



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

February 2022 Teachings Article:

Self & Self #2

Two in One

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You have always existed. You did not come into existence when your body was born into this world. Your own essence is the ever-existent Reality. That which you are existed before the universe existed. Deep inside, you already know this. My Guru said it this way, “The universe exists because you exist.” When I heard it the first time, I wondered, “Really? If I didn’t exist, the universe wouldn’t exist?”

It is true, for you are that existence that has become all that exists. There was never a time that you did not exist. There is actually no non-existence, for existence cannot come out of non-existence – not unless existence was hidden in the seeming non-existence. This is called the void, the illusion of emptiness that hides the One Existence that you are. Thus there are two, or there seems to be two: existence and emptiness. Which is you?

The void is very familiar for you spend hours there every night, deep asleep. Since you get there unconsciously, you get lost in it. Unfortunately, this is not the only thing you get lost in. You get lost in your mind, in your emotions, in life events and in what you want or fear, as well as what you think that other people think of you. It’s getting complicated, yes? Yes! The One has become many for the sheer pleasure of complicating things.

It’s like a scavenger hunt, a group game that I often played when I was a kid. We would be split up into teams, given identical lists of things to search for and sent off to see who could find them fastest. The clues were intentionally confusing: it has strings that cannot be tied; it has a face but no mouth or nose, it’s a bed without sheets and it’s always dirty. We had to bring the object back with us, the guitar or clock in the clues, or a handful of dirt from the flower bed.

The One has become the many for the sheer pleasure of complicating things. Because you are that One, you have the ability to do this too. You complicate things, not only with other people but all by yourself. When you’re caught up in your stuff, you are named “jiva,” meaning you are a bound soul. You are twined up in your thoughts, memories and fears, living in the past or future or, unfortunately, bilocating so you are energetically in a different location than your own body.

Jiva is Shiva. The One is masquerading as being bound. The One is being an individual. All you need is to be like Harry Houdini, slipping out of all those ropes and padlocks, even wriggling out of the straitjacket. But you need the key that unlocks the padlocks. That is Shaktipat, the initiation that gives you your Self.

Shiva becomes jiva so that jiva can become Shiva. An individual who completes their inner quest is called a jivanmukti, one who is free while alive. This is Self-Realization, often called enlightenment. It’s described and promised in the Kashmiri Shaivite texts.

cidaananda laabhe dehaadi.su cetya-maane.svapi cidaikaatmya pratipatti daardhyam
jiivanmukti.h. — Pratyabhij~nah.rdayam 16

Attaining the bliss of Consciousness, even while the body and world are being experienced, thus established in the experiential knowing of being Consciousness, the yogi is jivanmukti, fully liberated (mukti) while being alive (jiva).

The sutra begins with you attaining the bliss of Consciousness. I think of bliss like the breadcrumb trail that leads you back home to your own Self. While most people seek external sources of bliss, a yogi is smarter. Using your own body and breath, and (even more powerfully) using your mind, you can find the inner bliss. Bathed in the bliss arising within, you can dive deeper into it and find its source, which is your own Self. Becoming based in Self while living your life, you are completely free (mukti) while being alive (jiva).

But you cannot get there unless the inner flow is arising. Like watching a geyser with erratic timing, you wait and wait, but nothing arises. Where’s the bliss? So many meditators are waiting for the bliss. So many people are watching the ocean waves or gazing at the night sky. Maybe their mind becomes peaceful for a bit, but where’s the bliss? For consistent and reliable inner bliss, you need Shaktipat. The next sutra in this text explains it more fully:

In your spine, the inner arising of the energy of Consciousness gives you the bliss of Consciousness .

The energy of Consciousness named in the sutra is the energy that has become the universe. Matter is made of energy, which is conscious energy, as the physicists tell us. The most concentrated flow of this energy is found in your spine, though only a tame version of it is flowing for most people. This is called prana, the life-giving energy of Consciousness.

Shaktipat awakens the full power of Consciousness within you, to climb your spine from tail-to-top, uplifting you and blissifying you. Now you can access your own Divine Essence. That which seemed to be two, jiva and Shiva, turn out to be only one. You are that One Reality which we name “ Shiva.” Technically, you are the Nameless One. The One does not name itself. Consider the One Reality before the universe existed, when there was only The One. In its own blissful Beingness, what would the One call itself? If we can imagine that there was a thought, it would be “I am.”

This is what the burning bush said to Moses – I Am That I Am. St. John reported seven times where Jesus called himself by the same name. Krishna says the same in many verses of the Bhagavadgita, chapter 7. You too can say the same, “I am.” Right now, even whisper to yourself, “I am.” You know that it’s true.

When the Nameless One becomes another one, only now is a name needed. Just as water is the same regardless of the language used, the One is unchanged by the name you use. However, your understanding of that reality is profoundly affected by the name you use. The name “Shiva” points you toward the Nameless One inside. Shiva is deeply and profoundly personal.

The whole point is to take you beyond who you think you are. And to get you beyond buying into what other people think you are. When you’re focused on how you look to them, or how they feel about you, or how you feel when you are with them – you’re looking outward. You want their Shiva-ness to affect how you feel. Well, I want *your* Shiva-ness to affect how you feel.

I had a delightful experience when standing inside an old building in a historical village. One wall had many windowpanes, each about 8” square. The very old glass in them was bubbled and bent, with a wavy surface. It created beautiful little rainbows in the glass and throughout the room. But if you wanted to look outward, everything you would try to see was distorted. The metaphor points to the condition of your mind. When you look outward to see the world, you’ve got a problem. Instead, yoga makes you able to look inward and see — who is the one who is seeing?

When you be the one who sees, you are being your own Self. I say that you are “am-ing.” Amazingly, this experience of Self transforms your mind. You have crystalline clarity, as though all those old windowpanes were smoothed out. This is a mystical shift, an inner shift basing you in the mysterious dimensions of your own Beingness. It changes everything that you see and understand. It changes who you are in the midst of your life. And there’s another payoff – the bliss. It all comes from the Self. The reason yoga calls your inherent Divinity by the name “Self” is because it is your sense of “I am.” That is your own Self. This is the true goal of all the practices, the reason to do poses, to meditate, to receive Shaktipat and to have a Guru. So you find you.

Most people live with an inner feeling of fragmentation. They’re trying to put themselves together like trying to glue the pieces of a broken mirror back together again. Except you’re not broken. You don’t need to be put back together. No matter what has happened to you, no matter where you’ve been or what you’ve done, your own Self is pristine. You are Consciousness. You always have been, oh Shiva. There are not two of you in there. There’s only one. You are that One that is being two. You are being many. You are being all. How glorious, how entertaining, how divine! Now all you need is to know the One that you are, while you are being you. Do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, “SELF & SELF”

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