



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

September 2023 Teachings Article:

A Yogi in the World #9

Pleasure, Happiness & Bliss

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

At the end of a busy day, you look for something pleasurable to do. You may even have sought out pleasure during your day. Your choice of foods and drinks, maybe going for a walk or taking a nap, filling your ears with music or your eyes with beauty – pleasure seeking is a dominant theme in most people’s lives. Why?

To find out why, simply refrain from pleasure when you feel the need. Notice how you feel without a sensory indulgence, including any discomfort in your body as well as your emotional state. You may also find that your mind is crazy-busy. No wonder you want something to distract you!

Pleasure is a pathway to happiness. When you do something pleasurable, you get happy for a short while. When the happiness ends, you need another indulgence to trigger a few more moments of happiness. Like a frog, you hop from one thing to another, seeking brief moments of happiness. Bliss is better. It lasts longer than happiness.

Mystical bliss is hidden in every pleasure. The Vij~nana Bhairava gives an example of how it works.

When experiencing the joy of taste, arising from the pleasure of eating and drinking,
meditate on the joy itself (rather than the taste) to experience supreme bliss.

— Vij~nana Bhairava 72

Jagdhipaana-k.rtolaa-sarasaananda-vij.rm-bha.naat,
bhaavayed bharitaa-vasthaa.m mahaananda-stato bhavet.

With your first bite of something delicious, a two-stage process ensues. It happens only in your first bite! First you experience the pleasure of taste (sarasaananda). Then bliss emerges. It is a subtle movement, the bliss of Consciousness (mahaananda) arising within.

When you follow this surge of bliss, your attention turns inward as you become more ecstatic than taste could ever provide. However, most people keep their attention on the item they bit into. The second bite is not as good as the first, as you already know. The next bites are progressively less and less satisfying.

Follow the bliss instead! Now your inner experience lasts and lasts. It expands inward, carrying you to the source of bliss, which is your own Divine Essence. Unfortunately, most people follow the pleasure, giving them merely a pale imitation of bliss, which is called happiness.

The happy feeling comes from your momentary experience of supreme bliss. The quality that lingers after a surge of bliss is called happiness. It’s puny compared to the bliss. Don’t settle for mere happiness. Aspire higher!

Most people don’t know about this bliss trick. Yet it is the pathway to freedom from addiction, craving, need, greed and fear. It’s a simple trick, yet it frees you from so many things. What is the trick? Follow the bliss, not the pleasure. My free-form translation of this sutra is, “One bite is enough.”

You may have been cultivating healthy pleasures in your life. However, many popular pleasures are centered on intoxication. Unfortunately, intoxication dulls your senses and diminishes your intelligence. Even exercise and food can be used as intoxicants along with drugs and alcohol. Relationships can fall into this category if they are based on neediness and dependency. Yoga can free you from all of these.

I also classify yoga and meditation as intoxicants. The bliss of Consciousness is the best intoxicant there is! But it makes you healthier, expands your senses and increases your intelligence. The stated goal of yoga is for you to live in a steady state of inner bliss, called svaroopaa. This is why we are named “Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram.”

Bliss is better than happiness. When you notice that you are not in bliss, you have a choice. You can pursue pleasures or you can do yoga, which will open up your inherent flow of inner bliss.

Better yet, you can have it all. While the pursuit of pleasure distracts you from the ever-arising bliss, once you find the bliss, you can still enjoy pleasures. This means that it's OK if you get enlightened. You won't lose your pleasures.

The pursuit of pleasure is called "bhoga," which rhymes with "yoga." A tantric is a bhogi-yogi, who is working on a two-stage process. First you find the bliss hidden in ordinary pleasures and follow the bliss. Then you're living in a constant flow of bliss, and you can still enjoy life's pleasures.

Yoga's ancient sages explained that pleasure is one of the four goals of life. You are not limited to only one of the four. You get them all:

Dharma — right living, responsibility

Artha — accumulating wealth and possessions

Kama — pleasure, entertainment

Moksha — enlightenment, liberation.

Most people miss out on the fourth one or postpone it until later in their life, when they're tired of the other three. Kashmiri Shaivism is unique in giving you a pathway to enlightenment while you are fulfilling your responsibilities, accumulating wealth and enjoying pleasures.

This is the tantric loom, with bhoga and yoga woven together into a sacred cloth. Yogic spirituality is not something reserved for Sunday mornings, but is knitted through your whole life, enriching your relationships and everything you do.

In every moment, a Master experiences the bliss of Consciousness, which is transmitted to those who come in contact with him.

Lokaananda.h samaadhi-sukham. — Shiva Sutras 1.18

This sutra says that, when you know your own Self as Consciousness-Itself, you live in a contagious bliss. It uplifts those around you, even if you don't say or do anything special. Again I'll say that bliss is better than happiness. And bliss makes everyone else happy along with you.

I was formally trained in the importance of making other people happy. My 1950s girlhood was full of this message, not only from family but also from school, girls' organizations and the popular magazines. The 60s showed me another option — that I could focus on making me happy. I found yoga in the 70s, which showed me that bliss is better than happiness.

My Guru demonstrated how inner bliss benefits everyone. He was absolutely contagious. My mind returns again and again to my many hours sitting with him, deepening into bliss, even when he was sitting in silence. The first time was on the beach in Hawaii, looking out at Diamond Head. Like the sun radiates light and heat, he radiated Consciousness.

I was deeply inspired. I experienced the all-pervasiveness and unendingness of the bliss of Consciousness. Nothing else could ever satisfy me after that. I sought bliss, only bliss. And I knew how to get it. Baba made it clear: find it inside. And he made it easy, by his mere presence as well as through his teachings.

You can choose bliss over pleasure anytime. One yogi shared how she used bliss to get free from her chocolate addiction. Every time she craved chocolate, she took a Shavasana break. After 10 or more minutes in Shavasana, if she still wanted chocolate, she ate it. But usually she didn't want it any longer. In a couple of weeks, she was free from the cravings, yet she still ate chocolate once in a while. She realized it wasn't the chocolate she craved. It was the bliss.

I'll recommend you take a mantra break instead. It's even more powerful. Yet any yoga practice will do this for you. Instead of pursuing pleasure, follow the bliss! This is called "doing more yoga."

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "A YOGI IN THE WORLD"

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svaroopā*® Yoga & Meditation, contact *Svaroopā*® Vidya Ashram ♦ www.svaroopā.org ♦ info@svaroopayoga.org ♦ 610.644.7555