

6/24/14
Verse 65

Nothing exists here that we have not known once;
veiled by form, all this is not wakefully known;
being boundless, there is no one who knows;
who is there to know this dear wonder? Alas! It is strange!

Free translation:

There is nothing in this world we have not known at least once before (as pure Knowledge). When the same appears clothed in the garment of forms, it is thought of as separate entities not previously known. Who is there to wake up from his somnambulism and realize it is his own dear Self that is seen as all these? It is very strange indeed!

Nataraja Guru's translation:

There is not one thing here that we have not already once known;
Veiled by form, knowledge fails: wakefully to know all
There is none here boundless as it is;
O, who can know at all this wonder dear!

We are in the brief time of the year when we can have windows open during class. Last night a song sparrow poured its heart out for us, first joining in the chanting and then keeping it up until the dark set in, providing a glorious backdrop to our flowering whirlwind of a class, and coincidentally symbolizing the purport of the verse. After all, Narayana Guru is suggesting we open ourselves to a greater reality of which we are a part, a oneness that sings like a bird in the depths of our being.

There is a clear continuity from the previous verse to this, in the sense that the “vast expansive memory” of that verse morphs here into a knowledge of everything we encounter. The aim in both (and the entire work, for that matter) is to access “the priceless

ultimate knowledge.” This is not a measurable quantity, it’s a state of mind.

Here the affirmation is that we have already known everything we perceive, a simple idea that on reflection becomes dazzlingly complex. The class made a good first effort at unzipping the compressed file of Narayana Guru’s koan.

Nitya first brings in Socrates, who gives what might be considered the popular version of this idea: that we’ve lived many lifetimes and so have a huge store of knowledge that covers essentially everything we will ever encounter. Nitya does recognize that Narayana Guru’s take is somewhat different, and he pushes it in the direction of a more modern interpretation. I’ll take that just a bit farther, based on some of the more recent scientific theories. All versions agree that if we persevere, we can put ourselves in touch with a vast body of knowledge that is not normally accessible to our everyday consciousness.

Nitya’s version is summed up here:

Even in understanding the individuated forms of things you are using your own hidden concepts. Nothing new is ever used, but there are ever so many possibilities of reorganizing ideas so that they look new. You can always create complex situations and you can also understand all complex situations.

I’m sure Nitya would have been delighted by the subsequent findings and speculations of neuroscience. Their gist is that we gradually develop from an undifferentiated state of awareness to one where we have a clearly defined picture of our world. The mental structures erected in the process determine the way we see and understand everything. Moreover, there is so much input even from this one life as to stagger the imagination. Once our world view is created, it operates behind the scenes as a manager of what we perceive. It takes a faint whiff of sensory input and whips up a convincing display of what it likely means. It is even kind enough to include the conviction that what we are seeing is reality in itself,

and not simply a plausible fiction, which accounts for the reluctance of most humans to even begin to question their own superficial interpretation of events.

What this should teach us is that we can release our limited consciousness into a much, much greater consciousness that is still us, if we refuse to buy into the projected display and open ourselves to what we call the Absolute or the All. The rest of what we are. I believe that assertions of “all-knowingness” that permeate religious literature are hyperbole. No realized master has ever been literally all-knowing, but they have found access to their greater reality, which allows them to have a seemingly miraculous response to any particular situation.

Nitya wants us to know that this is not just the purview of special “realized” beings, but everyone already has this potential. I think he could tell we weren’t quite appreciating the value of the teaching, so he spelled it out plainly for us:

This verse should make you bold, happy and very enterprising. Bold in the sense that nothing can be hidden from you. You already know everything. But this knowledge is to be made certain in the language in which your mind understands it. There is a difference between having a knowledge and recognizing it. The only difference between a seer—a realized person—and an unrealized person is that though they both have the wisdom, one recognizes it with certitude and the other is still fumbling. It’s not that he doesn’t have it. In fact, he *is* it. When he looks into the mirror he sees his beard, or she sees her funny face. They think “How can I be That? How can I be the Supreme, the Absolute? Am I not that little mouse?” You are not the little mouse, that’s only your form. Knowing there is nothing other than you, whatever your form, emboldens you, makes you fearless.

You also become enterprising, once you understand there is the possibility to go from the lack of recognition to the recognition of your inner vastness. You can not only be, you can recognize yourself to be. What we are given here is not just a generalization, but how in the very world of the effect, the particular, the individuation of

things, you can relate yourself to that Absolute, bringing the totality to bear upon what is presented here and now.

And, of course, happiness is a natural outgrowth of this increased understanding and identification with absolute values.

I remember thinking at the time, “Oh, so we’re supposed to be bold, happy and courageous. How does that work again?”

Nancy—who exemplifies this ability to tap into her greater being wholly unpretentiously—spoke eloquently about it. She knows when she is lost—not just physically but in any sense—if she can release her concerns into confidently feeling part of the whole, then the solution is already there for her. She has learned to trust in a solution appearing if she can only master her fears and worries about being in a predicament. She tells herself, “I am okay, and this difficulty is okay.” It requires that she forget her small ‘s’ self and attune to the big ‘S’ Self. And after all, that’s the main theme of the entire hundred verses.

One easy technique for accessing this ability is to assume the solution is already known. If nothing else, it moves us from anxiety to calmness, which is the same as from closed to open. I’ll add a nice description of this in Part III.

The class examined the many ways we have learned to denigrate ourselves: only special people are realized, we don’t know the right answer, we defer to others because they know better, we live on the periphery, and so on. Nothing wrong with some of that, but it has unwittingly dug us into a hole. Narayana Guru is offering a counterbalancing mantra to “I’m not okay.” He suggests here that we could just as easily affirm that we do know, we are aware, we are capable. We matter. Clinging to the doubts instilled by our education causes us to spiritually shrink, whereas by affirming our unbounded potential we expand. We’re not talking about an ego expansion, of course: an expanding ego interrupts our communication with our greater Self. We lower the ego to expand in a spiritual sense.

Deb underlined what the rishis have been saying for thousands of years: we are knowledge itself. Knowledge isn't something separate from us we have to obtain. We are the source. Bill added that this isn't about conceiving of an endless reality—the very act of conceiving interrupts the endless reality we are an integral part of. He mused that we are trained to use our surface mind to make sense of things, instead of inviting our deeper Self to teach us.

Moni spoke of this, too. She remembered Nitya telling her “You already know everything. Most of the time it isn't so important to think about, but when you need it you will have 300 times more than necessary pouring into you.”

So we learn to think of ourselves as non-knowers, and it goes very deep. An interesting corollary I've often noticed is that confusion is often used by people as a defense mechanism. They are perfectly capable of understanding something, but they don't want to hear it, so they throw up a wall of misunderstanding to protect their timid perspective. No matter how clever you might be in providing a clear explanation, they aren't going to hear it. Nitya talked about how people can come to accord by trying to listen to each other and reframing their explanations, but that only works when both sides are predisposed to hear each other. Part of our albatross training is learning how to tune out contradictory information; again, a shrinking proposition. Deb agreed that if we are confident in our knowledge, we are not afraid to listen. The implications of that idea are vast.

Bushra got a kick out of the paradox that our vision limits our world, by interposing solid objects in front of most of it. It's exactly the opposite of what we habitually believe. Nitya uses the idea to bring home the profound truth of this emboldening verse, that all our concepts get in the way of our boundless awareness:

The Guru says that because of this you do not know what you are missing. “As this dear wonder is boundless, who is there to know it? Alas! It is strange.” What you miss is the very dear Self. You are like

a person who is sleeping with a great treasure under his pillow. If only you knew! But instead you feel so haggard and hungry and weary and poverty-stricken.

So from this point onwards we can take the resolve to counteract all the negative hypnotic suggestions lying buried in our minds, with a mantra like, “I have access to all knowledge,” or “I am a vast being.” Whenever those habitual negative ideas surface, as they surely will, we can notice them and bring in their opposite idea. We can balance ourself in both directions, definitely, but most of us err far more on the side of negativity. Once we root out those heavy weights, our steps will ever be lighter.

We are now almost 2/3 of the way through *Atmopadesa Satakam*, and Nitya was about to go on another burst of travel, so there was a hiatus in the class here. His summation of our endeavor was very moving, and I used a short excerpt of it on the front flap of *That Alone*. Since we are not bound by the limitations of fitting onto a piece of the cover, I’ll reprint the whole for our closing meditation.

We had been diligently applying ourselves to the study, arriving by 6:00 AM for the morning session, pondering it all day, and returning in the evening for further elucidation and discussion, seven days a week. I suppose our brains were turning to mush, being dissolved so they could be recast in a better mold, the kind of “growth spurt” that Nature produces at intervals, but that can be replicated by that kind of intense concentration. Still, it can’t help but be disconcerting to have your brain expanded beyond its accustomed boundaries. I know I was wondering what I had learned, because I could remember almost nothing specific. I felt great, but also unsure of what was happening. I had to sustain myself with an optimistic hope that some invisible transformation was taking place. Nitya must have known this was an important moment to reassure his students that there was much more taking place than simple confusion. Here’s how he put it:

This was certainly a wonderful experience for all of us to gather in the mornings and sit together and commune. Not all the days were alike, and everything you heard might not have been so inspiring, but here and there something must have gone deep into you. That little bit which strikes home, that makes a flicker of recognition and continues to shimmer in us, is enough to give us some direction in life. There is no need to learn each verse and then rationally apply it in everyday life. You can even hear it and forget it. Forgetting means it only goes deeper into you. Once you have heard it, it will go and work its way by itself.

The effect will be very subtle. It comes almost without you knowing that it is something which you heard that is enabling you to see things in a new light or make resolutions in a certain more helpful way. Nothing is ever lost. Even this very peace that comes to our mind during these verses is so penetrating that we feel the depth of the soul, the Self. It is indescribable. The indistinct part of it is as beautiful as the distinct. In a Chinese painting most of it is indistinct, but this does not make it in any way less valuable than a realistic photograph.

Bushra loved the idea that “Nothing is ever lost.” It’s another affirmation we can take home with us to counteract the sense of loss that an exploitive commercial mentality relentlessly instills in us. And we did.

Part II

Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:

Knowledge as an experience is the recognition of familiar concepts structured in a certain way. In the flux of consciousness new configurations arise and for a moment they may look very unfamiliar or, as in most cases, too familiar to be specially noticed. When a sense of unfamiliarity arises it comes as a question “What

is this?” “What does it mean?” “How?” “Why?” or “Which?” In search for the answer we go from the presented to what is not immediately obvious. In other words, we need to go from the effect to the cause. As we begin to probe, what appears to be unfamiliar at first will show a few factors that are known, and this is followed by a recall of the cause and effect context to which it belongs. In a systematic way, we can go from one previously known concept to another by restructuring the given situation. Consciously or unconsciously, we always do this. Tacitly everyone agrees that everything can become known, otherwise no one would bother to make any research in fields that are apparently forbidden.

The Socratic method of solving the most complex of problems by serializing questions of a very simple order exemplifies the predetermined faith that everyone knows everything. The lack of recognition is forgetfulness of the relationship between a particular effect and its cause. A wrongly structured memory can often be a stumbling block in recognizing another unique way of structuring. This difficulty was already alluded to in the previous verse.

In Meno, one of Plato's Dialogues, Socrates says:

The Soul, since it is immortal and has been born many times, and has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So we need not be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else which, as we see, it once possessed. All nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything so that when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—learned it in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search, and learning are in fact nothing but recollection.

In the present verse, Narayana Guru agrees with Socrates that what we call learning is only recollection.

Socrates gave Meno a demonstrative proof of this theory. He drew a geometrical figure of a square divided into four equal squares. He put simple questions to a slave boy to derive all the attributes of that figure. The boy first answered him smartly then came to utter confusion and perplexity. At one stage he simply gave up his attempt to solve the problem. But ultimately, when Socrates changed the mode of questioning, the boy succeeded in bringing out all apparently hidden secrets.

Knowledge can be looked at from the existential angle of its content, the ideal angle of its form, and the essential angle of its significance. According to present day physics, at the subatomic level, existence and non-existence are relative terms and nobody can predict what particle is going to change into what other particle. Thus, everything could be anything in the infinite progression of the flux of energy. All reductions and elaborations in mathematical logic are only formal restructurings of the implied idea. Essentially all formulations in consciousness should be the same at the causal level. Thus, the essential unity in the knowledge of all is undisputed.

A formally restricted entity reveals the uniqueness of one modulated value at the expense of concealing the all-inclusive Absolute, which is the ever-abiding reality of all. It is strange how we do not see the Real when we become obsessed with the actual.

* * *

Nataraja Guru's commentary:

MEMORY is at the basis of our vision of the manifested world. This is the theory of '*adhyasa*' or superimposition, well-known to Vedantic thought. The reality that we attribute to the objects we see are to be traced to their source by a process of reasoning which goes from effect to cause. Such a philosophical way of enquiry is natural and normal to the human mind. We are always asking ourselves about the 'how', 'why' or 'what' of things. All things

must have a cause, and science is what reveals the cause behind effects which constitute all the appearances in which we all live.

Adhyasa (superimposition) has been defined as the grafting by memory of something which does not belong to the place or context. It is a special or particular instance of wrong perception. The associative or apperceptive masses that are formed by our long contact with objects in our past, however long, are not lost, but remain as 'samskaras' or conditioning unit-factors which colour our present vision, giving it a 'reality' which is not really there. Subtle associative unit-masses of habitual forms called 'vasanas' (tendencies) operate to shape or determine our present view of things.

Western psychology does not give much place to this deeper aspect of the structure of perception. Perception becomes conception, and both of these interact, giving depth of meaning to everything. Emotive factors enter into cognition and conation to a larger extent than what is envisaged by the merely superficial stimulus-response or mechanistic psychology known in modern Europe or America. The Bergsonian theory of memory holds good here and gestalt configurations also count.

The whole question has to be viewed from a vertical rather than from a merely horizontal perspective. When we have done so, the verity of the statement in the first line of the verse above, which at first might appear too sweeping, will become more evident. Our consciousness, whether individual or collective, must, in principle at least, contain all that has been the least meaningful in our past life. There cannot be any effect without a corresponding cause. This cause must necessarily be any effect without a corresponding cause. This cause must necessarily be hidden in the past.

That form hides instead of reveals, as the second line of this verse seems to suggest, refers perhaps to a more fundamental

philosophical verity. Its shape or colour fails to touch the substantial basis of an object. Colour could be an optical effect and shapes could be mere outlines demarcated in space. The content or the thing-in-itself, as Kant would call it, is not the same as the accidents that are merely attributes of the substance that is not given to the view.

In the Indian philosophical context we distinguish between 'dharma', the mode of expression of an object and the 'dharmi', the basic reality common to particular modes of expression, which is the cause or agent that produces the effects or 'dharmas'. This agent cannot be seen, but has to be inferred through the exercise of the faculty of reasoning. What hinders reasoning here is the visual aspect. In thinking of colours or forms, which belong to the order of appearances, the reality becomes obstructed to the extent that we are misled by them. The extraneous impediments of form have to be brushed aside before a notion of the basic reality can dawn in our minds. It is in this sense that form is said to obstruct our knowing objects in themselves.

The impossibility of knowing all objects in this universe must make us give up any ambition, such as to be able to be so wakeful as to take into our consciousness all that is possible to know, without any remainder. We cannot be at all places together. Each is obliged to live in a bounded world of his own, whether big or small. Even when the collective consciousness of humanity brings within its wakeful scrutiny or purview the large world of outer space or when it examines microscopically the space in which minute particles live and move - while it is true that we can theorise or generalise about them, the knowing of each and all as particular objects or events in a fully wakeful or 'objectified' sense becomes impossible to conceive. There are expanding universes known to science beyond galaxies, and newer and newer particles leap into view as we progress in the scrutiny of atoms. Individual possibilities of wakeful knowledge are still more limited. Actual

knowing, as distinct from inferential knowing, draws a still narrower circle around our range of vision of things. Even the outside wall of our living room is only known to us at second-hand.

The 'dear wonder' referred to in the last line is that aspect of the Absolute not subject to the influences of memory-aspects of consciousness. It has been pointed out in verse 64, that memory is the enemy of spiritual progress. Retrospective in its drag or regret, it is only a negative factor. Only bold spirits can undertake the positive conquest of the unexplored aspects of what is known as 'adrishta' (the unseen) or 'apurva' (the never-known before) aspects of the Absolute Truth, which alone gives a crowning character to the notion of the Absolute itself.

The unseen can refer to the Absolute as the adorable, whether as God, as a high moral value, or as artistic perfection at its best and rarest. Whether through theology, which might call it God; or through ethics that might call it the embodiment of 'dharma' ('Dharmakaya' as with Buddhism) that could by-pass theological gods; or through aesthetics that visualizes this rare aspect of creative thought as something precious - we here touch a value that is absolute and supreme. This is given only to the vision of the boldest adventurer in the realm of the spirit, and constitutes the most precious aspect of human wisdom itself. The last line declares how rare it is to attain such positive wisdom.

Part III

There is a story behind Nitya's paragraph from the commentary, where he relates the kind of object that makes him think he doesn't have a prayer of making sense of it:

Many things are so perplexing that we don't see even the remotest possibility of some day understanding them. For instance, you might

pick up Bertrand Russell's *Principia Mathematica*, but from just looking at the cover you will put the book down again. The cover design is such that it baffles your mind. When you open it and see the bizarre symbols with which it is filled, you imagine you could never understand even one page of it. But after all it was written by a man just like us. If it were totally impossible, he would not have attempted it. So if we were to take the time to decode all the symbols and study the arguments, eventually it would begin to make sense to us.

Here's some of the background. This is from Love and Blessings, the chapter entitled A Universal Language:

After thirty-five years of continuous study and meditation on *Darsanamala*, Nataraja Guru was ready to make his final translation and commentary. I entered his room at 4:00 each morning and always found him sitting on his bed, eager to reveal his latest vision. He spoke like Niagara Falls, and I had a hard time writing down everything he said. During the morning class I would read out his dictation, and he would spend the whole afternoon tinkering with it and typing out a draft of the monograph. Each night I was asked to read it and offer suggestions. It was his habit to go to bed at nine o'clock, but from all day four until nine we were pondering subtleties and reading from books of heavy language. I thought my poor aching head would burst!

Whenever he disagreed with a point some author had made, he would ask me to justify the views. One of his favorite techniques was to treat me as if I was actually the author. Suddenly I'd find I was being addressed as Plato or Descartes or someone, and he would be shouting questions at me about my position. Pleading innocence was no use. It only infuriated him. I had to defend every idea of the philosopher I was projected to be. When this finally drove me crazy I would walk away, even go to the bathroom, but no sooner would I get inside and close the door than I would sense his presence outside. He would continue the

harangue as if we were still sitting properly in the classroom:
“Nitya, probably what A. J. Ayer meant was...”

A. J. Ayer, Carnap, Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein, Whitehead, C. D. Broad, T. H. Huxley—all those names became like nightmares to me. I wished they had never been born! Guru was a good physicist and mathematician, so he could thoroughly enjoy Russell and Whitehead’s *Principia Mathematica*, the most unreadable book I ever saw. When I read it, whenever I’d come to an equation I’d just skip over it. If anybody had asked me if I’d ever seen Iblis or Satan I’d have said they looked just like equations.

Guru had a trick for correcting my negativity. A neighbor’s daughter would come around hungering for a biscuit or a banana, and he would present the problem of the moment to her, minus the equations. He used the Socratic method, putting simple questions one after the other. She invariably answered correctly, showing how easy it was to understand not only Russell and Whitehead, but even Wittgenstein! I would have given anything if only she had never come grinning into Guru’s room. All the same, his simplified lessons for her were very illuminating, and I always rushed to my room to make a note of them.

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Here’s another twist on the idea that we already know everything. I “accidentally” ran across it this week listening to an audio book. I found the excerpt and some interesting context on a blog run by four writers. I should say that in the same book Dan Brown describes yoga as a Buddhist technique, so you can take that adjective with a grain of salt!

From <http://www.moodymuses.com/2009/04/trust-your-intuition.html>

Trust Your Intuition

I recently re-read *Angels and Demons* by Dan Brown—something about my trip to Italy last summer has informed many of my reading selections in the months that have followed — and while I loved the story for its pace, setting, and references to art and architecture, I found an unexpected nugget in this reading that I thought pertained to all of us in so many facets of our lives . . . but particularly to the writing parts of ourselves.

The nugget has to do with intuition.

In how many aspects of your life does your intuition come into play? Are you one of the lucky ones whose intuition is finely tuned? Or, are you like me – trying hard to be still enough to hear that wise but seemingly elusive inner sage, while I plead with myself for some much needed writing guidance from a higher power?

I think that's why the following passage struck me in such a strong way during this latest reading of the book. (To add a little context, the character, Vittoria , is a mathematician and a scientist who had been working with her recently murdered father on a revolutionary energy source. She finds herself with Robert Langdon in the mystery of a lifetime – one in which they both have to think their way through a series of intricate and historical clues to find her father's killer.)

“Remembrance was a Buddhist philosopher’s trick. Rather than asking her mind to search for a solution to a potentially impossible challenge, Vittoria asked her mind simply to remember it. The presupposition that one once *knew* the answer created the mindset that the answer must *exist* . . . thus eliminate the crippling conception of hopelessness.” (*Angels and Demons*, p. 137)*

When it comes to your writing, how helpful would it be for you to stop and practice the art of remembrance? To assure yourself that

you once knew the answer to that plot question, or character conundrum, or conflict crisis so that you can relax, have faith, and rely on your memory that the answer will come back to you . . . if you can just be still and heed your powerful intuition.

The very idea reminds me of my most favorite poem by the Persian mystic and poet, Rumi:

The minute I heard my first love story I started looking for you, not knowing how blind that was. Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along.

So are our stories. We just don't find the answers to our writing problems somewhere . . . they, too, are in us all along.

Trust your process, trust your abilities, and trust your intuition. And go forth and write!

Seize the day!
-Jessica

*[The next line is also important: Vittoria often used the process to solve scientific quandaries... those that most people thought had no solution.]

Part IV

Susan is in Japan with her recently-graduated son, but managed an early morning comment from afar:

Dear Scott,

Peter is still snoozing and I actually had time this morning to read the class notes. They're so great! I love all the things that people said and what you said about what they said and what Nitya said. What Nancy said really struck me. So wonderful and so good to

remember. The notes reminded me of an experience that Peter and I had a few nights ago when we stayed at Senju-in monastery. After dinner, there were women playing Koto and we and the other guests sat out on a long porch that overlooked a sweet garden with a pond. The garden was dark because the sun sets at 7 here and there were fireflies flitting around the garden. The way the music seemed to go so perfectly with the sparks of light from the fireflies was remarkable. Peter and I were mesmerized and for me, there was also the element of the quiet Japanese conversation amongst the other guests -- like another line of music. So serene. It smelled so good too -- gardenias grow like weeds... At one point, Peter said about the fireflies, "They are just so amazing -- I wish everything was like that!" I thought to myself, yes! They are so magical and exciting. But then I realized and I said to him, "Everything IS like that, it's just that we may not have seen it or realized it yet." I'm not sure where that came from but I guess, as the verse says, we are knowledge and it's all in there somewhere. It was funny that I said it (and Peter seemed to get it too) and then I had a nice meditation on the thought because it felt important. The fireflies so obviously give us their sparkly message of bliss and peace but the message is there in everything. The message is there but we are so distracted by the artifice of our busy and comfortable routines and ways of thinking. And don't even get me started on the artifact of hand held cellular devices! But not to get righteous here... It is wonderful to think about how we can find the magic of the firefly in everything, just by knowing it is there and by allowing the artifice to dissolve sometimes. Wonderful and inspiring.

On to Naoshima!
Susan-San

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Busy Dipika (her name means Lamp, the source of divine light) has been lagging a few verses behind, which is just fine.

She's just read verse 62 that included Deb's falling leaf poem, but her own poem follows Susan's report seamlessly:

what a lovely pome by Deb

at the end of a
rushed day
Atmo gladdens my senses

heart mind
endless duality
of a spark within a spark

many little sparks
a continuous
dipika make

* * *

Jake's commentary:

In Verse 65 and its commentary is the core Vedantic message damned equally by both the materialist Left and the dogmatic Right. Both the atheist and the religionist reject the principle that the Self and the Absolute are one, that the “only difference between a seer—a realized person—and an unrealized person is that though both have the wisdom, one recognizes it with certitude and the other is still fumbling” (p. 448). When we go as far as to recognize and live this truth, to accord the Self the final say, all those occupying the human forms extraneous to us no longer hold the keys to the kingdom, so to say. The high priests, the scientists, the experts and beauracrats soon lose their power over us—a defeat they are not about to suffer silently.

It is, perhaps, that extraordinary social pressure to accept authority outside the Self that makes the first line of Verse 65 so

alien to most of us living in 21st. Century modernity. On the face of it, stating up front that everything is already known to the Self before we recognize the fact telegraphs a message of fantasy or science fiction to those of us thoroughly indoctrinated to accept the mind as the final authority on knowledge (however much it is in need of an education). Most agree, that is, that this notion of an infinite pre-knowledge is both counter-intuitive and downright anti-intellectual. Stupid. In his commentary, however, Nitya drills down into this prejudice and demonstrates how it is anything but the incoherent hallucination we have managed to twist it into by way of our mindless training.

Nitya opens his commentary citing Socrates' Plato as "making the same point as Narayana Guru" (p 443). Both intellects point to the immortal nature of the soul/Self and its lifetimes of experiences that pretty much cover all known experience. As Nitya pointed out in his commentary on Verse 64 (and contemporary education theory demonstrates), education by its very nature requires prior knowledge in order to "take," thereby validating the necessary principle of pre-existing knowledge per se. Nitya reiterates this point (in the present commentary) in a paragraph dedicated to how we come to understand complex texts. He uses the example of Bertrand Russell's *Principia Mathematica*. The book would appear foreign, says Nitya, to those of us unfamiliar with mathematics. But that ignorance could be overcome with enough effort and diligence (if we chose to apply them). It would "make sense" once the language, concepts, and so on were made familiar to our pre-existing language, concepts, and so on.

As Nitya continues moving deeper into this system of remembering, he asks the question of just what it is we are learning when we sense these forms and create our concepts. He then supplies the one answer: all configurations and forms are comprised of the context—our consciousness itself, which operates on its own hierarchy of importance as far as qualities are concerned. Shape and color are secondary to content always. It is in the

sense/mind distinctions necessary for the mind to individuate that the mistaking of the shape or color of the form for the content itself occurs:

what we see here as forms is the formal recognition of those things with which we have associated in the present life. Those we've not associated in the present life look strange, so we think of them as unknown. . . . This brings a creeping sense of strangeness to our mind, which is one of the tragedies of the visual world. (p. 445)

All configurations, continues Nitya, appear in our consciousness, but this is the very point lost to us as we move about in our awake state and as our minds focus on the more trivial qualities of the objects we encounter. Shape and color differentiate similar forms (as do the words we attach to them) and allows us to navigate sense reality, a necessary mental operation that simultaneously pushes our *awareness of consciousness* further away from our wakeful state of consciousness.

At this point, Nitya counsels us to sit with our eyes closed and search for that which is unfamiliar, the conscious awareness, the context in which all these form arise and dissolve. That consciousness *is* the content common to all the forms, he points out. If we follow a reverse course and begin with the forms themselves and follow them to their origins in consciousness, we arrive where we started: “every bit of it is consciousness” and “everything is known.

This knowledge of oneness translates into the world of logical plurality, writes Nitya as he cites Socrates and Bergson, as we attempt to understand one another. In these transactions, we take nothing from the other party but use the opportunity to re-assemble the concepts we already have in order to match them with those we have confronted. Once the two are equivalent, we say we “understand” the other. We experience this brand of learning when someone offers us ideas we don't recognize and ask

for explanations. By re-phrasing a part of the idea the totality of it often becomes clear to us a self-evident. (We already knew.)

In addition to exploring the universe as one or as plurality (both of which point to our consciousness as the one knowledge), Nitya adds a third consideration shared by those in the scientific community generally: the holonic structure of the universe. As Nitya indicated in his earlier commentaries, all manifest systems are contained in other systems in a nested series of hierarchy from the molecule to the stellar. In short, the very structure of all is such that nothing is left out in a “seamless web,” as Ken Wilber has noted. “Everything is in everything else” (p. 446).

By waking and opening our eyes each morning, however, we once again know we occupy a body that limits perception and a mind fixed on the objects and concepts it must deal with. As Nitya puts the matter, because of the body obstructing the sight of other bodies, you do not see everything wakefully’ (p. 447). A common result of this redirection of attention from the “universal to the particular” (while forgetting our Absolute nature) is that “we do not know what we are missing” and spin on in a desperate campaign to find answers in maya as it dances in contradiction.

In his conclusion, Nitya writes that this situation is analogous to a person sleeping with a “great treasure” under the pillow while wearing himself out each day searching for it. The answer is within, and it is that very truth that all the “isms” and “ologies” of our social/political world violently deny. Likewise, by de-ifying and/or crucifying a realized person, we effectively separate his or her experience from any others; the treasure is left undisturbed. But the fact remains that realization occurs on its own in the first place—in spite of the norms that come and go on any side of the political divide.

* * *

I wanted to say a few more words about the epithet “It is strange!” because Narayana Guru means something definite by it, and in a way it is a key idea.

The world we observe—“all this”—has been formed out of our well-developed knowledge that has sprung (evolved) from our core source point, our karu. One might think that it would remain utterly familiar to us, yet somehow there comes a break in the continuity. At an early stage of life we begin to think of this aspect of ourself as foreign, and even hostile. We project our mental imagery as an outside world. All parents have observed that around the age of nine months their children suddenly become aware of “strangers.” Even old friends may produce a shock of recognition in the child that they are now different. Interestingly, this is right around the time when the theoretical eighteen-month gestation period ends. It must mark the beginning of the child’s separate existence. As Narayana Guru has made clear, this sense of otherness is the ground for all conflict and self-doubt. He laments here and elsewhere that we have all forgotten that connectedness we once intuitively experienced at all times. The worst of it is we become dissociated from our happiness—it is projected outside us along with our other imagery.

The Guru’s “Alas!” is his wondering why we don’t recognize our experience—this evolute of our own mental edifice—for what it is. It looks foreign and frightening, but it is nonetheless essentially us. Even if there were an other, we can only experience it as a known aspect of our own self. He well knows how much nicer our lives would be if we could restore the sense of unity which has been there all along and which we once knew intimately. Why is it so difficult to bring it back into the picture?

A corollary meditation for the contemplative is to ponder how the All veils itself from itself and becomes something that looks like an other. It seems impossible, since the veil is also the Absolute. And yet it happens. It makes the game of life possible, after all. It is both wonderful and terrible.

Part V

Hmmm. I thought we were done with this verse, and then I was reading *The Anointed Ones: Secrets of the Messiah Medicine*, by Michael Albert-Puleo, M.D., and he quotes Ecclesiastes 1:10, which closely parallels our subject. Actually 9-11 have the full idea, including the source of the phrase *there is nothing new under the sun*:

[9] The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

[10] Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

[11] There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.