



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

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Self & Self #1

One

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There is really only one of us here. You and I are different expressions of the One Reality. It's similar to how ice cubes are all made of water. You are an individualized form of the One Essence that has become all. Each and every different thing and being is made of the same essence. Called Shiva in this yogic system, the One is not only outside of you, but is within you and is being you. This is why I call you Shiva, oh Shiva.

When I look through my eyes and see you, it's like I'm looking in a mirror after I've gotten a haircut. The outside looks a little different but the core essence is the same. This way of seeing is called mystical vision, the ability to see God in all the forms She becomes. This is what yoga gives you.

Just as Sufism is the mystical branch of Islam and kabbalah is the mystical branch of Judaism, yoga is the mystical branch of Hinduism. Not a religion, yoga is a science, the science of maximizing human capacity. You use your body, breath, mind and heart in sophisticated ways to access the Divinity hidden within you. It's a tactile and practical process with reliable results: you get enlightened.

Maybe neck pain or stress got you started in *Svaroopaa*® yoga, but you've already become more enlightened than you used to be. You're more centered and peaceful, calmer, happier and more creative. Your inner light shines more radiantly and more frequently. Not only do others enjoy it, so do you. I promise you: it keeps getting better.

Every *Svaroopaa*® yoga class or meditation gives you an experience of the One that you are. While the poses make you healthy and strong, the most important effect is the inner opening. We use spinal decompression to open up access to your own Self, your Divine Essence, oh Shiva. No matter how many people are in class, every single one of you experiences the same Self, for there is only One. When you find your own Self, you realize it is the Self of all. The One is being all while being you.

Caitanyam-aatmaa. — Shiva Sutras 1.1

Consciousness is Self.

Your own Self is Consciousness-Itself.

This pivotal sutra has only two words, each with deeply layered meanings. Thus I have given you two translations above, rendering it forward and backward. Chaitanyam means Consciousness-Itself; aatma means Self. Thus, in word order, the sutra says, "Consciousness is being you."

Consciousness is yet another technical term for the One Reality, which I have already referred to by many names above (here being italicized): The *One* or the *One Reality / One Essence* is named *Shiva*. Finding your own *Divine Essence* is finding your own *Self*, oh *Shiva*. I use all these different words to help people get past reactions they may have to the name God, the word most often used in English. Yes, I could say that your own Self is that which we call God. But Consciousness means something different than what you think God is.

Consciousness names the all-pervading essence-of-existence that is aware of its own existence. You are that existence and you are aware of your own existence. The reason you are aware of your own existence is because you are that existence which is aware of its own existence. Confused yet?

Simply stated, you exist and you are aware that you exist. Your awareness is Consciousness. You are the one who exists and is being aware, oh Shiva. Thus you are existence and you are aware of your own existence. Both together is what is meant by "Consciousness-Itself".

Your own existence is Existence-Itself. The light shining through you comes from your inner source. Your ability to see, to hear, to think and to care — it all comes from that deep inner source, which is your Self. Like every window shines with the light from one sun, every being and every object is a unique manifestation of Shiva. Including you. Including me. How glorious it is!

The above sutra is the foundational sutra in Kashmiri Shaivism, a tantric philosophy and practice that empowers you to see the Divine in all. In this system, while living in the midst of the world, you

discover your essence and share it with the world. This is the second meaning I offered for the sutra, “Your own Self is Consciousness-Itself.” It means, when you look deeply within, you discover that your own Self is Shiva.

Living in the midst of the world, normally you take your cues from outside of you. You draw on inner resources to bring forth what is needed in different situations. Sometimes you’re the loving and supportive friend or partner; at other times you are pragmatic and productive, accomplishing various tasks. Because your essence is Consciousness-Itself, you have a whole range of capacities.

In life, you specialize in a certain few of these capacities. Because you use these capacities again and again, you depend on them for your sense of self. You use them to construct a feeling of self-worth. While this is good stuff, it is limited and limiting. Your sense of self depends on how things are going in the world and how you look to others.

Yoga calls this your small-s self, meaning that the word “self” begins with a lower-case ‘s’. By contrast, the goal is the experiential knowing of your Capital-S Self, where the word begins with an upper-case ‘S’. But there are not really two of you in there. There is only one of you. There is only One Reality. You are that One. Being Shiva, you have all capacities within.

I call it dimensionality. Oh Shiva, you are a multi-dimensional being, with every dimension made of Consciousness. I’ll compare it to the ocean. Oceanographers tell us that the ocean has dimensionality. From a ship, they lower a bucket on a chain and collect a sample of the surface water. Then they collect another water sample from 10 feet down, and one from lower, down to hundreds of feet or more. Analyzing all these levels, they find different things. Just as our oceans are multi-dimensional realities, so are you.

You’re used to focusing on the surface level of your being, constructing your sense of selfhood from the churning of your thoughts and emotions, like the waves marching through. But you have depths. These depths are worth exploring. This is yoga’s purpose, to introduce you to the dimensionality of your own being.

The deepest levels are hidden from you, the ultimate mystery, until you get the mystical key. This is Shaktipat, the initiation that reveals your Divinity to you. Shaktipat is the specialty of our tradition, that a Yoga Master who is established in Self can awaken Self in another.

Once awakened, your own Self arises within, enlivening and enlightening you every time you call on it. All you have to do is turn your mind in that direction and invoke the inner arising. Mantra is the mystical formula that accomplishes this. Thus, when you get Shaktipat, you also get the enlivened mantra, which empowers you to explore deeper and deeper within.

Your mind is your most important too. While you have been using your mind to look outward, it is also the tool you use to look inward. However, your mind is currently conditioned by the ways you’ve been using it, perhaps even gunked up with some residue that needs to be cleared out. Thus, all of yoga’s practices are for your mind. Working with your body and breath are effective ways to refine and empower your mind for the inner exploration. All of yoga’s heart-based practices also captivate your mind, so you can use it for your own upliftment.

Think of your mind like a magnifying glass. When you look at your problems, your mind often magnifies them into big, hairy, scary stuff. But you can turn your mind’s eye inward and your mind will magnify Consciousness, intensifying your perception of who and what you are. Then you not only know your Shiva-ness, you experience the unending Bliss of Consciousness. Being Shiva, you see Shiva being all. This is the fulfillment of yoga’s mystical promise. This is why you do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, “SELF & SELF”

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