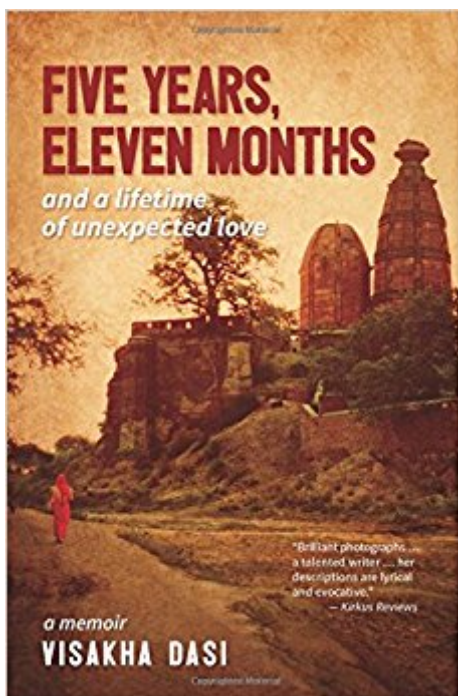


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Five Years, Eleven Months And A Lifetime Of Unexpected Love



Synopsis

Finalist: "2017 Next Generation Indie Book Awards, Spirituality Category" Brilliant photographs ... a talented writer ... her descriptions are lyrical and evocative." -- Kirkus Reviews "This makes Eat, Pray, Love look like a summer vacation ... An important historical and spiritual journey told seamlessly." -- The BookLife Prize

In 1971, at age 20, Visakha had just published her first book and was beginning her ascent to fame and fortune through a career in photojournalism. She dreamed of bringing the people of the world closer by sharing their common kinship and values through her photographic essays. Then, at the invitation of her college boyfriend, John Griesser, who was working on his MFA thesis in India, Visakha traveled east, where she first learned about bhakti yoga - the yoga of devotion - from a simple Indian sage. The bhakti tradition seemed irrelevant to Visakha, and she rejected it.

Five Years, Eleven Months and a Lifetime of Unexpected Love is Visakha's deeply personal account of the emotional upheaval caused by her doubting her own cherished convictions, by her discovery that the alarmingly unreasonable - bhakti - could gradually become alarmingly reasonable. Visakha portrays her own and others' experiences in India, Europe, and the United States as they grapple with knowledge and a culture that is at once utterly foreign yet also resonant with their hearts. And she reflects on the profound, life-altering questions that we all sometimes ask. Written by a fellow seeker who maintains a healthy dose of skepticism, this is the heartwarming, funny, colorful, bizarre, surprising, informative, and upending true story that will help questioner-skeptics see life from another perspective, one likely different from their own. In Five Years, Eleven Months, Visakha beautifully weaves together her personal losses and gains with an age-old tradition that enfolds her, creating a moving narrative for anyone who has ever asked, "Why?"

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

BookLife Prize 2017:Originality: 10 out of 10Plot/Idea: 10 out of 10Prose: 10 out of 10Character/Execution: 10 out of 10Overall: 10.00 out of 10Assessment:Plot: Well plotted and well paced. That the character arc develops slowly makes the book that much more believable. I wouldn't cut a word.Prose: This gifted author's prose is beautiful, carefully wrought, and a pleasure to read. The only issue is the title, which doesn't do justice to a wonderful book.Originality: Wholly original. This makes Eat, Pray, Love look like a summer vacation.Character Development: The author's spiritual development occurs gradually. It is believable and by degree -- and brilliantly told. The way the author handles the deaths of her parents is both painful and perfect. Dasi walks the line between sentiment and sentimentality and never veers too far toward the latter.Blurb: As multi-faceted and luminous as the photos it contains, this book is an important historical and spiritual journey told seamlessly.-- The BookLife Prize."This book will give pleasure and wisdom to many people, for many years to come." -- Howard J. Resnick, Ph.D., Harvard University"Whatever our own spiritual orientations and commitments might be, this memoir brings us into Visakha's world of material detox and spiritual reset, inviting us to look again and look deeper into ourselves and our motivations, convincing us that a lifetime of unexpected love is truly possible." -- Kenneth R. Valpey, Ph.D, Oxford University"One of the best memoirs conveying the power of the spiritual that I have ever come across." -- Graham M. Schweig, Ph.D. Visiting Professor and Research Scholar, Graduate Theological Union, BerkeleyReviewed By Mamta Madhavan for Readers' FavoriteFive Years, Eleven Months and a Lifetime of Unexpected Love by Visakha Dasi is a brilliant memoir about a woman's struggles in coming to terms with her spiritual realization, conditioning her mind to overcome her atheism, and her transformative spiritual journey amid many challenging circumstances. The memoir speaks about a woman who goes to India with her boyfriend, John, to capture how villagers lived in a quaint Indian village without the complexity and stress which is typical of Western life. Things take a different turn when she comes into contact with her spiritual guru. The book draws readers in with its honesty, faith, and the author's personal experiences. It is a memoir of self-realization, self-discovery, and an inner journey that will leave readers inspired and motivated to look for answers that revolve around God and faith.The

author's insights, thought-provoking reasoning, and her account of Prabhupada and his movement reveal the spiritual journey of a young woman who starts questioning her lifestyle, goals, values, and identity. The narration is descriptive and the black and white photographs are starkly vivid - they capture the essence and mood of the author's words. The way she has woven her story is simple, yet she manages to encourage readers to find their own spiritual path. The book is refreshingly unique, the emotions are palpable through the words and pictures, and the struggles and obstacles undergone and faced by the author during her journey as a spiritual seeker make it a compelling and thoughtful memoir.

Dasi (Harmony and the Bhagavad-gita, 2015, etc.) recounts her spiritual awakening in India in this memoir. Dasi (née Jean Papert) was studying photography as an undergraduate in Rochester, New York, when she met and fell in love with a photojournalism graduate student named John Griesser. She followed Griesser to India, where he was completing a project on the Hare Krishna movement. Dasi's initial impressions of the country were less than ecstatic. "The moment I looked out the window at Bombay's international airport," she recalls, "the term 'third-world' shed its mystery." Soon, however, the beauty of the landscape and the deep spiritual history of its peoples began to pull on Dasi and Griesser both. Over the course of their Hare Krishna project, which kept them in the close company of the movement's charismatic founder, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the couple became enamored of the guru's teachings. The world of ashrams and devotees was highly distinct from the Long Island of Dasi's youth. For the first time, she felt she was surrounded by people "who harmonized their lives with a higher purpose, who chose to control their minds, who were not at the mercy of passion, who were striving for something pure and great." This book is an account of Dasi's and Griesser's gradual conversion to the teachings of the Hare Krishna, set against the backdrop of the dynamic India of the early 1970s. The text is accompanied with brilliant photographs the couple took during that time, which lovingly frame the country as a place of great devotion. Dasi is a talented writer, particularly when it comes to documenting the specifics of places and people. Like the photographs, her descriptions are lyrical and evocative while remaining rooted in impoverished reality. -- Kirkus Reviews

"Brilliant photographs ... a talented writer ... her descriptions are lyrical and evocative." -- Kirkus Reviews (excerpt)

For a number of reasons, I found Visakha Dasi's book compelling reading: The writing was

clear and elegant, often poetic in its descriptions. The author was brutally honest about her struggles with atheism and faith (I identify with that; I was brought up in a communist, atheist household that mocked the idea of God). She was also honest (in a non-judgmental way) about the shortcomings of neophyte spiritual practitioners and how their inner battles were sometimes expressed in harsh and condemnatory behavior toward female followers. She eloquently described how the progress of someone new to the spiritual path is not at all linear, but rather ebbs and flows based on a number of stimuli. The love she developed for her spiritual teacher was inspiring. The transformation of consciousness she experienced in the holy Indian city of Vrindaban made me want to go there. And the scene of her return to her family home was touching and all-too-real. This work is a result of decades of mature spiritual practice grounded in human experience and wisdom. I found it spiritually edifying and an absolute joy to read. It deserves to become a prominent part of the literature in this genre.

This book really spoke to me. It is written from the heart with honesty, humility, and understanding. It is a frank recollection of a young woman unexpectedly coming into contact with that rarest of things..a true spiritual master, and overcoming her skepticism and conditioning. I could relate with so many of her internal realizations and struggles along the way. And I found her candor extremely helpful for my own understanding of what it means to strive to live a spiritual life. I highly recommend this book to anyone struggling to find their spiritual life.

This work by Visakha Dasi is an attempt in quasi-diary format to put the teaching of her beloved master and guide (Swami Sri Prabhupada) into perspective as it has developed in her everyday life. It is ingenious in that it does very little to host you (the reader) as a partner in her personal self-development or to advocate for your participation in her sectarian life as a guru's student. What it does do very well is attempt to communicate in a profoundly personal way her intense joy in service to a major master who influenced her every thought, emotion, feeling, and choice for a total lifetime. She is totally dedicated to his welfare as a Guiding Light and has given greatly to his community as a respected photographer to benefit his tribe (ISKON) and document his activities while alive and in retrospect. I enjoyed reading this work, albeit with reservations. It is not the doctrine that is so important or the self control that was required to maintain such lifelong commitment to a cause like Prabhupada's Ashram. It is her choosing it in the first place. How did it happen that she fell "into love" so thoroughly and so completely that she has not wavered or regretted her choice. That is the mystery of advanced spiritual development with a major master.

And accounting for that is totally impossible. It takes years to really realize what has happened to you, where you have been with this Master you have chosen for your teacher, and how to account for all the parts of that intense and very complex relationship. That said, it was a blessing to read and a joy to witness.

Five Years Eleven Months by Vishaka Dasi This book gives us an inside view of a deep transformation. Richly worded descriptions of a shy and intellectual girl from NY into the world of Bhakti-yoga. Her journey from atheist to lover of God is described with refreshing honesty. Vishaka brings her story to life with use of words long forgotten in the current English jargon which attests to her erudition. Her boyfriend John, also a photojournalist, has an assignment that changes both of their lives. Her success in practicing Bhakti, in spite of the crazies she bumps into along the way, brings humor to the story. Embracing a new adventure in life, in exotic surroundings, she has the good fortune of meeting a genuine saintly teacher, observe and get to know him, and feel inspired by him to practice the teachings he propounded. The intensity she reveals of her progression into heart opening spiritual life, gives us a look into the future of our own possibilities. Five Years is a memoir you don't want to miss! Jenny Roberts, Yoga Alliance ERYT 500 Gainesville, FL

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