



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

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Insight into Sutras #11

Illumined Action

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Sometimes you just know. In the midst of a real life situation, perhaps unexpected, you simply know exactly what to do, or what it is that you can say that will make a difference. Illumined action — wouldn't you like to live this way?

Yoga says you can. Tune in to your own inner light. Let your Divine Essence shine through your mind and heart. Your words will have the desired effect. Your actions will serve a greater purpose. To live this way, base yourself in your own Self, drawing from your inner depth and dimensionality in every moment. In every breath.

First, you delve inward to find your own Self. Then you rest in your Essence and Beingness, the source of bliss within. Free from need, greed and fear, your words and actions are divinely inspired.

You are not the only one who benefits from this. Your words and actions are motivated by clarity and compassion, seeing what will bring about the most beneficial results. In other words, you don't leave the world.

Nartaka atma.¹ — Shiva Sutras 3.9

One who knows their own Self is an actor on the stage of the world.

When you know your own Self, you won't want to retire to a forest or a cave. You will accept your role in the cosmic drama and participate fully. You still have a body and must take care of it. You still have relationships. You still have things to do, places to go, ways to contribute to the welfare of the world. You still have karma. While it doesn't define you, it does keep you engaged in life.

Those who want to hide away are wannabes, not yogis. Their inner state is so fragile that they can't know about world events. They want everyone around them to be peaceful, to be nice, to be kind, to be pretty and to talk softly. They need the outside to help them with their innards. Yoga says you have to do your inner work. It's an inside job.

Enlightened beings care about the world and the people in it. I have been fortunate to meet many Gurus who were acknowledged as having reached the summit of their tradition. They are the busiest and most effective people I've ever met. They care. Yet the events that transpire don't affect their inner state. Based in Consciousness, they embrace all as being forms of Consciousness.

We are all dancing this intricate dance together. Nartaka is the dancer, the actor, the acrobat — the one who enacts the world dramedy. That's you.

When an actor says their lines, they embody the character they are playing, but they don't become them. Playing the role of a superhero doesn't give you big muscles. Enacting the role of a villain doesn't make you evil. In the same way, show up for your roles in life, doing what is needed of you, but don't lose your own Self while you play the part.

Getting lost in the role is called a'hamkara in Sanskrit. It is a compound word meaning "I am what I do." Your words even say it, "I *am* a mother/father/sister/brother, I *am* a vegetarian, I *am* a good baker." I call it "am-ing."

As a yogi, say this instead, "I do mothering/fathering/sistering/brothering, I eat a plant-based diet, I bake yummy stuff." Now, you do what you do. And you are still Self while you do it. You are doing, not am-ing.

My friend got the female lead in a community theater play. She had three parts, all of them related to the male character: his mother, his wife and his daughter. Her costume change was done with a scarf. Tied around her waist, she was the mom wearing an apron. With it around her neck, she

¹ Nartaka aatmaa.

became his wife. Tying it on her head, she was his daughter. When the performance was over, she was my friend again.

One person was playing multiple roles. You do this all the time. Yoga says you must enact them well. Do a good job with each one! But you are doing, you are not *am-ing*. There is more to you than this activity, more than this role, more than this moment, this hour, this week, this year – you are the timeless reality showing up in current time by being you. Oh, Shiva.

You know what to do in each of your roles. It's only when you want something in return that you get churned up. If you drive for Uber and you want tips in addition to your pay, sometimes you will be happy and sometimes not. Your passenger, likely a stranger, is in charge of how you feel.

When you are daughter-ing or son-ing, and you want approval or you want to be understood, someone else is in charge of how you feel. They are not a stranger and may even be adept at provoking certain feelings or behaviors in you. So the downward spiral begins — again.

When you are Self, and you are daughter-ing or son-ing, you do your best, giving with sincerity and depth. And you can see whether your actions are approved or not. But that's about them, not about you. Let them have their feelings without taking them on. This works because you are more than what they see or believe you to be, oh Shiva.

An early stage of this is called witness-consciousness. You see all that happens from a deeper place inside, like watching from a distance. When you dream, who is watching? Someone inside sees your dreams and reports them to your mind in the morning. This is your own Self, the witness of all. In witness-consciousness, you watch the world and even the activities of your own mind without getting entangled in them.

Your mind becomes composed, unaffected by pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. Like a child, you have outgrown your sandbox and toys. When the sides fall off and the sand pours out, you merely see there's a cleanup job to do. So you do it, observing your actions all the while.

Inside and outside, no matter what happens, no matter what you do, your own Self sees all. Looking outward, at the world and at your mind, Self is the witness. Experiencing this is a great step toward yogic freedom. Your knee-jerk emotional reactions melt away.

In the beginning, you may even miss them and wonder if you are numbing out. Nope. Instead of drowning in the ocean waves, you're a scuba diver, gliding through a vast space of inner stillness. You can see the waves churning overhead but from a deeper inner center.

However, you haven't found the bliss yet. This is because you still see others as being different from you. You are inside, looking out, but you need to be inside, looking inward.

After you have attained witness-consciousness, your attitude toward creation changes. Creation is no longer separate from you. You begin to feel, "I am everything, I am God, I am creation." — Baba Muktananda

This inner feeling is not mere emotion. It is independent of thought, a whole-body knowing-feeling. Instead of being a scuba diver in the ocean, you become the ocean, including the waves and storms on the surface, the currents and critters underneath, the land masses around and under, even the sky and all that is beyond it. Oh, Shiva.

Shiva is jagat-sharira, universe bodied. It means that he manifested a body for himself — the whole universe. So when you know your own Shiva-ness, you embody it all. Now you're not looking out your eyes and seeing others. You are the One who sees through all eyes, not merely seeing all but being all. This is yoga.

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