

2022 Patanjali Class 47

3/14/23

Sutra I:37 – Also the mind fixed on freedom from attachment to sense experience acquires steadiness.

Sutra I:38 – Also by contemplating on the knowledge derived from the dream state and the dreamless sleep state.

Sutra I:39 – Or by contemplation as desired by oneself.

Last night was special in a number of ways, primarily that there were no Zoom attendees, so we turned off the computer and microphone for the first time in nearly three years and held an all-in-the-room class. It was a reminder of the power of proximity, of real people-vibes. Conversation was smoothed out, and the invisible factor of interpenetrating psycho-electric fields was palpable.

Deb's knee has recovered to the point she stayed with us for the whole class, and we were graced with Susan, Kris and her dog Kailua, Andy, Moni, Jan, Karen and Nancy. In gratitude for our nearly 45 years of weekly classes attended by dear friends, drawn together by potent topics, I shared a passage from Eknath Easvaran, on a pair of verses in the Gita, that we could apply every week:

In a sense, the words of an inspirational passage like this are not just words. They are more like depth charges, which are set to go off when they reach a certain level of consciousness. In meditation, by the concentration we give, we drive each word deep into consciousness so that it can release its potential. But when these words explode, instead of causing damage, they heal. Internal conflicts are resolved, doubts and reservations fall away, and we get the certitude that we are equal to challenges from which we used to run away. (Vol. II, 377)

This of course is similar to the front flap quote of *That Alone*, which is less driving:

There is no need to learn each verse and then rationally apply it in everyday life. You can even hear it and forget it. Forgetting means it only goes deeper into you. Once you have heard it, it will go and work its way by itself. The effect will be very subtle. It comes almost without you knowing that it is something which you heard that is enabling you to see things in a new light or make resolutions in a certain more helpful way.

The last seven sutras are essentially one sentence, and so make more sense when all in this section are read together, reminding us they are all aiming at clarity of mind:

33: The mind is clarified by cultivating friendliness toward happiness, compassion toward misery, gladness toward virtue, and equanimity toward vice.

34: Or, by the expiration and retention of breath.

35: When absolute interest is shown to a sensory experience or activity, that will bring the mind to a steady state.

36: Also by meditating on the sorrowless state of inner joy one can attain luminosity of intelligence.

37: Also the mind fixed on freedom from attachment to sense experience acquires steadiness.

38: Also by contemplating on the knowledge derived from the dream state and the dreamless sleep state.

39: Or by contemplation as desired by oneself.

Deb is finding that going through Patanjali a second time she is realizing how much more expansive the sutras are, especially this last batch. *Citta vritti nirodha*, the cessation of mental modulations, sounds dire, but this section is more about what works best for each person to allow that state to manifest. It's about honing our modulations to settle into a steady contemplative state, rather than fitting ourselves into a rigidly-defined practice.

Deb added, Nitya is right that sutra 39 is reminiscent of what Krishna tells Arjuna at the end of the Gita: after pondering my teachings, *you* decide what to do. In the Divine Comedy also, Virgil, after successfully guiding Dante through hell and purgatory, instructs him:

Expect no further word or sign from me.
Your own will is whole, upright, and free,
and it would be wrong not to do as it bids you.

therefore I crown and miter you over yourself.

My commentary on that climactic moment in the Gita, verse 63 of the last chapter, includes several more instances of the same sort of transmission, including this one:

Because Arjuna has plumbed the depths and scaled the heights, and has opened himself to embrace everyone and everything as equally valid and valuable, he has earned the right to his freedom. Where less accomplished seekers bicker over their partial viewpoints, Arjuna has gained an all-encompassing awareness. As Richard Wilhelm, in his comments on the I Ching, Hexagram 52, *Keeping Still*, writes:

When a man has thus become calm, he may turn to the outside world. He no longer sees in it the struggle and tumult of individual beings, and therefore he has that true peace of mind which is needed for understanding the great laws of the universe and for acting in harmony with them. Whoever acts from these deep levels makes no mistakes.

The old Notes reminded me how on first glance, people reject this profundity as if it saying that everybody can just do whatever they want. The true meaning is that it comes only after you have been educated to see the oneness of the world, so you are taking the entire context into account. At that point, you are the person who knows yourself far better than anyone else possibly could, so you are capable of the wisest decisions as you make your way through life.

Deb was happy about this open-endedness, knowing that each of us would have different explanations of the appeal of unmodulated consciousness. As Nitya puts it, “Yoga is not to be imparted like a collective drill that is given to squadrons or battalions of soldiers. Each person has their own biological, sociological, and cultural history, background, and heritage.... Patanjali states that the most suitable discipline for each person is that which he or she can wholeheartedly accept.”

Deb recalled a time when she was with Andy at the beach, and he said to her, “You know that feeling where you just have to pick up a pencil and draw?” Actually no, she never had that feeling, but for all of us, that ability to be open to what we really are and to allow that to flow out of us, however it takes form, is beautifully grounding, and is something we share in common.

Andy smiled at the memory, then added it doesn’t sound like there would be a lot of takers in the class for “freedom from attachment to sense experience,” though he’s a proponent. For him

it gets back to idea of meditating on aum and cultivating the feeling that aum is all of this. If you are tuning into that, attachment to sensory experience seems to be different, not like repressing yourself but kind of a new context for having it

I reprised an interpretation we have previously brought to bear on this, that cessation of modulations and freedom from attachment are not monolithic, all-or-nothing directives, they are about freeing ourselves from *distracting* modulations and sense interests. They are not about ceasing mental modulations or sense engagements entirely, taking no prisoners. Even meditating on aum is a sensory experience, though one that allows for sharp focus that cuts through the garbage of distracting perceptions. By steadying the mind, you become free to understand experience on your own terms instead of being bogged down with self-interested biases and opinions. Attachments pervert sensory experience by adding our memories and traumas, but if you can just relate to them neutrally, without neediness, then you have what's glibly called contact with the Absolute, or Isvara in Patanjali. We can simply think of it as unbiased.

Deb admired the end of sutra 37, where Nitya encourages us to watch how a wise person deals with agitations. For her, it was a beautiful thing to see how Nitya himself dealt with challenges. (There are several concrete examples in the Old Notes, in Part II.) Andy was often struck by how Nitya would take upsetting things in a humorous way—when someone was challenging him, his sense of humor kicked into gear. It was as if he delighted in the challenge. Instead of reacting angrily to a hostile person, he would keep listening, and only later would he offer a simple comment collapsing their argument. He waited until he had penetrated beyond the surface of their thinking, to really understand their motivation. Often this allowed him to even agree with them, because they were using him as a stand-in for their own projected problems. I also love his tactic when accused of wrongdoing:

respond that if the person only knew the real truth, he was much worse than they thought. You can't say that without being lighthearted, even a trifle silly, about yourself, and it keeps the ego from blowing up.

Andy has observed that many of his sensory attachments come out of boredom. The attractions assuage his discomfort of just sitting there. They are something you feel you have to do to fill the gap, and now he is beginning to learn how to live in the gap, he can hang out there. He's found you can nourish yourself differently than merely compensating for boredom.

Speaking of gaps, Deb was drawn to Nitya's last sentence under sutra 38: "You can meditate on the unmodulated consciousness of deep sleep for the eradication of the haunting impressions that are continuously created through a process of culturing psychophysical experiences." She felt opening to that inner light is beautiful, and it can have an impact.

Andy was perplexed about how to meditate on deep sleep. I suggested it was like mentally modeling something with no characteristics—a paradoxical exercise, but we are capable of it. Moni asserted that the inner light is the only light present. Our memory comes alive through the light from within, and still there is something mysterious behind all these things.

According to Deb, one of the functions of paradox is to deepen meditation. She has been enchanted by sutra 36: *by meditating on the sorrowless state of inner joy one can attain luminosity of intelligence*. She realizes this doesn't mean you are creating something anew, the sorrowless state of inner joy is always there.

Susan told us about a dream that she feels is related to the subject, but she hasn't figured it out yet. Her main idea to date was that she could be simultaneously watching and analyzing herself while analyzing others, and what a paradox that was. She later sent this summary:

I had a dream last night about driving a car and stopping on the side of the road where there were three cars parked. Each of the drivers were standing next to their cars. There was a new law that the cars and drivers had to be inspected, and I was stopping because I also had to go through this inspection. As I got out of the car I simultaneously realized that the drivers were looking nervously at me and that I had by mistake worn a blue shirt that made me look like a police officer/inspector. I was also carrying a clipboard as though an official of some kind. I proceeded to walk over and look at each of the cars while assuring the drivers that I had to be inspected too and that I was not an inspector or a police officer.

At a glance we can see the contrast between driving/flowing and being stopped for analyzing/inspecting. Both are parts of every human being, like the right and left brain hemispheres dealing with direct experience and analysis. It does seem sad to be pulled over all the time, to halt our journey for excessive self-examination. The Biblical line, judge not lest ye be judged, meaning, among other things, we are judging and crimping ourselves by trying to reel in others, came to my mind, maybe just because it's one of my favorite lines, never far from my thoughts. Regardless, the dream sounds like encouragement to get past the stuff that is tripping you up so you can be enjoying your life more. Cruising. It's a dream that works like Andy's aum meditation, allowing you to cut through tons of junk and move toward stabilization of consciousness.

Kris had no problem with meditating on deep sleep, because isn't that just what you are doing when you meditate— pulling back from externalities? When you get past time and beyond space, merging with something, yet just getting a slight taste of it? She had a student one time, and they had a lot of trouble getting

along. Then she had a dream in which they talked to each other, and after that they got along fine. It demonstrated to her how your mind is still working things out when you are asleep. It's also relaxing....

Nancy brought up brain studies where they hook electrodes to the scalp, and found that deep sleep and meditation have similar brainwaves. Deb felt these ideas were why sleep can be so restorative—it's a great gift to exist without time or space, and we need a lot of it. I was reminded of one of Nitya's ideas that blew my mind most was his accusation during the That Alone classes that "You're all prejudiced in favor of the wakeful state!" Guilty as charged, your Honor.

Moni said soothingly that once we are in deep sleep, from there we slip into turiya state. I-consciousness doesn't exist, but we are not disconnected. It's very peaceful, and this is how our mind works, if we can transcend our affinities and get into an unmodulated place.

For Jan, the light and wisdom we are trying to open up to she finds in nature. Being in places like beautiful forests in a receptive way can help us connect, and it's one of her personal favorites.

I wonder if Patanjali didn't mention forest bathing only because in his day people actually lived in the forests, spent their whole life in them, so their effect was taken for granted. Now that we have to go out and find such places, nature seems like it should have had its own sutra for stabilizing the mind. That was John Muir's great idea: in wilderness is the salvation of the world. How about this quote of his: "The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness."

Susan reported hearing in Gayathri's morning meditation about her relatives in India who used to sit out in front of their house and do nothing. (Just broiling is activity enough!) She meant the stillness, the gap, not needing anything to happen. It reminded Deb of a teacher she knew in Colorado who told her her father

could stand out with a friend by the fence staring out at the rangeland for hours, and nobody said anything. They simply stared. Andy agreed that just by being in that space, you feel something very fulfilling and nurturing. I believe we can learn how to infuse that sensibility continuously into our life so we are not abandoning anything when we speak. It's a steady state.

For the closing meditation, I shared two excerpts from Bergson buried below in the thirty pages of notes from the old class, since no one will read far enough to find them. I expressed my deep appreciation for the friends who make the effort to join together for this regular event of pondering the cosmos together. And there's nothing ponderous about it! In a rapidly closing society trying to reanimate the feudal era, our collective openness in the Portland Gurukula is deserving of appreciation, and Bergson surely would have admired it.

Henri Bergson (1859-1941) was an important influence on Nataraja Guru, and source of one of our favorite quotes: "The true mystic just opens his heart to the onrushing wave."

Bergson bits, from the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol I, article by T.A. Goudge:

Freedom of action, according to Bergson, is something directly experienced. Man feels himself to be free as he acts, even though he may be unable to explain the nature of his freedom. However, we are free only when our act springs spontaneously from our *whole* personality as it has evolved up to the moment of action. If this spontaneity is absent, our actions will be simply stereotyped or mechanical responses. In such cases we behave like automata. Hence, freedom is far from being absolute. Indeed, for most people free acts are the exception, not the rule. (p.288)

Since man is a social animal, his future evolution will be accelerated or retarded by the sort of group in which he lives. Bergson discussed this question in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, where he drew a distinction between a society that is “closed” and one that is “open,” describing in each case corresponding types of religion and of morality.

A closed society is one dominated by the routine and mechanical. It is resistant to change, conservative, and authoritarian. Its stability is achieved by increasing its self-centeredness. Hence, conflict with other self-centered groups, often involving war, is a condition of its preservation. Internal cohesiveness is secured by a closed morality and a closed religion.... Closed morality is static and absolutistic; closed religion is ritualistic and dogmatic. Both institutions exert pressure on individuals to accept the standard practices of the community. Spontaneity and freedom are reduced to a minimum. Conformity becomes the prime duty of the citizen. There is an obvious analogy between such a society and the repetitive mechanisms dealt with by the intellect. Indeed, Bergson regarded closed societies as in large measure the intellect’s products.

The existence of a multiplicity of closed societies on the earth is an obstacle to human evolution. Accordingly, the next development in man requires the establishment of an open society. Instead of being limited, it will embrace all mankind; instead of being static, it will be progressive; instead of demanding conformity, it will encourage the maximum diversity among individuals. Its moral and religious beliefs will be equally flexible and subject to growth. Religion will replace the stereotyped dogmas elaborated by the intellect with the intuition and illumination now achieved by the mystics. The spread of the mystical spirit must ultimately create an open society whose freedom and spontaneity will express the divine *elan* which pervades the universe. (p.294)

Part II

Old notes:

August 20, 2011

In my opinion, most of us habitually fail to properly distinguish “freedom from attachment” from “detachment.” Detachment is a thoroughgoing severance of connection with sensory experience, and as such is a dramatic hardcore practice where our reactions are rigorously suppressed. Freedom from attachment, on the other hand, is a much gentler endeavor in which we still register and respond to sense inputs but are not overly manipulated by them.

Breaking free of attachments is an intense and enjoyable form of yoga that can easily be a fulltime practice. In the course of our day (or night) we register a gestalt, and then observe how we reflexively respond to it. Bringing in an intelligent assessment allows us to catch a glimpse of our attachments, which are the discrepancy between what we might assess as a neutral reaction and what we can observe as our actual manifestation of self-interest. We can “feel” this as well as think it. By intuitively making adjustments in our psyche to correct the discrepancy, we learn how to regain our mental balance at all times. Nancy succinctly describes this process in her first exercise as: “becoming aware of such attachments within yourself and purposely focusing on freeing yourself from them.”

Attaining steadiness of mind is the mental correlate of learning to walk as a toddler, though much more complicated and usually sans the loving support and encouragement of a caregiver. In fact, we may well be pressed into pondering how to do it by stressful circumstances. It would be far better if we could mimic the toddler’s eager excitement at learning to walk, determined to achieve what we can plainly see most adults have already

mastered. And it shouldn't matter that this adult achievement is not nearly as universal as it appears....

Perhaps I'm making an artificial distinction and am all wet, but it seems helpful anyway. We could just as easily conceive of two types of detachment, one ferocious and absolute in rejecting all input, the other gentle and tolerant of input as inevitable and even potentially delightful.

This section of the Yoga Shastra is about getting free of obstacles, all the mental quirks that draw us off course and into miserable sidetracks. It's not about performing a lobotomy on ourself, but rising above a visceral or juvenile reactivity to an intelligent engagement with life. Patanjali says it right in sutra 37: we are trying to attain steadiness. Not immobility, but stability!

With this attitude we welcome all the waves that crash on our psychological beach, because each is an opportunity to fine-tune our reactions. We no longer cry when some kid smashes our sand castles or the rising tide wets our blanket, we treat it as an inevitable part of normal life, grin, shake our head, and carry on. Maybe we can even laugh about it. After all, we know in advance that boys love to smash castles and that the tide comes in and goes out, and we won't ever be able to put a stop to either one of them. It's all perfectly predictable, so it doesn't have to ruin our day.

If we get upset by such events—and life is clever enough to find ways to get us really upset, just for practice—then we will be *distracted*. In sutra I:30, Patanjali lists some of the major categories of distraction: “Physical pain or distress, mental depression, doubt, exaggeration, laziness, hankering after objects, insanity, having no firm ground for spiritual orientation, instability.” Then in the next sutra, I:31, he reminds us that “Pain, despair, shakiness, and hard breathing are the companions of distraction.” These are all very familiar “companions” to me, which I suppose is the incentive program to take myself in hand and do “yoga,” otherwise called “figuring things out.”

Normalizing is much easier to accomplish in the dream and deep sleep states, most likely because of our more limited interface with them. By including them in his list, Patanjali has covered a very large canvas of our mental activities for stabilization. Just in case he's left something out, he adds if we can think of any others, we are welcome to become stable in them also. What that means to me is that this is what we should do all the time, whenever sentience creeps in to confront our "petty pace from day to day." And the practice really does have a cumulative effect of building stability in tiny increments. Sweet.

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Here's what happens when you take each sutra for a whole class, as we did in 2009:

10/27/9

Sutra I: 37

Also the mind fixed on freedom from attachment to sense experience acquires steadiness.

In the last couple of days I've received several heartfelt expressions of appreciation for the class notes from widely divergent sources. Coupled with the trickle that come in throughout the year, this is very gratifying. It means that we are a part of an invisible net of beings dedicated to a similar vision. Our small class is a first impulse, and the electronic salon is a much larger second pulsation, of what we like to think of as "good vibes." The notes currently are mailed to about eighty addresses, mainly in India and the US, but with a smattering elsewhere. Sometimes they are shared with friends. I believe there is a beneficial effect to the feeling of being part of a larger entity

dedicated to wisdom and its application within the world we find ourselves inhabiting.

Last night's class actually contained an idea very like this. Nitya talked about how we are inspired and taught by the example of a guru:

A person who lives constantly in transcendence, such as one's guru, is also a human being. We are encouraged to watch how such a person overcomes situations that should cause agitation. Although in the beginning it may look as if we are only imitating our model, in the course of time our choices become habitual. Then it is no longer imitation but a spontaneous adherence to higher ideals and we also become established in the tranquility of a yogi.

While some of us have many cherished memories of how Nitya himself handled agitating situations, to me there was always an air around him that challenged us to hold our reactions in abeyance all the time. We didn't have to crudely imitate any behaviors, there was such a sense of beauty and perfection in the air that we were called to it as a matter of course. In a roughly parallel sense, it seems the Gurukula class is a symbol of our highest ideals, that we can measure ourselves against and also simply feel connected to.

This is not to rule out the thoughtful application of the ideas Nitya and Patanjali are offering us. Nitya was frequently astonishing in the way he neutralized opposition and hostility. This could make an interesting essay in its own right.

Paul wondered if Nitya was always unassailably transcendent. Sometimes he was, and at those times he overcame obstacles like a warm sun evaporating the dew. But there were plenty of times when you could see he was affected by some rude blast. Instead of leaping into a confrontation, he would sit and (figuratively) hold tight to his seat, gathering himself for a

measured response. He could be polite and yet devastating, all the more so since he would be at least outwardly calm. He only employed anger when he coolly thought it was his best gambit.

One prime example we talked about at length was after Nataraja Guru's death, when his Western disciples made power plays to try to take over control of the Gurukula. There was a lot of serious animosity, up to the point where they accused Nitya of poisoning his beloved guru so he could take charge. It's a long story, and one that will mostly disappear in the mists of time, unrecorded. I have compiled a rough history that runs to fifteen pages that anyone can have if they wish. Much of it was culled from Love and Blessings.

Deb mentioned one of those letters in L&B as an example of how Nitya handled opposition. It was to Peter O. on December 7, 1973, less than a year after Nataraja Guru's mahasamadhi: "Overriding my rights the Curran-Patrick-Freddy group printed 5,000 copies of [Nataraja Guru's] Gita with the hope that I will see them in a court of law. I found the Gita teaching of treating profit and loss the same as a better answer to their challenge. Instead of calling in the lawyers, I am offering a special prayer for the easy sale of the books."

The point is that it is very helpful to have an absolutist hub on which to balance our lives, and the Absolute is a principle, not a Thing. In the absence of a personal guru, we can have a group or a tribe or a mountain stream to inspire us and help us hold our ground. For humans, with our active intellects, there is a lot that can be done, and we spent most of the class time offering practical examples.

Often the idea of freedom from attachment (i.e. detachment) from sense experience is taken to mean suppressing our contact with the outside world. This is an unfortunate misinterpretation, and our examples helped us to see positive ways to simultaneously engage life and remain steady. Earlier in the day I had read this

from Eknath Easvaran, on a pair of verses in the Gita. It could as well apply to our sutra:

In a sense, the words of an inspirational passage like this are not just words. They are more like depth charges, which are set to go off when they reach a certain level of consciousness. In meditation, by the concentration we give, we drive each word deep into consciousness so that it can release its potential. But when these words explode, instead of causing damage, they heal. Internal conflicts are resolved, doubts and reservations fall away, and we get the certitude that we are equal to challenges from which we used to run away. (Vol. II, 377)

Nitya challenges us to go beyond all relativistic clichés in becoming grounded in our own nature, which is after all the Absolute. This is particularly important because the human mind seems to enjoy turning living reality into slogans and maxims, and dealing with them through fantasies. Relativistic clichés paradoxically set us apart from our nature, by creating dualistic versions of our unitive status.

One example that keeps coming up in class is the fantasy that enlightenment comes from spending thirty years in a Himalayan cave. It's a wonderfully romantic notion, but at heart it is an excuse to imagine that we can't be enlightened unless we do something incredibly boring and strenuous for a whole lifetime. I always wonder, "What are those poor people running away from?" And yet, as Deb pointed out, sometimes it's just the right thing to run away to a peaceful place. Then it isn't relativistic at all. But spiritual life is filled with images of imagined special states that amount to wishful thinking. We use wishful thinking to push those states away, at least as much as to move toward them.

Nitya unconsciously plays up a classic Indian romantic notion in his commentary, that of the transcendent being who is unmoved by events. Sure, every century there are a handful of Narayana Gurus and Ramana Maharshis who truly are transcendent. One reason they are is that they have left their families and friends behind. This is essential, because unless you are dead you will always care for your loved ones. That's why they call them loved ones in the first place. Yet for the remaining billions and billions of us, there is no point in struggling to suppress our feelings about those close to us. We are trying to retain our balance so we can be more available to them, not less.

Tragedies happen, and they are sad and unsettling. Plus, there are very few humans who don't have at least one friend who is seriously ill, crazy, addicted, deranged or what have you. If you don't, you are either very lucky or very cloistered. Or maybe you're the one who's nuts! Some of us have whole galleries of them, to the point where I think we are all in some unusual category or two. Anyway, these are people we love and care about, and it would be very selfish for us to turn our backs on them. Patanjali is not suggesting we build thick walls around our delicate psyches. Instead, we are to tune in to a solid state in our core, from which we can withstand the agitations that life is filled with. The wording of the sutra itself shows that this is a process, and not usually a *fait accompli*. When we stay fixed on freedom we *acquire* steadiness. That's very different from saying we're either steady or we're unenlightened.

Paul brought up something Moni said in the last class that had made a strong impression on him. She had talked about realizing that no one is better than anyone else, that God loves us and he also loves the person we are having trouble getting along with. Paul related this to work, where we are thrown together with a wide variety of people who we ostensibly either like or don't like. He found that if he let go of those divisive categories, he

found that he could begin to see the other person's reasons for being who they were, and so develop sympathy. There isn't really a class system or a hierarchy of spiritual versus unspiritual people. We are all equal. The Absolute doesn't distinguish between us in the way that our emotional attachments incline us to do. A guru doesn't separate agitated from pleasant interactions, but takes them all as they come.

In my reading of Easwaran yesterday, he put this very well. There are some very good stretches in his Gita commentary, offset by some really tedious "Lord Lordism," as Nataraja Guru liked to call it. But the good parts are quite excellent. He was speaking of XII, 16, for which I'll use Nataraja Guru's much preferable translation: "He who expects no favors, who is clean, expert, who sits unconcerned, carefree, who has relinquished all undertakings—he, My devotee, is dear to Me." Easwaran writes:

I once knew a chap who was expert at card games, who had a quiet way of making the most of every hand. "A good player," he explained, "can't afford to depend on chance. He's got to be able to play whatever he's dealt." Then he would add, with understandable pride, "Let anybody you like set up the cards—some good, all bad, I don't care. At the end of the evening, I'll still come out on top."

He was talking about cards, but I was thinking, "That's the way to live in freedom too." The word the Gita uses here is *anapekshah*, for which "detached" is a very pale translation. Literally, *anapekshah* means 'without expectation.' It sounds negative, even passive, but it is just the opposite. *Anapekshah* means always ready for the unexpected—in other words, ready for anything. It is a very daring attitude, because it means telling life, "I'm not concerned with what you send me. Good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, it doesn't matter; I can make the best of whatever comes."

The opposite of this is not preparedness; it is rigidity. Most of us are subject to this, and it comes to the surface when we have to deal with unexpected problems.... In other words, to live without expectations is the secret of freedom, especially in personal relationships. (Vol. II, 391-92)

Once again, random readings and encounters turned out to be directly related to our Yoga Shastra study. Life is like that.

We'll close with Susan's wonderful example. Her husband is Korean, and her teenage son was having a spat with her. He spat out, "You're the only one in our family who's a Caucasian!" She shot back, "At least I'm not a cocky Asian." It made him laugh. He had to concede, "That's a good one, mom." Friends again. As Deb said, maybe we should add a sutra that recommends humor as a way of breaking the ice. Patanjali seems to be lacking in that category, but many of the Indian classics abound in it. Nitya and Easwaran are full of it. As long as the humor isn't at someone's expense, as it so often is in the modern vein, it can be freeing and enlightening. We can only laugh when we're not rigidly doctrinaire, and we should be able to laugh at ourselves first of all. Thanks to Susan, we ended the upbeat evening on an even more upbeat note.

Part II

So many examples! One I'll relate is when Vicente Richards and I went into a bar in our early twenties, probably 1972. He lived next door to us at the Overton Street Gurukula, and we had become good friends. Vicente was a black Cuban who had moved to Portland a couple of years earlier, and probably growing up with less racism than the American norm helped him to have a more equal-minded attitude toward racial hostility. Anyway, we went into some seedy joint, and pretty soon a dude sitting at the bar started giving Vicente a hard time. It was unabashedly racist, and

had nothing at all to do with our behavior. He was simply painting all blacks as fitting his stupid and negative stereotype. I started think, “Oh boy, we’d better get outta here, there’s going to be a fight.” Vicente was proud as well as highly intelligent, and he carried a knife.

Then Vicente stood up to the guy and boldly told him, “You know, what you’re saying doesn’t have anything to do with me—it’s about you. You ought to be careful what you say, because you’re just showing everybody who you are.” He appeared unruffled by the insults, and calmly turned back to me. But the other guy, drunk as he was, had been stopped in his tracks. He never said another word, but retreated back into his haze. I have recalled this incident throughout my life as a great example of how to meet hostility with calm strength and good sense. It struck me Vicente was putting Nitya’s philosophy into practice without ever having come to his classes.

And this just came from Lila, one of the new members of our electronic salon. She offers a good tip for anyone struggling with the tough early part of the book:

All day I have been in wonder. I started to read Nitya's commentary on the Patanjali Sutras. It was tough going at first. I got as far as the sutra you just wrote about when I remembered what I used to do in graduate school. I started with the last page and worked forward. The good stuff is like desert, at the end. I read the letters, moving forward to the last sutras. Recently, I had been to a reading of Rumi by a Sufi who read and sang Rumi's poems in Farsi. He explained the language spiritual literature is written in by great saints is imbued with the “Absolute” (the Beloved, the transcendent). Reading the sutras, I found myself in deep meditation which slipped into another state where intense light

took my heart and made me soar. I awakened with the book tucked into my arms.

Thank you for bringing me into this circle of Light.

Lila

11/3/9

Sutra I:38

[The mind is stabilized] also by contemplating on the knowledge derived from the dream state and the dreamless sleep state.

I've been going through life under the happy illusion that everybody works with their dreams at least at some point in life. Last night's class disabused me of that notion. Dream work was treated as a novel concept by a significant chunk of us. Freud, for all his limitations, knew it as "the royal road to the unconscious." Likewise, the interpretation of dreams was central to Carl Jung's psychological insights. Patanjali isn't giving us any specific suggestions, but only showing that these ideas existed at least 2000 years before Freud and Jung. And it was all the rage during my formative years, which I'm afraid are beginning to approach Patanjali in antiquity.

All of us admitted to being generally ignorant of any MRI studies of the brain during dream sleep and deep sleep. At least in relation to wakeful consciousness, those have turned earlier science on its head, so to speak. Any readers who have some knowledge in this area, please write to the class and bring us up to speed. Also, since Patanjali closes this section on stabilizing the mind with the next sutra, where he says "Those are my suggestions, but you're welcome to use anything that suits you," we thought we would try to recall a dream during the week we could present in the next class. We're looking for transformative dreams, ones that taught you or your friend something significant, and that you aren't embarrassed to share. You can also tell us what

Patanjali left out of his list: techniques that you have heard about or invented yourself that offer a rock to cling to in the wild rapids of the stream of consciousness. Surely there must have been new ways to stabilize the mind developed since Patanjali's time!

One suggestion I had is to not use published lists of dream symbols. You can read them to see what other people think, but every one of them is different, so don't apply them rigidly to your own dreams. Each brain employs its own mysterious language concocted from its storehouse of unique experiences, and the same symbol might mean a vast panoply of different things to different people. To decode your dreams, you have to study them closely and learn their language. It's a huge and fascinating field, one that can teach us much about what we overlook during our wakeful periods. Our investigations can even help us to realize that the phrase "life is but a dream," is more than a nursery rhyme. When we speak of colorations and projections of the psyche, those mental superimpositions are like dreams impinging on what we take to be reality. The apparent solidity of the wakeful state turns out to be largely an illusion.

John pointed out that dreams are very chaotic and seemingly random. Their imagery is bizarre and even psychotic, so a lot of folks just shrug them off as weird and meaningless. But it is widely held by psychologists that dreams are a primary way for the depths of the mind to be communicated to our surface awareness. Take pity on your brain! It is trying hard, sometimes desperately, to make you aware of important facets of your life, aspects you are suppressing, intentionally or not. It doesn't speak English or Malayalam. Well, actually it's kind of close to Malayalam.... In any case, if we pay attention and make a concerted effort to hear the message, we can learn a lot. The subtext of much of Vedanta is that we have buried in our minds important aspects of a whole life, and we are not fully alive until we bring them out. It's our "true

nature” that’s trying to speak to us through both sleeping and waking dreams.

As I said, we didn’t get overly hot about dream revelations in the class. One type that several people did mention was being pursued by a terrifying figure. You run like mad away, but every time you turn back, there it is! Since it is part of your psyche, you can’t escape from it, no matter what tricks you pull. This is a classic, because we all have a smorgasbord of nasty traumas cooking inside us that turn our lives into a banquet of fearful reactions. Our subconscious is trying to alert us to a suppressed factor that is controlling our life. What that is will be difficult to determine, but it’s certain that as long as we are running away we will never find out. We have to turn and face the music squarely, and do some serious digging, but the fear impels us to do exactly the opposite.

A lot of traumas turn out to be not so frightening once we understand them. They draw much of their power from our ignorance. Like when we’re lying in bed drifting off to sleep and we hear a bump and experience a thrill of terror. In our imagination it’s a murderer with an axe, waiting to break in the door! And then we hear it again, and it’s someone in the next apartment dropping the other shoe. Whew!

Stabilizing the mind is something like mental chiropractic: painful at the instant of adjustment, but followed by a rush of relief as normal balance is regained.

Another typical dream we talked about was being naked in public or in school. I remember standing naked on a table in second grade, embarrassed and humiliated, while the rest of the class, normally dressed, held hands in a circle around me. John’s version included going into a classroom and learning there was going to be a test for which he wasn’t prepared. These are quite universal. My sense is that clothes represent socialized behavior, the persona, and our inner innocence is either not covered by them

or wishes to remain uncovered. We dream about being naked a lot early in the socialization period of childhood, while the unexpected test dreams are a later version. The nakedness or lack of preparation is thus very healthy and honest. The lesson of the dream would depend on how we feel about it, whether exposed, embarrassed, defiant, relaxed, prurient, or what have you.

Bill is our acknowledged expert on dreams, having worked with Stanley Krippner in the early 1970s in the Dream Lab in New York. He told us that all of us cycle through deep sleep to dream and back again several times during the night. We start with the more restful deep sleep, and then dream more after we become better rested. Barring damage or interference by drugs, everyone dreams every night. Deb once had a friend who claimed that because he had become enlightened by meditation, he never dreamed. Yet another example of self-delusion and pretension. As Anne said, some of this sounds like it's advocating brain death. But what we're really trying to do is bring the brain more to life.

Bill's dream friend Dr. Krippner still holds group meetings to unearth revelations through dream analysis. There are any number of ways to recall and study dreams. For instance, we should fall asleep with the affirmation that we want to remember our dreams, and keep a pencil and paper handy to write them down the minute we awaken.

Jan, an adept dreamer, wanted to know how we were supposed to meditate on the deep sleep state. That's a less studied area, and we wondered what the MRI studies have revealed about it. But there are several ways to look at it that could be helpful.

Most importantly, you have to be particularly careful not to fall asleep while meditating on anything so formless! But it is good for us to contemplate something so mysterious that we cannot grasp it, and we never will. Grasping belongs to the wakeful and dream states, and it is not available in deep sleep. Meditating on the immense depth of deep sleep teaches us that our conscious life

floats on a profound ignorance that is absolute. Knowing this, we can't help being more humble.

Secondly, if we dissolve into nothingness every night, why do we feel we have to reassemble ourselves into exactly the same being every morning? What's to prevent us from rebuilding ourselves as less oppressed, less addicted, less intolerant, and so on, and adding more compassion, insight, openness, and whatever else we want? Sure, there are neurological bonds, called samskaras, that pressure us to stay stuck in the same ruts all the time, but every morning offers us a fresh opportunity to pry ourselves out of them.

A really fine meditation is to picture deep sleep as a seed state. Like a plant seed, all that we are is compacted for a time into a dimensionless point, from which a new being will blossom forth in the light of the new day. A seed is a true miracle! The plant is nowhere in evidence, and yet it is fully present as a potential, and given the right environment it will spout and grow. We are filled with millions of seeds, waiting their turn to express themselves in our life. Are we going to keep them waiting forever? Shouldn't we be promoting some of them? It is quite a paradox that something as abstract and abysmal as the deep sleep state can be the womb of everything we know and love.

According to Bill, when Buddhists meditate on emptiness, it is an emptiness that is full of everything. This is very like a seed, or what we are here calling the deep sleep state.

Nitya's and Patanjali's point with this sutra is that we are prejudiced in favor of the wakeful state, which is a tiny pinprick of awareness afloat on a sea of infinite potential. We should invite the rest in, and do some exploring. And, as Bill agreed, the turiya or the infinite absolute ground of all, is the light that sustains the other three states. When we meditate on it, it throws light onto all the states. Wherever we go, the Absolute is there with us, and this realization should make us bold explorers indeed.

Part II

It seems that dreams are more popular than I was led to believe the other night. Of the sharable responses, Beverley sent two paintings and a funny cartoon that I'll have to include as attachments. Charles and Brenda pioneered an excellent technique that others who don't live in our area might try also. Without having read the notes I send out, they had a meditation on the sutra together at home, and then wrote their impressions. They both felt it was a wonderful way to participate, and then when they read my notes they were happy to see the connections. The best part is the feeling of evoking your own understanding without being in any way dependent on a class setting, with its multiple influences. This would in fact be an ideal way for actual class participants to prepare for our sessions too. We get a lot more out of a class like this when we've thought about the subject beforehand.

Brenda wrote:

I refer to 'the light of consciousness prevailing during dream hours.'

Not every dream is an inspired vision, and tejas doesn't always mean prophetic inspiration. I am thinking of tejas as light of wisdom, and in the deep sleep that follows there can be clarity and resolution.

i.e. often times I will practice musical passages that I find difficult, then I will sleep and upon waking I will know these passages better.

As dreams representing one's own personal mythology, pertinent case in point regarding my mother.

I dreamt that I was carrying her out into a wide fertile plain, to her Swedish grandparents' homestead, her body light in my arms, her head resting on my left shoulder, she was weary from

the psycho-pharmaceutical damage that she had endured for decades. In this dream I was sheltering her, beneath the tall locust trees that my Great Grandmother Hilda had planted. As I held my mother's fragile body, I walked assuredly, saying softly over and over again, 'You can depend on me, you can depend on me'. She was trusting me to take her home.

Upon waking, I shot out of bed and immediately began the process of bringing her home, to be embraced, nurtured and to recover a sense of belonging, wholeness and completion. This was manifested because I 'heeded the call' through the dream state. Even though the dream was the flame of the candle reflected in the mirror, what was in my unconscious mind arose in my dream, consequently my mother became a part of the dream in my waking state. All in all, it was a deeply enriching spiritual ordeal, full of joy and despair, all brought to the fore, spurred on by a dream.

Charles wrote: Reverie is a state between waking and dream. I can't remember dreams but when I lie half awake before dawn, geometrical ideas sometimes appear to me which involve number and proportion. If I don't write these down they fade in the full day of the waking state. Reverie is like the part of the ocean near the surface where reds, oranges and yellows are visible. The dream state is like the deeper parts where blues, violets and greens are visible. Deep sleep is like the deep where there is no light.

Charles didn't know, but we discussed the so-called hypnogogic and hypnopompic states, those that occur in the reverie between waking and sleeping, in class as well. This is an especially fertile area for creative breakthroughs, including a number of quite famous ones. We also talked a bit about Brenda's closely related idea, that our mental impressions are consolidated during sleep, and so we process and learn a lot, in addition to fixing our

memories, when we withdraw waking consciousness from the field. This is amply supported by new scientific findings. It makes you feel like the subconscious is your dear friend and helpmate.

Part III

Deb sent this along. The “you” is Nitya:

Here is a poem of a dream I had....

STEP FORWARD STEP BACK

In an open space
a thin line
the horizon.
You walk towards me,
we recognize each other,
smile, look into the other's eyes,
then with deft movement
you reach across your chest
and open it to me
a corporeal door swung ajar.
Nothing bloody, nothing fleshy
as I look inside, nothing.
I am you, you say,
your smile covering distance,
erasing peculiarities.
As our eyes continue to hold
you step closer and
with the same suppleness
open my torso: chest, stomach,
fluttering breath. You are me.
Still we watch, space
streaming around us.

A chirrup from the birds
in an unseen tree.
Quiet.
Your eyes.
We are nothing, you say,
We are transparent.
Transparent the line of my arm.
Nothing the shape of your mouth.
Nothing the touch on my arm.
Transparent my fingers to your face,
your lips evanescent in the startling blue.

11/10/9

Sutra I:39

Or by contemplation as desired by oneself.

One of our liveliest classes ever seemed to send everyone home in an ebullient mood. It's funny how sometimes the sharing is as reluctant as trying to coax a badger out of its burrow and at other times it's like a river in flood. The prevailing state tends to be roughly similar for everybody present, which is lucky, because badgers don't like to listen to prattle. There is definitely a tone to each gathering that we all partake in.

One of the most germane discussions was touched off by John reiterating the classic objection to Patanjali's assertion in this sutra, that each of us is the best judge of our own right activity. Nitya puts the idea succinctly in his brief commentary:

Yoga is not to be imparted like a collective drill that is given to squadrons or battalions of soldiers.... Recognizing the uniqueness of each individual, Patanjali states that the most suitable discipline for each person is that which they can wholeheartedly accept.

In the Bhagavad Gita... Krishna [tells Arjuna] “After critically examining all my instructions, you choose to act exactly as you desire.” Krishna does not hold his beloved disciple at the leash of any obligation. The disciple is fully free to choose what is most appropriate to him. Here Patanjali also emphasizes this supreme teaching in Yoga, which offers absolute freedom to its votary, making it clear that, ultimately, everyone has to help himself or herself. Thus this sutra is very significant.

John thought that, while admirable, this idea empowered bad people to do whatever they want, too. Moni responded that it doesn't ratify just any action indiscriminately. It's for those who have already been fully instructed.

Bad people have never had any inhibitions about doing what they want anyway. It's the good ones who seek to model their behavior on ethical norms. The norms are certainly part of the scrutiny of all aspects of a situation that we are asked to perform prior to acting as we see fit. The key, though, is that unitive action springs from the heart and soul of each person, and following rules, guidelines, and the like is not unitive, it is mediated activity. A long discussion brought us to see the wisdom of first being carefully instructed and only after that expansion of awareness has become an integral part of us can we safely renounce outside influences. Outside influence will always be valuable for learning, but we have to learn how to act independently also. The freedom to act as our own sovereign is actually a rare and complex accomplishment, having little or nothing to do with instinctual behavior.

Susan told us how she grew up with so many rules and laws to follow that she arrived at adulthood without a clue how to be on her own. She had to start learning that new set of skills from

scratch. The adult children the world is filled with are still waiting for someone to tell them what to do.

Anita talked about her long association and then break with the Mormon Church, the fastest growing religion on earth. A good part of its success comes from its role in doing people's thinking for them. A lot of folks are afraid of freedom, because it's so foreign to them and so demanding of their attention, and so they look for a safe haven that promises to care for them, here and hereafter. It's very attractive, really. A devil's bargain: "Sign here and I'll take care of all your wishes." The small print at the bottom reads: "In the end, I get your soul." Anita was brave enough to strike off on her own, because something in her needed to find its own way. But the church members still reach out and try to gather her back in, partly to ratify their own decision, but also because they are so happy and want to share their happiness. They don't understand why Anita can't be satisfied with their ersatz paradise. Their god doesn't want them to be independent and think for themselves. Anyone who does is doomed. As John pointed out, the Gita and the Yoga Sastra are quite unusual in advocating personal freedom. Most scriptures tilt heavily in the opposite direction, as do state constitutions, business plans, schools, and pretty much every other social institution as well.

My head is nearly bursting trying to do justice to our long and lively discussion of this crucial issue. I wish I could just fling it all onto the page! Readers are going to have to fill in a lot of the blanks for themselves, I'm afraid. Otherwise, we'll have a book on our hands.

Anita noted how young children, like John's criminals, just take what they want and use violence to get their way. It's true there is a similar condition at work here. Criminals never had the social development to help them grow out of those early simplistic attitudes natural to children. Either wise guidance was absent, or sometimes parents intentionally insulate their kids from the natural

consequences of their actions, and this is almost as debilitating. They feel they are protecting them, but instead they are cutting them off from learning what they need, and usually want, to know.

Overprotective parents also make all their kids' decisions for them, and then wonder why as adults they don't seem to be able to make good choices. They never had any practice, that's why! Making wise decisions is an advanced skill that is best perfected under the care of a guru or parent or other loved one. Most American parents these days are hyper-overprotective. We now have a whole series of generations of kids who are dependent to an unhealthy degree on someone else running their lives. Unfortunately, those someone elses aren't always Good Samaritans. It's no wonder the cults are full, not to mention the prisons! Susan shared a revelatory dream she had last summer on this very subject, which for space considerations I'll add as Part II.

Narayana Guru put his finger on the crux of the matter in Atmo verses 23 and 24, where he instructs us that selfish actions are doomed to disaster while altruistic ones promote general welfare. We start life naturally ignorant, with very limited awareness outside our self, and grow to embrace more and more of the rest of the world. When a child bites and then is bitten back, they learn how it feels to the other person when they bite, and next time they will think twice about their urge to hurt. An alert parent will underline the lesson by saying, "There! See how it feels?" By contrast, an overprotective parent will offer solace and put the blame on the other child, thereby erasing the lesson and empowering the child to continue to cause injuries.

Arjuna's education in the Gita, before he is turned loose on his own recognizance, is to move from a selfish perspective to a universal one. Krishna carefully instructs him how he, the Absolute, is in every bit of the universe and in every person. The critical examination he is to perform before acting is to take a global perspective so that his choice is optimal. The young child or

criminal is acting on limited information, only seeing things from a selfish point of view. The parent's job is to teach the child to think of others too. Yet thinking of others to the exclusion of our own needs is one of the errors often made. The global situation includes us too. We should not be asked for self-abnegation, but only to treat other's needs as equal to our own. We are struggling to grasp the whole story, and only if we come close can we act with confidence that the best interests of the most participants will be well served.

As we talked about how we can inculcate unselfish values in a world that worships self-interest, at one point Paul mentioned the "Hundredth Monkey" hypothesis. His version was an island (actually Great Britain) where a few birds had learned how to open milk bottles sitting on doorsteps and sip the cream off the top. A few learned by observation, but once a critical mass was reached, they all began doing it, all over the British Isles. Actually, the spread, carefully documented, was rapid but not instantaneous, as it was with the hundred monkeys learning to wash their sweet potatoes in Japan. (That was also on an island—could that be a decisive factor??) Paul brought the premise up in the hope that, rather than making direct efforts to teach others spiritual values, which seems to always backfire, if we exemplify them in ourselves that might be a more successful strategy. There are many pockets of spiritually dedicated souls scattered about the globe, and perhaps their efforts will produce a sudden flowering of enlightenment throughout the species.

Of course, there are a lot of folks meditating on stupid ideas too, so we have to hope they don't suddenly burst forth in all of us as well. It's important to keep our eyes open!

We held a review of the section of the Yoga Sastra we are hereby concluding, on how to stabilize the mind. We did it partly to fix in our minds what Patanjali covered, and also with an eye to adding what he didn't, including things that hadn't been invented

yet. When you scan his list it's obvious that there is no physical component whatsoever, at least to this part of the yoga program. The only thing that even comes close to physical activity is watching our breathing. These are strictly mental exercises done by a lone recluse, or for that matter, anyone home alone. Patanjali's suggestions for stabilizing the mind are:

33: The mind is clarified by cultivating friendliness toward happiness, compassion toward misery, gladness toward virtue, and equanimity toward vice.

34: Or, by the expiration and retention of breath.

35: When absolute interest is shown to a sensory experience or activity, that will bring the mind to a steady state.

36: Also by meditating on the sorrowless state of inner joy one can attain luminosity of intelligence.

37: Also the mind fixed on freedom from attachment to sense experience acquires steadiness.

38: Also by contemplating on the knowledge derived from the dream state and the dreamless sleep state.

39: Or by contemplation as desired by oneself.

Anita added music and companionship with animals. Music has become very important to spirituality since the old days. Chanting and mantras were mentioned as a way of overcoming obstacles in the previous section, and really, overcoming obstacles and stabilizing the mind are closely related. Having used music as my primary meditation technique for almost 40 years, I can only

concur. Stray thoughts immediately produce “mistakes” in musical performance, so the main thrust is toward one-pointed concentration, with ample negative feedback. Even listening to music requires concentration and focus, which with music we love comes quite easily. Music is a perfect example of why we are instructed to gravitate to what we love or what holds our interest. Music we don’t like makes us turn it off right away. If we’re not interested, our mind wanders all over the place. But when our interest is captured we are instantly in the flow, effortlessly lifted to a higher state.

The class agreed that companionship with pets and young children was blissful in a number of ways, one of which is their living in the present moment at all times. They help bring us into the here and now. And they love to play, so they remind us that life is supposed to be a divine sport, a lila. I added companionship with peers too. Patanjali was clearly not a sociable fellow. But we learn a lot and are at our best sometimes when we are having a good conversation. One of my favorite activities in the last decade has been simply talking with friends about issues that matter to both of us. Of course, personal interactions can be confusing and problematic too, but the potential is there for genuine stabilization of the psyche through joy.

One pretty hip thing Patanjali did mention was the contemplation of dreams. Happily, quite a few people shared interesting dreams in the class. Pradeep emailed that the science show Nova is screening a program on dreams on November 24th on US television. Nova is broadcast at the same time as our class (are they copycats, or just competing for ratings?), and the sense I got from our class was Who wants to watch TV? Maybe someone from the outside can send us a recap of the show.

Also, Peg sent a link to a New York Times article from the day before:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/10/health/10mind.html?_r=1&e

[mc=etal](#) . The article shared several new theories. One that caught the class's imagination was the idea that we dream all the time, that it's the way the mind operates on its own, until it is "corrected" by sensory input. The corrected dream is what we call the waking state, which floats like an empty plastic water bottle on the stream of dream consciousness (I made up this analogy). This helps explain why "life is but a dream," and why we color so much of the wakeful state with our projections. It may also help explain schizophrenia, conceived as the inability to handle the infringement of dreams on the wakeful state. Most people feel they are in control in the wakeful state, which may be strictly an illusion, but without that comfortable illusion we can lose our ground and feel overwhelmed by chaos.

Another theory in the article is that dreaming is how our mind prepares for the new day, like a computer booting up. A lot of REM sleep, the dreaming part, occurs right before we awaken. One aspect of this theory is to assert that some dreams, at least, don't mean anything. They're just us getting ready for the new day's challenges as we anticipate them.

The class spent a lot of time discussing dreaming, and it was clear that some dreams do have the ability to crystallize ideas we have suppressed but really should be facing, as with Susan's dream that follows. They are how our brain communicates with us, though doing so is a tough job, primarily identified as we are with surface awareness.

There was so much more, but my brain hurts. It was a wonderful evening. Apparently everyone went home feeling tremendously enriched by the class. In the pulsing, invisible, electromagnetic noosphere, we contributed our part, one pretty hip monkey to help some day maybe add up to a hundred and permit a quantum leap for the dawdling human race. Though we probably shouldn't hold our breaths on that, sincere thanks to everyone in

the primary class and the secondary class notes crowd for doing your bit!

Part II

Susan shared a recap of the following during the exploration of dreams part of the class. Her daughter Sarah had just gotten her driver's license and was starting to go out on her own. Susan has deep, well-founded issues with protecting her children from harm. This dream complex helped her to break out of one of the toughest fears, about the very real dangers of driving. We'd talked about gradually letting go of parental control for years, really, but it was the dream that provided, or at any rate signaled, her actual breakthrough. After the dream, Susan immediately felt vastly relieved of her persistent anxiety. Now she inwardly cheers as Sarah drives off to school with Peter, while she stays home to follow her freedom. You can't find a better example of how meditating on dreams can help stabilize and clarify the mind:

Dear Scott,

I just had these two dreams this morning and the poem came to me as I was thinking about them. This has been a hard week. I have been sick and mostly out of my mind, struggling with Sarah about where to drive next. I let her drive to the store and then she wants to drive to school and she doesn't even know how to keep her room clean. I let her drive to a friend's house and then she wants to drive into the morass of 23rd Ave and she doesn't know how to parallel park and half the time she doesn't clear her dishes from the table. I've been trying to remind her that driving is a privilege and that she needs to show that she is responsible. Oh my god, it's been a scene and [husband] Rick has been gone so he just gets an earful over the phone.

The dreams put it all in perspective, I think.

Aum,
Susan

I

The first scene I'm in the country somewhere and I am with a group of women. At one point there is a tiger that fixates on one of the women in our group and eventually is kind of stalking her because he wants to be with her so much. We start having to protect her from the tiger.

II

Small town. I am in a small bookshop with a Japanese feeling to it. I have seen a film or video that shows that the tiger is going to come after the woman/girl at this book shop and I am really terrified for her. She is in a box for protection. A big long sort of box, inside the store. [Interestingly, in her recap last night the coffin had become a cage.] I am barricading the flimsy windows and doors of the store so that when the tiger comes he will not be able to get to her. I am putting boards across openings and shoving heavy pieces of furniture up against doors except that there isn't too much that is heavy in the shop so I feel as though it is inadequate and that makes me even more worried about the tiger. Then a big truck pulls up in front of the shop (as the film that I saw showed) and the tiger is in a big long box on this truck (kind of like the box that the woman is in). There are several teachers unloading books to bring into the store. I tell them about the tiger and how it is going to try to get to the girl/woman and that they need to be careful about opening doors to the book store because we can't let the tiger get to her. They look at me with interest but I can tell that they don't really believe me. They are kind of humoring me. But I know I'm right because I saw the film and

tigers are really dangerous and this one wants to get to this girl and hurt her and then she will be destroyed. But I'm not sure that the film showed all that happens when the tiger gets to the girl. Maybe I just filled in the blanks. During this time of my utter panic and my walking around, trying to anticipate any move by the tiger, I notice a tall doll house in one part of the shop. It is Japanese style and with a roof that slants down in front. [Son] Peter is there replacing tiny shells that keep falling off the roof, but they are supposed to be there. Some of them break when they fall. We notice together how the lighter ones tend to make the big drop and don't break but the heavier ones break in half or in pieces when they hit the hard floor. Peter is very calm and is enjoying playing with the house. Sarah is there too, bustling around but more as a shadow. The teachers are talking amongst themselves. I like them. I admire them. I like to hear them talk about things. But I can't understand why they aren't as worried as I am about the tiger getting the woman.

III

There is a tiger
Who is after my daughter.
He stalks her day and night
I watched the scenes on Youtube
Of him running after her
With huge teeth and sharp claws.
He is coming to get her and tear her apart
The small baby that I have nursed and loved
She is 16 and she doesn't realize about the tiger
She doesn't even
Think he's a tiger
Happily would she walk into a whole street full of tigers
To be free
To be who she is

Part III – Bergson weighs in

I must've typed these up a year or two ago and forgotten them. They waved at me this morning, and they are exactly on the subject from our discussion of freedom this week. Synchronicity strikes again.

Henri Bergson (1859-1941) was an important influence on Nataraja Guru, and source of one of our favorite quotes: "The true mystic just opens his heart to the onrushing wave."

Bergson bits, from the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol I, article by T.A. Goudge:

Freedom of action, according to Bergson, is something directly experienced. Man feels himself to be free as he acts, even though he may be unable to explain the nature of his freedom. However, we are free only when our act springs spontaneously from our *whole* personality as it has evolved up to the moment of action. If this spontaneity is absent, our actions will be simply stereotyped or mechanical responses. In such cases we behave like automata. Hence, freedom is far from being absolute. Indeed, for most people free acts are the exception, not the rule. (p.288)

Since man is a social animal, his future evolution will be accelerated or retarded by the sort of group in which he lives. Bergson discussed this question in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, where he drew a distinction between a society that is "closed" and one that is "open," describing in each case corresponding types of religion and of morality.

A closed society is one dominated by the routine and mechanical. It is resistant to change, conservative, and authoritarian. Its stability is achieved by increasing its self-centeredness. Hence, conflict with other self-centered groups, often involving war, is a

condition of its preservation. Internal cohesiveness is secured by a closed morality and a closed religion... Closed morality is static and absolutistic; closed religion is ritualistic and dogmatic. Both institutions exert pressure on individuals to accept the standard practices of the community. Spontaneity and freedom are reduced to a minimum. Conformity becomes the prime duty of the citizen. There is an obvious analogy between such a society and the repetitive mechanisms dealt with by the intellect. Indeed, Bergson regarded closed societies as in large measure the intellect's products.

The existence of a multiplicity of closed societies on the earth is an obstacle to human evolution. Accordingly, the next development in man requires the establishment of an open society. Instead of being limited, it will embrace all mankind; instead of being static, it will be progressive; instead of demanding conformity, it will encourage the maximum diversity among individuals. Its moral and religious beliefs will be equally flexible and subject to growth. Religion will replace the stereotyped dogmas elaborated by the intellect with the intuition and illumination now achieved by the mystics. The spread of the mystical spirit must ultimately create an open society whose freedom and spontaneity will express the divine *elan* which pervades the universe. (p.294)