

2022 Patanjali Class 58

6/27/23

Sutra II:12 – The root causes of the afflictions in the reservoir of conditioned or processed impressions of action are experienced in life in a visible or latent manner.

Two excerpts from the old Class Notes summarize where this sutra takes us:

2010: Having completed our survey of the afflictions, we begin to dig down to the next level. In the last two sutras dealing with the afflictions, Patanjali directed us to a “regressive reemergence” into their origins and their removal by pure contemplation. Once this is fairly accomplished, we discover their root cause in a region called the *karmasaya*, the repository of samskaras. The *karmasaya* cradles the accumulation of all actions, whether good, evil or indifferent. These provide the growth medium for the afflictions that define who we are in the outside world of manifestation....

2012: What all this makes me realize is how much we are shaped by our beliefs and the values that come from them. The yogi’s pleasurable task is to trace them back to their roots and get as close to the source as possible, because that’s where real change can be effected. Clipping the tips of the branches has only the briefest impact, because the shoots grow right back as they were. By going deeply inward, we can make changes that will encourage more beautiful growth in the future.

Deb spoke of the River metaphor Nitya touched on, how we are at core clear and undefined, like water, yet we experience many various manifestations as we flow through the obstacles of our stream bed. She feels each individual only experiences a short segment of their total river in their life, and most of the

possibilities remain latent, and marveled that all of us have enjoyed very similar lives in so many ways, yet each remains distinctive, or particular, as she likes to say.

The word here translated as latent, *adrishta*, is the exact opposite of visible, *drishta*, so the sutra tells us the reservoir of samskaras, the *karmasaya*, is both visible and invisible, both expressed and potential.

Andy had just read an article about a [14-year-old boy whose father was a sperm donor](#) who never knew his father, but who finally listened to a recording from him made at the sperm bank. The boy was dumbfounded at all the affinities they shared, and realized that genetics plays an outsized role in the supposedly free choices we make.

Deb has noticed how since her father's death sixteen years ago, she has become more and more like him. More and more *him*. The old Notes have a section on restoring free will through yoga, if you're interested.

Charles felt genetic curiosity was why many people are preoccupied with exploring their roots, imagining they lived in Jesus's time, or with people like the Vikings or nomadic pastoralists, for instance. Surely a measure of those influences persists in us in the present. For Deb, seeing cave art 40,000 years old has touched her profoundly, revealing those kinds of connections that may exist in every aspect of our lives.

Ages ago, Paul learned in college about the fairly primitive genetic theories then extant, and his takeaway was he carried a bucketful of potentials, but social conditioning determines which of them is actualized, and in what form. He has been overwhelmed thinking about the niches certain species adapted to survive practically forever, like a dinosaur-era fern in his yard that they must have munched 65 million years ago. It made it seem to him as if evolution was a natural law that we had no say in—it happened of its own accord.

Deb countered with Nitya's included exercise asking us to determine a hierarchy of values, by observing our parents' and our own tendencies. Then he hints at how we can alter the rigidity of vasanas or genetic inheritance:

Mark the tendencies that are likely to lead you in the path of negativity and tragedy. Mark that which makes you conform to it obsessively with compulsion. By examining all this, conceive a value that you can adore as an inspiring goal to which you can return again and again.

This is a blueprint for establishing new values, new operating parameters. Not too many years after Nitya composed this, scientists began to study how we can rewire our neurons to effect lasting change.

Moni led us into a discussion of our instinctive habits, like claustrophobia, fear of the dark or heights, our preferences for excitement, and so on. We all have these in varying degrees, biding their time in latency. I suggested that some overly-serious contemplatives work very hard to neutralize such survival-based genetic traits, taking whole lifetimes to accomplish their goals and gain fame, but Patanjali is showing us ordinary folk how to work with constraints that are readily changeable. We can recondition our conditioning, we can make smarter choices, and these have a real impact on how we develop.

Andy has been reading *An Immense World*, Ed Yong's fascinating compendium of the sensory abilities of various animals, which shows how differently they experience the world, based on which senses they rely on. As Andy put it, what we perceive comprises our reality, and by contemplating this we can "sound our limits." I offered a quote from neuroscientist David Eagleman, from his 2015 book *The Brain: The Story of You*: "No one is having an experience of the objective reality that really

exists; each creature perceives only what it has evolved to perceive.”

One of Yong’s major conclusions is that for each creature, their processed data appears to be a complete version of reality, despite being clearly selective. It feels like we are taking in everything, the whole. And it’s essential that it does feel that way, no matter how partial the input. Can you imagine how confusing it would be to know we weren’t perceiving reality? We’d always be searching for the missing pieces, instead of confidently attuning to what we were getting. Talk about survival value! In an eat-or-be-eaten world, staying alive demands acute awareness, and confidence in it.

Paul often thinks along those lines (and he would LOVE Yong’s book), and he worries that religious searching is dedicated to going beyond the existing perfection of evolution, to try to become more than what we are, and it bothers him. Which is wise. While there is perfection in our inherent mechanisms, we all have seen people who are mired in delusions, substituting fantasies for actualities. Civilization makes their delusions less lethal, at least for them. I thought later of a religious belief that killed many dedicated souls: ringing church steeple bells during thunderstorms. Here’s [an article from The Guardian](#) about it, starting:

Churches and castles were often extremely dangerous buildings during thunderstorms in the days before the lightning rod was invented. Being so tall, they were highly vulnerable to lightning strikes: hundreds of bell-ringers across Europe were killed over the centuries in the mistaken belief that ringing the bells would ward off lightning. But an even greater hazard was the habit of storing gunpowder in castles and church vaults.

Within yoga or without it, we are working to optimize the awareness we already have, which might foster further evolution,

but that part isn't much up to us. We don't have to evolve new senses, but only process ours without mangling and corruption. And we have been doing this already for a long time! Don't we feel that we could have been even stupider than we already are? I invited everyone to share examples of how they've already changed their lives for the better, and reprised Nitya's famous quote from this very book: "The yogi makes every effort not to be a howler telling untruth or a simpleton believing in something because somebody said it or it is written somewhere." (243)

While mass media is eagerly spewing deranged fantasies, lack of direct human contact that can reify our perceptions is becoming an even more crucial topic now that we are on the verge of being inundated with constructed realities that have no basis in the actual world, that are computer-generated or even troll-generated. I introduced a short article from the most recent Atlantic magazine, which I've excerpted in Part III, recommending humans retain personal and intellectual contact, as antidotes to the vanishing of reality. Getting together with friends, as we do most Tuesday evenings for the class, is a fine example of what author LaFrance advocates, where we can check each other's perspectives and share insights, confident that we are dealing with real people. This reminds me of my favorite quote from the movie *Waking Life*:

When it was over, all I could think about...was how this entire notion of oneself, what we are, is just... this logical structure, a place to momentarily house all the abstractions. It was a time to become conscious, to give form and coherence to the mystery. And I had been a part of that. It was a gift. Life was raging all around me, and every moment was magical. I loved all the people, dealing with all the contradictory impulses. That's what I loved the most— connecting with the people. Looking back, that's all that really mattered.

The personal upgrade from our studies Deb shared was that she's has become much less ready to engage in disagreement, more neutral in her arguments. She's replaced her former combativeness with a positive disposition. It's a perfect example, and with minimal dedication it can be put in place fairly rapidly.

Moni's spoke about how she has adopted a new culture in America, after growing up in India. Now when she goes back, she can see how she has changed in comparison to those who have always lived there. She's more aware of the cultural differences. She lives by a line from Nitya she remembers: always make your best effort. Her transformation is less intentional than Deb's, but equally profound.

Paul has learned humbleness from Nitya's teachings. He no longer tries to deify his past experiences, so as not to project his pet theories onto new incidences. He has a sister who does that all the time, and he can observe the chasm between what she thinks and what the subject is, knowing that today's truths will inevitably be tomorrow's follies. Paul then shared a dream from his childhood, from his evangelical religious upbringing. You can read about it in Part II, in his own words. It's a fabulous and lasting example of how our dreams may be pictorial instructions from the depths that can communicate worlds, in this case showing how new thoughts can explode hidebound dogmas. Interpreting our dreams is yet another form of regressive reemergence.

Jan expressed her appreciation of the philosophy for helping her keep calm in troubled relationships. Her three siblings are difficult to get along with, but in their regular meetings for family management, Jan stays as neutral as she can, and she has been a good influence on how they have learned to work together. She sees how at times they need to unload their pain, and has learned not to take it personally, which has led to some collective healing.

Deb has only one sibling, but she praised Jan, well knowing how complex each one of them is. Despite sharing so much with them in genes and experience, we are worlds apart in how we express ourselves.

I shared a major turning point that I've mentioned before, but it seemed apt. In 1996, after more than 25 years of study and collaboration with Nitya, I was walking down busy NW 23rd Avenue in Portland, taking 8-year-old Harmony and a friend, shopping. Practically my whole adult life I had felt an almost-physical tide of sustenance flowing into me from the Guru. I was clearly the lowly disciple, or assistant, and he the source. In an instant—I remember the exact spot—the tide changed and began flowing out. I felt incredibly ecstatic, as though I was floating three feet off the ground. I didn't know what it meant or anything, it was simply a profound release. The girls were walking well ahead of me, but when they saw how blissed out I was, Harmony at least was furious. How dare I appear in public like that! It didn't, it couldn't, bring me down.

That feeling of a tide flowing out of my core has persisted for 27 years now, and it seems it was the beginning of my transition to a teacher. A very humble teacher, but there was definitely something there, if it could be made use of. Only time would tell.

I read out my impression of Nitya's river analogy, from the old notes in Part IV, for our closing meditation.

Part II

Late that night, Paul kindly wrote up his dream for us—

The Zippered Truth

I was a strange child. I can't claim full credit for how I turned out. I need to share that relic trophy with the Assembly of God Church in Eagle Bend Minnesota – GO EAGLES!

For Christmas 1969 my mom and dad bought me a bible...who does that to a 10 year old child. I'll tell you who does that to a 10 year old child, my mom and dad is who! For Christmas I unwrapped a simulated black leather King James Bible that zipped shut on three sides, thus successfully sealing its sacred sub rosa from undeserving eyes.... Most of the youth boasted how often they had read the entire bible from "cover to glorious cover". I had not. I had not read the Bible from cover to glorious cover. Nor was I ever.

In the Assembly God Church of Eagle Bend Minnesota it was expected – nay, it was judged essential, vital, indispensable and punishable by eternal death least ye be truth-truent & condemned as the drunken sluggard ye has become – "All shall seek ye the glorious truth." I was a strang child...

Anyway, in the name of brevity, lets just say I was terrified with what I didn't know...

Dreams started to mirror my fear. One impactful dream was that of my Holy Zippered Black Simulated Leather King James Bible. In the dream I would receive teachings from various illuminares in my dad's garage. Their teaching took the form of offering me artifacts of value that I was to obediently place between the pages of the Holy Zippered Black Simulated Leather King James Bible. After all the teachers submitted their artifacts of truth I was to zip & secure the three sides of my Holy Zippered Black Simulated Leather King James Bible bible.

I preformed this act of sacred deciplship multiple times with multifarious tutors. Things were going pretty good until some of the sacred artifacts I was given to place between the pages of my bible didn't fit between the pages of my bible. If I did manage to jam the artifacts between the pages it was becoming a challenge to close the covers. And even if I managed to close the covers it was impossible to then zip the Bible closed.

I didn't want to go to hell so I gave the task everything I had to try to keep the Bible whole/holy. I was failing, everything was falling apart. I knew that the next time I needed to open my bible to insert more truth more pages would fall out.

Fifty subsequent years – I'm a strange child – and I do NOT want to go to hell!

But now I know:

WHERE IS NO NEED to stuff more into LIFE than THAT which is manifested by the Numinous donning its magic attire as witnessed by WE the Watcher of the Phenomenal Absolute...

Paul Nordstrom

Part III

(Emerson was the first prominent student of Vedanta in the US, and it had a major role in his epiphany described below. This terrific short essay is here severely truncated, with an inadequate nod to Fair Use. The magazine has blossomed in the last few years, and the entire issue, July-August 2023, is excellent. Get yourself a copy.)

The Coming Humanist Renaissance

The Atlantic magazine, June 5, 2023

We need a cultural and philosophical movement to meet the rise of artificial superintelligence.

By Adrienne LaFrance

On July 13, 1833, during a visit to the Cabinet of Natural History at the Jardin des Plantes, in Paris, Ralph Waldo Emerson had an epiphany. Peering at the museum's specimens... he felt overwhelmed by the interconnectedness of nature, and humankind's place within it.

The experience inspired him to write “The Uses of Natural History,” and to articulate a philosophy that put naturalism at the center of intellectual life in a technologically chaotic age—guiding him, along with the collective of writers and radical thinkers known as transcendentalists, to a new spiritual belief system....

Now imagine this same internet infrastructure but with programs that communicate with a veneer of authority on any subject, with the ability to generate sophisticated, original text, audio, and video, and the power to mimic individuals in a manner so convincing that people will not know what is real....

The window for effecting change in the realm of AI is still open. Yet many of those who have worked longest to establish guardrails for this new technology are despairing that the window is nearly closed....

Just as the Industrial Revolution sparked transcendentalism in the U.S. and romanticism in Europe—both movements that challenged conformity and prioritized truth, nature, and individualism—today we need a cultural and philosophical revolution of our own.... Artificial intelligence will, unquestionably, help us make miraculous, lifesaving discoveries. The danger lies in outsourcing our humanity to this technology without discipline, especially as it eclipses us in apperception. We need a human renaissance in the age of intelligent machines....

Now is the time, as well, to recommit to making deeper connections with other people. Live videochat can collapse time and distance, but such technologies are a poor substitute for face-to-face communication, especially in settings where creative collaboration or learning is paramount.... (emphasis mine)

One computer scientist recently told me she's planning to create a secret code word that only she and her elderly parents know, so that if they ever hear her voice on the other end of the phone pleading for help or money, they'll know whether it's been generated by an AI trained on her publicly available lectures to sound exactly like her and scam them....

Today's elementary-school children are already learning not to trust that anything they see or hear through a screen is real. But they deserve a modern technological and informational environment built on Enlightenment values: reason, human autonomy, and the respectful exchange of ideas....

Finally, a more existential consideration requires our attention, and that is the degree to which the pursuit of knowledge orients us inward or outward. The artificial intelligence of the near future will supercharge our empirical abilities, but it may also dampen our curiosity. We are at risk of becoming so enamored of the synthetic worlds that we create—all data sets, duplicates, and feedback loops—that we cease to peer into the unknown with any degree of true wonder or originality....

A future in which overconfident machines seem to hold the answers to all of life's cosmic questions is not only dangerously misguided, but takes away that which makes us human. In an age of anger, and snap reactions, and seemingly all-knowing AI, we should put more emphasis on contemplation as a way of being. We should embrace an unfinished state of thinking, the constant work of challenging our preconceived notions, seeking out those with whom we disagree, and sometimes still not knowing.

Part IV

7/6/10

Sutra II:12

The root causes of the afflictions in the reservoir of conditioned or processed impressions of action are experienced in life in a visible or latent manner.

Having completed our survey of the afflictions, we begin to dig down to the next level. In the last two sutras dealing with the afflictions, Patanjali has directed us to a “regressive reemergence” into their origins and their removal by pure contemplation. Once this is fairly accomplished, we discover their root cause in a region called the *karmasaya*, the repository of samskaras. The *karmasaya* cradles the accumulation of all actions, whether good, evil or indifferent. These provide the growth medium for the afflictions that define who we are in the outside world of manifestation.

Nitya likens the course of our life, impelled as it is by the continuous supply of samskaras from the *karmasaya*, to a river. Rivers have a certain momentum and a well-defined channel. While they flow with great beauty, there isn't any freedom to choose where they're going. They can only fulfill the requirements of gravity, topography, volume and so on. The river flows past scene after scene along its banks, noting each but never tarrying to become a part of them. This classic metaphor of the ancients anticipates the modern scientific understanding that consciousness resembles a piece of flotsam floating helplessly on the surface of a sea of deep and invisible motivations. The idea of free will has been almost totally discredited as a laughable delusion. What we imagine to be free will is the pleasure we experience from making the correct (and wholly predictable) selection that we have been previously programmed to choose.

A yogi doesn't like to feel bound like this. Like the New Hampshire state motto, “Live Free or Die,” they want to discover

if free will is possible, and not just take some half-baked neuroscientist's word that it isn't. Their hope for a cure is to dive down into the realm of root causes, and even into the growth medium nourishing those roots. Mental modulations are the expressive bubbling of the upwelling urges as they burst on the surface. They cease (the goal of this Yoga) when the yogi goes beneath the root and into the reservoir, and possibly beyond the reservoir itself.

Attempting randomness is merely the flip side of bondage. Real freedom does not mean chaos as opposed to cosmos. It doesn't necessarily dispense with the general topography arbitrarily. It is simply disaffiliation from the context of suffering, the ability to sit unruffled and unmodulated in the midst of the unfolding paradigm of your life.

Often the expression of mental modifications is beautiful and inspiring, but much of it resembles the current Gulf of Mexico oil disaster, a raging plume of toxic darkness. I just got off the phone with a young woman struggling in the frying pan of her samskaras. Her case reminded me that the analogy is unfortunately very apt between our unconscious proclivities and the hidden caches of high-pressure oil pockets under the Earth's crust. Either you should leave them well enough alone and live an ordinary life frolicking in the waters or you should be prepared to drill intelligently all the way down to the root of your individuation. A partial penetration with inadequate preparation can release so much pent-up pollution that one's entire ocean is poisoned. As the well is drilled you have to be prepared to deal with what is likely to erupt, which may well smash all your best plans, burn them, blow them up and send them to the bottom. But drill you must, if freedom is what you seek.

What more often happens is that we dabble a little bit in yoga, just enough to release the tamasic cloud, and then reel back in shock and horror at what we have unleashed. We then try desperately to ignore what has burst forth as though it didn't exist.

We pretend it isn't there and hope everyone around us agrees to the charade. Since they are very likely playing the same game, you can fool pretty much everyone pretty much all the time. The success of this strategy depends on fooling yourself too. And there's the rub: you can't delude yourself without closing down your self-awareness, and then who knows what will happen? You might have to pray that some divine being will come and pick up the pieces for you.

That is not an option of yoga, sorry to report. Nitya implies this eloquently in his second paragraph:

The general behavior of the various life forms that we see in nature is said to be guided by natural instincts. In Sanskrit this is known as *prakritam*. When the same is sophisticated, refined, cultured, and presented in a manner acceptable to others, it is called *samskara*, a refined outcome or sublimated end result. The ethos or cultivated behavior of a regional culture can appear quite refined to the people of a particular geographical area or religious context. But the yogis are not thinking of social norms that please some particular group. They set their goal of refinement on the model of the purest of the pure Self, which is in no way contaminated by the physical, physiological, psychological, and sociological requirements of an individuated life.

Well, delusion is the more common path, but a yogi is one brave enough to face situations as they really are, and wrestle with the demons released by their explorations.

As Deb said, these tremendously powerful motivations are tough enough to handle when we pay attention to them, but they are many times more powerful when they are ignored or otherwise unnoticed. Patanjali just tells us that visible or invisible, the root causes of afflictions are experienced in life. He assumes that a

word to the wise is sufficient. His optimism was undoubtedly based on firsthand experience of what he was talking about.

* * *

4/24/12

OMG! This is one exercise I'm really going to fail with. I'm in between the north and south swings of my mini book tour, and can't face a deep assessment of my values in the midst of the whirlwind. Nancy is correct that tomes could be filled on this important subject. I'll try to at least mumble a few words about it, however. This is a very personal exercise, so you'll probably want to skip reading it.

Perhaps because I never could square my personal value system with the world around me, I have spent a lot of time mulling it over. We may feel things deeply, and I certainly always have, but not know how to express them well, and we can stray far off base in the ways we do bring them out.

In my early life I was deeply conflicted and buffeted by the opinions of everyone around me. When I finally had my breakthrough LSD trip, I found what I had been looking for: a certitude grounded in myself that didn't depend on anyone else's ideas. At the same time I realized that the saints and sages of history had all been raving about the place I had discovered, and that yoga was a way to take up permanent residence there. I resolved to find a teacher and "do yoga" for the rest of my life. Regaining that state of independent grace and sharing its blessings with others has been my highest value ever since.

Earlier, piano music had had nearly the same effect on me, electrifying my soul with new worlds of wonder. In my modest way I always wanted to share the delicious bliss I felt with others, as well as improve my ability to manifest it. This is a parallel value to the yoga thing, and one reaching even deeper into my roots.

On I suppose a lower level of values, I was almost always kind hearted and motivated to help others and mitigate their suffering. I was fortunate to land a job doing just that, and have enjoyed making myself available to help others “off duty” too. All these have a decided element of selfishness in them, too, because helping others is very satisfying.

Thinking back, my selfish and mean episodes as a child came from unthinkingly going along with my cohorts. Afterwards I always regretted hurting people’s feelings, but there is a type of madness that possesses humans in groups. Psychologists have demonstrated over and over how we slip into cruelty when we imagine we are part of a group that abets it. I know from personal experience they are right.

My resolution to be kind to children—taken at a young age because I was outraged at how adults demeaned them (us)—conflicts with the societal mania that all adult males are predators. I have reluctantly withdrawn from showing kids that not all adults are fools. I guess we aren’t supposed to give away the game, and maybe that’s as it should be.... Life would be boring if there were no puzzles to solve.

On the negative end, I have overstepped my boundaries in criticizing people with an eye to lifting them out of their conundrums. As an anti-charismatic person, I also have had a major conflict with often being seen as obnoxious and unwelcome, while feeling that I am in actuality a loving, deeply caring person. I have had to slowly learn that by exhibiting love I make people want to run away, but bottling it up it makes me appear safe, so it encourages people to open up some themselves. As a straightforward Taurus type, such nuances go against my instincts, but I have adjusted to them without causing any major problems to anyone else, as far as I know.

Roughly parallel is my love of pleasure, which in my puritanical society is rejected with hostility. I have basically

abandoned the values of my youth that fun was socially acceptable. Humans are yet too undeveloped, so they either overindulge or deny themselves all enjoyment. Finding a middle path is nearly impossible in such a madhouse.

Like most people, social rejection of my values has made me keep them under wraps and thoroughly private. I'm experiencing an odd moment when a book I allegedly wrote is in the public sphere, and I have to come out of hiding for a brief spell, but that's a temporary anomaly for sure. And talking theory via email is fairly safe all around. I do that a lot, without any qualms. Reticence is a value I was forced to accept, while my natural impulse is for camaraderie, and sharing the joy of being alive.

Comparing mine to my parents' values would be a colossal undertaking, especially since their generation was thwarted at being themselves at every turn. I'd have to do a lot of digging, since their values were really buried! Society demanded they serve it, and they willingly did. Both my parents reluctantly shouldered the burdens thrust on them and abdicated their inner authenticity. My mother, smart, lively, quick and competent, became a housewife and dedicated herself to raising two boys and keeping house. My father, gentle, intelligent and sweet, became a breadwinner, and shelved most of his feelings under a tough exterior so he wouldn't be crushed by the demands of his job. They did inculcate classic liberal values deeply in me, but when I began to act on the basis of those values it was shocking and dismaying to them. Few realize how insidiously social demands worm their way into our soul and co-opt us. It seems that every generation starts out with resistance to society and ends up with acquiescence.

I once wrote an article about all the wrongheaded values my parents used in my upbringing. Now after many years I have come to esteem the really excellent values they also passed on to me. Although the whole family was agnostics and atheists, many of our

best values come from the Bible. When I get time I intend to write a complementary article about the positive side of the story.

What all this makes me realize is how much we are shaped by our beliefs and the values that come from them. The yogi's pleasurable task is to trace them back to their roots and get as close to the source as possible, because that's where real change can be effected. Clipping the tips of the branches has only the briefest impact, because the shoots grow right back as they were. By going deeply inward, we can make changes that will encourage more beautiful growth in the future. Aum.

Part V

We didn't have adequate time to go into fear, though it came up in the discussion. My next project brought up a helpful part of Darsanamala notes, with long excerpts from Nitya—just as if he's still attending to our class, and one from author Marilynne Robinson:

10/27/15

Adhyaropa Darsana Verse 5

This, of mind-stuff alone, in the beginning
was accomplished, as if a painting,
with all the picturesqueness seen here,
by the Lord, like an artist.

A full moon night as we approach All Hallows Eve, also known as Halloween, the one night of the year when evil spirits are unleashed upon the land, formed a backdrop for this deceptively simple verse. And we were 13 resolute souls, supposedly an unlucky number, unless framed as a baker's dozen, when it's extra

nice. Which it was. The commentary even bore a connection to the impending night of the dead:

In the darkness of night, when a man passes by a graveyard he may be fearful that some ghost or goblin will confront him. His mind will people the cemetery with spirits of the dead, and such is the negativity of the human mind that they will be seen as malevolent. He knows this to be a self-induced fear, and will do his best to reassure himself that there are, in fact, no ghosts. But deep within his mind lies a stratum of paranoia, and because of this he does not easily yield to rationality. If he sees the stump of a tree or hears a strange sound, his latent fear will cloak it with the vestments of a ghost. Then he will either flee or faint. In this case the man is hypnotized by his own latent fear. We can find examples of this form of self-hypnosis in every area of human experience, in the painful and the pleasurable, in the benign and the dreadful. (67)

The conclusion to Verse 42 in *That Alone* recounts the basis for Nitya's understanding of this innate dread, and touches on the antidote:

If a person is contemplative, he should have a detached mind so that he knows that even when he is relating to many things, they are all born of one consciousness, called 'this'. Then we will not be caught in the magic that we ourselves create.

We are strange kinds of magicians that create a magic which we then get caught in the snare of. We need to be so clever that we create, but only amuse ourselves and do not get caught.

Once I painted a demon on one of the walls of a house where I was living. At night, I became so afraid of it I couldn't go down the hall where it was. I had done it with chalk, so I took a cup of water with me and when I passed by it I threw the water

on it. Then I couldn't see the chalk while it was wet, so I could go past. The next day I was not afraid, but again the next night I did the same thing.

Like that, we are always creating demons out of our own minds and getting afraid of them. Narayana Guru says to not get caught in this delusion. (288)

The conclusion of the commentary makes the cure specific:

In the Upanishads it is said, *yad dhyayate tad bhavati*, which means "whatever is meditated upon, that one becomes." Yogis meditate upon the Lord or the Absolute. Identifying themselves completely with the Supreme, they can then participate in fashioning or altering aspects of the cosmic picture.

The trick is, we don't realize the extent to which we are meditating on self-limiting ideas. When they pinch us it should tip us off, but it takes a philosophical reduction in order to begin to deal with them. We are more likely to believe the pincers are real and coming from a hostile outside world, than that they are reflections of our own misunderstandings. Verses 7 and 8 [of Darsanamala] will elaborate on how our delusions can terrorize us. Narayana Guru is of course guiding us away from living in fear, if we are brave enough to hear his message.

Deb recently shared an article by author Marilynne Robinson titled Fear, from the New York Review of Books, where she offers a Christian equivalent to the Guru's message. She is a voice crying in the wilderness for sure. After affirming that America is a self-professed Christian nation:

There is something I have felt the need to say, that I have spoken about in various settings, extemporaneously, because my thoughts on the subject have not been entirely formed, and

because it is painful to me to have to express them. However, my thesis is always the same, and it is very simply stated, though it has two parts: first, contemporary America is full of fear. And second, fear is not a Christian habit of mind....

There are always real dangers in the world, sufficient to their day. Fearfulness obscures the distinction between real threat on one hand and on the other the terrors that beset those who see threat everywhere. It is clear enough, to an objective viewer at least, with whom one would choose to share a crisis, whose judgment should be trusted when sound judgment is most needed.

Granting the perils of the world, it is potentially a very costly indulgence to fear indiscriminately, and to try to stimulate fear in others, just for the excitement of it, or because to do so channels anxiety or loneliness or prejudice or resentment into an emotion that can seem to those who indulge it like shrewdness or courage or patriotism. But no one seems to have an unkind word to say about fear these days, un-Christian as it surely is.

The whole essay is here:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/sep/24/marilynne-robinson-fear/>