

3/11/14  
Verse 50

The ground, together with water, wind, fire and sky,  
the functioning ego, right knowledge and the mind—  
waves and ocean: what else is there?  
All these worlds, having arisen, are changing into knowledge.

Free translation:

The impressions of earth, water, fire, wind, sky, the ego-sense,  
knowledge, mind, and of all aspects of the one and the many, such  
as waves and the ocean—on entering into consciousness these  
transform into knowledge as they rise into the hierarchic series of  
states of awareness.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

With earth and water, air and fire likewise,  
Also the great void, the ego, cognition and mind,  
All worlds including the waves and ocean too  
Do they all arise and to awareness change.

This is another one of those commentaries where I'm tempted to say, "Just read it!" and not say a word. What can you possibly add to it? Nitya knits so much together, with such a poetic touch, that it's simply breathtaking. I still remember him that morning, in top form, the way he put thrilling emphasis into every word, the humor bubbling up out of his deep meditation, his astonishment over the sentence, "A fiction that is uniting all the facts," as if it had just popped out of its own accord, the demon at the center of the earth, and especially the part about treating the ego as if it's a little pet puppy, parading it around, pleading, "Do you like my dog?" I guess there are more than a dozen A+ commentaries in *That Alone*, and this surely qualifies as one.

Part of the fun of the class, though, is that we always do come up with new insights, and often the verses where you can't say anything produce the best. Last night was definitely like that.

The stage is set with Nitya characterizing the glorious first half of Atmo as merely laying the groundwork for what lies ahead, similar to Patanjali's asana. He says:

We have come to a turning point in Narayana Guru's instruction. In the last forty-nine verses, the Guru was speaking to us more or less from a transactional point of view. Of course, we were given an idea of what we are besides this body. He also saw us as part of a society in which there are other individual members just like us. There are various kinds of relationships existing between people. There is this world, the society, and the individual. All these were taken into full consideration. He worked out a system by which we first can find peace with our environment, with the social setup, and peace on earth and good will among people. These are the first requirements. Now we are going to have a more serious entry into our own real being.

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, after the initial discipline is given he asks you to cultivate a posture where you can sit peacefully and comfortably, to make yourself stable for your practice. He did not say you should sit in a *padmasana* or a *mayurasana* or anything. Those were all invented by others. They may be good as exercises, but they don't especially aid your pursuit. All Patanjali wanted was a firm, steady posture so that you can forget about your body.

Likewise, in forty-nine verses Narayana Guru has prepared us to sit in peace so that now we can commence our search.... What next? What comes next is very important. We commence the real probe.

Of course, we've been thinking we were making the real probe all along, and in a sense we aren't wrong. We have learned a

great deal. The trick is that the ego can usurp any search to bypass itself, basically converting it into a self-glorification program. We have had to placate and discipline our egos to the point where they can dare to relinquish command, dare to take their rightful place on the periphery of our being instead of hogging the limelight all the time. This is likely the most difficult challenge in spiritual life, and we may not have been completely successful. But Narayana Guru can't wait forever for us to prepare ourselves properly. He has to continue the instruction as if we have gotten it.

Nancy described the first half of Atmopadesa Satakam as a system of peace and understanding. We had to work through all of it so that we no longer view the world as a threat. She thought we should ask ourselves, "What is fabricating your knowledge?" She noted that everyone all around the globe reacts the same way. We are all constructed the same, egos and all. Yet our faulty knowledge insists that we are different, so we have to consciously countermand those beliefs. Nitya's idea of asana includes getting a firm seat of understanding so we can properly interpret the other person's point of view. This can only happen when we no longer feel we have to defend our position.

Nitya often led us through a very simple meditation to demonstrate how we are captivated by our knowledge and use it as a substitute for experience. He had us sit quietly and close our eyes, then just feel the firmness we are sitting on. When we concentrate on that, it is nothing like our mental image of our body and the floor or chair we are sitting on. We can't even tell where our body ends and the room begins. There is a vague pressure on our lower body, but it doesn't conjure up any scientific belief. We are perfectly knowledgeable about our body and the law of gravity, but in this state we aren't really paying attention to them, except perhaps to momentarily notice their absence. There is nothing threatening to force us to cling to our concepts, it's all very gentle and natural. Just like that we are separated from the enchantment of our ideas, our knowledge. We're making ourselves real.

Deb noted the seeming contradiction that by being more open we are actually becoming more stable, more grounded. Once we realize that's the way it works, we welcome the opening out process rather than shunning it. When we take things personally, we aren't allowing the greater world to happen around us or in us.

If we can truly feel how our knowledge is oppressing us, we can learn to stand firm, free of its dominance. The class really got that, and it led to an intensely wonderful discussion and the eventual closing meditation. We were helped by Nitya's amazing exhortations, including:

Is there no way out? Oh, yes, certainly. That is to know that if you say I am bad and I think I am good, it is all only knowledge. And because it is only knowledge, I can straighten it up even if you mess with it. All I have to do is remember it is knowledge and not get carried away by it.

The central pivot in all this is called *ahamkrti*, the 'I' generating rascal who is sitting in the midst of it all. This is a tremendous problem. You don't know the nature of this machine that goes on clicking one 'I' after another—like drops from a leaky faucet—the consciousness of 'I'.

I remember being riveted by this discourse, and feel as if it's still boring into me. The next part is especially crucial, because the easy (and wrong) answer is to do away with the ego, which after all is largely or totally fictional, not to mention the source of all our travails:

It's not that there shouldn't be a lovely device called an 'I' as the central orientation point of your world. That's very good. But it should only be for that one purpose of orientation, and nothing else. You don't really need other peoples' opinions in order to know how to feel. So don't make your 'I' your pet baby you're always fawning over. You make it your lap dog. You have to pet it all the time, taking it around for walks and asking

your neighbor “how do you like my dog?” You feel very happy if somebody says “beautiful!” but you are upset if they say “I have seen a better dog!”

My friends, there is nothing more beautiful than this freedom of which I am speaking. Try to experience it. The whole day can be so wonderful! Whenever someone is making you turn and churn inside, causing a knot within you, remember it is time to add water and make things flexible once again. The world is so stupid! Someone or other may breathe poison in your ear—cast it into the wind or onto the fire. Do not take it seriously. Know that it is all happening where the generating of the ‘I’ is going on. This is the only place where real darkness prevails. Moreover, it is without our knowledge that the ‘I’ is being generated and passed on to us. We have no idea what tricky hand is doing it.

“We have no idea.” Truer words were never spoken! We have employed our ego to make an assault on our ego, which splits it in half and makes both sides grow bigger and stronger, more firmly entrenched as our central verity. Narayana Guru is gently wooing us away from our fixation, so we can wake up to a universe of benign possibilities. Nitya again: “When you tune yourself to this inner mechanism in your meditation you get a whole new freedom: the freedom not to be agitated, the freedom to enjoy or not enjoy, the freedom to relate or not relate. From the most gross you can slip away to the most sublime, the most subtle.”

It is tragic that due to social constraints and instilled fears, most people content themselves with shriveled lives that are a mere vestige of their potential. Somehow we get comfortable enough with our shrunken self to put up with it. We convince ourselves that we don’t deserve anything better, because we don’t really matter. After all, isn’t it only the ego that thinks we are important? No, we are very important, especially to ourself. Narayana Guru is offering us the chance to actualize much more of who we are, and

in the process become happier as well as more inspiring to our friends and associates.

We must own up to the fact that stepping outside our 'I' is a very challenging act, and one that is more often than not faked. I just listened to an interview with James Fadiman, one of the founders of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California. He noted that psychedelic therapy was successful in part because it demonstrated irrefutably that the 'I' was merely one small part of who we are. For people who spend their whole lives wrestling with the ego and unable to ever stand outside it, suddenly it seems almost irrelevant, just a small part of their true self. It is a great relief for them to leave that whole arena of misery and bathe in freedom. Often one experience like that is enough to alter the entire course of their lives for the better. In fact, in Fadiman's experience, about four out of five people who use LSD therapeutically consider it the single most important event of their lives.

Getting free of the ego's dominance is definitely the single most important accomplishment of a spiritual reorientation, however it comes about. Needless to say, a course like Atmo, taken to heart, can have the same impact. There is definitely a tendency to slip back into oblivion when the ego feels threatened, however. It's an aspect that has to be dealt with, or the opportunity will be diluted down to just another amusing pastime.

One more critical point is made at the very end of the commentary. We are completing our 36<sup>th</sup> year of hosting Gurukula classes, and yet we still frequently encounter the spiritual cliché that we have to stop thinking, stop having urges, escape from the chaos to have peace. So many great teachers say so. But that kind of peace is likely to be static and uncreative. Confrontations and collisions help us to grow, challenge our complacency. That means we don't have to stop the world in order to realize truth, we have to integrate ourselves harmoniously with it. Life itself is the guru, the source of our evolutionary development. It is by no means a mistake to be avoided. Paul put it nicely, that our identity (which is

based on our knowledge) has little to do with actual experience. By introducing even a little fluidity we can take the rigidity out of our identity.

The belief in getting everything to stop turns out to be a clever ego tactic to indefinitely postpone realization, because the thinking process never really ends. It can be altered, quieted, honed, but not prevented. We are dynamic creatures, and that's a good thing, or should be. This verse is one of the several places in the Gurukula literature where this misguided belief is countermanded in no uncertain terms, calling on one of Narayana Guru's classic analogies:

You cannot get rid of all the waves and just have a pure ocean. That is what everybody is trying to do—sit firm and close the eyes so that you get rid of all thoughts and ideas, and then finally you are left with the pure, pure ocean of the Self. Narayana Guru says this is like someone taking a cake of soap to the washtub and trying to wash all the lather out of it. No matter how much you wash, it cannot be done. The more water you pour and the more you rub, the more the lather comes. Trying to get rid of all the thoughts and ideas in the mind in order to come to pure consciousness is like that. It is in and through all this that you have to see pure consciousness. It is not that you kill everyone in the world and then find peace. Let your good neighbors be there. Their dog may bark, but you can still be peaceful. See how it works for you today.

## Part II

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

We sit, walk, work and when our limbs are tired we comfortably take our rest on the solid earth, the terra firma. It rains, water spatters on the roof and causes puddles on the ground. It flows as rivers to the mighty oceans which look so vast they

seem shoreless. Fire sits concealed in the matchstick; rub it hard on the match box and it bursts into flame. Fire is everywhere. It is in us as our body heat, in the stove on which we cook our food, in our lamps to give us light. It is in the clouds as electricity. It shines in the sky as the blazing sun. The far-off stars that shimmer at night are also fire. The gentle air we breathe is hardly noticed except when our nose is clogged or our lungs are weak. When the air is stirred it becomes an enjoyable breeze. When it blows hard it is the wind. At its worst it is a hurricane, a tornado. Open the door and come out. You are in the open. "The open" has no limits. In it are the neighbourhood, the far-off hills and dales, the whole world. You don't even need to come out, just open your eyes & that brings you to the outer world. All that is not inside is outside and with equal truth you could say that all that are outside are inside too.

Who experiences all this? Well, there is an "I-me-my-mine" generating consciousness which creates all these experiences. What is consciousness? That is my seeing and knowing and thinking and feeling and what not. Who causes what? Does "I" cause consciousness or does consciousness generate "I"? This is an eternal riddle of the mind. Mind! What is that? It is a fiction that is holding together all facts, like the sea generating waves. The sea is so cluttered with its waves, that we see only the waves. Philosophers and psychologists, who are the frogmen of the mind, assure us that there is a depth to our mind—a deep unconscious that is hiding beneath our perception, our thoughts and all the boiling emotions.

Ultimately, when we ponder over it, all these rise into the single phenomenon of pure knowledge: the knowledge of firmness, the knowledge of the flow, the knowledge of warmth, the knowledge of what is in and what is out & an ocean of knowledge cluttered with the knowledge of what was hitherto looked upon as "the known." The knower and the known blend in knowledge and knowledge alone triumphs over everything, enveloping everything and transforming everything into knowledge.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

WITH this fiftieth verse, which marks the centre of the hundred verses of the composition, when read together with the immediately previous one, we have to note that there is a change-over from one aspect of Self-instruction to another. The change-over could be described philosophically as passing from the ontological to the teleological.

Verse 49 ended on the note that one should settle down in inner peace of mind. Those aspects of Self-realization that are most conducive to this peace, as understood in this contemplative context, have been treated of by the Guru in a certain methodological and epistemological order. In both the halves of the work we notice that the topics discussed are around factors of subjective import, as the subject matter of the whole composition would warrant. Introspection, however, becomes affirmed deeper in the second half as deeper recesses of the Self are brought up into view and scrutinized more carefully, where again the reader would profit by noting the inward approach to the subject matter.

Cosmology and psychology enter into the structure of the verses in their own manner, and one is to be understood in terms of the other. A contemplatively neutral psycho-physical method and theory of knowledge, besides an axiology or science of values, all viewed in an absolutist sense, are implied in the verses as they now pass on to the latter half of the work.

Some modern philosophers know that Reality is an ever-changing flux and that 'being' and 'becoming' are interchangeable terms, with an element of paradox implied when both are taken together and fitted properly into the context of the larger and more inclusive background of the notion of the Absolute.

The Self and the Cosmos have the same laws belonging to the neutral ground of psycho-physics. The body-mind duality has to be transcended before one can visualize this common ground of all truth or reality. Absolute Being has to be understood in terms of becoming, as one is in reality a counterpart of the other when looked upon from the standpoint of dialectical thinking. Dialectics is what reconciles apparent paradoxes; and dialectical methodology, which belongs to the scientific approach to the Absolute by natural right, has to be recognized properly if such verses as the above are to be understood in their full import, and not merely as mystical or poetical effusions.

This verse sums up the position and restarts the discussion of self-instruction or realization which would require many pages to comment upon. It thus only prepares the way for the second half of the work. As the rest of the composition itself would serve in many ways as such a comment, we are not here going into the implications of all that is stated here. It would be helpful to refer back to verse 2, at the beginning, to be able to see the perspective in which the meaning of the present verse is to be understood. There it was stated that there are several worlds, beginning from our own inner instruments of knowledge or doors of perception, known as *karanas* in Vedantic language. The treatment of mind as on a par with other factors such as the worlds that can be serially conceived as leading up to the highest contemplative values - spoken of as the sun beyond space and equated to it - is to be justified in the light of the method followed in the work as a whole.

The great circulation of thought here implied in the absolutist contemplative context, starts with the earth, which is the grossest of the manifested elementals. Passing in graded fashion through the higher and subtler elements such as water, air and fire, we come to the sky, which is both subtle and gross at the same time. There is space that contains matter such as ether; and pure space

which is of an a priori and metaphysical order. Aristotle makes this distinction clear when he defines space as, ‘That without which bodies could not exist.’ (‘Physics’ Book IV). If space were a body then we should have to concede that two bodies existed in the same space. The passing on in the series here from the elementals which are primarily physical, to those that are understood to be of a primarily mental order, involves a unitive epistemology on the basis of which we have already made our comments in the previous half of the composition.

The “void,” which can represent both the aspects of space that we have tried to distinguish above at the same time, is the unitive factor which leads us to the rest of the series in order, such as the ego which cognises through mind etc. In the Bhagavad Gita we have the enumeration of a similarly conceived series of categories, which reads:

‘The earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind and reason too, with ego-sense—such are the eight items of the series of the nature that is of Me (the Absolute).’ (VII.4)

The *Viveka Chudamani* of Sankara also follows similar lines when it enumerates the eight cities that constitute the subtle (*sukshma*) body:

‘They are: the groups of five, beginning with speech (1); the five beginning with hearing (the organs of perception) (2); the five functional factors (3); the elementals (such as sky) (4); and the mental factors, such as cognition (5), nescience (6); action (7) and desire (8).’ (verse 98.)

Vedantic epistemology is thus familiar with this unitive treatment of categories. Other philosophers like Aristotle, Kant and Spinoza have, in the categories they enumerate, this same time-honoured methodology and epistemology. The Guru here follows the same

perennial contemplative approach, which is in keeping with the Science of the Absolute known both in India and outside. Contemplative method first reduces these factors into a series that, even when the order is reversed, still refers to the norm of the Absolute. Ascending and descending dialectics meet in the neutral Absolute. This verse marks the beginning of ascending dialectics.

After visualizing these factors contemplatively, it would be necessary to fit them into a 'being' in terms of a never-ending process of 'becoming'. 'Being' and 'becoming' have to yield together a unitive and living picture of the Absolute. The same circulation of various psycho-physical entities finds mention in the Bhagavad Gita (III.14-16) where there is reference to a wheel that goes round eternally as between items such as food, rain, sacrifice and the absolute value implied in sacrifice. The rising of the various worlds, understood in serial and graded order, and finally their transformation into terms of one absolute value as pure consciousness, is a matter already recognized, and one for contemplative vision to grasp both schematically, symbolically as well as dynamically.

The further reference here to the 'waves and the ocean', as if they fall outside the elementals, is to show that there is also a relational or formal world which has to be given its place in the scheme of the Absolute which is both being and becoming at once. The Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophers included 'sambandha' (relationship) as an independent category, and the Guru here approves of this way of examining all the possible categories that legitimately apply to the Absolute. The waves are dialectically related to the ocean, and the relationship implied is one that belongs to the world of categories which have all to be comprehensively understood schematically before any full vision of the Absolute can result.

When endowed with this type of reasoning through relationships, the intelligence of man will be able to see that all factors, ranging from the grossest to the subtlest, arrange themselves and constitute the cycle of change and becoming in terms of pure consciousness. A great deal of research and thought has, however, to proceed before such a vision of the rise of thought through ramified sets of psycho-physical factors into absolutist awareness can be witnessed as taking place in oneself.

### Part III

Jake offered the only feedback on this wonderful verse, which turned out to be a bit before the fact:

Scott:

Thanks for the notes and comments. The 100 VERSES seems to keep creeping into my experience in ways that suggest something there is going on that is above my mind's pay grade.

I was having a conversation with a close friend who was having issues with what someone said about her. I suggested that it was all just information she could decide to entertain or not, that she did not have to wait for someone else to tell her how she felt. I then said I was trying to do just that with myself as I encountered other social egos projecting all over the place and that when I'm on track, it works. She wasn't buying any of it—just too far off the tried and true.

--The arresting feature of this encounter was that it happened just before last Tuesday's class and I had not reviewed Verse 50 for a few months. But there it was as if on cue—

All the best,  
Jake

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Jake's commentary:

Just about every critique of American culture includes a damnation of its consumer ethos and general materialism. Avarice, greed, and narcissism are some of the terms freely thrown around by many who often then go on to cite American foreign policy as founded on those very principles. In his “Intervention in Vietnam and Central America: Parallels and Differences,”<sup>1</sup> for example, one of the most erudite of opponents of US policies, Noam Chomsky, cuts to the heart of the matter in his concise discussion of the American post World War II “Grand Area” planning that the US pursued immediately with its victory in Japan. The Grand Area was that part of the globe that was to be subordinated to American economic needs and was “strategically necessary for world control” (p. 317). Chomsky then cites a document (PPS 23) formulated by George Kennan of the State Department in 1948, a rationalization that puts in stark relief the realpolitik logic behind the Plan (echoes of which are heard throughout the media today):

We have about 50 percent of the world’s wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. . . . In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. . . . We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction. . . . We should cease to talk about vague and . . . unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better. (p. 318)

Given this dark background as an over-arching national ethic, efforts to interpret the world in alternative terms often fall on deaf

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<sup>1</sup> Found in *The Chomsky Reader*, edited by James Peck, pp. 315-338.

ears or, even more the case, are seen as trivial or juvenile. Films and books that are aimed at children get a cultural pass on conforming to our collective “reality,” but adult efforts to “look on the sunny side” are almost always relegated to the non-serious or to temporary aberrations that quickly evaporate as the *real* world closes ranks and resumes functioning on a consensus we authorize for one another.

With Verse 50, the Guru and Nitya begin work on how we can operate in transactional reality while at the same time clearly perceiving it. The world requires our cooperation in order to continue as it is, and without becoming aware of that fact and then deciding to play or not play (as events unfold), we are what we find so repellant while simultaneously dismissing the positive as an impossibly naïve posture for any serious adult to hold.

With this verse, Nitya writes in his commentary, “we [are about to] commence the real probe” by moving the inquiry deeper into our consciousness for an exploration of the process through which we manifest our social/environmental constructions (p. 339). This movement, says Nitya, constitutes the work of meditation, the discipline of which offers us the route for this voyage, but it is a discipline that requires no complicated and painful exercise. Sitting comfortably and stably in a peaceful setting constituted the heart of the simple instructions given by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras* (the ultimate source for yoga practitioners generally). Once the practitioner meets these minimal requirements, writes Nitya, we simply need to close our eyes and begin paying attention to what we begin to perceive, to trust our capacity to directly recognize without the interference presented by someone else “correcting” our direct experience. As Nitya points out, “You don’t really need other people’s opinions in order to know how you feel” (p. 341, underlining added).

Nitya begins with a simple exercise by asking us to become sensitive to our body’s natural attraction to the earth, an experience we almost always consign to the effects of gravitation. But naming it does not explain it any better than does the idea of a “green

demon pulling you down with invisible claws (p. 339).” Neither conception explains the strange experience any more accurately than the other which, says Nitya, is essentially “our knowledge “that cannot be divided between ourselves and the thing itself. We cannot tell when gravity ends and our perception of it begins, but we know the two, which are “held together by what’s called mind” (p. 340). As Nitya phrases this combination of the knower, the known, and knowledge, this trifurcation of experience is a fiction we employ as we navigate the infinite number of forms and forces that our bodies come into contact with daily.

As a consequence of this mental exercise, which is so necessary for our physical survival, we forget that the mind is doing this compartmentalizing and assume its work accurately represents a total picture of the one true consciousness permeating everything. As the wave and the water are not two, our *I* and someone else’s *I* are of the same consciousness. But in our synthetic state in which that oneness is pushed out of awareness, the knowledge expressed by the other *I* is taken to represent the totality of our consciousness. Through this category error we almost “naturally” assign to the other an enormous authority over our perceptions of knowledge. Having mistaken it for the total, we constantly adapt to what others tell us about our knowledge, input that we have inflated to an ultimate importance and attached to our sense of stability and safety (in a world of constant change). In this procedure is our ego inflation and deflation. What others tell us about our “selves” becomes vital information for our very survival, so “when my knowledge changes, I change” (p. 340). As Nitya writes as he narrates from this cramped perspective, “ I was [previously] under the impression that I was a good guy, but now you say I’m bad. Now I’m meditating on badness. It makes me feel very negative.”

The key terms in Nitya’s preceding sentence, I think, are the words “it makes me feel.” If I am told I am good, bad, sarcastic, jovial, whatever, my Self has not changed at all, but by assigning a total importance to the in-coming information I essentially choose

to assign it an un-earned and fictitious authority that absolutely must be dealt with or (as I have convinced myself to be true) I will die (which may be true in a relative sense). No one makes me feel anything I do not choose to feel, however much I deny my power.

In this continuous and instantaneous system, the ego-self operates beyond its necessary function of acting as an “orienting” position for our lives as we live them here in the marketplace, so to speak. This ego over-reach, writes Nitya, this fiction we create, is the source of just about all psychiatric maladies. By remaining unaware of this little ego-I continuously attaching to external stimulation and reacting to it as if it were real, we remain in a condition for which only temporary remedies exist. In the US, drug and talk therapies constitute the bulk of the relief, with drugs far in the lead because of their relative cost benefits. In this cultural evolution, the samsaric circle completes as these brief vacations from the endless/beginningess world of I-ego attached misery suspend awareness now and then. In these brief fixes, the power of the little ego is reinforced and hidden from view, an underlying characteristic of materialism generally. Only by locating value in the ever-present arising of the external, as the inflated ego continuously demands of us, can any larger social arrangement founded on avarice, narcissism, and envy exist and prosper.

In Nitya’s commentary on this verse, he asks us to let go of this little *I* attachment, to “water down your ego a little” (p. 341) by following the Guru’s instructions to “water down” and “let fly in the wind” that little ego-I. The external information we receive is not our Self, and we have a choice to accept it or not. If someone has a negative (or positive) opinion of you, that assessment is external to you and can have no effect unless you decide it does—or are compelled by internal forces outside your awareness (samskaras, etc.) to attach to it.

It is in this compulsion that the world of circular misery is constructed, a principle that Descartes centuries ago codified for the West (where it has festered ever since and flowered so

brilliantly in post-WWII America) when he coined the phrase, “I think therefore I am.” But, as Nitya points out, “we have to go beyond that. Can you not say, ‘If the thinking is me, then I am not. It is only a thought’ ” (p. 342).