

10/22/13
Verse 36

The power of knowledge is endless;
the end of all this can be marked as “sameness” and “the other”;
thus, in this way, there are two divisions; in this,
merging the other with sameness, one should remain awake to that clear
state of being.

Free translation:

Innumerable are the powers of knowledge. They can be mainly
categorized as two: 'sameness' and 'the other'. One should awaken to the
clarity of vision in which all forms of 'otherness' merge and become one
with 'sameness'.

Nataraja Guru’s translation:

The powers of wisdom are many; all of them under two divisions
The ‘same’ and the ‘other’ could conclusively be brought;
Merging into that form which makes for ‘other-sameness’
To clarity of vision one should awake.

Well, I’m legitimately accused once again of being a “broken
record,” (an obsolete term for endlessly repeating the same phrase)
because I’m certain that *this* is the best section of Atmo. It’s the nuts and
bolts part, the repair manual, where Nitya elucidates Narayana Guru’s
pithy koans on just how to bring about the transformation he has so
painstakingly laid the groundwork for. If we have been paying close
attention, the next seven verses, and for that matter the rest of our lives,
should be one continuous Aha! moment.

The commentary is so rich that I’ll only be able to touch on a few
highlights in these notes. Hopefully they will act as an invitation to all of
you to revisit the verses and bring them into your heart, where they can
do a lot of good.

Narayana Guru spent years in ardent contemplation, which included boiling down the manifested world into its essence. His distillation is described here as sama and anya, sameness and otherness. If you reduce the mesmerizing complexity of life to its primary differentiation, this is what you end up with. We began the study of Atmo acknowledging the original unity, the Karu or Core of all. Floating in its amniotic fluid, so to speak, is a generative duality from which endless worlds are produced. When we get caught up in their impact, we wander far and wide, and lose our self. If we become motivated to restore our grounding in our authentic being, we can universalize the situation, and realize we were never really lost, just out of touch. To get back in touch we have some serious, though highly rewarding, work to do.

The endless arguments of various belief systems hinge on partisanship to either sama or anya: either everything is related and interdependent, or it is splintered and unconnected, and thus available for endless selfish manipulation. The wisdom of the teaching is that truth can never be one or the other; it must include both together. Instead of the neat linear definitions of simple reasoning, it requires a subtle, dialectical intuition to penetrate into the mystery, and so it is likely to remain the road less traveled.

In his commentary, Nataraja Guru equates sama and anya with the vertical and horizontal axes, respectively. And as in that analogy, while it's easy enough to analyze them separately, they don't really make sense unless both are present. Our task is to integrate them. You can't chart anything beyond the simplest concepts on a single x or y axis, but when you put them together at right angles a universe of graphic imagery becomes possible. Meaning appears.

In a world captivated by anya, the need is to reinfuse the whole with sama. Anya we've got; sama we've for-got. All we have to do is start with it as a premise, we can build on it until it becomes a living reality in our life. It's effort well spent. As Nitya concludes, "It is a very joyous way of accepting life and a wonderful way of living it richly and beautifully."

Nataraja Guru cautions us that we shouldn't rely on someone else explaining sama and anya to us, we have to take the bull by the horns:

The clarification of the implications of these broad categories is given in the later verses of this section of seven verses. It is not easy to analyse the events in consciousness and refer them to their normative axes of reference. Such analysis is the result of extreme introspective research, and the Guru has given us the result of his meditations here in a very precise and succinct manner, which it would be wrong to try to elaborate in any way. All the clarification legitimately necessary is already given by him. If the reader does not still understand the full import of what he says with such crystal-clear precision, it must be because the philosophical problems that the subject-matter presupposes have not had a chance, so far, to arise and assert themselves in his own thinking.

Be that as it may, the well-considered insights added by Nitya and Nataraja Guru are extremely helpful and germane. I've found that not much arises and asserts itself when I'm strictly on my own, but stimulated by the insights of these rishis the connections do start to bubble up and burst into significance.

The main focus of the class was on the ego. Since the 'I' seems steady and unchanging, we associate it with sama, while the not-I, the anya, strikes us as different and potentially hostile. It's very hard to accept that our I-sense is an impostor, but it is. It only seems to be the Absolute. That's why Narayana Guru is always asking us to bow to a greater reality. Our I-sense is the tip of the tail of the dog, and as long as it imagines it's in charge, the legitimate impulses from the core of the system will be effectively blocked. Allowing them to flow again and only be monitored by the ego restores the whole system to health, wiping away the regret and anxiety that energize an untethered ego.

Over a lifetime of enduring psychological insults we have effectively walled out the anya and walled in the sama. Yet if we peek over the barricades, we might very well see that not all is as terrifying as we fear. After all, the anya is wholly within the sama. We could adjust

our defenses to be more inclusive, and in the process give ourselves more breathing room. The process is catching: once we feel the relative freedom of expanded terrain, we will take delight in enlarging it even more. Soon we notice that the defenses are bulwarks against our own mental projections, with little correspondence to outer conditions. We are defending ourselves from things that don't exist, imaginary assailants. We can and should continue to avoid real dangers, but we now are assessing things on their actual value, not on the false values we were once comfortable with. That's how we learn to act more appropriately, and have more fun in life.

In both neuroscience and Vedanta the ego is the final stage of assessment of the other. In the Indian scheme, manas or mind asks, "What is this?" when presented with something new. Citta is the memory banks where a match is sought with previous experience. When an acceptable correspondence has been ascertained, the intellect, buddhi, labels the new in terms of the old. Finally, ahamkara, the ego or I sense, weighs in with a personal preference. Empirically, there is no way around such a process in a sentient being. It has an important role to play. The downside is that we aren't really meeting the world on its own terms, but on the limited and often faulty terms we have developed in the past.

Not only that, but we fool ourselves better than we fool others. We spin a persona out of whole cloth, and soon we decide what to say and do based on the demands of the fictional being we have imagined ourselves to be. We effortlessly lie to others, since it tends to be much more plausible and palatable than the truth, and buy into it without a second thought. In a study like this, where the ego is threatened with a reduction in its vainglory, it diverts us into other areas of superficial attraction. It might be years—if ever—before we think, "wasn't I doing something terrific back then—what was it? Oh, well, never mind. Doesn't matter." But it does.

The realized person manages to suppress—at first forcibly and then with increasing naturalness—the instinctive responses programmed by millions of years of survival orientation and dressed up in the emperor's new clothes, so as to be fully present. This is sama at its

highest, identical with self-realization. We all have greater or lesser piles of baggage we carry. The difference is whether we can put our burden down so it no longer prejudices our viewpoint.

The subject is so critical we will be spending the rest of the year on it: six more classes. It really is the practical essence of Narayana Guru's revolutionary gift to a suffering planet. Once again, you are invited to share your thoughts, the things that have arisen and asserted themselves in your own thinking.

Frequently in my talks with spiritually-minded people I bump up against an escapist streak of one kind or another, and in the heat of the moment I can never remember any of the places where Nitya deftly refutes that familiar mentality. I hope to settle it into my dim brain that one of the best is here, at the end of Verse 36:

Narayana Guru is not asking us to run away from the particular to the universal, but to transcend the duality and live and accept both these games together. Then we will be living in our beingness and also allowing every little aspect of becoming to come to pass. In an earlier, very beautiful verse, the Guru said that knowledge, in order to see what it could be, becomes all this. This is what we are doing all the time. We don't relish eating the same food every day. The elements may be all the same: flour, sugar, rice, vegetables, but we make a new composition and serve it in a new way each time. So a new aspect of knowledge is revealed by the specific expression as it unfolds. It is placed as part of the universal, and the universal lives on through the particular we enjoy.

Although some have interpreted it this way, we are not advocating the negation of life and the running away from it. We do not say any of the luxuries of life are stumbling blocks to realization. Nothing is to be thrown away. Rather, everything is to be seen with a new attitude. That new attitude is the old attitude that you know everything is One. It is a very joyous way of accepting life and a wonderful way of living it richly and beautifully.

Part II

Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:

When we hear the English word “knowledge” what comes to our mind is a passive idea, such as that of a reflected image in a mirror. Guru, however, is not using the word *arivu* (knowledge) in such a passive sense. It is both passive and dynamic. Words like awareness, consciousness and knowledge refer only to partial aspects of that great dynamic whole which includes within it the conscious and the unconscious, the potential and the actual, the transcendent and the immanent, the creative and the created. In the present verse knowledge is to be understood as all this. In that sense, what is there other than knowledge?

The simplest form of knowledge is the awareness of the I-consciousness. When a person says “I am,” what he really says is: “I know that I am.” In this sentence “I” comes twice. Is the first “I” different from the second “I”? And what is the difference between “I am” and “I know”? The first “I” is a postulate to be examined. The examination is performed by knowing it. Knowing is a process. The culmination of the process is restated as a verified “I.” The verification is that it exists. Its existence is emphasized here as “I am.” The awareness of the I-consciousness is a very simple pulsation of an idea, there cannot be anything more simple than that, yet in that simple act of awareness, there is a presentation, a scrutiny and a judgement.

Irrespective of all these movements or modifications of consciousness, there prevails a pure knowledge which is at once transcendent and immanent. If this is recognized, then there is only knowledge. It is possible to postulate the existence of this world without our ever knowing it, but even for that negative postulation, one has to exercise knowledge. It is knowledge that reveals to us that we have no knowledge of certain things and we have knowledge of certain other things. Knowledge hides itself and experiences forgetfulness or ignorance. Like a magician,

knowledge restores what is forgotten and reveals what seems not to have been known before.

Knowledge projects a whole world of name, form, and intense activity. With the same ease it pulls that world aside as a chimerical dream. From the day of our birth, knowledge has flowed in from all sides, like rivers flowing into an ocean. Just like the ocean that never overflows, knowledge remains unfilled and there is plenty of room to receive more and more knowledge. It is never satiated, nor is it ever tired of producing variegations. When, as ignorant persons, we listen to others, we only understand if we are told words that correspond to concepts that already exist within ourselves. No new knowledge ever comes from outside, but by making permutations and combinations of our innate knowledge, we are led to believe that we know new things every day. Knowledge is a magician showing a grand magic to itself. It is both baffled and gratified.

Without knowledge, we cannot desire anything. We need knowledge to know the means to fulfill our desires. The right knowledge to fulfill is experienced as the dynamics of action. This action and knowledge are not two things. The propensity of motivation, the power of comprehension, and the dynamics of action are all to be understood as a power of infinite magnitude. In its collective and universal nature it is called *sama*, the same. We live that knowledge at the transactional and empirical levels. Empirical experience comes through the senses. We see different objects with our eyes, we hear different things with our ears; in the empirical world one knowledge is differentiated from another. There the knower becomes the subject and the known becomes the object of knowledge, thus knowledge becomes compartmentalized. This aspect of knowledge is called *anya*, the other.

A contemplative should learn to transcend both the *sama* and the *anya*. When we see a garland we notice the harmonious structuring of the flowers that make it a whole. We can appreciate the colour, fragrance and the beauty of each individual flower, and we can also see the garland as a whole. It should be the same in life

too; we can be in the thick of it, enjoying and experiencing every detail of it, and all the same, we can also experience the most serene unchanging inner beatitude of the supreme knowledge which is providing for all variegated experiences.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary is once again exceptional:

BEGINNING with this verse and ending with verse 42 (inclusive) we have a very valuable analysis of the structure of consciousness, with two main axes of reference which are classified under the taxonomic nomenclature of two symbolic expressions, which are the words 'same' and 'other'.

The clarification of the implications of these broad categories is given in the later verses of this section of seven verses. It is not easy to analyse the events in consciousness and refer them to their normative axes of reference. Such analysis is the result of extreme introspective research, and the Guru has given us the result of his meditations here in a very precise and succinct manner, which it would be wrong to try to elaborate in any way. All the clarification legitimately necessary is already given by him. If the reader does not still understand the full import of what he says with such crystal-clear precision, it must be because the philosophical problems that the subject-matter presupposes have not had a chance, so far, to arise and assert themselves in his own thinking. Dictionary meanings might be given, but the import might still remain elusive. The reader has been warned in the very first verse of the work that the subject-matter of the composition has to do with higher wisdom and not with everyday knowledge of practical utility.

The present commentator has developed in his writings a frame of reference consistently applicable to many branches of

contemplative wisdom, theological, cosmological or psychological. The taxonomic categories of the 'same' and the 'other' refer to the vertical and the horizontal axes of the frame of reference that has been developed. Even in the Guru's writings this frame of reference is implied in more than one place. In his Daiva Dasakam (ten verses devoted to the topic of God) we find that the Guru equates the depth-aspect of the ocean with the Absolute, God or Reality. The surface-aspect of the ocean in the fourth verse of that composition is meant to be analogous to the collective and overt aspect of the consciousness of humanity, conceived as a unit, while the depth of the ocean is there compared to the Absolute or God. Translated the verse reads:

Like the sea and the wave, the wind and the depth,
Let us within us see
Ourselves, Maya, Thy Power and Thee Thyself
respectively.

Here there is a tacit plan of reference in which the dimension called depth represents what is of value contemplatively. The individual selves of each member of humanity, thought of collectively, tend to be quantitative, and thus with the rival claims of each member, there is divergence instead of unity. Inwardly understood, however, the same Self could be conceived unitively and contemplatively as participating qualitatively in the unity of the Absolute Self, which is that of God. This same way of analysing consciousness has been consistently kept up in all the writings of the Guru and constitutes his contribution to Advaitic or non-dual thought, which is of no small importance. The importance of these aspects of the Absolute Reality has been insisted on in the Bhagavad Gita, which devotes the whole of its thirteenth chapter for the purpose, as significantly stated in verse 2:

Know Me also as the Knower of the field in all fields, O Bharata!
Knowledge in respect of the field and the Knower of the field

According to Me, constitutes (veritable) wisdom (itself).

The conflict implied between these two is a subtle one, which has to be clarified in various contexts, as the problems present themselves. The intersection at right-angles between these two aspects of the Self, understood in the absolutist context of total consciousness, will be justified as and when occasions arise, in the rest of the work. Confirmation will be found in other works, not only of the Guru, but in wisdom-literature generally, for which the keen student of Self-knowledge has to keep vigilant watch before the whole living picture gets filled in with the clear content of the Absolute given to a clarified vision.

In the present verse, after indicating the two categories of the movement or the functioning of higher reasoning or wisdom, the Guru indicates summarily that the goal of the contemplative is not to give primacy to the one or the other of these rival aspects, but to transcend them both through the neutral point of intersection of the two axes of reference, which he names as ‘anya-samya’ (the other-sameness) aspect.

By giving primacy to one limb or the other, whether the vertical or the horizontal, the negative or the positive aspects of consciousness, one tends to lose clarity, however much the accentuation of one aspect of knowledge might be necessary or laudable in a particular instance. The normal and normative picture of the Self has first to be conceived in its neutrality and harmonious symmetry before other value-accent could be added to the basic picture.

Part III

We've got mail! John wrote:

When I took some film courses at Portland Community Media, I experimented by taking some of my favorite movies and de-synchronizing them. I was seeing what would happen for its own sake. The lesson I learned was nothing less than one of those famous "ah-ha" moments - not a religious experience, mind you, but one of those experiences where I gained tremendous self insight. I learned that my perceptions and mind will actually go out of their own way to try to interpret reality and that there was something within the "whatever is me department" that could actually discriminate the modulation of tones and light coming in at me. I had sort of known that this was true - but then and there, I got it. That my inner me wasn't just a collection of perceptions because these could, if left to their own accord, try to manipulate an interpretation of what is. That there is a deeper level.

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Beverley sent some images I'll have to attach, and this:

I relished this verse. I just love following the kind of detailed analysis Guru Nitya gives us here. Indeed - all along I have been wrestling with semantics. So many of the words we are learning have a wonderful wealth of meaning and resonance that we do not have in English. I think 'arivu' is the richest and most complex yet. I ended up equating it to **wisdom** which I understand to be based on empirical experience, theoretical knowledge and intuitive ideas. I think I will go through the text now before I read it again and cross out the word 'knowledge' and substitute 'arivu' because I need my mind to stop making its customary assumptions about the meaning of the word 'knowledge' as I read.

The graphic I did for this verse is an extension of my meditating on the meaning of 'arivu'. It represents two very different perceptions of an object. I wonder to myself, 'The original object invited all sorts of associations, emotions and thoughts when I bought it. Then

I worked on the image and so experienced its intuitive significance for me in a deeper and richer way. So **my** 'arivu' of the graphic which I have called Ways of Perceiving, now encompasses most of the things Guru Nitya writes about in this verse. At least it does for now!

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Susan missed class again, but she did her homework:

I enjoyed the notes. Thank you. I agree with you about this verse. I read it yesterday and was very blown away. I really liked this:

"When sama and anya, sameness and the other, interrelate in this harmonious way, it brings the quality of the highest kind of inner peace and calm to our life. When life is so protected with an integrated wisdom, there is no dissipation of your energy. It is all conserved. It is hard to even comprehend this state unless you are already established in it. But I assure you it can be attained. You can do this. You can be what you are, going on with all your games of life, and yet be detached from it. Deep within you is that aloneness which is not of the individual. It is the aloneness of the universal, the aloneness of God, the aloneness of substance, the aloneness of the real. Nothing happens to it. By retaining that aloneness, you can be the many."

I love the way he uses aloneness here. I remember you talking about the "all oneness." which of course makes sense but I like to think of it as aloneness in the sense of that deep inner light which I suppose it to mean. I don't think I really get this yet -- not enough to describe how the aloneness leads to the many but I am drawn to it and I have faith in it.

The place I feel I need to work is in my judgments of myself and others. I am hard on myself, which can lead to burdensome and

needless guilt and I can be hard on others in a way that goes beyond the kind of discernment that is healthy and helpful. When I am in judgment mode, I am definitely in untethered *anya*. I have lost touch with the inner light. I see faults and problems and I am trying to fix them, either in my mind by dwelling on some remedy or when I am talking to another person and sometimes making suggestions and working out solutions when these are not wanted. Why do I make nasty internal judgments about the drivers who don't use their turn signals or the people who walk across the street while typing text messages or my family members when they put recyclables in the garbage? This kind of thinking is very separating. I'm not sure why I do it and I'm not sure how to stop but I'm having faith that this journey through *Atmo* and my inward attention through meditation and writing will lead me (back) toward an integration of *sama* and *anya*.

I wrote back:

Like all of us, you judge because you were judged, and you internalized it. Long, long ago. We actually talked about that quite a bit in class, the way kids form cliques to sneer at other cliques, the worship of the best sneerer or the best swaggerer. One way or another we fell for it, without realizing how toxic it was.

I'm sure the journey through *Atmo* will help. Implied in *Nitya's* words is the quest to understand. Don't just criticize people for their faults, but see how we all become detached from a meaningful relation to our world, and how it plays out in all these ways. It can be quite fascinating, as well as frustrating. Then turn it around, gently, and see how we do it too. We compensate by being extra careful and judgmental, but that doesn't fix it. Something else is required. What can it be?

I asked if I could pass her note along, and Susan added:

Yes, I meant to mention that of course I do all the things that I criticize others for. I intended that to be for public use if you saw fit. Otherwise, my examples would have been much nastier. :)

I see what you mean about how it all gets internalized. These days it seems even worse with the current put-down culture. So much humor is based on put downs and judgments disguised as wisdom and discernment. I see this in novels, movies, etc. Of course there has always been humor based on put downs -- Archie Bunker and his ilk. But this kind of humor seems to have replaced genuine emotion and thoughtfulness. Perhaps I'm just getting on a soapbox. I think I was pretty shocked by the many videos for kids when Sarah and Peter were little that used so much nastiness.

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Jake's commentary:

In our contemporary culture, in the realm of public discourse at any rate, we are generally offered two broad points of view, both grounded in a duality propagandists of neither party specifically articulate as they fervently engage in public policy disputes. On the one hand are those who locate what needs to be fixed squarely in material objects, a redistribution of which would lead to a perfect society. On the other hand are those convinced that those same manifestations represent barriers to divine realization and that such a state can be attained only once the world of necessity is denied and overcome. In both arguments, the world of immanence is a distortion to be "corrected" either immediately or in a world somewhere beyond the one we experience as embodied entities. (Oddly enough, in the latter case, the recognition of that altered state is still dependent on the mind/sense dualities for definition. Ignored is half of the duality required in order for anything to qualify as anything: heaven is an earth of virtue unencumbered

with vice in a construction where no such thing can exist on its own.)

Anchored in manifestation, our current American culture wars illustrate a profound ignorance of knowledge and the limits of language. As metaphors, words and the concepts they assemble can never become the thing in itself (as noted by any number of philosophers). The hope that they can, however, casts such a magical spell that the illusion itself has become irresistible in spite of its always failing to deliver results.

It is in this basic subject of knowledge itself that the Guru and Nitya discuss in verse 36. Knowledge, writes Nitya, begins with our recognition of ourselves. In “I know I am,” “I know” requires our identification with the awareness: The act of awareness is in knowing the state of awareness,” a condition that leads us to an infinite regress of “our awareness of an awareness. . . . ad infinitum” (p. 278). The complete statement, “I know I am,” combines the former state of knowing with a state of being, an existence of some kind. But no matter how we define that existence, a consciousness of being remains the same. That transcendent ground, writes Nitya, is the base on which we construct our existence.

Nitya goes on to note the objectivizing character of what we manifest. In order to identify an it, we must isolate it from its surroundings by way of the senses and in so doing analyze the thing or person or whatever so that its characteristics are peculiar to it. This objectifying is necessary in order for us to get by in the world, and, as Nitya concludes, we’ve made a gigantic industry out of doing so. *I*, as the subject (knower) dissect and analyze the world of objects (field of knowledge) in order to determine their relative empirical value, and there is no limit to the scope of the field.

This general condition boils down to a situation of “knowledge knowing knowledge,” a recognition of that which is manifest by that which is transcendent. That the two are the same is at the core of this dynamic dialectic, one that suggests an answer

to the question of what determines our motivation to act as we do. With each of us re-discovering the cosmos, each of us carves out our own route by transforming our knowledge which, says Nitya, is also of a oneness, analogous to the whole of the physicist's universe. Energy may change form but its supply is everywhere constant. In manifestation we can tend to miss that dimension and get all balled up in the particulars. And it is with this danger that Nitya concludes his commentary. Only in learning to live in the world of particulars as it arises before us while maintaining our stabilizing core on the unchanging oneness of the Absolute can we arrive at our true nature. As the world of activity and strife continues on around us, as we engage in dialogue with other's particulars, we need to harmonize that outward reality with the aloneness of the One Absolute out of which the activity arises. Holding fast to this "integrated vision" can help us put a new ending on a very old dilemma: "We do not say any of the luxuries of life are stumbling blocks to realization. . . . Rather, everything is to be seen with a new attitude" (p. 254).