

CHAPTER FIVE

DARSHAN IS TO BLESS WITH EYES AND HEART

Darshan is a spiritual practice from India.

Traditionally, it is a form of blessing and open-eyed meditation in which disciples gaze upon the face of their beloved spiritual teacher, and receive her or his gaze in return. It has overtones of loving and being loved, knowing and being known, of standing naked in the light of eternity, since it is commonly held belief in Hindu spiritual communities

that one's teacher knows all one's thoughts, an idea and experience made more vivid by a face to face encounter with that person. There are parallel practices in Sufism and the Sikh faith.

While exploring some new possibilities about eco-spirituality with a friend, I had a moment of awakening. As he looked into my eyes, I suddenly realized that it might be possible for all of us to give Darshan (blessing with the eyes) to one another! (This fits right in with one of my favorite sayings of Paramahansa Yogananda, "After me, Love will be the Guru.")



Charan Singh Mararaj, circa 1955

Contagious blessing. Rather than waiting for the perfect guru to arrive, we might each become a window through which more love could pour into the world. We can look into each other's eyes, and each give the deepest blessing we can express at that moment, a kind of visual unfolding of the meaning of Namaste (the Divine Presence in me bows to the Divine Presence in you). While the practice of such an egalitarian Darshan might violate the hierarchical structure of some spiritual communities, it does not violate the central idea of Hinduism: that your soul is a wave in the ocean of God's being, that you are already one with God but have fallen asleep to that deepest aspect of your true being. (The basic logic of the argument for an evolving, shared, egalitarian Darshan would be that, because the Divine Presence is already IN everyone, then the Divine Presence can certainly bless everyone THROUGH everyone.)



Amma, contemporary Hindu saint and guru, in Darshan pose

Awakening. There is a growing experience inside of me that the process of darshan has now overflowed the container of the guru-disciple relationship and is making its way through the world from person to person, a kind of beautiful contagion. This started about a year ago when I looked into the eyes of my friend, Richard Page, while sharing a meal at a restaurant near Berkeley, California. (Richard is quite a mystic, and was a follower of Swami Muktananda.) At

the same time I am aware from my reading in human development that the process of seeing mama and being seen by mama, is the stairway the baby climbs to become a person.



Eye of Blue Whale

(from the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society -- www.wdcs.org)

And all through life, the process of having some aspect of ourselves seen by another, is a crucial factor in the unfolding of that aspect. I for one see Darshan as a carrying forward of this organic duet. When someone who is aware of themselves *as love and awareness* looks into our eyes, they are likely to awaken our own knowledge of ourselves as love and awareness. As adults we live surrounded by an invisible thought bubble of our own and our culture's making. When someone who does not live in that bubble looks at us, and we look at them, there is a possible moment of awakening and new relatedness.

Living the Light: Our moment in history. Some years ago, in the introduction to my book, *The Geometry of Dialogue*, I pointed out that although the plutonium in a nuclear weapon is 3.5 million times more explosive, pound for pound, than the TNT (or other stuff) it replaces, we have not

become 3.5 million times kinder and wiser (my version of something similar that was said by Einstein a long time ago). That contrast, in my view, is the strange and out-of-this-world challenge of being born into this era: to become 3.5 million times kinder, wiser, more creative, more grateful, more forgiving, more able to bring out the best in one another and to help heal the worst. I find it an amazing, terrifying and beautiful moment to be alive. In the history of planet, as far as we know, there has never before been a time in which the power of tools increased by a factor of more than a million within the lifetime of single tool user. How will we rise to this extraordinary occasion? Will we all start to glow in the dark with some sort of spiritual light? When you think about it, the phrase, "glow in the dark," could be taken as a wonderful summary of our life assignment in this world of terror and torture: To bring compassion into a world obsessed with fear and greed, and to remember the love that we were born to live. May each of us live the light ever more fully.

How does energy get awakened inside of people? I am open to the possibility of some sort of "morphic resonance" or "fractal resonance" going on here. When we look into the eyes of another with the intention to bless and/or to receive a blessing, we re-enact and to some unknown degree recreate the baby's first experience of shared loving gaze with mama and papa. At another level, all the shared loving gazes in the history of the universe may be vibrating somewhere like a giant chord perpetually singing on the strings of some transdimensional harp. When we gaze with the intention to bless, the intention to bring out the best in another and ourselves, we may be tuning in to all the moments of Darshan and all the loving gazes that have ever been, spiritual, parental, erotic, romantic, and on and on, the whole universe in a moment.



Mother Meera, a contemporary Hindu guru who practices Darshan blessing as a central element in her spiritual work

I am including in this chapter what seem to me to be Darshan photos and paintings. Some are of spiritual teachers, some are of animals (spiritual teachers in their own right), some are of people in whose gaze I feel some greater presence calling. Of course, one might protest: How can you receive Darshan from a painting?! But if you look at from the point of view of fractal resonance, even a painting or drawing might allow our minds to tune in to a particular frequency, to be informed by a particular form, to sing the same melody. (I am comfortable with all such metaphors, because it is so clear to me that they are *empowering* and *illuminating* metaphors, rather than *mere* metaphors.)

Fractal transmission of compassion. There is some sort of transmission of spiritual energy involved in this that I can only understand at the intuitive level. (“Transmission” is one paradigm, “evoking” is another. Perhaps the transmission is *through* evoking: I don’t actually give it to you. I show you where to find it in yourself.) I know that for the last fifteen years I have been exploring the idea that the more we want to heal the world around us, the more deeply we will need to go into *the as-yet-unreleased energies of*

the heart. One way of expressing the intense dynamics of this might be to say that if you want to save a million endangered species, you may need to go a million times deeper into the sources of love and energy hidden within you.



Sawan Singh Maharaj, circa 1940

Here are some of my hunches about what is going on. In general, people seem to mobilize their physical and emotional resources IN PROPORTION to whatever challenges come along. Your muscles develop in proportion to the weights you lift every day. Your response to one stray ant wandering across your kitchen counter would be small in comparison to the response you would have if you saw a house on fire across the street. As the challenges of ecopolitics get bigger and bigger, I think people will struggle to mobilize deeper and deeper levels of inner resources, although not necessarily in orderly ways. For example, contemplating the need to protect all the life of the future

from today's nuclear waste sets the psychological stage for a person to become a deeply energized mystic, but also to go mad or commit suicide (several of my friends have done so). In the past such world-saving challenges were very theoretical and I don't know how seriously anyone actually took them. But today's needs to protect life are very concrete and much easier to understand.

Thus, I am thinking that a whole new kind of ecstatic, green, mysticism may emerge from our present crisis. Without realizing it, millions of people, you and I included, have begun doing very intensive Bodhisattva mental exercises. **An infinite demand sets the stage for an infinite response.** We may all suddenly become telepathic, or begin appearing in one another's dreams. Who knows? The shared Darshan experience suggests to me a channel to guide the arrival (or even the eruption) of some new energy.

Prayers of Evolutionary Darshan

*As I look into your eyes,
I open my life that I may be a window
through which infinite blessings come to you,
and to everyone, and to everything.*

*As I look into your eyes,
I open my life to receive the blessings
of the Divine Presence, in you and through you,
and through everyone, and through everything.*

*May every heart be a window
through which new blessings pour into the world
starting with my heart and yours.*

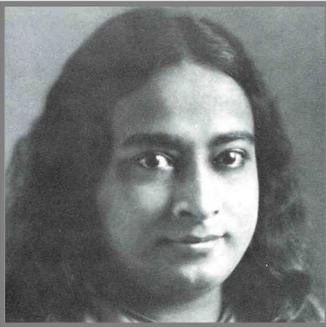
Ever Widening Glimpses of Darshan



Great Bodhisattva – Ajanta Caves



Gray Wolf



Paramahansa Yogananda



Anadamayi Ma