



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

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Multi-Dimensionality #9
The Power of Your Senses
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Your senses pull you outward in a constant search for bliss. But the bliss is inside. Crazy-making? Fortunately, these two things work together. They are perfectly paired to keep you in bondage and delusion. By contrast, yoga sets you free.

I experienced the power of the senses with the scent of honeysuckle. I was walking briskly but a cloud of fragrance stopped me in my tracks. I stood there and breathed it in. Motionless for a long while, I felt deeply centered and peaceful. It is a mild state of bliss.

When I opened my eyes, I turned outward again, looking around to find the source. After that, every time I walked through there, I paused and sniffed the air to see if the honeysuckle was blooming. I looked outward for honeysuckle, thinking it was the source of my bliss. But what really happened is that delicate fragrance stilled my mind so I experienced the bliss that is always inside.

Your senses are always scanning outward: your eyes, your ears, your nose, your tongue and whole-body sensation. Think of it like a radar screen, with your senses looking for the little blip — looking for something you will enjoy.

The word *enjoy* could be spelled *in-joy*. That's really what you want — to be in joy. I wish for you that your whole life be joy-filled. But that will happen only when you find the source of joy. It doesn't come from outside.

When you in-joy something, it's because inner joy is arising to fill you. To live a joy-filled life, tap into the inner source of joy so it fills you all the time. What is this source? It is your own Self, your inherent Divinity. The yogic sage Patanjali explained this over 2,000 years ago:

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

Tadaa drashtuh svaroope'vasthaanam.¹ — Yoga Sutras 1.3

This is about how you use your senses. When you turn your attention outward, pouring your energy through your senses, you are looking for something that will stop you. Maybe it's a puppy or kitten, "Aw, look at that." Maybe it's birdsong or some music and you hum along. It could be the fragrance of honeysuckle or jasmine, another of my favorites.

Patanjali says that you don't need the flowers to be in bloom. You simply need to stop. But it's not a physical stop that he recommends. It is the internal halt, when you quit pursuing outer things. His point is that you must look inward. The filling comes from within.

After many years of living and studying with my Guru, I knew how to allow the inner filling. I knew how to find God inside. Attending a church service with my extended family, I stood as the choir and minister entered the church. The rising swell of voices, exulting to God, triggered a surge of bliss to arise within.

Reveling in the bliss, I realized that this is what happens with all external things. You do something on the outside, hoping it will trigger an experience inside. Yoga says you can simplify the process. Simply look inside!

Unfortunately, the first thing you usually encounter is physical aches and pains. You notice that your body isn't perfect. This is why yoga offers poses and breathing practices, to get you past this first hurdle. The next hurdle is your mind. You can mud-wrestle with your mind for lifetimes, getting muddier and muddier. Instead, you need someone to hose you down.

This is what the Guru does. Like a riverbed is a channel for moving water, the Guru is a conduit of Divine Grace. You focus on the Guru, using your senses in a familiar, externalized way and you get an inner result. Grace washes away the mud and triggers the inner arising of your own Self.

Bliss is the physical sensation of Self. When Self is arising within, you may also see inner lights or colors, or have visions of Gods and Gurus. These are visual experiences of Self. You may have

¹ Tadaa dra.s.tu.h svaruope 'vasthaanam.

auditory experiences, like hearing angelic choirs singing, bells ringing or drums resounding within. This is why we like these outer sounds. There are Divine fragrances as well as a taste that spreads from the back of your tongue to the front.

When you have these experiences, your senses are being filled from within. Instead of your senses draining you as they usually do, you are being refueled. Your energies are being replenished. The visions and sounds are not what nourishes you. Your own Self is filling you. The visuals and other sensory experiences are merely symptoms that something deeper is happening. So you turn your attention inward, to the deeper dimensions of your own Beingness.

This is why meditation is not about having experiences. The experiences mean you are still focused on your senses. It is wonderful that they are being filled from within, instead of from outside. But your destination is the source from which the filling arises. My Baba explained:

Along the way will be many experiences, and these experiences are fine. However, the true state is beyond them. As we go deeper into meditation, we reach a place where we see nothing and hear nothing.

Turning your attention inward is called *pratyahara*. The Sanskrit dictionary defines it as “drawing back, marching back, retreating.” As a yogi, you turn your senses inward, withdrawing them from their external march. We teach how to do this in every yoga class — twice. While you settle into Shavasana, a comfortable reclining position, we lead you through a Guided Awareness, drawing your attention from outside to inside.

You know it’s working when you don’t hear the teacher’s words anymore. Or a fire engine goes by but you don’t hear it, though others tell you about it later. You were “in there, somewhere.” The goal is to be aware of where you are, while you are “in there.” More than this, the goal is to be the “you” who is having the experience.

Pratyahara is profoundly nourishing. It is described as one of the “five nutriments,” which includes food. As you turn within, you are being fed by the underlying Is-ness that becomes all beings, including you. This Is-ness is your own Self, the One Self being all.

To meditate, repeating the mantra turns your attention inward. While the Sanskrit words are important, it is the energy instilled in the mantra that does this for you. This is why you must receive the mantra from a teacher who is authorized within the tradition.

If your meditation is not what you wanted it to be, simply repeat the mantra aloud for 5 or 10 minutes. Saying it aloud helps your mind to focus on it. Mantra settles you deeper inward with each repetition, so you get beyond your mind and senses.

The inner experience is bliss, yes, but it is beyond bliss. Bliss is the sensation of Self, like being wet is the sensation you have when experiencing water. However, your own Self is not a “thing” that you experience. Your own Self is the experiencer. When you experience Self in meditation, who is experiencing this experience? You are the experiencer. That is your own Self.

Yoga promises that you will know and be your own Self. This is not only in meditation, but continues in every moment of your life. Your capacity to live life to the fullest is profoundly enhanced by your bliss-filled inner knowing of your own being.

This is called Self-Realization. You are based in the inner infinity while you walk through the finite world, seeing each person as another porthole to the infinite. It happens in stages. Like an infant learns to sit, then to stand and walk, so a yogi goes through stages. The first stage is pratyahara, turning your attention inward. For this, do more mantra.²

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² To receive the mantra from Gurudevi, attend one of her programs or request a mantra card at <https://svaroopā.org/mantra-card>.