



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

November 2018 Teachings Article:

Spiritual Upliftment #11

The Ultimate State

By Swami Nirmalananda & Vidyadevi Stillman

In meditation, you are either “in” or “out.” In deep meditation, you’re immersed within, which is called samadhi. You may even think you’d fallen asleep. You see and hear nothing, absorbed in deep peace, growing more and more blissful. Then you bob “out.” Your mind gets busy, revving the engine, ready to go. In the beginning, either you are meditating or you are enslaved by your mind.

While your deep inner absorption is an experience of “good meditation,” your ultimate goal lays a little farther along the path. The goal is beyond the “either-or.” It’s beyond inside or out. The goal is to know the integrative whole of Divine and mundane, Consciousness and life, Self and self. Called “sahaja samadhi,” you are established in Consciousness while you are engaged with the world. This is the ultimate state promised by Svaroopa® Vidya Meditation.

Swami Nirmalananda says, “I read a travelogue describing a yogi in a Himalayan cave who did not respond if a visitor spoke or even shouted at them. Even if someone clapped their hands in front of the yogi’s face, he did not flinch or startle. The article posited that someone could even punch the meditating yogi and get no response. I wondered if this is what they considered to be the ultimate state. Is meditation about becoming catatonic or about becoming Consciousness?”

The answer is that it depends on what kind of meditation you do. Different meditation systems give different results. The yogis have known for this for millennia, describing it clearly in their Sanskrit texts. Now, scientific research on meditation is looking at the different methodologies.

One of the largest studies¹ on meditation and the human brain shows tangible changes in brain structure after only 3 months of meditation. They were amazed that it happened so fast! They also proved that different meditation methods create different brain changes, which they correlated to changes in the behaviors and attitudes of the people being studied. It’s called neo-plasticity. How you use your mind determines what you get.

Different meditation traditions use different words to describe the ultimate state. The differences between the systems are important. Their sages are merely describing their own experiences while guiding you to what they name. It’s like when you get on an airplane and they announce, “This plane is going to Beijing.” If you wanted to go to Mexico City, you should get off.

“Nirvana” is the goal of many Buddhist traditions; it means “annihilation of self.” In the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali promises “kaivalya:” you become the One Reality, abiding in “Great Aloneness.” Kashmiri Shaivism, the basis of Svaroopa® Vidya Meditation, promises “sahaja samadhi,” the knowing of your own Divinity in the midst of life, while being and seeing the Divine in all. These states are very different from each other.

Swamiji often says, “Any meditation is good meditation.” Whatever meditation system you do, you get improvement compared to where you started. As you continue meditating, you’ll continue to progress, but in what direction are you going? As yogis walk by you in a multi-style yoga center, you can easily spot who practices vinyasa compared to hot yoga or Svaroopa® yoga. They walk differently, breathe differently and even the texture of their skin is different. Their body is shaped by the practice they do. It is comparable to an athlete training for the Olympics: a wrestler does different training than a high jumper. Where do you want to be in 2 years, 5 years or 20 years?

¹ Tereza Pultarova, Different Meditation Practices Reshape Brain in Different Ways, Live Science Contributor, October 5, 2017

Your mind and brain are shaped by the meditation practice you choose. You will have different inner experiences along the way to a different goal, experiencing the world differently when you open your eyes. Swamiji quotes her own Guru describing the ultimate state:

When you close your eyes, your inner absorption is not enhanced,
and when you open your eyes, it is not diminished.

When you speak, your inner silence is not diminished,
and when you fall silent, it is not enhanced.

This is sahaja samadhi: everything you see is Shiva, so
everything is a reminder of Shiva.

You go from one bliss-moment to another, outside and inside.

Sahaja means natural, organic, easy. As easy as the breath you just finished. Did you have to think about it? Did you have to make it happen? In sahaja samadhi, you are easily established in the vastness and freedom of your own Self. You don't have to maintain your state because you are who you are.

Yet you still have a mind. Actively engaged in life, you make choices, but they come from a deeper level. Life is not self-indulgent, but Self-expressive. You move through life freely, in a constant easy open state of Self. This is not only the goal, it is the promise.

Vidyadevi says, "When I got out of college, I found that the things society promised would make me happy were a lie. Having a nice apartment, living on my own, having a good job, good friends, etc. did not make me happy or fulfilled. There was something missing. It took me 15 years to find the one who could give me not merely happiness, but bliss. Not merely bliss, but my own Self. For that I am forever grateful."

Shaktipat is the initiation that opens the door, but you have to step through. Shaktipat makes it possible, but you need to do the inner work. A Shaktipat Guru is a person who accepts the task of awakening others to their own Divinity. Swami Nirmalananda is such a Shaktipat Guru. Once you've received that awakening, your own energy of Self-Realization climbs your spine to uplift you in every meditation.

Scientists measure how meditation improves your health as well as your performance in various areas of your life. Yet their studies do not measure your spiritual progress. Meditation's true purpose is the knowing of your own Self. If science could measure that, we would know which path was the highest, the most exalted, which path takes you the quickest and deepest into the knowing of your own Self. In the meantime, we have to look at the promises made by each of the different paths. We must look at the Masters who have attained the promise and share it so generously.

Receiving Shaktipat gives you profound inner experiences and illumined insight, while making you more effective in your life. In every moment your mind is fueled by Consciousness. You learn to live in service to the Self. You no longer look outside for happiness because happiness arises within. You grow into enlightenment. Ultimately, when you open your eyes you do not lose your Self.

This is sahaja samadhi; it is the continuing experience of your own Self. Your inner state is steady and constant whether your eyes are closed or open. With your mind in service to Consciousness, it expresses that reality forth into the world through your speech and actions. Yet there is more. Swami Nirmalananda says, "It just keeps getting better." Do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON "SPIRITUAL UPLIFTMENT," OUR THEME FOR 2018, CO-AUTHORED BY
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