



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

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Insight into Sutras #3

Enlightenment Is a Process

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

I wanted instant enlightenment. I didn't get it. I wanted the express elevator to the penthouse. I had to climb the stairs.

At least I knew where I was headed for I'd had amazing experiences after receiving Shaktipat from my Guru. This inner awakening showed me that there was more to me than I dreamed possible. I'd had a peek at Consciousness. It was a promise of my future. It made me willing to do the climb.

Like stairs with landings, at each new level I grew into expanded perceptions and profound understandings as well as progressively more and more bliss. Fortunately the bliss starts early. My early morning meditations anchored my day in an inner spaciousness. The bliss kept me in the game.

I moved through the process very physically. As the energy of Consciousness climbed my spine, I experienced lots of kriyas, spontaneous physical movements. These are Kundalini, clearing away inner blockages. After these clearings, my energy channels were more open to the flow of bliss.

I loved it all and wanted to share it, so I took Teacher Training. As a yoga teacher, I have helped thousands of people get free from pain. Our Svaroopa® yoga poses come from my kriyas, thus using Kundalini's intelligence for healing and empowering you on all levels. Best of all is the bliss. While pain might bring you in for a yoga class, it is the bliss that brings you back.

This is especially tangible after the closing Shavasana and Guided Awareness, particularly when you roll on your side and hear the short teaching being offered by your teacher. In that inner ease and blissful depth, the teaching rings with truth, giving you a new understanding of yoga – even a new understanding of your life. You are growing into Self.

Vismayo yogabhumikah.¹ — Shiva Sutras 1.12

The stages of yoga are truly amazing.

Your inner process unfolds in predictable stages, like the blossoming of a rose. Your early experiences of bliss lead to a quiet inner peace that carries into your day. It lies just under the activities of your mind. Like seeing into a lake with ripples on the surface, you discover an inner depth in the deeper waters. Your thoughts can no longer kidnap you.

Peace turns into clarity, which deepens into being centered and grounded even in the midst of life's craziness. Inner insights arise, giving you a new perspective. You have a new level of energy. Decisions are easier to make and are more effective in their implementation.

Most importantly, inner levels of perception open up, gradually reaching into the subtle energies that make up the universe. Your inner vision stretches to infinity and its source. This is not merely the opening of the chakras (energy centers) along your spine. As important as they are, they are limited to your pranic field, your own personal energy. After Shaktipat, you grow into cosmic energy, the vastness of your own Beingness which holds the whole universe within.

The first sutras in this text began with a shocker announcing that your essence is Divine. In the beginning of your process, you don't know your own Self because there are inner veils obscuring your ability to see inward. Shaktipat is the unveiling of your Divine Essence:

Udyamo bhairavah.² — Shiva Sutras 1.5

The inner arising of transcendental consciousness, awakened by the Guru, shatters your limitations and sets you free.

This is Shaktipat, an initiation easily attained when you get it from a Shaktipat master. If you had already done decades of yogic practices and deep spiritual work, you would get enlightened instantly.

¹ Vismayo yogabhumikah.h

² Udyamo bhairava.h

I hadn't done so. Still I had great experiences, flying high. But then I would crash back down to earth. The teachings and practices became my lifeline.

When you receive Shaktipat from the Guru, you get teachings as well, so you understand the goal and how to manage the process along the way. A few people get spontaneous Shaktipat, which comes from deep spiritual practice in a prior lifetime. They usually end up in a state of confusion, for they lack the teachings and the teacher who can show the way.

These two pathways converge in your relationship with the Shaktipat Guru. You get to connect with Cosmic Consciousness in a living human form. The Guru supports you while you move into your deeper dimensionality. They do this through the teachings and practices they give. This means you do the practices, as cited in another sutra:

Prayatnah sadhakah.³ — Shiva Sutras 2.2

The seeker's effort brings about fulfillment.

If you weren't instantly enlightened when you received Shaktipat, it means you hadn't done enough prior preparation. Now you are in a gradual process. Fortunately, the same yogic practices that would have prepared you are what you do to support your inward development.

You apply yourself to outer practices which give you inner progress. It works like everything else. When I was on my high school basketball team, I practiced shooting baskets as well as bouncing the ball and pivoting, ducking and weaving. When I was taking piano lessons, I practiced at the keyboard as well as studied musical notation. These outer skills shaped my brain as well as my body. It is always the inner change that matters most.

The good news is that your efforts bring you a bigger payoff after Shaktipat. It's like you have jets on your heels — every step you take propels you forward a mile. Even if you don't do consistent practice, your inner growth is assured, just like a plant blooming in the sunlight.

One student complained to me that she was having kriyas when she stopped her car at a red traffic light. I asked how much she was meditating. If she had been meditating regularly, Kundalini would move her through the needed process during meditation. So now Kundalini was taking advantage of any 90-second interval of stillness to do the needed clearings.

Your process might entail more mental and emotional clearings rather than physical. For me, that part of the process came later. Physical kriyas move your body and breath, even giving you inner heat or waves of bliss. Mental and emotional kriyas move your mind and emotions. You may experience rapid-fire thoughts and emotions churning through. They disappear as fast as they arise and never plague you again. As your mind becomes clearer, you may have profound insights into the nature of reality, have past life memories or get answers to worldly questions.

The process is different for different people. Kundalini gives only what each one needs. You may have classical experiences like deep meditative absorption into a space of timelessness within. You may see inner lights or hear inner sounds, even the singing of angelic choirs. Thrills of bliss can course through your body, as well as profound experiences of Divine Love, devotion to God and Guru. Any of these and many more inner experiences are possible along the way.

Don't get caught up in the scenery. Continue on toward your destination. Don't get out of the car to hug a tree! You are headed home, inward to your own Self, your own Divine Essence. The experiences along the way tell you that you are making progress. Remember where you are headed and how to get there. Do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "INSIGHT INTO SUTRAS"

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³ Prayatna.h saadhaka.h