



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

April 2020 Teachings Article:  
Focus on Enlightenment #4  
**Pathways to Bliss**  
By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

A short while ago, I got up off the floor after an hour of slow yoga poses, unraveling spinal tensions, creating delicious and tangible internal space. Sitting with my spine relaxed and upright, I found myself slipping into an expansive inner peace. It got progressively more and more blissful as I settled deeper and deeper within. This is *Svaroopa®* yoga and meditation. It's a reliable pathway to bliss — the inner bliss of your own cosmic beingness.

After sitting for a timeless time, resting within, I meandered into the dining room to find a delicious meal prepared by some of the yogis I am privileged to share my home with. Another pathway to bliss, unfortunately not as reliable. Nor does the bliss last as long.

Your body is biologically engineered for bliss. Your body has bliss wiring and produces bliss chemicals. When you're not experiencing bliss, you crave it. Yearning for bliss, you look for external situations to trigger it. Sometimes they work and sometimes not.

In the last few weeks, with the pandemic still expanding, you've lost some of your external pathways to bliss. The people, places and things you're used to focusing on are not so easily available, perhaps not available at all. But the truth is that they never gave you bliss anyway. Bliss always arises from within. The famous psychologist Abraham Maslow made up a name for bliss experiences, calling them "peak experiences," like when you see the view from a mountain peak.

You can simply remember when you've seen such a view. You gaze at the vastness around and beneath you; it stops your mind. Then the bliss arises within. Patanjali was right:

Tadaa dra.s.tu.h svaruupe 'vasthaanam.

— Yoga Sutras 1.3

In the moment your mind becomes still, you abide in your own  
Divine Essence.

This ancient sage goes a step further and promises that you will always experience bliss when your mind stops. This is why all of yoga's practices are for quieting your mind. This gives you the ability to choose when to quiet your mind and when to churn it up. What kind of choice do you want to make?

Most of the time, your mind is reviewing your pains and problems. Moreover, you've currently lost the external things that you use to distract yourself from the underlying fear and sense of alienation. On top of that, these types of thoughts and feelings are intensified by the daily news and government mandated isolation. It seems like all your pathways to bliss are cut off.

Except for one fact: bliss arises from within when your mind stills. So you simply need to know how to quiet your mind. That's called meditation. This is a great time for you to learn to meditate or to increase your daily meditation time. You can make tremendous spiritual progress in just a few days or few weeks.

Meditation is a process of looking within. You must look deeper than your mind, all the way into your own existence. You will discover that you do exist, and that your own existence is a conscious reality, the One Divine Reality who is being all.

Turning your attention inward can be challenging, but only because you lack training. You've been trained in how to focus outward but not inward. More troublesome, you use your mind to construct your sense of self. This superficial sense of self rises and falls, even lives and dies, based on the content of your mind. Please understand, I'm not telling you to improve the content of your mind. Cognitive Therapy, positive thinking, affirmations, mind control and other systems are ways to use your mind to work on your mind. While they can be very beneficial, you run into the limits of what your mind can do for you.

Meditation is about getting you past the limitations of your mind. Rather than being another type of psychology, *Svaroopā*® Vidya meditation is pure mysticism. It's about discovering the mystery within, the hidden dimension of your own vast and cosmic existence, what yoga calls your own Self (capital S-Self).

How do you get in there? Yoga excels in shortcuts! Any of your senses can be used as a pathway inward. If music is your thing, I'll recommend chanting — sacred music that repeats the name of God again and again, or that explains the cosmic reality in Sanskrit verse. Even fragrances can do it. I recently gave a lesson in how to burn frankincense and everyone began to go into bliss from the divine scent. At every special ceremony, we serve prasada, sacred food. Just a taste of this energy-infused food will stop your mind and open up inner bliss.

As I described myself doing, you can use your body to open up inner bliss. This is *Svaroopā*® yoga's specialty, which is why I used to call it by the name, "Bliss Yoga." But I found that people wanted me to teach in half-lit rooms and wondered why I didn't serve wine afterward. I explained that yoga is about the bliss of Consciousness, not the bliss of unconsciousness. Too many of the Western pathways to bliss are ways to depress your system, intoxicants that make you less functional and less aware. Yoga makes you more functional, more aware and more alive.

Cidaananda laabhe dehaadi.su cetya-maane.svapi cidaikaatmya  
pratipatti daardhyam jiivanmukti.h.

— Pratyabhij-nah.rdayam 16

Attaining the bliss of Consciousness, even while living in the world... such a yogi  
is jivan-mukti (fully liberated while being alive).

This yogic text promises that you can get enlightened while you are alive. You don't have to leave the world in order to transcend your limitations. You can live your life, even more fully and purposefully than before, while being based in your own eternal, unending, ever-expanding, inner ecstasy. This is called "chidaananda," the bliss of Consciousness.

The bad news is that you haven't been using your bliss capacity well. Even when you could see everyone and go everywhere, you were in bliss too little of the time. And when you experienced bliss, it was limited bliss and didn't last long. You are capable of experiencing so much more. I would love to help you get there.

Though you're currently in seclusion, you're probably looking forward to the time when you get out in the world and reinstate your old pathways to bliss. Instead, I want to help you find new pathways, ones that work for you, both while you are homebound as well as when life gets going again. They'll work better for you than anything else you've ever tried. *Svaroopā*® yoga specializes in bliss.

Bliss is your birthright. When a child of a wealthy parent is written out of the will, they can sue for their birthright, which the courts are likely to grant. Similarly, you have a right to experience bliss, simply because you are a human being. Yet you don't live in the bliss to which you have a right. The only reason is because you keep messing it up by looking in the wrong place. The bliss is inside, but you've been looking outside. Thus, having your usual haunts be closed right now is beneficial.

Of course, it's beneficial to avoid catching or spreading the virus. Yet there's a yogic benefit as well: now there's nowhere you can go to avoid yourself. Of course, you still have access to screen time. You can use it as another drug, even as a resource for education and self-improvement. That means, in the time you'll be spending at home, you could learn a new language or to play a musical instrument. Or you could do more yoga, even with online classes and programs. You choose. While learning something new broadens your mind, yoga expands your bliss.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "FOCUS ON ENLIGHTENMENT"

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