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The Relationship Imperative

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Your relationships are pivotal to your life. You may see them as the purpose of your life or you may have a more solitary lifestyle. The reality is that others have a powerful effect on you.

When I was seeking to escape that effect, I pursued solitude. I lived in a small place in several acres of woods, so I saw more deer than people. Yet relationships were still the crux of my life. My work revolved around other people. Even driving to the grocery store showed me there were people all around.

One day I realized I wouldn't have food without other people. While I never actually meet the people who grow the food, pack it up and ship it to the market, I buy and eat it. I am in relationship with them. At the store, I smile and chat with the cashier, another relationship. I abandoned the idea I was a hermit.

It challenged my idealism. Yoga's history highlights many sages doing intense practices in solitude. I had unknowingly picked that up as an ideal to live by. Now I see that the stories of such iconic yogis always included other people.

One modern-day story described a Himalayan yogi who was immersed in meditation all through the day. When he opened his eyes and stepped outside his cave, he found a plate of food waiting for him. The dal (bean soup) and rice were frozen, but they warmed up in his belly.

The food had been dropped off by a yogi from a nearby cave. He'd picked it up just down the hill, at the Ashram which served free meals every day. Similarly, last time I was in India, I was honored to serve food to over 100 yogis and pilgrims.

> The yogi should practice hatha yoga in a small room, situated in a solitary place, being four cubits square and free from stones, fire, water, disturbances of all kinds, and in a country where justice is properly administered, where good people live and food can be obtained easily and plentifully. — Hatha Yoga Pradipika 1.12

While this yogi lived alone, he relied on others to feed him. In this way, my Baba did 34 years of sadhana (spiritual practice), being housed and fed by others. He dedicated his spiritual autobiography to his "many mothers."

You are always in relationship. Your body needs food and water. You bathe and need clothing. If you're not growing the cotton, where would you get clothing without other people involved? For that matter, how would you have taken birth if others weren't involved?

I have devoted myself to doing and sharing yoga practices for decades. Yet it is your interest in the teachings that makes me able to continue to offer them. It's another reason that I live in gratitude, both to my Guru and to you.

Relationship is divinely ordained. The Pratyabhij~nah.rdayam agrees with Genesis, that God brought the world into existence. Why? Yoga says this world is an overflowing of God's bliss. The Shiva Purana describes Shiva using his own energy to create another, "in order to enjoy the bliss of his own Being."[1]

It's like a single candle lighting a dark room. When reflected in a mirror, the one flame becomes two, yet there is only one. You are the light of Consciousness, shining in a unique and individualized form. But you think you are the reflection.

You were brought into being by the ecstatic creative power of the One Divine Reality. The one is seemingly being two — God and you. How fun!

Your problem is that you have forgotten who you really are. In your not-knowingness, you have lost the bliss of your own Beingness. So your task is to rediscover who you already are and always have been.

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[1] Vanamali, Shiva: Stories and Teachings from the Shiva Mahapurana (Rochester VT, Inner Traditions 2013), page 32

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In your knowingness, Shiva meets Shiva. Every moment is an ecstatic reunion. Every person you see, every critter and plant, every rock and patch of earth, it's all you, in a multiplicity of forms. Shiva breathes you into being. Shiva BE-s you.

Your lifelong focus on relationships happens because you lost you. When you are with others, if things are going well, you experience the bliss again. The bliss of relationship is the bliss of Consciousness, but projected outward instead of being found within.

To find your Divine Essence, you need someone to get you over the hump. The Guru does this for you by giving you Shaktipat, as well as guiding you through the process with the teachings. The Guru serves you and others because they were similarly hoisted up by their own Guru.

Shiva is being you. Shiva is choosing to be uniquely you. Shiva is being the world and everyone in it, thus Shiva is in relationship with Shiva. The candle's light is doubled, tripled, even exponentially magnified. Your task is to realize that are already Consciousness, embodied Consciousness. Fully human and fully Divine. Self-Realized. Discovering this truth is the purpose for which you were born.

While you are the flame being reflected in the mirror, you think you are the reflection. Worse, the mirror of your mind gets dirty and streaked, making your Divine light shine dimly and distorted. You created the dimming and disfigurement by your thoughts, words and actions in the past, even in past lifetimes.

The situation into which you were born matched your karmic patterns perfectly. That was certainly true for me, an only child who loved solitude. In the aloneness, I could find a deep inner sense of wholeness. Only after I came to my Baba did I realize that childhood ability came from prior lifetimes as a yogi.

Now, with eighty years experience of being human, I have come to cherish relationship. For me, it's not about the conversation nor the activities we might do together. Yes, a pizza party is fun, but I treasure the stillness that surfaces when everyone's belly is full. I know that most people still depend on food for their bliss, but it is the shared bliss that matters.

This is why I have been teaching for more than 50 years — so you discover the inner source of bliss. When both you and I abide in the bliss of Beingness, we fulfill Shiva's purpose in being two while being only one. Shiva being Shiva while seeing Shiva.

Baba described it this way:

> This is not a mere universe; it is the image of Him. Knowing it as Shiva, love it.

People spend time in nature or look for beautiful things to find peace, to feel better. Looking outward, they hope to see the Divine in the mundane. It's wonderful when it works.

Everyone experiences profound moments of bliss and Beingness. They happen in the midst of life, which is why you work so hard at getting things just right. Your mind clears and you see the inner light that is always shining.

But you have only a momentary experience because your mind starts up again. in the same way, meditation also provides a momentary experience for most people. They settle for crumbs because they misunderstand the goal of meditation.

It is not about you looking inward, but for you to settle inward. Now you are inside — looking out. I call this "Divine Eyes," that you are seeing from a deeper place within.

This makes you able to be in relationship in a new way. Love without need, commitment without clinging, managing without manipulation — you're not looking for what you can get. Instead of pursuing bliss and Beingness, you are based in bliss and Beingness. You care and you share. This is yoga.

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svaroopa*® Yoga & Meditation, contact us at
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