

# VALUES



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## WISDOM AND THE ARTS: II

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

NEXT MONTH  
**GURU NARAYANA NUMBER**

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## Editorial: Backwards and Forwards

ON completion of four years publication we can humbly look back to having done a good deal of spadework in the presentation of wisdom suited to the needs of our time. This has been done as far as we know how in its universal and scientific aspect as initiated by the Guru Narayana. VALUES has been and continues to be a link for all lovers of this wisdom, for all lovers of the Guru. We have had enough evidence of how it falls constantly by "chance" into the hands of just the people who are seeking a "vertical" direction in their lives, and how beneficial it has been to them. This has been the case everywhere, and in lands very far away from India where the message of the Guru could have gone only in such a way. When we began we had hoped for this but had at that time no idea at all of how great the response would be. We cannot judge VALUES' readership by the measure of copies we print. We have been astonished meeting people who knew VALUES at second and third hand. Our presentation of the perennial wisdom of humanity in a universalist form, freed from special cult, regionalism and much unnecessary emotionalism, reflects, we believe, the true spirit of the Guru Narayana. There are enough publications dripping with tearful religious sentiment as well as nationalistic forms of spirituality. Entirely without elementary publicity, and hampered by a shoestring budget, we have all the more reason to be grateful to our loyal supporters. We feel often sad when we have to strain their understanding of our language as well as our demands on their pockets! But we know they are with us, and this gives us confidence and faith to face the continuation of our service to wisdom, in the name of the Guru and of humanity. [END]

### 4 YEARS OLD

Somehow, with the blessing of the Absolute, plus faith from Printers, Patrons and Subscribers, we survive. But mere survival! Our subscription list is far too low. Many readers are in arrears. We appeal to them to remit the small amount due, or to let us know they want to stop having VALUES, so that we can mail their copy to some new prospective reader. We need a readership promotion campaign. Will you help? Meanwhile we greet and thank you all.

—EDITOR.

# Narayana Gurukula Information and News

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 District (South), India.*

**Nataraja Guru:** The Guru paid a brief visit to England early in July. Later in the month Dr. Marc Gevaert (who was in India last year) drove him across the heart of France to Courchevel, a mountain resort high up in the French Alps. Here he gave lectures for two hours daily during a week's stay with his friend of ten years standing, Mr. M. A. Rohrbach, who, under the auspices of his organization, the Artisans of a Better Life (AVM), was holding a vacation conference. After a brief visit to nearby Geneva, the Guru returned to Marc's home in Belgium. The next important event will be the **celebration of Narayana Guru's Birthday anniversary at Geneva**. Nataraja Guru will give an Indian style dinner on this occasion on Sept. 16 on the premises of the Institution J.E.A.N., 15 Ave. Pictet de Rochemont, Geneva. This will be the sixth occasion that Narayana Guru's Birthday has been celebrated there, the first time being in 1928 on Nataraja Guru's first visit to Europe. A **Jean-Jacques Rousseau Pilgrimage** will follow, on Sept. 20, about which we hope to publish more next month. All communications for Nataraja Guru should be sent through the Editor **VALUES**, Kaggalipura P.O., Bangalore District (South), India.

## Narayana Guru Birthday Celebrations

**India:** These will be held at the main Narayana Gurukula centres. At **Varkala** (Kerala) on Sept. 16 there will be flag hoisting in the morning, distribution of refreshments, and a public meeting in the evening. The function at **Kaggalipura** (near Bangalore) will be held on Sunday, Sept. 20, and at **Fernhill** on October 11. (It is customarily held there in October for climatic reasons). Details are not yet available for centres in **Madras** and **Trichy** etc. but the usual functions will be held there on dates to be announced. Actually, Narayana Guru was born on August 20, 1854, but the prevailing Indian custom gives a shifting date from year to year like Easter. For us it is not so much the date that matters, as the solidarity and loyalty of those who meet to honour the Guru who was graced with a wisdom beyond time and place.

In **Bombay** both the Sri Narayana Dharma Seva Samaj and the

Billawar Association (not within the Narayana Gurukula, but maintaining very cordial relations) have also big programmes in hand for this 105th Guru Birthday Anniversary.

**Singapore:** The energetic Gurukula Representative in S-E Asia, Mr. K. Dharmadas, hope to have the Prime Minister of Singapore at the opening of a Conference of Religions on Sept. 19, with the High Commissioner for India presiding. There will be a more intimate gathering on Sept. 16 and on Sept. 20, a cultural programme.

### News in Brief:

Swami Mangalananda's health slowly improves. He remains at Varkala and is still forbidden by his doctors to lecture. It is hoped to have more students at the Hostel conducted by the Gurukula there.

Yati Nitya Chaitanya paid a brief visit to Trivandrum. He is again in Bombay.

World Citizen Garry Davis has completed his book on his ten years' adventures and travels without a passport.

Mr. G. Raja Gopal, after a six month's visit to Mexico, is now in Baltimore, U.S.A., at a centre interested in Asian affairs. He leaves for Europe in September and is expected in India by the end of the year.

Mr. Jack Baumer, who was studying Indian philosophy at Madras during the last two years, is back in Wisconsin USA, after a visit to Germany and England.

[ END ]

### 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.

# One-World Comment

**Kerala and Kindness:** Hats off to Ellen Roy of the *Radical Humanist* Calcutta, for pointing out the tragedy of the common people of Kerala caught in the midst of a party war for power. And to Nehru for admitting at the 17th International Scouts Rally at Delhi that there was too much politics in the world. If flood victims get general kindly relief (as in Kashmir), should we not have even more so for the victims of politics and ideologies? What the world needs is a recognition of the principle of kindliness. We hope that when Messrs. Eisenhower and Krushchyev get together they too will remember this, and also forget politics. Humanity will be grateful.

**Bhave Supports World Citizenship:** According to the June issue of *Toward World Democracy* (Paris) Vinoba Bhave is quoted as saying: "The individual must raise himself to the status of a world citizen. Nowadays a citizen of Tamilnad is also a citizen of India. The time has come to be recognized as a citizen of the world. Bhoodan rejects the narrow concept of individual property and the limitations of nationalism." He repeated similar sentiments in August at Srinagar. Bhave should declare the mondialization of the millions of acres he has been given and with which he apparently doesn't know what to do. Let him call upon destitute, landless world citizens everywhere to come and settle alongside "Indian" world citizens.

**"Poverty":** "For some of us, roughing it means turning the electric blanket down to 'medium!'" (*The Kurpacoan*, USA). In May, talking to the Eastern Study Group, Calcutta, Mr. Birla reported that a minister of some unspecified country referred to the "sufferings" of the people, and instanced "30% of the population not being able to change their bedsheets twice a week; that 20% had no refrigerators in their houses and they had to keep their food on the window-sills, and that 10% of the population had no electricity." How *poor* can you get?

**What Price Art?** Art dealers in London recently paid the following amounts for "old masters": for a Rubens altarpiece, £ 275,000; for an El Greco, £ 72,000; for a Hals portrait, £ 48,000; for a Claude, £ 36,000; for a Cuyp £ 25,500 and for a van Goyen £ 24,000. (altogether Rs. 6,400,000 or \$ 1,350,000). Eric Gill tells the story of a conversation he had with one of the U.S. art dealers who made money out of this snob business. The dealer told Eric, "Now look at Joe Duveen, He wanted me to go into partnership with him, but I wouldn't. Joe was one of the greatest salesmen in the world. He could sell *anything*. But I only sell what I *love*..."

**Real Americans:** When the St. Lawrence Seaway was opened, no mention was made of the Mohawk Indians whose reservations were taken over. As long as no dam is involved, no road scheme envisaged, no oil or valuable minerals found, the American Indians can abide in obscurity. But now they are waking up. Many tribes or "nations" of these real Americans have now united under the League of North American Indians. Hopis and Utes in the south, Tuscaroras, Iroquois, Senecas in the north, now protest against inroads into their treaty rights and feel the

time has come to protect their religion, culture and lands against the white man's civilization. As they put it, they don't want "integration" and "assimilation" into "the robot world of alcoholism, narcotics, excesses and crime," nor their children to be "exposed to all the tricks of juvenile delinquency which infest the 'white' schools." Many white Americans will sympathise and would even like to adopt (during romantic moods perhaps) the *real* American way of life. From childhood up they feel compulsively drawn towards the American Indian. Half the place-names of the USA and Canada are Indian-derived and some may recall that verse of Eva March Tappan :

We drove the Indians out of the land,  
But a dire revenge these Redmen planned,  
For they fastened a name to every nook,  
And every boy with a spelling-book  
Will have to toil till his hair turns grey  
Before he can spell them the proper way.

**Abominable** : We agree entirely with Peter Simple's remarks in the *Daily Telegraph*, London about Mr. Aubrey Jones' (British Govt. Minister of Supply) defence of the torture and killing of animals in the Chemical Defence Experimental Establishment. Peter says, "You do not have to be an 'animal lover', merely a human being, to feel disgust and impotent rage at this abominable work. Or to feel astonishment that the people who do these things in their working day can go home happily at night, like anybody else, to their wives and children."

**Fixed** : The high hopes of Darwin and Nietzsche for a superman have been buried by the French biologist Dr. Jean Rostand. In an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* (USA) he affirms, "Man has long since ceased to evolve." Humanity is going to remain human! Bring me my box of tranquilizer pills.

**Sad, Sad Note** : Writing in the *Times of India* cartoonist R. K. Lakshman (now visiting USA) quips "I feel the sponsors of programmes should not interrupt commercials with entertainment. An absorbing commercial is intruded upon every third minute by an opera, or a ballet or even a Shakespearean play."

**As Easy as That!** : Quite innocently a woman in America exploded a guided missile. She was talking to taxis on a short-wave radio. Did the big computer costing umteen million dollars in Washington also blow up for some such mysterious reason? Then in July the sun was blamed for radio fade-outs between India and Europe. But the Japanese affirmed last year that similar fade-outs were caused by ionization disturbance due to letting off two hydrogen bombs in the Pacific. Scientists being security-gagged, we can come to our own conclusions. Ours is a triggered world and humanity is at the mercy of less than one per hundred thousand who have that little knowledge which is such a dangerous thing.

**Definition** : (courtesy JM) "The Big Foundation : an organization with abundant means . . . and no ends."

[ END ]

## LITTLE SUDDEN POEMS OF JAPAN

THE Japanese *hokku* or *haiku*, a three-line poem represents the counterpart in words of the "empty-full" paintings of the great days of Tao-Buddhist art in China and Japan. Christmas Humphreys in his book *Zen Buddhism*, quotes an example of a *haiku* from R. H. Blyth. In Japanese it reads :

*Furu-ike ya*  
*Kawazu tobi-komu*  
*Mizu no oto.*

Literally it means "The old pond. A frog leapt into—the sound of water." Blyth's version is :

The old pond.  
A frog jumps in.  
Plop!

Here are some others :

A clump of trees,  
A bit of brush,  
Within, two startled eyes.

A sandy moor,  
A wide expanse,  
Beyond, a fleeing deer.

Winter snows gone,  
Scented plum blossom full of sparrows' song,  
And swaying bamboo leaves.

Flying bats  
Under the moonlight;  
Laquered phantoms in the air!

Heavy white snow  
Caps pine-tree tops—  
Where big black crows sleep.

As seasons change,  
Butterflies and flowers combine in new brocades  
Luring to dreams.

Lonesomely clings the dragon-fly  
To the underside of the leaf.  
Ah! the autumn rain!

World peace—  
As butterflies dance  
Through spring breezes.

A mountain ridge,  
A safe retreat,  
A form, limned against the sky.

Breeze on the lake,  
Tiny ripples break  
Against the heron's slender legs.

Snow-frozen trees,  
But now and then  
A bird chirps in its sleep.

[ END ]

## Causerie — 2

### The Journal and Reflections of an Absolutist

by NATARAJA GURU

*This month the Guru discusses further aspects of art with comparisons and similarities between East and West.*

ARRIVING in Belgium on the afternoon of 7th April 1959, I found that winter still lingered on, encroaching into the days that properly should have belonged to springtide. The plum, cherry and apple blossoms spread aloft their surprise sprays into an air still holding the bitter taste of winter. The leaf-buds on the trees were still to open, although the blossoms were out earlier in a somewhat paradoxical order, as young love sprouts in the mind before reason is fully established. A nuptial atmosphere prevails early in spring when leaves and fruits are forgotten and left behind in the fecund programme of nature.

Except for occasional riders on horseback or loving couples who sought the secrecy of the underwoods and the pine trees in the extensive pine-clad acres of the G. family, all was still. Father G. had himself planted a grove of trees consisting of conifers from all parts of the world.

Among them I was glad to recognize the deodar or *Deva-daru* (tree of the gods), the Himalayan cedar. The ash-coloured needles and branches bending down beautifully with a logarithmic curve of its own, made my memories linger nostalgically on the land of the *Kumara Sambhava* (The Birth of the War-God) of Kalidasa. A simple stimulus can carry the spirit of man backward into time or space and a mystery fills the spirit which we cannot decide to be inside or outside oneself. There seem to be latitudes and longitudes inside as well as outside which are set off one against the other to make this enjoyable world visible to us as a presentiment or a vision having subjective and objective elements at once. But I must not linger long on this subject . . . .

**Laethem-St. Martin:** Laethem-St. Martin is at a distance of ten and a half kilometres (six and a half miles) by an autostrat (a straight motorable highway) from the ancient city of Gand (called Ghent in English). It is situated in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium. This language resembles

Dutch and German but has deep roots of its own, like Telugu or Tamil in South India. All the features of a natural or native vernacular characterize its idiom. Vernaculars persist in many parts of Europe as in India with a tenacity whose presence the modern man here would like to minimise by his own wishful thinking. Recently, when crossing in the ferry boat plying between Ostend and Dover, breakfast had to be announced in four languages, in Flemish, French, German and English, for the benefit of persons who composed the group of passengers. It sounded not unlike India.

The domain of the G. family was in a wooded part of the country-side outside Gand and Laethem-St. Martin is a village where Belgian painters have lived and produced works of art from ancient times.

Father G. however, belonged to a school of painting of his own. The room where I was seated on the very first day when I arrived had walls overhung with paintings by the head of the family. It was neither impressionist, classical, religious, surrealist nor pre-Raphaelite. G. is a freelance who belongs to no set school. He paints no portraits, and human figures, especially the nude feminine forms, were at least so far not much studied by him. His domain in painting consists of landscapes with a biblical, pastoral atmosphere, which alternate with pagan themes with a bacchanalian love of the good things of life. He excels in painting details of fish, animal and bird life. The *clair-obscur* of the Rembrandt style of painting is foreign to him. Leonardo is not in his department either.

Although sometimes in his landscapes there is a distant view of a castle or a church spire, it is the common fisherman's hut or the life of the woodcutter or the shepherd that is his favourite. He follows no conventional rules about the golden proportions that dominated even the post-renaissance style of a Leonardo. Pious subjects such as the Pieta of Avignon do not mean anything to him. His is rather that of a Rousseau world of nature abounding in life of all sorts.

**Pictorial Veritability:** The undulatory movement of the flowing waters or waves finds in him a creative interpreter. There is always a living vibratory movement to be discovered in all his paintings. It is a marvel to see how the artist is always able to blend the far and the near, filling the near with richness of colour and detail while the far-off remains sombre and simple, merging into the horizon which he always marks sufficiently high. Between the extremes of the far and the near there is always to be found a secret undulating vertical or slanting line which is to him no more than a principle giving unity and perspective to the whole picture.

The painter's own personal history can sometimes be reflected in his paintings. A pagan love of nature seems to mix with a respect for truly Christian values, and in between these extremes one often discovers a little Rousseau world. All the moods of nature with its populations young and old, human and sub-human, enter profusely into his paintings, and each fish or flower stood out in the fore-ground calling attention to itself by the high-light shed on its most beautiful aspects. Some of the items composing the zoological population predominating in his paintings have their unique individual quality which, as one can see, the painter

had specially laboured with agony for days to bring out into full horizontalized expression.

A painting is a creation in two senses. It imitates an idea first vaguely in a rather Platonic or vertically conceived sense, and then, after the idea has been formed in the mind of the artist and externalized roughly, the greater part of his labours are lavished on giving reality and specific individuality to every object imitated.

The vertical lines meet and merge with the horizontal ones. Sometimes the vertical line which gives the painting a unity remains understood in the background, while the horizontal undulatory movements all but cover its mystery. There is always a cynosure or centre of attraction which may not always be at the geometrical centre. But something says: "Look here, I am at the centre of this canvas and what I represent is the whole value of the painting." One undulatory vibration runs through the whole picture whether in the form of a wave, a fish or mere outline.

Line, light and colour blend into a confection of a mystery that the painter externalizes on the canvas after a period of inner agony. The creative activity involved in such a task keeps the painter happy, and generations have the possibility of participating in this inner event which becomes permanently externalized on canvas. The accomplished work represents both the scene painted and the agony of the painter at once.

Such are some of the thoughts about art that I was able to formulate while regarding the numerous paintings on the walls, in the studio of the painter, and stowed away in corridors and vestibules all over the house.

**Ghent : Church and Art :** Soon I was to see more paintings and, although G. himself personally indulged in no advanced art criticism, he took me to see a famous painting by Hubert Van Eyck (1366-1426) and completed by his brother John in 1432, which was preserved, with entry tickets because of the revenue it brought to the church at St. Boron, which is one of the many tall and sombre cathedrals for which Gand or Ghent is famous. There is an area in the old city hardly a square mile in extent, in which many great churches, about thrice as big or tall as Westminster Abbey, abound. Piety, though of a gloomy and sepulchral atmosphere, preserved in vaults and within tall stained-glass windows which help to condition the bright sunlight, if any, rather than letting it in freely, gives to Catholicism, as practised now, a touch of regret of the Mater Dolorosa, which lingers still, making for an anti-pagan repugnancy for plain sunlight. The world of the dead seems to linger within the resonant vaults where candles and incense mount high, at almost every hour of the day, with sometimes incantations in an other-worldly voice that so often frightens children. The bleeding melodramatic effect of the crucifix is often over-stressed.

Here and there, within the church itself, a pagan artist persists, by his sheer genius, in taking his place on the walls or by sculptures in marble, by dint of his unquestionable mastery of art, as in the case of Michelangelo. The figures of Adam and God as represented by him on the roof of the famous Sixteenth Chapel in the Vatican, is a supreme example of how pagan standards persist in the very heart of the church.

The church of St. Boron in Ghent where G. took me was no excep-

tion. Paganism and Christianity blend here in a subtle dialectics, reflected in the works of art that are honoured and preserved here, whether in special annexes, niches or pedestals.

The painting bringing the greatest revenue to the church is that of the "Adoration of the Holy Lamb." It is not a large work — perhaps only six by ten feet, and seemed to me at first sight to be less striking than that of Rubens found in the same church, which is a masterpiece of lively curves excelling in line, light and colour. For the apocalyptic picture of "The Adoration of the Lamb" the scheme is Euclidean, or even Pythagorean.

Adam and Eve figure above the picture on either side in their human or pagan nakedness and simplicity. There is also the figure in the upper centre representing God the Father. Below this crowned and red-robed figure of God is seen the Holy Lamb, representing God the Son. The Lamb is in the centre on a sort of pedestal and the scene is geometrically conceived with vanishing points and the horizon executed according to strict classical rules. One can examine the details of even the leaves and flowers and see that much devotion and labour went into the creation of this much-admired altar-piece. The adorers of the Lamb are drawn up in segments, in each of which kneeling or bowing nuns, priests, men and women, focus attention and set off the central theme. The effect of the whole can be said to mark the classical religious art of that particular age.

**Paganism:** American and English tourists and students, as well as those from different parts of Holland or France were in evidence with their binoculars and guide books and with the inevitable guide who explained in broken English the importance of the painting. I heard him tell the ladies not to be shocked at the figure of Eve who was not dressed as she should be and was represented in a stage of advanced maternity. A pagan honesty in art, as in Indian temples, was surely in evidence here.

Some of the visitors seemed deeply affected by the whole group of Van Eyck's work, and stood in awe so evident in their attitudes and facial expressions, that there was no mistaking that this adoration of a Lamb to be sacrificed occupied a central place in the archetypal pattern of thought which is still prevailing within the Christian church.

No one can deny the atavistic elements surprisingly present in the situation of a Christianity practised to the present day. Religious feeling seems to touch here a universally human stratum. I could not see much difference between the fundamentally religious sentiment involved here and what we can see in any part of the world where religion attains to a fundamentally human expression. Religion, whether in the Buddhist caverns of Tibet or in the oldest temples of South India seems to have an alphabet of its own in which we can find the corresponding first and last letters, whether in the East or the West.

Van Eyck, whose "Adoration of the Lamb" I was looking at in the Ghent cathedral on the 13th April 1959 has pre-Christian paganism in it, while Rubens, whose paintings on a large and generous canvas decorate another part of the church, has the Michelangelo type of paganism implicit

(Continued on page 373)

# Dearest Freshness

by JOHN SPIERS

We said last month that the artist was a contemplative and that all art had the touch of the Absolute. Several questions remain: What is it that the artist discovers which is missed by others? What is it that affects him, whether as poet or painter, sculptor or musician? What message does the whole of artistic production try to give? Here we shall try to answer these questions.

IN two works, the one supplementary to the other, *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* (recently published as a one-volume Penguin), Mr. Aldous Huxley compares the visions seen by taking the drug mescaline with those seen by the world's mystics as well as with the various types of the numinous portrayed in art, in paintings, in poetry, in gems and stained-glass windows, in floodlit ceremonial, in fireworks, pageantry, coloured movies and so on.

It is clear that all these creative achievements take the individual out of the humdrum, everyday, economic, political, household, office or workshop mode of life. In Huxley's phrase, they are "transporting." From the examples he gives (and how encyclopedic these are) it is clear that the relativistic or *samsara*-attached mind when transcended or transported cannot bear the change for long or may even find the change painful, a hell rather than a heaven. But for a great many people the closing down of the ordinary senses is an enjoyable relief. Life is glorified.

Huxley believes that the painful asceticism of many religious people has its physiological and biological effect of closing the relativistic valves and of opening the doors of perception of the numinous or the Absolute. These temporary departures from "horizontal" existence to a "vertical" mode of consciousness brought about by these more or less artificial techniques (in which by the way *hatha yoga* must be included) at least prove that there is an artistic, religious or absolutist mood. It is this mood which occupies artists. The correct absolutist or contemplative attains to this without resort to drugs or severe physiological practices.

**Art and the Impossible:** At least from the time of the Buddha, all Gurus and contemplatives have warned mankind against these artificial and impermanent roads to Nirvana. The fact is that the true contemplative stands in no need of any drug or practice and that such devices can even be obstructions. It may seem a terrible thing to say, especially to artists, that the wholesale contemplative has no need even for art. Art, and even all the contemplative source books extolling the superiority of the absolutist life (many of which are themselves great works of art) can in this sense be considered to be merely reminders (but wonderful achievements of the human intelligence) of the vertical mood,

reminders of the existence of the true in and through and at the same time beyond the limited conditionings of separative, sensual, relativistic life. In the *Vivekachudamani* (Crowning Jewel of Discernment) Sankara declares:

“Ignorance of the paramount principles makes the study of the texts fruitless;

Knowledge of the paramount principles also makes the study of the texts fruitless,” (verse 59).

But Sankara himself wrote (in order to say something like this)!

The greatest art ultimately fails. All artists suffer from misunderstanding. Obviously because they are trying to achieve the impossible. They are trying to confine the ever-free flux of the Absolute. The real “art” is not in the production but in the wonder of the producer. In the artist this is present as an ever-flowing, ever-creative, ever-renewing becoming. It is a living joy, splendid with its own nature, risen above all weaknesses of composition and expression. These works of art are the mere impressions, like footprints left on the sand, of all grades of sense experience, from touch in sculpture to sound in music. All that we can do is to say when we see these marks in the fleeting world of time is “An artist has passed by.”

**The Divine Madness :** All artists are madmen. They are bound in a sense-world and compelled by a pitiless demon of egotism to try and loosen the chains of sense by the limited powers of the senses. The more they pull, the more they are bound. Hence their dreadful agony. Like El Greco, Rubens and so many of the old masters they will fill square yards of canvas with violent, writhing human figures. And from the temples of South India to Angkor Wat Oriental sculptures have done the same in stone. Or like many moderns, they will assault the senses with stridently coloured geometric patterns. Like the Chinese, they will empty their space of almost everything to express a world pregnant with mystery. Beethoven’s symphonies, and indeed the music of all lands, Chinese more perhaps than others, alternates with loud and low movements, the crashing noise of trumpets and gongs or the whispering of violins, of imperceptible flutings. South Indian music is nearly all *bhakti* or adorative, loud rejoicings and a despairing quiet plaint reaching up to the unattainable. Artists are trying to do two things at the same time, trying to say “It is not this, not this!” and “It is like this, like this!” No wonder there are headaches and quarrels among artists and critics...

For unless we have some pinch of the artist in ourselves, the whole of art will be nonsense. All artists will be just crazy people. They are mad, it is true, but most people cannot distinguish between ordinary madness and the “divine” madness about which Plato wrote. To those whose whole life is selling commodities, the artist is a worthless person as well, unless the art is old enough to have a snob-collector’s sales-value, or an advertisement-value. Our present society encourages the latter type of individual — one whose power of art-evaluation is more or less atrophied by a sales-ticket.

**The Yogic Smile :** In his book, Aldous Huxley refers to the “profound stillness” which seems to hover over the great masterpieces of

religious art, over "the sculptured figures of Egyptian gods and god-kings, the Madonnas and Pantocrators of the Byzantine mosaics, the Bodhisattvas and Lohans of China, the seated Buddhas of Khmer, the steles and statues of Copan, the wooden idols of tropical Africa. This stillness, he claims, "gives them their numinous quality, their power to transport the beholder out of the Old World of his everyday experience, far away, towards the visionary antipodes of the human psyche."

With all this we can agree. But there is more to these art forms than mere stillness. They glow with a strange life. Nearly all these figures have what is called by European critics "the archaic smile" often imagining the artist to be so imbecile as not to know why he put it there. Because it is so common throughout all antique sculpture they assume this smile to be there because of absence of technique. Having a hatred of idols and lacking necessary sympathy for the contemplative message of idols, they have come to this wonderful conclusion. But they are reduced to silence before *Mona Lisa* (reproduced on *VALUES*' cover last month).

The fact is that all over the world, artists have caught this feature and employed it meaningfully with purpose in religious art in order to bring out a contemplative truth. Stillness itself can be a deadness like a stone in the desert, or maybe one should say like a bit of concrete, for desert stones have the magic of all natural things. One of the most excitingly artistic things is a coloured photo of stones collected in the Gobi Desert and reproduced in *The Gobi Desert* by two extraordinary women missionaries.\*

What is this "archaic smile" so smugly dismissed by the critics? It is the inward-reflective smile of the contemplative who watches the spectacle of life, the yogi. *Mona Lisa* is a female yogi-type (as Leonardo has made her, at least). Looking and knowing and smiling. This is the face of the contemplative who lives in the awareness of the numinous.

**The Rewards of Stillness:** We should note however, that this antique smile of yogic joy and understanding is not necessarily itself religious, at least by theological standards of Western experience. We might go so far as to say it is not limited to humans. If you watch animals long enough you can catch them often in their quiet moods with the same equivalent expression of introspectively contented and self-assured happiness on their faces. It can be seen often on the faces of meditative cows and cats, less often on horses and dogs. When their hunting or feeding is done, when they are not asleep, this quiet "smile" appears.

Most civilized humans are so active, so remote from nature in

\**The Gobi Desert* by Mildred Cable and Francesca French (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1942).



THE KHMER SMILE  
ON IMAGE AT ANGKOR-WAT

general and from their own nature particularly, that this still introspective mood is of rare occurrence. That possibly accounts for their attraction for Buddhist or yogi figures as "art" objects. The lack on the one side of their own being is fulfilled by a little idol carrying the numinous smile. So there it is, placed discreetly in the sitting room. Westerners feel ashamed to be "lazy" or introspective. The commercial overlords of western civilization have done their conditioning propaganda well for the last century. Except on "public holidays" it is a sin to sit still. Driven relentlessly by an irrational acquisitive passion for manufacturing, these humans work a hundred times more than nature demands, more than the ants and bees. Like the contemplative, the artist revolts from this, refusing to be driven by commercial incentives. He knows the rewards of a great deal of passivity, stillness and "laziness."<sup>\*</sup> Art reflects it. Japanese rooms, the pastoral landscapes of Cuyp and Constable and Corot, Sung art in China, and of course, the poets: like W. H. Davies:

A poor life this, if full of care,

We have no time to stand and stare.

Not only statues, but nature too, can reflect the contemplative mood.

**Gerard Manley Hopkins:** In his description of numinous visions, Huxley mentions Wordsworth, A.E. (George Russell), George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and Traherne, among the poets. But curiously, he omits perhaps the greatest of all, a poet whom many believe to be the father of the moderns, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889). Hopkins was a saintly character. Quite early he took seriously to a contemplative life within the Catholic church. Most anthologies contain some of his poems, such as *Pied Beauty* (Glory be to God for dappled things...) and *The Starlight Night* (Look at the stars! Look up at the skies!). But there is one poem very relevant to our subject, called

#### GODS'S GRANDEUR

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then not reck his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black west went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

\* In this respect it is amusing to record here that one of the main reasons for the increasing popularity of air-conditioning in Bombay is not because it shuts out the heat, which the Indian can easily bear, but because it shuts out the noise (a valuable angle for the salesman) and gives quietude to the harassed businessman. How humans hunger for tranquilization!

**Inscape-Instress:** What Hopkins discovered and tried to tell in his public poetry and private letters was of the Absolute-charged freshness of nature (inclusive of humanity—he has a lovely poem about a ploughman) in a perpetual flux of renewal. The whole of life holds in its every part the Mona Lisa smile of the yogi. The artist, according to Hopkins, catches this in the form of a clear enlightened vision, what he called an "inscape," meaning the unique glory given by the artist to a contemplated whole.

"How near at hand it is," he wrote in one of his letters, "if people had eyes to see it, and it could be called out everywhere again." But besides *inscape* he was also aware of that irradiation of the Absolute in all, exploding out of all things, flaming out as he put it, a Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit, life-warming, bathing, illuminating and clothing everything with delight and brightness. This is the "dearest freshness" of the above poem, an absolutist pressure which freshens all. This he called "instress."

Thus the poet (or any other artist) blends *inscape* with *instress* and the result is an artistic ecstasy. The music in man meets the music in the universe to produce a living symphony in which there is forever a quickening spiritual joy uniting all kinds of rare values.

Obviously the more we have of *inscape*—*instress* ourselves, the easier it will be to share and equate our values with those of the artist. Shakespeare knew this when he wrote:

The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night  
And his affections dark as Erebus:  
Let no such man be trusted.

Shakespeare himself burst open the English language in giving expression to his *inscape*, while the *instress* of his work is not yet over. It still glows with freshness, down the centuries. Like the frescoes of Ajanta, or the Greek marbles, or the works of Plato to which men turn again and again for refreshment. And so also with writers, poets, painters, and musicians of our day or any day. They are all pioneers of the same life-fresh absolutist joy; all are witnesses to the unexpended, constantly recurring, ever-present glory of the Absolute, wherever their gaze rests, inwards or outwards, by pen and brush, chisel and note, dance and melody, inwards or outwards.

**Life's Glory:** The medium of the artist hardly matters. Hopkins was able to overcome the limitations of Christian theology like many other mystical geniuses. What he called the Holy Ghost is the same as the Indian *vibhuti* or glory of the Absolute revealing itself in the richest of values at every turn, in all orders of things, as described in the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The very heart of Mahayana Buddhism rests with the tradition of the Buddha being offered a golden flower by a disciple. He was asked to deliver a sermon. The Buddha took the flower, and, holding it aloft, gazed at it in perfect silence. After a while, the venerable Mahakasyapa smiled. That knowing smile was the beginning of Zen Buddhism. It was transmitted right down to the famous Bodhidharma, the 28th in suc-

cession from Mahakasyapa. And it was this "bearded barbarian" as the Chinese called this prince of South India, who carried the message of that yogic smile from South India to China. Out of that picture of the Buddha's gaze at a flower, with Mahakasyapa's smile of recognition, it may also be said, that the greatest art of China originated.

In *The Word of the Guru* (p. 168) Nataraja Guru has described how the same yogic smile, hardly perceptible, flickered over the features of the Guru Narayana when he once sat cross-legged for a photograph. The Guru Narayana was himself an artist who moved with artists, and inspired Malabar's great poet, Kumaran Asan, whom he guided and encouraged, thereby starting a poetic renaissance in the Malayalam world.

We have therefore answered the questions postulated at the beginning of this essay. What is it the artist discovers? The Absolute in himself and in all as a great fountain of wonder and glory, as fresh as a newly opened dew-drenched flower, as mighty as the storms of oceans or solar explosions, totally there in the smallest part as in the whole, electron or galaxy. What is it that affects him? The inrush of ecstasy meeting its identity wherever he turns, demanding the finest response which is called art. What message is it that the whole of artistic production has to give? That this is the secret of life and love and religion and philosophy, and that all the other affairs of men on the side of economy and work sink into banality and triviality before this triumphant super-sensual glory, and that in this ultimately contemplative participation in the glory of the Absolute lies the full redemption, comfort, salvation, justification and achievement of the spirit of humanity.

The Bhagavad Gita (X. 8) sums it up :

aham sarvasya prabhavo  
mattah sarvam pravartate  
iti matva bhajante mam  
budha bhavasamanvitaḥ

I (the Absolute) am the source of all;  
From Me everything moves outward;  
Understanding this, the wise adore Me,  
Endowed with the intuition of pure becoming.\*

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ONE line of a poem is given to the poet by God or Nature, the rest he has to discover for himself.—STEPHEN SPENDER.



To paint the bamboo, become the bamboo;  
To paint the dragon, become the dragon!—ZEN ABBOTT



A LARGE piece of stone or wood placed almost anywhere at random in a field, orchard or garden, immediately looks right and inspiring.—Sculptor HENRY MOORE.

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\*translation by Nataraja Guru.

# THE COMIC MUSE

## PRE-RAPHAELITE MODEL

A Pre-Raphaelite  
Had to have things right.  
The patient redhead, Elizabeth Siddal,  
Lay in the bathtub up to her middle  
(But richly gowned)  
To show what she would look like drowned.  
At last she sneezed: "Ow, Mr. Millais,  
Do I 'ave to welter 'ere all day?  
It's enough to congeal ya—  
Posing for Ophelia."—CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

## MODERN SONATA

To compose a sonata today,  
Don't proceed in the old-fashioned way,  
Take your seat *on* the keys,  
Bump about as you please.  
"Oh, how modern!" the critics will say.—F. E. GLADSTONE.

## LITERARY WARNING

There was a young man of Clovelly  
Whose brains were reduced to a jelly:  
He had, it is said,  
Spent a fortnight in bed  
With the works of Miss Marie Corelli.

## SPACE ROMANCE

O Moon! when I look on thy beautiful face,  
Careering along through the boundaries of space,  
The thought has quite frequently come to my mind,  
If ever I'll gaze on thy glorious behind.

## ON MY BOOKS

When I am dead, I hope it may be said:  
"His sins were scarlet, but his books were read."—HILAIRE BELLOC

## STARK TRUTH

"Why are you so much interested in art studies in the nude?"  
"Oh, I guess it's just because I was born that way."

## POET'S CHOICE

I would be the lyric  
Ever on the lip,  
Rather than the epic  
Memory let's slip.—THOMAS BAILEY ALDRITCH.

## The Sannyasin and Society

From the Secretary, Bharat Sadhu Samaj, New Delhi  
27 June 1959

Dear Mr. Spiers,

In the June issue of your monthly, you have focussed attention on Bharat Sadhu Samaj as a body sponsored by the government and supported by politicians. At the distance that separates you from the organisation of Sadhus in New Delhi, it is not surprising that your view of the Samaj has been somewhat distorted. The facts are quite different from the travesty of them you have presented to your readers.

To begin with, Bharat Sadhu Samaj has been started and guided by Sadhus and Sannyasis who fear none except God. Of course, as enlightened men, they give Caesar the respect that is due to Caesar. As a matter of fact, our organisation is the very picture of the organised body of Sadhus, which you yourself visualize at the end of your editorial.

Since we have our own National Government, it is but natural that our leaders have been taking keen interest in Sadhus and Sannyasis because of their potentialities in helping in the work of reconstruction that has been undertaken after independence.

Your interpretation of the guru-disciple link of old is also outmoded in as much as not a few gurus of today have failed to keep up the ideal of purity and perfection that was expected of gurus in better times. *Dakshina*, again, as outright gift to the guru does not hold good in all cases of trust properties. What of Mahants who marry in defiance of their vow of celibacy?

Surely, you will agree that abuses that have crept into the lives of heads of maths and religious institutions have to be removed, if necessary with the help of government. Hence the request of Sadhu Samaj to government to have the required legislation after a careful enquiry.

Your defense of contemplatives finds little support in our religious tradition. Active workers, *Karmayogis*, have always had sanction from leading masters like the Buddha and Sankaracharya.

You have no idea of the number of men in ochre robes. Some of them will have to work among the people for all kinds of service social, educational as well as spiritual. It is indeed easy to rush in with uninformed criticism of Bharat Sadhu Samaj without ascertaining all the facts from the proper source. Ere long, all the facts will come to your knowledge, and you will find yourself among the friends and well-wishers of Bharat Sadhu Samaj.

The Sannyasin, whose letter you published, is evidently thinking of starting a rival body with your collaboration. We all would do well to explore ways and means to consolidate Bharat Sadhu Samaj before frittering away the energies of our men in saffron garb in fruitless activities.

We shall be glad if you publish the above letter in your magazine. With best wishes, Yours sincerely,

SWAMI ANANDA

[REPLY: This letter only confirms what we had gathered from both public and private sources, from press reports and from our own informants who were on the spot. It is a fact that the Government of India Minister for Planning, Labour and Employment, Shri Gulzarilal Nanda guides the Samaj. When Gurus are called in and politicians are removed we shall regard the Samaj differently. If you are a sannyasin how can you speak of "our own National Government" and "our leaders"? and at the same time invoke God! The Universal and the Absolute, or God cannot make the distinctions between states. The true Dharma like sunshine, falls on the whole of humanity. It is somewhat tragic that I have to point this out, particularly in this day and hour when nationalism is the caste-curse of a scientifically united world. The glory of the yellow robe and of sannyasa is that it has always stood above partialities and cannot recognize caste even in its present racial, nationalistic and ideological forms. Yoga in politics or biology is that the human being is the same everywhere, of one kind only, not two (*advaita*). If our interpretation of the guru-disciple link is "outmoded" then the whole corpus of wisdom literature of India must be discarded, for it is based throughout on just this bond. Whether it is the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Buddhist Suttas, the works of Sankara or any other text in India, orthodox or heterodox, always one finds this central principle of teacher and disciple given fundamental emphasis and priority. In regard to vows a man can change his mind. Too much emphasis, stemming from a lop-sided layman's view of spirituality, often treating sex as sinful as in the case of Christian and other dogmas, is laid on celibacy, while the proper meaning of *brahma-charya* (Absolute-wise moving) is distorted. Such a view of brahmacharya and guruhood, if correct, would disqualify Yajnavalkhya, Vyasa, Valmiki and most other famous gurus in Indian tradition, for they were all married men. Who is to judge an abuse in the guru-sishya relationship? Certainly not an outsider! The relationship between a guru and a sishya is an intimate private affair, and is none of the business of the general public. If a disciple has a complaint he must bring it to the notice of his guru. It is for the guru to decide who is "fit" to be his disciple or not. There ends the matter. The worst scoundrel in the eyes of society may make the best sishya. History abounds with the condemnation of great gurus by society, and by the full adoption by great gurus of those whom society has condemned. Society condemned Socrates. Society condemned Sita. The Buddha's own father was outraged at his son's rejection of "social duties." Jesus was charged with consorting with disciples who were criminals and prostitutes. The sort of "screening device" of sannyasins you advocate by laymen and politicians in present-day Indian society, just because they are irked by the *right to their own way of life* of those who want to pursue wisdom, or who at worst, are misfits in society, is all wrong in principle. The wise man can be depended upon to know after long or short association with this or that sannyasin or disciple, who is genuine and who is not. Nobody else is fit for this job, and it cannot obviously be done by legislation. The human psyche cannot be bound by mechanical means. Society has always hated those who sought freedom. If it cannot make them into happy morons, it either forces them

into labouring for the state (and for very dubious ends at that) or locks them up in jail as criminals, or in an asylum as madmen. Society hates the spiritual seeker of all grades, and has persecuted them throughout history. The guru stands for man's emancipation from all bondages, including that of society and the state, and asks from the disciple only one thing, namely, his wholehearted affiliation to wisdom, to truth, to emancipation, and his unquestioning loyalty to himself in the role of a teacher. Such a quest is not "religious" but contemplative. Sankara laughs at bathing in the Ganges, at all ritual. Do you consider yourself superior in this respect to Sankara? The Gita itself (XVIII, 66) sums up its whole teaching in the words addressed to the disciple Arjuna: "Abandon all *dharma* and come to Me" (i.e. to the absolutist Guru). Even politicians quote the Gita, but not this, its final concluding judgement. You seem to be upset by the great number of sadhus and sannyasins in India. What is the objection? Are individuals free or not to take to the absolutist way of life? Are individuals free or not to take to the life of contemplation, or to the yellow robe, the way of the bhikku, the digambara or svetambara, etc. etc.? You say "some of them will have to work." This opinion reveals your own allegiance to an ideology of compulsory action, of forced labour which is totally repugnant to the spirit of human let alone spiritual freedom and even to the so-called rights of democracy. Let me assure you I have no intention of forming any rival body to the Bharat Sadhu Samaj. I am only expressing through VALUES facts about Indian spirituality. My task is primarily informative for there is hardly any subject about which there is more misinformation than this. The way of life to which all modern secular governments are committed, in effect despises the yellow robe and all it stands for, mainly because the man who takes to the way of the Absolute cannot be dragooned into the docile worship of the state or society and prefers truth and wisdom which he finds in the wise men or Gurus or in the principle of Guruhood. When the Bharat Sadhu Samaj takes the positive role of protection of guruhood, discipleship and of all the patterns of sannyasa, instead of being a compromised body as at present, based on state interference by unqualified persons, it will be time enough to consider giving it our support.—EDITOR ]

The men of the world should have no voice  
in the affairs of the Sannyasins.—SWAMI  
VIVEKANANDA (p. 188, *Works*, Part V,  
Almora, 1919).

in his work. The art in the churches helps to prove that the spirit of Bacchus or some sort of pre-Christian paganism persists to this day at the core of the very churches that incessantly repeat the unique character of Christianity as against paganism. Paganism and Christianity are dialectical counterparts, like the brahmin and the pariah of India.

Archetypal atavisms must persist anywhere as the black stone persists in the holy of holies of that most iconoclastic of religions, Islam. It is pagan enough to paint a crowned and red-robed God like Jehovah as Van Eyck has done, placed above the painting of the adoration of the Lamb, which latter must remind one of animal sacrifice apocalyptically revised. These taken together, change nothing in the fundamental human religious alphabet of instinct, and makes Christianity resemble paganism so closely as to be indistinguishable to any layman.

**Midnight Nightingales:** At my host's house I talked incessantly about various subjects almost the whole month, every night right into midnight and sometimes past that hour. There were at least three or four visitors each night. The subjects ranged from painting to world politics, dietetics, music and dialectics and I had to flit from one branch of wisdom to another without any regularity, system or order. Phenomenology and existentialism were not omitted either!

The nights were becoming shorter and shorter and, although mid-summer day was still more than a month away, the opening eye of sunlight encroached into the sleeping self so much that waking and sleeping became interchangeable terms, and night always had some element of day projecting into it at some corner of the horizon when we were supposed to be sleeping. This blend of waking and sleeping has a mystic effect on the temperaments of the people who live in this latitude. This perhaps explains and excuses some of their ways of life and habits which might seem peculiar for people like me from other latitudes, used to another rhythm of life altogether. In other words latitudes and longitudes demand latitude on our part.

One night G. came back almost at midnight from his usual nightly stroll in the nearby woods. The group round the open fire in the second dining-room were sitting round cups of Japanese tea or glasses of various forms of libations meant for the gods, when he announced, "Come! Let us listen to the nightingale!" This bird figures much in European literature. It is true that the European cuckoo is nothing compared to the Indian koel in the woods of Kalidas' country round Ujjain in India. The cuckoo in Europe is the soul of spring. The skylark and the nightingale are marvellous songbirds, the benefit or blessing of whose message has not been given to other latitudes or zones.

We went stealthily at one o'clock in the morning on the 14th May to hear the nightingale. This was an event of no small importance. At a certain part of the woods where the silence among the thickets was most profound, as also the darkness, the voices of two loving birds were exchanged from across branches which seemed to separate the two lost souls, male and female, between eternity and infinity. Morning lights were evident in the east when evening light in the western horizon had

not completely faded away, and there we stood in the fresh air or lingering winter in spring, listening to the love song of two selves or souls all but human or all too human.

Let us turn away again from this scene, for beyond the union of the counterparts there is only the ocean of bliss into which the dewdrop can merge...

**Music and Humanity:** As in painting, so in music too there is an interplay of dialectical counterparts, whether across the vertical axis or along the horizontal one. Modern European music has become a one-sided affair. The masculine elements dominate and suggest action or conquest of space, while the qualitative intuition of time and harmony which run across the quantitative aspects of music such as melodic variations in sound succession, have been forgotten and pushed into the background.

Besides being a painter, father G. is also a composer. This came to light on the 17th May. It was a Sunday and we had assembled in the old studio of the painter and mystic. He and his family had suffered hardships and privations when they had to hide from the hounds of war in the south of France during the last world war. They worked as labourers in the woods or farms, cutting wood and burning it to make charcoal and eking out a mere livelihood. A father, a mother and nearly a dozen children were at the mercy of hunger inside and danger of death any moment outside.

Brought up otherwise in comfort, the *vanavas* (forest life) was too much for the girls round puberty and for the boys in their teens changing from one cruel taskmaster to another to find work for simple bread. No wonder they became affiliated to the context of a vague form of absolutism by sheer suffering. Even now the warping effect of those days of high pressure or tension has left its mark on the family, and above all on the brave father. It was at this period that father G. wrote books for the education of his children and composed music for their benefit.

Here was a patriarch with his own chosen dear ones passing through the desert of hard times and anxiety. Musical composition was his consolation and he took to it by way of transcending suffering. His eldest daughter played the piano for the eleven o'clock Sunday cult that I was to conduct in the well-lit studio with high windows admitting the northern light, on May 17th.

For the first time I heard music which was neither masculine nor warlike. Soft contemplative tones and undertones of the major and minor keys, with a timbre and volume that stood out in a certain vertical-horizontal relief, in which one sound was set off rhythmically by another succeeding it or simultaneously, made a confection of sound values which transported the spirit and rocked it gently up and down, as it were, in a cradle. This music comforted a father in the forest when in dire anxiety and must therefore correspond to something in which the human soul in its loneliness finds consolation. European music needs to be humanized and toned down negatively in many ways before it can represent the real music which belongs to all mankind.

**Ghent Library Discovery:** After May 22, 1959, I began seriously to work on my projected Monograph on a Scheme of Correla-

tion for all Wisdom and went to stay with Dr. V. in the very heart of the city of Ghent.

The University Library of Ghent was only about a mile off, where I went on foot each morning, passing through beautiful public gardens where flowers were still bursting into heavy laden blossoms from the massed red rose-buds to the carefully maintained beds of the common lantana which is a weed in India. The weed becomes a garden plant in another latitude. A Brahmin at home can become a pariah in a strange land, and *vice versa*: such are the exigencies of time and place.

The library was a well ordered one, electrically worked. The reading hall could seat hundreds at a time and had a dozen windows, each about twenty feet tall and twelve feet wide, all of single glass. I looked at the card index and found that rare books in English, French, German and Flemish were all there. To my surprise I found my own name and the book I wrote thirty years ago and thought had been lost for ever among the books on education. I was consoled that my hard work was not lost but that all the French speaking universities and others of Europe and America had carefully preserved it and that it had served humanity in its own way for the past three decades. Citations from this book on *The Personal Factor in the Educative Process* and reports about having read this book with interest have reached me from important educationists like Prof. Piaget and Mr. Rosello of the International Bureau of Education. I breathed a sigh of relief. Now it was the greater task of writing a Monograph that absorbed me.

Here I was with no funds permitted to be taken from India and a stranger in a strange land, still receiving from the same Absolute that nourished me all my life and instructed me always, doing so again, giving me a chance to express myself to fellow man. I stayed with Dr. V. for more than a month and worked hard in the library. Between Laethem where I taught and the work in the library, the time passed till on Sunday June 28th, I began hectic travel again.

[ ANOTHER INSTALMENT NEXT MONTH ]

### Interview with Edith

THE following exchange took during a BBC Television interview with the poet Edith Sitwell:

JOHN FREEMAN: Now, I want you to listen to three most lovely lines, which I quote from one of your own poems: "The great sins and fires break out of me like the terrible leaves from the bough in the violent spring. I am a walking fire. I am all leaves." Dame Edith; what is that great fire? What is the living thing which all your life has been trying to break out of you?

DAME EDITH: The great fire, I suppose, is a humble but unworthy love of God, and certainly a great love of humanity. And to be an artist is a terribly painful thing. I mean, the great leaves break out of me—you see one has a perpetual resurrection in one's life, as the art returns to one, after long deadness. And of course the fire is always fighting the sins, and—well—there one is.

# 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)

12

With skin, bone, refuse, and many an inner factor  
of evil end,

Wielding these, lo ! one ego looms : This which passes  
Is the other : That greater Self which grows to perfection,  
O grant the boon that it may not the ego swell !

THE repeated "I", "I" of the previous verse has a way of asserting itself in two distinct manners. This verse suggests that one of these ways of assertion is favourable to self-realization while the other is detrimental to happiness when understood as the end or goal of life.

The structure of the Self which has been analysed in the two previous verses is filled with a content, not in terms of a vague abstraction, but in a very realistic, human, and even a pragmatic manner, by which the aspirant to Self-instruction can find his way and choose the right one of the two alternatives open to him in the path that marks out the progress of self-realization.

By cultivating the ego which has bodily attributes, the end is not happiness. By cultivating the Self that is non-bodily but has other attributes of a series of values in an ascending subjective scale leading to happiness (whose nature will become clarified only in the later verses), we stand in danger of having a bloated egoism in the name of some fetish concept of personal spirituality which might lead us into the blind alley of a megalomania. Spiritual life often contains this soul-killing possibility of a wrong kind of self-hood which can be full of horizontal taints such as passion, pride or ignorance. The *Bhagavad Gita* (XVI, 21) refers to this sort of danger in strong terms as constituting the gates of inferno :

Three-fold is the gate to inferno which can counter Self-hood—  
desire, anger and avidity; renounce therefore these three.

A horizontally oriented self-hood spells evil while a vertically oriented self-hood reaches out to the good ideal. A prayer for a boon to save self-hood from being developed in the wrong direction, and a warning against such a danger which is so easy to fall into in the name of self-knowledge, from which we can think many holy men suffer, is what the Guru takes the opportunity, sufficiently in advance in the course, to indicate appropriately in this verse, whose main purpose is to state the difference between the two forms of the same self. The modalities of movements in consciousness to which these two egos are subject, has a paradox, conflict or contradiction at its core, which it will be the task of

succeeding verses to effectively abolish.

To distinguish the two selves implied in the contemplative life envisaged here, constitutes the important initial step to be taken. We shall have occasion to examine the nature of the contradiction or the complementary character of the two selves involved. For the present we shall do no more than to refer again to the *Bhagavad Gita* (VI, 6) which also posits two selves for resolution into unitive terms, as follows :

To one who has overcome the self by the Self, the Self is his kin ; for one self-less, however, the very Self can remain inimical like a (veritable) opponent.

The verse immediately preceding (VI. 5), also refers to the subtle inner structure of the Self in man :

One has to support the self with the Self, one should not let it down. The Self is the kindred of the self, the very self is the Self's (own) enemy.

The "I" within has its convergent and divergent aspects, which have to be carefully distinguished.

**"Lo ! One ego looms, etc."**: The "lo" here which stands for "look," implies a warning as we have said above. In Vedantic literature generally this error of self identification with a certain unspiritual aspect or attribute of the personality, is called the *dehoham-buddhi*, the attitude of mind that says to itself "I am the body." It is important to notice here that in the verse above, as in Vedanta generally, the line dividing the body from the mind, or the physical from the spiritual aspect of the personality has to be correctly conceived.

When we use the word "mind" in English it is meant to include all that is spiritual in a vague manner. *Manas* (mind) however, as understood in the strict Vedantic sense, belongs to the bodily side of our life rather than to the spiritual, because it is one of the inner organs together with *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara* (intelligence, relational sense and individuation) which depend for functioning on the stimuli entering the body from the objective rather than from the subjective side.

Psycho-physical parallelism, although admissible, has to be understood as taking place between elements in consciousness that really belong to two rival poles. The line which is to separate what belongs properly to the side of the *psyche* and what belongs to the physical aspect of life calls for minuter examination in the light of the polarity or ambivalence which is to be postulated as the base of this question of parallelism.

In the present verse one notices that the Guru takes care to indicate that the ego that wields the skin and bone includes on its side many other factors of evil portent, which conduce to unhappy ends. Even religious or other sentiments as sometimes popularly felt, as when one hears of "an enjoyable funeral requiem or dirge" or of someone who cries throughout a melodramatic film show, have mixed sentiments involved which are hard to put strictly into one compartment or other in the polarized scheme that we have to think of, in respect of the two selves involved.

In fact, finally the two selves have to be abolished through unitive understanding. It is this which it is the task of the present work of the Guru to accomplish.

In other works of the Guru this parallelism and polarity is discussed

by the Guru in greater detail, as for example in the composition called *Chit-Jadangal* (Thought and Inertia). The same theme is indirectly touched upon in *Indriya-Vairagyam* (Sense Detachment) and in *Pinda Nandi* (Prenatal Gratitude), as well as in other compositions of the Guru.

The problem here is the same as in chapter XIII of the *Bhagavad Gita* devoted to "The *kshetra* (field) and *kshetrajna* (knower of the field) Distinction." Sankaracharya's famous work called *Drig-Drisya-Viveka* (Discrimination between the Seer and the Seen) is based on this same fundamental distinction so important to be made before the Self can be properly realized.

When one has succeeded in eliminating the horizontal tendencies adhering to the self and it is thus purified, the very self asserts itself and grows into power or perfection by double assertion and double negation. In the process, if one again rests peripheralized in interests, as for example being too much taken up by social or political problems, one might become some sort of distorted absolutist in the deprecatory connotation of the term. In the name of institutional forms of holiness we have examples of distorted personalities with egos exaggerated or awry in one sense or another. These pitfalls have to be avoided by the aspirant to contemplative life. The ego should not be allowed to suffer blocking, warping or distortion.

If we should think of social duties it can be of items which are free from the relativistic taint. The good work of a Good Samaritan in the Bible is disinterested and correctly altruistic, while many good intentioned works in the name of religious, suffer from relativistic taints or partialities which, like milk in a dog-leather bag, as Sankara would put it, have no real spiritual value.

**"That greater Self, etc."**: Once the distinction between the two aspects of the same unitive or Absolute Self is made, it will be easy to see how a normal process of spiritual progress can be established. Perfection or plenitude is the goal to be attained by the progressive self put on its proper path. The attribute "greater" as applied to the "other" self here is only to be understood as the initial one just necessary to distinguish the lesser self, which remains attached to the body as its attribute.

If Bishop Berkeley denied objectivity to the body while John Locke in his philosophy gave primacy to the objective aspect of reality in the context of European philosophy, we have David Hume the sceptic, whose position has been humorously summed up in text-books pithily as consisting of the saying: "No matter, never mind; no mind, what matter!"

In a revised methodology pertaining to a completer science of the Absolute, as envisaged in Advaita Vedanta, to treat of body and mind from the standpoint of what Bertrand Russell would call his position of "Neutral Monism" is justified. He restates this in his *History of Western Philosophy* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1946) as follows:

I think that both mind and matter are merely convenient ways of grouping events. (p. 861)

Earlier on in the same page he says:

Thus from both ends, physics and psychology have been approaching each other, and making more possible the doctrine of

'neutral monism' suggested by William James's criticism of consciousness.

Thus we see that the position taken by the Guru is not repugnant to the attitude of the latest pragmatic or empiricist philosophers who call themselves 'sceptics'. They represent a form of agnosticism which is a natural corollary to absolutist wisdom of the correct kind which remains to be formulated scientifically.

13.

This verse again follows an antique and somewhat idolatrous figure of speech. The worship of Siva, the great God of the Himalaya who is at the same time the Guru Dakshina-murti (the divine manifestation of the south), as pictured by Sankaracharya himself, long before the Guru Narayana, is almost an inevitable idiom on the spiritual soil of India.

The great God is pictured as sitting in meditation cut off from all sense-interests here, meditating on the Absolute and identical with it. This language is familiar to all Indians and especially the temple worshippers of the south, so the Guru invokes this ideogram to convey easily what he could have said otherwise only in many a dry paragraph.

The principle implicit in idol worship correctly understood, is to treat of the two bodies involved—that of the worshipper and the worshipped—as interchangeable terms in a contemplative manner. The self of the seeker on one side and the personified Absolute on the other side, form limbs of a reversible operation like an osmosis which takes place spiritually between the two poles which in reality, belong to the same vertical aspect of the Self as distinguished in verse twelve above. The Guru is merely employing popular idiom here and no anthropomorphic god is necessarily postulated, although the ruling-out of such a god is equally to be avoided.

The notion of the Absolute which is neutral between the two poles of the same unitive Self can be conceived in pure or practical terms and, as long as the limbs of the equation are properly conceived as dialectical counterparts, no harm is done to the resulting doctrine touching reality that results from the cancelling of counterparts.

The subtle dialectics implied in the exchange of values that can take place between the "self" and the "non-Self" whether subjectively or objectively treated according to the correct rules of dialectical understanding, cannot be elaborated in the language of mechanistic or syllogistic reasoning. Here the Guru therefore by-passes discussion of the truth of God in the usual ontological or teleological manner of modern philosophy.

phers in the West. The logical manner employed by Voltaire which can be valid in its own way is not resorted to. The same purpose is served here by the simpler approach. After helping us to distinguish the Self from the non-Self in the previous verses, the Guru passes over quickly to important aspects in the context of self-realization proper, without too much logic-chopping or laboured theology.

To extract the correct sense of this verse the reader has to imagine himself as a Siva worshipper of South India who prayerfully offers flowers at the temple of the God who represents the Absolute in the antique and natural language of iconographic ritual and symbolism. The flowers are to be thought of as fine products of the mind of man. They belong to this or the "self" side, while the Master or Siva would represent the "greater self" which is its own counterpart. The offering of flowers is a symbolic gesture by means of which a bi-polar relationship is to be established between the Absolute as the "Self" and the Absolute as the "self." They further represent the specific aspects of everyday value-factors or items corresponding to the infinite small change which pays for the gold coin of the notion of the Absolute, which is an all-inclusive and supreme value in life.

An osmotic interchange of values representing a reversible process or operation takes place between the two counterparts envisaged here which leads to self-realization, after the manner of the flight of the alone to the Alone, as Plotinus would describe the event or process.

The "glory" in the last line refers to the principle of the Absolute still within the limits of the phenomenal aspect of reality as understood in verse four above (see VALUES No. 7 of 1959). The Guru avoids referring at this stage to the pure notion of the Absolute as meant by the term *Brahman* but uses rather the word *Mahas* (the Great Principle) as used by the Samkhyas and as understood later and used more unitively in Advaita Vedanta as we have pointed out under verse four already. This is by way of respecting methodological strictness in developing the subject-matter stage after stage from the known or knowable to the more unknowable or unpredictable.

**"The ashes of the three modes":** The theory of the three *gunas* or modalities in nature, whether psychologically or cosmologically understood, is developed in a whole chapter (XVI) in the *Bhagavad Gita* devoted to their character and mechanism. The *Bhagavad Gita* itself presents a revised picture of the modalities which are given a psycho-physical rather than a cosmic status, and the three stratifications within the limits of necessary action, as understood in the dualistic Samkhya philosophy, is presented more unitively as applicable to the unitive personality of man. The *gunas* or modalities of nature are treated without the strict body-mind duality of the earlier Samkhya school.

The Guru here sees the possibility of effecting further unity in the same sense as in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The three levels or strata of modalities in natural and necessary expression, when they attain the Absolute, as represented by the Master who is Shiva, are nothing more than ashes, generally worn as three horizontal lines on the forehead and body. Here they have no effective living influence on Him who has transcended the necessary level of life, where alone modalities could be operative. The

*gunas* may be described as the dark or dull (*tamas*), the passionate or the active (*rajas*) and the pure or sublimated (*sattva*) expressions of psycho-physical life. On the body of Shiva, in the ideogram here employed by the Guru, these modes, which are sufficiently real from the side of the worshipper, have but the status of mere ashes as attributed to the counterpart, the worshipped symbol of the mystery of the absolute.

**"The flower of the inner self, etc."** : In verse nine (in VALUES No. 10 of 1959) the various states of consciousness natural to man have already been referred to as bearing blossoms. In relation to the plant itself the flower represents the most specialized aspect. Specificity represents horizontal multiplicity as against the vertical unity of the self. The special growths of a plant refer to luxury items in life, as suggested in the *Bhagavad Gita* which compares the leaf-buds of the great Banyan Tree of its famous fifteenth chapter to the stanzas of the Vedas, which represent the hedonistic values implicit in the vedic religion. It is there recommended that the tree with the buds is to be cut down mercilessly before one can follow the higher path of the wisdom of the Absolute.

The flowers in the verse under examination here are also petty utilitarian or sensuous luxury items, even of the context of holiness, which have to be sacrificed in the fire of absolute wisdom for progressing in the path of self-realization envisaged in the present text. Moreover, the Absolute is a wonder and is adorable, as the most supreme of human values. Axiology, phenomenology and personalism represent attitudes or principles which remain blended together in this reference to the subtle relationship that one has to establish with the Absolute before mergence into it could normally be expected.

**"Sense interests effaced, etc."** When a proper bi-polarity has been established in the manner indicated above, the lower series of interests naturally give place to the higher sublimated ones. The interests operative at the sense level of the personality depend on objects of perception stimulated from outside. They are horizontal interests which are of secondary importance only. When the full current is switched on by the bi-polarity established as it were vertically, between the self and the Self representing the Absolute, these interests recede. The absorbing nature of the latter bi-polarity detracts from the intensity of the sense attractions to such an extent that, like stars that fade in daylight, their appeal is countered and effectively nullified. They become faint and enfeebled, in inverse proportion to the positive interest in the Absolute which becomes progressively established.

**"Divest of all and cool, etc."** : The pure Self within sits in nakedness and simplicity as opposed to the peripherally conditioned personality that might have social dignity or status belonging to the outer world. Pilgrims to Mecca have to divest themselves of all decorations and even tailored clothes before entering the holy of holies. Likewise, the South Indian temple has to be entered wearing as few clothes as possible. This is symbolic of the rejection of all peripheral conditionings that might colour the pure Self as if from the extraneous and apparent phenomenal world. The utter nakedness of the soul may perhaps trail clouds of glory as the poet might say, in its spiritual journey from God,

but nothing of worldly decoration really belongs to it. Moreover, the outer world is "of the madding crowd's ignoble strife." Both these states of affiliation to group psychology or activity have first to be transcended before the path of self-realization as envisaged here can be followed up. The cooling therefore refers to the slowing down of the tempo of active outward socialized life.

**"Even from the *grandeur* bereft, etc."**: Zeus with his thunderbolt represents the great god on high as understood by the Greeks. Indra of the Indian context is likewise a chief of the gods of heaven. There is something quantitative still persisting in them in the attributes applied to them which imply horizontal values.

The Absolute is not a quantity with any magnitude, but rather a pure quality without magnitude. Even the hypostatic glory that we attribute to God in praising Him is not consistent with the image of the Absolute as understood in the purer non-theological context of contemplative self-realization. Neither can we say, however, that the Absolute is without greatness. The greatness (as we have translated the word *Mahas* "greatness" here) is to be understood as a glory that participates more in the vertical aspect of value rather than in the horizontal.

The distinction that we are trying to make is something like the distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* as used by Spinoza in his philosophy. The former has a vertical value while the latter is horizontal in its content. We have a similar reference to two kinds of *gunas* (modalities of nature) in the *Bhagavad Gita* (III, 28) which reads "the *gunas* reside in the *gunas*," meaning that modalities remain as principles with no horizontalized expression. The *grandeur* of the subject is absorbed in the greatness of the counterpart in the Absolute without getting horizontalized in the process. Without this subtle philosophical distinction between the two aspects, horizontal and vertical, the meaning of *mahas* and *mahima* as used in the original text must remain mostly obscure. The sinking into glory represents the flight of the alone to the Alone. The "sinking" further suggests that the forward progression is itself a vestige suggestive of duality which has to be counteracted by an inverse process which is sinking backwards rather than going forwards or rising. This is more in keeping with the "negative way" proper to contemplation. In pure becoming there is no movement at all in the usual sense.

[ TO BE CONTINUED ]

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ONCE art is really accepted it will cease to be. It is only a substitute, a symbol-language, for something which can be seized directly. But for that to become possible man must become thoroughly religious, not a believer, but a prime mover, a god in fact and deed.

— *Henry Miller.*

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