



June 2012 Contemplation Theme

## The Yoga of Grace

by Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

Yoga is not DIY. Do-it-yourself (DIY) is a slow, laborious process that brings questionable results. DIY can be a great money-saver, though it is never a time-saver. It's creative, productive, challenging, frustrating and satisfying to tile your own bathroom or build your own helicopter, but it never comes with a guarantee. Yoga comes with a guarantee. You will know your own Self (capital-S Self) if you follow the inward path that the yogis have trekked for generations, but you get help every step of the way.

The current Do-It-Yourself craze harkens back to pioneer America: if you couldn't make it yourself back then, you didn't have it. DIY is now a big moneymaker for television. It's an important part of the simple living movement. When you're baking your own bread or making a quilt for someone, it's an expression of love as well as a gift of your time and energy. Yet that gift of love, time and energy happens every time your *Svaroopa*® yoga teacher adds a blanket to your stack, realigns your body angles or gives you a sacrum press. If yoga was DIY, that wouldn't happen. I remember a yoga teacher (of a different style) who bragged that she never touched her students and she didn't even speak during class. She simply showed them how her body moved in the poses and let them do the best they could. It wouldn't have worked for me because, I always needed help to find my blind spots!

The millennia-old yogic tradition is based on yogis helping yogis. While Western yoga is focused mainly on entry level practices (poses, breathing practices and chanting), there's help every step of the way. Even if you're doing it yourself by working through a yoga book, DVD/website or our new Pose Cards, you're getting a boost from the writer of the books and cards and the makers of the DVD and websites. You don't have to reinvent the wheel.

As your yoga progresses into the subtleties, into the more powerful realms of inner exploration, the help you get also becomes more subtle and more powerful. Yoga calls this Grace. Your interiorization moves through stages of contemplation (*dharana*) and meditation (*dhyana*), culminating in profound and deep experiences of inner absorption (*samadhi*). As a practitioner of core opening yoga poses, you already know the early levels of *samadhi*, found so easily in the seated poses and twists, and especially in your many *Shavasanas*. To excavate more deeply, all the way to your inner Divinity, you have to sit up. All your spinal release has prepared you for an easy seated pose, so the meditative energy (*Kundalini*) can climb your spine.

Grace is the power of revelation, described in the "Siva Sutras:

*Yo'vipastho jna-hetushcha — "Siva Sutras 3.29*

Only a yogi with mastery over the wheel of energy is capable to enlighten others

This sutra is saying that there are yogis who are capable of giving enlightenment to others! What kind of amazing gift is that? Personally, this is what got me into yoga and kept me so focused for so long. Having met such a yogi, my own Guru, I knew I was being given a gift beyond comparison — Grace. I wanted it. I knew yoga's promise was true because I tasted it again and again; *samadhi* is a taste of enlightenment. I dedicated my life to finding all that yoga promises.

As I said last month, "Yoga leaves no stone unturned." If yoga left stones unturned, the crawly critters in the hidden corners of your mind and emotions would keep you from knowing your own Self. You must unmask your inner demons, but you don't have to do it alone. You will outgrow your fears and obsessions; this is yoga's promise. This is due to the power of Grace.

*Svaroopa*® yoga is the yoga of Grace. For me, it is the yoga of Grace because I got it from my Guru. For you, it is the yoga of Grace because it jump-starts your inner evolution, the discovery of your own *svaroopa* — your own Divine Beingness, your Self.

Once I received initiation from my Guru, the fire of yoga began to blaze within me. I wanted to surrender to this inner flame, and learned how under my Guru's watchful care and guidance.

Kundalini taught me about core opening, through the physical movements (*kriyas*) she prompted in my meditations. My gratitude will never end for what my Baba gave me. Most importantly, He taught me to trust what Kundalini brought forth within me. Every time I had a doubt about a new level of inner opening (and I had many doubts), He reaffirmed for me that I could trust the arising of Consciousness within me. By the time I moved to San Diego and began teaching, I knew that I knew.

Your practice of the discipline named *Svaroopā*<sup>®</sup> yoga, based on the key principles of precision and compassion, allow you to mimic the physical processes I went through in my early years with my Guru. The awakened Kundalini moved me through the full range of yoga poses, but in a way that opened my spine effortlessly — a radical departure from what I was doing and what I saw others doing in our yoga classes, as we tried to move our bodies into our idea of the picture-perfect pose. I knew that “imposing” the “pose” on my body was wrong because I experienced the grace and ease of each pose in my meditations, when Kundalini moved me.

As my process advanced, I left the physical *kriyas* behind and experienced Kundalini clearing my mind and heart. She unraveled the crazy-bits, of which there were many, by tracking them to their inner-most kernel: again and again I confronted the fear that drove all the crazies. But I couldn't unravel the fear. My Guru did that. I know what Grace is, for it begins the process (through Shaktipat initiation), supports the process (the ever-present umbrella of Grace) and it completes the process (the inner revealing of who you really are).

Even if you don't know what Grace is, *Svaroopā*<sup>®</sup> yoga is the yoga of Grace. Every time you target the core tensions and melt them away, tail to top, you open yourself to Divine Grace again. Core opening is a process of inner opening, surrendering the way you resist your own Divinity and surrendering to the inner Reality of your own Self. The practices invoke the blessing of the ages, coming from the sages and masters of yoga, those who are gone and those still alive. Most students of *Svaroopā*<sup>®</sup> yoga experience Kundalini awakening within their first two years of regular study and practice; many experience this incredible gift in their first class or in their first year.

How do you know if you have been Awakened? If you feel the inner heat climbing your spine or radiating from your core, the revelatory power of Consciousness (Kundalini) is awakened and working within you. If you dive in deeper than deep, losing track of time and place in a pause between poses, or in your Shavasanas, the doorway to your own Divinity has been opened; Kundalini is opening you from the inside out. If you find yourself lifted or moved effortlessly into a deeper angle in a pose or even right into a painful spot (to burn it away), the fire of yoga (Kundalini) is moving you light-years in a few breaths.

When you get inner answers, always right even when they don't make sense, Kundalini is showing you how to live your life by the inner compass. When you stop craving things that your mind still says it wants, Kundalini is freeing you from your compulsions. When you find that everything you thought you wanted is just a summer rerun, and you realize that what you want is something more... you're on the path. This is yoga. This is *Svaroopā*<sup>®</sup> yoga. The Yoga of Grace.

Do more yoga.

To reach Swamiji or to get more information about *Svaroopā*<sup>®</sup> yoga, contact: Master Yoga Foundation

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