

11/19/13
Verse 40

In sameness and in the other each one's
qualifying force always comes and becomes established;
by the fluctuating function of these two,
which comprises all, everything becomes the object of awareness.

Free translation:

Their specific powers alternate between synthesis and analysis. Even though the contexts of operation are innumerable, the dual functions of the assumption of the agency of the subject and the knowledge of the object belong entirely to these two entities.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

On to the 'same' as on to the 'other' there constantly alight
Their respective specific powers; though not proportionate
By spin-emergence as between these two in all,
All predications whatsoever come to be.

Verse 40 sums up the revolutionary section on sama and anya. In the original class, Nitya slipped into a deep meditation and took us on a guided tour of the cosmos. It's particularly wonderful to read the commentary in a similar way, taking a moment to vibrate aum in each chakra, and to visualize the imagery throughout. Nitya had the mojo to really vivify those places—they seemed intensely real in his presence, not like images at all. Probably a book can only provide a faint echo of that intensity, but last night the echo was amplified by the group meditation setting, which definitely adds to the effect.

Paul started the conversation off being curious about the two fulcrums Nitya mentions, referring to sama and anya:

Narayana Guru says even though the possibilities of these two ways of thinking are endless—one centralizing in your ‘I’ and making everything specific and particular, and the other expanding you, identifying you with the cosmic whole, generalizing and liberating everything--it all can be gathered under two categories, the unifying and the specifying. Consciousness is an eternal fluctuation between these two fulcrums. It zips about, now rotating around the hub of specificity, now changing to rotate around the hub of generality. In this way it enables you to know everything.

Ordinarily we think of a single fulcrum beneath a lever, with yoga being the effort to place it precisely at the balance point. Then the poles oscillate rhythmically, one rising into our attention while the other recedes, like a seesaw. Having two fulcrums would be seriously disruptive, requiring a lot of extra force to make the system function properly.

I think what Nitya intended was that each pole of the seesaw was not a monolithic state, but a system that has its own fulcrum. It’s like having a small seesaw on each end of the greater seesaw. The *anya* end has the horizontal parameter of subject and object, with its own fulcrum where we try to bring concepts and percepts into harmony. The *sama* end has the vertical parameter, so to speak, that oscillates between ends and means, goals and tactics for their attainment—something like that. In analysis we could add seesaws onto the poles of seesaws for several iterations, but the point here is that there are two main polarities, which are connected and oscillate or pulsate, known as sameness and otherness.

Bill thought the word fulcrum was simply wrong, that the poles in question are fields of energy, not static entities. Nancy agreed, recalling the figure eight movement of consciousness, which is anything but linear. Looking closely at the above paragraph with 20/20 hindsight, it seems that Nitya realized the word *fulcrum* was misleading, and switched to *hub*, which expands the concept of alternation from two to three dimensions at the very least. It allows for all kinds of movement

and interaction, whereas a fulcrum is linear and mechanical. Plus, hubs don't interfere with each other, as fulcrums might.

The image that Narayana Guru most wanted to impart is one of pulsation. The sphere of consciousness begins at the core or Karu, and expands in all directions toward the periphery, in which anya is everywhere. A healthy psyche, according to the Guru, comes back frequently to touch the Karu, infusing its benign influence out to the periphery. In a way, this is the essence of the study of the Hundred Verses. We tend to become mesmerized by the glitter of the periphery and imagine that going farther afield will increase our happiness and well being, and before long we forget the Karu entirely. We become dissociated from our own center and toss about seeking the missing unity in peripheral matters. The idea here is to remember the core, like touching home base in a game of tag. We go out and run around and try not to be touched, and there is the thrill of nearly being caught and imprisoned, but then we scurry back to base where we are safe. Once we catch our breath we can make another sortie. We don't stay on home base any more than we run around all the time, because that would spoil the fun of the game. As soon as we calm down, we plunge back in. As Nitya puts it, "You should not get stuck in one single idea, nor get lost in generalities. In a healthy life there is a constant fluctuation between these two possibilities. Out of this fluctuating perspective arises our idea of the world."

Paul offered a nice dialectical perspective, that spirit was the thesis and nature the antithesis. Their synthesis is us.

We tend to struggle with the dissociation we make between sama and anya, which could also be thought of as spirit and nature. It seems as if unitive awareness has no place in the harsh realities of everyday life. Nitya begins his commentary with a perfect demonstration of how the poles can fit together without contradiction. It's a stroke of genius. It makes you think, "Oh yeah. It's so simple." He was someone whose every moment in a very rich and busy life was charged with the dynamism of unitive awareness. That's what we are learning from our exploration together, as well. The more we dip into the oneness, the more it is available when we are involved with the affairs of our life. It's

not that we are always grounded: most of us regularly get caught up in reactions and forget. All the time, in fact. But when we do catch ourselves in the act, we can bring ourselves back to the center, and then our actions will be more meaningful and valuable. We can see evidence of this happening to class members, and it's very heartening. Practicing this really does have a positive impact on our lives.

Susan talked about how she used to obsess about what could go wrong in the future. It was like she was standing on the periphery and peering out into the gloom, worried and doubtful. But she has been back to dip in the pool at the center of her being enough to dispel a goodly measure of her fears. She has a renewed confidence in herself, and that allows her to be more available in the present to her family and friends. This is exactly the kind of stabilization of the psyche that makes for a satisfying life. We aren't talking about traveling to Saturn or performing miracles like rising up into the air. It's about getting well, being sane. There are no external marks to speak of, except perhaps the absence of panic. Once you are healed, you can try for astral travel if it still appeals to you. But most of that turns out to be veiled fantasies about getting off the hot seat. Once you reconnect with your own true nature, every moment becomes so beautiful and rewarding that you no longer desire to escape from it. You are no longer trying to arrange the future just so, in hopes that it will make you feel better. You are busy trying to see what's right around you more clearly, because everything you need is already present in it.

Jake laughingly told us how he wakes up in the morning and his mind immediately kicks into gear, roaring off in several directions at once. He used to follow wherever it led. Now he reins in those impulses and gathers himself together first. That allows him to sort out the valuable impulses from the unnecessary ones. He didn't say it, but being able to laugh at our follies is a big asset. Our socialized self wants to punish us for our transgressions, but that only makes the schism in our psyche wider. We know that nearly every human on earth is led astray all the time. We all get caught up in the attractions of the moment. It's totally normal. We should be kind to ourselves, and gently let go of the hook, whatever it might be. We didn't mean to be mean, it just

happened. Getting upset about it just prolongs the misery. Deb mentioned that this is what Chogyam Trungpa meant by befriending yourself first. Don't feel you will be condemned to hell for your mistakes, just stop making them when you notice they are happening. Laugh about them. Put an arm around yourself, and vow not to forget, at least until the next time, when you surely will.

Paul summed it up quite nicely: "the subtlety of taming the mind is impossible in the absence of love." Anya isn't cured by amassing just the right assortment of stuff, but by injecting all of it with sama. Or in the Gita's words, our residual cravings for our favorite fragments disappear when the One Beyond (or Within) is sighted. We crave oneness but seek it in otherness. No wonder we get disconcerted! Instead, we should carry oneness with us wherever we go. It's like bringing a torch into the dark cave we happen to be exploring.

We are very fortunate people indeed to have the luxury to step back from the chaos of anya and take stock. Self-examination is a rare enough endeavor, partly because it takes a while for the benefits to become evident. Rather than instant gratification, it provides lasting gratification.

The class mulled over the perennially tantalizing idea of the witness. Ordinarily, we hold on to a persistent notion that the witness has to be created, but it is always present. It just gets obscured when we fixate on peripheral matters. It may not be apparent how powerfully the One Hundred Verses is redirecting our attention to states where the witness is not obscured, but it is.

We want to be a little careful, though, because the witness that is witnessed is not the witness. It has been converted into an object of awareness. Then it becomes the possession of the ego. From this, all manner of unhealthy extrapolations are possible. We are already witnessing; we don't have to define it. Leave it alone.

Mick thought "conscious awareness" was a better term than witness. We don't doubt that we are aware, but we have no idea what the witness might be. Becoming the witness sounds like some exotic spiritual attainment. It's just that awareness witnesses best when it is in balance; when it's off kilter its ability to witness is reduced. Nitya concludes with an invitation to practice neutrality, by embracing the full

pulsation of consciousness, including the unitive core and the multitudinous periphery, saying, “You become aware of consciousness as such getting involved in these two-fold functions. One who can cultivate the neutral attitude where he or she becomes a witness to the two-fold fluctuation of consciousness becomes a real contemplative.”

We closed with a meditation on the superlative conclusion of Nitya’s Verse 20 commentary, about making every moment rich. Bringing sama into our everyday activities is the way to attain the permanent ecstasy of being really alive in the present. We pave the way for the possibility by dedicating a bit of our precious time to dipping into the Karu together. It has been very good. Aum.

Part II

Michael is a big fan of the short version, and wrote, “On second reading before slumber the commentary in this version is quite profound. Nitya's far more concise in weaving his dialectical dance. He uses the Sanskrit terms *anya* (specific/ego-centered) and *sama* (general/altruistic) to illustrate that at the center point of this bipolar relationship is the springboard for its transcendence. The *anya/sama* oscillation continues to function, it just doesn't get in the way of the Witness.”

Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:

“I shall give the meaning of this verse.” “Let us learn the all-embracing wisdom of the great seers.” In these two sentences, there are two different kinds of emphasis. In the first instance, the subject “I” makes a specific reference to the person concerned, and thus differentiates himself from all others. The object of that sentence refers to a particular verse, also differentiating it from other items of knowledge. Thus the main note of this sentence is *anya*. In the second statement, “I” changes into the all-inclusive “us.” The object matter is also an inclusive one. Thus, the dominant note in this sentence is *sama*. In our daily transactions we adopt both these stands. *Anya* is personal, specific and

ego-centred. Sama is impersonal, general and altruistic. If anya is analytic, sama is synthetic. When we understand a person with reference to his physical body, he is different from others in form, colour, the tenor of his voice, his individual tastes and temperament, his moods and behavioural patterns. These are only a few distinctive marks, but we can go on enumerating many more distinctions. When a thing is analyzed into its simpler elements, the thing changes and begins to vanish. When an atom is finally blasted, it becomes a destructive force. Thus, the power of specificity is unaccountably large and varied.

When all the limbs are put together we have a body. When all the structural and functional aspects of the body become pronounced as a personality we have an individual. When individuals associate themselves as a corporate whole we have a society. When all societies are brought under one universal group we have a species, and when all species are brought into the homogenous whole we have a genus. Absolute knowledge includes everything. Our personal knowledge is always moving between the most specific and the most generic. If a person is absorbed in his non-differentiated knowledge of the Absolute, there is no known or knower to know anything. There the operational aspect of knowledge has no significance. Conversely, when an individual becomes obsessed with one single item of knowledge, that stupefies him to the point of madness and thus brings about a malfunction of the agency of the knower in him.

Fortunately knowledge does not remain static either in its specific modes or in its universal mode. It is natural for man to shrink into himself and act as a psychological entity. With the same ease, he can also expand his consciousness and become an integral part of the cosmos. Thus, life is a pulsation of consciousness with the alternating emphases of anya and sama. Narayana Guru describes these two functions as the operational instrumentality of the specific and the universal. A contemplative can detach his witnessing awareness and transcend both these aspects.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

INTUITIVE imagination is called for in visualizing the subtle psycho-physical dynamics implied here. The two axes of reference for the tendencies that operate within consciousness, in its psycho-physical content at any given time, have a mode of operation on which the Guru here tries to throw more clear light.

The accentuation of one set of tendencies over the other takes place as man gets interested in one kind or category of subject or another. Sensuous pleasures may dominate the factors where wisdom counts, and thus the processes go on alternating between the two trends with their four possible modalities. The specific of each interest or value gets adjoined, merged or appended to the basic or generic aspect of the same.

As two branches of the same tree could grow, one at the expense of the other, there is a subtle or organic reciprocity to be understood, not only as between the two basic tendencies, but also as between the specific characteristics of each of the two taken separately. There is both interdependence and independence as between the two main sets of tendencies, each with its own generic and specific, positive or negative poles which could be accentuated at the expense of its rival set.

There is thus a phenomenological circulation of thought or feeling that goes on always and constitutes the content of self-consciousness. Interests and their corresponding objects fuse loosely or closely, intensely or feebly at different moments in what we call our life. Action gets accentuated at a given moment as against pure thought, which might prevail at another. Existential aspects may overpower essential or ideological ones. A complete cosmology and psychology have to be fitted into the scheme in which the dynamism functions in actual experience. The details

have to be fitted into the skeleton scheme outlined here, by the person who cultivates contemplative Self-consciousness.

Gaining the totality of experience is what constitutes spiritual progress, and not the asymmetrical development of one set of tendencies over the others. The rule of harmony and the golden mean hold good here, as in morality and art. Wisdom is thus part of ethics and aesthetics and could be cultivated side-by-side with love of beauty or of virtue.

We have translated *bhrama-kala* as ‘spin-emergence’ as the nearest to what the two Sanskrit words suggest. Modern quantum mechanics supports the idea of both right-handed and left-handed spin and is highly suggestive of the structural dynamism of the Absolute as seen by the Guru here.

Part III

Getting in tune—

Michael shared an upbeat musical meditation on the chakras:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ph1cff2AITc&feature=youtu.be_gdata_player

Here’s a fantastic, funny and depressing article about the direction meditation is headed. We are definitely out of date! And I don’t mind.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/03/fashion/mindfulness-and-meditation-are-capturing-attention.html?_r=0

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Jake’s commentary:

This verse, writes Nitya in his commentary, is a bit unlike most of the others because it offers no direct instruction but rather pauses to make an observation about our natural condition, the way it *is*. The mind, he notes, moves between the specific and the general of its own accord and on its own schedule. By oscillating between the psychological and the cosmological, the mind privileges the *I* in one case and the *all* in the other. Knowing this condition to be the case, writes Nitya, allows us the space not to try to control it or apply *shoulds* to it. It is what it is and by way of its activity allows us to know everything internally and externally.

Because this continuous shifting is natural, our being able to observe it rather than being controlled by it affords us the opportunity to follow it as we progress through the day. Becoming unreflectively attached to one or the other of these extremes leads to Narcissism or a collective totalitarian regimentation. In these positions lie all manner of social evil from chaotic anarchism, a primitive “survival of the fittest” model once articulated (and feared) so thoroughly by Herbert Spencer in the 19th Century on the one hand and a dystopian Big Brother collective oppressing any individual expression on the other.

In the American political scene, these two extremes are trotted out by their adversaries as the inherent dangers in subscribing to political forces tending toward one or the other. Those prizing individual autonomy are accused of fomenting social chaos that allows those individuals to retain power and privilege. At this juncture, ethnic dimensions are usually attached as additional fuel to damn the “individualists” who really (say the accusers) seek their own narcissistic ego inflation and their social position illustrated in the Dickensian horror of 19th Century industrialization. On the opposite side of this political coin are those same individualists pointing the finger of collectivist conformity at those on the left. The bigger the government, they claim, the smaller the citizen, a view that if taken to its logical conclusion leads to Treblinka and the Gulag. The history of modern collectivism, they point out, has been anything but pretty.

These two accusations are essentially projections of those cemented into an *I* or *we* centralized view. By denying that the alternative view can be legitimately entertained, those on both sides project on the other that “shadow” of themselves they have alienated and refuse to accept. It simply does not exist in them anymore and is now the property of the other. As Nitya observes, however, “consciousness is an eternal fluctuation between these two fulcrums” (p. 277). Our Self is made up of that continuous movement that allows us to know ourselves, and that movement *is*; it is not an *ought* that should not be so because nature is wrong and the ego is correct.

In his commentary, Nitya counsels us to harmonize ourselves with our natural rhythms and not attach to either the general or the specific but rather to remain as that observing Self that works with each oscillation as it appears so that we can expand consciousness and at the same time operate in the world of manifestation so that both states can combine as a dialectic educating us about ourselves. A contemplative who observes life in both its specific and collective dimensions is, through the exercise, relieved of the anxiety and fear so necessary for those demanding that the world—and ourselves—be other than we are and conform to the demands of illusions neither party can articulate because they exist nowhere in nature.