



December 2008 Contemplation Theme

Divinely Human

by Rama Berch

This is the season where we celebrate the divine in the human being, by celebrating the birth of a divine human, Jesus. However it's too easy to stop at acknowledging his divinity, to whatever extent you believe in it. It's a cop-out, from yoga's perspective, to say that he was the only divine human. Yoga says you must acknowledge your own divinity as well, and my understanding of Jesus' life and teachings says that he agrees.

Yoga says that any time you see that a person outside of you has a particular quality or problem, it falls under the term, "projection." If you meet Carol and see that she is friendly and caring, you notice that in her because it is one of your own qualities. A different person looks at Carol and says she is conniving and manipulative, just appearing to be friendly and caring so she can get her way. These qualities also exist in the eye of the beholder. If they are not there inside, you won't see them outside. It really doesn't matter how Carol is! What matters is what you see. Your ability to see the reality in front of you is limited by how far you see into yourself. Thus yoga is the science of introspection – beginning the inner exploration by working with your body, your breath, and the way you handle your life. The exploration delves ever more deeply, into your own divine essence. Your ability to see Jesus as a divine human has to do with your ability to see this in yourself. The divinity is there, whether you can see it or not.

When you experience your own divine essence, you are still human. The human being has this unique characteristic, to be both divine and human at the same time. This is the essential difference between humans and all other creatures of the world. Let's consider what that difference is. One teaching story describes it this way.

In the beginning, when Shiva manifested the world out of Shiva's own being, emanating the energy (Shakti) of which all things are made, Shiva looked around at all that had come into existence. Watching the human beings, Shiva saw that they did everything they knew to do. They ate and slept. They urinated and defecated and procreated. They worked and played. Shiva said, "They act like animals!" Shiva knew that we have a unique capacity, but could see that we didn't know about it, Shiva incarnated as a human being, named Adinatha (*adi*=first or primordial, *natha*=Lord). According to yoga, this was the first incarnation. Adinatha gathered a few interested people and gave the first teachings on the uniquely human capacity to know our own essential divinity. Those disciples did the practices that Adinatha gave and discovered the Truth within. They went on to teach their own disciples, passing yoga down through the generations unto today.

There are many important points in this sweet story – the most important of which is your human capacity to know your own divinity. Also, it identifies the source of yoga as being a "cosmic download" from the originator of the universe – not something that humans made up or figured out on our own. We needed help! The story also identifies the origin of yoga as coming from the ancient times, lost in prehistory, beginning with the first human beings. It says that many different incarnations of God have come and gone throughout time. Finally, it sets yoga's teachings within the guru-disciple relationship, which is what has enlivened and preserved yoga so it is accessible to us today.

Yoga honors the guru-disciple relationship for many reasons, primarily because relationship is the most important thing in our life. Countless studies have been done on this. Important studies of orphanages have documented that babies who are deprived of relationship in their early life actually die, even when they have proper nutrition, hygiene and medical care. No matter how important your work is, or your health, or your possessions, or your free time, or your yoga practice – your relationships are more important. Now imagine what it would be like to be in relationship with someone who knows her or his own divinity!

When I understood what my Christian minister was teaching me about Jesus, I got angry. I was 13 years old, enrolled in a series of Saturday afternoon classes with my girlfriend – it was relationship that got me to these classes. Dr. Henke explained the impact that Jesus had on people when he met them, by telling the story of the brothers James and John laying down their fishnets beside their boat to follow Jesus – leaving their homes and family. It all sounded like a nice fairy tale to me, until Dr. Henke said, "What kind of a man could have that impact on someone?" In that moment, I could see Jesus' eyes looking into mine, somehow, from the inside out. I saw something there that I could never turn away from. It was the only thing I ever wanted.

My instantaneous reaction was anger. I was mad that he lived 2,000 years ago. Why didn't I live then? It wasn't fair that I had to settle for some subtle relationship – I wanted the real thing!

It was almost 20 years before I met my Guru. When I looked into his eyes, I saw that same thing – only this time it was with a real person, someone I could be in relationship with. Nothing else has ever mattered to me, not before that moment and not since. It was like Adinatha was reaching through the thousands of generations to touch my heart and being – to say, “When you know who you are, you know me.”


After that, I couldn't celebrate Christmas. I never lost my love or respect for Jesus; I simply found a relationship with a divine human that fulfilled my inner longing. I followed that path with all my heart and soul. Today I sit on another crossroads in my life, just weeks away from becoming a swami, looking at what has brought me here. Today, I am able to celebrate Christmas, but in a new way. This is a holiday that honors the divine in the human. It was there in Jesus, and it is there in you. Even Jesus agrees.

As a disciple of a divine human, I have been given the task of knowing my own divinity. This is true now, while I am not a swami, just as it will be true after that ceremony. Yoga says that this is the purpose of human life – to begin in the not-knowing and to plunge into the depths of your own innermost Knowing-and-Being. All of us are working on this, while we live our life in different ways. It isn't about becoming a swami – it's about knowing your own divinity in the midst of your life. For me, my life is service and has been for decades. Many have asked me if I have a personal life aside from “the work.” The answer is no. I gave my life over so long ago, to serve as a teacher in this tradition, that becoming a swami is not a “becoming” at all. It's not a goal. It's not an attainment. It's a job. Technically, in the order of Saraswati, an order of teaching monks, “swami” is a job title.

What about you? You don't have to become a swami, but you must know your own divine essence. Without this inner full-filling, you will always feel incomplete, lost, scared, needy and speedy. That is what is so incredible about *Svaroopā*[®] yoga. It's amazing that a few yoga poses can open you up to that inner full-filling. While everyone else thinks you are doing yoga-exercise, you know you are diving into the vast pool of your own divinity. While you are taking care of your aches and pains, you are propelling your healing and transformation by drawing from the source within your own Self. While you are recovering from the stresses of life and the pressures of the season, you are filling your tank with the bliss of your own being. While you face the uncertainties of today's economy, you are supported from an inner source that never allows you to surrender to anxiety and fear-mongering.

Light a candle on this holiday that celebrates the divinity within. Lighting a light is a feature of every holiday within this season – whether Hanukah, Christmas, Kwanzaa or Ganesh Chaturthi. The light in the darkness of winter (in the northern hemisphere) is the light of your own divinity, shining into the world that forgets it too easily. Celebrate the divine human – by recognizing it within yourself.

Namaste,



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