something special persists despite the separation. It's still a satsang. As Nitya once wrote me: "Physical distance is a myth to the spirit." It's even more of a myth when the voices and images of our friends are on a screen on the table with us.

Paul continued that last year he was anesthetically "put under" a few times in the hospital. At first he was scared of it, but then looked forward to it. When he does have control, he feels he can really screw things up. Ideas spin in his head and it's hard to sleep. Being anesthetized was like learning how to get out of his own way, in a way.

My dry suggestion was for him to anesthetize his self-critic, and Bill advocated for meditation. Jan added a shout out to Gayathri's online meditation course she's been doing. (If you're interested and don't already know Gayathri, write me and I'll put you in touch. It's better than anesthesia!)

Steven brought the class to our own meditation moment by advocating for the turiya, the vertical positive or omega in our structural scheme of the coordinate axes. Anesthesia, like deep sleep, is located at the *sushupti* or vertical negative pole. Our "spiritual" unfoldment is to expand consciousness as we ascend the axis, or live our life, culminating in enlightenment at the positive pole, where you are in deep restfulness but you're fully aware. Nuff said.

Part II

Sharing

When our train steamed into a major junction, we purchased lunch packets. Guru opened his packet and was about to eat his first morsel of food, when a small boy of seven or eight who stood outside the train stretched out his hand. Guru passed the ball of rice on to him. The boy quickly swallowed it and stretched his hand again before Guru had eaten the second morsel.

This annoyed me, and I wanted to push the child away. But Guru stopped me from doing that. He ate the second rice ball he had made and then gave another ball of rice to the boy.

He turned to me and said, "I know people are annoyed by beggars. Poverty is bad, but it is not a crime. Every man is trying to live as best he can. What you see here in India can never happen in the West. This boy is a total stranger to us, but he is so confident of the love and compassion of others. It is that trust of man in man that makes him stretch out his hand. You should become tearful at the sight. This mutual recognition and sharing is discredited in sophisticated societies.

"Do not mix up the issues of abolishing poverty and relating to someone in need. If you take the first issue, you will have to tackle the economy of the whole world. Do it if you can. But the second question has an immediate urgency. You don't have to renounce your happiness, you are only expected to share. Your own happiness is to be bracketed with the happiness of others."

Economical Distribution

When I was living at the Somanahalli Gurukula, I used to grow tomatoes. I would laboriously haul buckets up from the river to water my small plot, and as the months went by I enjoyed

watching the green fruits appear and swell and redden towards ripeness.

None ever became fully developed, however. In the night the poor villagers would come and pluck the ripe fruits from the vines. I was very angry about it. I wanted to storm into town and find the culprits. Nataraja Guru, who was visiting at the time, told me, “No, no, it works very well this way. The tomatoes are finding a home where they are most needed. If we gave them away we wouldn’t know who really needed what. Now they go directly into needy pots. It’s the most economical distribution system.”

* * *

A letter about hope, from Jane Goodall to a friend in the Food Revolution Network:

I'm writing today because we are going through dark times. Violence, hatred, discrimination, the pandemic, environmental destruction, and climate change all threaten our future.

Ever since I began traveling around the world in 1986 to raise awareness about the harms we humans have created, socially and environmentally, I have met so many people who have lost hope for the future. Probably the question I am asked more often than any other is: Do you honestly believe there is hope for our world? For the future of our children and grandchildren?

And I am able to answer truthfully — *yes*.

What is this "hope" that I still believe in, that keeps me motivated to carry on, fighting the good fight? What do I really mean by "hope"?

Hope is often misunderstood. People tend to think that it is simply passive wishful thinking: I hope something will happen, but I'm

not going to do anything about it. This is indeed the opposite of real hope, which requires action and engagement.

I have four main reasons to feel hopeful about the future of our world: the amazing human intellect, the resilience of nature, the power of young people, and the indomitable human spirit.

Hope is nothing less than a crucial survival trait that has sustained our species since the time of our Stone Age ancestors. Certainly, my own improbable journey would have been impossible had I lacked hope.

Hope is contagious. Your actions will inspire others. Thank you, and thanks to all the members of Food Revolution Network for all that you are doing to make a difference. The cumulative effect of thousands of ethical actions can help to save and improve our world for future generations.

It is my sincere desire that you will find solace in a time of anguish, direction in a time of uncertainty, and courage in a time of fear. I want to invite you to join me in a journey toward hope and toward working to find solutions to the problems that threaten our world.

Together, we can do so much. I believe we have barely begun to discover what humans are truly capable of when we become engaged, when we work together, and when we take constructive action to build a world that is worthy of the dreams of our children.

With love (and with hope),

Jane Goodall Co-Author of [*The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times*](#)

Part III

From Dipika:

Your discussion on opulence & abundance, hit a note with me... especially here in India... where the contrasts are so stark. The really sad stories of people dying during the lockdown due to the sheer negligence shown by the Govt. in having just basic systems in place... showed us all, how precariously more than half the population lived & was an eye opener for a lot about how much unnecessary 'stuff' we have accumulated.

I have been called 'frugal' 'cause am always conscious about how much I spend... maybe its my film production background which just refuses to allow me to waste money. 😊

And I hate throwing out good clothes... of course one can give them to charity... but dresses n crop tops cannot be donated here... so I wait to give the good ones away to someone who wouldn't mind wearing them. And now its trending in fashion... up cycling or whatever!!!

Anyways these last 2 years has just made it very clear that we are all in this together and need to look out for each other.

To call stealing an economic distribution is a paradigm shift and a great new way to see... if of course it doesn't hit your life's earnings!

Jane Goodall's message is indeed hope full.

Lovely... thank you for sharing



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Charles also contributed:

World War Z (5/10) Movie CLIP - Over the Wall (2013) HD:
<https://youtu.be/uU0DNCV22dU> [Disturbing, described below]

TAMASIK negative archetypal imagery. We use disguised fantasy images because what is actually happening is too disturbing to watch.

PRETAS

Death and Life are universal counterparts

The fear of death is universal. In all times and places, people fear death.

People are fascinated by death and deeply fear that the dead don't go away. They want to eat us, they want to make us dead like them. They invade our minds in nightmares.

The fear of the dead is an mythological expression of the fear of death.

The fear of walking alone in the dark and being encountered, followed and attacked by dead people.

In the folklore of traditional societies (ghost stories) and in modern horror movies

Gives rise to archetypal imagery of a dark kind

I am impressed by the popularity of zombie movies and TV series in our time. We are haunted by these images. What do they mean?

They must mean more than one thing. Maybe many things. Maybe things that are inaccessible, unthinkable. Maybe we could speculate...

One kind of rational interpretation might be that zombies are fantasy representations of masses of dehumanized people. A way of thinking of people so degraded by fate, by overpopulation and war that we can't relate to them as human like us. We can't see them anymore.

In this clip from World War Z, we see Jerusalem surrounded by hordes of zombies. This might reflect deep fears of the affluent Israeli people surrounded by desperate impoverished

Palestinians. Even though the walls are high, the zombies are climbing over the wall like an ocean when the dam breaks.

I myself feel the dread typical-of the prosperous middle class citizen-when I go into Portland from my home in the countryside, and see encampments of homeless people, cluttered with trash, everywhere, along freeways, under bridges, at intersections and roundabouts, more and more of them every week.

And graffiti everywhere.

A large proportion of the homeless are mentally ill or addicted to drugs.

This is a growing phenomenon. We feel guilty when we realize that it is hard for us to see these people as fully human. They are ignored as they beg for money. We walk past or drive past and avert our eyes.

This is not happening only in Portland. Look at the desperate refugees from Africa and the Middle East trying to find a place for themselves and their children in the prosperous countries of Western Europe.

It's happening more and more all over the world.

As the effects of climate change kick in, it is going to get much, much worse.

It is a total, Absolute, global problem.

Zombies!

* * *

A comment from Jay:

Read [Charles's] posting including the video, and as I was reading it few thoughts came in my mind which I wish to share with you.

Stress brings out the best or the worst from an individual. Covid-19 has caused lots of stress all over the world.

More materialization, the social evil, reduces the chances of universal peace and happiness. This is because the root cause of this evil is Maya. In other words it is ignorance that works to promote the unhappiness and miseries in the world. This is why it has been said that the richest man in the world is the one who needs nothing! In my observation everyone is thinking of more and more possession. All our energy and skills are used to get rich, materialistically speaking. Thus more evil is stirred up. The whole story of Mahabharata and the genesis of Gita are based on this evil. The story of need versus greed! Generally people tend to be practical in life and follow "Umbrella Principle", you can't cover the sky, cover yourself! This does not reduce the problems. But then again the promise of Gita Ch4, V7, keeps our hope alive.

The verse Jay cited is Krishna saying:

Whenever there comes to be laxity in regard to right life, O Arjuna, and wrong coming to assert itself, then I bring about the creation of myself.