

2/10/15
Verse 92

Unexpended, the law of action operates outside;
therefore, it is eternal;
within, endearment is inseparable;
to this, action is only an external symbol.

Free translation:

The dynamic to act is eternal. As an unexpended law, it acts outside in correspondence with the perception of a dear value. These two are inseparable. By the action performed outside, this binary function is known.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

As there is the law of energy remaining ever unspent
By outwardly directed action, there must needs be inwardly
A dear value that is inseparable from it, for which here
The action is merely a symbol of outer recognition.

The gist of this verse resides in the last line: action is an external symbol of our inner life. Not that we create the world out of our imagination, but we interact with it in ways that are not merely seeing it as it is, but are highly interpretive. This critically important concept should be firmly in place at this stage of our study, and yet it is so different from what we might call our ordinary mentality that it takes a long time to reprogram our thinking to accept it. Even proud scientists strenuously resist the idea, despite clear scientific evidence in its favor. Thankfully the changeover is happening to some extent with several of the long-term participants. Still, it almost invariably produces an uproar whenever it comes up. We desperately want to be allowed to believe what we see.

Deb expressed the idea perfectly for us at the outset of the discussion: what we select (mostly unconsciously) in the outside world leads us to see it in a certain way. The selection process is an inner contribution based on our mental structuring. While we may prefer to imagine we are seeing the whole picture just as it is, a yogi is cautioned to remain circumspect, because our minds pick and choose a familiar story out of the welter of input that washes over us every second. This isn't necessarily bad, just inevitable. Knowing about this constraint on our awareness helps us retain an open mind at all times.

Nitya elaborates how action can be regarded a symbol of our inner state, and thus act as a kind of guru:

There is no time when the aspiration to be with our own true nature is not with us. Our seeming alienation from it comes not in reality but in the individuated forms of our consciousness. When the Self manifests itself with a body, the body identity acts as a coloring or conditioning agent. This is the first veiling principle. Because of it, part of consciousness feels as if it is segregated from its true field, its true home, so it is always seeking to return to its native nature.

The inner quest continues in us, never leaving, perpetuated by the conditioning of the physical body. In reality nothing is alien to us, everything belongs to the Self and the Self is existence through and through. So in every existential factor there is a possibility of discovering the ananda aspect of the Self. This is why the mind is again and again drawn to individual things, people, events, possibilities. The existential aspect and the ananda aspect have become linked in our awareness, and are continuously operating within us.

So we have a great bifurcation or division into two: an outer manifestation where action never ceases, and an inner manifestation where the quest for being with our own true Self is also going on continuously. The Guru says what seems to be action outside is only an external reflection of this incessant

quest we are feeling inside. All actions which happen outside mirror in themselves what is happening inside, that is, the eternal quest.

We mused about the validity of the word “only” in the last line of the verse, “action is only an external symbol,” which could give the mistaken impression there is no outer world at all, just a symbolic reflection of us. In the last few verses Narayana Guru has laid the groundwork for safely saying this by according the outer world its full reality, whatever that may mean exactly. The phrase’s intended import is that the real world *as we perceive it* is reflecting who we are, even if we are treating it as a meaningless, monolithic entity with no concern whatsoever for us. The play of events and our response to it provides an opportunity to study the workings of our psyche. This is quite different from meditating on a void or trying hard to erase the impact of the world on us so we can become “pure.” Here, input is welcomed as a tool for learning. How we act and react in our encounters reveals how our otherwise invisible being is put together, including what we cling to, the tender places we defend, the extent of our imaginings, secret longings, and so on. There is not some magical other place we are supposed to get to by subtracting our ego or our conscious mind from the picture, which seems to be the default setting of the New Age. I suspect the ease with which psychedelic drugs produce a state of reduced ego has fed into the persistent belief that we don’t have to do anything to become enlightened. Certain highly honorable forms of Buddhism stress a similar idea (though without the medicine), but this is one important place where Vedanta a la Gurukula diverges from them. We are invited to make sincere efforts, including the ever-important efforts to not make efforts.

This verse exemplifies the enormity of the revision Narayana Guru is proposing. While he modestly hid its scope under his well-known statement that “All we have to say is what Sankara said,” he takes that good sage at least one huge step farther. Much of spirituality, including Sankara’s, attempts to break away from the

actual world, but here we are invited to meditate on it as a reflection or symbol of who we are. If nothing is reflected back to us, we learn nothing. The world reveals to us our loves and hates, how we relate to others, our emotions, desires, and so on. Instead of retreating from them, we are encouraged to stand our ground and use them for evolutionary enlightenment. This effaces the schism between who we want to be and who we think we are, healing our divided psyche. Instead of identifying only with the good in the world while rejecting the bad, we accept all of it, and so participate, actively or passively, in its transition towards greater harmony.

Nitya expressed his admiration as a fellow activist for Narayana Guru's revision of Vedanta in the concluding paragraphs:

There is a generally held belief that because Vedanta treats this world as maya it dampens one's interest in everything here, making one ineffective. Many European critics think even now that the progress of India is retarded because of Vedanta's emphasis on maya as explaining away the need to do anything in this world. Narayana Guru restates Vedanta in such a way that every individual reaction, every aspiration which is ontologically valid, has a relevant place in life. There is no shying away from any responsibility or any efficient action, as long as it is done at the right time and in the right place. In this way we can say he corrects the notion of Vedanta in these verses.

Now by verse 92 the proper status of the transactional world is well established. Life is valid. It only lacks validity when we are confused regarding the *pratibhasa* and the *vyavahara*, or everyday, aspects. *Pratibhasa* means that within the transactional world there are possibilities for illusion. It's true those illusions are to be avoided, but this doesn't mean that because it gives rise to illusion we should neglect the necessary

aspects of the ontologic world. That would be an unwarranted extrapolation.

Evolution is intrinsic to the scheme of this verse, reflecting the progression of our aspirations from theoretical to actual. We are empowered to follow our stars, instead of apologizing for them. Nitya expands on this very nicely:

When we look at the external world we can see a mirroring or a reflection of the progress toward perfection taking place within ourselves. You can also look at the evolution of the external world as outlined by Darwin and presented creatively by Bergson, and apply or interpolate it into your personal life. Then you see in your own life a process of evolution. Taken in that sense, you can say the external world is a *bahyalingam*, a symbol of what is going on within you.

Of course, much of what we see outside doesn't look evolutionary in the least. And yet the whole mass of it is transforming at a rapid rate. Within that overall evolution there is simultaneous movement in many different directions. That gives us the opportunity to choose a way ahead, preferably based on loving kindness and well thought out compassion. Like the evolution of species as a whole, we change and adapt personally based on various necessities and accidents of fate. Our conscious intelligence can even play a role, if we allow it to. Or we can just be swept along by "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." We are free to choose how, or even whether, we will respond intentionally.

John wondered if the ego wasn't the source of all the misunderstanding we suffer from in the first place. While it is true that in many religions the ego is more or less equivalent to the devil incarnate, the implacable enemy, in Vedanta it is considered an essential part of who we are. Rather than being permanently exiled to the nether regions, it is to be healed of its developmental

quirks and oddities so it can perform its role with expertise. In Vedanta ignorance, rather than the ego, is the problem. It's true the ego does have a strange affinity for ignorance, but it doesn't have to rely on it if it is given a knowledge-based alternative.

Andy rightly added that the ego was the locus of liking stuff and fearing stuff. It's the sum total of our affectivity, much of which is simply common sense. Yet much of it is not. If our ego's affection is not controlled, it can certainly run away with us in a search for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. This is where we have the opportunity to refine our priyams, our endearments, to reflect something more profound than simple sensory stimulation. By restraining our fixation on our likes and dislikes, Andy continued, we are empowered to explore the central core of value, known here as the karu.

While the karu transcends psychotherapy, psychotherapy is how we learn to let go of our tensions to ease into it. Vedantic psychotherapy invites the benign influence of the karu to assist in the healing process, but includes more than that. Because our defenses obstruct access to our deeper being, we are invited to tear down the walls so we can be together (apologies to Paul Kantner).

John continued to wonder about the role of striving here. His concept is that not striving is the way to go. Yet striving and not striving are the same thing in essence—we have to strive to not strive. According to the Gita there is no such thing as inaction. In any case, intelligent effort is a definite factor in this particular study, and to the extent the striving is intelligently motivated it is highly valuable. As we are well aware, a lot of striving is misdirected, or else a kind of meaningless busywork. Spiritual striving can be an ego trip, without a doubt. That disaster is easier to avoid if there isn't any well-defined structure of progress, steps to Parnassus, as is the case with That Alone. We are merely invited to meet all contingencies with our best foot forward, and our involvement can be easy or hard, depending on our personal inclination. Nitya's elucidation of this is, I think, intentionally open-ended:

When you visualize your ananda, the true joy of your Self, in a certain situation, you inevitably associate it with things or people. Then you postulate in your mind that it will take so much effort and so much time to arrive at that happiness. The true happiness is now veiled and obstructed. The obstruction is to be removed so the happiness can again be experienced.

So mentally we conceive what we are going to find, and then we make efforts for the removal of the obstructions. But, as we have often pointed out, the realization of the Self is not something that can be achieved through any action. A raw fruit is not edible until it ripens. You have to wait for the transformation of the green fruit into a sweet one. But in the case of the Self no such transformation is required. It is always ananda.

The difference between Narayana Guru's approach and some others may hinge on the idea that in order to grow we have to rewire our neurons: we can't easily leap from our conditioned state to an unconditioned one (LSD notwithstanding). While the Guru's own profound education predated the concept of neural rewiring, he well knew that in most cases transformation could only be effected with diligence and dedication to an ideal, and that spontaneous breakthroughs were exceedingly rare, depending on something like a lightning strike. Moreover, some of our conditioning is essential and valuable, so why discard it all? Knowing what to keep and what to work to overcome is a major part of the study, and for that matter is the ego's crucially important role, at least in independent beings. In dependent beings these aims are reversed.

Deb and Andy talked about how clarifying the mind takes conscientious effort. Our true nature is always present in everyone, but our distractions and illusions lead us away from it, so we have to apply ourself to minimize their pernicious influence over us.

When it seemed to Bushra that we were being exclusive and intolerant by trying to accurately present Narayana Guru's and Nitya's teachings, Deb waxed poetic about the need to probe beneath the surface. As she put it, there is a wide world full of different approaches to truth, but you need to commit to one if you hope to have a deeper than average understanding. She recalled the time when she was attending classes with Chogyam Trungpa in Boulder, which she found entrancing. This was after her first stretch of intense discipleship with Nitya. When he came to visit her, he told her that whatever she wanted to follow was okay, but she needed to choose one particular path, otherwise she would always remain at the surface. Afterwards she was grateful he gently forced the issue, because she knew that in some respects she preferred hanging out on the surface. Trungpa's delivery was light and amusing, and while intellectually satisfying it was not personally threatening in the way Nitya's instruction had been. Easy is fun.

As longstanding class members well know, Narayana Guru was a model of openness and tolerance, cherishing each individual as a universe unto themselves. We love the Guru's instruction in great measure because of its universality, in addition to its profundity. It turns out those go well together: the deeper we go, the more universal the terrain.

Moni also spoke eloquently about Narayana Guru's support of the millions of people who wanted to convert from Hinduism to Christianity and Buddhism because of the oppressiveness of the caste system. Many Hindus, including Gandhi, were horrified that the Guru gave them his blessing and did not resist. He maintained that a religion—any religion—was good if it helped make a person better, and that was the end of it. He certainly accepted that his own ideals would not be everyone's cup of tea.

The class also wrestled with the concept of truth. One common misconception is to think of truth as an undeniable fact or group of facts, where it is more like a state or an orientation of mind. Truth is an unclouded openness to everything, and not some

fixed entity. Thanks to Beverley's typing, I've just come across a helpful bit about truth and affectivity from Nitya's commentary on verse VII of Daiva Dasakam, from the 1985 Gurukulam Magazine:

There is a glow of truth inwardly experienced as the truthful existence of whatever is relevant to that given moment. Thus there is inseparability between truth and its conscious recognition. The conscious recognition is termed, in this verse, *jnanam*. When we pass from truth to the knowledge of truth, there is the likelihood of a confusion assailing our mind. Pure awareness is one thing, and representative awareness is another thing. Only presentative or direct and unconditional knowledge is called *jnana*. Illuminated awareness is called *bhana*. Our sensory knowledge and ratiocinative conjectures are cases of *bhana* and they are to be clearly distinguished from *jnana*.

When we think of the source of consciousness, it is to be seen operating in all sentient beings. How it manifests in each mind may be different, but the faculty of awareness in all beings arises from the same source, *jnana*.

Consciously or unconsciously, we are applying a norm to discern the truth and right knowledge. That normative notion is *ananda*. Pleasurable affectivity is called *priyam*. Just as there is a difference between *bhana* and *jnana*, there is a difference between *priya* and *ananda*.

Interestingly enough, there were a couple of unconscious examples of people projecting their beliefs onto the class discussion and having strong reactions to their projections, which was a perfect though subtle demonstration of Narayana Guru's point that the world can function as a symbolic representation of our inner state. As is typical of kind-hearted humans, every effort was made to ameliorate the upsets instead of pressing to use them for self-examination, as Nitya or Nataraja Guru would have done.

We have become experts at placating, and rush to do so at the slightest provocation. What we might have done was support the revelation of the unconscious material that was presenting itself, and encourage it to tiptoe into the light of day. Instead we typically give it warm blankets to wrap itself in, and a cup of philosophic hot tea to soothe its nerves.

Whenever we are unsettled by chaotic aspects of the environment, we naturally want to evade them and return to a place of calm. Yet yogis with adequate preparation are able to embrace the chaos and use it as a tool to examine their responses. If they are strong enough, the world becomes a source of revelation and transformation for them, instead of a force of oppression.

Change is hard, all the more so because it is initially uncomfortable, so we naturally veer away from it. It requires an admission of self-doubt, something we have been striving to avoid for our whole lifetime. Conflict scares us, even within the very safe confines of our class, where we have over and over affirmed the value of compassion, kindness, and mutual support. Perhaps it is primarily due to that supportive atmosphere that these unconscious fears can surface in the first place. But we remain very timid about them.

It should be kept in mind that the original class that gave birth to the book titled *That Alone* was a course in spiritual transformation for serious seekers that Nitya put on only after ascertaining the dedication and commitment of the group studying with him at the time. It was never meant for casual perusal. While much can be gained from simply reading the book, what we aim to do at the Portland Gurukula is add back at least one additional dimension. Otherwise we could just recommend the book and go on our merry way. We could host a book group.

The added intensity of our modest and restrained class, with its faint echo of the original, explains why most casual visitors quickly bounce off it. It is not likely to meet their expectations, given present-day paradigms. For instance, last summer we had a fellow who came prepared to blast all the fools with which the

world abounds, and to use the Gurukula's wisdom as his ammunition. When it was gently suggested that he turn the arrow of intent on himself instead, he went berserk. Reversing the direction of our mind's eye is by no means as easy as it sounds.

The discomfort associated with having your firmly held beliefs challenged by intelligent arguments and alternative models should be treated as a welcome boost to awareness rather than an exercise in intolerance. The Vedantic perspective is that the world itself is a kind of living guru writ large, continuously presenting us with opportunities to learn and grow if we maintain an open attitude. To work with it requires courage along with an ability to damp down the ego's tendency to overreact to anything other than praise.

Happily, Susan has caught on to the idea that the negative feedback from the mirror of the world can be as educational as the positive. Her thoughts on the subject are appended in Part III.

As we sweep toward the thrilling conclusion of the Hundred Verses, we can resolve to use these last few classes to leverage as much transformative insight as we can. I hope I'm not alone in feeling that our time together has been a rare and exceptional opportunity, and, for me at least, despite a million previous readings, a long drink at a well that never runs dry.

Part II

Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:

Water never tires of making ripples, and fire leaps into flames at the slightest chance to create a conflagration. Atoms like to twirl, and it is the sport of earth to rotate on its axis and revolve around the sun. The universe is as busy as a beehive, everything moves and changes and becomes something else. All these motions and happenings can go under one blanket phrase, "the phenomenon of change and becoming." Each individual movement seems to be locally generated and a mere trifle, compared to the ceaseless

evolutions of the cosmos. In this verse the principle of becoming is treated as a grand generalization of all the factual operations that are going on.

The capacity to function is what makes a thing exist in a certain category. When it stops functioning in one capacity, then we can be sure that it has already changed into another category, and it is functioning in another way without leaving the mainstream of phenomenal change. Thus, on the whole, becoming is coeternal with being.

Man is an integral part of the world of becoming. His contributions to change are chronicled by historians, excavated by archeologists, and can be directly seen in the sprawling cities around us and their networks of roads, in the changing panorama of the landscape, and in the hustle and bustle of the transportation system in the sky, the earth and the ocean. Man's fancy even goes to the extent of putting satellites in the orbits of planets, and of sending wandering robots to reconnoiter the Milky Way.

We do not know why water flows or why fire burns, why the wind blows or the sun shines, but we do know why man works day in and day out busying himself over so many endeavors. It pleases him. He is motivated. Like the phenomenal change that never abates for a moment, the desire of man to be repeatedly pleased in new ways also continues as the one quest that keeps him on the track of action from birth to death. When one man leaves his work, another man picks it up. The tradition of a generation has its continuators in the next.

Thus, we have two parallel streams of change flowing from eternity to eternity. One is the purpose of action, the meaning of change, the cause that transmutes into effect, the motivational force that causes restlessness to a soul, the desire to be happy, the response to challenges, the urge to bring order to chaos, the desire to effect harmony and the will to create; this is the inner stream which every man recognizes as the one desire of his heart. The other is the external stream, the phenomenon of change, the man in action, the world that devours the dead to spew newborn beings.

The outer phenomenon of action is a visual symbol which reveals the meaning of the quest that is hidden until it is actualized.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

IN physics we are familiar with the idea of the law of conservation of energy as known in Newtonian mechanics and valid in the world of motion or action. Later physics is familiar with the notion of entropy, about which the law is "the total entropy of any isolated system can never decrease in any change, it must either increase (irreversible process) or remain constant (reversible process)." Modern physics, as well as classical physics in its philosophical aspects, accepts this law which the Guru also states so as to fit it into his own scheme of contemplative metaphysics. The Guru here has shown himself fully alive to the requirements of the modern way of treating physics and metaphysics unitively as belonging to one Science of sciences. Modern thermodynamics further accepts the convertibility of matter into energy and vice-versa so that the law of conservation of matter-energy could state this fundamental law more correctly.

Energy is action of some kind, and matter is also concentrated energy, as nuclear physics tends to show. Even in its revised forms, the law referred to by the Guru here for his contemplative, metaphysical theme remains valid in the light of modern knowledge. We know also of the case of radiation in radioactive matter which takes thousands of years to spend only half of its conserved material energy, and another period of thousands of years to spend half of what remains. Energy, known experimentally, thus approaches perpetual activity, although perpetual motion in the mere mechanistic sense remains only an ideal.

The light that these experimentally valid facts throw on the nature of the thinking substance is what concerns us more directly in this verse. In the very first verse, this source of all action was referred to as 'karu', which we translated as 'core'. After developing his subject through the intervening verses it is easy for us to understand the full import of this startling idea put forward by the Guru as a central reality which reconciles matter and spirit. The implicit method is both ontological and teleological. Nature itself, as we have seen in verse 81, has a subjective aspect that was both immanent and transcendent at the same time. In keeping with the tradition of Advaita Vedanta the Guru will be seen to have consistently adhered to a unitive way of developing his subject combining these two aspects of the *iha* (immanent) and the *para* (transcendent).

The case of the Absolute Value to which all the three verses, 91, 92 and 93 refer, and which was examined with a cosmological slant, as it were, in the previous verse (91) is now restated in psychological terms. Modern phenomenology knows this way of treating the inner self and its eidetic counterpart as consisting unitively of one 'epoche' or event in consciousness.

The sun and sunlight are to be understood unitively, as also the fire and the sparks, or the sea and the waves that arise therefrom. In essence or substance they are the same, although one might be less rich ontologically or more significantly teleological. As the classical example in Vedanta harps upon incessantly, the wave and the ocean in reality belong together unitively and constitute one and the same reality to the dialectically-trained, contemplative inner eye which can see the reality from within appearances. Cosmology and psychology thus view the same verity in terms of the Self, understood in the context of the Absolute.

The source of action and the action itself being thus one or inseparable, the brute action, as we mechanistically see it as an

actuality representing the non-self from an outside point of view, reduces itself into a mathematical symbol. The whole of physics is said to be a science of symbols by advanced philosophers of science like Eddington. The relation between action and what it corresponds to symbolically is explained by Eddington as follows:

The whole calculation of N (the Cosmic Number) is an essay in the representation of conceptions by symbolic algebra. It is the conceptions that matter. We have to express in mathematical symbolism what we think we are doing when we measure things; for if we had no conception of what we are doing, the results of the measurements would not persuade us to believe anything in particular. (23)

The symbol N thus stands for the measurable cosmos where action also lives and moves. The language used by the Guru thus catches up with what is known to link the experimental and non-experimental or symbolic worlds.

(23) pp. 266-7. 'Fundamental Theory', by Sir A. S. Eddington, Cambridge University Press.

Part III

Susan shared some recent insights with us:

For many years since I first read Atmo, I have appreciated the idea that our happiness is inside us. What we see outside that makes us happy is a reflection of our inner selves and the Absolute in us. Paying attention to the things that bring out that joy in us can help us to find our Dharma. Only recently have I started wondering about the negative side of this equation. If we are bothered by things and they make us angry and repulsed, is that a reflection of something inside us as well? This week's verse helped to clarify the answer to this. Not only are negative reactions reflecting

something about our inner selves but they are also pointing the way to issues we can work on. We need to pay attention to these as much as, or possibly more than, our joy. They tell us what might be getting in the way of finding our Dharma – our true nature. I think these would qualify as the veiling aspects that Nitya talks about. I had a dream the other night that illuminates this for me. I was walking in the open air, through a kind of valley and I came upon a beautiful, steep hillside. I was captivated by this hillside because the contours of it were very lovely and the foliage was gorgeous – plants and flowers that were glistening with her own kind of light. I noticed that the sun had just left the hillside as it was evening and so I was more amazed by the light coming from the plants. I reached for my phone to take a picture so I could keep this image. I fumbled with the buttons to make it happen but all I saw were out of focus images and then darkness. It was only a matter of seconds but by the time I got back to looking at the hillside with my own eyes, everything was dark and I couldn't see it anymore. I think the dream points very clearly to both the positive and negative aspects of the verse. The hillside in all its loveliness reflected my own inner joy and the Self luminous Absolute within me that I am learning to recognize. The inclination to take a photo and grasp the image is an example of my need to hold things too tightly – to analyze, to crush what could be left alone. This need to grasp is a reflection of my ongoing struggle to stay in the present and to remain solidly on my own two feet. Often I am inclined to step out from a beautiful moment and analyze it or to over worry about past events and future possibilities. I think this points to some deep fears in me that need work.

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Jake's commentary:

In verse 92, the Guru brings together two observations he has laid out in previous verses in order to clarify or over-all context. In

the first place, writes Nitya as he explains the Guru, as far as we are capable of knowing the world and everything in it are in constant motion, a principle not in dispute since the 1920s when Einstein and others clarified their notions of relativity. Here, Nitya observes that this swirling-everything informs both our interior and exterior domains. As the world moves so does our interior consciousness. In making these observations and connecting our two domains of experience as mirroring one another, Nitya is essentially re-stating an old concept now out of favor in the West: “Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. “That is,” writes Ken Wilber as he qualifies the notion in his *Up From Eden* (p. 25) . . . “the infant and the primitive share at least a few general characteristics.” In Nitya’s hands, that measured qualification disappears as cosmic evolution and change takes place within as well as without.

On a fundamental level, this understanding of our basic relationship with the world flies in the face of linear history such as that which underlies Christian historiography—in which beginnings and endings clearly set the parameters of the possible—and a materialist’s perspective based on the inevitability of a heaven on earth also placed in time and thereby ending it. In both cases, a stable *place* exists that the mind can know, regardless of its physical existence.

The world we live in, writes Nitya, is made of these two domains and as we go about our business our Self is attached to those things, events, people, ideas in which we detect our “*ananda*, the true joy of the Self” (p. 657). Projecting this quality onto that object or construction, we go about removing the “obstructions” or clutter obscuring that quality in that thing. Happiness, that is, will emerge once we remove the camouflage surrounding it. This circular process is our attempt to find our Self in our Self, a continuous project: “There is no time when the aspiration to be our own true nature is not with us” (p. 658), Nitya points out, and the “obscuring” or hiding begins with our birth. The body itself separates and isolates us at the get-go, establishing an illusion of

disconnectedness as the mind goes to work on re-establishing its awareness of the Self. It is in this act of projecting and reading back that the mind links the inner and outer worlds. Those items we find attractive constitute that which captures our attention, that which makes up what we assume to be the world. As Nitya concludes, “All actions which happen outside mirror in themselves what is happiness inside, that is, the eternal quest” (p. 658).

In the second half of his commentary, Nitya moves on to consider the nature of that to which we are attracted. Unstable and temporary, all manifestation comes and goes observing natural cycles. The waves appear and then dissolve as the water remains. In those waves, however, are features of the Absolute transcending the coming and going of the object. Here, Nitya gives the example of our life cycle from birth to death to birth. While occupying a body, we have the non-negotiable demand that we eat periodically. Because the principle endures however often we eat, the drive transcends the body and thereby qualifies as a “perennial principle. . . . It is to be understood vertically rather than horizontally” (p. 659). It is this transcendent or Absolute character implicit in whatever we find interesting in any manifested thing that makes our search continuous: “It is an eternal as the action taking place in the external world” (p. 660).

As we evolve and search ontologically so does our world in which we are manifest. It is a symbol of ourselves we can observe. A corollary to this on-going relationship is our implicit responsibility for that exterior world. In this regard, writes Nitya, the criticism of many westerners that Vedantic thought—because of its emphasis on Maya . . . [explains] away the need to do anything in the world—justifies doing nothing to address the ills of the world makes little sense. We are all responsible for correct and timely action in the world when it is called for.