



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

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Focus on Enlightenment #9

Seeing & Being

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I remember the first time I saw a tree, really saw it. It was scintillating, with every leaf waving at me and saying hello. I saw it as being alive in a way I'd never seen before. Not merely alive, but a living entity that was in relationship with me and had always been, though I hadn't seen or known it before.

I first thought that it was an amazing and unusual tree. Then I looked down and saw that the sidewalk was startlingly alive. Every bush, every car and even the sky were vibrant in a miraculous and intoxicating way. Then I didn't have words for it, but I was seeing Shiva, the One Divine Reality that is being all that exists.

This is why people love to go outside and spend time with Mother Nature, hoping She will reveal her Divine Essence to them. Usually they settle for mere beauty, which is calming and satisfying to a certain extent. Yet She is always scintillating, so why can't you always see it? The reason is that you rarely use your mystical powers of seeing. You usually use the normal, mundane, ordinary, limited perception that you share with everyone else.

Yoga develops your power of perception so that you can live in the constant seeing of Shiva, the One Divine Reality, masquerading as the mundane. Seeing Shiva in all is even better than having x-ray vision. However, though this way of seeing is blissful, it is incomplete. It doesn't take into account the one who is seeing — that's you. The goal is not merely to see Shiva, but to be Shiva. Think about it, if the One is masquerading as all, isn't the One being you?

Some call this "Unity Consciousness," a beautiful but misleading term. The differing definitions makes me grateful for the Sanskrit underpinnings of our system, keeping us anchored in precision while we explore the mystical reality within. Mysticism is how you discover you are the One (Shiva) who is being All. You could describe it as "One is All." But be careful! This is not the same as "All is One."

The Shiva Sutras describe that, once you've been awakened by Shaktipat, you can attain the highest perception:

"Sakti-cakra-sa.ndhaane vi"sva-samhaara.h. — Shiva Sutras 1.6

You see the entire universe as an emanation of Shiva.

Snowflakes make a good metaphor. A single cloud produces millions of unique snowflakes. Thus I can say "One is All." When all those snowflakes land, with some in the trees, some on rooftops and some on the ground, I'd have to gather them all together to be able to say, "All is One." If even one were missing, I wouldn't have the "All," so I couldn't get to the One. And how do I include the snowflakes in the nearby town?

In other words, the One is not a sum of parts. If you try adding up all the people in the world, all the critters, all the trees and rocks, streams, lakes and everything else, it will never be the One. Shiva is more. Shiva is both being the universe and is beyond the universe, both immanent and transcendent, all at the same time.

My meditations always grounded me into Consciousness, providing a whole-body bliss that began at my tailbone and climbed my spine. This gift from my Guru has kept me embodied and functional in the practicalities of life even while I was discovering the blissful inner realms of Pure Beingness. Yet some meditators are taught to leave their body, seeking an expansion into infinity. Others roll their eyes up and back, looking upward for the transcendent light within. Of course you will experience transcendent light and expansion into infinity! You don't have to leave your body to find it for it is what you are made of.

Does water feel that it is wet? No. Water is wet only by contrast with something dry. Similarly, you're looking for light, only because you feel dark or heavy. When you live in the light of your own

Beingness, you will be unable to find dark anywhere, for everywhere you look, your light shines into it. It's called "enlightenment."

In *Svaroopa*® Vidya Meditation, we don't meditate on light. We don't look upward or outward to find something uplifting. We meditate on Self, which is Shiva, being you. You don't conjure up your Shivaness. You don't have to believe that it exists. You don't have to become your own Self, for you already are you. You merely need to come to know that which you already are, Shiva. This is what Shaktipat opens up in you, the inner Knowingness of your own Beingness. It is an inner knowing at a deeper level than theory, an irrefutable knowing that is beyond mere mind. Once you know your own Self as Shiva, you see everyone and everything as Shiva.

This is not the same as the "One in All." I will quibble about the word "All." It's easy to think of all humankind but hard to think of your neighbors. To talk about "All" makes it quite impersonal. But when you know your own Shivaness, seeing Shiva in another person is deeply personal and meaningful. This makes every person dear, every person significant, every person special and treasured. The One is being Each and Every One.

Can I have another quibble? When you think about the "One in All," it's like they all have a small cupboard inside where their Divinity is stored; thus the One is "in" them. But how does Divinity fit in that small cupboard in there? Can you really confine God to a box? Instead, their whole being is Shiva, including their body, mind, heart, soul and innermost essence. Like ice is made of water, each and every being is made of Shiva. Even rocks and air. Everything!

When you see the Divine scintillating in every form, it's captivating. It's fascinating. It's so beautiful that you can get lost in it. That's why you must find Shiva within first. When you "be" Shiva, seeing Shiva in everyone and everything, it's like you're looking in a mirror. Everywhere you go, everyone you see, everything you do or they do — it's all Consciousness. It's all sacred. Every moment is a holy moment.

What does it take to be able to see the entire universe as an emanation of Shiva? You need to cultivate mystical vision by looking within. This is not about predicting the future or reading other people's minds. This is not magical or occult, not even channeling or astral traveling. This is about being here now. As tantrics, we start with the body. Your body is always in the here and now. Your mind goes running off, but your body is still here. The more "here" you get, the more you become embodied Consciousness.

I'll invite you to step into your own body. Once you become present in here, I'll ask, "Who lives in this body? Who are you?" You might answer with your name or profession, where you live, who you know and what you do. All of these are true, yet if any or all of them changed, you would still be you. There is only one answer. "I am I." That "I" is your own Self.

Caitanyam-aatmaa. — Shiva Sutras 1.1

Your own Self is enlivened Consciousness.

When you feel or say, "I am I," the words communicate a deeper knowing. It is your own Self knowing your own Self. It is not your mind knowing your Essence. It is Essence knowing itself. It can be hard to put in words, but you feel like you've come home inside. The longer you steep in it, the more expanded and blissful you become. You are you. This is enlightenment or at least a taste of it.

To get beyond the taste, you merely need to do more yoga. Why? Because you tend to get trapped in the familiar limited, mundane, ordinary perception that you've lived in for too long. Yoga lifts you out of the limitations so you can live in the mundane world while seeing it for what it is, a Divine Masquerade. Shiva is being you, while being everyone and everything else at the same time. This is not about Unity Consciousness. It's about you being your Self.

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