

2022 Patanjali Class 55

6/6/23

Sutra II:6 – Asmita is the identification of the seer, as it were, with the power of seeing.

Sutra II:7 – Attachment (raga) is that which accompanies happiness.

Prior to the opening meditation, I read out a classic Nitya-ism from his Darsanamala commentary, by way of encouragement for the work we're doing:

We should adopt an attitude of wary skepticism coupled with relentlessly critical scrutiny when seeking the path of our intended search for the nature and meaning of mind. It is paradoxical that the same mind which brings all kinds of bondage and suffering can also lend itself to be the most efficient weapon to prove, analyze, scrutinize and lay bare the truth of itself. (DM 159)

Deb began by exulting that we could spend years of self-study on just these two brief sutras, and it's true: in many ways they lie at the crux of the mystery. As such, they are never going to be "figured out" or "solved;" they continually generate challenges to stimulate our (ideally) evolutionary responses. Deb felt that one thing is being emphasized here—each of our incarnate selves is small in comparison with the total, the animating consciousness from which everything arises, yet each of us is at the center of a universe. Where how we experience it comes from our memories and interpretations. We may consider ourselves to be individuals, but we are all part of the one energy and one consciousness.

After inviting us to provide examples, Deb recalled standing next to Nitya gazing at the magnificent sunset from the top of the mountain on Orcas Island. After some time he was ready to head

down to dinner, but she couldn't tear herself away from the scene, feeling she shouldn't miss a minute of the display. Then he pointedly asked her, "How long are you going to stand there and keep stuffing that sunset into you?" Now she sees what he was getting at, but at the time her outrage spouted to the surface.

One key to understanding this sutra is expressed in II:17, near the end of this section on afflictions: "The cause of that which is to be avoided is the conjunction of the seer and the seen." In the old notes I've elaborated on this at length. What it means is that we forget ourselves and identify with what is coming into us through the senses, in essence leaving out the most important part. We are being invited to wean ourselves away from this seductive but fallacious version of truth. Another Darsanamala zinger adds:

Perception in Vedanta is an indiscernible confection of the observer and the observed happening within the realm of the Absolute. It is an experience of an apparent duality within the ambit of the nondual Absolute. This is why Narayana Guru says a close scrutiny of the apparent reality of things restores all individuated objects to their primeval status as the Absolute. When viewed from this standpoint, *maya* becomes irrelevant. (DM 144)

I read out a complementary section from the old notes, beginning with:

Asmita [I-sense or ego] means that our minds create sequential images of the world, which are so convincing that we then come to believe they are the world itself. In a sense, then, "the world" includes both subject and object, spirit and nature, represented in a projection within our brain. Because of how we are constructed as an elaborate sensing apparatus, there is

no way for us to break out of our conceptual framework and observe the world in its pristine purity. Or is there?

My surmise was that transcendental experience can break us out.

In the exercise for sutra 7, Nitya says, “*how much more melodious is your inner appreciation than the music you appreciate.*” In our 2010 class, Deb took issue with this, and I shared her take again, because that sentence can be misleading. We’re not meant to favor one side or other. It isn’t that the world is false and misleading and our conscious projection is an improvement—in yoga they are to be brought into parity. The two aspects of this “*apparent duality*” produce each other, so by downplaying one side we unwittingly downplay the other. They are in fact a single event. What we’re trying to discover is the unitive miracle taking place in us every moment, and it’s important we think positively about our engagement with what we perceive, both it and us.

Susan’s practical example was that she enjoys listening to music when doing chores like washing dishes, and the same songs can make her feel great one day and other days she can’t even listen to them. Obviously it isn’t the song, it’s her being in a different mood.

Deb tied the idea to relationships, where the challenge is to establish what we are constructing and to stop doing it, as it isn’t fair to the partner.

I read out the second half of verse 1 of the Tao Te Ching (D.C. Lau trans.), which emphasizes the proper balance:

Hence always rid yourself of desire
In order to observe its secrets;
But always allow yourself to have desire
in order to observe its manifestations.

These two are the same
But diverge in name as they issue forth.
Being the same, they are called mysteries,
Mystery upon mystery –
The gateway of the manifold secrets.

Lao Tzu could really hit ‘em out of the park! In response, Andy read out Atmo verse 70, and I’ll throw in 69, which is paired with it. The two liken our being to an ancient car, the chariot. *Rati* is the drive for happiness:

Hearing and such as horses yoked,
occupied by the self-image, the dexterous psychic dynamism
drives
the chariot of *rati*; mounted therein, the ego
is continuously chasing each pleasing form outside.

One *rati* alone is expanding into the ego, the senses,
the mind, the body and all that is;
where is an end to this?
Not until one knows that he is different, none other than
knowledge;
remember!

As Bill summed up, in the light of the sutra, we get attached to the things that make us happy.

Andy finds it fascinating that there is a motive force that is expanding into all of what we perceive. Along with that is desire, which is what we are considering here. He didn’t think Narayana Guru is asking us not to have desires. It’s like having desires to learn about their secrets, from the Tao.... He is happy that desire—call it the cosmic desire to become—has a rightful place in the scheme of things.

Desire being called an enemy in many scriptures does not mean all desire is bad, but hinges on the partiality or limitations of certain desires. The desire that creates universes deserves respect and collaboration. Where would we be without it!? In yoga, we are trying to adopt a nonpunitive perspective, which is tough in the midst of a punishment-based culture that thrives on teaching us to hate our desires, so handy because they are always present. It's a clever way of permanently neutering philosophers.

Anita related several stories with a single theme, that she's realized she has been seeing others as separate, different from her, and she has consequently judged them more harshly than necessary. Now she is able to catch herself in the act, because she knows it's her mind creating (or exaggerating?) the separateness. She wondered what we could actually feel if we homed in on what the other person was thinking—if we could get past all that otherness and sink into the oneness? She is working hard to calm herself and enter the flow more, feel less agitation, and arrive at some kind of peace.

Anita's most salient realization comes from spending time with her family. They often do nice things for her, but she would still get irked, thinking they didn't offer this or do that for her. She routinely feels offended, and then she gets home and remembers the positive things she overlooked. Now she is aware of how she interprets and labels other people's behavior or words, and asks herself why she is collecting negative things and centering her world around them. She now realizes how narrow her interpretation is, but she is working on it.

Bill told Anita that the conditionings that make our ego think we are seeing world, when actually it's an interaction between the object and how we configure it in our minds—those conditionings are built up over a lifetime, by what the culture tells us, our DNA, what our grandfather said, and so on. They aren't overturned in a day.

Deb added that if you can step back, you can see yourself as part of the entire manifestation, how our life has proceeded through the social context through all the years. There's more of a flow to it than we realize.

Honored visitor Nancy Y summed up that we are learning how impacted we have been by all our conditioning, yet we are also being guided to know that we can make choices. In meditation we have chance to practice letting go of our tensions, so we may meet life with more awareness, more calmness. We can examine what is coming up to structure our world in a certain way. We have the capacity to see a bigger picture of our consciousness, and we can attune to that and let go of what arises that attempts to box us in and gives us that sense of confinement.

Moni said that all this, both our transcendental feelings and our low feelings both come from same source. It is a secret that Patanjali is sharing with us: these are not two different energies, not two different sources. In the undivided state of consciousness, everything is calm and peaceful, and we connect with everything. When we start looking outside, our interest falls on different subjects, and their data interferes and gives colorations to it. Soon we forget we come from that light, and instead start looking at external stimulations.

After class I "accidentally" found a fitting Thomas Merton quote, though I don't have the source:

The beginning of love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves, and not to twist them to fit our own image. Otherwise we love only the reflection of ourselves we find in them.

While we're at it, here's another great one residing in my files, from Merton's essay *Day of a Stranger*:

In an age where there is much talk about “being yourself” I reserve to myself the right to forget about being myself, since in any case there is very little chance of my being anyone else. Rather it seems to me that when one is too intent on “being himself” he runs the risk of impersonating a shadow.

What we consciously call our self is more about surface data than spiritual depth. Anita initiated a conversation about that also, as she’s realized that her devices are working programs on her she is barely aware of. Here’s a short article on [surveillance capitalism](#), by Shoshana Zuboff, with this central point “What is abrogated here is our right to the future tense, which is the essence of free will, the idea that I can project myself into the future and thus make it a meaningful aspect of my present. This is the essence of autonomy and human agency.” In other words, we are being manipulated by people whose intentions we will never know.

The pesky paradox is that we have come full circle from being censored and abased by an all-seeing God to an all-seeing Cloud. Not long after freeing ourselves from the first bind, we invented a second version of the same chains. The Cloud is aware of everything we’re doing and will impact our life in ways more substantially binding than God ever thought of. Hell in the present instead of only a future threat.

As a class, we wondered if being the Absolute in essence would insulate us from the worldly impact of data management. Paul talked about the composition of matter, how human anatomy descends from ancient starbursts, and our calcium comes from a star at least ten times bigger than our sun. We are integral parts of a universe that has evolved the capacity to question itself. For Paul it eliminates his sense of individualized self, while making him grateful that he is the epicenter of such a consciousness.

Well yes, our carbon, etc. will continue forever, but it may go through a tough time on earth, and we might be able to do something about that.

According to Deb, data is little bits of information, and we are much more than our data. She recently overheard someone saying “I just don’t have enough data to have an opinion,” and it drove her wild, fuming that that is how we continue to break things down into unrelated individual aspects and surrender ourself, where we lose touch with this unified, undivided consciousness. She quoted Nitya under sutra 7: “Form is like a tyrant. It dictates the individuality of things.” We need to watch how that happens. Desire is like form also, at tis best prompting movement into non-particular consciousness. Precisely here is the vast difference between a human being and a machine: we come from unified consciousness that isn’t broken into bits.

For Bill, the real mystery was that the self can create a whole world of things, and yet we are just one of those things. We are projected as individuals in this game we are playing. It’s wonderful, as well as hard to get one’s head around. He loved Nitya’s Vedantic mirror analogy:

Spirit and nature are counterparts of a binary system in which both aspects are of equal importance. One example given is of the Sun reflecting in a mirror. The mirror by itself cannot produce a Sun but when it is held against the Sun, it is capable of producing an image that has the qualities of the Sun such as radiating heat and light.... Still, the inner organ is not merely a physicochemical and psychobiologic apparatus. It has to have a spirit or Self animating it, like the Sun reflecting in a mirror. If there are a million mirrors the Sun will reflect in all with different degrees of clarity and intensity. Similarly, the one spirit that is of the nature of awareness can manifest in countless millions of organisms. (164)

For the closing meditation, I resurrected a story from far, far down in the old notes, so far that only I would ever have seen it:

Susan helped us with a fine practical example. The other day her teenage daughter was in a major snit. In the past, Susan has become very anxious and felt like she needed to wade in and turn the tide. But this time she thought she would leave her alone. She got a book and sat in a back room reading. After a while her daughter peeked in as she was walking by. A few minutes later she reappeared with her own book, and sat down near her mom to read it. Without any exchange of words, they were happy together again, and it was even a kind of implicit apology. Because Susan wasn't trying to "fix" her daughter's state of mind, it gave her room to settle down on her own and in a gentle way reestablish their connection. It's very beautiful, and exactly the point of this sutra. We actually make matters worse when we show up like a drill sergeant to put everything in its proper place. But by turning the focus back onto ourselves, we allow ripples of peace to invite others to do the same, and love is reestablished on a solid footing.

Part II

Eugene sent a Poetry_Mary-Oliver_Wild-Geese-Re-write. His introduction:

Mary Oliver reminds us. We have a faulty idea of what we have to be every second. I am trying to be whatever is happening and really get to know that place, the space, that feeling intimately. Do we really know all of anger? In my experience, just sitting with hooks like anger or compassion transforms these experiences. Anger happens. Anger is ancient and very powerful. Have we

really allowed ourselves to have an authentic knowing of anger?
Funny how it becomes something other than just a destructive
force of weaklings. I am learning manifestations, like ourselves,
are not solid and definite. So, no, you don't have to be good. We
are everything. Thanks, Scott. Thanks, class. Thanks, Mary Oliver.
(What a manifestation she is?!)

[Wild Geese is probably her best-known poem.]

Wild Geese | Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. You only have to
let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. Meanwhile
the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving
across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading
home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting— over and over
announcing your place
in the family of things.

AND NOW THIS

Mary Oliver for Corona Times

(Thoughts after the poem Wild Geese) by Adrie Kusserow

You do not have to become totally zen,

You do not have to use this isolation to make your marriage better,
your body slimmer, your children more creative.

You do not have to “maximize its benefits”

By using this time to work even more,
write the bestselling Corona Diaries,
Or preach the gospel of ZOOM.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body unlearn
everything capitalism has taught you,

(That you are nothing if not productive,

That consumption equals happiness,

That the most important unit is the single self,

That you are at your best when you resemble an efficient

machine). Tell me about your fictions, the ones you’ve been sold,

the ones you sheepishly sell others,

and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world as we know it is crumbling. Meanwhile the
virus is moving over the hills,

suburbs, cities, farms and trailer parks.

Meanwhile The News barks at you, harsh and addicting,

Until the push of the remote leaves a dead quiet behind,
a loneliness that hums as the heart anchors.

Meanwhile a new paradigm is composing itself in our minds,

Could birth at any moment if we clear some space

From the same tired hegemonies.

Remember, you are allowed to be still as the white birch, Stunned
by what you see,

Uselessly shedding your coils of paper skins

Because it gives you something to do.

Meanwhile, on top of everything else you are facing,

Do not let capitalism coopt this moment,

laying its whistles and train tracks across your weary heart. Even
if your life looks nothing like the Sabbath,

Your stress boa-constricting your chest.
Know that your ancy kids, your terror, your shifting moods, Your
need for a drink have every right to be here,
And are no less sacred than a yoga class.
Whoever you are, no matter how broken,
the world still has a place for you, calls to you over and over
announcing your place as legit, as forgiven,
even if you fail and fail and fail again.
remind yourself over and over,
all the swells and storms that run through your long tired body all
have their place here, now in this world.
It is your birthright to be held
deeply, warmly in the family of things,
not one cell left in the cold.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Oliver

Part III

For Nancy Y's first class:

2/12/12

Asmita to me means that our minds create sequential images of the world, which are so convincing that we then come to believe they are the world itself. In a sense, then, "the world" includes both subject and object, spirit and nature, represented in a projection within our brain. Because of how we are constructed as an elaborate sensing apparatus, there is no way for us to break out of our conceptual framework and observe the world in its pristine purity. Or is there?

It may be that transcendental events are those that jolt us out of our absorption with our self-image and allow us to step outside ourselves in some way. It's a mind-blowing, ecstatic experience to temporarily (or permanently?) be freed from what we have learned

to describe as bondage, which is basically our total dependence on a neurological perceiving apparatus.

Being bonded to perception is a good thing, by the way, even as we chafe at its limitations. Over billions of years organisms have evolved ever more complex and accurate senses to register and interact with their environments. That's a primary directive in the game of life. But I think that occasional transcendental moments foster further evolution, by revealing the gap between our current state and an ideal one. If we can step back and see our limitations, we know what to try and overcome. Otherwise, we unconsciously train ourselves to be content with our limitations, and remain at their mercy.

Our self-image is as much a part of our inner passion play as the material objects we are surrounded by. Our spirit aspect perceives both us and our environment as nature, although we routinely make the mistake of calling the "us" part the purusha when it's actually an aspect of prakriti. The interesting and unnerving experience is to subtract both from our self-identity and see what's left. In my experience the remainder is a detached witness that is watching the entire game. I'm thinking back to my near-death experience here, now almost two years past. I'm unable to say for certain whether that core detached being was the real me, but it was definitely stripped of all prakriti, with a gulf between it and me. I assumed that I was the pure purusha at the time. If there was any such thing as "Scott" it was out there in the murk, but I couldn't see it, and had no contact with it.

The second exercise is especially easy for me because I've been drowning in music this week. Last night Deb and I went to Madame Butterfly, an opera that features some of the most sumptuous and poignant music ever composed. For hours afterwards the hum of it surged through my body and mind, producing successive waves of various kinds of bliss and tenderness.

I learned this week that operatic music is now being broadcast from speakers located in some of the shelters of Portland's transportation system. There, though, the intent is to drive away hoodlums who otherwise congregate in the shelters. Apparently operatic music is so loathsome to them that they can't leave the area fast enough. Hearing about this brought home the subjective nature of music, and by extension, experience in general. We learn to appreciate and despise all the multifarious elements of our world. Nowadays having disdain for as much of it as possible is the "hip" attitude, and I suppose you can make a case that loving and hating are cosmically of equal value. But one is so much more enjoyable than the other! I can't help thinking that joy leads us to evolve and expand, while misery leads us to stagnate and shrink. Rightly or wrongly, this motivates my avocation in my sunset years to try to coax a few friends to mutually enlarge our happiness by sharing the insights of yoga.

* * *

5/4/10, older notes:

Sutra II:6

Asmita is the identification of the seer, as it were, with the power of seeing.

The class struggled with this problematic and difficult sutra, so it was one of those nights when we wandered afield and examined some tangential concepts. This is a sutra where we especially wish our readers would weigh in with their own ideas!

Asmita, the ego sense or sense of 'I', is the first specific affliction listed in II:3, after the blanket category of ignorance or nescience. Next up are attachment, hatred, and lust for life. We will examine each in turn.

The most popular idea from the commentary was Nitya's description of how the ego appears from a cosmic perspective:

In the morning when the Sun shines it can be seen mirrored in all the dewdrops. If every dewdrop were endowed with a consciousness so it could say "I am," that would be the same as all individuated beings identifying the central locus of their consciousness as "I am."

I think we all had an inward vision of swarms of little dewdrops all singing "I am" at the top of their voices, and we had a lot of fun with it. Dewdrops are a classic Vedantic analogy because they are illuminated by the same sun but each reflects the world from a unique perspective.

Anne was reminded of a different analogy of Wittgenstein. He claimed that each person carried around a box with a beetle inside it. No one ever opened their box, so no one ever got to see the beetles, but everyone knew they were in there. Apropos our study he also said, "A man will be imprisoned in a room with a door that's unlocked and opens inwards; as long as it does not occur to him to pull rather than push."

We did some work with Nitya's suggested exercise to distinguish nature and spirit. We have talked about this dichotomy a lot in the past, so there is no need to repeat it. One thing about the exercise is that when you try to subtract nature from spirit to see what's left over, a lot of the parts that you thought were spirit turn out to be part of nature and zip! away they go. This led us to discuss stroke and other brain injuries, where the parts we take for granted as "really us" are suddenly not there anymore. It's a major shock, believe me. Our core of spirit is utterly without appendages, and so is just a very still witness. Language, communication, memory, and many other key aspects of who we are fall into the nature camp.

One key to understanding this sutra is expressed in II:17, near the end of this section on afflictions: “The cause of that which is to be avoided is the conjunction of the seer and the seen.” The movie theater analogy is very helpful with this. Our true nature is like the projection booth, with its bright light being beamed through a multicolored film. But we, in our role as projectionist, have become so fascinated with the play of images on screen that we have forgotten how we are producing them. We the seers have become attached to the scene seen on the screen.

Of course, any chance we have to affect the action must happen in the projection booth. The main thing is to change what movie we’re showing. Once it is projected onto the screen we are helpless to alter any of it. We try and try, but if we have selected Disaster Movie Highlight Reel or Sad Tales of the Nether Lands, that’s what we’re going to see. We reach out to make an adjustment and the action has already roared ahead to a new conundrum. It doesn’t matter anyway, because there is nothing to grab hold of, it’s just a very realistic illusion. Only by replacing the film in the projector with Alice in Wonderland or Wisdom’s Frame of Reference or some such are we going to accomplish any real transformation.

Typically after we have fiddled around with the onscreen images for awhile, we realize we can’t have any impact and we resign from the game. We give up. This is the kind of negativity that Arjuna felt at the outset of the Bhagavad Gita. Luckily his guru Krishna helped him to turn around and discover himself and learn how to live well.

Patanjali calls such a fixation with the outer play of events egoism. Rediscovering our true nature as identical with the Source is samadhi, the cure.

The next three afflictions stem from this primary ignorance of egoism, and are more or less side effects of it. For the resolution of all of them Patanjali is going to recommend pure contemplation,

along with a “regressive reemerging” into their origins. In our metaphor, then, we are to withdraw our attention from the screen and slowly turn around to view and closely examine how the whole thing works. The trick (which is a very appropriate term) is that our habitual mindset prefers to play out the saga on the screen and not actually carry out the yogic transformation. We are content to imagine the process and then think of ourselves as realized, when in fact we are only deluding ourselves further. This produces the spiritual ego, which is an order of magnitude more entrenched than the relatively guileless ego of ordinary people who are content to munch their popcorn and be amused or terrified by the movie itself.

5/11/10

Sutra II:7

Attachment (raga) is that which accompanies happiness.

We began the class with the suggested exercise, where we are asked to listen to music or watch a sunset and try to see how the source of the joy it elicits is in ourselves and is not directly supplied by the music. I played a Debussy piece on the freshly tuned piano as the light faded out over the mountains, so we didn't have to simply imagine the concept. We had both the visual and auditory stimuli on hand.

Deb started us off by fine tuning Nitya's statement that you are to “think how much more melodious is your inner appreciation than the music you appreciate.” Actually they go together, and your inner appreciation is very much a mirror image of the music. It is like our potential for joy is activated by the specific form of joy which we encounter.

I think the problem is only in the wording. Nitya wants us to know that we are the source of our experiences, both positive here and negative as described in the next sutra. We become convinced

that the outer manifestation is the source of our happiness, and then we believe we have to repeat the experience or a homologue of it in order to be happy, as Nitya puts it “each time with added vigor and a variation in the form so that monotony may not dampen your interest.”

This is an aspect of the teaching that meets with a lot of resistance. We are attracted to that which brings us joy. When we are challenged to stop projecting the source outside, the temptation is to see this advice as a bringdown and move on to another format that promises a longer period of pleasing forgetfulness.

We most enjoy the feeling of some outside source sustaining us, caring for us and guiding us. Essentially we are unconsciously seeking to restore the carefree times when our parents dealt with all the hassles and we were free to play and play. ‘Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished! The most successful religions intentionally supply this very comforting aspect of life, which is eagerly gobbled up by needy people for as long as it lasts. Even if a religion doesn’t start out that way, people are desperate to take refuge in the Buddha or Jesus, say, so that develops into a major force over time.

We have found that this very challenging section of the Yoga Shastra causes some to lose interest for that very reason. They prefer to play up the fun aspect and have it as the lodestone of a new belief system, instead of making the effort to turn around and know that they are the source itself. It’s not easy, but anything less would only cheapen the wisdom, turning it into an exotic version of the same old misguided attitude. That’s not what the Gurukula is about!

Coming to know that we are joy incarnate means that every moment of life will be filled with true happiness or will be tending toward it. Since we’re not quite perfect, most of us react to shocks, but then we can pull ourselves back together to let the light shine forth once again. It’s not that nothing affects us, but only that we

don't hold onto it. This sutra should awaken us to the joy in even the most mundane parts of our life. For instance, many people complain about doing the dishes, as though that was such a major drudgery that their life is spoiled by having to deal with it. I can attest that with the right attitude it can be fun: transforming dirty things into clean ones, making slow progress, feeling the warm soapy water, recalling the pleasures of the meal, knowing you are contributing to complete a cycle. It's all in the attitude.

Likewise, the music I love may sound like hell to someone else. Where we admire a sunset, someone else will barely notice it. It's not that the music or the scene is different, but the way it is interpreted surely is. We have been trained to be choosy and decide between better and worse. We want to always be seen on the right side. Nitya calls this the tyranny of form. Our happiness gets truncated into having to always be on the good side, to always align ourselves with the hip, the cool.

The reason this is particularly important will be brought home in the next sutra. When our happiness is linked to certain forms, those eventually fade out or otherwise disappear, and then our happiness goes away with them. We first become upset, and then miserable. If we can blame it on some external cause we will fly into a rage, and might even go into attack mode. False prophets abound who profit from inflaming our frustrations into hatred of other groups. If we are ever to stop falling for the siren call to charge forth into disaster, we need to see how our fixation on external happiness leads us astray.

The Bhagavad Gita describes the process in a little more detail than Patanjali: "Meditating on objects of sense-interest there is born in man an attachment for them; from attachment rises passion; in the face of passion (frustrated) arises rage. From rage is produced distortion of values, and from distortion of values memory lapse, and from memory-lapse comes loss of reason, and from loss of reason he perishes." (II, 62-63) Perishing means

psychological destruction, not actual death, of course. Here's my commentary on verse 62, which is quite relevant:

Attachment is a very subtle business that creeps up on us without our conscious awareness of it. At first we are merely amused or entertained by something, so we repeat the experience. Before long it becomes a need, then in some cases an addiction or obsession. Obviously some amusements, resonating with our vasantas and samskaras in the depths of our being, are more binding than others. We usually learn about these when we try to stop reinforcing them and find that we have hooks in us that make it much harder than it should be. The belief that this means the behavior is therefore good for us is off the mark; we can be hooked by both beneficial and harmful interests. Krishna will show where the deleterious ones lead, and it is up to each of us to observe whether we are sliding down this slippery slope or not. Since we are masters of denial, it doesn't hurt to have a guru or other advisor to give us the bad news. It is famously hard medicine to swallow the criticism when someone tells us we are going wrong, and our ego will likely shape shift into a parade of demons to resist it. And as Freud said, even the willing patient will push the dentist away when he approaches their mouth with his pliers.

Here's how the process works. In the normal course of becoming separate individuals, early on we retain a neutral balance in our nature, but very soon we learn to move toward our likes and away from our dislikes. This is where imbalance becomes possible. We can't always escape what we don't like and we can't always have what we do like. Frustration sets in, followed by manipulation and scheming to get "ours." Even small children can be seen to become violently angry when they don't get their way. Later they adopt "tricks" to coerce their caretakers into granting their requests. Adults retain these

attitudes, though they are better disguised by civilized behavior. But just try to get an addict to undergo treatment, for instance, and the civilized part falls away quickly enough.

Becoming enraged is only the beginning.

Sometimes when Nitya would see a rose or a sunset he would say, “Ah! Look how beautiful I am!” Our first thought was what a crazy idea. But he was doing, nay living, the exercise of this sutra. He knew if he wasn’t there his experience of the flower would not have existed. The flower was there, but he was bringing the bliss of appreciation to it. This was his continuous state of mind. It didn’t depend on the flower, it merely took that shape while the flower was present.

Susan helped us with a fine practical example. The other day her teenage daughter was in a major snit. In the past, Susan has become very anxious and felt like she needed to wade in and turn the tide. But this time she thought she would leave her alone. She got a book and sat in a back room reading. After a while her daughter peeked in as she was walking by. A few minutes later she reappeared with her own book, and sat down near her mom to read it. Without any exchange of words, they were happy together again, and it was even a kind of implicit apology. Because Susan wasn’t trying to “fix” her daughter’s state of mind, it gave her room to settle down on her own and in a gentle way reestablish their connection. It’s very beautiful, and exactly the point of this sutra. We actually make matters worse when we show up like a drill sergeant to put everything in its proper place. But by turning the focus back onto ourselves, we allow ripples of peace to invite others to do the same, and love is reestablished on a solid footing.

Part II

Because the class is made up of well-adjusted, artistic types, we mostly discussed aesthetic experiences, and as Eugene said,

there really isn't any point in revisiting their downside. Rarely do we get so carried away by them that we become addicts. They are good for us and do not require us to agonize over them.

There are more salient examples to clarify the problem that leads Patanjali to consider this kind of happiness an affliction. Drugs are always Exhibit A, in that they provide a temporary state of pleasure followed by a trough of negative reaction, which stimulates an urge to repeat the experience. Any habit like this is an end in itself, and carries with it no desire for any yoga practice that requires hard work and deferred satisfaction.

This whole subject is an excellent field for self-analysis. I recalled in my childhood being rocked by a well-advertised candy bar, the Three Musketeers. Three guys in Musketeer drag sliced one into three BIG pieces with their rapiers and shared them in a spirit of divine brotherhood. I remember being totally entranced by how delicious they were: heaven on earth. I couldn't wait for Halloween, when I could pilfer a bagful of them and their cousins from the neighborhood. In the meantime I spent hours plotting how to get the next one, and spent more hours wandering the streets picking up pop bottles and loading them in my red wagon. Two and a half pop bottles at two cents apiece would net you one five-cent candy bar at the store. It was good times, learning how to find happiness in junk food.

Another example more germane to adults is money. While very useful for normalizing exchange, it can also be manipulated into corrupting exchange, as we see with CEOs who make the same as a year's wages for their underlings in 2 hours at the office. In capitalism money is worshipped as a God, and whole lives are dedicated to its service. It and its markets are credited with deciding all things with an absolute righteousness, and any attempt to add mitigating concepts in the form of regulations is considered blasphemy.

Narayana Guru describes this type of projection of our happiness onto outside factors as a mirage: as we move toward it, it recedes into the distance or vanishes with a change of the light. Devotees never think that it is the fault of the God that they don't find happiness, only they haven't done enough. All I needed was another candy bar. With money the decision is always for more and more, a never-ending pursuit, since happiness does not reside anywhere in it. Not only is poverty a side effect of greed, but disasters like the current one in the Gulf of Mexico are a direct result of it also, and they will continue as long as money is worshipped. Typically, the financial profit itself is invariably used as the justification for degradation of the environment. This is tautology at its best: the value of the world is only what money can be made from it, therefore we should extract all the money we can from the world.

One thing Biblical Paul put well, if a bit exaggerated: "The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Greed is the king of all ragas.

So we play around with our obsessions, sure that ours are legitimate and that we can handle them, until they sneak up and catch us in their net. This is an arena for a fundamental rethinking of our personal values; in our former analogy, of turning away from the movie screen and examining the projecting apparatus in the booth of our mind.

Part III

Lila sent this response, which reminds us of the indomitable strength that a sane life sometimes demands of us:

I too have been grappling with concerns about addiction and obsession. Since my own ecstatic experiences are rare and unpredictable, I find I am putting a great deal of energy into not

falling down the despair pit. I am launching a new strategy aimed at just "Happy." It is not a botox, false smile, but turning what feels like abandonment and silence into ways that are wonderful. Little things bring joy too. Like searching for joy in every grain of sand beneath my feet as I walk. It's TOUGH. Since surgery, and allergic to most pain meds, I am one grumpy person. I have something I can take at night but then I worried. I obsessed about the night meds as finally bringing blissful sleep and pain relief. So I took them then during the day, too. Now I worried I was addicted or would become addicted and stopped all pain meds. The obsession was like walking through the Mohave Desert in bare feet. The pain kept me real. I have to work at being balanced (that sand is very HOT), finding that one or all grains of sand as works of art. The art of finding my inner strength and knowing love surpasses pain.

I am not polishing my halo anytime soon. What you wrote was another grain of helpful sand to ease the pain of existence (when there is so much hidden joy).