



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

March 2019 Teachings Article:

Quick Fixes #3

Elevate Your State

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Don't let your mind wander too far away from Consciousness, your own inherent Divinity. When you keep your mind on a short leash, it's a happier mind, just like the Dog Whisperer says. I went to see Cesar Milan performing live a few months ago and delighted in how impeccably he works with the mind — not just the dog's mind, but the human mind. During the show, he casually mentioned that he's a meditator. Aha! I knew there was a reason I'm a fan.

He doesn't use long leashes. He uses short leashes. You should too, not only for your dog, but for your mind. When you let it get too far away, it's hard to bring it back. Yoga's ancient sage Patanjali agrees:

tat-prati.sedhaartham eka-tattvaabhyaasa.h — Yoga Sutras 1.32

For freedom from the inner obstacles, constantly focus on one principle.

You already know how to do this. You keep a mostly-constant focus on one thing, usually a problem or pain. Whether it's a current situation or something from the past, you run it through your mind again and again. You have nearly-constant focus on one principle, but you're not very good at choosing the principle to focus on. You choose things that tear you down instead of uplifting you. You obsess on things that make you feel small, inadequate and not good enough. You're not the only one who does this. It's called the "human condition." It's called "ego."

You don't have a big ego. You have a puny ego. It keeps you small. Two different Sanskrit words get translated into "ego," though neither means what the English dictionary says, "a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance." The ancient sages predate Freud by millennia. They were talking about something different: how your mind keeps you small.

- **Ahamkara:** Your mind creates ahamkara, meaning literally, "I am what I do." Your mind invests itself in specific activities, people and places in order to construct a sense of self, who you are in the world. If your activities and relationships are going well, you feel good about yourself. If not, not.
- **Asmitaa:** Shiva takes on forgetfulness in order to experience individuality — being separate, small and alone. Despairing in this Self-imposed not-knowingness, Shiva creates a superficial sense of self to invest in, then you feel that's who you are. Asmitaa is the sense of self you create through your actions, words and thoughts.

Both of these Sanskrit terms agree that you work hard at creating a superficial sense of self by managing your life. They disagree on how you ended up in this trap. Ahamkara says your mind does this to you; asmitaa says that Shiva does this to Himself in order to become you. The mystical reality is that both are true. Shiva has become everything, including your mind. Your mind is designed to limit you, by depending on the world to give you a sense of self. The whole process is short-circuited when you focus on Consciousness.

On a practical level, this means you must keep your mind on a short leash. Like a dog on a long leash, it wants to dig under the shrubs and in the garbage cans so it can bring home something smelly, even half decayed. Then it rips it to shreds in the middle of the living room and lays down to roll around in it.

What if your mind focused on Consciousness? This is the "one principle" that Patanjali is talking about. He is urging you to focus on the One Truth within, your own Divinity. Elevate your state by using your mind to obsess on better quality stuff. More than 40 years of scientific research has proven that even your blood pressure, breathing and brain waves change when you apply your mind to Consciousness. Dr. Herb Benson's research began with yogic mantras, but he expanded it to prayer and generic mantras like "joy." Your body changes when you apply your mind to something higher. You can prove it in a yoga pose: on one side of Lunge, repeat a worry over and over; on the other side, repeat mantra or a single uplifting word like "free." How does it work? Whatever you are thinking, that is what you are becoming, and your body complies. There are three parts to this teaching:

- Whatever you are thinking... — this means you can choose what to think about. You can direct your mind in any direction you choose, like you direct a garden hose on one plant or another.
- ...that is what you are becoming... — your thoughts construct your sense of self, whether called ahamkara or asmitaa. I translate these Sanskrit terms as "small-s self," meaning you keep yourself

small by your limiting thoughts. I also call it your “constructed sense of self” because you construct it with your mind. Since your thoughts construct your sense of self, whatever you are thinking, that is what you are becoming.

- ...and your body complies — Every thought triggers a physical effect. A thought creates nerve impulses in your brain as well as brain chemicals. The nerve impulses track down your spinal cord, affecting your whole nervous system, as well as muscles, organs and glands. Your brain chemicals begin a grand symphony of coordinated responses affecting your whole body. You can think yourself into exhaustion and you can trigger endorphins (bliss chemicals) with your thoughts. Your body complies.

Affirmations use this process to your benefit if they are well constructed. You have to be careful that you don't lie to yourself when you apply your mind to something more uplifting. For example, if you decide to repeat, “I am happy, successful and loveable,” but you're saying it because you're unhappy, out of work and alone, both your body and mind recognize the lie. The problem is that affirmations usually still focus on the “small-s self,” trying to improve your psychology. Yoga is pure spirituality. Even yoga's poses and breathing practices are pure spirituality, especially when you're decompressing your spine. You're cultivating a spiritual capacity within.

The Shiva Sutras give us a similar recommendation to Patanjali.

Cittam mantra.h — Shiva Sutras 2.1

Your mind is made of mantra.

Earlier sutras in the text explain that Shiva becomes you, the individual, through a process of contraction. All-Beingness becomes pure vibration, which splinters itself into many individual vibrations. These vibrations are mantras, each constructing a different limited reality. Your mind is made of contracted energy, using mundane mantras to limit your sense of self. You can use mundane mantras to hold yourself back or to move yourself forward in the world, but they will always limit you to a sense of self constructed by the world.

To know the “more” that you already are, you need words that reveal your own Divine Essence to you. For this, you need an enlivened mantra, one passed down through the generations of yoga Masters.¹ Such a mantra gives you your “capital-S Self,” the experiential knowing of your own Divinity. My Guru said, “Go ahead. Have a big ego, the biggest ego of all. Think, I am God! I am God!”

Elevate Your State

Your quick fix for the month is to do two minutes of mantra repetition.¹ Stop what you are doing and apply your mind to mantra. If you're cooking, turn off the burners. If you're driving, pull over. If you're in a conversation, go to the bathroom. It's called a time-out, except it's really a “time-in” because the mantra tunes you in.

Watch the clock. See if you can repeat more mantras than one-per-second! Invest your mind in mantra to the exclusion of everything else for two minutes. Then go back to what you were doing.

Do it again later, as often as you need it, even when you don't need it. Keep your mind on a short leash. Bring it back to your own Self again and again.

I'm recommending focused mantra repetition, not the vague, spacey, back-of-your-mind repetition that so many do. You may need to repeat the mantra out loud in order to focus, or even to whisper it quietly. It does more for you when you give more of your attention to it. You might think, “If I say mantra inside while I talk to this person, I'll be happier during the conversation. Our relationship will improve.” You're still trying to accomplish a worldly goal. That's not what mantra is about.

What mantra does is give you your Self. A deeper dimension of your own beingness opens up within, which is so fulfilling that you no longer look for the relationship or activity to make you happy. You're already happier than happy, because mantra gives you a “time-in,” the experience of your capital-S Self. That is what makes you happy, and it does improve your relationships and your life. You can have it all, but you have to do it from the inside-out. Elevate your state. This is doing more yoga.

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¹ To receive the enlivened mantra of the Svaroopa Vidya lineage, order a mantra card online: www.svaroopa.org/mantra-card