



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

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A Yogi in the World #7

Where Are You Going?

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While I was growing up, the adults around me often asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I always wanted to know, “What are my options?” They never suggested that I could get enlightened. I would like for you to know that this is one of your options, too.

The good news is that you don’t have to give up your other options while you’re working on enlightenment. You can have a home and family as well as your work and pastimes. Your actions are not what keep you from being enlightened. It’s what you think that holds you back.

Yet your actions do change as you begin to manage your mind more effectively. They become more uplifting and more altruistic. This is because anything you do is preceded by thoughts. The sages warned us about this around 3,000 years ago:

Whatever one thinks, that one does.

Tat vaachaa vadati, tat karmanaa karoti. — Taittiriya Aranyaka 1.23.1

Where is your mind taking you? If you want different results than you’ve been getting, simply steer your mind differently. It’s easy to get motivated to do this, as using your mind the way have been means you get the results you’ve been getting. The bottom-line question is: are you enlightened yet?

My Baba always emphasized that you can live where you live, sharing your life with those you choose and doing what you do — just see it with Divine eyes. He said, “Change the color of your glasses.” Instead of approaching everything like it is an opportunity to get happy, bring your happiness with you.

How do you do this? First, fill your mind with your own inner light. Delve into the source within; discover that it is the One Divine Reality. That One is being you, your own Self. Now that you’ve found your own Self, bring your Self with you everywhere you go. Now you have something worth sharing!

Being enlightened means that you are always full of light. This is already true. Your inherent nature is the light of Consciousness whether you currently see it or not. But if you don’t see it, you’re not enlightened. It’s your mind that pulls down the window shades. This is why every yoga practice is for your mind.

While poses and yogic breathing improve your body, the most delicious effect is on your mind. It begins with inner bliss. It develops into ongoing peace and an inner spaciousness. These support an expanding capacity of heart and mind. Your new capacity leads to a deep sense of inner continuity — the inner knowing that “I am I.” This knowing is beyond mere thought.

Yet you can use your mind to support this upliftment. Cultivate noble thoughts, see the best in others, practice self restraint and relinquish your negativity, whether directed toward others or toward yourself. These are choices you can make whether life is going smoothly or not.

These practices are easier to do after you have done yoga or meditated. Thus you may find yourself motivated to do more yoga, something I always recommend. Even your family members notice when you’ve been yogified. One evening I was teaching a yoga class and was surprised to see a yogini arriving who always attended midday classes. She sheepishly confessed, “My kids sent me. They told me, ‘Mom, you need to do yoga.’”

Yes, your family will thank you for doing more yoga, especially when you cultivate a yogic mindset. It’s like you’re redecorating your inner space by removing the old furniture and leaving breathing space inside. Light shines through empty space.

Mind alone is the cause of bondage and of liberation.

Mana eva manu.syaa.naa.m kaaraṇaṃ bandha-mok.sayo.h.

– Amritabindu Upanishad, verse 2

You already know how to use your mind to limit your sense of self. This ancient verse says you can use your mind to get liberated. The Sanskrit word near the end of the line, mok.sa (moksha), means liberation. The classical definition is freedom from rebirth, that you won’t have to come back again.

It also means freedom from limitations while you are alive. This freedom is doubled. You have *freedom from* and *freedom to*. You are unshackled from what has been holding you back, even when it was your own mind. And you are empowered to be and to do whatever you choose. In this state, your actions are always Divinely inspired. This is because *freedom from* dissolves your self-centered and egoistic agendas while *freedom to* shows you what will best serve all.

It's easy to experience this great state, especially when studying with one who lives in it. The taste of freedom I got from my Baba motivated me to go live and study with him full time. It changed the trajectory of my life, like going from black-and-white living to residing in Oz. Everything is so alive, so real, so Divine!

It's only your mind that makes you think life is mundane. Like living in a desert, you keep looking for the oasis. It will be green and pretty, with lots of water and cool shady spots to lounge in. Your mind says, when I get "there", I'll be happy.

But the desert is incredibly beautiful. I've spent a lot of time in the California deserts, from my years of trying to escape the tedium of life. I went to the desert for the wide flat vistas, the clear skies and perpetual sun. I loved the sand and boulders, as well as the little plants that grew in their cracks, along with the little critters who scuttled around.

When you are waiting to get there, to the oasis in your life, it means you can't be happy now. Why? If you discover that happiness arises from within, you won't need to get to the oasis anymore. So you habitually suppress the inner flow of happiness. It is ever arising within but you shut it down with your body and breath, and most of all with your mind.

It's easy to prove. Close your eyes and take three deep breaths, nice and slow. When you open your eyes, you'll find that you feel better. Perhaps even happier. Certainly more relaxed.

You habitually breathe too little. It's a way of limiting your aliveness. I remember holding my breath while my parents were arguing. At three years old, I felt like I couldn't breathe until they calmed down. I was over 30 when I realized how often I held my breath. My yoga practices had opened up the way I breathed. Yoga taught me to breathe freely, which made me more alive and happier.

This is a change at the instinctual level, which repatterned a behavior I had learned out of necessity. Yoga's physical practices do deprogram you at this deep level. They also reprogram you into a more natural way of being — freer and easier. Yet the mental practices make the quickest changes, like turning on a dime.

Once you know, you can't not-know. The great masters make you able to use your mind to get beyond your mind. Freedom from delusion means you see that your mundane life is truly Divine, as are you. Your destiny is to know your deeper essence, to live in the constant flow of inner inspiration and to let your Divine light overflow into your life, your relationships and the world.

But first you gotta get there. For this, you have to reprogram your GPS. Your mind is taking you on an old route when you could be on the superhighway.

As one does and acts, so one becomes.

Yathaakaarii yathaacaarii tathaa bhavati.

— Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.5

The sages say to fake it until you make it. Shape your thoughts and actions as if you were already enlightened. Do what the great beings of all traditions have done: think only noble thoughts, see the best in others, practice self restraint and relinquish your negativity. You can make these choices whether life is going smoothly or not. Or you could do mantra all the time, another way of doing more yoga. What you are thinking is what you are becoming.

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

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