



March 2014 Contemplation: Body, Mind & More #3

## Your Body is a Temple

by Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati & Rukmini Abbruzzi

Your body is a temple. You've probably heard this before. It's a reminder to treat your body well, both because you need your body healthy and strong as well as because your body is "the house of your soul." You may even have begun yoga because you needed to take better care of your body. The deepest roots of such New Age teachings often come from yoga's ancient sages, yet the sages offer more: not only is your body the house of your Divinity, your body is itself Divine.

Not many people are interested in the teachings of the sages. Nor do most people treat their bodies very well. They run their bodies ragged. They put off meeting its needs and only pay attention to it when it's in pain. Yet you do yoga, which means you already take better care of your body. *Svaroopa*® yoga reliably provides healing benefits to your body. After even one yoga class you have less tension in your body, your breathing is easier, there's a brightness in your eyes and a lightness in your step. As you continue to do the *Svaroopa*® poses and breathing practice, your results are both more profound and easier to achieve. Think about it: how quickly does the Magic 4 open up your body now compared to the first time? Plus you enjoy much deeper opening, even from such simple poses.

Your practices give you great benefits, both physical and more than physical. Even if you began yoga to treat your body better, to heal it or decrease its pain, you soon find that core opening gives you more — you're immersing yourself in the core of your being. You discover that there is a deeper essence, the "you" that is more than your body and more than your mind. Yoga calls it svaroopa, your own Self as Consciousness-Itself, your own Divine Self. You may experience your own Divinity as an inner expansiveness, calmness, peace, clarity, happiness or joy. Whatever your reasons for beginning yoga, these experiences of your own Self are what keep you coming back.

Swami Nirmalananda describes her personal experience of walking the labyrinth, "I wondered what people got from walking a labyrinth, so I decided to try one. I didn't experience anything at the one in my nearby park, so I thought I'd try a better labyrinth and went to Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. They had just installed two labyrinths, outside in the garden and inside the cathedral. From my hotel, I took the cable car up the hill, then stepped down into the street. I walked across a little strip of grass and a cement sidewalk to place my foot on the first stair step up to the Cathedral's property. A bolt of energy shot up through my whole body! I stopped, very clearly experiencing Kundalini's message, 'This is holy ground.' I wasn't even in their garden yet, only on the cement steps leading up almost two floors to get to their grounds. Wow!

"I climbed the steps, tried out both labyrinths and still found nothing special there, but that's because I was already in the center — in the Self. Yoga gave that to me, not anything outside. But I did learn about sacred ground. It's not just the statue (or cross or flame) in the temple that is sacred; it's the whole temple and the ground on which it stands."

Yoga explains that if your body were merely a house for your soul, your body would be an inert substance or form, enlivened by your inner essence. Instead, your body itself is Consciousness, every cell formed of Consciousness-concentrate. One yoga text uses a map to explain the details: how Consciousness becomes the whole of the Universe, including you, your body and your mind:

Sa chaiko dviroopas trimayash chaturaatmaa sapta panchaka svabhaavah.

— Pratyabhijnahridayam 7

Though Consciousness is One, She becomes 2-fold, 3-fold, 4-fold and of the nature of 7 pentads (7 x 5= 35).<sup>1</sup>

Every sutra of the yoga texts are rich and dense with meaning, yet this sutra gives more than most, as it actually describes 4 different maps of creation! There is the 2-fold map, the 3-fold map, the 4-fold map and the 35-fold map. While all these maps are true and all of them are occurring simultaneously, right now we'll focus on just one: the 4-fold. In the sutra, Shiva is the One being named as "Consciousness," also referred to as "She" when manifesting a universe.

Consciousness (She) first manifests as the void. When you have a deep and profound meditative experience, you've experienced the void, an infinite inner nothingness, except that it is NOT nothing. It's Shiva, becoming the void to hide Himself/Herself.

Within the void, while being the void, Shiva moves. That movement is called prana. It's the second level of manifestation, becoming the energy that brings life to this universe (except the universe doesn't exist yet – it's in the process of being manifested).

Now prana, the energy of life, begins to coalesce into subtle forms, like coalescing clouds in the sky. These forms of prana become individual and separate beings on the subtle levels, pouring themselves into the five senses and the mind — becoming your five senses and your mind. This is the third level, made of pure energy.

That Divine energy condenses and concentrates into the fourth level of manifestation, your physical body. This is how your body comes to exist (with your parents getting involved too, of course). This is how everyone's body, and every tree and every bunny and every rock comes into existence. It's all energy, the "She" in the sutra, manifesting as matter. The physical form you see is just the outermost level of the Divine levels of manifestation that are all going on at the same time.

Rukmini describes being at the *Svaroopa*<sup>®</sup> yoga conference seven years ago or so, in a class led by Swamiji: "At the end of the class, Swamiji invited us to open our eyes. And when I did, the expansiveness and fullness I had been feeling inside was visible outside too. It felt like I was the ocean, and my body a wave of the ocean, each breath a gentle bob of the wave. Every other body around me was another wave of the same ocean, bobbing slightly with each breath and small movement. Even the air around us, the sounds that moved through it, the floor beneath us, was the same ocean."

Your body is a Divine temple. It is Consciousness-Itself that houses the Divinity (you) that is Consciousness-Itself. Whether you study the teachings or not, your core opening will give you the experiential knowing of your own Self, the Divinity that is Consciousness-Itself. Yoga's timeless goal is the continuing experience of your own Divinity and to see that in all others. Do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON "BODY, MIND & MORE," OUR CONTEMPLATION THEME FOR 2014, CO-AUTHORED BY SWAMI NIRMALANANDA SARASWATI AND VIDYADEVI STILLMAN OR RUKMINI ABBRUZZI.

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svaroopa*<sup>®</sup> Yoga & Meditation, contact: *Svaroopa*<sup>®</sup> Vidya Ashram, home of Master Yoga:

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<sup>1</sup> English rendering by Swami Nirmalananda