



June 1994 Contemplation Theme

Svaroopaa[®] Yoga #1

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Our style of hatha yoga is named Svaroopaa Yoga because we use the poses to discover svaroopaa inside. This experience of svaroopaa, your own true form, is the goal of yoga practice. Your true form is consciousness, beyond all limitations of idea, understanding or individuality. The experience of svaroopaa is very easy to access, and is found within and beyond the layers of individuality where you normally get stuck. It can be described as bliss, but the Shiva Sutras describe it as an aliveness that cannot be imagined — only experienced.

Chaitanyam atma

The Self is consciousness, completely enlivened, fully aware.

- Shiva Sutras 1.1

Atma is your true Self, the essence of your being. It can be considered a synonym for svaroopaa, your true form. Svaroopaa points to the experience of Atma, while Atma highlights that there is something to experience.

In this text, Shiva starts his message by telling us the most important thing in the first Sutra: You are Consciousness. This is completely different than how we usually describe ourselves. We tell others, “I am tall” or “I am a teacher,” or “I am angry.” We tell ourselves, “I am not good enough,” “I am overworked and underappreciated,” or “I am too fat.” We rarely tell ourselves anything positive, but even a positive statement would be limited. Even affirmations are limited, and limiting. The most powerful affirmation you can use is, “I am consciousness.” Most mantras given by great Masters actually mean this.

This consciousness (that is who you are) is completely alive. To feel completely alive is an extraordinary thing. You have had this experience at some time in your life. I vividly remember the moment I began to walk down the church aisle when I got married. I was fully alive. I could see everything and everyone there. I was absolutely still inside, completely calm. And I radiated a glow that was more than happiness — it felt holy.

At the time, it seemed that the experience was due to the external conditions: it was my wedding day. Since then, I have had that experience many times. The sages tell us we can have this experience at any time, by simply choosing to be in it. Who would ever choose to be out of it, once you had the ability choose it?

This is Svaroopaa Yoga, a way to use yoga poses and breathing to find this experience inside. You do not have to wait for the Shavasana relaxation pose at the end of a yoga class, but you can find it in every pose. More than that, you can find it in every beam of light, in every leaf on every tree, in every breath you breathe, and in every moment of life. Even now. Just consider: Who are you, really?

Namaste,