



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

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Sadhana: Practice & Process #4

Mystical Upgrade

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You have earned your current condition. Yoga calls this your bhava, meaning your state of mind and body as well as the circumstances of your life and status of your relationships.

You have invested your time and energy into getting what you've got, which includes the good, the bad and the ugly. It's called karma-phala, the repercussions of your prior actions.

This is karma-bhumi, the world of action. Bhumi means land, literally earth, also referring to our planet. Karma means action. You must have a body to exist in this plane. Having a body means you are propelled into action.

This plane of existence is based in perpetual motion. Even if you decide to abstain from external activity, your mind keeps going. The key question is — what is your motivation for any of your actions? Your motivation determines what your karmic repercussions are.

Being a good person is a primary motivator for most people. They will forego pleasures in order to take care of their loved ones and handle other obligations. The Bhagavadgita, an ancient yogic text, focuses on you being a yogi while fulfilling your dharma — your roles and responsibilities.

Classical yoga systems begin with morality and ethics. The yamas and niyamas¹ are lifestyle practices that clean up your act. My Baba summarized them succinctly:

They are nothing but rules of self-control: living a regular and disciplined life, going to bed and getting up punctually, talking less, speaking the truth and eating only as much as you can digest. Now who in the world doesn't need these rules?

When I met Baba, I hadn't been following the rules. I had invested years in breaking every rule I could find. As a teenager in the 1960's, I took rebellion seriously. Fortunately, tantra is for everyone. Even if your lifestyle isn't yogic and your karma is a bit messy, the tantric Guru will give you Shaktipat, the essential initiation into enlightenment.

External perfection is not a prerequisite because tantrics recognize imperfection as another form of the Divine. Besides, once you've been awakened to your own Divine Essence, you will want to live your life in attunement to it. Lifestyle changes ensue organically.

Knowing about the yamas helps you understand your newfound virtue as well as to consciously support it. You are being freed from your old knee-jerk reflexes. Better yet, you are drawn to doing spiritual practices. It's amazing how fulfilling the niyamas are compared to what most people do with their free time. Now your happiness comes from a deeper place inside.

Mysticism is not about you being right, successful, good or proper, not even about you being loved and appreciated or happy in life. This is a radical redefinition of spirituality. It may even seem a bit confusing if you have been working on improving yourself.

In a sutra course I took in India, a man shared, "If I live a good life, I will be reborn in a better condition. In that lifetime, if I live another good life, I will have even a better rebirth. In some future life, I will have earned the Grace of God. Then I can become enlightened."

You don't have to earn God's Grace. You are entitled to it. No matter who you are, no matter where you have been or what you have done, all you have to do is ask. God cannot turn away from you. You command God by your sincerity and the power of your yearning. When you are ready for Grace, you find the Guru. Like water flowing through a riverbed, Divine Grace flows through the Guru.

¹ Yamas: non-harming, speak only truth, non-stealing, celibacy, non-greediness; Niyamas: purity, contentment, challenging yourself, study of the texts, surrender to God. More information is available in Gurudevi's book, "A Yogic Lifestyle."

You invoke the flow by your receptivity. You block the flow by your resistance and self-doubt. This is one of the reasons that the arati (candle flame) ceremony and bowing to the Guru are so important. It gets you past your arrogance, making it possible for you to receive. Enlightenment energy is being given out. You want to get as much as you can!

Yet your ability to receive is affected by how you have been using your mind and body. This is why many traditions say you must prepare yourself by doing thousands of mantras or physical prostrations. Other systems have you do a self-inventory and make amends for prior misdeeds.

Tantra says if you are alive, you are qualified for awakening. No purification needed. You don't have to be a good person to get Shaktipat. Your transformation happens from the inside out. Shaktipat makes your own Inner Light shine more powerfully. Since you love living in the glow, the shutters on your mind and heart dissolve. You are the greatest beneficiary, of course, but you also have more to give to others.

The most important practices are meditation and mantra. All the other practices are available, yet they are downplayed. This is because mantra and meditation carry you all the way to God, if you apply yourself to them.

There is an easy means by which you can skip the yogic disciplines like asana (poses), pranayama (breathing practices), etc. When you keep your mind based in your own Divine Essence, relinquishing all other thoughts... within only a short time, you attain the whole of Consciousness.

— Pratyabhij~nah.rdayam 17 (Kshemaraja's commentary)

Meditation is your sublime inner exploration, all the way into your own Beingness. Cultivating this inner experience is called shambhavopaya, the upaya (path) of Shambho (Shiva). You settle inward to find that your own Self knows your own Self.

But if you have a busy mind or life, you need shaktopaya. This is the upaya (path) of energy (shakti). You yoke the energy of your mind to the power of the mantra. Repeating the enlivened mantra during meditation gives you the experience of your own Self. Repeating it during your life transforms your mind and life.

Mantra is that by which you deliberate secretly, inwardly pondering that you are not-different from Shiva. — Shiva Sutras 2.1 (Kshemaraja's commentary)

Each repetition of the mantra reminds you of your inherent Divinity. In what part of your day did you want to forget that? The karmic results of your secret inner japa² are predictable: bliss, clarity, compassion and enthusiasm fill your mind and heart. If that isn't happening, you're probably using your mind to secretly ponder over lesser things.

This is a lifestyle change, if you are up for it. If not, it's OK. You still live in karma-bhumi, so you get the karmic effects of your actions, words and thoughts, whatever they are. How many hours a day do you devote to lesser things? If you want different results, change what you're doing!

It's easy to add a few yoga poses to your life. *Svaroop*[®] yoga poses improve your meditation as well as your body, due to our focus on decompressing your spine. As it opens up, the meditative energy flows more fully. Our yogic breathing practice is great before bedtime.

These simple upgrades improve your bhava. Not only will you enjoy the karmic repercussions of doing more yoga, but the people closest to you will notice. Reading about the yamas helps you understand your newfound interest in eating healthily, even becoming vegetarian. It's a cornerstone of the yogic lifestyle. Doing more yoga improves your karma as well as your bhava.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "SADHANA: PRACTICE & PROCESS"

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² Mantra repetition