



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

August 2026 Teachings Article
Sadhana: Practice & Process #8
Being & Seeing Shiva
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I opened the door one Halloween to find a family in costume, three children with their mom and dad. His T-Rex costume towered over them all, an inflatable wonder that made me laugh out loud. Later in the winter, he wore it while steering his mini-snowplow. Yet I never thought he was actually a dinosaur. I knew it was a costume. So did he.

In the same way, Shiva is being you, wearing the costume of your body while using your mind to move through the world. When you know who you are, all your insecurities vanish. You are being your own Self, in the midst of life, oh Shiva.

In full enlightenment, you are being Shiva while you are seeing Shiva being all. Self-Realization is a totality of Beingness, beyond the emptiness of nirvana, beyond the Divine love described in most religions and beyond the bliss of Consciousness described by yoga.

Nirvana is only partial enlightenment per the sage Abhinavagupta. While you are freed from suffering, this is merely a mental attainment. You have not found the one who has a mind. Nirvana means emptiness. There is no real physical or material existence.¹ This is also called “no self.” While you are free from desire, aversion and delusion, you are stuck in emptiness, which yogis call “the void” (shunya).

The void is merely Shiva’s black cloak, hiding his fullness in an illusion of emptiness. When you experience the void (and how great that is!), consider who is experiencing the void. You will find your own Self. Shiva is revealed within you, being you.

Another path to partial enlightenment is worship. Divine love is a magnificent experience, whether you are feeling your love for God or God’s love for you. Bhakti yoga describes the attainment as pure devotion, which the sage Narada says makes you “perfect, immortal and supremely fulfilled.”²

However, this is merely the soul level of your multidimensionality. While your soul is immortal, it is separate and different from God. In the devotional path, there is no enlightenment. You hold yourself off from merging, for there must always be two in order for love to flow. As the poet-saint Tukaram wrote:

Oh dear Lord, please please keep me
just a little separate from you.
Else there is no me to love you.

Kashmiri Shaivism promises you more, your inner knowing of your own Divine Essence. Self knows Self. This is not your mind thinking, “I am Shiva.” It is not even your soul reaching for God. This is the culmination of your seeking because, once you have found your inherent Divinity, there’s no need to seek anymore. Easy and deep, you rest in your own Self.

Merging into the Self happens by gradual upliftment, beginning with understanding, then coming to rest in the Knower. This is accomplished specifically through ease.³

You settle into Self, deeper than your mind. This is called turiya⁴, the fourth state. Your mind cycles through three states: waking, dream and deep sleep. These relate to the conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels of mind.

Deepening inward, you expand beyond mind and soul to turiya. This is a blissful state of deep ease and independent bliss. You are familiar with it if you do snooze-alarm meditation, lingering in bed in the sweet space between sleeping and wakefulness.

¹ From Nagarjuna, “Boddhichittavivarana” (~150 CE), translated by Mark Dyczkowski, “Tantraloka” (Varanasi 2023, Mark S. G. Dyczkowski), page 134

² Narada, Bhakti Sutras 4

³ Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda, from Jaidev Singh, Pratyabhijnahridayam (Delhi 1963, Motilal Banarsidass), pages 49-50.

⁴ Turiya — in Sanskrit, chatur (four) becomes turiya (fourth).

You linger because of the bliss. If you get up and sit up, you can dive deeper into the bliss of Consciousness within. Especially in the early morning, it's so easy to find your way inside.

Yet yoga's true goal is beyond bliss. Bliss is the delicious and gentle friction generated by rubbing against God. Which of you will melt away? It's like the iceberg melting into the sea of which it is made. Neither is lost but both are found. You are you, oh Shiva.

Yet there is more. Turiyatita⁵ is beyond turiya. The -atita at the end means you have gone beyond or crossed over. I describe It as "beyond the beyond." Except the beyond is right here. That which reaches into infinity is right here, right now, being you while being all.

In turiya, you experience your own Self as Shiva, an experience which is sometimes called Unity Consciousness. You know your own Divinity. Turiyatita is a deeper state, where you recognize the whole universe as Self. You know your own Shiva-ness while you see Shiva being all. Baba described turiyatita:

This is the final attainment of the great sages... Once this goal is attained, it is never lost.⁶

Other yogic systems warn that you can lose your exalted state. You must diligently maintain your state or you will fall. But Kashmiri Shaivism says that once you are being Shiva and seeing Shiva, there's nowhere to fall to.

Based in your own Shiva-ness, you see God in all. Every relationship is an interaction with Shiva. Every action is done for Shiva, with Shiva, by Shiva's power.

Your love expands to embrace all that exists, Divine love flowing through you. Your mind is expanded, making everything in life easier. In this way, you attain the fruits of the other meditative systems while going beyond them.

How do you get there? Like with any travels, first you look at your location. Then you follow the map all the way to your destination. Consider where you are starting from. Your inherent Divinity is already complete, whole and perfect within, but hidden deeper than you can see on your own.

Shiva is hiding himself from himself by hiding within you, having taken on the cloak of density and darkness. This is why you look for light and happy things on the outside, to make up for what you cannot reach on the inside. Shaktipat awakens your own inner light to arise within. Once you have received this inner awakening, you are on your way.

The concealment of Shiva's real nature causes delusion for the ordinary individual. [After Shaktipat] Kundalini arising through the spine is the blossoming of the turiya state, expanding to pervade the universe as turiyatita. Both of these are a mass of consciousness and bliss, so that the yogi knows their own Divinity and attains liberation while still living.⁷

The upliftment you seek is a tangible feeling of upward movement, Divine energy climbing your spine. Your own Self is arising within you, turiya calling you home. Kundalini is the energy of Consciousness climbing your spine every time you invoke the inner arising. The enlivened mantra given by the Guru is the invocation.

When you're not yet fully enlightened, fill your mind with the energy of Self by filling your mind with mantra. The immediate effects include freedom from memories and fears, a new perspective on life and the opening of your heart and breath. If that's all you want, it's easy to get — 10 minutes of mantra does it for you. To get more, simply do more.

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⁵ Turiyaatita

⁶ Swami Muktananda, "Bhagavan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri" (South Fallsburg, New York 1996, SYDA Foundation), page 38

⁷ Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati, from K.semaraja's commentary on Shiva Sutras 12