

2022 Patanjali Class 49

4/4/23

Sutra I:42 – In the stabilization of consciousness in an object of perception, word, meaning, and idea are commingled in confused cognition.

Sutra I-43 – In unobstructed consciousness, the memory is purified, as if devoid of its own form, and the object alone is illuminated.

Now Patanjali is leading us to see that we, not the externals, are the source of our experience. We are not the source of the world, but we are the source of our experience of it. What we outwardly love are merely specific examples that relate to our inner happiness, not the actual producers of the happiness (or misery or confusion) itself. As I'm sure you realize, this is one of the most controversial and difficult notions in yoga, widely misunderstood. Yet thanks to our very able gurus and our diligent study of their teachings, the idea is starting to catch on in the class. (From the old Class Notes. It's still merely *starting* to catch on. 😊)

Deb felt sure we all were familiar with the confusion addressed here: how we try to keep our focus, yet a welter of other ideas constantly carry us elsewhere. Her example was right there in the reading of Nitya's commentary—she was trying to follow his train of thought, yet a chain of more or less tangential examples kept popping into her mind, so in place of clarity she was dragged into “a padded world of memory.” (The old insane asylums included padded rooms for violent patients, so they couldn't injure themselves, so it's a particularly apt analogy.) She could see how Patanjali was showing us that our experience is not of the Now, it's all over the place. Having just spent a week with our 7-month-old grandson, his super-intense state of being right in the moment at all times was fresh in her mind. Our confusion is compounded by an unassailable fact:

As Deb pointed out, it isn't just one person whose vision is clouded with memories, it's everyone. It would be hard enough to untangle the ensuing snarls if they were only coming from one place, but they are coming from every direction at once. Every person is trapped in their own mindset. It's no wonder that as a species we have become enmeshed in a colossal backlash affecting every level of our lives. (Old Notes)

Andy experiences the state of unobstructed consciousness as a moment of rest, which is something anyone can have. Our normal experience is to continuously relate to the world, the ongoing flow of life, but we can take a restful pause from our mental turbulence whenever we decide to. We can stay still naturally or take it on as a practice. Bill likened this to the aesthetic arrest we feel when admiring a sunset, for instance.

I felt it was important to clarify sutra 43, with its potentially confusing translation: "the memory is purified, as if devoid of its own form." From the old Notes:

The phrasing of this sutra is a little misleading, as we've already learned about "purifying our memories" earlier on. Purifying memories is a process of revisiting them and throwing the light of adult intelligence into the dark recesses where terrifying or twisted fantasies persist based on partial perception. Here we are sitting in contemplation and allowing the normal process of memory association to pass through us or slide off of us without grabbing on to any tag that comes up. It is actually *we* who are being purified, of the influence of memories on our consciousness, and not the memories themselves.

Deb read out Nitya's last paragraph again, in support of this:

The yogi adopts the discipline of letting go of all irrelevant aspects such as any personal relationship with that idea and with things that are unrelated to the particular gestalt taken for contemplation. This is a process of purifying one's memory. One by one, distractions are dropped. The external object and the internal contemplation become identified into a single entity. Then consciousness is filled with what is presented without being dragged into any tangent of association. Therefore, there is no experiencing of confrontation, because the duality of the perceiver and the perceived comes to an end.... In the yogi's sadhana (practice) this is a major crossing over. The most important thing to be noted here is the initial success of the aspiring yogi in liberating themselves from the clutches of memory.

Paul offered an excellent illustration of how we trip ourselves up. He once received a letter that looked like a legal document, and he was terrified. (He wouldn't tell us why.) He *knew* it had to be bad news, so he set it aside and steeled himself for the worst. He worked for days on how to deal with it, before he took the leap and opened it. It turned out to only be an advert. His ecstatic relief was only dampened by his chagrin at having worried about it for so long, but he had learned a lot about himself, in an instant. Attorney Jan laughingly commented that many, many letters like that sit on tables all over the country.

Deb talked in general terms about projections like these, what Nitya describes in an extended metaphor as "the many associated ideas that come rushing into her mind as a historical narration." Andy contributed that our memories manifest not just as ideas but also physically, so that our projections are a full-spectrum response. He wondered if body-kneader Karen noticed this while giving messages? She responded that she is like the rest of us, having to work to keep her concentration. In the beginning it was

harder, but now she finds it natural. One of those good habits. She uses a mantra to help her bring in the right energy. When she does, in many cases she experiences a blending of feelings with her client, and when they are in synch, Karen gets into an amazing space. Some of us can testify that we get astoundingly high, simply as passive recipients of her attunement.

Andy feels that releasing stress leads to a calm state where he can treat everything as an experience of the Absolute. Karen agreed: her practice helps her to “be here now,” and then she carries it into her everyday life, where she finds it much easier to let go of her tensions. She’s had a lot of ups and downs lately, and she is not the type who tries to manage them—her way of handling them is to just let them go. The old Notes speak to this:

All these mini-samadhis (stabilization in the cognizer, the act of cognition, or the cognized) are fine in proper measure, but they have a tendency to run away with us. Patanjali wants us to always remember that we are turning to the light of the Absolute for our stabilization, not to objects and subjects or even their contemplation, so we want to be sure not to get hung up on any of these specific and partial versions. Partiality breeds confusion.

We may imagine that inwardness includes healthy self-examination, and in one way it does, but excessive self-examination flirts with narcissism. So in a sense all three modes are outwardly directed, away from the core. If we are confused about this, we come to believe that our happiness and well-being are dependent on one or another of those outward factors. True inward searching eventually transcends even self-examination, to attain to Self-examination, or what we call union with the Absolute.

Jan gets a related feeling from what she described as trusting the Universe, which allows her to be transparent, not holding on to her wants. She used to make lists of things to accomplish, positive goals as well as chores and problems, and now realizes spelling out your good intentions take you out of the flow. She is replacing that ego-level programming with trust in the universe, and going with its naturalness.

For Andy, flowing requires acceptance. Paul resonated with that, recalling that early in his fire department career, he was over-stressed because he was trying to be perfect. There is so much to know, and it's worrying to realize how much you don't know. In a job like that, there is plenty of outside pressure to never make mistakes, as people's lives are often at stake. When the stress became unbearable, Paul finally gave himself permission to not be perfect. Once he accepted his own imperfection, he was able to relax and sleep at night again.

We finished up the class talking about sleep issues, which turned out to be dreamily related to the sutras. Nancy told us she keeps a pencil and paper near the bed, and writes about what her mind was doing, when she's up in the middle of the night. Seeing it in writing makes it easier to recognize it isn't important and shrug it off. It seems like a fine way to process those kinds of semi-conscious disturbances.

In one way our minds are prediction machines, and when the future is uncertain, it is impossible to predict how it will turn out. There is much these days that is out of our control, so our imagination churns and churns, trying to make the unpredictable predictable. A deep acceptance of what Paul realized—that we can't ever know everything, so it's okay to be modestly ignorant—helps, but of course we are deeply conditioned to pit our whole selves against it. Lying awake at night and stewing, we can subtly sense our bondage to separateness.

Hopefully, everyone got a good night's sleep from our discussion. I know I did.

Our closing meditation was initiated with more from the old Notes that I feel aptly summarizes the drift of these sutras:

The yogi's contribution to world peace, as well as interpersonal peace, is to continually set aside the memory associations that poison the present with prejudices of the past. These associations include, by the way, expectations, demands, thwarted hopes, festering wounds, and all the rest of the junk that causes us to walk around all the time in a state of frustration with the other. This doesn't mean that the yogi walks incautiously into the line of fire, but only that they see with clarity what their options are.

Yogis heal themselves first, and only then are they capable of possibly providing a curative influence on the whole situation. If you rush off half-cocked to repair the world, your memories will taint the purity of your motivations and make the problems worse, not better. You will only add to the confusion. But once you can see clearly without the intervention of your expectations and prejudices, you tacitly offer to others the opportunity to let go of theirs too. Some will respond by opening up, and some may want to kill you over it, but it is still the best contribution you can make to world and local peace.

We are called by this verse to surrender our small self interest, based as it is on outdated information, and merge into the greatness of reality as it is. No wonder Nitya describes this as a major crossing over!

Part II – Old Notes, in full

10/8/11

As we have often noted, there are many types of memory, and many of them are essential and beneficial to our existence. Because of this, I hesitate to vilify all memories. But there are some that “clutch” us and block the flow, as Nitya puts it, and these are to be transcended, if only during meditation. Traumatic memories have to be intelligently erased, while less egregious ones can be simply ignored and they will lose their grip. While it’s virtually impossible and hardly advisable to permanently erase our memories, we should be able to be honest enough with ourselves to recognize them for what they are and put them on temporary hold. I think that’s one of the most exciting challenges of yoga therapy.

Preventing ourselves from being “dragged into any tangent of association” is actually a very strenuous, positive effort. “Tangents of association” are frequently snares and delusions. Yet we also have to admit that creativity often manifests through these very tangents, meaning we have to be careful not to become rigid in screening out everything except a limited, predetermined focus. That would be squeezing ourselves into a memory box instead of liberating us from it.

Suppressing extraneous thoughts is actually a natural part of everyday living. A doctor puts her many interests on hold in order to listen closely to her patients. A dancer throws herself fully into her performance, where the intensity of the activity itself excludes tangential thoughts. Pretty much everyone does better at what they do if they are paying attention, being present. The love for expressing our dharma effectively engenders a natural concentration that raises us out of rote behavior.

A ready example of how we learn to streamline the chaotic firing of our neurons is taking tests, as in school. Those students who can maintain their concentration on tests will do well and make steady progress, while those who are continually interrupted by intrusive thoughts will make much slower headway, and will probably make more mistakes. Some of the chaos comes from

traumatic memories and some from lack of interest: the interest itself draws us into a focused state. So in the aspects of life that resemble test taking—and there are many of them—undivided attention is of great benefit. But we should be very careful to not make our contemplation an echo of academic competitiveness, which is a major tangent in its own right.

There are many devotees who strive diligently to keep their attention on a ritual performance or sequence, which is the “test taking” type of concentration. They have certain expectations, and put their whole heart and soul into actualizing them. This can be very beautiful, but it can also be the mark of the fundamentalist fanatic who cannot countenance any other path than their own. I think this is what Nitya is describing when he says “The intermediate stage is a confused state with a stable image arising out of the confusion.” The image is an amalgam of memory and social pressure, and it is held up by the concentration of confusion that the unexamined worshipper enthusiastically provides.

What the prudent yogi aims for is a breakthrough from the static imagery of memories into a fresh experience of the new, like apperceiving the essence of an object beneath the name and form that are its surface identity. Patanjali calls this the purification of memory in which consciousness becomes unobstructed. Only then is the object seen for what it is rather than what it is wished to be. This is a preliminary practice in the sense that the freedom and clarity gained can be carried over into the whole of life once it has been realized as a valid aspect of awareness.

The most important message here is that if we are vague about word, meaning and idea (or knower, known and knowledge), we can be led into unhealthy tangents. We become obsessive around false values and ideas, and are likely to get into trouble. As yogis, we are expected to sort out sensible meanings and interpretations and discard the nonsensical. This whole section on

stabilizing the mind is aimed at freeing us from half-baked thinking so that we can put our energies where they will do the most good. I can't think of much that's more beneficial.

* * *

12/1/9

Sutra I:42

In the stabilization of consciousness in an object of perception, word, meaning, and idea are commingled in confused cognition.

Sutra 42 is an extension of the previous, reinforcing what we studied last week. Coincidentally, this class was comprised almost exclusively of people who hadn't been here for the last one, so we covered much of the same, very important ground.

I should warn that this is the first time writing anything on my new computer, with a new Word program designed to frustrate simple folk by generations of computer nerds trying to preserve their jobs by making up annoying features and deleting useful ones. I doubt if I can keep the flow going, sorry. I will sort it out eventually. Arrrgh!

Anyway, as beginners, we ratchet ourselves into temporary stability by focusing on one of the three aspects of outward perception—cognized, cognizer and cognition—and I suppose this has an important role in our early development. But Patanjali is insistently reminding us that such stability is fraught with confusion, because every object is changeable from moment to moment and never can be more than partially comprehended. Only the unchanging light of the non-partial Self is trustworthy enough for us to thoroughly enmesh ourselves in. And this in itself is a fertile source of confusion, when the ineffable whole is mistaken for an object and thereby made partial.

We skimmed over examples of these three types of temporary samadhi or stabilization. We all know of those who become “locked in” to the outside world (the cognized) because they believe it represents the only reality. An economic system that values production over human needs is a logical outgrowth of such thinking, or keeping up appearances at the expense of substance, or doing as much busywork as possible. The mantra of such types is “He who dies with the most toys, wins.” Or “He who makes the most money, wins.” Technologic science that may be inimical to life is another thing pursued by the outwardly mesmerized, oblivious of the disastrous seeds they are sowing. Stabilization is begun for these types by meditating on a candle flame or other icon in plain sight, because for them seeing is believing.

Those who revel in the subjective counterpart of objective fascination (the cognizer) become obsessed with observing their states of mind and micromanaging them. “It’s all about me.” “What can you do for me?” “Okay, enough about you, let’s talk about me,” are typical attitudes. Stabilization begins by watching the breath or the flow of thoughts and trying to calm them down, and continues by including more territory into the ego’s purview. These types agree that seeing is believing, but what they see is their own opinion about everything.

Then there are those who like to philosophically analyze everything, to address cognition itself. Life is reduced to examples of ideas, and the typical meditation of these types is a study group like this one. Their confusion comes from losing touch with actual life situations when they get caught up in the thought mode, like an absent-minded professor. Thoughts are obviously central to existence, but they are only part of the picture, and we should not accidentally leave out the rest. This is why at the Gurukula we emphasize the practical implications of the teaching, and try to never leave it as “pie in the sky.” At least these types have come to

realize that believing is seeing, which is an important step toward detachment.

All these mini-samadhis are fine in proper measure, but they have a tendency to run away with us. Patanjali wants us to always remember that we are turning to the light of the Absolute for our stabilization, not to objects and subjects or even their contemplation, so we want to be sure not to get hung up on any of these specific and partial versions. Partiality breeds confusion.

We may imagine that inwardness includes healthy self-examination, and in one way it does, but excessive self-examination flirts with narcissism. So in a sense all three modes are outwardly directed, away from the core. If we are confused about this, we come to believe that our happiness and well-being are dependent on one or another of those outward factors. True inward searching eventually transcends even self-examination, to attain to Self-examination, or what we call union with the Absolute.

Now Patanjali is leading us to see that we, not the externals, are the source of our experience. We are not the source of the world, but we are the source of our experience of it. What we outwardly love are merely specific examples that relate to our inner happiness, not the actual producers of the happiness (or misery or confusion) itself. As I'm sure you realize, this is one of the most controversial and difficult notions in yoga, widely misunderstood. Yet thanks to our very able gurus and our diligent study of their teachings, the idea is starting to catch on in the class. Susan excitedly wrote me this morning:

I had such a moment of clarity during last night's class. It was when you were explaining about the "confusion" and Nitya's idea about the sunset. At the time, I was kind of confused about what it all meant. Then you said something to the effect of, "We are not trying to reproduce the circumstances

that gave us that good feeling," rather we are trying keep that feeling going or focus on that internal feeling. Something like that. As you were explaining it, the clouds all cleared away and I was going to shout, "I get it! Can we include this in the class notes?" but it didn't seem appropriate at the time. But I'm sure you'll remember how to say it because it's so inside you.

She was referring to my recollection of the time Deb and Nitya were watching a sunset on top of the highest mountain in the San Juan Islands of Washington, an amazingly gorgeous setting, myriad islands sprinkled over a glowing sea at the foot of the snow-capped Olympic Mountains. In those days of young adulthood we fervently believed that the more we could experience of "seeing the world" the richer we were. And again, there's a lot of truth in that, and we are in no way advocating living in a cave for your whole life so you don't get confused by events. But seeking gratification through experience can be overdone. As the sunset faded into night in that enchanting setting, made even more sublime by proximity with her guru, Nitya said to Deb, "How long are you going to stand here stuffing all that into you?" Deb was furious, and it took her a long time to grasp what he meant: that she was projecting her sense of awe and beauty into the scenery, and so when the scenery was not there, neither would her bliss be. She was gobbling the scene up like a starving person at a feast, and thus unwittingly making herself dependent on it. E.E. Cummings referred to the same idea when he wrote, "as freedom is a breakfast food." Great poem, so here's the first verse for your delectation:

as freedom is a breakfastfood
or truth can live with right and wrong
or molehills are from mountains made
-long enough and just so long

will being pay the rent of seem
and genius please the talentgang
and water most encourage flame

And yes, Deb still loves to “stuff” a lot of variety into her life, but she has a better sense of where the joy of living comes from. Nor, as you can see, was she ever one to humbly grovel at her guru’s feet, unquestioningly accepting his advice. She often had ferocious arguments with him. That was one reason he liked her so well, and why when she learned something she really learned it.

Despite not shouting out about her epiphany in class, Susan did reveal she was getting the gist. She told us how driving around listening to the radio, she sometimes hears a beautiful piece of music that makes her soar in ecstasy. (Hopefully she pulls over when these fits are on her.) She used to write down the name and resolve to buy a recording of it, go to the store, learn more about it, etc. She has a whole library of CDs that she never listens to. Now she knows that the music is activating her own bliss, and that it is with her all the time. Writing down titles and all that is a way of pulling herself out of bliss, by distracting her focus, and does not pave the way for more bliss in the future. Susan now has faith that bliss will come up all the time, and she doesn’t have to strive to reproduce an earlier version. This is actually a significant breakthrough.

Reminiscent of last week’s class, Anita told of how she had a day at work when her two bosses were impossible toward her. She started to get sick as well as upset, a typical reaction of put-upon employees with no chance to respond to injustice. This time she retreated to her car and sat in its womb for a half hour, reflecting on how the bosses’ irritability was something she didn’t have to be brought down by. She watched her breath and calmed down, and was able to return to work, knowing that their hurricanes were their own affairs. Her inner strength had seen her through something

that would have previously been a big problem, and she could save her sick leave for something more worthwhile. Detachment includes not unnecessarily taking on the burdens of others.

Last but not least, Susan asked me for an example of how exteriorization breeds confusion, and I served up a couple of throwaway ones, like how propaganda is used to stir up hostility and anger in people, how a couple of people in a dark room can make up a plausible fiction, have it widely broadcast, and lead whole nations into years of warfare. But I'd like to be a bit more locally relevant here.

Parents have many problems with their children as they approach independence, in part because they cannot readily relinquish their fixed ideas, brimming with fears, about their future course of life. Life is always uncertain, so trying to make it certain breeds anxiety in the parent. Children easily read their parents' unspoken thoughts. They sense from the anxiety that they have lost confidence in them, and they become insecure and begin to doubt themselves too. Then they begin to fail to meet expectations, since the expectations are impossible to begin with. After a while they may experiment with intentionally failing, as a way to make the parents stop weighing them down with the chains of their expectations. The parents try ever harder to "fix" the problem that they themselves have projected onto the child, and by doing so progressively make it worse. In this example the conceptual aspect is negatively impacting the actual, or cognized, aspect.

So, sooner or later the kid gets in trouble, as is inevitable, and the parents freak out. Instead of imbuing confidence by tapping into their deep love of the child, they start to fantasize about all the terrible things that are sure to happen to them. Mass media fuels their mania by infinitely enlarging the possible lethal repercussions. One small step off the treadmill to success and you're doomed! Children, not yet being yogis, mirror the panic and begin to doubt themselves with a vengeance. They take on the

parents' colorations and lose their transparency, and thus their happiness. It's extremely difficult to regain one's balance once that happens. Yet, it is the lot of most kids who live in technocratic societies, and they must sink or swim. In any case, the worry becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy before long, and the unfounded fears are confirmed. It's not that different from invading a helpless country, only to discover that the people there really are fighting you. So obviously the war must have been justified.

A yogi would realize that they themselves are a primary source of the anxiety and confusion. Instead of masking their fears, which the child can easily see through, they would dig into themselves to recover the confidence they lack when thinking purely of the objective world. They would intentionally radiate confidence and support from their core, and where the damage is not already too great the child will respond by blossoming. The yogi-parent must let go of the limited view over which they are obsessing and instead become a pillar of support. Needless to say, this applies to all relationships, but there is none as intense and problematic as the relationship of parent with child. Nor is there any other with such a direct connection to our eternal fountain of love within. We should never stop seeing the child as an extension of our loving nature, one with us and yet separately endowed, within the ambit of the Absolute. Once they are transformed into external objects the problems begin.

And if you're the child, flip this advice around to see why you are so unsettled by parental influence, and how to leave their projection with them.

12/8/9

Sutra I:43

In unobstructed consciousness, the memory is purified, as if devoid of its own form, and the object alone is illuminated.

Once again a seemingly simple sutra yielded a surprising and edifying bouquet of meaning as we prized our way into it, a testament to group exploration for sure. With bitter cold outside, we encircled the altar of the wood stove, basking in its radiant warmth. It was like being inside a sphere of protection, where openness and curiosity flowed effortlessly between us.

The phrasing of this sutra is a little misleading, as we've already learned about "purifying our memories" earlier on. Purifying memories is a process of revisiting them and throwing the light of adult intelligence into the dark recesses where terrifying or twisted fantasies persist based on partial perception. Here we are sitting in contemplation and allowing the normal process of memory association to pass through us or slide off of us without grabbing on to any tag that comes up. It is actually *we* who are being purified, of the influence of memories on our consciousness, and not the memories themselves.

Ordinary awareness is fairly choked with associations, which tend to drag it into the past and make it fuzzy. As we stand firm in not linking with them as they appear, it is like a clarifying process where a pollutant precipitates out of a beaker of water. Afterwards we are able to perceive whatever object is presented to us more clearly, more as it actually is. Holding onto our associations is like stirring the beaker again and again, so that clarity is never possible. This is reminiscent of Bishop Berkeley's famous assertion that philosophers kick up dust and then complain they cannot see.

Remaining detached from memories is a meditation experienced by everyone at some time. Do you recall as a child when you would "zone out" and stare uncomprehendingly at something, lost in reverie, with no descriptive commentary taking place? Though usually called daydreaming, it is a kind of samadhi. Then when your young brain had completed the complicated process of conscious registration, suddenly you realized you were looking at a flower or an anthill or whatever, as though the flower

had simply appeared out of nowhere. Somehow, identifying it consciously made it spring into existence in a sense. The present meditation reverses this process. We are un-associating, easing back into that state before memories clogged our minds with so much knowledge. As we have often noted, while memories are useful and even essential, they can take the thrill out of life by dulling the sharp edge of experience, converting it from “brand spanking new” to “old hat.” We are not abandoning memories completely, but only learning the skill of disconnecting the automatic associative process, which Patanjali assures us allows our consciousness to be unobstructed so the object alone is illuminated. In other words, the object is what it is, not what we want it to be.

Nitya describes this process in some detail:

The yogi adopts the discipline of letting go of all irrelevant aspects such as any personal relationship with that idea and with things that are unrelated to the particular gestalt taken for contemplation.... One by one, distractions are dropped. The external object and the internal contemplation become identified into a single entity. Then consciousness is filled with what is presented without being dragged into any tangent of association. Therefore, there is no experiencing of confrontation, because the duality of the perceiver and the perceived comes to an end.... In the yogi's sadhana (practice) this is a major crossing over.

The idea of dropping distractions is that as the various memories appear, they are released back into the vault from whence they came. You don't fight them or otherwise resist, nor do you pointedly ignore them. You simply attend to the presence of the object with renewed intensity and they go back into storage. It does

take some practice to get the hang of this, which is why it is a classic form of meditation.

The object-image often used for meditation is a candle flame or some other religious icon. As you contemplate it, you discard the normal urges to identify and describe the object as they arise, along with the more tangential thoughts that like to tag along. This is the opposite of religion, by the way, where the associations are the main point. Worshippers are required to agree to the preferred body of beliefs that have been attached to the object by previous members of their religion, and the promise is that doing so will lead them to enlightenment or heaven. In yoga though, this is a major, indeed fatal, impediment. If you aren't willing to discard everything that is not germane to the experience of the present, there is really no point to it at all.

It is also unfortunate that such a static notion as meditating on an object has taken root as if it was the whole point. In fact it's merely preliminary training, like hatha yoga. Meditating on a candle is fine for practicing the relinquishment of memory attachments, but all too often the blessings of yoga are confined to a meditation period separate from everyday life, and the yogi believes that that's good enough, that's the practice. But this is a technique that should be brought to bear regularly right in the marketplace, and its importance follows closely on what we discussed last week about how to relate to your child.

Any dear friend, and especially a close family member, is swathed by us in more memories than any other aspect of our world except ourselves. We don't really see our child any more for what they are, we see an amalgam of the child smothered in our hopes and fears, demands and disappointments. All that mental garbage chokes them, our dearest loves, the very ones we most want to be free and happy. It chokes our joy as well. What's worse, the child or the friend easily senses the memory cloud we are shrouded in, and feels it deep down as a disruption in the

relationship. A child in particular feels they are being constantly judged (as they are), and so they have to guard their tender soul from the harsh judgments that are cloaked in what passes for love in the allegedly civilized world. The open connection of the early relationship becomes ruptured by the ever-increasing mound of memories, to be replaced by a martial game of thrust and parry. Unless we can find a way to release the grip of memories, they continue to pile up until some kind of explosion beats them back.

As Deb pointed out, it isn't just one person whose vision is clouded with memories, it's everyone. It would be hard enough to untangle the ensuing snarls if they were only coming from one place, but they are coming from every direction at once. Every person is trapped in their own mindset. It's no wonder that as a species we have become enmeshed in a colossal backlash affecting every level of our lives.

The yogi's contribution to world peace, as well as interpersonal peace, is to continually set aside the memory associations that poison the present with prejudices of the past. These associations include, by the way, expectations, demands, thwarted hopes, festering wounds, and all the rest of the junk that causes us to walk around all the time in a state of frustration with the other. This doesn't mean that the yogi walks incautiously into the line of fire, but only that they see with clarity what their options are.

Yogis heal themselves first, and only then are they capable of possibly providing a curative influence on the whole situation. If you rush off half-cocked to repair the world, your memories will taint the purity of your motivations and make the problems worse, not better. You will only add to the confusion. But once you can see clearly without the intervention of your expectations and prejudices, you tacitly offer to others the opportunity to let go of theirs too. Some will respond by opening up, and some may want

to kill you over it, but it is still the best contribution you can make to world and local peace.

Another important lesson we can take from this is the way we relate to a guru or other person we hold in high esteem. Nitya liked to say that Indians placed their gurus on pedestals so they wouldn't have to pay attention to their teachings. If you treat them as wise and enlightened beings, you can just bow as you go past their statue, and pat yourself on the back that you are in their camp. This is by no means limited to Indians, but that's who he was talking to at the time. We are all guilty of this. Belief and practice are two different things, but if we're lazy or timid we may be eager to substitute the former for the latter.

When you sit at the guru's feet you should be listening as intently as possible, but instead you may think "Oh, what a great guru. Aren't I lucky to have this great teacher here! I will be saved just by being associated with such a wise one." And on and on, endlessly. All that worshipful chatter is throwing up a defensive barrier to ward off the impact of the guru's words. A yogi must set aside all those thoughts, however valid they may seem to be, so they can really listen to the preceptor. It is not uncommon to walk away from a darshana with a sense of smug satisfaction but without a drop of new information having penetrated your comfortable cloud (or fog) of memories. Equally commonly, you listen carefully for a few minutes, but then the guru says something that you catch on to, and you are carried away by it. For many minutes you mull over those immortal words, only to realize with a start that you've lost the train of thought and are far away from what is being taught. You may not ever catch the thread—the sutra—of the argument again. Your ego has just tricked you one more time! These are not great crimes, but an adept yogi will listen closely to the whole lecture, and only after the talk is over go back to recall the highlights they want to ponder over in more depth.

Listening closely is an excellent meditation as well as an opportunity to expand your horizons.

Because our brains normally work to attach memory tags to every situation, it is a perennial task to set them aside to take a good hard look from a fresh perspective. We cannot disconnect the normal brain function, but we can certainly rise above it to a new level of liberated awareness. Therefore this is one of those essential abhyasas, repetitive practices. We can become expert at this type of detachment, but we cannot predict if or when we will ever become so enlightened that all memories have been permanently disconnected. Nor do most of us seek such a state, either.

These are a few typical examples relevant to spiritual seekers, friends and parents, all of whom should be—and are—yogis to some degree. There is no slice of life that cannot benefit from an unclouded examination, and luckily this way of looking around can fairly quickly become habitual if you keep at it for a while. It is reinforced by the sheer pleasure of being more alive and more responsive, and seeing how far the world reciprocates your loving consideration.

We are called by this verse to surrender our small self interest, based as it is on outdated information, and merge into the greatness of reality as it is. No wonder Nitya describes this as a major crossing over!