

12/4/12

Verse 3

Existing outside and seen within, through an act of  
superimposition,  
the five specific elements, like sky, when contemplated,  
should become like waves rising in rows  
from the treasury of the watery deep, without any  
separate reality whatsoever.

Free translation:

It should thus come to pass that all the differentiations  
encountered in the world of empirical perception be known as  
the same in their essence, like the uniformity of waves  
constantly arising on the surface of the ocean.

Nataraja Guru:

These phenomenal aspects five such as the sky  
Which as emergent from outside is here seen to be,  
By contemplation one should bring to non-difference  
As the sea to the waves that rise in rows thereon.

We mounted another lovely evening of sharing and  
critiquing, almost too good to be true. It calls to mind a quote from  
Teilhard de Chardin that has been adopted by the psychedelic  
community, but applies to a broad range of possibilities:

There is an almost sensual longing for communion with others  
who have a larger vision. The immense fulfillment of the  
friendships between those engaged in furthering the evolution  
of consciousness has a quality almost impossible to describe.

Nitya's "treasury of the watery deep" turned out to be much  
more than a poetic flight of fancy. The class—our little  
communion of visionaries—kept bringing new and valuable  
insights up out of the depths of our mutual submersion, more than I

will ever be able to squeeze into these notes. The haul was due to a combination of factors. Everyone was well prepared, both by life and previous study. The subject is provocative, in the best sense of the word. Meditative openness was coupled with well-focused attentiveness. And once again each person's interpretation helped augment the subject and stimulate new thoughts in the rest. We all could have spent a peaceful night at home and never known what we were missing. The ocean of consciousness is like that, lying latent as potential until we decide to go swimming in it, and then revealing itself as a virtually infinite source of inspiration. It is omnipresent, silently beckoning to us until we heed the call. Nitya describes it this way:

The world we experience is like a feast of immeasurable abundance. The common man sees in it recognizable forms, admirable shapes, beautiful colors, and a perennial supply of things to gratify his several needs. Apart from the world's immediate presence, we also experience our memory of the past and imagination of the future. This gives it a vertical aspect of depth and height. If you are a poet you can find an infinite variety of symbols, allegories and ideograms with which to interpret the rich meaning of life. Artists will never exhaust the themes of inspiration presented by nature. Philosophers can endlessly ruminate on the world's hidden cause and its hypothetical purpose. For the scientist, every atom is literally a challenge to probe and investigate. The fact remains that no one goes outside their mind to experience or prove anything other than what is conceptually produced within their own prodigious brain.

Deb and I began the exploratory dipping by contextualizing the third verse. The first verse opens with the creative core or Karu, a.k.a. the Absolute, source of all. The second steps back slightly to contemplate the Absolute as the supernal Sun, radiating everything in its rays. The third takes another step back, so to

speak, to where the rays become like waves propagated in a celestial medium, at once the same and different from the ocean of consciousness that makes them possible.

Looking ahead, there will be one more degree of separation from the Absolute, focusing on knowledge, before we arrive at the stature of ordinary human beings in verses 5 and 6. This progression is Narayana Guru's version of evolution, and it will be projected forward from there in a very long, steep climb to the sublime heights of awareness that he was familiar with and was so strongly motivated to share with us.

Deb noted how important it is to first acknowledge the separateness of everything before proceeding beyond to their reunification. As part of his brief and humorous summary of the main thrust of Indian philosophy (I remember him laughing uproariously as he presented this section), Nitya compares universal oneness without an accompanying duality to a kind of cannibalism where man is forced to eat God, because that's all there is in the pantry. He insists that "No one would mistake a hard stone for strawberry ice cream." Nataraja Guru often spoke of different frames of reference, and used to say "You and I may be one, but we each have our own toothbrush." So we are not trying to erase everything, but merely to set it in its proper context.

In honor of this idea, Scotty brought strawberry ice cream for *prasadam*. That's a frame of reference we can all get behind!

Bobby immediately took the discussion to a practical level, wondering how much individual initiative we had. If everything is simply the Absolute unfolding, is there any room for us to make choices? This is of course a critical point, because so many people, including both scientific and religious types, feel that free will is either impossible or it is a sin, and such beliefs can tie us in knots. The Gurukula version of Advaita Vedanta attempts to optimize the value of individual effort and understanding, while acknowledging the limitations attendant on the way we're constructed. That's more or less the whole point of the study: we are bound in ways we realize and ways we don't, but we are determined to break those

bonds and claim our freedom, not to mention our strawberry ice cream.

Many programs suggest adopting an alternative form of bondage to set their acolytes free, but the Gurukula gurus have done their best, with over a hundred years of concentrated contemplation between them, on top of some thousands of years of background, to subtract all unnecessary impediments and requirements, leaving only the essence. The effort required by the study is wholly dedicated to liberation, and not to the substitution of one set of needs for another.

To give away the punch line, because it's elusive and needs to be regularly recalled, we typically see the world as many items or else we see it as one. The challenge is to see in both ways at once. It demands an expansion of consciousness, but it is well within our capacity to comprehend life unitively, meaning with oneness and multiplicity expressed in harmony, and not off kilter as an either/or proposition.

One major step toward intelligently expanded consciousness is to overcome the very convincing illusion our minds manufacture, that the world we perceive is outside and separate from us. Scientists have recently come to realize what the rishis have taught for millennia: that the wakeful world is all a stage show performed (under a mysteriously invisible director) in our mind's eye. That's the great leap forward. After that it's easy to see how each impetus of our existence comes like a wave from the depths of our being, originating in a point source and expanding up through hidden layers where it is shaped and structured to fit in with the local world as we know it, then further shaped to give it meaning and direction, and only afterward does the wave burst into consciousness where we can enjoy the sensation of surfing it.

Even the best ride of our life will soon end, but the next wave will be right along. Vedantic surfers can't wait to see what the next wave will bring, having a kind of faith based on experience that the eternal wave-generating mechanism, whatever it is, is essentially benign. It's only when people have learned to be afraid of the

waves coming up through them and try to block them out that they become split off from their healthy inner being, their dharma.

We are fortunate in the class to have a group of people who—mainly by accident or Luck—are substantially in tune with their inner waves, their dharma. That essential task is already accomplished, and several people were able to tell us about how they are able to do what they love. We'll hope for more dharma stories in the future, too, because that's precisely what the waves emanating from the treasury of the watery deep are: dharma waves. It's a major accomplishment to guide them into actuality with at least some of their energy and beauty intact.

Our conscious mind doesn't create the waves, but it fosters how they are actualized, and that's a complicated and noble task, worthy of our best efforts.

Mick said that in life there are winners and losers, and we all want to be winners. Because of having a limited idea of what winning means, we develop tension, and that blocks the expression of our abilities. Tension builds up when the mind wants something a certain way or doesn't want it a certain way. If the mind can reside in acceptance, then the judgment falls away and we are in harmony. So relaxation of mental tension is an important element here.

I added that while that's true, some type of effort is essential, because we have innate limitations that tend toward stasis. We have to simultaneously hone our skills and also relax. There is intelligent direction to be added to the waves, or at least an intentional reduction of our resistance to them. Otherwise we stagnate. Nataraja Guru says of this:

Consciousness has its radiating or horizontal wave aspect and the aspect of depth in which contemplative operations can move. When contemplation is established the difference vanishes, but in a more passive state, the waves appear as such in consciousness. Appearance has to be overcome and appreciation of reality established by the effort of

contemplation. The effort alluded to in the previous verse is here too suggested as desirable for contemplative vision. (25)

Our default setting is that we see the world “out there” perfectly as it is. By contemplation we strive to identify and correct the many faults that we tolerate because of this clever deception. In ordinary life the deception works perfectly well. It’s only for those who don’t feel content with it that investigation into reality becomes necessary. I address this in my Gita commentary, under VI, 4:

There are fundamentalists of materialism equal to the fundamentalists of religion, who throw the baby of unknown possibilities out with the bathwater of superstitious nonsense. Notwithstanding that the guru principle of the universe is constantly offering fresh fragrances to appreciate, with new insights routinely producing expanded comprehension, the attitude that you are secure in your conceits erects an iron curtain which excludes much if not all the serendipity that is continuously being presented to you. This is apparently the normal human condition we hope to rise above in any search for truth.

Stephanie gave a lovely example from an acting class with a revered teacher. (It’s funny how sometimes acting can bring a person closer to their essential self, while trying hard to be authentic can take us far afield.) Her teacher had been presenting a comprehensive new angle on acting, and Stephanie was wondering how she could ever perform it. Then the teacher said “Don’t think you can do this right away. It will take you ten years to get this.” Where most of us might have been daunted by such a lengthy prospect, Stephanie was relieved. She was glad to have plenty of time, and not feel that she was somehow less than perfect if she didn’t get it right away.

It’s nice to know that wisdom will grow slowly and ripen, even when we aren’t sure if we can ever make it happen ourselves.

And that is one of the most heartening aspects of life: we don't have to "get it" or pinpoint exactly how it works in order to evolve as we should. The waves are transforming us whether we know it or not. It helps to be open and cheerful, but many good things happen *despite* our best efforts rather than because of them. This should not prevent us from making our best efforts, but we don't have to feel that we will sink or swim because of our performance. That's just one more pressure we are trained to submit to in the artificially competitive world of society. We are not being graded at any final test, we are meant to be alive every minute. That's another thing Stephanie shared with us from her hatha yoga practice. Where beginners think that getting into a certain pose is the point, to her instructor *the entire process* is important. In other words, there isn't a final pose: life is an ongoing series of poses we bend ourselves into and out of.

In a related idea, David talked about patience, in the sense of not having expectations about outcomes. The more we push ourselves to achieve a desired result, the more we disrupt the natural flow of the waves. And yet, in horizontal activities, expectations are perfectly normal, to an extent, anyway. David is a pianist, and when he learns a piece of music he naturally expects to be able to perform it well. Having patience allows him to stay relaxed even as he makes his intentional progress. It's quite subtle, in fact. In performance is when discarding expectations becomes critical, however. If he has expectations during a performance, which amount to self-consciousness on stage, they might make him lose the flow and make a mistake. A performer has to let go of all that and rely solely on their acquired mastery during a performance, which a true performer does easily, fortunately for them *and* for the audience. For the rest of us it's rather a challenge.

A commonly held idea is that if we suspend our thoughts we are instantly in tune with the radiation of the Absolute, or truth, or what have you. Suppression of extraneous thinking has its place, certainly, but so does the development of skill, which includes expansion of awareness based on thought. I gave an example of

going to art museums, where I normally try for the direct impact of just looking at each work without additional information. There is a directness that can be missed if there is accompanying narration. But after doing that, I read or listen to some insights, and get a whole new rush of beauty from that. I'll notice new aspects that I never saw before, and these are also valuable. So an art museum (or a poetry book or a symphony or a spiritual teaching) is its own infinite ocean of possibilities, that I can dip into a little or a lot. Most days I just walk past the building, but I know an infinite world awaits within its walls, and on other days I seek it out.

The class spent time pondering Nitya's perennial idea of each of us being co-creators with God. Here he puts it this way:

The part we play in the creation of the world is not insignificant. We are co-creators with the Divine. Without us, the world would be without color, sound, or any of the sensory qualities that we know. It would be an inert mass of no meaning. Yet, when individually taken, each of us is nobody. The possibility of a collective consciousness in which we participate should necessarily fill us with deep reverence and devotion for that which is at once the unknown and the only known.

The individual as a co-creator with the whole is the perfect attitude. We are not CEO of our world, and we are not unwelcome intruders in a world of, by and for God or the Absolute. We are intrinsic elements of the total, each with an indispensable role apportioned to us to carry out as we see fit. Our imperfections and stupidities are part of the mix, the very things that make it interesting. And fun.

Deb gave a nice example of co-creation. One time when we visited Wolfgang's Botanical Sanctuary in the foothills of South India, he told us about an orchid that lived entirely underground, flowering, being pollinated, and reproducing deep in the earth. It drove Deb wild, resonating with her earthy nature, and she



determined to write a poem about it. Over the years there were many false starts, and eventually the flame burned low, yet it did not go out. Then one day the poem burst out of her, a perfect co-creation of her conscious efforts and some hidden, nurturing part of herself.

Great artists, writers, composers and scientists—visionaries of all kinds—repeatedly speak of how creative ideas come to them as if from somewhere else. And yet they are perfectly suited to make use of what comes to them. All they had to do was write down what they heard. We have talked extensively about this in previous classes, and it will be back many times more. A recommended read is Isaac Asimov's famous essay, *The Eureka Phenomenon*, available online. He talks about the importance of striving, but how when you reach an impasse, you should go do something else. As if by magic, the subconscious mind continues working and finds a way to break through the block.

If you're still with us, there is one last idea I want to get in, and the rest of last night's treasures will be left to float away in the air. The waves we are to contemplate pertain to every aspect of existence. As we have studied before, the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and space—that the Guru asks us to visualize as waves rising from the depths, respectively stand for the physical, emotional, rational, intuitive and spiritual aspects of our being. All of these have their rhythmic pulsations of rise and fall, rise and fall; alternatively intense and relaxed, intense and relaxed, endlessly.

We are to visualize the waves of cosmic energy rising up inside from a singular point in our core, expanding outward in all directions. The Guru asks us to welcome these ripples with every fiber of our being. Doing so counteracts the training we have gotten, where we have learned to ignore and block our inner inspiration, replacing it with rational, linear decision making that is not flexible enough to satisfy our souls. As psychological experiments have demonstrated, decisions based purely on rationality are vastly inferior to those that incorporate feelings and

intuition, because learning is much slower and may even be totally subverted by linear methods. We do better with holistic thinking that incorporates all the five elements.

Bobby was an advocate for following our feelings, and he talked about how it has guided him to do very well in his chosen field. Following his star and doing what he loved were his keys to success. Opportunities are constantly being presented to all of us that feel really good, but we have intentionally ruled them out in advance. So they fall on unfertile soil and wither away. Narayana Guru suggests we do our best to stay open to these whisperings of our creative forces. They have much to teach us, and we yet have much to learn.

## Part II

David came to class for the first time ever, and coincidentally had his first psilocybin experience just over a month ago:

Thank you so much for the meeting tonight! I enjoyed Scott's mushroom references very much.

Which brings me to my point. Tonight made me feel a little bit like Arjuna. You mention at the very beginning of your "Psychedelic Guide" that Arjuna could understand the words and ideas that Krishna offered him, but that he needed something else to really "get it." There were words and ideas being passed around tonight that PRIOR to my Halloween mushroom experience I would have just understood, or tried to understand. But having had my mushroom experience, what was discussed tonight really hit home. I felt that I had "been there" for just the briefest time and could pinpoint even a nanosecond of that feeling and experience to tonight's lesson. Duality, unity, oneness. All of these made so much more sense. Actually, unity and oneness had previously made sense the most. But tonight I enjoyed the discussion of duality. That was always a tricky thing to wrap my brain around.

But I feel lucky to have "felt" that while wandering around the Lan Su Gardens that day.

Also, the cookies were very good:)

Aum,  
David

Wendy sent some thoughts about the verse:

I have thought a lot about the inner and outer worlds we live in. How my consciousness pulls me out to revel in the senses and the elements. The 'real world' for me is where I breathe and live, but not deep down where I feel I belong. As I travel through the years I change physically and mentally,

As part of society I am hemmed in by its many demands. As these daily become more complex they take up more time. Added to this is my financial reality which also makes demands. Being a pensioner on a fixed income also hems me in. My health and well being is another part of the world I inhabit and am responsible to care for. Thus I seem to be bound in this real world, living among shadows, as Plato would say..

The objective realities of nature are wonderful, and sustain us all, as Guru says in this verse that earth, fire, air, water and ether sustain us all of the time we are on this earthly plane.

And how wonderful nature is; how we rejoice to give thanks to the earth, the crops that nourish us, herbs to heal us, flowers to bring light and joy, trees, lakes, rivers, mountains, clouds of rain, magical snowflakes, the open sea. The animals we share this world with, the fishes and birds and insects all contribute to the rich tapestry of this real world. Music, sound, vision, touch, smell and are all gifts for our delight. The organs of our bodies have their own complex reality. All details are attended to in this our playground gift, our *lila* from the Absolute. We can create babies and add to our earthly family. We have minds and brains so that we can learn and create. Transform nature into shapes and forms, houses and cars and spin fabrics, sculpt stone. It is all a marvel.

And add in colour to all this and we are so richly provided for. Plus so much I have left out.

Susan contributed a poem in the spirit of the verse:

### **On the Beach at Night Alone**

**by Walt Whitman  
(1819-1892)**

On the beach at night alone,  
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,  
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef  
of the universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,  
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,  
All distances of place however wide,  
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,  
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in  
different worlds,  
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the  
brutes,  
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,  
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any  
globe,  
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,  
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,  
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

The next installment from Jake:

**Verse 3:**

As interpreted by Nitya Yati, in this verse Narayana Guru condenses some huge abstractions into one “should” statement concerning the dependent arising of the manifest (the physical/psychic world we inhabit as humans) out of the transcendent. The wave metaphor once again carries the message that our ontological experience borne out of our interpretations of our five kinds of perceptions “when contemplated should become like waves rising in rows . . . without separate reality.”

In his first few pages of this commentary, Nitya uses a series of philosophers in order to give the Guru’s verse a nuanced reading in which the guru appears to be making a case that the Absolute is the only reality worth the effort to know. This general kind of plea to turn one’s complete attention to other-worldly pursuits echoes the ascetic tradition in the West, especially as it developed in medieval monasteries (and carried on at least in spirit by the colonial New England Divines) where aspirants worked diligently to put behind them the veil of tears of the physical life and embrace a transcendence free of sin, original or otherwise. The boundary between these two worlds, however, is the very element Nitya erases in the opening pages of his commentary as he re-asserts the “non-dual truth of transcendence” (17) and then proceeds to itemize the characteristics common to both transcendence and immanence, states between which we casually and daily cross back and forth.

The transactional arena we inhabit during wakeful consciousness, notes Nitya, is a seductive and constantly distracting sensual/mental series of experiences almost no one wishes to put an end to, at least as long as he or she has enough positive energy to invest in it. On the other hand is the absolute marvel of our deep sleep which reinvigorates the body/mind while at the same time removing from us our conscious awareness (of which dreams are an adjunct). In deep dreamless sleep is total rest and absence of all anxiety and thought. Death and this dreamless deep sleep state share a commonality that in the Vedantin tradition obliterates any distinction and represents the vertical axis

(transcendent) of our existence that crosses the horizontal (physical or immanent) at the point of our re-gaining conscious awareness as we know it in the manifest world. But the two states blur in many ways that are as equally out of awareness as is the fact of our entering and re-entering one or the other so easily without paying much attention.

The lot of most people, Nitya goes on to say, is “to make a mess of this wonderful world” because of the hypnotic attraction to sensual/mental pleasure which takes an infinite number of forms. The Buddhist Wheel of Samsaric Life presents a vivid picture of this pervasive obsession, one that few people escape.<sup>1</sup>

To break one’s obsession with the external world is not the same as dismissing it as unreal. Our senses and mind tell quite a different story, and we would be hard pressed to survive if we were to ignore the lies they tell us. Our survival rests on recognizing danger, for example, when it presents itself and not with “knowing” that at the sub-atomic level more space between elements exists than does the concrete elements themselves. In other words, a charging tiger may be made up of a loose amalgam of atomic elements, but the physicist that clings to such facts may be that day’s meal.<sup>2</sup>

In his verse, the guru tells the story of the senses/mind through reference to ether, air, fire, water, and earth. In terms of tangible measure, this list moves from the most abstract to the least, the most gross elements being associated with weight and mass. At the far end of the scale is the ether, a kind of placeholder term designating the necessary element of space in which separate objects can be discerned by the senses. Just what ether amounts to is an open question, but in all cases of sense input it is the mind that converts light waves, sound vibrations, tactile stimulation and so on into colors, music, ideas, and any number of values. Mind makes meaning and coherence out of a disqualified

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<sup>1</sup> One marvelous and clear explanation of this concept is presented both pictorially and textually in the Dalai Lama’s small work, *The Meaning of Life*.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Forgotten Truth*, Huston Smith offers a fascinating discussion of this very point, among others.

dumb show, and does so in such collective agreement with other minds that we can all metaphorically operate in an ocean of waves manifesting in endless rows.

The distinction between immanence and transcendence, then, is an artificial boundary we cross and re-cross each day in an absolute sense and each moment in a practical sense. Life and death speak to the mathematical precision of dependent arising, to the play of the infinite as it creates and re-creates itself, ourselves, in thought. If death is tragic, as those married to the thick boundary between our two realities in one would have it, then birth is a cosmic disaster.

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### Part III

Beverley, from England, sent a heartwarming response:

I am now 'seeing' the Atmo with new eyes. I think the latest class notes are really excellent.... They seem to me to have been absolutely inspired by the group with you at that time in that place. I have an awful lot of worrying stuff going on in the material world at the moment, and set out this morning to get down to things.... phone calls, emails, finding and sorting documents etc. Instead I read your class notes through, stopping now and then to ponder and making some inner matching connections. I then decided to listen again on You Tube to my latest discovery of the wonderful Mitsuko Uchida playing in Mozart's Piano Concerto no 25 - K503. These activities made it possible for me to connect with all the underlying emotional turmoil I have been successfully suppressing recently. After that I decided I could easily leave everything for today and went out with my friend for lunch. I have relaxed for the

rest of the day and now feel much more able to make wise decisions about things.

Paul's offering relates to the Verse 3 evening session, coming next week:

RE: That Alone Evening Session & Synchronicity

The Evening Session is a beautiful discourse on equanimity. Prior to reading Guru Nitya's Evening Session, I had read an article entitled "Love & Emptiness" in January 2013 issue of Shambhala Sun. The article described the Buddhist Heart Sutra; all dharmas are empty: no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no form...

If I may parrot some of the treasures in the article I found paralleling that of Guru's That Alone Evening Session. If all dharmas are empty, what are they empty of? "They are empty of separate self, empty of weightiness, empty of burden, empty of boundary". "All dharmas are empty like the sky—blue, beautiful, expansive, and always ready to receive a bird, a wind, a cloud, the sun, the moon, or an airplane. The emptiness of the Heart Sutra isn't the emptiness of despair; it's the emptiness of all limitation and boundary. It is open, released."

The Middle Way was defined as a unification of the transcendent Absolute (non-dual) with the imminent Absolute (the relative). This unification is accomplished in- and as-us. WE are the ground (or doorway) through which the Transcendent expresses as the transient. And "That Alone" makes our transactional world holy. We coalesce dualities in our Oneness. We manifest that Oneness in the everyday dualities of our imminently sacred lives.

We are the One in the Many

We are the Many in the One

Sujit has been traveling in India, but managed to smuggle a note to us:



Thanks for sharing Verses 2 and 3. Have been travelling and contemplating these verses in an unusually expanded time-frame; moving places and interacting with crowds of people across India. In the midst, partook in the first wedding of the next generation of my larger family; with my niece getting married outside of religion, culture, community etc. The grace of Narayana Guru's philosophic outlook was inherently remnant and smiling in many of us at the wedding.

Nitya's commentary on the Verse 2 was thoroughly enjoyed for its analysis of the 4 distinct stages of wakeful consciousness that comprise Karanam. Will perhaps help to forcefully stop at stage 3 and think independently, on occasions, barring the ego factor or impact on oneself.

The inherent design of the human mind and the transformed commonality or homogeneity in the way it processes external stimuli was an eye-opener, i.e. to the shortcomings in the simpler concept of the theory of evolution. Some more reading for me to do outside of this book, to expand on that realization.

Existing outside - Over the last few days am addressing a chronic pain in the lower-right shoulder with Ayurvedic treatment. It is usually two trained massage therapists working away on all my body to flex the stiffness or season the injury causing the pain. Have used these therapy sessions to be the 'detached spectator' of the holistic treatment process on the heavily oiled body, which I 'disown' for the while when therapists are at work on it. Another simple thought that comes to mind is the micro and macro worlds of other entities that exist outside and inside of individuals. Would anyone who views the Earth or other planets (larger entities) from afar recognize us at all as existent within the recognizable large entity? Aren't there various living and dead entities within our bodies? It is all an inter and intra-containment

of entities of varying physical volumes - forming and deforming - or coming from and returning to the five base elements. We as entities are irrelevant relative to the definitive boundaries of other entities overlying or underlying us. What makes us distinct is only the unique configurations of knowledge we acquire, hold transiently, enhance and leave behind in other entities, if at all worthy of relevance!

Lastly, over these readings, had the fortune of once again visiting the Varkala Gurukula, with Binu (my wife) and a friend Sreekumar (a member here). Asked Guru Muni a lingering question on the concept of re-birth, and listened to an informed response, putting that question to eternal rest. Muni prompted me to enjoy a reading of the somewhat satirical Kathopanishad on the 6-hour train journey back home. Muni kindly extended lunch. We shot some pictures of Muni, the Narayana Guru statue on a pedestal placed in the Gurukula courtyard, and pictures of the Brahma Vidya Mandir building etc.

#### Part IV

It's extremely gratifying that the pungency of Atmo is being sensed through this class. It seems to have been the right choice for our next sortie. It looks very promising.

Bobby is one of the new spirits who has clicked with the material, and he was kind enough to share his feelings from the last class. He has been having mysterious and debilitating pain in his legs:

Dear Scott,

What a wonderful class on Tuesday! I appreciated the chance to ask you about co-creating our lives and your response. I liked your notes on the subject in the email and I look forward to studying it more. I just finished Verse 20 and it was a beautiful companion.

Also, during class, Mick opened up a new level of understanding of myself, an epiphany of sorts. He spoke of winning/losing and tension in the mind. When he talked of calming the mind and allowing it to reflect *karu* I realized I hadn't forgiven some people for what had happened to my legs, but I think more importantly, I hadn't forgiven myself. So the lightbulb clicked and I totally forgave myself and my legs. I felt a rush of love and forgiveness, like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders and legs. So much peace.

My MRI results came in today and my legs are totally "normal" (no bone/tissue infection, no shin splints). However, that doesn't explain the pain that I still feel in my leg bones. I applied the comfrey but like you said it was pretty messy and kind of brown. So, I'm happy that it's nothing obviously serious and just trying to recover by taking it easy. Taking lots of homeopathic remedies and just started taking calcium pills. If anyone in the class has any ideas/insights I'd love to hear them.

I've come to see this downtime (trough in the waves) as a blessing. It's allowed me time to stop and reflect on where I've been, where I'm going and what I want. To see what's important in my life and what is superfluous. And, to remind myself that every moment the Absolute manifests beauty, forgiveness and love.

Scott:

Thank you for writing, and we welcome more in the future. I sense you could tell us more about your epiphany, but that's up to you.

Comfrey sap turns brown, almost black, in air, so that's a sign that there is still some juice in it. It won't cure you in a single session, but a few might well make a difference. It is definitely a mess, though!

There may be a psychosomatic aspect to this. I don't know the whole story, so I won't speculate. You mentioned forgiving, but not for what. Regardless, the feeling of peace you got to should be

very healing, on every level. I suggest revisiting it as much as you can during this down time (you probably don't need anyone's advice to do just that). Since you've ruled out serious physical problems with the MRI, it should relieve the anxiety of not knowing. Time to think of it as a spiritual situation--spiritual opportunity--rather than an illness.

As always, follow the Arab proverb: trust in Allah, but tie your camel first.

You've tied your camel, but check up on the rope once in awhile.

PS Verse 20 is among the most awesome of all, isn't it?

Bobby:

Yes, I feel like verse 20 is very special. The last paragraph is incredibly moving.

Thank you for the reminder to revisit the peace. I really enjoyed the metaphor of the lake and evaporation of tension. It really helps to smooth my mind.

I think I blamed my doctors for not being able to diagnose me.

And there was a strange anger/frustration with myself. That maybe I should have kept my foot elevated on the first onset or taken it more seriously earlier. Only recently did I consider that it might have been brought on or at least, ushered in, on some other thoughts/waves/vibes. But I found the total forgiveness to be very liberating.

I did have a batch of comfrey I just put on. I think I have enough for a few more sessions.

Susan also had some good stimulation from the class to report:

I am amazed and overwhelmed as I think about the vastness of the Absolute -- the mysterious and infinite “oceanic treasury of wonder in our wakeful state, and “the boundless realm of spirit’s unmodified consciousness” when we sleep. Trying to be open to the constantly incoming wisdom has helped me to start to let go of my micro managing tendencies and that is huge for me. I didn’t even realize quite what a micro manager I was until I started letting go. I suppose I like to be in control of my world so that nothing bad will happen but I have found that this takes me far off course; far from the present moment and the flow of possibilities. In the busyness of life, I can be very much stuck in the manifested/material world, trying to get things accomplished, warning my children not to do this or that, worrying about grim possibilities to which I am alerted by my overly sensitive interpretations of events. When I become sidetracked in this way, I am cut off from that natural flow of wisdom and I am in stress mode. This is what Mick was talking about — mental tension that blocks us. I think I am now much more able to recognize when I am in this blocked place — it’s very familiar but miserable. Examples abound. One of my children will say something about their plans or what they think about something or other and my mind will fabricate an entire scenario of inevitable doom in a split second. “Mom, I’m going to Little Big Burger to get some food,” says Peter. My mind rushes through the scenarios, including grizzly car accidents, clandestine meetings with drug dealers, and even Mad Cow disease. I don’t mention all these things as he goes out the door, but I don’t have to. I think Peter knows me pretty well. Now, in fact, he says terrible things sometimes just to bait me. But I find such peace if I can cut off that reaction of mine right away, by realizing that he is 16, he has lots of support, and trusting that I will know when and if he needs my help. I let it be his life as much as I can and that helps me relax into my own life and being and becoming.

Reading over Wendy's lovely note reminded me that one of the best ways for me to unblock is to walk outside. Nature and the five elements are great reminders of the possibilities of the oceanic treasury and that things grown and manifest and move along without our micro management. Yes, as Scott reminds us, we do have to make an effort, but there is so much happening that is that is "right" and "good" (I know these words are loaded but I can't think how else to say it) without our input and that is very reassuring.

12/11/12

Deb read out the evening talk from the day of Verse 3, so the actual verses are the same as last week. Nitya's talk is one of his most wonderful, and could stand alone as sketching out the whole point of spiritual endeavor as understood in the Gurukula. Susan just wrote to say "On the way back home last night, we all agreed that there was so much in that evening reading that we could have done a class on every one or two paragraphs! Wow! Great class." Lucky for all of us, the study we are setting sail upon will be revisiting all those ports of call, and plenty more.

Nitya spoke about four qualifications for participating in a class like this, though in true Indian fashion his second qualification is actually four or five pressed together. They are all of major importance. Popular teachers attract a crowd by promising all sorts of unusual abilities, but in the Gurukula the miracle we have set out to discover is our own true self, nothing more, nothing less. Our intention is to first recognize the mask we have unwittingly put on, and then relinquish it in favor of who we really are. That's the most astounding, miraculous, exciting, fulfilling accomplishment possible, but it doesn't sell tickets. It's really a mystery to me why it remains an obscure and recondite endeavor, while working assiduously to develop aspects of the mask is met with such enthusiasm. Well, perhaps it's not so mysterious, because we've been trained for our whole life to put

our energies into our image. Bucking trends of popular momentum breeds doubt and opposition, so we are diverted from it by what we mistake for our natural inclinations.

The essence of our dilemma can be expressed quite simply: we are wearing a mask that hides our real self, and that's all we can see. We don't even remember who's under it, even though it's us. Here's how we got into that fix:

As infants we were sometimes loved and nurtured and sometimes ignored (or worse). Because we wanted to be in love all the time, we invented a strategy to attract our caregivers, which with enough time and effort became our persona. Before long we forgot the essence of who we are and identified with the persona, the mask we had begun crafting right out of the womb. It's possible to go through a whole life identified with our mask, as a projection of our fears and desires pulling a confidence job on the world. The only problem is that it's not a perfect strategy. It leads us into darkness and conflict. The spiritual way out is to reconnect with our true nature and see the mask for what it is: a mirage we throw up to fool others. Those who don't choose that option face a lifetime struggle to prop up their mask and keep it cobbled together whenever it begins to fall apart or springs a leak.

Michael put his finger on the crux of the matter: crafting our mask sets up a division between ourself and everyone else, but the fact is that there is no other. The division, while amazingly convincing, is imaginary. Life is a singular situation that we have divided up. The outside and inside are paired aspects of our own being, put on as a play inside our mind. So we have become divided in our core, and spend our energy defending our projection of our self (the mask) from our projection of the others, who we want to manipulate into loving our mask.

Narayana Guru assures us that there is an outside world that we must take into account; it's not all in our heads. But what our heads do with the information we receive is critical, and something we do have leverage with. Mick pointed out that what comes into our awareness is essentially neutral, but then we give it a spin,

positive or negative. In the process it is converted from what it is to what we think it is, which is substantially different. This perversion of the world into an interpretation colored by our personal cravings is what Nitya calls madness, and a really malicious tendency. We don't realize how malicious it is, because we have totally bought into it. But sooner or later, as it poisons our life, we are impelled to want to try to give it up. Our "strategy devised by an infant," our mask, has become a poisoned cloak we can no longer bear to wear. Nitya epitomizes this situation perfectly:

We look for public opinion, the opinion of the other person, to define ourselves. The ego thus becomes more and more bent by the opinions of people. So you try hard to create a good opinion of yourself in the minds of others. The more you try to create good impressions, the more you are trying to live in your own mask.

You make a mask and then transfer the center of yourself from that beautiful inner being of all to this mask. If that mask is not honored, you think it is just like killing you. This is what I call the ego center and the spirit center. We have to transfer our life back from this structured ego center to our own normal, natural spirit center. When we have done that, we rejoice at the opportunities others get, the joy others get, the good works others do, because the other is no more an other than. Everything is part of our being. That is the first part of the riddle.

Susan talked about how much this meant to her when she studied *That Alone* the first time. It's very radical in our competitive society based on selfishness to realize how the happiness of all is also your happiness. She told us of a Canadian friend who always amazed her because she never resented that others were happy or comfortable even when she was having a tough time. Susan sent a summary of what she said:



I talked about how this was a big epiphany for me when I first came across this idea. I was conditioned to see my joy as mostly to do with my individual life — my parents and relatives talked about wanting me to find happiness — and while that is important it leaves out the idea that happiness can be bigger than ourselves — we can be happy about another person's joy and triumphs instead of feeling that we are less happy than that other person and so feeling envious, short-changed, or less than the other.

In my example of my friend, Daryl, I meant to say that it always amazed me that she could be happy for my happiness in family situations when her own family was a mess. I assumed she would feel jealous and pained. But she never did. She was genuinely happy for me and it made her happier. When I think about all the people in my life who modeled something different! Jealously, hatred, longing to have the happiness of others. This can actually lead to a person feeling darkness much more because they figure that the light is with another person.

A big part of our program is to replace a selfish and harmful attitude with a much more loving one. But it is not done by tinkering with our mask to make it more acceptable. When we reconnect with our lost soul, our core, it infuses our whole life with loving bliss without any need for artifice.

Mick quoted Nitya's most pointed comment:

When darkness comes it is not your fault. You deserve all sympathy. But there is often an insistence about holding on to the darkness. It is like a disease. Once it gets into your system, it eats into your vitals. It does not leave. What is the way to make it leave?

There will be plenty of work ahead on this theme. Suffice to say we are not trying to mitigate the symptoms or create diversions,

but to cure the illness. It's actually a very enjoyable project, because anyone drawn to a spiritual search has already felt the squeeze of a mask that's too tight, with innumerable imperfections that pinch and chafe. So taking it off is a great relief. But it's not easy. As Nataraja Guru said, undoubtedly with a laugh, "a bad disease needs a drastic remedy."

Here is where the admirable suggestion to simply turn off our thoughts falls down. If we don't think, we stay where we are, glued to our mask. It takes an active engagement to escape from our bondage. Going beyond conscious thought in meditation is great, very refreshing and inspiring. But the inspiration we garner is to be brought into a partnership with our conscious sense of direction. The great help the gurus offer us is to teach us how to integrate the light of our inner being with our daily life, which is grounded in thought.

The suggestion made for now, at this early stage, is to watch how the darkness comes on. We often don't notice it until it's well advanced, but if we catch it early, we can head it off. Darkness and light cycle eternally, but we can increase the light cycle and decrease the dark, just by relaxing our grip on the negative. The more wide awake we can remain, the easier it is to spot the deflection into darkness. Society is a boiling cauldron of diversionary tactics, a great game of make believe to keep our eyes averted from our true condition. Needless to say, Advaita Vedanta is for those who don't want to play that game any longer. We are drop outs in the best sense of the term, dropping out of the miasma of popular delusion.

Paul reminded us of a favorite analogy of his, that it doesn't do any good to curse the darkness. We should just turn on the light. Deb added that we should stand up to our fears and not let them have power over us. These are both in the "easier said than done" category, but we will be practicing as we go ahead. Deb also added a very important idea, that if we define what is beautiful, then we freeze it. We have to stay fluid and flexible.

This is one place where not having expectations of any kind is critical. If we imagine a specific outcome, it can't help but become part of our mask, our ego. Not having expectations means taking all power away from the ego to twist us around its little finger. "I intend to be fearless," is an ego assertion. Being truly fearless emerges from a state of self-awareness in which what is feared is brought to consciousness and seen to have been overinflated by our imagination. Subtracting the imaginary part is then fairly easy. Maintaining awareness is the challenge, but that's precisely what we're all helping each other to accomplish. The distinction here is quite subtle, but it should become clearer as we proceed.

Deb and I have been revisiting psychologist Alice Miller this week. She (without realizing it) is a Vedantin at heart. She studied the effects of childhood traumas on violence and addiction in later life. Her books are highly recommended for anyone interested in a deeper probe into the roots of their own inexplicable darkness and why it is so hard to overcome.

I spent a lot of time this week peering back into the depths of the ocean of sublime treasures, in search of those early childhood impacts. It felt like trying to scuba dive in a salty ocean wearing a life vest: there was a tremendous buoyancy pushing me back to the surface the minute I stopped forcing my way downward. Our life really does emerge as waves from the deep pushing upward, so it's no wonder we keep looking outward, the way the pressure impels us. I knew that the diving would be much easier in the group setting of the class, however. It's quite astonishing how a small group of dedicated seekers makes the probing so much more accessible. I will report my findings in Part II, because I anticipate one or two others also writing about their childhood experiences and how they affected their later life. This is an important step toward dislodging the mask. Try it and see!

We did have some reports about influences of conditioning in later childhood, which are also important, and much easier to access. Paul talked about his fundamentalist Christian upbringing,

with its many rules and restrictions. When he was young he took for granted (like all children) that it was all true and right, and all the non-believers were headed to hell. Guilt and fear were great motivators. Paul felt it was like growing up in a prison and not realizing how bound you were until you tasted freedom. It wasn't until his late teens that he began wresting himself from the grip of his religion. He acknowledged that the guilt that was instilled still makes an occasional appearance, so while freer he is not fully free of it. But recognizing its source as an arbitrary tool of domination over him did loosen its hold.

Mick talked about his childhood as a dedicated Catholic altar boy, who gradually expanded into wider arenas of more spiritual philosophies after adulthood. We didn't get into how the experience colored his life, but he did mention that the threat of hellfire eventually drove him away from the Church. Kissing outside of marriage is either a simple or a mortal sin, and Mick thought it was fun, so why should it be a sin at all? Alice Miller writes at great length of how the individual spirit is crushed by religious dogma, how insidious it is, and how it surfaces as violent and deranged behavior. Like many if not most teachings for children, its intent is to make them good, but it assumes they are bad, which winds up being a self-fulfilling prophecy. In any case, this is a rich field for self-exploration, because many of us, especially in the West, have been scorched by this madness.

Scotty summed up the class in a wonderful way. We had talked about how everyone's efforts are mutually reinforcing in the class setting. He affirmed that the study has a calming effect on him, and that's the place he can really grow from. When we're agitated, it produces a kind of static condition. Calming and easing into the fullness of our whole being is the rich garden loam from which sturdy plants of soul can set down roots. This is the kind of non-effort that can be intuitively paired with effort to make the most out of our time together.

I must apologize that this is once again the barest sketch of the ground we covered last night. But there is more time, and there

will be more added later on. It is truly astonishing how the words of a wise seer of not quite 100 years ago, passed through a focusing prism of another wise seer nearly 40 years ago, can touch off so much insight and evolutionary expansion in our hearts in the present. This gathering is but one ripple effect of their sincere dedication to truth and joy. All gratitude to them. Aum.

## Part II

In the first notes I meant to include the reading from Verse 19 that we closed the class with. We are trying to weed out projections based on what I call the Jesus complex, the deeply conditioned belief that some divine being from somewhere else is going to intervene on our behalf, whether guru, shaman, physician, god, or what have you. We could have a whole class on just the subtle ways this idea permeates our culture. Vedanta proclaims that *we are it*, we are the agents of our own salvation. Deferring our personal initiative to a hypothetical outside force is the prime reason we have become impotent. It's a continuation of our loving dependency on our mother, which is why it's so attractive. Vedanta is about claiming our rightful place in the cosmos and standing on our own two feet, which is as radical as it gets. In it we are called to keep the love but discard the fairytale dependencies.

Nitya's thrust in the nineteenth verse (among other places) is to counteract this externalizing tendency, and bring us right into the room where we are sitting, where our dialogue with a friend is a golden opportunity to learn and grow. In our foolishness we dream of a savior to come and downplay the person we are with. The "strange phenomenon" Nitya is referring to is the direct bond of friendship and love between people:

What is this strange phenomenon? This mutual attraction is what has been keeping the world going through the millennia. Although countless people have been born, lived and died on this earth, the heritage of mankind is maintained by this simple sharing. We have not seen the Buddha, we have never met Jesus Christ, nor Socrates.

We have never seen Kant or Spinoza, Shakespeare or Shelley, Kalidasa, Valmiki, or the philosophers of far-off China. Bach, Mozart and Beethoven were isolated within a tiny section of our planet. Still, our human heritage is molded by the brilliant thoughts of all these wonderful people from all around the world: the poets, storytellers, those who made the myths and legends, the inventors, composers, scientists and discoverers. Whatever they have contributed is still present in our lives, guiding us, teaching us, and helping us every moment. But they are not here. Only the friend next to you is here, the friend who exemplifies and incorporates all those wonderful qualities and insights. And we can all share this tremendous inheritance and even more, with each other, to make life an ecstatic and joyful experience. (140)

I promised to report on my sorties into early childhood, and I'll try to make this brief. I had a mother who had been taught it was beneficial to babies to let them scream and cry, because it "exercised their lungs." Imagine how it must feel to an infant who is filled with love to be cared for sometimes and ignored when they most need the other person. You try however many strategies to attract them, eventually turning to crying desperately because it feels like your heart is broken, but nothing works. Or sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't, but there's no detectable logic to it. You are unaware that your mother is in the next room equally desperate to be with you, but suppressing her feelings because she was told "on good authority" that children should be ignored, and definitely a caregiver should never cater to their whims. It's an insoluble riddle for the child, and it becomes a major defeat to their sense of self. You feel abandoned, and eventually give up trying. You take on the role of self-suppression because reaching out for love does not work. As you grow up, that pure unadulterated love you once felt dwindles to a vestige and is nearly forgotten, to be replaced by a sterile but socially acceptable substitute, called "well-behaved."

I suspect I'm not alone in having had this experience. In our fractured world, even caring mothers are not able to give full time attention to their kids, so they don't have to believe in any cockamamie idea to leave them to cry unconsolated sometimes. These are the times when the infant starts scheming what they have to do to bridge the gap, to reclaim their dearest friend. Our society actually considers this evil, or at least selfish, on the child's part, but initially it is a loving gesture. Eventually it may turn ugly, as the development of the persona goes farther and farther afield trying to make contact with someone who isn't there. Here is where the deep structures of our darkness are forged, and countless are the layers built up on top of them. We could spend eternity sifting through them, or we could try for a breakthrough all at once. But whenever the darkness surfaces it tells us we haven't laid those ghosts to rest yet.

I know in my case that deep in my psyche are feelings of worthlessness and abandonment that come from that primal experience in the cradle. I have mitigated them, but they still come back at times. Life pushes those buttons more or less at random, but the wiring is still hooked up, so they ring my doorbell, calling up ancient dread that never took conceptual form. Another person responds to a different set of random stimuli, but it's the same awakening of inhibiting energies that are included in the very building blocks of who we think we are. The essential thing is to know that that's what's going on. It makes us compassionate to our fellow sufferers as well as ourself, instead of fearful and mindlessly driven by incomprehensible forces. Being aware, we can begin to seek a viable balance that isn't nearly as skewed by our history of conditioning.

Later in childhood I heard the familiar mantra "Children should be seen and not heard." It made me double down on my self-suppression and adopt the attitude that everyone else was okay but I was not. I was basically an unwelcome intruder. From that place, negative comments are taken very seriously while positive

ones are brushed aside as irrelevant. The lopsidedness reinforces itself.

I could easily write a whole essay on this topic, but I hope to hear more voices than just mine here. I'll just draw one conclusion. All these ingrained attitudes make our ego unduly important. Only when we can strike an easy balance can we take everything for what it's worth, and in the bargain keep our equanimity. Then it turns out that what people say tells us more about them than it does about us. We have to keep listening for the kernel of truth in every interchange, but we don't have to swallow all the bitter medicine as if it only applied to us. Some medicines make us healthier when they aren't taken.

Once again, sensitive areas in our psyche are indicators of underlying traumas. That means we should look into them when something sets them off. We have to overcome our usual inclination to avoid them and dare to take a look. That's the true "warrior attitude" of the yogi, which is the opposite of a militaristic attitude. It's gentle and open, but brave and resolute as well. It is confident that its findings will be for the best, and that life truly can become "an ecstatic and joyful experience."

I'll close this with two quotes from Alice Miller that are particularly germane:

The truth about our childhood is stored up in our body, and although we can repress it, we can never alter it. Our intellect can be deceived, our feelings manipulated, our perceptions confused, and our body tricked with medication. But someday the body will present the bill, for it is as incorruptible as a child who, still whole in spirit, will accept no compromises or excuses, and it will not stop tormenting us until we stop evading the truth. (Thou Shalt Not Be Aware, 315)

[speaking of the therapeutic process]:

But the gain does not come until much later. At first the patient suffers greatly from the discovery that he has been conforming all



his life for the sake of what has turned out to be merely the illusion of concern for him on the part of others. Once it has become clear to him that he has been clinging to the smiling masks of others, he realizes the extent of his loneliness. Now that the masks have been removed on both sides, he no longer has to make an effort to behave as expected and gains more and more freedom as a result. (Thou Shalt Not Be Aware, 86)

### Part III

In class we talked a lot about how injuries affect children, which seems sadly prescient, with another slaughter of the innocents in the news today. Most lamented was the way adults routinely insult and denigrate their children, both publicly and privately. It's shocking even if you don't suspect how deeply wounding those things are. They don't have to live in a war zone or suffer a terrible accident to grow up traumatized.

The discussion was sparked off by Bobby asking how Nitya related to children. He was a total libertine, feeling that children could do no wrong and should be loved unconditionally. He never gave them any heavy-handed instruction, but encouraged them to be playful, which is the way they learn best. Nitya often counseled parents to be perfectly kind and respectful of their children, and to try never to hurt them. My image of him with kids is of them crawling all over him while he sat beaming and laughing like Santa Claus. He easily shared their spirit of joy and adventure in every drop of life.

There were young children often at the Gurukula, including during the That Alone sessions, so we will be revisiting this important subject as we go along.

When our youthful psyche is crushed or otherwise damaged, we eventually learn to adjust to it. Adjusting is fine, except that it often blocks us from repairing the damage fully. We more often just tuck it out of mind. A common theme I hear is that exploring

traumas is painful work, and it's much easier to learn to enjoy the halfway state we wind up in. The buoyancy I described earlier in trying to dive down into those deep layers of sediment shows the naturalness of this tendency.

One amazing thing about psychedelics is that they instantly can put you in a position to scrutinize all sorts of hidden aspects of your psyche, and many times perform healing where it is most needed. Without them, or some other strong impulsion or powerful faith, the Biblical "shadow of death" bars our access to the treasures of the watery deep. We are content to stay put, and we would rather pray to God to keep us away from it, rather than to help us across. This is the "difficulty at the beginning" of the I Ching. Yet if we don't dare cross the vale of shadow, at least we are in the presence of gurus who did, and they will be passing along their insights. So have no fear! We will learn from them, and dare what we may.

A note just arrived from Beverley underlying the same idea, plus she addresses some questions to everyone:

I was very touched by your description of your upbringing. Mine was just the same. I learned some pretty effective survival methods and, of course, it has taken me most of my life to understand and recover. As you say, taking off unnecessary armour and masks is surprisingly hard. I am 75 now and I think some of the conditioning is ineradicable, so I need to accept that's how I am. The class notes are a joy at the moment. I will be interested to see what people think about the 'Jesus complex'. I would guess it might be a sensitive issue. What does one mean by 'out there' anyway? Are we really born good and full of love?

The bulk of my response, slightly touched up:

Yes, I suppose we're stuck with being the fools we turned into over our lifetime, and that's one of the great jokes of life. Let's try to laugh about it!

When I'm in the presence of infants I sense a very strong blissfulness and radiance that touches me in my most reverent heart center. I presume it's a place they are in themselves. But it's okay to treat them as being essentially neutral rather than good—just not as little sinners, which is an excuse to abuse them. When their sweetness is abused, it can and does turn to hatred. And then they will bide their time until they are old enough to abuse the next generation. Our programme is to uproot the anger and hatred we develop and reorient ourselves to the sweetness, which is universally acknowledged by seers of all ages and locations to be our true nature. If they're all wrong, at least it's in a good cause! And it works.

“Out there” simply means that the world we construct in our brains looks exactly as if it was outside and separate from us, which permits us to take all sorts of hostile attitudes toward what amounts to us. Worse, we don't correct our own prejudices because they appear to be “someone else's fault.”

I'm glad you're enjoying the ride. I am too. The doggone notes are way too long, and yet they seem essential, so they write themselves despite my doubts.

John H notes the same tendency toward acceptance of our predicament:

Thinking more upon the material - it occurs to me that in a dark way, the world and its distractions have taken me hostage and that my mindset gets mungled up - not unlike victims of kidnapping who suffer stockholm syndrome and come to identify with their hostage takers more than they do their own inner realities. Are we doomed to suffer this Stockholm Syndrome en masse if we can't remember to be mindful?

My response:

“The Stockholm Syndrome” is not a bad analogy. Humans make the best of their circumstances, which allows us to be domesticated and forget our freedom. It sure beats being at odds with the world all the time. But neither of these is where we ultimately want to be: they are the thesis and antithesis of our most grievous polarity, one that desperately needs to be synthesized for us to access a liberated state. Neither acquiescence nor resistance to externalities helps make the breakthrough. Obviously, it’s not an easy task.

We should take heart that being aware of being caught is the first step in breaking out. The so-called “normal” state is to ignore our dire straits, but that’s a recipe for permanently staying stuck. Nitya says here, “If you don’t see this darkness, as contrasted to light, then there is no point in going any further.” It means you have surrendered to captivity. The first act of bravery is to admit our imperfections, to stop pretending we are “just fine.”

Nitya goes on to urge us to take the next step: “You don’t have to identify yourself with darkness. You don’t have to remain in it. It is foolishness which you can come out of and should come out of.” Once we see it, we can begin to stop identifying with it. This is where the effort we are fostering in the class has its role. That Alone evolved as a direct instruction of a guru to a roomful of highly flawed human beings, and although it’s something of a pale imitation of a direct personal dialogue, it actually can throw significant light where it’s most needed.

I guess you could say that the darkness provides the stimulus for mindfulness, for struggling to break free. We get lazy when life lacks challenges, but as long as we keep clear of crutches that cloud the mind, we are blessed with all the incentive we need, just by living and breathing. Life is hard, and that’s a stimulus to grow. Unaided we might shrink from the path before us, but with help we can overcome all self-imposed obstacles and make our way.

That’s what friends are for.

Jean sent a thoughtful analysis, implying an important question, “Why do we expect perfection in others, when even ‘pretty good’

is a superlative achievement?” For that matter, why do we so dearly wish our children to be perfect and have no problems? They are bound to make mistakes too. Can it be that we are pretending to be perfect, and so unfairly hold others to the same ideal? We have to somehow cope with and admit our shortcomings, which are inevitable in finite beings. This is a fruitful area for generosity and forgiveness. Now to Jean:

Lovely class notes. I have “read and registered.” Thinking back on my parents-- for two slightly dysfunctional people, they did an awful lot that was right, when you come right down to it. In a nutshell, I always felt very loved by them both, even in the midst of their arguments, divorce, and custody problems. They did a pretty good job of parenting, even when they were going through some hard times themselves. “Breaking free” is always a tricky time, but I had the advantage of living a year in Sweden then, living out my fantasies (“my god, I don’t *really* belong to this family!”), and getting a whole new perspective on everything.

The buoyancy you experienced when trying to “scuba dive down into your past,” this I can relate to anyway. In trying to reconstruct my role as a mother, during the difficult years of raising four small boys, I spent a week reading back in my diaries to help a psychologist. It was a heavy and painful experience, and I have no desire to revisit those accounts again. Much nicer to surface! I was an exhausted, over-ambitious, anxious mother (I see a lot of Susan in me), trying to keep up standards, working very much on my own: husband at sea, not really with the role of fatherhood when at home either, parents in another country, parents-in-law who already had 9 other grandchildren and lived 5 hours away. What is an exhausted mother who needs time to herself (who *makes* time for herself, even to staying up half the night)? Irritable, easily angered, impatient, screechy, you name it. Not at all what sensitive

small boys need (and I tend to believe that boys are even more sensitive than girls are). I would have profitted then from Gayathri's class on non-violent parenting-- if I'd had time and energy to fit it in.

Once my husbands' parents were visiting. They were raised like that generation, and in turn had raised 5 children of their own. When my new-born baby was crying after bedtime, I got the advice to "let him cry if you ever want to get any sleep at night; they learn quickly not to cry after bedtime if you just shut the door and leave them alone." In a rare burst of independence before their superior experience, I retorted, "You can also shut your new little puppy in a room and let him cry." There was no further comment. (They loved dogs, always had one, and took very good care of them always.)

So I am less interested in finding my own true being and throwing off masks, than in trying to understand my sons today. How have they been influenced by me? Each of them is intelligent, interacting with the world and loving it in special ways. The oldest knows piles about ecological justice, the next about social justice, the third about bodily health, and the youngest about human interactions. Finding some special friend to share life with appears to be harder, for each one of them. My fault? As their mother, I sometimes apply credit and blame to myself. But going back to the verdict on my own parents, I have to ultimately forgive myself, knowing that I did a pretty good job of parenting, and even in my hardest of times, while making mistakes, *I did the very best that I could at that moment.*

#### Part IV

Paul was the only one who so far has written about what I have called the "Jesus complex," the deferral of our initiative to a savior from far away who we hope will come and relieve us of our

problems. Its impact is critical, and expecting someone else to think about it for us and write about it for us is an extension of the complex, if I may be so bold. Adulthood begins when we claim the mantle of responsibility for our life. So I thank Paul for taking the time to write, as well as his insightful contributions in person to our class. I'm leaving in his own expression of gratitude because that is the flip side of taking responsibility: we are dependent on so many others, both human and nonhuman, and they are dependent on us. When done correctly, taking responsibility makes us more helpful to our fellow beings, and is not in any way a selfish act.

Paul's note dovetails with Alice Miller's psychological insights, so relevant to the wave of creation that each of us embodies, exquisitely delicate and vulnerable in our first years of life. Let's let Miller set the stage:

Morality and performance of duty are artificial measures that become necessary when something essential is lacking. The more successfully a person was denied access to his or her feelings in childhood, the larger the arsenal of intellectual weapons and the supply of moral prostheses has to be, because morality and a sense of duty are not sources of strength or fruitful soil for genuine affection. Blood does not flow in artificial limbs; they are for sale and can serve many masters. What was considered good yesterday can—depending on the decree of government or party—be considered evil and corrupt today, and vice versa. But those who have spontaneous feelings can only be themselves. They have no other choice if they want to remain true to themselves. Rejection, ostracism, loss of love, and name calling will not fail to affect them; they will suffer as a result and will dread them, but once they have found their authentic self they will not want to lose it. And when they sense that something is being demanded of them to which their whole being says no, they cannot do it. They simply cannot.

This is the case with people who had the good fortune of being sure of their parents' love even if they had to disappoint certain parental expectations. Or with people who, although they did not have this good fortune to begin with, learned later—for example, in analysis—to risk the loss of love in order to regain their lost self. They will not be willing to relinquish it again for any price in the world. (For Your Own Good, pp.84-85.)

And from her website:

Survivors of mistreatment need to discover their own truth if they are to free themselves of its consequences. Moralizing leads them away from this truth.

Paul's note becomes even more poignant with those words in mind. He writes:

The Jesus Complex

Be...Good!

*“No... I won't...I won't...I won't be good!”* But I did. And now I suffer. To trust another and grant them unlimited power in molding the self is an ignorance of not knowing. I believe a child's ignorance-of-knowing is more knowing than a parent's knowing-ignorance. I had to trust in my parents and older siblings to define “good”. And parents also unknowingly trust “others” to define their false concept of “good”. The whole charade is aptly played out in the Wizard of Oz. Remember when Dorothy and her dog Toto offered the ruby slippers to The Great Wizard of Oz to collect the compensation of a return passage to home? The Great Oz thundered, and flashed immense columns of fire before Dorothy to make his deception of ignorance seem **AUTHORITARIAN**. Toto was the only one not distracted by all the pageantry, and pulled the



curtain back to reveal to Dorothy the actual Oz. Toto was an astute guru. It is hard to muster the courage to peer behind the curtain. Scott, I feel immense gratitude to you, Deb, Nitya, and All that came before for your being my Toto.

## Part V

John sent some thoughts on the Jesus complex:

I know that I'm supposed to be non-caring, or dispassionate, or I suppose - Objective, but I totally get the need for the Jesus Complex - which is for someone to come and lift our burdens and so forth. It's part of our earliest hardwiring - make a noise and get feeding, or changing, or relief of some discomfort. It's plugged right into the reptilian part of brain - whatever it takes to survive. Being that this seems to be part of our hard wiring, it seems that I must admit that I take a stance of compassion lest I stand in hard judgment of myself.

It's cool if one can get past that Jesus Complex entirely, but I'm not sure we can. I think part of our nature is to be compassionate and when we find someone in need, it is only natural to be helpful. In turn, when in great pain, it is only natural to cry out for someone to help us. And for the most part we do. But like Eric Fromm said, when we put on costumes of warriors and pretend we are warriors that we become warriors and do things that are unnatural to us - such as to be warriors. I'm not sure that I want to become so enlightened or dispassionate and objective that I'm no longer a human. What's that great line from Shakespeares' play, Macbeth - "I dare do all that may become a man, he who dares do more is none." All the same, I'm perplexed. Why call it Jesus Complex? Why not Krishna Complex or Buddha Complex - as people from all the faiths show this dependence on a spiritual entity to save them, or have manufactured their belief systems to fit their own needs?

Eyore the Perplexed

My response:

There are some mixed up ideas here that sorting out should help clarify. Most glaring is equating the selfish or “reptilian” brain with relying on outside intervention, or my “Jesus syndrome.” Reptiles don’t normally expect someone else to take care of them. They don’t pray for prey, they just jump on it and eat it. And as far as anyone can tell, they never get depressed. No, the Jesus syndrome is an all-too human condition, seen nowhere else.

The second misunderstanding is that rooting out our false dependencies is somehow mean spirited and unfair. I’m not suggesting that those who want to deeply believe in divine intervention in some form aren’t welcome to do so, and I know it can be a balm. It can also be a way to disconnect from any number of positive steps that are well within our grasp. All of this instruction is for our own benefit, and is not to be applied to anyone else. No one is under any compunction to take a hard road like this, even if it leads to a very important place. But we are very fortunate it is available to us.

Most of humanity was taught servility as children, and then the antidote, self-reliance, was left out later on, and is still waiting to be recaptured. We transfer our dependencies from parents to Jesus or Krishna or pot or alcohol, instead of shrugging them off and choosing life in the present. A society filled with people waiting to be taken care of, or lost in a stupor, is tragic. The kind of spirit crushing experience that is routine in many circles produces the revenge-filled personality that reaches for a gun or a bottle for relief of its misery. It is far more compassionate to reawaken to the spirit within all of us, which has become an endangered species. Its characteristics are compassion and kindness.

You’re quite right that dependency syndrome is everywhere, though most egregious and popular in Christianity, where it couldn’t be more obvious. Because that’s the form that most permeates our culture, it’s the name I chose. If I called it the Krishna syndrome, no one in America would give it a passing

thought. But Jesus is worshipped here, big time, so it's easier to get the point.

As for the Shakespeare quote, Macbeth is arguing with his wife whether he should commit murder, which is a far cry from our objective. We are trying to relieve the pain and suffering of repressed trauma that goads people to commit crimes and be miserable. We are not resisting an invitation to a crime, either. The call to kill and inflict injury comes from our battered psyches. Restoring them to wholeness removes the incentive to cause mayhem.

Becoming enlightened means becoming fully human. It is not any remote, distant state, except in the popular fantasies which we might call the enlightenment syndrome. We have been shorn of our humanity through toxic management. Vedanta is a detox program that goes all the way. It doesn't just substitute a lesser evil for a greater one, though again, that's a choice people are free to make.

So thank you, John. I wish more people would voice their doubts, because that's the only way to clear the air effectively. One of our many shared repressions as humans is that doubts are a mortal sin, to be bottled up and kept out of sight. Nothing could be further from the truth. Doubts are only a threat to those who are hiding behind a veil of smoke and mirrors, like the "great and terrible" Wizard of Oz, who was in reality meek and fearful. For those seeking truth, they are a way to surmount obstacles. Respectful doubts, not sarcastic ones, of course. There's a world of difference, as you yourself have said.

Important clarification about psychotherapy.

Vedanta has a somewhat different take on psychotherapy than many of the Western models, and I feel I should offer some explanation.

Alice Miller has connected the dots between childhood traumas and practically the full range of mental maladies plaguing our species, including violence, bigotry, addiction and the rest of

our personal dysfunctions, which so often reinforce each other to become social conflagrations. The importance of her work cannot be downplayed, and it is having a significant impact on the current understanding of psychology across the board.

Western psychology is intent on accessing the latent fury over the injustices we have suffered to energize a close look at our past history, and then rejecting those abuses with every fiber of our being. The idea is you can only be fully cured if you learn to hate and utterly reject what brought you to your present condition. It is politically incorrect to bring love into the equation: love remains a separate category that may be enabled by overmastering the injustices we have suffered, but is not important in itself.

Vedanta as I understand it dares to posit love (in the form of self-realization) as the very antidote to all our ills. It expands on the Buddha's simple assertion that hate has never been cured by hate, but only by love. He did not mean the *idea* of love that we so ardently believe in, but the real authentic essence of being, which is quite mysterious and remains rarely accessed. It's more properly described along the lines of self-realization or reconnection with our true nature than love, which like God suffers from ten thousand senses of the word.

Note in the quote from Alice Miller below that the very concept of a "true self" is anathema to many western psychologists, but happily she is in agreement that its recovery is the whole point of therapy, or what we call the spiritual search.

In infancy it is quite clear that our well-being is dependent on outside factors. Before birth we spend a seeming eternity in bliss, so long as our environment is not polluted. After birth, someone else feeds and cares for us, and forever afterward we are convinced that rearranging the external world is the only effective means to happiness. The bliss we once took for granted becomes vestigial, and exciting things begin to substitute for it by grabbing and holding our attention. We develop addictions to the excitement, and become dependent to various degrees on what causes it. The

big problem is that excitement is intermittent, and a range of inimical interactions intervene to block it. Therefore they are seen as causes of unhappiness. Somewhere in childhood, the rise and fall, on and off of the affects of worldly encounters is overlaid on the steady state of our inner happy nature, and our inner contentment dissipates.

The rishis assert that true love is not dependent in any way, nor can it be manufactured out of externalities. It is our native state, and that the interference of outside dependencies tends to separate us more and more from it. Not just the bad events, but the good ones too. The cure then is to understand that the source of abiding happiness is within us, and is not at the mercy of external circumstances. No amount of rearranging the outside world will lead us back to our true nature, but when we rediscover it in us, it begins to radiate to affect our entire life positively.

This means we don't have to root out every injustice and hate our early caregivers. Those attitudes make us more stuck than ever. We have to acknowledge that a number of inevitable events confused and inhibited us, but then look inward to our loving, forgiving nature. Finding it *is* the cure. It is the only cure; everything else is a palliative or a better distraction. Alice Miller warns that paying lip service to our condition just adds another layer of obfuscation. The process requires an almost brutal honesty.

Once we open ourselves to the possibilities that we have become perverted in infancy, occasional insights will resurface at times, as we are freed of the logjams blocking our inner freedom. We don't have to spend whole lifetimes rooting around in the past; being as fully present in the present as possible propagates light into areas that are normally dark.

In citing Alice Miller I am agreeing with her that awareness of what happened to us early on is essential information, but after that I follow the Vedantic model. I have no urge to hate my parents for the wounds they laid on me. I can see that they had their wounds, and their parents had theirs, on back into eternity. Yet

they were top notch parents. We cannot expect perfection from our environment, but we certainly can subtract everything we can of our own injurious behavior. It requires reconnecting with ourselves: the loving, cosmic beings who journeyed from inner space to this beautiful planet in hopes of spreading our love where it is most needed. Each healthy child is a Zero Point Field of infinite energy and beauty, coming here to light the darkness, and should be honored as the beautiful diplomats they are. As Rabindranath Tagore so sweetly put it: "Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man."

Several of you have written that you were inspired by Alice Miller's intense honesty. One friend noted how refreshing it was (respecting an admirer of hers, Daniel Mackler) that they were speaking of Vedantic truths without any Vedantic terminology. Miller's website has some very interesting reading, and I'll clip in a relevant section of one of her essays there, if anyone wants to read a bit more. The rest is all Ms. Miller:

Many therapists - though I hope not all - are at pains to divert their clients' attention from their childhood. In this book [*The Body Never Lies*, 2004] I show very clearly how and why this happens, though I do not know what percentage of them do this kind of thing. There are, after all, no statistics on the issue. My descriptions will help readers decide whether the therapies they are undergoing are encouraging self-companionship or exacerbating self-alienation. Unfortunately the second of these two alternatives is frequently the case. In one of his books, an author highly regarded in analytic circles goes so far as to say that there is no such thing as the "true self" and that it is misleading to talk about it. With therapeutic care based on such an attitude, what chance would adult clients have of identifying their childhood reality? How could they gain awareness of the powerlessness they experienced as children? How could they relive the despair they felt when those injuries were inflicted on them, over and over

again, year after year, without being able to perceive their real situation because there was no one there to help them see it? These children had to try to save themselves, by taking refuge in confusion and sometimes in self-derision. Adults unable to resolve this confusion at a later stage in a form of therapy that does not impede all access to the feelings will remain prisoners of the derision of their own destinies.

But if they do manage to use their present feelings as a key to their simple, justified, and strong emotions as small children and to understand them as comprehensible responses to the (intentional or unintentional) cruelties of their parents or stand-in parents, then they will have nothing more to laugh at. The derision, the cynicism, and the self-irony will disappear - and with them, usually at least, the symptoms that have been the price for this luxury. Then the true self, the authentic feelings and needs of the individual, will become accessible. Looking back on my own life, I am astonished at the single-mindedness, the endurance, and the implacability with which my true self has prevailed against all external and internal resistance. And it continues to prevail, without the help of therapists, because I have become its Enlightened Witness.

Naturally, eschewing cynicism and self-irony is not sufficient in itself to come to terms with the consequences of childhood cruelty. But it is a necessary, indeed an indispensable, precondition for doing so. With an attitude of persistent self-derision we could go through a whole series of therapies without any appreciable progress because we would still be cut off from our genuine feelings and hence from any empathy for the children we once were. What we (or our health insurance) then pay for is a species of therapeutic care that, if anything, helps us to flee from our own reality. And we can hardly expect any change for the better to come about on that basis. (from [http://www.alice-miller.com/articles\\_en.php?lang=en&nid=57&grp=11](http://www.alice-miller.com/articles_en.php?lang=en&nid=57&grp=11))

Miller agrees with Vedanta that morality is at best tangential to what we call spirituality and she calls healing:

Good behavior... For many people in search of help, it closes the path to freedom....

Survivors of mistreatment need to discover their own truth if they are to free themselves of its consequences. Moralizing leads them away from this truth.

An effective therapy cannot be achieved if the mechanisms of pedagogy continue to operate. It requires recognition of the damage caused by our upbringing, whose consequences it should resolve. It must make patients' feelings available to them—and accessible for the entirety of their lives. This can help them to orientate and be at one with themselves. Moralizing appeals can result in barring access to this self-knowledge.

What remains is the vicious circle of repression: the true story, which has been suppressed in the body, produces symptoms so that it could at last be recognized and taken seriously. But our consciousness refuses to comply, just as it did in childhood - because it was then that it learned the life-saving function of repression, and because no one has subsequently explained that as grown-ups we are not condemned to die of our knowledge, that, on the contrary, such knowledge would help us in our quest for health. The dangerous teaching of "poisonous pedagogy" - "Thou Shalt Not Be Aware Of What Was Done To You " - reappears in the methods of treatment practiced by doctors, psychiatrists, and therapists. With medication and mystifying theories they try to influence their patients' memories as deeply as possible, in order that they never find the cause of their illness. These lie, almost without exception, in the psychic and physical mistreatment and neglect suffered in childhood. (from [http://www.alice-miller.com/articles\\_en.php?lang=en&nid=48&grp=11](http://www.alice-miller.com/articles_en.php?lang=en&nid=48&grp=11))



## Part VI

It's never too late to pass along your thoughts! Dipika just sent an account of yoga in action and inaction that can double as a holiday season blessing for everyone. So-called "little things" are the true miracles of life. Flying through the air and walking on water are metaphors for meeting life's challenges with an open attitude that cherishes the precious value in every detail:

Mostly am happy to listen and co-relate it to my manifesting world  
This time the evening session of Verse 3 ...coming in ...going out...outer..inner...struck a chord...especially about loving our neighbours.

Have been through a bit of a trying time...had to deal with a sudden Heart bypass surgery for my Dad who is 80 years old, away from home in a new city with nobody to really lean on. Luckily it was not an emergency and we had gone in for a routine angiogram with the intention of getting a Stent put...a day's hospitalisation at the most. On seeing the result the Docs informed me that he had over 95% blockage in one of the main aortas and their advise was not to get discharged but to do the Surgery right away.

Pandemonium...my Dad point blank refused...he said at 80 he would be damned if he would be cut up...and rightly so... We had one evening to decide...and the Docs had said if we moved Dad it would be against medical advice.

I have no idea where I got my inner calm from or how things fell into place and exactly when in less than 24 hours Dad changed his mind and decided to go ahead with the surgery  
We got the best Heart Surgeon in the city as he was affiliated to the Hospital and wonder of wonders was free to operate the next day!  
Instead of spending 1 night in the hospital...we spent 11 nights...and the whole time everyone around us ...the staff...the

doctors...friends from out of the blue just kept popping out to help...

I have never felt such love and wanting to give love to everyone around me...it was as though I was going through an open heart surgery myself!!

We even managed to spend 2 weeks in Delhi after Dad's discharge at a friend's residence who was away and had a great cook...it was so seamless...as though the Universe stepped right in and opened up and showed me each n every step...absolutely stupendous

And now have finally managed to bring Dad back home where he lives in the Punjab...3 weeks from the surgery.

Facing the facts without any fear and putting our trust and love in people qualified...with no excessive emotional thinking is probably part of the reason for the ease...and from somewhere *anugraham*

with love

--

Dipika

--when I sent my appreciation, Dipika added:

actually my attitude also 'happened'...all i consciously remember doing is not thinking too much...of the ' what might happen' and all those adjectives of 'poor dad' and 'brave' n 'strong'...and the fact that i was really alone had nobody feeding me with any further fears either...

all in all yes a happy ending