



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

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Focus on Enlightenment #12

## **Love is An Answer**

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

Love is important but it is not “the answer.” As glorious as love can be, it’s never enough. It’s not a substitute for your own Self. You already know that one person always gives more than the other, one needs more than the other, one loves more than the other. What’s worse is that one or both are doing this in order to create a sense of self-worth based on the other person. Bottom line: a shared life is different than shared personhood.

I believed the Beatles when they sang, “All you need is love.” It matched my adolescent angst perfectly, contributing to my confusing love and sex. It was the 60s, so there was a lot of confusion going around. I based my life, my hopes and dreams on love for a long time. I even succeeded for a while.

I have loved and I have been loved. I still do love and am loved. Yet neither was enough for me. Love left me feeling incomplete. No matter how intensely I loved, no matter how much I gave or received, there was still something lacking in me that love didn’t touch.

Yes, that inner pain drove me to doing some stupid stuff. It took years to explore in the many different directions, some of which were recommended and others not. I mastered many things, yet they all left me feeling empty. That all changed when I got Shaktipat. It wasn’t on either list, not as something I should do nor as something I should avoid. It wasn’t on the map at all. The map of life that “they” gave me was incomplete.

Incomplete, empty, lonely, afraid, not good enough — it’s all built into you. Everyone experiences it. At its root, you’re feeling separation from God, a profound sense of emptiness and loss. I remember being born, feeling like I was being ripped away from God and thrust into a cold cruel world. It took me decades to get back.

There is a pathway back. Yoga is a science of spiritual development that takes you inward, deeper than your mind and emotions, beyond your memories, even beyond your karma to your essence, your inherent Godness. You don’t merely get back to being “with God.” You discover there’s only One of you here.

I could never have found that by myself. All the Western systems that I tried lacked the key. Only India could give me that. The first time I traveled there was before Mumbai’s airport had jet bridges. I clambered down the stairs from the plane, exhausted and laden with my carry-ons. My foot landed on the blacktop covering India’s soil. A bolt of energy shot up from the earth and through my spine. Inside I heard distinctly, “Mother!” I’d come home.

It’s the inner homecoming that Shaktipat gives you, coming home to your own Self. The culmination of lifetimes of searching is attained in an instant, the deep inner experience of your own Beingness. A knowing beyond thought, it is the piece I felt I was missing when I relied on love. Love couldn’t give me the deeper dimension of my own being. Only one who knew that reality within himself could give me that within myself. That was my Baba, my spiritual father, the one who birthed me into me.

He not only gave me my Self, he gave me the ability to propel you into your own Self. What a glorious mission: to awaken others to their own inherent Divinity. I live in gratitude for this loving and profound task. To see the change in you when you receive Shaktipat is like watching the sun rise — the sky lightens, the birds sing, the plants on the earth bend toward the light and the earth rejoices at the touch of the sun’s rays. You grow into the Divinity that you have always been and it shows.

Baba emphasized in his teaching, “God is in your feeling.” This is why people go to church and why they climb mountains — to get that “God-feeling” again. There’s nothing else like it. Not even love can touch it. Yoga calls it “chid-aananda,” the bliss of Consciousness, a key term in yogic texts. You must feel! Bliss is a feeling experience. God is in your feeling.

*Svaroopaa*® yoga classes begin with Shavasana and a Guided Awareness. Your teacher guides you through becoming aware of each area of your body in turn, leading to the awareness of your whole body, all at the same time. This practice is also called “yoga nidra,” meaning yogic sleep. It doesn’t mean you

should fall asleep! It means that you get deep rest without going unconscious, though it may take you a few (or a few hundred) Guided Awarenesses to attain this ability.

While the practice is relaxing, the point is awareness. You're developing your ability to feel, an easy continuing awareness that extends inward through the multiple dimensions of your own existence. You feel your way inward. As you get deeper inside, your awareness becomes more subtle and more powerful. You feel deeply and are rooted in an unshakeable inner expanse that makes you able to live with your heart open.

By contrast, many spiritual paths direct you to feel less. Some emphasize renunciation, which is too often confused with distancing and withdrawal from the world. Unfortunately, this leaves you less and less alive, less and less able to feel. In the name of "witness-consciousness," people are learning to watch their emotions, even to name them, in order to separate from them. While this frees them from being trapped in their emotions, it leaves them in another trap — their mind. The neutral, dispassionate mind (buddhi) separates itself from life. Yet the underlying problem is the inner feeling of separation. How can separation heal separation?

Instead, on this path, you cultivate your ability to feel by exploring bliss. Through poses, breathing, chanting, seva, sharing with others and most importantly, through the meditation experiences that your awakened Kundalini gives you, you feel your way inward. Best of all, your relationship with an enlightened being gives you a way to feel love and to feel loved. Love is an essential part of human life. It is an answer, even though it isn't "the answer."

You've been focusing on negative emotions for most of your life. I remember as a child waiting for Christmas morning to come, periodically shaking the boxes under the tree, especially the ones with my name on them. Is this what I asked for? Is this what I want? I felt a mix of hope and fear, living on pins and needles as the pile of gifts grew larger. My parents told me this was joy, but I experienced it as anxiety and frustration.

Then the time came to open the boxes. Some of them did have the desired object, of course. I'd open a box, see that it was something I wanted, and feel a burst of joy. Then I'd turn to the next box, having already forgotten the joy as well as what triggered it. As I opened the new box, I'd feel the anxiety anew. By the end of the morning, I had a stack of anticipated items that, truly, didn't fulfill me. And I was exhausted. This was supposed to be the best morning of the year, but I experienced it as the most unfulfilling of them all. At least, on the other 364 mornings, I wasn't hoping to be fulfilled.

It turns out that all I ever really wanted was God. The holiday that focused on family love and worldly objects was not a meaningful substitute for a holy day, one focused on God. For me, the most fulfilling part of Christmas was the songs, sung in the days and weeks before the main event. I even love the muzak versions played in the mall and elevators. I sing out my love and yearning for God. It spoke to my soul, that inner level that felt so agonizingly separate from God.

Yet it was yoga that awakened a deeper inner level, my own Self. Christmas gave me a way to reach toward God, as though God were on the outside. Yoga gave me my Self, which is God on the inside. Needless to say, there are not two versions of God. There is only One. The ever-existent One Divine Reality that pervades all is being all, including being you. Like air: the air inside your lungs and the air outside your lungs is only one thing, air. We make the distinction of outside and inside. But that distinction melts away once you find your own Self, for the Self that you are is the Self that is being all.

This is the foundation of love. When you look in someone's eyes and see the light of consciousness shining within them, you love them. How sweet and precious this experience is. Yet everyone's eyes have the light of consciousness shining through. All you have to do is learn how to see. Then your love expands to all, for they all shine with the light of Consciousness. You are that light, embodied in your body, living your life, seeing that light, embodied in their body, living their life. What a sweet reunion. Yet it's not about love. It's about being Beingness, together.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "FOCUS ON ENLIGHTENMENT"

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