

## Darsanamala Combined Class Notes 2023

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

#### **Verse Five**

To whichever mind goes, from all that this should always be restrained, and should be united in the Self—this is yoga. In this should remain united.

11/12/7

Once again we are treated to one of Nitya's most excellent commentaries. I even borrowed part of the last paragraph to explicate a primary thrust of Darsanamala in the introduction (page 15). Here's how I framed it, in my first big writing project, now twenty years old:

The Psychology of Darsanamala makes unusual demands on the reader, not through any exterior coercion or threats of damnation, but through "reason, steadily applied." Such a tool can be quite effective in unmasking the depth of one's being, which is well guarded by fear and psychological defense-mechanisms. On page 413 we read, "To those who are constantly under the spell of their ego-infatuation, forgetting or forgoing the ego is wrought with the fear of being destroyed. Such a prospect always brings to them a plaguing sense of insecurity. So they always prefer to have some sense object to be associated with, or other paranoiac people to make friends with. This emotional dependence and sense indulgence keeps the mind always at the periphery of consciousness, and it becomes incapacitated either to dive

deep or to fly high.” While it is quite proper to keep the bliss of the Absolute in mind in our goal-orientation, we should not forget that part of ourselves may be wholeheartedly opposed to the success of our quest.

The ego infatuation in question is constructed around objects of interest. We peer out of the “windows of the senses” and become fixated on what we experience. All our psychic energy is directed toward influencing and being influenced by the disturbances appearing in those windows. All this “getting and spending” is how we “lay waste our powers,” impoverishing ourselves as we turn away from our own innate treasure house of the Self to the flux of the ordinary. Narayana Guru is through laying the groundwork. From here on we are called to “turn off the TV” of the senses and redirect our vision to the Absolute. This requires an initial holding back from our customary indulgence as the focus of consciousness is realigned, until the bliss of our nature floods us and irrefutably demonstrates the poverty of an unalloyed fascination with sensory surface matters.

Possibly because Narayana Guru mentions restraint here, Nitya’s commentary makes an excursion into Patanjali’s yoga, with its well-known observances and restraints. That “old fashioned” template is unabashedly dualistic, and so the comments are an attempt to unify the duality. They do succeed, but the terminology tempts us to think in terms of outmoded habits, so we must take care not to fall back on any unhelpful notions.

One of the most unhelpful and curiously popular interpretations of yoga is that we should especially restrain ourselves from what brings us joy. Yet in our study we have decided that the joy of the Self is the norm upon which our philosophy is grounded. The conflict between these two directions turns yoga into a sterile and useless, if not potentially destructive, activity.

A much better way to look at it is that we are to restrain ourselves from the myriad sources of negativity that we have been examining in detail throughout the Darsanamala study. Nitya reprises a couple of major categories here. He notes that the chimerical ego derives a sense of existence through conflict, because it is not trained to appreciate the validity of peace. If peace is merely the absence of conflict, it is nothing, and nothing has little appeal to the ego. It is always searching for something. Even if it finds nothing, it has to trumpet it as something. So we have a tendency to create conflict to ratify our existence. Since it is impossible to ratify something that doesn't actually exist but is only a floating hypothesis, the tendency is to create more and more conflict to reinforce the appearance of existence. This trend finds its apotheosis in the politician, but we all share the tendency, so let's not feel too self-righteous!

Nitya describes the most essential pattern of negative involvement with the senses on page 412:

The contact between the senses and an object of perception is like pressing a button in the mind to recall a whole bunch of memories. Once the memories are aroused, the urge to actualize a hidden desire gains momentum, and libidinal energy is instantaneously generated for the purpose of actualizing the conscious or unconscious desire. The even flow of consciousness is at once disturbed. A veil of oblivion is immediately cast over all objects other than what is relevant for the mind's immediate pursuit, and also over other latent desires which are lying in wait to be actualized at an opportune moment. This veiling enhances the highlighting of the interest. The sudden release of libidinal energy makes the mind infatuated with the possibility of actualizing the desire [which can be either positive or negative].... Infatuation has a blinding effect on the intellect's normative vision of the Absolute. Only

an intensively purposeful conscience of spiritual awakeness can prevail against the moral blindness that afflicts the mind with the irresistible compunction to behave in a certain way.

Since this is the normal way our bodies work, we have to have recourse to a preceptor who can help us out, help us see the Self in the midst of all the chaotic involvements. It helps to have some form of yoga or meditation to break the spell, the thrall of the particular.

In reviewing Patanjali, Nitya mentions that we should restrain ourselves from erroneous steps in the path of chastity. This can sound silly to a modern mind if chastity is taken to merely mean sexual abstinence. The path of chastity is brahmacharya. I'd like to quote Nitya from his commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, which may someday be available as a separate book, but for now can only be accessed in old Gurukulam Magazine issues from the early 1990s. [The book was published in 2009.] There he defines brahmacharya as "adhering to uprightness in life":

When a person is born he is said to be of very little knowledge. The path to perfection is to become conversant with the omniscient, the omnipresent and the omnipotent. Movement from the small world of little knowledge to the infinite world of omniscience is a logarithmic spiral in which the microcosm and the macrocosm become harmonized. The unbroken growth of persistently relating the individual to the Absolute is indicated by the word brahmacharya. Many have missed this point.

As brahmacharya is intended to provide an aspirant a fully enlightened path that will ever lead them from finitude to infinitude, brahmacharya is identical with the prayer given in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: "Lead us from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality."

From the first cognizance of the inflow of stimuli through the five senses to the final merger in the all-transcending imperiential unity of the Absolute, brahmacharya is the only path that one has to tread....

The restraints given by Patanjali include brahmacharya to caution the aspirant that there are false paths and temptations from which one should recoil. If one truly understands what brahmacharya is, one has already attained the highest mark of discrimination, which justly qualifies one to be an enlightened person. With that wisdom insight, one confers on oneself rishi-hood, Buddha-hood, Christ-hood and the peace of Islam. (244-5)

We spent the class time brainstorming how restraint works in actual practice. Susan noted that she obsesses and gets very anxious about her daughter, who is on the threshold of adulthood. She is powerfully drawn to worry about all the millions of terrible things that might happen to her, which is precisely what Nitya means by infatuation. So she has to consciously restrain the impulse to fret, and remind herself that the young woman has plenty of savvy and will have to solve her own problems in any case. The worry accomplishes nothing positive, and on the downside it communicates fear and mental blockage to the child. What Susan really wants to communicate is love and support, but she has to yogically take herself in hand to do it properly, because her buried memories are forever clamoring to present their unhappy take on things.

This struck a nerve with the class. Apparently very many parents have similar issues. It is a real art form to be close and protective with the small child, and then gradually relinquish the protection as the child learns to act on its own recognizance. Anita noted how hard it is to stop mothering, which is such a deep and profound and satisfying urge. There is nothing wrong with

mothering per se. But children need to get distance from it to learn independence. The best thing is for the mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters of the world to redirect their love and care to others who need it within the greater human family, as they gently wean themselves from the guidance of their own children's lives.

I offered the example of how busy my life is, and how I have to say no to certain activities or else my life would be frittered away on minor indulgences like dinners, concerts, chores and errands. These are all good things of course, but still I consciously chose to hold back on some of the possibilities that present themselves. That allows me to actually accomplish a few things of more lasting value, including improving my musical ability and editing books of word wisdom.

I also noted how, for men especially, it is easy to sit around and complain and disdain all the stupid things in the social world. This can be a full time occupation for many of us. Fire stations are rife with it, so I speak as an insider. But it is an empty exercise for the most part, accomplishing nothing, unless you feel somehow pumped up by the failings of others. Vedanta teaches us that those failings we perceive tend to be our own faults projected outward, so it behooves us to restrain from indulging in such low-hanging trivialities, and find a more meaningful outlet for our intelligence.

Anita mentioned how she deals with an obnoxious coworker. She used to get very upset by her passive aggressive shenanigans, but now she doesn't take the snubs and insults personally, so is able to think about them compassionately. She sees the underlying unhappiness in the woman, and, while it doesn't make everything into a Big Rock Candy Mountain of sweetness, it helps take the sting out of otherwise disappointing exchanges. This is a very healthy form of restraint, overcoming hurt feelings to offer consolation instead of responding with a hurtful remark. It initiates a cycle that opens the door to peace instead of escalating the cycle of petty warfare.

So there are a billion circumstances where we could indulge our surface consciousness in reacting to this or that stimulus tweaking this or that vasana or samskara, consequently disturbing our peace of mind, but we have decided to resist the temptation. With the help of wise friends and wise words we can continually bring ourselves back to a healthy state of mind. We cannot possibly catalogue all the ways we go off course, or stray from the path of chastity. We just know we do. And so we join hands to grope our way back to balance. As Nitya concludes: “Gaining that union and not losing it again can be effectively achieved only with the continuous exercise of detachment from the untrue and the unwholesome, and the emphasizing of the mind’s union with the Self constantly and forever.”

## **Part II**

One more category of thoughts worthy of restraint that we bandied about in the class includes: “I’m inadequate.” “I don’t fit in.” “I should just hold back and stay out of the way.” “Everybody’s got it together except me.” “If I join in, I’ll offend people.” “I’m different.” Or, by slight contrast: “I’m better than them.” “They’re not my kind of people.” “Those guys are stupid.” “I don’t like those (fill in the blank) types.”

From such thoughts, when one is freed, one gains release.

In other words, many of us indulge in thinking like this, and frequently base our actions on such thoughts, often without realizing it, but the yogi examines their basis and realizes they are inverted and exaggerated forms of egotism. Baseless generalizations. By identifying with the Self which is the Absolute which is bliss, the yogi is delighted to let go of all such ego-reinforcing ideas. They really do pinch the soul as well as cause conflict, and what is the upside? A thicker barricade to hide behind. A yogi is not attracted to such crutches.

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2/13/18

Yoga Darsana verse 5

To whichever mind goes, from all that  
this should always be restrained,  
and should be united in the Self –  
this is *yoga*. In this should remain united.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*To which or which other (interest) the mind goes  
From that or that others into the Self  
Ever restraining it, it should be joined;  
In such Yoga here let it be united.*

As Narayana Guru tells us through his interpreter Vidyananda, this verse presents a somewhat easier (or more preliminary) version of yoga meditation. In verse 4, continuous contemplation flowed like a streak of oil being poured into a lamp; this takes an advanced type of unified psyche. Here the flow is not continuous. Whenever the flow is interrupted we are counseled to get back into it as soon as we realize we have slipped back into ordinary thinking. Obviously, this type is more appropriate to all us regular folk, and featured prominently in the class discussion.

This is yet another A-grade commentary by Guru Nitya. Though I always get teased for noting it, I am not daunted by the embarrassment of riches threaded through this garland of visions. Nitya opens with the time-honored basic requirements for a person dedicated to becoming a functioning yogi or knower of truth:



The yogi enjoins upon himself the disciplines of five injunctions and five restraints. The five injunctions are deliberations to exercise. They are: to keep mind, word, actions, body, food, environment, and company clean; to engage in activities that promote serenity and joyfulness; to have programs of self learning; to carry out the instructions of the preceptor; and to offer service to promote the welfare of the world. The restraints are to refrain: from causing hurt to any sentient being; from the fabrication of lies; from theft; from misappropriation: and from erroneous steps in the path of chastity.

Deb started us off with the important insight that these injunctions and restraints aren't to be taken as a set of rules to rigidly follow, but more as a general and open orientation. When you are in a loving flow, all injunctions are superseded. We often think I can't do this or I'm supposed to do that, but that's the wrong way to go about it. As soon as we do that, we have pulled ourselves out of where we want to be. It's become ego-dominated behavior. We're making everything small. The liberated idea is that you are so immersed in this boundless life that all of this comes naturally.

I eagerly agreed: if you focus on rules, you can't help but lose fluidity. The aim of spiritual life is not simply to remember what you're supposed to do, but to be fully present as each new encounter comes along. Acting based on memory loses the joy of spontaneity and so is bound. It can't accommodate nuances. For example, we should refrain from hurting not because we have been told to do it but because of the love we feel for the other. We should refrain from lying not because it's a rule but because we know it takes us away from truth. (We have noted often enough that in some cases lying supports truth better than blatant truth-telling, so rigidity is definitely not the way to go about it.)

I mused about all the wise preceptors of old, sitting around and brainstorming some really good ideas to help hapless mortals deal intelligently with their lives. I very much doubt they were thinking of rules and consequent punishments, they were simply trying to pass along their wisdom and loving kindness. Over time, those broad ideas have a tendency to shrink in the minds of superstitious adherents. They begin to worship the letter rather than the spirit of the wisdom-source they have inherited, and it becomes binding rather than liberating. It's the (apparently) inevitable descent of sattva into tamas, and is particularly acute in religions and political parties. Breaking out of the frozen wasteland of tamas is a primary thrust of the yogi.

Jan drily noted that this is how a lot of us were raised, which is sad but true. If we were raised differently there wouldn't be quite so much need for gurus and therapists and such folderol. Paul agreed, having been brought up in a religious system that believed individual suppression was the key to salvation. He wondered how bottling up your interests could ever lead to higher consciousness. He thought a better cause to bring about the effect of wisdom was to identify with the unity of everything.

I added that restraints are taught so we can avoid the causality of negative impulses, to take away the impediments that block our natural flow. Most of what is thought of as causal is actually an effect of a hidden cause, as Narayana Guru has repeatedly taught us. We are bound within a universe of effects, from which we arbitrarily select hypothetical causes that accord more with our beliefs than with any substantive reality.

The immensity of the chasm between this type of open moral grounding and the current socio-political paradigm can be shocking and disheartening. For yogis it should amplify our dedication, as it is obvious how much grounded psyches are needed, especially when they are hardly modeled at all in the

public eye. Nitya provides a sketch of the confining mental process that kicks in when we rely solely on our default settings:

The senses are sometimes compared to cows that go into pastures for grazing, or to brutes of the forest which go hunting for their prey. Mind is always a companion of the senses, both in their commissions and their omissions. The contact between the senses and an object of perception is like pressing a button in the mind to recall a whole bunch of memories. Once the memories are aroused, the urge to actualize a hidden desire gains momentum, and libidinal energy is instantaneously generated for the purpose of actualizing the conscious or unconscious desire. The even flow of consciousness is at once disturbed. A veil of oblivion is immediately cast over all objects other than what is relevant for the mind's immediate pursuit, and also over the other latent desires which are lying in wait to be actualized at an opportune moment. This veiling enhances the highlighting of the interest.

Ah, the veil of oblivion! Now *that* is modeled far and wide these days, at least in its negative form. Yet backed by intelligent attention, the highlighting of an interest by screening out irrelevancies (which is essentially concentration) is a crucial positive ability. The difference is that yogis do not block out consideration of the impact of their actions as though they are of no consequence. Consequences are an integral part of the interest, and the awareness of them is provided by contemplation. Only then is the next stage of mental modulation permissible. Nitya gives a simple formula for our egos to decide which predilections to promote and which to allow to wither on the vine:

The sudden release of libidinal energy makes the mind infatuated with the possibility of actualizing the desire. The

desire can be meritorious or non-meritorious. It is meritorious when such a pursuit advances one's progress in realization, and non-meritorious when such indulgences cause the intensification of attachment and bondage.

The difference between a practice and an indulgence is the former is carefully considered, while the latter blooms in rich manure of ignorance. Nitya shares a key idea that self-indulgent people are not allowing into their purview, that being alert to what we don't already know makes life more interesting and more successful:

Infatuation has a blinding effect on the intellect's normative vision of the Absolute. Only an intensively purposeful conscience of spiritual awakeness can prevail against the moral blindness that afflicts the mind with the irresistible compunction to behave in a certain way.

Remember how we started out with this idea from the very first Darsana, in verses 7 and 8:

When Self-knowledge shrinks, then ignorance is fearful;  
substantiation by name and form, in the most terrible fashion,  
looms here, ghostlike. This is terrible and empty of content,  
like a phantom city....

We discussed at length how to maintain Self-knowledge in the very situations where we have habitually submitted to fear, anger, and their kin. Yoga promises and delivers a substantially improved outcome, which is the positive reinforcement that keeps us making the effort that spiritual awakeness demands.

Susan had a fine example for us. The day before, she had met with her Aunt Sue, someone who always gets her very frustrated and upset. Susan was kind to send us an account to share: "I

anticipated my time with her and told myself to not get into the usual snarls. We argue about silly things. But once again, I got taken in and we had a little tangle. Afterward I was berating myself at first but then I realized that this was an opportunity to see very clearly why we get into tangles. She has her anxieties and I have my frustrations with her based on my own fears. It was helpful to see that and to have a bit of compassion for myself in the situation. Some laughter too....”

There is nothing wrong with knowing in advance how people are going to push your buttons, and giving yourself a pep talk about it. Still, we seldom improve rapidly. It takes time. But this is precisely the vertical goal orientation that needs to be supported by our substantial efforts. It isn't some exotic behavior where you turn into an ancient Egyptian mummy or Wonder Woman or a Tibetan shaman—in our own way we're already as exotic and bizarre as they are. It's more about getting relaxed and connected with the life we happen to be in. Our simple lifestyle doesn't sound like the Hollywood version of yoga, and it isn't. But Susan felt better afterwards, and surely did not make things worse with her contributions. That's a very effective yoga practice. Plus, being able to laugh at our own foibles is already a substantial achievement.

Deb shared a story about someone in her prison dialogue group. He has been studying Buddhism, and decided to cure his food obsession by eating only one meal a day. Prisons have strict rules about not sharing food, because it can be due to extortion or other compulsions, but he decided to (illegally) put his uneaten meals out on the table for everyone to take. He is required to show up for all three meals no matter what. Normally prison guards are sticklers for rules, but something in his demeanor disarmed them, and they allow him to do this. Deb felt his example was contagious of a respectful way of being, even in such an oppressive atmosphere as prison.

Jan's explanation is that he is bringing a sense of the sacred to his food habits, and other people are drawn to that. She shared a missive she just read from Jack Kornfield, that the open heart offers up its own needed healing. The heart is connected to the deeper self, so openness brings forth its own wisdom.

In keeping with this Valentine's Day message, Jan had a similar story to Susan's about her sister, who had just been visiting. Jan is somewhat of a free spirit, and is working hard to love and protect her family relationships, though these can be a challenge, as she's pretty much the only free spirit in the family. While she was staying with her, her sister told her, as a thinly veiled criticism, "I'm a rule follower." Instead of getting into an argument, Jan simply smiled and agreed. She knew it already, of course. Her lack of combativeness diffused any strain in their relationship. Jan simply acknowledged her sister's way of being, and felt no need to proclaim her own. Peace was preserved.

Susan and Jan's stories reminded me of a hilarious tale from *That Alone*, which I will tuck into Part II, along with a couple of other supporting excerpts from Nitya and the Gita about steadiness.

Prabu also shared a story of keeping the peace by agreeing to disagree with a very opinionated visitor to his home in Tamil Nadu. Scotty shared how he processes these kinds of mental blockages through bodywork. He starts by asking himself or a client why a blockage is being held in a certain place in the body. You not only massage it out of the body, you acknowledge it as something important to you. Maybe you even write about it, and then it stays healed.

Once and for all, Nitya lays to rest the theory that ceasing *all* mental modifications, or roasting *all* memory-based tendencies, is what spiritual practice means. A healthy, well-instructed ego (yes, the ego!) is the final arbiter to decide which tendencies to promote and which to steer clear of:

To mitigate compunction and to promote the morally and spiritually guided behavior of both the senses and the mind, the ego in its capacity as the volitional agent should act in accordance with the instructions of a preceptor or the canonical word wisdom made available through the Science of the Absolute. This adherence to the Word of the Guru or of the Supreme Science is known as *sraddha*. (412)

This is not something we can normally do in a vacuum, nor is it exotic mysticism. It's just plain, though uncommon, sense, aided and abetted by longstanding examples from human history. Nitya continues:

*Sraddha*, devotion to truth, is intensified when a seeker or novice successfully establishes their bipolarity with the stable model of an excellent teacher or the ever-inspiring ideal venerated by millions, like Buddha consciousness or Christ consciousness. To graft onto the teaching of World Masters or to one's own preceptor, one has to engage in the purificatory discipline of continuously detaching oneself from all unhealthy distractions and engaging oneself in actions that are wholesome, honest, beautiful, harmonious, and beneficial to the world.

We had the most fun with the myth of Sisyphus, which Nitya makes a veiled reference to, in keeping with continuous effort:

It is like rolling a stone uphill. The pressure has to be constant and continuous. The vigil must be round the clock. A moment of lapse is enough to fall or slip. So one has to be extra conscious at all moments of one's life to maintain one's poise.

I mentioned the similar story in Indian mythology. Here's Nitya's presentation of it, from *Living the Science of Harmonious Union*, pages 151-2:

Both Eastern and Western people have classical examples to illustrate the restlessness and cyclic function of the mind. The Greeks have the legend of Sisyphus and the Indians have the story of Narayanathu Bhranthan. As a punishment Sisyphus was condemned to roll a stone up a hill, but the stone would always escape him near the top and roll to the bottom. No one punished Narayanathu Bhranthan; he was pushing the boulder just for the fun of it. For Sisyphus it was very painful; to the yogi Narayanathu Bhranthan it was a sport. The summit of the hill is the symbol of victory, while the valley represents failure. Unlike Sisyphus, Narayanathu Bhranthan was a philosopher. He wanted to illustrate how difficult it is to ascend to the summit and how easy it is to fall to disaster. So, after painfully pushing the huge stone to the summit, he would let it roll down the hill. Then he would clap his hands and laugh hilariously to draw the attention of people to the fact that lazy bums are bound to fall, just like the stone.

Trying to reach the summit has three stages. First is exerting yourself physically and mentally (*tapas*). The second is understanding your own resources and applying your abilities to the best advantage (*svadhyaya*). The third is fixing your goal on the summit and attacking the problem by getting into a constant dialogue with the Absolute (*isvara pranidhana*). When these three disciplines go hand in hand, you are disciplining yourself with *kriya yoga*.

The second paragraph in the excerpt details the vertical, goal-oriented mental modulations that are not to be suppressed, so I've thrown it in as an added bonus.



Paul lamented how easy it is to forget and let the ego take over, and then you are right back at the bottom of the hill. You have to keep up that steady pressure, that one-pointedness.

In contrast to the message of Sisyphus, where a moment's inattention sets you back to the beginning, I brought up the Gita's reassurance that anything truly learned is never lost. At the end of Chapter VI, Arjuna worries that if he doesn't become completely enlightened he will have to start over from the beginning in his next life. Krishna begins his assurances in verse 40: "Arjuna, neither here nor hereafter is there destruction for him, for none of good deeds ever goes to perdition." Yoga being what it is, both aspects—losing and retaining—coexist and are true when considered together. It may be that our intent is what determines whether truth persists or not, as we could just as easily intend to abandon it.

In any case, once you truly see the world as One, you never stop seeing that everywhere. Nevertheless, constant pressure is needed to avoid committing foolish acts. If we stop looking where we are going, we might well fall and hurt ourselves, as Deb can currently attest. Nitya reiterates the dialectical reading of yoga in his closing sentences:

Gaining that union and not losing it again can be effectively achieved only with the continuous exercise of detachment from the untrue and the unwholesome, and the emphasizing of the mind's union with the Self constantly and forever. Only when such a union is effected is there yoga.

Once again, Nitya shows us where to put our intelligent energies:

The usual tendency of the mind is to go out through the windows of the senses. This centrifugal impulse is to be converted into a centripetal interest so that the senses and mind

are always turned inward to be united with the ever-resplendent glow of the Self.

I gave my permission to take breaks from that “always turned inward” proclamation. It is so often put that way, but we need to keep from becoming obsessive. Playfulness means allowing for variety as well as occasional stupidities. We look inward even as we look outward. We in our class are not the holiest of holies. We’re just regular folk, with plenty of flaws. And that’s okay.

This verse includes some critical information about the much-maligned ego. First, how to recognize the ideas that unnecessarily provoke the ego to grandiosity:

In the union of the mind with the Self the mind loses its separate identity, and there will not be an agent to claim specific knowledge such as ‘I am’ or ‘I know’. Only where there is an existential confrontation that evokes the idea ‘I am’ or ‘I will’ can the ego have its recognition.

Deb agreed: we want something to desire, to fight against because all of those subject-object situations give life to our ego. As long as we stay in a dual place we are alive as our personal self. I added that this can include our dualistic take on spirituality: “I am doing this to be spiritual.” Such thoughts should be readily recognized as ego assertions, the prettying up of the persona. We have a hard time accepting that the real us is something other than all the aspects that we can see, hear and touch, and that others can likewise perceive. Our true nature is invisible and intangible, not to mention inexpressible. If we could accept that, we could definitely lighten up much more easily.

I’m sure everyone remembers this excerpt from Nitya’s take on this verse that I included in the Introduction, since it perfectly depicts the malaise of an ego-dominated perspective:

To those who are constantly under the spell of their ego-infatuation, forgetting or forgoing the ego is wrought with the fear of being destroyed. Such a prospect always brings to them a plaguing sense of insecurity. So they always prefer to have some sense object to be associated with, or other paranoiac people to make friends with. This emotional dependence and sense indulgence keeps the mind always at the periphery of consciousness, and it becomes incapacitated either to dive deep or to fly high. (413)

It's worth repeating what I added in the Introduction: "While it is quite proper to keep the bliss of the Absolute in mind in our goal-orientation, we should not forget that part of ourselves may be wholeheartedly opposed to the success of our quest." Diving deep and flying high are thrust behind a screen by our fear of the unknown, which must be counteracted before yoga can take place. They come out in the open only if we can resolve our paradoxes:

The same is also experienced by soaring into the sublime heights, which in effect is like immersing into the deepest depth. The highest and the deepest are the same. This profound experience of seeing the imminent as the transcendental and the transcendental as the imminent is the rare occasion of yoga. (413)

Once all the fears and other impediments have been intelligently dealt with, yoga can take place without much ado. It is simply the cancelling out of opposing factors in a unitive synthesis:

The Self which transcends time and space is sometimes described as the biggest of the big and the smallest of the small at one and the same time. Such contradictions or opposing

characteristics are given to cancel out these pairs of opposites, by which alone one can establish oneself in the neutral, indescribable numinosity of the Absolute.

The success stories everyone shared are eloquent testimonials to the value of a non-trivial yoga practice such as the one we have been undertaking with *The Psychology of Darsanamala*.

## Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary is excellent this time out:

As stated in the *Bhagavad-Gitā* (VI. 26,)

Whatever causes the changeful unsteady mind to go out (again and again), from each such, restraining (it again and again) it should ever be led to the side of the Self.

As it is difficult to keep the mind in a form of unbroken meditation on the Self, after the manner of the streak of oil that is unbroken and continuous, this alternative method of meditation is suggested in order to lighten such a difficulty. One should watch out carefully and incessantly for any change that might take place in the mind in its goings and comings. Without one being aware of it, the mind by its incipient memory dispositions tends to follow one or other extraneous interest. In every such case one has to discover the straying of the mind and bring it back by force so as to establish it again in the Self. This Yoga is none other than the constant effort to bring back the mind and establish it in the Self. Such a Yoga has always to be practised. As again stated in the *Bhagavad Gitā* (VI. 28):

Ever uniting thus the Self, that *yogi*, rid of dross, having contact with the Absolute, enjoys easily happiness that is ultimate.

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Part of my commentary on the Gita's eighth chapter is quite germane to this section of the Yoga Darsana:

8) Meditating, with the mind engaged in the yoga involving positive effort, undistracted by anything else, he goes to the supreme divine Person.

Once again positive effort is called upon. There is a heroic element in yoga which distinguishes it from slipshod forms of worship. Distractions are to be subdued with calm persistence.

Constant practice, *abhyasa*, was introduced in VI, 35 as a means to bring about control of the mind leading to yoga. It does not necessarily refer to any specific technique, but only means adhering to your principles. Whenever a negative or obfuscating impulse leaps to mind—and it happens all the time to everybody—you counteract it by bringing in an upgraded, intelligent determination. This allows you to plunge like an arrow into the core of the Absolute. If instead you latch on to the impulse, it will lead you off on a tangent and you'll miss the mark.

The human desire to manipulate others means the world is filled with potential distractions that commercially-minded enterprises have floated in front of us like fishing lures. We should not take the bait, but hold fast to our meditation, or our integrity. In addition, our native limitations make us fearful of the unfamiliar, and we can overcome the fear by reminding ourselves of the other's commonality with us. If we cultivate fear of the unknown, we will run away from precisely what we have been seeking the moment it finally appears, as Arjuna will be tempted to do in Chapter XI.

This is a very practical example of what is meant by *abhyasa*, steadiness. The constancy of the practice means we don't hate or fear aspects of life during the week and then practice overcoming

those tendencies for a couple of hours on the weekend. Our ideals will only become realized if we adhere to them day in and day out. If it sounds like a lot of work, it's not. Getting our heads straightened out should be our greatest pleasure and ardent desire. If it isn't we are very much in the dark and are not fit for yoga, among other things.

\* \* \*

Here's an ever-relevant bit from Nitya's Brihadaranyaka Upanishad commentary, followed by something I wrote about it:

Generally, when we apply a concept to a percept, we follow the easy path of choosing whatever prejudicial meaning comes to mind. Only after a few instances of coming to a similar context do we realize that the concepts we have already formed are wrong because of prejudicial associations implied in the meanings we have given to the words. This leads us to a critical review of our pre-formed concepts. They can be corrected only by our associating ourselves with scientifically conceived concepts, properly worded and explained either by knowledgeable people or documents of authority. (Vol. 2, 51-2)

Scott: One important corollary is that it is *our own* prejudices that need to be critically reviewed. The ego is very comfortable dissecting other people's shortcomings, especially as a diversion from having to focus on its own skewed perspective. Much of what a guru does with a disciple is to normalize the latter's thinking, rounding off the sharp edges like intolerance and unfair criticism, along with their grounding in prejudices of all sorts. Nitya used to refer to this as the stream smoothing the stones in its bed, an image that speaks eloquently to us residing in the American Northwest,

where most of our rivers are bedded with soft, rounded rocks that slide easily over each other when you walk on them.

\* \* \*

The story of the dog, from *That Alone*, page 560:

I once visited a friend's home in Delhi. He had a small dog. It was only a little bigger than a squirrel, but it barked like hell. I thought of showing my love to it, so when it came close I patted its head. It bit my fingers! Then my friend said, "I am so sorry! I should have told you that he can be fondled, picked up, caught by his tail, taken by his legs, put in your lap. He does all those things. But he doesn't like to be touched on his head." Once you know that, you have no more hatred for that dog. You just leave his head alone. But if you don't know it you think, "How can you keep a pet which bites you? It's a contradiction—a pet that bites. That's not a pet at all!" You can be reconciled to it once you know it acts like a pet as long as you don't touch its head. The contradiction even becomes amusing once you know it. Then you understand it is just the miraculous way in which this particular dog is made.

If you know this kind of information about your wife or husband, your child or your neighbor, you won't have trouble. You need to know where you shouldn't touch them....

### **Part III**

Living by rules reminds me of those floors with footprints painted on them, in old dance schools. You learned the moves of each dance form by stepping on the prints, but it wasn't really dancing until you could let go and perform the steps in your own way. Rules have a similar value to rank beginners, but the idea is to learn them, then let go and really dance. We aren't supposed to

keep stepping on the template, fearful of slipping outside the lines.  
We aren't supposed to live in fear and trembling of being punished  
for our sorties into vivid existence.