



Spiritual Life

Talks with Babaji

How do the practices of Ashtanga Yoga carry over into the world when we have so many things to do and can't spend all day observing all the limbs?

Yama and Niyama, restraints and observances: they are in our every-day life. It's called spiritual life. Asana is exercise. For good health, you have to move around. Pranayama don't need several hours. Do simple breathing exercises for 10-15 minutes. Meditation: just sit for 10 minutes and don't think about the world. So it is all 45 minutes. If you have more time, then you can increase your practices.

If my true Self is already liberated and needs no liberation, can I just leave my ego alone to enjoy itself?

If the ego is having a good time, then it's creating its trap. It's attached and addicted to good time; it is not liberated state. "When the ego is left alone" means it is desireless. Desireless ego dwells in eternal peace and that is liberated state.

I hear so much about not wanting to be here or not wanting to be in a body. Everyone tells us to be light; but I am heavy. This makes me feel disturbed.

In our spiritual journey, what is the vehicle? The mind-body complex. If this mind-body complex is in good shape, then it will work better. So first duty is to keep it in a good shape. Then we have to find out which way to go. It's in a good shape but goes to a wrong direction. That is not good. Right direction we get by 1) satsang (association with others on the spiritual path), 2) swadhyaya (self-study and study of scriptures), 3) sadhana (spiritual practice), 4) selfless service. Not wanting to be here or in the body means not wanting to live in a state of ignorance. In the state of ignorance, the person is always living in fear, anger, pain, etc. That's why we say "I don't want to be here."

How do we understand spiritual progress?

Progress is known when there is a comparison. If two airplanes are high up in the sky and one is ahead, then we can see it. But if one airplane is flying up in high altitudes by itself, then we don't feel anything about the speed and progress. Spiritual progress is not known in this way by comparison with others. We can only say if our mind is not attached. That's our indication of progress. If our mind is developing selflessness, not craving for worldly things and feeling contented more, that indicates progress.

I am a performing artist. Is there a contradiction between getting fulfilled with my art which involves pleasing an audience and the practices of Yoga?

You can do all those things but with an awareness that that is not your real aim. In the theater, you live the same kind of life. You play the part of a king. You come home and you don't feel like a king. In the art world, you are a different person who is working for others' satisfaction but other times, you are working for your self-development.

The component of a person's ego which causes us to want to live a spiritual life, how is that different from other aspects of ego?

Ego means duality. "I am" indicates there is something else. It's duality. What happens when the notion of "I am" disappears? The bucket of water from the ocean is sitting on the beach and someone pours it back in the ocean. There is only ocean, no separate bucket of water. We can explain it by saying ocean and bucket because both are perceptibles. When the universal ego is unknown and not perceptible, then we can't explain exactly what happens. The ego wants two things: 1) worldly experience, 2) liberation from the worldliness. When the ego sees the worldly enjoyments are momentary and the result is pain, then one seeks for spiritual path. The ego which is seeking for spiritual path and the ego which is seeking for worldly life are very different. The ego which is seeking for worldly life is rooted in desires, attachment, selfishness, etc. The ego which is seeking for spiritual life is reducing desires, attachments, etc.

If we try to restrain ourselves from violence in our waking state, does the negativity or violence that we experience in our dreams change over time?

What is the difference between awakened and dream state? Dreams are caused by desires, imagination and memory. Awakened state also functions by these three and also creates more memories for the dreams to manifest. The violent dream is not separate from your awakened state. In awakened state the mind is distracted so you are not aware of those thoughts. In meditation or dream, the mind is blocked from getting distracted by several sense perceptions. So the memory is seen very active. It presents many past events which you are not aware of. Why in meditation all worldly thoughts appear? They don't appear. They are there. Only identified more. If we are living a spiritual life then all our actions, thoughts, speech will be spiritual. In our dream the memory of spiritual life will start predominating and violence will start decreasing.

The path to selflessness is very tricky. What is the clearest way to get there?

The path of selflessness is hard when the mind is too involved in the world. It is easy when the mind shifts to devotion to God. Tulsi Dass writes "O Lord, like a passionate man loves his wife, like a miserly person clings to wealth; in the same way I may feel love to God." The two examples give the feeling of intensity of love in a worldly sense. But if this same intensity of love is felt for God, that is devotion. A person who is devoted to God gradually develops nonattachment to one's own needs and thinks more about others who are in need. Such a person works for the good of others with no selfish intent.

How can one be in a devoted attached relationship and also be devoted to God at the same time?

The union of matter and spirit is Yoga. In that union there is attachment and the purpose of this union is evolution. The same principle is in a devoted relationship. If they live a spiritual life together with one aim and purpose of life, then they are devoted to God.

If we have been practicing Yoga as a householder, are there yogic practices we can learn now to practice in the dying process to pass to a higher place?

What happens at the time of death? The five elements get very active and change very fast. Create colors, patterns, human or demon forms, and the mind gets confused. Keeping memory of God depends on regular practice of spiritual life. When the divine form is soaked in the mind, then divine presence will be there at the time of death.

Does a religion that uses as an object of worship a human figure who lived create more traps for the ego than a religion which uses mantras or symbols?

Forms or deities are reminders. Make a red circle and hang it in your room. Tell yourself, "whenever I see the red circle I will remember God." You go out and forget everything. You come in your room and the red circle reminds you. So these forms we have accepted are reminders of God in our lives. The forms are not God but they bring the thought of God. In devotional path, God incarnates in human form are worshipped. It is a dualistic method of worship. In mantra and symbols, the mind goes to non-dual state. If the mind develops fanaticism in dualistic path, then the ego can create more ignorance.

How is the samadhi state different from a state of deep sleep? In both the thought of "I am" is gone.

In deep sleep you lose outer consciousness and inner mind stops. You wake up and everything appears again as it was before. In samadhi, you lose outer consciousness. The mind stops but when you come out of that state you obtain knowledge of two things: 1) reality, 2) dispassion for unreality. If samadhi doesn't bring knowledge and dispassion, then it is no better than the sleep.