

2022 Patanjali Class 60

7/25/23

Sutra II:14 – They (the seeded carriers of action propensities) have joy or sorrow for their fruit in accordance with virtue or vice.

Deb was delighted with Nitya's initial salvo:

Modern commentators have done a great disservice to the study of karma by oversimplifying the course of action, conceiving of it in a linear manner and restricting the cause-and-effect relationship to be of one-to-one correspondence. Karma is not linear. It propagates its energies in different directions. It has a vertical implication as well as horizontal modifications. (187-8)

She wanted to cheer when Nitya corrected the popular version of karma, with its simplistic presentation, because, in fact, we live within an ocean of action and inaction.

Coincidentally, the previous Science Friday, on NPR radio, reported breakthroughs in observing the brain where scientists are realizing they have been likewise thinking for almost a century of actions as linear and two dimensional. It turns out the brain is actually working with an entire symphony of related actions and intentions. Moving your arm is not simply linear, but more like a tide. It admits heartfelt intentionality into the brain's repertoire: we're not just accomplishing x, y, and z in a minimalistic way, we're bringing our whole being to bear on our objectives. That means we don't have to plan for them in the limited rational fashion so popular in pop motivation. I'll put a few clips and the link in Part II.

Paul and others were mystified by Nitya's description of the birth of the ego, and Deb responded by first rereading the mystifying section:

In this complex organism a two-fold projection is happening. Inertial matter appears to be conscient and the conscient principle of the spirit appears as if it has physical limbs. Where these two projections overlap, the individual experiences ego-identity. This ego-identity takes upon itself the agency to perceive, conceive, judge, and react.

The ego's agency in that last sentence was recognized as the fourfold operation of consciousness: manas, citta, buddhi and ahamkara. This is by no means a bad thing—it's how healthy humans function.

There is a catch here, however. To Deb, what this means is that we see the animating spirit as the physical forms it takes on, and mistake it for inert matter. In an overlapping interpretation, we attempt to reanimate matter by imbuing it with spirit. Where these two projections come together, we think that's who we are. We imagine we are saving the world or getting what we want. Patanjali wants us to understand the mixing at the core and let go of all of those projections.

The easy way to decipher this is that it describes the horizontal and vertical aspects of our being, and locates our I-sense at their intersection. Nitya is stretching our conceptualizations, for some brain exercise.

To get to the gist, let me borrow the first line from the 2010 Notes: “The important thing to realize about this sutra is that it does not advocate being virtuous and avoiding vice, it merely notes that they are correlated with conditioned activities.”

Bill offered a helpful perspective: in the context of the spirit or Absolute we assume it to have some kind of consciousness that on a basic level is continually manifesting all the things we experience in the world. It looks as if it's manifesting the stuff coming out of us as well, and we think, “this must be me, I'm

going to interpret this as the world because it's coming out of me." And we do.

Paul's idea of himself is as a simple location of perspective, rather than an objective coordinate of existence. He sees it as a case of mistaken identity. He believes himself to be an independent agent of action, but that can't be right, because there is no agency beyond the Absolute.

Don't forget, though, that we are the Absolute!

Bill admitted it's really difficult to make sense of this. Out of necessity we have to figure out how to deal with the world. By remembering where it came from, we are no longer just one individuated consciousness at sea in the world, but what is actually happening is the Absolute manifesting as everything. Including us.

In an echo of his strict upbringing, Paul accuses himself of idolatry when believing his self is making the decisions, though he admits it does help him to negotiate life. Yet the Gurus talk about a happiness that surpasses experience, and that is a deeper understanding. He wondered if that awareness gives us a glimpse of our true identity as the larger self? Could that mean he is not subject to the individual stones he trips over in his day-to-day experience?

Bill replied that we are trying to remember we are just one more moment in the whole of creation. We recall the source so we don't get caught up in our own false certitudes.

Andy has been realizing that the function of the *kleshas*, the afflictions we have been studying for a couple of months, is to make us feel more solid. You do something that is a great deed, and you think that is you. Ignorance is again the parent of all of these things, parent of all the other afflictions: love, hatred, all are formed in avidya, which amounts to the magnification of the ego, bringing separation.

Bill reminded us that the yogi who lives a normal life but is completely grounded in the Absolute is not attached. As ordinary,

attached people we cling to an ego sense, because we want to make sure we are solid. Andy added that such things are devices we put into play that distract us from realizing we are only here temporarily.

Deb agreed: “we are biodegradable, yet trying to make ourselves appear solid.”

This struck a nerve with Susan, who is currently reading *Suttree*, by Cormac McCarthy, a novel of measureless depth. *Suttree* is talking with the ragpicker, who is looking forward to dying:

No one wants to die.

Shit, said the ragpicker, Here’s one that’s sick of livin.

Would you give all you own? [Restating Jesus’s requirement for following him, as a joke.]

The ragman eyed him suspiciously, but he did not smile. It won’t be long, he said. An old man’s days are hours.

And what happens then?

When?

After you’re dead.

Don’t nuthin happen. You’re dead.

You told me once you believed in God.

The old man waved his hand. Maybe, he said. I got no reason to think he believes in me. Oh I’d like to see him for a minute if I could.

What would you say to him?

Well, I think I’d just tell him. I’d say: Wait a minute. Wait just one minute before you start in on me. Before you say anything, there’s just one thing I’d like to know. And he’ll say: What’s that? And then I’m goin to ast him: What did you have me in that crapgame down there for anyway? I couldn’t put any part of it together.

*Suttree* smiled. What do you think he’ll say?

The ragpicker spat and wiped his mouth. I don't believe he can answer it, he said. I don't believe there is an answer.

There were chuckles of recognition all around, this being an argument we have all provided both sides to. It doesn't matter whether you believe in God or not, we've all argued with It and about It.

Paul was unsure we would know the correct questions to ask God, if we ever get the chance. What we think we are may pass from our apparent existence to what we could be becoming. If a fish got the opportunity to ask the Maker a question, and it asks if it's better for him to ride a bike or take a bus, where would that leave him? Paul's question would be: I don't know what I am. Practically speaking, I don't know my true identity. I hope I get the opportunity to find it. I hope I can cut through all the things I think I am to what I really am.

Anita said if she got five minutes with God, she'd ask Her what the hell were you thinking? Why do we go through all this suffering when we get old? And why does everything have to kill something else in order to survive? I think that's stupid!

Happily for us, Susan elaborated on her feelings in an email:

After reading this passage in *Suttree*, I felt such relief. Here was someone asking a question very like the question I have often asked — Why was I put in this particular body, consciousness, life, without the means to really flourish? Granted, my life is not a “crapgame”, but I have wondered why I was not born with some great talent, some brilliance, some ability to really connect with others. How can someone like me complain? I have so much — a privileged life, good friends, a lovely garden, access to lots of books and great wisdom. Do I even have the right to whine about what I don't have when so many people in the world are suffering?! But I do wrestle with

this, not just for my egotistical desires to be popular and a genius but also because I would like to make a difference. I would like to help others in some astronomical sense. Then I look back at the decisions of my life and start pulling them apart and criticizing. But what I have learned from our class and from my inner work is that all this is beside the point. It is like Paul's fish asking whether to ride a bicycle or take a bus. I am here and that is enough. The Ragman wanted to die. Sometimes I do too. But it is because I am returning to some kind of conditioned expectation that is placed on me by history, culture, family. I am looking to those for guidance, rather than allowing the clarity of vision to emerge from within me. When I see this, I really can relax and feel nothing but gratitude. I realize I was asking an irrelevant question, somehow formed by all the conditionings rather than something true.

One of the implications of Patanjali's yoga is that our mundane condition does not do anything for or against our realization. All of us have to approach it from where we find ourselves, and there is no sure formula for achieving it. In the ultimate sense, no one is "better off" than another. This was covered in the old Notes:

Much religious thinking breaks its head on what it means to be good, but yoga is concerned with a deeper level entirely. To Patanjali, as Deb pointed out, affiliation with the afflictions brings sorrow, and freedom from them permits the true joy of the Self to manifest. While that is true, joy and sorrow are lumped together here as delusory effects of being caught and held captive, and the true joy transcends them both. Being good or bad lies squarely in the domain of the afflictions. Think of all the anxiety, doubt, punishment, anger, and injustice (among many other things) tied up with our behavioral decisions, and it

becomes clear that such matters contain a plethora of confusion and stumbling. Pleasure can lead us to stumble faster and more thoroughly than pain. To wit: “The satisfied, the happy, do not live; they fall asleep in habit, near neighbor to annihilation.”  
~Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 1913.

We’re all privileged people in our class, and we’re all still searching, unconvinced. The only real privilege is to be alive, and see where it leads.

In the present sutra, Patanjali is hinting that we do have the power to make life joyous—we aren’t helpless, and we’re not supposed to strive to become helpless. Blending action with inaction is a way to develop expertise in action, not to come to a halt. The quote from Goethe in the old Notes, below, expresses this beautifully, though we quibbled over details of the rough translation.

Deb clarified that we aren’t helpless but we are part of an enormous flow that carries us, often without our consent. We can engage in action that is vicious or action that is beautiful, depending on how we are identifying them due to our conditioning.

Our teachers want us to know there are plenty of impressive things we can do for the people we bump into, for our friends and family—this is not a withdrawing type of philosophy. We do live in a time perfectly epitomized by Yeats, in *The Second Coming*:

The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Jan recently came across some thoughts on what we ought to be, from James Hollis’s *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life*, where he is interpreting Jung’s ideas on opening to life:

This is the essence of what Jung means by individuation. It is a service not to ego, but to what wishes to live through us. While the ego may fear this overthrow, our greatest freedom is found, paradoxically, in surrender to that which seeks fuller expression through us. Enlarged being is what we are called to bring into this world, contribute to our society and our families, and share with others. It cuts a person off from the herd, from collectivity, but it deepens the range in which more authentic relationships can occur.

Jan was down in SoCal seeing her kids this weekend, and something like this was what she felt she needed to tell her daughter Mira, who is a psychologist, but she was also trying encourage her to be open to intuition about what the people she is treating want to be and how they want to be healed. For her to be open to what is coming through in therapy. Jan is confident we can do this for each other, and for ourselves.

In his Yoga Letter Twelve, which we studied so long ago, Nitya speaks to this central aspect of our study:

While a diseased mind indulges in fantasy, a person of average normalcy engages himself in the pursuit of actualization. A yogi is careful to avoid both these realms, that of fantasizing and that of actualizing. The yogi's goal is to realize. In a negative sense, realization is the avoidance of the unreal that is perpetuated through the composition and retention of various imageries that cannot be validated as real. Hence the yogi terminates associations of ideas whenever an unprofitable memory is seeking a chance to reenter the focus of consciousness. Here the witnessing element assumes the role of the grand discriminator. The incentive for this grand discriminator is nothing other than to visualize one's own true form. This motive is again and again sabotaged by the seeping in of memories, either from the



threshold of factual retentions or from the threshold of the phantom-weaving mind. The experiential essence of realization is Being. (364-5)

Nonetheless, Nitya affirms the synthesis of action and inaction in no uncertain terms: “For a psychophysical organism to evolve and function as an individual, there has to be the bonding together of the gross (compound) elements and the pure elements.” The bonding reminds me of this part of a Love Letter that didn’t get into Love and Blessings, unfortunately. Ananda had reported Don Berry saying that Nitya was wasting his talents teaching mediocre disciples, and he should get better ones:

My words appear to be wise. I happen to be listening to a wise man who sat at the feet of another wise man. All wisdom really belongs to them. My contribution is to water down their wisdom and sometimes make it muddy because my pigs do not like clear water....

If the muddy waters which I turn to my pigs who drink with relish is also to be given to noble men and ladies who would appreciate pure and distilled water, I need someone who can filter and remove the dirt from what I cater to people. I wouldn’t stop anyone from doing that. I am not good at it.

The simile I have adopted here is not my own. About ten or fifteen years ago when I was enthusiastic in giving wide publicity to Guru’s philosophy, I used all sorts of devices to make it look popular. Then Nataraja Guru told me that the clear water of Narayana Guru and the muddy water of my relativism were both coming through the same hose. I learned to filter it as much as possible.

We’re having only a few scattered classes for the rest of the summer, so I read the account of Deb’s specific example, which

you can read near the bottom of this document, when she was putting on the first “bake sale” to raise money to begin the film at the prison that was finally released last summer. The seed state of a grand project that came to life. She had much to do, and without it the project might never have happened. She barely remembers even doing it, yet it’s a feel-good moment in Portland Gurukula class history

Lastly, the “accident” of the week came from the article YOU GOOD? – Aristotle’s guide to human flourishing, by Nikhil Krishnan, in *The New Yorker*, July 3, 2023. The author studied Aristotle at Oxford, and this reminded me of our venerable class, a most humble trickle of muddy water below a pristine glacier of uniqueness cradled in ancient philosophy:

When I stayed on as a graduate student and edged into the strange and wonderful world of Oxford’s scholars of ancient philosophy, I attended seminars where hours were spent parsing a single Aristotelian sentence. At one session, a nervous participant asked, “Would you think it precipitous if we moved on to the next sentence?”

What we were doing with this historical text [Nicomachean Ethics] wasn’t history but philosophy. We were reading it not for what it might reveal about an exotic culture but for the timelessly important truths it might contain—an attitude at odds with the relativism endemic in the rest of the humanities. The deliberate pace of the Aristotelians who taught me was not only an intellectual strategy but also an enactment of the lesson of the text I was reading. There is no shortcut to understanding Aristotle, no recipe. You get good at reading him by reading him, with others, slowly and often. Regular practice: for Aristotle, it’s how you get good generally.

## **Part II**

Excerpts from [NPR Science Friday](#), 7/21/23.

Every little action that your body takes has to be dictated by your brain from your eyes scanning the space in front of you to your legs moving one in front of the other. And this all usually happens without really thinking much about it at all.

So this is a very complicated process in the brain and one that still has a lot of mysteries to it.

Speaking about the motor cortex: the traditional view is that each spot in it connects to a part of the body and controls movement, controls muscles in that part. So it's kind of a map, if you will, that controls movement.

We found that the motor cortex... has somewhat of a different organization than what science and medicine have believed for 90 years. We see that the motor cortex in addition to containing these different areas controlling different parts of your body, it also seems to control this previously unknown set of areas, networked areas, strongly interconnected that looks like it allows complex planning areas of your brain to influence whole body actions.

So this is sort of a complicated set of findings, but we think that this new system represents a circuit that enables whole body actions, not just isolated movements of your fingers like if you're playing a piano or even if you're talking and you need to move your tongue in these very complicated ways. But we think about whole body actions like dancing or like sports.

And this system allows these whole body actions to be strongly influenced by your plans and your goals. And the potential connection to these internal organs might allow changes in your

adrenaline or your heart rate even before you start an action, sort of anticipatory changes.

Why is it that just our thoughts can cause these changes in our autonomic body systems? This is where I think we have to look to the cortex. We have to look to these very smart areas of cortex and understand how our planning, not doing actions, but planning might be connected in more direct ways to our autonomic body functions.

### **Part III**

5/25/12, Old Class Notes:

I've been listening to an audio book of *The Buddha and the Quantum: Hearing the Voice of Every Cell*, by Samuel Avery. It's a little Buddhist-wordy, but parts of it are excellent, especially the section on light. His conclusion about relativity theory is that it demonstrates that space is propagated by light, and not the other way around as it appears. Therefore light is primary, and unitive. Moreover, it is a quantum event. Photons are quantum packets of visibility. He's heading for what we already accept: that light is a product of consciousness, and therefore spacetime is also a production of consciousness.

I've been driving around all week listening to Avery talk about how space is a fiction we invent to explain our sense data to ourselves, which is mainstream science these days, and yet so counterintuitive we have to continually remind ourselves of it or we'll be sucked right in to believing that what we're seeing is "out there" rather than a fantastic play put on by our brain "in here" in a valiant attempt to account for the welter of vibrations we are regularly bathed in.

I love Nitya's reminder in his commentary that karma as it's popularly understood is a similar fiction to space. It's convenient to imagine karma is simple and linear. The only problem is that it's not true. The more we look into it, the more complex and mysterious it becomes. Part of the fun of life is peering into the depths of events to see more of their entanglement than meets the eye. Often that will give us insight into better ways to interact with those events.

In that sense all of us who are mounting a spiritual exploration are fascinated with the "dark side," the non-obvious profundity of life. Everything beyond our limited perception is dark to us, and we are curious to know what the dark holds. It seems that the more uncomfortable we are with our immediate surroundings, the more appealing "elsewhere" becomes. But yoga teaches us that "elsewhere" is inside us also, available right where we are.

Speaking of the Gita, the famous verse II, 69 reads, "What is night for all creatures, the one of self-control keeps awake therein; wherein all creatures are wakeful, that is night for the sage-recluse who sees." It means yogis turn away from the ordinary, illusory world of sense perception to seek the invisible yet solid ground of the Absolute, called by Patanjali Isvara.

One thing I've learned from the Gita about karma yoga, is that every aspect of life is connected back to unitive (intelligent) action in some fashion. The entire work is a magnificent exposition of how to live creatively and drenched in joy. In the process it throws a lot of light on Patanjali, and vice versa. When we tend to think of karma as an impediment, the rishis teach us it is central to our existence.

The sutra we're studying here is pretty straightforward: good actions bring us joy and bad actions bring us sorrow. Those outcomes are how we decide what's good and what's bad for us, though of course the effects of our actions are mysterious and

delayed in time, so it takes intense thought to figure out which is which. Often what looks auspicious turns out badly, and vice versa. In any case both the Gita and the Yoga Sutras advocate rising above the simplistic good vs. evil dichotomy to act in accordance with our innate abilities. Choosing good over evil, or as some prefer, evil over good, is trivial in comparison to choosing attunement over dissociation. That's where the real game is afoot!

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7/20/10

Sutra II: 14

They (the seeded carriers of action propensities) have joy or sorrow for their fruit in accordance with virtue or vice.

The important thing to realize about this sutra is that it does not advocate being virtuous and avoiding vice, it merely notes that they are correlated with conditioned activities. The seeds of action—*vasanas* and *samskaras*—sprout and develop into appropriate channels of expression, and these bring about varying levels of enjoyment or misery without fail.

I checked out the two words used here for joy and sorrow. The unfamiliar term *hlada*, meaning refreshment, pleasure, delight, and possibly in the old days a cry of joy, is the source of our word 'glad'. *Paritapa* has a long list of fiery definitions, including "burning, torment, suffering great pain, torture," and yes, "afflicted." The root is the same as *tapas*, the austerities which burn away the accumulated junk of our lives. Both words underscore how intense our experience of the seeded action propensities can be.

Much religious thinking breaks its head on what it means to be good, but yoga is concerned with a deeper level entirely. To Patanjali, as Deb pointed out, affiliation with the afflictions brings

sorrow, and freedom from them permits the true joy of the Self to manifest. While that is true, joy and sorrow are lumped together here as delusory effects of being caught and held captive, and the true joy transcends them both. Being good or bad lies squarely in the domain of the afflictions. Think of all the anxiety, doubt, punishment, anger, and injustice (among many other things) tied up with our behavioral decisions, and it becomes clear that such matters contain a plethora of confusion and stumbling. Pleasure can lead us to stumble faster and more thoroughly than pain. To wit: “The satisfied, the happy, do not live; they fall asleep in habit, near neighbor to annihilation.” ~Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 1913.

Good and evil are relative, so pinning them down can trap us in endless dilemmas. Anne paraphrased a quotation attributed to Mark Twain: “Half of every good act has bad consequences, and half of every bad act has good consequences.” I haven’t been able to locate the source, but the point is well taken and sounds like authentic Twain. Part of his inspiration in writing *Huckleberry Finn* was to convincingly demonstrate that always telling the truth could be disastrous and lies were often superior to straightforward honesty.

Additionally, philosophers have long realized that being “good” in order to secure a selfish end like admission to heaven undercuts the value of the act. Authentic goodness has to be spontaneous, based on the appreciation that it is worthwhile of its own accord, for its intrinsic value, and not for any personal gain. So religious claptrap about parading into paradise on the wings of your good deeds is paradoxical at best. Unitive action detached from karmic pressure is the way to go.

In his *Yoga Letter Twelve*, which we studied so long ago, Nitya speaks to this central aspect of our study:

While a diseased mind indulges in fantasy, a person of average normalcy engages himself in the pursuit of actualization. A yogi is careful to avoid both these realms, that of fantasizing and that of actualizing. The yogi's goal is to realize. In a negative sense, realization is the avoidance of the unreal that is perpetuated through the composition and retention of various imageries that cannot be validated as real. Hence the yogi terminates associations of ideas whenever an unprofitable memory is seeking a chance to reenter the focus of consciousness. Here the witnessing element assumes the role of the grand discriminator. The incentive for this grand discriminator is nothing other than to visualize one's own true form. This motive is again and again sabotaged by the seeping in of memories, either from the threshold of factual retentions or from the threshold of the phantom-weaving mind. The experiential essence of realization is Being. (364-5)

A secondary implication of the present sutra is that the determination of what is virtuous is that it brings joy, while vice causes sorrow. This is a subversive attitude in a civilization where being miserable is often treated as a virtue and being happy may be frowned on as diabolic. Certainly, short term pleasures can equate with long term miseries, while what is pleasurable in the long run may require some serious struggle at the outset. John appropriately asked, what is the time frame here? Which counts more, the long or short term happiness? Of course, we are searching for the joy that doesn't come to an end. These things can be appraised at every stage, but we are not really trying to rationally determine the best course and then follow it. Patanjali is reminding us here that seeded propensities flower into pleasant and unpleasant experiences, but we are aiming to find a witnessing zone free of their ever-proliferating influences. We are looking to drop out of that game of compulsion and into samadhi.



The class spent most of our time pondering the kernel of Nitya's commentary, which is:

Modern commentators have done a great disservice to the study of karma by oversimplifying the course of action, conceiving of it in a linear manner and restricting the cause and effect relationship to be of one-to-one correspondence. Karma is not linear. It propagates its energies in different directions. It has a vertical implication as well as horizontal modifications. (187-8)

A key question was asked, what exactly is horizontal karma and vertical karma? The short answer is that horizontal action is what is happening now, the action of the moment, while the coherent thread that links actions together over time is the vertical aspect. We have a fair amount of control over our horizontal activities, and very little in respect to our vertical unfoldment. We grow in predetermined ways whether we like it or not. But this doesn't represent an evil fate, it is a harmonious expression far beyond our conscious capabilities. Nitya mentions that the animating energy that propels every aspect of our being is a pulsation emanating from the spirit. His favorite example was the way a fertilized ovum grows into a fully formed and perfect being possessing many talents and inclinations, without any direct tinkering by anyone. It is a perennial source of wonder.

Deb gave a specific example. All through her life she has had a drive to help others. This vertical propensity has led her to do many things as specific expressions of that innate urge. She is now working with Open Hearts Open Minds on its prison project, helping with a fundraising sale. Her horizontal involvement demands that she arrange to pick up donated items, line up volunteers and vehicles, find storage space and a venue to hold the event; in short, she has to do all the legwork so that the sale will actually happen. Sometimes she feels embroiled in karmic

necessities, and sometimes she feels the exultation of doing what she does in an expert fashion. All this intentional activity is an expression of the horizontal aspect of karma, but none of it would happen without the pulsation of energy that infuses her very soul. The vertical pull of the future sale, which impels the present and future film project, which in turn hopes to bring a reduction of sorrow to many suffering individuals, permeates and energizes the horizontal necessities.

Clearly, the horizontal and vertical karmas have to be integrated and work together for meaningful action to take place. In a way they are not even two things, merely two aspects of a single life drama that is unfolding before our very eyes. Unlike some systems of thought, Vedanta is not about dispensing with the horizontal and retreating into the vertical. Each pole is meaningless without the other. Deb wouldn't be arranging a yard sale if not for the greater motivation of what the profit is going to accomplish, and without her action in the present nothing of the proposed project would ever happen.

John wondered if the effects of karma are cumulative. Yes, certainly, and that is why it is both difficult and mandatory to slip out of their influence. We are the product of four billion years of evolution, and all the constraints of all those multitudinous creatures are building blocks of our magnificent present edifice. Those constraints were incremental steps in a long process of liberation from absolute bondage and total ignorance. The excitement felt by yogis and others is that evolution has finally arrived at a stage where true liberation is beginning to be possible. We no longer have to live like worms, slaves to necessity. The tragedy of much of humanity is that, despite being equipped with the means, most humans are so saddled with coping with the requirements of their daily needs that they surrender without a fight. It may be that some day a liberated state of mind will be our birthright, but at this early stage of development we still have to

work at it. Happily we have guidebooks like Patanjali's Yoga Shastra to help us navigate this less well-known terrain of expanded consciousness.

At the close, Anne offered a quote from Goethe on the importance of horizontal activity. Remember the Enlightenment, now so far in our past? They were tuned in to the same spirit of the ancient rishis. Some of it lives on today in valiant hearts:

I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather.

I possess tremendous power to make a life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture, or an instrument of inspiration.

I can humiliate or honor, hurt or heal.

In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a person humanized or dehumanized.

If we treat people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat people as they ought to be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming.

- Goethe

## **Part IV**

A most helpful contribution arrived from *Meditations on the Way*, the account of Nitya's Tao Te Ching class by Peter O. It deals with verse 19, which is:

## XIX

Exterminate learning and there will no longer be  
worries.

Exterminate the sage, discard the wise,  
And the people will benefit a hundredfold;  
Exterminate benevolence, discard rectitude,  
And the people will again be filial;  
Exterminate ingenuity, discard profit,  
And there will be no more thieves and bandits.

These three, being false adornments, are not  
enough  
And the people must have something to which  
they can attach themselves:  
Exhibit the unadorned and embrace the  
uncarved block,  
Have little thought of self and as few desires  
as possible.

The whole chapter is worth a read, but I'll just add a taste:

Peter said that, for him, the key line which illuminated the meaning of the others was the final one advising one to have little thought of self and few desires. “Normally even when we think of high values, such as wisdom, benevolence and creative ingenuity, our vision is colored, tainted or even blinded by ego-centered desire: ‘I want to be a wise man,’ ‘I should become benevolent,’ ‘I wish I were ingeniously creative.’ Ironically it is the ego itself which comes between us and our experience of our own cherished values. Wisdom, benevolence, and creativity are not the monopolized possession of private individuals. On the contrary,

they are the primary qualities of the Tao itself, of which we are an incidental and instrumental product. Thinking too much in terms of self, makes us desire to arrogate these universal qualities as private possessions, and paradoxically the desire cuts us off from the source and mainstream of all values.”

The following are some of Guru’s remarks:

The Tao Te Ching is a wisdom text, so when Lao Tzu says, “Discard the wise,” he does not mean it. The archetypal embodiment of wisdom is the sage, and the entire Tao Te Ching is a glorification of the sage, of wisdom, and of the Way. The problem which he is pointing out here is not the sage’s problem, but a problem of how people view themselves in relation to the sage, and to wisdom. The tendency is to simply say that wisdom belongs to the sage, so why should we worry.

In the Gurukula you can see this tendency for people to become lazy and complacent, thinking, “There is a guru here. He is so wise. He will take care of it.” Instead of relying on a sage, you should bring yourself to the level of the sage, working day and night for the wellbeing of all, just as he does. Instead, you want to sit in the lap of your Guru and be spoon fed.

You can see the same tendency in all organized religions. If you go to a church, the people there will be praising the great Jesus Christ, who spilt his blood for the salvation of mankind, and then they will pray, “So please take away my headache also.” They dump all the responsibility on Christ to save all the world from sin and tribulation.