



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

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Insight into Sutras #2

Getting Set Free

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Born into bondage, your life's task is to fly free. You begin the process like a caged bird who keeps flexing its wings, wanting to fly. Your cage door is opened by one who is already free.

This is the Shaktipat Guru's task, to set you free by opening up the inner arising of Consciousness. Thus you discover the truth that has been hidden for so long, that your essence is Divine.

The not-knowing of your own Self is what causes all your pain. It is the result of Shiva's decision to become individually and uniquely you. He does this by hiding himself in multiple levels of contraction. It puts you on a merry-go-round, locked down by Shiva, going round in circles for lifetimes. What you have to do is grab the brass ring! Get Shaktipat, the inner awakening that sets you free.

The inner bolt of I-Consciousness bestowed by the Guru shatters
the not-knowingness, setting you free.

Udyamo bhairava.h.¹ — Shiva Sutras 1.5

Prior to receiving Shaktipat, I had a few expansive experiences. Though they were rare and never lasted long. I wanted more. Some of my friends used substances to get there, but I preferred spending time in nature, as well as listening to music and having lots of alone-time. The few glimpses of Divine Consciousness I experienced kept me in the game, always looking for more.

My seeking took me to my Guru. I was heartened by his teachings but didn't really understand their true potential. It was receiving Shaktipat from him that swung me around. Then, instead of looking outward, my attention was riveted inward toward the bolt of Consciousness he had awakened in me. My daily meditations were deep and profound, filling me with bliss and clarity like I had never known. He had opened the cage door to set me free.

The Guru is the means by which Parashiva bestows knowledge.

Tatah shri-guru-rupaya sakshat para-shivaya cha.²

— Kularnava Tantra 7.62

Since Shiva locked himself down to become you, only Shiva can set you free. How does he do this? Shiva assigns the task to the Guru, one who gets themselves out of the way so they can serve as the dispenser of God's Grace.

It's not about the Guru as a person, not about their beauty, their personality or their gift of gab. This awakening comes from God, not from the individual human being who serves as the conduit. The texts emphasize that such a Guru is hard to find. How fortunate I was that Baba came to America to make it easy for me.

Shaktipat is given intentionally or can happen spontaneously, as it did for me. A few weeks after I visited one of Baba's meditation centers, I had a meditation where I was lit up like a Roman Candle with ecstatic energy coursing up my spine. Many yogis get Shaktipat from doing the Svaroopaa® yoga poses, which are designed to create this inner opening for you. Mantra can do it as well, once you've made the Guru connection.

¹ Udyamo bhairava.h.

² Tata.h "srii-guru-rupaaya saak.saad para"sivaaya ca.

When I received Shaktipat, I was changed, wonderfully so. However I was not instantly enlightened. It means I hadn't done enough prior preparation, so my inner work continued afterward. In the birdcage analogy, it's like my Guru opened the door but this little bird needed to be coaxed out. This is why I continued to study with Baba after I received Shaktipat.

His teachings guided and supported me in my internal process. I read his books. I spent time with him, sitting in his meditation hall and listening to his discourses. In my seven years with him, I heard hundreds of his talks, always on the same theme, "Your own essence is Divine." I needed all those reminders.

I received Shaktipat from him over 200 times. Looking back, I have to call myself a remedial case. Yet he always met me where I was, sometimes with a loving word, other times with a stern glance. I simply kept putting one foot in front of the other, doing more yoga, doing more seva (volunteering), doing more mantra, marinating in his Grace.

Ultimately it is the Grace that matters most. Surrendering to Grace is like lying in the sun until your bones get warm. You bring the inner warmth with you even when you get up and walk inside.

Mantra is the most portable of all the practices that invoke Grace, for you can take it with you everywhere you go. Mantra repetition is also important because the birdcage bars are made of words.³ While the words you use on others are limiting, the words you use on yourself bind you more powerfully. Once you have received the mantra from your Guru, each repetition unravels the bars a little more, while simultaneously invoking Divine Grace to set you free. It's a two-fer.

Where does this take you? When you know your own Self fully, you recognize the one Self being all.

After Shaktipat, you recognize the entire universe as the outer
expression of Shiva's energy.

Shakti-chakra-sandhane vishva-samharah.⁴ — Shiva Sutras 1.6

Once you receive the inner awakening, first you discover your own Shiva-ness. As you deepen inward, you see that Shiva is being all. For me, it's like I'm looking in a mirror, seeing myself in every face. No one is a stranger; all are dear to me. One Self is shining through all eyes.

This is why my Baba always began his discourses with, "With great respect and love, I welcome you all with all my heart." Your heart becomes God's heart, with room enough for all. Of course, the one who benefits most from this inner expansiveness is you, oh Shiva. This is the best reason to do more yoga.

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³ J~naanaadhi.s.thaanam maat.rkaa. — Shiva Sutras 1.4. The three limiting conditions (malas) are rooted in the power of words (matrika).

⁴ "Sakti-cakra-sa.ndhaane vi" sva-samhaara.h.