

4/7/15  
Verse 100

Neither that, nor this, nor the meaning of existence am I,  
but existence, consciousness, joy immortal; thus attaining clarity,  
emboldened,  
discarding attachment to being and non-being,  
one should gently, gently merge in *SAT-AUM*.

Free translation:

You are neither this nor that nor the content of what is perceived as being. Know yourself to be pure existence, all-embracing consciousness, and immortal joy. Being brave with such a clear vision, discard all attachment to being and non-being, and gently, gently merge in that Truth that fills all with enlightenment and serene joy—AUM.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

Neither this, nor that nor the content of existence am I,  
But existence, subsistence, joy-immortal; thus attaining clarity.  
Emboldened, discarding attachment to being and non-being  
One should gently, gently, merge in SAT-AUM.

Such a profound time of sitting together, as we brought to a close another journey under Nitya's compassionate guidance. For this once we began with reading out both the "short version" (Neither This Nor That...) and the "long version" (That Alone). Appropriate to our dialectical approach, this is the only time the short version is longer than the long one....

That Alone is a work that continues to inspire fresh insights with each reading. No matter how many times you delve into it, it precipitates new revelations. The class agreed that as we grow, we become attuned to additional aspects of the philosophy we hadn't

suspected before. In this way, Nitya's talks resemble poetry—in many ways they *are* poetry. In the shadow of his poet father Nitya occasionally struggled to write regular poetry, with modest success, but his classes were the apex of poetic imagination.

Speaking of which, this morning, Beverley sent a nice note that included a paraphrase from T.S. Eliot's Little Gidding that perfectly expresses the sense of completion and expansion we all felt as we basked in the final verse of Atmo. Suitably enough, this is the very end of the last of his Four Quartets:

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

Through the unknown,  
unremembered gate  
When the last of earth left to  
discover  
Is that which was the  
beginning;  
At the source of the longest  
river  
The voice of the hidden  
waterfall  
And the children in the apple-  
tree

Not known, because not looked  
for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
A condition of complete simplicity



(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flames are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.

Not bad, T.S.!

We sat for a long time in meditation, as is appropriate to this verse of final merger. It truly is wonderful how easily a small group can sink into profound states, when by ourselves we tend to suffer much more mental chatter.

Yet we couldn't resist sharing our joy in words as well. Actually, it was almost impossible to break the silence, the peace was so intense. I opened my mouth many times, but no sound came out, and I sensed that Deb was having the same difficulty. Finally I audibly affirmed Nitya's brief instruction: the intensity of the state we have accessed should make us courageous. Fear comes from being cut off from our true nature, and reclaiming our Self erases the anxiety we experience in its absence. The all-encompassing state represented by Aum is a permanently abiding reality, and once we are in tune with that we not only become fearless, we respond to our environment with balance and expertise. Where we once shot back partial, misshapen responses based on our personal limitations, by easing into the ocean of being we all share we can offer a global, inclusive perspective.

Once the spell of silence was broken, the burbling streams of consciousness began to flow in mutual ecstasy. Much of it was pure gratitude for the profundity of our journey together, an experience all-too rare in the hubbub of the twenty-first century. This is a meeting without competition, aimed at sharing rather than argument. Undoubtedly, coming together as a class adds another dimension of transformative impact to the study. We have nothing to prove but much to learn.

Deb emerged from her inner quiescence and said, “I have such a sense of gratitude that all of us have been able to participate together. What I have learned has been amplified by everyone's participation. I am grateful to Nitya and Narayana Guru for their frontierless teaching that is not grounded in some particular place and is open to any human being anywhere.”

It would be embarrassing to recount all the words of appreciation from everyone, heartwarming as they were. Suffice to say those still participating are enthusiastic about the positive effect the classes have made in their lives. I noted that the Portland Gurukula class, now in its 37th year, has never been so focused and coherent. It is heartening to notice how everyone is handling their life with more effectiveness and compassion. The point all along has been to convert our lives from chaotic randomness to something deep, meaningful, and yes, more fun. The fact that it is actually happening is ample reward for the time Deb and I put into it. Life is meant to be a wonderful experience, and it shines when it is lived with enthusiasm.

Prabu is fairly new to the class, but what he said was as thrilling as it gets. He used to try to read philosophy and couldn't relate—he would get frustrated and just throw the books away. And Prabu is no dummy! He always preferred literature, as the great novels made sense to him. Now, however, he is finally able to get into the philosophy. Before, when he read spiritual works he either wouldn't understand or he actually found them disturbing in the way they introduced schisms into life. With the help of That Alone he feels like he is at last ready to start appreciating spiritual philosophy, and he has begun reading the book from the beginning. Needless to say, this is almost as exciting for us as for him.

I also feel that Vedanta can be bone dry or boring, and most of it is worthless. Moni agreed, and added you have to see how it can be implemented in your life, and then it has value. Academic philosophy intentionally leaves out relevance, so it is almost always deadly. Deb recalled a college philosophy class that just addled her brain, for no gain. I have always prized a quote in

Nataraja Guru's Gita that says it perfectly, from VI, 46, which reads "The yogi is greater than men of austerity, and he is thought to be greater than men of wisdom, and greater than men of works; therefore become a yogi, O Arjuna." Nataraja Guru comments:

Mere *tapas* (austerity) as it is known in the field of Indian spirituality, is a severe form of joyless self-discipline. The jnani is a wise man who might at best belong to the Samkhya (rationalist) or Nyaya (logical) philosophical schools, whose life is based on reasoning which generally ends up with sophistications and academic discussions, by themselves dry as dust. Likewise the ritualist tends to become ego-centered and harshly exclusive. Yoga generally understood is both a way of thinking and a way of life. The yogi is a dialectician who harmonizes old in terms of new and *vice-versa*, and is capable of giving fresh life to arguments which otherwise would be dead or stale. The breeze of a fresh life enlivens the ways of a yogi.

Each of the types of spirituality referred to here, when they are taken according to a yogic method or theory of knowledge, become, as it were, transmuted. This verse states the superiority of such a yogic way in both practical and theoretical matters.

I love that one line especially: "The breeze of a fresh life enlivens the ways of a yogi."

Susan shared several of her favorite passages from *That Alone*, which she had marked as we went along. She wrote, "Before class, I decided to read through all the passages I have marked over the last few years in our study of *Atmo*. I was really interested to notice that all the passages had similar themes. The passages addressed depression and negativity, making mountains out of molehills, and various ways we get obsessed with the material world. They explain how and why the mind works the way it does and then how to live more peacefully without all this negativity. The remedies that meant the most to me were the

oceanic treasury mentioned in Verse 3 (this image has been vital to my well being since my first reading of the book 10 years ago), the understanding of the witnessing consciousness, and coming to a unitive understanding from within.” Here are two of her faves, the first from the end of Verse 37, and the second from the end of 62:

The ultimate thing is to become *saumya*, which means finding the quietness within you. It is by attaining sama, sameness, that you become quiet inside. This is to be cultivated throughout. Each day begins a new series of encounters. Each encounter is to be taken as a challenge to reestablish your inner serenity, inner quietness, inner sense of sameness through an act of adoration, an attitude of worship and a sense of the sublime.

There is no need for you to win all the time. Your greater victory lies in your acceptance of defeat, allowing the other to win. You may be in an argument. What does it matter if you win or not? Give the other person the chance to win. Even if he uses some falsehood, when you allow him to win he rethinks the situation. In his heart of hearts he knows he did not deserve the victory. He knows the truth of your silence. You do not become egoistic and you don't make the other person egoistic either. It will chastise him as well as purify him.

Thus, through the cultivation of silence, sameness and serenity, you come to a unitive understanding from within. This brings peace and harmony. Where there is peace and harmony, love spontaneously comes. When you give yourself into the hands of grace, the hands of the Divine, things which are difficult to attain become abundantly possible. Then you can say you have attained the discrimination of the unbroken, by which every 'this' is brought under the spell of the universal sameness.

The Guru is here suggesting to us the most gentle pressure in the search. At the same time it is not lukewarm. It is an *urjita*,

an out-and-out search, but that search is not directed to just one isolated area. Life itself is the search. It goes on until we come to what is called *paramapadam*, an absolute state.

The absolute state comes when all relative aspects are seen in their relatedness within the Absolute. Everything has its own niche and you don't have to dismiss anything. It all gets placed properly in its context. There has to be a reorganization of the whole life so that things are put in their appropriate position and understood as being part of an organic whole. Once this is done, that's all.

The state of being the Absolute is continuous and simple. It's not a static experience or event. When you think of it, don't think of it as a great mass with the whole world inside it. A little baby smiling is a simple thing, but within that simplicity there is no shade of pretension. It doesn't smile to please anyone. It just smiles. A little flower tosses its head in the breeze—that's an absolute event. It is not a copy of a flower or an idea of a flower, it is an absolute flower. It shines of itself. So when you think Absolute, don't think it should fill the whole universe. There is a timelessness in it and an irrelevancy of the space occupied. It just is.

This is understood by the Japanese poets when they write haiku. The quality of the haiku is the element of the Absolute in it which comes as just a little shimmering—of its beauty, of its plainness—in your heart. That's it. You don't have to explain it to anyone. You should never read haiku to someone and then give a commentary on it. That's the worst thing you could do with it. Instead, silently read it and close the book. Then just feel the serenity that pacifies you and makes you forget the world for a little while, even if only for a fraction of a moment. A fluttering leaf comes down and you gaze at it. Until it hits the ground you forget everything. It's an Absolute experience. You don't have to be ponderously meditating, "Who am I? Who is seeing this leaf which is fluttering in the autumn wind?" You falsify the whole situation by thinking that way.

We all agreed that the entire book is a continuous highlight reel, an embarrassment of riches. I've never met anything that came close.

Love and Blessings, though, is not too far behind, while not as densely packed. Because of the theme of merger into silence, I read out a couple of excerpts from Nitya's time with his first real guru, Dr. Mees:

The Kanva Ashram is an abode of solemn silence imbued with the spirit of incessant search in the mysterious cave of timeless mythology. Of an almost unearthly beauty, it remains completely concealed from public curiosity. Dr. Mees introduced himself to occasional visitors as Sadhu Ekarasa....

That first night after hearing Mees' theories... I felt somewhat confused. I had always thought of myths as superstition. To me, to think of them as valuable was to go on a wild goose chase. But I had the patience to wait and see to what extent I could get along with his ideas. I was thinking of myself as an unformed chick in an egg, and that Dr. Mees was going to break the shell. Would I ever be the same again after being indoctrinated into what he called Traditional Psychology? I wasn't sure. I was entering a new world with an unfamiliar earth and an unknown heaven. I decided to wait until the next morning to get a clearer picture.

Towards the close of evening on my first day, I noticed something that had earlier escaped my attention. As a small boy I used to sit with my father near the creek flowing next to our rice fields, where I listened to the several natural sounds: the gurgling of water, the rustling of rice sheaves in the gentle breeze, the hum of the cicadas and the croaking of frogs. All through my life I had been listening to different sounds. But the Kanva Ashram was quiet and still. The expectant hush of silence grew deeper and deeper as day passed into night. It was by no means the sheer absence of sound. Rather, I experienced



it as if listening to a divine choir. I began to realize for the first time how truly vibrant silence is.

Then I started noticing many sounds that had always been drowned out before, like the soft pad of my footsteps, the creaking of doors, and the din created by turning the pages of a book. Even my breathing began to seem loud.

I wanted to merge into the silence, and I became more and more ashamed of my awkwardness whenever I caused a disruption of the total tranquility that prevailed in the ashram. I decided to discipline myself step by step so that my personality would merge into the background. This attempt to resonate with the flowing patterns of Nature's silent articulation made me very self-conscious for about a week. After that it was as if the inner flow of silence suffused my very breath and circulated as the lifeblood in my veins and arteries. (99-100)

With this scheme in mind I began to visualize awareness as a mysterious canvas that is hidden from sight by the endless parade of names and forms that are endlessly being painted on it. This was a revelation to me of my inherent freedom. I realized I no longer had to confine myself to being caged within a body.

In contrast to the many sterile and withdrawn spiritual programs peddled in the modern world, Dr. Mees turned my attention to the joy of the senses in order to discover the blissful center of the soul. I soon became familiar with the rhapsody and rhyme of poetry, the many moods of musical harmony, the rhythms and patterns of dance, and the individual's capacity to be transformed into any other type of character via the theatrical arts.

Every day at the feet of my loving master Sadhu Ekarasa was a day of spiritual feasting and divine jubilation. I have no words to properly express my gratitude to this great master of infinite compassion and dedicated zeal, who helped me to transform my several fickle interests into an intense discipline

of unending joy. He led me by the hand step by step down the grand avenue of living spirituality, which has time and again been frequented by prophets, poets, visionaries, artists, and seekers of all sorts. Each day big chunks of misunderstanding were thrown out of my mind, and I marveled at my growth in both reasoning and understanding. (103-4)

It's good to have words like these to amplify the silence, and our next excursion, into the Mandukya Upanishad, will be an extended meditation with less philosophical exegesis. It's classic Nitya, a series of ecstatic insights given as prophetic talks to a group of attentive disciples. It looks like it will be a delightful new line of study for us.

To set the mood for our closing meditation, and in the light of the "joy of the senses" Nitya extols in the above excerpt, we listened to the Beatles' song Here, There and Everywhere. Typically they transformed the traditional love song format into a paean of worship of the divine, and the first step in understanding the mystical power of their music is to use their words to visualize That Alone as the feminized divine. Listen along on your computer for an even better effect. The gentle sway of the music echoes the Gita's verse at V, 24: "He of inward happiness, whose inner life is free and easy, and likewise of inward brilliance—he of unitive understanding, having become the Absolute, enters the self-effacement of the Absolute." Dig it:

To lead a better life  
I need my love to be here

Here, making each day of the year  
Changing my life with a wave of her hand  
Nobody can deny that there's something there

There, running my hands through her hair  
Both of us thinking how good it can be  
Someone is speaking, but she doesn't know he's there

I want her everywhere  
And if she's beside me I know I need never care  
But to love her is to need her  
Everywhere,  
Knowing that love is to share  
Each one believing that love never dies  
Watching her eyes and hoping I'm always there

I want her everywhere  
And if she's beside me I know I need never care  
But to love her is to need her  
Everywhere,  
Knowing that love is to share  
Each one believing that love never dies  
Watching their eyes and hoping I'm always there

I will be there, and everywhere  
Here, there and everywhere

Could her name be Karu? I think it is. And so we say, from another  
cosmic Beatles song, Good Night:

Good night, good night, everybody  
Everybody everywhere  
Good night

Part II

*Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:*

The Absolute cannot be termed as “that” or “this.” A man recognizes his spontaneous awareness and he calls it “I.” As this consciousness is self-founded and not depending on an external light, if he claims his ego to be the supreme Self, that is also not true.

The Self is the undeniable truth of everything. It gives room for the appearance of modifications and, within time spans, to evolutionary changes fully governed by appropriate laws, and for all gradations of values that can make immanence meaningful without negating the ever-transcendent reality of the one Absolute. When realization comes, disjunct, distinct, and relativistic orientations vanish and their place is taken by all-embracing knowledge, which is existentially self-founded and is permeated with the nondual state that is glorified as immortal bliss. In this final stage, individuation widens its horizon to infinity and becomes overwhelmed by the encompassing mystical union of all. The lone voice of the Self merges in the vibrancy of aum. When this happens, let there be no resistance. May it come to pass.

AUM

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Nataraja Guru’s two sentence commentary makes the connection with our next subject, the Mandukya Upanishad, explicit:

AUM represents the Absolute as explained in the Mandukya Upanishad. ‘Sat’ supplies the ontological basis for the Absolute as Value.

Part III

Jake's commentary, appropriately, reprints Nitya's few words and says nothing more. Thanks to him for sharing all his fine work with us on this adventure. Aum.

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Stella sent a sweet thank you note this week, which can stand for the several others we've received:

Bob and I read this last week and contemplated on it.  
What a beautiful 'poetical' way of Nitya's explanation of  
Narayana guru's thoughts!  
What a light!  
Lovingly,  
-Stella

Part IV

Sujit takes the prize for a fitting final message of our study:

Many thanks for leading this discourse. It was an insightful and interesting journey. I have been two to three weeks behind the rest of you in catching up, often taking it at my own pace.

Atmo brings out so many facets of thoughts that its great author (Narayana Guru) was able to reflect in awesome poetry. On the one hand I am privileged to know Malayalam, raising in me some kind of a guilt that some of you may not as much enjoy the prolific usage of words and verses, often applied with a cryptic simplicity - unlike his contemporary poets who employed rhetorical Sanskrit (*sahityam*) to embellish Malayalam. The upside was in seeing the enjoyment and involvement that some of you could maintain solely in experiencing the noble outlook and philosophy - the undercurrents that carry the poem from start to end. Guru Nitya's

contemplative interpretations are par excellence, often bridging the substance over form (or language).

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