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Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

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A Yogi in the World #2

Choosing Your State

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

Whatever happens, you get to choose your response. You've got options. Let's say you have a flat tire. You could be frustrated because it is happening when you're busy. Or you could be relieved that it didn't happen when you were driving at 70 miles per hour. Another option is that you feel virtuous, for you have a membership to an auto service that will make the whole process easy for you.

You might feel guilty because you knew there was a problem with that tire, but you didn't take care of it. Maybe you are grateful to a friend or passing stranger who helps you with it. Or you use your intelligence to search for an online video that will help you with DIY.

You are even capable of having multiple reactions simultaneously. The feeling on which you choose to focus determines what happens next. If frustration makes you curse and kick the tire, you could end up with a broken toe along with a flat tire. If you focus on feeling relieved or grateful, then you feel blessed. You also become generous and helpful to others.

A yogi recently told me that another car ran into hers. After the police report was done, she offered a ride to the other driver, who was grateful. On their short drive, they bonded over their shared difficulty. You get to choose your state and it affects other people.

You're not an automaton, running the same program over and over. When you face a familiar problem, you can respond differently because (hopefully) you learned something from it last time. If you're a yogi, your response comes from a new level of compassion and clarity compared to last time, simply because you've opened up your inner reservoir more deeply.

Yogis learn from the inside as well as from the outside. On the outside, life gives you lessons. Are you getting them? If not, life will serve up the same menu as before, so you have another chance to get it. When you get it, you are changed. Learning from the outside changes you on the inside.

A yogi does it in a different order. A yogi gets it on the inside first. Then the same menu doesn't need to be served up again. And even if it does, your inner transformation makes your outer response easy. Clarity and compassion support you, even if the answer you give is "No."

This is tantra, the interweaving of the Divine into the mundane. Yoga makes you able to find the Divine within, your essence effulging forth like a blossoming flower. You bring it with you into everything outside of you, into the seemingly mundane world. Every other being and every single thing is the same Divine Reality, but in costume. Shiva is masquerading as this mundane world. You can't see it until you obtain Divine eyes.

Iti vaa yasya sa.mvitti.h krii.daatvenaakhila.m jagat,
sa pa"syān-satata.m yukto jiivanmukto na sa.m"saya.h. — Spandakarika 2.5

One with unbroken awareness of the Self, seeing Self in all,
recognizes this whole world as a Divine play. Indeed, such a yogi is liberated in this life.

You begin with deepening into your own Self. This gives you the ability to see Self in all, and to see the seemingly mundane world as Shiva's intoxicating dance. Now you know Shiva inside and outside. This is liberation. This is enlightenment.

I used to love being underwater in a pool or lake and looking up. I could see the people outside the water and the sky above them. While they looked distant from me, they were somehow more real, like they were all made of some ethereal substance that I could only see from underwater. Now I live in the inner depths, so I see that ethereal substance all the time. Everything and everyone is made of this mystical essence called Shiva — the One Reality, being all.

When you are deeply centered in your own essence, grounded in the inner infinity, you see the One Divine Reality all around. Your words and actions are based in clarity and compassion. When you're not centered and grounded, you still have free will. You can choose your attitude as well as your words and actions. You are choosing how to live and who to be.

In every moment, all possibilities exist. Your emotions are like a piano keyboard, with 88 keys. You can pick which keys to play, for all capacities lie within. Sometimes the answer is to cry, while other times it's better to laugh. You might simply walk away at a critical moment, to avoid reaching the tipping point. It can be very useful to take a bathroom break – even a long one.

The point is that you don't get sucked in. You don't want someone else playing your piano keys. You get to compose your own music. When you're centered and grounded, this is easy. When you're blown by the wind, skittering around based on other people's opinions and reactions, you've lost your own Self.

This is tantra, that you're always based in your own Divine Essence, bringing Self into your everyday life. Sounds good. The only remaining question is, "How do I get there?" My answer is predictable. I'll tell you to do more yoga.

M.rdu-madhya-adhimaatratvaat tato'pi vi"se.sa.h. — Patanjali's Yoga Sutras 1.22

Your amount of practice – mild, medium or intense – makes a difference in your rate of progress.

Toward what are you making progress? The good news is that yoga lets you choose your goal. The sages are telling you how to get enlightened, but you might opt for mere happiness, health and vitality. Whatever destination you choose, yoga will help you get there. Just like a car can take you to the local florist or you can drive across the continent, yoga moves you to where you want to go.

When you do a little yoga, you get a little better. Do more yoga, get more. Lots of yoga, you get it all. This is no surprise, for it's how it works with everything. An athlete or musician who practices a little will get gradually better. More practice, more improvement. So far, the process sounds quite linear.

However, *Svaroopa*® yoga is multidimensional. While you think you're only working on your back or neck pain, *Svaroopa*® yoga poses reveal a deeper dimension within. You are filled with bliss. You realize that pain relief is good but bliss is better.

While you started *Svaroopa*® Vidya meditation to reduce stress or develop your ability to focus, you discover the wellspring of peace and joy arising from within. You become whole. It's an inside-out process. You get inside, which changes everything on the outside.

There are two kinds of practices: emptying and filling. When you empty out closets and get rid of the accumulation of stuff in your basement or garage, it feels so good. You have space to breathe! Similarly, when you empty out your mind, you've got space inside. It's very freeing.

Emptying is what you're trying to do when you want to figure life out. When your mind returns to a memory or problem again and again, you're hoping to sort it out and clear it out so it doesn't own you anymore.

This is also how most media reports describe meditation – sit and wait for your mind to clear. Or watch your breath and wait for your mind to clear. When it happens, you expand into a glorious inner space. It lasts only as long as your mind stays clear.

Tantra does it another way. Tantra fills you up. Instead of emptying your mind, you fill it with mantra. Your mind gets to marinate in Consciousness. As your mind becomes saturated, it simply can't hold onto the old limiting stuff anymore. You outgrow your wounds and grievances, even your needs and desires.

You are able to use your mind without losing your inner state. Your mind functions with more clarity and creativity, while it is rooted in your deeper essence called Self. In every moment, you are able to choose the best response and decide on the most beneficial course of action. Your choices are no longer based in need, greed and fear. Your choices are based in Consciousness. So is your life. So are you. Do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "A YOGI IN THE WORLD"

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svaroopa*® Yoga & Meditation, contact
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