



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

July 2019 Teachings Article:

Quick Fixes #7

Think of a Great Being

By Sadguru Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

Your mind is full of other people. Most of your thoughts are about others or about how you manage those important relationships. Your actions center on other people, whether you're trying to be like them, trying to be different or trying to get away from them. Both a blessing and a curse, the human being is a social animal. Not a herd animal, blindly following along with everyone else, and not a pack animal, subject to the leader's whims, the human is a thinking animal. Your mind is your most powerful tool, but too often your tormenter. Your mind is full of other people.

I remember actively looking for role models when I was growing up. Beatle-mania took over when I was a teenager, but I couldn't get excited about people I'd never meet. Living near Los Angeles, movie stars were tantalizingly close, though news reports proved they didn't know what to do with their life any more than the people I grew up with. Today, millions of people follow every tweet from popular musicians, reality stars and politicians. Are these your role models? I hope not.

Maybe people closer to home have shone the light on your life's path. You "learn from the experiences of others," as the Yoga Vasishtha recommends. Much of what I saw there was a vivid display of unhappiness. This propelled me into being a seeker, which led me to the feet of a Self-Realized Master. It was obvious that Muktananda knew more and offered more than anyone else. I devoted my life to studying with him. My mind has been full of him ever since. I have benefitted immensely.

Your quick fix this month is to think of a Great Being:

Vita-raaga-vi.saya.m vaa cittam — Patanjali's Yoga Sutras 1.37

Or [when your mind is distracted from Consciousness],
fix your mind on a Great Being, one free from desire.

Earlier in the sutras, the sage explains that when you are experiencing pain, anxiety, despair or erratic/shallow breathing, you're distracted from your innermost essence. You simply need to get back to the light of your own being, called "svaroopā" or Self (with a capital-S). Don't wait until your next meditation is scheduled; do something immediately. I call it a quick fix. Among the many possibilities he lists, this one is the most heart-based.

Instead of thinking of the people that cause your pain, anxiety, despair or erratic/shallow breathing, think of one who has attained the heights of spiritual development. One who knows their own Self is free from desire because they are ever filled from within. When your mind obsesses on unenlightened people (which is most of the people you know), your mind reinforces your state of contraction. When you turn your mind to a Master of Consciousness, your mind is uplifted and so are you.

I had the great pleasure of sitting with Baba over many years. Every time, my familiar inner turmoil dissolved; I settled into a peaceful inner expanse of pure beingness. It was like I caught the germs of enlightenment from him, a most beneficial infection. It's gradually taken over until nothing else remains.

To remember a Great Being has also been emphasized in many religions throughout time. In 1891, Charles Spurgeon based several of his sermons on the question, "What would Jesus do?" Those sermons inspired a book, leading to the 1990s bracelets with the initials WWJD. Three eponymous movies ensued, the most recent in 2015. Asking yourself this uplifting question gives you a different direction to go than asking, "What would Lady Gaga do?"

Of course, the acronym has spread. WWBD can be read as, "What would Buddha do," or "What would Batman do?" I think of it as "What would Baba do?" It's a question that lights my path in life, always showing me the way.

When I think of Baba, mostly I remember sitting with him during darshan, a time when we could speak to him individually or bow at his feet. To get on my knees and bow down was an amazing experience every time, both simple and profound. Lowering my head below my heart always propelled me into a

deep, expansive and silent space within. It made it easy to see why yoga explains that grace flows through the feet of such a master.

The ancient sage Narada also emphasized the importance of a great being, saying:

mukhyatastu mahat-k.rpayai va bhagavat-k.rpale”sad va – Bhakti Sutras 38

Primarily, liberation results from the grace of the Great Masters...

Sitting with a martial arts master or a stock market guru doesn't propel you into an experience of cosmic consciousness. You may sense their mastery through their words or even in the way they walk and breathe, but you don't get what they've got by simply sitting with them. With a meditation master, it's different. They're contagious. It's the reason I spent years with my Baba. Yet the good news is that you don't have to be physically there, you can simply think of him or her. You get the same effects. It's called "grace," a technical term in yoga, meaning the revelation of your own Divine Essence.

To do this practice, first you must decide which Great Being you'll turn to. Fortunately, you have many choices. Any of the saints, masters or gurus of any religion or meditative tradition can do it for you. It's best to bring the same one to your mind again and again. If you think of Lao Tzu for a few minutes, then turn your mind to Mohammed or John the Baptist, and move on to Mother Teresa of Avila or Bhagavan Nityananda, you don't have time to settle in with any of them. Pick one and cultivate your ability to linger in that sweet thought or their subtle presence.

You cultivate your relationship with such a master the same way you do with anyone else. You've already proven your ability to carry your relationships with you wherever you go, even when those individuals are not present. Your mind returns to those you hold most dear. When you're away from them, you think about what they would enjoy or when you can phone or text. You can think of a Great Being in the same way, with the same frequency.

Yoga emphasizes cultivating a relationship with a living master, not just dead ones. While it's wonderful to read other people's reports of what a Great Being was like in their time and place, yoga values relationships with living people! The problem is, just as the unenlightened people around you may push your buttons, an enlightened being will sometimes do the same for you. A living master will shine light in your blind spots. This is probably why so many yogis turn to dead Gurus. Yet any master that you choose to think of will sustain you. Pick one.

Each time you think of that Great Being, you are uplifted. What your mind ponders, you become. You already know how to fill your mind with desires, and you are familiar with the result — feeling more and more needy. For too many people, the glass always looks half empty. Instead, turn your mind toward a God-Realized Being. Let him or her fill your mind and heart, showing you the pathway to your own inner source of love, light, truth and joy. Then, even if your glass is half empty, you can see beyond the glass to the more important things of life.

This practice is a way of refining your mind. Your mind is too often fragmented, pursuing multiple objectives simultaneously while not finding satisfaction in any of them. When you direct your mind toward a Great Being, your mind becomes peaceful and your heart is filled. This quick fix is such a sweet and deep experience!

It lays the inner foundation for your own discovery of the spiritual greatness within, that same greatness displayed by the one you've chosen to remember. Each repetitive thought draws you closer to your own Self, by focusing on one who knows the Self. I know it works. It has defined my life. My heart is ever resting at my Guru's feet while my mind does his work by serving you. What a Divine Life this is!

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Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram ♦ www.svaroopaa.org ♦ info@svaroopayoga.org ♦ 610.644.7555