



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

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Self & Self #8

No More Negativity

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One of the first words you spoke was “no.” You probably used it more often than your other first words, “Mama” and “Dada.” That’s why this growth phase is called “The Terrible Twos.” You became able to resist as well as able to express what you wanted. Unfortunately, you’ve continued to say “no” ever since. What if you said “yes” more often?

My earliest teacher in this was my first dog. When our front door was open and someone was coming down the sidewalk, my dog would run out as fast as her short little legs could go. She was not barking. She ran up to the passers-by, threw herself down on the ground and showed her belly, all four paws up in the air. 100% of the walkers stopped, said, “Ahhh,” then rubbed her belly. Watching her made me reconsider how I’d been approaching life. The protective mode I’d perfected had me saying no to life far too often.

Yoga agrees that you need to recalibrate. All the yogic methodologies work on dissolving your resistances, melting your negativities and freeing you from your fears. Then you are able to experience inner peace and a sense of balance that supports you.

Yet this is merely the launching pad. Beyond peace and balance, yoga promises more. Once you get past the ways you negate yourself, you discover there is more inside than you ever imagined. Exploring that expansive inner reality is yoga’s specialty.

Yoga’s poses and breathing practices reliably improve your body, yet they are targeting your mind. Next in the practices come more powerful tools, specifically to transform your mind. Next you go beyond your mind, exploring the vast dimensionality of your own existence.

You must get inside, deeper than your mind, because your mind loves to cut you down to size. The first time I tried to meditate, following the directions in a book, I was shocked by my own mind. Most of my self-talk was negative, actually quite mean and even punishing. I realized my mind was the problem, not the answer.

Yet I always loved the children’s song, written by Harry Dixon Loes in the early 1900s:

This little light of mine
I’m going to let it shine...

I wanted to shine! Somehow I felt that I had an inner light that could shine. I didn’t know how to access it but I wanted it. My Guru opened up my access to the inner light that was already there. That light shines from deep inside.

Your mind blocks your own inner light in the same way you can use your thumb to block the sun. The human mind excels at negating things, thus the sages described how to negate the negation. My own name does this, with Nirmala meaning “not limited.” The 9th century sage Shankaracharya wrote a poem describing your own essence. He meticulously negates your limitations.

I am not my mind or memories, not even my intellect or ego

I am not my ears, nose nor eyes

I am neither space nor earth, neither light nor air.

My true form is the bliss of Consciousness. I am Shiva. I am Shiva.

— Atma-Shatakam Verse 1

His first three lines negate what you usually identify with. By asserting that you are not your mind, next you look around to see what you actually are. But looking around won’t give you the answer, for it can only be found inside. This is why his fourth line ends with a proclamation of who you really are. Your true form is the bliss of Consciousness. You are Shiva. You are Shiva!

He gives us six verses. Five of them negate the many limited identities you get stuck in. Some pivotal lines say:

I am not my body or breath...

I am not my likes and dislikes...

I am not my success, not my possessions, not my desires...

I am neither enjoyment nor an object to be enjoyed, nor am I the enjoyer...

I am not my family or friends, not where I came from nor what I do...

He's knocking out all the props. You have been using external things to give you a sense of self-worth, but he methodically knocks them all away. Yet each verse ends with his incredibly positive statement, a reminder of who you really are: "My true form is the bliss of Consciousness. I am Shiva. I am Shiva." In Sanskrit — "Shivo'ham."

In the sixth verse, he describes your own essence in positive terms. Instead of saying "I am not this or that," he says (on your behalf), "I am the formless in form." You are an incarnation of the One Divine Reality. You are Shiva masquerading as a limited individual. Don't get lost in the masquerade!

Shankara continues, "I underlie all that exists and am the power behind all the senses." Your own Self is the one Self that is being all. The energy that powers your heartbeat, your breath and your mind is the same energy that powers your eyes and ears along with all your other senses. Where does this energy come from? It arises from within, from its own source, which is your own Self.

He ends with the same last line that ended each prior verse:

My true form is the bliss of Consciousness. I am Shiva. I am Shiva.

Chidaananda-rupah. Shivo'ham. Shivo'ham.

Our practice is one of positivity. Instead of negating who you think you are, we do practices that give you experiences of your own Shiva-ness. Gradually you grow into the greatness that has been hidden within for so long. Your inner light begins to shine. Let it shine, let it shine, all the time.

This would be a great improvement over your usual focus. Most of your thoughts and conversations are focused on your limitations and negativities, usually in the form of your fears and desires. You describe your life to others in negative terms, even going into detail about the things that keep you from being happy. It might be done in a complaining tone. This focus on negativity began when you were two years old. It's gone on too long. It's time to grow up. It's spiritual growth that you need, expanding into your own spiritual essence.

But you cannot think yourself into spiritual growth. Why not? Because the spiritual dimension is deeper than your mind, while thinking traps you in your mind. You can think, "I am Divine, I am Divine." It's a great thought, a direct translation of "Shivo'ham." However, it's like thinking, "I am in Paris" when you are not. Thinking won't get you there.

It's an inner arising that sets you free. This is Shaktipat. The light of your own being shines from its source and illumines your mind from the inside-outward. This is why all the practices are about settling you inward, so you can find the source from which your own light shines. That source is you.

Once you know your own Self, your mind shines with its reflected light. It's like the moon reflects the light of the sun. When your mind is shining with the light of the Self, you're happy. You are beyond happy, for the bliss of Consciousness is shining through your mind. You know who you are, a deep inner knowing of your own Self.

And it gets better. You see that everyone is made of the same light. The whole world is made of the One Divine Reality, Shiva, who is your own Self. You recognize the Self in every other person, for there is only one Self looking through all eyes. You see, you know and you be that which is being all.

Jagrat-dvitiya-kara.h. — Shiva Sutras 3.8

For the enlightened one, the world is made of his own light.

This is your future if you so choose. How do you get there? Do more yoga.

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