

6/25/13  
Verse 24

“That man,” “this man”—thus, all that is known in this world, if contemplated, is the being of the one primordial self; what each performs for the happiness of the self should be conducive to the happiness of another.

Free translation:

What is known as that person or this person, when carefully considered, is the one undifferentiated form of the primeval Self. Whatever one does for the happiness of one's own self should also include the happiness of others.

Nataraja Guru's:

What here we view as this man or that  
Reflection reveals to be the Self's prime form;  
That conduct adopted for one's Self-happiness  
Another's happiness must also secure at once.

Before we even began, I received this note from online participant Pratibha, who lives in California:

OH SUCH BEAUTY OF TRUTH AND EXPRESSION, THIS  
VERSE 24! MAY ALL WHO READ THIS VERSE KNOW IT,  
AND READ IT, AND SHARE IT!  
my thanks for having the privilege to receive this verse,  
Pratibha Gramann

Kinda warms the heart, eh?

The class too, worked our way into resonance with the profoundly compassionate motivation of Narayana Guru. As we

sensed in the last verse, he was heartbroken at the unnecessary cruelties inflicted by humans on each other, not to mention on the “lower” animals. Nitya recounts a story from *Word of the Guru*, in his *In the Stream of Consciousness*:

When the great poet of India, Rabindranath Tagore, came to pay homage to Narayana Guru, the poet was overjoyed by the great changes brought about by Narayana Guru in the socioeconomic setup of the country. Commenting on that, the poet complimented the Guru on the “great work” he was doing for the people.

The Guru’s reply was not delayed, “Neither have we done anything in the past, nor is it possible to do anything in the future. Powerlessness fills us with sorrow.”

Despite being saddened by the tragedies he witnessed on all sides, Narayana Guru was not one to be immobilized by a sense of helplessness. He was making a profound point: we don’t accomplish anything through mere willing, through making plans and carrying them out. Intentionality is a stumbling block, an infusion of duality into a unitive event. Whatever remained of his ego was dedicated to simply being available—present—to the situation. He might have wished passionately that he could bring about what so plainly needed to be done, yet he knew it was out of his hands. He held his desires in check, and in so doing became one of the most effectively transformative humans ever to walk the planet.

When most of us discover we are helpless, we give up. We say it’s God’s problem, or is otherwise out of our hands, and turn our backs. But “God” has only us to work with. Narayana Guru demonstrated how we can surrender our intentionality while remaining available, making us highly effective. He also knew the minute you think “I am accomplishing something good” it sabotages the whole business. The subtlety of this verse’s import is that we must act and not act simultaneously. Such an attitude can’t

be crafted, it has to be gentled into. We call it a dialectic synthesis, but it's very difficult to implement.

Brenda gave us a good example, without necessarily trying to. She has known a certain family since it formed, and the father since he was a child. In talking to their 11-year-old son she realized that he was not getting the care and attention he very much needed. The mother was no longer present. Brenda took the father aside and had a heart to heart talk with him, about what a child needs in such a situation. Because she wasn't threatening or didactic, he really listened to her, and resolved to be more caring. She gave him some practical steps he could easily implement. Where others might have thought "It's none of my business," Brenda cared too much to turn her back. Nitya often said we have unlimited liability. We matter. Brenda knows this.

Many adults retreat when they are in pain, imagining that no one wants or needs them. They erect a defensive barrier and remain inside it. This is particularly egregious in parents. In addition to oppressing their own soul, it's a protolanguage instruction to the next generation how to erect their own barriers and imprison themselves. It's also very effective at forcing friends to keep their distance. But Brenda, partly inspired by the last verse of Atmo and partly by her well-developed compassionate nature, did not stay away. She knew that a child of that age, if ignored, spirals down into all sorts of hazardous emotions and addictive behaviors. Their negativity is a cry for help, not the rejection it appears to be. So she waded in and made a positive contribution to getting the father more involved.

I have observed on many occasions when a well-meaning person was met with hostility, they quickly gave up and pulled away. We have to at least try to get past the lions guarding the gate before letting it be. Getting it just right requires real expertise. Too much or too little effort and the person's defenses will easily defeat us. Brenda made it clear she was acting out of love, and so was invited into her friend's inner sanctum.

Michael was also touched by Nitya's passionate outburst from the last verse. He was deeply moved by Nitya's outing of those who claim to live a spiritual life but in fact don't care for each other. It brought up something he would have said to his parents as a child, when they were divorcing, about how it would hurt their children. It was a healing insight for him, even though it came too late to affect the original gestalt.

Scotty talked about how he's resolved his feelings of not being loved as a child. It's been a long learning curve, but he has been able to forgive his family's lapses. His efforts epitomize the work of this study, which I'll summarize at the end. It's too bad we weren't loved as much as we'd have liked, but we are the ones who can reverse the trend, by intuiting that pretty much everyone feels unloved and wishes it were different. Scotty is becoming an uninhibited beacon of love himself.

Egos are expert at framing their selfish behaviors in altruistic window dressing. *Of course* we do everything we do for the very best reasons. Unfortunately, we are routinely deluding ourselves. Our purported high-minded motivations are actually excuses tacked on at after the fact. Which is another reason for Narayana Guru to admit his powerlessness. We shouldn't take credit for our successes any more than we should deny our failures.

It reminded Brenda of something Mick said last week: we should do good in secret. We don't set out to do good, and we certainly shouldn't have any expectations about what we can accomplish. But we do offer ourselves to the occasion. And we do our best to not distort the salubrious unfolding around us.

Deb reprised Nitya's point that if you really understand your connection to the whole you cannot behave in a bad way or be hurtful to others:

Protagoras put forward the claim that knowledge need not necessarily be a virtue. Socrates said knowledge is virtue. Protagoras replied, "No. A man who knows truth can also distort it." Socrates said, "In that case he does not know truth. If he really knows, he has

to be virtuous. A man who says he knows and is not virtuous knows only one part of it.” In the Upanishads this is called knowledge that walks on only one leg. For the Self to walk on two legs it must have knowledge and also love. Love for what? For itself. Nature reveals itself in a human self so that it knows it is all, or that it belongs to all. If you are concerned with the happiness of the Self, that binds you to commit yourself to live always for the happiness of all.

The class wrestled with this core idea, and we have an assignment of sorts for next week to proclaim the unity of life in a way that those who don't see it might begin to accept. After all, it's the central precept of spiritual life, which in Vedanta means all life. How do we communicate that we are connected to everything, when the primary knowledge base of the present day is about separation and isolation? Just saying we're connected doesn't get through. But it seems as if the very survival of the planet hangs in the balance. If we continue to treat it as consisting of isolated grains of sand, that's what it will wind up being.

Narayana Guru demonstrated the power of oneness even as he proclaimed his powerlessness. Rita also felt that we communicate the truth of oneness by how we live it: the more we experience it, the more it radiates to those around us. She lamented that humans require proof, and that in a way this blocks our inner vision of oneness. But that's what we're trained to, and it has a certain value in steering us away from manipulation by others.

Science has been discovering unifying truths for hundreds of years, but it hasn't had much impact on our default setting of isolation, probably because the heart has to learn along with the intellect. Not only are humans genetically one family, but now we know that all life has descended from a single progenitor—we are distant cousins of coral reefs, yeast, plants, and even microbes. Something inside us knows this, although our egos don't see it. It's a hugely inconvenient truth.

When we are cruel to children, they viscerally learn defensiveness and isolation, so abstract knowledge about unity

doesn't penetrate very far. This is a very important idea. We have to communicate—resuscitate—love and kindness, or the tides of separation will continue to dominate, with their consequent environmental and social degradation.

Rita asked about the overall scheme of our study, so here's my best attempt. We start out for what seems like eternity in a comfortable womb, with no demands and few if any disturbances in our blissful ease. After we are born, we begin to experience challenges in greater or lesser amounts. We have to gradually take over meeting our needs, and we receive a variety of mental and physical injuries. We begin to erect psychological barricades to protect ourselves from a seemingly hostile world. By the time we're teenagers we have a full fortress erected around our core self, with a popular persona painted on the door. Soon we identify with the persona so much that we abandon the core. Since the core is our true self, this is an extremely serious loss, leading to all the ills that flesh is heir to. But society is filled with cheerleaders and bartenders who tout the false self as the important one. So only rare birds downplay their defenses. Everyone else celebrates them.

As adults we no longer need some if not all of the barriers we erected in childhood, but they are solidly built and don't go away on their own. They have to be consciously dismantled. Unfortunately there is not much call for self-restoration, and the process is often painful and nerve wracking. So we would rather leave the barriers in place and pretend they don't exist. It sort of works, but they wall us in as they wall others out. Part of us resents being caged, and it's hard work to suppress our vitality. Our class is for those who want to let their souls run free again, who are tired of keeping themselves under wraps.

Briefly then, the Atmo study we're engaged in is to recover our authentic self. Two simultaneous motions are invoked: an inward exploration back to our core, our vacated home, combined with expanding our protective barriers to include more and more of the world inside them. It's not too hard to make them more spacious, if we want to. Narayana Guru tells us we are enlightened

to the extent that we allow the other into our personal territory, and so our enlightenment grows as we become more inclusive. Knowing our core self helps make us brave to extend our boundaries. Nitya gives the classic example of a mother who identifies with her child, but there are infinite possibilities. True enlightenment means finding a place for everyone and everything, making our boundaries so vast they include all, as if everyone was our own dear child.

It was a beautiful class, happily free of the quibbling that sometimes pops up around this subject: “does this mean you believe that things like rape and murder are okay?” No, that’s not it. All those selfish, cruel acts are manifestations of separation and isolation. Self-aware openness is their cure. This is all about restoring our own integrity. our wholeness, not worrying about other people’s faults. There’s plenty of that going on already, and it accomplishes nothing useful. Quibbling is the ego finding yet another excuse to avoid the hard work of healing ourselves in the light of this extraordinary gift, the Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction. Its absence is a fine mark that we have already made great strides in this exceptional endeavor.

## Part II

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

What is the purpose of my life? This is a question which many people want to answer for themselves. To eat and drink, to mate and multiply are the common lot of all living beings, and on this count man is not different from all other animals.

What makes man human? Man is the only animal who counts and calculates, writes poetry, fabricates a language with several thousand different intonations with which to express his ideas, and who builds schools and universities and takes pride in founding national libraries. The realization of a purpose is discerned by looking at the nuclear value of its motivation. The purpose of a pen is to write, if it fails it is no

longer a pen and it can be thrown away. The central value of man is that he is capable of knowing and sharing his knowledge with his fellow man. In essence, he is knowledge.

Knowledge and self are not two. The operational efficiency of knowledge is evident when a person says “yes” or “no.” To say “yes,” one should know what truth is and how what is presented conforms to the requirements of truth. The word “no” proclaims dissent. Without a normative notion, genuine or defective, one cannot agree or disagree. Truth determines everything.

The truth that governs the knowledge of man is not something private or personal, it is the one principle that covers every specific item. The basic element of the material world is hydrogen. A hydrogen atom is structured with one electron and one proton. There is determination in it: it does not vary. That uniformity can be seen in the structuring of the atoms of all elements. Even when the atom of one element combines with the atom of another, its basic structure does not change. For example, water, which is made up of hydrogen and oxygen, does not show the qualities of either hydrogen or oxygen, but the atomic structure continues to be unchanged even when combined into the molecules of water.

From the hydrogen atom to the monkey, we see that the evolutionary process in nature is governed by certain natural laws that are universal and predictable. These laws decide all the functional properties of organic and inorganic bodies, but they are not revealed to lower forms of life. Man is the consciousness of nature. It is as if nature, in its entirety, has within it an insight that easily merges with the faculty of human reasoning. When man introspects and goes to the very source of the truth that enunciates all the laws of the universe, he does not think that he is a stranger in this world. The labyrinth of the inner secrets of the universe is like a parental home for him. He claims knowledge of it as if he has a right to know what he has inherited, and nature hands over to him the keys of one secret after another as he proves himself worthy of receiving those truths.

Thus, when man finally establishes himself as the immortal indweller of the cosmos and the custodian of his knowledge, he does not



see anything as alien. In such a state he is not one embodied person looking upon another as a stranger, he is the Self of all and he recognizes it.

The nature of the Self is a transparency of its awareness and the freedom from the aches and pains of ignorance. To a person who has realized this truth, the suffering of another person is a blemish in universal consciousness. He recognizes his unlimited liability to cleanse the world consciousness of its smudges of impurity. This commitment to perpetuate universal goodness makes compassion the central motivating force in his life.

When an artist or a musician of exceptional ability loses the capacity to express his talent because of old age, we continue to honor him as a musician or an artist. Such kind of favoritism is never shown, however, to a good man. A good man must always be good, his past virtue will not give him license to show caprice afterwards. A person's realization does not confer upon him any lifelong guarantee of wisdom. The transparency of his vision of universal oneness and goodness should prevail as a fact of life to the very last moment of his life. For this reason a realized person is always dedicated to the welfare of all sentient beings and is a responsible custodian of truth.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

THE principle viewed above from the social and ethical standpoint is here restated in terms of Self-knowledge. The duality that is apparent between the interests of two individuals can be viewed unitively as referring to the self-same central or neutral Self conceived in the context of the Absolute.

The Bhagavad Gita (V1.32) alludes to this way of establishing 'sameness' (samam) between the Self and the Cosmos. It is not according to the ordinary laws of thought, which admit of

contradiction and an excluded middle that this kind of unitive vision of the Self, which is all-embracing, is to be established.

The equation of the Self and the non-Self, has implicit in it the dialectical method known to ancient wisdom the world over, but overcovered and lost in later philosophies. Remnants of it are to be found in different degrees of rationalized versions in Kant, Hegel and Fichte. Modern phenomenology has this way of thinking implied in it.

Looking at the verse in a common-sense way, we could derive the simpler principle of human equality from it. When the poet Burns writes 'A man's a man for a' that', the principle of equality which is at the basis of Western civilization and variously named democracy, socialism or communism is implicit, in spite of the closed interpretations or forms that interested political bodies might have given to it. Perhaps only exponential differences of degree or intensity might distinguish them. Treating thy neighbour as thyself implies the equation of the Self with the non-Self.

### Part III

Jake has said that he has more work to do on the verse, but his achievement to date is nonetheless admirable. It's the nature of the subject to be somewhat like a morass, easy to get into deeper and hard to find a way back out of:

In contemporary America, and in the developed West generally, those with the greatest intensity (as Yeats noted years ago) frequently trumpet the moral high ground they assume they occupy as they demand "social change" of various kinds. On the opposite side of the fence are those who found a "return to basic values" on the same principle. They, too, believe wholly in an ethical value system that they use to guide their decisions in the public sphere. Human history seems to speak to this perennial

condition, one that manifests as a constant battle between an endless series of foes, all of whom are convinced that they do the right thing. As an enormously monstrous example, consider Adolf Hitler who dedicated his life, he claimed, to elevating the human race and sold his view on a national scale. His acolytes also had right on their side as they went about designing their new world order—the extent to which the Third Reich succeeded was not possible without a guiding ethic.

In this verse, the Guru (and Nitya in his commentary) dives directly into the belly of the beast. Because morality/ethics is solely a social phenomenon, it can easily become isolated in that domain and thereby devolve into one big category error—the category itself cannot be an element in the category. In the case of ethics, to evaluate social behavior in terms of social behavior leads to an endless sliding of premises because nothing is stable. Conditions continuously shift. We are monotonously faced with new “crises” and unexpected emergencies that demand original remedies designed specifically for them, and technological progress offers a trendy rationalization for attaching to this assumption. By the same token, remedies founded on experiences based on an archaic social behavior automatically fail to meet the litmus test of “unique” contemporary conditions which continue to change.

In Nitya’s commentary, he exposes this circular farce for what it is—a procedure through which we guarantee more of the same non-sense by clinging tenaciously to our profound ignorance, by insisting on remaining stupid. The marvelous quality of this assessment is that Nitya is not offering a judgmental statement wrapped in an arrogant hubris, all designed to elevate his ego. On the contrary, his balanced and plain-spoken explanation clearly illustrates one of the guru’s central tenets: “Know and let know, rather than argue and win” (p xxiii).

Nitya opens his commentary by thoroughly anchoring his premises in what *is*. Nature and every form in which it appears is controlled by precise laws that act to organize all forms of matter

in specific ways. The further up one proceeds on the evolutionary scale, the more complex the organism and the more opportunity for choice is open to that organism. Human beings, for example, operate on a far more open field than do fungi or dogs.

With choice comes options and ultimately consciousness, and it is at this point that Nitya briefly follows Aristotle and what he has to say about life's purpose in his *Nichomachean Ethics*. Being the most complex of organisms, humans also face the questions of purpose and ethics. Concerning the latter, Nitya's Aristotle begins with the linking verb *is*. When the term is used, it connects two elements, so when one uses the phrase *is good* that which is internal must be able to discern an existence. In Nitya's view, this element is the internal eternal light. Acting on what that light perceives as *good* constitutes the term's definition. Otherwise, it is meaningless. This discernment of Self, says Nitya, is the self-evident truth at the core of ethics; *knowing thyself* is the necessary foundation for the proper approach to social relationships and for living that truth which is the *good*, and it is the same individually and collectively. The boundaries between the self and the other disappear for the realized person who lives for the Self's happiness which is identical in all of us.

The balance between these two spheres (if held in balance) leads to moral health which, like physical and mental health, can also become unbalanced and lead to illness. It is in these varieties of imbalance that war, pestilence, poverty, etc., are born because of the holonic character of ourselves, the world, and the cosmos. Individually we are part of a social circle in a world of necessity, and that social circle is part of a larger one, and on and on. Likewise, our biological bodies are a composite of organs and systems that, if functioning in balance, produces health, but if out of balance leads to an infinite number of maladies (all functioning in a pre-determined life cycle). If an organ is out of balance and ceases to function, that failure can terminate the entire organism. The cancerous lungs will destroy the innocent kidneys—and all the rest in the process.

Knowledge of nature's holonic processes, its natural harmony is that same knowledge that manifests as our consciousness. As Nitya puts it, "We who are the knowers of nature are really nature knowing nature" (p. 172) and that factual rational knowledge, in and of itself, contains no ethical dimension until it is used in some public way. Splitting the atom, as an example, can serve both constructive and destructive purposes. Driving the choice is our realization or our ignorance of our Self love, our identification with the Absolute and nature—as the knowers knowing nature. Self-love and happiness are identical and universal and is our true nature that requires our constant fidelity. If we love the Self and do not privilege the ego-self as all-powerful (but as useful in its own domain) we have no alternative but to include all as parts of that Self-love. This ultimate and foundational conclusion—and at the same time premise—is the very definition of *good*, the character of which will constitute the purpose of our moral public and holonic universe: "Realization and doing good are not two separate things, they are one and the same" (p. 176).

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Verse 24 atmo response by Paul:

I hate missing class!

This book has such a great message to share with us carbon based life forms.

Here is my take (in what I can figure out over the last 7 years or so) on Verse 24.

~ False deification of the small self displaces an actualization of the Greater Self ~

IE: The small self is the UN-Realized Greater Self

Man has become adept at dividing the One into the many. Now we must learn to remember the Many as The One. It is evident that human perception (intellect & experience) are all acts of inherent disassociation (duality) we tend to mislabel as real. Mislabeled knowledge displaces Truth. Perception itself is utilitarian in nature & inherently effective only within the boundaries of nature.

A crutch I employ is to distinguish transcendence as likened unto considering our transience as a state being asleep & dreaming--while 'remembering' that you are in a dream. Remembering that you are dreaming--when dreaming--has the potential to break the bonds of servitude unto our conditioned intellects (ego). To demote the ego from master to servant has the positive effect of illuminating our tendency to deify illusionary dreams as personal self-limiting idols.

Unconditioned knowledge is Spirit. To actualize Spirit in nature is to realize the Universal Nature of Spirit (with nothing left out). Spirit seeks It-Self within the nature of Spirit. We all are within Spirit's Nature (even the small self) as testament to our Being (Nature's Spirit). We are the Consciousness of God. We are the Absolute.

~ To liken transience unto a 'remembering' that we are dreaming a dream of a transactional nature, offers potential in breaking the bondage of self-lordship, thus enabling the dissolution of the small self (ego) into the Universal Solution of the Greater Self (God) ~

**Hence:**

~ this is not my-self ~

~ this is not my-universe ~

~ All is the Unified Self of God manifesting Consciousness ~