

7/9/13

Verse 26

Holding the limbs together, remaining like a bolt,
the limb owner envelops as vaporous being;
for this reason, “that man” and “this man” arise in this way—
so that man believes, due solely to the weakness of non-discrimination.

Free translation:

The Self that owns the body bolts all the limbs together and animates it with a vaporous stuff. Once having become identified with the physical body, one loses right comprehension and fancies a separate reality for each person.

Nataraja Guru’s:

All limbs suppressing and standing as a bolt
The limb-owner mere vapour enshrouds within;
‘This’ man he takes different from ‘that’ therefore
Owing to the weakness of unwisdom alone.

I often find that something seemingly random in the preceding week makes a significant contribution to the class, and this time there were several. Reading up on a new and promising approach to cancer (see <http://www.atavisticchemotherapy.com/>) I encountered this from Herman Hesse, in *Magister Ludi*, I believe about the monks in the curious monastery the Magister organized:

Each man had only one genuine vocation – to find the way to himself.... His task was to discover his own destiny – not an arbitrary one – and to live it out wholly and resolutely within himself. Everything else was only a would-be existence, an

attempt at evasion, a flight back to the ideals of the masses, conformity and fear of one's own inwardness.

Rest assured, then, we aren't the only ones to pursue such a strange agenda! Again and again we encounter the exhortation to take this subject (our Self) seriously, to really get into it—our “genuine vocation” is easily obscured by all the available distractions. Narayana Guru's “weakness of non-discrimination” in the verse refers to our inability to separate the wheat from the chaff, barring a significant effort. As Nitya puts it in his commentary, “Narayana Guru is lamenting the weakness which makes it difficult for us to go beyond the darkness and see the wonder of all this.” We all agreed that the small and modestly dedicated loose-knit community of seekers we create each Tuesday gives us a big boost in this area. It is much easier to dig beneath the surface when we sit together and ponder words of wisdom. This was particularly evident last night, a warm and glowing evening in which Susan's open admissions led to some keen insights for all of us.

Earlier in the week, Susan had expressed interest in a favorite analogy I added to my exegesis of Herakles' twelfth labor (which coincidentally also bears a nodding resemblance to Verse 26). Psychologist Leo Zeff, who used LSD as a therapeutic tool for many years, described the impact of a psychedelic trip in a similar way to Herakles' entry into the underworld I had just described:

Imagine a castle, a huge castle, very large. Many rooms, many turrets, many levels of it. There's only one way to get into this castle, and that's the front door. The front door is *solid steel*. *Impregnable*. You can knock on that door all you want. You can do everything you can to tear it down. You can't get it down. Every now and then you might somehow or other move it a little bit to get a glimpse of what's behind it, but that's all. There's no way, and you've tried every way possible to get into that castle. Which is yourself.

What happens on a trip is by some mysterious magic means this door is dissolved, and you have the opportunity to go in

and explore that castle. Any place you want. You go in and you look around, and you find many, many wonderful places, strange places maybe, scary places and all that. You can go to the top and you can go to the bottom and you get a sense of what the totality of yourself really is like. As you come down, what happens is that the door somehow or other gets back up there. But that's all right, because you have a memory of what possibilities are there and what you've experienced. The biggest experience that it brings to you is that it connects you with feelings that you've never been connected with before. They are now open to you. Not on the level or the intensity that you had in the experience but certainly much more than they ever were before.... You have really expanded your awareness.

My comment there was “Zeff’s steel door analogy closely corresponds with Kerberos [the hell-hound who guards the entrance], though it fails to convey the terror that effortlessly turns us away from the gates and sends us back to make the best of our mundane but relatively comfortable existence. Terrifying or not, both are insurmountable barricades that must somehow be overcome to gain entry into the mysterious realms.” Compare this with Nitya’s commentary:

We soon come to a dark chamber and stand outside its door, unable to penetrate into it to know the secret of how this [neural] agitation is manifesting.... Our knowledge is coming and standing at the portals of this wonder, unable to penetrate beneath the surface. Beyond lies a great darkness. The greatest of all wisdom, all knowledge, is happening behind that door and in that darkness. It keeps the whole universe proliferating and multiplying endlessly. What a great wonder it is!

The third foreshadowing of the class this week provided a ready answer to a question Bobby brought up that he’s been pondering for a long time: what impact does the awareness of unity have on the

individual? He means, partly, is it practical? The Sunday NY Times featured an article I had just read on meditation. It included a report on an experiment comparing the level of compassion in newly trained meditators with a control group. In this instance, the measurable level of compassion—bound to be fuzzy, of course—was three times greater in the novice meditators compared to those who didn't receive the training.

There is a paradox here. Our culture trains us to look outside and solve problems, to think of the other and serve them. Even many gurus advocate “selfless service” as the goal of yoga or spirituality. Oddly, this mentality creates a boomerang effect of retreat, perhaps because the core self is starved from lack of attention. We don't have enough compassion left over for our selves. Yet if we turn inward, we (fairly quickly) come to know a universal mystery residing within us that is the true source of compassion and the loveful delight in existence everyone unconsciously craves. By feeding or connecting with this, the world around benefits much more than if we altruistically set out to fix its ills.

This is actually extremely important in Narayana Guru's wisdom teachings, and we will be working on this in the months ahead. Our situation is more like the exact opposite of Zeff's analogy: we are trapped inside a castle and the whole world awaits us beyond the portal. We are all living within barricades, fortresses, from which some of us dare to make sorties occasionally into the outer darkness. We think, I'll help my friends to come out of their fortresses so they'll be much happier, and that will make me happy too. But action originating from a fortress has an alienating effect, no matter how beneficial it is on the material plane. What the gurus of That Alone are recommending is for us to learn how to come out of our fortresses and act freely on our own. If we can do it, we and everything around us will benefit. The coming out communicates something everyone secretly craves, and has largely forgotten. It animates the cliché of harmony to become something more than lip-service. Harmony does not have to be created, it is our true nature. We fall out of harmony the minute we strive for it, but fall back into it when we let our surface intentions go.

Jan wondered what life would be like if society was organized around sharing wonder, around what was really important? Oddly, that

has almost always been the initial impulse of human societies. People are motivated to share their best experiences, like parks, museums, schools, recreational facilities, not to mention the basic necessities, but there is a shadow side to it. Good intentions turn less ideal when they're organized into fixed programs. Over time the wonder is replaced by duties and obligations, and the spirit drains away.

Here's the paradox, baldly stated. When we act intentionally selflessly, there is a kernel of selfishness in it. That doesn't mean the corrective is to act selfishly, as many people seem to believe, because that's equally an arbitrary construct. Both positions are inherently selfish. Opening to the Self, by contrast, is neither selfish nor selfless. It is the dialectical synthesis of both positions.

Don't worry, there will be much more about this as we proceed.

Speaking of worries.... Susan's brave admission was that she is obsessed by worries, and she decided to check up on just how much. One day she kept a list. Every time she noticed a worry she wrote it down. In the first two hours she compiled 25 worries. That was really something to worry about!

As usual, everyone in the class was quietly relieved to find out that someone else shared their problems. We normally maintain silence because we assume (like everyone else) that only we have faults, and everyone else is a paragon of virtue. But as Mick said, that's humans for you. We are worrying machines, designed to stay alive by worrying about all sorts of things—even though worry itself can kill us. Jake remembered being shaken out of his own complacency about worries by a friend one time. He was talking to him about another friend who was dying of cancer, and said he was worried about him. His friend asked him pointedly, "Do you think you've worried enough?" It blew Jake's mind. It revealed to him what a waste the worrying was. It did nothing for the sick friend, and made him unhappy and potentially ill himself. Hmm. Being a lose/lose proposition, why is it we get so addicted to it? Why are there so few effective antidotes?

Bobby noticed the quietly explosive point Nitya makes about this. Neurologically speaking "there is no difference between your knowledge of comprehending the Absolute and having a pinprick. At the

nervous level it's all useless, superficial agitation." He later adds, "Our little pains are so very important to us. Our life is not ruled by wisdom but by pain: little, little pains and agitations." He is ferociously trying to redirect our attention to the magnificence we call the Absolute, but which is a wonder that transcends the triviality of names and forms: "When we look at it this way this very earth on which we walk is the great mother from which all this has come. How many times should we kneel with gratitude that all this was made possible from mere dust!" Bobby lamented that we tend to focus on problems rather than the good things. But that is how our brains have evolved so far. Atmopadesa Satakam is inviting us to evolve further.

One important idea is that we need a master interest to absorb our attention. If we have not yet reconnected with our inner drive, we cast about for it in all the wrong places. This course in Self instruction is an aid to regaining our authenticity.

For many people, including Susan, raising children is an overwhelming interest for a big chunk of their lives, but as the children become adults and move on, a new interest has to replace the vacuum they leave us with. It doesn't have to be an exteriorized interest, either. Curing and healing the self could be a worthy exercise in its own right. After that who knows? The sky's the limit. But whatever it is has to be a full-fledged effort—half-hearted dithering doesn't bring up the ananda we need to maintain our interest and get over our anxieties. Worries have to power to keep us distracted, if we let them. As Nataraja Guru often said, there is a heroic element that has to be brought to bear in spiritual life.

Being filled with wonder is all well and good, but how do we get over this obsessiveness, generated as it is by deep-seated and repressed traumas? The technique implicit in Vedanta and Yoga is the dialectic neutralization of opposites to produce a higher synthesis. The class really focused on what this means, on how to do this.

First of all, we have to recognize our barely-noticed thoughts, worries, and impulses. Susan's intentional list making was exactly right for bring her semiconscious predilections more into her awareness. Normally we simply try to suppress unwanted mentation, which drives it

underground where it can wreak havoc. So we have to recognize and acknowledge it first. Then we consciously counteract it with an opposite assertion, which allows us to drop both the worry and the assertion and sit for a moment in a neutral zero, until the next worry (mental modulation) comes along. Usually we don't have long to wait....

Bringing in the opposite premise is tricky business. In the past we've given Nitya's very valuable example of whenever he was complimented he would recall a fault or two, and when he was criticized he would pair it with a worthy aspect of his nature. This time the class used an "easy" example of Susan's. Whenever she passes a certain closet and sees how her family has left it messy, it initiates a chain of worries. Messiness means uncaring. Her son especially leaves messes all over. How can she teach him to clean up? Won't he fail in life because he doesn't have basic sanitation skills? Why doesn't anyone care about Susan's feelings? And so on. You know.

Of course, in training a child (or husband) those things need to be considered. But if we're trying to cure ourselves of obsessive worries, it's a different problem altogether. We could simply think that a dirty closet doesn't really matter in the overall scheme of things. Mick went a step farther: why not be charmed that the mess is the mark of your son? A clean closet is sterile, but that mess says "Peter" loud and clear. This is especially good because the worry is more an emotion than a rational thought, so it is best corrected with a countervailing emotion. We often fall short because we try to neutralize a huge wave of emotion, laden with unconscious fears, by using a simple slogan. Just repeat a mantra. Just tell yourself it's okay. I'm sorry, but that's not real yoga. You have to see what you've got going and intelligently find its contradictory position. (Helpful sayings can be efficacious at times—see Part III.)

Scotty talked about reading Krishnamurti, and that there's a lot of neutralization of opposites in his writing. The idea is not to simply take a contrarian position (we're all pretty expert at that!) but to pit one side against the other so they resolve into thin air and blow away. He has used the technique to resolve family issues that used to bother him a lot. He's replaced anger and resentment with understanding and compassion,

and found it easy to then forgive past transgressions. Along with Mick, he agrees we should take our self like a baby in our arms.

We are much greater than our thoughts, and we aim to access more of that greatness by sloughing off our attachment to our thinking. In fact, as Nitya says, we know virtually nothing. We are titanically ignorant. Admitting that is one way to open the steel doors of our inner landscape. But we've been forced to maintain the fiction that we are very knowledgeable, so as to get employment and social respect. Yes, we had to do that. No one can be hired (or loved) if they proclaim they don't know anything. But in our meditations we can admit the truth: we are absolutely clueless. We have no idea what's going on here. Like Bob Dylan's Idiot Wind, it's a wonder we can even feed ourself. It's a wonder we still know how to breathe. If we can dare to admit that, it's the beginning of wisdom. One last quote from Nitya, "In the Kena Upanishad it says one who does not know claims that he knows, and one who knows keeps quiet. The wonder is too much for him even to acknowledge what he knows."

We're winding down our "quiz" on unity versus multiplicity. It's not too much of an exaggeration to say that the mindset you decide to inhabit makes all the difference. I highly recommend reading Nataraja Guru's comments this time (in Part II), even if he's ordinarily too tough a nut to crack. They're quite good.

One last thought from me about universal unity. I have been musing for years about paying for a DNA analysis of my family history, because we suspect a lot of interesting elements in it. While everyone is unique, we all agree I'm even more unique than average. I do know I'm 1/16 Native American (Kiowa). So recently I looked into it. What I found is that within a very few generations, pretty much every strand of human ancestry is present in everyone. You can pick whatever history you want, because it's all there. The people who peddle DNA tests can make an exciting story, working in Genghis Khan or Cleopatra, but it's meaningless because we're all related. *Everyone* has Cleopatra in their ancestry. Moreover, the genome work done recently confirms that every living organism on Earth is related with us: bacteria, fungi, yeasts, plants

and all. There is only one lineage here, but consider the amazing diversity it is capable of. It takes your breath away.

Part II

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

Among human beings, there are no two people exactly alike in body, mind or personality traits. The fingerprint is considered to be unique. The formation of the skin on the pad of the thumb is considered by criminologists to be very important for the identification of a person who tries to conceal his true identity behind a mask. Fingerprints, however, won't help reveal one's true beingness, for that we need a unifying principle, not a differentiating one.

Look at the bodies of gymnasts or boxing champions, their muscles are like steel. If, for some reason, they choke and fail to breathe for four or five minutes, their bodies will crash to the ground with irreversible consequences. Should the breath leave the body completely, it will first stiffen, then inflame and finally fall apart. The skeletal system, the muscles, all the bodily functions, the sensory and motor systems, memory, reasoning, the will to act, and action all depend on the autonomous function of breathing. The first function we performed on coming out of our mother's womb was to breathe, thereafter we do not stop till death claims our last breath. Nobody knows who has the agency of keeping the respiration going. We may say it is the living principle in us; but what is that? And when and how did it originate? According to biologists or natural scientists, the life that pulsates in us has flowed continuously through many structured organisms over millions of years. The rules of our life not only go beyond the human race, but they have a unified origin even in the kind of stuff that has evolved into the present solar system. This elusive principle called life, which keeps our hearts pulsating rhythmically and makes our lungs expand and contract, has performed the same

functions millions of times before in organisms of varying shapes and states of consciousness.

A search for this principle will reveal not only a kinship with the people of our neighbourhood or humanity at large, but will also take us beyond the pale of vegetative life to consider salts and minerals as our next of kin as well. When our universal relationship with the rest of the world is such, how shameful it is for us to live only within the confines of the selfish interest of one embodied person.

Although we carry this body around as our most intimate instrument from the day of birth, our understanding of it is pitifully meagre. Even a ninety-year-old person can remember his childhood days with great clarity. Who is keeping all the impressions of life intact in the mythical engrams of the so-called “black box” of the mind? And who supplies those memories to consciousness, without even one second of delay, when there is a need to recall them? Pondering on the mysteries of life separately will only bring us to even less familiar regions and will close us off to the secrets that would make us stand in awe and bewilderment. Even after knowing every detail one is still compelled to ask, “What is all this?”

The confusion that ensues from the plurality of chaotic configurations causes distrust and fear of even the nearest of kith and kin. Peace and joy come when one sees the boundless extension of one's life flowing in all directions and mirrored, or even sometimes sculptured, in the lives of others.

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We need to bring Will Shakespeare in here, because Nataraja Guru is going to slyly refer to this (justly!) famous speech in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V Scene 1. I think our class musings have thrown a lot of light on what the Bard is saying, especially if you substitute rope and snake for bush and bear:

- **Hippolyta** - 'Tis strange my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.
- **Theseus** - More strange than true: I never may believe These antique fables, nor these fairy toys. Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend More than cool reason ever comprehends. The lunatic, the lover and the poet Are of imagination all compact: One sees more devils than vast hell can hold, That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic, Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt: The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling, Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; And as imagination bodies forth The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing A local habitation and a name. Such tricks hath strong imagination, That if it would but apprehend some joy, It comprehends some bringer of that joy; Or in the night, imagining some fear, How easy is a bush supposed a bear!
- **Hippolyta** - But all the story of the night told over, And all their minds transfigured so together, More witnesseth than fancy's images And grows to something of great constancy; But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

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Nataraja Guru gives Verse 26 his close attention, and goes so far as to claim that equality is a *fait accompli* of the modern world, at least theoretically. I think he passes our quiz with flying colors:

PETER may be said to be different from Paul, but for one primarily interested in the religious value they represent, there is no substantial or essential difference between them. Even in a more matter-of-fact scientific sense a man might have a fingerprint that is different from another, but his personality might be fundamentally the same as that of any other human being.

However, in the context of contemplation or wisdom, this kind of difference has no importance at all. All are made in the image of God, as the saying goes. What we call the soul within the body of man is a neutral and impersonal entity at its very core, although it might carry peripherally, as accretions, all sorts of impressions or conditionings which are incidental to the life of any individual.

The modern democratic idea of the equality of man recognizes this verity sufficiently. It is not necessary in our time, therefore, to insist on this aspect of the impersonal equality of all beings. All individuality or difference of detail belongs to the extraneous world of actions and reactions which do not touch the deep-seated self in man, just as the winds and the waves leave unaffected the deep waters at the bottom of the ocean. Wisdom is concerned primarily and solely with the pure and absolute content of the individual. Contemplation takes place best in dark-room conditions when the sense-impressions which make for differences and multiplicity are effectively effaced.

The Guru here compares the residual core of the unconditioned Self to mere vapour which is enveloped, as it were, by an outer covering or veil whose tissue or stuff is none other than ignorance. As the Gita puts it very directly, 'Wisdom is enveloped by unwisdom; therefore beings are deluded' (V. 15).

Characterlessness is to be treated as an attribute of the pure or absolute Self, although in ordinary life, to call a person 'characterless' might be considered derogatory. In an ordinary textbook of ethics it might be more correct to ask a person to try

and add some character to his personality. This contemplative text, as we have said, is not to be taken as an ethical code. Its only aim is to throw light on the absolute Self, and it is thus proper, therefore, that the Self here should be described as having no mark, even of individuality. The pure unconditioned Self tallies with the notion of the Absolute, which can be said to be existing and non-existing at the same time. The existential side of the Self here is compared to an upright bolt and the conceptual Self which is a phenomenological event in the mind is compared to the vapour of empty characterlessness. Both together abolish individual specificity, which is a myth to be abolished.

There is here reference to the limbs which are aspects of the physical personality or individuality. The 'limb-owner' may be said to be a psycho-physical entity as seen from this side of reality, from which as common human beings, we envisage reality. The physical body, which has limbs, has some agent or owner within which is able to order the limbs at its will. Whether that is the same as the absolute Self or not is not a question that should arise, because this relative Self is only a postulate used to affirm the Absolute. Finally, the non-dual Self is what is to be taken as real. Various suppositions have to precede the conviction. As we press towards this culminating notion in which the Self is compared to an airy nothing or vaporous something, we have to pass through an intermediate notion of the 'personality' or universal individual phenotype which is here compared to a bolt that stands upright or erect in perfect vertical poise. As a tree is supported by a stem, the limbs of man are held up by a principle which supports them, keeps them straight or erect and gives unity and coherence to the parts of the integrated whole. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts, because it belongs to a unitive order by itself.

Even such a notion of a unitive Self could further be resolved into an entity that has no tangible content and which could be called a void as well as intensely material stuff. As in the case of pure

space it could be thought of as highly unyielding as well as letting all things live and move within its flexibility. These contradictions are apparent and should not be taken seriously by one who knows the double-sided approach to axiomatic truth, which can use the a priori and the a posteriori together without contradiction. Self and the Absolute are one and the same, both perceptually and conceptually. (See for clarification our later work.)

The latter half of this verse lays down the dictum that it is foolish to discriminate between man and man. Equality is perhaps the highest contribution of modern civilization, and this notion is reiterated here and related to its proper context of non-dual philosophy. This philosophy thus becomes suited to the aspirations of all mankind treated as one.

Part III

Here's an excerpt from an interview I gave to Lifepositive Magazine in 2007, bearing on the subject of unity:

How can we apply Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy to attain unity in diversity, and for the uplift of the underprivileged in India and the world increasingly troubled by religious, caste and ideological divisions?

Luckily for us mortals, the unity is always there. It isn't something that needs to be obtained. But it *is* something that needs to be recognized.

Practically speaking, we have always to restrain ourselves first. Everyone wants to correct the other person and think of themselves as not needing correction. So we have to examine all the ways that we are partisans of limited groups, such as nations, religions, castes and so on. We may think, "If everybody did yoga or meditated, the world would be better off," or "if everybody would just be *nice* to each other, what a great world this would

be!” Thoughts that imply a right and a wrong way of doing things, or even a better or worse way, are the subtle beginnings of divisions among people. So we should be sure that we aren’t setting ourselves up as superior to others. In my experience, very few people have even taken this most basic step toward unity and peace. They are mostly excited about other people’s faults. The Guru’s suggestion, in the light of the Gita, is to attune first to the Absolute and then you will see its light in the hearts of all. People as people may be hard to love but their essence is very easy to love.

The next step is to practice kindness and just plain friendliness. Have you ever noticed how when you are nice to people they respond by being nice, and when you are in a bad mood people want to argue with you? There really is a kind of electromagnetism between people, invisible but potent. So work on making your dynamo hum with peaceful, loving thoughts.

Actually, changing the world “out there” is very difficult, but changing it right in your heart is profoundly simple, and much more effective. Whatever you learn and put into practice in your own life will radiate to everyone you encounter. If you are an evangelist for unity, you could then go out of your way to meet different kinds of people and befriend them, but it’s not necessary. What you *are* is already meeting them.

As to the underprivileged, Nitya wrote in his autobiography, *Love and Blessings*, that Nataraja Guru never liked the idea of calling someone poor or pitiable. “We are as poor as anyone else and really pitiable,” he would say. Of course, he was speaking as a sannyasin, but the point was for everyone. Nataraja Guru also distinguished between abundance and opulence. Nature is abundant, providing enough for all, but people have become opulent in their lifestyles. Opulence entails taking more than your share and hoarding it, which means someone else will necessarily have less. We have reached the point where Mother Earth may recycle the whole human species due to our untempered appetites. We have to turn to the Absolute for our happiness, instead of

searching for it in material goods. Then we can be satisfied with mere abundance and eschew opulence.

What do you think was the Guru's message when he consecrated a mirror as idol?

The great dictum Tat Tvam Asi (That thou art) is not mere idol chatter. Everything and everyone is the Absolute through and through, and realizing this is a great leap forward according to Narayana Guru. Devotees are always reminded that the siva lingam or whatever statue is the focal point of a temple, is an indicator of the truth, not the truth itself. All are waves on the ocean of the Absolute. But we continually fail to keep this in mind, and so become partisans of Krishna or Siva or Buddha or Christ.

Narayana Guru blew everyone's mind when he installed a mirror in a temple. Look: right there in the mirror is one of the Absolute's most magnificent expressions. You.

Is it sacrilege? Not at all. It is a great wisdom transmission from one of the world's greatest mystics. Is it idolatrous? By no means. It is a way of expanding consciousness by reflection, and the mirror is not to be worshipped as if it were a divine object in its own right. Narayana Guru is asking each of us to have reverence for what we see in the central icon: *ourselves*. We need to sit before that image and ask *ourselves* just how am I the Absolute? Am I the best it can do? Yes. And can it be better? Yes, sure, why not?

If everyone could accept that they were a spark of the Divine, just as everyone else is a spark too, they would be empowered to live up to at least some of their vast potential. Then they would never allow themselves to be beaten down as something worthless. There is no danger of becoming egotistic either, if everyone is the Absolute, only if you believe some are saved and some are not. We are literally one gigantic family. But when we think of gods we unconsciously defer our own independence to those "wiser" beings. We may rapidly stop valuing ourselves if we don't remember our central role in the game.

The neutrality of the mirror is very important. It cannot be mistaken for the icon of any particular religion. However beautiful is the symbolism found in temples, synagogues and churches, it unintentionally excludes anyone who doesn't grasp its significance. On the other hand, a mirror reflects everything that comes before it, and in exactly the same way. It does not pass judgment. It is a highly refined witness. And no one can claim it belongs only to their group.

On a secondary level, it is hard to look at yourself in a mirror honestly and without shame. We should be able to, but we hide from ourselves in so many ways. Narayana Guru wanted us to live so that we were never ashamed of our actions. And who knows what those are better than we do ourselves? So look at yourself squarely in the mirror once in awhile, and keep yourself honest.

There are any number of other implications to the mirror that readers can divine for themselves. It was a most inspired idea for the Guru to substitute it for a more localized icon.

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Here's a longer version of the psychedelic analogy that appeared earlier. Leo Zeff is speaking:

I'll bring my analogies in here at this point. When I'm talking about a trip to a person who hasn't tripped and they want to know, "What's it like?" It's hard to describe what it's like but I have a couple of analogies that I use.

One is, imagine that you're on a stage, a very large stage, a round stage, circular. You're standing in the center of the stage. Around this stage is a huge curtain, very, very high and it's closed and where the curtain comes together there's about say three feet of space, of an opening. You're standing in the middle of that stage and you're looking out through that opening. Everything you see is the totality of your experience of yourself.

What happens on a trip is by some mysterious means the curtain very gradually is pulled back. Very gradually. It's pulled back until it's pulled all the way around the back and you're given the opportunity to see everything that's been there all the time but you couldn't see it before because there was a curtain. All the different levels of experience that it's possible to have, you have. All the different truths, all the different things, you have. You experience it. Then, as you start to come down, very gradually the curtain gets pulled back around until you're all the way down. When you're all the way down, the difference is that before, you had about three feet of space that was open to look through. You now have about fifteen feet of space. You have really expanded your awareness, which is what they call these materials, awareness-expanders.

Myron: The curtain might have even gotten a little transparent.

Jacob: Yeah, (laughs), that was what I was going to follow with. In addition to that you have a lot of memory of what you did experience before. So in a sense that's true, the curtain has become almost transparent. You don't remember everything, you don't need to remember everything. You don't need to. You remember everything you need to remember.

There's another analogy that I use, too. It's similar to that. That is, imagine a castle, a huge castle, very large. Many rooms, many turrets, many levels of it. There's only one way to get into this castle, and that's the front door. The front door is *solid steel*. *Impregnable*. You can knock on that door all you want. You can do everything you can to tear it down. You can't get it down. Every now and then you might somehow or other move it a little bit to get a glimpse of what's behind it, but that's all. There's no way, and you've tried every way possible to get into that castle. Which is yourself.

What happens on a trip is by some mysterious magic means this door is dissolved, and you have the opportunity to go in and explore that castle. Any place you want. You go in and you look

around, and you find many, many wonderful places, strange places maybe, scary places and all that. You can go to the top and you can go to the bottom and you get a sense of what the totality of yourself really is like. As you come down, what happens is that the door somehow or other gets back up there. But that's all right, because you have a memory of what possibilities are there and what you've experienced. The biggest experience that it brings to you is that it connects you with feelings that you've never been connected with before. They are now open to you. Not on the level or the intensity that you had in the experience but certainly much more than they ever were before. That gives them an idea. "My God!" they say. "How soon can I have one?" (Laughter.)

The Secret Chief: Conversations with a Pioneer of the
Underground Psychedelic Therapy Movement
Myron J. Stolaroff
Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)
Charlotte, NC
1997

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Early in life especially, or if we're not dedicated to an intensive course of self-correction, repeating slogans, poems, wise saying or mantras can be helpful, a kind of hypnosis program. Michael mentioned a poem to Susan as she walked out of class last night. He said it got him through a lot of hard times and worries when he was younger. He suggested exchanging the word "fear" for "worry," which I think she's done for us:

LITANY AGAINST FEAR

I must not fear.

Fear is the mind-killer.

Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.

I will face my fear.

I will permit it to pass over me and through me.

And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path.

Where the fear has gone there will be nothing.

Only I will remain.

Part IV

Dipika sent a touching and very appropriate response:

what a great verse

it made me cry

at how ignorant we all really are ...

us all unique children of Gaia

then the only real contribution one can make is to live with love
(when
everything is similar to a pinprick)

* * *

Jake's thoughts, always trenchant:

In his *World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer spent several hundred pages articulating his notion of the pervasive and all-

powerful will to life, that life force driving all manifestation to continually evolve, unaided by and largely out of any human capacity to do anything about it. This perception is the beginning point of the Guru's 26th verse. In our physical form, Nitya writes in his commentary, breath itself is the vehicle for that "living entity" that permeates all manifest forms, most notably those associated with what we usually classify as having life. It is the stuff of the Absolute informing everything and making our body's animation possible. Without breath, as an example, our bodies would very quickly die and begin the decomposition process in spite of all our efforts to eat properly, exercise, and avoid toxins. Breathing, per se, is also largely an autonomous affair that we become aware of only on occasion. We don't have to worry about forgetting to do it.

Something there is that works through our scheduled breathing in all our states of consciousness, including deep dreamless sleep. When we add all the other automatic systems of the body to this key function we can, and scientists often do, use the computer analogy with its various programs all running simultaneously in order to explain it. Just who the programmer might be is an unanswered question for many, especially for those of us immersed in a fear-based transactional reality. As Nitya points out in his commentary, it is this focus on necessity and the very operations of this body system that contribute to our weakened ability "to discriminate" or sort out what is happening as it happens.

An analogy, I think, may be found in our failure to productively respond in certain situations and, say, "over-react" when, after the fact we recognize the limits we placed on our selves in the midst of the event. Recognizing an event wholly while being a part of it is, in general, not a "normal" position, a claim that can be illustrated by way of its counterpart: having a self-possessed awareness during an event, especially one in which survival is at stake, is universally applauded as illustrating, Hemingway wrote, a "grace under pressure."

In addition to our individual experiences of this vaporous life force, continues Nitya, we are products of a chain of evolutionary manifestations stretching back beyond the capability of any mental capacity to conceptualize them. Our lives did not come from nothing but directly from our parents. Re-tracing that biological chain far enough, we get to the pre-human and beyond. And through all of it—throughout the cosmos—pervades the living force. The enormity/complexity of this totality (that exceeds any total), both internally and externally, indicates our relative powers of discernment. We operate in a cosmos of systems within systems within systems into infinity that we know next to nothing about, and our perceptions of that world, in turn, are further diminished by our “normal” internal state. As Nitya clearly points out, “We are weak so we cannot discriminate. Since we can’t discriminate, we can only take into account the immediate changes within this one system”—as we are capable of knowing it (p.186).

We (our ego-selves) don’t know we don’t know, so we toil mightily to inflate the importance of what our minds are capable of reasoning. To illustrate the issue, Nitya points to the nihilism that can come about by our taking western science too seriously. For the scientist, knowledge itself must be measurable in order to qualify as knowledge. Once so established, chemistry, or chemical changes, can then be used (by those so inclined) to explain the brain’s “thinking.” Changes certainly do take place in the brain and can be measured in terms of electrical/chemical activity. Unfortunately, impulses derived from sense stimulation, arithmetic efforts, meditation—just about any cause—result in the same activity relatively measured. The questions of who or what is in charge and of who or what is making the discriminations are left unanswered (and unasked if the source is assumed to be the chemicals themselves). We come, inevitably, writes Nitya, to the point of the great unknowable, “the greatest of all wisdom, of all knowledge” (p.186). The entire cosmos wheels on infinitely, far beyond our mind’s capacity to comprehend, but we continue to

mistake our immediate world for that totality of which we are a tiny part.

In his closing few paragraphs, Nitya refers to the Kena Upanishad in which our position vis-s-vis the cosmos is condensed into a few words: “one who does not know claims that he knows, and one who knows keeps quiet. The wonder is too much for him even to acknowledge what he knows” (p. 188). One could add to the foregoing (for the scientists) the biblical injunction that “pride goeth before a fall.” In both cases, the mystery and magnitude of the cosmos, of our own bodies, defy our mind’s capacity to reason through, but we remain with one useful and constructive option we would do well to observe each day: assume the position of the silent witness and observe as part of a web of life within a web of life. “Retire” (p.187).

* * *

from John H:

The drop of water, the river current flows into and is a part of, the ocean that receives the river, the cloud that becomes the rain that becomes the drop of water.....endless. Equality and inequality and separateness-and-equal and separateness-and-not-equal are part of a process. It takes the knowledge and practice of one to understand the practice and knowledge of the other. I am a terrible dancer - but in that I have tried, I appreciate the ballerina, the fine footwork of the likes of Rogers and Astaire. I am not their equal there. But they are only superior because I, the poor dancer dancing, say they are because I am comparing them to me. If there were no other dancers but Astaire and Rogers - they would simply be crazy people kicking and swirling around, needing medications to calm down. I am not sure that equality matters - but there is a linear evolution - or so it seems - in the notion of Anglo-American justice. Solzhenitsyn has a great discussion of justice in volume one of the Gulag. Everything of value in that tome is in the footnotes,

by the way. I recommend reading it when you've had your wisdom teeth extracted or are in pain - the story line will make you feel grateful to be alive and free and the pain will lessen.

Part V

It seems to me Nitya's Preface to his autobiography, *Love and Blessings*, should stand on its own as a masterwork. Because it throws light on everything we are doing, I reprint it here. If anyone ever asks for the essence of the Gurukula and Nitya, this is a fine place to direct them:

PREFACE: WHAT LIFE HAS TAUGHT ME

Although this book is ostensibly my autobiography, it is really about my journey within. To be honest, I must admit that I haven't been traveling alone: I have been moved by an unseen hand from city to city and country to country, from one state of mind to another. I have also traveled in the minds of hundreds of people, even some I've never met. It is as if all the events of my life have been very carefully choreographed by the Mysterious Wizard, who is ever the fashioner of life.

I have always lived my life like a gentle breeze, or a clear stream that is ever flowing, with the only purpose of just being. For such a lifestyle I wanted to adopt the attitude of a poet, an artist and a writer, dedicated to stirring, stimulating and raising the consciousness of my fellow beings in a gentle, dignified and joyous manner. Because of this my life has been full of many major happenings, including teaching in universities in various countries, writing and publishing books in two different languages, attending international conferences and workshops, organizing the different centers of the Narayana Gurukula Foundation in various countries around the globe, and founding the East-West University of Unitive Sciences.

Life in its entirety is a learning process. I don't think we ever get to a point where we can confidently say we have come to

finalized wisdom. However I would like to jot down here a few points of which I have become somewhat sure:

To live a spiritual life correctly we need a contemplative orientation. Just as the route of a ship has to be charted correctly in order to continue on an intelligent course, so the self has to be guided in relation to its proper alignment in contemplation. Trouble is avoided and favorable paths are found through the establishment of active bipolar relationships. Even when we have understood how to reduce the self to its proper proportions, to discriminate the true from the false, and to distinguish what is scientifically valid from what is only mythologically apparent, a guru or teacher is of inestimable value.

Another thing I have learned is that there are countless millions of beings who also have a right to be here. They should all get a chance to express themselves, enjoy the attention of their fellow beings, and communicate on very many levels. So I should be sympathetic, loving, compassionate, and generous in giving others a chance even when it appears it will push me out of the scene.

It is by sheer blessedness that I have realized that many are living only at a level of physical identity. Although more evolved beings identify themselves with the social ego, only a few are mature enough in their spirit to appreciate that their body, senses and mind are tools in the eternal process of creation. Only one in a million has the realization that they are co-creators sharing with God the very precious opportunity of envisioning God's own dream—or plan—of creation. It is this insight which makes life the most adorable gift a person can have.

On the whole, the bargain of life is not bad. The pleasure and pain of each day is somewhat balanced. Several are the nights that you crawl into your sheets with a deep sense of gratitude and fulfillment. The cumulative pleasures with which you pass a restful night are such that when you wake up you are almost reborn, with well-orchestrated sensibilities. To your own surprise and delight, you are inspired from within to turn your thoughts, musings and

actions into a symphony of good taste. This enables you to stand out amongst your peers, applauded for having contributed yet another dimension to the glory of mankind.

The manifestation of life on earth is neither an isolated incident nor a mere event with a simple beginning and end. The alchemy involved in life and death involves a complex process of interchanges between existence and essence. In the matter of progress in spirituality, the inner world has to come into agreement with the outer.

This world is not a haphazard and chaotic conglomeration of things. It is evolving or transforming according to definite laws. The innate Law that governs everything, from a sub-atomic particle to a galaxy, and from the simple pulsation of thought to the amazing historical growth of civilization, is what I understand as The Word of God—*cidvilasam*. Such a belief gives me confidence that my life is also within the grand scheme of the universe, in which my playmates are the sun, the moon, the stars, the wind and waves, and the busy bees going in search of honey from the flowers blooming in my garden, as well as the countless autonomous selves that give unity to my own self. It is this sense of unity that assures me everything is secure until I run out of my meaningful physical, vital and social existence in this world.

All through life the Sun comes faithfully each morning to keep us company. With its benign energy it illuminates the entire world for every one of us, giving freely to all and sundry. It also witnesses our daily activity and helps us remember what has occurred as if it was recorded on a calendar. How can we have a better companion than the Cosmic Persuader to sit with us and watch not only what we do but also to guess what transpires in our minds, even before we voice it in words or execute it in action?

We are cherished as well by our Mother Earth. She shares with us the moist air, which is transformed into the fires of our vitality as soon as we breathe it into our body. This magical alchemy introduces us to the favor of all the elements of nature. The rivers are delighted when the Moon's sheen caresses the

shadows of playful fish under their ripples. The trees that stand firm, tossing their heads among the clouds, are not merely inert matter, they are the victorious spirits of ancient life. The lush vegetation of the forests and riverbanks eagerly watches to see if we are in league with the terrestrial and cosmic forces set to make our sensibilities more keen and accurate. Nothing stands apart from the poetry of life and the dream of the Creator.

The Sun, Moon and other heavenly bodies are not our only persuaders to live correctly, meaningfully and enthusiastically. We are also inspired by several immortal earthly exemplars who have appeared throughout the millennia in the caravansary of life. While it is true that each of us is led to think that we are walking alone, there are founts of spiritual, moral and aesthetic wisdom which are like heavenly rivers flowing into the oceanic spirit of our lives, succoring us with their cool sweetness. The percolation of the living voices of the wise-of-all-time improves upon what we have achieved. We don't always keep to the beaten track, as there is enough space and time to discover new and purposeful paths in which to walk and make fresh discoveries.

With such a reverent sense of gratitude to everything, I, borne by the winds of Fate, made my journey.

- Nitya Chaitanya Yati