

# VALUES



**GURU NARAYANA**

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

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## Editorial: Mary and the Philosophers

THE same fate seems to be hovering over Asia as happened in Europe in the year 529 A.D. That was when the Christian Emperor Justinian closed the Platonic Academy for good. He outlawed Europe's wisdom-tradition, and ever since Europe has suffered from a peculiar kind of spiritual malaise, from philosophic starvation, from a deficiency disease of the spirit.

At a UNESCO sponsored meeting of "philosophers" recently held at Mysore, there were beautifully worded appeals for philosophical unity in the world, for toleration amid diversity, the hope that somehow wisdom would prevail. And just as the names of Plato and Aristotle are misused in Europe, so here the names of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva were bandied about. Plato and Sankara were treated in the same breath as one might mention Bertrand Russell and Radhakrishnan.

The important thing was really not what was said but what was not said. In short, there was nothing about the role of the Guru. The true bond between a Plato and a Sankara is their common qualification as the disciples of wise men, of Socrates on the one hand and of the Guru Govindan on the other. Today when businessmen conduct "academies" and careerists hold university chairs as "philosophers", the world needs a total revaluation, or an education all over again into the heart of the philosophic life. The test questions for all who claim to play the role of wise men or philosophers must be: What are your interests in life? Are you a full-time seeker of wisdom? and Are you the disciple of a Guru?

In February Nehru gave a lecture in Delhi on India: Today and Tomorrow. He equated the culture of India with "Sanskrit, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Buddha" and said that without these "India would cease to be." True enough, but what does this imply?

The word Upanishad means "sitting beside" the Guru. The Gita is an upanishadic dialogue between a Guru and disciple, Krishna and Arjuna. Everybody knows that the Buddha had disciples.

What is the use of quoting venerable names when the gurus are by-passed in favour of headline personalities? Does wisdom come out of the blue? Can there be wisdom without discipline? Can there be discipline without affiliation to the wise man?

The very silence of the so-called philosophers and statesmen of our time is itself eloquent.

The failure of Gandhian politics is precisely because he had no Guru to curb his excessive exaggerations of the spiritual life and his rash peripheral activities. The breakdown in so-called Panchasila politics is that Panchasila belongs strictly to the Buddhist context. By ignoring the Guru figure of the Buddha no political adventure called Panchasila can succeed. The Guru figure provides the unitive element of neutral dispassionate stability. Take it away and everything, no matter how apparently good, falls to pieces. Good works are meaningless without wisdom's guidance.

Throughout the whole of Asia, hundreds of millions of peasants can easily answer the questions posed above. There is not a single legend, from the Jataka Tales, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana or any of the Puranas known to the common people from the snowbound highlands of Tibet to the blazing plains of India, from the cherry groves of Japan to the coconut groves of Ceylon, which does not take for granted the place of the Guru and disciple in Asian life.

We should also remember that Guruhood belongs as much to Europe and America as it does to Asia. To make this clear here are two complementary quotations involving the same Guru-disciple value. The first is from the Chhandogya Upanishad (IV. xiv. 1-2) :

Just as, my dear, a blindfolded person might be led away (by thieves) from Gandhara, and then abandoned in an uninhabited place, still blindfolded, but roaming about, and calling to east, north, south and west; and then (just as) someone might come, remove the bandage from his eyes, and tell him: "Gandhara is in that direction; go there!" he would, if he were a sensible man, by inquiry, from village to village, find his way to Gandhara; even so, here on earth, one who has a teacher knows "I shall remain here only so long as I am not set free. Then I shall reach home."

The other quotation is from the New Testament (Luke, X. 38-42):

In the course of their travels, Jesus came to a certain village, where a woman named Martha made him welcome in her house. She had a sister called Mary, who did more—she sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to his words. But Martha was distracted by her duties. She stopped in front of him and said: "Lord, is it nothing to you that this sister of mine has been leaving me to serve alone? Come, tell her to lend me a hand."

"Martha, Martha," the Lord replied, "you fret and fuss about a number of things; but there is one thing that you lack. Mary has chosen the good part, and that shall not be taken from her."

In the first quotation the Guru's role is declared. He removes the bandage and points out the way. The word Guru itself is derived from the roots *gu*—"darkness, what is hidden" and *ru*—"to destroy, to remove." In the second quotation the role of the disciple is explained. Martha had divided interests. But Mary gave her full attention to the Guru, even at the cost of the displeasure of her sister. If we consider these two examples together we find a common Guru-disciple situation in which

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# Narayana Gurukula Newsletter

**Founder and Head: Nataraja Guru, M. A., D. Litt. (Paris),  
L. T., etc.**

A Guru-Disciple body of unlimited liability depending on outright support completely free of public or social commitments, for the restatement and representation throughout the world of the Wisdom of the Absolute as taught by the unitive teachers of mankind, and as revalued by Narayana Guru (1854-1928), the teacher of Nataraja Guru, under the motto :

ONE IN DEITY, ONE IN RELIGION, AND  
ONE IN KIND IS MAN.

**Central Office:** Varkala, Kerala, India; **World Centre:** Kaggalipura, Bangalore (South), India; **S-E Asia Office:** 188-68, West Hill Road, Singapore 27; centres in Europe and America, etc.

**Nataraja Guru:** The main event has been the Narayana Guru Birthday Dinner at Geneva on Sept. 16, at which a distinguished group of about twenty persons were present. The hall of the Association J.E.A.N. put at the disposal of the Guru was decorated in Indian style and many of the philosophic charts made by John Spiers and G. Rajagopal were hung up. A report of the J.-J. Rousseau pilgrimage on Sept. 20 is given separately in this issue. The Guru returned to Belgium on Sept. 22, and Mr. G. Rajagopal was there to meet him, having just arrived from New York. Daily discourses on the Bhagavad Gita continue at the home of Mr. Edgar Gevaert. A proper centre is being formed for a wisdom university about which we hope to have more to say later. In October the Guru will be visiting Holland to meet friends. The Guru with Mr. Rajagopal, is likely to return to India sometime in November, depending upon availability of berths on ship.

## Narayana Guru Birthday Celebrations:

These took place as intimated in our last issue. There were large gatherings at most places. At the **World Centre, Kaggalipura**, on Sept. 20, guests came from town by car and bus. Lunch and tea were provided for all, including about 150 village friends. There was discussion about need for a centre in Bangalore City as well as for the need for greater support for **VALUES**. At **Trichinopoly** there was public feeding of about 500 in the morning, and a large meeting in the evening, presided by Mr. T. P. Santhanakrishnan, Dy.-Director of Public Instruction, Madras (retired). At **Varkala** there was also a function with flag hoisting and refreshments, a talk over Trivandrum Radio Station by Swami Mangalananda, who after one year, has now once again (to the delight of all)

returned to the platform after a year's medical rest. At **Fernhill** a similar public lunch and meeting was held on October 11, presided over by **Yati Nitya Chaitanya**. From **Bombay** there are also reports of largely attended meetings, particularly those of the **Sri Narayana Dharma Seva Samaj**, and commemorative lectures at the **Spiritual Centre**, and elsewhere. At all these meetings messages were read from **Nataraja Guru**, **John Spiers**, **World Citizen Garry Davis**, **Dr. Marc Gevaert**, and others.

**Overflow Meetings in Singapore:** News is just to hand of the immense success of the meetings held in **Singapore** in celebration of the 105th Birthday Anniversary of **Narayana Guru**. The functions there went on for several days. About 5000 people were present on the last day. So many came that the premises of neighbours had to be used and people even sat on the roadside. We give below the speech of the Hon. **Inche Ahmad Bin Ibrahim**, the Minister for Health, **Singapore**, who opened the celebrations with flaghoisting on September 16, 1959; partly because it is typical of the general attitude evoked by the word of the **Guru Narayana**, and also because it may be of interest to friends in other lands :

**"Gurukula Attitude Just the Thing We Need Most"**  
**Singapore Minister Inche Ahmad on Importance of Guru's Message**

I am extremely pleased that you should have called upon me to perform the flaghoisting ceremony here today. I am pleased not because many of you are known to me, but because your organization is one that has such worthy aspirations that must one day be fulfilled by all humanity.

Your aspirations, what you seek to achieve, have special significance to this country in which we live. We are a multi-racial society, and the efforts we should all make to secure harmony of interests in such a society should be persistent and unyielding. The sort of brotherhood that you advocate is just the thing we need most at this stage of our history.

Without the realization that all men are brothers there can be grave dangers to the lives and property of our people. We need to be able always to appreciate the problems of our people and to extend the right sort of sympathy. We must also strive to assist them in every way.

It would not be necessary for me to elaborate on the good work you have done in the way of promoting the spirit of brotherhood among people here. It is only fitting and proper that people with a keen awareness of the vital importance of spiritual values should strive to communicate the warmth they hold for people. Of the great religious movements of the world, India has been the birthplace of many. You are fortunate in having a background that provides you with a feeling of love for all people.

It is this feeling that we must all cherish. Non-violence, observance of the law, are some of the things that have been given a real meaning in India. And all of us here have much to learn from the attitude of that

great nation.

In the difficult times we are going through in building a Malayan nation the spiritual values so well established in India have great importance for us. It is not enough to call for friendship and love among people. It is necessary to act.

You, by having this ceremony here today are making your contribution to the great human responsibility of spreading the truths that all men are equal, and that love and brotherliness are what is most needed.

Mr. President and friends, permit me in all humility to say that I am honoured by you all. I look forward to the days ahead when you would all be able to make your good work known to the people of Singapore and Malaya. I pray for your success.

[END]

### An Apology

We owe our readers and friends an apology for the absence of VALUES last month. Reason : the old trouble, meeting expenses on inadequate income. We ask our patrons to bear with us in these things, and it is just possible that within the next few months we shall be able to put VALUES on a new economic footing.

In the meantime, our begging bowl is extended for whatever aid for our wisdom magazine can come. We need to say no more except to thank you all for all aid, including patience!—EDITOR.

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both roles are brought together.

In VALUES this month we are honouring one of the great Gurus who belong to humanity, a wise man whose main contribution to wisdom was the exposition of universal values as common to Europe as to India. In his own exacting life Narayana Guru reaffirmed the timeless message of the Guru.

[END]

# The Perennial Guru

## A Brief Survey of Some Aspects of the Life and Teaching of Narayana Guru

By JOHN SPIERS

THE fame of Narayana Guru increases with the years. It can even be considered amidst the recent course of events in Kerala where, under the older names of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, Narayana Guru lived and taught.

As recently as December 1958 one of the many marble statues of the Guru was unveiled by the Governor of Kerala, at a place near Alleppey. The Chief Minister of the late Communist Government was there. So was the current President of the Congress Party; both bitter opponents in the field of politics. They all united in praise of this great teacher. This is something remarkable to remember. In view of the almost universal veneration for Narayana Guru on the West Coast of India, the politicians had to bend and sink their violent differences. One may often hear Gandhi being criticized. One has never heard any criticism of Narayana Guru. This is something phenomenal, worthy of record.

Among the millions of people of that overcrowded but beautiful land of eternally rustling coconut palms and blue waters, the Guru is treated with sincere and traditional respect. At this time when the 105th anniversary of his birth has been celebrated with a public holiday, it was possible to witness customary Indian ceremonies in many hundreds of thousands of homes. This was not only the case in Kerala and in the coastal region of Mysore, but in distant places overseas, as well as in the larger cities of India, in Delhi and Bombay and Madras.

The portrait of the Guru is decorated with flowers. Whiteclad men and women ring bells and wave lights before it. Incense and pure camphor are burned. The portrait is marked with the fragrant paste of sandalwood. Coconuts are broken before it, and offerings made of fruits and sweets which are later distributed as sanctified gifts in the name of the Guru. Typical verses and prayers are repeated. Those present experience what Otto called the thrill of the *mysterium tremendum*, the instress of the holy spirit of Guruhood, with all its comforting values.

**Modern Dislike of the Word Guru :** In these days one single aspect of the Guru's ministry has been more and more emphasized. This is the effect of his teaching in the social field, in the removal of caste ways of thought and behaviour. That is why, to take a typical case, the Communist Chief Minister in the report of that meeting, while carefully avoiding the word "Guru", said "Sri Narayana considered the common masses as the basis of all his teaching and linked his message with people's movements." This is hardly a correct version. For the Guru there were just humans everywhere. He did not split humanity into masses and masters. The basis of the Guru's teaching again, was the sameness of the Self of all with the Absolute. As for these "movements" the Guru certainly linked himself with people always, but never with any movement, not even with the associations started in his own lifetime and using his own name.

But some mis-statements can probably be excused under the pressures of political expediency.

Undoubtedly very many people shy away panic-stricken at the word Guru. They have our sympathy. There have been so many fakes. But Narayana Guru was not a fake. He signed himself as a Guru. To attempt to write or talk about Narayana Guru without dealing with Guruhood, is like trying to write the life of Marx without mentioning Communism, or like writing about Washington and omitting any mention of American Independence. Thank heavens the common people have more common sense than ideologists. They do not have to use censorship scissors in dealing with facts. The Guru did have a genius for solving delicate social problems, but it was incidental, and it was only one specific instance of the application of certain methods and principles of wisdom. He was never a "social reformer" either in the socialistic or the Gandhian sense. And he would certainly never give his approval to the use of violence. For the Guru all action had to toe the line in accord with contemplative unitive principles. These are unescapable facts about the Guru.

**Confusions and Dilemmas :** On the other side there is often a religious appraisal of Narayana Guru. Hindus will regard him as a typical holy man. This is also an exaggerated view of the Guru. The Guru would not approve of a religion which made people unhappy and he would approve of any religion from the grossest idolatry to the most severe purity of absolute Godhead provided it made men better.

At that meeting already mentioned, the Governor of Kerala, Dr. B. Ramakrishna Rao, is reported to have said that "the Guru's teachings . . . laid particular stress on aspects of Hindu Dharma without distinction of caste or creed." This is not strictly correct. The Guru abolished what most people conceive to be Hindu Dharma, if by that is meant harsh codes such as the Manu Smriti. The aspects of Hindu life emphasized by the Guru were those found in the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and other wisdom texts which do not deal at all with social and personal duties, or dharma. Narayana Guru himself once remarked that if there was anything for which he stood throughout his life, it was for the removal of caste in every form. Duties are a part of the life of action, and the Guru's firm attitude here — as we shall see later — was to utterly

deny the possibility of any action at all on his part. But these are subtle things requiring the contemplative vision to understand.

Under ordinary non-contemplative conditions, people are faced with a dilemma in writing or talking about Narayana Guru. In his single personality two sorts of historical streams meet together as one. There is the human Narayana, the son of a farmer and there is the Guru Narayana the spiritual heir to the perennial pattern of the Guru. We shall try to say something about both. It is comparatively easy to deal with the first. There are thousands still alive who can give their personal reminiscences of the *man*. But there are hardly any persons except rare instances such as Nataraja Guru who can give a proper account of the *Guru*. And yet this last is by far the most important.

**The Public History:** The human side can be covered briefly as in a thumbnail profile. The boy Narayana was born on August 20, 1854, in a small village near Trivandrum. The cottage is still there, a place of pilgrimage. Nearby there are rice-fields and there are some enormous hoary banyan trees, that holy fig tree which still plays such an important part in the spiritual imagery of India, as it used to do in all the ancient wisdom teachings from even pre-Biblical times. The ancient queens of Ur of the Chaldees (as the spade of Wheeler discovered thirty years ago) wore chaplets of gold in the form of the leaves of the holy banyan. Narayana must have often watched some of these very same banyan trees with their heavenly roots hanging in mid-air.

The young Narayana struggled with education in the caste-ridden society of one hundred years ago. His mother passed away when he was in his teens, leaving two sisters to manage the affairs of the little household. Narayana pursued his studies. He mastered Sanskrit and Tamil, his own mother tongue being of course Malayalam. Then for several years there is a period of wandering. No record of this period exists. As in the case of many wisdom teachers, such as that of Jesus, there is a gap. In the present case, it was one of spiritual seeking, perhaps in the jungles and mountains, with visits to the caves and forest retreats of recluses and yogis, common in this far southern region of India. We can only assume these things. But again, as in the case of the Jesus of the New Testament, there is the appearance of the Guru, at the age of thirty, as a fully mature contemplative, the traditional yogi of India.

From this point onwards the Guru's life was public. There was a recognizable transformation of his character, a certainty, a spiritual assurance. The former shyness had disappeared. He was sought out for advice by more and more people. Some of the advice he gave was very startling and revolutionary. Naturally his teaching began with religion; the most precious thing in common Indian life. Narayana took on the full authority of the role of the Guru which the people expected of him. He revised the whole approach to religion, always suggesting better ways. He told them offerings of flowers were better than animal sacrifices. He gave advice about the kind of temples they should have, places of light and teaching of wisdom, rather than the dark awesome places in which ignorance and priestly tradition thrived.

**The Personal Touch:** Narayana Guru travelled widely throughout South India and Ceylon. His tall alert figure, of a certain unique ruddy

complexion, his witty disposition, his poetic temperament, his extreme wilfulness, his exacting vigilance, his keen scruples about apparently minute but in principle important details of practical life, all made of him a legend which has bitten deep into the social mind of his time. He would argue with his barber about the sharpness of a razor as he argued with his doctors in the days of his last illness, about their drugs and treatment.

Hoary injustices were cleared away as his followers raised themselves up in society under his approval, from their previous state of fear, superstition, ignorance and subjugation. Caste prejudices withered away before the Guru's word, backed as it was by ample quotation from the undisputed texts of the very Sanskrit books which the small but dominant caste groups had used for centuries to maintain their social status. Everywhere the public recognized more and more the innate justice and fairness of the Guru's word. By the time of his death in 1928 his name was forever established as the greatest teacher since Sankara. Organizations used his name, which was itself a guarantee of loyal support. The Guru himself would advise or criticize their ways and actions, while himself remaining aloof from them all, whether they were of a religious, sannyasin, or social character.

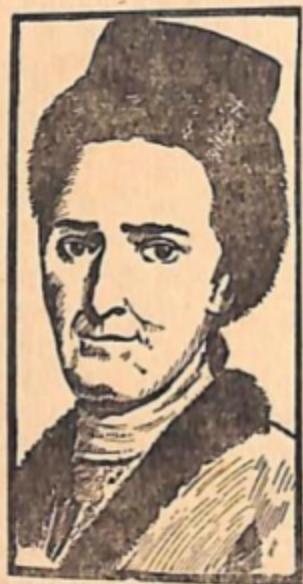
Many disciples gathered around him. Among his young disciples was Natarajan who is now an acknowledged Guru himself. Narayana Guru gave him much advice and encouraged him to go to Europe, even to the extent of paying for his passage, over thirty years ago. A university established in the name of the wisdom of the Absolute was one of the things the Guru hoped would come about.

To this sketchy review of his public "history" one should add here the hundreds of little incidents which adhere to the personal memory of thousands of people who had some contact with the Guru. Wherever the factors of saintliness, religious fervour and Guruhood combine, such events as the gift of an orange, the naming of a child, the unexpected visit of the Guru at some critical hour, have all been given perhaps more significance than was warranted. In nearly every case there is a story of a turn in the tide of fortune connected with such incidents. One cannot deny these things, heard from the lips of so many. With a better state of mind, an attitude of hope and elevation of spirit, the touch of the Absolute by way of a run of success in life can very well be expected. The Guru as the visible representative of goodness in life and absolute-ness, may be said to set off a sort of chain reaction in such cases, where faith is strong.

**The Spiritual "History":** So much for the plain story of Narayana Guru as viewed from the side of society. While it has its own interest, it can hardly satisfy the deeper student who is keen to understand something of the wisdom and the teaching of the Guru. Many fundamental questions remain to be answered, if that is possible. What is Guruhood? What is the difference between a social reformer—say, a Gandhi—and a Narayana Guru? What is the relationship between what is called Hinduism and the position taken by the Guru? Was Narayana Guru perhaps really just a man of self-sacrificing goodwill who employed common beliefs in order to see that justice prevailed among millions of

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## Homage to Jean- Philosopher of the Natural



ON Sunday, September 20, a unique event took place at Geneva. At 11 a.m. on that day, men and women of many countries, both those resident in this cosmopolitan city, and many from elsewhere, came together to pay silent tribute to Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The group of about fifty first met at the monument of the Swiss Federation. This monument represents two women. They personify the Canton of Geneva and Switzerland. While both are independent, they are at the same time interdependent, under the secret dialectical formula

of all bi-lateral pacts between the ruler and the ruled anywhere. One of the figures on the monument bears a shield on which this formula is stated. It reads: "One for All—All for One."

**L'Ile Rousseau:** The faces of these two women turn towards Lac Leman, largest of the Alpine lakes, upon whose shores the city of Geneva is situated, dominated by the highest mountain in Europe, Mont Blanc. They seem to gaze particularly at a small island of poplar trees, an island washed eternally by the clear waters of the Rhone River which emerges here after its passage through the lake. The figures seem to gaze at a second monument raised on this tiny island. This monument is dedicated, like the island, to the memory of a lonely man who described himself as "a simple man, a friend of Truth."

In many ways Rousseau can be said to represent the spirit of human solidarity and freedom. He called himself "the citizen of Geneva" for Geneva since his time meant liberty and freedom. Citizens of Geneva and of the world at large have learned to honour Rousseau. However much opinions differ about what he taught, none minimizes his importance. Rousseau remains an enigma who has still to be understood correctly to achieve the unity and freedom which is the dream of all good men and women.

Rousseau's Citizenship of Geneva represents on a reduced and experimental scale the possibilities opened to mankind of an actual World Citizenship. Geneva still preserves a mental climate favourable for summit talks by rival powers. With its associations, Geneva is equally favourable for the common man also to reaffirm human solidarity at every level of human life, irrespective of whether he comes from the north, south, east or west.

# Jacques Rousseau

## Man and Great Guru of Europe

**Silent Accord :** That is why this Pilgrimage was held. Four resident citizens of Geneva called for this hour of silent homage to Rousseau. Nataraja Guru was general adviser throughout with Dr. Marc Gevaert as co-ordinator.

An interesting feature of this gathering was its lack of any sort of demonstration. There were no speeches, no fireworks, no ceremonial. Someone lit some pure camphor at the foot of the statue. That was all. A few minutes silence, a circumambulation around the statue, in recognition of the wisdom that Rousseau stood for.

### Declaration Before The Statue Of Rousseau

*The following Declaration in writing was placed symbolically before the statue of Rousseau in Geneva on Sept 20, 1959 by Mr. Edgar Gevaert. The original was in French and this is a free translation :*

ON THIS occasion of our homage to Jean-Jacques Rousseau which was initiated by Nataraja Guru, in the name of all simple human beings who seek wisdom we declare :

Multitudes of men everywhere on earth strive to find a place at the peak of hierarchies in order to direct the fate of humanity ;

A summit meeting of the two parts of humanity, in its horizontal and vertical aspects, of the governments and of the people who allow themselves to be governed, is characterized by the manifestation of errors which develop on the basis of the negation of human unity in favour of wilfully accepted national divisions which are wholly and absolutely presented as a supreme value ;

It is easy to see that world peace thus evoked cannot exist in national divisions which can only indicate the conflict of rival gods ;



Under such conditions therefore, if war is to be avoided, it would be better not to raise the issue of peace, but instead first destroy the error of nationalism which makes peace impossible;

The peaceful happiness of man will never be realized through the smiles of statesmen or of the mobs who acclaim them;

In fact humanity ; having forfeited its legitimate basis, reveals its distemper by jumping with all the force of its passion from its ideological spring-boards, practising its collective exercises on the very edge of its own emptiness of all values ;

The motto "One for All, All for One" is not meant at all to serve as a basis for a fascism linking people and leaders, or leaders and people. It is opposed to everything that separates groupwise, to all closing-in tendencies, even of the most wonderful ideologies which might appear to vindicate their possession of this formula, for God will never become the prisoner of man. But considering simply creation in its harmonious perfection, we shall find man in his own truth and in his own place in that creation ; the shepherd with his sheep, the weaver, the labourer in the fields, in the humble love of the sole God and in his own proper happiness which is the happiness of all.

### The Honest, Unconditioned Human

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU was an innocent at large. All his life he was a lonely orphan in society. Women understood him better than men. His fame and power, the hatred he aroused and the sufferings he endured, were all due to the fact that he was never conditioned, and so, being always inwardly free or of contemplative temperament, expressed himself fearlessly. He was a puzzle to many. A few have loved him. Emerson declared that the one book he liked best was *The Confessions*.

Rousseau was born in Geneva in 1712, the son of a watchmaker. He lived by his writings and the support of wealthy patrons who now and then admired something he had written in his plays and novels. A large part of his life was spent in exiled wandering, moving dangerously from his enemies in troubled France, in Switzerland and once in England. He was too poor to support his children and at the same time refused to have them adopted and corrupted by rich families. He therefore preferred to place them in the public orphanage in the hope that therefore they might better be able to face life's hardships.

**An East-West Bridge :** Of writing he says in *The Confessions* (Book 8) : "I have always felt that the profession of letters was illustrious in proportion as it was less a trade. It is too difficult to think nobly when we think for a livelihood." This is a neat comment for journalists, novelists and all who write for money.

Whether he was writing philosophically or with sentiment in describing nature, or in discussing basic principles of politics, it is always the honesty and inward approach of Jean-Jacques which is uppermost. The transparency of his nature is at once his charm and the irritant to critics, and especially to those whose position and income depends on compromise and flattery. In an age in Europe noted for refinement of manners alongside crass brutality, Rousseau was the only voice speaking up for the

natural man. Perhaps he is still in Europe, for his message is all the more urgent in our age of mechanical uniformity.

But what is most extraordinary is Rousseau's intuitive and intellectual grasp of the Indian Guru-disciple principle in education which he elaborated in *Emile*, and which he extended and applied to society in *Le Contrat Social*. These two works themselves form a bridge between the yoga of India and the dialectics of European philosophy as the Greeks understood it. Rousseau's work has yet to be assessed in this light.

**Man is Good :** Rousseau was not a sloppy person. He was however, a man of intense poetic feeling. In place of the cold form of rationalism of his time, he pleaded for simpler human virtues. "The great thing," he said, "is to be kind to our neighbours." His *La Nouvelle Héloïse* ended the Age of Reason and ushered in the Age of Romance. Eventually it made Switzerland the main tourist attraction of the world, an astonishing result which would have made Rousseau smile. What he actually intended, as in all his writings, was not a fashionable love of beauty spots, but the restoration to man of his proper affinity with Mother Nature.

By doing so he had to challenge all habits, opinions and actions which made man unnatural and ultimately inhuman. In this sense he was a pure radical humanist and a world teacher or Guru. He was radical enough to centre himself in the deepest roots of human selfhood, and to see what is called progress as a deviation from the natural which for him was absolute Law. Civilized legislation, he declared, was no substitute for natural goodness.

In *Emile* he wrote: "God made all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil." Rousseau therefore argued that in the education of the child up to the age of twelve, before it can reason, the aim should be to shut out all that might corrupt this natural goodness. This phase of education would be negative. For man the adult however, he had a positive education based on pure reason.

The entire corpus of Rousseau's writing is pregnant with wisdom and condensed thought. He gave to distorted, nationalized or social man a vision of the true global human, as seen in the light of his own proper nature.

Rousseau was the humblest of men, scrupulous in admitting his own weaknesses to an almost embarrassing degree. This almost excessive honesty was his plain guarantee of faithfulness. He was without guile, without secrets, and he opened his all too tender heart to a humanity which did not always deserve it.

Rousseau died in 1778 in France where his remains were given state honours after the Revolution. But Geneva claimed his spirit and it is there that his statue, modelled by his compatriot Predier, was erected on a tiny island in the Rhone.

[ END ]

## Causerie - 3

### The Journal and Reflections of an Absolutist

by NATARAJA GURU

*In this instalment the author discusses Bacchic survivals in European life, gives his reactions to music, reports a visit to Spa in Belgium and Yorkshire in England with comments on life in London and elsewhere.*

A BACKWARD glance over the travelled road may be permitted here before I tell you of the hectic spinning I had in car, train or ship while moving in England, Belgium, France and again soon after, to dear old Switzerland of so many happy memories.

As I discovered as the days went by, my host in Belgium was a mystic and an artist, an author and world citizen, a patriarch and a proletarian, a pagan and a Christian, all fused into one of the most interesting personalities I have met. Many more ambivalent pairs of characteristics combined in this wonderful man. As I heard, he was interviewed as "the most interesting personality" by a representative of a famous magazine for its usual feature article. This however did not appear for the reason that there was some sterner stuff that constituted the core of this baffling man, and this fundamental character did not easily lend itself to be caricatured or treated light-heartedly.

**Wine and Dionysian Culture:** His home at Laethem-St. Martin was the common rendezvous for all nationalities, races and classes of people from far and near. After-dinner table-talk often continued into the time for tea or coffee. When painting, household or farm duties did not engage him, our host sat over glasses of gleaming liquids that could be called libations to the gods in a Dionysiac sense. The pale or red wines or liqueurs needed all the good taste that a connoisseur alone possessed to appreciate in the manner that Western civilization demanded.

In selecting friends, in the proper cultivation of the palate, in being properly dressed, in music and in art, much of what is called good taste entered. This contributed its share in each case to make the gentleman or lady held up as a model by Western civilization. In conversation one has to know at least the difference between champagne and whisky. Burgundy

and the blood-red wine of Bordeaux occupy an intermediate place between these extreme representatives. Algerian wine is common, and Benedictine, a sweet liqueur made by monks and which has the addition of herbs and is preserved for years, is more medicinal than intoxicating. The knockout taste and effect of whisky makes it a vulgar member of the family, while beer and port wine are meant to be milder, though still common. The Guru Narayana once said that one could take wine on condition that it was in a quantity just sufficient to wet the gullet with no drop swallowed. I have been a sinner in this prescribed manner once or twice by way of respect to the company.

Both the climate and the fireplace condition the culture of Europe, whereas I belong to a sun-baked latitude where pure contemplation away from social life attains to a zero point of wants and activities. It is however strange how Bacchus still has his place in the European world, and this in spite of the nearly two thousand years of Sunday sermons listened to piously by generations of congregations in Europe since the preaching of Christianity began. The absolutism of the Siva-Dionysos archetypal man still dances at the core of this most living of civilizations.

**The World of Music and World Music:** Western music has its mysteries too. Here the visitor from the Far East needs to be properly introduced. To Eastern ears Western music sounds too masculine. Harmony prevails over melody. Even then, when harmony is thus allowed to gain primacy, convention handed down from classical times gives, in European music, much importance to the modalities called major rather than to the minor or feminine modes of the scale.

There are many matters which linger in Western music merely because of convention. This is all the more evident when we examine music which is written with five lines. Sometimes in old church music, only four lines persist. The rise and the fall of the notes of the scale have intervals unfilled with sounds. These are called *soupirs* or sighs. The full and fractional *soupirs* supply perhaps the most interesting part of the art of music. The plain notes of the scale may be compared to the colours of the spectrum. These notes follow one another as against the simultaneously struck notes of harmony which set off the melody.

A simple song like *Frere Jacques* which is childish in the form of a melody becomes grand when harmonized with simultaneous notes far removed from the basic scale to the right or left of the piano keyboard. Harmony may be said to move in the vertical direction of music and melody is the variation in the horizontal scale.

Indian music excels in its richness of modes where the vertical elements merge into one another instead of being struck up simultaneously. Tones and demi-tones mix more delicately and imperceptibly like the high lights and darks of a high-class painting. The resulting confection has a haunting appeal which has, for the most part, been killed in the case of Western music by its growth within the walls of the church or in the family parlour or fireplace.

The fugues of Bach and the symphonies and sonatas of Beethoven figure inevitably in cultured conversation anywhere within the range of Western civilization. The Eastern pilgrim to the West will be called

upon constantly to defend his own ground when comparative cultural values are involved. Debussy perhaps marks the revolt of modernism in the world of music as Picasso perhaps does in the world of painting. The Soprano, the Alto, the Tenor and the Bass mark the extremes and the intermediate levels in the raising or lowering of the voice. Their effect is supplied in Indian orchestras by drums or keynotes sustained, called *sruti*.

Gregorian music and the Greek tradition in music have to be distinguished. The modern revolt against classical modes is introducing many strange elements into the world of music. Much that is foreign to Europe or to the Western world is being absorbed and incorporated into a music that might one day become known as world music, with scientifically grounded rather than arbitrary rules or conventions. In catering to a dinner entertainment in the White House, or in the Astoria Hotel of New York, or to passengers on a coastal steamer in the Gulf of Mexico one is obliged nowadays to have a wide range of musical selection. Newer instruments will contribute as well as more rationalized conventions in this revaluation of music which is now in the process of formation. Jazz, Negro spirituals, and the fugues of Bach will then find their proper places in a vertico-horizontally conceived scheme of correlation of all the varieties of musical language.

**Indian Fire-Ritual in Belgium:** In and through these lighter conversations in which I both learned and taught at the same time, I had conserved a serious vein in which played the role of a teacher of Indian wisdom. On almost every Sunday from the time of my arrival in Belgium, I had given talks to serious-minded persons who wished to learn about Guru wisdom as known on the soil of India. My first serious talk on preliminaries was attended by about ten people on April 26, 1959.

On June 7, 1959 I performed the fire-ritual or *homam* to show how religion and philosophy could be made to meet unitively and help to liberate man through a wisdom of the Absolute belonging to the language of ritual as well as that of speech. As geometry and arithmetic meet in explaining a central truth, so too does ritual when properly used as a language. Ritual can thus be made to support the superstructure of higher philosophical thought. The *homam* was an interesting event. An Indian dinner followed on the same day.

The last of my Sunday talks took place on June 28. By this time we had covered all preliminary subjects in the context of Guru wisdom up to the serious effort of understanding what the Bhagavad Gita represented.

**In the Ardennes:** After this Sunday talk on June 28 we went to a place near the forest of Ardennes, past the city of Liege in the French-speaking part of Belgium, more than 100 kilometres (62 miles) to the south-west from Laethem. At a place called Fraypont on the river Vesdre there was an interesting family. They were dedicated to world citizenship and to *abondancist* economics of which Madame Le Roi and her son Alan were active members. They had gathered together some of their friends for talks on world government and allied subjects.

About twenty people including some university professors were

gathered round the table by night. The talks went on till about midnight. We retired into different parts of two cottages on a hill overlooking the Paris-Berlin railway line passing near this little town. The fast trains connecting these great cities rushed with diabolic shrieks many times an hour as the morning approached. Raising the curtain of my bedroom window I looked at these trailing black monsters who had a more sinister appearance to me than their counterparts in India who seemed to take life more easily. This tearing through the countryside as whistles got absorbed in tunnels and lost in valleys, had a note of modernism whose tension of speed seemed geared up to a higher pitch than in the underdeveloped parts of the world, for which the superior moderns seem to have some innate contempt.

**The Original Spa:** Next day (June 29) we visited the original Spa, the name so famous for its mineral waters and hot springs. This has lent its name as an adjective to describe many a similar town in Europe characterized by similar water facilities. My friends and I drank from a fountain where many persons of fame during the past several centuries had done the same in the name of better health. Glancing over the list of such names hanging in the crystal hall where the water is sold for a few francs a glass, or bottled for transport on a commercial scale, I found the name of the great philosopher Descartes among others too numerous to mention, but consisting of rulers and magnates of every sort.

Not far from Spa was another interesting place. A small river could be seen to disappear wholesale into the ground for about a mile, to emerge again to the surface, only after it had gone beneath a hill and a forest. It disappeared into the vitals of mother earth to take its rebirth after being lost to phenomenal life.

The same evening we rode back to Laethem which we reached at about eight in the evening. At ten in the night I was off again by car to Ostend, as I was to cross over to Dover—which I reached at five in the morning of July 1.

**Over to England:** I had slept in the ferry boat, a ship of middle size, with sleeping berths in the hold, between one and four in the morning and felt sufficiently refreshed when I found myself on the deck approaching the famous chalk cliffs of the Kentish coast at Dover, through the early morning mist. This sight, which makes the soul of every Englishman returning home overflow with sentiment about his native land, meant nothing unusual to me. I could not compare myself to Ulysses nor to stout Cortes who discovered new shores. The sight of shore has a neutral yet sublime appeal to me. It has only an element of surprise without any pang at the other pole of the personality.

Victoria station was announced when I had gone off to sleep, at seven in the morning. I picked up my two pieces of luggage and walked out into the deserted morning platform. Women were driving trolleys. They were like men, dressed in leather belts and uniforms. They had also the

facial expressions of men. That grace and suppleness which distinguishes woman from man, that subtle flavour that gives to womanhood all its value seemed lost here in the unhappy women labourers of modernised England. Women conductors in buses and even women porters or police jarred on me. A distortion of human values seemed implied here, about which humanity, it seemed to my eyes at least, had little reason to congratulate itself.

Soon after I was in the underground station, I could not recognize the Piccadilly line which was to be known, not by its colour or name, but by the height of the bogies that ran on the lines. Unlike Paris metros, London tubes are an amorphous growth and present difficulties to the newcomer to London. Logic does not find as much place in the life of the Anglo-Saxon countries like England and America as with the Latin peoples such as the French.

**Suburbia and Leeds:** Eastcote was a little suburban town in Middlesex outside the limits of London proper. The winding streets, the old fashioned cars running in the road, the traffic circles, the villas and the gardens informally scattered along the roadside, all reflected the peculiarities of the English countryside so familiar even to American authors of New England of the United States, such as Washington Irving. Here they were before me, the same as ever. A London suburb is where the typical office worker lives, the man who is recognizable by his bowler hat, his umbrella and the *Daily Telegraph* in his hand. At about ten in the morning he starts for his work from this kind of suburbia which forms a large belt round the City.

In the centre of London itself one sees more foreigners than regular Londoners. Many of the cantonments of India, such as that of Bangalore, still present the same suburban atmosphere in which I found myself again quite at home. It made me wonder if London was not actually a zone of "external immigrants" as opposed to the "internal emigrants" actually left behind in the former colonies of the British Empire. The word colony itself seemed to me to have to some extent exchanged its connotation.

King's Cross, another big London railway station, was where I entrained for Harrowgate, which is about two hundred miles to the north. The train steamed off at about eleven in the forenoon and we travelled all day, passing through undulating English countryside with its irregular hedges and winding roads, villages with small plots of flower and vegetable gardens more informally planned than is usually seen on the continent. The Englishman does not seem to bother so much about geometrical exactitude in his planning of houses, roads, or even gardens. He is more practical than logical.

Leeds, which we reached a little after two in the afternoon, presented the worst aspects of a big industrialized city. For miles and miles around chimney smoke rose up eternally over iron and coal wastes. How

the whole of nature could be vitiated and overcovered and its message stifled by human love of the technocratic life, is well exemplified by Leeds. I looked in vain over the bleak vista to see where a university could possibly be housed in this devastated vaporous and smoky area where millions lived wrongly to gain their living.

**Glimpses of Yorkshire:** My friend C. L. was waiting for me at Harrowgate station as I alighted from the train with my baggage at 3.20 p. m. Soon we were talking about events of nearly ten years ago, while my host conducted me through the town which to my eyes, looked more Continental than British. Harrowgate was even a spa where there were also famous mineral springs. Ten miles out of the city itself was Bishop Thornton, a village of medium size with a little Protestant church and a bigger Catholic one.

Yorkshire generally was not like Leeds. With its green farms, valleys and heather-covered black rocky wastes with here and there a promontory from where one got a vista of the whole region spread like a map with its evenly spread farm houses, with hundreds of grazing cattle, reared on a highly commercialized scale, with sheep managed by trained dogs, Yorkshire presented many interesting aspects for a newcomer.

There was even a flower show at Ingleby Castle at Ripley. This town is beautifully situated on a lake-like river which went winding past the centuries-old castle where Cromwell is said to have spent a night. One of the Inglebys was still living in the Castle in a world which belongs properly to the days of knight-errantry. The tower and the knight's hiding-room with secrets about opening doors known only to the inmates, gave a middle-ages atmosphere to the place, which one could still feel. The fourth of July 1959 was a hot summer afternoon in which the flower show brought the elite of Yorkshire together round well-furnished rooms filled with cut flowers displayed with an artistic colour-scheme perfection of arrangement.

Summer thunderstorms were to be expected at this time of the year. I cooked an Indian dinner once while staying with my friend, and he returned the compliment by making for me the famous "Yorkshire pudding". This turned out to be a savoury rather than a sweet as I had thought. It was a homely dish like the *crepe* of France or the *fondue* of Switzerland. Germany has its *sauer kraut* and the Chinese their *chop suey* which are specialities like *idlis* or *appams* of South Indians. The grandmother's ways somehow persist through the barriers of modernism.

**London Again:** Harrowgate has also its finely laid out public gardens where the latest styles in horticulture were being put into practice. Although the best of the spring flowers were beginning to give place to those of summer, the gardens were fully overladen and colourful in display. Rockeries and hedges, lawns and fountains, with bright skies, attracted many who sat basking listlessly here and there when I was to

bid goodbye again to England. C. L. saw me off, at Harrowgate station, accompanied by his seven-year-old daughter Angela.

I was moving fast towards London again which I reached with no major events on the way except for a hailstorm which broke out when we reached the region of Hertford, a couple of hours from London. The Indian monsoons were nothing compared to the peals of thunder, the rain and hail that fell in less than an hour. London was dry and normal when I reached it at about one in the afternoon.

Next day I was to start for Ostend again by the night ferry. At midday I was walking through the streets of Westminster area. I had been to the Belgian, Swiss and French Embassies for my various visas. Much irritation of clerks and applicants had to be witnessed over formalities that seemed to me to be rather out-dated. I carried with me quite a number of photographs and was ready with forms filled. After hours of queuing I got out of the ordeals and then went to Victoria station. I spent the remainder of the day after office hours in the vicinity of Victoria station, making fresh again my forgotten acquaintance with London life which seems to go on in the same way for ever.

I was interested to study the new street map device replacing the old electric one, with green and red lights to show you where you are on the map and where you had to go. The present arrangement was a whole directory of all information which, by bringing it under squares, vertically or horizontally, by moving of handles, you could find your way anywhere in the city. You had only to know the address. The language of the map, presented in a practical way like this, links the inside wants or intentions in men with the outside world of actualities, through the technique of algebra and geometry working together. Its use is its proof. The proof of the pure mathematics is a form of idolatry, as Eddington once wrote.

In two more days I was to reach an Alpine retreat 1550 metres (5000 ft.) above sea level—but I shall tell you about that in my next Causerie.

[ ANOTHER INSTALMENT NEXT MONTH ].

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#### MOTTO FOR A HERMITAGE

Devoid of dividing walls  
Of caste or race  
Or hatred of rival faith,  
We all live here  
In brotherhood.  
Such, know this place to be,  
This Model Foundation ; —NARAYANA GURU

# Atmopadesha-Satakam

One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction

by NARAYANA GURU

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

(Continued from last month)

14.

That light, rid of three-fold view, that ever brighter burns  
Upsurging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple  
worlds,

Remember, that it will never come within the reach  
Of a hermit untrue, as Upanishadic secret lore declares.

THE context of Siva worship is here abandoned in favour of Upanishadic teaching. The dialectical revaluation of the Guru wisdom as represented here in the teaching for Self-realization participates on one side in the pure teaching of the Vedanta as contained in the Upanishads, and on the other side it includes the long tradition of Siva worship which has been preserved down to the time of Sankaracharya in South India.

A certain upright and straightforward attitude of mind is the basis of all Upanishadic teaching. The whole philosophy of the Vedanta may be said to be based on the notion of *sat* (ontological verity) which has the same root in Samskrit as the word *satya* (truth). *Sattva* which is recommended as an attitude to be cultivated by the aspirant to wisdom by texts in the Upanishads as well as in the Bhagavad Gita, also implies a basis in truth. The truth within and the truth that one seeks have to fall into one and the same line.

This attitude of mind is referred to as *arjavam* (straightforwardness) in the Bhagavad Gita (xiii, 7; xvi, 1; xvii, 14; xviii, 42), and as *satyam* (truth) in the same work (x, 4; xvi, 2, 7; xvii, 15; xvii, 65), reiterating Upanishadic teaching in many ways. In the *Chandogya* Upanishad truth is referred to as the foundation or principle of the Universe (VI, xvi, 1) and the same Upanishad stresses the need to understand the truth (VII, xvi). The soul is supposed to be obtainable by truth in the *Mundaka* (III, i, 5, 6). The Absolute itself is characterized by truth as stated in the *Brihadaranyaka* (V, v, 1, 2). Seekers of truth are applauded in the *Mundaka* (I, 11, 1) and referred to as *Satyakamas* (lovers of truth). Thus, both as end as well as means, truth represents a high value in the Upanishads.

There is no short or crooked path to wisdom. One has to go by the royal, public or straight road. All kinds of esotericisms and secret practices, not at one with the principle of Truth, as a philosophical as well as an ethical concept, are discredited here by the Guru, where he wishes to enter into the subject of Self-realization one degree deeper than hitherto in the text. In the next verse we can see that the Guru touches upon two

aspects of nature which are reciprocal and contradictory at once by way of relating outer and inner truth under one scheme.

The earlier half of the present verse disposes of two additional epistemological and methodological concepts familiar in Vedanta. They have to be first understood properly before one can enter the wisdom path of Self-realization. We shall examine them below. When these two kinds of conditionings hindering our progress in Self-realization are effectively discarded, the vision of the Absolute will come, as it were before the eyes of the aspirant in a manner that is not merely an academic appraisal of the Absolute. The wonder of the Absolute will then fill the personality with a form of subtle exaltation after which all yogis aspire.

The two impediments are of a cosmological and psychological order. The latter may be said to be lodged within, as the beam in the eye, while the other conditioning applies to the outer world in a cosmological sense. It is a grosser conditioning which is comparable to the mote in another's eye. The subjective and objective causes of erroneous appraisal of truth have first to be removed. *Triputi* is here translated as "the threefold view". *Tribhuvana* "three worlds", refers to the cosmological worlds of value within which the spirit of man with its aspirations may be said to live.

**"Rid of threefold view, etc."**: One of the most important conditionings to which knowledge is subjected is referred to in Vedanta as the tribasic conditioning, or *triputi*. *Puta* means base, as that of a leaf, and this tribasic quality affecting our appraisal of truth, consists of dividing our knowledge into the subjective, the objective and the meaning aspects, which tend to be thought of separately instead of unitively. Thus first, second and third persons, as used in grammatical syntax, can refer to the same central verity, in a phrase, which may be said to be affected by *triputi*. The pure vertical content of thought gets horizontalized in a sentence form.

If we should take the case of the purest notion of the Absolute we can refer to this central notion in three ways. The Absolute could be the antecedent respectively of "I", "you" or "it" in three sentences written as predication about the Absolute, but in the first, second and third person. The *mahavakyas* (great dicta) of the Vedanta do just this when they declare: "I am the Absolute.", "Thou art That." or "This Self is the Absolute."

But as soon as this primary "basic" fundamental conditioning natural to the intellect in relation with objective interests in life is admitted into our way of thinking, it has the disastrous effect of shutting out the unconditioned aspect of the Absolute. One already views it as it were, through coloured glasses of conditionings of three kinds to begin with. These three give birth to other secondary ones whose ramifications of *upadhis* (or conditionings and sub-conditionings) fill the whole area of the field and stream of consciousness with multiplicity of interests, rather than with that unitive one which is the highest and supreme Value in life.

The passion and love of Truth planted in the human heart which, as Matthew Arnold said, consists of the "intellectual enthusiasm to see the truth and the emotional enthusiasm to see the truth prevail" has to be

cultivated and affirmed further by contemplative disciplines. The false recluse here referred to is the spiritual aspirant who believes in indirect or sinuous paths for reaching the vision of the Absolute. The false personal attitude might be what conditions from within, or conditioning as it were from without, in the end as envisaged as a goal of life. In other words ends and means in spirituality have to fall in the same straight line of truthfulness.

**"The triple worlds, etc."** In every language heaven, inferno and the human world refer to three levels of value strata in which the human self finds its subjective-objective environment. The *Divine Comedy* of Dante and *Paradise Lost* of Milton are built round this time-honoured way of referring to value systems in which the personality of man may be said to live and move, up or down.

Rid of all its superfluous accretions and superstitious implications we can still think axiologically of three worlds or value systems. For example, we know that the blue of the sky is not even a scientific truth. The blue is there because of the limitation of our powers of vision. A telescope penetrating space through clearer vision abolishes the blue effectively. A certain dispersal of light is implied there which applies to the eye as an organ as well as to the rays of light than can affect it. Pure light is thus conditioned by a certain veil. This veil is both subjective and objective at once. Even as between the cosmological and the psychological there is a duality to be abolished in our appraisal of pure truth in itself, when rid of its phenomenal aspects.

While the notion of the *triputi*, which we have explained in the previous section, is a psychological one, the notion of the three worlds, resorted to by the Guru here, is to be taken as the more objectified counterpart of the same series of conditionings of an epistemological order. The three worlds and the tribasic conditioning of consciousness *vis-a-vis* the knowledge of the Absolute, in itself may be said to refer to the vertical and the horizontal aspects of the Absolute. Cosmology being more objective than psychology, the horizontal aspect would accord more with the conditioning under the three worlds, which would then refer to the horizontal axis. The threefold view, on the other hand, would refer to the vertical aspect. This difference which we here refer to under two aspects relating to the inner and the outer nature, is further clarified and brought into relief in the next verse.

### 15.

Ten thousand years do a moment make for the favoured ones

Suckled in the milk of the Absolute beyond; but when knowledge is caught

In the power of the nature that is relative here,  
Half a second, ten-thousand years long would seem.

A FUNDAMENTAL epistemological distinction is made here by way of comparing the two kinds of knowledge that the human mind

is capable of having, or of aspiring after. The knowledge of the Absolute which is beyond, unconditioned by the multiplicity of attractions here, in relativistic nature, with which we are every day related, refers to the supreme aspect of the Absolute. The ordinary every day world of life here in the biological sense involves values that are multiple and relativistic. Vedantic literature makes the use of two terms applied to Nature. One of these is called *para* which has the quality of otherness. The second is called *apara* which has the quality of non-otherness, or that which is familiar to us here. We have translated the two terms as "the Absolute beyond" and "the relative here" to indicate the reciprocity of the distinction implied.

Between these two aspects of Nature (one with a capital letter and the other without the capital), much epistemological theorization is implicit which is hardly possible to dispose of at one stroke. The Guru therefore refers to them here only in their broader aspects, contrasting them with reference to the factor of time and without referring to space for the present.

Time is related to eternity and reveals a dimension which is abstract and given to the philosophical insight with which human nature is endowed. More ordinarily, however, what man can appreciate refers to interests which have very little span of time involved in their attainment or enjoyment. In the domain of interests therefore, there are two broad divisions: some that lure us to eternal values and the other binding us to transient interests. The Guru suggests here that those who seek eternal values which refer to the Absolute that is beyond, are more intelligent than those who are caught by the necessary and binding items of every day interests belonging, as it were, to the opposite pole of reality. The *Viveka-Chudamani* of Sankara would refer to the same distinction as *nitya-anitya* (lasting and transient).

By his method of exposition here, the Guru goes beyond making the contrast merely academic. He relates it to the ambivalent or opposing states which each one of the attitudes involve for the subject. When the three worlds have been transcended and the aspirant has abolished the three prejudicial conditionings referred to in the previous verse, there is revealed as it were, a world without time's limitations, in eternity, or the eternal present, wherein he can feel a profound happiness. When subject to the opposing state of mind, the implied suffering tends to make the sense of duration of unendurable length.

**"Suckled in the milk of the Absolute":** The pure Absolute is referred to here, though figuratively, in anthropomorphic terms. The image of a mother suckling her child is introduced. One has to remember here that the pure Absolute should not even be named, as the *Tao Teh Kking* would put it. (In the same *Tao Teh Kking* the wise man is likened to the child suckling the Mother, Nature or the Absolute—ch. 20). The supreme Absolute is that about which nothing can be predicated. The *Mandukya Upanishad* (verse 7) describes such an Absolute, and this is about as far as epithets can go to help in the matter of appraising the notion of the Absolute. The verse (Hume's translation) reads:

Not inwardly cognitive (*antah-prajna*), not outwardly cognitive (*bahih-prajna*), not both-wise cognitive (*ubhayatah-prajna*), not a

cognition-mass (*prajnana-ghana*), not cognitive (*prajna*), not non-cognitive (*a-prajna*), unseen (*a-drishta*), with which there can be no dealing (*a-vyavaharya*), ungraspable (*a-grahya*), having no distinctive mark (*a-lakshana*), non-thinkable (*a-chintya*) that cannot be designated (*a-vyapadesya*), the essence of the assurance of which is the state of being one with the Self (*ekatmya-pratyaya-sara*), the cessation of development (*prapanchopasama*), tranquil (*santa*), benign (*siva*), without a second (*a-dvaita*)—[such] they think is the fourth [state]. He is the Self (*Atman*). He should be discerned.

The Absolute in its most ultimate aspect is indescribable but it is usual by words to try to help the seeker of wisdom to think of it as far as thoughts can take us. It is usual also in this linguistic or poetic context to describe the Absolute as a feminine principle. Sophia (or Wisdom) is represented in the West also as a feminine figure, as a foster-mother of wisdom whom Boethius saw consoling him in prison. The image of the consoling mother has persisted in many forms and the Guru here resorts to the same time-hallowed language. The highest notion of *maya* identifies this principle of nescience with the Absolute in, as it were, a penultimate form, also as a feminine principle. When we remember that the Guru in these preliminary verses is still labouring to lay down norms of reference for the better understanding of the Self in all its aspects, the imagery that he resorts to here can be easily understood.

**"Nature that is relative here, etc."**: A perfectly symmetrical picture is built round the notion of Time, half a second in duration, which is the central and neutral reality that is here postulated for the comparison of two aspects of the same Absolute, as seen in Nature whether taken to be within or without. The inner Nature is related to pure Time with no events, while the outer nature is so full of events that duration feels heavy and unpleasant.

In the Scholastic philosophy of Europe and as distinguished in the philosophy of Spinoza, we have two natures: the *natura naturans* (nature that is 'naturer') and the *natura naturata* (nature that is 'natured'). In the first the subject is sufficient to itself while in the latter there is duality as between subject and object. In the scheme of correlation employed by us in this commentary, and based on discussions elsewhere, we could refer to the Absolute Nature as the vertical and the relative nature as the horizontal.

As between these two aspects contrasted here, the reader has to notice the symmetry which is implied between them. The right and the wrong attitudes are not only different but reciprocally ambivalent or opposite. Instead of one being given primacy over the other, the two poles are given an equal status in the context of the Absolute. Good and bad have to be understood as aspects of the central Absolute which inclusively contains them both with an equal status for each of them. Wisdom triumphs dialectically by the vertical conquest of values over the horizontal aspects of natural interest.

[ TO BE CONTINUED ]

downtrodden people?

We have written many times about the background of the notion of Guruhood. Jesus was a Guru. The initials A. D. mean *anno Domini* "in the year of the Teacher". Some zealous devotees have made attempts to put a circle of exclusiveness around Narayana Guru as many Christians have done around Jesus. But Jesus and Narayana Guru stand outside all circles. Jesus had disciples. Even in his time it was a perennial tradition. It is not an exclusively Christian tradition. It is entirely pagan. Discipleship is one of the few strong pagan traditions which secretly prevail in the world, and if discipleship prevails, it cannot do so without its counterpart which is the notion of the Guru. Indians in their paganism find no difficulty at all in accepting Jesus as a Guru, more convincingly indeed than many so-called Christians.

The notion of the Guru, the contemplative teacher, not only antedates Christianity by thousands of years, it antedates the coming of the Aryan marauders to India itself. They were invaders who swept down with their chariots on an Indian civilization which had been established for thousands of years on the banks of the Indus river. Honest Indian historians are waking up more and more to the fact that the so-called Aryan culture is a myth and that the Aryans owed most of their graces and culture to what they already found in India, a basic grass-roots way of life whose antique pattern still survives in the pre-Aryan Dravidian south. These nomadic warrior bands of hawk-nosed Aryans settled in India and it was the conquered who tamed them and taught them the peaceful arts of life. It was in India that the Aryans came upon Guruhood for the first time. There is eloquent testimony from the ruins of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, as evidenced by the figures of the Siva-yogi found on the steatite seals.

Through the two or three millenia that followed, the wise men of India fused the indigenous notion of Guruhood onto the Aryan Vedic and other religious traditions. The result was that enormous flowering of wisdom literature (primarily memorised and only later committed to writing) known as the Upanishads. Later there came the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita and other traditional texts. Buddhism, Jainism and the Krishna cults added their respective strains to the common pool of wisdom. But all centred round the same basis of Guruhood and discipleship.

In South India the pre-Aryan traditions flourished, as they do to this day, with hundreds of historical Guru figures, some of a characteristic negative temperament, such as Ramana Maharshi of recent years (with whom Narayana Guru was himself intimate). It is from the contemplative south that the three most important philosophic Gurus of the past have come—Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. Bengal and Maharashtra had their own Gurus, each with a spiritual dynasty. They are too numerous to mention, but one can think of great Gurus such as Jnanesvar and of course Ramakrishna. So too in other parts of India as a whole, in what might well be called the cradleland of Gurus.

**Casteless Approach:** Every Guru can be recognized by a clear

universality of outlook. Sankara, who is very often considered as the upholder of orthodoxy, bowed down before a pariah in the streets of Benares. Many of the Mahratha Gurus such as Tukaram, Namdev and Chokamela were of lowly outcaste birth. Even the great Vyasa, the author of the Bhagavad Gita and honoured by all the brahmins, was himself the son of a pariah mother, as Narayana Guru with purposeful skill pointed out. However the real point of all this is not just the local case of caste, but the expression of a non-dualistic principle of unification which in modern terms would see the world as one in far more respects than many modern social revolutionaries are prepared to do. The world is a household in which all men are brothers. Differences are all illusory under this transforming outlook. Differences of all kinds are superseded, differences of nationality, colour, currency, dress, ethics, morality, marriage customs, religion, ideology, food, ceremony and language, when mankind is viewed by the world Guru, *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the light of eternal principles.

**Revaluation:** All Gurus have been reevaluators of wisdom. What was specifically intended for a particular society becomes outmoded in the course of time, and its crystalline formation has to be dissolved, so that men can again be free. Some expedient legislation by a Moses can be an intolerable burden for another society in a different age and situation. Thus injustices exist which cramp the human spirit, merely because of habit-formations. The world is full of many such irrational vestigial remains at all levels of human life, from outmoded beliefs like that of original sin and caste, to war-time exigencies like passports and a currency which does not agree with actual wealth, and so forth. Wisdom in all its branches has to come again and again to the rescue, and its common principles restated. Spirituality itself has to be freshly imparted in open public terms. Every Guru has therefore an enormous uphill task before him, nothing less than the correction of all the prevailing errors of mankind, the spiritually informed, intellectual process of modification and purification of the entire ideological and philosophical content of his time, in terms of the perennial universals which he understands. Customs, traditions and beliefs have all to come under such a scrutiny, and in such a way that nobody is hurt in the process. In all this delicate revaluation Natayana Guru was a genius.

**Dialectics:** Skill in revaluation also depends upon what in India is called *yoga* and what the Gurus of Greece knew as dialectics. When two domestic animals are going in opposite directions they need taming and bringing together under a common restraining rope. The real Self which represents what is best for oneself and which also corresponds to and is the same as Absolute Goodness will bring the animals together by means of the yoke or uniting factor of *yoga*. A Guru uses the "rope" all the time when he is dealing with many pairs of recalcitrant "animals." The old ways and the new ways in politics for instance, have to be shown to be leading or intended to lead, to the common goal of human welfare which is the uniting principle. Husband and wife are there for the sake of their Self happiness and common happiness at the same time. The skill to employ dialectics comes through much contemplative understanding. But essentially it depends upon that clear vision of neutral universality

which is the mark of Guruhood.

**Contemplation:** And so we come to another characteristic of Guruhood, namely, contemplation. This is its central feature. It is more difficult to deal with this briefly than even with yoga or dialectics. Like all living beings man is fettered to nature, and under the compulsions of necessity. Nature compels, as Horace wrote. Aristotle however, went deeper when he declared that man is a contemplative animal. Even popular proverbs declare that it is best to think before you act.

But men rush blindly into action. Usually the action has neither reason nor necessity behind it, but is just habit. The leaping of lambs, the frolicsome antics of colts, calves, puppies and kittens also lacks individual reasoning. It is nature playing with its own forces. People tend to rationalize their actions when they are merely being driven by long force of habit by nature. That is why it takes a great deal more strength of will to become a contemplative than it does to become a man of action.

Narayana Guru was no exception to the universal concurrence of all Gurus in emphasizing the importance of contemplation for all who wanted to understand his way of life and thought. You cannot read any of his verses without noticing the absence of any call to action in them. One may aptly quote here the statement he once made about the restless activity of modern man, as he saw it :

The animals have no exaggerated needs like man. Man trots about the earth as a veritable demon of destruction. As he marches, he carries behind him a trail of devastation. He cuts down the trees, and blasts and bleeds into paleness the green beauty of nature for the sake of the plantations and smoky towns and factories which his unbridled desires necessitate. Not content with destruction on the surface, he tampers with the crust of the earth, making it weaker and weaker day by day; and he covers the surface with miles and miles of iron and coal. Man is terribly inconsistent. The state, which calls itself interested in humanity would, for example, vehemently forbid even a man suffering from the worst form of skin disease to quit his miserable body. On the other hand, it will madly engage itself in wholesale manslaughter, after due deliberation and in the holy name of altruism or religion. Man does not know what he does, although he prides himself on being more intelligent than the animals. It is all a mad deluded rush. Oh, this man! He must lay waste. His greed can be satisfied only by the taking away of life....Man knows not what he does. It would not have mattered so much if the effect of man's misdeeds struck its blow only at mankind. But the innocent monkeys and birds in the forest have to forfeit their peaceful life because of man. The rest of nature would be thankful if, in the process of self-destruction, man would have the good sense to destroy himself if he must, alone, leaving the rest of creation at least to the peace which is its birthright. (pp. 10-11, *The Word of the Guru*, by Nataraja Guru (1952)).

**The Answer to Tagore:** The answer to those who think of Narayana Guru as a social reformer and man of action rather than a contemplative can be illustrated by his reply to Tagore. Narayana Guru was visited by the Bengal poet when he was at the height of his fame. The

meeting took place over thirty years ago at the Sivagiri ashram, about 25 miles north of Trivandrum. Nataraja Guru was then a disciple of Narayana Guru and a witness to the meeting of the two famous men, the contemplative Guru and the Poet. He writes :

The seer of Bengal broke the deep silence that marked their meeting, and 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." (p. 34, *ibid.*)

In busy offices there is sometimes a notice which reads : "Is your phone call really necessary?" If we could ask that question about every thing we do, we would perhaps come a little nearer to what the Guru implied.

For a full account of the teaching of the Guru one must study closely his major works, such as the *Atmopadesha-Satakam* which is now being commented upon by Nataraja Guru. We ought to notice that the Guru does not equate contemplation with any dullness of consciousness. It takes far more alertness and self-discipline to refrain from doing a compulsive act than it does to do it. As the Upanishad says, men by nature look outwards into the world of action. Only the daring and rare person looks inward, turning the senses around.

**Emotionalism Discredited :** The Guru was not at all the type of spiritual person who welters in tearful or pious emotions. The Guru was critical of all vagueness in spirituality. He avoided devotional outpourings, although he might shed real tears of sympathy with some poor forgotten man. There are hundreds of books and journals filled with ejaculative religious sentiment. An example of this sort of things comes readily to hand, where a writer says : "We as Indians still have a passion to fill our hearts with the outpourings of soothing sprays of embalming elixer softly and charmingly oozing from the lips of the spiritualist...." We refrain from giving the source of this excruciating passage. One is anaesthetized with that syrup and that spray. Certainly no such *passion* and *oozing* can ever be associated with Narayana Guru. For him adoration *bhakti* was equated with the contemplation of the Self, as he expounds it in ten verses on the subject in chapter eight of his Garland of Visions of Reality (*Darsana Mala*). Like Sankara the Guru was suspicious of devotional manifestations and prayerful attitudes as being of no real help in self-understanding. Adoration and *bhakti* like worship had also to be turned round inwards towards this end of wisdom.

Romain Rolland, the celebrated French author, in a footnote to his *Life of Ramakrishna*, had the acumen to recognize this characteristic of Narayana Guru when he wrote that "bhakti effusions fill him with mistrust." (p. 160, Almora edition, 1947).

**The World Guru :** It is as an *advaitin*, one who has the non-dualistic vision, as an absolutist Guru model, conforming to that perennial pattern, that the Guru would like to be remembered. The heart of his teaching is the Science of the Absolute or *Brahma-vidya*. It has been our endeavour in VALUES to try to present this universalist teaching properly and faithfully in the language of our day. The two major works of the Guru, the *Atmopadesha-Satakam* and the *Darsana Mala* give this

Science a strict systematic formation. These texts are of the same high quality as the works of Sankara or of the older Bhagavad Gita and still older Upanishads. They are all pregnant with deep philosophical meaning. On first sight the ordinary reader may find much of this baffling. They really need very hard study to comprehend. They were not meant to be *easy* texts. They were intended for exact study. The study is an essential part of the normal discipline of the disciple-student of this Science.

Fortunately we have Nataraja Guru as a true son of the Guru to continue the Guru tradition, to expound and spread the word of the Guru to all parts of the world. No doubt there will be others to bring before the world public this precious contribution of Narayana Guru. It will be judged by its scientific appeal. It cannot be interpreted as a rival religion, cult or belief. Wisdom is unitive and universal, the same everywhere. To give it the status of a science was the major end the Guru had in view, and this he did in full awareness and with delicate precision. It is the genuine unadulterated article, and some day, the Guru's hope of having this Science of sciences properly established at the highest educational level for all mankind, may come true. That will be his true monument.

It is good to think that so much has been achieved already in the appreciation of the wisdom the Guru stood for, both in India and in distant lands. The world has been offered the living example of a strict model of the perennial Guru of antiquity who was able to conform to the pattern of the great Gurus of the past as well as being able to face the needs of the twentieth century. Under his motto "Man is of one God, One Religion and One Caste" even simple minds can appreciate the wisdom of this Friend of All. Let us not be ashamed or scared of the word "Guru" as long as it is conjoined with the name of such a man. Guruhood and discipleship are among the highest values in life, and if followed properly, are the greatest of blessings, not only to ourselves, but to all. Long may the Guru Narayana's teaching of unity and compassion prevail !

[END]

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