

6/18/13
Verse 23

For the sake of another, day and night performing action,
having given up self-centered interests, the compassionate person acts;
the self-centered man is wholly immersed in necessity,
performing unsuccessful actions for himself alone.

Free translation:

A compassionate person without any vested interest works day and night for the welfare of others. On the other hand, a selfish person, desirous only of his own advantage, toils endlessly but comes again and again to frustration.

Nataraja Guru's:

For the sake of fellow-man, unceasing, day and night
Unstinting strives the kindly man;
The niggard lying prone, what frustration's toil undertakes,
That is for his own sake alone.

A major theme of Atmo is enlarging the ego boundary, and it starts up in earnest now. The section on *sama* and *anya*, self and other, from verses 36-41, looms in the near distance. The idea is that we learn to erect protective barriers around ourself in order to develop in safety, and while these serve a valuable purpose for awhile, their rigidity eventually becomes stifling for those who desire to expand their consciousness beyond the mundane. Spiritual development is the process of enlarging the ego boundary to include more and more of the universe, ultimately expanding it to infinity. When the ego includes everything, it no longer resembles the petty, turf-guarding version in the least. It is said to be one with the Absolute. Like the skin of a snake, we have to

continually shed our envelopes when they become too tight for us, else we will not be able to grow.

We all have periods when we become comfortable with our boundaries. After all, they do keep us safe from threats and include much of the territory we have already explored. We adapt ourselves to their shape and dimension and settle down, and can quickly become content. Our energy is mainly expended to reinforce the defenses, keeping what appears to be hostile out. Yet as Nitya puts it, “Of course, as Robert Frost has said, you are fencing yourself in as much as the other out. You only think you are keeping an alien world outside, when actually you are putting up a wall and imprisoning yourself.” He is referring to the sublime poem *Mending Wall*, which we have often referred to in these notes.

In *Mending Wall*, Frost says “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall, that wants it down.” That Something cannot be named. It’s not elves, exactly, but it’s like elves—invisible playful spirits. Inside us is a growth program unfolding, and it has many obstacles to overcome. Like a growing snake in its skin it pulsates between periods of rest and periods of expansion. But we have a tendency to cling to our image during the resting stage. Our brain seeks equilibrium, and holds on to it when it occurs. If we are not to become stuck in semi- or pseudo-enlightenment, we have to stay attuned to the inner impulse that “beats, murmurs, and pulsates in the nerves.” (DM VI, 7) We either expand or stagnate. Walls hold us back.

One of the most important services of a guru or dear friend is to help us make a breakthrough when we are satisfied with our stage of growth and are unconsciously stifling our development. *Love and Blessings*, Nitya’s Autobiography, is filled with stories of Nataraja Guru coming to sabotage his position whenever he found what he thought was a propitious situation. A favorite paragraph of mine is on page 207:

If Guru had not come along at that very moment and set me back on my path, my life might have been very different.

This wasn't the first time Guru had come into my life like a destroying Shiva to separate his disciple from the snare of karmic entanglements. Wherever I proved to be successful or was becoming admired, he had a knack for sabotaging the situation. Once I asked him why he was doing this, and he told me his name was Natarajan and he was only doing his duty, adding "If Shiva doesn't demolish, Brahma won't get a chance to create again." I have to admit that whenever he intervened to get me to terminate a program it always led to another program of greater spiritual value.

Hexagram 39 of the I Ching, Obstruction, is one of several that offer a similar insight, including, interestingly, "It furthers one to see the great man." Richard Wilhelm's comment on the image is typical of the I Ching's philosophy:

Difficulties and obstructions throw a man back upon himself. While the inferior man seeks to put the blame on other persons, bewailing his fate, the superior man seeks the error within himself, and through this introspection the external obstacle becomes for him an occasion for inner enrichment and education.

I'll tuck a more complete version of the hexagram into Part III, along with the Frost poem.

Verse 23 invites us to break free of our limits. Certainly Nitya's fabulous commentary speaks for itself and needs no elucidation. The class dug up subtlety after subtlety in just the way the Gurus intended the study to be made. It's really wonderful how the mutual feedback loops foster so much exploration.

Narayana Guru's sublime ideal runs counter to surface appearance: acting unselfishly benefits the self and acting selfishly is detrimental to it. It would seem that if everyone understood this one simple idea, the human race would be utterly transformed. Too bad it isn't as obvious as we might like. It is further complicated by

the subtle fact that “I am acting unselfishly” or “I intend to act unselfishly” is as much an ego thrust as “I am selfish,” although possibly having nicer ramifications. True unselfishness doesn’t cling to either side of that delusory coin.

I noticed a similarity in the verse’s paradoxical premise to a teaching attributed to Jesus at least six times in the Bible: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matt. 16.25) It is sometimes paraphrased as by giving you shall receive, but lacking the reciprocal: by receiving you should give. The underlying idea is that we are all connected, so I cannot act in isolation. My actions have to be seen for their impact in all directions. Nitya talks about this in terms of counterparts; Nataraja Guru often spoke of reciprocity. Newton summed it up as for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Or as Deb said, the more you concentrate on yourself, the more you minimize your connection to the whole, thereby underlining your isolation and unhappiness.

Nitya saw us all as trapped in this predicament in varying degrees, so he used the occasion to blast us out of our complacency. Even reading his words could provide a lever to raise us out of the ditch, if we were willing to take it seriously. It never ceases to amaze me, though, how resistant humans are to change, no matter how attractive its possibilities.

Several friends routinely get in touch with me when they are at low points and have become frustrated with the emptiness of their lives. They are isolated and depressed, busily self-medicating to reduce their incentive to change. We work to set up a first step in reaching out, of enlarging their ego barriers one tiny bit, but they never follow through. Some mysterious fear blocks them, keeps them enslaved to their habitual misery. The class wrestled some with how to make a breakthrough, but mostly we acknowledged the invisible factors that militate against our making progress. Needless to say, this is a critically important aspect of spiritual life. Why, oh why, do we fear life and willingly embrace instead a living death?

Deb used our friend Johnny as an example of someone who organically has found an outlet for unselfish activity, and whose life has been vastly enriched by it. He donates time to go to a prison and hold discussion groups and produce plays with the inmates. Plenty of people consider this a shocking waste of time and money, but for Johnny it gives his life meaning. Those outcasts from society who everyone would rather forget are living human beings not at all unlike the rest of us. The emptiness of their existence calls out to Johnny to cast his fullness into it. It is not a zero sum game. All are enriched by his efforts, including himself. By contrast, the untutored ego views it as effort wasted on those who don't deserve it, a lose/lose proposition. Many of them might even call themselves Christians or Hindus, but Johnny is the one acting as Narayana Guru and Jesus specifically advised. His is a win/win endeavor.

As Bill said, many teachers speak of the need to free ourselves from ego. Meaning the limits of a fearful ego. The ego is essential, but it needs to know its place. Johnny's ego has expanded to include a very needy group. I often recall his brief poem: My foreign policy: there are no foreigners.

Exactly.

Bill also stressed that being compassionate is a *practice*. It is meant to be practiced. The idea is eminently practical. You can be beautiful people following gurus, but if you aren't practicing what they preach it is all for naught.

Mick pointed out that we have to be unselfish without any expectation of reward or notice. If we act unselfishly with an implicit expectation of glory or heavenly reward or some such, it spoils the purity of the act. We should resolve to act in secret, out of the public eye, which helps take away our selfish expectations.

This reminded Deb of a meditation Nataraja Guru once prescribed for egocentric students: imagine the world without you in it. He himself had been instructed by Narayana Guru to meditate on himself without the world being present, and that's more the classic version. Because he was keenly aware of the reciprocal

nature of the universe, Nataraja Guru was always bringing the opposite to bear.

Jake related a story where he got upset and snapped at a woman who was just trying to help him. He was sheepish that for all his trying he still gets flustered and fails to act in an exemplary manner. Of course, everyone present knew he was not alone! We are all trying to really learn that moments like those are not so much failures as golden chances to take a look at our normally hidden conditionings. One of the biggest steps we can take in spiritual life is to convert our ego's leaps to its own defense into learning opportunities, which is what they are.

Brenda related something Charles had told her. When he was in Nepal, the guru he was with (Thubten Zopa Rinpoche) had said when you meet a difficult truth, a stinging truth, that's your "root lama" giving you a wisdom teaching. Don't obfuscate it with feeling upset or embarrassed, but look at what it's showing you. The ego's pain is just another ploy for it to avoid facing itself.

Listen to our root lama. This is another lesson, like reaching out to a wider world, that is easy to describe but difficult to put into practice. Something in us slyly resists, but that's the moment we have to bring pressure. Not by trying mightily to become calm again, to become a peaceful, wise rishi, but to admit our blundering and gaze open eyed into the chaos, because once we truly see what's going on there, it begins to lose its hold. Bill wanted to assure us that we are blessed if each day gives us an opportunity like that to be compassionate. I'd add, compassionate to ourselves as well as those around us. If the ego didn't feel under pressure all the time, it could more easily lighten up. It needs to be trained that it won't be punished for admitting its mistakes, it will grow wiser.

Nitya had been building up to a blast in the previous couple of verses, and at the end of this one he lowered the boom. Most of us in the class were in our twenties, and so still quite self-centered despite our posturing. Even though the outburst was nominally about other people, it was something for us all to take to heart. I well recall the intensity of sitting there and being eviscerated by

his quiet yet incredibly passionate words. Later when I was preparing the American edition of *Love and Blessings*, I discovered it included the letter Nitya had sent to the father who sparked the whole thing. I'll close with it, since it adds to the lesson and also demonstrates Nitya's expertise in dealing with people's problems. He was walking a fine line in being critical but also loving and supportive. Too much criticism and the person walks away. Too much love and they don't hear the lesson. Nitya got it just right. And yet it didn't change the outcome. So it goes.

The Swami these people were close to was Saccidananda, who had been brought low by a sex scandal. Nitya was responding to the man's letter:

Your letter opens with the sharing of beauty like some of these winter mornings in Oregon when St. Helens reveals herself for one moment in her snow clad glory with purple clouds hovering over. Unfortunately the morning glory of the winter fades out in no time, and the rest of the day is doomed with its dark clouds and cold mist. Your letter reminds me of Krishna's first admonition to Arjuna: "You are speaking words of wisdom and yet you are grieving unnecessarily."

The hermit in you is what the Gita calls a *midhyachara* in chapter 3, verse six: "He who sits controlling the organs of activity while ruminating mentally over items of sensuous interest, thus blinded to the self, whatever he does has only outer conformity and in substance is meaningless." Your thoughts of becoming a hermit do not at this moment mean anything more than fleeing, escaping from your own conscience. In that you will not succeed. Cain tried to run away and hide from his own conscience, and he failed miserably. God is the all-seeing eye in one's own conscience.

A hermit should love his aloneness, but what delights you is the company of admiring, supportive and loving friends. At a very impressionable time Swamiji was your alter ego. At that time he lived in undisputed glory, and you were recognized as a priceless promise of the future. Afterwards both these images were

tarnished. However stained the image is, the mind habitually looks in that direction with muffled regret clad in confused hope.

You have within you a youthful Apollo who brings to you visions of beauty, wisdom and love. But your psyche is also recurrently benumbed by the haunting influence of a Sphinx that suggests terrible things to you. Otherwise, I do not understand how you can ever look upon your children as a burden.

It is generous on your part in the think of giving Mary Sue in marriage to a loving rich man. This would have been a good aspiration if you were her father. But there are billionaires in the United States who live in greater poverty of feeling and sense of values than the most hard-hearted bandits. The magic to make Mary Sue happy is not finding a rich husband for her but curing her of her innate poverty that again and again raises its head like the hydra dreaming of new wants and fearing the advent of insecurity around the corner. Contentment should be her riches.

I welcome your preparedness to enter into a dialogue with me. I thank you for sending the note on Sankara's *Vivekachudamani*. I shall go back to it leisurely. In the meanwhile, let us have a direct confrontation like this and sort out the issues satisfactorily.

Love and Blessings,
Nitya

Footnote: I went through five full sets of correcting the errors that the publisher added (free of charge) to *That Alone*, but some remain. Many people are confused by the difference between everyday (adjective) and every day (compound noun). Pages 165 and 167 each have an instance of substituting the adjective for the noun, which I have corrected in the digital text I sent out. Nitya was a stickler for accuracy, and trained me very strenuously, but there are limits. The publisher even "fixed" some of the corrections in later proofs, after they had been rectified. The whole thing was a nightmare, demanding over a year of repair work, but I couldn't have stood it otherwise.

I am keeping tabs on errors in case there is a second edition ever, but you can send me what you find, just in case. So far I have about 40 more.

Part II

Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:

No one in this world is an isolated entity. Our abilities, commitments and responsibilities are to be shared with at least a few people. No one can totally abstain from action. Just to keep the body going one has to breathe, eat and keep the body and the environment clean. All these come under the category of daily imperative actions. Apart from this, there are actions that need to be performed because of our commitment to society, such as the pursuance of one's vocation, for instance. The third kind are optional actions and we may perform them only if we choose; these are incidental actions.

A responsible doctor cannot suddenly decide to treat the casualties on his hands lightly. Parents cannot shirk their responsibilities when their children are too young to take care of themselves. These are examples of the two kinds of imperative actions. Jesus' example of the Good Samaritan illustrates incidental action.

Of the three kinds of actions enumerated, incidental action implies a deeper spiritual significance than that of imperative and daily actions. Our commitment to it is born of free choice, and that choice is motivated by a unitive understanding that recognizes our identity with the Self in others as well. A father or mother, duty bound to their child, is under social duress. We can say that social mores are based on the fraternity of all beings, but it can also be interpreted in terms of convenience, as theorized by Hobbes, Bentham and Machiavelli. Our life flows between the banks of compassion and selfishness. Nature pushes us toward the bank of selfishness when our personal identity is threatened. Our spiritual belongingness attracts us to the opposite bank of compassion when others exposed to danger require our services.

A person with a strong and healthy spiritual identity places his own self as one among others and thus acts out of compassion even when his own self-preservation is at stake. Compassion is the most dominant note of a cluster of values such as love, rejoicement, peace, justice, freedom and fraternity. The realization of all these values is experienced as different degrees of happiness. Even the sharing of pain or grief can have in it an element of spiritual happiness when it is of an altruistic order. Actions motivated by pure selfish need are born of the pain/pleasure complex and are of little worth.

People who are obsessed with the idea of “I,” “me” and “mine” are blinded by their ego and they hardly notice the inflow of compassion from others. They build around themselves strong walls of separation and they decline responsibilities. As there is no trust in others, they become calculating and carry with them many secrets which increase their paranoia. Their lives are filled with intrigues and manipulations. Such people give way to despair and become heavy weights on those who are willing to show them compassion. From one disillusionment they go to a new fantasy, only to be once again disillusioned and thrown into the ditch of frustration. These unfortunate people always see long dark shadows of failure obstructing their path in every attempt they make to find an avenue to success.

When compassion dawns in the firmament of our life as our guiding star we become easily acceptable to others and we also detect in everyone something good to love and accept. Encouraged by the showing of love and happiness we may even become strong enough to commit ourselves with unlimited liability. The world will always find a good friend in a kindly person who is not daunted by reproaches and reprovals. Such a pleasant person brings out his or her goodness spontaneously. The sun shines and does not radiate darkness because it is its nature to shine, and so only good comes to the world from the compassionate sage as he engages in action without feeling that he is doing anything.

* * *

Nataraja Guru's commentary:

AFTER laying down the subtle dialectical law of ethics in which the counterparts of interest as between oneself and a fellow-human who is 'no other' than oneself, judged by the common human interest that binds them both in the two verses preceding the present one, the Guru here passes on to point out how static, self-centred striving, egocentrically carried on, finishes up in vain frustrations, eliminating in the process both the general good and the good for oneself.

These last two aspects of taking and giving, when correctly viewed in the light of dialectical ethics, hang together. Closed ethics ends in the desert sands of exclusive isolation; while the open and inclusive way, which rises from the particular to the universal in a dynamism implied in all things that develop and grow, gives life more abundance and makes life generally better for oneself and for all others. Moreover, selfish toil involves a great deal of energy which paradoxically defeats its own purpose. Niggardliness means lack of the open and bold generosity which widens the circle of a man's opportunities. The ungenerous man closes the bars against himself.

Here the Guru clearly enunciates the basis of ethical conduct, not in terms of a categorical imperative or an inner compulsion, nor merely in the name of the specifically human element in man, but based on a dialectical formula as between oneself and one's own counterpart in the world of human relations. Many of the ordinary theories of unilaterally-conceived ethics are here bypassed by the Guru in favour of an approach more in keeping with the non-duality which is the basis of the whole philosophy of self-knowledge as understood in this composition.

This verse teaches the same principle as the dictum 'love thy neighbour as thyself'; only the dialectical bipolarity is more

explicit and the unworkability of one-sided interest in the Self more categorically denounced.

Part III

From Jake:

Verse 23 speaks in a straightforward manner about a very basic feature of American life: the pervasive strength of narcissism. In many ways, this ego-centrism can be interpreted in terms of avarice, greed, and general materialism, but that definition covers only a limited number of the ways in which narcissism manifests. In his commentary, Nitya discusses these behaviors as a consequence of a series of steps that solidify as a solipsism that often takes a routine path but can also result in an arrogance for “straightening out” others. Both are projects of the ego-centric because in both cases self-enhancement is the goal.

It is with this very point of definition that Nitya begins his commentary. He opens by describing the different borders we draw around our egos, beginning with those inside of which we place people most intimate with us such as family members. Subsequent borders of a larger circumference include larger groups such as nations, ethnicities, and so on. The larger a circle becomes, the more likely it is to require a doctrinaire character in order to maintain (“the one true God,” “my country right or wrong,” etc.). The realized and compassionate person, Nitya points out, expands boundary to the point of its evaporating and uses the term *I* interchangeably with the term *we*.

These two alternative motivations—narcissism and compassion—lie behind our actions which are of three kinds: daily activities, social activities (that speak to one’s “placement in society”), and irregular or “incidental” activities. The first group includes those routines everyone must attend to such as eating, sleeping, and so on. These pursuits carry no moral weight. They just *are*. The other two categories, on the other hand, have an

impact on others and as such are ethical in character. Damage or benefit to the larger group results from our decisions however trivial they may be. By assuming the fear-driven ego-centric position, the selfish person maintains his boundaries thereby highlighting the distinction between the ego-self and the other. With this basic foundation, one develops a “life-pattern” that carves out major psychological ruts through which one drives one’s life. Because the threat of the other is everywhere, one must be on guard and constantly calculating relative advantage. The world contracts.

This sad state of affairs is the lot of many, continues Nitya, but it need not be. Compassion requires no more (possibly less) effort than that which is required to constantly attend to boundaries. We can begin by identifying in our social/ work lives those counterparts we regularly come into contact with: teachers/students, merchants/customers, doctors/ patients, parents/children, etc. By putting yourself in that counterpart’s position (walk a mile in another’s shoes), by pursuing those activities beneficial to that counterpart, we expand our worlds and include rather than exclude. It is in this simple adjustment that we can open ourselves to a compassion grounded in mutual openness rather than in a fear-driven exploitation.

Nitya concludes by noting the darkness and self-centeredness he witnessed in many members of young American families who (at the time when he narrated is commentary on the *100 Verses*) asked for his advice on how to free themselves of a life they no longer found attractive and to pursue larger social goals. These young parents, says Nitya, had lost their way and attached to their fantasies. In so doing, they had failed to see what was important and the responsibilities they had for others. Those closest to us require our fidelity first, or as Nitya so cogently put the matter, “Save your own child before you go out to save the whales” (p. 169).

* * *

That poem, brimming with rishi-wisdom, that grows more beautiful with each reading:

MENDING WALL

Robert Frost

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors'.

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
 If I could put a notion in his head:
 'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
 Where there are cows?
 But here there are no cows.
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out,
 And to whom I was like to give offence.
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
 But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
 He said it for himself. I see him there
 Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
 In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
 He moves in darkness as it seems to me~
 Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
 He will not go behind his father's saying,
 And he likes having thought of it so well
 He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

* * *

I Ching Hexagram 39 - Chien / Obstruction

- Above K'an the abysmal,
Water
-
- Below Ken Keeping Still,
Mountain

The hexagram pictures a dangerous
 abyss lying before us and a steep,
 inaccessible mountain rising behind us. We are surrounded by
 obstacles; at the same time, since the mountain has the attribute of

keeping still, there is implicit a hint as to how we can extricate ourselves. The hexagram represents obstructions that appear in the course of time but that can and should be overcome. Therefore all the instruction given is directed to overcoming them.

The Judgment

Obstruction. The southwest furthers. The northeast does not further. It furthers one to see the great man. Perseverance brings good fortune.

The southwest is the region of retreat, the northeast that of advance. Here an individual is confronted by obstacles that cannot be overcome directly. In such a situation it is wise to pause in view of the danger and to retreat. However, this is merely a preparation for overcoming the obstructions. One must join forces with friends of like mind and put himself under the leadership of a man equal to the situation: then one will succeed in removing the obstacles. This requires the will to persevere just when one apparently must do something that leads away from his goal. This unswerving inner purpose brings good fortune in the end. An obstruction that lasts only for a time is useful for self-development. This is the value of adversity.

The Image

Water on the mountain: The image of Obstruction. Thus the superior man turns his attention to himself and molds his character.

Difficulties and obstructions throw a man back upon himself. While the inferior man seeks to put the blame on other persons, bewailing his fate, the superior man seeks the error within himself, and through this introspection the external obstacle becomes for him an occasion for inner enrichment and education.

Part IV

Our discussion brought up a crucial point about spirituality. So much of the popular version is about escape, seeking absence. There is a powerful attraction to getting away from our problems, whatever they may be, and for injured or abused people it may seem the only option.

Because of the stresses that beset us, we have to first distance ourselves from them in order to gather ourselves back together. If our difficulties are grave enough we begin to imagine that if we didn't exist, life would be much more pleasant. In any case, we have to find peace first of all. The hermit fantasy mentioned in Nitya's letter is a familiar aspect of insular spirituality, of an unwillingness to cope with the present. In rare cases escape by itself could produce a full cure, but not very often. Most of us learn much more from meaningful interactions with others, once we begin to properly know ourselves. That's what Narayana Guru keeps underlining: the greatest "escape" is to be here now, to find truth within existence.

There is a huge industry built around relieving suffering, or promising to. Come away, give up your daily chores, cut yourself away from society. It's very appealing. But Nitya and his forebears, including Krishna of the Gita, were also teaching *presence*, in addition to absence. It may be that presence grows out of absence. We retire to develop wisdom so we can be more available, more present. We still strive for absence from our faults and intractable problems, but not from our value to our surroundings. For those who have recovered themselves, the practice is to become more in tune with the world and improve our capabilities to interact with it. Opting out is tragic. It is the child's immediate response to a hurt ego. When a child's ego recovers from an insult, they eagerly get back in the game. But if it is battered long enough, the child's spirit is defeated, and they only seek surcease of sorrow. They may even commit suicide to escape the pain. Or they continue to live, but with an unbridgeable abyss between life and self.

Narayana Guru's teachings direct us to restore the connection: to develop presence, heightened involvement, in whatever we do. We don't have to follow a formula or change our lifestyle, but only engage in what we do as completely as possible. We aim to be as alive as we can, if only at odd moments, when our focused attention is brought to bear.

Perhaps the greatest appeal of Narayana Guru's philosophy is that it is totally down to earth. There is no separation between us and the exalted state: there is no special place to go or thing to do. We live realization right where we are, in our daily activity. He assures us we are already realized. So many great teachers have an other-worldly air. He does too, and yet it's combined with a fiery intensity that pressures us to wake up and live, exactly where we stand. It's a philosophy that can have a fantastic impact on our life if we have ears to hear with.