



## Celebrate

By Sadhvi Parananda

I heard a statistic that totally stunned me the other day. A report came out stating that “Obesity greatly increases your risk of dying.” Wow. Who knew?! I thought everyone’s risk of dying was 100%.

Of course the missing word is dying *prematurely*. But, kidding aside, all of us are born with expiration dates. It is the nature of life. We all are on this earth for a time, in this place, for a purpose. We get to live in this body, this house, for a while, then we move out to another neighborhood.

When we truly realize that our time on this earth is limited, hopefully our appreciation for the gift of every single day changes our view about how we spend our time. We realize how many times we squander a day being completely unconscious of the universe’s gift to us, and we resolve to live each day as a conscious growing, grateful being.

One big “ah-hah” moment for me was the result of a visit I made to some friends who live on a large ranch in a very sparsely populated western state. I was staying for dinner with a family that included two beautiful young children. When the wife served dinner she announced proudly “We are having Whiskers for dinner.” Say *WHAT?*

“Whiskers?” I asked. She replied, “Whiskers is the calf that the kids raised.” I was horrified. How could we eat the children’s pet? Before I could say another word she stopped me cold. She explained that the children understood that everything raised on the ranch was stock.

Having thought about this for a while I came to understand how honest it was to live that way. They all understood the cycle of life and death. They raised a creature with love and kindness. When the butchered it, they did so nicely, and then they honored and appreciated the gift they had been given. Certainly this is far more “real” than thinking that beef is red and comes in a small cellophane wrapped package.

Generally, people have become so removed from nature - from the sounds and sights and smells and rhythm of the earth -- that they no longer can relate to its wonders. They get absorbed with electronics and “progress” and all things material. Sometimes they (we) forget our place in nature and we aren’t aware of the majesty and magic that fills our life. Maybe it is time to shift our perspective.



For us at The Movement Center and Nityananda Institute, July always it a time of great growth and celebration. Life, in its bursting state, is all around us. It is a time to celebrate teacher, practice and community. Our semi-annual retreat, which has been happening for more than 40 years, is timed to coincide with Swamiji's birthday, July 25. Also in July is Guru Purnima.



Traditionally, Guru Purnima is the day of the full moon, typically in July. This year Guru Purnima falls on July 19. In most ancient traditions, teachers (gurus) are essential to spiritual growth. And guru is as much a concept as it is a person. Guru means “dispeller of darkness.” When we speak of teachers or gurus in yoga and meditation communities, we refer to amazing beings who have mastered themselves and are willing to transmit their energy and wisdom to students us.

So, as we celebrate life, growth, practice and community, we also celebrate our teachers. We find ways to express gratitude for the amazing life that we get to live. We pull our attention away from thoughts and perceptions until only *I AM* remains. We become more aware of our true identity which is experienced, but is beyond sense perceptions. We engender a sense of profound gratitude for our teachers, for those in our life who have shown us the light.

***“Gratitude is the enzyme that dissolves structure”***  
**Swami Chetanananda**

#### **TRY THIS.**

##### **Every day for the month of July**

- \* Place a flower in front of a picture of your teacher. Light some incense and a candle. If you like, also offer some fruit or sweet. (We cannot grow without devotion).
- \* Begin your meditation by doing the double-breath exercise nine times. This will get your energy flowing in a powerful way.
- \* For as many breaths as you feel like doing, repeat “Jai Guru” on the exhale, feeling your energy rise from your root chakra to above your head.
- \* Meditate.
- \* End your meditation by taking a full breath into your heart chakra and feel a very deep sense of gratitude for the presence of a teacher in your life. On the exhale, feel that gratitude get absorbed into all of the cells of your body.

When we understand that simple acts of devotion and gratitude are not only helpful, but necessary to our growth and upliftment and we honor and appreciate the teacher/guru in our life, we begin to luxuriate in their light – in their radiance. And we understand that it is through grace that we grow and attain Oneness.

Namaste,  
Sadhvi Parānandā



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