

## Aloneness is the First Lesson of Love

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Without the other we don't know who we are, we lose our identity. The other becomes a mirror and we can see our faces in it. Without the other we are suddenly thrown to ourselves. We are greatly inconvenienced because we don't know who we are when we are alone.

With the other, things are clear, defined. We know the name, we know the form, we know the person — Hindu, Christian, Indian, American — there are some ways to define the other. How to define yourself ?

Deep down there is an abyss... undefinable emptiness. You start merging into that. It creates fear. You become frightened. You want to rush towards the other. The other helps you to remain out. When there is nobody you are simply left with your emptiness.

Nobody wants to be alone. The greatest fear in the world is to be left alone. People do a thousand and one things just not to be left alone. You imitate your neighbours so you are just like them. You lose your individuality, you lose your uniqueness, you just become imitators, because otherwise, you will be left alone.

You become part of a crowd, a church, an organisation. Somehow you want to merge with a crowd where you can feel at ease, so that you are not alone.

To be alone is really the greatest miracle. That means now you don't belong to any church or organisation, you don't belong to any theology or ideology — socialist, communist, fascist, Hindu, Christian, Jain, Buddhist — you don't belong, you simply are. And you have learnt how to love your indefinable, ineffable reality. You have come to know how to be with yourself.

Loneliness is absence of the other. Aloneness is the presence of oneself. Aloneness is very positive. It is an overflowing presence. You are so full of presence that you can fill the whole universe with your presence and there is no need for anybody.

If the whole world disappears this zen master will not miss anything; he will be as happy as ever. He will love that tremendous emptiness, this pure infinity. He will not miss anything because he has arrived home. He knows that he himself is enough unto himself.

This does not mean that a man who has become enlightened and has come home does not live with others. In fact, only he is capable of being with others. Because he is capable of being with himself he becomes capable of being with others. If you are not capable of being with yourself, how can you be capable of being with others?

A man who loves his aloneness is capable of love, and a man who feels loneliness is incapable of love. A man who is happy with himself is full of love, flowing. He does not need anybody's love, hence he can give. When you are in need how can you give? You are a beggar. And when you can give, much love comes towards you. It is a natural response. The first lesson of love is to learn how to be alone.

Try it, to have the feel. Just sit alone sometimes. That's what meditation is all about — just sitting alone, doing nothing. If you start feeling lonely then there is something missing in your being, then you have not been able yet to understand who you are.

Then go deeper into this loneliness until you come to a layer when suddenly loneliness transforms itself into aloneness. Loneliness is the negative aspect of aloneness. If you go deeper into it one moment is bound to come when suddenly you will start feeling the positive aspect of it. Because both aspects are always together.