

2022 Patanjali Class
2/1/22 (Written 2/2/22)
5 – Yoga Letter Four

Last week's class featured an eruption that Nancy rightly pointed out was a vivid example of the gunas, of the rajasic and tamasic inclinations lurking below the sattvic veneer. Among other things, it brought out that real-life exchanges are not acceptable to some of the class participants. As a result, my role will be minimized in connecting the teachings with actual situations. I will still touch on this in the Notes, for those who wish to use the material to address their actual life problems.

We have survived as an independent study group for nearly 44 years AN (After Nitya) without codifying class behavior, though it has been touch-and-go a few times. When Nitya was present, there was no question of who was wise and who wasn't, so we listened with respect and tolerated each other as best we could. He didn't have to speak sharply to us very often, at least in that context. When called for, he looked and felt like a human thunderstorm, and the air was rapidly cleared.

Deb has spelled out the most basic requirements for our class in these words:

I wasn't in class last week but I have talked to a number of people who were and I have thought about it over this week. What has especially come to mind is that this last September we celebrated 50 years of the Gurukula in Portland. Part of that, most essentially, were Nitya's classes here—also East West University celebrations, publications, and other events. To me, however, the heart of those 50 years has been our class. It is a class where we explore and share our study of the Gurukula's works and sink into that center of contemplation. For all of us it is necessary to have a reciprocity of sharing that is based on

both affection and respect. We bring a conscious attention to that process. We want to cultivate clarity in our class and one aspect of that is that for that evening, for class, we come with a mind as clear as possible, not smoking a joint or drinking wine or beer ahead of time.

Another important part is allowing silence between the more talkative discussions. When silence happens, we should just let it be there—as a way to sink into the teachings and as a way to allow the quieter, shyer people to participate. Also, part of the respect necessary for class is to not dominate the discussion but be a participant—that doesn't mean everyone has to be equal but there should be a balance.

From Narayana Guru to Nataraja Guru to Guru Nitya all of the gurus have been deeply intelligent people, with wide-ranging minds and ideas. All of their teachings have a profound base of inquiry and understanding. It is, I think, part of the beauty of these works. Yet the class is not a debate about intellectual ideas, not a game for sparring or a platform to push certain practices. As Narayana Guru famously, pithily said: “We are not here to argue and win, but to know and let know.”

We are here together to discuss and to cultivate an inward contemplation that is shared with words and silence.

After Deb's elucidation, Andy emphasized the Gurukula is not the province of any single person who calls themselves a teacher or student, but it abides in the heart of all beings, and that is the basis of our mutual respect. In a sense we have universal ownership, and he's concerned that all beings be respected.

Narayana Guru's quote echoed in my mind for days after the class. There are several ways to understand it, but it helps to know it's the statement he opened the World Parliament of Religions with. He regularly used the royal “we” in speaking of himself, and

that could make it sound as if he was the wise guy who knows, and he was there to tell people about it. Yet in reality he was steering the wildly heterogeneous group toward sharing instead of insisting their religion was the only valid one. He knew everyone could learn immensely by socializing outside their peer group. That's the spirit we have here: sharing, not arguing points. No one is considered "right," we're fellow seekers, eager to understand more of the subject at hand. We want to hear from each other and offer what we've picked up along the way. We are fortunate to have the Gurukula Gurus as anchors and guides, to give shape to our learning curves. By following what they've bequeathed us, we gain the most.

In the Baynes commentary on the I Ching hexagram 60, *Limitation*, we read:

Unlimited possibilities are not suited to man; if they existed, his life would only dissolve in the boundless. To become strong, a man's life needs the limitations ordained by duty and voluntarily accepted. The individual attains significance as a free spirit only by surrounding himself with these limitations and by determining for himself what his duty is.

The image is of a lake that is created by its border, lest its water run out over the ground and dry up.

As often happens, the Hypothesphere weighed in on the class a few times last week, including the book I picked up earlier the same day, by the coinier of the term *the hard problem* for consciousness, about virtual reality and its philosophical implications:

Like many other people, during the recent pandemic I've spent a great deal of time talking to friends, family, and colleagues using Zoom and other videoconferencing software. Zoom is

convenient, but it has many limitations. Eye contact is difficult. Group interactions are choppy rather than cohesive. There is no sense that we are inhabiting a common space. One underlying issue is that videoconferencing is not virtual reality. It is interactive but not immersive, and there is no common virtual world. (*Reality +*, by David J. Chalmers, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2022, pp xii-xiii)

Because of our long association and tendency to introversion, we have thrived for decades and even manage to maintain a moderate community “immersion” even without direct contact. We’re doing okay with Zoom, but it is less than ideal. Okay, on to Letter Four.

I recommend having the Letter handy for reference while parsing these notes. An extensive description of them can be found in Part II, including a number of potent ideas we didn’t cover last night. Deb opened the class calling our attention to the two beautiful points of contemplation, the beloved and the lover. Let me clip in some of the Letter for reference, in case you don’t have it handy:

The lover has no power to resist the tremendous attraction that is coming to him (or her). The lover becomes filled with thoughts and all kinds of imaginations, which are sometimes blissful, sometimes frightful, sometimes invigorating, sometimes confusing, and sometimes frustrating, depending on the quality of the spell that is experienced. From time to time the lover restlessly engages in all kinds of activities with the full conviction that what he or she is doing is most appropriate and is in reciprocation. This strange thing happens to everyone, to some in a beautiful way, and to others in a very weird and drastic way. The true science of union is to find ways by which

the duality between the usual beloved and the strangely behaving lover can be effaced so that the duality will cease and the pure aloneness of the Absolute will shine forth. This does not happen by any partial method. This is a search that demands total attention and total commitment.

There is a touch of the mystical in Nitya's intent, but Deb wanted to make it more familiar, asking what is it in our lives that is the beloved? And what underlies what we do in our lives?

Andy adroitly prompted her to answer her own question, to get the ball rolling, and it did. She recalled a lifetime of love for words. For her, writing was unforced and natural. Deb knows that the words she uses are only partial, not totally true. You can only say part of what you mean. Andy wondered if she claimed authorship of her poems, and they both agreed that no poet should ever claim that they wrote anything, they are only a passive receptacle for the muse. As Deb put it, she's just the water girl who gets to carry the water for the person who is really behind the words. That's on a good day. Many days she pretends that she is in charge.

Nancy talked about studying architecture and design at the U of O. It was drilled into them that when they were talking about their work, they were never allowed to reference something as "theirs." They could not use the word *create*; it was never *my idea*. The policy spoke to that principle that you are a conduit, that in your work you are not inventing something but only enabling it. She could see how it knocked the ego out of the students, and it was a way of practicing that became how their minds worked. She added, "Somebody told me early on that if you are an interior designer, you're doing something that affects people's *interiors*, not just strewing pretty things around."

I asked about the weird part, how Nitya says the lover can be weird, and Deb had found out that one definition of weird, from

Scotland, is fate or destiny, so she wondered what it is in our attraction to the beloved that expresses fate? ('Weird' comes from the Middle English *wyrd*, akin to *worth*. It conveys a note of the supernatural, of unearthliness, in fact.)

Bill affirmed that Nitya is talking about the relationship between true nature (the Beloved) and how our world gets created, how different parts of the mind influence how our world looks (the Lover). The spark of purusha creates its own reality, which is sometimes weird and sometimes beautiful.

That's right. Nitya is foreshadowing the yogic work ahead of us on impediments and obstacles, where we investigate our blocks to loving the beloved, observing what adds to the purity of love and what deflects it, that makes it weird. That makes us want to fight and kill over it, at the extreme.

Anita has taken from the teachings that space, time, knowledge, and so on, are just constructs that we use to define our reality. So, what is beyond our constructs? Her known beloved is first of all her family, and she has lots of other beloveds. She struggled to express what the Beloved actually means to her. In her youth she would have called it God, but her impressions have changed much since then. She no longer believes in the God she was brought up with, now it's something much larger. Eventually Anita just gave up trying to express what she thinks.

Interestingly, we started the discussion with the value and attraction of words, and have gradually become more cognizant of their limitations—two sides of a most essential paradox. Our understanding is built on words and their concepts, and we need them to be clear and supportive, but they peter out when the indescribable nature of the Absolute is the topic. Cognitive dissonance emerges from the schism, and is the source of the weirdness: the way we try to force the ineffable into a conceivable form or format so we can interact with it. Plus, subliminal awareness of our inability contributes to our feelings of lacking

something essential, pressed on by unmet needs, envy, jealousy, and all manner of other weirdness. Ultimately, do we love only ideas? What more can there be to embrace the Beloved with?

Speaking of the Hypothesphere weighing in, after class I read another fabulous short essay by Brian Doyle, in *The Long River of Song*, titled Joey's Doll's Other Arm. (Toddler Joey's doll is missing an arm, and he keeps looking for it out the glass door he marks with his breath. It's his beloved of the moment.):

Often I think we are afraid to speak frankly of God or gods because we cannot read that Mind, because so often religion is evil and greedy and bloody, because faith is so quixotic and unreasonable, because *spirituality* is a word as overloaded with connotation as a log truck top-heavy with the bones of trees. But because we sensibly fear a label does not mean we should be afraid of the content, and I wonder, on this bright morning, if divine love is not like Joey's doll's other arm: nearby, sensed, remembered, yearned for, searched for day after day after day, our breaths condensing on the glassy panes of this spectacularly inexplicable world as we look for it... "We are part of a Mystery we do not understand, and we are grateful." (196-7)

Nancy exalted that what she feels as beloved are things she has no control over. They just exist. She doesn't know where they come from, and she can't make them happen. They either are or they aren't, despite her desires.

Andy mused how the lover might indulge in all sorts of spiritual practices that will supposedly bring him wisdom, meaning he's totally confused. It's like a creative artist, seeking a resolution of beauty that is not physically attainable, which is frustrating, since it makes every effort seem provisional.

Deb spoke to those same feelings: Anita's understanding of

the Beloved has changed, but she continues to have a relationship with it. Implying we are not barred from the relationship simply because we can't adequately define it. In a way, we *always* have a relationship with a Beloved in our hearts.

Paul agreed he can have completion within if he is able to understand the fullness of his personal manifestation—or anyway accept it. There's the rub! We already have completion within us, which explains why a lot of pursuits end in running around in circles: the goal is contained—created—in the seeking. He admitted that much of his searching and complaining arises from his self-generated conditioning.

Anita heard that the Dali Lama was asked how he maintained happiness, and he smilingly answered, "Whatever happens, I don't mind."

Kris broke the subject down to a giver and a receiver, meaning there has to be a certain amount of action that takes place between the lover and beloved. You're sending out a certain vibration and you're receiving a certain vibration in response. You may write a poem, but there is also a reader, and you don't have control over what they get from it: what it means to them is different than how you are thinking about it. The interaction changes everything.

It made us wonder what sort of parity is possible in our interactions with the Beloved. Do we unilaterally provide both sides of the exchange? And how would we stop interfering with what Nitya (per Nataraja Guru) calls an osmotic interchange?

Deb loved how Nitya extols the searching element as "the best and most loveable part of your mind." She wondered why Nitya thought so, and Bill answered "it's your steering mechanism, so you can get to the truth."

Susan reminded us the searching mind is playful, and the play, the *lila*, takes you to your beloved. Her most beloved quality is curiosity. She wishes she had been a librarian so she could

research and answer questions on the phone — she loves to do research! She also loves to talk to others about their curiosities and what they are learning and wondering.

That means, for Susan, the lover is the mind spinning and getting distracted by all the learning and searching and questioning. And this is a good thing, lifting her out of herself, in a way. It helps her see more clearly how her mind works—just as Nitya talked about in the Letter. She has also experienced the peaceful truth beyond the mind's gymnastics, and that is especially helpful to her. Susan's conclusion was you can be satisfied and you can also need to keep looking—they're not mutually exclusive.

For Paul, using the mind to get to what can't be comprehended by the mind is a fool's errand. Yet comprehension is a *mental* trait. That's the fun of it. The Beloved has been uncomprehended since the singularity, and so it takes on a new appearance with each new mind that envisions it, and that's beautiful. We can enjoy other peoples' accounts, but we have our own we should not neglect. Above all, we should not get conflicted about the differing descriptions.

Yes, sure, humans are prone to cockamamie* ideas, but each person's mind is much more than those. We are fortunate to have other people who can point out our cockamamie ideas to us, so we can let them go.

Deb cooled us down by reading Nitya's magnificent closing sentence: "The present science of union is given as an instruction to one who aspires to become a fully developed contemplative while leading a normal and natural life on Earth, both as a person and as a seer." He always worked hard to help us remain grounded, in part because he had encountered so many raving lunies. The surpassing importance of this is reflected in a quote from Nitya's Gita:

Unfortunately, many hallucinatory malfunctions of the mind easily pass for mystical experiences, and pseudo-yogis and pretentious spiritualists claim the experience of nondual visions. As *brahmavidya*, the Gita is an uncompromising science, not admitting into its scope anything that refutes sound reason. As a *yoga-sastra* it attempts to be precise and truthful in comprehending every detail of the perceptual and conceptual world, so that the aspiring yogi or spiritual seeker will not take any false step in advancing toward the final realization of nondual identity with the Absolute. (Gita, 289)

Our final meditation was catalyzed by a quote from Nitya's Brihadaranyaka Upanishad commentary, aptly summing up Letter Four:

After seeing the world with ten thousand names and ten thousand forms and ten thousand special functions of each, one turns one's mind to the source of this magic. It lies in the homogeneity of the outer light, which creates the phantom of visual images outside, and the inner light of the Self, which, in response to the outer magic, creates the counter magic of superimposing on itself the world identity. The phenomenality of the world is effaced by a general exercise of identifying the sun beyond and the sun that shines as one's own consciousness. Narayana Guru [in Atmo, verse 2] points to the outer sky where the sun shines and to an inner sky of consciousness where the Self is continuously transforming itself into everything visible, everything audible, and everything functional. Reclaiming one's unitive vision from the plethora of pluralism is the challenge every student of Vedanta has to face. (BU Vol. III, 187-8)

* The word cockamamie was first used in 1962, the year I turned 11. The Merriam-Webster Dikker lists new English words by year. Some others from 1962, reading backwards, are zip code, three-pointer, scuzzy, salsa, road rash, ramen, picosecond, peacenik, one-liner, nuclear option, log on, heat shield, herstory, gigawatt, fudge factor, carpool, care package, can of worms, busines class, buckle up, baggies, at-large, antianxiety, AK-47.

Part II

Excerpts from the 2008 Class Notes are remarkably germane this time around:

The first step is to meditate as if you are a pure flame, noting that you illuminate three things: extension in space, meaningful assessments of name and form, and duration or persistence, known as time. We are cautioned not to visualize ourselves as the flame but to *be* it. This is the Mother of all meditations, and the cradle of our yoga study. After some practice its state of awareness can become one's normal outlook, beneath all the surface transactions we engage in. Certain necessities and urges call us out of ourselves and we may forget our inner poise for a time, becoming embroiled in various happenstances. The most basic discipline is to guide yourself back to this state of the witnessing flame or light as soon as you realize you have temporarily forgotten your self. The neutrality of the witness is the best place from which to ground our actions.

In Chapter Seven of *That Alone*, Nitya provides a germane review of this situation. He says:

Implicitly, the Guru attributes our failure in this [ability to remain centered] to the selective structuralism of the persona, which causes [a] search to be initiated on the basis

of whatever incipient memory is stimulated at any given time by the changing ensembles of life situations.

We become aware of a psychic compulsion pushing us in a certain direction only when it becomes pathologically exaggerated, such as in obsessions, inhibitions, phobias and manias. Still, the so-called healthy mind is not as free to act on its own as one might wish to believe. Even a scientist who is firmly wedded to a creed of honesty in observing facts is likely to miss negative data when he is otherwise encouraged by some positive observations. (48)

Our meditation next was to expand spatially, and then return to normal, repeating this as a pulsation. This provides some distance between the meditator and the scene, by default permitting identification with the purusha, Self or Absolute—different names for pure consciousness. Then we watched as the emptiness filled up with objects and events, and our egos reemerged to relate to them. These occurrences all spring from our memories, as none of them were actually happening but only being imagined. Seeing how our world is “created” or at least interpreted from memories was the next stage of our meditation. We observed the replacement of unfettered spirit with mundane details, hopefully teaching ourselves how to reverse the process when we wish to.

Thirdly, Nitya takes us into a meditation on loving a Beloved, in the same way a moving agent relates to the unmoved mover in Aristotle, or as the Gita puts it (IX, 4&5):

By Me all this world is pervaded, My form unmanifested; all beings have existence in Me and I do not have existence in them.

And further, beings do not exist in Me; behold My status as a divine mystery; further, Myself remaining that urge behind beings, I bear them but do not exist in them either.

This led to a wide-ranging discussion of this paradoxical relationship. Anita had done some research and reported that physics is toying with the concept of the unmoved mover these days. The quantum vacuum seems to fill a similar role, with its infinite holographic density of information. Nitya tells us that because of an urge to reciprocate with the Beloved, we sometimes relate to it in beautiful ways, while at others we relate in weird and drastic ways. He sums up the point of our study: “The true science of union is to find ways by which the duality between the usual beloved and the strangely behaving lover can be effaced so that the duality will cease and the pure aloneness of the Absolute will shine forth. This does not happen by any partial method. This is a search that demands total attention and total commitment.”

The reason for the discrepancy between a piecemeal and a wholesale approach is that partial methods are invariably dualistic, merely redefining the beloved instead of merging with it. I can't put it better than Nitya does on page 49 of *That Alone*:

The secret of all polarization is that the counterparts of the dialectical situation share a common value, which has made the polarization feasible or even imperative. Mother and child, teacher and taught, ruler and subjects, lover and beloved, all are examples of dialectical bipolarity. The common interest in all these cases can be reduced to the experience of happiness. The counterparts are individuals who can reciprocate their thoughts and feelings. But the bipolarity suggested in this verse is not between two individuals. Rather, it is between one's personal awareness and the totality of Knowledge. As one of the counterparts is impersonal, the question of reciprocation does not arise. However, bipolarity makes sense only if there is a free flow

of the essence of one into the other and vice versa, as in exosmosis and endosmosis.

By giving the analogy of the inseparability of waves from the treasury of the oceanic depth, the Guru has already given us the secret of sharing one's essence with the total, even when that total is of an impersonal nature. The example of the wave is not given to dismiss our individuality as a mere phantom, like the form of a wave, but to stress that the seeming separateness of the wave does not deprive it of its vertical relationship with the ocean. The constant awareness of this depth reestablishes one in the lost heritage of union with the Absolute.

Penultimately, Nitya passes in review five main aspects of the mind, using vernacular terms that cannot be easily pigeonholed. By doing so, he makes it easy for us to have a vital understanding of those areas of the psyche. Collectively they comprise another excellent meditation, and don't call for any explication.

Lastly, Nitya leaves us with a very important distinction. We hear of all sorts of exciting and lurid types of seers, in various degrees blissfully withdrawn from contact with the world they abide in. It makes good reading. But for a healthy life, the Narayana Gurukula Gurus teach yoga for integration, not disintegration. This is important because Patanjali leans more toward the latter. On page 201 of the upcoming Yoga Sutras commentary, we read:

An image seen in a mirror is a transitory phenomenon that will not cling on to the mirror when the position of the mirror is changed. But the inner organ of a person is such that whatever image is projected on it will leave an impression that can remain in the depth of consciousness to the very end

of life. Thus you are not only suffering from what is immediately projected on your senses and inner organ, but also from the stored impressions that remain with you as painful memories or inviting visions. Patañjali is of the opinion that, pleasant or unpleasant, these memories are the source of misery and should not be encouraged. According to him, all programming is to be avoided and he prescribes the abolition of the conjunction of the seer and the seen. But this is not always considered to be the greatest ideal. His two commentators—Valmiki of the *Yoga Vasistha Ramayana* and Vyasa of the Bhagavad Gita—give the alternative of positive programming, turning to what is good for you.

A very great deal of value can be learned from Patanjali, despite this key difference with the Gurukula and the Gita, which should always be kept in mind, just as we read the Nirvana Darsana of Darsanamala with caution. Rereading the book as I index, I'm excited by how terrific it is, radical and kindly at the same time. A perfect vehicle for Nitya's darsana.

Bill mentioned that his favorite, Suzuki-roshi, preached meditation followed by expert action with the motto, "We sit, then stand." Krishna implores Arjuna to stand up in exactly the same sense. Nitya concludes by assuring us "The present science of union is given as an instruction to one who aspires to become a fully developed contemplative while leading a normal and natural life on Earth, both as a person and as a seer." In the final analysis the degree of engagement with the world is a matter of personal preference. We will go through the upcoming study as a method for removing obstacles to happiness and even discarding the mirror, but then using any wisdom gained for upgraded interaction with our most precious gift of all: life.

My response for Nancy Y's study group:

The variety of responses to the last letter reminded me what fun this mutual journey is going to be. The possibilities are endless! I noticed some amusing coincidences, too, almost as if we were reading each others' minds.

Isha wrote that she had "failed" at the several techniques she's tried in her life. Just this morning I wrote this for my Gita commentary: "Every sortie into the Unknown is unique, as it springs from the meditator's storehouse of wisdom and experiences. Repetitive, mechanical practices stifle this calling forth of liberated insight and replace it with a canned program of expectations, which, as we well know by now, is wholly contrary to the Gita's intention." And her mention of how rajas can lift us out of tamas is very important. I just read a study of how depression is relieved by physical labor. Most of the chronically depressed people I know are worse off because they become frozen in inactivity, and then come to believe they are worthless in consequence. A little rooting around in the garden can remind the body and mind just how valuable we are. But once tamas has a firm grip, it is very difficult to fire up the rajasic motivation; all more so because the medications doled out sap people's initiative. But once you get started it isn't so hard.

Thanks to everyone for sharing your foods for thought!

As to Letter 4, Nancy's point at the outset of her study guide is to me pivotal. Yoga can produce some extreme states, but these are rare and exceptional. Still, they are how the game is marketed, often enough, because they sound so intriguing. Nitya reminds us that from the Gurukula standpoint, yoga teaches us how to become "a fully developed contemplative while living a normal and natural life on earth." Nataraja Guru taught that yoga was normalization. Moving from our abnormal states of mind to a normalized or "yogified" one is blissful and illuminating enough. Plus, if we believe that only the rare and extreme states are what we are

learning about, we will automatically think we are inferior, wrong, inadequate, and so on. We are so complicated and spectacular at every moment! It would be tragic to consider ourselves as anything less.

In this Letter, Nitya asks us to become aware of several different states of mind, and I love his description of the wandering mind as being like packing material, the worthless and weightless stuff we use to fill up the empty spaces of the parcels we send to our friends and family. He always had a great sense of humor! I have a place in the garage where I save just such material, and I'm quite sure I have a corresponding place in my semiconscious where I save its psychic equivalent.

I agree with Vien Duc that stories are a very good way to teach and learn, and I loved his locker room adventure last time. So here's mine for today. Last night I went to the wedding of two young friends in a gorgeous setting. During the ceremony I felt overwhelmed by the presence of many young people of many ages, from little kids running around up through the thirty-somethings, who were the largest presence. Somehow a wedding reminds me of waves of life roaring in toward the beach, surging through all their poignantly endearing stages. I am getting quite old, so I have been through most of the stages of life represented in wedding parties. I watch how each group feels—nay, knows—it is the center of the universe, and is most comfortable relating to those closest to itself in age and experience. From my vantage point in age I know what lies ahead for many of them, in a vague sort of way. I visualize how they are all passing from stage to stage, learning as they go, and the joy of it easily brings tears to my eyes and an aching sense of fullness to my heart. So I wasn't listening much to the ceremony, which was nice but ordinary. I looked around the room and let the beauty of each person wash over me. Many thoughts come around the theme of the eternal aspect within the transient. This is described in the present Letter as the experience of the

lover reaching out to the beloved. Nitya says, “The lover has no power to resist the tremendous attraction that is coming to him (or her). The lover becomes filled with thoughts and all kinds of imaginations, which are sometimes blissful, sometimes frightful, sometimes invigorating, sometimes confusing, and sometimes frustrating, depending on the quality of the spell that is experienced.”

I rarely drink alcohol, but since it was a party I did enjoy a beer before dinner. Then afterwards there was dancing to an old-time jazz band. I danced with my wife and her step-mother and one of the principles from the wedding party, but after that my hand was declined by everyone. I’ve always believed that girls like to dance so much that they will pretty much accept any invitation from anyone brave enough to ask, but this was definitely not the case last night. The younger guys were having no trouble, though. Later I had to walk out through the dark and rain to take something to our car, and I noticed I was feeling rejected and hurt, and all sorts of the old feelings of inadequacy that I grew up with and had supposedly laid to rest were back. Feelings of being an outsider, of being ugly, of wanting to go away so I didn’t spoil anyone’s fun. I well know now to yogically counteract such thoughts so as to neutralize them and prevent them from carrying me away into sadness. The bottom line is that it wasn’t about me. It never is. But it can easily *seem to be* about “me.” Such negativity as I was experiencing is a perverse form of egotism. Then I thought, Aha! It’s the beer. That small amount of alcohol was enough to dredge up a whole slew of egotistical thoughts lying semi-dormant in my unconscious. Alcohol is really good at that. Anyway, I got a firsthand look at elements of what Nitya calls here the fretful mind and the obsessive mind. Mine have been normalized to a degree by yoga practice, but they should never be counted out entirely.