

9/23/14  
Verse 75

Nature is water, the body is foam, the Self is the depth;  
“I am, I am”—thus, a restless repetition like a series of waves;  
every inner blossom of knowledge attained is a pearl;  
indeed, whatever each finds delight in is the nectar of immortal bliss.

Free translation:

It is as if we are in an ocean of consciousness. Nature can be equated with the water. The Self is the ocean, while the body is like the foam. What constantly arise as 'I', 'I', are the waves. The flowerings of knowledge in the mind are pearls. What each person enjoys is the nectar of immortal bliss.

Nataraja Guru’s translation:

Nature is water, body foam, the Atma (Self) the deep,  
The constant ‘I, I’ rumbling within, the magic of waves;  
Pearls they are, each flowering of knowledge from within,  
And what one drinks of oneself, indeed the nectar of immortal bliss.

We were joined last night by Prabhu, who hails from Madurai, in the far south of Tamil Nadu. Prabhu enrolled for grad studies in electrical engineering at Portland State University because Portland boasts a Gurukula. This is undoubtedly a first, for us and for them! And it promises to be a great honor, as Prabhu strikes everyone as a fine fellow with a real depth of wisdom and kindness already at his young age.

In his wonderful commentary Nitya gives us a masterful example of how to expand the suggestive ideas of a verse into a blazing sky of insight. There is little enough of specifics in the

verse itself, but a contemplative is ever induced to bring their full range of understanding to bear on the material, and the result in this case practically levitates us out of our chairs. And it has had its effect, to an unspecified degree. The class is able to focus on essentials more than ever, and is comfortable bringing in ideas that were held in abeyance in the past. It's very encouraging.

I was reminded last night that somewhere along the production line “the body is foam” in this verse became “the body is form.” This is clearly the single most egregious mistake in the entire book, out of the around forty I have noted down for a possible second printing. Of course, the form is foam and foam is the form, and in English they are just one tiny letter different, but still. Please change this in the text document I sent earlier.

We are in the midst of an interesting stretch of Atmo elaborating on the idea of the one and the many, through the lens of the five primal elements. (The Katha Upanishad is an excellent parallel reading, by the way, very likely in the Guru's mind when he composed this section.) Verse 73 presents the great secret of the unity of the one and the many: “In one substance there are many, and in many things there is one meaning; reasoning thus, everything becomes inseparably inclusive in knowledge.”

Narayana Guru goes on in Verse 74 to present this dialectical proposition in terms of the earth element alone, using virtually the same structure: “Innumerable particles of dust inhere in earth, and there is no difference in the earth that constitutes the particles; just as inert matter exists in consciousness, consciousness finds its expression here in the body; therefore, when contemplated, this is one.”

The present verse is structurally more complex—after all, repeating the pattern would merely tend to trivialize the idea—but the same dichotomy is expressed in terms of water. The next verse, 76, (my very favorite of the hundred if I had to pick one) examines the interaction of the earth and water elements in our individual life. I guess the Guru figured we could extrapolate the rest of the five from these two examples, so in Verse 77 he lists all the elements: sky (space), air, fire, water and earth, and asserts their secret is to be one substance. In succeeding verses they will be further reduced to hypothetical concepts with at most a contingent reality.

So, fasten your seat belts!

Deb started us off by emphasizing the crucial idea that the only way we comprehend unity is with a vertical orientation. Horizontal surface factors are always dual. The wave has to merge into the ocean in order to attain its full expanse. She was also charmed by the continuing analogy of people being like bubbles of foam floating on the waves, each one unique and yet reflecting the totality. This is beautifully expressed here:

In one sense we are in the world. In another sense we *are* the world, each one of us, at the level where we equate ourselves with a simple bubble in a mass of foam. One bubble and another are basically water. We are all of the same ocean. In the Self we are one. In the content of the Self we are one. Only in the various formations, the different notes, do we have differentiating attributes.

One of the class's favorite ideas for discussion was how miraculous it is that we are able to understand each other, considering that from birth we each have a vastly independent trajectory. This was one of the points that most stuck with me at that first class, too:

Although we are within the world, each of us contains a universe structured out our own constructs, our own percepts. Even when two people seem to have great love for each other, how often does one turn to the other and say, "I don't understand you." How could they understand? How does one bubble get inside another bubble? One foam cannot be another foam. The world is just what is mirrored from your position. A bubble placed over there and a bubble placed here are both mirroring the same world, but from their own unique perspectives. There are many kinds of spatial and temporal differences, while relative factors make some things clear and some things obscure. We shouldn't be surprised by any amount of confusion, only by how much agreement actually takes place.

Nitya states flat out that the wisdom of these insights is not something that needs to be proved; its value resides in the way we understand our true nature. It is strictly up to us what we make of it. Yet the warmth of sharing in the class amply demonstrates the value of interaction in plumbing the depths of our being. Without the forward momentum of enthusiasm, we often stagnate in positions of comfort or what might better be called reduced chaos. Like Maxim Gorky's storm petrel bird flying alone through tempestuous skies, we have to have an extraordinary passion to persevere in adversity. Occasionally joining up with a ragged flock of fellow storm petrels helps keep the spirit of exploration keen.

Since this verse is a distinctly enunciated analogy, Nitya offers us an elegant and rather humorous defense of the value of analogies in wisdom transmission, revolving around "The heart of an analogy is an a priori revelation through word-wisdom." A priori is the same as *sruti*, wisdom emerging from the depths as if by divine dispensation, in contrast to the a posteriori knowledge of *smriti*, wisdom recalled from readily identifiable memory banks. All through the hundred verses the Guru has been redirecting our vision into the deepest parts of our Self. Indeed, here the Self is equated with depth, it *is* the depth. Self deserves to be capitalized here because the self of our ordinary posturing is a mere construct floating on the surface of the Self; in other words, the self is the wave of our life, while the Self is the ocean, including the wave while extending all the way to the bottom. The self is for the most part unaware of the Self, hence the need for instruction so long as we are firmly attached to the self. Narayana Guru urges us forward with the assurance that every insight we garner, and every joyous moment we experience is a pearl beyond price. Not just the famous special ones achieved by notable people—ours too. Nitya explains how to uncover our highest values:

The ocean has in its depths lustrous pearls, *muttu*. Those who delve into it get the pearls. Pearls are not gathered from the surface of the sea; for that attainment you have to verticalize

yourself. The verticality of our Self promises us the pearl of life.

The wave cannot do anything to reach the depths of the ocean without losing itself. When you lose yourself it doesn't matter, you become the ocean, because you are in it and you are of it. The same particles which constitute a wave are now finding their individual descent to the very depths of the ocean. The ocean subsumes the wave. When you are not separated from the ocean, you are the whole.

Going into the depths is the same as turning away from external actualities to look into our own being, which is much more difficult than it should be. Pearls symbolize rarity and are the result of long effort. It is up to us to decide whether they matter enough to seek or not. Nitya goes on:

Turning inward, which is all the Guru asks, brings you to the pearl. He adds that the knowledge which comes from this is like the elixir of immortality. Here you truly relate yourself with your ground. In the perishable you truly find the imperishable. Change and the changeless are nowhere held so closely together. This is not really anything which needs to be elaborated upon. It is for you to see and understand where and in what sense this is your nature.

One primary impediment to swimming down into the depths is that we are caught up in contractual thinking and it closes us off to the openness of the Absolute. Without a clearly defined payoff we have no motivation to even consider dissolving our rigidity. Wordsworth intuited this, castigating us that by "getting and spending we lay waste our powers." After a penetrating meditation on the superficial nature of the I sense to ease us away from its dominance, Nitya hits us with a wakeup call:

Your minds are so conditioned by contracts! Life is taught to us to be like a contract: you give something and then you get something; you produce something and then you are given some time off; you sow and then you reap. But in higher nature you don't get what you sow—you are reaping what was sown by someone else and you are sowing for someone else to reap. The key is there is no difference between that someone and you if you have a verticalized vision. Only when you look at it horizontally is there a difference between one person and another. That's why you need to have a universal vision to understand the full import of this verse.

Ideally we can make these words vivid in our minds, as they were when an intense teacher was imparting them in the midst of a very deep group meditation. That way they go much more to the core, where changes can be initiated, instead of remaining at the surface where they are resisted or forgotten. The class spent significant time on this. Jake acknowledged that letting go of our ego fixations is terrifying. Instead of pushing through the fear we spend our energies trying to convert the distractions we covet into something worthy of veneration. His example from Tolkien of Gollum and the magic ring forged by the power mad ringwraiths is one of the most epic in all of literature.

Paul added that because our egos are drawn to positive experiences and shrink from negative ones, they cannot be trustworthy guides. Both are aspects of our core potentials, and provide the foundation for what comes next in our development. This is not only a valuable lesson, it is a good example of a hard one.

There is more on this in the verse:

You get a meaningful picture of the ocean of samvit only when you make yourself lucid like that. You have to take away the rigidity of your individualization, that brick into which you are

baked and made so brittle. You have become a block, brazen, stony, dead. Nothing can get inside you any more. You cannot be lively. This kind of understanding needs so much inner flexibility. You should melt. You should flow. You should soar off on the wafting wind like a sprightly fairy, playing in it, singing songs of joy. You should chase the stars and dance on the moonbeams. Why not? Such is the beauty we have within us if we want to live it.

But we have become boorish. We sit with heavy head and heavier heart, waiting for someone to do something for us. And who is going to do anything? Even sitting there and fantasizing is better than boredom, boordom.

This is not just poetic license. A few of the people sitting in the original class crashed and burned, somewhere down the road. In the way they pretended but weren't really serious about the ideas we were engaging with, it was hard not to predict a sorry end for them. Though of course, you never know for sure. I always recall Nitya's oft-quoted lines in a letter, dated this very day (September 24) 43 years ago:

When [someone] says high things and does not live up to them, you should underline the value of his vision and should ask why he always fails. The answer is that he sees the vertical possibility, but he does not know how to cross over the hurdles of the gross brutality of the horizontal. There is no easy correction for this, other than going all the way through the process of deconstructing the wrong mold and re-integrating the very Self that has to see its own integrated vision of itself.

You should not be saddened about anyone unless your sadness has a positive or negative impact on him to jolt him out of the impasse and set him right. I may observe a fast, or cry, scream, slap myself and roll on the floor like a mad dog if only I see the ghost of a chance to pull the other to the right track. If

that is not possible, I prefer to walk away with a prayer in my heart.

Such a generous soul! He sowed so much for others, without the slightest expectation of reaping anything. He well knew he was reaping a lot of the tragic karma that was oppressing those who came to him, but he never shied away from it. Nor did he ever have to walk away: those who weren't up to making needed changes would eventually walk away themselves.

The last part of the verse is crucially important too. We are invited to give up our ego-based obsession with judging the quality of the pearls we find. They can't all be peradams! Ordinary joys are also transcendently wonderful:

One very important point to note in Narayana Guru's work is that unlike many other teachers he does not brush aside any instance of joy if you experience it, no matter if it is inside or outside, or in things which are trivial or serious. To him every enjoyment brings a vertical relation between the ground and the mote. You tend to forget that there is a vertical participation in it, but if you remember it every item of joy is a joy of the Absolute.

Jan was grateful for the permission granted by these words to experience joy in her own way. All too often we become obsessed with judging the relative merits of what delights us. My music is divine and yours is cheap crap. Your art belongs in motel rooms, while mine is museum quality. Or, more in keeping with our humble class members, I wonder if my taste measures up? Should I keep it hidden so no one finds out how mediocre I am? Am I supposed to abandon what I like and take on what people tell me is good? And so on. Different wave forms of the I, aham, endlessly repeating. The gurus are serious that we gain so much by giving up our self-limitations. Jan has tried it and senses the freedom it allows her. Remaining unjudged is so thrilling we almost don't

dare to admit it as a possibility. If our joy was based only on a selfish attitude, we might well keep it under wraps. But we are assured here that by actualizing the joys of the core of our being, we are sowing seeds of beauty that others will have a chance to reap. Our common heritage of joy is effortlessly shared with others, because we all know it in our hearts and long to bring it forth.

## Part II

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

In the transactional world direct perception gives valid knowledge. To ascertain its truth we do not need to go to another authority. We cannot see God or the Absolute or the Self. When it comes to such matters, which are subjective, we need assurances and guidance from others. It is in this context that a priori wisdom teaching becomes an absolute necessity. To pass wisdom from one who has experienced to another who has not, word testimony is used. In word testimony what comes most handy is analogy. The Buddha, Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna used parables and allegories to teach their disciples. One of Narayana Guru's favourite analogies is the ocean.

The ocean is a favourite theme of artists, poets, novelists, story-writers, philosophers and mystics. Maxim Gorky's *Song of the Stormy Petrel*, Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* aptly describe the ferocity of the sea. Vedantins compare the dreadful aspect of the sea to the miseries of the world when they use the expression *bhava sagara*. In this verse Narayana Guru uses the analogy of the sea to illustrate the relationship of man with the Absolute and also the values which man relates himself to. In this context his reference is to a sea of knowledge, *samvit sagara*.

There is nothing so beautiful and fascinating as sitting on the soft white sand of a peaceful beach watching a gentle ocean on a

moonlit night. Silver-crested waves come rhythmically to cast long rows of pearl-like foam upon the sand. Every bubble of the foam glitters in the moonlight and mirrors the moon, the starry heavens and the dark world. After a moment the bubbles burst and disappear. In a little while another wave deposits fresh foam upon the sand, new bubbles to shimmer, burst and disappear. This game goes on and on, endlessly.

One wave followed by another shows the sequence of time. A wave gathering momentum, making undulations on the surface, rolling and beating against the shore reveals the contents of a unit of time. The fact that the ocean was there before any living creature appeared on earth and that it will continue to be even after all creatures will have perished suggests the eternity of time. In this verse the Guru compares the water of the ocean to nature. Water is a principle like nature. It manifests itself in many forms: as the lake, the clouds, the snow, the moisture in the atmosphere, the fluids in a living body and the sap in vegetative life. Our bodies are compared to the foam. Like the little bubbles of foam, the body lasts only for a little while and while it exists it is animated by consciousness, mirroring a world of light and darkness. With the bursting of the bubble the world is also gone.

The restless waves that come one after another are compared to the recurring consciousness, "I am, I am." There is anguish and dismay when the ego is vainly chasing shadows. If the same I-consciousness turns inward, it becomes honey-filled flowers of inner awareness. The ocean is likened to the Self. The depth of the ocean is proverbially unfathomable and so is the Self. In verse 3 the Self was compared to a treasury of watery depth. In the present verse Narayana Guru refers to the pearls of knowledge that gladden the heart of the seeker of wisdom. In every item of joy that gladdens the soul the Guru sees the relishing of the elixir of immortality.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

CONSCIOUSNESS is often compared to an ocean. Samvit, as it is called, is, like the electro-magnetic field of modern physicists, an abstraction that is neither material nor merely consisting of abstract conceptual entities. This ocean of consciousness, conceived neutrally and absolutistically, has noumenal unity under its apparent phenomenal diversity. In other words vertical and horizontal aspects come together to give it a global or unitive structure in which aspects of individual or collective consciousness could be intelligently fitted organically to make a unitive whole. The relations are not haphazard or chaotic. The way in which the structure of total consciousness emerges from its own absolutist background of boundless infinitude is what is presented in the verse here, and also in verse 77, where the same is examined from a slightly different perspective.

The Upanishads have in several places employed a scheme of cosmological, psychological or theological correlation to give a global perspective to that vision of the Absolute. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I, I, 1, starts with one of the boldest attempts at correlation of the Absolute when it reads:

‘Om! Verily the dawn is the head of the sacrificial horse; the sun his eye; the wind his breath; universal fire (*agni vaisvanara*) his open mouth. The year is the body (atman) of the sacrificial horse; the sky his back; the atmosphere his belly; the earth the under-part of his belly; the quarters his flanks...etc. ‘

The Aitareya Upanishad I. ii, 4 reads:

‘Fire became speech, and entered the mouth. Wind became breath, and entered the nostrils. The sun became sight, and entered the eyes; the quarters of heaven became hearing, and entered the ears.’

(19)

In the very next verse, 76, the global picture is one that takes place in time and process as factors side-by-side with being as such. Being and becoming are there juxtaposed by a mixed metaphorical or allegorical device, too complicated to analyse. Here, however, the unitive picture revealed is more simple and transparent. The participation of matter with mind takes place in a homogenous medium of general consciousness.

When Nature (prakriti) is compared to water it might be difficult for those brought up in Western notions of Nature, as in biology, to enter into the spirit of the analogy straightaway. Darwinian Nature, which gives room to the mechanistically-conceived forces of 'the survival of the fittest', 'the struggle for existence' and 'natural selection' under blind or necessary given conditions, is more viscous in consistency than Nature in the Bergsonian context of the eternal flux and becoming in terms of pure motion. Pure motion or act in the Aristotelian sense also fits into a world of absolute pure consciousness, which is neither physical nor psychic. The notion of Nature here must be made by the reader to fit into such a context of schematization as understood by Kant and others when they distinguish the pure thing in itself from its own phenomenal aspects on a common ground.

The body is here compared to foam because foam is more specialized than a wave, although both foam and wave are but water. Nature as water is the least specific general aspect of the basis of the pure act or motion in the phenomenal world. The Self does not depend on the material aspect of the water; therefore it corresponds to the depth dimension of the ocean to which all other factors may be said to cohere, cling or cluster around. The ego-consciousness is an event in pure duration that comes to be, lasts awhile and then is reabsorbed into the central consciousness where it has its origin. The repeated 'I, I' would thus represent each

individual consciousness that rises like a spark from the general anvil.

When knowledge is for the self, of the self and by the self, there is an essential unity which gives it a very high human value-content. There is nothing so dear to man as his own soul, the losing of which while gaining all the three worlds would still be meaningless. Immortality and happiness are synonymous and interchangeable terms. These values belong to the self at the very core of the relational structure portrayed here as the drinker or enjoying subject to whom all the varied values must refer homogeneously.

(19) Cf. R. E. Hume, 'Thirteen Principal Upanishads', for many other instances of correlation, both psychological and cosmological.

### Part III

Those of you who haven't read *Mount Analogue* by Rene Daumal may be wondering what a peradam is. It's a word he invented. I suppose you could call it an analogue insight, and it has an important role in that amazing book. Here's the introduction to the idea:

One finds here, very rarely in the low lying areas, more frequently as one goes farther up, a clear and extremely hard stone that is spherical and varies in size—a kind of crystal, but a curved crystal, something extraordinary and unknown on the rest of the planet. Among the French of Port-des-Singes, it is called peradam. Ivan Lapse remains puzzled by the formation and root meaning of this word. It may mean, according to him, "harder than diamond," and it is; or "father of the diamond," and they say that the diamond is in fact the product of the degeneration of the peradam by a sort of quartering of the circle or, more precisely, cubing of the sphere. Or

again, the word may mean “Adam’s stone,” having some secret and profound connection to the original nature of man. The clarity of this stone is so great and its index of refraction so close to that of air that, despite the crystal’s great density, the unaccustomed eye hardly perceives it. But to anyone who seeks it with sincere desire and true need, it reveals itself by its sudden sparkle, like that of dewdrops. The peradam is the only substance, the only material object whose value is recognized by the guides of Mount Analogue. Therefore, it is the standard of all currency, as gold is for us.

And I (Scott) may as well add Father Pierre Sogol’s last speech, at the start of the ascent of the mountain:

“I have brought you this far, and I have been your leader. Right here I’ll take off the cap of authority, which was a crown of thorns for the person I remember myself to be. Far within me, where the memory of where I am is still unclouded, a little child is waking up and making an old man’s mask weep. A little child looking for mother and father, looking to you for protection and help—protection from his pleasures and his dreams, and help in order to become what he is without imitating anyone.”

As he spoke, Pierre had been delving in the sand with the point of his stick. Suddenly his eyes froze; he bent down and picked something up—something that shone like a tiny dewdrop. It was a peradam, a small one, but the first for any of us. (93)

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Scotty accessed a favorite poem during the class that relates to our watery contemplation:

Cup and Ocean, by Rumi

These forms we seem to be  
are cups floating  
in an ocean of living consciousness.

They fill and sink  
without leaving an arc of bubbles  
or any good-bye spray.

What we are is that ocean,  
too near to see,  
though we swim in it  
and drink it in.

Don't be a cup with a dry rim,  
or someone who rides all night  
and never knows

the horse beneath his thighs,  
the surging that carries him along.

Deb and I read out William Stafford poems before bed last  
night, and so many of them were in the exact spirit of this verse. So  
cool!

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Jake's commentary:

Verse 75 and its commentary are unlike their predecessors in  
that in them the Guru and Nitya turn to consider directly the  
rhetorical character of the verses themselves, a principle element of  
which is the predominant position of figurative language. Nitya  
refers to this element as analogy and that it holds a prominent place  
in the verses as a tool for illustrating points and concepts. In the  
contemporary scientific community, as it evolved out of its 19<sup>th</sup>

century German sources, this reliance on figures of speech in discussing or writing of “serious” issues was more or less relegated to a juvenile status unworthy of a place at the solemn academic table surrounded by those with eyes fixed firmly outward. But in the Vedantist tradition and its privileging of the Self as the ultimate source of knowledge, analogy has always proved efficacious in the work of drilling down into questions of epistemology. The irony in this disagreement concerning the place of tropes in exploring reality is that both approaches pre-suppose their effectiveness in connecting with one’s prior knowledge or awareness. Illustrating points and, I think, making points generally amount to the same thing. In either case, through the experience one comes to know consciously more of what one already knew, educating oneself in the process.

Throughout the verses, writes Nitya, the Guru employs the ocean/wave analogy continuously as he illustrates through various points of view the nexus of the transcendent and immanent. “The wave and the water are not two” constitutes a kind of baseline from which he goes on to suggest many other possibilities. The ocean can be compared to, writes Nitya, the total consciousness or awareness or can be seen as a dangerous samsaric environment constantly manufacturing life and death. Likewise, the Guru has used the picture of the waves washing on the shore and spreading out as bubbles reflecting light in order to illustrate our life cycles and our individual reflections of the infinite (in the light) as we briefly shimmer, dissolve, and reabsorb into the whole. In the depths of that whole, he goes on to say, we are incapable of achieving our separate *I* consciousness, just as that absorption is not possible when we merge with the Absolute in deep dreamless sleep, Samadhi and/or death. It is only during our brief stays as an *I* that we develop the ego, attachment, desire, and so on. By diving deep into the depths (while still able to experience *I*) do we have the opportunity to realize the pearls of the Self so hidden from our sensual view. In this respect, the admonition to “know thyself” takes a detour into the Absolute as we live in the immanent.

As Nitya discusses this verse, he makes some references to Jesus and his use of parables and story in order to make his points. The same practice is common for all the Wisdom Traditions as they go about their business of stretching language to its limits and then beyond. It seems to me that to reverse course and to prize the literal, as our scholastic tradition has attempted (and the contemporary American education system embraces), is to confine the search for knowledge to the mind and its senses exclusively, a trajectory excavated to some degree by a mid-twentieth century Nobel Prize winning philosopher as he considered this combination of language and the knowable:

Where our knowledge halts our description will resort to metaphor. Long will man's fancy deal with the tie between body and mind by metaphor and often half forget the while that metaphor it is. Regarding this problem will a day come when metaphors can be dispensed with? (Sir Charles Scott Sherrington, *Man on His Nature*, p. 292)

#### Part IV

Ah! More thoughtful musings from Susan:

The commentaries on Atmo 74 and 75 are wonderful and they make me think about my current place at a crossroads in my life. I have an empty nest and several decades before me, if I am fortunate. I feel the pull toward making plans and finding a path because so many people seem to have their paths and numerous people ask me what I am going to do with my life. I have many questions and interests and I'm eager to explore them. I get a bit anxious just contemplating all this -- I think I am worried that if I don't jump into some formula, I will fail or miss the boat somehow. But I am also now occasionally finding time that is quiet and uncluttered. When I am patient about this and willing to let go

of my expectations and need to plan, I feel more able to sink into whatever I am doing. Sometimes it is just sitting and watching the birds, sometimes it is writing or reading, sometimes it is other activities that I enjoy. There is often the voice inside that is critical of these non-goal oriented activities that don't seem to do anything for anyone but Nitya's commentary helps me to let go of that more and more. It is a kind of trusting. it is also fairly indescribable but I like what Nitya says in verse 75 here:

"But if the wave sees that its fate is to become a perishing foam, this externality is not so very tempting. Knowing one's own self, as Socrates put it, becomes of greater importance. Then turning inward, which is all the Guru asks, brings you to the pearl. He adds that the knowledge which comes from this is like the elixir of immortality. Here you truly relate yourself with your ground. In the perishable you truly find the imperishable. Change and the changeless are nowhere held so closely together. This is not really anything which needs to be elaborated upon. It is for you to see and understand where and in what sense this is your nature."

Sometimes I get hung up trying to figure out what he means by turning inward and diving into the vertical in the great ocean (referring to a later passage in Atmo 75) but I feel as though I know it when I am in it. When I am walking in the woods or working on a sewing project or listening to beautiful music, I feel as though there is an inner flow and I am no longer trying to figure out where I am going and why. I am no longer self-critical and no longer worrying what anyone else thinks of me. Then I am part of the ocean that is the Absolute. By going again and again into this place, I am able to be more and more my authentic self (mySelf?). This in turn helps me to know my dharma and to find my way. I think it's kind of magical.

"You get a meaningful picture of the ocean of samvit only when you make yourself lucid like that. You have to take away the

rigidity of your individualization, that brick into which you are baked and made so brittle. You have become a block, brazen, stony, dead. Nothing can get inside you any more. You cannot be lively. This kind of understanding needs so much inner flexibility. You should melt. You should flow. You should soar off on the wafting wind like a sprightly fairy, playing in it, singing songs of joy. You should chase the stars and dance on the moonbeams. Why not? Such is the beauty we have within us if we want to live it.”

I can really relate to the brick! I have become quite stuck and rigid in many ways and that makes it very difficult to let go. I am a brick when it comes to self criticism and anxiety in general. I cling to my conditionings from long ago and my rule following and my critical mind. My identity is somewhat dependent on these rigid and hollow limitations and they take me far from the ground, as described in 74. I feel so fortunate to be reading Atmo so that I can work on my brickness and find my soaring being. All things go better when I do.

I was reading an interesting article by Charles Blow last weekend in the New York Times Sunday Review. Blow talks about overcoming his horrible childhood experience of abuse and struggling to figure out his sexuality. This quote from the article seems to relate to Nitya’s commentary in 74 and 75 very well:

"My world had told me that there was nothing worse than not being all of one way [here, he is referring to his sexuality but it could refer to many other ways that we feel judged], that any other way was the same as being dead, but my world had lied. I was very much alive. There was no hierarchy of humanity. There was no one way to be, or even two, but many. And no one could strip me of my value and dignity, because no one had bestowed them. These things came into the world with me.” (Up From Pain)

How beautiful are his words about value and dignity being intrinsic. When you know this, then it is easier to find the ground and allow your inner being to flow. It is amazing how much our world tries to convince us that our value comes from others' attitudes toward us. Yikes! It is such a simple thing to say that our value comes from within but actually not so easy to accept.