



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

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Focus on Enlightenment #3

Other People

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

Other people make a difference in your life. So does my Guru, whether you knew him personally or not. When you take a *Svaroopa*® yoga class or do *Svaroopa*® Vidya meditation, he's the wizard "hidden behind the curtain," making everything happen. His own practices made him able to share the highest attainment, giving it away to anyone who wanted it. That gift is a mystical transmission of energy, revealing your inherent Divinity to you. It's something you've always wanted.

In every satsang I lead, one of the sweetest ways I share his gift is when I put a dot of ash on your forehead, a "bindi" (dot) from a yaj~na (sacred fire ceremony). People come forward, most lingering a moment, a sweet connection. Yet I remember when I would avert my eyes when anyone looked at me. In the beginning of my yogic process, I was hiding, well shielded. In the 1970's encounter groups, we sometimes did a partner-pairing where each looked deeply into the other's eyes. It was very hard for me. As I grew into the gift that Baba gave me, my ability to see and to be seen expanded. Looking into my Baba's eyes that gave me that, and much much more.

Now I experience great pleasure in seeing you and in being seen, especially in that moment of sharing Baba's blessing with the ash bindi. What do I see when I see you? I see Shiva, the One Reality that is being all, being you. Both your uniqueness and your Divine Essence are showing simultaneously. Your individuality shines out as a form of Shiva, making you Divine both inside and outside, through all the levels of your being. I see you and I feel you, just as I see and feel me – we are one while being two. And we are two, while being one.

When you look at me or at other people, what do you see? You see an "other," a separate person. As you see them, you simultaneously evaluate if they are doing what you want or expect. Focused on what you can get from them, you go into reaction when they don't meet your expectations or desires. Those reactions drive you crazy.

Sometimes you focus on what you can give to the other, yet you know exactly how they should respond, which is usually the motivation for your giving. Whether you are getting or giving, the other person is different and separate from you. They make you happy — or they don't. Thus you're in constant reaction, probably also attempting to manage (meaning manipulate and control) them and the situation. It's a painful way to live, for both of you.

You know too many unenlightened beings. Spending time with enlightened beings changes what you see. My Baba said he met over 100 enlightened beings in his lifetime! I'm sure he learned something from each of them. When my Baba was alive, there was nowhere else I wanted to be. I confess that I wasn't there because of what I could give; I was there because of what I was getting — my own Self.

A few years after Baba's life came to an end, I decided to meet more enlightened beings. It's been a great blessing and a powerful education. It became obvious to me that there are different kinds of enlightenment. I was delighted to see how each enlightened being is unique, even while based in the greater inner Reality, proving that you don't lose your individuality when you become enlightened. The process of meeting so many of them has filled my life with many blessings.

One of the first lessons I got was that there's more than one. And that enlightened beings are alive now. It's not something limited to thousands of years ago, nor is it exclusively a male prerogative. I met both women and men who live in the mystical knowing of the Oneness underlying the multiplicity of our universe. Better yet, they encouraged me to go for it.

Their similarities and differences helped me better understand my Baba and his teachings. Again and again, I saw that I was on the right path for me. In my travels, I also had sweet reunions with many who had lived with my Baba. They helped me understand the differences between the Gurus, reinforcing my moment-to-moment gratitude and commitment to the one who awakened me, then trained me for years.

I can definitively state that there is only One Reality, but enlightenment is individual — it's about you, uniquely and personally about you. Who will you be when you are enlightened? You will be more you. How will you be when you are enlightened? You will be great, inside and outside. What will you do, once you are enlightened? Anything you choose to do, just like now. Only your ability to choose is clearer and your ability to do is more powerful.

The other people in your life affect you so much: by what they do, by what they say, by their mood, by the look on their face, even by what they think. You adapt to their idiosyncrasies; they adapt to yours. Most everyone is tiptoeing around everyone else's unenlightened bits. We call this "relationship." In trying to live a shared life, you lose your Self. You try to be what they want you to be. You act in a way that will get them to do what you want them to do. Your sense of self depends on how "they" see you.

But the Guru always sees your Divine Light, shining from its source within you. The Guru always sees you as having the freedom to make choices, as well as the power to discover what you're really made of. The Guru sees you both as you are and as you can be. Most importantly, the Guru makes enlightenment accessible, should you so choose.

How do you become enlightened? In a Shaktipat tradition, you begin with a taste of enlightenment. You get that in every *Svaroopā*[®] Yoga class, especially after your final Shavasana. You get that in every *Svaroopā*[®] Vidya meditation, especially when you are first opening your eyes. But the process really begins when you get Shaktipat, for the cosmic power of Consciousness is awakened within you, opening up the opportunity to get enlightened in this lifetime. How wonderful is that!

Still you have to do your part on the way to enlightenment. Simply stated, you have to do more yoga.

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