



January-February 2010 Contemplation Theme

Clarity, Integrity & Transparency

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Clarity is your sense of knowing, completely beyond doubt and even beyond thought. Integrity is the alignment of all the levels of your being and your life, an experience of complete congruency. Transparency is letting what is inside you shine outward. They all come from a single source, but each of the three is a different way of experiencing it.

You cannot think your way into clarity. It dawns in the “Aha!” moment, pictured in the comics as a light bulb over the character’s head. The cartoonists’ drawings depict what it actually feels like: the light dawns; in that moment, you get it. But how can you get there? Most people chase their mind all over the map, until they are exhausted and cannot think any more. Not being able to think any more is yoga, as defined by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras:

Yogas-chitta-vrtti-nirodhah — Patanjali Yoga Sutras 1.2

Yoga is the stilling of your mind’s activities

There are many yogic ways of stilling your mind, but exhaustion is a familiar technique for most people. It’s not the best technique, but it does work. When your mind falls into an exhausted stillness, the light of *svaroopa* (your own divine essence) shines through. The bulb lights up over your head and you know the answer! This kind of knowing is a deep knowing. There’s no thought, so there’s no discussion, no doubts, no analysis needed, no further reevaluation or continued dithering. Complete clarity. It comes from “insight,” meaning you looked inward (in – sight). When your decisions are based in this clarity, you move forward with confidence and ease. When you base your life in this clarity, it becomes easy, even when events are challenging.

Integrity is a wholeness that makes you invulnerable. All the levels of your being and your life are fully aligned. What you say is also what you think and feel. What you do matches up to all the others. No one can undermine you when you live in integrity with yourself. It’s an easy way to live because you’re always consistent, both with others as well as with yourself. This integrity occurs because you use your mind differently than most people do. They look outside for answers, but your mind is always looking inward for guidance, thus you select your words and make decisions to do things that are in integrity with your own divine essence.

Transparency means you have nothing to hide. The old ditty bag that you carried around for so many lifetimes has been completely emptied out, so you have no grudges waiting to be fulfilled, no obsessions or aversions to limit your joy, no “gotta’s” that propel you in slavery to your instincts, and no neediness to infect your relationships or your decisions. The radiance of your own being shines through without impediment, allowing you to enjoy the perpetual sunshine inside plus sharing it with the others in your life.

To summarize:

Clarity is when you are caught up in external things, and you look inside for answers.

Integrity is when you base your words and actions in the inner levels of your being.

Transparency is when you let your inner radiance shine through your mind and life.

They are all based in one thing – your own innermost Self, the light of your own divinity. When your life is based on anything else, you live in the opposite: confusion, fragmentation and density. I call that “normal” because yoga says this is the norm; it’s how most people live. Getting from normal (confusion, fragmentation and density) to a yogic state (clarity, integrity and transparency) is a process.

The process is a complex and multi-layered journey. Yoga’s practices keep you moving along the way and support you along the way. When you do your breathing and asanas, you keep opening in an inward direction. The opening is tangible and even blissful as you open from tail to top with every class, yoga therapy session or personal practice session. Unfortunately, you can go from a blissful openness to painful relapse in minutes if you don’t begin to work with your mind. It only takes a short conversation or even just a few of your own thoughts to create the tensions that you spent an hour or more unraveling. Your mind must do more yoga, too. Fortunately yoga offers practices for your mind.

You already know that there are different styles of yoga asana, with *Svaroopa*[®] yoga providing core opening while many others focus on core strength, and you have hot yoga as well as athletic and gymnastic-type poses and practices. Each has its own reasoning and purpose for working with the body in the dramatically different ways, and each accomplishes its purpose if you continue to work with its methodologies in a consistent and fruitful manner. In this way, you condition your body like an athlete does. Yet a basketball player does different conditioning than a tennis player, and a football player does different conditioning than a high-jumper. Thus, the different styles of yoga asana practice do not work with the same methodologies nor do they produce the same results.

In the same way, yoga's practices for the mind differ tremendously depending on which system you are using. Because the yogic and meditative disciplines are new to westerners, they tend to think that the different systems are all teaching the same thing. They are not. The differences are huge, including their perspective on the existence of this universe. You may have read books that say different things:

The world does not exist

The world is illusion, meaning you see it but it is not real

The world is real but you must turn away from it

The world is real and is meant to be experienced with great joy and love

You can easily see that these are not the same. Different meditative systems not only describe the universe differently, they describe the ultimate goal differently. An old adage says, "Be careful which path you take. Pick one with heart."

I remembered this when I returned home after visiting a Guru who was offering a free program in my home town several years ago. I love to meet those who represent their tradition most fully! I always learn more about myself and my own tradition. I sat while he arrived and seated himself. He sat quietly for a few minutes before beginning his program, and then offered his teachings in a question and answer format.

After I left the program, I sat in my living room gazing out the sliding glass door to my garden. I could see the possibility within myself of sliding something open, like the way the garden door opened, and that I could step into an inner vastness – pure space and vast emptiness. As I explored the possibility, I realized I could become enlightened in that moment, but it would be an enlightenment without love. I could be established in the pure light of consciousness, but the world would become unreal to me – like a mirage that disappears as you draw closer. I would be free, but in a vast aloneness. Like this Guru described for himself and consistent with his tradition. I decided to close that inner door. I wanted to follow the path I was on, a path with heart.

Svaroopa[®] yoga is based in the Kashmiri Shaivite tradition that says the world is real, and so are you, and so is everyone else, but there is more to all of it than you currently see. You must find that "something more" within yourself, then you will see it in everyone and everything. That seeing is a recognition of the one divine light in the multiplicity of forms, which is experienced as an overwhelming and unconditional love and joy – simultaneously. How do you get there? Your breathing practice and poses get you started, but you reach a point where you must work on your mind directly.

Different systems will give you different techniques for your mind. Kashmiri Shaivism says you must repeat mantra. There are two times of day that you must repeat mantra: when you are meditating and when you are not meditating. You can begin with this mantra, "Shivo'ham." It means, "I am Shiva, the ever-existent One Reality." An alternate translation makes it even more clear, "I am my own divine Self."

This is a temporary mantra. This means it will work, but it does not commit you to any long-term practice or lineage or tradition. It gives you the opportunity to start clearing out your mind, so you can live in progressively more and more clarity and integrity, leading to transparency. Do more yoga.

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