

2022 Patanjali Class 39

1/3/23

Sutra I:19 – The cognition of being for those who are bereft of body identification and those who are merged with nature.

Sutra I:20 – For others absorption is preceded by faith, energy, memory, and discernment.

Continuing as an online class is not working very well, but that appears to be our only option. As 2023 is the 100th anniversary of the Narayana Gurukula, we'll make a mighty effort to stay on the air. It's been fabulous to be a vibrant part of more than half of those 100 years.

Our class was a bit like waking up from a dream, a holiday dream, only we hadn't quite made it all the way awake yet. Getting back into a regular rhythm should help. The old notes from 2009, below, are packed with interesting ideas and useful examples, *and* they begin with the same sense of stupor. Maybe it's imbedded in the study.

Deb noted the broad outlines of Nitya's commentaries on the two sutras, in 19 giving the examples of people completely absorbed or merged with luminosity: *videhis* (those who are bereft of body identification) and *prakritileyas* (those who are merged with nature). We met them back in sutra 15; here Deb noted they are like birds or wolves in fully identifying with nature, detached from everyday mental ups and downs. Sutra 20 covers the situation for most of us: healthy, engaged people that can have receptivity to subjective notions, but also with enough inner resonance to unite and merge with the Absolute. We all have experiences like that, and she invited us to share them. Nitya epitomizes the core idea:

This central consciousness can detach itself from all the agitations and pain/pleasure dualities that we may experience with sensations, as well as from thoughts that are stained by

moral or intellectual conflicts. This detached inner awareness that is never stopped by the eventualities of life—remaining the same in times of rest and of feverish action—is often recognized as the shining one within us. (84)

An effort of will is involved in making this happen, and the more the will is aligned with the shining one within, the more effective and harmonious it is:

When you have faith and a will to achieve, all the dormant sources of physical and mental energy are unlocked. They are automatically channeled into your best effort for the achievement of whatever is programmed. (86)

Paul was so busy that he forgot about class, but I shared an analogy he gave in the 2009 class:

Paul started us off with a very good metaphor. He once took a tour of the zoo, where he learned that impalas can jump thirty or forty feet, but they are easily kept in their enclosure with a retaining wall slightly higher than their eyes. Because they evolved on flat plains, they will only go where they can see, and they don't even try to leap over the wall, which they could easily do. Paul's point was that if they had faith that it was safe to take the plunge, they could instantly break free. Like that, we have learned to be afraid of leaping out of the enclosure built around us by our social zoo keepers. Wisdom teachers try to impart the faith in us to dare to escape, but we are naturally timid about it.

A yogi impala tries to grasp how it is caught, so it can find a way out. If it simply ignores it, dutifully adjusting itself to its confines, it remains caught.

Bill shared a dramatic example. Ten days ago he suffered a metabolic encephalopathy, what the nurses call a brain salad. It came on suddenly—he could no longer think clearly, his speech was garbled, and he could barely walk. I attended him first, flashing back to my old paramedic career, and pretty soon the medical professionals arrived. They were asking him questions, and he knew what he wanted to answer, but he couldn't make sense. He was frustrated and felt awful, but he realized he wasn't afraid—the witnessing place in him was solid. It felt like when you are settled in meditation and thoughts are coming and trying to disturb you, but your equanimity is so stable it doesn't bother you. So it was a very interesting experience. He wondered if his calmness was due to his studies, his teachers, his longstanding meditation practice, or what.

At the time I could see that Bill was staying calm and he was really making an effort to say something, but what came out had nothing to do with anything. He didn't lose his cool through the whole thing, which was impressive. Deb was amazed he could stay in his witnessing state in the middle of that, and Bill responded that it's about learning to see things for what they are: if you are in a constant state of being present with what is, with an element of truth, then the confusion becomes less.

And really, the witness state is what's left after the other faculties stop functioning.

That reminded me of Nitya, who was a kind of videhi, since he was both an active participant in life yet always remained detached. People would come to see him and accuse him of all sorts of projected fantasies, and he would bear it calmly. On occasion you could sense some anger simmering below the surface, which might erupt in a stinging comment that withered the attacker, but only if it would teach them something. Probably Nataraja Guru's long-standing abuse taught him this: "I am beating you so that the world will not beat you." (L&B 173)

Nancy was puzzled about the relevance of sutra 19 to us regular folks, and I assured her that while we acknowledge that those types of people exist and they are inspiring to a degree, we are all engaged and affected by our lives. We are the “others” of sutra 20, for whom “absorption is preceded by faith, energy, memory, and discernment.” I read out some Nitya excerpts from other places that are very clear on what this means, and I’ll lump them in Part II and move the old notes to Part III. They are very helpful in getting the gist of this important section. The second one stimulated a discussion, so here it is. BU is the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

Although in principle Vedanta is supportive of the idea of the One without a second, in our daily life we always encounter the notion of the many. Therefore there has to be a continuous exercise of the mind to again and again find similitude between the seemingly diverse forms, names and functions. There is a central focal point to which all the pluralities are to be centripetally referred, to give full orientation to our understanding of brahman. This central focus is found in the heart. That is why prajapati is identified with the heart. (BU Vol. III, 53-4)

Andy was struck by this, and linked it to the quote earlier, how “When you have faith and a will to achieve, all the dormant sources of physical and mental energy are unlocked.” He wondered what it means to have faith, and how that relates to converging all of your interests in a central value in the heart. He is convinced that if you have purity of heart and faith, you are capable of acting with great strength.

Deb added that with purity and concentrated attention, you aren’t distracted by momentary desires or fears, external situations,

or internal memories. Yoga is about how to center in our heart, residing in that deep core.

Anita is bothered by the word faith, which is only a rough approximation of *sraddha*, which certainly does not mean faith in the Western sense. Nitya brilliantly defines it here as a “stabilizing disposition.” It’s not a belief in any exterior goal-oriented accomplishment or directive, but bringing about a convergence of bodily and mental functions, so they are no longer at war with each other. Moni called it total absorption.

Bill felt this brought us back to mental modifications, which confuse our connection to the Self. We are learning how to cut down on those influences, so we can have more of an experience of that shining inner being. *Sraddha*-faith indicates that we know there is a shining self, and we are learning ways to not cover it up. Faith is an important part of this study, because we know there’s a place that is home, that sees clearly, and is not influenced by the goings-on in the transactional world.

Nancy wondered if being in that state can that help you to not sink into an inertial state? She wants a feeling of a future, something beyond this moment, believing that you have to have a way to look forward in order to function.

This is the basis of the confusion we’re reading into these sutras. Absorption is *brought about by*, but is not identical with, the positive values of faith, energy, memory, and discernment. That means there has to be effort to dive below the surface. We normally function based on future goals combined with past memories, but there is also a place in us that doesn’t need to learn to “function” because it’s always present. Patanjali’s *samadhi* is a way of transcending—temporarily or permanently, depending on your preference—the stimulations and simulations of memory and anticipation. As part of this effort, the well-directed energy of our interests and beliefs (faith) is stabilizing:

Corresponding to the inner cohesion and harmony of the body, the mind can have a well-settled inner cohesion based on a sense of security. From that sense arises both hope for the future and stabilization of the present. This inner stabilization is induced by a deep faith in your basic stand and understanding. Such a stabilizing disposition is called *sraddha*, faith. (86)

And:

Interest has to stimulate the fount of energy to make virya leap into action. The catalyst to rouse virya is always a preconditioned state that comes in the form of a recall of memory. (87)

Yoga, though, means a taming or tempering of the virya, so we can settle into the shining heart center, relinquishing impulses like fear and aggression. We do this by substituting the teachings of a guru like Patanjali or Nitya, or their words and ideas, for our normal conditioned state:

Virya is utilized either to get into an aggressive action of acquisition or for the purpose of fleeing from fearsome situations. Memory need not necessarily always be your personal acquisition. A master's mind can infuse into a closely related, intimate mind a picture of his or her own memory, which in turn acts like a postulation that guides the neophyte to imitate the master. (87)

For Andy this means that a guru says something that you remember and you take it as a true piece of guidance. They are guiding us about how to behave. Moni added that the memory that Guru was talking about is not about the disciple's own memory but

it is infused or transferred to a higher level because of their relationship.

That's right: we're using this book as a guru to teach us, because, like an impala yogi, we would like to also expand our awareness so that we could jump over the walls that confront us. However we bring this about, the gist is to be fully present in our activities, our sadhana; as Moni said, to be totally absorbed by them:

In the discipline of Yoga, the finality of perfection is marked by the total absorption into which you can go in the performance of each sadhana. After the completion of each item of disciplinary performance, there comes a degree of clarity, or, in other words, you gain greater wisdom. (87)

Nancy summed it up beautifully: she's working on finding a place where each moment she takes a breath she is aware. Equilibrium and joy are just existing. Deb agreed that that's the detached awareness that is not disturbed by the ups and downs of our daily life. I added that then we don't just react, but refine our thoughts and actions into a higher sense of value.

Part II – Some helpful Nitya quotes

Do not look into the social mirror and then think that is what you are. You should have an inner estimation of yourself and the value of what you are doing. Of course, it is possible to be self-deluded and make mistaken judgments. In order to avoid that, you need a confidante who is detached. If you learn to strike a root in the universal order, that gives you stability.... When you sit firm on your own truthfulness, your own trust, you can face any encounter. (Gurukulam Magazine)

Although in principle Vedanta is supportive of the idea of the One without a second, in our daily life we always encounter the notion of the many. Therefore there has to be a continuous exercise of the mind to again and again find similitude between the seemingly diverse forms, names and functions. There is a central focal point to which all the pluralities are to be centripetally referred, to give full orientation to our understanding of brahman. This central focus is found in the heart. That is why prajapati is identified with the heart. (BU Vol. III, 53-4)

Praja is that which has within it the law of being, the law of fecundity, the law of propagation, the law of proliferation. So Prajapati is to be understood as an eternal cause, continuously projecting innumerable possibilities of which some become immediate probabilities, and a selected few probabilities become actualized. (BU Vol. III, 360)

For each one of us there is only one world. That is what we each call “my self.” That world is an actualization of the total creative energy of one’s manifestation, i.e. the *prajapati*. In that, one cluster of attitudes makes one divine, another set of attitudes makes one a human, and a third set of primitive urges makes one a demon. However ugly those urges are, out of them the most sublime aesthetic sensibility and spiritual wisdom are to be evolved. Looked upon this way, there is no hell outside, no heaven outside, no world outside. All pluralities organically belong to the unity of one’s being.

Now we can see how the false fabrication of heaven and its denizens, the earth with its sociopolitical histories, and hell with its wildest screams of fear causes millions of people everywhere to undergo excruciating pain, shame and misery. All these are manmade hypotheses which have become the most deplorable concepts of theology, religion, science, sociology, political

economy, and every kind of belligerency. To clear the board of all such misconceptions we should make a valiant attempt to go through the entire maze of conceptualized beliefs.

A deep psychological analysis is to be made to understand the images we generate inside, the emotional energy source that generates imaginations that can foster sustaining faith in us, the energizing value which is fed into images, and the shifting values that intrinsically belong to the inner dynamism of personality formation. (BU Vol. III, 40-41)

When your own nature is becoming more and more evident to yourself, the imperfections of your social personality will become more and more clear. In its place *īśvara*—the universal person not afflicted with the love/hate dualities of physico-social life—can be accepted as a better model for imitation or identification.

The word *īśvara* is derived from *īś*, which literally means “ruling from within.” The life of an individual is not an amorphous chaotic structure that comes from the randomness of the physical world. It has a goal to achieve and laws to abide by. The innate law of everything that governs, controls, and maneuvers it to function for the purposeful attainment of a given goal is *īśvara*. If you know there is such a guiding principle in your life, life becomes all the more dear and an incentive comes to live as correctly as possible. Thereafter, the lower aspect of the self will always be in resonance with *īśvara*, the higher Self. That *īśvara* is looked upon as your true teacher or preceptor. Relating always with that *īśvara* to develop insight into the meaning of your life combines both the purificatory and educative aspects. (YS 149)

Part III

From the first Patanjali class:

6/2/9

Sutra I:19

The cognition of being for those who are bereft of body identification and those who are merged with nature.

My grammar check underlines this sutra, because it seems to be all subject without a predicate. It does not stand alone, but must be grasped in context. Last night our month-long break was quite apparent, as we had to search through some cobwebs to reclaim the train of Patanjali's thought. This morning I seem to have collected all the cobwebs and stored them in my own brain.

The context here is a presentation of detachment. "Those who are bereft of body identification" are called *videhi-s*, and "those who are merged with nature" are known as *prakritilaya-s*. Nitya introduced them to us back in sutra 15. Here he tells us, "To those who are in these categories, there is no special discipline to undergo. They are real in themselves and there is nothing new to realize." Patanjali merely mentions "the cognition of being" for those like them. What's he getting at?

An important paradox in spiritual life is whether to try or not try. Efforts made in ignorance are often inimical to spiritual flowering. Jesus gives the examples of birds and flowers that naturally and without premeditation express harmony and beauty. Buddhist "no mind" and "emptiness" also have the appearance of effortlessness. We like to imagine wise yogis sitting quietly in repose on a distant mountaintop, fully satisfied with inactivity. Meditation includes seeking surcease of linear thinking. And busy people have no time for spiritual pursuits, at least if they are busy for the sake of busyness (more often spelled business).

We discussed the burgeoning awareness that all life is sentient, that it cognizes its beingness. The conceit that humans are the only intelligent life form was invented fairly recently as a way of permitting the abuse and slaughter of animals and the

destruction of the environment without any twinge of conscience. We dehumanize our human enemies for the same purposes. Now, to the dismay of many, everywhere we look we see intelligence, right down to single-celled creatures, and even some inorganic substances. It appears that all life is expressive of profound beauty and meaningfulness, and it appears to be naturally evolving toward greater and greater complexity. So what can humans add to this unfoldment other than disruption and short-sighted manipulation? Perhaps it's time to give that up.

On the other hand, if we do nothing, we will get nowhere, both pragmatically and spiritually. The next sutra complements this one with what works for those of us who are not birds, flowers, or prakritilayas, to wit, effort. Preferably well-directed effort, which is necessarily guided by a wise teacher, a group consensus, or a scripture like the Yoga Sutras. Otherwise there would be no point in Patanjali's book, for one thing. Those cobwebs that gathered in my mind over the past month of vacationing won't go away on their own. I have to press forward with vigor, and only then will they gradually give way.

The Gita says, in VIII, 8: "Meditating, with the mind engaged in the yoga involving positive effort, undistracted by anything else, he goes to the supreme divine Person." Positive effort is a translation of *abhyasa*, repetitive practice, that is paired with *vairagya*, detachment in this series of sutras. Speaking of the Gita, I coincidentally wrote the following just yesterday in respect to VIII, 9, where we are directed to meditate on the unthinkable nature of the Absolute:

Much has been written about the incomprehensible nature of the godhead, Absolute, or Whole Shebang, and no one wants to argue with that. Yet this assertion of impossibility is not meant to dissuade us from thinking, at least from the Gita's standpoint. We have just had two

verses, 5 and 7, where we are directed to put our best effort into thinking about Krishna's nature, which is the same as the Absolute. Now Krishna provides dialectic balance so we know we both can and cannot think our way to realization.

Humans are always eager to embrace an idea that lets them off the hook, allowing them to defer to someone else to pull their load. Nataraja Guru called those who waited around for spiritual experience to be handed to them on a plate, hobos. Lazy brahmacharis are on the lookout for any excuse to doze at their ease. Mellifluous, isn't it? Hobos dozing at their ease.... Spiritual experience that comes from magical drug use, which delivers a temporary "free ride," plays into such misconceptions. Our mind is like a vast castle, full of exotic rooms and secret passages to new wings. Staying in our favorite room watching TV will never lead us to the high tower with the stupendous view. We have to actually find our way there, or all our vaunted experiences will be necessarily imaginary. So don't let the adjective "unthinkable" trick you into abandoning your search.

The Great Mystery simultaneously encompasses and transcends our efforts. A scientist does not surrender her search, but takes a specific interest and begins to expand her knowledge of it. As she learns more, doors begin to open onto previously undreamed of fields of possibility. This is the best model for a seeker of truth.

To sum up, we have to make a dialectical synthesis of striving and letting go. Both are important, and both have their season. We will explore this matter in more depth in the next class.

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6/9/9

Sutra I:20

For others absorption is preceded by faith, energy, memory, and discernment.

Sutra 20 is paired with 19 as the dialectic of trying/not trying. Patanjali's point is that either we are enlightened already, or we must make efforts. But it isn't a monochrome process: somehow trying and not trying are both important. Interestingly, last week almost no one came to class, and this week almost everybody tried and succeeded, so the overall tone mirrored the import of the two sutras.

The class focused immediately on the first aspect of making an effort, which is faith. Let's review what Nitya tells us about faith, *sraddha*:

Corresponding to the inner cohesion and harmony of the body, the mind can have a well-settled inner cohesion based on a sense of security. From that sense arises both hope for the future and stabilization of the present. This inner stabilization is induced by a deep faith in your basic stand and understanding. Such a stabilizing disposition is called *sraddha*, faith.

When you have faith and a will to achieve, all the dormant sources of physical and mental energy are unlocked. They are automatically channeled into your best effort for the achievement of whatever is programmed. (p. 86)

Because we tend to have cheesy notions about faith, I'd like to reprint the introductory paragraph of my commentary on Gita Chapter XVII, regarding *sraddha*:

Sraddha is inadequately translated as faith, for lack of a better English word. It means giving full attention to the Absolute. In his Gita commentary, Guru Nitya says, "What is prized most

highly in the Gita is an unfailing attention to the Absolute, which runs through every moment of life like a golden thread, giving unity to life and order to the world. This is called *sraddha*.” (p. 342) He adds later, “*Sraddha* means one-pointed attention, perfect bipolarity, total acceptance, pure devotion, ardent faith, full sympathy, unconditional appreciation, and an attitude of loving regard which is continuous and consistent, like the unbroken flow of oil.” (p. 373) Radhakrishnan (p. 343) says “Faith is the inward sense of truth.” They are speaking of the ideal *sraddha*, but in this chapter the Gita is dealing with how it plays out in the world, so *sraddha* includes what you give your attention to as the vestments of the Absolute from your own personal perspective. In other words, it addresses faith in the largest possible sense.

Paul started us off with a very good metaphor. He once took a tour of the zoo, where he learned that impalas can jump thirty or forty feet, but they are easily kept in their enclosure with a retaining wall slightly higher than their eyes. Because they evolved on flat plains, they will only go where they can see, and they don't even try to leap over the wall, which they could easily do. Paul's point was that if they had faith that it was safe to take the plunge, they could instantly break free. Like that, we have learned to be afraid of leaping out of the enclosure built around us by our social zoo keepers. Wisdom teachers try to impart the faith in us to dare to escape, but we are naturally timid about it.

Anita continued the animal metaphors with a story from Ram Dass about the famous monkey trap. His version had a glass jar with a small neck, filled with nuts. The monkey reaches in and grabs the nuts, but then its fist is too big to pass back through the narrow opening of the jar. It tugs and tugs, but never thinks to let go of the coveted prize so it can be free. Anita's point was that

detachment was like letting go of the nuts so we can extricate ourselves from our traps.

Deb told me later of a similar observation Jane Goodall had working with Chimpanzees. To draw them near she would put lots of bananas out. They would load up with as many as they could carry, and then struggle mightily to pick up the rest too. As they started to walk away, some would drop. They would pick them up, and more would drop. They never were able to be content with just what they could carry—they wanted the whole pile. Desire alone kept them captive. It isn't too surprising that they are our closest relatives.

Anita had some good practical examples of detachment too. As a young mother she was more or less forced into suing for divorce. She didn't want to have to deal with it, and the practicalities were daunting and highly unpleasant. But she persevered, and the result was a freeing of her psyche to grow into who she really was, instead of continuing in an ill-fitting role with an abusive husband. As the I Ching would put it, "Difficulty at the Beginning" was followed by "Pushing Upward." This is the admirable course. Too many people endure dreadful circumstances because they have been trained to put up and shut up. Our innate ability to express ourselves has been severely truncated, and our present course of study is one way of repairing the damage.

Anita has just been on an arduous trip to Boston to see her son and his family, including a baby almost a year old. Of course she was so excited about her new grandchild, but when she arrived he had entered the stage where he noticed and feared strangers, and she was a stranger to him. During her entire five day stay he refused to be cuddled and instead would cry and carry on. Anita's first impulse was to feel rejected and sorry about it, but then she took herself in hand and reminded herself that this was an important developmental stage he was going through. So she mentally changed a negative into a positive, and didn't allow it to

spoil her visit. There were a couple of other factors too where she initially was upset but then substituted an improved description, thereby turning a sow's ear into a silk purse, as the saying goes. Last night she was glowing with happiness over the success of her visit. The "old" Anita might have tempered her joy with a measure of resentfulness and bitterness, but she has grown to take charge of her life in ways that have opened doors to happiness and wisdom.

These examples demonstrate the value of letting go of past conditionings, but the letting go is active. It requires intention and energy. The truth is, we are like monkeys with our hand already clinging to nuts inside the jar. We imagine we should just stop trying and that will solve our problems, but we are already caught. It would be a wise course if we were still pure as the driven snow, if we were prakritilayas or videhis, naturally realized. But for us, not trying means staying stuck. The efforts we are called upon to make are designed to undo the chains and padlocks that hold us fast in the cramped zoo enclosure we have reluctantly come to think of as home.

Jan's relationship with her sick child highlights the importance of trying, and trying hard against all odds. When we are well we don't notice our gradual physical decline, so we believe we can just bop along, careless and carefree. But real illness requires immediate and continuous action. Jan has been heroic in seeking ways to help her son. Last night she told us of how she was relating to him psychologically. Knowing how important belief is, and following up on the part of last week's class where we discussed placebos, how they activate actual chemical changes in the brain that can promote healing and pain reduction and so on, she has been conversing with him about his beliefs around the treatments he is undergoing. She is struggling to find the kind of language that will convince his brain to switch on the healing process. Listening to her son's thoughts helps him to get in touch with his vague and terrifying emotions, that inevitably

are being suppressed as hard as he can suppress them. Instead of telling him things, she is stepping back and letting him tell her, which is a way of combining trying and not trying that opens new terrain.

John has also had some difficult issues with his children's health. He mentioned how we want very much to control their lives, because we can see so much more than they do when they are young. But we have to pull back and let them have room to learn on their own. Parenting is a long process of letting go, and fighting the urge to control and direct, which becomes especially intense when there are problems. He also mentioned that we may try very hard to solve problems, but it is usually after we give up that a solution comes to us. The wrestling with our problems is important, and then the letting go is equally or more important. As we have often noted, many scientific discoveries came about through pondering and then "sleeping on it," which leaves room for the subconscious to work outside its accustomed boundaries and then present its findings. As Bill said, our subconsciouses are geniuses, if we can give them room to inform us. The principle even has a name now: the Eureka! phenomenon, after Archimedes.

We did touch on memory a little. Bill reread for us the important part of Nitya's commentary on how it provides motivation, in association with our energy, *virya*, the source of the word virile, though in English it has come to mean only male energy. (Does anyone know a female counterpart for virility?) Anyway, in Sanskrit it lacks the gender bias:

Even when you have inner nourishment and a lot of energy to spend, you can sink into an inertial or lethargic state if your mind has no promise of the future to look into. It is like the chemical components of the nerves which, on interaction, produce an electrical impulse. Interest has to stimulate the fount of energy to make virya leap into action. The catalyst to

rouse virya is always a preconditioned state that comes in the form of a recall of memory. Memories never come as singular gestalts. It is like pulling a string from a thread ball: several associations come one after another, presenting pictures of hope or disgust. Virya is utilized either to get into an aggressive action of acquisition or for the purpose of fleeing from fearsome situations. Memory need not necessarily always be your personal acquisition. A master's mind can infuse into a closely related, intimate mind a picture of his or her own memory, which in turn acts like a postulation that guides the neophyte to imitate the master. (p. 87)

The last two sentences highlight the importance of a guru or some outside factor to our evolution. Our egos are very clever to undermine our efforts and divert attention from what will have an impact on our lives. It is important to open ourselves to a therapist, teacher, or sympathetic study group, who can tell us what we would rather not hear. We can easily have faith in notions that insulate us from freedom. Ideas that “nothing has any meaning” or “everything is lies” merely play to an attitude of complacency. Charles offered that there are different types, active and passive, which is quite true. But there is a tragic side, in that most people live passive lives of resignation and don't express their potential because they have been crushed by the steamroller of actuality. The hostility of an apparent outside world drives them into hiding. A healthy spiritual investigation can free them to live full lives again. But we glumly accept the belief that we aren't meant to matter, that we aren't important, and we should just slog through life and get it over with.

Deb told us that when she was once struggling with some of these issues, she got a letter from Nitya. Thanks to the miracle of computers, I can reproduce it for the notes. It's in Love and Blessings Part III, November of 1972:

As I write this a beautiful butterfly is struggling to find its way out through the transparency of a curtain that is fixed around my window. It almost reaches a point from which it can easily fly out. Before that, it loses patience, flutters and brings itself again against the curtain. I don't know whether this is necessary for its growth—-obviously not. The butterfly does not philosophize. It struggles until it is worn out. Just now I walked over and lifted the curtain. It saw its chance and flew away. What is the use of relating ourselves to a butterfly when we are so deeply ingrained in the world of logic and rhetoric?

The letter communicated the right words at the right time. Deb alternated between anger, confusion and despair. She cried for a long time after receiving it. It made a permanent impact, and she still holds it in her heart. It helped shake her out of a rut she was in.

Memory shapes what we do almost completely; if it didn't we would just act randomly all the time. We follow our programs because we remember them. Thus, memory works in concert with the will, which utilizes our energy in the scheme of this sutra. Drugs and other diversionary schemes and beliefs interrupt the memory and sabotage the will, so while a person's faith may remain intact, little or no progress is made. It's too comfortable for us to replay a single step over and over. Plus, it is way too easy to mistake stupor for absorption, and our egos are very proud to pass off the former as the latter. These are crucial issues that we could benefit from spending more time on.