

VALUES

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LEONARDO'S MONA LISA]

WISDOM AND THE
ARTS : I



*VALUES is devoted to integrating human understanding unitively
impartially and globally in the interests of the general good.*

NEXT MONTH
WISDOM AND THE ARTS II

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Editorial: Human and Wise

MANY readers will endorse Nataraja Guru's admission about his hitherto heavy writing. But wisdom's exact academic presentation was necessary if many later misunderstandings about first principles and general conclusions were to be plugged at source. The new series of his more lightly written reflections beginning this month may meet the needs of readers who found the former style over their heads. Although written at the actual and personal level, it is still Nataraja Guru who is writing. We believe it will be a delightful discovery for many to read about the reactions of a wise man to actual life. Since many have not had the actual experience of meeting him, this aspect of his personality may give to the academic aspect a necessary correction and balance. These *Causeries* should provide an insight into the charm of an alert modern mind, quite aware of what goes on the ordinary world, and at the same time able to confront it with humour and a profound understanding which carries behind it an entire fidelity to the timeless model of the wise man belonging to the Guru context of India.

This personalized cultural blend gives pointed meaning to the approach to the solution of world problems gently yet firmly stated by a group of World Citizens in the *Open Letter to Leading Men and Women* which we are also publishing this month. Discussions of world affairs by public and national leaders have ignored precisely those basic human values in life to which this document draws their attention.

Sex is a touchy taboo topic and yet one which is also universal, and in which all human beings are involved. Nitya this month deals with sex in relation to Indian art and religion, showing that when sex is treated normally without the sense of sin, it can be included like art and religion within a natural and spiritual pattern of life. Many Indians have borrowed a sense of sin and shame and fear of sex from their association with Christian and Islamic missionaries instead of being bold enough to expose the whole artificiality and harshness of the puritanical approach to life which is negative and life-destroying and totally foreign to India. For them as well as for many others, this essay of Nitya's will be both salutary and enlightening.

In all this we hope you will find VALUES this month both human and wise.

[END]

CONTEMPLATIVE LINES

by WORDSWORTH

In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

* * *

And 'tis my faith, that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

* * *

.... We can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

* * *

But hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.

* * *

A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

* * *

That inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.

* * *

When from our better selves we have too long
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude.

* * *

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours.

* * *

Heaven lies about us in our infancy.

* * *

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Causerie—I

The Journal and Reflections of an Absolutist

by NATARAJA GURU

As promised last month, we are beginning here a new series. In his own disarming words the author says : "I am sure my friends would like to know me not merely as a disciple of a serious Guru but also as a human, with all the frailties that belong to human nature, without which profounder thoughts would lack perspective." Besides this, we might add that these letters will supply to some extent the need that many of our readers express for day to day news about Nataraja Guru.

CAUSERIE in French means familiar conversation. Having tried the patience of readers of VALUES with contributions which were, as I was all the time aware, somewhat heavy, I wish now to make amends and climb down from the platform, as it were, for a more informal chat on many topics following no particular sequence in thought.

I feel that I have covered, in the form of formal and serious articles, enough aspects of subjects that have been very dear to me for reasons both personal and general. My object in all of them has been to present to the reader, whether in the East or the West, a way of integrating and presenting the whole range of what might be called wisdom in the context of the Absolute, through what could be distinguished as a dialectical approach.

With the article devoted to "Values Dynamism" in the July 1959 issue (Vol. IV, No. 10) I feel I have covered most aspects that have seemed to me to have some immediate need for critical examination or explanation.

I am conscious however, at the same time, that many aspects of applied wisdom of work-a-day aspects of life, such as the social, aesthetic and religious remain to be covered. As I still have occasion even now to treat of many miscellaneous items that remain as I cover the verses of the *Atmopadesha-Satakam* (One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction) by the Guru Narayana, which will appear side by side with these Causeries, and more especially as I wish to keep in contact with friends intimately and personally through the pages of VALUES as I travel abroad again, I want here to address

myself with intimacy, sometimes in lighter vein, yet quite seriously at other times, to friends, admirers or disciples wherever they might be in the larger space of the universe where an echo to my thoughts can be expected to be alive.

Disciple and Human Being: I am sure my friends would like to know me not merely as a disciple of a serious Guru but also as a human with all the frailties that belong to human nature without which profounder thoughts would lack perspective.

Travelling has its novelty and charm even at an age like mine which has already passed half its sixties. Even little events like sitting in an antique style restaurant eating ice-cream with M. at Deurle, a village near Laethem-St. Martin in Belgium, two days after my arrival here from India on the 8th April 1959, deserve at least passing mention.

M. had promised me this treat when he was still in India four months before. He had returned to Belgium hardly three months back and I had followed on his heels. He had no other go than to keep his word although a sort of taboo against sugar prevailed in his family household for some time past.

From Bombay to Belgium in thirteen days via Marseilles and Paris was not an unpleasant nor difficult journey even by ship and train.

Let me tell the story right at the beginning.

Leaving India: It was past midday on March 25, 1959 at Ballard Pier, Bombay when the *S. S. Strathaird*, the P. and O. Liner was still preparing to lift anchor one hour behind schedule. The dock was still packed with people waiting to wave *bon voyage*. The sun was getting too warm and the waiting too long for mere sentiment to prevail over common sense. Some left. It was past luncheon hour too. B. N. Nair, Nitya and John had already decided to wave their goodbyes and had gone back to the city. Soon after the engines started and I found myself in the splendid company of thousands of passengers going to Europe. Adventurers young and old, careerists, men and women, officials on leave or transferred to distant parts with families, students, pensioners, priests, not to speak of pairing couples married or still going to be, interspersed with children of all grades and races between brown and white, all were still busy, or settling down with a prospect of fine weather before them.

We had perfect weather throughout. Strangely enough the other passenger in my cabin was an Indian doctor from Mysore State who was going for higher studies to Manchester. He was a medical officer in the very district where the two Gurukulas at Kaggalipura and Somanhalli are situated. Another passenger, P.D. of Calais whose home was in Paris and who was English from his mother's side, spoke to me on the 27th and with this the first real contact with a fellow passenger on board was soon established. We passed many hours together sitting in many parts of the beautiful ship at the various corners of the aft and fore decks watching the waves, the gulls or the stars as we talked about Indian philosophy and holy men of different kinds.

Militant Christianity: The 29th March was a Sunday. Invited by a missionary lady I went to a Bible reading class on coming out of which a young missionary going to England from India talked to me

crudely about believing in Christianity. I was surprised to find so much militancy still surviving among the followers of this otherwise beautiful religion. Lovely Hypatia and the innocent life of Joan, a village girl of France, have been sacrificed at the altar of the "Militant Church" established in the name of one who was the very embodiment of the non-militant attitude. Europe seems still steeped in the barbarity of what is called "belief" which is in reality an idol which has taken the highest toll of human life for its propitiation. The model set by Agamemnon when he sacrificed Iphigenia to calm the winds before the Greek ships set sail for the siege of Troy seems to persist still as an element of paganism at the very heart of Christianity. Nemesis cannot be wiped off easily. Even the scientific attitude is no better when it only puts "proofs" instead of idols for blind men to adore. Torn between the fixed ideas of science as well as religion, the time seems near when humanity will be prepared to re-think everything in the light of something dearer to humanity than either science or religion conceived unilaterally rather than unively.

Aden, Symbol of Top-Heavy Economy: On the 29th March the ship was anchored in the calm gulf of Aden. The harbour looked no less opulent than Bombay with its many-storied business buildings and warehouses, or godowns. The land itself seemed as if parched and poor. The hinterland was evidently not the source of the visible opulence. I was thinking of the strange paradox involved here as in many ports such as Bombay too. The economic forces that conspire to make for opulence are not derived from the country itself vertically, so to say, directly from the hands of nature, but there are atmospheric factors like invisible clouds of credit coming to meet corresponding interests in human life which give to a place an appearance of prosperity.

According to the definitions of Western economists this would constitute wealth and would measure prosperity. There is nothing more misleading. A top-heavy economy superimposed on a favourable mercantile situation is no true measure of the economic prosperity of a nation. Of course this kind of horizontal economy has its saving features which it would be wrong to deny. For the distribution of food at a moment of emergency, horizontal rather than vertical factors count. Horizontal economics is the handmaid of power politics and thus favours war. Vertical economics, where abundance rather than opulence is the watch-word is kinder on human nature and spells peace.

Red Sea and Harsh Religion: We had soon entered the Red Sea still in clear and calm weather. The colour of the sky had been changing overhead to the blue of the Near East as known to Europeans who first discovered Eastern climes at the time of the Phoenicians and the Greeks. The blue of the Mediterranean was to be of a slightly deeper indigo tint still. The ship was going with Eritrea to port and Yemen to starboard.

On that same side we were soon to pass Mecca and Medina between which towns of Arabia a strange new language of dialectics was formulated by a man who preferred to be known more simply as a man praising the Most High God or interpreting the Absolute rather than representing God in flesh on earth. This delicate distinction which has only a far-fetched

importance in the world of actualities, has meant in history the shedding of much human blood.

The Arab and the Jew are still fighting. Ideologies to which groups are hereditarily affiliated do count in human affairs. Whether called the Son of God or a Prophet of the Most High, it is the proper understanding of the supreme Value implied in the Absolute that should count with human beings who want to behave intelligently. The kind and generous Prophet who dared to revalue dialectically the notion of the Absolute was met with opposition from his own near relations, and he had to fly from Mecca to Medina in fear of them. The holy days of the Islamic religion called Ramzan are reminiscent of the harsh events which the teaching had to survive before it could harden itself horizontally as a common pattern of behaviour.

Taken at their source all religions reveal pronounced vertical tendencies, but these are lost in the process of hardening into harsh horizontal patterns of behaviour. The Pharisees of the Jews and the Caste oligarchy of India and the *Eglise Militant* which burnt Joan of Arc at the stake are all cruel expressions of the same religious instinct which is adorable at its inception and hatefully crude when it expresses itself in its exclusively harsh orthodoxy. Such were the thoughts revived in me about Mohammed, Mecca and Medina when in the Red Sea.

We continued in the Eritrean Sea for nearly three days before we came to the Suez Canal. Meanwhile there was a Gala Parade and a Captain's Dinner on board and much fun and mixing up of races, ages, sexes and the criss-crossing of ideas. The sun was beginning to be sought after rather than being avoided. Bathing went on in the swimming pool with sports on the topmost deck open to the skies, while older men and women took their constitutional walks making mile rounds on the promenade deck, keeping us all fully alive.

The Alexandrian World: We arrived at Port Said on the midnight between the 1st and 2nd April. I looked through the port-hole of my cabin and found the first sign of Western civilization blazoned across the sky when I read *Dewar's Whisky* written in large letters on the top of the tallest hotel in Port Said. The Egyptian and Arab vendors of curios were there in their sailing boats in large numbers calling to the passengers in broken English and bargaining in voices like the pirates of old who must have been their predecessors at least in vocational succession though maybe not in a hereditary sense.

The slightest crevice of opportunity for living is taken advantage of by man wherever it can be found. The pressure of economics seems to admit of no vacuum. The shouting of the vendors had gone on throughout the latter half of the night. The seagulls have an avidity for fish and humans for dollars.

Some of the passengers who had disembarked at Suez had now come back with stories about the Sphinx and their descriptions of the city of Cairo. This magical key city of the East which shared its glories with Alexandria has too many ancient memories that they may revive between them. The true language of dialectics was first heard in the early lisplings of wisdom that were wafted from the Far East along the Red Sea in ancient times when the Spice-Wine Axis that linked the Eastern Mediter-

ranean with India was still a living one. The early Christians of Alexandria had Far Eastern Gurus and, in turn, later they had Eastern students too listening to the dialectics that they had made their own. St. John's Gospel written about 110 A.D. is steeped in the dialectical idiom of Plato and Philo the Jew.

The cradle of Christianity itself is not far from here and the dialectical revaluation that took place here gave us the prophetic religions as they spread their impulse Westwards. Those who spoke the language of descending dialectics were left behind for ever. The elder sister parted company with the younger one, as Max Muller would have said. Sometimes forgetting this simple fact, the Eastern Pilgrim of the West is often put to the necessity of reminding his Western contemporary, when rivalry of conversation becomes evident, of how wisdom came from the Orient. The message of Equality and Justice on the other hand, may be said to have at present its centre in the West. *Ex oriente lux, ex occidente lex*—Out of the East, Light—out of the West, Law.

Islands and Volcano: We were happily sailing off the Island of Crete at 7 a.m. on the morning of 4th April. Swami Vivekananda tells us how in those days when he was a pilgrim of the East to the West, he was once awakened by a dream at this very spot which told him that the origins of Christianity were to be found on this far-flung island. I have come after him almost as a similar pilgrim, and I should not deny that I have been impressed by the Swami's life in my boyhood more than by any other single hero that I admired.

When I lived on the island of Sicily in 1931-32 for several months I have myself been able to see that even that Mediterranean island held the secrets of the origins of this great religion. The catacombs that I visited then in and around Syracuse made the dream of Vivekananda about forty years before me, quite believable. The swastika and fish signs which had a family resemblance to the prehistoric language of the Akkadians and the Babylonians and linked it with the Mohenjo Daro civilization were found near the graves of some of the martyrs of early Christendom buried in these underground hiding places which protected the Christians, for like Lazarus, Martha and Mary, the early Christians suffered persecution. Christianity has many sepulchral associations. Even today the white-washed grave is its most poignant paradox used to snub its rivals.

On the 5th April it was Sunday morning about 10 o'clock when we were to pass the Straits of Messina. European breezes were beginning to blow and passengers began to take out their woollens even from the previous night. We crossed the overhead cables that stretched between Scylla and Charybdis and all eyes and binoculars were turned to the vision of the smoke visible through the blue haze as we watched the volcano that was dormant yet alive, ominous in its august presence before us. It definitely had a touch of what is called the numinous. The wonder of it was missed by no one and even the meal hours of the passengers were adjusted to enable all passengers to participate in the glory of the Absolute that the smoking mountain represented.

Incident at Marseilles: Continuous instructions were coming for those of us disembarking at Marseilles to pack and keep our papers in order. The ship was to land off the old harbour of Marseilles in the new

docks at 9 p.m. on the 6th. My friend P.D. had trouble with the ship's doctor who insisted on re-vaccinating him although he had a valid certificate of vaccination but without the required international seal on it. He refused and I was taken by him as a witness to the doctor, and there I had the strange experience of trying to mediate between two European "allies" settling a difference between them, one a hundred-per-cent. Englishman and the other a fifty-fifty English-Frenchman. That was a delicate dialectical situation especially when the latter had annoyed the Englishman by a reference to what happened at Dunkirk when, as the Frenchman put it, the French allies were saved last and on reaching the English shores were put in bad camps meant for foreigners. I could see sparks of fire crossing between them as they looked proudly at each other. The battle between Calais and Dover seemed to be on. I, as a referee present, could not say much to ease the situation except to mumble that the objection of the ship's doctor was merely technical and not factual. The situation was saved and all went well.

Cold European weather became evident as the ship drew alongshore at the harbour of Marseilles dominated by a hill with a church at its top. Cold winds and rain with grey skies greeted us as usual. It was always the weather which was the concern. I was walking with my two lighter valises and overcoat from one dining-room to another where the passport officer was to meet us to let us land. At last the formalities were quickly over and the causeway led me out alone on-to European soil for perhaps the fifth time in my life. I have often imagined myself pennyless and friendless in my moods of orphanage in the Absolute, but the Tao or Absolute has always been kind to me. I have never had real cause to complain.

Through France to Belgium: Landing at Marseilles I was told by Cook's man who handed me a ticket that the train leaving for Paris was at 10.55 or so. It was already nearing 10.30. The luggage had to pass the customs who seemed to take it easy unmindful of the passengers who were in anxious haste. The tall French officer put his mark on the luggage that at last arrived from the ship, and between money-changing, paying the porters, hiring a taxi to go five miles off to the railway station of Marseilles and getting into the train, there was much hurrying, blabbering and blustering. I had hardly put my heavy trunk into the corridor of the coach which bore the number of my ticket than the train steamed off. It was in full speed with people asleep in the Wagons Lits Cook and my seat number was right at the other end as I passed from one end of the long corridor coach to the other.

At last I entered a compartment with three ladies, a gentleman and two children, all going to Brussels. One of the ladies was the wife of a doctor in Ghent who readily promised to drive me on arrival there to the village of Laethem-St. Martin, my destination. After a stay of some hours at noon at the Gare du Nord at Paris without changing compartments, we arrived at Ghent (changing only to the electric trains at Brussels) by 4 p.m. We had been travelling very fast throughout the previous night, and all I had eaten was a French breakfast of strong coffee, rolls, butter, jam and fruits for 300 francs service *y compris* at seven in the morning. At the Gare du Nord there was nothing to eat available at the

platform and the dining saloon was in its full rush when I wanted to go there. However, I managed to get a cake and a drink to ward off hunger and thirst till the kind lady going to Ghent offered me *café filtre* at the buffet at Brussels. I had not time to get money changed into Belgian francs but the lady paid all my portorage too and, not satisfied with all this kindness, telephoned to her husband who came in his big car and, putting my things in it himself, drove me to ten kilometres away to the nearby village called Laethem-St. Martin.

He had to ask the way twice before we could locate the home of E. G. in the pine woods isolated from the fashionable villas with lawns. G's place is situated like a sort of island of neutrality as an open house known for its special hospitality to foreigners. Mr. G. himself is a mystic and an artist who has also many books to his credit, both in Flemish and French, one of which received recognition and a prize from the Royal Society here. He is a remarkable man and to tell you something about the life with him and his family would take more space than is offered here at present. It was thus on the 8th of April that I found myself at home again in a new and strange country.

After two days of rest and talking to the members of the family and guests, M. was ready to keep his promise about the ice-cream. We took a walk through the woods which still had only spring buds and blossoms that come before the leaves (like love before the child is born) and the smell of winter was lingering on through days that should have belonged to springtide. We entered a café which was decorated with antique lanterns and vessels of olden days. M. ordered the best cup of ice-cream and fruit. He paid forty francs for both which in Indian money equalled the price of all the meals in an average house for one or two days. Such is the streamlined opulence-g geared standard of life here, about which I shall have occasion to tell you more soon.

[ANOTHER INSTALMENT NEXT MONTH]

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Your opportunity to secure
The Bhagavad Gita

A new translation and complete commentary entirely faithful
to the intentions of the great Vyasa.

by Nataraja Guru

This work will be published in the autumn of 1959. The cost will be approximately Rs. 28 per copy. By arrangement with the publishers we are having 200 copies reserved for the benefit of readers of VALUES.

May we list your name among the select number who must have this wonderful book? Send no money, but just your order with your full name and address, to

The Manager VALUES, (Gita Dept.)
Kaggalipura P.O., Bangalore District
South, India.

Those who have read the manuscript say this is the most remarkable exposition of the Bhagavad Gita since Sankara.

An open Letter to

MINDFUL as we are of the General Good of Humanity and of the Good of all members of the Human Race, we the undersigned who represent nothing higher than the authority vested in the commonest of human beings and voicing its most inarticulate section, are prompted, lest it be a minute too late, respectfully to submit to all high dignitaries of the world, the following few words:

Our times are as anxious ones as they have ever been. One voice unheard or one word too much might turn the scales against us. The balance we have to keep is more important to stress in the most normal of times than when everything has gone beyond control. Humanity has a conscience that deserves respect. There is none so humble as to deserve anything less than the fullest fair play. Our brothers, in the furthestmost recesses of the world from where we live, call for pointed attention and recognition. No widow or orphan should be forgotten. An attitude of equality and self-respect, with a sense of gentlemanly sportsmanship, which implies a new form of chivalry, is called for in the interests of a single sister or brother in distress anywhere. Bread with freedom has to be guaranteed to each according to his need; and from each is to be expected a response according to his personal capacity and no more. Man has to care more for his fellow man.

The power vested in each of us is proportionate to our sense of collective responsibility. Those who can serve best deserve to take the topmost leadership. At home or abroad we want men as ready to lead as to take the last place. There is equal glory in both. None retires prematurely nor is he to be chosen for ever. All shoulder responsibilities in a dignified and orderly fashion. The lure of power or pelf shall not mar the natural nobility of man to live and let live.

Civilization implies more than mere urbanized amenities. We should desist from vitiating the atmosphere with poisons that spell mutual mistrust. A graded sense of true values in life is required for this.

Any statesmanship that divides man against man is, to say the least, unscientific. It involves double loss where double gain would be easy. The heritage of human wisdom which sometimes tends to get discredited, deserves always to be kept in view. Progress is not merely through technology. To counter

Leading Men and Women

the dark dangers of the weapons of war, we have to catch up once more with the Truth that shall make us free. Generosity is the counterpart of the same Truth. Both depend on a proper understanding of human values according to a fully integrated Science of the Absolute which will include technology and the humanities under one Science of sciences. The universities of the world have to work for the integration of such a Science.

A kindly attitude to all life must necessarily be the corollary of such a truly scientific attitude. Man will be able to communicate his dearest wishes to his fellow-man across all kinds of barriers or frontiers, actual or ideological, when the present confusion of tongues has been counteracted by the language of a correctly and consciously formulated Universal Science. The dialectical approach to wisdom which treats mother and child, master and servant, ruler and ruled, capital and labour and even husband and wife together and not unilaterally, is what is here recommended.

Let one increasing purpose run through all our lives revitalized by our love of fellow-man.

Such is the prayer with which we respectfully address ourselves to all high authorities the world over at this critical time. We do so in the name of the happiness of Humanity which should be dear to one and all of us at once.

Yours ever in the name of One Humanity,

Edgar Gevaert, Belgium

Mark Gevaert, Belgium

Leon Lefebvre, Belgium

Guru Natarajan, India

Dr. Georges Ohsawa, Japan

S. A. Thompson, Ghana

Dr. Joseph Vercruysse, Belgium

Armand Vermeulen, Belgium.

From a World Centre for World Government,
Laethem-St. Martin, Belgium.

June 1, 1959

Please send your comment or reply to :

Mark Gevaert, "Parlement,"
Laethem-St. Martin, Belgium.

Sex is not Sin in Indian Art

by NITYA

The author shows here that classical Indian art in line with the free spirit of absolutist philosophy, accepted sex as part of the natural life of man-woman, and that the modern attitude of puritanism is false to India's cultural heritage and due to external influences in religion and morality.

EXISTENCE and subsistence interpenetrate to form an absolute Value. In other words the subjective and objective interact and establish a unity in the connecting link of an inexpressible joy. When such a joy overwhelms the mind of a poet, a musician or an artist, the inexpressible finds expression, and both the conscious and the subconscious shades of joy in us get symbolized in art.

In such a free and dynamic expression of art, social taboos and moral scruples offer no obstruction. The dialectical union of the yearning from within and the grace from without are the eternal themes of Indian art. No religion in the world has such secular or "irreligious" art as India. Indian art knows no frontier. It is not at all for amusement. It is for the adoration of the Absolute—yet not for a socialized deity. The truly precious art of India is not to be looked for in art galleries, even where they exist. In India there are no such stock-piles of paintings and sculptures. It is to the temples of India that we must go to see the free expression of Indian art.

Passion and Divinity: From Cape Comorin, the southernmost tip of India up to Mount Kailas in the Himalaya millions of people daily anoint the phallus. They glorify the *lingam* lost in the *yonis*. No Christian or Muslim can ever feel divinely inspired by paying such homage to sex in active union. But for the innocent contemplatives of India the harmony of the two sex emblems is an eloquent symbol of transcending all pairs of opposites or dualities. Western Puritans sneered at Sigmund Freud for saying "sex is the hub on which life revolves," but the Indian artist went further by asserting that the union of the lover and the beloved was the nearest expression of the joy of the Absolute.

Except in Greece and India, nowhere in religion have the great passions of human life been given a touch of the divine. The Konara Siva holding Parvati in sweet embrace while she kisses him lost in ecstasy, gives a rapturous thrill to the Indian mind which is not yet poisoned by monastic notions of sex and sin.

It is impossible to hear from the lips of a Christian of Jesus kissing

the Magdalen or holding Martha in an embrace. For the orthodox Christian mind such a thought would be blasphemous and would be sure to be punished by the Church here and by God in the hereafter. In the Christian heaven one never meets sweet damsels like the Urvashi or Menaka of the Hindu paradise. In the Christian heaven the pious ones favoured by God are supposed to remain for eternity mumbling boring hymns in praise of the Creator and ever in fear of a revisitation of Satan. The Muslim heaven is comparatively bright where the faithful can have a jolly time with lovely houris. Yet in spite of this concession no Muslim will ever portray the Prophet in an erotic mood with his several wives, while Islam forbids the portrayal at all of the human figure.

Krishna the Great Lover: But in India, Krishna is the beloved of the majority. Even as a child he was a thief. He used to enter the kitchen of the *gopis* (milkmaids) and snatch away butter and cream. When he grew up he became a permanent headache to the cowherds of Brindavan. With his flute he lured away their wives and daughters from their homes to sing and dance with him under the kadamba trees. The author of the *Bhagavata* was not obsessed with any sense of shame or guilt in making Krishna steal the clothes of the bathing beauties and making them blush at their nudity.

Even today in Central India and Bengal in almost every village the chief entertainment is the enactment of passionate themes of Radha (Krishna's lawful wife) becoming love-sick for Krishna. To the Indian mind there is nothing sexy in the lover pining for the beloved. On the banks of the Ganges in Rishikesh, or in Haridwar or Kasi (Benares) or Allahabad even now we can listen to hundreds of holy men clad in yellow robes passionately narrating the story of Radha and Shyam to countless men and women who deeply sympathise with Radha who feels lonely and deceived, and of the unfaithful Krishna who steals kisses from every *gopi*. Such discourses cannot be passed as "religious" by the sex-is-sin votaries of the Semitic religions. Yet this is the basic stuff of art in Indian "religion."

Monastic ashrams of modern India founded on Buddhist and Christian patterns have nothing in common with the ancient Gurukulas and Ashrams of Ancient India. The well known Ashrams described in the epics of India are those of Vasishta, Sanidipany, Kanva, Bharadwaja, Gautama, Valmiki and Yajnavalkya. In all these Ashrams the wives of the respective Rishis or Gurus were the matrons. Young men and women, *brahmacharis* and *brahmacharinis* (so-called not because they were merely celibate but because they were treading the path of Truth or Brahman) were living in these Ashrams under the same roof, and learning wisdom which included the wisdom of sex from the Guru and helping the Gurupatni or the matron in the running of the establishments.

Love and the Ashrams: Such Ashrams were always open to the victims of social oppression. Sakuntala found the parental care of a Kanva and Valmiki had no hesitation in receiving Sita abandoned by her husband, and Valmiki chose his own *tapograha* as a lying-in room for Sita who later gave birth to twins. Love and romance in Ashrams were never treated with unsympathetic harshness. Sakuntala was free to have her way with Dushyanta. The other charming girls of Kanvashrama,

Anusuya and Priyamvada were only too glad to help Sakuntala to screen her off for the privacy she required to be with her lover. Even the matted-hair brethren of the Ashram did not consider it their business to bother about Sakuntala's moral behaviour. Kanva, who came to know of Sakuntala bearing a child without social marriage formalities was not so cruel as to hurl a curse on her. On the contrary, he had only kind words of consolation and blessing. Kalidasa, in his beautiful treatise of romance even elicits sympathy for Sakuntala from the jasmine and the mango tree and the little antelope of the Ashrama. This thoroughly human approach to the delicate problems of life known to the age of Kalidasa—the greatest dramatic writer of India—has become totally foreign to India today. This is partly due to the Jain and Buddhist notions of Akusala Karma and the Christian and Islamic notions of "sex-is-sin."

If today love was discovered within the closed walls of a "modern" ashram it would be splashed as world news to give concealed satisfaction to the sex-starved multitudes of Puritan-conditioned societies. Perhaps it is for this reason that Narayana Guru warned his disciple Nataraja Guru not to ban marriages in Gurukulas.

The Language of Idols: It was not only in the field of love and romance that the contemplative mind of the Indian artist could soar to sublime heights. In the language of the idol all the paradoxes and enigmas of the Absolute are introduced even with a delicate sense of humour. One such imagery is that of Ganesha, the elephant-headed lord of the ascending and descending path of the Devas (gods) and the pitris (the ancestors). Ganesha represents the ideal as well as the actual. He is seated on a lotus-petalled throne which is the symbol of Guruhood. The elephant using the mouse (another image) as his vehicle for transport is ludicrous when taken literally, but the universal resides in the particular and the microcosm reflects the macrocosm. The big ear of Ganesha looks funny too, but it bespeaks the need to listen patiently to the wisdom teaching of a Guru. Ganesha's half-closed eyes are drawn inwards to contemplate the significance of what he has already seen. His big nose is an indication of the need to discriminate between the Absolute and the relative, the perennial and the fleeting. His big belly reminds us of the Chinese Taoist saying to "empty the mind and fill the belly." He is content. So should be every wise man. In one hand he keeps the food for the body and in the other the food for the soul. He thus teaches that man does not live by bread alone. It is equally true that one need not lose anything that is naturally good here and now while being interested in the good of the Absolute.

Thus viewed, the icon of Ganesha will appear to us as a contemplative lesson in lithographic language. Ganesha is not to be worshipped, but to be studied and so to reach the sublime heights of unitive Wisdom.

Whether in the field of poetry or painting, drama or temple carvings, the mind of the Indian artist could soar to any height without being censored by social and moral taboos. In South India the universally read *Tiru-Kural* frankly expounds the wisdom of sex and love and marriage inside and outside society. Here there is no sublimation or distortion of the place of sex in life. But this golden age of art, of drama, sculpture, painting and literature, underwent a great degeneration after the spread of

The Enigma of the Smile of Mona Lisa

by NATARAJA GURU

Nearly everybody must be familiar with Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, the most famous painting in the world, the pride of the Louvre in Paris. Around this curious painting Nataraja Guru puts his finger on the mystery that is still in art for all who try to "explain" it.

WHEN men and women who claim to be cultured meet in Europe, conversation soon turns round the familiar subject of art criticism. Hardly had I landed in Europe this time than I found myself assailed many times in after-dinner conversation by questions such as whether I liked modern or classical art. Impressionism, surrealism, cubism, the *clair-obscur* of Rembrandt and the famous painting of the Sacrifice of the Holy Lamb by Van Eyke were natural topics raised. Some went into details of technique in the matter of line, light or colour. Many talked about the proportions and the secret geometry kept in mind by the artist which followed the principle of the "golden number" supposed to be derived from Plato but christened as such, centuries later, by Leonardo da Vinci.

The Last Supper by da Vinci, the original of which I had looked at in Milan, nearly thirty years ago now, has remained in my memory together with what I have seen in the most famous galleries of Venice, Vicenza, Naples, Rome, Padua and in the Sixteenth Chapel of the Vatican. I have heard many guides and read many stray articles and books about art. I must confess however that the key to the true appreciation of art still eludes me. It seems now that I have to be taught from the very beginning.

Breakdown of Art Criticism: Did art critics still think

Semitic repressions in the name of morality and religion. To some extent also, Jain and Buddhist outlooks were not balanced or healthy enough to allow the free growth of art and literature. But the paintings of Ajanta, if they were done by Buddhist monks, and the wonderful marbles of Amaravati, show that they did have enough aesthetic sense to appreciate the delicate curves of the feminine form. The Jain carvings of Ellora also show the healthy mind of the Jain contemplatives. So we may rightly presume to infer that the present perversion of Indian art must have begun only after the advent of the Mugals and the evangelism of the Christians.

[END]

in terms of definitions? Some did but this was very rare. Others, including some that I met who had taken a five year course of the history of European art cared for no norms or definitions at all. They were often carried away by merely superficial technique. Even here, if, for instance, one asked what was the greatness of a Picasso, Van Gogh, Goya, or a Cezanne, one was only answered vaguely with exclamations, shruggings of shoulders, superlatives, ravishments, or other forms of linguistic exaggerations such as "I adore" or "I hate." Europe that takes pride in what Romain Rolland called the "*Libre Critique d'Occident*" flounders at present totally when it comes to clear notions on art.

I had promised the editor of *VALUES* to treat of this subject in my present instalment of the *Causerie* but as it happened in actual writing, I had already to cover preliminaries about how and where I found myself among my present European listeners. This took more than eight pages of typescript and I could not arrive at the promised topic of conversation.

In anticipation of arriving at that instalment of my *Causeries* where I could have touched this all absorbing topic more normally; I am selecting here one item which has always intrigued me, namely, the place that we have to give to Leonardo da Vinci's *La Giaconda*, better known as *Mona Lisa*, in the whole range of masterpieces of European art that comes naturally within the purview of any art critic who wishes to be systematic. In my view this major problem is inseparably linked with the eternal enigma of the oblique smile of *Mona Lisa*.

The Obsession with *La Giaconda*: The sensation that prevailed in the world of art when this famous painting hanging in a very cherished and important place in the museum of the Louvre in Paris was stolen not so long ago, indicates that it still occupies a central position as a supreme example of Western art taken as a whole. Even now the sensation round this painting has not subsided.

Although there are many now in Europe who pooh-pooh any idea of giving this painting any central place in discussions, the subject is one that haunts the subconscious of the art critic in a strange manner. I recently had a lively discussion on this subject with a middle-aged lady, Mrs. H. who had herself recently turned from being a talented portrait painter to a sort of impressionism that relied on vague and nebulous patchy colour-patterns without any figures as such. My attention was drawn to other painters who were to be treated as more important than Leonardo, even for historical reasons. After this I felt quite discouraged about being able to hold my own in any conversation on the subject of art. To my surprise I found that the Universities no more began by the definition of art. Art criticism had become a matter of merely individual taste. Plato and Aristotle were long outmoded here. One like me, who desired to see all branches of culture hang together by a central notion, had to suffer some disillusionment and discouragement.

However, I happened to pick up a popular illustrated magazine, called the *Paris Match* of June 13, 1959 and found to my surprise that therein was reproduced a modern version of the *Mona Lisa*, holding some gold dollars in her palm and caricatured with a pointed Kaiser moustache on the otherwise same face, except that the eyes were fully open and the enigmatic smile was slightly changed into one that was harsher. Extracts

from the note below the picture read as follows when translated :

"The smile of Mona Lisa has always tormented painters, impenetrable secret before which all the resources of their talents were spent away. Salvador Dali has made his own portrait 'after the manner of' in order to free himself in turn from this obsession."

Modern painters evidently hardly know what to make out of this painting any more. The dollars that have been put there by Salvador Dali and the name given to his work 'Avida Dollars' represent the tendency of modern painters to laugh altogether at this masterpiece. It survives as something hardly more than a joke at the present day.

Leonardo and Bergson: Now let us turn to the words of a philosopher of scarcely a generation ago, Henri Bergson, who wrote or rather spoke on the subject of this very Mona Lisa of Leonardo. Quoting first from Leonardo da Vinci's *Traite de Peinture* directly, we read :

"The secret of the art of drawing is to discover in each object the particular manner in which there is along the whole of its extension a certain direction such as that of a central wave which expresses itself in the form of superficial waves, a certain undulating line which is, as it were, its generating axis."

Commenting further himself on the secret that Leonardo explains above, Bergson, *a propos* Mona Lisa, continues as follows :

"True art seeks to render the individuality of a model and for this goes to seek behind the lines that one sees, the movement which the eye does not see, behind the very movement itself, something that is more secret, the original intention, the fundamental aspiration of the person, a simple thought which would be equal to the undefined richness of forms and colours." (p. 248, *La Pensee et le Mouvant*, Bergson, Geneva.)

On the single subject of Mona Lisa we thus find opinions that are very sharply divided. Some like Bergson see in it what the ordinary man can hardly see without initiation, and some others laugh at it altogether. It is the latter tendency that I see gaining ground now. New standards of art are quickly replacing the old. One would even feel that the age of classical art from Raphael and Michelangelo through religious art like the Pieta of Avignon, Van Eyke and Rubens to its latest representatives in Minne (the father of my hostess) is coming to a close. The art of Edgar Gevaert is an example of how modern art is striking a new line in which Christian and pagan art counterbalance each other. "To have something better to do than paint Mona Lisa" has even become a current idiom among certain sections of painters, as has been reported in the very article of *Paris Match* quoted above.

The smile of Mona Lisa has thus become a sort of sore spot, a touchy subject or what might be called a complex to the dilettante and the serious or light-hearted art critic of the present day. Even directors of studies about the history of art seem no more able to say anything intelligible about it. Meanwhile, even by wilful omission, it becomes more and more an obsession.

What we have to offer ourselves to the discussion will be conceived from the dialectical angle and would be based on the philosophy of the distinction between the self and the non-self. We shall elaborate these aspects in further parts of the *Causeries* to be appearing in VALUES. [END]

Art, Absolute Art!

by JOHN SPIERS

An essay on the relationship between the artist and the philosopher and the role of the artist in a technologically unified world.

CERTAIN incidents give us a clue to the nature of art. A friend who is an Indian ivory carver quite recently spent an extraordinarily long time in the bathroom. When I asked him if there was anything wrong he answered that he had been entranced with the designs for a piece of sculpture evoked by the cracks and stains on the bathroom wall. Spellbound, he had no idea of the passage of time. Nothing in itself perhaps, this little incident could be paralleled by others from all over the world. In a famous passage Leonardo da Vinci also refers to the same phenomenon. One of the pastimes of the Mughal aristocrats was to recline on the flat roofs of their marble palaces in Delhi and enjoy the "castles in the air" of monsoon clouds. There is even a Zen school in Japan who willfully advocate "wall-gazing" as an exercise in the contemplative life.

For the clue to art which these incidents supply is of course that whether he knows it or not, the artist is a contemplative by temperament. The artistic and contemplative temperament or faculty may be even far more common than is supposed, at least in this respect, when we remember how many businessmen find relief in what is called doodling, a habit of scribbling on old scraps of paper. To some extent everyone is a yogi and an artist, however much such capacities may be neglected, distorted or suppressed. The great artist like the great metaphysician is only the genius who has the more all-extensive, all-comprehending, all-universal vision. The one translates it into art, the other into philosophy and the rare ones combine both the song and the science.

The Artist and the Philosopher: The Bible is enjoyed as much as a work of literature as a religious text, and the same applies to the Koran. As its name implies, the Bhagavad Gita is a "song" of the Absolute. The Tao Teh K'ing, the Dhammapada, the Dialogues of Plato, the Masnavi of Jalalu'Din Rumi, and in our own day the compositions of the Guru Narayana, are all artistic literature as well as containing the deepest philosophy pertaining to humanity as a whole and to absolute reality.

Like the great metaphysical explorers, artists have sought the solitude of nature far from the haunts of men, or at least away from the humdrum pressures of conventional society. Wordsworth purposefully chose the then wilderness of the Lake District of England where he could commune with that presence far more deeply interfused and see without distraction

the light that never was on land or sea. It was during his visit to Italy that Goethe's whole life was transformed. Others like William Blake took to an absolutist life in their own backyard. William and his wife Kate, naked in their garden, horrified the neighbours. "We are Adam and Eve" he explained. Some like Gauguin, fled to the very ends of the earth, to the antipodean isles of the Pacific. Paris still has its absolutist call for thousands of artists and their fellow-travellers. Artists in our own time are now venturing further afield, and seek in Arabia, India or Japan what was formerly found on Mediterranean shores.

The usual indifference of the artist and philosopher to the economic side of life is notorious. Whether in the slums like Rembrandt or locked in an asylum like Van Gogh, the artist is quite content and goes on painting. Cobblers, grocers and fishermen all adorn the contemplative life of India. Tiruvalluvar, the most famous name of antiquity in the philosophic life of South India was a weaver. Narayana Guru was the son of a farmer. Spinoza was a lens grinder. The splendour of the kings and politicians of their times passes and is forgotten, but the contribution of such men of humble origin to the wisdom of humanity survives and even grows with the march of time.

Wonder and Agony: As Oscar Wilde pointed out in his most heart-rending essay written from prison after the whole world had abandoned him, Jesus himself was an artist when he asked his disciples to live flowerlike lives. The world offers less and less opportunity for living a life even remotely flowerlike. The history of any notable artist of the present day is one of painful struggle in finding a medium, a material or a style which will ultimately satisfy the need for the apocalyptic finality of an absolutist expression consonant with the world of today. Yeats in poetry, Picasso in painting, in their respective fields of changing modes, show not only virtuosity, but this interior struggle.

What they all want to do is to tell the world, to remind the lost sheep, the happy morons, the zombies and, the living dead, of that wonder of the Absolute which is "Ah!", the Suchness or Tathata of Buddha, the "Aum" of the Upanishads. In the various languages at his disposal, music, painting, poetry or sculpture, the artist is trying to tell us about the existence of an immediate kingdom of happiness or delight which belongs to the Absolute. To all enmeshed in the coils of a deadly utilitarian samsara world, they point to a Nirvana within us and without. Faced with an obstinate humanity which is weeping and wailing and fighting (with men like great cylinders rolling against each other, to use the expressive analogy of Pythagoras) the artists like the great Gurus crying in the wilderness, suffer excruciating spiritual agony in their helplessness, for ultimately, the wonder has to remain a wonder which each must find for himself. The wonder can be given mutual admission, the knowing smile, the stillness and silence of the ultimate arrival. The great artist can catch the symbol or the sound, can show the magic case-ments, or indicate the significant form which meant revelation of Nirvana to him, just as the contemplative yogis and Gurus have composed their poems and left us priceless records of a science of spiritual liberation. But when the individual is self-insulated against transmission, there is just no flow. The dialectics of art like the dialectics of philosophy, requires a

satisfactorily polarized situation.

Opposition to Absolutism : Today, thanks to technology, we have at our disposal the arts of all ages and all cultures, translations, reproductions, recordings, just as we have also the wisdom source books from East and West. If books alone, and art alone, or both together, could liberate humanity and make mankind for ever wise, beautiful and happy, the task would be easy. But it is not so, because this is merely a mechanical view. Being informed is not the same as being really cultured. Mastering the scriptures may make one a tolerable theologian, but not necessarily religious let alone spiritual. The exposition of recondite Vedantic texts does not make a living Vedantin.

There remains the full adoption of the Absolute way, whether in art or in any other fashion which agrees with our own temperament, disposition and ability. It is here that the artist needs the guidance of the Guru who should be as dear to the artist as the absolutist teacher finds the artist dear to him. For of all people in the world, it is the Gurus of humanity who best understand the nature of the artist, who realize his agonies and who can tell him how to protect himself from the misunderstandings which beset him.

Only the other day when I was showing a young boy some of the possibilities of the free creative use of his first box of water-colours, his mother blurted out: "Oh dear, I hope he is not going to be an artist!" I replied that I knew most artists had a hard life, that they hardly made any money but, provided it made them supremely happy, was that not better? Society has the ends of wanting children to be a success in the world, meaning to make money, to raise a family. Parents are delighted if a child shows a desire to be a lawyer, a doctor or an engineer. In India they are more than satisfied if he is a government clerk! But to want to be an artist is hardly better than wanting to give up society altogether and put on the yellow robe!

There is opposition all along the line for the artist. Corot, Daumier, Degas, Cezanne, and thousands of others, known and unknown, had to face the general disapproval of fathers and mothers. The great spiritual figures of the world had the same opposition. Jesus had to openly disaffiliate himself from his mother in favour of humanity. Socrates' wife Xantippe was continually railing against her good-for-nothing husband.

Global Inspiration : The artist has to meet further opposition even within the art schools themselves. It stands to reason that if he is an original that he is bound to revolt against conformity to fixed and closed art standards. We cannot escape the conclusion that the artist (like the born metaphysician and the lover, as Plotinus points out in a memorable passage) belongs to a verticalized pattern of human life, and it requires the terms of an absolutist science to understand him properly.

In looking at the disturbed state of mind of the modern artist reflected in his restless movement from style to style and his frenzied experimentation it is clear that this is due to the post-atomic age in which the whole of humanity is involved. Almost *all* the culture, and the cultural apparatus, like the politics, economics, religions, ideologies and the entire orientation of thought, is totally obsolete. The perplexity, unrest and despair, the lapses into frivolous, satirical, mocking or absurd

Atmopadesha-Satakam

One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction

by NARAYANA GURU

Translated from the original Malayalam
with a Commentary, by Nataraja Guru

(Continued from last month)

10

“Who sits there in the dark? Declare!” says one;
Whereupon another, himself intent to find, in turn
Asks, hearing the first: “Who may you even be?”:
For both the word of response is but One.

THIS verse has to be read with the next (given below, on page 344) to make a complete contemplative item. The two men sitting in the dark questioning each other in the name of knowledge about the Self in each, represents a dialectical situation about which the Guru here in this tenth verse enters into the heart of the subject of the present work.

Wisdom has always been enshrined in dialogues between two persons—whether a Socrates and an Athenian youth, a charioteer and a warrior on the battlefield as conceived poignantly in the Bhagavad Gita, or more simply as between a teacher and a pupil.

Here the counterparts are brought together very closely as dialectically interchangeable factors, with all extraneous elements eliminated as in arranging a laboratory experiment. The Guru, in such a method of approach, seems also to have been fully alive to the requirements of the age of science and of free criticism based on equality of status.

An Experimental Situation: The dark room is meant for selection and control purposes as in modern experiments. The reference

moods among artists, is of the same order as the indifference of the entire present generation to the divided world which ended with the atomic epoch. Surrealism is the artistic counterpart of the jiving and rock'n roll of a generation (and of more generations to come) which rejects the past and is not quite fully awake to the global proportions of all current human affairs. The artist, like all the rest of us who intend to be living men and women and not rolling cylinders, has the opportunity of playing his absolutist role in a whole new world of total humankind which has been made possible by the advances of science. Any artist who considers anything less than this global world today is only burying his head in the dead ashes of the past. The inherited techniques of the ancestors can be used, along with any regional media, but what a globally awakened artist will give cannot be anything less than a *world art*. More than ever before the artist will create for humanity. He has a chance to be more absolutist and therefore more of an artist than ever before.

[END]

to two men, instead of referring to the self in one man, is like bringing in the control element in the experimentally conceived critical situation by which he who is 'to prove scientifically' the reality of the soul or self. The normative method in science would rely on statistics or a questionnaire to arrive at scientific certitudes. The experimental approach on the other hand is more direct and based on the three stages of experiment, observation and inference. The Guru employs here a method which combines both these, the normative and the experimental together into a more direct one. He thus fulfils the requirements of dialectical reasoning rather than relying on the one-sided approach consisting of ontological or teleological proofs known to the rationalistic philosophers of modern Europe.

To know oneself has been accepted both in the East and in the West, in both ancient and modern times, as constituting the core of wisdom. Knowing oneself is hindered by the outward-going eye which sees other objects besides oneself. Bipolar relations could be established between the self on the one hand and what the self is able to perceive on the other hand through the outwardly directed senses. This latter aspect could be called the non-self. When the bipolarity is between equals of the same kind or species, the non-self aspect could be spoken of as the other self. Language even permits of a man referring to his wife as his better half. There is thus a parity that we can imagine between two persons. The subjective and the objective selves could be treated as interchangeable terms.

If anything could mar the strict bipolarity of the experimental situation here envisaged for attaining to a correct notion of the Self in man, it would be a third element in the form of various secondary miscellaneous interests that dissipate our attention and spoil the contemplative attitude required for wisdom. It is for this reason, in order to minimise the possibility of a third factor disturbing the bipolarity, that the Guru postulates darkness as a necessary condition for the experimental situation to teach us fully what could be derived from it.

The darkness further implies that contemplative wisdom is what is given to the eye of man when shut and directed not outwardly to objects, but to realities belonging to the inner world. The science that results with the eyes open could be called physics and that which persists even when the eyes are shut may be said to belong to metaphysics. Between the visible and the intelligible worlds of Plato these conditions are not strictly applied nor distinguished. As a result we have the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle getting confused one with the other. Extraspection has action in view, but introspection is directed to tranquillity or peace. Both are movements of thinking envisaged by the Self in each man.

"The word of response is but One": What could be called a dialectical proof may be said to be implied here. There are proofs given by *a priori* reasoning which are not those of the experimental sciences like physics. The *a posteriori* approach is more naturally associated with its history. The telescope or the microscope were used by the earliest modern physicists to help outwardly the normal sight of the open eye. In other words the eyes were to be more open to see truth or reality. The philosophers who were called rationalists or idealists, from Descartes (1596-1650), through Spinoza (1632-1677), Leibniz (1646-1716)

to Kant (1724-1804) admitted the *a priori* but still thought with objective predilections and spoke of essences, substances or existences which they sometimes compared to some sort of fluids, emanations or monads. The *a priori* lost its way with them till dialectics began to be recognized again with the German idealists like Hegel (1770-1831). Henri Bergson (1859-1941) was able to look at the self from the pragmatism angle, giving a new start to philosophy from the approach of evolutionism. There is however a far cry from evolution as in the philosophy of Spencer (1820-1903) and the Creative Evolution as envisaged by Bergson. Bergson himself however, stops short of employing the fully dialectical method. What he refers to as "intuition" which is reasoning from "inside" an object rather than what is got by viewing it from outside, and which serves physics and metaphysics equally, is really a dialectical form of reasoning which was only beginning to be understood by him and the philosophers of his generation. Bergson remains for us here perhaps the only philosopher of the West who comes very near to the method of approach adopted by the Guru in the present verse. Bergson wrote :

"There is one reality at least which we grasp from inside and not by a simple analysis. That is our own person in its flow along time. It is our self that endures. We can sympathise intellectually or rather spiritually with no other thing. But we do sympathise surely with ourselves." (p. 177, *La Pensee et Mouvant*, Geneva, 1946 edition).

Bergson goes on to describe what he is able to grasp about his own self by the method of making his "inner power to see" (*regard interieur*) take a walk over his person (*promener sur ma personne*) as he puts it, and is able to describe poetically the structure of the personality in man. By this unilateral treatment of the self, which is not conceived as it ought to be, in conformity with what we have called "dialectical methodology", those who spoke the language of speculative philosophy and contemplative disciplines have each put a barrier between themselves and those who spoke the language of experimental science.

The Two Self-counterparts: The Guru Narayana, by referring to the self in two persons at the same time, makes an epochal innovation by which he lays the foundation for the reapproachment and unification of two branches of wisdom, the physical and the metaphysical, which, by being treated hitherto separately, have lost their full influence in enriching human nature to the limit of its possibilities.

On reading this verse carefully it is important to note that the Guru takes pains to give in detail the agonizing stages in the dialectical situation portrayed in this metaphysical experiment that he describes. The resolution of the paradoxical duality of the two persons into the One of the last line does not take place without effort or earnestness. A thirst for more knowledge is implied on one side and the inclination to remain quiet on the other. If the first man did not insist on knowing, the silence would have remained unbroken and wisdom would not have resulted. Active seeking of wisdom is a form of agony or thirst for knowledge which represents the knocking at the door to open, to put it in the biblical idiom. One has to want to know badly before knowledge can result. The duality then becomes transcended. The two partial selves merge into

unity in the Absolute. (We have taken the slight liberty here of capitalizing the initial letter of the "One" which is only to be expected in the light of orthographic usage in English.)

Unitive understanding consists essentially of abolishing duality. This duality is to be understood not merely as a theological doctrine which in common parlance, especially in India, separates God from Man, as when we speak of the difference between the theological doctrines of a Ramanuja, a Madhva or a Sankara. Monism and monotheism still belong to the ordinary speculation of philosophy of the scholastics or the theologians. The truly dialectical content and import of the term *non-duality* belongs to the domain of dialectical thinking which, as between the self and the non-self, or as between the one and the many, reduces all duality into unity. The unitive way is that of the central core of the stream of consciousness where it has nothing to do with mechanistic objects hardened as a crust round the liquid central flux of eternal becoming. It could be conceived in terms of a vertical axis passing invisibly at the core of the polyhedron, to which form of clear crystal we could compare pure contemplative consciousness.

II

The repeated "I, I" contemplated from within
Is not many but remains One; divergent egoity
Being multiple, with the totality of such
The Self-substance two continuity assumes.

HERE we touch the paradox of the one and the many which started to puzzle philosophers from pre-Socratic days in the West and the early dualistic Sankhya philosophers on the soil of Indian wisdom.

The notion of unity in terms of self-consciousness which was touched on in the last line of the previous verse, based on a metaphysically conceived form of contemplative experimentation, is further analysed here with its dialectical implications. Even within the domain of unitively understood metaphysics there is room for the one-and-the-many paradox to persist. A monist in the philosophical or a monotheist in the theological sense should not be confused. This, however, often takes place. One who sees all as one, in the context of non-dual or unitive understanding in the context of the Absolute, is the truly wise man.

The latter implies a dialectical approach which is not given to the mechanistic reasoning of even correct theologians and philosophers. Reason has to one step beyond even the intuition that Bergson postulated. When the faculty of dialectics which, as the coping stone of wisdom in man, attains to its full scope of directing and regulating thought processes, through its ascending and descending movements, as we have elsewhere studied, one would be able to think of an Absolute that combines unitively even the one and the many by one single act of understanding.

Plato's chapter on Parmenides analyses this possibility masterfully. Even in the Bhagavad Gita we find one allusion at least where the possibility of an absolute notion of reality being viewed from the dialectical rather than a rationalistic angle is present. Referring to the various forms of sacrifice open to men, the author of the Gita envisages the possibility of a wisdom-sacrifice to the Absolute:

Others also, sacrificing with the wisdom-sacrifice, worshipfully attend on Me (the Absolute) unitively, dualistically, as also many-sidedly, facing universally everywhere. (IX. 15)

The possibility of seeing the one and the many together in the notion of the Absolute which is really above even mathematical symbolism, has remained one of the puzzles of philosophers both Eastern and Western through the centuries. The Absolute is above all count as the Guru Narayana himself says later in verse 68 of the present work. In verse 87 the non-predicability of the Absolute is alluded to further. The very first verse of the book of the Tao, which term represents the purest notion of the Absolute in Chinese philosophy, describes the Absolute in the following striking manner:

The Tao that can be told

Is not the Absolute Tao ;

The names that can be given

Are not Absolute names.

The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth

The Named is the Mother of All Things.

The Language of Metaphysics : How then, it could be asked here, is it possible to speak of the Tao that cannot even be named in the mathematically conceived language of the one-and-the-many? Although the notion is not predicable in the usual rationalistic and mechanistic terminology of a living language, the subtler language of dialectics can be used to reveal its inner structure. When we say in algebra "Let X be the unknown factor" we have in reality started saying something about it, and at the same time not said anything definite about it. Mathematics as the handmaid of mechanistic physics which uses static notions expressed by symbols, can still, as Bergson points out, be limited in its scope of revealing absolute reality especially in its negative aspects. Bergson sums up: "*Metaphysics is therefore the science which claims to do without symbols.*" (p. 175, *La Pensee et le Mouvant.*)

Although this is true as far as it applies to the mechanistic sciences, in modern times after the work of Pascal, Descartes, Leibniz, Poincare and Eddington there are newer forms of mathematics which can bring even the negative aspects of the Absolute under symbolic scrutiny. We reserve for a future study the explanation of such mathematical possibilities.

For the present we shall content ourselves by referring to the possible meaning of a symbol like $\sqrt{-1}$ which can refer to nothing that we can visualize mentally but would still be capable of valid interpretation in pure non-utilitarian higher mathematics which could be put at the service of metaphysics more aptly than in the service of ordinary physics. Modern physicists are feeling more and more the need for some such precise language.

When the Guru here states that the sum total of the divergent multiplicity in consciousness attains to continuity with the One which represents the Absolute in a more finalized sense, he is only delving further into the structure of the notion of the One Absolute. The Absolute can have a positive and a negative side. The conflict between the two has to be overcome by a dialectical approach. The one and the many can

co-exist without contradiction or paradox, in the mind of the trained dialectician, while to the mechanistic thinker who is not a true contemplative and who is incapable of using higher mathematical symbols like the square root of minus one there is a glaring intellectual *cul-de-sac* over which he cannot jump.

In this verse the Guru is just broaching the subject of transcending contradiction and reducing contraries unitively. In later verses we shall see him going deeper into the application of this dialectical approach which eluded even master minds such as Bergson and continues to trouble the mathematical though sceptical genius of a Bertrand Russell. Whitehead being an avowed Platonist does not view the Absolute except from the positive side of lasting intelligible values. The correct method of the approach of Guru Narayana will become more and more evident as we proceed.

"The Self-substance too continuity assumes": In modern physics we have begun to be familiar with terms like the continuum of space-time. This language which is non-Euclidean and non-Newtonian is sometimes called that of Relativity as opposed to the Absolutism implied in the older languages. Einstein is the one primarily responsible for this change-over. But when we examine closely the physical theories of Einstein we find that a new form of Absolutism in terms of the unit velocity of light lurks at its core.

In reality Relativity is only the dialectical counterpart of the Absolutism of space. Giving primacy to time above space, Einstein preferred to take a position at the other pole of a vertical axis to which both what is called Absolutism and Relativity belong.

The relation between the Absolute and the Relative as the two terms referring respectively to Einstein or Newton, is itself one to be understood in the subtler light of dialectics. The Absolute that cannot be told about, as in the quotation above, is the neutral and silent Tao. Einstein's Relativity with a capital R corresponds to the "Mother of All Things" rather than to the Newtonian notion of the Absolute which would correspond to the "origin of Heaven and Earth." Dialectical methodology and epistemology are still in the process of formulation at the present time, and neither Einstein nor Eddington have arrived at the *omega* which marks the negative limit of the *alpha* of the Absolute. Like the space-time continuum, the Absolute-Absolute and the Relative-Absolute have to be understood unitively as belonging to one and the same context of the Absolute that cannot be told about. Both physics and metaphysics would then derive from this central normative principle a correct methodology and epistemology. The following extract from Eddington will help us to see how the continuity between the One and the Many as suggested in the verse of the Guru here is quite in keeping with the language being vaguely formulated at the present time by first-rate physicists who may be expected to be quite matter-of-fact and not merely sentimental in their approach to reality:

"Relational Structure": We take as building material *relations* and *relata*. The relations unite the *relata*; the *relata* are the meeting-points of the relations. The one is unthinkable apart from the other. I do not think that a more general starting-point of

structure could be conceived.

The relation between two human individuals in its broadest sense comprises every kind of connection or comparison between them—consanguinity, business transactions, comparative stature, skill at golf—any kind of description in which both are involved. For generality we shall suppose that the relations in our world-material are likewise composite and in no way expressible in numerical measure. Nevertheless there must be some kind of comparability or likeness of relations, as there is in the relations of human individuals; otherwise there would be nothing more to be said about the world than that everything in it was utterly unlike everything else. To put it in another way, we must postulate not only relations between the relata but some kind of relation of likeness between some of the relations. The slightest concession in this direction will enable us to link the whole into a structure.” (pp. 225–226 *The Nature of the Physical World*, Everyman's, London, 1947).

It is not hard to notice from a scrutiny of the above extracts that the modern physicist is, as it were, at the end of his tether in the matter of building an intelligent structure of the physical world. The physical and metaphysical worlds have to be linked through co-ordinates that are common to cosmology and psychology. Man is finally the measure of all things whether cosmological, psychological, or both. The four-dimensional world with time gives us the Relativist picture of reality and the one which gives space primacy over time gives us the earlier Absolutist picture. Both have again to be related as between relata, as Eddington puts it. There is no escape from subtle dialectics here. Instead of turning the face against it or hesitantly asking for “the slightest concession” as Eddington does, the bolder and more straightforward approach would be to adopt the methodology and epistemology of dialectical reasoning on which the Guru Narayana here relies.

The continuum here presupposed as existing between the divergent Self and the One Self is thus to be understood in the light of the dialectics which will unravel itself stage by stage as we cover verse after verse in this sequence of verses. Eddington's reference in the above quotation to business transactions and golf as linking one person with another might be considered as referring to outer aspects of life needed for understanding the physical world. The problems of contemplative wisdom concern the metaphysical rather than the physical. Hence it is that we see that the Guru Narayana takes care to eliminate extraneous factors so that in the dark room postulated in the previous verse, pure relations between one man and another could be more clearly visualized. Pure dialectics operates best when extraneous interests are minimised. The one and the many selves, whether seen as between two individuals or within the plus and minus side of the same individual can thus be seen to attain equality, sameness, homogeneity or continuity as here mentioned. Unitive understanding is what is here implied which is the subject-matter of non-dual (advaitic) wisdom.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

The Vertical Response

Anecdotes of the French Painters

INGRES: (1780-1867) Just before his death when he was 87, an astonished visitor found Ingres copying one of the paintings of the fourteenth-century painter, Giotto. When the puzzled spectator asked why the "master" was bothering to make a copy, Ingres answered him simply, "Pour apprendre!" (To learn.)

RENOIR: (1841-1919) "No doubt you paint simply to amuse yourself" said the teacher Gleyre to Renoir. "When I cease to be amused," replied Renoir, "I want you to know I will no longer paint!"

At 78 when racked with pain, Renoir said to a friend: "What wonderful people those Greeks were! Their life was such a happy one that they believed that the gods came down to earth to find their paradise and to make love.....Yes, earth was the paradise of the gods!" Then he added, "Now that's what I want to paint!"

"My concern has always been to paint human beings like beautiful fruit."

"Look—when I paint a buttock and I feel like patting it, that's when I know it's finished!"

"For me a picture must be a pleasant thing, joyful and pretty—yes, pretty!"

COROT: (1796-1875) When the artist Daumier was in great distress and too proud to take help, Corot went about the delicate task of making his friend the gift of a small house, in which he might live out his life. The letter he wrote is:

Dear Old Friend:

I had a little house at Valmondois near l'Isle-Adam that I did not know what to do with. I got the idea of giving it to you and finding the idea a good one I had it registered in your name at the notary's. It is not for you that I do this but rather to annoy the landlord.

Yours, Corot.

When Corot visited Daumier shortly after, it is reported that the embarrassed artist embraced his friend and said, "Ah, Corot! You are the only person from whom I could take such a gift and not feel humiliated!"

Of Corot's work, his biographer, Gustave Geffroy describes the effect of his pictures on himself:

"I gaze at the fields, the forest, the skies and waters—all those wonderful places of refuge where Corot spent his life, and which he offered to those who, like himself, were ready to love and understand the eternal beauty of the universe."

CEZANNE: (1839-1906) "I want to die painting!" (He did). Of his father (who was a hat manufacturer and later a banker, and

who opposed his son's vocation all his life) Cezanne said: "My father was a man of genius—he left me an income of twenty-five thousand francs a year!"

GAUGUIN: (1848-1903): When Gauguin at 35 was living in dreadful poverty in Paris with his son Clovis, he wrote to his wife who was in Denmark: "Do not fret about Clovis. Children of his age do not know what suffering is, provided they are loved a little, and as to food, this is not difficult, especially as the best morsels are kept for him. With an egg and a little rice he makes a good meal especially when there is an apple for dessert." And later, "I have received the stockings for Clovis; he now has something to put his feet into for some time. He is very good and plays quite alone in his little corner without bothering me." Later, struggling with his painting, with Clovis sick in bed and himself working at pasting advertisements about Paris, he wrote: "I had twenty centimes in my pocket and for three days we had been eating dry bread on credit."

LAUTREC: (1864-1901): He was a prodigy. When he was taken to witness the baptism of a baby brother, after the registry had been inscribed by those in attendance, the boy of three cried: "I want to sign too!"

"But you don't know how to write yet," he was told.

The child countered with, "Then I will draw an ox!"

When he was in the asylum (after years of hard drinking) Lautrec drew the astonishing series of circus sketches, later published in two portfolios called *Le Cirque*. Completely from memory he represented the movement and colour of the circus—the clowns, the dogs, the horses, the ringmaster, the acrobats. To this day it remains the most artistic, acutely observed record of circus life. The doctors at the asylum recognized this as no work of a *madman* and it influenced them greatly to consent to his release. Later, he used to say, "I have purchased my liberty with my drawings!"

HENRI ROUSSEAU: (1844-1910): In the year 1909, at the age of 65, Rousseau became involved in a lawsuit, having been used by a swindler to engage unknowingly in a serious piece of fraud involving the Bank of France. When brought to trial, his lawyer had the acumen to introduce some of Roussaeu's paintings, pointing out to the jury that such a simple-minded individual could hardly be capable of the ingenious plotting of which he was accused. The jurors looked at his pictures and were inclined to agree with the attorney. Rousseau sat by silently while his paintings were ridiculed and the courtroom was filled with laughter. Suddenly he arose, and haughtily addressing the court said, "Now that you have finished, may I leave?" The jury had to find him guilty, but the sentence was immediately suspended. Upon hearing the verdict, Rousseau bowed to the court and said to the judge, "I thank you, your honour, I will paint a portrait of your wife."

ROUAULT: (1871-): "It is not the worldly eclecticism of

multiple knowledge that enriches, but perseverance in a favourable furrow and the loving silent effort of a whole life."

BRAQUE: (1881-): "A picture is an adventure each time. When I tackle the white canvas I never know how it will come out. This is the risk you must take. I never visualize a picture in my mind before starting to paint."

"The senses deform, the mind forms. Work to perfect the mind. There is no certitude but in what the mind conceives."

MATISSE: (1869-): "What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or depressing subject-matter, an art which might be for every mental worker be he business-man or writer, like an appeasing influence, like a mental soother, something like a good armchair in which to rest from physical fatigue."

PICASSO: (1881-): "How many people have actually read Homer? All the same, the whole world talks of him. In this way the Homeric legend is created. A legend in this sense provokes a valuable stimulus. Enthusiasm is what we need most, we and the younger generation."

[END]

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