



Svaroopavidya® Vidya Ashram

September 2016 Contemplation:
Yoga & Spirituality #9

Being a Role Model

By Swami Nirmalananda & Vidyadevi Stillman

Yoga's teachings begin with, "You are perfect and divine. Know this Truth and live it." It is a beautiful theory, but yoga is about getting beyond theory. Yoga's stated goal is for you to live in the Experiential Knowing of your own Divine Essence (svaroopavidya¹). You will enjoy living the Truth of your own Being, all the time. Ultimately, you are both living the Truth and you are being the Living Truth.

You are not empty, waiting to be filled up by others. You don't have to function from need, greed and fear. When you know your own Self, your heart is always filled from within. Then your life is a divine gift, both a gift to you as well as a gift to others, for you operate from the overflowing bounty that is ever arising inside. You are the embodiment of Truth-Itself. Ultimately, living Truth is about you being the "Living Truth." This is the purpose for which you were born.

Getting there is a process. When you begin by releasing your tailbone tensions, you come back into your body, the first step of getting embodied. It's like tying the string of a helium balloon on your wrist so it won't get lost. Your mind also needs practices to return home to your Self again and again. Repeated experiences of your own Self are reliably provided by Svaroopavidya® yoga poses, breathing, chanting, mantra and meditation, etc. You become progressively abler to be more and more embodied — fully alive.

Once you truly land here, being present in this world, you have begun your return home to your own Divine Self. The process is easiest when, along the way, you read about or meet Great Beings. Both from the past and present, they inspire you by being examples of the Living Truth you are becoming. You are piercing through your own self-limitations, in order to begin living the Truth.

Even if you are not yet Self-Realized, your yoga makes you able to live the Truth, now more than ever before. Yogis become a role models for others. Your yogic way of living and acting in the world, which others see, is inspiring and uplifting. Being a role model for others is very important. Swami Nirmalananda reports, "A waiter recently shared his philosophy of life with me, 'To give of my knowledge to others, even a little bit, to anyone who wants it. They may go on and share with others, who will also share with others. In this way, we make a difference in the world.'"

Krishna, honored as an incarnation of God, had the freedom to act or not act. Yet He chose to act in this world, knowing He served as a role model for our benefit. In the Bhagavadgita, He explains this to his student Arjuna:

Oh Arjuna, there is nothing required of me in all the worlds
nor is there anything for me to attain, yet I continue to act!
If I did not work earnestly, others would follow my slothful example
and the world would perish along with all in it.²

The world needs you. A yogi must not live in isolation, or the world would fall to ruin. You are the light of Truth that shines in the dark. You are a beacon that inspires others to aim higher. You show others what the potential of a human being is. You serve as a role model, like Krishna.

If yogis withdrew from the world, the only examples to emulate would those who operate from their limitations, motivated by need, greed and fear. You already know the effect they have on the world. When you allow yoga to affect your lifestyle, you are bringing spiritual principles to life in your life. Embodied spirituality. You serve as a role model for others, while you continue to grow into living Truth, progressively more and more as you "Do More Yoga."

When you live this way, you are like a lotus. You don't get dirty even when life plants you in the mud. Great Beings do not need to live on a pedestal in order to avoid the mud. Even the raindrops splashing in the mud cannot muddy the state of a Great Being. In fact, the greater they are, the more they get involved in real life, including the mud. One who has to live in a protected environment, withdrawn from the world,

¹ Svaroopavidya – your own Divine Essence; Vidya – Experiential Knowing

² Bhagavadgita 3.22-24, rendered by Swami Nirmalananda

and needs “a lot of private time,” does not have a steady state. They are dependent on their environment for their peace or joy. Instead, as a yogi, you can depend on your practices to reopen your inner source of peace and joy.

A great Master continues doing practices, but it’s for the sheer pleasure of it, not because they need it. In fact, their continued practice inspires others. Vidyadevi says, “I know that Nirmalananda does not need to come downstairs at 6:30 every morning to chant the Guru Gita with us. She does it because she loves it. I am the one who needs it, and her being there consistently inspires me, especially on days it is hard.”

For yoga students, their yoga teacher is a role model. You know this from having a yoga teacher and you may know it from being a yoga teacher. Vidyadevi says, “I realize that, for some, I am a role model. Students ask me about my life. Do I mediate everyday? Am I a vegetarian? Do I do abdominal and hamstring poses daily? What I say and do has an effect on them. I am a role model and, to the best of my ability, I walk the walk, to be an example for them to continue the practices that give them their own Self.”

Serving by being a role model means you see how you are coming along contrasted to others. You are inspired and supported by other yogis. While you recognize that you live differently than your neighbors, coworkers and relatives, you also see when they begin to appreciate that. You choose to remain in relationship with them, in a very real and caring way, but your primary relationship is with your capital-S Self. You see your own humanness; you’re as real as they are, yet you are looking at your Divinity. It is not ever about what *they* see in you. It is about *how* you are. And it is about *who* you are within your own skin.

Swami Nirmalananda says, “I would like for every Svaroopi to be a role model for everyone else. You are a role model because you are experiencing the Self, thus becoming progressively more uplifted, and understanding what you are becoming, which is embodied consciousness.” Cooperating with that process, in a sincere and committed way, makes you able to serve as a role model for everyone whose life you touch. In this way we uplift the world together. It’s not just about the spiritual greats from the past, not about the greats in the present, not even about Swami Nirmalananda — this is about you!

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON “YOGA & SPIRITUALITY,” OUR TEACHINGS THEME FOR 2016, CO-AUTHORED BY SWAMI NIRMALANANDA SARASWATI, VIDYADEVI STILLMAN AND RUKMINI ABBRUZZI.

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svaroop*[®] Yoga & Meditation, contact
Svaroop[®] Vidya Ashram ♦ www.svaroop.org ♦ info@svaroopayoga.org ♦ 610.644.7555