



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

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Being Here, Now

By Swami Nirmalananda & Vidyadevi Stillman

Ram Dass' book, Be Here Now, left an imprint on American culture that continues today. In addition to attracting yoga practitioners and influencing numerous other writers, he introduced the phrase into common use. "Be Here Now" is succinct summary of yoga's goal. Each word is a significant and valuable teaching.

"Be" emphasizes that you are a "human being," not a "human doing."¹ It expresses yoga's goal beautifully: to become the Ultimate Reality, thus realizing your full potential, which is currently hidden within you. Yoga offers skillful tools to open up this inner experience for you. Unfortunately, some people take this word, "be," as though it were a practice unto itself. They model themselves after the iconographic image of the skeletal yogi, living alone in a Himalayan cave, who eats very little, has long scraggly hair and never speaks or does anything.

Such spiritual aspirants want to vacation or to move to a mountain cabin, to be alone and silent, sitting to meditate for 23 hours a day. The problem is that, if your inner state depends on your immobility, how realized are you? Worse, if you can't actually do anything, for yourself or to benefit others, why are you taking up space on this planet? Even Krishna, an incarnation of God, says, "Look at me. Even I work for the benefit of mankind."²

While most seekers don't go to this extreme, their heartfelt desire to experience elevated spirituality means they try simply to "be" by doing the minimum in life. They work, eat and bathe, take care of their car and home, but they stop interacting with people, withdraw from relationships and don't have any friends. They don't go anywhere and make their life very simple. This is touted as an elevated spiritual lifestyle.

Swami Nirmalananda debunks this idea, "This is escapism, a refusal to participate in life, a way to wimp out and insure you have many future lifetimes in which to work on yourself. True "beingness" is a state of vibrancy, that revels in relationship as well as in solitude, in activity as well as in stillness."

Other people develop their spirituality by practicing the "now" — being "present" in the "present moment." Playing on the multiple meanings of "present," the moment is like a gift. Life itself is a gift! No more dwelling in the past or living in the future. No more shoulda, coulda or woulda. You're done with constructing expectations or fears. Living in the present moment, second-by-second and breath-by-breath, everything that comes, comes. When it goes, it goes. This moment is the way it is, without you needing to change or control it, nor to make it different. It sounds quite wonderful!

Except how do you plan for the future, or utilize what you've learned in the past? The practice of "now" means you fully participate in the ever-moving now, every moment of life as it presents itself to you, even when it's something you didn't want or seems like more than you can handle. No escape hatch. It's now. It's happening, so it's part of your spiritual practice. While this teaching plants you squarely in life, it tends to leave you stranded in your mind, or always struggling with your mind, often in a spacy ungroundedness that undermines the quality of your life.

Svaroopā® yoga focuses on "here." "Here" is wherever you are physically located; your body always gives you a "here" to be in. Simply be in that location while you are there. Once you become "here," you find that "be" is built into "here." The whole reason that Consciousness has become embodied is in order to be you, and to be in your body. You are the being who has your body, your mind, your emotions and your life, which are based in the location where your body is located. In order to be here, you are "being."

By being "here," you are also in the "now." Your body is not in the location where it was ten minutes or two hours ago. Thus, "here" always includes "be" and "now."

This is described in the *Pratyabhijnahridayam*, a Kashmiri Shaivism text from 1300 years ago:

¹ Kurt Vonnegut.

² Swami Nirmalananda & Vidyadevi Stillman, "Being a Role Model" (Downtown PA, *Svaroopā*® Vidya Ashram, September 2016 Contemplation Article), page 1.

Consciousness-Itself assumes contraction to become
both the universe and the individuals,
who have the universe as their bodies in a contracted form.³

You already know that energy contracts to become the whole universe. What you may not have realized is that physicists also explain that the energy-that-becomes-matter is Conscious Energy, something they confess that they don't yet understand. The sage Kshemaraja explained it for them, that Consciousness has become energy in order to contract into matter and manifest as the universe and all in it, including you.

This means you are pure Consciousness, which has coalesced into a unique and individualized form. A classic example comes from the oral tradition. As a banyan tree grows, it extends horizontal branches that produce aerial roots which hang down to take root wherever they touch the ground. Each aerial root grows into another trunk which also grows limbs, extending one tree outward with multiple trunks. The largest banyan tree in Hawaii is over 100 years old and covers an entire city block.

Yet a banyan tree seed is the size of a strawberry seed, those little black dots on the outside of the berry. India's ancient sages describe that the tiny seed contains the whole tree. Just as the banyan tree seed has the whole tree within it, you have the whole of Consciousness within you. You can think of yourself as the seed of Consciousness.

This means that your body is very mystical. To discover the mystery of who you really are, you need to get "here," beginning by being present in your body. When you delve all the way inside, you will find that you are the whole of Consciousness. The point is that you are using your body as the entryway into the deeper dimensions of your own beingness. Otherwise you can get stuck, focused on your body, attempting to perfect it for beauty's sake or for the sheer thrill of athleticism. This is why *Svaroopa*® yoga is not focused on physical mastery, but on decompressing your spine so that you discover the Consciousness of which you are made.

As you get into your body, you may discover some aches and pains. While this is uncomfortable, being unaware of them doesn't really help. If you do nothing about them, they are only going to get worse, and if you cannot feel them, what will do you about them? If you do have pain, it is better for you to discover it, experience it and to deal with it before it gets worse. A vacated body is called a corpse, which means when you are not present in your body, your body begins to die. When you become present in your body, it will be more alive and able to begin any needed healing.

Svaroopa® yoga has a hands-on-healing system called *Embodiment*® (in-body-ment), which gets you in your body. In *Embodiment*® Yoga Therapy, your therapist does not give you their healing energy. Instead your therapist gives you access to your own healing energy, jump starting your own healing power by helping you get present in your body. Vidyadevi says,

I have seen many *Embodiment*® clients literally become more alive during their session. Their breath opens, their skin color changes, more light shines through their eyes and they look 15 years younger at the end of the hour. Not only does their body heal, but they experience what they are made of — pure Consciousness."

When you are present in your body, it is "you" that is "here." You are also in the "now," because your body is always in the now. "Be Here Now" is most easily accessed by being "here." And Swamiji turns the phrase around by saying,

The bottom line is: 'Here, now, be.' I emphasize the 'here.' You must arrive so that you can participate in this world and create your own life. You have the great gift of a human life, but you have to actually be in your human body to use this gift. When you are "here," you are "being." You are embodied, you are conscious and you are "now." It all happens in the here.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON "YOGA & SPIRITUALITY," OUR TEACHINGS THEME FOR 2016, CO-AUTHORED BY SWAMI NIRMALANANDA SARASWATI, VIDYADEVI STILLMAN AND RUKMINI ABBRUZZI.

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³ Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda