



February 2000 Contemplation Theme

Path with a Heart

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Your mind is not capable of love. Your mind is a limited tool, and is not able to experience love or happiness. For you to be able to feel the feeling of love, your mind must get out of the way. When you feel happy, truly happy, your mind is completely still. Both love and happiness arise from a deeper level of your being and stream up through and past your mind.

Likewise, your mind cannot hold Consciousness. Your mind is a creation of Consciousness, which creates all things, but is a limited form of Consciousness. Your mind can conceive of the existence of Consciousness, which yoga calls "Self", but cannot know it. Your mind must surrender to the Self. Still, in yoga you must work with your mind, just as you must work with your body. You must retrain your mind and clear out the things that limit your ability to experience the Self.

I had studied these principles and even memorized the *sutras* explaining them, but did not really understand them. Without realizing it, I still approached yoga as though I could know Consciousness with my mind. I felt that I would eventually "get it", I could be able to grasp it with my intellect and know it with my mind. Then I met a Guru who had done it that way. What a wonderful lesson!

Several years ago, I went to a *satsang* (gathering of seekers) where people could ask questions of this Guru. I sat with everyone else, waiting for him to come into the room, and read the printed page describing his background. It described how he was thrust into a moment of clarity by watching a bird fly across the sky. He seized that moment then, and continues to live in it now.

When he entered the room and sat with us, I was surprised to see that he continually peered into space with his eyes squinted, as though he was focusing on some distant object. Occasionally, he would look at a person who raised their hand, and then look back into the distance. He paused after hearing the question as though he was straining to hear some distant sound. He seemed to me that he was always reaching or straining for something that was almost unreachable.

I became increasingly uncomfortable as I listened to the questions and his answers, finally wiggling and shifting in my chair constantly. To me, his answers were dry and so intellectual that I could not relate to them. Yet he truly spoke with a tremendous clarity and insight. It just seemed like it was coming from a book – to me, it wasn't alive. After 10 or 15 minutes, I left. I knew it was disrespectful, but I could not stay!

I went home and sat in my living room, contemplating what I had experienced. Then, I saw that he had given a gift to me. I saw the opportunity to step into the clarity he lived in, just as one would open a sliding glass door and step through. I knew that, in that moment, I could become enlightened. I had a sense that I had stepped previously through that door, in the distant past, in another life. I hesitated. I was surprised that I did not seize this tremendous opportunity! I inquired further into myself, why was I waiting? Then I saw that this path had no heart. This would be (for me) an experience of Consciousness but without love. And I knew in that moment that I didn't want that kind of enlightenment. Give me a path with heart, I prayed.

Since then, I have enjoyed every encounter with every person so much more. I have been able to give up the desire to control others and delight in the unexpected twists and turns of being in relationship. I know that every person I meet is another teacher who will help me to find enlightenment with heart. And I know that every moment of working together with others, doing yoga together, chanting together, and breathing the same air together is another step toward enlightenment – the ability to live always in the Self and always in the flow of love. Thank you for teaching me.

Namaste,

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