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**This Issue's Theme:**  
**DEVOTION**

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**Issue 21**

**March • April 2005**

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# *the* JOURNEY

*A Mind, Body & Soul Connection*

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## WORDS FROM THE PUBLISHER.....

Not quite seventeen years ago when I made a decision to stop drinking and using in order to “cope” with the world, I had a spiritual teacher frequently say to me “be careful what you put into your God box.” It took a long time for this meaning to set in. First I had to come to the idea that there was a God. Then I had to believe that he wasn’t out to get me. That I have a free will to create experiences based on my actions and reactions and that through these I am responsible for the “world” I am in. When I came to devotion as the theme for this issue that was one of the first things I thought of. I believe the point of what my teacher was saying was that whatever we decide to devote our energy to will be what we live in our lives. Perhaps we can look at devotion as the fuel for the mind. Maybe the creation of the energy to live our lives. Knowing that if I take a personal inventory that whatever is happening around me is the direct result of what I devote my energy to. That to me is the importance of a personal inventory. What am I feeding the most. A few of our writers struggled with this theme. That to me is a good sign that it got them going deeper.

On our cover you will see two good friends of mine, Meenakshi and Ron Reid of the band **Swaha** from Toronto, Canada. The music that they share is the essence of devotion to love, peace, joy and happiness. Meenakshi has practiced Bhakti Yoga (which is the Yoga of Love and Devotion) for many years. Ron is a devoted Ashtanga Yoga practitioner and probably the foremost Ashtanga Yoga teacher in Canada. I was honored to spend time to dialog with them recently in their home in Toronto. The result of this dialog is the Spiritual Genealogy column in this issue. Their devotion to doing their part to help heal the world comes through not just in their music but also in who they are.

Please know that the community (which includes all our advertisers and readers) we have built at the Journey is devoted to also doing our part in this same mission.

Namaste, Clyde

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Toronto based band Swaha.  
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Our Theme for the Next Issue...

# Being Present

# Spiritual Genealogy

## The Journey of Two Becomes One

By Clyde Chafer

**R**ecently I spent some time to dialogue with Meenakshi and Ron Reid of the Toronto based band Swaha. Meenakshi has been leading Kirtan, chanting, teaching and studying various forms of yoga here and in India. Ron Reid is one of the foremost Ashtanga teachers in Canada and also has been writing, playing and sharing his passion for music for many years. Ron is also co-owner of Downward Dog Yoga Centre and Meenakshi is one of the teachers there.

*The Journey:* Thank you both for agreeing to this interview. When we first met back in November I believe I told you your music resonated with me. This issue is on devotion so I think this interview will fit real well in that your devotion

comes through in your music and your practice. So, as usual, the best place to begin is in the beginning. What I would like to know from both of you is a little bit of background, where you are from etc.

Meenakshi: I'm from Toronto and I grew up in a Jewish family. From a young age I was interested in the performing arts, mostly theatre, but I also did some dance. I went to a performing arts high school and I think my parents recognized that there was more to my path, even then. I got into theatre for a while, and I slowly got into modern dance. When I was 18, I backpacked through Europe and it was at that time that I got introduced to my Teacher in India and his philosophy and decided to go the following year to go to India. I went to India when I was 19 and...

*The Journey:* Well before we get to India... you were born Jewish. Was your family practicing? Did you go to Synagogue?

Meenakshi: Yes, I went to Hebrew school up to fourth grade, like full time school, then I went part time to week-

end Hebrew school. I had a bat mitzvah when I was 13. We were conservative, so yes, we went to Synagogue and everything was in Hebrew. I found myself loving the chanting and the prayers but never really understanding why we were

there. I was sort of in between not understanding what was going on, knowing that I was seeking something deeper but it gave me a context of understanding. But because it was in Hebrew it just did not fulfill my needs. Questions never got answered but there was something about the process of being in a holy place that I really enjoyed.

*The Journey:* Would you say that you tapped into something not knowing what it was? This column is about spiritual genealogy, which is why

I wanted to back up and tap into where your first feelings of spiritual growth were. This is what comes to me when you speak of chanting and prayer. Did something resonate, maybe in a different way at that time, did you tap into something at that period?

Meenakshi: Well, I can say that there was a point that I could not wait for the choir to sing. We had the Canter, he was the one who led the prayers, the chanting, he had the most beautiful voice. Just the choirs and the melodies and the tunes were very, very soulful to me. So I really looked forward to that and that was the point that I really understood, understood it on another level. I also think that going to a performing arts school as an actor, it's a very spiritual action because you are looking at the nature of this character, you are digging a lot deeper than you normally would and for a high school aged student, it became a very spiritual experience for me.

*The Journey:* So you kept that with you?

Meenakshi: Yes, and there were some other people that



Ron Reid and Meenakshi



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came along that had better voices than me but I really admired that they could sing. I always sang but I never really thought of myself as a singer. I took classes and was in musicals, but it wasn't like I had a starring role. For me it was something that I enjoyed doing....

*The Journey: The word "joy" came into my mind and then you said "enjoy", I'm thinking that you found joy in singing. So let's go to India.*

Meenakshi: Yes, when I was in India again, I had a very internal practice. The ashram that I was at, people were into singing and performing. I often did not join these groups but I really enjoyed singing. I took classes in the Bhagavah Gita and Patanjali and I also learned Sanskrit through the ancient scriptures of India. So in a sense, I liked that more. It just became a practice that I did on my own, rather than a practice that was shared with others. My first trip there, I had to write some music and one day I decided to share one of my songs. I remember that my teacher listened to it and asked me to sing it again. In the process of me singing it, he knocked everything over that was beside him so that I had to stop. He sort of went into kind of..... when you study with a great teacher, they come to learn your essence, and they also see where you need to learn. What he saw in me was that this was not the path that I needed to learn. After that experience, I stopped. For the next year, I did not do any music, I did not write any songs. I think what he was saying, was that I needed to go inside and if you chant it is something that you do for yourself. It just broke all thoughts of the idea of performance for me and it made me realize that performance was quite dualistic....that yes I am going to sing and yes you are going to listen. I remember as an audience member, I wanted to be a performer and get up to be a part of it somehow. I was always inspired to get up and do that so when I eventually came upon the idea of Kirtan it really appealed to me because it was something that I could share with people.

*The Journey: Interaction?*

Meenakshi: Yes, and how interaction created energy of oneness, which became more of my interest.

*The Journey: What is your teacher's name? And when you first went to India did you have an idea that you wanted to go to ashrams, or were you just going there to check out the country?*

Meenakshi: Swami Shyam. I just went straight there and I have never been anywhere else. All the times that I have gone to India have been to study.

*The Journey: How did you know?*

Meenakshi: When backpacking through Europe, I met this fellow who had begun to study with a group of people who were into this Swami Shyam. I had already read the Bhagavad Gita and he gave me a copy of the Swamis' translation when I was at the beach in Greece. I read it and I had an experience; an experience through the words of the meaning and it was the first time that I ever had an experience like that.

*The Journey: So had you dabbled in Indian culture, some of their spiritual text?*

Meenakshi: Oh yes. Hinduism – their spirituality in

general.

*The Journey: So you felt very drawn to it and when the opportunity to go to India arose you went?*

Meenakshi: I truly made the opportunity – back then I was quite willful. (laughing) It was something I wanted to do so I did it. Actually, the first time I tried to go I wrote the Swami. His right hand man, the man that was in charge of granting permission to come and study, wrote back and said the Swami thought it is not the right time to come. I was back in Canada by this time and I connected with a group that studied his teachings. We did satsang and kirtan and connected with him in meditation. At that time, the rule was that you had to study for two years before you could come to India to be with him. I got the letter back saying that Swami said I could not come yet. I was so determined that I wrote directly to the Swami, saying I only wanted him to read it. I felt that was the only way that I could get through to him. I believed that I should be allowed to come and study. I was very determined. The Swami then wrote me back and said that I could come.

*The Journey: Lets back up for just a moment. Before you went to Europe, did you get into any type of meditation? Did you have any type of spiritual practice whatsoever?*

Meenakshi: I was dancing. I did not start meditating until I started reading the translations of the Gita. I then found that meditation started to come really easy. So my whole practice of meditation came really easily through that process, through going to India, satsang. That whole process began way before hatha yoga.

*The Journey: How long before?*

Meenakshi: Probably four or five years before. I kept dancing and then it seemed natural. The Sivananda Yoga Center was around at that time, in Montreal, and I liked that they did a lot of chanting and I was already flexible from dance and then I started teaching.

*The Journey: What year was that?*

Meenakshi: This was back in '92.

*The Journey: So you made several trips to India?*

Meenakshi: Eight.

*The Journey: What was the longest that you stayed there?*

Meenakshi: Two years.

*The Journey: Was it hard coming back?*

Meenakshi: It was *very* hard.

*The Journey: So what brought you back?*

Meenakshi: Fate...(she smiled at Ron....laughing).

*The Journey: Well, I guess this is a good time to bring Ron into the picture. Ron, let's hear about you, from the beginning.*

Ron: I am originally from Canada's heartland. I think that for me the earliest spiritual connection is that my family used to travel. Most of my relatives were farmers so living in the city is a challenge in the modern world. When you're farming, your connection to nature is very strong

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spiritually; in particular for my father. He was amazing at growing things, he was a real person of the earth, and he had a very strong nature *connection*, a passion. My mother was a musician; she was a very spiritual person through her own nature. So even though we did certain traditional things, like go to church, I never really felt connected to it.

*The Journey: What kind of church was it?*

Ron: A Christian based church, on a regular basis, which I fought.

*The Journey: Did anything resonate?*

Ron: Yes, the music and the hymns - there was something about them. When I write music, I start looking for the essence or the simplicity of something - something that you can connect to, especially at the heart level.

*The Journey: So after high school, did you go to college?*

Ron: Yes, I went to university for a while and studied philosophy and music. Just right at the end of junior high school, about age 14, I started to play in bands.

*The Journey: What type of music?*

Ron: Rock and Roll, Beatles, which was prime time. The power of that music was very spiritual, larger than life in a way that was guided by a higher experience.

*The Journey: Their music is timeless.*

Ron: Yes, they are probably my biggest single influence because they brought in classical and jazz and all these other elements that would color the basic tune. So I think it showed the great expanse of potential of that time. You could feel all the different things that were available.

*The Journey: So you became a professional musician?*

Ron: Yes, at that time I always played in bands. We would play for fraternities, sororities, etc. I remember the university was \$85 per course.

*The Journey: So you went on the road?*

Ron: Yea, one of the things about Winnipeg, which is a good thing and a bad thing, is that it is not close to anything. Going on the road meant that it was quite an undertaking, quite a distance to travel. So we never really went that far. I think my interest in music really grew from that when I did not have a sense of any other purpose. I think on one level I could really see myself studying philosophy, eventually evolving into spiritual philosophy. So I had just started playing with a band and one fella in the band and I really felt a soul connection through our music. Before that, the music was more an imitation of other people's songs. After I met him it became much more creative. I really loved the way he played. Working with him made me a much better musician. He ended up moving to Toronto and I moved here shortly after that. I played in Toronto for quite a few years, making my living as a professional musician. Traveling at this point all over Canada playing. That's when I discovered yoga. I had a friend who was a drummer that dabbled in it; he kind of talked a bit about it. In my travels I used to like to read; you have a lot of downtime when you are traveling or playing gigs at night. Anyway, one day, I went into this second hand bookstore and right as soon as I walked in my eyes went straight to this orange book. It was

right in the center of the store. The Illustrated Book of Yoga by Swami Vishnudevananda. He was in the Sivananda lineage. So I connected with this at very much a distance.

*The Journey: So you got this book and started practicing on your own? How long after you got the book and started your practice was it until you went to a class and got instruction?*

Ron: Quite a long time, probably eight or nine years. I did this in hotel rooms, moving the furniture. I would practice 3 to 4 a day. Asana, pranayama and meditation. Then in the late eighties I walked by a small yoga center and for some odd reason I was kind of drawn to it. I just started going and that was where I met my first teacher, Yogi Krishn. I practiced with him another seven years or so, mainly Raja Yoga - meditation, philosophy. We did Hatha Yoga to get ready for meditation. I learned a lot about taking care of my body through nutrition. He was a great teacher for me and I still feel very connected to him - maybe not so much the physical but the spiritual plane. Being around him I was always interested in how he treated and interacted with others. He was a great power of example for me in this. He was very kind and wise - but other times very stern. I was fascinated by these interactions and was getting a teaching that I didn't realize at the time.

*The Journey: Were you having thoughts of opening your own studio?*

Ron: Yes, about this time I was getting disillusioned with my music career. I had gotten to the point that I felt like I had sold out as a musician. Once I became more of a musician for hire, I lost the soul of music that I had felt for so long. I was at a crossroads and it was like, "What am I going to do, teach yoga?" It was almost like a joke. There wasn't a lot of yoga around at that time. But that's what I did. The biggest class I had for a long time was like eight. I probably did 20 years of practice before I opened a studio.

*The Journey: When did you first start with Ashtanga?*

Ron: I had read an article on Ashtanga in *Yoga Journal*. Well, even though my teacher was not so much into the physical practice, I had a strong passion for it and had developed the physical postures. It allowed me to feel all wrapped up, consumed with the body and spirit. This helped me nurture my spirituality. Anyway, I had started teaching some classes, rented space, put out posters, teaching for the school board. Shortly after that my wife at the time had gotten a scholarship to go study in the States. It was in a small town and I had no idea what I was going to do there. I was kind of freaked out. Surprisingly it worked out very well. Shortly after getting there I met a dance professor who said she always wanted to do yoga. She offered up her space and we started classes there. She was full of energy and always had ideas. I will always be grateful to her. She helped me in a lot of ways to establish who I am. Before I went there I was all over the place with the music and yoga. When I was there I was able to focus on teaching yoga. We were there for two years and by the time I came back to Toronto there was more material available on Ashtanga.

**Spiritual Genealogy....Continued on page 40**

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# CONTEMPLATING DEVOTION AT GREAT LAKES MALL

By Ted Lardner

Thunderbird. Thumbs, side by side on the steering.

We're going a million miles an hour: the speedometer, when I peek, I can't see it; the needle's buried in high digits. Mr. Kenney's driving. Between dark and dawn, minute by minute, the sky changing, but the road, the road stays empty, empty and long.

This old car, huge engine, power-everything, you can't feel how fast. We *move*. Mr. Kenney, touching the wheel, got a toothpick tucked the corner of his mouth. His son, Paul, Paul's brother, Casey, me, Jim B. I don't know how we don't know this is going to end.

Devotion is not a home-word for me.

But I like being around people who get involved in a devoted way—a loving way, a humble way, though I have problems with that word, too—with work of the heart. Loving what they're doing, what they're doing is imbued with a feeling of love, which seems to radiate, a communicable positive vibe.

Devotion implies sweetness, deliberate gentling we bring to action that comes from humility.

Bhakti yoga, according to David Life and Sharon Gannon, is a method to gain "access to the form of the Divine that resides in [one's] heart." "Devotion," they write, "does not mean blind following. It means conscious seeking after the truth." My teacher mentions the Sanskrit root *bha* in bhakti refers to this divine essence. Words with this root, she explains, convey this golden thread.

Is this the thread that brings the memory of Mr. Kenney as I sit, contemplating the food court at Great Lakes Mall? My daughter is attending a birthday party. Her friend, Alivia, has turned 7. The girls and boys crowd together in the Build-a-Bear store.

In my teens, was it in devotion Mr. Kenney loaded sons and other teenagers, hauling us to one little quarter-size Illinois "mountain" where, entirely for fun, for as long as we could, until our legs turned to rubber from cold and fatigue, we skied? Week after winter weekend, he shepherded us toward graduation, college, leaving home.

It's hard to give yourself like that, I think. To the straight world, devotion perhaps makes you stumble and stray. Heroic and absurd, you become the subject of Rumi's poem, "The Lame Goat":

You've seen a herd of goats

going down to the water.

The lame and dreamy goat  
brings up the rear.

There are worried faces about that one...

In skiing togs, Mr. Kenney looked ridiculous and beautiful. He wore a silver James Bond windbreaker, black stretch pants. When he took off his hat, the hair he had left stuck to the sides of his head. At the end of the run-out, he was the old guy (my age) standing, face toward the mountain. Watching for us.

Of the many kinds of knowing, Rumi says,  
The lame goat's kind is a branch  
that traces back to the roots of presence.

My head says, "I don't get it," but my heart keeps showing me pictures, taking me there. The old lift rattles on skate wheels up the tracks. Its metallic whoosh echoes along gullies, abrupt woods. It sounds like a pulse, the whirl of in utero heartbeat, slowed down, amplified. Like breathing, it encircles. Side by side, Paul and I ride, swags of quiet between us.

In my twenties I lost friends to Jesus, mushrooms, computer science. What do we do with our lives? My friend David says, "What is it you will gladly get out of bed at 5 in the morning to do? Figure that out, then you'll know what to do with your life."

Now I'm driving. Birthday over, my daughter in the backseat cradles her bear. She named her Lucy. "Lucy," she says, cutting open reality, "has her heart in her head." I check out of the inner music, check in with Izzy in the rearview. Holding Lucy, she explains: "First, I made a wish, then I put in her heart. Then I was carrying her around and her heart kind of moved up into her throat. And then when it was my turn, they put more cotton inside, and then I think her heart moved into her head." What if our hearts...? We laugh about loud thumping in your ears all the time. "If the President says the pledge," Isabel rejoices, "he will have to put his hand on his head!"

In *The Barn at the End of the World*, Mary Rose O'Reilly writes: "Certain predictable problems recur in my spiritual life...I become irritated easily, I make harsh judgments about other people, I let myself be invaded by assertive personalities." If it is true, as O'Reilly notes, that anger and sadness are "the price of knowing what we feel" and that "knowing what we feel is the basis of compassion," I count the ways Mr.

Kenney showed compassion, devotion, sparing his Sundays for us. In a land of 100 million evangelicals, added numbers of the born-again, streams of public piety from high office, I want to keep my eye on the lame goat. To understand devotion from the inside, I want to think about Mr. Kenney and the gift he made of his time.

I want my heart to move into my head.

Joan Chittister says, "Humility is...to know that it is the little we are that is precisely our claim on God...[and] the foundation of our connectedness to others." It seems like when you start looking for devotion, its small swervings peek through, humble, mundane, reliable. In them live sources of our closest comfort and strength. In flat light before dawn, the prairie's graceful line, the swell of a breath. Devotion. Trough to crest, in a while the sun will rise. Widened with the presence of night, our eyes will clear. Devotion. For now, though, the road is dark; Mr. Kenney is driving. Thumbs on the wheel, he might be asleep. Devotion. This might be his dream coming true.

*For Donald Vincent Kenney, 1929-2004*

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# DEAR LOUISE.....

## A Monthly Column from Louise Hay



**Louise L. Hay** is a metaphysical teacher and the best-selling author of numerous books, including *You Can Heal Your Life*, *Empowering Women*, and *I Can Do It!*. Since beginning her career as a Science of Mind minister in 1981, she has assisted millions of people in discovering and using the full potential of their own creative

powers for personal growth and self-healing. Louise's works have been translated into 29 different languages in 35 countries throughout the world. Website: [www.LouiseHay.com](http://www.LouiseHay.com)

**Dear Louise,**

I'm a breast cancer survivor, and I try to stay as stress-free as possible. But, of late, I've been under a lot of stress and have been having hiatal hernia and acid reflux problems. The probable cause and new thought pattern for these two conditions are not in your book **Heal Your Body**. Thus, I really would appreciate it if you would be kind enough to tell me a probable cause and new thought pattern for these two ailments. Thank you.

**R.A., New York**

**Dear R.A.,**

Fear. It's all fear. Dear one, you're scaring yourself with your own thoughts. Eckhart Tolle's brilliant book *The Power of Now* says it all when he talks about stress: "Stress is caused by being *here* but wanting to be *there*, or being in the present but wanting to be in the future. It's a split that tears you apart inside."

Hiatal hernia is creating and carrying mental burdens that make it impossible for you to relax. The same with acid reflux—just fearful thoughts that tie your stomach up in knots. I probably sound like a broken record saying the same thing over and over, but most of our problems come from not allowing ourselves to breathe deeply and fully and refusing to stay in the now.

Many, many times during the day, and before you go to sleep, take slow, deep breaths. Bring your attention to the present moment. Don't think about the past or future. Say to yourself: *In this moment, all is well. I am safe. There is nowhere I have to go and nothing I have to do. I relax my body and my mind. I am grateful for this moment.* This will break the pattern of incessant worry.

You're far more than your worrisome, fearful thoughts. As you said, you're a survivor. And I say that you're a powerful, dynamite woman, and you *can* heal yourself! Be at peace, my dear.

**Dear Louise,**

I've had chronic fatigue/hypothyroidism for six years now, but I'm not healing. Since last year I've been having a recurring thought pop into my head: "I'm tired of my life." Basically, I feel that my life is making me ill. I'm bored, and I want to change my life completely, but having low energy makes a change difficult. My subconscious is talking to me, so I know I need a change, but how can I combat this thought with something positive?

**F.V., Sydney, Australia**

**Dear F.V.,**

Of course you're tired of life. You've been disconnected from your emotions for a long time. This pattern usually begins in childhood. At home and in society, many of us receive the message that it's not okay to express certain feelings such as sadness and anger. We suppress or "depress" the so-called unacceptable feelings inside of us. We become cut off from our emotional energy and are left with a general feeling of fatigue and disconnection from life. We slow our bodies down and feel we're running on empty.

At least 80 percent of all autoimmune disease (when the immune system attacks the body) occurs in women. Somewhere very deep within so many of our bodies there's some kind of destructive message that needs to be revealed and transformed. To break free of this pattern, it's helpful to establish a safe environment to reconnect with our feeling processes and begin to safely release stored anger, sadness, and other suppressed emotions. It's highly recommended and important to have qualified professional help in this process. An affirmation to use here is: *It is safe to express all that is within me. I love, honor, and accept all aspects of who and what I am. As a result, I'm energized, expressed, and filled with joy!*

**Dear Louise,**

I'm recognizing a pattern that's been present in my life since the '70s. It has to do with finances. It seems that there's always a theme of loss of employment and housing. The situation clears up and then comes around again. I'm willing to release this pattern and obtain, maintain, and sustain that which is mine by Divine right. Will you assist me in unveiling the cause of this pattern? Thank you, and God bless.

**B.H., Tempe, Arizona**

**Dear B.H.,**

At the top of a large sheet of paper, write: **What I Believe about Money, Women, and Deserving**. Then list everything you were taught or learned as a child about these subjects: what your parents believed, what your teachers said, what the church told you about keeping your place, and so on. Don't censor anything.

It if comes up in your mind, it's part of your belief system. Take several days to get all of this out where you can look at it.

When you read it, you'll see that some of the things you learned were positive and helpful. However, as you look at the list, you'll discover many negative beliefs about the worthiness of women, and why you don't deserve to be prosperous. Turn every negative comment into a positive affirmation. For instance, "I will never amount to anything" could be turned into "I have every right to be fulfilled and to be a success." Or, turn "Nobody wants me" into "I am loved and respected wherever I go."

Our thoughts create our reality, and your new thoughts *can* create a new reality for you!

All is well!

---

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If you would like Louise to answer your letter in this publication, please send it to: Dear Louise Column, c/o Hay House, Inc., P.O. Box 5100, Carlsbad, CA 92018-5100, or e-mail your letter to: [admin@hayhouse.com](mailto:admin@hayhouse.com) (letters used in this column may be edited for length and clarity). Please visit Louise's Website at: [www.LouiseHay.com](http://www.LouiseHay.com) or the Hay House Website at: [www.hayhouse.com](http://www.hayhouse.com).

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# DEVOTION

By Wah!

Devotion is an unending dedication. A person who is devoted to someone or something will expend all his or her energy connecting to it. People are devoted to all kinds of things – work, career, achievements; spouse, family, children, grandchildren; church, God; God's work; feeding the poor; helping the homeless; worshipping Krishna, Kali, the Sun... I think we are all devoted to something. We have a specific goal to work towards it in this life and we follow it faithfully.

Devotion involves love. You give freely of yourself to it, you believe in it, you work tirelessly for it. When you dedicate yourself to something, your efforts are rewarded. You receive a rush of energy in return. You feel exalted; you feel complete and purposeful. Devotion is a give-and-take relationship. You are a player in a reciprocal relationship with the Universe.

Devotion in a non-reciprocal relationship is called obsession. You devote yourself and dedicate yourself to something but you don't receive anything back from the object of your devotion. You place yourself in a lesser stature. You exalt your dedication so high in your mind, neither you nor anyone else could possibly reach it. The energy goes into your devoted efforts but doesn't come out. You are not expanded in the process. Quite the opposite, your devoted efforts might suck the life-energy right out of you. You might even want to sustain your dedication at all costs. This kind of unhealthy dedication is called obsession and is responsible for a long list of sufferings including abusive relationships, hero worship, guru-disciple misunderstandings, misuse of power and addictions.

I myself practiced obsession when I first started my spiritual path. I was so desirous to experience a true spiritual awakening that I sacrificed myself in the process. I learned somewhere that devotion was synonymous with being humble. It was described in so many scriptures and by so many teachers as being the absence of ego that I decided to become ego-less. I obliterated myself. I worked at having no identity and no desires. What was God's will was my will. What my teacher wanted, I wanted. I didn't want to be recognized. I didn't want to attract attention. I didn't want to be here at all. I dedicated myself to my practices of yoga, chant and meditation. I disappeared.

I was devoted to my yoga group, my teacher, my deities... but I wasn't getting anything back. The Universe heard my prayers and I experienced absorption (*dhyaan*) but not devotion (*bhakti*). It was incomplete. For me, heaven was everything and earth was nothing. My wel-

fare didn't matter; I was only concerned with the welfare of my dedications. I could not receive what was coming back to me. Not because it wasn't giving, but because I wasn't capable of receiving. In relinquishing my personal power, I denied myself the true experience of devotion.

Devotion is an expansion of both heaven and earth. The one being adored expands, as does the one doing the adoring. All souls are equal under the sun. Your happiness is greatly valued by the one you devote yourself to. It is truly a love relationship between you and the whole Universe. The same problems that arise in a relationship with a loved one arise in devotion. The Universe is a willing partner.

When you give something towards your dedication, you receive something back. This is what continues the devotional relationship. Even someone who is giving their life to a certain cause will feel an expanded love as a result of their devotion. Those who have dedicated themselves to a single purpose eventually emerge with an appreciation of the whole thing, of life itself. The key for me is whether or not the person is expanding and growing as a result of their dedication.

If you are not receiving something back from your dedicated efforts, perhaps you are obsessed. If your devotion is draining the life out of you, it might be time to re-examine what you have dedicated your life to. Devotion should bring an expansive and loving quality to your life. Your efforts to co-create with the Universe should open you up; you should be challenged and encouraged to grow. You should feel expanded as a result of your devotion. Indeed, even happy.

Becoming fully present is a lifelong journey. There are hundreds of healers, life coaches, authors, counselors and programs to help you become more fully yourself. In my own experience I have found that the more I allow myself to come forward, the more love I can give and receive. Bringing your energies forward means allowing all the inconsistent, scary and awe-inspiring aspects of yourself to become present. The arrival of imperfection is a must. With my identity present, there is simply more of me to experience devotion. My early attempts to obliterate my personality actually hindered my ability to attain higher states of consciousness. Accessing my personal power changed everything. My personality became the vehicle for holding and understanding the energies of love and spirit. Now, what is initiated through the practices of yoga, meditation and chant has a chance to nurture my body, mind

and spirit. Devotion is something that feeds me. It expands and refines who I am.


My work has changed in relationship to devotion. The weak link in the relationship was me. I had to refocus my efforts on healing myself so I could be a better participant in the relationship. It was easy for me to offer all my love to the object of my devotion. I needed to focus on being able to receive the love in return. The more wholly present I am, the more I am able to participate as a partner in the dance.

*Wah! is a musician and spiritual seeker who travels the world singing and expanding sacred intention. She and her band will perform at Winds of Change in Moreland Hills, OH and Karma Yoga in Cleveland, OH in April. Please check the website for details: [www.wahmusic.com](http://www.wahmusic.com)*



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# How do you score?

By Evsttarr

Taking my usual meditative position before attempting to write this particular piece, I decided to do a little research. What exactly does devotion mean? As I sat and pondered the word *devotion*, a lot of visuals came to mind: monks in hooded brown robes uttering a solitary word once every two years; a faithful canine wagging its tail like it's about ready to take off & fly to the moon when it hears your car a mile down the road from home; the workaholic who hasn't realized yet that somewhere between sunrise and sundown lies the ever so popular human tradition called a *coffee-break, time-out, you need to eat*, etc. etc; or two lovers in a lip-lock going for the Guinness Book of World's records, and the list goes on.

During my search I came across an incredibly unique website called [queendom.com](http://queendom.com) and a test appropriately named The Devotion Test. "Alas" I said to myself, "now we're getting somewhere." So I proceeded to take the test. The questions are not so cut and dry...I kept thinking "well it depends on other circumstances"...but I had to answer one-way or the other. So I finished the quiz and the computer tallied up my score and in big bold letters is written **your score is 45**. I was scared, anxious, and above all curious...well I'll give you a little insight into my psyche...I'm not even sure about my psyche sometimes, but here is **my** test result:

*Your results showed that you are sometimes devoted, but other times you turn your back on loved ones... which is not necessarily a bad thing. Love is not blind for you, which means there is a certain line others can't cross and still expect to have your loyalty. You set boundaries, which sends the clear message that you won't put up with crap. This results in healthy devotion, as opposed to self-sacrificing submission. You've got a backbone and a heart!*

Whew, I'm not a crazed maniac or a sobbing mess,



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thank God. So now that I can sleep nights again, let me tell you what *devotion* means to me. Being a Cancer, I am devoted to my home and family, my children come first but not to the point of losing my sanity (*I have a teenager*), or totally ignoring mom's needs. I hear often from my daughter Shayna "the other moms drive their kids to school, the other moms do their laundry," I'm sure you can relate, so of course you may already know my standard response—"then go live with the other moms."

I am also devoted to my spirituality, but I don't think, in fact I **know** for certain, that I could never take that vow of silence or that other one for that matter. I meditate daily, and even occasionally in my car on the way to work, not in full fashion of course, I have my eyes open on the road. I fast from time to time, but, not for forty days, not even four days, 24 hours is about all I can manage and that's with juice. I attend church pretty faithfully but then there are some mornings when *St. Mattress* is calling me, so I listen.

I am devoted to my job, but not to the point of sacrificing my beliefs, ethics or my health. I have been in other occupations that didn't fit for one reason or another...when your job starts affecting your health or morals it's time to leave. I am strongly devoted to my outside work, which is teaching Louise Hay's philosophy, Treasure Mappings, Astrology, Dreams, and whatever way I can serve humanity in the esoteric realm.

I feel that occasionally we need to take inventory of our life, and see what's working and what's not. Real simple, list your categories one-by-one, sit down, make yourself a pros and cons list and weigh it out. You're the maker of the movie; remember, it's your script. You need to decide what you have control over and what is controlling you. Now, the hard part is doing something about it. I read a book, quite a few years ago, and most recently I picked it up and read it again, Susan Jeffers, Feel the Fear and Do It Anyways...great for giving you that extra **oomph!** We need to look at what's devotion and what is addiction...so go ahead log on to [queendom.com](http://queendom.com) and go to Free Just-for-fun Tests and then click on The Devotion Test. Tell me "how do you score?"

*Evsttarr's spiritual journey has taken her coast-to-coast studying the various schools of thought. Look for her upcoming Louise Hay groups, Treasure Mapping workshops, Angel Card Readings at Goddess Blessed; Seek the Unique and Karma Kard readings at Journeys! Contact her at [evsttarr@yahoo.com](mailto:evsttarr@yahoo.com) to be added to her mailing list, check out her website [reachforthemoon.net](http://reachforthemoon.net) for latest class listings.*

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# HEALTH & NUTRITION

A Special Section Now Inside Every Issue Of The Journey

## ALIVE 1 Devotion To Ones Health

By Janee Kuta Illiano

Imagine the government's highest medical authority making this statement, "Today we have more information and knowledge about the cure and prevention of disease than ever before in the history of mankind. The advancements that have been made in just the last few years have given us new insights about the treatment and prevention of virtually all illness and disease, making it safe to reach two major conclusions." One of which I will share with you now.

"With these revolutionary breakthroughs in technology, virtually all illness and disease should be wiped out in America within the next 10 years! We are on the verge of being in a place where a person will never be sick. And if you do get sick, your doctor will be able to cure you of your illness in a matter of days. We have virtually reached the pinnacle of medical knowledge."

When I read this, I was really excited. It sounds exciting, doesn't it? Could we really be close to reaching the pinnacle of medical knowledge? Will we soon know all there is to know about the cure and prevention of disease? In just ten years, thanks to medical science, sickness will be eliminated in America. Unfortunately, as Kevin Trudeau points out in his book, Natural Cures,

They Don't Want You to Know About, the message has a downside. Imagine if this speech was given in 1902! In 1902, people believed they knew all there was to know about the cure and prevention of disease. Now it's 2005 and when we take a look at the statistics we find that more people are sick than ever before. More people get colds and the flu than ever before. More people get cancer, more have diabetes, heart disease, acid reflux, lupus, multiple sclerosis, menopause problems, attention deficit disorder, chronic fatigue, bad skin, migraines, joint and back pain, depression, sexual dysfunction, prostate

problems, yeast infections, allergies, constipation, fibromyalgia, etc., than ever before. Yet, at the same time, more people visit their doctors than ever before. More people get diagnostic testing, take nonprescription and prescription drugs and get surgery than ever before.

We can of course take population growth into account; but, look to your personal life, how many of you know someone who is sick?

Of all the pharmaceutical drugs manufactured in the world, the United States consumes over half. Yet, 31 other countries have longer life expectancies than us. It is also estimated that doctors write over 3 billion prescriptions each year and that the average American has over 30 different prescription and nonprescription drugs in their medicine cabinet. This is a lot to process. Is this how we want our health care to be progressing?

Of course everything is an opinion, even medical science. What was once "good" for us according to medical studies may no longer be good for us. Certain drugs, once scientifically proven safe, are found to be no longer safe and they get recalled. To lose weight, doctors once recommended smoking cigarettes. At one time blood-letting was the accepted practice and now we know it's crazy, just as in 10, 20, 50 years from now our modern medicine may look primitive and incompetent. It is all a matter of opinion, based on what we know at certain points of time. There is no one to blame, the health industry is always changing. It is up to us to educate ourselves, to be responsible for knowing what's available and doing what feels right to us.

I would like to believe that everyone in the medical profession has the public's best interest in mind when it comes to providing the best health care available. The procedures that scientific studies show today will be implemented with good intentions; however, it is up to us as consumers to choose how we want our healthcare plans to proceed. Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? Then devote time to staying fit, keep an open mind, read all there is to know about health and nutrition. Consult with medical professionals and practitioners with whom you feel comfortable. As the old saying goes, "You have nothing if you don't have your health." It is no big surprise that if we devote time to doing just the basics like eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking plenty of fresh water, reducing our stress, exercising and resting properly we will be one step closer to our optimum health.

At the same time, devoting time to your health and well-being starts with Faith. You must believe that what you are doing is going to be of maximum benefit to you. You cannot experience wellness just by going through the motions. You actually have to believe and see yourself as being well.

*Alive 1..continued on page 20*



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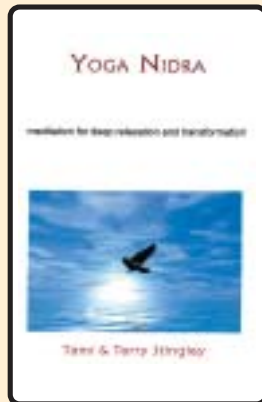
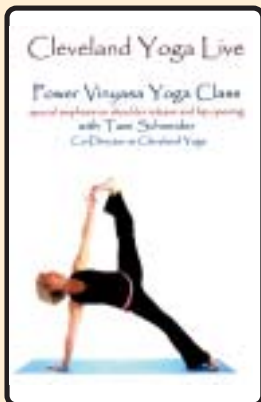
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# EAST MEETS WEST....(in the same room)

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This is the brainchild of Dr. Wayne Daum of the Cleveland Clinic Westlake. He supports non-surgical procedures when possible and believes in the mind body connection that complementary therapies provide. His specialty interests include but are not limited to, non-operative adult orthopaedics, hip disease, low back pain and sacroiliac pain.

Working closely with Dr. Daum is Judi Bar, a Certified Yoga Therapy Practitioner, Advanced Yoga Teacher, and Reiki Master, and Ann Driscoll Registered Acupuncturist.

Judi's specialty is chronic pain and illness. It is close to her heart, having recovered from a crippling degenerative spinal disease herself. Besides her therapeutic work with patients, she teaches anatomy, yoga therapy, and philosophy to yoga students for certification and advanced training to yoga teachers. She has been teaching over 25 yrs.

Ann's exposure to Chinese culture and healing began with the study of Tai Chi Chuan under the teaching of Master Bow Sim Mark in Boston's Chinatown. Two years of teaching English at the University of Science and Technology in Beijing, China, brought her even closer to choosing Chinese Medicine for a life's career. At the New England School of Acupuncture, Ann completed a three-year, year-round program in acupuncture and herbal medicine, and has an NCCAOM

Diplomat in Acupuncture. She is a Registered Acupuncturist under the State of Ohio Medical Board and maintains a practice in Lakewood, Ohio.

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# LIVING WITH HASHIMITOTOS HYPOTHYROIDISM

My name is Marion and I have Hashimitotos Hypothyroidism. I was diagnosed in 1985. There are millions of people that have this condition and millions more that are just not yet aware of it.

I wish that I had learned more about my condition long before I ever did. When I was first diagnosed I complied with the tests and took the medication, never taking the time to do any research. I don't blame my doctor for my own ignorance. For 17 years I lived with the way hypothyroidism made me feel. I was doing things that were contradicting my thyroid and medication.

When I finally took the time to learn more about hypothyroidism I learned how to better take care of myself. I still take my medication and see my doctor but now I know what I need to do to help them help me.

No one is going to care about you as much as you do. No one can feel what you are feeling. I have noticed time and again that people want a quick fix when it comes to weight loss. Your thyroid controls your metabolism. I am sure you would decide that changing the normal functioning of a major organ just to lose a few pounds is not worth the consequences of your thyroid

being damaged for life. It is better to learn how your thyroid functions healthily.

People are buying things with confusing lists of ingredients, never taking time to understand how those ingredients function within our bodies. Once you put junk into your body it's there for good. I am asking you to please not take any medications or supplements until you know how it will interact with any conditions you may have. If you have a medical condition take the time to learn about it.

Learn about the changes you need to make in your life and then take action. I don't blame my doctor for my long period of recuperation; I blame myself. I learned about the thyroid because I have to live with the symptoms of Hashimitotos Hypothyroidism.

Since opening my store I have learned of many people in my own area having the same condition. Your thyroid controls your metabolism, hormones and body temperature. Please take the time to learn about it. Thank you. I hope that my story has been of help to some of you out there.

—Marion

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# DEVOTION: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

By Ric Schumacher, Minister  
Unity Church Centre in Girard Ohio

Devotion is a concept that is shared by many people, but if we try to define devotion we might find as many definitions as we find people. This is appropriate because devotion is a deeply personal experience. One can be a devotee of anyone or anything and each of us might be called a devotee since we are each very interested and enthusiastic about someone or something. Yet devotion has a higher meaning.

Devotion is most often thought of as religious worship or observance. This seems to me to be more accurate and to reflect devotion's higher meaning. The word devotion has its origins in Middle English. Here we discover that the word that is used to describe an act or observance comes from *devovere* meaning consecrate. Devotion then is action we take and consecration is the result of that act. To consecrate is to make sacred.

Since devotion is a deeply personal experience, I can really only write about it from a personal perspective. I am devoted to unfolding a Universal Spiritual Consciousness. Some have called this the Buddha Mind; others call it The Christ Consciousness. Paul said, "Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus." I am a devotee of an elegant

universe that is designed to support my every need. My act of devotion is a meditation process in which I engage both morning and evening. My act of devotion consecrates my individual mind. Through regular scheduled periods of meditation I "let" more of the Universal Spiritual Consciousness that is express through what I call my mind. In this continuing process, and not by my own efforts, the secular is made sacred. In this the self becomes the Self and the mind becomes the Mind. This is the result of devotion.

My process is effective for me. If I were to share my process in a step by step fashion you might find it worthless or you might find it meaningful as a part of your devotion. You might find that it is similar to practices that are ages old, because it is similar to those ancient ways. The key here is that each individual must find that to which they are devoted and they must find their own act of devotion. Herein lies the challenge.

The challenge is to develop a clear vision of that to which one is devoted and then to develop a personal process, practice or observance that will allow the individual to experience the consecration that reveals the Sacred Self. Universal Spiritual Consciousness, The Buddha Mind, The Christ Consciousness, enlightenment or whatever name you choose cannot be experienced without devotion from a personal perspective.

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# Messages of Love; Sensitive Nature

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Laura Lee

**Q:** I am a very sensitive person ever since I was a child. I am a good listener and can feel people's pain. I took a job as a social worker and had to quit because I got burned out and couldn't draw any boundaries. I was coming home exhausted physically and mentally because I was almost living the lives of some of my clients. How mental does that sound? Anyway, I have a strong faith, but lately I have been feeling a little weird. I am

even seeing a counselor because going to public stores exhausts me. This will sound odd and it is even hard for me to put into words, but sometimes I meet a person and feel what they feel. I don't want to nor do I try. In crowded places I feel overwhelmed and jumpy. Whatever this is, either I need to get rid of it or develop it so I don't go insane. Am I being overly sensitive to everything is something I am supposed to have? - **Sensitive Nature**

### **A: Dear Sensitive;**

Rejoice that you are aware of this capability. It is a sign of spiritual growth. This is a sixth sense, extrasensory perception or intuition, as some would call it. The experience you are having is called clairsentient. It is inner feeling. Once you become aware of this asset, it won't go away. In fact, it only grows stronger.

However, don't despair. There are advantages to possessing this gift. To intuit feelings of others is important for communication. This is what made you a good counselor. It allows you to have compassion for others by connecting with them on a soul level. It is a privilege to have this information. Inner wisdom, such as this, enlightens ignorance. Used appropriately in a given situation, it serves as an opportunity for divine intervention to evolve the collective consciousness for both involved.

As a clairsentient, you are healing by opening and connecting with other realms of existence. Paradoxically, you ARE already healed and whole. You are one with these realms naturally. It is only a matter of revealing this wholeness to self. Becoming aware of your clairsentient ability means that you are becoming aware of your true essence; that you are a divine incarnation. You are not separate, as the ego would want you to believe, but part of the whole; realizing your oneness with other beings whose feelings you intuit.

You are being guided to stretch and embrace this fullness of your being. How much you embrace is only a choice you can make. You have free will as human. As you become aware of how you feel given a certain situation, you can determine your level of participation. Just remember that you are never given more than you can handle.

The experiences you explained are a natural process to your growth. Change can be scary. Rest assured, there are ways to manage this capability where you are not overwhelmed by the intensity of others feelings. When you recognize the emotional states of others, take a deep breath and come back to yourself. Remain present. Ask why this experience brings disharmony to self. The answer will be

revealed. You will find that this knowledge brings peace to you. Request that this peace be extended in the moment. Then you will be guided what to think, say, and do. If you are having difficulty with this process, ask for help! Then it is done.

Anytime someone raises dissonance within you, bless him or her. They were brought forth to assist you in your own awakening. They are helping you become aware of a part of yourself that needs attention. By being attentive to that part of yourself, you bring forth more love. You are integrating the whole of your being. As you do this for self, you simultaneously serve as a warrior of light for others.

Be patient with yourself while developing this valuable skill. The process becomes easier as you grow stronger. The rewards are well worth the effort.

*Angel Medium, Laura Lee shares messages she sees, hears, and feels from your guardian angels and deceased loved ones as heard on LA's popular KBIG 104.3 "Angels In Waiting" show. She is profiled on radio, television shows, and a leading speaker at conferences throughout the country. Her practice extends throughout the world where she leads private sessions and workshops helping others to receive heaven's call. If you would like to have your question answered, please go to her website at [www.MessagesOfLove.com](http://www.MessagesOfLove.com) and go to Messages of Love Q/A. We recognize that your question is a very private matter and is not published without your permission.*

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# PLANETARY PATHWAYS

By Evstarr

## ARIES

OK Aries, in March it's time to stop starting all those projects you never finish & eliminate clutter from your home and office to bring a more balanced chi into your arena

Birthday child, April is decision time...hopefully you've quit running around like a busy bee and taken some time to connect with your intuitive side, listen to your gut and go with it

## TAURUS

Nobody does it better than the Venus ruled sign *the Bull*, and March is beckoning you to take some much needed time to indulge yourself in self-care...smell the flowers, get a massage, bask in the solitude of your own company

Now that you're rejuvenated...it's time to reach for the stars, raise the bar, April has you increasing your standards, expect more for yourself...do not settle for less, you're worth every bit of it

## GEMINI

It's time to bring Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde together...you've got too much going on...*again*,

March has you taking inventory and eliminating clutter, you heard me, it's time to clean up, get rid of all that *stuff* so you can breathe again

Now that the dust has cleared, you can actually *hear* those little voices talking to you in April...things are starting to gel, you can actually predict the next happenstance, it's as if you think it and it happens

## CANCER

Now, you've rotatilled the soil, in March it's time to *really* spend time alone contemplating, meditating, setting your intention for what you truly desire, the seeds are about ready to be planted

April has you in a holding pattern, you're on the verge of receiving new information, if you act now, you'll miss a window of opportunity, patience my dear Crab...breathe...the Universe is setting things up for you

## LEO

March is crunch time Leo, it's time to quite floating aimlessly down the river, be clear, be firm in what you

want, your decisiveness is the catalyst for spirit to open the flood gates, smooth sailing ahead, ahoy Captain

That's the spirit, you go Lion, and Lioness, April has you reclaiming your power, the world is awaiting, release all blame, you and you alone are in control of your life, and you wear the crown proudly

## VIRGO

Virgo, don't jump ship...stay optimistic, March's winds are blowing your dreams this way...be grateful and imagine that it's already happened...don't quit before the miracle appears

OK, April has you emptying what you no longer need, so you can fill that cup to runneth over, get rid of unnecessary people, conditions and things in your life that no longer serve your higher purpose

## LIBRA

March has you asking for help...you're good with the partnership thing, consult an expert, ask for advice, there are people out there just waiting to assist you, ask and you shall receive, knock and the door shall be opened

OK, you've asked, now just be patient, April is showing you the light at the end of the tunnel, be still, you're almost there, don't give up now, use your imagination, Treasure Map the outcome

## SCORPIO

Serendipity is March's theme song...heaven is answering your prayers, just make sure when there's a knock at the door that you're home, keep focusing on those positive thoughts, make magic happen

Spring is in the air, take time out for your friends in April, make a play day date...when you take time from your busy day-to-day world you find yourself rejuvenated, don't be so intense, lighten up, you'll be glad you did

## SAGITTARIUS

Don't be so trigger happy in March, put down that bow and arrow...think about your aim, slow down, focus your eye on the target, patience, good things come to those who wait

OK, aren't you glad you waited...April has *synchronicity* written all over it...you're being helped

behind the scenes, isn't it nice to have a guardian angel, maybe two on your shoulders

## CAPRICORN

Heal those self-inflicted battle wounds in March, self-forgiveness is key, it's time to quit beating up on yourself...as you get rid of guilt, your self-esteem is raised...remember you are God's perfect child, beautiful

Well, Capricorn, now that you've done all that work on yourself, in April it's time to give that forgiveness thing another shot, this time, your mother...as your feelings toward your mother heal, *your* dreams and desires move at the speed of light

## AQUARIUS

You do change like no one else in the Zodiac...March has you exploring your options...turn your possibilities into realities...when you take that first step the Universe starts flowing in the direction of your dreams

April's energies are soaring like the eagle...set your sights higher, quit trying to rationalize that a certain situation is OK when it isn't...don't feel intimidated...you're ready to reach for the moon, go for it

## PISCES

OK Pisces, in March it's time to quit swimming in the bottom of the sea, you're drowning in a sea of negativity...eliminate negativity from your life...people, places...quit listening to all that negative talk, surround yourself with positive people...give yourself & your home a quick feng shui make-over

In April, now that you've cleaned up the pool...it's time to dream *big*...you're no longer a small fish in a big sea...you've moved up...let go of small thoughts, it's now time to think of yourself as that big 'ol whale...see yourself succeeding, claim the ocean

*Evstarr's love for Astrology, inherent in her since childhood, is still a growing passion today. New Astrology classes starting soon. Contact her at [evstarr@yahoo.com](mailto:evstarr@yahoo.com) to be added to her mailing list, also, be sure to check out her website [reachforthemoon.net](http://reachforthemoon.net) for upcoming class listings and to get your requests in for the ever so popular Solar Return charts.*

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# DEVOTION

By Joyce Varona

**de-vo-tion n.** 1. The state of being devoted, as to religious faith or duty; zeal. 2. Strong attachment or affection expressing itself in earnest service. 3. *Usually pl.* An act of worship; prayer. 4. The act of devoting. See synonyms under ALLEGIANCE, ATTACHMENT, ENTHUSIASM, FIDELITY, FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, PRAYER, RELIGION.

**de-vote v.t.** 1. To give or apply (attention, time, or oneself) completely to some activity, purpose, etc. 2. Set apart, as by a vow; consecrated.

I haven't heard this word in a long time. Devotion. As you can see, I had to look it up in the New Comprehensive International Dictionary of the English Language by Funk & Wagnalls just to remind myself what it meant. Of course, I always heard different forms of *devote* being used to describe people at their eulogies and in obituaries. I have seen it carved in headstones – Devoted Wife and Mother, Devoted Husband and Father. Or, so and so devotes him/herself to his/her work. I understood *devotions* to be a form of prayer the nuns used to say in the morning at my catholic church growing up....but what is devotion and where do I find it these days when everything changes and moves at such a fast pace?

In the context of relationships my cynicism creeps up when I look at the high divorce rate. Not a lot of devotion there. In terms of corporate America I am hard pressed to find evidence of companies having a devotion to their employees or the employees showing devotion to their companies. Even in a religious context with the growing movement toward a global spirituality the act of devotion to one mode of belief seems to be something so singular, so boxing in and of itself.

When I say the word devotion my first reaction is that it is a slow, arduous and persistent process over a loooooong period of time. As in the second definition above, to devote myself to something would be to give or apply (attention, time or oneself) completely to some activity or purpose. Being a single mom with five kids and juggling two careers, the words "give completely to some activity" sound like a foreign concept.

I do see that I have a deep longing for the act of devotion in my life. It really stinks to be scattered all the time. So, as I wrote this article, I began to look at where devotion is evident in my life. Where and when or do I ever "give myself completely to some activity?" What I saw is that I have moments of devotion all the time.

I see devotion when I am playing hide and seek with my small children. I hide behind the tree then I experience the butterflies in my stomach hoping that they don't find me. I see devotion when I am having heartfelt conversations with my teenagers watching their eyes light up when they see that I have heard them, understand

them and have not judged them.

I feel devotion when I am on my hands and knees washing down my hardwood floors, clearing away the grime to reveal a shiny, smooth surface. I feel it when I wash dishes feeling the warm, soapy water between my fingers and seeing the food come off leaving a squeaky clean plate.

I smell devotion when the toast pops out of the toaster and I spread butter on it watching it melt to produce little rivers of butter. Then I bite into it and feel the texture of the crunchy toast with the soft, sticky, delicious flavor of the butter in my mouth.

I experience devotion when I look into my lover's eyes, feel his hand caressing my face, my neck, stroking my back. I experience devotion when our bodies come together during passionate lovemaking and orgasm is reached and he and I are no longer there – only bliss and emptiness.

I hear devotion when I get caught up in a good tune and start singing at the top of my lungs. I don't care who is listening, if I'm on key or if people think I'm crazy and silly. I hear devotion when I'm laughing so hard that tears start rolling down my cheeks and I have to hold my stomach because it hurts so much. That's the best!! I start laughing just thinking about it.

So, as I review these moments I see that devotion is not such a loooooong, difficult process after all. The most profound moments of devotion are the ones we experience right here, right now. Is this what Buddhists refer to in the practice of mindfulness? Perhaps to be mindful of everything is the highest act of devotion one can give.

**de-vo-tion. n.** To consecrate oneself to being present in the moment.

*Joyce Varona is co-founder of White Tiger Hall, LLC and is a Classical Feng Shui consultant, lecturer, and teacher throughout the United States, Mexico and Peru. She is also the Administrative Director of Medici Art Center providing transformational art programs in Chicago. Joyce lives in Rogers Park, IL with her five children. joycevarona@sbcglobal.net*

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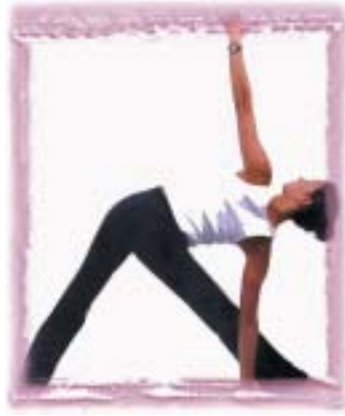
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# THE YOGA PAGES

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## DEVOTION

### A Teacher's Perspective

By Parker Bean

“Many branching and endless are the decisions of the infirm in mind, for the yogi there is but one decision.”  
The Bhagavad Gita

Devotion is what I have been looking for my whole life. It is such an elusive word. Where in this modern society do we see true devotion and sacrifice? Throughout my life, I can remember sitting and ruminating over the fact that nothing inspired me. There was the occasional boyfriend or hobby but each seemed to slip away as I lost interest. I felt I was doomed never to be truly and passionately devoted to anything.

In this prison and without any light I was passive. I had no interests. I worked, worried and suffered. I was trapped in darkness, doubt and selfishness. I avoided responsibility. I was afraid to live. I felt that I died every day when I woke up alone and imprisoned in my mind. I was more afraid to live than I was to die.

When I started practicing yoga, I began making amends with myself. I began trying to right all of the wrongs I had done. I became committed to my practice because it was the only thing that I did for myself. In my practice I found silence and in silence I found truth. My body became stronger and there was some consistency in my life. I could depend on the fact that my yoga classes would be starting at a certain time every day. I didn't really know what was happening when I would show up and practice asana, but there was a mental shift. I began to trust the fact that I wasn't going to fail. The seeds of self worth were planted and I became very passionate about yoga. I felt very safe when I was at the studio but I still didn't trust myself when I walked out. I was still lost and looking for something on which to focus my energy.

I remember the day that I lost my job. I was thinking about how happy I would be if I could make yoga my life. I spoke to a good friend that day and he asked me, “Why not make your dreams come true?” I realized in that instant that yoga was a constant, it always would be. Warm, light, stable. I found truth. I began to dedicate all of my time to educating myself about the philosophy. The more I learned, the more free I became. I was insatiably curious. I was focused and there was nothing that I would rather do. Yoga was steady and it grounded me. Through this concentration of my energy I found happiness. I became centered around my practice. I found that I was brought to my knees with gratitude for the moments of bliss that kissed my life. I channeled my energy on this path of a yogi and, with sincerity and steadiness, I found my life long companion, devotion.

Devotion comes from the heart. It is the continuous curiosity that runs through our veins. This devotion is rooted in an emotional fervor and warmth that I know will never go away. The process is gradual and the path may become narrow. There are things that I simply won't do anymore because they cause suffering. With devotion comes sacrifice and with sacrifice comes safety. The path of a yogi requires that we let go of any attachment and we find freedom. I had to let go of dying and start living. Yoga helped me to change my prison into a temple. A shift in vision lit the way on my path of devotion, a path that led to my authentic soul. Devotion is not a choice, it is a way of life. I stopped searching outside to find myself and started to be myself. In yoga, I am inspired; every moment I am nurtured and growing. I am learning and I am humble. I am ardently dedicated. I am loyal. I am not alone.

# Yoga & Devotion Bhakti Yoga

## A Student's Perspective

By Shakthi

One of the branches of Yoga is Bhakti Yoga – the path of devotion, of ultimate surrender to the formless & Eternal Divine.

Bhakti Yoga teaches a method of love and attachment to one of the manifestations of the divine and it's very easy for a lot of people to follow especially in India and Srilanka where I grew up. But over the years I have cultivated an ego that won't surrender so easily, wants to analyze everything. That makes the path of devotion in its truest sense a little difficult for me. Fortunately for me there is Kirtan (chanting mantras to music) an easy and powerful method to attain freedom. Ritualistic Poojas and Bhajans are some of the other techniques used by Bhakti Yogis to attain a blissful state of non duality. I enjoy Kirtan and it works for me.

Intellectually it's easy for me to agree that the universe knows better but it's really a different matter living that knowledge, I am in conflict thinking I know better. During those times chanting has greatly benefited me in chang-

ing my attitude and life. Bhakti Yoga is not just being devoted to a God or a Guru; it's also about being devoted to a Life of Truth, Honesty, Love, Joy and Compassion in all that we do. It's an integral part of all the branches of Yoga. Some believe that all paths/branches of Yoga leads to Bhakti Yoga (where the devotee is so engrossed in the contemplation of the divine that he/she totally disappears as an individual and merges with God – Union).

It requires trust, letting go and being open to the universe, for some its really a tough thing to do , so being devoted to a regular practice of the asanas is a step towards the Here and Now, actually that is a great starting point as it breaks the patterns of the mind and brings us into the body. It works, I can attest to it personally, the last year and a half I have not been that particular about my physical body and during the last few months have been in a very Tamasic state( a state of low energy) getting back to the physical(with asanas & Capoeira ) has done wonders for my state of being. Now I am enjoying the pleasures of a body in tune with the spirit and a mind in tune with the body and its fun. Devotion to this practice will keep this state of mind/no mind. So now I am devoted to creating love and joy in my life. It affects everything, the Universe changes as we change. So let's change us. What are you devoted to- creating a life of Joy or Pain?

Let Go, Let Shiva.

Om Namah Shivaya!!

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# A Trinity Collection on Devotion

By Jessica Robertson

1. Rushing. She wanted the earth to shake with an understanding of inevitable doom. She wanted to speed to the end. She held solid without questioning yet spun her feet with necessity. Then suddenly the movement pinched her. She woke up paralyzed. She couldn't get out of bed. She couldn't hear what people were saying, their lips moved without sound. Just convulsions, pursing. She fell into prayer. "Please let all who are ready to see, open to one version of all that is true. Please let a vision of mystery pervade consciousness. And let the world slow with the potential change." There was all-at-once potential to raise her eyes in wonder to anything other than what was expected. In stillness it was clear: all could be loved. All can be loved.

2. I grew up in a traditionally Jewish home. My mother has enough Yiddish for humor and emphasis and my father (with a name like Robertson!) honors his Scottish heritage and knows the kaddish, the blessing over the Sabbath wine. When I was first introduced to Hindu mythology through my parent's friends' satsang I was all-at-once curious and estranged. How could I, a practicing Jew, be sincere chanting to Gods and Goddesses with elephant faces and snakes dripping from their mouths? However, as a hippie-genera-

tion child, I was also raised with the ethics and beauty of openness, so I kept my instincts at bay for the duration of the evening. I remember driving home after two hours of kirtan feeling the seeds of clarity. It was only a few years ago that I really started to nourish those seeds.

Just recently I spent a week with Jai Uttal and his wife Nubia learning how to lead kirtan. Kirtan is Vedic chanting, a folk form of Bhakti (Devotional) Yoga that involves repeating the names of Gods and Goddesses. I went to the training without expectation and left amazed by what I was able to bring from the experience into my day to day life. A new sense of devotion was awakened.

In my ideal world, devotion is in the air I breathe. Each day I awake and say, "Take this day, and every breath as an offering." The reality is, however, that although I attempt to continue my day with this sentiment, I am often carried away by busyness. With renewed devotion I can sustain a connection with something greater than myself far into the late afternoon! This means traffic isn't all about the rush I'm in but rather an opportunity to practice patience and breathing; problems actually feel like challenges to solve; work is a gift. To me devotion is formless. It can be found in church,



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in nature, in time with your children, journaling, asana, the list is endless. What is important is finding what works and creating a daily practice. For me this can be just 10 minutes of kirtan, pranayama or asana practice. And when I am connected to my practice I can, with more frequency, lift up out of the world that revolves around ME. I can lift my eyes to see a clear picture of how lucky I am to be alive, how inextricably we are all connected, and how each moment is rich with abounding potential. What a gift.

3.  
 Longing like wind  
 Fills their hearts  
 As each blade is kissed  
 With the gratitude  
 Of the realized.  
 Oh let this be home -  
 Peace, devotion, wisdom.

Let each sun rise upon understanding,  
 Justice, virtue and love.  
 And when we find our hearts  
 Lost to sorrow,  
 Let us bow low to  
 The wonderment of learning.  
 And bathe in the  
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 All is divine.

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**Bobbi Holliday and Leslie Thompson** offer classes at the Ganesha Studio in Elyria. Day and evening classes. Yoga With A Difference presents area teachers with their specialties. Yoga and Metaphysics Intensives are offered twice a year. Next intensive starts in January. (440) 324-6373 or email at [bholliday@eriecoast.com](mailto:bholliday@eriecoast.com)

**Kundalini Yoga**, Linda Kirby, Certified Teacher "Masters Touch." East Cleveland 481-7332, Beachwood 682-0413, Private or Group lessons, email: [assortedbeings@yahoo.com](mailto:assortedbeings@yahoo.com).

**Marni Task**, private group or individual yoga lessons. Jivamukti yoga with an anusara flair. Phone (216) 376 2521; email: [marnitask@aol.com](mailto:marnitask@aol.com) website: [www.marnitask.com](http://www.marnitask.com)

**Shakthi**, gentle hatha style yoga. Personalized classes with an intimate atmosphere. Tantra classes starting soon. Phone (440) 255-1638 or (847) 942-8440 email: [Psumakanth@hotmail.com](mailto:Psumakanth@hotmail.com)

## Yoga Events/Workshops:

**Tantra Workshop** at Karma Yoga Downtown with Shakthi Saturday, March 26 & April 23. Call 216-849-6621 for details and registration.

**The Harmony of Yoga- Midwest Yoga Conference**, May 31- June 5 at the Indian Lakes Resorts and Spa, located 30 minutes west of downtown Chicago, featuring Rodney Yee, Seane Corn, and Jonny Kest, special concert by Deva Primal and Miten, special two day teacher training available. To register call 1-800-599-YOGA (9642) or at [www.midwestyoga.com](http://www.midwestyoga.com) <<http://www.midwestyoga.com>> .

**Feel Good Therapy Workshop** with Denys Morgan, L.M.T at Karma Yoga, Sunday March 27, 1:00-3:00 P.M. Workshop will teach yoga principles and alternative medicine modalities. \$30 in advance, \$40 at the door. For more information or to register call (216) 832-9436 or (216) 621-7085.

**Reiki I Training** at Karma Yoga with JoAnne Aboussouan, RN, Reiki Master/Teacher, Sunday April 17, Saturday May 14, Saturday June 18. 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Combination lecture, discussion, and hands on experience. Practice time included. To register contact (216) 337-9053 or e-mail [jaboussouan@adelphia.net](mailto:jaboussouan@adelphia.net)

**wah! in concert** at Karma Yoga, Monday April 25 at 7:00 p.m. \$15 advance/\$20 door. For more information or to purchase tickets call (216) 621-7085 or visit [www.karmayogacleveland.com](http://www.karmayogacleveland.com)

**Grand Opening** at Karma Yoga, March 5, featuring Astanga workshop, Yoga Lounge and Kirtan with Ron Reid and Meenakshi from Downward Dog Yoga Centre in Toronto. Call 621-7085 to register or visit [www.karmayogacleveland.com](http://www.karmayogacleveland.com)

**Support YouthAIDS** global HIV/AIDS prevention programs by purchasing "Off the Mat, Into the World" T-Shirts at [www.gaiam.com/youthaids](http://www.gaiam.com/youthaids). T-Shirts and project supported by Seane Corn and Ashley Judd, as featured in The Journey Magazine and Yoga Journal.

**The Journey Mind, Body, Soul Expo 2005**, September 9, 10, 11 at Lakeland Community College. Featuring over 100 vendors, including speakers, mini-workshops and lectures. 3-day workshop with world-renown Yogi Bryan Kest. for information call 440-223-1392 or go to [www.thejourneymag.com](http://www.thejourneymag.com)

**Yoga teachers, studio and workshop listings are available for this section. Cost is only \$20 per listing for each issue. Please keep each listing to 35 words or less. Call 440-223-1392 for more details.**



OK, this is probably one many of you have been waiting for—dreams about being “naked.” Well, let’s first talk about clothes. Clothing represents a variety of things in your dreams, outer appearance, attitudes, and ideas. It could be indicative of your sense of style or self-esteem. Like I’ve repeated many times over, look for what *you* associate with that particular type of clothing.

If you’re one to wear a certain type of clothing for work—suits, dress clothes for the office—then that would have a different meaning for you than someone who would only wear a suit for a wedding or funeral. Nudity in dreams is similar in regards to *your* feelings about nudity. Generally, nudity in a dream can indicate vulnerability, defenselessness, fear of being exposed in a particular situation, or “revealing” something to someone.

**QUESTION:** If I dream of clothing from a particular era, a time I myself didn’t live in, is that a past life dream?

**ANSWER:** Excellent question; if other things in the dream are familiar to you, (i.e.) you recognize the school, the yard, the people you’re talking to, then I would tend to think, yes, it’s a sort of a dejavu experience. You could be going back to a time period you were indeed living in. Now, if nothing seems familiar to you I would want to look at “beliefs, thought patterns.” What kind of things did people believe in during the era of your dream? Maybe, it’s saying to you your thoughts are outdated.

**Dear Duchess: Cowboy Hats** – I was in a store trying on different cowboy hats and some of them were too small. Signed, Cowgirl

**Dear Cowgirl:** Hats in general represent how the world sees you, your mental outlook, what’s going on in that head of yours, and also jobs, talents, (i.e.) “he wears many hats.” Trying on many types of hats, I would want to look at “trying on new thought patterns, for size.” Are you typically a country girl, or is that a foreign idea to you. Look at your belief system. Maybe it’s time to come out of your comfort zone and try on some new patterns of thought. The hats that were too small could be outdated beliefs that no longer hold true for you. You’ve outgrown them so to speak.

**Dream Tip of the Issue:** Take a look at the clothing, or lack of, in your dreams. Check out the “action.” Are we borrowing, buying, repairing, and taking off, trying on, or stealing. Look at what it is we are doing with the clothing in our dreams. Then take a look at your thought patterns and how that relates to the content of your clothing dreams. “Sweet Dreams!”

*Evstarr, aka “Duchess of Dreams,” has been studying dreams for the past 20 years, attending workshops throughout the country. She has studied under renowned dream author Robert Moss, along with the works of Edgar Cayce, Carl Jung and others. Look for her upcoming dream classes at Nature’s Touch Massage & Wellness Center in Medina (330) 721-9357. Contact her at [evstarr@yahoo.com](mailto:evstarr@yahoo.com) and visit her website [www.reachforthemoon.net](http://www.reachforthemoon.net) for listings of future dream workshops.*

## Spiritual Genealogy...Continued from page 8

One time a woman came to my class and I asked her where she had been practicing and she mentioned Richard Freeman. I ended up getting his video. I remember thinking how good could this guy be? I put the video on and he does this demonstration at the beginning and it is mind blowing, like nothing I had ever seen before. At that point I was totally hooked. I had to know about this practice. Right at this time a mutual friend had told me about a woman that he was studying Ashtanga with. She ended up becoming my business partner...Diane.

**Meenakshi:** That is actually when we first met. At the time I was teaching at the largest yoga studio in Toronto. I had heard about Diane and that she was teaching this yoga called Ashtanga. Everyone kept saying you should try it out so I had a break in my schedule and I went there and was the only one in class. She started putting me in poses and surprisingly I was able to do them. We became friends. Than shortly after that I moved to Vancouver with my boyfriend, but I met Ron for one brief instant before I left.

**Ron:** I took about four classes at the studio and Diane one day called me and told me she was going on vacation and asked me to teach her class. I was shocked – but I agreed to it. I started studying as much as I could about the practice and finally decided I needed to go to India to study with Pattabhi Jois. This was in 1996. After I got back I met Danny Paradise and he showed me another level to the practice. I studied like crazy with some of the best in the world. Diane and I then opened up Downward Dog.

*The Journey: So how did you two connect?*

**Meenakshi:** I was living in Vancouver but Diane and I were keeping in touch. I would see her whenever I came back to Toronto. Several years later I moved back and she said with out skipping a beat she was putting me on the schedule. Before I knew it I was on the schedule teaching at Downward Dog. It was great. They allowed me to sing in class, teach philosophy, chanting. Meanwhile Ron was teaching Mysore and I started taking his class. Then Ron knew about my chanting and felt moved to get back to music. There was another teacher named Xenia that was also into music and we all started to get together and play.

**Ron:** I started getting some ideas on some music and when I would start to play she would just go with it and invent things as she went along. Totally blowing my mind.  
**Meenakshi:** I was oblivious.

**Ron:** I felt a very deep connection to her musically. We ended up going to a retreat in Hawaii. If you ever have been to Hawaii you will know that it stirs up things spiritually. Very strong, high energy there. Something happened. I started to feel a more profound connection to her at this point.

**Meenakshi:** It was the end of our old life and the beginning of our new one.  
**Ron:** We ended up getting to know each other better and would talk for hours on end.

*The Journey: Sounds like paradise.*

**Ron:** It was. But our lives had different directions back home in Toronto. When we got back we found that we needed to stay apart. There were things that needed to be looked after

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back home.

*The Journey: So your decision was to not be together? This must have been very difficult.*

Meenakshi: It was. I actually went back to India and that is when I did my first cd – Prayers. It was a very good project for me. We had no contact in the time I was gone. We had agreed that it was best for us to not be together. We both honored that - as hard as it was. When I came back I felt it was important that Ron got a copy of the cd, because he had been so supportive of my music. I had a mutual friend get it to him. I was only going to be in Toronto for a short time and I was going to go live in India permanently. I never believed I would hear from him and then just before I was to leave I got a call.

Ron: I had really struggled with my feelings for her and the connection we found. Just when I felt I was getting over it - this bloody cd shows up! When I got the cd I wasn't going to play it. But, I listened to it and I heard the passion and devotion I always heard and I knew I had to call her. Not so much to be with her – but to affirm that she has to do something with the cd. She had just got back from India and was all spacey and again oblivious of the power of her music. Well as fate would have it, the power of our connection took over and we have been together since.

Meenakshi: We actually started seeing a spiritual advisor and he said our souls are entwined. That we are two sparks and we need to be together.

*The Journey: Perhaps you signed a contract in the spiritual plane before you got here?*

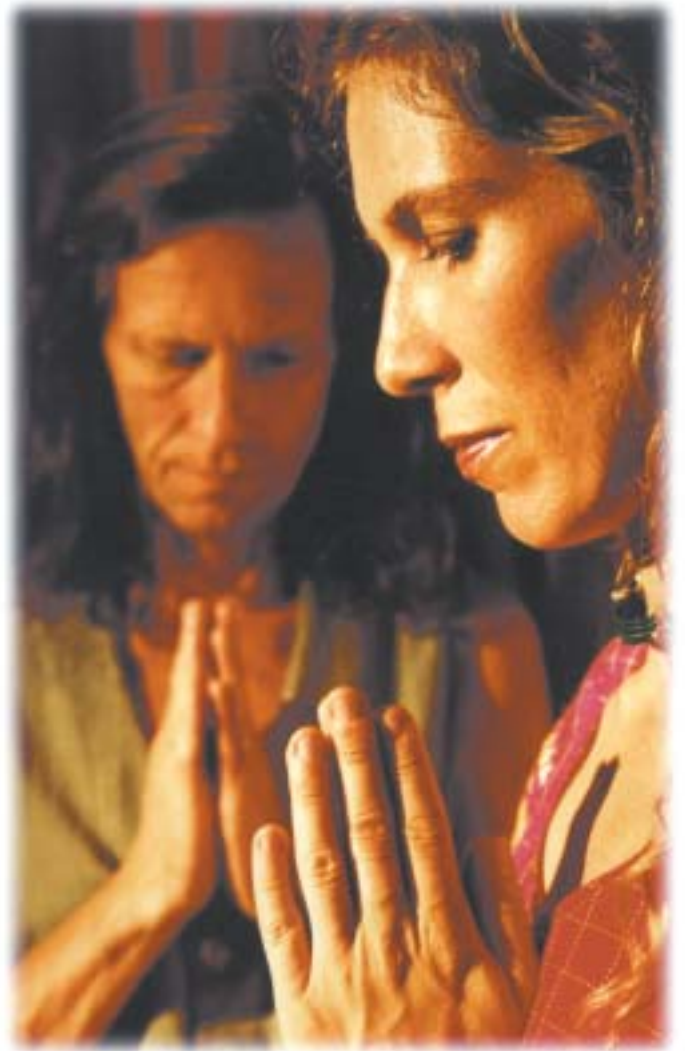
Meenakshi: Yes, Yes...without a doubt. So much keeps falling into place since we have been together. Our music just flows together, we don't even work at it, there are no preconceived notions. The music just flows through us and we are just vehicles for it. It's magical. It's nothing I could make up or even conceive of.

*The Journey: Actually I think it is reality. The way things are supposed to be.*

Ron: The real reality.

*The Journey: From as much as I have gotten to know the two of you, you both seem to be very directed and have a keen sense of what your purpose is. What in your own words would you see as your mission?*

Ron: Well, I think that we both really feel that we are where we are supposed to be – on the path we are supposed to be on. Perhaps throughout your life you have visions of what that is about. Maybe you trust, sometimes maybe not, these visions. But I think until you have experienced certain things, say the death of a loved one or a breakup of a meaningful relationship, you can't help others. These experiences can be so powerful. Then is when you can start to help others. I can see how peoples' mental health is in regard to whether they are living their purpose. If not, they are usually suffering. What ever that purpose may be they need to come in contact with it. They need to be empowered with that to live their purpose. Our purpose is to help people see theirs. Meenakshi: In vedic astrology it is talked about in your chart where you come into your power. This is your time, meaning all the little pieces of you come together. What your life has been about comes together. Your personal practice ends up being one that allows you to connect at a deeper understanding and allows you to connect deeper with others



and really open your heart as you connect deeply with yourself and that's exciting! And if there is anyway I can help or I am asked to help, then I will. It is not even an effort. It just becomes what you do. You see everyday as a gift, what you are doing in life is not even work. It's a total joy....like we get up and go do our total joy! In that little bits of magic pop up all the time. We just look for new spaces for doing what we can. Now we feel directed to go where we can help. It is a magical time for us.

*The Journey: The path of least resistance.*

Meenakshi: Yes, one time my teacher said, "Put down the books and live the Gita of life".

Ron: In hatha yoga we take the body and the mind and blend them to perpetuate change. The Yogis say if you want to change the world you are not happy with start with your self. Transform your life from the ground up. We will be there to help.

*The Journey: Thank you Meenakshi and Ron.*

Meenakshi and Ron: Thank you Clyde.

Meenakshi & Ron, with the rest of their band **Swaha**, will be in Cleveland at the grand opening of Karma Yoga on Saturday, March 5. They will be teaching an Ashtanga workshop at 12 pm and doing a class called Yoga Lounge at 6:30 pm followed by Kirtan/Concert at 8 pm. For more information, please call 216-621-7085. You can also get more information on them at their website [www.swaha.ca](http://www.swaha.ca)

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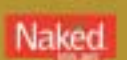
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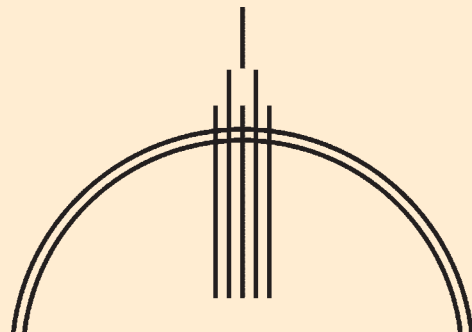
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