

## 2022 Patanjali Class 51

Sutra I:47 – Upon the undisturbed flow of consciousness, clarity of the higher Self.

Sutra I-48 – Therein pure consciousness, pregnant with truth.

Sutra I-49 – It is different from word-testimony and inference, as the meaning of specific objects arises from transparent consciousness.

These three sutras plus the next two form the subsection on unseeded absorption—transparency of vision—concluding the first pada or chapter. At this stage we don't identify or resort to preferences about what we are contemplating, leading up to the next pada, the famous eight limbs of yoga. That means we've finished out preparation and are ready to begin Patanjali's practical program.

Most of the class attended in person for a change, lured by a delicious rhubarb pie—overall, my highest achievement this lifetime, and marking my 72 years completed. We had glorious weather for a change. The kitchen had been dismantled the day before, so the living room was piled with boxes of cooking gear, the whole process symbolic of torching the seeds of karma to make room for new possibilities of absorption.

The old notes from thirteen years ago garnered wonderful feedback from the diaspora, making for fascinating reading. Last night's class took the message seriously to be quiet, stop linking memories, and let the depths float to the surface. The diaspora long ago stopped contributing....

As usual, Deb was our primary interpreter, doing us the favor of summarizing Nitya's somewhat abstruse analysis. She directed us to the continuum of going deeper into mental stillness, not just by stopping vrittis, but finding ways to retain an even flow of consciousness in our daily lives. The continuum begins with

concentrating on an object, like looking at some relic or saint picture, or chanting; or pondering some concept to keep bringing our mind back to,

Nitya opens his sutra 49 commentary with two series of progressive Sanskrit terms, to show how to elevate from those basic starting points into the empyrean. Translating them into plain English, the two threads are: 1) *perception* of an object, to stabilization of consciousness in objective perception, to stabilization of consciousness in perception without objects, to absorption in perception without objects. 2) *conception* of an object, to stabilization of consciousness in objective conception, to stabilization of consciousness in conception without objectification, to absorption in conception without objectification, which is naturally purificatory; meaning the seeds of memories and genetic tendencies have no leg to stand on, so to speak, and are unable to manifest.

Deb felt that the gist of all this is instead of bouncing from particularity to particularity we are giving ourselves to the unbifurcated flow of consciousness, like little children who get so involved in something that the rest of the world falls away. Another example she gave was the breath, which unifies every aspect of our lives.

I used two excerpts from the old notes to prompt the discussion:

I asked for everyone to share any memories they had of times when they had realized that the world that seems so convincingly real was actually a contrived image in their brains. Nitya implies here that this is the way to enter into unseeded absorption, into samadhi that dares to let go of all its moorings. This can be very frightening, because it feels like being cut off even though it is in fact tuning in.

The class talked quite a bit about blissful objects that energize us to break free of our complacency, babies and flowers and so on. But it was hard to swallow the fact that the minute you say “Isn’t that beautiful!” or “Isn’t she sweet!” you have given up your transparency of vision to categorize the event. As Paul pointed out, this sets up a dualistic perspective where you and the object are separate. The sutra instructs us that it is the merger of subject and object in unity that we are aiming for. Any descriptive appreciation inevitably draws a line between perceiver and perceived.

Cooing over a baby isn’t necessarily a spiritual disaster, but the way we overlay all of existence with our petty preferences is. Every moment of life is spectacular, unique, and transcendental, if we choose to see it that way. But we prefer a more dismal narrative, where everything is judged and compared. Remember, we are trying to overcome *all* our mental modifications, good, bad or ugly.

Susan has been meditating on her breath, recently noticing that in spiritual circles teachers speak of “the breath” instead of simply “breath,” and she realized it’s because breath belongs to everyone—it’s a unity we all share. There isn’t a breath that just belongs to a particular person. Deb said one of the reasons that meditation on the breath comes up so often is because breath is a continuous experience that is always present. It’s a unifying aspect wherever you are, whatever you are doing. I’ve clipped in the magnificent meditation of Guy Murchie on it, as Part II, wishing now we had used it for our closing meditation.

Susan woke in the night last week, very stressed, and couldn’t figure out how to get back to sleep. Then she thought of her 19-year-old niece, who had just had surgery. Susan decided to try to link her mind with hers, sending her healing, loving vibes. It felt easy to find that place, and it was very calming for Susan, too,

as all her stresses and worries faded away.

Jan was captivated by the middle section of sutra 49, here simplified a bit:

A natural purification happens when the mind goes into the state of absorption. The fluctuating tendency of the oscillation of consciousness between subject and object is transformed into the fixation of consciousness.... When both of these are transmuted into a harmonized or homogenized consciousness, mind becomes cleared of several impressions of the past, and a new transparency comes to it. (142)

It reminded Jan of times she has slipped into deeper states where she can feel things she was clinging to from the past lifting, allowing her to sink into something much freer and truer. How cathartic that can be! It happened when she was drawing this past weekend, and again it felt freeing and intense. As her concerns lifted away, she felt she was in a deeper place that was very beautiful.

Nancy remembered feeling that way while riding on the back of a motor-scooter as a teenager, her boyfriend taking her through the woods in her hometown of Eugene, on a sunny spring day like today, with everything blooming. They had so much fun bumping over roots, swishing through the brush. The next day she was covered in poison oak, a very strong skin irritant, and broke out all over.

I guess the subtext was that feeling free can get you in trouble, and that's surely true. That's why we mostly do yoga in sedate ways in predictable settings, and clear-eyed forethought is not banned. Yet getting to that feeling of wheeee! is a kind of samadhi, one of the best kinds. Letting go is harder than holding on, especially as you get older.

Deb spoke on the continuity revealed when we look back over the course of our lives, how spontaneously certain interests keep arising, as if there's a stream of identification which unifies all that time and space. Recently she looked back and noticed that working with plants kept coming up in her life again and again; writing kept coming back, as did planning, and teaching. Looking back over the decades, she can pick out the ribbons of interest that unify aspects of her life. They keep appearing without her forcing them. As an example, her college teaching career came out of nowhere. Andy casually invited her to do a course at the Art Institute on Indian art history, and the rest *is* history: she spent about nine years in several institutions, teaching mainly East Asian and South Asian art to kids who had literally no knowledge of it. (We once employed a babysitter who asked us straight out if all Indians had four arms, like our statues.) Deb did an art history minor in college, but it had lain latent for more than 30 years, until Andy touched a flame to the powder keg. She exploded into her new role.

Dharma-related opportunities come to you when you are ready, often unanticipated. They are a natural part of our unfoldment, and are smart enough to not depend on our conscious acquiescence. In 1975 I had overcome my juvenile self-interest enough to tell Nitya I had time to help with whatever he liked. After some reflection he said, why don't you help me with getting my Gita book ready for the publisher? Ever since, those prepping and editing jobs have kept coming back. When I would finish a big project (That Alone lasted ten years), it would feel as if I was done, yet quite soon another would arrive. Not always from Nitya, but always on topic. It's one of the prime loves of my life, and a perfect way for me to learn the subject. When it started, I thought it was so far from my taste I would never do anything like it. Nitya saw what I did not. He was good at that sort of thing.

Anita has lately been attracted to videos about roughing it in the wilds, which help her feel connected to the earth. She recalled how exhilarating and unique natural smells, like conifer forests and dirt, are, and of being overwhelmed by the smell that permeates you when you breathe it in.

That Alone has four pages indexed for Transparency of Vision, and I shared one of them before we ended, with the clear sky still glowing joyously:

We go to schools and colleges and walk around with fat books under our arms, thinking we are learning. Certainly we are learning something, but our learning is confined to the world of agitations of the nervous system. We do not go beyond that. Narayana Guru qualifies this as the knowledge that happens in between pure darkness and pure light, and says that it is not worthy of being called knowledge. If you do call it knowledge, then the funny noises the little puppy makes when it is tied up and can't see its mom are also great knowledge. We have only refined that agitation or excitement or dissatisfaction more elaborately.

[...]

This is the point where the need arises to transcend the triple states of deep sleep, dream and wakefulness. How do you know you have transcended? There comes a new clarity in the form of a transparency of vision where you see through the past, present and future. Your vision is not checkmated by any frontier: it is a frontierless vision. It is not confined to name and form. It does not come under the category of cause and effect. We cannot say it has a beginning or an end. In fact, words that we use and thoughts that we celebrate are all of no use. This is the realm of infinite silence into which we can merge, where the present faculties which are very useful to us become of no use.

Now we come to a very difficult situation where we must go around a curve, so to speak, in our understanding. All the conditionings which we have so far called learning are no better than the salivating of Pavlov's dogs. All the rewards and punishments which you have had so far in the form of education help you only to salivate when the bell rings. Don't you want something better than that? (199-200)

I'll save the others for the next class.

## Part II

Guy Murchie – The Seven Mysteries of Life (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1978)

I tried to define the physical boundaries of the body and began to realize they are virtually indefinable, for the air around any air-breathing creature from a weed to a whale is obviously a vital part of it even while it is also part of other creatures. The atmosphere in fact binds together all life on Earth, including life in the deep sea, which "breathes" oxygen (and some air) constantly. And the water of the sea is another of life's common denominators noticeable in the salty flavor of our blood, sweat and tears, as are the solid Earth and its molecules present in our protoplasm....

Yes, life as a whole breathes and owns the common sky and drinks the mutual rain and we are all embodied in the sea and the clouds and in fire and forest and earth alike. As the God of Egypt was quoted as saying about the year 2000 BC, "I made the four winds that every man might breathe thereof like his fellow in his time...." And thus, He might have added, I made sure that all life mingles and shares the most vital elements. Indeed oxygen (then unknowable to man) is the leading substance of life as it is presently known, making up some 60 percent of the weight of the

human body, surging and blowing through it in the rhythmic torrent that Sir Charles Sherrington called “a draft of something invisible” to fuel life’s flame. It is plain to see that we all breathe the same sky and we are becoming aware that it pours through our lungs and blood in a few minutes, then out again to mix and refresh itself in the world. But it is still easy to overlook the completeness of airy suffusion throughout the planet, so easy in fact that I would like to offer a few quantitative statistics to point up some of the significances.

Did you know the average breath you breathe contains about 10 sextillion atoms...? And, since the entire atmosphere of Earth is voluminous enough to hold about the same number of breaths, each breath turns out, like man himself, to be about midway in size between an atom and the world... This means of course that each time you inhale you are drawing into yourself an average of about one atom from each of the breaths contained in the whole sky. Also every time you exhale you are sending back the same average of an atom to each of these breaths, as is every other living person, and this exchange, repeated twenty thousand times a day by some four billion people, has the surprising consequence that each breath you breathe must contain a quadrillion atoms breathed by the rest of mankind within the past few weeks and more than a million atoms breathed personally sometime by each and any person on Earth. (319-320)

### Part III

11/13/11

Reading the Yes Magazine article, I was ecstatic to find that many more things than just sex will build bigger and healthier brains: meditation, music, walking or other exercise, lots of stuff will do it. With all the brain exercise I’ve been getting lately, I’m surprised the darn thing hasn’t burst out of its bucket already!



I'm delighted I can (finally) go back to doing all those other things, too! All that sex was getting exhausting.

Okay, enough mirth and merriment. Let's get Sirius.

Our Portland class just reviewed the whole First Pada, and sutras 33 and 39, in Nancy's suggested review section, stood out as particularly amazing. Sutra 33 epitomizes the liberal, tolerant and optimistic attitude of a yogi, and 39 throws the doors wide open to bring contemplation to bear in any way that suits the individual. There is an ocean of misery dispelled by these two sutras alone.

Then we discovered sutra 43 to be almost the same as the grand finale in III, 3. Compare:

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

III, 3: In that, when the object alone shines, as if there is a void of one's form, that is *samadhi*.

So unobstructed consciousness is what will later be called *samadhi*. We simply have to stop obstructing our inner light. Nothing to it!

Our class also felt that sutra 43 might be slightly out of place, and make more sense to be right at the end of the pada. As it is, it stands in stark contrast to its surroundings of confused cognition and seeded absorption.

The whole point of this, along with Nancy's exercises, is that we have to spend time on vacation from the daily grind of processing sensory input, expectations, popular theories, and all the rest of the transient stuff of experience. If we can tune these out, however briefly, we can resonate with the undisturbed flow of consciousness that is not dependent on them. While the flow is unfamiliar territory from the standpoint of our conscious mind, it is the living and breathing home of our whole being. More than being familiar, it is precisely who we are.

I think I've talked in this group about my theory, based on recent neuroscientific discoveries, that the Absolute communicates with our conscious mind from something like a singularity in the deepest part of the brain, with its influence penetrating into consciousness like a growing plant or a universe exploding after its big bang inception. This dimensionless point is the source of the "undisturbed flow of consciousness" we all experience in our best moments. Its benign energy is ever-flowing, but we definitely disturb it with all the buzz of our getting and spending, paying attention instead to continual promptings aimed at survival and reproduction. By the time we're well-adjusted children, we may no longer be aware of the flow at all.

All we have to do to reacquaint ourselves with the undisturbed flow is to stop disturbing it. Without the buzz, the vibrations, the flow naturally returns to its original clarity, and voila! "Therein pure consciousness, pregnant with truth," as Patanjali puts it. (I think he would have liked the word voila!)

The term 'higher self' is somewhat confusing, because the self I'm talking about comes from back and down, as far as our cortex is concerned. It is inner, not higher. The oldest parts of the brain are in the stem. So if we picture the Self as up and out, we are looking the wrong way. It is down and in. Which is why yogis do meditation instead of projection.

Patanjali has some interesting ideas about this flow, for instance that it is the source of truth, and attending to it displaces more tangential impressions, those shimmering falsehoods that we mistake for truth because they are convincing enough. Though this comes in the next lesson.

So, enough idle chatter! I'm going to go out and walk the dogs, and in the process grow some new brain tissue. I really do find walks inspiring of philosophical insights, as long as I don't block them out by paying attention to the words of a friend or details of the environment. (These are also fine, but just for other

times. Friendship must grow brain matter faster than anything!) Taking these three sutras with me for inspiration, who knows what valuable insights the flow may present? I'm confident it will come up with something.

\* \* \*

From the first class:

1/26/10

Sutra I:47

Upon the undisturbed flow of consciousness, clarity of the higher Self.

As we enter the final leg of our preliminary study, Nitya reminds us that what apparently engulfs us as our environment is actually a mediated replica produced in our mind. The goal of yoga is to transcend all interpreted versions, so we can stand face to face with Whatever It Is. We will be actively shrugging off our labeled and managed experience to test these waters, at least for a short time, and perhaps for a long time.

One thing that would certainly kill the possibility of unmediated experience is to name or describe what that state will be like. If we have any preconceived notion, openness becomes impossible. For this reason, unlike religion yoga does not posit any finalized state that we are to go searching for. We want to be open to any and all possibilities. We aren't looking for Jesus or Krishna, because those expectations will blind us. Likewise, if you meet Buddha on the road, kill him. This means if you meet an anonymous person on the road, treat them as befits the occasion. But if your mind insists "This is Buddha," you have to run away from that thought, because it just gets in the way of any pure interaction you might be able to have.

Religious imagery will always be more popular than yoga, because humans prefer to fantasize rather than risk direct experience. We're not doing this because it is popular, but because we see the need.

Deb set the theme for the evening by suggesting that we couch the world in a comfortable story, and then bend reality to conform to it. Yoga means relinquishing our story and trying hard to live without it.

Jesse added that stories are rigid and life is always in motion, forever changing, so they tend to conflict. The intent is to ride the wild exuberance of life and not always keep it penned up in the stables. A yogi needs flexibility, and stories are not usually up to the task, though there are definitely more flexible and less flexible possibilities. If we are going to settle for a story, at least it should be as inclusive as we can make it.

Your story is like your nest, a necessary place to incubate until you are ready to fly. Flying—movement, instability—can be disconcerting and even terrifying, unless you have a solid grounding somewhere. It's good to return to your snug nest and gather your psychic forces. But don't just stay there. Rest a minute and get up and fly again. Eventually you can stay in the air for long stretches without the necessity of recharging your batteries all the time.

A lot of people, especially those who haven't been taught any structural scheme to understand what is happening to them, become frightened by the uncertainty of continual movement. They cling to whatever provides the illusion of stability. Medication, or self-medication, is often the route they choose. All too often that means staying about as close to the egg stage as possible, without hope of growing into a rare bird.

I asked for everyone to share any memories they had of times when they had realized that the world that seems so convincingly real was actually a contrived image in their brains. Nitya implies

here that this is the way to enter into unseeded absorption, into samadhi that dares to let go of all its moorings. This can be very frightening, because it feels like being cut off even though it is in fact tuning in.

Eugene reiterated a story of when he was at the beach and suddenly felt all his self-definitions slipping away. He found it unnerving and scary, and yet it provided distance and perspective on his chosen role in life. He actually has this experience fairly often, and it has become less frightening over time, thankfully.

I hate to say this, but the fear is a reliable indicator that Eugene's experience was the real thing. All too often we find a way to incorporate immediate experience into our ongoing narrative story, and then it is only make-believe immediacy, mediated immediacy. As Nataraja Guru said, the word God should make us fall on our knees in fear and trembling. As it doesn't, it shows that the word is only a symbol of something else. So if we aren't gripped by some powerful emotion or transformative energy, we are probably only toying with ideas instead of setting them aside to stare into the raw face of God.

Arjuna most definitely went through the whole gamut of reactions when he met the Absolute as Krishna in the Gita's Chapter XI: fear, awe, worshipful adoration, ecstasy. In the end he begged to be taken back to his nest, but Krishna refused.

Deb thinks I'm just a big chicken, and she's probably right. Unmediated experience should be exciting and delightful, not terrifying. It's the letting go that's frightening; the actual experience is blissful. In this she's definitely correct.

Paul gave us a perfect example of the joy of setting aside the ongoing narrative. He was walking on the street one day, and he saw a 2-year-old child running, with his dad chasing after him. Instead of putting the scene into a predictable storyline, comparing it to his previous experiences, he simply watched. As he did he felt a powerful sense of beauty. The child ran to a fringe of grass, bent

over and put its hands into it. Paul felt along with it the thrill of new discovery, as if he was seeing grass for the first time. Something we take utterly for granted is so complex and interesting and yes, beautiful, and yet we no longer see it. As long as Paul suppressed the natural urge to narrate what he was witnessing, he continued to experience the joy and wonder of the child's perspective.

That is one of my favorite forms of yoga: to get down on the floor with a child and merge with their natural openness. Don't try to instruct them about the world as we know it, but let them teach you about what you have lost by learning what everything "is".

I recalled a time over forty years ago when, as a result of smoking some mild ganja, a friend and I had a funny and not frightening abruptness of our normal perspective. Driving down the highway, it suddenly seemed to us that we were sitting still and the scenery was moving. What's more, we imagined a huge giant out of sight beyond the horizon, who was turning a crank and making the scenery move, like a piano roll or the background of an animated movie. This new way of seeing was laugh out loud hilarious. Thereafter we had several occasions when the giant was rolling the scenery. It laid the groundwork for intentionally inviting contrarian images to disrupt our normal perspective, which it turns out is a rudimentary form of yoga practice.

Scotty expressed gratitude to Nitya for how amazing and transformative his books are. They don't simply offer a fresh story, they help you break free of your static notions. He has had several teachers, and knows the feeling of beings guided and corrected by a living human being, but the fact that he can really feel that same profundity from a book is mindblowing to him. I'm sure Nitya would be delighted to hear that his dedicated efforts to create living books of wisdom have touched souls in this way. And in this Scotty is by no means alone.

The main thrust of life as it has evolved over its three billion years has been to get an accurate picture of the environment. Perceiving outside yourself is important for survival, for both finding food and to avoid being eaten yourself. Sensitive areas on the surface of simple creatures have quite rapidly evolved into specialized sense organs in more complex creatures, so now they can have a good working image of their surroundings. This is a logical first step in evolution. Homo sapiens has added awareness of the past and future and several other abstractions to this continuum. But what comes next? Are we to remain solely survival oriented, or are there other possibilities to investigate and develop? The only way we can know is to begin to explore, to fly out of the nest.

One of the mysteries of life is that when we are ready to make an evolutionary leap, we find that the necessary groundwork has already been laid. Somehow, deep in the unconscious we are preparing for new abilities that our conscious minds have only a vague inkling of. It seems that there is a universal version of the individual's vasanas that bubble to the surface to shape our lives, and in both instances the wakeful mind is the last to get the news.

We closed a high-spirited and well-tuned class with a group meditation. The group has developed an excellent focus. We have no need of a "talking stick," because everyone listens respectfully to each speaker before offering their own contribution. During the course of the class, this harmonizes our consciousnesses into a kind of mega-mind. From this state of attunement we can much more easily plunge into a deep meditation, casting off all forms and directives to sit easily in the empty fullness and the full emptiness. Last night it felt like we could sit that way forever. It was a manifestation of the value-form of delight, twelve beings as one, not counting the dreaming dogs. Sweet.

Part II – erratica

I guess I referred to an earlier episode in Eugene's experience, so he sent this correction and expansion:

I want people to know that the experience of feeling like I was somehow being pulled deeper and deeper into quicksand happened in my house as I was doing daily chores. It was very frightening but there was a sense of bliss, rejoicing going on at the same time. I was crying and I was laughing and it was unlike anything I had experienced. I felt like the "Big Coming Undone" was upon me. Words don't really help much in this situation. The experience was TOTAL yet the quicksand image seemed appropriate.

Peace,  
Eugene

### Part III

I expected to hear more from people on this one, but one never knows. Susan, who likes to sit outside in the early morning, just wrote (for those who don't know it, Jello is a kind of translucent rubbery pudding that vibrates mystically and so is universally carried to church picnics):

Thank you for the class notes. I enjoyed reading them, as always. Your ganga experience reminds me of my meditation the other morning. After sitting quietly for a bit, I became aware of being connected to the whole world by thinking about the air and everything else as connected (as it really is).

It was a good way of looking at things as though I was in a world of jello and every move I made would result in a movement in the jello (air) and then in everything else -- other beings, trees, grass. And then I thought how much this is like being in the womb, or at least what I imagine it must have been like. In that case you moved a hand or a shoulder and it was natural to feel the give and take of



the universe (in a totally tactile way). You were very connected, not only to movement but to sound and vibration. Maybe when a baby is born, they still feel that connection but then slowly they become individualized and even frightened of connection. One might feel as though that kind of womb connection is claustrophobic or like being trapped in a spider's web. It might not feel so comfortable. This seemed connected with your mention of being frightened when one goes out of one's safe notions. But it can actually be a lovely feeling when you get into it.

2/2/10

Sutra I:48

Therein pure consciousness, pregnant with truth.

One does not expect to have much discussion about pure consciousness, but the class revealed the potency of the sutra by giving birth to a mass of insights touched off by the three small words it contains. The words themselves are pregnant with truth, and when watered by Nitya's elucidation and incubated by our meditation they sprouted into quite an enlightening hour.

In his commentary Nitya briefly reiterates how the three states of individual consciousness—wakeful, dream and deep sleep—each have impurities or aspects of falsehood. These are associated with our conditioning as well as the inevitable time-delay from being housed in a body with a sensory apparatus that has to interpret the world. He concludes:

When all impressions of the past are flushed away with yogic disciplines, only pure consciousness remains. It has no impurity so it is absolutely truthful. Hence it is the ground for all truthful perceptions, inferences, and actions. The entire yogic discipline is to purge one's consciousness of all its

impurities and make it pregnant with a reality that can be actualized in the here and now.

The balancing of opposites in yoga allows us to gently nudge our way into the vertical core of experience, regarded as the domain of truth. Horizontal perceptions of the vertical range from reasonably accurate to wildly off the mark. The integrity of our lives depends on accuracy in horizontal assessment, but then if we add the additional element of reciprocal balance, it allows us to access the core of the field. Here the horizontal winds fade into insignificance as the immediacy of the vertical essence is imbibed. We can remain in this truthful enclave until the mind kicks back in with its labeling and judging faculties.

Susan wondered how it was possible to work on the seeds of *vasanas* and *samskaras*, planted as they are in the *sushupti*, the so-called deep sleep state. Mostly we work on them after they have sprouted, promoting the beneficial and paring back the unhelpful ones. Gardening. But as we sink more and more into our core, we can apprehend them in their primal state, unsprouted. Here is where the yogi can bake them with wisdom so that their potential to manifest is nullified. Then the yogi can act freely, instead of in response to the ceaseless promptings of the past.

Verse 9 of *That Alone* has a lot of background for Susan's important question, and it's worth rereading. For now, I'll excerpt one of the most relevant bits:

We are already familiar with the four alternating states of consciousness: the wakeful, dream, deep sleep and the transcendental. The wakeful and the dream states are conceived horizontally, while we think of a vertical core rising from the deep sleep state to the transcendental. We do not know anything in deep sleep, and the transcendent state

passes unnoticed. What remains is the alternation between the wakeful and dream states.

Thus, the space of our everyday living is filled either with wakeful experience or dream experience. Our wakeful experience cannot make any sense if the external items are not meaningfully related to an inner consideration of their worth or value. A glorious sunrise comes. You turn to it and say "how wonderful!" Outside is the sun, inside is the wonder. The love for the beautiful is embedded in us. Even when no beautiful thing is being presented, the capacity to appreciate beauty is still within us. Everything which happens in wakeful life has a corresponding urge, interest or value vision lying buried in the deep unconscious. This is the causal factor which produces the effect of what is experienced, called *susupti*, or *suptam*.

*Suptam* is the state of the unconscious, but it is not by any means empty. Like a seed pod, it has many seeds embedded in it. These are called *vasana*. Some of them are cyclic in their manifestations. For instance, there are certain kinds of lilies which flower only in a particular season. You can bury the bulb in your garden anytime, but it will lie there dormant until its proper season comes. Then it will flower forth. There are other kinds which are not seasonal, they just go on blooming. Whether seasonal or unseasonal, the seeds of all our experiences lie buried in the garden of our unconscious.

Now let's talk about the dream state. Where do all these images in our dreams come from? There is a myth-creating tendency within us, which is capable of finding appropriate symbols to make a language like that of a fairytale. This is lying buried in the same place where the urges of the wakeful state also are. It is a common repository from which wakeful life and dream life are both manifesting. The wakeful and the

dream are both causally related to the deep unconscious, where the seeds of all these concepts are lying in wait, seeking to be promoted in one way or another, either as an actual experience or, if an actual experience cannot be promoted, then as a dream experience. Freud and others think that a dream is the expression of an incomplete wakeful experience, a wish-fulfillment, or a prophecy or premonition of the mind.

The class agreed that just coming to be aware of this structural situation was the biggest step toward gaining freedom. Then, instead of aggressively energizing our predilections and prejudices, we can step out from under their pressure and live more lightly.

An interesting new word used by Patanjali is *ritambhara*, translated here as pregnant with truth or truth-bearing. *Bhara* means bearing or carrying. I can't find any known link to the Spanish *embarazada*, also meaning pregnant, but it would be a surprising coincidence if there isn't one. The really interesting word, though, is *ritam*, pronounced almost exactly like the English 'rhythm' and having a similar implication. When you are in tune with the beat you have rhythm, and when you are offbeat you have lost the rhythm (called *anrita*). *Ritam* means something like "functional truth." Because of its importance, you'll find it indexed in *That Alone*, and I'll pull out a few paragraphs from there for your delectation:

Two special terms are used in Sanskrit to represent truth, *satyam* and *ritam*. Not only is there truth, but that truth is capable of asserting itself to the extent that it cannot be denied. When it is just truth it is called *satyam*. When it is also asserting itself and we are cognizant of the fact it is true, it is further qualified as *ritam*.

Everything has an innate limitation as well as enormous potentialities. Sand cannot hold water. But sand can be melted and fused into transparent glass, which can hold water. If you look at a handful of sand and a glass bottle, you would never imagine there could be such a transformation. Enormous possibilities are lying concealed in the sand.

But however much you try you cannot get milk from sand, except in fairy tales. This is the field where charlatans thrive. When you abandon ritam, functional reality, they all rush in. "We shall help you! Now you have given up your common sense. Very good! That's an important requirement of our path. From here onwards we will be fast friends." This kind of spirituality is not safe.

Ritam and anritam are our guidelines here. There is a science of anritam. Even malfunctions adhere to certain laws. If this were not true a mechanic would not be able to repair a car, a plumber couldn't fix the pipes and a teacher wouldn't be able to correct anyone's grammar. Diseases are all anritams, malfunctions of the body. All the *materia medica*, all the pathological sciences, deal with aspects of anritam, but there is nonetheless scope for science in them, since even with a mistake you can see how it takes a certain inevitable course and brings a predictable wrong result. And by just examining a wrong result you can see what kind of mistake was made to arrive at it. So there is ritam working within the anritam. It is a universal law which guides you when it functions as well as when it malfunctions.

In our meditations or spiritual experiences, we should also make a search for the ontologic verity of the truth of what we experience.

Anne wondered if truth isn't simply what we believe. In Vedanta, consciousness is described as sat-chit-ananda, truth-awareness-value. Here truth and its apprehension are recognized as distinct factors, with the meaning assigned being an integral third factor. But this is a crucial question in spirituality, and it dominated our discussion. We believe we are knowing and seeing truth all the time, but mainly we are seeing what we believe. A yogi has to find a way to overcome their inherent limitations to come face to face with truth.

Our culture is permeated with a "big lie" mentality, where as long as you are confident in your assertions, they will appear true enough to steamroll the opposition. You stick to your beliefs and never waver, and this does have a functional impact. Since most people are aware of their own limits, they will defer to blowhards and let them have their way.

Sometimes the only way to distinguish falsehoods from truth is by their fruit. When a prosperous people become impoverished or a peaceful world descends into chaos and warfare, the ensuing disaster begs us to reexamine the principles being employed. Likewise in our own personal lives, when we crash we can know we weren't fully cognizant of what we were doing. But yogis don't want to wait until the shit hits the fan. They find that by stripping away all the veneer and taking a good hard look at themselves, they can know truth on its own terms, here and now. This is much better than wistfully looking at the smoking crater where truth or beauty once stood.

Deb reminded us of our old friend, Long Chen Pa, with his Natural Freedom of Mind: "Since everything is but an apparition, perfect in being what it is, having nothing to do with good or bad, acceptance or rejection, one may well burst out in laughter." We tend to be obsessed with whether we should accept or reject something, believe it or not, or whether it is good or evil. All these are horizontal considerations assessing a temporary flux. It is such

a relief to shrug off such grindingly miserable outlooks to sit in our natural freedom that we may well burst out laughing.

A gossamer rain fell toward the end of our time to cloak our quiet closing meditation in a gentle embrace, tinkling rhythmically on the glass roof of the greenhouse.

2/9/10

Sutra I:49

It is different from word-testimony and inference, as the meaning of specific objects arises from transparent consciousness.

The “it” in the sutra refers to *ritambhara*, discussed in the previous week’s notes. Here it is said to be related to a transparency of vision.

Because Deb always loved the phrase “transparency of vision” I indexed it in That Alone. There is some excellent additional input to be gathered there. I’ll cull out just a bit from verse 28. The whole chapter is worth rereading, for that matter. It includes the famous bit about spit bugs (also indexed):

I like to compare the individual to a common insect, the spit bug. The spit bug is very tiny, smaller than a coriander seed. All the time it spits out a kind of foam all around itself. When you go for a walk in the morning, you can see its spittle all over the leaves and grass. It looks just like spit, but if you examine it you will find this tiny bug concealed in it.

Like that, individuation goes on spitting out constructs all around it. The tiny, fearful ego continually spews forth clouds of obfuscation in order to conceal its sense of insignificance, but its delusory images of glory appear to be no more than unwholesome excrescences to passersby.

Now back to TOV. This will throw light on Nitya's rather confusing commentary on the sutra too:

We go to schools and colleges and walk around with fat books under our arms, thinking we are learning. Certainly we are learning something, but our learning is confined to the world of agitations of the nervous system. We do not go beyond that. Narayana Guru qualifies this as the knowledge that happens in between pure darkness and pure light, and says that it is not worthy of being called knowledge. If you do call it knowledge, then the funny noises the little puppy makes when it is tied up and can't see its mom are also great knowledge. We have only refined that agitation or excitement or dissatisfaction more elaborately.

This is the point where the need arises to transcend the triple states of deep sleep, dream and wakefulness. How do you know you have transcended? There comes a new clarity in the form of a transparency of vision where you see through the past, present and future. Your vision is not checkmated by any frontier: it is a frontierless vision. It is not confined to name and form. It does not come under the category of cause and effect. We cannot say it has a beginning or an end. In fact, words that we use and thoughts that we celebrate are all of no use. This is the realm of infinite silence into which we can merge, where the present faculties which are very useful to us become of no use.

Now we come to a very difficult situation where we must go around a curve, so to speak, in our understanding. All the conditionings which we have so far called learning are no better than the salivating of Pavlov's dogs. All the rewards and punishments which you have had so far in the form of



education help you only to salivate when the bell rings. Don't you want something better than that?

Every time I read this I burst into tears. Nitya's simple query, "Don't you want something better than that?" just rips open my heart. What a guy!

The class talked quite a bit about blissful objects that energize us to break free of our complacency, babies and flowers and so on. But it was hard to swallow the fact that the minute you say "Isn't that beautiful!" or "Isn't she sweet!" you have given up your transparency of vision to categorize the event. As Paul pointed out, this sets up a dualistic perspective where you and the object are separate. The sutra instructs us that it is the merger of subject and object in unity that we are aiming for. Any descriptive appreciation inevitably draws a line between perceiver and perceived.

Cooing over a baby isn't necessarily a spiritual disaster, but the way we overlay all of existence with our petty preferences is. Every moment of life is spectacular, unique, and transcendental, if we choose to see it that way. But we prefer a more dismal narrative, where everything is judged and compared. Remember, we are trying to overcome *all* our mental modifications, good, bad or ugly. We usually are content to discard the bad and ugly, but cling to the good, and therefore we never are completely released from our conditioning.

Relinquishing mental modifications is not a passive process, either. We have to overcome our inertia. I'll call on Nitya one last time, from That Alone verse 84:

Simply saying they are all modifications does not help you. You have to see in each piecemeal experience what kind of modification has come, what its essential nature is, and how you can see through it. This means a transparency of vision is

to be cultivated, by which you can neutrally assess a situation that is superficially dismal or cheerful.

Moni gave the example of caring for her mother-in-law, where she spent years tending faithfully to a terminally ill woman. Her husband's family would sometimes say, as a kind of compliment, "You treat your mother-in-law better than your own mother." But Moni was incensed. She thought, it isn't a question of this person or that person. Here is a situation where a person needs care and I can give it. She didn't cling to fantasies about who was deserving and who wasn't. She simply followed the requirements of the situation in which she found herself, and gave it all her loving kindness. Should we reserve loving kindness for some special occasion? Moni at least didn't think so. Because she is loving and kind, she wants to be that way all the time.

We are rapidly coming to the close of the first part or pada of Patanjali. Chance handed me the following paragraph by Richard Wilhelm, in his comments on I Ching hexagram 58, The Joyous, Lake. It makes a fitting conclusion to our most excellent group adventure:

#### THE JUDGEMENT

The Joyous. Success.  
Perseverance is favorable.

#### THE IMAGE

Lakes resting on one another:  
The image of The Joyous.  
Thus the superior man joins with his friends  
For discussion and practice.

A lake evaporates upward and thus gradually dries up; but when two lakes are joined they do not dry up so readily, for one

replenishes the other. It is the same in the field of knowledge. Knowledge should be a refreshing and vitalizing force. It becomes so only through stimulating intercourse with congenial friends with whom one holds discussion and practices application of the truths of life. In this way learning becomes many-sided and takes on a cheerful lightness, whereas there is always something ponderous and one-sided about the learning of the self-taught.

## Part II

Before the class, Paul was telling Moni about Groundhog's Day, where a prize groundhog, a cheerful mammal in the marmot family, is brought out of hibernation to assess the weather. Paul did an imitation in which he seemed to momentarily transform into the sleepy but surprised groundhog. He actually *became* the groundhog for an instant. Susan and I were both standing in the kitchen, and we both noticed it. It was spectacular! To even call it an imitation would be to undervalue it. I tell you this so you can understand the reference in Susan's note, which arrived even before I began work this morning. Susan is touchy that she is the only person on the planet whose understanding of Vedanta is vague, and she probably doesn't want me to print this, but it's a relief for others to know that they are not alone. Feeling vague is far more common than emerging from class bristling like a lighthouse. Vague feelings sometimes incubate the ideas discussed better than sharply delineated memories, as she well realizes:

Dear Scott,

Nice class last night. I keep thinking about our discussion and the wonderful feeling of being there (and Paul as the ground hog!).

I may think of something to add to the notes eventually but for now I was hoping that you would clarify something in your notes. I

liked that image that Paul brought up with the rock falling down to its resting place, being shifted by the current and also having an influence on that current. Jan, Moni, and I started talking about that right away as we were driving down the hill for home. The thing is that we knew it was related to the discussion but we weren't sure exactly how. We wanted it to be related because it was such a compelling image. Moni thought it had to do with masses and spaces. I thought it had to do with oneness and something that the class was just discussing before that but now it has left my mind. We also wondered about what the ground represented and Jan thought maybe it was the Absolute. I guess we were trying to define and label and eventually we realized that even if we didn't figure it out, it was a great image and somehow the understanding would make its way into us. It's interesting that much of the class kind of mashes into a fuzz for me at this moment (more than usual) but I still feel the comfort and bliss of it. And somewhere, a deeper understanding.

Happy Wednesday,  
Susan

The idea in question is similar to one we talked about recently of Buckminster Fuller's. A play about him opened with him pitching pennies and watching as they perfectly followed the optimal trajectory. "Yep, nature gets it right every time," he said. Each penny described a perfect arc, and then bounced exactly in the way that combined all the various factors of weight, hardness, speed, gravity and angles. Not like people, who mentally and physically try to construct mechanical imitations of nature. Those calculations would be mind-boggling, and take forever. You might easily leave out something important. But nature does its "computations" instantly, because her actions are in the groove, in the flow. Because of this, Fuller pondered nature for his

inspiration, to try to make his mechanical imitations more closely resemble natural perfection.

Paul did not recall where his example came from, but it was of a pebble thrown into a stream. The route the pebble takes to the bottom follows every nuance of the current interacting with its shape, weight and so on. It's a nicer image than a penny pitched onto a stage floor, but the idea is the same. All such events demonstrate a transparency of vision, or perhaps just plain transparency. No thought process intervenes to disrupt the perfection of the trajectory. All factors are effortlessly included in the result.

Like that, our lives are hurtling through the cosmos even when we feel like we're standing still. We have to follow every dip and curve and overcome every obstacle according to its dimensions. We are like a pebble falling through a river. If we could abandon ourselves to the flow, we would be in tune with our natural inclination, sometimes called our dharma, and its basis in the Absolute. And as to Jan's question about the Absolute, the whole business is the Absolute: pebble, river, the throw, the fact that this is only a story, the way we understand it, everything. The pebble doesn't attain the Absolute, it is the Absolute passing through the Absolute, in the eye of the Absolute.

It's really a very good example, and I'm glad it was kept alive during the ride home. Our flailings and carefully chosen pathways almost always deflect us from the absolute, optimal flow of our life. We can't imagine we could survive without them. But in yoga, we set all that churning aside to allow for a transparency of vision. It's an experiment, like learning to swim: what would happen if we stopped thrashing and just relaxed? Ah, the water holds us up! What do you know.

Part III

Susan should get an award for two responses to one class, a first as far as I can recall. Plus another award for hinting at a link between transparency and trance-parentsy! Her new favorite meditation calls to mind the ancient Chinese proverb: If you want to be happy for a day, get some opium. If you want to be happy for a year, get a sex partner. But if you want to be happy for a whole lifetime, become a gardener.

Dear Scott,

I really appreciated your notes and comments on my note. Your notes are terrific and really helpful. They started me thinking about other things I've wanted to ask you about or tell you.

I loved your comment about your reaction to "Don't you want something better than that?" Love that it rips open your heart. It is quite a thunderbolt for me too. Since college I have been obsessed with learning and have often (very often) felt inferior to those who seemed brilliant, smart, quick-minded, learned, scholarly, full of knowledge. I have beat myself up over not having read enough books in my life, about not being able to keep all sorts of facts in my mind. (I know you know all this but it feels good to write about it). It is taking me a long time to let go of this intellectual dream of mine. But really it is just a lot of spittle. On one level, I want to have the knowledge so I can join in more and more interesting conversations and so I can understand more and more but of course there's also something about ego and pride in there. I like to impress people with my knowledge and I would like to impress the people who impress me. I am a snob about knowledge. I guess I should be happy that I'm bad at remembering names and places and dates in history, films, books, etc. I see it as a defect of my brain but maybe it's a fortunate defect. It's a bit like Oliver Sacks and all his stories. If one part doesn't work, you figure out how to

function with what does work and you learn so much about reality along the way. In the end, the intellectualism is a game — a very fun game at times, but a game (well, it can also be a very tedious and dull and stupid game).

Which brings me to gardening. I have been gardening a lot in recent weeks and loving it. I am in a wonderful trance when I am gardening and I can only think of it as a transparency of vision because it is so absorbing. I feel at one with the garden, with no preconceptions or judgments, and a bit like the pebble falling into water. The garden has an influence on me and I have an influence on the garden. We are the Absolute and we are creation. But then I come out of my trance and sometimes think to myself (you will not be surprised by this): Is it right that I should be working so hard in a garden that almost no one sees? Is it right that I should be doing so much work that doesn't help anyone really? I am trying to find a reason to justify my actions. In the last week I have come to the idea that gardening is a type of prayer, something like the prayers of those cloistered monks in France. I am beginning to feel comfortable with the idea of doing something I love and not having it be practical — I think this might be verging on dharma. This feeling is challenging for me because of my addiction to the hamster wheel and my love of accomplishment. It's nice that the garden looks more and more beautiful, the more I work in it, but when I'm gardening, I'm only thinking about the task of the moment. Fun and transformative. I keep tending to think --- where is this leading? What is this doing? But it's such a relief to think of it as a meditation, an unfolding, a being, a prayer.

Piano is similar to this in many ways, especially considering that I lack the skill to attain great levels of playing. I would love to whip off pieces the way you do and also to know so much about the music and the composers. But when I am playing, I don't think

about these things and this is such a balm. Again, it doesn't lead anywhere and yet it leads everywhere.

Thanks for getting the thoughts churning. Feels great. The quotes from Nitya are just amazing, by the way. Thank you for including them.

Aum,  
Susan

#### Part IV

Due to some of the responses I've gotten, it seems Susan's last note hit a definite nerve. I think I should add a slight clarification, especially for the newer members of the group, because some of it was a little off target.

A couple of people felt that gardening, as an example of yogic activity, stood in opposition to intellectual activity. Not at all. Like pretty much everything, gardening requires a lot of intelligence, properly directed and applied. What Susan was exulting over was her newly acquired ability to shed her nagging doubts for a while. A negative inner voice is not the same as intelligence, by any means.

Like many of us, Susan used to spin her wheels, endlessly channeling the confusion bequeathed her by her upbringing and the current state of public derangement in which we are regularly bathed. After only ten years of diligent work, she can now relegate those unhelpful states to the background, at least for part of the time. This is a testament to her perseverance, as well as to the damnable tenacity of the "poisoned arrows" we enter adulthood adorned with.

Any absorbing activity can give us an opportunity to let go of the mental chatter that passes for the "normal" and even "intellectual" state of mind. Then our reasoning and our activity



become unified, meaning they work together in an expert fashion. Actually, being deeply engaged in what we love is the true norm we seek to find, and when we do it can be called our dharma, as Susan pointed out. It doesn't have to be just one thing, either, though specialization has its advantages in the modern world. We can go from one task to the next, one interchange to the next, and remain fully absorbed in what we're doing, so the yogic state or the dharma becomes our whole life. Generally speaking, the way into this happy condition is through something that we simply love to do.

It must be that some of us have been intellectually intimidated by someone at some point, and are carrying resentments still. That's too bad, but then again, maybe we could stand a jolt to shake us out of our complacency once in a while. The gurus we know certainly evinced great joy in intellectual pursuits, and were constantly inviting us to join them. In my day, I stood out as the most intimidated and humiliated pretender by one of them.

If nothing else, keeping the mind well fed is a way to avoid boredom, as Nitya once assured me.

It is possible to be an intellectual snob, and it's also possible to be an anti-intellectual snob. Either way, you're still a snob. Insecure people either try to impress others with what they've been taught, or they defend their ignorance as being exactly what they want out of life. On the other hand, unity in reason and action, or love if you prefer, dispels insecurity. True intellectuals are engrossed in their favorite subject and if anything are happy to share the pleasure they take in it. The false dichotomy of materialism versus spirituality has made for a lot of sniping, but we have laid that albatross to rest in our Darsanamala study, thanks to Nitya's insights in his commentary on it.

The Gita, too, is definite about this. In II, 50, there is the assertion, "Yoga is reason in action." Further on we are reminded,

“That rationalism and yogic self-discipline are distinct, only children say, not the well-informed; one well-established in either one of them obtains the result of both.” (V, 4). “Yogic self-discipline” stands for gardening here.

The bottom line is that most of the sneering in life is done in the early teen years, or by those who never left their teens, no matter what their current age. We don't need to still be carrying that useless baggage.

So dive in! That little voice inside that is telling you that you are inadequate in some way is a liar and a thief of your peace of mind. Tell it to be quiet, and carry on. Go dig some roots. Aum.

## Part V

A hearty generic thank you to the many who've written in response to Susan's email. I love to know I'm not merely writing in a vacuum! Behind each of the addresses I send out to is a vibrant, living human being filled with well-considered thoughts. Many of you love to garden too, apparently! I'm not resending most of what's come in because it seems rather personal or at least intimate. It helps me if you write at the bottom “Okay to share” or “Not okay to share”, otherwise I have to go on my own flawed judgment. But I can't keep it all to myself.

Lila wrote, in part:

I felt such kinship with Susan. I wish I could garden all year around but I also walk in the woods, saying prayers.... The soul needs the deep roots and loamy soil of Mother and our planet depends upon us for its care as it comes into Being. We are the beings who will either destroy or be caregivers of this Earth.

I am reading John Spiers' book [What Should I Read?] and he also mentions that sometimes intellectualism gets in the way of the starkness, the freshness of the Absolute blowing through our lives in every atom, leaf,

Everything.

I am giving my heart and soul to the Spirit writing Susan's email and I am touched.

Thank you

Blessings

Lila

And, from dear Ammu/Aumm, mother of two:  
Lovely. Thanks for this, Scott. The most important lesson I took from this came from a phrase you casually (or maybe not) threw in there - *On the other hand, unity in reason and action, or love if you prefer....* I love how you equated “unity in reason and action” to “love”. So true. All is love when we harmonize these seemingly opposed values. And of course, I enjoyed everything you wrote to explain why these two are not opposed to each other. Taking care of little ones is a very real everyday example of how reason and action are (or at least can be) synthesized.

Aum.

Ammu.

Brenda wrote a lot, but the gist is here:  
*To be given to the pursuits and not focused on anything but the joy of it, and to willingly share what one has learned...that feels right indeed!... I'm off to dig some roots!*  
*\Love and Aum, Brenda*

Lastly, Susan just sent a letter from Nitya to Josie she found in L&B, as a great blessing:

"The absolutist is one who sits firmly on the conviction that there is a functional truth that runs all through life, sometimes obscure, sometimes pronounced and sometimes hard to detect. He or she knows that the best way to be in tune with this benevolent, protective, friendly, hidden truth of life is never to belittle its glory, power, intelligence, beauty and absolute goodness. The Absolute is neither particular nor general; it is neither an idea nor a fact. It is the living meaning, the unalloyed value that insures the worthwhileness of life."

Love this. It's from the letter Nitya wrote to Josie on August 31, 1977, when he was comparing a relativist to an absolutist.  
Susan