



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

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A Yogi in the World #10

Just Do It

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This is not only good advice, it's a famous advertising slogan — Just Do It. It captured the zeitgeist of the time, a great sense of possibilities. It's a perfect slogan for a tantric yogi, one who brings their spirituality into the world.

The Bhagavadgita defined this yogic approach to the world. Krishna says you must contribute to the world's process. Give it your best. Make a difference.

Buddhi-yukto jahaatiha ubhe suk.rita-du.sk.rite,
tasmaad yogaaya yujyasva yoga.h karmasu kau"salam.

— Bhagavadgita 2.50

Established in clarity, shed selfish motivations that create
pleasurable and painful karmas.

Devote yourself to yoga. Skillful action is yoga.

Yogis of yore withdrew from mainstream society to live in nearby forests. Similarly, in Egypt the desert hermits lived in remote caves. Hearing of these spiritual extremists, you might think that you should leave the world, to try to get enlightened by yourself. However, those living in the Indian forests and Egyptian deserts were not solo seekers. They lived together in small groups under the guidance of experienced teachers. They were not into DIY spirituality.

Krishna's teaching was a radical revamp of the tradition. He said, "Get out there and make a difference in the world." Why such a change? It was because the world had changed. He lived on the cusp of Kali Yuga, our modern age, predicted to be a time of increasing darkness. Krishna said the world needs the yogis. You must bring your light into the world. Get up and get going. Just do it.

His teaching was revolutionary in another way. While you choose to act in the world, doing your absolute best, a yogi's motivation is different than that of worldly-minded people. You're not doing things so you can get a karmic payoff. While people will work hard to get a promotion, their improved status and salary are karmic payoff for their efforts. Doing something nice for others, so they appreciate you, means you're looking for the karmic payoff. Krishna says, "See what needs to be done and do it. No payoff needed."

Proactive. Professional. Proficient. And not looking for the results to make you feel good about yourself. Instead you analyze the results of your efforts as a way to gauge your effectiveness. Are your efforts producing the beneficial results you had in mind? This is not about fulfilling your desires. It's about serving others, a whole yoga practice in its own right, called karma yoga. It's the yoga practice that erases your bad karmas.

It sounds like hard work. Yes! In Sanskrit, it is tapas, the purificatory fire of conscious action. You choose to do the hard stuff. Most people wait for life to thrust them into difficulties. Instead, as a yogi, you make a decision to challenge yourself. Then you rise to the occasion. And you are uplifted.

In his Ashram, my Baba gave us lots of seva to do. For example, new decorations for Christmas and New Years were handmade every year. They were not saved from the prior year. Instead, 50 or 100 yogis would spend days cutting out paper decorations, painting and gluing them together, then hanging them in all the public areas – thousands of square feet of rooms decorated with a visible expression of their love.

My Baba often spoke of the value of karma yoga, citing himself as a living example of one who gave his every action to God and Guru. He called it guruseva, serving the one who gives you your own Self. While any type of volunteer work benefits the giver more than the receiver, that effect is multiplied when you're serving the Guru.

Praaptu.m tat sahaja.m svabhaavam anisha.m
sevadhvameka.m gurum. – "Srii Guru Gita 53

Always serve only one Guru and attain the state easily
where your breath suspends on its own in the timelessness of your Self.

Receiving Shaktipat initiation from Baba is what propelled me into Consciousness. Yet it was seva that grew my ability to live in that state all the time. I have benefitted from doing full-time seva for my Guru for decades. This way of living and working is an offering, a sacred action performed for the benefit of others.

Let's return to Krishna's definition of yoga: "Skillful action is yoga." It can be read forward and backward. It means that yogis are skillful. It also means that, anytime you do something skillfully, you're a yogi.

The focus it takes to do something skillfully is a yogic focus. Plus, you've spent some time developing your ability, which means you have done some practice. Additionally, you are applying your skill in a discerning fashion. When you really get into what you're doing, you disappear into it.

As a musician, I know this in playing music. I have chosen to play music focused on God, so when I disappear into it, only God remains. Yoga calls this samadhi, a Divine Absorption. However, music always comes to an end.

The point is to live in the inner absorption always. When you do, every action arises from that Divine source. Every word and every thought is for one purpose only, the Divine purpose hidden in the task at hand. With yogic music, the purpose is to uplift others – to give them the experience of Divine Absorption. It is sanctified work.

This is choice-full living. You choose where to put your time and your energies. Instead of using every moment to avoid pain and pursue pleasures, you go for upliftment. You choose to share, to give, to live in a spirit of generosity. Your life becomes filled by the river of Grace.

Unfortunately, I know yogis who avoid making decisions. They say, "I'm good with whatever happens." Maybe they truly are free from expectations, need and fear. Yet they are not contributing their energy and creativity to the situation. They're being a passenger in the back seat of life in the delusion that this is spirituality. Or maybe they're simply lazy.

Krishna said you have to lead the way. Yogis truly are more skillful. They see things more clearly, especially once they are truly free from expectations, need and fear. They have a greater capacity to accomplish things, for yoga has made them more productive. They get things done quickly and with impeccable quality. It's a rare and beautiful thing.

When I returned to a mainstream lifestyle after many years of study in my Baba's Ashram, I got a job. I sat at a desk in a room with 20 other desks, all of us doing the paperwork it took to run the business. Within 3 months, I was promoted to the head of the department. I asked why. They said, "You understand our needs and are more productive than those who have been here for years." This was because I brought yogic clarity to even the simple things of life. And I didn't have all the expectations, needs and fear weighing me down. It's a glorious way to live! I got it from doing guruseva.

Yes, meditation contributes to it. Also yoga poses and breathing practices. The chanting and yogic studies provide a deepening insight, giving you a profound transformation of mind. But guruseva is a transformation of will. You're no longer focused on your own petty needs. You see the bigger picture and choose to operate from that higher perspective.

While seva is an activity, it's also a perspective. Do what you do as seva, as an offering to God and Guru. Many of the things you do are for other people already, so do it as if I told you, "Take care of this person for me. They are a sacred trust." With the things you do for yourself, do it as if I said to you, "Take care of yourself. Do it for me. I want you to be well cared for and you're the one who has to do it." Yoga is skillful action. Do more yoga.

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

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