



Mystic's Musings

An interview with Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, realized master an

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Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev is a realized master, yogi, and mystic from southern India. As founder of Isha Foundation, Inc., an international, non-profit service organization, Vasudev works tirelessly among the world's pre-eminent spiritual leaders and institutions to foster peace and international cooperation.

Vasudev's program of subtle yoga, Isha Yoga, is designed as a vehicle for personal exploration and transformation to facilitate healthy, truly joyous living. Isha Foundation conducts personal development programs, humanitarian initiatives, and through the Isha Yoga Center in Coimbatore, India, administers the Dhyana-linga multi-religious temple and meditation shrine, an ashram, and a yogic hospital. Vasudev's work is an outpouring of uninhibited compassion and love. A glimpse of his life and work can be experienced in the newly released book Mystic's Musings.



QUESTION: Sadhguru, you are here to teach a special form of yoga. Yoga seems to be the trend these days, but is yoga an exercise or spiritual experience, a path to enlightenment?

VASUDEV: Yoga is neither an exercise nor an experience. It is a certain state. The word yoga means "union." When you experience everything as one in your consciousness, then you are in yoga. Now when you are here, whatever you may say about your body not being of any importance to you, you still have to attend to it, isn't it? Can you deny it? You can talk God, you can talk religion, you can talk philosophy, but when your body gets hungry, you forget about God, you forget about philosophy. The first thing you want is food. Even if you pray, you will say, "Dear God, give

me food," isn't it? So, your body is an undeniable reality for you. It is there with you all the time.

Similarly with your mind. Wherever you go, whether to a temple, or a church, or somewhere else, your mind comes with you. Even if you go to the mountain caves and sit and think it is peaceful, your mind will go on with its own nonsense. So your mind also is an undeniable reality.

And you may think you are controlling your emotions, but they are always there. You can hide them for some time, but at the right moment, they come out. And to make all these happen, your energy is there. If you want to transform yourself, you should not deny any of these. That is why there is an emotion yoga, a mental yoga, an energy yoga and there is a physical, action yoga. You have to accept all these four types of yoga and work on all four levels.

If there is a live guru, he knows and understands what is required. He looks at the combination that works for a person. For each person he mixes the right combination. For different people, different types of meditation, different levels of practices are given depending upon their nature. A common prescription will not work-people will only get suppressed. There will be no enlightenment. Suppression has happened in the name of spirituality everywhere in the world. Mostly, ninety percent of it is suppression. This is simply because without any understanding you want to go head-on against your own nature. It is not going to work. You don't have to become slaves of your nature. You have to transcend your nature. You have to approach it with understanding and awareness.

QUESTION: Then how does yoga help a person attain that state of unity within himself?

VASUDEV: To experience yoga or unity within you there are many ways. Hatha yoga means to start with the body. Apart from your mind, do you see your body has its own ego? It has its own attitudes. See, 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." Doesn't it do this? It has its own way. So in yoga we start with Hatha yoga as a way of working with the body, disciplining the body, purifying the body, preparing the body for higher levels of energy.

All of us are alive, but all of us do not experience life to the same intensity because our energy levels are not the same. Our vital energies, or prana, are not the same, so likewise is our intensity and experience of life.

The whole process of yoga is to take you from something that you know and take the next step into the unknown. If you talk about something that you do not know, either you have to believe it or disbelieve it, isn't it? Suppose I start talking about God. You either have to believe my God or disbelieve my God, which will only take you into flights of imagination, not into growth.

So now I begin to talk about the body. This is something that you know: you know you have a body. Now you take the body to its peak. Now I talk about the mind. That is also something that you know. Take it to its peak and then the next step.

Realizing where you are right now and taking the next step is growth. So yoga starts like this-with the body, then the breath and then the mind. Now we have made this yogic science (Isha Yoga) almost like a physical science. Suppose you put two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen-water will come. Whether a great scientist puts it together, or an idiot puts it together, only water will come. Similarly in yoga, whether a great yogi does it or an ignorant person does it, it doesn't matter. If he does those things properly, the result is there to be seen.

QUESTION: You were talking about energy levels or prana. Does your approach incorporate some type of meditation and breathing practices or "pranayama?"

VASUDEV: Yes, definitely there is pranayama and meditation. When you describe the "pranayama" as a "breathing practice," you are lowering it to a different level [laughing]. "Prana" means vital energy. "Yama" means to gain control over. So though we're employing the breath, it is not limited to the breath. It's a way of gaining control over your energy.

Today, modern science says that the whole existence is just energy, vibrating in so many different ways. There is no such thing as matter. It's true. Definitely having a mastery over your energies can lead whichever way you want. You can take yourself to the highest peak. It's entirely possible. The practices are not something that are being invented by somebody and being imposed on the system. They are something that has been discovered by observing the system. It's gleaned from the system by a deep observation. So definitely, it will accelerate one's progress on the spiritual path.

There are eight limbs of yoga. The first three limbs are called the "fire" aspect of yoga. Last five limbs are called the "light" aspect of yoga. Pranayama is called a path of fire and light. The reason this is so is-fire signifies purification; light signifies enlightenment. Pranayama is path of fire and light. It is both purifying and enlightening-which we have found is more suitable for the present age,

because people are not willing to go through three stages of purification and then go through the other stages. That much time is not there for most people, so we find that pranayama is the most suitable path for most people.

QUESTION: I understand that your programs are as appropriate for the average person simply seeking health and happiness in their everyday life as they are for the intense spiritual seeker. How so?

VASUDEV: If you ask me, you cannot really separate these two things. People are seeking well-being, people want health, people want to be peaceful, but they have a confused mind. How will health happen? How will peace happen? How will happiness happen to them? They think they can buy it from the outside; it's a very wrong notion. So, if you're really seeking well-being, whether peace or happiness or health, you need to dig into yourself, to go deeper into yourself, which is a spiritual process.

Now, this question comes up because there is so much misconception about what is spiritual. We are posing spirituality versus a materialistic way of life. There is no such distinction. If you live here, your body, which is material; and who you are within you, is a spirit. So, can you separate these two things in living? You have to live here as body-spirit. So there is no such distinction as to this is spirituality; this is materialistic. It is just that. If you're enslaved to a materialistic way of life, then we will say, to find a little release from it, you can focus on the inward. But, with or without focusing on the inward, on the inner situation, there is no well-being in life. It's only a struggle.

So definitely, Isha Yoga focuses on health, well-being, natural living, and all these things. But, if a person can be truly peaceful and happy in this world, irrespective of what's happening around him, I consider that person a spiritual person. How deep he's gotten is questionable, but he's started being spiritual, because he's happy by his own nature.

QUESTION: For myself, and I'm sure many others, however, focusing on the inward is precisely the problem. How can this program help us do that?

VASUDEV: I would say that the seven days is an opportunity for a person to explore himself. So it's a personal exploration for a person with the assistance of a master so he can look at himself like he has never looked at himself. The practices are a great support in that direction. Whatever we individually understand, unless it is substantiated by personal application, it will not become a permanent process within you. Intellectual processes will have an impact today. Tomorrow you will totally forget about it. Today you read a book and it

seems to be so wonderful, life changing, but the day after tomorrow, you've forgotten about it. So, unless the intellectual dimension is reinforced with an experiential dimension, it doesn't really become a life altering process. It (the Isha Intensive) is an opportunity for a person to really seek the innermost core within him.

Then what you are doing in terms of practices (Isha Yoga) is just to mature your energies in such a way that if you sit down you don't need to do anything. You're willing to allow whatever happens. The very fundamentals of Shoonya meditation (a powerful process of conscious non-doing taught in the Isha Intensive) are just that, you are not needed. If something truly wonderful has to happen, you are not needed. If you want small, petty things to happen to you, you can do it. But if you really want something enormous to happen to you, you are not needed. If you know how to keep yourself aside, it will happen.

How do I do that? You can't do that; you just have to allow it. So whatever you're doing (Isha Yoga practices) is just to bring your energies to that level of stability where you can just be. Not trying to do anything, not trying to get somewhere, simply allowing it to happen.

QUESTION: Sadhguru, you make it sound so simple, but it still eludes me. How can I better understand the spiritual process?

VASUDEEV: If it is to happen, to move from one dimension to another, you cannot move with understanding. This must be understood clearly. Anything that is not in your experience, there is no way to understand and analyze. This needs to be extremely clear to every individual. People are always trying to understand. I just recently saw a big book, Understanding God. I think it's on the popular list? Understanding God. They're even understanding God. That which created you. How did you get to understand that? You cannot understand anything which is in a different dimension than you are right now. The whole effort is to move to a different dimension. If that needs to happen, first you must STOP understanding. You have to see, "I cannot understand, and there is no need to understand." It is the experience, which takes you out of this dimension.

Try to understand this flower, what will you understand? In your attempt to understand this flower, maybe you will pull it apart petal by petal. But you will understand nothing. Maybe you will know the chemistry of it. Maybe you will analyze everything and then you will conclude everything is proton, neutron, electron. All that is fine, but you will not know anything about the flower.

QUESTION: Okay, so without yet having this experience, is there any material

context for what it is my being aspires to?

VASUDEV: Now people are trying to deliver spirituality as an understanding. Understanding is needed about how you are bound, that's all. How you are bound to your limitations, that you need to understand. You cannot understand the other dimension. See, people are always talking about how God is, how heaven is. This will not lead you anywhere except hallucinations. The only thing that you need to understand is how you are bound to your limitations. If you understand this and free yourself from those bondages, where you have to go you will anyway go. If I talk about the sky, it's no use. What are the ropes that are tying you down to the Earth? That is all that matters. Your business is with the ropes that are tying you down, not with the sky. If you untie these ropes, this [pointing to questioner] will anyway reach the sky. When you reach there, only then you will know what is the sky.

Till then, whatever you think about it, whatever understanding, whatever analysis you make, is coming from the limited dimension of where you are right now. There is no way to understand that which is beyond your present level of experience. So a guru's work is to help you to untie the knots with which you are binding yourself and to show you where the knots are. And if you untie them and you're ready, you are on the edge; maybe just with one knot left, then he can push you. If he pushes you when you have ten ropes tied down, then it will damage you. He can push you only when everything is broken and just one single thread is hanging. Then he can push you. He can afford to push you because you will not break, the rope will break. But when you have ropes tied all over, if he pushes you, something of you will break. So the process that we have set in the form of Isha Yoga is just that, to mature the body, to mature the mind, to mature the energies so that slowly, these bondages . these ropes that we are tying around us gradually are broken down. A moment comes when all you need is a Whoo! You will go.

QUESTION: Sadhguru, can you tell me a little about yourself? From what lineage or tradition do you come?

VASUDEV: Fundamentally, I don't come from any particular tradition as such. It is from inner experience that I come. But, if I look at it now, I'm a part of every tradition in the world . whatever the traditions have become over a period of time, that's different. When I look at the source of all traditions, all traditions have started the way I have started. It cannot be any different. Whether it is this religion, or that religion, or Tao, or Zen, or yoga, whatever-it all comes from the same source of an inner experience-when a person experiences the unity within himself. So, in a way, I belong to all traditions, while I don't belong to any because the presentation is unique.

What you call a tradition is a certain way of presenting. The reason Gau-tama, the Buddha, chose to teach in a particular way, the reason Jesus chose to teach in a different way, and somebody else in a different way is simply because of the kinds of situations around them. What was most understandable for the people around them, accordingly they proceeded. Depending on the quality of minds around them-the level of receptivity available to them, accordingly they chose their teachings. Even now, it's the same thing, so we are presenting it in a certain way, as it will be most appealing to the modern mind.

QUESTION: Can you explain how you were inspired to share Isha Yoga with the rest of the world?

VASUDEV: You see when something of this magnitude happens within you [referring to his enlightenment], there is no way to keep it to yourself. Ultimately. If I want, I can just sit here for the rest of my life, not doing anything, and really be happy. I have really no need to teach anything. But it's needed, so it's being done; that's all. That doesn't mean to say I don't enjoy it. Definitely I do enjoy it.

So one blessing in my life is that I'm probably one of the few people who are fortunate enough to every day see tears of joy, tears of love around me. I think that's very beautiful. We have worked in all kinds of places with all kinds of people. In one week, the way they flower -some of them from utterly miserable states to joyous states. That unfolding is very beautiful to watch.

So ultimately you can say that for me, this whole life is simply about helping people realize and experience their own Divinity.