



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

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Sadhana: Practice & Process #5

Metamorphosis

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Spirituality changes your body as well as your mind and heart. The changes blossom forth as your spiritual essence fills you from the inside.

The fast path to a mystical upgrade is Shaktipat initiation. What follows is, as I described last month, "...bliss, clarity, compassion and enthusiasm fill your mind and heart." This is not merely a mood change. Your body changes.

A body that runs on anxiety is different than a body running on bliss. Your nervous system and hormones operate differently when you stand down from red alert. Your metabolism changes.

Research has proven that, when you are happy, your digestion and elimination work better. What do you suppose happens when you're in bliss? Your lungs and heart, your immune system and even the composition of your blood are changed. Your biological age markers run in reverse.

My student Saul started yoga at age 80. He took Gentle Yoga twice weekly, our class level that is geared to elders and those recovering from illness or injury. While he enjoyed his classes, he did no yoga at home. After three months, he went in for a scheduled follow-up on his annual medical physical. When he blew into the spirometer, they discovered that he had regained seven years of gradual loss of breathing capacity. Since he was a medical doctor, he would never have believed it possible. At his next yoga class, he told me, "I know it's the yoga."

Yet he did only five minutes of yogic breathing in each class. What if he had done the 20 minutes we recommend? More changes would ensue. Organically. What if he had gotten Shaktipat and started meditating? Wow, what possibilities!

Science has mapped your brain. You use certain parts of your brain more than the rest. For example, if you are in pain for some time, your brain grows more pain synapses. This means your brain specializes in pain, feeling it more intensely and harboring the memory of pain long after the cause is gone.

When you experience bliss, your brain grows bliss synapses. You feel the bliss more fully, harbor the memory of it and experience it again more readily. Your brain is reshaped by the experiences you are having — neuroplasticity. Scientists can tell what your predominant mode is by brain scans. But the reality is that you already know.

While science has begun exploring some of these things, yogis have known it for millennia. The good news is that bliss dissolves pain synapses. Bliss changes your body as well. This is not merely transformation. This is metamorphosis. Just like the caterpillar crawling on the stem, you were born to fly free. It is your destiny.

The DNA of the butterfly is the same as the caterpillar it had been. Butterfly wings were there in a potential form all along. But the caterpillar had to tuck inward and meditate for weeks or months in order to emerge with a new form and function. Instead of eating leaves, it now sips nectar. You are going through the same process.

Svaya.m tathaavidho bhootvaa sthaatavya.m yatrakutrachit,
kii.ta-bhramara-vat tatra dhyana.m bhavati taad.r"sam.
— Shree Guru Gita 118

Having become That, like Brahman, you can go and live anywhere.
Like a larva becomes a bee, meditate thus on the Guru.

Yoga offers you the inner knowing of your own Beingness, in this verse called "That" and "Brahman." When you know your own Self, you are you no matter where you go. How do you get there? By meditating on one who lives in the state you aspire to.

Bhramara means bee or wasp, which also begins as a worm (kita). What happens inside their cocoon? The sages say this little creature is meditating on its own inherent nature, as its genes form a new body appropriate to its destiny.

I felt this happening to me in the years I was graced to live with my Baba. First I got physical changes through the spontaneous yoga poses (kriyas) I experienced in meditation. Then I was backed through my earliest years, unraveling the inner kinks and craziness I had carried away with me. My understanding of my life was completely reformatted along with my sense of personhood. I emerged able to share what he had given me, ready to teach.

Baba described it, “In meditation, the inner energy first purifies your body.” Then your mind and emotions are cleared of density. This changes your body, too. As you empty out your backpack, you walk lighter with every step. Your interactions with others change because you are no longer weighted down by your past. More than merely reacting differently, you see what’s going on in a whole new way. One of your biggest improvements comes from eating vegetarian. It is part of ahimsa, the yogic practice of not causing harm. Not only is it the starting point for yoga’s ten lifestyle practices, it was the basis of Gandhi’s movement for independence in India. Dr. ML King also used this principle in the Civil Rights Movement. He called them nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience. They worked.

I learned ahimsa in my first Shaktipat experience. Blissfully expansive, I experienced the whole earth as my own body. The grasses of the earth were the hairs on my arms. The rivers were the blood flowing through my arteries and veins. All the critters were like different cells in my body and I loved them all. Afterward, I realized that I could never eat meat again, for it would be like eating my own body.

Then I was in a steep learning curve. I learned to cook lots of new things as well as how to utilize plant protein effectively. My body changed rapidly. I had been anemic for years, but it simply disappeared once I eliminated animal flesh from my diet.

My combo of daily meditation with my new vegetarian diet gave me more energy than I’d had before, which made me less stressed and kinder to my own family. I got the other changes now described online, including improved digestion and elimination and less systemic inflammation, which reduces the risk of diabetes and heart disease. It’s win-win for both you and the critters.

Most important is the energetic shift. This is mapped in the yogic map of your spinal energies, including the six primary chakras (energy centers), landmarks on your inward journey. The lifestyle practices of yoga (yamas and niyamas¹) support you in the upliftment of your energies along this vertical axis. As you free yourself from speaking untruths, grasping for outer things and draining your energies in relationships, you become free from anxiety and neediness.

Subtle perceptions open up. Baba described it this way:

There are so many chakras just in the head, so many different springs welling with nectar, so many clusters of nerve filaments, so many kinds of musical harmonies, so many different fragrances; there are rays from so many different suns, abodes of so many different deities.²

Your body must be transformed for you to explore this inner multidimensionality. Your mind becomes expanded. Your emotions become Divine Emotions, ways of sharing the God-feeling you live in.

What’s your first step? You could begin with yogic breathing, like Saul did. Even more powerful is mantra and meditation. Once you have your inner process under way, yoga poses weave the Divine energy through your body, metamorphosing it. I remember the first time I touched Baba’s hand. Though he was over 70, his skin was like a baby’s. Yet he was strong enough to hold an elephant in place. Do more yoga!

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¹ The ten yamas and niyamas are summarized in Gurudevi’s book, [A Yogic Lifestyle](#), and in her online [Teachings Articles](#).

² Swami Muktananda, [Play of Consciousness](#), page 7