

12/5/12

Verse 2 – beforehand

Outside of class, Moni told a sweet story of the first meeting of what was to become That Alone, back in 1976. A number of people were living in a small house on Hall Street in Portland, and the rest of us made a pilgrimage early morning and evening for the classes. After the evening sessions, Nitya would ask Moni to bring him some tea or oatmeal, and they would talk. She remembers him one time asking her what she thought of that day's class. She told him how special it was, and how important, and how much everybody loved what he talked about. He looked at her and quietly said, "I also heard it." Moni knew what he meant, that he was listening to the words as they flowed out of him, but he didn't feel that he was inventing them. They were coming from somewhere else, and just passing through him. He was as much a witness to the class as we were.

I remember Nitya saying something similar in his very first class in Portland, on the Bhagavad Gita in 1970. He pointed to the light fixture in the ceiling and said, "I am like that light bulb. By itself, it doesn't give off any light, but it does have that potential. It has to have electricity passing through it, or it remains dark. Like that, by myself I don't give off any light. Nataraja Guru is my electricity. When his wisdom flows through me, it becomes a light that can be transmitted to you."

So much of Nitya's instruction was to help his disciples become properly mentally attuned so that they could detect and eventually even amplify the wisdom that is the very fabric of the universe. If we think of it as ours it is no different than rejecting it: we unintentionally shut out the light-giving energy. Instead, we are to assume the pose of empty vessels awaiting the favor of being filled by wisdom. As he sat every morning in the living room of Hall Street house, speaking words of enchanting beauty and insight, Nitya was very well prepared to transmit wisdom from the universal profundity. And as he sat, he listened to his own words

just as we did, and was thrilled by them, honoring them as if they came straight from his guru. The lesson was as much for him as for any of us. In his humble way, as he said to Moni, he also heard it.

* * *

Wendy actually followed Nitya's suggestion that "You can profitably use this verse to detect your latent urges, hidden propensities, and even your basic drive," an excellent starting point for self-instruction:

As I read and pondered this verse, I became aware of how the four aspects of consciousness: questioning, recollecting, reasoning, and being affected, create my perceptions, and when the senses, body and mind all come together they create the confection of my different worlds and a call to action, dominated by the major drive or urge that dominates that particular moment in life. How these worlds of interest lead one to the next, and how they arise from latent urges. It has been a very interesting process to step back 'from the heart of the situation' and to focus on the dynamics in play. This led into looking at many situations.

I pondered next on how the dominating interests, ones which reoccur over and over, make up my major drives. And how they have their roots in past life vasanas. Plus all the samskaras I have collected in this lifetime.

It was very early morning and I was enjoying a cup of tea [I went through the stages] and decided that my most major drive of all is the longing to know the nature of life, the Divine. The home from which I came. As a small child I loved the hymn: 'There is a happy land far, faraway, where saints in glory stand, bright, bright as day.' I so wanted to go there, to return home. So all of my life I have thirsted after esoteric books, courses, groups etc to seek and learn. Jon and Vangelis: 'Somehow I'll find my way home' has been my theme song. I dwelt in the beautiful world of crystals for

several years [where I met my partner, Karel] My greatest joy was being led to Guru Nitya who became my dearest teacher and friend.

Making my way to India and Ooty was challenging in those early days, but when ones major drive is aroused, everything becomes possible.

Secondary drives appeared in my mind: Freedom. Letting go of fear. Reaching out to unknown. Love of perfection, beauty and order. A drive for a father figure, to wrap me in warmth and strength. To be taken care of. A drive to aloneness. Being happiest off on my own as a child for a day on my bicycle, with a sandwich, apple and notebook. The pleasure of peddling and finding a peaceful spot in nature. Later in my life canoeing and exploring. The drive to run away when life became oppressive. Fear of containment.

The drive to understand love. Learning to live in a family, to care, to be of service.

My major dominant drives are:

My journey to the Divine.

Freedom- not being tied down.

Perfection –order –congruence.

Sanctuary. A place of belonging.

Writing.

Love.

Underlying these drives has always been a knowing that I am being taken care of by grace. My mother told me I was born under a lucky star. When I am still and quiet I know that everything will be alright in ways I cannot imagine.

I thought of our garden. It is a good metaphor.

It was overgrown after years of neglect when I took it over. My task was to create beauty and order within its natural structure.

This has been achieved over 12 years. During this time it has had many changes as it evolved. Karel and I have created a Zen

meditation garden area, filled with Ferns, Bamboos and dwarf conifers. So many shades of green. I love colours, shapes and spaces. So many scents too.

The garden feels like myself. Flowering, dying back, re growing. Removing inner weeds etc. Pruning here and there. Living through the forces of change.

I went through the exercises and came out with the drives I have mentioned. I also love creating a lovely home with plants, light and colour and music. I love reading. I love and value my family connections and friendships. Precious old memories. I will add that Karel is generous, kind, courageous, silent, appreciative and loving. So I aspire to all these qualities, sometimes falling short when I feel tired and can't reach my preferred standards. Then I feel lost and unsure. This is when I have to see myself as one with everything, which is why I love this book. It brings me home.

With love from Wendy.

* * *

Dipika sent a link we've shared a year or two back for another TED talk, explicitly related to the first verse, but not in any way limited to it. A visual feast of the beauty of our world and a reminder to keep loving it:

http://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+TEDTalks_video+%28TEDTalks+Main+%28SD%29+-+Site%29&utm_content=Google+International

This echoes Taira's comment in the previous notes that we draw much inspiration from what we see and feel, which is very true. And yet, sensory stimulation is only the outermost layer of our very rich cosmos of mental functioning. As we proceed in our

study, we'll be turning the arrow of our intention the other direction: from the inside out rather than from the outside in. Since our state of mind modulates the perceptible world much more than the reverse, we'll be digging as deep as we can into the inaccessible regions of our being.

Part II

John H wrote:

How can I know which state of consciousness I'm in? I sort of know after the fact - like, I was just remembering, or I was just aware of

If I become self conscious, I stop being conscious. Does that make sense?

Dear John,

I'm glad you brought this up. You may be confusing two things called self-consciousness. The more familiar one is an embarrassed or threatened ego trying to throw up a defense or a diversion, and you're right: doing that makes a person much less conscious. It shrinks the psyche down to "me versus the world," only interested in immediate rewards. This is the self-consciousness of the battlefield, the same one that Arjuna the seeker insisted on getting away from in the Gita.

The self-consciousness that is the goal of the hundred verses of self-instruction is something else entirely. Here 'self' has a global sense, inclusive of as broad a view as we are capable of. You are correct in realizing that we routinely mistake the first type for the second, a grandiose delusion that allows us to go about our business untroubled by doubts, but prone to a different set of tragic errors: forgiving ourselves our sins even as we commit more and more of them.

To the philosopher, though, those doubts are essential. They are messages from our greater self that we are leaving out important information, and we ignore them at our peril. The chaos and

misery rampant in the social sphere is the logical outcome of self-delusion, often referred to as ignorance in Vedanta.

The danger is that in confronting our doubts we can also become mired down in them, and if we do it also shrinks the psyche to a painful smallness. This is another rampant state of mind in modern humans.

So we are all assailed by doubts and fears. On the one hand we try to ignore them and cover them up, and on the other we face them but get sucked into a kind of mental quicksand from which escape seems impossible. Neither horn of this dilemma is acceptable. The study we are undertaking is to discover the synthesis of this dialectic, to attain a “higher ground” above the battering of escapism and confusion. I’m pretty sure the reason so many find solace in this book is that it leads us very effectively to this higher ground. Narayana Guru and others call this unknown territory the Self, and the shorthand for this dilemma is the contrast between self and Self. Our aim is to make that initial ‘s’ bigger and bigger, until the Self is All. It’s an exciting prospect.

Aum,
Scott

John wrote back:

Yes, the mired down and sluggish trip that happens in a self-conscious place of the first sort. I totally grok that.

Is there any place in the four steps of conscious where one can see a road sign to get out of self-conscious number one and march up the higher road to self-consciousness number 2?

Scott:

Your question hits the nail on the head. It’s precisely the kind of thinking that leads a person deeper into the subject instead of cruising along on the surface. Very good.

First of all, there are no road signs here (or there are many conflicting signs pointing every which way, which amounts to the

same thing), and that is why this little known system is definitely The Road Less Traveled. It's mysterious why some people are drawn to independently ponder the meaning of life, and yet gratifying that they do. And while the four stages of thinking described in Verse 2 have a kind of logical sequence, they are not so much linear as simultaneous and interpenetrating. We stretch them out and pin them to a board, so to speak, so we can study them. That's the transformative factor here.

Most people go through life like a leaf in a windstorm, blown across the terrain by a combination of many outside forces, both helpful and unhelpful. It works adequately, up to a point. We're often encouraged to simply "go along to get along," and it works. Then again, becoming a cog in a gigantic wheel can make us feel like we have lost our personal integrity, and we'd prefer to hold onto it.

If we happen to feel that simply Blowin' in the Wind isn't for us, we stop and think, trying to make sense out of the apparent chaos. Here is where a study of consciousness has its effect. Where we once took the surface imagery of our life for granted, we begin to see the mechanism behind it, we begin to learn about the inner structure of our mind that both binds and liberates. Then we can resist the bondage and support the liberating tendencies in us. Our efforts may be small in respect to the whole system, but they do have an effect, and it gains momentum with practice.

You will see that the Atmo study starts with some heavy going: a handful of verses to lay out the general structure of our situation from a psychological standpoint, but then it takes wings. We can soar with it because we have become cognizant of several pitfalls that have been hampering our journey, and now we can avoid them. I'll leave spelling these out for later, as the Guru introduces them. Here in Verse 2, the fourfold aspect of consciousness shows us how we register a scene, compare it to what we know, label it, and decide whether we like it or not. While helpful and even essential, can you see how this is also the basis of prejudice and intolerance? We are always limiting ourselves to

what we decided previously, often erroneously. If we are going to learn to fly, we have to be able to provide new input: we have to add another dimension to this habitual process.

Some of the words we'll be reading are like magic seeds that go deep into our psyches, where they sprout into new possibilities. Each person is free to decide for themselves if they are attracted to this form of transformation or not. There are lots of others. The ones who stay with it are those who gave it a try and found it lifted their spirits. In the final analysis, that's the only road sign we have.

John responded:

In a way, this rather brings to mind a long conversation I had with Ursula Le Guin regarding the Tao Te Ching. She maintains that if you get the first poem, meditation, thought form, whatever it is - that you don't even have to read on for clarification. If you don't get it, the other verses continue to provide road signs, but if you aren't there, you don't necessarily speak the language the road sign is in and you don't get it and have to keep on.

I wonder, are the delineations of the thought process therefore not road signs, but more like a storyboard in the Hollywood studio - one can move them around into different orders, still have the same movie - and here's the thing, but different?

Scott:

No, they're in a very logical sequence, which wouldn't work shuffled. Do you care whether or not you like something before you know what it is? Or can you identify it before it appears? No. And these are not road sign for some other destination, they are exactly how the mind operates, in a general sense. Knowing how our mind works allows us to be a conscious fellow traveler with our Self instead of a sleeping hitchhiker just along for the ride. The road signs we pass are mostly commercial billboards trying to sell us something we don't need, and we'd do better to admire the scenery instead of fixating on them....

And yes, if you get it, none of this is necessary. Narayana Guru and Nitya provide 99 implications, or really a thousand and 99, in case we didn't think of them ourselves, and by golly! we didn't. Or we won't have. Those guys did our thinking for us, which is great because we didn't. That's why they are called teachers. Teachers show us what we should have thought of, but didn't, but at least we do recognize it when they make it clear to us.

Fun, isn't it?

John:

I love this. I laughed out loud about the billboards telling us about things we don't need. How full of distractions so many signs are, indeed!!!

A perfect thought for this evening. And teaching is always leading - even if you are trying not to, it ends up being that. I have personally found that when I teach my courses at PSU, if I lead my students to the conclusions of the course material, they "get it," versus just memorizing it, passing the test, and actually forgetting it by the end of the term, and not really getting it. So I appreciate what you are saying about teaching, Scott - a great deal. It took me about ten years to figure out how I could teach - that is, lead.

Okay - so the steps of the mind are a fixed sequence. Good to acknowledge. I asked just to be sure. It is good to have some things that are in a sense axiomatic, because you can build on those. Maybe axiomatic is the wrong word. Hmmm, help me here someone.

Just curious - and I hope I'm not being a pest. Vasanas are instinct or more like the newer theories about epigenetics - which, and I probably don't understand this correctly, state that there is some kind of memory or chemical mechanism with DNA, as yet unmapped or unseen, but has consequences that are visible - i.e. - a generation comes from Ireland that has been subjected to severe

famine, their next generation is healthy and well fed, but the next generation shows the cellular deterioration commonly found in victims of famine - or more recently, one generation exposed to irradiation from nuclear testing, the next generation reasonably healthy, and the next generation showing a lot of autism, adhd and the like.

I love teachers, incidentally. Well, maybe not Mrs. Buzzel, but about all the others.

Scott:

And I got a LOL out of yours, thank you. Beauty is as beauty does.

Karanam is not quite axiomatic, which would mean it is a core assumption, unprovable but necessary. We often treat the fourfold consciousness as axiomatic, as it's the ground of our way of thinking, but here we are challenging the axiom, parsing it out to see how it functions in practice. A lot of its presumptions turn out to be erroneous. It will still function similarly if and when we upgrade the data base and discard the garbage.

Right on about vasanas, the old name for what we now think of as genetic processes.

John wrapped it up with a "Memory Stick" for the karanam:

"What where how who when?" asked young Ms. Manas

"As I recall," started young Mr. Cittam

"Is this memory device relevant?" interrupted young Buddhi.

"Now I get it," said old gray Ahamkara

11/27/12

Verse 2

The psychic dynamism, the senses, the body,
the many worlds known by direct perception--
everything, when contemplated,
is the glorious embodiment of the sun that shines
in the sky beyond;
this should be realized through relentless search.

By a relentless search one should realize that the inner faculties, the senses, the body, and all the worlds of our interest are but transformations of the glorious substance of the Sun shining in the void of the Absolute.

As it's fairly straightforward, the several versions of this verse are remarkably similar, so these two will suffice.

Another hearty group assembled, featuring some fresh new faces that are adding much to the mix. Deb started us off as usual with an excellent summary, and she even was kind enough to write up the gist for me:

In the opening, first verse we are immersed in a quiet, intimate feeling, even though we are bowing inwardly to the karu, the karu that shines both within and without. That reverence gives way in the second verse to a stronger, more outward-seeming stance. We acknowledge the sun that shines in the outward firmament... again, though, it is a light that permeates all, in both inner and outer worlds. Here our approach is one of relentless search. We are moving from a silent, even humble, recognition of brilliance, to a rigor of self-analysis. In both verses, though, there is a pervasive light (karu or metaphysical sun) that illuminates and unifies our world.

Susan, a former news reporter, took notes and also supplied them this morning. (As I start my writing with an apparent empty slate, I am eternally grateful for these helps, and hope that others will take pity on me as well.) She wrote down Deb's most

important point: The relentless effort is meant to “sort out compulsions from insights,” one of the most critical points in all of spiritual life. Much of the class was spent mulling over the significance of the relentless effort involved, but first we focused on the “psychic dynamism,” the fourfold process the brain employs to determine the meaning of everything it confronts.

Narayana Guru’s advice is to relate everything we encounter to an underlying unity, and we are instructed to make this a determined habitual choice. He well knew that we are mesmerized by appearances, that unity is not a visible item, and if you didn’t bring it in with your intelligence you were consigning yourself to a fragmented world, desolate and harrowing. His compassionate soul was convinced that regaining the Karu or supreme sun in our hearts was the antidote for the emptiness and cruelty that plague our species. Verse 1 directs our attention to this all-encompassing reality, and Verse 2 asks us to relate it diligently to everything that we can and do perceive.

Normally our psychic dynamics happen so fast that we are hardly aware of them. It’s truly amazing how quickly and unconsciously we characterize the elements of our world, based on our previous experience. We take the result for granted, and that generally works fine in respect to our survival. But awake adults begin to suspect we are doing damage to our environment, unintentionally reducing it from a marvelous living garden to a mummified reproduction of one. If we want to go beyond a life of bondage, we have to realize that basing our life in terms of what was established in the past is deadening. Boring, too.

The memories that we draw on to determine the meaning of everything and what we should do about it are at best limited and at worst severely twisted. So the yogi stops and takes a good look at the way they react, digging down into the depths, comparing their reactions to a more enlightened model from a favorite source of wisdom (for which Atmo is admirably suited, of course).

I offered a simple example of how this can work. Most of us experience some level of humiliation in school, and come to have a

guarded attitude about anything resembling a classroom situation. It is processed into a feeling that has no conscious connection to the original misery we once suffered. The Gurukula class is a friendly and supportive, easygoing, informal gathering, but newcomers bring with them the guarded, worried attitude they carry without even knowing it. To their conscious mind, they are simply being alert, because the ego is ignorant of the baggage it carries. It treats its attitude as pure and direct, but it is in fact colored by those old wounds. It is registered as fear. Gradually, though, the warmth of the setting promotes a transformation, and the old defenses can be dropped, again mostly unconsciously. The newcomer just feels like it's okay now. This is a microcosm of how we relate to the world, and it could be a terrific opportunity to expose those negative samskaras (memories) that blunt our experience. Very often, though, the reaction is to just go away. It is a relief to not sense our old traumas. Most people go through life in avoidance mode, never curing themselves, simply seeking out the least stressful settings. It takes a measure of bravery to realize that the discomfort can serve as a window into who we are. By facing our stress we can reduce it, where by avoidance it maintains its grip—one of the classic paradoxes of having a human brain.

Paul brought up an important issue at this juncture. On the one hand we're asked to open up to the inner flow, but suddenly we're being cautioned that what we think is the flow isn't. How do we distinguish the legitimate inspiration from the managed version that our unconscious is presenting to us? This echoes Deb's initial question of how to separate insights from compulsions.

This is actually a very important distinction. Our brain is an expert at knowing exactly how to manipulate us, to convince our ego that it's in charge, basically keeping it fat, dumb and happy. It has fine-tuned this game for our whole lifetime. Obviously, we don't want to become opposed to our inner self, and split in two, because that's dangerous. And yet, we do want to penetrate behind our delusions and stop having them. So what's the best way to thread this needle?

This is where outside assistance is invaluable. Being experts at self-delusion, we need feedback from outside sources to show us where to leverage the changes we want to make. Most outside sources are as flawed as we are, or worse. So we look for ones that are better, and that does not mean serene, necessarily. Serenity can be an escape as much as any other. It has to be something that speaks to the best part of who we know ourselves to be. When we find a suitable source of feedback, we should resist the urge to flee that comes up whenever our assumptions are challenged. Instead we should ask ourselves if the criticism is justified, and even give the critic the benefit of the doubt, because we've been cheating in our favor for a long time. We need to regain balance here.

The high points of transformation in my time with Nitya were when he made some stinging comment that hit home. It's one thing to nod in agreement with a teacher's ideas, but some of them produce shock and disbelief. Those were the ones that hurt! They blasted past my defenses and opened up some dark regions to my awareness. Because of my respect for him, I was (grudgingly) able to accept the corrections, and to incorporate them into a new personal and world view. Eventually I was able to ease the humiliation back into neutrality, by no longer identifying with the faults I didn't even know I had, but he could clearly see. I had to consciously relinquish them, but then I could let them go, which is not the same as ignoring them. I have mentioned some of these in the past, and since many of them are associated with the Atmo study, I may reprise them at relevant moments. Rest assured this study has some intense blasts. It can be read lightheartedly or worshipfully and that's fine, but if you take it seriously there are many opportunities for drastically upgrading your whole being. When Nitya said at the outset, "we are now entering an intense spiritual discipline," he wasn't kidding.

At the same time, as Deb and Bill pointed out, if we can sink into the emptiness of an unmodulated mind, it can have a curative effect also. We will be bringing that in more at a later stage of the study, because it's trickier than it sounds. At this early stage, the

intentional aspect is being stressed. We have to want it, work for it, and be relentless, or no change is going to happen. Leaving it to God or Fate is not different from abandoning the search. I suppose you could say it's the first trick of the ego to derail the self-examination, but later on surrender to a higher power may be turned into a useful tool.

Much of the class was spent examining the meaning of *relentless*, a concept that has negative connotations in our society, which is oriented toward idleness and ease, where vacation is the ideal state. Right-wingers are relentless, lefties are mellow. So what does it mean for all us mellow types?

Jan said that because the class we are in made her a more loving and happy person, she kept coming to it. If it didn't, she wouldn't. It's as simple as that. Her relentlessness is very gentle, and based on an attraction of the heart. It's very touching to know that a friend feels that way.

Bill reiterated Shankara and Narayana Guru's definition of yoga: continuous contemplation on the true nature of the self. When we get tied up in all of the disparate aspects of life, we need to draw a mental line between them and their core, where all lines join. Remembering our true nature (as a postulate) helps us to not slight anyone or anything.

My version is more activist. I know that our lazy default setting can very easily masquerade as spiritual. How convenient! If ignoring important issues is divine, I must be awesome! I suppose the problem is that I have run that con game so often that its ragged edges are showing. Now I retain a measure of caution about my own vast propensity for self-delusion.

Psychological testing has revealed what the rishis have been saying forever, that we routinely make up a plausible story to excuse our behavior, and we do not behave in the ways we insist we do. Our brain is like a consummate magician, spewing a line of distracting patter while it plays tricks on us. So I'm not comfortable taking it lying down. I want to sweep aside that self-

befuddling aspect, where what we think we think is apt to be a bluff covering up the things we don't want to see.

Durga told us about the intensity he maintains in his spiritual quest. He is driven, and has done some amazing things, but at the same time he isn't quite sure where the motivation is coming from. He's like several of us, inspired and motivated, but not for any apparent reason. Which is good, because our supposed reasons are likely to be false anyway, as was just noted. That's always a fascinating aspect of a relentless search: finding out what impels it. Why do we care, when so many people are allergic to caring? Are we pressing forward for the reasons we think we are, or are we chasing shadows? What's really going on here? The Atmo study should help focus our intensity by weeding out the conditioned and imaginary aspects while leaving the idealistic fervor intact.

One thing I wanted to mention last night but never found time for, thanks to yet another highly gratifying level of participation by everyone, is that neuroscience also provides insight into the need for relentless effort. It is now known that we can rewire our brain's neurons, altering our abilities and even our outlook, but it's a slow process. We have to overcome our current neural wiring, and grow a new set of connections. It takes substantial time and repetitive effort, but when we change our activity and maintain a new program, our wiring slowly converts to support it. If we want to go from selfish and mean spirited to generous and loving, we just have to set our sights on it and act *as if* we felt that way. Eventually we will. While essential for physical rehabilitation, this is particularly important in combating addictions of all kinds. (Our ordinary mentality itself is a kind of addiction, by the way.) Simply wishing for change and then continuing our unhealthy behavior, imagining things will be different in the future, does not work. We have to intentionally change our lifestyle, and then fight off the habits that keep trying to convince us to reactivate the old, outmoded one. The momentum builds as the new wiring is aligned, but the old pathways remain in place for a long time. It's not advisable to listen to the excuses that

keep popping into our head, no matter how convincing they seem, because our psyche knows exactly how to fool us. Determination is the key. Patience and persistence.

Nataraja Guru was particularly stringent about this aspect of the study, and I'll add in a few paragraphs from his commentary as Part II. I'll try to find time to type up his highlights and include them. They are wonderful, but I don't have a digital version of his commentary. He is a hard read, so I think we should keep them separate.

We closed with a tacit acknowledgement of a shared journey with supportive friends, one of the greatest feelings life on earth has to offer.

Part II

Here are Nataraja Guru's Verse 2 highlights, hard going but worth a measure of your relentless effort:

The positive and the negative items of this series could always be equated and understood one in terms of the other. "The supreme Sun risen in the void" would represent the extreme positive counterpart of the inner organ, which is the first item of the ontological aspect of reality. The main equation is between the inner organ as next to the thinking substance or Core we have seen in the first verse, and the supreme Sun in the void postulated here. A form of pure mathematical reasoning is involved here which a scientist, whose very language is mathematical, should not question. If mathematical predictions of events such as eclipses are possible and permissible, this *a priori* induction here, which equates the poles of reality as we can experience them, arrived at by hard introspective cogitation on the part of the contemplative seeker of the wisdom of the Self, should not be dismissed as unscientific, dogmatic or superstitious.

One can attain this view or certitude, the Guru warns us, only by very hard thinking of a certain kind, whose nature will become

clearer as we proceed. Meanwhile it would be worthwhile to note that the “inner organ” which is the basis of the attributes of ego or individual consciousness such as the mind, reason, relational mind, and sense of individuation, is strictly the correct contemplative counterpart of the Sun in the void. Any empirical stigma attached to these starting counterparts in the mind of the student will have to be progressively discarded as the discussion attains to subtler inner factors which must constitute the subject-matter as well as the object-matter of all contemplative philosophizing. (17-8)

We saw in the first verse that the “Core” that he referred to admitted of no duality. In the very next verse we find him referring to many worlds and to the counterparts of these many worlds, to be thought of in a certain graded order and brought together as the terms of an equation.

The inner organ is to be the dialectical counterpart of the Sun in the void postulated by him. If pure non-duality is the doctrine of the work as a whole, the Guru has to develop his subject by using a certain method. Methodological and axiological requirements thus make him come down from the platform, as it were, and explain more intimately to the student that the way to arrive at non-duality finally is, first to find the counterparts that belong to the unity and then to bring them dialectically together for being resolved in unitive terms. Such apparent duality is not to be mixed up with doctrinal duality. It is rather a methodological suppositious requirement only.

All contemplation must needs have a human purpose, however pure or abstract. (20)

One has to do violence to one’s own nature in the practice of dialectical reasoning. That is why it has been called in Sanskrit *tapas* or the burning up by oneself. A form of agony and a vertical ascent is implied in this intellectual effort, which resembles the working of the faculties of a pure mathematician like Eddington with his sedenion algebraic formulae, his equations and constants.

No armchair philosophizing will suffice here. Bergson in his *Metaphysics* refers to it as a form of “intellectual auscultation” as when one hears sounds from within oneself by stopping and reversing the process of normal thinking. Dialectical ascent and descent are also known to philosophers from classical times. The cogitations of Descartes and the use of intuition as known to him and to Plotinus or Bergson, involve a pure mathematical way of negative or positive induction which involves special effort on the part of the contemplative. The true end of contemplation is not to be attained by any lazy attitude, but involves vertical though not horizontal effort. (21)

Part III

Paul graciously sent a nearly exact reprise of what he said in class last night, an important matter which we skittered away from rather too quickly, I’m afraid:

Balance & Equanimity

My perceived conflict between Patanjali’s Equanimity & That Alone’s Equanimity:

Is our balance best positioned midway between the transcendent and the transient? Or is proper balance maintained in the transient by our being placed in (or our identification as) the transcendent? The transient or transactional part of being is addictive. In that addiction, most (if not all) people, restructure God’s perfection of the Real transient (the Absolute manifesting as Transience) into a transactional prison reflecting our fears and untruths (genetically and socially).

If man falsifies the transient (maya), it is only in the Transcendent Absolute that we see the crimes committed by the abused ego to the otherwise Holy Phenomenal. It was my understanding that Patanjali’s Yoga (Equanimity) required the *restraining (sacrifice) of the five senses* prior to attaining a balanced state. That balanced

state is an immigration of our (true) identity into the phenomenal world based on our citizenship or identification within the Transcendent Absolute. The intellect has a boundary. Belief (and identity) has no borders. It is the intellect that conceptually sees the currently experienced phenomenal world. And it is also the intellect that sees the transcendence of the phenomenal. But for the intellect to cross the boundaries erected by the intellect, the intellect must be sacrificed (the five senses withheld). I've heard it said that, **“God is Everything that you are not”**.

The sensual interpretation that constitutes the mind is a required tool for transacting the phenomenal. But like using a hammer to fix a delicate watch, the intellect is an ineffective tool – and must be Self-limited - to negotiate identification as the Transcendent Absolute. We - as the Transcendent Absolute - are the Holy manifestation of God being as the Imminent-Self.

So, is equanimity like a pinball game where we - as the ball - bounce relentlessly back and forth between the two bumpers of the imminent and the transcendent? Or is equanimity the pinball game itself, where we identify as the Whole Game (Absolute) and are only witnesses to the random bouncing of our balls (sorry).

Scott:

I'm going to offer a few ideas, and invite more from the rest on this central paradox. This is a good question to settle right at the outset.

First off, Patanjali is somewhat dualistic while Atmo is unitive. Still, it's impossible to say anything about unity without acknowledging the apparent separation of knower and known. This tends to be a murky area deserving of clarification.

In your terms, Paul, yes, we are best positioned right in between—or in the middle of—the transient and the transcendental, because there is only one thing going on that we are seeing from two different angles. Perhaps we should call it the Transientental? The fatal flaw is when we divide up the One

Substance and then reject (or undervalue) the transient in favor of some hypothetical Beyond, some ideal of perfection, it drains the life out of our experience. Narayana Guru and Nitya will affirm over and over that this world is It: the transient itself *is* the Eternal. What we are doing is appreciating it more and more, not trying to sweep it out of the way.

Nitya gets it just right near the end of his commentary: “We have to see *karanam*, the psychic dynamism, as a gracious modulation of the primordial light which has transformed into this universe.” It’s not some glitch in the system. God is not only everything you are not, but everything you are, too. By using our intellect wisely, we aren’t so much falsifying as interpreting. In this we do the best we can, continually refining our understanding while remaining aware that it will always be an imperfect assessment. That prevents us from getting a swelled head.

Patanjali definitely does give the impression, shared with a number of religions, that we have to get away from Here and end up somewhere better. Nitya’s commentary struggled to portray it in a way that minimized the duality, and he did a fine job, but without that level of care it can easily play into the hands of the dualists. He will have no such struggle in explaining *Atmopadesa Satakam*!

As transient, manifested beings, we will never be fully identified with the Transcendent (Unmanifest) Absolute. But we can still take it into account as the necessary Core or Ground of all manifestation. At least then our intellect will be more expansive than if it is busy deciding who is saved and who is damned, who gets it and who doesn’t, who is right and who is wrong. In the ultimate analysis, those are all beside the point. We are very much caught up in that mode of thinking, however. These days as a species we are using the hammer of our intelligence to smash the delicate watch of our planet rather than repair it. But again, the world doesn’t need fixing, it’s already perfect. We ourselves are what needs some tinkering with, and that’s what we’re about in this study.

Part IV

Jan gave an example that many of us can relate to, which I just didn't squeeze into the notes on the first go around:

I had been talking about how authority was essentially an imaginary state of mind that we are trained to submit to from our earliest childhood, one of those unhelpful memories lodged deep in our psyches. One day, after mulling it over based on Vedantic principles, I realized that everyone was an imposter, not just me. Authority figures were just as confused and clueless as I was, but they had learned a role that gave them power over the rest of us. I suddenly saw their position was baseless, and it was like the lifting of a heavy boulder I had been carrying all my life without realizing it. I could actually feel the weight dispersing, and found myself laughing out loud with relief!

Jan has been struggling with the medical establishment for many years. She began the way all good people are brought up: she was meek and submissive, prepared to do whatever the doctors recommended. But also like many patients, this led her into blind alleys, where doctors who hid their uncertainty behind a mask of unquestioned superiority made semi-educated guesses that missed the mark. Then, rather than try something else, they blamed her for not responding to the faulty prognosis. Jan knew she had to take a more active role or face dire consequences.

Over the years Jan has become more assertive, and because of people like her, there has been a measure of loosening up by medical authorities in response. Not much, though. She told us about one physician she has been seeing, who seemed very supportive of her assertiveness, but then suddenly threatened to drop her as a patient if she didn't accept his dictate on a certain matter. She was shocked, and rightly so. It wasn't that the course she had chosen was inferior; it was in all likelihood superior or at least equal to his. Luckily, Jan is confident enough to stand her ground and not let herself be pushed around. But not everyone has that strength of character, and inferior care is sometimes the result.

We are bound to encounter resistance from people in positions of authority, but in my experience if we treat them as equals it actually obviates many potential problems. We have to get past the fortified wall they are standing behind, but if we can, it changes the whole equation. In this case, Jan felt she had been admitted behind the barricades, but something changed and she found herself on the outside once again. Knowing Jan, she will not surrender—nor should any of us.

On a lighter note, this is more from John, with my response, continuing our earlier conversation:

I wish there were a better term or phrase for “duality” and also for “dialectic.” Even “generation of opposites” doesn’t quite hit it, but maybe it’s closer? I don’t know.

As for learning - yes, it can be very hard to accept something not acceptable from experience and memory. Memory always trips me up because 1) it plays tricks and remembers something that didn’t exactly happen the way the memory has embellished it and 2) it becomes sort of a dogma. As an appraiser, I am continually confronting and getting tripped up by the “M- Factor,” as I call it. I remember when a book was worth this price or that, and now, it’s not worth anything, or conversely, it has suddenly become collected. It’s not that the memory is necessarily wrong - it is what it is - but it’s what I do with the memory that counts. Can I have the presence of mind to place it in an appropriate data base and say, hmmm, things have sure changed, or do I put it in the wrong database and say, no, the new facts are entirely wrong because I want them to be. Of course, maintaining the latter course does generate consequences, too.

Scott:

Well, I'm afraid *duality* will have to do. It has a long history and is exactly right, too. Take a blank sheet of paper to represent oneness, and draw a line down the middle to divide it in two. You really haven't taken anything away, but now there's the appearance of two sides superimposed on the underlying unity. That provides the stage for all sorts of things to happen, conflicts and congresses, and pretty soon we are taking sides.... Kinda clever, really.

What else would you suggest? Two-ness? Isn't that the capital of Tunisia?

As for dialectic, the better term is *yoga*, but since that word has a wide range of meanings, I like to refer it back to its original concept of a way to regain the underlying unity by treating the two sides as separated-at-birth twins. Hence *dialectic*, which generally means logic, but we use in the sense of synthetic logic, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, because the parts are actually related.

John:

Great analogy. Or is that a simile? Anyways - as I understand it, we are trying to reach clarity by defining the one as two so we can delineate parts of the process, or wholeness? Or the one-ness or wholeness is dividing itself like a zygote to create.

Tunisia would be fun to visit, but so would Triple Lee.

Scott (subject line: zygote):

That's the spirit! Make it fun to visit the actual world. Duality is not an enemy, only an opportunity. The problem is we forget the unity, and so get a little bent out of shape. We just need to add it back in. It takes two to tangle, as my mother used to say, before I was old enough to know what her play on words meant.

It was no accident that Nitya describes the Karu as an egg.

And finally for Verse 2, a brief exchange about Jan's point. John wrote:

So Karu has an element of telos - which is an Aristolean term and therefore highly debatable just exactly what he means - but if I understand Ari correctly, it's the purpose that's built into the thing/person whatever. Like that old joke I read somewhere about the proud grandmother who introduces her toddler grandson as: "my grandson, the doctor."

Or, am I way off base on this? Throw Aristotle in there and there's a chance that the stew will become soup.

Authority - Jan is so right. It brings to mind some of the better chapters of Eric Fromm's "The True Believer," and how we play act until we become what we play act - the purpose of military uniforms, for example, besides knowing which side you are on, is to change you from you so you aren't you, because you wouldn't ordinarily go to the front lines of anything and shoot at people.

Imposters - yes. Because argument based on authority is an informal, but true, fallacy.

Cool input here.

Scott:

Yes, why have an egg if nothing is going to come of it? Recall Nitya's last paragraph from Verse 2:

There is an instrumentality which decides the division of a cell and then governs its development from a fetus to a mature human being. Without this instrumentality, nothing can manifest. The same continues in a person as the ego. We have to see *karanam*, the psychic dynamism, as a gracious modulation of the primordial light which has transformed into this universe. We are using the term 'transformation' rather

than 'evolution', because we are aware of the conceptual limitation that is now imprinted on that word after the advent of a theory of evolution which does not attribute to the cosmic principle of transformation an intelligence that is ontologically universal and teleologically purpose-oriented.

I think it's fair to subtract all our *projected* meanings and purposes in a scientific spirit, because many of those have led us astray in the past, but we should permit ourselves to notice such things when they appear of their own accord. The magnificent, infinitely complex universe is its own argument for purpose, even if it isn't going anywhere....

John:

This is beautiful.

In a way, my imagination serves as a kind of sense - like vision or taste, etc. The ability to conjecture based on [observing] the possible manifestation. And I don't mean imagination necessarily like, say, a speculative story, such as a science fiction story, though that's not outside my intended use of imagination. The point for me is to be clear that I am "imagining" vs. actually observing a future manifestation. If I don't clarify, I end up future tripping. That's a weird mental maze to get into, let me tell ya.

One last bit from Susan, who like many Americans practices road-yoga:

I was just thinking that when you're in the first three parts of the psychic dynamism, you are not the knower. In ahamkara, you really become the knower. Also, sometimes we get stuck in the second part, cittam -- something sparks a question and we are thrown back in time and we linger there, whether in a pleasant, sad, or frightening memory. Then we may forget how we got there and never make it to buddhi.

As far as my observations in the last few days, I have discovered mostly how focused I am on outcomes. I have been doing many errands this week and so my discoveries about my psychic dynamism are mostly driving related. I come to an intersection with a stop light and many cars and my mind is clicking away — How long until the stop light turns green? How fast will the other cars move? Is that car next to me going to try to cut in ahead of me? Then I am bringing in all my memories of other intersections and drivers. Then I am predicating all this and figuring out what is going to happen. This is the point at which my muscles tighten up and my cortisol levels rise and I am thinking only of getting through the intersection as fast and efficiently as possible. I was amazed to find how often this happens — there are so many opportunities! The crazy thing is that I toned down my driving stress years ago (probably when I was going through Atmo the first time) and I thought I was such a calm driver. It's true that I no longer assume that other drivers are malicious, stupid, or crazy. I see that we are all the same — in a hurry or distracted or forgetful. This has really cut down my road rage. But now that I have observed my karanam, I can clearly see the stress that comes up again and again when I drive. I should note that if I get into my car 5 or 10 minutes early when I am going somewhere, the stress part doesn't happen. I still go through the steps of trying to figure out how to maneuver through cars but it is more of an enjoyable and artful game in this situation.

I do different things during those 5 or 10 minutes. I definitely take longer getting to places because I don't feel the push and when I arrive, I sit for a bit and collect myself (meditate) or I check my email and text messages (the opposite of meditation). Sometimes, I wish that I had remembered to bring a book. All in all, it's a very pleasant interlude, for which I am always happy.

Jake has been scrutinizing these verses for some time, and will be sending us his analysis regularly. Because of its length and density, I'll generally put it last and delete the verses (which we already have), but it serves as an excellent review with helpful new insights, for the more philosophically minded among us:

Verse 2:

Beginning with the fundamental equivalency previously established, the oneness of the internal and external light, the guru now gets personal and examines our interior processes through which we experience experience and so easily lose sight of that one reality. The system he here describes connects our personal psychology with a cosmological universe having meaning beyond the mind's capacity to hold it wholly, but we never cease trying to work out parts of the puzzle by way of a process that is for the vast majority outside awareness but is at the same time common to all and understood by both western and Vedantin psychology.

In this verse, then, is a blueprint for psychotherapy and introspection regardless of one's prejudices concerning either process. By way of this model, you can begin to "know thyself" by first accessing the awake state and working backwards, so to speak. In his commentary, Nitya Yati opens by outlining the four categories or stages of wakeful consciousness. He begins by narrating the transition we all begin with upon waking from the dream or deep sleep states. Upon waking, the mind begins its questioning (manas) as if on automatic pilot: what to do, how to go about it, etc. To address the question, the mind then fits the query onto what it already knows, placing it in the memory bank of existing thought (cittam) which is then judged by one's reason (buddhi) as to its value. With that third step immediately follows the fourth (ahamkara): the application of one's feeling about the decision to be thrilled, indifferent, afraid, and so on.

This general pattern continuously and instantaneously occurs, and as it does leads us to some sort of reaction to act in some way

(which includes not acting). It is at the point of action that what follows is largely pre-determined for those unaware of the process, for it is at this juncture previous and out-of-awareness patterns assert themselves. Talk therapy is largely concerned with bringing into view those patterns so that a cause/effect can be made apparent and some kind of adjustment in the present can be effected. Home of origin issues, for example, are often re-played out of awareness continuously throughout one's life in an effort to "make right" or repeat what happened decades earlier but the fix is then applied to the present situation. One's parents hold the power of life or death for everyone when they are children, so adjusting to whatever these gods require is a more than reasonable adjustment to reality. Applying the same technique to one's spouse 30 years later is to address an illusory unreal conflict and, for the most part, to distort the present condition altogether.

Pre-rationally motivated behaviors, these patterns for acting embedded in the present life, are known as samskaras in Vedantin psychology, and they form the basis of vasanas, impulses and compulsions that are carried from one life cycle to the next. In both the DNA and psychic dimensions of the vasanas, they in conjunction with the continuously emerging samskaras present us with the contexts in which we "decide" to act in any particular condition. When out of awareness, these vasanas/samskaras manifest as compulsions and establish the range of choices available.

If you examine the choices you make, the redundancy of their character, and the irrational force driving you to choose that redundancy, you have an excellent starting point for taking control over your life and creating genuine choice in it, concludes Nitya. (In my own life I have always managed to narrow my "choices" to a select few and then rationalized them as the only reasonable ones available. By so doing, I've managed to re-work old vasanas endlessly and always in a circular manner.) Putting new endings on repetitive conditions allows the possibility of choice rather than compulsion dressed up as choice, an alternative path for exploring

those issues that monotonously appear and re-appear both within us and without us in the culture generally. This small start at attaining conscious awareness opens the door to *possibility*, and that, like the mathematical precision with which the cosmos operates, speaks to an absolute we are both part and all of.