



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

December 2017 Contemplation:

Exploring Yoga's Multidimensionality #12

You Are the Light You Celebrate

By Swami Nirmalananda & Rukmini Abbruzzi

Glowing candles, twinkling strands of light, sparkling glitter & sequins — at year-end, we love to decorate and celebrate with light. Each flickering flame, every spark and glow draws your gaze, precisely because you are made of the light you see. You are the light of Consciousness, that which has become everything and is being everything, right now. When you focus on the universe, you forget you are its source. Focusing on joy and love makes you chase externals instead of finding the source within.

Life offers so many ways for you to get caught up in stuff, but this season offers more joys, more excitement and more pressures. It could come from the family events you'll attend, or maybe because you don't have family. Your yoga might have changed the kind of presents you want to give, not to mention how much stuff you want to (graciously) receive. If you don't drink alcohol or eat meat, how do you join co-workers for holiday cocktails or eat your mom's lasagna? Gathering with your nearest and dearest is so important, but it can push every button you've got. Exhilarating and exhausting, it's so easy to get lost in it all.

Consciousness has taken on "not-knowingness" in order to become you. Each map that we've explored this year gives the not-knowingness a different name: shoonya, aanava mala, avidya. Each map describes how the all-knowing ever-blissful ever-existent One Reality becomes you, with limited knowing, intermittent bliss and a short time span here on earth.

Hopefully, these maps of your multidimensionality give you a new ability to function within the demands and delights of the season. Can you waltz through it without losing the subtle and expanded levels of yourself? Those deeper dimensions are what yoga specializes in. Each of the maps we've explored explains WHO you are and unfolds a way for you to see where you begin as well as how to move into knowing your Self.

Though the maps say it differently, they are all saying the same thing: You are Consciousness, but you don't know you are Consciousness. Because you don't know, you get caught up in outer stuff that reinforces your not-knowing. This is called "bondage." The purpose of a human life is to get free from bondage, to see your Self and to be your Self. All you have to do is make a decision that you want to know who you are, then initiate action to get there. We've spent a year exploring the sages' road maps:

duality-in-unity	36 tattvas
four-fold map	three malas
five pranas	seven chakras
three gunas	five kleshas
three doshas	time and timelessness.

What will get you through the holidays? You could keep the map that resonates with you the most in your back pocket like a fold-out road map. Pull it out whenever you lose yourself, using it to track back home to your Divine Essence.

You can do Ujjayi Pranayama to nourish all your pranas, filling up your pranic reservoir to take you deeper than mere prana.

You can do *Svaroopa*® yoga and balance your chakras from tail-to-top.

You can recognize when you're experiencing fear, aversion or desire, then locate where you are on the map of the kleshas and dissolve each one into its root.

But be careful not to simply collect all the maps and keep them in your pocket. You may even have had deep experiences with multiple maps, but it's best to pick one to work with if you want to make rapid progress. Knowing the maps, as profound and mystical as they are, is not the same as knowing your Self. You are more. You are the light of Consciousness, the source of everything and beyond everything. Find your Self and you know all the maps.

All your *Svaroopā*[®] yoga practices work multidimensionally. They propel you again and again into the experience of your Self, your Divine Essence. You may think, "But this is such a busy time!" Yes, it is. The balance is tipped even more towards an external focus, on what you need to do, on who you need to see, on what they think of you and on who you want them to be. Round and round you go, on the worldly merry go-round. Will it stop at pleasure or at pain? The answer is yes. Both are guaranteed.

You may need to do more yoga, instead of less. Everyone around you benefits when you remember who you are; so do you. Rukmini shares, "I started Thanksgiving Day with an extra-long practice, before anyone else was up. I volunteered to pick up last minute items and used the alone time in the car to play chants. And I repeated mantra as often as I could remember! It really made a difference. I got less lost in both the stresses and the pleasures of the day."

Your *Svaroopā*[®] yoga practices uplift you and carry you through your life because they come from one who has been uplifted. Swami Nirmalananda says, "You can do a lot for yourself, but you can't make it all the way alone. Bootstrap enlightenment is guaranteed to fail. How do I know? I got help, so I know what that help provides. And I am forever grateful."

guu.dha-vidyaa jaganmaayaa dehe caaj-naana-sambhavaa,
udayo yatprakaa"sena guru"sabdena kathyate. — "Shrii Guru Gita 10

Birth is into not-knowingness, spellbound by Maayaa's worldly dance.

Giver of the upwelling light of your own Self is called Guru.¹

When you get lost in the experience of being small, separate and alone, you are "spellbound by Maayaa's worldly dance." But you have not been bound without a way to become free. There's a shortcut built into the system: "Giver of the upwelling light of your own Self is called Guru."

When someone gives you the experience of your Self, that person is called a revealer. The title "Guru" honors those who give their lives over to the energy of revelation, to free you from the not-knowing and reveal your inherent Divinity to you. How are you going to find it otherwise?

As embodied Consciousness, the revealer lights your inner light, so it "upwells" within you, awakening you to the Consciousness you are. This is called Shaktipat. You may have spontaneously received Shaktipat through *Svaroopā*[®] yoga because of the Grace that flows through the practices. Or you can intentionally receive this inner awakening at a Shaktipat retreat with Swami Nirmalananda. It's the greatest gift of all, the gift of your own Self.

During this season of celebration and gift-giving, whether for Christmas or Hanukkah, Diwali, Kwanza or the solstice, remember your own light. Beyond mere remembrance, discover your own light! Do more yoga, so you can know the light that you are.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON "EXPLORING YOGA'S MULTIDIMENSIONALITY," OUR THEME FOR 2017, CO-AUTHORED BY SWAMI NIRMALANANDA SARASWATI, VIDYADEVI STILLMAN & RUKMINI ABBRUZZI.

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¹ Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda