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Darshan, the Grace Of Seeing the Divine

The spiritual energy shared in the simple act of seeing and being seen has the power to transform lives

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In the Orient, whenever the cloud of despair covers the soul of a devotee, the darshan of the Gods is sought. Whenever it becomes difficult to meditate, his grace is hoped for to lift the veil of delusion and release awareness from the darker areas of mind to soar within. If you were to travel through India on a spiritual pilgrimage, you would undoubtedly hear much about the Sanskrit word darshan, meaning "vision, seeing or perception." But in its mystical usage darshan is also the feeling of the emotions of a holy person, the intellect, the spiritual qualities that he has attained, and most importantly the shakti, the power, that has changed him and is there constantly to change others. Darshan encompasses the entirety of the being of a person of spiritual attainment. In India, everyone is involved in darshan. Some at a temple have darshan of the Deity. Others at an ashram have darshan of their swami or on the street enjoy darshan of a sadhu. And most everyone experiences doordarshan. That's the word for television in India, meaning "seeing from afar." Even this seeing, through movies, news and various programs of

mystery, tragedy, humor, the fine arts and culture, can affect our emotions, intellect, pulling us down or lifting us up in consciousness. Seeing is such a powerful dimension of life, and it affects us in so many ways, inside and out.

Hindus travel for miles to receive the darshan of an illumined soul established in his enlightenment. Perhaps he does not speak to them. Perhaps he scolds some of them. Perhaps he gives the most inspired of talks to them. In any case, they feel the darshan flooding out from him. A great soul is always giving darshan. Hindus believe that the darshan coming from a great soul helps them in their evolution, changes patterns in their life by cleaning up areas of their subconscious mind that they could not possibly have done for themselves. They further believe that if his darshan is strong enough, if they are in tune with him enough, by its power the kundalini force can be stimulated enough that they can really begin to meditate. This is called the grace of the guru. The ability to meditate comes from this grace. You must have it before you can begin to meditate, or you must do severe austerities by yourself instead.

Darshan and the unfolding soul on the path are like the rose. When the rose is a bud, it does not give forth a perfume. Unfoldment is just beginning. We admire the beauty of the bud, the stem, the leaves and the thorns. We are aware that it has the potential of a great flower. In the same way, we appreciate a beautiful soul who comes along, seeing in him the potential of a spiritual mission in this life.

In the life of a bud, nothing happens until unfoldment begins.

The same is true for the fine soul. It happens occasionally that someone comes along and picks the bud. This means the fine soul is in the wrong company. Now neither the bud nor the soul can unfold. But when they are protected nicely in a garden or ashram by a careful gardener, or guru, the bud and the soul unfold beautifully.

With just their first little opening to the world, they begin to see the light of the outer and inner sun shining down into the core of their being. It is still too early, of course, for the rose to have a noticeable fragrance or the soul a darshan. We might appreciate them closely, but we would detect little in this early and delicate stage of unfolding. At this time the unfolding soul might say, "I can see the light in my head and in my body." And the sun's rays keep pouring into the rose, penetrating into the stem and as deep as the roots. It is feeling stronger and unfolding more and more. If no one picks it because of its unfolding beauty, the rose continues to unfold until it opens into all its glory. Then a wonderful thing happens. The perfume of the rose fills the air day and night. It is the darshan of the rose.

To some people the bouquet of the rose is very strong; to others it is rather weak. Is the emanation of the rose stronger at one time than another? No. It is always the same. It goes on and on and on, maturing all the while into a deeper, richer, more potent scent. Soon it is filling the entire garden. But to the one who comes into the garden with a stuffy nose, there is only the beauty of the flower to experience.

In the same way, one who is closed on the inside of himself

misses the darshan of the awakened soul. He sees in the greater soul just another ordinary person like himself. The darshan is there, but he is too negative to feel it. But the darshan permeates him just the same. He goes away from the garden not having smelled a rose, but carrying the perfume of the rose himself. If you stand away from the rose, you smell less of its fragrance. Bring yourself really close, and more of its strong and pungent scent will penetrate your body.

Darshan from a great soul, like the pollen of the flowers, can stimulate healthy sneezing and cleansing if one's subconscious happens to be congested. Call it, if you like, an allergy to flowers. Some people have allergies to gurus, too. The guru's darshan lifts repressed subconscious patterns that have been out of the flow of the cosmic pattern of regenerative life, bringing them up before one's conscious attention. Instead of feeling wonderful, the visitor to the garden feels terrible, as the fire is brought up from within, releasing his awareness to view the polluted state of the subconscious mind.

The concept of darshan also embraces the guru's seeing of the devotee. When you are in the presence of the guru, his seeing of you and therefore knowing you and your karmas is another grace. So, darshan is a two-edged sword, a two-way street. It is a process of seeing and being seen. The devotee is seeing and in that instant drawing forth the blessings of the satguru, the swami or the sadhu. In turn, they are seeing the devotee and his divine place in the universe. Both happen within the moment, and that moment, like a vision, grows stronger as the years go by, not like imagination, which fades away. It is an ever-growing spiritual experience. The sense of separation is transcended, so there is a oneness between seer and seen.

This is monistic theism; this is Advaita Ishvaravada. Each is seeing the other and momentarily being the other.

Some people are more sensitive to fragrance than others. Others are so selfless and sensitive they can become the fragrance itself for a time. In such a person, the rose smells sweet through every pore of his body. He is not in the least aware of any subconscious congested area of the mind. He sits in the garden and goes deep into meditation on the subtle fragrance of the flowers. The same principle relates to the unfolded soul. Darshan pours forth from within the unfolded soul just as fragrance flows from the rose--seeming stronger at times than at others because some devotees are more in tune than others. For them, the room begins to ring and vibrate. Some people are so sensitive that when a great soul comes to the same town, they feel his presence. This shows their inner attunement to the constant flowing power of the darshan.

Everyone has some feelings radiating from within, but they are emanations that fluctuate. Because you feel these vibrations coming from them, you can intuit how they are feeling. They do not emanate a constant or a building flow. It is a fluctuating flow of emotional or astral energy. The darshan I am explaining is really the energies flowing from the deeper chakras, sahasrara and ajna, the seventh and sixth chakras or psychic force centers in the head, through the kundalini force within the spine. These energy flows do not fluctuate as the emotional odic-force energies do. They go on day and night and night and day through the illumined soul. Those devotees who are in tune with the guru can feel his physical presence when he enters their town because the darshan gets stronger. And it feels to them more ethereal when he is farther away.

These energy flows are very important to study, because it is possible to draw and enjoy a great darshan from an illumined soul if you approach him in just the right way. If you can become as a sponge when you approach him, you will draw out beautiful talks and other profound feelings from him. The Hindu is conscious that he is drawing darshan from his rishi or his satguru, just as you are conscious of drawing the perfume of the rose into your body. When approaching a soul who is known to give darshan, be in the same area of the superconscious mind that you feel he must be in. The guru does not have to be necessarily functioning in that same area. He could be externalized in consciousness at the time. This is not important. It does not stop his darshan at all. The guru, feeling you draw the darshan, would immediately go within and enjoy it himself. Once darshan is there in him, it is always there.