

## Darsanamala Combined Class Notes 2023

### **IX Yoga Darsana, Transpersonal Union**

#### **Verse One**

That which always unites and also gets united with *cidatma*,  
which is in the form of restraining mind, that is praised as yoga.

10/9/7

The Yoga Darsana proper begins with a structural orientation. The exact wording of the verse is tricky. Nataraja Guru's version is helpful:

That which always unites the mind  
With the Self that is consciousness in essence,  
and also gets united with it  
And which is of the form of restraint,  
That is praised as Yoga.

The restraint spoken of here is in part a tip of the hat to Patanjali, who literally wrote the book on yoga. *Cidatma* is the Self that is consciousness in essence, otherwise known as the reasoning Self. So we have an image of a bipolar affiliation between the limited mind and the total consciousness, brought about through a form of restraint. With Narayana Guru the restraint is not via any mechanical system of exercises, but through a mutual attraction that naturally leads the mind to withdraw from any and all obstacles.

To highlight the distinction between more morose forms of restraint and the Guru's ecstatic version, Nitya speaks extensively

of *lila*, divine sport, in his commentary, which is one of his very best, by the way. He assures us that sport is the best model of yoga. In play there is no extraneous force involved. We are effortlessly drawn into a wholehearted participation in what we love. While we play our games we are fully absorbed in them, and when they are over we pass on to the next game without regret.

John noted how nowadays sport has become a deadly serious business, just one more high stakes money-making scheme. Moni added that all of our life has become like that. Where we should be participating in this wondrous world in joy, we are often anxious and unhappy, fearing the worst. It is so bizarre that the most comfortable and well-off society the world has ever known is rapidly descending into a maelstrom of doubt and hysteria. Almost no one knows how to play any more. Even food and water are considered deadly hazards to life. And sex—don't even mention it!

The mania arises because of the bifurcation of a seamless, unitive universe into subject and object. We become isolated subjects awash in a vast sea of otherness, made up of objects. The solution is to sit quietly and take a clearheaded look at the present situation, to look at the polarity from a transcendental perspective. Then not only can we make better decisions, we are released from the painful squeeze of being identified with our superficial aspects.

When we sit, we can visualize a subject and object on either side, with lines of convergence coming together in our central core. Doing this, it is easy to know we are much more than either aspect, and also that subject and objects are both subsets of the *cidatma*, the total consciousness in which we are enthusiastic participants. When the convergence is upward towards the intelligence of the *turiya* there is a release through comprehension. The convergence can also take place downwards into the unconscious depths, where the ensemble is united as a unit into *samskaras* and eventually *vasanas*.

So, when we relate in a stimulus-response fashion to events, we grow our seedbed of conditionings ever more prolifically. We are called by the Guru to bring the light of conscious awareness onto the scene, which is like pulling the weeds from that same seedbed. Those vasanas are sooner or later going to sprout and carry us into their version of reality over and over. Each time it happens is called a unit of modulation, and our unexamined life is a sleepwalk through modulation after modulation. Our meditation in the Yoga Darsana is to wake up from this. As Nitya puts it:

Although [a unit of modulation] happens as a self-deluding hypnotic function, the yogi intensifies the thoroughness of watching the full round of modulation so that he can free that bit of consciousness from being identified as subject or as object.... The result is a total transcendence effected there and then even when the flow of energy does take place. (399)

This last bit is very important. Restraint is often thought of as bottling up the energy flow to prevent vasanas from popping up, but this merely represses them and makes them go underground, so to speak. Then they get weird and gain power, potentially erupting in horrific fashion. Here we are advised to live our lives and do what we do, but bring intelligent awareness to bear on it all the time. Okay, we'll settle for most of the time.... How about some of the time? Well, however often you can do it, you are doing true yoga, and it frees at least that one slice of consciousness from repression. When you really know something, you really know it. There is no worry that you'll forget. If something keeps happening that you don't like, you haven't understood it properly yet, that's all. You need to bring more focused consciousness to bear.

The Yoga Darsana turns a corner in our study. From full manifestation and the refinement of thought and action, culminating in devotional conjunction with light, we now begin a

progressive withdrawal. In Darsanamala, Narayana Guru presents a complete picture of all life, and bowing out is an integral part of it. The yoga aspect retains a correlation with life as we live and love it, while the nirvana part to follow walks off into the sunset, as it were. This verse where Nitya equates yoga with lila, play or sport, is poised on the cusp, and represents the highest realization brought to bear on life. What this means is that we should always remember that until our death, withdrawal is a temporary affair. We meditate to learn and grow, and we come back frequently to full participation. This simultaneously enlightens us for living and prepares us for a peaceful transition when the final curtain falls.

## Part II

The Yoga Darsana has some very complex commentaries that are going to strain our brains a bit. To get them in training, I have pulled some excerpts pertaining to the first verse from *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*, Nataraja Guru's version of Darsanamala commentary. This is definitely extra credit material, not for the faint of heart. I won't muck it up by adding any comments of my own, but hopefully these matters will be reflected in future notes, with maybe even some feedback from others. I'll begin with Narayana Guru's own elucidation, which you may remember is included in ISOA:

The correct meaning of the word *yoga* is the union of the mind, when rid of all dross of nescience, with the Self that is consciousness in essence. This is *yoga* or union. The mind has in it many activities which come under nescience, etc. When all such activities have been countered by the means that have been indicated in the wisdom texts, and when the mind is thus made to unite with the pure Ultimate Self, such a branch of knowledge is called Yoga. The radical *yuj* is used in texts as meaning *samadhi* in the expression *yuj-samadhau*

(union in *samadhi* by Panini, the great ancient grammarian and linguistic authority), and we are therefore justified in treating Yoga and *samadhi* as pertaining to the same subject. The saying of Patanjali in one of his opening sutras that Yoga is the restraint of the mind, as well as the definition of Valmiki in the *Yoga-Vasishtha* which says that Yoga consists of the act or means of tranquilizing the mind, all indicate the same meaning of Yoga. Because Yoga mainly consists of restraint of the mind, it is referred to as consisting of this restraint in general terms. It is not enough, however, that the activities of the mind should be merely mechanistically restrained (in a unilateral sense), but it is also to be understood that the mind when restrained should be constantly joined to the Self that is pure consciousness in essence (*cidatma*). What is more, such a union should also take place so as to justify the name of Yoga properly understood. (ISOA, Vol. II, 383)

And now to Nataraja Guru, who titled this Darsana “Meditation”:

Quantitative and qualitative aspects between matter and mind reveal the same twin structure compensating each other and having a complementary or reciprocal relationship between them. When they attain full equality and mutual transparency of status, as in pure mathematics, they become cancelable against each other. The result is an absolute value factor corresponding to *nirvana* (absorption) found in the final chapter.

Before such a full absorption can be considered we must first of all consider a form of meditation capable of effecting the reciprocal interaction or union between two aspects of the personality. These aspects are *manas* (mind) and *cidatma* (the

Self that is consciousness in essence), as used by Narayana Guru in this chapter. Quantitative aspects have a horizontal reference and correspond to the somatic side of the *persona*, while the *cidatma* has a vertical qualitative reference corresponding to the psychic aspect of the same absolute *persona*. The complementarity of contemplative life found in the previous chapter implied the same two selves. Here the two counterparts come together more intimately than before, and it is preferable to refer to this relationship as a natural reciprocity rather than a mere complementarity.

Quantitative and qualitative factors coexist in one and the same object, as for example, in a red hot iron ball where heat inheres in the inert matter. This is also true of the flame of a lamp, the song of a bird, the perfume of a flower, and the sound of a bell where qualitative and quantitative factors coexist without conflict or contradiction. The qualitative factor can even be called the soul of the quantitative factor. The taste of water has been referred to in the Bhagavad Gita (VII, 8) as belonging to the context of the Absolute when understood in this structural way of a vertico-horizontal correlation of quantitative and qualitative aspects. Time, as pure duration, is a qualitative factor when compared to space, although both may belong unitively and schematically to the same symbolic structural context. At the core of the notion of the Absolute there is always a vertical parameter relating all value-worlds or ensembles into a systematic series of sets for purposes of serving the contemplative end of human happiness.

Whether we think of a somatic self or a psychic self, a reciprocal interaction between them is always easy to imagine. The meditation or Yoga of this chapter is to be understood on the basis of such a possibility, which can be actively or consciously cultivated by any aspirant to final liberation. The

Yoga of this chapter is therefore to be understood essentially as a correlation of the psychic and somatic aspects of the personality, and not merely as a correlation of brute aspects of practice as such. (Vol. II, 354-5)

The mind has many levels and the term *vasana* (incipient memory factors) refers to its lowest or most negative memory aspect. We have seen already that in the first three chapters of this work there is reference to this memory factor together with other aspects of mental life such as *caitanya* (vital consciousness), *manas* (mind) and *sankalpa* (willing). *Vasana*, *caitanya*, *manas* and *sankalpa* mark the various positive degrees that a mind can accommodate within its scope, ranging from the negative to the positive. In the present chapter we again find that the mind as in Chapter 3 is directly under reference. This mind is supposed here to enter into relation with something higher than itself, which is referred to as *cidatma* (reasoning Self). The ontological Self and the negative factors of the mind such as incipient memories (*vasanas*) have been considered in the first three chapters and are now left behind. (367)

As long as the *vasanas* (incipient memory factors) persist in any individual case of a *yogi*, his efforts to purify them have to be incessantly and willfully maintained. When by a double negation the *yogi* has risen higher, he always correctly keeps his verticalized orientation leading to the higher goal. The importance of discipline then recedes into the background. It is only when the *vasanas* (incipient memory factors) have been sufficiently purified that any kind of respectable Yoga may be imagined as taking place between such a purified mind and its own reasoning Self (*cidatma*) as its positive counterpart. Any respectable Yoga has to treat these two counterparts as having a

homogeneity of epistemological status between them, without which true Yoga cannot take place at all. (373-4)

The popular version of Yoga often presupposes that within some months or years of cultivating the body through breathing exercises or postures, one is brought nearer to some kind of high and culminating value resembling *samadhi* (peace), *satori* (the Zen Buddhist version of *samadhi*) or *nirvana* (final absorption or emancipation). Freedom in the correct sense is a goal to be reached by periods of practice conceived as units of successive lives sometimes almost implying a beginningless eternity in time. Quickly obtainable results which are meant only to apply to transient and very practical values are mentioned in Yoga literature. But the true Yoga is the pure verticalized version of practical and quickly accomplished Yoga. (395)

Here the intention is to give a revised definition of Yoga in terms of the restraint (*nirodha*) found in *Yoga-Sutras* of Patanjali. There is, however, a slight revaluation to be noticed. Instead of referring to restraint of all the functions or the mind, there is a special kind of control exercised over horizontal tendencies. This is so that the mind will gain a vertical and positive orientation enabling it to meet on equal terms with its more positive counterpart, the (*cidatma*), with which it is ready to unite, to descend into its arms, as it were. The two-sided reciprocity implied between the two poles of the total structural situation, globally understood, constitutes the delicate revaluation and restatement that we have to note in this revised definition of Yoga. (409-10)

\* \* \*



1/16/18

Yoga Darsana verse 1

That which always unites  
and also gets united with *cidatma*,  
which is in the form of restraining mind,  
that is praised as yoga.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*That which always unites the mind  
With the Self that is consciousness in essence,  
and also gets united with it  
And which is of the form of restraint,  
That is praised as Yoga.*

\* \* \*

In the word breakdown of *The Psychology of Darsanamala*, *cidatma* is defined as *cidatma*, which isn't particularly helpful. The best definition is what Nataraja Guru and Narayana Guru (through his foil Vidyananda) have penned: the Self that is consciousness in essence.

Other than that, Nitya's commentary is possibly the most crucial and informative of all his elucidations of the hundred verses, and it lit up our evening together. We have worked diligently to be prepared for it, and now the Guru feels confident in sharing some of the practical secrets of yoga with us. Happily, the best model of yoga is playfulness. Nitya is categorical about this: "Sport is called *lila*. This is the best model of yoga." He elaborates:

Games are played in freedom. There is no obligation to play. It is in freedom that one resolves to enter into a game of one's own choice. The choice is so suitable to the players that they see in it a promise of feeding into them and feeding out of them a circulatory happiness. They set the rules of the game for themselves and other willing partners. In all cases the rules are framed by consensus. The rules of a game prescribe how to commence, how to proceed to the goal, what one's precise role is, what are the modes of correct relationship and reaction; and when one errs, how to rectify the error and what penalty is to be imposed for the deception; and, finally, how to bring the game to its graceful close. When it is terminated, it is terminated forever.

We all realized Nitya is presenting an idealized version of games, and not everyone plays them so impeccably. As far as we know, Nitya never played any sports. Karen wondered about whether he might have in his childhood, but there were no organized sports where he lived. There was a pack of kids to run around with, or he would take off his pants and wander into the nearby jungle alone to be absorbed in its embraces.

Anything can be a kind of play, depending on how you do it. Absorption in an activity brings about a natural centering of the mind, and concentration is the essence of interest, the way we are captured and completely involved in our games:

What is beautiful about a game is that the mind goes into concentration. From the very first moment of the game's commencement to the final second, there is such a union of ends and means that the goal is not to achieve anything other than bringing the game to a close. Success and failure are juxtaposed, and all participants in the game know that these relative possibilities are to be transcended. All parties who

come to the field begin the game in loving comradeship and close it with a benign handshake to the victor in congratulation and the victor's embrace of the comrade who lost the game in gratitude for their earnest participation.

Again, a rather ideal picture, isn't it? When large sums of money are involved with sports, it can become viciously competitive, and "sportsmanship" may become less genuine. A yogic kind of concentration is remotely displaced from the core of a person's being. Karen remembered a college football game where the spectators were far from sportsmanlike. Football coach Vince Lombardi famously said, "Show me a good loser and I'll show you a loser." Playing for pay steers you away from Christ's "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But we are not making our living financially as yogis, we are only trying to come to life, to wake up from our somnolence. Nitya makes a connection that Michael in particular might appreciate: "Concentration, when it is simple, spontaneous, total, and not rebounding in reaction, is called the equipoise of the reasoning self." Michael is a big admirer of equipoise. Are you?

In case we haven't drawn any comparison between games and our life, the Guru takes us there himself:

The game spoken of above is an outward performance, a yoga or union of the performance of a team. Although this is an excellent diversion to keep both the body and mind well exercised, there is another game which is many times more meaningful and rewarding. The attitude is the same, i.e. of playing games with one's own faculties and the environments of the given world. In this game the field is not spatially delimited like a tennis court or football field. It is rather the field of the knower, the field of the actor, the field of the enjoyer.

So the whole world is the “court” for the game we play, and it lasts for a lifetime. We play it as a knower, an actor and an enjoyer. We will score many points and have many scored against us. We invariably make mistakes and draw penalties, as will everyone else we rub up against. Ideally the penalties will be commensurate with the violations, though in actuality they tend to be much harsher than necessary, both the self-administered and the culturally imposed varieties. Mistakes make for transient ups and downs, but the game isn’t over until it’s really Over. And the only kind of final scoring is how much happiness we are able to experience while playing. No outward accumulation matters unless it fosters happiness. I have included an uplifting excerpt from *That Alone* in Part II relating to this, a confession I wasn’t able to work into the actual class. In it Nitya talks about how we mistake our happiness as being delivered by externals, though they don’t really satisfy what we are hoping they will.

Playing for realization instead of playing to win is such a crucial reframing of our socialized attitudes! Here’s what Nitya says about it in his commentary:

A game is a game only when the knower, with full conscience and deliberation, performs their role to promote in full their truest happiness. In such an act, the knower, the performer, and the enjoyer are all fused into the identification of one and the same person. Such a person is fully conversant with the possibilities of the field, its hierarchy of probabilities, and the sequential order in which actualization is to be attempted. (398)

Nitya isn’t talking about knowing the rules of things like capital investment or political manipulation. He advocates becoming conversant with our intrinsic nature and allowing it a full range of expression—to know our Self first, and use that knowledge to

bring light to the darkness. What a great game that is! Rewarding to all, though not necessarily in monetary terms. Show Nitya a good loser and he'll see a winner, in the best sense.

Part of the rules is that horizontal involvement tends toward being an impediment to a full range of expression. Expression is initiated in the vertical essence of our being, and is best when not overly diluted—when it refers in a creative way to our essential being.

Deb thought that means allowing the world to be, yet not feeding the illusion. A tall order! But yes, we are inclined to try to “fix” everything; it's how we were raised. By now we should have learned that fixing often just adds more disruption. And, if we are more accepting, Deb mused, perhaps there wouldn't be so much to fix in the first place. I added it meant not allowing yourself to be manipulated by the world so much. We don't have to always rise to the bait.

I sometimes sit and ask myself what I'm intrigued by, and what is it that I keep doing even though it's getting me nowhere? Not necessarily about the broad themes of my life but in terms of habitual ways of seeing and interacting? And sometimes I can let go of what I see as unnecessary. But it doesn't go away without the contemplative examination.

This is something that resonated well with Jan, and she has had a recent success, though she was reluctant to share the actual facts. She was talking with her grown daughter about certain impulsive behaviors she was once famous for in her family. Her daughter agreed that Jan had stopped doing them. Being approved of by her daughter added a plum to the good feelings Jan already was having from resisting that habitual impulse. I guess we'll never know what it was, sadly....

Paul recalled a humorous road sign a teacher once told him about, posted at the beginning of a deeply rutted dirt road in the Alaskan outback: “Choose your ruts wisely, because you will be in

them a long time.” Don’t we wish we had had such a sign when we eased into our own personal ruts, back in the day? But it’s surely true, and we should readily admit, that we are stuck in rutted ways of relating that get us into trouble sooner or later. Can we upgrade our choices? It’s not so easy, but it is possible.

Jan is now recognizing that this upgrading can be a joyful experience. Somehow our egos portray it as scary and dubious, but once you get to doing it, it is very freeing, which is fun!

If we concentrate on how we are perceiving and influencing the world, we can begin to see all the ways we are diverted from maintaining balance and focus. The more we let those diversions go, the more artistic our performance will be. Bill’s sport is golf, and he has learned to put all stray thoughts out of the way, at least for the instant he is hitting the ball. Every miniscule impediment causes the ball to fly off course. And of course we can see that effect in many types of performance, artistic as well as athletic. Deb mentioned one of her skills, calligraphy. One extraneous thought and blip! a stray mark on the scroll. Paul spoke up for music, and Karen for ice-skating—one misplaced thought and crash! And unlike football, skaters don’t get to wear much padding.

Susan used a sports metaphor to her advantage when dealing with her son growing up. Some mornings he would come to breakfast in a bad mood. She visualized him as hitting a tennis ball at her, and she would dutifully “pick up her racket” and blast one back at him. Pretty soon they were whacking furiously at each other. Then she realized she didn’t have to always play on his terms, so she didn’t pick up the racket. The mornings when he didn’t have a competitor, his upset mood would dissipate and pretty soon they would be having an amiable meal together.

This resonated with Paul, who could see how his own mother had been hitting balls at him for his entire life, and he would always be drawn right into the game. It makes him sad, but one of those pesky vasanas makes him do it, time after time. Maybe it’s

about to change soon.... He remembered Nitya's advice to Deb that some day she may no longer feel the need to defend herself so strongly. Returning the ball puts you on defense every time.

Deb amplified Paul's idea in favor of a generosity of spirit where you let the other win, and not by just withdrawing, but by allowing yourself to lose. Losing is something the ego wants to avoid at all cost, so learning how to be a loser is an ideal discipline for the ego. Deb may have been recalling the end of verse 59 of *That Alone* (there is a longer excerpt in Part II):

When I first came to my Guru, I had plenty of trouble with people, with my fellow disciples. Guru called me and said, "I shall give you a secret: allow the other to be victorious. If somebody fights you, let you be the vanquished and not the victor." I found there is nothing more helpful than this, to be vanquished and not to become victorious. Just say, "You have the upper hand. Let all the glory be yours. I shall lie in the dust." It is very difficult, but it works. You don't make any claim. You don't indulge in any feelings of martyrdom. You just give up.

There is a place for losing, and also a place for not being pulled into someone's black hole. I repeated my favorite story attributed to the Buddha. A nonbeliever was reading him the riot act, spewing venom. The Buddha, unruffled, simply asked him, "What if you gave a banquet in my honor and I didn't attend?"

Susan talked about a board game called Settlers of Catan that her family enjoys. It reveals a lot about the people playing it, and is especially fun when the players are different ages and types. So actual games actually have a place in yoga, in the right setting.

The game the gurus have in mind is epitomized in Patanjali's definition of yoga as *citta vritti nirodha*. We talked about it in the last class, and when I was preparing for this one I found that some

months back I had inserted another important quote from the Integrated Science, down in Part II, just waiting for this moment. We need a total and nuanced understanding of what Patanjali meant, and there it is. Briefly, Patanjali's meaning is to restrain only the horizontal tendencies, in order to give more time and attention to the vertical, which includes things like critical skepticism and inquiry. The impulses that heighten our interests and refine our relationship with them. Those that bring focus.

You may remember that during the Bhana Darsana we talked about the *vritti* as like the fluttering of bee wings. Conscious awareness emerges from a unified seed state into a duality that produces the experience of a world. Subject and object appear simultaneously as mirror images. Nitya harkens back to it here:

Like the rapid, harmonious, and efficient fluttering of the wings of a bee, the consciousness of the performer moves so rapidly from subject to object that one and the same consciousness is facing itself from two poles, which are recognized as the subject and the object. This is similar to the conception of Feynman that there is only one electron which is seemingly countless. This rapid modulation is called *vritti*.

Being aware of this gives us a lever to reshape our thinking to be more promoting of happiness. For instance, a forbidding object does not have to be taken as a hostile attacker. It could be treated as a prod to learning, or an opportunity to release our grip on ignorance. It might be a cry for help. Knowing that subject and object are not separate in essence changes the whole playing field. Each is influenced and shaped by the other. The extra That Alone excerpt below addresses this idea too.

Yoga is not just about a wrestling match of the self and the other. If we can retreat into the underlying unity, the immanence of subject and object lose their hold over us. We can find “shelter



from the storm,” but also more energy for our vertical, authentic development. The subject-object interplay comprises what we call the horizontal. Yoga means restraining our outward-directed tendencies that dissipate our energy, and concentrating it in the vertical, progressive core. Nitya puts it this way:

The intended game of the yogi is to effect a total cessation of the consciousness that fluctuates and thereby automatically creates the subject-object duality between a non-temporal, non-spatial, non-physical subject and an object spatially located, temporarily contacted or apprehended, and physically assessed.

Nitya next makes a very important point: we usually observe the object as an outside factor, not realizing that what we perceive originates in our sense of being a subjective entity, which is not quite correct. Our awareness as a subject is projected out and bounces back as our experience of the object. By reclaiming our role in this game, we can neutralize the modulation, the *vritti*, by combining its two sides yogically. Nitya reveals:

An observation of this phenomenon can never be fully directed to the observed because the source of its illumination is in the observer, and the most active intentionality of perception and conception originates from the self as a vibrant projection of an image which is received back as a vibrant interjection. Thus one unit of modulation is completed.

This isn't easy. Nitya calls it a self-deluding hypnotic function, and that's putting it politely. We have been in its grip for our whole life, so we hardly notice how it pinches. This is why we probably won't seek liberation unless we are severely oppressed by some condition. Pain is the blessing that reminds us we are at sea in an

unreal, delusory version of reality. The Guru invites us to take a close look at what's going on, and then bow out of it:

Although this happens as a self-deluding hypnotic function, the yogi intensifies the thoroughness of watching the full round of modulation so that that bit of consciousness can be freed from being identified as subject or as object, as the accompanying attributes pinned on to the subject as a pain-pleasure complex, or as the attributes of the object such as visual, auditory, or other properties. The result is a total transcendence effected there and then even when the flow of energy does take place. There is no qualitative distinction between the first, second, or third moments of the transcendence of modulation. This is what Patanjali calls *citta vritti nirodha*.

A good part of what makes this difficult is that the impulse to project comes from the depths of the psyche, from the *vasanas* and *samskaras*, and not from the rational wakeful consciousness. There has to be a serious intention to resolve the predicament, or it will easily persist. For many people a worshipful attitude is very helpful, so Nitya includes, "In principle, the yogi's successful transcendence of the same [duality] is performed through an act of absolute devotion, *sraddha*."

Karen offered that she tries to make everything sacred in her life. She very often finds ways to sanctify the ordinary, and even the less than nice. This led to a nice session about the miraculousness of all and sundry. Like Whitman's famous mouse: "miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels." It's easy to be devoted to the miraculous, so why not notice it everywhere?

Ultimately the effort goes beyond any formula or technique to a direct confrontation and grappling with the urge to keep generating hot air. We stop the modulations by turning off the incentive to act at the level of the incipient memories. By the

advanced age of most of the class members we have already done this to some extent. It isn't as mystical as it sounds. We already know that many of the things that used to motivate us are ridiculous or not worth our time, so we have discarded them. We already have a strong suspicion that our state of mind determines our happiness, rather than the flow of amusements we can catch. So what if those addicted to amusements consider us irrelevant? Eventually they may find the thrill is gone for them, too, and wonder where it went. They would be very fortunate if they were redirected to some version of the eternal truths that invite us to find ourselves right within our own being.

The more contemplative we become, the farther in toward the core we will be residing. The deeper we get, the more we can prune back our irrelevancies, many of which are impelled by genetic or socialized vectors that are more like impediments than high roads to understanding. Nitya concludes by beckoning us to do just that:

Narayana Guru calls our attention to deal with the modulation at the deeper level of removing the incentive from the potential seed of a maturing incipient memory which is about to burst into the actualization of a conscious act.... Then, instead of entertaining an assumed false identification, the Self remains established in its truest form because it is freed of its obligation to fulfill the instinctive wish of a *vasana*, an incipient memory. Narayana Guru praises such a reversion of transcendence within immanence itself as yoga, and he qualifies it as *vasananasa*, the reduction of the potential into the impotent.

Our bubbly discussion spontaneously quieted into a profoundly still meditation—a place where it was easy to cease promoting *vasanas*, if only for a few moments. Then everyone was encouraged to take a slice of stillness home with them.

## Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary:

The correct meaning of the word *yoga* is the union of the mind, when rid of all dross of nescience, with the Self that is consciousness in essence. This is *yoga* or union. The mind has in it many activities which come under nescience, etc. When all such activities have been countered by the means that have been indicated in the wisdom texts, and when the mind is thus made to unite with the pure Ultimate Self, such a branch of knowledge is called Yoga. The radical *yuj* is used in texts as meaning *samàdhi* in the expression *yuj-samàdhau* (union in *samàdhi* by Pànini, the great ancient grammarian and linguistic authority), and we are, therefore, justified in treating Yoga and *samàdhi* as pertaining to the same subject. The saying of Patanjali in one of his opening sutras that Yoga is the restraint of the mind, as well as the definition of Vålmiiki in the *Yoga-Vàsishttha* which says that Yoga consists of the act or means of tranquillising the mind, all indicate the same meaning of Yoga. Because Yoga mainly consists of restraint of the mind, it is referred to as consisting of this restraint in general terms. It is not enough, however, that the activities of the mind should be merely mechanistically restrained (in a unilateral sense), but it is also to be understood that the mind when restrained should be constantly joined to the Self that is pure consciousness in essence (*cidàtmà*). What is more, such a union should also take place so as to justify the name of Yoga properly understood.

\* \* \*

Nataraja Guru's ISOA Vol. II has a very important clarification for us. Speaking of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, a foundational text of yoga:

Besides the idea of peace, the most important single condition for Yoga is mentioned in the second verse of chapter I:

*yogas-cittavritti-nirodhah*

Yoga is restraining (the outgoing) activities of the mind.

This sutra is meant to define Yoga as a whole. The keyword is *nirodha* (to hinder, obstruct or control). Many people fall into the error of thinking that one must control all psychic activities, because *citta-vritti* means 'the activity of the mind'. Here a subtle distinction and a clarification have to be made. Narayana Guru makes this in the first verse of the Yoga-Darsanam. The verticalized activities of the mind should not be obstructed but instead must be allowed free scope, with *vitarka* (criticism) and *vichara* (inquiry) as functions. It is the outgoing tendencies or horizontal activities of the mind that produce dissipation of interest. It is only on the horizontal level that control is necessary. Mere brute unilateral control is not to be thought of either. One has to respect the reciprocity of counterparts, whereby an ascending effort to unite with the higher Self is reciprocally understood as being met by the descent of the soul, from the opposite pole of the total Yoga situation. This delicate distinction is also clarified by Narayana Guru in the Yoga-Darsanam. Yoga is a bilateral and not a unilateral process. (103)

\* \* \*

That Alone, verse 13 is an excellent companion read to this verse. Here's the excerpt that came to my mind during our conversation. First Nitya introduces the setup:

“I am the seer; I am the actor; I am the enjoyer.” When all three of these come together, we are in a single world of interest. A world of interest remains sometimes for only five seconds, sometimes for two minutes, sometimes for the whole day, a few days, months, or even years. Its length varies, but we go from one world of interest to another in a continuous series.

Later he illustrates our fickle relationship with the things we want to get:

In spite of what the mind creates and the values presented by the various qualities, time devours all these things. So the Supreme or the Infinite is described again by Sankara as the great Lord who crushes all these worlds of interest in his palm, turning them into ashes. He smears his body with them. What we see as a great reality is only ashes smeared on the transcendental God. It is not even skin deep.

The enjoying self in you has many concepts of attraction, but when you turn to your inner reality all these seem false. At that point you begin a return. It is a pilgrimage from unreality to reality, from your sense orientation to the realization of your most divine center. And when does this take place? Every day, all the time, whenever our senses are drawn outward to get glued onto objects, and the great surge of excitement comes. This is the time to hitch it to the central core of our own divine being, rather than identifying the excitement with an objective, external situation, as we invariably do. Each time a pretty thing is attracting you, you become a beggar: haggard, poverty-stricken, wanting, desiring, stretching your hand, crying for it.

You become miserable. Once you get it, you realize you have wasted a lot of time in pursuing this trifling thing. Now that it's yours, you just put it aside.

I do the same thing sometimes. I wait for the Book-of-the-Month Club to send me some big book. I get very excited in anticipation of its arrival. But when it comes, I look at it and say, "Oh beautiful, wonderful! Put it on the shelf." Do I read it? No, I don't have time for it. I have other things to do. And what happened to that great value, that great excitement? It is transferred to the next month's offering. This month's book is already mine. I can take it from the shelf any time.

This happens between people also. Before someone is possessed as a friend, as a lover, as a wife or husband, many days and nights are spent thinking and worrying about how to get together with them. So many intrigues and posturings take place. But when they are finally yours, it can become a stalemate. Often you feel trapped, unable to extend your sense of adventure to the next person. Friends are not as easily stuck on a shelf as books. (97-8)

\* \* \*

Here's the end of verse 59 of *That Alone*, about letting the other win:

Henri Bergson, in his *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, says "When you point your finger at another and denounce him, you know in your heart of hearts that you are no better."

When I first came to my Guru, I had plenty of trouble with people, with my fellow disciples. Guru called me and said, "I shall give you a secret: allow the other to be victorious. If somebody fights you, let you be the vanquished and not the victor." I found there is nothing more helpful than this, to be

vanquished and not to become victorious. Just say, “You have the upper hand. Let all the glory be yours. I shall lie in the dust.” It is very difficult, but it works. You don’t make any claim. You don’t indulge in any feelings of martyrdom. You just give up.

The basic truth rests on this: there is only One and not a second. If there is someone to be punished, it is only you. If there is someone to be corrected, it is also just you. ‘You’ means ‘me’. In my personal life I correct the other by correcting myself. I punish the other by punishing myself. I silence the other by going into silence myself. I bring peace to the other by making myself peaceful. I bring happiness to the other by making myself happy. It is a very intimate experience, to work with one’s self. And it is the one place where you can conveniently work, where your volition, your knowledge and your feeling are all at hand, at the very source from which the idea ‘I’ comes. (407)