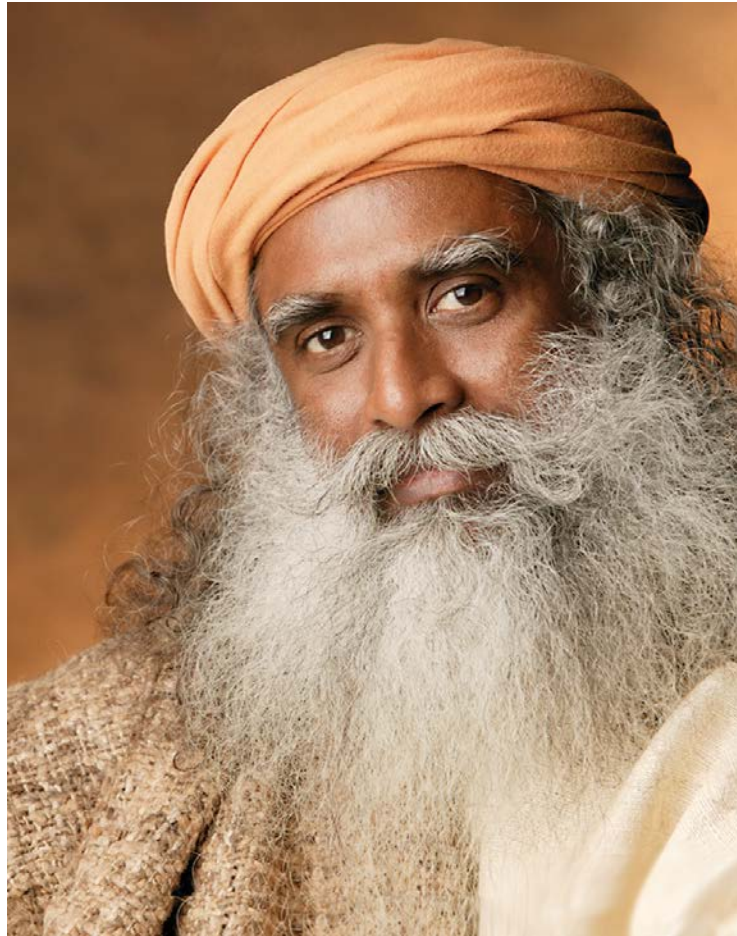


SADHGURU

A Collection of printable Articles from the Isha-Blog



“Simply being does not come easy. So, be with something that supports your being. Something that is always striving to energetically destroy your boundaries. In that sense, I am telling you, ‘Be with me.’ Wherever you are, try and Be with me, for a specific time. Six twenty in the morning and evening is best. Use a picture if necessary or just close your eyes and Be with me. As I have already invested a large volume of Energy for this purpose, you shall find it Supportive, Exhilarating, or even Ecstatic. Try Me.”

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ON RELATIONSHIPS

Making Life Decisions

On a daily basis, people approach me for advice on decisions in their lives that they are having difficulty with – for example about career choices, marriage, children, spiritual involvement, or whether they should file for divorce or not. Let's look at life on an existential level. The fact is that you were born alone – then you made the difficult decision of getting married. In that context, falling back into your original state is a simple decision. Only because you have identified yourself with everything you do, because you have made the other person your possession, the decision appears difficult. Even if you want to leave your body tomorrow, it is not a difficult decision. You did not exist; then, because of somebody else's act, you came into existence, and here you are. Falling back into nonexistence is a simple decision. There are no difficult decisions in life. It is just because you are clinging to so many things that every decision creates turmoil. Otherwise, whether it is divorce or death or whatever else, it is not a difficult decision. It may matter a lot, but it is merely another step in life, which will anyway happen, one way or the other. The difference is just that you do things consciously before life forces you to do them.

The decision-making as such is not difficult. The difficulty arises because you are deeply attached to so many things around you. In Western societies, people have great difficulty in deciding whether to marry or not. They may be living with someone for years but still struggle to make the commitment of marriage, because they would have to forgo little things that they are attached to. Whatever decision you make, you have to forego something. When it comes to divorce, they also struggle with the decision, though maybe less. In India, marriage comes easy – divorce is difficult. In the West, marriage is difficult – divorce comes easy. Two different cultures, but the same underlying problem. Either way, people have difficulty in making decisions. Whatever you do, anyway it hurts, because you have identified yourself with so many things that you are not. It is like you are caught in a barbed wire fence – whichever way you move, it hurts. Because the thorns are multi-directional, and you cannot keep still and just live with whatever is there. You have to move, even though it hurts.

How to get out of the barbed wire fence? The thorns are illusory. It is only because of your identifications that so many aspects of your life which should have been a pleasure have become thorns. Your wife, husband, children, friends, and family are simple pleasures that you probably always wanted. They only have become pains because you have gotten too identified with them. Every simple process of life is hurting. If you are identified with so many things that you are not, and at the same time, you do not want anything to hurt you, it means you do not want life to happen. You are setting up a self-defeating situation for yourself. If you are not identified with your own body, you will never be identified with anybody or anything. Being with someone and creating bondage are two different aspects altogether. In being with someone, you shall build life. In creating bondage, you are seeking the death of the individual.

Anxiety-free Relationships – Are They Possible?

When you live in this world, there are various types of complex interactions happening. As your field of play increases, the complexity of interaction also goes on increasing. If you are just sitting in a cubicle working on your computer with only one other person, you need only a little understanding. If you are managing a thousand people, you need a vast understanding of everyone. Suppose you are managing a thousand people and you want all these people to understand you, you are not going to manage anything. You need to understand the limitations and capabilities of these thousand people and do what you can. Only then will you have the power to move the situation the way you want it to go. If you are waiting for these thousand people to understand you and act, it is a pipe dream. It is never going to happen.

Q: Suppose somebody is in a close relationship with me and is very important to me. Shouldn't I expect better understanding from them?

Sadhguru: That's the point. The closer the relationship is, the more effort you should make to understand them. It so happened, once there was a man who had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, with his wife staying at his bedside night and day. When he came to, in those few moments of consciousness, he motioned for her to come closer. As she sat beside him, he said, "I've been thinking...you have been

with me through all the bad times in my life. When I got fired, you were there to support me. When my business went down the tube, you were there working overtime and doing night shifts. When I got shot, you were by my side. When we lost the house in that legal clash, you were right there beside me. Now my health is failing, and you are still by my side. When I consider all this, I think you only bring me bad luck!"

This is exactly what you are doing to yourself and to your relationships. Someone becomes closer and dearer to you only as you understand them better. If they understand you, they enjoy the closeness of the relationship. If you understand them better, you enjoy the closeness.

Q: This is easier said than done. It is difficult to always be there...

Sadhguru: It is not that the other person is totally bereft of understanding. With your understanding you can create situations where the other person would be able to understand you better. If you are expecting the other to understand and comply with you all the time while you don't understand the limitations, possibilities, needs and capabilities of that person, conflict is all that will happen. It is bound to happen.

Unfortunately, the closest relationships in the world have more conflict going on than between India and Pakistan. In your relationships, you have fought many more battles than they have. This is because your line of understanding and theirs is different. If you cross this L.O.C., this Line of Control, they will get mad. If they cross it, you get mad. If you move your understanding beyond theirs, their understanding also becomes a part of your understanding. You will be able to embrace their limitations and capabilities. In everyone, there are some positive things and some negative things. If you embrace all this in your understanding, you can make the relationship the way you want it. If you leave it to their understanding, it will become accidental. If they are very magnanimous, things will happen well for you. If not, the relationship will break up.

All I am asking is: do you want to be the one who decides what happens to your life? Whether they are close relationships, professional, political, global or whatever, don't you want to be the person who decides what happens in your life? If you do, you better include everything and everyone into your understanding. You should enhance your understanding to such a point that you can

look beyond people's madness also. There are very wonderful people around you, but once in a while they like to go crazy for a few minutes. If you don't understand that, you will lose them. If you do, you know how to handle them.

Life is not always a straight line. You have to do many things to keep it going. If you forsake your understanding, your capability will be lost. Whether it is a question of personal relationships or professional management, in both places you need understanding. Otherwise, you won't have fruitful relationships.

Are Relationships and Spirituality Incompatible?

There is no need to drop any relationship to progress. You just need to understand your present situation – not the way the world or the other person sees it, but the way it actually is within yourself. The pains and struggles are individual, so each individual has to look at it for themselves.

It is not a question of whether the spiritual path is compatible with relationships or not because they are two completely different dimensions that do not clash anywhere. Spirituality is something that you do within yourself. What you do on the outside is your choice. Whether you want to live in a relationship or alone, whether you want to live in the city or in the mountains, is an individual choice you have to make according to your likes, dislikes, and needs. It has got nothing to do with the spiritual process as such.

What type of relationship you hold with someone is your personal choice and depends on your needs. It is not because of something spiritual that you have done or someone else has done. Let's not mix up spirituality and relationships because you cannot mix them – one is inside, the other is outside.

Demands & Expectations

Many people in the world who went on a spiritual process shed their relationships – not because the spiritual path demands it but because they were not able to bear the demands of the relationship. The spiritual path does not demand that you shed your relationships, but relationships often demand that you shed the spiritual path. People choose to shed either this or that.

Unfortunately, more people have shed their spiritual path for a relationship rather than shedding the relationship for the spiritual path. But at no

time are these two in conflict with each other. Your relationship with someone or something is not in conflict with what you do within yourself. Only when a relationship demands that you have to be in a particular way, it becomes an obstacle.

We see this happening sometimes. When someone starts meditating, initially the family is happy because the person's demands have declined, he or she seems to be peaceful and able to do things better. But as this person goes deeper into it, when he or she can just close their eyes and sit happily, that's when people start having problems. If this person was going after something or someone, the spouse would know how to handle it. But now when you are just happy by yourself, people become insecure. This is the danger. So they say, "No more meditation in this house." "Okay, I will just sit quietly." "No. You must do something or talk to me or whatever. No sitting quietly." When you face restrictions about simple things that do not cause harm to anyone, after some time you will wonder why. When someone does stupid things, there will be a divide in the relationship.

From Vested Interests to Love

I hold intense and involved relationships with thousands of people – various levels and dimensions of relationships. My spiritual process and my relationships do not clash in any way because they are two separate areas of life. Your relationships are on the outside. You need to manage them to the best of your ability. Your spiritual process is inward. Whether your partner is becoming spiritual or you are becoming spiritual, either way it should not clash with the relationship.

The thing with the spiritual process is, once you start tasting something within yourself, that something becomes the center of your life. But most relationships are such that both people expect that he or she should be the center of the other one's life. That is why they feel threatened. People claim they believe in God. If you do, should he not always be the center? The issue is insecurity, not relationships. If the relationship is based on love, there is no issue. If the relationship is based on vested interest, when you hold people to extract certain things from them and suddenly you are not able to extract those things from them anymore, then you feel upset.

Otherwise, once you are on a spiritual process, your relationship can become so much more mature and beautiful. You will not have stupid expectations about the other person. You can just

treat and revere the other person as life. The most reverential aspect here is just life. So why not revere another person as life?

A Seeker's Relationship Blues

If your concern is spiritual growth, then if you have a demon for your partner, that is the best thing! But your husband or your wife is not just about spiritual growth. If you also want to have a pleasant life in the family, you have to choose someone you like. But there is always something that you do not like about any human being on the planet, isn't it? You use that part of it for your spiritual growth, and the rest of it you enjoy as life.

If your intention is to have a good family, then some rapport is needed between two people; that means there have to be some areas of commonality at least. To build a rapport takes effort, it takes compromise, it takes love and it takes endurance. If you want to build a rapport with someone who is not supportive, but you do not want to go their way, it takes lots of endurance. People whom you love are not easy.

So what can you do? One thing is to transform yourself in such a way, that being in your presence, unknowingly, they will turn around.

Sometime ago, I went out and it started raining. I was carrying both my phones because I was expecting some calls. One phone is for India, and one is for outside-India calls. I had one in my jacket and the other in my trouser pockets, and they got wet and both the phones got fried. So, people around me were telling me, "Sadhguru, why carry two phones? Now, we can have two SIM cards in one phone. This is a Chinese phone. If you hold it one way, you can speak on the India SIM card. If you turn it around, it just shifts into the other SIM card. You don't have to switch anything." I did not get the phone, but you must become like this if you wish to take people who are around you with you. If you want to walk alone, it is very easy. If you want to take people with you, it takes a considerable amount of effort.

Gautama was asked this question, "Is it better to walk alone on the path or with a companion?" He said, "It is better to walk alone than to walk with a fool."

Because they can take such a lot of energy and time, and you do not know, they may be stronger than you and take you their way rather than you taking them your way. There is every possibility.

I will not say what Gautama said. All I am saying is, it does not matter how you walk, as far as your spiritual process is concerned, anyway you are alone. Nobody is with you. It is only the bodily process, the material process of life, which you can share with people. You come alone and you go alone. Even if you have a twin brother or sister, you still come alone and go alone. When it comes to the spirit, anyway you walk alone. Do not mix that up. That part of it you handle well. The material part of it, handle it according to your capability. You must see what you are capable of and what you are not capable of. If your partner comes your way, it is wonderful. If they do not, it is alright. Do not grudge them. It is just that you do not have to go that way.

How to Make Marriage Work

One of the questions that I am asked frequently is how to choose the right person for companionship and marriage. Trying to find the perfect partner is expecting the impossible. One reason why marriage can be tumultuous is because you have to share so many things in this relationship. The issue is neither marriage, nor is it about a man and a woman, husband and wife. In any situation where you are forced to share a lot with other people, you will face similar problems.

In a marriage or cohabitation, you usually have to share the same space, the same everything. Consequently, every day, you are treading on each other's toes in one way or the other. In other relationships, if someone is overstepping the boundaries, you can create a distance. Here, you do not have a choice. The greater the overlap, the greater the possibility of friction.

There are many couples who are living beautifully together, who are profoundly in love, and who are fantastic companions to each other. At the same time, this relationship can assume the ugliest forms. One contributing factor is that generally, no one gets to know the ugly things that are happening behind closed doors. If someone on the street steps on your feet, you will react in a different way, because everyone is watching. But in this relationship, no one is watching, so anything can happen.

What is needed to make a marriage successful is not the perfect person – there is no perfect person on the planet. What you need is absolute integrity. Whether someone is watching or not, you should act in the same way. Who you are should not

change depending upon where and with whom you are. Once you have established your way of being, interacting with another person can be a joy. Another aspect is that if you try to extract something out of each other, and you or the other person does not get what he or she wants, there will be constant conflict.

You as an individual have to evaluate if this is just a passing interest, or if there is a strong need to have someone by your side. Not everyone has to get hitched, nor does everyone have to live alone. This is something that individuals have to look at for themselves. You should only get married if there is such a strong need in you that without a companion, you cannot live, and you believe marriage will be a stepping stone for your well-being.

There is nothing wrong with getting married. But if you get married without you having the need to do so, then it is a crime, because you will cause misery to yourself and at least one other person. We would advise everyone to get married if the human race was in danger of disappearing, but the human population is exploding. If you do not reproduce, you do humanity a great service. Leaving that aside, the important thing is this – not everyone needs to get married.

When someone asked Gautama the Buddha, "Should I have a companion?" he said, "It's better to walk alone than to walk with a fool." I am not that cruel. I am saying: if you find a similar fool, then something can be worked out. But based on your need – not because of what society is saying, not because others are getting married, not because you worry about being alone.

What is your intention for your companion? It should not be something like, "If I'm getting lost, let me have another person who gets lost with me." Companionship or marriage does not solve existential problems. It just takes care of some of your needs. If you have strong physical, emotional, or psychological needs, then you should look for a companion. You should not get married for social and financial reasons alone.

Another point to remember is that you get married because you need support. This support may be physical, emotional, psychological, social, or financial – whatever it may be, you do not get married out of charity for the other person. You get married because you need certain things. If the other person is willing to provide them to you,

and you live in gratitude, then there will not be too much friction.

Do not look for the ideal man or the ideal woman – there is none. If you understand that it is your needs that make you seek a companion, find someone who is reasonably compatible with you. If you accept, respect, love, include, care for, and take responsibility for each other, it can be a beautiful relationship.

How to Love Unconditionally?

If it becomes unconditional, she will not be your wife. It is a condition of marriage that she should always be your wife. Within this condition, how can it be unconditional? Right now, your very life is a condition. Only if you fulfill certain conditions will life happen. When it comes to an emotion like love, there is no such thing as conditional love or unconditional love. There is either love or no love. Either you know love in your life or you know a mutual benefit scheme. "I will give you this – you will give me that. If you do not give me this, I will not give you that." If it is a mutual benefit scheme, run it gracefully.

Benefit schemes are needed. With business partners, neighbors, husband, wife, children, father, mother, there have to be some transactions. If you think this is all one overflowing love affair, you are still living in la-la land. Your wife should bring you down to earth. Romance is fine, but when it comes to relationships, there is a transaction. If you do not want to admit that, you will suffer. If you admit it, you will learn to conduct it gracefully and well. If you say, "I gave you so much – what are you giving me," it becomes ugly. There is a way of running it in a graceful manner, so that what you give is not noticed by anyone.

The Generous Brothers

My great-grandmother told me many stories – this is one that stuck with me. This story is not the basis of my life but definitely shaped me in some ways. There was a man and his wife. In those days, the man worked the land, grew crops, and made money. And if you had boys, you could work more land. They had two boys. These two boys grew up into strong young men. They worked hard with their father, increased their land, and became well-to-do. When the man was getting very old, he told his two sons, "I may die anytime. This is one thing you must maintain at all times. After my death, both of you should always

share the produce of this land fifty-fifty. Never should there be any debate, argument, or fight about that."

The old man died, and the boys took care of that. In India and many other parts of the world at that time, there was no question of dividing the land. Only the produce could be divided, not the land. Only in the last four generations, maybe after the British came, we started dividing the land. So, the two brothers always split the produce equally between themselves. One of them got married, and he had five children. The other one never got married. But still they shared fifty-fifty. One day, a worm entered the unmarried brother's head. He thought, "My brother has a wife and five children to take care of, and I am single. Still I take fifty percent, and he takes fifty percent. This does not seem to be fair. But it was our father's wish. And my brother is so proud that if I try to give him some more, he will not take it. So let me do something else." He started an operation. Once the harvest was over, every night, he secretly carried a sack of grain on his back and put it in his brother's store.

The same worm entered his brother's head, and he thought, "I have five boys growing up. In a few years, I will have much more happening for me. My brother has no one. What will he do later on? But he takes only fifty percent; I take fifty percent. If I try to give him more, he will not take it." He started taking one bag of grain every night and putting it in his brother's store. A kind of reverse osmosis of grains was happening. Both of them did not realize that for a long time.

They were growing old and still continued to do this. One day, as they were walking with a sack of grain towards the other one's store, they bumped into each other. They looked at each other and suddenly realized what had been happening all this time. They quickly averted their eyes, walked on, took the sack of grains to its destination, went back to their houses, and slept. Time passed, and they became old and died. The towns people wanted to build a temple and were looking for a nice site for it. After a long search, they decided the best place to build a temple was where these two brothers met with a sack of grains on their backs, and were embarrassed about their own generosity. If you live like this, you are a living temple. Then you do not have to worry about unconditional love, conditional love, and all this.

A Pool of Gratitude

If you do not count what you give but always remember what you get, you will naturally be a pool of gratitude. Drop this nonsense of “How much I have done!” If you do not expect anything from anyone, you will live easy. If you expect something from someone, or you ask yourself whether they love you or not, then all these problems arise. When you do not expect anything from anyone, if they do it, it is wonderful for them. If they do not, what is the problem?

A relationship is a transaction; it takes a certain skill to run it well. Otherwise, it can turn ugly. You may have seen how wonderful it can be with someone on one day, and how ugly it can be with the same person on another day.

Unfortunately, most people do not want to acknowledge that a relationship is a transaction. There are certain ground rules and conditions for it. Only if you stay within these rules and conditions, will you run the relationship successfully. If you have la-la ideas like “our love is unconditional,” any day, it will break down.

Do not get lost in ideas of unconditional love. Love itself is a condition. Why should you love? If your emotions are sweet, you will look at anything you see lovingly – whether it is the sky, a lake, a man, or a woman – simply because you are loving in nature. There is no condition on it. It is your quality, not someone else’s.

Vivaha – A Profound Marriage Process for Our Times

Because I believe in efficiency of human activity, when somebody says they want to bind themselves to someone else, I thought I should do it more efficiently. People bind themselves and it doesn’t stick. If you have no intention of binding, that is up to you. But when you show an intention of binding, you better learn to bind yourself well. So Vivaha is just that, a more efficient way of binding.

In furniture different pieces of wood are bound together. You can bind it together with a screw... I’m sorry, in America, do you know what is a screw? I think you understand the word screw in a different way. Everywhere else in the world, we use screws to bind things; in America, everything is nailed and screw means something else.

There is something called a screw with which you can bind two pieces of wood efficiently together. The advantage of the screw is that you can un-

screw. With a nail, you can’t really un-nail it – once you nail it, you generally only have to break it.

I was just surprised when I was watching the houses being built – the whole house is just nailed. If you had used screws instead of using a thousand nails, probably with fifty screws you could have done the same job; only thing is, a little more engineering would go into it.

In India, a traditional carpenter would be banished if he used nails like that. Traditionally in Indian carpentry, they always used wooden batons in a certain way. They are not permanently fixed; they are very well fixed, but not permanently fixed – if you want, you can tap it out. But it will take a certain amount of skill and effort to get it out. They mastered this in the East. That is how all binding should be; binding should be really fast and proper, but for some extraneous reason if it has to be undone, with a certain amount of effort, we should be able to undo it. Otherwise it means we don’t care a damn for the material we are using.

That goes for human beings too. When we bind someone, we must bind them in such a way it is quite permanent. But for some extraneous reason – let us say one person died, then the other should not follow immediately, because if you bind it absolutely fast, that is what will happen.

In the past, many people exhibited that kind of desire: “If my husband or my wife dies, I also want to die.” Those days are gone. If you do as much as something that they don’t like, you are gone. In a world like this, you should not bind so fast. It must be fast enough that tomorrow morning, when quarrel arises over the toothpaste, the binding should hold. But if something extraneous happens, then with a little bit of effort, you must be able to undo the binding. But, once you have bound something, if you want to unbind it, unless it is not at all bound properly, unbinding will inevitably extract a price from us. Whatever it is, whether it is physical, material or human beings, it will extract a price when you want to unbind.

If you want to unbind this furniture, some holes will be left inside, which are not easy to cover; it will take a lot of work to fix those holes. Similar things will happen to human beings also. I know today the slogan is, “I’ve moved on.” Moved on does not mean I got liberated, and I went up. Moved on means I’m in the next pit. So you may say “I have moved on,” but certain gaping holes are left, which will get you once in a way.

You may manage, you may handle the evenings with drink, mornings getting up just five minutes before you have to leave for the office, office time managed with grumbling and rumbling and being busy; people are managing their life like this. If you make them sit in one place without anything to do for three days, you will see, they will go quite crazy with all these holes inside of them.

Glossing over a hole and fixing a hole are two completely different things. Fixing it is not that simple; you can gloss over it. It is like the termite – if you have painted furniture, you have to keep checking because one day, when you touch it, only the paint will be there, because he doesn't like to eat paint, he eats only organic. He is not like you, he doesn't eat chemically infested food. He just neatly eats up all the wood. You poke with your finger, your finger goes straight in, because only the paint was there.

So, binding of anything has to be done well, otherwise what is the point? We can bind in such a way that if one dies, the other will also die; if one gets enlightened, the other will also get enlightened. There are positives also. But, on an average, the number of people who get sick, the number of people who die, the number of people who go crazy are more than the number of people who ever get enlightened; so we don't take that risk.

So, with a certain amount of effort and a certain price attached to life, it should be able to untie, but there will be a price. Vivaha is an organic process of tying two organisms in such a way that, at least there is a segment of them where they can't make out which is which, which is good. They experience some sense of union. We are hoping they will use this as a stepping stone for a larger union. Well, whether they do or they don't is another matter.

For those who conduct it, it will be very beautiful, because it can become a great sadhana for them in their life, that you bring two organisms together and make them feel like one. It has a certain beauty and a certain contribution to your own life.

For those who witness also, we can do it in a much stronger way than the way we are doing it right now. We are not going that far because of the percentage of divorces, deaths and diseases happening. We can actually bind it much stronger, or the overlap can be much bigger. You have to take social realities into consideration, always. But still, no matter how many divorces happen, no

matter how many people go about talking in terms of "marriage has an expiry date," when some union happens which is beyond body and beyond just psychological companionship, there is a certain beautiful energy around there.

So those who have come to witness, they have come to lick that little bit of honey that spills over. Well, just now, quite a few here have come out of their Bhava Spandana. Even if they did not experience anything, somebody else was in a certain state – just looking at that, there is a lot of benefit. Simply because you saw somebody else in union. With what they are uniting, you do not know, but somehow, they have redrawn their boundaries, at least the boundary is little larger. When that process is happening, even those who witness benefit immensely.

So similar things are happening in Vivaha, on a lesser scale. We can scale it up, but then we will have to face various consequences which we will see, because people have to live twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years. In today's world, where people are counting microseconds, fifty years seems like imprisonment, they cannot even think about it. A whole lot of people would back out of marriage, "Oh, my whole life!" Previous generations very easily said, "Till death do us apart." I don't think any priest is saying that anymore; he wouldn't dare.

So, taking social realities into consideration, we have calibrated Vivaha to a certain extent – one step more than what the society expects. But if you do more than that, it won't be nice.

Spouse and Sadhana – Is There a Conflict?

If he has to be supportive to your spiritual process, you must make your spiritual process very profitable for him. He must see that, with spirituality, you have become so exuberant, so joyful, so wonderful. Then he will say, "Meditate, come on! Have you done your meditation today?" But if your idea of spirituality is to tell your family, "From today, I am not going to cook, I will only serve you groundnuts. They have told me in Isha that soaked groundnut has everything." This is not going to work.

If you make your spirituality profitable for your partner, then he will ask you every day, "Have you done your morning kriya?" This must be your sadhana. You must see that your spirituality works

for him, that you have become a much more wonderful person than he had ever seen. Then he will make sure you are doing your morning kriya, producing results for the family.

But there are certain families where, if someone sits for 15 minutes of meditation, they will come and shake them, "Why are you closing your eyes?" If you have gotten into that kind of a situation, where they protest about anything new, where they are simply insecure about every little thing, then I do not think you have a family. Sorry, I am very brutal but let's face it. Family means two people or four people are working towards each other's wellbeing. They are concerned about each other's wellbeing. If there is no such concern, you really do not have a family. It is time to look at it.

To Remarry or Not To Remarry?

Let's talk about children generally, first. In today's world, a child is not an automatic happening after marriage. There was a time when there was no other way. If you got married, children kept coming. But in today's world, a child is not automatic, it is generally planned. You must understand that once you have a child, you have a twenty-year project. If your child is very competent, a fifteen, sixteen-year project. So when you choose or decide to have a child, you must be ready for at least a fifteen-year project. If you don't have that commitment, you shouldn't get into this; it is not necessary because no child is knocking on your womb and saying, "Get me born." If you are not sure whether you can provide this kind of support or not, you shouldn't get into that misadventure of producing children.

Thinking just one more marriage will settle the child is a very wrong idea. I am not saying it will not settle it, maybe it will. But just thinking that "The child's biological father did not work, if I bring in another man, everything is going to be fine" is a very dangerous idea. I would say such things work only ten percent of the time. Ninety percent of the time it creates more problems than solutions. I am not questioning why you broke your marriage, it is up to you. If you have chosen to break it, you must at least make yourself competent to play the role of being a complete parent for the child in every possible way. But because you are longing for something else, the child also longs along with you. Please do not bring up your children in such helpless ways that they are always longing for someone who is not there.

You may have an eight-year-old boy. How much time does your eight-year-old want to spend with you? Barely any. He is busy with his own stuff -- unless you made him into such a helpless creature that he has to cling to you all the time, otherwise he has his own things to do. That is the nature of life; children have their own things to do. You just have to keep one eye open to see that they don't end up doing wrong things for themselves. They don't have to do everything with you.

So, if you want to remarry -- that is up to you. That is a choice you have to make. Don't put it on the boy. Make the boy in such a way that he neither needs you nor his father. He is fine by himself. He just needs your support and care, nothing else. Whatever you do, there will be a consequence. If you do not get married, there will be one kind of consequence. If you remarry, there will be another kind of consequence -- one you have already experienced, so you may be able to handle it better -- we don't know. But both will have their consequences. And consequences need not necessarily be pleasant or unpleasant. It simply depends on how you carry them with you. If you joyfully carry the consequence, it will be a labor of love. Otherwise, it will be just labor.

The Beauty of Motherhood

There are many associations we make to conduct our life process. We make associations of business, nationality, community. But among all these things, family is a fundamental association. You must understand family for what it is, and conduct it for what it is. The problem is we get overwhelmed with emotion and raise it to another place, which it is not. In many ways, my mother never tried to influence us in any way. By not wanting to influence us, she was the biggest influence. What human beings have to offer you, and what you have to offer them should not be trampled upon. But the illusions we create around them must be trampled upon, otherwise we will miss the beauty of people coming together and sharing things.

In many ways, family means "the closest association." That means you have to constantly step on each other's feet. When you constantly step on each other's feet because you are sharing the same space, it brings a certain level of understanding and maturity. Suppose you have a Facebook family. You can have a family of 10,000 without any problems because you don't have to

share anything with anybody except pictures. It does not challenge you. Suppose you do not like someone on Facebook, you can just click and they are gone! That is not the case with family. One moment, they do something and you hate them, but you can't click them away.

When people stay together, either by bondage or choice, they mature because maturity happens when you rise above your likes and dislikes. There are so many things that you do not like about your parents, children, husband, wife. Initially, it irritates the hell out of you, but after some time, you rise beyond it. If you rise beyond it by giving in and saying, "The hell with it!" that will not help. But if you rise beyond it consciously, you have turned spiritual. Without intention, you have become spiritual. That is the most beautiful way to do it.

Family is a training ground where you rise beyond likes and dislikes. But because some people cannot get along with their families, they want to move into the ashram. I tell them, "If you find living with three people too challenging, you are not fit to live with 1,000 people!" If you are doing great with your family and you want to move into the ashram, that is great, you have passed the test. But if you cannot live with a few people, how are you going to live with 1,000 people?

Above all, family is very important to fulfill your physical, psychological, financial and social needs. You formed an association that you call "family" to fulfill your needs. Do not forget this. Do not suddenly act like Mother Theresa and say, "I have done so much for you." Right now, you may feel like a sacrificial goat in the family. But everything that you do within the scope of the family need not work out just because you think they are your people -- that is just your thought. They are just people. If you give yourself totally to them and make their lives beautiful, they will yield to certain things.

More horrible things happen within the family in terms of anger, hatred and struggles than what happens between two enemy nations. I am not saying this is right or wrong. But you made your association for your needs to be fulfilled, and now you are expecting all the life that evolved out of this family to happen the way you want it to. This does not mean all of them must turn out the way you want them to be -- they will not. Just remain in gratitude and do the best you can. "But they are suffering. I don't want them to suffer." Yes, we

don't want them to suffer. Not just because they are your family, we don't want anybody to suffer. It is time that you enlarge your desire to all. "I don't want anybody to suffer."

During the 20s, 40s and even 60s, family meant "crime" in America -- the mafia. Even today, that is what it means. I want you to understand this, what you see as evil on this planet is not coming from some devilish source. It is human beings who think, "Only these three people belong to me. The rest don't belong to me." It is what they perceive as wellbeing for these three people that causes all the rubbish to everything else. It may be a family, community, race, religion or nation. It is this limited perspective of life that causes all the evil on this planet, and it starts with the family. Please expand your idea of family.

Your children may have taken only one cell from you. But how much have you taken from this planet? How many cells? The whole of it, even if you cannot think beyond your biology! The planet and everything that comes out of it is more of a family than somebody who just took one cell from you. You may not like this at all, especially just after Mother's Day, but the beauty of motherhood is not in reproduction. The beauty of motherhood is in inclusion. It is not because your mother reproduced you, bore you and let you out. That is not why a mother is precious. She is precious because, in many ways, she saw you as a part of herself. It is not the biology; it is the inclusiveness. Suppose your mother bore you and never bothered about you, she would be your worst enemy. It is not the biological process that is significant here. It is the willingness to include another life as part of yourself. It is that beauty we are trying to celebrate with Mother's Day.

Weeding out the Lies

Over the years, I have been observing that in their enthusiasm to come to the Isha Yoga Center, unfortunately, a few people lie about where they are going. This is just one of many examples of people lying to their family, spouse, boss, and whoever else is around them, on a daily basis. When you make lying a part of your life, having harmonious relationships is difficult. In any relationship, it is absolutely important to weed out the lies. Only then can you have a beautiful relationship. If you lie even once, they will start doubting anything you say. People lie because they do not have the courage to face a little bit of unpleasant-

ness that may arise from telling the truth. Please face this unpleasantness.

If, after some consideration, you decided you want to do something and someone around you is against it, assert that you are going to do this. If you tell the truth, there may be some friction, but there will be a relationship, respect, and regard. When you are lying because you want to avoid unpleasant reactions, it will ruin the relationship. They will not know anymore if what you are saying is the truth or a lie. It will become an endless struggle within the other person, and in turn in the relationship. Therefore, tell the truth. It is important to stand up for what matters to you. Especially when it comes to yoga, you are doing something for your wellbeing. Standing up for yourself is good for you, for your relationships, and also for yoga. Initially, people around you may be upset, but after some time, it will settle. At least they will know they can trust you.

Trust is a fragile thing. If someone trusts you one hundred percent, in a way, they are making themselves vulnerable to you. They allow you to get close to them. That is why if you break the trust in some way, it is going to hurt them. Another aspect is – how effective you are in the world depends on the amount of trust you have earned. Even with the greatest intelligence, capability, and knowledge, if you do not earn the trust of people around you, they will not let you create anything in the world. One of the simplest ways to earn trust is to be straight. Whether what you did was right or wrong, smart or stupid – be straight. Initially, it may be uncomfortable. But after some time, once people see that whatever you do, you are willing to own up to it, trust develops.

If you earn the trust of ten people, in some way, you have the strength of ten people. If you earn the trust of a million people, in some way, you have the strength of a million people. All of us should take every possible care to build and preserve trust. Breaking trust is easy – fixing it, not so much. When trust is damaged, the first thing is to own up to what you have done, rather than finding devious ways to hide it. If you take responsibility for your action and establish for yourself and people around you how you will be in the future, there is a chance to rebuild trust. But if you repeatedly break people's trust, no one will be with you. It is not just about maintaining good relationships with others. Only if people trust you can you create something in the world. Being truthful and building trust is not a question of

morality. It is the most sensible and effective way to live.

How To Be A Good Friend and Avoid Being A Bad One

You are always making friends among those who support your way of thinking, feeling, understanding, liking, and disliking. All you are seeking is some supporting substance for whatever nonsense you have made out of yourself.

It happened last winter, a tiny little bird enjoyed the fall time a little bit too much and didn't start its journey south early enough. It started a little late in the winter and tried to fly out, and it just froze and fell down. A cow was passing that way and it dropped a heap of dung. The dung fell right over the bird and covered it. The warmth of the dung slowly defrosted the bird and he started feeling good and started tweeting happily.

A cat was going that way. It heard the tweet, looked around, and saw that the tweet was coming from inside the dung. He pushed the dung off, pulled the bird out of the dung and ate him up. So, whoever heaps you up in shit need not necessarily be your enemy. Whoever pulls you out of shit need not necessarily be your friend. And above all, when you are in a heap of shit, learn to keep your mouth shut.

Good Friends Say What Needs to be Said

If you are a friend to someone, you don't have to nag them with what is wrong with them; that is not the point. But at the same time, you must have the courage to be unpopular with people. In trying to be popular with people, in just trying to maintain some kind of pleasantness around you, see how much unpleasantness you have buried within yourself.

If you bury unpleasantness, if you put seeds of unpleasantness into the soil, you will reap fruits of unpleasantness. If you really have a friend, you must have the courage to be unpopular with him or her, and still be loving and okay with him. Right now, your friendships are always made on agreements, likes and dislikes. But even if you are apples and oranges, you can still be good friends. A true friend is someone who has the courage to tell you what shit you are, and still be loving and nice to you – that is friendship.

Good Friends Have The Courage to be Unpopular

On a certain day, three generals from the US Army met. They were on a tour of the Grand

Canyon, along with their troops. The first general wanted to brag about the courage and the spirit of obedience in his battalion, so he said, "There is no other battalion like mine. The level of courage and obedience is so high. Real courage! Let me show you an example." He boomed "Private Peter!"

Private Peter came running, "Yes, Sir!" – "You see this," the general pointed at the Grand Canyon. "I want you to just take a leap across the canyon, now!" – The man just ran, full speed and took off. Obviously, you know where he landed. Then the second general laughed and said, "That is nothing. Look at this." He said "Trooper Higgins!" – "Yes, Sir!" Trooper Higgins arrived. – "It is an emergency. I want you to fly and go across the canyon and inform my officer there about this." – The man flapped his hands, and you know what happened. The third general just kept quiet. The others nudged him and said, "What about yours?" And they laughed, "No courage." – Some of the general's men were loitering around, so he said, "Hey you." One of them came. The general said, "Now, look at that down below," and pointed to a swirling, quick-moving stream, which was just two hundred meters from a steep waterfall. He said, "I want you take this little canoe, and cross the river." The guy looked down and said, "General, it looks like you have been on your whiskey once again. I am not going to do such a damn stupid thing." The general turned to the others and said, "See, this is real courage."

Be a little more courageous in your friendships. Be ready to lose them, it's okay. At least if you care, you must do what is good for the other, not for yourself.

Good Friends Aren't Conditional

There was a doctor I knew who was a beer drinker. When I met him he was almost seventy years of age – a big man with a big gut. Sometime ago, he used to steadily visit a friend of his. Whenever he went, the friend would serve him beer and both of them would have a drink. Whenever they had time, either his friend came here or he went there, whichever way.

Suddenly one day, the friend met some Guru and he started doing spiritual practices and gave up his beer. So the doctor went about telling me this whole story very elaborately, and said that was the end of a great friendship. Never again did he want to go to his friend's house because the man had stopped serving beer. Lots of friendships last

like this. As long as something is flowing, it is there. The moment it is gone, everything is gone.

If you do not have a real friend in your life, you miss something. After all, what is a friend? A friend is another confused human being like you. A friend does not mean he is a perfect human being. It is just that when two people are relaxed enough to at least approach each other sincerely, then they become friends. Your friend is as much of a mess as you are, but if two people can be in an atmosphere sincerely with each other, he becomes your friend. You must have lots of real friends, not just one. If you do not even have one, it is better you do something about your life now.

Friendship – An Overlapping of Life

I made my first friend at the age of three or four, after they sent me to school. I built such a bond with him, he was more than anything else to me. I still remember his name. I am sure he doesn't.

I had a wide variety of friends, hundreds of friends all over the place, but that's different. I am talking about the bond that I built with real friends – I always thought it was absolute. But over a period of time, with the experience of life, I realized there are very few people who see friendship like that. Most people see friendship as context-oriented. When you are in school, you have one kind of friend. When school is over, you just drop them and pick college friends. When college is over, professional friends, and whatever else. That's how people look at friendship. I've not been able to look at it like that. I am not disgruntled, but it has been a learning experience about human nature.

My need for friendship was never too much but the moment I formed a friendship, I always thought it was for good and in every way absolute. I've found good friends here and there, but even for them, as life situations change, their needs and their focus on the friendship changes. For me it never changes.

I wouldn't say it is heartbreaking, but definitely it is disappointing that most people cannot form deep relationships in their lives. They can form relationships only according to their needs; they cannot form relationships beyond their needs. A relationship just for the sake of relationship, that is not there in most people. They form a relationship when they need it; when they don't need it, they break it.

I am a little bit of a fool in such matters. Even now if I meet an old school friend, I still approach him the way I knew him at that time. But he is somewhere else, no longer the way he was. Probably they move on with life and I don't. I have always stayed a little outside of it. I valued life that way, so I always kept it that way. I think it continues to be so even today.

I think life has been phenomenally generous with me. When I say generous, I am not talking about material things but the way life treats me wherever I go, the way it opens up for me without any effort. The life process is willing to open up all its secrets to me probably because of the bonding that I form with whatever I sit with. Even if I am in touch with a simple inanimate thing, I form a certain relationship with it. For example if I look at what Mysore means to me, I have a very deep bonding with that place simply because I spent a large part of my growing-up period there. I am not looking at it emotionally or sentimentally as people normally would. It is just the level of involvement I had with the land, the trees, the hills, with everything around. Lots of things have changed in the last 30 years, but still I can see so many places that I walked upon, how deeply I looked at things, and the billion questions that I asked at a billion different places in Mysore. It forms a very different kind of bond which brought me to a certain level of quest within myself.

For me, Mysore means a billion questions and at the same time an incredible answer too. Friendships also meant the same thing for me. Those few moments that I shared with someone, not necessarily just in terms of emotion – I was really not emotional about anyone in that sense – but somehow knowingly or unknowingly, moments of sharing were moments of uniting and becoming one in some way. I never saw sharing as giving and taking; I always saw sharing as two lives overlapping each other. I did not see friendship as an advantageous or useful thing, something that will help you live better or whatever else.

Even now when I travel around the world and meet all kinds of people, I don't network with them, I don't keep their phone numbers, I don't try to contact them, but I share something very deep with them in those few moments of being together and many of them do share that with me too. But my sense of that sharing is a permanent process while I see that for most people, it is a passing process.

Probably my idea of friendship is too old-fashioned, or I don't know if it was ever in fashion. Maybe it is a little silly, maybe it is not socially savvy, but in terms of life, I think my ability to bond with anything or anyone deeply – whether it is a tree, a place that I sat upon, a piece of land, a rock or people – has in many ways been the key which has opened up dimensions of life and nature to me.

So, for me, friendship is not an advantageous transaction or give-and-take, for me friendship is a certain overlapping of life.



PARENTING AND EDUCATION

Is Childlessness a Bad Omen or a Blessing?

If reproduction was fulfillment, just think how much fulfillment there should have been in the world by now? But that has not happened. We need to look at why someone would want to have children. One aspect is there is a natural instinct pushing you towards the sexual act. But that need not result in children because we have handled it with contraceptives.

The reason people want to have a child is because you are longing for a very deep sense of involvement with life. Your involvement with your husband or wife comes down after a while, so you want something new and you think a child would be good. What you actually want to experience is a deep sense of involvement with another life. But this involvement need not necessarily be inspired by biological oneness. This can be brought forth from your own awareness and intelligence.

Suppose when a woman delivers a child, they actually gave someone else's child to her, she will still experience everything that she has to experience with that child. Emotional and psychological closeness can be the basis of oneness that a human being experiences. What does it matter whether the child has come out of you or out of someone else? It is how deeply you accept and include this person as a part of yourself which gives you that experience. It is more psychology than biology.

If you knew a tremendous sense of involvement with life, the need to have a child will disappear. If you really want to bring up a child, there are so many who need to be brought up. There are too many children who do not have parents in this world. Let us do something about that.

You are Complete Without a Child

You should not bear a child to fulfill your needs. This is not a good way to bring a child into the world. Unfortunately, 99% of children come into the world like this. You, as a life, are complete by yourself. This life does not have to reproduce to feel complete. There are people who have delivered one dozen children. Do you think they are all complete? Nature has its tricks to somehow make you reproduce, to make you believe that if you bear a child, your life will be fulfilled. There is no need to succumb to those things.

Socially also, society has conned you into this. For a long time in many societies, they said, "If you do not bear a child, you are not a woman. You are barren, you are a bad omen." It is the burden of all this that is behind the question. There is a big social stigma attached to this. If those who do not reproduce are a bad omen, then all those who walked the spiritual path and never bothered to do those things – all the sadhus and sanyasis, Vivekananda, Jesus – should also be considered bad omens. But they are the people whom you worship!

Human Life in Peril

Does that mean to say no one should have children? That is not the point. If a child is born, it is fine and we must create a conducive environment for the child to blossom. But there is no need to succumb to the notion that a woman's life is unfulfilled unless she has a child because it is a very prejudiced idea created by society.

Today, a woman who does not bear a child is doing something wonderful for the world, considering our population is 7.3 billion and half of humanity is languishing in such terrible conditions. If you try to provide good conditions for all 7.3 billion people, the planet will be finished. They are expecting that by 2050, there will be 9.6 billion people on this planet. That means the whole world has to live with 40% less resource than what we are enjoying right now.

Resources do not mean diamonds or gold, it means 40% less food, water and air! Fifty percent of the world's population does not have enough nourishment in their body. They are barely living

like human beings. If you reduce it further by 40%, you can imagine what the life of a human being will become. No matter how rich and well-to-do you are, the kind of life someone born today will have will be very difficult, if we don't bring down the population.

When that is the situation, more women who do not bear children would be a blessing for the planet. I hope more women make that choice.

Pregnancy Care – A Holistic View

In India, so much care was taken about what should be around when a woman is pregnant. What type of people she should or should not see, what she should read and not read, what type of smell should get into her – her whole atmosphere was controlled. These days it is all gone. Pregnant women are going to the office, sitting in the cinema, sitting in the bar – it is a different scene now. Otherwise, once a woman was pregnant, she was taken care of like she was a precious jewel because that is what makes the difference as to what kind of impressions you put into the fetus. What kind of impressions the woman puts into herself also go into the child that is being born. Not only that, it is also very important how you keep yourself before the fetus has taken on life, because you want to attract a life which is better than yourself.

So conception itself was taken care of. If two people got married, before any kind of consummation happens, the first thing was they went to the temple and spent time there. Only then were they supposed to consummate and conceive, because they do not want to produce a child who is just like themselves. They want to attract another life which is a little better than them. So on every level, from conception to all aspects, care was taken so that life happens in the best possible way right from day one.

Becoming a Parent? Are You Ready?

Reproduction is not just about you and your mate; you are producing the next generation of people. Is it not a tremendous responsibility? How the world will be in the next 25 years is determined by what kind of children you are producing today, isn't it? So they should not happen accidentally, they should not happen un-lovingly, they should happen consciously. They must happen in utmost pleasantness.

In today's world, unlike what it was a few decades ago, you are able to choose when to have a child. It was not so in the past. Children just happened; people did not choose most of the time. So now when there is such a choice, it is very important that parents look at this – whatever their aspirations, whatever their goals – if you want to bring a child you must understand that this is a 20 year project. If your child does well it is a 20 year project. If he does not do well, it is a lifelong project. When you start on a 20 year project, you must have at least a 20 year commitment. Our emotions, our thoughts, our ideas may change as we are moving on. Many discords, disagreements and struggles happen. When two human beings are in a certain level of proximity, certain level of sharing, many things happen, but because we have a 20 year project we must be committed at least for 20 years.

This much maturity and commitment one must have before they decide to bear a child, otherwise it is not needed for you. You are still a child; you can fight and go away today. You can disagree with somebody and leave the house today. If you are in that condition, you are still a child, you don't need another child. Asking a child to bear another child is not fair, so you don't have to do it. You will be doing a great service to the world because right now our only problem is excessive human population.

How Should Our Parents Influence Our Lives?

In the yogic science, we look at human life as a full cycle if one lives up to eighty-four years of age. In this cycle of life, which involves a little over one-thousand-and-eight cycles of the moon, the first quarter is when the influence of the parents is upon us energetically. In terms of karmic influence, parentage can only influence us up to twenty-one years of age. After that, we are not supposed to be influenced by them. We can only live in gratitude for whatever they have done. First of all, they have brought us into this world, and they have done many other things out of their love and involvement.

One should not be influenced by the patterns of parentage after twenty-one because it is important that one's life is a fresh life, not a repetition of what has happened in the previous generation. There is a karmic influence which definitely influences everybody up to twenty-one years, but

beyond this age, there is no such thing. A whole lot of people may depend on parents psychologically, financially, or socially, but essentially this karmic bond breaks at the age of twenty-one. We should not look for parental nurture after twenty-one years. After that, it is a bond of relationship, of love, and of gratitude. Those things can stay forever.

6 Tips to Be a Truly Great Parent

A few hundred years ago, John Wilmot, an English lord, said something significant about parenting: "Before I got married, I had six theories about bringing up children. Now I have six children and no theories." So what should you do in terms of parenting? Look back at yourself when you were a child – what kind of parents would have been the best? Remember what it was like to be a child, and you will clearly know.

Unfortunately, people have been made to believe that children are all born improper and we have to correct them, which is not true. If you look at parents and children, generally, at least children below ten years of age are definitely more joyful. Then who should be the consultant for life – those who are more joyful, or those who are falling apart within themselves because they do not know how to handle their offspring? Children want to emulate what you do. If you set an example as someone worth looking up to, you do not have to do much parenting.

#1 Evaluate Yourself

Before you decide to have a child, you must evaluate yourself in every aspect – the way you sit, stand, speak, and react to situations. Ask yourself, if you were a five-year-old, would you like and look up to this person? Another thing you could do is spend sufficient time with children to see if they like you, and if you like them. This way, a lot of wisdom would blossom, and fertility clinics would close down.

#2 Create the Right Atmosphere

If you already have a child, all you have to do is create a loving, supportive, and invigorating atmosphere. There is really nothing to teach. You came here a few years earlier than the child. What you know about life that the child does not know are just a few tricks of the world, how to survive and how to make a living. But you do not know a deeper dimension of life. These tricks need not be taught to children too early. They will learn them

later on. Right now, when a child enters your life, it is time to learn, not to teach. Children may not know what is dangerous, what is nice, and things like that. But hopefully you have a certain wisdom about life around you, which children may not have. If they are moving towards danger, exercise your wisdom. Otherwise, children are able to conduct life more joyfully than you. Learn those aspects from them.

Do not teach them commandments that have not worked for you, and that you yourself could never follow. In every society, there are some kinds of commandments. If everyone practiced them, the world would be very different. Obviously no one practiced them, but still these commandments survived because people teach them to their children. If you want your children to be better than you, the first thing you have to do is to establish integrity, because wherever they go, this will sustain them. If you try to teach your children things that you are not able to follow yourself, obviously they will see through that after some time. Your words and your behavior should match. If you create a loving and vibrant atmosphere, they will be fine.

#3 Skip the Toys, Climb a Tree

You have to physically nourish and mentally ignite children about things. The simplest way is to take them out into nature, where everything, from an insect to a flower, is exciting. But most parents today want to buy some stuff, throw it in the children's room, lock it – everything is padded so that they cannot hurt themselves – and the parents can go to a party. That is not parenting.

Billions of dollars are spent every year on toys for twenty to thirty percent of the children on the planet, while the remaining seventy percent never get a toy in their lives. Those who are bought these toys are the ones who suffer most, on a mental and emotional level. The others may suffer because of lack of nutrition and other basic requirements. But the affluent ones are going through inner turmoil.

If instead, you take the trouble of taking your children out, making them climb a tree, walking somewhere with them, taking a swim or some such thing, the child will grow up physically and mentally healthy.

#4 Prepare Yourself for a 20-Year Project

Once you have a child, it is a twenty-year project – if they do well. If they do not do well, it is a lifelong project. If you are not ready for that, you

should not get into it. Unfortunately, many couples think that for their marriage to survive, they have to have a child. A child is not a personalized project. We are creating the next generation. In some way, the next generation should be at least one step ahead of where we are. If we do not aspire and work towards that, we should not have children. What is the point if the next generation is going to be just like us, nothing more?

And above all, humanity is not on the verge of extinction – there is no need for everyone to reproduce. It almost looks like we are trying to compete with the insect population in terms of numbers. It is time we slow down in many respects.

Those who decide to have children must have dedicated time for them, because this is about making the next generation better than who we are. And above all, you must fix yourself. You must be a kind of a person the child will look up to and love to be with. Then, even time can be adjusted. If they are really looking up to you, five minutes of contact can be worth five days.

The responsibility of having a child requires involvement. Suppose you made the mistake of having a child without being able to offer the necessary involvement, please hand over the child to someone who is loving, caring and joyful, someone who is able to give his or her life to the child. You can provide the financial support. Whether they are the biological parents or not – the child does not care. Whoever is most loving, most joyful, is the one who children would like to hang around with.

#5 Explore the Positive and Wonderful World

Nowadays it's not uncommon to find three-year-old kids glued to the television or smartphone screen. And we don't know what they are taking in and how they understand what's shown there because even you can't figure what's going on. One moment, somebody is talking about creating a beautiful world, the next moment there is a bombing happening, the next moment something else.

Every parent needs to think about what they want to expose their children to. The exposure that they have had is what will stick with them for life, not a moral teaching. You must expose them to all the positive, wonderful things in life. Positive things do not mean right versus wrong – simply life the way it is.

This may sound extreme, but I think if people want to have children, they should be ready to withdraw with them to a natural space for at least two months in a year, rather than living in city burrows or bird nests of apartments. Even if you have to live in a tent somewhere, children need to be in nature if you want them to be physically and mentally healthy and balanced, which is the most important thing.

#6 Provide Emotional Security

The number of people going crazy today is too large. In the European Union for example, which has enjoyed economic wellbeing for much of the last two centuries, thirty-eight percent of the population has psychological problems. This is mainly because they grew up in conditions where they were uncared for. There was emotional insecurity even about their parents. They did not know if their mother or father would leave them at some point. Now as adults, there is serious emotional insecurity about their spouses and partners. That man or that woman may leave you anytime. When there is no emotional security, human beings become psychologically imbalanced. If you want a generation of people to be productive, they either must be conscious or they must have emotional security – otherwise, they will go crazy. We have destroyed all these things, and then we wonder why we are not living well, why our children are acting crazy, why our children are shooting someone or shooting themselves. This is so because right from childhood, there is no emotional security.

For most people, I would say emotions make up at least eighty percent of who they are. Being such a big power, if you do not harness your emotions, if you do not make them into a positive force in your life, they can smother and destroy you. Today, being emotional is equated with having negative emotions. When we say someone became very emotional, it means he went a little crazy. We have to change this concept in the world. Why do we not acknowledge that joy, bliss, love, devotion and ecstasy are emotions?

Emotional security is absolutely important, because emotions are still the largest dimension of most human beings. If one becomes really conscious, then emotions do not matter. But until then, emotions play a significant role. So, if we want to bring up our children well, there should be a loving atmosphere around them all the time –

not just at home, but also in school and on the street.

Educating for Ignorance

You should not shape the thinking of others because if you successfully shape – usually you cannot succeed – but if you succeed in shaping the thought process of another person, that means you produced a carbon copy of yourself. That is not the intention of education.

The greatest thing that you can do when it comes to life sciences is, in every class that you handle, make sure that you say, “I don’t know” at least thrice. Let the children learn that they do not know, because ignorance is and will always be a much bigger possibility than knowledge.

In the yogic culture, we always train people to identify with their ignorance because knowledge is a very limited thing, but ignorance is a limitless possibility. Let children be in touch with that which is limitless, not the limitedness of the teacher or the textbook.

Education is not a Production Line

Today, the world is no longer about people, it is about the economic engine we have built. It has become bigger than us and we are afraid to stop it even for a moment, so we have to keep the engine going all the time. Unfortunately, education has mostly become about manufacturing cogs for this machine. We can't let the machine fail, so our children have become the spare parts and fuel needed to keep it running.

There are studies which say that if a child goes through twenty years of formal education and comes out with a Ph.D, seventy percent of his intelligence is irrevocably destroyed. Essentially, we have mistaken information for education. If you deaden the brain with too much information, the possibility of intelligence is definitely lost. What we accumulate and who we are should remain separate. Who I am should not be influenced by what I have accumulated – whether it is material objects, information or impressions.

Don't Mistake Intellect for Intelligence

The purpose of education is to expand the horizons of individual human beings. But that is definitely not happening in most places right now. As people get educated, they really can't get along with anyone! Those who are not so educat-

ed can live together. But once you become educated, you become isolated because that is the nature of the intellect. And education today is entirely intellect-based. There is no other dimension of intelligence in it. Mistaking intellect for intelligence is a serious error. It is like trying to drive your car on a single wheel instead of all four.

Intellect can function only with the backing of your memory. Or in other words, your intellect functions with accumulated information. If your memory is removed, your intellect is quite useless by itself. But there are other dimensions of intelligence within you that do not need the support of memory. If education systems do not focus on activating these dimensions of intelligence, you will create a workforce but no geniuses.

The Best People Should Go Into Teaching

But more than the systems themselves, we have to upgrade those who deliver the system. If we do this, every system will work well. If we are interested in the future generations, the best people in the world must go into teaching. What a child needs is inspiration, not just information. We need to completely take away the idea of instruction from the teaching process.

You think you need to instruct someone only if you have assumed they are of a lower intelligence than yourself, which is a serious mistake. There is sufficient scientific data to show that a thirty-year-old is not as intelligent as a child before he even enters school. The only reason we look smart is because we have more information than the child, which we try to show off through instruction. Instead of instruction, we need to empower teachers to inspire and transmit what really matters to them. Then, a child would surely sit up and listen, and every school system could become a fruitful process.

Intelligence need not be influenced, it needs to be inflamed. The purpose of education is to decondition intelligence, so that it becomes active, adapting to situations and doing what is appropriate. That is the essence of intelligence. But today, education systems are trying to condition the intelligence one way or the other. If human intelligence applies itself, every little thing will explode into a new cosmos by itself. This is what a human being is here for – to enhance life in a way that no other creature can. But right now, the only thing that is important is what serves our economic engine. What will earn you more money has become the fundamental question. If we do not

remove this from our education system, there will only be a manufacturing unit, not education.

Education is not a production line. It is an organic happening. You cannot create an education system independent of the society in which we exist. Are we as a society willing to cultivate an eco-system suitable for a child to grow up in the best possible way? This is a question all of us should ask ourselves. Are we going to do what we like to do, or are we going to be conscious of how every action of ours will impact future generations? It is very important that we look at this because educating a child is not just a teacher's, parent's or school's business – it is the responsibility of the entire society.

The Privilege & Responsibility of A Teacher

Today happens to be Teacher's Day because it is the birthday of Dr. Radhakrishnan, the second President of India, who happened to be a school-teacher to start with. It is a wonderful compliment to the teachers of the nation that one of our Presidents was actually a schoolteacher. In Indian culture, we have always recognized a teacher as a very important part of one's life, to the extent, we said: "acharya devo bhava", which means a teacher is like god. Because generally, growing children spent more time with their teachers than with their parents. The idea of parents sending children to school is: somewhere they know that someone else could be a better influence upon the children than themselves.

A teacher has a significant role in the making of an individual human being, in the making of a society, a nation and the world at large. And a teacher definitely plays a big role in the process of enhancing capabilities and developing an interest in a particular subject. Largely for many children, which teacher is teaching a particular subject determines whether they love or hate that subject. It gets identified with that person. If a student identifies with the teacher, if the teacher is inspiring enough, the subject suddenly becomes interesting.

Inspiring GenNext

People think there is no longer any significance to a teacher in today's generation because everything that a teacher can say, the Internet can say. In fact, I think the significance of teachers has gone up manifold because the burden of deliver-

ing information has been taken away from them. A teacher's job becomes mainly to inspire and enhance a student as a human being, which has always been the main task. A teacher is no longer just a tape recorder who reads something out and rattles some information to you. He is someone who is going to make a student's life by inspiring them to be in a certain way.

If we have to build any nation into something worthwhile, the highest caliber of people should go into school teaching. What kind of influence the child comes under in those first 15 years determines many things about their life. So the best quality of minds and the highest level of integrity and the most lively levels of inspiration should go into the making of a teacher. But today, we have set up an economic and social situation where if people cannot get anywhere, they become school teachers. This has to change. If this doesn't change, we will not build a society of any substance. We will build very low quality human beings, a low quality society and low quality nations. This is already happening. Inspired teachers are few in most schools. It has become a profession. No one is willing to walk an extra step to do what's needed. We have seriously failed on this in this country. There are hardly any inspired teachers.

A teacher does not mean 10 Ph.Ds hanging from his head. It is not just that someone should wait for the dole-out of what a teacher knows. A teacher means, in that person's presence, people should learn things that even the teacher doesn't know.

Children means they are humanity in the making. What you make of them when they are in your hands, is one of the greatest responsibilities and privileges a human being can have. Any human activity is significant only if we are able to touch another life. That you can actually shape another life is a tremendous privilege. If you have your own children, you won't have that. But as a teacher you have that privilege. When such a privilege is being vested in someone's hands, it is very important that the highest caliber of minds, and the highest integrity and inspiration goes into that.

Why Does My Education Seem Pointless?

Q: I'm pursuing my first year in Bachelors in Computer Science in CEG. My question is, all of us here have been through more than fifteen

years of education, but I haven't found an application or use for many of the things I've learned. So, why do I find some of the things I learned pointless?

Sadhguru: No, no, that should not be happening in an engineering college! I can understand that in a high school – most of them are pointless. But in a technical school, that should not be happening.

Our education system was largely created just to provide clerks for Her Majesty's service. There was no imagination behind it – obedience was the most important aspect of our education system. This is why you have to just mug up a whole textbook and puke it there. That is supposed to be excellence in education. I would not say that so much about technical education – I think it is different.

We wrote a policy on textiles in India, we wrote a policy on the rivers and agriculture, and right now, we are busy writing a policy on education. After my constant push, the government recently announced that in the future, only fifty percent of the time in school should be focused toward academics, and the rest should be focused towards sport, art, music, craft and a variety of things. This was announced just about a month ago. Announcement is fine, but the schools are not equipped to shift. I always said that for as much math and science, there must be that much music, art, and a variety of other things. Our schools are managed like this, but that is a small number.

Right now the central government has announced this, but to implement it on the ground is still far away. It needs human infrastructure, physical infrastructure, training and various things which are yet to happen in this country. It will take time, but at least that intention has come. We are seeing how the academic part of the school for all the children should be limited to three to four hours a day, max. The rest of the time, they must learn other things.

Right now we have created a nation where, if a farmer's son goes to the farm with his father and both of them are working on the land, then the father can be arrested for child labor. Yes, really! There is something very dangerous growing in the country. If you ask any farmer in the country whether they want their children to go into farming, it is just two to four percent. So in another twenty-five years when this generation passes, who is going to grow food in this country?

You may have technical knowledge, you may do an MBA and various things, but just go on the land and take out one crop, let me see. It is too complex! We think farming is for the illiterate, but it is not so. It is a very complex, meticulous operation. Just because he does not have formal education does not mean that he has no brains. He knows something very vital, and because of this, all of us are eating right now. Our stomachs are full. But this nation is in danger of not being able to grow its own food in the next twenty-five years.

Only a certain number of children need to go into academic education. Others need to learn other skills and a variety of other things to do in the country, for their own wellbeing. Not everybody's brains are made for academics. A whole lot of them simply suffer their academic life. Some of them find great joy in academics, but a whole lot of them suffer the examinations and studying. These people should not be doing academics; they should be learning some other skills where their aptitude is. But there is nobody to identify your aptitude – what it is that you could do well, with joy.

Between the ages of ten and fifteen, we must have a process in the education system where people can choose. Right now, one reason why everybody wants to go into medicine or engineering is because of social prestige nonsense. An electrician or a carpenter must have the same prestige that a doctor or an engineer has. Only then, education will get leveled out. Above all, a farmer must have a higher place in this society than any of us. He is feeding us.

Children and Discipline: What's the Best Way?

Essentially, in English, the word "discipline" means "a learning" or "to learn." When you say, "I am disciplined," that means you are always willing to learn. You are not stuck in some mode. Discipline is not just doing something in a particular way. If you constantly strive and are willing to learn how to do everything better, you are disciplined.

You cannot impose learning but you can force people to do certain things. But once you start forcing people, if it's for a short while it can be done, but if it is long-term, your life will go, their life will go. In trying to enforce it your life will go. Their life will go in trying to dodge it.

In my own childhood, whatever my family tried to impose never worked. But whatever was brought in as a kind of a culture in the family worked and it has benefited me immensely in many ways. It was just simple things. For example, wherever we were, we always went back home for lunch and dinner. It wasn't possible for breakfast because people were leaving at different times but lunch and dinner, the whole family always ate together. If one person didn't come, the whole family would be waiting. So, you could not "not go" on time. This was not an imposition. An atmosphere was created where you had to be a part of it.

Essentially, it is about doing what is needed in a certain way. If you want to have a certain quality of life you have to have a clean space. To keep the place clean you have to do certain things. If you're not willing to bend down and do that then you will live in a dirty place. So, first let's set our priorities right. If you make people understand why something has to be done, I'm sure every sensible human being is willing to do it. If you are a sensible human being you understand what is best and you do it. If you don't understand, if someone tells you, at least you will listen and understand. If you don't get anything, you are a donkey. Donkeys will get treated like donkeys. Even if people don't treat you like donkeys, you will live like a donkey.

In the house, it didn't matter what, even if the maid did not come, my mother would sweep the house twice, in the morning and evening, and swab the house once. She would not have her bath and eat unless the house was swept and swabbed. How will you let your mother do the whole thing by herself? So everybody pitched in to whatever extent they could. If only the maid was doing it and when the maid was not there my mother did not do it, we would have never thought of doing it because it would have been the maid's work. But whenever she was not there, without hesitation my mother was doing it, so there was no question of not doing it. Everybody had to do it.

It was these little things that made all the difference. Simple things like the way you leave your bed when you get up in the morning to where you leave your coffee cup – these things are not there in many families unfortunately. No one ever yelled at us if we didn't do these things. My mother would sit and do it. When you saw her doing it you had to pitch in and do it yourself.

Civilization has disseminated not through textbooks or preachers. It is essentially the way a family lives. Everything, from a bathroom to a dining table, how you leave them, these things were all set and it had to happen that way. Whether you participate or not, no one asked but how long can you just simply be like that? You cannot be. When everyone is doing it you also become a part of it and do it.

If you bring yogic practices into a child's life there is no way they cannot be disciplined. Practicing yoga brings discipline into life because you have to do certain things in a certain way. Otherwise it does not work. The way yoga is taught is so meticulous that once you start doing it with that sense of meticulousness, there is no way you cannot be disciplined.

How Sports Can Build the Nation

Q: It is very interesting to learn that you are using sports in the process of reaching out to communities in rural areas. How did Isha Foundation begin to use sports as part of its community outreach and development program?

Sadhguru: This happened many years ago when we started our first Action for Rural Rejuvenation program. We wanted to offer a meditative process to rural people. When we started the first class, a little over one hundred people came.

On the third day, we served everyone a lunch. But then on the fourth day, half of the people dropped out. I asked, "Why?" They had been told not to come because it was not okay for them to eat with someone of another caste. I decided I am not conducting this program anymore if this was going to be the basis. So I stopped the program midway. But then, when I thought about it, I saw that this was a problem that was a few thousand years old. It is not going to get solved overnight. The problem was that I had asked them to eat together, which became a contentious issue. So I thought, if eating together is a problem for them, let's devise the program in such a way that they will play together.

They had no issues playing together, and it changed the whole dimension of Action for Rural Rejuvenation because, in playing together, they forgot who they were. That is the beauty of a game – once you jump into a sport, there is a certain sense of abandon in you that your identity collapses.

We always use games, every time, in every program across the world. Wherever we teach any meditative program, before we initiate people into meditation, there is always an hour of some kind of simple games that they play, where people become like children. They scream, run and play. If that sense of abandon is not there, if people cannot scream, laugh and jump, then they definitely cannot meditate.

Leveling the Playing Field

Caste and other kinds of prejudices are things that have been carried from generation to generation. But what we noticed is that once the teams formed in the village and league tournaments started across Tamil Nadu, whoever was playing well, he became the hero. Nobody identifies him by caste – he is their village champion and that is all that matters. Sport leveled the caste system, if not entirely, at least to some extent. It made inroads into each other's communities.

Even today, when they are having a match, you will see all the communities gather. They have forgotten who they are. Initially, maybe when they stand, they stand among their own people. As the game picks up momentum, the spectators will boil over and mix with each other. They are slapping each other's backs – they have forgotten who is who.

That is the beauty of a game. You cannot play a game without involvement. Involvement is the essence of any sport. If there is no involvement, there is no game. Sport brings such a sense of involvement that they become ready for bigger things. We use sport very effectively in villages to make them still and meditate, which they had never imagined possible in their lives. Vivekananda went to the extent of saying, "You are closer to God in kicking a ball than in prayer."

Sports and the Future of India

Q: As a nation, we face an enormous number of issues. What do you visualize as the role that sports can play in India's development as a nation?

Sadhguru: One thing is, for one billion people we do not have enough sport. For the one billion people that we have, we should have a team for every game on the planet. When a country like Costa Rica, with a population of five million, can send their team to the Football World Cup, why is it that with 1.25 billion people, we cannot produce a team?

This is simply because we have never taken sport as an important part of our life. In many ways, we have dropped our playfulness in this country, for which we are paying a very heavy price. It is time we bring back sport on all levels.

In schools, it is very important that at least fifteen to twenty percent of the time is spent in sport to make the child playful. A lot more can be taught to a child by making him playful, rather than just making him sit in a corner in a classroom. His body and his brain have to develop and become agile. If your physical body and your brain are not agile, what are you going to teach to that child?

It need not always be competitive sport. It can just be fun games, but people should play. It is very important for the physical body and the brain to develop. Only then can we develop a humanity which is competent. If that competence is not built at an early age, then later on, most people in the country will not be fit.

Fit for Life

I was talking to a group of very high profile business people and their families some time ago. I said, "None of you are fit for life." They said, "What do you mean? We are all doing fine." I replied, "Tomorrow morning, if all of you are walking on the street – let us say a tiger came. How many of you can climb a tree and save yourself? Not even one of you could do that. Only that guy who is sweeping the street, he may climb the tree and save himself. All of you, who think you are successful, you will be breakfast for a tiger."

Fitness levels are generally low in India. In the last few years, a little bit of enthusiasm has come, but that is only in a certain segment of society. This has to spread across the country.

If we want to build a great nation, first of all we should have healthy and strong people, and sport can play a very important role in making that happen. Without building individual human beings properly – well nourished, healthy and agile – you are not going to build a great nation. There is no such thing as nation – there are only people, and in this, sport has a significant role.

Empowering India Through Isha Vidhya

None of Isha Foundation's activities are based on any concepts or ideologies. It is based on the existing need of the people around us. There are people whose stomachs are full but they are still

not fulfilled. To such people we are talking meditation and enlightenment. If you just go beyond the boundaries of this ashram, there are people who rarely eat a full stomach. I will not do such an obscene thing and talk meditation or enlightenment to them. I will talk to them about eating better, living better. And their children are not sufficiently equipped to at least make their lives in such a way that they can eat better. Isha Vidhya is a tool to empower them towards that.

National boundaries, political identities and all these things don't mean anything to me, it is just that this mass of people that we call as India, have not had a good deal for the last few hundred years. Continuously they have had a bad deal. Invasions after invasions – people came, looted them, raped them, robbed them, left them. Nobody bothered to educate them or feed them, nobody bothered to empower them to do well in their life. Nobody was interested in them. Only now, in the last 15 years, our leaders are thinking fresh about building India as a nation, as a strong force, as a mass of people who can take care of themselves. They have done well in some areas, but they have goofed it completely in other areas.

India is a complex mess, not a simple mess. It is probably the most complex country in the world because the variety of languages, cultures and races is so enormous. If you handle it right, it could be very intoxicating and wonderful. If you don't handle it right, it could be killing. In all this, what we have is over one billion people. One billion people means about 17, 18% of the world's population in one country. If we have one billion well-educated, focused and vibrant people, there is no better miracle than that. They can do things that no technology in the world can do. One billion people, focused, educated and healthy – it will be incredible. But if you have one billion unhealthy, unfocused, uneducated people, there can be no greater tragedy. So Isha Vidhya is just a small effort in that direction to generate an educated, focused, healthy, next generation. That is the dream of Isha Vidhya.

Isha Samskriti: Cultivating Human Potential

Samskriti means to do life in an exuberant and equanimous way. This is the whole issue with most human beings – if they are equanimous, there is no exuberance in them. If they are exuberant, they are falling apart. If you know how to

be equanimous and exuberant at the same time, there will be no fear. Whatever situation you may face, life will always be beautiful. Once there is exuberance and equanimity in you, your destiny will not be ruled by what happens around you, but only by what happens within you.

Sanskriti is about growing a human being to his or her full physical and psychological potential, without the intention that the child should become a doctor, an engineer, or whatever else. Parents are always concerned about what their children will do for a living. If they are at their full potential, earning a living will not be an issue. When an earthworm can earn its living, human beings, who are supposed to be the peak of evolution on this planet, need not worry about earning a living if their body and mind are developed to their fullest capability.

In Sanskriti, we achieve this by using classical arts – music, dance, martial practices, yoga, and Sanskrit – as well as English as a passport for them, wherever they go. Unlike modern arts that people create out of some freaky instinct or for entertainment, these are consciously evolved arts that come from a deep understanding of the human system and the science of how to evolve it to its highest potential.

The Ideal Time to Start

The children come to us between the ages of six and eight, which is the ideal time – they are most receptive. When the varnashrama dharma was practiced, 0 to 12 years of age was balavastha [childhood], 12 to 24 years of age was brahmacharya [discipleship]. In this context, people often assume that there is a guru-shishya relationship, which is a misunderstanding. Gurus never hold relationships of any kind with their shishyas. You could compare the role of the Guru to the role of the sun in your life. It lights up and makes you see everything, and that is all.

Doing What Works

Obviously, in the past, people have set up similar education systems as we do now, but Sanskriti is not about reflecting tradition. I do not want people to be identified with the tradition – that again would be a restriction. This is about scientifically looking at how the human body and mind work, seeing what kind of activity would be best for them to blossom to their fullest, and doing that. What was done in the past was also an outcome of how the human system is made.

Every child would love this system of education. It is not a question of fitting in – a child need not fit into anything. Each one has to blossom according to his or her own nature. This does not mean doing whatever freaky things one feels like doing, which is a modern idea. Today, we equate individual compulsions with freedom. Sanskriti, in contrast, is a type of education where all compulsions are ironed out so that, over a period of time, a child learns the beauty and the freedom of being conscious and being able to do what is needed.

Particularly in India, once the economy gains momentum and people are doing better financially, the demand for teachers and performers of classical arts will increase immensely. In fact, the demand is already there. Today, a reasonably good music teacher can earn more than a doctor. There is no need to worry about how they will earn a living. Some of them will become performers of music and dance – locally, nationally, and even internationally. Others will become teachers of music, dance, Kalaripayattu, Sanskrit, and yoga. Yoga teachers are in huge demand right now. And no other yoga teacher in the world will be so rooted in this science, because from the age of six, the Sanskriti children are not just learning it, they are imbibing it from everything around them.

Dedicated to Profoundness

The type of yoga that they will deliver is a classical form, not a studio form, and the way they will transmit it is going to be phenomenally powerful, which cannot happen unless you are soaked in it. This not only applies to yoga but to all the other arts as well. You cannot learn Carnatic music, Bharatanatyam, Kalari, or the yogic sciences as a hobby on the side – you have to be absolutely immersed in them.

That is why we are trying to provide these children an atmosphere where they are immersed in these arts, all the time. Without that culture, without that atmosphere around them, they cannot develop this kind of quality. These arts demand a great amount of dedication and involvement. Whether it is classical music, dance, or Kalari – these disciplines are not about entertainment, fighting, social interaction, or grouping. All these aspects are served on the side, but the important thing is these are arts where not only to perform but even to just be able to appreciate them, you have to develop a certain profoundness of perception.

At the time in my life when I began to meditate for long hours and my perception deepened, I realized Indian classical music has such a profound impact on you. The music, dance, and other art forms that go out from Isha Samskriti are statements about the profoundness of life. We need to make a statement and a pitch for profoundness of life, because right now, the whole idea of modernity is a journey from profoundness to profaneness. Samskriti is an effort to reverse that.

The Next Step

Once the children go out into the world, they will make a subtle change wherever they go – just because of the phenomenal discipline and strength with which they have grown up. Anyone who grows up with that level of conscious discipline will go far. If physiologically and psychologically, they are truly mature, they will find their way in the world. We as an organization will support them in that too, and so will millions of volunteers across the world.

The children have really amazed me in many ways. For example, a few of the 15- to 18-year-olds were in the Inner Engineering teacher training. Among all the teacher trainees – mostly highly educated adults from across the world – the Samskriti children did best. They are already showing their mettle, but I do not want them to be put on an express pathway. If you become a full-grown tree, flowers and fruits will come. You do not have to try to extract them. These children will transform the world.

How Much Freedom Should Kids Have?

We have thoroughly enjoyed the skills that are hidden in your wrists – on the cricket field, of course! When it comes to parenting, this idea that we have to raise our children is a very Western idea. You only raise cattle, not human beings. You should not raise children. You just have to allow them to grow.

You just have to create an atmosphere of love, joy and responsibility. In your question, you used the word “freedom”. Freedom is a bad word that you should never utter. Nor should your children get used to the word. You must always bring into their life, a sense of responsibility for their wellbeing, health, growth and their ability to respond to every dimension of life. If the necessary responsible existence is there, freedom is a consequence.

The fundamental problem we have in the world today is that we have become goal-oriented. We are interested in the consequence, not in the process. If you want flowers in the garden, you do not talk about flowers. If you are a good gardener, you will never talk about flowers, you will talk about soil, manure, water and sunlight. If you manage these things, wonderful flowers will come.

Similarly, if you manage the conditions necessary for the beautiful blossoming of a child, then children will blossom. But if you try to raise them according to the molds that you create in your own mind, then every child will rebel because life cannot fit into the molds of the mind – mind has to fit into our life.

So leave your ideas about how to raise a child and just maintain an atmosphere of absolute love, joyfulness and responsibility. Above all, never let children see resentment, jealousy, frustration, depression, and anger in their parents. Make sure your children never witness these things at home. You will see, your children will blossom absolutely wonderfully. If you are focused on the consequence without taking care of the process, then the consequence that you desire will just be a dream. But if you take care of the process, the results will come.



ON LEADERSHIP

The Essence of Leadership

You're not looking at life to see what you can extract. A leader is someone who's looking at what he can offer... From what you take, you make a living. It's only from what you give that you can make a life. Sadhguru reminds us, “Business is about serving life. It's not the other way round. Life is not about serving business or commerce.”

The most basic tool is insight. That means you have some insight that others do not have – you are able to see something that others are not able to see. Otherwise, you are a contrived leader who has somehow gotten up there, and you will always be worried that you will fall down. Leadership means you are sitting on a perch. If you sit on a

perch and you cannot see any better than others, you will become a joke.

Once you sit on a perch, you must be able to see something that others are not able to see. It need not necessarily mean that you are able to do something better than someone else, but you are able to see better than someone else. Once you are able to see something that others cannot see, however clumsy you may be, you still become a leader. People will still look up to you because you are seeing something that they cannot see. This is most important.

Leadership – A Labor of Love

If your leadership is by accident, and not by any great vision or capability, I think people would do better without such leadership. Instead of having a stupid leader, if they don't have a leader, people will do something, you know?

A stupid leader can cause so much disaster that without a leader people may do something better. It may be a little chaotic but still they may do something better. Essentially, what a leader means is that knowingly or unknowingly you have taken the destiny of a few people into your hands. You have taken up that responsibility. When I say a leader, you need not necessarily be the leader of a nation or a large group of people. You are running a family; you are a leader, isn't it? In some way you have taken the destiny of a couple of people's lives into your hands, isn't it?

So, whoever is willing to take responsibility for one more life is a leader. It is just a question of the scale. According to one's capabilities people will choose the scale of leadership but everybody is a leader in some way. At least, if you have chosen to take your destiny into your own hands, you are a leader, aren't you? Only if you are a hobo, you are not a leader. You know what is a hobo?

An American tourist was visiting the U.K. A local person who was taking him around showed him a certain estate and said, "Here lives an aristocrat."

The American asked, "What is that? An astronaut?" "No, an aristocrat."

"What is that?" The Englishman was surprised that there could be a human being who didn't know what an aristocrat is. "Oh, you don't know what an Aristocrat is? An aristocrat means he doesn't have to do any work. Everything comes to him one way or the other. He always has a good place somewhere. Wherever he goes he has a

ringside seat and he does nothing, he lives off other people," said the Englishman.

'Oh that, in America we call them hobos.'

So that's a hobo. Unless you're a hobo, in some capacity you are a leader, isn't it? So once you understand you are a leader, it means either you have taken your own destiny into your hands or you have also taken the destiny of a few more lives into your hands. This is a certain responsibility.

If you want to lead any group of people, first thing is you must make sure that all of them fall in love with you. Yes? So, how do we do that? Do we give them a love pill? There is no such thing. If you want everybody to fall in love with you, first thing is that you must fall in love with all of them. Instantly. You must do it instantly, they will take their time. They will slowly, very slowly give in. They are privileged people. Once you are a leader, you are not the privileged one; you must understand, they are the privileged ones because they have their choices, you don't.

So, if you want to be a leader at your workplace, it is after all a major part of your life in terms of number of hours per day. You probably spend more hours at your workplace than anywhere else, isn't it? Isn't it so, for most of you? The number of hours that you spend at your workplace is maximum compared to anything else. When this is so, is it not important that we make this into a beautiful experience?

Sports for Leadership

Leadership and sports are very directly connected. All the fundamental qualities that are necessary for a leader are naturally brought forth when one learns to play a game.

The moment you get into a game, knowingly or unknowingly you become 100% participation. Unless you plunge yourself into it, there is no game. This is so for anyone. This is an absolute requirement for a leader. A leader learns to participate. He does not hold himself back in anything. He learns to give himself absolutely.

In many ways, sports sets the rhythm for every human being to become a leader in his own right. For example, another aspect which is most important for a leader that is naturally inculcated by playing a game is the desire to win or achieve – you cannot play a game unless you develop a strong desire that you want to win. Without this

there is no sport. At the same time, sports also sets this condition that you really want to win but you are willing to lose. If you lose, it is alright with you. This is most essential for a leader that he goes out to achieve things. At the same time, when things do not happen, he will not become a bundle of frustrations.

Whenever you set big goals in your life, many things don't happen. For people who do not set big goals, they may believe that many things are happening in their lives but that is because you are not aspiring for anything big.

The very fundamentals of leadership is that you aspire to achieve certain things, to take people with you towards that goal, and if it does not happen, for whatever reason, you will never become a bundle of frustration. These qualities which are most essential for leadership are naturally inculcated by the very nature of the sport.

Sports can become a tremendous tool in building leaders. We have seen this in our own experience with Isha's rural sports program and various other programs – in all of which sport is an essential component. We have seen how just because they are involved in a game, people are able to come out of their limitations and take up leadership for that moment to handle a particular situation. This in itself sets them up as a leader.

Transformative Leadership

If one has to become a leader, he has to transform himself into a larger possibility. What was essentially individual concern becomes a little larger concern in some sense. What is being looked forward to from a leader is that he should be able to see things that other people are not able to see. He need not be a super human being. He need not know everything. Most leaders do not know much, but they are able to see certain things that other people are missing and they are able to put people together for a certain common purpose. That makes them leaders.

Who you are – what your mind is, what your emotions are and how you are right now – will manifest in every action that you perform in the world. And once you are in the position of leadership, every thought and emotion that you generate, and every action that you perform has an impact on many people – maybe a few hundred people or a thousand people or millions of people, depending on what type of leadership you are in.

When this is so, it is extremely important that one who wishes to be a leader, in some way, focuses upon how he is within himself too, not just about how he performs in the world.

Transforming Yourself First

And once you have moved to a position of responsibility that is having a huge impact on many lives, it would be irresponsible for a leader not to be constantly striving to transform himself first. Essentially leadership also means, either you are transforming people's lives directly, or you are transforming situations which will in turn lead to transformation of life for other people. So transformation and leadership cannot be separated.

Our Common Aspiration

Whether you are leading a company, or a community, or a city or a country, leadership is the art of making people realize that somewhere, deep down, all our aspirations are the same.

The first time I was at the World Economic Forum, people looked at me very resentfully. They said, "What is a mystic doing at an economic conference?" I thought I should speak their own language, so I asked, "What do you do? What is your business?" This person said, "Well, I am working for the second largest computer manufacturer." I said, "You are doing computers..." I pointed out someone who was in the automobile industry and I said, "He is making cars. Somebody there is making a safety pin. It does not matter whether you are making a computer, car, safety pin or spacecraft, what is the fundamental business?" He said, "What? My business is computer."

I said, "Your business is not computer. The fundamental business is human wellbeing, isn't it? You might have forgotten why you are making a computer. Essentially, you are manufacturing computers to make human life better. Somebody is manufacturing a safety pin to make human life better. The essential business is human wellbeing, and that is my business too, so that is why I am here."

Integrity and Insight

What people expect from a leader is that, first of all, he is straight. People do not appreciate you manipulating them. You do not have to be brilliant or a genius or a super human to be a leader. You are straight – your integrity is always there – and you have some vision and insight into a few things. That makes you a leader.

When you are truly inclusive, you will naturally have an insight about everything. Then the right kind of people will naturally gather around you when they see a certain level of integrity in you, and things will happen, according to your capability, of course. You can never equate people's capabilities. People come with different capabilities, which is fine, but the question is just this: are you able to use yourself to the fullest extent or no? If you yourself are an issue on a daily basis, you cannot handle issues on the outside. If you make yourself in such a way that you are not an issue anymore, now you can attend to the outside issues to the best of your capability, and your leadership will happen effortlessly, without being stressful to you, or to anyone for that matter. That is transformative leadership.

Is Spirituality Relevant to Leadership?

In what way is spirituality relevant to leadership? As I said, spirituality means your experience of life has transcended the physical. If you look at your body, it is just a heap of food. What you eat is becoming you. What you call "my mind" is essentially a heap of impressions that you gathered through the five senses.

If you function only on physical and intellectual terms, you will be a poor leader because your body and mind are chained to the past. People are always looking forward to a leader who does not repeat the past. They look forward to a leader because he can create something that other people could not think of. He sees something that everyone else could not see. Unless there is a spiritual element, unless a human being has started experiencing life beyond his body and intellect, he will not create a new possibility. Without a spiritual element, a leader – whether political, economic or otherwise – is definitely handicapped.

A leader is someone who takes charge of the destiny of a large mass of people. Unless he is capable of organizing and directing situations towards the desired goals, he is not a leader. But that will only happen if you have some mastery over yourself. How much mastery you have of your own inner nature will decide how free you are from outside situations.

True Freedom

Most people's way of being is hugely enslaved to external situations. The nature of the situations in

the world is such that it doesn't matter who you are or how powerful you are, no one has 100% control over the outside situations. No one in this world functions 100% the way you want them to, but at least you must function the way you want.

If your inner situation functioned the way you wanted, how would you keep it? Naturally you would keep it in utmost pleasantness. You wouldn't know any tension, anger or other nonsense. The reason people are going through these things is simply because the fundamental faculties within them – their own body, mind, emotions and energies – are happening in reaction to external situations.

Is there a possibility where whatever the outside situation, one can be free from that within themselves? Each one of us is uniquely capable when it comes to outside realities. But when it comes to inner realities, all of us are equally capable. Because you are looking in the wrong direction, it looks so far away and impossible. If you turn around, it is just a simple reality.

Today in the world, whatever kind of leader you are, it demands extensive travel, handling complex situations and above all handling people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. When a human being has to constantly handle complex situations, he will naturally get pulled down if he is not spiritually established. People talk about burnouts these days. This is not happening because the work is difficult, but simply because we do not know how to manage our own systems. Managing these systems from outside will not help because they were created from within. But if you have access to that which is the source of this body, they can be managed from within.

Spirituality means gaining access to that dimension within you which is the very source of who you are right now. This is not about looking up, looking down or looking around – this is about looking inward.

A Tremendous Opportunity

Right now, we are trying to handle human wellbeing and the wellbeing of nations and societies in a very ad hoc way. Today, India as a nation is on the threshold of economic prosperity. We as a generation of people have the opportunity to move a large mass of people from one level of living to another. No other generation has ever had this opportunity. In the next 10 years, what kind of leadership we have will decide what we do with this. A leadership bereft of any spiritual content,

bereft of perception beyond the limitations of logical intellect and physicality cannot manage a situation like this with absolute clarity. It can only manage by chance. By chance, anything can happen, but if we are doing things by chance, we are a potential tragedy because we can fall at any time.

Indian culture is steeped in these technologies for inner wellbeing. This is something we must make use of. No other land has seen as much work towards human consciousness as this culture has. The best acknowledgement for this came from Mark Twain, one of the greatest intellects of the previous century. He came to India and had a good guide who took him to the right places. When he was leaving, he said, "So far as I am able to judge, nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the sun visits on his rounds. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked."

Sadhguru Quotes

On Being a Leader: As a leader, your every thought, emotion, and action impacts many lives. It's extremely important to work on how you are within yourself.

Being a leader does not mean dominating the situation. It means empowering people to do what they would not have imagined possible.

Unless a leader displays an infectious level of inspiration, sloth and inertia will prevail.

As a leader, you build trust when you give yourself 100%, so that people understand with your every action, you stand for them.

On Leadership: Leadership should be free of gender. Do not look at a leader as a man or a woman. Look at them for the qualities they exude.

Integrity, insight, and inclusiveness are the three essential qualities of leadership.

Leadership is not assertion of yourself. Leadership is the art of fulfilling the aspirations of everyone.

Leadership should not be an aspiration. It should be a consequence of competence.

Leadership means partnership, cooperation, mentoring, and support. It does not mean dominance. Dominance is tyranny.

On Business/Commerce: Commerce should serve, not lead humanity.

When you earn people's love and respect by how you love and respect them, it not only enriches your business – it enriches your life.

Whatever kind of business you are into, ultimately, there is only one business, that is human wellbeing.

Leadership – Finding the Order in Chaos

Q: Is it important for leaders to manage in a state of chaos, or do they need to bring that chaos down to a more structured way? For the corporate world, how do leaders need to think about that? Should they let the chaos kind of evolve into itself? Do they need to bring more structure to it?

Sadhguru: Chaos is not a choice. The choice that you have made is to reap out of the existing chaos. If you choose to make something chaotic, that will be stupid. It will go somewhere else.

For a gardener's mind, a jungle will look chaotic. But no, there is a very deep order there. That is why a forest will live for millions of years and a garden will not last for a month without maintenance. People are thinking of something as chaos because they have an external view of things. They do not have an internal, integrated view of that. If you understand the ecosystem – today, slowly human beings are beginning to understand – we understand that is the greatest order because that is the only thing which has lived for millions of years.

Stuck in Straight Lines

A snake will not move in a straight line. This does not mean its mobility is not good. Just travel without using your limbs, let me see. Without limbs, the snake has found a way and he is very effective. He finds his own way of life, he chooses his terrain accordingly and he manages.

Something looks chaotic not necessarily because it is chaotic but simply because you have a linear mind and something does not fit into your straight line.

So this is about different types of lives, different types of people, different types of terrains, different types of activities – to reap the best out of it, you have to harness that, rather than beating everyone into one type of system, because in that, you may produce some level of efficiency, but you will destroy people and situations. Essentially, you will destroy the existing ecology and try to create something new.

For example, to build anything in the ashram, we have never bought a bulldozer and leveled any land. Whichever way the terrain is, I design accordingly and build on that. When I go to the US for example, I see with great distress that if they want to build fifty houses, they just level out fifty acres completely. This is the worst thing you can do. You have no sense of how much life you are disturbing.

You think order means it must be in a particular way. No, there is a different kind of order, and if you do not allow that within the human mind, within the human consciousness and in the actions that we perform, then we become straight lines. Maybe somebody else appreciates us, but we are miserable doing what we are doing simply because we are straitjacketed all the time about how we should be and how we should do.

Instead of harnessing everything to its best the way it is, you want to turn everything the way you think it should be. This is essentially because you think too much of yourself. You think you are better than the natural forces that are working, which have shaped everything the way it has been shaped.

The Order of the Jungle

So chaos is not a choice. There is always a certain order, which is not logically correct. The order of the jungle is not logically correct, but it is the best order because it has lasted longer than anything else. Everyone is talking about building sustainable businesses. If you want a sustainable business, you must take to the order of the jungle.

Today, in India, we use the phrase “jungle raj” (Referring to the Hindi word – rule) because people believe a jungle means disorder. I am using the word “jungle” as a very superior order. It is a highly sophisticated order where you do not see any straight lines, but still everything is in place. Everything is in such a way that it can function like this for a million years and still last. That is definitely a superior order, isn't it?

How Meditation Can Save the Earth

There is a beautiful parable in the Indian lore. A man is sitting on the branch of a tree – the wrong end of the branch – and cutting the branch. If he succeeds, he will fail. Right now, the economic engine that we have let loose on this planet is just like that. If it succeeds, we will fail. How absurd

does it seem that we should pray for failure? That is where we are right now.

Most people have not understood that life on this planet is not a transaction, it is just an extension of each other. We may have transactions in society, but when it comes to life, it is a mass of life, not one distinctly separate from the other. What you call as my body is just a piece of this earth. Unfortunately, most people do not get it till they are buried.

You are a separate human being only in your psychological framework. Physiologically, you are not a separate human being. As a life force, you are not a separate human being. You are happening as one with everything else in this universe. This is a fact that physical scientists are establishing today. Physics is telling you it is all connected every moment. But that is something that one must experience. Intellectually arriving at this will make people do absurd things. If you experientially arrive at it, that is a solution.

A Meditative Leadership

I was with one of the very active environmental activists in United States and they were asking me, “Sadhguru, what is it that we must do? We're all doing something. We know it's not going to work.” I said, “The leadership in the world should meditate.” When we say meditate, in the West, people will ask, “What should I meditate on? Should I meditate on a tree, or the planet or the universe?” Meditation is not about something. Meditation means to de-concretize yourself. Right now, you have become like a concrete block, a separate existence from everything.

If you sit in meditation, slowly, after some time you clearly know who you are is not a separate entity. It is one with everything else. If this becomes a living experience in the leadership on the planet, it does not take much to fix this, believe me. In spite of all the damage that has happened, it does not take much. In twenty-five years, we can do a significant reversal. Before you and I fall dead, we can fix it, but it needs top-level support.

My Ishta Devata

The other day, someone asked me, “Sadhguru, who is your Ishta Devata? Are you a Shiva devotee?” I told them, “Have you ever seen me sitting in front of Shiva doing pooja? I'm spending all my time with fools like you! So what do you think, whom am I devoted to – you or Shiva? My entire

life is devoted to all of you!" Whoever or whatever is in front of me at any given moment is my Ishta Devata. This is my way of life – I pay absolute attention to whoever is with me right now. No matter who you are or what you are, I give myself totally. This keeps me at the highest level of emotion and focus, and makes me who I am.

This is something I want everyone to understand: Your devotion is not doing anything to your deity – it is transforming you. If you do not know how to use your devotion to transform you, it becomes deceptive. If you look at things as high and low, superior and inferior, good and bad, you have not tasted the Divine. Don't look up to anything – don't look down on anything. If you pay absolute attention to everything, you will see something tremendous in everything. If I see an ant, that ant is my Ishta Devata at that moment.

To me, leadership is Bhakti Yoga. If you are devoted to creating what you think is the highest, you are a devotee. Unless you are devoted to what you are doing, you will not do anything significant in life. This applies to every area of activity, whether it is business, industry, art, sport, spiritual process, or something else. As Swami Vivekananda said, "You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita." You can pray without involvement, but you cannot play without involvement. Unless you put everything into it, the ball will not go where you want it to go.

Devotion is a tool to dissolve yourself into what you are doing. This is a way to access intelligence and insight well beyond your normal intellect. You will see things that others would never be able to see. Devotion is not only about going to the temple, breaking coconuts, or doing pooja. Devotion means involvement with no limits, prejudice, and conditions. Who you are dissolves in your activity, as if you are not there. That is when you are a true leader. That is when you are a true devotee.

If you look at great devotees in the Indian tradition, such as Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Mirabai, the Nayanmars of southern India, and so many others – they were not even interested in anything around them. They were totally devoted to their deity. Their devotion led to such a state of dissolution that people naturally followed them. A true leader does not intend to be one – people anyway gather, because he or she has a certain quality.

Devotion and leadership are synonymous, in my experience. People think I'm a leader. But in truth, I'm a devotee.



ON YOUTH

Youth and Indian Culture

It's not that the youth are particularly going off-track. Always the adults, the older generation thought that the youth are going off-track. Every generation thinks so. Your father thought so about you, your grandfather thought so about your father, his father thought so about him, isn't it so? Nothing new about it. So don't create a problem, just understand that youth are still trying to create themselves. If you have something truly valuable to offer to their lives, offer it. They will imbibe it in their own way, not in the same way you did.

Youth means, in some ways, they are yet to be created. They have not yet become anything in particular. Those who are becoming have a much bigger possibility than those who have become something. You got stuck in something, they are still looking. Because they are looking around, it seems like they are a big mess. Even your parents thought you were a mess. Those who have grown up don't understand that those who are growing up are still looking around.

Above all, the previous generations, especially the last two-three generations have failed to show the younger generations the value of what you have, because you yourself have not touched it. You yourself are not living it. You are talking about aping the West, but everything about you is western right now. Your shirt is western, your pant is western, your haircut is western. You are westernized only to the extent that you dared. They are going a few steps ahead. Always, the next generation should take steps that you did not dare to take. What is Indian about you? Maybe you are still eating Indian food, they have begun to like junk food. They like McDonalds, you are still eating sambar. Otherwise, what's the big difference?

So, you must dig into your culture and pull out something really valuable. Some of the second

generation Indian youth in the US are coming back with me now, because they see enormous value in this. You show them the value. Don't just try to convert them. It won't happen if you do not know how to show the value, don't tell them, "Don't eat pizza, eat dosa." They will eat only pizza.

Why are Youth Turning to Alcohol and Drugs

There are many reasons why the need for intoxication is going up in the society. One basic thing is, people are no longer fighting for survival. A large segment of the society has moved out of survival mode. When people move beyond survival, they must find other areas of interest and passionate involvement. If that does not happen, the need for pleasure and the need for intoxication will naturally go up in that given society. This is why it is very important that even if parents are affluent, their children should not know affluence until they come to a certain age.

In this culture, even the kings sent their children to gurukulas where they studied with other children, and everybody lived with very basic needs. The necessary sense of discipline, involvement, and engagement with life has to happen before wealth comes into somebody's life. Otherwise, wealth will become a burden that you carry on your head. That is what is happening to this generation.

Missing Activity and Attention

Another reason is that these days, largely, both parents are working. At an early age, the attention that the child needs is not being given. Naturally, various deviances are taken to. And there is not enough physical activity. When you do not enjoy the fitness of your body and the vibrance and vitality of your system, then the only other thing that you will enjoy is intoxication. And now, drugs are not only for intoxication; they also makes them feel vibrant for a few hours. So, massively, the generation is moving in that way.

One more significant reason why this generation is moving towards these drugs is that, in their minds, the heavens that were promised are collapsing. They may be still unable to articulate it very clearly. They do not have the clarity or the courage to say it. But for a long time, we have managed people by saying, "If you abstain from all these things, in heaven all of this will be available in huge quantities." Now the heavens are

collapsing, so they are trying to drink it up right here. Like this, there are many aspects. Fundamentally, there is no need for an individual human being to physically strive for his survival. That itself makes the need for intoxication greater.

Learning to Enjoy Other Pleasures

What are the solutions? It is very, very important for those of you who have growing children to involve them in sports and other intense activities which engage them with nature: trekking, mountain climbing, swimming, etc. They must become passionate about something like art or music. They must learn to know the pleasures of their intellect, their emotion, their consciousness.

When one begins to enjoy the pleasures of the mind, of the sharpness of one's intellect, of emotion, and of consciousness, then indulging in the pleasures of the body will naturally come down dramatically. So it is very important that children should be passionately involved in a variety of activities. This will bring down the need for alcohol and drugs.

But we must understand that today, alcohol is being heavily marketed. The movies are promoting it, and everywhere it is being made into a social thing that unless you drink, you are no good. People ask me, "Sadhguru, you drink?" I say, "Yes, I drink water." They look at me like I am a strange creature. "Just water?" Yes, the most fantastic drink you can have is water because seventy percent of this body is made of water, not alcohol.

Intoxication from Within

This human system is the greatest chemical factory. If you want intoxication, you can generate it from inside – a kind of intoxication which makes you inebriated and super aware at the same time. This is the kind of intoxication we should introduce to our children and youth. This is why we are striving to bring the technology of yoga into everybody's life. If you go into certain states within yourself, you will know intoxication that no drug and no drink can ever create. At the same time, you will remain super aware, and it will do miracles to your health and wellbeing.

It is time that we learn to do things in a more technologically enhanced way. We have ways that people can turn inward and know the highest pleasures of life. We must make our youth experience this. Unless you give them an alternative, they will go back to the bottle or pill.

Right now, you need chemical help to be healthy, peaceful, joyful, or to experience anything within yourself. When a generation uses chemicals like this – if ninety percent of the people start using pharmaceuticals and other types of chemicals on a daily basis – then the next generation that we produce will be less than who we are in many ways.

This is a crime against humanity. All of us should wake up to this fact and do what is needed.

Sex: Sacred or Sinful?

Why are all the desirable things in life either immoral, illegal or fattening? Young people often ask the question, or think about it. Let us look at the first word: “immoral”. Much of the time, people are alluding to sex when they use the word. Sex is a subject on which people spend an incredible amount of thought in a lifetime. A simple biological need has turned into a lifelong obsession for many. Let us understand this: Sex is a simple drive within us, a chemical change that happens with adolescence. It is a pleasurable experience because it is nature’s way to impel us towards reproduction. With time, we have made the reproductive aspect optional, but the pleasure remains. There is nothing right or wrong about it. It is important to accept one’s sexuality as an essential part of physical existence. It is only because two people felt the sexual urge that you and I exist. This is a fact.

The biggest problem is that religions and moral teachers have told us that our biology is a sin. This has created untold guilt and misery down the ages. The more you deny something, it assumes disproportionate importance in the mind. This suppression mode has wrought untold havoc on the human psyche.

At the same time, are we just puppets of our chemistry? Surely not. The role of sex in human life is fine, but essentially limited. Those more focused on the mind find that the drive is less insistent. Once you find pleasures deeper than the mind, sexuality recedes in significance.

Allowing Sexuality to Find its Place

Reacting against traditional religious horror of sex, the West has, in recent times, veered towards an excessive identification with the body. It would be unfortunate to mimic this. Our basic biology is not to be trashed. But it does not need to be glorified either. If you observe your development from

childhood to adolescence, it should intrigue you, not rule you. A natural intelligence makes us all aware that we are more than the play of our hormones. Unlike animals, human beings are not at the mercy of their chemistry. The human need for emotional and intellectual companionship is far stronger than the physical need.

Unfortunately, those who allow the hormonal process to dominate their intelligence lose their inner equilibrium. It is a pity that so many young people subjugate their intelligence to what they read and encounter online or at the movies. The result is a standardized response to sexuality, rather than one based on inner awareness and balance. People will continue to speak for and against sexuality. Neither is required. All we need to cultivate is a certain inner equanimity in body and mind, so sexuality naturally finds its place. It is important to acknowledge the sexual impulse, but also to conduct it responsibly.

Some simple yoga can be hugely beneficial if one starts practicing it young, because it harmonizes the body and mind more effectively than any teaching can.

Is It Normal to Think About Sex?

Let me tell you a joke. A six-year-old girl came home one day from school and asked her mother, “Mama, how was I born?” The mother was embarrassed. She said, “A stork dropped you.” The girl noted that down.

Then she asked, “Mama, how were you born?”

“A stork dropped me too.” “Mama, how was Grandmama born?” “A stork dropped her too.”

The girl became serious. She went and sat down and started writing something in her homework. The mother was feeling uncomfortable and after the girl had finished her homework, the mother went and picked up the notebook. The essay was about the family tree. The girl had written, “For three generations in my family, no one had a natural birth.”

Sex is Natural, Sexuality is Invented

So, there’s nothing strange about it. It is just that your intelligence has been hijacked by your hormones. It is just compulsive behavior. When you were a child, what reproductive organs someone had did not matter to you. But the moment hormones started playing within you, you cannot think of the world beyond that. Your whole intelli-

gence has been completely hijacked by your hormones.

Sex is a natural thing – it is physical, it is there in the body. But sexuality is invented and created by you. It is psychological. This is sweeping the world today and in so many ways, it has become sick because if sex is in the body, it is fine – it will fall into its natural place where it belongs. But the moment it enters your mind, it becomes a perversion. It has no business with your mind.

Though sexuality has become a big question in the human mind, it is actually a very small question. If you go a little beyond the body, there is no man and woman. It is only on the level of the body that someone is a man and someone is a woman. To accommodate reproduction and for the species to carry on, there is a small physiological difference. To assist that difference there is a certain psychological difference. But it is the same two eyes, nose, mouth – everything is the same – just the reproductive organs are different.

Why have we made these small parts of the body so important in our minds? If any body part has to be very important, it should be your brains not the reproductive organs!

Philosophies of Sexuality

Sexuality has become so huge because somewhere, we did not accept our biology properly. We accepted the other parts of the body but not this one part. Your sexual organs are just like your hands, legs and everything else. But you created “something” about it. As this became more and more, it became a huge thing in people’s minds.

It has entered your mind because somebody told you it is wrong. Now you cannot leave it alone because it is a “bad thing”. You cannot leave anything that you consider as a bad thing. It will follow you everywhere, please see.

We have made right and wrong out of something which is so simple and basic. Then you want to find a philosophy to subvert the wrong and still have it. So many philosophies are being propounded just to support people’s sexuality. I don’t see why you need a philosophy to have sex. It’s just biology. All these complications are unnecessary. If you make it complex, it becomes an unnecessarily large part of your life.

Because of absurd ideas, either we exaggerate something or we try to unnecessarily play it down. If you look at modern societies, I would say probably ninety percent of human energy is being

spent either pursuing sex or avoiding it. Sexuality has a certain role in your life. If you make it too big, you will become perverted in your mind. If you try to obliterate it, you will become even more perverted in your mind.

Sexuality becomes more important as you get more identified with the body. As you become less identified with the body, sex recedes. Do you see, when someone becomes very intellectually active, the need for sex recedes. But most people do not know any intellectual highs and the sweetness of the mind; they do not know so much about the sweetness of emotion; sweetness of the energy is totally out of question. The only thing which gets them a little high is sex. A little sweetness of the body is sex and that is the only little break they have from the normal monotony of life that they are living.

More Orgasmic Than Sexuality

If you are alert and observe either yourself or people around you, if they are such that there is no physical discipline, you will see, they will slowly become in such a way that they are desperately trying to be happy. There will be no joy left. The more joyful you become, the less need for pleasure in your life. When you are not joyful, there will be desperate activity, and sexuality is one of these. I am not speaking about the fundamental act which has brought all of us into existence. I am not talking against it, but you must get it off your head.

I see people saying this – whatever they are doing they say, “This is the next best thing to sex.” Sex is not the best thing. It is the most popular thing in the world but it is not the best thing. If you taste other dimensions of life, it is just like as a kid, you were so thrilled with certain things but as you grew up you dropped them without any effort. Sexuality should drop like that.

As your energies get more established and subtle, just like that it is so beautiful – you do not want to have anything to do with any other body because just to simply sit here is much more orgasmic than sexuality. As it becomes a living reality where you are like this all the time, sex just disappears from your life; not because you are incapable or because you think it is wrong or immoral, but simply because it looks so childish to go cling to someone and do something and think it is so great.

Sexuality is okay, there is nothing wrong or right about it, but it is just a rudimentary aspect of life, that’s all. If it stays in your body it is okay, but if it

is in your head, it is in the wrong place. If it is in the wrong place, your life will become a mess.



ON THE GURU

Is A Guru Essential For Spiritual Transformation?

If I give you a torchlight, it still does not mean you are going to find your way home. A torch lights up so that you don't step into a drain or a ditch, but how you use it and whether you walk the right path is left entirely to you. Many people have walked to their death with a torch. They have even done it with headlamps! What you do is always left to you. So, who is the best light? You should not make a conclusion about that. If something works very well for you, if it enhances your life, then try a little more, putting more energy and time into it.

The reason why there has always been so much importance and stress on a Guru is that without a Guru, you cannot transform yourself. It is possible to work towards what you know, but how can you transform yourself into something that you don't know? To do that, you have to be so aware that you see the natural tendencies of every aspect of energy in the existence. Only a person who has that sense of awareness can walk without a Guru.

Through the Grace of the Guru, in a moment, with just a clap of his hands, things can happen. Sometimes certain situations or certain energies can also do things to people. In these situations, they are acting like a Guru – maybe not in the physical form, but that is what is happening. Transforming yourself into that which you don't know, or that which you have not tasted, is logically impossible. I am not ruling it out totally. It is possible, but only for very few people. For most others, it is very remote.

Q: Then what is it that allows some people the opportunity to have access to a Guru, while others don't?

Sadhguru: So, why does one person get access to certain possibilities? A Guru is not a person, but a certain possibility. It is not that only certain people get access to this possibility. Everyone

may not have access to the person, but anyone who truly longs, always has access to this energy.

I have initiated more people I have not met than people I have met. That is the reality. When someone really longs, when the longing is deep enough to receive me, I initiate them, wherever they may be. When someone's heart cries out to know, I am always there. As far as the possibility is concerned, this possibility has happened to a lot more people who have never seen my face. But if you are talking about the person, that is not of great significance.

Being with a Master is never comfortable because he will break all your limitations and ideologies. Knowing the person or having access to the person can be on many levels. Having access to the possibility is only because of the longing that one may have. There are many people who have close access to the person, but don't know anything about the possibility yet. This has been put forth by many people in many different ways but Gautama put this forth very beautifully. Ananda Tirtha, who was constantly with Gautama throughout his life, remained unenlightened until the end. When people asked, "This man is with you all the time. Why has nothing happened to him?" In answer, Gautama asks, "Can a spoon taste the soup?" That says it all. You need sensitivity. You need to be life sensitive, not ego sensitive.

Limitless Emptiness: Sadhguru on What Makes Him a Guru

Q: For those who have been initiated by you, things are happening in ways beyond our understanding. Still I am wondering, or maybe even more so, who are you really? And how do you function as a Guru?

Sadhguru: As a person, I am quite terrible. As a Guru, I am absolutely empty. I am a Guru not because of my knowledge. I am a Guru because my ignorance is totally limitless, and that is all that matters. If something within you becomes limitless – whatever it is – it will work. If you become limitless ignorance, it will work. If you become limitless love, it will work. If you become limitless anger, it will work. If you become limitless in anything, it will work.

I found being limitless in ignorance is the easiest way. My whole spiritual process started because I realized I did not know anything, and that is not a

small thing. What is limitless cannot be small. If you try to become limitless in knowledge, how much can you know? How much ever you know, it is still limited. I realized the trick of existence – what is labeled as knowledge is ignorance; what is labeled as ignorance is true knowing.

Because I am like empty space, I have become a doorway for Adiyogi to function through me. If you meet me on the street, my head is empty. If you look behind the person, you will find nothing. And when it comes to the person, I have been changing it every few years. People have been confused and confounded about that. I always warn those who have been around me for a long time that I am going to change my personality, but in spite of that, many of them get shocked – some hang on, some fall off.

The person is crafted in such a way he is terrible enough that you do not want to have anything to do with him, but at the same time, he is sweet enough that you cannot leave him. If I become a little more terrible, no one will be here. If I become a little sweeter, no one will be able to leave for a moment. I keep myself on the edge so that they cannot stand me, but they cannot be without me, because that is needed for them to seek.

If they sense me as too sweet, they will make me bigger than their seeking, which is not good. If they sense me as too terrible, they will give up their seeking, which is not good either. I am crafting a personality that creates enough of both so that their seeking never dies. Even if they look beyond for no other reason but being tired of me, it will work. A Guru is not a goal. A Guru is a means. A Guru is like a doorway. If you pass through the doorway, you find reality.

It is good to go through me, because it is one of the few empty spots that you can find. Everywhere else, it is opaque – full of knowledge, full of scriptures, full of conclusions. A doorway has to be empty. Only if you can pass through it easily, without any struggle, it is useful. So, do not try to find something in the door. If you find something in the door, it is a closed door.

I am not a destination, just an open doorway – a doorway to all that we refer to as Adiyogi – a doorway to all his knowing, to all the possibilities that he was. A doorway without a doorkeeper. If you are willing to go through it, no one can stop you.

A Rare Expression from Sadhguru about His Guru

The most dominant factor of my life has been my Guru, and nothing else. Even today, in my mind, or rather literally in every crevice of my body, in every pulsation of my system, and in my very energy, it is his presence that is the most dominant within me. To keep it this way has been easy for me because I do not have a mind of my own. Probably because of this, just about everything in me reverberates in a way that is far beyond me, far bigger than me.

I did not see my Guru as a man who touched me, though his touch brought me to the highest level of experience, and a revelation of life and beyond. The old mental structure within me somewhere would not accept a human being as a Guru, because it was said that unless it comes from Adiyogi, unless it comes from Shiva himself, it is not real. So the compassion of my Master made him turn himself into the form of Shiva.

I do not know if this was his act that he turned himself into this form, or if that is how he really was at that time. But this experience has left me in a place where ever since, I do not have to make any attempt to know anything. Whatever I need to know, He [Guru] and He [Shiva] are there, all the time.

The Meaning of a Guru – The Master's Role in One's Life

Belief springs from your expectation. When you say “I believe you,” you are expecting that I will act according to your rights and wrongs. Suppose I do something which is not within the field of your rights and wrongs, then the first thing that will happen is, you are going to come to me and say, “I believed you, and now you did this.” If your Guru can be contained within your limitations, then you better not go anywhere near that man because he will be of no help to you. He will solace you, he will comfort you, but this man is bondage. This man is not liberation. Trust is different. Trust is your quality. It is not subject to anything else, it is simply there. When you say “I trust,” it means, “It doesn't matter what you do, I trust.” That is not falling into the framework of your limitations.

I never asked you to trust me. The very reasons why I never use the word “trust” with people is because it is badly corrupted. If at all anybody

here spoke about trust, it is to raise you beyond your own likes and dislikes, your own limitations. The very feeling of “I trust you” raises you beyond this bundle of likes and dislikes. “No matter what you do, I trust you.” If you really want to make use of a Guru’s Presence, you must be willing to allow that Presence to overwhelm you, to overpower you, to destroy you in one way. At least for those few moments that you are with him, you should no longer be yourself. What you consider yourself to be, should be absent in his Presence.

Pulling the walls down

When people spoke about trust, what they meant was that you allow someone else to enter you. If you have to allow someone else to enter you, you have to become vulnerable. Once he enters you, you are subject to anything. The very reason why you have built walls is, somewhere when you made yourself vulnerable, someone did something which was not within your expectations. So you got terrified and built walls around yourself. Now, when you say, “I trust you,” you are willing to pull that wall down, which means that the other person does not have to live within the framework of your expectations. So one aspect is the Presence of the Guru, the quality of who he is, does things to you. Another aspect is, the moment you create that kind of situation that you are not bothered about what is going to happen to you, that itself is transformation.

The time frame that I have with people is limited. So I am making myself available only as a Presence, not as a person. As a person, I am just keeping a certain face – in many ways within the framework of your expectations. If I have to use my person also as a device, then it needs much more trust, and maybe more time. People who are with me for longer periods of time find me an impossible person, which I am not with you.

A conscious concoction

Right now, this personality that you call “myself” is in some ways an accident, depending upon what kind of situations you have been exposed to. Your personality is constantly evolving, beaten around by life. Whichever way life beats you, you will become that kind of shape and form. Your personality is constantly being constructed by external situations. The one whom you call as Guru is not a person. The whole process of self-realization means someone has transcended his personality and then he carefully crafts a person-

ality as it is necessary for the kind of role that he wants to play.

In a limited way, on the surface, you too are building your personality to suit your activity. A being who is experiencing himself beyond limitations does it in a very deep way. He structures every aspect of his life as it is necessary for the role that he has chosen to play. It is a conscious construction. When it is a conscious construction, it is just a device, it is not bondage anymore. Any moment, he can just pull it down. Even now, the way I operate as a person is very different in different places. It may be shocking for you if you see me in other kinds of situations. Because you have fallen into the comfort of knowing this kind of person, when you see another kind of person, you are unable to handle it.

A Guru creates his personality in such a way that people don’t know whether to love it or to hate it. He carefully crafts a personality where one moment you think, “Yeah, I’m really in love with this man.” Next moment, you may feel completely different about him. And both of these emotions are not allowed to cross certain lines. Within those lines, you are constantly being thrashed around so that after some time you will know, this is not a person. This is not a human being. Either he is a devil or he must be Divine.

Taking the jump

That which is not in your experience cannot be taught to you intellectually. To take a person from one dimension of experience to another dimension of experience, you need a device which is of a higher level of intensity and energy. That device is what we call as Guru. The Guru-shishya relationship is on an energy basis. A Guru is touching you in a dimension where no one else can touch you. There are many ways to move your energies to Ajna. But from Ajna to Sahasrar, there is no particular way to do anything. It is just a jump. It is because of this that the Guru-shishya relationship has been held as the most sacred relationship in this culture. If you have to take this jump, you need deep trust – otherwise, it is not possible.

Krishna’s Guru Dakshina: Why Couldn’t Sandhipani Save His Son

Those who stood out as truly great were not people who could handle everything in their lives. They were people who, no matter what happened, maintained a certain balance and fulfilled the

purpose of their lives. The circumstances they faced were always far more extreme, difficult, and challenging compared to what the people you call “normal” go through. In spite of all that, they did not deviate from whatever they held as right within themselves. It is that which makes them great, not that they were fix-alls and do-alls.

There are no fix-alls and do-alls in the world, no matter who they are. Only an immature person will believe that he is a fix-all. One who is seasoned with life knows that many things may not happen the way you want them. Many things may turn against you. Things that you have worked for through your whole life may just collapse for some stupid reason.

It happened in Krishna's life. People who had proclaimed that they would give their lives for him, suddenly turned around and spat at him. But this did not make him deviate from what he saw as the right thing to do with himself and life around him. It is this that makes a man great. Not that he was a fix-all. There is no fix-all in the world. You thought I am a fix-all. Is that why you are here? I'm not a fix-all either. I am putting my 10 fingers in 20 different holes, trying to plug them. All the time, it is leaking somewhere. It is an eternal circus. But that doesn't break you. That doesn't subjugate you. It may kill you, but still, it doesn't get you away from who you are. It may bring death to you, but it will not destroy you. That's what makes a person great.

The View from the Projection Room

The sun actually neither rises nor sets. But the way we perceive it – what a glorious deception! From the smallest to the largest things in life, there is a series of deceptions in our perception. If you sit in the movie theater, the drama seems so real. But if you go to the projection room and see, it is just a light bulb and two wheels spinning. So much drama will happen – love, fight, war, peace, maybe even enlightenment. But essentially, it is just a projection.

One who does not enjoy the play or cinema is a fool. But one who gets caught up in the play or cinema is a much bigger fool. One who enjoys the play to the hilt and still never becomes entangled with the process understands that it starts with the opening credits and closes with the end titles. In a way, it is like the names at the cemetery – the characters that you just saw in the movie are there now. If you do not understand that what is

happening in between is just a play and you get caught up in the play, then so many things that are not real become real to you, and what is absolutely real will be completely lost.

The work of a Guru is not to take you to the movies but on a tour of the projection room. Why should you destroy the beauty of the cinema by going into the projection room and seeing that the fantastic men and women in the movie do not exist, that there is no great drama – just two wheels and a light bulb? If the cinema was about some other actors, it would not be necessary. You could just sit in your chair, have popcorn, and enjoy the movie. The thing is you have a role to play, and you are not holding the hand of the director.

If a director does not hold the hand of an actor, then even well-known stars will be a complete mess. It does not matter how brilliant or capable you are – if you do not hold the hand of the Creator, your life will be a complete mess. If you are successful, it will be one kind of mess. If you are a failure, it will be another kind of mess. If everyone was a failure, the world would go down the drain. If everyone was successful, we would destroy the planet even faster.

If you know how to play your role and still be conscious of the mechanics of the projection room, then you can control the cinema the way you want it. If you hold the hand of the director, then it can be a wonderful experience, and above all, you can retire and watch the movie.

Ramakrishna and the Proof of God

When he was just 19 years of age, Vivekananda was a very logical, intellectual boy, and was full of fire. He wanted proper answers for everything. He came to Ramakrishna and asked, “You are talking God, God all the time. Where is the proof? Show me the proof!” Ramakrishna was so simple. He was not an educated man. He was a mystic, not a scholar. So he said, “I am the proof.”

Vivekananda did not know what to say because this was just utterly crazy. He was expecting some great intellectual explanation – “The proof of God is the seed sprouting and the planet spinning.” But Ramakrishna said, “I am the proof God exists.” “The way I am is the proof” – is what Ramakrishna was saying. Vivekananda did not know what to say and he left.

Three days later, he came back and asked, "Okay, can you show me God?" Ramakrishna asked, "Do you have the courage to see?" The brave boy said, "Yes" because this was tormenting him. So Ramakrishna just placed his foot on Vivekananda's chest and Vivekananda went into a certain period of samadhi where he was beyond the limitations of the mind. He did not come out of it for almost 12 hours and when he did, he was never the same boy again.

Patanjali – The Father of Modern Yoga

If you look at Patanjali, as an enlightened being, he can't be more enlightened than someone else. There is no such thing. Realization is realization. But as a man and above all as an intellect, he is such an intellect that the great scientists of today look like kindergarten children in front of him. The breadth of his understanding of life is so big that you cannot believe that this is possible in one human being. In his mastery of language, mathematics and in his perception of astronomy, he is so fantastic. Today's scholars argue that this is not one man's work, that many people must have worked to make this happen because it is so big, it cannot fit into one man's intellect. It is one man's work. He is probably one of the greatest intellects ever on this planet.

He is known as the father of modern yoga. He did not invent yoga. Yoga was already there in various forms, which he assimilated into a system. Shiva, the Adiyogi or first yogi, transmitted yoga to the Sapta Rishis or the seven sages many thousands of years ago. He had the highest understanding of human nature, but he didn't put anything down in writing. He was too wild to be a scholar. He found it was too difficult to put everything he knew into one person, so he chose seven people and put different aspects of yoga into them. These became the seven basic forms of yoga. Even today, though these have branched off into hundreds of systems, yoga has still maintained seven distinct forms.

The Yoga Sutras

Patanjali came much later and sort of assimilated everything. He saw that it was getting too diversified and complex for anyone to understand in any meaningful way. So he assimilated and included all aspects into a certain format – as the Yoga Sutras.

Sutra literally means a thread. Or in modern language we can say it is like a formula. Anyone who knows the English alphabet, even a kindergarten child can say $E=mc^2$, but there is an enormous amount of science behind that little formula, which most people do not understand. The sutras are like this, in thread form. Out of ignorance, people have just taken these sutras and are trying to implement it as it is. A thread is of no consequence by itself. There can never be a garland without the thread but no one ever wears a garland for the sake of the thread. The thread was given so that each master makes his own kind of garland. You can put flowers on it, or beads or pearls or diamonds. The thread is vital but that is not a goal by itself.

Unless you are exposed to the culture, it is a little difficult to understand what kind of mind Patanjali is. Even though the Indian scriptures like the Vedas and the Upanishads are quite phenomenal by themselves both in terms of grammatical excellence and in their poetic beauty and content, the Yoga Sutras are an absolutely brilliant piece of work compared to any of the scriptures on the planet talking about life and beyond.

They are a tremendous document about life and the most uninteresting book on the planet. It is the driest and dullest book you can read. It is not scholarly in the usual sense. Patanjali does not teach any practice in them. He did this intentionally, and his mastery over language and composition was such that he wrote it in a way that no scholar would be interested in it. The idea is, this is a formula to open up life. If people like the poetry and literary part of it, all kinds of people, especially scholars, will read it. Once they read it, they will make a 100 different interpretations of it.

The sutra will mean something only to a person who is in a certain level of experience. Otherwise it is just a bundle of words which don't make any sense. Someone who is exploring his consciousness, if he is in a certain state of experience, if he just reads one sutra, it will be explosive. You are not required to read the whole book. If you read one sutra and make it true with your life, that's enough. It will realize you.

And Now Yoga

Just to give you some sense of what kind of a man he is – he starts such a great document of life in such a strange way: the first chapter of the Yoga Sutras is just half a sentence, not even a full sentence. The sentence is like this, "And Now

Yoga.” What do you make out of it? Intellectually, it doesn’t make any sense, but experientially what it is saying is, if you still think that building a new house or finding a new wife or getting your daughter married will settle your life, it is not yet time for yoga. If you have seen money, power, wealth and pleasure, you have tasted everything in your life and you have realized that nothing is going to fulfill you ultimately and work in the real sense, if you have gotten that point, then it is time for yoga. All the nonsense that the whole world is involved in, Patanjali just brushes it aside with half a sentence. This is why the first sutra is “and now yoga.” That means, you know nothing works and you do not have a clue about what the hell this is. The pain of ignorance is tearing you apart. Now, yoga. Now there is a way to know.

It is improper to call Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras a book because it is not a book. It is a complex arrangement of tools – such fantastic tools arranged in such a brilliant way that if at all something similar ever happens, it is too far away. Because someone with that kind of inner experience usually would not care or bother with scholarly nonsense. And someone who is so scholarly is usually so lost in his scholarship that he never has any inner experience. Never before has there been one person with an absolute depth of inner experience, but with that kind of erudition and scholarly mastery over language.

He just understood humanity inside out – not as people but as a total mechanism of the human body, human mind, human consciousness – everything – in such absolute detail and completeness. There is simply no better way to look at it. It is not fair actually because whatever you try to say, the guy has already said it! You think of the most brilliant idea and try to say something, but he has already said it. He did not leave anything for anyone to say about life.

The musician

They say he played a variety of instruments and was a great musician and singer. The veena was one of his favorite instruments and he composed many ragas. His intellect was such that he could find a way through anything. He was absolutely audacious in everything and did things in a challenging way that no one could break through.

There was another sage Vyagrapada who was his contemporary. Vyagrapada means “one who has tiger’s feet.” And there was someone else with a name that meant “one with horns on his head.”

Once, in their banter, they got into an argument and teased Patanjali. He then took a challenge that he will compose music in any raga without using alphabets with “horns.” This is almost impossible but he composed a complicated series of music. If you listen to it, you will just see it seems impossible, but still the music sticks to the tones and tunes of the ragas without those alphabets. It is so incredible. That is the kind of man he was.

Chidambaram temple

In South India, there were five lingas created for the five elements in nature. Patanjali consecrated the linga for space which is in Chidambaram.

In the yogic system, the snake is used as a symbolism for unmanifest energy or kundalini because till it moves, you don’t even realize that it is there. Patanjali was such a great being, for him divinity is not an upward movement. He is a cascade of divinity. He is a kind of human being that gods would be envious of. He is symbolically depicted in the famous half-man, half-snake form indicating that he has risen above the duality of life and attained to ultimate oneness, and in doing so, has opened the door for others to achieve the same. Half of his body has been symbolically made into snake, because he is not seen as a person anymore. He is seen as the very basis of the yogic system.

Chitta Vritti Nirodha

Patanjali defined yoga as Chitta Vritti Nirodha, which literally means that if you still the modifications and activity of the mind, you are in yoga. Everything has become one in your consciousness. We may be pursuing many things in our lives and going through processes that we call achievements, but to go beyond the modifications of the mind is the most fundamental and at the same time the highest achievement one can attain, because this releases a human being from what he is seeking – from what is within and what is outside – from everything. If only he stills his mind, he becomes an ultimate possibility. The mind becomes a plain mirror, not a wavy mirror. A wavy mirror will distort one’s whole perception of life. At least if you don’t look at it, you may have some idea how you are, but if you look at it every day, it will give you a completely distorted vision of everything.

Right now, most human beings are using their mind only between their memory and imagination. Memory and imagination are not two separate things. Memory is accumulated past, imagination

is an exaggerated version of that. If you bring your mind to a state where you are neither contaminated by memory nor deluded by imagination, then it is a truly intelligent, penetrative mind. It sees everything there is to see – life and its source. For the survival process, your memory and imagination are good enough, but if you want to explore other dimensions of life, then memory and imagination are not sufficient because they are only a recycling of your past. Once you recycle your past, there is a pattern to your life. And it is an unbreakable pattern if your mind is just engaged in memory and imagination. Once you are trapped by a pattern, it does not matter who created the pattern, it is a kind of slavery. Essentially, realizing that one is trapped in psychological realities and missing out on the existential experience of the grandeur of creation is the first step towards liberation.

This is the reason why, of all the beautiful ways in which it could be expressed, Patanjali chose the description *Chitta Vritti Nirodha* for yoga – a technology which can take you towards your liberation or realization.

Ashtavakra and the Enlightened King

King Janaka's Longing

Later, when Ashtavakra grew up but was still quite young, he accompanied his father to a great debate that had been organized by the ruler of the land, King Janaka. Janaka was a truly phenomenal man of great intensity. Though he was a king, he was a true seeker. He was burning to get enlightened. His longing for enlightenment was so strong that he had gathered in his court everyone in the whole land who could be of spiritual value. He welcomed them, treated them well, gave them the necessary sustenance and supported them because he was hoping that they would show him the path.

Every day, he finished his temporal duties as quickly as he could and spent hours listening to these people, conducting debates and discussions to somehow know which is the way to enlightenment. Different scholars who had mastered different traditions of spiritual scriptures would sit together and start off great intellectual debates which would run for days, weeks and months. Usually, the winner of the debate would receive a great reward. They would receive a great deal of money or be appointed to some high position in the kingdom. These were not ordinary

people. He had gathered good ones, but no one could give him enlightenment.

Kahola was invited to one such debate and he went accompanied by Ashtavakra. The debate began and a great argument was underway between the best scholars there. Many intellectual questions were raised and the intricacies of the scriptures were being discussed when Ashtavakra stood up and said, "All this is empty talk. None of these people knows anything of the Self. They are all talking about it, but not one person here including my father knows anything about the Self."

King Janaka looked at Ashtavakra – this young man with a twisted-out body speaking like this – and said "Can you substantiate what you just said? Otherwise you will lose even that crippled body of yours."

Ashtavakra replied, "Yes I can."

"Then what is it that you can offer?" asked Janaka.

Ashtavakra said, "If you want to receive this, you must be willing to follow my word to the limit. Only then I can offer this to you. If you are willing to just do what I ask you to do, I will see that you know yourself."

Janaka appreciated this straightforwardness and said "Tell me anything, I will do it." He was not simply saying that. He really meant it.

Ashtavakra said, "I live in the forest. Come there and we will see what to do." And he left.

"Stop Right There!"

After a few days, Janaka went in search of Ashtavakra in the forest. When a king goes anywhere, he always goes with his guard of soldiers and ministers. Janaka set off into the forest with his retinue. But when they entered the forest, the jungle kept getting denser and denser. Gradually, after many hours of searching, Janaka got separated from the rest of the group and lost his way. As he was wandering around in the forest searching for a way out, all of a sudden he came upon Ashtavakra sitting under a tree.

When he saw Ashtavakra, Janaka began to dismount from the horse. He was on one stirrup and his other leg was up in the air when Ashtavakra said, "Stop. Stop right there." Janaka just stopped in that absolutely uncomfortable position – hanging onto the horse, with one leg up in the air.

He just stood there in that absolutely awkward position. We do not know for how long. Some

legends say for many years, some say it was just a moment. The chronological time does not matter. He stood in that position long enough. Long enough can be just one moment. Because of that absoluteness of him following the instruction – just stopping there, where he has to be – he became a fully realized being.

Once Janaka became enlightened, he got off his horse and fell at Ashtavakra's feet. He said to Ashtavakra, "What am I going to do with my kingdom and my palace – these things are not important to me anymore. I just want to sit at your feet. Please let me stay with you in your ashram in the forest."

But Ashtavakra replied, "Now that you have attained, your life is no more about your likes and dislikes. Your life is no more about your needs because you have none actually. Your people deserve an enlightened king. You must stay as their king."

Reluctantly, Janaka stayed back in his palace and governed his kingdom with great wisdom.

Janaka was a true blessing to his people because he was a fully enlightened being, but he functioned as a king. In India, many sages and saints were once kings and emperors who willingly and voluntarily gave away everything they had and walked as beggars, with great dignity. There have been many like this – Gautama Buddha, Mahavira, Bahubali – but an enlightened king was a rare being. Janaka remained a king but as often as possible, whenever his regal responsibilities gave him some time, he would visit Ashtavakra in his ashram.

The Monks and the Monkeys

At the ashram, Ashtavakra had gathered a few monks who were being taught by him. These monks slowly began to resent Janaka because whenever he came, Ashtavakra went out of his way and spent a lot of time with the king because they had such a good rapport with each other. The moment Janaka came, both of them lit up. With the monks whom Ashtavakra was teaching, he did not light up the same way. This was resented by the monks.

The monks would whisper to each other, "Why has our Guru sold out to a man like that? It looks like our Guru is getting corrupted. This man is a king. He lives in a palace. He has got so many wives and so many children. He has so much wealth. Look at the way he walks. He walks like a king. And look at the way he is dressed. Look at

the ornaments he wears. What is spiritual about him that our Guru should even pay attention to this man? We are here totally dedicated to our spiritual process. We have come here as monks but he is just ignoring us."

Ashtavakra knew that this feeling was growing among his monks. So one day he arranged for something to happen. He was sitting and speaking to the monks in a hall and king Janaka was also present. As the discourse was going on, a soldier came barging into the room, bowed down to Janaka but not to Ashtavakra, and said, "Oh king, the palace is on fire! Everything is burning. The whole kingdom is in disarray."

Janaka got up and just yelled at the soldier, "Get out of here! How dare you come and disturb the satsang and how dare you bow down to me and not to my Guru! Just get out of here!" The soldier fled from the room. Janaka sat back down and Ashtavakra continued to speak.

A few days later, Ashtavakra set up something else. All of them were once again seated in the hall and Ashtavakra was giving a discourse. Right in the middle of the discourse, a helper in the ashram came running into the hall and said, "The monkeys have taken the clothes off the clothesline and are playing havoc with the monks' garments."

All the monks immediately got up and ran to save their clothes. They did not want the monkeys to tamper with them. But when they got to the clothes-drying area, there were no monkeys and their loin cloths were still hanging on the clothesline. They realized what had happened. They hung their heads down and walked back.

Then as a part of the discourse, Ashtavakra said, "Look at this. This man is a king. A few days ago his palace was burning. His whole kingdom was in turmoil. Wealth at its peak was burning, but his concern was that his soldier disturbed the satsang. That was his concern.

You are monks. You have nothing. You don't have a palace, you don't have a wife, you don't have children, you have got nothing. But when the monkeys came and picked up your clothing, you ran. Most people would not use your clothing even as mop cloths. That is the kind of clothing you wear. But for that loin cloth, without even paying attention to what I was saying, you just ran out to save those worthless pieces of cloth. Where is your renunciation? He is the true renunciate. He is a king, but he is a renunciate. You are monks.

You are using things that other people discard, but there is no renunciation in you. This is where you are. That is where he is.”

One’s progress within oneself has nothing to do with what a person does on the outside, what is most important is, what a person is doing within him or herself. What you are doing with the outside world is just social; you conduct yourself as it is suitable for the situation in which you exist. It has social relevance but no existential or spiritual relevance. How you are within yourself is all that matters.

When Buddha Said “Drop It”

What does it mean when we say being with a Guru? What is needed? If you sit here as an observer or even a student, you will miss the whole aspect of what it means to be with a Guru because, if all you need is a teaching or a little bit of guidance, you do not need a Guru as such. There are many teachers who can do that, there are scholars who can do that, there are books which can do that. “Being with a Guru” means you are seeking direct action. You are not seeking guidance, you are not seeking help – you are seeking direct action. If that has to happen, what is needed and how do you need to be?

Gautama Says “Drop It”

On a certain day, a man came to see Gautama the Buddha. Gautama was sitting alone in a small enclosure, and the man came with two handfuls of flowers because that is a normal way in India to greet your Guru. As the man came towards him, Gautama looked at him and said, “Drop it.” When he said this, the man thought because he brought these flowers as an offering, Gautama was telling him to “drop it”. Then he thought, “Maybe because I am carrying it in my left hand, it is inauspicious.” This is also part of the culture; if you give something to somebody with your left hand, it is considered inauspicious. So he thought maybe because of that he was asking him to drop it, and he dropped the flowers in his left hand and then went on in an appropriate way. Gautama once again looked at him and said, “Drop it.” Now he did not know what to do. What was wrong with the flowers? He dropped the rest of the flowers. Then Gautama said, “I said drop it, not the flowers.” The one who brought the flowers, you have to drop that, otherwise you will not know the Buddha. You will come, you will bow down, you will listen, you will go, but you will not know what it means to be

with an enlightened one. You will completely miss the possibility.

If you want to add a completely new dimension to your life, you have to drop that, not something else. Dropping your work, dropping your family, dropping this and that does not mean anything. You have to drop this one – only then something can happen. Right now what you call as “myself” is just a bundle of thoughts, emotions, ideas, opinions, and belief systems. If you do not drop that, where is a new possibility? Are you just trying to decorate the old stuff with some extras? That is not going to help; that is going to make things more and more difficult. But if I just say “drop it,” it does not drop off. So there are methods and procedures to be brought in so that this dropping happens.

Byazid and the Seeker’s Ignorance

One of the most prolific and beautiful spiritual masters of all time was Byazid, a Sufi master, who at one time had thousands of monks in his place. He was an extremely beautiful person and a man of immense capability. One day a man came seeking spiritual liberation, of course. Byazid looked at him and said, “Yes.” He came and asked, “Will you accept me as your disciple?” Byazid looked at him and said, “Yes, I will, but there are a few conditions and duties to be fulfilled.” “What are those?” the man asked. Byazid said, “You have to draw the water, you have to chop the wood, mop the floors, cook and clean.” That man got up and said, “I came here looking for the ultimate truth, not for employment,” and he left. Byazid just looked at the moon and wept.

These simple procedures are set up so that you learn to drop yourself, but people do not want to do them. They think spirituality means they must be doing this, this, and this only. They think mopping the floor is not spirituality, chopping the wood is not spirituality, cleaning the dishes – definitely not. They have some fancy idea of what spirituality is.

The Heavenly Needle: A Story About Guru Nanak

The significance of Guru Nanak’s life is not about starting a new religion, as most people think he did. Guru Nanak was someone who knew no scriptures, he knew life. What we know of him today, in the form of his teaching, is very little. I would say not even two to five percent of what he

said is with the world today. But we can imagine what he could have said because anyone who comes from an inner experience will say the same thing. Scriptures may become outdated, but inner experience is never outdated. It has no date. Times and dates are for physical nature. What is within belongs neither to this time nor that time.

Guru Nanak was a very compassionate and courageous being. There is a beautiful story about him. Once, he was traveling by foot, walking from village to village, offering his teachings to people. He was not one of those all-the-time smiling, gentle saints. He knew when to be hard and when to be soft.

One day, he happened to be a guest in the home of a very rich man in the area. After a few days, as he was leaving, he gave this man a sewing needle and said, "Keep this with you. Some time later when you see me, you can give it back to me." After Guru Nanak had left, the man told his wife about the incident. The wife immediately scolded the man, "You fool, why did you take a needle from a guru? He is an old man. Suppose he dies and you don't get to give back this needle, what will you do? Offering him something is fine but you should not receive anything from a man like him. If he dies, you will be in debt forever. You will be unable to wash out that one karma, and this may mean another thousand lifetimes for you. This is not a good thing. Somehow try to find him and return it to him immediately."

So the man started trekking behind Guru Nanak. Slowly, after a couple of months, the man caught up with him and said, "Guruji, I don't want to carry this needle with me. You are an old man. In case you die, I cannot carry this needle to heaven and return it to you there. I will be in debt forever." Guru Nanak replied, "So you know that you cannot carry this needle to heaven, right?" The man said, "Yes." "When you know you cannot carry a needle, what about all those other things you are accumulating? You will not be able to carry any of that either." The man got the message. He fell at Guru Nanak's feet. He went back home, just kept what was needed for his family, and went about building whatever was needed for the wellbeing of people around.

The world is a limited space and a limited resource. Whether it is individuals, societies or nations, when they go about accumulating endlessly, all that can happen is strife and pain for themselves and everyone else. Unless every

individual fixes this within himself: "This is what I need. The rest of my capabilities, I will use for everyone's wellbeing," if this does not come in a human being, he is a disaster to himself and to the world. The true disaster on this planet is not an earthquake, volcano or tsunami; it is human ignorance. Ignorance is the only disaster. Enlightenment is the only solution.

Why Do We Celebrate Guru Purnima?

Guru Purnima is the day the first guru was born. In the yogic culture, Shiva is not seen as a god, he is seen as the Adiyogi, or the first yogi. Guru Purnima is that full moon day when the first yogi transformed himself into the Adi Guru – the first guru.

This is the time of the year, when over 15,000 years ago, his attention fell upon the now celebrated Saptarishis – his first seven disciples. They had done some simple preparation for 84 years. Then, when the solstice had shifted from the summer solstice to the winter – that is, when the Sun's run with relation to this planet shifted from the northern run to the southern run, which in this tradition is known as Uttarayana and Dakshinayana – on that day, Adiyogi looked at the Saptarishis and saw that they had become shining receptacles of knowing. He could not ignore them anymore. He observed them closely and when the next full moon rose, he decided to become a guru. That full moon day is known as Guru Purnima. He turned south and the transmission of yogic science to the seven disciples began.

Guru Purnima: The Day the First Guru Was Born

The yogic science is not about how to bend your body or hold your breath. This is the science of understanding the mechanics of the human mechanism and to be able to dismantle or put it together. Adiyogi made a dimensional change in the way people perceive and understand the existence and the source of creation. And he made himself a bridge between a simple piece of creation and the source of creation. He said, "If you walk this, there will be no distinction between you and that which you refer to as the creator." The journey is from creation to the creator.

When Adiyogi spoke, he was not speaking religion, philosophy or dogma. He was talking about a science, a scientific method through which you could undo the boundaries that nature has set upon human life.

Every boundary that we set has the purpose of protection to start with. We build a fence around our house with the intent of protection. But once you become unaware as to why you set up these boundaries, the boundaries of self-preservation also become boundaries of self-imprisonment. And these boundaries are not in any one form. They have taken on so many complex forms.

I am not just talking about the psychological boundaries that you set for yourself. I am talking about the boundaries set by nature for your protection and wellbeing. But human nature is such, you cannot experience true wellbeing unless you transcend the limitations of boundaries set upon you. This is a human predicament. When you are in danger, you want fortresses around you. The moment the danger is gone, you want it all to collapse and disappear.

But if the boundary that you set for your self-preservation does not go down when you wish, you feel imprisoned and suffocated because once you have come with a discerning intellect, a limitation or that which confines us to something is the worst thing. Human beings will suffer confinement more than torture. The moment a human being feels confinement, their suffering is untold.

Guru Purnima Celebrates Adiyogi's Methods

Shiva's work was to bring the tools of awareness that will allow you to transcend these boundaries – tools that will allow you to keep the fortresses to the extent they serve their purpose and make them vanish when you don't want them.

How to build this magical fortress that only those forces which are dangerous for your existence see, but you yourself cannot see? This was Adiyogi's work. Using the basic illusory nature of nature itself, he came up with many incredible methods to build that magical fortress that you can walk through but no enemy can penetrate. Guru Purnima is in celebration of this, that something so sophisticated and phenomenal began for the human race for the first time.

It is on this day, for the very first time in the history of humanity, that human beings were reminded that they are not a fixed life. If they are willing to strive, every door in the existence is open.

Guru Purnima Is Celebrated Irrespective of Caste or Creed

So this day is the most significant day for the human race. It was held that way in this land till recently. Guru Purnima was one of the most

important festivals in the nation. People celebrated it irrespective of caste or creed because in this country, the most important thing was not wealth or money. Knowledge or knowing was considered the highest value. A teacher or guru was considered the highest entity in society because knowing is the most important thing.

Once the Guru Leaves...

People have gotten interested in the driver only because of the destination that he represents. If you have a dream about going to a certain destination, the man who drives the bus becomes a part of your dream. You may be thinking "Sadhguru" with tears in your eyes, but if I go to the next village, they are not even bothered who I am, because they are not interested in going anywhere. They have not even thought about it, so what I represent does not mean anything to them.

Your interest is the destination, but the destination is abstract, while the driver is something that you can relate to. Therefore, in your understanding, the driver has become important. But actually, the important thing for you is the destination. The way the mind understands, knows, and perceives things is like this: "If the driver is not there, will we really get to the destination?" You have no trust in the technology of auto-piloting. You think if it is put on auto pilot, it will not happen, which is not true.

The question is, "When are you going to go – before me or after me?" Maybe I will outlive you – I have not made up my mind when to go. Does this mean I have an unbounded amount of time? Right now, no. If one wishes, one can earn that. But it needs a lot of hard work, just to drag on for a few more years, and I am not the kind to do that. Suppose I leave tomorrow, is your spiritual journey going to end? Definitely not. Instead of piloting it from outside, it could be piloted from inside. The initiations that you have gone through, whether it is shoonya or anything else, are not empty procedures or a bundle of instructions – they are a huge investment of life energy. If you keep it as a seed in your belly, you do not feel its presence. You have to create the necessary atmosphere for it to become a big tree, then there is no way you cannot feel its presence.

The unfortunate reality for most masters in the past has been that the spiritual processes that they started gathered much more momentum after they left. The physical absence makes the other

presence very powerful – it always greatly enhances the other dimension. If I went tomorrow, it would also be to your benefit, so there is no need to be concerned. But it will not happen tomorrow – sorry to disappoint you.

Stories of Gurdjieff, the Rascal Saint

George Gurdjieff, who lived in Russia in the early part of the twentieth century, was a wonderful master. But Gurdjieff was known as a rascal saint because his methods were very drastic and he did crazy things with people. He played unbearable tricks on people!

He had a powerful presence in England and when he spoke, people wanted to listen. If Gurdjieff was going to speak on a particular evening at six o' clock, five hundred people would come to one great hall somewhere in London. If somebody was late by even a minute, the doors would be closed. So people came at six o' clock and they waited... six-thirty, seven, eight, nine o' clock; they just kept waiting. Every fifteen minutes, Gurdjieff's disciples would come and say, "He will be coming now." Like this, people were kept waiting till ten o' clock.

Then the disciples would come and say, "Gurdjieff is not going to speak today. Today night at twelve o' clock, he is going to speak in another town, which is a hundred kilometers away." So out of these five hundred people, fifty people would leave for that town to be there at twelve o'clock. The rest would be tired and would go home. In the next town also, these fifty people were kept waiting till morning. In the early hours of the morning, the disciples would say, "Gurdjieff is not going to speak here. He is going to speak tomorrow afternoon at twelve o' clock in some other place." Only five of the fifty people would go there. Then Gurdjieff would come and say, "That's good. I want to speak only to these five people. The others just came for entertainment. It is good that they are gone." And he spoke only to these five people.

For Lords and Ladies

In Germany, he opened an ashram which was known as a camp. The elite of European society – lords, counts and countesses – came to these camps. These people, who had never worked in their lives, would be given spades, pick axes and crow bars and Gurdjieff would say, "Today, you must dig this trench with tremendous intensity. Do not even break for lunch." They would all start digging the trench because when the Master says

something, there must be some purpose. By evening, they would all be dead tired and in unbearable pain. When Gurdjieff sees that they cannot bear it anymore, he would say, "Okay, just dig a little more and then close the trench and come." These people would go mad. For days together he would keep doing this with them. By this time, ninety percent of the people would run away from the camps because they had their Rolls Royces' waiting. They were that kind of people. Then Gurdjieff would take the remaining ten percent and do the actual work with them.

Gurdjieff & Ouspensky

One person who made Gurdjieff famous was a person called Ouspensky. Ouspensky was a very famous man by himself. He was a great philosopher, mathematician, and a great intellect. He had written a book on truth, which was hundreds of pages long.

When he went to meet Gurdjieff, he was kept waiting for a very long time – almost three to four days. Gurdjieff had nothing to do in the room, but he would not see Ouspensky. He would go to the toilet, he would go outside and tend to the garden but he did not make time to see Ouspensky. Ouspensky was very irritated with this. When at last he was given the chance to meet Gurdjieff, Gurdjieff said, "You have written big books, so you know plenty. There is no point in once again wasting time talking the same things that you know. Do one thing," he gave Ouspensky a small piece of paper and a pencil and said, "Write down all the things that you know on this paper. We will talk about what you do not know."

Such a small paper was a great insult to this great scholar. Ouspensky felt very insulted but he sat down with this paper and pencil in the presence of this Master and he looked and looked. Many hours passed. Both of them sat there but Ouspensky could not write one word on this paper. He felt totally lost. Then tears poured out of his eyes and he said "I really don't know anything." Gurdjieff said, "You don't know anything? I heard that you have written hundreds of pages of truth. I don't know how you spread truth to that many pages. It must be really diluted." Ouspensky wept and surrendered himself. Gurdjieff took him as his disciple and after that, the real torture continued. Ouspensky is a very stubborn intellect; the problem was that he was well-educated. Too much of study had gone into him. He was a very

polished ego. Gross egos can just be broken. Polished egos are slippery.

Gurdjieff played such absurd tricks on Ouspensky and drove him mad. Once, they were traveling in a train when Gurdjieff was giving talks in the United States. Ouspensky was writing down every word that was said because he wanted to prepare a great volume out of them. Most of the books about Gurdjieff were published by Ouspensky. American trains used to travel for three or four days from one coast to another. So when they came into the pantry car to have lunch or dinner, suddenly Gurdjieff acted like he was totally drunk. Ouspensky tried to control him but Gurdjieff just picked up a glass of wine that was on the table and poured it over a lady's head. She screamed and yelled and they wanted to throw Gurdjieff off the train. Ouspensky was trying to hold everybody and say, "No, this man is enlightened. He is not drunk, he is just enlightened" – a very difficult situation! Then, somehow Ouspensky maneuvered Gurdjieff into the cabin and said, "What are you doing?"

Once he entered the cabin, Gurdjieff sat quietly. So Ouspensky warned him and said, "Please don't do it again, I cannot manage this situation anymore. Let's have dinner. I have not eaten since morning." And again they went for dinner. Once he entered the pantry car, again Gurdjieff acted drunk and he picked up a suitcase and threw it out of the window of the moving train, creating chaos everywhere. Ouspensky wrestled Gurdjieff back into the cabin again! "What did you do? Again! And you threw somebody's suitcase out. What about that man?" Gurdjieff said, "Don't worry, it was your suitcase." Ouspensky just broke down. "Months of work. Everything that I have done was in it. How could you do this?" Gurdjieff said, "Don't worry, I kept all the work here. I just threw the suitcase." He went on doing these kinds of things to Ouspensky. It drove Ouspensky mad.

At the height of the Russian revolution and World War I, when it was very risky to travel, Ouspensky was in England. Gurdjieff was in a remote part of Russia. He sent a telegram to Ouspensky telling him to come immediately. When the Master calls, he has to go, so Ouspensky left everything and with great difficulty, risked his life and traveled through Europe and Russia. When he got there, he thought something of tremendous importance was going to happen. Gurdjieff saw him and said, "Oh, you have come? Okay, you can go back." Ouspensky got so mad this time that he left Gurd-

jieff. By this time, he had written and published a few books on Gurdjieff praising the greatness of the Master. After that, he wrote another book denouncing the Master. Gurdjieff said "That fool. When I said go, if he had gone, he would have gotten enlightened. It was so close, but the fool went away."

Like this, masters have different ways of working, but the whole thing is to bring that kind of intensity that you become total.



INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Getting Distracted? Just Get Involved!

Simply sitting may not be in you right now. Do not try to concentrate and focus. It is not a pleasant experience. Just get involved. For example, when you are watching a movie, it is only a play of two-dimensional light and sound. Nothing so significant. But when you are really watching, it becomes larger than life. People love Rajinikanth more than they love their family. They have never seen the guy and he does not look like that, but he has become larger than life for them because of their involvement. All that happened was that they got involved. Because of this, though he is not a three-dimensional human being, he is just play of sound and light, people started loving him more than anything.

Something becomes fantastic not because it is. Everything is fantastic or nothing is fantastic in the universe. For instance, someone is looking at an atom. They spend their entire life looking at one silly atom. But because of their involvement, that single atom becomes so fantastic! So much life to see all around, but someone is looking through the microscope at one single atom, or a bacterium for that matter. Because of their involvement, bacteria become so fantastic.

Do not try to concentrate. Do not try to focus. If you bring involvement, something becomes fantastic in your experience. Then I do not have to tell you, "Be focused on it." The problem is how to get you out of it. Unfortunately, the world has become goal-oriented. They want mangoes, but they do not like the tree. It does not work like that.

If you get involved with the tree and nourish it, mangoes will fall on your head anyway. You do not have to say, "Mangoes, please come. Be sweet, be sweet, be sweet." If you nourish the tree, mangoes will fall and they will be sweet. Similarly, focus and concentration are consequences of involvement. But people are trying to have the fruit without the tree, and it is freaking the hell out them. Trying to concentrate on something with which they are not involved is just killing people.

How India Can Shape The Future

The world is not a globe. The world is its people. If you are really concerned about peace, it takes individual transformation. Peaceful individuals are the building blocks of a peaceful world. So, in our day-to-day lives, we need a culture of peace – how human beings can maintain their bodies, minds, emotions and energy in a state of peacefulness.

In this culture, just a few generations ago, everyone had some simple process in their daily lives that took care of their inner wellbeing. Unfortunately, today, if you utter the word "yoga", people think you have to twist yourself into some impossible postures. No. Yoga, on one level, is a science of creating the right kind of chemistry within.

Every thought and emotion has a corresponding chemical process within the body. If you are peaceful, the chemistry within you is in certain way. Or, if you can create that kind of chemistry within, you naturally become peaceful. With the right kind of practices, you can bring about a change in the internal chemistry and bring it to a state where whatever the situation, you are always peaceful. Peace and joy are assurances that you will not do unpleasant things. If you are feeling pleasant within yourself, why would you do unpleasant things to someone else?

This culture has profound technologies of creating an exuberant, balanced and ecstatic inner situation. We just need the willingness to learn and apply it. If there is one role that the people of this nation must resolve to play, it is to light the way for the inner transformation for the whole world.

2) *What is the quintessence of India's soft power?*

Nations are created on the basis of race, religion, language or ethnicity. India, however, is a mind-bogglingly complex combination of all these ingredients and more. Sameness has been the

basis of the making of nations. India stands in total defiance of this formula.

In the past, although we were over 200 political fragments, we were still seen as an entity with civilizational unity. But why was this subcontinent considered one entity? After all, every fifty miles, people look different, speak different, dress different, cook different, eat different – everything about them is different. The reason is this has always been a land of seekers, not a land of believers. This is the essence of this culture.

A seeker can never be a believer because you seek only when you realize you do not know a damn thing about life! The most important thing in the world today is to build this culture of individual seeking, not religion. All the conflict on the planet, though some would like to project it as good versus evil, is essentially one man's belief versus another man's belief, religious or otherwise. The moment you believe something, you become blind to everything else.

However, when you are seeking, you have something to strive for, but nothing to fight for. The world needs this badly. When we fight, we destroy. When we strive, we create.

3) *How do you explain the world's affirmative response to India's spiritual values?*

It was always believed that affluence will bring wellbeing. But in Europe, which has enjoyed many decades of continuous affluence, 38% of the population suffers from mental illness. In the United States, almost 70% of adults are on prescription medication. This is not wellbeing.

People today are anxious and neurotic and whatever methods they have been using to handle their internal turmoil have not really worked. So looking towards yoga is very natural. The yogic science is the only technology for human wellbeing which has lived for over 15,000 years. Today, nearly two billion people practice some form of yoga simply because of its efficacy. It works!

I normally never talk about the benefits, because I consider them as the side-effects of yoga. But there are definitely physical and mental benefits. One can experience remarkable changes in terms of being peaceful, joyful and healthy. And there are many people who have come out of chronic ailments miraculously.

But that is not the essential nature of what yoga is. The fundamental objective of yoga is to make your experience of life so large and all-inclusive

that instead of being an individual, you become a universal process.

To become something more than what you are right now is a fundamental longing in every human being. What you are seeking is boundless expansion. Boundless expansion can never happen through physical means. It can happen only if a dimension beyond the physical becomes a living reality within you. To experience this dimension is the true purpose of yoga. So in that sense, it is only yoga that can truly address human wellbeing. But, one must also understand that the spiritual and cultural dimensions are a lame duck without the nation's economy and political influence.

4) What are your personal impressions about how the world is responding to Indian values?

Across the planet, I find that doors are opening for spiritual process like never before. Even universities, which are in many ways the last bastion of resistance, are opening up. Academics would never accept mysticism or spirituality as a part of their life. But now they want weeklong sessions every year for their students.

And three years ago, International Yoga Day was adopted by the UN after 177 countries co-sponsored the resolution. No other resolution has received such support. It was almost like the whole world was waiting for India to take this step.

International Yoga Day means we are looking at wellbeing as a science, not as faith, not as something that happens to you by accident. We are not looking at the stars to fix our wellbeing. We are looking towards a scientific process of creating wellbeing consciously.

In pursuit of wellbeing, human beings have looked up and fought forever. Then they looked out and ripped the planet apart. But wellbeing will happen only when you turn inward. In is the only way out. Human wellbeing will not happen unless one turns inward because human experience is created from within. Once you realize this, yoga becomes very relevant. As human intellect fires more, you will see in the next 25-50 years, yoga will become the norm on the planet, not an exception. "In is the only way out."

I would say that if you have integrity, there is so much to be done in India. I am focusing on integrity because it has become scarce material in India. What we need in this country is not necessarily dollars. Money is there. We need corruption-free, clear, focused and dedicated people.

We are sitting on the threshold and we are on the right track. The problem is, we have been sitting on the threshold too long. Especially when you are on the right track, if you sit there for too long, you will get run over. It is important that we walk and walk fast. So if you think you have integrity, please come and stay in India. There is much to be done.

What is the Significance of Brahmacharya?

Brahman" means "the divine" or "ultimate," "char-ya" means "the path." If you are on the path of the divine, you are a brahmachari. To be on the path of the divine means you have no personal agendas of your own. You simply do what is needed. You have no personal ways of deciding where you should go in your life, what you should do, or what you like and dislike; all these things are simply taken away from you. If you do this unwillingly, it can be an absolute torture. If you do it willingly, it makes your life so wonderful and beautiful because there is nothing to bother you anymore. You simply do what is needed; life is so simple. Once you have given yourself like that, you do not have to bother about the spiritual path or worry about your spirituality. It is taken care of. You do not have to really do anything about it.

People may think a brahmachari is making a great sacrifice and is being denied life. But it is not so at all. If someone is a brahmachari only by dress, yes it is true, life is torture. But for a person who is truly walking the path of the divine, the petty pleasures that the world offers will become totally meaningless. Once you enjoy the inner pleasures of your being, the external pleasures become totally meaningless.

Does it mean everyone should become a brahmachari? Everyone should become a brahmachari, not necessarily in terms of lifestyle, but internally. Everyone should be on the path of the divine. Brahmacharya does not just mean celibacy. That is just one of the aspects that have been taken up as a supportive system. To become a brahmachari means you are ecstatic by your own nature. You can be married and still be a brahmachari. It is possible because you are joyful by your own nature; you are not trying to extract joy from your husband or wife. This is how it should be. The whole world should be brahmachari. Everyone should be joyful by their own nature. If two people

come together, it should be a sharing of joy, not extraction of joy from each other.

An Investment For The Future

Why has a certain order been set up? If one is just seeking realization at the end of his life, it could be taken care of in many different ways. I can fix a date with you for that day! But if one wants to explore, and not only explore, if one wants to be a useful instrument in making it happen to many other people, then brahmacharya becomes significant. Brahmacharies are an investment for the future, to keep spirituality in its pristine purity and transmit it from generation to generation. A small, core group of people are needed. They are initiated in a particular way which turns their energies in a completely different direction. Everyone need not take that step, nor will we take everyone because it is not necessary, and neither can they put in the sadhana that is required or demanded out of them.

All of us have eaten mangoes, but how many of us have planted mango trees, made them grow and then eaten mangoes? Most people have eaten mangoes because someone else planted the mango trees. In every society, out of a thousand people, at least ten people have to take care to plant mango trees. Similarly with this, a few people have to take the path of brahmacharya. People who are willing to dedicate themselves to other's wellbeing are needed in society. If there is no one thinking about others wellbeing, that society is definitely heading for ruin. That is what has happened to society right now. There are very few people thinking of everyone's wellbeing.

Like A Rocket!

Essentially, this human mechanism is a certain energy system. You can keep it with many openings and transact with the world in a certain way or you can make this into a close-circuit system so that it becomes very integrated. A rocket goes up because it is firing only on one side. Suppose it fires on all the sides, it is not going to go anywhere, it will just dissipate itself. Or it will go somewhere without direction and fall apart. What we are trying to make out of a brahmachari is just that he fires only on one side. One that fires only on one side is going to go straight up and there is a particular purpose to creating such a system.

When you have a close-circuit system like that, it is a powerful instrument. This instrument could be employed or deployed in so many different ways.

It is a weapon with which you can bomb the world with a spiritual process.

Monks have been there in every culture because wherever there was a genuine enlightened process, they always wanted some mechanisms to be wired in such a way that they are completely integrated systems. There is no transaction outside. It is totally by itself. Those systems are needed if you want to shake the world in a certain way and want to create certain processes and access certain things. If you want to put a satellite beyond the atmosphere, you need a rocket. If you want to just fly around in the atmosphere, an airplane will do. That's the difference. When you are planning and projecting to do something which is beyond certain limitations, brahmacharies become necessary.

The Side-Effects of Meditation & Why They Don't Matter Much!

Physical manifestations are probably always the most tangible. There are many physical and psychological manifestations and there are many other manifestations which are beyond physical and psychological. All these things can be questioned, but by whom? People who know only the physical and psychological, people who rely more on machines, who believe that machines are more reliable than the human beings who built them, those type of people question it all the time.

Dead or Brain-dead?!

Let me tell you something that happened a few years ago. I went to a certain place where they were doing all kinds of experiments on yoga and yogis. They thought I was a good subject – a guinea pig. I normally would not subject myself to these indignities, but it was a moment of obligation, so I said yes.

They said they want to check the gamma waves in my brain. I did not know I even had such waves! They put fourteen electrodes in different places on my body and mainly in the head region, and told me, "Now meditate." I said, "I don't know any meditation." They said, "No, no, you are teaching meditation to everybody." "I teach meditation to people because they can't sit in one place. You have to teach them something to make them sit." Then they asked, "Okay, what can you do?" I said, "If you want, I will simply sit still." They said, "Okay, do that." So I sat.

After about fifteen to twenty minutes, I felt somebody hitting my knee with some metallic object. Then they began hitting my elbow and my ankle – in all the most painful places. I did not know what their interest in my joints was. It became very persistent and then they touched my back. My spine is always super-sensitive and once they touched my back, I thought maybe it is time to tell them. If they want me to come out, if they would have just said, “Come out,” I would have taken a minute and come out. Why all this tapping?

When I opened my eyes, they were giving me a weird look. “Did I do something wrong?” I asked. They said, “No, our machine says you are dead.” I said, “Okay, that’s a great diagnosis.” Then they discussed amongst themselves and said, “Either you are dead or your brain is dead.” I said, “The second diagnosis is too insulting. I will take the first one. You say what you want. I am alive, it is fine with me. Brain-dead is not a good certificate to have.”

When you go about checking out life like this from bits and pieces of information and knowledge that you have, you will obviously come to wrong conclusions. But anyway, it is important because the world happens that way today. Because I was not willing to subject myself again, I asked some of our meditators to allow their brains to be scanned. It was processed in a premier institute in the country and what they found was that there is a phenomenal coherence between the right and left brain. The people who looked at it said, “We have never seen anything like this.” This is for people who have done these practices for just three months or a little more.

Right & Left Brain Coherence

What this means in terms of translating it into life is, whatever information you receive and process through the five sense organs generally goes to the left brain. Whatever information that is perceived through the rest of the body, which is not logical, which is not piecemeal, which is more homogeneous information that is most essential for your life, is processed in your right brain which is not logical. You may not be conscious of it but you are always using this information. Otherwise you could not be here. Unless there is an active coherence between the left brain and right brain, you cannot access this information consciously. Consciously being able to access that part of life within you, that part of information and knowing within you can take you places that you have not

imagined. What you have been doing in your life with great effort, you could just do it like that.

For any number of people, it has translated into their lives in terms of action and how they live. I would say, if you are doing a particular kind of activity, let us say today’s software engineers, what they are doing in thirty days, probably very effortlessly, within six months of practice they could do it in a much shorter time. But if they are stretching it for contract purposes, that is left to them; that is not my business! Your ability to function in the world can be greatly enhanced – almost super-enhanced. Physically and mentally, it will set you apart in any crowd of people if you give yourself to the practice sufficiently. And health-wise, there is any amount of medical research today to tell you that it does miraculous things to you.

The Real Thing Is Slowly Building Up

But all these benefits – physical health, mental capabilities, being able to handle life with ease – these are just side-effects. The real thing is slowly building up. That, you will know only when it flowers. Till then, you think nothing is happening. It is like you planted a flowering tree in your house. As it grows, only leaves keep coming. Your neighbour comes and tells you, “This is no good. You said flowers would come but only leaves are coming. Let us chop it and make firewood out of it.” You said, “Let me see. Maybe tomorrow morning it will work.” Tomorrow morning – nothing. Again you said, “Let me see, one more day,” One more day, one more day... years passed. If you do not know how long it takes for this tree to flower, you would probably have chopped it a hundred times over. But if you keep nurturing it, one day when it flowers, when it is in full bloom, then you realize this plant was not about leaves, this was not about shade, this was not about a little bit of oxygen. This, when it flowers, is incredibly beautiful.

The Breath, Passage to Liberation

As one’s awareness gains the needed sharpness or keenness, one of the first things that one naturally becomes aware of is the breath. The breath being a mechanical action in the body that is constant and continuous, it is truly amazing how most human beings live without being conscious of it. But once the breath comes into your awareness, it becomes an amazing process. No wonder breath watching is probably the most practiced

form of meditation today. It is so basic and simple, but it comes so easy and naturally that it does not need any preparation.

If you become a little more conscious, the breath will naturally come into your awareness. I was six or seven years of age when I started to enjoy the breath. Just watching the constant, rhythmic movement of my little chest and belly kept me interested and engaged for hours. It was only much later that the idea of meditation entered my life. But if you are a bit conscious, you cannot ignore the simple rhythm of the breath that is going on endlessly.

Most people notice the breath only when their body goes into bronchial spasm or excessive breath. They are missing the normal breath, simply because they have a serious attention issue. These days, people are carrying their attention deficiencies like a qualification.

Bringing Attention into Your Life

Bringing attention into your life and particularly into the lives of our children is most important. Ultimately, whether it is spiritual or material, the world yields to you only to the extent that you are willing to pay attention to it.

Focusing on the breath is a forceful attempt to do that. But it is also a way of making you conscious. The important thing is not to focus on the breath but to raise the pitch of your awareness in such a way that you are naturally conscious of your breath. The breath is such a mechanical process. In a minor way, the body is going through a spasm every moment you inhale and exhale. How can you miss it unless you are completely lost in your psychological framework? Unless you are totally lost in your own thoughts and emotions, if you simply sit down, there is no way you can miss the process of the breath. Including something into your awareness is not an act. There is no effort involved in this.

When we teach a certain process, we may ask people to focus on the breath because the necessary level of awareness is not there. But otherwise, if you simply sit, there is no way you cannot be conscious of the breath, unless you are lost in thought. So, do not be lost in your own thought – it is not of much consequence, as it comes from a very limited possibility of information. If you stay with it, the breath could become an access to a larger possibility. Right now, the process of breath itself may not be in most people's awareness. They may only be conscious of the sensations

caused by the movement of air in their nostrils or lungs.

If you simply sit or lie down, staying still in every way, the breath will become such a big process, and it is on all the time. It is amazing how so many people can live without noticing it, without being conscious of it every moment of their life. Staying focused on the breath is one way to get there. Those of you who are initiated into Shoonya may find that if you simply sit there without doing anything, suddenly the breath seems to be happening in such a big way. The breath actually is a very big thing, though you may not realize it until you lose it.

You may have heard the Bhaja Govindam chant, where it says, Nischala tatvam, jeevan mukti. What this means is if there is an unwavering attention towards something, no matter what the thing is, then liberation, the possibility of freedom cannot be denied to you. In other words, the essential problem of human beings is lack of attention. With keenness and intensity of attention, you can open just about any door in this universe. It all depends on how keen and intense your attention is, and how much energy there is behind your attention. In this context, the breath is a beautiful device because it is constantly on, as long as we are alive. The breath is there all the time. You just have to be conscious.

Not the Body, Not the Mind

When you say, "I am not the body; I am not the mind" during Isha Kriya, it is not a philosophy or an ideology. It is not a slogan that you keep shouting within yourself and one day become converted. This is a subtle reminder that you add to your breath. Do not use "I am not the body; I am not the mind" to try and psych yourself. You are just adding a certain element to your breath. Otherwise, you are not able to notice your breath. Right now, you are only able to watch the sensations caused by the movement of the air, not the breath itself.

When you are inhaling, not necessarily is only inhalation happening – exhalation could be partly happening as well. Similarly, when you are exhaling, not necessarily is only exhalation happening – inhalation could be partly happening too. But you will not figure this until you notice the way of the breath. Though in many ways, physiologically, the breath is the basis of your life, most human beings have never really experienced their breath. Those

who become conscious of just the sensations of the air passage claim all kinds of transformations, and that is true. Your sensations are the outermost layer of who you are. Knowing the sensations is most fundamental. Whatever you touch, whether you sit or stand, there are sensations. The breath is a more profound and subtle dimension which will not come into your experience easily.

Taking the Breath Away

When we say breath in the sense of koorma nadi, we are not talking about the oxygen-carbon dioxide exchange. That is happening as a consequence of what we refer to as shvasa. Along with the transaction of air that is coming in and going out, there is another level of transaction required for the physiological process to happen. Even after a person is medically dead – the movement of air, the heartbeat, and the brain activity have stopped – he is still breathing for some time, in the sense that the koorma nadi is still on. That process is still going on, but it is not able to pull in air and push out carbon dioxide. It is like an old siphon that is still pumping, but the liquid does not flow, because there is a little leak. Similarly, the koorma nadi process is still on, but the oxygen-carbon dioxide exchange has closed down. Suppose the stock exchange closes down – in most people's understanding, the entire economy is finished, but you can still buy bread locally. Maybe you do not pay in cash but in kind, but the economy is still going on, though not at a level that could be measured. Similarly, the koorma nadi can still be on while the exchange of air has already stopped.

We are talking about becoming aware of the breath, which means you become aware of the link between you and your body. If you take away your breath, obviously you and your body will fall apart. Travelling along the breath will give you access to that dimension. If you learn to hold your body a little away from yourself, you will know you are not the body. If you are wearing loose-fitting clothes, you know these clothes are not you. If you are wearing really tight-fitting clothes, after some time, you do not know whether they are you or not. You experience your skin as "yourself." Some part of your skin will disappear in no time, but still you are yourself. Even if you go into little deeper layers of the body, still you are yourself.

Adding a Fragrance to the Breath

Do not use "I am not the body, I am not the mind" as a slogan – it will not work like that. This was given to you as an aid to bring awareness to the koorma nadi, or the breath. Shouting slogans is a way of manipulating crowds on the street. You cannot do anything inside with that. When I go to new places in northern India, it is very common that people want to shout, "Sadhguru maharaj ki jai!" I immediately stop them and say, "First, a slogan will come, then a flag, then an emblem, then you will become a nation of your own. And then you will have a national bird!"

"I am not the body, I am not the mind" should happen in a very subtle way to bring the breath into your awareness. With that thought, you are simply adding a little fragrance to your breath so that you can notice it. It is like lighting incense to see where the air is moving. If it is moving gently, you would not know otherwise. Just like that.

Kriya Yoga – A Powerful Way To Walk The Spiritual Path

Fundamentally, kriya means internal action. When you do inner action, it does not involve the body and the mind because both the body and the mind are still external to you. When you have a certain mastery to do action with your energy, then it is a kriya.

If you do external activity we call it karma. If you do internal activity we call it kriya. In a way, both are certain kind of karmas or both are certain kind of kriyas. But traditionally, or in the general sense of the term it is understood like this: karmas are those which bind you, kriyas are those which release you.

Whatever we do with your body, your attitudes and your thought, for example today your thoughts may go in one direction. Tomorrow if another person comes and influences you, they will go another way. Similarly, whatever we do with your body, your body is well today so it likes asanas. Tomorrow morning if your body is stiff, you will hate asanas. Your emotions are not at all reliable. At any moment they can shift from this to that. But your energies are different. Once we start working with the energy in a certain way, it has a different kind of depth to life. Suddenly, there is a different dimension to every aspect of your life because your energies have been touched and activated in a completely different way.

A powerful way

Kriya yoga is a very powerful way to walk the spiritual path, but at the same time it is a very demanding way. What it demands out of a person is so tremendous. For a modern educated person today, kriya yoga would be inhuman because it needs that kind of discipline and a certain exactness about everything. Most people don't have the body, the mind or the stability of emotion for the kriya yoga path anymore because right from childhood, people are in too much comfort. Comfort does not mean physical comfort. Sitting in a comfortable chair is not an obstruction. But your whole being is seeking comfort always, that is a great obstruction. If you are sitting on something which is comfortable, enjoy it – there is no problem about it. But if you are constantly seeking comfort, then that kind of mind and emotion is unsuitable for the path of kriya yoga. Kriya yoga cannot be done with people who are loose, people who talk “freedom” everywhere, “Am I not free to do this, am I not free to do that, can't I eat this, can't I sleep there?”

If you take someone into the path of kriya, if I tell you sleep with your legs up and head down, that is how you should sleep without asking questions because all of it can never be explained. You may understand as you go, but it can never be explained. And if it has to be explained, the essence of the kriya will be lost. If people start asking stupid logical questions for everything, kriyas cannot be imparted.

If we want to teach you kriyas just as a physical practice, I can write a book about it, and you can read and learn it. But if you want the kriya to be a live process, if we want the kriya to be imprinted into your system in a certain way, then it needs discipline and dedication. It needs trust to open up your energies to the other person so that you become absolutely vulnerable. He may do anything with you, and initially you will start wondering what the hell he is doing with you because the initial stages of kriyas can be such that you don't know whether you are getting enlightened or you are going mad. You must have enough trust to sustain through those periods. Otherwise kriya will be difficult.

So generally on the path of kriya, most Gurus make the disciples wait. You come and you want to learn kriya yoga. “Okay, sweep the floor.” “No, I want to learn kriya yoga.” “That is why I said, sweep the floor.” You swept the floor for one year

and said, “I did one year of sweeping.” “Oh, you are done with one year of sweeping the floor? Wash the dishes.” Just make him wait, wait, and wait. Use him, misuse him, abuse him, and still his trust does not shake, “Oh, there must be some reason.” When he comes to this, then he can be initiated into kriyas. Otherwise, once you power him in a particular way that his system is vibrant beyond normal standards, if his attitudes and emotions are not proper, he will cause immense damage to himself.

But in today's world, to get that kind of time with people to make them wait and go through all this and when they come to that kind of trust, then imprinting this is a little remote. It is not impossible, but it is a little remote in the modern world.

The mechanics of life

Kriya yoga is important only if you want to do things beyond realization. If your interest is only to somehow escape this prison and get away, you just want enlightenment or mukti, then you don't really have to walk the kriya yoga path because kriyas are so elaborate and involve so much discipline and focus. If you just want to be liberated, then kriyas can be used in a small way, it need not be too intense. Kriya as a whole path is not necessary because it needs too much application.

If you follow the path of kriya very intensely, without guidance it may take a few lifetimes to mature. If there is someone alive who can do things with you, then it can happen in this life. Otherwise kriya is a little roundabout way. With the path of kriya you are not only seeking realization, you also want to know the mechanics of life-making. You want to know the engineering of how life is built – what to do about it. That is why it is a much longer process.

People who have come up on kriya have a completely different kind of presence about them because of the mastery over their energies. They can dismantle life and put it back together. But if you are just pursuing other ways, like gnana for example, you are razor-sharp, you can do many things with your mind but still there is nothing much you can do with your energy. If you are on bhakti, there is nothing you can do and you don't care, you only want to dissolve. If you are on the path of karma yoga, you do many things in the world, but you can do nothing with yourself. But kriya yogis can do whatever they wish with them-

selves in terms of energy and they can do a lot with the world also.

Are You A Fan of Positive Thinking?

Too many people in the world are always talking about “positive thinking.” When you say positive thinking, in a way you are trying to escape reality. You only want to look at one side of life while missing out the other. You may ignore the other, but the other will not ignore you. If you do not think about the negative things in the world, you will live in a fool’s paradise and life will get you for it. Right now, suppose black clouds are hanging in the sky. You can ignore them, but they are not going to ignore you. When it rains, it rains. When you get drenched, you get drenched.

You can ignore it and just think everything is going to be okay – it has some psychological and social relevance but no existential relevance. It will only be solace. You try to solace yourself by moving from reality to unreality because somewhere, you believe that you can’t handle reality. And you probably can’t so you succumb to positive thinking. You want to skip the negative and just think positive. Or in other words, you try to avoid the negative.

Whatever you try to avoid becomes the very basis of your consciousness. What you pursue will not be the strongest point in you. What you try to avoid will always be the strongest point in you. Anyone who tries to eliminate one aspect of life and live with the other will only bring misery upon himself.

Dual Nature

The whole existence is happening between two dualities. What you refer to as positive and negative is: masculine and feminine, light and darkness, day and night. Without this, how will life happen? It is like saying you don’t want death, you want only life – there is no such thing. Only because there is death there is life. Only because there is darkness there is light. It is just that you don’t allow the negative to overwhelm you. Let both of them be there and see how to make both of them productive.

If you look at life just the way it is, it is positive and negative in equal terms, always. If you look at it as it is, neither the negative nor the positive can overwhelm you. Only because they are equal, everything is happening the way it is happening.

You have to harness both and produce what you can.

A light turns on because there is positive and negative in electricity. A positive result is happening so we don’t mind the negative. If there is a man and a woman, if joy is coming out of them, we don’t mind the man or the woman. Suppose they started creating a lot of negative result, now we think they are a problem. It is not the positive and negative which is the problem, it is the end result that you produce.

You don’t have to resist the positive or the negative, you just have to make a positive result out of it, which is just a question of your capability. If we are concerned about this life, it is very important that we are truthful about where we really are. Only then can we make a journey. Positive thinking has destroyed many possibilities for people. Positive thinking is like this – there’s a poem written by a positive thinker:

A little bird did fly in the sky. Shit it did in my eye.

But I can neither worry nor cry, Because I’m a positive thinker.

I thank God and pray that buffaloes don’t fly.

If you are not willing to see life the way it is, there is no way to take a step about it. You can’t do anything about it. You can only do funny things mentally, which can keep you entertained for a while but will never take you anywhere.

Indian Classical Music and Activating the Chakras

Today, it is common scientific knowledge that the whole existence is a reverberation of energy. The source of all that is physical in existence is a reverberation or a vibration. And where there is a vibration, there is bound to be a sound. Or in other words, the entire existence is a complex amalgamation of sounds. This was recognized by the yogic sciences many millennia ago. We call this Nada Brahma, which means that the creation and creator is just sound.

“If everything is sound, why don’t I hear it?” The full spectrum of sound that the reverberations of creation throw out is usually not available to the human ear. What you are able to hear is just a small band of frequencies – the sonic range of sounds. Anything above this range is called ultrasonic. What is below is subsonic. Both subsonic and ultrasonic sounds are normally outside the hearing range of the human ear.

However, it is possible to move into certain states that we refer to as Rithambhara Pragna, where you can hear sounds beyond the usually audible spectrum. In such a state, if you look at any form, the sound attached to it becomes clear to you. The whole existence can be experienced as just sound.

Many years ago, I used to travel alone for a month or two every year in the Himalayas, and I happened to go to Kedarnath. Kedar is a very powerful and wonderful place. Above Kedar, there is a place called Kanti Sarovar, where people don't generally go because it is a tricky climb. I trekked up to Kanti Sarovar and sat on one of the rocks there.

It is very difficult to put this into words, but after some time, everything turned into sound in my experience. My body, the mountain, the lake in front of me, everything had become sound. It had taken on sound form, and was just going on in me in a completely different way. My mouth was closed – I am very clear about that – but my own voice was going on loudly, as if it was on a microphone singing a song – and it was in Sanskrit.

NADA BRAHMA

Translation: Sound is Brahman, the manifestation of the universe, sound manifests itself in the form of all life, sound is bondage, sound is the means for liberation, sound is that which binds, sound is that which liberates, sound is the bestower of all, sound is the power behind everything, sound is everything.

If you just give yourself to that song, there is a kind of power to it. It has a power to dissolve a person, if you really throw yourself into it.

Mantra: If you arrange sounds in a certain pattern, it has a certain kind of impact. In this culture, we explored different patterns and came up with mantras. A mantra is a technically correct arrangement of sound, but it need not necessarily be aesthetically pleasing. With a mantra, the technical correctness is more important than the aesthetic enjoyment that one may have. Mantras neither belong to any religion or sect, nor are they a form of worship. They are just key sounds that can open up every realm in the universe. In the yogic sciences, there is a way to hold and incubate a mantra within yourself. Many yogis spend their whole life just incubating one particular mantra within themselves. So the mantra is not something that you say, it is something that you are striving to become. If you become the key, it

will open up a different dimension of life and experience within you.

Classical Music

Indian classical music is a modification of mantras, where aesthetics become as important as the technical arrangement of sounds. Music is a more refined harmonious arrangement of sound. The very body is reverberating with wonderful music if you listen. Shiva carried a damaru (a drum) because it is symbolic of the rhythm of life. Whatever sound emanates from anything, there is a certain rhythm to it. If there is a rhythm to every sound that you hear, obviously there is a rhythm in the reverberation that causes the sound.

Indian classical music comes from a very deep understanding of the human system because all our experience of life is essentially happening within us. Light and darkness, sound and silence, joy and misery happen within us. Every human experience happens within, never outside of ourselves. We are the basis of our experience. Because of this, we identified certain dimensions of the body that are responsive to sounds. If you know how to use sounds, a proper arrangement of sounds can do incredible things.

Activating the Human Body with Music

In yoga, we see the human body as made up of five koshas, or five sheaths or layers: annamaya kosha or food body, manomaya kosha or mental body, pranamaya kosha or energy body, vigyanamaya kosha or etheric body and anandamaya kosha or bliss body.

Pranamaya kosha, or the energy body, is very significant. It is made up of 72,000 nadis, which are energy channels or pathways through which the energy in the body flows. These nadis meet and redistribute at 114 chakras or junction points in the human system. Of these 114, two are outside the physical body and 112 are within. Out of these 112, four are dormant to a large extent.

This leaves 108 active energy centers in the body. These 108 are divided on the right and the left as 54 each in the form of ida and pingala. Based on this, we formed a Sanskrit alphabet of fifty-four sounds, each in two manifestations of feminine and masculine.

Indian classical music has, to a mathematical precision, recognized which sounds can activate these 108 chakras, and lead to a natural evolution of the human being to a higher level of consciousness. Indian classical music has never been just a

form of entertainment. It has been a way of evolving an individual human being into a universal entity. In this culture, music, dance or whatever else a person does are not entertainment, they are also a spiritual process. Entertainment was not the attitude in life. Everything was a sadhana to reach a higher level of consciousness.

The dimension of activating the human system and allowing the human system to evolve to its ultimate possibility by using these 108 sounds is called Nada Yoga. Indian classical music is an evolution of this fundamental process of Nada Yoga. If one listens to music with the necessary involvement, or if one involves themselves in the process of what we refer to as classical music, it is not just about the pleasantness of the body or emotion that one goes through, it is a method to move out of compulsive cycles of life. It is a method to transcend those cycles to achieve freedom and liberation.

Cultivating the Audience

Cultivating the audience is an important part of nurturing this wonderful form of music. Without cultivating the audience and without allowing expression for budding talent, this art form cannot live. This is one of the most wonderful ways through which one can transcend one's limitations and arrive at an ultimate possibility. There are many ways to do this but Indian classical music is a wonderful and beautiful way to do it.

Don't Overdo Criticism

When reason is immature it finds expression in the form of denying. Criticism and denial always tend to look more intelligent than acceptance and creating something. Always, the opposition sounds more intelligent because they only criticize, they are not doing anything. Those who are creating do not look intelligent because when you are creating something, you will make many mistakes – some things go right, some things go wrong. But one who just criticizes suddenly sounds so intelligent. This is how many people in the world – especially in the media – are going on unfortunately. Very few of them are really creating anything. Most of them just criticize everything. They get into this mode of trying to be one up on everyone else.

To question is fine. If you criticize someone, you must have the intention of correcting them. But to blatantly criticize and throw darts at everything is

not the way forward. This has become a serious problem everywhere in the world. Criticism always sounds more intelligent. Demolishing something always seems more powerful than constructing something. If I nurture something and make it grow, there is nothing dramatic about it. But if I come and knock something down in front of ten people, that is quite dramatic. That is why knocking down is always dramatized in movies. Without knocking somebody down, there is no movie! There is something dramatic and impactful about it.

Criticism is a way of knocking someone or something down. When you take a negative stand, it somehow seems to appear more intelligent than the positive stand. That is immature reasoning because it takes a lot of intelligence to keep your own opinions aside and just create what needs to be created. When your reasoning is immature, you can deny everything. When your reasoning matures, you learn to accept everything because you understand the process of life. You are not just going by logic. You are going by the reasoning of life. You have more life sense in you, not just logical sense.

Spirituality – Not a Moral Code

If your spirituality is time-bound, from five to seven in the morning or whatever time, you are just trying to be spiritual; there is nothing spiritual about you.

What conclusions have you made about being spiritual? If you have made the conclusion that being spiritual means speaking kindly to everyone, you are mistaken. If someone is communicating with different aspects of life in different ways, out of their understanding, out of their sensitivity, out of their own experience – they know how to communicate with a baby, a buffalo, a mountain, they know how to speak to the bus driver – if they know it out of this awareness, then it is wonderful and fine. That is how life should be.

If someone, out of their so-called spirituality, is trying to speak with whatever they believe is kindness or goodness, to every aspect of life, they are just moralistic and stupid. Maybe they are good people, but they have no sense of life. There is no inner experience; it is just coming from their goodness and morality. They may make good citizens, but they will not know anything of the beyond.

If one is communicating in different ways with different aspects of life because of their unawareness or prejudices, that is a different aspect altogether. How one talks to a bus driver may be a way of seeing where that person is, or may not be at all. It is best that you do not judge a person by the way they are speaking to someone at a certain moment. If there is a pattern of addressing something kindly and another aspect of life rudely, then you know it is coming from ignorance.

Spirituality – Not a Moral Code

First, let us understand that spirituality is not a moral code. Spirituality means you are beginning to experience that which is beyond the physical. It has nothing to do with the way you communicate and handle the world around you. The way you do that is just a question of your capability, intelligence, exposure, inclination, and what kind of objectives you have in your life.

There was a yogi who lived many decades ago. Once, he was sitting in the forest, absolutely blissful, but if people came anywhere near him, he threw stones at them. He never hit anyone, but he threw stones at them like a mad man. As far as people were concerned, he was a madman throwing stones. It was only much later when people looked back, they were able to see that not once did he hit anyone. He always made sure of that. He just did not want people around him. He knew that if people came, they would ask for things, and because of the way he was – his energy was in a certain state – naturally miracles would happen. Then people would gather and mess up his whole life. So if people came anywhere near him, he would throw stones at them.

If you go by one's behavior, about what he is doing or what he is saying, you will definitely come to a wrong conclusion, a wrong judgment. If you had known Sadhguru Sri Brahma, if somebody came and said something stupid to him, he would just kick them – not out of arrogance or hatred. That was how he dealt with people. I don't do that. This is not because I am more realized or less realized, it is simply from being a little smarter with the world. How you operate is just a question of your inclination, intelligence and exposure. It has got nothing to do with your spirituality.

Why Do People Go on Pilgrimages?

What is the difference between travel, a journey and a pilgrimage? People move from one place to

another for a variety of reasons. There are explorers who are always looking for virgin land that they want to put their footprint on. They want to prove something. There are travelers who are curious to see everything, so they travel. There are tourists who just go to relax. There are other kinds of tourists who just go to escape from their work or family. But a pilgrim is not going for any of these purposes. A pilgrimage is not a conquest, it is a surrender. It is a way of getting yourself out of the way. If you do not budge, it is a way of wearing yourself out. A process of destroying all that is limited and compulsive and arriving to a boundless state of consciousness.

Subduing Who You Are

The very idea behind a pilgrimage is fundamentally to subdue the sense of who you are. It is to become nothing in the process of just walking and climbing and subjecting yourself to various arduous processes of nature. In the ancient past, to get to such places, a person had to go through a certain amount of physical, mental, and every kind of hardship, so that he becomes less than who he thinks he is right now. Today things have been made much more comfortable. We are flying up, driving down and just walking a little bit.

Physically, we are much weaker human beings than what they used to be a thousand years ago because somewhere we do not know how to make use of the comforts and conveniences for our wellbeing. We have used them to make ourselves weaker, at more difficulty with ourselves and with the surroundings in which we exist. So the fundamental idea of pilgrimage becomes all the more relevant to modern societies than it was to the ancient ones.

Hardship is not necessary but most people are unwilling to dissolve, so you have to wear them down. It is unfortunate that most human beings cannot grow in comfort. It would be wonderful to grow in comfort but unfortunately, most human beings become frivolous when there is comfort. Some profoundness comes to them only when there is hardship. But it need not be so. Something else need not beat us down. We must have the sense to understand that if we want to experience something larger than ourselves and touch dimensions which are not yet in our perception, the most important thing is that the sense of who you are should go down.

Make Your Life a Pilgrimage

If you have a working head, you would make your life into a pilgrimage. If your life is not a constant process of reaching for something higher than where you are right now, what kind of life is that? If this life is not constantly longing for something higher than what it is, that is not much of a life. If you are aspiring and working towards something higher, then your life is a pilgrimage.

Keep the Wheels Spinning: The Purpose of Sadhana

Q: I've been doing my practices for three years and I haven't had any great experiences or seen any changes in me. What should motivate me to continue doing the practices?

Sadhguru: You need to understand what a practice is. If you want to consciously move your hand, you can. If you want to move your mind somewhere, you can do that too, to some extent. Similarly, you can move your emotions. Can you move your energies? No. We do the practices so that that part of your life begins to move too. If everything moves – your body, your mind, your emotions – but your energies don't move, you still don't go anywhere. The practice is to loosen that dimension of your life which is normally not in your hands.

Your physical body is largely in your hands, but still it is not moving the way you want it. It is doing its own things. Your mind could easily be taken into your hands, but it may also not be doing what you want right now. It may be doing a thousand other things. Your emotions can easily be focused and taken where you want, but that also may not be happening. But if you make up your mind, you can move your body, mind, and emotions. Every one of you is capable of that if you really make up your mind. But even if you make up your mind, you cannot move your energies. This is not in your grasp at all.

The sadhana is brought into your life so that that dimension of your life begins to move. If transformation is not happening, it means that you are not doing much about the other three dimensions. Your body, your mind and your emotions have not been disciplined, but you are doing practices because you think it is some kind of a magic wand that will pay off for you. It will, but still...

Four-wheel drive!

It is like, right now, in some places in the ashram, there is a certain level of soggy soil. When you

drive, one mistake and you will be stuck. Even if just one wheel is stuck and the other three wheels are spinning, still you cannot go anywhere. You are stuck badly enough. Sometimes, two are stuck, the other two are spinning – you are not going anywhere. Sometimes, all three are stuck. If only one is spinning – nothing! If all are stuck, that is a different matter. When all are stuck, you cannot call it a car anymore – it is part of the earth. You are not going anywhere.

Life is just like that. If your journey has to be from one dimension to another, all the four have to move. On one or two wheels, you can still do your career, manage your family and be successful in the world, but if you want to move from one dimension to another, all the four have to move – there is no other way. Otherwise you won't go anywhere. So you may be doing your practices but neglecting the other aspects.

We have always told you this, but in a different way... But the younger generation is slowly reducing their communication to five-word sentences. You must make a sentence only with five words, otherwise they will lose their focus. As people are becoming like this, I am also trying to make the teaching like this, because otherwise, it goes over people's heads.

A crash course

So I am giving you a formula kind of teaching. This is, every day in the morning, before you do your sadhana, you give yourself a crash course of Inner Engineering. If one dose a day is not enough, remind yourself every hour and do your sadhana. You will see, it will work much better because now, the other three dimensions – body, mind, and emotions – are being taken care of.

You have to remind yourself. Otherwise, your thought, your emotion, your physicality keeps getting entangled with just about everything around you. If you are just trying to pump up your energies, it won't go anywhere because three wheels are stuck, one wheel is spinning. So, every day, every hour, or why not every minute, remind yourself. It just takes ten seconds.

On the first day, when you were initiated, it worked. Later on, why is not working? You are not setting the necessary conditions, that's all. Otherwise, as you practice, it should work better. Anything that you do should work better as you practice. If it does not work better, it is simply because you are not setting the needed conditions. So release the other three wheels. This wheel (the

energies) will spin anyway. Still it may not move ahead because you may be in a deep ditch. It is okay, keep spinning. As long as your wheels are spinning, even if you are not moving, all you need is a nudge. When we feel you are ready to go, we may give you a nudge, and you will start moving. But if wheels are stuck, that's tough. Then you need much more than a nudge. So you must keep all the four wheels spinning.

What Happens When You're Blessed By Someone?

Anyone saying, "all the best to you", is not a blessing; it is just a wish. A wish is just a hope. It is not substantiated by anything. It is just a nice thought. A blessing is not a thought or emotion. A blessing is a piece of energy. If you have made yourself fluid enough – so that you are not a burnt pot – if you are just loose energy, then you can take a little bit of that and give. If you are a properly burnt pot, you can't take anything out of it because it is crystallized. A blessing is not a thought or an emotion. It is something that hastens you. It is like fuel in the car! If you put fuel into the tank, you can move. If you have to push your car and go, it is a long way home. If you have fuel in the tank, you can get there in no time. Whatever the distance, it's no big deal.

But if you are somebody who enjoys a parked car, a moving car is dangerous. A lot of people have chosen to live in a parked car. Morning becomes afternoon; afternoon becomes evening; evening becomes night. Fall becomes winter; winter becomes spring; spring becomes summer; and then autumn again. It looks like you are going somewhere because there is so much change in scenery. It's exciting enough. But if you are a little loony – if you are willing to risk it and go a certain distance, then you drive a car. A parked car is a damn safe car. You could live there very well. It's just that you don't go anywhere. But if you want to go somewhere, you need fuel. And that's what a blessing is.

Unfortunately, most people refuse it when it comes to them because they don't realize it is a blessing. They expect that a blessing means it will always come in a particular way. No. Especially when it comes from me, it comes in so many ways that you have not imagined. It is always packaged in ways you don't usually expect.

Unusual Packages

It happened in Michigan last winter, a tiny little bird enjoyed the fall time a little too much and didn't start its journey south early enough. It started a little late in the winter and tried to fly out, and just froze and fell down. A cow was passing that way and dropped a heap of dung, and the dung fell right over the bird. The warmth of the dung slowly defrosted the bird, and he started feeling good. He started tweeting happily because he had recovered from a frozen state. A cat was going that way. It heard the tweet, looked around and saw the tweet was coming from inside the dung. So he pulled the bird out of the dung and ate him up.

What you need to understand is, whoever heaps you up in shit need not necessarily be your enemy. Whoever pulls you out of shit need not necessarily be your friend. And above all, when you are in a heap of shit, learn to keep your mouth shut!

You don't know how a blessing will come. That is why you must keep all the windows and doors open. It gets packaged in so many different ways. If it is packaged in obvious ways, it will go waste. It doesn't do the same as when a blessing enters you without you thinking it is a blessing. So it is always packaged in most unusual ways. It is a question of creativity!

Remembering the Mahatma

Incredible things are done in the world simply out of commitment. A great example is that of Mahatma Gandhi. If you look at this man, he was not talented or anything special, please see. As a child he did not show great potential. He was not extraordinarily intelligent. He was not an artist, scientist, or even a very good lawyer. He could not successfully practice as a barrister in India, which is why he went to South Africa for a better opportunity. Even there, he was not very successful. But suddenly, the man made a commitment towards something. He got so committed that he became a giant.

I remember what he wrote about his first case at a court in India – he stood up to argue his case and his heart sank into his boots. Does this sound like Mahatma Gandhi? The man went on to move millions of people. With just one incident in his life, suddenly all his identities broke.

He had gone to South Africa to make a living and he was doing okay as a lawyer. One day he

bought a first class ticket in a train, got in, and traveled some distance. At the next station, a white South African got in. This man did not like a brown-skinned person sitting in first class, so he called the ticket collector. The ticket collector said, "Get Out!" Mahatma Gandhi said, "I have a first class ticket."

"It doesn't matter, just get out."- "No, I have a first class ticket. Why should I get out?"

They threw Gandhi out of the train along with his luggage and he fell on to the platform. He just sat there for hours. "Why did this happen to me? I bought a first class ticket. Why was I thrown out of the train?" he thought. It was then that he identified himself with the larger predicament of the people. Till then his survival, law, and making money were important to him. But now, he identified with a much larger problem that existed. He just broke that little identification and moved into a much larger identity.

Many humans who are historically known as great beings; this is all that happened to them. They were living with a limited identification. All of a sudden, an event occurred that broke their identities and they were able to relate to a larger process happening around them. They did things that they themselves could not imagine possible.

Gandhi moved millions of people just like that. Not only in India, anywhere in the world you take the name of the Mahatma and there is a sense of respect. All this happened at a time when there were so many leaders who were true giants in India. They were more talented, better orators and better educated. Yet, this man stood above them all, simply because of his commitment.

Whatever happens, life or death, commitment must not change. Truly committed, you express yourself totally, in every possible way. When commitment is lacking, somewhere you lose your purpose. When the purpose of why we are here is lost, there is no question of fulfilling our goals, isn't it?

So being committed is just something we have to decide within ourselves. If we are truly committed to whatever we have taken up in our life, the results are plenty, you know? If results don't come, for a committed person there is no such thing as failure. If I fall down 100 times a day, what to do? Stand up and walk again, that's all.

Commitment does not mean aggressiveness; this must be understood. This is where Mahatma Gandhi's example is so apt. He was committed to

India's freedom struggle, but at the same time he was not against the British people. That was the best part, wasn't it? This shows the maturity of the man.

The Next 15 – 30 Years are Crucial for Humanity

As human beings, we can do so many different activities. But whatever the nature of our activity, in today's world, even hard-nosed businessmen are talking about impact, not profit. "Impact" is a crude way of saying, "We want to touch someone's life." Whether business people are talking about impact, or you are forming a personal relationship with someone, essentially, somewhere, you want to break the boundaries with someone for some time.

To be a yogi means to be determined to obliterate the boundaries of your individuality. In some way, you want to erase the lines that separate you from the rest of the universe. Yoga means to approach it in a scientific way. You do not have to do any great amount of activity; you do not have to indulge in sexuality; you do not have to get entangled in anything. If you consciously erase your boundaries, simply sitting here, you can experience a trillion times more than with any activity, and it is just fantastic. Yoga means to obliterate your boundaries.

Desperate Attempts

All the human nonsense that you see on the planet is only because of concretized boundaries. They have concretized their boundaries so rigidly that if two people meet, they will clash. Yoga does not mean twisting and turning; it is not a weight loss program or stress relief program. It means you understood the stupidity of "me versus the universe." It is absolutely idiotic to be in competition with that which is the source of your life. When you realize that, you are moving towards yoga.

It does not matter how you do it. You can call it impact, you can call it service, you can call it whatever you want. Essentially, when you realize this me vs. the rest of the universe is a stupid competition to get into, you start relaxing your boundaries – this is yoga. That means approaching it in a fail-safe way. When two people fall in love or get married, they think they are in yoga, they broke their boundaries, but after some time, you will see it is not fail-safe.

Because you broke the boundaries for a period of time, revenge will come. Not necessarily do two people have to turn against each other after some time. Maybe comfort will happen. In rare moments, they might have erased boundaries. The rest of the time, it is a mutual benefit scheme. Whatever form it is, yoga essentially means this: the first thing is you are interested in erasing your own boundaries. And if you know the joy of what it means, then you want it to happen all around you.

The Irony of Life

The fundamental irony of life is – the very instruments of life turn against us. Without this body, we do not know how to live here. Without this mind, we do not know how to live here. Body and mind are the two most basic instruments of life, but it is these two which have turned against people. You can call it suffering, misery, disease, or any number of names. Essentially, two basic instruments of life have turned against you.

Keeping these two things for you, not against you, is our most basic responsibility. If body and mind turn against us, human potential will not be realized. Let us say you have a headache; nothing big, no cancer – just a headache will ruin your life. Or let us say your nostrils are stuffed all the time – nothing big, just a cold. First you will say, “What’s the big deal?” But suppose it lasts for a few years, you will see, life is lost. Not because of cancer, not because your heart broke, just a cold – life is lost. If this body, if this mind turns against you, then you cannot explore the full depth and dimension of what it means to be human.

Making Everything Work for You

Some people have this issue – the very universe is against them, simply because of the way they exist. When you have that kind of opposition, you cannot live. Yoga means to keep everything – body, mind, existence – working with us; or better, we are working with it. Now, if something happens, it is wonderful; if nothing happens, it is too fantastic. Something important to do today – wonderful! Nothing to do – fantastic! But for most people, if something happens, it is a problem; if nothing happens, it is a super problem.

Yoga means you become a part of everything. You still have an individual existence, but with open, porous boundaries. Because of this, in some way, we have become everything, and we are okay with anything. If you really open up your boundaries, and existence and its source are working with you, what needs to happen will

happen. This is what yoga means – to be in tune with everything, simply because you loosened your boundaries. You make the boundaries porous, so that life seeps in, so you are not a prisoner in your own body and your mind.

Most people are prisoners of their own body and mind. Instead of your body and mind being platforms upon which life is housed, they become the prison walls for the life within. You always have to keep it up, to feel like it is worth living; and not just you, you expect a few other people to cooperate. Yogis just stayed alone, not because they did not care, but simply because they were just fine by themselves. If the society of the times had shown the right kind of interest, they probably would have stepped in.

The Belly-Up Generation

Today, we are at a certain time in history where we are a belly-up generation. For example, in my father’s generation, whatever personal things were happening in their lives, they never spoke about it to anyone; they just managed it within themselves, and carried on with their life. Then my generation came. When I was in university, I just sat outside in the garden. Every day, someone came and told their whole life story to me. Not an interesting life, but they want to tell. All stupid stuff – how they suffered their parents, their education, their poverty, their girlfriend or boyfriend – endlessly. At that time, I just heard all these things – everyone had a problem. It looked like I was some kind of a freak because I did not have any problem.

My father’s generation used to write journals. Even in my generation, a lot of people wrote journals, about all aspects of their life, and they didn’t want anyone to see it. If anyone ever opened as much as a cover page, they would be terribly upset. “Without me knowing, you opened my journal” – it was like a crime. But today’s generation puts every aspect of their life on Facebook, and they will be terribly upset if no one sees it. Like, “I’m eating my breakfast,” – picture! “I’m licking my ice cream” – picture. Just anything and everything...

In a way, this is a belly-up generation. When a generation is belly-up like this, it is time for transformation – the best time. There are various things that I cannot articulate right now. If we really have to transform human beings on this planet, they are available to you in a big way only for another fifteen to maximum thirty years. After

that, it will be very hard to touch them. Of course, there will always be people who are willing and others who are not willing, but generally, the larger population will be super-willing for these fifteen to thirty years. Beyond that, it will be difficult, for a variety of reasons.

A Possibility for a Limited Time Only

So, we are here at an appropriate time. If we do the right things, we can touch the maximum number of people. But if time passes, if this generation passes, and once they are off Facebook and everything, it will be difficult. Above all, if we do not impart yoga strongly enough in the world, in another twenty-five to thirty years, more than ninety percent of the world's population will be on some kind of chemical. Once they are on chemicals, you cannot talk to them. The world is rapidly getting there. If you do not show them another way to take away the boundary simply sitting here, they will get there in a way that is not for keeps. It is only for a few minutes or a few hours – afterwards, it will get them.

This is the right time, and it is our time on the planet. If we are committed and determined, we can make this the best time ever in the history of humanity, because we are empowered like never before. Survival is taken care of like never before – for the human beings, at least; not for the other creatures, unfortunately. Never before did human beings have so much comfort and convenience. If we do not do the right things now, later, it will be too late; because later, situations will be very different. It is being estimated that with the rise of Artificial Intelligence, probably in seventy years' time, anywhere between forty to fifty percent of the population may commit suicide. Simply because if there is nothing to do, they will see no worth in their life.

Yoga: Transformative Catalyst

So imparting yoga is not just another chore that we are doing in the world – it is a very significant activity. Everyone may not understand this right now. But if we all do the right thing, with enough intensity, in another five to seven years' time, you will see how important yoga will become in the world. Already the demand has become significantly more today than it was five years ago. The only thing is, when something is in so much demand, all of a sudden, all kinds of spurious stuff will come up, because there is a market. If there is no quality product, people make up and do all kinds of things.

The classical system of yoga is unique. Maybe it is not as entertaining as doing Zumba or something else, but if people give themselves to the yogic process, it will do things that they have not imagined possible. Yoga is a phenomenal process – it can change the composition of who you are. When I started practicing simple aspects of yoga at the age of twelve, it changed everything about me, physiologically. It just depends on the intensity with which you go at it.

Imparting Yoga: The Who and How

The science of yoga is always there, but who carries it and how makes a world of difference. Apart from imparting yoga in an instructional way, there are other ways of imparting it. In the sense, if you have been at Dhyanalinga – there, a yogi sits; he has everything that is worth knowing about yoga. He cannot speak, but that does not mean he is any less effective.

I have all the energy I need to do whatever I want, but sometimes the body is lacking. If you are willing to stand up and do something beyond yourself, especially young people, these possibilities are there. Those of you who wish to go in that direction, you must express your intention. We will see what to do.

How To Be Intense?

Life is intensity. Do you see the life within you does not slacken even for a moment? What slackens is your mind and your emotion – sometimes on, sometimes off. Watch the breath, does it ever slacken? If it slackens, it means death, isn't it? When I go on telling you in so many ways to be intense, I am just talking about you becoming like life. Right now, you have given too much significance to the thought and emotion that happens within you, not the life that is happening within you. Is your thought more significant than you being alive? The great French philosopher Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am."

Most people believe that they exist only because they are thinking. No, because you exist you may think, or you may not think, isn't it? Your aliveness is far more fundamental and more significant than your thought and emotion. But you only listen to what your thought and emotion are saying. If you go by the process of your life, it is intense whether you are awake or asleep. Is the life within you slackening when you sleep? Otherwise you will not wake up tomorrow morning, if it slackens. No

matter what you are doing, whether it is something that you like or not, is your life slackening? No. It is only your mind that says, "I like this, so I will do it with passion. I don't like that, so I will not do it with passion." But your life is not like that, it is always intense.

If you are constantly aware that all the other things are passing things and I am fundamentally life, you will remain intense. There is no other way because life does not know any other way to be. Life is always intense. It is only thought and emotion, which is deceptive.

When it comes to looking at the nature of your thought or your emotion for that matter, any number of times in your life, it has made you believe so many things and after little bit of time it makes you feel like a fool for what you believed yesterday. Today your emotions tell you that this is the most wonderful man, then tomorrow your emotions tell you that this is the most horrible man and both seemed 100% true. So both your thought and emotion are tremendous instruments of deception. They can make you believe just about anything.

Just look at your own beliefs – none of them will stand any kind of investigation. If I ask you three questions, your whole belief system will collapse. But your mind will make you believe different things at different stages in your life and firmly believe that is true.

So intensity means just going by the way of life. If you just exist here as life, pure life, it will naturally go to its ultimate nature. You are creating a huge hurdle in the process of life reaching its natural goal by becoming a thought, emotion, ideas, opinions, prejudices, anger, hatred and so many other things. If you just remain a piece of life, you will very naturally reach your ultimate nature.

It is not something that you have to strive for or struggle for. This is the reason I have always been saying – just maintain your intensity, the rest will happen. You do not have to look for the way to heaven. Just maintain your intensity. There is nobody who can either take this life to its ultimate nature or stop it. We can delay it or we can just allow it to go very quickly without any obstructions. This is all we can do.

Any spiritual process is about allowing it to happen as quickly as possible. You do not have to call for gods to come and help you, you just have to become life and nothing but life. If you can just exist here as life is, you will naturally be there.

Intensity on the Spiritual Path – The Story of Nachiketa

Nachiketa is supposed to have been the first seeker in the world, maybe the first significant one. One of the Upanishads starts with him. Nachiketa was a small boy. His father took a certain vow to perform a yaga, a sacred ritual where all the material possessions that you have – including your wife, your children, your house, your everything – you have to give it away as dana to all the rishis, the brahmins and the other people. Then you'll attain to spiritual bliss. This is a device somebody has set up in the tradition.

So a few people take this vow for spiritual attainment. Nachiketa's father took this vow and he gave away all the sick cows, the useless property and everything that he didn't want, which was a burden in one way or another, and made a big show of it, but he kept everything else that he really needed, including his two wives and children. Nachiketa saw this and he was very hurt. He saw that his father was not being sincere. His father made a vow that he will give away everything and attain spiritual bliss, but that man is playing tricks like everybody else. So Nachiketa went to his father and started talking about this to him. A small boy about five years of age, physically he was five years of age, but the boy had tremendous maturity.

Nachiketa told his father, "What you have done is not right. If you didn't want to give away everything, you shouldn't have taken the vow. Once you took the vow, you better give it away. You have to give away everything. You tell me to whom are you going to give me?" His father got angry, and he said, "I am going to give you to Yama." Yama is the Lord of Death. So the boy took it very seriously and he prepared himself to go to Yama, and he went. Don't start thinking in terms of, "How could he have gone, with the body or without the body?" That's not the point. He went.

Yama was not there. He had gone visiting. He makes house calls. So he had gone visiting. For three days Nachiketa waited. A small boy, without food, without water, he waited at Yama's doorstep. After three days Yama came back and he saw this little boy totally famished and tired, but fully determined. He was just sitting there not moving. He had not even gone searching for food here or there. He was just sitting there waiting for him. So Yama was very moved by this boy's

determination, waiting for three days without anything. So he said, "It is great you've been waiting for three days. What do you want? I'll grant you three boons. What do you want?"

The first thing Nachiketa said was, "My father is in extreme greed. He wants material possessions right now. So you bless him with all the material possessions that he can have. Let him become a king." Okay, it was granted. The second boon he asked for was, "I want to know what kind of karmas, what kind of yagas I have to do to attain." The Vedic literature always talks in terms of yagnas and yagas. The whole literature is like that; everything is in terms of yagas and yagnas. So Yama taught him what he had to do.

Then Nachiketa asked him, "What is the secret of death? What happens after death?" So Yama said, "No, this question you take back. You can ask me anything you want. You ask me for a kingdom, if you want. I'll give it to you. Riches if you want, I'll give you. All the pleasures in the world, I'll give you." He goes on offering, "What do you want, you tell me; all the pleasures in the world, I'll give you. You take them but this one question, you withdraw." Nachiketa says, "What will I do with all of them? You've already told me, all these things are transient. I have already understood that all activity, everything people are involved in, is meaningless. Simply it seems to be there. It is not the reality. So what is the point in you giving me more riches? It will just be a trap for me. I don't want anything, you just answer my question."

In many ways Yama tried to avoid this question. He said, "Even the gods do not know the answer for this question. I cannot give it to you." Nachiketa said, "If that is so, if the gods do not know this answer and only you know, then you must definitely give me the answer." He wouldn't leave him. So once again Yama left him there and went visiting for months. He just wanted to avoid this boy somehow. He wanted to get rid of him, but the boy just stuck around for many, many months; and they say, right on the doorstep of Yama's domain, he attained to his full enlightenment. He got the answers for everything he had to know in the existence and dissolved himself. He was the first seeker. And he is always used as the best example. A five-year-old boy with that kind of determination, who didn't fall for a chocolate or a visit to Disneyland or anything. He wanted that and that's all it is.

When a person is like that there is no need for a path for him because the end is here itself. It is not on the top of Velliangiri Hills. Only when it is not here, it is on Velliangiri Hills and we have to slowly climb it. When you are like Nachiketa, there is no need for a path for you. It is already here. There is nowhere to go. It is very much here. Now the whole purpose of doing everything that we are doing here is to create the intensity. That craving should become so strong, so powerful, that God cannot stay away, and the Divine cannot avoid you anymore. It is not that the Divine tries to avoid you, but this mind and ego tries to screen the reality from your eyes in so many millions of ways. Millions of tricks are played.

No Intensity, No Transformation

Whether you walk the path of karma, gnana, kriya, or bhakti, it is your intensity which keeps you going, not the path itself. No practices or kriyas will do anything when there is no intensity. In turn, when there is intensity, the practices have the power to move you into a different dimension.

It is not the kriya as such which will transform you – it is your intensity. When you have this intensity, the kriya is a tremendous support that enhances it more and more. That is the whole purpose of doing the practices. Whichever path you walk, by itself, the practice is not going to make you realize anything unless you have intensity.

If you half-heartedly love someone, there is no love. It is either 100% or zero. If you think you can love someone 99%, you have not known love at all. The same goes for any kind of action. If you do not perform your action 100%, it is meaningless. It is not going to produce anything great. At the most, it will earn you food. Unless your action is 100%, it cannot transform you. Unless your kriya is 100%, it cannot transform you. Unless your love is 100%, it cannot transform you. It may be a device to get something, like a barter system, but in existential terms, nothing happens.

Evaluating Growth on the Spiritual Path

In the initial phase, do not worry about whether you are moving ahead or backwards because your logical judgments will be very misleading. When you sit for your kriya in the morning, your legs will tell you that you are going backwards, and your family will also probably tell you to stop this nonsense. So in the initial phase, do not judge anything. It is always best to start a spiritual

process with an unconditional commitment for a certain period of time. No so-called "spiritual growth" or benefit needs to happen to you. Just simply do the practice out of commitment for six months. After that, evaluate your life and see how peaceful, joyous and calm you are. What is it doing with you?

Even a man who has reached the peak within himself always takes time to evaluate himself, maybe not in the usual ways, but he does in many other ways. A certain incident happened in Gautama Buddha's life. On a certain day, everybody came and bowed down to Buddha but one man came and spat on his face. Anandatheerta, Buddha's close disciple who adored and worshiped him, got really angry. He said, "Give me permission, and I will teach this man a lesson. How could he spit on your face?" Gautama said, "No," and thanked that man. He said, "Thank you very much for spitting on my face because this has given me an opportunity to see whether I am still capable of anger or not. I am very happy to know that I am not angry even if people spit on my face. That is very good. You helped me evaluate myself, and at the same time, you have also given Ananda that opportunity. So thank you very much. You have made both of us realize where we are right now."

So give yourself to a certain period of sincere practice without expecting anything to happen. Don't look for miracles to happen. The greatest miracle in life is life itself. The very process of life, that you are sitting here and breathing, is a miracle. If you do not appreciate this miracle, and are looking for some other miracle where some God will extend his hand out of the clouds and do something to you, then you are still very childish. You have not matured into an adult and you still believe in fairytales. So do not be in a hurry to evaluate your spiritual process; just allow it to sink in.

Generally in this tradition, the normal commitment that was demanded to start any spiritual process was twelve years. You simply say a mantra for twelve years and then look at what is happening with you. Even now, many spiritual sects in India follow this path. A Guru gives you a mantra to utter for twelve years, and then you come back to see your progress. But today, people have become so impatient with life. Even if we ask for twelve days of commitment, people have so many problems. People are complaining that it is too long!

Gautama Buddha had his own methods. If anybody came to him, there was absolutely no teaching, no spirituality or anything for two years – you would just hang around. If you could wait for two years, then a certain quality came and something else would happen to you. When he initiated you, it happened in a big way for you. But now, people are struggling to wait because the modern mind has become so impatient. Do not be in a hurry. Just stick to the practice, evaluate yourself periodically and see.

The Subtlety of the Spiritual Path

Spirituality is not difficult. It is just that there is a certain subtleness to it that people are unable to get. The hopelessness of it is that the very effort that you make to dissolve, is also karma. You will not grow unless you create a desire, "I want to grow, I want to reach this." At the same time, if the desire goes on, that itself is karma – it goes on creating new karma.

However, if you can reach a state where you handle life with great involvement and intensity, and still don't care a hoot about it, then it's very easy. You must be deeply involved, you must do things like your life depends on it, but actually it should not matter at all. Whatever you do, it must be just the way the situation demands; nothing more, nothing less. The moment it matters to you, you become a vested interest. Whether it is for satisfaction, happiness, money, or because you want to go to heaven, the moment you do it with some purpose behind it, you become a vested interest. The moment you become a vested interest, there is no spirituality in you.

People talk about, "Don't expect the fruit of the action," and they misinterpret it as, "The result does not matter." The result does matter. When we do something, we do it so that it works, isn't it? When you perform some action, you think about it and constantly apply yourself so that it works. It is just that it personally does not matter. You neither gain nor do you lose from it. You do it if the situation needs it. If it is not necessary, you just roll back everything and sit quietly. Once you have this freedom within you, then, karma becomes a conscious thing.

If you have to know a very deep sense of involvement with something that does not mean anything to you, it can happen only when there is no fear of entanglement. For this to happen, either you must be crazy, or you must be drunk with

blissfulness, or you must have fallen so in love with somebody that nothing matters. Without one of these three qualities, it is difficult to do something with great intensity and still not be bothered about what it is.

Becoming Free from Karmic Structure

There is a difference between thought and thinking. Thoughts are simply floating away, depending upon the content of your mind. Thinking means you consciously think about something. How you think may be strongly influenced by the content of your mind, but still your intellect has some discretion to think beyond that if you are willing. In the Inner Engineering and Isha Yoga programs, we spend over thirty hours with you to transmit a twenty-one-minute practice. What we are doing in this time is helping you to consciously think beyond your karmic limitations. When you do a certain kriya or sadhana of any kind and your thought does not facilitate this, energy may burst upwards, but your thought may go downwards. If thought and energy collide, it will create a certain amount of friction and struggle.

This is what is happening to a lot of people. You sat in the program and suddenly realized, “Yes! It’s really me who is doing all this. I always thought it was someone else who is doing something to me, but it’s actually me!” That was true for you for the first three months after the program. It was like a dream – everything transformed. But slowly, people fall back into the same old patterns. You again start to blame others for what is happening in your life. That means you are re-establishing your ignorance. Then there is no ambience for your sadhana to flower. If you do the practice without setting the necessary psychological ambience, it will only create health benefits, no transformation.

This is not because the practice wears out. This is not because your sadhana has become ineffective. This is simply because you are not setting the psychological ambience that is necessary for the practice to succeed. If you do the Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya (from the Inner Engineering program) without setting the psychological ambience, the energy will go up, but your mind will pull it down. That is why those of you who have done the program should give yourself a three-minute crash course in Inner Engineering every day before you do your Shambhavi.

This crash course will create the necessary psychological ambience for you to distance yourself from your karmic structure. If you do not create that psychological ambience, the content of the mind will catch up with you. What we offer you in the Inner Engineering program is a fool-proof way to fix that. There will be no room for you to get stuck to anything. If you fix that every day and do your practice, transformation will be a continuous process. As long as you live, the transformation will go deeper and deeper. Just one practice is enough. You do not have to keep doing different things. If you give yourself to this one thing, it will take you all the way.

To become free from your karmic structure does not mean to forget about it. Forgetfulness is not freedom. It is important to know it but not be stuck with it. Being ignorant of something is not freedom. Knowing it and being untouched by it is the important thing. If you set this ambience, it will take you beyond your karmic structure.

Shedding the Burden of the Past

Right now, whatever you call as “myself” is simply a certain type of information in your mind that you have collected. When you say, “I’m a good person,” “I’m a bad person,” “I am haughty,” “I am meek,” or whatever, these are simply certain formations of the mind. In other words, this is past accumulation – you are simply living through your past. If the past is taken away, most people are just lost. Everything depends on the past for them. The personality belongs to the past. So as long as the personality is important, it simply means the previous moment rules everything. The present moment is no longer important.

The personality that you carry is a dead thing. You cannot walk very far when you carry a dead body over your shoulders. And you can only head towards the burial ground. If you carry a dead body for too long, you will have to bear with terrible smells. The stronger your personality is, the more odoriferous it is.

Leaving the Past Behind

You can go far in life only when you can leave your past. This is like a snake shedding its skin. One moment it is a part of the body, the next moment it is shed and the snake goes on without turning back. If every moment, one is like a snake leaving the skin behind, only then there is growth. When a person does not carry the burden of the

past, he is a truly sinless person. Being sinless does not mean that he did not do anything with his life. That would mean being a dead person. He did everything a person could possibly do to know life, but his actions never left any residue, nor did he build a personality out of the actions he performed.

Have you heard of Suka? He was Vyasa's son. Suka was a pure being, a truly sinless being. There was a particular incident that happened in his life. One day, he was walking by himself in the forest, naked. As he was walking by, there was a lake where a few jala kanyas or nymphs were bathing. As they were by themselves in the forest, all the women were bathing together naked and playing in the water. Suka came upon the lake, looked at them, and just walked by. The women were not ashamed, nor did they try to hide themselves. They just continued their play. Suka walked off.

While looking for Suka, his father Vyasa came after him. He was over seventy years of age, an old man, and a great saint. He also came by the lake while following Suka. When the women saw him, they immediately rushed for their clothes. Vyasa asked them, "I am an old person, and I am dressed properly. Whereas my son is young and naked at that. When he came near you, you were not disturbed, but when I came, you are acting like this. Why?" They said, "He carries no sexual identification. We did not feel anything. He is just like a child."

Only that person who does not carry the previous moment to this moment, is free from everything. And that quality will be felt everywhere. Within a few moments of meeting you, people will trust you to the extent that they would not even trust their parents, husbands or wives, simply because you don't carry the burden of the past with you.

Odor Begone!

If you carry the past with you, then you also smell like anybody else. The whole world stinks with personalities. Everybody has his own strong smell or personality. These are the various stench in the world, and they keep clashing all the time. All your anger, hatred, jealousy, fear – everything is based in the past. The moment you carry the past and future, you become a real ass, because the burden is such. There is no way anybody can live his life intelligently carrying that burden.

When one does not carry this odor, one can cross over this existence. This person crosses the

ocean of samsara without any effort. What looks like a great effort for somebody else will be happening for this person without any effort. One not only passes through this world effortlessly, one will pass through the very process of life and death effortlessly.

The Power of the Mind: Making Your Thought Truly Powerful

Whatever people aspire for in their life – whether it is to grow a business, build a house or whatever else – the thought: "I want this" arises. Once this thought happens, for most people, they focus their energy towards that something through action and start working towards it. If their action is incisive enough, their thought becomes a reality. That is the usual way people function in the world. But they do not know how to infuse or empower that thought with a certain dimension of energy.

However, if you have some mobility in your energy beyond the physical body, if the mobility becomes a conscious process, you can sit in one place and make your energies go somewhere else. However, if you do this without gaining sufficient mastery over your own life energies, you may not know how to pull the energies back into you. You can lose your life like this. You will see, if someone's desire is beyond a certain pitch, they always die young. Most people's desires are fickle. They desire something today, something else tomorrow – it keeps changing. But if someone desires very powerfully towards something, they die young whether that something happens or not. Especially if that something happens, they die young because they know how to throw their life energies out, but do not have enough mastery to do the work and come back.

A Single-pointed Mind is Powerful

Thought itself is a reverberation and an energy. You cannot generate a thought without energy. It is just that because it is happening in such a haphazard way, maybe it does not have the necessary energy to manifest itself. You can generate so much energy with your thought process that you could kill someone. When your mind is single-pointed, it is a powerful instrument. Unfortunately, most of the time this single-pointedness happens to people in a negative way, not in a positive way. An angry mind and also a lustful mind are very single-pointed minds. That is why in Indian culture, children are always warned, "When you are angry, do not say anything nega-

tive about somebody,” because if your mind has become single-pointed with anger, it can easily manifest itself.

Let us look at the process of generating a thought. Is your thought conscious or is it just an outcome of a million things that have already gotten into you? When your thought process is unconscious, most of the time it is like mental diarrhea. There is no control over it. It simply rambles because there is old stuff inside. This is just like the more bad food you have in your stomach, the more your diarrhea goes on. When you have mental diarrhea, you cannot call it a thought.

A woman once invited a few friends for dinner. She served dinner and then told her 6-year-old daughter, “Why don’t you say the blessing?” She wanted to show off her daughter a little bit. The daughter said, “I don’t know how to say a blessing.” The mother said, “Just repeat what mummy says.” So the girl very religiously bent her head, held her hands together and said, “Why on earth did I invite all these people for dinner.” These things are happening to you, isn’t it? You want to meditate, isn’t your mind talking so many things?

Clearing Your Slate

If you want to write on a blackboard, first you have to wipe it clean. Only then will you be able to write clearly. If a million things have already been written on it and you write something else on that, no one can figure out what you have written. And after sometime neither will you. You have to first clear the space and then generate a thought consciously.

If people have cleared their space and then have a thought, this thought really matters because this has come out of a conscious process. Once this thought is on like this and it is held in that clarity, infusing energy to it can be done.

If you generate a thought in your mind consciously and if it is single-pointed, it will find its way in the world. It will manifest itself naturally. And if you have little more control over your life energies, you can tweak it further.

A Powerful Way to Transform Yourself

Every human being, either consciously or unconsciously, through the process of what we call life, creates a certain image, a certain personality of himself. This image that you have created within yourselves has nothing to do with the reality. It has nothing to do with the self, your inner nature.

It is a certain image that you have built, most of the time unconsciously. Everybody has some image of what they are. Very few human beings have built a conscious image of themselves. All others have built images according to whatever kind of patterns or external situations they fell into.

Now, why don’t we create a new self-image consciously, the way you really want to be? If you are intelligent enough, if you are aware enough, you can recast your image, a totally new image, whichever way you really want it. It is possible. But you should be willing to leave the old one. This is not pretension. Instead of acting unconsciously, you act consciously. You can create that kind of image which supports you best; that kind of image which creates maximum harmony around you; that kind of image which has least friction. You create that kind of an image which is closest to your inner nature. What kind of an image, do you think, is closest to your inner nature? Please see, the inner nature is very silent, not dominant but very forceful. Very subtle but very forceful. Now that is what we need to do: the grosser elements within you – your anger, your limitations must be chopped off. Create a new self-image, which is subtle but tremendously forceful.

Think about it for the next one or two days and create a proper image for yourself; what should be the fundamental nature of your thought and emotion. Before we create something, let’s really see, if what we are creating now is better than what we have. Choose a time when you would not be disturbed. Sit comfortably with your back rested and be relaxed. Now, close your eyes and visualize how other people should experience you. Create a whole new human being. Look at it with as much detail as possible. See if this new image is more human, more efficient, more loving.

Visualize this new image as powerfully as you can. Make it alive within yourself. If your thought is powerful enough, if your visualization is powerful enough, it can even break the bonds of karma. The karmic limitations can be broken by creating a powerful visualization of what you want to be. This is the opportunity to transcend all your limitations of thought, emotion and action.

Ojas – A Passage to Effortless Living

The three main processes which must happen to keep the physical body going are respiration, ingestion, and excretion. Even if you have no

thought and no emotion, you can still go on. But respiration, ingestion, and excretion must happen to keep the physical body going. All these three things are mainly assisting in converting one form of physical matter into another. For example, agriculture means you make mud into food. Digestion means you make food into flesh and shit.

These are all different process where you are converting one form of physical existence into another. You eat a carrot; you make it into a human being. Tremendous job, isn't it? Eating is not a simple thing. You eat a simple vegetable and transform it into a human being. If it goes by the evolutionary scale, it must take ten million years. In one afternoon, you are doing it. It is not a small phenomenon. Without understanding the significance and the miracle of what you are doing, you are going on.

If you understand and if you really experience the miracle, that you are converting simple things like water and food into a human possibility – it is a tremendous job that you are doing. So converting one form of physical existence into another is a natural process which is always happening in you. This is nature.

If you go by the laws of physical nature, then naturally, self-preservation is the main instinct and the main process. All these three things – respiration, ingestion, excretion – are also connected with self-preservation. If self-preservation is happening well, then the next immediate thing that the physical existence demands is procreation. But that is also self-preservation – preservation of the race. So, even procreation can be termed a secondary level of self-preservation. So, the physical knows only self-preservation – and that's good. If the physical did not have any sense of self-preservation, you wouldn't exist.

Beyond Boundaries

Now you want to cater to a higher dimension within you. There is another part of nature in you which wants to expand, which wants to become something else, which is not willing to settle for the limited. It wants to become boundless. The boundary is always of the physical. Physical means always between two boundaries, isn't it? Nonphysical means no boundaries. So moving from the physical to the nonphysical also means moving from the bound to the boundless. To move from bound to boundless, you don't have a vehicle. Right now all that you have is physical. So you are trying to create a vehicle for yourself

which is non-physical, but can still retain a certain form. Ojas is that dimension where you generate a nonphysical energy, but still it has its own individual form. So that is used as a vehicle.

If you create sufficient ojas around you, your passage in this existence will be well lubricated. You will see life happens effortlessly for you. Wherever you go, you move smoothly. So much turmoil may be happening around you, everybody is going through turmoil, but somehow your passage is always clear. You keep going. Once you are like this, you can take violent risks in your life, you know? Recklessly, you can live. At least other people think you are reckless, but you know where you are going so there is no hassle about it. You can live in such a way that other people think you are superhuman, simply because you have well-rounded ojas hanging around you. Your passage is well lubricated in the existence.

In the Far Eastern cultures, an enlightened being is referred to as an "enso." An enso means a circle. Why they are referring to him as a circle is, a circle is the shape of least resistance. Why are your car wheels or motorcycle wheels circular, not a rectangle or a triangle? Can you imagine how you would ride on square wheels? Why they are circular is because a circle is the shape of least resistance. Any moving part anywhere is a circle because it's of least resistance. So if you create sufficient ojas around you, you become circular in your existence, you become circular, so that your passage is with least resistance through the existence. Ojas creates this possibility.

Part 2: When we eat food, generally for a human being, most of the food is converted into the physical body. A small part of it is becoming ojas. When you do your kriya, we are trying to change this ratio – we want to convert a large part of our food into ojas. A meditator is someone who has set up an industry of ojas. The whole process of kriya yoga is to turn this "factory" which makes food into flesh and shit, into a factory to transform the same food into a much subtler possibility, which makes you accessible to the divine.

When a person has a very huge ojas about him or her, everything that is celestial and considered divine becomes just like normal communication. You simply see and perceive things because your energies have become so subtle. The quality, the intensity, and the volume of ojas makes the difference between one human being and another.

Why one human being's presence seems to be so strong and transforming, and another's weak, is simply because of the ojas they carry with them.

Right now, it is quite limiting and frustrating not to allow people to go into higher states of energy and ojas simply because people don't have the necessary balance, preparedness, and discipline; or they are still unable to understand the priorities they need to allocate to different dimensions of their life. Quite a few people are experientially open and definitely capable of generating higher possibilities of energy, but modern life has made people absolutely fickle. People are simply shifting all the time, from this to that, whether it comes to jobs, priorities, education or relationships. In this shifting, a person's energy also becomes unstable.

There are so many things that you can do to dissipate and destroy the growth of ojas in you. Improper attitudes, negative thoughts and emotions, and various types of mental activity can do that. Certain types of physical activity, excessive sexuality, excessive indulgence in food, too much of stimulants, and being in contaminated atmospheres can also do that. With kriyas and practices you fill the tank, but then you go on leaking the tank. It is because of this that it takes so long for a person. If one knows how to plug all the holes, suddenly you will see the kind of energy that you gather around yourself is enormous.

Spirituality means going into processes that can enhance one's ojas and change the very fundamentals of your life – to take you to a completely different experience and joy within yourself, a blissfulness which is not only yours, but which will be everyone's around you. Your meditation is not only about yourself. If twenty-five people become truly meditative, the whole town will become peaceful without knowing why. Without having any idea about what is happening to them, there will be a certain sense of settling. The deeper one goes into it, the more of a device you become for everyone's wellbeing.

It is not by blabbering good things that true peace and wellbeing will come. Only when people carry the right kind of energy around them, only when their ojas is such that a hundred people can sit under their shadow and experience it, only then wellbeing will truly happen.

What Is Spirituality?

Spirituality does not mean any particular practice. It is a certain way of being. To get there, there are many things to do. This is like a garden in your house. If the soil, sunlight or stem of a plant is in a certain way, it won't yield flowers, you have to do something. You have to take care of those things. So if you cultivate your body, mind, emotions and energies to a certain level of maturity, something else blossoms within you – that is what is spirituality. When your rationale is immature, it doubts everything. When your rationale matures, it sees everything in a completely different light.

Whenever any human being experiences something bigger than himself, the traditional way of looking at that is, "this is God..." The whole idea of God is just that – anything bigger than you. It could be a human being or an experience or some aspect of nature. But is this spiritual? No, this is just life. When I say "just life", I am not trying to dismiss it as a small thing. It is the greatest thing. Only when life becomes an overwhelming, powerful, blissful experience for you, you want to know what could have created this.

If you want to know the process or the source of creation, the most intimate part of creation for you is your own body, isn't it? There is a captive creator here, trapped within you. You shouldn't miss him here. If you don't miss him here, if you know the source of creation within you, you are spiritual.

Does Belief in God Make You Spiritual?

An atheist cannot be spiritual. But you must understand that even a theist cannot be spiritual. Because an atheist and a theist are not different. One believes there is God, another believes there is no God. Both of them are believing something that they do not know. You are not sincere enough to admit that you do not know, that's your problem. So theists and atheists are not different. They are the same people putting up an act of being different. A spiritual seeker is neither a theist nor an atheist. He has realized that he does not know, so he is seeking.

The moment you believe something, you become blind to everything else. The whole conflict on the planet is not between good and evil as they are trying to project it. It is always one man's belief versus another man's belief. The need for belief is more psychological than spiritual. You want to cling to something, you want to feel secure, you want to feel like you know it all. That is coming

from a very immature mind. What is the problem if you don't know anything about this existence. You actually don't know anything. It's beautiful! And you see how to make yourself beautiful and joyful within yourself, which is within your hands.

What is a Spiritual Experience?

Going to the ocean or to the mountain and seeking an experience may be beautiful, you must enjoy the world the way it is, but you must understand, the fish in the ocean doesn't think it's a spiritual experience, nor does the mountain goats think the mountain is a spiritual experience because they are there all the time. If you bring them to the city, they may think it's a spiritual experience. It is the breaking of the barrier within you – something broke within you. You were in a shell. This broke and became a bigger shell. What I'm saying is, if you get used to the bigger shell, it feels the same way as the previous one.

So if you want to become boundless and you are trying to attempt it through physicality, you are essentially trying to go towards boundlessness in installments. Can you count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and one day count to infinity? You will only become endless counting. That's not the way. Through physical means, you can never reach towards boundless nature. Every human being is looking to become boundless. If you give him whatever he wants, for three days he is okay. The fourth day he is looking for something else. Somebody may label it as greed, I just say this is life process in the wrong direction. If you want to know boundless nature, you must experience, you must perceive something which is beyond the physical. Something you might have touched when you jumped into the ocean, when you saw a mountain, when you sang a song, when you danced, when you closed your eyes, in so many ways it could have happened to an individual. You touched it, but now the question is of sustainability.

A Simple Practice

One thing is, we can put you on to something very simple, which is subjective. Any subjective technology cannot be taught to you in uncommitted atmospheres. So if you are willing to give yourself a small space of time that is very committed and focused, we can put you on a simple practice, where investing just 21 minutes a day (Inner Engineering), you can start your day with a very phenomenal spiritual experience within you. A very powerful experience that leaves you peaceful and joyful throughout the day.

Apart from that, to sustain it, one simple thing every human being has to do is, make your sense of involvement indiscriminate. If you look at a person, a tree, or a cloud, you are equally involved. You are equally involved with your own body and the breath. If you have no discrimination as to which is better, and you are equally involved with every aspect in life, then you will be constantly spiritual. Nobody needs to teach you what is spirituality.

A Rollercoaster Life

Once you are actively on a spiritual path, some fools might tell you, "Everything will be okay." Being on the spiritual path is not about making everything okay. If you want things to be okay you have to fix them, and still only some things will be okay, not everything. The significance of being on the spiritual path is not to seek comfort but to put your life on fast-forward. So, more fluctuations than you ever imagined possible may happen in your life. Things that would have happened in ten years may happen in two months. Whether you have the courage, capability and the stability to take it is the question. If you want it evenly spread out and you want to come back for we don't know how long, that's up to you.

Once you ask for speed, if you ask for speed without stability you are asking for trouble. Sadhana, in a measured way, is created so that on the one hand it creates stability, on the other hand it creates speed. If there is no speed in you, you will feel like a tombstone not going anywhere. If you are very fast, then it feels like a rollercoaster ride. A rollercoaster gives you a feeling of being out of control but actually, it is perfectly safe because it is locked onto the rail on which it runs. A spiritual process is like that. If you have clamped onto the inner rail, everything may be going wild and weird but it does not matter because there is one spot which is steady, so anyway it is not going to fall off. If you have fixed yourself like that with what is internal, then let the outside situations go as weird as you can imagine, still it will be on track. Somebody may think these things are weird but you can also think it is exciting. If you don't like excitement, if you cannot handle excitement, then it is a lot of trouble. But if you enjoy excitement, a rollercoaster is a good place.

So, the significance of being on the spiritual path is not that everything is going to be fixed. Even if

nothing is fixed and everything is going crazy, “I am fixed so everything is fine with me” – that’s all. If you don’t fix the rail and the rollercoaster, then it is going to fly off at the first dip. If the inner rail is fixed, it goes wherever it wants, it gives you all the excitement, but still it does not fly off. All the excitement will be outside. The ups and downs, the flying and falling, everything will be okay.

Spirituality is not about fixing life. “I am fixed.” Then we fix the rest of life to the extent we can, but the important thing is, this one must be fixed. That must happen.

Satsang – When the Creator is Your Friend

When we say “satsang,” we are not talking about a yoga club, an association or any other kind of meeting place. “Sat” means “truth,” “sang” means “to be in communion with that.” What is needed to be in communion with truth?

What we are referring to as “truth” is that which makes everything here work. Something is spinning the planet, something is making your heart beat, something is making the whole cosmos work. That is truth. You don’t have to go to the core of the galaxy to be in touch with this. The core of yourself is also the same thing. Then why is it that we are not constantly in touch with it? Why do we have to come to a certain space or presence to even feel that? This is because the mind, which should be a mirror to show life with absolute clarity, is functioning in prejudice.

Instruments of Prejudice

Whatever kind of mind one has, it is a certain kind of prejudice. You may think you are broadminded, but that just means you have a broad prejudice because the mind cannot function without identification. The moment you are identified with something, the mind becomes prejudiced. Some people are very rigid about their prejudices, others are a little flexible, but there is a prejudice. If you say “I am a man,” you have a masculine prejudice. If you say “I am a woman,” you have a feminine prejudice. If you say “I am Indian,” you have an Indian prejudice. Every single thought, emotion and action that human beings commit is coming from this variety of prejudices.

The problem with humanity is that prejudice has established itself in so many ways and is being celebrated. Prejudices have become so concretized that people think looking beyond that is

sacrilege. Once you have identified yourself with something, you cannot think, feel or act beyond it. Everything will be within that ambit. And the greatest problem is you will think you are perfectly right.

A satsang is not about just trying to wipe out one line of prejudice. We want to stay beyond the instrument that manufactures prejudice. You keep all the prejudices down – you are not identified as a man, a woman or anything for that matter. You don’t pay attention to your body, mind, thoughts, emotions – nothing. The mind is going on, the body is saying “This hurts; I want to go to the bathroom,” but you simply sit – like a sack, but alert.

You may think many things about yourself, but after all, your body is just a sack of soil. If you put it into the earth, it becomes soil once again in no time. So if you simply let the body sit there and maintain your alertness, the rest will happen. Nothing else needs to be done. A spiritual process is not something that you do. If you just keep your body and mind aside, you are spiritual. If you take attention away from body and mind and just keep yourself alert, something else comes into your perception. The more importance you give to your body and mind, the more prejudiced you become because the very nature of body and mind is prejudice. For example, let’s say an automobile is coming at you, the body will want to escape. At that moment, only this body is its interest, not the other bodies. But suppose you have fallen in love with someone, you will dive to save that body.

Love is made so important in the spiritual process because it helps you cross the line of prejudice – which is so rigid and concretized that you usually never break it – and act in irrational ways. It is these irrational ways that make your life beautiful. Knowing this, somewhere deep inside, you keep a little bit of your life irrational and sensible. Everything else is analyzed, rational and utterly life-stupid. There is a lot of smartness and social sense in it, but there is no life sense in it.

When the Creator is Your Friend

Satsang means ultimate life sense. To be in communion with this ultimate life sense is of utmost significance to your existence. Isn’t the source of life within you of utmost significance? But if you look at your life, your teeth get attention first thing in the morning; your body gets attention, your nails get lots of attention, and your hair gets two hours of attention. But how much attention

does that which is the source of your life get in a day?

If the creator within you turns against you, you are finished. But people are trying to live without paying any attention to that, hoping everything will be okay. Life does not work like that. If you do not pay sufficient attention to it, it will begin to take its toll. When the burden becomes unmanageable, people think, "Oh, I want to die..." But if you kept the core of creation or the creator as your friend, whether you hang around this earth for a thousand years or leave the next morning is no big deal. That is how life should be.

It is so simple, but it takes so much pain and suffering for people to realize this. Does something have to go drastically wrong with your life before you do the right things with yourself? You must do the right things when everything is right with your life. If you wait for things to go horribly wrong, then, even if you intend to do something, your body or mind may not have the strength, or situations around you may not cooperate. Unfortunately, most individuals and humanity as a whole are handling situations this way.

Look at the whole issue of climate change. Does it take enormous scientific knowledge or any great understanding about the planet to see that we are on a disastrous path? The way we are handling the earth, any fool can see things will go wrong. But we see it only when something goes horribly wrong.

Stacking the Odds in Your Favor

If you remain in satsang, you will do what is sensible before things go wrong with life – before it is too late. If the core of your existence becomes a part of your day-to-day life, not in imagination or belief, but as a living thing, the odds are very different for you.

Once, Shankaran Pillai went to the bar with his pet parrot. With great effort, he had taught this parrot to repeat the whole second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita verbatim. So he ordered a few drinks and with a loud voice said, "Is anybody in for a wager? My parrot can repeat the second chapter of the Gita for all of you." The whole crowd in the bar said, "Boooooo, you've had too many."

Shankaran Pillai said, "Whatever you guys offer, I'll pay back twice if my parrot fails." He was confident about the parrot's capabilities. Everyone knew this was easy money, so they pulled out whatever they had and put the money on the

counter. All counted, it amounted to 54,000 rupees. If the parrot speaks the Gita, he gets it; otherwise he has to pay 108,000 rupees. Then Shankaran Pillai told the parrot, "Come on, Kiki." The parrot simply said "kik kik." Shankaran Pillai said, "Come on Kiki, the Gita. Go!" The parrot squeaked "kik, kik." Whatever he did, the parrot did not say anything more than "kik, kik." People just laughed and Shankaran Pillai had to pull out his cheque book and write a cheque for 108,000 rupees.

When he came home, he yelled in fury, "You idiot! Why didn't you speak? For so many months I trained you, why didn't you speak?" The parrot just said, "Can you imagine the odds tomorrow?"

If you keep your mouth shut for five minutes, you can't imagine the odds tomorrow. That is what satsang means.

Is Celibacy a Necessity on the Spiritual Path?

The whole dimension of spirituality is to grow beyond the physical, to taste something beyond the physical. If your involvement with the physical is very deep, naturally your attachment to the body is very strong. It is not sex per se which can be an impediment in one's growth but one's attachment to the body definitely is an impediment – there is no question about that. Generally, sexuality breeds that attachment. Celibacy has been talked about in that context. But does the sexual act itself stop a person from pursuing his spiritual path? Not at all, but what is being said is, unless your focus is strong and one-pointed, the chances of progress or the progress itself will naturally be very slow because you are thinking in many directions at the same time.

For a person who wants to go all out and do things in a short time, the advice is definitely to not get entangled with these bodily aspects because then you will get involved in many things. For many people, if they start out with any kind of physical involvement with something, emotions and thoughts follow and their whole life becomes just that – they cannot keep their focus on anything else. If a person is such that one department of his life is handled one way and it is totally absent when he sits for something else, then it is not so much of an impediment. But most people cannot deal with their lives like that. It just entangles them on all levels. It is in that context that this has been said.

Whatever activity you do in your life has nothing to do with the spiritual process because the spiritual process is inward, activity is outward. Action is either of the body, mind, energies or emotion. All these things can be stepping stones for a spiritual process but they are not spiritual in any sense because all of them belong to the physical realm. Spirituality and activity have actually got nothing to do with each other if you know how to keep a clear distance between the two. But that distance is not there in most people, so we say “do not get entangled in this, do not get entangled in that.” If you are absolutely conscious in every aspect of your life, nothing that you do in your life is an impediment. But that is a far away thing for most people.

Compulsiveness to Consciousness

Though people would like to project their sexuality as a very conscious process, it is not so. It is a compulsive process. Maybe it is handled a little consciously by some people while others do it compulsively, but essentially, the basic ingredient and seed of sexuality is a compulsive process. It is physiological and chemical – it is a function of hormones which drives you in that direction. Unless you are able to transcend all compulsiveness within you, it is definitely an impediment in that sense.

Any kind of activity, whether it is eating, sexuality, talking or whatever, if it is a compulsive process – if you are enslaved to it – it is an impediment. If you look at what is causing this compulsiveness, if you understand that and handle that aspect, compulsiveness goes away. That means you are definitely moving towards freedom. If one pursues a spiritual path, irrespective of where he is right now, he will gradually evolve out of many compulsions within himself.

Begging – A Tool for Growth

Once, there was a beggar who begged for everything. All his life, he lived in one tattered coat that he wore. Gradually, he gathered a certain reputation and people started going to him for all kinds of solutions. He became known as a very wise man. News reached the king who also started going to him seeking advice.

One day, the king said, “You should not be a beggar, you should become my minister.” The beggar replied, “What you are offering does not mean anything to me, but if it makes me useful to

the people, I will take this offer under one condition: I must have one room in the palace which nobody should enter or inspect, including yourself. If anybody enters or inspects this room, I will no longer be your minister.” The king said, “Yes I will give you a room. Keep it any way you want. Why would I want to look into your room?”

This went on for a few years and the beggar, who was now the Chief Minister, could not go around in his beggar’s coat anymore, so he dressed himself properly. With time, he came to be immensely admired and became very dear to both the king and the people. Seeing his popularity and his unrivaled wisdom, the other ministers were very jealous. Some of the ministers began thinking, “He has got something suspicious in that room. That is why he does not want anybody to enter. It must be some plot he has against the king and the nation. Otherwise, why is he protecting it like that?”

The rumor built up, and it soon reached the king’s ears. The king got fired up and one day told the minister, “I want to see what is in the room.” The minister said, “You can see, but the moment you enter that room, I will go back and no longer be a minister.” The king, knowing the man’s wisdom, did not want to lose him, and so, restrained himself.

However, after some time the king became restless and people were telling him stories, “You are the king and no secrets must be hidden from you in your palace.” This went on until one day, the king insisted, “I must see that room.” The minister agreed, so the king went in. He saw nothing in the room. It was just a plain, empty room. Hanging on the wall was that old tattered coat the beggar used to wear.

The king looked at all this and asked, “Why did you keep this a secret? There is nothing here.” The minister answered, “During the day, I am a minister. At night, I wear that coat and sleep on the floor. This way I never get caught up with my position as a minister. But now that you broke the agreement, it is off.” He wore his coat and walked away.

Begging Consciously

Begging in India was a part of the spiritual tradition. You did not select your food; you begged and ate whatever people gave you. It was considered a great privilege when a person on the spiritual path stood in front of your house and asked for food, and for you to offer food to him. Today,

these traditions have been misused, and there are so many people wearing the uniform of a spiritual seeker who are just plain beggars in search of money and food. But when people begged consciously, it had a completely different meaning and possibility.

When someone stretches his hand in front of you, if you feel it is being misused, you can refuse and move along. If you feel that it is really coming out of genuine need, you must respond as a human being. Just think how difficult it would be for you to stretch your hand in front of someone on the street. That man is putting himself through that.

A beggar may be doing so out of helplessness, but a sanyasi is doing it consciously for his own growth, so that he does not get too full of himself. A beggar does not have such great goals. He is just trying to fill his belly which he has become incapable of doing by himself.

Disability is not just in terms of losing a hand or a leg. You can become disabled just in the way you think and feel about life. Actually, almost the whole population is in some way handicapped because of their patterns of thinking and feeling towards life. Similarly, the beggar has gotten himself into a corner, and he thinks that begging is the easiest way to earn a living.

Dropping Yourself

A spiritual person, however, takes to begging because he wants to drop himself. The idea, "I earn my own living, my own money, my own food, my own home," is a big part of your ego. One day, a guest came to Gautama the Buddha carrying a few flowers. It is a part of our culture that when people go to meet a guru, they take flowers as an offering.

When the man came, Gautama looked at him and said, "Drop it." The man looked around and wondered, "What to drop?" He thought it was the flowers. He hesitated, "But I brought it for you." Gautama again said, "Drop it." So the man dropped the flowers. Gautama looked at him and again said, "Drop it." The man said, "I have dropped the flowers. I brought them as a gift, but you asked me to drop them so I did. What else to drop?" Gautama said, "No, you drop yourself first. The flowers are not the problem. You plucked the flowers for me. That is fine, I will take them, but you drop yourself."

Begging was used as a tool to drop yourself because in earning a living, you gather yourself. But you drop yourself in just stretching your hand

in front of someone, knowing and being fully conscious that you have the capability to earn your living, yet you still choose to beg. That is a tremendous shift in a human being. People may give you food or they might just ask you to get out. It does not matter, but being a beggar is not a small thing.

That Quality Will Become You

Devotion is like nature. In nature, everything is trying to dispense itself to the maximum extent – everything in nature is always trying to throw itself out to its fullest capability. But human beings are trying to save. Because they save so much of their joy, their love, and everything that is valuable to them, they have to do all kinds of other splurging activities. If human beings could just sit and be absolutely joyful, they wouldn't spend time in preoccupation of an evening drink or dinner. But because they are going about life like this – saving themselves – they are waiting, 'When is dinner? When is my wine coming? When is my whisky coming?' If they were bursting with joy every moment, bursting with love, bursting with ecstasy – would they be preoccupied with dinner, drink, sex or anything? Such thoughts wouldn't keep them engaged for a large part of their life.

Devotion is just that, that you have demolished all of these boundaries of self-preservation; you are just flowing to the maximum extent that you can flow. Whatever you are devoted to, once you dismantle the concrete structure of who you are, suddenly the quality of what you are devoted to will just reflect upon you, and that quality will become you. I have seen this being demonstrated in such dramatic ways. Whether it is a writer, scientist, sportsperson, housewife or just about anyone who is absolutely devoted to what he is doing, there is a different kind of quality about that person.

A wonderful example that I have seen of this is...there was a lady saint in India. Nobody knows where she came from because she did not speak, but looking at her facial features, I think she came from Nepal. She was in the town of Kanyakumari, which is the very tip of southern India. She would just wander the streets and feed the dogs, so she built a whole family of dogs around her. Even if she did not eat, she would feed the dogs because she loved them so much, and there would always be eight to ten dogs following her wherever she went. Sometimes she went to such extremes that

she would go into a restaurant and grab some food and throw it into the street for the dogs to eat. In South Indian restaurants, some dishes are displayed in a glass case in front of the restaurant, like vada, sweets and laddoos. When nobody was looking, she would grab this food and throw it to the dogs, and the dogs would help themselves.

She began getting the harsh social treatment because she was seen as irresponsible, not saintly; she did not fit into the standard definition of a saint. Because of this, she had to face many social situations which were not always pleasant. But then, people would sometimes find her floating on the waves. She was simply sitting on the water and floating all over the ocean. When she wanted to come back to shore, she would swim; otherwise she would just float upon the water and go away into the ocean. Once they saw this, people started worshipping her. Some gathered around her but she never spoke, not a word. She walked and some people walked behind her. If she sat, they sat around her.

Later on, in her old age, someone brought her to Salem, which is a little closer to Coimbatore, and she lived there and left her body there, and her disciples built a Samadhi for her. It so happened that some time ago, I was staying at a hill station close to this place and somebody showed me her picture. The moment I saw the picture I said, 'I want to go there.' The three of us – myself, my wife Vijji and my daughter Radhe, who was just about five years of age, drove down and went there. The place was reverberating like crazy. I said, 'Wow. For someone who never spoke a word, this is too good.' This is a fantastic place.

It happened to be a full moon day and some of her followers asked us to stay back for prasad that evening, so I said, 'Definitely, I will stay.' And Radhe just sat there near the Samadhi with her head shaking, eyes closed, unmoving because this place is like a magnet. Even a five-year-old child could not miss it; it just held her like that. And the best thing was – one of her disciples, this one man who was devoted to Mayamma – he came in front of me and his face had become exactly like hers. Her features are Nepali, definitely not South Indian. I just looked at him and burst into tears – this is a devotee of the highest order. She is another race, this man is South Indian, but his face has shifted itself exactly like hers. It was so amazing seeing him.

Devotion is that kind of thing. If you dismantle the structures of who you are and you are completely absorbed into something, if that something is powerful enough, it will just imprint upon you. That is the idea of devotion, that you become that. It is not about being devoted to somebody or something; it is just that it is the highest level of perception. You can imprint yourself with what you are seeking because you opened yourself up completely.

If you are a little devoted, let's call it a love affair...there is a little love affair between you and me. But any time, you can recover – that is, you were falling in love with me and you recovered just in time. I hope you don't recover. If I do not fulfill your expectations, if I do not speak the way you think I should, if I do not behave the way you think I should, you will see – that little love affair will be gone. So a little is always dangerous. Don't try to save it because you can't take it anywhere. You can't take this life anywhere. You have to allow it to go into its full blossom now, here, not somewhere else. Do not try to save the fragrance of life. Those who save will stink. Those who throw it out, you will see them as fragrant beings.

You Got to Die

Thirty years ago, on that evening when I shook myself out of a flood of ecstasy and realization, I thought, 'This is it, this is so simple. I am going to set the whole world on fire.' Since then, very slowly but steadily, the world has been trying to humble me to reduce the size of my geographical boundaries. I am not complaining about the world. I think as life comes, internally there is no question, it has come in the best possible way to me. Even externally, it has come in the best possible way to me, so I cannot complain. But still, it intrigues me, it bothers me, I have still not learnt a lesson in thirty years. Though I have started speaking to people with reduced goals, within myself I still burn with the passion, 'Why can't it happen to everybody?' Because logically, I cannot find a single reason why everybody cannot have it. I cannot find a single reason in my intelligence as to why it is not possible.

There are many glorious names to this which are out of people's understanding. People call this 'enlightenment' – that means, of course, it is beyond you. People call this 'God-realization' – it is up in heaven, you cannot touch it. People call it simply 'self-realization' – a more humble descrip-

tion. Or, it is just an 'awakening'. I call it a reminder. You can be reminded in many ways. Tomorrow morning, you have to wake up at a certain time. You could be reminded by yourself; if you cannot, you can have an alarm bell which beeps. Otherwise, somebody will beat a drum, or somebody will kick you awake. The choice is yours, but you could be awakened, or we can remind you. It is just a reminder, it is not an achievement. It is not about going somewhere.

This happened...a woman was on a river bank. It looked so beautiful – the expanse of the river and the other side of the bank. Then she noticed there was another woman on the other side. So she called out and said, 'How do I get to the other side?' That woman looked up and down the river looking for a solution, then she looked at her and said, 'You are on the other side.'

It is that simple, it is that obvious, but we were given a mind of a certain competence. I know these days people are telling you that you should become a 'no-mind'. A lot of people already are, and that is the biggest problem on the planet. The biggest problem on the planet is just that quite a few people are refusing to use their mind. This mind is given to you so that you can project, you can think of the next moment, tomorrow, a thousand years, a million years, backwards or forwards, depending upon what your profession is – whether you are a historian or an astrologer. You are playing this game, oscillating between these two professions all the time. Some are lamenting about yesterday, some are looking forward to something glorious or fearful about tomorrow. You are either functioning as a historian or as an astrologer. This is constantly happening. Nothing wrong – this is the capability of the mind and it is fantastic. The only problem is the projections become so real, they will obliterate the reality. And the projections are coming from a certain package of compulsions which are physiological, chemical, hormone-based, karmic and social – so many kinds of compulsions. Because the body and mind are functioning from these compulsions, simply being reminded of the nature of your existence seems to be so complex.

In a Sunday school, a teacher wanted to inspire the children to aim for the highest. In Sunday school, in a church school, the highest is heaven of course, not God. So the teacher asked the children, 'If I give my wealth away to the church and serve the church, will I go to heaven?' The children in unison said, 'No!' Then he asked, 'If I

serve the poor, wash the leper's feet and wipe the tears of a child's face, will I go to heaven?' The children said, 'No!' Then he asked, 'If I love my wife, love my children, take care of my family, do my duty to my nation, will I go to heaven?' They said, 'No!' Then he asked, 'Then what should I do to go to heaven?' Little Tommy from the back-bench said, 'You got to die.'

That is all it is, you got to die. This is the only problem. It is just a reminder that what you think as 'yourself' is a make-believe projection of your mind. If you kill it, then everything is right here, life is a flood of ecstasy. You don't have to kill the world; you just have to kill 'this one'. You have no business to kill the body because you didn't make it. You have every right to kill all that you have created; you have no right to kill what the Creator has created. Nobody has any business to kill anything that you cannot create. But the person that you call as 'myself' is all your making. If you just kill that one guy, everything, the whole universe is yours.

This is a tradeoff – me or the cosmos? One who makes the deal is not asking for currency, just you. This is all the tradeoff is, this is all the whole business of enlightenment is. 'God-realization', 'awakening', 'reminder' – whatever you call it, this is all it is. Just kill what you have created; the Creator's creation will explode within you.

A Burning Piece of Life

Inever was spiritually inclined, which is a known fact now. Nor was I inclined to anything. I was not inclined towards a particular profession, not inclined towards a business, not inclined towards any person, not inclined towards anything. Simply a fire without direction. A bit angry with the world around me. One thing is the level of injustice that you see in the world kept me that way. A bit of my fire turned into anger, as when a man is young, stupidity appears to be the worst of all crimes – that also burns me a bit even now. And it is all-pervasive in various aspects of life. How people conduct themselves, how they conduct the life process within themselves. The ridiculousness and the stupidity also kept one percentage of my intensity towards anger. Intense – not about anything. Angry a little bit – not about anything. There was something within me constantly telling me I should not invest my energies into anger. But I liked the feeling of anger at that time. Anger was the only thing that gave me some sense of pur-

pose; otherwise I had no purpose about anything. I was simply burning hot just towards anything. Anything I touched was absolutely on, but nothing in particular. So anger gave me some sense of purpose because I was angry about something, but I was intense – purposeless and directionless.

Shiva likes people who are not inclined towards anything, but simply a burning. Just life. Life does not mean your food, clothing, family, society, things that you do and do not do. Life just means this (references himself), this is life. And life is a purpose unto itself; it need not have another purpose. It is a big enough phenomenon; its magnitude is too large for it to be focused on something else. It is a purpose unto itself. It is an end unto itself. It does not need another direction. Many people in the big cities in the world are asking this question, 'Sadhguru what is the purpose of my life?' (Laughs) They want a god given purpose, or they want to be the chosen one.

The moment you think you are a chosen one, you will start doing all kinds of idiotic things because when you say, 'I am a chosen one,' you believe you are special. Once you are 'special', you will get 'special' treatment from life. But this is about just being life, just ordinary life, like an ant, grasshopper, elephant, tree, mountain, rock, just like that. Simply life. Nothing special, just ordinary. So ordinary it turns out to be extraordinary. 'I want to be special' is a kind of disease. Once it catches you, you will do all kinds of idiotic things to prove that you are special and you will invite things upon yourself which are absolutely unnecessary for anyone.

To know the source of life, to know the divine, you just have to be life and nothing else but life. But right now you are a man, woman, mind, thought, idea, philosophy, belief system, maybe you are just a slogan, who knows. People have reduced themselves to all kinds of things. So these are all deductions from life, but you come here as life and fizzle out as life. In between it is left to you what kind of blunder you want to be. Because you can never be anything other than life.

You can imagine that you are a king; maybe a thousand people around you may also call you your highness. But it is just a game. The reality is that you are just a piece of life. Either you blossomed into your ultimate possibility, or you are an unsprouted seed or an unblossomed flower, but nothing happened. If nothing happened, you think you are safe. Either you lock yourself in a prison

– prison is a very safe place – or a coffin is even better. Very safe. Nothing ever happens to you. We can even make it termite proof.

That which is the basis of life has to come to you if you are just an intense piece of life, there is no way it can avoid you. There is no way Shiva can desert you if you are a burning piece of life. But you become something else and something else and something else... Things that you can never be, things that you realize you are not only when they bury you.

Birthdays and burials are related, if one happens the other is inevitable. Happy birthday to myself and all of you. We are mortal and that makes our lives very precious. May you live a great life.

The Magic of Life

There are two aspects to knowing life: pragna or samadhi. Pragna is the path of awareness. Samadhi is the path of abandon. If you walk through the rain with utmost awareness, you will know rain in a certain way. But if you walk through the rain with absolute abandon, you will know rain another way. If you walk through the rain in total abandon, you will know the whole of it, but you will miss the point of it because you don't care a damn what the point of rain is.

'What is the point of this life' is only for someone who does not have the necessary abandon to walk through this life, enjoying everything that is happening to him. He is trying to decipher the meaning of life because the magic of life has not hit him. With awareness, you will know the meaning of life. With abandon, you will know the magic of life. Do these two things meet somewhere? Yes. If you go into any one of them absolutely, you will realize they are same. They are two doors to the same room, but they are two completely different kinds of doors. Right now, it is like, 'If I am focused on something, I miss everything else. If I try to pay attention to everything else, I am not able to be focused on anything.' Better to be focused on something. At least one thing will happen. Otherwise, nothing will be happening – life will pass off like a dream.

If you look back meticulously at what happened yesterday – I got up in the morning, this happened, that happened – you will see that with 99.9999 per cent of your experiences, we can easily confuse you whether it was real or it was a dream. It just takes a little bit of talking, because

nothing profound has happened; only the five senses are recording. Recording of events is happening, but no experience is happening.

Are you a human being or are you a historian? Are you interested in recording life or experiencing and knowing life? If you want to know life, if you give yourself absolutely to at least one thing, you will know something of life. Otherwise you will only record life. This is why wherever you go today, even if you come to a satsang, you will see someone pull out their camera. They want to record everything because the only way they can prove to themselves after a few years that they actually went to this place is by looking at the picture, nothing else is left. If you are blown away by an experience, do you want to take a picture?

I happened to be in Turkey. I was in a hot air balloon. There was another hot air balloon which was full of Japanese tourists and every one of them had a camera. One Japanese man was leaning out of the basket to take pictures of the balloon and he just fell from fifty feet. I thought, 'Okay, this experience he need not photograph.' He broke his collarbone and one of his ankles. I am sure he did not need a picture; he will always remember the experience. I am saying just looking out, seeing something could be as big an experience as breaking a bone. But because nothing is an experience, you want to record everything.

Whether you do it with your camera or your eyes, this is what most people are doing – recording life. They are not experiencing life. At least if you are involved with one thing, there is a possibility that you will experience something, otherwise only recording is happening. The accumulated memory of recording is what we are referring to as karma. That means you will become a creature of the past. All these recordings will keep replaying every moment of your life, telling you an old story which doesn't matter anyway.

I want you to look back and see ten days ago, what happened from the moment you got up till you went to bed, look at it and see. It is as good as somebody else's story, isn't it? Here and there, there may be moments of experience, the rest is all just a recorded story. Yoga means to transform this life into a living profound experience, not a mere recording.

So, now you have seen and discarded many people – those Inner Engineering people, Bhava Spandana, Samyama, Brahmacharis – all dis-

carded! I want you to go to the next Inner Engineering and volunteer, okay? How people are on the last day – first be like that for one whole month. Then go to Bhava Spandana. How people are at the closing of Bhava Spandana – be like that for one more month. Then try Samyama. By then, you will know what I am talking about, what transformation means. Transformation is not an ambition or even an aspiration. It is an evolution. If you do the right things, you will evolve. It is not because you aspire or have an ambition that you become something; you need to allow this being to grow. If this grows, it will evolve into a certain possibility.

If you are aspiring for transformation, whatever is the highest peak you have hit, you must stay there. Keep the necessary atmosphere within you so that you can live like that. Otherwise, you would have just gone to one fanciful program, done some crazy things, and then gone home and continued the same old rubbish – that is no good. If the highest peak you have known is the level you hit with your Bhava Spandana, see how to stay there for one whole month. And then aspire for the next one. If you go up and fall down and then aspire for the same thing, it means nothing. One step forward, one step backward – this person has no intention of going anywhere.

The fundamental principles of how to stay at that peak is what the program is about. Just bring it into your life, and then aspiring for the next thing and the next thing will become a reality. Otherwise, it is an empty dream. If you want to show serious intent that you really want to go somewhere, this is what you can do, step by step. For someone who is at zero, going on talking about a million is not going to work; you have to climb.

Soul Soup

Suppose right now your right hand starts acting funny – it beats you, pokes you in the eye, and pops around. Would you say you have an ailment? For sure, you have one. That is exactly what your mind is also doing. It gets up, pops around, hurts you, pokes you, makes you cry, makes you suffer. Too many people have this ailment – you can form an army of sick people!

This sickness in the mind will manifest in so many ways in the physical body. There is no question about it. Your whole chemistry will go through a change with every thought, every reverberation you create on the level of the mind. It has all been

measured. If you think about tigers, you will create one kind of chemistry. If you think about flowers, another kind of chemical change happens. For every thought you generate, your chemistry changes. You are a chemical soup and how you stir it is what you become. But now, if your mind turns against you, do you know what kind of soup you are making? You are a lousy soup. Not just lousy – poisonous. If you are soaked in this poisonous soup on a daily basis, wellbeing will not happen to you. Today, we do not have so much control in the world as to what we eat, drink or breathe – all of it is somewhat poisoned. But if you are on self-help, depending upon how hard you strive, you will succeed.

Ancient societies always saw disease as something wrong. They were aware that a human being should not be in any state of illness. But modern societies have started treating illness as normal because there is an industry which thrives on you. One of the largest industries on the planet is pharmaceuticals because you have a nasty soup going within you. If you are willing, we can make you into a very wonderful soup, where the chemistry is fantastic, where being blissful is natural. If you do this, seventy percent of ailments will vanish from the planet. With the remaining thirty percent, there are too many external influences which are not in our control. You don't know whether a bird, pig or cow is sitting next to you. Or in other words, you don't know whether you are going to get bird flu, swine flu, or mad-cow disease. You can take care of this to some extent but not absolutely. But what you are doing from within, you can take into your hands, if you are one hundred percent willing.

If you are constantly creating a nasty chemistry within yourself, how is life within you supposed to understand you are seeking wellbeing? Life within you thinks, "He likes ailments," and gives it to you. Some people may have a robust system, which can take a lot of beating. Others will fall at the very first taste of lousy soup they create.

I know when somebody says, "I am not well," you are supposed to sweet-talk them, "Don't worry, everything will be okay." But I am not like that. I am not solace, I am a solution. If you are poisoning your system from within, how can you live well? Life doesn't work like that. Unless you do the right things, the right things will not happen to you.

The most sacred source of creation is housed in the chemical soup of your body. If vegetable floats in a soup, we call it vegetable soup. Make yourself a great soul soup!

The Journey is Not Hard, You Are

The journey is not hard, you are. A rock dipped in the ocean one thousand times does not dissolve. Actually, there is no such thing as a journey if you ask me, because to make a journey you need a distance. What is the distance between you and yourself? How long would it take to make this journey? The word "journey" is used more as a device, otherwise people will just sit around, but if you say "journey" they know they have to get somewhere.

Some time ago, we were teaching a program in Los Angeles and initiating people into Shambhavi, just a twenty-one minute kriya. Typical of Los Angeles, somebody asked me, "Sadhguru, why are you teaching such long and difficult processes. Ramana Maharshi said you don't have to do anything and it will happen." I said, "What he said is right, but you must understand what he meant. Ramana sat down and did nothing for fourteen years. Rats came and bit into his thigh and ate up his flesh; it got worm-infested and he still did nothing. But you are made in a way where if a mosquito bites, you will call 911!"

If you can do nothing like Ramana, why would I teach you something like Shambhavi Mahamudra? If you are in such a state of doing nothing, why would I teach anything to you? For you to sit quietly for three minutes, I have to continuously keep talking, otherwise you will start scratching yourself. It is not that we have to make something out of you; that would be too hard. We just have to stop your compulsive thoughts, to "un-think" you. To make you understand this, we have to bend you, twist you, turn you upside down; we have to do many things.

The problem is you think you are something. Tell me, what are you made of? Are you made of the same material as the rest of Creation? Or are you made of different material? Is there one leaf, bird or atom in the Existence that can function without the source of Creation throbbing in it? It is everywhere, and you are also made of the same material, so why are you acting so funny and thinking you are different? Intelligence was given to you so that you will throb with the larger intelligence. The way of the existence is that it offers you the possi-

bility of existing in various dimensions of possibilities, whether you choose the lowest or the highest of the choices offered is up to you. Intelligence is about crossing the limitations set by the physical. But you think because you have a certain level of intelligence, you can do your own thing. If you do your own thing, you will become like a rock which does not melt into anything.

As you sit here, air is constantly entering you in the form of breath and making your life happen; this you allow. When you are hungry, what is all over the world enters your plate; that you also allow. You are keeping a couple of doors open to survive, but everything else is closed. You understand, "If I do not open my nostrils, I cannot breathe, if I do not open my mouth, I cannot eat." But if you are truly intelligent, you would extend this and understand, "If I do not open up completely, my life will not happen to its fullest possibility. The fullest dimension of life will not touch me." This does not need any extraordinary intelligence. Everybody has enough intelligence to understand this.

Becoming a salt doll means you are willing to die the way you are, so that something far bigger than yourself can happen. The problem is you are so enamored with yourself. You are who you are only because of the opinions that you hold. It is very important that you do not make an opinion about anything. Within myself, I have never formed a single opinion about anybody. I always look at people as if I am seeing them for the first time. Always. Yes, when it comes to work and activity, we consider what they have done yesterday, as when it comes to specific activities, knowing the trends and tendencies of a person becomes relevant. When it comes to Mystical work, I will sieve through one's karmic body of info to make judgments, but that is only for work. When I simply look at someone, I just look as if it is the first time because the worst thing you can do is have an opinion of another life. You don't have a right to hold an opinion on any life.

If you want to dissolve, one important thing is not to have an opinion on anything. Society is training you to hold an opinion on everything; otherwise you will have no self-esteem. Your self is such hollow nonsense that it needs people to tell you, "Oh you are a beautiful person." You are thriving on opinions, not only on other peoples' opinions, your own opinions. You are a person only because of the opinions that you hold. If you did not hold any opinion, you would be a salt doll. If you

just sit, it is not just the air that will enter you, the whole Existence will enter you. Nothing is stopping it except your own ideas about yourself. Do not hold any ideas either about yourself or anybody, just look at everything the way it is – you will merge with everything, there is no other way to be.

How Long Will You Take?

The first and the foremost thing is iccha. Iccha means a strong aspiration or desire. If iccha is not strong enough, whenever a small difficulty comes your way, you will take the sideline. This will happen if you trek in the mountains. On our last trek to Kailash, we went through the Manang Valley to Thorong La, via the Thorong La Pass. It is about 18,000 feet, sixty degree slopes. When you start climbing, your mind says, "Manang Valley is beautiful enough! Do we really have to go through that pass? It looks desolate up there. Everything is rocky, not a spot of green. But here in the Manang Valley, it is nice and full of flowers." In your life, this will always be the trick of the mind. Those who rise beyond this trick go places – others will have a snack and sleep. Whether it is spirituality, business, music, art – or whatever – this will come when you pitch beyond your limits. Your mind says, "Is it really necessary? It is nice here, where is the need to go up the mountain?"

The first thing is to create an aspiration. "I want to know, I want to know, I want to know." It must bother you from within. If the aspiration does not bother you, seeking will not take you beyond limitations because every human being has them. "Will I cross these limitations or succumb to them?" That is the question. Instead, people are asking, "What is the point, what will I achieve?" It is not an achievement. There is a very beautiful video about how a plant grows – all that the roots do to find nourishment and throw out one flower or fruit. Somebody filmed it and it is played on fast forward so you can see what the roots do just to survive and flourish. This struggle and this wanting to be something more than what you are is not because of a teaching – this is the very nature of life. In every sphere of life, human beings have strived. It is only because of the striving of a few human beings that you are enjoying many things in terms of science, technology, geography and spirituality. Many died trying, few made it. It is because of those few people that many things have happened on the planet.

The spiritual process is the same thing – is it hard? It is not hard, but if you are a hard nut, it is hard. The hardness is not in the spiritual process; the hardness is within you. If the aspiration becomes a burning aspiration, leave the rest to me, I will tell you what to do step by step. But if the aspiration is wavering every day, how to work? If I wanted to just initiate people into a simple fifteen or twenty minute meditation process, we could have done that; that is very simple. But somebody with fire can be taken to the ultimate goal. My intent is not that everybody is happy, healthy and sleeping comfortably. I want them to burn with a different light! Whether you live for thirty, ninety or one hundred years is not important to me. What is important is, “Did you access the Divine in your life? Did you burn with a light beyond flesh and bone?” This must happen to you in your life, otherwise what is the point? In this flesh and bone, even if you live for one hundred years, you will still have the same issues, believe me. More painful issues, that is all!

Look at older people, do they seem fulfilled with all the things they have done with their life? I am asking about people who have lived a full life. Don't they look pained at every step? Most people's satisfaction is only that they didn't get into the trouble their neighbor got into. “You know, I must be pretty okay. We never had those problems!” If you want to be one more statistic on the planet, you can be. But if you want to be an embodiment of the Divine, then there is another way to live. The first and foremost thing is aspiration; it must be a burning aspiration. If there is no burning aspiration, if there is no fire in you – what to do? How to direct when there is no fire in you? Make the fire happen. Don't take thirty-five years to get the fire going.

Why Acceptance is Freedom

If you look into your own mind, if you look into your own persona of what you consider yourself to be, normally, what you call as a personality is essentially different levels of constipation. “I don't like this. I can't stand this. I can't do this. I can't do that. I only like this. I cannot like that” – different levels of constipation. What causes this constipation? Constipation in its physiological sense means constriction of a tract. Here, it's constriction of one's mind and consciousness, that it's held; there is no free flow of life. It's restricted because your ability to experience your life is only

through the instruments of your body and your mind. Either your body or your mind being in some way constricted means your ability to experience life also gets constipated.

This happens in many ways – you will be surprised. Many of you think you've grown out of those things, but when you were ten years of age, your mama, your uncle, I mean. Your mama said something – he called you an idiot. Now, you are fifty, but still, forty years ago, he called you an idiot. It still bothers you. When you see his face, “He called me an idiot!” Like this, it goes on. The more concretized your persona or your personality is, the more nicks and wounds you carry upon yourself. And these are not physiological wounds to heal. Because they are self-inflicted wounds, these are being carried as badges of life's experience, so they don't go. Because of this, “I like this guy. I don't like this guy. I love this person, I hate this person. I can't stand this person” – all this has happened.

Next twenty-four hours, you must do this: all these mamas, friends, enemies, nonsense – you don't have to tell them, “I love you” – not necessary. Within yourself, you must come to a total sense of acceptance of everything. So, somebody said something, somebody did something, somebody stepped on your foot, somebody stepped on your head, twenty-four hours – it's a small prescription – only for twenty-four hours, come to an absolute acceptance of everything. Your mental things, your emotional things, your bodily things, every damn thing, and the social things – just simply accepting it as it is. You don't have to do anything with anybody – just within yourself. If you just do this, life will happen on a larger scale.

About Fear

Then there are a whole lot of people who always try to protect themselves, who are afraid that someone may take advantage of them. Let them take advantage. There are self-appointed advisors around me who keep telling me to be careful, that someone may use me or do whatever. I say, let them use me. That is why I am here. Do not worry about that. Say “yes” to life. With a “yes,” you will not lose. With a “no,” you will lose. A “no” is a closed door. Do not close the door for any reason. It is a very brief life – there is no time to keep closing and opening the door.

Only the physical body needs protection. And sometimes, certain things are not possible. Oth-

erwise, everything should be a “yes.” There is not a single atom in the universe that is not a possible doorway for you. I do not mean “yes” as an attitude but as a reflection of existence. Existence is always “yes.” If you understand you are a part of it, you will also be a “yes.” If the air that you breathe says “no” to you, you are dead. If life around you says “no” to you, you are dead. If the food that enters your body says “no” to you, you are dead. Existence is saying “yes” to you. Then why are you calculating, “Yes or no?” It is time to say one hundred percent “yes” to life.

For some people, the greatest obstacle is fear of judgment or ridicule. First of all, are other people really interested in what you do, and do they have the time to make judgments about you? Do not worry about what someone else thinks. What happens in their mind is their problem. You should be concerned with the quality of your mind. That will improve your life. Do not worry about the quality and content of other people’s minds. If you are concerned about what others may think, you will go crazy, because it is all guess work. If you think something is worth doing, just do it, no matter what someone else may think. And if someone laughs at you, you can laugh with them. Possibly, they will help you out of something that you may be doing wrong. But anyway, most people are not thinking about you. They are busy with their own stuff.



ON TRADITION

Indian culture: A tool for wellbeing

This spiritual ethos is not about belief systems. It is about systematic practices which sharpened the mind and body in a certain way. Wherever I travel, whatever kinds of groups of people I meet, I have spoken to top-level scientists, academics and students at very prestigious universities, and various other kinds of people, but I always find that the groups I meet in India are far sharper and smarter than most people anywhere in the world. The country is so effortlessly going ahead in the information technology age while everyone else is struggling essentially because the spiritual ethos

in the culture has sharpened the intellect in a certain way. This ethos was so magnificently and intelligently presented in the past, but because of over two centuries of extreme poverty, it has gotten twisted out of shape over a period of time. Every generation has to twist it back into shape where it can be an effective tool for one’s liberation and wellbeing.

Western societies talk about freedom and liberation in political systems. But liberation is the core value of who we are. The significance of this culture is that in every way, we created support for a human being to nurture himself towards his liberation because the only goal in this country was mukti. In the West, they may talk about freedom in physical and social atmospheres, but in terms of real life, there is no freedom because God will decide. Here, God does not decide anything. Here we say whatever is happening to you is your karma. That means it is your making. You are the maker of your life. This is constantly present in everything we do. Somewhere along the way because we lost battle after battle and were conquered, the same karma came to be perceived in a fatalistic negative way. Otherwise, when you say, “Your life is your karma,” we are saying your life is your making. No God is influencing you. And the ultimate goal, the core value of your life is freedom – freedom from prejudice, fear, death – everything.

If you want a family and work towards your liberation, you work that way. If you don’t need it, you work directly. But the only value once you are born in this culture is your mukti. That is how every aspect of this culture – even the simplest thing – was arranged. How should you be if you want to move towards your ultimate freedom?

Indian culture: Strategically designed

For example, people who come to our Isha Vidhya schools for the first time notice the children sit on the floor. This is not to save furniture. Sitting cross-legged has immense benefits for your physiology and the development of your mind. Like this, every aspect of life was thought of very strategically.

This is the reason this culture must be nurtured – not because we are emotional about it but because it is a scientific process. It would take thousands of years to set up such a complex scientific mechanism that constantly drives you towards your liberation. Whether you sit, stand, or do anything else, it leads to your wellbeing. Music,

dance – everything – is oriented towards making you free. People who get deeply involved in classical music or dance naturally turn spiritual. There is no other way to be.

If we look at ourselves as a nation, the way people look, their language, food, way of dressing, music and dance, everything is different every 50 or 100 kilometers in the country. Everything about people who live in this country is different, but a cultural thread has held us together. This culture of what India has been, which cannot be quantified, is simply there. Wherever you go in the world, if you see an Indian, the very way he sits and walks, you know he is an Indian! It is extremely important that we strengthen this cultural thread because if you destroy this culture, there will be no spiritual process on the planet. There may be individual people in the rest of the world but culturally, there will be no spiritual process on the planet because this is not a culture that accidentally happened for convenience. This is a culture that was engineered by realized beings where every human being is working towards his ultimate liberation.

Indian culture: Engineered with gentleness

A certain gentleness was engineered into this culture by the enlightened ones of the past to ensure that its basic skeleton can never be misused in the name of the divine. Individual people may misuse so many things but it will never be empowered by divine sanction. Because of this, a certain gentleness flowered, but when this gentleness was treated as weakness by outside forces, the culture has paid a price and they were exploited.

Now that the world has moved on from military power to economic power, this is the time for this culture to manifest itself. A time has come to reinstate these cultural strengths. If the fundamental focus of this culture, which is to work towards liberating yourself from everything, is reinstated, and everyone strives for that, physically and intellectually, people can function effortlessly. Reestablishing that focus is most important today because every human being tends to get encumbered hugely by these things. But once a person is seeking his liberation and nothing else is important for him, he is greatly empowered.

The Forgotten Essence of India

After receiving the Bharat Ratna award in 1992, JRD Tata said, “I don’t want India to be an economic superpower. I want India to be a happy country.”

Today, power is the only thing that is respected. This is only because we have not created a world where gentleness is respected. But is this power, this craze to accumulate wealth, making us happy? India is now at the peak of world attention. It is important to see how we are presenting ourselves to the world, about what we have to offer to the world.

Technologies To Manufacture Enlightened Beings

We have forgotten that the essence of Indian culture has always been about human liberation. No other culture has looked at a human being with so much depth and understanding and created methods to evolve a person into his ultimate nature. To put it very bluntly, we have technologies to manufacture an enlightened being. Western societies talk of political, social and physical liberation, but we have always understood liberation as the core value of who we are, the ultimate liberation.

We need to understand that this Indian spiritual ethos is not about belief systems. It is about systematic practices that were so intellectually and magnificently presented over thousands of years that they sharpened the mind and body in a certain way. That is why the country is so effortlessly going ahead in the information and technology age. India as a nation is very unique. It has an ethos and a quality that you can't find anywhere else. There has been a certain dimension to this mass of people which we right now refer to as India or Bharat, a certain sense of awareness and wisdom which is very hard to find anywhere else. People always looked east when they thought of inner wellbeing. Why shouldn't India aspire to make every nation meditative?

That is why I say “yoga”. When I talk about yoga, I am not referring to various postures that people seem to want to achieve. I'm talking about yoga as a method, a whole technology, which leads you on to a sense of inclusion; to experience everything and everyone as a part of yourself, which ultimately brings absolute clear perception of the realities in which you exist.

Conquest vs Inclusion

There are two ways of making somebody or something yours – one is by conquest, another is by inclusiveness. Inclusiveness is the way of yoga; conquest unfortunately has become the way of modern science. We have a wrong sense of what is achievement in life. Is conquest at the cost of harming someone an achievement, or is inclusion by making someone fall in love with you an achievement? Our juvenile ideas of achievement need to be altered, particularly in the minds of children. Though forceful extraction is more useful, it is crude. It is in inclusion and gentleness where the very process of life thrives. So our aspiration should be to become a nation operating from clarity, creating wellbeing for itself and as far as possible, wellbeing for everyone in the world. Unfortunately, because of over two centuries of extreme poverty, our spiritual ethos has gotten twisted out of shape. It becomes the responsibility of every generation to put it back into shape, as an effective tool for one's liberation while demonstrating its immense possibility to the world.

A time has come for this culture to manifest and reinstate itself once again. The distortion it has gone through due to invasion and poverty has not destroyed the spiritual thread even if it has made us power and wealth-hungry. As a nation, we must show the world by example that when we talk of freedom, we mean ultimate liberation: freedom from everything, freedom from prejudice, freedom from fear, freedom from death. Establishing that focus is most important today because every human being tends to get encumbered hugely by external factors. Fear encumbers human intelligence in so many ways. But once a person has the ultimate goal of liberation, nothing else is more important for him. He goes about his life with a profound understanding, with a certain sense of responsibility. We should become a counter model for dog-eat-dog type of world situations. We should establish a society that is respected not because of its aggression or wealth but because of its wisdom of life. Till we learn to respect gentleness, the world will never know evolved situations.

Why Are Traditions Important?

There are many traditions in the world. But if you can follow any tradition to its source, you will see it is only an outer manifestation or expression of an inner experience of one person or a group of people. When people try to organize and deliver

that experience to more people, it becomes a system, and then becomes a tradition, and tradition sometimes turns into a religion, and sometimes into many other things.

All these things start with an inner experience before the process of either disorganized flow or organized conduct. If it is a disorganized flow, generally it gets referred to as a tradition because it is a loose organization. If it is a more organized expression, it becomes an organized religion. But essentially, if you go back, you will see all these things originated in an inner experience of an individual human being or a group of human beings.

How Time Distorts Tradition

Whoever experienced whatever – a hundred years ago or a thousand years ago or ten thousand years ago – we bow down to them for who they are. But still, whatever someone experienced is only an inspirational story for you. Unless you experience it, it is not real. That person's experience and that person's life can only be an inspiration, never really the way. The only way for every human being is that he or she has to experience it. Maybe the guidance offered could lead you in that direction, but in these many years before it reached you, it might have been distorted.

For example, if you see something today, and you went and told someone what you saw, in twenty-four hours, if it goes through twenty-five different people and comes back to you the next day, you would not even recognize the story. Whatever is passed on from generation to generation, human minds are given to enormous distortion. This is the nature of the human mind because most people have not done anything about their minds.

For most people, their mind is not functioning independent of memory. What type of memory you carry in your mind, accordingly, that kind of contamination happens in your mind with whatever is given to you. So, in this country, we established a tradition, a science of transmitting with as much purity as possible. This tradition was called Guru-Shishya Parampara.

A Tradition of Oral Transmission

According to the tradition, anything that is an inner experience should never be written down, only transmitted orally. No one has any right to even change a syllable in it – it must be transmitted exactly the same way, with no interpretations. Nobody should write any commentaries about it. For thousands of years, we have managed this.

When someone experienced something, he delivered it to someone who held this above his life, not as a part of his life, or as his profession or hobby. This was more important than his own life. And this person transmitted it to the next generation. Even if he did not experience it, he delivered it in the same format to the next generation. This was a very wonderful system, but those times are gone and distortions have happened today unfortunately.

A Tradition is Not Important by Itself

Tradition is not important by itself. Tradition is valuable only as a means for the present generation of people to experience the same glorious thing that was the origin of the tradition. Unfortunately, we have come to a place where we think everything that happened a thousand years ago is better than what it is today. That is not so. Even a thousand years ago, there were people like you and me, there were struggles, there were problems, there was nonsense, there was everything.

It is just that people carry the memory of a few people's glorious lives, and they think everyone at that time was like that. No, a few individuals were like that at that time. Even now, there are a few individuals like that. It is just that tradition has to come alive in individual experience. Only then that tradition becomes a living process. Otherwise, it just becomes an imposition, and one generation or the next will drop it.

Is Preserving Tradition Important?

All tradition will be demolished when it does not work. You cannot enforce something upon a generation if it is not working for them; it does not matter how sacred we think it is. So, the most important point is to travel back in your tradition, see what the source is, and see if you can bring that experience to the people who are sitting here. Then you do not have to tell them, "Please preserve the tradition." They will anyway keep it alive.

Indian Culture & Tradition – The Basis Behind

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smarter than most people anywhere in the world. The country is so effortlessly going ahead in the information technology age while everyone else is struggling essentially because the spiritual ethos in the culture has sharpened the intellect in a certain way. This ethos was so magnificently and intelligently presented in the past, but because of over two centuries of extreme poverty, it has gotten twisted out of shape over a period of time. Every generation has to twist it back into shape where it can be an effective tool for one's liberation and wellbeing.

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thousands of years to set up such a complex scientific mechanism that constantly drives you towards your liberation. Whether you sit, stand, or do anything else, it leads to your wellbeing. Music, dance – everything – is oriented towards making you free. People who get deeply involved in classical music or dance naturally turn spiritual. There is no other way to be.

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Now that the world has moved on from military power to economic power, this is the time for this culture to manifest itself. A time has come to reinstate these cultural strengths. If the fundamental focus of this culture, which is to work towards liberating yourself from everything, is reinstated, and everyone strives for that, physically and intellectually, people can function effortlessly. Reestablishing that focus is most important today because every human being tends to get encumbered hugely by these things. But once a person is seeking his liberation and nothing else is important for him, he is greatly empowered.

Why Were Temples Built?

The very nature of human perception is such that, right now, whatever a human being is involved with, that will be the only truth for him in his experience. Right now, most people are involved with the five sense organs and that seems to be the only truth, nothing else. Sense organs can only perceive that which is physical and because your perception is limited to the five sense organs, everything that you know as life is only the physicality – your body, your mind, your emotion and your life energies are all physical. If you see the physical existence as a fabric, then we can say you are living on the fabric of the physical. You are walking on this cloth and what you are walking on is all that is real. When you look up, there seems to be a vast emptiness above, but even there you only recognize the physical. You look at the stars or the sun or the moon – this is all physical. You don't perceive that what is not physical, isn't it?

What you call a temple is like putting a hole in the fabric, creating a space where the physical becomes thin and something beyond becomes visible to you. This science of making the physical less manifest is the science of consecration, so that dimension beyond the physical becomes apparent or visible to you if you are willing. To take the analogy further, it is like the temple is a hole in the fabric of the physical, where you could fall through easily and go beyond.

Today temples may be built just like shopping complexes with concrete and steel, probably for the same purpose, because everything has become commerce. When I talk about temples, I am talking about the way ancient temples were created. In this country, in ancient times, temples were built only for Shiva, nobody else. It was only later that the other temples came up because people started focusing on immediate wellbeing. Using this science, they started creating various other forms, which they could use to benefit themselves in so many different ways in terms of health, wealth, and wellbeing. They created different types of energies and different kinds of deities. If you want money, you create one kind of form or if you are full of fear, you create another kind of form, which will assist with that. These temples came up in the last 1100 or 1200 years, but before that, there were no other temples in the country except Shiva temples.

The word 'Shiva' literally means 'that which is not.' So the temple was built for 'that which is not.' 'That which is' is physical manifestation; 'that which is not' is that which is beyond the physical. So a temple is a hole through which you enter into a space "which is not."

How the Spiritual Process Lost its Quality Control?

The checks and balances came from within. There was no external authority to check whether a spiritual process was genuine or not, whether it is used in the right direction or not. It was self-governed. It could be self-governed simply because the spiritual process was not an isolated aspect. The spiritual path was not followed by just a fringe group of people. Spirituality was mainstream. This has never happened in any other part of the world. Religion has happened, but an active spiritual process for a large segment of society has never happened anywhere else.

In the same town, there would be many gurus, each speaking different things but none of them in conflict with anyone else. This naturally led to a very democratic process of doing things because it was widespread. And people had the option to sit in one place one day, another place the next day, and still another the day after. Gurus were not insecure. They wouldn't prevent anyone from going anywhere. They said, "If you don't think this is the best place, don't be here. Go where you want." I am saying that even today. The only problem today is there may not be enough places for you to explore. But in the past, when this kind of ecosystem was present, there naturally were checks and balances because there were so many people in society who were in profound states of experience. If somebody said something wrong, everyone immediately knew this is not it.

A Qualified Audience

For example, let's say you learn Indian classical music. You can go and sing in Atlanta, they will clap their hands. You can sing in Delhi or Mumbai, they will clap their hands. But when you go to Chennai and sing, if you make one little mistake, they will get up and leave because the audience is so qualified and steeped in music.

Chennai is the only place where in December and January, for an entire sixty days, there will be five concerts every day taking place in a hundred different venues. People go from concert to con-

cert, concert to concert. Such a culture is not present anywhere else on the planet. This could be a huge event that attracts audiences from around the globe, but they will not promote or advertise it because they are such purists. They say, "If you have a sensitive nose, you will come for the fragrance. If you don't have such a sense, we don't want you to come!"

Similarly with the spiritual process, there was a qualified audience. But when invasions happened, the most qualified people were the first ones to get killed because invaders not only want land, gold and women. They understand clearly that unless they impose their religion upon you, you are not fully taken. So, the first thing they did was destruction of the spiritual process.

This happened primarily in the northern plains of India, where many masters had to move into the Tibetan plateau for survival. This led to a huge dislocation and so today, many people who should have been astrologers, priests and even conmen are claiming to be Gurus. Because there aren't enough realized beings, a lot of entrepreneurs have come up. Some of them have good intentions, but good intention armed with ignorance is potentially dangerous – more dangerous than evil if you ask me because good intentions give legitimacy to ignorance. Many ignorant people are nice. You can marry them if you want but you don't choose them as your Guru because they will take you down the drain.

Making Truth Mainstream

If we want to bring quality control back, the first thing we have to do is make spiritual process mainstream, where there are millions of people who are practicing, who know by experience and can make a distinction between what is real and what is not real, between what will lead to their liberation and what will entangle them. If there is a qualified audience, then a cleanup will naturally happen.

Truth should become mainstream. Right now, lies have become mainstream, truth is fringe. Initially, people lie with some hesitation. As days progress, they start lying with more confidence. After some time, everybody knows everybody is lying but because it is mainstream, it is okay.

If truth is mainstream, if somebody utters one little lie, everyone will see it and it will get obliterated by itself. I am hoping everyone, especially the young people, stand up and make truth mainstream.

What is the Reason for Rape?

We call this "Mother Earth." Does that mean all crime on this planet will stop? No. There is a variety of crime. Sexual assault on women is very much there. There are many aspects to this. We can get angry and say, "Okay, hang them." Well, if you bring hanging as a punishment for rape, you must understand that in a rape case, the only witness is almost always the victim. If you guarantee to a rapist that, if you rape and get caught, you will hang for sure, what do you think he will do? He will eliminate that only witness. So, before we say something, we must be careful what we are saying. This does not mean we are supporting them. It is just a question of whether you are looking for a solution or a Kangaroo court: "Hang everybody!"

A Generational Shift

We must look at why this is happening. One thing is that, for India as a culture, this is the first generation that women are actually coming out on the street, walking and working with men in close proximity. People are not used to this. Also, millions of young people are moving from villages to cities. In their village, their idea of a woman was their mother, their mausi, their attay or patti [aunt or grandmother]. Now they come and see young girls walking on the street. It is very new for them. Let us not simply discount things and act like we have dropped from somewhere.

Human beings have sexuality in them. Between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five the hormonal influence may be in maximum force. If one is disciplined with a certain cultivation of intellect and other avenues of expressions in their life like sports, art, music, education, then so many things are there to engage you. If nothing is there to engage you, just your hormones bursting within you, then from your village you came to a city and suddenly you see young girls. The kind of people that you saw in the movies are walking on the street. The guy goes crazy. And above all, you have been encouraging alcohol everywhere. The moment two drops of alcohol fall into him, he goes absolutely crazy in the evenings. If he thinks nobody is watching, he will pounce on somebody.

An Inhuman Atmosphere

There is also a sociological issue in this. If he was in the village, his mother, his aunt or somebody would be saying, "You know that girl, we are going to get you married to that girl." Whether he mar-

ries that girl or not, in his mind there is a solution for his needs.

Now he comes to the city alone. He just sleeps in one room with ten boys, working through the day and night in a rubbish and inhuman atmosphere. It is like a concentration camp. Most of them are living in those kinds of conditions. And there is no solution for him – for his hormones, for his body, for his emotions, for his life. There is not one person who is going there asking, "What are you going to do? Who are you going to marry? How are you going to settle your life?" Is there any one human being looking at him? No. In the evening with friends, if he drinks, the guy goes wild. Of course, people are also selling all kinds of wild pornographic videos. He sees those things and he thinks that is the thing to do.

When somebody commits a crime, you have to punish them – that is another matter. I am not going to get into that. But sociologically, what is the solution? Are you teaching them to become ascetics? Are you teaching them yoga or sadhana so that they will become brahmacharis and walk free of these things? No, you have not taught them anything like that. Are you going to give them a solution? If he was in the village, then by eighteen, nineteen he would be married to somebody. Now he has no hope. He is simply there, and he will do wild things. This is the nature of a human being, we must understand.

A Need for Debate

Just fifty years ago, almost every girl was married by the time she was sixteen or seventeen. A boy was married before he was twenty. Before he was going out of control, his things were settled. As a generation and a culture, this situation has changed. Now, there is no settlement for his life. We must at least be willing to debate, "What are we going to do with our youth?" Just being puritanical is not going to work.

Youth means there are many aspects. One aspect is the influence of hormones in them – are you going to address it, or are you going to just close your eyes and say, "Nothing like that, just hang a few people and everything will be okay." It is not going to be okay. A time has come we must address it. Rather than linking this to Bharat Mata, please address it.

Should Women Work & Pursue Careers?

Generally, people work for financial needs. If you are working out of a passion for what you are doing, that is different, but most people work for financial gain. So, if there is a financial requirement in a family, women going to work or pitching in by working from home is perfectly fine. The question is not about whether you should work or not. The question is about whether there is such a need or not.

If the need has become social rather than financial, I don't see a need that every woman must work. The idea of creating so much technology in the world is that someday, we create a world where neither man nor woman needs to work. We can live on a vacation! But many people work because they are in a mode of compulsive action. They don't know what else to do with themselves. That is an unfortunate way to be. Coming to women in particular, this idea that every woman should work has gained great momentum in the last 40 to 50 years. It has come because of a certain element of exploitation that happened to women because of their financial dependence on the man. As a reaction to that, women thought the only way is to go to work. But I think it is only in some families that such exploitation happens. It is not true with many families. The idea that you are a real woman only if you earn money, has been borrowed from the man's mind. In the name of women's liberation, women have taken on men's values. This is true slavery. If she wants to become free, a woman should not take on man's values. She should see how to enhance the feminine into a flower-like, fragrant existence on the planet. This is something only she can do.

Looking at Life Beyond Your Wellbeing

The world becomes beautiful not because you earn money. Whether it is an individual's life or a family, community or the world, it becomes beautiful because there are a few people who exist out of their love, truly wanting to reach out and do something beyond their personal wellbeing. That is what makes the world beautiful.

In terms of my personal experience, my mother never went to work outside, and my father would have never thought that she should work. But was she a useless person? Absolutely not. Without her, what would we be? Her dedication, the way she gave herself to her children and husband, is what has made us who we are.

A deep sense of concern, care and looking at life beyond your own personal wellbeing was something that was instilled in us simply by looking at her. There was no way you could miss it because her life was never about herself. With great joy, day or night, she served her family. This was not slavery, this was done out of absolute love. If you told her that she was being exploited, she would have been immensely offended because for her, it was such an experience of love to expend herself in doing what she was doing.

A family is the smallest unit of community in the world, and if this does not happen in a family, it will not happen anywhere in the world. If a child is not exposed to this sense of love and dedication right from childhood, it will not happen.

Making a Difference

This does not mean a woman cannot do this if she goes to work. If there is a need to work, she has to do something about it. Once again, to take my mother as an example, she did not go to work, but she made sure that whatever could be done at home was done, so that it need not be bought in the shop.

Throughout my childhood, until I moved out of my family situation, I never slept on a pillow without a little bit of embroidery. She always made sure there would be at least some embroidery – maybe a little parrot or a little flower. Without this, my life wouldn't be the same. She could have bought it in the shop. My father could afford it, but she made sure that she did that little thing. That was her way of pitching in. Whether you make money or you save money, it is still a contribution to the family. So, how a particular woman functions is an individual aspect. But no one needs to develop a philosophy that all women should work or all women should not work.

Religion, as we know it, will go down in 100 years

Today, human intellect is sparking like never before. More people are thinking for themselves than ever before in the history of humanity. Today, even if God spoke to you, and if he did not make logical sense, you wouldn't buy it. There was a time when people would. So, in many ways, the heavens are crumbling. Right now it may be happening to individuals, but gradually it will become a widespread phenomenon.

I estimate, in another 80-100 years' time, the present form of organized religion will go down. Heavens of the past made sense when people were living in such abject conditions. Today we are living lives better than the heavens, so people will tell you, "I don't want to go to heaven. This is good." But the human being's aspiration to experience something more will not go away. If we as a generation of people do not strive to bring about a powerful inner experience for every human being, ninety percent of the population will move towards drink and drug – and you can't stop it.

Before the entire population turns back this incredible work of evolution – which brought you from the level of an amoeba to such a level of intelligence and capability – a scientifically relevant spiritual process must happen to the world.

Occult and Spirituality

Generally, the occult has always been shunned on the spiritual path. Whenever someone on the path veered towards the occult even slightly, stringent steps were immediately taken to see that such things don't happen. Gorakhnath is a great example of this. Gorakhnath was a very fierce yogi of immense capabilities. In Gujarat, there is a mountain peak named after him because he was a mountain among men. His followers, the Gorakhnathis, are one of the biggest sects among the yogic traditions even today. They are very intense and fierce people.

Gorakhnath's Guru was Matsyendranath. Matsyendranath was looked upon by people as no less than Shiva himself – he was that capable. He was not considered as a man because there was very little about him that was human. Everything else belonged to some other dimension of life. It is said that he existed in his physical body for over 600 years. Generally, he stayed away from social situations and was only available to a band of very few intense and fierce disciples. Gorakhnath was one of them.

Matsyendranath saw that Gorakhnath, an immense possibility for the world, was getting very attached to the person of the Guru. So, he sent him away for fourteen years. "Go away to some other mountain and do your sadhana. Come back after fourteen years." Gorakhnath left, and was in intense sadhana – but counting days as to when he would set his eyes upon his Guru again. Exactly after fourteen years, he came back to where he expected his Guru to be and found another disciple

guarding the door. Gorakhnath told him that he had come to see Matsyendranath. The disciple said "No, you cannot enter." Immediately, Gorakhnath flew into an intense rage and said "How can you stop me? I have been waiting for fourteen years. Who are you to stop me?" The disciple said "It doesn't matter who I am, you cannot enter."

Gorakhnath pounced upon the man, put him down physically and entered the cave in which his Guru was supposed to be staying. But when he went in, it was empty. He came out weeping and asked "Where is he?" The disciple said "I have no intention of telling you. You are too crude." Gorakhnath begged him, but to no avail. Then, using his occult power, Gorakhnath read the other yogi's mind, found out where his Guru was and went straight there.

The moment he got there, Matsyendranath knew how he had come to know. Matsyendranath told him "You misused the sadhana I gave you. You misused it to enter the mind of your brother yogi. You had no business to read his mind. You have found the lowest expression to the yoga I gave you."

Occult is the lowest expression of yoga, but that is the first thing people would like to do. They want to see something or do something that others cannot. In yogic terminology, it means he expressed himself through the Muladhara. So Matsyendranath said to Gorakhnath, "Go away, block your Muladhara and sit for another fourteen years." Gorakhnath went back and sat in what is now the famous Gorakhnath asana – a very torturous asana – by blocking his Muladhara continuously so that he never again finds expression in the lowest way.

Occult has been treated as a dirty thing that you shouldn't touch. It is not always a dirty thing, but unfortunately, largely it has been used that way. No science or technology is a dirty thing. But suppose we start using technology to kill and torture people, after some time it will look like technology is a dirty thing. That is what has happened to occult because too many people misused it for some personal reasons. So, generally occult is shunned completely on the spiritual path.

Why Do We Immerse the Ashes of the Dead in the Ganga?

When someone very dear to you is dead, though you know they are dead, somewhere, your mind

will start playing tricks. "Maybe he is just sleeping, maybe he is going to sit up now, maybe he will come back out of the ashes." But when you spread the ashes in the river, you know it is over. A deep acceptance of death happens for the living – and it is also for the dead.

The Dead Must Move On

Upto forty days after death, the being still takes time to completely leave the body. Even if you have burned the body, it will look for certain elements of the body like the ash or something that belongs to them, such as their used clothes.

This is why in Hindu families, the moment the person dies, all the clothes that the person used, especially those clothes which touched the person's body, like underclothes, are burned. This is because the being still looks for elements of the body, maybe the sweat, maybe the smell of the body, because the realization has still not come that it is over. If you keep the ashes in one place, there is a tendency for the being to look for that. So the ashes are released in a river where they will spread and be immersed. That way, they cannot be found. Everything possible is being done to make the being understand that it is over.

Runanubandha: Breaking the Bond

Another aspect is that whenever you touch someone – either because of blood relationships or sexual relationships, or even if you just hold someone's hand or exchange clothes – these two bodies will generate runanubandha, a certain commonality. A physical sameness happens.

When someone dies, traditionally, you are looking at how to completely obliterate the runanubandha. The idea of putting the ashes in the Ganga or in the ocean is to disperse them as widely as possible so that you do not develop runanubandha with one who has departed. For you to continue your life, you must break this runanubandha properly. Otherwise, as is happening in modern societies, it can affect your physical and mental structure. It weakens your body and mental structure in such a way that instead of cherishing all the beautiful things that happened between two people, you will suffer it. It can also lead to a certain derangement of life.

To avoid this, we try to destroy the physical memory alone – not the psychological memory. You should not lose the psychological and emotional memory. Someone who meant so much to you – why should you forget them? You must

cherish that relationship forever. But we want to destroy the physical memory.

Occult Mischief

There is another reason why we want to disperse ashes. The qualities of the person remain in the ash after death. Even if you burn the body, it is possible for a forensic laboratory to identify the person from the ash with DNA analysis. So if you keep it in an urn for example, this being may still hover around! This is why those who practice occult wait at cremation grounds to gather ashes for rituals – they want to attract the being towards them. They want to do sorcery and grab that being to make use of it in a different way.

When someone dear to you dies, you want to make sure their ashes do not get into the wrong hands. You do not want your ancestor or relative to be misused for a long time or become a victim of sorcery. When you immerse the ashes in the river, nobody can take it. Another way to disperse them is to go to a mountain where the wind is blowing, and let the ashes out so that it spreads all over. The intention is that nobody should be able to pick up even a small handful of ash.

The Stages of Death and the Significance of Shraddh

In India, if someone close to you dies, you are supposed to sit and watch – no one leaves a dead body alone. If you keep the body for over two to three days, the hair will grow. If it was a man and he used to shave, you can see this from the facial hair. The nails will also grow. Therefore, in countries where they preserve the dead bodies for a longer time, the undertakers clip the nails and shave the beard. This is so because of the way life manifests. For the sake of understanding – there is fundamental life and physical life. Physical life energy, which is generally referred to as prana, has five basic manifestations. These are called samana, prana, udhana, apana, and vyana.

The Stages of Death

Within 21 to 24 minutes from the moment when a doctor would declare a person as dead, samana starts exiting. Samana is in charge of maintaining the temperature in the body. The first thing that happens after death is, the body starts cooling down. The traditional way of checking whether someone is dead or alive is to feel the nose – they would not check the eyeballs and other paramete-

ters. If the nose has gone cold, they concluded that he is dead.

Somewhere between 48 to 64 minutes after someone is considered as dead, prana exits. Between six and twelve hours after, udhana exits. There are tantric processes through which we could revive the body before udhana exits. Once udhana has exited, it is practically impossible to revive the body. Then, somewhere between eight to eighteen hours, apana exits. Subsequently, vyana, which is the preservative nature of prana, will start exiting and may continue to do so for up to 11 to 14 days if it is a normal death – that is if someone died of old age, because life became feeble. For that period of time, certain processes will continue in the body; there will still be some element of life. If someone died in an accident, when the life within was still vibrant – unless the body is totally crushed – the reverberations of this life will continue somewhere between 48 and 90 days.

During that time, there are things you can do for that life. Your experience of death is that someone is gone, but the experience of that being is that he or she has exited the body. Once they have exited the body, you have no business with them anymore. You cannot recognize them anymore, and if they came back, you would be terrified. If people you love died and would pop up again, there would be terror – not love, because your relationship is with their body or with their conscious mind and emotion. Once someone dies, those two aspects are left behind.

The mind is just a bunch of information that has natural tendencies which find expression in a certain way. When someone dies, there is no more discernment, no more intellect. If you put one drop of pleasantness into their mind, this pleasantness will multiply a million fold. If you put one drop of unpleasantness, that unpleasantness will multiply a million fold. It is a little like with children – they go out to play until they are exhausted and cannot go on anymore, because they do not have the necessary discernment as to when it is time to stop.

After death, discernment is completely absent, even more than in a child. Then, whatever quality you put into the mind, it will multiply a million fold. This is what is being referred to as heaven and hell. If you go into a pleasant state of existence, it is called heaven. If you go into an unpleasant state of existence, it is called hell. These are not

geographical locations – these are experiential realities that a life which has become disembodied is going through.

Death Rituals

How well or how ridiculously it is done today is a different matter, but there is a whole science of what to do at different steps. One of the first things people traditionally do if someone dies is, they will tie the big toes of the dead body together. This is very important because it will tighten up the muladhara in such a way that the body cannot be invaded by that life once again. A life that has not lived with the awareness that “this body is not me” will try to enter through any orifice of the body, particularly through the muladhara. The muladhara is where life generates, and it is always the last point of warmth when the body is cooling down.

The reason why traditionally, we always said that if someone dies, you must burn the body within an hour-and-a-half or a maximum of four hours is because life tries to get back. This is also important for the living. If someone very dear to you died, your mind may start playing tricks, thinking that maybe a miracle will happen, maybe God will come and bring them back. It has never happened to anyone, but still the mind plays up because of the emotions that you have for that particular person. Similarly, the life that has exited the body also believes that it can still get back into the body.

If you want to stop the drama, the first thing is to set fire to the body within one-and-a-half hours. Or to be sure the person is dead, they have stretched it to four hours. But the body should be taken away as quickly as possible. In agriculture communities, they used to bury, because they wanted their forefathers' bodies, which are a piece of soil, to go back to the soil that had nourished them. Today, you buy your food from the store, and do not know where it comes from. Therefore, burial is not advisable anymore. In earlier times, when they buried in their own land, they always put salt and turmeric on the dead body so that it quickly dissipates into the soil. Cremation is good because it closes the chapter. You will see that when there is a death in the family, people will be crying and wailing, but the moment cremation happens, they will become quiet, because suddenly, the truth has sunk in that it is over. This does not only go for the living but also for the disembodied being who has just exited the body. As long as the body

is there, he or she is also under the illusion that he can get back.

There are many rituals to see that you can somehow put a drop of sweetness into such a non-discerning mind so that this sweetness will multiply many fold and they will live comfortably in a kind of self-induced heaven. That is the idea behind the rituals – if they are done properly.

Runanubandha

I am sure most of you have heard of runanubandha, which indicates a physical relationship. Whenever you touch someone – either because of blood relationship or sexual relationships, or even if you just hold someone's hand or exchange clothes – these two bodies will generate runanubandha, a certain commonality. When someone dies, traditionally, you are seeing how to completely obliterate the runanubandha. The idea of putting the ashes in the Ganga or in the ocean is to disperse them as widely as possible so that you do not develop runanubandha with one who has departed. For you to continue your life, you must properly break this runanubandha. Otherwise, as it happens in modern societies, it will affect your physical and mental structure. Children up to eight years of age are immune to these things – nature has given them that protection, but adolescents will suffer immensely when we do not take care of the dead properly, because the energies of disembodied beings are always there and the first ones that they go after are adolescents because they are the most vulnerable. You see in the world today how much upheaval people are going through during adolescence.

One of the reasons why adolescence is more of a struggle today than it was in previous generations is that we are not properly taking care of those who have departed and these runanubandhas are all over the place. It is like loose software everywhere, and it always affects adolescent life most.

Q: But what to do? How do you grind your emotions into powder and sprinkle it? I don't think it is possible to cut off your emotions.

Emotions are a different, secondary aspect to life. It is the physical sameness, the runanubandha with the dead that you want to eliminate, because this can cause sickness and mental derangement, among other things. Emotion by itself is not damaging. If you had a beautiful relationship with someone and now the person is no more, it is healthy to cherish the beauty of that relationship rather than suffer. But if the runanubandha is

there, it weakens your body and your mental structure in such a way that instead of cherishing all the beautiful things that happened between two people, you are suffering, and not only that – it will lead to a certain derangement of life. To avoid that, we try to destroy the physical memory alone. It is not only that you cannot forget the emotional and psychological memory, you should not forget it either. Someone who meant so much to you – why should you forget them? You must cherish that relationship forever.

What is the Meaning of Namaskar or Namaste?

When you see a person, whether it is in your workplace, on the street, at home or anywhere else, the nature of human intellect is such, the moment it sees, it will make a judgment – “this is okay in that person, this is not okay in that person. He is good, he is not good, he is beautiful, he is ugly” – all kinds of things. You don't even have to consciously think all this. In a moment, these assessments and judgments are made. And your judgments may be completely wrong because they all are coming from your past experiences of life. They will not allow you to experience something or someone the way they are right now, which is very important. If you want to work effectively in any field, one thing is, if someone comes in front of you, to be able to grasp them the way they are right now is most important. How they were yesterday does not matter. How they are this moment is important. So, the first thing is you bow down. Once you bow down, your likes and dislikes become mild, not strong, because you recognize the source of creation within them. This is the intention behind doing namaskaram.

The Hand of the Creator

There is no piece of creation without the hand of the creator operating in it. The source of creation is operating within every cell and atom. This is why in Indian culture, if you look up at the sky, the culture taught you to bow down. If you look down at the earth, you bow down. If you see a man, a woman, a child, a cow, a tree or whatever, you bow down. And it is a constant reminder that the source of creation is within you too. If you recognize this, you are paving the way towards your ultimate nature every time you do namaskaram.

There is another aspect to this. Your palms have a lot of nerve endings – something that medical science has also discovered today. Actually, your

hands speak more than your tongue and your voice. There is a whole science of mudras in yoga. Just by holding your hand in certain ways, you can make your whole system function in different ways. The moment you place your hands together, your dualities, your likes and dislikes, your cravings and aversions, all these things are leveled out. There is a certain oneness to the expression of who you are. The energies are functioning as one.

Making Yourself into an Offering

So namaskaram is not just a cultural aspect. There is a science behind it. If you are doing your sadhana, every time you bring your palms together, there is a crackle of energy – a boom is happening. On the level of your life energy, there is a giving, or you are making yourself into an offering to the other person. In that giving, you will make the other being into a life that will cooperate with you. Only if you are in a state of giving, things around will work out for you. This is so for every life. Only if it gets the cooperation of all life around itself, it manages to prosper.



CLASSICAL YOGA

Isha seeks to bring back classical yoga in its purest form – not studio yoga, not book yoga or the various innovations that are brought in around the world without an understanding of the basic principles – but proper classical yoga, which is a phenomenally powerful science. It is a system that is precisely and meticulously put together as a means of reaching higher dimensions.

The Science of Hatha Yoga

Unfortunately in the western part of the world, if you utter the word “yoga,” people think you must twist yourself out like rubber bands or stand on your head. Yoga is not an exercise form. The word “yoga” means union. Today, modern science has proved that the whole existence is just one energy. So if all this is one energy, why is it that you are not experiencing it that way? If you can break the limitations of the illusion that you are separate, and begin to experience the oneness of

the existence, that is yoga. The religions of the world have always been talking about God being everywhere. Whether you say God is everywhere or everything is one energy, is it any different? It is the same reality. When it is mathematically deduced, we call it science. If you believe it, we call it religion. When you find a method to get there, we call it yoga. So what is yoga, what is not yoga? There is no such thing.

If you use any process of life to transcend your limitations, that is yoga. Everything – the very way you breathe, sit, stand, eat, walk and work – can be yoga.

Hatha Yoga: Directing your energies

To lead you towards the experience of yoga – of union and boundlessness – we manipulate the energy and move the system in a certain way. Physical postures are one aspect of this. Understanding the mechanics of the body, creating a certain atmosphere, and then using the body or body postures to drive your energy in specific directions is what Hatha Yoga or yogasanas are about. Hatha yoga is not exercise. Asana means a posture. If I sit in one way, it is one asana. If I sit in another way, it is another asana. So innumerable asanas are possible. Out of these innumerable postures that the body can take, eighty-four fundamental postures have been identified as yogasanas.

Hatha Yoga: A preparatory process

Hatha yoga is a preparatory process of yoga. The word “ha” means sun, “ta” means moon. “Hatha” means the yoga to bring balance between the sun and the moon in you, or the Pingala and Ida in you. You can explore Hatha yoga in ways that take you beyond certain limitations, but fundamentally, it is a physical preparation – preparing the body for a higher possibility.

If we want to do Kriya Yoga, we always prepare people with Hatha yoga because without the body being prepared, it will not be able to take higher dimensions of energy. It will break. It is just like if your pipe is not ready and you pump in too much force, something is bound to burst. Hatha yoga, so to speak, could be understood as preparation of the pipe.

There are other dimensions to this, but to put it simply, just by observing the way somebody is sitting, you almost know what is happening with them. If you have observed yourself, if you are angry, you will sit one way; if you are happy, you sit another way; if you are depressed, you sit yet

another way. For every different level of consciousness or mental and emotional situation that you go through, your body naturally tends to take certain postures. The converse of this is the science of asanas. If you consciously get your body into different postures, you can also elevate your consciousness.

The practice as you see it currently in most places – the mechanics of it – is simply of the body.

You have to breathe life into Hatha Yoga, otherwise it will not become alive. This is why, traditionally, there has been so much stress on a live Guru – to make it come alive.

Classical Hatha Yoga

After twenty years of yoga entering the West and becoming popular, despite it being taught sometimes in ways that leave much to be desired, still, the health benefits of it are undeniable, wherever you live and whatever you do. Right now the number of people practicing yoga is growing in a big way. This could be simply because the scientific community is slowly beginning to recognize the depth and dimension of what this is. But if improper, distorted kind of yoga spreads, in fifteen years' time, scientific studies will clearly come out and tell you in how many ways it is harmful to human beings, and that will be the downfall.

So it is important that we bring back classical yoga as it was. If it is taught in a proper atmosphere with a certain sense of humility and inclusiveness about the whole process, it is a really fantastic process of shaping your system into a fantastic vessel, a fabulous device to receive the Divine.

Largely the “studio yoga” that you are seeing today is unfortunately just the physical aspect of it. Just teaching the physical aspect of yoga is like having a stillborn baby. That is not only no good, it is a tragedy. If you want a live process, it needs to be taught in a certain way.

Hatha yoga does not mean twisting your body, standing on your head, or holding your breath. There was a time when I was personally teaching hatha yoga as a two-day program. People would burst with joy; tears of ecstasy would flow simply doing asanas. That is the way yoga needs to be done. Unfortunately, the hatha yoga in the world today brings peace for some, is healthful for others and a painful circus for many.

Most yogis just use the simple postures to break the limitations of who they are. That is all I learned

when I was eleven years of age – just a few simple postures. It is just the way it is done that makes the difference.

The Right Conditions

#1 Closed Eyes

Sadhguru: For a human being, the visual apparatus are the most dominant. When you close your eyes, the world disappears – unless you have your own false world in your head! The eyes will naturally close for any internalization because the visual apparatus engage us with the outward. If you just close them, you can still hear, smell and feel, but half the world is shut off. So internalization happens best when your eyes are closed. When you're doing asanas, you want to internalize everything.

#2 Empty Stomach

While practicing yogasanas, you should not only be on an empty stomach, your bowels should be empty. Anything that is not the body should be out of the body if you want to move your energies upward. Yogic practices are not exercises, they are a way of restructuring your body and recreating yourself the way you want to be. If such a thing has to be done, nothing should be there other than your body.

Yoga means you are beginning to have a partnership with the creator; you can't do it all by yourself, but you can create the necessary atmosphere for him to do the job. The first time you were created, it was not your choice, it happened from genetic memory. But now you are reinventing yourself step-by-step the way you want yourself to be.

Being a partner with the source of creation means a huge infusion of intelligence, the kind of intelligence that you cannot believe possible. If this has to happen there should be no obstacles – the food you put in or the waste you produced, both these things should be out.

#3 Cold Water

Before beginning your practice, it is always best to be immersed in or to allow a certain volume of water which is about five to eight degree centigrade lower than room temperature to flow over you. If this happens, the pores between the skin cells open up, and that's important for practicing yoga because we want the cellular structure of the body to be charged with a different dimension of energy. Why one person seems to be far more

alive than the other is essentially because of this. Once your cellular structure is charged with energy, it remains youthful for a very long time.

#4 Frequency of Practice

The Yoga Sutra says – *sukham sthiram asanam*. The goal is to achieve a state where your asana is comfortable and stable; if you remain like this for any number of hours it stays the same way without causing any disturbance internally. This is when your perception becomes bigger and bigger.

The point is not about doing yoga every day or twice a week, the intention is to knead the body in such a way that we can re-mold it. So, how much time do you have, to do the necessary work upon yourself – that much time you must do it.

This body is just clay. It gets burnt with your karmic stuff and becomes rigid. Established memory is what we are referring to as karma. It is because of that bank of memory that the physiological and psychological substance becomes rigid. We are trying to undo that. The idea of asana is that you are working with the body and kneading it in such a way that after some time it is un-burnt. Then, you can shape it whichever way you want because the energies are mobile.

#5 Using Mirrors/Listening to Music

There should never be a mirror or music when you practice Hata Yoga. The culture of using mirrors has come from body-building and gymnasiums because they want to admire their bodies. In yoga, that should not be the attitude at all. If you look at many yogis, their physical structure is not like that of an athlete – they are quite ordinary. Many of them are even pot-bellied because they never look at a mirror. For them, the only thing is they must grow.

If you want to get the involvement of that which is the source of creation within you, your body, mind, and energy must be absolutely involved. If you look at a mirror, will you look at just yourself? Let's be straight about this. You will look at everyone else, isn't it? And your mental focus is most important while practicing asanas. Classical yoga demands a certain involvement of your body, mind and energy, and the innermost core. That which is the source of creation, which we usually refer to as the divine, will not yield unless you are one hundred percent. If you hold back or deviate a little, it will not be there for you.

#6 Speaking

An asana is a dynamic way of meditating. Because you can't sit still, you're doing something else to become meditative. That which is absolutely comfortable and stable is your asana. When your body is at ease, your mind is at ease and your energy is at full vibrance and balance. If you sit like this, you are naturally meditative. To come to a state of naturally being meditative, the preparatory step is asana. So in a way, asanas are a dynamic way of meditating.

If you speak, so many things change dramatically, not just physiologically but in the energy parameters also. So, not talking during the asana is not just a norm, it is a rule. You must never, ever speak in postures because your focus, breath and what happens to your energy system are most important; otherwise you will disturb the system. If you want to speak, there's no need to do asana. Just go jogging and talk to each other.

Upa Yoga – Understanding Your Body

In the Indian languages, the word Upa Yoga has unfortunately degenerated to mean: that which is useful. The word upa means sub or semi, so Upa Yoga is sub-yoga or semi-yoga. Yoga is for union. That means it is for a committed practitioner who wants to attain to his ultimate nature. For someone who does not have such desires or intentions – he is not ready to be sucked into the core but at the same time he doesn't want to get lost in the mundane – for such a person we offer semi-yoga or Upa Yoga. Over a period of time in the usage of language, the word Upa Yoga has been interpreted as useful yoga or useful act. It is useful, there is no question about it, but that is not the way to approach anything. You do not approach something only for its usefulness; there may be something more to it. If you lose the attitude of using it, it will not only become very useful to you, but also transform the fundamentals of who you are.

Upa Yoga is a system of yoga which is not very strongly oriented towards the spiritual, it is more towards the physical, psychological and energy dimensions of a human being. It is for one to live a more complete physical life. When I say physical, that includes psychological and emotional aspects. One basic thing to understand is that yoga is not an exercise form. But within yoga, there are systems such as Upa Yoga, which are powerful systems of exercise. Rather than doing serious yoga as an exercise, Upa Yoga may be a good

way to start for many people today because it is a powerful system by itself. When they feel drawn to it they can go into yoga.

One aspect of Upa Yoga is to understand the body's needs and operate accordingly. When I say needs, I am not talking about your body wanting to run to the bathroom or lie down or collapse. When you lie down in horizontal positions and become static, a certain inertia gathers in the energy system and parts of the joints are not lubricated as they should be in normal activity. If you move without lubricating your joints, they won't last too long. A human being has been liberated physically only because of the type of joints he has. All the joints are store houses of energy because the nadis behave in a certain way in the joints. So, one aspect of Upa Yoga is towards activating the lubricants and energy nodes in the joints so that the rest of the system begins to function.

Angamardana – Mastering Your Limbs

Angamardana is a unique system of yoga which is almost completely lost these days. Traditionally in classical yoga, Angamardana was always alive. It is not like yogasanas, it is a very intense exercise where you don't need any equipment. You are just using your body and building a completely different level of physical strength and tenacity.

In Angamardana, you use your own body weight and momentum to increase the flexibility of the muscle over a period of time. It is just a twenty-five minute process as it is being taught today by us, and in terms of health and wellbeing it can do miracles. It is a phenomenal process and is so complete. All you need is a six-by-six space; your body is everything. So, wherever you are you can do it. It is as effective in building the body as any weight training is, and it does not create any unnecessary stress on the system.

Even if you just look at it as an exercise form, Angamardana will definitely pass the test. But strengthening the muscle and bringing fat levels down are just fringe benefits. The important thing about whatever sadhana you are doing, whether it is Angamardana or anything else, is that we are trying to work up the energy system to a certain level of energy and integrity of energy. The thing is to get yourself into a state where you have a fully functioning system, because only if it is fully functioning can it be taken to heightened levels of

perception. A half-a-body or a half-a-being cannot be taken to a full level of perception.

The word "Angamardana" means to have mastery over your limbs or body parts. Whatever action you want to perform in this world, how much mastery you have over your limbs determines how well you are going to do it. I am not talking about action in terms of joining up a sports team or something. I am making a distinction between action that you do for survival and action that you do for liberation. If you want to do something for your liberation and particularly for the liberation of everyone else around you, you should have some mastery over your limbs. Mastery over limbs need not necessarily mean you are going to be muscular or you can climb up the mountain. That may also happen but it is basically to strengthen the energy structure of the body.

To give an analogy, if a person walks by, you can clearly see whether his body is well-exercised or not simply by the way he walks. If you look at a person's face, you can see whether his mind is well-exercised or not. Similarly, if you watch closely enough, whether someone's energy is well-exercised or not is very distinctly there. What they can do and cannot do is determined by this. Having complete mastery means you can make your energies crackle. If you simply sit here, the body will do things; you don't have to go and do things.

If grace has to transmit itself, you need to have an appropriate body. If you do not have an appropriate body and grace descends on you big-time, you will only fuse out. Many people want big experiences but they are not willing to transform their body to be able to conduct those experiences. In yoga, you don't chase an experience, you only prepare. If your spiritual process is something more than just talk-shop, that means you should have some mastery over your limbs.

Kundalini Yoga: Beneficial or Dangerous?

In the yogic culture, the snake is a symbolism for kundalini – the unmanifest energy within you. The nature of kundalini is such that when it is still, you do not even know it exists. Only when it moves, you realize there is so much power within you. Till it moves it is almost non-existent. Because of this, kundalini is symbolized as a snake because a coiled-up snake is so hard to see unless it moves. Similarly, you do not see this coiled-up energy

unless it moves. If your kundalini is aroused, miraculous things that you cannot believe possible will happen with you. An unleashing of a completely new level of energy begins and your body and everything behaves in a completely different way.

Kundalini and perception

Heightened states of energy are also heightened states of perception. The whole yogic system is aimed only towards enhancing your perception. A spiritual process essentially means just that – to enhance your perception because you know only what you perceive. This is the reason for the symbolism of Shiva and a snake. It indicates that his energies have reached the peak. His energies have reached the top of his head and so his third eye has opened.

Kundalini and the Third Eye

The third eye does not mean someone's forehead has cracked and something came out. It simply means another dimension of perception has opened up. The two eyes can see only that which is physical. If I just cover them with my hand, they cannot look beyond that. That is how limited they are. If the third eye has opened, it means another dimension of perception which is inward looking, which looks at life completely differently, has opened up and everything that can be perceived is perceived.

Kundalini Yoga: Preparation first!

Nowadays, a lot of books and yoga studios talk about Kundalini Yoga and its benefits, though they don't know anything about it. Even to utter the word "kundalini" we always bring a sense of reverence and then utter the word because it is so enormous. If you have to activate the kundalini, the necessary preparation in your body, mind and emotion should happen, because if you pump energy into a system which is not ready for that kind of voltage or volume, things will fuse out. So many people have come to me who have lost their mental balance and physical capabilities because they tried to do Kundalini Yoga without the necessary guidance and assistance. If the necessary supportive atmosphere is not there, simply attempting to raise kundalini could be very irresponsible and dangerous.

Kundalini Yoga is the most dangerous form

Kundalini Yoga in its essence is the most dangerous form of yoga. I am saying dangerous because it is the most potent also. What is most potent is

always the most dangerous if improperly handled. For example, there are various kinds of ways in which electricity is being produced. One of the ways we do it is through nuclear reactors. It is the most efficient way of producing energy that we know right now but it is also the most dangerous way, isn't it? When things are going right, it is the easiest and best way to produce energy on the planet. When things go wrong, they go seriously wrong in ways that you can't fix it. Similarly with Kundalini Yoga, it is the most potent and it is the most dangerous. Without the necessary preparation, without constant, expert guidance and observation, no one should ever attempt it. But the problem is books have been written about it and everybody wants to do the highest yoga. Nobody wants to start with "A", everybody wants to start the alphabet with "Z". This attitude itself is dangerous.

In classical yogic traditions, there is a certain type of yoga we teach for people who live in family situations. There is a certain other type of yoga we teach for ascetics. We never teach those in family situations the ascetic form. That is the most potent way to do it but it will demand a certain dimension of discipline and focus, which your regular lives will not allow. If you do that kind of yoga, it will dismantle your outside life instantly.

This doesn't mean there is something wrong with Kundalini Yoga. It is a very fantastic process but it needs to be done properly because energy has no discretion of its own. You can make your life out of it or you can burn your life out of it. Electricity is making our life. But if you stick your little finger into it, you know what will happen! Energy has no discretion. How you use it is how it is. Kundalini is also like that. You are using it right now but in a minimal way. If you maximize it you can raise beyond your limitations of existence.

Kundalini Yoga: The science of breaking limitations

All yoga in one way is towards that but Kundalini Yoga is particularly towards that. In fact, all life is towards that. In some way, people want to experience life more intensely than they are experiencing it right now. Someone wants to sing, someone else wants to dance, someone wants to drink alcohol, someone else wants to pray – why are they doing all this? They want to experience life more intensely. Everyone is trying to raise their kundalini but they are doing it haphazardly. When

you approach it scientifically with a proper method, we say it is yoga.

Surya Kriya and Surya Shakti

The earth and the moon are significant in the way they affect life, but the sun is the source of all energy. Sadhguru tells us: “If the sun’s rays do not fall upon this planet, there is no possibility of life, it’s finished. If the sun disappears right now, in a few hours’ time, everything will turn into solid ice. All the oceans, as well as your blood, will turn into solid ice. Solar energy is fundamental even within your body. Your body is maintaining a certain temperature; the immediate mechanism may be something else but essentially, all that generates heat upon this planet – whether in the form of life or in the form of inanimate material – all of it is solar energy, finding its expression in so many different ways.”

The basis of all spiritual sadhana which is physical in nature is to get us in sync with the cycles of nature. Sadhguru says, “If you are in tune with the cycles of the sun, then physical health, wellbeing, vitality, energy, these things you don’t have to bother about – they are just there with you.”

One solar cycle is about twelve-and-a-quarter years. If our physiological cycles run in sync with the sun’s cycles, physical health will be great, mental balance will be perfect, and life will happen effortlessly. So, how are we to get in tune with the sun so that our cycles run in twelve-year cycles, not less?

Sadhguru talks of three processes to align with the sun, the most profound being Surya Kriya. Placing them in context, Sadhguru calls the widely practised Surya Namaskar a “country cousin” of Surya Kriya, while yet another process called Surya Shakti would be a “far-off relative.” He elaborates: “If you want to just use this system as a physical culture to become physically strong, you do Surya Shakti. If you want to be physically fit, you want to have aerobic exercise and you want your heart strong, but you also want to have a spiritual element in it, you do Surya Namaskar. But if you want a strong spiritual process in the physical process that you are doing, then you do Surya Kriya.”

Surya Kriya is the fundamental practice and a powerful process of activating the sun within us. This is a refined process that needs enormous attention in terms of the geometry of the body.

Surya Namaskar evolved out of Surya Kriya. Comparing the two, Sadhguru says, “Surya Namaskar is largely a way of saluting the sun, bringing balance between Ida and Pingala. It also activates samath prana which is the manifestation of the sun’s energy in the body. But Surya Kriya has more spiritual intentions and more powerful connotations attached to it which need to be taught carefully and learnt with a certain level of involvement. It is very important that it is practiced with care because anything that is powerful has to be handled properly; otherwise, it will not be safe to handle them.”



ON THE ELEMENTS

The Element of Fire

In any society, just uttering the word “fire” loudly creates a lot of excitement. Fire is generally perceived as danger – which it is, if you do not handle it properly. Let us look at the elemental dimension of fire or agni – its manifestations, ways to conduct it, and above all, ways to master it. Though among the five elements, fire accounts for the smallest proportion in the composition of the human body, its influence is tremendous. In many ways, fire represents life. One major indicator for whether you are alive or dead is if the fire is still on in you, or if your body has gone cold. Life upon this planet is essentially solar-powered. You know, the Sun is a huge ball of fire that fuels life on this planet. Any machine, while it works, invariably generates heat because fundamentally, fire is the fuel. You may call it electricity, petrol, wood, coal, or whatever else, but essentially, it is fire that lets any machine run, including your body.

In this culture, the element of fire is personified as Agni Deva, a two-faced god who rides on a fiery ram. The two faces are symbolic representations of fire as a life giver and a life taker. Without the fire burning within us, there is no life. But if you do not take care, fire can quickly go out of control and consume everything. When it burns our body, it is called cremation. Another aspect is we are using fire to cook, so that we can consume foods that otherwise may not be edible or palatable for us. There are many dimensions of fire, within and

without. Let us look at the three forms of fire that burn within us. One is known as jatharagni. Jathara means stomach or digestive process. Without a little bit of fire in your belly, you cannot digest the food that you eat. Food is functioning as fuel that you need to break down in order to release the energy that you need. If the digestive fire is well-nourished and well-supplied with fuel, it also becomes reproductive fire. Both digestion and reproduction depend on jatharagni.

The second kind of inner fire is called chitagni. It is the dimension of the mind and beyond. Chitta is a dimension of intelligence within you that transcends the limitations of the physical form. Your physical form is an outcome of your genetic and your karmic memory. By contrast, chitta is a dimension of intelligence that is untainted by memory. The fire of intelligence can manifest on many different levels, the first level of manifestation being the intellect. If we look at the different fires within you, only if your digestive fire is going well, the reproductive fire will come into the act. If you are not well-fed, the reproductive instincts will disappear. Similarly, if your chitagni is not reasonably fired, your intellect will become weak and ineffective. However, if your chitagni is fired up, it will manifest itself in the form of intellect – even if you are not in a state to consciously access other dimensions of intelligence.

If your chitagni is burning bright, you will lose interest in food, sexuality, and other matters of the body. It is in this context that what is unfortunately being propagated as renunciation should actually be transcendence. The next dimension of fire is called bhutagni, the elemental fire. If your elemental fire is on, the circus of the body and mind will not make much sense to you. Your interest and focus will shift from the antics of the body and mind to a more fundamental aspect of creation – the source of life. If you take charge of jatharagni, you will have a healthy and robust body. If you take charge of your chitagni, you will have a mind that you can use in many ways. If you take charge of your bhutagni, you will have fundamental mastery over the process of life.

The boundaries of the body are very clear and limited. The boundaries of the mind are larger. For example, if you know something about another part of the world, it is within the boundaries of your mind. As your knowledge expands, your mental boundaries can expand. But if you become conscious of the dimension of bhutagni or the elemental fire, you will be a boundless being, be-

cause the play of elements is happening across the entire creation. Beyond this, there is something called sarvagni, because, according to modern science, the physical dimension of existence is less than five percent. That means if you know the entire physical dimension of the universe, you know only five percent of existence. Sarvagni touches the dimension where there are no elements, where there is no creation as you know it, or in other words, where there is no physical nature.

Generally, a yogi who wants to access the nature of life will not interest himself in jatharagni, chitagni, and bhutagni. He will focus only on sarvagni, because this is the ultimate fire – but it is a cool fire. Jatharagni is a very obvious fire. Chitagni is less obvious but very much there. Bhutagni is not so visible at all but very much there. Sarvagni can hardly be felt, but without it, nothing would happen. It is the fundamental and ultimate fire that encompasses all other fires. Fire is the element that is closest to akash or the ether. The akashic or etheric dimension becomes more accessible where there is fire – particularly if certain fuels are used. In South India, we either use ghee or sesame oil for a lamp. If both are not available, then groundnut oil; if that is also not available, then coconut oil. These oil-based fires have a certain quality. They have a comparably higher smoke point than other fuels. That is why, if you look at the edge of the flame – you should not look into the flame – the etheric dimension is more available.

Whenever you want to create a conducive atmosphere, the first thing is to light an oil or ghee lamp. This is so much a part of Indian life. And the fuel for the lamp should be of a certain kind for maximum benefit. Candles generally do not have the same effect, especially when they are made of chemical wax. Essentially, what you are trying to do is make a fire with a material that creates a certain aura around itself, so that akash becomes available. With an oil lamp, you create an akashic field from which you and others in your home can benefit. Especially for children, pregnant women, sick people, and for health in general, it is vital to have an oil lamp burning in your home. Such a fire not only enhances your jatharagni for increased health and robustness of the body, but also the chitagni, and the availability of akash. It is important that the fire of intelligence burns within you. When only the physical fires are burning within you but not the fire of intelligence, life can

get miserable and ugly. When there is too much jatharagni and not enough chitagni, people will do the stupidest things.

In this culture, everything of significance in people's lives happened around fire. Without fire, there was no worship, no marriage, no significant event. Many different manifestations and ways of using fire got established in this culture, including sacrificial fires like homas and havanas. Fire makes akash or the ether more accessible. Of all the elements that we are made of, akash is the one that is most transparent and fluid. The earth in my body and your body is fundamentally the same, but in terms of what your body contains and what mine contains, it is distinctly separate. The water within you and within me is separate – you could say it is kept in different containers right now. But the air that we breathe cannot be separated. It is being exchanged all the time. The fire element of who we are is shared to an even larger extent. The akashic element is absolutely shared. We are all in the same akash. If you enhance the akashic element in any atmosphere, a certain bonding happens between human beings. Around a fire, togetherness and communication are greatly enhanced, because where there is fire, the element of akash becomes dominant.

To sum it up: Although fire only forms a small part of you in terms of quantity, in terms of quality, it is very significant because of its unique nature. Your ability to touch fire is very minimal. At the same time, fire is the element to which you are most sensitive. Fire is a means to set the atmosphere to communicate, to create receptivity, to transcend limitations, and to touch another dimension that you can refer to as the Divine or God or whatever you want to call the source of creation.

Vayu, The Element of Air

In the yogic tradition, we refer to air as “vayu,” which not just means air as a mixture of nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, and other gases, but as a dimension of movement. Among the five basic elements – earth, fire, water, air, and ether – which make us and everything in the universe, air is the most accessible and relatively the easiest element to gain reasonable mastery over. Hence, a large number of yogic practices are structured around vayu or air, though in the composition of the body, air makes up only a small percentage.

Most of the yogic practices that involve an element of breathing are aimed towards vayu or

prana vayu. Vayu is the element – prana vayu is one of the pancha pranas. We are in a womb of prana, which is the atmospheric bubble. This larger prana breaks down into eighty-four pranas. Out of these, five pranas can cover the day-to-day requirements of most human beings. These pancha pranas are sufficient to keep your body and mind well, and yourself spiritually alive. Another ten are needed for someone who is into occult practices. The remaining pranas are generally too subtle to explore and experience. The prana vayu is an inward movement between the pit of the throat and the navel. At least sixty percent of the process of Shakti Chalana Kriya that we teach is aimed towards prana vayu. We focus on this element because the quality of the air that we breathe and how we breathe largely determines people's surface experience of life.

I would say almost ninety-nine percent of the people today are only concerned about how to navigate their way through the world in a reasonably pleasant and successful manner. There are very few who seek to become perceptive to another dimension of life. In this context, vayu and prana vayu become most significant, because a certain level of mastery over prana instantly enhances the sharpness of the intellect. That means the practice of Shakti Chalana Kriya can leave you a little smarter. Your emotions get a little more stable, organized, and sweet. And you can do some physical activity better than you used to. For most people, these three aspects are all they want in life.

The impact of the air that we breathe is very immediate. You can go without food for eight to ten days without causing damage to the system. You can go without water for up to three-and-a-half days without causing damage to the system. But most people can go without air for only three-and-a-half to five minutes. With some practice, you can stay without air for longer periods, but this involves a little bit of cheating. If you manage to keep your metabolic activity very low, you do not need to breathe through your nostrils but you breathe through your skin. As there is perspiration, there is also respiration, or movement of air through the skin. If you substantially activate the prana vayu, you can survive for a longer period of time without breathing through your nostrils.

In this context, the Shakti Chalana Kriya is a phenomenal practice. We have taught it to a few million people over the years. If all of them had kept it up and grown with it, the world would have

changed by now. Growing with it means – if your practice was initially only forty minutes, over time, you extend it to one-and-a-half to two hours. If, let us say, at least one hundred thousand people were doing Shakti Chalana Kriya the way it should be done, it would already change the atmosphere in the world.

So, what can we do with air? We can pollute it. We can purify it. Above all, we can use air as a force of transformation in our lives. There is a certain immediacy about air or vayu, which makes it very responsive and gives it the ability to transform or to bring about changes very quickly. And of all the elements, wind is the one that can generate maximum force. That is true both in the outside atmosphere and within the human system. If you learn to activate it, it will make you phenomenally strong – not necessarily in terms of muscular strength but in terms of life. A certain amount of sadhana is needed to activate the prana vayu. The standard is that generally, if you do 1,008 days of Shakti Chalana Kriya without a break, then your prana reaches a certain level of activity. The sheer energy that you carry will set you apart.

You will seem to have a limitless amount of energy. There is no such thing as limitless energy, though – only in other people's perception, it appears like that. If your prana vayu is really active, you will be able to manage your time well. Life is a combination of time and energy. If you keep your energy or the prana vayu very intense, you will seem to have more time. Activity will happen out of the effervescence of your energy, not out of effort. If you keep up the Shakti Chalana Kriya, your ability to be active will increase immensely.

Today, an increasing number of people need to take longer breaks from their work, in the sense of sabbaticals and the like. This need arises when you do not manage your prana vayu well, and there are many reasons to it. One thing is – if you eat food that generates gas or air in the lower belly, below the navel or manipuraka, it disturbs the movement of air or vayu from the navel to the pit of the throat. The area between the navel and the pit of the throat is the main activity zone of prana. When you eat bad food and have gas, you will experience a great lack of energy in the system, because the prana vayu will not function well. You have gotten the air in the wrong place. It should move between the navel and the pit of the throat – in this area, it is powerful.

If the prana vayu moves below the navel, the effervescence in life is gone. The body feels like a sack of potatoes. By the way – potatoes literally cause inertia in the system because they lower the prana vayu. And of course, any food that is moving towards putrefaction has the same effect. This includes food that you buy in the supermarket, which is stored for long periods of time, and has no pranic value. Even if it is not yet beyond the expiration date, it is slowly moving towards putrefaction. In the yogic culture, one important aspect of managing the prana vayu is to eat food within an hour-and-a-half, or a maximum of four hours after cooking. Certain substances must be eaten even more quickly, or else they will create gas in the system. Once there is gas in your system, you cannot master your prana vayu.

Not only yogic practices – even the way you keep yourself, the way you breathe, walk, sit, and stand can help you gain a certain amount of control over prana vayu. Every human being has some control over the five elements – otherwise, you would not be alive. For life to move to a higher possibility, having mastery over the elements is important. Vayu or air is the best dimension to work with for part-time yogis, because it is relatively easy to master. Yogic practices that focus on vayu give instant results – especially on the level of your mind and emotions. By increasing the prana vayu, you can solve mental problems. The mind will get much more organized. But even if you master the element of air, your karmic mill will still keep rolling. Generally, it will move even faster than before, because it has a clear run now. That means your karma is getting worked out faster – but you may have a more eventful life.

The idea of taking charge of the element of air is to bring about health and an instant sense of wellbeing. If you activate vayu and it reaches a certain peak, naturally agni or the fire element will follow to some extent – maybe to twenty-five to thirty percent. If you have mastery over the element of air, the element of fire will partially come along with it. A lot of people lack fire, which is a big problem in life. They may do things, but nothing will come out of it. Once the fire is on, you are much better than the way you were. Though fire only makes up a small percentage of the human system, in many ways, it is everything. It also gets you closer to the subtle element of ether.

Vayu has a great influence on all the day-to-day things that people aspire for. The process of activating vayu is an important step in one's

growth. Vayu-based practices can bring you a higher level of intellectual capability, energy, and effectiveness in the world.

The Element of Earth

In yogic terms, when we say “earth,” we not only refer to the planet but also to the most fundamental element in the making of our physical selves and of everything for that matter. Our physical self is essentially a combination of Earth, Water, Air, Fire, and Akasha. Earth is the most basic and stable of the five elements. When it comes to the energy system and chakras, the Earth element is associated with the Muladhara. It is the basis that all the other elements build on, and of our physicality. Though the element of Earth is part of physical matter around us too, it is best we start to perceive and understand it from the basis of our lives, because most people only really experience their own body and mind. Knowing and experiencing the element of Earth from within is part of the yogic process.

Whenever you eat food, you swallow a part of the earth. Essentially, we take in a part of the planet to sustain the body. Consequently, how we treat the planet is how we treat our own bodies. Conversely, in a way, how we treat the body is how we treat the planet. It is all the more important to look at what role the element of Earth plays in our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. If the element of Earth does not cooperate, you are not getting anywhere. If the body does not cooperate, whatever aspirations you may have, you do not get very far. Unless you are completely detached from the physical, it will determine just about everything in your life.

How to establish a connection with the earth? All creatures have set levels of perception – they experience life in a certain way. Animals are very connected to the earth because they do not have the intellect and awareness that human beings have. When it comes to humans, their psychological space dominates over their existential presence. In a way, an earthworm experientially knows the connection to the earth, but it cannot consciously realize it. If you pull it out of the earth, it wants to go straight back into the earth. If you pull a fish out of the water, it wants to go straight back into the water. This is not only essential for survival but also just because of the familiarity of habitat. In that sense, they know the connection.

But they are not capable of being aware of it when they are in the earth or the water, respectively.

Most human beings are in the same state. Nature has evolved us to a different level of intelligence and awareness, but we are refusing to accept the promotion. Obviously, you cannot live without Air, Water, or Earth. If someone tries to take any one of them away from you, you will desperately want to get it back. In that sense, you know the connection as an earthworm or a fish knows it. It is time you know it as only human beings are capable of knowing it. There are ways and methods to do that – unless you are too engaged in a world of your own. Most people are living in their own world, which means they are living in a psychological space, not really on the earth. They get down to the earth only when they get buried or cremated. Their psychological space is much more important to them than the reality in which they exist. In other words, their own thoughts and emotions are working against them, because their intelligence has not been trained to be used in such a way that it enhances the way they experience life.

The whole focus of modern education and cultures is on how to use and exploit our physical environment – every creature and every substance. Nothing is being offered to enhance the way we experience life using our intellectual dominance and awareness. We have learnt to use everything around us, but wellbeing has not happened. If you try to enhance your physical situations, only those are getting enhanced, not you and your experience of life. When you breathe, there is not a certain quantity of air that is yours or mine. Without a constant exchange with your surroundings, you cannot live. An earthworm knows this. But most human beings do not even have that level of awareness. Our intelligence and awareness have turned against us because we have not bothered to create a stable enough basis for ourselves. This is why the Earth element is so important, and that your Muladhara is stable.

A simple way to connect with the earth and stabilize the Muladhara is to walk barefoot. The time between pradosham, which is always two days before a new moon day, and new moon is particularly conducive for this experience. On these days, the moon’s gravity creates a certain level of inertia, and your body and its energies are much more connected with the earth than on other days, because it is pulling you in that direction. By contrast, on full moon days, it is pulling you up, in

the opposite direction. That is why there are different yogic practices for full moon days, new moon days, Shivaratri, and pradosham.

If not every day, at least for these three days from pradosham to Amavasya or new moon day – if not outside, at least in the house – see if you can walk barefoot and sit on the floor, particularly cross-legged. Both bring a deep energy connection and create the experience of being a part of the earth. Lying down will not give you that kind of conscious experience. One thing is we know what kind of meditation will happen when you lie down. Apart from that, how the energies function when you lie down does not support a conscious experience. There are various other practices in this culture to connect to the earth experientially. On certain days of the year, people eat a little bit of earth, generally from a termite hill or the like, to experience this connection. A practice to bring the elements into your experience on a daily basis is the Bhuta Shuddhi that we teach.

It would be best if you can be conscious of every breath you take. When you breathe air, be conscious that you are breathing a certain aspect of this planet. When you eat something, be conscious that you are eating a part of this planet. When you drink water, be conscious that you are drinking a part of this planet. You should intellectually understand and be conscious of the connection, but that alone will not bring an experiential connection. A true experiential connection means that you experience the earth as much a part of you as you experience your little finger as a part of yourself.

Walk barefoot, sit cross-legged on the ground, do the Bhuta Shuddhi practice. Whether you eat, breathe, or drink something, be aware that you are taking in a part of this planet. Whatever you do – make it as conscious as possible. It will make a world of difference in how you experience life.

The Elemental Dimension of Gender

I always used to say there are only two places where your gender should matter – bathrooms and bedrooms, nowhere else. But now even which bathroom to go to has become a subject of debate. This brings up the question how deep-rooted gender actually is in the human system. While biological expressions are apparent, does it also reflect on the level of the five elements within the body? Generally, there is a difference in tendencies between men and women on the

elemental level, though this need not apply to every individual. The female is leaning more towards water, while the male is leaning more towards earth. This gives a female a certain level of flexibility, both in body and mind. Leaning towards earth gives a male a sense of firmness, assertion, rigidity, and strength of manifestation.

By nature, women generally tend more towards intuitiveness, whereas men tend more towards reasoning. Again, this need not hold true for everyone, but the general tendency is that a woman wants to experience life – a man wants to understand life. This big difference in approach exists because in one, the water element is dominant, whereas in the other, the earth element is dominant. The remaining elements play differently in each individual. Whether you are a man or a woman, you can train yourself to become competent of what the other gender is generally more competent of, in the mental space. Essentially, the disposition of the basic elements in men and women is the way it is to fulfill basic functions of being male or female. These functions can be argued about today because with our cities, homes, and workplaces, we have created an artificial world of our own where gender differences are leveled out. But if you lived in the wild, these dispositions were natural requirements. And above all, we need to consider that fundamentally, we exist because a woman who we call our mother bore us. This means generating the next generation is a function of the female body. Because of that, the female body is made in a certain way. For this reproductive purpose, water is a very important element.

Up to a certain age, the elemental composition of the male and the female system is engineered in such a way that both are complementary to each other. Later in life, the elements in the male and the female body reorganize themselves independently. However, people are unfortunately conditioned to believe that they have to maintain certain social arrangements, particularly when it comes to marriage and family, all their life – otherwise this judgmental and stigmatizing society labels them as copouts. Because of this, and because of habit, and emotional and psychological insecurity, people continue their relationship with the opposite sex beyond that point. The rapport between the elemental tendencies of the female and the male systems, i.e. one leaning towards water and the other towards earth, is only temporary. How quickly you go beyond gender-

based tendencies also depends on how much akash you develop within yourself. If you want to transcend your present limitations, enhance your perception beyond the five senses and the physical dimension, and explore the mystical nature of existence, increasing the proportion of akash within your system is vital. Now the question is how to enhance your akash. First of all, physical creation does not manifest just by mixing the five elements of earth, water, air, fire, and akash (ether). Before physical creation happened, there was only emptiness or shoonya. From shoonya arose the first element, akash. All the other elements are consequences of akash.

Enhancing akash does not mean creating empty space in your head. Enhancing akash means moving towards your original nature, both spiritually and physiologically. If your tendency goes towards akash, the spiritual longing overrides all other needs. When akash is the dominant element in your system, physical aspects become less important. This does not mean neglecting physicality but transcending it. Transcendence means to rise above present limitations. People generally define themselves based on their racial, religious, national, or gender identifications, or personality traits. Essentially, you define yourself through your limitations, or the boundaries that you have set for yourself. Increasing the proportion of akash and turning spiritual means defining yourself through boundlessness. And boundlessness does not have a definition.

Once your perception rises beyond the physical nature, there is no male or female. There is just a human form that can be made competent in many different ways. Competence is not just in terms of action but also perception. You can increase your competence not only as a person but as a life. You can become more alive. Every human being is capable of knowing life in a larger dimension. The aspiration to transcend is latently present in everyone. If you give yourself some time off from your office, family, friends, social media, phones, and computers, you will realize the need to transcend your present limitations. This does not require any teaching or goading. Every human being will know the limitations of their existence if they give themselves the needed time. Once you become conscious of your own boundaries, the longing to go Beyond is a natural outcome.

Tips To Cleanse the Five Elements: Essential Bhuta Shuddhi

Before you attempt anything that is considered as a mystical process, it is very important to stabilize the five fundamental elements within you. These are known as pancha bhutas or maha tatwas in the yogic science. The body, the very earth, the universe, and the cosmos, all are just a play of five elements. The body's composition is such that most of it is water. Then there is earth, air, fire, and the rest is akash or etheric space.

How these five elements behave within you determines just about everything. Bhuta means element, bhuta shuddhi means to become free from the taint of elements or to cleanse the elements. It means to become free from the physical nature. Most human beings are completely in the grip of their physiological and psychological processes. Our physiology is something that we have accumulated. Likewise, the whole content of our psychological process has been accumulated in the form of impressions.

Between these two processes, who you are existentially, the nature of your being, is completely missed. If you want to access dimensions that are not yet in your experience, dimensions that are considered mystical, the first thing that you need to do is to start cleansing the five elements within you. When the elements are pure, you distinctly know the difference between what is physical, what is psychological, and what is existential.

Tips to Cleanse the Five Elements: Water

Among the five elements, water has the greatest significance because a major percentage of the body is water. You need to take sufficient care of the water that you consume – not just in terms of its physical purity, it being bacteria-free and so on, but in terms of how you keep the water and how you approach it. There is substantial scientific evidence today that a thought, an emotion, a touch can change the molecular structure of water and greatly alter the way water behaves within your system.

Water has a great sense of memory. Everything that happens around a body of water is in some way stored in the water molecules. You could call it a fluid computer. You are not dealing with a commodity – you are dealing with life-making material. Water is life. It is important how you treat it before it enters your system.

You can keep the water in a metal container, preferably made of copper or an alloy of copper, wash the container every day with an organic substance, and keep the water in a place where it is not touched by other smells and substances – there is sufficient space around it. If you do this, and you approach it by holding the vessel in your hands with a sense of gratitude and reverence because it is life-making material, and then consume it, you will see it will do wonders within your system. Healthfulness and equanimity will be a natural consequence.

Earth

The earth that you walk upon has a sense of intelligence and memory. Even if you live in a concrete jungle, it is important to keep in touch with the earth upon which you live. Create ways for yourself to somehow remain in touch with it. If your bare hands and bare feet – particularly the palms and soles – come in touch with the earth on a daily basis, it will harmonize the physiological process in your system.

Try to spend at least a few minutes in the garden, barefooted, touching plants or trees, because the earth is the basis of life. All life – yours and that of every other creature – has come from this earth. Stay in touch with it and harmonize your system.

Air

Though air represents only a small percentage of your body's elemental composition, it is the most dynamic element in terms of the transaction that happens on a minute-to-minute basis. It is well-known that what kind of air you breathe is important, but how you breathe and how consciously you do so is equally important.

Especially for those of you who live in large cities, it may not always be in your hands what kind of air you breathe, so it is good that at least for a few minutes every day, you take a walk in the park, along the lake or the river, whatever is available to you. If you have children, it is important that at least once a month, you take them out far enough from the city, where nature is in a reasonably pure state, and they can climb a small hill, walk in a forest, or swim in a river, to be in touch with nature and do something where the breath is dynamic.

This is not just for aerobic exercise but because there is a constant exchange of air from within and without. The very intelligence in the body will make sure that when it senses the air is pure and alive, the way the body breathes will be different.

With this exchange of air, cleansing will happen within the system. If you are in pure air, it is important to bring the breath to a dynamic state with some activity. You do not have to do too vigorous an activity – just enough to breathe slightly deeper than normal for a period of time. Especially for growing children, this is very important because it greatly enhances the body's integrity and strength.

If you are not able to take yourself out on a daily basis, you can do a simple yogic practice called nadi shuddhi at home to cleanse the breath.

Fire

Fire accounts for another part of your elemental makeup. What kind of fire burns within you? Is it the fire of greed, hatred, anger, resentment, lust, love, or compassion? If you cleanse the element of fire, once again your physical and mental wellbeing will be well-taken care of. You become an equanimous and exuberant being. A simple process you can do to cleanse the fire within you is get some sunlight every day. Though we have contaminated every other element, fortunately, sunlight cannot be contaminated – it has remained pure. Make best use of that.

If you wish to, you can light a fire with an organic substance like straw or firewood, without any oil, and stand facing the fire with open hands and open eyes for three minutes. Then stand with your back to it, exposing your spine for three minutes. This process cleanses your aura and brings about a new sense of resurgence in the system. It rekindles and reconnects the fire within with the fire outside. This is the basis of all fire-based rituals of the East.

If having a fire is not practical for you, at least light a lamp with vegetable oil or ghee and be around this lamp. First, sit facing the lamp, then turn around and sit so that the fire element within you gets rekindled.

Akash

The fifth and most expansive dimension of the elemental composition is akash or etheric space. Akash has a certain intelligence. The nature, quality, and power of your life is essentially determined by how much access you have to the akashic intelligence. There is only a limited amount of water, air, earth, and fire, but the akashic dimension is limitless. If your access to it expands, both your perception and intelligence will grow.

One simple process you can do to find more access to the akashic intelligence is, after sunrise, before the sun crosses a 30° angle, look up at the sky and bow down to akash for holding you and this planet in place. After the sun crosses 30°, sometime during the day, look up and bow down again. Within 40 minutes after sunset, look up at the sky and once again bow down to the etheric space around us that is holding everything in place.

If you get akash to co-operate with your life energies, life will happen in magical ways. An intelligence that you have never thought possible will become yours.



ON THE BODY

5 Reasons Why You Should Not Be Snacking Between Meals

1. Mind & Body Function Best on an Empty Stomach

You may think that eating something through the day will help you be more active. But if you look at how your body feels when there is food in the stomach and how the body feels when the stomach is empty, you will see your body and brain work best when your stomach is empty. If food is constantly being processed in your digestive system, a certain amount of energy is naturally allocated towards that, so both your brain and body will not function at their best.

If you want to function at your full potential, be conscious and eat that kind of food where within 1.5-2.5 hours, your stomach bag becomes empty and the food material moves to the intestine. The body does not consume so much energy from that point. And within twelve to eighteen hours, the food must be completely out of the system. This is what yoga always insists.

The stomach being empty does not mean hunger. You feel hungry only when the energy levels run down. Otherwise, the stomach must be empty.

If you maintain this simple awareness, you will experience much more energy, agility and alert-

ness. These are the ingredients of a successful life irrespective of what you have chosen to do.

2. Cleansing the System for Physical and Mental Health

When the digestive process is happening in the stomach bag, the purification of the body on the cellular level almost shuts down. So if you keep eating through the day, the cells retain impurities for a longer period, which creates various problems over a period of time. Even the excretory process from the intestines does not happen efficiently because the waste material will keep coming to the colon at different times instead of at once.

If the colon is not clean, you are asking for problems. In yoga, we say that an unclean colon and psychological disturbances are directly connected. If the colon is not clean, you cannot keep your mind stable.

In Indian traditional medical systems such as Ayurveda and Siddha, it does not matter what a patient's ailment is, the first thing they will want to do is purge your digestive system because most of your problems may be due to an unclean colon.

The way people are eating today, keeping the colon clean is going to be a big challenge for them. But suppose you eat just two big meals a day and nothing in between, like we normally do in the ashram, or if we are too active we may eat a fruit, then your colon will always remain clean.

In the yogic system, we say there must be a minimum of six to eight hours between one meal and the next. If that is not possible, at least a five-hour gap is a must. Less than that means you are causing trouble to yourself.

3) Assimilating Food into the System

What you call as your body and your mind is a certain accumulation of memory. It is because of this memory – or you can call it information – that this body has taken its shape. The food we eat transforms into the body depending on this memory. Let's say I eat a mango. The mango gets into me and becomes a man. If a woman eats a mango, the same mango will go into her and become a woman. If a cow eats the mango, it goes inside a cow and becomes a cow. Why does this mango go into me and become a man and not a woman or a cow? It is essentially because of memory, a specific kind of memory that is there in my system.

And why is it that if I eat a mango, one part of it becomes my skin and it comes to the same skin tone? You don't suddenly find one mango-colored patch on the hand. Because there is such a strong memory structure, whatever I put in, the memory will make sure it becomes this person, not some other person.

As you age, this ability of the body to integrate food starts to reduce because your genetic memory and evolutionary memory become less capable of transforming whatever you consume. You may be healthy and capable of digesting what you eat, but the body will not be able to transform the mango into a human being with the same vigour. Digestion happens but transformation of one life into another will not happen as well because the memory is becoming weak.

The body will adjust itself to this slowing down, but if you are conscious about how you eat and what you eat, you can adjust it more sensibly. Unless you are an extremely physically active person or have some medical issue, if you are over thirty-five years of age, two meals a day would definitely be healthier for you. If you are eating more, you are unnecessarily burdening the system. You no longer need that much food because your vertical growth is completely over. If you feel a little hungry or tired, a fruit in between should take care of you. If you can maintain this, you will live very well. It is economical and eco-friendly and you will be healthy.

4. Maintaining Integrity

One level of what the spiritual process means is that you bring a certain sense of integrity to your body and mind. By integrity, I mean when your system is not consolidated in a certain way, if it is loose, it becomes incapable of experiencing anything. Even if the greatest things happen, you will miss it. Everything in the Inner Engineering program is designed so that there is a certain level of physiological and psychological integrity within you, so that your ability to experience is enhanced.

The only instrument that you have through which you can experience is your body. You can say your mind, but that is also body. In opening up the body to something outside, you loosen the integrity of the physiology. This is something that people have not understood. How many times you open your body to receive something in a day will also determine how long you live. If you simply open up the system too often to outside things, you will

loosen the system. A body like that cannot do anything because there is no integrity. When there is no integrity, there is no connectivity with anything. You will simply survive somehow. Nothing will happen beyond that.

Why yogis or those who are in sadhana eat only once or twice a day and nothing in between is because they don't want to open the body for anything. No outside elements except air and water should enter the system too often because it will loosen the integrity of the system in terms of sensitivity. Sensation is the outermost layer of who you are. If you want to keep yourself very sensitive, it is important you do not open your body to anything and everything that comes your way. You must eat well, that's not the point, but you should not be eating many times.

5. From Compulsiveness to Consciousness

Not eating when you feel like eating is one part of sadhana so that you take away compulsiveness for food, or for anything for that matter. Food is a very fundamental thing. Based on this, many other aspects of life become compulsive.

Many of you might have suffered this torture when you come to the ashram: it is the meal time, you are really hungry and you come to the dining area. There is food in front of you, you want to gobble it up. But people are closing their eyes and folding their hands for the invocation. The idea is that you are very hungry but you wait for two more minutes. Try to do this with everything that you are compulsive about. Whatever you are compulsive about, just wait for two minutes. It will not kill you. It will leave you very strong.

Taking away that compulsiveness in the body is crucial. Your body and mind are a composition. All kinds of past imprints have formed tendencies and those are compulsive. If you go by that, it means you have decided not to evolve. You have decided that you do not mind living in the pattern. You do not want to break the pattern and explore new possibilities.

Food is something very basic and simple but still, how you handle this aspect makes a lot of difference. This is a journey to a more conscious way of functioning by slowly distancing yourself from the information that is already there within you, which is ruling you from within. Bondage is on many different levels, but the foundation of all your bondage is your body, so that is why you work with the body.

Gautama the Buddha went to the extent of saying, "When you are very hungry and you are badly in need of food, if you give away your food to somebody else, you will become stronger." I am not going that far. I am saying "just wait two minutes" – it will definitely leave you stronger.

Is There Any Benefit to Fasting?

It is important that you don't fast forcefully. If you observe the natural cycle of the body, there is something called a mandala. The mandala means that every 40 to 48 days, the system goes through a certain cycle. In every cycle, there are three days when your body does not need food. If you are conscious of how your body functions, you will become aware that on these days, your body does not need food. And without effort, you can go without food on that day.

Once in every 11 to 14 days, you may not feel like eating. On that day, you should not eat. You know, even dogs and cats have this awareness? Have you noticed that on particular days, they will not eat? They are aware of their system. On the day the system says "no food," it is a cleaning-up day, they will not eat. Since you don't have this awareness, they fixed Ekadashi. Ekadashi comes once in every 14 days in the lunar calendar. At least every 14 days, you could go without food. If you are unable to go without food, if your activity levels are such and you don't have the necessary sadhana to support you, then you could go on a fruit diet. Just observe your own system, and you may notice that on certain days, you do not really need to eat. Forcing food on those days is not a good thing to do.

Suppose one wants to fast for a certain period, it must always be supported with the right kind of spiritual practices or sadhana. If you forcefully fast without preparing your body and mind sufficiently, you will only cause damage to your health. But if your body is properly prepared, if you are mentally also in a certain state, if you are prepared energy-wise, then fasting can be of much benefit to you.

If you are constantly drinking coffee or tea, then, if you fast, it will become torture for you; fasting will be very difficult. So if you want to fast, first of all prepare the body by eating the right kind of foods. If it is a great torture when you hold back your urge to eat, you will only cause damage to the system. Maybe you are thinking of performing some kind of a feat "I did not eat for three days," and you want to go and tell that to the whole

world. Please don't do such things. It is of no benefit to you. You will just make yourself weak, that is all. Just understanding the body and coming to a deeper understanding of how the system functions and what is the best thing to do, is more important than doing something like this.

It may not be a good thing for everybody to fast, but it has many benefits if it is done with proper understanding. So finding the right situation for the system and taking off food at that time will be a good thing to do.

Sleeping Positions: Why North Is Not The Best Direction

In India, you were told that you should not place your head to the north while sleeping. Why?

How your body is engineered

Your heart is not located half-way down, it is placed three-fourths of the way up because pumping blood up against gravity is more difficult than pumping it down. The blood vessels which go upward are a finer arrangement compared to those going down. As they go up into the brain, they are almost hair-like, to such a point that they cannot even take one extra drop. If one extra drop is pumped in, something will burst and you will have a hemorrhage.

Most people have hemorrhages in their brain. This does not incapacitate you in any major way, but small damages happen. You may become duller, which people are becoming. Your level of intelligence after the age of 35 drops in many ways unless you take enormous care to keep it up. You are managing because of your memory, not because of your intelligence.

What happens when you put your head to the north?

If you have any kind of blood-related problem, let's say anemia, what would a doctor prescribe? Iron. It is an important ingredient in your blood. You have heard of the magnetic fields on the planet. In many ways, the earth is engineered because of its magnetism. That's how powerful the magnetic forces are on the planet.

When the body is positioned horizontally, you can immediately make out that your pulse rate drops. The body makes this adjustment because if blood is pumped at the same level, too much will go into your head, causing damage. Now, if you place your head to the north and stay that way for 5 to 6 hours, the magnetic pull will cause pressure on

your brain. If you are beyond a certain age and your blood vessels are weak, you could have hemorrhages and paralytic strokes. Or, if your system is sturdy and these things don't happen to you, you could get up agitated because there is more circulation in the brain than there should be when you are sleeping. It is not that if you do this for one day, you will fall dead. But if you do this every day, you are asking for trouble. What kind of trouble depends on how strong your system is.

So, which is the best direction to sleep with your head pointing towards? East is the best direction. North-east is okay. West is alright. South, if you must. North, no. This is true as long as you are in the northern hemisphere – sleeping with your head towards any side except north is okay. In the southern hemisphere, don't put your head to the south.

The right and wrong side of the bed!

Your heart is an important aspect of your physiology. The station that pumps life across the body – if this one thing doesn't happen, nothing happens – starts from your left side. In India, the culture has always said that when you wake up, you must roll to your right side and then get out of bed. When your body is in a certain state of relaxation, its metabolic activity is low. When you get up, there is a certain surge of activity. So you need to roll over to your right side and get up because at a lower level of metabolic activity, if you suddenly roll to your left, you will put pressure upon your cardiac system.

Activate your body and brain

In the tradition, they also told you that before you get up in the morning, you must rub your hands together and place your palms upon your eyes. They said that if you do this, you will see God. It is not about seeing God.

There is a heavy concentration of nerve endings in your hands. If you rub your palms together, all the nerve endings are activated and the system comes awake immediately. When you wake up in the morning and still feel sleepy and drowsy, just do this and see, everything comes awake. Instantly, a whole range of nerves connected with your eyes and other aspects of your senses come awake. Before you move your body, your body and brain should be active. You shouldn't get up dumb, that's the idea.

Ayurveda, Siddha or Allopathy – What to Choose When

Allopathic Medicine

When we say health, disease, or ailment, there are two fundamental kinds. One kind of ailment comes to us from outside, an invasion of external organisms. It has to be dealt with in one way. We still find that the Allopathic system of medicine is the most effective way of handling infections, there's no question about it. However, a majority of human ailments are self-generated. They come from within the system. For such chronic ailments, the Allopathic system of medicine has not proven to be too good. Allopathy can only manage the disease. It can never really uproot the disease because essentially, it is about symptomatic treatment.

For most of the ailments that are chronic in nature, symptoms are like the proverbial tip of the iceberg. We are only treating the tip all the time. In fact, today it is an established form of treatment – if you get diabetes, hypertension, or asthma, doctors are talking to you about how to manage the ailment. They are never talking to you about how to get rid of it. But the manifestation of the disease in the form of a symptom is very minor. What is happening is at a much deeper level, which cannot be treated with external medicine.

If you are really in a state of emergency, going to an Ayurvedic doctor is not the best thing to do. You go to him only when you have time to recover. In an emergency, Allopathy has better systems than any other. But when your problems are mild and you know they are evolving, Ayurveda and other systems are very effective means of treatment.

Ayurveda

So what is so different about the medicines of an indigenous kind, which largely get labeled as Ayurveda? Ayurveda comes from a different dimension and understanding of life. A fundamental part of the Ayurvedic system is about an understanding that our bodies are an accumulation of what we gathered from the planet. The nature of the planet and of the Pancha Bhutas or the five elements that make the planet are very much manifest in this physical body. If you want to handle this body in the most effective and productive way, it is very important that everything you do about this body has a relationship with the planet.

Ayurveda says that every root, every leaf, every tree bark found on this planet has medicinal value. We have learnt how to use only a few. The rest of them, we are yet to learn how to use. What this statement is trying to convey is, health is not something that falls upon you from the sky. Health is something that has to grow from within you, because the body is something that grows from within you. The input comes from the earth but it grows from within you. So, if you have a repair job to do, the best place to go is to the manufacturer, not to the local mechanic. This is the essence of Ayurveda.

In Ayurveda, we understand that if we go deep enough into the body, this body is not an integrated thing, it is a continuous process which involves the earth upon which you walk. If this relationship does not come through, these subtle systems of medicine which work from within, will fail to work. Without taking care of the whole system, just trying to do one aspect of it may not be very fruitful.

A holistic system does not mean just treating the body as a whole. A holistic system means treating life as a whole, which includes the planet, what we eat, what we breathe, what we drink – all of that. Without attending to all those things, the true benefit of Ayurveda will not be seen. If Ayurveda becomes a living reality in our lives and our societies, people can live like gods.

Siddha

Siddha or Siddhavaidya is unique to Southern India, fundamentally Tamil Nadu. This dimension of medicine was opened up by Agastya Muni. They say Adiyogi himself practiced it and Agastya brought it to the south. He created a very potent combination, some fantastic usage of material. It is unbelievable how Siddha works. In the Siddha system of medicine, the sages, realized beings and the Siddha doctors were not different. Always, the sages practiced a certain amount of medicine because human health is an essential part of going ahead.

Siddha is very different from Ayurveda and I would say it is much closer to the body's energy system than Ayurveda is. Ayurveda is more disease-oriented, whereas Siddha is more health-oriented and simply about rejuvenation. So the variety of what is available in Siddha may not be as wide a range as in Ayurveda, because Ayurveda enters every disease. Siddha doesn't enter the treatment of every disease. It is mainly about

strengthening the inner sources of the body and activating the body in a certain way.

Siddha is very different in the sense, though there are herbs, it is essentially elemental in nature. It comes more from the yogic science because the fundamental of yogic science is in Bhuta Shuddhi or in the cleansing of one's elements. This is an evolution from the yogic science. Since it is elemental, you are dealing with the fundamental material which makes the body. You are not trying to infuse some other medicine into it. So it is not really a medicine as such.

Because of this, it needs less study but more internal mastery for the person who practices it, which is again a problem today. Siddha vaidya cannot happen without sadhana. Today they have set up colleges for siddha vaidya, but it will not work like that. "Siddha" means an established one or one who is firmly established within himself. At Isha, we have access to certain Siddha systems that are not normally available with other doctors who practice Siddha.

Isha Rejuvenation

Isha Rejuvenation, located at the Isha Yoga Center, and Isha Arogya clinics, located in various cities in South India, are holistic health centers established by Sadhguru. Find out more about these centers from Sadhguru himself...

The uniqueness of Isha Rejuvenation is that it is a treatment based on Siddha and yoga. So, aren't the yoga programs alone sufficient? When someone has been ill for a long period of time, just a program may not be sufficient. They may need some more medical support. So we are offering traditional Siddha.

But this is not a hospital where we treat all kinds of ailments. This is more about rejuvenation. The rejuvenation system is more about activating the energy system to a certain level where the body corrects itself. The general attitude, intention and ambience of Isha Rejuvenation are not that of a spa. It is a more dedicated atmosphere. People may go to a spa just for pleasure. It's not that you can't enjoy this, it has a good ambience, but here it is not just about pleasure. We are always seeing how to make a person fit enough to receive the spiritual possibility.

Isha Arogya

At Isha Arogya, Siddhavaidya, Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Yogic systems, Homeopathy and Allopathy – all six – are practiced together at one place.

The clinic is generally conducted by Allopathic doctors because they are better trained for diagnosis in today's world.

People have been asking me, "Sadhguru, how can all these systems happen in one place?" I am not committed to any system. My commitment is to human health. You may be committed to Siddha, you may be committed to Allopathy, you may be committed to Ayurveda, but when a man is sick, he wants health, he doesn't care how. Do you care how you should become healthy? When you are not healthy you want health, you don't care how it happens. This combination of things has been working wonderfully.

3 Fundamentals For Good Health

1. Eating Right

When it comes to food, one of the most important aspects that you must be conscious of is how quickly a certain type of food digests and becomes a part of yourself. If you eat something and it does not digest within three hours, it means you have eaten food that should either be avoided or reduced in quantity. If the food moves out of your stomach within three hours, it means that even if it is not the best food, it is still something your system is able to handle.

If you maintain a clear gap of five to six hours between one meal and the other without having anything in between, cleansing will happen on the cellular level. This cleansing on the cellular level is most important for a healthful life. If you are over 30 years of age, two good meals a day will suffice – one in the morning and one in the evening. There must be three hours after the evening meal, before you go to bed. If this includes at least 20 to 30 minutes of light physical activity – such as simple walking – your system will largely be healthy. If you go to bed with food still inside the stomach, it generates a certain level of inertia in the system. Physiologically, this inertia is like an acceleration towards death. Death is ultimate inertia. Another dimension is that if you go to bed with a full stomach, it puts pressure on other organs in the abdomen. This will also lead to various kinds of health issues. For that reason too, it is very important that before you go to bed, the food you have eaten has moved out of the stomach. As you sleep in different postures, the stomach should not put pressure on other organs at any point.

2. Use Your Body

When it comes to activity, one simple thing that we need to consider is that our body is capable of bending forward, bending backward, and twisting to both sides. This much activity must happen in some kind of form. Classical hatha yoga is the best way to do it, and a scientific one. If classical hatha yoga is not yet part of your life, you must somehow make sure that every day, you bend forward, backward, twist to both sides, and squat so that the spinal column is stretched. This is a must for everybody on a daily basis if you want to keep the entire system healthy – particularly the neurological system, which will otherwise be an issue as one ages.

3. Get enough rest... but not too much!

The volume of rest that an individual person needs is determined by various factors. One important factor is the type and the volume of food that you consume. You must experiment with different types of foods and see which ones make you feel heavy, and which ones leave you light and agile. If you make sure that at least 40% of your diet consists of fresh vegetables and fruits, there will be lightness in the body. What the body needs is restfulness, not necessarily sleep. It is a misunderstanding to think that sleep is the only way to rest. Even as you sit or stand, you can either be in a state of restfulness, in a state of agitation, or in a state of inertia. If you are in a lively state of restfulness, every moment of your life, the volume of sleep you require will decrease.

The Five Sheaths of the Body

In yoga, we look at the human system as five sheaths or layers. Every aspect of the human system, including the mind, is seen as body, and yoga is a technology to transform it. These five layers of the body are called Annamaya Kosha, Manomaya Kosha, Pranamaya Kosha, Vignanamaya Kosha, and Anandamaya Kosha. Anna means food. Your physical body or Annamaya Kosha is basically the food that you have eaten – small or big is your choice, but it is a heap of food nonetheless. As there is a physical body that you have gathered from outside, there is a mental body. The mind is not in one particular part of the body – every cell in the body has its own memory and intelligence. This mental body is known as Manomaya Kosha. The physical body is the hardware – the mental body is the software.

Hardware and software cannot do much unless you plug them into quality power. The third layer

of the body is called Pranamaya Kosha or energy body. Physical body, mental body, and energy body are all in the realm of physicality, but on different levels of subtlety. To use an analogy – you can clearly see that a light bulb is physical. But the light it diffuses is also physical. And the electricity behind it is physical as well. Light bulb, light, and electricity: all are physical but differ in subtlety. Similarly, the physical body, the mental body, and the energy body are all physical but differ in subtlety. The next layer of the body is a transitory body that is known as Vignanamaya Kosha. It facilitates the transition from the physical to the non-physical. It does not ascribe to any of the physical qualities, but at the same time, it is not yet completely nonphysical either. The fifth layer is called Anandamaya Kosha, which in English translates as “bliss body”. This does not mean there is a bubble of bliss in you. We call it bliss body because in our experience, whenever we touch it, we become blissful. Bliss is not its nature, bliss is what it causes for us. Anandamaya Kosha is a nonphysical dimension which is the source of everything that is physical. If you bring the physical body, the mental body, and the energy body into proper alignment and balance, you will not have any physical or psychological ailments. I could show you hundreds and thousands of people who have come out of their health issues – particularly chronic ailments and psychological problems – simply by creating the necessary alignment within themselves. It is misalignment that causes all kinds of problems. When the body is at ease, there is no disease. Only if you bring the first three layers of the body into alignment, there will be a passage and a possibility of touching Anandamaya Kosha, where blissfulness becomes a natural state of being. Not blissful about something in particular – simply blissful because that is the nature of life.

The Body Remembers All

Today, we are living in a culture where it is not necessary that you have lived with one partner all your life. Things have changed. I mean, a partner comes with an expiry date. When you made the relationship you thought this is forever, but within three months you think, “Oh, why the hell am I with this person?” Because it is all going by what you like and what you do not like. Because of this, it is always off and on, off and on. When it is broken and when it is unstable, you will go

through enormous pain and suffering, which is totally unnecessary. If you do this exercise of falling in and out of love too often, if you go on playing around with too many people, after some time you will become numb, you do not like anybody because there is something called Runanubandha.

Runanubandha is a certain aspect of karma; it is a certain structure of karmic substance. It happens because of a certain amount of meeting and mingling that happens between people. Wherever there is a certain amount of meeting and mingling, some runanubandha is created. Especially when two bodies come together, the runanubandha is much deeper. It is a kind of recording in the body; the body is keeping a record of everything that has happened. If intimacy happened with another body, it is keeping a record of that particular kind of energy.

Now because the body remembers, if there are multiple partners, the body slowly gets confused over a period of time and this confusion will tell in your life in a million different ways. Your mind is confused, but you are living with that somehow. If the body gets confused, then you are in deep trouble.

In many ways, one of the major reasons for the level of anxiety, the level of insecurity, and the level of depression that is going on right now is just that the bodies are confused. After some time, you do not need any reason to go nuts. People are just going nuts without any reason because the body itself is confused.

Body gets confused with multiple intimacies, that is one thing. Another thing is the type of food that you eat. Whenever a little affluence comes, people think they have to eat everything in a single meal. In India, orthodox people never ate more than two or three items in a meal, and those three items were always matched together, not mismatched food. People understood the body so well that in our homes, they knew that when they cook a particular vegetable, they will make only a particular kind of curry. When they cook this vegetable, another kind will never be made because traditionally, they understood that if they put this and that together, the body gets confused.

As young boys, we were trained – if we go to the market, how we should pick up the vegetable. These days it is totally gone, but when I was young they trained me – when we go to the market, “If you buy this vegetable, you do not buy that

because these two cannot be eaten within a span of two days. If you have eaten this, you should not eat that," because the body will get confused. Once your body gets confused you will go haywire in so many ways. This understanding was always there.

What I see is, if you go to any affluent dinners, it has become madness. Recently in one of the events, someone was very proudly announcing that they have 270 different varieties of food. People take a little of everything and eat. The body gets confused with this kind of food.

So these are two major things – people not eating properly and an indiscriminate sense of intimacy with other bodies – which will create certain confusion on the body level which will take a toll over a period of time. "So have I committed a sin? Is this a punishment for me?" It is not on that level. Every action has a consequence. This is not a moralistic reality; it is a certain existential process. If you do certain things with your mind, certain consequences will come. If you do certain things with your body, certain consequences will come.

These are things that have been deeply understood and life was structured in a certain way around that. Now, in the name of freedom we want to demolish everything and suffer. Maybe centuries later we will realize that this is not the way to live.

Cleansing With Fire – Klesha Nashana Kriya

Have you noticed that when you have a shower – or a bath as we say in India –which is not a dip but involves water flowing over your body, if you pay attention, especially if you are showering with cold or cool water, you will see a shower is not just about cleansing the skin or washing whatever dirt or impurities that may be on your skin. It rejuvenates you and cleanses you of many things. Even if you went in angry and agitated, when you shower and come out, all the nonsense feels washed off. This is not just because of cool water flowing over your body and calming your nerves. That is also happening of course, but beyond that, there is a certain cleansing of the akashic dimension of who you are.

Your body is a manifestation or a play of five elements and akash or space is one of the five elements. The other four are earth, water, fire and

air. When you look at the human form, the outermost aspect of your body is akash. There is somewhere between twelve to eighteen inches of akash around almost everyone, unless someone is in a certain state of sickness or very close to death – then it is structured differently. Otherwise, for most normal human beings, somewhere between twelve to eighteen inches of akash naturally envelops the physical body. This is an essential ingredient of the making of this human form.

Using fire as a way of cleansing yourself is a very powerful system. This is known as Klesha Nashana Kriya, which means "to destroy or burn up the impurities in the system."

Even before your physical body touches something, your akashic body has already touched it. So, whether what comes from outside is nourishing to you or destructive to you, the first element that takes the beating is your akash. How much you gather there in terms of impurities or support depends on what you are exposed to. To cleanse this of impurities, as you can do a water wash for the body, you can do a fire wash too. This does not mean setting fire to yourself! Using fire as a way of cleansing yourself is a very powerful system. This is known as Klesha Nashana Kriya, which means "to destroy or burn up the impurities in the system."

If this process is done properly and the person conducting it is properly trained, you will see, initially, it is just fire. But at some point, you will feel a certain freedom, a release within you because something that was attached to you is gone.

If you wish to do some form of cleansing at home, light a fire with an organic substance like straw or firewood, without any oil, and stand facing the fire with open hands and open eyes for three minutes. Then stand with your back to it, exposing your spine for three minutes. This process brings about a new sense of resurgence in the system. It rekindles and reconnects the fire within with the fire outside. This is the basis of all fire-based processes of the East.

If having a fire is not practical for you, light a lamp with vegetable oil or ghee and be around this lamp. First, sit facing the lamp, then turn around and sit so that the fire element within you gets rekindled.

Leave the Dead to the Dead

Whatever kind of memory the mind carries, I see a lot of people in the world are pretty low GB in their mind, but their bodies are phenomenal GB. Your body still remembers just about anything. Your great, great, great-grandmother's nose is sitting on your face right now. Your body has not forgotten. I'm sure your mind has no clue who your great, great, great whatever was. How your forefathers looked a million years ago, your body still remembers. Your mind doesn't.

In terms of carrying and transmitting qualities from generation to generation, across thousands of generations, body is a far more significant thing than your mind. You can think one way today, think another way tomorrow. Let me see if you can look one way today, look another way tomorrow – let me see. That will need serious sadhana, to change even a small physical feature.

That is why most of the yoga is focused towards the body. It is only new-agey stuff which is focused towards the mind because they want to feel good today. They're not looking for long term transformation. Transformation means that which is old is being systematically dismantled. Change means repaint of the same thing. Change the nose, you will look different but nothing would have changed with you. Change your attitude you will look different suddenly, you will feel different but nothing has changed.

So this is not a cosmetic art, this is a transformative science. We work at the roots. The sadhana is a tool to extricate you from a phenomenal memory. The slackening of this memory is important if one has to transform. Otherwise your grandfathers and grandmothers and their fathers and their mothers – dead are very greedy people – they will try to live through you. You must leave the dead to the dead otherwise they will crawl up from the earth and live through you. They shouldn't try to live through you. If they manage to live through you, you will never know what your life is about.

If you allow them to dominate your system, you will become a bundle of compulsions. In many ways unknowingly you will live like them. If you watch your own traits, you will see many things are repeating like your parents. You thought when you were eighteen, "I will never ever be like them," but by the time you're forty-five, you sit like your mother, you talk like your mother, you behave like her. These things are happening to you. And not

just your mother – your great, great, great grandmother also is playing her own stuff. It's time, those who are buried should stay buried. That is the way of life. Those who are alive should become more vibrant. Those who are dead should stay dead.

So it's very important that the sadhana is serious about the body. Body does not mean just bones and muscle. This is a five-layered body ; the sadhana is on all levels. The first three levels of the body we can teach you some technique, and you can keep doing it. But the other dimensions of the body will not be accessible. So what I'm telling you is, the problem is the unknown terrain. Stop struggling with the known terrain. Your psychological status, your emotional nonsense this is known terrain for you. This is something that you should deal with. Known terrain you must handle. There is unknown terrain, that's where you need me.

Yoga and Breast Cancer Prevention

Cancerous cells are present in all our bodies. In the yogic system, we describe cancerous cells as being similar to, let's say, criminals in a society. If there are a few individuals here and there who commit petty crimes, it doesn't really affect the society. But when they gang up together in one place, something begins to happen. Similarly, having a few cancerous cells in your body is not going to affect your life or health in any way. Generally in yoga, we look at it this way: when certain kinds of blanks happen in the energy body, either because of a person's attitude, food, lifestyle, or any other factor due to which the energy body gets affected, an atmosphere conducive to the growth of cancerous cells is created. So if the flow of energy is not good in a certain part of the body, cancerous cells choose that place to hide and fester.

Breast cancer is rampant today, especially in Western societies, because a lot of women do not conceive when they are at a child-bearing age. I am not saying they should have more children. It is a good thing they are doing in an already over-populated world. It is just that the mechanism of the breast, which was mainly made to feed offspring is not made use of, or is only made use of during a specific time period. In the past, if a woman went through the normal process of conception, from the age of around 16 or 18 till about 45 she would conceive periodically, which would have kept her whole system, the uterus and the

breast active in so many ways. This would have also kept the energy flowing.

Today, for most women, child bearing is over before they are 30 years of age. Then for another 15 to 20 years of their life when they are still able to bear children, the necessary hormones and enzymes are still being produced but are not made use of. Because it is not made use of the way it should have been physiologically, that part of the body becomes low energy, which attracts cancerous cells and becomes a place for them to accumulate.

So does it mean to say we must produce more children? Please don't. There are ways to find solution for this.

The benefits of fasting

One of the simplest solutions that we have for curtailing cancerous cells in the system is periodic fasting. One aspect of these cells is that they need a lot more food than a normal cell, up to 30 times more. Just by denying yourself food on certain days, you could put down the level of cancerous cells.

There are also certain types of sadhana one can do where one's hormonal secretions can be controlled. The Shakti Chalana Kriya and asanas we teach help in correcting and balancing the system. We have seen many women with uterus-related problems, such as polycystic ovaries getting completely cured by simply practicing certain asanas and kriyas. The hormonal conditions inside the body become controlled, rather than simply reacting to the kind of food you eat and atmosphere you live in.

To what extent the practices have helped patients suffering from cancer, we cannot document or confirm this. But we have definitely seen that they recovered quite well. The doctors who were treating these cancer patients were quite surprised at their response to chemotherapy. We have seen a few people who recovered from chemotherapy very quickly after doing yogic practices. Whether their cancer went away because of the practices, there is no way to say that. I would say supplementing yoga with medical treatment could definitely benefit the patient.

Neem and turmeric

Another thing is to consume neem paste and turmeric paste which are made into small marble-sized balls on a daily basis. This keeps the number of cancerous cells in the body within a certain

percentage, where they do not gather against the system. When inertia levels increase in the body, it does not allow a certain amount of energy to enter the cellular level, and as we looked at earlier, areas of the body where energy does not flow freely can become susceptible to cancerous growth. Neem and turmeric as a combination act as a dilator for the energy.

For example, if your ophthalmologist wants to look into your eye, he cannot see much by simply looking. By applying a dilator, your eye expands, and he can see. Neem and turmeric dilate the body in such a way that they allow the energy to enter and fill up every crevice inside. This may not be a treatment for a person who is already diseased, but traditionally it is always believed that if you consume neem and turmeric on a regular basis, the cancerous cells in the body can be easily contained.

Strong as Life Should Be

There is substantial scientific evidence to show that within a single generation, the genetic structure of a particular family can deteriorate. It is not because our genes have become weak -- we have become weak. Because we have become weak, the next generation will be weaker, unless they really strive. Of course, it can always be revived, but whether revival will happen is the question.

One day, you will have an electric car to drive you from your sitting room to your bedroom, and from your bedroom to the office -- it may happen. Everything will be at the touch of a button. Touching buttons may also go away. If you verbally speak, everything will get typed and work will be done. You don't have to use your body or your brains at any great length. So definitely, in a single generation, we can fall dramatically. It is already happening at an alarming rate. Simple physical things that we were capable of doing as children are like a circus for children today. Only the very athletic are able.

I was speaking to an elite group in Chennai. These young couples pride themselves on their fitness -- walking on the treadmill, cycling and of course, all of the ladies are wearing size zero, so they think they are fit. I asked them a simple question, "Suppose you are walking on the street and a tiger came, how many of you could just climb a tree and save your life? Only those who are doing a laborer's job, like building a road or

digging a hole could do it.” They agreed. They may look reasonably fit, but they are not fundamentally strong within themselves. The very sinews of life within have become weak. This weakening is happening dramatically, and as technology makes you do less and less, both in the body and the brain, it becomes a very serious affair. This is probably how we will decimate ourselves, not by bombs, fire or riots. We will just peter out because we won't have the strength to exist by ourselves.

Right now, a lot of people over eighty are on different types of life-support. If we continue to weaken, in fifty years, the age at which human beings need life-support may come down dramatically by ten or fifteen years. This is a serious weakening of the human structure. And the next generation will definitely inherit this genetic structure. This is one of the reasons we set up a yoga center in America, on some 1,300 acres of land. At first, everybody said, “This is crazy Sadhguru, we must buy twenty-five acres next to Atlanta.” But the purpose of the ashram is not just to have a center and meditate; it is to regenerate life.

I want many of you to live on the land, work on the land and become strong as life should be. You can conduct the spiritual process and do life in a way it needs to be done, not the way it is done in New York City or somewhere else – but do life strong. If we don't do that, we won't have much to say about humanity in the future. I am not saying one ashram is going to save this, this needs to happen in many places. We have to go back to the land. We have to live with the five elements and be exposed to the earth, sky, rain -- these things need to happen. The forces of life are not just within your body; they are everywhere. Without being in communication with all five elements every day, life does not happen strong. We need to live strong. This purpose can be fulfilled with Yoga.

Perception or Inertia – Your Choice

Last week, some people were commenting on my suggestion not to have food during the lunar eclipse, calling it superstitious and unscientific. They said they had food and they did not die. I was wondering, were they disappointed? First of all, let us understand what superstition is. Superstition is to make conclusions without any perception about a certain subject. This is the nature of life: Your perception and experience of life de-

pends on how sensitive you are. Perception will not come through intellectual accumulation. If those who read a high school textbook think they are scientists, what can I say. A genuine scientist, who has probed into any aspect of life with a certain profoundness, will not speak like this.

As a yogi, as far as possible, I will not consume anything more than an hour and a half after it has been cooked. Why we are serving the food the way we do in the ashram is because we are hoping that people will graduate from being yoga practitioners to yogis. Not just bending and twisting but beginning to feel the union in existence. For this to happen, the body has to be sensitive, and it has to have the least possible level of inertia. If you eat food which has deteriorated in some way – it may not be rotten, nor will it kill you – it is just that it will lower your perception. In my experience of life, lowered perception is death. At least the death of the yogi. The man may live – the yogi will be dead if he loses his perception and his sensitivity. If the death of sensitivity does not matter to you, you can eat what you want; you can eat garbage and still survive. People are eating food that was cooked days, weeks, or even months ago. If they don't feel the difference between freshly cooked food and food that has been refrigerated for ages, what can you say. But for sure they do not have the sensitivity that I am talking about. This is what causes inertia. They may be sleeping eight to ten hours a day – that is death to me. Ten hours of sleep, that is over forty percent of death in twenty-four hours. So, if you wish to live like that, you can eat whatever you want. I am not a scientist, nor do I wish to be one. Neither am I reading books, nor am I researching anything, nor do I have a lab in my backyard. I just pay attention to this human mechanism that is me. I keep it in a certain way, which takes a lot of work. And for anything that happens in nature, I observe what is happening with me, and that is what I am speaking about. I am also observing life around me, for confirmation. Every insect, worm, bird, animal, tree is saying the same thing. If you are only going to discover this after many years and a few billion dollars of research, it is up to you.

Some so-called scientists do not have anything to do with real science. A scientist who has looked at something with profoundness will not speak this way. It is just that there are “internet scientists” who think they know every science, because they are on the internet. Something as simple as

realizing that alcohol, tobacco, and red meat are bad for your health took so many years and billions of dollars of research. What is a recent discovery for them has been an eternal wisdom for us. For example, I was in conversation with an Indian-origin doctor in the United States, who is credited with discovering how the atrium functions in sucking back blood to the heart. When I saw his videos and scientific papers, I could not believe that until a few years ago, the medical science did not know that. The yogic system has always focused on that. In yoga, we are interested in our blood being as pure as possible. An increased level of impurity in the blood means you lose perception. The level of perception that you have determines the quality of your life. How profound your perception is has always been the concern of this culture. If you think only if something is written in a book, it is true, it means you are superstitious and religious. There is nothing scientific about that. Obviously, a lunar eclipse does not mean that the moon quickly makes the twenty-eight days' journey in a matter of a few hours – it is only covered by the shadow of the earth. It is like when it is night for us, the sun is still there but we are on the side of the earth that faces away from it. In your experience, does night only mean absence of light, or is there a phenomenal change in the very way life happens from day to night? If you just look at every insect, bird, animal, tree, or even a rock, you will see there is a difference. If you sit outside at night with a little openness, you will know it is not just about the absence of light. There is a difference in quality between day and night. Someone may say, "This is all rubbish – there is just absence of light." That is also what some people say about the eclipse. It doesn't matter. I am saying, during the eclipse time, don't cook food and eat. Eat well before or after. This is life sense, not internet science. This is a Sadhguru – that means he knows life from within. That's about it. I am for those who are interested in life. The greatest ignorance is to think that you are not ignorant. Whatever is not known to you cannot exist is the crown of ignorance. I request all the internet scientists, eat some fresh food, keep yourself healthy and perceptive to life. Eat during the eclipse if you wish. You won't die – it is just that inertia will build up. If you don't mind inertia, go ahead. For those who are drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and consuming whatever else, it may not make any difference. It is like if you take a high-performance car and fill it

up with low octane petrol – your car may stop within a few kilometers. For high performance, you need special petrol. If you want to be high performance, you need to look carefully what kind of fuel goes into you. If you are a junk machine, eat whatever, drink whatever, live whichever way you want. The nature of life is such that the earth, the sun, and the moon have a significant impact on the system. If you are conscious of their ways, you can ride these natural forces and make your life effortless and easy. If you are not conscious, these same cycles could crush you – everything will be a struggle. All the best till the next eclipse. Just don't let your arrogance born of ignorance eclipse greater possibilities of life.

Why Eating Food During Lunar Eclipse is Harmful

During lunar eclipses, what would happen in 28 days over a full lunar cycle is happening in a subtle way over the course of two to three hours of the eclipse. In terms of energy, the earth's energy is mistaking this eclipse as a full cycle of the moon. Certain things happen in the planet where anything that has moved away from its natural condition will deteriorate very fast. This is why while there is no change in raw fruits and vegetables, there is a distinct change in the way cooked food is before and after the eclipse. What was nourishing food turns into poison.

Eclipse Effect: Food Once Eaten, Turns To Poison!

Poison is something that takes away your awareness. If it takes away to a certain minor level, that means you are dull. If it takes away your awareness to a certain depth, that means you are asleep. If something takes away your awareness completely, that means you are dead. Dullness, sleep, death – this is just a progression. So, cooked food will go through the phases of its deterioration much more rapidly in a subtle way than it does on a normal day.

Eclipse Effect: Can We Eat Raw Food?

If there is food in your body, in two hours' time your energies will age by approximately twenty-eight days. Does that mean you can eat a raw food diet on such a day? No, because the moment food goes into your body, the juices in your stomach attack and kill it. It becomes like semi-cooked food and will still have the same impact.

This is not just about food. This is about the way you are itself. If you have moved away from the natural dimension of who you are in anyway, you become more susceptible to these forces. If you are in your natural state, you are least available to these forces.

Eclipse Effect: The Moon & The Human Body

The cycles of the moon have an impact upon the human system, physically, psychologically and energy-wise. This is evident in the way our mothers went through their cycles. I am talking about our mothers because we are here only because our mothers were in tune with the moon. If our mothers' bodies were not in tune with the moon we wouldn't be here today. When the moon is going through a whole cycle in two to three hours' time, there is a little bit of confusion in all our mothers' bodies. This is also happening in a man's body, because your mothers are present in a certain way – not physiologically but in other ways.

Eclipse Effect: When The Body is Confused...

When the body is in a confused state, the best thing is to keep it as empty as possible, and as conscious as possible. One of the simplest ways to be conscious is to not eat. Then you will constantly be conscious of at least one thing. And the moment your stomach is empty, your ability to be conscious becomes so much better. Your body becomes more transparent and you are able to notice what is happening with your system much better.



MISCELLANEOUS

What is Tantra Yoga? Definitely Orgasmic, But Not Sexual

Unfortunately, in western countries, tantra is being presented in such a way that it is supposed to mean uninhibited sex. It has been so badly misinterpreted. This is because books on tantra have been written by people who just want to sell books. They are not tantrics in any way.

The word "tantra" literally means a technique or a technology. This is an inner technology. These are subjective methods not objective methods.

But in the current understanding in society, the word "tantra" refers to very unorthodox or socially unacceptable methods. It is just that certain aspects are used in a certain way. It is not any different from yoga. It is a limb of yoga called tantra yoga.

The human mechanism is a composite of the physical body – an accumulation of food consumed; the mental body – the software and memory part that makes individuals function in specific ways; and the energy body – the fundamental upon which these two are housed. What is beyond this is non-physical.

The compulsive and cyclical nature of the body and mind render themselves a barrier for higher possibilities. Tantra is to go beyond, so that compulsiveness of the body and mind does not keep us trapped in our limitations. It is about learning to use the body, not as oneself, but as a stepping-stone to deliver this being to the highest possible dimension.

Tantra Yoga: Blowing from the top

Tantra is not about unbridled sexuality, as assumed by many. Sexuality is a fundamental instinct instilled in our bodies to ensure the species perpetuates itself. This is a basic requirement. At the same time, one must know the limitations beyond which it will not carry us. It is only on recognising the limitations and the longing to touch other dimensions enters, that yoga and tantra become relevant.

People thinking in terms of "I have sexual needs so I will follow the tantric path," is nonsense. In tantra, it is not that someone is using just sexuality to grow. They are using every aspect to grow. Unfortunately, there may be people who are attracted to such a path for the wrong reasons. They go because they want a spiritual sanction for their sexuality. Why do you want to bullshit yourself about spirituality? Handle your biology as biology, you do not have to give it other names.

Sexual needs can be fulfilled by forming relationships for that purpose, either within or outside the fold. Using spiritual process to fulfill sexual compulsions is reprehensible and irresponsible. It can lead to various levels of loss because the tantric process is not only used for the individual's spiritual growth, but also to create an energetic space to support other possibilities that bring wellbeing to many.

The simple principle of tantra yoga is: whatever can take you down can also take you up. The

ways in which a man usually sinks in his life are through food, alcoholic drink and sexuality. Tantra yoga uses the same three vehicles to rise up. Unlike sexuality, which tends to find release at the lower level of the energy system, tantra is about building our energies to the fountain-head of the uppermost dimension of the energy system, so that one's energies spill from the top. Of the different energy manifestations in the body – referred to as the 114 chakras – spilling from the top three is considered the highest. If you have to build up to this, every basic instinct, including the sexual instinct, emotions, intellect and survival process must be used to build and hype the energy system. The intention is to deploy all instincts for which a certain amount of energy is dedicated in the body. If one goes into an actual sexual act, the build-up and the purpose of it will be lost.

But once people start using certain substances, they must be in a certain state, otherwise it just becomes addiction. This needs extreme discipline, a kind of discipline which is not possible for most people to even attempt. When people walk this kind of path, if a 100 people take it up, 99 will end up only as drunkards.

What is ego? Does it need to be destroyed?

"Ego" is not something that you got because you did something well or because you became rich or beautiful or anything else. When you started kicking in your mother's womb, the ego was born. The very first mistake of getting identified with your physical body means the ego was born. It is a defense mechanism. You got identified with this little body. This little organism has to survive in this vast existence of which you have no perception to even know where it begins and where it ends. Just to survive, you have to project yourself like a big man. So the ego is born. It is a false reality you created just for the sake of survival.

So what is ego? It is like your shadow. The moment you have a physical body, you have a shadow. The shadow itself is neither good nor bad. If the sun is up there, you have a little shadow. If the sun is down there, you have a mile-long shadow. Whichever way the outside situation demands, that is the kind of shadow you have. That is also the kind of ego you should have.

Stop "destroying" the ego

Today, there is too much unnecessary talk going on in the world about destroying the ego. This has been picked up from the scriptures. Whenever your personality turns ugly, you call it ego. This is just one more way of passing the buck. When your personality turns ugly, you must just see it as you. If you see, "I am ugly," you will want to do something about it. You would not want to be that way anymore.

But we have evolved so many strategies just to avoid this possibility. At a certain moment, whether you are beautiful or ugly, it is you, isn't it? Keep it that way. Don't create things which are not there – your ego, your atman, or something else. The moment you create things like "What is beautiful is my atman, what is ugly is my ego," no transformation will be possible. If you see: "Whatever nonsense I am, that which is beautiful and that which is ugly in me are both me," then, what is ugly will naturally start changing – you will have to transform, you can't help it.

Today in the world, we need to bring about simple sense – life sense. Right now, people only have ego sense, they have no life sense. They are ego sensitive, not life sensitive. When you are like this, you only see yourself as life, no one else is life. You can trample upon anything and anyone. But if you are life sensitive, everything is life in your experience, so you naturally behave very sensibly with every other life around you. The ego will no longer be a problem if you become life sensitive.

The Arithmetic of Life

You are asking about the arithmetic? This is a very ancient question that people have asked a million times over. The calculation is, today there are seven billion people. Let us say one thousand years ago there were only a billion people. If people are reincarnated and born, where did they come? "Did all the monkeys become...?" Maybe! There aren't as many monkeys in the world as there used to be a thousand years ago. Does that not explain it to you?

The Boundless Emptiness

But that is not how it is. The basis of creation is a boundless space of emptiness. Because there is so much emptiness, creation can happen in any scale. If there was no emptiness, there would be no possibility of creation. Without nothingness to accommodate something, where would something sit? Nothingness is the basis of all this "something."

There is no arithmetic for nothingness. Arithmetic is only for numbers – one, two, three, four belong to arithmetic. Zero does not, nor does the infinite belong to arithmetic. Suppose we formed a thousand bubbles that were floating around. If we wanted to form ten thousand bubbles, would we run out of air? It is still there, because it is not material – it is non-material. If it was material, you could count it and then wonder how these seven billion happened. “Okay, only two billion monkeys died, but there are one billion extra. Did the insects become this?” Even if you look at it that way, it still works because of the huge number of other creatures in the planet we have killed. Maybe all of them have crept themselves up into human form.

“Okay, but where does the karma come for these people. They are just empty bubbles.” You can gather in a day the karma you need for ten lifetimes. In terms of the material world, can you not do something today that will buy you ten years of trouble? You are capable of that.

So, even if we reproduce and make these seven billion into twenty billion a hundred years from now, there will be no dearth for that substance which is the basis of life. There will never be a shortage. You create bodies, it will fill itself up. If you create a bubble, air fills up. Similarly, if you create a body, it fills up. Wherever there is a suitable body, a crucible for life to go, it will go. There will be no such problem that, if there are too many pregnancies this year, there will not be enough life to get into all these new bodies!

Karma And Memory

Now the essence of all this is, first thing is to understand the nature of how existence is happening. Either you can look at this (Gestures) or you can look at the atom or you can look at the universe. If you want to look at the universe, it is complex, it is difficult because you don't have a gallery seat, you know. There is no... it is not like a stadium you can sit somewhere and watch the whole universe, very difficult. You can only see it in pieces. If you want to watch an atom, nobody has seen an atom, do you know this? Do you know this? Even in a super electron microscope, you can't see an atom. We have observed its activity but we have never seen an atom as such, but we have broken it. We are capable of breaking things that even we cannot see, that's our... We are very proud of this these days. (Laughs) We

can break anything. We can make it or not is a questionable thing, but we can break anything we want. Even if we cannot see it, we can break it.

Now what you see and what you do not see itself is a very dicey thing. In the sense, what is it that you can see? Right now, can you see my hand?

Meditators: Yes.

Sadhguru: Yes. You can see my hand only because my hand stops light. If my hand did not stop this light, if it allowed light to pass through you wouldn't see this hand. Yes? Or in other words, right now your visual apparatus can see only those things which stop light. Anything that allows light through, you cannot see it. You cannot see life... light itself first of all. Can you see the light that is here? No. Only whatever stops light you can see it. What does not stop light, you cannot see it. Tch... Very bad, isn't it? You must be able to see all those things which allow light to pass through because they are important things. But right now, your visual apparatus are trained to see or capable of seeing only that which stops light.

So the whole process of seeing life the way it is means – first of all, evolving an eye, a thoughtless eye, an eye which is free of thought. When I say free of thought, it is free from the taint of memory. Right now, these two eyes are heavily loaded with memory. See, you can see this – if you see a group of people like this, if you just casually look like this, if the...among these hundreds of people, if there is one face that you are familiar with; you will see suddenly that face sticks out. Have you noticed this? Have you noticed this? You are going on a street, there're hundred people standing there, your friend is among that. If you look here just this friend's face is more clear than the rest of the faces because this eye works with memory. The more memory you have, the better it sees. No memory, it cannot see.

Memory means an accumulated past. Memory means information. Memory means that which does not exist but acts out as if it does. Memories are more real than reality. Isn't it so? Yes or no? See I want you to understand, everything in your life is run by memory. Not just your computer stick – everything in your life. When I say memory, it's not just what you carry here, (Gestures) your very body is a body of memory. Why if you eat a banana, it becomes a masculine body and if she eats a banana, it becomes a feminine body, is simply because of the memory that it contains, isn't it? The information that is stored in this body and that

body is different. Same banana, it becomes a man; same banana, it becomes a woman. Yes or no? Hmm?

Meditators: Yes.

Sadhguru: Or you're eating different types of bananas? (Laughter) Same thing, same food if you eat, it is becoming one way. In one person, it is becoming dark skin. In another person, it's becoming fair skin, how? The memory that you carry. Do you remember your great great great grandfather? You don't but his nose is sitting on your face. (Laughter) Your body remembers, isn't it? You may not have no idea who it was but your body remembers even today. A million years ago how your forefathers were, still it remembers, isn't it? So what you call as my body is just a body of memory. And eyes are loaded with memory. An eye which is loaded with memory, an eye which is corrupted with memory cannot see anything the way it is. It will only see things as it is convenient because the software is working from inside. It will not allow you to see anything the way it is. This is what traditionally we are referring to as karma.

It is there in your body, it is there in your energies, it is there in the way your chemical reactions happen, it is there in your brain, it is there in your mind, it is there in everything. In the very physical energy that you carry, there is memory because you will see each person's energies behave differently from the other simply because of the type of memory it carries. If you want to get rid of this, it's a long process. And if you get rid of this, dismantling of the personality and the body will happen. So another way is to create a distance from it. Just hold it little away. When you want to play with it, you play with it. When you want to switch it off, you must be able to switch it off. So for this, an external view is needed.

Right now your ears are loaded with memory, your eyes are loaded with memory, your tongue is loaded with memory. Why... (Laughs) if you are born in Karnataka if you go to North India, food doesn't taste good is because the tongue is loaded with memory. Yes or no? Have you suffered this or no? You went north and they said aloo bhaji, aloo... (Laughter) aloo mutter, anoo...aloo palak, aloo parotta, aloo-aloo aloo-aloo they said, you couldn't stay there. (Laughs) Because your tongue is loaded with memory, it wants the same things back, otherwise it will suffer. So what "being loaded with memory"

means is – a cocoon of the past is holding you. It will not allow you to even move into the present. A cocoon of the past holds you and you allow it to do this because it feels safe, it creates a cocoon. There is safety; but in safety, there is also imprisonment. You're really safe if we lock you up in a safe, isn't it? But the problem is you can't get out. That's the whole problem.

Walls that you build as self-protection they also become the walls of self-imprisonment. That is the nature of life. If you lock yourself from inside or outside, it's the same thing. As long as you do not open the door, whether somebody locked you from outside or you locked yourself from inside, there is no difference. Anyway you are imprisoned, isn't it? At least... somebody locked you from outside, you can at least complain and scream. You locked yourself from inside, you can only be depressed, you cannot even scream. Who...At whom will you scream? So this process of what we're looking at is, the memory imprints itself on all levels right up to the elemental level.

From the five elements which function here, from just after that memory's work starts. So when we uttered the word karma, it is not one simple formula or it's not...you know people are saying theory of karma; we are not talking about any theory. We are referring to a certain reality. Karma means memory – action and memory. Past action exists only in the form of memory. Isn't it so? Yes? Memory not just what you carry here (Gestures); every cell in the body carries its own memory. Why one atom behaves differently from another atom though the same ingredients is, it has a memory. A hydrogen atom has one kind of memory, oxygen atom has another kind of memory – unless you mix them up, they will continue to behave like that. It is in a small circle, you are in a little larger circle; the universe is in a much larger circle but the same memory rules all of it.

So when we said karma, we are not talking about some concept or philosophy, we are referring to a certain reality which is finding manifestation as who you are. The very shape of your body is because of memory. If a bird eats a mango, it becomes a bird; if a worm eats a mango, it becomes a worm; if you eat a mango, you become a human being. Same mango, how many things it's doing, depending upon what kind of memory it carries, isn't it? You...What you call as a seed, if you plant the same seed... if you plant a seed in the same soil – here you plant a mango tree, here

you plant an apple tree in the same soil, this (Gestures) will only produce apples, this (Gestures) will only produce mangoes. I know there is a newspaper picture where a... you know a jackfruit has become bananas. That's different. Yes, you saw this? Are you all from Bangalore or Devanahalli? (Laughter) No, you didn't see this? A bunch of bananas are coming out of a jackfruit for some reason. (Laughs) That's a freak. And that's happened because of some mix up. We don't know who did the mix up. (Laughs) But essentially if you... in the same soil if you plant an apple seed and a mango seed, this (Gestures) will only produce apples, this (Gestures) will only produce mangoes because seed is a certain amount of memory, isn't it? Whether it is a seed of a plant or your father's seed which entered your mother's womb, it is just memory and memory and memory. Isn't it so? This is karma and this goes right back. Right up to the elemental level, everything is memory. Only the pure element is free from memory.

So the idea, when we start, we're starting off 'Bhutesha' because that's the most important thing – that he mastered the elements. That's why we bow down to him because... Because he mastered the elements, he has an eye which has no memory. A taintless eye which sees everything just the way it is. So yoga essentially means developing an eye which is not contaminated by memory, which simply sees. It does not see things the way your memory perverts it. It simply sees everything the way it is. This eye will see those things which do not stop light. Right now these two eyes can only see what stops light. If you start seeing something that does not stop light that means another dimension of the eye is beginning to function.

More Real than the Real (Maya)

The nature of human experience is such that one can be easily deceived by the limitations of one's own perception, thought, emotion, beliefs. What you think, or what you emote, can become far more important and far bigger than the creation itself. This past week, we have been on a tour of Chennai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and back. One evening, someone asked me a question, 'Sadhguru, why is it that god sent me here and now I have to work for my mukthi, or my liberation?' Then I asked him, 'Why do you believe that you are a god-send first of all? You don't look like

a god-send, to me.' It just goes on endlessly like this.

People invest in one thing; from that, a world will grow out of it. One thought, one emotion, one idea, one attachment; out of that a whole universe will evolve. This is why, traditionally, they dismissed all of these experiences with just one word, 'maya'. It is illusory, it is evolving out of your identity, it is evolving out of your thought, your emotion, your attachment. Just one thing is enough – a world will evolve, a universe will come out of it. It is happening, everybody has a universe of their own. And it looks real, more real than the real. So there is no time for the Real.

When you were a child, what little games you played were bigger than the universe; they were everything. Then your intelligence got hijacked by your hormones, the opposite sex became so big. It ruled everything, everything looked real. You became old, all those games and people became not so important, but by then you had gotten into a cycle of worry. Endlessly you worry about the money that you don't need, the future that you don't have, the past that you cannot reclaim, because now you have become a veteran worrier. As you age, you don't need any reason, simply you can worry. It just goes on because you have created a false universe. And with your death, it is going to collapse, so it becomes restless and active. Somewhere it knows its existence is timed. So it is over-active and gives you all kinds of false perceptions.

This happened...a young woman went to a doctor and said, 'Oh doctor, my body is hurting all over. Just everything in my body is hurting.' The doctor looked at her; she looked young and quite healthy. He said, 'That is strange. Every part in your body is hurting? Show me what is happening.' She said, 'Just look at this doctor,' and she touched her right knee, 'Haaa!' she screamed. Then she touched her left elbow, 'Haaa!' She touched her neck and she screamed. Then the doctor said, 'Okay just relax,' and he brought a little plaster and put it on her finger. There was an injury in the finger. Wherever you touch, it hurts; every part of your body is hurting.

Everything in the universe is wrong. Nothing seems to be okay, nobody seems to be okay, you know why? Because one thing has gone wrong, everything looks wrong. So this one thing needs to be fixed. (Pointing to himself) Is there something wrong with this? No, nothing wrong with this,

it is just that this is not yet. Somebody who is not yet is trying to live a life. This is the problem. A bunch of ideas, emotions, beliefs, prejudices is trying to live a life. There is no individual here, a big crowd inside. This crowd is trying to live, this crowd is trying to get educated, this crowd is trying to build a career, this crowd gets married, produces children. Everything is confusion. Not because there is something wrong with your education, not because there is something wrong with your job, or with marriage or with children – simply because a crowd cannot get married, a crowd cannot be a parent, a crowd cannot work in any place. You can never educate a crowd.

You can only work with individual people. With a crowd you cannot do anything. Right now, this is a crowd – all kinds of ideas, all kinds of emotions, all kinds of philosophies, picked up bits and pieces from all over the planet – is ruling from within. Everything is one big mess. You can't fix this mess because this is supposed to be a mess. If you find the individual in this, there is no problem with this one. This one is fine. It is all a crowd that is hanging around – have you seen in the evenings a whole bunch of mosquitoes hanging around your head? You know why? They are not interested in your brain or lack of it. A human being is exuding the maximum amount of carbon dioxide in the head region and in the feet. They either go for your feet, not because they are bowing down to you or they think you are spiritual. They go for your head not because they think you are intelligent; the maximum carbon dioxide is generated and their receptors are drawn to the carbon dioxide.

So, a crowd is hanging out here. You can't fix this crowd. If you drop this crowd that you are carrying on your head, this individual is no problem. Every individual is fine, there is really no problem. It is only a 'junk of a person' who is a problem. I am saying 'a junk of a person' because this 'personality' is junk that you gathered from the whole world around you. This junk is a problem. This individual being – no problem. We have no problem with any being. But to keep the crowd down takes some wisdom, takes some courage, takes some sense, or at least some devotion – where you are willing to listen to somebody. Something must be there; otherwise you will carry the crowd to your grave. And when the grave comes, the crowd doesn't die – only you die. Only the individual will die, without having lived. So fixing this means not fixing situations around us.

This happened...a husband and wife were driving in a car. Quietly they were driving, and the husband opened the conversation, 'Mary, I know we have been married for 20 years. I know you have done your best for me. But, I want a divorce.' She was driving at 60 kilometers per hour; she increased the speed to 80 kilometers per hour. She didn't say anything. He looked at her, she was calm. Then he thought this was the best time to tell her and said, 'Mary, I really want this divorce. And I also need the house because I have been having an affair with your best friend and she likes the house.' She didn't say anything, she just pushed the car to 100 kilometers per hour.

He looked at her, she seemed to be taking everything well. So he said, 'Mary, I need the car. You know, I like the car very much.' She pushed it to 110 kilometers per hour and didn't say anything. He thought, 'This is a great day. She's in a great mood, not saying anything.' So he said, 'You know, I won't be able to give you the bank account. I have already fixed the bank. What was a joint account, I have made it into mine because I took a power of attorney from you ten years ago, remember?' She pushed it to 135 kilometers per hour. Then he said, 'Mary, don't you want anything?' She slowly veered the car towards the culvert on the roadside, and she said, 'I got what I want.' He said, 'What have you got?' She said, 'I fixed the car. I have an air bag and you don't.'

You must fix it in such a way there is no escape for this one. That is why, 'morning sadhana, morning sadhana, morning sadhana' is, no matter what, 'morning sadhana'. You fix this one in such a way that there is no escape. If you leave one small hole, it will escape from that and it will be very difficult to catch it because it is a big crowd. You have heard the Vikramaditya Stories...And you don't know where it is, but constantly it is on.

How to Deal with the Loss of a Loved One?

When Life Disillusions You

When life disillusions you, you may sit up and become enlightened, or you may become depressed. If all the illusions go away, that is called self-realization. Right now, you are hanging on to illusions, valuing them and being identified with them so much that you are fighting to keep them. This is maya – it goes on as if it is real, until suddenly, it is gone.

In a way, you always knew it. From the moment you were born, your clock has been ticking, and one day, it will stop. Well, we try to stretch it. We try to slow it down. We try to make best use of the time we have. We try to make it as profound as possible. It is very important that life touches you. If life should touch you on a deeper level, you have to put down the world that you have made up in your mind.

If you do not put down your illusions, the most profound dimensions of life will never touch you. Only drama will go on. This is not only a question about someone's death – this is about your fundamental ignorance about life. It is time you come to your senses. If all your illusions break right now, if you are absolutely disillusioned, you are also enlightened. But you do not allow yourself to be disillusioned. If one illusion breaks, you make up the next one.

The Glass of Water

Maya means you weave so many illusions in your mind that they become more real than the real. What is happening in your mind, what is happening in your emotions becomes far more real than the real itself. It is like a cinema theater – it is a two dimensional light and sound play. But you love the cinema stars more than the people you have lived with for twenty-five years. You have never even seen these stars in real life, but they are larger than life.

What is happening in your mind is just like that – it is larger than life. But the lights will come on one day. Will it be the lights of enlightenment, or will it be the lighting of your cremation fire – that is your choice.

How To Deal With Anxiety When Meeting People?

You would have definitely heard of a word called “yoga.” When I say “yoga” people immediately think of twisting the body into some posture. No, the word yoga means “union.” In your perception of life there is you and there is the world. So it is you versus the universe actually. You versus the universe is a bad competition to get into. Do you think you have any chance of winning this competition? Don't compete with the universe.

This is why we found a way called yoga. Yoga or union means you consciously obliterate the boundaries of your individuality, so there is no such thing as you and the universe – it feels like

one. You need to do a little yoga, otherwise your mind will get twisted out with all kinds of ideas, emotions and opinions.

If you open it up a little bit, if you obliterate the boundaries of your individuality, it becomes very easy because when you sit here you see the other person as a part of yourself. You have no problem whether it is a man, woman, child or an animal. You will communicate with everything absolutely because you have opened up your boundaries. It is only when you have concretized your boundaries that you will always have a problem. If it is a man, there is one kind of problem. If it is a woman, there is another kind of problem.

It is time you work upon bringing yourself to ease – not only with other people, just with life. The life that you are must be at ease. If you are not at ease, you will never realize your full potential.

There is a certain genius in every individual. But ninety-nine percent of the people live and die without ever opening up the genius within themselves. If it has to open up, if the true potential within you has to open up, your life should come to ease.

There is a whole science and technology called yoga, which approaches how to handle your body, chemistry, mental fluctuations and energies. If you bring this to a certain level, whoever comes, you are at ease. In agitation, everything is distorted. So, being at ease is most important, otherwise you will not experience life the way it is.

What Living in the Ashram Really Means

What is the purpose of living in an ashram? There are various types of ashrams. People who have not been able to take care of themselves in the outside society, their food or their wellbeing or their housing, they move into certain types of ashrams. Isha Yoga Center is not one of those ashrams. This is an ashram created for a spiritual purpose. Why does one move into an ashram space like this, which is essentially for the spiritual process? What is the ingredient which makes it into that kind of a space? What is the significance and why be in such a space?

This is a spiritual space because the necessary energy has been invested in this space. If we were as strong as the other creatures who live on the Velliangiri Mountains, we wouldn't have made this place ugly with all the buildings – we would have just slept on the field.

To be in the ashram means to be under the umbrella of this energy. What is the purpose of an energy like this when it is driving many people totally insane? You stay here, you can't be here. If you leave this place, you cannot be anywhere else because the purpose of this energy is not to let you settle down.

The idea of creating an umbrella of this energy is to put your life on fast-forward. People on the spiritual path are people of unquenchable discontent. It is being propagated that spirituality means contentment. Contentment means you have contented yourself with what you have. A spiritual person means he is unwilling to settle for anything less than the Ultimate. If he is miserably discontent, he becomes ugly. If he is joyfully discontent, he is dynamic. He is a possibility all the time. He won't stay in one place. It doesn't matter how much comfort it offers, he will not stay. It is a longing not to stop, not to find a nest of comfort, not to end up in a nook that is comfortable, but to get onto the boiling main stream and go.

When we put life on a fast-forward, everything is exaggerated in your experience, both your joys and your miseries. When your pain gets exaggerated, you wonder, "Why the hell this spirituality? Why did I choose this? I thought this was going to be bliss..." That was the advertisement at least: "Inner Engineering – Peak of Wellbeing." Yes, it is, but you need to understand, when you stand on the highest peak, wellbeing means you just manage to stand – that you are not blown off.

There is a beautiful story in the yogic lore. Once there was a blacksmith in a village, a very poor man. It looked like he acted like a magnet to all the problems in the world. They were visiting him too often. But he was a devout, very prayerful person. Once, a friend of his who did not believe in all this came and said, "What nonsense, you going on praying to your god. Look at your life! All the time you are in trouble."

So the blacksmith said, "See, I know only this profession. Everything I have learned, I have learned by being a blacksmith. If I want to make a useful tool, I take a piece of steel, heat it, beat it, cool it, heat it, beat it... If a piece of steel cannot take the heating and beating and cooling, then I throw it on the scrap heap. Otherwise it becomes a useful tool. So my prayer is only this: "Dear god, heat me, beat me, cool me, do whatever— but don't ever throw me on the scrap heap."

The scrap heap is a comfortable place. Nobody beats you, nobody heats you, nobody does anything to you, but you are on the scrap heap. You should not be afraid of pain, you should not be afraid of hardship, you should not be afraid of death. "Don't put me on the scrap heap." That should be the only fear for a person on the spiritual path.

Creating Your Own Shrine at Home

If you are living in a family situation with a few other people, it is best to create a space for sadhana that is kept in a certain way and not used for any other purpose. If you have a yantra or a sannidhi, that is great. Otherwise, at least keep a picture, light a linga jyoti or an oil lamp, and put a little flower there every day. If you can create a dedicated, cared-for space, it can provide a lot of support – a little shrine in your own place. A shrine is not about looking up or looking down. A shrine is a possibility to look inward.

The sadhana you do can transform the space. Through the sadhana, something within you should shine. When you shine, you are enshrined. Investing in that little space will definitely pay in a big way in your life. There are certain ways to create a shrine. Whether you have a yantra or just a picture, make sure you always have an oil lamp burning. Beneath the yantra or picture, you can keep a raw silk cloth that is not dyed or sanforized. If the silk is raw, the way it came out of the cocoon, then the fabric is alive in a way. If you use a raw silk cloth, it reverberates much better than if you use a synthetic cloth or something else.

Another option is to keep everything on a large copper tray or a woven copper cloth. Between the three – the raw silk cloth, copper tray, or copper cloth – you can choose whatever is best for you, according to your convenience and aesthetics. This will enhance the energy of the space. If you can cover the walls and partitions of this space with lots of loose material, such as raw silk, it will reverberate and hold the energy much better. In this way, you can create a cocoon of energy. "Can't I do without that?" You definitely can. It is just a question of energy efficiency. If the sides are covered with raw silk, the space will be much more energy efficient.

When you meditate at home, and you sit in a space that is a cocoon of energy, it takes much less for you to get into a meditative state. The instructions for Shoonya meditation are that you

can sit wherever you want – even at the airport, for example. One reason is because Shoonya is of a certain nature. Another reason is that when people begin to meditate, we do not want them to give it up because they cannot set a certain atmosphere. When it comes to Shoonya, the idea is “Do it anywhere, but anyway do it.” Not having a raw silk cloth should not be an excuse for you not to meditate. But if you create a certain atmosphere, it is more energy-efficient. Things will happen so much easier if the place is kept in a certain way.

What is a Mantra?

Mantra means a sound. Today, modern science sees the whole existence as a vibration. Where there is a vibration, there is bound to be a sound. So that means, the whole existence is a kind of sound, or a complex amalgamation of sounds – the whole existence is an amalgamation of multiple mantras. Of these, a few mantras or a few sounds have been identified, which could be like keys. If you use them in a certain way, they become a key to open up a different dimension of life and experience within you.

There are different types of mantras. Every mantra activates a particular kind of energy in a different part of the body. Without that necessary awareness, just repeating the sound only brings dullness to the mind. Any repetition of the sound always makes your mind dull. Only when it is done with proper awareness, with exact understanding of what it is, a mantra could be a very powerful means. As a science it is a very powerful dimension, but the way it is being imparted without any necessary basis or without creating the necessary situations, it can cause lots of damage.

Mantras always come from a Sanskrit basis, and the basic aspects of Sanskrit language are so sound sensitive. But when different people speak, each one says it in their own way. If the Bengalis say a mantra, they will say it in their own way. If the Tamil people say it, they say it in another way. If the Americans say it, they will say it in a completely different way. Like this, different people who speak different languages, according to what language they have been used to, tend to distort the mantra, unless real training is imparted. Such training is too exhaustive and people do not have that kind of patience or dedication nowadays because it needs an enormous amount of time and involvement.

Mantras could be an extremely good preparatory step. Just one mantra can do such tremendous things to people. They can be an effective force in creating something but only if they come from that kind of a source where there is a complete understanding of all that is sound. When we say “all that is sound,” we are talking about the creation itself. If a mantra comes from that kind of source, with that level of understanding and when the transmission is pure, then mantras can be an effective force.

Old Age Can Be a Great Blessing

Old age need not be misery. In many ways, old age can be a great blessing because the whole experience of life is behind you. When you were a child everything was beautiful, but you were eager to grow up because you want to experience life. When you became youthful, your intelligence got hijacked by your hormones. Whatever you did, knowingly or unknowingly, it just pushed you in that direction. Very few people are capable of raising their intelligence beyond the hormonal hijack and looking at life with clarity. All others are trapped in it.

When you come to old age, all the longings are over, a whole experience of life is behind you and you are once again childlike, but you have the wisdom of experience of life. It can be a very fruitful and wonderful part of your life, but unfortunately most human beings suffer their old age simply because they don't take care of their rejuvenation process properly. In ancient times in India, old age meant Vanaprastha ashrama, where the old couple went back into the forest and lived there joyfully. But today, old age means “hospital ashrama.”

If you take care of your rejuvenation process well, old age can be a miraculous part of your life, because it is invaluable to have a whole life's experience behind you and to be once again childlike.

Everything is over, but very few old people can even smile, unfortunately. This is because the only thing that they knew in their life was the physical body. Once the body begins to recede, they become despondent. It might not have become diseased, no big cancer need to have come, but in every step that you take, age is telling you this is not forever. If you establish yourself in other dimensions of experience, the

body becomes an easy thing to handle. Old age and even death can be a joyful experience.

Should I Read Scriptures?

There is something called knowledge, which is an accumulated mass of memory, and there is something called knowing, which is sheer perception of life. Knowledge is just your conclusion about life. If you come to a conclusion about life from accumulated knowledge, it becomes prejudiced knowledge. It will not allow you to experience anything afresh. Nothing new will ever happen to you. Knowledge is useful for your survival process but it never liberates you.

Should you not take care of your survival? You definitely should, but when a little worm with a minuscule fraction of the brain you have, can survive pretty well on this planet, should you spend your whole life on survival when you have such a big brain? In the yogic systems, we look at the mind as having sixteen parts. They say just one of these sixteen parts is enough to be super-successful in the material world. The remaining fifteen should be focused on your inner wellbeing because that is a much vaster space than the material world. Even scientists today say that just four percent of the universe is creation, and the rest is dark matter and dark energy. So, four percent of your mind is enough but the ancient yogis were a little more generous. They gave you a little more than six percent to very successfully conduct your material life!

So, with all due respect to the scriptures, it is accumulated knowledge. If it was a book of engineering or literature or history, I would say read it. If it is a book of knowledge of the self, if you are here and alive, it is better to read this book that is yourself than to read some other book. You are a book written by the creator himself. It is best to read this if you want to know about this life. Whatever other books you take, even if they happened to be God's own words, if it is written in some language obviously it was written by human beings. Human minds are given to enormous distortion. If you see something today with your own eyes and tell your neighbor, he goes and tells someone else. If it goes through twenty-five people in twenty-four hours and comes back to you, can you recognize that story? It is very obvious that human beings are capable of enormous distortion. When something has come down

for thousands of years, you can imagine how much could have happened to it on the way.

If you want to know yourself, don't read a book written by someone else. If you read about yourself in a book, you are not real, you are just a story. You need to look within. You must have the necessary instruments to turn around and look at this. I am not trying to trash everything that has ever been written but if you learn to go into the deeper dimensions of who you are, you will see, all scriptures will be stale.

When Krishna was giving the Gita to Arjuna, every time Krishna said something, Arjuna who received the best education in those days because he was a prince, would say, "But no. This scripture says something else." He was referring to all the books he had read. Krishna laughed and said, "When the light has risen within a human being, all your scriptures are like a tank full of water when the flood has come."

If you are living in a desert, a tank full of water may feel like an ocean to you. When the flood has come, what meaning does a tank full of water have? When the creator is throbbing within you every moment, you must look within.

Importance of the spine

Your spinal column is the basis of everything that you experience right now. If you want to transcend the limitations of who you are right now, this is the most important part of your body. This is why it is also advisable to avoid massage therapy, chiropractic procedures and similar things, not because they are necessarily doing something wrong. It is just that if you want to expand your perception, your perception grows from your spine. So when it comes to spinal procedures, it is best to avoid them unless something very serious has happened in an accident or an injury that cannot be fixed without a surgery. If there is just a little bit of pain and trouble, these things can be fixed. It takes work to build it, but you can build it. The spine regenerates very well compared to any other part of your body. Thousands of people who had worn out discs have completely recovered from it by simply doing certain practices.

In terms of life, the spine is such an active place that you can very easily rejuvenate and regenerate cells that have been lost there. It is also very easy to do that in your brain. If people who are suffering from dementia and the like do the right

kind of things, they could regenerate that. Even in your life right now, how many neurons are active varies in a big way depending on how you are using your mind. When you are a little down, intoxicated or depressed, the number may be much less. By doing the right kind of things, you can enhance this. This would definitely be a boon for every human being, it does not matter who he or she is. The world could do with a little more intelligence.

The Best Time to Meditate and Do Yoga

Practices like Surya Namaskar and Shiva Namaskar should happen at these times of transition, in the twilight zone between night and day. During the sandhya Kalas, around sunrise and sunset, everything is in a state of flux. If you practice at that time, your ability to transcend limitations is better because your life energies are in a state of flux. That is one aspect of it.

Is it Hot? Not the Best Time!

Another aspect is that all these practices generate a certain amount of ushna. There is no equivalent for the word “ushna” in English, but it usually gets translated as heat. Heat, not in terms of temperature but as one of three aspects – the other ones being sheeta and pitta – that control various functions in the human system. If you have excess ushna, or in other words, if your samat prana is high, you feel your body is hot, but if you take your temperature, it is normal. Ushna is not like having a fever – it is experiential heat.

Samat prana or samana vayu is in charge of maintaining the warmth of the body. A yogi always wants to keep the body slightly on the warmer side because heat also indicates intensity and dynamism. If the body cools below a certain point, it creates inertia in the system. Almost all the practices are designed to take you to a somewhat higher realm than what people normally live at. A higher realm does not mean a higher level of metabolism. If the metabolism becomes high, you will exhaust yourself physically.

When your energies are in a higher realm, your body will function at an easier pace. We can prove this to you in a matter of three to six weeks – if you do certain practices and get your energies to a certain level, your physiological factors will settle down and go at an easier pace. When your energies are low, your body tends to go at a higher pace to keep the life process going, which will

deplete the system. If your bodily functions go at a certain speed, your mind will go crazy, and above all, it will reduce your lifespan.

We are conscious that doing practices will raise the ushna in the system. If the temperature outside is high and the ushna rises beyond a certain point, it will cause cellular damage. That is why yogic practices are always to be done in the cooler hours of the day. Between day and night, there is a transition that reduces the friction within the system, and therefore, the practices will generate less ushna. Because yoga evolved in tropical climates in India, we always said that all yogic practices must happen before 8:30 in the morning or after 4:00 or 4:30 in the evening.

Times of Transition in Yoga & Meditation

With yogic practices, you are trying to remold yourself. You may have great regard and respect for your parents, but you do not want to end up just the way they made you, or just the way they are. You want to be something different or something more. If you only psychologically and emotionally remold yourself, at some point in your life, you will fall back. There are many people who, when they were 18, said “No way!” and rebelled against their parents, but by the time they are 45, they walk, sit, talk, and behave like them, because mental changes will only go that far.

Attitudinal changes will not last. After some time, as life situations change and you become less conscious, you will fall back. If you say you are the way you are because your father was like that or because it is in your genes, you are saying you are a creature of the past. If you want to be a being of the future, it is necessary to remold the fundamentals of who you are. That is what we are trying to do with yogic practices – we want to remold ourselves into something entirely different.

The best time of the day to do this is always the sandhya when the energies on the planet are going through a certain transition and the friction within the system is greatly reduced, which allows the remolding to happen more easily. There are other aspects to it, but these are the two most fundamental reasons why yoga is practiced morning and evening.

Brahma Muhurta – The Best Time for Spiritual Progress

If you are looking for dramatic spiritual progress, you must do your yogic practices before sunrise, which usually means starting the practices at the Brahma Muhurta, which is the last quarter of the

night – anywhere between 3:30 a.m. to 5:30 or 6:00 a.m., or whatever is the time of sunrise. At that time, there is a certain process that you will become naturally conscious of if you do your practices in a certain way. If you are doing yogasanas, once your biology adjusts itself to the planet's biology, every morning, you will wake up by yourself between 3:20 and 3:40.

This is not a confession, but it is supposed to be a matter of pride for me – when I was a little boy, and even when I became a little older, I just could not wake up in the morning, no matter what. It took an hour-long effort from all the family members to wake me up. After some time, they gave up calling me because I anyway slept through all the calling. Since shaking did not work either, they would make me sit up – I would sit up and fall asleep again.

Then they would drag me out of the bed. My mother would put toothpaste on the brush and give it to me. I would stick it in my mouth and sleep off. After I brushed my teeth, she would say, “Bathe before you go to school.” I would go into the bathroom, sit down there, and fall asleep. Once I was awake, you could not stop me, but waking me up was something else. If no one woke me up, I would sleep until noon time. Only when I got too hungry, I would wake up – otherwise, nothing else would wake me up.

I started practicing yoga at the age of 11, and after about 12 to 18 months, it began to happen, and has been so ever since, that when I first wake up and check the time, it is always just before 3:40. I may choose to get up or to lie down again depending upon what time I went to bed, but every day, no matter which time zone I am in, for at least one moment, I am awake at that time, because once you do certain things with your system, your biology is in sync with the biology of the planet. 3:40 is not a time that someone came up with – there is something within the human system that is connected to the planet and will make you come awake.

The Brahma Muhurta is the best time for you to do practices if you want to transcend your physical nature or know dimensions that we refer to as spiritual. But if you are looking just for physical health, then the sandhya kala around sunrise is the best time to do practices.

Brahmarandhra: A Passage for Life

On top of the head, there is a spot known as Brahmarandhra. When a child is born, there is a tender spot where the bone does not form till the child grows to a certain age. Randhra is a Sanskrit word, but it is in common usage in other Indian languages too. Randhra means a passage, like a small hole or a tunnel. This is the space in the body through which life descends into the fetus.

The life process has the awareness to keep its options open as to whether this body is capable of sustaining it or not. So it keeps that trapdoor open for a certain period so that just in case it finds the body unsuitable for its existence, it will leave – and it does not want to leave from any other passage in the body; it wants to leave the way it came. A good guest always comes through the front door and goes out the front door. If he comes through the front door and goes out the back, that means your house has been swept clean! Even when you leave one day, if you leave consciously through whichever part of the body, it is fine. But if you can leave through the Brahmarandhra, it is the best way to leave.

There are many medical cases where stillbirth happens though by all medical parameters, the fetus is healthy and everything is fine. This is simply because the life within is still choosing. If a being enters into a fetus and finds it unsuitable as it evolves to become a baby, it leaves. That is why one door is kept open.

This is the reason why in Indian culture, so many precautions were taken to create a different kind of atmosphere around a pregnant woman. We are giving that up nowadays, but this used to be done hoping that something better than who you are comes into your womb. So a pregnant woman used to be kept in a certain state of comfort and wellbeing. With the right kind of incense, sounds and foods, everything was done so that her body is in a state that it welcomes the right kind of being.

Brahmarandhra is an “Antenna”

There is a lot of talk and many books have been written about the Brahmarandhra, and unfortunately many people start imagining things happening on top of their head. You need to understand, you will feel some sensation in whichever part of your body you focus your mind on. You can experiment and see. Focus at the tip of your little finger and see, you will feel so much sensation. And there are also many physiological twitches and twists

happening here and there in the body – especially if you are the nervous or tense kind. These shouldn't be mistaken as some great process happening within you.

There are 114 chakras in the body, of which two are outside the physical body. If a dimension beyond your physicality becomes a continuously active process within you, then after some time, these two chakras which are generally dormant, become active. If they become active, then you have an antenna on your head giving you a certain perspective of life!

Living On the Threshold

This is also always keeping you on the edge – on the threshold of life and beyond. It is the intention of a yogi to always keep himself on the threshold, so that any moment he wishes to, he will step out consciously. Especially for a yogi like me who is active, who floors his car, flies helicopters, plays football and breaks his knee, for a yogi like me it is very important that I keep myself always on the threshold. All yogis do, but I do it very much so, because just in case the helicopter crashes, I do not want to die unconsciously even there.

When you keep yourself on the threshold, it is safe. Tightrope walking is safe if you are balanced. For someone who is not balanced, it looks very risky but actually, it is safer than driving on the streets, because with tightrope walking, it is all you. On the street, it is not all you. A tightrope is much safer if you know how to do it. Once you have balance, sitting on the threshold is very safe. There is no risk to it. There is no chance of accidentally falling off, but it gives you the freedom – if things go wrong you can just step out, but you do not go unconsciously.

Don't start thinking that you are on the threshold. If you feel some sensations in your body, it is alright. Either you can just continue to do your sadhana, or if you want to transform this energy into a bigger possibility, you must come to us.

Build a Culture of Peace

September 21 will be celebrated as the International Day of Peace. World peace, however, seems to be a very distant possibility when bodies of children wash up on merciless shores, because the innocent are being massacred by "soldiers of god."

So, can peaceful co-existence ever become reality? Yes, it can, if we can create peaceful

individuals. We need a culture of peace in our day-to-day life. Nothing much is being done about how human beings can maintain their bodies, minds, emotions and the very energy within, in a certain state of peacefulness. It is important to realize that peace is not the goal of life but the very foundation of life and peaceful individuals are the building blocks of a peaceful world.

Peace and joy are assurances that you will not do unpleasant things. If you are feeling pleasant within yourself, why would you do unpleasant things to someone else? Only when a human being is not peaceful, there is a possibility of the world not being peaceful. If human beings were peaceful, the world will definitely be peaceful.

This cannot be done with a crowd. It needs a committed approach to individual transformation. Unless there are movements which work towards individual transformation, there will be no peace.

What you call peace, is a certain kind of chemistry; joy is another kind of chemistry; anxiety is another kind of chemistry. Every human experience has a chemical basis to it. Recent research into the human brain has yielded some incredible results. An Israeli scientist spent several years researching certain aspects of the human brain, and he found there are millions of cannabis receptors in the brain! Then neurologists discovered that at different times of the day, if you closely observe the system and what happens with the brain chemistry, the body develops its own cannabis which satisfy the receptors in the brain. If a person is in a certain state of blissfulness or ecstasy, he produces these chemicals, which the brain is constantly waiting for. Even your brain is waiting for you to be blissful – millions of cannabis receptors are sitting there and waiting, not for you to smoke or drink or do drugs, but for you to become blissful.

When they found this chemical which goes towards the receptors, there was no name for it. The scientist had the freedom to name this newly found chemical. He wanted to give it a name which would be truly relevant. When he researched the Indian scriptures, to his amazement, he found that the Indian scriptures are the only scriptures which talk about blissfulness. No other religion on the planet talks about bliss. Religions talk about sin, religions talk about fear, religions talk about guilt, religions talk about punishment. But no other religion talks about blissfulness. So

he called this chemical, which moves towards the cannabis receptors, "Anandamide."

If you simply maintain your inner chemistry in a certain way, the body itself will produce these "bliss" molecules, whilst the nervous system will receive it. If you generate sufficient amount of anandamide in your system, you will be blissful, yet alert.

Inner Evolution

Nowhere in the world has any culture looked at inner evolution with such depth as in Indian culture. When Adiyogi spoke about evolution, he propounded far beyond physical evolution. He spoke about nine manifestations of the divine. The first manifestation is the form of a fish – Matsya avatara, aquatic life. The second manifestation of Koorma Avatara – a turtle – amphibious life. The third manifestation is Varaha Avatara, divine manifested in the form of a boar – a mammal. Next is Narasimha Avatara which is half-man and half-animal form. The fifth manifestation of the divine is Vamana Avatara, a dwarf man. Then comes Parasurama Avatara, a full-fledged man but emotionally volatile. Following him is Rama Avatara, a peaceful man. The next one is Krishna Avatara, a loving man. The ninth is supposed to be the Buddha, a meditative man. Next is to be a mystical being.

This is not about a single person. This is about humanity evolving, life evolving, in a certain way.

Only if individuals evolve to peacefulness, joyousness and meditateness by their own nature, can we hope for stable societies as was present in our culture millennia ago. In such societies, art, music and literature flourished. The search for a dimension beyond physical nature allowed gentle flowering of each individual. Strife, conflict and violence did not hold sway.

Partners in Peace

If we do not focus on individual transformation, the anger that resides in individuals can only be restrained and contained, and it will explode in so many ways. So, when the UN asks us to become "partners in peace," let us first commit to becoming peaceful and joyous human beings ourselves. We have the technology for inner evolution, let us have the willingness to learn and apply it.

If there is one role that the people of this nation must resolve to play on this International Day of Peace, it is to light the way for inner transformation for all. So that children may grow and

thrive under benevolent gazes and borders are drawn only on maps and not hearts.

Violence – The Humanity Within

We urgently need to understand that today, we are not equipped with only fists and clubs anymore. We have gotten ourselves equipped with such absolutely destructive devices that today if you get angry, it is not about you killing your neighbor, you could be putting an end to the world. Once these kinds of technologies and capabilities have come into our hands, it is extremely important that the world turns meditative. If the quality of meditation does not enter this world, with the kind of technologies and destructive capabilities we have, we could cause great damage.

When I say destructive, I am not talking only about the bomb. Almost everything that we do today is destructive. The very car that we drive, the very factories that we run for our wellbeing are all destructive in that sense.

In pursuit of our economic wellbeing, the volume of violence we have imposed on every other creature on this planet is unspeakable. Don't think of violence as just killing another human being. Any destruction of life beyond the need for one's survival is violence. If you look at it that way, today's societies are enormously violent. Our very existence is violence.

Though there is an instinct of self-preservation in us which is a biological factor, of all the creatures on the planet, a human being has the capability to look beyond his instinct of self-preservation and express himself in the world, which is what is of utmost need right now.

Human beings have often displayed this. When the most horrible situations were happening, individual human beings stood up and expressed the beauty of what it means to be a human being. As a group, we can become an ugly force, but still the humanity in us beats.

Certain individuals still stood up and expressed their humanity to show the world how beautiful a human being can be when he thinks beyond his own wellbeing.

The Types of Yoga: Understanding the Four Essential Paths

Q: Sadhguru, there are so many different types of yoga. How do I know which kind of yoga is best for me?

Sadhguru: Right now, the only things which are in your experience are your body, your mind, and your emotions. You know them to some extent, and you can infer that if these three things have to happen the way they are happening, there must be an energy that makes them happen. Without energy, all this cannot be happening. Some of you might have experienced it. Others can easily infer that for these three things to function, there must be an energy behind them. For example, a microphone amplifies a person's voice. Even if you don't know anything about the microphone, you can infer that there is a source that powers it.

4 types of yoga for 4 aspects

These are the only four realities in your life: body, mind, emotion, and energy. Whatever you wish to do with yourself, it must be on these four levels. Whatever you wish to do, you can only do it with your body, your mind, your emotions or your energy. If you use your emotions and try to reach the ultimate, we call this bhakti yoga. That means the path of devotion. If you use your intelligence and try to reach the ultimate, we call this gnana yoga. That means the path of intelligence. If you use your body, or physical action to reach the ultimate, we call this karma yoga. That means the path of action. If you transform your energies and try to reach the ultimate, we call this kriya yoga. That means internal action.

These are the only four ways you can get somewhere: either through karma, gnana, bhakti or kriya – body, mind, emotion, or energy. “No, no, I am on the path of faith. I don't need to do anything else.” Is there anyone who is only head, no heart, hands and energy? Is there anyone who is only heart, not the other things? You are a combination of these four things. It is just that in one person the heart may be dominant, in another person the head may be dominant, in yet another person the hands may be dominant, but everybody is a combination of these four. So you need a combination of these four. It is just that, only if it is mixed in the right way for you, it works best for you. What we give for one person, if it is given to you, it may not work well for you because that person is so much heart and this much head. That is why on the spiritual path there is so much

stress on a live Guru. He mixes the cocktail right for you, otherwise there is no punch.

Uniting the four types of yoga

It happened once. Four men were walking in the forest. The first was a gnana yogi, the second was a bhakti yogi, the third was a karma yogi, and the fourth was a kriya yogi.

Usually, these four people can never be together. The gnana yogi has total disdain for all other types of yoga. His is the yoga of intelligence, and normally, an intellectual has complete disdain for everyone else, particularly these bhakti types, who look upward and chant God's name all the time. They look like a bunch of idiots to him.

But a bhakti yogi, a devotee, thinks all this gnana, karma and kriya yoga is a waste of time. He pities the others who don't see that when God is here, all you need to do is hold His hand and walk. All this mind-splitting philosophy, this bone-bending yoga, is not needed; God is here, because God is everywhere.

Then there is the karma yogi, the man of action. He thinks all the other types of yogis, with their fancy philosophies, are just lazy.

But a kriya yogi is the most disdainful of all. He laughs at everyone. Don't they know that all of existence is energy? If you don't transform your energy, whether you long for God or you long for anything else, nothing is going to happen. There will be no transformation.

These four people customarily can't get along. But today they happened to be walking together in the forest and a storm broke out. It grew very intense and began raining heavily. They started running, looking for shelter.

The bhakti yogi, the devotion man, said, "In this direction there is an ancient temple. Let's go there." He's a devotee; he knows the geography of temples very well!

They all ran in that direction. They came to an ancient temple. All the walls had crumbled long ago; just the roof and four columns remained. They rushed into the temple; not out of love for God, but just to escape the rain.

There was a deity in the center. They ran towards it. The rain was lashing down from every direction. There was no other place to go, so they moved closer and closer. Finally, there was no alternative. They just hugged the deity and sat down.

The moment these four people hugged the idol, there was a huge fifth presence. Suddenly, God appeared.

In all their four minds the same question arose: Why now? They wondered, "We expounded so many philosophies, did so many poojas, served so many people, did so much body-breaking sadhana, but you didn't come. Now when we're just escaping the rain, you turn up. Why?"

God said, "At last you four idiots got together!"

If these dimensions don't walk together, human beings will be one big mess. Right now, for most people, these dimensions are aligned in different directions. Your mind is thinking and feeling one way, your physical body is going another way, your energy another way. Yoga is simply the science of aligning these three dimensions.

Yoga – The ultimate union

When we say "yoga", for many of you it probably means some impossible physical postures. That is not what we are referring to here. Yoga simply means to be in perfect tune. When you are in yoga, your body, mind and energy and existence are in absolute harmony. When your body and mind are in a relaxed state and at a certain level of blissfulness, you can be free of so many nagging ailments. Let us say, you go and sit in your office with a nagging headache. Your headache is not a major disease, but just that throbbing could take away some of your enthusiasm for work and perhaps some of your capability for that day. But with the practice of yoga, your body and mind can be kept at the highest possible peak.

The word "yoga" literally means "union." When you experience everything as one in your consciousness, then you are in yoga. To attain to that unity within you, there are many ways. For example, there is hatha yoga. Hatha yoga means you start with the body. The body itself has its own attitudes, its own ego, its own nature. Apart from your mind, do you see, your body has its own ego? Suppose you say, "From tomorrow, I want to get up at five in the morning and walk on the beach." You set the alarm. The alarm rings. You want to get up but your body says, "Shut up and sleep." It has its own way.

So we start with the body. Hatha yoga is a way of working with the body, disciplining the body, purifying the body, and preparing the body for higher levels of energy. All of us are alive, all of us are human beings. But all of us do not experience life to the same intensity because our pranic

energies are not the same. Different people experience life in different levels of intensity.

For example, someone sees a tree. A tree is just a tree. Most people don't even see it. Somebody sees the tree in more detail. An artist sees every shade of it. Someone else not only sees the tree but also sees the divine in it. Seeing is not the same because the level of intensity with which you experience life is not the same.

The whole process of yoga is to take you from something that you know, and take the next step into the unknown. We have made this yogic science almost like a physical science

The whole process of yoga is to take you from something that you know, and take the next step into the unknown. We have made this yogic science almost like a physical science. Suppose you mix two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen, you get water. Even when a great scientist puts it together, it is water. Even if an idiot puts it together, it is only water. Similarly, in yoga too, whether a great yogi does it or an ignorant person does it, it does not matter. If he does the practices and sadhana properly, the result is there to be seen.

In yoga, these systems have been identified. To start with, you work with the body, then you move to the breath, then to the mind, then to the inner self. Like this many steps have been created. They are only different aspects. They are not really different types of yoga. In fact, we address all of them at once. It is important that in a very balanced way all of them are addressed at once, as one unit. Otherwise, if you work just with the body, it is only preparatory in nature. So, there is really no division as such. Yoga is a union of all these.

Benefits of Meditation: Shambhavi Mahamudra

Meditation is a powerful tool for spiritual growth, and is essentially a process to take one beyond the limitations of body and mind. Teachers and practitioners of these "inner technologies" have also experienced the many physical and mental benefits of meditation and yoga. In recent years, a growing number of scientific studies and research on meditation have corroborated these experiences.

Isha's introductory practice is the Shambhavi Mahamudra, an ancient kriya that has millions of

dedicated practitioners who aver that they experience greater emotional balance, concentration, focus, stability and better health with regular practice of the meditation. In fact, there have been several scientific studies that measure the various benefits of practicing the kriya regularly – both with regard to brain activity during the kriya, as well as statistical research of how it affects people's health and well-being.

How does the Kriya Work?

The reason why most people are unhappy or unhealthy is that the physical, the mental and the “pranic” body are not in alignment.

Sadhguru says, “There is a certain way to engineer our system, to make this body, to make this mind... the very chemistry within us the way we want it.” Traditionally, yoga sees the human being as five layers of body: the physical body, the mental body, the pranic energy body, the etheric body and the bliss body. The reason why most people are unhappy or unhealthy is that the physical, the mental and the “pranic” body are not in alignment. Sadhguru explains, “If they are properly aligned, a natural expression, an overwhelming expression of joyfulness will naturally happen within a human being. Now, we are looking at the technology of keeping these three bodies constantly aligned so that joyfulness is not an accidental happening; joyfulness becomes a normal condition, a natural way of living for you.”

Studies on Shambhavi Mahamudra

Studies on Shambhavi Mahamudra have been varied: some have examined its impact on disease status and medicine usage, some have looked specifically at menstrual disorders, while others have studied the benefits of this meditation on sleep, heart rate variability, brain activity, etc. Other studies have researched general well-being and improved attention spans among regular meditators.

Let's take a look at the results of some of the key studies.

Benefits of meditation #1: Improved cardiac health

Two studies published in 2008 and 2012 examined how Shambhavi Mahamudra supported cardiac health. The studies showed that participants had a more well-balanced Cardiac Autonomic Nervous System and an overall increase in Heart Rate Variability (HRV) during the practice. A higher HRV has been linked to better immunity to stressful situations, and is said to bestow a great-

er survival advantage on individuals. A lower HRV on the other hand has been linked to various heart diseases such as coronary artery disease, hypertension, chronic heart failure and myocardial infarction. The researchers conclude that practitioners of the Shambhavi Mahamudra and other Isha Yoga practices have higher exercise tolerance, better cardiac response to stressful situation, lower probability of undergoing hypertension or cardiac troubles such as ischemia or infarction.

Benefits of meditation #2: Greater coherence within the brain

A study from the Centre for Biomedical Engineering, IIT Delhi, looked at EEG (Electroencephalography) data from practitioner's brains before, during and after practicing the kriya. The results show that practitioners experienced a greater level of coherence between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. EEG coherence is known to be a measure of how well connected various regions of the brain are. Higher coherence indicates greater exchange of information between various regions, as well as improved functional coupling and coordination. Higher levels of coherence are also correlated to higher scores on IQ and creativity tests, as well emotional stability and cognitive flexibility.

The researchers also measured signals at various prominent EEG spectral bands known as the alpha, beta, delta and theta. Shambhavi practitioners were seen to have higher alpha band power in general, indicating that they experienced lower stress levels. There was a high increase in delta band power and theta band and a notable reduction in beta band power. A reduction in beta band power indicates reduced susceptibility to mental tension, excitement and anxiety. Higher theta and delta activity have been noted in previous research as indicative of conscious access to deeper states of meditation. “Delta rhythms combined with alpha are known to reflect an inner intuitive empathetic radar, a kind of sixth sense” the researchers note.

Benefits of meditation #3: Improved sleep

A study presented at the 20th Congress of the European Sleep Research Society, Lisbon, Portugal compared the sleep patterns of 15 male meditators with a control group of 15 age and education-matched, male non-meditators. Participants were aged between 25 and 55 years. The meditators had practiced Shambhavi Mahamudra as well as other Isha Yoga practices.

Whole-night polysomnographic measures were recorded in participants and EEG data was recorded, along with other parameters. The results showed that the percentage of REM sleep, sleep efficiency and total sleep time of meditators was significantly higher as compared to the control group of non-meditators. Meditators also experienced better sleep quality as evidenced by fewer awakenings after sleep onset.

The study concludes that consistent practice of the Shambhavi meditation has a positive impact on quality of sleep.

Benefits of meditation #4: Improved attention and focus

A study, published in the journal *Perception*, looked at how 89 participants performed in the Stroop task and attentional blink task before and after a 3-month Isha Yoga meditation retreat. The Stroop task looks at interference in the reaction time of a task. For example, when the name of a color is printed in some other color (for example, “red” is printed in black), respondents can make errors in identifying the printing color. Participants of the study were prone to fewer errors after the retreat than before it.

Similarly, the attentional blink task involves participants identifying various visual stimuli presented to them within extremely short durations. Participants showed 58% correct detection during pre-retreat tests and 69% correct detection in post-retreat tests. The researchers conclude that “the hypothesis that meditation tends to improve allocation of attentional resources.”

A similar study by a team from the Université de Toulouse, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behaviour, UC Irvine and the Indiana University School of Medicine looked at how Isha Yoga practices improve performance in attentional tasks due to better allocation of attentional resources, an ability to sustain attention and focus, faster re-allocation of attentional resources, greater cognitive flexibility and a reduction in automatic response. The study observes that these improvements are likely due to structural, anatomical and functional changes in meditators’ cognitive systems as compared to control groups drawn from the general population.

Benefits of meditation #5: Reduced menstrual disorders

75% of women are thought to experience problems related to menstruation, which has a huge physical, psychological, social and economic

impact on their life. The primary means of treatment for such issues are known to offer less than satisfactory relief, even when patients choose surgery as a last resort. Currently, Yoga has become very popular as one of the mainstay alternate treatments for many disorders. The benefits of meditation and yoga in relation with such ailments have been under study for a while and show great promise.

A team from the Poole Hospitals NHS Trust, UK, and the Indiana University School of Medicine, conducted a questionnaire survey of 128 female practitioners of the Shambhavi Mahamudra between the age group of 14 and 55 years, from the USA, UK, Singapore, Malaysia and Lebanon. 72% of the respondents practiced every day and the rest practiced 1-3 times in a week.

The questionnaire asked respondents about the prevalence and impact of various menstrual disorders before they began the kriya and after they had practiced it for at least six months. Disorders covered included Dysmenorrhea, symptoms of premenstrual syndrome, heaviness of menstrual flow, irregularity of menstrual cycle, the need for medical or surgical intervention for disorders, and the impairment of work during the menstrual period.

The results showed a 57% decrease in the impact of Dysmenorrhea, a 72% decrease in psychological symptoms such as irritability, mood swings, crying spells, depression and arguments, a 40% decrease in breast swelling and tenderness, and a 50% decrease in bloating and weight gain. There was an 87% decrease in the incidence of severe menstrual flow and an 80% decrease in the irregularity of the cycle. There was a 63% reduction in the need for medical or surgical interventions, and an 83% reduction in the number of instances of impairment at work.

The authors conclude that the kriya “can be considered as an adjunct therapy for menstrual disorders given the improved symptoms in all the parameters.”

Other benefits of meditation

In a questionnaire asking about improvements in life experienced from practicing the Shambhavi Mahamudra, 536 respondents indicated how the kriya had helped reduce medication and eliminate problems such as depression, allergies, asthma and other ailments. 91% reported greater inner peace, 87% reported improved emotional balance, 80% experienced greater mental clarity,

79% experienced increased energy levels, 74% reported improved self confidence and 70% reported better concentration and higher productivity.

Among meditators who had been suffering depression, 87% reported improvement, 25% reduced their medication, and 50% were able to stop their medication. Similarly, for those suffering anxiety, 86% reported improvement, 28% reduced their medication, and 50% were able to stop their medication. Among those with insomnia, 73% reported improvement, 40% reduced their medication, and 30% were able to stop their medication. Similar improvements were seen for those with poor resistance to colds and flu, those who had suffered from headaches, asthma, fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorder, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and a range of other chronic ailments.

In brief

Taken together, all these results support a drop in stress and anxiety, a boost in mental alertness and focus, and an increase in self-awareness due to practicing the Shambhavi Mahamudra. It is also clear that regular practice benefits cardiac health and either leads to a stop in the use of medication or at least reduces it considerably for a range of ailments including hypertension, depression and menstrual issues.

Try it out!

The beauty of the Shambhavi Mahamudra is that it takes a mere 21 minutes of your day. The kriya is a part of the Inner Engineering program, Isha's flagship course. A large part of the course can be taken in the comfort of your home, through Inner Engineering Online, and initiations into Shambhavi are offered around the world at regular intervals.

Another option is the Isha Kriya guided meditation. Isha Kriya is a powerful 12-18 minute practice that is offered online as a free guided meditation. For those who would like a taste of what meditation has to offer, this would be a great start. Try it at IshaKriya.com

Sin and Virtue

If you remove the idea of what is right and wrong from your life, you will see that everyone is handling their life the way they know it. Everyone is doing whatever they think is best at that moment. Even a criminal killing someone does it because

he thinks that is the best thing to do at that moment. It is not a question of right and wrong, it is only a question of whether certain actions are necessary or unnecessary for our life. That is all we have to look at.

Guilt And Suspicion, Sin And Virtue

Unfortunately in every society, since childhood, people have constantly fed you with concepts of what is sin and virtue, good and bad.

If you look at all the things that are supposed to be a sin, the whole of humanity is always sinning. In such a situation, people naturally become a little deceitful while doing simple activities in their life.

The one who is performing some activity is going through guilt and the one who is looking at it is suspicious and judgmental because if you are in this state of mind, you can't help being suspicious.

If you take away your judgments about life, life is happening in so many ways – crazy ways. You take what you want from it and leave what you don't want. That's all you can actually do with life. But if you label this action as good and that action as bad, you invariably become suspicious. And there is a lot of room and scope for suspicion because so many people are doing what you think is bad, including yourself.

You have created virtue and sin and then you wonder why guilt, why suspicion? They are by-products, you cannot help it. If you don't want guilt and suspicion in this world, you must take away sin and virtue, right and wrong, and see life the way it is. But we are not willing to take away virtue and sin. The whole world is playing a huge game based on this. We are neither conducting our lives with our intelligence and awareness, nor with our humanity. Unfortunately, we are trying to conduct our life through morality.

If your humanity was in full bloom, would someone have to teach you as to what's right, what's wrong, what to do and what not to do? It would happen naturally.

You are conducting your life by your morality, so guilt and suspicion are natural outcomes of that. If you conduct your life on the basis of the quality and exuberance of your humanity, there will be neither guilt nor suspicion.

The Importance of Being in the Right Company

Q: Sadhguru, I share an apartment with other people, and whenever I'm away for longer periods of time, I sublet my room. All kinds of people are staying there – once a girl who turned into a drug addict, and different couples too. I'm wondering to what extent this could affect me. What's your take on that?

Sadhguru: Do not underestimate the influence of the company that you keep. Even if you do not drink or do drugs, being in the company of people who do impacts you on a completely different level. Gautama the Buddha described the ultimate truth, the one who transmits truth, and the sangha or the kind of company you keep, as equally important. He is socially correct but existentially wrong. Actually, the first priority should be the sangha or the company that you keep, then the Buddha or the one who transmits truth, then the dhamma or the ultimate truth.

Most human beings are – knowingly or unknowingly – shaped by the company that they keep. They may not realize to what extent. It is not only your family and friends who have an impact on you, but your social exposure in general. I would say your social exposure has shaped almost ninety percent of your personality. Choosing your company is not about being discriminatory, but about being discretionary as to where you want to be and with whom you want to be. It is definitely not ideal to be among people who are so compulsive in nature that you can consider them addicts, no matter what they are addicted to.

Moving from Compulsiveness to Consciousness

Your whole effort is to move from compulsiveness to consciousness. Being among people who are very compulsive is not supportive. You have not yet reached a place where you can be among the most compulsive people and still be absolutely conscious and unaffected on the level of your system. You may or may not get addicted yourself. I hope you will not, but it definitely influences you in many ways. If external influences did not have an impact, why would anyone make the effort of building an ashram? It is one big headache to maintain a spiritual place which is like an oasis in a churning ocean. To keep it like an island that remains untouched by what is happening around takes a lot.

On an average, about seven thousand people are visiting the Isha Yoga Center every day. To wel-

come them, to let them be part of it, and not to become them is a great challenge. We need solid people. Otherwise, everyone tries to bring a bit of their home, their street, their town and make it a part of the ashram. People try to introduce their whims and fancies, their likes and dislikes. Almost everyone who comes tries to exert some influence upon the ashram. Some ask about doing or having things in a certain way – others just do it. To politely or sometimes forcefully refuse their influence is not easy. The idea of an ashram is to maintain a space that is dedicated towards a purpose.

Wherever you live, you need to maintain your space in such a way that it is dedicated to the purpose for which you are living. Your private space should reflect where you want to go, rather than someone else's compulsive ways of living. This is very important; until you come to a place where, even if you go to hell, you will come out untouched. Right now, you tend to get carried away. Do not overestimate yourself.

Cultivating the Right Kind of Company

Creating the right kind of space – and if necessary moving away from negative influences – is very important for your growth. This is not only about avoiding people with a drug addiction, but with any kind of excessive compulsiveness. People are dedicated to their compulsiveness. If you look at the way many so-called normal families live – “normal” in the sense that the children are not drug addicts, the husband is not an alcoholic, and the wife is not a shopaholic – the way they exist is so anti-consciousness. If you can transform them, that is great. If you cannot transform them, the best thing is to step away. For almost all human beings, the kind of company they keep shapes their lives. To what extent may vary from person to person, but it definitely determines a lot of things.

Maybe right now, what kind of company I keep does not make any difference to me. But the company I kept in earlier times definitely determined who I am today. If I had kept the wrong kind of company then, things would surely be very different for me now. What was relevant for me then is relevant for you now. It is very important for your growth that you either cultivate the right kind of company or make choices not to be in the wrong company.

The Significance of Cleanliness

Shaucha, or cleanliness, is an important aspect of one's spiritual development. Cleanliness is not just about the body. It is also about our surroundings. Everything that we perceive through our sense organs can either create filth or wellbeing within ourselves.

Whatever we perceive, if it is pleasant upon our senses, we experience it one way. If it is unpleasant upon our senses, that becomes filth in our experience. If our surroundings are not clean, or in other words, if our surroundings are not pleasant upon our senses, then the images that we create in our mind, the projections that happen upon the seat of our experience turn unpleasant. When you create unpleasantness like this, going into blissful states of experience and consciously generating the nature of your experience becomes difficult.

Whether you are miserable or joyful is determined essentially by what you are doing within yourself. A spiritual process essentially means everything that you are, happens consciously – your experience of life is determined by you. If this has to happen, it is important that our sense organs do not perceive something as unpleasant.

As you make your bed...

I am sure that in every culture, you have been told at some point – if not by your parents, at least by your grandparents – about how to keep your clothes and bedclothes. In India in particular, they say that if you leave your bed clothes crumpled and unfolded, ghosts will come and gather. When you sleep, they will sleep with you and trouble you. I think in English there is a saying, "As you make your bed, so shall you lie upon it." This is essentially about the forms around you. Today, scientists tell us that the whole existence is just one energy manifesting itself in a million different ways. As energy has generated forms, forms can in turn generate energy. And every form around you is generating a certain type of energy.

The kind of forms we build, the kind of forms we hold around us and the kind of structures we live in have a phenomenal impact on everything that we are. If there is a little more awareness about the way we sit, the way we arrange ourselves and the way we keep things around us, we can create the spatial arrangement in a way that is conducive to looking inward, and which makes our spiritual process much easier. If you want to drive from point A to point B, you could probably drive

through anything, but if a proper road is laid out, you would get there easily. In that context, if the spatial arrangement around us is organized in such a way that it is conducive for inward looking, it will happen much more easily.

PILGRIMAGE TO KAILASH

Right from my childhood, my great-grandmother told me many wonderful stories about Manasarovar. I thoroughly enjoyed these stories, but I never believed one word of them. So when I made the first trip to Manasarovar in 2006, I made it for the sheer adventure of it because people told me the drive is so fantastic and so arduous. And I love to drive through this kind of rough terrain where it is 5 percent paved road, 10 percent unpaved road and the rest -- no roads. It is a driver's dream and a passenger's horror. I did not come to Manasarovar for any spiritual reasons, but what I witnessed just beat all the logic in my head. I have encountered many situations one cannot believe, mystical dimensions stranger than fairytales, but still, I was not prepared for what I saw. Now I am willing to believe any toothless old grandmother's story because what is happening there beats all the tall stories you might have heard. It is just unbelievable, unbelievable.

Though I have been to Manasarovar year after year, it still continues to intrigue and amaze me in ways that defy articulation. What happens upon the lake between 2:30 am and 3:45 am is so startling and powerful. Though I was dead beat after a 19-hour drive through the most treacherous terrain that you can drive through, and went to bed at about midnight, I unknowingly sat up at exactly 2:30 am. The dogs in the region seemed to become very nervous exactly at this time and no one can miss their anxious barking that continues for hours.

The morning process at Manasarovar was pushed back a few hours because of heavy rainfall. So just after the process was complete and many of the participants were taking their dip in the lake, I jumped back into the Land Cruiser and headed for Kailash to meet up with another group of trekkers who were already there.

Reaching Shershong later than we should have for the trek to the base of Mount Kailash, and with a certain amount of time wasted in solving some logistical bottlenecks, it was already after 3 pm when I started the trek. And at over 16,000 feet, have to walk with restraint. I trekked one-third of

the way and had the first glimpse of Kailash. As usual, something takes over me and from there on it's not me – just Him. Without a stop, I go up as if downhill and in just over four hours, I am there.

The whole reason why you make a pilgrimage like this is to understand and experience that there is something beyond what you logically know in this world as 'real'. Either you remain within the limitations of your logic or you taste the magic. The logical will handle the mundane, which you must take care of. But at the same time, a point should come where you are willing to leave logic aside and taste the magic of life. Otherwise, life will remain mundane and nothing beyond it will ever touch you.

Kailash is a phenomenon like no other; its mysticism, its magic, its beauty, above all, in its magnitude, there is no comparison to this sacred being. I call Kailash a 'being' as it is more present than you and me.

Kshetra Sanyasa

It has been thirty years since I realized the meaning and purpose of who I am and what I could do. When I look back, these thirty years seem like the day before yesterday in my experience because it has been going too rapidly. The first twelve years of my life, I was very taciturn, barely spoke, all kinds of things cooking in my head, you wouldn't imagine – all kinds. Another twelve or thirteen years later, yoga became a part of my life, but I became more and more aware of the world around me, the way it is and the way it functions. And by the day, I became angrier and angrier.

If you are looking for justice, you will die of anger, believe me. There is no other way because there is no such thing in human societies, unless you believe what other people tell you. If you are able to see how people function, what they do within the family, in the social structure, in the nation, in the world, you will only die of anger. So, I was raging within myself. Fortunately, my involvement with finding expression limited itself to attending revolutionary meetings and sticking posters at the university. I did not go to the extent of picking up the gun. A few of my friends did and they went all the way, one of them became a prominent leader and was killed about two years ago. I was so angry with the way the world functions – how much deception, how much injustice, how many uncaring ways of functioning, how human beings treat each other, how human beings treat every

other creature on this planet. All this made me suffocated and angry.

If the coolness of enlightenment did not happen, I would have died of anger. There was so much rage in me. I did not display it in my daily life but I think my blood was not at normal temperature. Inside every vein in my body, every artery in my body was burning because I saw discrimination, injustice, deception, just in everything. It took a certain dimension of perception to look at the other aspect of life – not just of human beings – but of the creation and the source of creation. How beautiful it is, how compassionate it is, how absolutely incredible it is. If that dimension had not opened up for me, whatever expression my anger found, I can assure you one thing – I would have been efficient and that would not be good. That is why the spiritual process is so vital for our existence. Either you have to be insensitive or spiritual, otherwise you will only be angry.

If you become sensitive, conscious and not enlightened, it is a horrible place to live. If you are absolutely ignorant, it is quite fine. If you are enlightened, it is fantastic. In between – I have been there – it is not a good place to be. So, what does it take? The spiritual process has always been associated with renunciation. Again, one badly misunderstood word. People think to renounce means, 'I have to give up everything.' No, it is like you renounced your mother's womb to become an infant, you renounced your infancy to become a child, you renounced your childhood to become a youth, you renounced your youth to become middle-aged, you renounced your middle-age to become old age, you renounced old age to become the grave; unless you are already a very grave person. You will anyway do it. If you do it consciously, gracefully, then we say that is renunciation. Otherwise, we say it is entanglement. If you are constantly renouncing – that is, something smaller is falling away and something larger is becoming apparent to you – this is renunciation. Renunciation means you gave up petty things and moved on to bigger things and you continue to do it. This is renunciation; that you are not an entanglement.

The word 'Sanyas' creates a lot of negativity in the social structure today because Sanyasis have set such a bad example. Not all of them, many of them have been fantastic – but many chose that as another way of livelihood. People misunderstood because they saw bad examples. I have been mulling over this for a long time now, par-

ticularly in the last one-and-half to two years. I know enough about life to know that any human being, if he remains in the right kind of space, can be transformed. An Angulimala, a man who chopped off people's fingers to count his achievements of robbery and hung them around his neck – he was wearing a garland of people's fingers and he had gathered hundreds – such a man turned around and became a sage. Today, we know that many who are trapped in prisons have turned into real sages in their own right. And for us, it has been an absolutely incredible journey. Those who are teaching Isha Yoga or Inner Engineering know what this means – the kind of transformation that they see in people in a matter of three or seven days. There is no better joy than that in terms of doing something in the world, the way people blossom right there in just those few days.

I know one hundred percent that it does not matter what kind you bring, if you keep them in the right kind of atmosphere, the right kind of energy, the right kind of influence, they can be transformed into something absolutely incredible and beautiful. Sanyas has been spinning in my head big time, I have been thinking how to bring this forth to people on a larger scale. Right now, somebody has to be a Brahmachari for a certain number of years, but that is not going to happen to everybody. At least your wives and husbands will not allow it, and your life situations will not allow it.

Sanyas does not mean that you have to go away somewhere. Sanyas means you are soaked in a constant longing to grow. If you grow, you are always discarding or renouncing something. Only those who are stagnant can live without renunciation. Those who are growing are always renouncing something. If you do not renounce something, you will not have the next. This is the nature of life. So, an active Sanyas where people can participate in different ways will open up in the next year or so. Wherever you may be, you can be a Sanyasi. You may be married but you can still be a Sanyasi because you have taken a vow, never to be stagnant.

Every moment, something new should happen in your life. Something old should fall away. You must renounce something old and something new should happen to you. If not every moment, at least every day it must happen because if you do not soak yourself in a certain longing, the Grace will go missing in your life. If there is no longing in

you, even if the most beautiful things are around you, it will not enter you because the longing is missing.

To create an opportunity for people to be constantly in a space of Grace, to be soaked with this energy, we will create an opportunity called 'Kshetra Sanyasa' which means that you take a vow never to leave the energy space. Three dimensions of Kshetra Sanyasa of different levels of intensity will be set up in the coming year.

Before we handle that which is not, which is **the future**, to come to ease and to be stable – if you achieve these two things – the rest will happen. Always you are at ease and always you are stable, the rest will happen according to your capability, according to the situations. There are so many factors, but all these factors will work to your benefit. If these two things are not there – if you are not at ease and you are not stable – you will see, one day you will shoot up, the next day you will come crashing down. So, before we handle the future, it is very important that we bring this dimension into the present, that we are comfortable and stable.

Doorway to the Beyond

In India, people use deities in very powerful ways. Any number of Devi worshippers are there, when they sit in front of the Devi, they have a tremendous insight into various aspects of life, but once they step out, they will be innocent of what they uttered just a little while ago. I remember when I was about nine years of age, I was in Guntakal in Andhra Pradesh. I was studying there for two years. There was one lady on the street side with one little temple, an old lady with dreadlocked hair. She must have been over eighty years of age and she was small, like a sparrow. I remember this very well. I went there with my grandmother who was a kind of a meditation initiator herself. A guru had given my grandmother a mantra and she would in turn initiate people. Some families kept her as their Guru Maa. In very close circles, people used to call her 'Mysore Amma' because she spent a certain segment of her life in Mysore. But that was not her known name.

My grandmother and I went and sat inside this little temple. It was small, built with brick and stone. This lady who was taking care of the temple went into a trance-like state sitting in front of her Devi. She started making all kinds of sounds,

'Haauu, Haauu' and then she said 'Mysore Amma! Mysore Amma!' This is not a name that anybody could just know, and she began saying all kinds of things about my grandmother in front of me. My grandmother was so embarrassed -- already I was so much trouble to her. My grandmother tried to interfere and say, 'No, no, no! It's not like that!' but this old woman just kept on 'Aaiyee, Aaiyee!' and told her to shut up. She went on saying so many very embarrassing truths about my grandmother.

Ramanujan was a brilliant mathematician from Tamil Nadu. He had very little formal education, he was mostly self-taught, but he went to Cambridge to work with various mathematicians there. When I say mathematics, you need to understand it is not a school subject. You can convert the whole creation into numbers; that is mathematics. It took years for great mathematicians in the world to understand his work. He did many theorems and said they were given to him by 'Namagiri' -- his deity. He had initially refused to travel outside India, but later agreed when his mother received permission from Namagiri for him to go to England in a dream.

While on his deathbed in 1920, Ramanujan wrote a letter to his mentor, English mathematician GH Hardy outlining several new mathematical functions never before heard of. In his own words -- "While asleep, I had an unusual experience. There was a red screen formed by flowing blood, as it were. I was observing it. Suddenly a hand began to write on the screen. I became all attention. That hand wrote a number of elliptic integrals. They stuck to my mind. As soon as I woke up, I committed them to writing." In the last 90 years, nobody understood what his theorem was, but they knew it was something tremendous. Only in 2010 did they find out that this theorem describes various behaviors of black holes. Ninety years ago, no one was talking about black holes, the term did not even exist, but Ramanujan made a mathematical impression for it sitting on his deathbed and he said 'my Devi' gave it to me. When Ramanujan says, 'Devi gave it to me', for him Devi is the doorway.

Isha Yoga is a doorway by itself. Almost everybody who comes to Isha Yoga opens it a crack and says, 'Wow!' -- and then they shut it. You see this happening with everybody around you, including yourself. They open it and say 'Wow!' then close it again. They had a good enough peep.

You need to open it and keep it open. That's the thing.

What Makes a Home

When we utter the word "home," it conjures memories of comfort, companionship, and love. For most of people, though they have lived in different homes in the course of their lives, the most important one seems to be the home they grew up in. This is probably so because from childhood to adolescence and adulthood, our perceptions and perspectives of life are changing far more dramatically than in any other phase of life. It is a time when we explore different ways to experience our surroundings. Therefore, the ambiance of the home that supports and nurtures us in this period of our life naturally sticks in our minds in a much more profound way than many other things that we may see and experience later on.

I still vividly remember the different homes I have been in from an early age. My grandfather's home was a kind of zamindari residence with a history of a few generations behind it. It was spacious and exuded power. Almost everything that happened in that region happened from this home. My father's home, by contrast, was one of quietness, comfort, companionship, and love, but no great happenings. Then I crisscrossed India on my motorcycle. Almost all the time, except for a few days when I camped somewhere, I just knocked on someone's door and said, "I'm hungry." They fed me, and either I left, or they asked me to shower and rest there. Generally, they did not even want to know my name, nor did I inquire about who they were. Still, there was a fantastic rapport. We spent a few hours together, I slept there, and the next morning, I was gone. In different ways, these experiences cultured my own understanding of a home.

Building a home is a fundamental human need. Unlike other creatures, who are largely equipped to live their lives from the moment they are born, we need a lot of culturing to become full-fledged human beings. It is the incubator we call home which cultivates us to become human. The most important aspect of this incubation is inclusiveness. A home is a place that nurtures the few people who live and grow up in it. At the same time, it becomes a home because its doors are open to many others -- family, friends, business partners, and whoever else the residents may have some kind of relationship with. Of course,

some come to stay – particularly sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. Sometimes, wanderers like me slip in and out. I am a homeless person, in many ways. Most of the time, I live in other people's homes, not in the home I built. When life incapacitates me a little more, maybe I will stay home.

I have been in homes with over four hundred family members. They may not have known everyone else's names, but they sort of knew who they were. Generations of people used to live under one roof. People were born, grew up, got married, reproduced, and died in the same house. But not anymore – every generation moves into a new home. For various reasons, people frequently relocate today, which was not the case a few generations ago when societies were predominantly agricultural and mobility was limited. Our lifestyles, our work situations, and the world as a whole are quite different today. The physical structures and the aesthetics may have changed, but the fundamental value of what makes a home remains the same. A home should nurture a deeper dimension of inclusiveness. You need to learn to include and accept if not the entire world, at least those few people who are your world.

The people who live with us are not perfectly the way we want them, and they never will be. If you come to terms with that, you will be able to know life beyond what you think about it. A home should culture you for life, so that when you step out in the world, you are far more inclusive. Living together gives you the opportunity to learn to accept many things. But as the level of education increases, you lose the ability to let someone overstep your boundaries. If someone as much as touches you, either they are finished or you are finished. This is the kind of culture we are headed towards. We are fortunate that in this generation, we still have a certain dimension of inclusiveness. It was inculcated in us in our homes, where the lives of our siblings, friends, and family overlapped ours in many ways, and that was perfectly fine.

Though most homes in the world are built for comfort, companionship, love, and togetherness, in India, we had a special element to them. There was a time when every single home was consecrated. It was considered truly negative and uncaring to have people live in a space that did not offer the necessary atmosphere for wellbeing, growth, and inner blossoming. Therefore, every home had a consecrated space. Today, remnants of that are still there, though much has changed in

the last few generations. My great-grandmother's pooja room, for example, was the largest room in the house. There, she sang, danced, cried, laughed, and did all kinds of things. My grandmother shrank the pooja room to half the size. When my mother set up home elsewhere, the pooja room became a little smaller than a toilet. And when my daughter set up her home, the pooja room became just a rack on the wall.

Before my eyes, the significance of the Divine shrank in these four or five generations – from the largest room in the house to a rack on the wall. I am sure in the next generation, the rack will also disappear. This has happened because from being able to transform the energy of a space in a powerful way through the science of consecration and consequently transform lives, overtime, we came down to very basic forms, the meaning of which we were not able to explain to the next generation. What did not make sense to them, they naturally began to reject. A few hundred years ago, either your priest, your pundit, your guru, or your scriptures thought for you. Today, a whole lot of people are thinking for themselves. Whether they are thinking straight or not is another question, but at least they are thinking for themselves.

Once you start thinking for yourself, you cannot swallow anything that is not logically correct, no matter what kind of authority says it. We are transforming the world from authorities being the truth to truth being the authority. This is a good transition, but the in-between space can be a barren place. This reflects in our homes, where many things that used to represent our heritage, history, and culture, many knick-knacks which tell stories that not everyone is able to interpret correctly, are getting dumped by the next generation because they do not make sense to them. This is the nature of the intellect – it dissects everything. If I want to know you, dissection is definitely not the best way, but that is what the intellect continuously does. A lot of things may not make any logical sense, but they may make a lot of life sense. People, things, and structures that are part of your home need not make logical sense – still they mean the world to you.

Homes have to become incubation spaces which nurture the realization that ultimately, the only home a human being can really know is within. If you do not realize in this lifetime that the ultimate home is within, then the only home you will know will be the grave. That something does not make

logical sense to you does not mean it should not exist. This is an understanding that a home is constantly culturing us towards. What one person likes, another person dislikes, and vice versa. Still, because you live in the same home, you come to terms with that. You do not have to try to like it. Learning to live with things you do not like is a huge lesson in life. A home brings us to a place. If you want everyone and everything one hundred percent the way you think they should be, no one will want to be around you.

In my efforts to consecrate as many homes as possible, we create the necessary energy that enables you to realize it is not the walls, not the décor, not the smells, sounds, and taste that define a particular home. Ultimately, a home is a space that is supposed to turn you inward and allow you to experience that there is only one home, which is within. That home is neither yours nor mine. If you turn inward, you become super inclusive. It is only in being identified with our body and mind that we have clear-cut boundaries of “you” and “I.” If you turn inward, there will be a profound sense of inclusiveness in you. A home should culture that inclusiveness. It is not the opulence of the structure but the inclusiveness of the people which makes a home.

On the Threshold of a Golden Age

The last few months have been a monstrous amount of travel for me. I was hoping that as I age, I would graduate from living out of a suitcase to a cupboard, but I am back to the suitcase. We were at a cusp for the last one and a half to two months, and around end of April, beginning of May, I have completed five solar cycles. The coming twelve years will be the golden age for spirituality on the planet. In many ways, it will be a time of great possibilities. When we move into top gear, it will be a good speed, a good time for the spiritual movement, for Isha, and for all of you. That will also mean a lot of work. I will take the brunt of it, in terms of activity, but you know I believe in sharing what I have. As all I have is only work, you will get it too. It is important that we do this well, with maximum impact.

Humanity is at a crossroads. Something fundamental is shifting in the very way human beings are. Things that have given hope to humanity are crumbling and falling apart. If you believed everything they told to you, you would not seek spiritual process. You would think you know the entire

creation, God, heaven, and hell. Without knowing, life would pass you by. For most human beings, nothing has ever touched them profoundly. They have never looked at a tree with tears in their eyes. They have never looked at a butterfly, trembling with it. They have never caught the sunlight before it hits the blades of grass. They live without being truly alive.

In the coming few years, spiritually and socially, big things will happen. There will be a lot of change in the world, and a lot of change about me too. Be ready for that. This is going to be a good time, but like all good things, it comes with lots of activity. Many other groups are also working towards this, but we will have a significant role to play. Top level universities in the United States, such as Stanford, Harvard, Yale, the Wharton Business School, and many other Ivy League schools are opening up to the spiritual process, for the very first time. It is due to lack of time we are accepting selectively, but my intention is to touch the entire spectrum of youth. As such, universities do not mean much to me – I live in this universe. But these were the last bastions of resistance. Now academics are beginning to accept mysticism and spirituality as a part of their lives.

It is a good thing for the world that established sectors – corporate sectors, academics, and even politicians – are opening up to spiritual process. We recently did programs for the Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh governments, and in a few days, we are going to do a program for the government of Rajasthan, from Chief Minister, to all the ministers, and the bureaucrats. This is a blessing of many sages and seers of the past, who all aspired to marry the spiritual process and the political process. Administering a nation as diverse as India is not an enviable job. Some politicians have done terrible things, but wonderful things have been achieved too. From 1947 to today, there has been a phenomenal transformation in the country. We could have done better, but still, we have not done too badly. And the next five to ten years are going to be a golden age for India.

Economic development is essential for spiritual process to spread, because people have to see that after eating well, shopping well, still life is not fulfilling. You cannot tell this to a hungry man – it would be cruel. You must make his stomach full, and he must realize with a full stomach, still life is not fulfilling. So, economic development is an

important aspect for spiritual process to happen to people. And spiritual process is an important element for fulfilling the purpose of economic development – human wellbeing. If there is economic development, but still, people are not feeling well, it is cruel too. And that is a reality in the world. Nearly forty percent of Europeans are on psychiatric medication. One in ten people in Tamil Nadu is diabetic, and a major part of the population is getting drunk the moment they have a little money. This is not wellbeing.

Unless economic wellbeing is bolstered with spiritual wellbeing, you will have everything yet have nothing. In this context India is fortunate, because economic and spiritual wellbeing will largely happen together in the next twelve years. But when it comes to spiritual wellbeing, we have to think in terms of wellbeing of humanity as a whole. I want you to know the joy of creating something you really care for. A few young people, who stood up to become teachers and fulltime volunteers, have been wearing their lives out to reach you, to come to your town and offer programs for you. It is time you also stand up and do that, because a spiritual movement is successful only if it creates a trend towards spirituality in the world. Your individual salvation will be taken care of – that is not even an issue for us. But is it not important that we live in a world that has a spiritual fragrance, wherever we go?

This spiritual springtime must be a worldwide phenomenon. Never before in the history of humanity has there been a Guru who could talk to one billion people at once. Krishna, as wonderful as he was, would have spoken gently, so only a few people heard him. Gautama the Buddha was a little more single-minded. He may have spoken a little louder, and a few more people would have heard him. Today, we are so technologically empowered that if we do the necessary work, we can sit here and talk to seven billion people. Never before was this possible. When all kinds of rubbish are reaching the entire world, it is high time spiritual process reaches the entire world too.

At this stage, already two thirds of the people who are with us, participating in many ways, have not done any program with us. They are with us on YouTube, Facebook, reading a book, or seeing us on television, and they are inspired. To give an example – when I recently went to the kumbh in Ujjain, there were armed policemen as part of the security detail for the Prime Minister. The moment they saw me, they gleefully chanted, “Shiva–

Shiva,” echoing the thunderclap of Mahashivaratri. They have all been with us on Mahashivaratri via live broadcast, and as far as they are concerned, they are one with us.

The wonders of technology should be made use of for the right purposes, that is, for the wellbeing of humanity. Only if the spiritual process, the economic process, and the political process come together as one, will human wellbeing happen. I want all of you to gear up for this momentous time. Many things are in the pipeline. You will start seeing it take shape in the next couple of years, in many different ways. I have said this before – as we are changing gears and picking up speed, hold on tight or you will fall off. I have seen too many people who were very dear to me fall off, right through my life. The most important thing for me is that when a change in momentum happens, you do not fall off. So I am telling all of you, we are changing gears right now. All those sleeping ones – do not fall off. Let’s make this happen – for yourself and the world.



CONDUCT OF LIFE

I don’t even pass an opinion on my dogs...

During the Q&A at Friday’s Darshan, I was asked about my views on one of the spiritual leaders of India.

I have no views about anything in this world, not just one person. I really have no opinion about anybody, actually, because why should you form an opinion about somebody? It is such a waste of life and energy. If you know something, you know something. If you don’t know something, you don’t know something. If you find something is good for you, then you go ahead. What’s the problem? If it is good for you, you should go ahead. What is the issue?

About me passing an opinion on somebody – I never thought, within myself, that I was so important that I must pass an opinion on anything for that matter. I don’t even pass an opinion on my dogs in the house. I just watch them everyday, seeing that maybe they will be different tomorrow

and they are. I see how their behavior changes as they mature – how they were when they were puppies, when they became adolescents, and now that they have matured. So everyday, as they grow, I watch how they are maturing. It is quite an amazing thing for me to watch how a dog, which has reached a certain age, has formed his habits – he functions by instinct – but still, he has a character of his own. And between the two dogs, how different they are! The same breed, but how different they are in their character, likes and dislikes, and even the way they respond to people is not the same.

So when even a little puppy has so much character and is changing, isn't it a crime to form an opinion? I have never formed an opinion on anybody. I am not good at these things. Right from my childhood, I have been reading the newspaper, but as a rule, I never, ever read an editorial in any newspaper because it is somebody's opinion and I'm not interested. I read the news but never the editorial because I don't want to listen to anybody's opinion, nor do I expect that anybody should listen to my opinion. When I speak, I am speaking what I see.

People reduce themselves into a bundle of opinions, which are essentially prejudices about other lives. The moment you form an opinion about someone or something, you cannot mingle in abandon, and that means you cannot experience anything or anyone but only soak in your own opinions. Opinions are like cataracts upon the eyes – definitely not for someone who is looking to enhance his perception or vision.

Kalabhairava Karma – Death Process at Ashram

We are starting a process called 'Kalabhairava Karma.' This is for the dead only, to ensure that their new location is a better place. When somebody dies, you think that person is dead, but as far as that person is concerned, he just lost his body and everything that he knew as life. When he lost his body, he also lost his discretionary mind. What does losing your discretion mean? Let's say somebody that you know died and you became sad and miserable. Maybe you will grieve for awhile, but after a certain passage of time, you will employ your discretion. "There is no point just going on like this, let me get back to whatever I need to do." But somebody who is unable to employ his discretion will stay in that state for a

long time, as the discretionary mind is not functioning as it should. So whatever his tendencies are, those tendencies will multiply. If he had pleasant tendencies, pleasant tendencies will snowball; if he had unpleasant tendencies, that will avalanche into something extremely unpleasant.

Every culture has been aware of this – irrespective of where or what religion – when a man is dying, whoever he may be, you must create a pleasant atmosphere. Even if your enemy is dying, at that one moment you don't create unpleasantness for him.

So at either the last moment or just after, we can still touch that life in such a way that pleasantness will seep into that life. Once pleasantness is given – even a drop of pleasantness – if you put it into him, this will become an ocean of pleasantness after some time because he has no discretion, he cannot stop it.

So we can put a drop of pleasantness into that being up to 14 days for those over 50 years of age who die a natural death, and up to 48 days for those under 50. In the case where somebody was vibrant but died either by breaking the body in an accident or suicide, then we can do this up to 48 days for those above 33 years of age, and up to 90 days for those below 33. We are also offering a process called 'Kalabhairava Shanthi' which can be done anytime after death.

This has been very much a part of yogic culture – that if somebody dies and does not have the awareness to conduct his death properly, then somebody else does it for him. But unfortunately, probably in the last 100-150 years, these traditions have become largely dormant; what is left is generally corrupt and commercial. If you lose somebody who is dear to you, they will ask you to bring footwear for the dead, bring an umbrella for the dead, bring a cow or a horse or even, these days, they may ask you for a Mercedes. The dead does not need footwear; one who has lost his body is not going to wear footwear. If the man who is conducting this wants footwear, he must be upfront and say, 'I want footwear.' At least he will get the right size. If he gets the dead man's size, he has to go and sell it.

So we will be using the Bhairavi Temple as the energy base and conducting certain processes for the dead. If somebody dies that you know, or if you know someone else who has had someone die, then if you send us a piece of their clothing

within a certain period of time, a certain process will happen.

We would like people to live blissfully. If they don't make this, if they don't live blissfully, then at least they must die peacefully. If they don't even do that, we want to do something after they die. So even if you die, I will not spare my efforts to turn you spiritual.

Making Corruption Cosmic

Power doesn't corrupt, people are corrupt. When they get empowered, it becomes super visible. When the microscope is not on them, you don't see it. But someone who is not corrupt will not become corrupt.

First, let us understand what corruption is. If there is something called "me" and there is something called "you," corruption has started because what is "me" is more important than what is "you." Once "me" comes, "what is mine" and "what is not mine" will come. Once "this is mine" and "this is not mine" comes, corruption is deepened. If you get very attached to "what is mine" and "what is not mine" then it becomes well established. Like this it goes on.

That is why, all these years, I have been saying, "Let us make corruption cosmic!" The nature of who you are is such that you have to identify with something. If you identify with just the body, one level of corruption. When you get married, you identify with two bodies -- corruption multiplied. When it becomes two, the corruption becomes a little bit bigger; people can see the conspiracy. Family is the first form of corruption. I am not speaking against it, I am just telling you. Suddenly, "what is ours" and "what is not ours" becomes important. Then comes community, nation, race, religion...different levels of corruption.

Essentially, corruption means, with whatever acts of wellbeing a human being commits, he is excluding somebody. If you have something, you want to give a little more to this person, and a little less to that person. This is corruption. The question is whether it is a socially acceptable form of corruption or not. For example, if something happens to your children, buckets of tears will come. But when other children are on the streets without clothes or food in their bellies, and not even a teardrop comes to you, you are corrupt. If we make you the prime minister, your corruption will be reported in the media. Right now, your

corruption is not worth reporting because it is not of much consequence to other people. Anything that you empower gets blown up into a larger dimension of corruption. But don't wait to become a prime minister and then check out whether you are corrupt or not.

Most of the corruption on the planet is because you are identified with something limited. Limited identity is corruption. If you make your identity yourself, you will rob the person next to you. If you make your identity for your community, you will do things for your community at the cost of some other community. If you are identified with the nation, you will do good things to your nation at the cost of another nation. That is not perceived as corruption, but it is corruption. Corruption is not a lack of morality. Corruption is essentially a limited identity.

The whole spiritual process is just to take an individual from a limited identity to an all inclusive possibility, not just intellectually but experientially. When you say, "I am a devotee," it means that "I have either dissolved" or "I am willing to dissolve." There is nothing here that is "me" or "mine." That is why we are striving so hard to reach the powerful in the world. If one becomes meditative, if one becomes a devotee, they are incapable of being corrupt.

Offering

Whatever you do in your life, you can only do it with what you have. You cannot do something with what you do not have. So whatever you have, use that. It is not about whether Shiva gets something or not; he really needs nothing from you. The important thing is that you learn to direct all your energy – everything that you are – in one direction. If you do not put everything that you are in one direction, you will not go anywhere.

If your love is for Shiva, your lust is for someone in the neighborhood and your hatred is for your friends, you will drive yourself in five directions. One who is trying to drive himself in five directions obviously is not serious about making a journey. But if you put everything in one direction right now, you will go somewhere. I want you to understand – you neither have love, hatred, lust or jealousy in you. You just have life in you. What you make out of it is up to you. You can make love out of it, blissfulness, depression or frustration. You can make it pleasant, unpleasant, ugly or beautiful.

There is a wonderful story...On the way to Mysore, there is a place called Nanjangund. Just after Nanjangund, there is a little ashram on the left side called Mallanna Moolai. Over a hundred years ago, there was a man there named Malla. At that time, Mysore City was one of the few cities in South India which was planned and done-up beautifully because the Maharaja had a sense of aesthetics. He created a wonderful palace and gardens.

People would go to Mysore for everything – commerce, livelihood and pleasure. They would either walk or go in a bullock-cart. But when they came to this corner, which was 16 miles from Mysore, Malla would rob them. People came to find out about this and instead asked if they could make a deal with him. He became like a tax collector, and set up a system where every person that passed would pay him one rupee, which was a big amount of money at that time. The people hated this, so they called him Kalla which means “thief”, and that spot became known as Kallana Moolai which means “thief’s corner.”

He collected money the whole year and then on Mahashivarathri, he celebrated in a grand way and fed the whole town. He didn’t eat up this money, he just had a little piece of land on which he lived, but he robbed everybody and then conducted a big festival for Shiva. So when two Veera Shaivas – sages who were also great devotees of Shiva – came and saw what he was doing, robbing everyone and then having a big Mahashivarathri, they were both embarrassed and intrigued by this form of devotion. They talked him out of this and said, “There are other ways to conduct this festival.” They set up a little ashram and Malla became a monk along with them, and all three of them attained Mahasamadhi.

There are many wonderful stories about how Shiva is most pleased with his devotees – not because they offer a lump of gold or a diamond, but because they offer what they have. The message is, “You offer what you have” because in the very nature of things, you cannot offer what you do not have.

So the question is not about in what form you offer; you just offer your life. In offering, your life becomes one-pointed. Once it becomes one-pointed, it will begin to move. If it is a five-pointed star, it is not going anywhere. It will just create tension in five different directions. If you make a weapon, you want it to penetrate so you make it

one-pointed. It has to be sharp. Sharpness means its point is limited.

Don’t Let Your Problems Go

If there is a problem in your life, you might try to let it go. People are telling you, “If you can’t find a solution to a problem, let it go, surrender.” You may let it go, but the problem may not let you go. This always happens, people take loans from the bank, but they can’t pay them back. They want to let the loan go, but the bank won’t let you go. Life is like that – if you get into some situation, it is like debt. You have to pay it – not with money, but with life. If you are smart, you will pay one way, otherwise, you will pay another way, but you have to pay.

Every problem is a problem only because you call it so. In life, there are no problems – there are only situations. Everything is a situation. If you call it a “problem” it becomes a problem. If you call it “wonderful” it becomes wonderful. Somewhere, right now, somebody is getting married but they do not want to. They think it is a big problem. Do you know how much suffering this can cause? Somebody else is getting married but they want to – do you know how wonderful their day will be? It is just a situation – whether it becomes a problem or otherwise is just the way you approach it. No situation is airtight because every situation is evolving. If you don’t want to be in a situation, you want to be somewhere else, then closely observe the situation and you will see where the doorways are. If you just want a breath of fresh air, you can open a window and make it a little relaxing. If you want to get out, you can open the door and walk out, that is your choice. If you stay, there is a consequence and if you leave, there is a consequence. Are you ready to face the consequence?

The problem with most people is that they want the situation, but they do not want the price attached. If you want to buy clothes, but you don’t like the price tag, the only option is to become a thief. If you become a thief, you can have everything for free, but you always live in fear, and anytime, you can become a “state guest.” Otherwise, if you want something, there is a price. Whether it is worth the price or not is what you have to estimate in your life.

You may decide to buy something if it costs ten rupees, but if it costs eleven rupees, you won’t buy it – that is your judgment. Similarly, with every situation – not just monetary situations but every

situation – there is a price. You must evaluate whether the price is worth paying. Only you can do that. I may look at it from a different perspective and think the whole situation is ridiculous, but it may be valuable to you. It is not for somebody else to make this judgment; you must evaluate what the price of that situation demands and whether you are willing to pay. Once you decide, pay the price joyfully. If you don't pay the price joyfully, you will have it and you will be miserable. Once you have decided, there is no right and wrong. There is no such thing as a "good life." But if you put yourself wholeheartedly into something, it is a great life. If you really throw yourself into something, however simple, it may be great in your experience. Somebody else may look at your life and think it is rubbish. That is their problem. In your experience, your life is great and that is all that matters.

So, if you want to evaluate, what is needed is involvement, not letting go. When you are deeply involved with the situation and know everything about it, you can make a judgment. Any judgment you make will be valuable only if it is well-informed. If you don't know much about the situation and you are making a judgment, it is bound to be of no value. So, in any given situation, don't try to let go or distance yourself, or be detached. Involve yourself absolutely. In your involvement, you know the situation. When you know the situation, you see the price that the situation is demanding on your life. If you remain there, there is a price, if you leave, there is a price. You must see which price you are willing to pay. There is no right thing to do; whether it is the appropriate thing to do in your life is the question.

Life is a continuum of situations, if you are on a growth trajectory, you will be constantly facing situations that you may not know how to handle. These situations may be challenging, but they are not a problem. A true problem would be that there are no new situations in one's life, which means life is in stagnation mode. If you want to continuously be in a process of dynamic growth, you will constantly be in new situations that you may not necessarily know how to handle. If you are facing many of these so called problems, you're living a life of great possibility.

Vanaprastha: Becoming Conscious of Your Mortality

In modern times, if you walk away into the forest, thinking you are in vanaprastha, there is not much danger of tigers eating you up or anything like that, because there are very few. But there is every chance that you may get arrested. Vanaprastha does not necessarily mean going to the forest. Yes, vana means forest, but vana can also mean garden. Essentially, the idea was to withdraw from a place that has four walls. You do not want to live in four walls, because four walls create a false sense of immortality. If you are already in a box, it gives you a coffin-like feeling. When you live in a coffin, you think you are going to be here forever.

You should do this – on Purnima nights, ladies should sleep outside. On Amavasya nights, men should sleep outside – no matter if it is cold, it rains, or whatever else happens. If you sleep outside, you will feel vulnerable. You will understand, your very body will understand clearly that it is not forever. That is the fundamental idea of vanaprastha. You build a home not to make yourself immortal, but because a human child is not designed to grow up totally outdoors. It takes some time for a human body and mind to get to a certain level. When an elephant is born, the mother elephant stands next to the baby for three days – then both of them just walk away in the jungle.

A human child needs a few years of nurture and protection. At that time, along with the children, you also enjoyed the comfort of four walls. But then, people had enough sense to understand that if you think that you are immortal, you live with a lie. You being immortal is a lie. To make that very clear – not just intellectually but in every way – the first thing is to step out of four walls. This is why many sadhus and sanyasis never sleep in buildings. They will either sleep under a tree, or, if the weather is very harsh, they will sleep in a cave or something like this. Even if they build buildings, they just build a roof, leaving the sides open. Or if they do build walls, they will always be of mud. It will never be an over-protected kind of situation.

Being in touch with the earth and the elements constantly reminds the body of its mortality. It may not be in your head, but the earth constantly reminds your body that you are just a pop-up. You will go back to the earth. When people say they

are ill and something is wrong, the first thing I tell them is to work in the garden. The idea is to bring the body in contact with the earth. The earth is both nurture and the ultimate resting place for everybody. Unless you go with Elon Musk and have your body buried on some other planet. Otherwise, this is where we come from – this is where we go to.

In a closed, four-walled structure, there is no such reminder. People assume they are immortal. Even if someone dies at ninety, they say, “He was so healthy and well – suddenly he died.” He has been dying for ninety years! People’s idea of death is that somebody should be dragged to the hospital, and after at least a few months of torture, as the bill is growing, they will say, “Let him die.”

If you want to become conscious that this body is mortal, the first thing is to step out of protected atmospheres, so that the body feels and understands that it has to go at some point. Actually, many people who moved into vanaprastha became very healthy. I have seen this, both here at the Isha Yoga Center and at the Iii (Isha Institute of Inner-sciences, USA). People moved into the ashram because they were already over sixty-five. But in the last eight to ten years, they have become so much fitter, younger, and healthier. They are looking much better and stronger than ever before, just by being exposed to the elements and walking around a lot.

People do not go to vanaprastha to die there but because they are conscious that they have to die, which is very important. It is not that because you reached a certain chronological age, you must die today or tomorrow. But you must be conscious that you are mortal. Once you are completely conscious that you are mortal, you will see everything – property, money, relationships – with a distance. You will understand that this is a web you created for your survival. You managed to catch a few people in it, but you should not be stuck in it. You should keep a little distance to it, knowing that it has to go when it is time.

Vanaprastha essentially meant to be in communion with vana or the forest, so that you do not live with a lie of being immortal. Mortality comes home. Let’s say there is a storm. When it is pouring heavily, you may be sitting in your room with your music turned on or your headphones plugged in, not hearing anything, not experiencing anything. But if you are out in the jungle, just one storm, and you will see how vulnerable the human

body is. If even for a night, you stay out there, in the lightning, the thunder, the rain, and the wind, suddenly, a certain wisdom arises within you. I have seen this with seasoned mountaineers – exposed to the elements and risking life every day brings a certain stillness and ease. You understand that you are mortal. You know if you make one mistake, you are dead.

Vanaprastha is just that – to bring a deep sense of mortality to this body. If the body knows it is mortal, it gradually calibrates itself well. It will not foolishly waste its energy. It will definitely live much longer. Vanaprastha is not necessarily about dying. It is about making a person absolutely conscious of one’s mortality. Without that, a human being is not a human being – they will live a very idiotic life. You know, Gautama the Buddha used to refer to the whole world as fools. He was not wrong, though he could have been a little gentler. But he was from BC – he could say what he wanted. I am in the twenty-first century – I have to say some nice things.

The understanding and the wisdom behind that is essentially this: clearly, every cell in your body should know that you are mortal. Once you know that you are mortal, you will become super energy efficient. If you just move consciously, without wasting anything, then you are doing yoga, in a way. The physical dimension of yoga is to teach the body how to do something in a graceful way, without any kind of aberration. This will also happen to a human being if one becomes fully conscious. Cobras, for example, are instinctive creatures. If you are at total ease, they cannot bite you. Only if they see your chemistry is agitated, if they sense fear in you, will they go for you. If you see that you are mortal, you have to be fully conscious. Death could come in the form of a snake.

This is why we have set ourselves up near a forest – you must feel the elements. If none of the elements are touching you, you will not even know that you are a life. Most of the time, you are just a bundle of thoughts, emotions, ideas, opinions, prejudices, and nonsense. If you sleep outside and there is a thunderstorm that night, all your ideas, opinions, thoughts, and emotions will vanish. You will understand you are part of the elements. Unfortunately, most people have not really been outdoors in any serious sense.

Only those who are walking around, feeling life, know they are mortal. You built homes, you built

protection, you made arrangements for a certain stage of life, to handle certain things, because a human being is also a social creature. But once you feel that you are done with that, you must go into vanaprastha. Going into the forest is not a possibility now, so people come to ashrams. Some have come early, though it is never too early.

Even in earlier times, when people went into vanaprastha, they did not necessarily live completely out in the open. They went into an ashram, deep in the jungle, where arrangements – clothing, food, everything – were very simple and frugal. You were exposed to nature and the elements. When you are in a forest, you cannot forget your mortality. Mortality is not an idea. It is a reality that is calling this body every moment. If your body does not hear that call, your mind will become stupid. Vanaprastha is an effort to get out of that stupidity, to get out of that web of lies that every human being creates.

In the coming years, we will make many more arrangements in terms of vanaprastha, because even those who came young are slowly getting old.

A Profound Sense of Life

For almost thirty-five years now, I've been constantly on the road. I've been planning to cut down on my travels, but with every event, we are raising people's expectations in such a way that it looks you all will make me work myself to death. I'm not complaining. Participants are leaving our events and programs hugely impressed by the entire experience – to a large extent because of our volunteers. Everywhere I go, people are telling me that our volunteers are fantastic.

Those of you, especially the young people, who are still unencumbered and unentangled, I want you to look at how you want to live your lives. Is all you want to do just eat, sleep, reproduce, and die one day? Or do you want to create something bigger than yourself? Do you want to stand up for something that is way bigger than anything you ever imagined? The phenomenon of life at its highest level does not yield to you unless you put your full attention to it. This is what I want you to understand. Gathering things and people around you does not change the quality of your life. As creation made you, you are a complete life. You do not need any accessories to be complete. It is only because of a false sense of inadequacy,

which is purely psychological, that you think you need something or someone to make your life complete. Do you want to shop for things and overload yourself with information on a daily basis? Or do you want to know the ease of living without the need to become something.

Human intellect is blossoming like never before. Never before could so many people on the planet think for themselves. In the next couple of decades, you will see a huge shift. Whatever rubbish that people were made to believe for a long time will not sell anymore. Now is the time to offer the spiritual process to humanity on a large scale. Otherwise, once religious beliefs and promises of heaven disappear, drink and drugs will take over. Either the entire world turns into drunkards and drug addicts, or we make them into meditative, wonderful human beings. This is the responsibility that we have. All of you, who feel that way, must stand up and make something happen.

We need people who deliver sense to the world. Don't even call it spirituality – just a profound sense of life. You have the choice. Do you want to just make a living or make a life? Making a living is not a big deal. Every other creature is doing quite okay with that, and there seems to be some ease and joy about them. You don't see that in most human beings, simply because an intelligence and a consciousness that should be universal in nature, is constrained right now. What people suffer are not the external situations in their lives, though they may think so. Whatever the outer circumstances – rich or poor, educated or uneducated, married or unmarried – either way, people suffer. This is not because there is something wrong with their lives. What people really suffer is that their consciousness, which should be limitless, is constrained.

It's my wish and my blessing that you should not fall into this rut. Once you have experienced something beyond yourself, establish it for yourself and make it happen for as many people as possible, in whatever capacity you can. Your life becomes spectacular not by what you gather and possess but by the profoundness of experience. In offering this to all is the fulfillment of action.

There's More to Life than This

Wherever I go, I see people glued to their phones. Technology per se is neither good nor bad – it all depends on how we use it. Why do people have such a compulsive urge to post pictures of them-

selves and whatever thoughts come to their minds on social media? Essentially, this is because their experience of life does not go beyond the boundaries of their thoughts and emotions. There is nothing more worthwhile than sharing their nonsense with others. There was a time when people used to write a diary about things that happened in their lives. If someone else opened the diary and read it, they would be heartbroken, "How could you read about my life?" But now, if no one reads and likes their Facebook posts, they are heartbroken.

You want everyone to know what you did, where you went, every moment of your life. You are trying to find significance where there is none. Life can be significant only if you enhance your ability to experience beyond your psychological and emotional framework. Most human beings spend their entire lives stuck in thoughts and emotions. They don't experience anything else, and think that only this is real. Thoughts and emotions are your psychological drama. If, for example, you think right now that something has gone wrong, you will immediately start suffering, even if nothing really happened. On the other hand, if something really goes wrong around you, but you think everything is okay, you will be fine. Your thoughts and emotions are your making – they have nothing to do with reality.

Likewise, don't waste your time looking at other people's experiences. If you focus on what is happening with someone else, nothing will happen with you. Don't be a spectator – be a participant in life. See if you can turn up the intensity of whatever you are doing. Just try it. Let's say you are looking at something – see if you can look at it with ten percent more intensity. Not everyone's eyes see the same things. The level of your experience depends on the level of intensity with which you are doing something. Increasing your intensity takes some conscious effort and perseverance.

Most human beings do not get anywhere because they somehow take one step forward, one step back. If you intentionally take a step forward and you acknowledge that, there will be a momentum for you to take the next step. Intensity will not come by itself. Unless you turn up the voltage of your life, you will not become more conscious. The extent to which you are able to experience something depends on how conscious you are. Suppose you became totally unconscious right

now, you would neither know that you are here, nor that there is a world around you.

You are somewhat conscious – that is why you know you are here; that is why you know there is a world around you. If you turn up your intensity, your consciousness will increase as well. You will start perceiving things that you never thought possible until this moment. It is my wish and my blessing that every moment of your life should be truly worthwhile. It's better to die of excitement than of boredom.

Make Your Life Spectacular

Wherever I go for our events and programs, it is such a joy for me to see people crossing their limitations to make things happen. Human beings who do not break their self-created boundaries will remain trapped in them. Breaking your limitations is an essential part of your spiritual growth. This spiritual process is not based on a scripture, philosophy, or dead tradition – it is a living thing. You have to live it every day. I do not want you to miss this possibility because you are getting caught up in day-to-day situations or issues with other people. If you want to move forward in life, it is important to constantly keep account of your growth – ideally every day, but at least weekly once or monthly once. Ask yourself, "Am I getting better? Am I a little more joyful? Have I grown a little more compared to the way I was yesterday?"

People keep close account of their money. It is only a transactional tool – you cannot take it with you when you die. The most precious thing you have is that you are alive right now. If that is the case, is it not worthwhile to keep account of where you are going in life, if you are improving yourself or you are regressing? You do not regress because of what someone else does to you. No one can do anything to you within you. Your boss or your family can make your life a little difficult on the outside. That means they give you more exercise – that's all. This should only make you stronger. You should at least be as smart as this smart ass – let me tell you the story.

One day, an ass or a donkey past his prime slipped and fell into a well. The well had gone dry and was not too deep, but the donkey could not get out. It started braying from down there piteously. A few villagers and the owner came and saw what happened. The donkey kept screaming, wanting to get out, fearing for its life. People said, "This stupid donkey will go on screaming. It is

already old and of no use – we can neither put it to work nor sell it. Anyway we wanted to close the well. Let's do it now." So they decided to close the well and bury the donkey alive. They started throwing earth into the well. Every time a basketful of earth fell on its back, the donkey shook it off and stepped on top of the pile. As the earth gathered, it kept coming higher up. The moment they filled up one side of the well, it walked out. The villagers thought, "Wow, this is a real smart ass." In appreciation, the owner went and tried to hug the donkey. It kicked him straight in the face and ran away to freedom.

No matter what someone throws at you, you must make the best out of it – this is spiritual process. A mango tree, which does not even have a brain like you, can make mud into mangoes and sweetness. Plants can make filth into flowers and fragrance. You should be able to make something beautiful out of whatever comes your way. If you are able to do that, that shows who you are. The biggest problem on the planet has been that if small things go wrong, people blame it on "the small guy" (someone else). If big things go wrong in their lives, they blame it on "the big guy" (God). They themselves do not seem to be responsible for anything. It is time to stop blaming or trying to fix others. Instead, you should grow to your full potential.

Seeking something that can only happen within you outside in the world is the most foolish thing to do. To find peace and joy, people are looking up. To find wellbeing, they are looking all over the world. Only when you turn inward, will it happen. Your sadhana is a scientific approach to both your immediate inner wellbeing and your ultimate wellbeing. If you want your sadhana to be successful, you need to free your mind from unnecessary junk. With the initiation into Shambhavi, you got the right seed. It is up to you to cultivate the soil. Even the most fantastic seed will not sprout if you put it on a rock. If you keep collecting other people's garbage, it will not allow anything to sprout. Modern times are such that most people have too much trash in their heads to realize the immense possibility of what is being offered to them. I do not want you to waste your life, not realizing this possibility.

One way to reduce mental distractions is to drop the gossip. In Kannada, there is a saying that if someone creates some nasty karma, people who keep talking about it will get it. The person who did it may have forgotten about it. But people who

keep talking about it will get it because it occupies their minds. These are simple things to remember when living and working with other people. You may have heard this story about Socrates, who was considered to be phenomenally wise, even in his lifetime. One day, someone came up to him and said, "I want to tell you something about Diogenes." Socrates said, "I have a simple principle. Whatever you want to say, you must put it through the triple filter." The man asked, "What is this triple filter?" Socrates said, "First thing – whatever you're going to tell me now, have you ascertained the truth?" The man said, "No. Someone just told me this." Socrates said, "So it doesn't pass the first filter. The second filter is, is it something nice?" "No, quite the contrary – that's why I want to tell you this." Socrates said, "Then it doesn't pass the second filter either. Is it something useful?" The man said, "No, I don't think it's useful. I just want to tell you this." Socrates said, "That means it doesn't pass any of the filters."

Put these three filters on your mind: If someone wants to tell you something, have they made sure that it is the absolute truth? Is it something good about someone? Is it useful? If, from whatever others want to tell you or what you want to tell someone else, you filter out everything that does not meet these three criteria, you will have a lot of space in your mind to do useful, wonderful, and spiritual things. If you fill yourself with unfiltered information, you will always be busy with junk, whether it is someone else's or your own. You should never take pleasure in someone else's problems by gossiping about them. You could make it a rule for yourself to not speak about anyone when that person is not face-to-face with you.

Do not waste your energy mulling over things that someone said or did. Most of you are not in a state of mind where, if you close your eyes, the world is gone in your experience. If that is the situation, the best thing is to expend yourself in such a way that there is simply no energy left for anything that is not necessary for your wellbeing. It is better to die of exhaustion than of boredom, laziness, resentment, or misery. The fact that you are aging does not mean you have to reduce your activity. If you keep doing something with tremendous intensity and involvement, your capacity will only increase.

One day, a young cowherd went into the forest to graze his cows. While there, a cow delivered a calf. For the first time, he witnessed a birth. Sud-

denly, there was this little piece of life – it was a miracle to him. He felt such a deep sense of love and compassion for the calf that he picked it up and hugged it. And since it could not walk, he carried it on his shoulders back home. The next day, when he went to the forest with his cows, again he carried the calf on his shoulders, and he continued to do so every day. Over time, the little calf grew into a big bull. As its weight increased, the man's strength also increased. By the time he walked around carrying a full-grown bull on his shoulders, everyone in town thought he was a superman. I want to see supermen and -women like that everywhere. You should not put a limit on what you can do. Let us see where life puts a limit. Human beings who put limits upon themselves cannot create anything big.

It is important that you use your life to the fullest, in every possible way. This is such a brief life – why waste your time on things that are not worthwhile? Either you must do something for your inner wellbeing, or you must be doing something that is useful for people around you. If the moment you hit the pillow, you fall asleep instantly because you have spent all your energy for the day, whatever sadhana you do will become many times more effective. Do not sit around thinking about what to do and what to avoid. If you shift from unwillingness to willingness, from inertia to effervescence, your life will become joyful; your journey will become effortless. And when it is time to die and you look back, you will see you have lived a spectacular life. It is very important to me that this happens for you. Become spectacular and light up the world. I shall burn with you.



DEVI, ADIYOGI AND DHYANALINGA

What is Consecration?

Consecration is a live process. It is like this – if you transform mud into food, we call this agriculture. If you make food into flesh and bone, we call this digestion, integration. If you make flesh into mud, we call this cremation. If you can make this flesh or even a stone or an empty space into a Divine possibility, that is called consecration.

Today, modern science is telling you that everything is the same energy manifesting itself in a million different ways. If that is so, what you call the Divine, what you call a stone, what you call a man or a woman, what you call a demon, are all the same energy functioning in different ways. For example, the same electricity becomes light, sound and so many other things, depending upon the technology. So it is just a question of technology; if you have the necessary technology, you can make the simple space around you into a Divine exuberance; you can just take a piece of rock and make it into a God or a Goddess; this is the phenomenon of consecration.

An enormous amount of knowledge about this dimension of life was perpetuated particularly in this culture, and this was held as the most important thing. Because it does not matter what you are eating, how you are or how long you live, at some point, a need will come that you want to get in touch with the source of Creation. If that possibility is not created across the planet and is not available to every human being who seeks, then society has failed to provide true wellbeing for a human being. It is with this awareness that in this culture, every street had three temples; because even a few meters should not pass without there being a consecrated space. The idea was not to create one temple versus the other, the idea was that nobody should walk in a space which is not consecrated; nobody should live in a space which is not consecrated. The temple was always built first, and then houses were built.

The whole state of Tamil Nadu is built like this. Every significant town in Tamil Nadu had a grand temple and around that, a little town. Because the kind of dwelling you live in is not important. Whether your house is 10,000 square feet or just 1000 square feet is not going to make an ultimate difference in your life, but being around a consecrated space is going to make a phenomenal difference in your life. With this understanding, they built human habitations like this: if there are 25 houses, there must be one temple. Whether you go there or not, whether you pray or not, whether you know the mantra or not, is not the point. You must be in a consecrated space every moment of your life.

The Science and History of Creating Lingas

The science of linga-making is a huge experiential possibility, and has been there for thousands of years. But in the last eight or nine hundred years, especially when the bhakti movement swept the country, the science of building a temple got washed away.

Generally, the only lingas that have a scientific basis to them are those created by siddhas and yogis looking at liberation as a scientific process. They are eternal vibrations. Usually, they were consecrated with the use of mantras, for specific purposes and specific qualities. If you are not aware of this, in southern India, there are five lingas for the five elements in nature. These five lingas are created for sadhana, not for worship.

The Five Elements

The most fundamental sadhana in yoga is bhuta shuddhi. The pancha bhutas are the five elements in nature. If you look at yourself, your physical body is made up of five elements. These are earth, fire, wind, water, and space. They come together in a certain way to become the body. The spiritual process is about going beyond the physical, beyond the five elements. These elements have a huge grip on everything that you experience. To transcend them, the fundamental practice of yoga involves what is called bhuta shuddhi. For every element that is involved, there is a certain practice you can do to become free from it.

To practice bhuta shuddhi, they created five different lingas: one for earth, one for fire, one for wind, one for water, and one for space. Huge, magnificent temples were built where you can go and do sadhana. If you want to do sadhana for the element of water, you go to Thiruvanaikaval. For space, you go to Chidambaram. To do different sadhana, different types of temples were built. This is how a temple is supposed to be, a place where energy is created in a particular way for the specific purpose of sadhana. They created these temples as places for sadhana, not for worship. Indian temples have never been places of prayer; no one ever leads prayers there. It is only nowadays that people give five rupees and appeal to God to do this or that. But in the tradition, you were told that if you go to the temple, you must sit there for a while, because these temples are energy centers. It is like a public charging place. Every day in the morning, before you go out into the world, you have a bath, go sit in the temple

and imbibe this, energize yourself. Then you go out into the world with the right kind of vibe.

Lingas Around the World

The incredible thing is that there are lingas all around the world. In Africa there are terracotta lingas used for occult purposes. In Greece there is a temple with a linga known as the “Navel of the Earth.” This is purely manipuraka. It was definitely done by Indian yogis. Someone consecrated the linga for manipuraka, probably because the local king or chieftain wanted victory, prosperity and well-being. So they created an instrument towards that purpose. As most temples were funded by kings, they were mostly manipuraka in nature, but a few kings who looked beyond those things wanted anahata lingas – also called atma lingas. Usually, these atma lingas are for love and devotion, for ultimate dissolution. Anahata is a very malleable kind of state, accessible to most people. There are occult lingas which are muladhara lingas, very base, gross and powerful, used for occult purposes. Those types of lingas you can find in certain parts of Assam and Karnataka also. There are secret temples, usually very small and powerful in their occult capabilities, but generally most lingas are manipuraka.

The Energy Body of the Highest Being

Right now, most of the lingas in the country represent one or two chakras at the most. Generally only one, because the linga is made powerful and intense with one chakra for a particular purpose and is consecrated by mantras. The Dhyanalinga, which is empowered with all the seven chakras, was consecrated by prana pratishtha. Holding all the seven chakras together was the greatest challenge. If I had wanted to create seven separate lingas for seven chakras, that would have been so much easier, but the impact would not have been the same. The Dhyanalinga is like having the energy body of the most evolved being sitting there, or you could say, the highest being, referred to as Shiva, his energy body.

Another thing is, probably for the first time anywhere in the world, the Dhyanalinga is cared for by both men and women. Nobody has allowed women to do this kind of work before, but today, fourteen days in a lunar month – towards the full moon – women take care of the Dhyanalinga. The next fourteen days – towards the new moon – men take care of it. I think that is a big gift for the society to be able to go beyond these traditions.

If one wants to do spiritual sadhana, he can have the intimacy of sitting with a Guru, a live Master. That is the purpose with which the Dhyanalinga has been created. So people come, sit for a moment and go, that is fine, but those who want to do sadhana can have that kind of intimacy with that energy which is not normally available for people. It is very rare for people to have such an opportunity.

Devi is a Living Entity

We are nearing the completion of two years since Devi. Since we started off with the Bhairavi consecration in the month of January 2010, there has been no looking back; it has been a roller coaster of excitement and Devi has touched the lives of a countless number of people. Already, four full-fledged Bhairavi temples have been confirmed, and many small ones are coming up. So, She is going places. Even before we established the temple, I expressed my apprehension that people may start making Her more important than Dhyanalinga, but that is not our fear. If you have a child in your house, the little infant becomes more important than everybody else. That is not a bad thing.

The reason why many people are able to feel the Devi temple much more than the Dhyanalinga temple is simply because She is physically manifest. Dhyanalinga is subtle; it takes a certain receptivity to feel it. It is of a completely different dimension. Devi is physically manifest – She is even capable of slapping you in the face. She can also do pleasant things, but She can even slap you in the face. Yes, I am telling you, fifty fingers may be left on your face. So, is Devi manifest? She very much is. Is She physically manifest? Very much. As far as I am concerned, She is a living entity for me and for many people.

So, what should I do to experience Devi? You don't have to do anything. If there is not much of you, you will feel the presence of what is not you. If there is too much of you, you won't feel anything anywhere. Not just here, anywhere. Devi is difficult to miss. If your vision is normal, we could write 'A-B-C' in big letters and you could read it. Right now, Devi is like that. She is for people who won't get anything else – Big Bhairavi – you cannot miss her. It is very simple and easy. But most people are like this – they have not even felt their breath themselves. So for such people, if

your heart is beating – dubu, dubu – if you cannot even feel this, how can you feel anything else?

There are people who have not felt their heart-beat, there are people who have not felt their own breath, there are people who cannot see the full moon. If you don't notice a mosquito biting, your heart beating, your breathing...if you don't notice how food behaves within you, how will you notice Devi? Fifty finger marks should fall on your face. If you want, we can also do that. I am not joking. We can do it, but it will hurt. There are a few things which have manifested in some people's lives with Bhairavi which are very strange and, probably, they would not want to talk about it, so I will leave that alone, but things have happened. But the problem with most people is – they are already imagining something.

Don't imagine anything. Imagination is not good for experience. If you think imagination is a substitute for your experience, it is a stupid way to live. Imagination will feel pleasant for some time – if it goes out of control, you will go nuts. Experience is different. Experience transforms life. With imagination, you can go to heaven in two minutes and come back and you are in the same place – a little depressed because you are back. Not that kind. Real life experience. Physically manifest experience. It is very much possible.

So...devotion. It is not because you are singing for Devi or loving Her that She will appear. She is always there. It is just that with devotion, you are trying to wear yourself down. Who you are is becoming less and less as your devotion overflows. She doesn't care whether you are devoted or not. Your devotion has nothing to do with Her. Your devotion has something to do with you. If you are absolutely in devotion, nothing of you will be left. If nothing of you is left, She will be as strong and real as the morning sunlight. The only thing is, for you to feel it, you must be empty. How empty you are, that strongly you will feel it.

Your devotion is not about Devi; your devotion is about dissolving yourself. But without Her, you cannot be devout. You need something; you need somebody to be devout, so you can use Her. If you are in love with somebody or something, it is like this...If you see a cloud, Oh, it looks like Bhairavi! If you see a stone, It looks like Bhairavi! For devotees of Shiva, if you show them anything, they will say, Oh, it looks like a lingam! See that cloud? It looks like a lingam. Do you see? Do you see? It may sound stupid to you – it is stupid on

one level, but it is a fantastic device. In everything, if you see that, now you don't see yourself anywhere.

This is a fantastic device to lower the sense of who you are because your sense of the world is just yourself, please understand this. Your experience of the world is just yourself. Everything is just a reflection within you. Only because of you, the world exists as far as you are concerned. Only because of you, the whole creation exists. In this condition, there can be no devotion, there can be no perception. Everything that you see as the world is your interpretation, it is your reflection. That is not the world, that is not the creation, that is not the Creator. To demolish this, where 'me' has become so big...I see Bhairavi everywhere. Now, after some time, everything is like that. If you see a leaf, Oh, it looks like Bhairavi. If you see a flower, It looks like Bhairavi. You don't say this to anybody, just do this within yourself. Who you are will just disappear over a period of time.

So, is this not stupid? An idea that works, do you call it stupid or smart? It works, that's all. All devices are to be used, not to be analyzed. It is not for analysis, it is for use. If you use it, it works. If you analyze, what is there in it? If I analyze you, what the hell is there within you? There is really nothing. Isn't it?

Why is Meditation the Quality of Dhyanalinga?

Why we have chosen meditation for the Dhyanalinga and why it is the predominant quality – it's not that devotion is out. Devotion is fine, but the predominant quality of the Dhyanalinga and the work that we do is meditation, not devotion. This is simply because though devotion is definitely the quickest way for one to grow, devotion can be very, very deceptive. You know it, isn't it? Today you think you are absolutely devoted, tomorrow morning one little thing goes wrong and your devotion just evaporates. That is not the nature of meditation though – you can't deceive yourself. Maybe it will not happen to you for a long time but when it happens, it happens. There is no going back on it.

So we have chosen meditation because thinking minds and devotion don't go so well together. If you could become simply devotee, then we would have definitely pushed you into devotion because that would be a quicker way to grow. But the problem with devotion is you do not know whether

you are going forward or backward. You will not know which way you are going because it is just emotion – raising emotion to such a pitch that it will break barriers for you. But there is no check or control on it and thinking minds can be very deceptive with devotion. Devotion may not happen, just deception may happen. So the main quality of the Dhyanalinga is meditation.

Dhyanalinga: Sowing the Seed of Spiritual Liberation

We can teach or impart things to you in many different ways. People come to me in different ways. Some come as investigators, some as students, some as disciples and some as devotees. Investigators want to find out what is wrong. There is nothing wrong, but they want to find out what is wrong – they are not interested in learning. Many investigators came and quite a few of them have slowly evolved into devotees today.

The "Gathering Need"

Students come because they want to learn, they want to pick up something. I call the investigators shit-pickers. They always come to pick the dirtiest out of any situation. They want to pick out what is wrong. Students are also pickers but they want to pick out what is good. This is an old habit from the hunting and gathering days. Man has been gathering, gathering, and gathering, either things, people or knowledge. The need to gather has come because there is a sense of inadequacy and incompleteness. You want to gather something all the time, maybe money, maybe wealth, maybe relationships, maybe knowledge.

People who gather knowledge always think they are better than people who gather money or things, but it is not so. It is just a question of taste – somebody likes toast for breakfast, somebody likes masala dosa, somebody likes a whole meal in the morning. Everybody is gathering whatever is dominant in them.

Socially, one thing is held superior to the other, but actually, gathering knowledge is so much more entangling than gathering money, wealth, people or anything else. Knowledge is the most entangling thing, because the way you think and feel are the deepest attachment within you. People have always thought renunciation means to leave your wife or husband. But the deepest attachment is to your own ways of thinking and feeling. If your ways of thinking and feeling are

threatened, you are willing to leave your child, husband, wife, father, mother, anybody. Your own ways of thinking and feeling, that is where the trap is. So gathering knowledge is not any better, but students want to gather knowledge, that is their way.

The third kind who comes is the disciple. The disciple has come to transform himself, he wants to become something other than what he is right now; a pretty good beginning, but a devotee is not interested in all this. He just wants to dissolve. He does not want to exist as himself anymore, he wants to become one with everything. These are the four ways that you can come here.

Transforming Body, Mind, Energy

Depending upon who you are and what your requirements are, we start imparting things in so many different ways. We can transform your body. Every day in the morning, you bend and twist. If you do yoga asanas for six months, you will see, suddenly you are so much more peaceful and healthier. You will see an enormous change in your body and mind, simply because you are doing simple physical asanas. Let us say you practice for six months or one year, and give it up for another six months, then you will be back to square one. If we transform your mind, if you live in awareness for the next six months, there will be a huge change in you, but if in the next two years you live in unawareness, you will be back to square one. The next thing we are trying to transform is your prana or vital energies with kriyas. You practice for six months and you give them up for the next five years, you will be once again back to square one. This period may vary from person to person, depending upon their lifestyles, karmic situations and other aspects.

But if you can impress or imprint something into the etheric body, a substance which is beyond the pranic or the physical energies, you can never destroy it. It is not in your hands anymore. That is what an initiation means. An initiation is not just a set of instructions. So much elaborate care is taken to initiate you into a few minutes of meditation, hoping that you will be in the right level of receptivity and receive this. The seed of it, once it falls into you, you cannot destroy. It does not matter what you do, even if you live the worst possible life, you cannot destroy the seed. If you create a conducive atmosphere, it grows and flowers. If you do not, it will wait.

The Seed of Spiritual Liberation

Have you seen how in summer everything seems to be dry? When you look at the land, it looks so hopeless. Probably a long summer looks like the end of life. But when a few drops of rain come, do you see how it all springs up? They are all waiting. One drop and immediately they are up. Similarly, once something is implanted into your etheric body, you cannot destroy it. That is what an initiation means. That is why so much care is taken about it.

If I have to initiate people like this, I can initiate only a limited number of people at the same time. So we created a device – I would call it a tool. Dhyanalinga is a tool. Sitting in the space of the Dhyanalinga for a while, you start as a devotee, which has a tremendous advantage over Isha Yoga programs. It starts from the other end, which cannot be influenced by the outer situation. If you transform your spiritual body, you will see that this transformation is permanent. Once you are in the sphere of the Dhyanalinga, the seed of spiritual liberation is sown into you. Whether you are willing or not, a believer or non-believer, whether you have come to investigate or surrender, it does not matter. When people sit in this space, this impression will definitely happen, knowingly or unknowingly.

This seed will wait. If the person creates a conducive atmosphere, it will flower very quickly; if he does not, it will wait. It will wait ten lifetimes or hundreds of lifetimes, but you cannot destroy it. This is why we have put so much effort into creating the Dhyanalinga. This transformation works within you on a different level altogether – one which cannot be destroyed, cannot be undone.

After we are gone, what Isha Yoga will become, we do not know. We are taking a lot of care to see that distortions do not happen. We are demanding tremendous discipline and dedication from the teachers. We are putting very hard conditions on them so that distortions are not made. But if whatever Gautama Buddha said or Krishna said can be distorted in a thousand years, what I have said will also definitely be distorted. The Dhyanalinga is the shakthi moola for that – it cannot be distorted. If the whole of Isha Yoga is distorted, it does not matter. If you just go and sit in front of the Dhyanalinga, everything that needs to happen will happen experientially, without saying a word – that is the nature of the Dhyanalinga. Even if a person who does not know anything about meditation comes and sits there, he will become medi-

tative by his own nature. That is the quality of the Dhyanalinga. That is the kind of tool it is.

It has taken an enormous effort to create it. It took three lifetimes for me. It is very hard for you to believe this. It will sound too unbelievable if I tell you the whole saga of what it took to make it happen. People who have been around me have seen all that has happened. That is the nature of this tool. If we go on teaching in the current way, with the kind of safeguards we are creating, we can never reach enough people. So the Dhyanalinga is to just hasten this process. That is why in our eagerness to share, we have created this.

Dhyanalinga – A Live Guru

Every form and shape has its own vibrance and quality about it. Certain forms have been identified as ideal receptacles of energy. An ellipsoid is one form that can become a perennial storehouse of energy. Fundamentally, the ellipsoid is the first form that manifested itself. From unmanifest to manifest, when this transition happened, the first form that the unmanifest takes is the ellipsoid. If you look at the core of any galaxy, you will see it is always an ellipsoid because that is the first form that it takes. Through our experience, we know that when one reaches the height of meditativeness, when one comes to a point of dissolution, once again our energies take the form of an ellipsoid.

So, the ellipsoid is seen as a gateway to the beyond – from both ends –the beginning and the end. Based on this is the science of consecrating lingas. The science of making and energizing lingas has existed for thousands of years. A certain mastery has been attained about this science in the Eastern cultures and the linga is just a manifestation of that. This ellipsoid or linga can be energized in various ways to bring different types of wellbeing to humanity.

A significant aspect of the Dhyanalinga is that it is not made for worship. It is a meditative force. There is no worship, no ritual and no offerings for the Dhyanalinga. It is maintained in total silence. By simply sitting silently for a few minutes within its sphere, one can experience and imbibe the energies there.

Dhyanalinga is like a living Guru. It is a live form. Only a physical body is absent, but as an energy body and in all other ways, it is like a living Guru. For a spiritual seeker to be able to do his sadhana

or inner work in the presence of a Guru or a living Master is a tremendous opportunity.

The role of a Guru in a spiritual seeker's life is not just about giving teachings and guidance. The most fundamental reason why a spiritual seeker seeks a Guru is because a Guru can ignite his energies into a different dimension. Otherwise, all spirituality will just be verbology. You go to a Guru not because you need teachings and guidance. All those things can be had from books. You go to a Guru because he can ignite you in a way that no book or no teaching can do. It is a live subjective process. That aspect of a Guru's role is very well fulfilled by Dhyanalinga. Dhyanalinga can ignite one's energies into a completely new dimension of vibrance and possibility. That is the most fundamental aspect of a spiritual dimension.

Dhyanalinga is a tremendous possibility for the world. As you see today, worldwide, there is a spiritual longing in people like never before. As the spiritual longing and thirst arises in human beings, wherever they may be, irrespective of time and space, the energies of Dhyanalinga will become available to them as a spiritual ignition, as a spiritual guidance and a spiritual force which will lead them on. If a longing to know, a longing to grow, a longing to go beyond his present limitations arises within a human being, the energies of Dhyanalinga will naturally reach.

Sixteen Years of Dhyanalinga

So, sixteen is an important number for us, and there are certain things we will be doing with Dhyanalinga to make him more available during the next sixteen-year phase. Very few people have really consumed it, but it is a tremendous storehouse of knowledge; nowhere else has it been done like this. The form of it is very, very unique. It is time people become more sensitive to him. I am not saying this with any disregard, but people come like tourists and sit for fifteen minutes, and at the end they ask, "No Prasadam?!" Or, "When is fifteen minutes going to be over?" Other people go through fifteen minutes like a moment. If you come like a tourist, so what? But if you leave the world like a tourist, that is a pathetic state. Before you leave this world, that which made this world happen should be yours – at least a little bit. If it is not yours, all you are left with is a lump of earth (body) – which they will anyway take back.

If something is ignited within you, if something more than the warmth of your body is on, then in the coming year we will offer possibilities to tweak up the way Dhyanalinga functions for you – whether you are living in the ashram, or just here for a short period of time. It is my only endeavor that you should experience something more than your physicality. This will not happen by you seeking experiences, but by preparing yourself to become receptive. Your Sadhana is your lifeline. I am with you.

Recognizing the Adiyogi

The Adiyogi brought the possibility that a human being need not be contained in the defined limitations of our species. There is a way to be contained in physicality but not to belong to it. There is a way to inhabit the body but never become the body. There is a way to use your mind in the highest possible way but still never know the miseries of the mind. Whatever dimension of existence you are in right now, you can go beyond that – there is another way to live. He said, “You can evolve beyond your present limitations if you do the necessary work upon yourself.” And he gave methods as to how to evolve. That is the significance of the Adiyogi.

Before I fall dead, I want to make sure that His contribution to humanity is recognized across the world. We are in various stages of doing this. One thing is we are building Adiyogi shrines. It is a twenty-one foot tall bronze Adiyogi with a consecrated linga in front of Him. It is a powerful space. The first one has come up in our ashram in the United States, in Tennessee.

Everybody on the planet should know that He is the one who offered this science to the world. In the last five to six years, four major books were published in Europe contesting that yoga did not come from India, but is the evolution of European exercise systems. If they write another ten to fifteen books like this, that will become the truth. Whatever you read in your textbook as history, you believe is the truth. It is not, I am telling you, it is just written by some vested interest largely. So if they write twenty-five to fifty books like this in the next ten to fifteen years, after some time everyone will say yoga came from United States or from California, or that Madonna invented yoga. It is not a laughing matter, it can easily be done. There are people who are willing to write anything. Some very famous books are saying this. Dan

Brown, in his book *Angels and Demons*, says yoga is an ancient Buddhist art. Gautama is only twenty-five hundred years, Adiyogi is fifteen thousand years. Now you say Gautama, tomorrow you will say Madonna. If you write a few books that will become the truth. So I want to make sure, before I am dead, that everybody should know yoga came from Him, nobody else but Him.

We need to do this because the ethos of India is that of seekers. We are not believers, we are seekers of liberation. That is all that is holding us together. If you travel one hundred kilometers, people look different, speak different, eat different, dress different, everything about them is different. Though politically we were over two hundred pieces at one time, outside people say this is “Hindustan” or this is “Bharath” because the strangeness of this existence was that they were a land of seekers, not believers.

It does not matter what Rama said, what Krishna said, what the Vedas say, what the Upanishads say, it does not matter who says what – still, every person born in this land is supposed to seek his own truth. You are supposed to seek your own liberation. Because they were a land of seekers, they were never conquerors. If you make the whole humanity on this planet seekers, not believers, there will be no conquest. The basic incentive for violence is gone. People may fight for small things, but the big fight is over. Because I believe one thing, you believe another thing – there is endless fight.

If you see you do not know the nature of the universe – as scientists are admitting today – who are you going to fight with? “No, my God created the universe, not yours.” That is the problem. A seeker means one who has realized that he does not know. If this one thing happens to humanity, ninety percent of the incentive for violence will be gone.

So to bring this back, there is no better inspiration than Adiyogi. And we want to manifest Him in many ways.

Adiyogi – An Iconic Presence

Shiva is in a way synonymous with the Third Eye. One of the many names associated with him is Tryambaka or Trinetra – the three-eyed one. Because of the Third Eye, he perceives “that which is not.” “That which is” is physical manifestation – “that which is not” is not physical. Right

now, what you cannot perceive through your five senses is not in your experience. If willing to strive, a human being can see “that which is not,” that which is not physical – Shi-va. The human aspiration to be something more than what they are right now has taken too many lives, has driven too many species to extinction – even the planet itself is in danger. Gathering money, property, relationships, family, or whatever else may make you feel like you are something more – but only in comparison with someone else. By yourself, nothing of you will be enhanced. Only when your perception is enhanced, the way you experience life is enhanced.

We are planning to make Adiyogi an iconic presence in the world so that people understand that only enhancement of perception ultimately enhances life. We are in the process of building a hundred and twelve feet tall face of Adiyogi. The number is both symbolic and scientifically significant for our existence because he opened up one hundred and twelve possibilities for human beings to reach their ultimate nature, and there are one hundred and twelve chakras with which you can work. This image of Adiyogi will be the largest face on the planet. Along with the Adiyogi statue, a book on Adiyogi will come out, and hopefully in the next couple of years, a movie.

The idea of creating an iconic face like this is not to build one more monument but to use it as a galvanizing force to transform the world from a mass of believers to individuals who seek truth of life and beyond. You know what terrible things believers are capable of. All the conflict on the planet, though some would like to project it as good versus evil, is essentially one man's belief versus another man's belief. The moment you believe something, no matter what it is, you become blind to everything else. For belief systems to work, you need a flock. If you apply your own intelligence and think for yourself, your belief will collapse. The nature of seeking is individual. Every individual has to seek within himself or herself.

The most important thing is to build this culture in such a way that it is always an individual seeking, never a religion. The good thing about seekers is they are joyfully confused. When you are seeking, you have something to strive for, but nothing to fight for. The world badly needs this. The way human beings are empowered today, we have a phenomenal ability to create and destroy. When we are striving, we try to create. When we are

fighting, we destroy. Believing means assuming certainty about dimensions of which you have really no clue. This will give you confidence without clarity, which is disastrous. Seeking means consciously moving from certainty to uncertainty. When you are constantly stepping into new terrain, it means you are genuinely progressing. Certainty comes from familiarity. When you are making rounds in the same place, obviously you are not going anywhere. People who are exploring different dimensions of life are always uncertain. Great scientists talk in ifs and buts.

We will unveil this image of Adiyogi next Mahashivaratri. People here are working day and night to keep on schedule. On 25th of February 2017, we will offer him to the world. This is a once-in-a-lifetime event. Those of you who missed the Dhyanalinga consecration, this is your chance to experience something like this, and to make as much noise as possible about Adiyogi in the world. It is very important today that the next generation are seekers, not believers, that they do not belong to some imaginary heaven for which they only qualify after death. This is what believing does – it makes you dead sure about things that you know nothing about. Adiyogi is significant to start a new awakening in the world, where instruments of self-transformation will be common. As today most people on the planet know how to brush their teeth, they should know how to keep themselves peaceful and joyful. Human beings must know how to manage their body and their mind. If this happens, human beings will become a tremendous potential and possibility.

Right now, people are capable of making everything a struggle. This is because they do not have tools for self-transformation. It is time we change that, starting in our homes and social surroundings. We can create a culture where we focus more on how we as human beings work. If you understand how your own system works, you can employ it in many wonderful ways. Otherwise, you live by accident, which means you are naturally anxious. That way, the simplest things can be a great struggle. What are most human beings doing? They are earning a living. If they wish, they reproduce. And they will die one day. Every other creature is doing that too, quite efficiently. The point is not that everything that human beings have created is negative. The quality of science and technology and what it can do to the world essentially depends upon what kind of people handle it. The point is to create people who can

use science and technology in a sensible way, to enhance life for ourselves and for every other life form on the planet. Not in a way that is destructive for ourselves and for everything around us. Not in ways that brings trouble and suffering upon ourselves and everyone else, which is what is happening right now.

You may have noticed, the last two, three summers have been hotter than ever before. In the Himalayas, you can see this too. At Gomukh, where the river Bhagirathi is born, water was spouting out from the mouth of the ice cave like a fountain. Now the ice has melted to such an extent that you can walk a mile into the cave, and only a small stream is flowing out of it. Many peaks that used to be covered in snow throughout the year are not anymore for months on end. River Kaveri is not touching the ocean anymore for nearly three months in a year. In one generation, we have made a river that was perennial for many thousands of years into a seasonal one. What all this means is – the tools of science and technology that we have are in irresponsible hands. What we need is not more science and technology but a transformation of individual human beings. If tools for transformation are not transmitted in a big way in the coming decade, it will become more and more difficult for our children to live well in the world.

We have just started a new solar cycle. In many ways, the next twelve years are going to be the golden period for spiritual movement on the planet. If we do the right things in the coming decade or so, it will bear fruit much more easily. Human intellect is readier than ever before for something like this. Things are falling together – 2016 is coinciding with similar situations as they were when Adiyogi first taught. All these things are good for us. It is my wish and my blessing that we as a generation should have the privilege of making this happen for future generations. We want to use Adiyogi as an iconic presence to make this happen. We are not promoting him as a god but as a yogi. A god means you have to worship him. A yogi means a possibility. We want to create spaces where tools for transformation are offered to everyone who comes, beyond race, religion, gender, and creed. The first one has happened in Tennessee. No miracles offered, no place to petition – just sadhana; but the numbers of people who are coming there are increasing by the day.

If we create the necessary atmosphere, similar places, where people can receive tools for transformation, will happen everywhere in the world. If the necessary integrity and the power of the space are created, people will invariably come. Today, more people than ever before are seeking. More people than ever before are disappointed with whatever belief systems are being propagated. A huge mass of people still hang on to their belief, even though it does not make any sense to them – simply because they do not see a better alternative. It is our responsibility to make sure they find a better alternative, because in this is the wellbeing of the world.

If we want a peaceful world, we need peaceful human beings. If we want a loving world, we need loving human beings. If we want a sensible world, we need sensible human beings. If we are interested in creating the kind of human beings that we want to live with, that we want the world to be inhabited with, and that we want our children to live with, we have to make sure that in the next ten to twelve years' time, every child, before they reach ten years of age, learns a simple process, where they at least close their eyes and sit for seven to ten minutes. Every human being on the planet should know some simple tool for self-transformation. Unless we bring this into their lives, violence and disaster will continue and multiply in the world. By 2050, they are expecting about 9.7 billion people on the planet. The more crowded it gets, the more intense situations will become. If we have to live in close proximity, it is very important that people are as pleasant, peaceful, and joyful as they can be. That is why tools of transformation become super important.

I want all of you to somehow make sure everyone in the world will know about the unveiling of Adiyogi. Not everyone will start doing yoga the moment they see his face, but the word "Adiyogi" will slowly work on them. The entire world should know something is being done to create more pleasant human beings. This is the most fundamental business for any generation – to leave the world a little better than the way we found it. In terms of environment, we will not be able to reverse the destruction that has happened in our lifetime. But at least we can leave people in a better state. If they are peaceful and joyful, I am sure they will fix the environment. Let's make this happen.

SADHGURU ABOUT HIMSELF

Sadhguru on His Full Potential

What would the full potential be? Different people have expressed this in different ways. Krishna said, “I am the radiant sun among the luminaries. I am the moon among the stars. I am the lion among the beasts. I am the king of birds among the birds. I am the Ganga among the rivers. I am the Himalaya among the mountains.” In this language he went on, very eloquently. Jesus said, “I am the son of God; the only son.” That is another kind of language – the same thing expressed in a different way. Gautama said, “If you walk my path you will never have to turn around,” – a subtler way of saying it. In India, it is very common to chant, “Aham Brahmasmi” – that means, “I am the Ultimate Truth.” Mansur al-Hallaj, who is the originator of the Sufi system, went to India, came back and said, “Anal haq.” That means, “I am the truth,” and he got into a lot of trouble.

I am not given to that kind of language. I am just putting it very simply. Whatever mechanics and dimensions of this existence, if you just provide me the needed atmosphere, I can take you to any one of them and fix any one of them. I am not a god, I am not a Guru – I am a mechanic. I can take you to the mechanics of this existence, whatever dimension it is. Whatever needs to be done, I can fix it. That is the 100% potential. That does not sound as grand and poetic as, “I am the lion among the beasts. I am the Himalayas among the mountains. I am the Ganga among the rivers.” My interest in the existence is that it works. It looks so chaotic, so unwieldy, nobody knows the beginning and the end, but it still works.

If you are interested in that which works, you are naturally a mechanic. It is just a question of creating a conducive atmosphere, and that is challenging. If we create the atmosphere, I can make it work on any level of existence. This is all I have aspired for – and this is all there is.

So, what do you have to do? One thing is the foundation – the foundation of any building should be in the ground, but the Isha Foundation is sitting on my head all the time. I want to put it to the ground. If you are willing to be that ground and if it is off my head, a lot more things could be done. That is not all, but it is an important factor right now – I am trying to unload. Step-by-step, I am

getting it off my head, but still it is happening too slowly because life does not stop for one moment.

This is a race to the grave. You may think that the physical body is going to many places. “I went to Himalayas, I went to Florida...” But still, your body is going straight to the grave – nowhere else. The rest is your imagination. That is something that I am constantly aware of.

In a very codified way, not the knowledge, but the keys to everything that is worth knowing are all in one place. If tomorrow, someone with the necessary awareness comes, it will not be lost. That was the intention of the Dhyanalinga – not just what I know, also what my Guru knew and what the whole tradition knew, everything is there, not in the form of knowledge, but in the form of keys. If someone is aware enough, they can pick it up and open whatever they want in the existence. It is a dvāra, a doorway to the creation. You can use it to open just about anything. But right now, the 21st century is a talking century. If you don't talk, nobody gets the point.

So, because this is a talking century – I hope it won't be a talking millennium – we have to talk, but at the same time create an atmosphere where the needed talk happens as quickly as possible so that we don't have to go on talking endlessly. If the talk has to be quick, it has to be brutal. If the talk has to be brutal and still people should not run away, you have to create the necessary atmosphere where people are so overwhelmed by your love, devotion and intensity that when they come here, I can go straight at them – no diplomacy – so that the talking period can be shortened. Otherwise, you will end up talking for the rest of your life and still people won't get it. If you speak gently, the conversation will go on forever. One brutal word, it stops. To say a brutal word and not make them run away, to make them realize this brutality has a profoundness behind it, you need to create a certain atmosphere, otherwise the diplomacy that you should do, I will have to do, and my time is ticking away.

If people are created who are of a certain capability, people who are stable beyond mental moods and emotions, they will be the foundation – that means it is off my head. Then a lot more can be done. If we could find 100% expression with even a handful of people, that would already be fantastic. We are not expecting to find 100% expression with the whole world. That is never going to happen. I am not so dreamy. But definitely, it is possi-

ble to create a handful of people with whom it could be 100%. If that cannot be done, we may be a success in the world, people may be clapping their hands, but if we cannot find full expression even with a handful of people, if we have to be careful with them, watching out for their egos, then as a spiritual movement, it is a disaster.

We need people who have the necessary integrity, balance, stability, and heart in them, that even if you let them out into the most corrupt situation, they will function successfully there and come out untouched. We need people of integrity. Integrity has become a dicey thing in today's world because people have very infantile ideas of freedom.

It would be impractical to think that you are going to make every fool on the planet into an enlightened being. The world is always a play between the positives and the negatives. Some generations enjoy the positives more than the negatives, some suffer the negatives more than they enjoy the positives. If there is something that we as a generation can do and be proud of, we have to see that for the next generation, the positives of life hugely outweigh the negatives. This does not mean there will not be a single problem in the world and everything will be perfect. That would not be a dream, that would be hallucination.

The whole world may not go spiritual but if you at least create a possibility that is available and accessible to the whole world, then the pluses would increase to a point where people can gloss over the minuses. When life is so good, even if one bad thing happens, you can ignore it and go on. Otherwise, every little minus pricks you so badly because there are no pluses in your life.

Particularly in today's world, because of technology, our ability to reach people is phenomenal. Never before was this possible. What we can do in terms of reach, a Krishna, a Buddha, a Jesus could not do. Today, we have the advantage of technology – we have audio, video, television, and the internet – we can slip into everyone's house. Though there are many other disadvantages in today's world, this is a phenomenal advantage. If we make use of this – if we can change the culture of this planet from materialistic to spiritual even by one percent in our lifetime, it is a phenomenal achievement because if a ship keeps changing direction by one percent, after some time, it will have made a complete U-turn. Yes, you cannot turn everyone around right now, and there is no need to. If you can just change the

direction by one degree, in a certain period of time, the world will have made a U-turn. This can be done if the necessary people are there.

We still have some life in us – there is time left. You decide how far you want to take it, what you want to do. Let me see that fire spilling from your eyes – not a fire of anger, greed, or passion, but the cool fire which burns quietly and does all the work that needs to be done without burning itself up. Cool fire fuels everything but it does not burn anything up – and we have everything in our hands to do that. Today, we have a social situation in the world where as long as we don't break the law, we can do whatever we want. This was never so before.

It does not take millions of people to do this. Fifty really committed, stable people who don't have basic questions on an everyday basis, are all it takes. If you decide that the air around you is good air to breathe, you don't have to think every moment – "Is it poisoned, is it poisoned?" Wondering whether it is cold or hot is okay, but if you keep thinking, "Is this air poisoned..." If it was poisoned, you would have been dead by now.

If you settle these basic things within yourself once and for all, this will bring stability, a new ground for you to stand upon within yourself. Then the next steps will naturally come. Every rung will be a challenge, so you have to stabilize the ground on which the ladder is standing. I am not asking you to run up the ladder without checking every rung. But if you keep disturbing the ground on which the ladder stands, however good the quality of the ladder is, it is useless. You take your time on every rung, that is perfectly okay. If you are maddened by this, you run up the ladder without bothering whether it is going to withstand your weight or not – that is also okay. If that is not possible for you, check every rung and go. But this one basic thing, the ground, you must settle. If you don't settle that, it will be just waste of time.

Time is not a commodity that comes and goes – it just goes. Time is life. We cannot afford to squander it. I would even say, there is no such thing as time, there is just life. If we create such people with the necessary integrity, stability, and balance, we can start exploring.

Be with Me

Humans are the only species on the planet that are referred to as Being. There is no such thing as

a tiger-being, elephant-being, reptile-being, or cockroach-being – only Human Being. There is no greater honor for any species than to be a Being. That means it is significant even if it is not doing anything. Human Beings are not significant because of what they do. Human Beings are significant because of the quality of their Being. But unfortunately, how many humans are really Being – that is the big question. Essentially, everything that we are attempting in Isha is to bring you this sense of Being.

If I say, “Simply Be,” you do not know what it means. Or if I say, “Don’t do anything” – that is one thing you cannot do. Either in body, mind, emotion, or energy, you have to do something. So I am telling you, “Be with me.” In doing, there is this and that. In Being, there is no this and that. In trying to Be with me, there is still doing involved. In that sense, “Be with me” is only a ploy. Essentially, you have to Be. But this “Just be” thing that is propagated in popular culture is nothing but mental circus – people only think they are Being.

You could choose to Be with anything, but those somethings or somebodies may not be supportive for your wellbeing. If you try to Be with someone else out there, a dog, a cat, or anything for that matter – they do not know how to support your Being, because they themselves do not know how to Be. Even if you are trying to simply Be, they will want you to do something – “What are you just staring at me like that for? Say something!” In Being with me, if you pay absolute attention, I will destroy your doing. You will experience moments where you are not doing a thing on any level. In the realm of physical phenomena, this is called induction. Your situation is just like that. You have come as a complete human being. Everything that is needed is there, but still you do not know how to simply Be. It needs an induction. Induction needs energy. Energy costs life.

If you can really Be without any sense of doing, there is no such thing as Being with. “I am being with somebody” is only a phrase. In a physical sense, maybe you can be with somebody. When you are truly a Being, there is only one. Everything in this existence is “me, me, and me alone.” That is the beauty of Being. When you are doing, you have to do something with something or somebody. The moment action comes – whether in body, mind, emotion, or energy – there have to be two or more entities. Only in Being, there is just one entity. In simply Being, you become one with everything.

Being essentially means yoga. Yoga means union. As the word yoga has become popular – like any other four-letter word – people have started using it to refer to something. Yoga is not about something. When there is no something, no this or that, when everything becomes one, there is union – that is called yoga. In the ultimate sense, yoga means to become one with everything. We need to get this idea out of people’s heads that yoga means some impossible posture. When we are doing, our terrain is limited – no matter how big our action may be. When we are being, there are no limitations.

When you are trying to Be, it is important that you are Being with something that is energetically supportive. Something that will not cause division. Something that will not enhance your identity. Something that will destroy your identifications. Identification means individuality. Individuality means limitations. “This is my personality” means “this is my limitation.” People are saying it proudly, out of ignorance. They have also told you “ignorance is bliss.” But if that was so, by now the entire world population should be totally blissed out. Ignorance is bliss – till you hit the ground. If you jump off from a tall building, it is really wonderful – till you hit the ground. In ignorance, there are brief moments that are truly wonderful, when you are not seeing the reality. Being means you are absolutely in reality. Doing, thinking, means you are making up something. In simply being, you are not making up anything anymore.

Simply being does not come easy. So, be with something that supports your being. Something that is always striving to energetically destroy your boundaries. In that sense, I am telling you, “Be with me.” Wherever you are, try and Be with me, for a specific time. Six twenty in the morning and evening is best. Use a picture if necessary or just close your eyes and Be with me. As I have already invested a large volume of Energy for this purpose, you shall find it Supportive, Exhilarating, or even Ecstatic. Try Me.

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