

10/15/13
Verse 35

Like ten thousand suns coming all at once,
the modulation of discrimination arises;
the veil of transience covering knowledge is *maya*;
tearing this away, the primal sun alone shines.

Free translation:

The function of Wisdom discernment come like the dawning of ten thousand suns. This is the primeval Sun, which cleaves asunder the veil of maya that precipitates the transient forms of ignorance.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

Like the dawn all together of ten thousand solar orbs
Wisdom's function comes: such, verily is that which
Tears asunder this wisdom-hiding, transient Maya-darkness
here,
And as the primal Sun prevails!

A mystical tang was in the air last night, with a bright moon giving "the luster of mid-day to objects below." This was one of those special nights when an animated discussion floated on the surface of a very powerful undercurrent of peace and love. After the closing chant, everyone sat blissfully in their seats for an eternal moment, not wanting to disturb the still waters.

In every class Nitya was a force of nature, inwardly pulling us toward a breakthrough like a whirling neutron star attracting ambient dark matter, all taking place beneath the web of his enchanting disquisition. In verses like this one, he ramped up the invisible power to a radiant intensity. While ten thousand suns might have been out of our reach, each of us felt the impact of a few. It was a transformational day, old Verse 35. Sadly, there's no

way to package that energy in book form. You have to try to imagine or visualize it as you read. The nice thing about getting together in a small group—we were ten hearty souls this time—is that at least a faint echo is generated; maybe somewhat better than faint, even. That’s why no one wanted to go: we all knew the spell would be broken. Yet I’m confident that once accessed, some of that “pixie dust” stays with us for a long time.

The secret wisdom transmittal that was taking place that day was especially evident in Nitya’s relating the well-known stories of some of the most prominent masters of world history. Read from a book, they are old hat, retold so often as to be clichés, and we might even be tempted to groan, “Oh no, not again!” But as he spoke, Nitya was spiritually reliving the moment of enlightenment each of those people experienced, and that came through loud and clear. I sometimes felt like I did as a child, when my father would boost me up to the lowest limb of a tree so I could begin to climb it. It was that tangible. Nitya’s beams of light were beams you could walk on.

Deb started us off with an essential insight, that we tend to think of the outer world as inferior to the inner, which throws us off kilter. Nitya insists that both are equally imaginary projections of consciousness, which is the light source for the whole game. We are redirecting our focus to the light itself, withdrawing our consciousness from where it is squashed up against the two aspects of projection, which have caused us to forget who we are. As Nitya sums up:

This fantasy can be stopped in a fraction of a second if we suddenly wake up to the light, which is what has allowed us the occasion to fantasize in the first place. Those who woke up from their reverie and found this light not only came out of the blues of their own lives, but also became the torch bearers of truth for the whole world.

The fact remains that truth must be renewed perennially, or it becomes stale, snagged in static imagery that continually grows back like creeping vines up a jungle tree. So, while we look to others for our inspiration, it is incumbent on us to reactivate the source within our own being, lest it be driven underground once again.

It is not simply a matter of tuning out the inner and outer worlds, they are essential, but they only come into happy resonance when they are accorded equal weight. If we lean to one side or the other we run the risk of losing our center.

This imbalance is partly to blame for the degeneration of the outer world currently taking place in many parts of the world. Deb and I recently visited Italy, where the ancient cities reflect an outward bias, and so are indescribably beautiful. In olden times there was a mania for expressing inner visions in terms of the surrounding world, and we are still reaping the benefits. Nowadays the outer world is denigrated as inferior and burdensome, so it is crumbling to ruin even as humanity's inner life is thriving as never before. At least in our class we are in the process of discovering new ways to integrate the twin aspects of existence, to keep them in harmony. That should prove mutually beneficial.

Narayana Guru and those like him assure us that the only way to keep our life on an even keel is to start from the center and work out. As Deb put it, "we want to focus on the light that gives a stable base to the inner and outer worlds." Contrary to our normal inclinations, accessing the light is not the end product of upgrading our relationship with the inner and outer worlds, but rather walking the razor's edge between them, entering the "crack between the worlds" to bring the light out into the open.

Many people enjoyed Anita's message in a recent mailing, where she is happy for no reason at all. Happiness is an integral aspect of the blazing light. It is not dependent on any "reason" to be, it just is. Happiness that is dependent on external or internal support is a fragile thing, easily breakable, but if it is self-founded it can persist through thick and thin. It is inexplicable, and

explaining it just corrodes its purity. Finding our way to a pervasive state of happiness is a quietly supreme achievement, a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Michael recalled Nitya's favorite image of a movie projected on a screen. The insight he had was that both internal and external realities are projected together on the viewing screen. The temptation is for us to imagine we are already grounded in the internal and looking out at the external, but it turns out that both aspects are equally projective. I think that's the exact place where the ego usurps the light of the Self: it sets itself up as the bearer of the light, when it is in fact only part of the projection. Once that happens, all hell breaks loose. Narayana Guru will be correcting that exaggeration in the immediate aftermath of the ten thousand suns.

Thinking about this, Paul realized why religion so often goes off track. It reflects the human tendency to be obsessed with differentiating between true and false attitudes, despite the fact that everything we experience is maya. In other words, religion's truths are as false as everything else. Duality only ceases when the here and there become one.

Paul added that since words are necessarily dual, they fall short in describing the Absolute. This is a common refrain, and I wanted to clarify the value of words. We all agree that they are inadequate for describing the indescribable, and that is often a failing of religious imagery. We have learned that the ten thousand suns are a direct experience, not an analogy. We could also accept it as the best analogy and leave it at that. The value of words is that they can either lead us to become more bound to projections or they can lead us out of bondage, in a sense bringing us to the verge of the crack between the worlds where we can dive in unencumbered. The wordiness of Vedanta is designed to lead us to the light by stripping away our delusions. As Mick correctly put it, this study is about opening the shades to let the light in. We are already made of light, but we have drawn the shutters and forgotten it. We don't have to create the light, it is what we are. We just have to raise the blinds.

With that, the class was invited to share their personal experiences of being drenched in light. It's not an uncommon experience, especially in the age of psychedelics. We wanted to hear of the variety of adventures our friends have had. I pointed out that the inside of the skull is perfectly dark; no outside light at all gets into it. All the light we see is generated by internal processes. To what extent can we impact the light we see and are guided by? Does the brain create light, or does it shine in from somewhere else? It seems that the dim light we function by is yet another part of maya, and the overwhelming light Narayana Guru refers to is entirely of another order.

The class shared a few en-lightening events, but I invite everyone to send in their experiences. I'm sure we would all love to read what you have discovered. And part of the fun is that each person's experiences are unique, as well as having universal elements. I will also repost in Part III an excellent summary of three progressive stages of psychedelic experience, with stage three being akin to Hinduism's venerable ten thousand suns.

So let's see. Jan reported an oceanic feeling of love that came to her at times. She doesn't much talk about it. I see her cradling it like a baby bird in her cupped hands, nurturing it with maternal loving kindness. It permeates the atmosphere around her without any need for description.

Bill, one of the rare souls who sits regularly in meditation, told about when he is having a really good meditation he feels he is absorbed into the sky. There is a sense of vastness, of peace.

Michael spoke of once walking through a house where he lived and suddenly having a completely unitive golden moment. He felt he was in the "whole soup" of everything. Though brief, the feeling of oneness has stayed with him forever after. He also took salvia divinorum once, which is a still legal psychoactive plant in the sage family. During the twenty-minute trip he heard the roar of the universe, its aum sound. Though profoundly moved, or perhaps because of being profoundly moved, he never felt the need for psychedelic assistance again.

Like Michael, Deb reported occasions of momentary stillness, a peace that surpasseth understanding. She only can describe them afterward; in them she is having a direct experience, and they don't seem to depend on any circumstance. She doesn't even call them a state of happiness, more like quiet joy.

My numerous blissful experiences have been recounted often enough already, and are mostly taken as a kind of joke. I did mention something less well known: the small disc of light that I first noticed around age 5 or 6. I was sitting on my bed looking out the window at a gorgeous tree and the cloud bedecked sky through the branches, when I noticed a bright spot floating in the air. As I looked at it, it grew brighter. At some point, then or later I can't remember, I realized it was in my mind, and was only reflected in the outside world. Since then it has always been with me, sometimes not in sight for months, but then popping back in and remaining off and on for weeks. When I look at it, usually with eyes closed, it can become very bright. It looks like I'm viewing a sun through a cave entrance, some kind of organic hole in the rocks (my skull?). I have tried innumerable strategies to penetrate the hole and emerge into the light, but whatever I try moves me away from it. If I sit really still the hole grows larger and the light brighter. It's a tricky puzzle—only *not doing* will do it. But trying to not try fuzzes it up too. When I asked Nitya about it, all he said was that it showed I had a mystical streak in my character. Yawn.

Mick added that working on it was the problem. To access the light we are to do nothing, just be. It takes a kind of relaxed vigilance, where you are not wanting or needing anything at all. As we have often noted, this is both the simplest and most difficult thing there is.

In this verse Narayana Guru has granted us a glimpse of his own experience, and what it means. The next six or seven verses dig into how to bring that about, how to raise the blinds in Mick's analogy. The ego has to surrender its perch on the top of the heap and become a humble member of the conglomerate being that each of us embodies. Here it's done in a gentle yet persuasive manner,

with Narayana Guru's infinite kindness throughout. I recall this section as being the most important to me the first time out, literally blowing my mind, over and over. And we're talking of a mind that had already been blow many times before....

We had a lovely closing meditation, the kind only a small and intimate group can accomplish. In it we tried to visualize the brightest light possible. It takes a surprising effort to image bright light. We mostly function in a half light, and that's perfectly appropriate, but for meditation, why not see how effulgent you can make your brain box?

To assist the visualization process, I described one of the magical moments in my family's life, at Puerto Angel, Mexico, one of the most gorgeous tropical beaches in the world, ringed by high mountains and jungle forest. A great wide stretch of pristine sand shimmering in the scintillating sun. Naked hippies strolling at their ease, wading in the warm water or lying in hammocks in the shade. Blue, blue water fading to white, brimming with golden glints of sunlight reflected in each wavelet. A day of heaven on earth. So bright, so warm, filled with love.

So bright.

Part II

Both these entries are particularly good this week. Nataraja Guru throws a lot of light on the subject, and Nitya reveals his love for *Alice in Wonderland* and tells a bit more of the legend of Narayana Guru's enlightenment. A Barmecide feast refers to a famous story in the Arabian Nights where Prince Barmecide serves imaginary plates of food to beggars, claiming they hold a sumptuous repast.

Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:

We see before our eyes an enchanting world of exquisite beauty, which can also become horrid, vulgar and threatening.

When our senses are possessed by the spirit of that world, mind becomes infatuated or hysterical. Similarly, there is a world within us; it is of fantasy and imagination. Sometimes it leads to the imaginary mansion of the fool's paradise and feeds our pleasure-seeking mind with a Barmecidal feast such as Alice's tea party with the Mad Hatter. Some unfortunate people wake up from such an illusion only to be caught in a never-ending nightmare; to them life is a pool of tears. With a smile of indifference the Self sits unconcerned between these two worlds called the external and the internal.

The Self is pure knowledge, which transcends all specific notions. It is the supernal sun that shines in the firmament of consciousness. It is not the knowledge of anything, but the being of knowledge. It is the unlit lamp that shines as the soul of everything, which never becomes extinguished even if the body perishes. It knows no transformation. It is the secret of aum. It is the certitude which allows no riddles or doubts. It is the witnessing consciousness that is silent by nature. It is the golden link that connects everything to give unitive understanding. It is the Absolute that transcends all the three modalities of nature. Its field is not divided into any regions in space or divisions in time. It sustains the Blessed Ones with the blissful nectar of divine wisdom. It is an all-filling symphony which opens the eye of wisdom. It is the Primal Glory which knows no modulation.

Even though half moments give birth to name and form, space and time, actor and enjoyment of action, cause and effect, the universal and the particular, the five elements, the three modalities, the triple states of consciousness, the six-fold transformations of life and the duality of pain and pleasure, it takes only one quarter of a moment for all these aggregates to be blown up into a conflagration of dazzling light, as if ten thousand suns had suddenly come into being as an all-embracing consciousness. This is not just wishful thinking. It happened to Siddhartha Gautama when after five years of fruitless search and mortification of the body, he sat under a bo tree to give up his life in desperation.

In a single flash he became the Awakened One, the blessed Buddha. It happened to the son of a Nazarene carpenter called Jesus. He stood in the Jordan to be baptized by a crazy man called John, who described himself as “the cry in the wilderness,” and like lightning the heavens broke open and the spirit of God entered Jesus and made him the Christ, the Light of the world. A simple man who did not nurture his brain by going to any school, but did humble service to a pious Arabian widow, once sheltered himself in the cool shade of a cave. There he had an encounter with the one Self which is behind all selves. It commanded him to read the divine revelations. Poor Muhammad Mustafa lamented his fate and pleaded his ignorance of the written word. Once again a miracle happened, the ignorant Muhammad became the wisest of all prophets in the wink of an eye, and lo, he chanted to the world the nectar-like suras of the Holy Quran. An illiterate priest of West Bengal became infatuated with his love for a stone image of Kali. Sri Ramakrishna wanted the stone to become flesh. The Divine will that once transformed the word into flesh came to his rescue and transformed the clod of his mind into the blissful ecstasy of the highest possible realization. In a mountain cave of South India, where the three oceans meet, Narayana Guru lived, befriending a cobra and a tiger as he found human nature no better than that of brutes. After years of penance in that solitary cave he suddenly awakened to the one Reality that makes everything real and precious. No one is more chosen than any other. All these masters were human beings, just like you and me. Tomorrow it can be our turn.

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Nataraja Guru’s commentary:

AFTER pointing out in the immediately preceding verse that reality and knowledge are not distinct, and that the content of half a second is sufficient to imply all the manifested universe, the Guru here makes a more finalized statement about the way in

which wisdom comes to the aspirant for Self-knowledge. The illumination understood in the contemplative context is not one that takes place slowly and gradually, as in the evolutionary picture or with the growth of plant. Within the relativistic context there might be accumulation of information about things or events which in time might mature to make the person concerned more and more worldly-wise; but the wisdom that has to do with the Absolute asserts itself in quite another fashion. It is not a slow evolutionary process but an overwhelming event in one's life.

It is true that there are references elsewhere in wisdom-writings to the long number of years of discipline in the form of meditation or study that should precede the attainment or the goal of education or spiritual discipline. The Gita refers to the many births that should pass even for a wise man to attain to the Absolute (VII. 19). In the context of education with a Guru in ancient India, twelve years, or even multiples thereof, are said to be normal periods for finishing one's studies. Here it is not a question of the actual time required but of the qualitative content of the wisdom, when it comes, if at all.

Contemplative wisdom is different from the ordinary accumulation of information about events, things, or matters. It is something wholesale of an all-or-nothing character. This difference is due to the global totality of the subject matter of such wisdom, which is no other than the Absolute. Wisdom that refers to the Absolute has to be itself of an absolute quality.

There is moreover to be noted the word *vritti* (functioning), which qualifies the kind of wisdom which the Guru has in mind here. There is static wisdom as also dynamic wisdom. The latter is the resultant of the meeting of the positive and the negative aspects. When the positive and the negative aspects of wisdom meet, it is the central radiance of the neutrality that we refer to as wisdom. The subtle mechanism, as in the case of the electric-arc lamp,

where positive and negative electricity meet to make the brilliant light, is referred to more clearly elsewhere in the writings of the Guru. In his composition called *Advaita Dipika* (The Lamp of Non-Dual Wisdom), verse 4 translated reads as follows:

In wisdom that is dynamic, there is no universe
Nor is there any seed thereof as nescience.
When light comes there is
No more darkness near it; but again as soon as the wick
Is left, the light goes out and darkness comes

In verse 17 above in the present composition, the more complete psycho-physical picture with the role of the wick as the basis of wisdom-functioning (or dynamism) has been once touched upon. The various references to the structure of the Self have to be put together by the intelligent student to yield a complete picture of the living Self as finally to be understood in the context of the wisdom of the Absolute.

Science and nescience are two aspects of the dynamism of wisdom; one that may be considered positive in character, and the other that is negative. Between these aspects there is an interaction that, when dynamic, tends to dispel the surrounding darkness; and when static, brings more darkness round it, resulting in the emergence of the phenomenal universe. The phenomenal universe belongs to the world of transience, while the dynamic reveals the light of the Absolute which is eternal and changeless. The technical name in Vedanta for this alternating process, in which the plus and minus sides alternate to make for a phenomenal world of doubtful status in reality, and which is filled with the plurality of multifarious entities in an ever-changing flux of becoming, is Maya, and results from the dual aspects coming together without the fullest measure of dynamism. Degrees of doubt and error giving rise to relativistic phases of appearances result from the same Maya-principle understood in this manner. Maya is the

negative or static basis of all possible philosophical errors, whether physical or metaphysical. When the full dynamism of absolutist wisdom prevails, the brilliance of the illumination suffices to efface all the relativistic vestiges in consciousness, leaving the pure consciousness to prevail over all appearances which are false. The vision of the Absolute is here compared to the primal Sun which forever reigns, dispelling the relativistic darkness.

Part III

Hey boys and girls, time for another contest! We didn't talk about it in class, but it's an important point: what does "modulation of discrimination" refer to? The whole phrase is "Like ten thousand suns coming all at once, the modulation of discrimination arises." Nataraja Guru translates it as "wisdom's function." Any Malayalam speakers want to help us here? I'll save my input for later, so as not to prejudice your thinking. The contemplation is the reward.

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This came from Brian. I hope it will make it through the email. I'll include it as an attachment also. Wonderful to have a nonverbal response, like we used to get from Beverley on occasion. Thank you, Brian!

Here's my response to Verse 35, to say that not all of us respond with words. This is my sculpture completed on 9/11 "Lifting Maya's Veil". Seems to fit the verse. In peace, Brian



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Jay Stevens' book, *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987), is an exceptional history of psychedelic thought in the twentieth century. LSD frequently produces the "multiple suns effect"—an overwhelming blast of light that flushes out the psyche quite thoroughly. Several in the class noted the hallucinations regularly produced by the brain under the influence of psychedelics or other stimulation, which are spectacular in their own right. My most recent hallucinatory experience was during my NDE three years ago. I watched for ages as incredibly detailed, colorful images were produced each instant. There must have been thousands of elements in them, and all more or less coherent, transforming rapidly. Truly stunning. But as the early researchers in LSD realized, you have to go beyond that level to achieve a breakthrough like the one Narayana Guru describes in this verse.

The second excerpt below is the more germane one, but the first is interesting too. Speaking of the LSD research at Myron Stolaroff's International Foundation for Advanced Study, Stevens writes:

The Foundation was not reticent about the data it was seeing. Seventy-eight percent of its patients claimed an increased ability to love; 69 percent felt they could handle hostility better, with an equal percentage believing that their ability to communicate with and understand others had improved; 71 percent claimed an increase in self-esteem, and 83 percent returned from the Other World with the conviction that they had brushed against "a higher power, or ultimate reality."

Robert Mogar, the Foundation's expert in such diagnostic tools as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, had never seen anything that could produce the kind of dramatic changes that LSD routinely produced. (178)

The Foundation's theoretical Manifesto—*The Psychedelic Experience: A New Concept in Psychotherapy*—was submitted for

publication in late 1961. In it, the psychedelic experience was broken into three broad stages: (1) evasive maneuvers, (2) symbolic perception, and (3) immediate perception.

The evasive stage, according to the authors, was what earlier therapists had confused with schizophrenia, leading to LSD's misclassification as a psychotomimetic. What happened was this: the drug, by its very nature, released such a flood of new thoughts and perceptions that the patient's normal conceptual framework was overwhelmed, producing a panic condition with overtones of paranoia. But with skillful manipulation of set and setting, the therapist could guide the patient smoothly through the evasive stage to the point where the overly famous hallucinations began. These shifting geometrical patterns were a last gasp of the ego which, "having lost the battle to divert attention through unpleasantness, seeks to charm and distract the conscious mind by throwing up a smokescreen of hallucinations to hide the inner knowledge which it fears."

Actually, the hallucinatory level was a preparation for the realm of symbolic perception, which was where the psycholyticists spent most of their time, deciphering the curious symbolic patois: "The subject constantly works off repressed material and unreality structures, false concepts, ideas, and attitudes, which have been accumulated through his life experiences. Thus a form of psychological cleansing seems to accompany the subjective imagery. This results in considerable ventilation and release almost independent of intellectual clarification. Gradually the subject comes to see and accept himself, not as an individual with 'good' and 'bad' characteristics, but as one who simply is."

But there was also a higher level still. Past the symbolic stage was a land of no boundaries:

The central perception, apparently of all who penetrate deeply in their explorations, is that behind the apparent multiplicity of things in the world of science and common sense there is a

single reality, in speaking of which it seems appropriate to use such words as *infinite* and *eternal*.

As Abram Hoffer had told the last Macy Conference, if you could lead a patient to this point, then nine times out of ten a cure would miraculously occur. Why this happened was not easily explained in psychological terms (as Leary had realized when he decided to opt for the rhetoric of applied mysticism). But it seemed to be something like this: overwhelmed by the realization that one was an “imperishable self rather than a destructible ego,” the patient underwent a kind of psychic expansion, in which “the many conflicts which are rooted in lack of self acceptance are cut off at the source, and the associated neurotic behavior patterns begin to die away.” As the self expanded, it burst the webbing of unhappy relationships that had tethered it to the ground. (179-180)

[The included quotes are taken from the *Journal of Neuropsychiatry*, Nov-Dec, 1962]

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Jake always has to go last, I’m afraid, because his commentary is bigger, if nothing else, but it’s well worth a read if you have the time. Here he cites one of the most famous stories by Kurt Vonnegut, one of my favorite writers. The siren mentioned in it is one of a random series of distractions that the government has implanted in everyone’s heads:

In this brief verse, the Guru has located the fundamental character of the Perennial Tradition shared by all the mystics wherever they happen to appear in the various wisdom traditions. That core of commonality, that *Transcendent Unity of Religions* as the title of Frithof Schuon’s instructive work denotes, refers to that absolute transcendence at the heart of immanence, no matter what form it might take. As Schuon explores this line of thought, he

distinguishes between the exoteric and the esoteric dimensions of spirituality and in very general terms notes the distinction between the outer forms (exoteric) rituals, dogmas, and so on, of the revealed religions and their esoteric or intrinsic (metaphoric, mystic) sameness. For the exoteric majority, writes Huston Smith in his introduction to Schuon's work, "god is primarily loved; for the esoteric he is primarily known; though in the end the exoteric comes to know what he loves and the esoteric to love what he knows" (p. xxvii).

As Nitya comments on the Guru's verse, he takes these rather large philosophical/metaphysical concepts and positions them in terms of our direct perception and experience, our common sense. He begins with what we know to be true. We experience the world in an elliptical fashion. In our wakeful state, we see the world is filled with objects of interest we focus our attention on throughout each day. The duration of any interest varies significantly but fades sooner or later and we move on to another. As Nitya points out, we experience our interests in two general domains: interior and exterior. On the one hand are our five senses and on the other is our mind with which we relate to our interior world, spinning all kinds of fantasies, fears, and illusions. Both domains are transient, always supplying us with impressions of all kinds of phenomena constantly rising and receding. All pains, like all pleasures, come and go as do all our fantasies and fears. Because we experience the wakeful world via this dual method we can easily miss the ever-present Absolute within us for which all of this activity is made obvious.

The very fact that we can recognize and verify the transient nature of all manifestation and the ghost-like quality of our mental constructions denotes, I think, some other stable *something* capable of such observation. If we were of the transient only there would be no other place to stand, so to say, and no other possibility for the mind to use in fashioning one. Like the concept of *perfection* (found nowhere in manifest reality), it seems to me that the concept of the core Absolute within—whatever one may choose to

call it—is an inescapable fact however buried it may be by the mind/body death fear and the extraordinary propagandizing efforts of those in positions of power in our contemporary culture to use that fear as a tool for social control. Boiled back to its essence, today’s media beat that drum of fear in melodies seductively sweet to hard-core crude.

Remaining as that knowledge that knows, says Nitya, is the path of the wise. By so doing, those who have seen through the grand illusion and all the worlds both inside and out have no separations between subject and object or knower, known, and knowledge. As a corollary, the modalities of nature no longer control that person’s awareness and he or she is “all in all,” as John Milton among many others have phrased it. Nitya goes on to note that for the enlightened time transforms into the eternal *now* and “ten thousand years is just a passing moment” (p. 243).

Such transcendence is possible for all, concludes Nitya, but also extremely rare. Citing Buddha, Christ, Mohammad, Arjuna’s vision of Krishna, Sri Ramakrishna, and Narayana Guru, Nitya offers a catalogue of individuals who have demonstrated that perennial sameness. Each overcame the stranglehold of the inside/outside world and came to be centered in that transcendent core. Achieving such a state “for just a little while” is our first step in struggling to know that which is within us always” (243). Such a self-directed project, however, has not always been appreciated socially and may never be:

The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren’t only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality as due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General. . . .

Hazel had a perfectly average intelligence, which meant she couldn't think about anything except in short bursts. And George, while his intelligence was way above normal, had a little mental handicap radio in his ear. He was required by law to wear it at all times. It was tuned to a government transmitter. Every twenty seconds or so, the transmitter would send out some sharp noise to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage of their brains. . . .

"If I tried to get away with it "[jettison a handicap], said George, then other people'd get away with it—and pretty soon we'd be right back in the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else. You wouldn't like that would you?"

"I'd hate it," said Hazel.

"There you are," said George. "The minute people start cheating on laws, what do you think happens to society?"

If Hazel hadn't been able to come up with an answer to this question, George couldn't have supplied one. A siren was going off in his head.

"Reckon it'd all fall apart," said Hazel.

"What would?" said George blankly.

"Society," said Hazel uncertainly. "Wasn't that what you just said?"

"Who knows?" said George.

(Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron" In *Welcome to the Monkey House*, pp. 7-14)

Part IV

Okay, here are my thoughts on the *modulation of discrimination*, along with Nitya and Nataraja Guru's, extracted from their commentaries. We didn't hear from anyone else, I'm afraid.

First off, we can note that in the verse the real explosion is the modulation, and that's what is compared to ten thousand suns.

The suns are the analogy, or say the aftereffect, and the modulation, wisdom's function, is the primary feature. We modulate with discrimination—like pulling up the shades—and the light goes on. It seems that both gurus are talking about this concept, but without specifically noting it. I'll clip in the relevant passages below. It looks like this is the “how to” of Narayana Guru's masterwork, so it's worth pursuing.

Modulation has two relevant meanings for us. It can either mean adjusting to a certain goal, fine-tuning; or else toning down, reducing the intensity of the ups and downs. In the first sense, it means we bring discrimination to bear accurately on the value of subject/object duality. We find the median point between them, because we're discriminating between duality and unity, and this orients us to the unity that is the blazing source of all duality, located, so to speak, at the balance point of the polarities.

In the second sense, we are to modulate or minimize our differentiation between what we like and don't like. That kind of discrimination exaggerates duality, polarizes our psyche, and veils the inner light. We have to mitigate that type of discrimination in order to release the suns, not by suppression, but by intelligent reduction.

It's quite possible that both shades of meaning are intended by Narayana Guru, but we would have to have an analysis of the original language to be sure.

I believe Nitya hints at the meaning of *modulation of discrimination* in places like this, where consciousness is the uniting factor:

The senses relate to the external world. We also have an interior world we relate to with our mind, where we make ghosts of the objects of perception and experience nightmares of our own creation. Our fantasies help us to create a fool's paradise and revel in it, and our own fears assume definite shapes, which then haunt us and make us paranoid. This inner world is as transient as the outer one.

Our life alternates between the external world of momentary pleasures and pains and the internal world of fantasy and nightmare. In order to experience the external and fantasize the internal, you need consciousness. It is the same consciousness—the same knowledge—that is lending its light, ideation, meaning and value to be projected on the screen of the external and internal worlds. This is the same knowledge that is referred to in the first verse as the Knowledge that enters all other knowledge and that transcends all forms of fleeting awareness....

This knowledge of all knowledge and light of all lights is described here as *vivekavr̥tti*. Sankara's *Vivekachudamani* opens with the insistence that one should have the power to discriminate between truth and untruth, the Self and the non-Self, and the fleeting and the eternal. As we are torn between the world outside and the world inside we always miss this centerpiece, which is the only reality.

Nataraja Guru's translation is *wisdom's functioning*, which he describes in this way:

There is moreover to be noted the word *vr̥tti* (functioning), which qualifies the kind of wisdom which the Guru has in mind here. There is static wisdom as also dynamic wisdom. The latter is the resultant of the meeting of the positive and the negative aspects. When the positive and the negative aspects of wisdom meet, it is the central radiance of the neutrality that we refer to as wisdom....

Science and nescience are two aspects of the dynamism of wisdom; one that may be considered positive in character, and the other that is negative. Between these aspects there is an interaction that, when dynamic, tends to dispel the surrounding darkness; and when static, brings more darkness round it, resulting in the emergence of the phenomenal universe. The phenomenal universe belongs to the world of transience, while the dynamic reveals the light of the Absolute which is eternal and changeless. The technical name in Vedanta for this alternating process, in which the plus and minus sides alternate to make for a phenomenal world of

doubtful status in reality, and which is filled with the plurality of multifarious entities in an ever-changing flux of becoming, is Maya, and results from the dual aspects coming together without the fullest measure of dynamism. Degrees of doubt and error giving rise to relativistic phases of appearances result from the same Maya-principle understood in this manner. Maya is the negative or static basis of all possible philosophical errors, whether physical or metaphysical. When the full dynamism of absolutist wisdom prevails, the brilliance of the illumination suffices to efface all the relativistic vestiges in consciousness, leaving the pure consciousness to prevail over all appearances which are false. The vision of the Absolute is here compared to the primal Sun which forever reigns, dispelling the relativistic darkness.

Lastly, I synchronously touched on the modulation of discrimination in my latest Yoga Shashtra response to Nancy's online exercises. I had been writing about the spiritual nature of my two Dalmatians:

This morning the dogs and I sat together and meditated deeply, each in our own way, and it was wonderful. I had picked out exactly what Nancy highlighted in her suggested exercise: *A person who is internalized—first with asana and then with pranayama—is cut off from all external interests. That naturally develops into the abandoning of catering to inner urges. Thus the demand on the body/mind to rush energy to any part of the body is negligible. That means the inner movement of energy comes to a standstill.* I tend to think in terms of curtailing external orientation so that the inner impulses can emerge, but Patanjali is firm that our inner orientation is also to be curbed. I wasn't quite sure what to make of it. I thought maybe we were in doctrinal disagreement.

Sitting in my canine-assisted meditation, I realized that there are two distinct levels of inner stimulation. There is what Nitya calls imperience: thoughts and imaginations not based on sensory experience, at least directly. Then there is what we can

only presume to be a level of true inspiration from the depths, what we refer to as the Absolute or Isvara (here), and this is something that only manifests if both imperience and experience are temporarily quelled. My imperience tends to consist of musical memories or philosophical or psychological insights, and in meditation I often attend to them, because they are coming from my unconscious processing, which I know outshines my conscious mind by a significant amount. But today I stopped all of them, and allowed myself to sink into utter stillness. Quitting all inner impulses led to a deeper state in which there was no need for thoughts or actions of any kind. As Nitya says, “Dharana strongly manifests as pure ananda when all specific modulations are automatically negated.” We had a strong manifestation of dharana all right, and my two companions are still lying swathed in ananda as I write this....

Part V

Sujit has just responded to my request for elucidation of wisdom's function or the modulation of discrimination:

Going back to Narayana Guru's original verse and usage of the two words 'viveka' and 'vritti'; conjoined as 'viveka-vritti', the simple way of seeing the poet's contextual usage is as follows:

Viveka - Yes, 'viveka' or 'vivekam' is truly the power of discrimination. The word 'discrimination' though should be used/read in the right context to mean viveka, as the power to differentiate the Reality (Truth) from the falsehood. Or representing - the power of good judgement to differentiate right from wrong, good from evil; and yes, in extended usage it all falls in wisdom's domain.

Vritti - Means 'to function', or an action in a certain 'pattern of conduct', a frequent occurrence in a certain manner - lets say 'a process'. Note the usage of 'vritti' here is as a verb.

By combining 'viveka' and 'vritt'i, as 'viveka-vritti', the poet is apparently creating a verb (a doing-word), implying a process of setting in motion the power of discriminating (i.e. thenceforth a natural ability of differentiating without effort) the one Reality from the falsehood or Maya.

In the second part of the verse, Narayana Guru further clarifies that the 'discrimination-process', that takes off from that point of realization, is more specifically that of the destruction (or tearing apart) of the veil of Maya. Maya, which he also 'qualifies' as 'anitya' (the antonym of 'nitya') - meaning Maya is transient, temporary and impermanent; whereby also implying to the contrary that the underlying Reality is eternal, behind the veil of the transient Maya.

Yes, the 'ten thousand suns' is only a figurative expression, as an experience that is possibly otherwise inexplicable for the poet to start with. In the second part of the verse the poet interestingly comes down in count to the singular sun; the rising (or revelation) of the one primeval-sun ('aadi-sooryan'), after the destruction of the darkness, or the falsehood of Maya. The quick move and figurative contrast in the number of suns from 10,000 to 1 is noteworthy of Narayana Guru's poetic genius, and also his daringness to take our imagination from 10,000 suns and encapsulate it all into 1 sun, at the end of the verse. Obviously a high-density sun!