

2022 Patanjali Class  
2/15/22  
7 – Yoga Letter Six

The sixth Letter is a standout, even among its outstanding fellows. In Part II, Susan contributed an important page of afterthoughts, and there's some very touching material from the Old Notes. Don't miss the long-forgotten account of Jim S. in it.

Deb was carried back in memory by the beautiful image that opens the Letter, of being in an Expo (remember those?) in the 1960s where there was an enormous transparent sphere you went inside to examine the displays. It gave a sense of vastness, like the imaginary sphere of perception each of us is at the center of, and our psychic fountain is the pulse of pranic energy that we bring with us. We breathe and the prana comes to us: an energy pulsating within our enormous transparent universe.

With this image Nitya invites us to really ponder the flexibility and fluidity of our true being, to get over the rigid fixations with which we are unwittingly armor-clad, before proceeding further. Then he characterizes the way we positively inhabit our life, growing into preconfigured structures that foster opportunities for development. Converting it to present tense, he writes:

Although the rudiments of the structure are there, those physiological parts assume their structural role only when a demand is placed on them to function in a certain way. In this manner, a person evolves both physical and mental coordinations of several structures, each having a relevant function.

The class was invited to share ways they noticed that this has already happened to them, which is actually a quite difficult

exercise, because the process is so seamless we hardly notice it. I thought it worth exploring because the obvious examples are from early in life, like breathing, walking, speech and puberty. But we aren't finished works of art by age 14. The adult brain first arrives (if ever) at around 23 for women and 25 for men, and, with brain imaging, there are several clearly observable stages of neural bursts spread over the rest our lifespan. The "midlife crisis" is substantially due to a quantum leap in neurons, and another one occurs in our sixties. Moreover, we don't need to make a quantum leap. Modest holding actions are beautiful too. All through, we are capable of further unfoldment. What could be more fun than that?

The Grandmother effect has been much admired lately; one article can be accessed [here](#). Ideally, in the long run there is the conversion of knowledge to wisdom, as described in the Reistad-Long article in last week's Notes.

It's important to realize that as old people we still brim with exciting possibilities, and they are enhanced by the quieting down of so many needs and desires that naturally afflicted us earlier on. This makes room for another layer of ability later in life. The class prompt is to think of something in your life you hadn't suspected, that was latent and developing in you, but you weren't ready for it to appear yet. When it shows up, you can trace back through the evidence of its progression.

For instance, for most of my life I thought (like many disaffected youths) that I didn't have any value in this world, I didn't belong and didn't want to, yet around twenty-five years ago an accepting energy started flowing into me, as an extra ability that I had not used before, but had been there all along. I'm not much of a teacher, but could be considered a sharer of interesting ideas. I have developed an internally-focused interest that is actually the most satisfying part of my life now, and it's a welcome relief to no longer doubt the value of my existence, to be alive and vibrant, not beset by doubts and subversive ideas about myself. Never fear: I

can do that and still accept my manifold faults.

Another, easy example for me can be seen in a couple of lines in my John Spiers horoscope:

So right at the start the advice of the map would be to curtail activity as far as possible, and to direct this vitality carefully to your goal in life. That goal would seem to be the arts generally and writing especially. There are all the indications here of literary ability and great originality, almost too much, perhaps, in a revolutionary sense.... Being so close to the Ascendant, writing will take a powerful place in your life.

This was 50 years ago, and it was the one thing in the remarkably prescient reading that I was sure was totally wrong. In those days I was enamored of nonverbal activities, and considered words antithetical to them. I snorted in derision at writing, and was sure I would never do it. And yet, it came true, very naturally, after a long gestation.

Andy spoke about how the advice in the Letter is relevant to the whole of creation also. We tend to have a fairly static idea of what that is, because we're busy labeling everything, so it all seems solid to us. Yet everything is dynamically in flux, and maybe we don't notice it because it's moving too slowly. Everything is heading toward a karmic destiny that isn't fully expressed yet. If we pause, we can imagine this incredible movement.

Andy has a new habit he picked up from Nancy Y of ringing a bell before his breakfast. Now he first rings his bell, and imagines the karmic maturation of the food and everything else around him. He becomes more aware of the physicality of the room, how it's somehow in motion. He enjoys giving it his profound attention. It's a vibrant vision of the world, busy arriving and moving around him.

In the same vein, Deb talked about Jill Lepore’s tremendous history of the US: *These Truths*. (The title is from the line in the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,” etc.) We’re listening to an audio version, now in the period of a growing revolutionary movement in the 1700s, much of it inspired by slave and native rebellions and revolts against settlers, and also the burgeoning of the anti-slavery movements—fascinating accounts not included in the standard histories, for sure. Deb’s point was that many of the people agitating for change were aware that the goals they dreamed of would not be accomplished in their lifetimes, but they didn’t give up on that account. They kept up the struggle for justice and kindness. There was substantial support for those goals brewing, and it’s inspiring to have it brought to light by Lepore’s research.

Andy agreed that many things we want are slow to show up, just like the discovery of some latent trait emerging in yourself. The origin of those proclivities can be very old, traced back to your ancestors. He wondered about the tendencies in his relatives, going back for generations, how some of them might be contributing something that is just now maturing in his nature.

I have thought of that too, how the hopes and dreams of my forebears were so much more constrained in the past. Their lives were severely circumscribed, and they had little room to outwardly express progressive ideals, other than perhaps a rant in church. I imagine them grateful that later generations can actualize much more of what was stirring in their hearts. I feel it as a kind of obligation to be excellent on their behalf, and I don’t obsess on whether I’m exactly getting it the way they wanted. I’m sure I’m not. The point is to act in freedom, and however we are able to do that, the universe is bound to breathe a sigh of relief.

Nitya often compared us to a developing rose bush, emerging from a seed containing all its possibilities, sequentially expressed as sprout and root, branches and leaves, and eventually flowers,

followed by fruits containing more seeds—how hip is that! Rose hips. It's especially important at our "advanced" ages to realize the seed we started as is still unfolding in us.

Andy affirmed that with anything we naturally love, expressing it is joyful. It doesn't seem like a burden to try out expanded consciousness. In a book, it may sound like a job or a chore, but when you think about the moments you do it, it's so nice. Light. It's like spending infinite time in bliss, in the root of your being.

Regarding what he calls "patiently programming your own restructuring and re-functioning," Nitya recommends:

Right away start your business of glorifying the approaching moment and infusing it with all the beauty of yourself so that it will become a permanent treasure of your past and the continuous joy of all around you.

This is an echo of his beloved finale of *That Alone*, verse 20, which includes:

The passing moments of our lives are to be made lively and rich. One thing I have learned in my life is that the moment that comes will not come again. It's gone. You can see the moment approaching. Receive it with open arms. Glorify it by enriching it with your joy, finding a new value, a new sense of direction in life. Have a renewed sense of wonder. Thus, that moment becomes eternalized in your life, it is a moment to be remembered and to be proud that you could live it so well. Then you can move on to the next moment; this one has already been immortalized in you. What you have achieved in that moment is your eternal repository. Wonderful! You feel fulfilled. You are filled with gratitude: "Oh, I lived this moment so wonderfully!" This is your own life, in this very world, with all these amenities given to you in the here and now.

With this understanding you are eager to race to the next moment because it is going to be wonderful, going to be beautiful. It will yield so much. You see the promise of the future already in it. It is going to be still more wonderful than what you have already lived. Then you pass on to the next with joy and grace. The day opens up with such beauty, such promise. There is nothing like life, nothing like this world, a world where you can make friends, a world where you can create beautiful things, a world where you can share beauty with others and where you can make others part of your own self. A world where there is such an abundance of love and sharing. (146-7)

While the good Guru is weighing in on this, here's the quote of the day, from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

Any person who turns to the Khila Khanda of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is assigned a duty which will benefit all blessed people who are endowed with pure intelligence to decipher the paradoxes and enigmas of life, and at the same time, to be deeply devoted to the Cause beyond causes. The message of this mantra is that the Supreme is in love with every part of itself, and every part has to reciprocate that love by furthering the message of the Vedas, which can bring one to the silence of wonder that washes away the bitterness of the phenomenon which is superimposed on the noumenon. (BU Vol. III, 183-4)

Paul is regularly inspired by the openness of children to delight in the world around them, but the part that scares him is how vulnerable we are to conditioning. He was brought up with the religious attitude that you are not citizen of world, you're supposed to escape it and get somewhere else. Your real life belongs to the future, because the world you inhabit is evil. Implicit in that

attitude is abandoning the purity of childhood, as it's an affront to God.

Paul still longs for the miracle of the indescribable. He knows our memories are partial and prejudiced, and wondered how you derive your perspective from the whole, as an alternative. The whole is so vast that he can't help placing value on his partial experiences, on what has been gained by his past efforts. Even so, he suspects partiality has inherent untruth or bias that creates a dysfunction.

The key here is to not feel that, no matter what, you're doing something wrong, which is a holdover guilt trip from a restrictive upbringing, religious or otherwise. Nitya is trying to help us overthrow that self-inhibition so we can experience our life more fully. Humans are inevitably partial, and we should accept that. When you feel you are having a partial experience, you can make it less partial by being as inclusive as possible. Figure out what you haven't included yet. There is never a point where we should say, I'm totally aware of everything. God is advertised that way, but being godly doesn't mean we'll ever have the capacity to be all-knowing. There will always be unoccupied room in our little nutcases.

Susan spoke of walking in the woods with her friend Gretchen, about fifteen years ago, on a beautiful summer day. They were going along as they often did, talking and looking around. They stopped at a bench for a rest, and Susan brought their attention to the moment — the beautiful trees, the warm air, the special feelings, the passing of time, and their aliveness in it. She still remembers that moment more than all the other walks they took, still vividly etched in her brain.

From that happy image, Deb brought us around to the original prompt, about our latent potentials arriving at the right moment for us to engage them in our vertical development. After the chaos of the Sixties and an introduction to India and LSD,

through Nitya and Scott, respectively, she ended up going to graduate school and becoming a teacher. Initially she was motivated by changing society—all the rage in those days—and she quit after her first year of real teaching, ready to abandon the whole business. Soon after, she spent a summer in California with Nitya and other friends, including Peter O, and one day they were all in the car and somebody asked her a question. As she elaborated at length about it, she became aware of “loud listening” coming from Nitya, up in the front seat. She asked him what he was up to and he replied, “I’m just listening to you talking about what a teacher you are—this is what teaching can be, and you are naturally a teacher.” It started to alter how she thought about teaching, more as a natural ability than as a way to save the world. Her many jobs after, as she put it, “were beautiful expressions for me, since they provided the opportunity for me to be me. It was an unfolding that came at the right time.”

Jan had just received a box of letters she wrote to a friend in Junior High School, before and after moving out of the US to Bolivia. Rereading them gave her a fresh look at herself as a young woman moving into puberty and out of the country. She was pleased to see her cheerful, good natured, chatty self, going into this unknown situation, and she noticed inklings of things on the longer path of development, finding their way forward in her life.

Andy offered that we are seldom conscious of the things we can nurture, and what we can’t, and he finds that he accidentally nurtures his development more than making clear decisions. Which doesn’t always work so well. One of Nitya’s points might be that we can possibly be more aware, consciously aware, how every moment involves a choice. Yet perhaps that can be inhibiting if overdone.

We ended on a blissful note of silence—the perfect mixed metaphor, by the way—allowing the encouraging perceptions of the Letter sink deep into our leaves and flowers.

After class, the Universe weighed in with a snippet from an interview with Roberto Calasso, a well-known writer about myths, including *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*:

Interviewer

You write in *The Marriage*, “We enter the mythical when we enter the realm of risk, and myth is the enchantment we generate in ourselves at such moments.” What does this mean?

Calasso

This comes from Plato, from the *Phaedo*. Socrates says that precisely. Within the realm of myth, you wander into this danger zone, and that is the zone of the unknown. What you can do there is, first of all, utter or sing a *Carmen*, a word that is usually translated as “poem” but primarily means “enchantment.” That is the best weapon at our disposal.

Interviewer

But when do we enter the realm of myth?

Calasso

We are already there. As Sallustius the Neoplatonist wrote, the world itself is a myth. So no matter what we are doing, we are in the midst of a fable. And fables are by definition what enchant us. The only question is whether we perceive it or not.

## Part II

Susan sent her well-incubated thoughts this morning:

Wow. What a beautiful letter that was and a wonderful discussion last night. I woke up just now bubbling with it all in my brain. My first thought was how amazing it is that just attending to each

moment not only brings along the whole web of humanity and the world but it also so effectively and sweetly takes me out of the stuck place in myself. Amazing. Unexplainable in its way, though Nitya did a very lovely job of this in the beginning of Letter Six. Reading it again, it makes more sense to me.

There are many ways to dive into a moment. I loved Andy's example of the bell. In a slightly different way, I manage (sometimes!) to pause before a meal and think about where each food on my plate may have started on its journey to me and how many hands it must have passed through — the aduki beans started with a farmer getting up early, working the land. Then that farmer planted the seeds (dried beans) for new plants. The plants were tended by many probably, then picked by many, then sorted and washed and transported by many. Then they were unpacked and sorted again. So many hands for just one thing on my plate. And if there is also rice, and four different spices and squash and collards, So many hands! So much energy, movement, intention. We are all dependent on each other. It feels good to think about this and about all the people who are actually linking hands with you in a way. This is similar to the place (in Atmo?) where Nitya talks about thinking of all the builders and workers that put together a building and how they all continue to be present in a way.

When sitting in a moment and trying to make the most of it, sometimes it can terrify me too. There is the wonder of our planet and its miraculous presence in our great universe and there is also the terrifying realization that it can all go away. Just as Andy talked about last night, we are not on the solid ground that we think we are (well, he said it differently perhaps) but instead things are changing, morphing, decaying, always moving along. There are threats of war, the super volcano under Yellowstone, global warming, fascism and there are also the natural processes of

change in organic material. And aging! Ack! But looking at it in a larger perspective, as I dive into a moment, there is great peace too. If I were a miserable refugee on the island of Lesbos, I might have a harder time finding that peace. I feel so fortunate! But I am just trying to stay in this moment, right here, right now.

I realized that the part of the letter that was confusing to me was the sentence after the part that I read on page 347: "Although you are a reservoir of enormous energy and capabilities, this alienation humiliates you every time you try to make a reentry into your own center." I wasn't sure about his word, "humiliates." I don't feel that way about diving inside, only the wish that I would come around to it more often! Let me know if you have more of an explanation about this. [She sent this to Deb and Scott, but all are welcome to contribute.]

Deb: Yes, I also paused at the word humiliate. What I guess is that it indicates that we know we aren't in our deepest place or center and there is regret and embarrassment about that...we know in our hearts that we have forsaken something essential.

Also, another thing from a Nitya letter to me was that when I am in a difficult position, I should never trust any reason or explanation given to me by my surface mind. Whatever is given is the product of duality and ego-interest and it stands for a particular point of view. Instead, we should silently immerse ourselves in the wordless core and out of that may arise a more whole and truthful response. Not always easy. And maybe not in the time frame we want.

Scott: We talked in class how most of our associates resist our centering, wanting to keep us at the periphery. Their urgency to keep us "eccentric" includes shaming and humiliating, among other techniques. You bring up another possibility, Susan: we also

humiliate ourselves to remain outward-directed, wondering What right do we have to sink into ourselves? It isn't thoughtful or respectful of others. The fact that you don't feel this as much these days means you have overcome this feature of younger life. Remember, Nitya was writing these Letters for relative novices. Take heart that it doesn't all apply directly to us oldsters anymore! Yet, it's good to remember it's a major impediment for many people, and has been for us too.

Human interdependence is exalted in *That Alone* especially memorably at the end of verse 19, worth citing again:

Our human heritage is molded by the brilliant thoughts of all these wonderful people from all around the world: the poets, storytellers, those who made the myths and legends, the inventors, composers, scientists and discoverers. Whatever they have contributed is still present in our lives, guiding us, teaching us, and helping us every moment. But they are not here. Only the friend next to you is here, the friend who exemplifies and incorporates all those wonderful qualities and insights. And we can all share this tremendous inheritance and even more, with each other, to make life an ecstatic and joyful experience.

Even when you do something as simple as sip a cup of coffee or tea, think about what you are doing. Your morning tea begins in some far-off land, where very poor people get up at four o'clock. They crowd onto a battered bus, then walk to the plantation where ripe leaves are waiting to cut into their fingers. Leeches climb on them to drink their blood. All day long they fill their baskets, then they go home to a meager supper. The tea leaves are hauled to huge mills employing hundreds of people, where they are cleaned, dried, and made into the kind of blend you want. Then it is put in tins or boxes, and sent by truck down the mountains and out to the coast. The shipyard is filled with more poor laborers, who load the tea onboard ships. Then across the ocean it comes to your port. The distributors parcel and package it and send it to your local market, where you buy it and take it home. Thus the

whole world participates in one cup of tea. If you like sugar with your tea, there is another world of production and distribution behind that spoonful of white grains you tip into the cup. So should you not look into the numinous aspect of just a cup of tea?

If you become sensitive to the numinous aspect of life, gratitude will naturally fill your whole being. Each time you put a morsel of food in your mouth or sip your tea or coffee, you will become so grateful to the corporate life of mankind for giving you so much for so little effort. You will see nothing but the unity underlying the many forms of the world. Great will be your joy to share, to give, to receive. Then you won't fight. The belligerency comes in where you see only your own personal interests—"my home," "my family," or just "my self." The superficial form of your self interest should be subsumed in the ocean of the general interest, and you should feel the world is your country, your home. That humanity is your family, filled with your brothers and sisters.

The Guru wants us to really feel this: to stand united, to find peace and become peacemakers. We have to first be peacemakers in our own lives. We bring peace to ourselves. By putting all the peaces together, we make peace with the world. If you fragment it, you lose it. So let us gather all the peaces together in one meaning, in one divine thread of love and compassion and understanding. (140-1)

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Excerpts from 7/1/8 Class Notes:

The commentary begins by establishing us in the center of our being. In place of the cumbersome construct we have come to imagine ourselves to be, we are an amorphous locus of consciousness pulsating between our core and a spherical universe of awareness. Once we're comfortable remaining undefined, we can begin to see that our identities, far from giving us existence

and meaning, actually screen us off from what surrounds us. They are inhibitory factors, breeding separation and consequent mistrust. Self-description is stultifying.

Beings who are disconnected with their living core tend to congregate in groups of similarly disaffected beings. There is a specious relief from discomfort by imagining yourself to be accepted by peers. It takes your mind off of the internal disconnectedness and substitutes an imaginary wholeness. Religious and political groups, gangs and cults all draw their energy from the quiet desperation of disaffected human beings seeking an external cure for their loss of self-knowledge. But members always have to be on guard lest they fail to follow the myriad unwritten laws that define the group, and the group must excrete anyone who doesn't play the game or at least appear to. It's a game that time and again turns very ugly.

Nitya offers us a sane alternative: to dive deeply into our essential amorphousness, and then gently begin to build a new structure based on intelligently chosen, inclusive values. It doesn't have to be the best model ever, but just something you can easily accept and implement. Something that springs from within and isn't just following somebody else's directions. He exhorts us to put our best effort forward in meeting the next moment as it comes to us, cherishing it with a loving attitude and appreciating it for all its richness. This can transform our experience of living dramatically for the better.

Deb started our conversation off with a story about one of Nitya's visits in the mid-1970s, when he was traveling with Swami Baskaranya (a.k.a. Swami Baskin-and-Robbins) and a regular Indian householder gent whose name escapes us. In those days Nitya was spending a lot of time at the Center Family in La Center, Washington, which was a classic freak scene of that era, meaning something like a Puritan vision of hell and damnation.... The point of Deb's story was that Swami Baskaranya, having an open mind

about who he was, easily meshed with the scene and seemed to have no trouble participating with it. The ordinary fellow, on the other hand, was totally freaked out. He strove mightily to hold onto his conventional beliefs, which only reinforced his separateness. In consequence he was nervous and unhappy and also unable to share any of his vision with the youngsters at the Center.

Deb's story precipitated an avalanche of similar thoughts about how we typically feel like outsiders or insiders, depending on how we define ourselves in respect to what we encounter. Several of the stories shared a similar element, that first we have to make a clean break from our attachments before we can be truly free in relating even to what we are or were attached to. Brenda and Anita told of leaving their Christian denominations, but later being able to be friends with some of their members once the attempts to restore them to the faith had subsided. Scotty related how he one day realized that he was an outsider in his own neighborhood where he had grown up, but after he came to terms with it and no longer defined himself as an outsider, he could communicate positively with those he saw there.

I related a story about my friend Jim, who could be called a natural yogi (he'd prefer to be called a Catholic). He was one of the guiding forces of the oral history department at the Oregon Historical Society, dedicating many years to recording and transcribing the histories of prominent labor leaders and other progressives from the state's past. After retirement he continued to donate a great deal of time there as a volunteer. Then a couple of years back the Society hired a new coordinator of volunteer services, and she took an immediate dislike to Jim and "fired" him, even banning him from any involvement with the program. Of course Jim was rankled, but he didn't get angry or vengeful. He accepted it in his heart and forgave the woman with his trademark elfin laugh. Eventually the interloper moved on, and Jim was able to begin contributing again, though more on the fringe than he

might have liked. Then one day a woman came up to him and said, “You’re Jim Strassmeier, aren’t you?” “Well, yes.” “You are part of my earliest memory.” He had no idea who she was, so she went on, “When I was four years old, you were holding my grandfather when he died. I was there in the room.” It all came rushing back to him from many years before. Always a helpful soul, Jim had attended his friend’s death and had been holding him in his arms when he gave his last breath. Thinking back, he could just barely remember that there was indeed a little girl standing by the bedside. “Ohhhh, yes. I remember now!” They quickly became warm friends and it was clear that she idolized him from her memory. “And what are you doing here?” he asked her. “I’m the new coordinator of volunteers.”

So sometimes Fate blesses us with a clean break, and sometimes we have to make our own Fate. We very likely have to endure what Nitya aptly calls humiliation when we stop playing the surface games and become loyal to our own realized values. But for those who can endure the humiliation, breaking out is a great blessing whatever the potentiating cause. And in the mysterious harmony of the universe, justice may yet come around to give us a big hug and a kiss, though this must never be our motivation. It can only come when it’s least expected.

The idea of humiliation also brought up floods of memories for everyone, with stories so poignant I don’t dare relate them here. Heartbreaking, really. Everyone seems to have experienced rude shocks to their natural love of life. Those humiliating us are often doing it because they don’t know any better and think that forcing us to hide in the center of the herd will make us less likely to be eaten by the predators that they imagine are all around us. That’s true to a small degree, but milling around in the herd all we’ll breathe is dust and all we’ll see is the tails of our fellow sheep. To really find ourselves we have to break out and take a look around from a high vantage point. We find our center by being ex-centric

to the herd, and we are ex-centric to ourselves when we seek our center in the herd. So dare to be amorphous, to be yourself. All it takes is courage, determination and effort, plus a sunny dose of optimism. Nitya wishes us good luck!

— Post script: Jim volunteered with the Historical Society for many more years under the new coordinator, and produced many more important oral histories. He even did one with me, which was a very enjoyable project. It's available [here](#).

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Yoga Shastra study group response, 2008:

Nitya is such a kind fellow! If you don't read between the lines, you almost think he's endorsing option #1, hanging out with groups of like-minded eccentrics, so that your own eccentricity seems "normal." History teaches us, however, just how deranged such groups tend to become. Of course, only the weirdest make the news, while the milder versions slip past unnoticed by the outside world. But this game is fraught with danger, because such groups ratify and amplify our faults. This carries us farther and farther from our true center.

The "tyranny of the majority" is something that spirituality aims to redress via individual empowerment. We are called to bravely identify with our true inner nature, against all pressures to conform to groups that prize various forms of ignorance. This only appears like the easier path. Once past the door, the pressure to conform rapidly becomes hellish. I hope I don't need to cite the worst examples of recent times, and that you are all familiar with what I'm talking about.

Nitya encouraged his followers to not hide themselves away in caves or cults, but participate in life to the fullest. In a streambed

there are only round rocks, except for the ones that have just fallen in. He told us we were like rough rocks that would be rounded off in the course of time, as the stream of events rubbed and bounced us against other rocks. I have often had recourse to this analogy—being a very rough rock myself—and have seen firsthand how the parts that protrude the farthest, that are the most eccentric, are precisely where the natural bumping occurs most often. Since our ego identifies with those parts that stick out, that make us unique and different in some ways, we initially feel like we are losing our best qualities when we crash up against an inertial culture. But lo and behold, we don't become less ourselves but more, as the ego projections are rubbed away.

This natural process of centering through encounters does not occur if we encyst ourselves in protective cocoons, only if we expose ourselves to the pounding of interactions with a dynamic universe.

I admit that shearing off our eccentricities isn't the primary way to become centered. We should first become centered by uniting with the Absolute or some similar high value, and then the eccentricities begin to fall away of their own accord. But when you have as many idiosyncrasies as I do (and many people do!) it doesn't hurt to employ several techniques at once.