

## **Somaesthetic Encounters with Socrates: The Peaceful Warrior as Yogi**

*Dr. Vinod Balakrishnan, Swathi Elizabeth Kurian*

**Abstract:** *The body perfects itself: It is the subjective site of personal transformation, hence, the somaesthetic Body. It is, simultaneously, the objective site of inspired transformation, hence, the Mentored Body, the cared-for Body. This thesis is examined through Peaceful Warrior: The Graphic Novel (2010), which is Dan Millman's autobiografiction, illustrated by Andrew Weingartner. The paper interprets Dan Millman's journey by employing Richard Shusterman's theory of somaesthetics as well as the classical Indian treatise of Patanjali called the Yoga Sūtra. The paper is built around the idea of the "Mentor"- here, Socrates - who must guide the disciple (Dan Millman) to "greater perceptual acuity." To this end, it reflects on: 1. "Socrates" as an idea; 2. The relationship between the Field (which is the classical image of the Body) and the Farmer (here, the Mentor); 3. The building of the Peaceful Warrior, and 4. The culmination of the journey when the Peaceful Warrior becomes the Yogi.*

*The moment of awakening in the narrative is when Socrates declares to Dan that, "this world is a school" where one must discover his purpose. The Mentor guides the seeker towards his purpose. The seeker journeys towards the purpose by moving from the outermost somatic territory through routines called Bahiraṅga Sādhana into the inner territory of the mind involving routines called Antaraṅga Sādhana and, eventually, arrives at the innermost territory of the soul through routines called Antarātma Sādhana. The journey from the somatic territory towards the territory of the Soul takes the seeker through four degrees of wakefulness – sleep (Nidrāvasthā); dream (Svapnāvasthā); wakefulness (Jāgratāvasthā); eternal wakefulness (Turyāvasthā). The journey towards the Soul places somaesthetic demands that are satisfied by observing the eight aspects of Yoga: Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, Samādhi. In the process, the seeker traverses all the three domains of Yoga: Karmamārga (actions centred in the body); Jñānamārga (actions centred in the mind); Bhaktimārga (actions centred in the Soul). The seeker commits his body (the subjective site) to the purpose. The seeker is inspired by the Mentor to become a warrior as he battles the forces of inertia entrenched in him. When the peaceful warrior arrives at superconsciousness he completes the journey of the Yogi.*

**Keywords:** *Peaceful Warrior, Body, Mentor, Sleep, Wakefulness.*

*The Peaceful Warrior (1980) is Millman's autobiographical narrative about his spiritual-somaesthetic journey through modern dance and martial arts as well as his exploits on the trampoline and in gymnastics which bring him international attention. It is the account of an athlete's life which describes his commitment to the care of the body as the fine-tuned instrument for winning competitions involving somatic routines that demand aesthetic grace, hence, the rationale of reading Millman's journey as the road to somaesthetic perfection. The graphic novel, written 30 years after the book and four years after the film, departs from the suggestive*

language of the earlier narratives to be more direct and immediate as when Socrates provides Dan with the foreknowledge about the impending “Test.” It was what the wind whispered: “This world is a school. If you don’t learn the easy lessons, they get harder” (50).<sup>1</sup> There comes a time in the life of Millman, as also in the narrative, when he realizes that the purpose of training and winning competitions within the confines of a stadium is not the end for which one must be on the road but to understand that life itself is the bigger stadium in which one has to win. It is a proposition that demands a greater magnitude of training and, as for winning, one has to discover the ‘purpose.’

Unless one dedicates oneself totally – body, mind and soul – to the search, the ‘purpose’ would remain elusive, hence, the need to be spiritually committed to the quest. Ironically, that ‘purpose’ which lies buried within each one of us must be reached by a more arduous journey to far off lands where there are secrets waiting to be unraveled. During his discussion on the *Liezi*, which is a Daoist classic with lessons on somatic cultivation, Shusterman draws attention to the two journeys undertaken by the seeker– the “imperfect” outward travel and the “perfect” inward travel. The two travels are distinguished thus: “By outward travel we seek what we lack in things outside us, while by inward contemplation we find sufficiency in ourselves” (*TTB* 203).<sup>2</sup> And what would those journeys yield if one did not have the benefit of a map drawn up by a mentor who had travelled the road towards discovering the ‘purpose’ somaesthetically?

Millman’s closing remarks in the *Introduction to Peaceful Warrior: The Graphic Novel* captures the storyline of the narrative thus:

You are about to enter an adventure in which Socrates and Joy guide Dan along the peaceful warrior’s path – a mysterious passage through valleys of shadow – as Dan searches for the gateway to a brighter reality. In the process, you may discover the peaceful heart and warrior spirit in each of us. (5)<sup>3</sup>

The testimony of Millman points to the role of the mentor in the life of the peaceful warrior; the role of the body that must be mentored with care and the wakefulness that ensures the keenness of vision so necessary in the journey towards enlightenment. Socrates, Dan’s mentor, through care for the body transforms the latter into a “Peaceful Warrior” who must be sworn to the canon of “Excellence in the moment” (144). The path of the peaceful warrior must pass through the “valleys of shadow” that point to the phantoms of unrestrained consciousness that occlude mindfulness; one must quell these by conquering the monstrous wall of fear within. And, finally, there is the discovery of the warrior spirit, the potential energy which all of us possess at the time of our arrival and which must be realized through actions informed by body consciousness and mindfulness leading up to the vision of the continuum; of the here and the now, in which, each one of us is placed. In order to realize the continuum, one must necessarily be awake and watchful and not languish in illusions, dreams, delusions, and in the case of Dan, nightmares and night terrors.

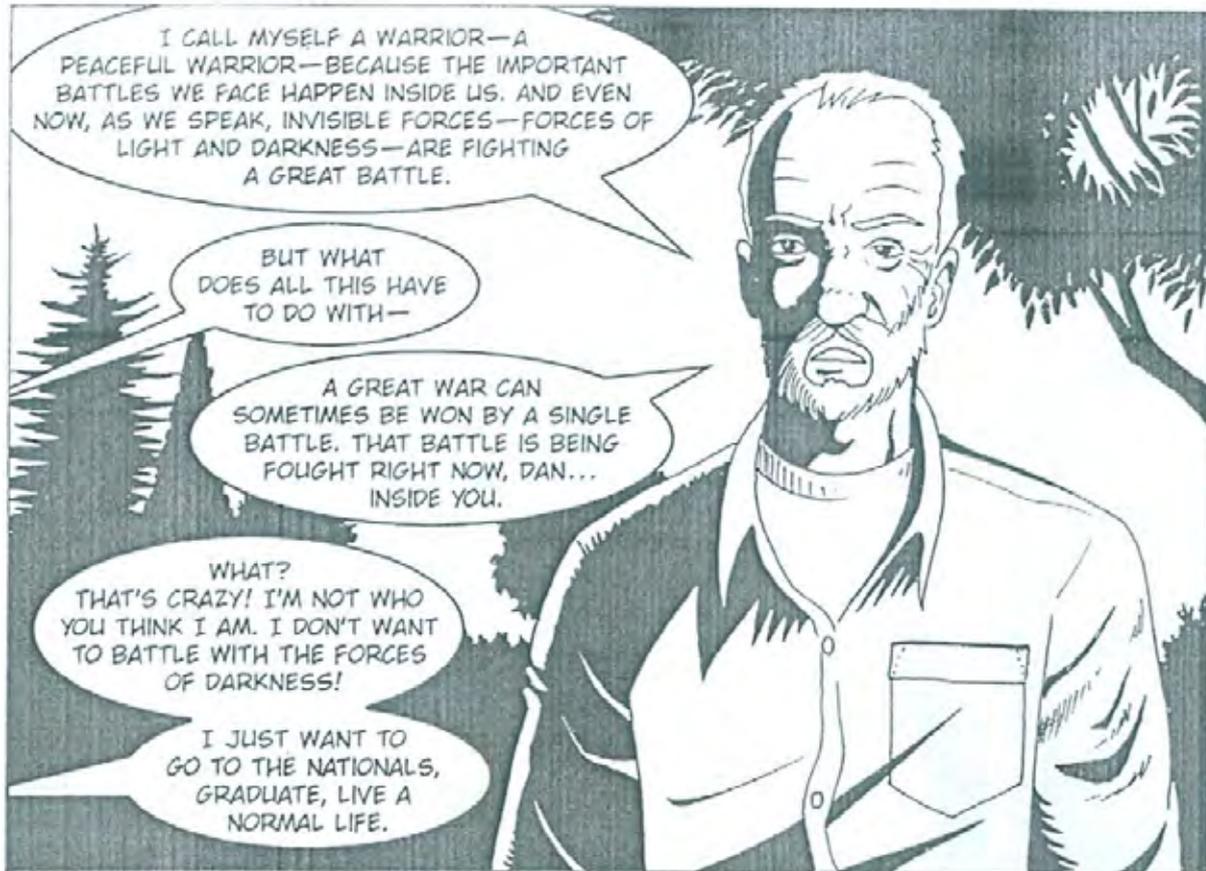
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1 Dan Millman, *Peaceful Warrior: The Graphic Novel*. Tiburan: H.J. Kramer, Novato: New World, 2010.

Subsequent references to *Peaceful Warrior* is abbreviated, *PW*. The publishing notice of *Peaceful Warrior: The Graphic Novel* (2010) mentions that the text copyright is held by Dan Millman while the illustration copyright is held by Andrew Winegarner. Millman’s personal attestation in the *Introduction* is that the Graphic Novel “contains many elements and scenes not found in either the original book or the movie. So, in collaboration with illustrator Andrew Winegarner, I’ve been able to show and tell the classic tale in a fresh way.” When he adapted his book for film in 1990 with a screenplay reflecting his vision, he did manage to get the producer interested but *Peaceful Warrior* which, eventually released in 2006, was scripted by Kevin Bernhardt which left Millman feeling a little thwarted by the arm twisting ways of Hollywood. The partnership with Andrew is Millman’s “opportunity to share the movie ...[he] had always envisioned up on the screen.”

2 Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge, 2012. Subsequent references to *Thinking through the Body* is abbreviated, *TTB*.

3 Millman, *PW*, 5.



The Peaceful Warrior

In the “Preface” to *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, Shusterman describes encounters with his Mentor, the Zen Master as “moments of struggle, frustration, failure, shame, and pain” which ultimately yielded “perfect happiness” (xiii).<sup>4</sup> While “perfect happiness,” as a phrase, is abstract and vague, even subjective, his rephrasing of that intense personal experience is more illuminative – “greater perceptual acuity”- which suggests that the encounter with a truly evolved mentor enables a bioenergetic enhancement of the human capacity to see. Shusterman is not alone in proffering, first, the tentative phrase that becomes more clean-cut in the re-phrasing. Wordsworth on his return to Tintern Abbey after five long years, captures the evolution of the poet’s “greater perceptual acuity,” first, in an inexact phrase: “sensations sweet” which is then, tellingly and somaesthetically, rephrased: Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,/And passing even into my purer mind/ With tranquil restoration.”

The third *sūtra* (aphorism) in *SamādhiPāda* (on true emancipation), the first chapter of the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patanjali, refers to “greater perceptual acuity” as a state of the seeker who has conquered the dissipations caused when consciousness (*citta*) is unbridled. The aphorism, first, spells out a cryptic phrase: *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam*.<sup>5</sup> It begins with the adverb, ‘then’ (*tadā*) which implies that the speaker refers to the stage in the development of the seeker when the distractions of the mind, caused by the ceaseless waves of consciousness, are, eventually, stilled to the supreme degree of concentration (*ekāgratā*). The adverb, ‘then,’ points to the seeker

4 Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge, 2008. Subsequent references to *Body Consciousness* abbreviated, BC.

5 BKS Iyenger, *Light on the Yogasutra of Patanjali*. Delhi: Indus imprint of Harper Collins, 1993. Subsequent references to *Light on Yogasutra* is abbreviated, LOY.

as a warrior who gradually annexes the somatic territories from the outermost layer of the skin to the innermost self through the intervening territories of the muscles, the bones, the nerves, the mind, the intellect, the will and the consciousness. The true state (*svarūpe*, here the splendor of the soul) abides or radiates (*avasthānam*) and it is attained by the seeker who becomes the illumined soul or the all-seeing (*draṣṭuh*).

The shortest road to the adverb, ‘then’ is the longest road informed by the discipline implicit in the verb “act” in accordance with the instructions laid out by the mentor, Patanjali. The second chapter of the *Yoga Sūtra* called, *Sādhana Pāda* (or the way of purposeful repetitious actions) commences with the three-fold commitment demanded of the seeker: *tapah svādhyāya Īshwarapraṇidhānāni Kriyāyogaḥ*. The yoga of action, *Kriyāyoga*, insists that the seeker possesses an ardent desire like an unquenchable thirst (*tapah*); the unflagging attention required by self-study (*svādhyāya*)<sup>6</sup>; the absolute faith in the Mentor’s powers to inspire and move one towards perfection (*Īshwarapraṇidhānāni*).<sup>7</sup> The first of the 55 aphorisms of the second chapter of the *Yoga Sūtras*, crystallizes the three paths open to the seeker: the path of action implicit in the first commitment called *Karmamārga*; the path of knowledge implicit in the second commitment called *Jñānamārga*; the path of devotion implicit in the third commitment called *Bhaktimārga*.<sup>8</sup>

The three paths may very well be the three approaches open to the seeker but, in the map possessed by the peaceful warrior, the paths lead one to the other – from the outermost territories of the body to the innermost territory. The somaesthetic discipline of the external territories called *Bahiraṅga Sādhana*,<sup>9</sup> involves the first four aspects of Yoga: First, the disciplining of the body through vows of abstention, control and self-restraint (*Yama*); Second, the disciplining through a strict observance of the rules and precepts inscribed in the scriptures (*Niyama*); Third, the disciplining of the body by perfecting posture (*Āsana*); Fourth, the discipline of regulating and controlling of breath (*Prāṇāyāma*).

The subdual of the external territories leads the peaceful warrior to the inner territories. So, *Bahiraṅga Sādhana* must needs graduate towards *Antaraṅga Sādhana*, involving the next two levels of yogic discipline called *Pratyāhāra* when the seeker grapples with the five senses so as to draw them within facilitating the inward journey towards *Dhāraṇā* where the focus is on achieving equipoise and equanimity through rigorous concentration routines. *Antaraṅga Sādhana* begins externally where *Bahiraṅga Sādhana* leaves off and sets its course inward into the mind. This is the stage when *Karmamārga* leads to the stage of complete absorption in the quest for knowledge through self-study: *svādhyāya* which informs the path of knowledge implicit in the second commitment called *Jñānamārga*.

Walking the path of knowledge, it dawns on the seeker that the journey is complete only when it reaches the inner most territory of the soul. It is, in Wordsworthian terms, the “passing ... into the purer mind/ With tranquil restoration” or, in Shusterman’s terms, the attainment of complete identification between the seeker and the seer (the soul) –the enlightenment that is tantamount to “greater perceptual acuity.”<sup>10</sup> The passing “into the purer mind” requires an unalloyed faith in the spirit of the Mentor which is the path of devotion and complete self-abnegation: the *Bhaktimārga*. The path of devotion involves the last two aspects of yogic discipline: 1. *Dhyāna* and 2. *Samādhi*. It begins where the seeker achieves equipoise of mind (*Antaraṅga Sādhana*)

6 Iyengar, LOY, 344.

7 Ibid., 330.

8 Ibid., 108.

9 Ibid., 324.

10 Richard Shusterman, “Preface,” BC, xiii.

but rises to levels of wakefulness and watchfulness (*Antarātma Sādhana*). The seventh aspect of Yoga, *Dhyāna* is the discipline when the seeker meditates and is attentive to the subtle impulses that cause the awakening from within. When the seeker, as peaceful warrior, watches the body as the medium that conducts these subtle impulses towards superconsciousness, the eighth and final aspect of the yogic discipline, *Samādhi*, is achieved.

Dan Millman and Richard Shusterman are kindred spirits as they undertake identical journeys: Dan's journey to San Francisco, Hawaii, India, Hong Kong and Japan through somaesthetic education in aikido and yoga is matched by Shusterman's journey to Jerusalem, Hiroshima, Beijing, and Shandong through somaesthetic education in the Feldenkrais method and Zen meditation. The "larger lesson" to be learned from the peregrinations of these two seekers is that the self has an "essential dependence on environmental others" (BC 213).<sup>11</sup> Both Millman and Shusterman have acknowledged the role of mentors in their respective journeys of discovery: Shusterman provides a meditative account of his formation under the tutelage of Zen Master, Roshi Inoue Kido when he lived and trained in the Zen cloister, the Shorinkutsu-dojo (TTB 302-314). Millman narrates his encounters with a sage-like man, whom he first encounters in a dream before, actually, meeting him in the gas station; whom he 'nicknames', Socrates.

## Socrates

'Socrates' is not the real name of the old man whom Dan meets in the gas station. Towards the end of the narrative, when the heart-monitor flatlines suggesting the passing away of Socrates, the caption reads: "And death. The passing of a sage, a warrior, a mentor, a friend" (152).<sup>12</sup> To Dan, Socrates was all these and much more. After all, it was the strange old man who first drew the restless Dan's attention to the irony of his life: "Young guy like you. In a hurry. Needs directions but isn't listening." Dan's naïve reply is that he, "Gotta go. Need to get some sleep." The old man is heard teasing: "Maybe you need to wake up." Dan's response to this series of repartees is by contriving a name to playfully dismiss the intriguing old man: "You're quite the philosopher, Socrates" (35).<sup>13</sup> Just then he realizes that by some mysterious prescience he got the appropriate name for the one who tells him that he "Wouldn't mind one last student" (37) who was "Obviously [in] need of a teacher" (37).



Listen: You are Asleep

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>12</sup> Millman, PW, 152.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 22, 27, 29, 33, 34, 41, 79.

Socrates was not making a facetious comment when he picked Dan to be the “one last student.” On the contrary, he was waiting like the “Gardner [who] plants the seeds” (159), in the most fertile soil so that the lessons of life can be conducted through the body and the mind of that impassioned seeker. Perhaps Dan had seen in Socrates the coming together of *so* which is Greek for “whole, unwounded, safe” and *kratos* which is “power.” So, “Socrates” is that continuum of enlightenment or Buddha-hood who appears, first, as the alternative to the “Dark Specter” (22) that terrifies Dan in his sleep; then, during his real encounter with the old man of his dream, Dan beholds Socrates perform an incredible and mystifying stunt to land on the roof of the gas station (29); later, the old man shocks Dan by narrating his own dream in which he saw the latter as a nine-year old on a roof top, too terrified to jump (33); also, Socrates lets Dan in on the secret to his ability to catch the “wrench” (34) flung at him even as his back was turned to the approaching tool or when he managed to lob the orange peel in the trash can without looking (41) as the result of “Body Wisdom” (41). As Dan is on, what the doctors feel, the long road to repair with his thigh bone shattered into 40 pieces after his motorbike rammed into a speeding car, Socrates puts him on the table to give him “A Jump Start” (79) by rubbing the damaged parts of the body with his hands that are bioenergetically charged; finally, after Dan survives the “Great Battle” in which “Invisible forces – forces of Light and Darkness- are fighting” (52) within and thus becomes “A Peaceful Warrior” he asks to see the real Socrates who reveals himself containing Whitmanesque “multitudes,” described by the caption thus: “The next moment, fleeting images appear around Socrates – Identities from other times, places and cultures” (160).



Whitman: “I contain multitudes”

## The Field and the Farmer

The Gardner plants the seeds only in fertile soil as his goal is to enable their germination that perpetuates vital life. The soil bears and enwraps the seed like the protective womb. It patiently presides over the gestation when potential vitality is transformed into active vitality. The soil holds the roots firmly so that the plant can stand even as it unfetters the shoots that break out of the subterranean darkness into the light of luxuriant growth. Dan Millman, as the fertile soil in whom Socrates plants the seeds must cling to the roots foregrounding the necessity for the body to remain ready, resilient and responsive. The body anchors us to the history of this world even as it conducts the spirit to germinate and flower into light and emancipation. In the context of “Body Consciousness and Performance,” Shusterman refers to the *Guanzi*, a Dao text of the middle of the fourth century BC which insists on “inner cultivation” as a “method to grasp the Dao and thereby achieve the most effective perception and most successful manner of action” (TTB 203).<sup>14</sup> In order for the seed of the Dao to be perpetuated it must germinate in the body of the seeker as perfection in performance before it, spiritually, flowers into “the most effective perception.”



The Gardener and the Seed

During the course of the 196 aphorisms in the *Yoga Sūtra*, the body of the seeker is named in four different ways: a. *Kṣetram* (*Sādhana Pāda*: 4); b. *Kāyā* (*Sādhana Pāda*: 43; *Vibhūti Pāda*: 21, 30, 46); c. *Śarīra* (*Vibhūti Pāda*: 39); d. *Dehā* (*Vibhūti Pāda*: 44). While all the four refer to the perishable body, it is the reference to the body as, *Kṣetram*, which is of the greatest significance because it metaphorizes the body as the fertile cultivable soil. *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1890) by V.S. Apte<sup>15</sup> registers fourteen different but related meanings; a few of which are: i Place, abode, region, repository; ii. A sacred spot, a place of pilgrimage; iii. Place of origin; iv. The sphere of action, the body (regarded as the field for the working of the soul); v. The mind (388). As a root word, *Kṣetram* also takes the suffix *Pālah* (*Kṣetrapālah*) which has three different but related meanings: i. a man employed to guard a field; ii. a deity protecting fields; iii. an epithet of *Śiva* (the Supreme Yogi, the Supreme Dancer, the generative spirit which destroys in order to create, the Masculine Principle, the Supreme Warrior, the eternally awake). The

<sup>14</sup> Shusterman, TTB, 203.

<sup>15</sup> Vaman Shivram Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit- English Dictionary*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Bombay: Gopal Narayan, 1924.

word, *Kṣetram* suffixed with the particle, *Jñā* (*Kṣetraññā*) has three meanings: i. a husbandman; ii. a sage, one who has spiritual knowledge; iii. the soul. Apte also records the two earliest instances in Sanskrit literature where the body is likened to the fertile soil with its spiritual dimensions emphasized: first, the 4<sup>th</sup> BCE text, *the Bhagavad Gita*<sup>16</sup> and then the 5<sup>th</sup> CE play by Kalidasa, *Kumārasambhavam*.<sup>17</sup>

The *Bhagavad Gita*, believed to have been in existence 800 years before the *Yoga Sūtra*, must be the site of the earliest reference to the body as the cultivable field, *Kṣetram*. The 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, *Kṣetra-Kṣetraññā Yoga*, which provides a comprehensive exposition of the meditation on the imperishable Universal Spirit, is translated by Swami Chinmayananda in his commentary as “The Field and Its Knower” (796). The chapter opens with Arjuna supplicating before Lord Krishna for the knowledge about Matter (*Prakṛiti*) and Spirit (*Puruṣa*) as also the Field and the Knower-of-the-Field. Lord Krishna replies in 34 *slokas*(couplets) beginning with the terms of reference: “This body, O Kaunteya [the epithet of Arjuna, as he is born to Kunti], is called the Field [*Kṣetram*], and he who knows it is called, *Kṣetraññā* (the *Knower-of-the-Field*) by those who know them ... i.e., by the sages” (800). The seeker who identifies completely with the pluralistic world and its myriad entanglements is said to be asleep (*Nidrāvasthā*) and in a dream-state (*Svapnāvasthā*). When the individual realizes that the body as Matter does conduct the Spirit or Pure Consciousness, it begins to discriminate between that which imprisons the body and that which unshackles the body. The beginning of discrimination is the beginning of wakefulness (*Jāgratāvasthā*) that puts the seeker on the road to becoming the *Knower-of-the-Field* when it dawns that the seeker is “Pure Consciousness” which has freed itself from the attachment of knowing. This state of superconsciousness is a state of absolute emancipation called (*Turyāvasthā*). The Sixth Canto of Kalidasa’s *Kumārasambhavam* (The birth of Kumara or Karthikeya to Shiva and Parvathi in order to slay the demon Tarakasura) reads: “*Yogino yam vichinvanthi Kṣetrābhyantaravarthinam*” (Canto VI: sloka 77). It means that evolved men and women (*Yogino*) seek out (*vichinvanthi*) those who have awoken from the stupor of worldly entanglements and who have cultivated the life of abiding within the body (*Kṣetrābhyantaravarthinam*).

Besides the reference to the body as the field, the Fourth Chapter of the *Yoga Sūtra* that maps the road towards complete emancipation, *KaivalyaPāda*, emphasizes the necessity for regulating one’s energies so as to come into Pure Consciousness. It requires the seeker to be watchful of the ceaseless distractions, dissipations, and delusions in order to remain focused, single-pointedly, on the goal. To animate this point, the Fourth aphorism likens the discipline of channeling one’s energies to the ministrations of the Farmer: “*nimittam aprayojakam prakṛtīnām varāṇabhedah tu tataḥ kṣhetrikavat*” (249). B.K.S. Iyengar in his *Light on the Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali*, elucidates the aphorism thus:

Culture of the sprouted consciousness is of paramount importance in yoga. As a farmer [*kṣhetrikavat*] builds dykes between fields to regulate the flow of water, evolved yogis channel the abundant flow of nature’s energy to free themselves from the bondage of their actions and develop spiritual insight. (249)<sup>18</sup>

The relationship between the Farmer/Gardner/Socrates and the Field/Seed/Dan is based on the principle of harmony between the immediate field of action, so evocatively captured by

16 Chinmayananda Swami, *The Holy Geeta*. Mumbai: Central Chinmayananda Trust, 1992.

17 Kalidasa, *Kumara Sambhavam*. Translated by KuttyKrishnamaral. Kozhicodu: Mathrubumi.

18 Iyengar, LOY, 249.

William James in the phrase, “the supreme theatre of human strenuousness” (BC 170)<sup>19</sup> and the circumambient universe whose vernal instincts influence our thoughts and consciousness like the seasons influencing the germinating seed. The relationship is understood as that fine tension between the care of the Farmer (which is more about unconditional giving) and the resilience or the give of the Field (which is more about absolute trust in the hands of the tiller). When Dan wanted to leap from the rooftop for the first time, he was petrified by self-doubt and dread. It appears that his father’s advice was not adequately inspiring. Socrates, steps into Dan’s life after his father’s death, and picks up the thread from where his father left off when he draws attention to the “Destiny [which] ... began some years ago ... on a rooftop. Now it’s time for you to leap again. And I may be able to help you” (52).<sup>20</sup> It is this help which Socrates extends to Dan that must be examined in the context of the Farmer’s care towards the germinating seed.

### Building the Peaceful Warrior

There are, in fact, three mentor-figures in the narrative: Dan’s father; his coach, Lopez; and the Farmer, Socrates. The question one must ask at this juncture is: Who among the three would count as the real mentor? Dan’s father brought him into the world and gave him the first valuable lesson about life: “It’s OK to be afraid, Danny. We all feel scared sometimes ... but you can’t let the fear stop you” (9). Those encouraging words lend succor and strength to Dan to perform routines on the trampoline and in the gymnasium. He resolves to make a career in gymnastics which brings into his life the second father-figure: his coach, Lopez. When he receives the news of Mr. Millman’s death, coach, Lopez does not convey the news to Dan immediately. He thinks about the competition where he expects Dan’s performance on the Uneven Bars to increase the chances of the UC Berkeley team (11). In fact, the words with which the coach is introduced provide a telling profile of the man who can only be obsessed with: “If everyone hits, we have a shot to win this” (11). In the eyes of his friends, Dan is that “Secret Weapon” (42) who must be unleashed during the competitions. Coach Lopez does not see a greater purpose than that for Dan, the gymnast, when he intervenes during a lean patch in order to advise him: “Take your risks in the *gym*, not in life. In life, Dan, play it safe” (54). Under the care of his father and later his coach, Dan is but a weapon who will be prevailed upon and coerced into conforming with the designs that others have chalked with little possibility of discovering one’s purpose in life or pausing to see the beckoning hand of destiny. His life takes a momentous turn when he encounters, in the gas station, Socrates for whom Dan is not as much a “weapon” as he is himself the “Peaceful Warrior.”

Actually, the graphic narrative makes a distinct departure from both the film and the novel, in that, it suggests a chance meeting between Socrates and the coach when they “Struck up a conversation. He [Socrates] shared some interesting ideas that changed my thinking” (144). Coach Lopez brings the wisdom gleaned from that encounter to prepare the gymnasts for their final performance at the NCAA Championship: “That old guy reminded me that we can’t control any outcomes in life, only our efforts. All we can do is show up and do our best” (144). While coach Lopez would take the wisdom received from Socrates to enhance his chances in the Gymnastics arena, the latter (on his death-bed) plants the same seed of wisdom in the soil of Dan’s life to watch the germination of actions born out of the spirit of following one’s vision; doing what one is born to do and what one has worked for (142). Shusterman invokes the “care of the self” implicit in the Japanese philosophy of personal cultivation called, *shugyō* where

19 Shusterman, BC, 170.

20 Millman, PW, 9, 11,42, 54.

there is an equal emphasis on the body as on the mind as, together, enabling “self-knowledge and self-cultivation” (BC 18). The exhortation of Socrates would require Dan to recalibrate his gymnast’s body into the field of the “Peaceful Warrior” who must attend to “the concrete reality of the present moment” (TTB 312) with “greater mindfulness” (312) so as to experience the “somatic symphony”(313) when the music of “an overwhelming impersonal perception of breathing that pervade[s] all ... [the] consciousness” is apprehended as an eternal wakefulness or superconsciousness.

Between the two Acts (Act I: the Gymnast and Act II: the Peaceful Warrior) comes the dramatic Interlude of the motorbike accident whose gravity becomes clear when the surgeon reads Dan’s X-ray: “Fractured Right Femur ... badly mangled... about forty pieces” (PW 59). The interlude does mark the turn that Dan’s life takes towards the ‘purpose’. It has an intensity all its own with Dan in a semi-conscious state in which he remembers a flurry of activity and visits by several people. The episodes in the hospital begin in despair and culminate in Dan’s tryst with himself and the higher purpose within him which suggest the trajectory of the damaged gymnast who must repair his body and his mind before beginning the journey of the “Peaceful Warrior.” It begins with the surgeons agreeing on the prognosis that his gymnastics days are all but over and it would be a miracle if he would be able to walk again. Later, when a worried coach Lopez confers with nurse, Valerie, about Dan’s chances of competing again, he is told that they are not even remote. In his delirium, Dan has nightmares of being chased by the “Dark Specter” (59-60). With a gorge suddenly in front of him, Dan decides to dive across the chasm to “save his life” (60) “- or maybe save his soul” (60). Miraculously, a hand materializes in the darkness- the hand of Socrates - which grabs his wrist and leverages him to safety. Socrates, indeed, visits Dan in the hospital. He “Lays his hands on Dan’s injured leg... and heart” (61). A few days later, Joy, Socrates’s protégé, stays at Dan’s side while he is asleep. The gesture of touching the injured leg and the heart is symbolic of Socrates transmitting his vital energies which are a result of “Clean Living” (80),<sup>21</sup> in order to heal the broken body and the distraught mind. B.K.S. Iyengar’s notes on the 35<sup>th</sup> aphorism of the third chapter of the *Yoga Sūtra* add credence to the fact that Socrates is mending the body and mind of Dan by spiritually overhauling his constitution:

The citadel of *puruṣha* [the soul which is the seer] is the heart. It is *anāhatacakra*, the seat of pure knowledge as well as of consciousness. By *saṁyama* [perfect integration of body and mind which Shusterman calls a “somatic symphony”], a yogi [like Socrates] can become aware of consciousness and of true, pure knowledge. He learns to unfold and tap the source of his being, and identify himself with the Supreme. (216)<sup>22</sup>

It is this spiritual energy, communicated by Socrates to Dan during such “Jump Start[s]” (79) that enables his somaesthetic reconditioning. The teacher also tells the student that he is in a stupor, in a dream visited by illusions that are mistaken for reality. The latter is “Missing the big picture” because he is “Like a fly sitting on a TV screen” (66) distracted by the myriad tiny dots. And to catch the meaning of Socrates’s words Dan must wake up. And Dan would not wake up until he realizes that he has been in deep sleep (66).

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21 Millman, PW, 59,60,61,80

22 Iyengar, LOY, 216



Healing: The Anahata Chakra

### The Peaceful Warrior as Yogi

The entry for “Mentor” in *Brewer’s Book of Myth and Legend* reads as follows:

A guide, a wise and faithful counselor; so called from Mentor, a friend of ULYSSES, whose form MINERVA assumed when she accompanied TELEMACHUS in his search for his father. (181)<sup>23</sup>

The mythological description of Mentor points to the human and the divine becoming one; of the human being inspired by the divine in order to become charged with purpose. In the case of Telemachus, Mentor takes the place of his father, Ulysses, only after the “Supramental descent” (Sri Aurobindo’s pregnant phrase)<sup>24</sup> of Minerva into the human person thus bringing to the body of the warrior the superconsciousness, in which empowered state, he leads Telemachus and shows him the way. Shusterman, in *Body Consciousness*, alludes to the power one comes into when the human and the divine or infinite fuse into one by invoking Emerson:

We do few things by muscular force, but we place ourselves in such attitudes as to bring the force of gravity, that is, the weight of the planet, to bear upon the spade or the axe we wield. In short, ...we seek not to use our own, but to bring a quite infinite force to bear. (215)<sup>25</sup>

Socrates becomes such a divinely inspired Mentor to Dan when, on the death-bed he tells the latter: “My journey is nearly over. Yours is just beginning. Wherever you step, the path will

23 J.C Cooper. ed., *Brewer’s Book of Myth and Legend*. Oxford: Helicon, 1993.

24 “Sri Aurobindo’s teaching and spiritual method.” Auroville: The City of Dawn. 13 Aug. 2014. Online. 18 Nov 2015. <http://www.auroville.org/contents/575>.

25 Shusterman, BC, 215.

appear. Trust that. And whatever you face ... I'll be there. We're part of one another's destiny" (142). Socrates, indeed, is with Dan at every step of the journey guiding him through the triple-roads of Action, Knowledge and Devotion; through the triple-discipline that begins at the External Somatic Territory, passes through the Internal Territory of the Mind and comes to rest at the Innermost Territory of the Soul; involving the eight aspects of Ethical Restraints, Ethical Observances, Postures, Expansion of the Vital Energy through Breathing, Withdrawal of the Senses into the Mind, Concentration, Meditation and Emancipation; and through the four degrees of consciousness beginning with Sleep, Dream, Wakefulness and Eternal Emancipation or the state of superconsciousness.

The path of Action (*Karmamārga*) begins as the discipline of self-cultivation at the outermost somatic territory (*Bahirāṅga Sādhana*). The actions involve wrestling with the neglected soil whose potential remains because it is untapped due to the smugness that makes Dan accept his achievements in gymnastics as the ultimate purpose of his life. He is too bedazzled by the glory and the fanfare to be bothered about the larger purpose of life. His life as a gymnast appears to be one filled with somaesthetic consciousness yet he languishes between the dream-state (*Svapnāvasthā*) and the sleep-state (*Nidrāvasthā*). Socrates, the Mentor, diagnoses the condition by likening Dan to "a fly sitting on the TV screen" which can only make him see the "dots" and miss the "big picture." He also cautions him about the need to "Answer the phone" when "Destiny calls" (66). So long as Dan is like the fly, he would see only the specters in his dream and so long as he is asleep he would not hear Destiny's phone call. He must needs break out of the "unconscious consciousness" in order to cultivate the keener faculties of seeing and hearing. Dan, who is actually hobbling around with a pair of crutches, in more than one sense, needs help. Socrates, vividly and objectively, reflects on the young man's condition thus: "At night, in your dreams, you walk, talk, maybe fly, all the while thinking you're awake. Your life is like a dream. Same is true for most people. You can't wake up until you realize you're asleep" (66).

The first signs of the young man making the momentous turn is when he confesses to the old man that he is scared of him. Moreover, he admits that though he may not be ready to learn what Socrates wants to teach or hear what the latter wants to say, he is still "willing to listen" only to be forewarned by the latter that "there are going to be conditions" (78), signaling the first stage of the Peaceful Warrior as *Yogi* called, *Yama* which imposes five moral restraints as spelt out in the 30<sup>th</sup> aphorism of the *Sādhana Pāda: ahimsā satya asteya brahmacarya aparigrahaḥ yamāḥ*. (LOY 142)<sup>26</sup> (Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence and contentment [constitute] *Yama*). Dan is soon appalled to hear that he would have to eschew protein, meat, desserts, beer, coffee and instead live on water, herb tea, juice, salads, fruits, whole grains, tofu, sprouts, seeds. When Socrates tells the reluctant young man with a ravenous appetite: "You want special healing, you apply special discipline" (85), he is guiding the latter towards cleansing his body and mind through a diet regimen so essential for the pursuit of self-knowledge implicit in the five-fold observance called *Niyama* which prescribes *śauca santoṣa tapaḥ svādhyāya Īshwarapraṇidhānāni niyamāḥ* (*Sādhana Pāda* 32)<sup>27</sup> (LOY 144) which translates as: cleanliness, cheerfulness, a burning desire, self-cultivation, and surrender to the preceptor constituting *Niyama*. After a week of somatic conditioning Dan declares to Socrates that he has put away the crutches, he has finished his fast and is ready to begin training. The old man makes the disciple sit in an imaginary chair with the back against the wall even as he gently strokes the cat, Oscar. Dan is hardly able to hold the posture for 20 minutes and the old man observes: "That's because your muscles are

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26 Iyengar, LOY, 142.

27 Ibid., 144.

too tense. They waste energy fighting one another. Not like Oscar here” (PW 91). He tells Dan that “Fear can paralyze the muscles just when you need to act. So go deep. Open the body, release the past. Deeper – down to the bones!” (91). By making the disciple listen to the body as if it is a violin which needs fine tuning, Socrates emphasizes the need for prolonged ease of posture as a prelude to long hours of meditation and thus initiates the former into the third aspect of Yoga called, *Āsana*. The 46<sup>th</sup> aphorism of the *Sādhana Pād* says: *sthira sukham āsanam*. (LOY 157).<sup>28</sup> The principle of the *āsanamis* that it must be a posture that can be sustained with steadiness and firmness (*sthira*) even as it fills the body with a sense of felicity and transport (*sukham*). In the early days of training with the old man, Dan becomes more high-strung on account of the restraints, observances and routines. He is puzzled by the preceptor’s words that it is imperative to go through the “Growing up before showing up” (101) as he is, equally, puzzled by the cryptic suggestion that the body and mind “Must ripen like fruit” (101). The warrior on the road to ripening arrives (like a fruit) at the doorstep of Joseph, the restaurateur, who conducts Dan into the final stage of *Bahiraṅga Sādhana*, involving the regulation of breath called *Prāṇāyāma*: “That’s it. Breathe into your belly. When you notice any thoughts or feelings coming up, just let ‘em flow by like a river. No need to cling to anything, just let it be ...” (101). *Bahiraṅga Sādhana* is the stage when the somatic frontier is penetrated in order to enter the territory of the mercurial mind.

The penetration into the mind is not achieved by battering the wall of dreams and distracting consciousness but by a delicate maneuver of withdrawing the senses which are entrenched in the body. These minions of the mind prefer to keep consciousness anchored in the body by conjuring a concatenation of dreams and specters that occupy the mind in a false sense of reality and a false purpose of life. It is critical for the Peaceful Warrior to realize that the worldly sense of reality is a way of living life as in a dream. In order to shake off the specters one must begin to see that one has been sleeping. The point at which the seeker receives the intimation that he has been asleep after all is the beginning of *Antaraṅga Sādhana*. The breathing routines of *Prāṇāyāma* work to release the senses from their firm hold on the somatic territory even as *Āsana* works to release the tension that has built up in the muscles. In fact, the path of Knowledge, *Jñānamārga*, begins with the flow of awareness that the mind opens, not like a castle door but like the sluice gate of a dam which, in Shusterman’s “simple-sounding injunction [is] to live one’s life in a waking state” (TTB 291) or in Patanjali’s phrase is: *Jāgratāvasthā*.

Socrates enables the penetration of the somatic territory by instructing Dan to carry a notebook to register all the random thoughts that fade in and fade out of his mind (PW 117). It takes Dan hardly a day to realize that the notebook is inadequate to contain the cascade of thoughts erupting from the mind. Socrates likens the mind to “a barking dog” (119). A dog cannot but bark. The way to control the dog is to keep it on a leash and not “let it pull ... [us] down the street” (119). Being led by one’s thoughts is to live like a “puppet on a string” (119). One must come into wakefulness to perceive this as the fact about the mind so as to be able to watch it spew its conjurations. In order to keep the mind-dog on a leash, even as it barks its thoughts, is to withdraw into a position of vantage “to notice what passes through ... [one’s] awareness” (119). It is imperative, then, to bridle the almost irrepressible senses in order to withdraw into oneself and watch the mind-dog bark. *Jāgratāvasthā* or the state of wakefulness enjoins the seeker to take absolute control of the senses which is implicit in the 55<sup>th</sup> aphorism which defines *Pratyāhāra* as *paramāvaśyatā* (supreme control) of the senses (*indriyāṇām*). The

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28 Iyengar, LOY, 157.

aphorism reads as follows: *tataḥ paramāvaśyatā indriyāṇām*. (LOY 170).<sup>29</sup> The adverb, *tataḥ* (then) is a critical link in this aphorism as it suggests the Yogi's transition from the discipline of regulated breathing (*Prāṇāyāma*), through ingathering of the senses (*Pratyāhāra*) towards the higher state of *Dhāraṇā* which involves the practice of harnessing attention in order to achieve concentration and to focus on the higher purpose of attaining to superconsciousness. The first aphorism of the third chapter, which is about the innermost quest for esoteric accomplishments (*VibhūtiPāda*), characterizes *Dhāraṇā* as the practice of binding or tethering (*bandhaḥ*) the consciousness (*cittasya*) to one place or region (*deśa*): *deśa bandhaḥ cittasya dhāraṇā*. The phase of *Antaraṅga Sādhana* is marked by an inner wakefulness when Dan realizes that he has to merely "let'em [thoughts or feelings that erupt in the mind] flow by like a river. [There is, indeed] no need to cling to anything, just let it be ..." That way, he ensures that he does not mander into the mundane streets led by the mind-dog. The adverb, *tataḥ*, also signposts that the seeker, who is now capable of watching the mind, is ready to ascend the higher rungs of *yoga* which are beyond somatic fine-tuning (*Bahiraṅga Sādhana*) and mind-watching (*Antaraṅga Sādhana*); the seeker enters the final stage of eternal wakefulness: *Antarātma Sādhana*.

Dan's journey is unique when compared to the journeys commonly undertaken by others. Common men approach journeys, sometimes with a map, sometimes with an unfinished business in mind, and sometimes with a sense of adventure whose outcomes are within the realm of communicability. Dan's journey, unlike the common journeys, takes place without a map, without a worldly purpose and beyond the communicative efficacy of ordinary men. It begins in the somatic territory and moves inwards into the cognitive and metacognitive realms of the intelligence through a wakefulness that puts behind the days when the body was languishing in the successive cycles of dream and sleep. His journey cannot be conducted with a map as the bearings of the mental geography require one to plot the regions differently and the routines of *Antaraṅga Sādhana* underline a cartography that carefully watches the bounds of the mind. So, there are no maps because there cannot be any, as the seeker is himself the journey and the journeyman whose road appears and opens even as its experiences are registered through the body and the mind. Moreover, the seeker submits to an experience whose basis is self-discovery which makes it difficult to decide if he/she has arrived at the destination. To the common traveler, the terminus marks the distance covered and the end of an exhausting affair. The huge uncertainty in the Peaceful Warrior's journey necessitates the presence of the Mentor whose care lends succor to the seeking. The support of the Mentor to the mentee is equal to the measure of penance (*Karmamārga*), the measure of knowledge (*Jñānamārga*) and the measure of identification with the Seer, which is the Soul (*Bhaktimārga*).

Socrates, whose presence goes with the Peaceful Warrior, guides Dan beyond the somatic territory ("felt in the blood" beyond Sleep and Dream); beyond the super-rational territory of the mind ("felt along the heart" beyond wakefulness) in order to arrive at the innermost territory ("into the purer mind with tranquil restoration" which is the stage of superconsciousness and eternal wakefulness – *Turyāvasthā*). It marks Dan's arrival at *Antarātma Sādhana* which, happening as it does in the innermost realm of the soul, is, essentially ineffable experience that is incommunicable. Dan arrives at *Antarātma Sādhana* after "a nine-year journey around the world" (PW 154) and "travels into the hidden recesses of his mind and heart" (155) in order to "prepare ... for something that ... [he] cannot yet see or taste or touch" (155). He only receives a beckoning intuition that it is "out there waiting" (155) for him. During this "final ascent [to superconsciousness] that may deliver or destroy him" (161), he understands that "a part of

29 Iyengar, LOY ,170.

Socrates lives within him now” (156). This reminds us of Minerva’s descent into the person of Mentor who, thus inspired and informed, is able to show Telemachus the way.

The site in the narrative where Dan receives the call to commence *Antarātma Sādhanā* is “the remote wilderness high in Sierra Nevada” (156). The door to his soul opens the moment he resolves “to face the darkness” that had tormented and hounded him all his life. As if on cue, Socrates makes his final appearance and instructs Dan to “open all [the] ... senses. Follow the moon. [As] it leads to the gateway” (159). The moon, an archetype of the mind, should light the Peaceful Warrior’s way during the final ascent. Dan who has gone beyond Sleep, Dream and Wakefulness must open all the senses to conduct the flow of superconsciousness. Having travelled beyond the practice of *Dhāraṇā*, he accomplishes the integration of ingathered energies and like the farmer (*kṣhetrikavat*) who digs canals to guide water, Dan begins an intense meditation on the fundamental questions that have remained unanswered: “Who am I?”; “What is the purpose of my life?”; “Where is the gateway beyond the mind, beyond past and future, beyond life and death?” (156).

The fourth chapter of the *Yoga Sūtras* called *Kaivalya Pāda*, describes the journey into the “purer mind” which begins in meditation (*Dhyāna*) and culminates in “tranquil restoration” or *Samādhi*. By meditating on the fundamental questions, Dan arrives at a purer consciousness that is subtle and quite different from the earlier consciousness of his wakeful state. Earlier, while watching his mind-dog, he was able to see how consciousness was born, how it flowered into a concern and how it occupied him like an inescapable purpose. Now, with the energies flowing single-mindedly into fundamental questions he moves towards an immaculate state where consciousness is incapable of inscribing any purpose or influencing any action. The futility of attachment to the conjurations of consciousness dawns on his senses which are, on the instructions of Socrates, fully-opened like the sluice gates of a dam in order to let the answers rush in like an illumination or “Supramental Descent.” The sixth aphorism of the *Kaivalya Pāda* posits that only through meditation (*Dhyāna*) can be born (*jam*) an immaculate and “purer mind” that cannot be influenced by consciousness (*anāśayam*). The aphorism begins with the prepositional phrase “of these” (*tatra*) pointing to the activities undertaken by the Yogi involving consciousness. So, the aphorism: *tatra dhyānājam anāśayam* (LOY 252),<sup>30</sup> suggests that, of all the consciousness-related activities, only those that result from intense meditation are pure and untainted because they do not possess the detritus of the past. They are anchored in the tranquility of now-ness. The peaceful warrior chooses to obey the commandment of life that if the time is “now” there is no choice but to act, “here.” Choosing to act, here and now, Dan, finally, confronts and penetrates the specter of darkness (PW 171). The seed that Socrates planted breaks out of the darkness and “a small shoot emerges from the rich earth” (177). In that moment Dan, the Mentee, the Peaceful Warrior, becomes Socrates, the Mentor who has discovered the answers to the questions that emerge from the innermost territory of the *Antarātma* (the Soul-as-the-Seer). Millman describes the final episode of Dan’s journey as the arrival at an illumination which is also a recognition. The illumination comes with the recognition of one’s essential one-ness with the cosmic reality. Millman describes Dan’s arrival at superconsciousness or *Turyāvasthā* thus:

As he emerges from the cave, having passed through the visionary gateway of his death and rebirth, he gazes up at the heavens but sees only the light at the center of creation, beyond life, beyond death. ...Hiking back down the mountain, Dan knows that a part of him, the separate self, has died. ... Yet he feels more alive than ever before, having found an

30 Iyengar, LOY, 252.

understanding and peace greater than he has ever known. (179)<sup>31</sup>

The “light at the center of creation” that Dan experiences as his momentous destination is the omniscient consciousness (*Samādhi*) that happens when the *Kṣetram* (Dan-the-Field) becomes the *Kṣetrajñā* (the-Knower-of-the-field). The 29<sup>th</sup> aphorism of the fourth chapter talks about this arrival at the one-ness or union (*yoga*) when the light of the Soul dawns. The Seeker-as-Peaceful Warrior becomes the Seer, the *Yogi*.

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31 Millman, PW, 179.