

5/25/21

In the Stream of Consciousness

Chapter 13B – Reaction and Review #3 – Part 2

A handful of Nitya's pithy comments set off a spectacular exchange, doubly inspired by a Sagittarius full moon heading toward a total eclipse, and the miraculous reappearance of Paul, after a very long recovery period from serious illness. It never ceases to amaze me how so much richness pours forth from the participants, augmenting itself by the mixing of well-honed perspectives. What fun! What a meaningful event, week after week!

We began with Nitya's addressing the essence of renunciation that transcends cultural patterns, together with the following comments about laziness. Energetic Nataraja Guru often derided misfits and hobos who "caught a ride" with their more dedicated associates in ashrams everywhere, not to mention Boards of Directors. It's a subtle business indeed to distinguish a true deadbeat from one who is inwardly absorbed in meaningful transformations. Both gurus were circumspect about disrupting the latter type of involvement, even if it meant presuming the very best about everyone until proven otherwise.

After listing typical religious renunciates, Nitya reminds us there are many dedicated seekers who don't fit the mold and don't make any outward show of their investigations (such as most of the Americans he was meeting):

Apart from these recognized patterns of religious orders, there are people who place their complete reliance on the will of God or trust in the benevolence of a concurring chance factor which seems to keep the world order meaningfully and harmoniously interrelated in its inner constitution. Such people may not have anything by way of external signs to tell the world they are renunciates, but they have an unsurpassed courage to accept both the good and bad eventualities of life.

Their acceptance of fate comes at least in part from their conviction that an underlying truth is manifesting in the way they experience their life. Because of this they don't allow themselves to feel like victims, but frame themselves instead as beneficiaries of lessons and tempering challenges. In trying times, this requires real strength of character. (Both tempering and *tapas* come from heat, by the way.)

Addressing laziness, Nitya goes to the heart of the matter here in the quote, including distinguishing action and inaction, something the Gita describes as “elusively subtle indeed.” Verticalizing action is the same as being in tune with one's dharma or authentic nature:

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, spiritual life is likened to climbing a mountain. To carry one's own burden in a backpack and ascend a steep mountain, what one requires most is an unflagging resoluteness. One can take his own time and pace himself very slowly, but every step is meant to be an ascent. Action becomes truly verticalized with such an attitude.

A seeker many engage in many unrelated and nonessential actions, imagining that they are preparations for future progress. But to a spiritually disciplined eye, the evasion of responsibility in such activities is very transparent.

Every action should be a promotion of one's own intrinsic worth. Even if a person is only sitting with his hands resting on his thighs, he should be considered as a seeker of true perseverance if his silence and inaction are contributing to the intensity of his search. Conversely, someone might be physically very active and yet spiritually very lazy. What I truly abhor more than physical inaction is spiritual lethargy and moral inertia.

Steven told us how he keeps noticing the curious dialectic between opposites in the way Nitya's discourse goes back and forth

between poles, yet he is always trying to achieve some synthesis. There is a paradox here of action and inaction in spiritual progress. On one hand we're carrying our pack up the mountain, and on the other we are trying for equanimity in the face of adversity: maintaining disengagement, distance, to not be buffeted by the hardships life throws at you, which is another kind of discipline in and of itself.

Steven reports he struggles with the idea of discipline, because without it he becomes disoriented, having a hard time focusing on goals and knowing what to do to achieve them. In short, to be inwardly motivated and directed is a real challenge for him. (He's not alone.) For Steven, structure is foundational, but he also realizes that if you become too rigid in your discipline you lose sight of what it is you're trying to achieve: this poised openness, the ability to let life surprise you, to allow yourself to be caught unaware.

Steven's perceiving the yogic dialectic that Nitya uses as a foundation is really astute. Nitya was always trying to teach us to engage in life actively and with self-acceptance, which when kept in balance is more spiritually beneficial than we often realize. What he is implying here is that real laziness includes those who want others to tell them what to do. We can just coast along if we're following orders, but the real inner effort is to engage with our authenticity, and most definitely with its absence. Bravery is called for, since we are not always approved of by our society, forcing us onto "the road less traveled." Which, according to Frost, has as many footprints as the popular route....

There are plenty of people who abandon their self-engagement and resignedly plead, "you tell me what I should do and I will become a great person by doing that." You need to care enough about yourself to take yourself on as a project. Don't undervalue the fact that you have already learned a lot, that you are a fantastically complex and well-developed person. We have a tendency to think we're not doing what we should, not measuring up, so we must adopt a promising technique. That belief is purely a

samskara, lodged in our unconscious, dragging us down. Nobody meant for us to be weighted down by such ideas, so we don't need to keep carrying them. We can discern them and discard them—that was the light Nitya was always holding up for us.

Paul gaily admitted his trauma has only been occurring for a mere 62 years, but he's catching on that the approval of others is a heavy taskmaster. He is drawn to these talks on conditioning and how to decondition the self, helping him revert back to what he used to value in the past. Paul regaled us with his arguing with smart doctors during his illness. He told one, "I've heard all that you have said, but I've been around for 61 years, and I think I know what I'm doing." He could almost see the doctor's smile under her mask as she shot back, "No, actually you don't have a clue. You have neither the education or the experience. Ignorance is your belief system." For him it was like being baptized in water, dying to his old self, along with all the conditioning he'd been through. He agreed that failure serves a spiritual purpose, helping us understand our limitations, reminding us not to idolize, and to rid ourselves of our pre-conditionings. He wondered how much of the ocean you need to drink before you decide oceans are salty?

Everyone was charmed to have our good friend back with us, with all his familiar means of expression. I made one suggestion to him: we can't *erase* our samskaras, all we can do is become aware of them so they no longer dictate our actions. We can reorient ourselves away from them, but they never go away. Everything we've ever learned, suffered, experienced, is all still sitting in us, making us who we are. If we turn toward our positive attributes and reinforce them, the negatives will wither away gradually and naturally. It is a slow process of brain rewiring, and of course we are impatient to get on with it. Here's how the Gita puts it, in chapter VI:

25) Slowly, slowly, activities should be brought to a standstill by reason steadily applied, establishing the mind reflexively in the Self, without thinking of anything whatever.

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.

27) Such a yogi, verily, of calmed mind, of pacified passion, who has become the Absolute, free from all dross, comes to supreme happiness.

Bill reinforced the message about trauma: don't get attached to it. Look at it and let it go. If you are focused on the old stuff, you aren't going to get rewired.

Deb asked me to read out Nitya's next response, his excoriation of drug use, as she knows I have significant disagreements with him on this. Yet I also have substantial agreements, too. I think he would modify his ideas in the light of brain imaging that has revealed a lot about what's going on during psychedelic voyages, but a lot of what he says is essential to know in that context.

The back story is that the decade Nitya first came to the US, the 1970s, was awash in all sorts of drug use, much of it decidedly unspiritual. He was valiantly working to establish a quiet, centered state of community consciousness where disruptions were minimized, and that rapidly became much more attractive to some of us than getting high. He was also a bit of a refugee from the Western hippie disciples of his guru, some of whom were arrogant and racist, and despised him in particular for his old-fashioned values—and for his vocal resistance to their behavior. He rarely talked about it, so we can only make out the bare outlines, but it clearly prejudiced his feelings in advance about Americans.

In the class I suggested a couple of places where the new science might have changed Nitya's views. Self-control is a mysterious thing that isn't as conscious as we might imagine. It is possible that our self-inhibiting energies actually *suppress* our connection with our inner guidance systems, and relaxing those

suppressions promotes entry. Brain imaging indicates that, rather than stimulating the control systems, psychedelics turn them off, opening the doors to hidden splendors and insights. This means what Nitya describes as a negative could actually be very positive:

The highly exaggerated dilation or acceleration or inhibition caused by drugs, as it could be in different cases, throws the control system, especially the cortex, out of gear. Powerful sources of energy can then be easily tapped and conducted to various areas of association in the brain by overwhelming the normal synaptic resistance.

Yes, some drugs foster exaggeration, but psychedelics, used wisely, reduce it. Moreover, the old view of a brain where the cortex is the “human” part, of recent development, is now obsolete. The optimal mode is for the brain to function as a whole system, all parts working together.

I also took issue with this paragraph:

In a healthy person the accelerating and inhibitory systems work in complete harmony with perfect complementarity, acting like a dam to retain a vast reservoir of consciousness. Once this is disrupted, it is as though the dikes have been breached and there is no longer any means to regulate the flow. A simple suggestion can send the whole mind on a tangent, and exaggerated elaborations can continue unhindered for a long time until there is no more energy left to pursue them.

This type of healthy person held up as an example is extremely rare, and in fact is the goal seekers seek. Seekers seek because their inner harmony is disrupted, otherwise why would they have to seek anything? For some people, the healing process is greatly enhanced by benign drugs, exactly as if they are medicine for the psyche. Once the healing has taken place and you are restored to your Self, you no longer need the medicine, and you stop. One

common mistake has been that the feeling of relief of being back in contact with your true nature should be continuously replayed by keeping taking more doses, but that does wear on the system, eventually.

Jan brought up computer use and how it also changes our brain—acting like a drug too. Deb generalized the principle, asking when you take one thing and hyperventilate into it, no matter what it is, how can you get homeostasis? We need to keep our energy circulating. She's been reading the Perloth book about cybersecurity, learning about vast numbers of mostly men who spend their days working on computers and their nights playing virtual games, and never, ever walking outside. It has to be a heavy weight on the mind, an addiction.

Paul wondered how we can ever know if we're even viewing reality, and was told that Anita reminded us a couple of classes back that each brain is producing its own virtual reality. The question is why would we rather have someone else's virtual reality substitute for our own? We have somehow been convinced that our virtual reality isn't good enough, that other people's are better. I urged that as screwed up as we are, with our traumatized samskaras, we are also fine. One key samskara from which we suffer is that we aren't good enough. We don't measure up. It's tragic. I often think of Nitya's take on the once-popular book *I'm Okay, You're Okay*, spelled out in a letter to all Gurukula members in 1980:

The psychologists' cliché, "I am okay; only you are not okay," was recently revalued by Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross to, "I am not okay; you are not okay; but that is okay." The reassurance of Elizabeth has an immediate effect to silence one's mounting guilt complex. A similar calming down is necessary on all fronts so that the high walls of emotion that barricade mutual communication between the self-labeled "we" and "they" can be erased, and the cordiality of a warm dialogue be introduced. (L&B 475)

As Deb said, the first and most crucial step is befriending yourself.

Bill figured it's all about learning to see more clearly; learning how to see things that trap us or influence us. The more clarity you get, the more comfortable you get. He cited Patanjali, who said you are a mirror image of the Absolute, which is perfect bliss, it's just got a lot of overlays on it. Andy added that Patanjali is recommending that we pay attention, and this is part of your discipline as well.

Deb reiterated that despite the awareness of your shortcomings, you have to accept where you are. Jan averred in a cheery way that because of their self-doubts, most people don't wake up and live. "Wake up and live" is an excellent mantra to chant, by the way. Nancy agreed that we inevitably judge what we are, and accepting yourself is just realizing you're okay, and there's bliss in that. She can see higher knowledge, but what's here is here. We're all part of everything, and that's blissful. People irritate you, and that's part of the bliss, too.

I figure the conviction that the resolution of our self-doubt is found somewhere outside us leads us to look for love in all the wrong places.

Paul talked about an overriding happiness in our lives, despite all the failures and the suffering. Once we finally achieve an understanding, happiness pervades even through tears. Our mistakes can still hurt, but there is happiness underneath, just from that understanding. Jan added that being aware of the things she loves in life gives her bliss, and focusing on that allows her to live it all the more.

Obviously, we're all fortunate to live in a relatively safe and prosperous zone of the planet, where these issues can get our full attention.

We moved along to the response about God's green room, a green room being a waiting room/lounge for the performers at a theater. Nitya writes:

In the time of Kanada in India and Thales in Greece, observations and speculations were in progress to discover the stuff out of which this world is fashioned. Four aspects of this world continue to intrigue us, namely the origin and nature of matter, the origin and nature of life, the origin and nature of consciousness, and the irrevocable criteria of truth.

What is referred to here as God's green room is the place where God hangs out backstage before the grand show, in other words, where creation takes place. Our desire to see the creator in his lair refers to the insatiable curiosity that is ceaselessly bugging the human mind. Many have cried out "Eureka," and yet dissatisfaction prevails. The mystery continues.

Steven talked about how often religious authority points to the inadequacy of science—that it can't solve the deeper mysteries, and that inability points to some deeper spiritual reality. He wondered if it's an inherent limitation of science, and if those religious authorities are right.

Deb responded that many people who are deeply into science embrace that mystery as well. I mentioned that we older folk grew up in a time of extreme scientific arrogance, and that has mitigated substantially since then. I cited something I'd just read by highly regarded neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barrett, from *7 1/2 Lessons About the Brain*, (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston 2020):

Scientists normally try to avoid saying that something is a fact or is definitively true or false. In the real world, facts have some probability of being true or false in a particular context.
(141)

Let me add one more quote from Barrett:

A given gene does not necessarily make the same proteins in every animal where it's found. Two animals can have the same

genes, but those genes can function differently or produce different structures. (143)

This means genes aren't the ultimate blueprint, something other than them determines what they do. DNA may be a mechanical-drawing sort of blueprint, but there's a deeper determinant here too. Science can now go looking for it. The mystery continues.

Bill recently had a stem-cell transplant, and he asked the doctor how the cells find their way into his bone marrow and start making white blood cells. The doctor answered, "They know the way." Bill then paraphrased Einstein: from all studies of science, there's an underlying intelligence that is far beyond anything I can imagine."

In any case, whether there is a God or not, which is a subtext of Steven's musing, is the wrong question. And it's unanswerable anyway. I'll add a couple of powerful bits about this in Part II, starting with Thomas Merton's lead up to "Salvation is more than the answer to a question." Final answers would be an end to search; would make our lives static, so you have to wonder what the attraction is. Obviously there is a strong attraction at work, but never a fully satisfactory answer. And that's a good thing. Limited minds pretend they have the answer, and then gleefully do battle with other limited minds. See Frans de Waal, in Part II. Knowing (and admitting!) that we don't know, makes life interesting. We have life, and that is the mystery we are contemplating. Contemplating is the all-important port of entry.

Anita is passionate that she loves science, how it brings humanity's attention to new knowledge, but it's always been laughable to her that we expect science to have all the answers. To assume that science is definitive is absurd, it's just a tool, one aspect of our human ability. In a way, it's taking a snapshot of the understanding of the moment, and that is always growing, so it isn't the final word.

Steven acknowledged that science is a way of knowing, yet it's always inherently fallible, always revising knowledge. Karl

Popper emphasized that this can still produce truth. Steven is reading the Evan Thompson book, *Waking, Dreaming, Being*, where Thompson claims science can never understand what consciousness is because you can't step outside of it to look. It requires people investigating their own consciousness, and the hope is that science will collaborate with meditators, in order to further our understanding. For all its faults, science keeps devising things that work, and Steven is appreciative of them. For instance, the incredible speed with which the Covid vaccines were developed is based on very recent scientific knowledge about RNA.

Anita was involved with a shaman some years ago, and she had experiences that were exciting but troublesome, not unlike being in a waking dream. She kept insisting that the shaman explain them to her, but he wouldn't. She was angry at first, then settled down to realize that as much as we are seekers and we crave understanding and bliss and perfect unity, we probably don't really want that, because if we had it we wouldn't have the experiences we're having on a day-to-day basis. We would lose the opportunity to continue learning. Once upon a time she was disappointed in not seeing the big picture, but now she realizes that would have spoiled everything. She suspects before we came into life, we made an agreement to forget what we know, in order to have experiences.

Deb woke up yesterday after a dream, one she's had many times before. For years she was convinced that the dream had happened in real life. This time it was close enough to when she woke up she realized that it really had been a dream. Now she's convinced the basis of it did happen in real life. She's now wondering how many times does the curtain raise a little and we see that all these assumptions we are sure of are not that clear?

Anita suggested maybe our transactional life is the dream. In response Deb later sent an Indian myth about maya, reprinted in Part II for your delectation. There's a version of it from the Yoga Vasishtha, retold in *That Alone*, too, on pages 698-9.

Andy offered that it's a meta-question about seeking at all. Nitya lists four major questions we are interested in: four mysteries that never get solved. He wondered what is it about the act of seeking that's blinding us? We have this itch to obtain an answer, and that's the structure of that bears examining.

Nataraja Guru pondered for a long time before deciding on the first sentence for his Integrated Science: "Science seeks certitude." It doesn't ever *arrive* at certitude, but it seeks it. Our academically trained brains imagine there is always an answer, and that's another stumbling block, as well as the rocket fuel of our seeking drive.

Paul was brought to mind of a koan: to know is to not know, and to not know is to know. It made him think, aren't we expecting too much from the conscious mind? When we demand that the conscious mind becomes as smart as the subconscious mind, it's like using a hammer to fix a watch (a true Paulism). Or, it's like being a silent witness: if you pick it apart it's like the anatomy of a joke. Explaining it ruins it—it's not funny anymore. An explained silent witness is no longer a witness.

For our closing meditation, we used Nitya's response to the question: What did Bishop Berkeley mean by "think with the learned and speak with the vulgar"?

Sir Arthur Eddington, in explaining the nature of the physical universe, differentiates the physicist's table from the perceptible table on which he was resting his hand and notebook while he was writing his essay. According to Eddington, the physicist's table is an incomprehensible and elusive entity made up of geometrical properties of physical energy, which can at best be conceived as a swarm of molecules bumping into each other, and those random bumps and clashes are mysteriously keeping the molecules bound in a kind of self-imposed circumlimitation, which in our naivete we interpret as the cohesion of matter.

If such a simple thing as a table can become so complex in

the eyes of the physicist, the speculating philosopher can throw the world entirely out of whack, making it absolutely unintelligible to our common sense.

The man whom Bishop Berkeley calls vulgar is the honest common man who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. In other words, he's the realistic man who unquestioningly accepts the usefulness of the table. His learned brother is the philosopher who seeks truth by kicking up the dust of skepticism, and then complains of poor visibility.

One should be careful not to mix up the frame of reference of the transactional world with that of the transcendental.

Part II

Thomas Merton, *The New Man* (The New American Library, 1963). I used these in my Gita commentary, in the places noted:

Life and death are at war within us. As soon as we are born, we begin at the same time to live and die.

Even though we may not be even slightly aware of it, this battle of life and death goes on in us inexorably and without mercy. If by chance we become fully conscious of it, not only in our flesh and in our emotions but above all in our spirit, we find ourselves involved in a terrible wrestling, an *agonia* not of questions and answers, but of being and nothingness, spirit and void. In this most terrible of all wars, fought on the brink of infinite despair, we come gradually to realize that life is more than the reward for him who correctly guesses a secret and spiritual "answer" to which he smilingly remains committed. This is more than a matter of "finding peace of mind," or "settling religious problems."

Indeed, for the man who enters into the black depths of the *agonia*, religious problems become an unthinkable luxury. He has no time for such indulgences. He is fighting for his life. His being itself is a foundering ship, ready with each breath to plunge into

nothingness and yet inexplicably remaining afloat on the void. Questions that have answers seem, at such a time, to be a cruel mockery of the helpless mind. Existence itself becomes an absurd question, like a Zen koan: and to find an answer to such a question is to be irrevocably lost. An absurd question can have only an absurd answer.

Religions do not, in fact, simply supply answers to questions. Or at least they do not confine themselves to this until they become degenerate. Salvation is more than the answer to a question. (9-10) [placed XI, 25]

The meanings we are capable of discovering are never sufficient. The true meaning has to be revealed. It has to be “given.” And the fact that it is given is, indeed, the greater part of its significance: for life itself is, in the end, only significant in so far as it is given. (13) [placed Ch XI]

Man is truly alive when he is aware of himself as the master of his own destiny to life or to death, aware of the fact that his ultimate fulfillment or destruction depend on his own free choice and aware of his ability to decide for himself. This is the beginning of true life. (14) [placed XVIII, 63]

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From Frans de Waal’s *The Bonobo and the Atheist*, published 2013. The chapter on fundamentalist atheists is top notch: Is God Dead or Just in a Coma?

In my interactions with religious and non-religious people alike, I now draw a sharp line, based not on what exactly they believe but on their level of dogmatism. I consider dogmatism a far greater threat than religion per se. I am particularly curious why anyone would drop religion while retaining the blinkers sometimes associated with it. Why are the “neo-atheists” of

today so obsessed with God's non-existence that they go on media rampages, wear T-shirts proclaiming their absence of belief, or call for a militant atheism? What does atheism have to offer worth fighting for?

As one philosopher put it, being a militant atheist is like "sleeping furiously." (84)

Atheists' zeal keeps surprising me. Why "sleep furiously" unless there are inner demons to be kept at bay? In the same way that firefighters are sometimes stealth arsonists and homophobes closet homosexuals, do some atheists secretly long for the certitude of religion? (88)

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Narada and Maya

This is a well-known tale in India that illustrates the nature of Maya, or the illusion of duality. This version from *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* by Heinrich Zimmer, (edited by Joseph Campbell; Bollingen Series VI, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1946) is adapted from Sri Ramakrishna's telling. (My one caveat: traditional culture always has woman as the lure but in reality it can be any enchanting person or idea or object.)—Deb

Through prolonged austerities and devotion practices, the hermit Narada had won the grace of the god Vishnu. The god appeared before the saint in his hermitage and granted him the fulfillment of a wish. "Show me the magic power of your maya," Narada prayed, and the god replied, "I will. Come with me," but again with that ambiguous smile on his beautifully curved lips.

From the pleasant shadow of the sheltering hermit grove, Vishnu conducted Narada across a bare stretch of land, which blazed like metal under the merciless glow of a scorching sun. The two were

soon very thirsty. At some distance, in the glaring light, they perceived the thatched roofs of a tiny hamlet. Vishnu asked, "Will you go over there and fetch me some water?" "Certainly, O Lord," the saint replied, and he made off to the distant group of huts. The god relaxed under the shadow of a cliff, to await his return.

When Narada reached the hamlet, he knocked at the first door. A beautiful maiden opened to him and the holy man experienced something of which he had never up to that time dreamed: the enchantment of her eyes. They resembled those of his divine Lord and friend. He stood and gazed. He simply forgot what he had come for. The girl, gentle and candid, bade him welcome. Her voice was a golden noose about his neck. As though moving in a vision, he entered the door.

The occupants of the house were full of respect for him, yet not the least bit shy. He was honorably received, as a holy man, yet somehow not as a stranger; rather as an old and venerable acquaintance who had been a long time away. Narada remained with them impressed by their cheerful and noble bearing and feeling entirely at home. Nobody asked him what he had come for. He seemed to have belonged to the family from time immemorial. And after a certain period, he asked the father for permission to marry the girl, which was no more than everyone in the house had been expecting. He became a member of the family and shared with them the age-old burdens and simple delights of a peasant household.

Twelve years passed: he had three children. When his father-in-law died he became head of the household, inheriting the estate and managing it, tending the cattle and cultivating the fields. The twelfth year, the rainy season was extraordinarily violent. The streams swelled, torrents poured down the hills, and the little village was inundated by a sudden flood. In the night, the straw huts and cattle were carried away and everybody fled.

With one hand supporting his wife, with the other leading two of his children, and bearing the smallest on his shoulder, Narada set forth hastily. Forging ahead through the pitch darkness and lashed by rain, he waded through slippery mud, staggering through the whirling water. The burden was more than he could manage with the current heavily dragging at his legs. Once, when he stumbled, the child slipped from his shoulder and disappeared in the roaring night. With a desperate cry, Narada let go the older children to catch at the smallest, but was too late. Meanwhile the flood swiftly carried off the other two and even before he could realize the disaster, ripped from his side his wife, swept his own feet from under him and flung him headlong in the torrent like a log. Unconscious, Narada was stranded eventually on a little cliff. When he returned to consciousness, he opened his eyes upon a vast sheet of muddy water. He could only weep.

“Child!” He heard a familiar voice, which nearly stopped his hear. “Where is the water you went to fetch for me? I have been waiting more than half an hour.”

Narada turned around. Instead of water he beheld the brilliant desert in the midday sun. He found the god standing at his shoulder. The cruel curves of the fascinating mouth, still smiling, parted with the gentle question: “Do you comprehend now the secret of my maya?”

Part III

I just happened to be working on Nitya’s video Gita commentary, on one of the verses quoted in the earlier notes. When he broke down verses in detail, as he does here, his mastery really came through. This addresses some of the persistent questions we’ve talked about in recent classes. The first couple of paragraphs and the last are particularly enlightening. Enjoy!

I might as well include the link, from where you can access the rest of the videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuYFKiM468g&list=PLt61T0pa_62JWFzzi837ffdATIE1MIUv&index=11

**25) śanaiḥ-śanair uparamed — buddhyā dhṛtigrhīṭayā
ātmasamsthaṁ manaḥ kṛtvā — na kiñcid api cintayet**

-slowly, slowly, activities should be brought to a standstill by reason steadily applied, establishing the mind reflexively in the Self, without thinking of anything whatever.

There are a number of words here which are to be looked at carefully.

dhṛtigrhīṭayā – For this you need determination. It's not a *rājasic* determination, but a more thoughtful consideration. You take into account everyone involved in the situation and what is beneficial to all and then you regulate.

buddhyā – We have senses in the forefront, the mind behind it, and behind the mind is *buddhi*, the intellect, and then comes the *ātman*. Mind has the power to attract the intellect and make it into a kind of a lawyer or a defendant, thus making the intellect somewhat vicious. It tries to find reasons for doing what you like. Instead of that, if the *buddhi* is allowed to exercise proper discrimination, it will be in resonance with the soul or spirit, so to say. The 'yes' and 'no' that you get from the intellect will be more appropriate, more helpful than allowing your intellect to be influenced by the mind.

buddhyā manaḥ ātmasamsthaṁ – Thus with the intellect, you gather yourself in the *ātman*.

śanaiḥ-śanair – For that, one should know what the *ātman* is. Without knowing what the *ātman* is, how do we hold on to it? For that we require time.

We see in the creative process also that it is with the light of the *ātman* that you see validity in things which are before you. In the sustenance also, the existence of a thing is because of the sustaining principle of the *sat*-ness of *ātman*. All values that you see, that you want to perpetuate is because of *ānanda*. When your mind is going from your body to another body and seeing reality there, to know that you are also along with that, realizing the Self by seeing the reality in another body, in another place, in another time. Thus, the all-pervasiveness of the Self is arrived at through the continuous perception of reality, of awareness and of value. When you are convinced that inside and outside, everything that is recognized to be existing is one or the other version of the Self, then the limitation of the Self goes; the limitation of it within just one body goes and you see it everywhere.

Only after seeing the Self like that, you come to *uparamed*. Śankarācārya gives the meaning of *uparama* as having a proper appreciation of the right value so that your mind is not distracted to an assumed value or a projected value. When you say *sat-cit-ānanda*, seeing *ānanda* as an unbroken value and thus delighting in a thing not as a *viśaya*, not as a pleasure object, but as an extension of the Self, then you are having a withdrawal from the pleasure object but an appreciation of the Self, the *ātman*. That is *uparama*.

Finally, you are asked *kimcid api na cintayet*. The word *cinta* in Sanskrit is a little different from the word *cinta* in Malayalam. In Malayalam when you say *cinta*, it means thinking. In Sanskrit, *cinta* and *vilāpa* are considered as worry and regret. Two things which assail our mind are the *vilāpa* of the past and *cinta* of the future, but both are generically called *cinta*. “This happened to me. I shouldn’t have done that.” “If I planned like that it would have happened like this.” “If at that time I had chosen this it would have

happened like this.” This is all remorse, called *vilāpa*. *Cinta* is about what will happen tomorrow. “Will I be able to make it?” “Am I going to lose?” “Will somebody find fault with me?” “How can I make someone agree?” A number of uncertainties are seen before us and those uncertainties cause worry. That worry is called *cinta*. So, when you are asked *kimcid api na cintayet*, that means do not worry. Not that you should not have any thoughts in your mind. Thoughts will always be in the mind, but the quality of thoughts can be controlled, can be changed.