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Inner Engineering with Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev



By [Kavita Chhibber](#)

I had been hearing about the courses Isha foundation offers at different levels for a couple of years. I also kept seeing the changes the yogic and meditative practices brought for the better in some of my friends who had taken the course. For some it was life altering, for others it certainly changed the way they viewed life-how long lasting the effects were of course depended on how regularly they did their practices.

I also heard stories, that there was a cult like environment not just at Isha but also at Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living foundation because participants were told not to teach others whatever was taught to them during the courses or to share their experiences. It was advised to let new participants come and learn whatever the teachers were offering directly.

As readers of this emag know I have been talking regularly with Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, the founder of Isha foundation on various topics. Sadhguru has also been answering questions from readers and practitioners from all over the world each month about various aspects of life-from the mundane to the spiritual, world politics, business, humanity at large and why it is really important to create a harmony and balance between the inner and outer elements. When there is an imbalance, disease, stress and strife and even natural disasters follow.

While I have enjoyed all my conversations with Sadhguru, I hadn't done any of the courses. Also, for me the only truth is what I see with my own eyes, hear with my own ears, and experience myself. While I wasn't looking for any kind of life altering experiences, or answers to complex questions, I decided to take the inner engineering course which is an introduction to inner well being. I have been practicing yoga and pranayam off and on for a few years and can also vouch for the great benefits that I have personally derived from them. So I figured anything that helps you feel better and creates a harmony within and without couldn't go wrong. Also it would give me an opportunity to see for myself whether everything was really as great as it was or was it indeed a cult where people were in lala land blindly lapping up everything in a dazed state.



It seems that over a period of time Sadhguru and the volunteers who work with him, have observed people who have come, experienced the courses and based on the response, worked towards making it a kind of multilayered teaching. It allows people to move up each level if they wish to at their own pace. Sadhguru's courses geared for the corporate world are also in great demand. The organization itself is totally run by volunteers in a free wheeling way and there is nothing that is regimented. No one is paid for their services and every penny goes towards humanitarian causes.

The course I took last month was different from previous ones-or so I was told by those who had done the earlier courses. The previous sessions were supposedly more intense and demanded more time to practice, and many people had a harder time keeping up. This redefined course was definitely easier to handle by first time participants. With that came the hope that they will when they left the 6 day program, continue to keep up with their practices.

The course in Atlanta was sold out because it was one of the last three that Sadhguru was going to teach personally. It was interesting to see that there were a number of people from out of town-some had driven from Tampa Florida, North Carolina, others had come in from NY, NJ, Boston and many other places. Many wives were there because their husbands had taken the course and wanted their wives to do the same. This was an interesting shift, because usually its the women who take the initiative in spiritual matters and then push their husbands to do the same. Many people had come at the recommendation of friends. One nurse was caring for a woman with a newborn and saw Sadhguru's books in her room. The new mom told the nurse to read the books and those inspired her to come for the course. Another person had heard Sadhguru speak just two days earlier at an event and signed up. There was an interesting mix of both Indians and non Indians. There were many there who were frazzled, stressed out and some not in good health-chronic back pain, multiple sclerosis, migraine headaches, acidity etc. Others were in dysfunctional relationships; some were looking for peace of mind-there was the founding member of one of the most sought after leading rock bands of the late sixties. Then there were some who were grieving and some were there just to experience Sadhguru up close and personal.

It was interesting to see how people came in with one attitude when they started and at the end of the intense 6 day session

many underwent what I can only call profound change. Again no question, no comment was off bounds. There was one person who asked why people were charged for the courses. Sadhguru mentioned that only the first two courses came with a price tag- and that was to bring a sense of commitment and discipline in people. "If I asked you to come here for 6 days, not many of you will do so with a sense of commitment and if you miss one session, you will have missed a lot. If you do the first two courses then I know that if you decide then you will be there for the next level and that is why there is no charge for the other courses."



There were some people, who were pretty blunt in their questioning everything, and it was interesting to see at the end of the course, even they had realized that it was not necessary to be either offensive or defensive because every question was dealt with compassion and humor by Sadhguru.

I decided to ask participants to share their thoughts after the 6 day course got over. Bhavana Sirivelu who drove from Tampa Florida, to Atlanta with her husband said two of her friends in Detroit and New Jersey attended the course and had recommended it. One used to have insomnia and is cured after practicing the kriya. The other friend wanted more peace and calm and she did gain something out of the program

"My friends asked me to send my husband Kishore (Only one of us could go, because of the little kids). My husband has a severe case of acidity and wanted to give it a shot. He took the course and was very excited after each day's teachings from Sadhguru. He was always looking forward to the next evening and he enjoyed it and got very inspired by the whole thing. He was deeply touched and emotional for the next few days after the program. He even shed tears in front of his colleagues and the CEO of the company. I observed all this

and was very cooperative with him and tried my best to support him through this time. He would tell me the little moral stories Sadhguru told him and other little details which he was allowed to share. I had lots of questions for him and he would say "You need to go to the course and hear it from Sadhguru. I cannot talk about it". It used to frustrate me a little, but I understood his position. He has become a vegetarian and I think it's for good now. He is the kind who does research on anything and everything and he is totally involved in it. He has not missed his Kriya and follows the rules very strictly.

I did not see any significant change in him as a person or his personality. I did not expect too. He has accumulated this for the past 40 years and I don't expect it to go away...But, he is loving all this and wants more of it and I'm sure there are lot of internal changes happening. But, his acidity has not reduced at all. He went to the Sathsang with Sadhguru last week and I believe Sadhguru asked him to eat only uncooked food. He is trying that now. Hopefully he will feel better. He has also registered for the next level course- Bhava Spandana, and read Sadhguru's book "Mystic's Musings" and shared a lot of that information with me."

Bhavana adds that after seeing her husband she too wanted the opportunity to meet Sadhguru and when she finally did she was overwhelmed. "For me, it's all about him. He is who makes it all worth it. He is love. You feel so loved and blessed in his presence. I did become very emotional and could not contain my tears during a few situations. The one that most affected me or touched me was that song he sang when we are all were closing our eyes and just sitting with open palms on chairs. Over all, I just enjoyed the experience and felt very blessed to be a part of Isha. I wanted to be a volunteer immediately and my husband and I will do so for the next program in Tampa.

My husband and I sit together every morning at 6:20 and meditate a few minutes. We then do the kriya together. We are enjoying it. I sure would love to join the organization in a big way after my children are a little older. My husband and I did not experience anything big(out of body/mind) during the program. I guess that's not so important right now. I'm sure it will happen some day.

As far as health benefits, I used to get headaches and have not seen one yet after the program. I don't worry about things so

much and feel much calmer and observe my breath more. Because of the four hour rule (before Kriya in the evenings), I'm losing some weight! My husband and I want our parents in India to also take the course. We are suggesting they take the wholeness program.

The volunteers did an awesome job. I don't think there was anything more I would want from what was presented. They inspired me right away to become a part of them and the Isha family."

Raghavan Santhanam said he came for the course to learn the right breathing techniques, and practice of yoga, and also because of the high recommendation from others. He is an Osho Rajneesh fan and Sadhguru reminded him of Osho. His first impressions were positive. The volunteers were courteous and everything was well organized. Santhanam adds of Sadhguru, "When he opens his mouth, wisdom and knowledge flows. Frankly I have heard a lot of people speak, but Sadhguru's ability to communicate complex things in an understandable way was remarkable. Overall I came out of the program with a positive experience. I was impressed with Caucasian/ African American ethnicities represented. There is no doubt that anyone who listens to Sadhguru will be changed to some extent. I have greater respect for Hindu religion. Sadhguru's message is clear. Living a joyful life begins with a choice, to live every moment happily. The change that I have had is every time I feel low or sad, his words beam into my ear and I become happy." Santhanam also feels greater calmness, a reduction in anxiety/anger and his breathing has improved. He does say that he felt there was a cult like atmosphere, "I do not know if it is good or bad. I don't know why but the stern looking volunteers in the room reminded me of a very organized force."

Ramesh Bakshi who took the course along with his wife Vijaya had attended a lecture by Sadhguru about 4-5 years ago. Since then one of his close family friends completed his courses and insisted that the couple attend the Inner Engineering seminar., Ramesh says, 'Guruji's lectures, his logical explanations and his jokes were exceptionally good. Guruji is vibrant and dynamic and very knowledgeable. His wit is sharp and to the point. Only thing I did not like was his questioning of people on their beliefs by asking were you there to witness it or Did you see it...etc. I am sure he wanted to prove a point by asking that question. I enjoyed every minute of Guruji's lectures. I wanted more of it. Hopefully I will attend his advanced seminars."

Mallika Gadepalli was one of the most effusive participants. She had tons of questions for Sadhguru and plenty of comments and observations. Mallika was inspired to take the course because she saw a close friend deciding to make the organization his life. "I was curious to know more about Isha and Sadhguru, what was it that inspires my friend (and many others) to contribute their time, money and effort so completely.

In addition, I have always been interested in yoga, and wanted to know more about the non-hatha vinyasa (active/ exercise type) yoga, learn something of our ancient traditions from Isha or any similar course."

Mallika says her first impressions was that things were a bit disorganized and that the room where the course took place was too crowded. "By the end of it however, I was very very impressed in terms of how the volunteers gave their time and energy tirelessly, they were always pleasant, always smiling, very very committed. I would be proud of a team like that working with/ for me!"

As for Sadhguru, Mallika says he grabbed her attention from the first day as an excellent orator. "I doubt I have listened to anyone else speak endlessly for so many hours on any topic. He is an immensely intelligent, phenomenally well read, deep and energetic person and his charisma is almost physical. I once went very close to ask him a question and felt almost a physical heat wave wash over me when he looked straight at me. What I got most of all was that even though he talks about how logic and experience are diametrically opposite when it comes to life - he realizes how he has to frame it in a logical way to get the attention of the logically minded folks (like myself!). So, in short, I understand some of what all the fuss is about him as a leader and a wise person."

For Mallika, some of the changes she has undergone since the course are too personal and she is hesitant to openly share them but she can say this much, "There were some very important reminders that we forget in a daily setting - about things like anger

and resistance to what is real, what is immediately around you. These are pure common sense and can be greatly beneficial to make life easy. I find that I try to employ these ideas more, generally I am quieter. I can feel the times my mind is quieter too, e.g. the couple of days that I got up early immediately during and after the program, which is rare for me” Mallika says she is more relaxed for most part, and quicker to catch her own hidden agendas before they become issues for her or anyone else.

“In addition,” for her, “the whole Isha experience has revived a sense of sanctity- a reminder that some things are sacred and need to be understood and held in a deeply spiritual way and that your belief (or your experience) is the only thing underpinning it, not logic and thought!”

For Malathi Reddy Vulupala, who has been practicing yoga since she was 13 , the search for a guru made her come to this course, on the recommendation of a friend.

Malathi says, “I came to the course expecting to learn more about asanas but learnt something different. From my experience the postures taught in the course are the most basic and deal with most of the body parts. Most of the postures are a part of my regular exercise which I do daily. The only difference is the sequence.

Sadhguru taught a compiled version which everyone can practice on a daily basis (30 min for ourselves should not be difficult). I can't stress more how daily practice can bring changes as I am a good example for this.

I always think about good food and bad food and make changes accordingly but my knowledge about healthy food is not very deep. The course offered this to me and I can say some of the changes I wanted in my body (which were not happening before even after practicing different techniques) are happening now with some change in my diet along with my regular exercise and the practice of kriya.

I think Sadhguru made the course very simple and understandable even to a person who has no knowledge of yoga, and about expressing my thoughts about healthy living. I felt happy thinking that there is someone else who thinks like me and my thinking is in the right path.

I am planning to take the rural rejuvenation (which was in my mind long before I attended this course but did not know where to start, how to start, what name to be given to this and much more) to Andhra villages. Now I have some hope, I will look forward to take Sadhguru's and his team members' help in organizing one. As he said it takes lot of effort and planning.

I believe in happiness only when my surroundings are a part of this. Because, I have seen the suffering and want to lend my little hand towards making better conditions. As Sadhguru said I just want to live one moment at a time.”

Jackie Fitzgerald says a friend from work recommended the course. “ I had shared how frustrated I get about work and family at times. I was looking for a way to “stop all the thinking and feelings”. It was overwhelming at times and I wanted to find a way to better deal with all the emotions.” Jackie was intrigued to see a lot of people from different backgrounds, all looking for “something”. “ The group had lots of energy.”.

On finishing the course she says that the one thing she immediately felt was that “It really made a difference in my sense of control. Many have told me for years “you take too much responsibility for things you don't have control over”. The way that Sadhguru explained things made her look at her own reactions and actions differently.

“I have also noticed a considerable difference with my 2 teenage boys, who I feel more connected to since the program. I think they see it too. I have been focusing on explaining things to them calmly and asking them to do something different the next time...and they seem to be listening. Rather than getting mad at them about something and expecting them to do it right next time, now I take responsibility for trying to create a new outcome in the future. I am pretty healthy in general. I do feel more

relaxed in my muscles in my back. I am also doing my best to eat vegetarian food and have lost a couple of pounds-an added benefit I wasn't expecting!"

Wendy Behr says she has known about Isha for a number of years but never felt drawn to check it out until someone said the Atlanta program would be one of the last IE programs Sadhguru would do." I also wanted to meet Sadhguru personally and see what my inner experience would be." Wendy says she loved the course and Sadhguru. "The first night I experienced him as funny, genuine, passionate, caring and wise...the kind of wisdom that you know is the truth the minute you hear it. I knew by the 3rd day that I was being given the gift of sitting in the presence of a living Master." Wendy says after finishing the course she finds," I am calmer, clearer in my motivation and infinitely more resolved to follow a conscious spiritual path for the rest of my life. I am thrilled about the possibilities in my life and feel much gratitude."

Ann Roberts has multiple sclerosis, and says she felt much better health wise after doing the course. "I already see the attitude improvement, which helps mood and, to a lesser extent, energy level. With MS, I have the classic deep fatigue where sometimes it is difficult to put one foot in front of the other. Since attending the course, I have not been in this state of fatigue. I only hope it continues. With the summer coming, the heat adversely affects my energy and ability levels, so we will see how it works out. I am finding that the longer I practice the kriya the more they become part of my routine. It's kind of interesting, but I am actually waking up at 4:50 am every morning without dread to do the morning practice. This is certainly not usual behavior for me. I love to sleep late."

Ann says that she had hoped to gain peace of mind, patience with others, and an ability to deal with the world as she thought it should be. "What I got from the course was a swift kick in the attitudinal butt. When Sadhguru started to talk it was sort of like slamming on the brakes and thinking in a whole new direction. That simple way of thinking has already, and will continue to change my life. I am hoping that as I become more centered and am able to meditate on a deeper level I will realize some significant health benefits. "

Ann Adds, 'One thing I think is interesting; Ted(her husband who took the course before her and recommended it to her) and I agree that once the course was over, we each felt that we had known Sadhguru in the past. He became so comfortable and familiar to us that he seemed to have been a part of our lives before this experience."

Darshana Kaur is a busy IT Project Manager managing over 20 projects. She was battling stress, developing severe symptoms of road rage, and becoming quite irritable in general. "Having heard that Yoga is supposed to help calm your mind, I decided to join the course. I had also heard from some friends that this course changed their life, so I was curious to see if it would have an impact on mine. Of course I was afraid that if this course involved a lot of body twisting, I would be a failure because my size does not permit much flexibility".

When she arrived on the first day she wasn't expecting to see so many people from diverse ethnic groups, and a large number of volunteers. "I will be honest – I wasn't really very impressed the first day but decided to go through with the course anyway.

Once she completed the course she says the transformation has been amazing. "I wouldn't be able to recognize myself. Being a single woman, I have been taking care of myself and all my needs for such a long time. It had made me so much more aggressive and I had forgotten what it is to be a woman. I got in touch with my feminine side (I have actually started cooking meals at home, am much more soft-spoken). Of course, I can still be aggressive when the situation so demands. Also, I have a glow and a smile on my face these days and people around me have started to notice. I can stay calm under duress. I have had a lot of people at work approach me and ask me why I look so different. A few of my colleagues are taking this course the next time we have one in Atlanta.

I am also very positive these days. I was able to walk away from a situation that had been bothering me for quite some time. I find it easier to let go. I moonlight as an actress and I have always been able to detach myself from the role I was playing as soon as I got off the stage – now finally I am able to do that in real life as well. I think the biggest benefit to me has been to realize that I am a complete universe in myself. I always felt so alone and was always very needy in my relationships (no wonder guys would run

away). Now I am quite happy being by myself. My mother passed away about 1.5 years ago. Having lost my father 5 years before that, I took my mother's death really badly and was on anti-depressants for the last year or so. A couple of weeks after this course I felt a sudden revulsion to the medication I was taking and (with my doctor's permission) I am off the medication now and I still feel great."

Narender Reddy says that about a year ago, some of his friends who attended the Isha Yoga program returned, totally sold on it and asked him to attend the next session but Narender was not too interested. In recent months however he was beginning to feel that his life had become monotonous and predictable; that he was feeling unfocused and needed a refreshing change. He felt perhaps yoga was the answer to refocus and infuse fresh energy and so , "after much persuasion from a couple of friends, I decided to attend Isha Yoga's IE program. I don't believe in the so-called 'Holy Men' or 'Swamis' and I don't believe in their teaching me about religion, etc., so I was very skeptical till the first day's session began. It didn't take me long to realize Sadhguru is different from others. The moment he entered the room where the session was to begin, I noticed that he made a quiet entrance without being surrounded by dozens of followers. That made a great impression on me. I was amazed at the softness of his voice and his method of communicating with audience (no one is considered a devotee). His sense of humor is excellent and I liked the humorous stories he narrated to make his point.

By narrating his life story, he made us believe that he is one of us and didn't claim to be a 'Holy man' or 'Swami'. He didn't promise us any miracles to change our lives. Sadhguru didn't call us 'Ignorant' like some Swamis do during their discourses. He showed us compassion and was willing to guide us to change our life styles for betterment. Basically, his approach is of urging us to use 'common sense' and deviate from 'senseless acts' which is my life's philosophy as well though at times I make senseless decisions.



Practicing Isha Yoga has changed my personality. I've become calmer in my dealing with day to day interactions with others. My reactions to others' actions have become more calculated acts instead of just knee-jerk reactions.

Till today, I'm practicing 'Kriya' and other 'asanas' taught at the program regularly. Even during my travels, I didn't break this routine. Though I'm a very healthy person, breathing exercises are making me feel much better all day long. I'm planning to continue practicing 'Yoga' that I learned at the camp in the near future as well."

Most of the participants are keeping up the practices recommended though some have slipped a bit to doing it once a day.. When I checked with Sadhguru he said, that unless the kriya is done as instructed the full benefits of it will not be derived. I guess it's just like taking half a dose of a medication and still expecting be cured fully.

I think what I came away with was that it is really important to be in touch with your inner self on a regular basis, that all the answers are within us and what Sadhguru was providing everyone were tools to reach that state of inner well being.

I think what really stood out was the focus on looking at your life more objectively and through discussion pinpointing the areas that were ailing or not healthy-be it emotional, physical or spiritual. There was also focus on looking inward in deeper introspection and eliminating negativity be it in attitude or way of thinking or looking at life, others and yourself-it was very liberating for many. I saw people deeply moved at some of the universal home truths Sadhguru pointed out-many had emotional breakdowns as they recognized the veracity of his words, the depth of his knowledge of humanity and his non judgmental compassion. It was as if many of them went through a deep cleansing that left them feeling lighter, more purified and wholesome. The course saw an entire gamut-there was laughter, discussions, tears, joy and dancing to music and Sadhguru joined in the fun,

a pot luck dinner organized on the last day that went way past midnight, a great pre breakfast sports oriented morning where friends of the participants and other family members also joined in. Many friendships were formed, and many ideas exchanged and people were in a much more generous, giving frame of mind. And I thought what if the entire world became this way? It would be such a safer, more balanced world to live in.

I think one of the most interesting aspects, as Narender mentioned, was the story of Sadhguru's own life and how he became who he is today. It is sufficient to say that if he can do it, anyone can reach that level of inner well being if they are willing to give it a shot. I also liked the information on healthy foods and according to Sadhguru, while the optimum diet is that of raw foods, in today's world even if we could make it 50 percent raw and 50 percent cooked balance it should work. Fish is the only non vegetarian food that he recommends because it digests like vegetables in the body. Like Dean Ornish, he feels dairy products should be limited. There was a pretty extensive discussion on diet, and we also got to know much more about the Isha initiatives that are making such a difference in the lives of people back home.



I don't know if it's because I knew a lot of the volunteers in Atlanta and their personalities but I found a very warm atmosphere and nothing that was cliquish or cultish. I also think it is basic commonsense not to teach the kriyas you learn, to others since you may teach them incorrectly. Some of us who have practiced yoga earlier were still messing up because the sequences and techniques are unique to Sadhguru's interpretations. I seemed to have knocked off 10 pounds in two weeks just following some of it, and that in spite of traveling constantly, and not being able to incorporate exercise or even a healthy diet on a regular basis. The key is of course to listen to your body-it will tell you what makes it happy, and what doesn't.

The participants openly made suggestions in some areas to improve the overall experience and those have been forwarded to the volunteers. I will continue talking to other participants and then check back on the ones who did this course 6 months from now to see where they are. Personally I enjoyed the candor with which everyone was encouraged to participate. Everyone also appreciated Sadhguru's tireless energy and patience and his easy accessibility to every participant-one night he sat till past 1 a. m. to meet every one of the participants and hear them out.

As for the practice-they are only as easy or as hard as you make them to be. Those who want to have found the time, others haven't but I hope that they will continue the effort to explore the possibilities to inner and outer well being because unless there is balance between the two there won't be harmony.

Inner Engineering Program: Detroit , MI

Dates: Jun 6-Jun 11 (Weekdays 7-10pm, Sat/Sun 8am-7pm)

Venue: 19600 Ford Road , Dearborn – Detroit , MI 48128

E-flyer Link: <http://www.ishayoga.org/eflyers/DetroitJune07.html>

Register Online: <http://www.IshaYoga.org>

Video Web Page: <http://www.innerengineering.org> (includes short video clips on Sadhguru)

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