
IN THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Nitya Chaitanya Yati

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NITYA CHAITANYA YATI

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*To my elder brother
Harry J. Jakobsen*

No analysis of consciousness is better known to us than when it is revealed to us by the “inner programmer” who always hides behind our own inattentativeness, and no discipline is more effective to tune our consciousness to the ever-abiding charm of our own beauty than that which is conspired by the sequential eventualities of life, which may look random, coincidental and often even incoherent.

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PREFACE

From underground springs to mighty rivers, everywhere on earth the water that falls from the sky is flowing toward the oceans. The sun's heat evaporates water out the ocean, lifting the vapor heavenward. The winds gather the vapor together as clouds, which return the life-giving droplets backs to earth as rain. On the ground the drops reunite, forming pools, streams, creeks and rivers, all once again winding their way back to their source. It is as if all the four elements are in a conspiracy to perpetuate the cycle of emergence and return of all forms of life.

From ancient mythology and folklore to modern pop music lyrics, again and again we find life itself treated as a river. Always flowing and changing, now turbulent, now calm, many streams joining together to form single bodies, all of it moving at its own pace back to the sea where the individuality of each separate stream is remerged in the totality from which countless future vaporous clouds drops, and streams will again be brought forth.

The common denominator linking cloud, rain, pool, river and ocean is Water. The ever-flowing water of our life is Consciousness. Whether life savours bland, sweet or bitter, it is our own consciousness that is at once both the taster as well as that which is itself tasted. Christ must have had this in mind when he remarked:

“Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt should have lost the savour, wherewith shall it again be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing but to be caste out and to be trodden underfoot of men.” (Matthew 5. 13)

In its onward flow water knows many conditions. When it is calm and clear, it is capable of beautifully mirroring the sky, and the surroundings from which it came, as well as the sun which illuminates and enlivens all this. The same water,

when turbulent, reflects the sky, the surroundings and the sun in an unstable and distorted way. The water may sometimes even become so muddied that it becomes opaque, and nothing can be mirrored in it at all.

This book was initially conceived as an investigation into the nature and dynamic of that very consciousness which in turn raises us to the heights of sublimity and plunges us to the depths of despair, which creates its own meaning or sense of meaninglessness, which has no form and yet is ever ready to assume any form. It is not a philosophical treatise, through a sound philosophical base is implied herein. The problems it deals with, although universal, are in no way treated hypothetically. The book in general and each chapter in particular grew out of the burning needs of real people who approached Guru Nitya for help.

Nitya's style is often to give a talk to a class that is simultaneously transcribed by one or more students. Later he goes over it to correct errors and make further comments. In addition, during the period that this book was being written, he would hold a session for the students to ask questions about the material. In the classic format of a guru/disciple dialogue, he would answer the questions extemporaneously. The incisive querying of disciples is the time-honoured method of eliciting wisdom from a guru, in which insights tend to be retained unless they are called upon to be brought forth. The four Reaction and Review sections of the book are the record of these encounters.

As is often the case in such situations, the answers the guru presents bear on the spiritual problems of the questioner that may or may not have been directly implied by the actual question. It is a real mystery that the couple dozen of us who had the good fortune to sit in on the dictations and question and answer sessions each felt that the message contained was speaking directly and personally to us.

The talks interchanges contained herein took place in 1975, in and around Portland State University in Oregon, United

States. Guru Nitya's primary teacher Nataraja Guru, whose teacher was the Great Narayana Guru. Both these other gurus are mentioned in Part two of the work, which is a collection of teaching stories.

In the *Upaniṣads* it is said that in order to know the nature of water, it is not necessary to drain the seven seas; but rather if one of thoroughly understands a single drop, he knows all water. Like that, this book is not an objective study of anything "out there". Each reader is invited to make the subject and the object under study one and the same.

Perhaps the best way to prepare ourselves to sink inwardly into the spirit of this book is with a gentle prayer of self-recollection in the words of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*:
(VI.10.1.3)

"These rivers, my dear, flow, the eastern toward the east, the western toward the west. They go just from the ocean to the ocean. They become the ocean itself. As there they know not. 'I am this one', 'I am that one'--even so, indeed, my dear, all creatures here, though they have come forth from, Being, know not 'We have come forth from Being.' Whatever they are in this world, whether tiger, or lion, or wolf, or boar, or worm, or fly, or gnat, or mosquito, that they become.

That which is the finest essence - this whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality. That is *Ātman* (Self)."

Peter Oppenheimer

Spring 1976

Scott Teitsworth

Spring 2003

Introduction

According to John Locke, we come to this life with a blank slate of a mind on which nothing is scribbled. He called it a *tabula rasa*. Many of his contemporaries did not agree with him. I don't want to get into a controversy about it at this point, but at least one thing I know for sure is that no writer sits with a *tabula rasa* when he is about to write a book. He has in his mind the theories he has heard and the arguments that were put forth to support or to oppose such theories. He has his own observations and questions. On his own he must have been exercising some suitable method to attack his particular problem and present it in a convincing manner. He must be aware of rival theories and the merits and demerits of several other stands. Above all this, he will have his own normative notion that gives him certitude of the truth he wants to underline and share with others.

If the writer is not fanatical and has an open mind, he won't fail to see that there are several points of view from which one can look at the issue under consideration. Consequently he should also believe in the complementarity of the points of view from different vantage points. In spite of the advantage of knowing a subject from every possible angle, historical settings and the natural limitations of a mind tied down to a body that can transport itself only in a limited region of time and space and which is favored to live in no more than a few ethnic circles, make it inevitable that the writer be content with the one standpoint where he can feel most comfortable.

The grassroot of the present writer are in India, where several hierarchies of teachers have been busying themselves with the search for the meaning of life. They have evolved a number of models of perfection which approximate the several shades of meaning they have arrived at. The most important among these models are those of the yogi, one of harmonized mind who lives in a state of equipoise and the *jnani*, a seer of

clear vision who silently witnesses the real and passively participates in the demands of the actual.

The *yogi* image dates to the prehistoric era. A seal depicting a yogi, estimated to have been made around 2500 BC, was found in the archeological site of Mohenjo Daro, which is situated in what is today Pakistan.

The system of philosophy that upholds the image of the *jnani*, the wise rishi, is the school of Vedanta. Yoga and Vedanta are classified among the six orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy. The six schools are more conveniently grouped as three pairs of systems: *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāmkhya* and *Yoga*, and *Mīmāṃsa* and *Vedanta*.

Nyāya is a school of logic which gives priority in its system to the category of the general or the collective. *Vaiśeṣika* is a complementary school of logic giving primacy to the specific constituents of truth. It has also developed a method of analysis to categories and classify all elements that constitute the field of human experience.

Sāmkhya is a school that has reduced the visibles into calculables. It divides the world into twenty-four categories originating from a binary cause. According to the *Sāmkhya* system, the world is essentially a “coming together of things,” so there is no need for a God or a Creator. While the school of Yoga’s generally follows the epistemology of the *Sāmkhya* system, it does accept the notion of God in a philosophically limited sense. This brings it closer to the spirit of the *Upaniṣads*.

Mīmāṃsa means a critique. *Mīmāṃsa* and *Vedanta* are otherwise called *pūrva Mīmāṃsa*, anterior criticism, and *uttara Mīmāṃsa* posterior criticism. *Pūrva Mīmāṃsa* is a critique of action dynamics, espically of ritual and of the semeiosis of *mantras*, and Vedanta is critique of knowledge. Happily, three eminent masters of Vedanta gave their best attention to the yoga aphorisms of Patanjali, the basic exposition of Yoga. They have each written a commentary on Yoga by complementing its teaching with the wisdom of Vedanta.

From the days of Sankara, in the eight century, through the Mogul period, in the sixteenth century, there was an active exchange of ideas and counter-criticisms between the scholars of the six schools Indian Philosophy and the exponents of the four schools of Buddhism, the two main schools of Jainism and the Indian school of materialism. The two schools that have withstood the onslaught of time and the decadence through which India has passed during the last five centuries are the schools of Yoga and Vedanta.

All these schools deal primarily with what is today known in the West as psychology. The Hindu religious garb given to them only casts an obscuring shadow of parochialism over them.

The present book is meant to be a continuation of the discipline instituted by the above mentioned schools. All the same we want to make it clear that we do not limit ourselves either in our scope or in our method of approach to conform strictly to the dictates of any particular system or outlook. We keep our mind open to receive light from whatever source it comes, and we have no hesitation to give up any previous stand if we can avail ourselves of a new avenue which can yield a more universal truth for maximum benefit of all.

Nitya Chaitanya Yati

PART ONE

1. The Wholesale Deal

Last night I went to a theater in the city of Portland to listen to a wise man. The spacious auditorium was packed to its capacity. On the dimly lit stage squatted a large crowd of shabbily-dressed men and women. A bearded man was seen plucking a monotonous tone on a stringed instrument which is usually used by the wandering minstrels in India. All were chanting a Hindu *mantra*.

At the entrance of the theater was a solitary Christian evangelist restlessly walking up and down cautioning everyone about the dubious ways of the devil and the promising of Jesus, the saviour and good shepherd. A band of shaven headed young men with small tufts of hair left as pig-tails resented the whole show, and they were jingling their own bells and chanting a rival *mantra*.

I sat inside waiting for the wise man. Finally he appeared on the stage. He was pleasant and impressive with his *rishi* like figure. He presented before his audience the divine program of the universe as an ingeniously designed television set of which he had the know-how of flipping its channels and going back and fourth from the world of sensory experience to the ultimate truth.

When he was halfway through, he thought the stuff was getting too heavy, and so he decided to rejuvenate the audience with light musical entertainment. At that point I left and went home.

Before going to bed I went through my mail. A young man who is living with his family in London lost his job, and he is on danger of also losing his house if nobody comes to his

aid in paying his overdue rent. Another letter was from a philosopher friend in India who had dysentery which followed on the heels of a toothache, and now he is having fever and cough.

This morning the first thing I did on waking up was to listen to a long distance call from another city. At the other end of the line was a woman sobbing. She was crying at the thought of my possible death, and she wanted to extract from me a promise of all the spiritual attainments including immortality.

Another young lady, broken loose from the confines of a mental hospital, is annoyed by the sudden release of the psychic energy of her *kuṇḍalini* and she desires me to tackle and tame it, so that it may be used for the welfare of the whole world.

These experiences are not the figments of my imagination. The couple of thousand people who came to the theater, the wise man who wanted to try music to retrieve the interest of his audience, the young man in London struggling to get a new position, the ailing philosopher, the woman wanting to make hay while the sun shines, and the lady with an unmanageable *kuṇḍalini* are all to be included in whatever program we envision if we are to claim any access to the path of happiness.

The enormity of the problem makes me feel very diffident this morning, especially with my “myocardial ischemia”. What surprises me most is that these problems do not come under the category of any of the positive science such as physics, chemistry and physiology. Neither do they belong to systematized schools of thought such as rationalism, empiricism, idealism, phenomenism or materialism. Even the non-systematized existentialism fails to tackle these problems unless the existentialist happen to be a poet, a novelist or a playwright. I can well understand the impatience of A. J. Ayer when he called metaphysics “nonsense”.

Human reasoning is a big bully that always wants to dominate over all other faculties which constitute the conscious experience. Man knows no other way of reshuffling the stuff of

his consciousness than by structuring it in terms of logic and convincing himself and others convinced that his logical stand contributes to stabilization of ethical standards and that his reason and emotion are harmoniously blended. We bring significant limitations upon ourselves because of our disproportionate allegiance to reason and our confidence in its supremacy.

Look at all the great people who have captured the hearts and imagination of mankind down through the centuries, such as the Buddha, Lao-tzu, Jesus Christ, Bodhidharma, and the Prophet. Even though today we have voluminous literature to expound the prose and cons of every word they uttered, not one of them arrived at the peak of their experience at the fag end of a chain of well structured syllogisms. Life's dark fears, untiring hopes, vivid and hazy imaginings, and deep-rooted and irrational urges all came together at a certain moment to forge out of these great ones a model that was to influence mankind forever after.

This tells us that any attempt we make towards understanding should include entering into the thick of life to experience in full measure everything that contributes to the tremendous impact of what is sometimes described as the "*mysterium tremendum*".

Suppose I want to look at the world as it is without adding anything to it or subtracting anything from it. Even the very thought of it makes me shudder. The first thing that is going to happen is the dropping away of the names of eight people sitting in this room with me. The one I previously called "Johnny" changes into a visual image of red, light-blue, grey and pale flesh tint. But even these names of the colors are unnecessary appendages that I'm adding to what is presented to my eyesight. By merely dropping the names and the verbal descriptions of what I'm seeing, I don't disturb the structural coherence of the visual images at all. They continue to be distinct and appealing to my sense of visual appreciation.

This simple experiment of dropping the names of my friends brings me up against the enormity of the learning and recalling process of my mind, which took so many pains, beginning probably from the very first day of its entry into this universe, to minutely observe the distinctive differences of every form by shape and size and by all the varying shades of all the possible combinations of colors. A separate name is given to each distinction. All parts constituting a thing are clearly marked off in my mind, and again a separate nomenclature is appended to each part. When, today, one such item is spotlighted by any one of my senses, it is provided with a backdrop of thousands of mental images, each of which can be declared with its appropriate name on short notice or even no notice at all.

It would be interesting to see what size the complete Oxford or Webster's dictionary would shrink to by the removal of all the nouns. The immediate impact of abandoning names would be the virtual silencing of my tongue.

Is it really necessary to use so many words, constantly supporting arguments with more arguments and adding appeal to appeal? As a young man, for about eighteen months I went into a state of silence without resorting to signing with gesticulations, nodding my head in approval, or disapproval, or expressing my intention or preference by changing the direction of my look. The immediate reaction that came to my mind was an awesome fear, as if the plank under my feet had given way and I was drifting away from anything that could be named or described.

The only other person who is said to have experienced something similar was Alice, who fell down the rabbit hole into Wonderland. Lewis Carroll was compassionate to Alice, making her fall leisurely and less frighteningly. In my case the author, being the Author of everything, also made the fall less appalling after a couple of weeks, and in less than a month I learned to look at the world without ever again needing to make a running commentary of whatever I was seeing. The amount

of rest that it gave to my mind was amazing. When I stopped asking questions like “what”, the significance of “who” and “which” and all the rest also became less and less until the urge to compare and contrast became almost nil.

It was not my intention to meddle with the flow of time, so it took awhile for me to notice that time was not functioning as a continuum. As the eventualities of life had become considerably reduced, I sat squarely on slabs of immobile time which were never measured and hence could not be accounted for in terms of how long or short each was.

In that state I was not communicating with my neighbour whom I could sometimes see out walking in the rice field. As far as my relationship to him was concerned, he had only the same status as the mango tree or the jackfruit tree that stood in my garden. I could, if I wanted, call out to the man in the field by yelling his name, but if I called out to the jackfruit tree, it would not have responded because it didn't know it was called a “jackfruit tree”. When this thought struck me, I felt like laughing out loud. The conceit of man is great that he takes liberty of naming everything without consulting it. Shakespeare said, “What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smells as sweet.”

We think it is of considerable use to have a name assigned to everything. It is certainly easy to recall a mental concept by attaching a name tag to it. Another item of information to aid in the recall of a concept is the form itself. But in that case there has to be the immediate presence of the thing which bears the form. Name, on the other hand, have the plasticity to be used for the purposes of abstraction and generalization, and it can refer to what is present as well as what is not present.

Still I don't have to demolish the entire world of name and form to be complete in my appreciation of life. Memory does play a vital role in life, by continually forging link after link to make life consistent. And even though I question the validity of contiguity in time, I do appreciate the contiguity of

meaning. However, the result of my experiment with prolonged silence I was no longer under any pressure to recall past events, things, or the interrelations of things.

Once my emotions were allowed a free rein to run riot without being labelled according to the classifications systems of the American Psychiatric Association or the British Psychiatric Society, thick dark clouds of emotions such as fear and grief rose up like mushroom clouds from the anal and sacral plexuses. As I was far from anything that could be called the human neighborhood, all that was possible was to open the vent of my emotional restraint and let off the steam in the form of uninhibited tears.

As my several appetites-such as of physical hunger, sex, comradeship, curiosity, self-preservation, the need to dominate, and the urge to glorify - were to be fed with the scanty provisions of a recluse in hermitage, the lesson was soon learned that most of them were acquired, tutored, or otherwise suggested. It is amazing that the system left to itself has an inner sense of priority by which it closes down everything but the essential. Both body and mind cooperated to attend to only such inputs as were essential for the growth and preservation of the organism.

Since the naming of these urges or the separate recognition of any appetite was not there the regularization and sublimation of the urges was accomplished without any conscious discipline.

My world became very simple, very diminutive in size and without a clock ticking on the wall of my awareness. It was not in the least expected that such a dwindling world would transform itself into a spatial immensity that could swallow up all concepts of size, so much so that I could be at once a dimensionless mathematical point as well as an infinitude of immeasurable vastness. Simultaneously, the eternal present grew big enough to allow the icebergs of time to appear and float for short durations, before sinking back out of my awareness.

The outcome of the whole thing was very neat. From behind the darkness of my emotions there arouse the subtle light of a new dawn to bring good cheer and sunshine to my identity which was no longer bearing upon its forehead any label which could be read and classified.

Today when I sit at a distance of ten miles and twenty years from the simplified version of life and scrutinize the civilized world through which I've been rambling, I'm filled with a joy of understanding that life is at once simple and complex that we can discover it by forgetting it, and we can forget it by accepting it.

The acceptance I'm speaking of is not in terms of canons or commandments or enumerated laws of fundamentals. It doesn't happen by becoming profoundly scholarly or by climbing the pinnacle of saintliness. The simple peasant of sweet innocence, when he smiles, when he cries, when he leaps to his full height with rage and passion, and when he sits in calm repose, is living the life that you and I have forgotten and have now to rediscover through just such a wholesale abandonment and a wholesale acceptance.

2. The Neurotic in the Basement and the Freak in the Attic

Recently I went to Boston to stay with a friend for a few days. We were sitting in the living room where a big, beautiful fire was burning. It was a very peaceful evening, and we were all in a state of serenity. Suddenly we were startled by the banging of a door in the basement and somebody shrieking in a hysterical voice. This was followed by a torrential flow of abusive words giving full vent to someone's anger.

My friend apologetically looked into my eyes and told me of a miserable neurotic girl of seventeen living in the basement who has periodic bouts of hysteria. He said what was most surprising was how she acted if someone ventured down to find out what was the matter. If you knock on the door when you hear her shouting, you'll be let in to see a sober and smiling girl sitting there quietly, without the least trace of anger or violence in her face. This incident led us into a discussion of the strange behaviour of neurotic people.

The next surprise happened when it was growing dark. This time it came from the flat above us. There was a music lover who turned up his stereo to the loudest possible pitch. After braving the torture for an hour, I asked my friend if he could call the man upstairs and ask him to turn down the volume. My friend was again apologetic. He said that this guy gets from work at the night and turns on the stereo full blast, and it won't let up until he goes to sleep. He'll turn it back on the minute he gets up, and it will go on until he leaves for work. There is no hope of stopping him from doing this.

I felt very sad about the situation in which my friend was placed. Then I thought that in one sense we are all in a similar predicament. How many of us are free from the hysterical neurotic living in the basement of our mind? And isn't our conscious mind a lot like that music freak, continuously blaring on and on all through our wakeful state, repeatedly playing one recorded memory after another?

The person in our basement resembles the hysterical girl in another way as well. Suppose you're angry and you make an enquiry into the nature and cause of your anger. You'll find, to your amazement, your anger fading out and in its place a sober mind greeting you.

And our conscious mind, further resembles the man playing the stereo in that you can prevail upon your mind to tune to a particular memory or a chosen line of reasoning, but it is almost impossible to effectively silence the compulsion to continue playing one recording after another.

Should I place all this in the world of heredity or environment? If I am to look for the roots of my instincts and the seeds of my conditionings, I should first clearly discern everything that has gone into the basement of my psyche.

With this in mind I began studying a literary analysis of the novels of Hermann Hesse by Colin Wilson. In it he was trying to show how Hesse's personality was getting diffused and transfused into the personalities of several of his intimate associates in the process of evolving the personality of the characters of his novels. The suggestion in it stood before me like a bottle in the Wonderland of Alice exclaiming, "Drink me". And like Alice I did swallow it. My God, that was the worst thing I could have done. On a beautiful autumn afternoon, looking at the fluttering leaves of New England's colorful trees, I began to grow in all directions spatially, temporally and meaning-wise. I saw the molecular structure of my brain disturbed and reset by the jolt it had received from the Japanese poet Ringai, whose Haiku I had read that morning. He wrote:

In these dark waters
drawn up from my frozen well
glittering of spring!

Like the recording of an EEG, the thought-waves in my brain responded as follows:

Boundless inertia
lay asleep
on the breathless surface
of unfathomed silence.

When the first throb
of a vague dream
caused a gentle stir
in the heart of cosmic inertia
there arose from its
frozen stillness one gentle ripple,
then another and another,
each encircling the primal event.
Each ripple was crowned
with a golden peak of consciousness,
and in a hushed voice
the ripples exclaimed
"The dawn of creation!"

How many minds are behind this expression of the present, to weave such a pattern of thought, of mood, of emotion, of poetic fancy? I can clearly see in the crowd of people helping me with shades of suggestions and alternative visionary images, the faces of Nataraja Guru, Narayana Guru, my own father, Kumaran Asan, Sri Aurobindo, Dante, Tagore, Kalidasa, Shakespeare, Sophocles, Vyasa, and the Upanishadic *rishis* of antiquity, to mention only a few.

Taking this into account, the singularity and compactness of my personality ceases to be real. Instead I become a small piece of reed fashioned by Nature to pipe through its holes the song of mankind. Instead of the individual in me I now see an infinite range of minds belonging to many different ages and ethnic backgrounds within me. In that crowd of people, who are more real: Steppenwolf and Siddhartha, who I know intimately and in great detail, or Tim and Harry in the flat below, who I know only by name?

I had initially thought an understanding of the person in me was only a matter of closely examining my own life. But I have now come to this impossible venture of probing into the impact of the Greek tragedies, the plays of Shakespeare, the fables of Vikramaditya, the hell and purgatory of Dante and even Grimm's Fairy Tales, which are all mixed up with several major and minor woes of my childhood, adolescence and youth to create the neurotic living in the basement of my mind.

3. *The Meaning of Life*

What is consciousness?

It is an experience.

Whose experience?

My experience.

What do I experience?

I am experiencing that I am experiencing.

Precisely what does that experiencing mean?

First there arises an awareness. Within that awareness is the idea of an agent who thinks or feels or is merely "aware of". This agent need not necessarily be experienced as a person. It manifests as an intense core of consciousness or a centre of awareness that may refer to itself as "I". The knowledge that is invariably manifesting along with it is formulated or modulated as a distinct pattern of awareness, in which the consciousness centring around the awareness of "I" unfolds and spreads out almost instantaneously. Awareness alternates from the center to the periphery and the periphery back to the center in rapid succession.

Is that "I" the person in me?

The awareness of the I-consciousness as such does not imply a person. It is only the central point of reference for all aspects of consciousness.

Who, then, is the person in me?

When the consciousness of "I" is treated as its own object of awareness and that awareness is clothed with pride, elation, depression and a thousand and one changing patterns of emotional, cogitational, and volitional instrumentality, the 'I' takes on the appearance of a distinct person.

Who am I as a person?

I, as a person, am all that is mentioned above plus a well-structured physical body which has in it the psychophysical and psychochemical basis for generating consciousness. This system is in turn subjected to the same consciousness which makes it think its thoughts, feel its emotions and will its volitions. At this point it becomes I. To make it complete, each person has a uniqueness marked off by a name which is his social tag and even a unique thumbprint to pin him down in case he becomes antisocial.

How does that person figure in this book?

This book is an attempt to explain how the mind is fashioned, how his consciousness fluctuates and transforms itself, and how his cogitating, emotional, and volitional consciousness comes to be activated as a ripple, a wave, a whirlpool, or a tidal wave in the troubled waters of his psyche, as well as how we can tame the same consciousness to be in tune with the time and tide of phenomenality.

What makes life so problematical?

Compared to the fabulously vast and immensely complex phenomenon of the universe, human life is a fairly simple and insignificant. We live out our existence here in a limited space and a limited time. However, we add to its complexity by bringing in many other space-related factors and time-related incidents.

We have in our system past conditionings along with conscious expectations for the recurrences of situations which were favorable in the past. In the same manner, we have dreams of the future and legitimate expectations based on inferences or statistically plausible imaginings. Occasionally there arise, in some of us, irrational hopes or threats based on wild speculations born of paranoiac fear or wishful thinking.

With all these, our immediate present alternates between being light and heavy, bright and dark and from being hopeful to feeling frustrated. It is in this context that we seek the meaning of life.

What is the meaning of life?

Although the immediate world around us may appear somewhat chaotic, the universe to which our earth belongs has a great amount of orderly arrangement, and the floating luminaries seem to have fairly good traffic regulations. Just as our earth behaves accurately to the minute in its rotations and revolutions, everything that goes into the structuring of the earth is also purposively interrelated.

When we examine the meaning of meaning, we can simplyfy the problem very much by confining it to the life that we live on earth. Although the physical and chemical happenings that are going on in the planet may have functions unrelated to life, we will not be far of the track if we consider that most of the natural laws are conducive to the progressive perpetuation of life on earth.

As a living being, man is part of the biological order, and his personality has a depth which cuts across the characteristics of life, in ranging from the vegetative wants to the sublime heights of poetic vision. The natural, social, psychological and aesthetics facilities, both innate and environmental, that are available to a person extended throughout the entire depth, and dimension of his personality. When a person makes habitual choices among these faculties, and has a conscious appreciation of them in such a way as to makes him glow with an inner sense of fulfilment and radiate his joy in sharing his fulfillment with beings of like nature, we can say he has discovered the meaning of his life.

4. *The Bed of the Stream*

The question before me is, “what do I want?”

Nobody has asked me to enter into any metaphysical speculation. In answering this question, I want to avoid meddling with unnecessary jargon.

To know what I want, I must first find out who I am.

I am a happy person, and I like to share my happiness with others.

How do I know I’m happy, and why should I want to share my happiness?

If there is one thing I have no difficulty recognizing, it’s when I am happy. When I am happy, I can effortlessly conveniently give up my preoccupation with self-pity and all other personal problems. In fact, I don’t have to give up any problem, because none even presents itself to me in my state of happiness.

In a state of true happiness everything other than the idea of ‘I’ ‘me’ and ‘my’ is presented to the surface of my mind and shines in my awareness with the gentleness of a beautiful morning or the sweetness of a prayerful choir. On certain occasions it is like the jubilation of a serene ecstasy that is radiating its brilliant hue, spreading a profound sense of beauty around me. On other occasion it may come as a feeling of soul-stirring gratitude for being placed in a situation of exquisite goodness. There are moments of wonder and amazement in seeing how a cloud of darkness that had been veiling truth and filling the mind with menacing doubts and hesitations suddenly vanishes, and is replaced with the conviction of a truth which is wholly reassuring and comforting. And there are moments when time passes without being noticed, and the duality of the seer and seen does not exist at all.

If there is anything greater than this which can be termed happiness, my search in its pursuit.

Coming back to why I want to share my happiness with others, more questions arise in my mind. Despite my hesitation to step into the world of metaphysical speculation, I am inevitably led to ask, “What is this self?” Another way of putting it is “Who am I?” This naturally leads me to the question, “Who is the other?” or “Whence this world?” These two--Who am I, and where does this world come from --are the classic paths of contemplation recommended by traditional teachers of Vedanta for their students.

By the mere fact of asking “Who is the other?” I’ve drawn a line between “me” and the “other”. But the “other” as a universal is too general a term. In fact, I have in mind only the idea of a few people with whom I am intimate, who are eager to share their lives with me. Even when I call them “people”, I am reducing them to abstractions and generalizations. What necessitates me to think of the “other” is the embodiment of personality. I live in my body, and others live in their bodies.

When I just wanted to be happy and to share my happiness with others, little did I know that it would lead me into a metaphysical examination of dichotomies, such as spirit and matter, mind and body, I and the other, and the self and the non-self, to enumerate a few.

In all these dichotomies we can trace two common factors. The common factor in the concepts of I, spirit, mind, and the self is the principle of awareness or self-luminous consciousness, while the concepts of the other, matter, body, and the non-self have objectivity and existential verity in common.

Existence refers to the existence of a structural or functional assembly or organization of entities. And awareness is a conscious recognition of the form, the qualities of the relation -relata complex of whatever is included in the structure, the purpose or meaning, and how it affects the consciousness of the

person who becomes aware of its existence. In spite of the difference between the subjects and the objects, however, existence is experienced only when someone is aware of it, and awareness has to subsist in something that really exists.

The interdependence of existence and awareness reveals a third factor: meaning. When we look at everything related to I and the other or the self and the non-self, everything seems to come within the framework of a meaningful awareness of existence or an existential meaning of awareness or an awareness of existential meaning. For this reason, Vedatins have defined the Absolute or the True Being as *sat, cit, ānanda* where “*sat*” stands for existence, “*cit*” for awareness, and “*ānanda*” for meaning.

Why am I bringing in the idea of the Absolute? I think it's for the same reason that the physicist postulates one hypothetical “matter” behind all quantifiable and measurable things and that the biologists presume a simple biological principle which is believed to be animating all forms of life.

I began this enquiry for the purpose of having a closer look at the happiness that I cherish and wish to share with others. If what makes me happy is worthy of being shared, it should be able to make another person happy.

As I have been living with a number of people around the globe, I have reason to believe that all human beings are generally of like nature in spite of the personality variations that distinguish one individual from another. It is this perceived homogeneity that makes me optimistic of being able to share my happiness with others.'

Moreover, my vision of sharing is not limited to the human society, I would like to make a probe into the possibility of befriending the flowering cactus or the wayside hedge, the creek that sings an exotic symphony, the funny kookaburra of the Aboriginal myth that laughs upon seeing the sunrise, My heart goes to the heavenly dust that shimmers in the sky on clear night.

To be able to share my happiness with these “others” I need to discover the homogeneity that links me to them as well.

Physically I am an insignificant speck and this universe is appallingly of infinite dimension. I know there is some controversy going on regarding the infinitude of space, in any case it is bigger than my mind can grasp. Still, when it comes to a matter of discerning facts, one need not hide behind the social virtue of modesty. I am an insignificant speck only if someone mentally places the physical model of me beside all those mammoth cosmic bodies with the intention of comparing my size. Otherwise, I enjoy the unique position of always remaining at the center of the universe that I see with my eyes and admire with my mind.

This is not my fancy. Erwin Schrodinger to whom we owe our insight into the fundamentals of wave mechanics, postulates the problem in much the same manner:

The world is a construct of our sensations, perceptions and memories. It is convenient to regard it as existing objectively on its own. But it certainly does not become manifest by its mere existence. Its becoming manifest is conditional on very special goings-on in very special parts of this very world, namely on certain events that happen in a brain. That is an inordinately peculiar kind of implication, which prompts the question: What particular properties distinguish these brain processes and enable them to produce the manifestation? Can we guess which material process has this power, which not? Or simple: What kind of material process is directly associated with consciousness?¹

Schrodinger's question must wait until I answer the question with which I have begun this topic. If I am instrumental in the creation of the world that I experience, then the Absolute emerging from my consciousness and the infinitude into which my universe merges and disappears cannot be so unwieldy as to make it impossible for me to relate to them.

The Absolute that I'm referring to here and which will have to be alluded to several times later, is not to be taken as something huge and massive into which we can push this universe. One handy example which conveys the approximate meaning of the Absolute of which I'm thinking that can be quoted from Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

When you lift your arm, you accomplish a movement the simple perception of which you have inwardly; but outwardly, for me, the person who sees it, your arm passes through one point, then through another, and between these two points there will be still other points, so that if I begin to count them, the operation will continue indefinitely. Seen from within, an absolute is then a simple thing; but considered from without, that is to say relative to something else, it becomes, with relation to those signs which express it, the piece of gold for which one can never make up the change.²

In other words, the Absolute is the simple truth, that which is singularly good, and that which brings a peerless joy such as in the case of a pearl of priceless worth.

It has already been pointed out that the happiness I refer to emerges from the truth, I visualize, the goodness I appreciate, and the beauty that overwhelms me. The Oriental concept of the Absolute, as was mentioned elsewhere, is the existence of the awareness of meaning or the awareness of the existence of meaning or the meaning of the awareness of existence.

Truth has to include the undeniable recognition of its existence. There is no greater good than the conscious recognition of truth. The highest good is that which makes itself most meaningful to us. If I am a chip of the original stuff of that is described as universal truth, goodness, and beauty, it should be in the plan of the universal that these intrinsic aspects of the Absolute are also shared with the particular, in the present case 'I' the individual. Yet if I am substantially the very stuff of the

Absolute, how is it that my comprehension is shrouded by a thick veil of ignorance every now and then which makes me so stupid so as to not understand even simple things clearly?

I very often wonder what makes me so wretched when a fellow human-being pushes me aside into the ditch of non-acceptance or elbows me out of my due share of justice. How is it that I feel so tormented when I am exposed to the mad shoutings of the angry mob, when I should be listening always only to the celestial music?

Why on earth does the grand creator or creatress or whoever or whatever it is that brings about this wholesale transformation which accounts for the manifestation of individual forms, brings forth such ugly faces and ghastly shapes that cause so much fear and disgust in me?

Does existence cast its own shadow of non-existence as a universal negative principle?

Should it be so that wisdom is always balanced with its distortion and sometimes even its total negation?

What place should be assigned to the ugly, the worthless, the fake, the pretentious, and the meaningless in the universal order of things?

To pinpoint the central problem let me pose a few more questions:

When exactly do I experience the elation of love and feel the gratitude of being favored with goodness? When do I feel deceived by the passion of my heart and recent the treachery of a deceitful person? When do I comprehend the truth of things that are simple and issues that are complex? When am I assailed by the failing of my own ignorance or by the treacherous traps of falsehood? When do I experience my senses and mind dissolving into the harmonious sublimity of nature's symphony and the soul-capturing hues of the spirit's illumination? When am I exposed to the torturing harassments or the painful darts that throw the entire topology of the ground under my feet into disarray?

The one answer to all these questions is when I am conscious.”

When am I conscious?

I am conscious when I'm wakeful and get into transactions with anything or everything that is “out there”. In a less pronounced way I am conscious enough in my dreams to fancy a mirthful event or have a muffled shriek caused by a nightmare.

Is consciousness always a transaction?

While all transactions take place in consciousness, not all aspects of consciousness are transactions. There are continuing transactions of sociological, interpersonal and transsubjective import which are recognized as wakeful experiences, and there are also terminable and sporadic transactions within the experiences of dreams, fancies and imaginations, which fall clearly within the bounds of what is usually termed as subjective. Both aspects are called transaction because of a central agent that owns the responsibility of receiving stimulation and making responses to them.

This central agent is none other than the I-consciousness that is always accompanied by an inseparable awareness of what is other than I. ‘I’, as a consciousness is primarily aware of itself as a continuous I-identity, and it always discerns anything that manifests within the ambit of consciousness that cannot be included in ‘I’ as the ‘other’.

Transaction implies establishing relationship between I and the other. The procedural details of the process of transaction are: cognition of the other, including an analytical survey of its constituent elements, followed by conation in response to the other, by first judging the qualities of the interrelational aspect of its predicables, and the assuming a certain responsive posture in the acceptance or avoidance of the other's envisaged value significance.

Sunanda, a young writer in India, wrote me the other day about two old women in her life. One of them came to live with her in her cottage. She is advanced in age and constantly burps and belches because of her chronic indigestion and gastric ulcer. It seems the old dame is nosey as well, and is always hanging around my friend and putting all sorts of inconvenient questions to her.

Sunanda likes to sit near the window when it rains, and she is very fond of watching the downpour from the thick of black clouds. The old woman, on the other hand, is highly allergic to rain, and she likes to keep the shutters closed. To avoid an unpleasant clash, Sunanda retires to her own room and lies on the bed with her eyes closed.

Then there comes to her the sweetest of all grandmas, the archetypal grandmother of all fairy tales. At the very approach Sunanda becomes a small child again, small enough to sleep in the lap. This grandmother is her only door to escape from the dreary world of actuality to the pleasant world of fantasy.

In the above confection of wakeful and dream experiences, it is easy to see that we cannot treat both the transactions as being of the same order. Vedantins use two separate terms to describe wakeful and subjective transactions. The interpersonal and transsubjective transaction of the wakeful is called *vyavahāra*, which literally means the conscious experience of systematic disposal. Thus subjective experience of transacting with an imaginary person, thing or event is called *pratibhāsa*, indicating an instance of the recomposition of memories.

The examination of transactions brings us once again to the dichotomy of an inside world and an outside world. Sunanda's transaction with her imaginary grandmother is warm, harmonious, full of joyful possibilities and serves as a good escape from threat and boredom. Her transaction with the actual old woman who lives with her in her cottage is unpleasant, cold, and wired. It compels her to flee or withdraw.

Now the question is, is the imaginary grandmother only a recomposition of fragmentary memories and therefore of no consequence, or is she a psychological reality that is dynamic enough to make Sunanda's inner life calm, bright and full of loving warmth? And as to the unpleasant old woman who actually exists in the physical world, is she a one hundred percent an external reality or is she partly a psychological peg on which to hang all the projections of the person who hates her?"

Although the division between the inner world of subjectivity and the outer world of objectivity appears to be clear and well defined, a closer look makes the line of demarcation hazy, and we should not be surprised if we again and again tumble into experiences which cannot be easily discerned as being solely of one type or the other. This peculiar mixing up of physical and metaphysical factors is analogically referred to by Vedatins such as Gaudapada and Narayana Guru as a figure eight movement of a burning ember at the tip of a twirling twig.

It is profitable to go into the significance of this ideogram. A moving ember in the dark can be seen to make any number of patterns such as waves, circles or figure of eights. These shapes do not exist at any time in the burning ember, they only appear to exist, and at no time does the twig lose or violate its identity in any particular shape it makes. The forms are only in the mind of the person who perceives them. All the same, the perceiver will not see any shape or form if the burning ember does not move.

Movement involves two other interesting factors. The first is a space to move in which provides for an infinite number of, locations and the second is the time taken to move from the first position to the second position and so on and so forth. On closer scrutiny we do not see anything physically warrant a particular location other than where the mind wishes to place point of reference for its own orientation. Viewed thus, the conscious appreciation of space turns out to be nothing more than an exercise in localizing points of reference and relating one point of reference to another.

The 'I' that is an extension of the perceiving mind provides for the simultaneous localization of a large number of points of references, but when it comes to the following up of shifting references, simultaneity is jolted out of its place, and sequences are pressed into service. It is not hard to see the sequential shifting of interests in consciousness is what we call 'time'.

Isn't it paradoxical that consciousness weaves out of itself these two limiting adjuncts of space and time, placing every unit of experience as conveniently as possible within the framework of its time-space continuum, while the head, tail, or limbs of experience that fall outside the specified time and space are allowed to remain out of focus?

There is one more factor concealed in the analogy of the burning ember. Physically it is a piece of carbon, which is by no means self luminous. What makes it bright is the fire. The fire is not extraneous to the carbon lump. It is a process of oxidation which is throwing the molecular structure of the carbon into an uproar. From this perspective it is hard to say whether the carbon itself is luminous or not.

The physiological and chemical basis of consciousness corresponds to the lump of carbon in this analogy, while the process of oxidization symbolizes the psychodynamics of the mind that expresses itself via the molecular functions that weave patterns out of constellations or collisions within the cellular structure of the brain. These patterns are always accompanied by a running commentary of what is going on, commonly called "thoughts". The patterns are also accompanied by pleasant feelings if they are made up of harmonious combinations or unpleasant feelings if the grouping expresses dissonance. The figure of eight movement of the glowing tip further suggests the beginningless and endless cycles which alternate between harmony and cacophony.

Even after visualizing such a fascinating picture of consciousness, it is of advantage to us to minimize our excitement

over its grandeur by keeping in mind Francis Bacon's caution regarding the "idols of perception".

What makes consciousness complex is its tendency to pass on from one dimension to another, by either expanding or contracting or as dictated by the requirements of logistic and syntax of the language in which its thoughts manifest.

When I say "I," "you" or "he". I experience something like the drive of an automobile shifting gears. In each of these cases there is a reorientation of my centre and a restructuring of my vision of the world to suit the new centre.

I am now dictating this to Peter. When I address him personally, I say "you". To do this I move away from the consciousness of 'I' to the corresponding idea of the other. What I actually experience when I say "you" is as if I have gone out of my body and placed myself inside Peter as the centre of his consciousness. Having equipped with my I-sense, I then come back into my own centre without abandoning the consciousness I deposited in Peter. Now I can perceive that aspect of my own I-consciousness with my senses and hence forth address it as "you."

My idea of the other can remain valid only as long as I don't tamper with the formal integrity of its apparent individuation. Attributing a separate consciousness to it is not logically necessary, and in fact not even logically possible.

When I say "we", a new complexity arises, because now my consciousness has to make connecting thread of I-and-you-and-/or-one-or-more-he-and-/or-she's. This thread has to pass through all the assumed centers like a fast running circular loop. The formal individuation of everyone included in the 'we' is given little attention, and their personality variations are abandoned as being of no consequence at all.

When I say "they", I create a barrier and cause a limit to my own I-consciousness by cordoning off an area of my consciousness. Then I fill the other side with an indistinct grouping of centers of consciousness of 'they' which are so feeble

that no single individual can function separately. Yet, I assume 'they' has a collective dynamics to honor me or shame me, to grant me its approbation or to condemn me with its disapproval. In this way it becomes my social counterpart.

Every now and then I lift my eyes away from friends and the society and look into the beyond. The far-off horizons and the blue dome of the sky shrink into my mind as symbols of finitude and my consciousness pushes itself beyond them until it can go no further. On such occasions I think I'm in communication with the whole universe. Taking this a step further, through an act of sheer presumption I provide the universe with an all-filling consciousness which can even contain, as a very finite iota, my own consciousness also. At that point I am tempted to designate my awareness of God or the Absolute, or I may even prefer to leave it undesignated.

In the next movement I am again back in the comfortable seat of myself and reassume the role of 'I' in the first person singular.

How do I experience time?

What I can easily notice within my time experience is a two-way movement which is analogous to the experience of a person when he is sitting in a slow moving train and sees a faster train, running in the same direction on a parallel track. Every time he looks at the other train is moving backwards. If he turns his head to the other side, though, he'll see that his train is actually running forward.

When I'm keeping a future goal in sight and trying to reach it by hurrying past the present, the direction of time I feel is of going from the past to the future by jumping from one slab of the present to the next. On the other hand, when I cognize the dynamics of the purpose that I want to achieve and how that is influencing and directing my present moment to transform the unaccomplished into the accomplished, I visualize the passing of the time from the future into the past. Apart from these two directional movements of time, there is a time that

drags and a time that flies. On some occasions time does not show its face or make itself felt in any manner at all. One important thing I should keep in mind when I ponder time is an incongruity that I have forced on myself by adopting a regimented and standardized notion of time that is completely at variance with my actual experience. Life experience does not begin from the first minute of birth. I was a fully formed child even before I was delivered by my mother.

The contiguity of time is manufactured by the mathematician and is forced upon us by the commercially minded technologists. When I pick up a hot cup of tea or chocolate, I am not worried about the space it occupies nor am I thinking about how many seconds elapses between the cup and my lip. But all this irrelevant data is laid on the table as the precious findings of the philosopher, who is bent upon manufacturing metaphysical problems for the edification of his own sense of vanity.

No two events, with their component factors emerging and moving towards their culmination, are lived at the same pace. This makes it is beside the point to look at the calendar to decide how many years we've been living or to read the clock on the wall to determine where we are in the flow of life. Mind, conditioned by the gadgets and accounting programmes, is handicapped in looking at time from the point of view of its intrinsic quality, which is continuously felt within oneself as one lives it.

I began this enquiry with the sole intention of sharing my happiness with others, and now look at the cobweb of metaphysical tangles into which I have brought myself and you, my gentle reader.

REACTION AND REVIEW

(i)

Question: What is the difference between the present and the future, in other words, between what is and what is yet to be?

Response: "What is" exists. Its existence is revealed by awareness. Awareness includes the awareness of the form of existence, the meaning of existence, the relationship of existence with prior existence, and the consequence to which the present existence can further push itself.

"What is yet to be" is the womb of creative evolution. It is the unknown abyss from which is the awareness of the consequences toward which the present existence tends and the meaning of that awareness continuously arises. Paradoxically, what is accomplished is the morbidity and death of existence, because what is accomplished becomes worn out and exhausted and so is to be discarded.

Question: How is accomplished existence discarded? Is the past the storeroom of the accomplished?

Response: "Past" is a semantic fixation of the mind to account for all related, unrelated and closely interwoven memories which lie on the fringes of immediate awareness. It is also a mental device to gauge the quantitative dimension of time by arranging the memories in a chronological hierarchy. It gives to time awareness an idea of its segmentation, such as the notion of the present arising out of the future or the present diffusing into the past.

Every item of awareness, as Bergson puts it, is similar to the narrow beam of flashlight inside a dark and misty tunnel. It

is as if an all-pervasive darkness, *tāmasi*, is giving birth to specific incidents of awareness, *taijasi*, and then the darkness is again devouring what has come to be, like Kronos swallowing his own children. Thus there is an economy in creation.

Anything once formulated can subsequently be a model to be varied or improved upon. In that sense the past is the eternal substance that is endlessly being fashioned by the future to give an ever-new look to the present.

Question: If we are nothing but a product of this endless processing of nature, what place is there for disciplines like *yoga*?

Response: *Yoga* is not just sitting cross-legged and freezing into a static corpse of the past. It is a conscious participation in the scheme of life. By constantly pulling ourselves out of the tendency to freeze, to become morbid, numb or inertial, and lose awareness, we make ourselves available to the meaningful vitality of the moment.

True *yoga* is like the diligent application of a sculptor who is envisioning, chiseling, scraping, polishing, admiring, appreciating, comparing the actual with the ideal, detecting flaws, improving, and beginning again with a new vision. The sculptor at a marble, the composer at the piano, the poet working on the rhyme, the yogi in meditation, and the lover in a state of rapture are all agents of the creative future. They are all bits of the unconscious Mother *tāmasi* who is giving birth to the awareness of the conscious deliberation and affectively *taijasi* her offspring children full of wonder and awareness, born only to die the next moment.

Question: Are disciplines like *Hata Yoga* and *Pranayama* then only morbid corpses of the dead past?

Response: Our reference to death is mainly aimed at the state of mind that refuses to grow, refuses to change and refuses to flow. Such a misfortune can happen to anyone if they

bottle themselves up, even though it might be through a legitimate discipline or technique.

Question: I always thought of the past as the creator of the present and the future? Could you clarify this for me?

Response: Take the example of a potter. He fashions his pot from clay, which is the material cause of the pot, using his wheel, which is the instrumental cause. But in choosing the shape, the size and in thinking of the eventual accomplishment, which is its final cause.

The future, as the final cause, is thus pushing its way through the substance of the clay, via several scheduled stages and finally terminates its unfoldment as the present which in its turn is stacked on the shelf of past. If you turn the clock of time the other way round, it will mean having to say goodbye to the concepts of creative evolution, purposiveness and meaningful relation of the present to the future.

5. *Are You Mine?*

A very dear friend showed me the following poem by Hermann Hesse:

At night, on the High Seas,
 At night, when the sea cradles me
 And the pale star gleam
 Lies down on its broad waves,
 Then I free myself wholly
 From all activity and all the love
 And stand silently and breathe purely,
 Alone, Alone cradled by the sea
 That lies there, cold and silent, with a thousand lights.
 Then I have to think of my friends
 And my gaze sinks into their gazes
 And I ask each one, silent, alone:
 “Are you still Mine?”
 Is my sorrow a sorrow to you, my death a death?
 Do you feel from my love, my grief,
 Just a breath, just an echo?”

And the sea peacefully gazes back, silent,
 And smiles: no
 And no greeting and no answer comes from anywhere.¹

“Are you still mine?” is a question that arises in the heart of every lover. This is also the very question that

confronts every beloved and presses them to answer, to make the final commitment. It implies in it a demand and a response that is so very vital that the lover is willing to sacrifice everything to prove that the demand is real and that the response is a matter of life and death. No other question carries with it such an overtone of emotionalism, such willingness to sacrifice, such shameless self-centeredness, and such blatant fanaticism.

This question is the hub on which the pleasantries and sweet nothings of romance turn towards the dark and dismal abyss, of sorrow and tragedy. It is again a question that undercuts the relevance of logical reasoning. It draws its power from the emotional bias of the one who questions and also the other who is expected to respond.

Even the most altruistic universalist who is well trained to think in terms of abstract generalizations quickly shrink back into the supposition that he is a mere person if someone confronts him with this question. On no other occasion does the delineation of ‘I’ and ‘you’ become so clearly highlighted.

When one whispers “I love you”, in one’s own heart gently and sweetly, “I” and “you”, are lying close in each others arms, and the body outlines of the lovers are obliterated by the mellowness of two hearts dissolving in the silence of pure ecstasy. One has really gone far from this romantic whisper of life when he or she, as the lover, comes to the moment of truth and has to stare into the eyes of the beloved and ask pointedly for a final reassurance, “Are you mine?”

The answer to this question cannot simply be registered in the world of semantics. What is asked for is a proof with the rest of one’s life. Men and women are cowards. No one can answer this question expect the wise and the reckless.

If the wise answers in the affirmative, their reward is the realization of the Absolute and the effacements of their ego. Committing to the responsibility of love is no less an act of denying your self and bearing the cross of eventualities than is

walking in the path of the Christ or Allah or following the way of the Tao.

For the wise, a negative response is not in any way inferior to the affirmative one. Through it they commit themselves to the responsibility of revealing the One without a second, before which 'I' and 'you' cannot present themselves without being absorbed and dissolved in the all-embracing light of nondual beingness.

When the reckless one says yes, he is committing himself to walk on the edge of a razor. Such commitment is a sword that is all blade and no handle. It bleeds the hand which grasps it as well as the beloved against whom it is held. Nobody can predict who is going to be heroic or villainous in being loyal to an unexamined commitment.

The one who at first appeared to be a yielding beloved may soon prove to be rude, and one who seemed rude in the beginning may prove to be inconveniently yielding. The dialectics of commitment and dodging commitment is a game that is played from the day of the inception of polarization.

Although in true love both partners are to be lovers and beloveds to each other, in actual life attitudes of top dog and underdog become more and more pronounced. The top dog plays the role of the beloved and behaves like the unmoved mover of Aristotle, which means making the lover dance to their tune.

Love in living terms, is not mere euphoria. It is not a cliché of the poet or a joke for the theater. In every lover's heart is a longing that is seeded by Mother Nature. Longing is irrational. Each longing casts its own shadow of fear. It is an appetite. When a hungry man asks for food, he is vague in his mind as to the kind and quality of the food he is going to get. Likewise, the lover really does not know very much about the beloved.

You only think you can single out a person and love them exclusively. Soon after moving toward your beloved, you

will see them in the dangerous and deadly clasp of the tentacles of their father and mother, men and women, a job situation or what have you.

Love is not always the gentle moonbeam dancing on the silvery edge of a floating summer cloud. It has to cater to the actualities of life, such as paying the grocer's bill and changing the baby's diaper. "Are you mine?" Also means "Will you pay my bills?" And "Will you change the baby's diaper?" Our sense of security is tied up with it.

Compared to our emotional and moral security, socio-economic security is a trifling matter. If the ship of love can be wrecked in the troubled waters of economic insecurity, it can explode in flames if one does not know how to honor and appreciate the personal feelings of one's partner.

It is both a comedy and a tragedy of love that it impels the lover to fantasize. There arise wide and varied images of hope and threat. Pleasing fantasies stimulate the longing. While the fear of rejection, fear of rivalry, fear of the beloved turning into a worthless clod, fear of incompetency and a thousand other unknown hostilities are lying in ambush.

All the fantasies lived in the pre-union days of love line up for actualization. Love becomes a counter where the gold coin is sorted out from the counterfeit and the grain is picked out from the chaff. This is a risky game. In this transactional arena, pleasure walks hand in hand with sense of guilt. From the pleasure of touch to the ecstasy of spiritual oneness, a healthy relationship has several rungs to climb. If instead of ascending from the tickling of pleasure to the sublimity of the beatitude of oneness, one loses one's grip and tumbles on guilt, what awaits is a conflict that can sooner or later land one on the psychiatrist's couch.

Although poets and philosophers grow eloquent when they speak of unity and human solidarity, life, as a rule, has in it several figure eight movements, and one should not be

surprised if there comes a swing of ambivalence which makes the dear darling look like the vilest devil or a stinking skunk. It is not unusual for two people who were clinging to each other in love to roll away to the opposite edges of their bed and experience between them the cold blast of an unfriendly Siberia.

But lucky is the man and luckier is the woman who finds true love. While there is the assuredness of love, the whole world is with you. The sun, the moon and stars are all there only to bless your love. The season change to beautify the variegations of your love themes. Flowers blossom at your window and the birds come and sing in your garden all because you are in love.

Look at the unfortunate man walking the streets alone at night shivering in his soul for lack of a companion. To him this world is cold and bleak. And there is no one even to pity the woman who lies with her eyes wide open staring into the emptiness of the dark ceiling which has no promise to hold out.

Children born of love are the unfailing promise of continuity. They are an actualization of the immortality of life. Love and marriage do not always favor us with this grace. Instead one might walk to the truncated end of final extinction where even our footprints will be soon effaced. Love maintains the blessed altar of benediction and also the assassination post of revenge.

The *Katha Upanishad* places man at the crossroads of life and asks him to choose between the pleasurable and the good. The mind tainted with emotional coloration, *raga*, turns to the pleasurable; whereas the mind wedded to truth turns to the good.

6. *A Knock on the Door*

A couple of days after the betrothal of Ravi and Veenu, Ravi met with an accident. His vertebrae in the cervical region were crushed, and he is paralysed entirely from the neck down. Veenu visits him in the hospital every day. Everything in his head seems to have become extra bright. He speaks the wisdom of the ages to his beloved girl, in a sweet and gentle voice. He wants her to live with another man and make her life happy.

As for Veenu, life is lying broken before her like a shattered crystal bowl. She does not think it's possible to piece together the broken pieces of what was previously an exquisite dream of immense beauty. Her relatives think it is silly to sit and mourn for a man who broke his neck and has become dead in his body. She can still walk on and embrace life in all its sweetness and fullness.

Her parents and well-wishers pray for her and speak to her of a just and compassionate God. She sees nothing but a treacherous fate before her, and if there is a compassionate God, she has no access to Him. She has one question which remains unanswered, why did this tragedy come to dear Ravi, who was kind and upright and good to everyone? Her parents have the same question about her, why was Veenu exposed to this cruel tragedy that is blinding her vision of the several other open exits through which she can still walk on?

She wants a miracle to happen, a good fairy or a healing Christ to make Ravi whole again. All religions speak of such possibilities. Why doesn't that happen in her case?

This reminds me of Vasanti. She is also in deep love, with a boy named Bruce. He's not been exposed to any such tragedy. He's a young and well-built fellow minding his father's business in a prosperous part of the city of London. The thick black smoke that is growing day by day between Vasanti and

her boyfriend, is a product of the diehard prejudice that separates one tradition from another.

All Vasanti's dreams of the ideal man are mirrored in Bruce's physical charm, mental versatility and spiritual wholeness. But she knows nothing of the parents, family, socioeconomic set-up, cultural background and traditions of the young man. She only becomes confused whenever she makes an attempt to understand them.

To Vasanti's father she has become a curse. She is bringing great shame to her family and its hallowed tradition. He traces his lineage far back into the prehistory of India to relate his family to the vedic *rishi*, Vasishtha. He beats his head and laments over his fate for having begotten such a shameless daughter who would run after the son of a Greek pirate. Vasanti's father earnestly entreats her to forget this foreigner and choose her right man from among the "twice born" Vedic brahmins of Southern India. When Vasanti looks at the picture of complete stranger coming into her life and establishing himself with such intimacy that nothing of her remains to be called her own, she cannot take upon herself the responsibility of permitting such a fateful situation.

How is it that we come to live a life in which the part we have measure of control over seems to be so trifling?

My friend John is exposed to a more intriguing situation. It took thirty years after running away from his native land to carve out for himself a life that seemed to be prosperous and satisfying. He married twice, because his first wife died, and both the marriage blessed him with children. In his business he was fairly successful. While in his church his fellow congregation members thought he was wise and mature enough to become a minister. His sons and daughters admired him as a worthy father.

Just when everything was at its best for him, he happened to listen to a curious visitor who came and live in his

neighbourhood. This strange man cast a spell on his mind that precipitated nothing more than an occasional fancy to withdraw and ruminates on the meaning of life. This apparently harmless preoccupation has now done so much damage to his social standing that he cannot any longer keep himself to where he belonged.

He lost his house. He closed down his business. He broke away from his wife. His children deserted him. His parents, who are still living, think he has gone crazy. He is no longer the member of any church. Butter has become a luxury, and he has to hide his face away from everyone in shame and disgust.

What does he want?

He regrets that he spent thirty years building up a false world, based on false values. He wants to hurry away from it to the true world where true values thrive. He knows such a thing exists, but he does not know where it is. He sits there and laments. He rebukes God for keeping His shutters down, and he challenges Him to come and show if He really exists.

I can go on narrating the stories of predicaments is the individual's responsibility in creating their own life situations. Do we reap the harvest of seeds that we ourselves have sown?

I have a psychiatrist friend in West Australia. Who told me a method he adopted for understanding his patients. On a blank piece of paper he puts a dot to represent the patient sitting before him. First he asks his patient about his father. If he says his father is a bank clerk or a Presbyterian Minister, he will draw a small circle beside the point he already marked, and on that circle he will mark two other small circles for this or that specific attribute. He has evolved a code of his own to indicate the commercial world, the congregational world, etc. He does not have a pre-meditated scheme in his mind when he begins to put questions. But just goes on proposing whatever comes to his mind spontaneously and by association.

After half an hour of such questioning, there will appear on his paper a map of his patient's heredity and environment, routine life and chance factors, things that are directly related in the patterns of cause and effect and indications of missing links.

I found this psychaitrist's map to be as useful as a road map for driving in a city, and have adopted a similar method in understanding people. Those who are minding their own business and who don't come for any counseling and sharing are mostly of conforming types who take the path of the least resistance and simply adjust to the demands of utility or pragmatic requirements as they arise. On the other hand, those who are troubled and sit withdrawn or want to be trusted. Their outward calm or withdrawn look is not to be trusted. They have in their minds their own yardstick or normative notion of values. They carefully sort out all the data available to them and structure the presentable facts with all the cunning of a salesman while throwing a big carpet of seeming indifference on all subjects related to their sore spots.

When I relate myself to such a person, the first part of my investigation is in making maps of areas of indifference which my friends exhibit in their conversations as well as noting areas in which they withdraw from contacts of interpersonal participation.

I'm in no hurry to sneak through the back door or peep through the keyhole. More and more I create a counter indifference to their projected indifference, until these arise an automatic polarization created by an unconscious trust. This causes a critical situation in which you can miss the whole game by generating such a cold and bizarre attitude of negativity on the part of your friend that you turn out to be an unfit to be admitted into their inner circle. The strategy I use is "causing a minor offense", which can create panic and confusion in the mind of my associate. Before I do that I make sure that we can both run into another avenue of a deeper sharing. Mostly it works. I know a couple of occasions when it misfired.

From here onward we walk on slippery ground. The treasured secrets of even the most trusted friend are so much guarded by fantasizing and imaginative myth-making that the story given to you is no more true than a suggestive or symbolic dream. This part of the sharing is very valuable both for therapy and teaching. Since my role is of a teacher and not of a therapist, I don't make any fuss about the defensive attitudes or the unconscious precautions taken by my associate.

In the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* there is mention of a method which is similar to the proverbial idiom hit and run". While this may have success in certain rare occasions, I prefer a gentler approach. We can make our interest pulsate by initially becoming wholeheartedly interested in the friend and then minimizing the interest to near zero. Those who know how to pulsate their interest can also begin to perceive a complementarity rhythm arising in the responsive pulsation of their associate. The whole process can become a relationship of infinite value in both rendering and receiving help of the person handling the situation has no ulterior motive other than altruistically assisting their friend or associate.

If you put your hand into another's or lie close to their body, it takes only a little while before the breathing, pulse, and body reaction become rhythmic and synchronized in both people. Even greater is the alignment when a mind enters into empathy with another mind. The body reacts sharply to physical hurt. In a similar manner the mind also flutters and snaps violently if it senses apathy or antipathy in the relating mind. This necessitates that the teacher who is probing and helping the mind of the pupil remains one hundred percent genuine, sincere and honest.

In such a frame of mind, when I relate to Veenu, I do not share her feelings of panic or the exaggerated sense of tragedy in the minds of her parents. Her refusal to look into an alternative choice of life is to be understood as a dialectical concomitance with the imploring eyes of Ravi, which are still open and relating to her daily. She will slip into another mood

and another chain of reasoning when that pair of eyes is no longer there to speak to her.

Then is “out of sight” always a case of “out of mind”?

Not at all. The volitional pattern of emphasizing values, as a romanticized ideal, may well look alike in different people, but there is a marked difference between the will of an individual who is deeply loyal to a society and the will of an absolutist. I know the social bias of Veenu’s mind, even though in the present context her will is diametrically opposed to the demands of the society. The best I can do for her is to provide nourishment for her tiring psyche by giving her the assurance of dependable friendship.

Questions created by time are also answered by time, The healing panacea in such a situation is the provision of hopeful patience.

Coundrums regarding fate do not cause concern when the chance factor is beneficial, such as in the case of winning a lottery prize. However when we examine the validity of concepts like fate, under tragic circumstances, a sense of personal insecurity dampens our mind and causes disturbance in the lower chakras. In fact, our assessment of the nature of the problem often arises out of a psychological projection even though it may be presented in the guise of a philosophical investigation.

Vasanti’s refusal to own the propriety of causing embarrassment to her father or family tradition highlights another interesting element at play in the affairs of a men. People take every possible precaution so as not to fall into a snare they fear. Then, to their own horror accompanied by an incomprehensible sense of excitement, they find themselves drawn in the very direction in which the snare lies. This is experienced by all martyrs. It is as if a vacuum were inexorably sucking them into the very mouth of their most dreaded fear. If anyone attempt to save them from being swallowed up by such a fateful avalanche, they are sure to turn around and bite the very person who tries to help. After passing beyond a certain thresh-

old of intense fear and agony, they stand by their fate and even become proponents of it.

If that is what’s going to happen to Vasanti, I have to prepare myself to be a sad witness to see the last slip of an unfortunate woman from the edge of a steep cliff. After steeling myself for that, I can also venture to introduce more and more freedom from social obligations into her psyche so that she can retreat with dignity from her self-awarded destruction. If chance favors, I can open up a side window to show her some avenue of interest through which she can enter into hitherto unknown facets of life’s never-ceasing wonder. These are the hopeful expectations of a teacher.

The third victim of fate I mentioned, the man who deserted his social obligations to investigate truth, changed the course of his life after meeting with a stranger. I am that stranger, and yet like Vasanti, the victim of my second narrative, I plead not guilty of altering the path of my friend. Time and again we see people making a complete turnabout of 180 degrees in their life. I consider it as a stroke of good luck or a matter of divine grace if you are picked out of the multitude to become something different. Though there is no assurance that all those who are called will be honoured, mankind has only benefited from those who agreed to stake everything on opening up the next phase of human growth.

A person fully opened up to the call of the spirit is called in Tamil *turavi*. There is a radical note contained in that small word. Literally it means “opening the door and walking onto the highway”. There are similar radical elements in the calls of all masters. The advice Jesus Christ gave was for the seeker to deny his self, take up his cross to follow him. Buddha asked each of his disciples to leave his homestead, shave his head and eat from a begging bowl. The Prophet instructed the true follower of Allah to commit himself without any reserve or compromise.

The spiritual models before us such as Lao-tzu, Naropa and Milarepa, St. John of the cross, St. Francis of Assisi, Guru

Nanak, Bahauallah, Sri Ramakrishna, Narayana Guru and Ramana Maharshi all share the same characteristic of walking away from the established haven of protection and security into the challenge of the unknown. What happened to everyone of them is the theme I hold out as most valuable to me, and I commend their example to all those who are likewise contemplating abandoning the warmth of their hearths.

All our early training at home, in school, on the street, in the market place, and even in church is to convince us to adopt the ways and means of successful transaction. We are taught how to labor and get to its fruit, how to learn and practice over and again to obtain efficiency, and how to adopt a well structured formula or technique to get a desired effect. Afterwards when we come to seek the spirit, we presume that we are expected to do something similar to achieve results. But masters like the Buddha and the Christ and the *rishis* of the *Upanishads* draw a distinction between the world of transactional gains and the world of spiritual attainments, pointing out that transactional methods only serve us well in their appropriate context. The Indian saints call the world of transactional gains one of “small pleasures” and the world of spiritual attainment “the great happiness”.

The absolutist path is certainly not conceived with a democratic or socialists bias. It is followed by only a few people. What is important in their path is not “laboring and finding” or “learning and practicing”, but how thoroughly they have made themselves available to a radical change or transformation. This transformation is happening not only as an event within the seeker’s psyche, but it also fashions a world, a world that can grow around them and can continue to expand in different directions for several years or sometimes even for centuries after their death.

Jesus, the son of Joseph of Nazareth, made himself available to a transformation by receiving baptism in the River Jordon at the hands of John. As a result, not only did he change into the Christ, but also Christian world has evolved from it which

continues to expand its horizon even today. Jesus parable of the little bit of leaven that leaveneth the whole lump refers to this process.

In both Christianity and Islam conversion is considered to be of utmost importance, whereas the concept of spiritual attainment in India admits of a double movement, with the world finding a center in the spiritual person and the spiritual person expanding in all directions to embrace the world in its totality.

When I relate myself to a fellow-seeker, I am often asked to give transactional assistance. Usually seekers are not very much conversant with the change that is awaiting them. My Guru did not waste his time or that of his student in adopting or applying transactional techniques or aids. With a big bang he walked into the arena of change, expecting his disciples to strip themselves of their relativistic loyalties and jump alone with him into the all-consuming flames of total transformation.

I know how much this can scare a student. So I have adopted a slightly modified approach. If the seeker thinks is absolutely necessary for him to jog, I also run a few laps with him. If another seeker insists on macrobiotic food, I also show my taste for brown rice and seaweed. If the seeker thinks there is sure path in Tai Chi, I look around and admire her graceful movement. If another wants to chant, I have no hesitation to clap my hands and say, “Radhe sham”. Even when it comes to such extremes such as torturing the respiratory system and jolting the spinal cord with the hope of rousing *kuṇḍalini*, I won’t fling an immediate curse.

All these seekers are earnest and sincere. They have heard or read somewhere of what these wonderful disciplines can do. But what impresses me more is a John sprinkling water on a Jesus. The very irrationality of it makes it thrice dear to me as compared to the acrobatic disciplines of a *hata yogi*.

There is no way to initiate a person into a world of spiritual transformation without snapping their ties with the trans-

actional world and making them walk through the fire of self-negation. I don't take anyone by the hand and drag them through the destructive fire of renunciation. Without turning back, I just walk on expecting sooner or later to hear the wailing sound of the seeker who has committed himself to the flames. If I see them singeing their wings, I cannot console them in any other way than by aggravating the fire so that the whole process is speeded up.

When Jesus says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household", (Matt.10,34-36) it may sound harsh, but he is frankly admitting a truth that every spiritual preceptor also has to confess.

When he further says, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it", (Luke 17, 33) he epitomizes the whole story of spiritual transformation. The barriers of the individual break away, and the individual becomes a universal person.

The *Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad* begins with the presentation of the unbounded freedom which is gained by the man who can confidently and courageously open up the door of their relativistic security and walk onto the highway of spiritual abundance. My role is to knock at the door of men and women who are ready, to tell them that there is an open world outside and that there is an unrestricted path on which to walk.

REACTION AND REVIEW

(ii)

Comment: I thought you were going to make an analysis of the mind in a systematic way by examining such notions as sensory perception, the learning process, and so on. It seems to me you are speaking of too many things all at once.

Response: Life is orderly only in textbooks, in the analyst's lab and in the *The City of God* of St. Augustine. We live it here as a complex whole in which perception, feeling, emotional reaction, reasoning and many other biological and psychological processes simultaneously occurring as a collective response to each given moment. You cannot theorize without resorting to abstraction and generalization. I want to keep as near as possible to the facts of life rather than its assumptions.

There can be knowledge *of* things and knowledge *about* things. Knowledge *of* things is what is what the home maker has, the plumber has, the surgeon has when he applies his scalpel, the construction engineer has when he is at the work site and the soldier has when he is shooting it out. Knowledge *about* things is happening in the special chamber of the mathematician, the philosopher and the theoretical scientist when they structure a number of logical conclusions supported by statistical data and mathematical equations to arrive at more generalized and abstracted concepts. This highly refined processing of knowledge probably began in the West when Socrates turned away from the "philosophy of mud and dirt" to know his self, and in the East when the visions of the mystics were subjected to

commentaries and explanations by their less ingenious disciples.

After some twenty centuries of studying *about* things, a reaction came from several sources, and today humans are once again interested in what actually prevails upon them, no matter how pinching and nauseating it might be. I respect this new attitude and personally feel an urgency to throw more light on the knowledge *of* things also.

Question: "Consciousness" is a very general term. It is easier for me if we speak of mind, but you seem to prefer the term consciousness. Why is that?

Response: Generally speaking in the West the life-style of people is collective, while their thinking is individualistic. In the East the life-style is individualistic, but they think in terms of the universal. So naturally the Western study of consciousness centered around the individual. Mind is located in an individuated body. As psychology wants to claim for itself the status of a science, mind is studied in terms of objective behaviour. More recently, even though it has been begrudged a depth, the study is still mostly confined to the individual consciousness.

There is a glaring contradiction between the social norms of the society and the ego-oriented norms of mental hygiene practiced in the West. People in the East, especially India, are subjected to an even more hypocritical and schizophrenic split between their loyalty to altruistic universal values and their parochial social behaviours.

A much healthier attitude can be evolved if the democratic or socialist way of life is treated as a natural corollary of the spiritual oneness of consciousness that is experienced by all. This formula is not alien to us. In the East it is taught by the *Upanishads*, and in the West it is introduced in the Christian faith as the complementarity of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The same can be more philosophically termed as "the Fatherhood of Consciousness and the brotherhood of minds".

Comment: It is not clear whether you are supporting the concept of fate or denying its feasibility.

Response: The semantic purport of a word must be examined in its organic context, in the way it is used to help express the thought of a particular person. A man in the grip of a great disaster may cry out in a high emotional pitch, "God!" In that context God stands for the request for and anticipation of a miraculous help. Another man may gently whisper, "God", upon seeing the unusual beauty of a fabulous sunrise. There the word God means, "How beautiful it is!" When a young son asks his father, "Who made this world?" the father may answer, "God". There it means "Son, I really don't know." Thus the operational dynamic of the same word can be different on different occasions.

We play with a number of vague concepts such as God, The Tao, The Unknown, Chance and Fate. The emotional state of mind in a particular context justifies the use of one or another of these terms. If what is fateful turns out to be beneficial, Fate will transform itself into God. In the same way, when hope is belied, God becomes pale, and from beneath the mask Fate will bare its teeth.

Fixing an inflexible meaning to these terms only shows our unfamiliarity with the workings of semiosis, which affixes a certain meaning to a certain term in a given context.

7. Cherish Your Fantasy

Last night I got into an unusual mood when I visited an old friend of mine in Portland. Six years ago we were living together in a suburbs. At that time my friend's only daughter was ten years old, and her physical frame was as small as that of a six or seven year old. In those days the emotional vacuum in her mind of a father's affection was mostly filled by me.

By the way, I want you to know I am happily afflicted with a chronic father complex, and at least six to seven hundred young people around the world look upon me as their father. When my hair and beard were long, I could easily pass myself off as Father Christmas.

My relation with my friend's daughter was much more intimate and intense than that of Santa Claus. She used to cling to me like a baby, and together we wove many fantasies which if recorded and illustrated would have been good fairy tales.

Most children grow up gradually from childhood to adolescence and linger there for a while before maturing into youth. My little baby was so very impatient to grow that it looks now as if she skipped adolescence entirely, and that her psyche shot through her physical barriers like an angry avalanche. All I could learn from her tearful mother was that she was away and was drifting still further away.

A couple of days ago she gave me a surprise by inviting me to her mother's apartment. When I walked in I saw her psyche reassuming the gentle guise of a sweet baby. I asked her to sing for me:

Happiness is being with you again.
I want to never to end.
Oh, life is going 'round in my head.
The clouds go by and by,

I'll ask them please to cry
On you for me.

And the dreams I had, they were true,
But now I am glad that I'm with you.
Good to be home by your side.
The sun had lighted my eyes to you.

What is done is done
And what is past is past
And only the future lies in our eyes.

When you read what is written here, all you see are the simple words of an honest person. But when I listened to her, I was not merely listening to her words. It was like the soul leaving the body and effortlessly moving into another world, a world where sounds, forms, colors and movements all blend and share the prevailing mood. I could feel and experience a palpable tenderness in mind, my heart, my soul. It was as if I was seeing the tenderness, listening to it, feeling it fondle me as if my soul was filled with its soft fragrance.

I savored and relished this non-objective softness. Simultaneously I felt sad. Sadness, as a word, stands differentiated from softness, but in the actual experience there was no such semantic verbalization nor any differentiation of the contents of the non-dual experience of the sad softness or the soft sadness. It was as though the light of my consciousness was fading out in resonance with a descending pitch.

To see how the singer was receding away like a fading shadow in the desert sands of time, and then to come to the abrupt revelation that she was welling up within my heart as a gentle and cool oasis, should be accepted as a gift of the fantasizing unconscious.

The term “fantasizing” has a pathological coloration. That is a great misfortune to which the western world is exposed. This universe itself is a fantasy of our mind, but then again there is nothing more beautiful and worth cherishing. Jesus Christ spent a whole lifetime and even died on the cross to bring home to us the beauty of what he fantasized as the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven within.

When the song began, what first captivated my mind was its softness, pathos and the sublimity to which it was silently soaring. Then there arose from the very core of that place, which was neither inside nor outside us, a spark of joy brimming with a seriousness of non-differentiated connotation such as sweetness, satisfaction, contentment, good cheer, gratitude, and grace. Now, when I try to recapture what I was living at that moment, I realize that my flowing mood was not stumbling on word formation and the syntactical obstructions of language. I cannot but marvel at the magical changes that come to the articulating mind as soon as we are favored by any one of the nine Muses.

My young friend sang other songs for me, but by then, I had ceased to be the social ‘I’, and the whole situation looked different. I was intrigued only by the magical display of sounds.

I should have remembered the tendency of food to flow. There are hanging veils through which we have to pass to go from one mood to another as well when we listen to the spontaneous music of a living soul. Suddenly fury and rage masquerading as musical notes and rhythmic beats pounce upon you from their hideouts. You lose your grip for a moment, and you cannot believe your ears. Someone who is so well known to you now sits there like an entranced medium, and her psyche has changed into a raging volcano, spitting fire and choking you with thick dark clouds emotional frenzy. There is an uncompromising urgency in her voice. You feel stupefied, tongue-tied, bizarre and helpless.

What amazes me when I listen to Western classical music, such as that of Beethoven, is the multi-dimensional pro-

file of it in which the entire tapestry is woven out of the threads of the listener’s consciousness.

How is it I could crowd myself into my center and simultaneously flow in all directions, as if cross-currents of consciousness do not ever clash? The experience of nearness with my site resting on the far-off fringes of infinity cannot be adequately described with words.

A know-nothing girl of sixteen can sit there in full confidence with the age-old wisdom of the ancients and sing a tune with such clarity that even a beast could understand! What a marvel! Even the flickering flame of the candle looked as if it was in full agreement with what was being sung.

Before the music began, she had turned off all the lights. There were only two candles burning in the room. One had a steady flame, symbolizing the eternal witness that never engages itself in the game. The other had a flickering flame, and it was in full participation with the moods, pitches, beats, and all the movements of the psyche that the music took us through.

When the lights were turned back on the strange musician disappeared, and there once again was my dear darling child. She held my hand, as she had done six years before, and asked me to tell her the story of the elephant and the monkey which was a favour of hers back then.

This is a story that is told in the *Jataka Tales*, which narrate the thousand and one previous incarnations of the Buddha. The story goes somewhat like this. Once there lived a monkey in a forest. He considered himself the wisest animal of the whole forest. In the same jungle there lived an elephant who was very proud of his strength and the experience he had gained through many years of life. All the animals bowed before the elephant to keep him in good humor, but the monkey thought that he didn’t need to stoop so low. When the elephant saw that the monkey was not bowing, he asked for an explanation. The monkey said that the age-old custom was to

only bow before an elder. According to the monkey, he was the oldest animal of that forest. He pointed to a huge Banyan tree and said that when he was a baby monkey the banyan tree was only a sapling which he used to hope over. This only brought laughter from the elephant, because he also knew of the Banyan tree as a sapling. When the elephant was a small calf, it had grazed where the Banyan tree was. Then it had only been just beginning to sprout.

At this point they were both greeted by a tiny little bird which sat on the tree. The bird said, "Do not quarrel, my children. This Banyan tree came from a seed that was in my droppings." On hearing this, both the elephant and the monkey bowed before the bird.

When I finished my story, I also bowed before the little girl and told her that my salutation was to the spirit of music which is older than all of us and manifests again and again to reveal to us what the eye cannot see and the ear cannot hear. It is no wonder that so many seekers through the age have come to realize that this world is made of music. author and scientist Dr. Donald Andrews says, "This world is made of music."

8. *The shameless Prodigal and the Joyful Pilgrim*

In 1971 I was a guest lecturer at Portland State University teaching the *Bhagavad Gita*. On the first day when I entered the classroom, one student came close to me with a friendly grin of welcome. His hair was unkempt; his clothes were shabby; and I thought he must not have had a bath for a long time. My first reaction was to turn my face away. For a second I was embarrassed, and gave him only a hesitant gesture of acceptance. But beneath his grime I sensed a beautiful smiling soul.

While the class was going on, I noticed he was attentive. Every day after class, he had come up to me with one question or another. Still my hesitation of the first day became something of a permanent attitude suggestive of an acceptance-avoidance complex.

After a couple of months he came to live with us. That gave me a better opportunity to study his enthusiasm, sincerity, genuine love of wisdom, fickleness, naivete, and his incapacity to perceive the factual orientation of social demands. If he had been born and brought up in India, he would have made an ideal disciple of a hashish-smoking *baba* on the banks of the Ganges.

When he expressed his desire to go with me to India, I remembered the warning of my Guru that I too easily give in to smiling men and crying women.

Before I gave my assent I wanted to meet his parents. I was very impressed with his father, who seemed to me jovial, kind, open-hearted and straight forward in his thinking. In his mother I saw a very intelligent and witty woman, capable of

appreciating dreams without herself ever compromising her realistic stand. She invited me to have a look at her son's messy room so that I might have some idea of what to expect if he were to go with me.

Those who are familiar with the biographies Naropa and Milarepa know the kind of games oriental gurus like Tilopa and Marpa play. My guru was not the honey oozing, goody goody type. Although he was not capricious like Tilopa, he was determined as Marpa. Bringing a young and innocent seeker before him was like throwing a lamb to a hungry tiger. So I was somewhat puzzled and amazed to see the Guru giving his very tender care and affection to this young man, without scaring him too much or punching his nose every now and then.

Guru always used to give me a key word to understand the people who came to live with us, and he described this young man as a *nambudiri*. *Nambudiris* are a group of people in Kerala who claim to be superior *brahmins*, and enjoy great confidence in their superiority. They have genuine love for word wisdom and take pain to study all the intricacies of the scriptures. When it comes to acknowledging truth or admiring wisdom. Most of them are quite sensuous, and they cannot resist delicious food or beautiful women. In sexual matters they are not simply brutes wanting to rape, but instead use erotics as a catalyst to get into flights of poetic fancies or artistic creativity. They are cut off from the actualities of history and are very naive in their interpersonal relations. About eighty percent of the jokes in Kerala are coined from *Nambudiri* episodes. Guru's description of this man as a *nambudiri* was helpful to me afterwards in dealing with him.

When it was almost certain that I was to step into Guru's shoes to see the ship of the Gurukula, he gave me some very cryptic instructions, one of which was not to encourage laziness or to create misfits. It took me some time for me to find out the operational meaning of "lazy" and what exactly he meant by a misfit. It is harder than you might think to tell the

difference between a person who is simple and one who is a simpleton.

When we study patterns of social contract which are implicit or explicit in books like Plato's *Republic*, Hobbe's *Leviathan*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, and Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*, we find that tall human beings are to be treated as members of a homogeneous society, and the social obligations are to be made binding to everyone in the same way. The societies conceived in these books are at great variance with the concepts in the *smritis* of Manu and Parasara and in the Indian epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, however.

In the latter, the concept of *varna* (psychic colorations of the individual) and the concept of *ashrama* (patterns of behavior appropriate to a particular stage of life) are made the basis for discerning the obligations and rights of the individual in his respective society. The man of active temperament, wanting to make a living using the skill of his hands, is given a different social status from one who relies on intuitive flashes and takes delight in living in a world of refined thoughts and takes delight in living in a world of refined thought and poetic imagination. The ambitious youngster wanting to acquire wealth and make a mark in society is assigned a role which is different from the elder who has retired into the realm of contemplative meditation.

The world which was sitting on the wall of time had a great fall in the forties when the Second World War broke out. The world-egg broke, and the white and colored parts mixed in an amorphous way. No one can now keep the East and West separated in any field interest.

Now there are several young people in the West, like my friend, who want to adopt a pattern of life which is easily recognized in India as that of a renunciate. I don't mean the celibate aspect of it, but rather the aspect of living as an orphan in God. Conversely several holy men of the East are now

setting, up their establishments on the High Streets of western cities and striving to compete with the best business tycoons of the west. If there is anything called social confusion, it's what we see in the lives of these people.

As the problem I've raised here relates to a young man of an American family, I shall leave aside the swami-business for the time being.

Within the family unit, we can think of the son as constituting the numerator and the father and mother remaining as the denominator. The son is the off-shoot of the parents. He symbolizes the perpetuation of their life as a continuator of their flesh and blood, their social establishment and the values they have cherished. The will to live is the same for any animated being, from an amoeba to the managing director of General Motors. It is natural that the parents want to see their son both happy and successful. Their idea of his happiness is usually measured by the degree of economic independence and social security gained by him. His will to live is to be expressed in terms of his prowess to compete with his fellow competitors of the society. As the happiness of parents is mostly based on the projection they cast on their children, the son's failure to engage invitational competitions is looked upon as a personal failure and the parents come to grief. This is on the overt side of life.

In the deeper and more emotional interior of the psyche the umbilical cord is never cut, so even the least degree of emotional disadoption or transference can become a painful challenge to the parent. Most parents in a sophisticated society swallow the pain of disadoption and estrangement by rationalizing their children's need to grow and wean themselves away. Even with ordinary sons and daughters, parents are bound to feel a growing sense of rejection. If they don't think of their children as callous and ungrateful, it's only because they want to be magnanimous.

In the case of my young friend, the situation is made unusual and complex by his choosing a pattern of life which is

far from normal to the society which reared him but very normal and acceptable in another part of the world. He has before him living models of people who have transcended the requirements of a closed society and the expectations of blood relations. He thinks of the social contract as somewhat irrelevant, and in its place he thinks of a universal order based on an implied benevolence, regulated by a chance factor which can be lovingly recognized as Divine Providence. As against the social taboos and legislated demands of nationalistic governments, he pins his faith on the word-wisdom of masters recorded in the universally acclaimed scriptures, such as the *Gita* or the *Bible*.

In his life the Eye that sees everything and beckons everyone to undifferentiated happiness is such as much or more imperative than the blind urges that propel the functioning of his organism. Even when this is so clear to his mind, he does not know how to end the feud that has arisen between his biological urges and his spiritual call.

It is painful for the parents to see their son sitting on the pavement wasting away without a loaf of bread, so even the most prodigal son will find a welcome back to his mother's kitchen. The mother's gesture is motivated by love. This love of the mother is shared by almost all animals as an irrational passion. But it can never convince the logical mind of a grown up as being sufficient reason to support their son if that guy is going to depend for the rest of his life on their sentimental weakness.

This brings the parents to an inevitable conflict of love and hatred. They love the son and hate the dependent. The son is also not left in peace, because he feels guilty when he is pitied. He eats every morsel in his parent's home with an unallayed sense of shame. The atmosphere is stifling. He cannot breathe easy until he walks away to his own freedom.

The problem is not solved by moving away from the parent's apartment, because he is only going to dump himself on a friend. There is a Japanese proverb which says, "Guests

and fish stink after three days.” In India it is customary not to prolong the stay of a guest for more than two nights. The wandering *sanyasins* of India stay in one place for more than two nights only during the rainy season, and even then they must be specially invited to live in a public institution and not in a private home.

In spite of this social disparity of the East and West, a man resigning himself to the will of the God should find everywhere the one protective hand providing him with the *manna* of life. It cannot be limited to any particular time or place.

For the true renunciate there is a positive content in his psyche; his capacity to identify himself with all sentient beings as a vertiable *bodhi sattva* and to spontaneously share his life with all. He does not enter into bargains and contracts, but he contributes in measures which are greater than what he receives. He is not a leech on society. He does not cast his burdon on anyone. In the *Viveka chūdāmaṇi* the life of such a person is described as the rain cloud that showers the grace of sustenance on every famer’s field, and as the beautiful Spring that blossoms in abundance everywhere in the world.

One has to speculate and risk many things just to gain economic security. How much more should you be prepared to risk when you finally decided to burn all bridges behind you and walk into the unknown to greet the true meaning of your life. The only assurance my friend needs from me is my heart felt blessing of

“Gook luck.”

9. *Oh, What a Noble Mind is Here* *Overthrown*

There is a general held belief that no machine can make another machine more complicated than itself. The brain is analogous to a computer; in fact, it is the most complicated of all known computers. However, each individual’s brain is limited in its capacity. Someone may have great engineering capacity, and yet may not understand how the musician creates certain nuances of improvisation.

A Soviet mathematician recently proposed a way of producing a computer more complicated than the human brain. He reasoned that if a computer programmed by a physicist was supplemented with a computer programmed by a mathematician, it would be more complicated than either of them taken individually. His idea was to go on supplementing it until the machine could beat any genius. He put a lot of hard labor into working out all the relevent equations and in building techonological devices to make his proposition succeed.

His overworked brain taxed his heart so much that he was slated for open heart surgery. He give his manuscript to the surgeon who was to perform the operation, with instructions to pass it on to another mathematician in case he were to die. He did die, but the mathematician’s dream is still haunting the minds of those who had occasion to read his manuscript.

This is not an isolated incident of man failing to have a real peep into God’s greenroom. When a friend heard me speaking of some of my experiences during my eighteen months of silence, he was inspired to make a probe on his own. He was a succssful businessman in Bombay who had a fair proficiency in theoretical physics. He reminded me of Bishop Berkeley’s dictum, “think with the learned, and speak with the vulgar.”

He did his business in a commercial street of Bombay and thus spoke with the vulgar. And he spent a lot of time questioning the theories of one famous scientist or another from America, Britain, and the Soviet Union.

He wrote me that he was going to live alone in a dark room for one year. At the close of the year he invited me to have a private discussion of his experiences where he would present me with his programme for the next four years.

When I went there, he was sitting in pitch darkness. After bandaging his eyes with a piece of black cloth, he asked me to light a candle. Then he showed me his hands and legs, which had hundreds of pockmarks on them. I thought he must have had small pox. He told me that the marks were caused by applying burning incense sticks to his skin day after day so that his mind could finally transcend the sensation of burning. He also used to apply ice to his body to transcend the sensation of cold.

He told me also how everyday he was sipping a few ounces of his urine and tasting his feces until he could completely get over the sense of nausea. He had no more desire to get back to the world of light and see things with his eyes. His program for the next year was to put out of commission his sense of hearing and his faculty to articulate.

I was somewhat horrified by the kind of experiments. he was performing on himself. I tried to talk him out of it and used all kinds of methods of perfection to stop him from hurting himself, but he seemed to be absolutely satisfied with the outcome of his experiments. He imagined he was getting nearer and nearer to the secret of how spiritual energy transforms into physical and chemical substance and organize those materials into living organisms able to carry out performances of all kinds at the behest of the spirit. He believed that he was walking on a very urgent project that was sure to benefit mankind, and that no one should stop him from making this wonderful contributions to human welfare even at the cost of his own life.

The man I'm speaking of was not an alcoholic or addicted to any narcotics. Previously he showed no signs of abnormality when he was conducting his business or presenting his scholarly papers in seminars and conferences. Yet now he did not bear the least resemblance to the sober scientist I had known the year before.

Two other people held in great esteem by their colleagues and worshipped by thousands of people have made a similar error, and I hope I can mentioned them without incurring wrath of their admirers. I have in mind are Sri Aurobindo and the mother, who had been working at what they considered to be the speeding up of a "Divine Project" which they called "the supramental descent."

Many other intelligent people have applied their minds to the possibility of evolving a superior race. When Neutzsche spoke of superman, not everyone dismissed it as the fantasy of an aching brain. It is even possible that Hitler thought that he was going to be one of those superman. But he was crazy enough to plague the world, so he was dismissed as a crackpot.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did not declare war on anyone. When they spoke, they spoke with such passion in their hearts that no one could deny the love they felt for humanity. Their expositions of integral yoga were worked out meticulously with sound logic. Their world outlook was one hundred percent universal, and their understanding of human nature was almost perfect. There was no field of human interest that did not appeal to them. And yet they made the claim of transforming their physical bodies to become immortal receptacles of the spirits that dwelled in them.

The idea of death was anathema in the Pondicherry ashram. When Sri Aurobindo's life ended his disciples did not believe he had actually died. The authorities had to take aggressive measures to get the body buried. Then an alternative theory was put forward that Sri Aurobindo was continuing

to live in the body of the Mother. So then nobody was allowed to mention the possibility of the death of the Mother.

Even a date was fixed for the supramental descent, the day on which every body on earth was to become animated by the spirit of God. That date has already passed. It might be that there is some kind of a delayed reaction in it, but when we look at the chaos all around us, we have to doubt the efficacy of the spirit that has descended upon man.

Another *yogi* friend of mine read in the *Vibhūti pāda* of Patanjali the mention of *oushadha* as one of the possible aids to obtain psychic powers. He interpreted *oushadha* to mean drugs. To make it clear to his followers, he specified them as hashish, marijuana and LSD. The effects of these aids on the mind are well-known now so no one has to explain them. For a couple of years he was overwhelmed with the series of discoveries which he made, and his spirit was radiant with great beauty.

The main ingredient in beauty are wonder and love. The sense of wonder and the intoxication of love can lead a mind from an individual sense of satisfaction and fulfilment to the catering of happiness to an ever-growing world of communion and fellowship. But when these states of mind are propelled by an aid unsupported by the true vision of the Self, the same wonder and the same love become pathological. The worst kind of hallucination will be treasured as a divine gift when the mind and the spirit are fed on this. The capacities to discern and to question are all wrung out of such a mind, so it makes continuous demands to feed it with more and more kicks.

This is a vicious circle. The drugs cannot do the trick for very long. *Karma* comes home to roost. Wonder changes into fear, and love gives way to feelings of hatred born of a sense of persecution. One way of escaping from it is by assuming the importance of the mission at hand, such as discovering the origin of the universe or finding out the day of the final blast when the universe will perish.

What makes it difficult for all these great minds and those who want to believe their revelations is the good intentions they have and the grandeur of the several visions which they have experienced, which in themselves have an indisputable value.

I don't know of anyone who has dealt with this problem with a greater efficiency or sounder reasoning than William Shakespeare who introduced the theme in his play Hamlet. Of course the net result of Hamlet's probe is wholesale death to everyone on the stage and tears to those who are in the audience.

The lure of a tomb of Tutankhamen is well-known. When this kind of situation is happening again and again to your best friend, you are at a loss, because he is not right and he is not wrong.

10. The Wonder of The Guru

Here before me is a picture of my Guru with me sitting at his feet. It was taken by Deborah Buchanan in 1971 when she came to India and stayed at the Varkala Gurukula. Although I am very interested in pictures and enjoy taking photographs, my temperament is not “religious”, and I am not fond of showing reverence to a picture or a symbol of any sort. But during the last three of four years, I’ve encountered this particular picture in a number of places around the globe.

As a photograph it is far from beautiful. The two bearded men cannot be considered very attractive. They certainly look strange if not downright weird. Atleast to those who don’t know them, but I have even seen total strangers asking for a copy once they found out it was a photograph of a Guru and disciple.

Anything about the Guru is a wonder to the Indian mind. If the Guru is 150 years old, he must be very wise. He can be a scarecrow or a pot-bellied fat man. He can be bald or hairy. The illiterate Guru and the erudite scholar are all glorious in their own right.

One of the very few human images found on the ancient seals of Mohenjo Daro was also of a Guru image. To the Indian people no concept is more dear and sacred than the idea of the Guru. Having found it unsatisfactory to equate the Guru to *Brahma*-the creator, *Visnu*-preserver, and *Maheswara*-the destroyer, they consider the Guru to be none other than *parabrahman*, the Supreme Absolute. You can make a pot, and you can break it. But the name “pot” was there before your great-grandfather was born, and it will still be there when we are all dead and gone. Such is the power of the word. It persists, even though the objects described by it come and go.

Every time a word is signaled by a script to the eye or articulated as a sound in the ear, it bursts into meaning like a bombshell in consciousness. In sanskrit this explosion into meaning is called *sphota*. Nothing bursts in you with a more terrific blast than the word “Guru”.

The psycho-dynamics of the word “Guru” has extended its field of operation beyond the semantic barriers of Sanskrit to find a place in almost all world languages.

When I first prostrated at the feet of my Guru, I did not know his lotus feet were sticky, I got stuck to them first emotionally then morally. Afterwards it assumed a spiritual dimension. To make matters worse it became legalized, and my imprisonment was made complete by social acceptance. Now I’m in a position in which I cannot even resign without being in danger of becoming even more popular as “the Guru who resigned his guruhood.”

There is nothing more outmoded and anachronistic than worshipping a Guru image. All members of the civilized world are either democrats or socialists. Both these philosophies agree on at least one thing: that all men are equals and no one should be placed above another. And yet even today we see men and women kowtowing at the feet of a fellow branded as Guru, which could have been normal only in the days of Genghis Khan.

In one of the songs of Kabir he sings, “Oh God, you can wait there for a second. Let me first incline before my Guru. For you brought me into this world of misery, but it was he who showed me the way out.”

Although it looks very irrational to show reverence or be in a state of adoration, several of the deep-seated instinct which make human life integral, whole and meaningful cannot be dragged into the blatant light of reason. However profound reason may be, it is pale and shallow when compared to the depth of certain intimate experiences which bring awe and reverence to the soul. Only when man finds under his feet the plank of such experiences, does he feel that he has roots.

Realization may be the final end of life, but finding one's own root is an immediate necessity. This happens only when you are reborn. Jesus said, "Verily verily, I say unto thee: Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." (John 3.3) Every birth presupposes the coming together of an effector and a receptor in a physical birth the sperm is the effector and the egg is the receptor. Similar to the coming together of the physical father and mother resulting in the chance entry of the spermatozoa into an ovum, the miracle of union occurs between the input of a genuine master and the receptive mind of the seeker. The seeker's mind should be kept open for a seeing master to fill with the spiritual seed.

When it happens, it happens. No one can predict how, why, when and between whom it will take place. Men and women can lie together and mate a thousand times, but the one coupling resulting in pregnancy is mysteriously different from all the other nine hundred and ninety-nine. Like that you can sit at the feet of several people and feel entertained, but the magic touch of transformation comes to you only from the right person by God's Grace. I say this fully aware that it may sound old fashioned to speak of grace.

Finding one's Guru should not be confused with the commonplace event of entering into a contract with a fellow member of your society. The only test and final proof that you have found your Guru is life becoming meaningful to you, because what is happening is not at all outside you. The man or woman "out there" is only a mirror of the occasion of your birth.

When a child is born, the placenta is thrown away. Nobody mounts it on a frame and says, "This is the most benign placenta from which I got the child." What is important is the emergence of your true Self. You are That, and your Guru is also That. Everything else is to be treated as incidental. This idea is well expressed in the Zen story of "The Taming of the Bull."

Even though the word "Guru" and the spiritual rites of a Guru giving initiation to a disciple are looked upon as Indian in origin, seeking wisdom and finding it from a wise preceptor has been known all over the world. The spiritual reality of being initiated into the sacred center of one's own beingness has happened in one way or another to people everywhere.

Unfortunately, this most vital and wonderful experience is today very much vulgarized by having become a commercial proposition. The "confusion of tongues" relating to this subject is now more confounding than ever, and it has become the hunting ground of charlatans. As a result, many an honest seeker is lured into the blind alley of mystical pretension.

Only a few, many are lucky enough to find their path without being confronted by impossible situations and enigmatic paradoxes. The trickiest part of the search is keeping faith alive without giving up caution and discrimination. In other words, the best guide for common sense is intuition, and the most dependable friend of intuition is common sense.

The need to know and the imperativeness to be arise from the very depth of man's soul. They will go on tormenting him until he finds his root, discovers his path and is assured of his goal.

REACTION AND REVIEW

(iii)

Question: Can you tell us the story of “The Taming of the Bull”?

Response: The idea of canceling out the seeker and the sought in the seen is typical of Zen philosophy. In “The Taming of the Bull” a man hears of a spectacular bull living deep in the jungle. He goes in search of it. After beating the bush for a long time he notices some footprints. Carefully examining the prints, he infers “There must be some animal around here that makes these kinds of marks.” He follows the footprints deeper and deeper into the jungle. Soon he sees some movement in the foliage, and knows that his quarry is getting closer. Creeping in that direction, he comes upon the rear end of the bull. He thinks, “At last, I have found it!” To have a better look he circles around to the front. To his horror, the bull suddenly charges at him. He realizes his search will cost him his life, so takes the bull by horns. It’s a long and desperate fight, but the bull is ultimately conquered and the man climbs on its back. After another long journey he finally succeeds in bringing the bull home and tying it to a tree. He is so proud to show off his prize to those in his village. Then he takes a good look at the bull. There’s nothing there. There is no bull, nor is there anyone who brought the bull.

Question: How does the guru seed the mind of a seeker?

Response: “Seeding the mind” is an allegorical way of describing initiation. When a guru gives a *mantra* to his disciple, the *mantra* is supposed to have a root, a seed and a sprout. This is to be symbolically understood rather than taken literally. The root is pointing out to the seeking disciple his own nature and what can be of intrinsic value to him considering that nature. Even the best spiritual discipline can be an extraneous foreign intrusion that will be rejected by the psyche if it isn’t suitable to the respectivity of the seeker.

A man who wants to proselytize and is holding out the same teaching for everyone may know of the universality of human nature but is likely to be blind to the uniqueness of the individual. A true guru does not act in haste. He studies each disciple separately, and individually leads him to his path.

Whereas a farmer sows a seed that is gathered from the fruit of a separate tree, the guru probes the depths of his disciple’s psyche to find the dormant seed which is buried within himself. And even after cultivating the seeds of spiritual insight in the disciple, like a good farmer or a careful parent he attends to the sprouting and growth of the seed, until such time as it becomes strong enough to stand on its own.

Question: Why is the guru described as a hungry tiger waiting for his prey?

Response: The living guru is a link in an unbroken hierarchy. The wisdom of the ages is handed over from generation to generation, and if a guru does not pass it on to a worthy disciple, it would be like a river getting lost in the desert. Precious wisdom should not be allowed to be lost. A master of great maturity, when he advances in age, remembers the good faith and confidence with which he was entrusted with wisdom by his own master, and he is eager to pass it on to the next competent disciple.

A worthy seeker coming to such a guru is described as an innocent lamb falling into the mouth of a hungry tiger. The reference is to the fact that the seeker really has no idea of what’s in store for him. He thinks he can just stay the same and gain some wisdom. But there is a wholesale transformation impending, and the guru may even be somewhat ferocious in catalyzing the change. Just as the tiger consumes every bit of the baby lamb, nothing will be left of the original version of the seeker. The guru will polish him off and make a clean business of it. It won’t be left halfway.

Question: Who are Tilopa, Milarepa, Naropa and Marpa?

Response: They are successive gurus of a spiritual hierarchy in Tibet. The hierarchy began with the great master Tilopa. His disciple was Naropa. He was succeeded by Marpa, and Marpa's disciple was the illustrious Milarepa.

All these gurus are known for various ingenious methods which they adopted to test the wisdom and efficiency of their disciples. Some of the techniques used by Tilopa sound weird, such as asking his disciple Naropa to cast himself down from a steep cliff or Tilopa's having sex with Naropa's wife while he himself was looking on. To make matters worse, when he finished with the women, he got up and upbraided his disciple for not having a serene face while watching the master's sex act. He was certainly a capricious guru.

Marpa the disciple of Naropa, kept up the high office of his lofty chair of wisdom with dignity, but he was uncompromising and very exacting in the demands he made upon his beloved disciple, Milarepa. He was always firm and correct.

Question: What is meant by "finding one's own roots"?

Response: According to Herod Antipas, Jesus was the son of Joseph of Nazareth and was given capital punishment by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate for propagating a pernicious superstition. But according to St. Matthew, Jesus was born of the spirit of God, and he came to recognize it when he was baptized by John in the River Jordan. According to Matthew, the spirit of God descended upon Jesus, and there came a voice from the heavens saying "This is my son in whom I am most pleased." From that day onward Jesus behaved as a Son of God, and he could not confine his allegiance to the parochial, tribal loyalties of a few people in Judea. He had found his true roots.

Narendranath Datta, the son of a lawyer in Calcutta, walked into the temple of Dakshineswara and was awed

by Sri Ramakrishna. A simple glance, a word of love, and a magic touch from the master transformed Narendranath into Swami Vivekananda. He had found his roots.

Our spiritual roots are not necessarily the same as the social grassroots that can be traced to a family, tribe or ethnic race. To be truly spiritual one has to discover one's own roots.

Question: How is it that a normal person of perfect mental health suddenly becomes weird and behaves in a self-destructive manner?

Response: Toward the close of Romola Nijinsky's biography of the great dancer Nijinsky, she writes:

As the days passed, Vaslav was working more and more. He seemed to make a drawing in three minutes with a lightning speed. His study and rooms were literally covered with designs; no longer portraits or scenic or decorative subjects, but strange faces, eyes peering from every corner, red and black, like a bloodstained mortuary cover. They made me shudder, "What are those masks?" "Soliders' faces. It is the war."⁶

Here we have a peaceful man of profound beauty and creative genius suddenly changing into a puzzle, at once grotesque and frightening.

In his analysis of dreams Carl Jung again and again points to the hidden nucleus of the dark side of the psyche, which in time can erupt and cause a pathological catastrophe. When this deep-seated discontent or fear acts only as a dormant stimulus, it produces pathos or sublime sadness tinged with a suggestion of fear, which can make one's work of art highly appealing to the critic. At that stage no one would suspect that the genius is heading toward a crisis.

When he is praised and congratulated for being so beautiful in his sadness and so powerful in inciting our emotions, the effect of such acclamation on him is the same as nailing him permanently onto the cross of his insanity.

He becomes a martyr to his mistaken cause. His earnestness and enthusiasm are so very sincere that a number of

his admirers are carried away by their previous loyalty. But they all have to stop somewhere. Like Antigone, who followed the footsteps of King Oedipus, it was for him to tell his child, "My dearest Daughter, thus far and no farther." In the case of the disintegrating genius, it is for his friends to say, "Only so far; we cannot go with you any farther."

Question: What is meant by "supramental descent"?

Response: Sri Aurobindo believed in the divine as the highest Self and a Supreme presence. His integral yoga teaches the complete surrender of a person's individual self and how his nature is to be ruled by the Supreme Self. The taking over of the individual self and the body by the Divine Power is called "the supramental descent." In his *Essays on the Gita* he says:

A supreme Presence within you will take up your Yoga and carry it swiftly along the lines of your *swabhava* to its consummate completion. And afterwards whatever your way of life and mode of action, you will be consciously living, acting and moving in Him, and the Divine Power will act through you in your every inner and outer motion. This is the supreme way because it is the highest secret and mystery and yet an inner movement progressively realisable by all. This is the deepest and most intimate truth of your real, your spiritual existence.⁷

Question: What is the essence of renunciation that is not affected by the cultural patterns of the East or the West?

Response: Eastern religions have shaven-headed *bhikkus* (Theravada Buddhism), ochre-robed *sannyasis* (Hinduism) and naked recluses (Jainism). Christianity has organized monasteries and nunneries to house renunciates. Apart from these recognized patterns of religious orders, there are people who place their complete reliance on the will of God or trust in the benevolence of a concurring chance factor which seems to keep the world order meaningfully and harmoniously interrelated in its inner constitution. Such people may not have anything by way of external signs to tell the world they

are renunciates, but they have an unsurpassed courage to accept both the good and bad eventualities of life.

The description of such *rishis* comes again and again in all the scriptures of the world such as the Bhagava Gita, the Four Gospels of the Bible, the Holy Koran, the Dhammapada and the Tao Te Ching.

Question: What is the true meaning of laziness, and who is a misfit?"

Response: In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, spiritual life is linked to climbing a mountain. To carry one's own burden in a backpack and ascend a steep mountain, what one requires most is an unflagging resoluteness. One can take his own time and pace himself very slowly, but every step is meant to be an ascend. Action becomes truly verticalized with such an attitude.

A seeker many engage in many unrelated and nonessential actions, imagining that they are preparations for future progress. But to a spiritually disciplined eye, the evasion of responsibility in such activities is very transparent.

Every action should be a promotion of one's own intrinsic worth. Even if a person is only sitting with his hands resting on his thighs, he should be considered as a seeker of true perseverance if his silence and inaction are contributing to the intensity of his search. Conversely, someone might be physically very active and yet spiritually very lazy. What I truly abhor more than physical inaction is spiritual lethargy and moral inertia.

The terms of contract within a social structure are very demanding. When a person is welcomed into the community of a spiritual *āśhram*, what comes as a great relief is the sudden lifting of social demands from them. Life becomes somewhat convenient, especially if nobody asks them to contribute to the general good. Under such circumstances they may not even notice how their moral is crumbling, and they become a victim of spiritual inertia.

Then, after getting a respite from social exploitation in the spiritual community, when they go back to the world

they may become a total misfit. This is the danger my Guru warned me against when I generously welcomed young men and women to come live in the Gurukula.

Question: Why does the wonder stimulated by drugs become pathological?

Response: The Psychophysical organism, along with its structural design and functional meaning, which together constitute what is termed the spirit, are to be treated as a homogeneous whole with a single law of inner harmony. The hyperactive functioning of one part is as dangerous as the dysfunction in another part.

The highly exaggerated dilation or acceleration or inhibition caused by drugs, as it could be in different cases, throws the control system, especially the context, out of gear. Powerful sources of energy can then be easily tapped and conducted to various areas of association in the brain by overwhelming the normal synaptic resistance.

In a healthy person the accelerating and inhibitory systems work in complete harmony with perfect complementarity, acting like a dam to retain a vast reservoir of consciousness. Once this is disrupted, it is as though the dikes have been breached and there is no longer any means to regulate the flow. A simple suggestion can send the whole mind on a tangent, and exaggerated elaborations can continue unhindered for a long time until there is no more energy left to pursue them.

Yogis do sometimes use what they call *oushadha*, or life-giving herbs. But even the preparation of the *oushadha*, which is sometime mistranslated as a drug, implies a discipline that is so well conceived as to make the total organism--ranging from the most physical to the most sublime aspects--respond to the psychochemical aid in a total and organic manner. Any comparable insight into the alchemy of psychedelics is still only at a level of wishful thinking.

Question: What do you mean by "peeping into God's green room"?

Response: In the time of Kanada in India and Thales in Greece, observations and speculations were in progress to discover the stuff out of which this world is fashioned. Four aspects of this world continue to intrigue us, namely the origin and nature of matter, the origin and nature of life, the origin and nature of consciousness, and the irrevocable criteria of truth.

What is referred to here as God's green room is the place where God hangs out back stage before the grand show, in other words, where creation takes place. Our desire to see the creator in his lair refers to the insatiable curiosity that is ceaselessly bugging the human mind. Many have cried out "Eureka," and yet dissatisfaction prevails. The mystery continues.

Question: What did Bishop Berkeley mean by "think with the learned and speak with the vulgar"?

Response: Sir Arthur Eddington, in explaining the nature of the physical universe, differentiates the physicist's table from the perceptible table on which he was resting his hand and notebook while he was writing his essay. According to Eddington, the physicist's table is an incomprehensible and elusive entity made up of geometrical properties of physical energy, which can at best be conceived as a swarm of molecules bumping into each other, and those random bumps and clashes are mysteriously keeping the molecules bound in a kind of self-imposed circumscription, which in our naivete we interpret as the cohesion of matter.

If such a simple thing as a table can become so complex in the eyes of the physicist, the speculating philosopher can throw the world entirely out of whack, making it absolutely unintelligible to our common sense.

The man whom Bishop Berkeley calls vulgar is the honest common man who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. In other words, he's the realistic man who unquestioningly accepts the usefulness of the table. His learned brother is the philosopher who seeks truth by

kicking up the dust of skepticism, and then complains of poor visibility.

One should be careful not to mix up the frame of reference of the transactional world with that of the transcendental.

Question: In a parent-child relationship, why do you treat the child as the numerator and the parents as the denominator?

Response: Generally speaking the denominator represents the whole, and the numerator stands for the part under consideration. In the use of the numerator and denominator as a dialectical symbol, the denominator stands for what is more basic and less expressive, and the numerator stands for what is comparatively incidental and yet more pronounced. For instance, bread and jam can be treated as denominator and numerator. Even though bread is more basic than jam, jam is more readily noticed and appreciated. The bread supports and the jam is supported.

Here the mathematical analogy is used to symbolize the dialectical relation of the parent to the child. When the parent and child are of equal value, the denominator and the numerator cancel each other out. A fraction is feasible only when there is a variance in the values of the numerator and the denominator.

Question: Is it actually possible to have experiences without formulating words in the mind to follow the course of flow of thoughts?

Response: Thinking in the form of structural reasoning is only one of the several constituents of the total conscious experience. Hundreds of ideations present themselves in the mind as symbolic hints, and recede almost immediately if they fail to get hooked onto one of the main drives or interests. In fact only a very few mental images become powerful enough to find access to the focus of our awareness.

In between mental images and their associated ideas, there arise several instinctive modulations of emotions

that are not readily recognized as conscious experiences unless they happen to create pronounced overtones of their presence in the chain of reasoning or participate in the experience of a fully conscious emotion.

Even conscious thinking such as is in progress when I am dictating these sentences, does not always occur in my mind in words of the English language. Sanskrit verses and aphorisms from the ancient scriptures or the writings of Narayan Guru in Malayalam stimulate me to think in the words of those languages. Afterwards, almost without effort English words come into my mind to suit the ideas formed in those other languages. In other words, the word content of a thought is the last and finalized element of conscious thinking. Conscious experience itself is only a peak of the total content of the mind, of which structured consciousness clothed with language is only the snowy crest of the peak.

The logistics of a structured sentence is not formulated consciously, it happens instantaneously in the unconscious. We only become conscious of the process when the structuring is defective and lacks the power to properly convey the idea. Even before the idea becomes clothed in words, there arises a flash of it as a general orientation of the particular gestalt that is to be presented. The source from which this flash arises is a constant of the individual's personality, and such it reveals the very meaning of life.

Question: Conscious experience means knowing what is going on. Knowledge is a process in which things and their qualities are consciously related and recognized in terms of what belongs to which and how. Such a process necessarily implies the structuring of thoughts, at least unconsciously. Don't we think with words? Then how can you speak of emotions that aren't semantically verbalized and which are undifferentiated from other emotions?

Response: We have already made clear the difference between knowledge *of* and knowledge *about*. Our conscious-

ness has an impressive aspect and an expressive aspect. There are limited channels of deliberate expression, such as speaking and writing. Expression supplemented with elements of impression occurs when you sing or dance. Paradoxically an expression becomes most dynamic when the channel of expression is minimized, such as when one goes into silence or quietly sheds tears.

When we use a limited channel of expression it tends towards the linear, where only one thing is articulated or expressed at a time. While it takes only an instant for a complex idea to present itself to the mind, it may take a couple of minutes to explain it to someone or write it out on paper. We are more familiar with the linear transactions comprising our conscious experience than their relatively instantaneous, nonverbal presentation.

If you don't have to write or speak, and if there is a way of tracking your thoughts and emotions without making the mind conscious that it is being spied upon, you will be amazed to see that most of your thoughts, emotions and changing moods have their twilight zones. It's not clear how a thought or emotion first enters consciousness, but at a certain point it becomes vivid. It builds to a climax of clarity and afterwards you don't notice at all how it fades out, because the clarity of another thought is already occupying the central focus of your awareness. In this way, crowding thoughts, fleeting emotions, and changing moods all succeeded each other in a tumultuous manner.

When it comes to a matter of pinpointing an experience, mind uses the mechanism of selective structuring in terms of an object of interest and its relation with either the personal I-consciousness or with other objects of interest. When the experience is one of aesthetic appreciation or an overwhelming emotion, the needle of attention deflects from existential objectivity to the extreme of affectivity. To coherently formulate a thought, consciousness has to keep itself somewhat balanced between existential objectivity and the affectivity of the entire psyche.

To go closer to affectivity is to move away from the syntactics to be more closely allied with the pragmatics of experience. When you are nearer to your own center, when affectivity is at its peak, the witnessing self does not function as an on-the-spot commentator, although it retains its efficiency to evolve information data from the experience for future recall. This is why the bulk of intense experience falls outside the scope of being able to be verbalized.

A blend of millions of resonances is in every passing moment. Attempting to fully describe it serves no purpose. Furthermore, the telescoping of emotions leaves them so close together and at the same time unattended by the categorizing or classifying faculty that the blend of emotions can never be clearly analyzed in terms of pure moods.

Bharata, the author of *Natya Sastra* (The Science of Dramatics), and Nandikeswara the author of *Nrityasara* (The Essentials of Dance), go into the combinations and permutations of the nine major moods, which are feeling pleased, displeased, angered, pacified, embarrassed, awed, emboldened, compassionate, and erotic. While discussing the interweaving of these moods in detail, beyond a certain point they give up enumerating the possible combinations.

When it comes to music, the musician performing it and the listener experiencing it are to be understood separately. In classical music, lyrics, is only a springboard for plunging into musical ecstasy. When once the musician spreads his wings and gets in tune with the resonance of the atmosphere, the verbal meaning of the lyric transforms into the dynamic of the mood.

Here the musician soars very high or drives to great depths. In either case he becomes oblivious to the presence of the audience as an outside factor, and yet somehow the receptive rapport of the audience transforms itself into the musical atmosphere, which allows him an even freer flow, a more natural flight and effortless diving. He unconsciously feels the audience participating in all the movements

with him, and here again his musical experience turns out to be the experience of nonduality with his environment.

If a bird balancing delicately in the sky loses the grip of air, at once the gracefulness disappears and it is caught in the grip of fear and anxiety. This also happens to musicians who lose touch with the inner flow.

Question: Regarding musical expression, should one be selective in one's repertoire limiting oneself to pure and elevating music, or should one lend oneself to the spontaneity of the lyric and open oneself to whatever comes through?

Response: My musical background is the music of India. Irrespective of regional preferences, classical music there is always sung in mathematically perfected logarithms of tones, called *ragas*. *Raga* literally means "intense affinity caused by love". The same word also means "coloration". In Western books it is often translated as "mood". In the musical context it means "the coloration which the psyche of the musician and his listener undergo upon hearing the ascending and descending scales".

South Indian or Karnatic music is based upon seventy two basic scales which form the skeletal structure of any number of improvisations. One such scale is called *Sankara Abharana*, meaning 'the decorative ornament of the God who brings all auspiciousness.' Another *raga* is called *Vasantha*, which means, Spring. The *raga Mohana* means a hypnotic spell. The main intention of the musician is to convey the spirit of that particular *raga*. The lyric composed for it is designed to suit the purpose of expressing the spirit of the *raga*, and the *raga* is never made a subservient to it. Indian music, which originated from the concept of the psycho-dynamic of sound, such as is believed to be contained in *mantras*, appeals directly to the mind via the influence of the musical sound rather than by the semantic impact of word power.

Although the scales used in Western classical music are different from those of India, the purity of music, in the

West has also been maintained by strict adherence to rules. More recently, when music was adopted as a powerful instrument of dramatics to make emotional appeals or to register protest, music became a vehicle, and the articulated word was made its charioteer.

After the Second World War when European tradition received its death blow and a new generation arose from the debris of shattered values, the Western world began to receive its principle inspiration from the ancient pulse of Africa. The protest songs of the black slaves and their descendants combine the irresistible charm of rhythm with the disarming power of truth which is made explicit in every line. Not only are jazz, rock and soul forms of music for listening they are musical encounters in which the listener can get into active dialogue with himself, others and the Unknown.

The shift in the times also heralds a revaluation of the connotation of purity. Modern music is an amalgam of elements from every part of the globe. No one can alienate himself from the accepted meaning of the contemporary mind without either burying himself in the tomb of the past or making a leap into the fresh avenue of tomorrow's triumph.

The only answer is what arises in your mind when you reread the question with these thoughts in mind.

Question: When speaking of your young musician friend, you described the rising and receding of various images of her in your mind as "a gift of your own fantasizing unconscious." Just what are the implications of this in understanding interpersonal relations?

Response: Interpersonal relations do not manifest as a fixed relationship between morbid entities in a static situation. Rather they are dynamic through and through. In spite of my constant identification with myself, the dimensions of my personality at any moment are decided by the waxing or waning of my interest, the opening or closing of my gestalt, and the sense of my being inspired or frustrated.

Even when I do not objectify myself, I am in full sympathy with myself, to pity myself or protect myself or to become my own salesman. When you hate me, I want you to know I'm not the person you think I am. When you love me, I want to assure you that I am the person you love.

Your relationship with me is analogous to a stirring in the lake of my consciousness, which comes to the surface as an agitation that is either pleasurable or annoying. It causes receding circles of emotional ripples, each of which is experienced as a fading out shadow of the other. Even when one shadow fades out, another is at the core to stimulate a new interest or to cause a fresh annoyance. In short, the interpersonal relation is not between two individuals; it is between two series of individuals.

Question: When is fantasy pathological, and when is it healthy?

Response: One pathological symptom of the Western world in general and America in particular is its preoccupation with the idea that we are in constant need of therapy. Even a mosquito bite is instantly feared to be a case of malignant cancer. And there is a real sense of triumph in the pathologist when the result of the biopsy is positive. Group discussions, music and poetry are all considered to be forms of the therapy nowadays.

The life of an organism is not to be lived for all eternity. Disease, disintegration and death are as natural and meaningful as birth, growth and change. There can be a fantasy arising out of and centering around any of these six aspects.

What makes a life beautiful is an attitude of acceptance. There is no experience of beauty without the element of wonder in it. A hidden cause giving rise to a profound effect is the main theme of wonder. When the cause is not known, the mind wants to explain the situation to itself and becomes prolific in its imagination. The result is a fantasy. The greatest fantasy collectively lived from the very dawn of human history and one which is likely to last forever is the idea of God. For people like Freud and Marx, fantasizing

the God-image was pathological. For millions of people it is their only consolation in life.

If your fantasy beautifies life, if it inspires you to love, and if it enables you to sympathize, it is valuable. If it cause a nightmare to yourself and others, you may need the guidance of a wise guru to readjust the folds of your brain.

11. *The Word of the Guru*

Yesterday a young lady came to me in distress and asked me to tell her how a person should relate to a guru in order to be a good disciple. I told her that the question does not arise, because there is no guru for her to relate to, and she is not anybody's disciple. Friendship between two people, I assured her, is beautiful enough to make her happy.

After a while the mailman brought some letters. Among them was a fat envelope from a good friend in Australia registering his protest about what he interpreted as denial of his discipleship and also listing a number of claims that I should consider for accepting him as a disciple. This almost socially codified version of the guru-disciple dialogue is a new phenomenon occurring more and more frequently in the Western world.

Even though a goodly number of oriental scholars and adepts in physical or mental discipline already somewhat fill the need for masters or teachers, I feel very uneasy about walking in that direction. This uneasiness is not born of mere prejudice or emotional maladjustment, though I don't deny that there could be such weaknesses implied in anyone's attitude.

However, I have given serious consideration to the question of fulfilling the role of a guru and initiating disciples. In this matter I am relying heavily on the spirit of tradition, on what I have learned from those I consider my own guru's and on what I have personally experienced by being a disciple myself.

Tradition is more or less the same everywhere in the world. The *Bhagavad Gita* opens up many secrets when it is studied after having full recourse to the *Mahabharatha*. I found the four gospels of the *New Testament* to reveal much that was hidden after making myself familiar with the several books of the *Old Testament*. The wisdom text of the Chinese masters give a better perspective when we know several of the

historical anecdotes that are alluded to in them. In addition, familiarity with one tradition makes it easier to learn the esoteric layout of another tradition.

When we pass from Moses to Joshua and from David to Solomon, we are not making a leap from one person to another. There is continuity in their wisdom transmission. The mandate of a master and the authority of a king each have behind them the unbroken sanction of spiritual or secular tradition. The decisions of a head of state and the judgments of a wise man are readily accepted by those who relate to them as either authoritative commandments or valid testimonials.

If I say to someone "I accept you as my guru, I am agreeing to link myself with them. In that agreement there is a tacit submission of my will and understanding to the guru's authority. Before accepting such a relationship I have to make a conscious decision to enter into it.

In making that decision of my own free will, without fear or prejudice, how do I look upon myself?

The 'I' in me, in such an act, is raised to the point of paramount power, and I am exercising that power as the sovereign ruler of myself. The sovereign in me then effects an abdication. I transfer my authority to the guru. This would be a very painful and shameful act if such a submission were to place the sovereign in me at the beck and call of another person as my social superior.

Nothing is more dear to anyone than their personal freedom. The young lady who came and asked me about the discipline of a disciple had been very vehement a few days before in declaring her right to observe the mandate of her free will.

There is a blatant contradiction in the attitude of such a person when she expresses a desire to submit herself to another person as a disciple. Even though the contradiction should be readily apparent, it is nonetheless complex enough to create emotional tangles, egoistic conflicts, and dark moments of uncertainty.

Given that we cherish our freedom so much and that we seek nothing but our own happiness, why should we willingly walk into such traps when they are bound to create nuisance?

The answer to this can be seen in the illustrious examples from our time-honoured traditions. In secular society also, we elect a person from among ourselves and assign them to the highest seat of justice or grant them the authority of the supreme sovereign. Thereafter they even have the power to send us to the gallows, and we have no right to protest their authority as long as they have confined themselves to the canons treasured by the tradition.

What is actually happening in such cases is that there is a social and political acceptance of the individual's nonduality with the collective whole, of which the head of state is only a spearhead. If this secret is known to the spiritual seeker, the abdication of the ego's sovereignty is to be interpreted as the solemn recognition of the disciple's nonduality with the perceptor in the context of wisdom. It is easy to understand the disciple's nonduality with the guru intellectually, but in actual life there are many short circuits and much spitting of fire. It is only by God's grace that a total break or complete disadoption can be avoided.

When I first came to live with Nataraja Guru, I asked him to enlighten me on my relationship to him. He said, "In the social context you and I are two free individuals who live their lives as they want. In the wisdom context I am the guru, and you are the disciple, and any violation of our non-dual stand is to be seen as a consequence of disadoption."

Being young and rebellious and being propelled by an ego which refused to be easily tamed, I wanted to test Guru's commitment to his own version of himself as a social being relating to another free individual of the society. After a few days of friendly behaviour I sneaked out of the Gurukula and went my own way, only returning after several months.

When I walked back in, Guru was taking his evening meal. Upon seeing me entering the dinning hall, he asked someone to serve me a plate of rice gruel and boiled gram. I was deeply struck by his casualness. Then, wasting no time, he picked up the thread of a philosophical argument right where he had left off three months before and continued bringing it to its logical conclusion.

The stable foundation of my discipleship is laid on my guru's consistent victory and my continuing failure in all the trials to which we put each other during a period of twenty-three years.

What I have said so far is only an introductory caution which we should keep in mind if we are strongly motivated to relate ourselves to another person as disciples.

In the *Upanishads*, a number of illustrations are given about people of all ages and walks of life seeking discipleship. The spirit of a disciple relating to a guru is very well presented in a conversation between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

"Maitreyi" said Yajnavalkya. Lo verily I am about to go forth from this state. Behold, let me make a final settlement for you and that Katyayani."

Then said Maitreyi: "If now sir, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal thereby?"

"No," said Yajnavalkya. "As the life of the rich, even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth."

Then said Maitreyi: "What should I do with that through which I may not be immortal? What do you know, sir, that indeed tell me."

Then said Yajnavalkya: "Ah! Lo, dear as you are to us, dear is what you say. Come sit down. I will

explain to you. But while I am expanding, do yoy seek to ponder thereon.”⁸

Prior to this conversation, Maitreyi’s relation to Yajnavalkya was as a wife. She gains a new status when he asks her to come and sit down.

Going near and sitting at the feet of a master is called *upanishad*: *Upa* means near. *Ni* means down. *Shad* means to sit. These three small words are highly suggestive of the spiritual context in which a master and disciple relate to each other.

The word *Upanishad* also can be interpreted another way. It can mean the breaking down of obstructions in the right path. The obstruction of a disciple being ignorance, the role the master has to play is that of a dispeller of darkness or ignorance. The Sanskrit term *Guru* literally means the remover or destroyer of darkness.

Another interpretation given to the word *Upanishad* is the initiation into secret wisdom. There is nothing more pregnant with grace than a *Guru* agreeing to teach and granting a seat of honor to a dear disciple.

The very first instruction given to the disciple symbolizes the highest discipline known to Vedanta: sitting silently with devotion and diligence and listening to the Word of the master. In fact, this is the only thing a disciple does with the *Guru* all through his life. It doesn’t matter how far removed in time and space he is from his *Guru*, or even whether the *Guru* still exists in the physical body at all; but throughout, the act of listening continues.

You can be literally sitting at the feet of a wise man, and yet if your own mind is making a hell of a noise within you, no true listening actually takes place. That’s why several years of preparation are necessary before one places oneself before a master.

We often hear of a “third eye”. The third eye is opened only by attaining the primal ear of the eternal being in us to the

sacred Word of the beginningless and never-ending Master. What is so beautiful in the act of listening is the silencing of one’s thoughts and withdrawal of the urge to act, which leads to and opening up of the ear and the other powers of perception.

All through the process of listening there is an awareness of the transformation of all one’s preconceived concepts. In fact, you are willingly initiating yourself into the alchemy of spiritual transformation by placing yourself in the crucible of fully devoted attention.

A careful consideration of human life will reveal that the initial preparation goes on without conscious recognition, and when you are ready, you are charmed by the resonance of the imperishable Word.

When St. John began his gospel with his allusion to the Word, he was pointing to the very foundation of wisdom. After all, your world is nothing other than what you have structured out of the meanings of the words you have heard and are speaking.

If all that matters is imparting the meaning of the words, why do universities with hundreds of professors, thousands of classrooms, and millions of scholarly books fail to make us wise? And how is it that a carpenter’s son with no proper schooling, in Palestine, an untutored Arab tending the camels of a widow in Arabia, or an illiterate priest of a temple built by a courtesan in Calcutta, could each echo the same imperishable Word that is glorified in all scriptures?

Saunaka once approached the great master Angiras and asked him. “Through understanding of what, pray, does all this world become understood, Sir?”

To him Angiras said, “There are two knowledges to be known--as indeed the knowers of Brahman are want to say--a higher and also a lower. Of these the lower is the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*, the science of renunciation, ritual

grammar definition, metrics, and astrology. Now the higher is that whereby the imperishable is apprehended.”⁹

Our universities are well equipped to teach what is described here as lower knowledge, or wisdom we have to watch for the appearance of that rare one at whose approach we instinctively rise from our seats to greet as the one we have been looking for all our life. In his word is the ring of truth, and we at once recognize it.

One may well ask, if a wise seer is a rare phenomenon, and learning the secret of the imperishable Word from a guru happens more as a matter of chance than choice, then how can the public be benefited by the wisdom teaching of a master?

It is a noble sentiment to share something of value with everyone, but in actual life it does not happen that way. Even the specialized fields of physics and chemistry, in their most advanced aspect, are understood by only a few people. In studying advanced science there is at least the incentive of a lucrative career or social recognition when it comes to seeking wisdom, such a bent of mind comes only to very few people.

Phrases like “wisdom teaching” and “the imperishable Word”, although they sound familiar, don’t make sense to most people. These terms are to be understood as blanket phrases covering large field of intimate experience shared by spiritual preceptors and their disciples.

The imperishable Word, which is often alluded to in the *Upanishads*, is symbolically described as “aum”. The first mantra of the *Mandukya Upanishad* translates as:

Aum! This imperishable syllable is this whole world.

Its further explanation is:--

The past, the present, the future--everything is just the word Aum.

And whatever else that transcends threefold time-that too is just the word Aum.

For truly, everything here is *brahman* (the Absolute); this Self (*atman*) is *Brahman*. This same Self has four fourths.

This reminds us very much of the opening passages of *The Gospel According to St John*:(I: 1-5):

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

It’s a pity that King James ghost-writer was so anthropomorphic as to change the original “logos” (Word) of John into a “he” instead of an “it”. If women’s were to call him a chauvinist pig, it would not be inappropriate. By the time of Christ, the logos had already had a long history of its own in the Greek world of physics and metaphysics. John borrowed the term from his close associate and probable Guru, Philo the Jew. Philo adopted it from Plato, and Plato borrowed the idea from Heraclitus, who conceived of logos as the ascending and descending fire of creation.

As the ascending and descending fire of creation, logos symbolizes a complementary process in which an expanding universe is juxtaposed with a contradicting universe to produce the total function of a cosmic throb. To mistake the whole analogy and conceive it as male only demonstrates the bankruptcy of the medieval imagination.

Neither the Aum of the *Mandukya Upanishad* or the Word of *St. John’s Gospels* are to be taken as literal words. Even a child would laugh at us if we insist on believing that the whole world is created from a simple sound which we can articulate by just rounding our lips and breathing a wisp of air.

A Guru may have ten disciples. Allegorically we can say he is imparting the same Word-wisdom to all ten, but we may not actually find him ever discussing any mysterious word or its semantic properties with any one of them.

The last part of the *mantra* above qualifies 'aum' as consisting of four quarters. This is significant to a guru, the Word operates in rotation in the disciple as wakeful consciousness, as the highly suggestive compositions of symbols in dreams, as the varying quanta of centripetal withdrawal in deep-sleep, and as the occasional cancelling out of the dichotomy of subject and object in the state of transcendence. These four states of consciousness are what is referred to in the *Mandukya Upanishad* as the four quarters of the all inclusive Word.

Or the Guru may be on the lookout for the luminous principle of positive vital function which is time and again confronted and negated by a darkness housed in the very physical and mental make-up of the individual whom the Guru has to correct, guide and teach. What is important to note in St. John's description of the Word is the envisioning of light and darkness are two eternal principles of dichotomy, a concept which is not dissimilar from *yin* and *yang*.

All that we have to understand here is the ever-entwining principle of double-helix with reference to pairs of positive and negative factors that constitute everything in the world of matter. A true master is one who has insight into the paradox of the dual aspects of existence in their ten thousand modes of non-dual operations. This is what is suggested by St. John's Gospel.

Thus to the Guru, the Word is the secret key to the total personality.

Bringing the Word aspect of the Guru in resonance with the Word aspect of the disciple can cover the entire field of interpersonal transactions as well as very profound and intimate depths of transsubjective empathy. When the disciple is at a very low ebb of spiritual stamina, the Guru compassion-

ately identifies with the disciple's main drive or interest and transfuses into them his own faith, confidence, courage and insight. This must be continued until the disciple can regain a level of stability to go on to the next step with a correct perspective.

On the other hand, if the disciple is sinking into the quicksand of self-created fantasy or is afflicted with a grievous onslaught of mental pathology, it is not at all helpful to identify with the disciple's interest. In that case the Guru may resort to the tactic of a sharp and shocking confrontation to rouse the psyche from the shackles of exaggerated emotions.

In still another case the disciple may already be mature enough to emerge from the chrysalis more or less unassisted, and all the guru has to do is to give an incentive for them to break out of the shell of their solidified conceptual notions.

Recently a friend came and told me of the great wonder with which he had witnessed the birth of eight pups to his dog, who was giving birth for the first time. He was amazed by the perfect knowledge of the mother dog in liberating each puppy from the placenta, biting off the umbilical cord, stimulating it to breath and move, and finally cleaning up the whole mess, since nobody had taught her the science of midwifery.

A wise guru is certainly not inferior to a mother dog. He also knows his business in attending to the special and distinct needs of each disciple, and his comprehension of the problem in its entirety and the working out of a solution to his utmost satisfaction is what we are calling understanding the imperishable Word.

The Word functions only when a bipolarity between teacher and taught is properly established. A word for bipolarity in the Sanskrit language is *bhakti*. *Bhakti* literally means "to be conjoined with light." Light here stands for insight or intimate understanding. The relationship between a guru and a disciple is not based on any dark instinctive urge or conventionally accepted ritual.

Sankara defines *bhakti* as the continuous contemplation of one's true nature, and Narayana Guru defines it similarly, as continuous contemplation of one's own Self. To have *bhakti* for the Guru amounts to seeing your truest Self in the Guru or his Word. That insight is the light in which the polarization of the guru and the disciple has to manifest.

A method of approach suggested in yoga is to advance progressively from the gross to the subtle and from the subtle to the sublime and from the sublime to the transcendent.

A disciple cannot straightaway surrender his mind or individuated self to his guru for the simple reason that the disciple is not at all clear in his mind as to what the self is. When he is so troubled and tormented by a capricious mind over which he has little or no control, how can he ever make a gift of it to his guru?

The only aspect of himself over which he has some measure of control is the physical body. So to begin with, the disciple offers physical service to that person in whom he sees the Guru shining. This is symbolically expressed by the seekers in India by bringing the guru an armload of firewood to build the sacred fire of sacrifice.

By sharing life through service the disciple gets a chance to be in the immediate physical presence of the guru, which is recommended in the *yoga* discipline as *asana*. *Asana* means a sitting posture, but in the larger context of spiritual discipline it is to be understood as the stabilizing of an attitude in which you make yourself steady and comfortable in relating to your guru.

The first phase of spiritual alchemy is attaining a capacity to efface the physical duality of you and your guru. It is like becoming one person with two sensory systems and two sets of the organs of action. Once this attitude is established, it no longer matters where you go or where your guru is.

This brings you to the second phase of the discipline. Every word you have heard from your guru, every expression

you have witnessed in the guru's face, every occasion that promoted the guru to initiate or to put off, to articulate or to go into silence, to turn on or tune in, is now remembered. Each recollection is followed by deeply pondering its significance. Even the guru's engagement in a trifling activity or the equality of his rest or sleep stimulates you to have a new look at yourself. This ensures that the teaching that is imparted and received is wholesale and not piecemeal instruction. This aspect of the discipline is called *manana*. *Man* means mind. *Manana* means applying the mind.

The mind is like quicksilver: when you try to hold onto it, it slips away from one interest to another. The discipline requires the student to bring the receding attention back again and again to the assigned subject. Stabilizing the mind in one place continuously for a long time is a discipline recommended by Patanjali to again the seat of steadfastness.

The big surprise that awaits you in the initial stages of the discipline is noticing the number of inconsistent and contradictory behaviors in your personal life. You are intellectually convinced of the good inherent in a certain attitude or behavioral pattern, but to your dismay, you find yourself going off on another tangent. You know your own weaknesses: your instinctive urges impel you to behave in a certain way that you think of as pleasurable. You even succeed in rationalizing those weaknesses to convince your mind they are justified. Then to your utter amazement, you feel a strong hand pushing you in another direction. When this happens, you can be sure it was the guru who prompted the change of direction, not your own weak resolve. It is as if you have become temporarily schizophrenic to sometimes live your personal predilections and at other times to actualize the will of the guru.

Living the teaching is the third stage of discipline, and is called *nididhyasa*.

Listening, meditating on the meaning of what is heard, and living the truth of what is revealed may sound as if they are separated in time by a sequential order of manifestation. This is not so in our experience. These three aspects are presented all at once.

What is once heard again and again, but the repetition is by no means monotonous. When the guru's Word re-echoes, it is not just an echo, it is the opening up of the Word in a new way with a new profundity. Consequently the reflection of it amounts to an attainment that is far superior to anything lived before.

In most cases spiritual growth is not immediately spectacular, and the disciple does not notice how much growth or change has taken place. If you are continuously watching a plant, you don't see it growing. All the same it is a little bit different every day. After attaining to a certain growth, the disciple's sensibility becomes keen, and there is an inner assurance of an ever-new path through which you are finding your way every moment. This certainly brings an immeasurable joy to know that you are living a life that is entirely original and which is intrinsically beautiful.

How can this story ever be told when someone pushes open your door and abruptly asks you to be their guru? The very vulgarity of it puts you off.

The beauty and sacredness of kneeling before the altar of wisdom is recognized only when it is experienced. All that one can tell the hasty seeker is, "Wait. Have patience."

12. *The Stream of Consciousness*

Yesterday after my morning dictation a young friend listening to it made a remark that what I said about the guru-disciple relationship amounted to saying that the disciple is asking to be murdered by the guru. This lady has been living for a couple of years in the intimate circles of oriental teachers who are looked upon as gurus with or without their conscious consent. In spite of the suicidal demand that seemed to her as inevitable in posing as a disciple, she added that the catastrophe holds an irresistible charm.

In the evening another good friend who has gone far and deep in his spiritual inquiries and personal discipline asked me why some forgotten behaviour choices of the past, which were thought of as having withered away, can reappear without apparent cause to stimulate the dead habit.

The young woman's apprehension and my old friend's question may look unrelated. But if I am to allay the fear of the lady and give an adequate answer to my gentleman friend. I should invite both of them to have a look at the mainstream of individuated consciousness.

The indication of the failure of a discipline, as my friend pointed out, is the unanticipated recurrence of a structure of memory which was not successfully destructured on a previous occasion. To throw light on this and other similar questions, we should have a good look at the stuff we are handling either as a guru and disciple or as a self-disciplining aspirant.

For a quarter of a century I have been fully engaged in what is understood in the western world as psychology and in India as *atmavidya* or *brahmavidya* (the science of the self or the science of the Absolute). Although these names seem to connote different areas of study, their actual scope and content are the same.

What has always surprised me in comparing and contrasting western psychology with Indian studies is the ability of both to satisfactorily explain phenomena from two totally different frames of reference, which are at variance both in their conception of the mental faculties as well as the methods they adopt for the purpose of understanding the faculties and working with them to produce desired ends.

In spite of a seeming agreement in recognizing the importance of memory, the European philosopher and the Indian *rishi* do not look upon memory through the same window. The point where they come nearest is in recognizing memory as the most vital constituent element in the functioning of the mind. Henri Bergson characterizes conscious experience in the following manner:

It means, before everything else, memory. Memory may lack amplitude; it may embrace but a feeble part of the past; it may retain only what is just happening but memory is there, or there is no consciousness. A consciousness unable to conserve its past, forgetting itself unceasingly, would be a consciousness perishing and having to be reborn at each moment; and what is this but unconsciousness?... All consciousness, then, is memory--conservation and accumulation of the past in the present.¹²

To the Western mind, memory is the recorded impression of what is experienced by the organism in its conscious state within this life span. It is supplemented with the instinct of the species, which is understood genetically. In other words, the Western version is a binary system of memory in which there is a piecing together of the learning process of the individual with the prefabricated instinctive urges of the parental stock. In such an understanding the dichotomy of the conscious and the unconscious is bound to be pronounced and mutually exclusive. Any liaison between the two is a matter of speculation.

To the Indian mind individuals are not only the offspring of their parents, they are also the offspring of themselves. I am producing myself every moment, and this was true even before I found a temporary habitation in my parents.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras begin with the reference to modulations monitored by incipient memory. In Sanskrit this is called *citta vritti*, Vyasa, Bhojaraja, and Vachaspati Misra, early commentators of Patanjali, trace the origin of *citta* to *cit*, the primal self-luminous aspect of the spirit, or that which lends to everything an intelligent and meaningful existence and relation.

The entire theme of guru-disciple dialectics is confined to the delicate revision and restructuring of the individuated personality, which is none other than the continuous and unceasing flow of the self luminous stuff of the mind. This is always presented as the expression of incipient memories.

We have no way of understanding *cit* other than by resorting to the mathematical devices of abstraction and generalization. The rock that is sitting firm, the water that flows to find its own level, the fire that is leaping into flames, and the air that becomes restless and blows as wind can all be abstracted as one single nature with uniform laws. The same scheme may present a very specific picture when we look at the manifestation of these elements in our own body, for instance, namely the solid structure of our skeleton, the circulatory flow of our blood, the agitations caused by our digestive fire, and the life-giving breath that we respire with ease.

When we retrace our steps from the deliberation of our consciously conceived daily activities to the ever-unfolding program of the individuated unit called 'I', we see no essential difference in the manifestation of our behavior, regulated by the alternating states of consciousness, from those of other living species. This leads us to presume a general scheme behind all forms of life, which is to be understood as a master intelligence. This is called *citta śakti*. The master intelligence

is like single potter who is designing separated jars and pots and fashioning them from the same clay. There has to be in his mind the envisioning of a pattern of pot that is different from his idea of jar. So even before the actualization of an individual pot or jar, there has to be potential specific pot and specific jar. This aspect is called *chaitanya*.

The final version of the pot or jar is an accomplished impression which has to carry with it the stamp of its specialized meaning to mark it as a particular occurrence in the general flow of things. An actual pot does not exist except when all the particles of a lump of clay cling together to make a visible articulation of the potter's version of the pot. What Patanjali calls *vrutti* is to be similarly understood as a meaningful adherence of impressions in which the envisioning of the self-luminous *cit* and the material gathered from the creative flux of nature come together as a living fact of the moment.

What an atom is to a physicist and a cell is to a biologist is what "the modulation of an incipient memory monitored by an interest" is to the Indian psychologist. This is what is called a *vrutti*. Every modulated state of the operation of an interest, has in it an envisioning of the interest, the pursuit of the interest, and actualization of the interest.

Each vision has in it a potent charge of a certain quantum that releases an electrical discharge to energize the interest. The rapidity and intensity with which the energy is released in sustaining the unit of concentration determines how long the *vrutti* can sustain itself.

The duration of a single *vrutti* is interpreted differently by different Indian schools. To be consistent with their notion of flux or eternal motion, the Buddhist think of it as having validity during the time span of a snap of the fingers. The Vaiseshika School of Indian logic agrees with this view, and they reduce everything to a unitary monad which stands in relation with other monads for a single instant. By contrast, Vedantins and yogis are willing to bracket all the separate mo-

ment of identical impression or experience as one homogeneous *vrutti*.

When the *vrutti* or modulation stabilizes itself and remains in a particular pattern, that stable state is called *sthiti*. Even though it's in a stable state, it is still functioning dynamically. The quality or property of that particular state is expressed as its individual function. To be stabilized as something and to function as that, it should have its own intelligent understanding of the scheme. This innate appraisal, which can be conscious or unconscious, is called *prakhya*.

A kind of mental vacuum is formed when no vision of interest occupies the modified state of consciousness. Such a condition does not occur either in the wakeful or the dream state. *Prakhya*, the envisioning power of the consciousness, goes on stimulating the functional aspect for a fresh assembly of mental constituents to structure a new pattern, and it also impresses upon the stabilizing mechanism to hold together what has been structured. The interaction of this system keeps the process going on and on, hence the general nature of the mind-stuff that is undergoing modification is called *kshipta*, which literally means "sliding" or "moving". As this movement is from one meaningful configuration of mental experience to another, and as each state has its own inner quality to sustain interest, each shift or slide is treated as a unique movement, called *vikshipta*.

The *vrutti* can be compared to many things, like the ticking of a clock, the flow of a river, germination of a seed and its growth into a tree, the formation and breakup of cloud patterns, the pulsation of the heart, the alternation of *yin* and *yang*, or even the ambivalence of love and hatred. All these analogies partially shed light on the complex nature of *vrutti*, yet they do not exhaust several of its mysterious and hidden aspects.

Time may be best described as "eternal duration," but we tend to think of it as moving from one tick of the clock to the next. Each such moment seems to have a quality of its

own. Astrologers take pains to relate events with one such point in time, and psychologists like Jung speak of the uniqueness of the time synchronized with specific events. A *vritti* is a modification of consciousness in which the recall of a memory, the appraisal of its relevance, the release of a quantum of mental energy that produces a pleasant or unpleasant feeling, the awareness of one's orientation, the subsequent sparking of a volition, and a number of other such elements of consciousness, come together to make a total impression. Like a point in time, the pattern of modification also has its own uniqueness.

Like time rolling on from the first tick to the second, modifications also change. Consciousness is not static, it is flowing like a river. Although it is ever flowing and changing, the change has within it a purposive plan of progress. From the germination of a seed to the maturation of a tree, there is a continuous process of the growth and division of cells and the substitution of living cells for dead ones. In the same manner, a *vritti* once manifested can and will have a purposive relation with other future *vrittis*. In between, whatever comes along and looks unrelated or irrelevant does become related and relevant at some other stage in the flow of consciousness. A rhythmic movement is kept up between the functional dynamics (*pravratiti*) and the stable state (*sthiti*).

We have five senses of perception and five organs of action which are always bringing in hundreds of messages to either perceive or act upon. Visual images flow onto the retina of an open eye not by the millions but by the billions. If the mind had to respond to every beam of light that was being reflected from one object or another, our visual perception would be overwhelmingly chaotic. Instead, a careful screening device is employed so that focus is laid on the object of utmost interest that is centralized in each given gestalt.

This selective function is not arbitrary or haphazard. It is in the selection process that we see how the potential of a memory aroused by a conducive environment exercises, its capacity to point out the possibility of reliving an enjoyment of

the past. If the recollection is not of pleasant purport, it can also come as a caution or warning to flee from a dangerous situation that is feared because of the similarity of the circumstance to a previous one that proved to be dangerous.

For the selection process to function properly, all irrelevant stimuli are to be screened out and kept hidden from the envisioning potential of modifying consciousness. The negative function that accomplishes this is called *nirodha*.

When the power of *nirodha* is not regulated by a well oriented value system, it can also engage in the folly of masking the valuable. But when the irrelevant is screened off and the relevant is brought into focus, there manifests a total concentration of the individual's mental energy so that the whole psyche is permeated with it. This state is called *ekagram* or one pointed attention. Meditating yogis attentively scrutinizing scientists, ambitious people carefully working out their project (such as robbing a bank at midnight), lovers fantasizing communion with the beloved, and fugitives sitting in their hide-outs listening for the approach of the posse are all in states of *ekagram*.

When the concentration is aroused by a phantom value, it manifests as a state of infatuation.

In a state of infatuation with, or uncritical acceptance of a situation, the meaning of the experience is dictated by the recalled memory. When this happens there is a progressive loss of energy from the interest, and increasingly desperate measure must be taken by the mind in an attempt to revitalize the imaginary interest. Remembered experiences that are habitually repeated become more and more empty of living energy, since they are no longer original but a production of the fantasizing faculty of the mind.

On the other hand, when there is the possibility of a critical revision of the previous memory, resulting in the introduction of a new way of seeing, we are led to fresh illuminations, and also a drastic correction of the conditioning caused by the previously formulated memory can be made.

In an encounter with a guru or in the follow-up of a meditation, the most valuable benefit is the deconstructing of a previously established stable state, which releases the mental energy to move freely for a fresh appraisal of truth. So if the guru “murders” a student, it is not by throttling the neck but by turning them away from vicious thinking and deluding fantasies.

Innumerable are the impressions we gather in the ownward flow of the stream of consciousness. Because of this, self-tutoring of the psyche may not always adequately cope with the elusiveness of the individuated state which is well armed by the negative principle of nature, called *maya*, to exercise many delusory tantrums to perpetuate its game.

Man seeks happiness. The two main elements of happiness are the experience of peace and joy. The serene state of peace is passive, and in that state there is a natural tendency for the experiencing mind to become more and more undifferentiated from the experience. When this is at its peak, it is called *yoga*.

The state of joy is more active than the state of peace. A close look at the activity of the mind when it experiences joy will reveal a continuous output of energy towards the object of interest and constant movement from expended interests to new ones with the potential to nourish the mind with a fresh supply of the joyous state. In this there is the simultaneous pursuit of happiness and the recognition of happiness. When the sense of agency is polarized with the appreciation of the ongoing experience of happiness, it is called *bhoga*.

The two circles of yoga a *bhoga* can overlap in a wide range of patterns, anywhere from a minimal amount to being absolutely concentric. To study the total personality involved in *yoga* and *bhoga* demands very close attention, and there are areas which are so elusive that one cannot enter them without the danger of losing one’s personal identity. In such cases the only recourse may be to lapse into silence.

REACTION AND REVIEW

(iv)

Question: Isn’t there is a contradiction when your guru possess on the one hand that there must to be no violation of the “non-dual stand” between you and him while at the same time insisting “I am the guru, and you are the disciple”?

Response: Experiences can be concept forming or concept dissolving. Social life is a participation in a transactional frame of reference in which a particular face of the ego is related to particular things, events, and specific moods and temperaments of individual people. The game of transaction is primarily carried out by forming concepts, using the mind as a chessboard and formulated concepts as pawns. Implied in transactional experience is the dialectical interplay of the one and the many.

In the concept dissolving experience, consciousness reverses its flow from the specific to the generic. The guru, identified with the Absolute, is the genus of all genera, and all that is to be experienced is the identity with That, which transcends all specific concepts. In this context the Guru stands for That and the disciple for ‘I’. ‘That’ has no meaning except in the sense of being the only reality, and ‘I’ is to be understood as the only experience.

PART TWO

13. *When the Seed Matures*

Mr. J. qualified himself for civil service in India. He was posted as the collector (equivalent to county commissioner) in one of the district of the state of Gujarat. Very soon he earned a name as an able chief executive of the district.

He sincerely believed his external form mattered as much as his performance. One day one of his shoes needed mending, so he sent it to the cobbler. When it was brought back, the shoe was wrapped in an old newspaper. As he unpacked it, his attention was caught by a picture of Sri Aurobindo. Underneath was a thumbnail sketch of the seer, poet and philosopher.

Mr J. read the brief account given in the paper, and in less than a week he found himself sitting at the feet of Sri Aurobindo as a fully dedicated disciple. Even now he's the administrative head of a big educational unit in the Aurobindo Ashram.

What role did the cobbler play in changing Mr. J's life?

14. *The Tenacious Knots of Bondage*

A rich merchant of Bombay went on a pilgrimage to Kashi. On the banks of the Gangas he encountered a spiritual recluse sitting in a state of absorption. The merchant felt a great sense of peace in his presence. When the yogi came out of his trance, the merchant persuaded him to go with him to Bombay as his guest. The *yogi* agreed.

When they arrived at the merchant's residence in a prosperous section of Bombay, the yogi insisted that he himself should be given the master bedroom. Then he directed that the merchant's office was to be converted into his private study. The newcomer was very picky about what he would eat and drink, and made a fuss over everything. He insisted on having his way, until the merchant became so annoyed and angered that he wanted to get rid of him.

The yogi said he could not go without proper clothes. In his eagerness to have him out of the house, the merchant bought him whatever clothes he wanted. Then he complained that he had no shoes or umbrella. The merchant gave him those also. Then the yogi said that he could set out to a new place only on an auspicious day. The merchant reserved a seat for him on the train back to Kashi, but the yogi complained he could not go by third class. He insisted that he should get a first class ticket for an air-conditioned coach. After a heated argument the merchant conceded to it, but the yogi pointed out that it was not an auspicious day. Nearly frantic, the merchant reserved the seat for a day considered auspicious by the yogi.

Finally the morning of departure arrived. When the merchant brought his car to take him to the railway station, the yogi said. "My dear son, thank you very much for your kind attention. Excuse me for all the inconveniences caused. You can donate the shoes, umbrella and the clothes to some needy person. You can get a refund for your ticket. I don't need

anything in the three worlds. God was gracious to show you how strong and deluding are your several bonds. God bless you.”

The yogi, once again in his semi-naked attire, walked barefoot into the street and peacefully disappeared.

15. *The Crowning Glory of Absurdity*

In the state of Punjab in North India there is a city called Patiala. I was once passing through it as a vagrant mendicant. Somebody ran up to me and asked me to come with him quickly to see a dying man. It is normal in India to call a *sadhu* (a spiritual mendicant) to bless the dying. Even though I myself was not convinced of my spiritual prowess. I hurriedly ascended several flights of stairs in a palatial building and entered a room where there was a goodly display of the pomp and royalty of the rich man who owned the house.

The master of the house was lying on his back on a well-cushioned bed. Standing by his bed were a number of dignitaries, of whom I could easily recognize a priest, a physician and a nurse. When my presence was announced, the patient opened his eyes and turned to me with a bewildered look. He gave vent to a primal scream, as if he were in a nightmare, and with both hands folded he implored me to pardon his sins and wish him a peaceful death.

It was not the time to dispute my right to pardon, so I told him without any thought, “All your sins are forgiven. Have no fear. You are not dying now, nor will you ever die.” When I had finished my little speech, I was struck by the absurdity of what I had just said. Taking advantage of the freedom of Indian *sannyasins* to behave capriciously, I hurriedly left the mansion and walked away as fast as I could.

After a couple of years, as I was standing on the banks of the Ganga in the sacred city of Hardwar, I saw an old man making a beeline toward me. He prostrated at my feet and laid his forehead on them in a gesture of worship. I felt very embarrassed to see such a venerable looking gentleman falling at my feet, so I raised him from the ground and asked him who he was.

He said, "I am your follower, I follow your footsteps. I believed in wealth. I amassed plenty of it, and I had everything that money could buy. When death came to me, I lay helpless, staring into the face of my own sin. At that time all my relations and friends had failed me. Then from out of nowhere you walked into my room. In the eye of the world you were just a beggar, a vagrant of the street. You told me with authority that my sins were pardoned. The dark cloud of doom was lifted from me that the very instant. Then with great confidence you said that I was not dying, and assured me I will never die.

"You proved to be right, I did not die. As soon as I was able to get up from my bed, I gave up my riches and my social position and have been searching for your footsteps. I came to this sacred city, where many like you live. Today I am also a vagrant. By sitting at the feet of wise men who walk on the banks of the sacred Ganges, I have verified the truth of your assurance. I am now certain that I will never die, No one ever dies."

16. Beware of False Labels

Nataraja Guru always liked to talk to his fellow passengers everywhere. He would accost them in trains, buses, planes and ships. Once an Indian university student asked him, "Sir, what do you think of family planning?"

"What do you mean by family planning?" Guru shot back.

"The Government of India has a project to control the population of India by adopting some contraceptive methods."

Guru commented dryly, "To ward off ants from a jar of sugar, if you label it 'salt' will an ant take any notice of it?"

The student was surprised. "Why do you think this is a case of wrong labeling?" he asked.

Guru began to expostulate. "A family is a sacred unit exemplifying the finest relations man can have, such as those of parent and child, husband and wife, and brothers and sisters. To plan a family one has to visualize the inner coherence of the whole unit, and should understand the contribution of each member to its general value structure. Each person has a right to unfold in their own way and to realize what is dear to them. Both the end of one conceives and the means adopted to bring it about should directly or indirectly contribute to a similar unfoldment and realization of the values cherished by the other members of one's family.

"Creating environment and facilities, and avoiding, hindrance and obstructions are aspects which need planning. This is to be done from inside the family and not to be imposed by a government from outside. If the government is not doing its utmost to insure safe births and adequate nourishment for the children an atmosphere free of prejudice and dread in which children can grow up, educational facilities, medical care and

the inculcation of value visions, as well as environmental protection and adequate parental support, how dare it interfere with a family to inhibit the desire to have children or prohibit the birth of a child?"

"Does your government's 'family planning given attention to all this? It does not. They are only interested in producing a statistical report showing how many men are castrated and how many women's ovaries are ripped open."

The student was stunned. "How do we tackle overpopulation, then?"

Guru asked, "What do birds do when there is overpopulation?"

"They migrate."

"Man can do the same thing."

Guru then called the student's attention to the area outside the train window. We were passing through miles and miles of good land and vegetation with hardly anyone living on it. He said, "In the crowded city of Bombay we want no proof of overpopulation. The same is true of Calcutta. But outside the city we hardly see any habitation. Proper planning should be done to provide facilities to people so they can live in natural surroundings, rather than sucking everyone into an industrial city and then insisting on their castration."

17. When You are Wrong

Once I was accompanying Nataraja Guru on the train from Delhi to Amristar. Among our fellow passengers were two gentleman who were workers of the Indian Communist Party in the Punjab area. Seeing our saffron robes and our beards they took us for religious people, and wanted to discuss some of the fundamentals affecting human life.

The older one asked the guru, "Sir, do you believe in God?"

Nataraja Guru replied, "I cannot answer that question unless you tell me what you understand by the term 'God'. The existence or nonexistence of God is to be determined by its definition."

The elderly gentleman pursued his point, "And what is Guruji's definition of God?"

Nataraja Guru gave him a slight smile and a look and answered, "That which is right when you are wrong is God."

18. *Bhoga and Yoga*

We were setting out on a long journey from the Nilgiri Mountains in South India to Punjab in North India. As soon as we boarded the train, Guru said, “Man seeks certitude.”

People were still pushing each other aside to find their seats. Both inside and outside the train there was a lot of noise and the situation was absolutely chaotic. But when I looked at Guru, he was sitting with his eyes half closed, absolutely oblivious of the shouting and disorder in the compartment.

I pulled out my notebook and started writing. He continued, “Man is endowed with reason. Like crest jewel, there shines in human reason the jewel of discrimination that enables man to discern the true from the false, the essential from the nonessential, the self from the nonself, and the transient from the eternal. It is this discernment that brings certitude. Certitude brings peace. In peace the duality of the self and the nonself is transcended, at least momentarily. That moment of nondual silence is *yoga*.”

“Life alternate between *bhoga*, and *yoga*. Sexual consummation marks the peak of *bhoga* and spiritual absorption arising out of true certitude marks the peak of *yoga*.”

19. *Sex is Vertical*

As we were passing by the side of the racecourse grounds in Ooty, a horse there became amorous and started mating with a mare. The cows that were grazing nearby stopped eating grass and looked at the couple.

Nataraja Guru called my attention to the behaviour of the cows and said, “Here is an excellent proof to understand the verticality of sex. Sex, in its pure and spontaneous manifestation, has the stamp of the Absolute on it. The cows show great interest in the horses mating. Don’t you see here the registry of the interspecies interest in sex? Men, horses and cows are all united by their interest in copulation.”

“To see obscenity in sex, to vulgarize it by reading immorality into it and to think of it as a sinful act shows that we have lost the innocence of our heart. *Bhoga*, the conditional enjoyment of happiness in the physical body, has for its nucleus the blissful nature which unites all embodied beings in the Absolute.”

20. *Love that Glistens in a Teardrop*

There was an interesting bunch of fellow passengers on the train we had boarded. One of them introduced himself as a Sanskrit professor. Guru asked him if he had any Sanskrit classic with him. He said that he had, and he produced out of his briefcase a copy of Valmiki's *Ramayana*.

Guru was very much delighted to see the one book that has most touched the soul of India in its depths and said, "Do you know what unites India? From Kanya Kumari to Kashmir and from Surat to Howrah, in every home you can hear the chant, 'Rama, Rama.'

"How does Rama go the core of India's psyche? He embodies truth. Truth is not only to be known, it is also to be upheld. Truth that is known is *satya*. Truth that upheld is *rita*. In Rama there is a coming together of the *lux* and the *lex*, the Light and the law."

The guru asked the professor to read out a passage from the *Ramayana*. He chose the portion where Rama abdicates his throne and departs into the wilderness with his wife and brother to live a life of self-imposed exile, in order to uphold the truth of his father. When he entered the ferryboat, Guha the ferryman, who was the chief of an aborigin tribe, greeted Rama with great affection and lamented the misfortune of the valiant and virtuous prince.

In all earnestness Guha said, "Oh Great Prince, do not go away. I have a small kingdom. It may be absolutely worthless in your eyes, but I entreat you to accept it as my humble gift to you. Be our king. I will serve you with my life. "Here it can be noted that Guha means cave, and that the kingdom under reference is the kingdom in the cave of the heart.

Hearing these words, Rama became tearful. He held Guha to his heart. The love of Rama overwhelmed Guha. Tears of joy and gratitude rolled down his cheeks.

At this point the professor's voice cracked. He stopped reading to wipe away his tears. We who were listening to him also became tearful. Guru said, "the eternal glory of Valmiki's victory as a Guru of all time lives on in this teardrop that comes alike from every eye, Rama's and Guha's of the past, and yours and mine of today." For a long time no one spoke. It was a silence in which we all felt we were going deep into the cave of our own heart.

21. *Sharing*

When our train steamed into a major junction, we purchased lunch packets. Guru opened his packet and was about to eat his first morsel of food, when a small boy of seven or eight who stood outside the train stretched out his hand. Guru passed the ball of rice on to him. The boy quickly swallowed it and stretched his hand again before Guru had eaten the second morsel.

This annoyed me, and I wanted to push the child away. But Guru stopped me from doing that. He ate the second rice ball he had made and then gave another ball of rice to the boy.

He turned to me and said, "I know people are annoyed by beggars. Poverty is bad, but it is not a crime. Every man is trying to live as best he can. What do you see here in India can never happen in the West. This boy is a total stranger to us, but he is so confident of the love and compassion of others. It is that trust of man in man that makes him stretch out his hand. you should become tearful at the sight. This mutual recognition and sharing is discredited in sophisticated societies.

"Do not mix up the issue of abolishing poverty and relating to someone in need. If you take the first issue, you will have to tackle the economy of the whole world. Do it if you can. But the second question has an immediate urgency. You don't have to renounce your happiness, you are only one expected to share. Your own happiness is to be bracketed with the happiness of others."

22. *Economical Distribution*

When I was living at the Somanahalli Gurukula, I used to grow tomatoes. I would laboriously haul buckets up from the river to water my small plot, and as the months went by I enjoyed watching the green fruits appear and swell and redden towards ripeness.

None ever became fully developed, however. In the night the poor villagers would come and pluck the ripe of fruits from the vines, I was very angry about it. I wanted to storm into town and find the culprits. Nataraja Guru, who was visiting at the time, "No, no, it works very well this way. The tomatoes are finding a home where they are most needed. If we gave them away we wouldn't know who really needed what. Now they go directly into needy pots. It's the most economical distribution system."

23. *Knowledge is Virtue*

When we arrived in Madras, a friend arranged for our stay in a brand new hotel. When Guru was shown to his room, he walked around and had a good look at the room, its furniture, and the conveniences of the bathroom, and asked us to call the manager of the hotel.

When the manager arrived, Guru pointed out the odd way in which the room was furnished, the defect, in the choice of colors for the carpet, bedspread and window curtain, the lack of imagination in the switchboard fixture for the lights and fans. and the absence of any clothes racks or clothes lines in the bathroom. He was not merely satisfied with offering criticism, he even started giving details for remodeling the whole thing. Taking the manager with him, he walked outside and had a look at the details of the building and told him of some of the latest innovations in hotel architecture.

I secretly thought in my mind that there was no need for Guru to waste his time on the oddities of the hotel.

I think Guru read my thoughts. He said, “What do you think is the state of a *mukta*, a released soul? From what do you think he is released? The only thing to be freed from is the absurdity of life. God gave us the wonderful light of reason to make our life on earth pleasant and beautiful. Absurdity can come to us from any direction. Wherever you see it, push it away.

“I am not employed by anyone, but I am fed and clothed. I owe a responsibility to the world which supports me. So I take pleasure in sharing the light of my understanding with my fellow men.

“You think I wasted my time. Even though the defects of the room remain, the darkness which perpetuated those de-

fects is no longer in that man’s mind. He is happy about it. Only knowledge can bring us happiness. That is why Socrates said that knowledge is virtue.”

24. The Eye of the Beholder

Once the Maharani of Gwalior organized a *Bhagavad Gita* Conference in Bombay for seven days. Nataraja Guru was invited to preside on the last day. That morning Guru went for his customary walk. He always combined teaching with his morning walk, and the best lessons I had from him were often when I followed along on such occasions.

Morning hours in Bombay are the peak time of traffic. Guru was totally engrossed in a subtle point of metaphysics when he came to a signal light. He did not notice the signal turning red, he just walked on. Fortunately there was a policeman in the traffic island. He gave a long whistle and held the traffic to a complete stop. Oblivious of what was happening, Guru kept on going. When he came to the traffic island, the policeman greeted him with a verbal salutation, and Guru realized that on all sides cars were impatiently waiting for him to pass.

On our way back we saw a beggar sitting on the pavement. Being a leper, he had no fingers, and the stumps that were left behind were really horrid to see. All that he had gotten that day was a banana. As we passed by, I felt guilty that we had nothing to offer him. Then to our amazement, he greeted Guru by politely mentioning the name of God, and with great reverence he picked up the banana with the stumps of his hands and offered it to him. Guru accepted it with great love and blessed him. As is customary in India, he returned half of the banana to the beggar. Guru immediately continued the teaching, in which he was fully engrossed. We came to the site of the conference. The Maharani came and prostrated at Guru's Feet. Guru turned to me and said, "What a beautiful woman. Don't you think so?" Nobody makes such a remark in India, so I was very much embarrassed, if not shocked. But Guru insisted that I should answer this question. "Isn't she beautiful?" he prodded.

In India *sannyasis* are not supposed to even look at the face of a woman. I did not know what to answer or how to save everyone from embarrassment.

Then Guru addressed everyone in the room. "Today is a great day," he said I saw three beautiful children of India. I am not a man of wealth, and I have no authority over anyone. I am only a beggar, but a policeman on duty stopped traffic in my honor, and leaving everything behind, he even came forward to pay homage to a Guru. This can happen only in India. A beggar should know nothing but his need, but today a beggar offered me the only fruit he had. He wanted nothing in return. This Maharani was educated in England. She is a powerful woman of modern political India, but she leaves aside her pride of social position to take the dust of the feet of a wayfarer. It is in this attitude of the Maharani, the beggar, and the policeman that I see the true beauty that is taught by the *Upanishads*."

I looked at him and marvelled, "How beautiful is my Guru."

25. *What Else Do You Need?*

On a full moon fall evening my Guru took me for a walk along the banks of Gangas in a place not very far from Rishikesh. We came to a place where the river, even though the current was rapid, appeared to be still. It shone like a sheet of glass. The high mountains of Himalayas, a silhouetted by the bright moon behind them, were seen reflected in the water. The moon, peering over the mountain peaks, made the trees appear like phantom figures of exquisite beauty. The gurgling of the river sounded like the endless chanting of aum. The hypnotic spell cast by the sense was irresistible. We both stood entranced, gazing at the moon and Himalaya heights mirrored in the Gangas.

After a long silence Guru turned his compassionate glance toward me and said tenderly, almost inaudibly, “the Himalayas, the Gangas, and the moon coming together in the blend of one reflection. What else does man need to be inspired? The rishis of the Upanishads, Vyasa, and Kalidasa were all inspired by this trio.”

Again he lapsed into silence. Lost in a sense of ecstasy, I stood there. To me it was even a little more wonderful than what Guru had declared. I thought to myself, “the Himalayas, the Gangas, the Moon and your own Guru coming together to bless in peace. What else did you want in life?”

26. *Can't You Recognize My Voice?*

Once I was sitting at the feet of Swami Akhananda Saraswati of Brindavan. The Swami was speaking of the bipolar relation of a Guru and a disciple. He became very eloquent on that subject, saying “The disciple should be like chaste wife who cannot think of any other man than her husband to occupy the treasured sanctum of her loveful heart.”

At that point I got up from my seat and begged his pardon to leave the hall. He asked me where I was going. I said, “Swamiji, I am like a chaste wife. I treasure my bipolarity with my Guru.”

“Who is your Guru?” The Swami asked.

“Nataraja Guru is my Guru.”

The Swami looked at me searchingly. “Can't you see me? Can't you recognize my voice? The same Nataraja Guru is speaking to you.”

I was more than a little put off. “Suppose a man goes to his neighbour's wife and says, ‘Can't you see me? Can't you recognize my voice? I am your husband’ Should she accept him?”

“Certainly not,” the Swami replied. “The husband and wife belong to a transactional world of social membership, whereas the Guru and disciple belong to a transcendental context in which the personal aspect of the individual is a superimposed error that is to be effaced by wisdom. The noting of duality and understanding of a Guru are mutually exclusive.”

I bowed low in profound gratitude, and resumed my seat.

27. *Images of Truth*

While I was staying with Swami Akhananda, there was a marble statue of Lord Krishna on the altar in the prayer hall. All the devotees were offering flowers to the stone figure.

One time I approached the Swami and asked him, “Why should I worship a fixed image in a work of art when I am far more inspired by the presence of a living example of the Highest, such as yourself? I would much prefer to sit at your feet than to sit alone before an image.”

He said, “Yeah, that’s right. But one day you will come to look for me in my room, and I won’t be there. You may come after me and find me sitting on the toilet most likely would conflict with your previous projections of holiness, divinity, and purity, I think it’s better to worship this lovely sculpture, which also represents the Highest. Whenever you approach it, it will always greet you with the same serene smile. It will never grow old or ugly or run off to sit on the toilet.”

I thought. “Yeah, that’s right.”

28. *Idols Have No Teeth*

An elderly couple came to Nataraja Guru with a request that he install a *devi* temple for them. Guru agreed to it. The couple belonged to a family of which it was well known that some of its scholarly members were pronounced atheists. In their, installing such a diety would be seen as supporting the supersition of idolatry. When one such scholar confronted Guru and asked him if he believed in idol worship, Guru said, “I was a physics teacher in Europe. Still, I do not want to snatch away from any Indian priest the privileges of his priestcraft.

A couple from this family wanted me to install the idol of a female deity. If a man has a sore tooth and he goes to a dentist asking for a filling or extraction of the tooth, the dentist won’t give him an admonition for having a bad tooth. Neither will he reject it as an irrelevant case. He will attend to it.

“My main interest is the happiness of each and every person. Everyone has a right to believe in whatever they are convinced of. This couple believes they can have peace by prayerfully relating to what they call a *devi*, symbolized by this idol. I am obliging them. Tomorrow they may find out that what is real in the image is only stone, and what they have projected on to it has arisen out of their own mind. Then they may discard the stone. Why should I stop anyone from following their own way of arriving at truth?

“I am not afraid of an idol. I know that it is a stone, and it will not bite me. But it seems that you believe in it, because it is disturbing you”

29. *Custom Binds; Wisdom Frees*

Once Narayana Guru was sick in bed. He was served some rice gruel, and he asked the man who brought it if it had been salted already. There is a custom observed in India that one should never taste food prepared for a guru, because it is believed to instantly become leftover food, unfit to serve. As the cook was not readily available the man could not say yes or no. Seeing his confusion, the Guru said, "Give it to the dog. It has no false scruples."

30. *Judging a Gift by its Wrapping*

When the great poet of India, Rabinranath Tagore, came to pay homage to Narayan Guru, the poet was overjoyed by the great changes brought about by Narayana Guru in the socio-economic setup of the country. Commenting on that, the poet complimented the Guru on the "great work" he was doing for the people.

The Guru's reply was not delayed, "Neither have we done anything in the past, nor is it possible to do anything in the future. Powerlessness fills us with sorrow."

After a lengthy period of stillness, the poet bowed low and took leave of the Guru. The Guru sat quietly, looking on in silence. Afterwards some journalist reported that Narayan Guru did not respond to the reverential salute of the poet- saint. When this was brought to his attention, Narayana Guru said, "Our act of reverence, concealed by the wrap, is invisible."

31. Sink or Swim

Two friends and I were sailing a boat on a lake in India. The particular part of the lake we were on was notorious for being tricky. When we took a certain turn, the boat capsized and all three of us were thrown overboard.

None of us knew anything about the hazards of that lake. When I came up, I saw my friends thrashing about and gulping mouthfuls of water. They were in a panic and seemed to be drowning. Cautiously I put my leg down, feeling for the bottom. It turned out that the boat had capsized in shallow water, and when I should up it was only up to my shoulders. I rushed to my friends and showed them that they could stand on their own feet, and together we waded out of the lake.

Today when I see many of my friends struggling, I am very much reminded of this incident.

End Notes

1. Ringai, *Japanese Haiku*, (New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1956) p. 7.
2. Erwin Shcrodinger, *What is Life? in Mind and Matter*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967) p. 99.
3. Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind and An Introduction to Metaphysics*, (New York: The Wisdom Library, 1946) p. 161.
4. Francis Bacon, "The Idols of Perception," reprinted in *The World of Psychology*, edited by G. B. Levitas (New York: George Braziller, 1963), Vol. 1 p. 161. Bacon catalogues the ways in which perceptions that seem to be true can be deceptive so that what appears valid often is not.
5. Hermann Hesse, *Poem*, trans. by James Wright, (New York: Bantam Books, 1974) p. 23.
6. Romola Nijinsky, *Nijinsky*, (London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1970) p. 330.
7. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita* (Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1966) p. 546.
8. Robert Ernest Hume (translator) *The Thirteen Principle Upanishads*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 98.
9. Narayana Guru, *One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction*, translated by Nataraja Guru, (Varkala, India: Gurukula Publishing House, 1969) p. 85.

Verse 16 reads:

If an arid desert most expansive should become overflooded
By river water, all at once, such would be the rising symphony
Falling into the ears, to open then the eye;
Do therefore, daily become the best of sages endowed with self-control.

10. Hume, pp. 366-7.
11. *Ibid.* p. 391.
12. Henri Bergson, *Mind Energy, Lectures and essays*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920) p. 5.
13. Nataraja Guru, *The Word of the Guru*, (Cochin, India, PAICO Publishing House, 1968) p. 34.
