

1/22/13

Verse 7

Do not wake any more, and without sleeping remain as  
Knowledge;  
if you are unfit for this,  
then steadily fix your embodied self in devotional service to those  
great ones  
who ever live free from birth, in silent contemplation, awakened to  
*aum*.

The original translation is the same. Nataraja Guru's:

To wake never more, ever sleepless to remain, as awareness;  
If for this today you are not fit, then in the service  
Of those silent ones who ever dwell awake to AUM,  
Absolved from birth, steadily fix your form.

Dedicated souls braved the threat of icy roads to gather together once again. This class is already a high point among the string of highs that imbibing the gurus' thoughts have offered us over the years.

Because this verse is a kind of restatement of the first verse, the commentary contains a long and masterful recapitulation of the territory we've covered so far. In Verse 1 we were directed to prostrate inwardly to Knowledge, and the Karu or creative force that permeates it; here we are directed to either stay attuned to Knowledge on our own or else find someone who is well-attuned and apprentice ourself to them. Because such people are rare, most realized beings are historical characters. The model of living with a Guru and serving them is largely—but not entirely—obsolete. But we need to have some kind of support in our quest for Knowledge, or our efforts tend to fizzle out or get diverted into unhelpful sidetracks. It takes a formidably intense effort to stay focused on

our own, whereas with guidance our normal sine wave of hot and cold periods is likely to be good enough.

Deb was out reading poetry at one of the several celebrations of William Stafford's birthday, so I started us off by acknowledging that Nitya's and Narayana Guru's urging us to be committed can be frightening, because we fear we might lose some of our independence. The idea is not to cede our individuality, but to remain steadfast through the inevitable difficult periods. We are actually in the process of *regaining* our individuality. But self-improvement isn't all peaches and cream; there are painful struggles that have to be worked through. Part of us pulls back when our defenses are threatened, and when that happens many people move along to find a more pleasant scene. They dabble, and never go beyond square one. But change doesn't take place without a significant commitment.

Neuroscience has finally given us a map of why this is so. Our consciousness is expressed in concert with the way our neurons are "wired," in the pattern of connections in our brain. With an unconditioned infant brain we can forge new connections almost effortlessly, but once structures are in place they are much harder to alter. Until recently it was believed that change was impossible, but now that we can look at what's going on using imaging techniques, we can plainly see it is possible to rewire our neurons. But adult neurons are much slower to change than infant ones, and that's a good thing in some ways. If we try something strange that isn't such a good idea, we don't instantly become wired to it. For us it takes many repetitions of a new mode of thinking or doing to establish a new pattern, and as those new connections gradually strengthen the old, unused pathways become weaker. If you just do a little work and then change to something else, no transformation is accomplished. Nitya often said something like what appears in the book:

If we plant a seed, it needs to remain in one place to grow. It won't survive if it is pulled up every day and put in another

place. Bipolarity has the same secret. There has to be contiguity, a continuation of natural flow. The sap of a tree has an ascending and descending movement. Like that, there has to be a reciprocal flow between the master and the disciple, between the seeker and the light that is sought.

It's perfectly appropriate for the Guru to bring bipolarity up now, towards the end of the introductory section of the first ten verses. The hundred verses are a complete transformative vision, and he wants us to get the full benefit. There is a modest value to hitting a bit of it here and there, as it's based in a holistic philosophy that is eminently sane and kind, but to truly break out of the blockages we suffer from is not at all a simple matter.

Here's why: many things happen to us in early childhood, before we have any way of consciously interpreting them. Some are traumatic, and for many, they are overwhelmingly traumatic. The infant brain creates a defense that allows it to survive, but it becomes lodged at a deeper level than the conscious mind can access. The problem is the defense is automatic and not educable, and so it kicks in even when we don't want it to. It blocks us from fully living life, and we don't even realize what is sabotaging our best intentions. It's almost like an evil fate is at work.

Psychedelic medicines are amazing at giving us access to these defenses and assisting us to dismantle them. Thankfully they are slowly being brought back into play legally. They can provide a decade's therapy in a few hours. But Narayana Guru's program is a rare and excellent one that doesn't rely on anything other than a person's intelligence and willingness to change for the better. With expert guidance, that's all you need. When we hear testimonials of people who have read and studied *That Alone* claiming that it has changed their life, they aren't kidding. It really did.

I reiterated that a guru is whatever removes your darkness. It doesn't have to be a person. Each of us has a guru within that is a source of the guiding light we seek. We are intent on opening

ourselves up to it, in whatever unique way it may manifest in each of us.

Scotty talked about how his bodywork is similar. People have tightness or tension, and the point is to relax those areas. He has to work where it hurts. He's found that a good story makes a big difference. If a person thinks that what he's doing is going to make them healthier, he can literally feel the area relax. For instance, he often tells them that their emotions have metastasized in a certain area, but there is no need to beat themselves up by holding it in—they can let it go. And then they do.

So while our defenses are ordinarily beyond our control, we can access them some times, and much more easily with the help of another person. Several people talked about how they have learned to notice tension and then can release it. They can spot it instead of just being driven along by it, which is the unexamined position. This is terrific as far as it goes, but the source of the tension is still present, so all they are doing is mitigating the symptoms. Narayana Guru is showing us how to relieve the original trauma, which alleviates all the misery it was producing, all the self-sabotage.

Paul added that describing our faults and pains as evil is a story that makes them worse. If we treat them as our guide, it can lead us to a positive outcome. He gave the example of a Native American shaman who walked without shoes so he could feel not just the soft ground of the trail but the sharp stones and thorns at the side. The painful feelings told him he was straying off the path. He was guided by both the sharpness and the softness.

Seeing the incidents of our life, both the good and the bad, as teaching factors, is an excellent story that helps us to grow rather than defend.

Michael gave an example of a somewhat different tack from a favorite movie of his, *Lawrence of Arabia*. Lawrence would put out a match with his fingers. His friend tried it and got painfully burned. He asked, "How do you do it?" Lawrence answered, "The

trick is not minding that it hurts.” You can watch the brief scene here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYNElueJj\\_w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYNElueJj_w) .

I’ve mentioned before Freud’s analogy that no matter how painful your rotten tooth is, when the dentist approaches with his pliers you instinctively push him away. That was before anesthesia, of course. But our defense systems don’t necessarily realize when something unpleasant is going to do us a world of good. We are more likely to tell ourselves a story that our “rotten tooth” is okay, it’s not a problem. It’s who we are. So leave it alone! And we’ll go find a dentist who agrees with us.

Psychologists have observed that we don’t base our ideas on facts, we craft our facts to suit our ideas. That means our ideas are in fact very important in shaping our outlook, and we are well advised to take some care in choosing what to believe.

Jan gave a good practical example of yoga in action. She often thinks of changes she wants to make, but they are impossibly remote. She feels inadequate, but she doesn’t hold too hard to either the vision or her idea of not being up to it. She winds up somewhere in the middle, where she is comfortable with her acceptance and compassion. Almost by accident, she brings herself to a middle path, and that turns out to be a really good place. I also highly recommend reading Susan’s ideas sent out earlier (That Alone 6, Part V) for some good insights along the same lines.

The middle way is exactly what the verse is talking about. Waking and sleeping are the opposite poles used as an example here, but they can be anything. The Guru is counseling us to not be a partisan of one side or the other but take them together. When we do, we convert to a whole new way of being, described here as awakened to aum, awakened to the underlying vibration of the totality.

Mick talked about tension and anger. These are exacerbated by partisanship, by taking sides and refusing to acknowledge the validity of any opposing position. He knows that acceptance, aided by deep breathing, can ease the tension, but it is a challenge. There are many instances when we know we’re right and the

opposite is wrong, but becoming self-righteous about it just makes matters worse. It's a perfect place for our intelligence to intervene. Anger makes us stupid, essentially. It truncates our mentality, giving us tunnel vision. We refuse to see even simple, plausible things when we're angry. All our energy goes into defending our position, so there is none left to hear with.

New visitor Drew talked about how as a teenager he felt he had to reject his parents' belief system, but now he sees he can accept the good parts of it. He no longer feels pressed to reject things. That's a very important step in the right direction. Rejecting something is still tied to that thing. Rejecting and accepting are two sides of one coin. To be free, we have to rise above such considerations. It's not easy. It's a growth process, not an instant shift. Rejecting comes easy to us humans. There are deep-seated predilections to it. But the pleasure of letting all that junk go is more than ample compensation.

We are indeed tightly bound, even those of us who have done a lot of work on our self already. We don't know how to communicate with the demonic part of our psyche that is tripping us up, that is preventing us from accomplishing all that we would like to. Narayana Guru, with Nitya's able assistance, is going to teach us how to get in touch with our authentic self. It's a very exciting project, a liberating project, if we can just stay with it.

## Part II

Nataraja Guru's version:

To wake never more, ever sleepless to remain, as awareness;  
If for this today you are not fit, then in the service  
Of those silent ones who ever dwell awake to AUM,  
Absolved from birth, steadily fix your form.

THIS is the third verse in sequence which refers to the alternating states of sleeping and waking in consciousness. The analysis of states of consciousness in a vertical series referring to deeper and

deeper seats of consciousness is familiar to us in the context of the methodology of the Vedanta. Especially is this so with Sankara who conceived the Absolute as the witness of the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, with the 'fourth' called turiya, which touches the deepest stratum of Absolute awareness. But before coming to deepest seats of pure consciousness, it is necessary in the initial stages of developing the subject of Self-knowledge, to distinguish between the vertical and horizontal. The necessary aspects of everyday biological rounds of activity have been referred to in verses 5 and 6. We were brought to the threshold of a central spiritual value which persists at the core of even our everyday life, in and through our ordinary activities. It was referred to as a guiding light in verse 5, and as a changeless factor to which we should become awake in verse 6. The poles of the vertical axis of spiritual progress or Self-instruction have thus been worked out for us in verse 5. These poles were brought together more unitively in verse 6, as a way or an axis referring to unitive values in life. Instead of the cosmological setting with a source of light apart from the seeker, guiding as it were from beyond, the metaphor here refers in terms of the personal consciousness and its affiliation to lasting or changeless values which are under the category of the Eternal. The present verse goes one step further in the same direction. Sleeping and waking are not treated here in verse 7 as alternating states falling outside of the vertical axis of pure consciousness. In the form of a central neutral awareness independent of both the alternating states lying on one side or the other of the vertical axis, there is here a function postulated in which pure knowledge thrives and triumphs in and through itself.

This state of equilibrium between alternating states or tendencies is the secret of the contemplative or the yogi. The verse assumes the existence of silent men who live in this kind of unitive awareness in which the mean or middle ground between the alternating asymmetrical states in consciousness is merged into a central stream. Here it is hard to distinguish whether the subject is in a

state called sleep or whether he is fully awake. Participating in both from either side as it were, sleep is to be understood in terms of waking, and waking in terms of sleep. Awareness becomes fully neutralised in this fourth or deepest dimension.

Active temperaments tuned to the horizontal world of action and caught in the love of particular objects of interest cannot steady themselves in the pure contemplation of absolute Value. There are, however, rare individuals among human beings who may be said to have tuned themselves to this kind of higher consciousness, which belongs to a category by itself. If an aspirant to wisdom feels that he has not understood the content or the intellectual and emotional implications of such an attitude as recommended here, there is a time-honoured alternative method known to many wisdom texts, especially in India, of establishing bipolar relations with a master who has already attained to the awareness or attitude implied. As the understanding of the attitude is not possible by the usual didactic methods of learning and teaching, which are mostly based on an a posteriori, pragmatic, empirical or logical approach, the only way to get it is through a global intuition which has its favourable conditions. By means of a subtle rapport and a mutual bipolar personal adoption between the seeker and the teacher, a sort of osmosis is established. The personality thus better adjusted to the absolutist way will be able to absorb something of the master's attitude to the seeker when all the conditions required for the transmission of the teaching are present together.

The service of such a wise man is meant to induce that degree of mutual adoption necessary for the osmotic transfer of the wisdom-state from teacher to seeker. Mistrust and disadoption between the two concerned in such a bipolar wisdom-situation would tend to make the experiment a failure. Sankara's 'VivekaChudamani' (verses 37 to 43) refers to the relation between the teacher and the disciple in detail, and the Bhagavad Gita, after entering into the subject in chapter IV-34, goes into greater and greater secrets to the point where the teacher there, who is Krishna the Guru, feels confident that there is no disadoption between himself and Arjuna



the pupil, and himself refers to the possible kind of disadoption by the name asuya (a carping attitude).

In the Upanishads we have several instances, such as that of a Nachiketas, Satyakama or a Svetaketu, who are adolescent seekers of wisdom and who are taught only after the requisite bipolarity of relations is securely established between teacher and pupil. The wavering mind, caught between rival interests, has to be steadied. This can be accomplished only by a body and soul affiliated to the context of wisdom. The wholeheartedness of the affiliation requires that the whole man, which does not exclude the physical, is made to comply or bend, as it were, to listen to the word of wisdom represented by the personality and attitude of the Guru. (1) According to popularly accepted dicta on the Indian soil, no wisdom which has not received the sanction of a Guru can be valid.

'AS AWARENESS': The deeper one sinks into consciousness, the more independent does it become of the alternating states of sleeping and waking. In verse 9 the two poles of the vertical axis are more explicitly alluded to, the two states of sleeping and waking attaining to an alternating asymmetrical expression. After establishing bipolarity with a supreme notion as representing the Absolute, the aspirant is to develop, here and now, a corresponding attitude of neutrality and steadfastness of a wholehearted character so that interests can be secured at both ends and kept within the right path of spiritual progress. Wisdom can result only when the conditions are fulfilled correctly. The two poles implied and the axis involved have first to be visualised or postulated correctly before instruction in the Self can go on unhindered. Neither the waking life or overt action nor the dreaming life of innate mental representations can give the correct orientation prerequisite for Self-realization.

'SILENT ONES': The word 'muni' is given here. It brings to mind the picture of a recluse living in a forest or far from the 'maddening crowd's ignoble strife.' Mouna means silence, and contemplatives of the type called munis in India are those who are generally

sparing in speech. They have invariably a pronounced inner life which lives in constant awareness of a high human value represented by the Absolute Self that they themselves represent. The two attributes that follow in the same verse, giving two of the limiting characteristics by which such persons have to be distinguished, are also referred to as follows:

'AWAKE TO AUM': The analysis of self-consciousness with reference to the mystic syllable AUM has been masterfully accomplished in the Mandukya Upanishad which, with its commentaries by masterminds such as Gaudapada and perhaps Sankara also, should make what is implied here quite complete and as thorough-going as can be expected. The letters A, U, M, represent three grades of open, half-open and closed states of consciousness, with a fourth stratum that pervades all the others. The vertical axis may be said to pass through all of them. Activity and passivity, waking overtness and dreaming innateness, are all levels to be marked on one and the same vertical axis in which consciousness can live and move towards action at one stage or to pure inaction at the other.

'ABSOLVED FROM BIRTH': The phenomenal existence of a living being, when biologically understood as active, is one in which horizontal factors enter to a greater or lesser degree. When pure movements of contemplative thought are established, as it were, along the vertical axis of awareness, the alternations as between birth and death, sleeping and waking, which have their being only on the horizontal plane, cease to operate. Even if they do operate, they have to be considered as null and void, belonging to the world of secondary values which can be dismissed as mere epiphenomena. We might here perhaps pause to ask relevantly whether or not the well-known doctrine or theory of reincarnation is not implied here. This doctrine or theory belongs to the general background of Indian thought. It has never been put forward as an article of faith. Various versions of the same theory are found in different grades of literature, beginning from the Puranas (legendary mythological lore) up to highly philosophically-

conceived works such as the 'Yoga Vasishtha'. Popular belief has its own story to tell of an ancestor whose soul might be in a crow that pecks first at a ball of cooked rice ritualistically offered by way of propitiating the pitris (ancestors).

But reincarnation in the proper context of wisdom has to be understood divested of all the mythological or allegorical prejudices or accretions around the idea of the past living into the future, which is perhaps all that the doctrine in its purest form wants to suggest. The vertical axis of time or pure duration has its retrospective aspects changing into prospective ones through what might be called the eternal present or the dialectical moment.

The silent ones who have awakened to the high value called the Absolute Self live an undisturbed life of peace and understanding which is free from the taint of the alternation of states whether between sleep and wakefulness, memory and prospective vision, life and death. Established in wholehearted interest in Self-realization, such an alternation of opposites does not affect them. They maybe said to be established in a form of pure becoming where the alternation of successively opposing states does not arise.

'STEADILY FIX THE FORM': The word in the text here is 'murti'. An idol in wood or metal is sometimes referred to as a murti. Each individual has an aspect which is finite with a particular form. The impersonal Absolute is at best an abstraction which is formless and infinite. To establish a correct bipolarity between the two aspects involved here it is important to recognize that the outer aspects of the personality come into relation with the inner. The two poles of the two magnets have to be juxtaposed with the understanding of the technique which will give double mutual gain rather than double loss. It is not the spiritual side of the disciple which is first to be surrendered, but rather the gross, materially inert side on which he has actual control through his own will. Steadfastness results only from proper cross-affiliation.

(1) Further psychological and educational implications of this relationship have been worked out in a thesis submitted to the University of Paris by the present writer, entitled *The Personal Factor in the Educative Process*, (Vrin, Paris. 1933).

### Part III

Susan sent a lovely, long meditation on Verse 7, including a gripe that many of you may share, along with its resolution:

The term, bipolarity, has always bugged me because of it's difficult for me not to immediately think of bipolarity as a mental illness—a handicap rather than something functional and beneficial. Nitya talks about it so much in Verse 7 that I am forced to revisit it with an open mind. But once again (and this must be about the tenth time!) I have looked up the word in the dictionary just to see if any light can be shed to help my brain. But the dictionary is very unhelpful so here I am, left to meditation and writing. I love the word dialectic and really this is what is meant and Nitya does refer to it as a dialectic bipolarity but I understand from verse 7 that calling the relationship bipolar describes it as one in which the two parts of the dialectic are in opposite or contrasting places — one is in touch with the vertical and the other is not (yet). I know that this does not have to be between two people or even with a realized person. A person who is determined to be open (as the planted seed), can have a dialectical bipolar relationship with anyone and anything, from her Guru to a sparkle on the sidewalk. Whatever nutrients are allowed to reach her and in whatever way. But it does help to have some steady things in place. And I do feel as though, I have not only very steady bipolarities in place but also the will to be open and listening. I have my important relationships, class each week, a very steady home life, and quite a lot of love and encouragement coming from friends and relatives.

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Eugene passed along an interesting and somewhat hypnotic video link about neuroscience and its impingement into spirituality:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbh5l0b2-0o&feature=em-share\\_video\\_user](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbh5l0b2-0o&feature=em-share_video_user)

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I've been rereading an important book on Jungian psychology by Donald Kalsched. Nitya was a big admirer of Jung, by the way. One section relates well with our study, both the importance of verbalizing and as support for Scotty's ideas about bodywork he shared last week. Kalsched (and others) are convinced that an important part of healing, and indeed learning, is to add a narrative onto nonverbal experience. This goes against a certain popular grain where words are considered the enemy of spirituality, to which Vedantins do not subscribe. Words can be either helpful or hindering, depending on many factors.

The key idea of these psychologists, as well as our spiritual thrust in the Gurukula, is that trauma (a nearly universal condition) produces a split in our makeup that must be healed. When we speak of duality becoming unity, it includes psychic splits being resolved.

First I'll reprint Scotty's paragraph from the notes so you don't have to go looking for it:

Scotty talked about how his bodywork is similar. People have tightness or tension, and the point is to relax those areas. He has to work where it hurts. He's found that a good story makes a big difference. If a person thinks that what he's doing is going to make them healthier, he can literally feel the area relax. For instance, he often tells them that their emotions have

metastasized in a certain area, but there is no need to beat themselves up by holding it in—they can let it go. And then they do.

Now, this from Kalsched and Jung:

Quoting Jung:

The underlying idea of the psyche proves it to be a half bodily, half spiritual substance... an hermaphroditic being capable of uniting the opposites, but who is never complete in the individual unless related to another individual. The unrelated human being lacks wholeness, for he can achieve wholeness only through the soul, and the soul cannot exist without its other side, which is always found in a “You;” Wholeness is a combination of I and You, and these show themselves to be parts of a transcendent unity whose nature can only be grasped symbolically....

(Jung, *Psychology of the Transference*, 1946; para. 454)

Kalsched comments:

The person who suffers a mind/body split after trauma is ill in this third place—in his or her psyche—not necessarily in the mind or in the body. The post-traumatic individual may have an excellent “mind.” He or she may be highly gifted and effective intellectually (even though usually these individuals are more at home in abstractions or rarified aesthetic pursuits than they are in personally grounded thinking). Similarly, the post-traumatic individual may have a healthy body. Such a person may push his or her body to extraordinary feats—undertaking marathons, decathlons, body-building, and so on. But closer examination reveals that there is something missing in these people’s body-experience, and this we can only vaguely describe as a missing personal spirit, a sense of animation, intimacy, and vulnerability

that leaves them compulsively unsatisfied and wanting more and more stimulation. What these individuals are really looking for is psyche, or soul—the place where the body meets mind and the two fall in love. If this tension could be held, a true birth of the personal spirit would be possible, but psyche, or soul, is necessary first. For this reason we speak of psychopathology and of psychotherapy.

Understanding the psyche as a half-bodily—half-spiritual (or mental) entity has some important implications. One danger of psychotherapy is that it becomes too “mental” (wordy) and loses the link with the body. When this happens, psychotherapy loses the psyche also. Correspondingly, a danger of pure body-work is that it may release much somatized energy without this raw affect becoming available to the mind in the form of images or words that would enable it to be understood. If affect from the body cannot be expressed in verbal or symbolic language between people, it cannot reach the level of “meaning” which is where the psyche is. So body-workers also lose the psyche and if this happens, the possibility of truly transformative work is also lost.

Kalsched, Donald, *The Inner World of Trauma* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1996) pp. 65-6.