



February 2013 Contemplation Theme

## It All Begins at Your Tailbone

by Vidyadevi Stillman & Swami Nirmalaananda Saraswati

*Svaroopa*® yoga sequences your spinal release by beginning at your tailbone. You do this in every class. It's there in the DVDs and the Pose Cards. You learned in it the Daily Practice classes with your teacher. You do this in your home practice. It's the way to get the best results.

After your tailbone release, you continue and carry your core release into your sacrum, through your waist area, into the vertebrae through your rib cage, shoulders and neck, so your whole spine decompresses. You're not releasing the bones themselves. Technically you are releasing the tensions in the deep muscles connected to the bones of your spine, in each area, from tail to top. It all begins with your tailbone release.

Why do we always begin the core opening at your tailbone? It's because this is where all your tensions begin. First your tailbone tucks under and pulls to one side. That triggers other muscles to tighten, counterbalancing your internal tensions, upward along your spine, which causes so many aches and pains. We call it the "creeping crud." Your belly hurts, your back hurts, your shoulder hurts, your neck hurts, your head hurts, etc. The "creeping crud" not only goes up your spine. It also goes downward, causing knee and foot problems. All those problems unravel in reverse when you practice *Svaroopa*® yoga's core opening.

Why does the tension start at your tailbone? It's instinctual. Your tailbone tucks under whenever you experience any type of fear: anxiety, nervousness, worry, resistance, impatience, frustration, etc. When you experience fear, your tailbone tucks under — just like a scared little puppy dog. Unfortunately most of your thoughts are fear-driven. This means you have to consider how many times you tuck your tailbone every day. You release your tailbone in every class and in your home practice, but then it tucks back under so easily. Thus you must begin to work on your mind, so that you become free from the tendency to again and again tuck your tailbone and grip your whole spine.

Fear has been thoroughly researched, probably because it is so universal. It creates a measurable physical process in you. Your fear affects your heart rate. Your blood pressure soars, your eyes dilate, your skin goes white and dry, your diaphragm constricts, and (of course) your tailbone tightens. In fact, your tailbone is the first thing in this complex chain of events even though the medical researchers haven't found it yet. They're not looking for it because their tailbone is tight and tucked too!

You can easily track what happens for yourself once you have been doing enough *Svaroopa*® yoga to get the core release – when you react emotionally, you can feel your tailbone curling up and toward one side. Once you know how to calm your mind and lengthen your tail, you become free from the knee-jerk reflex. You learn how to live in openness.

This is part of the mystery of the body-mind relationship. When you come in for a yoga class or do your home practice, you often start by feeling tired, stressed, in pain or unhappy. When you are finished, you are light, lifted, optimistic, cheerful and friendly. The physical change is also an emotional change. When you lengthen your tailbone you get a taste of yoga's promise: freedom from fear. Bit by bit, as you continue yoga, you are lessening or becoming free from the habitual anxieties that everyone else lives in.

This is one of the most remarkable things about *Svaroopa*® yoga poses. Every time you do a tailbone pose, you experience freedom from fear. Anxiety cannot take over your mind or

emotions anymore. Now you have lots of extra energy and enthusiasm for life. You approach life in a whole new way.

What happens when you walk into a situation without anxiety? Now you see things as they are. Your fear had been blocking your ability to see things as they really are.

Vidyadevi describes her experience of this, “When I worked in a research laboratory, one day the head researcher was very anxious and serious. He started telling me things that needed to get done. In the past I would have thought he was saying I was not doing my job, was not good enough, etc. But (from yoga) my tail stayed long. I breathed. I listened to what he was saying and realized that he was in fear. He was in fear of not getting his grant renewed. I could see the situation as it was and did not take what he was saying personally.”

When you are free from fear, you see what was there all along: the dynamics at work, the dynamics of your family, the dynamics of the situation or the challenge that you are facing. *You see things as they are!* This is called revelation.

What decisions can you make when you understand the situation fully? “With my work situation,” Vidyadevi continues, “I could have gotten mad at my boss, or objected to his thinking I was not working hard enough. I could have talked behind his back, cried in the bathroom, resisted and worked less, etc. None of these would have made the situation better for either of us. Instead, seeing it clearly, I smiled and agreed that we needed to get things done quicker. I saw that he needed my support, not my objections. This was about his fear, not mine.”

When you see what you could not see before, that thing is now revealed. Yoga has a word for the power of revelation — Grace. Grace is the cosmic force of revelation. Grace is one of the five cosmic powers of Shiva, who is the One Ever Existent Reality that is your own Self. Grace is your own Divine Self reaching for you, within you.

While this is clearly described in many of yoga’s ancient texts, one sutra (aphorism) clearly describes how Grace opens up your own future:

Jagrat-svapna-sushupta-bhede turya-bhoga-sambhavah.—Shiva Sutras 1.7

Through grace, transcendental consciousness emerges within, so the delight of your own Self is experienced as constant in the midst of life.

Though fear has been extensively researched, bliss lacks such a thorough exploration. You are the scientist who will make the greatest discoveries! When you practice *Svaroopā*® yoga, you open yourself to Grace. You align yourself with Grace. You truly can live a Grace-filled life.

When you lengthen your tailbone, you lift and open your spine so your own life-energy can flow through. Now you are more open to the cosmic force of Grace, a more powerful current which also flows through your spine, tail to top. *Svaroopā*® yoga is the yoga of Grace.

Every time you release your tailbone, you are physically aligning yourself with Grace, so your life is aligned with Grace and your being is aligned with Grace. This month is the month to “Free your Tailbone!” How do you do this? You simply do more yoga: include an extra tailbone pose in your daily practice!

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