

4/29/14  
Verse 57

In the waveless ocean, endless traits of *maya* remain  
as potent and beginningless effects;  
water's taste and so on make a configuration,  
and with such embodied forms world upon world comes to be.

Free translation:

Even in a quiescent state of consciousness there lurk many traits of  
maya. As in the ocean endless effects are produced from the many  
configurations of water—its taste and so on—world upon world is  
created out of the latent potentials of consciousness.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

Within the waveless ocean, there do abide  
Endless Maya traits, which as potent configurations that assume  
Bodies with such as water and taste, remain  
As beginningless effects forming various worlds upon worlds.

If you translate the terms just right in your head, this verse is  
a plain statement of physics. The ocean under consideration isn't  
that big body of water stretching to the horizon out there, it is the  
inner essence of the universe, of our universe and presumably all  
others as well. It permeates us right where we stand. We can easily  
perceive the waves it makes in the form of people, vegetables,  
minerals and animals, but beneath all that turmoil is an oceanic  
field from which they all manifest. We can describe it as the zero  
point field (ZPF), the sea of subatomic particles, the Higg's boson  
field, or what have you. Those oceans contain the potential for all  
this, along with everything that will eventually come to be, to exist.  
If it didn't have that possibility, it wouldn't—it couldn't—happen.

Physicists are now scratching their heads that there is no reason to claim that anything is impossible. Mathematically there are no barriers to anything, including infinite universes. In fact, if there are—and there must be!—infinite universes, then everything possible *must* happen somewhere. Physicists are only beginning to realize the implication of this premise. We're not just talking about a giraffe with three heads. What about infinite interconnectedness, infinite psycho-spiritual expansion of consciousness, infinitely unimaginable mental constructs? In other words, infinity isn't just about horizontal expressions, but must include vertical potentials as well. The sky's the limit!

How about: a world where conditioning is like the shell of an egg, keeping us safe and warm while we develop enough strength to break out of it, after which we discard it and tentatively learn to fly, eventually soaring far and wide? There could be a mother bird kind of guru nearby who helps us learn how. Maybe we live in a universe like that right now! That universe might exist side by side with one where fledgling birds are desperately trying to hold their shattered eggs together and crouch inside, agreeing with their fellows to pretend that the eggs are whole and beautiful, even though they are in fact mere scraps, mere shards?

I won't go on and on about this, but it is clear that the gurus are trying to bring physics out of the ivory towers and down to earth, so that we can have more fun. These possibilities do not have to remain mere abstractions. If we swim in an ocean of potential expressions, why do we prefer to lurk under rocks? What's the point of clinging ferociously to the tiny bit we already know? What are we afraid of?

As I read out the verse last night, I got an image of Nitya straining mightily to raise the level of consciousness in his students. He was tugging with all his radiance on a rope strung over a pulley, with the roomful of disciples and gawkers making a block of almost immovable solidity on the other end. I could feel the resistance, and yet also the ever so slight movement! In fact, it

takes more energy to resist than to allow ourselves to be raised up by such sublime insights.

I think Nitya was a little fed up with us at this stage. He had been pouring his poetic soul into bringing the glowing promise of life to light, day after day, and yet we remained mired in our petty habits. He never let himself believe he was casting pearls before swine: he was too compassionate, too humble. When he castigated us, it was because he sensed the chance was there to precipitate a breakthrough. The magnificent ending of his commentary still holds the power to move mountains:

Narayana Guru gives us here a total vision where being and becoming are interlaced, cause and effect are inseparable, and the one and the many are the same. Interest and the cessation of interest are also to be taken as complementary aspects.

Do not try to understand this as a philosophy. Place yourself in the whole system. Look at the importance and unimportance of what is happening in life. Think of the great magnitude of potentials within a time-space continuum, in which your consciousness at the moment is in pursuit of one single interest. Also, think of yourself as the one consciousness which permeates all, envelops everything with a frontierless vastness. Thus you are both the tiny little interest that is running after gratification, and also you are that universal consciousness which is going on proliferating universe after universe within itself. What a grand vision this is!

Now think of your little gossips, bickering, petty likes and dislikes. We have such beautiful, fine, wonderful meditations in the morning, but once the closing chant is given the mood changes, the mind and its interest changes. You slip away into the world of gossip and innuendo, and say “I don’t like that person sitting there; this one shouldn’t be doing that; I don’t like the way that person is behaving.” How many such thoughts come and mar the beauty of this wonderful life! Where there is every possibility of great harmony, great joy, a sense of wonder piled on top of another sense of wonder, you invite frustration after frustration. This happens because you are shrinking

into just one momentary point of awareness or interest and thereby isolating yourselves from the vastness. The “me” in you becomes so very important and mean and dirty. It has become a scourge to annihilate the whole beauty of life. Learn instead to expand. Learn to permeate. Learn to embrace.

Karl Marx once said, “Workers of the world, unite, for you have nothing to lose but your chains, and a whole world to gain.” We can also say, “Lovers of wisdom, unify yourselves, unite your understanding! You have nothing to lose but your stupidity, your madness, and you have a whole world of eternal joy to gain.”

Inspired by that ringing exhortation, the class explored the perplexing subject of free will. Are we capable of changing our attitudes, or not? Free will has gotten a bad press for centuries. Bushra thought it was a contradiction, that will wasn't free by definition. That it was even anti-freedom. Certainly the history of the human species is primarily the playing out of fettered will. We have The Triumph of the Will of the Nazis or the implacable will of God freezing us in our tracks. Now science has joined in, observing that our thoughts are products of unconscious fixed wiring that adds a stamp of “This is what I think (or want)” to the final product so that we never question it. It's a marvelous trick, by the way, and the scientists are right, as far as they go. As long as we're convinced that our bondage is something we've freely chosen, we will never question it. That means the illusion of free choice is the ultimate constraint. Or, if we only take only one step beyond, we will admit we are bound, but believe it can't be helped. If we have no free will, it's pointless to try for it. Definitely a formula for stagnation and dissatisfaction. So I think you have to acknowledge the possibility of change or it will never happen, barring lucky accidents.

Nitya used an interesting metaphor as part of his effort to help us overcome our reluctance to participate in our own growth process. I'll let him describe it:

Innumerable are the possibilities of the *maya kala*. Tantric Yoga speaks of *bindu*, *nada* and *kala*. A bindu is a focal point. A point has no dimension, only location. But that location decides what is to happen around it. When you fix one end of a compass and inscribe a circle, the particular locus fixed as the center decides where the circle is going to be. You can move the locus and then you will draw another circle. Of course, this is independent of the diameter you choose, which decides the size or the circumference of the circle.

What happens between a locus and a circumference decides the field. The operational function which originates at the bindu point and spreads all over the field is called *nada*. Nada means the vibration. There is a vibratory function which originates from the focal point and then fills the field. The field becomes permeated with that particular vibration. It can be a vibration of love, of hatred, of infatuation, of great joy, of serenity, of great peace, of beatitude, of anything.

When this happens it is called *kala*. Before it happens it is remaining there dormant. If the possibility is not in it, it cannot happen.... Only if the possibility is there can something happen. In maya are many such potentials to produce ever so many kala. A kala is thus to be understood as both potential and actual: it is the total function which has its own will, *ksetra*.

I'm not sure how *kshetra* got where it is, since it means field, not will. And I don't know of any words for will that sound like it. But *kala* is like a field, in the sense used here. There is a point source, *bindu*, and a vibration, *nada*, that spreads to the circumference, leaving a state of actuality imbued in the field, *kala*. *Kala* also means an embryo just after conception.

We covered the vibratory expanse in depth in Chapter V of *Darsanamala*, the *Bhava Darsana*. Last night we focused more on the compass point, since it determines the quality of everything else. We are free to set the point wherever we want, and yet we tend to become attached to our favorite anchor spot, and resist mightily even the merest hint that moving it might improve our

situation. Spiritual groups have a higher percentage of those willing to at least consider the possibility of changing their perspective, but actually carrying it out is a real challenge.

Bushra put it nicely: if you change the point of the compass you realize everything is a construct. Getting to that understanding is half the battle. If you mistake your perspective for pure reality, there is nothing you can do about it. But if it's a construct you can deconstruct and reconstruct. I'm pretty sure this is where free will comes into play.

Paul added an important thought about how to make the shift: we should substitute pure action for reaction. Our brains function primarily as reactors to stimuli, and therefore are always conditioned by the environment. A yogi stops to think and ponder, restrains the impulse to react, and then can choose a way to act more directly. Of course, you can get tangled up in always pondering and never acting, never sure of the right course, but a yogi uses the opportunity to remove the fetters so they can press ahead with full confidence.

Still, when you try to pick up your compass and move the point, all sorts of gyroscopic resistances come into play. We may swing it all around, and yet plunk it down right in the same old place. Exasperating! But something must give eventually, since the world does not remain the same for even two nanoseconds. If the universe is a machine for making gods, as Bergson surmised, even though we are constrained by the structure of the machine (known as maya) we at least can choose whether to make the transition joyful or begrudge every minute, whether to share love or broadcast hate, whether to lend a hand or turn our back. Again, if we're sure (as many people are) that our attitudes are fixed and predetermined, we will imagine ourselves to be helpless victims of fate. Most people do have another option, however: to take the first step of a thousand mile journey of rehabilitation.

There was much, much more, but it's a warm sunny day, so I quit! I'm sure the thoughtful discussions we had will resurface later. If you have nothing better to do some time, you can try to

imagine what else might have been mulled over. And you can write it down and send it to me.

I'm going to include two relevant excerpts of Nitya's in Part III, so don't miss them. I do hope his message of our ability to improve our life through our own efforts has come across in these classes. By simply moving our compass point a fraction of an inch, we can transform our world in a positive way. As he concluded in verse 55, "Somehow, up to now you have not cultivated that acumen. You can try it and see what kind of difference it makes."

## Part II

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

The ocean is not going to be absolutely placid one day, nor will our minds. Suppose that by some chance the sea is calm and non-eventful. Dip your finger in it and taste it. The water tastes saline. We are now looking at the ocean from another angle; not as the ocean with a wavy surface but as saline water. In this verse the Guru calls our attention to this fact; *salila rasadi*, the saline taste of sea water. This is one whole unit of sensory experience. It takes us away from the idea of looking at the ocean in terms of waves and ocean. A pearl diver looks at the sea with the interest of diving into it to gather pearl oysters. Each interest makes a world. How many such possibilities are there in a single item like the ocean? It is hard to say.

The ocean of saline water is not the only ocean of our interest. When the experience of phenomenality bristles with several contradicting factors, such as love and hatred, pain and pleasure and truth and falsehood, we call it the ocean of samsara. The vast expanse of consciousness, where cause and effects are only relative terms and the Absolute and the Relative are convertible ideas, this unnamable totality is looked upon as the ocean of *samvit*. When we are in a mood of reverence, feeling

overwhelmed by the benign shower of grace and seeing the sharing of omnipresent benevolence everywhere, we think of the ocean of compassion. To a contemplative, who is merging in the peace of his beatitude, it is like immersing in the deep of the eternal.

Maya is considered to be the beginningless process of becoming which causes the variegated phenomenality of names and forms and causes and effects. With this concept, it is not tenable to think of a being first, which is then followed by a becoming. The relationship between cause and effect is much the same as the relationship between the past and the present. It is in relation to this that we call what is already experienced “the past.” After, or while experiencing the effect, its cause is deduced. In the world of consciousness countless are the effects that come to its surface as new possibilities of interest. When we see the wave as an effect we think of the ocean as its cause. When we taste the water and notice it is saline, we move away from the idea of waves and ocean to direct our interest to the sapidity of water. From there we may shift our interest to navigating in the sea, surfing in it, or fishing in it.

Again and again we go to a state where all our interests in the world of effects are suspended, like we do in deep sleep. It will last only for a few hours and then we will wake again to engage in the pursuit of a thousand interests. Even death will not terminate the world of interests a person has initiated or promulgated. Where one person leaves it others will continue it.

The Yoga Vasistha says that we do not know how many creators (Brahma) have gone before or how many more will follow. One day of Brahma is equal to several billion human years. Each Brahma lives for a thousand cosmic years. Thus, cosmic time has no end. According to high pressure physicists, certain subatomic particles, like the pion, will take 10 particle seconds to cross the diameter of the nucleus of an atom and a particle second is  $10^{-23}$  seconds. Thus the infinitude of time is only one of the several constituents of the phenomenal process which the Guru calls *kalya*.



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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

THE Aristotelian notion of *entelecheia* and the scholastic notion of "being as such" known as *ens* have been the subject of much philosophical disputation in the history of Western philosophy. The term 'Maya' in the context of Indian thought refers to negative being and becoming at once, where potentiality and realized form are held together under a common unitive notion in the context of the Absolute. There is also 'being' viewed rationally (*ens rationis*) and the same 'being' viewed from the more realistic standpoint. Again there is the notion of neutral being between opposites, as in the *ens* known to Parmenides. We have to refer to all these grades and varieties of being and becoming known to philosophy before we can see the idea behind this verse, which demands much philosophical insight and imagination.

In the previous verse we have examined the notion of the body that is born into the visible world, and reduced it to terms of pure awareness. Here the same subject is viewed from the more virtual, negative or abstract and generalized viewpoint. A noumenal rather than a phenomenal view is taken here. The minus side of the vertical parameter is under reference here, with the serial worlds that it can project upwards.

The expanding universe or the contracting universe known to modern physics, e.g. to Jeans and Eddington, refers to distant galaxies which move away or come nearer to the observer. Whether these have a rational or a real existence is a question that cannot be answered definitely. The measurements involve the velocity of light and are calculated in terms of light-years, which are notions beyond the realistic limits of human experience. Further, the Eddingtonian world belongs to a non-experimental

order where science transcends observation. The concept here becomes more important than the percept. We have to put ourselves in a frame of mind in which mind-matter differences are abolished before we can see the meaning of the above verse.

The analogy of the ocean of pure or prime awareness is continued here from the previous verse. Within the calm level of the ocean, where action is potent and invisible, there are motion- or action-factors still at work which have a cause-and-effect structure. If we think of the salt water of the metaphor and think of it as a reality, we have two distinct aspects of the reality: 1) the qualitative attribute of the taste which touches the consciousness at a certain point, and 2) the water with its objective form which belongs to the empirical order. These two put together form the basis of effects ranging from simple entities in nature to entities such as all the galaxies that we can observe. There are worlds upon worlds that thus form themselves with their root deep-hidden within prime consciousness itself. If waves on the ocean surface refer to the horizontal plane, these serial effects of worlds here refer to a vertical parameter, still within the scope of Maya's process of becoming.

The verse may be re-read carefully with the cause and effect aspects of being kept distinct in the mind. Being has to be understood as in a process of flux, when it will be known as becoming, which refers to the notion of Maya. Maya is the two-sided process of becoming applied to pure being or the Absolute in Indian philosophy. Maya refers at once to existence and essence as also to the neutral substance, which last we have referred to above as the *ens* as understood in the philosophy of the Eleatics like Parmenides. The galaxies are effects which range from one pole of abstraction to the other and spread endlessly out or remain held together within the comprehensive awareness of man. The expanding and contracting universes are within human awareness. The contemplative vision is capable of visualizing the whole from

the standpoint of the Absolute and in more verticalized terms than in the immediately preceding verse.

### Part III

Nitya's Foreword to *That Alone* is a lovely statement that begins with a very relevant story about wave and water, which was read out as part of the class. It is worth revisiting occasionally. The first page throws light on our study, and the rest is included because of its value in succinctly stating the context of the work:

#### Foreword

Narayana Guru once asked a young novice, "Do you know Vedanta?"

The young man answered, "No. What is there to know about it?"

"Do you know what water is like?" replied the Guru.

"Yes."

"Do you know what wave is like?"

"Yes."

"Do you know that water and wave are not two?"

"Yes."

"That is all."

"If Vedanta is so simple, why do people spend so much time studying it?"

"Because people forget the wave is water."

"Why do we forget?"

"Because of maya."

"How do we get rid of maya?"

"By knowing that wave and water are not two."

"What is the use of knowing they are both the same?"

"So you won't put such questions!"

This story was told to me by my Master, Nataraja Guru. As he himself was a disciple of Narayana Guru, it is even possible that he was the novice mentioned.

The point, however, is that truth is so very simple we don't need to make any effort to know it, but an undetectable ignorance conceals what should be obvious. Then we take a lifetime of beating around the bush to arrive once again at what is already known to us. Once the lost truth is regained, the search comes to a close and there is no need to utter another word.

Between the effortlessness of the obvious and the silent wonder of regaining the forgotten truth, there are many hurdles to be cleared. The truth we speak of is neither fact or fiction. It is not the object of immediate perception or the subject of mediate inference. Either you unconditionally know it or you do not. This is the knowledge which cannot be taught but, paradoxically, it dawns upon you on listening to one who knows.

There is no assurance you will know because you listen, and there is also no assurance you will know if you do not listen. What one listens to is a word symbol of that which cannot be adequately symbolised or represented. To rectify this defect, a series of mutually complementary symbols can be presented by the knower. One or all of these analogies may prepare the listener to have a state of mind which can suddenly get the jolt of confronting the Absolute. There is no guarantee, but it is in the compassionate nature of gurus to offer any number of chances to those who are willing to listen.

In the Atmopadesa Satakam, the polarising of the Self and the non-Self is therefore presented with one hundred variations. Narayana Guru (1854-1928), composed these hundred verses in Malayalam in the year 1897. For about half a century it was only read by a few scholars, and no one thought of translating it into any other language. The first English translation and commentary was written by Nataraja Guru in the Fifties, though it was not published until 1969. During that time three Malayalam commentaries and one Sanskrit translation and commentary were written and

published. One of these was based on Nataraja Guru's English commentary. Of late, the works of Narayana Guru have attracted many scholars, and new translations and commentaries are appearing year after year.

Narayana Guru's basic stand is that of a non-dualist visionary. At the same time he could appreciate the value of the traditions that entered into the aggregate rightly or wrongly called the Hindu religion. He was not a partisan in favour of any particular religion. This made it possible for him to have a neutral stand and to view all religions with the attitude of a devoted lover of beauty, goodness, love and truth.

It may seem superfluous for me to write a new translation and commentary when my own Guru has already written one which is undoubtedly a bona fide translation and authentic commentary. However, when Nataraja Guru instituted a hierarchy of teachers, a parampara, for the Narayana Gurukula, his intention was to have an unbroken chain of the continuators of wisdom teaching. He personally told me on several occasions to develop and enlarge on points and aspects of the work which he had only hinted at and which he had had no time to elaborate.

In the Malayalam language there are no words more simple than the ones the Guru has used. Thus, one cannot escape the fault of meddling with the obvious and making each verse a conglomeration of confusion by commenting on it. Yet we take that risk in the hope that our listener or reader will ultimately leave us and take refuge in the compassion of the Guru, developing a proper attitude which is more likely to help him or her to see the Guru's wisdom-gesture, imprinted in his every word, of the forgotten truth which everyone is seeking all the time.

Beginning in the Fall of 1977 and continuing through the Winter and early Spring of 1978, the students of the Narayana Gurukula in Portland, Oregon, USA agreed to participate in a meditation on Atmopadesa Satakam. The idea was to learn one verse a day and to give full attention to external events and internal life, understanding and molding them in the light of the meditation

that ensued from each verse. This book is a transcription of the morning meditation I gave on the meaning of each verse. We have decided to publish it because it complements the translation and commentary of Nataraja Guru. The Guru's translation faithfully adheres to the original word structure of Narayana Guru's Malayalam composition. In the present translation we have taken the freedom to rearrange words to enable the reader to have an easier reading of the meaning, but we have taken every care not to deflect from the original intention of the author. An even freer translation will be found in the Appendix of this work.

As Nataraja Guru's commentary will always remain as the most authentic, we have not repeated what is so ably expounded by him. However, we hope that the present book will be seen as complementary to his. It is our wish that the reader will find this book a helpful guide to meditating on the One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction.

Nitya Chaitanya Yati

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The reference to the saltiness of the ocean is famous in Vedanta, the point being that if you know the invisible essence of the ocean right in front of you, you know its invisible essence everywhere. Way back in verse 16 Nitya retold this tale from the Chandogya Upanishad:

Once there was a young man named Svetaketu. He was sent to a Gurukula, a forest university of ancient days, for study. He studied twelve years. When he came back home, he was very proud of his graduation and went to his father to show off his knowledge. He said, "Father, ask me anything you want to know about astronomy or economics or archery. I know all these things now."

His father responded, "My dear son, many have gone from our family to the Gurukula before you, but nobody returned with such

conceit. What happened to you? Please tell me—what is it, knowing which you know everything? And what is it, not knowing which you do not know anything?”

Svetaketu was stunned. “Father, please repeat the question. I never heard such a question before. You please tell *me* what it is, knowing which you know everything, and what it is, not knowing which you do not know anything. My dear father, I think my teachers also do not know this. Otherwise they would have taught me. So I prostrate at your feet. Accept me as your dear disciple. Teach me.”

“Ok, I shall teach you. Go and bring a fruit from a fig tree,” said his father. He went and brought one. “Now cut it. Look into it. What do you see?”

“I see very tiny little seeds. Each seed is so small—smaller than a mustard seed.”

“Cut that.” So he cut it. “What do you see now?”

“Almost nothing; just a little white stuff.”

“From where does a fig tree come, my son?”

“From that.”

“So this is that which becomes the fig tree?”

“Yes.”

“*Tat tvam asi*, Svetaketu. That thou art, my son. That which looks invisible and yet becomes all this, you are That.”

Then Svetaketu was asked to put some salt crystals in a vessel of water and bring it. His father asked him, “Where is the salt?”

“Father, it is dissolved.”

“Now touch on the surface and taste it.”

He tasted it. “It is salty.”

“Now touch the side and taste.”

“Salty.”

“Put your finger at the bottom and taste it.”

“It is salty.”

“The salt, which is invisible and yet pervades every drop of water, That you are, my son. *Tat tvam asi*, Svetaketu.”

The father went on taking a number of examples, showing over and over how one reality pervades everything and seems to be many.

When the fig seed changes into a sapling, leaves come from it which are very different from its roots, very different from the seed itself. Then flowers come which are different from the leaves. The fruit is again different. So many formal variations come from one source, yet they are all one.

#### Part IV

Jake's commentary:

In this verse, writes Nitya, the Guru continues with the wave/ocean metaphor but modifies it in terms of what it might illustrate. Nitya concluded verse 56 with a comment on our fatuous arrogance in imagining our physical lives to be of so much importance that we end up building for ourselves stone monuments commemorating our brief manifestations. We are more akin to the bursting bubbles of the surf than we are self-created gods, but we come to think of ourselves to be of epic stature. As the waves endlessly throw bubbles on the beach, each of which ends its fragile existence to be re-absorbed in the ocean depths, we too inevitably experience life as a part of that unchangeable power of the Absolute.

In the present verse, the Guru moves to an explanation of our experience within each wave. Perceived as a sequence, the waves (lives) become noticeable because the mind constructs a time sequence in order to place them in a context it understands. This way of "knowing," writes Nitya, is a linear way of perceiving beginninglessness, endlessness, and the eternal rhythms. In dwelling on this dimension, we occupy a world of interest that, as Nitya has discussed earlier, always occurs in a singular fashion. We simply are not capable of "being in two places at the same time" in thought or deed. The organizing ego function can't operate beyond its cohering capacity.

We do, however, constantly move from one world of interest to the next, usually without paying any particular attention to the



motion or considering what that movement indicates. In reviewing the wave/ocean metaphor, Nitya has us pay that attention by moving our observation point from our time/sequence context to that of timeless lived experience. The water of the ocean, waves or no, can also be known, for instance, by way of its taste, its salty quality. Experiencing this world of direct perception requires our complete attention, however brief or extended, and stands outside the wave action. Tasting presents us an alternative point of view as does the infinite number of possibilities the mind creates as it constantly and timelessly shifts from one world of interest to the next, reacting as it does to compulsions arising from a likewise infinite variety of samskaras and vasanas. Given this bewilderingly complicated context, Nitya writes, “you cannot judge anyone. You cannot even judge yourself” (p. 391).

Experience, writes Nitya, contains the collective and the individual, having no beginning or end. In our physical state, however, we have a tendency to isolate our sense experience, fashion “ensembles of meaning,” and locate our world of interest within the ensemble. The mechanism through which this connection occurs is a “vibratory function” (*samvit*) that “originates from the focal point and fills the field” (p. 392). This vibration connects that which lies dormant within us—“love. . . , hatred . . . , joy, serenity—with that particular experience we choose to have out of the numerous possibilities.

Caught in a trivial and endless string of worlds of interest, we isolate ourselves from the truth of totality and are thoroughly embedded in maya’s circular process. Holding a perspective of truth while at the same time functioning in our world of necessity (and interests) requires we assume a trans-rational point of view. Maya’s contradictions along with the rational discernment between “sense and soul” (Wilber) confront our minds with insurmountable barriers if we cling to the mistaken truth of a solely sense-defined scientific model (materialist) or one that denies totally the western scientific method (the New Age). Both are true and not true, and

both are orphaned philosophies of a grand whole system we either accept as a transcendent inclusive vision or we do not.

In his concluding section, Nitya cites a story drawn from the *Yogo Vasisth* in which the characters decide to meditate on Brahmin. Nitya writes, “it is said that what you meditate on, that you become” (p. 333). If we reduce the term *meditate* to mean an isolated singular exercise in breath control or sitting posture, we miss the larger message: our lives in their totality *are* a meditation. By narrowing our vision to our peculiar worlds of interest, we essentially meditate on and become Maya and do so completely unaware of the fact. Operating within our boundaries, we meditate on the details we manifest ignorant of the over-arching context, the boundaries of which are unknowable to our centralized ego-self. But seeing Maya for what it is, says Nitya, does not necessitate our becoming it:

Do not try to understand this as a philosophy. Place yourself in the whole system. Look at the importance and unimportance of what is happening in life. . . . You are both the tiny little interest that is running after gratification, and also you are that universal consciousness which is going on proliferating universe after universe within itself. (p. 394)