



October 2013 Contemplation Theme: Alignment with Grace #8

Finding Self in Your Self

by Vidyadevi Stillman & Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

At the end of a class, Vidyadevi had the students roll to their sides after their final Shavasana. One man didn't move. She describes, "I looked over at him. Honestly, he looked dead. His skin was pale and I couldn't see his breath moving. I got up, came over and squeezed his foot several times before he opened his eyes. For some reason I asked, 'Where were you?' He said, 'Oh, I was at the beach.' So I said, 'You need to get into your body!'"

Unfortunately, most people float around outside their body most of the time. They are a little above and a little in front of their body, walking around and looking half dead — pale, dry and shriveled up. No wonder zombie movies are so popular!

Svaroopa® yoga classes start with the Guided Awareness in Shavasana. For the first few months, you track the words all the way up to your knees or hips, then you lose the outer sounds, including your teacher's words. Have you yet gotten to the point where you can follow the whole Guided Awareness yet? Being aware of each area of your body that is named, being aware through each of your body parts in turn, and being aware of your whole body all at the same time? It's an amazing experience!

As you continue to practice Shavasana and the Guided Awareness, your ability to be embodied increases. This means that Shavasana is very important. As your ability to hear every word expands, you're hearing the words without working at it. This is because the Guided Awareness is an "awareness practice," not a body oriented practice.

Awareness is one of the technical terms of yoga, describing the true nature of your own being. You have the inherent capacity to be aware without thought, without efforting, and without the doingness associated with your usual mode of perception. In the beginning of your yoga studies, you go unconscious at such profound inner depths, but your Shavasana practice makes you able to be very deep within yourself, yet aware while you are in there. It is not **YET** the fully empowered awareness that is your own Divine Essence, but it is the beginning of your inner discovery.

This happens because you are already Divine. The innermost dimensions of your own existence are Consciousness-Itself, as clearly described in one of the Kashmiri Shaivite texts:

Chiti sa.mkochaatmaa chetano'pi sa.mkuchita vi"svamaya.h

Pratyabhij~nah.rdayam, Sutra 4

Consciousness-Itself assumes contraction to become both the universe
and the individuals...

This sutra begins with "Chiti," meaning "Consciousness-Itself," naming the Reality which contracts to become the whole universe, and specifically points out that Consciousness becomes **YOU**. This means that you are pure consciousness, contracted into an individualized form. Consciousness doesn't lose anything in the process; Consciousness is not diminished in any way.

A metaphor makes it clear: do you remember running a foot race with a child, and letting them win the race? Years ago my nephew wanted to run a foot race around the block to see who could run faster. We ran neck-and-neck all the way, yet at the very end I let him win. Did this mean that I was never going to have the capacity to run fast again? No. It can even be fun to pretend to be small, but you don't lose your greatness in the process. Neither does Chiti.

The paradox is that Consciousness is grounding and rooting at the same time that Consciousness is expanding. By grounding and rooting into self (small-s self), Consciousness is grounding into individuality; yet Consciousness is expanding into multiplicity at the same time. It's cosmic; it's huge. It is also totally personal. When you are becoming embodied in your own body, grounding and rooting into individuality (small-s self), you expand into your Self (capital-S Self). People think grounding and rooting are limiting, but being spacey is what is limiting. Being out of your body is completely limiting. When you get present in your body, you get expanded when Grace is part of the equation.

This is why we have dedicated a full year of contemplation articles to Alignment with Grace. Without Grace, grounding into your self (small-s self) makes you feel small, lonely, needy, anxious and

inadequate. It's Grace that turns the inward way into an expansive way. In meditation, you invoke Grace when you repeat mantra and meditate on your own Self. In poses, you invoke Grace when you lengthen your tailbone and open your spine.

This means that, as you become more embodied, you discover Self (capital-S Self) is found in your own self (small-s self). You come to know, "Oh, I am I!" Most people think enlightenment is going to be, "Oh! I am something other than what I always was." In fact, the moment of recognition is, "I am I." Look at it from the other way around: you won't realize your Self (capital-S Self) by running away from your self (small-s self). When you lengthen your tailbone, it is like lightning striking the earth from the sky, coming all the way down and grounding into being you. This is the Self (capital-S Self) grounded in the self (small-s self).

Swami Nirmalananda invites you to try explaining it to yourself it this way:

- When I get present in my self (small-s self), I am present.
- When I am present, I am aware.
- When I am aware, I am expanded — I am Self (capital-S Self).

Vidyadevi shares a recent meditation that showed her this. "I was repeating mantra and easing back into my Self. Then I felt a thin sheet of almost-liquid come down. It was clearly Nityananda's¹ presence. At that point my awareness deepened even more. I was behind my mind; I experienced bliss. When my meditation period ended and I opened my eyes, I was still in bliss and behind my mind. From a deeper place inside I was looking through my mind into the world. I was still self (small-s self) but grounded in Self (capital-S Self)."

This means that Self (capital "S" Self) is found in self, revealed through Grace. Yoga defines grace as one of the five Divine powers, specifically the power of revelation, meaning — Grace Reveals. *Svaroopā*[®] yoga is the yoga of Grace. It all comes from the initiation Nityananda gave to Muktananda, who gave it to Swami Nirmalananda. The blessing flows from one generation to the next, including straight to you. The lineage is like a riverbed, which concentrates the flow of water to make it accessible to all. By doing any *Svaroopā*[®] yoga or *Svaroopā*[®] meditation practices, you step into the river, so you get wet. You position yourself to get drenched with Grace.

The flow of Grace is concentrated in a person, the one who carries it to the next generation. A river without a riverbed is a flood; you need a riverbed to concentrate the water and make it safe and usable. The Guru is the person who serves as the riverbed, so that the Grace can flow through. Technically, it is the flow of Grace that is honored by the Sanskrit word "guru." The Guru is not a body made of flesh and blood. The Guru is not a man or a woman. The Guru is not an individual being or personality. "Guru" is a function: the bestowal of Grace.

Nityananda was asked by a member of the local legislature to define "Guru's Grace" (guru-k.rpa). He responded with the following questions: "Where is your hometown? How long does it take to get there by road? By sea? By rail?" After the man replied, Nityananda asked how long it would take by air. The legislator said that it would take less than 30 minutes. "Guru's Grace is like air travel," Nityananda said, "providing the shortest and fastest way to the place of our origin — in the Infinite."

How many lifetimes do you want to do, before you discover that the Self (capital-S Self) is found in your own self (small-s self)? People go round and round in circles for lifetimes, focusing on distractions and mistaken goals. Yoga's ultimate goal is to give you your own Self. Life's ultimate goal is the discovery and ongoing experience of the bliss of your own Self, in your own self.

When you use *Svaroopā*[®] yoga to align your spine, you place yourself in that flow of Grace. Nirmalananda's studies and dedication to Muktananda guarantees it. This is why *Svaroopā*[®] yoga works so quickly, deeply and profoundly — this is a path of Grace. Get drenched and hop on the airplane! Do More Yoga!

To reach Vidyadevi or Swami Nirmalananda or to learn more about *Svaroopā*[®] Yoga & Meditation, contact: *Svaroopā*[®] Vidya Ashram, home of Master Yoga:

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¹ Swami Nityananda was the Guru of Swami Nirmalananda's Guru, Swami Muktananda