

12/2/14  
Verse 85

No shadow exists independent of an actual form;  
as there is no original form anywhere for the existing world,  
it is neither shadow nor substance;  
everything that is seen is like a snake painted by a master.

Free translation:

No image can exist without a model. If the world is a shadow it should have its archetype somewhere. No such original is seen anywhere; therefore, this world is neither a model or its image. Everything seen here is like a snake painted by a master artist.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

No shadow could exist without depending on a model original  
Since the manifest world is seen to have no original model  
anywhere  
Neither shadow nor actuality is this: all is seen  
Like a snake that a gifted artist might cleverly sketch.

It's famously difficult to pick out the "essential" verses from all the merely wonderful ones, but this would certainly be a top choice. Nitya's commentary is so detailed and superb there is not much to add. What we do have to bring in is our personal pondering of these critical questions, to convert them from a theoretical to a vital understanding.

As the rishis have intuited and neuroscience confirmed, what we perceive is a construct, not any absolute reality as such. It is a painting—or as Nitya upgrades the image, a movie—presented by our whole being to our miniscule but critical conscious awareness. We are captivated by the movie's apparent perfection. It all seems to hold together, to work, so why should we question it?

The reason is that we can become full participants in our own life only if we realize how we are bound by false ideas. We are much better off when we face up to them. Nitya brings this home to us yet again in his conclusion:

You bind yourself so much with mere suppositions. It is those suppositions and images, called here *nizhal*, shadows, that you should be dealing with. Then alone can life become a harmonious flow. Otherwise it can spell tragedy.

One of the most crippling suppositions is that somewhere other than where we are is an ideal place, and our present location is just a way station to where we ought to be going. The idea constrains us to be either passive and docile or inharmoniously busy and unsettled. I suggested that the class think about how thoroughly our attitudes are suffused with the ubiquitous assumption that here is not good enough. The belief permeates human culture, and it is shocking to realize how deeply the illusion cuts into the joy of life. I would say that almost 100 percent of our framing is grounded in scientific and religious ideas about a perfect and remote paradise. We are striving to find our way there. What gets left out is our full appreciation of the here and now.

Even the idea of artwork produced by an adept can leave us with the feeling we are mere irrelevant observers in the majestic play of the world. Yet the master artist of the verse is in us, *is* us! We are co-creators of the drama. Narayana Guru is not asking us to imagine there is some godlike artist out there somewhere who is painting this world. The painting is done by our own brain-mind, and it is indeed masterful, utterly compelling. Only a rare seer can learn to accept that it is their own constructs they are dealing with, and not some freestanding reality that we are timidly intruding on.

I think many of us are afraid to accept this truth because we fear we will lose our grip on reality. Actually, we will lose our grip on unreality! Nitya's explanation here is a classic:

How does Narayana Guru explain it? He says that when an expert paints a snake and the painting is placed in dim light, it can frighten a person. The dread can be so great that the person might even collapse and die. So the painting can function as a snake to some extent, but as soon as it is closely examined it will be found to be only a painting.

When it turns out to be a painting, it does not cease to be. The snake doesn't disappear. It continues to be what it always was—a painting done by a master. What changes is your reaction to it. You no longer react with fear but with great admiration. You say, "Look how lifelike it is! It's wonderful!" You might want to possess it: "Let me take it home. It's a terrific picture!" Once you accept it, it is no longer a snake. When you were dreading it, it was also not a snake. It all came from the mind's projection.

If we want to convert our baseline fear into admiration, we have to change our orientation to our surroundings. Humans think we have to change the world to make it better, or even just to hold on to what we have now, but then we bring our original misperceptions to bear and everything goes haywire. Grasping that what we perceive is a projected image accords us at least one additional dimension, which is huge. We can still love the play, but we don't pin our existence on it: that comes from somewhere deeper. And we have a hand in shaping it. Our happiness is discovered to be an intrinsic part of our being, instead of an acquired condition we have to fight for. Nitya says:

How can ignorance come and take away the joy of something you have enjoyed? Because your basis for that joy was only a supposition. If you saw joy right in eternal existence itself, in eternal awareness itself, it would not have broken down. But we are forever fashioning something out of that and projecting our happiness onto this temporary creation, which is moving and changing all the time.

Nitya uses the analogy of married people getting divorced when their projected joy no longer resonates with the person it once fastened upon. It's a good image to think of how we are entangled by all sorts of "love affairs" with various aspects of the world, and then drop them with more or less distress when another attraction comes along:

This doesn't only refer to the husband-wife business but is a handy way of understanding something general in life, where people get infatuated with so many things and then after some time effect a separation from them. Marriages and divorces are going on all the time between people and their relativistic values. They aspire to something, but when they get close to it they no longer want it. They think it is not what they were looking for. That's because the beingness of those things has the same status as a painted picture. The painting is done from within. Is it real or unreal? The Guru says you cannot say it is real, nor can you say it is unreal. It's simply a wonder.

Wonder or not, making our happiness dependent on externals is a failed approach. The external world—which is an inner projection of our master artistic Self—is infused with enthusiasm to the extent we bring it to the table with us. As Deb put it, our life can be a constant, beautiful uprising of joy, because the eternal moment is always present. Paul added that we can still cry our tears over life's tragedies, but they are no longer tears of self-pity. They are tears of compassion, of a life that's so vast it can't be confined solely to the body.

We are moving into a section with some uniquely excellent clarifications of saccidananda, of existence-awareness-value, woven in. The example in Nitya's commentary is worth revisiting:

To apply this in your life, you have to look for the being which cannot be explained away. What is that being? It's called

existence. You should also look for the knowledge which cannot be explained away. Such knowledge is awareness. Existence is called *sat*; the awareness of subsistence is called *cit*. *Sat* and *cit* never change, but you can fashion the *sat* like the potter fashions a pot, like the lover fashions the beloved, like the buyer of a commodity fashions its value, like the admirer of beauty fashions light into a beautiful form. The substratum is perennial existence. What you temporarily create out of it has existence only during the time when it is valuable to you.

This brings us to a third factor, the utility of a thing, its *prayojana* or value.

Saccidananda is an anchor of solidity in the turbulent, every-changing universe. It's where our true happiness resides. We get displaced from happiness when we pin our feelings solely to outside factors, which come and go, wax and wane. It isn't that we sweep away all the outside factors to enjoy happiness, but that it is incorporated in everything we do, from our greatest triumphs to our most profound tragedies. I know we have heard this many times already, but have we understood it yet? We often "get it" in one instance, but the next enticement that comes along catches our attention and makes us forget. So it bears repeating.

When the three aspects of saccidananda are contracted into one, that core oneness could be called the Karu. We began our investigation with the Karu. It expanded into all this manifold universe, and now we are contracting back into it. The Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction are one grand pulsation from point source to infinite manifestation and back to a point. Hopefully we have learned something valuable in the process.

We are burdened with so many onerous beliefs, it is no wonder we are miserable! The gurus want us to throw them off and come alive as free beings. Why not? What is holding us back? It's worth taking a good close look. This is apparently not something

that can happen in public, even in a supportive environment like the Gurukula class. It has to be homework.

The example Susan submitted by email a couple of weeks back (Verse 83, Part III) gave us a practical example of how this can work any time, any place. Remember? Once again she was driving and a car came up hard on her tail. Feeling pressured, she imagined all sorts of negative things. She pulled over and the car roared off. Usually she would be very upset, but this time she asked herself what had actually happened. On reflection, it was a very simple event, and her anticipated upset had mostly been a projection: “I was amazed to think about the pile of untruth that I had managed to load on top of this incident.” It’s a simple enough example, but one we can easily apply to every aspect of our life, with highly gratifying results. We don’t just do this conditioned projecting in the car.

It shouldn’t be too much trouble to investigate our suppositions and question them, and we might as well start with the ones that are making us the most miserable. We can deal with the harmless ones later if we feel like it. But look at the egregious ones first. How about, “I’m putting up with this horrible situation for someone else, to make their life happier. Because of them, I can suffer a lot, and it’s okay.” From a detached point of view, we might wonder if the others are actually going to benefit, or if we are just imagining it so we can keep basting ourself in misery. A surprisingly large portion of our self-imposed duties has this kind of false supposition behind it.

I know everybody is very guarded about their projected suppositions, so I won’t even invite anyone to send in examples to share. Just know that you will get out of this study what you put into it, so at least do it privately for yourself. If you want to make our study transformative, spend some time thinking about this simple principle. Take a look at your core assumptions and ask yourself why you have to believe them. What are they based on? You can still maintain all the connections you have built up in your

life, but they will be much easier to bear when they pinch, and you might even be able to let some of them go.

The bottom line is that we are always waiting for something else to come along, always thinking we should be going somewhere else. Maybe we should, especially if our life stinks. But this is it! We should not indulge in excuses to keep from living fully right now. That's why the gurus insist, as Bill reminded us, that this world isn't a copy of anything. It's all we have, and it's way more than enough.

Let's let Nitya have the last word, in his inimitable fashion:

This verse is not of merely intellectual interest. It has a great spiritual import. To those who meditate on it and want to take benefit from it in their life, it gives so much. It is just like Jesus saying, "Come to me, those who suffer. Unload all your burdens on me." Why should you carry them around in your head? The whole thing is a supposition—leave it where it belongs. Feel right. Be happy.

## Part II

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

Of all philosophic problems, none has caused more dispute among thinkers than the judging of the right distinction between appearance and reality. Philosophers have made this problem even more complex by drawing a line between what "seems to be" and what "looks."

There are at least two groups of appearance idioms—what might be called "seeming idioms" and "looking idioms." The first group typically includes such expressions as "appears to be" "seems to be," "given the appearance of being"; the second, such expressions as "appears," "looks," "feels," "tastes," "sounds."\*

In Plato's Republic, Socrates makes a division in knowledge between what appears to be falling on the "eyeball" or the "sky ball." According to him, all we see here are only shadows of archetypal ideas. In this verse, Narayana Guru refuses to accept the Platonic theory of shadows. For a shadow to appear there needs to be a concrete object or body to obstruct or reflect the light. If the world of our experience is the shadow of another world, that world should have an existence elsewhere. We do not know of any existence other than what is experienced here and now.

There are many variations of shadow. When a concrete body stands in the path of light, a dark patch is cast on the ground or on a wall and that is called a shadow. We can easily distinguish the shadow of a man from that of a tree or a dog, and the careful manipulation of shadows can make them closely resemble actual people. The reflections we see on oil or water are more detailed than mere dark shadows; however, they too are only shadows. In a well-polished mirror we see the clearest of all images, except that the right looks like the left and the left looks like the right. In the projection of Cinerama, one can experience the illusion of walking into the panorama and among the people that are projected, but realistic as this might seem, we cannot have any transactions with these projected shadows.

In comparison to all these shadows, the encounter of actual persons and objects is a most real experience, and this is where we come to the real stumbling block. We have no means of apprehending the physical world except through our sense impressions. Although we are experiencing the seemingly infinite magnitude of the universe, all forms of perception are manufactured for us within our own small skulls. Neurophysiologists, who have busied themselves with the inner mechanism of perception, are yet to discover how exactly the electrical impulses that agitate the synapses of the brain can reproduce a world of color, sound, name and form, and magnify it according to a standardized perspective which seems to be of a



measure identical to the images produced by the brain-stuff in all skulls, whether of a man, a rabbit or a frog. If the cosmos we experience is the image of an image, what means do we have to verify it as bona fide?

Narayana Guru's answer to this question is that in this context such a criterion is not feasible. All that he agrees to is that a continuous process of gestaltation is going on and that the expertise involved in it is matchlessly superb. He compares the world to a snake painted by a master. If the painting is realistic enough, the image of the snake can cause fright, but as it is only a picture, after the first shock one will realize that it is only an appearance. That knowledge brings an altogether different appreciation of the same picture. Now the picture is admired for its beauty, and one might even want to possess it as a remarkable aesthetic expression. In either case, we are affected by the compelling aesthetics of the picture. This world also offers us a similar ambivalence of repulsion and attraction. On the whole, it is a source of continuous affection.

\* The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (New York: MacMillan, 1972), Vol. I, p. 135.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

PHILOSOPHICAL speculation all over the world has tried to face the problem of reality in various ways. Idealists like Plato have spoken of original prototypes of the imitations that we see here around us in some sort of archetypal or ideal world. Vedanta is not strictly such an idealism, but has this difference, that it is founded on the ontological notion of 'sat', the basic existing reality. Aristotle, who revalued his own teacher Plato, may be said to have given matter here primacy over mind or idea. He was thus nearer to the Vedantic standpoint. Even in India the tendency with the

Vaiseshikas was to put stress on the side of the intelligible effect rather than the ontological cause. In Spinoza we have the notion of the 'thinking substance', which is both matter and mind.

The world of reality and the world of appearance are often juxtaposed and contrasted in Vedanta, which otherwise seems to support the idealistic viewpoint. The duality that is implied here is what calls for the above explanation by the Guru in the present verse. In an earlier verse (20) this same denial of duality was once underlined. It was also pointed out in verse 80 that the earth and other things were mere names or words.

Here the complementary point of view is stated, viewing reality, even in the ontological sense, as nothing more than the creative urge of an artist talented enough to sketch or give to a mere outline some sort of apparent reality, even when it has no real content. The appearance of reality is made possible by this merely sketchy outline coming from the mind of the artist. The name-aspect and the form-aspect just meet here and now, resulting in the ontological reality of the world that we experience. Like the pure world of mathematical equations the name equates with the form and that is all.

The reference to the snake here is by way of respecting the traditional example dear to Vedantists from antiquity where the apparent is compared to the snake and the real to the rope that is the basis of the snake-illusion. Between the rope and the snake realities, a unitive understanding is to be established which should stand neutral between the two aspects of name and form. The nominalistic emptiness of content of mere appearance has already been explained in verse 80. The unity that underlies appearance and reality has been pointed out in verse 20. Now the form-aspect of the snake is finally dismissed as having no significant material content at all. It is merely a flourish of the artist's pen. Reality and

appearance both cancel themselves out thus within the neutrality of the Absolute.

### Part III

Nitya's take in *That Alone* on the reality of temporary factors was slightly modified and elaborated in his 1985 article, *My Personal Philosophy of Life, Part II*. I think many of us will prefer this version, which accords the transient a more dignified status than flat unreality:

My first postulate is All. Then I want to qualify that all. All also means the ground of all potentials. Whatever is possible arises from that All. What is known to me and what is not known to me, what I am conscious of and what I am not conscious of - all these are included in this concept of All. I am in it, the world is in it, the past, the present and the future are in it. Nothing is excluded.

Thus, All is my starting point. I bring in two concepts, objectivity and subjectivity. When I open my eyes and see whatever they can perceive, I understand that I only see a part of this grand universe. I suggest the rest to my mind. The world does not stop where the horizon stops. Something similar to what I see continues from the horizon infinitely or, at least beyond where my mind and senses can reach. The objective world does not come and stand as a mere object which I experience with my senses. I identify all objects by reading meaning into them. Some subjective embellishment is required for any objective factor to present itself to me. Therefore the objective world or the cosmological world out there, which includes my body, is only one half. The other half is everything I experience with my eyes closed, with my senses withdrawn. If I am not looking out at the external world, I am in the world of ideas and subjectivity. But, in the world of subjectivity, every form that I perceive and every concept I apply is influenced by whatever I have noticed in the objective world. So the objective world is not

completely objective and the subjective world is not completely subjective.

There is an interiorization of the subjective and objective into each other which creates an amalgam of the external with an emphasis on the objective, and an amalgam of the internal with an emphasis on the subjective. The center of the area where they overlap each other and interlace is the central focus of my consciousness. In the heart of it I experience the I-consciousness. When I say: "I know," "I feel," "I see" - seeing is external, feeling is internal and knowing is centrally placed between them. Between the cosmological and the psychological, I place myself as part of consciousness very much affected by non-conscious elements. I am always within the brackets of objective appearance and subjective appearance. I say 'appearance' because close examination of what is presented reveals that there are inner layers of greater reality which were not seen at first sight, whether objective or subjective. So the prima facie status of our experience is one of appearance. That does not mean it is unreal. To me, all experiences are real experiences, but their status is not that of a perennial, eternal entity, but that of a transforming, changing entity within the ground of the All. The All has within it the possibility of becoming as well as being - it's a being, becoming entity, without any contradiction.

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The Sunday NY Times of Nov. 29, 2014, ran an article featuring another excellent example of how a change of framing can make a big difference in our life. Eugenia Bone's article, Can Mushrooms Treat Depression? is mostly standard fare, except for this beautiful excerpt about her own experience. The second paragraph fits perfectly with our study, which I think of as psychotherapy for the sane. It is too bad that people on a psychedelic trip can implement long lasting changes so easily, as Bone did, while those of us without the "brain boost" struggle,

sometimes for years, to make even modest breakthroughs. Still, I hope we can at the minimum learn from their courageous examples. Bone writes:

Anecdotally, psychoactive mushrooms may positively affect even nonsufferers. They did for me. I ate the mushroom as part of research for a book. The experience lasted about four hours, much of which I spent outdoors, but seemed to last much longer. I think because everything I was seeing was so new: the way the air was disturbed behind the flight of a bee, the way the trees seemed to respire, how the clouds and breeze and rocks and grass all existed in a kind of churning symbiosis.

I experienced a number of small epiphanies — self-realizations actually — but one in particular remained with me. As the drug wore off, I went indoors to take a hot bath. For a moment I thought that might not be a good idea, as bath time is when women in middle age can be very self-critical and unforgiving, and I didn't want the sight of my waistline to veer me into a bad trip. But while in the tub I envisioned my body as a ship that was taking me through life, and that made it beautiful. I stopped feeling guilty about growing older and regretful about losing my looks. Instead, I felt overwhelming gratitude. It was a tremendous relief that I still feel.

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I've just finished the final (for now) edit on my Gita Chapter XV commentary, and found this extract fits rather well with verse 85:

10) Whether departing, staying, or experiencing, conditioned as they are by the modalities of nature, the foolish cannot see; the wisdom-eyed can see.

Being able to “see” spells the difference between wisdom and ignorance. So what does that mean, exactly? We tend to be convinced we are seeing perfectly well all the time, and only other people are the fools who don’t get it, but that’s how they feel about us also. Therefore we have to have a measuring device for wisdom that is independent of our personal impressions. Here the Gita offers a unique and eminently practical guideline for how to judge our own perceptions and inclinations: if they are subject to the gunas, the modalities of nature, then they are less than optimal. To really see clearly we have to shake off their influence with a transcendental vision.

So how is it that the gunas blind us and turn us into fools? Foolish humans go by the appearances created by their sensory system within the theater of their mind’s eye, but the wise can additionally intuit the animating principle behind the surface play. They know that what they are seeing is an imaginative display projected within their own brain. Instead of retaining the detached wisdom of our inner “transcendent Lord,” who knows nature to be a conditioning factor only partially perceived by the mind, foolish people mistake their cerebral passion play for reality itself. Once this happens, they are likely to be trapped by their convictions, and what they see is then further warped by the funhouse mirrors of the gunas, sattva, rajas and tamas, cycling between differing degrees of obfuscation.

By the way, almost all of us are foolish in this way pretty much all the time. The Gita’s advice is not given for anyone else; it is for our benefit alone. And the second half of the Gita, the practical half, is heavily weighted toward helping us to become detached from the gunas, which as moderns we can understand to mean the dictates of our mental imagery. Everyone lives in a universe of their own making, and yoga is the process by which we can pry ourselves free of it, to some degree at least.

Part IV

Deb has been rereading Nitya's commentary on Sankara's *Saundarya Lahari*, the work that captivated Nataraja Guru toward the end of his life. It's one of Nitya's most profound efforts. Deb found this relevant excerpt under the fifth verse:

The *Saundaryalahari*, composed to glorify beauty as the highest form of truth and goodness, treats beauty as a deluding force as well as an emancipating one, and in doing so refers to one of the most difficult epistemological stumbling blocks in the field of philosophy. This is the paradox around which center problems like the One and the many, being and becoming, and the transcendental and the immanent. Here *tripurantaka*, the god of destruction, is allegorically said to be in love with the manifestation of *tripurasundari*, the goddess of beauty, which is not possible without causing violation to his own nature. This paradox is really the hardest crux of philosophy. Ramanuja overcomes it with a revision of Sankara's *anirvacaniya khyati*, the error of indeterminism. According to Sankara, this paradox is like the assumption that the wave has a reality other than the water or that the blue color of the sky has a reality other than that of the sky itself. These, according to him, are transitory projections which are neither real nor unreal. In the above-mentioned story, the exciting beauty of the illusory seductress was only a momentary phenomenon superimposed on the reality of Vishnu, who was never a female. Similarly, the universe is a phenomenal superimposition in the form of Nature, on Siva, the eternal principle of transcendence, who is free of all the triple qualities of Nature, sattva, rajas and tamas. The Real is unchanging. The water is real, making the wave unreal. By the same token, the world is unreal and only Siva is real.

This position of Sankara is reviewed, criticized and rejected by Ramanuja. So long as water remains, one wave will be replaced by another wave, and the nature of water causing a wave is as real as the water itself. Therefore the principle of waves has a reality in which the reality of the water itself participates. We find this same

position stated in this verse of Sankara, who must have corrected his earlier position in this book of hymns which he wrote after completing all of his major commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and the Brahma Sutras. In this revised sense it is Siva, the burner of the three cities, providing the ground for the manifestation of beauty in all the three cities. (35-6)

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Jake's commentary:

I had a conversation with angry man on Christmas day. Rational science, he assured me, is capable of knowing everything if only given enough time, a condition, he added, that was effectively blocked because people were too stupid to avoid their own destruction. Implied in his analysis was the unstated premise that if only everyone would accept what he (this man) knows to be empirically true then this cutting-short of opportunity would not occur and heaven on earth would naturally emerge, that and eternal somatic life. Rarely articulated so clearly, this "philosophy" illustrates many elements of contemporary American atheist materialism or *ulaku*, a point of view Nitya introduces in his commentary to the verse: "The world we perceive when we are earth-bound and mundane in our interests" (p. 598). Dealing with that *ulaku* as we live in it constitutes the lesson of verse 85, and that universal tutorial is both practical and spiritual, he writes.

How shall we deal with the world that is simultaneously of one Absolute substance while presenting itself to us in an infinite number of forms in addition to the words and concepts our minds manufacture about them? As Nitya answers, "that [condition] is the crux of the problem" (p. 597), and as he and the Guru have repeated throughout the verses and commentaries, what is true is consistent in all cases. Manifest reality certainly does not qualify, however much so many find in it a durability it does not possess. Because of this failure, true believers find despair or renew their



crusades to find the next “true” object (idea, cause, or whatever) often distracting their attention, at least in the short run.

Regardless of our position, the things of the world require our attention as long as we live in it, and our *experience* of them, says Nitya, “has two major factors implied in it. One is the *beingness* of what is experienced, and the other is the knowledge of what is being experienced” (p. 596). To illustrate his point, he uses the Indian-traditional “pot/clay” analogy, writing that in all instances the clay is present while the pot comes and goes. The question then arises as to just what we mean when we say “pot.” The word *pot* represents the form, which is, in turn, constituted of clay always. The name, unlike the form, is not experiential and exists “in air,” to employ a tired phrase. The pot exists in the space already occupied by the clay, but the name for the object—the knowledge of the name—does not. It is a mental construction without *beingness* and relies entirely on conditions in order to be a stable construct. The pot has certain characteristics, features, functions, and so on, but those too are ideas that once peeled away leave the *beingness* of the pot in question or reduced to its perennial substance, clay.

Nitya writes that this problem of establishing beingness of forms arises “when we do not know the subject we are dealing with” (p. 597). A pot is a fairly elementary kind of form whereas those we construct our culture and lives out of—such as “wife, husband, friend [or] enemy”—are far more complex (p. 598). These types of constructs are provisionally established and transactionally valid as long as our consensus establishing them holds together. That is, the husband and wife exist until the divorce ends the matter. It is in these concepts “in air” that we operate in a relativistic world in constant motion as we experience the cycles of birth, death, and cyclical existence or endless beginningless change within change.

In the clay/pot analogy, the clay is the constant just as the Absolute remains constant in us. It is that which informs all manifest arising in spite of the forms and names our minds

perceive and manufacture. And that mental reaction is the key to what we experience, writes Nitya. Here, he uses another analogy he borrows from the Guru: an expertly done painted snake placed in a dim light. Inaccurately perceived as real in the semi-darkness, we become victims of our fear and dread as they control our behaviors until that perception is corrected in the light of day. The tendency to privilege the mind's colorations of perception without awareness of that tendency illustrates our general condition according to Nitya. Our reactions to events, perceptions, and so on change constantly, and that very process applies generally to our lived lives. For the length of time we hold any idea about any perception in collusion with those around us, that idea holds transactional reality, all of which are in effect temporarily in a world of flux and change.

At this point, Nitya turns his conversation inward and addresses our ontological situation as we experience all this relativity. He notes that whatever it is we temporarily create exists only insofar as it has value to us. Once that element disappears, so does the condition generally. Moreover, the "pots" in our lives—husbands, wives, children, and so on—"are fashioned out of an already transitory situation called the life process" that further amplifies the motion/change of *ulaku*, the transactional world (p. 600).

The contradictory nature of this reality lies in its presenting the relative as the eternal stability where happiness (the goal of the spiritual journey in the first place) resides. Nitya paraphrases Jesus in making this very point that "one who is to have a strong house should build it on rock and not sand" (p. 601). By remaining on the sand, puzzled by the play Maya puts on for our senses/mind, we essentially fool ourselves into believing the elements of relativity are in and of themselves stable and true. This projection of value always disappoints because of its very nature. The mind is unstable and continues its work in a world just as changeable where transactional validity ceaselessly comes and goes. It is, however, the world in which we live and demands our attention as

long as we do. It is in our position in that world and our awareness of what it really is that Nitya concludes, “There is a simultaneous resignation and acceptance involved. There is prompt action, too, efficiency to suit the situation. This is a living philosophy; it is a living annotation of this verse” (p. 604).