



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

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Sadhana: Practice & Process #6

Time & Timelessness

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Infinite Beingness is being finite by being you. Like an iceberg in the ocean, you have a clear and distinct sense of individuality, yet you are made of the same substance you are melting into. Iceberg and sea are like time and timelessness interwoven together. This is our world.

I found timelessness by listening to the clocks ticking in my elementary classrooms. Black dots separated the numbers on the big white clock face, with the second hand jumping from one dot to the next. I stopped hearing the teacher as I listened to the silence between the ticks. Looking back, I think I was meditating. The teacher didn't appreciate me tuning her out.

Right/wrong, good/bad, pleasure/pain — yoga calls these “the pairs of opposites.” We see the world this way, though it is much more complicated. The sages of India explained that the world is not merely black and white. Finite reality is manifesting in bold living color, yet it is all made of the infinite. It's all Divine, even when you're not getting your way.

You have probably invested time and energy in doing things right. The theory says if you do everything right, you will get what you want. It works most of the time. But some days give you different results. Also, it works differently for other people. Trying to calibrate all the differences can spin your mind out of control.

Yoga says you don't have to track it all. You don't have to map where all the individual icebergs are headed. Find the water in which they rest, that substance of which they are made. When you find your own essence, you find Essence-Itself, flowing in a Divine choreography. While each dancer hears a different song and creates their own moves, it all lives and breathes in timeless time.

Na shivam vidyate kvachit.¹ — Svachchanda Tantra

There is nothing that is not-Shiva.

What exists that is made of something other than Shiva? There is nothing that is not-Shiva. This is true because “that which exists” is called Shiva. Thus, if something exists, it is made of Shiva. Even that which does not exist is made of Shiva! The texts explain that, if your mind conjures up something that doesn't exist, like a fantasy or worry, now it does exist — in your mind.

Whatever your mind has been labeling as bad and wrong, painful, negative or scary, it's all Shiva. Even if your worry never happens, your thought is made of Shiva's energy. Unfortunately, you are using Divine energy to flagellate yourself.

If an event does happen, it's still Shiva. Sunshine is Shiva just as snow is. Rain is Shiva and so is the flood that swamped our basement a few years ago. The wonderful workmen who came out for the cleanup were all Shiva as well. We all did our dance together.

Samatvam yoga...² — Bhagavadgita 2.48

Yoga is equanimity.

When you drop a pebble in a puddle, you get a splash. Dropping it in a deep lake makes barely a ripple. Events do not create your happiness or unhappiness. When you have inner depth, you take things in stride. Life does bring some discomfort and pain to every being. A yogi moves through them with equanimity, happy even in the midst of difficulties.

This is because the yogi doesn't depend on externals for their happiness. Their identity is not based on possessions, places or other people. Their inner dimensionality supports them in life's ups and downs. You are cultivating this inner state of boundlessness with every meditation and every pose you do. Every time you repeat mantra, you are imprinting your mind and heart with Consciousness. You are becoming more centered, deeper in your own inner infinitude, oh Shiva.

¹ Na “siva.m vidyate kvacit.

² Samatva.m yoga.

This is tantra, the mystical system that shows you the infinity hidden in what seems to be merely mundane. After every breath, there is a pause where you melt into your own Beingness. Then breath moves, your mind moves and life plays out with all the colors you have woven into it. You choose the colors, but your ability to choose is affected by your spiritual state.

As an individual, your experience is like the iceberg's: contracted, needy and lost. Having lost the awareness of your Divine nature, your outlook on life shrinks you down. This is called bondage. Trying to color in your life, it's like you have a box with only eight crayons in it.

Yet every human has the capacity to live in absolute freedom. It is Shaktipat that makes the difference, opening up the inner arising of Consciousness, filling you with life, love, creativity and generosity. You become free from need, greed and fear. You now mix your own colors, made from the rainbow's light.

Light contracting into matter, this is how the world is made. In Kashmiri Shaivism, the process is called abhasa³ (light flashing forth to manifest as matter). Though we think of matter as being solid, abhasa says it is ceaselessly moving energy which is flashing matter into and out of existence faster than we can perceive.

Our world is a discontinuous continuity, like the separate frames of a movie reel glide you through an experience. Yet it's all done by energy. Subatomic particles appear, disappear almost instantaneously, then reappear (or are they new particles?). The physicist Werner Heisenberg first described it 100 years ago. Kashmiri sages were ahead of him by about 1,000 years.

The universe was not merely created at some point in the distant past. It is being continuously recreated in every moment. This is described by the sage Kshemaraja:

Shiva exists in an unchanging condition, yet brings about all conditions and is untouched by those conditions... — Netratantroddyota 22.11

To know your own infinity while moving through our finite realm — this is yoga's goal. Time and timelessness are interwoven. Tantra aims higher, that you recognize everyone else's infinite essence while you join them in the game of being separate. When you know your own Self, you play your part in this cosmic masquerade with great delight, helping out wherever possible.

Because you didn't attain Self-Knowingness in your last lifetime, you are here to finish the task. Everyone gets planted in fertile soil. You were born in the perfect time and place, to the people who would expedite your growth by any means necessary.

For your Divine Essence to blossom forth, sometimes you need sunshine and other times you need fertilizer. Your life has included both. It will continue to do so. Tantra says you accept both with enthusiasm and wide-open arms. The yogic principle of tapas (choosing to do the hard stuff) is a recognition that you learn and grow more from climbing the steep slopes than any downhill slide.

For me to be able to see the infinite reality shining through my life, I had to get past the pairs of opposites. I had to give up regret, recrimination, guilt and blame. To catch the winds of Grace, I had to hoist my sails and head into unknown waters.

Fortunately I do love sailing! The silence as the wind carries you along is underscored by the quiet sound of the sea slipping away under the hull. The tantric loom shows you the mystical that is woven into the mundane, light becoming matter, timelessness and time.

You are blossoming into something you cannot predict or control. Who you think you are is SO much less than who you really are. What will you choose to do in this world once you know your own Self? Your answer is beyond your mind's current capacity to imagine. It's time to learn how to fly!

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

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³ Aabhaasavaada – Philosophy of Divine Manifestation