

2022 Patanjali Class 64

Sutra II:20 – The seer is consciousness only; even though pure, it witnesses cognition.

Sutra II:21 – The very being of the seen is for the sake of the seer alone.

Sutra II:22 – Although it becomes non-existent for one whose purpose has been fulfilled, it does not cease to exist because of being common to others.

Sanal, along with newlyweds Karina and Prabu, graced our in-person gathering with nearly all the regulars, harkening back to the full houses of yesteryear. Although Nitya was modest about these sutras, we found them a rich source of practical inspiration, expanded on with Sanal's sharing of his journey to ever-greater enthusiasm for psychological philosophy and its ancient heritage.

Deb's takeaway was how we think of the world coming to us, and having it flood into us, but here Patanjali is saying that actually it is the reverse: we are an animating spirit, where the luminous aspect brings awareness in through the senses, which we react to with happiness or anger, and then have memories which we go forward with. That means we are the co-creators, in many ways, of our world—we chose how we see it, interpret it, interact with it. She recalled Nataraja Guru's instruction to imagine yourself alone in a room, and ask yourself what you fill that room with, memories of distress? Hope for the future? The gurus are trying to show us that we are doing that all the time, filling our room-world with imaginings. That means we have many varying responses to every situation, yet they are all genuine to us. She reread the end of the sutra 21 commentary, showing that the whole point of this study is to see how we bind ourselves to emotions, memories, and actions that keep us from realizing our inner oneness:

It is as if the immeasurable vastness of the cosmos in its temporal and spatial magnitude is of no consequence to the individual. Your mind is a receptacle like a plate or cup in which you receive a limited share of your world. Patanjali confines himself to that world of psychologic significance, and to the study and evaluation of it in terms of a person's happiness or misery. That is why it is said that the perceptual world of nature is what is given to the individual spirit (purusha) to experience for its own meaningful search and progression into ultimate fulfillment.

The whole point of our search, then, is to disentangle from that bondage and allow that oneness to be who we are. In a way it's reversing the process of being helpless tools of the world, instead opening oneself to touch and create it.

Nitya's commentary made Deb think of an experiment she did with her college art history classes (a possibility now lost to history), on how we see. She would show a slide of an art object, beginning with it out of focus, and as she slowly focused it, she would ask the students what they saw. Each one's version was completely different, and it demonstrated how much of their personal perspective they brought to their vision. We all are doing that all the time, processing hints that are all around us to construct a comprehensible world, perceiving and reacting to it in our own ways.

Deb's experiment put Nancy in mind of her three-year-old granddaughter, who just went in for her check-up and the doctor realized she had sight issue. It turned out she is severely challenged with sight, and not seeing well at all. Now she has glasses, and she lights up with them on—there is a whole world she wasn't seeing before. Where she was timid, now she is talking excitedly about everything. To see a little one you have known all along and not realized their visual perception was limited, you expect they are

normally sighted. Nancy watched her holding a giraffe stuffed animal while testing, and when they put the new glasses on she looked at the animal like she had never seen it before. She thought it's no wonder everyone we interact with is taking things in so differently! We don't even see alike.

Sometimes when Deb wakes up from sleep, she doesn't know where she is at first, and she can lie there and not put names or forms on anything. Then, as she comes more awake, she watches the forms and their names slowly coalesce. She understands that Patanjali is breaking it down like this to show us the profound impact of our own predilections, how we orchestrate ourselves into unhappiness and other afflictions based on our long histories. Yoga is the means to disentangle ourselves from the web of our afflictions, to participate in the greater web, referenced in her article for this year's hundredth anniversary celebration:

One time a person put this question to Guru Nitya, "Who are you? What are you doing?" His response was, "I am part of the web." In those pre-internet days, he was not referring to the cybersphere but to the unlimited interactions and connections of all beings. He was and is one part of that overarching web, as are we.

Prabu has been studying Schopenhauer and Kant in the last two months, and was amazed by how identical their thoughts on perception are to the verse here. We perceive objects to be in our world, but in subject-object perception that they are brought to our consciousness. For instance, we bring the idea of space and time to the experience, so that we know when we see the stars we only think we see them—the real stars may be dead and gone. He also was amused that science is coming to grips with quantum entanglement, while Patanjali and Nitya are concerned with disentanglement. Prabu read out an example:

All the events in a man's life would accordingly stand in two fundamentally different connection; firstly, in the objective, casual connection of the natural process; secondly, in a subjective connection which exists only in relation to the individual who experiences it, and which is thus as subjective as his own dreams - *Arthur Schopenhauer, Parerga and Paralipomena.*

Sanal studied Nitya's Patanjali book a couple of years ago, and now is amazed to come back to it and find how much more he is getting out of it, and how different it is. What struck him in preparing for this class was how ideas he totally overlooked the first time through stood out this time. I assured him that would keep happening, no matter how many times he read the Gurukula books.... He enthused that there was always something fresh that comes out in his readings, like a bouquet of flowers in full bloom you can sniff and admire from different angles. Plus, every time he looks at a verse, it always matches up with another idea in a concurrent study.

Sanal was fascinated this time by Andy's sutra 20 diagram of the fourfold antakarana, which made it clear how much mental terrain there is between the seer and the scene. What we see is going through these several interpretive stages, so of course what we each see is different, even what we see at different ages in our lives is divergent, depending on things like memory and our state of mind. As human beings we live our lives, never realizing we have all this in us. He is fascinated by the evolutionary history we have gone through, due to innumerable slight mutations, to become beings with so much complexity. He added that the interaction between the manifest and unmanifest explains life, including pre-life and post-life, and these sutras capture it.

Sanal is excited that he's finding answers in his studies, and that's wonderful, but I wanted him to know we deemphasize reliance on fixed answers in our class contemplations. One of the major entanglements of well-schooled humans is striving to come up with answers for things that don't necessarily have answers. Answers have their place, but they can also serve as impediments, so we have to be aware of the context. I cited Thomas Merton in *The New Man*: "Religions do not, in fact, simply supply answers to questions. Or at least they do not confine themselves to this until they become degenerate. Salvation is more than the answer to a question." (9-10) Deb has memorized Nataraja Guru's impeccable sentence, and recited it for us: "Meditation has the final result, not of solving mysteries but rather of making the sense of the mysterious live in the heart of man forever." She added, there is a place to honor what you can't pinpoint precisely because we are part of that mystery.

Answering questions correctly feels really good to us, yet it is primarily a horizontal activity. As such it can and does foster conflict with those preferring different answers.

Frankly, I think that's what Patanjali is getting at here. The easiest thing is to complain about the other guy's faults and problems, which makes it seem, spuriously, as if we have solved our own. He wants us to work primarily on ourselves. To refocus on the gist of the sutras, I read some of the 2010 class notes, which culminate in the suggestion we should welcome life, including the tough parts, as an ongoing revelation of who we are:

Sutra 20 goes right to the crux of life and its unbearable paradox. To wit: our witnessing self, *purusa*, is unaffected by and unable to interact with *prakriti* at all, yet as it looks on, it becomes identified with the quasi-illusory ego, which *is* affected by and does interact with what goes on. We may intuit an immortal quality to the witness, but the ego is definitely

short-lived, and its brevity imparts a degree of anguish to what should be pure delight.

Although Nitya characterizes these snippets as being less important than the rest, between his comments and our class discussion we explored a very valuable aspect of spirituality. During our early development we are focused primarily on the world we perceive, and so there is a tendency to project our normal self-examination outwards. Where we should be assessing and disciplining ourselves, we may instead become caught up in analyzing and complaining about the behavior of others. These two sutras remind us to turn the arrow of our critical analysis back toward ourselves.

Nitya points out us that Patanjali's intent is to help us disentangle ourselves from psychological bondage, and it would be a mistake to take sutra 21 as a final word on the overall nature of the universe. Sutra 22 demonstrates Patanjali's awareness of the limited purview of his instruction. He wants us to take care of our own spiritual needs and not be distracted by the chaos through which we move and breathe.

Sanal heard this in personal terms, saying sometimes when you listen to a recording or video of yourself you see annoying things, which are overlooked because our eyes are pointing the wrong way.

Deb felt one of the reasons Nitya went into 18 months of solitude was so that there was nothing to project his thoughts out onto. Everything that happened was within his world, his "room," and he realized you can either go crazy or come to a profound depth when you take this seriously. That's why he advised that in the Gurukula, each person should strike their roots deep in the wisdom of the unconscious. She was referring to Nitya's inimitable

letter about what it takes to have a Gurukula, in *Love and Blessings*, pages 470-473, including:

I endorse your statement “Narayana Guru’s teachings render negligible any cultural or national restrictions.” The model of the center you suggest can function well provided all the participants have had an occasion to strike their spiritual roots in the mass of the unconscious psychological phenomena on which the foundation of Narayana Gurukula rests. By merely calling a place “Narayana Gurukula,” it does not become one.

Striking spiritual roots in rich soil does not mean we have to stop having sensory experiences or mental modifications. Even though we realize we are seeing a world we have constructed to interpret what the real world might be, it’s essential, and we would be severely damaged if we didn’t. Our inner guide is producing the illusions for our maximum benefit, and we should harmonize with its intentions, with gratitude.

Speaking of synchronicity, I found the following parallel passage in the 2005 Darsanamala Class Notes, on verse 2.6, quoting one of the Gurukula’s rarest books:

Two other quotes surfaced in John Spiers’ book, *What Shall I Read?* These are from two Chinese Buddhists, Hui Neng from the seventh century and Huang Po from the ninth:

Hui Neng, on a very common mistake made by more than Buddhists:

“When you hear me speak about the Void, do not fall into the idea that I mean vacuity. It is of the Utmost importance that we should not fall into that idea, because when a man sits quietly and keeps his mind blank he would be abiding in a state of the voidness of indifference. The illimitable Void of

the Universe is capable holding myriads of things of various shapes and forms, such as the Sun and the Moon, and the stars, worlds, mountains, rivers, rivulets, springs, woods, bushes, good men, bad men, laws pertaining to goodness and badness, heavenly planes and hells, great oceans and all the mountains of Mahameru. Space takes in all these, as does the voidness of our nature. We say that Essence of Mind is great because it embraces all things since all things are within our nature. When we see the goodness or the badness of other people, and are not affected by it nor repulsed by it, nor attached to it, then the attitude of our mind is as void as space. In that we see the greatness of our minds.”

Huang Po adds:

“Your true nature is something never lost to you even in moments of delusion, nor is it gained at the moment of Enlightenment. It is the nature of the Bhutathata (Such-beingness). In it is neither delusion nor right understanding. It fills the Void everywhere and is intrinsically of the substance of the One Mind. How, then, can your mind-created objects exist outside the Void?” (99-100)

Sanal told us about how he became interested in the Gurukula and Narayana Guru’s legacy, and it’s a case in point. His transition from the ordinary began some thirty years ago, when his boss lent him Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics*. Being scientifically oriented, Sanal read only the second half, about the physics, and he found it dull and uninspiring. Before he returned the book, he thought he should peek at the first part, covering the experiential side, and he became engrossed. It’s been a long gradual journey ever since, but he has found his enthusiasm kindled with Nitya’s books especially, and in his studies with Swami Tanmaya and Nancy Y. He subscribes to the Class Notes, and has come from his

home in London to meet some of the protagonists in our studies for the first time, enjoying matching names with faces.

Like Sanal, Deb loves how we cultivate our intertwinings, we can be either prisoners of them or liberated by them. We all have enjoyed a similar process in our life, having a sustained interest that carried us all the way through. She cited incipient memories as a source, which led to a discussion of that term as a translation of *vasana*, which I'm almost certain is a Nataraja Guru original. I just searched "incipient memories," and there are very few hits (149) most of them from the Gurukula, including my writings.

According to our local experts, *vasana* not only refers to our genetic heritage, but also to smell, and Charles wondered why. Actually, smell is our most primal sense, linked with earth, the most gross of the elements. Deep memory is activated by smell—search that phrase and you'll find plenty of documentation. As we've already covered this subject many times, I'll leave it at that.

Bill did offer a nice connection with our scheme of correlation – that incipient memories are the negative pole of vertical axis, and are like seeds that we grow out of.

Moni was also thinking of the big banyan trees in India. Their fruits are tiny, like a blueberry, but if you open one there are millions of tiny seeds inside. Each one of those seeds, if it lands in favorable conditions, sprouts a tiny plant that will become another huge banyan tree one day. The seed is the tree's incipient memory.

Moni recalled a reference in Nitya's *Darsanamala*:

Memories are shielded and preserved by *tamas*. This close association of *tamas* with memory shows a near identity of incipient memories with ignorance. Incipient memories are called *vasanas*, and ignorance is called *avidya*. In both the systems of Vedanta and Yoga, *vasana* and *avidya* are sometimes treated as interchangeable terms. (157)

I can't say whether this downgrades *vasana* or upgrades *avidya*, though likely both.

Andy circled us back to smell. He knew of a New York conceptual artist who bought an apartment in Manhattan and filled it full of dirt, three feet deep. A friend of his went to check it out, and the amazing thing to him was the luscious smell. The earth gives off an incredible, complex fragrance, even in the middle of natureless Manhattan. Andy shared the word for the smell of earth when it rains: *petrichor*, the unearthly earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil. Part of its power could well be the memories it evokes, if only unconsciously. Moni echoed for all of us: *summer rain, smell of earth*.

Prabu shared a Tamil poem from his recent marriage to Karina, to round out our evening:

Translation of the Kurunthogai Poem:

A man tells the woman he has just fallen in love, like this,

When we met
I didn't know who your mother was
You didn't know who my mother was
We didn't know about each other's fathers
Whether they are related or not
We had not seen each other before
Yet our hearts merged into one in love
Like the raindrops fallen on desert's sand.

He added the rain makes the desert bloom into a lush garden.

Part II

8/13/12

Nancy added a quote from Nitya: “I'm not suggesting you get totally into this while you are still young, but short spells of it can be very refreshing and very reassuring.” He said that about 35 years ago, and I'm no longer young by any measure. But Nitya's beautiful insights make me feel young inside. What a guy.

It continues to strike me how my “random” learning process overlaps significantly with the lessons we are studying. I've been rereading *Everyday Survival*, by Lawrence Gonzales (New York: Norton, 2008), and its thrust is very similar to Nitya's treatment of sutra 20. Here's an example. Gonzales is describing the way the brain categorizes information, generalizing the vast amount of incoming data into mental models, which it then sequences as behavioral scripts:

Mental models make our world, but they also shape and constrain the possible. We can't see, or at least can't comprehend, things for which we have no mental models....

The efficiency that these [behavioral] scripts confer therefore comes at the expense of deliberate attention to real information coming to us from the environment. The model displaces the real world and sends this message: you already know about that, you may proceed. That's how many of our worst decisions are made. They aren't really decisions in the normal sense of the word. They're simply automated behaviors, formed out of the inheritance from our animal ancestry. And once a behavioral script is set up, we will continue to act until we're finished... or until the illusion is somehow overturned by dramatic new information from the real world. For it really is an illusion, albeit one that is often useful. And these illusions on which we act can be very stable and difficult to overturn.
(29-30)

I really like the clarity of this book, in dealing with ideas that are more vaguely presented in Patanjali, but are definitely addressing the same issues.

It's interesting that Nitya mentions holograms in his comments on sutra 20:

The intellect has no direct relation with the percept. It has only a processed replica to deal with. But when it makes a judgment, it triggers ramifications in three directions: the registry of knowledge; the stimulation to react with appropriate action; and an affectivity of attraction or repulsion, joy or distress. The combination of the three can be compared to a holographic effect. The mystical sense of wonder and the mystery of a hologram are experienced along with the psychosomatic composition.

So, on to [Nancy's] exercises. Again, the two strike me as twin aspects of one, which is to confront and subvert our own projections, or our own behavioral scripts and mental models, if you will. This is a major, ongoing battle in spiritual life, because our brains are always casting about for the "right" projections, by which we can comprehend and manipulate our world. Our task is nothing less than rejecting the familiar imagery we clothe our persona with, and daring to "dance naked beneath the diamond sky" instead. In other words, drop our habitual responses and stay open to the newness of the present. Not so easy! In this week's class notes, dealing with the Isa Upanishad's metaphor of a conceptual golden disc masking truth, I penned a relevant paragraph:

Humans have a strong tendency to feel less anxious in restricted, well-defined roles. That's a pernicious version of the golden disc: we feel relief when we fall into a routine that

allows us to drop our guard, but the routine itself is not necessarily the truth we seek. Yet most people are content to stop feeling bad, and spend their lives trying to block out painful feelings. Our higher potentials as a species are rarely explored, because we are always going the opposite direction, seeking surcease of sorrow rather than true nourishment.

I also like to keep in mind the motto of the accidental cosmic tourist Jack Flanders, that “what’s coming at you is really coming *from* you.” That’s the essence of projection!

I’m not much of a creative, artistic type, so I suppose I flunk the (admirable!) exercises once again, but I do have a good way of wrestling with projections. I know I’ve often bragged of being married to someone who has little hesitation to calling me on my foibles. Plus, occasionally people contact me about spiritual matters, usually when they are in extremis. Then together we sort through the possible causes and solutions. Quite often I have been confronted with angry accusations that my entire philosophy was bogus and selfish. Both of these are golden opportunities to reexamine my state of projection and imagination, as well as accept my fallibility, whether actual or merely as projected by other people. This is the prime time for me to observe my reactive need to defend myself, located in the overly-tender ego. I have to reassure myself that it’s okay to be flawed, and even okay to be resented and reviled, as long as it isn’t universally true.

What I’ve found is that the mirroring of other people is very helpful in discerning projections. On my own, I all-too-easily tolerate my own quirks without even realizing it. So I’m not the monkish type who gains the most from being isolated from the madding crowd. I need and warily welcome external criticism, even as I dread it.

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10/26/10

Sutra II:20

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Sutra 20 goes right to the crux of life and its unbearable paradox. To wit: our witnessing self, *purusa*, is unaffected by and unable to interact with *prakriti* at all, yet as it looks on, it becomes identified with the quasi-illusory ego, which *is* affected by and does interact with what goes on. We may intuit an immortal quality to the witness, but the ego is definitely short-lived, and its brevity imparts a degree of anguish to what should be pure delight. The original *mahendra* magic show.

Paul used a perfect metaphor for how the witness is thrown off balance by the ego. He pictured a blind man with a seeing-eye dog on a leash. The dog is capable of only a few very helpful functions, but the man imagines it is totally in charge. When the dog sees a squirrel, it tears after it and drags him all over the place. Soon it is out of control, zipping hither and yon in a mad dash. In one of Paul's favorite phrases, the ego/dog makes an excellent servant, but a very poor master.

The image that came to my mind was of the spectacular milk splash caught on camera back in the 1950s, looking for all the world like a royal crown. You can see similar ones on the net if you wish. Milk makes the effect more visible, but water acts in much the same way. Picture a puddle you are looking into. A raindrop falls in and a gorgeous splash flies up. For an instant you are captivated by its beauty, and then it merges back into the puddle or the lake it came from. Our ego is just like the splash: breathtakingly amazing for the duration of its brief existence, and then gone. We identify with it at our peril. It would be better to admire its existence but also keep in mind we are more than that.

Each individual splash begins with the physics to be a symmetrical and stately crown, but in actual life our puddle is filled with millions of splashes going off all the time. It's a monsoon deluge! The splashes overlap and impinge on one another, so the shape they are bumped and blasted into is deformed, or at least becomes much more complex than any simple form. No matter, we can't seem to help thinking that the splash is who we are, until we raise our vision from the puddle and look around.

Nitya mentions that our intellect is not actually in contact with the reality we seem to perceive, that we are only dealing with a replica constructed in our mind's eye. This ancient insight has been confirmed by modern science. Despite this, we all carry on as if we are seeing and interacting with reality as it is. Few are the yogis who take into account the possible discrepancies between our mental images and whatever reality lies beyond them. The images are so convincing we are easily deluded.

John wondered why knowing this mattered. Paul's image is perfect: we are being dragged all over town by a mad dog, driven insane by its own limited understanding, its kneejerk reactions and unbridled desires. Once we get a little distance on the situation, we can calm our doggie down. Doing so makes us more, not less, capable of taking a wise course through our life.

In keeping with the mystical side of our study, which is rapidly deepening, we closed with a meditation on the Gayatri Mantra, from the wonderful class captured on tape and converted to CD by Sraddha. She might still have some if you are interested. For a brief spell our flaring splashes settled down and we merged back into the ocean that is the source of all.

11/2/10

Sutras II: 21 & 22

The very being of the seen is for the sake of the seer alone.

Although it becomes non-existent for one whose purpose has been fulfilled, it does not cease to exist because of being common to others.

Although Nitya characterizes these snippets as being less important than the rest, between his comments and our class discussion we explored a very valuable aspect of spirituality. During our early development we are focused primarily on the world we perceive, and so there is a tendency to project our normal self-examination outwards. Where we should be assessing and disciplining ourselves, we may instead become caught up in analyzing and complaining about the behavior of others. These two sutras remind us to turn the arrow of our critical analysis back toward ourselves.

Nitya points out us that Patanjali's intent is to help us disentangle ourselves from psychological bondage, and it would be a mistake to take sutra 21 as a final word on the overall nature of the universe. Sutra 22 demonstrates Patanjali's awareness of the limited purview of his instruction. He wants us to take care of our own spiritual needs and not be distracted by the chaos through which we move and breathe.

The Book of Genesis, among other scriptural visions, is often ridiculed for presenting a flawed cosmology. Unfortunately this had led its votaries to try to defend it on the same grounds, thus pitting one illusion against another. Nitya's first guru, Dr. G.H. Mees explains this conundrum very well in his introduction to *The Key to Genesis*:

The first Chapter of Genesis has been generally assumed to present an account or theory of the creation of the material universe and of the evolution of life. For that reason it cannot

be a source of wonder that modern man, with his knowledge of material processes in the universe and of biology, has tended to look down upon Genesis as a poor product of an ignorant mentality. No doubt the people who knew the meaning of Genesis in past ages would have shaken their heads if they had come to learn of the modern way which tends to take everything at its face value alone and to interpret spiritual scriptures as if they were textbooks of astronomy, physics or biology. For Genesis does not describe cosmic and biological processes. Its purpose is more profound.

The aim of religion is to make man happier and to help him find peace and bliss, within himself and in his relation to the world without. It does not make anyone happier to know how the material world is created (assuming that such knowledge is possible at all) and how the physical processes take place and can be controlled. In connection with many aspects of science the world has learned to its cost to what extent control of matter can endanger and destroy peace and happiness. Atomic bombs and clouds are now looming in the sky threatening to shatter man's peace altogether and to cloud his horizon for evermore.

Modern man has largely lost interest in "established religion", because its dogmas, based almost wholly upon a literal interpretation of Scripture, offend his intelligence. He has become convinced that the great astronomers and physicists of these days have something to tell us that is more intelligent than the superstitious and outworn traditions which are contained, according to his belief, in Scripture. And who can blame him, as long as he does not know the deeper meaning hidden in the fundamental teachings of "Genesis"?

It is really astonishing how much we all get caught up in being our brother's keeper, instead of addressing our own needs and faults. The famous phrase from Genesis itself has even become

an exhortation to make that very mistake, that we should be our brother's keeper, although that is definitely not the original intent. 'Keeper' is another word for 'jailor', by the way, and that seems to be the subterranean motivation surfacing ubiquitously these days. Let's put everyone under lock and key, and that will solve all our problems.

I often tell the story of a friend who was going on and on to Nitya about some serious troubles in Africa. Nitya listened for a while and then said, "If that is how you feel, you should start walking there right now." The friend immediately got the point: what use is obsessing over some faraway malaise, which the world is always filled with, when you have so much to work on right here in front of you? "Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone," and all that. At least our local problems have more substance to them than the distant ones that are made up mainly of partisan news reports and imaginary simplifications.

Family members often figure into our most pressing problems, because our attachments to them go so deep they seem to be indistinguishable from us. Jan talked about her disappointment with her brother, with whom she was once very close and now is emotionally estranged. At some point she had to stop trying to repair the relationship and let it go, which helped her to free herself from a painful mindset. The very act of trying to let go caused her to face some of her own issues that were tied up with him, and as she worked through them she felt much lighter about how it had turned out.

Deb also continues to wrestle with her disappointing relationship with her brother. She was extremely close to him for a very long time, much more than most siblings, so the attachments are all the harder to release. Family ties are probably the most deeply lodged of all, and the solution has often been to cut them off entirely and walk away. Sannyasa in one sense means dying to your blood family, and that has come to be seen as a keynote of

spiritual exploration. But yoga is more about using our problems as illumination and inspiration for our ongoing work. Nitya says that specifically here:

Patanjali confines himself to that world of psychological significance, and to the study and evaluation of it in terms of a person's happiness or misery. That is why it is said that the perceptual world of nature is what is given to the individual spirit to experience for its own meaningful search and progression into ultimate fulfillment.

In other words, what we encounter is like a veiled reflection of our own developmental needs, and we strive to decode the mystery with penetrating contemplation of the situations in which we are embroiled. We should welcome life as an ongoing revelation of who we are.

For this reason, the challenges of life are characterized as blessings in disguise, and without them we would stagnate. They press us to seek for answers and adjust ourselves to their demands. But as Deb said, we'd prefer to do without that kind of blessing. The tamasic parts of our brain would just as soon be spared any challenges. Spirituality is not possible without intentionality. There is a widespread belief that simply ignoring problems is spiritual, but is the proverbial ostrich with its head buried in the sand the epitome of wisdom or simply ludicrous?

The key point here is that we may not be able to correct anyone else, but if we are brave enough we can allow ourselves to be corrected by our own intelligence. If our problems are detached from reality, our fantasy life may lead us into craziness. Just as work keeps us grounded, the world continually blesses us with innumerable challenges to keep us ever awake and attentive.

In the light of this insight, Bill quoted poet Gary Davis as saying, "There is nothing to be done. So let's get started!" I

mentioned the parallel Thai adage: “Life is short. So we must move very, very slowly.” Haste makes waste, as does vapid inactivity. Any impatience we feel is generated by our hopes and expectations bouncing off the world around us, distorted by the imperfections of the mirror. But if we can settle into a grounded state within, we will be more effective in everything we do, because the flaws of life will have lost their ability to hold us back.