

Update 3/23

[Narayana] Guru does not say that the world is dreamed by the individual. He attributes its existence to an overriding principle which, like the human mind, can project its ideas in such a cogent and coherent manner that it should be possible for anyone to gain some understanding from and about it.

If the world is like a dream, can it be called real? The answer is no, it is not real. But if the world is unreal, how could it have a creator? Are we not forced to say that if the effect is unreal, the cause must also be unreal?

This leads us to a position where the initial assertion of a creator as a reality is cancelled out by the unreality of the creation. This in turn brings us to the awareness of a numinous but indiscernible principle that is behind the phenomena of both creator and creation. So we are led to the conclusion that the status of such a reality has an existence which is established *in itself*, and which is independent of all other possible forms of existence. (48)

Spiritualists claim this primeval cause to be an absolute principle of Spirit. Materialists argue that the original cause is a primeval energy which is in no way different from matter. They say further that consciousness, which is apparently different from matter, is after all only a quality of organized matter. If we should ask both spiritualists and materialists to define and describe the exact nature of the primeval substance, they will postulate the same attributes to what they call the original cause. But neither will give up their claim that spiritualism or materialism is the definitive truth. (49)

A scientist may claim that his observations are objective, but the fact remains that he arrives at his conclusions through calculations, some part of which will certainly be subjective. (50)

In the twentieth century we are unable to say that the field of the modern physicist is limited to the world of objective data alone. (50)

In the realm of mathematics we no longer deal with things which are visible. Even with the use of the most powerful electron microscope we can penetrate the visible world only so far, and our findings are valid only within certain limits. When our inquiry is taken beyond the frontiers of the visible world, physics changes into metaphysics. Most scientists are unwilling to accept that their philosophical speculations are not strictly objective and are on a par with the shrewd guesses of philosophers.

Just as religion has its followers who swear by the pronouncements of one prophet or another, so also do people who are excited by scientific invention or technological progress satisfy themselves by repeating slogans in favor of science. The physicist tries to relate all forces to one physical entity. The biologist wants to show that all forms of life arise from a primitive principle of Life. Thus, unknown to themselves, scientists, like every one of us, are in need of a unitive principle to which all phenomena can be related. However, they do not wish to underline any one term as the first principle or first cause. They tend to leave this question as a mystery, while engendering the hope in their followers that some day in the future they will be able to realize this elusive first principle. (52)

Human caprice can be likened to a piece of phosphorus, which when exposed to the air can suddenly and without warning burst into flame. In the case of phosphorus, the possibility of such a transformation is a latent chemical property; in a human it is latent as a potential psychological factor.

This potential or latent aspect, which enables one to have harmonious or discordant relations with others, and which often appears capricious to the onlooker, is described by the Sanskrit

term *vasana*. In one case the transformation is a chemical potential and in the other a psychological potential; there is no essential difference between the two. (53-4)

*As a result of the conditioning of the faithful by the established religions, and of the skeptics by the categoric statements of science, man has become bifurcated in his sense of his true beingness. Having thus separated him from his true ground—that substratum that gives rise to all beings—those responsible for this have largely repressed in him the sense of wonder and delight in which one who knows his true being lives all the time. Looking in vain for some religious statement or scientific formula which will neatly encompass the whole mystery of being, so that we can file it away in our box of consumer goods and calendar maxims, we have forgotten that the mystery we seek to penetrate is our own mystery. (56)

A proper philosophical study should take into account the concrete facts of life and the problems arising from them. It is easy to say that the world is a projection, but it makes little sense if one does not follow this with an explanation of how the projection is experienced as a concrete fact. A philosophy which ignores this will not help us to emancipate our consciousness from the psychic colorations and social conditionings which perpetuate our misery. (58)

The nature and composition of an object can never be known to us in its own reality. When we view an object there arises in us a self-luminous concept, and we presume that it is appropriate to consider the object as having the quality which the concept gives to it. As consciousness arises out of unconsciousness and recalls a little of its hidden aspect, so does the unknown allow some unveiling of itself to give us a glimpse of its nature. (60)

What in one case may be a song of joy, in another may be a shriek of unbearable dread. Still, in every case the value interest of every item of knowledge arises from the continual, if usually unconscious, quest to be in tune with the blissful nature of the Self. (74)

There is the possibility in some for consciousness to free itself from specific transactional events and the fantasizing ideations of dreams, to remain poised in a state of unconditional awareness without falling into the state of deep sleep. This is called the fourth state of consciousness—a state of pure transcendence. As this state is without finite limitations, it is called the pure state of the Self. In fact, the other three states occur within the state of pure consciousness, as modifications of consciousness, producing item after item of what is generally called knowledge or experience. We modify the state of pure consciousness, which is absolute truth, to produce the illusions which we mistakenly call reality. So habitually and continuously do we vary our focus of awareness, that few of us come to know that the pure state even exists. This is one of the tragic aspects of individuation. (74-5)

The world presented to us as individuals is not the entire universe. It is a very limited environment of a relatively few square miles in area, and which belongs entirely to the present moment. We can perhaps give it a time-span of a few hours. The problems arising from it are likely to be few and simple, but we complicate matters which should only arise from, and relate to, our individual environment, by hooking on to them the structuring of a vast and complex world. The world with which we complicate our responses to sensory input is the conditioning passed on to us from generation after generation. This conditioning arises from the store of information chronicled as the history of human endeavor and discovery—the story of man's encounters with nature and his fellow humans. Thus, the world we think to be real has in fact very

little objective reality. It is padded out in all directions with half-baked conceptual notions and hidebound prejudices. (78-9)

What has been experienced by us in the past reasserts itself in the present in every situation, appearing as a frightening and ghostlike presence which haunts us in our transactions with the world. (79)

Two threatening aspects of life are our present ruminations on past experiences, which arouse regret and remorse, and the fear which arises when we contemplate the uncertainty of the future. Remorse related to the past and anxiety related to the future—so much of these overlap into the present that the world begins to look like the Inferno for a great many people. (79)

The here and now is always simple. It is a great wonder that we insist on complicating it, thereby introducing an element of dread, by linking it with a dead yesterday and an unknown tomorrow. This we do at the expense of our enjoyment of the present, which could otherwise be a loving and meaningful experience of the Self. (79)

Narayana Guru assists the student to simplify the complexity of the world by helping him to know the planet on which he stands, and by giving him a new angle of vision which he can use, together with a viewpoint he can adopt in every situation. Then he will have a correct perspective and understanding of the problems presented to him as they arise. This will change the world described as a “boundless ocean of misery” into one of clear knowledge and precise laws. Then his understanding of the world will be more correct and profound, and his ability to deal appropriately with problems which confront him will be much improved. (82)

Mere personal conviction is not sufficient to validate truth. Inherent in the nature of truth is a universal acceptance of it. (84)

What is taken for granted as a life experience, when carefully examined, will reveal itself to be a superimposition. A superimposition implies a ground upon which something alien to its nature is transposed or imposed. The ground of our experience is what we call “I,” although the I we talk about or ponder over is not the ground, but only a semantic symbol which is colored by what is superimposed on it. Thus the transactional I is as much alien to the beingness of the ground as what is fictitiously projected upon it. All of the various kinds of reasoning are inefficient for cutting through the matrix of projections because conceptual word-images are used, which, by affinity of semantic associations, get entangled with the verbal content of the reasoning mind and float along with the stream of verbal concepts rather than penetrating to the bottom, which is beyond the reach of concepts and untainted by memories of the past. One must go again and again to the bottom of one’s experience, carefully avoiding all habitual chains of reasoning.

The crust of our consciousness is formally structured with a relation-relata complex. Our empirical ego, which is also the semantically structured I-consciousness, is the invisible thread which holds together all ideas, sensations, and feelings to form the gestalt of the moment. An integral part of this gestalt is a certain pattern of reasoning and its given coloration of mood, which time and again is recognized as one’s mind. Thus, on the whole both the mind and its monitoring I-consciousness are camouflages that conceal from us the true ground, which can be equated with the prior nothingness of what is being experienced. The Self, or the true I, is therefore to be understood as the anterior absence of what is present. It implies within its structured content the paradoxical contradictions of the coexistence of both beingness and nothingness. When Ramana Maharshi advised his followers to repeatedly ask the question “Who am I?” his intention was to make them go beyond all semantic exercises and not hang on the crutches of reasoning, so that they could experience directly the nothingness of nothing cancelled by the being of beingness. So, in

order to be precise, we should add here in parenthesis (forgive the use of words and forget that it has been said). (88)

Most of what we call cause and effect are pairs of sequential occurrences in which the antecedent is believed to be the cause and the consequent the effect. In many cases such a surmise is not warranted by a logical necessity. (89)

Let us think of the element of reason as our inner light. In this light we see several elements of our experience; reason is our tool to specify these elements as it highlights each unit as a value factor. Let us take joy as one such unit. The recognition of joy occurs as a conscious appreciation of its existence in our awareness. Awareness and the state of joy are now related as a matter of psychological affinity. We recognize not only the element of joy, but also the fact that we are joyous, and the recognition of being joyous is immediately promoted as a main aspect of our experience. The recognition “I am joyous” is a secondary representation of the primal happening of pure joy. We have thus rationalized our experience, and it is brought forth as a representative image of our understanding of this spontaneous occurrence of the state of pure joy. (89)

The intention of the first *darsana* is to give us the discipline of recognizing our general experience as a superimposition, and then to work our way into the primal state previously mentioned as the ground of all experiences. (90)

By silencing our mind we can go back to our own prior absence. This is not, however, meant to be an intellectual process. It is accomplished by a process of reduction, though not a reduction in the sense in which it is suggested by Husserl or Jaspers. The type of reduction suggested here is the kind performed by a yogi. We have hands for working and legs for walking or moving. When a yogi sits quietly he does not use his

legs or his hands. The hand is an instrument. If it is not functioning, the mere structure of it alone does not make it a hand. The plastic hand of a doll is also called a hand, but is it one? Is a plastic flower a flower? No. It is a chemical substance molded into a form that bears some similarity to a hand or flower. It may look like a hand or flower, but even structurally it is not true to the original. When we go beyond it, when we reduce the function of the hand, we go from what it can do to nothingness. The same with the legs. This means we sit quietly. If we also make this happen to our mind by not feeding it with memories and by not hooking one association to another, then functionally the body and the mind come to a certain nothingness. It is in this nothingness that we find the ground. We do not see the ground, we are the ground.

This ground or nothingness is not a total nothingness: it has certain potentials. When these potentials become actual, we think of them as the cause and the actuality as the effect. Now let us again forget the tyranny of language. At what stage is there a cause and at what stage does it become an effect? We can imagine our physical growth. Could we draw a line somewhere and say that up to this point in our growth was the cause and thereafter the effect began manifesting? After the prior absence of the fetus there comes into being a single cell, the zygote, which then starts to multiply. Can we stop there and say that that was the cause and the rest is the effect? No. The replication of the cell is done as if by memory, like a habit. It is as if this organism has done it so many times before that it has become instituted in it as a habitual function. This is what is called incipient memory. The incipient memory need not necessarily be the memory of what we recall in our mind. It is a potential in the ground itself. Our meditation is to reach the ground as well as the potentials in it.

Why should we bother to seek the ground? It is because at the conscious level in which we live our life we have no control, since that level is already manifested. If we want to do something with the primeval dynamics, we should go to the area which is still in the process of being manifested. The further we go into the

unmanifested potentials, the greater is our control. How do we go about this? Let us go into our own personal experience, our own life. What problems are we confronting now? What kind of personal relationships do we have with others? What makes us cry? What makes us laugh? What inspires us to write poetry, or paint, or do any creative work? What inhibits us? What gives us courage? These are the areas that have become fully manifested. We should try to predicate the “what” in these questions. (91-2)

We began with nothingness. Then we found that nothingness is the prior absence of things that are manifesting, and that if there is a prior absence of what is manifesting then the potentiality of that which has to manifest is there. To understand ourselves we should know our ground, the nothingness, the scratch from which we began. Understanding is a complex process of comprehension where our emotions understand our emotions, our reason understands our reason, and our unconscious inner mechanism understands the unconscious totality to which it belongs. The principle of homogeneity is to be applied at each level so as to include and interrelate the entire content of our experience. One way of doing this is to conceive of our life as a series of pulsations, and to watch the centripetal and centrifugal contractions and expansions. (93)

Life implies a binary function between our being and nothingness. What happens in between the being and the nothingness is what Sartre calls the becoming. The becoming should be the tool of our meditation, not to achieve anything but to have a comprehension of the *modus operandi* of our life process. (95)

* The vital urge has its origin in incipient memory. An incipient memory is a pre-established habit, which remains in the system as a potential waiting for an opportune moment to actualize once again as a manifested reality. Conscious deliberation is not an

imperative to initiate the actualization of the incipient memory. Before a person becomes conscious of an urge or need the incipient memory unlocks many hidden reservoirs of inner forces, which, for example, stimulate the glandular system and turn on the secretion of hormones. Thus only half of the story of the reaching forward from nothingness to beingness is shared with our conscious mind. If by some chance the actualizing incipient memory is stifled or repressed by a counter-memory, all that we come to experience is perhaps a muffled uneasiness, or a dark and choking depression, or even an irrational outburst of hysteria. We will never consciously know what triggered the irrational anguish of the psyche. (95)

* Even at its best, no expression represents the total potential of an urge. And whether it is an outburst of an inner conflict or the manifestation of a creative urge, all our expressions stem from our incipient memories propelled by a vital urge. (97)

What seems at first to assail a person as his darkness can be a virile source of spiritual dynamics, which can ultimately transform him from a conventional conformist into a genuine being fully committed and dedicated to a truthful life—the existential validity of which arises from the very essence of his beingness. When one is ultimately in resonance with his own vertical nature, he may emerge in the society as a dark threat to its prestructured stability and a challenge to its social norms. The truthful man makes his breakthrough and causes serious dents in the shell or crust of society. Sooner or later, others who love and aspire to the same truth turn to the voice of the rebel; they read prophecy and promise in his words. In this case what appears in the beginning as a dark force confronting the individual finally proves to be a fresh lease of life coming from the perennial fountain-source of the Eternal, the ground of all. (98-9)

The mere knowledge that there is a myth under our feet or that we are confronted with ciphers that cannot be deciphered does not help anyone.... In the matter of turning to the myth for light, resigning ourselves to intuition can lead us to fanciful imaginings and beliefs. This is dangerous. For this reason, in Plato's dialogue "Euthyphro," Socrates categorically denies his belief in the myth when it is taken literally. The appeal that Socrates makes to reason is fully upheld by the rishis of the Upanishads. The whole of the *Darsanamala* is an attempt to clearly steer our way through the fog [of languages]... so that we can obtain a transparency of vision which will put us in touch with the primal language of transcendence, the metaphysical reality realized in thought and symbols, and the language of reason that reveals, in apodictic terms, the meaning of existence. (105)

*Nitya notes the similarities between adherents of science and religion in his *Psychology of Darsanamala*:

Both sides want truth to prevail; both want the mind to be systematically directed towards truth, so that whatever an individual does will be consistent with a truthful conviction; both hold that only truth will set man free from incorrect beliefs and wrongful conditioning; and both want their votaries to be happy. In addition, both spiritualists and materialists believe they should share happiness with others and work towards the perpetuation of peace, justice, love, and happiness for all through the achievement of the goals of their philosophies. (106)

The God who is asserted to be real and the God who is denied reality are both only byproducts of the reasoning faculty. If the proponents of this argument had known they were quarreling only about the incompatibility of their ideational structures—a merely semantic issue—they might have agreed to suspend hostilities.

When the people who were indigenous to the area called Arabia propounded the great truth in their own language, *la ilah il*

Allah, its complementary truth was uttered by the seers of India, *sarva khalvidam brahma*. Unfortunately, these nearly identical doctrines pronouncing the truth of one Divine Principle have given rise not to a unity of peoples, but to hostility and bloodshed. Even today India is a country divided against itself as the result of fanatical partisanship to one presentation or the other of the same truth. Throughout recorded world history terrible things have been done by man to man in the name of religion, and words have usually been the medium used to inflame unworthy passions. (112)

When the question of conscious awareness at the gross and subtle levels is considered, it is necessary that one should have a proper understanding of what is truly existent and what is merely fanciful imagery of the mind. The difference between what is existent and what is fancy should never become blurred in our experience of events or situations, or in our assessment of individuals and our relationships with them, if we are to retain psychological health. This is even more important if we are to have any hope of penetrating the mysteries of the esoteric. What is hidden from us now will remain so if we cannot distinguish between what exists and what does not.

Human misery is wrongly thought to arise merely from human action. In fact, it is the effect of a basic illusion which is cosmic in its dimensions, and an all-pervading ignorance which has no beginning in the sense that we can say mankind began. This illusion and ignorance is fundamental to the emergence, structuring, and ongoing development of the cosmos. It cannot therefore be attacked in a piecemeal fashion. If it is to be reversed, it must be done in a radical and wholesale manner, and this is not possible without resorting to an efficient methodology. (DM 114)

All experience is subjective, though we do not usually realize it. For most people, what appears to be a flow of experiences relating to the passage of time gives them the feeling that the empirical world is independent of their subjective consciousness. (116)

Cause and effect are not two entities, they are the two poles of complementary events or situations.... Without a cause there cannot be an effect. Equally the effect is necessary if there is to be a cause. Without an effect there cannot have been a cause.

Some say the world is unreal. If this is so, and because the world is an effect, or rather, the result of a series of effects, then the cause or series of causes must also be unreal. To say the unreal has existence or did exist, or had origin either in reality or unreality, is to construct a fairytale for children....

In these questions, as in every other, what may seem to be an impenetrable mystery becomes crystal clear after the acquisition of sufficient knowledge. As far as the world is concerned, knowledge is an imaginary entity. But that is not to say it is unreal.

Knowledge is indispensable at every level of our existence. Even for illusion or misunderstanding, some knowledge is necessary. We can question everything, but we cannot question knowledge; without knowledge we can question nothing. Still, most people are satisfied to have and propound a type of knowledge that from an enlightened viewpoint can be seen to be more properly described as ignorance. (118-9)

When we are small children our parents are delighted to see us correctly recognizing objects and other people. Parents carefully teach children the names of people and things, and how to recognize the values in situations and events. For the most part what they teach arises from their own conditioning, the distillation of their life experiences, and the belief-systems structured from their hopes and fears. Above all they teach us name and form. Again and again they repeat the teaching to make sure we have memorized it. When we in turn become adults we are fully convinced of the reality of a world of actuality, constituted of countless things, each having a different name and form. But our view of the world is really only a conditioned subjective reaction to sensory input.

When we think of the human organism, we first usually identify ourselves as a physical body. We experience mind as operating within that body, and within the mind we experience a focal point of attention which is recognized as the I-consciousness. Keeping the I-consciousness as a nucleus and the external shape of the body as the outer limit, a personality is structured. This personality is experienced as being limited in size and influence, and as being separated from the rest of what constitutes our world. We experience self as a small individual in a world of immense dimensions. When one who is structured like this wishes to learn about what is called the Self, he naturally thinks of it as being confined to one branch of knowledge, as are history, geography, chemistry and biology. This attitude is the most dangerous and harmful stumbling block, which can impede the progress of even the most earnest seeker of truth. (120)

The Upanishads repeatedly say that mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation. Superimposition establishes the state of bondage, while the systematic denial of superimposed falsehood brings one to the state of liberation. (125)

In the case of the awareness of an experience, of its beauty, and of our enjoyment of that beauty, all items of awareness have their existence in knowledge. When we speak of bliss we ought to speak of our awareness of that bliss, or to be more precise, of the quality of that awareness. It is the quality of our awareness at any given moment which gives our experience of that moment its particular flavor. The aspect of consciousness known to us as awareness has the inherent power, if it is conditioned correctly, to change the potential morbidity of an experience into an actualized delight. Very much power to shape our own experiential destiny lies in our own hands if we care to exercise it. We experience our own projection of what is called “the world.” Either individually or joining with others in a mass projection, it is we who create the world. And what we have made, we can alter and unmake.

If we ourselves become the expression of true knowledge, we can change what is now a world of unreality into a different world of reality. Whether we actually see what is real, or see what we wrongly believe to be real, depends on the extent to which we have experienced ourselves as reality, that is, as the living Self. (128)

The self-luminous I-center... is the only area of consciousness which can assure certitude. At one and the same time it is the ultimate criterion of judgment and the consciousness which applies that criterion. To introduce other criteria or another methodology to prove what is self-evident will result only in the logical fallacy of tautology. And if one fully understands that the only real existence is the Self, then to attribute reality to transient projections of the mind will result in contradiction. Accepting this as the final truth, the world of perceptions should be treated as non-Self and its so-called reality should be refuted. (137)

Narayana Guru did not begin his spiritual life as an evangelist of wisdom. First he withdrew himself from everyone and everything. For more than a decade he examined the lifestyle of his fellow men. Then he withdrew from the world. After that he withdrew from the physical body. Finally he withdrew from the tumult and feverishness of the mind. Eventually came the experience of the realization that his own being was none other than Being itself, which is the One manifested as the All. Only after the actualization of this experience had saturated and transformed his emotions, thought, volitions, and specific identity did the Guru begin to reveal his gospel of love and unitive understanding. (141)

Perception in Vedanta is an indiscernible confection of the observer and the observed happening within the realm of the Absolute. It is an experience of an apparent duality within the ambit of the nondual Absolute. This is why the Guru says a close scrutiny of the apparent reality of things restores all individuated

objects to their primeval status as the Absolute. When viewed from this standpoint, *maya* becomes irrelevant. (144)

It is knowledge alone that shines. If something does exist but is beyond the range of our knowledge, it does not exist for us. Our consciousness remains unaffected by what is beyond the scope of our knowledge. That which does not shine or reveal itself in terms of existence is nonexistent. Nonexistence cannot assert its beingness in any way.

If it is the quality of knowledge to reveal itself, everything we perceive or conceive is a revelation of knowledge mirrored as a mental image. In that case should we look upon everything we see as the same as the Self? It is to remove this doubt that we have already given the concept of perception as expounded in Vedantic texts such as the *Vedanta Paribhasa* in our commentary on the previous verse. Since everything we perceive has this quality of self-illuminated existence, all that enters the field of empirical knowledge and subjective imagination should be seen as the Self, tainted by the negativity of nescience. The substratum of nescience is the Self. In this sense, realization is not anything to be newly gained. As all individuated beings are manifestations of the Self, they do not have to go anywhere to discover it. Unfortunately for us there is a veil of ignorance which creates the illusion of a dichotomy between the Self that is seeing and the Self that is seen. All we are asked to do by the Guru is to rectify this veiling ignorance of the individuated self. (145-6)

The goal of the present study is to release ourselves from the perennial chain of human misery, and to establish ourselves in a state of happiness which is not transient. Turning away, repudiating, or fleeing are methods adopted to escape pain. Drawing closer, and using techniques of sharing or communication are indications that pleasure is being experienced. Pain germinates fear; pleasure brings hope. Of these two major propensities, fear and hope, it is fear that dominates both the conscious and the

subconscious mind. Hope arises from that stratum of existence which is truth itself—that is, the blissful Self. Hope asserts itself again and again as the will to live, the will to seek, and the will to actualize. Actualization of the highest possible values, or the realization of the Self, dispels fear.... To become established in fearlessness in all the four modified states of consciousness is another way of stating the main goal. (146, 147)

Narayana Guru wants us to recognize that truth is nothing other than happiness. Happiness is that which sustains the value of everything in life. When life is permeated with happiness it is the same as saying it is beautiful. The beauty of the Self is its unalloyed bliss. This bliss permeates the knowledge of the Self. (150-1)

The Darsanamala was not written by Narayana Guru to cater to the curiosity of an armchair philosopher. It is not meant for mere discussion. The Guru calls it a darsana—a philosophical and mystical vision. (153)

If truth is hidden and untruth is veiling it, one can never reach the truth without first removing the veil of this ignorance. As the Guru is convinced of this, he invites us to the third darsana, which is the envisioning of falsehood. The very knowledge of falsehood is the most efficient method to eliminate it. In modern psychological therapy, the psychoanalyst tries to spot the cause of a hidden malady. That in itself is the treatment. Here is where the method adopted by Narayana Guru goes beyond that of conventional psychotherapy. The psychologist leaves the patient at this point. He does not help him to go further and see what he truly is. In the remaining darsanas, the Guru does just this. (153)

By and large the most significant role is played by the third modality, *tamas*. It is an inertial binding force which can couple itself with either *sattva* or *rajas*. Its inertial quality can stabilize a

situation so that the temporal sequences can be reduced to the minimum. This comes in handy for making a span of interest somewhat static, so that one will not find life to be a fleeting experience. The opacity of *tamas* can shield away from consciousness whatever is not relevant or is opposed to the prevailing interest of the moment.

As the human mind shares these three modalities with the rest of nature, they are to be treated as universal phenomena.

Memories are shielded and preserved by *tamas*. This close association of *tamas* with memory shows a near identity of incipient memories with ignorance. Incipient memories are called *vasanas*, and ignorance is called *avidya*. In both the systems of Vedanta and Yoga, *vasana* and *avidya* are sometimes treated as interchangeable terms.

In the state of deep sleep, *tamas* is said to be operating as a total veiling principle that envelops both *sattva* and *rajas*. Consequently, there is no remembering of any particular thing or idea other than the *sattva* being focused on the pure and luminous nature of the self. In this case the ego does not function, but there is the experiencing of the great calm of the pure spirit.

Tamas can also aid in the selective structuring of meaningful ensembles or *gestalts*. When a certain value factor of an incipient memory is being promoted to gratify itself in a favorable environment, *tamas* can provide it with a protective cover so that there will not be any interference from other interests during that span of experience. When the attention of the mind is about to be detached from its object and directed to another, *tamas* puts a blindfold on the focus of attention which allows a new train of thought to seep into the realm of consciousness without giving a chance for the conscious ego to realize that a distraction is already effected.

Just as a picture cannot be successfully projected onto a white screen in brilliant sunlight, even so man cannot experience the phenomenality of the external world and his several worlds of subjective fantasy without there being nurtured in him the darkness

of ignorance. In fact the tamas of cosmic nature is inside and outside. It is no wonder that it plays such a mighty role in the operation of the individuated psyche. (156-7)

Awareness becomes circumlimited and identifies itself with a particular image structure as soon as a term evokes in us its formal image as a specific unit of awareness in consciousness. We should adopt an attitude of wary skepticism coupled with relentlessly critical scrutiny when seeking the path of our intended search for the nature and meaning of mind. It is paradoxical that the same mind which brings all kinds of bondage and suffering can also lend itself to be the most efficient weapon to prove, analyze, scrutinize and lay bare the truth of itself. (159)

In the mental realm, fact and fiction may be inextricably intertwined or can manifest in such an amorphous manner that we may not be able to discern one from another. (159-60)

When a person turns away from the facts of the empirical world to his psychic presentiments, he is entering into his own private domain of experience. This area covers a wide range of experiences such as sensations, feelings, moods, thoughts, visions and fantasies. These can interact with the factual, established by collective consent, or can remain confined to the individual mind as an exclusively personal form of consciousness. In either case, the reactions may cause personal problems of mental agitation. These agitations can be pleasant or unpleasant. This polarized field existing between the factual and the psychic can be seen as a hinterland of consciousness lying between the eidetic origination and the transcendental. (162)

We can prove that the world-experience of man is illusory, but that does not help us very much to escape from its tragic spell until it becomes completely transparent to us in what manner the Self is veiled, and how projection manifests in all the individual cases of

the experience of entities with names and forms which seem to exist within the framework of time and space, with inner relationships such as cause and effect, and with whatever is treated dualistically as other than one's own self. (166)

Sankalpa

We began this darsana [5] with the question, "Where is mind?" When we look for mind, what comes to our attention is one of the many impressions, or in other words, an experience of awareness. In Sanskrit the act of giving a specific form to consciousness is called *sankalpa*. Usually it is translated as "will." As willing is an act of volition, such as when one is determined to say or do something or to become steadfast in a certain judgment, it lacks the wider connotation of the Sanskrit term *sankalpa*.

Sankalpa is somewhat equivalent to the drawing of a blueprint in consciousness which will lead to the actualization of an event, the attainment of a state, the acquisition of a desired object, or to the establishment of a new relationship with oneself or with another person at some time in the future. These do have an element of will implied in them. That is why *sankalpa* is usually translated as will.

Sankalpa carries with it a probability factor, and it is most likely that the desire to actualize it may bring it about. But it is also possible for desires to arise in consciousness which by their intrinsic nature are highly improbable. The ignorance of the individual, coupled with a rational myopia caused by infatuation, may easily convince a person that what is willed is not at all improbable. In spite of this improbability, they may try hard to actualize a desire and will fail to achieve it. In this aspect, the desiring imagination of the person is called *vikalpa*. Both probability and improbability are promoted with the desire to actualize, whereas the person sees nothing but probability due to their infatuated imagination. The infatuation is directly related to one of the many incipient memories, which we have referred to earlier as *vasana*. Thus, both *sankalpa* and *vikalpa* are born of *vasana*. (177-8)

Although the world is generally treated as unreal in Vedantic literature, again and again there come exhortations from the great masters to do good to the world and to maintain the harmony of world order. This is called *loka sangraha*. Both in the Bhakti Darsana and Nirvana Darsana, the Guru tells us of the necessity to relate to the world in a meaningful way. Great masters like Krishna, Christ, Buddha and the Prophet have all desired peace on earth and fellowship between human beings. These good works are also sankalpas, but they are qualified as satya sankalpa, desirable imagination that can be true in all probability.

Unfortunately, most of us are motivated by personal gains, and are so veiled by our personal ignorance that we draw thick ego boundaries and separate ourselves from the rest of the world phenomena. As a result of this darkness, the “other” can assume a fancied image which makes the individual hanker after it and thus become subject to infatuation. This brings about false hope after false hope, like that of a thirsty man going from one mirage to another. Such an unfortunate person runs after shadows, which results in mounting frustration. The “other” can also assume a demonic form, engendering in the person an element of fear. The fear grows from moment to moment until it becomes a paranoia that can assume gigantic proportions. (179)

It is with the best of intentions that one begins to set out in the search for truth. As the search is directed by a finite mind using the finite doors of perception and the limited concepts of word images, sooner or later the seeker is likely to confine their final summation of truth as a fixed entity visualized by the individual’s mind. This is in no way different from the sculptor deciding to express his visualization of the Absolute in the form of a *sivalingam*. It certainly helps him and another person of identical vision to sense the Absolute by extrapolating the meaning of the symbol beyond the scope of the manmade artifact, as well as by interpolating into

the medium the purest of notions that can never be confined to any form or name.

Even after making such a rational assessment of the several pitfalls that we may come across in the world of names and forms, there is no guarantee that such knowledge will spare us from conditionings. We began this chapter by saying that all that is, is the mind. Unless one transcends the conditioned operation of the mind he will again and again come back, through the back door as it were, to the same world of ignorance that he is trying to escape by adopting one device after another. (193)

*The Sanskrit words in the verse are given valuable definitions here. For the most part, the Sanskrit word-by-word definitions have been left out in this digital version, but these are especially important. Keep in mind these are selective definitions of words that all carry a broad range of meanings:

vidya—knowledge in the true and absolute sense.

avidya—ignorance, in the sense of relativistic notions, opinions and conditioned reflexes.

para—consciousness pertaining to the reasoning self, mind and senses; with which one discerns happiness and sorrow.

apara—the unconscious and instinctive self that is instrumental in carrying out all physical and biological functions.

tamah—the state of confusion in which the discriminative power of the reasoning self is at its lowest.

pradhanam—the prime potency, such as of a seed to develop into a tree or a big bang that can cause an expanding universe.

prakriti—that which has the tendency to proliferate, replicate, and cause endless varieties of mutations. (197)

Pleasure is a quality of awareness that reflects the element of happiness, which in truth belongs to the Self. If the seeker understands this, he will realize that he should turn his attention inward into his own being to find true and lasting happiness, instead of seeking it through the gratification of his senses in the world external to himself. When one gains this knowledge, he naturally curtails all activities in which he previously engaged which were born of the confusion arising from the ignorance of his projected values. Then he is saved from the world of transient values that the Isavasya Upanishad describes as darkness.

It is for this reason that the Isavasya Upanishad says that a man who knows the secret of ignorance will transcend death. (206-7)

Darsanamala is a textbook of the Science of the Absolute. The intention of the author, and what should be that of the student, is not the gathering of information for the sake of scholarship. The prime motives are to attain a lasting happiness and to free the mind from the dual conditionings of pain and pleasure. The overall idea of maya is here presented as an epistemological theme of intimate human experience to be critically scrutinized. (225)

In one regard the spiritual is like any other aspect of life: it can be imitated. Many people do enact a passable imitation of spirituality—passable, that is, to others as deluded as themselves. It is even possible to imitate the aspect of universalized sameness which can be seen in its true expression in a Self-realized man. We can fool ourselves for a while, and fool others, but very soon we shall discover that we can go all the way only with the realized man. What he is on the surface he is all the way through. To claim realization is one thing; to be realized is very much another. (247-8)

Using the statement “this is a pot,” a true contemplative can extend the undiscerned “thisness” to obviate all its “potness.” In the same manner, when we say “I am the body,” all the variegated moods, tendencies, sensations, and impressions can be sublimated by a contemplative if he turns himself into a blazing fire of pure I-consciousness. However, most of us are not contemplative at all, and we pay only lip service to the hope of Self-realization. We limit ourselves, in both the above cases, to the accidental and partial knowledge of what seems to be concretely manifested, or to the conception of the limits of our own bodies. (248)

The observing faculty of awareness can be turned to the movements of thoughts and feelings, just as it can be a witness of perception when the senses are engaged in the act of perception. It is not difficult for one to stand apart from the mainstream of mental events and act as a witness, listening to the arguments and counter-arguments going on in our intellectual sphere, until the volitionally bent intellect passes a resolution to be ratified by the I-consciousness, which either promotes the incipient memory or suppresses it as a matter of expediency or prudence. (256)

The state of deep sleep is described in the Upanishads as blissful. When encountering such an assertion, it is likely that we would take it to mean a state wherein our feeling of pleasure is at its maximum. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it cannot be true. To experience pleasure, there must first exist an I-consciousness capable of doing so. In the state of deep sleep there is no I-consciousness to know what is happening. Moreover nothing is happening. (266)

Just as the lower animals take the air they breathe for granted, so do we take consciousness for granted. We feel no pressing need to know from where consciousness comes. As we grow older and encounter situations where it is necessary to make precise

observations free of any natural fallacies and erroneous vision due to personal defects, we begin to pay some attention to the structure and function of consciousness at the transactional level. This need has created a sound and systematic methodology of science. When mature minds entered this field, it became imperative to withdraw the mind from immediate impressions so that things of like nature could be abstracted and generalized.... In this connection, the mind has developed the power of analysis and synthesis to a very high degree. Even so, the mind-stuff that has become expert in what may be called the application of the subjective technology of consciousness has not bothered to find out the nature of itself. Only after big cracks have appeared in [this] general network based on the concepts of the functional mind... have some adventurous souls begun to look into the depths of the mind itself. They have been awed and thrilled to discover that mind has a profound depth, and that behind and beneath it is an unconscious mass. (278-9)

When this revolution of understanding occurs, we shall find our way into the secret chamber of the programmer of the universe. This reality now hidden behind the passing shadows of the phantom transactional world is called in this verse the Self. The Self is the one seer behind all that is seen, though it sees not itself; the one listener behind all hearing, though it hears not itself; the one knower behind all knowing, though it knows not itself; and the one enjoyer behind all enjoyment, though it enjoys not itself. When the tribasic error is corrected, the knower and the act of knowing disappear in knowledge, and the enjoyer and enjoyment disappear in a nondifferentiated joy. With this verse [V.9] the Guru has prepared our minds to go beyond the last frontier in the world of personal awareness. (280)

*The seers of the Upanishads have a down-to-earth and matter-of-fact attitude when they consider the basic interests, moods, and urges which impel a person to action. The fear of loneliness, the need for delight, the search for companionship, and the emotional

and physical intercourse between husband and wife – all these factors and more are not ignored as being outside the scope of spiritual wisdom. The wisdom of the Upanishads firmly rests on the existential factors in daily life, but at the same time the ultimate goal of human life is not forgotten. That goal is the discovery of the Paramount Person (*purushottma*), hiding in all and behind everything as the totality of experience.

There is a magical quality in life. We can see it in the mysterious changes of moods, in the sudden birth of new interests and in their often equally sudden vanishing, and in the surging up of unexpected situations. All these can fill us with a sense of wonder, or one of tragic and disastrous catastrophe. This evasive, magical element that enters into consciousness, and which assigns name and form to everything, accounts for the experiencing of our world of varying interests. It is not we who experience anything – all is the experience of the Paramount Person, including its experience of itself as the individuated beings we call ourselves. The magical element is an intrinsic feature of the action-reaction complex in which the individual self becomes almost inextricably tangled. (301-2)

Aum tat sat—what is thus instructed, arrived at as the union of the Absolute and the Self, devoid of functions like willing—that is said to be absolute knowledge. (VII, 10)

As Darsanamala is intended to aid the student to realize the union of the Self and the Absolute, the present verse is given as a conclusive teaching that the nondifferentiated knowledge of the Absolute and the Self can come only when all vestiges of conditionings, both psychologic and cosmologic, have fully disappeared.... The imperiential union of the psychologic and the cosmologic indicated in the present verse is not a knowledge that is one among many items of information that one gains through an act of ratiocination or by dualistic cognition. It is a tremendously sweeping and overwhelming denial of all the limiting adjuncts of

an individuated self. After one has embraced this indescribable union, even when the previous individuation returns it does not gain the dynamic status of an ego-centered individual again. Both the psychologic 'I' and the cosmologic 'other' are reduced to mere appearances, and a strong bond of union prevails as a substratum for the superimposition of both 'I' and the 'other'. This knowledge has the existential verity of irrefutability and the subsistential transparency of a boundless Self-knowledge that is not alienated anywhere as a part torn off, or even modulated as an objectivization of any kind. In its absolute value-content it is intensely ecstatic, which can be poorly illustrated by such examples as the total union which is experienced in love. (364-5)

Love, devotion, compassion, empathy, and consequent rapture of mind come spontaneously rather than as a result of mechanically practiced discipline. Although concentration is prized as a high value both in public life and spiritual pursuit, people quite often forget that it comes as a result of the evoking of a deep interest which is centered around a value that is most dear to one's mind.

Our entire life can be described as an aggregate of values and a network of relationships connecting or coordinating one item of value to another. Every value has a self-luminous nucleus which characteristically triggers a sense of joy ranging from an intense experience of bliss to a moderate sense of satisfaction or well-being. Individual items of sensuous experience are part of the passing parade of phenomenal flux, and hence cannot hold the mind in rapture for more than a given time, which is likely to be short if not momentary. (366)

The most popular experience in which people can easily transcend the sense of duality is when loving mates are overwhelmed with the thrill of each other's inseparable presence as the pearl of their hearts' sweetness. Holding this sense of rapturous fulfillment as the model to measure love and one's consequent devotion to it, Narayana Guru presents in this chapter a scheme which can serve

us as an intelligent key to unravel the science of values and their interrelationships. As the entire process is woven around one's awareness of the ever-attracting and resplendent Self within, *bhakti* is defined as the continuous contemplation of one's Self. (367)

In our own times, meditation and contemplation are used as synonyms: both the terms have lost their precise connotation and have become vague in meaning. So it has become necessary to revalue and restate the terms 'meditation' and 'contemplation'. Sequentially, meditation comes as a prelude to contemplation. The way to know something, as Henri Bergson puts it, is not by going around it, but by first entering into it and then being it. Meditation is an active process of applying one's mind to make a total 'imploration' of the depth of whatever is to be known. The state of actually being it is what is achieved by contemplation. It is a passive but steady state. (368)

The constant meditation on the Absolute is not to be understood as a sheer withdrawal and absorption into a faceless and characterless emptiness, but as a positive acceptance of one's cosmic dimension and a universal recognition of the one Self that prevails in all and everywhere as the only joy and meaning of this world. (372)

The yogic discipline is goal oriented. The yogi sets *kaivalya*, the primeval, unadulterated state of pure 'be-ness', as the final goal. As every step is to be directed to progress towards the attainment of it, all acts of cognition, volition, and states of affection are to be aligned with this basic goal. Thus the goal has to be both ontologic and teleologic. It is teleologic because it refers to a future possibility, and ontologic because there is an approximation of the goal to a certain degree, however negligibly, in the here and now. Such a discipline enjoins upon the aspirant the conscious monitoring of every modulation in the stream of consciousness. (408-9)

Even after receiving the secret instruction *tat tvam asi*, “That thou art,” from one’s teacher, one may not become a yogi unless this consciousness of the union of the subject and object is continuously realized by perpetuating the retentive idea “That thou art.” This is not possible unless one empties oneself of one’s ego. Personal ego is an aggregate of memories called *vasana*, and it is always active to produce volitional imagery. This is called *sankalpa*. *Sankalpa* is the root cause of all human miseries. An effective step in withholding from being influenced by the *vasana* is returning again and again to the true nature of the Self. This withdrawal is called *pratyahara*. When once the Self is seen through an act of *samyam*, the Self can be seen in all and as all. When there is nothing extraneous to attract or distract, consciousness becomes steady and *samadhi* is achieved. Thereafter one does not experience the duality of the subject and the object. Such a state is praised as yoga. (DM.417)

Two events which are an absolute certainty in life are birth and death. It is not in the individual’s power either to prepare for birth or to have it gracefully. Likewise, although death is wholly certain, there is an uncertainty as to the time and mode of its happening. In spite of the unpredictability of death, one can prepare for it so that the journey up to a conscious point of life’s final termination can be made abundantly satisfying to oneself and exceedingly beautiful to others.

In one sense the entire life is a preparation for the final departure. What there is after one dies is a question which can perhaps never be adequately answered. Another pertinent question is to enquire into the state of being as one approaches and enters into death, and the content of the probable continuance of the Being that is punctuated with death on the physical and phenomenal side. (427)

