



Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

November 2022 Teachings Article:  
Self & Self #11

## A Living Temple

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

“I lived in a Tibetan temple,” a woman told me. “They worshipped me as a Goddess in ceremonies every day.” She truly had an other-worldly look to her. Her eyes were full of light and space. Her voice flowed like a stream running silently over rocks. She didn’t walk like normal people, she glided, almost floated.

“One day I wanted to actually do something, so I decided to go out. I slipped past my guards and went into the marketplace. I wandered around until I got tired and hungry. Then I realized I didn’t know my way back. I didn’t even know the name of the temple I’d been kept in.” She continued, “I asked the Goddess for help. The pathway through the marketplace lit up. I followed the light back to the front door. They were so happy to see me! They were worried about me.”

She was in the USA when I met her, so that phase of her life had ended somehow. She didn’t share that part of her story. A couple of people came over to us and took her away, presumably to their home. I wondered at how she managed her life. I think she didn’t.

Is this the goal? To be other-worldly, sheltered and cared for, even to have guards at your door? To be “kept”? This is not what yoga calls freedom. While she is one of the most unusual people I met, I have an advantage over her. I had something to compare her to. I’d already had the good fortune to meet a dozen enlightened beings.

Every Master I’ve met is one of the most effective, most productive people on earth. They live in a state of constant clarity and have an amazing capacity for whatever they turn their attention toward. I saw my Baba directing a kitchen with 15 chefs, then go outside and oversee 100 acres of gardens, while stopping by and answering questions about current construction projects. Then he went inside and helped with painting a giant photo of his Guru. Later he came to our evening chant, sitting quietly in the back and watching us all with such love as he hummed along. He explained it this way:

The Guru understands the ways of the world very well. He knows fully the laws of destiny. He possesses complete knowledge of God. Adept in spiritual matters, he is just as clever in practical affairs.

Some people want the Guru to be a fortune teller, to foretell their future or read their mind. But the Guru possesses complete knowledge of God, not of your mind. Why would they want to know what is running through your mind? Your mental content is generally not very uplifting, not even entertaining.

If you want the Guru to know something about you or your life, you have to tell them. Baba trained us to be succinct when doing this. Our story and the question had to fit in one sentence, maybe two. It taught us to cut through to the heart of the matter. Then he gave an answer in a few words, sometimes only two or three. Again and again I experienced his answer cut right through as well, clearing my confusion and making my choices clear.

The goal of meditative practices is both “seeing” and “being” God. Most people settle for seeing God. Some report transcendent experiences in their meditation, “I was in an infinite realm of luminous light.” I answer them, “Was? You mean the experience ended?” Surprised, they go back and enter into that inner level again. That is what yoga calls your own Self.

When you find that realm within, anchor yourself there, even while you open your eyes. Then capital-S Self fuels your day, even fuels your life. Your own small-s self shines with the light of capital-S Self. Now you are being the Divine Being that you already are.

Many religions specialize in giving you experiences of the Divine. You are temporarily uplifted, even transported to an infinite space of bliss and beingness. Everyone yearns for this experience, with many using nature, drugs, sex and music to get there. But then they crash. They’re back on the earth-plane again, maybe even disappointed about it. Yet being embodied is also Divine.

Manusam-dehamasthaya channa'ste paramesvarah.<sup>1</sup> — Utpaladevacharya

Shiva takes on a human body, concealing His own Divinity within it.

Shiva is being all that exists, including you. Baba wrote, "Don't make yourself an assassin of the soul by thinking that you are just ordinary." You are a uniquely individualized form of the One Divine Reality, though you may not yet know your own Self, not fully.

When you reject your own body or turn away from the world as though it could limit you, you're rejecting God's own body, God's own form, God's plan for you. You have a body because you're supposed to be here. There's something you're supposed to do.

Your body is a living temple. It is not merely a mound of flesh, muscle, bones, fat, blood and organs. Your body is something wonderful. All holy places, all gods and all mantras are in it. The entire cosmos is mapped in your body. You find this only when your body is no longer given over to the gratification of your senses but is dedicated to a higher purpose.

Do you know what your purpose is? If you don't yet know, it's time to find out. The answer is found inside. You need to learn how to look and listen in a whole new way. That's yoga in a nutshell. You develop your ability to tune in and to discern the difference between your purpose and your desires. Now you can make choices that truly matter.

Most people make their choices based on pleasure-seeking and pain-avoidance. The Bhagavadgita explains that momentary pleasures bring temporary enjoyment but "become like poison in the end," while choosing beneficial actions, though hard in the beginning, "become nectarean in the end." Thus, a yogi bases their decisions on what is beneficial compared to what is harmful. In other words, they take the long view on things.

I remember my 56<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was momentous for me because it meant that I'd been doing focused yoga and meditation practices for half my life. Not only had my practices gotten more enjoyable with time, but the benefits were also expanding.

Physical benefits were only the tip of the iceberg. My inner clarity and sense of purpose imbued my life with peace and focus, a rare combination. Most people think they have to relax and get unfocused in order to be peaceful. But peace lies at the foundation of your ability to focus. Then your worldly actions are an outer expression of that peace and inner dimensionality.

Tat-parij~naane cittam-eva-antar-mukhii-bhaavena cetanaa-pada-adhyaarohaata citi.h.

— Pratybhij~nah.rdayam 13

By knowing the Divine source of your own actions, your mind expands inward, ascending to the plane of pure Consciousness.

Finding the Divine source of your actions frees you from the pettiness that used to invade. I remember when my conversations with other people were how I got them to pay attention to me. Now I'm genuinely interested in them. That interest comes from a deep inner well. This Divine source is what motivates me to do what I do, using my body and mind as tools to accomplish the purpose.

Your body is a living temple, housing the One Divine Reality. Just like you'd clean a temple, care for your body so that it can house the Divine in a beautiful way, and for a long time. Temples are centers of worship and of work, serving all who come to them in practical as well as mystical ways. My Baba said, "A body that does no work is of no use."

This is tantric living, an integrative experience that weaves together all the dimensions of your being. Work is an essential part of it, a way for you to give of yourself, to make a difference in the world. Thus your life is a celebration of the interweaving of the Divine in the mundane. This is doing more yoga.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Manusam-dehamasthaya channa'ste paramesvaraa.h.