

7/8/14
Verse 67

One is beyond what can be counted,
the other is ordinary; other than these two there is not any other
form
existing in waking, or in dream,
or in some city of the gods; this is certain.

Free translation:

All that comes within the ambit of experience can be divided into two. One is the ordinary, which can be perceived, calculated, analyzed and categorized. The other is the transcendent, which is beyond the ken of one's mind to grasp. Apart from these there is nothing else, here or elsewhere. This is certain.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

That which is beyond count, on the one hand,
And what is ordinary and of the workaday world;
Other than these two, there is no other form at all
Either in memory, in sleep, or in the city on high.

“One is beyond what can be counted.” What a perfect way to express the mystery of That Alone! Or we might say, One is beyond what can be *accounted*. Our mind is busy accounting for everything, so it's no wonder we insist there is nothing beyond our accounting. As Andy jested, we can see squirrels, but we can't see the One. That being the case, how many unaccountable events have to transpire before we let go of what is referred to here as the ordinary?

In these classes Nitya was addressing a churning roomful of intense people who sought him out particularly whenever they

were disturbed. He well knew there was nothing “ordinary” about the ordinary:

That world which is called *sadharanam*, the practical, the ordinary, has a snag: extraordinary things seem to happen, and unnatural events seem to interfere. If there were only objects and people we knew how to interact with and events we knew how to handle, the world would be fairly safe and unsurprising. But we tend to mistake one thing for another. We see in one object the properties of another. We mistake a person of a certain character and nature for someone different through our own projection, and try to deal with them in a way that is inappropriate to who they really are. When this doesn't bring the result we anticipated, weird situations are created, which are the seemingly extraordinary traits of the ordinary world.

We are familiar to some extent with our mind and its concepts, but from our consciousness there also arise certain urges we cannot control, certain emotions that cannot be bridled, along with depressions, negative feelings and even paranoiac fears. Here again we can lose our ground. We do not mean to belittle these aspects by calling the world they belong to simply ordinary. There is a lot of homework to be done in that world to keep things going harmoniously.

When the ordinary world pinches, the natural impetus is to try to escape the pressure. This is the realm where charlatans thrive, inviting desperately dissatisfied humans into their programs, some of which are at least well intentioned. Nitya's students were constantly bringing the latest spiritual bombshell to his attention, and a number of them dropped out of his demanding classes to pursue a lurid attraction, several of which are mentioned in this talk. Nitya lumped them together as aiming at a “third reality,” a fantasy world created to assuage our confusion:

Narayana Guru speaks of three wrong places in which many of us search. One is within our own thought sphere: taxing our brains to find a third reality. Another is living in wait for a vision to come, since we have so often heard of such visions coming to others. The third is striving for attainments. If you consult the Theosophists, for instance, they can give you the whole plan of aspiring to attain an astral body and fly to the seventh sphere. There are plenty of groups in the world with complicated plans for your life, but their ideas will only drag you into fruitless searches.

Although Nitya was charismatic, the philosophy he stood for is actually perfectly down-to-earth and rather humble. If you didn't know Narayana Guru or Nataraja Guru you might wonder what the point was. Somehow they were profoundly transformed by the very basic principles they espoused, and the effect was tangible. One of the negative aspects of the psychedelic trips that brought most of us to Eastern philosophies is that you can hardly help believing in some dramatic event that forever lifts you above the madding crowd. Ergo, if it wasn't weird or extraordinary, it was pointless. Such beliefs permeate our culture. Belief in miracles tantalizes and inflames the ego. Weird stuff is exciting.

Jan mused about this. She loves the worshipful aspect of life, and wanted to know how that fitted in to Vedanta. What did Nitya worship? It's by no means obvious.

Nitya was not religious in any ordinary sense: he always related the Indian gods to the psychological principles they embodied. He worshipped every moment of life, and he did it quietly and unobtrusively, though he respected other people's beliefs as long as they were harmless. The philosophy we embrace directs us to penetrate to the essence of the world as it comes to us, to throw off our false frameworks and "cities in the clouds" of heavenly imaginings that only draw us away from living experience. We have been taught that worshipping God is the only true worship, but from Nitya's perspective it is just attachment to

an imaginary hypothesis with no basis other than popular consent. Exciting God stories make it hard to appreciate the wonder of existence we are surrounded with at all times. The ordinary seems far too mundane. And yet it is right where the Beyond resides.

Jan in class and Scotty privately after, both confessed to being inexplicably happy lately, just walking down the street or digging in the garden. Noticing—really noticing—the beauty of the world around them. This is the true way to worship, according to Vedanta. Because worshipping like that doesn't fit the accepted mold, no one will be impressed. In fact, they are likely to pity us for our folly and urge us to give it up. But the heart knows. Part of this class is to strengthen our confidence in the value of the everyday miracles we experience all the time, and to see how most people are trained to be unhappy and to draw others into a similar state. Our conditioning tugs us to surrender to those toxic beliefs, but the gurus urge us to stand firmly on our own wisdom.

Most of the social pressures to conform to absurdities are so prevalent as to be invisible. The belief that we are born sinners who have to be remade to be worthy is a prime example. People spend their entire development stage of life trying to remake themselves to satisfy the imaginary cultural God. Deb remembered Nancy coming with us to one of our girl's middle school plays and bursting out, "Oh my God! I can see their little souls hovering above them, trying to get into their bodies." It's so sad! But they had all learned to abandon themselves by the age of twelve or thirteen, to the degree a visionary like Nancy was bowled over by the division. What Nitya calls schizophrenia. Almost all humans will pick a substitute persona and struggle to live with it. And they will have plenty of help: drugs and medications and distractions of all sorts. Anything to block the pain of losing their soul.

Why love the friend by your side when you could be reading exciting advice from a 13,000 year old reincarnated Lemurian? Or just not caring about it?

Spiritually we lack nothing. But a consumer culture has very thoroughly taught us how to be needy and project our happiness

onto objects that can be purchased. Part of the bliss Jan and Scotty felt was being able to feel confident that what they felt was true, and not simply based on alignment with external pressures. When we support our own authenticity we tap into a lasting happiness that is independent of the ups and downs of the environment.

This philosophy is too simple to be commercially successful. True happiness cannot be bought and sold. Only if it can be made complicated and exciting will it incite a mass movement. Behind all the hullabaloo, Nitya holds his ground, and extends his hand to us:

By exposing ourselves to great anguish and by struggling we cannot achieve an identity with the beyond. This secret is known to the truly wise. The wise person does not struggle, but lives in harmony. Is this a great thing? It's a very great thing.

If you read all the literature passed off as spiritual, and learn about the many techniques and gimmicks sold in the marketplace, and if you study the various kinds of exercises and disciplines people are trying to impose on themselves, you can see the importance of this caution. Contrary to popular belief it is not through any physical, mental or psychic struggle that we become endowed with wisdom.

Andy quoted Nataraja Guru's dear friend Harry Jacobsen: "There is nothing secret about yoga; the secret is that nobody wants it." Our wants are leading us in exactly the opposite direction.

The effort that characterizes Vedanta amounts to counteracting the popular beliefs instilled in us, discerning where those beliefs are blocking out the natural harmony of existence so we can de-energize them. Bushra believes that in many places everyday life is more in tune with the beyond than we are. She asserted that American culture is severely displaced from natural harmony, while many other cultures are more at ease with it. I hope it's true. In my experience, here and there people are able to

be open and accepting, but it's an exceptional thing. The Gita calls it one in a thousand, but that was the ancient way of saying "once in a blue moon." Most people are busily trying to reestablish their harmony with social strictures one way or another, and when they do they outwardly appear very comfortable. They like to follow familiar pathways, and that's fine. Only a rare individual feels suspicious about the tried and true and dares to stand free of all the readymade props. But Bushra is right that when harmony happens it's a perfectly simple and natural thing. Deb quoted Nitya as saying you just open your eyes. Then you aren't dreaming anymore; you're awake. Of course, he might have been speaking psychologically, but how hard can it be? In the verse Nitya puts it this way:

What, then, is this spiritual power or spiritual insight we are speaking of? If the Guru discourages us from seeking in all these places, where do we get it? It happens as simply as the little child getting breast milk from her mother, or the apple tree producing flowers and fruits in its proper season. It's as natural as that. If you don't think of yourself as only a creature of transaction, and if you keep yourself open to the greater ground in which the transactional occurs, something like an osmosis between your transactional world and the transcendent ground takes place.

Nataraja Guru also spoke of osmosis, intending to minimize the struggle: struggling squeezes the membranes tight so that osmosis cannot take place. Instead we are gently allowing our inner truth to permeate us, flushing off the ersatz garment that we tried valiantly to wear until we finally admitted it was never going to fit.

Stan made an important point, that we spend our first twenty years or so developing our social ego. For bright kids like him it's fun and rewarding, and for everyone it's wholly necessary. Only later do we realize it's but one aspect of our vastly complex being, and we have exaggerated its importance. Then begins the

sometimes arduous retraining of the ego to assume its proper size. He felt it was only by suffering that people begin to look beyond the social myths. And there's plenty of that! Stan reported that the World Health Organization predicts that by 2020 depression will be the second leading cause of disability on the planet. I wondered if number 1 was stupidity, so I looked it up: it's ischemic heart disease. Four of the top ten are psychological disabilities, however.

An essential part of the retraining of the ego is rediscovering the All, the Absolute. It is the missing part we are always searching for, usually without even knowing it. Reconnecting with it provides the sense of satisfaction and ease we all crave. Then we can abandon the false quest to find happiness somewhere out there, and carry it with us wherever we go. Nataraja Guru said, "Follow anything wholeheartedly, and you will get the truth." Every one of Nitya's classes leads us back to unitive truth, so that eventually we will be enabled to find the way ourselves. He concludes:

Here you have a total acceptance of the One because it is not one and many. It is the only one. The recognition of this affects your awareness of your own existence. You place your existence in that One. Then right inside you, you feel that oneness.

Part II

Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:

Each day several things come to pass, many are our transactions. We are conscious of the events and the people that come into our life, of our interactions and transactions, and we are also conscious of how each of these items gives way to the next. The content of our transactional consciousness is measurable, observable, calculable, inferable and conceivable; consequently we can judge the relative merit and demerit of what we experience. Our transactional world is empirically valid.

While all these transactions are going on, we are also aware of an overall consciousness that is not separable either from the field of our transactions or from the transacting agents. What is termed here as “overall consciousness” is an inadequate term because it includes the known as well as the unknown and the conscious as well as the unconscious. We do not know where it begins or where it ends. It seems to be independent, self-founded, all-by-itself, and anything we experience, including our very selves, is part and parcel of it and entirely dependent on it.

These are the two spheres of our experience, of which the former is ordinary and the latter is beyond adequate comprehension.

In the transactional world we discern the merit of things, persons and actions by using various kinds of norms or criteria. The physical world is governed by physical laws; these include the chemical, the biological and even the laws of mathematics. Those who want to transact with physical entities should learn to understand and appreciate the law that governs each field or each entity. Apart from these physical laws there are many man-made laws, conventions, taboos and social contracts, and although these are relativistic and alterable, we may have to go a long way with most of them for the sake of social harmony. When it pinches we can revolt and reconstitute the law.

The transactional world does not limit itself that way. There is room for mistaking the identities of our roles, false projections, pretentious deeds, evil motives and above all our many illusory and hallucinatory experiences. To guard against all these, science and scientific ways of disciplining our life will help to provide us with worldly wisdom. Our present day education, social welfare programmes, public health services and the judiciary are geared to meet these demands.

Man is not satisfied with all that. There is a deep need in him to seek and find the ultimate. Some people turn to their own inner consciousness and tax their brain with many hazardous disciplines in the hope of finding a reality which is other than the ordinary and

different from the totality to which they belong. Some of them stumble on pet theories or strange aberrations of their nervous system and become obsessed with their queer experiences. Some others look for clues in their dreams and decide to see the Ultimate face to face in visions. In the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, when Arjuna asks for the vision of the Supreme, Krishna says, "See whatever you desire to see." From this it is evident that most visions are psychic projections of one's own wish fulfillment. Then there are those who think that the ultimate is not in this world but in heaven or in another world, and a place can be secured there by doing meritorious acts in this world, or by pleasing God, or by bribing some intermediary agent. Narayana Guru dismisses all these as irrelevant attitudes and approaches.

This relativistic world of transactions and its Absolute counterpart are all there is. The Absolute is the ground, the source and the only truth to be known. It is not comparable to anything. Hence it is called Allah in the Quran; yet, immediately following the mention of Allah, two epithets of praise are usually found, the merciful and the beneficent. This is highly suggestive of the attitude one can have to one's own ground. The Absolute is treated as the adorable. Our very life on earth is to be treated as an expression, a flowering and a fruition of a value, or a graded series of values that glorify the Absolute.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

THERE are two archetypal types of knowledge to which all reality may be said to belong without exception or remainder. The first mentioned in the verse is the Absolute as conceived in its purest connotation which is beyond all plurality or computation. If it is one, it belongs to a unique order by itself. Notions of the one and many cannot apply to it. As pure mathematics is not merely arithmetical in content, the Absolute is the most generalized and

highly mathematical abstraction which does not refer directly, for example, to the items for sale piled up in the market place. One is perceptual or conceptual, the other is actual. Between these, all reality is comprised.

These components have to be put together for us to arrive at the normative notion of the Absolute, which is all-inclusive. For clarity we could say that there is a reality with a vertically logical reference and one that has a horizontal reference. There is nothing besides.

The pointed reference in the last line to the dream world; to the world of past memories or samskaras; and to the world that the life of a spiritual man aspires for or attains as the promised land, apocalyptically viewed - which is in common language referred to as the City on High or Heaven, and which is no other than the sum-total of value- items that human beings aspire after in terms of future happiness or other visualized goals - are all to be comprehensively included within the scope of the two axes of reference of values to man, whether here or hereafter, whether in the past or in the present. All else belongs to the limbo of the absurd.

The categoric generalization with which the verse ends is fully justified by a priori considerations. That Absolute which leaves something outside its scope is inconceivable, and we know also by the same a priorism applied to the notion of the Absolute, that reality must either be perceptual or conceptual. It could be said to consist either of 'relata' or of relations, to put it in the words of Eddington. Whatever the particular philosophical terms used, these two aspects comprise all.

We have consistently developed the terms from algebra and geometry as the vertical (pure) and the horizontal (practical) in

various contexts in articles published, which refer to the same two divisions.

Part III

I wondered in class whether anyone knew the source of the Christian theological analogy Nitya ends with. Because he read him a lot, I wondered about Saint Augustine. Stan sent in another idea, and some helpful additions to the notes:

Just tried to track down Nitya's christian reference in verse 67, thumbing a few minutes thru Meister Eckhart's sermons. ME seems a most likely author of that sort of effort, which he was very good at, of leveling out hierarchical Church dogmatics into complementary relations that made real, arrestingly good sense.

He was so good at it in fact that much to his credit he was accused of heresy by the powers that were, at least twice I believe, and then after his death, excommunicated. I did not find a passage that specifically paralleled Nitya's, but many that indirectly point to the same truly intimate (non-hierarchical) *relationship* between "God" and one's egoic self, however that may be framed—whether as father/son or beyond/ordinary or of course many many other ways, all instructive depending on one's own needs at the time.

Verse 67, by the way, was the biggest blockbuster yet for me. I never sent you my ruminations on it, because every time I set about articulating them in writing I would see some further, new significance, forcing me to rewrite and rewrite. Kept me busy an entire day, and when the same pattern started the next day I realized I just needed to sit back and let the integration complete itself before trying to write about it. That written effort is presently an ungainly mass of chaotic material that's neither sendable nor coherent even to me, and may have to just be pitched aside, but was very worthwhile to have wrestled with.

The biggest takeaway from 67 for me, in a nutshell, is a clearer understanding of “relation” itself, in what I think is the most general sense, quite apart from whatever the inter-related contents might be. The key relation of “relativity” itself--upon which our entire construction of phenomena, our consciousness, our ego, every aspect and element of the “ordinary” side of ourselves--I see as simply the relation of binary *difference*. After all, if we can detect no difference between two things, attributes, conditions, etc., then as far as we are concerned *those things do not and cannot exist*.

So, we and all other living creatures, are masterful at detecting differences, multifariously, that we then instantaneously combine into meaningful forms that spawn fresh differentiations and ever more complex forms, and as these forms exponentially emerge into “consciousness” we are then empowered to realistically deal with them in all kinds of practical, ordinary ways--the whole complex process which as N rightly points out, is highly challenging to manage well and easily goes wrong in unexpected ways. Thus it is no wonder that almost everyone at some point falls into over-focusing and being consumed by the ordinary material exigencies of life--not to mention how tenaciously “materialistic” values and philosophies of life become so badly deranged.

To better state my point at the meeting, kids first need about 20 years to completely “master” the phenomenal world and get up to speed with human society. They do so by leaps and bounds from the “blank slate” they start from, thru the evolutionary short-cut of language, social institutions like education, and much guidance from their elders, all of which largely has to be in place before that world can ever be perceived by them as “ordinary” in the full sense Narayana-Nitya mean. For them, still learning to drive a car, have a first girl/boyfriend, buy a stereo, and so forth, are all still totally extraordinary, exciting things that need to be pursued and lived out fully before the superficiality and humdrum ordinariness (and

oppressiveness) of all that can eventually be discerned for what it actually is, that is, small potatoes *relative* to the Beyond. There are exceptions to this, of course, but basically, someone deprived of full egoic development and thrust too soon into such “higher” considerations, easily turns out to be seriously imbalanced and strange, for life--such as pedophile priests and the astoundingly hypocritical persona of, say, J. Schizamurti.

No matter how old we are, as long as we remain mostly or even partly oblivious to this very simple and very clear distinction between the ordinary and the beyond (and related complementarities), we have little other choice but to chase “third realities.” And despite the dualistic limitations of the “adult” mind, that very power when directed “beyondwardly”, complementarily, is what allows the ordinary mind to effortlessly and harmoniously give up its dysfunctional predominance, by doing nothing more than getting clear about the Ultimate Difference, the “difference” that demolishes difference, thus relativity, and thus every obstacle to the blissful No-thingness we most fundamentally are.

So another quietly powerful framing of the Beyond/ordinary relation, to me, is the Same/different relation, in which relation itself--by its own binary logic--gets fuzzier and fuzzier and may even disappear....

Jai Nitya! -----Stan

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Jake’s commentary:

In the previous verse and commentary, the Guru and Nitya have repeated a basic point about the nature of the two worlds we inhabit and the tendency we have to privilege the one supported by

our mental/awake-ego state. The forces at work in that world also conspire to isolate our sense of *I* as permanently contending with others as isolated manifest forms that, in turn, are themselves just as real and permanent as our ego-constructed selves. This dual condition of maya constitutes the foundational platform on which both major cultural/political American camps rest. Without it, they both dissolve into the unreal, temporary illusion they share.

In this verse, the Guru moves us one step beyond our recognizing this condition and begins to explore where to go once we recognize what is and what is not: “the search is here and now,” as Nitya writes in his commentary “if you don’t think of yourself only as a creature of transaction, and if you keep yourself open to the greater ground in which the transactional occurs, something like an osmosis between your transactional world and the transcendent ground takes place.”

Before arriving at these two conclusions, however, Nitya reviews the Guru’s verse and its two major points. The world of becoming, this “ordinary world,” he notes, has “transactional validity” (p. 457) and is comprised of what we perceive and conceive. Our conceptions can be and are measurable in terms of scales, norms and criteria. Because we share them, through numbers, transactions among us become possible. These norms, in turn, can be further divided into “natural laws” and “socially conceived laws” (p. 458). It is the former of the two that cannot be violated without consequence. Stepping in front of moving train will, for instance, end badly for anyone who believes he has the power to withstand the locomotive’s energy. Socially conceived norms, on the other hand, are those we agree upon but can on occasion be transgressed without consequence. Theft, as an example, is generally illegal but there is often success without consequence in this criminal activity.

On exceptionally rare occasions, writes Nitya, gifted individuals manage to suspend the laws of nature, but their achievements are so minimal that they “don’t particularly alter our understanding of what is ordinary and what is beyond it.” It is in

our negotiating the world of socially constructed norms that our awake lives take place, and it also in this sliding, shifting relativity that we continuously make mistakes, mis-read others, and project our egoic constructions on to one another. This is the home of psychoanalysis, and “there is a lot of homework to be done in the world to keep things going harmoniously” (p. 459).

The second major point Nitya explores in his commentary on this verse the guru calls “the beyond.” Essentially the Absolute, this second dimension is beyond one’s mental powers to comprehend. It is the oceanic depths out of which the transactional emanates and returns. The wise person, counsels Nitya, “lives in harmony [with the two]” and “does not struggle” in living both worlds, the only two that exist. They are also both within, and that very point (made in the previous verse) leads to an inevitable truth that seeking a third alternative by emulating someone else or in following another’s program (for the purpose of attaining the “thing”) will lead you to “endless struggles.” Many adepts, yogis, or psychics, Nitya points out, may have attained a realized state and often their stories inspire others, in itself a positive and useful purpose, but when that pursuit becomes narrowed to the same goal via the same means exclusively, two errors work to undermine that awareness we seek. What another did to find him or her Self is true for *that* person, but you are not that person. Moreover, by modeling our behavior in order to attain a pre-determined end we objectivize the goal, reduce it to a thing our minds can objectivize. Unfortunately, the Absolute is not a thing that can be “understood.” It is the context of all, “the subject of all subjects” (p.462).

Living the now of both worlds demands we exercise a significant measure of trust and “absolute dependence.” That trust, concludes Nitya, opens for us the knowledge that our dependence is freedom because the Absolute depends on us every bit as much: “there is a togetherness in the search of the ordinary and the unnamable” (p. 463).