



trikāshalā

N E W S L E T T E R

AUGUST, 2017

Unconditional Bliss

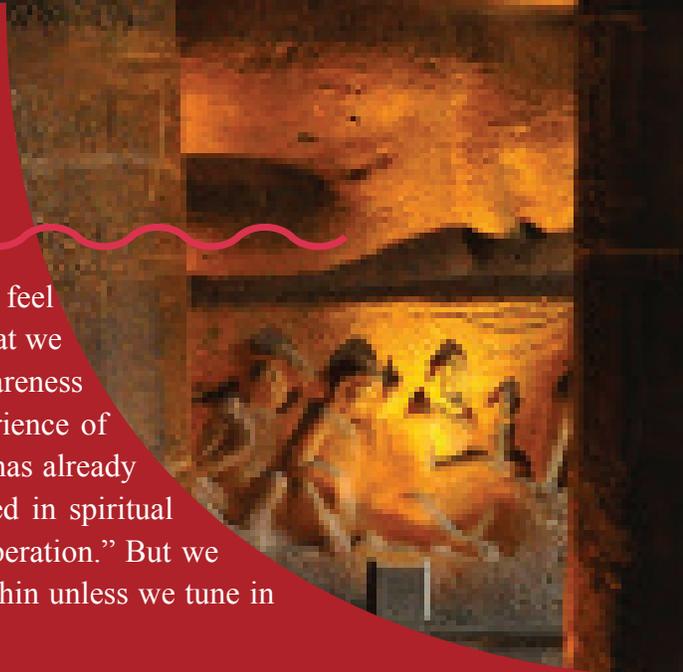
The Self is the dearest of all things, and only through the Self is anything else dear. The Self is the origin of all finite happiness, but it is itself pure bliss, transcending definition. It remains unaffected by deeds, good or bad. It is beyond feeling and beyond knowledge, but it is not beyond the meditation of the sage.

—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad

All great traditions tell us that our true nature is that of the divine Self, whose nature is unconditional bliss—yet the presence of this eternal bliss is meaningless unless we consciously make contact with it. If bliss is ever-present within us but we don't experience it, then it's up to us to uncover that level of consciousness. To do so we have to let go of whatever is preventing us from feeling and sustaining bliss in our lives.

It's really a matter of picking up the phone and calling that place in ourselves, rather than choosing not to and therefore perpetuating some other, more limited experience. Making this choice requires a true depth of surrender and profound subtlety of consciousness, and gaining this level of maturity is the very purpose of sadhana. Throughout our life, our entire practice is about moment-by-moment choice, about what we're going to tune in to in ourselves. Otherwise, we will not tune in.

In the moments we're not feeling bliss, instead of fighting with ourselves or analyzing all the reasons



why we feel disconnected, we can just take a breath and feel that which is imminently close to us. It's so important that we come to understand that sustaining higher levels of awareness within starts with *making contact with them*. The experience of bliss is one we must consciously call forth, although it has already begun to show itself to us or we would not be engaged in spiritual practice. That bliss is waking up and saying "go find liberation." But we should not expect to find the full expression of bliss within unless we tune in from our side.

How do we do that? Nityananda (whose very name means "eternal bliss") said it so beautifully: "Surrender everything that keeps you from Shiva." Divine bliss is not an alternative experience. Our life in apparent duality is the alternative experience! Yet we get caught up in daily life and think that the conditions we encounter somehow limit that which is limitless. In reality, unboundedness expresses itself in every level of existence, including what we perceive as limited. All form is the manifest expression of Shiva, of Consciousness. They're never separate.

The discipline of sadhana creates the capacity for our consciousness to be still, to deeply contact our source, but that discipline is in our awareness, not in what we're doing. Of course, the dimension in time and space we function in will have an effect on us if we allow it to do so—and the problem is that so often we *do* allow conditions to limit us. In our mind, we think we can only find bliss when life looks and feels a certain way. So we try to find a condition within which we think we can experience the unconditional, instead of finding the unlimited and then infusing the vibrancy of that state into the limitations of our life. We therefore have to flip our understanding to, "I can find bliss in any condition."

The very cannon of Tantric practices is that our awareness has nothing to do with condition. And yet, it doesn't eliminate condition. What we must surrender is all the fight, struggle, and projection that gets in the way of simply penetrating through into the bliss that is ever-present within us. We must, at some point in our sadhana, recognize that it is those very conditions, presenting themselves from within our own consciousness, that create the possibility for liberation and give us the strength to be beyond conditions.



Experiencing our divinity is both long and difficult, and easy and instantaneous. The real paradox of sadhana is that it takes us so long to figure out that realization happens in a flash. All we have to do is get still, tune in, and look for the very thing we intuitively know is within us, the very thing we say we want in our life. It's a sad state of affairs that it usually does take us a lifetime to recognize our Self, but that's only because we are so busy pursuing everything else.

Why not focus on the highest? Focus on bliss. Start there, and then support that with whatever other disciplines and sadhana you need to do. Don't accept that unconditional bliss not available to you right at this moment. Because as soon as you accept that, it's true. Look for the openness in your heart. Find some gratitude for the fact that you can feel your heart and open it, and you'll find bliss. Eternal bliss is as close to you as your own heart.

